

# WRITERS BLOC

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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## WELCOME BACK

Welcome back, everyone! We hope your winter break was relaxing and inspiring. As we dive into this new semester, we invite you to share your voices with us. Send in your reviews, opinions, creative writing, and photographs! This semester, we'll be celebrating a number of special events, including National Pet Day, National Poetry Month, and International Scribble Day. And don't miss what has become a favorite feature, the Weird Question of the Week. We'll be inviting you to join the fun and share your thoughts. Please direct your writing, suggestions, and questions to the editor: melissa.gish@glenville.edu. Here's to a great semester!



### SEND WRITERS BLOC SUBMISSIONS TO

melissa.gish@glenville.edu

Views expressed in the *Writers Bloc* are not necessarily the views of GSU.

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[www.glenville.edu/departments/language-literature](http://www.glenville.edu/departments/language-literature)

Banner photo by Jason Gum

## A BUSY SPRING AHEAD

**Writers Bloc** welcomes everyone back for spring semester. The Department of Language and Literature has got a variety of exciting activities and events planned, and we hope you'll join us for all of them.



The **Little Kanawha Reading Series** will host three guest readers. All readings are held in the Robert F. Kidd Library on the GSU campus starting at 4:00 p.m.

**Robert Tinnell** will be featured on **Wednesday, February 11**. A native of Marion County, West Virginia, Robert Tinnell is a writer, director, and producer. He recently adapted his Eisner Award-nominated graphic novel *Feast of the Seven Fishes* into a feature film.

**Ace Boggess** will join us on **Thursday, March 19**. A resident of Charleston, West Virginia, he is the author of several poetry collections, including his most recent *Tell Us How to Live* (Fernwood, 2025), as well as two novels.

**Davis Shoulders** will be our guest on **Thursday, April 9**. A director and the owner of Atlas Books in Johnson City, Tennessee, Shoulders is the editor of the book *Queer Communion: Religion in Appalachia*, a collection of twelve essays, poems, and stories that follows and fractures the expectations surrounding LGBTQIA+ Appalachians and their religious beliefs.

GSU's **Little Kanawha Theater and Drama Club** will present two stage plays:

John Carani's ***Love/Sick***, with performances on **February 26 and 27** and William Shakespeare's ***Macbeth***, with performances on **April 30 and May 1**. All performances will be held in the President's Auditorium at 7:00 p.m.

**AUDITIONS** for both plays will be held 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on **Tuesday, January 20, & Wednesday, January 21**, in the President's Auditorium. Students, faculty, staff, and community members are invited to audition. Non-acting assistance with sets, lighting, and other aspects of the production is also needed. If you'd like to be part of theater magic, please come to the auditions or contact [Jennifer.Wenner@glenville.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Wenner@glenville.edu).

The **Trillium** is GSU's literary arts journal. With guidance from the Department of Language and Literature, GSU students have edited and produced issues of the *Trillium* annually since 1979. The *Trillium* is not just for writers. It also includes art, and its student art editors are from the Fine Arts Department. The **Trillium Art Show** will open on **Monday, February 23**, in the Spears Art Gallery in the Fine Arts Building. It will feature works from the 2026 issue.

The RFK Library has provided a welcoming space for the **Trillium Reading** over the years. This year, we will launch the new issue with a reading tentatively scheduled for **Wednesday, April 15**. A confirmed date and more details on the event coming soon. Faculty advisor Dr. Jonathan Minton notes, "The *Trillium* is an important part of GSU for several reasons. For one, it gives our students, staff, faculty, and community a space to voice and showcase their creative expression, and it gives our student editorial staff some practical, hands-on experience in terms of editing, design, and collaboration."



## DARKNESS AND HOPE IN MUSIC AND MCU

Contributed by Emmy Clickenger, Psychology Major

I watched a music video of The Animals singing “House of the Rising Sun” on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1964. It reminded me of Jeremy Renner in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Stay with me here—it might seem like a wild connection, but hear me out. They both have this heavy feeling of sadness, but also the idea that things can get better.

