

Muse Project

Batch # 2

15 Brod Bagert Poems

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The Separation of Powers

or

Checks and Balances

by Brod Bagert

Power is a tricky thing,
so if you do not want a king,
one bossy guy who wears a crown,
just spread the power all around.
Checks and balances! Hip-Hurray!
Yes, that's what keeps the kings away.

SS.1.21
PRIMARY

Note: In 1887 Lord Acton, an English historian, made the following now famous statement in a letter to a friend: “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” So the “separation of powers” is all about “spreading power all around” so we don’t end up with a tyrant. So the next poem, “Three Branches,” explains how the U.S. Constitution spreads the power around by creating three separate branches of government.

Three Branches

Articles One, Two, and Three
The Constitution of the United States of America
by Brod Bagert

ARTICLE ONE? THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH?

Please-oh-please, don't scream and shout,
we'll ask them what it's all about.

Dear representatives, senators too,
could you please tell us what you do?

*We make the laws, it's such a fuss,
we make the laws that govern us.*

Article One! Yes-siree!

The Capitol's the place to be!

ARTICLE TWO? THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH?

He's very nice, he's not a snob,
Let's ask him how he likes his job.

Dear Mr. President, how 'bout you,
Could you please tell us what you do?

*I'm always working on the run
cause I'm the chief, the number one.*

Article Two! Yes-siree!

The White House is the place to be!

ARTICLE THREE? THE JUDICIAL BRANCH?

Judges, lawyers, bailiffs, clerks,
just ask them how the system works.

They call you "Judge," that much is true,
but what do judges really do?

*Those tricky laws can make you scream,
so we say what they really mean.*

Article Three! Yes-siree!

The courtroom is the place to be!

Just like the branches of a tree—

Article One and Two and Three.

SEPARATE POWERS! SHOUT IT OUT!

THAT'S WHAT FREEDOM'S ALL ABOUT!

SS.2.22

PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE

Critical Thinking Opportunity (Next Two Poems):

The next two poems (or two pairs of poems) are from *The Poet and the Professor: Grade 5th* (2010 Shell Education). They were written by me, Brod, in the voices of Timothy Hickman and Jimarcus Jones, both of whom are fictional fifth-grade poets. The poems are part of an ongoing debate between these two classmates.

The first pair of poems, *Exploration Infestation/Prince Henry the Navigator-Dude*, is written in the voice of Timothy Hickman. Tim is a skeptical kid who grows up to become an investigative reporter, and who tends to see only the dark side of history.

The second pair of poems, *Good or Bad?/Good Guys*, is written in the voice of Jimarcus Jones, a more flexible personality who grows up to become an arbitrator, who sees the moral questions of history in shades of gray.

So how can you use this in your classroom as a model for the richer, deeper, more critical kinds of thinking that make history both more interesting to learn and more valuable to the know? I have several thoughts as to how they might be used, but I'm much more interested in your ideas. So, if you decide to give it a shot, please let me know what you did and how it worked.

This might also be a good time to introduce for discussion the second, less well-known, and more controversial part of Lord Acton's statement. "*Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. **Great men are almost always bad men.***" Can this be true?

Exploration Infestation

History makes more sense
if you look beyond the text
to find the force that helps explain
the things that happen next.

So I learned about the explorers,
and right there from the start,
I had a kind of strange idea
that crept into my heart.

Was all that exploration
a kind of noble deed?
Or were they just a bunch of guys
whose hearts were full of greed?

Which is when I started worrying,
hour after hour,
this nagging doubt... that it's all about
our lust for wealth and power.

Prince Henry the Navigator- Dude

**In the Voice of Timothy Hickman—5th Grade Cynic
by Brod Bagert**

If you grow up in Portugal next to the sea,
a sailor is what you are likely to be.
But a ship on the sea is no place for a fool,
which is why ole Prince Henry established a school.

It taught navigation, by sun and by star,
a skill to help sailors compute where they are.
And sailing the sea is a very long trip
so Prince Henry developed a new kind of ship.

