



Writers' Workshop 7-9 Syllabus

Course Goals

1 Learning the Writing Process

Students learn about and practice the entire writing process: brainstorming, planning, writing a rough draft, proofreading, editing and revising, and fine-tuning the final draft.

2 Acquiring Tools for Writing

Students learn how to refine and enhance their work through instructor feedback on word choice, usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

3 Reading for Inspiration

Students read and discuss examples of the genres they will be practicing: personal narratives, short stories, plays, and poems.

4 Writing in Multiple Genres

Students hone their writing skills through practice writing in a variety of different genres, including personal narratives, short stories, plays, and poetry.

5 Creating a Class Anthology

Students compile their favorite pieces into a class literary anthology as a final project.

Course Topics

1 Personal Narratives

Students read an example of a personal narrative and then write their own based on an early experience.

2 Dialogue

Students read an example of a story which incorporates dialogue, and discuss how speech and actions can be used to develop character. They then have an opportunity to either incorporate dialogue into their personal narratives or create a new story using dialogue.

3 Character and Setting

Students read descriptive pieces which focus on character and setting, and discuss the importance of these features; they then write both a description of a particular place and a character-driven story.

4 Story Structure

Students learn how to structure a story and what the key elements of successful story-telling are, and work on writing a longer story.

5 Play-writing

Students learn the elements of drama and the importance of voice and point of view. After reading a dramatic piece, they begin writing their own play.

6 Poetry Writing

Students read and write poetry in a variety of genres, including narrative poems, monologues, sonnets, haiku, and free verse poems. They discuss and practice using a number of poetic devices, including alliteration, hyperbole, and onomatopoeia.

7 Peer-Editing and Review

Students are introduced to the editing process and to peer review. They have the opportunity to share their work with classmates and help each other edit their work.

Course Schedule

Day 1

Introduction to Personal Narratives

Students learn about and discuss the elements of personal narratives.

Reading Personal Narratives

Students read and discuss the personal narratives "The Climb" and Truman Capote's "A Christmas Memory."

Drafting Personal Narratives

After a grammar lesson on common writing mistakes, students brainstorm, draft, and write their own personal narratives.

Day 2

Pre-Writing Day 2

Students finish their personal narratives from the day before and share these with the class. They then write an imaginary conversation between two historical or fictional characters to practice writing dialogue.

Point of View/ Dialogue exercises

Students learn the different types of Point of View for narratives, and rewrite earlier work from a different Point of View.

Reading "Two Kinds"

Students read Amy Tan's "Two Kinds" and discuss it, focusing especially on the point of view and dialogue.

Peer Conference Day 2

Students learn the guidelines of peer group reviewing, then form small groups in which they can share their work and provide constructive feedback.

Day 3

Pre-Writing Day 3

Students practice character description by inventing and writing a description of their own fictional character.

Writing and Reading Settings

Students begin to read "The Scarlet Ibis" to illustrate the importance of setting. They then write their own description of a setting and share it in a peer conference.

Reading and Writing Character

Students finish reading "The Scarlet Ibis" and then write a story featuring their own invented character.

Day 4

Pre-Writing Day 4

Students listen to a dramatic classical piece of music and use it as inspiration to write a story.

Drafting Longer Stories

Students discuss the drafting process and start drafting their longer stories.

Story Elements

Students learn more about the elements of a story, and how to structure a longer story.

Reading for Story Elements

Students read Doris Lessing's short story "The Tunnel" and discuss the various plot elements, including conflict and motive.

Story Writing and Revising

Students write and revise the long stories they drafted earlier.

Day 5

Pre-Writing Activity Day 5

Students complete a pre-writing exercise which allows them to focus on dialogue in preparation for the lesson on playwriting.

Learning and Practicing Playwriting Basics

Students discuss the elements of play-writing and the differences between stage play scripts and screenplay scripts; they then turn their pre-writing into a scene in a play.

Playwriting Techniques

Students learn about the importance of elements like conciseness, tone, strong verbs, and foreshadowing in playwriting, and begin brainstorming their plays.

Performing a Script

Students perform a short play called "Twelve Angry Pigs" as inspiration for their own playwriting.

Begin Writing a Play

Students begin writing the plays they brainstormed earlier, using the literary elements and techniques they have learned.

Day 6

Pre-writing Day 6

Students imagine what is going on in a famous painting and use this to write a scene in a play or movie.

Finish Writing Plays

Students complete the plays they began writing on Day 5.

Reading "Who's On First."

Students read the famous comedy routine "Who's on First" as an example of fast-paced, compelling dialogue.

Revising Plays

Students learn the elements of revision and editing and apply these to their plays. They then cast their classmates in their plays.

Performing Plays

Students perform the plays they have written with the help of their classmates.

Day 7

Pre-Writing Day 7

Students come up with specific verbs, images, settings, and emotions related to an experience they've had, and use these to write a poem.

Elements and Types of Poetry

Students learn about various types of poems and read examples, including sonnets, lyric poems, and free verse poems.

Figures of Speech

Students learn the figures of speech that are important to poetry, including similes, metaphors, and personification.

Poem Writing

Students write, edit, and share their own poems, in which they use the figures of speech discussed in class.

Day 8

Pre-Writing Day 8

Students write a story using exaggeration, in preparation for the lesson on hyperbole.

Epics, Elegies, and Haiku

Students learn about three more types of poems-- epics, elegies, and haiku-- and read examples.

Literary Devices

Students learn about literary devices including hyperbole, onomatopoeia, and alliteration, and learn when to avoid intensifiers and qualifiers in their writing.

Writing Free-Verse Poetry

Students work on their own free-verse poems.

Day 9

Pre-Writing Day 9

Students write about a supernatural, fantasy, or science fiction creature in the genre of their choice.

Grammar Review

Students learn new grammar lessons and participate in activities to refresh their memory of previous grammar lessons.

Read "The Pedestrian."

Students read and discuss the short story "The Pedestrian" to refresh their memory of the elements of prose writing.

Literary Anthology Day 9

Students select pieces they've written in class for inclusion in the class literary anthology, and work on revising and editing these pieces.

Day 10

Pre-Writing Game Day 10

Students play a game which allows them to write a story collaboratively with their classmates.

Literary Anthology Day 10, Part 1

Students complete work on their pieces for the class literary anthology.

Literary Anthology Day 10, part 2

Students receive their copies of the anthologies; they decorate the covers and take some time to read each others' work.

"The Lady or the Tiger?"

Students read a final short story, "The Lady or the Tiger," and discuss their interpretation of the ending, as well as the importance of character and setting to the story.

Free Writing

Students use the remainder of the class to write creatively, using the knowledge and writing skills they have acquired in class.

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