

Courageous Action

~a multicultural unit incorporating learning close reading and multiple writing modes ~

The Rationale: The theme of *courage*. The rationale for my selection of *courage* as the theme for a 9th grade unit on narrative writing is inspired by the thought that a discussion of the need for facing challenging situations in life with *courage* could be explored. As a class, we would read literature where dynamic characters are compelled to exhibit courage, and the ensuing discussion would produce a focal point of relevance for writing. While the students are learning to produce meaningful text which is a needed marketable skill in our times, with varied exercises that encourage an understanding of the writing process, they would also be able to formulate their own thoughts on facing life's challenges courageously. We would choose our literary characters from a wide range of cultures. In *Teaching English by Design*, Smagorinsky states that "personal experience would infuse the literary characters with particular and probably idiosyncratic meaning, as different world views provide the framework for different kinds of meaning." (Smagorinsky 2008, p.9) Students would be encouraged to express their personal opinion on matters pertaining to the literature read in order to answer questions such as—*How do we describe courage, and how does courage pertain to facing changes in our person lives?* Adolescents are at an age where they begin to meet the challenges of adult responsibilities as they move into new spheres. I believe they would be encouraged to hear that their whole peer group is facing a similar array of challenges.

The Writing Discourse: The topic of courage will be addressed in a straight forward manner.

The class will first engage in an oral discussion creating a definition of courageous action which expands as we encountered more examples of courage. I thought since some individuals in the class might be shy about expressing their views either out loud or in writing on such a sensitive issue, studying characters in literature would prompt access to a greater depth of thought on the matter. If students view a monumental change and a courageous response to it in another person's life through literature, then a personal discovery of potential courage within could follow. Journal writing in answer to specific questions generated in class would document this discovery. "A personal journal is an open-ended opportunity for students to write whatever they think or feel in response to the unit's content and processes however they might be experiencing them." (Smagorinsky 2008, p. 84) Through journal writing the students will explore the topic of personal courage and produce a narrative which conveys the experience through fictional writing. Journal writing would progress into narrative writing, and persuasive writing would be the culminating project of the unit.

In order to engage the students in this discourse, I plan to use several genres which relate in some way to the over-arching theme of courage. The students would experiment with a variety of writing formats. A time constraint will limit this selection of reading materials to a short list, but I would bring copies of previous students' work, poems and short stories to class to model the writing lesson of the day. Only a few types of writing would be included in the unit, but a discussion of how writing strategies and critical thinking go hand in hand will expand the students' understanding of writing as a creative process. I will take the Hillock approach that "Knowing how to write narratives can become a base for other kinds of writing and for

studying literature.” (Hillocks, G. *Narrative Writing*. 2007. p. 9) Students will learn to generate concrete detail. We will explore how writing formulas learned in school should be a viable spring board for writing necessities later in life.

Would I deviate from the canon? There will be two canons at work in my unit—the canon which pertains to learning to writing and the canon which pertains to studying literature. I believe that in order to write effectively, young men and women must to learn to understand the thinking process behind what they are attempting to communicate. I would use a form found in the canon such as narrative writing, but I would use it as a spring board to greater understanding of writing as a whole. I believe teaching writing with formulaic methods, which is the teaching of writing without an explanation of the critical thinking involved, can put students at a disadvantage. Whether or not the canon expressly states that writing should be instructed in a formulaic manner, I feel instruction of the various forms often turns out this way. “Writing is not about reproducing a predetermined structure; it is about creating meaning,”—this is the argument Jeff House uses in his book *Writing is Dialogue*.” (House 2006, p. 41) I would have the students participate in activities honing critical thinking skills, write a few narrative pieces to help focus on how personal writing is, and ultimately learn to create a persuasive essay as the final achievement in this unit. I believe this follows the canon, but not in the conventional manner.

The Literary Discourse: The literature I select to exemplify courageous action is meant to be a mixture of canonic works and contemporary writing. I am a firm believer in mixing the literary canon up with the works of contemporary writers in order to engage the student

readers. I feel if the reading assignments in the unit point to an example of the protagonist courageously taking a stance of some significance in our modern times, the students might be more interested in reading the material. I feel it would be advantageous to first engage the students with material they show an interest in, and then to present a more classic piece which might be difficult for them to either read or understand and therefore be intimidating. As a class, we could discuss what categorizes a work as a piece of literature and what attributes cause a book or an author to stand the test of time.

I would also consider Atwell's Workshop method which includes allowing students to select their own reading material. (Smagorinsky 2008, p. 49) I would have students select books with certain criteria, rather than randomly, because that way the class would remain engaged with one unifying focus—on courageous action in the lives of people with a similar adolescent outlook. A judiciously selected reading list could help ensure all students see themselves in the literature, and no one feels marginalized by reading ability or cultural background.

I believe this approach is possible using the theme of courageous action as a parameter, because I think all adolescents are looking for a hero to emulate—the heroes we would read about will be engaging in realistic life struggles. I chose the theme of courageous action, because students in the ninth grade are at an age where decision making is becoming their responsibility, and maybe some students see this new experience as unique to their own situation. Many students have low self-esteem and might benefit by reading about others who have insecurities but behaved bravely. As students read of various protagonists' struggles and see difficult decision making modeled, many will be able to draw the conclusion that meeting

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challenges is a universal reality of adult life not to be shied away from. The idea is for the literature to model unselfish qualities which students might embrace. Our discussions and papers will bring into focus how courageous action is in play all around us, in our own lives, and in the lives of our neighbors.

In Conclusion: We could read Poe, Twain or Saki; we could also read Cisneros, Alexi, and Walker. Either way we will discover creative minds. There are hundreds of short stories to choose from—why be limited to “A Most Dangerous Game” or “The Scarlet Ibis?” In the end I will be thinking about how to engage my students with a novel, poetry and a short story. The class will write using a variety of forms without being formulaic about it. I think the topic of courageous action is close to the hearts of young people and will serve as an admirable subject matter to inspire young readers and writers.

