

Unit Lesson Plan: Creative Writing

By Amy Holthouse

Creative writing promotes student's writing abilities in many ways besides just helping them be creative. The writing process promotes good interpersonal skills, careful thinking about audience, form, purpose, and also helps in working with conventional and non-conventional grammar. Creative writing may at first seem scary for some students who are used to and comfortable with the usual research paper or persuasive essay, but creative writing will allow these students to use the skills they have developed in these other forms of writing and will benefit from this skill. Other students may be thrilled with the idea of getting away from the usual factual essay and be able to finally express themselves, even if it is through writing.

All too often creative writing may be barely glossed over in high school English classrooms but spending time really delving into creative writing gives students the knowledge they need to be able to write well and creatively. This particular two-week unit will focus on short stories. I chose short stories because covering both short stories and poetry in two weeks would be too much to do. Also, if both needed to be covered students wouldn't get a deeper understanding of short stories or poetry, merely a surface understanding of both. This would also be a unit that would be taught after teaching formal essay styles because students would benefit from their previous knowledge of organization and structure of an essay, which would be easily applied to writing short stories. According to Illinois learning standards, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to write creatively and I intend to go beyond fulfilling this single standard.

These standards that will be met are: use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization and structure. Compose well-organized and coherent writing for specific purposes and audiences. Finally, communicate ideas in writing to accomplish a variety of purposes.

I will approach this unit with a student oriented and facilitative response method. I feel that if a student is invested and interested in what they are writing they will do the best work they can. Another common occurrence in English classrooms is the inability of

students to choose what they would like to write about. The teacher benefits by being able to read interesting and well-written stories all of which are all unique and respond to each student's own individual thoughts and interests. There will be none of the drudgery of reading the same essay over and over again; the uniqueness of each student's writing will keep you alert and interested. Students will also be following Atwell's process of writing outlined in *In the Middle*. The responses that students will be giving to others and the responses that I will be giving will be facilitative in nature. In other words I will only be giving suggestions as to what the student may consider changing and will be working towards the student's idea for their final product, not having the student re-write their work towards what the teacher thinks the product should be. This does not mean that grammar will be ignored, but that it will be addressed during editing. Ignoring grammar would be detrimental to student's future. These two weeks that will be spent working on creative writing are important, not just so students can learn how to create characters and a plot, but so that students can use the imagination that may have laid dormant for years and have fun!

Day 1

Class: Junior/Senior Composition or English Class

Orientation: Students have just finished writing a research paper and are going to now be exploring creative writing.

Learning goals: Today students should be able to know what creative writing is, what a short story is, and what the parts of a short story are. Students should also feel more comfortable about sharing writing and ideas with classmates.

Preparation: Since this is the beginning of the unit the students (and teacher) got a break from homework. Students should come into class expecting things to be business as normal. Please review lesson plans for today before class begins!

Materials:

Today students will need:

- Their journal
- Pen or Pencil
- Notebook for class notes

Today teacher will need:

- Some implement for writing on the board
- Either rolls of register tape or toilet paper strong enough that it can be written on
- A wide variety of writing utensils
- Dictionary
- Thesaurus
- A large surface for writing (floor will do as well)

Activities:

-As students walk into class have them divide into groups of four if the class is large and if the class is small have them work in groups of two.

-Take attendance

-Write the day's tongue twister on the board and see who is able to say it ten times fast.

Tongue twister of the day: Shy Shelly says she shall sew sheets.

-Pass out register tape or toilet paper to each group (one per group).

-Ask students to please listen to the directions for the activity they will do next:

-The "Which group can write the most" race:

In your groups I want you to come up with a theme that your group would like to write a story about. (Please make it school appropriate!) After each group has decided on a theme send a group representative to me to get the writing utensil of your choice. Once all the groups have something to write with I will give your group ten minutes to write the most they can on the register tape (or TP). After ten minutes is up you will stop writing. We will then determine the winner by the amount of writing and yardage of the tape or TP that has been used.

-Tell students that the reason that they were doing this particular activity was so that students could get to share their ideas with each other and become acquainted with creative writing and short stories in particular.

