

**Where I Stand:
Fictionalizing the 20th Century Eras that Happened in My Neighborhood**

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Overview

Where I Stand: Fictionalizing the 20th Century Eras that Happened in My Neighborhood is a creative writing mini-course that spans two curricular areas by combining the building of suspense within original student-created works of fiction *and* setting development that is based on research of a significant era in 20th century history. This unit is divided into four distinct categories: *Reading, Researching, Writing, and Responding*. Equal weight is placed on process and product. The process goals are to have the students learn to recognize and utilize creative and higher level thinking and to work through the self-directed learning process *efficiently*.

This stand-alone course was designed for the seventh and eighth grade students in the Humanities Department of the Pittsburgh Public Schools gifted education program. These students have extremely high cognitive abilities, most with Intelligent Quotients (IQ) above 130. They need strength-based enrichment activities in addition to what they receive in the mainstream curriculum.

Each student attends the center one day per week. The students have the rare, college-like opportunity to choose the courses they will take each semester. Each course meets for one hour each week over a 16-week semester.

Rationale

The rationale for creating “History Mystery” is based on the gifted model of education which requires that equal weight be placed on process and product. Process awareness can be best summarized as *meta-cognition*. It is my job as a gifted support educator to help these students **increase their ability to work through projects efficiently**, not just complete them. Efficiency is the concept on which educators should place focus. Process skill experiences, such as those requiring creative and higher-level thinking, demand that the learner be thoughtful in the choosing, planning, implementation, completion, and evaluation of the entire process needed to having a completed project. It requires awareness of how a project should be tackled. The focus process goals for this course are to have the students work through creative thinking, higher-level thinking, self-directed-learning, and interaction within intellectual peer groupings.

The four terms used to define the creative thinking process are from educational researcher Dr. E. Paul Torrance’s work. He defined creative thinking as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. These components occur in relation to one another, not as separate entities. Fluency is commonly referred to as the brainstorming process. Flexibility is the process of looking at a brainstormed list and determining the possible categories where the ideas fall. These processes, according to Torrance, also require *abundance of such ideas and categories*. Originality connects to the aforementioned process in that they must be self-created, unique ideas. Elaboration is the process of looking at the categorizations and selecting the material that most readily aligns with the task at hand and is most executable.

Higher-level thinking stems from the final three components of the upper tier of Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy, which are analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. At the analysis level, the student must identify traits and patterns to organize parts of a whole. In creative writing, a good example is **finding** inferences within text. At the synthesis level; the student must creatively or divergently apply prior knowledge and skills to produce a new or original whole. In creative writing, a good example is **creating** inferences within self-created text. At the evaluation level; the student must critically respond to the process and product that he has created. In creative writing, a good example is **judging** the effectiveness of the inferences used within self-created text.

Self-directed-learning is a process that is typically defined in three categories: Plan, Action, and Result. In the planning category, the student sets goals and develops a plan for learning. He or she then prioritizes tasks to achieve goals. The final component requires the student to look at the result and determine

its exactness and whether the methods used to achieve the product were efficient. A self-reflection period is necessary so that the student can suggest ways to improve both the process and product as well as to determine what behaviors should be repeated. In creative writing and historical researching, self-directed learning is used in the prewriting phase.

Although many educators believe that peer grouping is beneficial, gifted peer grouping means that the students must be grouped by intellectual strength. Leadership, communication, and cooperation are the three components of the interaction process. Leadership requires that the students must demonstrate initiative, set realistic goals, organize team duties, and resolve conflicts. The students must communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, between one another and to their selected audience. This process skill comes into play in this unit during the peer response and editing sessions.

These process skills apply to this unit in numerous ways. Let me first say that these skills are appropriate for gifted learners, *as well as for **all** writers*, because writing is a process that requires many skills and processes. The students must be made aware that what they produce is as important as how they work toward and through the production. They must learn to communicate their ideas both orally and in writing. They must learn that everything is not done well the first time around and they must learn to accept and use constructive criticism both from peers as well as from themselves.

As an educator of the gifted, I am to account for the students' academic strengths and interests and provide opportunities for them to work in intellectual-peer groupings. A common misconception regarding gifted student support is that a teacher should focus on the same things as they do for all other students – their *weaknesses*. It is a unique juxtaposition. Although all students need to learn basic skills and show growth in multiple content areas over time, gifted students need to focus on that for which they are already demonstrating a high aptitude.

