

**The Central Connecticut Student Writing Project**

**Summer Institute Curriculum**

Creative Writing

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### Curriculum Overview:

The CCSWP curriculum is designed with this overall focus: **organic story development**. The CCSWP professes no formula or steadfast guidelines for storytelling, but instead helps participants find the stories they already have within or are already waiting to tell; the students in the CCSWP write from within.

The CCSWP operates under the belief that there is no one way to tell a story. Through the CCSWP these stories are given a means through which they may mature and grow, avoiding the common pitfalls associated with young writers. The process works for new stories as well as situations where previously created stories are revised. The desired outcomes of the CCSWP are the creation of stories that will grow even after the institute and the development of writers who will consider themselves as such.

While the curriculum is focused on students finding inspiration within themselves, the curriculum is specifically paced and ordered to foster this organic process. While we hope that all instructors infuse their own passions and personalities into the lessons, the curricular order is designed so that students meet certain limits before being given means by which to exceed them. The lessons become necessary

### Curriculum Justification:

The CCSWP curriculum meets the following Common Core standards for language arts:

#### *Writing Standards*

- Grades 3-12
  - Text Types / Purposes: 3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
  - Production / Distribution of Writing: 6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and display information flexibly and dynamically. Also update in response to ongoing feedback.

## *Reading Standards for Literature (6-12)*

- Grades 6-8
  - Key Ideas / Details: 2. Determine theme or central idea and how it is conveyed through details, analyze its development including its relationship to characters, plot, and setting.
  - Key Ideas / Details 3. Describe how text's story or plot unfolds in a series of episodes, how characters are shaped and react, and how plot moves toward resolution. Also be able to analyze textual elements to reveal aspects of character or provoke a decision.
- Grades 9-10
  - Key Ideas/Details: 2. Determine theme or central idea and analyze over course of a text
  - Key Ideas/Details: 3. Analyze complex characters
  - Craft/Structure: 4. Determine meaning of words as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning/tone
  - Craft/Structure: 5. Analyze how author's choice in structure/order creates effects as mystery, tension, surprise
- Grades 11-12
  - Key Ideas/Details: 2. Determine two or more central ideas and analyze over the course of a text, including how they build on one another.
  - Key Ideas/Details: 3. Analyze complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how individuals, ideas, events interact/develop over the course of a text.
  - Craft/Structure: 4. Determine meaning of words as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative; analyze cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning/tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.
  - Craft/Structure: 5. Analyze how author's choice in structure/order of text contributes to overall meaning as well as aesthetic impact.

## Curriculum

- The curriculum is mapped out in phases to accommodate different implementation schedules. While the exact timing of each lesson can be variable, the strength of the curriculum is derived from the exact order of these phases.
- Every day, regardless of phase, must begin with Writing into the Day, and end with time for written reflection. There should also be time allowed for students to share their writing.
  - The Writing Into the Day should be somehow related to the lessons of the day, and should be something that can be used later in the day.
  - The written reflection is a chance to review and share daily successes and advances.

### **PHASE 0: Writing Into the Day, Daily Reflection, Community Building and Wikispaces Orientation**

- These first phase items take place daily and/or for select periods of time at the start of the institute.

#### *Writing into the Day*

- Every day must start with a 10-15 minutes Writing into the Day (WID). These daily writing exercises are meant to focus students immediately. WID activities can vary. Often students are asked to respond to quotes, references to personal experience, pieces of music, and/or artwork. The WID has no necessary type of response. Students may write what they wish as long as they write and as long as they write for the entire time designated to the WID.
- Students are always offered the opportunity to share their writing, but this is not necessary, and efforts should be made to make sure the WID does not run too long during the morning.
- During **Phase IV**, the WID activities can be centered around the day's craft lesson.

#### *Daily Reflection*

- At the end of each day, 10-15 minutes should be put aside for daily reflection. Students should write about their day, not necessarily continue working on their pieces. This designation should be stressed as reflection upon daily lessons or writing process can be enlightening. It is optional to offer time for sharing after reflections are complete.

