

Reading and Writing

The Short Story

Department: English (Senior Elective)

Proposer: David Bye

Length: 1 Year

This course: 1) emphasizes the crucial relationship between reading and writing short stories and 2) encourages the influence of renowned writers upon student writers. Concentrating on a different genre each quarter, students initially study stories by the masters and then create their own. The major goal of the course is to convince students that successful writers are necessarily lifelong readers.

First Quarter – The Conventional Story

Weeks 1-4

After reading and studying representative stories by the craft's founders, Chekhov and Poe, students progress to other masters such as: Irving, Hawthorne, Twain, Wharton, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Porter, Baldwin, O'Connor, Carver, Tan, Updike, and Allende. We pay particular attention to the use of the following elements in creating a conventional story: character, point of view, plot, conflict, climax, denouement, figurative language, dramatic irony, and theme.

- Writing Assignment: A 750-1000 word essay comparing and contrasting the **structures** of two stories by different authors.

Weeks 5-7

Students write their own conventional short story. Meeting in workshops, students critique each other's drafts.

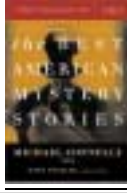
- Writing Assignment: A 1500-2000 word conventional short story.

Week 8

In the lab, students word process their completed stories in a standardized format to create an online anthology.

Week 9

Students read their stories aloud to classmates.



Second Quarter – The Mystery Story

Weeks 10-13

Students read and study several stories in The Best American Mystery Stories of the Year. We pay close attention to strategies different mystery writers employ to achieve desired effects.

- Writing Assignment: A 750-1000 word essay comparing and contrasting the **creation of suspense** in two mystery stories by different authors.

Weeks 14-16

Students write their own mystery story. Each story must incorporate some well-known feature of Berkeley's setting in the plot. Meeting in workshops, students critique each other's drafts.

- Writing Assignment: A 1500-2000 word mystery story.

Week 17

In the lab, students word process their completed stories in a standardized format to create an online anthology.

Week 18

Students read their stories aloud to classmates.

Third Quarter – The Experimental Story

Weeks 19-22

Students read several entries in Donald Barthelme's collection, Sixty Stories. We attempt to: 1) discover the conventional rules he breaks in each story and 2) articulate the effects he attempts to achieve by breaking the rules.

- Writing Assignment: A 750-1000 word essay comparing and contrasting the **experimental structure** of two stories by Donald Barthelme.

Weeks 23-25

Students write their own experimental short story, breaking at least one conventional rule. Meeting in workshops, students critique each other's drafts.

- **Writing Assignment:** A 1500-2000 experimental short story.

Week 26

In the lab, students word process their completed stories in a standardized format to create an online anthology.

Week 27

Students read their stories aloud to classmates.

Fourth Quarter – The Children's Story

Weeks 28-31

We use Bettelheim's The Uses of Enchantment to help us understand the inner workings of several short stories. Students then study works by renowned children's authors such as Carroll, Seuss, and Sendak. We concentrate on the didactic and moral effects that stories have on children.

- **Writing Assignment:** A 750-1000 word essay comparing and contrasting the **moral themes** of two children's stories by different authors.

Weeks 32-34

In pairs, students write and illustrate their own children's story. Meeting in workshops, students critique each other's drafts.

- **Writing Assignment:** A 1500-2000 word conventional short story.

Week 35

In the lab, students word process their completed stories in a standardized format to create an online anthology.

Week 36

Students go to Washington Elementary School to read their stories to youngsters.

California State Standard's Addressed

| <u>#</u> | <u>Standard</u> | <u>Classroom Activity</u> |
|----------------|---|---|
| READING | | |
| 3.2 | Analyze the way in which the theme or meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, using textual evidence to support the claim. | Classroom discussions and analytical essays on all four kinds of short stories. Workshops in which students critique each other's stories. |
| 3.3 | Analyze the ways in which irony, tone, mood, the author's style, and the sound of language achieve specific rhetorical or aesthetic purposes or both. | Classroom discussions and analytical essays on all four kinds of short stories. Workshops in which students critique each other's stories. |
| 3.6 | Analyze the way in which authors through the centuries have used archetypes drawn from myth... | Discussion of Bettelheim's <u>The Uses of Enchantment</u> to understand children's literature. |
| 3.7 | Analyze recognized works of world literature from a variety of authors. | Classroom discussions and analytical essays on all four kinds of short stories by recognized masters of the craft . |
| 3.9 | Analyze the philosophical arguments presented in literary works to determine whether the authors' positions have contributed to the quality of each work and the credibility of the characters. | Classroom discussions and analytical essays on all four kinds of short stories. Workshops in which students critique each other's authorial positions and credibility of characters. |
| WRITING | | |
| 1.2 | Use point of view, characterization, style (e.g. use of irony), and related elements for specific rhetorical and aesthetic purposes. | Writing four different kinds of short stories during the year. Workshops in which students critique each other's stories. |
| 1.5 | Use language in natural, fresh, and vivid ways to establish a specific tone. | Writing four different kinds of short stories during the year. Workshops in which students critique each other's stories. |
| 1.7 | Use systematic strategies to organize and record information. | In the computer lab, word processing stories in a standardized format to assemble an online anthology. |
| 1.9 | Revise text to highlight the individual voice, improve sentence variety and style, and enhance subtlety of meaning | Writing four different kinds of short stories during the year. |

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| | and tone in ways that are consistent with the purpose, audience, and genre. | Workshops in which students critique each other's stories. |
| 2.1 | Write fictional, autobiographical, or biographical narratives. | Analytical essays on and creation of four different kinds of short stories. |
| 2.2 | Write responses to literature. | Analytical essays on four different kinds of short stories. Workshops in which students critique each other's stories. |

WrittEn and Oral English -- Language conventions

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 1.1 | Demonstrate control of grammar, diction, and paragraph and sentence structure and an understanding of English usage. | Analytical essays on and creation of four different kinds of short stories. Workshops in which students critique each other's stories. |
| 1.2 | Produce legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct punctuation and capitalization. | Analytical essays on and creation of four different kinds of short stories. In the computer lab, word processing stories in a standardized format to assemble an online anthology. |

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 1.7 | Use appropriate rehearsal strategies to pay attention to performance details, achieve command of the text, and create skillful artistic staging. | Reading short stories to the class. Reading children's stories and showing accompanying illustrations to students at Washington Elementary School. |
| 2.5 | Recite [stories]...with attention to performance details to achieve clarity, force, and aesthetic effect and to demonstrate an understanding of the meaning. | Reading short stories to the class. Reading children's stories and showing accompanying illustrations to students at Washington Elementary School. |