GRADE FOUR
Sample Sessions

UNITS OF STUDY
in Opinion, Information, *and* Narrative Writing

LUCY CALKINS *with* COLLEAGUES *from the* READING AND WRITING PROJECT

Heinemann
DEDICATED TO TEACHERS™

GRADE FOUR Components

Four Units of Study

- The units offer all of the teaching points, minilessons, conferences, and small-group work needed to teach a comprehensive workshop curriculum.
- Each session within the units models Lucy and her colleagues' carefully crafted teaching moves and language.
- The Grade 4 grade-level set includes one unit each in opinion, information, and narrative writing, and one additional opinion unit.
- Each unit provides 4-6 weeks of instruction.

If... Then... Curriculum: Assessment-Based Instruction

- The *If… Then…* book offers seven additional abbreviated units of study that teachers may choose to teach before, after, or in between the core units to meet specific instructional needs.
- This helpful resource also includes dozens of model conferring scenarios to help teachers master the art of conferring.

A Guide to the Writing Workshop, Intermediate Grades

- The *Guide* introduces the principles, methods, classroom structures, and instructional frameworks that characterize effective workshop teaching.
- It provides the information teachers need to prepare to teach the units, and offers guidance on how to meet the needs of all students.

Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions

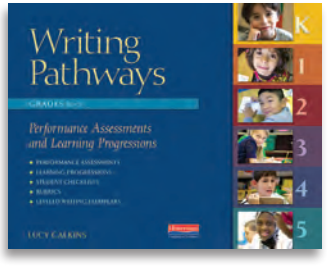
- This practical assessment system includes learning progressions, on-demand writing prompts, student checklists, rubrics, student writing samples, and exemplar pieces of writing.
- The tools in *Writing Pathways* help teachers set all students on trajectories of growth.

Anchor Chart Sticky Notes

- Preprinted, large-format sticky notes feature each key teaching point and help teachers evolve anchor charts across the units.

Online Resources

- This treasure chest of resources includes reproducible checklists, pre- and post assessments, learning progressions and rubrics, videos and web links, Spanish translations for various resources, and more!



Trade Book Pack

- Includes books that are used as demonstration texts for the teacher to model the skills and strategies students will try. Recommended optional purchase.

For complete details, please visit **unitsofstudy.com/K5writing**

"At the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, we have been working for more than three decades to develop, pilot, revise, and implement state-of-the-art curriculum in writing. This series—this treasure chest of experiences, theories, techniques, tried-and-true methods, and questions—brings the results of that work to you."

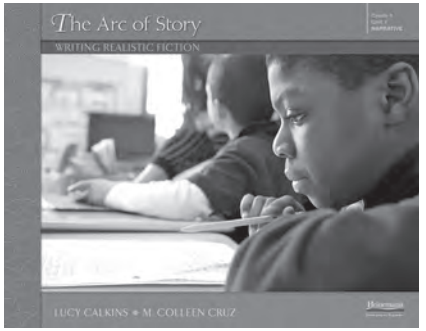
—LUCY CALKINS

Welcome to the Grade 4 Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing Sampler. This booklet includes sample sessions from each of the four units of study for this grade level, chosen to broadly represent the range of work that students will do and to provide a snapshot view of how instruction develops across the school year.

SAMPLER CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

SAMPLE SESSIONS



The Arc of Story
Writing Realistic Fiction

LUCY CALKINS • M. COLLEEN CRUZ

In the first bend—section—of this unit, you will let students know that writers see ideas for fiction stories everywhere. Children then begin to collect story ideas in their writer's notebook, fleshing them out to include elements of an effective story. Then students will storytell their ideas to a partner, making sure to use a storyteller's voice and include literary language. Once children have chosen a story idea, you'll teach them ways writers develop their main characters: by thinking not only about a character's external traits but also his or her internal life and surroundings. After this, writers may dramatize a scene or small moment. Finally, writers think about a character's needs, letting a storyline emerge in which the character meets obstacles.

In the second bend, you'll focus on the classic "story arc," showing students how stories with two or three strong scenes can successfully show the development of a character, a plot, and even a setting over the course of the story. The arc a writer creates in the planning stages becomes a touchstone for drafting. Each scene or event in the story arc is assigned its own page in a booklet, and this, plus an emphasis on skills developed in earlier years, helps fiction sound and feel storylike.

In the third bend, you will help children prepare their story for audiences through focused drafting, deep revision, and editing. When your students were younger, they were taught to intersperse dialogue with action as a revision strategy. Now you'll add the need to ground the entire story in a place, a setting. You'll also teach children to rethink the evolution and conclusion of their story. Writers know endings don't come out of nowhere. You'll teach children that in fiction, as in life, solutions are generally hinted at all along: they are solutions we arrive at little by little.

In the final bend, you will show students how to take the reins and write fiction independently, teaching them the systems and skills they need to feel confident that they can continue writing fiction throughout their lives.

Welcome to Unit 1

BEND I ✦ Creating and Developing Stories and Characters that Feel Real

1. Imagining Stories from Ordinary Moments
2. Imagining Stories We Wish Existed in the World
3. Developing Believable Characters
4. Giving Characters Struggles and Motivations
5. Plotting with a Story Arc

BEND II ✦ Drafting and Revising with an Eye toward Believability

6. Show, Don't Tell: Planning and Writing Scenes
7. Feeling and Drafting the Heart of Your Story
8. Studying Published Texts to Write Leads
9. Orienting Readers with Setting
10. Writing Powerful Endings

BEND III ✦ Preparing for Publication with an Audience in Mind

11. Revision: Rereading with a Lens
12. Making a Space for Writing
13. Using Mentor Texts to Flesh Out Characters
14. Editing with Various Lenses
15. Publishing Anthologies: A Celebration

BEND IV ✦ Embarking on Independent Fiction Projects

16. Launching Independent Fiction Projects
17. Planning and Drafting Stories with Agency
18. Mining the Connections between Reading and Writing Fiction
19. Focusing the Reader's Gaze
20. Choosing Punctuation for Effect
21. Surveying Your Work and Planning for the Future

Boxes and Bullets

Personal and Persuasive Essays

LUCY CALKINS • KELLY BOLAND HOHNE • CORY GILLETTE

This unit, like a number of other units in this series, begins with a quick, intense immersion in the process of writing a new kind of text—in this case, the essay. The goal of "essay boot camp," as this bend is called, is to help students develop a sense for writing an essay. You will plan a simple essay together, aloud, and send students off to draft that spoken essay on paper. Then students will spend a few days gathering entries in their notebook, writing long about people, objects, events, and so on. As the bend ends, students will use what they've written in their notebook to develop a thesis statement and plan their essay.

In the next bend—"Raising the Level of Essay Writing"—students will collect and write about evidence to support each of the reasons for the opinion expressed in their thesis statement. They will select the most powerful evidence and tell it in a way that supports their reasons. They will draft sections of their essay, using transition words and phrases to create cohesion. As they draft, they will also learn to use the introduction to orient and engage the reader and the conclusion to offer final thoughts. They will assess this draft to determine how much they have grown, and then they'll revise the draft with these goals in mind. Students will edit to improve their clarity, finding and correcting run-on sentences and fragments. At the end of the bend, they'll share their work in a mini-celebration.

Bend III of the unit, "Personal to Persuasive," focuses on transference and raising the quality of work. Students will develop a plan for a persuasive essay. Then you will invite them to take themselves through the process of developing and drafting this essay with greater independence than before, transferring and applying all they have learned and using all the resources, tools, charts, etc., at hand. You will coach them to include a greater variety of evidence than before and to elaborate on how that evidence connects to their reasons and opinion. They will again assess their work, reflecting on their growth during the unit and setting future goals. Students will edit their essay using all they have learned about conventions, in particular ensuring that all grade-appropriate words are spelled correctly. They will publish their pieces in a final celebration.

Welcome to Unit 2

BEND I ✦ Writing to Learn

1. Essay Structure Boot Camp
2. Collecting Ideas as Essayists
3. Writing to Learn
4. Using Elaboration Prompts to Grow Ideas
5. Mining Our Writing
6. Boxes and Bullets: Framing Essays
7. Return to Boot Camp

BEND II ✦ Raising the Level of Essay Writing

8. Composing and Sorting Mini-Stories
9. Creating Parallelism in Lists
10. Organizing for Drafting
11. Building a Cohesive Draft
12. Becoming Our Own Job Captains
13. Writing Introductions and Conclusions
14. Revising Our Work with Goals in Mind
15. Correcting Run-On Sentences and Sentence Fragments

BEND III ✦ Personal to Persuasive

16. Moving from Personal to Persuasive
17. Inquiry into Persuasive Essay
18. Broader Evidence
19. Connecting Evidence, Reason, and Thesis
20. Getting Ready to Put Our Opinions into the World
21. Hey World, Listen Up!: Sharing Our Opinions Loudly and Proudly

Bringing History to Life

LUCY CALKINS • ANNA GRATZ COCKERILLE

In unit 1, you introduced the persuasive essay in a spirited boot camp in which you and your students wrote an essay in defense of ice cream. Now you will introduce the information essay in a boot camp in which together, you write an overview of the American Revolution. You will also teach children that information texts are often conglomerates, containing a lot of other kinds of texts. At the end of this first bend, students complete a small book in which each chapter is written as a different kind of text.

In the next bend, students narrow in on a subtopic of their choice; some students will continue to research the original topic, the American Revolution. You will teach students ways writers logically structure their writing. In this bend, because students work on subtopics of their own choosing, they rely heavily on their knowledge and their research, so you will continue to explicitly teach the skills of effective research writing. You will also teach students to use transition words and phrases more effectively and to clarify and bring out the structure in their writing. Most of all, you will coach students to highlight important information by using historical details, text features, and quotations.

Bend III, "Building Ideas in Information Writing," brings this work to a new level as students move from organizing information to developing their own ideas about the information. This bend is all about historical interpretation, very heady work for fourth-graders, but work for which they have been aptly prepared not only throughout this unit, but throughout the entire school year. Their research will take on a new bent as they generate life lessons from their topic, generate questions, and then hypothesize and research answers to those questions. As always, students will spend time editing their writing before publishing it, this time focusing on the unique way writers of history use punctuation. The unit will culminate with an expert fair, at which students will be given the opportunity to teach others all they have learned about their topic.

Welcome to Unit 3

BEND I ✦ Informational Books: Making a Conglomerate of Forms

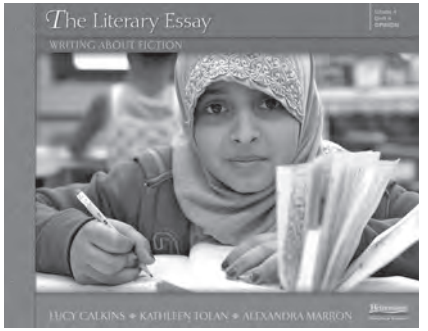
1. Getting the Sense of Informational Books
2. Planning the Structure of Writing
3. Planning and Writing with Greater Independence
4. Teaching as a Way to Rehearse for Information Writing
5. Elaboration: The Details that Let People Picture What Happened Long Ago and Far Away
6. Bringing Information Alive: Stories Inside Nonfiction Texts
7. Essays within Information Texts
8. Taking Stock and Setting Goals: A Letter to Teachers

BEND II ✦ Writing with Greater Independence

9. Writers Plan for Their Research
10. The Intense Mind-Work of Note-Taking
11. Drafting Is Like Tobogganing: First the Preparation, the Positioning ... Then the Whooosh!
12. Developing a Logical Structure Using Introductions and Transitions
13. Text Features: Popping Out the Important Information
14. Quotations Accentuate Importance: Voices Chime In to Make a Point
15. Using All We Know to Craft Essay and Narrative Sections
16. The Other Side of the Story
17. Self-Assessment and Goal Setting: Taking on New Challenges

BEND III ✦ Building Ideas in Informational Writing

18. Information Writing Gives Way to Idea Writing
19. Digging Deeper: Interpreting the Life Lessons that History Teaches
20. Using Confusions to Guide Research
21. Questions without a Ready Answer
22. Editing
23. A Final Celebration: An Expert Fair



The Literary Essay
Writing About Fiction

LUCY CALKINS • KATHLEEN TOLAN • ALEXANDRA MARRON

To write well about reading, students need to learn more not only about writing, but also about reading. Throughout this unit, you will teach students ways writers read complex texts closely and then write about the literature they are reading. You will first teach students to notice authors' choices about the setting, objects, words, metaphors, and characters they use in their texts. This work, so central to state standards, is especially powerful work for students who are analyzing texts for ideas and interpretations. Students learn that there are certain aspects of a text that tend to be more important, and they learn to pay attention to those aspects, noticing what the author has done and fashioning evidence-based theories about the text.

From the get-go, you will teach students to write structured, compelling essays in which they make and support claims and analyze, unpack, and incorporate evidence. Students focus on arguing for their ideas about characters, while carrying forward what they have been taught about planning and drafting essays, writing introductions and conclusions, and marshalling evidence in support of reasons. This allows the main focus of teaching to be devoted to the special challenges of writing essays about texts.

After drafting and revising an essay about a familiar short text in Bend I and receiving feedback, students are asked to repeat that cycle in Bend II, this time applying all they have learned and also working to write more interpretively and analytically. On the first day of this second bend, you will begin teaching youngsters the power of higher-level interpretive reading. Writing about favorite texts—read-alouds, short stories, novels—students learn to value complexity and examine all sides of an issue with the most open mind possible. In doing so they will also learn new, more complex ways of structuring an essay and more nuanced ways to mine a text for the evidence they need.