-Ask students what they think creative writing is, have them record their answer in their notes

-Give the students the dictionary definition; have them record this as well

-Ask students what they think short stories are; have them record their answers in their notes.

-Give a dictionary definition. Have them record this as well.

-Go over parts of a story:

Plot: What happened in the story

Theme: Main idea behind the story

Character: The people in the story

Setting: The place where the story happens.

-Let students come up with their own examples of each part of a story. Students should also be writing this information down.

-Assign Homework:

In your journal write your favorite fairy tale or folk tale but leave out specific characters and settings.

-If time permits students can start homework, if not dismiss class.

Time: Spend about five minutes taking attendance and going over the tongue twister with students. Spend ten minutes preparing for and explaining the race, the next twelve to fifteen doing the race and determining which group is the winner. Spend the next fifteen minutes going over the definitions and the following five minutes reviewing the homework assignment.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated based on their class participation and through how they interacted within their groups- did they contribute anything? Did they contribute anything to the class discussion? This would mainly be for participation points.

Day 2

Orientation: Yesterday we went over what creative writing, short stories, and what the elements of short stories are. Students will be learning about plot today and creating their own plot lines.

Learning Goals: The goal for today is to be able to create a plot line and also to be able to recognize parts of a plotline.

Preparation: Students were asked to create a plot by taking a fairy or folk tale and removing the setting and some of the characters. Teacher should read over the lesson plan in advance of teaching the class to be best prepared for class.

Materials:

Students should bring:

- Their homework written in their journal
- Their notebook
- A pen and a pencil

Teachers should bring:

- A utensil to write on the board with
- A dictionary
- A thesaurus

Activities:

- Greet students
- Take attendance and write the tongue twister on the board
- Go over tongue twister for the day with students

Tongue twister for the day: A skunk sat on a stump and thunk the stump stunk, but the stump thunk the skunk stunk.

- See who can do it ten times fast
- Have students share some of their journal homework with each other.
- Ask what elements seem to be the same in each story.

- Is there a background story given?
- Is there a main problem that needs to be solved?
- Are there more problems?
- Is there a resolution?
- Have students write in their notebooks about the elements such as exposition (background story), inciting incident (the thing that caused the problem), conflict (the problem (s)), climax (when the action is at it's height) and denouement (the resolution of the story). Students should write down the formal name so they can use the terms later with their writer's memos.
- Have students work in groups and come up with their own plot line.
- Have students present plot line to the class if they wish/
- Assign homework: Bring in a picture of someone that they do not know and also a paragraph of made up information about the person.
- Collect journals from previous day.

Time: The first five minutes of class should be devoted to attendance and the tongue twister. The next fifteen minutes will be devoted to sharing plotlines and answering the questions posed by the teacher. The next five minutes will be spent going over formal definitions. The next fifteen minutes will be spent making our own plotlines and sharing them. The final five minutes will be spent assigning homework and collecting journals.

Evaluation: Today's class will be evaluated on the completion of the homework in their journals and on class participation (including group work).

Day 3

Orientation: Students have gone over plots in a story and are about to begin character.

Learning Goals: Students should be able to create and analyze a character by the end of this lesson.

Preparation: Students were asked to bring in a picture of someone that they do not know and write a paragraph about that person. Teacher should be prepared to run a workshop like class and should have read over the lesson plan for the day. Also, have responses to journals done and be ready to pass them back.

Materials:

Students should bring:

- Their homework (picture and the paragraph)
- Pen or pencil
- Notebook for class notes

Teacher should bring:

- Student's journal's
- Extra pictures
- Extra paragraphs
- Tape or push pins
- A utensil to write on the board with
- A dictionary
- A thesaurus
- A name dictionary

Activities:

-Greet students

-Take attendance and write the tongue twister on the board

-Go over tongue twister for the day with students

Tongue twister for the day: Six slick slim sycamore saplings.

-Pass back journals.

-Divide students into groups of three (this number could vary)

-Ask students to put their pictures up around the room, but to hold onto their paragraphs.

-Give directions for activity and write key items on the board:

-Directions: You are to look around the room and find a picture that you and your group really feel could be fun to write about. This person is a “mystery person” no one knows anything about this person but I want your groups to create an identity for this person. You may consider things like where the person is from, what their life is like now, who they know, what their childhood was like...just about anything would help us figure out who this person is exactly. You must create a name for your character as well. Please have a recorder for your group write down the characteristics of your person and other important details so at the end of class someone else can present your mystery person to class.