#### *Community Building*

- The first few days of the CCSWP curriculum must consist of a series of icebreakers that help to create a safe, comfortable environment. These activities are critical for overall success in the program as students must be comfortable with each other in order to have a meaningful writing community.
- In a new institute, these activities should occur over 2-3 days.

- If this curriculum is implemented with a group of students who have already developed a rapport with each other, this phase may be omitted. However, any group-building activities can continue to build the trust and comfort necessary for authentic feedback.
- Possible Activities
  - Who Am I? Game
    - Each student wears a card on his/her forehead with a person/place/thing written on the card. The student must try to figure out who he/she is by asking questions.
  - Two Truths and a Lie
    - Each student introduces themselves by saying who they are, and then saying three things about themselves, one of which is a lie. The other students must try to guess which is the lie.
  - Human "Bingo"
    - Each student has a different bingo card with different directions in each square. These questions might be "find someone who likes the same kind of music as you" or "find someone who has traveled to the same place you have" or "find someone with a birthday in the same month as you."
  - Blind / Silent Arrangement
    - Students must arrange themselves from oldest to youngest without speaking.
    - Students must arrange themselves from shortest to tallest while blindfolded.

### *Wikispaces Orientation*

- All students must register an account with [www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com) and then join the institute page [ccswp.wikispaces.com](http://ccswp.wikispaces.com). Students need not provide a valid email; instructors may use their own emails in cases where students do not know/have an email address.
  - Note: this process may take upwards of an hour with some groups of students. Please plan first days accordingly.
- All students must register to edit pages and take part in online discussions. Instructors should pre-link student pages once rosters are finalized.
- Over the first few days, instructors should demonstrate how to...
  - Edit pages
  - Link pages
  - Upload files
  - Use the discussion
- Each CCSWP cite should have a go-to person for specific help with wikispaces issues.

## PHASE I: Character Creation

**GOAL:** Students will create organic characters and, through stages, develop these creations into three-dimensional characters.

- **Resources/Materials**

- Ice Breakers
- Computers
- [www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com)
- Writing materials

- **Lesson 1: The Driver's License Character**

- **OBJECTIVE:** Students will create a main character by brainstorming basic physical and contextual characteristics.
  - Students create a basic character by listing attributes that would be found on a driver's license.
    - Name, Age, Gender
    - Address (setting)
    - Picture (basic visual imagining)
    - Glasses, other obvious impairments
  - Students may also add other "first impression" information to their character: anything that a person might notice immediately upon meeting this character
    - Note: Characters need not be people. These can be fantasy characters or even inanimate objects brought to life.

- **Lesson 2: Dimensions of Character**

- **OBJECTIVE:** Students learn about the different types of characters in narratives and the kinds of roles these characters may play through teacher-led instruction.
  - One-dimensional characters
    - These are characters that are flat. They only have one way of acting/interacting, and have no range or depth in characterization. They can be part of the story, but cannot carry a story.
      - Ex: The Bridge Troll. It has no back story, but is simply a character that provides a specific function but does not change or show range of emotion or motivation.
  - Two-dimensional characters
    - These are characters that show a very limited range of characterization. They are either one way or another, but never anything in between. These characters are also incapable of carrying a story.
      - Ex: A teacher who is one minute a tyrant, and the next a parent. There is never any middle ground, nor a need for explanation as to why the teacher is angry or caring.



- Why does the character not like x?
- What did the character do before this moment?
- What will happen after the character gets to y?

After the author is done reading, the listener should ask the author at least three questions regarding his/her character

- Author: The author should read the paragraph as written and not try to add a lot of supplementary information as he/she reads. Once the author is finished, they should write down the questions from the listener so that these issues can be considered afterwards. Authors should introduce their characters to at least two other students.
- The goal of this step is to have students make their characters as three dimensional as possible. Getting other perspectives allows students to create a character that truly achieves depth.

