



New Jersey School of Conservation
1 Wapalanne Rd.
Branchville, NJ 07826-5116
Voice: 800-624-7780 (Dial 3) or
973-948-4646 Fax: 973-948-5131
<http://www.csam.montclair.edu/njsoc/>

CREATIVE WRITING / COMMUNICATION

Subject Area: Humanities

Core Curriculum Content Standards: 3.1.F, 3.2.A, B, C, D, 3.3C & D, 3.4.A, 5.1.A

*I am a very tiny, tiny part of the World,
A part that is lucky enough to be able to
Touch the beauty of NATURE*
Susan Polis Schultz

*Trees are poems
that the Earth
Writes upon the sky*
Kahlil Gibran

SESSION DESCRIPTION

The creative writing session helps students consider why it is useful to study language. During the class, language is considered in several ways:

- how it is used in the communication process;
- the different venues of communication, such as non-verbal, verbal and written.

Human senses (sight, smell, touch, and hearing) are considered useful tools in learning about the natural environment, as well as in expressing thoughts about it. Both indoor and outdoor activities that foster exercising one, or several senses at a time are conducted. The forest is used as a critical site for such processes. Students will conclude their experiences by reflecting orally, then in writing, using selected literary forms.

OBJECTIVES

Students will describe the importance of natural areas to support life.

Students will develop their powers of observation.

Students will define different types of communication and poetic samples, and assess the efficacy of each.

Students will demonstrate their abilities of self expression via a variety of communication forms.

MATERIALS

Teaching materials for this class and instructions on how to use them can be found in the large gray field bags stored in the hallway closets of Kittatinny Hall. The needed items include:

- "feelie" bags
- hand lenses
- color patches
- adjective hunt card
- paper and pencils
- blindfolds
- crayons or colored pencils

PROCEDURES

1. Activity: Students pair up and face each other. One student attempts to communicate a complete thought non-verbally. When one message is accomplished, the other student takes his/her turn. VARIATION: The instructor gives each student a laminated card with a pre-written complete thought. (*The cards are in a cloth bag with a label "non-verbal communication" in the 5 Alive supply bags.*) Messages include present, past and future tenses of verbs as well as the subjunctive. When finished, discuss the effectiveness of non-verbal communication, including limitations, problems, and consequent barriers.
2. Ask students to name the 5 senses. List English words that have "sense" as a root (e.g. consensus, nonsense, sensitive). Discuss the importance of the senses. Do we use all of them all of the time? Do we rely on one sense more than another? Ask students to give an example of use of a sense

that makes them comfortable; that could save their life; that aids their appreciation of the outdoors. Have them compare a human sense(s) to the same sense(s) in other animals. *e.g. A falcon can see newspaper print at a distance of @ 1/2 mile.*

3. "Feelie" Bags – Natural objects of various shapes and textures are in cloth bags. Distribute the bags. Students may NOT look inside, but should FEEL the bagged object then try to get an accurate mental picture of it. Have them describe the way it feels, either verbally or in writing. If in writing, distribute a sheet of (SOC scrap) paper to each student. Ask them to list descriptive adjectives for their object. Ask them to sketch it, still without looking at it, also indicating textural features. Go around the group and ask each student to share some of their adjectives. Then ask classmates to guess what the object is, before it is taken out and revealed.
Hand Lenses – distribute hand lenses and ask the students to observe their objects more carefully. What do they notice under magnification that was not obvious with their first observation?
4. Forest hike/adjective hunt – Assign descriptive adjective word cards to pairs of students. *e.g. scaly, diamond-shaped, eroded, textured, peeling, encrusted.* While hiking along a selected trail at SOC, ask students to collect 3-4 natural objects that have these characteristics, without destroying the environment, for activity #5. Have them display their examples to the group when they get to the site. They can give verbal clues. The rest of the students attempt to guess the selected adjective. (Also, see last page of this lesson plan for another level of this activity called *Adjective List/Creative Writing* for older students.)
5. Conduct a *Silent Walk* at this site. To prepare for this activity, each student should make four columns – one for each sense (except taste) – on a piece of paper. Students are to write in the appropriate column those natural phenomena, events, entities that they observe during the walk. Walk slowly for about 10 minutes. Gather together at a site (*e.g. Piney Point log bench area, OR sandy beach area, OR on the Lake Wapalanne dam, OR on a rock in the surrounding woods*). Ask for feedback.
6. Use the technique from Acclimatization (Van Matre, 1972) titled: "Find your friend in the forest," in which students are paired. One is blindfolded, spun in place three times, and then led by her/his partner to any tree. The blindfolded student must get to know this tree by using all available senses. After 5 – 7 minutes, or so, the student is led, via another route, to where the instructor is waiting, spun again, and removes the blindfold. S/he must then find the tree just observed. After doing so, the other student in each pair is blindfolded and the procedure is repeated. At the conclusion of this activity, each student must have his/her own tree "friend". *SAFETY NOTE: THE LEADING STUDENT MUST HOLD ONTO THE BLINDFOLDED STUDENT WHILE WALKING.
7. Regroup and discuss with the students how they felt without the sense of sight. When necessary, ask them a question to provoke this thought process, such as: "What were you aware of while walking?"
8. Have students return to her/his tree "friend" and record 10 observations. (NOTE: 10 is arbitrary. Select an appropriate number based on the students' levels.) VARIATION: Assign two or three objects to each student (e.g. a maple bud, a particular cloud, a broken hemlock needle branch) and allow 10 minutes for students to observe them, using as many senses as possible and recording their observations.
9. Regroup and discuss poetry as a concise means of communication. Show the format for a cinquain poem:

