



A Creative Writing Shared Education Project 2018/19

Overview

Project Co-ordinator:
Mrs S Jess

The High School
Ballynahinch

Having completed many successful Shared Education events with my colleagues in St Colman's, St Colmcille's, and Assumption Grammar, I decided to embark on a Creative Writing project that would unite Year 8 pupils from all four schools. My objective was that the pupils would write a shared, short story book which would then be published.

I live a few fields away from Montalto Estate and knew that this would be a wonderful setting; it is a focal point and a shared space for all four schools, so I decided that this would be the perfect location for our story.

After consulting with the other Heads of English, I decided to devise and lead a creative writing project which involved:

- a series of workshops for Year 8 (Ice Breakers and Writing Descriptively);
- writing a short story book; and
- publishing a short story book.

In August 2018 I was fortunate to attend a meeting arranged by our Shared Education Officer, Mrs Casey, with Ruth Montgomery from Co-operation Ireland. Co-operation Ireland expressed an interest in the project and offered to financially support it in the following ways:

- a one-night, two-day residential for 20 pupils (five from each school);
- publishing the book 'Montalto Magic'; and
- a book launch event at the Carriage Rooms at Montalto Estate for 240 guests.

This allowed our project to blossom and reach its full potential, providing all involved pupils more opportunities to fully bond by experiencing a range of different activities together, such as drama and go-karting.

In October 2018 I conducted a series of workshops with the Year 8 pupils. I held the initial workshop in Fighting Words Belfast, an exciting venue with inspiring views of the city. Pupils fully engaged with all tasks, completing ice-breaker activities in mixed groups. As a reward for participating, I gave all the pupils merit treats: these rewards will encourage them to engage in the future.

I then conducted follow-up workshops in The High School Ballynahinch to prepare for the Year 8 visit to Montalto Estate.



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When the pupils visited Montalto Estate they received a guided tour by the ranger, Wilson Johnston, and I completed further Creative Writing workshops, during which I gave all pupils creative writing booklets to complete. We also explored further details of the story book, 'Montalto Magic'.

This day at Montalto was inspiring and provided the pupils with an opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the grounds of the Estate and discover the fascinating history of this local tourist attraction. This day also encouraged pupils to bond, share experiences and work together on a piece of creative writing. This experience was also shared by a lecturer from Queens University, to prepare for the delivery of the Drama workshop based on the book (during the January residential).

English teachers facilitated and supported the writing with their Year 8 pupils over November and December (five weeks were permitted). Pupils also sketched photographs of the estate and characters from their chapter.

After receiving, proofreading and amending all chapters of the book, I met with the printing company to discuss our requirements. We agreed a price (in consultation with Co-operation Ireland) and we sent the book for printing in January 2019.

I met and corresponded with the management of Montalto Estate to discuss the book launch (26th February) and agree a fee for the hire of the Carriage Rooms and refreshments for 240 guests, and Co-operation Ireland approved this.

Local councillors and politicians were invited to attend and speak at the book launch event as well as the parents/guardians of those pupils involved.

The successful residential took place at Clandeboye Lodge on 16th & 17th January and helped the pupils to bond and develop more meaningful friendships. They worked with Queens University on voice projection and drama to prepare for their part in the book launch event, and they also enjoyed go-karting.

Co-operation Ireland and Queens University facilitated a follow-up rehearsal on 7th February.

We received the book, 'Montalto Magic' from the printing company on 15th February, and hosted a successful book launch at Montalto Estate on 26th February.