The unit ends with a third bend in which students learn to write comparison/contrast essays, noting different texts' approaches to the same theme or issue. Students will learn to write in ways that take into account not only the subject of a text but also the author's treatment of that subject. In this way, students are taught to write more about point of view, emphasis, and interpretation, and to be aware of the craft moves authors use. Students will also learn ways to structure a comparison/contrast essay and cite evidence from two texts in a seamless, purposeful way.

Welcome to Unit 4

BEND I ✦ Writing about Reading: Literary Essays

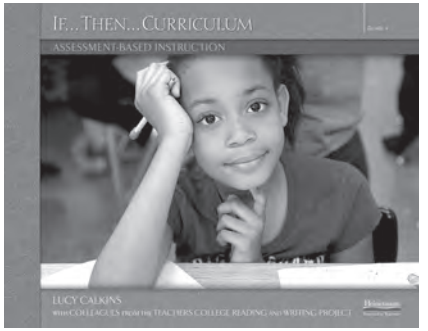
1. Close Reading to Generate Ideas about a Text
2. Gathering Writing by Studying Characters
3. Elaborating on Written Ideas Using Prompts
4. Finding and Testing a Thesis
5. Using Stories as Evidence
6. Citing Textual Evidence
7. Using Lists as Evidence
8. Putting It All Together: Constructing Literary Essays

BEND II ✦ Raising the Quality of Literary Essays

9. Writing to Discover What a Story Is *Really* About
10. Adding Complexity to Our Ideas
11. Flash-Drafting Literary Essays
12. Beginnings and Endings
13. Using Descriptions of an Author's Craft as Evidence
14. Editing

BEND III ✦ Writing Compare-and-Contrast Essays

15. Building the Muscles to Compare and Contrast
16. Comparing and Contrasting Familiar Texts
17. Using Yesterday's Learning, Today and Always
18. Developing Distinct Lines of Thought
19. Exploring Commas
20. A Celebration



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If... Then... Curriculum
Assessment-Based Instruction

LUCY CALKINS • WITH COLLEAGUES FROM THE TEACHERS COLLEGE READING AND WRITING PROJECT

The *If... Then... Curriculum* offers additional, abbreviated units teachers can use before, after, or in between the core curriculum based on students' needs. This resource also includes conferring scenarios that help teachers plan individual and small-group instruction.

PART TWO Differentiating Instruction for Individuals and Small Groups: If... Then... Conferring Scenarios

NARRATIVE WRITING

Structure and Cohesion

If the story lacks focus . . .
If the story is confusing or seems to be missing important information . . .
If the story has no tension . . .
If the story has no real or significant ending . . .
If the writer is new to the writing workshop or this particular genre of writing . . .
If the writer does not use paragraphs . . .

Elaboration

If the writer has created a story that is sparse, with little elaboration . . .
If the story is riddled with details . . .
If the story is swamped with dialogue . . .
If the writer has written the external story but not the internal story . . .
If the writer struggles to identify and convey a deeper meaning . . .
If the writer is ready to use literary devices . . .
If the writer summarizes rather than story-tells . . .

Language

If the writer struggles with spelling . . .
If the writer struggles with end punctuation . . .

The Process of Generating Ideas

If the writer has "nothing to write about" . . .
If the writer's notebook work does not represent all she can do . . .

The Process of Drafting

If the writer has trouble maintaining stamina and volume . . .
If the writer struggles to work independently . . .

The Process of Revision

If the writer does not seem to be driven by personal goals as much as by your instruction . . .

The Process of Editing

If the writer does not use what she knows about editing while writing . . .

INFORMATION WRITING

Structure and Cohesion

If the writer has not established a clear organizational structure . . .
If there is no logical order to the sequence of information . . .
If information in various sections overlaps . . .
If the writer is ready to experiment with alternative organizational structures . . .
If the writer has chosen a topic that is too broad . . .
If the piece lacks an introduction and/or a conclusion . . .

Elaboration

If each section is short and needs elaboration . . .
If the writer elaborates by adding fact upon fact . . .
If the writer goes off on tangents when elaborating . . .
If the writer does not elaborate on information from outside sources . . .

Language

If the writer incorporates quotes, facts, and statistics but does so awkwardly . . .
If transitions from section to section sound awkward . . .
If the writer does not incorporate domain-specific vocabulary . . .

The Process of Generating Ideas

If the writer chooses ideas about which she has little expertise and/or that are difficult to research . . .
If the writer simply copies facts into the notebook . . .

The Process of Drafting

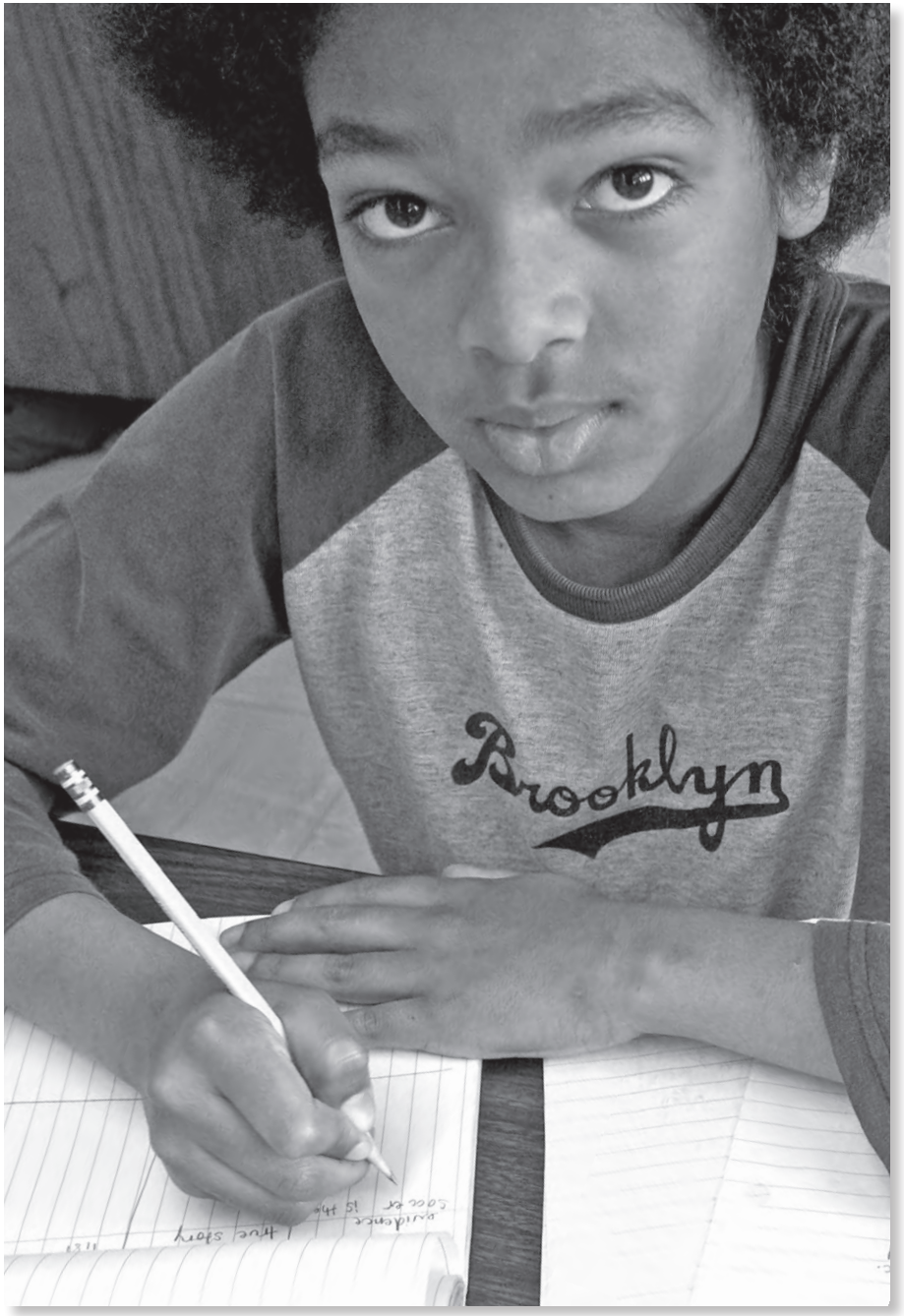
If the first draft is not organized . . .

The Process of Revision

If the writer is "done" while revising . . .
If the writer does not have a large repertoire of revision strategies to draw from . . .

The Process of Editing

If the writer has edited but has missed several mistakes or would otherwise benefit from learning to partner-edit . . .



OPINION WRITING

Structure and Cohesion

If the introduction does not forecast the structure of the essay . . .
If supports overlap . . .
If supports are not parallel or equal in weight . . .
If the writer is new to writing workshop or this particular genre of writing . . .
If the writer has a number of well-developed reasons, but they blur together without paragraphs or transitions . . .
If the writer is ready to consider counterarguments . . .

Elaboration

If the writer is struggling to elaborate (1) . . .
If the writer is struggling to elaborate (2) . . .
If the writer's evidence feels free-floating or disconnected from the argument . . .
If the piece is swamped with details . . .
If the writer has provided evidence, but it does not all support the claim . . .

Language

If the writer uses a casual, informal tone when writing . . .
If the writer struggles with spelling . . .
If the writer struggles with comma usage . . .

The Process of Generating Ideas

If the writer struggles to generate meaningful topics worth exploring . . .
If the writer is exploring opinions that are overly simple or without dimension . . .

The Process of Drafting

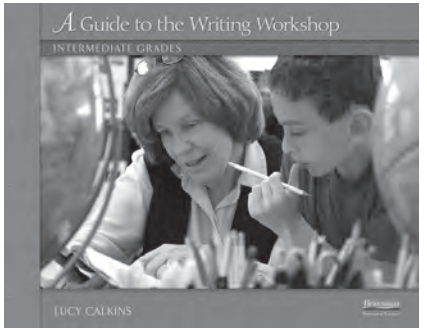
If the writer has a clear plan for her writing but loses focus and organization when drafting . . .

The Process of Revision

If the writer has a limited repertoire of revision strategies . . .

The Process of Editing

If the writer edits "on the run," investing little time or effort in the process . . .

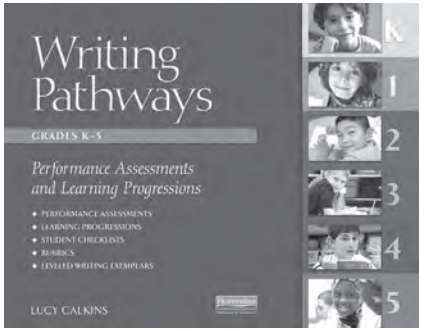


CONTENTS

A Guide to the Writing Workshop
Intermediate Grades

LUCY CALKINS

This important resource describes the essential principles, methods, and structures of effective writing workshop instruction.



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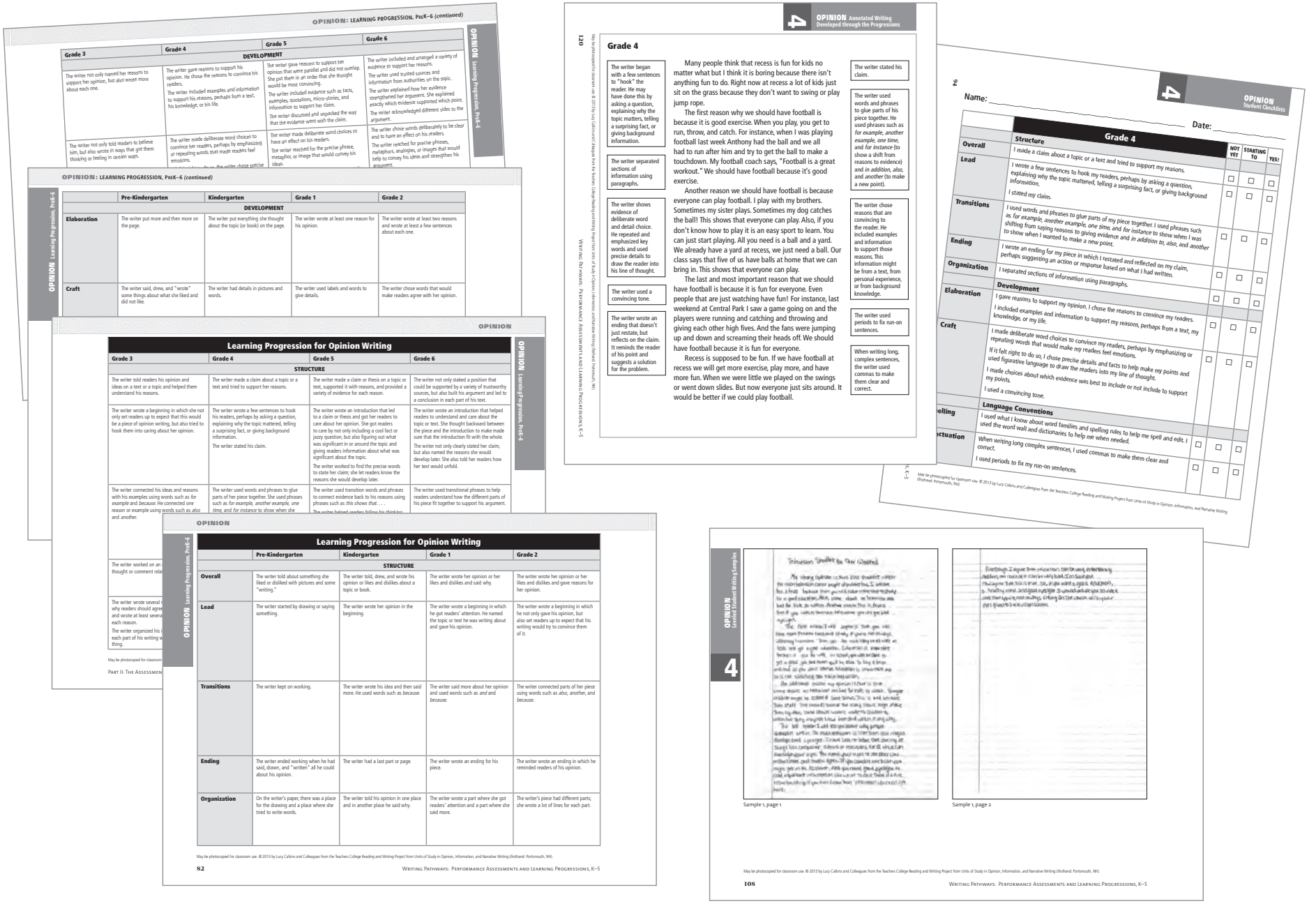
Writing Pathways
Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades K–5

LUCY CALKINS

This powerful assessment system offers learning progressions, performance assessments, student checklists, rubrics, and leveled writing exemplars—everything the teacher needs to provide students with continuous assessment, feedback, and goal setting.


