

CREATIVE WRITING I

with MS. HUGHES



WELCOME BACK! I hope you've had a fantabulous summer and are excited about a fresh start this year!

I'm thrilled you've elected to take Creative Writing—a course I wish were a requirement. We tend to compartmentalize our writing: We write This Way in English and That Way in, say, history. In your English classes, you develop your academic writing (i.e., argumentative, informative, & narrative essays); however, once you finish your schooling, chances are pretty good that you'll never write another essay. Ever. Instead, you'll be doing the kind of publishing we'll be doing in *this* class. However, good writing is good writing. So, the skills you'll glean in our class will make your academic writing more sophisticated, too. It's a win-win!

Throughout the year, we'll explore a variety of writing genres (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, poetry, personal narratives, short stories), respond to various forms of communication (e.g., literature, art, music, film), and write for a variety of purposes and audiences. And because the single-best way to improve your writing is through reading, we'll be reading a lot as well. What follows is a general breakdown of our time together this year.

I. READING (*the Inhale*)

Whether it's storytelling or essay-writing, the most effective way to improve your writing is to read. And "[i]f you don't have time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that." (Stephen King, [On Writing](#)) Reading has an even greater impact on your writing skills than taking a fantabulous Creative Writing course. (Even better? Reading and taking CW!) When it comes to the writing process, **reading is The Inhale, and writing is The Exhale**. So, we'll be "inhaling" a lot this year: short stories, poetry, and (at least) [one full Choice Book per term](#). (For accountability, your Choice Reading will be assessed throughout the year.) However, our reading will differ from the kind you do in your English class; here, you'll be asked to read *as a writer*, absorbing—and then emulating—the authors' craft. [Annie Dillard](#) contends, "The more you read, the more you will write. The better the stuff you read, the better the stuff you will write."

In addition to improving your writing, the reading we'll do this year will also help build stamina. The average college freshman is assigned 600 pages of reading *per week*. (It's 600 pages *per class* per week at the Ivies.) While the amount of reading you'll do in our class won't get you anywhere close to that, it's a pretty great start. And, of course, you're strongly encouraged to exceed this goal. (It also helps foster a love of reading, which, as [one look around Room 1227](#) will tell you, is sort of my thing.) We'll silently read for the first 10 minutes of every class (15 on long blocks), and I'll be reading, too. Be sure to come prepared.

II. WRITING (*the Exhale*)

The most important writing lesson you'll learn this year is to Take Risks. To cultivate your own writing style, you'll need to be okay with making mistakes and breaking the rules. No more playing it safe. Unleash your Inner Rebel, and prepare to break some rules. While not every teacher embraces this fact, Real-World Writing—the kind that exists In the Wild—breaks quite a few of those rules we English types have taught you.

WRITER'S

NOTEBOOK

You will create (and electronically share with me) a [digital](#) Writer's Notebook (WNB) for assigned and impromptu writings. Your WNB is designed to build your writing skills the same way that practice problems help you master a math concept. These assignments will be checked and/or assessed *with or without notice*. Therefore, you'll be expected to complete these entries *when they're assigned*. If an entry is not completed when it is assessed, you'll receive a zero; you will then have [one cycle](#) from the scoring date to earn [up to half of the points](#) back by: 1) making up the entry; and b) notifying me via email that you made it up.

PASSION

BLOG

To create a positive digital footprint and as an opportunity for real-world, authentic publishing, you'll be designing—and regularly publishing to—your own Passion Blog (i.e., a website that entails something you're passionate about). This is a great product to share during the college (& job) application process, as it says more about who you are as a person and writer than your college essay ever can. Plus, colleges know the application essay is often a product of several writers (e.g., the applicant, teachers, parents, hired college consultants), so sharing your blog during the application process is as authentic as it gets. And it sets you apart from virtually every other applicant—few of whom are sharing their voices with 5 billion readers around the globe.

PUBLISHING

Being a BYOD district means our classroom is a writing lab—and where we'll do much of our writing, revising, and publishing. Each assignment will be published using the Google Suite (e.g., Docs, Slides), formatted according to the [MLA Formatting Guide](#), and adhere to the [MLA Style Handbook](#). You'll publish in a variety of places, including Google Classroom, your Writer's Notebook, your Passion Blog, and other online platforms.