9th Grade Narrative Writing

THE GOAL: My goal in this unit is to teach contemporary literature, appropriate for 9th graders, the language necessary for critiquing narrative writing or poetry (as indicated in the Georgia Standards), and expository writing. I plan to read a variety of short stories, a novella, and a selection of poems. As we read, we will learn close reading skills, and we will analyze the strategies used and the critical thinking involved in composing a narrative piece. By teaching mini-lessons and scaffolding activities, I plan to move from close reading to experimenting with

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expository writing. By awakening students' creative writing talents, I hope to strengthen their over-all writing abilities.

The over-arching theme will be *courage*, which I hope will allow a discussion of how people face life-experiences courageously. Hopefully, this thematic element to my unit will enable students to relate well to the experiences of the characters in the stories, kindling a creative out pouring about the universal aspect of courage. The mini-lessons I teach will contain an element of writing which we will work on for the day, such as, for example, the careful selection of words needed to create sensory imagery. We will work by listening to an example of a literary element, and then attempt to create that element. We will discuss how the critical thinking involved in one area of writing can be expanded into another. The class will create journal entries which show a developing understanding of the writing process as we create a variety of genres such as a personal narrative, a poem and a persuasive essay. The culminating journal will contain all of the pages of creative effort, a poem, and two essays.

My unit will contain a multicultural element. In the area where I live and plan to teach, 75% of the students do not speak English as their mother tongue. Many of these students come from Bosnia, Mexico, Russia, Somalia, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Guatemala, and Vietnam to name a few countries. I am hoping that by adding short stories composed by modern immigrant authors and authors of color to the 9th grade curriculum, I will be promoting understanding amongst my students of many backgrounds. I am hoping that getting a sense of the characters will infuse our study with an element of understanding about who Americans are in the twenty-first century.

THE RUBRICS: Several rubrics will be necessary to help the students develop agency in reading comprehension and writing. There will be one rubric for the journal which will contain the work showing the students' growing understanding of the writing process. This grade will be based largely on creativity and effort. There will be separate rubrics for the original poem, the narrative pieces, and the two persuasive essays.

The Journal: The journal will show

- a growing understanding of writing as a process
- personally created work exemplifies the genre we are examining
- responses to stories and/or poems read by the class

When grading the journal I will give a check mark credit for several entries made per week, completeness of attempt at genre being studied, and creativity. Consistent check marks will yield a 4 and be worth 25% of overall grade.

The Poem: I will grade the original poem with the same rubric as the journal, and it is worth 10% of overall grade.

Discovery of Courageous Action Journal

Teacher Name: **N Williams**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Completeness	There is one clear, well-focused attempt at genre. Main idea stands out and is supported by details.	Main genre is clear but the supporting information is general.	Main attempt at genre is somewhat clear but there is a need for more supporting information.	The main genre is not clear. There is a seemingly random collection of information.

The Narrative Stories: The Scar Story and The Memorable Episode from Childhood narratives

are weekly writing exercises worth 10% of grade each and will be graded for

- whether or not the topic is clear
- whether or not the piece engages the reader
- whether or not the sequencing of ideas enhances the story
- whether or not the sentence fluency flows

Narrative Writing

Teacher Name: **N Williams**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Introduction (Organization)	The hook is inviting, and previews the theme of the paper.	The hook states the topic, but doesn't previews theme in a particularly inviting manner to the reader.	The hook states the topic, but does not adequately lead into the story.	There is no clear hook or statement of the topic.

Sequencing (Organization)	Details are placed in a logical order and the way they are presented effectively keeps the interest of the reader.	Details are placed in a logical order, but the way in which they are presented/introduced sometimes makes the writing less interesting.	Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader.	Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the writing is organized.
Flow & Rhythm (Sentence Fluency)	All sentences sound natural and are easy-on-the-ear when read aloud. Each sentence is clear and has an obvious emphasis.	Almost all sentences sound natural and are easy-on-the-ear when read aloud, but 1 or 2 are stiff and awkward or difficult to understand.	Most sentences sound natural and are easy-on-the-ear when read aloud, but several are stiff and awkward or are difficult to understand.	The sentences are difficult to read aloud because they sound awkward, are distractingly repetitive, or difficult to understand.
Adding Personality (Voice)	The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience, and the author has made the ideas "his own."	The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but there is some lack of ownership of the topic.	The writer relates some of his own knowledge or experience, but it adds nothing to the discussion of the topic.	The writer has not tried to transform the information in a personal way.

The Oral Book Report Presentation: This might be a good place to pick up a few points if some of the other projects are difficult, but it is also worth 10% of grade. The presentation will be graded on

- enthusiasm and expressiveness
- whether or not the student seems to be prepared
- whether or not the student sticks to the time allotment
- whether or not the student sticks to the topic

Oral Book Report Presentation

Teacher Name: **N Williams**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Enthusiasm	Facial expressions and body language generate a strong interest and enthusiasm about the topic in others.	Facial expressions and body language sometimes generate a strong interest and enthusiasm about the topic in others.	Facial expressions and body language are used to try to generate enthusiasm, but seem somewhat faked.	Very little use of facial expressions or body language. Did not generate much interest in topic being presented.
Preparedness	Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.	Student seems pretty prepared but might have needed a couple more rehearsals.	The student is somewhat prepared, but it is clear that rehearsal was lacking.	Student does not seem at all prepared to present.
Time-Limit	Presentation is 7 minutes long.	Presentation is 5 minutes long.	Presentation is 3 minutes long.	Presentation is less than 3 minutes OR more than 7 minutes.
Stays on Topic	Stays on topic all (100%) of the time.	Stays on topic most (99-90%) of the time.	Stays on topic some (89%-75%) of the time.	It was hard to tell what the topic was.