OPINION: LEARNING PROGRESSION, PREK–6 (continued)
OPINION Learning Progression, PreK–6
Grade 3
Grade 4
Grade 5
Grade 6
DEVELOPMENT
The writer not only named her reasons to support her opinion, but also wrote more about each one.
The writer gave reasons to support his opinion. He chose the reasons to convince his readers.
The writer included examples and information to support his reasons, perhaps from a text, his knowledge, or his life.
The writer gave reasons to support her opinion that were parallel and did not overlap. She put them in an order that she thought would be most convincing.
The writer included evidence such as facts, examples, quotations, micro-stories, and information to support her claim.
The writer discussed and unpacked the way that the evidence went with the claim.
The writer included and arranged a variety of evidence to support her reasons.
The writer used trusted sources and information from authorities on the topic.
The writer explained how her evidence strengthened her argument. She explained exactly which evidence supported which point.
The writer acknowledged different sides to the argument.
The writer not only told readers to believe him, but also wrote in ways that got them thinking or feeling in certain ways.
The writer made deliberate word choices to convince her readers, perhaps by emphasizing or repeating words that made readers feel emotions.
The writer made deliberate word choices to have an effect on his readers.
The writer reached for the precise phrase, metaphor, or image that would convey his ideas.
The writer chose words deliberately to be clear and to have an effect on his readers.
The writer reached for precise phrases, metaphors, analogies, or images that would help to convey his ideas and strengthen his argument.
OPINION: LEARNING PROGRESSION, PREK–6 (continued)
OPINION Learning Progression, PreK–6
Pre-Kindergarten
Kindergarten
Grade 1
Grade 2
DEVELOPMENT
Elaboration
The writer put more and then more on the page.
The writer put everything she thought about the topic (or book) on the page.
The writer wrote at least one reason for his opinion.
The writer wrote at least two reasons and wrote at least a few sentences about each one.
Craft
The writer said, drew, and "wrote" some things about what she liked and did not like.
The writer had details in pictures and words.
The writer used labels and words to give details.
The writer chose words that would make readers agree with her opinion.
OPINION
OPINION Learning Progression, PreK–6
Learning Progression for Opinion Writing
Grade 3
Grade 4
Grade 5
Grade 6
STRUCTURE
The writer told readers his opinion and ideas on a text or a topic and helped them understand his reasons.
The writer made a claim about a topic or a text and tried to support her reasons.
The writer made a claim or thesis on a topic or text, supported it with reasons, and provided a variety of evidence for each reason.
The writer not only staked a position that could be supported by a variety of trustworthy sources, but also built his argument and led to a conclusion in each part of his text.
The writer wrote a beginning in which she not only set readers up to expect that this would be a piece of opinion writing, but also tried to hook them into caring about her opinion.
The writer wrote a few sentences to hook his readers, perhaps by asking a question, explaining why the topic mattered, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information.
The writer stated his claim.
The writer wrote an introduction that led to a claim or thesis and got her readers to care about her opinion. She got readers to care by not only including a cool fact or jazzy question, but also figuring out what was significant in or around the topic and giving readers information about what was significant about the topic.
The writer worked to find the precise words to state her claim; she let readers know the reasons she would develop later.
The writer wrote an introduction that helped readers to understand and care about the topic or text. She thought backward between the piece and the introduction to make made sure that the introduction fit with the whole.
The writer not only clearly stated her claim, but also named the reasons she would develop later. She also told her readers how her text would unfold.
The writer connected his ideas and reasons with his examples using words such as for example and because. He connected one reason or example using words such as also and another.
The writer used words and phrases to glue parts of her piece together. She used phrases such as for example, another example, one time, and for instance to show when she
The writer used transition words and phrases to connect evidence back to his reasons using phrases such as this shows that . . .
The writer used transitional phrases to help readers understand how the different parts of his piece fit together to support his argument.
The writer worked on an
thought or comment relat
The writer wrote several
why readers should agree
and wrote at least several
each reason.
The writer organized his
each part of his writing w
thing.
May be photocopied for classroom
PART II: THE ASSESSMEN
OPINION
OPINION Learning Progression, PreK–6
Learning Progression for Opinion Writing
Pre-Kindergarten
Kindergarten
Grade 1
Grade 2
STRUCTURE
Overall
The writer told about something she liked or disliked with pictures and some "writing."
The writer told, drew, and wrote his opinion or likes and dislikes about a topic or book.
The writer wrote her opinion or her likes and dislikes and said why.
The writer wrote her opinion or her likes and dislikes and gave reasons for her opinion.
Lead
The writer started by drawing or saying something.
The writer wrote her opinion in the beginning.
The writer wrote a beginning in which he got readers' attention. He named the topic or text he was writing about and gave his opinion.
The writer wrote a beginning in which he not only gave his opinion, but also set readers up to expect that his writing would try to convince them of it.
Transitions
The writer kept on working.
The writer wrote his idea and then said more. He used words such as because.
The writer said more about her opinion and used words such as and and because.
The writer connected parts of her piece using words such as also, another, and because.
Ending
The writer ended working when he had said, drawn, and "written" all he could about his opinion.
The writer had a last part or page.
The writer wrote an ending for his piece.
The writer wrote an ending in which he reminded readers of his opinion.
Organization
On the writer's paper, there was a place for the drawing and a place where she tried to write words.
The writer told his opinion in one place and in another place he said why.
The writer wrote a part where she got readers' attention and a part where she said more.
The writer's piece had different parts; she wrote a lot of lines for each part.
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WRITING PATHWAYS: PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS AND LEARNING PROGRESSIONS, K–5
4
OPINION Annotated Writing Developed through the Progressions
120
Grade 4
The writer began with a few sentences to "hook" the reader. He may have done this by asking a question, explaining why the topic matters, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information.
The writer separated sections of information using paragraphs.
The writer shows evidence of deliberate word and detail choice. He repeated and emphasized key words and used precise details to draw the reader into his line of thought.
The writer used a convincing tone.
The writer wrote an ending that doesn't just restate, but reflects on the claim. It reminds the reader of his point and suggests a solution for the problem.
Many people think that recess is fun for kids no matter what but I think it is boring because there isn't anything fun to do. Right now at recess a lot of kids just sit on the grass because they don't want to swing or play jump rope.
The first reason why we should have football is because it is good exercise. When you play, you get to run, throw, and catch. For instance, when I was playing football last week Anthony had the ball and we all had to run after him and try to get the ball to make a touchdown. My football coach says, "Football is a great workout." We should have football because it's good exercise.
Another reason we should have football is because everyone can play football. I play with my brothers. Sometimes my sister plays. Sometimes my dog catches the ball! This shows that everyone can play. Also, if you don't know how to play it is an easy sport to learn. You can just start playing. All you need is a ball and a yard. We already have a yard at recess, we just need a ball. Our class says that five of us have balls at home that we can bring in. This shows that everyone can play.
The last and most important reason that we should have football is because it is fun for everyone. Even people that are just watching have fun! For instance, last weekend at Central Park I saw a game going on and the players were running and catching and throwing and giving each other high fives. And the fans were jumping up and down and screaming their heads off. We should have football because it is fun for everyone.
Recess is supposed to be fun. If we have football at recess we will get more exercise, play more, and have more fun. When we were little we played on the swings or went down slides. But now everyone just sits around. It would be better if we could play football.
The writer stated his claim.
The writer used words and phrases to glue parts of his piece together. He used phrases such as for example, another example, one time, and for instance (to show a shift from reasons to evidence) and in addition, also, and another (to make a new point).
The writer chose reasons that are convincing to the reader. He included examples and information to support those reasons. This information might be from a text, from personal experience, or from background knowledge.
The writer used periods to fix run-on sentences.
When writing long, complex sentences, the writer used commas to make them clear and correct.
WRITING PATHWAYS: PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS AND LEARNING PROGRESSIONS, K–5
4
OPINION Student Checklists
Name:
Date:
Grade 4
NOT YET
STARTING TO
YES!
Overall
Structure
I made a claim about a topic or a text and tried to support my reasons.
Lead
I wrote a few sentences to hook my readers, perhaps by asking a question, explaining why the topic mattered, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information.
I stated my claim.
Transitions
I used words and phrases to glue parts of my piece together. I used phrases such as for example, another example, one time, and for instance to show when I was shifting from saying reasons to giving evidence and in addition to, also, and another to show when I wanted to make a new point.
Ending
I wrote an ending for my piece in which I restated and reflected on my claim, perhaps suggesting an action or response based on what I had written.
Organization
I separated sections of information using paragraphs.
Elaboration
Development
I gave reasons to support my opinion. I chose the reasons to convince my readers.
I included examples and information to support my reasons, perhaps from a text, my knowledge, or my life.
Craft
I made deliberate word choices to convince my readers, perhaps by emphasizing or repeating words that would make my readers feel emotions.
If it felt right to do so, I chose precise details and facts to help make my points and used figurative language to draw the readers into my line of thought.
I made choices about which evidence was best to include or not include to support my points.
I used a convincing tone.
elling
Language Conventions
I used what I know about word families and spelling rules to help me spell and edit. I used the word wall and dictionaries to help me when needed.
ctuation
When writing long complex sentences, I used commas to make them clear and correct.
I used periods to fix my run-on sentences.
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OPINION
OPINION Leveled Student Writing Samples
4
Television: Smallest No One Watched
Sample 1, page 1
Sample 1, page 2
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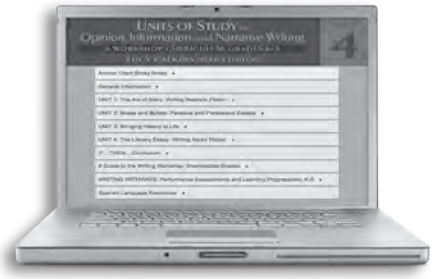
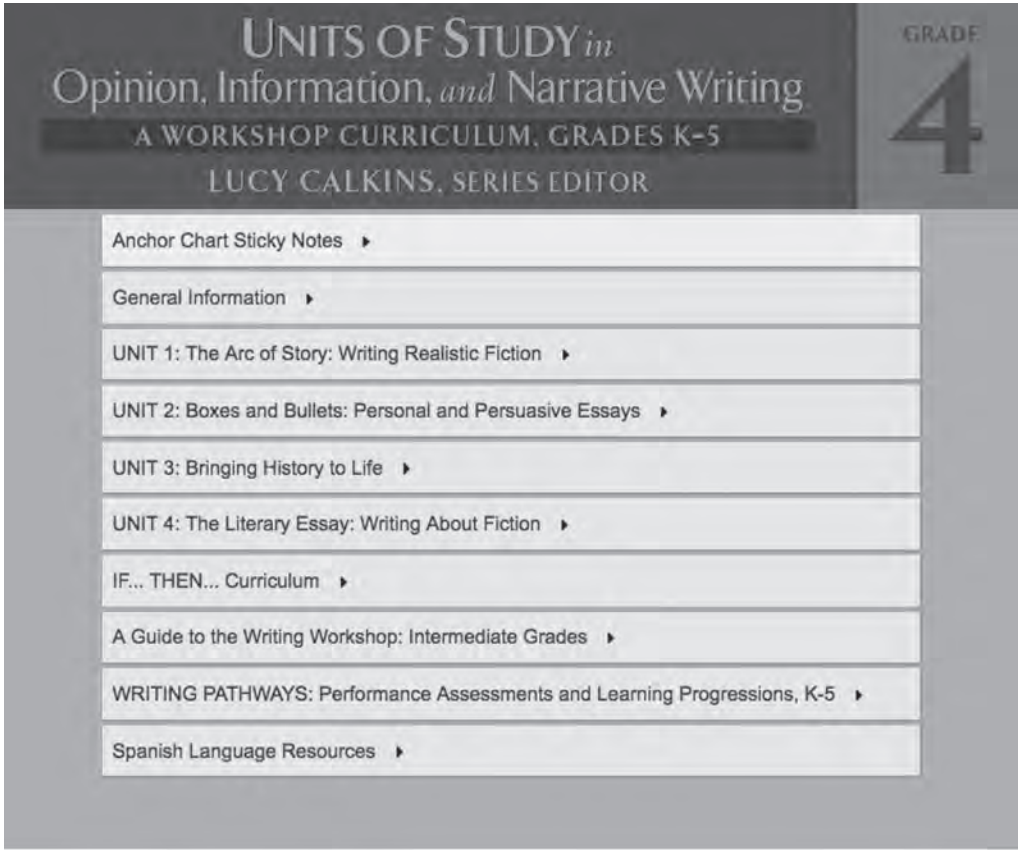
108
WRITING PATHWAYS: PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS AND LEARNING PROGRESSIONS, K–5



Online Resources for Teaching Writing

Grade-specific online resources support teaching throughout the school year. This rich assortment of instructional tools includes downloadable, printable files for anchor charts, figures, student exemplars, checklists, Spanish translations of many resources, and more.



