HIGHLIGHTS

Teachers: sign up to participate in Italy Reads today!

Day-long Teacher Training Workshop
12 September, 2014
Aula Magna Regina,
Guarini Campus,
Via della Lungara 233 (Trastevere)

Write to
italyreads@johncabot.edu

In This Issue …

- Feedback from Italy Reads 2014 JCU volunteers and high school teachers.
- Italy Reads 2014 Student Video Contest winners announced.
- Italy Writes 2014 winners announced. Read excerpts of the finalists on page 3.
- JCU’s Institute for International Communication hold Media Literacy Workshop for teachers of English.

Italy Reads 2013—Jhumpa Lahiri’s The Namesake

Italy Reads 2013 has come to an end and left lasting memories and new friendships. Before moving on to Italy Reads 2014, when we will be reading Ernest Hemingway’s A Farewell to Arms, we’d like to share some of the fun and excitement from this year’s activities.

We thank all the teachers, students, volunteers, staff and faculty at JCU and at the many high schools and parents for their role in making Italy Reads a success. Here are some of the comments received from participants in the program this year.

Andy (a Study Abroad Student at JCU from the University of Madison, Wisconsin) – “This has been a wonderful opportunity for me personally to learn about the Roman youth community as well as the very important teachers who try every day to provide a guide for those young minds by educating them on the world they live in.”

Danielle (a Communications major from Adelphi University) – “I had such a great time with the students! I was impressed with their speaking skills and how eager they were to talk about our lives and theirs.”

Raffaella Fiorini (Liceo Chris Cappell College, Anzio) – “It was really great to have [your students] at our school! The students were very happy and enjoyed it a lot!”

Isabella Marinaro (Liceo “L. Manara”, Rome) – “[My students] were absolutely enthusiastic and I could see their effort to communicate their emotions about ‘The Namesake’.”

Mariarosaria Savino (ISIS ’Enrico De Nicola’, Naples) – “What we are trying to do with the cultural exchange program with your university is make a further effort to spark enthusiasm in learning English so that [students] really understand that it’s not only a school subject but a means of communication that will enrich their lives.”

This document and other resources for teachers and students is available at:
http://johncabot.libguides.com/ItalyReads
Winners of Italy Reads Student Video Contest

⇒ First Prize, €500: Class1A, Liceo Classico, at Liceo Immanuel Kant won with “The Namesake” and enjoyed their award while sharing with those in need. The class went to MagicLand amusement park and made a collective donation to AIRC (Associazione Italiana per la Ricerca sul Cancro) in support of cancer research.

⇒ Second Prize, €300: Class 3H, Liceo Scientifico Statale “Innocenzo XII” in Anzio won with “Interview with Hyenas” and enjoyed an evening together celebrating their group effort over ‘Italian comfort food’: pizza!

⇒ Honorable Mention: “Let Me Be” by students of Class 3C at Liceo Immanuel Kant, Rome.

⇒ Honorable Mention for Best Acting: “One Hand, Five Homes” by students of Class 5E at Chris Cappell College, Anzio.

ITALY WRITES 2014

Italy Writes 2014 The annual creative writing contest for Italian high school students whose primary language of instruction is not English. Read excerpts beginning on page 3.

Winners in the Non-Fiction Category:

1st Place - Elena Placanica, Liceo Classico ‘Dante Alighieri’, Rome, for "Sexist Tropes in Mainstream Media".
2nd Place - Francesca Portante D’Alessandro, Liceo Classico ‘Dante Alighieri’, Rome, for "Art and Crime: an Unexpected but Frequent Connection".
3rd Place - Eleonora Corradi, Liceo Classico ‘Luciano Manara’, Rome, for "Steve Jobs: So Spoke the Senecan Ulysses of Our Times".
Honorable Mention - Flavia Antonelli, Liceo Statale ‘G. Keplero’, Rome for "To Be or To Have - Between Capitalism and Humanity".

