

Extreme Writing Welcome Letter

Spring 2010
Mrs. Willcox, Instructor

Dear Parents,

It is with great pleasure & excitement that I write this letter of introductory to you! I am really looking forward to working with your child! This is going to be one exhilarating semester!

Writing well is a great passion of mine. I believe that it is a passion of many people. Even so, this subject seems to intimidate many stout hearts. Often, the questions are asked, "What if I miss something or how do I measure progress?"

I hope that Extreme Writing will be a great help to you and your child. We have an enormous amount of stuff that we *could* cover. However, in twelve weeks, I am going to limit our scope/sequence to that which we *should* cover. This will be order to meet a few, well thought out objectives.

In Extreme Writing, we will primarily be focusing on writing concisely. We will use both creative and academic assignments to accomplish this goal.

My main objective is to have each student write a well-written, sensible paragraph. That goal might not seem very lofty—however, it is the springboard to all other academic writing. When I taught at the high school level, very few students were able to produce a decent paragraph—thereby, crippling them from further progress.

Students will be asked to keep a responsive journal, entitled, "*Extremely So! A journal for the Wild Writer*", for nine or ten of the twelve weeks. Also, this semester, students will write in their "*Periodical of Pure Poetry—a poetry journal for the Wild Writer*". Weekly homework will support and represent the lessons taught in class. Repetition and review, which are foundational to great writing, will be a cornerstone to our class.

Another objective is: exposure to beautifully written poetry. Poetry is often overlooked in writing classes. I want your child to start to acclimate his literary palate to this form of writing.

Also, a short literary unit will be introduced. Students will be taught how to read a short book, as well as the basics of literary concepts.

Information:

1. **There will homework assignments almost every week of the semester.** Depending on your child's apprehension (Some kids view writing as an icy, cold lake—they just do not want to jump right in!) homework **could take up to an hour per day**. As the semester progresses and confidence grows, the amount of time needed for homework may decrease. If you have a kid who loves to write—please! Let him put pen to paper!
2. The syllabus for Extreme Writing will also include a calendar that is aimed at helping your child manage his homework schedule. It is just a suggestion, however.

3. I grade on a scale of 5-10. If a student gets a 6 or below, it would not be uncharacteristic for me to request that, the assignment be done over. Assignments are due the next week of class, unless otherwise specified. In EW, it is my goal for kids to feel that they CAN write. In so saying, I ask that all assignments be turned in ON TIME. Yet, if an assignment is not grasped, I will ask that it be done over, with *no* penalty.
4. I welcome your ideas and suggestions. I am available to answer your questions. Kindly e-mail me at: Isaiah54.13@sbcglobal.net or call me at 620-259-7125.
5. An incentive program that is part of Extreme Writing has to do with “Ex Bucks”. These bucks are earned by completing assignments, following directions and doing a good job. At the end of the semester, students will have a chance to spend their hard earned “cash” at the Extreme Store for cool prizes!

Objectives:

- 1) For each student to acquire & demonstrate the steps that produce a well written, sensible paragraph.
- 2) For each student to be exposed to different forms of poetry.
- 3) To help students avoid common words (example: “said”, “like”, “good”) and use vivid vocabulary in place of mundane, ordinary words
- 4) For students to demonstrate the ability to use a Thesaurus
- 5) For students to express themselves clearly in daily journal writing
- 6) For students to learn and demonstrate the necessity of SUPPORTING ALL ANSWERS, with justification and proper reasoning
- 7) For students to develop good habits (labeling paper properly, listening, meeting all teacher requirements, following instructions)
- 8) For students to demonstrate the skill of “imitation” and thereby, begin to demonstrate their ability to be creative and imaginative
- 9) For each student to be exposed to basic literary terms and elements and to be able to demonstrate a beginning understanding of said terms
- 10) For each student to demonstrate a beginning knowledge of “summarizing”
- 11) For students, who already love to write—a reason to write more. And, for students who are reluctant, hopefully—a reason to start writing at all.