The Persuasive Essay: The ability to write a persuasive essay is our culminating goal. There will be a trial run analyzing the character in a movie worth 10% of overall grade, and the final paper worth 25% of grade. Both papers will be graded for

- an effective first paragraph
- well constructed presentation of evidence
- sentence structure
- strong closing paragraph

Persuasive Essay : Facing Life Courageously

Teacher Name: **N Williams**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4 - Above Standards	3 - Meets Standards	2 - Approaching Standards	1 - Below Standards	Score
Attention Grabber	The introductory paragraph has a strong hook or attention grabber that is appropriate for the audience. This could be a strong statement, a relevant quotation, statistic, or question addressed to the reader.	The introductory paragraph has a hook or attention grabber, but it is weak, rambling or inappropriate for the audience.	The author has an interesting introductory paragraph but the connection to the topic is not clear.	The introductory paragraph is not interesting AND is not relevant to the topic.	

Evidence and Examples	All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Evidence and examples are NOT relevant AND/OR are not explained.	
Sentence Structure	All sentences are well-constructed with varied structure.	Most sentences are well-constructed and there is some varied sentence structure in the essay.	Most sentences are well constructed, but there is no variation in structure.	Most sentences are not well-constructed or varied.	
Closing paragraph	The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader solidly understanding the writer's position. Effective restatement of the position statement begins the closing paragraph.	The conclusion is recognizable. The author's position is restated within the first two sentences of the closing paragraph.	The author's position is restated within the closing paragraph, but not near the beginning.	There is no conclusion - the paper just ends.	

Week One, Day One

3 minutes: *Hero* by Mariah Carey playing in the background; attendance/announcements.

15 minutes: To introduce the unit on courageous action, I will present a power-point containing clips from Wizard of Oz. The power-point will show how Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Lion think of themselves in terms of low self-esteem, yet perform courageous deeds. We'll have a brief class discussion as to

whether or not these characters do take courageous action, and whether or not their actions belie what they think of themselves.

25 minutes: I'll further explain specific aspects of the unit on courageous action. Each student will start by reading a novel (Appendix I—book suggestion list). After the books have been read, each student will give a book-report presentation. The criteria for choosing a novel are as follows:

- The setting of the novel be in a culture other than one's own
- Becoming embroiled in a situation which requires a tough, unselfish decision, the protagonist exhibits courage and the ability to think about the well being of others.

We will discuss setting up a journal with three sections

- a double-column response log for reading responses,
- a multi-purpose section for writing exercises, and
- a personal vocabulary list.

We will discuss the use of the reading journal—I'd like the students to choose passages from their novels which they enjoy or find significant in one column (more on this later) and make commentary about what the passage means in the other. Close reading of a passage would involve high-lighting a word or phrase in the passage as key to what the author intended. Look for passages which show

- how the main character in the novel manifest courage in a unique manner;
- show why the passage is an example of descriptive or otherwise meaningful writing.

I would like the response column to explain how or why the passage speaks to the student personally. Does a character's action meet expectations of courage, or does it challenge a previously held idea and put the need for courage in a new light? Do the descriptive passages make you feel like you are there experiencing the protagonist's dilemma? We will be alternating reading and writing responses, and there should be vocabulary words added each week. Words from our classes can be included, or words from the novel, poem or short story the student thought to look up. Use dates; I will be checking the journals weekly.

15 minutes: As a class discussion, the students begin creating an extended definition of *courageous action*. Students come up to the board and write what is understood at this time to be the definition of courageous action. When we are finished, I ask students to start a page for courageous action criteria in their journals as an opening page, saying this definition will be expanded in the days ahead.

2 minutes: We go over homework again—set up journal with three parts and finish writing out criteria for the definition of courage and/or courageous action on the first page.

Day Two

5 minutes: Attendance /Housekeeping (Seating arrangement could stay in collaborative formation; twenty-four students—six groups of four, or four groups of six if room is tiny.)

25 minutes: We do an Opinionnaire opening activity. (Appendix II) (Smagorinsky, 2007) I pass out examples of heroes in the news which the class reads and discusses in collaborative groups. I have a sheet of discussion starters: Do these young people demonstrate courage or not? Are the criteria for courageous action amiss in our modern world? Do these young people mirror our own ideas of courage? Is courage a planned activity? Can you think of other forms of courage not mentioned in these examples? Students discuss the expanding courageous characteristics definition. Students might decide heroes think in terms of

- other's well being
- helping others —physically or emotionally
- situation involves risk
- deed seemed a natural thing to do

25 minutes: Briefly clarify schedule for reading—students have two weeks to read novel and should read about 20 pg. per day. An important aspect of the reading should be to find a self-effacing action on the part of the protagonist—students should find passages they feel exemplify the topic. There will be other close reading assignments pertaining to our writing lessons.

Take class to computer lab to check out a book.

5 minutes: Discuss homework—finish writing up journal entry for the expanding definition of courage and/or courageous action. Start reading novel.

Day Three

3 minutes: Attendance/ housekeeping

20 minutes: Discuss goal of reading literature generally and of reading literature pertaining to courageous action specifically as a class. Discuss connection between reading and writing. What causes a book to stand the test of time? Write findings such as the following on the board and later in journal. Students could note

- connections between literary characters and their own lives
- words have the power to connect—
- novels, short stories, and poems have the power to connect
- reading provokes thought
- student writing provokes thought

Note class should be reflecting on how courageous action takes place in the lives of the characters we read about, in the lives of those around us, and in our own lives as journal entries. Class should be thinking about how the protagonist's display of courage compares with the list we are generating of courageous actions' characteristics.

30 minutes: Begin a writing activity called Telling Scar Stories. (Blasingame & Bushman, 2005) This activity is pre-assessment of writing skill level.) Pass out handout with empty (vague) body shape and tell students to mark a significant scar that they actually have on the chart. The activity is to imagine a story that relates how a specific scar came to be on a certain part of the student's own body, but they can invent a fictional character with this scar if they prefer. Handout a Hillock-like page of ideas: *Questions for Story Ideas* (Hillock, 2007). Start students thinking about the need for

- setting
- characters
- action/results of action

Briefly discuss brainstorming, creating characters, being precise with details, and imagining your audience. (All of these will be covered in more depth as the class progresses.) State this should be

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approximately a two page story. State students could add an element of courage—either main character’s or rescuer’s. Tell them to have fun. (I’m thinking the class will have more trouble with editing and rewriting than this part.) Kids begin brainstorming and jot down ideas for Scar Story.