My approach to teaching gifted students can be defined as “laissez faire”. Under Chapter 16 of Title 22, gifted students in Pennsylvania are *entitled* to instructional time that is geared specifically toward their strengths and interests. Gifted students need teachers who are willing to become mentors; teachers who are willing to do the leg work to gather information and to create instructional materials that are based on the individual student's strengths. These mentors must be knowledgeable in the content that they are teaching, as do all teachers, but they must be willing to release a certain amount of control to the students. Acting as guides, a gifted educator helps the students narrow in on their strengths and interests. Granting autonomy is a critical component of facilitating the

improvement of both decision-making skills and self-directed learning skills within a gifted learner.

As a standard academic goal, the students need to “write for a variety of reasons” and must “make sense of a variety of texts” so the long term product goal for this particular course is to have the students complete a short work of fiction that includes several elements of good fiction writing, such as logical sequencing, and techniques such as character development through the use of dialog and “showing” descriptions of words and actions. Although fiction writing is not a necessary skill for the average student, it *is* a true test of the students’ understanding of the components of fiction and those components can be applied to most writing formats. In addition, writing fiction forces students to read fiction more critically. It expands upon and fosters their ability to analyze and use literary devices. Fiction writing connects the internal world to the external world; what is known to what is unknown, reality to creativity.

Some may ask why this unit is devoted strictly to historical fiction. It has been my experience that many students, gifted or otherwise, have difficulty when they are given too many choices. In addition, gifted students are not to ‘*skim the surface*’ of new material. They are to be guided past the superficiality to look more critically, to ask questions, to create original products. This requires an intense, focused look at new material. It goes without saying that far too many time constraints are imposed upon our time as learners. By narrowing in on one genre, I can help the students to accomplish much more.

The use of the historical research component of “History Mystery” can also be rationalized based on both student interest and on the common practice of increasing rigor by adding a cross-curricular element to assignments. There is value in helping students recognize *living history*: They need to find a connection to events that don’t always happen directly in front of their faces, but none-the-less significantly impact their lives. Gifted students are expected to be able to create original work that involves multiple criteria.

Historical fiction lends itself to an examination of different categorizations of writing. Although the word *fiction* implies *untruth*, fiction coupled with history causes a cross over that is “gifted” in its very nature. It is a paradox: Untruth and Truth standing side-by-side. It causes the historical fiction reader to pull at knowledge stores to determine what elements are true and which are false. It connects the outside world to the inside world, the past to the present, the reader to the writer.

This unit will require the students to connect history to their own time and space. This aligns with the Pittsburgh Public School system’s movement toward

theme-based instruction. For example, *perseverance* is a vehicle through which many things are accomplished. A variety of assignments can revolve around this concept, such as historical research, self-exploration pieces, scientific and technology advancements, etc. For my curriculum unit, I have chosen the theme of *change*.

When reading over the activities in this unit, a teacher might pose the question: “How could all of these things possibly get done within the 16 weeks time frame?” The answer is also founded in gifted research. A high rate of perfectionism is seen in gifted students. Many find it difficult to move between tasks because they are never satisfied that they have done tasks *perfectly*. This curriculum unit has been designed to combat this by moving the students through activities quickly, focusing on how efficiently they have worked, rather than just the product.

Gifted students need academic rigor, but they also need to be able to exercise control of their product. The desired course product *and the activities that will help to lead the students to this product* will give the students opportunities to be fulfilled as gifted learners via a process skills approach.

Objectives

By the end of the course the students will be able to read various works of published fiction that use suspense and discuss how suspense is both created and used within such works. Each will explain and give examples of techniques, *such as direct vs. indirect characterization*, and devices, *such as foreshadowing, personification, and metaphor*, that are used in the aforementioned works. They will diagram the cause-and-effect relationship that carries a story through a logical sequence. I will guide each student into making connections between literature and history by having the students examining how history can be used within fiction.

Every student will also choose and research a self-chosen era in history, such as *Roaring 20's, Depression Era 30's, WWII Concentration Camps, 1960's Pre-Civil Rights Enclaves, etc.* This will include *researching how the above information* played-out in the students' home city (Pittsburgh). They will use the above information to develop a setting and to support a story line. Each student will create an original work of fiction that demonstrates the use of suspense and clearly illustrates an era in history through setting development. As a culminating activity, each student will evaluate and critique published, peer, and self-written works of fiction.