Winners in the Fiction Category:

1st Place - Antonia Belli, Liceo Ginnasio Virgilio, Rome, for "Across the Dark".
2nd Place - Orazio Argentero, Liceo Ginnasio Virgilio, Rome, for "Hostile Ambient Takeover".
3rd Place - Simone Crinò, Liceo Classico Luciano Manara, Rome, for "Much Ado About Laughing".
Honorable Mention - Filippo De Luca, Scuola Svizzera di Roma, Rome, for "Upper Floor".
Honorable Mention - Emilia Richiello, Liceo Classico Luciano Manara, Rome, for "Logbook".


Media Literacy Workshop
Professional Development for Teachers of English at JCU

Twenty-two teachers from 18 different high schools located in Rome, Anzio, Pomezia and Naples participated in the Media Literacy for Teaching English Workshop for Teachers on Tuesday 8 July 2014.

The JCU Institute in International Communications hosted this daylong workshop of professional development for teachers of English in partnership with Italy’s premier media literacy organization, MED-Italian Association for Media Education (http://www.mediaeducationmed.it/).

Missed this opportunity? Not to worry, you can find the information presented at this workshop at this URL: http://www.openmediaeducation.net/medialit-english/
killed off to give the hero cheap angst. It is lazy, it is sexist, and it is still used in the media today.

Another frequent trope is the so-called “manic pixie dream girl”, a term coined in 2007 by film critic Nathan Rabin. It is a subtler example of misogyny, for the character is disguised as an independent, if quirky, woman, often with a childlike aptitude and a penchant for ribbons. It is not her femininity that makes her a poorly-written character, but the fact that she only exists when relating to the usually brooding and disillusioned male character. She has no real personality outside the man’s needs. Nothing is known of her, her past, family or relationships outside the man. She is the woman of his dreams, and only lives to break his cynical and pessimistic vision of life, and introduce him to the joys of adventure.

While both these tropes reduce women to objects, nothing takes away their agency more than the “mystic pregnancy”, which consists of the character ending up pregnant, often magically, without her knowledge. It very much reduces her to a human incubator, and the literal use of her body without consent is downright terrifying.

But not every piece of modern media presents sexist narratives: *Orange Is The New Black*, a Netflix-produced TV show, follows a diverse, complex cast of women during their stay in prison. In merely ten episodes we meet black, white and Latino women, queer women and straight women, trans women and cis, or non trans, women. *Orange Is The New Black* not only presents the most diverse ensemble in mainstream media, but actively focuses the narrative around them, with little to no male influence, allowing them to be the heroines of their story.

Art is usually associated with culture, beauty and uplifting experiences. However, such is the power of images both to those who want to “own” them and to those who fear them, that works of art have been connected also with violence, crime and even wars. These have been associated mostly with
- Religion
- Ideology
- Organized Crime

To begin with religion driven fury against “images” is responsible for the outbreak of large-scale violence connected to art. In the 17th century Calvinists, destroyed fine artworks and decorations in most northern and central European countries. In what it was called “Beeldenstorm” or, in German, “bildersturm” churches were attacked, their paintings and frescoes whitewashed, statues smashed, reliefs defaced. The effect of this “storm” is documented in the paintings of Pieter Jansz Saenredam, white empty naves and aisle, with rare and minuscule human figures that create an eerie, almost metaphysical space. Such
religious fury is unfortunately not a prerogative of the past. In 2001 the Afghan Taliban obliterated the giant Buddha carved in the cliffs of Bamiyan (dating from the 6th century).

Ideology also has been responsible for massive destruction of art. As an example Nazis labelled all modern art “degenerate art” (Entartete Kunst), considering it anti-German. In 1937, a decree mandated the confiscation of thousands of art pieces, mostly German expressionist paintings but also works by Picasso, Chagall and Van Gogh. A few hundreds of these were parachuted in an art exhibit that toured several German cities to further incite against the “perverse Jewish spirit” polluting the nation. Following the exhibition, many paintings were auctioned abroad, especially in Switzerland. Over 5000 pieces were publicly burned in Berlin in 1939, while others, including masterpieces by Picasso, Dalì, Leger and Miró, were burned in Paris in July, 1942, at the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume. The Gestapo prohibited the living artists from working and subject them to strict surveillance. Many managed to escape into exile. Formally no one was “executed” for their art, but those of Jewish extraction were imprisoned and eventually killed in concentration camps while others, including masterpieces by Elfride Lohse-Wachtler, were imprisoned in a mental asylum and killed in the T4 program (the nazi eugenics program).

