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ABSTRACT

One of a series of educational packages designed for implementation either in a workshop atmosphere or through individual study, this Hot Topic guide presents a variety of materials to assist educators in designing and implementing classroom projects and activities centering on the topic of creative writing in the elementary school. The Hot Topic guide contains guidelines for workshop use; an overview/lecture on creative writing in the elementary school; eight articles (from scholarly and professional journals); and ERIC documents on the topic. A 43-item annotated bibliography (including special sections on poetry, the gifted, and using computers) of items in the ERIC database on creative writing is attached. (RS)

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ED 380 809

HOT TOPIC
GUIDE 57
Creative Writing in the Elementary School

This Hot Topic Guide is one of a series of educational packages designed for implementation either in a workshop atmosphere or through individual study. With the comments and suggestions of numerous educators, the Hot Topic Guide series has evolved to address the practical needs of teachers and administrators. As you take the time to work through the contents of this guide, you will find yourself well on the way to designing and implementing a variety of classroom projects and activities centering on this topic.

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by Christopher Essex

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- From Fake to Fiction: Young Children Learn about Writing Fiction
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- Using Character Development to Improve Story Writing
- Using Cues and Prompts to Improve Story Writing
- Talking about Writing: Developing Independent Writers
- Assessment: Collaborating with Children to Assess Writing Objectively
- Variations on the Culminating Event
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BIBLIOGRAPHY
A collection of selected references and abstracts obtained directly from the ERIC database.

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In-Service Workshops and Seminars:
Suggestions for Using this Hot Topic Guide as a Professional Development Tool

Before the Workshop:

- Carefully review the materials presented in this Hot Topic Guide. Think about how these concepts and projects might be applied to your particular school or district.
- As particular concepts begin to stand out in your mind as being important, use the Bibliography section (found at the end of the packet) to seek out additional resources dealing specifically with those concepts.
- Look over the names of the teachers and researchers who wrote the packet articles and/or are listed in the Bibliography. Are any of the names familiar to you? Do any of them work in your geographical area? Do you have colleagues or acquaintances who are engaged in similar research and/or teaching? Perhaps you could enlist their help and expertise as you plan your workshop or seminar.
- As you begin to plan your activities, develop a mental "movie" of what you'd like to see happening in the classroom as a result of this in-service workshop or seminar. Keep this vision in mind as a guide to your planning.

During the Workshop:

- Provide your participants with a solid grasp of the important concepts that you have acquired from your reading, but don't load them down with excessive detail, such as lots of hard-to-remember names, dates or statistics. You may wish to use the Overview/Lecture section of this packet as a guide for your introductory remarks about the topic.
- Try modeling the concepts and teaching strategies related to the topic by "teaching" a minilesson for your group.
- Remember, if your teachers and colleagues ask you challenging or difficult questions about the topic, that they are not trying to discredit you or your ideas. Rather, they are trying to prepare themselves for situations that might arise as they implement these ideas in their own classrooms.
- If any of the participants are already using some of these ideas in their own teaching, encourage them to share their experiences.
- Even though your workshop participants are adults, many of the classroom management principles that you use every day with your students still apply. Workshop participants, admittedly, have a longer attention span and can sit still longer than your second-graders; but not that much longer. Don't have a workshop that is just a "sit down, shut up, and listen" session. Vary the kinds of presentations and activities you provide in your workshops. For instance, try to include at least one hands-on activity so that the participants will begin to get a feel for how they might apply the concepts that you are discussing in your workshop.
- Try to include time in the workshop for the participants to work in small groups. This time may be a good opportunity for them to formulate plans for how they might use the concepts just discussed in their own classrooms.
- Encourage teachers to go "a step further" with what they have learned in the workshop. Provide additional resources for them to continue their research into the topics discussed, such as books, journal articles, Hot Topic Guides, teaching materials, and local experts. Alert them to future workshops/conferences on related topics.

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After the Workshop:

- Follow up on the work you have done. Have your workshop attendees fill out an End-of-Session Evaluation (a sample is included on the next page). Emphasize that their responses are anonymous. The participants' answers to these questions can be very helpful in planning your next workshop. After a reasonable amount of time (say a few months or a semester), contact your workshop attendees and inquire about how they have used, or haven't used, the workshop concepts in their teaching. Have any surprising results come up? Are there any unforeseen problems?
- When teachers are trying the new techniques, suggest that they invite you to observe their classes. As you discover success stories among teachers from your workshop, share them with the other attendees, particularly those who seem reluctant to give the ideas a try.
- Find out what other topics your participants would like to see covered in future workshops and seminars. There are nearly sixty Hot Topic Guides, and more are always being developed. Whatever your focus, there is probably a Hot Topic Guide that can help. An order form follows the table of contents in this packet.

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I really enjoyed working at my own pace.... It was wonderful to have everything so organized...and taken care of in a manner where I really felt like I was a student, however "distant" I was...."
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Planning a Workshop Presentation
Worksheet

Major concepts you want to stress in this presentation:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Are there additional resources mentioned in the Bibliography that would be worth locating? Which ones? How could you get them most easily?

_____

_____

Are there resource people available in your area whom you might consult about this topic and/or invite to participate? Who are they?

_____

_____

What would you like to see happen in participants' classrooms as a result of this workshop? Be as specific as possible.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Plans for followup to this workshop: [peer observations, sharing experiences, etc.]

_____

_____

_____

Agenda for Workshop
Planning Sheet

Introduction/Overview:

[What would be the most effective way to present the major concepts that you wish to convey?]

_____

_____

_____

Activities that involve participants and incorporate the main concepts of this workshop:

1) _____

_____

_____

_____

2) _____

_____

_____

_____

Applications:

Encourage participants to plan a mini-lesson for their educational setting that draws on these concepts. [One possibility is to work in small groups, during the workshop, to make a plan and then share it with other participants.]

Your plan to make this happen:

_____

_____

Evaluation:

[Use the form on the next page, or one you design, to get feedback from participants about your presentation.]

End-of-Session Evaluation

Now that today's meeting is over, we would like to know how you feel and what you think about the things we did so that we can make them better. Your opinion is important to us. Please answer all questions honestly. Your answers are confidential.

1. Check (✓) to show if today's meeting was

   ❑ Not worthwhile ❑ Somewhat worthwhile ❑ Very worthwhile

2. Check (✓) to show if today's meeting was

   ❑ Not interesting ❑ Somewhat interesting ❑ Very interesting

3. Check (✓) to show if today's leader was

   ❑ Not very good ❑ Just O.K. ❑ Very good

4. Check (✓) to show if the meeting helped you get any useful ideas about how you can make positive changes in the classroom.

   ❑ Very little ❑ Some ❑ Very much

5. Check (✓) to show if today's meeting was

   ❑ Too long ❑ Too short ❑ Just about right

6. Check (✓) whether you would recommend today's meeting to a colleague.

   ❑ Yes ❑ No

7. Check (✓) to show how useful you found each of the things we did or discussed today.

   Getting information/new ideas.

   ❑ Not useful ❑ Somewhat useful ❑ Very useful

   Seeing and hearing demonstrations of teaching techniques.

   ❑ Not useful ❑ Somewhat useful ❑ Very useful

   Getting materials to read.

   ❑ Not useful ❑ Somewhat useful ❑ Very useful

Listening to other teachers tell about their own experiences.

❑ Not useful ❑ Somewhat useful ❑ Very useful

Working with colleagues in a small group to develop strategies of our own.

❑ Not useful ❑ Somewhat useful ❑ Very useful

Getting support from others in the group.

❑ Not useful ❑ Somewhat useful ❑ Very useful

8. Please write one thing that you thought was best about today:

9. Please write one thing that could have been improved today:

10. What additional information would you have liked?

11. Do you have any questions you would like to ask?

12. What additional comments would you like to make?

Thank you for completing this form.

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Creative Writing in the Elementary School

Overview by Christopher Essex
M.F.A.-Creative Writing, Indiana University

"Children want to write. They want to write the first day they attend school. This is no accident. Before they went to school they marked up walls, pavements, newspapers with crayons, chalk, pens or pencils...anything that makes a mark. The child's marks say, 'I am.'" (Graves, 3)

As the quotation above suggests, most children enter school with a natural interest in writing, an inherent need to express themselves in words. Couple this with the child's love of stories and nursery rhymes (Who has not seen a goggle-eyed group of kindergartners lost in the world of imagination as their teacher reads them a favorite story or nursery rhyme?) and you have the basis for building an emotionally involving and intellectually stimulating creative writing program for your students. In this *Hot Topic* guide, you will be reading carefully selected articles from various magazines and journals about this important subject.

The Necessity of Creative Writing

Gail E. Tompkins suggests, in her article of the same name, seven reasons why children should write stories (these reasons, of course, also apply to writing poetry):

1) To entertain
2) To foster artistic expression
3) To explore the functions and values of writing
4) To stimulate imagination
5) To clarify thinking
6) To search for identity
7) To learn to read and write (Tompkins, 718-21)

With these compelling reasons in mind--along with children's natural interests in writing and storytelling--it is hard to justify not making creative writing an important part of the elementary school classroom day. It is important that the reasons for writing be made clear to administrators and parents, who may automatically categorize creative writing as merely frivolous play, something akin to recess. While writing certainly should be enjoyable, and children should have opportunities to choose their own subjects and methods of writing , the importance of creative writing in developing children's cognitive and communication skills cannot be underestimated.

"Though we can identify several psychological, social and cognitive reasons why children should compose stories regularly, one reason is to me clearly the most significant. In the process of attempting to get their ideas out on paper so they can be shared with others, children clarify their thinking. The process of encoding ephemeral thoughts into more permanent form in writing results in a clarification of those ideas." (John Warren Stewig, quoted in Tompkins, 720). The fact that these ideas originate from the child, and not some exterior source, such as a reference book a child might use to write a nonfiction essay or a novel chosen for a book report, may allow some children to feel less intimidated and more competent in expressing themselves. "If we want children to learn to write," according to Kenneth Hoskisson, "we must use a mode that will be interesting to them and that will allow them to develop their imaginative and creative powers." (Tompkins, 721)

It is important to realize, and to communicate this realization to parents and administrators, that having children write fiction has many of the same intellectual benefits

as having them write nonfiction. In a creative writing classroom, "children learn to write, to read, to understand literary and grammatical structures by reading stories, by discussing their structures, by writing stories based on their structures, by discussing their own writing, and by repeating the cycle over and over again." (Tompkins, 721) By being actively involved with, and actively interrogating their involvement with, the elements that make up our written and oral communication, these young writers of fiction will gain an intuitive and intellectual understanding of its operations. This kind of understanding will elude those who merely observe it in its final, polished, professionally-produced presentation. Simply put, one can best understand how something is constructed by attempting to put it together yourself.

Both the writer of fiction and the writer of nonfiction must put forth a similar kind of questioning of his/her world. Teachers should emphasize that good fiction requires logical consistency and factual accuracy. Creative writers are asking us to believe in their dreams, and this requires that they 'get the details right.' If a student wants to write a story about a pitcher for the Seattle Mariners, then they should know things like: what the stadium looks like, what kind of glove the pitcher wears, how high the mound is, etc. Even stories that are based on fantasy or science fiction, with monsters and space aliens, need to obey various rules of logic; they need to 'make sense.' For instance, what might the monster eat? What kind of planet would the alien come from? This kind of questioning can open up many new areas of intellectual and emotional interest for the student writer of fantasy or science fiction. These are areas that they might not have as easily accessed through other types of writing. Thus, their understanding of their world is deepened.

Specific Techniques for Teaching Story-Writing

One of the most difficult questions for many Creative Writing instructors to answer is, "What is a story?" Most children, by the time they reach elementary school, have been exposed, through first being read to, and then by reading on their own, to hundreds of stories, and they may at this point have an intuitive feel for what 'seems like a story' and what doesn't. But this 'story-sense' will vary in degree for each student , and it is not something that can be relied upon to occur automatically. A sense of what a story is can be reinforced during our classroom reading of stories, and also, importantly, in post-story discussion. If students are led in a helpful way in these discussions, they may begin to see similarities and differences between books of different writing styles and content and will begin to form an idea of the forms and structures that stories generally follow.

In "From Fake to Fiction: Young Children Learn about Writing Fiction," the first article in this *Hot Topic Guide*, Sharon Taberski relates her experiences as a second-grade teacher struggling with the difference between her expectations of her students' writing and the reality of it. She set out, as she says, to "research the qualities of good fiction and then develop strategies that young children could use to integrate these qualities into their own writing." Her strategies are similar to those used in graduate-school-level writing workshops, but are tailored to the unique requirements of the elementary-school classroom.

The author of the article, "Using Cues and Prompts to Improve Story Writing" has students take their growing knowledge of story structure and utilize it in their own creative writing, using an easy-to-understand checklist method. Hopefully, once students are used to the checklist method, they will internalize some of the general concepts of story structure and rely less on the checklist.

Carla Rensenbrink's article, "Writing as Play," offers a slightly different approach, as the title suggests. Her approach emphasizes children's personal involvement and investment in their writing, and she suggests several activities that will help children keep their natural enthusiasm for writing.

For many children, one of the most enjoyable aspects of writing fiction is that it allows them to create "invisible friends" for themselves in the characters that they invite

into their stories. However, to the "outsider" in this relationship- the reader--these characters may come across as flat and one-dimensional, in a word, unrealistic.
The article, "Using Character Development to Improve Story Writing," provides specific suggestions about how to help your students create interesting, complex characters. Also, importantly, it describes a method of having children evaluate their own work in regards to the complexity of the characterization.

Specific Teaching Techniques for Teaching Poetry-Writing

To a teacher who has not had much experience reading or writing poetry, it can be a very intimidating thing to consider working with elementary school students on creating their own poetry. This is especially so if the teacher has had experience only with reading the classics of Western literature; formal, sometimes difficult and abstract, written in archaic language. One very useful thing teachers can do is to look into modern poetry, buy a good anthology or two, such as the Norton or Vintage anthologies, and perhaps even try writing a poem or two in emulation of the poems they find. This exposure to how poetry is written now will form a useful background of knowledge when discussing poetry with your students, and when commenting on their work. The anthologies can also provide examples of poems for your students.

In the article, "Poetry Writing in the Upper Elementary Grades," not part of this guide but listed in the bibliography section, Ruth H. Freeman suggests useful techniques and activities to introduce upper elementary students to poetry. She emphasizes reading poetry aloud to students and having them discuss both the meaning and the formal structure of the poem. Directing the students' attention to such techniques as alliteration, she has them write their own short alliterative poems. She also has the children write short, three-line poems called 'terquains'; the first line names the subject in one word, the second line describes the subject in two or three words, and the last line gives an emotion relating to the subject. An example is:

Storms
Horrifying, terrifying
Destruction.
(Freeman, 240)

Later, she provides examples of haiku (3 lines of 5-7-5 syllables) and has the children write their own. The attention to syllables and the need to carefully choose and arrange words in order to meet the form's requirements can be very useful in developing children's language abilities. Freeman cautions educators about the overemphasis on rhyming poems, which are often the only kind of poetry most children are exposed to. While entertaining and often musically appealing to hear aving students write rhyming poetry is often difficult and unsatisfying. The need to find a rhyming word often restricts unduly the children's already-limited vocabulary, and meaning tends to take a back seat in the resulting poem. As Freeman says, "Rhyme turns fun and challenge into a chore" (241). While some students are successful at and enjoy writing rhymed poetry, teachers should be aware of its limitations.

It is important that students have experience writing in all of the forms of creative writing: fiction, poetry, and drama. While it is outside the scope of this guide to present articles related to poetry and drama, you will find several articles on both subjects listed in the ERIC bibliography at the back of the packet.

Feedback

Many teachers, particularly those who did not get take extensive college coursework in English or creative writing, feel unsure of themselves when confronted with giving feedback on students' creative writing. They do not wish to stifle students' creativity or

expression of themselves, and may even feel that appreciation of writing is so subjective that comments that are at all critical may be unfair.

"Talking about Writing--Developing Independent Writers," by Iris W. Estabrook, looks in detail at how a first-grade teacher helped one of her students develop critical thinking abilities regarding his own writing. The reader is given insight into a six-month period wherein the student, his teacher, and the class worked together in discussing student-written stories, questioning elements within them, and revising the work. Estabrook deals with the student's initial resistance to any suggestion of revision to his stories, which is a very common reaction, even with adult writers. The article shows how, by sharing his work with an audience (in this case, the other students as well as the teacher) the student became motivated to continue improving his short stories, and to become a "thoughtful, choice-making writer." (705)

The writing workshop, long a standby of college creative writing programs, can also be adapted to teaching elementary students. Having students read each others' work and comment upon it can help both reader and writer. Writers are provided an audience for their work, which is almost universally appealing, and, for many children, comments by their peers will be attended to in ways that teacher comments would not. The reader may pick up on techniques of fiction that might not be apparent from reading a professionally published book, and will have an emotional investment in reading and understanding the work that other kinds of reading do not offer. The writing workshop can further the kind of critical thinking skills that students are already being encouraged to use in other aspects of their learning.

Many teachers report on being surprised at the insightfulness and quality of the peer feedback that is a product of the writing workshop. Of course, as with much student interaction, this feedback needs to be modeled and monitored. Timothy J. Lensmire, in his book, "When Children Write: Critical Revisions of the Writing Workshop," comments on his initial experiences teaching eight and nine-year-olds in the workshop format: "As I shifted control over aspects of the work of literacy to children in this third-grade classroom, children's relations with each other became extremely important for their experiences and writing in the workshop. These relations included the rejection, by children, of members of the other sex as partners in collaborative work, and peer hierarchies granting those girls and boys at the top status and influence, and those at the bottom the brunt of teasing and exclusion." (1-2) None of this should come as any surprise to one who has regularly worked with children, and this should not be seen as a disincentive to the open sharing of writing in the classroom, but it is important to consider the classroom management implications of creative writing work.

Assessment

As mentioned above, many teachers view creative writing as 'impossible to grade', and think that any form of evaluation is necessarily subjective and therefore often unfair. Related to this belief, they think that if a students' work cannot be judged fairly, then there is no way of accurately monitoring their growth and progress. "Assessment: Collaborating with Students to Assess Writing Objectively," by Susan Mandel Glazer, acknowledges these worries, but argues that assessment can be practical, useful, and fair, providing that the teacher clearly communicates consistent criteria for the work that will be evaluated, criteria focusing on writing skills such as description, organization, and punctuation, rather than relying on the teacher's general 'impression' of the quality of the work, or comparison with other students' work. These criteria can be tailored to specific student strengths and weaknesses, and can be modified as the child's abilities develop. Glaser provides an example of a "framework," a collection of several of these criteria that she used to assess a student's writing.

