Form, content, and style are stressed in this quinmester program in the creative writing of short stories. The program, which is offered by the Dade County Public Schools, is designed for students who wish to improve their writing skills in order to compose a structured short story. Among the learning activities suggested by the program are awareness exercises; cultivation of sensory experiences; discussions of books, plays and movies; and character study. A resource list for students and teacher; includes textbooks, reference materials, films, filmstrips, audio tapes, and records. (RS)
CREATIVE WRITING: SHORT STORIES

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English, Creative Writing

Written by Elaine Kenzel
and
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for the
DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION
Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida
1971
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Miami, Florida 33132

Published by the Dade County School Board
COURSE TITLE: CREATIVE WRITING: SHORT STORIES

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is offered for the student who has a real interest in sharing his experiences through composing short stories, and who wants to communicate clearly and effectively. Form, content, and style are stressed. Selections written in this class will be considered for publication in the school literary magazine.

I. Performance Objectives

A. Presented with a variety of stimuli, students will identify the sense to which each appeals.

B. Given a specific stimulus, students will generate ideas suggested by it.

C. Given a specific stimulus, students will write a description of it.

D. Given a specific stimulus, students will write a reaction to it.

E. Given a picture, students will write a description of it which will enable the reader to "see" what is described.

F. Having selected a specific place, era, or time, students will write a sketch to evoke it in the reader.

G. Given a character's name, students will identify several physical and personality traits suggested by the name.

H. Shown a picture of a person (unknown to them), students will suggest a name for him.

I. Using a snatch of an overheard conversation, a situation presented to them by the teacher, or one they contrive themselves, students will use it as the basis of an incident which reveals character.

J. Having originated a character, students will write a sketch which presents him in a number of different situations and in different ways.

K. Using one of a variety of methods for generating a plot sequence, students will outline plot ideas.
L. Given a short story to read, students will state the theme of it.

M. Given a theme statement, students will suggest a variety of situations, which, if developed, would illustrate it.

N. Having generated an idea, students will identify a theme relating to it.

O. Having read a number of short stories, students will classify them by type: mystery, adventure, science fiction, romance, etc.

P. Presented with a short story to read, students will identify the parts of it and the manner in which the author presents them.

Q. Drawing upon their total experiential background, which now includes a variety of experiences with the elements of a short story, students will write a fully-developed story.

R. Using a published short story or one of their own, students will evaluate it in terms of its effectiveness for the reader.

II. Course Content

A. Rationale

This course seeks to help the writer translate his purpose for writing and his reflections of himself into a unified treatment of a single action: a structured short story. If we accept the above statement, then the writer of a short story must have the requisites of an interest in people, an awareness to transmit, a sensitivity to express feelings and facts, a passion for language, and an ability to criticize. He must utilize these talents for a form that begins with an incident selected for reader-appeal, builds through mini-climaxes, and concludes with the protagonist's search for his objective resolved by a favorable decision, an unfavorable one, or one left open for the reader.

B. Introductory Material

A person writes to be read either by others or by himself. The idea he chooses and how he conveys it mirror his experience and purpose. His sensitivity, therefore, must be sharpened by a sequence of awareness activities involving some dealing with sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. By carefully planned activities, the writer is helped to generate ideas and to achieve
the transmission of these via a blueprint for the complete short story.

Students must become involved in a variety of experiences utilizing the elements of a short story. They should practice writing descriptive material which will evoke a feeling of a particular mood, setting, time, place, or period.

Then they should select a character with specific physical and personality traits and a suitable name. This character may be revealed to the reader by several methods: conversation by the character or dialogue about the character by others or between the character and others; actions of the character or by actions of others toward him; thoughts of his own or thoughts of others about him. Placing the character in a variety of situations and using the above methods of character revelation develop a rounded character.

The plot sequence and the character portrayal blend to convey meaningful human action illustrating the chosen theme. Devices such as suspense, conflict, foreshadowing, and symbols are used to create curiosity and tension regarding the outcome.

An investigation of the types of short stories (romance, adventure, mystery, science fiction, etc.) will help the student determine the proper type through which to convey best his idea and purpose.