Strategies

Gifted students master concepts quickly, so a higher level of *guided* autonomy must be granted in order to keep the classroom running smoothly and productively. I use the term ‘guided’ because the teacher should always deliberately choose the type of independent activity to fit, or at least help to support, the course objectives. The first part of my overall teaching strategy is the use of class-entry routines. Having structured time immediately upon entering the classroom establishes the classroom as a work place and supports the professional teaching objective of ‘using class time wisely.’ Additionally, it gives the teacher a few precious minutes to organize and review lesson plans! For this unit, I have selected an editing (*grammar and punctuation scenarios*) and vocabulary building (*adjectives and idioms*) routine because it has been my experience that students learn such things best when used in context. It will also help me to quell such errors before they arise within the students writing. In the editing portion, I include things such as common misuses in punctuation, as well as things specific to the development of a work of fiction, like the correct way to structure dialog.

The objectives of this course will be met by working through four distinct categories: *Reading, Researching, Writing, and Responding*. The students will begin the process by analyzing and evaluating published works of fiction to determine the structure, devices, and techniques that such authors use to create fiction. I have dubbed this as a Read-to-Write approach. This approach can best be described as using literature as a model for what I expect the students to write.

Strategies Specific to the Unit Activities

The strategies that I have selected to use to within this unit have been developed through both research and by personal and classroom trial-by-fire. I have taught creative writing for a number of years and have found the activities that are contained within this unit to be ones that the students most frequently need.

Reading Component

Depending on the time you have to dedicate to this unit, I strongly suggest that each student read at least one book in the suspenseful, Historical fiction genre. This will give the students a frame of reference for which on model their writing. I would give the students a chart containing the common terms that denote the sequence of a work of fiction: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Denouement, and Conclusion. Discuss the meaning of the terms and, while reading, have the students write in the key events/ideas that belong in the respective categories.

While the students read, it will be important for the effective development of their original works of fiction to have them outline the historical-component used within the books you present to them. When doing so, they should be able to answer the following questions: What is the time span in which the story is told? What sensory details does the author include to let you know this? Which major elements (*events, characters, and places*) are true? Which are fictitious? The students should locate sources that prove the aforementioned to be accurate. They should also list vivid details that the author used to “show” the time and space.

My suggestion for making this an active lesson (*meaning that the students are doing the work, rather than simply listening to a lecture or reading*) is to divide groups of students based on oral reading fluency and have these students partake in a Reading Roundtable. This means that each student is responsible to report specific things about the story to the peer group. This can be monitored by making a packet of focus prompts and questions for each student.

The students should partake in a critique of an author’s choices in specific word selection, characterization, sequence, etc. I like to do this by using two short stories that have something in common, such as two stories about war from different authors, or two seemingly unrelated stories from one author. This allows the students to see how one subject or person can create very different pieces of writing. For example, “War” by Luigi Pirandello and “Hell Fire” by Isaac Asimov are both short-fiction stories about the affect that War has on not only those fighting at the frontlines, but of those at home. In both stories, war touches the home front. In “War”, Pirandello captures the time period, WWII, by having distraught strangers meet on a train. In the story, the families begin to discuss how they feel about their children who are fighting in the war, as well as the idea of war itself. He addresses their time-period clothing and location to help establish setting. Pirandello never names a single character within the text. He made this choice specifically to allow the reader to interject his or her own thoughts. By leaving out names, it solidifies the universality of war.

Asimov, on the other hand, uses an imbedded image of a demonic atomic bomb within the story to help the reader understand the irony of what humans do to themselves. In his story, he shows the reader how we destroy ourselves, while we sit idly by and watch it unfold. Unlike “War” in which Pirandello shows what *happens to us*; Asimov shows *what we do to ourselves*.

Having the students tell one another what they think was and was not effective is a great way to break them into peer responding. I ask “double entry” questions, which means I ask a question and then I ask a question of the response. For example, I would ask “What mood is set in the story?” and then I would follow up with, “Can you find a series of words that justifies the mood that you have stated?”