When I watch The Animals video, I can just feel the pain in the lead singer’s voice and in the band’s faces. It’s like they’re totally stuck and full of regret. Now, think about Jeremy Renner as Hawkeye. Underneath the heroics, there’s a feeling of loss and burden that you can especially see in the miniseries *Hawkeye* (2021), whether it’s from the loss of Natasha Romanoff or the dark path he walks as Ronin. Renner truly makes you see how much Hawkeye is hurting. It’s like both the song and Renner’s portrayal tap into a sense of struggle and inner conflict.

What really connects them farther is the subtle thread of hope that you can feel as the song progresses. “House of the Rising Sun” is a cautionary tale. We can see this in the lyric, “Oh, mother, tell your children not to do what I have done.” However, I also get the feeling of hope. Like the feeling of breaking free from a cycle. In the song, it is cautionary, but it also feels like the singer is seeking forgiveness from the things he has done, similar to Hawkeye. Hawkeye’s journey in the MCU is all about finding his way back from the brink, seeking forgiveness, protecting his family, and mourning the loss of certain loved ones. So, while one is a haunting folk song and the other is a superhero saga, both “The House of the Rising Sun” and Jeremy Renner’s Hawkeye have the idea that even in the darkest times, there is hope for a better future.

You can watch The Animals video here:

[https://youtu.be/N4bFqW\\_eu2I?si=Ybdw0kRsqh4N3JcK](https://youtu.be/N4bFqW_eu2I?si=Ybdw0kRsqh4N3JcK)

And watch the miniseries *Hawkeye* on Disney+

### January Mist

Sometimes at night I hear small birds lament.  
Dark notes that seem to second moon’s descent.  
Cold is the color of a deep regret,  
An etude perfected by winterset.

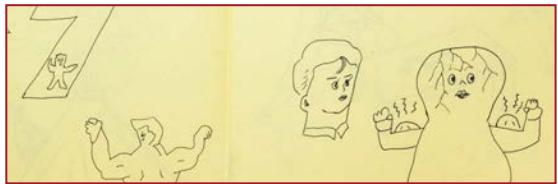
The world was music and it turned us round.  
Stirred by the subtle atmospheric sound,  
You gently sketched a snowflake on my face  
Which shall be mine till light has left this place.

Such solace has the power to outlast time,  
To lock a small bird’s elegy in rhyme.  
Somewhere beyond the January mist,  
The magic of our landscape still exists.

— Sarah Fowler

## SPIRIT IS WHAT MATTERS

Contributed by Elizabeth Oldaker, BA Undeclared



An article by Erik Winkowski called “Bad-Nice: The Art of Heta-Uma” is about a style of art that began a movement in the 1970s. This art style is messy and free. You do not have to stress about perfection because this style celebrates imperfection and creativity. In the article Winkowski states, “Drawing is fun, but putting too much emphasis on technical skill can drain the spirit from your art, and that spirit is the most important part.” The main thing I learned from this article is to not worry about everything being perfect all the time and do not let yourself change the way you do things for the convenience of others. I am a big crafter. I love making little pieces of art and picking up new hobbies, but I almost always find myself worrying if other people will like the things I make or if they will be able to see my vision of what the art is. Is this just my anxiety? Yes. Nonetheless, this is a terrible way to look at things. It ruins my mood and makes the process of making the crafts not as fun adding a not needed stress to it. This article is all about letting those feelings go and just going with the flow. Do what you love because you love it. Make what you want to make even if it is a little crazy or messy. Who cares what people think. The only approval that matters is your own, express yourself and do what makes YOU happy.

Read the article here:

<https://erikwinkowski.substack.com/p/bad-nice-the-art-of-heta-uma>

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# THE ATOM, THE MOON, AND MATH: IN PRAISE OF THE SLIDE RULE

Contributed by Ari White, Alumnus, Regents Bachelor of Arts, 2025

Five years ago, as my mother and I were being shown the house my family would subsequently purchase, I saw a book on a bookshelf. It was a small paperback volume on how to use a slide rule. Aside from briefly thinking that it sounded interesting, I did not think much of it at the time. A year later, after we had moved in, I slipped it into the room that would become my office, planning on studying it later. My mother passed suddenly seven days after we completed the move. In my grief and needing a distraction, I ordered the slide rule the book required, a Post 1447, and set about teaching myself.