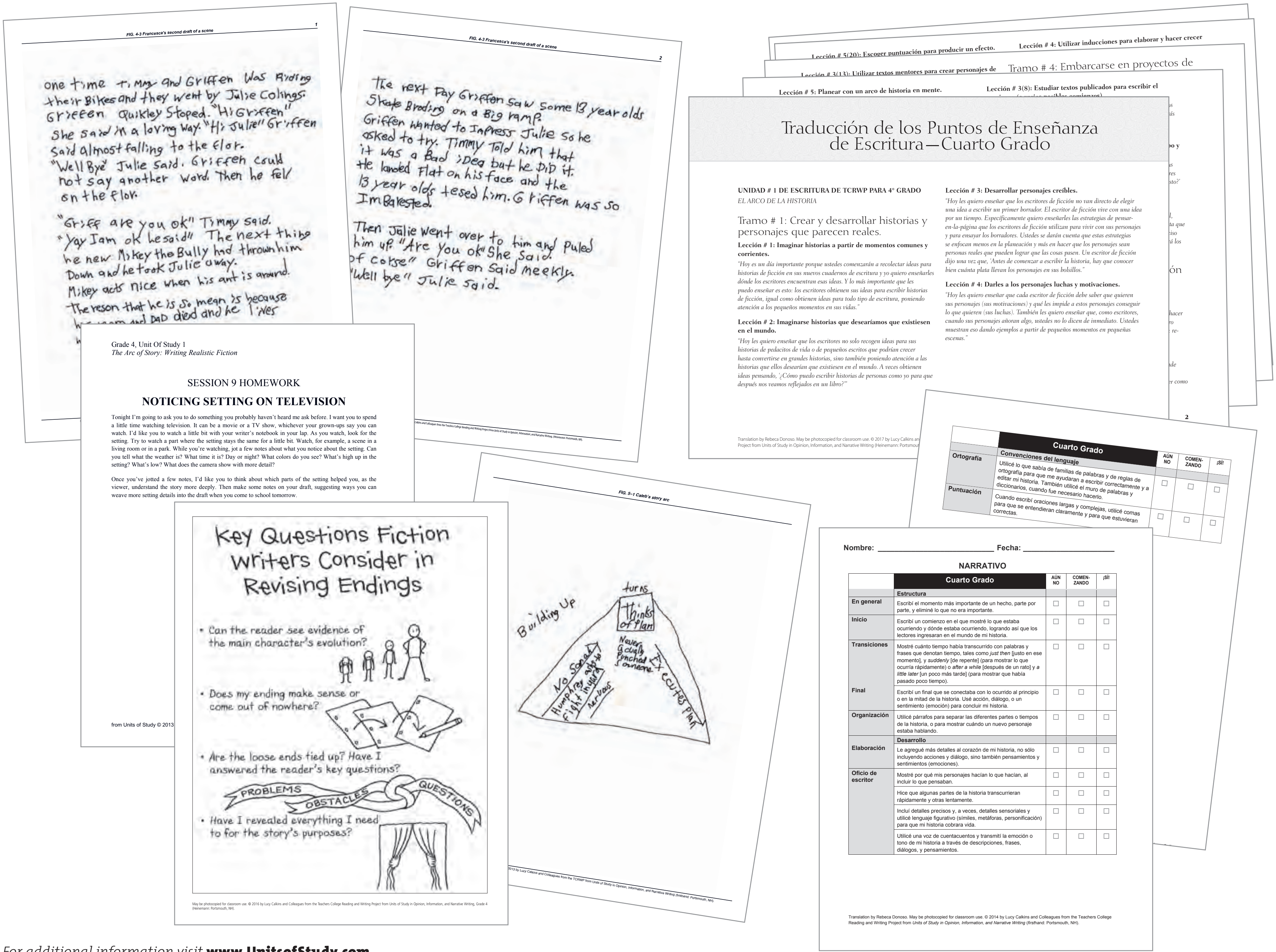


FIG. 4-3 Francesca's second draft of a scene
one time timmy and Griffen Was Riding their Bikes and they went by Julie Colings. Griffen Quikley Stoped. "Hi Griffen" She said in a loving way. "Hi Julie" Griffen Said almost falling to the flor. "Well Bye" Julie said. Griffen could not say another word. Then he fell on the flor.
"Griff are you ok" Timmy said. "Yay I am ok he said" The next thing he new Mikey the Bully had thrown him Down and he took Julie away. Mikey acts nice when his ant is around. The reson that he is so mean is because
The next Day Griffen saw some 13 year olds Skate Broding on a Big ramp. Griffen wanted to Impress Julie so he asked to try. Timmy Told him that it was a Bad idea but he Did it. He landed Flat on his face and the 13 year olds tesed him. Griffen was so Imbaresed.
Then Julie went over to him and puled him up. "Are you ok" She said. "of corse" Griffen Said meekly. "Well bye" Julie said.
Grade 4, Unit Of Study 1
The Arc of Story: Writing Realistic Fiction
SESSION 9 HOMEWORK
NOTICING SETTING ON TELEVISION
Tonight I'm going to ask you to do something you probably haven't heard me ask before. I want you to spend a little time watching television. It can be a movie or a TV show, whichever your grown-ups say you can watch. I'd like you to watch a little bit with your writer's notebook in your lap. As you watch, look for the setting. Try to watch a part where the setting stays the same for a little bit. Watch, for example, a scene in a living room or in a park. While you're watching, jot a few notes about what you notice about the setting. Can you tell what the weather is? What time it is? Day or night? What colors do you see? What's high up in the setting? What's low? What does the camera show with more detail?
Once you've jotted a few notes, I'd like you to think about which parts of the setting helped you, as the viewer, understand the story more deeply. Then make some notes on your draft, suggesting ways you can weave more setting details into the draft when you come to school tomorrow.
Key Questions Fiction Writers Consider in Revising Endings
• Can the reader see evidence of the main character's evolution?
• Does my ending make sense or come out of nowhere?
• Are the loose ends tied up? Have I answered the reader's key questions?
PROBLEMS
OBSTACLES
QUESTIONS
• Have I revealed everything I need to for the story's purposes?
FIG. 5-1 Caleb's story arc
Building Up
turns
Thinks of plan
Executes plan
Traducción de los Puntos de Enseñanza de Escritura—Cuarto Grado
UNIDAD # 1 DE ESCRITURA DE TCRWP PARA 4° GRADO
EL ARCO DE LA HISTORIA
Tramo # 1: Crear y desarrollar historias y personajes que parecen reales.
Lección # 1: Imaginar historias a partir de momentos comunes y corrientes.
Lección # 2: Imaginarse historias que desearíamos que existiesen en el mundo.
Lección # 3: Desarrollar personajes creíbles.
Lección # 4: Darles a los personajes luchas y motivaciones.
Lección # 4: Utilizar inducciones para elaborar y hacer crecer
Tramo # 4: Embarcarse en proyectos de
Lección # 5: Planear con un arco de historia en mente.
Lección # 3(8): Estudiar textos publicados para escribir el
Cuarto Grado
Convenciones del lenguaje
Ortografía
Puntuación
AÚN NO
COMEN-ZANDO
¡SÍ!
Nombre:
Fecha:
NARRATIVO
Cuarto Grado
Estructura
En general
Inicio
Transiciones
Final
Organización
Desarrollo
Elaboración
Oficio de escritor

Session 5

Plotting with a Story Arc

SOME PEOPLE IMAGINE THAT WRITERS put a pen to paper and out pours a story, or a novel, or a play, from beginning to end. In fact, that is how the writing process is often depicted in movies, giving the average person a romantic but false version of how writers work. We are fortunate to know from our own processes and through learning from countless writers over the years that the process involves as much organization as inspiration. This unit of study offers a perfect opportunity to teach children the power of rehearsal, and specifically, it gives us a chance to teach children that writers organize their ideas before they embark on a draft.

In this last session before drafting, we again remind writers of a template used by countless authors to structure the plotlines of their fiction—the story arc. The role of the story arc is as old as the idea of story. For a story to be a story, and not just a listing of events (much like a flat timeline might be), the events and the characters have to start in one place, and climb, facing obstacles and challenges, coming out changed on the other side. As an organizing tool, the story arc acts like a timeline or an outline. It allows the writer to step outside the details of the story to see the big picture. Some writers imagine that there is some sort of pivotal movement at the apex of the arc that changes everything. Other writers see not one big moment or conflict, but rather a series of events that end up in a change for the character of some sort. The goal of the story arc is to help the writer to be able to see the big picture shape of his story—to make sure it will move and evolve as the events unfold and not be a plodding list of moments linked together only by chronology. It might help for you to consider either designing your own story arc for a story of your own invention or spending some time looking at the story arcs of published books. Try to steer your students from the common misconception that a story arc means that they need to have dozens of little scenes to make up the arc. An arc can be made up of simply two or three scenes. Think of the classic "boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl" as a perfect example of story arc. Not that you need share that example with your students!

This session also emphasizes that story arcs are tools for revision. Because children will be writing in scenes and not in summaries, they'll probably need to revise their story

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach children that writers sketch out possible plotlines for stories, often in story arcs that represent traditional story structure.

GETTING READY

- ✔ Story arc on chart for *Fireflies!* by Julie Brinckloe (see Teaching)
- ✔ Story arc of shared class story, created in active engagement
- ✔ "How to Write a Fiction Story" anchor chart (see Link)

plans by zooming in on just two or perhaps three key moments. Encourage students to try many versions of their story arcs. The more they try, the more likely they will land on a story structure that works for them. Remind them that tomorrow they will begin drafting and they will want the best possible story arcs to carry with them.

"This unit of study offers a perfect opportunity to teach children the power of rehearsal, and specifically, it gives us a chance to teach children that writers organize their ideas before they embark on a draft."

Before this session, you would be wise to reread the fiction mentor text your students are most familiar with. In this session it is *Fireflies*. You might direct students to notice the structure and how the events of the story move from one moment to the next. As many long time workshop teachers can attest, it is very helpful for students who are relying on a mentor text to learn about writing to know that text as well as readers.

MINILESSON

Plotting with a Story Arc

CONNECTION

Remind children that once fiction writers have brought their characters to life, they use knowledge of the characters' wants and struggles to develop a possible plotline.

"Writers, a few days ago, I told you that fiction writers don't just go from choosing a story idea to writing a draft. Instead, fiction writers have strategies for bringing people to life, strategies like thinking about the internal and the external characteristics of the main character, the protagonist. They go through their lives thinking, 'What would my character do in this situation?' They give special attention to what a character yearns for and struggles with.

"Writers postpone thinking about what happens in a story, about the plot of a story, until they've done this other work. They postpone thinking about the sequence of events because eventually they take all they know about their characters—especially their understanding of what their characters yearn for and struggle with—and they use this information to create a plan for their stories.

"You'll probably remember that when you wrote your personal narratives in third grade, you got ready to write by remembering what happened and plotting the sequence of events on little timelines or perhaps with story arcs."

Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that after you develop your characters, you draft possible story arcs. And I want to teach you something new about plotting your story, something that will help you whenever you write fiction from now on! Fiction writers plan by plotting the arc of the story—and specifically, by aiming to intensify the problem.

"Writer Patricia Reilly Giff says that the fiction writer's job is to make every part so interesting that the reader can't wait to turn the page. She says some writers call that 'plotting,' but she calls it 'making the problem worse and worse!' Story arcs can help you do that because they remind you that it's not just one event after another, with no real change or climb. It's like each scene in the arc is a whole new movement for your character. That's what makes readers want to keep reading, to find out how the character will get to the other side of this arc.

◆ COACHING

Before now, children may have drafted scenes that put their characters into motion and revealed them as people, but those scenes will probably not comprise the start of their story. Before a fiction writer can write her lead, the writer needs to know the character, to imagine him or her in action, and to have drafted, chosen between, and revised multiple plotlines for the story. Today, then, children will consider a variety of ways their stories could unroll.

Notice that I teach story arcs within the context of a bigger focus—thinking about how the story will go in general (across the pages). Only after emphasizing that the character will get himself or herself into a growing mess of trouble do I mention that this is signified by the rising slope of the story arc. I'm trying to be sure the graphic organizer functions as a symbolic representation for the story itself.

"The story arc also shows you that something is going to happen, and things are getting tough, and then something happens as the story arcs that changes things or that solves your character's problem. After that, things change, your character is different, and there isn't a feeling of anticipation anymore."

TEACHING

Explain why a writer would use a story arc to help plan a plot. Teach children that writers are not always sure of what might happen in their story when they first set out to draft a plan.

"Writers, in reading workshop, we discussed how stories have a way they usually go. And we learned that usually the main character has wants, and something gets in the way of the character getting all that he or she wants. So the character encounters trouble, or a problem. And today we learned that usually after encountering the problem, the character has to deal with that problem somehow, giving movement to the story—making sure the story isn't just going from one event to another in a flat way, but rather, each scene builds on the one before it.

"Let's take a look back at a story we have been studying, *Fireflies!*, and how it could be outlined using a story arc," I said.

"You'll remember that when I read aloud *Fireflies!* to you, we talked about how the story went, how the events fit together, what its shape is. If it were to be written up on an arc, it might look something like this," I said, turning to a chart where I had recorded the main events of the story on an arc.

