

Writing in the Dust

There's so much dust out there. It's hard to see, hard to breathe, and it's almost impossible to be heard. You're caught up in the middle of the noise: banter with your friends, TV shows, songs on the radio, snippets from news stations, text messages, articles on the internet, video games, emails. So many people saying so many things. And then there's you.

As a 12- or 13-year-old, you're pushed through the world and plenty of people probably think of you as just another kid. Not many people know what's inside you. But the truth is, you have important ideas and an important voice to speak those ideas. In this project, you can let the dust drown out your voice, do the work you have to do, get a grade slapped on your paper. But you're about to find the volume control: the work of awe-inspiring authors Eugenia Collier, Robert Burns, A.A. Milne, and John Steinbeck. Will you let their writing turn up the volume of your own voice and share it with the world?

Process: You will use “Marigolds” by Eugenia Collier, “To a Mouse” by Robert Burns, “Us Two” by A.A. Milne, and *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck to preview the Great Depression and Dust Bowl and to inspire you toward great writing. Throughout this unit, you will conduct several creative and expository writing experiments including a full literary analysis essay.

1. CREATIVE EXPERIMENT 1: Introduce a place using Collier’s exposition of “Marigolds” as a model.
2. CREATIVE EXPERIMENT 2: Introduce a place using Steinbeck’s first two paragraphs as a model.
3. EXPOSITORY EXPERIMENT 1: Find and use textual evidence to analyze the following relationships: George/Lennie, Curley/Curley's wife, and Candy/Candy's dog.
4. EXPOSITORY EXPERIMENT 2: Write an in-class essay on a given prompt using essay organization and analyzed textual evidence.
5. CREATIVE EXPERIMENT 3: Write a free verse poem based loosely on the ideas from “To a Mouse,” and *Of Mice and Men*.

Your passionate, carefully crafted efforts will be compiled in one exquisite portfolio (turned in as a PDF file via email). These portfolios will be showcased on *Mining the Text*.

Assessment: Unlike other projects, this project is not graded at the end. Each experiment will be graded as it’s turned in, and your final PDF will receive a separate grade for overall neatness and presentation. The experiments will be graded based on **how well you accomplished the objective of that particular task, the effort you put into your work, how appropriately you use your model text as inspiration, and the six traits of great writing** (see the back wall of the classroom). The creative experiments and Expository Experiment 1 are worth 10 points each. Expository Experiment 2 is worth 30 points.