In blatant but unsurprising contradiction, Nazi officials kept many valuable pieces for private use. In 2012 over 1400 paintings were found hidden in Munich, in the possession of the son of one of the Nazi-appointed “authorized dealers”.

Not only the desire to “destroy”, but also the urge to “own” art has led individuals and groups to violence and crime. Occupying armies have routinely looted art, not just for its monetary value, but also as a symbol of dominance and possession, seizing the symbols of the defeated cultures. This is not referring to the individual looting unfortunately asso-ciated with any war, but with planned and organized appropriation.

The Mafia itself is fully aware of the power of art as a national symbol. The 1969 theft of a famous “Nativity” by Caravaggio in Palermo was perhaps part of a broader “destabilization” operation. This story periodically emerges in the trial proceedings of all mafia bosses. In 1992-93 its “bombing campaign” was aimed specifically at art related targets: the Uffizi, the Contemporary Art Museum in Milan, the churches of San Giovanni and San Giorgio.

In any case, despite its detractors, art is never just a “piece of painted canvas” but it can have such a strong evocative power to unleash incredible forces. These can generate inspiration and further creation or, as we have seen, fear, greed and destruction.

Eleonora Corradi
"Steve Jobs: So Spoke the Senecan Ulysses of Our Times"
3rd Place, Non-Fiction

My story speaks of another story, a story of true life. The prota-gonist of the story is Steve Jobs that while describing the most important experiences of his life imparts a great life lesson to Stanford University students.

Jobs begins his long speech from his own youthful experiences, from the moment he decided to leave university to follow his dreams, his aspirations. All the choices made when he was young, choices made by following his heart, proved to be the most important for him, and even those that might have seemed senseless at the moment, with the passing of time have proved invaluable. Obviously it was not possible at that time "to connect the dots" as Jobs says, but everything became clearer years later, looking back. This is an encouragement to have faith in the future, because the dots that appear meaningless now will join with the passing of time.

Going on with his speech Steve Jobs tells us a story of love and loss. He soon discovered what was the job of his dreams, the work he loved to do, and so he founded Apple at only twenty years of age, in the garage of his house. The love for one’s own passions is what each of us must learn to cultivate and to pursue to the end. Doing the job of our dreams is the aspiration to which we should aim at, without losing confidence, because we know that the path to get to the finish line is always full of distress. Steve Jobs always believed in living every moment as if it were your last, as does each of us, but never fully understood what it meant till he found himself at the face of death.

An incurable cancer, a maximum of three to six months of life. To remember that he would be dead soon was the most useful tool to help him make important decisions, because in the face of death everything superfluous fades away and only what really matters is left. You cannot therefore waste your existence following dogmas, false beliefs, living the life of others or being influenced by opinions. The most important thing is to have the courage to follow your heart and intuition, because they do know what is truly right.

The cancer diagnosed to Steve Jobs proved to be treatable and from that moment on, he truly lived each day as if it were the last day of his life. His story ends with a call, a sentence read many years before in a magazine of the Seventies, which for him became a real philosophy of life and it is what he wishes Stanford University students for their future: "stay hungry, stay foolish".

Since ancient times, philosophers, thinkers, and most simply men have discussed about life and its brevity. While reading this wonderful speech I immediately referred to
the philosophy of Seneca: he also tackles the inexorable passing of time. According to Seneca man makes use of his own existence in the wrong way and then complains about its brevity: in fact, when man reaches the end he realizes he has lived only half his life. Seneca believes, unlike many others, that life is not short at all, on the contrary it is rather long. If you live it fully. According to him then you need to live today fully, considering today as a lifetime.