In the years since I graduated high school I have used more math than the average high school graduate. Algebra and trigonometry factored into my work quite often. Still, it was not until I learned how to use a slide rule that I understood logarithms. As I learned more, I began to understand more about advanced scales, the simplicity of the ST scale merging the S and T scales below 4.7° and the clever shortcuts of LL scales for using Euler's number to work with exponents, and came to realize that learning the slide rule was teaching me math in a way I had never before understood it.

I acquired more advanced slide rules and began carrying a small pocket watch style slide rule to do math when working in the field, under the bright sun that makes using the calculator on a smartphone so painful. Over the following years, I came to a profound realization. Something was lost when the slide rule was removed from the classroom. I believe that the slide rule remains relevant and has a place in education.

Slide rules teach math in a spatially intuitive way. The human mind is well-equipped to think in spatial ways. It is no accident that adjectives such as high and low, big and small, are used to describe quantity. More telling is how the human mind tends to think along logarithmic lines. Quick estimations of quantity of several groups rely not on an absolute grasp of the magnitude of quantity but on logarithmic scales. Logarithms also show up in everything from psychoacoustics to color perception. The most basic scales of a slide rule, the C and D scales used for multiplication and division, rely on the fact that  $\log(x) + \log(y) = \log(x \cdot y)$ . While it is initially disorienting for a person who has spent a lifetime looking at linear scales to find their place on a logarithmic scale, once that initial disorientation passes, the sight of the interactions between the scales gives a more meaningful insight into the math, a phenomenon that carries through on the advanced scales, as well. Scanning the scale for the answer, I do not see merely the answer, but a continuum of the possible answers of the many possible values of the multiplicand for the given multiple.

It was with this intuitive interface and continuum of analog possibilities that great works were wrought by our ancestors. I do not think it an accident that slide rules were brought to the Moon by astronauts, nor that it was slide rules that made the journey possible. It is telling that disastrous mistakes of orders of magnitude take place in the era of the digital calculator but were almost unheard of in the era of the slide rule. All calculations on a slide rule are in scientific notation, with the user tracking orders of magnitude in their mind for simple equations or tracking it on paper for the more complex.

Since learning the slide rule, even when I use a digital calculator it has become second nature to track orders of magnitude separately. This was how I caught a mistake I made when I was totaling delinquent receivables for the public service district on whose board I serve, by use of a habit I only gained from my experience with the slide rule. So, too, for aerospace engineers. Those who learned on the slide rule would

have habitually checked the scales of their answers. Those who learned on digital calculators, however, have been lulled into a false sense of security that has spelled the ignoble end to more than one mission of discovery. I can also see how the continuum of possibilities the slide rule presents as I pick out the answer would open an engineer using such a tool to other possibilities, especially the possibility that the question they are looking to solve might be wrong or, at least, sub-optimal.

The amount I learned from the intuitive nature of the slide rule and the realization that two centuries of the greatest advances in engineering the world has ever seen corresponded to the slide rule's ubiquity led me to believe that the slide rule has a place in the classroom of today. When I heard that the high school where my wife teaches science had reached 0% full proficiency in SAT mathematics, I felt a duty to take a math position there as soon as possible. I believe that literacy and numeracy are the two academic skills whose absence would most thoroughly stymie any attempt to learn later in life.

While the last few years playing with slide rules shaped a direction for how I had intended to teach my own children math, the dire situation at the high school made me consider how to employ this direction more generally. I found the last manufacturer of slide rules, a Japanese concern called Concise, and purchased one of their circular slide rules to study. While I am not prepared to completely abandon the modern bits of pedagogy that might prove beneficial to educating my future students, I cannot help but think that the evergreen and ever-unfulfilled promise of how something new will revolutionize education may serve only as a distraction from what is most important for an educator: inspiring students to see the value in their education.

