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Humanities and Education: Section Introduction

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Humanities and Education

We are used to thinking about the humanities within an educational context—courses of study, college and university departments—but the articles in this section highlight intriguing ways the humanities are engaging students and developing their potential. Kristen Case describes the value of the kind of work done in the humanities, especially what happens within the physical space of the humanities classroom. Ronald Cantor discusses the sometimes-surprising role that humanities classes play in community college education. Both these articles present strong arguments that humanities education should not just be reserved for the well-to-do. With years of experience in a university career center, Patricia Counihan outlines the value of the curiosity, flexibility, and open-mindedness that humanities majors develop through their coursework, which allows them to thrive in many careers. Michael Grillo wonders how we can hope to imagine our future, and more importantly address what it brings, if we do so using frameworks defined only by our present and most immediate needs. He argues that study of the humanities ensures our best chances of creative thought, cultural growth, and meaningful survival. The articles that close out this section describe interesting humanities outreach with high school and middle school students: a philosophy outreach program between the University of Maine philosophy department and Orono High School Students (Kirsten Jacobson), two perspectives on the national poetry recitation contest Poetry Out Loud (Julie Richard, Susan Thibedeau), and National History Day, a program that promotes historical research by students in grades six through twelve (John Taylor). 