2 minutes: Discuss homework—keep reading novel and choose a rich descriptive passage to bring to class for discussion tomorrow. I’m looking for specific examples of what a character looks like, maybe what he or she dreams about. What does it look like where he or she lives, or possibly a passage which describes what is marvelous about the overall setting?

Day Four

3 minutes: Attendance/announcements

20 minutes: Today’s lesson is about choosing detail to describe a character or a setting—we read one person’s passage aloud and discuss its descriptive qualities as a class in order to exemplify what we are looking for. The students continue by reading their passages to one another and discuss further in groups. State how and or why the details are bringing the passage to life and helping the reader to visualize the character or setting. Is a character quirky, honorable, and/or what is it that makes this person tick? Is the setting a sensual paradise, a barren waste land, or something just like your neighborhood? How do you know?

30 minutes: We practice critiquing. I take three stories written by last year’s class and placing one at a time on the over head, I read the stories aloud. Each group is to rank the stories from the one they liked best to the one they like least and say why. Each group will share some aspect of their reasoning with the class—a student from each group writes the group’s most significant findings on the board. This list forms criteria for the narrative form to be used with *Scar Story* writing project. The students might state that, for example, a story should contain the following elements:

- A threat to the main character (and this could be his or her own bad idea).
- The writer *shows* detail, but doesn’t *tell* facts, regarding the protagonist’s emotion —are they mad, glad, or sad— how can we tell?
- Is there enough descriptive writing for the reader to understand these emotions?
- What or where exactly is the setting?

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- Has the writer created an interesting opening—a hook to grab the reader’s attention?
- Is the writer addressing the reader? Who is the reader— an interested peer.
- Are the events following a logical order?
- Is it realistic? Do we like events to be realistic even if the setting is fanciful? (Talk about suspending disbelief.)

Again jot down ideas for story, and if there is time, begin brainstorming *Scar Story* with peers. Think of specific details pertaining to story—get some details down about main character and setting. (One student types up narrative criterion list, and I make copies for class.)

2 minutes: For homework write first draft of story about a scar somewhere on your body. Double space your work. Try not to make the story too long, because we will be learning to critique each other’s work in class. Bring your first draft and your novel tomorrow. Also make sure journals are up to date for Friday check—be sure expanded definition is in place and finish adding comments about chosen descriptive passages.

Day Five

3 minutes: Attendance/announcements.

10 minutes: Ask students to take out first draft of story. Talk about critiquing other’s work:

- Student should read the story slowly,
- See if the narrative form criteria discussed yesterday are evident (list on board),
- Politely ask author if they would mind if you mark spelling and punctuation mistakes.

20 minutes: Each student exchanges paper with person on their left. Each person reads another’s story and checks for the narrative criteria. Each student makes a few encouraging comments about what is likeable about the story, how they feel the essential elements are or are not present, and states positively how the work might be improved.

20 minutes: In the discussion groups each person works on improving their own story, but quietly talking about ideas with a neighbor is allowed. If a student feels their story is sufficiently improved, they may read their novel while others write. I circulate checking and discussing journals (finish Monday).

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2 minutes: Homework is to polish story to hand it in on Monday, write a journal entry about what aspect of the class critiquing session helped the author improve his or her story, and continue to read novel.

Week Two, Day Six

2 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping. I collect stories.

15 minutes: I introduce *Menu Project* (Smagorinsky, 2009)—which restaurant will suite the Quinn family’s needs for a graduation party better? Twenty-five family members will be attending the party—this creates a variety of needs starting with things such as does the restaurant have a special room for hosting large parties, or do we even care? You will work in groups, but you (as a group) represent a cousin with good intentions who is trying to bring both sides of the graduate’s family together. The cousin thinks through the list of particularities below while examining the menus of two restaurants— which I have distributed to each table. The cousin considers the needs of the guests as she studies what each restaurant has to offer. The goal is an inquiry project—the planning of the festive event—that will emphasize the necessary steps used in the decision making.

The handout for the project states the following:

- Compare and contrast the menus of the Buckhead Pizza Co. at 3350 Buford Dr. in Buford, GA with the menu of the Olive Garden at 3220 Buford Dr. in Buford, GA.
- Check—does the restaurant provide an ample selection of celebratory food possibilities?
- Costs—will the cost be approximately \$35 per person?
- Air quality (smoking in restaurant?)
- Choices for people with dietary restrictions?
- Special menu preferences (being vegan)?
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities?

The graduate has a large family and twenty-five of his relatives plus friends will be invited. They are as follows:

- Mr. and Mrs. Quinn (the grandparents), age 62—Mrs. Quinn has diabetes.

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- Mr. and Mrs. Quinn (the parents), age 43—Mr. Quinn’s business is doing poorly. Mr. Quinn would like to celebrate his son’s graduation, but he feels shy about asking each family to pay their own way. (You, the cousin, are not shy.)
- Fred Quinn, the graduate, would like to invite a few friends—they have voracious appetites.
- Mr. and Mrs. Diamond (the other grandparents), age 65—Mr. Quinn was wounded in Vietnam and can’t climb stairs.
- Two Quinn Uncle plus wives and six Quinn cousins—two of whom have asthma.
- Three Diamond Uncles and Aunts, plus you—one vegan cousin.

The object is to arrive at a group consensus—where will the memorable occasion most likely be a success? Outline your answers. (Assign someone from your group to take notes.) You are the cousin and you have to present the mother of the graduate with your ideas—clearly stated on paper, in the form of an outline. She is not fully convinced this huge party is such a good idea. You are doing your best to convince her that it is.