Education does not happen in the classroom. It does not happen on smartboards or in books. Education happens between a student's ears. This was true in the days of chalk and slates and studying late by candlelight as much as it is true today. If I were to look at earlier forms of pedagogy, I ought look to those which were most effective at turning out numerate students. In each of those, the slide rule was hanging on the wall, in the students' hands, and, most critically, in their minds.

It was that small, innocuous book that set me down this path. Had it not been among the furnishings that came with this house, I would not have learned the slide rule, I would not have an adding machine partially disassembled on my work bench, and I never would have heard of the even earlier engine of computation, the calculating sector. In addition to these hobbies, I would not have returned to math with new eyes, open with the wonder of discovery. I would not have planned out this course for introducing the slide rule to my students as I essay the task of restoring effective math education in this country.

Humanity harnessed electricity, internal combustion, and the atom with the slide rule. Humanity traveled to the Moon with the slide rule. Humanity developed everything from radio to aeronautics with the slide rule. Even the digital age was ushered in with the slide rule. Yet, for how thoroughly digital calculators have displaced slide rules, as a tool of learning the latter still deserves a place in the classroom. I aim to see just how effective the slide rule might be in the hands and on the minds of my future students. Though I am a sample of but one, I am optimistic for its use in illuminating a difficult subject.

Aryeh White is currently teaching math at Calhoun Middle/High School. His desk is buried to an average depth of eight inches in a mix of student work, reference books, calculators, and, yes, slide rules.

# WEIRD QUESTION of the WEEK

As we launch into 2026, we thought we'd ask a question that imagines the year ahead: "If you were allowed only one snack food and no others for an entire year, what would you choose?"

## **Daniel De Quintal** - Business Major

"If I had to choose only one snack, it would have to be a mango. I absolutely love it, and I don't think that I would get tired of eating it even if it was all I could eat. Plus, it's healthy, so I wouldn't have to worry about that when I'm eating it."

## **David O'Dell** - Professor of Chemistry

"If I could have only one snack food for the year, I would easily choose buckeyes. Not the somewhat toxic fruit of the Ohio state tree, but rather the chocolate-covered ball of peanut butter that is made to resemble the seed in that fruit. Not only do chocolate and peanut butter make a tasty combination, but also the peanut butter provides plenty of protein so the snack could almost be viewed as a balanced meal."

## **Emmy Clickenger** - Psychology Major

"I would choose rice cakes. Rice cakes are low calories and you can dress them up to actually taste good. I usually eat them with yogurt, raspberries and chocolate chips and it makes it so good!"

## **Trinity Coltellino** - Integrated Marketing Major

"For a whole year, if I had to pick just one snack, my number one choice would be Hot Ruffle Chips. The strong, bold, spicy flavor in addition to its crunchy texture is what makes this the perfect snack food. Whenever I'm at home ready to go to bed, or need something fast when I need to leave, Hot Ruffles always meet my needs. Although the only option available would be the same chip all year long, I don't think I would ever get tired of how they taste."

## **Jennifer Wenner** - Senior Lecturer of Communications

"Salty. Probably Wavy Lays, maybe Wheat Thins."

## **Andrea Greathouse** - General Studies

"Definitely would have to go with the Original Cheez-Itz. They're literally so addictive, like I'll open a big box of them and finish it in one sitting."

## **Elizabeth Oldaker** - BA Undeclared

"If I could eat one snack for an entire year, I would pick trail mix, specifically the pack with M&Ms in it. To me it is a perfect snack, sweet and salty. What more could you want?"

## **Schuyler Chapman** - Associate Professor of English

"Sour Patch Kids for sure."

## **Alyssa Hall** - Field Forensics (CRJU) Major

"I would choose gummy sharks because one of my favorite animals besides a wolf would be a shark, and they are super easy to snack on and wouldn't hurt my teeth, and the flavor is like a blueberry mixed with a raspberry, in my opinion, and I really enjoyed them as a kid as a reward for good behavior, and I still enjoy them as a reward for myself for doing well on a college assignment and class."

## **Melody Wise** - Professor of English

"Ice cream."

