



Creative Writing: Folklore & Folktales

folklore: the tales, beliefs, customs, or other traditions of a people, handed down from generation to generation

folktale: a story that is part of the folklore of a people and often appears in different versions

Joe Magarac

Find the story of Joe Magarac. See how many different versions of the story you can find. Write a short summary of the story of Joe Magarac.

Create a picture book of the story of Joe Magarac. Use your story summary to write your book. Illustrate the book with your own drawings of Joe Magarac and the other characters in the story.

Create a comic strip of the story of Joe Magarac. Summarize the story with comic strip blocks and illustrations.

Eliza Furnaces (1861)

Lucy Furnaces (1870)

Isabella Furnaces (1872)

Carrie Furnaces (1884)

Dorothy Furnaces (1964)

When furnaces were built for steel mills, they were often named for a relative of the owner or builder. It could be a wife, mother, daughter, or other woman who is important in someone's life. Sometimes the source of the name is known. Sometimes it is unknown.

Four of the more important and well-known furnaces of the steel mills in the Pittsburgh area were the Eliza, Lucy, Isabella, and Carrie furnaces.

Create a character for which one of the furnaces could have been named. Develop a character profile, including heroic qualities.

Write a folktale about the character and her involvement in the steel industry. Create a situation that demonstrates the heroism that led to the furnace being named in honor of the character.

Draw a portrait of the folklore character. Illustrate the story you have written about the character and her involvement in the steel industry.



Creative Writing: Poetry

couplet: a two-line poem or stanza that usually rhymes

tercet: add a third line with the same rhyme to the couplet

quatrain: a four-line poem or stanza that usually follows the rhyme scheme of *aabb* or *abab*

cinquain: a five-line poem written with twenty-two syllables that are arranged in lines that have 2, 4, 6, 8, and 2 syllables

senryu: written like a haiku poem, with three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables; the subject is usually human nature

clerihew: the poem is made up of two rhyming couplets; the subject of the poem makes fun of a celebrity; the first line of the poem is the celebrity's name

persona: written from the point-of-view of the subject of the poem

limerick: a five-line poem that follows a rhyme scheme of *aabba*; it is humorous and often has a bouncy rhythm

ode: written with no formal structure or rhyme; it can celebrate a person, animal, or object

acrostic: the first letter of each line spells out the subject of the poem; should be very descriptive

concrete: sometimes called a “shape poem”; the words are arranged to form a picture or shape that is identified with the subject of the poem

free verse: no formal structure; does not have to rhyme; should be descriptive and should elicit visual images



* Choose from among a variety of poetic styles, or find your own poetic style. Write a poem about the steel industry in the Pittsburgh area.

* Choose several of the poetic styles. Write several different types of poems about one topic about the steel industry.

* Working with the rest of the class, create a book of poetry. Choose different styles of poetry. Write the poems and critique each other's poetry. Choose the best poems to include in the book. Illustrate the poems using a variety of artistic styles:

- work together to critique each poem
- create a layout with the poems and illustrations
- have the pages copied and bound
- make enough copies for each student in the class to have a copy
- make extras to give to special people (parents, teachers, administrators, friends, community members)
- could be used as a fund-raising activity by selling the poetry books

* Have a class contest to vote for your favorite poems. Have students, especially those interested in art, create fun "poetic" awards (like special handmade ribbons).

* Have poetry reading day:

- take turns reading your poems to the class
- read each other's poems
- schedule the poetry reading and invite special guests, such as school administrators, other teachers and classes, parents and relatives, community members
- provide simple refreshments during the poetry reading

* Challenge:

- write about other industrial topics
- write about important people
- create the book with sections for each topic, person, or style of poetry



Creative Writing: Letters

There are five parts to a letter. The five parts include:

HEADING --- street address
city, state zip code
month day, year

Dear (name), --- **GREETING**
paragraphs filled with information --- **BODY**
CLOSING --- Your friend,
SIGNATURE --- Your name

Choose two people or an important situation and write a letter. Decide who will write the letter, and decide to whom the letter will be sent. Include details and facts in the body of the letter. Some possible letters could be:

- * William Kelly writing to tell Sir Henry Bessemer of his process that is similar to the Bessemer process;
- * the union leader to the owner of the steel mill during the Homestead strike of 1892, just before the Battle of Homestead;
- * the steel mill owner to the union leader during the Homestead strike of 1892, just before the Battle of Homestead;
- * the union leader of the AFL and the union leader of the CIO – one to the other to propose the merger of their two organizations;
- * George W.G. Ferris to tell someone (you decide whom) about your new invention, the ferris wheel;
- * Daniel Burnham to write about the Columbian Exposition World's Fair in Chicago, 1893;
- * the president/CEO of U.S. Steel to the chairman of the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair to describe your donation of the Unisphere;
- * an immigrant steel mill worker to his parents in his home country to describe his work in the steel mill;
- * a mill worker to his government representative (state or federal) to describe some of the problems of mill work that need to be changed;
- * any other situation you think would be interesting – just be sure that you include accurate facts and details in the body of your letter.



