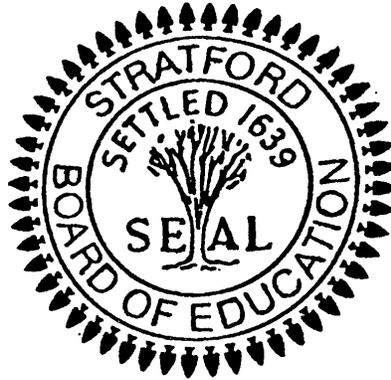


STRATFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Stratford, Connecticut



“Tantum eruditi sunt liberi”
Only the Educated Are Free

Creative Writing

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Section II: General Information

Rationale

Students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 may take creative writing as an English elective, with no pre-requisite. Some students take a single year, others may elect to take a second, third, and even fourth year. The students in these sections are grouped in one instructional period. This unpredictable mix of students from any grade and any level presents both opportunities and challenges to the students and the teacher. In any case, the course can supplement various components of the English Language Arts program in the high schools. For example, the same steps in the writing process used for a character analysis in the English class can serve to create a story or poem in creative writing. Furthermore, instruction in sentence and paragraph structure, vocabulary, and usage that takes place in the English classroom finds constant application in creative writing projects like narrative fiction and creative nonfiction. There are, of course, key differences involving critical versus creative thinking. Creative writing requires both: it is in large part problem-based learning, requiring both the analytical and creative halves of the brain. Like our classes in journalism and annual writing, the most special feature of the course is publication, whether in print, video, or live performance. Second and third year students produce the annual magazines, while any student can join the school's performance poetry club; both of these activities requires working in diverse groups, which is an important aspect of 21st century education. Creative Writing 1,2, 3, and 4 is offered to students in grades nine, ten, eleven and twelve who have an interest in writing. Creative 1 will stress the fundamentals of writing, especially the writing of short stories, informal essays, and verse. Students will have the opportunity to publish their writing. Creative Writing 2,3, and 4 are advanced courses in writing offered to students who have completed Creative Writing 1 or have demonstrated the ability to write. The course is conducted as a workshop. Students will analyze and evaluate each other's writing. Students will serve as editors for the school literary magazine.

CONTENT/PROCESS EMPHASIS

Stratford creative writing students will demonstrate mastery in the following areas as indicated:

Personal Skills

- Understand mistakes as opportunities to grow
- Understand school-appropriateness for sharing of writing
- Understand false starts as a common and necessary part of the writing process
- Distinguish between personal and public writing
- Develop a personal journal
- Develop a creative writing notebook
- Develop discipline as a writer through regular practice of the process
- Develop voice by reading, modeling, and writing in many genres
- Identify and use internet sites that provide writing tips and examples of good writing
- Meet deadlines

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

- Share writing orally with classmates
- Interact positively with peers by giving and accepting feedback
- Practice the art of compromise
- Set publishing goals (second year students)

Writing Process

- Use and refine the steps of the writing process
- Emphasize or de-emphasize various steps according to the goals of each unit or the needs of each student
- Understand the Chronology of Composition (second year students)

Assessment

- Contribute original writing to class, school, and outside publications
- Compile a portfolio of outstanding personal work
- Create and use rubrics for self-assessment
- Show effective use of the writing process

Language

- Use diction appropriate to topic, purpose, and occasion
- Use diction to lend freshness and originality
- Use detail to develop subject and reveal voice
- Use detail to create a precise mental picture
- Use detail to bring life and color to description
- Use detail to make abstract descriptions more concrete
- Use detail with care to add meaning, and to avoid detracting from it
- Use a variety of imagery
- Examine the traditional meanings of images
- Recognize nontraditional imagery
- Vary sentence length
- Vary sentence structure
- Identify and use transitional words, phrases, clauses, and sentences
- Use Standard Written English whenever appropriate
- Identify and distinguish between fact and fiction
- Identify and distinguish between fact and opinion
- Analyze how writers use verbs to develop vivid prose and poetry

Vocabulary/Writing Terms

- Master specialized vocabulary in each focus area
- Master use of denotation and connotation

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Each question is followed by the letters of the related enduring understandings listed below.

