

## Member Spotlight – Kelly Danielson

**The Bio:** I teach at The Woodstock Academy in Woodstock, CT, and I just started my 13<sup>th</sup> year. I teach sophomore English as well as Mystery, Mythology, and Advanced Placement and Early College Experiences courses.

**A Favorite Book:** Currently, my favorite book to teach is Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Not only does the book provide opportunities to do close reading, but it also allows for thought-provoking discussions about current issues. I recently paired the book with an article written by Adam Sternbergh from *New York Magazine* called "How to Be Happy." The article focuses on the popular class offered at Yale University, the one about happiness that broke records in terms of enrollment, and it also includes many facts and figures based on studies about what truly leads to happiness. Since happiness is at the heart of *BNW*, the pairing fit. My students engaged in lively discussions, and many shared that they had even discussed the article with their parents.

**A Go-to Strategy:** I really like something that I call "section analysis." When students have read a large section of text, I chunk it, put them in groups, have each group address a few questions about plot, tone, style, and figurative language, and then create an open-ended question of their own for the entire class to discuss. This allows for close reading, collaboration, and discussion. It works well before a more high-stakes Socratic Seminar, as students are working in small groups and can rely on one another for ideas and support while still engaging in analytical thinking. I use it all year long with sophomores and seniors, and it works with both.



**An Influence:** As a graduate student, I took a contemporary poetry class at Emerson College taught by Gail Mazur. Although I'd read and written some poetry, I considered myself a fiction writer. Yet I took a risk because I was curious. Part of the class involved each student leading a lesson. During my lesson, I mispronounced the word tetrameter. Gail gently corrected me, and I moved on, feeling a little embarrassed but not disheartened because Gail acted like it wasn't a big deal. Although it's a really small moment, I realize now that as a teacher those small moments are often the moments students remember, and how a teacher treats a mistake is so important.

**Something Personal:** John Mellencamp is my all-time favorite musician. He's from Indiana, and I'm originally from Indiana, so we have that connection, but even more than that, I find many of his songs poetic. One time my husband and I took a road trip all the way to Toronto to attend one of his concerts. I also adore cats and travelling, especially travelling with my cats (last trip: Nashville) or to places that have cats (like the Algonquin Hotel in NYC).