

# Steve Glazer

## Middle School English Teacher

Steve Glazer lived in Minnesota, Virginia, and South Korea before settling in the suburban sprawl of South Florida—a place that never felt like home. “There was no Town Meeting,” he said. “There was no Green. There was no Village School. The only thing I knew was the absence of something I longed for.”

It is no surprise, then, that as an educator, Glazer puts place at the center of his teaching—first for a decade at Vital Communities, the Upper Valley nonprofit, and since 2013 as a seventh and eighth grade English teacher at Crossroads Academy in Lyme.



For a month every fall Glazer and his seventh graders immerse themselves in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Students study twenty-five poems, memorize two, and then compose poems employing Dickinson’s distinctive poetics: hymn meter, slant rhyme, thematic capitalization, and the dash. Students conduct web research using the Emily Dickinson Archive. They produce creative responses to her work using writing, song, dance, sculpture, and photography.

Then, on December 10, the poet’s birthday, they take a bus to Amherst, Massachusetts, Dickinson’s home place. “And in her house, on her birthday, we recite poems from memory,” Glazer said. The class also visits the Amherst College archive to see Dickinson’s manuscripts, letters, and a lock of her red hair. The field trip concludes at Dickinson’s grave, where the students sing “This Is My Letter to the World.”

In eighth grade, Glazer and his students immerse themselves in the life and work of the escaped slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. As a young slave, Douglass taught himself the art of eloquence by secretly studying a book called *The Columbian Orator*. Glazer sends his students into the woods to study it too, just as Douglass would have.

“These are the same words he read in the same kind of situation,” Glazer said of his students, “except they have choice, they are going to a school. Frederick Douglass was doing this without any formal education. He was doing this with great risk to his black body and to his life.”

The study of Douglass also concludes with a field trip, this time to the African Meeting House in Boston, where Douglass spoke in 1860. There, Glazer and his students each recite a portion of “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?”, one of Douglass’s most powerful speeches. “They climb up to the podium and for about thirty-five minutes we offer that text ... to crying docents,” Glazer said. “... And I’m trembling too.”

Glazer’s job at Crossroads is his first in the classroom, but his on-the-scene approach flows from his work at Vital Communities. There he directed the Valley Quest program, which uses treasure hunts to foster sense of place.

At Crossroads, both in the classroom and outside it, Glazer has found that sense of place his childhood did not offer. “Most people do not want to go back to being twelve or thirteen,” he said of his students. “I am

trying to give my middle school students experiences that they'll never forget."

That was certainly the case for Maxine Park, now a ninth grader at Phillips Exeter Academy. Park described herself as a student who disliked writing when she encountered Glazer. That began to change with the Emily Dickinson project.

"In a world of many words with often little meaning, Mr. Glazer has taught us to express complexity with creatively structured simplicity," she said. "To say that Mr. Glazer is inspiring would not do justice to the great dedication he has for his students and the way he challenges them to engage with writing and the world."

For Maxine and other students in Glazer's class, that all-important sense of place has a way of staying with them, no matter where their path may lead. And the opportunity to make such a difference explains why Glazer has found his place too, at Crossroads.

