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Creative Writing: Fiction and Non-Fiction

EDN 501

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Overview

While creative writing does not feature heavily in the Common Core Standards, the analytic and narrative writing skills required at the 11th and 12th grades assume that students have been working with narrative techniques throughout elementary and high school, and are familiar with syntax, diction and tone. Additionally, Creative writing, in the Common Core, is a way to show students' ability to recognize and use the techniques they have been analyzing throughout their school experience. At this time, Common Core Standards are still relatively new and generally focus on skills that are more easily measured (e.g. analysis). While I anticipate more Common Core emphasis on creative writing in the future, creative writing has often fallen by the wayside because it can be difficult to grade objectively using rubrics. As a result some may dismiss this writing form as less important than others. I would argue that creative writing is essential for students to practice extensively because it helps them learn to think differently about writing, and texts, and to convey abstract ideas in a way that is clear, and artful.

The following is a series of summative and formative assignments that represent the first two units of a four unit, semester long course. It is assumed, and highly recommended that teachers supplement these assignments with student samples, speaking and listening assignments, and supplemental readings. Both the formative and summative assignments focus on key aspects in creative writing – the use of narrative techniques and figurative language, and reflection. The major goal of these two units is to get students to write creatively and cohesively, and use techniques such as dialogue, figurative language, and sensory detail. Most importantly, these assignments, and accompanying rubrics are tied to the Common Core Standards for 12th grade. The units are designed around the idea that students should consistently repeat previously learned skills while adding new ones each time. Each unit contains at least three summative assignments and three formative assignments that focus on the Process Standards. In addition, student will write their Fiction and Non-Fiction pieces no less than three times. This includes the Formative Flash Fiction assignments at the beginning of each unit. Fiction is the first unit because it allows for extended time and focus on basic, but essential, narrative techniques: exposition, dialogue, sensory detail, and conclusions. Because the first unit involves three rewrites of the original paper, the units after it are intended to be shorter and allow for more student choice. For example, once students have spent some time on Fiction, the Non-Fiction unit introduces figurative language, and a poetry option. Finally, the unit assignments are designed so that teachers can easily change the weight and content of the rubrics, and build on them by adding more units (e.g. setting) while maintaining continuity in structure and practice.