Reading Public Schools

Instilling a joy of learning and inspiring the innovative leaders of tomorrow

Course Description

Story writing is a writing-intensive class for students who wish to explore narrative from an author's perspective. Students will write their own scenes and stories. Through the reading of short fiction, memoir, and essays on craft, students will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for narrative. Fueled by imagination, experience and observation, students will engage in the writing process. Writing prompts will inspire creativity and help students develop ideas. Students will produce drafts, conduct peer workshops, and provide one another with constructive and informed feedback. Students will need to be highly engaged and willing to write and revise. Drafts, revisions and peer workshops will also be a major component of this class. Secondary texts include Ann LaMott's Bird by Bird and recent editions of Best American Short Stories.

Reading & Writing Skills

READING

MA Curriculum Frameworks Standards RL. 1-6

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence.

- Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text.

- Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story, poem, or drama.

- Determine the figurative or connotative meaning(s) of words and phrases.

- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

- Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant.

WRITING

MA Curriculum Frameworks Standards W3-5, 8, 10

- Write narratives.

- Produce clear and coherent writing.

- Develop and strengthen writing as needed.

- When conducting research, gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources.

- Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Language, Speaking, & Listening Skills

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

MA Curriculum Frameworks Standards SL.1,2, 6

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.
- Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media.
- Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks.

LANGUAGE

MA Curriculum Frameworks Standards L. 2,4,5

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases.
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Units	Essential Questions	Key Activities MAY include:
Freewriting and The Creative Process	• Where do story ideas come from? • What is freewriting? • How does one freewrite? • How does freewriting help to activate creativity? • What are the benefits of story drafts, story workshops, and story revisions?	• Reading and discussion of articles (on freewriting, the creative process, the right vs. left brain) • Multiple 10—20 minute freewrites throughout the semester both in class and/or for homework
"Show Don't Tell"	• What does the phrase "Show Don't Tell" mean? Why is it an effective writing strategy? • How can a writer make a readers feel like they are *experiencing* a scene/situation as opposed to reading *about* a scene/situation?	• Reading and discussion of story excerpts that successfully immerse readers through sensory detail • Creation of "Show Don't Tell" scenes that employ sensory details
Plot: Understanding Story Arc	• What is a story? • What is the difference between a scene and a story? • What are the quintessential elements of plot? • How do plot elements work together to create an engaging and satisfying story?	• Reading of short stories • Discussion and written analysis of story structure • Creation of an original full length short story (Draft and Final)
Point of View: Why Me?	• What are the points of view an author might use when writing a story? • What is a protagonist and how does a writer decide which character will be the story's protagonist? • What is the effect of multiple points of view? • What is the relationship between point of view and plot or story arc?	• Reading of short stories • Discussion and written analysis of point of view • Character Development exercises (character interviews, character questionnaires, etc.)
Voice and Dialogue	• What is meant by narrative voice? What is it's relationship to tone? • How can a writer develop a character's personality through narrative voice? • What is the effect of using dialogue in a story? How does one choose when to use dialogue and when to summarize conversation? • How can one learn to write authentic dialogue?	• Reading of short stories and excerpts from novels • Discussion and written analysis of voice and dialogue • Voice and Dialogue exercises and freewrites • Creation of an original full length short story (Draft and Final)
Flash Fiction	• What is flash fiction? What are the origins of this form and how has it evolved over time? • What makes a flash fiction story a "story"? • How do flash fiction "stories" address structure and character development?	• Reading of various flash fiction stories (including Brian Arundel's "The Things I've Lost") • Writing of an original flash fiction story based on "The Things I've Lost"

Units	Essential Questions	Key Activities MAY include:
Best American Short Stories	• How does one evaluate the quality of or a story? • What makes a story "great" as opposed to merely "good"? • What challenges and considerations face editors who are charged with determining a story's worthiness? • What are some trends of the trends in contemporary story writing?	• Reading of several stories in the Best American Short Stories series • Reading of the editor's preface to Best American Short Stories edition • Discussion and written analysis of 1—3 stories in the collection.
Writing Workshop	• What is the protocol for a creative writing workshop? • Why are workshops useful? What are the benefits to the writer? To the readers who are conducting the workshop? • How does workshopping help a writer move from the draft stage to the final, polished story stage	• Workshop Practice with a sample story • Workshop of peers' stories • Receipt of workshop feedback on an original draft • Creation of an original full-length short story (Draft and Final)

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Curriculum Guide Overview

Curriculum Guide	Curriculum guides are public documents aligned with the Massachusetts Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks. They focus on the set of standards that students will learn within certain disciplines at appropriate grade levels. Each area of the curriculum is divided into general strands (broad categories) under which the standards fall. When we discuss "standards-based education" we mean that students are measured against their proficiency and growth towards meeting these standards. Curriculum Guides are intended for teachers, parents, and the wider school community as an overview document of the course of study for the year.
Curriculum Map	Curriculum maps are internal documents utilized as planning tools for teachers. Curriculum maps keep a focus on the end-of-year standards and chart a course for the teaching and learning over the year. They are typically organized in a grade-level overview organized by month or marking period. Curriculum maps typically include; standards and expectations for the grade/content, essential skills/concepts, methods of assessment, and major content resources. Maps are never "done" as ongoing work of educators include revisions, additions, and revisits to the maps. They provide an overview for the year while also allowing educators to see a vertical picture of how the content develops as students progress through each grade.
Standards	The standards used as the foundation of our curriculum come directly from the Massachusetts Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks. State standards may be viewed here: http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/
Priority Areas	Priority areas are defined by the state of Massachusetts as the most critical areas in each grade level on which instructional time should focus.
Resources	Resources identified in Curriculum Guides are not intended to be exhaustive, nor are they intended to be prescriptive. The resources identified may function as a menu of curriculum resources from which educators identify the most appropriate tools to utilized in their classrooms. More specifics about identified resources are identified within the curriculum map documents.
Content Standards	The Content Standards describe what students should know and be able to do once within the area of mathematics.
Essential Questions	Essential questions are questions that are not answerable with an easy answer or a simple instruction. The purpose of essential questions is to provide opportunities for inquiry into the learning and act as an umbrella to anchor the unit/lesson.
Workshop	"Workshop" refers to a comprehensive, collaborative review process that professional writers frequently use to refine their writing. This method may involve, but is not limited to a writer reading his or her work and getting oral feedback, classmates providing rounds of written feedback, or conferencing with the teacher.