The narrator gets ready to catch fireflies
He goes out and catches fireflies with his friends
He comes home and puts the fireflies next to his bed
He watches their lights start to fade
He doesn't want to let them go
He lets them go

"When Julie Brinckloe wrote this story, she probably knew that it would be about a boy catching fireflies and having to decide whether or not to set them free. But she probably didn't know, when she started to write the story, exactly what would happen on every page. I bet she imagined one way the story might go, and another, and another.

"Authors always know that the trouble will grow and that characters will make choices—some of which probably won't work out. And authors know that *somehow*, in the midst of all the trouble, *somehow* there will be *something* that makes a difference. I bet Julie Brinckloe didn't start her book realizing all the little details. She probably didn't know before she started writing that the boy wouldn't just let the fireflies go free right away, that he would wait until they almost died before he let them go.

I'm especially aware that I'm oversimplifying the resolution part of a story, setting children up to believe that in every story characters achieve all that they want—which is far, far from true.

"When we plot our Luz story, I know that our character will struggle to achieve what she yearns for. Our character will make choices. Some of those choices may not work out. We don't know which ones, exactly. But we do know that something will happen that makes a difference. Our character will find a way to resolve the struggle, or she will change her sense of what she wants.

"And we know that just as a story arc climbs and then changes, Luz will take actions, and things will happen that will result in a change."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Demonstrate planning a possible plotline based on the story idea the class has been following.

"So let's try planning our Luz story, the one that Ramon helped us start, keeping the story arc in mind. In the draft we've already begun, we have Luz lying in bed, practicing sleeping without a light on so she can sleep in the dark at a slumber party. Then she gets up to turn on the closet light. Before fiction writers move forward to plot the whole story, it helps to rethink the start of it. Do you want to keep what we have so far as the very beginning? (This does show Luz's fears.) Or we could alter the beginning, perhaps in a way that more dramatically shows what she wants, and only then shows her fears.

"Talk with your partner and think what the scene in our arc should be. The starting scene must bring Luz to life, show what she yearns for, and show the trouble (which we already know will be her fear of sleeping in the dark and of being embarrassed in front of her friends). And remember, things need to climb and get harder before things change, so think about how we'll then make Luz's problem get worse. Turn and plan the start of our story arc."

Everyone started to talk. I moved among the partners. Marissa said, "Let's think of a different beginning, one that shows she wants friends. We could have Luz decide to hold a slumber party. Then she gets worried who'll come."

I nodded. "But try to think about that in terms of actions. What exactly might you show Luz *doing* when she decides to have a slumber party? How does the movie in your mind actually go at this starting scene?"

Marissa answered, "She realizes her birthday is just two weeks away. Then she starts writing invitations."

I nodded. "But you can't *tell* that she realizes her birthday is coming. What could she do? Imagine this as a movie. What would the character be doing that shows her realizing this?"

Marissa jumped up with excitement. "She looks at a calendar?"

Convene the class. Report on overheard ideas for how the story could begin.

"Writers, I heard some great ideas. Some of you suggested we alter the start to show first that Luz is hoping lots of friends come to her birthday party. Marissa thought the story could begin with Luz looking at a calendar, realizing

In this minilesson, you'll notice that the teaching component is brief because most of the teaching is embedded in the active engagement. I mostly told and reviewed, and I did not show—an exception from the norm.

The story arc is useful because it provides a concrete image for thinking about a complicated idea. When teaching students about the story arc, I draw a hill shape on a chart and model the plot points that move the character toward a moment when he or she solves a problem, confronts someone, changes, or learns something.

Anne Lamott, in Bird by Bird, *reminds us of the relationship between character development and the story arc. "Find out what each character cares most about in the world," she writes, "because then you will have discovered what's at stake" (1995, 55).*

Notice that in this active engagement children are not only working on the teaching point of the day. They're also synthesizing all they know to collaboratively author a story. This is an unusual active engagement for this reason.

John Gardner, one of our leading novelists and the author of The Art of Fiction *(1991), describes writing fiction by saying, "One of the chief mistakes a writer can make is to allow or force the reader's mind to be distracted, even momentarily, from the fictional dream." The writer encourages the reader to dream by presenting as many concrete details as possible. I'm trying, in this intervention, to elicit those concrete details and to remind writers that the story is carried by scenes, not summary.*

her birthday was approaching, and beginning to address invitations. Would you be willing to have our story start like Marissa suggests?" I asked, and when children agreed, jotted an abbreviated version of Marissa and Ramon's points on the class story arc and retold those scenes from the story.

Set children up to imagine what might come next, then convene the children and add their ideas to the story arc.

"What could come next? Remember, you'd need to *show* (not summarize) her struggle and that the problems need to get worse. Turn to your partner and plan."

Again I listened in, and after a bit I again paraphrased what I'd heard a child suggest. Soon the story arc contained these scenes.

- Luz looks at a calendar and starts writing lots of birthday invitations and gets worried people will find out about her fear of the dark.
- Her friends don't like her games.
- Her plan to leave the closet light on fails.
- She has to face her fear of the dark OR her fear of being embarrassed.

Model for the students that the story could also go another way.

"Great. We have one fantastic story arc. But, just like any other part of the writing process, we know that we should give it a few goes before we decide on the perfect arc. I heard a few other ways the story could go too. I heard Hannah and her partner saying that the story could start right at the party." I drew a line under our first story arc and created a new arc with these points.

- Luz welcomes everybody to her party and shows people around, avoiding the closet.
- Her friends don't like her games.
- She can't leave the closet light on, or she'll give herself away.
- She decides to tell someone that she's afraid.

"The first job of a story's beginning is to start at the right time. It should not start when things are quiet, when nothing's happening, when things are much the same as they always have been. After all, the whole reason we tell the story is because something about life is new and different, something's happening that stands out—and your responsibility, as the writer, is to begin the work at that point of change" (The Artist's Torah, *Ebenbach, 60*).

Philip Gerard, in his chapter "An Architecture of Light: Structuring the Novel and Story Collection" suggests that stories have a "signature" that can be stated in a single sentence. The signature for Moby Dick *is "Madman goes hunting for a white whale." This line defines what Gerard refers to as the "structural arc" of the story. He writes, "Think of the signature as the cable that hauls the rollercoaster cars up the long hill of suspense, round the hair pin turn of reversal, down the stomach-clenching fall" (152).*

Most importantly, Gerard says that although writers begin with our structural arc and our characters clearly in mind, "almost everything will change" (153).

LINK

Remind writers that when fiction writers plot story arcs they do so knowing the problems will get worse before they get better.

"So, writers, I hope you've been reminded today that the time comes when fiction writers plot their stories. They are usually not sure exactly what will happen next, but they plan the start of the story against the shape of an arc, remembering that they can't just write any old thing next. In our Luz story, after she makes the invitations, we can't have her grandmother arrive and the family go to dinner, forgetting all about her being afraid of the dark and the slumber party! Instead, when we ask ourselves, 'What will happen next?' we already know that Luz's struggles to master her fear of the dark and to have friends will have to get worse before they get better."

Encourage students to try multiple story arcs, each one improving on the one before.

"Writers, I know many of you are pretty sure that you know exactly how your story should go, but it's important that you make sure to try a few different story arcs just to make sure you have the best one you can make. Push yourself to come up with two or three different ones, each one better than the one before it. I've added this newest strategy to our "How to Write a Fiction Story" anchor chart.

"Off you go! Draft your story arcs, and do so making the problem worse and worse, like writers always do!"

How to Write a Fiction Story

- Develop a strong story idea, character(s), and setting.
- Spend time planning how the plot will go, making sure there is an arc to the story, trying again and again until the plan feels just right.

CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Building Story Arcs

I DREW MY CHAIR FIRST ALONGSIDE CALEB, who had taped his plan for his story onto the corner of his desk and was now staring at a half-written page. "You've put your story arc just exactly where Rachel, in 'Eleven,' "put that red sweater," I said. "It's on the tippy top corner of your desk, could hang over the edge like a waterfall, I bet you'd push it there! Are you trying to get it out of sight, out of mind?"

Caleb laughed and assured me that he wasn't mad at the story *arc*, just at the story. I glanced at the graph, noticing that instead of marking specific Small Moment scenes in it, he'd labeled general trajectories he'd planned for the story (see Figure 5–1).

But it seemed he was preoccupied with other worries. "So what's troubling you?" I asked.

"I want to show Spencer walking to school, worrying about Humphrey, the bully. But I just keep telling what's in his brain: 'I'm worried. I'm so worried. I'm really worried.' There isn't any way to *show* his worries except if he looks up and down the block like James Bond or something," he said.

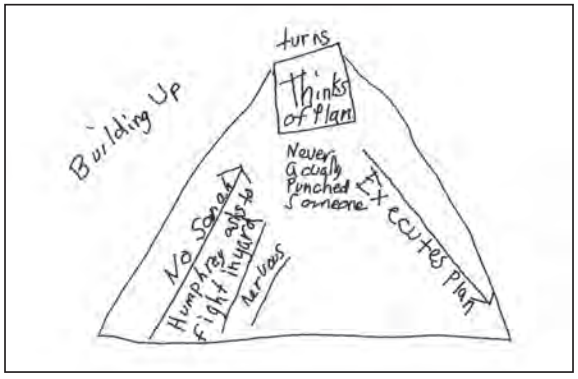


FIG. 5–1 Caleb's story arc

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

Finding Story Arcs in Published Stories

"I need to stop you for just a moment and tell you something really wonderful that's going on right now. I just saw Ari get up quietly from his seat and grab his folders. Then I noticed he was going back and rereading some of the realistic fiction short stories we've been reading as a class. I wasn't sure what he was doing at first, but then I talked to Ari and realized he was doing something so smart. Ari, can you tell people what you were up to?"

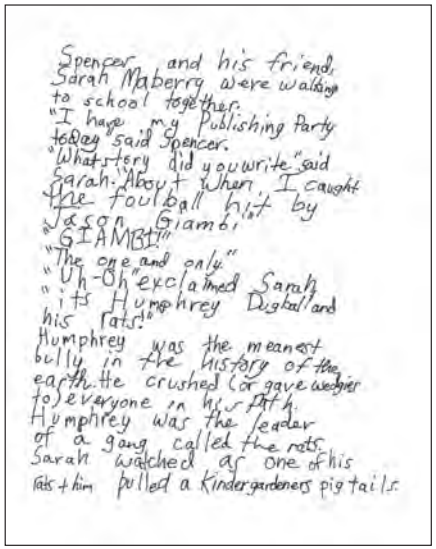
Ari held up his notebook to show a rough story arc. "I was getting a little confused as I tried to put my story into an arc. So I thought, well, if most stories have a story arc, I'll go and see what other writers did. I went back to look at 'The Marble Champ' by Gary Soto, and I noticed that the story starts with Lupe getting her thumb all ready for the marble competition, in lots of different ways. So I decided to look for what would be the top of the arc in 'The Marble Champ' and to make a story arc from that story. I think Lupe's last battle where she wins the championship is the top of the curve. Because after that she got everybody's cheers, and the trophy, and her family gave her that party, and then everything seems to calm down."

I thanked Ari, and then said to the class, "Writers, if you can pull yourselves away from work on your own story, it'd be helpful for you to try what Ari did. Consider looking for a story you can use as a model for your own story. Plot the story arc in the text you select as a mentor text. And remember, you need to continue thinking and writing about your characters even as you plot out possible story lines."

"Caleb," I responded. "You are doing what every fiction writer—really, what every writer—does. You've identified the writing problem that your story line poses. Some stories are hard because there are lots of characters, some are hard because time jumps backward and forward. Yours is hard (or at least the start of it is hard) because you want to show what your character is thinking and feeling, and yet he's walking all alone. So the problem you are struggling with is this: how does an author reveal a character's thoughts and still show, not tell? It is really smart for you to identify the problem!"

Then I said, "What I do when I encounter a problem is that instead of thinking about what the final solution will be, I switch my brain over and think, 'What strategies could I use to at least get me started on this?' So that means, for example, I'd probably sit here and just list optional ways to solve the problem. I'd brainstorm possible ways to go about solving it. How could you *maybe* solve it?"

Caleb generated a couple of ideas, culminating in the idea to add Sarah, Spencer's friend, into this section of the story. Soon he'd begun a new draft of the lead (see Figures 5–2).


Spencer and his friend,
Sarah Maberry were walking
to school together.
"I have my publishing party
today" said Spencer.
"What story did you write" said
Sarah. "About when I caught
the foul ball hit by
Jason Giambi
"GIAMBI!"
"The one and only."
"Uh-Oh" exclaimed Sarah
"it's Humphrey Dugball and
his rats!"
Humphrey was the meanest
bully in the history of the
earth. He crushed (or gave wedgies
to) everyone in his path.
Humphrey was the leader
of a gang called the rats.
Sarah watched as one of his
rats + him pulled a kindergardeners pig tails.

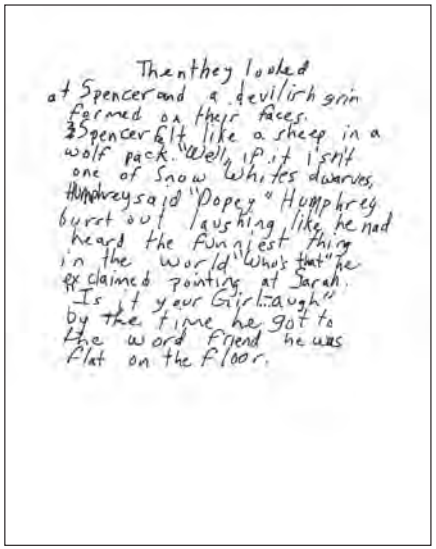

Then they looked
at Spencer and a devilish grin
formed on their faces.
Spencer felt like a sheep in a
wolf pack. "Well if it isn't
one of Snow Whites dwarves,
Humphrey said "Dopey" Humphrey
burst out laughing like he had
heard the funniest thing
in the world "Who's that" he
exclaimed pointing at Sarah.
Is it your Girl...augh"
by the time he got to
the word friend he was
flat on the floor.