III. SPEAKING & LISTENING *(the Community)*

No one writes in a silo—or if they do, it's in a silo next to other silos within a farming co-op. We need other eyes, other ears, other opinions to improve our craft. Because Creative Writing is a workshop-based course, [you will be speaking, listening, and interacting daily](#)—both formally and informally. Some of the forums will include small-group conversations (tables), whole-class discussions, brainstorming, idea swapping, peer editing, and product-sharing.

IV. LANGUAGE *(the Craft)*

Understanding the rules of the English language is critical for effective written communication. However, it is even more vital with the addition of the SAT's Writing section. Students will interact with grammar *in context*, as well as be exposed to supplemental lessons that target common student errors. Two free resources for any grammatical question that arises are the [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) and [Grammarly](#).

V. MISCELLANEOUS *(the This-and-That)*

HOMEWORK Every week, you'll receive a digital calendar on which all classwork and homework are listed, complete with links that take you directly to the assignments. (You can find the Calendars in three places: posted in our Google Classroom's CLASSWORK section under the CALENDARS topic, on our Virtual Classroom linked to "Current HW," and in our shared CALENDARS folder in Google Drive.) Accordingly, you are expected to take responsibility for your learning by consulting our calendar daily and by coming to class prepared. With the exception of absences, all assignments must be submitted on time. **NO LATE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED**. Since, homework assignments are typically worth 5-10 points, missing one or two here and there will have little to no effect on your grade. However, larger assignments (e.g., short stories, blog posts, projects, book reviews, presentations, etc.) may be submitted late and will lose points according to the [English Department Late Work Policy](#). Absent students have one cycle to make up any missed work. New this year, students also have the ability to rewrite major assignments and projects on which they've scored below an 85%. See the full policy [here](#). See the Writer's Notebook section above for those specific guidelines.

INTEGRITY All work produced in our class should be your own, unless given permission to borrow and/or use A.I. The penalties for not doing so will follow pages 16 & 17 of our [Student Handbook](#).

BYOD We are a paperless classroom, so you'll need to bring a charged device to class daily. We will use our devices daily, for a variety of purposes, including accessing class content, conducting impromptu research, responding to readings, collaborating on group documents, participating in online discussions, cultivating our writing skills, etc. It will be up to you to have your computer charged or charging before class starts. There are extension cords & power strips in the front and back of our classroom if your battery is low; however, so as not to interrupt the flow of the classroom, please plug in before we begin reading.

NOTEBOOK There is no specific notebook requirement for our class, as virtually all of the resources will be digitally shared and organized for you in our Google Classroom. Along with helping the environment, a paperless classroom allows course content to be accessed from anywhere and by all learners—regardless of their organizational skill set. You might want to keep a notebook for reading assignments, class discussions, videos, and the rare lecture. However, choose the method that best matches your learning style: a digital notebook in Google Drive works just as well as a three-ring binder. Maintaining a physical notebook is not required.

VI. ASSESSMENT *(the Unavoidable)*

Students and parents/guardians can access my gradebook in PowerSchool at any point in the year. I use a point system, which involves the simple formula: TOTAL POINTS EARNED *divided by* TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE.

The following components will factor into your grade each term:

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|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--|
| • Classwork | • Homework | • Written Assignments | • Class Engagement (i.e., Behavior, Respect, Preparation, Initiative, Work Ethic, Collaboration, & Vocal Contribution) |
| • Assessments—Announced & Unannounced | • Work Ethic | • Digital Citizenship | |

VII. COMMUNICATION & AVAILABILITY *(the Support)*

BUILDING I'm available to support students *by appointment* during A, D, & F blocks and after school until 2:20. In addition, I can hold Zoom office hours beyond the school day if no other time works.

E-MAIL Email is the best way to reach me (Beth.Hughes@wpsk12.org), and outside of weekends, I will typically respond within 24 hours. Note: Our district blocks emails without a subject line, so be sure to add one.

PHONE I can also be reached at WMHS via phone: (781) 246-6440. However, this will force a delay, as a paper message gets placed in my mailbox, which I only check once a day in the mornings.

ONLINE PRESENCE I model digital citizenship online, so feel free to follow me on Instagram ([teaching account](#)) and [family shenanigans](#)), [Pinterest](#), [WordPress](#) (where I blog), and/or [X](#) (Formerly Twitter).

"It's none of their business that you have to learn how to write. Let them think you were born that way." ~Ernest Hemingway