If you teach one grade level and the History focus for the year is, let’s say, American History, you may wish to have the students pick from this point in history. I have narrowed my historical background allowance to the 20th Century for several reasons: First, I have lived through some of these decades, so it supports the notion that “good writers write about what they know.” Second, historical records on 20th Century history are relatively new, which means that information is abundant. Third, it would be impossible for me to help the students create accurate portrayals on *all* points in history, so in choosing 20th Century History, I have contracted myself to learn as much about it as possible.

Research Component

To begin, I suggest having a brainstorm survey of things that really bother the students. This is part of “*Plot Fleshing*”. I would ask them to think about things that have happened to them, their family members, or friends that they think are unfair, show bias, or just flat-out disappoint them. Give a writing prompt such as “It really bothers me when...” or “I am really disappointed by...” Give a personal example, such as “*It really bothers me when...my husband expects me to handle all of the cooking and house organizing.*” (personal scale) or “It really bothers me when...people make racist jokes.” (large scale)

This could help a teacher figure out what universal themes might be emerging from the students’ experiences. It can also help the students flesh-out a basic conflict to use within their stories. The survey should be analyzed in a whole-group setting to find a common thread between what the individuals’ issues are and what era in history might match to the issues. For example, if a student states, “*It really bothers me when...people expect that I cannot do something just because I am a girl.*” then this child may connect well with the fight for a woman’s right to vote.

An outline of major themes, events, and people who have defined the decades of the 20th century should be done. In order to make this an active lesson I would divide the students into groups and have them spend a few minutes researching a specific person or event within a particular decade. The students should reconvene and create a timeline of their research using wall-sized sticky notes marked by decade. (See **Appendices - Figure A**)

Although it might be a greater learning experience to have each of the students choose to write about a different era, I feel that it is necessary to allow them to choose what they are interested in because it has been my experience that better work is produced when the students are granted such autonomy. It might also be interesting and beneficial for the students to see how different students interpret the same era.

In order to help students capture details about their point in history that could be used to dress a work of fiction, I suggest giving each student a time-period photograph from his/her chosen era. Have each student create a list of things a person in his or her era choice might see, hear, feel, think, say, work, eat, etc. (This might be a good time to introduce the “Living Verbs: *Adding action through active sentences*” that is outlined in Section 3.)

This lesson requires the student to distinguish between fact from fiction. I plan to use American History Mysteries by Jones, J. M. It is a reproducible list of short history-mysteries that contain one or more historical-fact errors. I would have the students read the short stories associated with the time periods you would like them to use. Give them two highlighters and ask them to use one color to highlight what they think/know is fact and one to highlight what they think/know is fiction. The students should be directed to a variety of sources where they can verify the information. Ask: What textual evidence lets you know what was fact and what was fiction?

Writing Component

If one poses the question, “How do you teach students to write?”, the answer is simplistic – Give them abundant opportunities to write. The question that should be posed, however, is “How do you teach students to write *well*?” In this case, research comes into play.

The students need to use all six components: Prewriting, Writing, Responding, Revising, Editing and Publication. Ideas for helping students with this process can be found in the **Appendices - Figure B** The most important aspect of helping students learn to write is response. The students need continual

response on all aspects of the process from both teachers and peers. I have found it to be most effective if I give students a deadline for specific things such as a date on which I will review their topics, planning organizers, and writing. I like to check each student's writing every two to four pages so that I can nip any misunderstandings in the bud before the students get too far along in their stories to be able to repair the problems.

The students need to brainstorm lists of verbs that correlate with a particular situation or setting. I have chosen to start with wars/battles. I will demonstrate how to use the verbs to make an active, action-filled sentence. As guided practice, they will then try a few examples as a class. Next, the students will read the short story "Hell Fire" by Isaac Asimov and apply the concepts in the lesson to rearrange and add life to the sentences in the story. I will discuss 'ReVERBerizing', which is a lesson in selecting accurate action verbs. For example, "The intercom *was* buzzing." could be changed to "The intercom *buzzed*."