-Allow students to begin working and circulate through the class to ensure that students are on task and that they know what to do.

-When most people appear to be finished or when time is running out ask students to give the presentation of their person. Have students show the other groups their picture and then have them say whom the person is.

-Assign homework for the day: Write in your journals about your character or a new character. Do the same that you had done for your group projects, if you feel you are up to it you can draw a character to describe.

Time: Devote the first five minutes to attendance and the tongue twister. The next five minutes should be spent grouping up, explaining the project and putting up the pictures. The next twenty to twenty-five minutes should be spent on the activity. The last ten minutes of class should be spent giving presentations and assigning homework.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on their participation within their groups and the completion of the previous night's homework. Students who did recording or gave the presentation may receive more points or extra credit for their work.

Day 4

Orientation: Students have just finished a lesson on character and are about to begin working on a lesson on setting.

Learning Goals: Students should be able to create and recognize a setting in a story by the end of this lesson.

Preparation: Students will turn in their homework today. They should come to class prepared to write. Teacher should read over the lesson plans and be prepared to teach.

Materials:

Students should bring:

- Their homework (journal assignment)
- Pen or pencil
- Notebook for class notes

Teacher should bring:

- A utensil to write on the board with
- A dictionary
- A thesaurus
- Coloring tools (crayons, markers, colored pencils)
- Blank computer paper

Activities:

- Greet students
- Take attendance and write the tongue twister on the board
- Go over tongue twister for the day with students

Tongue twister for the day: Mrs. Smith's fish sauce shop.

-Ask students to take ten minutes and write a description of a old house. Some things to consider are: What it looks like, what it smells like, what it sounds like, what it feels like...basically anything that you can detect with your senses.

- When done ask a few students to read their descriptions out loud.
- Tell students what a setting is in a story.

- Ask students to draw a picture of their description.
- Students should exchange their writing with a partner and not show their partner the picture.
- The students then should draw a picture of the setting that they read.
- Next students will compare drawings and note where there are differences.
- Students should then write for five minutes about what the differences in the pictures might mean and what they plan to do to get a clearer picture across to their audience.
- Questions to consider in the writing: What was different about the pictures? Was there something in the writing that you thought you added or thought you left out? Did your partner assume something about your setting? Why do you think this happened?
- Ask students to turn in their journals.
- Assign Homework: Ask students to create the setting of their choice, and write at least a two-page description of the setting.

Time: Spend about five minutes taking attendance and going over the tongue twister with students. Spend another ten minutes having students describe an old house. Next spend five minutes having a discussion about setting. The next twenty-five minutes doing drawings and comparing the drawings and writing about the comparisons. Spend the last five minutes of class assigning homework.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on their in class participation and the completion and effort put into their homework.

Day 5

Orientation: Students have just finished a lesson on setting and are about to begin a lesson on conflict and dialogue.

Learning Goals: By the end of the lesson students should be able to identify and create the three types of conflict and be able to use dialogue effectively in writing.

Preparation: Students should have completed their homework and be ready to turn it in. Teacher should have finished grading homework and know today's lesson plans.

Materials:

Students should bring:

- Their homework
- Pen or pencil
- Notebook for class notes

Teacher should bring:

- A utensil to write on the board with
- A dictionary
- A thesaurus

Activities:

-Greet students

-Take attendance and write the tongue twister on the board

-Go over tongue twister for the day with students

Tongue twister for the day: The myth of Ms. Muffet.

-Ask students to write for five minutes about an argument that they had with someone or something.

-Tell student about the three types of conflict: man vs. man, man vs. nature, man vs. himself.

-Ask students to categorize some arguments or conflicts in stories they know- think of fairy tales or children's stories.

-Ask students about how they feel about dialogue in writing. What does it do for a story?

-Have students take notes about types of dialogue.

-Stilted language: dialogue that does not sound natural.

-Filler: dialogue that does not further the scene or deepen the understanding of a character.

