



Spartan Writing Camps & Greenrock Writers Retreat

Facilitated by
Red Cedar Writing Project Teacher Consultants

Audience

Red Cedar Writing Project teachers facilitated 22 sections of Spartan Writing Camps serving 216, 1st-8th grade students. The camps were organized around various genres (Full Moon Poetry, Skits and Scripts), writing methodologies (Middle School Tech Camp) and particular audiences (Just for Boys, Just for Girls).

Greenrock Writers Retreat served 26, 9th-12th grade Michigan high school students, representing 19 school districts in 2012. Thirteen of these students returned for their second (6), third (3) or fourth (4) year of Greenrock! Most participants are from the Greater Lansing area; however, some students travel from as far away as Rochester Hills and Birmingham, Michigan. Three pre-service undergraduates collaborated with the teachers who facilitated the camp

Funding

In addition to student registration fees, Spartan Writing Camps and Greenrock receive financial support from Red Cedar Writing Project (RCWP), Michigan State University's site of the National Writing Project. Michigan State University absorbs facility costs (such as computer labs and classrooms).

Objectives

Both camps share a common mission to engage students in creative writing, critical thinking, and active learning. The camp facilitators seek not only to enhance students' writing skills, but also their commitment to writing as a personally and professionally meaningful act. These objectives are addressed through a variety of activities that may include daily writing and writing response time, attendance at one of the university's museums, gardens, or Theatre Department's productions, reader response opportunities, a book (mentor text) study, visits to a range of university facilities (including the Dairy Store!) and landmarks, as well as the publication of an anthology.

Outcomes

All Spartan Writing Camps are designed for students to leave with the following understandings about writing:

- Sometimes we write without a pre-determined purpose for our writing; however...
- Often we write with particular audiences and purposes in mind.
- Depending on those audiences and purposes, we may change genres to better suit our needs.
- Writers are intentional in choosing just the right words to convey their meaning.
- When preparing to publish, writers focus on the readers' needs, including spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.
- Writers need rich knowledge of the subjects about which they will write.
- Writers imbue their writing with their own original voices.

Greenrock is crafted around the importance of having a space for high school students to write and discuss writing with a community of writers. "Illusion vs. Reality," the theme for 2012, provided an opportunity to consider perspective while exploring various characters' realities, whether based in real worlds or imagined situations. Embracing "Illusion vs. Reality" presented opportunities for writing across a range of genres that use imaginary characters and situations to address very real issues. "Illusion vs. Reality" encompassed the following:

- Creating imaginary worlds to comment on the real world
- Examining what "truth in storytelling" really means
- Writing the worlds we would like to see
- Exploring perspective to illuminate multiple realities
- Considering whether the "Illusion vs. Reality" dichotomy really exists.

Author J. Gabriel Gates visited Greenrock as a guest speaker. He nudged students to consider the ambiguities authors include in their work, and he answered many thoughtful questions about his novel, *The Sleepwalkers*, and his writing process. Gates signed books for students, and he gave away free, signed copies of *Dark Territory*, one of his other novels. Gates was very generous with his time and materials, and many students spoke highly of the experience.

For more information,
Visit <http://rcwp.msu.edu/> and click on "Youth Programs" or Call Dr. Janet Swenson at (517) 432-7236

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