

School of the Woods Language Curriculum

By Rachel George

Mrs. Clements our writing aficionado comprised our language curriculum out of workshops created by the think tank at Columbia University. The theory behind it being that we want authentic writing with purpose, and a specific audience in mind.

The basis for being a good writer is being a good reader. We learn how to read like a writer. Critically. Mrs. Clements supplies us with questions that help us take a closer look at the text and at our reactions to the text. We searched for hidden issues and created a web. Contrasting our views on an issued against what the text wants us to feel about and issue has been eye opening.

We can always learn from the greats along with reading their writings but also from incorporating their style into our writings. This year we each choose a mentor writer we were interested in ranging from Goethe to Shel Silverstein. Each student read samples of their work and looked for constant themes and reoccurring writing traits.. We then attempted to tell a story of our own in their style. Every week we do a miniaturized version called apprentice sentence, paying attention not only to the content but also to the punctuation and the grammar.

My favorite lessons were the ones where we explored different genres of poetry ranging from irregular odes to sonnets and sestinas. We learned how purpose affects a writer's choice of genre.

What had the most lasting effect on the Students of Woods Middle School and their writing was the lesson about looking for social norms. We studied writings where the text adhered to norms and where they were transgressed. We understand convention but now understand how to break convention with purpose.