

Literature & Writing: Summer 2022 Course (6th-8th grade)

Taught by Emily Huang, Stanford University '25

This course is targeted to students in grades 6, 7, 8.

In this 12-week course, three major units will be covered (4 weeks per unit): fiction workshop, literature & film, and personal writing. Students will be introduced to the techniques of writing both creatively and critically, and we will read a variety of selections of famous fiction works & authors that exemplify these techniques. The units will be interspersed with “bonus” philosophy workshops, in which students will have the opportunity to learn basic philosophy concepts such as logical fallacies and argumentation construction.

Throughout the course, students will have the chance to read a variety of short stories, read one full length novel and watch the accompanying film adaptation, and write three essays of their own (one creative, one formal, and one of flexible choice TBA). There will also be extra assignments for students who are interested in further improving and learning more about the topics we cover in class, including philosophy.

By the end of the course, students will have gained familiarity and skill with writing fiction and personal essays, and be able to apply these skills to their work in the future (including school assignments and high school/college application essays).

Please find the syllabus below.

UNIT ONE: Introduction to Fiction & Fairy Tales

This unit is a survey style course intended to introduce students to the craft of writing fiction, with an emphasis on world/character-building and fairy tales. The skills learned in this unit will be applied to later units and continuously practiced.

Students should also prepare for Unit 2 (study of full-length novel “The Giver”) by reading as much of the novel as they can over these four weeks. Reading homework will continue to be assigned once we begin Unit 2.

WEEK 1

Class 1

- Introductions

- Presentation/discussion: elements of fiction
 - Focus: world building
- In-class reading: “The Pedestrian” by Ray Bradbury
 - Follow-up discussion: study world-building techniques
- Writing exercise: build your own world
- Homework: finish writing exercise and read “There Will Come Soft Rains” by Ray Bradbury

Class 2

- Warm-up writing exercise: openings
- Discussion: personal takeaways from homework & reading
- Presentation/discussion: elements of fiction
 - Focus: character building
- In-class reading: “Cinder” excerpt
 - Follow-up discussion about fairy tales
- Writing exercise: character-building, get to know your character (fairy tale protagonist)
- Homework: interview with character, read fairy tale of choice (explore Grimm version /other versions, etc.)

WEEK 2

Class 3

- Brief presentation & warm-up writing exercise: climax
- Discussion: personal takeaways from homework & reading
- Presentation: Freytag’s Pyramid & Hero’s Journey
- Writing exercise: alternative fairy tale
 - Follow-up peer share & feedback
- Conference/work time
- Homework: fiction or alternative fairy tale

Class 4

- Warm-up writing exercise: endings
- Discussion: what makes a good ending? Elements of a fairy tale ending
 - Where can we see story structure & arc in fairy tales?
- Writing exercise: alternative endings
- Wrap-up discussion & looking ahead on syllabus

Bonus: Intro to Philosophy

- Group read of Confucius excerpt: Analect 3.18
 - Follow-up discussion
- Group read of Sophocles' "Antigone" excerpts
 - Follow-up discussion
- Optional essays/readings assigned

UNIT TWO: "The Giver"

This unit is a literature & film structured course that will give students the opportunity to conduct a deep dive into the famous novel "The Giver," written by reclaimed author Lois Lowry. This novel is read by many middle and high schoolers in their English class. Set in a dystopian society in which families don't exist, everyone is assigned jobs, and there is a strict set of rules to follow, this story teaches about the importance of emotions, memories, and community. Students will end the unit with knowledge of a classic American novel, knowing how to effectively study (both read & write about) literature, and compare literature to its film counterpart.

Pre-homework: Read chapters 1-5

- Introductions (if needed)
- Guided discussion about first five chapters
- Writing exercise: world building (with unit 1 practice applications)
- Watch corresponding parts of film

Homework: read chapters 6-10

WEEK 3

Class 5

- Guided discussion
- Presentation: Freytag's Pyramid & Hero's Journey
- Writing exercise: original next scene
- Watch corresponding parts of film
- Homework: read chapters 11-16

Class 6

- Guided discussion
- Study on Freytag's Pyramid/Hero's Journey in the story
- Final essay assigned
- Watch corresponding parts of film
- Homework: finish reading the book

WEEK 4

Class 7

- Guided discussion
 - Study on Hero's Journey
- Writing exercise: alternate ending
- Conference/working time on essay
- Finish watching film
- Homework: turn in final essay

UNIT 3: Personal Writing - Creative Nonfiction & the Memoir

This unit will introduce students to the mode of personal writing, and various techniques and styles students can employ to make their personal writing more effective, such as elements of creative nonfiction. Through a series of small writing exercises, students will learn what makes an effective personal essay and work towards writing their own full-length memoir.

Class 8

- Presentation: what is a memoir?
- Writing exercise: earliest memory
- Discussion
- Writing exercise (2 parts): Place (welcome/unwelcome)
 - Peer feedback
- Homework: flesh out earliest memory into full essay

WEEK 5

Class 9

- Presentation: creative nonfiction
- Writing exercise: dramatization (comparison of real vs. dramatized)
- Discussion
- Writing exercise: Object
- Homework: finish writing exercises

Class 10

- Presentation: POV & dialogue
- Writing exercise (2 parts): Body Part (comfort/discomfort)

WEEK 6

Class 11

Bonus: Logical Fallacies

- Brief presentation: argument construction & logical fallacies
- Individual time: look through [Thou Shalt Not](#)
- Fun break: identification practice
- Optional writing assigned: fallacy “scene” writing (individual or pair)

Classwork

- Final essay assigned + work time
- Homework: finish writing exercise & work on final essay

Class 12

- Presentation: in media res openings
- Closing discussion: takeaways
- Feedback
- Writing exercise: flip the script (POV change)
- Conference/working time for final essays
 - Peer workshop
- Final thoughts
- Homework: turn in final essay