Publication

Many teachers look at publication, in some form, as being a useful and satisfying conclusion to a unit of writing fiction. Having a nicely-presented finished version of the students' work can often be a source of pride to the student, and a way to share the specialness of creative writing with his or her family. Publication also provides motivation for a student to do the extra work of revision and proofreading, for which they might otherwise be lacking. The article, "Variations on the Culminating Event," by Harry Greenberg and Nancy Larson Shapiro, discusses specific techniques that will help teachers present their students' work in the best, most attractive fashion. "Publishing Children's Writing," an ERIC Digest by Marjorie Simic, presents other alternatives to publishing as a way of presenting student work to an audience, such as writing competitions and "the author's chair."

Conclusion

It is hoped that this overview, and the following articles, will help you introduce or expand creative writing in your Elementary classroom. The materials chosen have been selected to provide both a theoretical and a practical basis for a quality program. The articles and books mentioned in this overview are included in the bibliography below, and may serve as useful materials in designing your creative writing classroom, as will the additional ERIC bibliography at the back of this packet.

Works Cited:

Books:

Graves, Donald H. (1983) *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*. Exeter, NH: Heinemann.

Gregory, Cynde. (1990) *Childmade: Awakening Children to Creative Writing*. Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press.

Lensmire, Timothy J. (1994) *When Children Write: Critical Re-Visions of the Writing Workshop*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Journal Articles (other than those included in this *Hot Topic Guide*):

Freeman, Ruth H., "Poetry Writing in the Upper Elementary Grades," *The Reading Teacher*, v.37 n.3, December 1983, pp. 238-242

Tompkins, Gail E., "Seven Reasons Why Children Should Write Stories," *Language Arts*, v.59 n.7, October 1982, pp. 718-21

From Fake to Fiction: Young Children Learn About Writing Fiction

Sharon Taberski

"Mrs. Taberski, I need your help," was the request that rose above the other voices in my classroom. As I turned around to see who was tugging at my sweater, there stood Michael, an eager, seven-year-old writer clutching his five-page story. "I need help with how to end it," continued Michael. As I read Michael's story, "The Haunted House," my perception of myself as a "more than adequate" writing teacher began to unravel. The only problem Michael felt he had with his story was how to get out of a haunted house filled with ghosts and monsters, who had already killed off his friends in very gory ways. Michael needed help with his story and I was unable to help him.

Michael's story contained qualities common in most of the second-grade fiction stories I have read. It lacked feeling, direction, and plausibility. The characters were lifeless and unengaging. John D. MacDonald said: "Story is something happening to someone you have been led to care about" (Shulevitz 1985, p. 7). Michael's story, however, did tug at the heart of the reader.

I had recently been awarded a grant from the Gould Foundation to research children's writing. The research was done under the direction of the Teachers College Writing Project, which is headed by Lucy McCormick Calkins. My research began in January and my first significant learning about how children perceive and write fiction occurred as I observed my class as they attempted to write fiction.

Jessica looked displeased as she stared at her blank paper. I walked over to her to see how I could help. "It's harder to write fiction than it is to write real stories (personal narratives)," complained Jessica. I bent down to learn more from her.

> It's different because you always look back when you do personal narratives. You think of your vacation, and you think of the rides you went on. And it's really hard when you write fiction because you just have to think up something in your head. And if you look back you won't see anything that's fake. You'll just remember everything you did that wasn't fake."

Jessica, in her attempt to write fiction, had been trying to write *fake* stories.

Jessica's explanation was my first clue as to why fiction writing had been so unsuccessful in my writing classes. Jessica didn't understand what fiction was and I began to suspect that the rest of the class didn't either. I observed the children and listed the topics they were writing about. I found stories titled: "The

Talking Snowman," "The Tree That Walked," and "The Magic Daisies." Jason and Lori explained that when they started to write fiction, they think of something that couldn't ever happen in real life, or something that is not true, and then they think of a way to write about it.

I began to realize the scope of my challenge and was determined to avoid a fragmented approach to teaching fiction. I did not want to divide fiction into the categories of plot, character, and setting. I wanted my children to experience the gestalt of fiction writing.

Strategies That Help the Fiction Writer

My first step was to research the qualities of good fiction and then develop strategies that young children could use to integrate these qualities into their own writing. I decided to emphasize that *good fiction:*

- Deals with universal themes or seminal issues in life. When issues such as friendship, fear, and coping with difficulty are written about skillfully and honestly they evoke feelings in the reader.
- Leads the reader to care about what happens to the characters. It is not crucial that the reader like the main character, but he or she should at least care about what happens to the main character.
- Allows the main character to change in some way or to solve a problem.
- Satisfies the reader by its completed action. The stories have the quality of wholeness.

I arrived at a set of strategies to present in my teaching which would enable the children to better understand the qualities of good fiction and incorporate them in their own writing. The strategies were: (1) stressing the importance of topic selection when writing fiction, (2) using literature to teach fiction writing, (3) stressing the importance of having the main character change or solve a problem, (4) emphasizing that stories should be reality-based, or grounded in the writer's own experiences, and (5) encouraging the children to research their fiction pieces.

Choose Topics You Care About

Topic selection is a crucial element in good writing. Writing is often facilitated when the writer cares deeply about what he or she is writing. When this quality is present it can elevate the writer's energy level and make the piece more powerful. It can also evoke feelings in the reader. Suzanne cared about her story about a grandfather. When I asked her where she got the idea for the story, she replied, "I keep thinking of my Grandpa and if he ever dies. Every night I hope he won't die. Then I got a story about a Grandpa that almost dies." Suzanne's story was important to her. It involved real concerns and fears. Suzanne ended her story like this:

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Weeks passed but grandpa
didn't come out of the
hospital, Then after a few
more days of hard work,
milking the cows and
everything, at last the
door bell rang. "That must
be Grandpa," Tracy yelled!
She ran to the door and
she was right, It was
Grandpa! The minute he
came into the house
Tracy hugged hime so
hard. Then Tracy's mother
and father came; And they
all had a big family hug
and sat down to have some
tea.

The End

After Suzanne read her story I commented that the ending, "And they all had a big family hug," sounded very poetic. It conveyed a lot of feeling in just a few words.

Use Literature as a Resource

I asked Suzanne where she got the idea for her ending. She smiled as she pointed to my "library" of poetry and picture books. She said, "I got the idea when you read us *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant." I then took the book from the shelf and read aloud the section Suzanne was referring to.

> Then it was hugging time. Talk about hugging! Those relatives just passed us around their car, pulling us against their wrinkled Virginia clothes, crying sometimes. They hugged us for hours. Then it was into the house and so much laughing and shining faces and hugging in the doorways. You'd have to go through at least four different hugs to get from the kitchen to the front room. Those relatives! (Rylant 1985)

Suzanne said, "When I read, it gives me ideas of what to write. And it gives me the feeling of fiction. It helps me write better fiction. And all the authors say, 'If you want to write fiction—Read!' "

Literature is an invaluable tool to help children write better fiction. During the months that I conducted my research, I enveloped the children with quality literature by reading to them daily. Among the books I read were picture books since these stories were closest to the ones the children could approximate in their writing. As I did this, it was very natural to discuss the qualities that made

these books so special and endearing. I also involved the children in a daily reading workshop. During this workshop the children read for forty-five minutes each day. There were multiple copies of books and the children read them in groups of three, discussing the story, author, and characters. These readers read and discussed books as adult readers do. This reading workshop provided opportunities for me to highlight the qualities of good fiction. Literature became a model for their writing.

Children need to know what good literature looks and sounds like. A point at which the children began to truly understand what good fiction is, was when I read them *Watch Out for the Chicken Feet in Your Soup* by Tomie de Paola. Joey, the young grandson, was embarrassed to bring his friend Eugene to visit his Italian grandmother because of her accent and peculiar customs. This simple story about the universal themes of friendship and family evoked strong feelings from the children. They saw Joey's attitude toward his grandmother change from embarrassment to pride. The children cared about what happened to Joey. As I finished reading the story, they clapped enthusiastically and asked me to read the story again. The minilessons, conferences, and share sessions during the writing and reading workshop allowed me to refer back to this story and others like it.

During reading workshop Jason finished reading *Gypsy Summer* by Wilma Yeo. He then wrote an index card about the story to put into his file box of "Books Read This Year." His comments reflected his growing understanding of what good fiction is:

Yeo, Wilma
Gypsy Summer
193 pages
Chapter book (22 Chapters)

This book is good and it is a completed action because first Marya is Mean then she keeps get nicer and nicer until she is Katy's freind. This book also has feeling the part that gives alot of feeling is when Marya and Katy's haunted house burned down because of the lightning. And When Katy saw that it burned down she was sad because it was where Katy read to Marya and taught her how to read.

Every Story Is About Change

As the children and I read and "talked books," we discussed how the main character of the story had changed or solved his or her problem. The children soon

learned that this change is a crucial element in fiction and looked for it in the stories they read. I reminded them to try to integrate this quality of change into their own fiction stories. Soon part of their rehearsal for writing was to decide on the problem their character would have and how he or she might solve it, or to decide on how their central character would change. Suzanne rehearsed her new fiction story in her journal. She wrote:

5/6/86 My new story is called
Why Me! It's about a little
girl named mary lue all the
kids in school tease her. And
also thein's another girl named
Sara, But mary lue hates Sara!
The teacher likes Sara better
Mary lue has a promlem!
She has a big one.

Uri Shulevitz (1985) says in *Writing With Pictures* " . . . whatever its subject matter, every story is about *change*. This change must be important to the hero, for if it doesn't matter to him or her, the reader will not care" (p. 47). The children soon realized through their reading and discussions that change was one of the most important elements in fiction writing.

Fiction Writers Draw on Personal Experiences

As my minilessons began to introduce authors as people who often base their stories on personal experiences, the children were surprised to learn that the experiences and characters in *Watch Out for the Chicken Feet in Your Soup* were part of the author's childhood. I read them an excerpt by Tomie de Paola from *Something About the Author* (1977).

> My Italian grandmother was the model for the heroine of *Watch Out for the Chicken Feet in Soup*. Like Joey's grandmother in the story she pinched my cheeks, talked 'funny,' and made Easter bread dolls that were the highlight of my young life. There's a lot of me in the character of Joey, and Joey's friend Eugene is a combination of all my friends through the years who were entranced by my grandmother—her house, accent, and cooking, not to mention the chicken feet. (p. 71)

Whenever I read to the children, I pointed out how the author might have used some personal experiences when writing the book. When I read *The Real*

Hole and *Two Dog Biscuits*, both about fraternal twins and both written by Beverly Cleary, the children were fascinated to learn from the book jacket that Beverly Cleary is the mother of twins, now grown up. The children began to speculate on how Beverly Cleary might have drawn from her own experiences when writing these books. When I read *Here I Am an Only Child*, they were just as excited to learn that the author, Marlene Fanta Shyer, is an only child.

One afternoon during reading workshop several children were discussing *No Such Thing as a Witch* by Ruth Chew. Pia jumped up and said, "Look Mrs. Taberski, the dedication says 'To Maggie Baran who makes the best fudge in the world.' The witch in the story is called Maggie Brown." Pia ran over to the bulletin board to read the letter she had received from Ruth Chew. Each child had written to their favorite author and Pia's was Ruth Chew. Ms. Chew wrote:

> I write about places I know. I think it helps the stories to seem real. . . . Some of the things in the stories are true. My neighbor is very much like the witch in *No Such Thing as a Witch*. She took my children to the zoo and introduced them to a bear. She has too many animals in her house. And she makes fudge—but I make the fudge magic in the story. The witch in *The Witch's Buttons* is like a friend of mine who collects buttons and Mary Jane in *The Wednesday Witch* is like my youngest daughter—a mischief maker! As you can see, the ideas come from everywhere.

The children were gradually making the connection. Fiction is not fake; it is rooted in reality.

Research Is Essential in Fiction Writing

Authors are students of their topics. Since realistic fiction, and especially fantasy, must be believable, fiction writers must often research their topics to create a world that is credible to the reader.

I emphasized the importance of researching topics during my teaching. When I read *Oscar Mouse Finds a Home* by Moira Miller and Maria Majewski, I called the children's attention to the shredded paper Oscar Mouse always used to make his house. Since most of the children had experiences with gerbils, mice, or hamsters at home or in school, they knew that mice actually do shred paper to build their nests. This detail helped to make this fantasy story more believable. The children realized that the author, too, must have had some experience with mice or had done research on their living habits. They also learned that E. B. White kept a spider in his room to observe its habits before writing *Charlotte's Web*, and that Robert McCloskey kept ducks in his bathtub while he wrote *Make Way for Ducklings* so he could draw them more accurately.

When Suzanne began writing her "grandfather story," she wanted the story to be about a grandfather that got seriously injured but then recovered. She shared this idea with the class and told them that the grandfather lived on a farm and would be bitten by a tiger. Heather raised her hand and said, "But tigers don't live near farms." Danny suggested that she have the grandfather bitten by

a snake. Suzanne threw up her hands and said, "But I don't know anything about snakes." "I do," said Jessica. So the next day Suzanne arranged to interview Jessica. They came up with the following list and description of snakes.

V

rattle snake

a rattle snake can hert you by it's tailbecause it has pricklys. rattle snake can also have a posines bite.

Cobras

Cobras have fangs that are posins. If it bites you die because of so much posinis in the fangs.

Corn Snaks

Corn snaks like to go in feilds. Their bites arn't that posinis.

told by Jessica Neier and writhin by Suzanne Soba.

Suzanne finally decided on a rattlesnake because its victim could be injured but still recover.

Kelly was writing about a grandmother who had eight heart attacks. After she read the beginning of her story, I commented that it might be unlikely for someone to have eight heart attacks and still recover. Kelly then made a list of teachers and classmates, put the list on her clipboard, and interviewed each person on the list to ask if he or she knew someone who had had a heart attack, how many the person had, and if the person was still alive. After her survey Kelly decided that two heart attacks was a more realistic number. She and the other children were already familiar with the research technique of interviewing. They had learned this skill while doing report writing.

One of the most helpful strategies the children learned while writing fiction was to think of an ending or several endings to a story early in the draft. This requires the ability to organize and sequence information—both research skills. This strategy helped the children give direction to the pieces and set boundaries for their stories. Dalila wrote three endings for her story before deciding to use the third one.

1. The parents are fine and they live happily ever after.
2. The parents are fine and they're not scared any more.
3. The parents are fine and the children learn a lesson and the lesson is that they shouldn't worry to much. *

Layering: How Reading and Writing in Different Genres Support the Fiction Writer

One morning in May Jessica sat in the "Author's Chair" to read her fiction story. As she sat down and waited for silence from her audience, I thought about her growth as a fiction writer. Then Jessica read her story.

My Doll But Too Shy to Show

It all began when Molly, who was 12 and a half invited her friend Louise, who was only 12 to sleep over. When it was time to go to bed Molly got her favorite doll, whose name was Pinky to go to bed with her. When she got Pinky, Louise saw and started to say you sleep with a doll? Hah! It was 10.05. Louise's parents went to bed at 11.00. Louise decided to call her parents to come and pick her up. For she didn't want to sleep with a baby. Louise packed up and left. Molly didn't play with Pinky again.

+ + + ✿ ✿ ✿ ✿

3 weeks later Molly was going to sleep at her friend's house. Her name was Fran. She was 13. Molly didn't bring Pinky because she thought that Fran was going to laugh at Pinky. At bedtime Fran said to Molly "Do you have a doll like this?" "Yes, but I thought that you would make fun of mine like Louise!" "No," said Fran. "Do you know what I think Louise is?" "No. What?" said Molly. "A—A Nudge." Then the girls started to laugh. "Molly, can you bring your doll to school tomorrow?" said Fran. "Sure" said Molly "As long as you don't show it to Louise." O.K. said Fran.

The End

When Jessica finished reading, the children clapped and shared their comments with her. Heather said, "Your story has a lot of feeling. When Louise made fun of Molly because she slept with a doll, it made me feel sad." Dara said, "I like your story because it's realistic. Some people who read it might connect with the idea because it might have happened to them." Jason said, "I like it because Molly changed in the story. At first she was too afraid to show her doll to Fran and then she wasn't ashamed of sleeping with her doll anymore." The decision was unanimous. Jessica had written a good fiction story.

As I thought about the children's responses to Jessica's story and my reaction to it, I knew her story was different in quality from the "haunted house," "monster," and "magic daisy" stories I had received in the past. But how did this change take place? What had helped Jessica and the other children move away from unimportant, boring, "so what?" stories and closer to ones that elicit feeling, deal with real issues, satisfy the reader by their sense of completion and unity, and are populated with engaging characters? While the strategies discussed earlier were undoubtedly helpful to the children, these lessons by themselves did not account for the depth of the children's understanding of fiction and their improved ability to write it. They were part, but not all, of the story behind the children's growth in fiction writing.

I spoke with colleagues and fellow researchers about this internal sense of fiction my children were acquiring. I also wanted to know if the children themselves were aware of the interrelatedness of writing and reading in different genres.

One May morning as the children filed past me with their bookbags strung over their shoulders, I felt more than my usual Monday morning anxiety. I had questions for the children, and they had the answers. I smiled at how "unorthodox" my approach to teaching and children had become. I wondered, nevertheless, if the children were aware of how writing in different genres and reading literature had affected their fiction writing.

As soon as the children unpacked their bookbags, I called them to the back of the room for a class meeting. They were surprised by the untimeliness of this activity. "Shouldn't we do our boardwork first?" they asked. I dismissed their questions and proceeded with my agenda. The tone of my voice and the unexpectedness of this class meeting alerted them to fact that I had something important to discuss. As the children sat on the floor around me, I quieted their chatter and leaned forward to speak. I recalled the different types of writing and reading they had done that year. I then asked, "How did writing personal narratives, reports, poetry, as well as reading help you become better fiction writers?" They raised their hands to respond, but I told them they could respond in their journals. I sent the children back to their seats, but Sari remained behind. She jumped up and whispered excitedly in my ear. "Oh, that's easy. One part of everything makes a good fiction story. Because in poetry it's the feeling. Personal narratives is how to write. It's the simplest writing because you don't have too many steps, except remembering and editing and that stuff. And report writing teaches you to go step-by-step or else it's going to come out messed up. Reading helps me because it's just like TV I get new ideas." Sari smiled as she skipped back to her seat. She was proud of her answer. I was surprised by its insightfulness. As I walked around the room, I learned that the other children were also aware of their learning processes. They wrote:

> *Personal Narratives* . . . got me used to writing and it gave me ideas of how to write . . . it helps me put some real things in my fiction . . . it helps me get just enough realism into a fiction story for someone to believe it . . . I look back at my personal narrative stories and get some ideas for my fiction stories.