Drawing upon his experiential background and imagination the student will write a fully-developed short story. An analysis of its effectiveness for the reader should be a constant consideration. In addition, a final evaluation by the writer and by a number of his peers, should prove helpful in determining the effectiveness of the story as a whole. Consideration should be given to the choice of words, to the arrangement of events, to the accuracy of any facts used, to the development of character, and to the achievement of a single purpose.

III. Learning Activities

A. Use awareness exercises to develop students' depth, breadth, and height of observation, perception, and sensitivity.

1. Sight
a. Place an object in a prominent position before students. Ask them to write a description of it, being careful to include facts about its size, shape, color, weight, texture, and thickness.

b. Show students a piece of poster board to which you have affixed a variety of pictures, pieces of string, or other small objects. Have them look at it for three minutes and tell them you will ask questions about what they have seen at the end of that time. Turn the poster around and ask your prepared questions, which might concern the number, the color, or the variety of the pictures or objects. Students should assess the degree of their observation and memory by the number of correct responses.

c. Show students a stimulus film such as "Ski the Outer Limits" or "Psychedelic Wet" or a loop film such as "Color of Autumn." While the film is running or immediately afterward, have students list all of the ideas and feelings they have which were suggested by the film.

d. Play a non-verbal record or tape and ask students to write about what they see while listening to it.

e. Show students a picture, slides, a filmstrip, a film, or a film loop such as "Color All Around Us." After they view it, ask them to identify all their observations. Discuss these and have students note the variety of responses. A second showing may reveal how much students did not see the first time.

f. Show students a picture from a magazine, perhaps on an opaque projector. Have them tell about what's happening in the picture; ask them to imagine what took place before this picture and after the incident shown. Then have them arrange these in the most effective manner and tell a story using them as a base.

2. Hearing

a. Have students list all of the sound words which denote noises specific "things" make. (Examples: a bus, a baby, a piece of paper, a stone, a jackhammer, a leaf.)

b. Ask students to be completely quiet for three minutes. Have them identify and describe all sounds they heard during this period of "silence."
c. Stage an incident. Have someone burst into the room and angrily demand an explanation about something. When the incident is over, have students write up what they heard (and saw). Compare the various versions and discuss point of view.

d. Play a record or a tape of electronic music. Have students describe what they heard or have them react to it. Other types of music may also be used.

e. Show students a picture (from a magazine, on an acetate, or a slide) and ask them to write about what they hear as they look at it.

3. Taste

a. Have students describe the most bitter, sweet, or sour taste they can remember without naming the item. They may find it useful to employ comparison or contrast, using simile or metaphor.

b. Suggest a number of items of varying consistencies and tastes and ask students to describe each for someone who does not know what the item is, what it looks like, nor how it tastes. (Examples: pepper, mashed potatoes, grapefruit, wax, cantalope)

c. Give each student a piece of candy. (Ask students to tell you if they should not eat it for any reason.) Have students describe its taste.

4. Smell

a. Have students describe the smell of something (smoke, freshly cut grass, shaving lotion, burned toast) they can remember without naming it.

b. Suggest a number of scents (gasoline, salt water, pine needles, jasmine) and ask students to describe each for someone who does not know what the item is, what it looks like, nor how it smells.

c. Uncap a bottle of perfume or shaving lotion and let each student smell it briefly. Have them write a description of its aroma, using comparison or contrast. Ask them to suggest a name for it which captures its essence.
5. **Touch**

a. **Have students describe a touch sensation.** They may find it helpful to list words which describe such sensations before they begin their description.

b. **Suggest a number of items (metal, a wire brush, velvet, sand, a piece of chalk) and have students describe their feel.**

c. **Put several items (thumbtack, apple peeling, raisins, cold noodles, small piece of torn material) in a bag. Have each student feel the contents of the bag without looking inside. They are then to name the items, describe the feel of each, and identify the sensation aroused by each.**

