

VOICES ON THE SIDE OF GOD: THE POWER OF THE LITERARY IMAGINATION TO
PREPARE THE INDIVIDUAL FOR PARTICIPATION IN A DEMOCRACY

A Dissertation

by

William Glenn Vinson, Jr.

Submitted to the Graduate School

Appalachian State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

August, 2003

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
Reich College of Education

VOICES ON THE SIDE OF GOD: THE POWER OF THE LITERARY IMAGINATION TO
PREPARE THE INDIVIDUAL FOR PARTICIPATION IN A DEMOCRACY

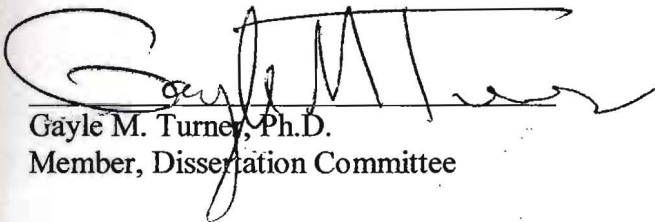
WILLIAM GLENN VINSON, JR.

August, 2003

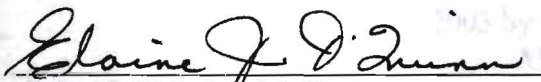
Approved by:



Michael W. Dale, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee



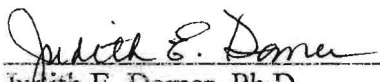
Gayle M. Turney, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee



Elaine J. O'Quinn, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee



Alice P. Naylor, Ph.D.
Director of Doctoral Program



Judith E. Damer, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate Studies and Research

ABSTRACT

VOICES ON THE SIDE OF GOD: THE POWER OF THE LITERARY
IMAGINATION TO PREPARE THE INDIVIDUAL FOR PARTICIPATION IN A
DEMOCRACY. (August, 2003)

William Glenn Vinson, Jr., B.S. Appalachian State University

M.A. Lenoir-Rhyne College

Dissertation Chairperson: Michael W. Dale, Ph.D.

This dissertation promotes an approach to the study of literature in high schools that is based on three distinct types of imagination: (1) the prophetic imagination, (2) the literary imagination, and (3) the moral imagination. Each form of imagining entails having the ability to see beyond the status quo—to think and understand in terms that transcend the given, and to envision alternative capabilities heretofore untapped within individuals and society. The complacency and contentment of modern society is critiqued, and it is argued that literature can be taught in such a way as to awaken citizens from the slumber of prosperity, into lives that demand awareness to the suffering of others, both locally and globally. The prophetic imagination is examined as the force that empowers us to articulate our perceptions of injustice, and the role of the teacher as a prophetic voice is advocated. The literary imagination is seen as the form of imagining that, when developed properly, helps us to hear the stories of others, enabling us to more richly engage in human life with our neighbors. And the development of the moral imagination is a step toward imagining the possibility of a freer, more caring, more just

world, in which a culture of friendship might be possible. Such imagining will necessitate a dynamic shift in the role and practice of education in our society, and this shift and its possible ramifications are discussed. Of each of the three imaginations, it is argued here that the literary imagination can play the most significant role both in the development and energizing of the other types of imagining.