> *Poetry* . . . has feeling and fiction has feeling too . . . it helped me put feeling into my stories. Because now all I have to do is take the feeling of a poem and put it into a story and then I have a story with feeling . . . poetry is almost the same as fiction because in fiction you can write on any topic you want and the same in poetry. So poetry gets me started writing fiction . . . sometimes you write poems and you think maybe you could write a fiction story about your poem. Poetry just moves you into fiction.

> *Report Writing* . . . helps me organize my story . . . it helps to write "maps" out. If you don't you'll be confused . . . You also have to do research on fiction. Fiction wouldn't be fiction if you didn't. What I mean is, it would be all untrue and people won't understand it. And fiction isn't all untrue . . . it helped me to find information on things that needed to be realistic in my stories . . . it helped me because sometimes you have to do research on things in fiction. And if you already know how to do it, you're ready already.

> *Reading* . . . gives you ideas to write in your fiction stories and sometimes when I read I begin to think about writing something like it . . . I see styles of writing by reading. And I get to pick out which ones I like best..I get ideas from books I read . . . it helps me see how other people write fiction . . . you can get a model from it and then write your own ideas.

My second graders began their writing workshop this year first by writing personal narratives, then reports, then poetry, and finally fiction. This seemed to be a logical sequence, since it progressed from the easiest to most difficult genre. Along with the writing workshop, the children were engaged in a daily reading workshop and were read to daily. They were reading literature, learning about authors and how they write, discussing their own reading processes, and "talking books" in small groups and as a whole class.

A process of layering had taken place in my class. This layering of personal narratives, poetry, reports, and reading laid a solid foundation for successful fiction writing. Whereas I thought I had begun teaching fiction writing in January, I now realized I actually began in September with my first writing and reading workshop and my first picture book.

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They exchanged news about their families and mutual friends. Adrian and Dorothy joined them.

"I thought Angela and Dennis might have come," said Adrian, with a slight tone of grievance. "They did join."

"Angela rang me, she sent her apologies, but she's tied up organizing some bazaar today. And Dennis isn't much interested in the Church these days. Ever since Anne. . . ." Miriam's explanation trailed away.

"Yes," said Edward, shaking his head, and looking at his toecaps, "That was too bad."

Adrian and Dorothy had not followed this and had to have it explained to them, as will you, gentle reader. Two years after Nicole was born, Dennis and Angela's next youngest child, Anne, was knocked down by a van outside their house and died in hospital a few hours later. I have avoided a direct presentation of this incident because frankly I find it too painful to contemplate. Of course, Dennis and Angela and Anne are fictional characters, they cannot bleed or weep, but they stand here for all the real people to whom such disasters happen with no apparent reason or justice. One does not kill off characters lightly, I assure you, even ones like Anne, evoked solely for that purpose.

David Lodge
How Far Can You Go?

Writing as Play

Carla Rensenbrink

"When I finish my work, can I write?" I love it when children in my multilevel language arts class ask me this. Sure, I say, and off they go. I try not to point out to them what a superior choice they are making. I don't tell them that most people consider writing to be very much 'work,' or that some consider it quite central to the curriculum, a means of refining skills and of developing higher-level thinking abilities. I don't even belabor the "can/may" distinction. I just silently rejoice.

If writing isn't work, what is it? In some circumstances it seems more like play. Children use their imaginations to invent characters and settings and even to create worlds in much the same way that they do when they are playing. Sometimes toys are a source of inspiration.

Toys as a Source of Inspiration

Maggie brought in a toy skunk named Newspaper and wrote a story about it. The next morning Robin came in wearing a new backpack, the first I'd seen of a style that was about to become popular. The pack was furry like an animal's body. The straps tried to look like legs and paws. There was a raccoon head on top, but no tail. Robin went over her new acquisition with Maggie and they talked about it for a while. Then Robin started to write:

A Raccoon Called Ashes

Chapter I
The House

Once there was a raccoon named Ashes. He was about one foot tall and he had no tail. He was eighteen in person age but in raccoon age he was 4—no, 6—no, 8—no, 12—no, 14. Oh, I don't know. Let's get on with the story.

One day he was walking along the river bank when he saw a house. He started to walk toward it. He thought he saw a sign on the door, but he was not quite sure. He came to get a little bit of a close look, and it did have a sign. It said:

TAIL MAKER
If you come here without
a tail, and you are supposed
to have one, you will forever
after have one.

Ashes went up to the door and he knocked on the door. A little man came to the door. He said, "I see you are a raccoon without a tail. Come on in."

Chapter II
I Have a Tail

"Now what is your name?"
"Ashes," replied Ashes.
"Ashes, sit in this chair, please. I am going to blindfold you, OK?" said the little man.
"OK," said Ashes, who was a little shaky because he was not sure he was right to go in the house. He heard a POOF and then a voice that said, "You can take the blindfold off."
He took it off.
He shouted, "I HAVE A TAIL!" and he ran home to show his mom and his friends.

The first—and final—draft of this story was quite correct for a second grader. Robin gives the impression of knowing precisely what she does or does not want, and one of the things she wants is accuracy. Other children in the class are less concerned about correctness in their first drafts and rather inventive in their spelling. Robin placed herself between two fourth graders (there are twenty-four first through fifth graders in my class) during the writing of "Ashes." Both of these older students are good spellers, and she probably pestered them for every third word. It took several weeks for her to complete the piece.

Extending this story over time seemed to be an important part of Robin's absorption in it. Right there in her writing folder was the world of Ashes, waiting for her from day to day. She could return to it at some point during the hour and a half of her language arts class and work on her story for a long or short period of time. I doubt if it would have captured her imagination in the same way if it had been due on Friday, or if she had had to put it aside for other writing assignments, or if she had been limited by twenty minute blocks of writing time.

When she finished writing, Robin read "Ashes" to a very attentive audience. At the end she asked, "Any questions or comments?" Mollie, a first grader, was deeply absorbed in the story. When she raised her hand, her eyes were glazed as if she had not yet returned to Room Three from the land of the Tail Maker. She said dreamily, "I wouldn't mind having a magic tail—if it wasn't prickly." So Mollie puts herself in the story and extends it in her own imagination.

In their play children spend a lot of time making up stories inspired by toys. As they manipulate dolls, stuffed animals, even those dreadful little orange plastic things called "Muscles," they create characters and give them voices and work along some sort of story line.

Instead of making her toy raccoon walk and speaking for him, Robin writes his story down. The process of writing it, as Vygotsky (1962) pointed out, is very different from spontaneous play. Robin must make deliberate choices as she translates from condensed inner speech to detailed written speech. She gives her story a distinctly literary form. It begins with "Once there was . . . " It revolves around a problem. It has a very satisfying conclusion.

Imaginary Adventures Together

Another popular subject of children's writing is an imaginary trip, an overnight, or adventure that includes the author's friends. This is also game material. Some friends get together and plan, "Let's pretend we're stranded on a desert island . . . exploring a haunted house . . . being chased by bears."

Kelly wrote about an imaginary trip to Florida in which she shared some adventures with her friends. The story opened with a series of telephone conversations.

Ring. Ring.
"Hello."
"Hello, Sarah, this is Kelly. Do you want to go on a trip to Florida?"
"Sure, I'll ask my Mom . . . I can go."
"OK, be at the airport at 4:30."
Ring. Ring.
"Hello."
"Hello, Katie, this is Kelly . . .

This brief, decisive exchange was repeated numerous times, each time slotting in the name of a different friend (and she had many). Kelly read the unfinished story to the class, ending with two ritualistic phrases of our classroom, "to be continued" and then "any questions or comments?" The first comment was a suggestion that she condense or vary the repetitive conversations.

The second comment was from Wendy, a younger sister of Sarah. "But usually I answer the phone," she observed. "Oh," said Kelly. "You should put me in," Wendy insisted. She had been paying careful attention to the reading and either spotted an inaccuracy or, more likely, saw her way in to the story. "OK," said Kelly.

A third hand went up and Carol, an only child, asked if Kelly would *pretend* that she was the sister of Katie and also let her answer the phone. Kelly generously put both younger children in the story, and even allowed them to go along to Florida. The episode reminded me of a game where a younger sibling is teasing to be included. The story, like a game, is perceived as maleable and expandable.

Another typical adventure story also starts with a list of friends. They arm themselves thoroughly—either by shopping in the hunting department at L.L. Bean's or by falling into a cave and finding it piled with crossbows, halberds, and pikes. Then off they go seeking ADVANSHR.

Some of the stories in this vein tend to get rather violent. The parents of Vic, John, and Marshall, coauthors of "DETH AT FRIST SITE" were not pleased with the subject matter (or the spelling) of their children's joint effort. I was therefore very grateful to Marshall when he redirected the energies of this third-grade gang for a while. I had been reading *The Wind in the Willows* to the class,

when one morning Marshall brought in a new and gorgeously illustrated edition of the book which his grandmother had given him. We had been talking about writing letters in class that day, and he asked if he could pretend that he was Badger and invite Mole, who would be Colin, to tea. Marshall had found another way to participate in someone else's story, though this time it was a published author, not a classmate. Two rounds of letters were produced in that period.

The next day Marshall moved his gear in at recess so he could get the prized round table for his project. He brought his book and several paper mail boxes that he had made. Vic was added as Ratty. Another friend came over and looked through the pictures in the book to find his role. Their letters, with the Wild Woods stamps they created, take liberties with Grahame's story. Three characters share the jail experience.

> Mole.on February 17 mr. badger will bail Toad, Me, and you out of ~~jale~~ jail so stay ~~eam~~ calm and maby badger will biy us a Turky
>
> Ratty

This writing game went on for a couple of weeks, both in class and outside at recess, where the children continued to play those roles.

Being "In" Stories and Play with Friends

Being in a story with a friend is a powerful symbol of being *in*. It was crucially important to Paul, a strongly imaginative first grader. The monsters he drew with crayons seemed to scare even him. In a way, he played a monster role—explosive and frightening. He threatened and teased and scared other children away.

When Paul first arrived in September, it was immediately clear to the teachers that he was going to need a lot of concentrated attention. (In our small school the children have different teachers for language arts and math in the morning and any one of the four of us for a succession of afternoon units. Therefore we share responsibility for every child.) We were still fumbling around, trying our various strategies to help him recognize limits and see the effects of his own behavior on others, when a miracle occurred, or at least a better solution than any of us could have devised: a second grader befriended him.

The friendship developed in writing class. Paul and Mike would secure a stack of paper, blank at the top and lined at the bottom, and take it to a table they had claimed. Mike would draw a series of clever and intricate war pictures. Like many children he talked about aspects of his pictures as he created them. He was not talking to Paul; it was what Vygotsky calls "speech for oneself," helping him to plan and organize his drawing. After watching for a while, Paul would practically climb on the table and strew papers around, as he interrupted with his questions.

"What's this guy doing?"

"He's falling off the cliff, see, 'cause he got hit."

"Who shot him?"

"This guy. He's got a bazooka."

"Make a man with a sword. Make him chop someone's head off," Paul would suggest.

When a few pictures had been completed, they would divide them up so that both could work on the writing half of the page. They had a peculiar notion of equivalents: "OK, you do the battle with the French. I'll do the battle with the Extraterrestrials." They continued to discuss the stories and offer each other suggestions. Mike was an inveterate invented speller. Paul, though younger, was more aware of conventional spelling. He'd ask his mentor for help (How do you spell *different*? DIFRNT) and be puzzled by the results.

The other arena in which this friendship was played out, and one with some interesting parallels, was the recess game of Forts. Our playground has some trees along the side and a bit of woods down a slope at the back. At times most of the area not taken up by kickball or playground equipment has been divvied up into forts. Boundaries are marked by piles of raked pine needles, rocks, or sticks. It is rare that a fort has walls more than a few inches high, and only one in my memory ever had a roof. Sometimes the space inside the fort is elaborated with different rooms, a fireplace, and a place for treasure. The activities of fort dwellers consist mostly of housekeeping and raids on other forts. These occupy every recess moment for weeks at a time.

Forts seem to me almost a universal in the experience of children in this culture. A fort marks off a safe inner space where you can be with chosen friends, engaging in homey tasks or returning from sorties into the outer world of danger. That fragile line of pine needles protects you from the menace of Ethan and his gang, or Jenny and hers, or, I suppose, monsters.

Paul was initiated into a fort as Mike's protégé. The shared planning of battle strategy, begun on paper, continued in this other setting. "Come on, let's sneak around the swings. Bring your stick." There was a lot of discussion of who was in what fort. "Colin's not in it anymore. He's in Joel's fort."

One day in class Paul was sitting alone. I went over and suggested that he look through his writing folder and decide what he'd like to work on. We sifted through various fragments. Finally, Paul picked up a clump of papers with Mike's drawings and his own writing. "This is 'The Destroyer.' I don't know if Mike is in it anymore."

Sadly, he was right. His joint stories with Mike dwindled. In fact, as Paul's choice of words, his reference to "in it," suggests, both stories and forts went out together. But I felt that the experience had been a healing one for Paul. His involvement in both these imaginary worlds had made him feel safer and stronger—rather in the way Bettelheim (1977) claims that absorption in a fairy tale can have a healing effect on children.

Some of these stories, like the games they were based on, were discarded or outgrown. Others had sufficient impetus to carry them through to completion. "The ADVANSHR" was never corrected, but it was made into a book which will be a linguistic puzzle for its author in a year or two. "A Raccoon Named Ashes" was almost ready for the school magazine when the first draft was completed. *A Trip to Florida* was redrafted and carefully copied by Kelly, grateful for the suggestion that she do some condensing, into an illustrated homemade book.

The connection between play and writing is a rich one for children. It enables them to bring into the classroom their own compelling interests—their imaginary games, their toys and books, their friendships, their fears, their dreams. It connects the inside classroom world with the larger world of recess, after school, and home. This abundant play material is transformed in various ways as children work with it in writing their own stories. When their play becomes their work, children find it particularly meaningful and satisfying.

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Using Character Development to Improve Story Writing

Alexandra Leavell • Anne Ioannides

Students with writing problems generally include basic story elements such as setting, plot, and resolution in their written stories. However, they frequently omit a critical element of good stories, the characters' internal responses or plans (MacArthur & Graham, 1987; Montague, Maddux, & Dereshiwsky, 1990). Internal responses and plans are story elements that give life to characters through expression of emotions, intentions, and thoughts. If students do not understand the roles characters play in a story, they may not be able to comprehend or write well-developed stories (Emery & Mihalevich, 1987).

Explicit instruction in character development helps students understand the importance of characters in stories. Students can learn to create characters who are like real people who have emotions and ideas and can solve the problems they encounter. This article presents guidelines for teaching students how to develop such characters in their written stories.

The students are taught the three character attributes that will make their characters seem like real people.

Expose Students to Books and Stories

Because most special education programs emphasize basic skills instruction in reading and writing, students in these programs usually are not exposed to literature. As part of our instructional program, stories and excerpts from books containing fictional characters are read aloud to students. Fictional characters who are involved in situations familiar or appealing to students seem to motivate them to create similarly interesting characters in their own stories. Discussions about the characters in the stories read to them often help students understand the elements of character development. For example, in a recent study (Montague & Leavell, in press), an excerpt from *The Pigman* by Paul Zindel was read to the students. The unconventional behavior of the two young people who tell this story from alternating points of view sparked the students' interest. The class discussion centered on developing a character's point of view and making characters the catalysts for action in stories.

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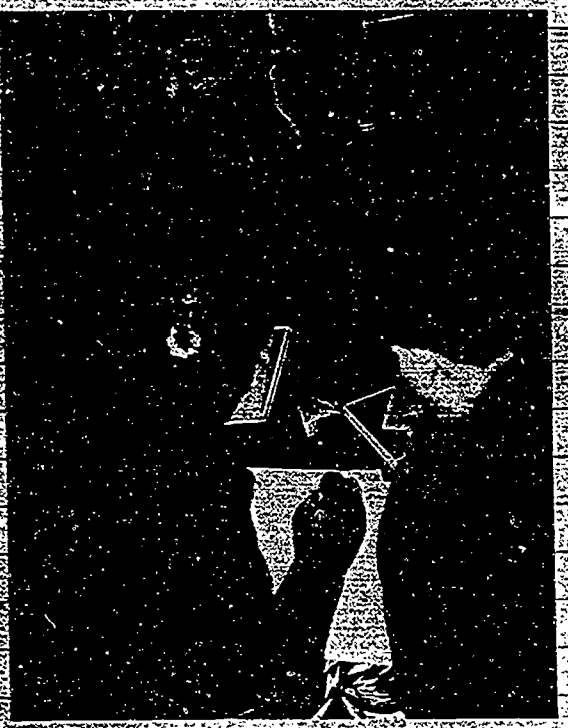
of smoke in the sky above their apartment building. They looked at one another in terror and began to run as fast as they could. When they got there, they saw flames coming out of the third floor windows. Art panic!



The teacher circulates among students and helps individuals draw on their own knowledge as they compose stories.

Focus on Student Knowledge and Experience

Students' prior knowledge and experience come into play during the writing process. Students draw on their own experiences and create fictional representations of actual events in their lives. Explicit instruction in character development should be provided at the beginning of the instructional program. However, as students become better able to create and develop characters, the teacher can become a facilitator or guide. In this role, the teacher circulates among students and helps individuals draw on their own knowledge and experiences as they compose stories

Provide Explicit Instruction in Character Development

Developing students' understanding of character attributes and how authors use these attributes to make characters seem like real people is the primary instructional goal. To introduce the character attributes, the teacher can draw an analogy between meeting and becoming friends with someone and creating characters in stories. The following are techniques for teaching students to use three character attributes as they write stories.

1. *Physical appearance.* Introduce the first character attribute by saying,

> The author helps readers get to know the characters in a story in much the same way as a person gets to know another person. For example, the first thing I notice about people is how they look; for example, how tall they are, the color of their hair, the clothes they are wearing, and so on. This is called the character's *physical appearance.*

Then, write "Physical Appearance" on a large piece of newsprint. Using examples from stories read aloud in class, tell the students to use the authors' description of the characters to imagine or make pictures of the characters in their heads. Next, have the students give examples of physical attributes that could be used to describe a character for the reader. Write the students' ideas on the newsprint.

2. *Speech and actions.* Introduce the second cnaracter attribute by saying,

> After seeing how a person looks, I might want to talk to that person and get to know him or her better. I can find out more about what characters are like by listening to what they say and observing how they act toward other characters. Authors help us know more about characters by letting us listen in on their conversations and follow them around to see what they do. What characters say and do is called their *speech and actions.*

Have the dialogue from previously read stories available. Let the students take turns reading aloud different characters' parts. Then discuss getting to know characters by listening to what they say and observing what they do. Write "Speech and Actions" on a sheet of newsprint. Elicit a list of action words as examples of responses characters might have to story events. Also have the students suggest verbs that can be

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smoke in the sky above their apartment building. They looked at one another in terror and began to run as fast as they could. When they got there, they saw flames coming out of the third floor windows. Art panicked

Figure 1. Thoughts and Emotions Chart

Thought Words			
wanted	realized	thought	wished
noticed	reasoned	hoped	felt
knew	needed	wondered	believed
understood	remembered	pondered	

Emotions			
happiness	hate	sadness	anxiety
satisfaction	nervousness	boredom	worry
amazement	tension	jealousy	fear
excitement	surprise	panic	loneliness
depression	envy	love	compassion
joy	agony	frustration	sympathy

used instead of "said" as they write dialogue for the story characters.