6. **Emotion**

a. **Have students write about the happiest, saddest, most poignant or most decisive experience in their lives.**

b. **Have students brainstorm to compile a list of human emotions. From this list they are to select several which they will develop in two ways. First, they will write a short sketch in which they show one character experiencing the emotion. Next, they will write a piece which evokes that same emotion in a reader. (Example: A character in an incident is angry because his luggage has been stolen. An account of a grave injustice might arouse anger in a reader.)**

c. **Have students write about how they feel toward their paternal grandfather, a younger cousin, an older brother, the mailman, a pet, a "prized" possession, a girlfriend. They should include specific causes for these attitudes.**

d. **Have students identify traits they admire and those they dislike in others.**

e. **Ask students to imagine that someone very close to them has been away for six weeks and is returning today via plane. While the student is eating dinner, he learns from the television news that a plane crashed in a remote area**
two-hundred miles away. Many are believed killed or seriously injured. At that moment the phone rings. Have students describe their feelings from the time of the announcement to the actual picking up of the receiver.

f. Give students a situation similar to the following: from a bus you see a woman astride a girder atop the George Washington Bridge. Have students brainstorm and from the items suggested ask them to select those which can be related and then to develop these into a sequential pattern by time, space, or logic.

B. Give students a list of a variety of items which appeal to one (or more) sense. Have them classify them according to the sense to which they appeal. (Example: a cloud, a tree, a bell, wind, grapefruit, burned toast, a cough)

C. Show students pictures or have them bring in their own and ask them to write a description of one (or more) which would enable a reader to see without visually looking at the picture. A reader should have a mental image similar to the visual image or the author's imaginary image if the writing communicates clearly the intent and perceptions of the author.

D. Discuss with students the books, stories, and plays they have read and the films and television shows they have seen to determine the types of moods portrayed. Ask them to identify the ways in which an author portrays mood. (Possibly via setting, the character's actions and speech, descriptions, the theme, and plot.)

E. Have students determine the settings with which they are familiar (through primary -- being there -- and secondary-- reading, hearing, viewing it vicariously -- sources). Ask them to select a setting from their own experience or to choose one from a list for each of the three types of setting:

1. Time (of day, week, month, year)
   Examples: breakfast, picnic in May, New Year's Eve, 5:00 a.m., dusk, summer, the first week of school

2. Place
   Examples: antebellum home in Mississippi, Waikiki, Paris, Coral Gables, University of Florida, home, amusement park
3. Era
   Examples: the Inquisition, the Crusades, the Jazz Age, the Victorian Era

   Students are to write a sketch in which they evoke in the reader the feeling of the particular time, place, and era they have selected.

F. Have students write a number of names on the board. (Examples: Homer Holland, Marcy LePage, Wesley Van Granoff, Sam Gravatt, Bertha Rolley, Fifi DePlume, Losito Doyle, Jake Miller) Have them identify three personality traits and three physical characteristics for someone with this name. They will select one of those to develop into a short sketch in which they show the character evidencing at least one of the personality traits named.

G. Show students a variety of pictures of people or have them contribute some. Have them suggest a name for a certain number of them. They should also give those they name personality and physical traits.

H. Ask students to talk about the stories they have read and seen to determine how published authors have presented their characters. They may suggest some or all of the following:

1. Description
   a. Choose an imaginary character and itemize information which could be used to show the social, political, educational, economic, cultural, geographic, or religious experiences of the individual.
   b. Show how a fat child adapts to life, how a short man compensates, how a gesture or facial expression could be misinterpreted, or how a stereotyped image influences a reader.

2. Conversation
   a. Give students snatches of conversation overheard in the halls or in class. Have them use one of these snatches as the basis of an incident which includes conversation.
   b. Tell students a brief incident. Have them write it up using conversation to portray the feelings, views, or
reactions to the characters.

c. Write a series of short sketches in each of which the "main" character discusses something with several others. This could be something different with each or the same thing. Example of the same topic: A student discussing his grades with his counselor, his teacher, his parents, his brother, his girlfriend) The point of view of the speaker, his concept of himself, and his purpose shape the conversation.

d. Write a sketch in which two characters talk about another who is not present.

e. Have students read a short story which uses conversation and then discuss how much the various characters reveal of themselves and of their perceptions, attitudes, and feelings. How much of this was intentional; how much was unintentional?

