



Mrs. Nancy Gorrell attended the University of Wisconsin, Madison (1964-67) and received a BA Degree SUMMA CUM LAUDE from the State University of New York at Stony Brook (1968). In 1970 she received her MA Degree in Cultural History from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She teaches 11th grade English and creative writing at Morristown High School, Morristown, New Jersey.

#### **Awards:**

- NEW JERSEY STATE TEACHER OF THE YEAR 1992
- OUTSTANDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS EDUCATOR FOR 2001 FROM THE NEW JERSEY COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
- NEW JERSEY'S GOVERNOR AWARD IN ARTS AND EDUCATION 2001

"Peter Fischl's memoir of his holocaust experience adds to the testimony of survivors we will cherish for the coming generations. His personal struggles and triumphs will inspire students and the world to "Never Forget"

### **INTERVIEW WITH NANCY GORRELL**

**"IT IS EVERYTHING THAT AS A POETRY TEACHER I WOULD WANT A POEM TO BE"**

This poem particularizes one boy's point of view and one poet's point of view and enables the reader and the viewer to enter the experience poetically and visually. I think it's a great lesson. I told my History Teacher friends, "I think you should start teaching the Holocaust and the history of it through something like this because it puts a face on it for the kids. It's not just a page in the history book. I read the poem to the kids and then I ask them to write their own poem of address to either the little boy or to any other subject in the photograph. My objective is that they somehow imagine, so they enter the experience; imagine what the little boy might be thinking, what the woman might be thinking what the soldier might be thinking. Then we share the poems and that is basically our introduction to Holocaust literature. We go into Elie Wiesel's "Night" very often and the other Holocaust pieces that we read. I usually use Peter's poem as an introduction. It is, in the teacher jargon world, anticipatory set something that gets the kids in the mood, gets them focused. The interesting thing is that Peter didn't know his poem fell into a literary tradition. He just wrote his poem which is what great poets do. Great poets write from the heart, they write from their experience and it is real. Peter's poem is real. It's from his heart. It's from experience. No one can read that poem without being deeply moved by it. When you read his poem you can hear his voice. You can hear that there is an accent to it, sort of syntax to it, that is his own. It is everything that, as a teacher, I would want a poem to be. It's understated and genuine. It's very, what we call, "accessible." Peter doesn't want to write a poem that only the high brow can read. He didn't know until I read it and spoke to him that it was actually in a literary tradition. Great poets are always writing in their culture, in a literary tradition, because you can't help but being influenced. I think it pleased Peter to know that the poem itself is in the literary tradition and it's very teachable because of that. When I first read it I went crazy. I said, "Oh, my goodness! This is an Ecphrastic poem! It's a Holocaust poem but it's also an Ecphrastic poem! I CAN TEACH THIS IN A MILLION CLASSES. The great thing about poetry is that it's a gift to share to someone else and that gift is shared to someone else and that gift gets shared to someone else.

That is what Peter's poem is doing. When kids read it, they write their own poems. I think that is what most poets would really love to know. They would like to know that someone reads their poem and is inspired to write their own poem. I think Peter's poem is a great poem.

FIND "THE LITTLE POLISH BOY"

<http://www.holocaust-trc.org/FischlPoem.htm>

Read the testimonials at the end of the poem click on the following lesson plans:

By Nancy Gorrell: "Teaching Empathy Through Ecphrastic Poetry"

By Judy Luhme Junenco: "TO BE OR NOT TO BE"

WITHIN A FEW MONTHS "THE LITTLE POLISH BOY" will be in German schools

For speaking engagements contact Peter L. Fischl: <mailto:peterfischl@verizon.net>