## PHASE II: The Hero's Journey

**GOAL:** The second phase of the CCSWP curriculum revolves around using the previously created character within the framework of the Hero's Journey as detailed in the work of Joseph Campbell. Understanding Campbell's work with the heroic cycle is key to correctly implementing this phase of the curriculum.

### • Resources/Materials

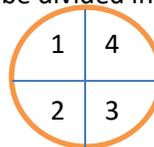
- *The Hero With 1000 Faces* by Joseph Campbell
- *The Power of Myth* (DVD)
- Appendix A: Hero's Journey
- Modern / Popular examples of journey in practice
  - Note: Children's films/books, Sport films and Romantic Comedies fit the formula perfectly in most cases
- Computers
- Writing Materials

### • Lesson 1: Hero's Journey Overview

- **OBJECTIVE:** Students will understand, through teacher-led instruction and examples, the structure of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey and the way in which this *can* structure their own narratives.
- **NOTE:** The hero's journey overview is something that can be differentiated for age groups. Each step is explained here, but only the key components (highlighted below) are fundamental for story creation. The steps below are meant more for the instructors who *must* internalize this structure to be effective as the writing and editing process moves forward.

#### ▪ Overview: The Circle, Two worlds, and struggle vs. mastery.

- The Hero's Journey circle moves from the top in a counterclockwise direction. The circle should be divided into four equal parts by a horizontal and vertical line.



- The horizontal line divides the circle into the two worlds. The top half is the "known world" and the bottom half is the "unknown world." These "worlds" refer to the state of the hero/protagonist. "Worlds" can be physical places or states of being. It can be a house, or being unmarried; a "world" of routine or immaturity.
- The vertical line divides the circle into struggle and mastery. The portion on the left-hand side represents a journey full of struggle, and the portion on the right represents a journey of mastery. The bottom of the circle (the nadir) represents a fundamental change. Prior this change, the character struggles as he/she/it is in a state of immaturity or

imperfection. After the change, the character then begins to master both the unknown and the previously known worlds.

- Step 1: The First Quarter (1) and Finding the Conflict
  - Innocent World of Childhood/Introduction/Contextualization
    - In this first section, the scene is set: where we are, who we need to care about, what situation we are a part of. The context of the story is set including the hero's starting point (child, single, uninitiated, etc).
  - The **conflict**.
    - The conflict of the entire narrative – that which will be achieved/failed, won/lost, reached/denied – must be revealed. These conflicts come early to keep an audience interested and informed. Campbell always says
      - To show an example, use a wide-release Hollywood movie. This conflict will be revealed between 18-22 minutes into the film without fail. Showing examples may help students understand both introductions and the nature of conflicts.
    - The best conflicts are those that are concrete. Characters should want something tangible, need to go somewhere real, want to achieve something discernable. Many young writers will make abstract conflicts (be happy, "better," normal). Even if they still want to use an abstraction, there must be a concrete symbol of that abstraction, i.e., the character will be happy if they are able to get x.
    - A conflict needs a time element to help the narrative achieve **tension**. Narrative tension is what allows a writer to move through a narrative. Lack of tension causes wandering and frustration in plot construction. Ex: The sports team must win the championship by the end of the season (natural time element). Ex: The boy must get the girl before prom. Ex: The police must catch the criminal before the bomb is detonated.
      - Concrete Conflict + Time Element = Tension
  - The refusal and the push
    - Most characters exhibit some sort of resistance to the journey itself. The journey requires effort and risk, and characters recognize the demands. Often there is a some sort of refusal that is overcome by some kind of deliberate or forceful "push" from a person or circumstance. These refusals can have varying degrees of intensity or can be omitted in certain cases, often in

stories where the character does not know what he/she is getting him/herself into.