"The caravel! Yes!" they all shouted with glee,
"All the places we'll go! All the things we will see!
All the money we'll make! All the oceans we'll cross!
We can search for new trade routes and never get lost!"

They made lots of maps as they sailed all the seas
and infested the earth like a dog full of fleas.
And what was behind this great traveling itch—
the people of Portugal yearned to be rich.

*SS.2.23
INTERMEDIATE & MIDDLE*

Good or Bad?

I don't think all of history
is a tale of human greed.
Sometimes the tale is driven
by a deeper human need.

Like the artists — some are wealthy,
but there aren't very many,
and most of them work day and night
and never earn a penny.

And sometimes it may seem as though
our world is going wild,
but lots of people give their lives
to rear a single child.

So yes, I bravely face the truth
as every student should,
but even in an ugly truth
I find a little of good.

Good Guys

**In the Voice of Jimarcus Jones—5th Grade Philosopher
by Brod Bagert**

They're in almost every movie,
we see them more and more,
the power-hungry bad guy
who is evil to the core.

And they also have a good guy
who will fill us with delight
as he fights for truth and justice
in a struggle for what's right.

But history's not a movie,
it's the tale of humankind,
and in history perfect good guys
can be very hard to find.

Cause instead of perfect heroes
who do everything they should,
what we find is normal people
who are trying to be good.

*SS.2.2.4
INTERMEDIATE & MIDDLE*

Critical Thinking Opportunity (Next Two Poems):

The next two poems (or two pairs of poems) are again from *The Poet and the Professor: Grade 5th*, and again are were written by me, Brod, in the voices of Timothy Hickman and Jimarcus Jones, two of my fictional fifth-grade poets. The poems are a continuation of their ongoing debate.

In *Truth Sleuth/History, Poetic License, and the Midnight Ride of Dr. Samuel Prescott*, ardently-skeptical Timothy Hickman does a tongue-in-cheek parody of the Longfellow poem depicting Paul Revere as the messenger-hero of Lexington and Concord.

Jimarcus Jones responds with *Figurative Truth/A Big Legend*, in which he demonstrates that while figurative language may not literally true, it often can communicate a universal truth more accurately than a simple statement of facts.

So how can you use this in your classroom as a model for the richer, deeper, more critical kinds of thinking that make history both more interesting to learn and more valuable to the know? Please let me know what you do with this and how it worked.

Truth Sleuth

When you look for truth in history
the search is hard and long,
cause lots of things in history books
are absolutely wrong.

And even in a history poem,
this may seem impolite,
but that Longfellow poem about Paul Revere's Ride?
It's not exactly right.

History, Poetic License, and The Midnight Ride of Dr. Samuel Prescott

**In the Voice of Timothy Hickman—5th Grade Cynic
by Brod Bagert**

Listen my children and you shall hear
the truth about ole Paul Revere,
cause it's sad to say, but the poet lied
when he wrote about Paul's midnight ride.

There were no hooves of steel
striking sparks along the way,
for the British captured Paul
and they took his horse away.

And the guy who did the ride
was a doctor name of "Sam,"
so why would a poet want
to perpetrate a scam?

Well poets aren't bad,
and poets aren't lazy,
but writing rhymes with English words
can drive a poet crazy.

And "Prescott" doesn't rhyme with "hear,"
that's why the poet used "Revere."
So, is it such an awful crime
to bend the truth to make a rhyme?

*SS.2.25
INTERMEDIATE & MIDDLE*

Figurative Truth

The search for truth is tricky,
sometimes you just need to relax,
cause sometimes you might miss the truth
if all you can see are the facts.

A BIG Legend

In the Voice of Jimarcus Jones—5th Grade Philosopher
by Brod Bagert

I could hardly believe my ears.
I had no idea what to do.
“When they say it’s only a legend,” I asked,
“Does that mean it isn’t true?”
“Paul Bunyan never existed?
But how can that possibly be?
No pancakes the size of mattresses?
No bacon the size of a tree?
“No big blue ox named Babe?”
I was almost starting to cry.
“It’s my favorite story ever,
and it’s all a big fat lie!”
“Truth can be tricky,” my teacher said.
“Consider this point of view—
often the facts can be make-believe
in a story that’s totally true.
“Paul was the spirit of a big new land—
big trees, big mountains, big streams—
and the very real people who traveled so far
to follow their very big dreams.”
It was one of my favorite stories,
I believed it to the letter,
but now that I know what it really means,
and I like it even better.