3. *Thoughts and emotions.* Introduce the third character attribute by saying,

> Think about the person you know and like the best. Think about why that person is different from other friends you have. I know my best friend so well that I can usually tell how she would react to a certain situation or how she would feel about it. Authors help us get to know characters by letting us "get inside the characters' heads" and hear their inner thoughts and feelings. In this way we are able to figure out how characters will act in certain situations.

Write "Thoughts and Emotions" on a sheet of newsprint. Have the students generate a list of "thought words" that can be used to indicate that a character is thinking about an event in the story. Then elicit various feelings that characters might have. Figure 1 presents an example of a chart developed for this part of the lesson on character attributes.

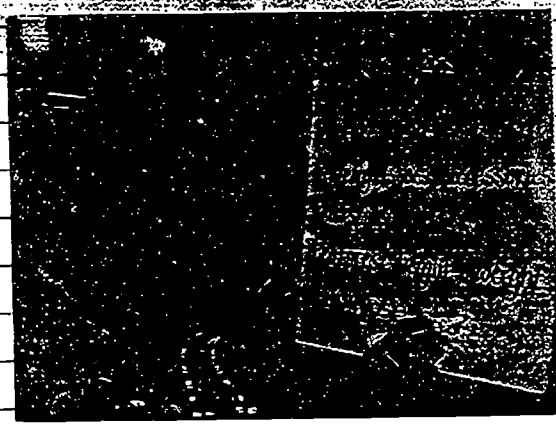
Encourage the students to express their own feelings and reactions to situations as examples of how characters might feel or act. Discuss the importance of understanding how the characters feel and how their actions often give the reader clues about their emotions. When authors reveal their characters' thoughts and feelings, readers get to know the characters better. For example, Jody, the young boy in *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck, reveals his feelings when his pony becomes ill. Discuss how readers might identify with story characters and have similar emotions in similar situations.

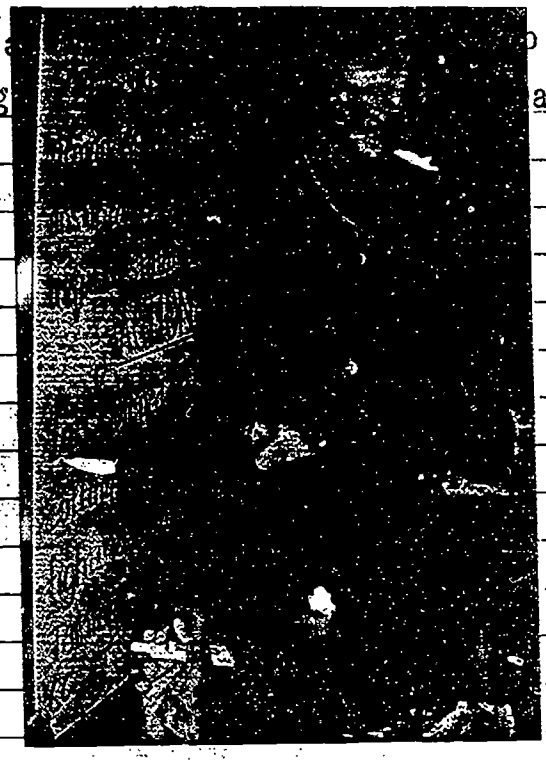
Remind the students to use the character attributes as they create characters in their stories. Display the lists of physical attributes, speech and actions, and thoughts and emotions for use during group story writing.

Provide Story Writing Practice

Before students begin their stories, remind them that they are authors and, as authors, they are responsible for making their characters come alive for the reader. They should also be reminded to use the posted lists to get ideas for describing physical attributes, speech, actions, thoughts, and feelings as they create "real-life" characters. Have them first write a story as a whole-class activity. The following guidelines will help in structuring this writing activity. Allow approximately 3 days to complete the class story.

1. Give the students a list of story prompts or have them generate their own list. For example, the prompt "and





The lists of physical attributes, speech and actions, and thoughts and emotions are displayed during group story writing (above). To the right, students make use of the posted charts as they create their "real-life" characters.

the burning building crashed to the ground" might be selected by the students. Write the prompt for the class story on the chalkboard.

2. Tell the students to imagine characters who might be in a story about a burning building. Ask them to describe the various parts these characters will play in the story. Then have the students describe each character's physical appearance, speech and actions, and thoughts and emotions. Write each character sketch on the newsprint. These sketches then become the cast of characters for the class story.

3. Discuss the possible problems the characters may encounter as the story unfolds and moves toward its ending. Write the students' ideas on newsprint. Discuss the purpose of conflicts or problems in stories (to set the action of the story in motion); the importance of having characters develop plans to solve some of the problems rather than simply reacting to the problems; and that problems can be internal (inside the person) or external (outside the person). Figure 2 presents a chart developed for this part of the lesson.

4. Ask the students to develop a plan for solving each of the problems they have posed for the characters. Have them tell how the characters might feel about these problems and the people who are involved in creating or solving the problems (see Figure 2). Also, have them tell how the characters feel about themselves. Guide the students as they tell how their characters will react to the various internal or external problems. As the students dictate their responses, write them on newsprint and display it in the classroom. Encourage ongoing revision to help the students understand the evolving nature of story writing.

5. As subsequent events are added, ask the students to describe how their characters feel and what they are thinking as events occur. Ask them how their characters will react to each event. Point out that this reaction may be the next story event. Provide frequent examples such as the following:

> On their way home, Art and his buddy saw the huge cloud of smoke in the sky above their apartment building. They looked at one another in terror and began to run home a fast as they could. When they got there, they saw flames coming out of the third floor windows. Art panicked.

Ask the students to examine their own feelings about this event and then imagine what they would say or do if it were happening to them. Ask them whether the characters would have similar thoughts and feelings and why they might have these feelings. Help the students understand the relationship among characters' thoughts, actions, and reactions.

As the students share their ideas, the story may change considerably.

smoke in the sky above their apartment building. They looked at one another in terror and began to run st as they could. When they got there, they saw flames coming out of the third floor windows. Art panicl

Figure 2. Character Problems Chart

Problems
- set the action of the story
- can be **internal** (inside the character) or **external** (outside the character)

Plans
- tell how the character(s) will solve the problem(s)

Some examples are problems with...

money	friends	sickness	insanity
family	love	death	war
business	school	abuse	being trapped or stranded
personal crime	weather	nature	addiction
work	heartbreak		

Encourage frequent stops during the story writing activity to reread what has been written so far. This is an opportunity to model techniques for story writing. For example, if there are inconsistencies in a story, a teacher might read the story aloud, stop, and say, "Just a moment. I'm confused. I thought this character was supposed to be 12 or 13-years-old, but in this part of the story, he is driving a car. Did I mean to do that?" The students can then brainstorm about changes so the story makes sense.

Teach Students to Evaluate Their Stories

To help students determine whether or not their characters are well developed, give each student a copy of the final draft of the story. Make a list of the characters in the story and assign one character to each student. Have the students read the story and underline the words and sentences that answer the following questions:

1. What does the character look like?
2. What does the character say in the story?
3. What does the character do in the story?
4. What is the character thinking about in the story?
5. What emotions does the character display in the story?
6. How does the character feel about what happens in the story?

Then have the class discuss each character and decide whether or not the characters are developed well enough for their parts in the story. At this point, students can add or delete information about characters and make any other changes in the story that they agree upon. This activity is reinforcing because the students begin to realize that they are able to create stories with interesting characters who think and act like real people.

Conclusion

Students with writing problems often have difficulty writing stories because they may not understand the interactions among the motivations, actions, and reactions of story characters. Explicit instruction in character development improves not only story writing skills but also their attitude toward writing.

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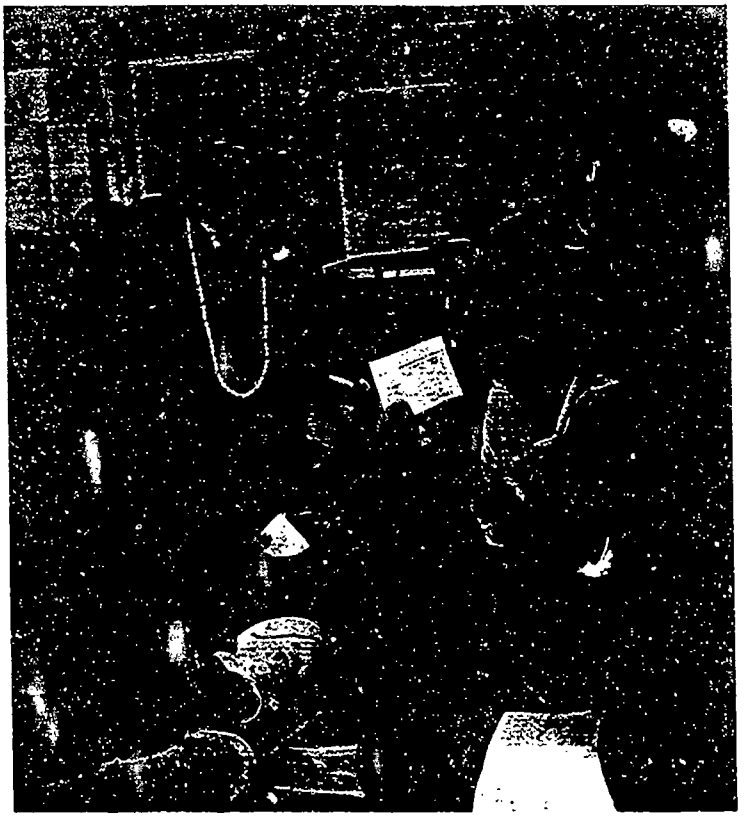
Using Cues and Prompts to Improve Story Writing

Anne Graves • Rochelle Hauge

Although narrative writing is emphasized in most elementary school language arts programs, many students still have difficulty with this academic task. Narrative writing involves formulating ideas, creating plots, developing characters, and solving problems encountered by characters in the story. Students must be taught to develop a plan for writing a story, organizing their ideas, and writing coherently for an audience. They also must be taught how to revise their stories.

Teaching students to write stories may improve their ability to evaluate and appreciate literature, plays, movies, television shows, and stories told by others. Story writing can be therapeutic for students because they can imagine themselves in the story, create characters, and develop plots that relate directly to their own experiences (Brooks, 1987). Emphasizing content and ideas rather than mechanics during instruction gives students an opportunity not only to succeed in but also to have fun with writing. When students enjoy the writing experience, their motivation to express themselves in writing increases.



The teacher models the use of the self-monitoring checklist.

This article provides specific recommendations for teaching students how to use a story grammar cuing system to improve both the fluency and quality of their stories. The cuing system is simply a series of steps in the form of a checklist that serves as a self-regulatory mechanism for prompting attention, memory, and accuracy (Graves, Montague, & Wong, 1990; Hauge, 1991; Montague, Graves, & Leavell, 1991). The cuing system is most useful for students who can identify story elements and write simple stories but have difficulty creating complete and well-organized stories. If students do not have the prerequisite skills, then explicit instruction in story grammar elements or sentence production should be given prior to introducing the cuing system. The six procedures described in this article are recommended for teaching students how to use the system.

Assess Students' Knowledge of Story Grammar

To determine whether or not students can identify story parts, first read a short story to them. Then, ask them about the main character, setting, problem, plan, and ending of the story. If the students can recall and identify the story elements, have them write a story. To help them get started, have them select a story starter from a list.

To assess students' inclusion of story grammar elements and story writing progress, teachers can use quality measures such as the Story Element Scale (Graham & Harris, 1989) and the Story

Quality Scale (Graves & Montague, 1991). The Story Element Scale is designed to provide a numerical rating of story parts by addressing the presence and quality of seven story elements: main character, locale, starter event, goal, action, ending, and reaction. The Story Quality Scale is designed to assess story coherence, organization, sequencing, goals, and outcomes and the student's ability to develop episodes within the story. Sections from these instruments and other, similar quality measures can be used as guides for developing story writing goals and objectives. Goals can be set and adjusted based on the results of these curriculum-based measurement tools.

Students who omit story elements from their stories can be taught to use the story grammar cuing system. Students whose stories are complete may not need the check-off system. Instead, their instruction might focus on making sure the events in the story are logically sequenced, creating an interesting and cohesive plot, and expanding episodes for more sophisticated and better developed stories.

Review the Story Grammar Elements

Before presenting the story grammar cuing system to students, review the story elements, including (a) the setting (where and when the story takes place), (b) the main and supporting characters, (c) the problem presented in the story and a plan to solve it, and (d) the ending or resolution. Use the story grammar terms that are most familiar to students. For example, if students already know the terms *problem* and *resolution*, continue to use this terminology. As part of the review, make a list of the story elements and discuss the terms and their identifying features (Graves & Montague, 1991). The following illustrates how a teacher might present this review:

> Stories usually have the parts that are listed on this card [see Figure 1]. The *setting* is where and when the story takes place. The *character* or *characters* are the people or animals in the story. The *problem* is something that happens that concerns, worries, or confuses the characters. The *plan* is the way the characters attempt to solve the problem. The *ending* is the last part of the story. In the last part of the story, the characters' *reactions* to the problem solution are described; for example: "Jenny smiled and waved goodbye to her new friend," or "The purple pandas lived happily ever after."

Model Use of the Self-Monitoring Checklist

To model use of the cuing system, first provide the students with a card listing the story parts (see Figure 1). They will use this card as they plan and write stories. Then, model the use of the cuing system in the following manner:

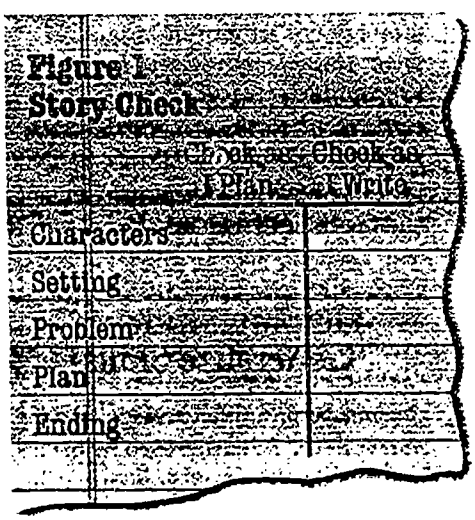
> Today, we are going to learn a story writing strategy called "Story Check." Stories usually have all of the parts listed on this card. As you plan and write your stories, I want you to check off each story part.
>
> Listen. I will check each part as I plan my story. My story will begin in this way: "One day a surfer saw a strange creature in the ocean." Watch me. I want the surfer to be the main character, so I will check "Character(s)" under "Check as I Plan." I want the story to take place at the beach, so I will check "Setting" in the same column. I want a great white shark to sneak up and scare the surfer, so I will check "Problem." I want the surfer to figure out a plan for escaping from the shark, so I will check "Plan." I want the surfer to end up on the shore watching the shark swim out to sea, so I will check "Ending."
>
> I have made a plan. Now I am ready to write. During my story writing, I will check each part again after I include it in my story. So when I write about the surfer, I will check "Character(s)" in the "Check as I Write" column. As I write about the beach and the ocean, I will check "Setting" in the "Writing" column, and so on. Now, help me write this story and make sure I check off the story parts as I write

Prompt and Check Students' Story Writing

After modeling the strategy for students, provide a new story starter and repeat the strategy with the students. Call on individual students to tell what to do as the checklist is completed. At the end of this practice session, ask, "Did we use the story-check strategy? How do we know?" Students might respond by indicating that the cue card's planning and writing columns are checked. Finally, students will use the strategy independently. Monitor student progress and provide assistance as needed. At the end of the independent practice session, ask, "Did you use the story-check strategy? How do you know?" Students will show their cue cards and explain what they did as they planned and wrote their stories. Students may then read their stories to the group.

Provide Practice Using the Checklist

When students have mastered the story grammar cuing system, make time for daily story writing practice. As students practice writing stories, both teacher and peer feedback can be provided to assist them in formulating and refining



of smoke in the sky above their apartment building. They looked at one another in terror and began to run as fast as they could. When they got there, they saw flames coming out of the third floor windows. Art came

As students practice writing stories, both teacher and peer feedback are provided to assist them in formulating and refining ideas.

ideas. At this level, the cue card only helps students monitor themselves. As they write regularly and become comfortable with the self-monitoring procedure, the quality of their writing should improve.

Make Sure Students Use the Checklist to Maintain Skills

As students write more, some adapt the cuing system to fit their individual needs. For example, if students no longer overtly use the check-off system during planning or writing and the quality of their stories remains at the improved level, they may be using the strategy covertly or at an automatic level. This covert use of the cuing system is desirable if writing quality remains high. However, to maintain improved performance levels, periodic reviews of the story grammar elements and the cuing system may be necessary.

Helping Students Generalize Skills

Generalization of the strategy to other situations can be encouraged by having students use the story grammar cuing system in other classes and with other teachers. The special education teacher may work cooperatively with the regular language arts teacher to monitor student use of the cuing system in the regular classroom. Generalization of the strategy can also be increased by having students use the cue cards to write stories at home. Students must be monitored closely to ensure that their performance levels are maintained. They can construct individual storybooks and read their stories to one another. They can then be taught various revision strategies to improve their writing further.

Conclusion

Elementary and secondary school students with learning problems usually need explicit instruction in composition. They may also need instruction in using self-monitoring procedures such as the story grammar cuing system as they engage in story writing. Students' confidence and self-esteem can be improved by providing them with a strategy that actually improves their writing.

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Iris W. Estabrook

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Talking About Writing—Developing Independent Writers

"Would you like to have a conference about your popcorn story today?" the teacher asks. Matthew nods.

They meet at a table in the middle of their first-second grade classroom. The teacher, Brenda Bristol, brings along Matthew's story from his writing folder. Six-year-old Matthew comes, pencil in hand.

"Would you like to read your story to me?" Ms. Bristol begins.

When Matthew finishes reading his piece aloud Ms. Bristol asks him to talk about a new development in his writing, the use of chapters and chapter titles.

"I just went along and put the names of the chapters and what chapter it was," Matthew explains, "I think it makes more sense if you just put the names on 'cause otherwise the people don't know what the chapter's about."