- Ex: The hesitant soldier is ordered to begin a mission or face punishment.
- Ex: A storm causes the plane full of boys to crash land.
- Crossing the first threshold.
  - Once the refusal is overcome, the character crosses a threshold (real or symbolic) into the unknown world (again, real or symbolic). This is a point of no return. The character must now travel the entire journey and attempt a resolution to the conflict.
    - Ex: In the first *Lord of the Rings* film, Sam stops and remarks that one more step will be the farthest from home he's ever been. This is a literal step into an unknown world.
- Step 2: The Second Quarter (2): Trials, Tribulations, and the Nadir
  - Trials and Tribulations
    - The course of the second quarter is comprised of the character being tested in his/her attempt to achieve the goal. Necessarily these tests will illuminate the failings of the characters. These failures are necessary for plot and character development. A character cannot change without failure. This quarter may take up the greatest part of the narrative and the character struggles against this new, unknown world.
      - Ex: A character struggles with a new relationship as he/she fails to move from a state of total selfishness to a state of compassion and understanding. Parts of the relationship may work, but fundamental problems remain and are revealed over time and through experiences.
  - The **nadir**
    - This moment occurs at the six-o'clock position in the hero's journey. This is both "rock-bottom" and the moment of fundamental change for the character. At this moment, all seems lost, and is lost, unless the character undergoes a change. These changes can be external or internal, but there must be a change nonetheless. It is at this moment of change when the character stops struggling against the unknown and begins to master it.

- Ex: All members of the sports team quit only to reunite and compete with newfound loyalty to one another.
  - Ex: The couple breaks up and each searches themselves until they realize they need each other to be truly happy and one or both begins the process of reconciliation.
- Step 3: The Third Quarter (3): The Preparation, and Conflict Resolution
  - The montage moments
    - The post-nadir section of the narrative is one of the most difficult to write, and, often, is given a shortened treatment in modern storytelling. The character begins the process of rebuilding with the goal of moving toward apotheosis (see next bullet). In film, this section is often given a musical montage treatment. Sports films use this most often: Rocky's training for the final fight; the sports team's winning streak toward the championship. In a written narrative, it is very easy to quickly move from the nadir to the apotheosis/resolution without damaging the narrative.
  - The **apotheosis**
    - An apotheosis is an elevation to a god-like state, but in narrative terms, it is the moment when the character reaches his/her full potential following a fundamental change. At the apotheosis he/she is as prepared as he/she can be to face the conflict. Again, sports films provide excellent examples here.
      - Ex: Down by a run in the bottom of the ninth, the hero must step to the plate and face his arch-nemesis pitcher who always strikes him out (but not this time...).
  - The resolution of the conflict
    - Here all is won or lost. The conflict is resolved positively, negatively, or other-ly. The nature of the story is often decided here and much rides upon the outcome. A great deal of thought is required here to avoid cliché or anticlimax.
- Step 4: The Fourth Quarter (4): The Master of Two Worlds
  - The return
    - After the resolution of the conflict, the story does not simply end, but there must be some sort of return. This could be a return to the starting point of the journey, the return to comfort, the return of stability, etc. However, in this return, the character is changed and even if he/she returns to where

he/she started, they are not the same person that can interact with the world in the same old ways. Because the character is now in a quadrant that represents a mastery of the known, he/she is known as **the master of two worlds**. It is from this point the character is now ready to undertake a new journey for further growth.

- NOTE: The journey need not be followed in chronological steps. While each part plays a role in character development, the order does not, nor does the attention given each part. Students should not feel obligated to treat this format as gospel; instead, they should see it as a starting point they can either explore or evolve.

### Phase III: The Workshop Model

**GOAL:** The third phase gives students to tools necessary to facilitate a successful, safe, and useful writing community both face-to-face and online.

