



Hi, folks. Welcome to the first edition of Baggetta_Ware Ramblings. Starting with this issue I'm going to include some little tidbits about teaching. Some will be tips I've picked up over 36 years of teaching English on the high school level. There will also be news of little discoveries I've made about advances in technology that will help teachers and students. I'll also include some anecdotes that might provide a chuckle for new and experienced teachers alike, and I'll keep you up to date on the workings of [Baggetta_Ware](#) and our latest offerings, including our monthly FREEWARE program. Feel free to write me with comments about the newsletter and the software along with suggestions you might have for new programs that will help making teaching a little bit easier.

HEADLINE: NEW TEACHER LEARNS A LESSON (c. 1970)

I was reading an article on student cheating the other day (yes – some of them do “fudge” when they get a chance), and it reminded me of an early experience I had as a second-year teacher. It's a bit amusing, but I thought it might illuminate a possible problem when giving exams and maybe you could use a good laugh at my expense.

I've always liked giving daily quizzes when my students were given reading assignments – kept them on their toes, I thought. As I walked around the room up and down the aisles administering a quiz one day I thought to myself how cunning I was. These kids knew I was going to test them daily, so they definitely would do the reading. (How naive was that?) And from what I had seen so far over the last week my plan was working.

Well, I liked to patrol the class while the kids were working and this session I was rounding the front of the second row, and I noticed the girl in the front seat hovering over her test. Boy, I thought to myself, has this test got her thinking – look at that concentration. Poor kid must have been burning the midnight oil to make sure she passed this one.

I settled against my desk watching her, and she must have felt the vibes traveling through the air because she sheepishly looked up at me, still hugging the area around her test. The other kids were diligently working, so I quickly gave her a “hello” wave of my hand.

Must have caught her off guard because she held up her left hand (the one without the pencil) and with a windshield wiper movement waved back at me. Suddenly she went pale because she understood that her wave was showing all of the answers to the quiz -- imprinted on her palm. She quickly realized her mistake and plopped her hand down on the desk – drawing the attention of the whole class and Baggetta.

I had already caught her dead to right, but I asked to see her hand more closely. Reluctantly she showed it to me (this was before students got all those rights), and I was amazed that she had all of the correct answers, in the exact order I had them on the test.

When I asked her how she knew what questions I would ask in the exact order, her reply was that a friend of hers in my previous class gave them to her,

from a list she had made while taking the test. Then they put their heads together to come up with the correct answers.

My first thoughts were *that's nonsense*. *No student is going to take the time to write down all the answers to a test, probably fail it in the process, and then give the answers to her friend so she can get a 100%*. Wrong -- turns out, as the girl innocently explained, that she would return the favor at another time in a similar fashion.

So, I learned two lessons that morning that I've followed continually from then on: It's a good idea to give quizzes daily to consecutive classes, but **they will have to be different quizzes for each class** (a lot of work until I invented my literary test generators). **Watch your students very carefully when giving a quiz** – not for what they might be using so much as what they might be taking with them when they leave.

Multiple Test Generation On Demand

You might want to give our [literary and social studies test generators](#) a whirl. They allow you to generate many variations on a quiz, test or worksheet and the answer keys make correcting a breeze.

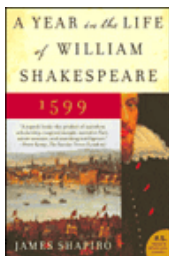
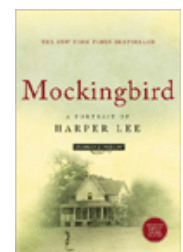
Speaking of Test Generators. We have another new Literary Test Generator available at Baggetta_Ware: [Jane Eyre Test Generator](#). This one is for Charlotte Brontë's popular classic *Jane Eyre*. When you get a chance you might want to take a look at it in more detail at our [website](#).

WRITERS ALMANAC

April was a popular month that generated a lot of great writers. The greatest of them all, of course, was **William Shakespeare** (b. April 23, 1564 – d. April 23, 1616 – what a coincidence). Also born in April: Danish fairy tale writer **Hans Christian Andersen** (b. April 2, 1805 -- d.1875), English romantic poet **William Wordsworth** (b. April 7, 1770), **Thomas Jefferson** (b. April 13, 1743), **Henry James** (b. 1843; d. 1916), **Daniel Defoe** (b. April 24, 1659 -- d.1731), (Nelle) **Harper Lee** (b. April 28, 1926), John Crowe Ransom (b. April 30, 1888; d.1974)

Books of Interest

I mentioned in the bar above that Harper Lee was born in April and there is a new book out about this mysterious writer. The title is [Mockingbird](#) and the author is Charles Shields. If you teach the book *To Kill a Mockingbird* in your classes, you'll want to take a look at this work. It's one of the very few books that really delve into the life of the author and points out many of the origins of the events that take place in the work of fiction.



William Shakespeare was also born in April, and there is another fascinating read (and rather short as Shakespeare biographies go) by James Shapiro. The title is [A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare](#). Shapiro does an excellent job of presenting the important year 1599 in the life of The Bard. The

text itself was quite interesting, but it is enhanced with several additions at the end of the book: About the Author, About the Book, and Read On – all give interesting insight to the work and the author. You can pick this book up in paperback and use it as a handy reference to Shakespeare's most popular plays. It's even available as an [audio book](#) you can run on your computer or CD player.