FIG. 5–2 Caleb has added a second character into his lead.

Spencer and his friend, Sarah Mayberry were walking to school together.

"I have my publishing party today," said Spencer.

"What story did you write?" said Sarah.

"About when I caught the foul ball hit by Jason Giambi."

"GIAMBI!"

"The one and only."

"UhOh," exclaimed Sarah, "It's Humphrey Dugball and his rats!"

Humphrey was the meanest bully in the history of the earth. He crushed (or gave wedgies to) everyone in his path. Humphrey was the leader of a gang called the rats.

Sarah watched as one of his rats and him pulled a kindergartner's pig tails. Then they looked at Spencer and a devilish grin formed on their faces. Spencer felt like a sheep in a wolf pack.

"Well if it isn't one of Snow White's dwarves," Humphrey said. "Dopey." Humphrey burst out laughing like he had heard the funniest thing in the world. "Who's that," he exclaimed pointing at Sarah. "Is it your Girl . . . augh" by the time he got to the word 'friend' he was flat on the floor.

Once Caleb had written this lead, we again conferred. I pointed out that with the arrival of Humphrey, he'd definitely created some tension, but he hadn't really had a chance to develop Spencer's character or to show what Spencer wanted before Humphrey arrived on the scene. With that in mind, Caleb decided to revise his story arc. "Fiction writers do that a lot," I told him. "They shift back and forth between planning possible story arcs, writing a scene or two, rereading and rethinking what they've written, and revising their story arcs."

Next I gathered a group of children together for a strategy lesson. "I want to talk to all of you together," I said, "because each of you has a great plan for a *novel*." I added, "But I want to remind you that you are writing a very short story, and before you get much farther, you need to do some rethinking. When you plot out your story, the first point on it will

probably belong to one Small Moment story, to one vignette. And then you'll probably leap ahead to a second and maybe a third moment, but by then the story will need to be complete." Then I suggested we all look together at Felix's tentative plans, using that as a case in point. Felix had already made a timeline that began with Max winning his first boxing trophy. Then Felix shows that Max practiced to win more, followed by Max having a fight with his nemesis, followed by Max's first loss and the arrival of a girlfriend (see Figure 5–3).

"You need to go back to that question," I said. "What does Max most want? Fear? Struggle toward?" The group of children helped Felix revise his plans and sketch a story arc, and then they each brought out their own work. Soon the children had stories that were at least somewhat focused!

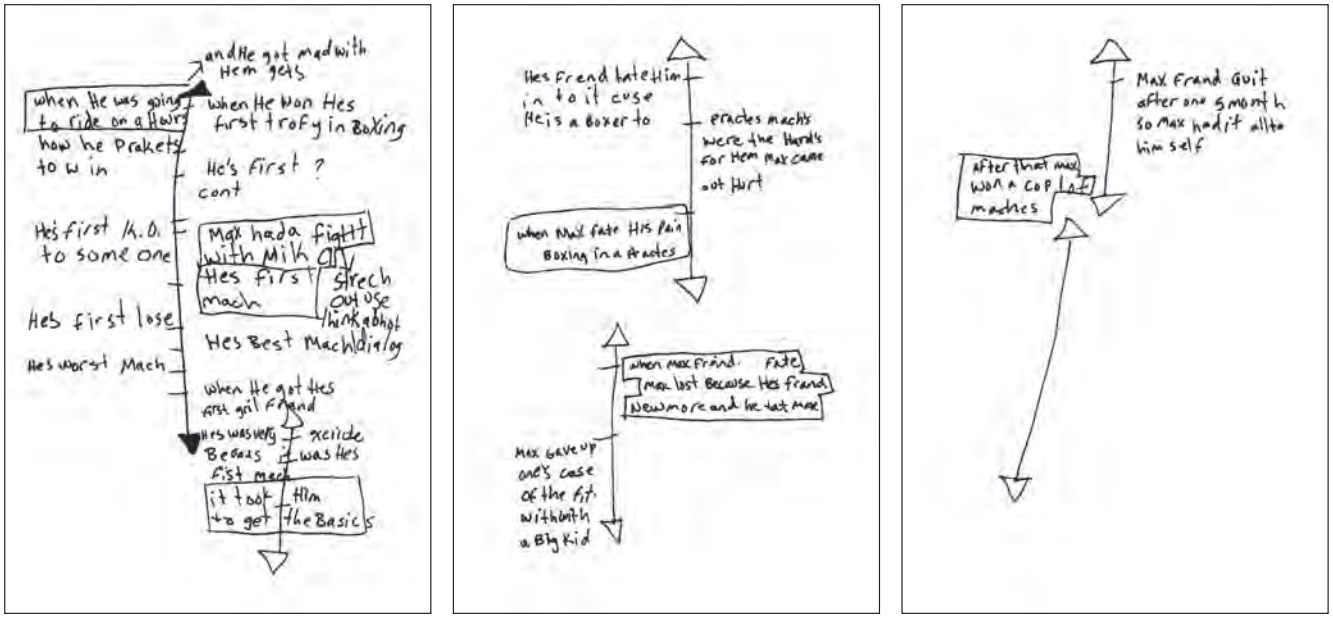


FIG. 5–3 Felix's timeline

SHARE

Choosing the Story Arcs that Map Our Stories the Best

Guide students to choose their strongest story arc.

"I saw tons of very intriguing story arcs being worked on today! I really can't wait to get a chance to look more closely at them. I also noticed that many of you made more than two or three. No matter how many you made, though, you will need to choose one that you think will make the best possible story. Can you, right now, read through your arcs and put a star on the one you think is strongest? The one you think will make the best story? If you're having a hard time, feel free to get your partner's opinion."

Explain that story arcs can be maps for writers' imaginations, allowing them to picture with detail how each moment might go.

Once I noticed that most students had their eyes on me, I called them back. "I know for many of you it was a hard choice. You have a couple of really good options. What a great problem to have! The good news is now that you have a story arc that you really like, it's a bit like having a map to someplace you want to go. You know how sometimes when you go someplace, like an amusement park or a museum, there's a map that allows you to see everything that is there? Well, if you're anything like me, you look at each place on the map and imagine exactly what that place will look like and also how you will get from one place to the next.

"Here's a little tip. You can do that with story arcs too. Except story arcs don't keep you from getting lost in a museum. Story arcs help writers make sure that they don't get lost in their stories. Even more importantly, story arcs help you to let your imaginations explore a little bit about how each scene might go and how to get to the next scene. We can imagine those things without fear, because our story arcs will help us keep from going too far off. Tomorrow we will begin drafting, so it would be really good practice to help you get ready for drafting by allowing your minds to follow the map of your story arcs. Can you right now look at a point on your story arc, and tell your partner how you imagine that scene playing out in your story? Where will it take place? Who will be in it? What will they say? What will they do? How will the character get to the next scene?"

Session 4

Using Elaboration Prompts to Grow Ideas

THE WONDERFUL THING about teaching writers is that every teacher has a built-in staff developer on hand every day. You teach, and then before the sun sets that day, you get feedback on the precise ways in which your teaching has been effective and the ways it has not been so effective. This feedback is an extraordinary gift because research has shown that learners of anything—and certainly that includes learners of teaching writing—improve immeasurably when they are given feedback. What a bonanza it is, then, that teachers of writing have built-in staff developers!

For you to reap these benefits, you do need to put a bit of time into receiving the feedback that is right there for you. And in this world, when all of us are so strapped for time, so busy busy busy, it is entirely possible that you'll allow yourself to be so engulfed in all that you have to do and to reach and to get to and to accomplish that you won't pause long enough to take in the feedback that is right there for you. Don't do that. Doug Reeves has shown that 20% of what we do yields 80% of the payoff. You need to learn which parts of your teaching are yielding that payoff, and you need to alter your teaching based on that feedback.

The feedback that is there for you—the built-in staff developer—is in your students' work. You teach, your writers' write, and *their* work is an immediate assessment of *your* work. You need to collect their work and to sit with it, thinking, not, "How are my students doing?" but instead, "How am *I* doing?" Read their freewriting from three days ago, two days ago, and yesterday and think, "Are they getting better?" Compare their writing to your image of good freewriting/writing to learn, asking, "Are they getting better in obvious, concrete, dramatic ways?" And, if not, be ready to reconsider your own teaching.

Be ready to notice especially the sources of trouble, because the storyline of your teaching is going to emerge from you (the main character in this story) encountering difficulties (as main characters always encounter in a story) and then inventing responses to those difficulties. Those invented responses will be where the rising action occurs in the storyline of your teaching.

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach children that writers linger with their ideas, extending their initial thinking by having conversations with themselves as they write and using elaboration prompts to grow their ideas.

GETTING READY

- ✔ "Qualities of Good Freewriting" list from Session 3
- ✔ "Ways to Push Our Thinking" list of prompts, written on chart paper. Feel free to use ours or add your own that your students are already comfortable using. (see Teaching)
- ✔ Your own entry of an idea and ways you pushed your thinking by using prompts. Prepare to demonstrate the process in front of students.
- ✔ Idea the whole class can build on using prompts
- ✔ A chart with some noted qualities of freewriting that you can use to create small groups (see Conferring)
- ✔ Examples of big abstract ideas and small precise details (see Mid-Workshop Teaching)
- ✔ A cut-out photo or drawing of a ladder (see Mid-Workshop Teaching)
- ✔ You'll want to be on the lookout today for a great example of freewriting that leads to new thinking that you can highlight (see Share)

This extra-powerful, extra-fun session emerged from just this sort of grappling with difficulty. Time after time, teachers found that when teaching essays—and when teaching free-writing as well—students found it hard to write about ideas at length, and part of that difficulty was that they found it hard to think about ideas in depth. Many students approached this unit, writing (and thinking) in what the great writing researcher, Mina Shaughnessey, referred to as "sentences of thought."

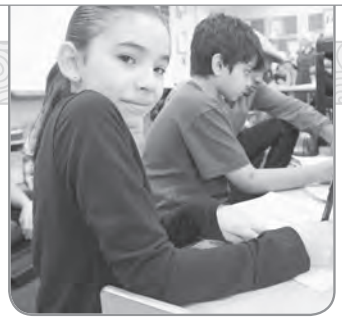
"It is no small thing to teach students to elaborate. Today, then, is just one of many days devoted to this challenge."

As mentioned earlier, I have come to realize that when working in expository genres, elaboration is especially difficult because the writer needs to learn to go from thinking in one-liners to thinking in paragraphs (or better yet, in essays!). It is no small thing to teach students to elaborate. Today, then, is just one of many days devoted to this challenge.

It's easiest to teach children to elaborate on their ideas in writing if they've already done this in conversations. Many teachers first teach youngsters to grow ideas by engaging them in accountable discussions after read-alouds. If you want to do this, read aloud a text, and when you pause, ask children to turn and share their ideas with a partner. Listen in as they talk, locating a child who has an idea that could generate an effective conversation. After a few minutes, ask, "Could someone get us started in a conversation about what we just read?" and call the child whose comment you heard earlier.

Let the class see you mulling over that one child's idea, restating it as you do so. Then say to the group, "Let's *all* talk and think more about Raffi's idea." You might say, "Talk with your partner about ways you agree with what Raffi said and ways you disagree with his idea." Soon afterward, convene the class and help them work together to add on to and talk back to that one idea. At first, you'll need to provide the conversational prompts. "Raffi said. . . . Who'd like to *add on* to that idea? Do the rest of you agree or disagree? Tell Raffi. Tell him why you agree. Give him examples."

Whether or not you begin by leading these accountable talk book conversations, you will want to teach children to grow ideas as part of writing to learn. In this session, you'll teach them to use the same phrases that they're apt to use in conversation—phrases such as "the important thing about this" or "As I say this, I'm realizing . . ."—to elaborate as they write. Last year your students likely learned strategies to elaborate, which consisted of helping them shift from declaring opinions and reasons to providing concrete examples to show their thinking. Thus, you'll probably find them comfortable with phrases such as "an example of this is . . . ," "for instance . . . ," or "like this one time. . . ." Now you will want to ratchet up the level of that work by pushing them to also elaborate through other means. You'll want to also equip them to linger at the level of ideas before shifting into the more familiar world of retelling instances. "In other words . . ." and "This is making me realize . . ." and "The important thing about this is . . ." can all help children elaborate first by saying more about their ideas. What important work!



MINILESSON

Using Elaboration Prompts to Grow Ideas

CONNECTION

Celebrate that children are writing provocative ideas and point out that they could be saying even more.

"Writers, I brought your notebooks home last night. I made myself a cup of tea, wrapped myself in a blanket, and put the pile of notebooks beside me. You know what happened? I read a few sentences in one of your notebooks, and then those sentences got me thinking and I'd look further on the page to learn what *you* thought about the topic you'd brought up, and then—Whoa! I'd find you had jumped onto a whole new topic!

"I kept wanting to phone you guys and say, 'You got me thinking that. . . . Isn't it also true that . . . ? This makes me realize. . . .'

"I think we've turned a corner in this unit of study. You have gotten really great at coming up with entries that spark all kinds of thoughts."

Name the teaching point.

"Today, I want to teach you that *you need to hold on to those thoughts for longer stretches of time*. It helps to hold conversations with yourself about your own first thoughts. Some writers keep a list of 'ways to push our thinking' close by while they write and use those elaboration prompts to prompt them to talk back to their own first ideas."

