# The Benefit of Authoring "How-to" Books to Reduce the Writing Apprehension of Secondary Preservice Teachers

Peggy Daisey

Eastern Michigan University

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to define writing apprehension, describe the writing apprehension of 91 secondary preservice teachers of diverse subject areas, in a required content area literacy course, and explain how their writing apprehension was reduced significantly by authoring a "how-to" book. The "how-to" book assignment is explained and examples of preservice teachers' "how-to" book benchmarks, covers, dedications, introductions, as well as their back cover photographs and biographies of themselves as authors are included. Results indicate that preservice teachers thought that it mattered whether a teacher had writing apprehension. They believed that writing apprehension had drawbacks such as focusing on the wrong details (such as grammar rather than the writing process) or asking students to write less. However, they also thought that writing apprehension could be a possible bridge between teachers and students, if teachers had honest conversations about their past writing experiences, shared their writing with students, and encouraged them to write despite their apprehension. Teacher educators need to assess the writing apprehension of secondary preservice teachers and discuss its ramifications for instruction. (The writing apprehension survey, as well as six

photographs of preservice teachers' "how-to" book covers and back covers are included.)

## The Benefit of Authoring "How-to" Books to Reduce the Writing Apprehension of Secondary Preservice Teachers

Ideally teachers are to be positive role models so that they may pass their attitudes onto their students (Graves & Kittle, 2005). Sadly, due to past negative writing experiences, some preservice teachers believe themselves to be inadequate writers (Bowie, 1996) and do not like writing. The potential of a teacher to incorporate writing-to-learn activities in a lesson with confidence and success depends upon the teacher's beliefs and attitudes toward writing and capacity to develop instructional activities (Pajares, 2002). Rasberry (2001) noticed that some of his secondary preservice teachers enjoyed writing, but others were apprehensive or uncertain about it. He found that preservice teachers' attitudes about writing did not agree predictably with their subject area either before or after his course. Similarly, Daisey (2003, 2008) found that writing apprehension of secondary preservice teachers ranged widely at the beginning of the semester of a required content area literacy course. Daly, Vangelisti and Witte (1988) found that inservice science and mathematics teachers had significantly higher levels of writing apprehension than other content area teachers. They suggested that teachers in these subject areas be excluded from the writing across the curriculum program; so that

they would not pass on their writing apprehension to their students.

Given the large number of secondary preservice teachers and the larger number of teenagers they affect, it is essential that teacher educators walk future secondary teachers through positive writing experiences. In this way, the likelihood will be increased that secondary preservice teachers will become positive writing role models and skilled in the integration of writing into their content area instruction (NWP & Nagin, 2003; Wood & Lieberman, 2000). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to define writing apprehension and explain how authoring a "how-to" book reduced the writing apprehension of secondary preservice teachers in a required content area literacy course. The paper ends with the thoughts of these 91 preservice teachers of diverse subject areas about whether it matters if a teacher is apprehensive about writing.

*Writing Apprehension*

Writing apprehension is a construct that characterizes if a person will undertake or shun writing (Daly, Vangelisti, & Witte, 1988). The amount of writing apprehension of an individual may extend from none to intense anxiety. A considerable part of writing apprehension seems to stem from a writer's negative self-talk rather than the writer's ability (Madigan, Linton, & Johnston, 1996). Writing apprehension is developed over the years of a person's schooling. Whether a student experiences an encouraging or punishing writing environment, influences the amount of writing apprehension that he or she has (Smith, 1982). Harsh criticism of writing enhances the likelihood that a student

will feel discouragement toward writing and avoid it (Brinkley, 1993). Reeves (1997) found that persons with high writing apprehension have common characteristics such as lower self-esteem. Individuals with high writing apprehension have difficulty choosing writing topics, write shorter pieces, develop their ideas incompletely, and lack knowledge of usage and grammar. They tend to choose courses and careers that they believe involve little writing, rarely write for themselves, and have few writing role models. Wachholz and Etheridge (1996) observed that persons with high writing apprehension relied on teachers for affirmation and thought that writing was an inborn aptitude instead of a practiced process.

*Writing Apprehension and Teaching*

There is a positive correlation between a teacher's belief of the value of writing within instruction and his or her own level of writing apprehension (Faigley, Daly, & Witte, 1981). Thus, teachers who dislike writing, assign their students less writing than teachers with positive attitudes toward writing (Claypool, 1980). This insight may help to explain why "the amount of writing in subject areas other than English...decreases in high school" (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1986, p. 10). Additionally, teachers who have high writing apprehension tend to focus on grammatical correctness of writing, instead of the process of writing (Gere, Schuessler, & Abbott, 1984). Apprehensive teachers also tend not to conference with students about writing (Bizzaro & Toler, 1986) or talk to students about their own writing experiences (Lane, 1993). Preservice teachers may

spread their antipathy and misgivings about writing to their students (Wing, 1989). This is because some preservice teachers are uncertain how to integrate writing into their instruction (Brinkley, 1993) and have doubts of the effectiveness of writing strategies (Kamman, 1990). This prompts the belief among preservice teachers that education courses are impractical, and do not prepare them for the real classroom (Kagan, 1992). Preservice teachers need an opportunity to reflect upon and criticize unexamined assumptions about themselves as writers (Graham, 1999-2000). Therefore, preservice teachers need to be walked through writing experiences themselves in order to assign meaningful writing (Soven, 1996).

