

*Inland Northwest Center for Writers*

# Writers in the Community

**Slams, Workshops, Classroom Instruction  
and general writing awesomeness lead by EWU MFA interns.**

**Fall 2010-Winter 2011  
Spokane, WA**

## 5th Period Creative Writing Class at N.C.

One day I would love to be a teacher like Mr. Jim Creasman in his fifth period creative writing class. When Kyle D. and I went to meet with Mr. Creasman, I asked him what the limits were for us in his classroom. He didn't blink when he responded, "You're the experts." With that in mind, I brought mints to my first lesson and asked my students to describe what the candy looked and tasted like without using cliché language. I watched as they sucked thoughtfully

on their mints, pens scribbling across their notebooks. My lesson plans continued in this experimental fashion, some of them wildly successful, others to be quickly abandoned. One day when I am a teacher, I hope to use these lessons to guide my own class and I will always be thankful for Mr. Creasman for letting an "expert" find her way.

~Monet Thomas



**WITC Intern Monet Thomas enjoys her teaching time at North Central High School.**

## WITC Placements Featured:

- Havermale
- Medicine Wheel
- Airway Heights Correctional Facility
- Rogers High School
- North Central High School
- Shrinking Violets Society

## FREE Community Writing Workshops!

WITC will be hosting four FREE! Community Writing Workshops leading up to the Get Lit! Festival!

Hope to see you there!

These events will feature writing extravaganzas from Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing students here at EWU.

Please RSVP on facebook or at [witc@eagles.ewu.edu](mailto:witc@eagles.ewu.edu) to reserve your spot!

Poetry, Fiction and Non-fiction will all be featured.

### Coming up:

**All Genres 3/5**  
**Fiction Workshop 3/12**  
**Nonfiction Workshop 3/19**  
**Poetry Workshop 3/26**





***“That reward of seeing their faces light up...is good enough for me.”***

## Spokane’s Alternative Ed High School

Havermale is a school all its own. For one reason or another, the kids at Havermale haven’t fared well in traditional learning environments. I knew this going in. I expected there would be violence, a complete disregard for authority, and a whole lot of kids I could’ve related to at that age. But while it’s been no trouble relating to the students, I have found something different, though. The kids aren’t trouble-makers any more than your average teenager. Some have learning disabilities. Some come from bad homes. And some do have serious

problems. But what they all share is an ability and desire to listen if teachers take the time to sit down and talk with them one-on-one. And Havermale school days are designed to optimize time for one-on-one learning. Lessons are quick, five-minute deals where the students mostly listen during the short lecture in exchange for being able to work for the rest of the hour on their projects. Teachers then go around and help students individually. This works well for the kids, and pretty well for me. One thing that I wished happened

more was the chance to teach in front of the class. Because of this, there’s no way to prepare a lesson plan ahead of time, as I never know what each student will need help with. The more I go and the more I help the kids with their writing, the more they hear that they write well, and through this, I believe they find the motivation to continue writing, and in a few brief instances, even think of themselves as writers. That reward of seeing their faces light up when they ask, *Really? You think this is good?* is good enough for me.

~Matt Furst

***“My relationship with my group is reciprocal and mutually beneficial.”***

## Working with Spokane’s Violets

The members of the Shrinking Violets Society (SVS) writing group come to the group with an established interest in writing, though they have different writing and educational backgrounds, different levels of experience, differing degrees of seriousness, and widely differing goals. They write in different genres, including poetry, fiction and nonfiction, but also horror, romance, young adult, and so

on. Generating exercises, writing prompts, and discussion topics, and developing “lessons,” to engage and benefit all members of such a diverse group was challenging, to be sure.

However, the challenge is well-rewarded. Despite all perceived differences, all of the members of the group, myself and my co-facilitator included, are working toward becoming better writers. This common ground does not

eliminate the challenges from leading the group, but it does mean that my relationship with my group is reciprocal and mutually beneficial. I think of my group members as an extension of my own writing community. They are closer to being my peers than my students.

~Elizabeth Moore



**Ann Huston is a first year Poet that works with Havermale, Medicine Wheel Academy and has guest taught with the Spokane Shrinking Violets Writing Group.**

## Teaching Within Havermale High

Havermale Alternative High School is a cool place to do WITC. It’s very free-form, with lots of one-on-one work with the kids (all grades together in classes with topics they choose, basically). In Nov/Dec, I worked with students on a Poetry Out Loud session, and I think they enjoyed it (but the whole time, they wanted to memorize

their own poems, not the ones for the contest! Which I think is encouraging, since they already are writing their own poetry). Now I’m helping part of Medicine Wheel, which is within Havermale, on a story-telling session. It’s dwindled to one kid, basically, but he seems happy to work with me, and I’ve helped him with his “photo-

story” and the poem he wrote to go along with it. Havermale definitely keeps you on your toes and guessing what is going to come next, but it’s a neat experience. Next session, I want to do more poetry centered stuff, so we’ll see how that goes!