1. Why write? (F, H, I, J, K)
2. What is creative writing?? (G, I, K)
3. How does one become a more effective writer? (How does it “work”?) (B, C, D, E, L, M, N, O)
4. Who am I and who is my audience? (J, O)
5. How can I use my own experiences in my writing? (H, J)
6. How can being a writer help me to interact more meaningfully with other people? (I, J, O)

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- A. There is a crisis in writing skills not only among high school students, but also among college students and adults.
- B. The *writing process* is a proven method of dealing with this crisis. The process is essentially the same, regardless of the genre of writing.
- C. Writing teachers should share what they know about the writing process with their students and teachers of other subjects.
- D. Teachers of writing must also be writers themselves, willing to talk to their students about their own writing experiences and sharing early and final drafts of their writing.
- E. Writing teachers must work with their students to develop positive attitudes toward writing and to increase students’ ability to progress through the writing process with the goals of their becoming independent writers.
- F. Writing can be used as an art form or for functional purposes. The distinction has more to do with content than with language skills. In expository writing, the objective is often clearer at the outset than in non-expository writing. There doesn’t need to be a reason to write in a non-expository mode; writing itself can be reason enough.
- G. Virtually all writing is creative, in that it involves discovering exactly what one wants to say and the best way to say it. Creative writing generally takes the form of fiction, poetry, drama, memoir, the creative essay, or journal writing.

- H. Conceiving and communicating a series of ideas can be as satisfying a writing experience as getting in touch with and expressing feelings.
- I. Writing is not only self-expression; it is also self-formation and re-formation, especially when it helps us develop a sense of who we are, what we know, and how we fit into the world.
- J. Students should have an open forum to explore and exhibit to their peers their *social location*. *Social location* is defined as backgrounds, cultures, histories, races, sexes, gender identities, sexual orientations, religions, people one knows, and experiences one has had: the overall makeup of each individual that makes him or her unique.
- K. Writing can be its own reward, personally meaningful and sometimes even fun!
- L. Imagination and emotional capacity develop with us. We all have artistic capability that can be developed. No one knows exactly what “talent” is, how much of it is natural, or how much can be acquired; desire and perseverance are major factors in successful writing.
- M. Reading, thinking, and writing are inextricably connected.
- N. Creative writing is a lab class requiring access to computers in the classroom.
- O. There are various audiences that influence the decisions that the writer makes.

TERMS

NOTE: This is not to suggest a preliminary “writing terms” unit before beginning work on any genre of writing. Rather, the terms below would be handled best by introducing them organically during the course of study.

Common to poetry and prose (in addition to terms commonly studied in English, such as *character*, *denouement*, *setting*, *theme*, and *tone*):

- connotation and denotation
- diction, word choice
- explode the moment
- imagery
- voice

Frequently associated with poetry:

- conceit
- concision, word economy
- line break
- meter
- poetic devices (alliteration, assonance, caesura, etc.)
- poetic forms (haiku, quatrain, four-by-four, etc.)
- rhyme (eye rhyme, internal rhyme, half rhyme, etc.)
- speaker
- stanza

Frequently associated with prose:

- characterization methods (direct and indirect, character’s dialogue, others’ dialogue, etc.)
- cliffhanger
- flashback
- framed story
- point of view (person, limited or omniscient, etc.)
- suspense

Writing process:

- pre-write, brainstorm/web, free write, focused free write
- draft, produce a rough draft, draft a “sloppy copy”
- conference, peer-conference, workshop
- revise
- edit, peer-edit, proofread
- publish, share, read-around, project, print, post, podcast

Unit Name: What is creative nonfiction?

Synopsis: This unit serves as an introduction to narrative writing. In part it is designed to broaden students' conception of the form.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Enduring Understandings

Essential Understandings:

- Students should have an open forum to explore and exhibit to their peers their social location (backgrounds, cultures, histories, races, sexes, gender identities, orientations, religions, people one knows and experiences one has had: the overall makeup of each individual that makes him or her unique).
- Imagination and emotional capacity develop with us. We all have artistic capability that can be developed. No one knows exactly what "talent" is, how much of it is natural, or how much can be acquired; desire and perseverance are major factors in successful writing.
- Writing can be used as an art form or for functional purposes. The distinction has more to do with content than with specific writing skills. In expository writing, the objective is often clearer at the outset than in non-expository writing. There doesn't need to be a reason to write in a non-expository mode; writing itself can be reason enough.