*What Writers Need*

Advocates of the writing process believe that writers have practiced a set of skills that is available to anyone who wishes to write (Fletcher, 1993). Writing can be hard work and requires motivation. Cskiszentmihalyi, Rathunde, Whalen, and Wong (1997) observed that motivation prompt teenagers to spend more time and energy on a task, which increased their knowledge and ability. Preservice teachers need a way to assist their future students to use their passion for a topic to enhance their writing ability while developing their identity as a researcher and writer (Williams, 2006). Students also need a way to manipulate and go public with their ideas (Giacobbe, 1986). Writing becomes accessible when respect, ownership and relevancy, as well as rule-breaking are part of instruction (Romano, 2004). According to Staw (2003), “hope often lies in taking a

different route, or at least an unexpected turn...Interrupting our habitual series of behaviors and responses toward writing gives us a chance to open ourselves to new reactions and attitudes" (p. 30-31). Maxwell (1996) proposes the use of diverse forms of writing. Prain and Hand (1999) found that diverse forms of writing promoted higher levels of thinking and ownership in science students. Nontraditional forms of writing have been found to promote less writing apprehension of females and minority students (Hildebrand, 1998). Book-making promotes motivation, ownership, and creativity (Ada & Campoy, 2004; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998).

*"How-to" Book Assignment*

One example of a writing activity that has been successful at the secondary level with preservice teachers (Daisey, 2000, 2003, 2008) and with high school students (Huntley-Johnston, Merritt, & Huffman, 1997; Merritt, Shajira, & Daisey, 2003) is writing a "how-to" book. A "how-to" book describes how to do something in a subject area. It contains at least 500 words spread over 20 pages including photographs or graphics. As a rationale for secondary content area literacy course preservice teachers, I explain that as a former biology teacher, one of the state's benchmarks in biology is for students to know the life cycle of a flowering plant. I say that I could give students a test on Friday, but they would probably forget it all by Saturday. But, if I asked them to write a "how-to" book, they would have more motivation to become experts, share their knowledge with their classmates, and remember what they have learned. I show them my example of a

"how-to" book entitled, "How to Grow Birdhouse Gourds."

I tell preservice teachers that the purpose of writing a "how-to" book is to enhance students' interest, achievement and retention in content by creating experts and ownership. I explain that they need to have an attention-grabbing introductory paragraph that leads into the steps of how to do something. On the back cover, I note that there needs to be a photograph of themselves and their biographical information. I explain that a resource page is necessary with at least two different types of resources including books, websites, and interviews. I suggest a dedication page. I say that the size and shape of the book does not matter, but pages must be laminated back-to-back or in plastic sleeves, and the book must be bound. I review the scoring (see Daisey, 2003). Although there are requirements, secondary preservice teachers have noted that there is much room for choice and creativity, which promoted their ownership, while reducing their writing apprehension (Daisey, 2003, 2008).

I explain three approaches to write a "how-to" book. One method is to tell a reader how not to do something, usually in a satirical or humorous manner, which suggests nonetheless that the author is knowledgeable. For example, I share "How NOT to Change a Tire" written by Todd Losey, a technology preservice teacher.

Jacking up the Vehicle

Double-check that you indeed parked your vehicle on an incline.

Place the jack under the car so that it will crush sensitive

components when you lift the car. Good places are on the end of the tailpipe, directly under the fuel lines, or against plastic pieces. Begin jacking the car up as far as it will go. This will insure that if it does fall it will do the most damage.

A second way to write a "how-to" book is to allow the reader to role play. For example, Patrick Dwyer, a history preservice teacher, put his readers into the shoes of General Lee and Mead, in his ingenious "how-to" book entitled, "How to Win or Lose the Battle of Gettysburg: Create Your Own History." Here is one decision that faced Union General Mead on the second day of the battle (Thursday, July 2nd, 1863).

Morning Report: Your troops managed to avoid an attack. You took up a position south of Gettysburg on a hill overlooking the small town. Enemy forces have taken the town and gathered supplies. Your reinforcements are steadily arriving. The enemy is setting up for an attack lining up their artillery and moving troops into formation. What do you do next?

Option A: Hold! Dig more trenches and allow for more support to arrive. Let the enemy attack you. You have the high ground. (Turn to page 27).

