



OLD SPACES NEW SKILLS

TEACHERS' GUIDE FOR CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP GRADES 4-8

INTRODUCTION

Dalnavert Museum and Visitors' Centre is an inspiring setting for both established and emerging creative writers. This tour is designed to provide students with the following opportunities:

- Exposure to an unfamiliar and inspiring space and the artefacts it contains.
- An introduction to (or review of) key tools of creative writers, namely: similes, adverbs, adjectives, and settings.
- A prompt to work individually and collaboratively to practice these techniques.
- The chance to share their work with tour group members and the larger class.

Follow up activities, created by the Museum for teachers to use in their classrooms, will give students the chance to consolidate developing skills, to reflect on their visits, and to draft and revise new pieces of writing. **Let us transport your students through time to explore not only a day in the life of Winnipeg in 1895 but also their own potential as creative writers.**

The purpose of this field trip is to use Dalnavert Museum as an inspiration for creative writing and to inspire focused practice of different literary techniques, such as similes and adjectives. As students move from room to room, they will learn about the Victorian era and artefacts in the museum while participating in writing activities. This Teacher's Guide provides Activating and Extension Activities.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

General Outcome 1:

- 1.1 Discover and Explore – Express Ideas, Experiment with Language and Form
- 1.2 Clarify and Extend – Develop Understanding, Extend Understanding

General Outcome 2:

- 2.3 Understanding Forms and Techniques – Forms and Genre, Techniques and Elements

General Outcome 3:

- 3.1 Plan and Focus – Ask Questions, Contribute to Group Inquiry
- 3.2 Select and Process – Assess Information, Make Sense of Information

General Outcome 4:

- 4.2 Enhance and Improve – Appraise Own and Others' Work, Enhance Artistry
- 4.4 Present and Share – Attentive Listening and Viewing

General Outcome 5:

- 5.2 Encourage, Support and Work with Others – Cooperate with Others, Work in Groups

FIELD TRIP OUTLINE

TIMELINE: 1.5 HOURS

Arrival & Introduction (10 mins)

- Students arrive; put away outerwear etc. (5 mins)
- Congregate in Visitors' Centre
- A brief introduction to the house and the tour (5 mins)
- Divide up into four groups

Program (40 – 60 mins)

- Students will rotate between four stations in different areas of the house: kitchen, basement, parlor and second-floor/attic.
- In each area, students will perform a writing exercise related to a different writerly tool: setting, simile, adverbs and adjectives.
- Students will use the inspiration of the house and the unusual objects it contains to author sentences that share their impressions of a strange and evocative space.

Conclusion (10-20 mins)

- Students will congregate back in the Visitors' Centre to share their work and enjoy the creative work of other students.
- Museum guides and/or the teacher can debrief with questions and discussion.

ACTIVATING ACTIVITIES/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Professional Development Reading:

“Creative writing in the classroom: five top tips for teachers,” by Alan Gillespie.

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/sep/26/five-tips-creative-writing>

“How to write an Object Poem,” by Jasmine Haryana.

<https://penandthepad.com/write-object-poem-5085351.html>

Before the Field Trip:

- Students should be familiar with the terms: setting, simile, verb, adverb, noun and adjective.
- Share the examples of poetry and prose provided below. Some are from the Victorian era and some are contemporary. They demonstrate the value of techniques for creative writers who wish to describe objects and spaces.

Before or After the Field Trip:

- Have students complete:
 - CREATIVE WRITING: POETRY
Before or after the field trip, read a set of poems about objects or about domestic spaces, such as kitchens or attics. Share with students some images or some objects of the kind they will find or found in Dalnavert Museum: a china tea cup, a plain wooden spoon, a photograph of a child taken in the nineteenth century. Encourage students to write a poem about these objects. Students can share their work with a partner, small group or with the class.

- Read the two prose excerpts individually or as a class.
 - CREATIVE WRITING: NOVEL EXCERPTS
Have students highlight figures of speech and words that help to create the setting of each story.

During the Field Trip:

- Teachers or students can take pictures of different artefacts at the house. These pictures could be printed, projected, or used for the class to use as inspiration for creative writing after the tour.

CREATIVE WRITING: POETRY

Define each of these terms.

Setting:

Simile:

Metaphor:

Adverb:

Adjective:

Identify adjectives and verbs in the following poem. What do you think the mood of the poem is? Circle words that set the mood of the poem.

Read and Explore the poem “Kettle”

“Kettle” by Phillis Levin (2017)

Flame under the bubbling water.
Blue flame. Water ready for tea.

Amber infusion soon to be seeping,

Leaves about to uncurl. Here
Is a tin, a spoon, a cup, an open

Teapot saying, Nobody else but me

To nobody else but you: awaken,
Pour. What are you waiting for?

Read and Explore the poem “Yellow Bowl”

Identify adjectives or adverbs that you find in the poem.

What is the setting of the poem?

Identify the words that help to create the setting.