Creative Writing: Speeches

Choose a topic to research and write about. Try to find something that is controversial or innovative. Write a short speech about the topic, including important details and accurate facts. Your speech should be 2-5 minutes long. After you have written your speech, practice it. Then, give your speech in front of your class. Be prepared to answer your classmates' questions about the situation and the people involved.

Some possible topics for a speech could be:

- * the invention of the Bessemer process and its importance to the steel industry;
- * the completion of the Pittsburgh to Connellsville Railroad line which started the coke boom and led to an increase in the steel industry;
- * the beginning of the union system on the mill workers and the problems faced by workers who wanted to join the union;
- * the Homestead Strike and its impact on the steel industry and the local and national economy, and especially the Battle of Homestead;
- * the delivery of the Unisphere to the New York World's Fair in 1964-1965;
- * the completion of the building of the U.S. Steel Building in 1971;
- * the acquisition of Marathon Oil by U.S. Steel in 1982;
- * the announcement of the merger of the AFL and the CIO;
- * the environmental impact of the steel industry on land, air, or water in the region and throughout the country;
- * the closing of a steel mill and the impact on the local economy;
- * the demise of the steel industry in the Pittsburgh area;
- * the importance of trying to save the steel industry in the United States;
- * the problems caused by foreign imports of steel to the United States, and how the imports helped cause the demise of the steel industry;
- * any other topic you feel would be of interest to others, especially one that is controversial and leads to discussion, disagreement, and exchange of information.



Creative Writing: Quotations

Choose a quote about the steel industry or a related issue. Think about what it means. Research the importance of the quote and its relationship to the steel industry. Write an opinion paper about the quote, and include facts and details to support your opinion. Your paper should have three parts:

- 1 – a short summary of the meaning of the quote
 - tell what the quote says
 - interpret anything important or necessary for understanding the quote
- 2 – your impression of the meaning of the quote
 - tell what you think about the words and meaning of the quote
 - tell how the quote makes you feel
- 3 – your opinion of the meaning and impact of the quote
 - interpret the impact of the words on the industry and economy
 - give your impression of the meaning behind the quote, and the event that may have impacted the people and industry

You may choose from the following quotes, or find one of your own:

- * Robert Moses, president of the New York World's Fair, 1964-1965, referring to the Unisphere:

“What stronger, more durable and more appropriate metal...than stainless steel? And what builder more imaginative and competent than the United States Steel Corporation.”

- * Andrew Carnegie worked as an operator for the Pennsylvania Railroad when he was young – later he hired other telegraphers for the office. The telegraphers were often women:

“Among all the new occupations invaded by women I do not know of any better suited for them than that of telegraph operator.”

- * Meda Logan, poet, circa 1907:

“Here's to grim Pittsburgh
the city of smoke,
Where the sky's but a memory
and sunshine a joke,
Where the incense of stogies
perfumeth the air –



But in spite of her faults
we all love to be there.”

* Epitaph for Condly Brislin, Pennsylvania coal miner:

“Forty years I worked with pick and drill, down in the mines against my will: The coal king’s slave but now it’s passed, thanks be to God I am free at last.”

* John Mitchell, president of the United Mine Workers of America:

“The coal you dig is not Slavish coal, or Polish coal, or Irish coal. It’s coal.”

* Joe Hill, 1915, in a message just before his death, to Wobbly leader Bill Haywood:

“Good-bye Bill. I will die like a true blue rebel. Don’t waste time in mourning. Organize.”

* A song written after the Homestead Strike of 1892:

The Homestead Strike

We are asking one another, as we pass the time of day,
Why workingmen resort to arms to get their proper pay,
And why our labor unions should not be recognized,
Whilst the actions of a syndicate must not be criticized.
Now, the troubles down at Homestead were brought about this way.
When a grasping corporation had the audacity to say,
“You must all renounce your union and forswear your liberty.
And we will give you a chance to live and die in slavery.”