

Wordsmith Welcome Letter

A Year-Long Writing & Literature Class!

Spring 2010
Mrs. Willcox, Instructor

Dear Parents,

Here we go again! It is time to start “building the wall” on top of that firm foundation of effective writing!

I have a passion for great literature. I firmly believe that children must be exposed to literature that will expand their creative abilities, while teaching them a proper Christian Worldview. (Remember, not all books teach us about God in what they express, but rather what is avoided or left out.) Literature, filled with vividly expressed passages, have a way of “growing” us. We learn, we dream, we think...we wonder.

Knowing a book...that is, how to get to the soul of a book...the very heart of a book... is a wonderful experience. It is not a mystery if one knows how to take the journey.

It is my unyielding belief that knowing how to be a prudent reader, must be coupled with the need to be a sensible writer. I believe that we must expect more of students as they get older. These students must start the process by which they learn to express themselves in a logical, intelligent manner.

I believe that best use of our time together will be to teach “how” to read, coupled with “how” to write. I have united the writing process (which will include various kinds of writing) with great works of literature.

This semester in WS, we will read and examine a novel. Also, we will continue to use the literary terms learned during the first semester to help with creative writing.

WS will include a unit on SCHOLARLY WRITING. It is imperative that Jr. High school students begin to learn to express themselves in a intellectual, coherent manner when writing.

When studying literature, one of my main teaching tools, is the “literary question”. This will teach your student five different things, while they are seemingly working on only one thing. It teaches: reading critically, drawing conclusions, writing succinctly, elements of literature, and it lays a foundation for future writings as the student must learn how to support his answer from the text.

You may have to struggle along with your student, at first. However, I am a definite believer that struggling to achieve that which is worthy, is time well spent.

I do expect quality. I have high expectations. Your student is at the age, where he or she must aspire to exhibit academic excellence.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my love of great literature and of the art of writing. Remember...*it is what we read and how we will write...*Welcome to Wordsmith--again!

Expectations & Information

1. There will be homework assignments every week in Wordsmith. Jr. High School students will be required to demonstrate a higher level of skill. Homework time is estimated at 45 minutes to 1.5 hours per school day. However, some students may need to work on their homework during the weekend. Often, students find it easier to spread homework out to encompass the weekend.
2. Class begins PROMPTLY at 2:00. Every student is expected to arrive in enough time to go through his or her folder, to file work, and to be ready to begin the day. We have an enormous amount of work to do in a very short period of time. Tardiness is not acceptable.
3. Students must have all class materials on the first day of class, unless otherwise indicated.
4. Grades will be given in a traditional manner: 100-90 = A, 89-80=B, and so on.
5. Half credit will be issued to any assignment that is not turned in at the proper time. Students have one week to earn partial credit. All work that is more than one week tardy will be issued a “zero”. Students that have sporting or other activities need to plan accordingly so as to prevent “late work”.
6. Students who do not turn in work two weeks in a row are not permitted into class unless accompanied by a parent. I will gladly meet with a student and his/her parent 15 minutes before my first class begins. (12:15)
7. A progress report will be given at the six-week mark and also at the end of the semester.
8. I welcome your suggestions and I am available to answer your questions. Kindly email me at Isaiah54.13@sbcglobal.net or call me at 620-259-7125. I ask that students do not call me the night before an assignment is due.

OF PRIMARY CONCERN! PLEASE READ!

It is my great hope that this class will greatly compliment your at home Language Arts program. **I will not be teaching grammar.** My concern will be more towards form and content. However, I will expect proper grammar. As I grade papers, I will comment on grammar just as much as I comment on content/form. I have noticed that if students will read the comment that I make on their papers, (and apply what they read) they can improve in all areas of writing.

Please help your student to succeed by being a willing accountability partner. I find that students reap the fullest benefits from my class, when their parents are involved in their work.

I DO NOT want you to do their work. More specifically, I want you to be aware of any assignment I give by reading the instructions and also be available to answer questions or to proof read. Also, please allow your child to edit his or her own work. Please, serve as a guide.

I want your child to gain confidence and to feel successful. You and I must be a team. Only then, will we see the full rewards of hard work and effort.

At first, your student may struggle. Please be prepared for that. However, as the weeks progress and as your student starts to comprehend what my expectations are—things will become more manageable. (Truly!)

Objectives:

- 1) For students to acquire & understand and use the step in becoming a prudent reader
- 2) For students to understand the beginning of elements of literary critique
- 3) For each student to acquire and demonstrate the steps that lead to a well written, sensible paragraph & other forms of writing.
- 4) For each student to be introduced to different forms of poetry
- 5) For students to learn and demonstrate the necessity of SUPPORTING ALL ANSWERS, with justifications and proper reasoning
- 6) For students to develop good habits: proper paper labeling, listening to instructions, following directions
- 7) For each student to demonstrate understanding of literary techniques/terms/elements
- 8) For students to justify answers during literary discussions
- 9) For students to strive for excellence in their work
- 10) For students to gain confidence in reading challenging literature, and for them to write in ways that make them want to continue to “go the next level”.

Supplies*** (Kindly bring these the first day of class)

- 1) NAVY BLUE, 1” to 1.5” inch, three ring binder (**No** other color is acceptable)
- 2) Permanent black sharpie marker, fine point
- 3) 12 white, blank dividers for your binder (tabs should be clear or white and you should be able to write on them & notebook must be set up before the first day of class, please)
- 4) blank note cards
- 5) pencils with good erasers
- 6) red ball point pen
- 7) black or blue ball point pen
- 8) green or purple ball point pen (do not need the first day of class)
- 9) yellow highlighter
- 10) good thesaurus and dictionary
- 11) TWO presentation folders (do not need the first day of class)
- 12) A way to type your assignments