Circle your favorite words in the poem.

“Yellow Bowl” by Rachel Contreni Flynn (1969)

If light pours like water
into the kitchen where I sway
with my tired children,

if the rug beneath us
is woven with tough flowers,
and the yellow bowl on the table

rests with the sweet heft
of fruit, the sun-warmed plums,
if my body curves over the babies,

and if I am singing,
then loneliness has lost its shape,
and this quiet is only quiet.

An Exercise for Writing an Object Poem

Both of these poets are keen observers of the ordinary things around them. Look around you and pick two objects you can describe using adjectives, adverbs or similes. Use figures of speech to create images that you can see with your imagination and that your reader can use to imagine the objects you are describing.

1.

2.

CREATIVE WRITING: NOVEL EXERPT

A Secret Garden, by Frances Hodgson Burnett; Published: 1911, pp.5-7

The cholera had broken out in its most fatal form and people were dying like flies. The Ayah had been taken ill in the night, and it was because she had just died that the servants had wailed in the huts. Before the next day three other servants were dead and others had run away in terror. There was panic on every side, and dying people in all the bungalows.

During the confusion and bewilderment of the second day Mary hid herself in the nursery and was forgotten by every one. Nobody thought of her, nobody wanted her, and strange things happened of which she knew nothing. Mary alternately cried and slept through the hours. She only knew that people were ill and that she heard mysterious and frightening sounds. Once she crept into the dining-room and found it empty, though a partly finished meal was on the table and chairs and plates looked as if they had been hastily pushed back when the diners rose suddenly for some reason. The child ate some fruit and biscuits, and being thirsty she drank a glass of wine which stood nearly filled. It was sweet, and she did not know how strong it was. Very soon it made her intensely drowsy, and she went back to her nursery and shut herself in again, frightened by cries she heard in the huts and by the hurrying sound of feet. The wine made her so sleepy that she could scarcely keep her eyes open and she lay down on her bed and knew nothing more for a long time.

Many things happened during the hours in which she slept so heavily, but she was not disturbed by the wails and the sound of things being carried in and out of the bungalow.

When she awakened she lay and stared at the wall. The house was perfectly still. She had never known it to be so silent before. She heard neither voices nor footsteps, and wondered if everybody had got well of the cholera and all the trouble was over. She wondered also who would take care of her now her Ayah was dead. There would be a new Ayah, and perhaps she would know some new stories. Mary had been rather tired of the old ones. She did not cry because her nurse had died. She was not an affectionate child and had never cared much for any one. The noise and hurrying about and wailing over the cholera had frightened her, and she had been angry because no one seemed to remember that she was alive. Every one was too panic-stricken to think of a little girl no one was fond of. When people had the cholera it seemed that they remembered nothing but themselves. But if every one had got well again, surely some one would remember and come to look for her.

But no one came, and as she lay waiting the house seemed to grow more and more silent. She heard something rustling on the matting and when she looked down she saw a little snake gliding along and watching her with eyes like jewels. She was not frightened, because he was a harmless little thing who would not hurt her and he seemed in a hurry to get out of the room. He slipped under the door as she watched him.

CREATIVE WRITING: NOVEL EXCERPT

The Unexpected Dragon, by Mary Brown; Published: 1994, pp.28

They brought me round with hastily sprinkled font water.

I had never fainted before in my life and I felt stupid, embarrassed and slightly sick. Their faces swam above me like great moons, in the light of the miller's lantern. For a moment I could remember nothing and then it came back like a knife-thrust: Mama was dead, my father a thief, and I had no name. In a way the last was the worst. Without an identity I was a blank piece of vellum, a discarded feather, the emptiness that is a hole in the ground. I felt that if I let go I should float up into the sky like smoke, and dissolve as easily. I was deathly frightened.

Then somebody had a good idea. "You must have been baptized." Of course, else would I not have been allowed to attend Mass.

They helped me to my feet and we all repaired to the vestry, when by the light of the lantern and the priest's candle, the fusty, dusty mildew parish records were dragged out of a chest.

"How old are you?"

But I couldn't be exact about the either, till the miller suggested the Year of the Great Fever, and there was much counting backwards on fingers and thumbs and at last the entry was found, in the old priest's fumbling scratchy hand.

"Here we are...Strange name to call anyone," said the present priest. Only the clerk, he and I could read, and I bent forward to follow his finger. There it was, between the death of one John Tyler and the marriage of Wat Wood and Megan Baker. The cramped letters danced in front of my eyes, but at last I spelled it out.

No date, but the previous entry was June, the latter July.

"Baptism of dorter to the Traveling woman: on Somerdai."

"Somerdai..." I tried it out on my tongue. "Summerday." And Mama had called herself one of the Travelers. All right, she had given me an outlandish name, but at least I now existed officially. And, according to the records, I was seventeen years old, and knew something more of Mama's origins. All at once I felt a hundred times better, and was able to invite them all back for the funeral meats almost as graciously