3. Actions

a. Have students write a sketch which shows someone doing something.

b. Write a sketch in which a character demonstrates one or more of his personality traits through something he does.

c. Write a sketch in which the actions of a supporting character reveal his attitude toward the "main" character.

4. Thoughts

a. Reveal the thoughts of a character. These may be different from what he says aloud about himself or others.

b. Reveal the thoughts of others toward a "main" character. These may be different from things they speak aloud to or about the "main" character.

All of these suggested activities may be developed using one character for each one or a new character may be selected for each activity chosen.
I. Write a character sketch about an imaginary individual which combines a number of the approaches suggested in "H". By combining methods of presenting character, students should write a sketch which portrays a well-rounded character seen in a number of different circumstances by a variety of people.

J. Have students imagine two people with opposite personality traits and interests. Give each a name and identify a meeting time and place. Assume that because of their opposing traits they will disagree and describe what happens during this, the initial meeting of this sequence. Then ask what happens as a result of the first encounter. What happens next? What is the logical conclusion? What is a plausible twist ending?

K. Present students with the following:

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main character   barriers   objective
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Show them that if the character were to achieve his objective on the first try, there would be no story -- an incident, perhaps but no story. Barriers to achievement create conflict. Have students make three columns on their papers. In column 1 they are to identify a character; in column 2 they are to suggest an objective or goal the character desires to reach or obtain; in column 3 they are to list at least three barriers which could prevent or delay the character from attaining his objective. (Example: 15 year-old boy/ motorcycle / mother's objections, lack of funds, state law prohibiting license for his age.) Students should generate many of these barrier-plots.

L. Study published stories. Outline the major phases of the plot. Discuss what arrangement is used: chronological, spatial, flash-back, stream-of-consciousness.

M. Develop a plot idea by space, time flashback, or stream-of-consciousness. Discuss how each method of presentation changes the story and its effect.

N. Use a plot-generating procedure and have students outline a proposed story. Have them tell these orally.

O. Give students a list of topics (or have them suggest their own)
such as love, war, the draft, or parental authority. Have them make theme statements about these. (Example: love - love is beautiful at any age, love leads only to disillusionment, love is selfish, love brings fulfillment to all involved)

P. Suggest a theme such as "People who are unhappy with themselves find fault with others." Have them outline or suggest a variety of situations which might be used to portray this view of life.

Q. Identify the theme of short stories read.

R. Read a number of short stories and classify them according to type.

S. Study the parts of published short stories and the manner in which the author presents each element.

T. Write a fully-developed short story.

U. Evaluate published or student-written short stories. Discuss the story as a whole. Where in a chronological arrangement of its events did the author choose to begin? What is the probable reason for this? Note the diction and other style factors. How does the author present the story -- by narration, dialogue, third person, first person, omniscient author? Are facts used accurate? Are there any gaps or illogical steps in the development of the characters or of the plot? Does the conclusion result from the motives and actions of the characters or is it contrived?
IV. Student Resources

A. State-adopted Textbooks

The Lively Art of Writing

Creating Clear Images

Composition: Models and Exercises Series

Writing Creatively

Developing Ideas

Studies in the Short Story

B. Non-state-adopted supplementary materials

1. Textbooks and reference materials

   English Grammar and Composition
   (Warriner. Harcourt, Brace and World)

   Man in the Fictional Mode Series

   Diction and Style in Writing

   Developing Writing Skills
   (William W. West. Inglewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentiss-Hall, Inc.)

   Learning to Write in College
   (Reed Smith. Boston, Mass.: D. C. Heath)

   Stop, Look and Write! (Leavitt and Sohn. New York: Bantam)

   Pictures for Writing. (Sohn, Vavid. New York: Bantam)


A Book of Short Stories, 1, 2. (Lodg and Laubacher. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World)

All of the books, periodicals, etc. in the world!

