

## NLLN Continuing Education Scholarship Report

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### International Reading Association Annual Convention Report May 2009

My first experience at International Reading Association was so special, as I had the opportunity to hear many children and young adult authors speak about their work. Jane O'Connor and Robin Preiss Glasser spoke together about their work on the Fancy Nancy books. Their collaboration is unusual in the publishing world – both in their communication with each other and their speaking engagements. A panel discussion with Annie Barrows, Ashley Bryan, Katherine Paterson, Seymour Simon and Martin Sandler offered interesting glimpses into their writing and their books. I was least familiar with Martin Sandler who spoke of his nonfiction books and how in his history books he doesn't write down to children, while telling them "what a country lived of" instead of "what a country died of." Sharon Creech entertained at a luncheon by speaking of the "collision of poems" that spurred her book *Love That Dog*. She read some of her new book *The Unfinished Angel* which will be out in September.

Several conference sessions dealt with how to organize book clubs in the school. Deborah Appleman and Carol Jago gave specifics about how to have an engaging book club, ranging from text selection, to when to arrange the club, whether to read the entire book before discussing, and whether a teacher should talk about whether she/he liked the book (don't!). A session on Boys and Books provided criteria to look for in making boys' book clubs successful. T. A. Barron, Alan Sitomer, and Sharon Draper all spoke about the "voice" to listen for to connect with boys.

Patricia Polacco was one of the conference highlights. She spoke of her family history and how she has incorporated that into some of her 40 books. She talked about children needing "authentic literature in authentic voices" since neighborhoods these days are so homogeneous. Patricia told about her two newest books, *In Our Mothers' House* and *January's Sparrow* and what came to inspire her to write them. A pre-publication copy of *January's Sparrow*, plus other pre-publication books offered by many of the publishers vending at the conference show will provide new titles for me and my colleagues to include in our reading lists.

Thank you so much for the financial help to attend the IRA Annual Conference. I can't wait to share the books and the workshop sessions with my librarian and teacher friends.

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