"Talk it Out" is a supplement to "Plot Fleshing" that is outlined in Section 3 of *Classroom Activities*. The purpose of "Talk it Out" is to have the students work together to determine the logical or illogical connections between the characters, between the plot and characters, and between the sequence of the plot. Each student takes a turn in **telling a small peer group** who the main character(s) will be in his or her story. Next, the student will follow up with a line or two about what he has planned for the plot line. Students should be instructed to keep it brief. Last, the student will ask the small peer group to help them "Talk Out". They should be instructed to use phrases such as, "I am having trouble..." The peer group should be instructed to ask "How are [---] connected?" In the blank, they should insert characters, events, setting to characters, etc. I have tried this with my own writing and the students always come through with very creative and insightful suggestions.

Before the students attempt a peer response and editing session, I model what I expected of them in a whole-group setting. I ask each student to read a small portion of his or her work aloud and I respond by using the same two guiding questions that I want them to use during peer response sessions. These are: "*What specific things did the author do well? (Give examples from his or her text.)*" and "*What specific things could be done to improve the writing? (Give an example.)*" These two questions are essential because it is as important for a young writer to know what behavior she or he should keep repeating as well as for her or him to be offered constructive criticism. I ask for text-based examples because it shows that the peer responder is reading critically, not just criticizing, and because using text-based examples is a standard for writing.

Writers, regardless of age, the genre being written, or the talent level, will undoubtedly experience some sort of writer's block. I try to reissue the phrase as "Writer's Road Block" to encourage the students to think of such situations as obstacles that can be circumvented, just as when a driver faces a closed roadway.

One of the common "road blocks" occurs when the mood of the writer does not match the mood of the character. In this case, I ask the student to fold a paper in half and mark his or her name at the top of one column and the characters name atop of the other. I instruct the student to spend a minute or two listing verbs and adjectives that describe the mood that he or she is currently in. The next step is to have the student to read the last few pages written in the pervious session, marking down the verbs and adjectives within the writing that captures the mood of the story. The student is asked to then look at both lists as a whole to determine the difference between the two word groups.

Another effective strategy used is the use of student (or teacher created, if need be) examples. Having examples establishes expectations and gives the students a place to begin. In addition, attempting to do what you expect your students to do will help you determine the true level of difficulty, any flaws in the lesson design, and a realistic task-completion time.

Classroom Activities

Component 1: Reading Your Way to Effective Writing

For this lesson series, I plan to have the students read a variety of suspenseful, Historical fiction stories in order to uncover the structure, techniques, and devices used in such a work of fiction. **(See Annotated Bibliography - Student Section)**

What the teacher should do:

Collect historical fiction in the suspense/mystery genre.

What the students will do:

Diagram a work of fiction to determine the logical sequence that every work of fiction should take: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Dounement, and Conclusion.

Analyze stories to determine how history is used in a work of fiction.

Critique the author's choices in specific word choice, characterization, sequence, etc.

Component 2: *Research Techniques for Understanding and Writing about Historical Eras*

For this lesson series, I suggest collaboration with a colleague who teaches History in order to determine the “best practice” methods for having students research the historical eras that you would like them to use within their stories. I have outlined the ones suggested by my colleague.

What the teacher should do:

Create a **basic** thumbnail outline of era-defining moments in the 20th century.

Collect books, historical newspaper articles, and photos of places in the students’ neighborhoods from the various eras.

What the students will do:

What Bothers You?: *Universal Ideas that Connect the Past and Present*

You are There: *Creating a list of things a person in your era choice might see, hear, feel, think, say, work, eat, etc.*

History Fact or Fiction: *Researching your way to realistic, truthful historical fiction.*

Component 3: *Fiction Writing*

For this lesson series, I plan to work the students through all phases of the writing process, focusing on elements specific to suspenseful fiction writing. Pacing is dependent upon the abilities of the students. Some may need to spend a great deal of time brainstorming, some planning, others many whiz through these and move quickly through writing. I sometimes find that I can do two lessons in one day – sometimes the students need several days to soak-up one concept. I think that it is imperative that the students take part in each of the following, but ***planning is the most important***. I am willing to guarantee that the majority of students who refuse to plan will never complete a story.

What the teacher should do:

Create a packet of story-building organizers, such character profiles (**Appendices - Figure C**) setting organizers (**Appendices - Figure D**) and plot outlines (**Appendices - Figure E**).

Collect lists of verbs that describe different eras.

What the students will do:

Idea Journal: *Where can I find story ideas?* This requires the students to routinely log even menial snippets of story ideas such as first lines, unique characters, verb lists, themes, research, etc.

