

Honors Multi-Cultural Literature- Creative Writing Unit

essential understandings:

Creative writing is the focus of our final unit. Students will be exploring the different genres of creative writing, the way creative writing is produced, and the impact of creative writing on society and individuals. Multicultural authors of poetry, prose, and creative nonfiction will be read and analyzed. The best way to learn how to write is to read, so this unit will focus equally on reading and writing creative works.

"A word after a word after a word is power."

--Margaret Atwood



Art by Shantell Martin

overview

Creative writing is used to express emotions, tell important stories, and to make sense of the world. Creative writers are artists who put hard work into their craft. Their ability to make people think and feel gives them power and strength in society. Students will study the

techniques and devices used by a variety of authors to create powerful messages through writing. Guest teacher and poet Brennan DiFresco will guide students through writing workshops to create their own creative writing portfolio.

By reading the creative works of multiple authors, and by producing their own creative writing, students will enhance their understanding of the importance of literature and stories in daily life. Higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation will be practiced.

guiding questions:

What makes a piece of creative writing “good”? What qualities or techniques can authors use to inspire and engage readers? How can we use creative writing to express ourselves in a way that is artful and cathartic?

lessons

- Creative Writing Genres
- Techniques for Creative Writing
- Poetry
- Prose
- Creative Nonfiction
- Literary Elements
- Literary Devices
- Reading Strategies

group work

- Students will be actively participating in group work, primarily in pairs, by evaluating each other’s creative writing assignments. They will give productive feedback to each other on how to best convey the message they are trying to get across. **Due 5/28-5/29, 6/4-6/5**

individual work

- Daily notes on lessons-Daily notes are a summary of the most important information from each lesson, individual writing assignments (Do Now, Answering the AIM, creative short writing, reading quizzes, etc), 5 vocabulary words with definitions from the day’s

lesson/reading/activities, and short group activities these are **Due at the end of each lesson**

- Creative writing with Brennan-Students will be participating in three (3) separate one (1) hour long writer's workshops with Brennan from Poetry Out Loud. These smaller works will be put together into a writer's portfolio at the end of the unit. **Portfolio Due 6/11-6/12**
- **Honors Students-choose three (3) of the following prompts and create original pieces of creative writing (minimum of 1 page each) Due 6/4-6/5:**

Creative Writing Exercises

Compiled by Catherine Reid

Creative writing exercises, like any kind of warm-up routine before playing a sport or a musical instrument, help loosen up your imagination while honing your writing muscles. The goals of the prompts below: clear, lively writing that uses specific images, well-chosen verbs and precise nouns, that "shows, rather than tells," and that avoids clichés.

Though the exercises are more fun done with two or more people, each can be done alone. A suggested format: Choose a prompt from the list below. Weigh a few possibilities. Then write without interruption for 12-15 minutes.

If, while writing, you're at a loss for material, shift to another of the five senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste); or shift your perspective from high to low, from close to far away; or consider the journalist's five questions—who, what, when, where, why.

The prompts:

- 1) Describe a "first" (first apartment, first kiss, first time driving a car, first lie, first big success, first roller coaster ride, first time in this setting). Include as many details as possible, being sure to include an aspect relating to each of the five senses.
- 2) Describe a memorable event, positive or negative, and how it felt to you, but do not name the feeling. Instead, tell how it felt in your body (damp hands, metallic taste, tight throat, wobbly knees, etc.).
- 3) Create a story using words of one-syllable only, beginning with a phrase such as:
"The last time I saw her, she..."
"From the back of the truck..."
"On the night of the full moon..."
"The one thing I know for sure..."
- 4) Describe a significant place, allowing the details to reveal why the place matters. Describe it from a tree or rooftop or from a hawk's point of view. Describe it from the height of a dog or a turtle.
- 5) Write the map to where you live. Start as close or as far from your home as you wish.
- 6) Describe a significant person (teacher, neighbor, mentor, coach, parent, sibling, sweetheart) with as many physical details as possible, but no clichés! (If you've heard the expression before, don't use it.)
- 7) Write about your first name—why you were given it, what associations or stories are attached to it, what you think or know it means. Do the same for your last name. Given the chance, what name would you give yourself?