Ms. Bristol begins to transcribe Matthew's story into conventional spelling on a new piece of paper. Matthew's phonetic spelling is largely decipherable at this point but a fresh copy will aid in typing the piece and provide a reason for a careful reading of the story.

As Ms. Bristol writes, she and Matthew read the story aloud. Ms. Bristol stops to ask, "Does that say they'll bag some up?"

"I'll just change this 't' to an 's'," Matthew answers. He does, changing "tome" to "some."

The teacher continues copying and reading aloud. "Here's a sentence that's pretty long," Ms. Bristol points out. "Do you want to make this another sentence or keep it as part of one?"

Matthew takes the paper, erases "and," then continues reading aloud to his teacher. "I don't think this makes much sense," Matthew comments as he reads, "'soon it was time for all of them to go to bed. It was 11:00.' Do you?"

"Why?" Ms. Bristol asks.

"It doesn't sound good," Matthew explains.

"How would you change it?"

Matthew erases, crosses out, adds to his story.

Ms. Bristol asks, "Now what does it say?"

Matthew reads, "soon it was time for all the children to go to bed. It was 8:00, so they went to bed and the parents went to bed at 11:00 at night." "Does that make more sense?" Matthew asks.

"Yes, because now you have the children going to bed before the parents."

"Yeah, 'cause 11:00 is late. Sometimes I go to bed at 8:00."

The teacher continues copying while Matthew explains, "I was going to make it 12:00 but I can't make it the same time as the robbery 'cause they would probably catch the robber."

They continue reading aloud and transcribing, stopping along the way for a word choice revision initiated by Matthew.

As he reads Chapter Three, "he said do you know what the thief looked like said the policeman," Matthew stops to comment, "Could we change this to 'they'? Would that be better?"

No, the policeman said that," Ms. Bristol responds, "How many policemen were there?"

"One car has at least two."

"Ok, so it could be 'they'. I think you should write 'policemen' then."

Matthew does, abandoning "they" in favor of "the policemen said," then re-reads his revision and discovers, "I don't think I need this."

Ms. Bristol looks at the paper. "So now you've got that there twice. You've got "the policemen said" at the beginning and the end. Where do you like it better?"

Matthew crosses out "the policemen said" at the end of his sentence. "If the policemen are saying this to them then I've got to put something in front of the 'no'—the people said that," Matthew tells his teacher as he adds "the people said" before the dialogue.

Later in the story, as the police catch up with the popcorn thief, Matthew reads, "it looks like there is good pieces of popcorn." He had originally written "9,000," but in his difficulty decoding he now reads "good" instead of "9,000." The change in reading has left Matthew uncomfortable with the change in sentence sense. He crosses out "it looks like there is," changing to "they look like good pieces of popcorn."

Matthew's behavior during this conference with his teacher shows that he has internalized several important concepts about writing.

Simply bringing along his pencil indicates an understanding of the purpose of the meeting, revision. Matthew revised throughout the conference and verbalized his willingness to do so by responding, "I'll just change that," to his teacher's first question. He often took the initiative, suggesting revisions he might make. Matthew was comfortable with what Lucy McCormick Caulkins described as "making it messy to make it clear" (unpublished paper, University of New Hampshire Writing Process Laboratory, 1979).

Matthew's concern with clarity stemmed from his awareness of the reader's

eeds. He titled the chapters and identified the speakers in his story, with a reader ther than himself in mind.

Matthew was also concerned that his story make sense. It was important to him that the plot be consistent, logical and realistic. He looked for these qualities in his story as he read it.

Matthew's performance in this February writing conference may come as a pleasant surprise to many who work with primary grade children. Yet the skill he exhibited in discussing his writing is not surprising if we consider this episode in the context of his earlier experiences.

When Matthew met with his teacher he brought his pencil and much more. He brought with him the effects of six months of interaction in a classroom where he was encouraged to talk about his writing.

By tracing some landmark events and everyday situations Matthew experienced during those six months we will see how he developed his critical writing skills. Thus we may also discover how we can help other beginning writers develop these skills.

September 9 - November 19

Beginning on the first day of school Matthew's class wrote daily. Many of the children drew pictures or talked with neighbors to arrive at a choice of topic. The children were also free to talk while drawing or writing, providing their conversations pertained in some way to their writing. Their teacher circulated among them, holding informal writing conferences to encourage the children to think about the content of their writing.

During the first two weeks of school Ms. Bristol asked few questions. Instead she accepted their work with positive comments such as "This is kind of spooky" or "I think if I had been there I would have been scared too." As trust developed, she began to ask more questions, "What will you write about?", "What will happen next?"

In this writing workshop atmosphere which focused first on the development of content, and later on skills, Matthew's writing flowed. As he wrote in September it was not unusual for him to reach a speed of eighteen words per minute and continue his writing for more than an hour. Matthew rarely shared his writing with either teacher or peers. Questions from Ms. Bristol about his topic met with responses such as "It's a secret." or "I can't talk, I'm in the middle of writing." Interactions with his peers during writing were strictly limited to comments and questions on the length of their writings. His revisions consisted of letter or word erasures done during writing to improve a letter's formation or correct a spelling he felt he'd gotten wrong. Matthew wrote profusely, feeling no need for, or awareness of, an audience other than himself.

To lead Matthew away from his view of writing as a solitary activity toward a developing sense of audience as a force for revision, Ms. Bristol gradually began to expose Matthew to questions about the content of his writing. At first, Matthew was simply encouraged to read his "finished" piece aloud. This gave him the opportunity to re-read his writing, something he did not do on his own.

On October 1 Matthew read his piece to his teacher, stopping at the word "the" (written "th") and noticing the missing "e." Ms. Bristol commented, "Sometimes that's why it's good to read your story over, because you find things you want to change." Matthew read on, noticing a letter missing from another word. When Matthew finished reading, he and Ms. Bristol discussed the content of his story. Matthew talked freely but made no sign of being ready to add more information to his piece. "Ok, when you were reading your story was there anything you found that you think you're going to change?"

"I found there wasn't any 'n'. I probably forgot and I better fix that 'the', the 'e'."

Matthew made these changes before returning his story to his writing folder.

It was such a small revision, yet of such great significance in Matthew's developing view of writing. The message—that writing may be re-read, discussed and changed—carried over to his writing conference a week later, October 8:

Matthew: I don't think that "A" should be there.
Ms. Bristol: Want to cross it out?
(Matthew does, reads on, stops again.)
Matthew: One thing, there should be "said" there.
Ms. Bristol: Want to use my pen and write it in?
(He does.)

Matthew's flexibility in revising his writing was growing—from letter to word, erasure to crossing out and adding, revisions done during writing to changes made after writing.

Yet Matthew could not view the content of his writing as open to change as we can see two weeks later when Matthew shared a "finished" piece in a small group conference which included his teacher and three peers.

Matthew's story involved a repetitive, confusing plot in which a book visited a bookstore and exclaimed over and over how much he loved another book. The group acknowledged Matthew's efforts with comments of "good," then tried to point out some of the repetitions and confusions through questioning. Matthew steadfastly defended his story, explaining away each inconsistency without making any changes in his writing. Matthew ended the discussion by commenting, "I want it how it is." And so it stayed.

Several days later Matthew again exhibited his unwillingness to revise the content of his stories. After sharing an adventure he'd written in which a robot chased Bugs Bunny, Ms. Bristol asked, "I have one question about your story. What got smashed at the end?"

"The robot," Matthew responded.

"The robot? Where did it tell us that?"

"It didn't tell us that but otherwise why would Bugs Bunny be safe?" Matthew walked away from this meeting, still unable to see the need for clarifying information in the content of his story.

Although Matthew could not perceive these problems with his own writing, he could be led to discuss others' writing. While waiting to see Ms. Bristol, Matthew listened to another child's writing conference. The teacher involved Matthew in the conference, "Is there anything else you'd like to know if you were reading this story?"

Matthew responded, "I would like to know some other things."

"What kinds of things would you like to know?"

"Where he found it and if it was a happy ending. Like that."

On several other occasions in October and early November Matthew listened to other children discussing their stories with teacher or peers and participated in a group conference to discuss another child's story. Matthew's contribution to these interactions was limited to the comments "good" or "I think it's nice," yet he was exposed to the discussing, questioning and revision of others.

On October 30 Matthew met with his teacher to prepare his Bugs Bunny story for publication (typing and binding into a book for the classroom library):

Ms. Bristol: What got smashed?
Matthew: The robot.
Ms. Bristol: Would that make it clear to say the robot got smashed instead of *it* got smashed?
Matthew: Everybody knows it's the robot.
Ms. Bristol: I didn't know that. I thought it was the chair.
Matthew: Of course not, the chair wouldn't go after Bugs Bunny. The chair loves Bugs Bunny.
Ms. Bristol: (reading from the story) He sat down in the green chair and one day it got smashed. Would it be better to write the *robot* got smashed instead of *it*?
Matthew: Yeah, I think that would be better. 'Cause I think you are right.

Matthew's first content revision was minor in terms of its change in the story's information but a breakthrough in the way he dealt with his writing.

In order to make this step Matthew had to talk about his writing, not just this once but many times. Audience had to be made real to Matthew, in all the interactions, both successful and unsuccessful, that he had been involved in and seen modeled up to that time. Matthew expressed his developing sense of audience in his comment, "Everybody knows it's the robot." Matthew heard questions being asked about writing, his own and others. He had begun to talk about writing.

Near the end of this period Matthew began to offer to read his stories to his teacher. He expected no response, did not wait for one before resuming his writing, yet he wanted the opportunity to hear his story aloud.

His conversations with his peers were still limited to comments on length, such as, "Have you been writing on the back?", "That's your third page!", or "How many pages are you on?"

A development wholly unrelated to writing led Matthew beyond his teacher's modeling of questions and his limited peer interactions. On November 19 the desks in Matthew's classroom were rearranged. Matthew now sat between two children who had been sharing their writing informally, questioning each other about the content of their pictures and stories as they worked. In this new position Matthew's exposure to "writing talk" expanded.

November 19 - February 25

Questions of length were quickly replaced with questions of content by Matthew's new neighbors. On the first day in his new seat Tim caught Matthew by surprise:

Tim: What story are you writing?

Matthew: What do you mean?
Tim: What's the name of your story?
Matthew: The Flower and Matthew.

That his neighbors were interested in the content of his writing and drawing became clear to Matthew through incidents such as the following a few days later:

Tim: There's another way you could have drawn it, with a thing going down his neck.
Matthew: I'm going to.
Tim: You could even make him go gobble gobble.
Matthew: You don't have to bother about that—it's my picture.

Matthew rejected Tim's suggestions but found it was acceptable to talk with others about their drawing. During the same day's writing period, Jenny, Matthew's neighbor, shared her animal drawing with him. Matthew offered, "Why don't you go over it with black for the spots?" Jenny accepted Matthew's idea, reinforcing his willingness to share and discuss.

Over the next several weeks Matthew's neighbors continued to involve him in similar conversations. Jenny would often ask Matthew to listen to her story.

As Matthew's neighbors exposed him to their writing talk, he began to model their questions and actions. On December 2 Matthew offered, "Want to know what I'm going to write about?" to his neighbor. On December 9 he asked Jenny, "What are you writing about?" That same day Matthew read his piece to Jenny, unsolicited.

Along with his developing informal peer interactions Matthew continued to meet with his teacher to discuss his writing. On December 2 he met with Ms. Bristol to share a piece he wanted to publish about a girl running away and finding herself in "boysland":

Ms. Bristol: I have one question about the beginning of your story. You wrote, "one day I said to myself," so that sounds like it's you you're writing about. Then it changes from you to a girl. I thought this was going to be about you but all of a sudden it's about a girl. Is that confusing there?
Matthew: Well, I'll change these words to something else.
(He revises "one day I said to myself" to "one day a girl said to herself.")
Ms. Bristol: That sounds much better Matthew. Now right away I know it's going to be about a girl. The other thing I wondered when I was listening is, where was she running away from?
Matthew: House—look (he reads from his story). Does that sound like she's at home?
Ms. Bristol: Sort of, but I really wasn't sure.
Matthew: Do you think I should add it?
Ms. Bristol: I think it might help.
Matthew: Where should I add it?
Ms. Bristol: Just make a little mark here, like this, and write it in real small.

Matthew continued to revise his "boysland" story the next day during a small group conference. After Matthew read his story to the group Chris asked, "What happened when she got to the boys camp?" The three children called to the conference discussed the possibilities—she might make friends with the boys or she might leave. Matthew showed interest in their suggestions. After they returned to their seats Matthew spent several minutes revising the ending of his story. He

erased "and she lived happily ever after" and added several sentences in which the plot developed to include changing the sign for "boysland" and making friends with the boys.

The group reassembled to hear Matthew's revised story. Matthew opened the conference with the comment, "See what I changed. Now I bet you know where she stayed."

Chris answered, "I think it's kind of good. Well, did they paint the sign? How did they change the sign?"

"You want to know? I'll add it in. I'll add it on the end," Matthew replied as he began to revise once again.

These conferences show Matthew's new desire to revise to satisfy his readers' needs for additional or clarifying information. Matthew's revisions were largely dependent on his audience's specific questions and suggestions. He was now receptive to writing talk yet still unable to find direction for his writing without specific help with what and how to revise.

Over the next several weeks Matthew continued to participate in informal and formal teacher and peer conferences. He also attended several group conferences during this time, listening to others' stories, questions and comments and observing other young writers revising in response to their audience. The composition of these groups was carefully structured by Ms. Bristol to expose Matthew to peers whose conference skills were more developed than his own. The range of questions he was exposed to widened. Matthew's conference experiences began to affect his writing behavior.

Matthew no longer wrote as quickly as before. He frequently stopped during writing to re-read, using this time to think about the development of his plot. Matthew continued to offer to read his writing to his neighbors and teacher, calling their attention to his work by involving them in conversations such as, "Jenny, this is what I wrote", or "Want to see what I got so far? Guess what will happen." His peers would often respond with a question about the plot's development. Ms. Bristol would use these opportunities to press for more information about the content of his stories, enabling him to orally rehearse ideas for the story's continuation.

That Matthew was beginning to make choices about the content of his writing, discovering his plot as he wrote, rather than settling quickly on one direction is evident in this January 22 conversation with his teacher:

Ms. Bristol: So now will you tell what happened to Jill or the balloon?
Matthew: I have to think about that. It won't run away. I'll make Jill let go but the balloon will follow her.

Matthew was also beginning to be aware that writing talk is useful to the writer. On January 23 he once again offered to read his story to Jenny. Unlike on other occasions Matthew read his piece and then waited in silence for Jenny's reaction before returning to writing. On the same day he read another child's published story from the class library and reacted to it, "He should tell more. If I was at Terry's conference I would ask who's Martin. I wouldn't say this story was ok."

His conference skills improved as he was given the opportunity to practice asking questions of other childrens' writing. On February 10 Ms. Bristol asked Matthew to have a peer conference with Tiffany. Matthew began the discussion

with questions he's heard asked many times, "Where did you get the idea?", "Do you like your story?" Getting beyond these standard questions required him to stop for several minutes and consider the content of Tiffany's story. "Why don't you tell what happened to the other mice? 'Cause how would I know that? They ran after him. What did they do after that?"

Matthew's writing and conference experiences enabled him to develop the abilities we saw in the February 25 popcorn story conference with which we began this history. At this point in his writing career Matthew was able to "find the questions in the story," as another young writer put it, and use these questions to help others, and later himself, make decisions about the content of their writing. Yet Matthew was still dependent on the presence of another child or adult to ask the questions and make the decisions.

He was on his way to becoming an independent writer. The last few months of school saw Matthew's abilities grow still further.

February 26 - June 5

Matthew's teacher and peer interactions tapered off somewhat in the last months of school. The seating arrangement was changed once again and a student teacher, untrained in the use of the writing process, managed the classroom for many weeks.

Audience remained real through publishing, oral sharing and small group conferences so that a reason for the consistency, logic and realism Matthew sought in his popcorn story remained. What changed was Matthew's former dependence on his audience for the specifics of how to achieve these qualities. As his interactions with others decreased he became more self-reliant in his conferences.

Evidence of his growing ability to internalize both the questions he had asked and had been asked over the last six months can be found in a look at his writing behaviors. A typical October writing session saw Matthew write stories of 50 to 100 words with two or three erasures to correct letter formation or spelling, breaking the flow of his writing infrequently. In March he wrote a piece of comparable length with four to five times as many revisions, all cross outs rather than erasures and most directed toward content changes instead of cosmetic changes. He stopped frequently during writing to lift his paper and re-read, sharpen his pencil, share his neighbors' writing, stare ahead or shift positions in his chair; resembling an adult writer struggling with choices in the content of his writing.

The kinds of revisions he now made and occasional comments from him during and after writing provide insight into the questions he was asking himself as he wrote.

On April 6 Matthew began a new piece of writing with "Ann's pet is named Snowball." He stopped after writing his lead, re-read it and revised "pet" to "cat." We can imagine him asking himself, the way his audience was likely to, "What kind of pet?" Snowball's story continued to reveal an incident that had occurred at home that morning. At the conclusion of the incident Matthew wrote "th," stopped, looked up and erased "th." He spoke to himself aloud, "About Snowball, what else should I write? I know, how he got girlfriends." "The End" was to follow

Snowball's morning adventure until Matthew asked himself, "What else would I like to tell people about Ann's cat?"

Matthew's desire to include as much information as he could was clear two days later as he handed a 'finished' piece to his teacher with the comment, "That's all the information I had about my vacation." He seemed to have in mind his audience's potential request for more detailed, additional or clarifying information.

His May 19 story of an elephant who packed his trunk and travelled to New York again shows us Matthew questioning himself as he wrote. The elephant's plane crashed into the water just outside New York, stranding the elephant in the water. The next sentence Matthew began to write, "at the motel," was crossed out as he paused to think aloud, "I forgot to tell about the elephant." The revised version, "Just then a boat came and got him and put him on shore," included information on the elephant's escape from the water that had been missing in the original water to motel sequence.

In addition to informational questions Matthew was beginning to question himself regarding topic choice. The familiar, "What are you writing about?" and its ensuing conversations became a silent, self-selecting process as we see in Matthew's beginning writing of May 27. His first effort, "today one of," was erased to write, "Last Monday was mori day," which was erased in favor of "Yesterday we went on a field trip."

Matthew no longer depended on the presence of others to discuss his topic or "find the questions in the story." He had talked about the content of his writing so many times and in so many ways that he was becoming able to have a dialogue with himself.

The growth in Matthew's critical writing skills is perhaps best seen by comparing his satisfaction with his October book story to his reaction to the same story in early June. Near the end of the school year Matthew wrote Ms. Bristol a note about school. He said he really liked writing and still wanted to publish the story he'd written about the book that loved another book. Ms. Bristol pulled it from his writing folder and called him over to talk, "Remember this? Let me read this to you. If you still want to publish it think if there's anything you'd want to change in it before we publish it."