30 minutes: Groups work on project. I tell the class when they have ten minutes left to finish polishing their outline.

2 minutes: I take up the outlines at the end of class to check, make comments, and make copies for each group member (unless we are a groovy HS where kids use computers in class). Homework is read novel.

Day Seven

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

10 minutes: We are continuing exercises which lead toward the goal of learning to write more effectively. Talk about how writing connects author to reader. We are learning to do what authors do—generate detail to pull the reader in and discuss how students appreciate this as the reader. This week we are going to tell or write another story. Today we are going to practice searching our mind for detail to accurately portray what we have in mind relating. I have brought several huge, South Georgia pinecones to class and put one in front of each collaborative group. (Hillocks, 2007)

30 minutes: In this *Fishing for Detail* exercise, the object is to find plenty of specifics worth bringing to each other’s notice—this might include details about color, seeds, prickliness, and size—whatever

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strikes you as unique and piques your interest. There are a lot more colors than “brown” to be noted. Think about and write down findings individually for fifteen minutes, and then we will discuss our findings as a class.

10 minutes: Discuss being more specific when finding *voice*—note being present in the moment. Explain how an individual focuses on detail when telling a story. What do students say to their best friend or cousin, when they want the other person to understand what happened at a key event? Think about how you might know what happened, but realize that you are writing to an audience who does not, so you have to give them detail. Tomorrow we will discuss specifics and use language that does not need to be a list of adjectives.

2 minutes: Homework: Finishing up novel, and bring in an interesting descriptive passage for discussion. Be thinking about episodes from childhood that you might like to share with the class as next writing project. Make vocabulary entry with words like voice and audience.

Day Eight

3 minutes: Attendance/ housekeeping. I give back Scar story, with forward looking comments.

20 minutes: Today we start by generating ideas for our next story. This one will be any memorable episode from childhood. (Hillocks, 2007) I have produced a list. I ask students to share their ideas, and we make a longer list of potential stories on the board.

- Humorous—learning to cook as a brownie scout—putting salt in the cocoa instead of sugar.
- Scary—loosing Grandmother in the train station.
- Ostracizing—fighting in the school yard
- Spooky—events on camping trip, etc.
- Zany—family member who idiosyncratic behavior amused all parties concerned
- A favorite pet, sport, or holiday and reasons why—what happened?
- An entertaining wild life in the garbage story

Students discuss in collaborative groups which story they’d like to write, and vote on which story they’d like me to write. Class brainstorms episodes from personal past.

10 minutes: Note the importance of word choice again—adjectives not the only way to create a description—think of alternatives.

- Language of action—verbs
- Language of people and place—nouns
- Sensory impression important
- Responses of body to emotions important
- Figurative language—great tool
- Dialogue (but we won't use that just yet).
- Style helps create mood or humor.

20 minutes: Try to make reader—writer connection. Bring out selected passages from novels. Read passages to each other in groups, and state why or how passage is telling, descriptive, or otherwise note worthy—what exactly did you find so interesting about it? Each group shares something with class—either a descriptive passage favored in the group or something to add to our extended definition.

2 minutes: Homework: Write first draft of stories. Make sure your reading log includes why you liked the passage you selected and up dated expanding definition.

Day Nine

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

10 minutes: Discuss continuing to write a fictional account of a childhood event, while possibly adding an element of courageous action. How did the character control, or fail to control, fears during the episode? Reflect on your own courage in this situation. (It can be humorously presented.) Form your idea by looking at the criteria in the definition of courageous action.

20 minutes: In collaborative groups, discuss adding an element of controlling fear. Might the courageous decision have had an ostracizing effect? Could this element be added to current story? Brainstorm, and continue honing specifics.

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20 minutes: Spend last 15 minutes critiquing each other's latest story—pass it to the right, etc. Comment politely on what you like about the story and over all ways it might be improved.

2 minutes: Continue working on story for homework. Update journal for weekly check.

Day Ten

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

10 minutes: Pass around sheet for signing up for presentations which start next Wednesday—three people a day for eight days in a row. (Post list). Ask the students to create an artistic representation on a poster board—paint or glue something representative—but it should be a visual representation. Include a brief outline of the basic story and reflective points on your poster. (You can use this to give your presentation.) A well formulated book review presentation contains the following:

- State the title and author of the book.
- Give a *brief* hook, not a summary of the entire plot.
- Do not to give away any exciting parts.
- State whether or not you liked the book and why.
- Mention specifics about the author's style that you liked (or not).
- Mention specifics about the characters.
- Mention specifics about the setting that intrigued you.
- Talk about the main character's culture, or divided culture.
- Include warrants that explain the protagonist's courage (lesson below)
- Recommend (or not) the novel to your classmates.

In order to include one or two specific warrants about the protagonist's courage, we will to learn more about how to create them shortly. The presentation outline including several warrants high-lighting the protagonists courage should comprise about two pages, glued to a poster board, and decorated. The presentation should take about seven minutes. We are going to mount the poster boards on the wall.

20 minutes: Now we are going to do an activity to prepare for thinking analytically about the novels and the protagonist's courage. (Smagorinsky, 2009) Pair off in two's with the person to your left. The task at hand is to choose a set of ballplayers, songs writers, makeup brands, pizza companies, video games, or jeans—something you're are familiar with—to generate points of comparison with your partner, and in about 20 minutes we will start sharing the findings with the class. Discuss what you see as the strengths of the ballplayers, ball teams, video games, etc. and what you see as the weaknesses. Give a clear reason why you have decided the one is preferable, superior, or more desirable than the other. This is called a warrant—it consists of a claim, an example, and the proof. We generate several examples as a class. (For example: The superiority of Jersey Mike's pizza over Domino's is evident in the toppings, because....and state an actual comparison between Jersey Mike's pizza and Domino's, such as...Jersey Mike's topping are fresher and more abundant than Domino's.)

20 minutes: Share findings—each pair selects a representative.

