

CREATIVE WRITING FOR TEENS
WELCOME, PARENTS AND
TEACHERS!

I'm so glad you took a chance on my writing course for your teenager. I love story! And I love to share that passion with others.

But let's admit something up front: Writing is hard. Its practice takes immense discipline, the rules change, and the judges are subjective. Think how disappointed a child can feel after pouring his heart into a story only to hear all the things that are wrong with it!

So more than anything else, especially if you have a struggling writer, practice encouragement throughout this class. Help your child get better at writing, point out the things that need fixed, but also be sure to find things to praise.

Here's what you need to know about my Creative Writing Class.

1. My goal is to get teens excited about writing.

That means *my goal* of writing may conflict with *your goal* of writing.

For example: the rules your kids will get in their first assignment include me telling them that neatness, grammar, and spelling are not important. It's not that I don't think these things matter, but neatness, grammar and punctuation rules are huge obstacles to getting a story out of an author's head and onto paper. There's always a time for editing, but it is *not* when you are trying to write.

2. I encourage students to be readers.

Great writers must be great readers because some writing is caught more than it is taught. If your child wants a writing career, he must read and must read a variety of genres.

3. You can add more to the assignments. Or not.

At the bottom of each assignment is two sections:

- If you want to go farther . . .
- Going Deeper: Recommended Resources

The main assignment is all I expect from kids struggling with writing. For these kids, I don't want to pile on work and increase their anxiety about or hatred toward writing.

However, some kids will want to know more than is taught in the class, and some of you may want to add enough to the class to count it as a half credit on their transcript. That's the purpose of the additional assignments.

4. Editing

Many assignments include your student reading his story out loud. This is because the ears pick up things the eyes miss. Especially in the first several weeks, your student can do this in private.

If your child works on his story on a computer, he can do some editing on the screen. But, he will catch more if he prints it out.

Speaking of pens, an expert tip. No one likes editing, especially when it's the fifth or sixth time through the manuscript. A fun or favorite-colored pen may ease the pain a little.

5. Grammar

You need to know that I will be teaching your kids *modern fiction* writing techniques. That means that the grammar in these lessons may be somewhat different than what they are learning in their English lessons.

Grammar and punctuation rules change every (roughly) 10 years. Textbooks and school budgets cannot keep up.

Additionally, different writers have different rules. Journalists adhere to the Associated Press Stylebook. The medical and scientific communities follow the AMA Manual of Style. And book writers stick with the

Chicago Manual of Style. Each includes slightly different rules.

Grammar in writing is a complex problem, and most average adults don't care to keep up. I understand. When we get to these issues in class, I recommend they follow their grammar book for all assignments for teachers and standardized tests. But, if one day they want to be published, they need to learn the new rules and strive to keep up with the changes.

6. Let your student write with whatever they are most comfortable.

Your student will need a notebook and a pen or pencil or access to a computer. Whatever they like to write with is fine. I write on my desktop utilizing Microsoft Word; my writer-daughter prefers to do her initial efforts with pen and paper.

7. If the material in this class is not for your student, it's okay!

Only one of my three children went through these lessons. Two of my children are absolutely not writers in the traditional sense of the word.

What I'm about to say makes many pro-college people twitch, so let me be clear: I am pro-education. I strongly encourage learning.

Most of us learned the 5-sentence paragraph and the 5-paragraph essay in school. Now think about it: How often have you used that since college graduation?

I've written a blog at least once a week since the fall of 2011 (for a while, I wrote two-to-three blogs per week). As of June 2017, I've written thirteen books—fiction and nonfiction. I've written several magazine articles, and guest posted online at numerous different places. I do not use the 5-sentence paragraph for any of it.

It has its place. Your kids need to understand the basics of paragraph and essay writing. Knowing the 5-sentence paragraph and the 5-paragraph essay will help them do well in college. But for the vast majority of them, they'll never use it again.

As often as possible, work with your child's strengths—even in the writing world.

- If your child is good at making lists, that's writing! And we need list writers. Who do you think does all the credits at the end of movies and TV shows?
- If your child is good at writing down directions, that's writing too! And we need direction writers. Have you put together any furniture or toddler toys recently?
- If your child is good at making an argument, that can be writing! Train them in logic and debate, and set them loose on the judicial and political worlds. They could be speech-writers or journalists.
- If your child is good at finding mistakes in writing, all writers need editors: Children's writers, young adult and adult writers,

fiction, and nonfiction! Editors tend to specialize just like medical doctors—in big-segment genres as well in the details they focus on, whether they look at big picture problems like the flow of the story or the minute details like missing or misplaced punctuation.

- If your child is good at research, authors and publishers need fact checkers! Publishers and online websites like Wikipedia, Encyclopedia Britannica, magazines, and others all pay for people to double check their facts.
- If your child is good at selling—that's copy editing, a highly paid field (as in six-figures per project if he's really good).
- If your child writes succinctly, bloggers need to get solid messages out in less than 1,000 words. And many big companies look to hire content creators.
- If your child loves to learn about other people and then tell you all about it, ghostwriters write other people's stories. Many of the rich and famous hire authors to write their autobiographies.
- If your child loves the big screen, screenwriters take books and turn them into movie scripts—a specialized field very different from traditional fiction writing.

The point is that there are tons of jobs in writing that have nothing to do with the 5-sentence paragraph.

Teach proper paragraphs, but allow your student the freedom to write within their strengths.

It is my hope that this course is a great benefit to your child. If I can help in anyway, please let me know.

Happy writing!

Carrie