-Exposition: dialogue that explains plots or repeats information for the benefit of the audience.

-Naming: having a character use another character's name to establish identity. People rarely use other people's names while they are speaking to them, unless the character speaking is a used car salesman.

-Overuse of modifiers: too many modifiers such as shouted, exclaimed, cried, whispered, and stammered can be useful but over use can sometimes be annoying. It seems like a crutch for poor dialogue.

-Have students create examples for each of these.

-Have students share their examples

-Allow time for students to start homework.

-Homework: Students should begin to write their stories. Students should create, characters, settings, a plot, dialogue and conflict. This will just be a rough draft but the more effort that is put into it the more that you will get out of it. If you are stumped as to what to write about, think about your favorite tale, how could you change it to give the story a new twist? What stories do you tell your friends that you can share with the class? Write about something that interests you!

Time: Spend about five minutes taking attendance and going over the tongue twister with students. Take the next ten minutes for talking about the types of conflict and writing about the conflict. Take another five minutes for student examples of conflict. Take the next two minutes to write about dialogue, and the next ten to explain the types of dialogue and have students come up with examples of each. Give homework assignment and allow the remainder of the class period for students to work on assignment.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on their in class participation and the completion and effort put into their assignments. The work that they begin to put into this paper will be shown at the end when their final drafts are turned in.

Day 6

Orientation: Students have just finished a lesson on conflict and dialogue and will begin writing their short stories using what they have learned last week. Today will be for getting ideas for stories and thinking about the elements.

Learning Goals: Students should be able to further their drafts and have a clear idea about what they will write about at the end of this lesson.

Preparation: Teacher should come prepared to work in class on their papers. Teacher should come with ideas for stories to be written and having gone over the day's lesson plan.

Materials:

Students should bring:

- Their homework
- Pen or pencil
- Notebook for class notes

Teacher should bring:

- A utensil to write on the board with
- A dictionary
- A thesaurus
- A name dictionary

Activities:

- Greet students
- Take attendance and write the tongue twister on the board
- Go over tongue twister for the day with students

Tongue twister for the day: Unique New York.

- Have students take out their rough drafts.
- Give time for students to share their writing with other students.
- Have students respond to each other's writing.

- Ask students if there were some issues that they would like to talk about concerning their writing.
- Talk about issues that may come up like having a good idea to write about, creating believable characters, and coming up with a good ending.
- Have students get as many peer reviews as possible
- Allow time for in class revision.
- Assign homework: have students fill out plot worksheet chart for their story.

Time: Spend about five minutes taking attendance and going over the tongue twister with students. Spend the next fifteen minutes having students respond to each other's writing. The next ten minutes should be spent discussing questions the students have. The remainder of class should be spent receiving more student responses and working on the rough draft. Take two minutes to assign homework.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated based on the completion of their homework assignment and their class participation.

Day 7

Orientation: Students have just finished getting ideas for their stories. Today will be spent working on more of the rough draft of the story.

Learning Goals: Students should have a good handle on the story they are writing by the end of this lesson.

Preparation: Students should have done their plot relationship chart for homework and be prepared to use it to further enhance their papers. Teachers should be prepared to have student teacher conferences about the stories in class today. Teachers should also know the day's lesson plan.

Materials:

Students should bring:

- Their homework
- Their rough draft
- Pen or pencil
- Notebook for class notes

Teacher should bring:

- Utensils to write on the board with
- A dictionary
- A thesaurus
- A name dictionary

Activities:

- Greet students
- Take attendance and write the tongue twister on the board
- Go over tongue twister for the day with students

Tongue twister for the day: The sixth slick sheik's sixth sheep's sick.

- Tell students that the day will be spent refining the rough drafts to a formal draft form.

Students will also be spending their time talking with the teacher about their papers.

- Ask students to come up with questions they want the teacher to answer.

-Begin student conferences, have students come up and talk to you as they feel comfortable, all students should see the teacher though. Students should bring with them all the copies of their work, the peer response they have got and the plot relationship chart they have completed.

- Assign homework: let students know a final draft is doing the next day, one that will be peer reviewed again.