SS.2.26
INTERMEDIATE & MIDDLE

The Shogun, the Shinto Priest, the Emperor, and Me

by Brod Bagert

I was worried about Ms. Guempel's test on Feudal Japan,
which if I don't pass I am no longer a cheerleader,
so last night I studied like crazy.
Then, when I was brushing my teeth for bed,
I started thinking about Woody Hill and Shavan Williams.
Woody's the best seventh-grade quarterback in the history of football,
Shavan is an amazing guitarist,
and they're both totally hot.
So I get in bed, close my eyes, and the dream machine kicks it.

Woody Hill is dressed in full Shogun armor
standing in front of ten Samurai warriors
who look like the guys on the football team.
And when I look around I see that the room is full of feudal Lords
each surrounded by his own football team of Samurai warriors,
all singing and dancing like guys in a Broadway play:

Bushido! The Way of the Warrior-Knight!

Our Samurai armor will give you a fright.

Our Lord is the BOSS! Our Lord is the MAN!

We fight to protect him, he gives us some land.

And then I realize that the Emperor is sitting behind me,
and in the dream the Emperor is my father,
and he's about to promise me in marriage to Shogun Woody
who's looking at me with his incredible green eyes.

And just as I'm about to swoon into his arms
in comes a long line of commoners—
farmers and workers and servants.

And the last in line is a guy in white robes with a weird black hat
and a small wooden plank in his hand like a scepter,
and from history class I know he's a Shinto priest,
and as he gets closer his scepter turns into a guitar,
and I can see that it's Shavan Williams,
and he starts singing to me.

*As the farmer grows wheat and rice from the land,
you are my woman... and I am your man.*

(Don't laugh. It's a dream.)

Then he looks at me with those bottomless black eyes,
hands me this origami dove
with the words "True Love" written in calligraphy,
and just as I'm about to swoon into his arms,
I hear a cheer coming out of the Emperor's mouth in my father's voice:

Zen Buddhists! You and me!

Inner-peace will set you free!

Self-control is not a crock!

Best be home by ten o'clock!

And before I can say, "Daddy! You're embarrassing me!"

I wake up, it's Friday morning,
and Ms. Guempel's exam on Feudal Japan
is less than two hours away,
but I fell in love twice in Feudal Japan,
and DUDE! I'm getting an A!

SS.3.17

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

Simple Machines

The following seven poems function as a group to introduce the concept of simple machines. The first six are about the six different kinds of simple machines. The seventh is a poem about the power of the human brain, which, after all, is how we devised these machines and is the true source of the power.

You might tell your students that...

Simple machines have been around for a long time. The ancient Egyptians built giant pyramids with simple machines. Someday you'll study physics and you'll get to learn a lot more about simple machines.

You'll learn formulas like "*Work = Force + Time*." You'll learn terms like "*Mechanical Advantage*" which is "*the ratio of the input force to the output force*." You'll learn about "*Vectors*." And you'll learn the mathematics that makes it all so easy to understand. All this stuff is what they call "*Mechanics*" and it's the part of physics that "*mechanical engineers*" know a lot about.

But one step at a time. For now, just have fun with these poems and learn the names of the simple machines. And remember, your brain is the most powerful machine of all.

-1-

Monster Lever

by Brod Bagert

Monster lever, big or small,
makes me strongest of them all.
Lever! Lever! Fulcrum too!
Watch and see what I can do.
Watch me push this lever down
and lift that load right off the ground.
MONSTER LEVER! BIG OR SMALL!
MAKES ME STRONGEST OF THEM ALL!