There is also another character who perfectly embodies all the aspects dealt with by Steve Jobs: Ulysses, a man dominated by a thirst for knowledge, the myth of the eternal quest. Where have all these values gone today? We now have the technological means to receive all kinds of information but rarely we question these data about our reality; we should rather start experiencing firsthand what he absorbs passively and live fully and intensely every present moment.

On the contrary we tend to spend every day, leading a monotonous life and having few aspirations for the future. But I believe that it is precisely in such a time of crisis that we need to take action and deal with the situations that we face with decision and determination. We are the authors of our fate, we decide our future, the future is in our hands.

Flavia Antonelli
"To Be or To Have - Between Capitalism and Humanity"
Honorable Mention, Non-Fiction

The origins of consumerism are to be found in human nature and in its unrealizable desire to get more and more in one's life, until the moment one owns everything but without any satisfaction.

We should analyze primary and secondary needs of human life. Only primary needs are enough for men's survival; but, quoting Kant, men have not only got five senses: they also have the so-called "sixth sense", the intellect, which makes them different from animals. So, men can satisfy their instincts like every animal, but they can also decide not to pander to them, just using their reason; this is why men are the most peculiar beings in the world. Their needs double because food for their body is not enough for their survival: they also need to satisfy the strange necessities of their intellect.

This destructive process will bring mankind to suicide in the most comfortable way and with the best technology ever invented. The more people venerate divine money the more they damage themselves and their minds, satisfying all needs of their five senses, until the day they realize their dramatic condition, when a person who has not got any money left will be out of the capitalistic and consumerist world game. It will be game over!

"In man, life is the use of reason"(2): we live because we think, and we are human beings because we ponder. Only this way we can save ourselves from the devastating consequences of consumerism and capitalism, which make all of us the same conformed drones in this extraordinary world.

(2) “Convivio” (Book Four, Chapter 7), written by Dante Alighieri, 1304/1307

Antonia Belli
“Across the Dark”
1st Place, Fiction

Across the Dark.
As little flowers, which the
Chill of night has bent and huddled,
When the white sun strikes,
Grow straight and open fully on their
stems,
So did I,
Too,
With my exhausted force.

Dante Alighieri, Inferno.

Our house was white wooden walls and big glass doors.

In the winter, it would almost disappear among the snow, yellow light shining through the square windows into the dark. In the brief summer it looked oddly out of place against the dark green trees and the bright grey sky.

I remember playing by the lake in my red swimsuit, black pebbles so hot under my feet it made the water feel like ice when I stepped into it. I remember my mother’s smile, and the sparkle of her eyes behind her sunglasses. I remember the sound of my father hitting his newspaper to
keep its pages together against the wind and the lighter, softer sound the wind made as it tore them apart, over and over and over again.

I used to remember the smell of sunscreen and wet leaves and banana ice-cream. But now all my memories smell like fire.

The hospital was white and light green; an endless maze of long, wide, identical corridors that stretched on forever from one set of stairs to the other. When the nurses weren’t around I used to escape out of my room and walk on and on until someone eventually found me and took me back. They never got mad at me. I didn’t know where I was going.

The last time I sneaked out of my room I managed to walk much longer than I usually did, and I found myself in a corridor that was not white and light green but yellow, colorful stickers filling the walls and windows, balloons resting on the floor. Something cold crawled through me from the back of my head and I knew, then, where I had been going all along. Still, it took me twenty more minutes to find his room. He was asleep, his tiny body almost drowning in the blinding white sheets. Someone had stuck needles in his arms and tubes in his nose, and I could hear the faint sound of the machine telling me his heart was still beating, but it could all have just been in my mind. The nurse put a light hand on my shoulder and let me look at my brother one more time before she ushered me away.

My arms and legs are still covered in white bandages. The thought of what they cover is enough to make my insides churn. When I push my fingertips against them the skin underneath feels warm, as if some of the fire had stayed there, gnawing at my flesh and eating me alive.

Jude woke up after many cold days had come and gone, and many furious blizzards with them. One day, I’ll tell him the story of the winter I spent waiting for him.