2 minutes: Homework is polish story (double space the writing), and finish novel.

Week Three, Day Eleven

3 minutes: Attendance/ Housekeeping (I collect unchecked journals.)

20 minutes: Today we are going to practice improving the quality of written sentences. Get out several different color markers and the current story. Using different colors respectively, students find the following on their own paper:

- *Be verbs*—be, being, been, am, are, was, were, is. Find these words and then revise at least half of them—use interesting action verbs instead—you will probably have to rearrange the whole sentence—but you will probably like the result.
- Vary your sentence length. Underline each sentence using two colors—first one, then the other, over and over, underlining several paragraphs. When you have done this, you should be able to see whether or not your sentence lengths are varied—some sentences should be short and some long. Consider revising really long sentences into two sentences. Check really short sentences for a subject and a verb.
- Vary the beginning of your sentences. First box the beginning word of each sentence. Do a lot of your sentences start with the same word, or do you see a pattern of repeated words? (*When,*

So, Then , or My) When you make your revisions try doing away with these words, or at least add more variety.

- Unnecessary words in sentences: very, get, got, or so—find them and replace them with a more vivid word.
- Find slang or contractions and replace these words.

30 minutes: For the next thirty minutes work on revising paper. Mention this is what authors do—revise, revise, and revise, because writing is a fluid process. Quiet talking while revising is permitted. I circulate and check journals or answer questions.

2 minutes: Homework is to polish paper and/or start a rough draft of your presentation. Mention who is up for presentations on Wednesday and thank them for volunteering to go first.

Day Twelve

3 minutes: Attendance/ Housekeeping Collect stories.

30 minutes: Again I talk about the relationship between warrants and the book presentations, clarify once more that this is an inquiry project into the topic of courageous action—what do we think about courageous action generally? The objective as a class is to show how a wide variety of individuals demonstrate courage. The object as an individual is to compare your character with our expanded list of what constitutes courage, make a decision about what type of courage the protagonist displays and share the details. First of all, do you think your protagonist shows courage? How could you prove it? We create a few examples of warrants on the board as a class. For now think up a demonstration of courage and characterize that action according to one criterion on the list. If you find more than one criterion you like, make several warrants and rank your points. A warrant is—a claim, followed by an example that provides evidence, and a stated criterion from the list in a phrase starting with a word that means *because*. Other words or phrases that could be used might include *due to, in light of, in that, owing to, since, or though*. An example might be, *Charles showed courage when he... (action &/or deed), because he... (statement from the list defining courageous action)*. We use colored markers on the board to accent each separate part of the warrant and to make it especially clear. We have a lesson on punctuating subordinate clauses. Students practice creating warrants in their groups for a few minutes. (Smagorinsky, 2009)

Nina Williams

20 minutes: During the presentation week we are going to do a poetry segment. We will spend twenty minutes a day exploring how specific details create the poem. The focus will continue to be on learning to recognize and use effective, descriptive language. I show the class a few YouTube segments of Shel Silverstein’s “Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout” who would not take the garbage out, “The Crocodile’s Toothache,” and “Jimmy Jet and his TV set,” (or just find these poems online and put them on the over head). I’m trying the non-intimidating approach to poetry, while using it as a tool to show that learning careful word selection is important to all writing and especially necessary in creating a poem. Between each of these poems we will discuss how Silverstein was using language. Do his words appeal to the senses? How does he address and/ or hook the reader? What strategies does he appear to have been using in his word play? By the end of the presentation/poetry week, I will expect everyone to have written three poems in their journal which we will start in class and one completely original poem. We’ll keep it simple and try to have fun. (Blasingame & Bushman, 2005)

2 minutes: Homework: Work on presentations, and write a response in your reading journal about something that you saw in a new light today with regard to one of Shel Silverstein’s poems. Name the poem, try to quote the line that seemed significant, and say how or why the line stood out today.

Day Thirteen

3 minutes: Attendance/ Housekeeping

20 minutes: I read from Behind the Wheel: Poems about driving by Janet Wong. Some are prose poems. We discuss how author uses language, rhythm or beat, and rhyming or not rhyming words. Main rule—rhyme or rhythm should feel poetic to author. We discuss similes and together as a class we spend a few minutes finding interesting similes. In groups, the students note their favorite simile in the reading journal and discuss a response—each student should write down a simile or two they liked and be prepared to write a response.

30 minutes: Three students give presentations. (I’m thinking they will be 7—8 minutes each.)

2 minutes: Homework is to write a response about the simile you chose—what struck you about it?

Day Fourteen

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

Nina Williams

25 minutes: I show the class “Swan Shadow” by J. Hollander. We talk about what theme means and putting poems into interesting shapes that are somehow connected to that theme. I also read William Carlos Williams’ “The Fourth of July.” We talk about suggestive imagery. I read from A Dime a Dozen by Nikki Grimes. Students listen and write down something they found interesting about theme or imagery. Discuss how figurative language comes into play.

25 minutes: Three kids give presentations.

2 minutes: Homework is to continue working on presentations, poetry responses, and vocab. list. Bring in a song that can be used to note rhythm, theme, imagery, etc. in poetry.

Day Fifteen

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

25 minutes: In groups, class members take turns reading song selections and groups talk about how creating songs and poetry is the same thing—poetry is all about personal choice.

25 minutes: Several kids give book presentations.

2 minutes: Homework is update vocabulary journal with the language of poetry; include words such as figurative language, rhythm, rhyme, simile, and suggestive imagery, etc. Work on presentation and/or start generating ideas for an original poem.

Week Four, Day Sixteen

3 minutes: Attendance/ Housekeeping

25 minutes: Today we look at “Women” by Alice Walker and talk about recognizing assonance, understanding why sound devices emphasize an idea, and see how Walker used metaphors to juxtapose ideas. Each student chooses a few lines to comment on for home work.

25 minutes: Three students present.

2 minutes: Homework is to update vocabulary page; write a response pertaining to a portion of “Women,” and begin creating an original poem.