Ms. Bristol read a few sentences before being interrupted by Matthew, "I think it's sort of confusing around here."

"Want me to finish reading it?" Ms. Bristol asked.

Matthew's tone showed his impatience, "I don't even want to publish this one any more."

Matthew's writing talk had led to an awareness of his audience's needs and a changed view of the role of revision. Matthew expressed it his way in a portion of an interview about the writing process:

Researcher: What is a writing conference?
Matthew: You just talk about your story.
Researcher: How does a writing conference help you?
Matthew: Just gives me ideas and sometimes I change a little. Helps me get ready to publish that story.
Researcher: What kinds of things do people tell or ask in a writing conference?
Matthew: Sometimes they say, "Do you like your story?" Sometimes they ask questions about your story. I went to a conference. I published three books and that means I should know some of the questions. Then I've been invited up to some.
Researcher: What questions do you ask?
Matthew: Where'd you get the idea and do you like your story and sometimes it's confusing in some parts.
Researcher: And if it's confusing in some parts what do you think the person should do?
Matthew: Change it.
Researcher: How could they change it once it's already written?
Matthew: Just erase it or cross something out. You just have to think about it.

Matthew's independence as a writer had grown tremendously in his first year of school. The situations and interactions which led to this growing independence need not be restricted to Matthew or his classroom.

Implications

We have seen the writing talk Matthew was exposed to and involved in lead him to greater independence as a thoughtful, choice-making writer. The sequence of Matthew's development suggests some major steps that teachers may help students follow in moving toward the same goal.

Initially, the teacher is most visible. Her interactions with the writer are focused at first on exposing writing as a process, establishing revision as an important part of that process. She works from simple units of revision, such as letter or word changes, to more complex revisions, including sentence or paragraph changes. The teacher helps the writer decide what and how to revise yet leaves the choice with the writer. The writer's attention is turned to the content of his work as the teacher questions, listens and supports his efforts. The teacher's interruptions as the student writes lead him to re-read his work, to make self-discoveries previously overlooked. Her question, "What will happen next?", gives the writer an opportunity to discuss and rehearse the development of the plot.

Meanwhile, other students begin to ask questions and talk with the writer, widening his sense of audience. He is involved in thoughtfully structured small group conferences in which he hears his peers and teacher talk about writing and observes how they improve their writing through revision.

Throughout this period his teacher and peers continue to initiate interactions with the writer as he listens and responds and gradually learns how to discuss writing.

The writer begins to utilize his new skill not on his own writing but on the work of other writers. The types of questions he asks and comments he makes develop in sophistication as he hears others' questions and comments change and as he practices asking and responding. His conference skills pass several mileposts before he arrives at the ability to listen to another's story to find the most helpful questions to ask. The writer starts by simply listening to another's writing. He doesn't make any comments or ask any questions. He has merely provided an audience. Later he may concern himself with the mechanics of the writing done by the other students—the need for name, date, correct spelling. Peer interactions increase as students become interested in the length of writings. Finally the focus changes to

the content of other students' writing, first simply to the topic of their piece and then later the specifics of its content. The writer asks questions, in small group meetings, with careful guidance from the teacher. Then he practices them in peer interactions which the teacher may have structured but is not a part of.

Other students or the teacher are present, yet nearly invisible, as the writer starts to ask questions of himself. He may wait to meet with his teacher or peers, using their presence to have an audible dialogue with himself. The writer asks the questions and answers them. The listener's role is to be there, be quiet, except perhaps to ask, "What do you think?"

Slowly the destination comes into sight. The writer begins to talk with himself without the need of another's physical presence. The issues he deals with grow in sophistication as they did when he was conferring with other writers.

The journey is complete and yet unending, as continued interactions with teacher and peers will aid the growth of his internal dialogue. The writer follows this path to independent thinking, then circles back to expand his thinking.

It is a slow process, filled with time to listen, practice and internalize the skills of talking about writing. One realizes it is time well spent when the writer verbalizes his view of revision and the writing process, "You just have to think about it."

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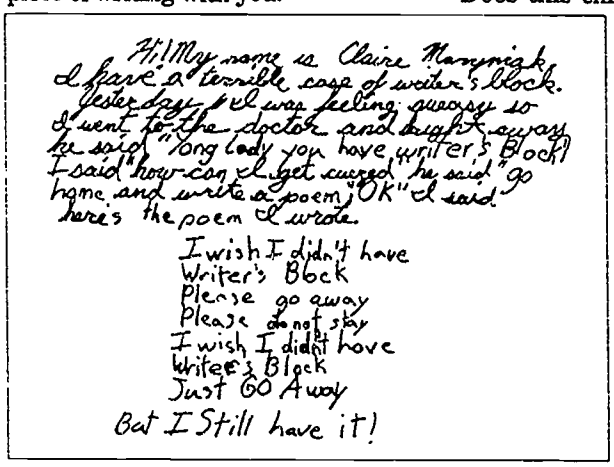
Susan Mandel Glazer on

Assessment

Collaborating with Children to Assess Writing Objectively

A framework for observing, describing and summarizing writing.

Nine-year-old Claire has given me permission to share the following piece of writing with you.


Hi! My name is Claire Manyniak
I have a terrible case of writer's block.
Yesterday I was feeling queasy so
I went to the doctor and taught away
he said "long lady you have writer's Block!
I said "how can I get cured" he said "go
home and write a poem; OK" I said
here's the poem I wrote.

I wish I didn't have
Writer's Block
Please go away
Please do not stay
I wish I didn't have
Writer's Block
Just GO Away
But I Still have it!

After reading Claire's creative writing, I thought to myself: What a delightful child! She knows so much about poetic humor! She writes so well that it's easy reading.

My immediate response to the child's work was a biased critique of her product. My feelings and values pushed me to make a subjective evaluation. If you reread, you will most likely agree that the words "delightful," "so well," "easy reading," are opinions. These, and words like "very good, terrific, well written," are opinions often used to assess children's academic products. If Claire had heard my thoughts, she, too, would have looked upon the words as an assessment, for I am the teacher and she is the student.

Now you might be asking yourself, "What's wrong with a teacher's opinion about a child's writing?" Nothing is wrong, as long as you are aware of the fact that opinions are values – your values – and your opinion might not be the same as other teachers'. I shared Claire's writing with a colleague, who commented. "Does this child really believe that writer's block is an illness? Her teacher really needs to talk to her about that!" I thought the comment was ridiculous, but this teacher was serious. She saw no humor in Claire's writing. I spoke with Claire about her writing and she thought it was just great. She said, "I like the way I used my mom's words in the story. That'll make her happy, for sure!" A review of all three opinions clearly demonstrates that each reviewer looks at Claire's writing differently.

Who is correct? All were correct. All judged the writing based on individual expectations. All were also incorrect, for the judgements, evaluations and critiques of Claire's writing were based on each individual "personal" framework. The frameworks or expectations were different and so was the language for talking about the writing.

The language of assessment must be consistent. Consistency provides

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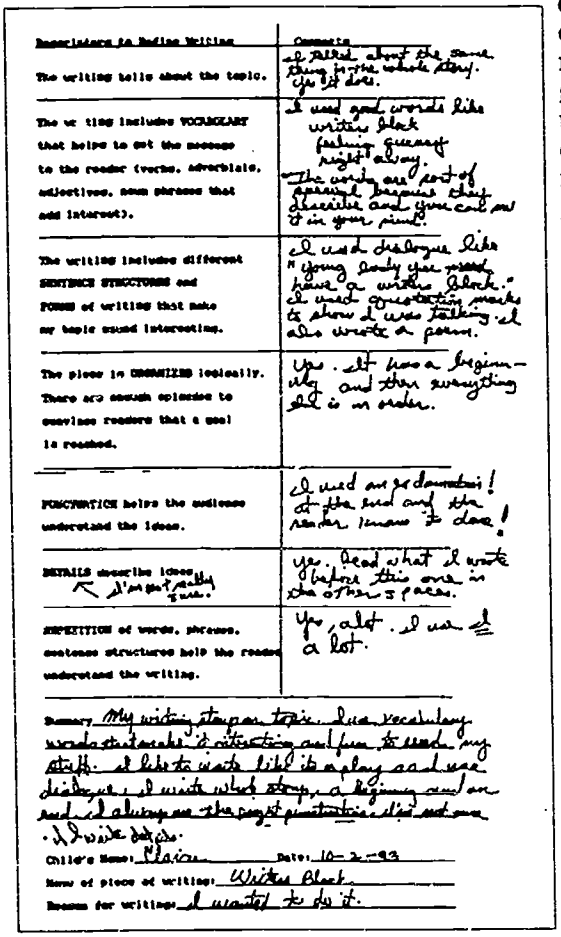
learners with guidelines for growth. It permits them, as well as adults, to talk about the writing in consistent waves. Consistent assessment requires frameworks for looking at children's products. Frameworks provide language that can be used *consistently* to describe children's writing. They guide us to observe, describe and, finally, summarize children's behaviors, growth and needs. They permit teachers to observe children's growth, but can also be used by children to assess their own writing.



Descriptors to Define Writing	Comments
The writing tells about the topic.	I talked about the same thing in the whole story. Yes it does.
The writing includes VOCABULARY that helps to get the message to the reader (verbs, adverbials, adjectives, noun phrases that add interest).	I used good words like writers block feeling queasy right away. The words are sort of special because they describe and you can see it in your mind.
The writing includes different SENTENCE STRUCTURES and FORMS of writing that make my topic sound interesting.	I used dialogue like "Young lady you need have a writers block." I used quotation marks to show I was talking. I also wrote a poem.
The piece is ORGANIZED logically. There are enough episodes to convince readers that a goal is reached.	Yes. It has a beginning and then everything I'm in order.
PUNCTUATION helps the audience understand the ideas.	I used an exclamation! at the end and the reader knows to done!
DETAILS describe ideas. I'm not really sure.	Yes. Read what I wrote before this one in the other spaces.
REPETITION of words, phrases, sentence structures help the reader understand the writing.	Yes, alot. I use it a lot.

Summary My writing stays on topic. I use vocabulary words that make it interesting and fun to read my stuff. I like to write like its a play and use dialogue. I write what stays, a beginning and an end. I always use the right punctuation. I'm not sure. I write details.

Child's Name: Claire Date: 10-2-93

Name of piece of writing: Writers Block

Reason for writing: I wanted to do it.

A framework for observing, describing and summarizing writing. You might agree that Claire seems aware of an audience. "Aware of an audience" means many things. The elements that define audience awareness – put into chart form – become a framework for observing, describing and summarizing Claire's work.

Using the framework. I consider assessment frameworks teaching tools as well. At individually scheduled conferences, children learn how to use the audience awareness tool. The first time Claire and I conferenced, I placed the audience awareness framework next to her story. "Claire," I said, "this is a framework that will help you and me look at your writing. It will help both of us describe the writing so we can summarize the elements that make you a good writer." We begin using the framework by locating and reading one element at a time out loud together. Claire wrote the comments about each element discussed (at left).

This framework was used many times by Claire. She used it independently to look at and describe her writing. I discovered that she learned to name the elements as described in the formal language of the framework. That excited me, for I confirmed for myself that the tool for assessing was also a tool for learning. As time progressed, Claire used the language of the framework as she constructed her stories. On one occasion, I heard her say, "I think that I will use at least one adjective to describe the characters in my story. Adjectives are vocabulary words that help a person understand my story message." How wonderful to guide children to look at their finished product and also learn the language of writing at the same time!

What next? This framework is a simple one. As children grow and learn, frameworks may be constructed more intricately. More of the elements of the English language that make writing exciting, interesting and sophisticated can be included when children are ready for them. The more extensive the framework, the more children will learn about the language of composition. Descriptors will replace opinions and assessment will become an objective part of the teaching/learning process.

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Publishing Children's Writing

by Marjorie Simic

To make writing public, the writer must have an audience. The audience becomes the writer's stimulus—the purpose for writing. If children do not have a purpose for writing (i.e., an intended audience) then writing becomes an "exercise" for a non-communicative event. Children who have not published do not write for an audience, but instead write for a critical reader—the teacher.

Publishing for early writers may mean reading their writing to teachers, a group of children, a friend, or a parent. Publication may mean showing or displaying the work. Writing can be displayed on bulletin boards, on classroom walls or in the halls, mailed to pen pals, sent home, or published in "real" book form. Publishing "real" books is a child-centered production, where the child designs the book cover and illustrates the book, has a dedication and title page, and may even have a page written "about the author." Students model bookmaking just like real authors.

Writing Competitions

Some schools or school districts have writing competitions. The author of the best handmade book in each classroom gets to attend a conference for young authors. Some schools arrange for all children in the school to attend the conference. A children's book author may be contacted to talk to the young authors, and workshops on writing may be conducted in which children share ideas about being authors with each other. The children's books are displayed, then put in their school libraries for others to read. Copies are sometimes made and placed in public libraries to reach others in the community.

Some people question the need for and value of writing competitions. One may think the rewards for becoming an author are publication and the self-satisfaction that comes from sharing one's idea. But acknowledgement of good writing, whether it is peer or adult, helps build an awareness of the importance of writing.

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Calkins (1986) and Hansen (1987) support rewards but also see the need to celebrate throughout the school year. They encourage teachers not to wait until the end of the school year to celebrate authorship. The celebration should take place early in the year and continue throughout the school year. Make scissors, markers, crayons, paper, and other bookmaking materials and techniques available in September to encourage and excite students about publishing. Schedule author conferences periodically and invite the public in to browse. Events can be centered around completion of a topic, celebration of holidays, "awareness" weeks, or featured students, careers, etc. These celebrations of authorship to the process writing curriculum generate excitement about writing, and they promote more writing in classrooms.

Classroom Environment

How teachers choose to make student writing public may not be as significant as the attitude instilled in students during writing (Balcer, 1990). "That means treating students to that final and ultimate writerly pleasure of finding their words come alive in the faces of their listeners and their readers" (Willinsky, 1985). The classroom atmosphere determines the amount and kind of risks taken in writing. Children need to feel support and acceptance from teachers and peers to take the kind of risks involved in the process of producing good writing. When children feel safe from criticism, they become eager to write and to share their writing. The class becomes a community of writers.

During publication, children can play both the roles of author and audience to other children's pieces. Instead of questioning the teacher, they can question each other for clarity of meaning. Children as authors use the ideas of their audience when revising their writing. As audience, they have the opportunity to see their ideas used by other students in their revised stories. Shifting from author to audience and back encourages children to become perceptive readers and writers.

It is also important that children confer with each other as they write. Some time should be set aside daily for children to read orally what they have written or are in

the process of writing. Older children who are experiencing difficulty with writing may find it less threatening to share their writing with younger students. The benefits of such sharing are twofold: the older student gains the confidence and esteem needed in order to continue his/her writing, and the younger student sees, early on in his/her learning, the connection between reading and writing.

The "Author's Chair"

An integral part of the publication stage is sharing. Graves and Hansen (1983) refer to this sharing as the "author's chair." As writers, children struggle to put their thoughts on paper, and they talk about these thoughts with other writers. As readers, they compose messages and ask questions about published books. They play, they invent, they mimic, when they compose in reading and writing and sitting on the author's chair." Use of an author's chair gives children feedback on their writing, models conferencing, and develops a sense of "community" for writing and authoring (Graves and Hansen, 1983).

Hansen (1987) says young authors need to respond to other authors if they are to make the important connection between reading and writing. "Authors who share their own writing and who ask other authors questions experience connections between reading and writing," states Hansen. She describes 4 different response situations: (1) response to unfinished pieces; (2) response to an author's published piece; (3) response to other student's published books; and (4) response to books by professional authors. These situations all need to occur in the classroom for children to develop a sense of authorship.

Harste (1988) sees his "author's circle" as "crucial in helping authors develop the sense of audience so essential to becoming a writer who can successfully communicate with others." This sharing and responding helps students develop a reader perspective on their writing among readers they know and trust. The child receives opinions and ideas from many children, whereas during individual conferences, the author receives the comments of only one person. Children learn how to be helpful responders in an author's circle. They learn how to discover good qualities in a piece, and how to ask good questions about the content. Additionally, circle participants learn that their ideas are valued when many of them later turn up in the work of the authors they have helped.

In the process of revision, children become responsible for corrections. A piece ready for publication must contain correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, and good handwriting. It is important that the writing not be taken away from the writer during the publication stage. Final decisions about content, title, and so on, must be made by the author who must also attend to conventions. When involved in group publication, the author should remain in control of publishing decisions about illustrations, layout, form of publication, etc.

Hansen (1987) feels that students who attend to their own misspellings, errors in punctuation, grammar, and so on during the editing stage of publication learn and remember more of the mechanics of writing than if the errors are found for them. Calkins (1986) believes that even adult writers who are writing for publication must release their work at some point to have it corrected by editors. She argues that, as writers, we no longer want to "own" those errors. If teachers choose to do the final edit, they are taking the "ownership" of the writing from the writer, and they should be aware of the effects this may have on future writing for students in the classroom.

Teachers need to know their purposes for having children write. Ultimately, the goal is for students to be able to express themselves and what they are learning through writing that clearly conveys meaning to the reader. Realistically, teachers must give students support and encouragement to "make their best better," and in so doing, children must be allowed to be responsible for all the components of publication.

Making writing public brings an additional dimension to reading and writing. Writers view themselves as authors and value the interaction with their audience in the process of writing. A cooperative and caring environment that invites children to share and to respond is the type of supportive environment in which children's reading and writing can flourish.