SC.2.27
PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE

-2-

Wonder Wheel

by Brod Bagert

Wheel and axel, hip-hurray,
watch me move this load away.
 A hundred pounds on top a wheel
 and oh the strength I start to feel.
 A little push and there it goes,
 just please don't roll it on your toes.
WHEEL AND AXEL! HIP-HURRAY!
WATCH ME MOVE THIS LOAD AWAY!

SC.2.28
PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE

-3-

Incredible Incline Plane

by Brod Bagert

The incline plane, I can't go wrong,
the angle makes me very strong.
 I'll lift that load, don't say I can't,
 I'll use the power of a slant,
 then I won't even have to strain
 to push it up my incline plane.
INCLINE PLANE! CAN'T GO WRONG!
MAKES ME VERY-VERY STRONG!

SC.2.29
PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE

-4-

Power Pulley

by Brod Bagert

I love this pulley, yes-siree,
it makes me strong as I can be.
 A little wheel, a piece of rope,
 and how my heart fills up with hope,
 as down I pull without despair
 and lift that load into the air.
PULLEY! PULLEY! YES-SIREE!
IT MAKES ME STRONG AS I CAN BE.

SC.2.30
PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE

-5-

Two-Faced Wedge

by Brod Bagert

Two-faced wedge, right or wrong,
it makes me very, very strong.

A wedge can split a thing in two,
just hit one end, it's really true.

But then it changes like the weather
pressing different things together.

TWO-FACED WEDGES! RIGHT OR WRONG!
WEDGES MAKE ME VERY STRONG!

SC.2.31

PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE

-6-

Inscrutable Screw

by Brod Bagert

Super, super, super screw,
how do you do the things you do?

I don't know how you make me strong,
I'd guess but then I might be wrong,
I'll learn someday, I'm going to try,
some day I'll learn the reason why.

SUPER! SUPER! SUPER SCREW!
HOW DO YOU DO THE THINGS YOU DO?

SC.2.32

PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE

Note:

"Inscrutable" is a word that means mysterious. I used it in this poem because I like the way it makes my mouth feel when I repeat the "scr" sound in two words right next to each other. Say it out loud and notice how it feels: "In**scr**utable **scr**ew." Say it a few more times, "inscrutable" will become a permanent part of your vocabulary. Building your vocabulary is like collecting really cool stuff, only better because when a word becomes yours you get to use it for the rest of your life, and no one can ever take it away. a pretty cool metaphor. I think I need to write a poem about that. By the way, inscrutable come from two Latin words: "in" which in this case means "not," and "scrutare" which means to "examine."

-7-

Brain Power Machine

by Brod Bagert

It works at an amazing speed
to gobble up the things I read.

Thinking hour after hour,
thinking is what gives me power.

Cotton candy? Sugar cane?

There's nothing like the human brain.

I may not be a king or queen,
but I have got a brain machine.

BRAIN! POWER! MACHINE!

SC.2.33

PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE

Note: This poem came out of a request from a North Carolina teacher who told me that her third graders regularly visit an assisted living home and wanted a poem for them to recite to the residents.

Passing It On

by Brod Bagert

When you were little like me, and your life had just begun,
did you like to go outside and play and have a lot of fun?
Did you challenge the wind to a foot race?
Was it hard to be polite?
Did you laugh the sun on its path by day
and whisper the stars at night?
When you were little like me did you like to dance and sing
and live each day like the string of days was a never ending thing?
When you were little like me.

I came today to see you, to give your spirits a lift,
but I also came to get from you a very special gift.
I came to ask your permission, to ask you face to face
to say it's okay to try to make the world a better place.
I know it might sound funny, it might sound a little strange,
but I need to hear you say it's okay to think the world can change.
And then you can give me the hopes you hoped and the dreams you used
to cherish,
and I'll promise to hold them in my heart and never let them perish.

Then, when my bones are achy and old and my eyes are squinting to see,
I'll search all around until I have found another child like me.
a child who'll hold fast to this bundle of hope, this gift which together we
give,
so that neither of us will ever be gone while hopes and dreams still live.


*CD.2.34
PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE*

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Thus done this 20th day of May, 2012,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brod Bagert", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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