Time: Spend about five minutes taking attendance and going over the tongue twister with students. Take the remainder of the class time to hold in class conferences. Have the homework assignment written on the board and take a minute to remind students of this.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the amount of work they have completed thus far and what they show at the conference. They also will be evaluated on their work with other students based on the helpfulness of their comments.

Day 8

Orientation: Students have created their rough drafts and now will begin working on refining their stories.

Learning Goals: Students should be able to fix the mechanical, grammatical, and spelling mistakes on their formal drafts by the end of this lesson.

Preparation: Students should have what they would consider a more final draft to work on today. Teacher should be prepared to help students with questions about grammatical and mechanical errors. Teacher should also read over the day's lesson plan.

Materials:

Students should bring:

- Their homework
- Their drafts, rough, and formal
- Pen or pencil
- Notebook for class notes

Teacher should bring:

- A utensil to write on the board with
- A dictionary
- A thesaurus
- A grammar handbook

Activities:

- Greet students

-Take attendance and write the tongue twister on the board

-Go over tongue twister for the day with students

Tongue twister for the day: A box of biscuits, a batch of mixed biscuits.

-Ask students to break up into small groups, ask students to share their formal drafts with the group and check for spelling errors, errors in punctuation and format and also errors in grammar.

-Ask students to please be honest about the mistakes and to do their best thorough job they can.

-Allow students to spend the remainder of the period looking over grammatical mistakes and spelling mistakes.

Time: Spend about five minutes taking attendance and going over the tongue twister with students. The next five minutes should be spent telling students what they need to work on and assigning groups. The remainder of the period should be spent working in the groups.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated based on their in class work and the changes that they make evident on their final drafts.

Day 9

Orientation: Student's have finished their piece and today will be a ketchup day for the students.

Learning Goals: Students will be finished with their papers by the end of today's lesson.

Preparation: Students need to come prepared to work in the computer lab either on their papers or on another assignment for any class. Teacher should be familiar with today's lesson plan.

Materials:

Students should bring:

- Their drafts or other homework
- Pen or pencil
- Notebook for class notes

Teacher should bring:

- A utensil to write on the board with
- A dictionary
- A thesaurus
- A name dictionary

Activities:

-Greet students

-Take attendance and write the tongue twister on the board

-Go over tongue twister for the day with students

Tongue twister for the day: Six thick thistle sticks. Six thick thistles stick.

-Go to computer lab.

-Ask students to work on their final drafts if they need to or to do homework for another class. If students do not have any homework to do they can do an extra credit assignment like looking up the etymology of their favorite word in the Oxford English Dictionary or online.

-Tell students that their final drafts are due the next day along with their rough drafts and plot chart in the order in which they were done, oldest to newest.

Time: Spend about five minutes taking attendance and going over the tongue twister with students. Take five minutes telling students what is due the next day. The remainder of the period should be devoted to student work.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on if they do what they are asked and work well in the classroom.

Day 10

Orientation: Students have finished their story for today. The class will share their finished stories today.

Learning Goals: Today students should work on their listening skills while students read their papers.

Preparation: Students will have their completed assignments ready to turn in and will do so at the end of the class period. Teacher should be prepared to listen to the students stories and be familiar with the day's lesson plan.

Materials:

Students should bring:

- Their final draft and all other drafts
- Pen or pencil
- Notebook for class notes

Teacher should bring:

- Pop
- Snack foods
- Music for beginning of class

Activities:

- Greet students
- Take attendance and write the tongue twister on the board
- Go over tongue twister for the day with students

Tongue twister for the day: Red lorry, yellow lorry.

- Play music while students get their snacks and beverages.
- Ask students to please share their papers. If they do not feel comfortable sharing they can have other students read their stories.

-Ask students to please listen to their peers and not to be rude by talking while the students are telling their stories.

-Spend the rest of the period telling stories.

-Collect the finished projects.

Time: Spend about five minutes taking attendance and going over the tongue twister with students. Spend about the next five minutes getting ready to listen to stories. Spend the rest of the period telling stories. At the end of class collect finished projects.

Evaluation: The students will be evaluated on this unit as a whole. They will be graded on the completeness of their finished project along with the grammar, elements of the story, and correct format of the story. They also will be graded based on the work that is evident through their rough drafts and assignments they have completed.

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