Spring Writing 2024

Years 5-7

For our classes together over the spring course, we will be focusing each week on a different style of writing, looking at famous works written in that style/ form/ genre and learning how to both analyse and emulate the conventions of each style. Within each lesson we will consider literary techniques, structure, writer’s voice and other key elements of writing, whilst also completing vocabulary exercises to encourage the class to expand their lexical range. There will also be two mock exams where the students will have a chance to practice and receive feedback on different ways of writing creatively, experimenting with new ideas and advanced writing styles. These lessons will also expand the students’ knowledge of classic works of literature and classic authors, ranging from Shakespeare to Bronte to Orwell, encouraging them to broaden their horizons with what they read and how they write, so the students will be able to dip into whole new ways of thinking about literature, language and art.

*Lessons 1 & 2:* **Dystopian Writing**

In our first week of lessons, we will focus on dystopian writing, starting in lesson one with considering the key question: what defines a dystopia? The students will create their very own dystopian society, and we will consider works of literature that explore these concepts, thinking about what the authors have included in their societies to make them so dystopic. Some examples of dystopian universes we will consider include those of *1984* (George Orwell), *The Hunger Games* (Suzanne Collins), *Brave New World* (Aldous Huxley) and *Noughts and Crosses* (Malorie Blackman). We will not be studying the books themselves but will be looking at the societies the authors created and what makes them undesirable, thinking about how their writing style reflects the genre and elucidates the world they have created. In these lessons we will also discuss science fiction, thinking about why dystopian and sci-fi are often linked, and looking at the way storytelling, description and structure are utilised in order to create plot arcs that suit this writing style. We will discuss why we think people enjoy reading about dystopian societies, and discuss historical incidents of dystopia (i.e., Jim Crow America) in order to better understand the importance of the genre. As their final homework task at the end of the week, the students will write a chapter from their own dystopian novel, being as creative as possible with the features of their imagined society whilst also considering how, and where, their writing fits into the genre’s conventions. The main skills we will be learning in week 1 are to do with the creation of the world of a story, structuring a plot, creating suspense and tension, and exploring the students’ inventiveness in forming original and unique constructs in their writing.

*Lessons 3 & 4:* **Gothic Writing**

In our second week of lessons, we will be looking at the tradition, history and form of gothic writing, considering the way the genre has evolved over time and asking ourselves what has remained constant and what has changed. We will consider the importance of features such as the weather and landscape in gothic writing, looking at how to use pathetic fallacy in our own writing and considering how more recent gothic literature has subverted traditional trends in this sense (i.e., replacing the classic stormy, wild hillside of books such as *Wuthering Heights* for the hot, barren desert of modern American gothic literature). We will look at different examples of gothic writing, considering books such as *Dracula* (Bram Stoker), *Wuthering Heights* (Emily Bronte), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Harper Lee) and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Robert Louis Stevenson), exploring how themes of gender, class, race, tragedy, and good & evil are explored throughout these works (though, again, not studying the books themselves but analysing passages from them and considering overarching themes and ideas). The students will also be introduced to the notion of gothic description, looking at why exactly descriptive writing is so important in gothic writing, and coming up with inventive and creative ways of constructing their own gothic landscapes and settings. We will consider how the genre overlaps and plays around with horror, suspense and mystery, and look at how the psychological and supernatural are treated in the gothic realm, asking ourselves questions such as what is the fear of the unknown and why is it so crucial in this style of writing? How can the author hide things from their reader? What is the effect of shifting focus, playing with pacing and other structural devices? For their final homework assignment, the class will have a chance to practice writing in the gothic style, thinking about how it mixes the romantic and poetic form with the dark and spooky. The main skills we will be learning in week 2 are to do with the importance of description in a story, using themes effectively & creatively, using figurative language such as symbolism & metaphor in writing, and how to create complex and interesting moral questions within their work.

*Lessons 5 & 6****:* Comedic Writing**

In our third set of lessons we will be focusing on comedic writing, looking at the way humour can be used to many different effects in crafting a story or piece of writing that grips and entertains the reader. We will consider how humour has evolved over time, and how it translates from culture to culture and between different languages. We will also look at differentiating different types of comic writing, trying our hand at satire, irony, slapstick, comedies of error and dark comedy. For these lessons, the students will be looking at comedy in both the fiction and non-fiction realms, considering what makes a story funny and why do people respond to comic writing so well. The examples of comic writing we will be looking at include *Twelfth Night* (William Shakespeare), *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Lemony Snicket), *Jeeves and Wooster* (P. G. Wodehouse), *Public Enemy Number Two* (Anthony Horowitz) and the work of satirical newspaper columnists such as David Mitchell. We will discuss the subjective nature of humour and ask if anything is universally funny, whilst also considering the different mediums that comedy comes in and the particular challenges of *writing* comedy rather than performing or filming it. The class will get a chance to make up their own puns (looking at the place of word play in comic writing), to think about how they can come up with their own version of comedic tropes such as mistaken identity, and to explore the style of dark comedy, thinking about what makes a story that plays around with morbid themes a potential backdrop for ridiculous and entertaining antics. For their final homework assignment, the class will have a chance to practice writing in the comedic style, deciding which style of comedic writing they feel most comfortable writing in and using the genre’s conventions and devices such as sarcasm, irony and puns. The main skills we will be learning in week 3 are to do with the importance of timing and pace in writing, how to write with an authoritative and confident tone, connecting with the audience or readership, and how to create compelling and unique characters.

*Lessons 8 & 9****:* Journalistic Writing**

In our final set of lessons, we will be studying and emulating journalistic writing, looking at all the different types, forms and styles of journalism. The class will be asked to consider why journalism is important in society, thinking about the different roles that a journalist fills and the tasks they complete, stretching from exposing corruption to writing reviews to making readers laugh. The students will also learn about the process of finding and constructing a story, with the chance to ask questions about journalism to an actual journalist friend of mine. We will look at different forms and mediums of journalism (newspapers, podcasts, investigative journalism, documentaries) and we will look at how journalists are able to discuss social concerns. We will also look at structuring journalistic articles, how to use tone and build a writer’s voice, and finally touch on the persuasive nature of some journalistic writing. We will ask questions regarding how important objectivity in journalism is, and how can we be sure to maintain impartiality, whilst also looking at styles of journalism that call for opinions to be heard, such as op-eds. For their final homework assignment, the class will have to research and write a journalistic story, finding a topic that interests them and going out into the world to report on it, using the features of article writing we have learnt about in the previous lessons. The main skills we will be learning in week 4 are to do with researching and fact-checking stories, working on creating a unique writer’s voice, learning about the structure and tone of literary non-fiction and considering persuasive and informative features in writing.

*Lesson 9 & 10:* **Writer’s Workshop & Mock Exam**

These final lessons will contain a writer’s workshop to revise and share key ideas about what we have learnt and then a mock exam to help test the students’ skills, enabling them to showcase all they have learnt about writing over the past nine sessions. They will be asked to complete an exam under timed conditions, which we will then go through step by step as a class. They will have their exam graded and returned to them after the lesson and can use these mocks to track their progress and work out their strengths and areas of improvement in writing. This lesson is designed to consolidate their knowledge and to help them get used to the format of writing in exams. They should aim to use as many different advanced writing techniques, high-level vocab examples and interesting structural devices as possible- all of which we will have covered in the preceding weeks.