TEACHING

Recall that yesterday, students noted that when doing strong freewriting, writers linger with and elaborate on an idea. Explain that writers conduct conversations with themselves as they write—conversations that allow them to develop their own first thoughts.

"The other day, when you studied Jonah's freewriting, you guys noted that it was effective in part because he stayed on one idea for a long time, saying that big idea in more than one way until he got it right. When a writer stays on one idea for a long time and finds a lot to think and say about that one idea, people say the writer is 'elaborating.'

◆ COACHING

I'm hoping children will understand the need for elaboration if I situate this within the context of an interested reader who's dying to get into a grand conversation over their ideas.

Remember that our goals always extend beyond the reading and writing workshop. It is important to teach writing in part because writing is a powerful tool for thought. This session goes a long way toward helping children use writing as a tool for growing ideas on the page. We're explicitly teaching children to say more and think more, to extend their first thoughts, and to know what it is to see new ideas emerge from the tips of their pens. This is important!

"Here is the secret. If you are thinking something—like, thinking, 'It's hard to be a good friend'—the best way to get yourself to think a lot more about that is to have a really great talk with someone about that idea, right? And that other person might say things like 'Yeah, I agree,' and then she might say the idea (It's hard to be a good friend) in *her* words. Then you might nod and say, 'Yeah, that's it!' And who knows, you might say the idea *again* before giving an example.

"So here is what I need you to know. Essayists let the words on the page be sort of like the other person in a conversation. So they have a thought, and they put that thought on the paper. Then they listen to the paper saying their own thought to themselves, and say, 'Yeah! I agree' (with themselves) or say 'One example of that is . . .' or 'That's partly true and partly not true.' It is as if essayists are in conversation with themselves. That conversation with themselves is what allows them to elaborate—to say more about one idea, to connect the idea to other things, to say the idea in more than one way, to go from big ideas to specific examples.

"Sometimes it helps to keep a list of ways to push our thinking close by while we write and to use those elaboration prompts to extend our thinking, prompting us to talk back not just in conversations with others but also when writing more about our own first ideas."

Ways to Push Our Thinking

- In other words . . .
- That is . . .
- The important thing about this is . . .
- As I say this, I'm realizing . . .
- This is giving me the idea that . . .
- An example of this is . . .
- This shows . . .
- Another example of this is . . .
- This connects to . . .
- I see . . .
- The thought I have about this is . . .
- To add on . . .
- I used to think that . . . but now I think that . . .
- What surprises me about this is . . .
- Many people think . . . but I think . . .

It is crucial to teach children to talk back to each other's ideas. The single most common limitation in children's writing is that ideas are underdeveloped. By teaching children to talk back to each other's ideas, you also teach them to talk back to (and extend) their own ideas.

Earlier we taught children to use prompts to turn the corner from simply observing to having a thought about what they observed. In this minilesson, you use a wider array of prompts to promote thoughtfulness, channeling children toward different kinds and even levels of thinking. A prompt such as, "For example . . ." or "To add on . . ." can lead children to provide examples and think associatively. "This makes me realize . . ." or "This is giving me the idea that . . ." can lead them to progress from one thought to another, often in a free-association fashion. "On the other hand . . . ," "But . . . ," and "I partly disagree because . . ." can lead a child to question, while "This is similar to . . ." and "This is different from . . ." can lead to comparison.

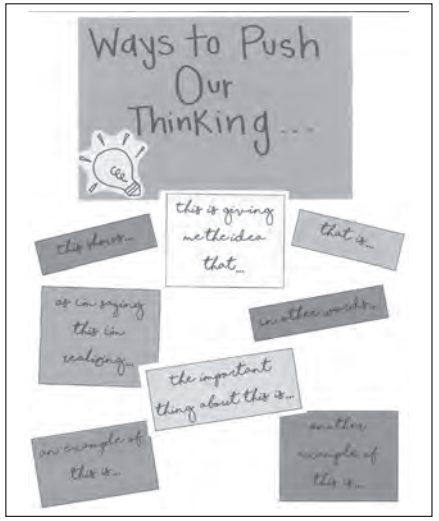


FIG. 4–1

Involve writers in helping you to use elaboration prompts to help you talk back to your own first ideas.

"I'm hoping you can help me try this in my writing, and then you can try. Here's a teeny start to an entry:

When I was a kid, my father taught me a lot.

"Maya, would you choose from the 'Ways to Push Our Thinking' list," I said, signaling to the list. "Coach me by saying a prompt you want me to use, and I'll use that prompt to think more about my claim. I'm going to write-in-the-air, but in real life, I'd be writing on the paper." I repeated my entry, "When I was a kid, my father taught me a lot."

As I do this, I try to demonstrate that a writer can use one of these prompts without knowing what she'll say next. As we articulate the words of a prompt, our mind leaps ahead, thinking "Why is it important?" In this fashion I aim to demonstrate that writing can be a tool to grow brand-new thoughts. Children already know that we write to record well-fashioned ideas that we've decided to present to the world; now I'm helping them learn that we also write to muse, speculate, risk having new insights.

Maya interjected, "*In other words* . . ." I repeated my claim and the prompt, paused in thought and then completed that sentence. "*In other words*, my father was one of my first teachers. I had others at school, but my father was a teacher-at-home."

Then Maya said, "*For example* . . . ," Repeating her prompt, I nodded at her and used it to spur an additional thought to my writing-in-the-air. "*For example*, he taught me that a person's job should also be that person's hobby. Every Christmas he made waffles and took them to the hospital where he worked. He never complained about having to go into his job on Christmas."

Before long, Maya inserted, "*This gives me the idea that* . . ." I again repeated her prompt and said: "*This gives me the idea that* everyone should have work that they love. I now realize people who love their work are lucky."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Set children up to practice using elaboration prompts to extend an idea you give them.

"Now it's your turn to practice this. I'm going to give you a shared, whole-class idea, just to practice. Partner 2, you'll take the part of the writer. Partner 1 will prompt you, acting almost like the other person in the conversation, saying elaboration prompts that can help you think longer about your idea. I'll give you the idea, and then Partner 2 you repeat it. Partner 1, use the chart to help you use elaboration prompts to help your partner grow his or her thinking. Remember to give Partner 2 some space to write-in-the-air whatever his or her thoughts might be.

When children begin to bring these phrases into their writing, you'll notice a child may write a phrase such as "This makes me realize . . ." without being aware of the meaning of that phrase. If you see a writer write that phrase, point to the words and say, "Oh! This tells me you are having a brand-new idea right now. I can't wait to see it!" If the writer writes, "This is important because . . . ," you will want to exclaim, "I can't wait to see what you figure the real significance of this is! I can't wait to see your decision." In this fashion, you teach children what those hard-to-pin down words mean.

"Okay, here's the idea: Kids have more problems with friends as they get older. Partner 2, repeat it and go."

LINK

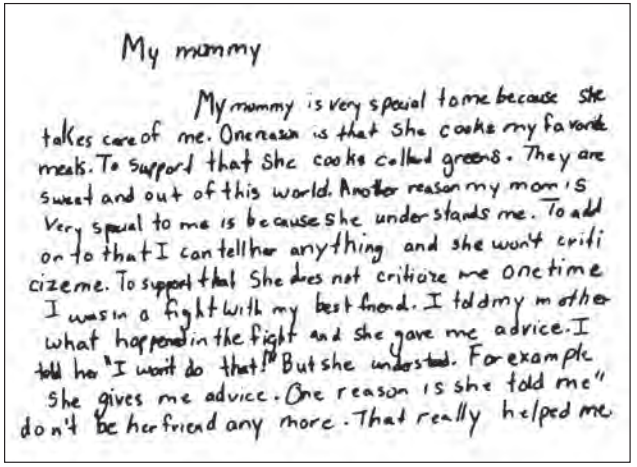
Restate the teaching point. Rally writers to use elaboration prompts as scaffolds to help them extend their own ideas as they write.

"Writers, listening to you, I'm hearing your first ideas become more insightful. Remember, if this writing can get you thinking deep into a conversation with yourself about your ideas, using elaboration prompts to talk back to (and think with) your own ideas, this can push you to grow insightful, surprising ideas. Later you can box them out, put them on top of a new page, and think off from them.

"How many of you will start today by putting the writing-in-the-air you just did onto the page?" Some hands went up. "Great. Get started. You'll probably be able to do a second one today, too. And how many of you are writing a new entry today?" Others raised their hands. "Great. Remember, you can use our chart, 'Ways to Push Our Thinking.' And try to use these elaboration prompts to help you stay longer with an idea. If anyone feels a little unsure about what you are doing, stay here on the rug and we'll work together. Off you go!"

As most of the class moved off, I gathered the few writers who remained and did another quick round of using prompts, this time charging them with writing their ideas on paper rather than writing-in-the-air. I left them to continue working as I moved off to confer and pull small groups, checking back on their progress from time to time.

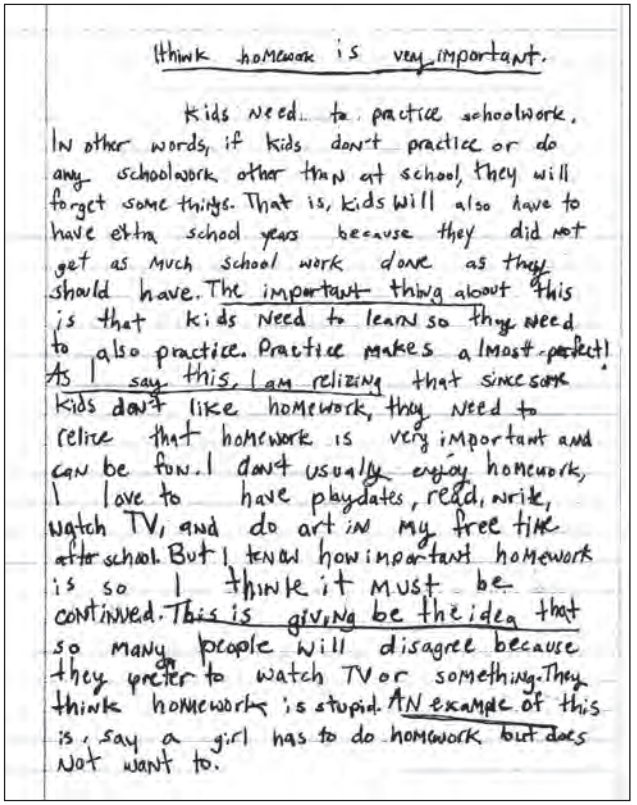
LaKeya used conversational prompts to extend her first thought (see Figure 4–2), and Maya elaborates using prompts (see Figure 4–3).



My mummy

My mummy is very special to me because she takes care of me. One reason is that she cooks my favorite meals. To support that she cooks collard greens. They are sweet and out of this world. Another reason my mom is very special to me is because she understands me. To add on to that I can tell her anything and she won't criticize me. To support that she does not criticize me one time I was in a fight with my best friend. I told my mother what happened in the fight and she gave me advice. I told her "I won't do that!" But she understood. For example she gives me advice. One reason is she told me" don't be her friend any more. That really helped me

FIG. 4–2 LaKeya has used conversational prompts to extend her first thought.



I think homework is very important.

Kids need to practice schoolwork. In other words, if kids don't practice or do any schoolwork other than at school, they will forget some things. That is, kids will also have to have extra school years because they did not get as much school work done as they should have. The important thing about this is that kids need to learn so they need to also practice. Practice makes almost-perfect! As I say this, I am relizing that since some kids don't like homework, they need to relize that homework is very important and can be fun. I don't usually enjoy homework, I love to have playdates, read, write, watch TV, and do art in my free time after school. But I know how important homework is so I think it must be continued. This is giving be the idea that so many people will disagree because they prefer to watch TV or something. They think homework is stupid. AN example of this is, say a girl has to do homework but does not want to.

FIG. 4–3 Maya elaborates using prompts.

Noting Qualities of Good Essay Writing in Children's Work

WHEN YOU CONFER WITH CHILDREN, try to let their entries teach you (and your students) ways to talk and think about essay writing. Notice entries that children have written that for some reason work especially well, and then join children in trying to put into words why those particular entries work. Be very specific and ask children to be specific, too. For example, ask, "What do you mean when you say, 'It's detailed?' Point to the details you used. What works about them?" Most state standards make it very clear that it is important for youngsters to grow up not only writing well, but also able to talk about effective writing, turning texts inside out to discuss what writers have done to create effects. Any time you recruit students to talk about effective writing, you support this important skill. *(continues)*

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Moving Up and Down the Ladder of Abstraction**

"Writers, can I have your eyes and attention? I'm noticing you move back and forth between writing about big ideas and showing them through small specific details. Totally cool! You're writing about huge ideas like 'I care about my friends' and then showing those ideas through details like the time your friend was sad and you sat next to her on the steps, even though you really wanted to join the kickball game. Emma, for example, is writing about the big idea that good friends can be any age and then shows that idea by writing about her friend who is two years older. (See Figure 4–3.)

Emma moves up and down the ladder of abstraction (see Figure 4–4):

My brother is older than me.

Older siblings don't always act their age.

I am two years younger than my friend, but she acts as though I am her age.

Good friends can be any age.

Parents don't always understand kid issues.

My parents don't always understand what I am dealing with.

