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NMH SUMMER SESSION

**2010**  
**Middle School Program**  
**REALISTIC FICTION**

This course was designed to provide the students with opportunities to discuss and analyze the elements of realistic fiction. These opportunities arose from readings, discussions, and written assignments that prompted them to make connections from the book to the real world. The unifying theme for the reading selections was race and racism, as well as the question of how fiction can be used to represent the “real world.” The students were asked to consider how settings, characters, and plot can be “realistic” despite being the products of an author’s imagination.

In the first three weeks, the students tackled Mark Twain’s masterpiece, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and had in-depth conversations about the realistic use of language, characters, setting, and cultural beliefs. In the last two weeks, they read Jerry Spinelli’s *Maniac Magee*, a book that set the foundation for discussions about how characters develop a moral code.

Over the summer, the students completed journal prompts, small-group activities, and individual assignments pertinent to each novel. In addition, a final project was required after each novel, which gave them the opportunity to creatively demonstrate their knowledge of the book and the genre of realistic fiction. Moreover, the students’ effort and active participation were calculated into their final grade.

TEXTS: *Maniac Magee*, by Jerry Spinelli  
*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain

The course met for 75 minutes per day, six days per week, for the five-week session. Homework assignments were expected to take 60-90 minutes each night.

Master Teacher: Shannon Miner  
Northfield Elementary School

Teaching Intern: Mickey Lenzi  
Connecticut College