Option B: Attack! Don't allow the enemy to gain any more supplies from the town. You have the high ground so your

downward movement toward the enemy should give you the

advantage. (Turn to page 24).

The third method to write a "how-to" book is user-friendly, straight-forward instructions. For instance, Justin Simmer, a vocational education preservice teacher wrote, "How-to Install a Faucet." Justin explained in his book, "Most new faucets have plastic gaskets between the faucet and the sink and do not require plumber's putty. If your faucet does require plumber's putty then use it as recommended."

As a prewriting activity, I ask preservice teachers to go to a bookstore (Daisey, 1995) and look at "how-to" explanation books in their subject area. I provide preservice teachers with a 20 page list of titles of "how-to" books divided up by subject area (see Daisey, 2003 for a sample list). I also say that I have copies of former preservice teachers' "how-to" books divided by subject area into notebooks. I distribute notebooks matching preservice teachers with subject areas. Preservice teachers enjoy looking at the examples of "how-to" books in their subject area and seeing the photographs of authors, often their friends on the back cover. Talk is important for the learning process (Vygotsky, 1986). Preservice teachers learn from one another through exchanging ideas, asking questions, and providing information. This talk generates ideas that will be useful as preservice teachers begin to write. Throughout the semester in order to promote talk, I ask preservice teachers to turn to their neighbor and to talk about their "how-to" book progress. The room is always filled with conversation.

## Writing Apprehension

I encourage preservice teachers to write in places that they enjoy such as outside or in coffee shops (Lara, 2007); so that they might connect enjoyment with writing. I tell them about my favorite spots to write in Vermont and in local bagel shops. Then, I walk preservice teachers through a small group "how-to" writing process, by asking groups of three to write the directions for someone who has never made a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Groups switch their directions and they must follow the directions explicitly. Preservice teachers learn not to be assumptive and to be clear. Preservice teachers write and read aloud their group's biography for these directions. Although this activity has been used before, in an earlier study (Daisey, 2008), this prewriting activity gave preservice teachers with writing apprehension direction for organizing their writing, which built their confidence.

In order to get preservice teachers going, I say that I would like them to turn in their title, benchmark or Individual Education Goal (IEP), and their first paragraph early. In the first paragraph, I explain that they may engage their reader by asking them a question, giving fun facts, providing historical background, or listing startling statistics. Shortly after the benchmark and first paragraph are due, preservice teachers are asked to turn in their 500-word draft and resources. The class peer reviews and I read the rough drafts. Typically, I encourage preservice teachers to put in historical examples or personalize their instructions with examples from their experiences. If they are explaining how to write something, often they need to add an example they have written.

After the rough draft, the following parts are due: the “how-to” book revisions, front cover, back cover with the preservice teacher’s photograph and biographical information, and the book’s 20-page divisions.

The day the “how-to” books are due, there is a buzz of excitement and celebration. A few preservice teachers bring their “how-to” books in the week before and want to show them to me. On the presentation day, the preservice teachers sit at their tables in a circle. We go around and preservice teachers say their subject areas and titles of their “how-to” books while holding them up. What is striking when I look at preservice teachers’ “how-to” books is the freshness, the sense of play and adventure that comes through. Preservice teachers always are impressed with the creativity and the variety of titles. They nod their heads in appreciation for the creativity, adaptation for wide-flung topics, sizes and shapes, as well as for the humor of the “how-to” books. It is apparent that there are many ways to be a writer.

Then preservice teachers are counted off by twos, and half the class gets up and looks at “how-to” books and chats with their authors. A preservice teacher noted, “I think it really makes you look at other books differently and you appreciate the efforts and designs.” An atmosphere built around respect for other preservice teachers’ content knowledge is present. A preservice teacher explained, “I really felt like the expert and that my thoughts were valid.” Preservice teachers considered their writing identity and one thought, “It helped me to see that I could be a writer, and it also gave me an idea for

a book that I may write some day."

The joy of teaching a course in secondary content area literacy is the variety of subject areas. I am honored to have the opportunity to work with these future teachers. It was my task to try to provide the initial structure and scaffolding to lead the way to success without confining innovation, motivation, and capability. Even after assigning "how-to" books for ten years, there are new titles and evidence that preservice teachers have taken a topic and made it their own. McLane (1990) notes that "written language offers [students] an interesting, useful, and powerful means of expression and communication....one that is potentially accessible and available to them [that] will fuel their interest and their motivation" (p. 318). There are preservice teachers who became noticeable because their "how-to" book hit on a talent that allowed their identity to be revealed. Author, Raymond Carver, describes the voice that published authors try to acquire. He says, "I think that a writer's signature should be on his work, just like a composer's signature should be on his work" (Murray, 1990, p. 130). I have concluded that offering choice has many rewards.

## Examples of Preservice Teachers' "How-to" Books

In this section, there are examples of preservice teachers' benchmarks, covers, dedications, introductions, backcover photographs and biographies.