When he was four years old, my parents started taking Jude to doctors all around the country, and they would ask them the same questions they asked each other in whispers when they thought we couldn’t hear. Two years later, and they still hadn’t got an answer. Not one they could live with at least, but they won’t have to now.

My grandmother lives in the south, where the people are nicer and the weather is kinder. A place where the ocean is as blue as the sky. Sometimes I sit by one of the big windows and look out into the busy street full of people walking and talking and shouting and driving, and I wonder what will become of us. Jude brought me a leaf from the garden once, green and soft and so different from the ones that made up the piles we used to jump into in autumn afternoons, pine needles biting at exposed hands and cheeks. Green leaves in March, that’s how far we are from home.

He tries to talk to me like that sometimes.

Tonight is cold and restless. I sit on the floor with my back to the wall, the rhythmic passing of cars on the street below lulling me into nothingness. Jude comes in and sits next to me, close enough that I can feel his warmth, but far enough away that no part of us can touch. He is not looking at me but at something he holds in his hands. I recognize what it is from the warm glow that suddenly tints his face red against the dark blue of four am. He flicks the lighter again and it’s almost deafening in this still house, silent as ours had never been. In my dreams I can still hear how loud their screaming was that night, even before the fire came, the words they threw at each other like acid and his fists slamming against the walls so they wouldn’t slam into her.

Sometimes they did anyway. It was a flicker that put an end to hit, and then the heat had swallowed us all. “I will love you anyway.” I whisper to him across the dark.

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**ITALY WRITES 2014 WINNERS EXCERPTS**

2nd Place, Fiction: Orazio Argentero with Professors Dews and Keenan

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**SCENE 4**

**THE HILL/THE MAN/LYSOL BARS**

The sun was rising and the boys were walking/headed towards the hill.

There was this man raised by wolves/dogs. He killed dogs, humans and other hopeless lives. He studied chemistry. He had the gift of scientific knowledge, one of his victims had helped him to understand it. He made poisons and weapons and he worked with bad guys. He cooked FOUR lysol bars not so long ago. He does
it for the money. Money is evil ‘cuz it lets dumb people ruin themselves.

He gave the boys the bars, and took their money, then he turned on his television and asked his wife to cook him dinner.

SCENE 444

Joshua kills-Marcus dies-Beck kills

WANKIEL

Papa shouting, mama crying. Wankiel held his lysol bar then he ran out of the window. No one was following him. He was crying, he knew he was a coward. He stopped near a lake, then he took off his clothes and fell in the lake. He was now in the lake with many meaningless mutated lives.

That last week the boys decided to kill their parents with the lysol bars, to effectively reach a status of existential misery that would have allowed them to start feeling really fucked up and like experienced guys.

... (anonymous guy)***: -What about your actual boyfriend?
Wankiel’s girlfriend: -Why are you asking?
(anonymous guy)***: -He could be a good person.-
Wankiel’s girlfriend: -He’s kinda shy…-

... Came out of the lake feeling multiple annoying and meaningless mutations. That’s what the world is doomed to be: mutated existence, water with no life… Mutated though not necessarily beautiful and not necessarily useful. No one has real hope of becoming anything. There is always place for an artist to observe, reproduce, but not to grow up. No artist can grow here. Desolation and misery is the new achievement that men can reach.

Wankiel raised his eyes to the skies trying to let them be as bright as the fake stars up there. A creature came out of the lake, it died releasing a powerful poison. Wankiel died without suffering.

He could see the obelisk again.

Simone Crinò
"Much Ado About Laughing"
3rd Place, Fiction

Gioialessa is an anonymous, uncoloured small town in Central Italy. Its buildings are grey, ugly, tall and oppressive. The only green space is a little dirty park with two leafless trees. Very close to the town there is an industrial area, whose smokes cover the sky with a dark gray tone. This environment reflects on the inhabitants’ behaviour and on their temper. They are always in a hurry and nervous.