- Resources
  - Student work
  - Classroom spaces for conferencing
  - Computers / Internet access
  - [ccswp.wikispaces.com](http://ccswp.wikispaces.com)
  
- Lesson 1: “I” Statements
  - **OBJECTIVE:** Students will understand how the use of “I” statements in conferencing allows for a less threatening and defensive environment that allows an author to maintain ownership of both the work and editing process.
  - **NOTE:** This lesson can be achieved through simple modeling and/or a fishbowl approach.
    - Step 1: Have students watch an editing session between two instructors or an instructor and student. I would not recommend two students unless they are familiar with the program or have received coaching on this lesson.
    - Step 2: Have one member give the other feedback using “you” statements. Ex: *You* need to fix...; *You* should change...; *You* could make \_\_\_ better by...
    - Step 3: Repeat that feedback using “I” statements. Ex: If it were me, *I* would try fixing...; *I* might change...; *I* might make \_\_\_\_ better by...
    - Step 4: Reflect upon the differences. Students often notice the less threatening nature of the comments and the differences between suggesting and ordering. Instructors must stress this type of language as students give each other feedback in conferences and online.
  
- Lesson 2: Bless, Address, and Shred
  - **OBJECTIVE:** Students will understand the differences between the three type of conferences, their purposes, and their desired outcomes.
  - **NOTE:** Again, these conferences should be modeled by instructors as they are taught. “I” statements should also be continually modeled.
  - **NOTE:** All the below meetings can take place on [ccswp.wikispaces.com](http://ccswp.wikispaces.com) on the discussion board or through messages. Models of this are readily available on the message board.
    - Step 1: Bless meetings (first/second drafts)
      - Positive feedback only from reviewer
      - No suggestions given without request
      - Must find positives somewhere and everywhere if possible
    - Step 2: Address meetings (second/further drafts)

- Author chooses specific areas of critique. No feedback is given in areas not designated by the author
  - Feedback can be positive and constructive, but, again, must refer only to the areas designated by the author
- Step 3: Shred meetings (“final” drafts)
  - Feedback intended for almost finished product
  - Feedback can be positive or constructive and can address any part of the work
- NOTE: Instructor’s role
  - Instructors, when not giving direct instruction, should be constantly reviewing works in progress. Instructors must divide the group strategically to ensure that all students are seen at least once over the course of 2-3 days (2 is very preferable). All students must have face-to-face time with instructors, even if it is not a direct review of written work. This will become more intense as students move toward finishing an anthology piece.

## PHASE IV: The Craft

**GOAL:** Students will be exposed to the many aspects that help authors establish a unique voice in their writing and that help writing become dynamic, fresh, expressive, functional, and powerful.

- Resources
  - Student work
  - Minilessons w/ examples
  - Visual aids (sensory details, detail)
  - Computers / Internet access
  - Ccswp.wikispaces.com
  
- Lessons
  - **OBJECTIVE:** In the craft phase of the CCSWP, students will practice daily, writing minilessons that will help their narratives avoid cliché, repetition, derivation, or confusion, and allow them to develop an authentic authorial **voice**.
  - Phase IV will occur over several days after students have completed character development and the hero's journey overview. By this time, students will crave some autonomy as many will have story ideas that they will want to put to paper. The minilesson format allows for targeted instruction while also provided students with extended time for writing.
  - The structure of Phase IV minilessons is as follows.
    1. Definition of craft element, its uses in narratives, and examples of the craft element in practice.
    2. Opportunity for students to practice element in isolation. Students experiment with element but are able to experiment outside of their main narrative.
    3. Time for sharing and reflection about element and possible extensions and placement in main narratives.
    4. Short (5 min) written reflection on how students can use craft element in their writing *today*.
  - These minilessons are the responsibility of the instructors. They must be designed for the ages, experience, and needs of the particular group. By the time Phase IV begins, instructors should recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the group and be able to order these lessons both effectively and logically. These lessons should build upon each other day after day.
  - Craft elements (non-exhaustive)
    - Show, don't tell
    - Literary Devices
    - Imagery
    - Details

- Sensory details
- Diction and syntax
- Perspective
- Genre expectations
- Mood and tone
- Motif
- Dialogue and dialogue structure
- Iceberg theory
- \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX A: Campbell's Hero's Journey

# THE HERO'S JOURNEY

