

Mimi Herman References

Mimi Herman is the quintessential poet, mentor, teacher, advocate, and community builder. I am humbled and graced by her generosity of spirit. My own artistic work and passion for writing through unexpected lens of memory and sense of place have been greatly influenced by my creative and professional collaborations with Mimi. Her poetic critique of the world continues to inform, support, provide tutelage, and provide an unconditional respect for the diversity of human story and experience.

Jaki Shelton Green
North Carolina Poet Laureate

Mimi creates memorable writing experiences for all individuals that she works with by helping them see the power of poetry. Her teaching techniques allow students and teachers to create a comfortable relationship with words, knowledge and emotion.

Kristen Terry
Magnet Coordinator
Wake County Public Schools

Mimi is creative, entertaining, empathetic, intelligent, unbelievably organized, and real. All the folks who have trained with her have felt transformed by the experience.

Stacey Lane
Community Collaborations Manager
Penland School of Crafts

At the heart of all of Mimi's work, whether it is her poetry, fiction, or outreach to other writers, is a deep love and respect for the power of the written word. She understands that words are personal, that literature is a reflection of the human spirit, and that what you are told about your own writing can have a deep impact on how you feel about yourself and the world around you. Mimi is sensitive to the right of people to develop their own voices, extremely tactful and respectful of other people's opinions, and one of those rare individuals who is both a wonderful listener and an intelligent source of advice.

Katy Munger
2016 NC Piedmont Laureate

My colleagues said that Mimi Herman's residency was akin to having Mary Poppins come for a visit. To say that my students were bewitched and bedazzled by Mimi's charismatic presence would be no exaggeration, yet more importantly and more lastingly, they were energized and empowered. (continued)

Consider the case of K, a boy who never met something new that he liked, who never tried something new without saying that it was too hard, who never worked on anything without saying that he was confused. When Mimi asked my class to write a five senses poem, after giving a lesson on using sense imagery, a lesson that would have drawn a round of applause from the Bard himself, K replied that he was confused and clueless as to what to do. Mary Poppins sat next to him, calmed him, reassured him, and gradually drew out of him a couple of examples, all the time quite sensitive to K's overall unease with the lesson. Amazingly, after Mimi moved on to helping other students, K kept at his poem, even volunteering to read his when it was time to share. Mimi was working with 120 students total that week, but when I saw her the next day before the second session, she not only remembered K's name but she singled out the progress that he made as one of the more satisfying moments of the day.

N is the kind of boy who will not stay in one place, will not concentrate on a lesson, and will not write a single word more than he has to. Mimi brought out the art work and N remained aloof. He was determined not to participate and with his defiant pose of inattention, dared any adult to try to get him to do otherwise. Once again Mimi showed off her ability to create rapport with even the most reluctant of students, gaining N's trust and his interest, drawing him into the task of telling his own story from inside the painting. N worked and worked and that afternoon, long after the lesson was over, N was still working on telling his story.

The world might indeed be puddle-wonderful to children but it never occurred to me to use an e.e. cummings poem as an introduction to poetic devices but Mimi did just that, getting my whole class involved in analyzing cummings' "in Just", somehow getting children who had never cared about poetry before to not only find neologisms in a poem but start creating their own for their own poems. One of my students, A, was so taken with the idea that a poem could have a visual shape that she has been creating her own shape poems, an average of one per day in class, ever since that lesson with Mimi.

The mother of one of my sixth graders, M, came up to me during the Informance, asking if I could arrange for Mimi to tutor her son privately. She told me that she had never seen her son so excited about writing anything and that he was actually sitting at home and writing poems instead of playing on his PlayStation.

Soon after the residency ended, I spent the day writing up a grant application so that Mimi could return next year. Naturally, I want more of my students to have the experience of K, N, A and M, whom Mimi has energized and empowered. At the same time, I selfishly wanted another chance to watch such a master teacher in action.

Tom Keeler
Upper Elementary School Teacher
Sterling Montessori School, Raleigh NC