

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Title: Creative Writing

Department: English Language Arts

Course Description:

This course is an elective course designed to mold students as both dynamic writers and readers-who-think-as-writers. We will achieve this objective by examining a variety of genres: short stories, poems, memoirs, screenplays, plays, comic books, graphic novels, fairytales and myths.

Class will be conducted primarily as a college-level writer's workshop, with students learning to both critique and accept criticism of their work in a professional, academic manner. Students will also be expected to peer edit extensively throughout the year by using Wikispaces and email to post and exchange assignments. These conferences will help students develop authentic voices as writers, irrespective of genre. Creative writing students are also responsible for aiding in the publication of *The Thistle*, Melrose's literary magazine, through contributions and school publicity.

Primary Course Materials:

- One three-ring binder, pencils and paper
- Notebook for journaling, brainstorming, and personal writing
- Great Works of Edgar Allen Poe
- Selected handouts of texts

Essential Questions:

Thematic Concept: Imaginative Writing

1. What is good writing, and who decides?
2. How does drama contribute to a greater understanding of the human condition?
3. How do we distinguish between "high" art and popular culture?
4. How do we value creative writing in our culture? How do writers work today?
5. Is there a "right" way to write? How do writers develop their voices?
6. How and when does writing shift from a "selfish" act into public art?

Course Objectives:

MHS Learning Expectations:

- 1) Write effectively using standard English
- 2) Demonstrate the ability to read effectively
- 3) Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively
- 4) Demonstrate the ability to use technology responsibly and effectively
- 6) Demonstrate an understanding of art and culture

MHS Course Goals:

Melrose High School students will:

- I. Write compositions that reflect knowledge of formal written English, including appropriate ideas, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency.

- II. Read age and grade-level appropriate literature for comprehension and analysis.
- III. Complete several original works for publication, including short stories, short shorts, poems, screenplays, and plays.
- IV. Prepare an oral presentation focused on a favorite author's biography.
- V. Develop authentic voices as writers for use in a variety of academic, personal and professional settings.
- VI. Construct a novel of at least 10,000 words during National Novel Writing Month

Content Outline:

The order of units may vary each year depending on the availability of books.

The Short Story: Beginning with Flannery O'Connor's classic, "A Good Man is Hard to Find," students will read and then write their own short stories, considering the relevance of the form today. Other selections include, but are not limited to:

- "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner
- "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin
- "Another Manhattan" by Donald Antrim
- "The Swimmer" by John Cheever
- "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- "The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allen Poe

The Novel: During National Novel Writing Month (November), students will construct their own original novels and submit them via the NaNoWriMo website.

Poetry: Students will work to identify how poetry has evolved, from Anglo-Saxon times to present-day, before writing their own poetry. Selections include, but are not limited to:

- "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot
- Four Quartets* by T.S. Eliot
- "Birches" by Robert Frost
- Selections from "Song of Myself" by Walt Whitman
- "The Congo" by Vachel Lindsay
- "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath
- "Theme for English B" by Langston Hughes
- Selected Sonnets by Shakespeare, Petrarch and Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Screenplays and Plays: Students will write their own screenplays and plays, distinguishing between both and determining the popularity and relevance of television, stage and cinema comedies, tragedies and dramas. Selections include, but are not limited to:

- The King's Speech* by David Seidler
- Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen
- Selected episodes from popular television shows
- Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett

Memoir: Students will write their own contemporary memoirs and debate its prevalence and value as an art form. Selections include, but are not limited to:

- Me Talk Pretty One Day* by David Sedaris
- Hunger for Memory* by Richard Rodriguez
- I Was Told There Would Be Cake* by Sloane Crosley

Major Evaluation Strategies:

Name of Assessment	Type of Assessment	MA Standards Assessed	MHS Learning Expectations Assessed
Novel	Written	Writing 3, 4, 5, 6, Language 1, 2 and 3, 5	1, 2, 3, 4
Adaptation of a Short Story or Memoir	Dramatic, Written and Oral	Writing 3, 4, 5, Speaking 6, Language 1, 2, 3, 5	1, 2, 3, 4
Stylistics Speech	Oral	Speaking 6, Language 1, 2, 3, 5	3
Short Story	Written	Writing 3A, 4, 5, Language 1, 2 3, 5	1, 2, 3
Poetry Portfolio	Written	Writing 3A, 4, 5, Language 1, 2, 3, 5	1, 2, 3
Blog	Written	Writing 3A, 4, 5, Language 1, 2, 3, 5	1, 2, 3, 4
Memoir	Written	Writing 3A, 4, 5, Language 1, 2 3, 5	1, 2, 3, 4
Children's Story	Written and Oral	Writing 3A, 4, 5, Language 1, 2 3, 5, Speaking 6	1, 2, 3, 4

Learning Standards from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks:

Reading Standards for Literature

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is
4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
6. Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

Writing Standards

- 3.** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
 - a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
 - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
 - d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

MA.3.A. Demonstrate understanding of the concept of theme by writing short narratives, poems, essays, speeches, or reflections that respond to universal themes (e.g., challenges, the individual and society, moral dilemmas, the dynamics of tradition and change).

- 4.** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
- 5.** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 11–12 on page 67.)
- 6.** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

Speaking and Listening Standards

- 1.** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
 - a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
 - b. Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.
 - c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
 - d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
- 3.** Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 11–12 Language standards 1 and 3 on page 67 for specific expectations.)

Language Standards

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

a. Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.

b. Resolve issues of complex or contested usage, consulting references (e.g., *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*, *Garner's Modern American Usage*) as needed.

2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

a. Observe hyphenation conventions.

b. Spell correctly.

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

a. Vary syntax for effect, consulting references (e.g., Tufte's *Artful Sentences*) for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 11–12 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., *conceive*, *conception*, *conceivable*).

c. Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.

d. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.

b. Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

6. Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.