Learning Objectives / Grade Level Expectations

- Students will use the writing process.
- Students will use narrative writing to reveal aspects of their character.
- Students will write their own life stories

Essential Questions

- Why write?
- What is creative writing?
- How does one become a more effective writer?
- Who am I and who is my audience?

Unit Name: Forms of Creative Nonfiction

Synopsis: This unit serves as an introduction to the various forms of creative nonfiction.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Enduring Understandings

Essential Understandings:

- Reading, thinking, and writing are inextricably connected.
- Writing about one's self can reveal truths previously hidden.
- Writing can be used as an art form or for functional purposes. The distinction has more to do with content than with specific writing skills. In expository writing, the objective is often clearer at the outset than in non-expository writing. There doesn't need to be a reason to write in a non-expository mode; writing itself can be reason enough.

Essential Questions

- Why write?
- How does one become a more effective writer?
- Who am I and who is my audience?
- How can detail and description improve a piece of writing?

Learning Objectives / Grade Level Expectations

- Students will use diction related to topic, purpose, and occasion.
- Students will use detail to develop subject and reveal voice.
- Students will use detail to bring life and color to description.

Unit Name: Coming to Stratford

Synopsis: Students will write a creative non-fiction piece, based on family research (interview), relating how their families came to live in Stratford.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Enduring Understandings

- Writing personal and family nonfiction can reveal truths previously hidden to one’s self.
- Students should have an open forum to explore and exhibit to their peers their social location (backgrounds, cultures, histories, races, sexes, gender identities, orientations, religions, people one knows, and experiences one has had: the overall makeup of each individual that makes him or her unique).
- Writing can be used as an art form or for functional purposes. The distinction has more to do with content than with specific writing skills. In expository writing, the objective is often clearer at the outset than in non-expository writing. There doesn’t need to be a reason to write in a non-expository mode; writing itself can be reason enough.
- Research is a valuable tool for the writer.

Essential Questions

- Why write?
- How does one become a more effective writer?
- Who am I and who is my audience?
- How can detail and description improve a piece of writing?
- How did my family and I get here?

Learning Objectives / Grade Level Expectations

- Students will use detail with care to add meaning.
- Students will identify and use transitional words, phrases, clauses, and sentences.
- Students will use interviewing techniques as a research tool.

Unit Name: Changing Genre

Synopsis: Part I: This unit is a response to the annual *Unlearn* read-in. Students will select an article and revise and edit it in a different genre.

Part II: Students will select a second article, research the topic, then revise the article into a “Dear Abby” column with both question and answer based on current research.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Enduring Understandings

- Writing can be used as an art form or for functional purposes. The distinction has more to do with content than with specific writing skills. In expository writing, the objective is often clearer at the outset than in non-expository writing. There doesn’t need to be a reason to write in a non-expository mode; writing itself can be reason enough.
- Writing can be a source of strength and growth in dealing with the problems and challenges that adolescents face.
- Changes in point of view and/or genre create new opportunities for the writer, and lead to new discoveries.

Essential Questions

- Why write?
- How does one become a more effective writer?
- Who am I and who is my audience?
- How can being a writer help one to interact more meaningfully with people?

Learning Objectives / Grade Level Expectations

- Students will use the RAFT (Role of the writer, Audience, Format, Topic) techniques and detail to create a precise mental picture.
- Students will be aware of the seriousness of health issues and ways to find help.

Unit Name: Short Story

Synopsis: Students will use literary techniques and dialogue to write a short story.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Enduring Understandings

- Writing can be used as an art form or for functional purposes. The distinction has more to do with content than with specific writing skills. In expository writing, the objective is often clearer at the outset than in non-expository writing. There doesn't need to be a reason to write in a non-expository mode; writing itself can be reason enough.
- Writing can be a source of strength and growth in dealing with the problems and challenges that adolescents face.
- Changes in point of view and/or genre create new opportunities for the writer, and lead to new discoveries

Essential Questions

- What is narrative writing? What are the key components of a narrative piece?
- What are the stages of writing a narrative piece?
- What forms can a narrative piece take?
- When writing a narrative piece, how do you avoid summarizing and instead, create a scene by showing the reading what happens?
- When writing a narrative piece, how do you evaluate the significance of the events after having described them? How do you determine how explicit your evaluation will be to your reader?
- Why is it important to consider your purpose and audience? What aspects of your narrative piece are influenced by your audience and purpose?
- How do you select an appropriate title for your narrative piece?