New Windows FREEWARE now available for April

My FREEWARE program this month is a handy little device I invented to cure a common problem in my classes. Many times when studying writers and their works of literature I found it beneficial to have students do some group research and reporting. This was always fun, and it cut down my correcting load by tons, especially if most of the work was presented orally. If you haven't yet tried it, give it a whirl. I'm sure you'll be doing much more of it. All you need is a good rubric for grading and you're off and running. We've posted [two free generic rubrics at our site](#) if you'd like to check them out.

Fine, Baggetta, but let's get back on track. Okay. I always encountered a problem when organizing groups. John didn't want to work with Eddie because they didn't get along. Mary didn't want to work with Elizabeth and Francie because they were part of a clique that she didn't belong to. Mrs. Gildflap contacted me after the last grouping and made it very clear that her son Portnoise was not to be grouped with Philip because this young man has no ambition and would only pull Porty down with him – although I think Porty was doing a good enough job of pulling himself down already.

I tried to be fair when I selected groups, but there was always the suggestion that I was favoring someone, insensitive to dire needs, unaware of social standings, and completely unable to apply the *group method* because there was so much diversity in the world, and I would only be hurting someone's self-esteem. Go figure.

One day when I was mulling over this predicament I thought that it would be great if there was a computer program that would decide randomly who would be in whose group. It would make the decisions completely unencumbered by acquaintances, intelligence, and social standings – everybody was equal by computer standards -- and I would be almost out of the picture.

I found that there were computer programs that did this very deed, but they were rather expensive and time-consuming to learn. So, I dusted off my Visual Basic programming suite and put together **Group Mixer** (now developed as **Group Mixer2** and offered as freeware).

I used it quite a few times when I was teaching, and while it did not resolve all of the emotional connections involved with grouping, it did eliminate a lot of the pressure of making group selections. You'll have to make up the project and rubric yourself, but I offer this simple program here for you to use, and I hope you find it a handy tool in your arsenal of educational software. [Click here to download the program directly to your Windows PC from our website](#) – scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the free program icon. Please let me

know how it goes with you and the program, if you use it in your classes.

Teachers Mentor and Earn Money With Their Lessons

The last issue of *NEA Journal* cited Paul Edelman's site *Teachers Pay Teachers* as a new way for teachers to connect with other teachers through lessons they offer. Teachers can sell their lesson plans (I know this sounds mercenary, but hey, teachers have to eat too), and they can also buy plans, tests, projects, etc. that they might need. This seems to me an interesting way of *mentoring both ways*: Experienced teachers get to pass on their legacy of knowledge and new teachers get to introduce new ideas to the older generation of teachers. Seems like a win-win situation to me. If you haven't visited [Teachers Pay Teachers](#) yet, take a look. You might find it educational.

GREAT NEWS – BAGGETTA_WARE PRODUCTS NOW DOWNLOAD IMMEDIATELY TO YOUR WINDOWS PC.

Many of our customers have been asking for immediate download availability when they order from our site. Well, until now if you ordered after 10 PM EST you probably had to wait until the next morning (since I usually turned in about that time). You could order throughout the night, as many did, but the download link would not arrive until the next morning. WELL WAIT NO MORE. Now when you order a program using PayPal (or your credit card) you will be able to DOWNLOAD IMMEDIATELY to your Windows PC. No more waiting. This means you can get right to using our great products as fast as your machine will let you. When you order, simply pay for the item through Pay Pal (using your account or credit card). When the process is finished you will see a link that says **RETURN TO MERCHANT** or **RETURN TO BAGGETTA_WARE**. Click this link and you will be taken to a download page from where you will be able to download the product you purchased. You no longer have to wait for Baggetta to roll out of bed. If you encounter any problems (which you shouldn't) please send me an email and I'll get back to you as soon as possible.

NEWS FROM BAGGETTA_WARE

Unfortunately, due to the complex nature of Windows Pocket PC development, we will no longer be programming for these devices, and we will be dropping all of our current line so that we can concentrate on developing software for Windows PC. We will still offer support however for anything you have purchased in the past.

TWO BONUS FREE DOWNLOADS AVAILABLE THIS MONTH

If you'd like to add some excitement to your next boring faculty or in-service meeting download our [TEACHER INSERVICE LINGO](#) card printer. Instructions are included with the download. You and your fellow faculty members will love it.

Also if you'd like a free copy of our pass printing and tracking database program called [PASSTRACKER LITE](#), just recommend our site to a friend and you will be able to download this unique program right to your machine.

If you need a test quickly you can now find many assorted literature tests ready made and available for most word processors. Check out our new [Literary Exams Page](#) to see the current selection of tests available.

We have also released [Interactive Mice and Men](#) as a compliment to our popular [Mice and Men Test Generator](#). You can check this great program which can be used as an on-screen test or study guide in your classes or in your computer lab. While visiting us, check out all of our other [Interactive Reading Programs](#).

We had to do a fix on the [Huckleberry Finn Test Generator](#) – Question 3 was ambiguous, but it has now been straightened out. If you are a current user of the program and would like the free upgrade of the program, please contact us at abaggetta@comcast.net telling us when and where you purchased the program and we will send the new download link.

Visit our website and check out our new [Butterfly buttons](#). I took this picture last summer and thought it would make a good inaugural for the spring and summer months. Clicking on these will lead you to our pages on Interactive Reading Software, Classroom Management Software, Literary Exams, and much more.

Well that's about it for now. We hope you like our new Ramblings and we hope to visit you again next month with more features. Please send us an email letting us know what you think of our new format and if you have any suggestions to make this newsletter more useful.

Best
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