### *Benchmarks*

Preservice teachers are asked to connect closely a subject area benchmark or IEP

goal with their “how-to” book topic. Here are some examples.

1. Title: “How to Make a Genetically-Modified Tomato” (Corrinn Palmer)

Biology Goal: Explain how new traits may be established in individuals/populations t through changes in genetic material (DNA).

2. Title: “How to Read Latitude and Longitude” (James Coneset)

Geography Goal: Students will be able to locate and describe the diverse places, cultures, and communities of major world regions.

3. Title: “How-to Keep Your Anger Monster Under Control” (Anna Jay Soucie)

IEP Goal: Student will learn how to control and release [his or her] anger.

*Covers of “How-to” Books*

Here are samples of “how-to” book covers.

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*Dedications*

Keyes (2003) encourages writers to read the acknowledgments that authors write in their books. He suggests that acknowledgments suggest three things: writers were discouraged, they sought and received encouragement, and the support helped them finish their writing. Here are a few examples of dedications from preservice teachers. Ruthann Wagner, a vocal music preservice teacher who wrote “How to Practice Classical

Song," penned this dedication. "I wish to thank my family, John, Phil, and Elizabeth for their moral support, humor, patience, and love. Without them I could not have pursued my study of singing, and this book could not have been written." One physical education preservice teacher dedicated her "how-to" book to her soccer team. Another physical education preservice teacher, Mallory Gentile who wrote "How to Play Boccee Ball," dedicated her book to her grandfather who taught her how to play the game as a child. "For Nonnos: a grandfather and a great teacher of the game." Rachel Paterson, a social studies preservice teacher who wrote "How to Make Escotcha," dedicated her book to her immigrant grandparents. Another touching dedication to a mother who died during the semester was written by Stu Solomon, a social studies preservice teacher, who wrote, "How to Organize a Benefit Concert."

*Introductions*

Writers are encouraged to engage their readers and compel them to turn the pages (Brooks, 2003). Through their "how-to" book introductions, preservice teachers made the writing their own while promoting the interest of their readers. Here is an example of a humorous introduction that also included questions from a Japanese language preservice teacher, Meghan Drummond, who wrote "How-to Visit a Japanese House."

> "*Ding-dong*."
>
> Uh-oh, now you've done it. You finally worked up the courage
>
> and rang the bell, so there's no backing out now. Somewhere from

deep inside the house, you hear a female voice, yelling,

"*Haaaaaaaa!* You hear the hurried padding of footsteps, almost drowned out by the pounding in your chest. What do I do? What do I say? What if I make a fool of myself?

Here are some statistics included in the introduction of "How to Plan for a Tornado," by earth science preservice teacher, Leah Klepser.

Tornadoes cost the state of [X] an average of $7,505,604 per year.

[State] ranks 18th in the United States for the most tornadoes per year.

[State] has an average of 17 tornadoes per year.

Nationwide, over 1,000 tornadoes are reported every year.

*Biographies and Preservice Teacher Photographs*

Biographies of preservice teachers along with their photographs appeared on the back cover of their "how-to" books. Biographies of student writers help teachers to see their students more clearly as writers (White & Dunn, 1989). It also permitted preservice teachers to see themselves as writers, and promoted their ownership (Daisey, 2008). Biographies helped to uncover and challenge unexamined assumptions about identity as writers (Marzano cited in Graham, 1999-2000). The biographies revealed the diverse past roads traveled and inspiring hopes for the future of preservice teachers. I learned about previous impressive careers in law, engineering, art, and marketing. The following

are examples of biographies of preservice teachers. Some biographies were very honest. For instance, a future teacher of emotionally-impaired students wrote this biography for "How to Make Friends."

> ...actually quit school at the age of 17. Yes, he dropped out with only three months remaining. He hated school, teachers and anything to do with either of them. He certainly did not want to go to college, but later in life he experienced a complete transformation, and returned to college to become a special education teacher, imagine that. How can a high school drop-out become a teacher?
>
> Upon quitting school he enrolled in the school of "hard knocks." Eventually his life crashed, and he awoke and decided that something had to change. That something was him. He had spent years running away from and covering up the person he's truly supposed to be. Today rather than pushing people away, he's considered an expert at making friends. With a persistent diligent effort, [he] has become a completely different person. He will soon graduate from college and will continue working toward a master's degree and who knows, maybe more than that.

Preservice teachers also wrote humorous biographies such as Todd Losey, a

technology preservice teacher, who wrote “How NOT to Change a Tire.”

> Todd Losey is a twenty-four year old expert at how not to do something. He has been doing things wrong for most of his life. Now you too can tap into Todd’s expertise by purchasing his 28 volume set entitled “How Not to Do Almost Anything You Shouldn’t Be Doing in the First Place.” Save yourself the trouble of doing things correctly the first time by picking up the complete set today.

A clever biography was penned by an English preservice teacher who wrote “How to Write a Limerick.”