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Hansen, J. (1987). *When Writers Read*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. [ED 282 226]

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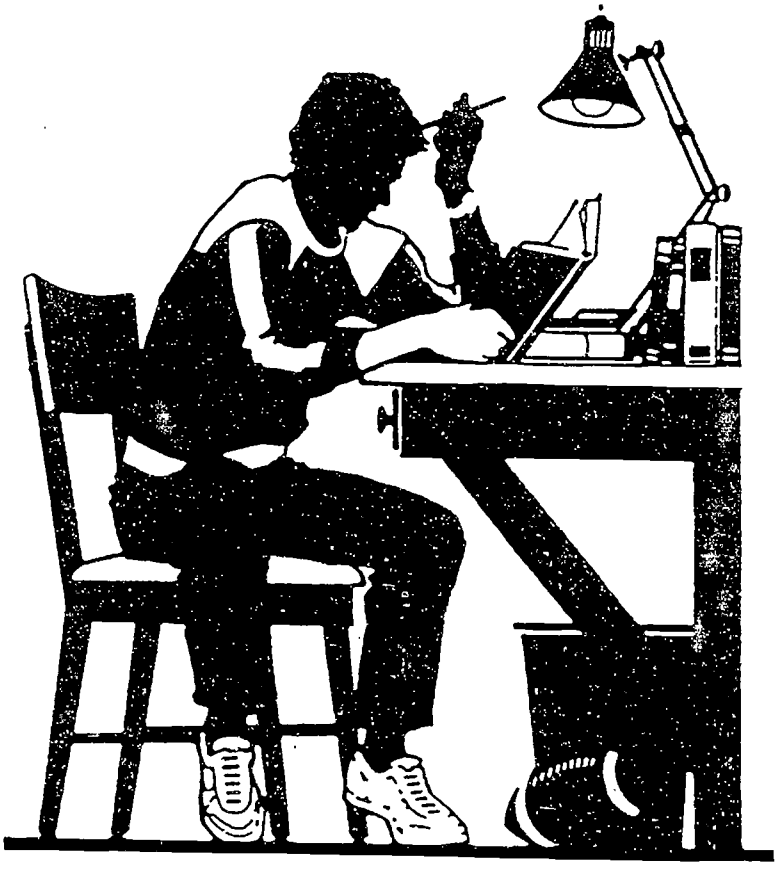

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Clearinghouse Accession Number

EJ466919 EC606287

Article Title → Family-Centered Techniques: Integrating Enablement into the IFSP Process. Andrews.

Author(s) → Mary A.; Andrews. James R. *Journal of Childhood Communication Disorders*. v15 n1 p41–46 1993 ← **Journal Title**

Reprint Availability → (Reprint: UMI)

Descriptive Note → Note: Theme Issue: Service Delivery to Infants and Toddlers: Current Perspectives.

Volume No., Issue No., Pages Publicaton Date

ISSN: 0735–3170 ← **ISSN** (International Standard Serial Number)

Major and Minor Descriptors— subject terms found in the *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors* that characterize substantive content. Only the major terms (preceded by an asterisk) are printed in the Subject Index of *Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)*.

→ Descriptors: Child Rearing: *Communication Disorders: *Early Intervention: *Family Involvement: Individual Development: Objectives: Parenting Skills: Skill Development: *Teamwork: Young Children

Identifiers: *Enabler Model: Family Needs: *Individualized Family Service Plans ← **Major and Minor Identifiers**— terms found in the *Identifier Authority List* that characterize proper names or concepts not yet represented by descriptors. Only the major terms (preceded by an asterisk) are printed in the Subject Index of *Current Index to Journals in Education*.

Annotation

This article describes techniques, used in a family-centered early intervention project, that both assist in accomplishing the goals of the Individualized Family Service Plan process and create opportunities for families to display their present competencies and acquire new ones to meet the needs of their children with communication disorders. (Author/JDD)

Annotator's Initials → (Author/JDD)

Note: The format of an ERIC Journal Article resume will vary according to the source from which the database is accessed. The above format is from the printed index, *Current Index to Journals in Education*.

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The Following Abstracts of Articles on Creative Writing in the Elementary School have been Obtained Directly from the ERIC Educational Resources Database.

Special Sections on Poetry, the Gifted, and Using Computers Follow the General Section

AN: EJ429714
AU: Greene,-Beth-G.
TI: **Reading, Writing, Publishing (ERIC).**
PY: 1991
JN: Journal-of-the-Wisconsin-State-Reading-Association; v35 n1 p93-4 Win 1991
NT: Themed Issue: Whole Language.
DE: Elementary-Secondary-Education
DE: *Audience-Awareness; *Creative-Writing; *Elementary-School-Students; *Secondary-School-Students; *Writing-for-Publication
AB: Cites the benefits of publishing student writing. Defines informal and formal publication. Discusses how students consider the audience. Offers further information on publishing student writing. (PRA)

AN: EJ429392
AU: Marzollo,-Jean
TI: **Bookmaking Made Simple.**
PY: 1991
JN: Instructor; v100 n9 p36,40-42 May-Jun 1991
DE: Creative-Teaching; Elementary-Education; Experiential-Learning; Teaching-Guides; Teaching-Methods
DE: *Childrens-Literature; *Class-Activities; *Creative-Writing; *Student-Publications
AB: A children's book author describes how to help students blend bookmaking techniques and the writing process to create a classroom hardback library full of unique publications. The project requires inexpensive, easily accessible materials and results in impressive finished products. (SM)

AN: EJ425086
AU: Balcer,-Bernadette-T.
TI: **Give Your Students a Reason to Write. Help Them Get Published.**
PY: 1990
JN: Learning; v19 n4 p52-55 Nov-Dec 1990
AV: UMI
DE: Authors-; Elementary-Education; Elementary-School-Students; Instructional-Innovation; Teacher-Role; Teaching-Methods; Writing-Skills
DE: *Class-Activities; *Creative-Writing; *Writing-Composition; *Writing-for-Publication
AB: Provides guidelines to help teachers set up publication programs for young writers. Whether or not they get published, students benefit from that goal because they are more motivated to be creative. Steps to motivate students toward publication include assessing the market; shaping writing sessions; editing; and preparing for submission. (SM)

AN: EJ418024
AU: Sklar,-Daniel-Judah
TI: **Playmaking: Children Writing and Performing Their Own Plays.**
PY: 1990
JN: Teachers-and-Writers; v22 n2 p1-7 Nov-Dec 1990
AV: UMI
DE: Drama-; Dramatics-; Elementary-Education; Learning-Activities
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Playwriting-
AB: Provides an excerpt from the author's book by the same title in which he shares an account of how a playwright guides the children from start to finish in writing and performing their own plays. (MG)

AN: ED321295
AU: Marley,-Bernard-M.; Marley,-Linda-G.
TI: **Big Foot to the Rescue or Story Starters: A Component of Whole Language.**
PY: 1990
NT: 7 p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Indiana State Council on Reading (Indianapolis, IN, March 29-31, 1990).
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DE: Classroom-Environment; Elementary-Education; Reading-Writing-Relationship; Whole-Language-Approach
DE: *Class-Activities; *Creative-Writing; *Prewriting-; *Writing-Instruction
AB: The creative writing process, like any writing process, begins with a prewriting activity. Story starters are one such activity which teachers can use to begin the creative writing process with their students. For example, large cartoon-like characters made on an opaque projector can be used to initiate discussion. The second step requires a drafting of ideas into story form. Thirdly, the youngsters use their peers in revising their stories. The writer is responsible for responding to the criticism and for making the essential corrections. Next, students rewrite their stories and proofread. They are encouraged to use a dictionary or get help from a peer. Noise levels may be louder than usual, but learning is taking place. Once all corrections have been made, the publishing process begins. Given paper with an outline of the cartoon-like character on it, students write the final copy within the drawn character. They illustrate the paper and make covers for their books. Completed books are shared with the class. (SR)

AN: ED321265
AU: Vilscek,-Elaine
TI: **Sensing Story Elements and Structure in Good Literature, the Models for Children's Writing.**
PY: 1990
NT: 26 p.; Paper presented at the Annual Southwest Regional Conference of Authorship (18th, Alberquerque, NM, February 8-10, 1990).
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DE: Authors-; Creative-Writing; Elementary-Education; Illustrations-; Writing-Instruction; Writing-Skills
DE: *Childrens-Literature; *Reading-Writing-Relationship; *Writing-Improvement
AB: Quality children's literature can model a wide range of effective writing and illustrating techniques. When exposed to good models of writing, children can be encouraged to reflect on how authors and illustrators have shaped a story, and literary elements, story structure, and design can be identified. As children progress in their understanding of story elements and structure, they should be exposed to varied styles of authorship. Their awareness can be heightened by engaging them in creative responses to good books. As they internalize these models, they begin to take risks with them in their own writing. The valuing of authorship can be promoted through the creation of a writer's studio which includes: some things/ways to highlight the techniques and story craft employed by an adult author or illustrator of renown; some

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things/ways to highlight classroom student authors and illustrators; and varieties of tools for writing and illustrating. (Periodicals that publish children's original work, publishers' addresses, books on children's authors and illustrators, multimedia production companies, end instruction charts in literary elements of story and design are included. Twenty-four references, including children's books, ere attached.) (MG)

AN: EJ403265
AU: Erdman,-Michael; Gaetz,-Thomas
TI: **Using the Process Approach to Teach Writing and Poetry: An Investigation of Elementary Students' Attitudes.**
PY: 1988
JN: Educational-Research-Quarterly; v12 n3 p51-56 Jul 1988
AV: UMI
DE: Creative-Writing; Elementary-Education; Grade-2; Grade-5
DE: *Elementary-School-Students; *Poetry-; *Process-Education; *Student-Attitudes; *Teaching-Methods; *Writing-Instruction
AB: Surveys of two second-grade and two fifth-grade classes (45 and 40 students, respectively) assessed effects on student attitudes of using the process approach to writing as the core of poetry instruction. The approach worked for both grades for poetry, but only for fifth graders for other creative writing forms. (TJH)

AN: EJ370907
AU: Ellis,-Normandi
TI: **The Question of Publication: An Open Letter to Teachers and Parents.**
PY: 1988
JN: Childhood-Education; v64 n4 p206-08 Apr 1988
AV: UMI
DE: Comparative-Analysis; Elementary-Education; Teaching-Methods
DE: *Children-; *Creative-Writing; *Talent-Development; *Writing-for-Publication
AB: Suggests ways of encouraging young children to write that are preferable to forcing them to try to have their work professionally published. Points out negative aspects of young children writing for publication, end offers more constructive alternatives. (SKC)

AN: EJ368636
AU: Zancanella,-Don
TI: **On the Nature of Fiction Writing.**
PY: 1988
JN: Language-Arts; v65 n3 p238-44 Mar 1988
AV: UMI
NT: Themed Issue: Literary Discourse as a Way of Knowing.
DE: Elementary-Schools; Fiction-; Middle-Schools; Self-Disclosure-Individuals; Teaching-Methods; Writing-Instruction; Writing-Skills
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Narration-; *Story-Telling
AB: Notes that although fiction writing is a somewhat problematic part of upper elementary/middle school writing, it is important for children to be able to compose good fiction. Suggests two methods to benefit young writers: (1) expose them to a wide range of good fiction, end (2) preserve their right to create personal fictions. (NH)

AN: EJ368624
AU: Greeves,-Adrian
TI: **Learning from an Owl.**
PY: 1988
JN: Use-of-English; v39 n2 p9-20 Spr 1988
DE: Creative-Development; Creative-Expression; Creative-Teaching; Elementary-Education; Foreign-Countries; Self-Esteem; Student-Writing-Models; Teacher-Student-Relationship; Teaching-Methods
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Writing-Instruction
AB: Describes one creative writing teacher's use of an owl as a focal point for writing activities and how the writing activities aided the students' personal and creative development. Provides samples of student writing. (ARH)

AN: EJ300573
AU: Young,-Alan
TI: **Learning the Craft: Creative Writing and Language Development.**
PY: 1984
JN: Journal-of-Aesthetic-Education; v18 n1 p51-58 Spr 1984
AV: UMI
DE: Elementary-Secondary-Education; Higher-Education
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Language-Acquisition; *Teaching-Methods
AB: Creative writing should be an integral part of any total language or English course of study at all levels of education, from primary school through higher education. Provided are specific examples of methods which teachers can use to help students develop their language skills and write creatively. (RM)

AN: EJ279420
AU: Walshe,-R.-D.
TI: **The Writing Revolution.**
PY: 1982
JN: English-in-Australia; n62 p3-15 Oct 1982
DE: Creative-Writing; Elementary-Secondary-Education; Instructional-Improvement; Revision-Written-Composition; Teaching-Methods
DE: *Theories-; *Writing-Instruction; *Writing-Processes
AB: Describes the features of a process model of writing and efforts to translate the theory into practice. (JL)
AN: EJ269736
AU: Tompkins,-Gail-E.
TI: **Seven Reasons Why Children Should Write Stories.**
PY: 1982
JN: Language-Arts; v59 n7 p718-21 Oct 1982
AV: Reprint: UMI
DE: Cognitive-Development; Creative-Development; Elementary-Education; Self-Concept; Writing-Composition; Writing-Research
DE: *Class-Activities; *Creative-Writing; *Teaching-Methods; *Writing-Exercises
AB: Writing researchers suggest that children should write stories in order to (1) entertain, (2) foster artistic expression, (3) explore the functions and values of writing, (4) stimulate imagination, (5) clarify thinking, (6) search for identity, and (7) learn to read and write. (HTH)

AN: ED273968
AU: McClain,-Anita
TI: **I Can Teach, They Can Write! Student Teachers and Primary Children Pattern Books as Models for Creative Writing.**
PY: 1986
NT: 14 p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northwest Regional Conference of the National Council of Teachers of English (Portland, OR, April 27-29, 1986).
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DE: Comparative-Analysis; Creative-Activities; Creative-Teaching; Critical-Thinking; Elementary-Education; Methods-; Primary-Education; Reading-Aloud-to-Others; Story-Grammar; Writing-Instruction
DE: *Childrens-Literature; *Creative-Thinking; *Creative-Writing; *Models-; *Prewriting-; *Student-Teachers; *Teaching-Methods
AB: To encourage children's creative writing in a classroom setting, student teachers used two types of children's books as models: (1) a traditionally structured picture book in which the story maintains strong development of plot, setting, and

characters as in "Peter Rabbit"; and (2) a predictable pattern book that develops a repetitive pattern as in "In a Dark Dark Wood." In both cases, the teacher read the book aloud, discussed the book with the class, and drew a chart on the board illustrating the story grammar. The undergraduates who taught both lessons self-evaluated the pattern book lesson as being more positive and effective than the lesson using a traditionally structured book. The student teachers' preference for the pattern book was the result of positive reactions from the children in terms of creativity and independence in easily writing their own pattern stories. The pattern stories written by the primary children reflected more creative and critical thinking in terms of story development than the stories they wrote in a traditional format. (Examples of the children's stories are appended.) (SRT)

AN: EJ373362
AU: Otten,-Nick; Stelmach,-Marjorie
TI: **Creative Reading/Creative Writing: What Do They Write about?**
PY: 1988
JN: English-Journal; v77 n2 p80-81 Feb 1988
AV: UMI
DE: Death-; Secondary-Education; Student-Motivation; Writing-Instruction
DE: *Creative-Writing
AB: Suggests that classroom writing reflect topics that teenagers write about privately, such as powerful events, dreams, or rejected love. Includes a sample student essay on the Challenger disaster. (ARH)

AN: EJ261472
AU: Jacobsen,-Mary
TI: **Students Write Stories: Inside-Out and Outside-In.**
PY: 1981
JN: English-Quarterly; v14 n4 p41-48 Win 1981-82
DE: Fiction-; Group-Activities; Higher-Education; Newspapers-
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Prewriting-; *Teaching-Methods; *Writing-Composition; *Writing-Instruction
AB: Describes how students can be encouraged to draw upon their imaginations and upon their observations of and speculations about the outside world to write their own short fiction. (AEA)

AN: ED354522
AU: Daiute,-Colette; Dalton,-Bridget
TI: **Collaboration between Children Learning To Write: Can Novices Be Masters?**
CS: National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy, Berkeley, CA.
PY: 1992
NT: 60 p.
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DE: Educational-Research; Elementary-School-Students; Grade-3; Peer-Evaluation; Personal-Narratives; Primary-Education; Story-Telling; Urban-Education; Writing-Research; Writing-Skills
DE: *Cooperative-Learning; *Creative-Writing; *Literacy-; *Writing-Instruction
AB: A study explored the role of peer collaboration in literacy development as a case study in the broader inquiry on the social nature of learning and cognitive development. Fourteen low-achieving 7- to 9-year-old children in a third-grade urban classroom used a word processor to write four stories individually and three stories collaboratively with a partner over a period of 3 months. The individual stories, the collaborative stories, and the transcripts of their collaborative processes were analyzed to identify children's expertises as writers and to trace any transfer of knowledge between partners. Results showed that almost all of the story elements added after collaboration had been the focus of children's talk as they composed together. All children showed the ability to give and receive information via transfer. Certain affinities with expert/novice pairs were demonstrated among the children work teams. A case study of two students' collaboration over time illustrates how children bring diverse expertises to bear as they teach each other how to write stories. The literacy learning process involves intense engagement among peers who share their relative expertises as they focus intellectual and social energies on the text they create together. Furthermore, the repetition and co-construction characterizing novice peer interaction may be a unique benefit of peer collaboration. (Ten figures and three tables of data are included. Contains 70 references.) (HB)

AN: EJ458626
AU: Heller,-Carol
AN: EJ478599
AU: Barchers,-Suzanne
TI: **A New Leaf.**
PY: 1993
JN: Learning; v22 n2 p76-77 Sep 1993
AV: UMI
DE: Creative-Teaching; Elementary-Education; Teaching-Methods; Writing-Instruction
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Journal-Writing; *Writing-Composition
AB: Notebooks and journals can help interest students in writing. A sample activity suggests that teachers begin the year by reading a poem about notebooks then discussing school supplies and writing. Discussions can examine creative things to write on, creative word choice, creative use of notebooks, and turning favorite words into art. (SM)

AN: EJ464066
AU: Clark,-Mary-Louise; Montague,-Marjorie
TI: **Applying Story Writing Strategies in Regular Classrooms.**
PY: 1993
JN: Teaching-Exceptional-Children; v25 n4 p50-51 Sum 1993
AV: UMI
DE: Cooperative-Learning; Creative-Writing; Elementary-Secondary-Education; Interaction-; Mainstreaming-; Reinforcement-; Student-Evaluation; Teaching-Methods
DE: *Classroom-Environment; *Learning-Problems; *Writing-Composition; *Writing-Instruction
AB: This article presents several recommendations for helping elementary and secondary school students with learning problems to apply story writing strategies. Recommendations include create an environment for writing that nurtures developing writers; encourage teacher and peer interaction through a variety of collaborative activities; and monitor and reinforce strategy application. (JDD)

AN: EJ464062
AU: Montague,-Marjorie; Graves,-Anne
TI: **Improving Students' Story Writing.**
PY: 1993
JN: Teaching-Exceptional-Children; v25 n4 p36-37 Sum 1993
AV: UMI
DE: Creative-Writing; Elementary-Secondary-Education; Story-Grammar; Student-Characteristics; Writing-Improvement
DE: *Language-Handicaps; *Teaching-Methods; *Writing-Composition; *Writing-Instruction
AB: This article introduces a special section of four papers featuring strategies for improving the story writing skills of elementary and secondary students who have problems with written language. It outlines the elements of story grammar, describes characteristics of students with writing problems, and notes the strategies presented in the four papers. (JDD)