Day Seventeen

Nina Williams

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

30 minutes: We focus on how poetry distills ideas today with a found poem. I show a found poem on the over head created from a book which students have previously read—*The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton.

Johnny

Scared of his own shadow

Sixteen

Had it awful rough at home, awful rough (etc.)

We plan creating a found poem from a work the students are familiar with out of the LA text book. Working in collaborative groups, each table creates a found poem by choosing a story the class already read in a previous unit and letting the creative juices flow. Each group reads their poem a loud after about fifteen minutes.

20 minutes: Two or three kids present, depending on the time.

2 minutes: Create a found poem of your own from your novel for homework.

Day Eighteen

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

30 minutes: Talk about how a writer is not passive. A writer must discern what the reader needs to know—journalist's *W* questions are helpful: *Who* did *what*, *when* did it happen, *where* did it happen, *why* did it happen, and *how* did it happen? Writing in all forms is about analyzing what the reader needs to know, and figuring out an interesting way to pass the information on. Today we are going to create Haiku poems. We discuss elements. I show Haiku poems from previous classes. Traditionally Haiku poems contain an element of nature, and the students can use this to spring board into Haiku writing. Talk in collaborative groups. I help with some ideas—a beautiful camping spot, a trip to the lake, and/or an outdoor sports event. Each person creates their own, but they can discuss and brainstorm ideas to get started.

20 minutes: Several students present.

Nina Williams

2 minutes: Homework: Finish the Haiku. Write elements of Haiku up on vocabulary page.

Day Nineteen

3 minutes: Attendance/ Housekeeping

30 minutes: Today we are going to create a formula poem. The formula is C+C+WD+E=P. I show work from previous students. The letters stand for comparison plus comparison plus wild dream plus emotion equals poem. A good place to begin might be to focus on someone you admire or love such as a close relative. Again each class member creates his or her own, but the students can discuss ideas as they work. The job of a writer is to effectively sequence ideas.

20 minutes: Students present.

2 minutes: Homework is polish poem.

Day Twenty

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

25 minutes: Students presentations come first in case we have gotten behind—they finish up.

25 minutes: I read Frost's "Road Less Traveled By"—put it on overhead. We discuss poem as a class emphasizing new vocabulary. I read poems written by teen boys from *You Hear Me?* edited by Betsy Franco.

2 minutes: Homework: Write a wholly original poem, and bring it to class to share on Monday.

Week Five, Day Twenty-one

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

15 minutes: The class spends a few minutes reading poems aloud—students post poems on bulletin board.

35 minutes: We begin watching a movie, *Coraline* (N. Gaiman's novel, Jim Burton's movie, 2008) We watch this movie for two class periods (and I edit a few parts to make it fit the time slot).

2 minutes: Homework: Next reading—a short story, "The Management of Grief" by Bharati Mukherjee.

Nina Williams

Day Twenty-two

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

50 minutes: We watch important parts of *Coraline*.

2 minutes: Homework: Pick a character from the movie and using all the writing skills you have acquired so far, analyzing whether or not the chosen character is courageous. The paper should be a page or two long.

Day Twenty-three

3 minutes: Attendance/ Housekeeping

25 minutes: Get out essay. Students working in groups—pass paper across table, etc. Students read, edit, and comment on each other's paper.

25 minutes: Students polish their own paper, but continue to discuss problems if need be.

2 minutes: Homework: Finish polishing essay and finish reading short story, and select a passage from this tale concerning the repercussions of terrorism that shows a character manifesting courage.

Day Twenty-four

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping Hand in stories.

15 minutes: Our final project begins—a research project that also utilizes the persuasive skills we have been acquiring and has real life applications which we discuss. (Blasingame & Bushman, 2005) Pick a real person whom you admire (this can be a relative). We brain storm topics as a class. Discuss conducting research either with an interview, the internet, or a library book (or a combination).

15 minutes: I give lesson on conducting an interview. As a class we brainstorm interview questions.

20 minutes: Class practices conducting interviews in groups.

2 minutes: Homework is to choose a person to write about and plan your paper—think about type of research. Students will be persuading me of whether or not this person has courage.

Day Twenty-five

Nina Williams

3 minutes: Attendance/housekeeping

20 minutes: Discuss nuances of writing the persuasive essay using an outline. Discuss taking notes and creating categories of note cards in order to form an outline. Discuss looking at groups of facts in order to create headings and or paragraphs, etc.

30 minutes: Class goes to the library to listen to the media-specialist give tips on research. Begin conducting research.

2 minutes: Homework: Start research. Conduct interview (can be phone interview) if you are writing up a relative. Bring 4 by 5 cards to class.

Week Six, Day Twenty-six

3 minutes: Attendance/ Housekeeping

20 minutes: Discuss quiet courage in “Management of Grief.”

30 minutes: Start watching film—*Finding Forrester (2000)*—Dir. Gus Van Sant.

2 minutes: Homework: Work on out line.

Day Twenty-seven

3 minutes: Attendance/ Housekeeping

20 minutes: Students ask questions about paper. Discuss outline amongst themselves in groups. I talk about good hooks and good ending.

30 minutes: Watch film

2 minutes: Homework: work on first draft of persuasive essay.

Day Twenty-eight

5 minutes: Attendance/ Housekeeping. Students can ask questions about paper.

25 minutes: Watch film.

25 minutes: Talk about film. Ask questions about paper.

Nina Williams

2 minutes: Homework is finish paper.

Day Twenty-nine

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping

10 minutes: Discuss using warrants that point out courage or courageous action—note quiet courage. I collect journals. Review peer editing skills.

20 minutes: Peer edit. Pass paper to right etc. Make polite suggestions about paper as a whole, organization, sentence quality, check introductions and ending, and warrant quality.

20 minutes: Begin final copy of paper.

2 minutes: Homework is polish paper.

Day Thirty

3 minutes: Attendance/Housekeeping. Collect papers.