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Amanda Hubbard is a writer.
And never ever is she a fighter.
Well, sometimes she snaps
And her judgment will lapse.
After that her mood becomes much lighter.

Preservice teachers’ biographies revealed that they have drawn on their prior knowledge to write their “how-to” book. The biography of James Coneset, a geography

preservice teacher who wrote “How to Determine Latitude and Longitude,” is an example. “James Coneset is an experienced U. S. Coast Guard navigator, and Aids to Navigation specialist. James relied heavily on the use of latitude and longitude coordinates throughout his service on Lake Superior.”

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*Preservice Teachers’ Writing Apprehension*

Preservice teachers completed an anonymous pre and post semester writing apprehension survey. (The pre and post surveys were matched by asking preservice teachers to make up a four number code for themselves to write on their surveys.) The writing apprehension survey was a Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Survey which was adapted by Lenski and Paradieck (1999). (See the appendix for this survey.) The original Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Survey (Daly & Miller, 1975) is a self-report instrument of 26 statements about attitudes toward writing, that was normed on college English composition class students from diverse socioeconomic and subject-area backgrounds. Daly, et al. (1988) also administered this scale to inservice elementary and secondary teachers. It employs a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The survey has robust internal and external validity and reliability.

Although, Daly, et al. (1988) administered the original Daly-Miller Writing

Apprehension Survey (1975) to inservice teachers, Lenski and Pardieck (1999) thought that minor changes would make it more relevant to the elementary preservice method course teachers they surveyed. Therefore, they changed the wording of 9 of the 26 statements. For example, "I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them" was changed to "I expect to do poorly on writing assignments." In a second change in the adapted version, Lenski and Pardieck (1999) reversed the scoring of the survey from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) on the original Daly-Miller (1975) version to 5 (strongly agree) and 1 (strongly disagree) on the adapted version, so that the survey would be "more compatible with students' expectations of surveys" (Lenski and Pardieck, 1999, p. 272-273). As a result, scores on the adapted Writing Apprehension Survey could range from 130 (low apprehension) to 26 (high writing apprehension).

Secondary preservice teachers' writing apprehension decreased significantly during the semester ($t$ = -391, $df$ = 90, $p$ = 0.0001). The pre and post means were 94.58 and 102.97, respectively. The range of scores at the beginning of the semester was 45-128. At the end of the semester, when they were only thinking about their "how-to" book writing, the range of scores was 68-124. In an earlier study, preservice science and mathematics teachers who had significantly higher writing apprehension than their nonscience and mathematics classmates, also reduced their writing apprehension after writing a "how-to" book (Daisey, 2003). Notably in past studies, preservice teachers who were Latinas reduced their writing apprehension (Daisey, 2003, 2008).

*Secondary Preservice Teachers' Explanations for the Reduction of Their Writing Apprehension*

Preservice teachers explained why they thought their writing apprehension decreased, in an open-ended question, on an anonymous end-of-the-semester survey. Some preservice teachers attributed the decreased to choice of topic. For example, one preservice teacher whose writing apprehension decreased by 43 points explained, "I enjoyed writing about the things I chose...I didn't have that opportunity in most of my classes previous to this one." Another preservice teacher, whose writing apprehension decreased by 23 points noted simply, "I liked the subject that I was writing about." Preservice teachers also thought that their writing apprehension was reduced because they had an opportunity to choose a topic reflecting their prior knowledge. For instance, a preservice teacher, whose writing apprehension was reduced by 10 points explained, "when writing the 'how-to' book, I knew my subject well. So, while I was writing it, I began to feel more confident in that fact."

Secondary preservice teachers also felt that freedom of structural restrictions decreased their writing apprehension. For example, a preservice teacher whose writing apprehension decreased by 36 points wrote,

> Since the "how-to" book was something I choose the topic for, it allowed me to write in a more relaxed manner. Most papers are so structured that I worry about writing them correctly. The "how-to"

> book was using my own voice without trying to force it into a certain structure.

Secondary preservice teachers also appreciated that parts of the "how-to" book were due early, which made the writing seem less overwhelming and promoted success. For instance, a preservice teacher whose writing apprehension decreased by nine points wrote, "I believe that this decreased was because of the amount I felt comfortable with the writing we were doing and how it was divided into steps."

Ownership of writing was a reason given for the reduction of writing apprehension. For example, a preservice teacher whose writing apprehension decreased by 20 points explained,

> I think that my writing apprehension decreased because I really enjoyed working on my 'how-to' book and I felt a great deal of ownership of what I was creating. In addition, I am a very visual/ "crafty" person and finally had the opportunity to show that, which made the writing portion of this project much more fun!

In an earlier study (Daisey, 2008), secondary preservice teachers noted that they had rediscovered writing through the "how-to" book experienced, or looked at writing in a different perspective. For example, a preserivce teacher wrote, "I loved writing and making books in elementary school (young author), but I haven't had a chance to do that since then" (Daisey, 2008, p.210).