~Ann Huston

## Process, Procedures...Teach!

So, you want to intern with WITC but you don't like spending time with people who haven't conquered adolescence? Fear not. There are multiple adult-oriented internship opportunities, including the option of teaching at Airway Heights Correction Center (AHCC). Word has it that teaching at this medium-security men's prison is among the more popular placements, but there are a few key things to know in advance.

Foremost is that AHCC requires interns to go through a more involved application process than what is normally required at schools. Potential interns must fill out a volunteer application form, be able to pass a background check, and attend a three-hour orientation before they can begin teaching classes. This means if you want to intern at AHCC, you should start the process well before the beginning of the quarter during which you want to

teach. AHCC may require a few extra steps, but WITC alum who have worked there swear that the payoff is worth it.

~Ericka Taylor



***“AHCC may require a few extra steps, but...the payoff is worth it.”***

## Experimenting With Words

The students in Ellen Gillespie's Creative Writing class at Rogers High School have thus far had very little exposure to poetry in their academic careers, and when asked, only two of seventeen students raised their hands to say that poetry was their preferred form of writing. At first, I was daunted by the prospect of teaching poetry to students so unfamiliar with the subject, but I soon found the process freeing. Because they have very few preconceptions, we've been able to experiment with a lot of different elements in unconventional ways.

One week, I introduced them to sound

poetry and, more specifically, the almost nonsensical poetry of Christian Bok. After, we played a word game in which students had to use a set of just eight letters to create a word bank and then write lines using words from the word bank. The exercise really forced them out of traditional syntax and produced some fascinating results. The students had a lot of fun playing with the words and one student even produced a sort of imitation of one of the Bok poems we had listened to.

This nontraditional poetry had such an impact on the students that Ellen Gilles-

pie, their teacher, e-mailed me days later to tell me that they were still talking about it! It felt really great to engage them so successfully in the writing process and to find a way to make poetry accessible to even those students who claimed not to like it.

~Aimee Cervenka

### “Eating Poetry”

Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.  
There is no happiness like mine.  
I have been eating poetry.

The librarian does not believe what she sees.  
Her eyes are sad  
and she walks with her hands in her dress.

The poems are gone.  
The light is dim.  
The dogs are on the basement stairs and coming up.

I am a new man.  
I snarl at her and bark.  
I romp with joy in the bookish dark.

### A Poem by Mark Strand

Their eyeballs roll,  
their blond legs burn like brush.  
The poor librarian begins to stamp her feet  
and weep.

She does not understand.  
When I get on my knees and lick her hand,  
she screams.

I am a new man.  
I snarl at her and bark.  
I romp with joy in the bookish dark.



***Aimee Cervenka (above) is a first-year Poet that teaches in two classrooms at Rogers High School.***



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*We Foster and Create*  
**WRITERS**

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## From The Director's Desk

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Writers in the Community has been close to my heart ever since I started teaching with the program in the Fall of 2009. I taught at Mead and Rogers High Schools. I had a wonderful time with my students in these placements and when I was named Director of WITC in May 2010, I was excited to pass on my experience and enthusiasm for what I had learned in the academic year.

The interns I have this year are smart, dedicated teachers who seek to challenge and encourage their students. Their lesson plans are diverse and creative.

One of my other goals as incoming Director was to foster exchange between the interns. To encourage this, I send out a weekly update email and have monthly meetings where we make time to talk about what the interns are up to in their classrooms and what successes and challenges they are facing. By knowing what a fellow intern is teaching, this can inspire new ideas and help the interns connect as a community of creative writing educators.

WITC is busy working on the annual issue of *In-Roads*, our yearly journal with work by the students

WITC interns teach. Elizabeth Moore was selected as the Managing Editor of *In-Roads* in January and is doing a stellar job. Watch our Facebook page for updates as we move toward our publication date and release party!

Our FREE Get Lit! associated Adult Community Writing Workshops are about to start. Our first multi-genre workshop is March 5th. Email us for more info or to RSVP. More info can also be found on the Get Lit! Blog.

Keep Writing!



Jennifer Miller McIntyre  
Director