- 8) Describe a presence in your house (childhood home/current place of residence)—a person, a pet, a piece of furniture, an illness, a secret. Use all five senses. Be as detailed as possible.
- 9) Recall a photograph from your life and describe it in a way that suggests (but doesn't specifically name) why it matters. (Remember the creative writer's adage, "Show, don't tell.") Describe what happened either just before or just after the photo was taken.
- 10) Choose a photograph from a published collection of black-and-whites, of humans in uncertain conditions. Write the story of one of the individuals or one of the groupings.
- 11) Narrate a story about a person or a family member, a story that's been passed down or ritualized; a story about yourself. Embellish, if so desired, or contrast the story with what you know to be the "true" account.
- 12) Describe a routine or holiday ritual, using present tense verbs.
- 13) Describe a routine or holiday ritual, using the 2nd person "you":
For example, "You stand in the steaming kitchen with people you haven't seen in almost a year. You wish your shirt didn't have that tiny stain on the cuff. You wish your aunt's laugh wasn't quite so brittle. Feet stomp on the porch and you hurry to let your tall uncle in, forgetting to keep the dog from escaping outside..."
- 14) Choose a moral dilemma (for example, you see someone pocket several items at a CVS; you're in a car at night, with people you don't know well, and the driver hits a dog that ran into the road; you learn that a friend is having unprotected sex, etc) and explain what you would do. More importantly, explain why you would do it. What do you know about yourself that accounts for such a decision?
- 15) Create a short story that is 26 sentences long, each sentence beginning with the next letter of the alphabet. (Add other, arbitrary conditions, if desired, such as one sentence should be one-word long; there should be one question mark, one quotation, etc.) Rigid rules often produce fascinating results—such as with well-written sonnets, which have 14 lines and tight rhyme schemes, each line governed by a specific number of syllables and alternating stressed and unstressed syllables.
- 16) Create a still-life in the room that implies a dramatic moment (e.g. an overturned chair, several balled-up pieces of paper, an open map, a torn envelope, a set of keys, a silk scarf). Describe what happened either just before or just after that moment.
- 17) Review a section from the Police Beat or Classified Ads of a local newspaper. Choose one and tell the story behind it.
- 18) Describe the room of one of the following: a high school student about to drop out; a cashier who has just won the lottery; a faded movie star who still thinks she's famous; a paranoid person, etc (see full list of suggestions in *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers*). Be as detailed as possible.
- 19) Create a how-to manual for something you can do well (clean a fish, change a flat tire, restring a guitar, make sushi, shop for groceries). Describe the process so that someone else could complete the task based on your directions. Use present tense verbs.
- 20) Come up with a list of nouns and a second list of verbs, all of one syllable each. Describe a scene or situation, using a minimum of ten words from each list.

assessments Due 6/14-6/15

- A Socratic Dialogue on creative writing. Students will develop two questions to bring to class about any of the readings or writing activities from this unit to discuss in a collaborative dialogue.

readings

Notes on a Native Son by James Baldwin

Home by Warsan Shire

Good Bones by Maggie Smith

Collective Nouns for Humans In The Wild by Kathy Fish

The Revenant by Billy Collins

Borderbus by Juan Felipe Herrera

Dear Discouraged by Tonya Ingram

My Honest Poem by Rudy Francisco

Still I Rise by Maya Angelou

Annabel Lee by Edgar Allen Poe

Oh Captain, My Captain by Walt Whitman

A Sestina For A Black Girl Who Does Not Know How To Braid Hair by Raych Jackson

videos

Dead Poet's Society

<https://youtu.be/o30cLzwVbE4>

https://youtu.be/aOevG_I3DC8

<https://youtu.be/HwffEcUSsCU>

https://youtu.be/Tq-W_GLxsUs

<https://youtu.be/7V7TXJdI8-Y>

<https://youtu.be/nJwiOTeKDOQ>

<https://youtu.be/8s1spvkfbeo>

<https://youtu.be/Yw-FjS6BzaQ>

<https://youtu.be/VtTkXBSML48>

<https://youtu.be/zaq5bNK4q0c>

<https://youtu.be/mFS-er6oZ30>

<https://youtu.be/xx5wXwfjYIA>

https://youtu.be/16Tb_bZZDv0

<https://youtu.be/0QsCrFANMzc>

<https://youtu.be/0uFUrBJJwDs>

links

<http://gjs.appstate.edu/social-justice-and-human-rights/what-social-justice>

<http://gender.stanford.edu/news/2013/why-literature-matters-social-justice>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=if6RmoT5roI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoYJCuOih0>