Two other reasons given for the lost of writing apprehension was their increased confidence in evaluation and pride in writing. For instance, a preservice teacher whose writing apprehension was reduced by 29 points noted, "I have gotten over my fear of being judged. I have found pride in my writing which helped me get over that fear." Another preservice teacher whose writing apprehension was reduced by nine points concluded that, "accomplishment always brings confidence."

Of importance, future use of "how-to" books was cited also as a reason for writing apprehension reduction. A preservice teacher whose writing apprehension decreased by eight points wrote, "A 'how-to' book made me realize how to use writing in a fun way as a future educator. It motivated me to write, so hopefully it will motivate my future students." In an earlier study (Daisey, 2008), secondary preservice teachers whose writing apprehension decreased also reported that they thought the "how-to" book was useful. They explained that they were thinking about their audience of future students when writing their "how-to" book. For instance, a perservice teacher wrote, "You showed me different ways we can use writing in physical education" (p. 212). Moreover, evidence from the earlier study (Daisey, 2008), suggested that preservice teachers who had reduced their writing apprehension after writing a "how-to" book, were more likely to report that they planned to ask their future students to write a "how-to" book.

*Does It Matter What a Secondary Teachers' Writing Apprehension is?*

The 91 preservice teachers rated this question at the end of the semester as 8.77 on a 10-point scale. When asked to explain their rating, three reasons emerged. The category of "teachers' attitude affects students" was cited most frequently by preservice teachers (71.43%). A preservice teacher (whose writing apprehension decreased from 98 to 108) wrote, "It can be negative or positive, but know that it will have an effect." A preservice teacher (whose writing apprehension decreased from 103 to 106) explained, "I feel a teacher's attitude toward writing influences how successful students will write. If the teacher enjoys writing; I think the students will see that and write better as a result." A preservice teacher (whose writing apprehension decreased from 102 to 110) felt that,

> as a teacher, I will be a role model for all of my students. Whether I am teaching English or math I will be incorporating writing into both areas. If I have students who despise writing, I want to be confident enough in my own writing to share with them and help them improve their own writing.

A preservice teacher (whose writing apprehension decreased from 72 to 85) noted that, "A teacher's apprehension is not easily hidden to the students. Students can pick up on such things and transfer it to themselves." Wing (1989) also worried that preservice teachers with writing apprehension could spread their antipathy and misgivings about writing to their students. The preservice teacher who had the highest writing apprehension at the beginning of the study and lost the most apprehension (45 to 110)

cited this category and reasoned, “if a teacher does not like to write, students will not be into it either.”

The second most cited answer category for “does writing apprehension matter?” was “level of writing apprehension affects choice of assignments, evaluation, and amount of writing assigned” (23.08%). One preservice teacher (whose writing apprehension decreased from 89 to 101) wrote, “A teacher’s apprehension will influence their choice of assignments and how they evaluate writing.” Another preservice teacher (whose writing apprehension decreased from 78 to 89) felt that, “apprehension can lead to concentrating on the wrong details.” Similarly, Gere, Schuessler, and Abbott (1984) found that writing apprehensive teachers focused on grammatical correctness, instead of the process of writing.

The third most cited answer category for “does writing apprehension matter?” was “it depends on the teacher” (14.29%). For instance, a preservice teacher (whose writing apprehension decreased from 81 to 122) wrote, “I feel that a teacher can excite students if they have low apprehension. And both [teachers with high or low writing apprehension] can work with students to find the best ways to lower everyone’s apprehension.” A preservice teacher (whose writing apprehension decreased from 78 to 110) noted, “I think it depends on the teacher and the methods used to assign and grade writing.” In an earlier study (Daisey, 2008), preservice teachers were asked if there were a teacher who had a score of 130 (very low writing apprehension) had a student with a

score of 26 (very high writing apprehension), how the student might fare in the class. Preservice teachers were divided in their opinion. Some preservice teachers believed that the teacher could not relate or understand the student and would make the student's apprehension worse by piling on lots of writing. In contrast, other preservice teachers explained that a teacher, who had a score of 130, had experienced many enjoyable writing activities and would wish to pass that on to his or her students.

Preservice teachers in the current study also thought that teachers with high writing apprehension could use it to their students' advantage. A preservice teacher (whose writing apprehension decreased from 87 to 107) wrote, "A teacher can share experiences with the class and at least one student will be able to relate." Lane (1993) agrees that teachers' writing apprehension could be used as an asset if teachers' had honest conversations with their students about their past writing experiences and shared their own writing with them.

> Recently, a high school teacher told me he felt very insecure about his own writing and didn't feel right about sharing that with his class. He thought it would be bad modeling. I told him I felt just the opposite. When we model our struggles we give our students permission to struggle alongside us. We wipe out the disempowering notion of perfection that teachers often unwittingly model, and we expose our uniqueness, our vulnerability, and most

important of all, our humanity (p. 145-146).

