Member Spotlight – Ziva Hassenfeld

The Bio: I began my career as a high school teacher. I taught in a Jewish high school in Waltham, MA for four years. I taught biblical literature. In my years of teaching I developed burning questions about how to teach textual interpretation in a way that prepares students for the rhetorically charged and "pluralized, hypermediated textual landscape" (LeBlanc and Stornaiuolo, 2023) that defines their world. This led me to earn my doctorate at the Stanford Graduate School of Education in California where I trained with some of the leading scholars of literacy and English education in our country. After finishing my doctorate I immediately returned to the classroom, this time to teach middle school and this time in Watertown, MA. My goal was to try out the pedagogies I had studied in graduate school. This teaching culminated in a book about text pedagogy I just published.

A Favorite Book: I like to start any class, whether second grade (which I've taught) or college (which I currently teach) reading Marcus Pfister's *Rainbow Fish.* It is a short, engaging children's book that is a wonderful canvas for exploring how each of us can read the same text but have very different reactions. It starts a conversation about interpretation, personal experience and identities as readers, and ultimately, how to productively create an interpretive community in my classroom that celebrates diversity of opinion and experience.

A Strategy: This question is near and dear to my heart because it's what I spent my entire doctoral training and then teaching in middle school afterwards focused on. I think that teachers have interpretive boundaries for their students in text discussions that we are sometimes aware of and sometimes not. The most important pedagogical principle in my mind is to define and articulate those interpretive boundaries for our students so that they can productively participate in interpretive discussions. For example, will the author's biography be an important factor in our interpretive work or not?

An Influence: Without a question the answer is my doctoral advisor, Maren Aukerman. Her work on text comprehension and pedagogy is mind blowing. I suggest every teacher read her work in *Language Arts.*

Something Personal: I like getting coffee with fellow spotlight-ee Kaylin Gangi and hearing about her teaching ;-)