Brainstorming: *Good writers write about what they know.* The students should begin listing everything that they think they know enough about to express clearly. They should also brainstorm a list of things that they would be interested in researching. After these lists are made, the students should categorize the list components to see which are the most unique, interesting, and accessible to them.

Understanding and Purposefully Picking Narration and Tense.

Show Me, Don't Tell Me: *Direct vs. In-direct Characterization*

Plot Fleshing: *So what are you afraid of?*

Reversed Plot Building: *Sequencing the cause and effect relationships in fiction writing by building a story front **last-to-first** event.*

Mystery and Suspense Building: *Plant your plot clues.* Don't give the reader everything, just enough to make them feel silly when they realize that they missed the clues.

Living Verbs: *Adding action through active sentences with good verbs.*

Explore the rules of dialog use through reading.

Specific Word Choice: *A review of literary devices.*

Component 4: *Learning to Improve Writing through Peer and Self Response*

For this lesson series, I plan to work through a number of different response session methods, many of which will be related to the activities listed in Section 3.

What the teacher should do:

Model peer responding expectations by reading a few lines of something self-written and allow the students to orally critique it.

What the students will do:

Logic: *Talk it Out*. With peers, discuss what you want to happen in your story. Let them respond to your questions and logic.

Student-Teacher Writer's Conference

Peer Response Session (*Improvement of word choice, sentence length variation, literary devices, etc.*)

Peer Editing (*Spelling, Grammar, Mechanics*)

Annotated Bibliography

Student Material

Historical Fiction that Contains Suspense for 7th and 8th Grade Students with Below Grade Level Oral Reading Fluency

Avi. “Who Was That Masked Man. Anyway?”. New York, NY: Avon Books, 1992.

Ayres, K. Macaroni Boy. New York, NY: Delacorte Press, 2003.

Lowry, L. Number the Stars. New York, NY: Bantam Double Day Dell Publishing, 1989.

Historical Fiction that Contains Suspense for 7th and 8th Grade Students with At or Above Grade Level Oral Reading Fluency

Beard, P. Dear Zoe. New York, NY: Viking, 2005.

Choldenko, G. Al Capone Does My Shirts. New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2004.

Coles, W. Another Kind of Monday. New York, NY: Avon Tempest, 1999.

Curtis, C. P. Bud, Not Buddy. New York, NY: Dell Yearling, 1999.

Rinaldi, A. The Coffin Quilt. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 1999.

Strasser, T. The Wave. New York, NY: Dell Laurel-Leaf, 1981.

Historical Research Websites

<http://www.alcaponemuseum.com/>

The Al Capone Museum website contains historical photographs and details of the good and not-so-good endeavors of Al Capone.

<http://www.pghhistory.org/>

Senator John Heinz History Center website contains information that relates to the history of Pennsylvania. This includes historical eras, sports, art, etc.

<http://www.ushmm.org/>

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website contains documentaries, dictionaries, and general information about the Holocaust.

Teacher Material

Angelillo, J. Making Revision Matter. New York: Scholastic, 2005.

Illustrates revision methods that help students help themselves.

Fletcher, R., Portalupi, J. Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, c2001.

A guide to creating and managing effective writer's workshops.

Grafton, Sue (ed.), Writing Mysteries: A Handbook by the Mystery Writers of America. Cincinnati, OH: F&W Publications, 1992

A collection of writing tips from published authors.

Jones, J. M., American History Mysteries. Portland Maine: J. Weston Walch Publishers, 1989.

This is a reproducible list of short history-mysteries that contain one or more historical-fact errors.

Kirby, D., Latta, D. Liner, T. Inside Out: Strategies for Teaching Writing (3rd Ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004.

Classroom applications of process-approach to writing.

Marshall, J. "American Detectives: On TV and in Books" Teaching in New Haven: The Common Challenge. New Haven, CT: Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, 1991.

A teacher's application of a compare and contrast format for studying the characterization of detective-crossovers in literature-to-film.

Romano, T. Clearing the Way: Working With Teenage Writers. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1987.

A teacher's scenario-based guide illustrating how to get kids to write by having the student focus on his/her experience.

Schwartz, S. The Detective Story: An Introduction to the World's Greatest Whodunit's Sleuths and Their Creators. Illinois: National Textbook Co., 1989.

