

YOUR WEEKLY READER

Rescuing Reading Project

Thomas Nelson Community College
February 22, 2007

Student Book Circles and The Big Read



Students are buzzing about Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, selected for the college's **Spring 2007 Book Circles on Friday, April 13, 2007, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.** and the Virginia Peninsula Literary Consortium's

selection for The Big Read, a community reading project funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, in April, May, and June.

Free reader's guides to the novel, provided by NEA's The Big Read project, have been disappearing quickly, distributed at public locations around campus and to faculty who have assigned the book to their students.

Students report that Hurston's use of dialect writing in African-American Southern rural vernacular has been challenging, but reading those passages aloud or listening to an audio book version (narrated by actress Ruby Dee) has been helpful.



Web Watch

[Reading assessment data of The National Center for Education Statistics \(U.S. Department of Education\)](#) provide national benchmarks, state-by-state reporting, and longitudinal data (since 1992) on 4th-grade and 8th-grade students' performance.

By the Numbers

The good news for Virginia from the **National Center for Education Statistics** is that 4th-grade students reading at or above "basic" level have increased from 67 to 72%, at or above "proficient," from 31 to 37%, and at or above "advanced," from 6 to 8%. The bad news is that 8th grade reading levels have remained flat (78% basic, 3% advanced). The it-could-be-worse news, Virginia students' performance is better than those in all Southern-tier states from Virginia to California.



Participants in the one of the TNCC Fall 2006 Book Circles discuss Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. (Photo: Marlene Waters)

What They're Reading (or Not)

Not everybody is happy with the book that she's picked up. **Eirlys Barker** (professor of History) reports that she's been reading "*Angel and Apostle* . . . [by] Deb Noyes, very roughly based on [Nathaniel Hawthorne's] *The Scarlet Letter*, and very disappointing."

Laura Spencer

(Mathematics, Engineering, and Technology Division) says: "I just finished *Next* by Michael Crichton. It was horrible. He has changed (sold out) to sell more books and movies. This one even had sex in it! Every book he writes is worse than the last. Why do I even keep hoping? *Riptide* by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child was really good, like Crichton used to be, before...It was about a hunt for buried pirate treasure. Since I like the Preston-Child combination, I am now reading all their books."



President's Cultural Scholarship Supports Book Circles

The [TNCC President's Cultural Scholarship](#) supports the TNCC Book Circles by assigning two event credits to reading a selected book and attending the Book Circles event.