Today, as usual, everybody in the Trenti family got up on the wrong side of the bed. Luca, the father, is bad-tempered because he has a lot of things to do at work today. Maria, the mother, is angry with her two children because they are late for school and Tommaso, the smaller one, has just split the milk. During breakfast Luca turns on the TV to watch the local news. The speaker with a funny hilarious face announces a last-minute piece of news bursting out laughing. With tears in his eyes he says: “A few minutes ago, in the industrial area, a factory of nitrous oxide, also called laughing gas, exploded. Luckily no one was injured in the explosion. A cloud of gas is coming out from the factory and scientists say that it’s not dense enough to cause health problems. The only effect it might cause is making people laugh without reason.”

Hearing this piece of news and watching the journalist’s face Tommaso begins to laugh: “It’s true, I feel like laughing” he says. After him everyone else starts laughing and so they forget their bad mood. The unexpected cheerfulness makes them more ready to face this day and each of them goes out chuckling. In the meantime, nearby, in a car, the radio reporter, amid the laughter, is telling the same piece of news. The driver, Vincenzo, can’t help laughing himself, so, getting distracted, he bumps into another car. He gets out still laughing while the driver of the other vehicle comes out very angry: “Sorry but I can’t help it - says Vincenzo - I think it is due to the cloud of laughing gas that is arriving on the town from the exploded factory”. The other man, who hasn’t heard the news, looks at him puzzled but, infected by his laughter, he progressively starts smiling and, eventually, he bursts out laughing, too. They
see that the collision has caused only minor bruises and the peculiar position in which the cars got stuck makes their laughter even louder. So, shaking hands, they go and take a coffee together.

On the sidewalk of the same street is walking Paolo, who didn’t sleep tonight. Yesterday his last girlfriend left him, he doesn’t have a job and he is convinced that this life is meaningless. So now he has decided to put an end to his life and to throw himself from a bridge.

While walking lost in his thoughts he sees the two cars colliding and this gives him more evidence that this dangerous life is worthless living. But then he sees the men involved in it laughing and patting each other’s shoulders, struck by that infectious laugh, he starts laughing in his turn and decides to give himself another possibility.

This has been a wonderful day for everyone in town and for the Trenti family, too. They are having dinner together and are still laughing telling each other about their funny day. Luca turns on the TV to watch the news; the same speaker of the morning, with a red face telling he had passed all the day laughing, says: <<Scientists, after detailed analysis of the air, say that due to the strong wind the gas cloud dissolved in a few minutes and couldn’t possibly have affected anyone>>. The Trenti look at each other in amazement: << So, after all, it was not the gas!>> says Maria, and they all burst out laughing.

As at first the sad environment had reflected on the inhabitants’ temper, the general good mood, which is spreading through the people, causes the opposite process: the inhabitants’ temper reflects on the environment. The atmosphere of the town changes: people greet each other friendly and everybody is cheerful; some begin to paint their buildings with bright colours, other expose flowers and plants on their windows, making the town skyline more cheerful.

The Mayor, after a communal council, decides to make new gardens full of coloured flowers and to change the name of the town which becomes Gioiafulla.

WISHING YOU
A LOVELY
SUMMER VACATION!!

ITALY WRITES 2014 WINNERS EXCERPTS
Continued from page 6

We look forward to welcoming you to
Italy Reads 2014,
Ernest Hemingway’s
A Farewell to Arms.

See:
* Resources for Teachers
  (http://johncabot.libguides.com/ItalyReads)
* Italy Reads Calendar of Events
  this will be updated in September!

ITALY WRITES 2014 WINNERS EXCERPTS
Continued from page 6

Italy Reads from the high school student’s perspective: Giuliana Caiazzo at IMS "V. Gassman", Rome tells us: “One of my students is going to discuss her "Tesina" at "Esame di Maturità" about Jumpha Lahiri and "The Namesake" with the title "Vive la difference – Enjoy the difference" thanks to the work we did together and thanks to the idea of ITALY READS.”

Find out more about Italy Reads with our new video:
http://youtu.be/RGiVa8MPjZI
We invite you to share this with your colleagues!

This document and other resources for teachers and students is available at:
http://johncabot.libguides.com/ItalyReads