Of importance, a preservice teacher (whose writing apprehension increased from 79 to 68) noted, “I think as long as a teacher encourages their students to write in spite of their insecurities.” Thus, writing is an avenue to “undisempower” students and to affirm a student’s self-worth (Kemmis, 1995). Writing can provide dignity (Daisey & Jose-Kampfner, 2002; Shaughnessy, 1993).

*Conclusion*

Published authors reassure individuals with writing apprehension to keep writing. Cythia Ozick advises, “If we had to say what writing is, we would have to define it essentially as an act of courage (cited in Gordon, 2000, p. 156). Elbert Hubbard believes, “to escape criticism, do nothing, say nothing, be nothing (cited in Gordon, 2000, p. 19). Edelstein (1999) offers advice to all writers, “The people who succeed in the writing business are the ones who don’t take rejection very seriously, but who keep on patiently building their skills and their careers. Become one of these writers if you can” (p. 153). Given the large number of secondary preservice teachers, it is essential that teacher educators walk preservice teachers through positive writing experiences. Lunsford (1993) calls on all educators to “create a new scene for writing, one that challenges divisions between disciplines, genres, and media” (p. 73). Beneficial aspects of “how-to” book writing process which could be applied to other writing situations includes choice of topic, clear directions and connections to benchmarks, availability of past examples, bookstore trips, mixture of words and pictures, drafts, and revisions with peer support. This approach provided evidence that writing apprehension reduction of secondary content area preservice teachers is possible.