A collection of detective stories with questions to help guide students into understanding both the history of the detective story as well as how the genre is structured.

Standards

Pennsylvania Content Standards for Communications: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify the purpose, structure and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform or describe.
9. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.

Appendices

Figure A – Timeline of Era Defining People and Events in 20th Century History

* = Direct connection to Pittsburgh

1920

- WWI
- Flappers
- KDKA becomes first commercial radio broadcasting company *
- West End – “Temperanceville” (1,500 people die in US during “prohibition” due to bad alcohol and rebellion shootings) *
- Leading cause of death in the United States moved from tuberculosis to heart disease
- United States citizens raise 60 million dollars for starving Russians
- A 20 ton meteor hits Blackston, VA
- Boogie Woogie becomes the most popular genre of music in the US.
- Scarlet Fever (*streptococcus*) is isolated
- Kleenex is invented
- IBM is founded
- First winter Olympics is held
- Al Capone’s headquarters is hit with gun fire.
- Ford Motor Company creates “Model A”
- The first Academy Awards held
- American Civil Liberties Union is formed
- First Miss America Pageant held in Atlantic City, NJ.
- “Black Tuesday” – Stock Market Crashes

1930

- Great Depression
- Pluto is discovered
- United Airlines hires first female attendant
- Clairol hair dye is introduced
- Gambling legalized in Nevada
- “Dust Bowl”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt elected (and re-elected) as President of the United States
- 21st Amendment repeals prohibition
- “Big Band” music becomes most popular musical genre
- Jesse Owens wins four gold medals in Berlin (*in front of Hitler*)
- Boulder Dam is built (Colorado)
- Hindenburg explodes in Lakehurst, NJ
- Amelia Earhart disappears
- Spam (*the “lunchmeat”*) hits supermarket shelves
- General Motors introduces automatic transmission
- John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* and *Grapes of Wrath* published
- Orson Welles reads *The War of the Worlds* over the radio and listeners think it is real
- Alberta Einstein’s atomic bomb

1940

- Japan attacks Pearl Harbor
- WWII
- Draft
- Robert Vann creates the “Pittsburgh Courier” *
- Mars creates M&M’s (intended for US soldiers)
- Swing Dancing becomes popular
- Daylight savings time first used
- African-American males are allowed to vote
- Oswald Avery isolates DNA
- Seventeen magazine begins publication
- First atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima
- First McDonald’s opens
- “Baby Boom”

1950

- Korean War
- Television becomes a standard household item.
- Isaac Asimov publishes *I, Robot*
- 22 Amendment limits US Presidency to two, 4-year terms
- Rachel Carson, propels “environmentalist” attitude*

- “TV Dinners” hit supermarkets
- Rock-n-Roll is most popular US musical genre
- Segregation outlawed in public school systems
- *Sports Illustrated* begins publication
- Dr. Seuss’s *The Cat in the Hat* is published
- Barbie is sold in stores
- NASA is formed

1960

- JFK elected President of the United States
- Vietnam War
- Many evade the draft
- “Peace” protests take place
- The Pittsburgh Pirates win World Series over New York Yankees*
- Men’s US Olympic ice hockey team wins gold medal (“*Miracle on Ice*”)
- Al Shepard becomes the first American to enter space
- Peace Corp. is created by JFK
- JFK assassinated
- Cigarettes linked to cancer
- G.I. Joe doll is created
- Beatles become popular
- Martin Luther King assassinated
- Neil Armstrong becomes first man to walk on the moon

1970

- Watergate scandal
- Bill Gates founds Microsoft
- Supreme Court uphold “Capital Punishment”
- Disco becomes a popular dance and musical genre
- The Pittsburgh Steelers defeat Dallas Cowboys in the Super Bowl
- Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant malfunctions
- Pittsburgh Pirates win World Series over the Baltimore Orioles

1980

- Ronald Reagan elected (*and re-elected*) as President of the US (introduces “*Reaganomics*”)
- John Lennon is assassinated
- Rubik’s cube is sold
- Aerobics class becomes a fad
- Sandra Day O’Conner become first female Supreme Court Justice
- Pop and Techno are popular musical genres
- MTV airs
- CD’s replace records
- Affirmative Action upheld by Supreme Court
- Nintendo is introduced
- Hurricane Hugo devastates east coast