## **Robert Woods** - Director of Student Support Services

"My answer would be chips and dip. I believe the variety of flavors currently on the market and new ones being released seemingly every other week can keep me snackified for quite some time."

## **Mike Vozniak** - Assistant Professor of English

"Chocolate chip cookies with pecans, from my great aunt's recipe."

## **Ashley Crook** - Early Education/Multi-Categorical SPED Major

"I think I would choose carrots because there are many ways you can make them like for example you can put brown sugar on them if you want a sweet treat or you can just eat them the way they are."

## **James Hinkle** - Health & PED (PreK-Adult) Major

"I would choose cereal as my snack. Cereal is a diverse snack, being able to be eaten dry or with milk. With so many different kinds it can be as healthy or unhealthy as you please. If I had to choose one kind, Frosted Flakes would be my pick!"

## **Brian Johnston** - Associate Professor of Communication

"Popcorn! (stove popped, non-GMO)."

## **Brett Coe** - Admin of Justice (CRJU)

"I would choose cookies; they are my favorite, and I could eat them all the time."

## **Mike Boehke** - Professor of Exercise Science

"If I were only allowed one snack for an entire year I'd choose popcorn. First, it's available at nearly every entertainment venue; theaters, concerts, sporting events, amusement parks, and sometimes even in front of Walmart. Second, and more importantly, it's completely customizable so you'll never get bored with it. Sure, traditional butter and salt is great, but you can also add so many other toppings that's probably in your pantry such as Tajin, Everything Bagel seasoning, Old Bay, garlic powder, cinnamon, taco seasoning, ranch seasoning, or parmesan cheese. From the grocery store, Kernel Seasons makes a variety of powdered toppings including nacho cheddar, bacon cheddar, cheesy jalapeno, white cheddar, ranch, and caramel."

For New Years or Superbowl parties my wife often makes a popcorn bar where guests can customize their popcorn with various goodies.

Some favorites include gummy bears, pretzels, chocolate chips, mini marshmallows, graham crackers, smashed Oreo cookies, broken up peanut butter cups or Butterfinger candy bars, and various cereals such as Cheerios, Chex, or Captain Crunch. You can also drizzle on chocolate or melted peanut butter or make caramel corn and add peanuts to have your own Cracker Jacks. There are literally thousands of options; I didn't even mention all that can be done with popcorn chicken!"



## **Kaitlyn West** - Business Major

"If I were to only allowed one snack food and no others for an entire year, I would choose dill pickles. They are my favorite thing to snack on. They have plenty of a variety of ways you can eat them as well, like baby whole pickles, chips, slices."

## **Paige Taylor** - Dual Enrollment

"I think my snack choice for an entire year would have to be chips. There are so many different kinds that you would never get sick of them."

## **Isabella Russell** - Dual Enrollment

"If I was allowed only one snack food for a year, I would choose dark chocolate protein granola. I've been eating healthier and this has been a new addition to my snack drawer, and I love the flavor, so I feel it is a perfect snack for a whole year."

*Read more on the next page!*

## MORE WEIRD QUESTION REPLIES

This week's question was quite popular, especially with our delightful Dual-Enrollment/Dual Credit students.

### Fiona VanMatre - Dual Enrollment

"If I had to choose one snack to eat for the rest of my life I would choose cookies. More specifically chocolate chip cookies because they are delicious, and I couldn't live without them."

### Logan Neal - Dual Enrollment

"If I had to eat only one snack for the rest of the year, it would be trail mix. Trail mix is my first choice because I wouldn't be limited to just one food; I would get to have raisins, nuts, and other candy."

### Ryleigh Fink - Dual Enrollment

"If I were stuck with only one snack food for an entire year, it would have to be Goldfish crackers. As I am sodium-deficient, they help with my sodium intake, and have been one of many snacks that I have favored ever since I was a little kid."

### Kaycee Tenant - Dual Enrollment

"If I were to choose a snack and no others to eat for an entire year, I would choose Cool Ranch Doritos. I picked this because they are my favorite bag of chips."

