

## LITERATURE IS A WAY OF LIFE

## WELL SO ACTUALLY IS TECHNOLOGY APPARENTLY

By Emily Mullins

As a fourth year teacher, I have always found teaching to be a career that widens even the broadest of horizons. It is a field that is diverse in its practices, in its methodology and in its execution. It's because not only do our students change from class to class, from year to year, but so does society. My ninth grade students do a media unit in which they analyze their use of technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as learners through revealing non-fiction texts. It is eye opening for them, and it is eye opening for me. Their phones are a constant source at the ready (however ready is sometimes inconvenient to my teaching and a bit of bruise to the ego). They have the internet at their fingertips. They are 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, and in order to teach, we, as teachers, must adapt.

When I initially applied for the Masters of Arts in Educational Technology program at Michigan State University, I knew that the world we live in was advancing, and as much as I teach novels and poetry and plays from 400 years prior, the Western canonical teaching can only be truly successful if learned and instructed in new ways. I like for my students to think, as literary critic and Yale professor of literature Harold Bloom would put it, of "literature as a way of life." And it can be, yet their way of life involves much more than simple books one can hold in their hands, and the teacher simply telling the students what life was like when Shakespeare was producing plays for Lord Chamberlain's Men at any of the Elizabethan theatres in and around London is not enough. There needs to be virtual tours, webquests, research, and other gadgets, gizmos, and whats-it's a plenty. These can help is used wisely and thoughtfully in the classroom.

One of my goals has and always will be to have my students make choices analytically and capitalize on their ability to think independently and critically as contributing members of our globalized world. Technology can and is a goal within the four walls of my classroom because it will help me to alter the world of literature for my students. Changing our methodology as teachers is important and necessary. Although the curriculum may require someone to teach the canon, learning to provide information or giving kids the ability to access the information themselves will reach new students.

I had a wonderful time in this program, and I think my goals regarding my masters' learning happened due to my experience in Ireland this 2013 summer with other MAET students studying abroad. We were able to share ideas, learn together, and grow beyond the knowledge we arrived across the ocean with. My goals are to be a greater English teacher because of what those colleagues and teachers in those specific classes taught me. I gained a change in perspective from so many other life perspectives. There were so many unique situations that I was able to walk away with so much more than I initially planned on taking with me. I can end my masters course with renewed confidence in my growth as a teacher and continue to make goals for continued education technological implementation to effectively move my students forward as not only 21<sup>st</sup> century people, but 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.