B. Non-state adopted supplementary materials

2. Reference materials (See Teacher Resources)

3. Periodicals (See Teacher Resources)

4. Media Resources (See Teacher Resources)

V. Reference Material

A. Textbooks (See Student Resources)

B. Professional books and periodicals


Creative Writing. (Ziegler. New York: Barnes & Noble)

The Writer. (Periodical)

The English Journal (Periodical)


C. Films

1-13284 "A City of Many Faces"
1-05799 "A"
1-05800 "Clay - Origin of the Species"
1-13819 "The Hand"
1-13835 "The Hat: Is This War Necessary?"
1-05864 "Junkyard"
1-30569 "New Ways in Composition: Planning the Story, Part I"
1-31807 "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"
1-14011 "Pigs!"
1-00193 "Psychedelic We!
1-13841 "Reflections"
1-13827 "River Boy"
1-13849 "A Short Vision"
1-30929 "Ski the Outer Limits"
1-13967 "Two Brothers in Greece"
1-04859 "Wheels, Wheels, Wheels"
1-30758 "Why Man Creates"
1-40015 "The Red Balloon"
1-14386 "Begone Dull Care"
1-30024 "Sense Perception (The Limitations of the Senses)"
   Part I and II
1-00556 "Something to Write About"
1-01209 "Better Choice of Words"
1-11806 "The Black Cat"
1-00314 "Boundary Lines"
1-04213 "'C' Cloth"
1-00182 "Developing Imagination"
1-30128 "Doughnuts, The"
1-30073 "Due Process of Law Denied"
D. Filmstrips


"How to Read A Short Story" (How to Read Literature Series). Popular Science Publishing Company (Denoyer-Geppert, 9601 S. W. 103 Avenue, Miami, Florida 33156).


"Let's Look at a Painting" (Contemporary American Painting). Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, Inc.

"Madrid" (Cities of Europe Series). Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, Inc.

"New York City" (Life in U. S. A. Series). American Council on Education, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20036

-15-
"The Right Word in the Right Place" (Words: Their Origin, Use, and Spelling Series). Society for Visual Education.


"Drag Racing" (Reading Incentive Program), accompanying record. Stanley Bowmar Co., Inc., 4 Broadway, Valhalla, New York 10595.

"Dune Buggies" (Reading Incentive Program), accompanying record. Stanley Bowmar Co., Inc., 4 Broadway, Valhalla, New York 10595.

"Surfing" (Reading Incentive Program), accompanying record. Stanley Bowmar Co., Inc., 4 Broadway, Valhalla, New York 10595.

E. Audio Tapes

3-20112 "What Makes a Writer Readable"

"Once Upon a Time There Was a Story" (National Center for Audio Tapes, Bureau of Audio Visual Instruction, Stadium Building, Room 320, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80302).

"When Sound Makes Sense" (National Center for Audio Tapes).

"Writer as Creator" (National Center for Audio Tapes).

"Listen and Think Program!" (Gordon S. Cook, P. O. Box 2306, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 30303).

"Recognizing Conflict"

"Recognizing Foreshadowing and Climax"

"Understanding Character and Sharing Feelings"

"Understanding Setting"

"Understanding Theme"

"Using Our Senses"
F. Records

"2,000 Years of Music". Folkways/Scholastic Records Services, 904 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

"Vocabulary and Sentence Completion." (Lessons 5-10) (Anatomy of Language Series). Folkways/Scholastic Records Services

"Your Personality," Parts I and II, accompanying filmstrips. Folkways/Scholastic Records Services

"Full Dimensional Sound". Capitol Records, 1750 North Vine, Hollywood, California


"In Sound from Way Out, The," Vanguard Recording Society, Inc., 71 West 23 Street, New York, N. Y.

G. Loop Films

(models for English Composition Series). Ealing Corporation, 2225 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Mass. 02140

"Beach Rescue"

"A Classroom Dilemma"

"Lonely Shore"

"The People Watcher"

"Playing the Game"

"Where the Road Leads"

"Who They Are"

"Film." Ealing Corporation

"Clay." Ealing Corporation

"Color of Autumn." Thorne Films, 1229 University Avenue Boulder, Colorado 80302
"Color of Spring." Thorne Films

"Color of Summer." Thorne Films

"Color of Winter." Thorne Films