



The February Spotlight on Gifted Education comes to us from ITAG Board Member Gail Kenkel. Feel free to contact her at iajayhawk@cox.net with any questions!

ITAG Spotlight

Gail Kenkel

Over the past 5 years, I have spent my summers immersed in history. I have walked the slave quarters of South Carolina's plantations. At Greenfield Village in Detroit I examined Edison's Menlo Park laboratory, viewed the 1760 Daggett Farm, the 1880 Firestone Farm, pushed the track at a roundhouse, and spent a day at the Ford factory. I walked Philadelphia's Elfreth's Alley, our nation's oldest residential street and once the home of Ben Franklin. I saw George Washington's chair at Constitution Hall with a half sun carved in its back. Ben Franklin is reported to have said, "I have often looked at that picture behind the President without being able to tell if it is a rising or setting sun. Now at length I have the happiness to know that it is indeed a rising, not a setting sun." I have felt the grooves in the floor made by Jews rocking back and forth on their heels in prayer at Eldridge Street Synagogue, an 1887 building that housed the first great wave of immigrants to New York City. Akhil Reed Amar, Yale's law and political science professor, shared with our class at the National Constitution Center the relevance of our Constitution in today's world. I felt the presence of Franklin Roosevelt at Hyde Park and Top Cottage. Jeff Urbin, education director at the FDR library, taught us a rap to use before introducing "the document of the day." We had a guided tour of the library, and we saw primary source documents such as Roosevelt's fireside chats and war communications. And finally, Stephanie McCurry, history professor at the University of Pennsylvania, wowed us every day with her lectures on African American slaves and women of the South during the Civil War.



Eldridge Street Synagogue, NYC



Daggett Farm, Greenfield, Michigan

Where can you find experiences like these? At Gilder Lehrman and National Endowment for Humanities summer workshops. Go to their websites:

www.neh.gov

www.gilderlehrman.gov

Look at the variety of experiences they offer! Some workshops are a week long, some 2 weeks, and still others are 3 weeks long. Follow their directions for applying to the workshops of your choice. It is a week of hard work! You will rise early and be immersed in lectures and field trips all day long, with many workshops offering optional evening tours and lectures. You will be required to develop a lesson plan that you can use in your classroom. You have the opportunity to take pictures of the sites you visit to share with your students. These workshops have stipends to help defray costs of travel and lodging.



Liberty Bell, Philadelphia



In the good company of Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt

I have found these workshops to be invigorating, challenging, and just plain fun! I have met teachers from all over the United States, who teach in a wide variety of settings. I have visited places that I have never seen before! I learned how to navigate New York's subway system, and I even found time to take in a Yankees game in their old stadium. Try a class! If you are like me, you will apply every year and hope that you get accepted. These classes have not only enriched my life, they helped me become a better teacher.