

The Write Stuff



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From Tia's Desk...

Finally! Spring Break is here! Any of the rest of you ready for this break? It seems like every teacher at our school is chomping at the bit for that week off. I think we're all getting a little stir crazy!

Hope your break is nice whether you stay at home or go off somewhere. I know I'm looking forward to catching up on my reading.

Write On

by Bob Miller

Last fall, members of Coalfield Writers from East Chapmanville Grade School were asked to conduct a writing program as part of the Title I Community Involvement Program. Velma Workman, Bob Miller, and Sharon Blevins accepted the challenge. It was February before a date could be scheduled, but on Valentine's Day the Coalfield Writers from Chapmanville East put on a program titled "Write On." Students from Velma Workman and Debbie Bias's third grades were given an invitation to spend an afternoon at a writing workshop. Thirteen students and three additional teachers accepted an invitation to join the workshop.

The students and teachers were asked to bring a photograph of themselves and a friend or family member at a special place or event. After school on Valentine's Day, participants gathered in the gym and were given an introduction

to the Writing Project by Velma Workman. Participants were then asked to remember a special day in their life and how that time produced vivid memories, or pictures, in their brain. They were then asked to look at the picture they brought and write about that time and place. While the students broke into groups with one of the Coalfield writers as a leader, the teachers received some additional instruction and an invitation to SI Summer Institute.

The students produced some beautiful pieces of writing which were mounted with the picture they brought. As the session drew to an end the participants shared their work with each other and their parents who joined the group for the wrap-up. Comments were made by the students like, "do we have to go" and "when can we do this again" let us know the workshop was a success. Next year it is hoped we will be invited to have another one.



Coming Events:

Book Club
*King of the Mild
Frontier*
March 20

SI Kickoff Banquet
April 25-26

Creative Writing Camp Held in Mingo by Tracy Baisden

Imagine 80 students, ranging from grades three through eleven, gathering at 9:30 on a sunshiny spring morning in a High School cafeteria for the sole purpose of writing together. It's hard to imagine that many students willing to give up a day of free time in the early spring weather for writing instruction, but that's exactly what happened at Williamson High School on March 1st, 2008.

Coalfield Writers, a satellite of Marshall University Writing Project and affiliate of The National Writing Project, provided the creative writing arts symposium that drew the students.

During the day students divided in groups based on grade level. Each student attended three different writing experiences themed around a central idea. Students in grades 3 and 4 attended classes around the theme of "Night in a Museum." During their classes they went to a dinosaur museum, a Native American museum, and a Christmas museum. Students in grades 5 – 11 attended classes around the theme "Quilting a Writing Life" and during each class created three writing quilt blocks. At the end of the day the nine quilt blocks were pieced into a quilt of writing.

The staff of the creative writing camp was comprised of Teacher Consultants of The National Writing Project. Each teacher leader has extensive training in the writing process, from pre-writing, through drafting, revision, and finally publishing. These teachers crafted writing experiences for the day that allowed students to experience several forms of the writing process.

Coalfield Writers Holds Writing Assessment Student Training

By: Laura Tracy Baisden

Coalfield Writers recently held two writing assessment seminars for students. The goal of the seminars was to help students connect strong writing practice learned in their classrooms to tips, tricks, and strategies for success on the upcoming Writing Assessment test.

During the writing assessment test students generate an essay based on an assigned prompt. This type of writing, often called "writing on demand" is one of the most difficult types for student mastery, since writing on demand does not allow for either student choice in topic or time for work with drafting, revision, and writing groups. Studies have shown that both topic choice and collaboration time are factors in writing mastery.

On February 16th Coalfield Writers held a Writing Assessment symposium for student in Logan County, at Logan High School. On February 23rd Coalfield Writers held a Writing Assessment symposium for students of Mingo County at Williamson High School. On both Saturdays students worked with teacher consultants of The National Writing Project to review and practice successful writing strategies. One of the most helpful sessions of each weekend was time to review actual student writing samples and score them against the rubric for evaluation that the West Virginia Department of Education uses.