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AN: EJ461026
AU: Bailey,-Dore-L.; Ginnetti,-Philip
TI: **Formulating Fractured Fairy Tales: A Model for Using Process Writing in the Classroom.**
PY: 1993
JN: Ohio-Reading-Teacher; v27 n2 p3-7 Win 1993
AV: UMI
DE: Creative-Writing; Elementary-Education; Teaching-Methods; Writing-Processes; Writing-Strategies
DE: *Fairy-Tales; *Writing-Instruction
AB: Presents a three-phase strategy whereby teachers can introduce the writing process to children at almost all grade levels by involving them in writing fractured fairy tales or fairy tales with a twist. Appends a sample fractured fairy tale. (SR)

AN: EJ456150
AU: Johnson,-Terry
TI: **Structure and Economy in Writing Narratives: The Teacher-Librarian and the Writing Process.**
PY: 1992
JN: Emergency-Librarian; v20 n2 p20-27 Nov-Dec 1992
AV: UMI
DE: Childrens-Literature; Creative-Writing; Elementary-Education; Grade-6; Teaching-Methods
DE: *Media-Specialists; *Revision-Written-Composition; *Story-Grammar
AB: Examines current educational thinking about the development of children's writing, story structure and its functional components, and economy in writing. Strategies that teachers and teacher librarians can use to improve students' work are suggested, and an annotated bibliography of seven childrens' stories is provided. (eight references) (EA)

AN: EJ455162
AU: Wall,-Shavaun; Taylor,-Nancy
TI: **Igniting the Writing Revolution at Home.**
PY: 1992
JN: PTA-Today; v18 n1 p13-15 Oct 1992
AV: UMI
DE: Elementary-Secondary-Education; Family-Involvement; Study-Habits
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Home-Study; *Parent-Participation; *Parent-Student-Relationship
AB: Presents ideas to help parents enhance their children's creative writing at home by building upon what they learned at school. Suggestions include modeling respect for written words, reading aloud, providing good tools and a comfortable location, selecting topics, hearing the message behind the written words, and publishing the child's work. (SM)

AN: EJ450860
AU: Cramer,-Ronald
TI: **Writing Workshop. Focus on Fiction.**
PY: 1992
JN: Learning; v21 n1 p60-62 Aug 1992
AV: UMI
DE: Childrens-Literature; Elementary-Education; Writing-Workshops
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Fiction-; *Reading-Writing-Relationship; *Whole-Language-Approach; *Writing-Skills
AB: Presents five ways elementary teachers can enrich their students' fiction writing abilities: teach students to incorporate their own experiences; encourage students to do research; give students chances to read and discuss fiction related to their writing; and help students recognize story elements. (SM)

AN: EJ448324
AU: Stewig,-John-Warren
TI: **Helping Children Be There, Then. Historical Fiction as a Base for Children's Fiction Writing.**
PY: 1991
JN: Journal-of-Teaching-Writing; v10 n1 p73-86 Spr-Sum 1991
DE: Class-Activities; Creative-Writing; Elementary-Education; Junior-High-Schools; Writing-Improvement
DE: *Childrens-Literature; *Writing-Instruction
AB: Describes how to use children's books as the basis for writing sessions. Focuses on having children write fiction after reading and listening to historical fiction. (SR)

AN: EJ439261
AU: Sautter,-R.-Craig
TI: **Writing as a Community-Building Activity.**
PY: 1991
JN: School-Community-Journal; v1 n1 p21-26 Spr-Sum 1991
NT: Single copies available from Subscription Office, The School Community Journal, 121 N. Kickapoo, Lincoln, IL 62656 ($4.00).
DE: Elementary-Secondary-Education; Journal-Writing; Self-Expression; Trust-Psychology
DE: *Cooperative-Learning; *Creative-Writing; *Peer-Relationship; *Student-Participation
AB: Teachers can gradually develop the emotional and interpersonal infrastructure of their classroom communities through a creative program encouraging youngsters to write all the time and read to each other what they have written. The writing process involves four steps: brainstorming ideas, writing the rough draft, polishing the final draft, and reading and communicating a finished piece to others. (MLH)

AN: EJ436318
AU: Kaminski,-Robert
TI: **Legends for Sale, Poems for Free: Whole Language Activities Can Be Inspired by Risk-Taking and Scene Changes.**
PY: 1991
JN: Emergency-Librarian; v19 n2 p21-24 Nov-Dec 1991
AV: UMI
DE: Class-Activities; Elementary-Secondary-Education; English-Instruction; Grade-5; Grade-8; Writing-Evaluation
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Legends-; *Oral-Interpretation; *Poetry-; *Whole-Language-Approach; *Writing-Exercises
AB: Describes two classroom activities that were developed to promote a whole language approach to listening, speaking, reading, and writing. One involved fifth grade students who wrote legends that other students paid to read and evaluate, and the other involved an eighth grade English class who gave free poetry readings in a coffee house setting. (LRW)

AN: EJ434894
AU: Millar,-James-G.; And-Others
TI: **Whole Language--Inside and Outside!**
PY: 1991
JN: Pathways-to-Outdoor-Communication; v1 n1 p14-15 Fall 1991
NT: Prior title was "Outdoor Communicator."
DE: Elementary-Education; Grade-4
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Outdoor-Education; *Poetry-; *Whole-Language-Approach
AB: Describes a teacher's efforts to create an anthology of poems written by fourth grade students. Whole language activities progressed from poetry reading and group writing to individual writings based on outdoor themes. Presents examples of students' poetry. (KS)

AN: ED370130
AU: Ediger,-Marlow
TI: **Creative Writing in the Language Arts.**
PY: 1994
NT: 5 p.
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DE: Class-Activities; Creativity-; Elementary-Education; Poetry-; Writing-Assignments
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Language-Arts
AB: Pupils need to express themselves in creative processes and products in the language arts curriculum. Too frequently, teachers require behavior which involves conformity on the part of learners. Specific objectives many times delimit pupils' opportunities to express original ideas that come from within the involved learners. Many activities can assist pupils in achieving objectives: (1) summarizing the content of filmstrips using diverse forms of verse; (2) telling and writing of original "tall tales"; (3) writing poems emphasizing syllabification after viewing a set of stimulating pictures; (4) writing additional content, a different ending, or modifying a part of the content of library books or textbooks; (5) writing an advertisement to convince others to read a library book; (6) interviewing a selected character in the library book; and (7) drawing pictures and captions relating to the content read. Pupils, with teacher guidance, need to choose vital objectives, learning activities, and appraisal procedures reflecting the concept of creativity. (RS)

Poetry

AN: ED361747
AU: Reid,-Gem; And-Others
TI: **Teaching Poetry Tips; Teaching English without Desks.**
CS: North Dakota Univ., Grand Forks. Center for Teaching and Learning.
PY: 1993
JN: Insights-into-Open-Education; v26 n3 Nov 1993
NT: 7 p.
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DE: Creative-Writing; Elementary-Education; English-Instruction; Grade-2; Grade-6; Instructional-Effectiveness; Teaching-Methods; Units-of-Study
DE: *Poetry-; *Time-; *Time-Management
AB: This issue of "Insights into Open Education" presents two short articles dealing with teaching poetry and English instruction. The first article, "Teaching Poetry Tips" (Gem Reid), discusses the author's experiences conducting a week-long poetry workshop for a class of 30 second graders. The second article, "Teaching English without Desks" (Marlow Ediger), discusses a student teacher's implementation and evaluation of a unit on creative writing (using "learning stations") for a sixth-grade class. (RS)

AN: EJ441035
AU: Morice,-Dave
TI: **Poetry Poker: Misfit Improvisations on Language.**
PY: 1992
JN: Teachers-and-Writers; v23 n4 p1-6 Mar-Apr 1992
DE: Adult-Education; Creative-Teaching; Creative-Writing; Elementary-Secondary-Education; Higher-Education
DE: *Educational-Games; *Instructional-Innovation; *Poetry-
AB: Describes how to use "Poetry Poker," a strategy that allows the student to write a poem by playing cards. Discusses how each student/player is dealt five cards on which are written one sentence of poetry per card and how the student/player then must arrange the cards into the order desired to form a complete poem. (PA)

AN: EJ445264
AU: Fine,-Allan-de
TI: **Sweet Rhymes by Dorothy Aldis.**
PY: 1992
JN: Instructor; v101 n7 p48-49 Mar 1992
AV: UMI
DE: Childrens-Literature; Descriptive-Writing; Elementary-Education; Learning-Activities; Teaching-Methods; Writing-Skills
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Poetry-
AB: Presents two children's poems about candy, by Dorothy Aldis. The article describes a teaching unit on the poems, the poet, and her use of and rhymes. Activities include writing rhyming words, writing rhyming poems, rhyming a recipe, and creating collages. (SM)

AN: EJ475082
AU: Bates,-Merilyn
TI: **Imitating the Greats: Art as the Catalyst in Student Poetry.**
PY: 1993
JN: Art-Education; v46 n4 p41-45 Jul 1993
AV: UMI
DE: Audiovisual-Aids; Creative-Writing; Educational-Strategies; Elementary-Secondary-Education; Painting-Visual-Arts; Self-Expression; Teacher-Behavior; Teaching-Methods; Writing-Composition
DE: *Art-Education; *Class-Activities; *Creative-Development; *Interdisciplinary-Approach; *Poetry-; *Visual-Arts
AB: Argues that student creative writing is stimulated by painting and other visual art. Describes a seven-step process in which students view painting and other visual arts and then write poetry. Includes suggested artworks and excerpts of poetry written by students. (CFR)

AN: EJ418025
AU: Roberts,-Len
TI: **How to Start a Poem and Then Continue It.**
PY: 1990
JN: Teachers-and-Writers; v22 n2 p9-12 Nov-Dec 1990
AV: UMI
DE: Creative-Writing; Elementary-Education; Writing-Instruction; Writing-Processes
DE: *Imagery-; *Poetry-; *Writing-Exercises
AB: Stresses the importance of using imagery when having beginning writers write poetry. Discusses additional techniques of stressing the unusual, continuation words, the five senses, and repetition of a word or phrase. (MG)

AN: ED331093
AU: Worley,-Demetrice-A.
TI: **Freedom within Boundaries: The Use of Structured and Loose Structured Poetry.**
PY: 1990
NT: 17 p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English (Springfield, IL, October 26-27, 1990).
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DE: Class-Activities; Classroom-Techniques; Creative-Writing; Elementary-Education; English-Instruction; Middle-Schools; Teaching-Methods; Writing-Processes
DE: *Poetry-; *Writing-Instruction
AB: Often when teaching creative writing to grade school and middle school students, teachers encounter two problems: students state that they do not have anything to write about, or students keep their poetic voices quiet and imitate the examples that they are given. If students are encouraged to mentally create images of poetic forms and to write poetry within loose versions of the forms, they are more receptive to poetry. In addition, when students visualize the forms before they write, they have a sense of where they are going before they get there. In order for students to see poetry as living, breathing words which have a connection to them, educators need to give students examples chosen from the middle of the poetry spectrum. Students in the third through eighth grades respond best to quatrains and sonnets. The quatrain works well as an example to use to explain how stanzas can create a poem. If teachers explain to students that what goes on within the sonnet is as important as, or even more important than, its formal elements, they can encourage students to see that the message within the sonnet is what is most important. Seeing a visual representation of the poetic form allows

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students to visualize what a poem looks like; they then have a schema to tap during their creative process. Students can then be given a sample poem to discuss in small groups. (Three figures are included.) (MG)

AN: EJ289454
AU: Freemen,-Ruth-H.
TI: **Poetry Writing in the Upper Elementary Grades.**
PY: 1983
JN: Reading-Teacher; v37 n3 p238-42 Dec 1983
AV: UMI
DE: Childhood-Interests; Intermediate-Grades; Language-Skills
DE: *Childhood-Attitudes; *Creative-Writing; *Language-Usage; *Poetry-; *Teacher-Role; *Writing-Instruction
AB: Notes that poetry writing can be a natural and interesting part of the language arts curriculum. Offers an approach to teaching poetry to intermediate grade students that leads them to accept and like poetry. (FL)

AN: ED265566
AU: Collom,-Jack
TI: **Moving Windows: Evaluating the Poetry Children Write.**
PY: 1985
AV: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, Department MW, 5 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003 ($9.95, plus $1.00 postage and handling for first copy, $0.50 for each additional copy).
NT: 180 p.; Funding for this publication provided by The New York State Council on the Arts.
PR: Document Not Available from EDRS.
DE: Elementary-Secondary-Education; Figurative-Language; Imagery-; Metaphors-; Student-Motivation; Symbols-Literary; Writing-Evaluation; Writing-Instruction
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Poetry-; *Teaching-Methods
AB: Beyond providing insights into evoking, evaluating, and encouraging children's poetry, this book may give other poets and writers insights for their own writing. The 17 chapters discuss the following topics: (1) teaching poetry in the schools; (2) relating personal memories in poetry; (3) writing poems about animals; (4) using the chant; (5) writing poems collaboratively; (6) candor and innocence; (7) energy in poetry; (8) poems with the element of surprise; (9) rhythm, rhyme, and other sounds; (10) poetic "moves" or play with meaning; (11) creating poetry with an emphasis on factual details; (12) metaphor and surreal language; (13) concision, shapeliness, and understatement; (14) adult-like thought and feeling in children's poetry; (15) empathy; (16) other methods to use in writing poetry; and (17) evaluating children's poetry. The appendix contains eight poems by such poets as Denise Lavertov and William Carlos Williams. (EL)

Gifted

AN: EJ431049
AU: Jampole,-Ellen-S.; And-Others
TI: **Using Mental Imagery to Enhance Gifted Elementary Students' Creative Writing.**
PY: 1991
JN: Reading-Psychology; v12 n3 p183-97 1991
DE: Grade-4; Grade-5; Intermediate-Grades; Reading-Research; Writing-Ability; Writing-Assignments; Writing-Research
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Gifted-; *Writing-Instruction; *Writing-Processes
AB: Examines the effects of mental imagery instruction on 37 gifted fourth and fifth grade students' creative writing and development of imagery vividness. Finds that treatment subjects significantly outperformed control subjects on originality and use of sensory descriptions but not on writing length. (MG)

AN: EJ481436
AU: Jampole,-Ellen-S.; And-Others
TI: **Academically Gifted Students' Use of Imagery for Creative Writing.**
PY: 1994
JN: Journal-of-Creative-Behavior; v28 n1 p1-15 1994
AV: UMI
DE: Elementary-Education-; Imagination-; Instructional-Effectiveness; Writing-Improvement
DE: *Academically-Gifted; *Creative-Writing; *Creativity-; *Imagery-; *Teaching-Methods; *Writing-Instruction
AB: This study evaluated the use of guided imagery practice to enhance creative writing with 43 academically gifted students (stratified as either high or low creativity) in grades 3 and 4. Groups receiving the guided imagery practice (regardless of original creativity level) generated more original writing, which contained more sensory descriptions than comparison groups. (DB)

Computers

AN: EJ464065
AU: Montague,-Marjorie; Fonseca,-Fionelle
TI: **Using Computers to Improve Story Writing.**
PY: 1993
JN: Teaching-Exceptional-Children; v25 n4 p46-49 Sum 1993
AV: UMI
DE: Creative-Writing; Elementary-Secondary-Education; Teaching-Methods; Word-Processing; Writing-Improvement
DE: *Computer-Assisted-Instruction; *Learning-Problems; *Writing-Composition; *Writing-Instruction
AB: This article discusses the advantages of using computer-assisted composing (CAC) to teach composition to elementary and secondary school students with learning problems. It also describes the effects of CAC on student writing and offers several caveats for teachers who plan to use CAC in their classrooms. (JDD)

AN: EJ459327
AU: Reissman,-Rose
TI: **"Can't We Pleeeeease Keep Writing?" Two Favorite Computer Lab Activities.**
PY: 1993
JN: Writing-Notebook:-Visions-for-Learning; v10 n3 p35-36 Jan-Feb 1993
NT: Special Issue: Writing in the Language Arts.
DE: Elementary-Secondary-Education; Writing-Instruction
DE: *Computers-; *Creative-Writing; *Writing-Assignments; *Writing-Exercises; *Writing-Laboratories
AB: Offers 2 favorite writing activities for the computer lab: (1) students write about 100 words of the beginning and end of a favorite fiction book, while another student fills in the middle; and (2) students choose from 1 of 3 plot twists, write at least 5 sentences, and then write 3 more plot twists for the next student. (SR)

AN: EJ463675
AU: Boehm,-Diann
TI: **Creative Writing at Its Best with Kid Works 2!**
PY: 1993
JN: Writing-Notebook:-Visions-for-Learning; n10 v4 p13-14 Apr-May 1993
NT: Focus on Writing as a Tool for Thinking and Learning.
DE: Elementary-Secondary-Education; Teaching-Methods
DE: *Computers-; *Computer-Software-Reviews; *Creative-Writing; *Writing-Instruction
AB: Details the creative writing software program called "Kid Works 2" and claims that it is a solid and useful means of inspiring and fostering creative writing among young students. (HB)

AN: EJ461892
AU: Reissman,-Rose
TI: **Using Computers. The Plot Thickens.**
PY: 1992
JN: Learning; v21 n4 p43 Nov-Dec 1992
AV: UMI
DE: Elementary-Education; Story-Grammar; Teaching-Methods
DE: *Class-Activities; *Computer-Assisted-Instruction; *Creative-Writing; *Word-Processing; *Writing-Instruction
AB: The article describes how to use a word processing program and add-on story starters for different genres to enhance elementary students' creative writing skills. Teachers input story starters, then students select a genre and add on a story version in that genre. Students can also develop their own story starters. (SM)

AN: ED331044
AU: Yau,-Maria
TI: **Potential and Actual Effects of Word Processing on Students' Creative Writing Process.** No. 198.
CS: Toronto Board of Education (Ontario). Research Dept.
PY: 1991
NT: 43 p.
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DE: Classroom-Research; Computers-; Elementary-Education; Elementary-School-Students; Foreign-Countries; Literature-Reviews; Naturalistic-Observation; Writing-Research
DE: *Creative-Writing; *Teacher-Role; *Word-Processing; *Writing-Processes
AB: A study examined the subtle impact of word processing (used alone) on the way students approach their writing tasks. Nine elementary school teachers were trained in techniques of naturalistic observation and received a kit containing important guidelines for their observational task, daily log sheets, and journal forms. The teachers then observed their students' spontaneous word processing behavior over a six-month period. The three conventional writing stages (planning, composing, and editing and revising) were used as the framework for analysis. Results indicated that to tap the full potential of word processing technology to enhance students' writing skills, several conditions must be met: (1) a teacher must be actively involved in the process both as instructor and facilitator; (2) the word processor should be employed in conjunction with, rather than in place of, other writing tools; (3) teachers and students should have enough access to computers and printers to ensure that the word processor can be fully integrated into writing classes; and (4) teachers need to be supported and facilitated. (Forty-nine references are attached.) (RS)

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