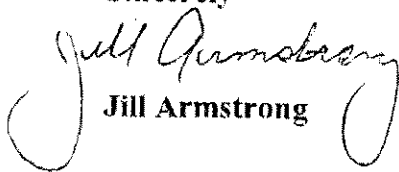


The following are updates from the "Imagineaction" Project.

1. Students (my Grade 12 Writer's Craft class) received copies of the Toews' novel A Complicated Kindness in February, 2012.
2. Students read the novel independently and wrote journals (focusing on relationships) from the various characters' point of view. (Nomi, Trudi, Tash, Ray, Travis)
3. A teacher on staff with a Mennonite background (who was from the same area in Manitoba as Toews) made a presentation to my students regarding Mennonite stereotypes, background etc. Her thoughtful presentation gave my students a deep insight into Mennonite culture and beliefs and the range therein.
4. A discussion with Miriam Toews was arranged for May 30, 2012. Students prepared questions based on the reading of the novel. The Welland Tribune was present and did an in-depth article which I have emailed you and which I enclose. Miriam Toews signed the school's copies of the novels we received from "Imagineaction". Students wrote reflective journals on Toews' discussion of her themes, life and novel.
5. Students' culminating activity was a creative and analytical activity based on the novel. I have included one student's, Sebastien Carrier's poetry, titled, "Nomi Nickel" which was his creative component for the novel.
6. Students are currently putting the finishing touches on their video component(s) for this project. They will be submitted electronically by June 18, 2012.

Thank-you for the opportunity to participate in this project. It was an invaluable experience for my students.

Sincerely


Jill Armstrong

ENTERTAINMENT LOCAL

Miriam Toews stops at Eastdale



By Maryanne Firth, The Tribune
Wednesday, May 30, 2012 6:31:16 EDT PM



Canadian author Miriam Toews discusses her award-winning book *A Complicated Kindness* with the senior writer's craft class at Eastdale Secondary School on Wednesday.

WELLAND - It took students little time to delve deep into the mind of author Miriam Toews when she visited Eastdale Secondary School on Wednesday. Toews, who's book *A Complicated Kindness* won the Governor General's Award for Fiction in 2004, is a celebrated Canadian author who answered questions just as eagerly as they were asked by the school's senior writer's craft class. It was through the national Imagineaction program — designed to facilitate teacher, student and community interaction — that the visit was made possible. Writer's craft teacher Jill Armstrong said her students were thrilled to be meeting with Toews.

whose book they had studied closely in class.

A Complicated Kindness, which spent more than a year on the Canadian bestseller list, tells the story of Nomi Nickel — a teenage girl who rebels against the conventions of her strict Mennonite community in Manitoba, and longs to escape to a more exciting life in New York. Toews, who herself comes from a small Mennonite community in Manitoba, was happy to meet with the small group of 12th graders to analyze her breakout novel.

Now a Toronto resident, she kept the discussion session casual, with students able to ask what was on their mind, whether about the inspiration for characters in the book, her motivation for becoming a writer, or her process when she has a project underway.

Toews offered tips she finds helpful when she's in writing mode, including her coveted "90-minute rule," which she picked up from a fellow author.

Whenever she sits down to write, she tries to do so for at least 90 minutes — what she calls a solid amount of time to really get into the story.

"Writing requires enormous amounts of self-discipline," she said, adding it's important to "force yourself to do it on a daily basis."

Toews spoke about challenges she faced both before and after writing the book, including working hard to ensure the tone was right and facing harsh criticism, particularly from the Mennonite community, once the book was released.

She was also asked about a challenge faced by many who work to master the art of the printed word — writer's block.

Toews admit she, like many authors, has been struck by the condition.

"It's like how you combat a cold," she said, "you have to wait it out ... allow yourself time to move through it and not beat yourself up."

"You need to have faith your ideas will come back."

Her advice to those hoping to become published authors themselves: "Write as honestly and intelligently as you can."

Following the discussion session, Toews took the time to sign the books of all those in attendance.

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Nomi Nickel

	--	Youth
Black on White		
		Heaven and Hell
Love and Pain		
		Tash and her library card
Jesus and his baseball bat		
		Family
Faith		
	--	
		Rage
Red on White		
		Blood and Snow
Love and Pain		
		Jackson Pollock memories
Bong hits, Face kicks, and true love's first kiss		
		Loss
Love		
	--	
		Runaway
Yellow on Black		
		Lights and the city
Love and Pain		
		She used to sing on a stage
Miniput scores and mascara streaks		
		Longing
Lament		
	--	
		Goodbye
Red on Blue		
		Fire and Tears
Love and Pain		
		One by one you all went away
Bonnet tossed aside in a motel 6		
		Gone without a word
How could you?		
	--	

By: Sebastien Carrier
Eastdale Secondary School