Project Step by Step Action Plan



| Month | Action |
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| May 18 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Devise Action Plan 2. Communication with SE Officer 3. Issue Action Plan to HoDs from partner schools 4. Agree engagement 5. Submit Action Plan to EA |
| June 18 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult Fighting Words Belfast and Montalto Estate to explain project and obtain involvement/support 2. Regular communication with SE Officer |
| August 18 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular communication with SE Officer 2. Meet with Co-operation Ireland 3. Update Action Plan 4. Contact all involved parties to explain new possibilities 5. Obtain agreement |
| September 18 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular communication with SE Officer 2. Design all resources and materials for workshops 3. Purchase all merit rewards for workshops 4. Purchase all resources for workshops 5. Design overview sheet with actions, dates and deadlines and submit to all HoDs 6. Meet with Montalto Estate to organise nature trail visit 7. Send permission letters to all pupils 8. Update SLT 9. Book coaches for all workshops 10. Update HoDs in all partner schools |
| October 18 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular communication with SE Officer 2. Confirm coach bookings 3. The venue 'Fighting Words Belfast' cancelled, so prepare to conduct the 'ice-breaker' workshops myself 4. Design creative writing booklets and issue to all pupils 5. Design book overview and submit to all HoDs 6. Contact all HoDs to update and send copies of workshop material 7. Update BoG 8. Purchase and organise refreshments for staff for all four workshops 9. Conduct four workshops 10. Send letters to parents for permission (for all related workshop trips) 11. Organise Montalto Estate visit and tour of Estate by Ranger 12. Share photographs on social media 13. Update HoDs in all partner schools |

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| Month | Action |
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| November 18 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Correspond with SE Officer and Co-operation Ireland regarding residential 2. Contact HoDs with Residential proposals and process to select five pupils 3. Contact and update parents 4. Create displays in The High School, Ballinahinch regarding the project 5. Meet with Ballynahinch Library to inform about project 6. Update HoDs in all partner schools and remind of deadlines 7. Write Chapter 4 with Year 8 pupils 8. Weekly emails to HoDs with updates and reminders of deadlines |
| December 18 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finalising residential details and liaising with all parties 2. Obtain permission slips from all pupils 3. Weekly emails to HoDs with updates and reminders of deadlines 4. A.Casey to complete risk assessment 5. Finalise Chapter 4 with Year 8 pupils 6. Obtain all chapters from partner schools, read, proof, amend and forward to printing companies for cost 7. Communicate book launch day details with Montalto 8. Invitation to Montalto to Christmas coffee morning |
| January 19 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact all HoDs to obtain pupil names for book 2. Write blurb and design book front/back cover and so on 3. Liaise with printing company to finalise book 4. Forward prices to Co-operation Ireland to obtain approval 5. Update all HoDs 6. Update SLT 7. Regular communication with SE Officer 8. Correspond with Montalto Estate regarding Book Launch event, fee, press release, refreshments, seating, car parking, speeches, guests and so on. 9. Devise Open Evening display showcasing Shared Education creative project 10. Issue draft book to SE Officer for use in Residential 11. Liaise with all HoDs regarding Residential – final details 12. Collect all permission slips – forward to SE Officer 13. Confirm Risk Assessment paperwork complete 14. Visit printing company to view sample book 15. Inform all involved parties of dates for book to be published 16. Liaise with Montalto Estate and Co-operation Ireland with regards to costs and agree same 17. Invite guests (including local councillors, parents and so on) 18. Agree with Principal that he will make a speech on 26/2/19 19. Complete itinerary for 26/2/19 and forward to all relevant parties 20. Complete speech running order and send to all relevant parties 21. Ensure all permission slips are collected and all schools have sent final numbers for 26/2/19 22. Collect books by 15th February 23. Deliver sample book to all relevant parties (HoDs, Principals and so on) 24. Update social media |

Project Step by Step Action Plan



| Month | Action |
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| February 19 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular communication with SE Officer 2. Update SLT 3. Finalise guest numbers for 26/2/19 and forward to Montalto Estate 4. Confirm coach transport for St Colmcille's (see Ruth, Co-operation Ireland) 5. Ensure pupils have read the book 6. 7th February – pupils to rehearse in THSB with Queens University (A.Casey to organise) 7. Finalise speeches with guest speakers 8. Update social media 9. Reminders sent to all involved parties 10. BOOK LAUNCH 26th February 2019! 11. Devise and issue evaluations to all pupils involved 12. Collate and complete report based on evaluations 13. Thank you letters to guest speakers 14. Thank you emails to HoDs |
| March 19 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Amazing the Space' – showcase event on Friday 29th March 2019 at the Foyle Arena in Derry/Londonderry (Co-operation Ireland) 2. All Year 8 pupils involved to attend and participate in the event 3. Consult with SE Officer and all HoDs in relation to the Amazing Space Event 4. Organise permission slip letters |