50 minutes: Finish watching movie.

Merry Christmas!

Resources:

Nina Williams

Blasingame, J. & Bushman, J.H. (2005). NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Hillocks, G. (2007). *Narrative Writing*. NH: Heinemann

House, Jeff. (2006). *Writing is Dialogue*. Maine: Christopher-Gordon, Pub.

Smagorinsky, Peter. (2009). *Dynamics of writing Instruction*. (An online publication)

Smagorinsky, Peter. (2008). *Teaching English by Design*. New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Appendix I

Booklist for *Courageous Action*

Nina Williams

Borland, H. (1963). *When Legends Die*. NY: Random House

Conway, J.K. (1989). *Road from Coorain*. NY: Randon House

Durbin, W. (1998). *The Broken Blade*. NY: Yearling Press

Ellis, D. (2002). *The Breadwinner*. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre

Levintin, S. (1988). *The Return*. NY: Ballantine Books

Martel, Y. (2001). *Life of Pi*. FL: Hardcourt

Mortenson, G. (2006). *Three Cups of Tea*. NY: Penguin Books

Philbrick, R. (1993). *Freak the Mighty*. NY: Scholastic Inc.

Resau, L. (2007). *Red Glass*. NY: Delacorte/Randon House

Robinson, J. & Duckett, A. (2003). *I Never Had It Made: An Autobiography of Jackie Robinson*.

NY: Harper Collins

Robinson, R. (1990). *Iron Horse: Lou Gehrig in is Time*. NY: Harper Collins

Spellini, J. (2007). *Love, Star Girl*. NY: Harper Collins

Spellini, J. (2004). *Wringer*. NY: Harper Collins

Winkler, H. & Olive, L. (2003) *I Go a "D" in Salami*. NY: Grosset

Appendix II

Heroes in the News

Neighbor Saves Four from Burning House

Lisa Thomson of Ajax, N.C. woke up at about 4:30 am and went to close her bedroom window. While doing so, she looked out across the street and noticed a neighbor's deck on fire. The fire was traveling up the railings of the deck and was threatening the house. She called 911 and ran over, trying to wake up the occupants. Because of the distance, she lost her 911 call. She rang the doorbell, pounded on the walls and door, and finally a woman came to the door, quite startled. Lisa quickly told her to wake everyone up as there was a fire, ran in the house, called 911, and everyone got out. The fire trucks arrived and quickly doused the fire, which had not yet spread to the frame of the home.

Adonis Bell, 11, saves entire family from house fire

Adonis Bell, 11, of the Riverdale community of Chicago's west side, saved his entire family from a fire that broke out in grandmother Roseland's house at about 3 am, August 19, 2009. Heavy smoke filled the kitchen. Adonis was the only one to wake up, apparently because a fan was blowing the smoke into his room. He woke up his mother and carried a 2-year-old friend to the family out safely. He then ran back into the house to make sure his aunt got out. All seven in the home, as a result, got out safely. Adonis later said, "I knew what to do. A fireman came to our school ... Get myself and everybody out. He told us not to grab any stuff. Just get out." And that's exactly what Adonis did. I wanted to do something for them."

Jogger Tamara Frinak saves drowning man in Wausau, Wisconsin River

Tamara Frinak, a chaplain with the Aspirus Hospital in Wausau, Wisconsin, was jogging at 5:30 am on August 14, 2009 through downtown when she heard a man screaming for help. The man, Michael L. Stoffel, 57, was caught in the fast moving Wisconsin River in this part of town and was bobbing up and down. There was a heavy rain at the time and he could not climb up the slippery concrete wall. Frinak ran over, but could not reach him. She tore off her turtle-neck shirt and used it to drag the man more than 50 ft. to a piece of metal sticking out of the wall, something he could hold on to. Frinak then ran to get help. Two nurses and a male patient from a nearby clinic ran out and the patient brought a shower curtain from the clinic with him. Frinak and the patient gave Stoffel the shower curtain and everyone held on to everyone else. Firefighters arrived and took over. Stoffel was not hurt seriously. Expressing her appreciation for first responders, Frinak said, "It humbles you. This is what I did today, but they do this every day." (081509)

High school Football Player Wrestles Loaded Gun from 14 year Old Girl in School Bus

Kaleb Eulls, a 6 ft 255-pound high school football playing senior wrestled a loaded gun from a 14 year old girl as she boarded the school bus and pulled it out of her handbag on September 1,

2009. He was already seated in the bus and taking a short nap, when one of his two sisters on the bus shook him to wake him up. As the 14 year old girl boarded, she pulled the semi-automatic pistol out of her handbag. The school bus video shows students rushing to exit the bus from the front and back after she drew it. Kaleb approached her head-on and then tackled her and wrestled the gun from her hand.

A Heroic Train Ride

Ricks, 22, a student at the Delaware Tech/Community College tried to remain calm, while attempting to dislodge Griffin (age 60)'s car off the railroad ties. No movement occurred. Nearby students joined him, putting their weight into pushing Griffin's car forward—still no movement occurred. Suddenly the ground began to shake, lights began to flash, and the railroad gates dropped. Griffin froze. Ricks, seeing her stunned face, reacted quickly and pulled Griffin from the car. Moments later a train, breaks screeching, plowed into her car, while they all watched in horror. Griffin had been yanked to safety, but her car was demolished. The students then went so far as to organize an advertizing event to get the community behind helping Griffin get another car. Thanks guys!

Heroic Metal of Honor

A group of soldiers becomes surrounded by enemy forces. They decide to fight to the last man, because they do not want to abandon the wounded. A group of less experienced soldiers (ie: kitchen help) crawl on their bellies toward the trapped men. They are outnumbered and out gunned by the enemy forces, but manage to carve an escape route for the trapped men. Later the government honors the men who had been trapped. (The government does not honor the soldiers who helped them escape certain death.)

www.npr.org

<http://www.talkingproud.us/CultureEverydayHeroes.htm>

www.rd.com