Learning Objectives / Grade Level Expectations

- Students will effectively use dialogue.
- Students will employ various literary devices including point-of-view, characterization, setting, and sensory details.
- Students will write a short story.

Unit Name: What Is Poetry?

Synopsis: This unit serves as an introduction to the writing of poetry. In part, it is designed to broaden students' conception of the form (beyond, for instance, the need to rhyme).

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Enduring Understandings

- Writing can be used as an art form or for functional purposes (expository vs. non-expository writing). The distinction has more to do with content than with language skills. In expository writing, the objective is often clearer at the outset than in non-expository writing. There doesn't need to be a reason to write in a non-expository mode; writing itself can be reason enough.
- Imagination and emotional capacity develop with us. We all have artistic capability that can be developed. No one knows exactly what "talent" is, how much of it is natural, or how much can be acquired; desire and perseverance are major factors in successful writing.
- Students should have an open forum to explore and exhibit to their peers their social location. (backgrounds, cultures, histories, races, sexes, gender identities, sexual orientations, religions, people one knows, and experiences one has had: the overall makeup of each individual that makes him or her unique).

Essential Questions

- Why write?
- What is creative writing?
- How does one become a more effective writer? (How does it "work"?)
- Who am I and who is my audience?

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to recall several definitions of and approaches to poetry (e.g., William Wordsworth's definition, James Scully's "What is Poetry?", Marianne Moore's "Poetry," John F. Kennedy's quotation about poetry and politics, Robert Frost's quotation).
- Students will formulate their own definitions of poetry.
- Students will write their own poems.

Unit Name: Poetic Devices periodic refreshers and one-day mini-lessons as appropriate
Synopsis: Writers of poetry should have as many tools as possible at their disposal. An exploration of poetic devices (in the abstract and as found in published and student poetry) can fill writers’ toolboxes.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

<p>Enduring Understandings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagination and emotional capacity develop with us. We all have artistic capability that can be developed. No one knows exactly what “talent” is, how much of it is natural, or how much can be acquired; desire and perseverance are major factors in successful writing. • Reading, thinking, and writing are inextricably connected. • There are various audiences that influence the decisions that the writer makes. 	<p>Essential Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does one become a more effective writer? (How does it “work”?) • Who am I and who is my audience?
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Learning Objectives / Grade Level Expectations

- Students will be able to identify and employ several poetic devices.

Unit Name: Poetic Forms periodic refreshers and one-day mini-lessons as appropriate
Synopsis: Writers of poetry should have as many tools as possible at their disposal. An exploration of poetic forms (in the abstract and as found in published and student poetry) can fill writers’ toolboxes.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

<p>Enduring Understandings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagination and emotional capacity develop with us. We all have artistic capability that can be developed. No one knows exactly what “talent” is, how much of it is natural, or how much can be acquired; desire and perseverance are major factors in successful writing. • Reading, thinking, and writing are inextricably connected. • There are various audiences that influence the decisions that the writer makes. 	<p>Essential Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does one become a more effective writer? (How does it “work”?) • Who am I and who is my audience?
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Learning Objectives / Grade Level Expectations

- Students will be able to identify and employ several poetic forms.

Unit Name: Performance Poetry periodic refreshers and one-day mini-lessons as appropriate
Synopsis: Poetry is a form of sound and sense and, as such, is meant to be heard. It is also a form historically linked to emotion. These facts, and the current popularity of performance poetry among young people, argue for the teaching of a unit specifically addressing poetry in performance.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

<p>Enduring Understandings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagination and emotional capacity develop with us. We all have artistic capability that can be developed. No one knows exactly what “talent” is, how much of it is natural, or how much can be acquired; desire and perseverance are major factors in successful writing. • Reading, thinking, and writing are inextricably connected. • There are various audiences that influence the decisions that the writer makes. 	<p>Essential Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does one become a more effective writer? (How does it “work”?) • Who am I and who is my audience? • How can I use my own experiences in my writing? • How can being a writer help me to interact more meaningfully with other people?
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Learning Objectives / Grade Level Expectations

- Students will be able to identify, define, and demonstrate effective performance poetry techniques.