1990

- Desert Storm (*Propaganda*)
- World Series is cancelled as players strike
- Timothy McVeigh convicted
- Princess Diana dies
- Columbine tragedy
- Women’s Soccer Team wins World Cup
- Generation X
- The Internet
- Y2K scare

Figure B - Help with the Writing Process: *Prewriting, Writing, Responding, Revising, Editing and Publication.*

Prewriting

- Brainstorm
- Examine examples
- Keep an idea journal
- Bounce ideas off of peers
- Make a list of things you already know or care a lot about
- Classify ideas into categories
- Focused free write (Quick, randomized–but-focused writing on a topic)
- Question like a reporter (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?)
- Interview people who know something about a topic (primary resources)
- Search for books or internet information about the topic (secondary resources)
- Graphically organize ideas (Draw webs or graphics to represent and make connections of or between ideas.)
- "Leads" (Create a few opening sentences to help narrow in on a topic.)
- Compare and contrast
- Create figures of speech (Create analogies, metaphors, similes to help establish a connection between what you know and what idea you have about the topic.)

Writing (Draft 1):

- Decide on an audience
- Make a general outline
- Get your ideas down on paper
- Use transitions (First, next, therefore, in conclusion, etc.)
- As you write, keep asking: “Is this focused on my topic, subject or theme or have I gone another direction?”

Responding:

- Allow a peer to read your ideas and offer support

Revising (Draft 2):

- Expanded upon your ideas
- Make necessary additions and deletions
- Check varying of sentence length
- Polish language (Refine your details - add figures of speech)
- Repeat the **responding** process as needed

Editing:

- Proofread (Remember: Word processing programs don't pick up homophones!)

- Allow a peer to proofread
- Repeat the **responding** and **revising** process as needed

Publication:

- Share your work with others
- Enter contests
- Display your work
- Submit your work to magazines, newspapers, etc.

Figure C – Character Profiles

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Describe your character's physical appearance. (*Think of your story's time period!*).
2. Describe the types of clothes your character usually wears. (*Think of your story's time period!*).
3. Describe your character's voice. (*Make sure that it suits his/her personality.*)
4. Tell whether or not the character has common sense, special talents, or abilities.
5. List at least three phrases your character may routinely use (*Think of your story's time period!*).
6. Mention any special characteristics, quirks, or physical traits that would make your character memorable.
7. How does the character feel about his or her life?
8. Name and briefly describe the usual acquaintances (*people he or she knows*) of your character.

9. Name your character's worst enemy and explain who it is and why there is a problem.

 10. Name your character's most important possessions.

 11. Hobbies:

 12. Religious beliefs:

 13. What is the character's life goal?

 14. Character flaws (*fears, weaknesses, etc.*):

 15. Character physical and emotional strengths:

 16. Name the character's likes and dislikes in books/ movies/ entertainment/ food, etc.

 17. Mention at least one major event in the character's life. (*Even if it doesn't go into your story!*)

 18. What would your character do if he or she walked into a burning building?

 19. Sign the character's name as he or she would.
-

Figure E – Plot Organizer

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Circle the conflict type(s):

person vs. person person vs. self person vs. nature person vs. society

2. What is the BASIC problem in this story (*I.e. Someone steals test scores and the students class trip is cancelled unless it is returned.*)

3. What does your protagonist want?

4. Who or what is standing in the way of your protagonist getting what he or she wants (*conflict*)?

5. What does your antagonist want?

6. What flaw or obstacle does your protagonist have that will complicate him or her from getting what he or she wants?

7. What strength does your protagonist have that will help him or her get what he or she wants?

8. Will your character get what he or she wants in the end? If so, describe how you will solve the conflict. If not, tell why he or she does not get what she wants.

Use the plot outline to flesh out what you *THINK* should happen in your story. Be sure that the events are logically tied together. (As a writer, you have the right to change your mind at anytime, but you must have a plan at all times!)

	Purpose of	Transitions (<i>Time Teller</i>)	Main Idea(s) / Story Building Events
Exposition	<i>Gives Story Background</i>		
Rising Action	<i>Creates Tension (Show Conflict; Plant Clues)</i>		
Climax	<i>Highest/Turning Point of Tension</i>		
Dénouement	<i>Resolves ALL Tension Created in Rising Action</i>		
Conclusion	<i>Creates Closure</i>		

