

## Grade 6 – 8 Creative Writing Syllabus

### WEEK 1 – POETRY

Monday

*AM*

- Introduction to the class.
- Read and discuss the first two brief chapters (Introduction and Getting ready) of Mary Oliver’s “A Poetry Handbook”.
- Who can be a poet? What makes a poem *good*? What is the purpose of poems?
- We will discuss previous notions of what we think poems should be with hopes of expanding outwards to incorporate a world of material that is generally not thought of as being “poem-worthy.”
- Start with the first 10 poems of “Poetry 180” and discuss.

*PM*

- Begin by discussing the free-write.
- The first half hour after lunch will be time spent writing silently and will be followed by a sharing session and more discussion of the poems we started reading earlier in the day.

Tuesday

*AM*

- We will discuss how to read and imitate poems using those chapters from the Oliver book.
- We will read from the chapters aloud as well as continue through Poetry 180.

*PM*

- Each person will model their own poem from one they’ve read so far in the class.
- The workshop setting will be introduced.
- We will break into small groups and discuss our own work.

Wednesday

*AM*

- Chapters on Imagery, Sound, and More Devices of Sound will be discussed.

*PM*

- We will continue through Poetry 180.

Thursday

*AM*

- Chapters on Revision / Workshops and Solitude.
- Poetry 180 poems.

*PM*

- First half of Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet*

Friday

*AM*

- Chapter on free verse/conclusion.
- Second half of Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet*

*PM*

- Workshop day

## **WEEK 2 – SHORT FICTION**

Monday

*AM*

- What makes a story? Why write one at all? We will discuss what makes a good story by reading several short-short stories as well as listening to several podcasts of stories told without notes by noted story tellers.
- What do we find compelling and absolutely necessary? What do we find bothers us about some stories? What do we look for when we set out to read a story? What kind of story do we want to write?
- What are our favorite stories from our own lives and how can we shape those stories into fiction?

*PM*

- We will read a longer story to ourselves silently and then discuss. After, students will do some free writing. Prompts will be provided and students will be encouraged to work from them, but it is not mandatory.
- After sufficient writing time, students will break into small groups with the teaching assistants to share and/or discuss their writing process or simply what they want to write about.
- Class will reconvene and discuss choosing subject-matter.

Tuesday

*AM*

- We will discuss where plot comes from and how it is constructed.
- We will have a guest fiction writer come in to discuss this very difficult issue.
- We will examine sections of various essays that explore plot and discuss why it is important.
- Plot is one of the most integral and difficult aspects of fiction and we will discuss various ways of making it less intimidating.

*PM*

- We will discuss conflict and how it works to move plot forward and develop characters.
- We will discuss voice and examine the work of different voice-driven writers.
- We will examine how voice is not an ends but a means through examples in stories.
- We will work independently writing and reading, coming together halfway through to share something about what we are reading or writing.

Wednesday

*AM*

- We will discuss how to compose characters. We will do some in-class exercises built around learning to construct the identities of the people in our stories. Often we are tempted to tell the entire back-story, but we will explore how to allow voice to do that work for us.
- We will examine some of our favorite characters from literature and film.

*PM*

- We will break into small groups and each group will make one character. We will then regroup and put those characters into a situation and we will all write separate stories using those characters and situation.
- Stories will be shared and we will spend the final hour working on independent writing and reading.

Thursday

*AM*

- We will respond to a longer story and discuss in large group comparing the story to the previous ones we have read.
- We will explore not only various techniques we have thus far discussed, but how we respond and what those responses mean.
- We will discuss what it means to react to a story and how those reactions can change.

*PM*

- We will break into small groups led by the teaching assistants to discuss how we read and come back to talk about that.
- We will then free-write the beginnings of three to five short stories and regroup to share.

Friday

*AM*

- We will discuss how we felt personally about our experience with poetry versus short fiction and how our perspectives have been expanded.
- We will explore the lyric essay and areas of creative writing that fall between genres such as the short-short, flash fiction, prose poem, and letter.
- We will discuss what makes them different from more traditional forms and what opportunities they present.

*PM*

Workshop and final presentations