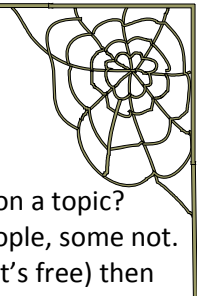
Charlotte's Web (Site)



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Reading on the Holocaust

Mary Hawkins

In July 2007, I had a rare, unique chance to further my education on the Holocaust. I received one of eighteen fellowships to study in NYC with colleagues from various rural sites of NWP from across the country. For nearly two weeks, we studied at the WWII Memorial Library. We had an opportunity to meet teachers from the New York area that had participated in the 2006 seminar.

Since returning home, our group has stayed in contact via the internet. Spike Harris from NWP worked tirelessly to connect us. Currently we have read and discussed two books and are preparing to begin the third one. The first book we read was The Zookeeper's Wife: A War Story by Diana Ackerman. It is quite interesting because often the characters are disguised as zoo animals. It was set in Poland where a large number of Jews made their home.

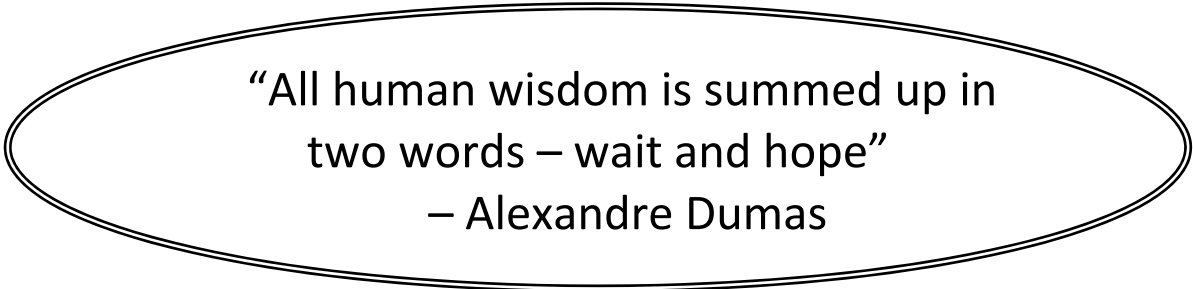
We just finished reading the second book, The Family Moskat by Isaac Bashevis Singer. It too is set in Poland, but instead of taking place solely during WWII as in The Zookeeper's Wife, it spans a wider period of time. The events begin before WWI and continue through WWII. The Family Moskat traces a family through every avenue of human nature.

One area that really troubled me was when a "good Christian" woman complained about having to walk everywhere while the "Christ-killers" bought roses for their lovers and rode around in droskies. I first heard the term "Christ-killer" when I studied at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. I was stunned to the point that I didn't mention it to my husband for a long time.

When I came across it again as I read the novel, I remembered not only the statement from a noted Holocaust scholar from years ago but also to a discussion that we had last summer at the seminar in NYC. I brought this up in one of our online meetings and spoke from my reserved, protective Bible Belt mentality. I confessed how naïve I am in many worldly matters. As it turns out, several of the other teachers weighed in and admitted that so were they. It has really been an eye-opening aspect for us. It is often hard for us to admit how sheltered and narrow-minded we are, but once the ice is broken others wade in. I was hesitant about bringing up the point made about Jews being Christ-killers, but it fueled the discussion in a very positive manner.

I was offended that anyone would think of the Jewish people as being responsible for the death of Christ. I still find it hard to discuss. There is widespread acknowledgement among some of the mainstream religious organizations that point fingers at the Jews and believe that their denial of Christ is the reason for their persecution.

The 2008 Seminar is currently being planned. If you need more information, I would be happy to put you in contact with the appropriate sources.



"All human wisdom is summed up in
two words – wait and hope"
– Alexandre Dumas