### Grant Roush - Dual Enrollment

"If I was allowed to only eat one snack for an entire year it would be parmesan cheese, I love the richness that the flavor gives and how you can taste the aging process within the cheese."

### Noah Miller - Dual Enrollment

"If I were only allowed one snack food for an entire year, it would be Pringles, because there are so many different flavors and I really enjoy eating them."

### Savannah Decker - Dual Enrollment

"If I were allowed one snack food and no others for an entire year, I would choose chicken bites with garlic parmesan sauce from Buffalo Wild Wings. I have recently discovered this sauce. While this may be a temporary high for my taste buds, I would choose this particular food."

### Payton Barnitz - Dual Enrollment

"If I was allowed to only eat one snack food and no others for an entire year, it would have to be bananas with peanut butter. I would choose this snack food because it is my favorite and usually my first choice when I am craving something to snack on."

### Teagan Scott - Dual Enrollment

"If I had to only eat one snack food for one year I would have to pick jerky. I would choose this because of the high protein content, high sodium content, and variety of flavors. These factors make it an appealing snack food as protein and sodium promote muscle recovery."

### Mary Brinker - Dual Enrollment

"If I could only choose one snack for the rest of my life I would pick tortilla chips and guacamole!"

### Raelynn Fields - Dual Enrollment

"If I could only eat one snack food for an entire year, I would choose to eat fruit. This is because I love every fruit, and there is a good variety of fruits to choose from. Plus, fruit is a healthy choice, making it beneficial to eat."

### Brogan Henry - Dual Enrollment

"If I was allowed one snack and only that for the rest of the year I would choose Doritos with crème cheese. I enjoy this a lot and would be fine eating it for the rest of the year."

## UPCOMING FEATURES

We're looking ahead at the specials days and events that we plan to feature in *Writers Bloc* this semester, and we hope you'll be a part of them all. First up is . . .



### National Draw a Dinosaur Day

**Friday, January 30**

Celebrate the day by drawing a dinosaur! Then email a picture of your drawing to us, and we'll share it in the newsletter and on our social media. Everyone is invited to share!

No artistic talent is required. Just have fun with it!

**February** is **Black History Month**. We will celebrate by featuring literature that reflects on the more than 400 years of Black history and heritage that have shaped American culture as we know it today. We invite you to let us know about your favorite Black writers.

**March** is **Women's History Month**. This year's theme is "Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future." We'll help celebrate the contributions of women who are leading sustainability efforts across environmental, economic, educational, and social justice movements. We invite you to share your thoughts and recommend works by women writers.

**International Scribble Day** is **Friday, March 27**. This special day was founded in 2019 by Diane Alber, author of the children's book *I'm NOT Just a Scribble*. Scribble Day is celebrated as a day to promote kindness, acceptance, and creativity by encouraging everyone to embrace simple scribbling as a form of self-expression. Please spend the day scribbling and then email us a picture of your scribbles. We'll share your scribbles in the newsletter and on our social media.

**National Pet Day** is **Saturday, April 11**. To celebrate, we'd like to feature pictures of your pets. Email us pictures of your pets. In addition, share a "quote" from your pet. Maybe you'd like to ask your dog to tell us about his favorite snack. Or ask your cat what her deal is with knocking your coffee cup on the floor. Maybe your goldfish will tell us what it does all day when you're not home. Have a creative convo with your pet and let us know what's going on in their lives. We'll share your pets' pics and quotes in the newsletter and on our social media.

**April** is **National Poetry Month**. It was launched in 1996 by the Academy of American Poets to increase awareness and appreciation for poetry. We will feature a variety of poetry from the classics to modern poetry, from famous authors to emerging voices. And we'd like to include you, too! Even if you've never written a poem before, we invite you to write a poem for our two newsletter issues in April. Please don't feel intimidated; if you're not up for writing an entire poem, try writing a 'mini' poem—something short and simple, like these lines:

I am his highness' dog at Kew  
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?  
— Alexander Pope

Freeze, thaw, freeze.  
An obstacle course—potholes, crevices.  
— Paul Michelsen

And we'll be commemorating **American Cheese Month** in **May**! Our last issue of the semester will be a cheesy one!