Supplies: (bring to first day of class)**

- 1) **WHITE**, 1 inch, three ring, presentation binder***
- 2) permanent black Sharpie marker (fine point)***
- 3) 12 white, blank dividers for the binder (tabs that are *clear or white*—that can be written on) **You should set up the notebook before coming to class. Read other sheet about notebook, please.**
- 4) notebook paper***
- 5) blank note cards***
- 6) sharp pencils with good erasers***
- 7) red ball point pen***
- 8) yellow highlighter marker***
- 9) good (up to date/modern) thesaurus & dictionary *****(MUST HAVE!)**
- 10) Extremely So! (will be given to the student the first day of class)
- 11) Periodical of Pure Poetry! (will be given the first day of class)

How to help your student get the MOST out of **EXTREME WRITING!**

Extreme Writing is meant to COMPLIMENT your Language Arts program. It is NOT meant to replace it. Please keep this in mind.

It is my goal to encourage and admonish, NOT to frustrate. As I want to make every student successful, I want to help you and your student make Extreme Writing a positive experience.

Here are some things that may help you:

- ❑ **Be patient.** I find that students, once they get used to what I expect, truly rise to the occasion and do quite well. *There is always a bit of fussing at the beginning.* From experience, I typically tell parents that fussing lasts about three weeks—maybe four. **This is a writing class and writing, often takes work.** I have high expectations. Yet, I really want your child to feel successful. Encourage your child and work with me.
- ❑ **Please read all instructions with your child.**
- ❑ **In regard to HOMEWORK, I am very specific.** I **will** ask for proper spelling and punctuation. At this level, the only way this will happen, will be if you are overseeing your child's work.
- ❑ **Please make sure that your child completes his/her homework assignments.**
When a student completes his work and get complimented on it, he is more apt to try harder the next time. This begins a wonderful cycle.
- ❑ **Please look over your child's journal entries.** Sometimes, they do understand what I am asking. Please make sure that he/she understands what is expected (Did he/she answer all the questions, give examples, write enough, etc.?)
- ❑ **If** your student is a reluctant fourth grader he/she may be overwhelmed with the amount of writing required. If this happens, please let him/her dictate to you. (Please do not change your child's wording. Just write, as he/she speaks.) *You will want to wean him/her off of this method as soon as you can.*
- ❑ **Use** the calendar that I provide. It breaks the work into smaller amounts. This will help with that overwhelmed feeling!
- ❑ **Help your student find a poem.** Check out several poem books from the library. Also, you can look on-line for a good poem.
- ❑ **Help you child understand how to use the dictionary and the thesaurus.** This will help lessen the intimidation he may feel over being asked to use these in class.
- ❑ **Talk to others** who have had their kids in my classes. That may help you as a mom adjust and know what to expect. (Ann Marie DeJong, Kathy Morris, and Kelly Herndon are willing to field questions. Email them!)
- ❑ **Visit my class** and see how things are done. Attending my class is VERY beneficial to new kiddos. Please feel free to come any time. There are extra seat on the far west side of the room.
- ❑ **FYI**—students are never given “Ex-Bucks” for their “free write” assignments. They are too subjective in nature to grade. I just want the kids to have a chance to create without feeling the pressure of grammar or form.
- ❑ **Email me** if you have any concerns or questions: Isaiah54.13@sbcglobal.net

A Word about Journals

“Extremely So!”

- ❑ I would like for you to relate to your child’s work the same way that I do.
- ❑ In regard to journaling, I **do not** grade students on their grammar, sentence structure, spelling, or mechanics. (Regular homework—yes. Journals—no.)
- ❑ I am looking for words on the page. **I am trying to encourage.**
- ❑ You can check to see if your child met the requirements of the entry (Are there examples? Description? Support? Did he answer all the questions?)
- ❑ Parents often get uncomfortable when I tell them that I really, really do **not** care about spelling and punctuation in regard to this journal. Please trust me. It is okay. No bad habits will form!

“Periodical of Pure Poetry!”

- ❑ Students are asked to **FIND already published** poems and COPY them into their journals. They are not required to write an original poem until we have our poetry unit.
- ❑ Please make sure that these poems are copied NEATLY.
- ❑ Copy the poems **exactly**—use the same punctuation and spelling.
- ❑ If your child finds a poem that he likes that is particularly long, you may have him write a few (3?) of the stanzas, instead of the whole thing. Some kids really like to write all the stanzas. That is up to you.

We are a team—you and I!
Let’s work together to make fantastic writers!

PLEASE PRINT OUT ALL FOUR PAGES, STAPLE TOGETHER, 3-HOLE PUNCH, AND BRING TO FIRST DAY OF CLASS! These papers go in the section labeled, “Special Stuff”.