First line:	Name of object (noun)
Second line:	Two words to describe the object (adjectives – each should convey a separate thought)
Third line:	Three words to describe what the object does or can do (verbs)

Fourth line: Four word to describe how you, the poet, feel about this object (adjectives or adverbs)
 Fifth line: Repeat the first line or use a synonym

Two examples:

needle	water
flat, bitter	clear, shallow
produces, floats, bends	trickles, flows, surges
hopeful, sad, aged, large	cool, comfortable, thoughtful, lazy
needle (factory)	liquid

CONCLUSION

- A. Students may have difficulty with the fourth line. Discuss the importance of trees, e.g. the concept of a watershed, forest products, and aesthetic considerations.
- B. Discuss imagery. Ask volunteers to read their poems. Remind the students that they need not agree with what is said, but should be able to clearly understand and form a mental picture (image) of the tree described. Pay special attention to the fourth line of each poem read.
- C. Have students illustrate their poems, especially the fourth line.
- D. Time permitting, have students exchange poems and try to find each other's "friend."
- E. Write a group poem, using the above format.

EXTENSIONS

- A. Ask each student to convey similar impressions about a forest "friend" in another form of poetry, such as the haiku, a Japanese form of poetry:

First line:	five syllables	Pretty butterflies	flat, bending needle
Second line:	seven syllables	Be careful of pine needles	floats along the gentle stream
Third line:	five syllables	In this gusty wind!	a dead factory
		by Shusen	

- B. The diamante is another possible poetic form:

noun	cocoon
two adjectives describing it	scrawny, ugly
three participles ending in "ing" or "ed"	stirring, growing, tearing
four related nouns	blob, stickiness, tail, wing
three participles indicating change	opening, spreading, fluttering
two adjectives continuing the change	golden, graceful
noun (opposite)	butterfly

- C. The limerick is a humorous poem with a rhyme scheme of "aabba." (The first, second, and fifth lines rhyme.) Example:

There is a very old beaver
 Who acts very much like a cleaver.
 He chops down the trees.
 Stands no higher than my knees,
 And then he acts like a weaver!

- D. Discuss the advantages and limitations of each form.
- E. Back at school, ask each student to write a cinquain about some human made object in the classroom; ask them to write one about a tree in the school yard or on the street. Ask them to

consider: "Does the fourth line differ from the cinquain you wrote about the tree in Stokes State Forest? How?"

- F. Ask each student to write at least two cinquains OR haikus OR diamantes about the same object or place, in two different seasons of the year OR in different weather conditions OR at different times of the day. Consider the results.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ackerman, Diane, *A Natural History of the Senses*, Random House, NY, 1990.
Ciardi, John, *How Does a Poem Mean?*, Harcourt, Brace & World, NY, 1963.
Pei, Mario, *The Story of Language*, Lippincott, NY, 1965.
Rico, G. L., *Writing the Natural Way*, Tarcher, Los Angeles, CA, 1983.
Van Matre, Steve, *Acclimatization*, American Camping Assn., Bradford Woods, IN, 1972.
Wilentz, Joan S., *The Senses of Man*, Crowell, NY, 1968.

LESSON CONTRIBUTORS

Regina Kelly, Humanities Specialist at SOC, and Maura J. Bowe, SOC Teaching Fellow 1978-79.

Adjective List - Creative Writing

When working with older students, any of the following adjectives could be used, instead of the laminated adjective cards that are already with teaching supplies for activity #4 in this lesson plan. Students are asked to observe and point out objects in the forest that have the adjective quality that they've been assigned. (Ask students not to pick or break plants and trees while doing this activity.)

When working with younger students, teachers could deliberately suggest a vocabulary word from this list at an appropriate site.

e.g. I'd like to share a word that means "more than one color in one place." Look at this autumn leaf. A good adjective for it is "multihued."

sight

brilliant
colorful
multihued
dingy
radiant
discolored
mottled
flecked
speckled
bulbous
spherical
globular
angular

sound

harsh

resonant
echoing
resounding
swishy
rustling
crackling

smell

fragrant
pungent
slick
fresh

sweet

hearing

shrill
melodic
quiet
soft
soothing
babbling
rushing
splashing

touch

squishy
pebbly
coarse
sandy
spongy
frigid

tepid