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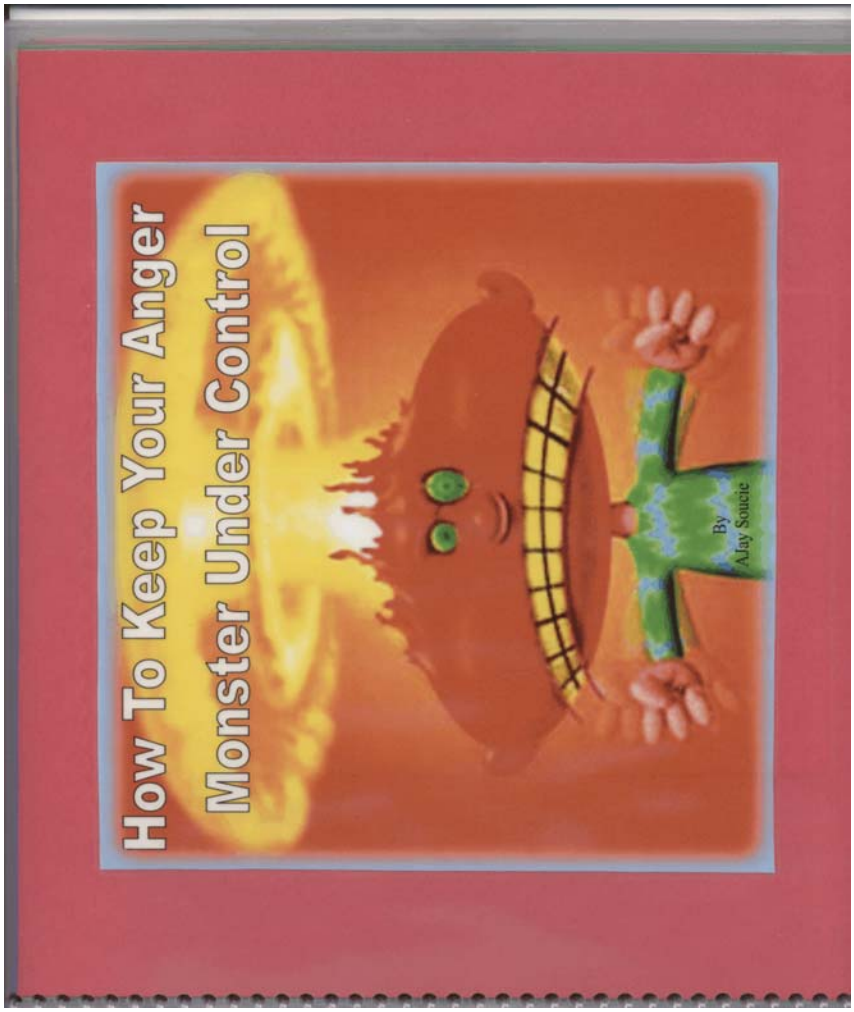
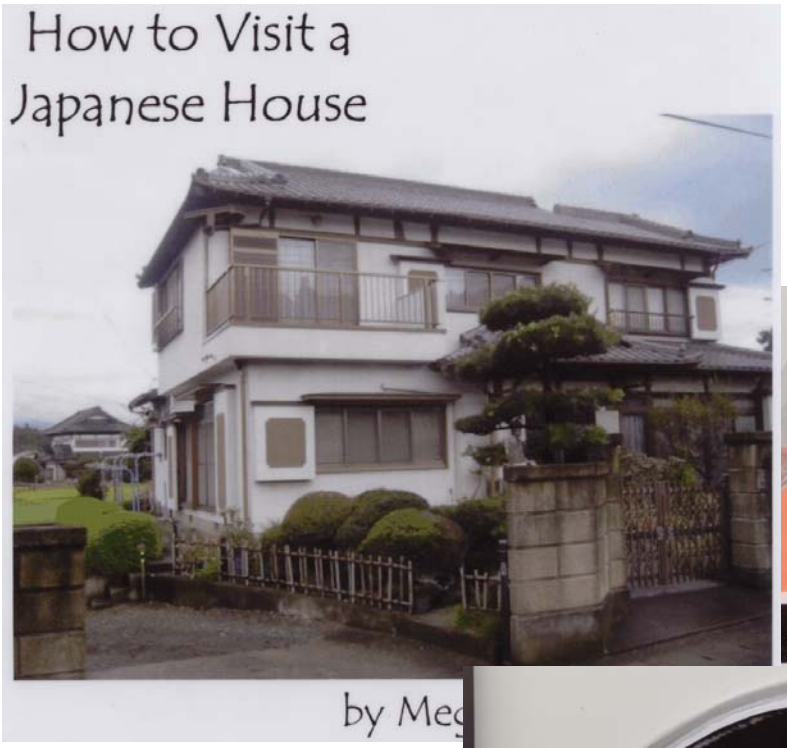
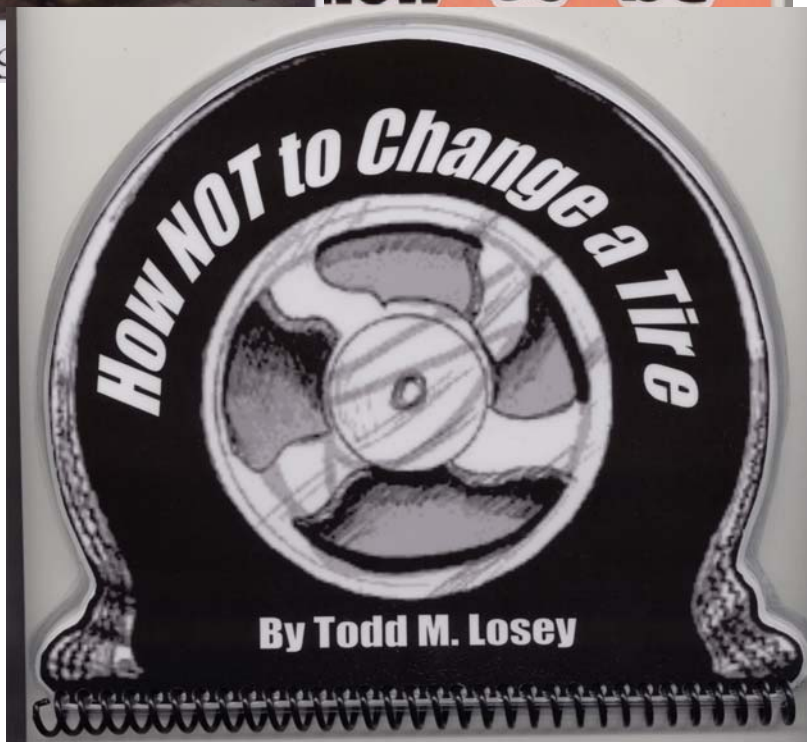

How To Keep Your Anger
Monster Under Control
By
Alay Soucie


How to Visit a
Japanese House
by Meg


How to be


How NOT to Change a Tire
By Todd M. Losey


Fahrenheit
451
Ray
Bradbury

## Appendix. Writing Apprehension Scale*

Name _____ Date _____

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I avoid writing. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. I look forward to writing down my ideas. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. I am afraid of writing when I know it will be evaluated. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Writing is an intimidating experience for me. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Finishing a piece of writing makes me feel good. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a piece of writing. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. I would enjoy submitting my writing for publication. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. I like to write my ideas down. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. I like to have my friends read what I have written. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |





| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. I'm nervous about writing. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. People seem to enjoy what I write. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. I enjoy writing. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. I never seem to be able to clearly write down my ideas. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. Writing is fun for me. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. I expect to do poorly on writing assignments. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas for a piece of writing. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22. When I finish a piece of writing, I know it's not good. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 23. It's easy for me to write well. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 24. I don't think I write as well as most of my friends. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 25. I don't like my writing to be evaluated. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 26. I'm not good at writing. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

* Adapted from Daly, J. A., & Miller, M. D. (1975). The empirical development of an instrument to measure writing apprehension. *Research in the Teaching of English, 9,* 242-249.