

## Member Spotlight – Joanna Ialuna

**The Bio:** I've been teaching for 14 years. I currently teach at Tri-County RVTSH in Franklin, MA, where I feel fortunate to teach literature and creative writing to 11th and 12th grade students. This year I have the privilege of teaching a new class all about drama and I'm very excited to pilot a creative and active class.

**A Favorite Book:** It's hard for me to pick a favorite book to teach but I have to go with Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*. I find it to be very engaging, and I greatly enjoy all of the ways I can connect it to powerful non-fiction, visual art, poetry, and music. I also love the poetic nature of O'Brien's prose.

**An Influence:** The biggest influences I've had as a teacher are the amazing teachers I've had. My American Lit professor sophomore year at Kenyon, my creative writing professors at BU, and my music and english teachers in high school are the heroes I hope to channel in the classroom. Some poetry resources I really love are The Favorite Poem Project website, which has awesome videos and classroom resources, as well as Poetry Foundation, and The Academy of American Poets.

**A Strategy:** One of my favorite teaching strategies incorporates visual art. I teach students about ekphrastic poetry, and then let them peruse digital museum catalogs



from around the world to find a piece they find powerful. They produce fantastic writing in response to art. I love this strategy because it gives students freedom and choice, incorporates visuals, and helps them in determining what to write about.

**Something Personal:** My hobbies include running, singing, and writing poetry. I also love being outdoors, kayaking, hiking, and spending time with my family in my home state of Vermont. I'm also one of two advisors for our school drama club; we play many improv and acting games and put on a full production every spring. I have two kids who keep me quite busy, too; I learn new things from them every day.