

TEPS Committee:

Please accept my sincerest gratitude for funding my journey to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2019 in Baltimore, MD.

The conference began with a convocation led by Tonya Bolden and Henry Louis Gates Jr. While the presentation centered around their recent book, *Dark Sky Rising* – a YA book that discusses the importance of the Reconstruction Era in today’s racially charged society – it evolved into a conversation about our role as historians and the philosophy that we are all made by history. Throughout the variety of workshops NCTE offered this year, the presenters, whose mission was to deliver messages peppered with this year’s buzz word, Inquiry, seemed ever more intent on reminding us of the importance of seeing, knowing, and loving our students. The authors who spoke at the two luncheons I attended inspired me in ways that I have so longed for as writer, reader, and teacher. Another seminar consisted of a panel of five YA authors and classroom teachers who look at the complexity in YA literature, specifically how authors write in response to questions they want and need to answer, and how inquiry-driven discussions of YA literature empower students to explore, understand, and critique the world around them. The absolute best part of my experience at NCTE was a meet-and-greet with a long-admired author, Taylor Mali. Finally, the weekend was capped by guest speaker Tara Westover, author of *Educated*, as the keynote in the closing session. The breadth of materials with which I am returning extends beyond the walls of my classroom. This symposium was a fertile breeding ground for creativity, collaboration, and comradery. I am truly grateful for this experience. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
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English 7