"Writers, a guy named Roy Peter Clark, who is a really important writing teacher for grown-up writers, calls what you are doing 'going up and down the ladder of abstraction.' At the top of the ladder," I said, waving my hand above my head, "are the times you write about big ideas like friendship and being true to oneself and peer pressure. At the bottom of the ladder," I continued, and I brought my hand down, "is

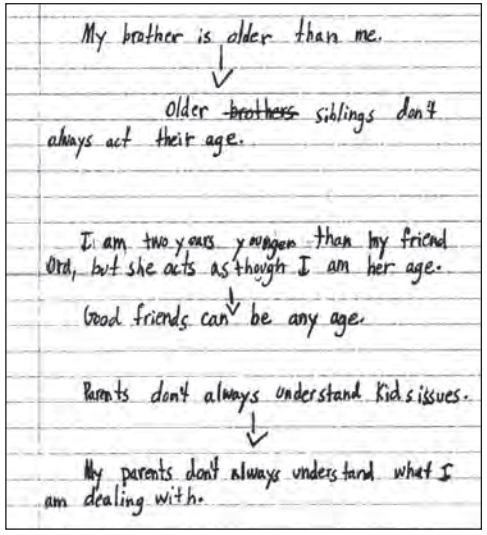


FIG. 4–4 Emma moves up and down the ladder of abstraction.

(continues)

when you show these ideas through detailed examples and Small Moment stories. I confess, I sometimes keep this photo of a ladder beside me when I write to remind myself to go up and down the ladder of abstraction when I am writing.

"Let's practice thinking about where an idea is on our ladder. Show me with your hand whether I am writing at the top or the bottom of the ladder. Let's see. I could start by writing about how my father taught me so much. Show me with your hand where that is on the ladder." The children all raised their hands above their heads, and I nodded, "Yes, that is a very general idea about all the times, not just about one time.

"Let's try another one. So, I could tell about how one time my father taught me it was okay to cry. You are right. That's lower down. It's a specific example.

"I could write, 'Some grown-ups, like many kids, care a lot about fitting in, but others don't think that matters.'" The children stretched their arms over their heads, and I nodded that yes, this was a big, abstract idea.

"I could say that my Dad wore frozen peas on his head at our Christmas party." (Specific.)

"Writers, remember, the best writing moves up and down the ladder of abstraction. If you find yourself staying at the top of the ladder and writing on and on about big ideas, push yourself to say, 'For example, this one time . . .' because that will help you move down the ladder.

"On the other hand, if you find yourself only writing about the details, push yourself to say, 'This makes me think . . .' because that will help you move back up the ladder."

I ended by saying, "Before you continue writing, reread your writing and mark in the margin whether it is high or low on the ladder of abstraction. Decide if you are writing at the top of the ladder or the bottom. Then push yourself to move back and forth. Okay, back to writing."

It will also be important for you to notice problems that you see in children's entries and to help children put those problems into words. This, too, will help children develop a vocabulary for talking about their goals as they write.

As you talk about writing with students, one of the things you will notice is that writers can always write at greater or lesser levels of abstraction. For example, earlier I jotted ideas I had about my dad. One idea was that he was one of my most important teachers. That is a fairly general idea, high on a ladder of abstraction. Think of it as Roman numeral I in an outline. I could move down a notch in the level of generalization and write, "My dad taught me to fail with grace." Think of that as the A in the outline. Or I could move toward an even more specific/less abstract idea (the number 1 in the outline) and say, "When my dad was fired, he taught my brothers and sisters and me the truth of the saying, 'When one door closes, another opens.'" Expository writing works best when there is only a little bit of writing at the highest level of abstraction and much more writing at the lowest level. But writing at the lower levels of abstraction needs to fit under the province of the writing at the higher levels of abstraction. As mentioned earlier, it is important for children to learn to shift between higher and lower levels of abstraction and for our teaching to support that flexibility.

Then, too, as you talk about writing with students, you will probably talk and think about whether the writing feels honest. I suspect you will generally find that when writing feels fresh, it is characterized by honesty. The writer may not use fancy words, but he or she seems to reach for the exactly right words.

Writing about ideas also works when the writing is cohesive. The entries students produce now will not tend to be that, but you may find sections that do feel cohesive. Chances are good that those sections will contain repetition and parallelism, as these are ways writers create a unified message. You may notice that in some essay entries, a key phrase or word recurs, almost like a refrain. As the text unfolds, bits of the text harken back to earlier passages. This creates resonance, and it is often what takes my breath away in an essay. When children do this it is usually a lucky accident. Find these accidents and let the young author (and his or her classmates) know the effect on you!

You might also consider how you can set up small groups around qualities of good freewriting. You might set up a chart with different qualities you want to see in the writing and jot quickly the names of students who seem to need more help in these areas. Then you'll have your small groups set.

Shifts from big ideas to details	Stays with one idea	Reaches for precise words
Grows new thinking	**Writing has parts that feel cohesive**	

For any of these groups, you can always create a piece of your own demonstration writing or show a short excerpt from a previous student that showcases the quality you want writers to notice and involve them in a mini-inquiry as to how the writer of the exemplar piece has reached for precise words, or stayed with one idea, etc. Chart what they notice and get them to try it out in their own writing immediately.

SHARE

Celebrating Extended Thinking

Ask partners to talk over the development of the thinking in their notebooks—with or without prompts.

"Writers, can I have your eyes and attention? Get with your partner and share an entry in which you really pushed yourself to stay with those ideas so they led you to new thoughts. And talk about whether you used the elaboration prompts from our chart to stay with your idea or whether you did something else. We're inventing ways of writing here, and I'm dying to learn about what you are doing that works for you."

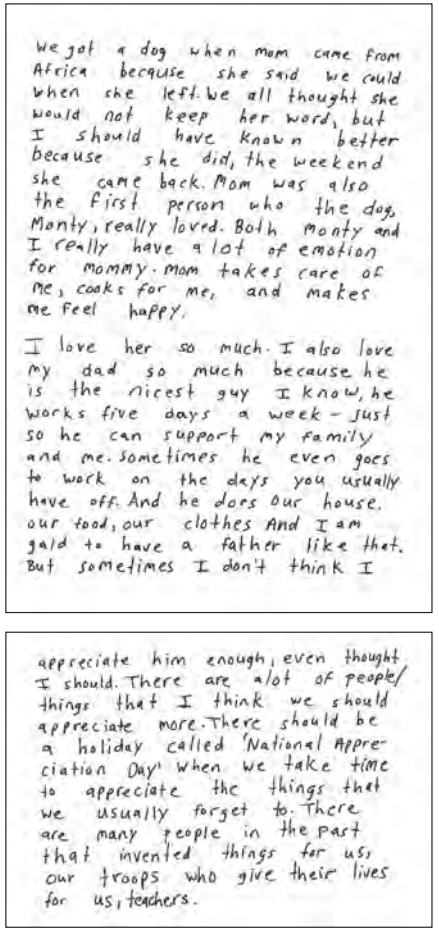
"I definitely used the prompts," David told Maya. "Me, too," Maya said. "But I also tried to ask myself questions and that helped me keep going, too."

Convene the class and highlight an example that you want the rest to emulate.

"Listen to these examples from your classmates! See how their thinking grows and grows? You'll notice that Ellie definitely uses elaboration prompts, and she uses more and more sophisticated ones as her entry progresses along. First she uses 'for example,' but soon she's nudging her thinking with 'I realize . . .' and 'what surprises me is . . . .'"

> I hate it when I am doing something important and then I get interrupted.
> For example, when I'm reading a book and my mom calls, "Ellie, it's time to go to sleep" but I really want to finish the book because that's what I am into. I realize that this happens a lot to me, like when I'm watching TV or having fun with my friends. What surprises me is I always have a lot of time and no one interrupts me when I am doing things I don't like, like homework or practicing my oboe or other things.

"Let's each set a goal for ourselves for our next entry. Right now, think of something you want to try doing in your next entry. Maybe you want to try writing a full page on one idea. Maybe you want to make sure you move up and down the ladder of abstraction. Maybe you want to try pushing your thinking by using all of the prompts, even the more sophisticated ones. Make a goal for yourself, right now. Write that down at the top of a new notebook page and box it out. When you return to your notebook, you'll see your goal and be reminded of what you want to accomplish the next time you write. Okay, share your goal with a neighbor right now and say how you will hold yourself accountable for meeting your goal!"



We got a dog when mom came from Africa because she said we could when she left. We all thought she would not keep her word, but I should have known better because she did, the weekend she came back. Mom was also the first person who the dog, Monty, really loved. Both Monty and I really have a lot of emotion for mommy. Mom takes care of me, cooks for me, and makes me feel happy.

I love her so much. I also love my dad so much because he is the nicest guy I know, he works five days a week - just so he can support my family and me. Sometimes he even goes to work on the days you usually have off. And he does our house. our food, our clothes And I am glad to have a father like that. But sometimes I don't think I appreciate him enough, even thought I should. There are a lot of people/ things that I think we should appreciate more. There should be a holiday called 'National Appreciation Day' when we take time to appreciate the things that we usually forget to. There are many people in the past that invented things for us, our troops who give their lives for us, teachers.

FIG. 4–5 Max's entry represents a journey of thought.

USING ELABORATION PROMPTS TO GROW IDEAS

Elaborating on First Thoughts

Tonight, practice using some of the elaboration prompts at home. Have a little conversation with yourself while you are walking down the street or brushing your teeth or looking out the window. For example, you can walk down the street and pick a prompt out of the air. Say to yourself "I'm learning that. . . ." Fill in the sentence in a way that surprises you. Then add on. Say another prompt: "For example. . . ." Or try more complicated elaboration prompts (they're the later ones on your list), like "I used to think that . . . but now I think that. . . ." "What surprises me about this is . . ." or "Many people think . . . but I think. . . ."

When you do this work, try to make sure that you don't only say these phrases but that you use them. Use the phrases to make your initial idea become richer, more complex, and more original. Suppose I say, "I like dogs" and add, "This is important because. . . ." But then I simply say, "It just is," and add, "Furthermore, I like cats, too." I wouldn't be using these terms as tools for thought. What a difference there would be if instead my thought train went like this:

> I like dogs. This is important to me because my mother's dogs sometimes seem to matter as much to her as we, her children, do. I find myself growing up to be like her. Furthermore, now that my oldest son is going off to college, I've been thinking of getting myself a new puppy.

Most of your homework tonight won't be written. It will instead be thought, said, or lived. But also, in your writer's notebook, re-create and extend one train of thought, one that leads you into especially provocative areas.

Session 4

Teaching as a Way to Rehearse for Information Writing

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that when writing to teach, it helps writers to do some actual teaching about their topic.

GETTING READY

- ✔ One student to share his or her work with the class (see Teaching)
- ✔ "Questions Teachers Ask When Planning to Teach" list (see Teaching)
- ✔ Chart paper and markers (see Active Engagement)
- ✔ "Getting Ready to Write an Informational Book" chart, updated to reflect today's teaching (see Active Engagement)
- ✔ An enlarged copy of the Information Writing Checklist, Grades 4 and 5, as well as individual copies for students (see Share)

THE GREAT PSYCHOLOGIST, Erik Erikson, has written, "We are the teaching species. Human beings are constituted so as to need to teach. Ideas are kept alive by being shared, truths by being professed." Those of us who have the great fortune of being teachers know that there is no way to learn more about a subject than to teach that subject. When we have the chance to teach others what we know, we come to know what we know—and what we do not know, as well. We learn the parts of our subject that will elicit a response from others, and we learn to rise to the occasion of those parts. We get that special glint in our eyes when we reach a good part of our teaching; we slow things down, become more detailed, building suspense, momentum.

Then, too, we come to anticipate the parts that will confuse our students. We approach those parts differently, aware that we need to carefully lay out the progression of thinking so that learners travel with us.

The wonderful thing is that children who want to write informational texts all have access to the power of teaching. The only thing that you need to do is to orchestrate time and people so that youngsters have an appointment to teach. Ideally, there is an interlude between learning about what one will teach and actually doing the teaching—because there are few more powerful ways to support rehearsal than to tell someone they have just a bit of time before they'll be teaching others. Perhaps you can find ways to elevate the teacher—prop that youngster up on a milk crate, suggesting he teach children sitting at his feet. Or give the child chart paper, a marker, a pointer, and ten minutes to prepare. The smallest props can do a world of good to create a drumroll around this event, and that will, in turn, invite children to rise to the occasion.

You've experienced this yourself: the first time you spoke at an open house to a room full of parents, the first time you talked about your teaching to your colleagues—and someone actually took notes! Give your youngsters the experiences that can allow them to write with an authoritative voice.

MINILESSON

Teaching as a Way to Rehearse for Information Writing

CONNECTION

Note that the collegiality of shared inquiry keeps people wanting to engage in research, and support some of that by channeling students to teach others what they have learned.

I asked students to join me in the meeting area, sitting next to the partner that they worked with during the previous day's share session. "Today, writers, will you return to the person you talked to yesterday about your scavenger hunt, and show each other the notes you took, the things you learned or did? As you talk, tell each other what you learned that is especially interesting about the Revolutionary War."

The children talked for a bit, and then I voiced over. "I love that some of you are taking notes on what you are learning from each other! Researchers go through life like magnets, letting things stick to them. So yes, if your classmate tells you something interesting about the Revolutionary War, you need to think, 'Could I add that to *my* writing?' I circulated, listening to animated discussions about Molly Pitcher firing a cannon for her husband and William Dawes's bravery on the Midnight Ride. "You are all sounding like experts!"

Name the teaching point.

"Today, I want to remind you that when you are writing to teach about your topic, as you are whenever you do any information writing, it helps to *actually do some teaching*. Knowing that you have an audience can help you figure out what you need to teach. And the questions people ask in real life are probably questions that *readers* will also ask, so it helps to try to answer those questions in your writing."

◆ COACHING

There are a few reasons for this interlude. First, there is no better way to call for students' attention than to get them talking about the topic first. Then, too, the mark of good writing is that the voice of the writer comes through on the page. Many students write research that is utterly lacking in voice. So the simple act of making time for children to talk in pairs about the research topic will have far-reaching impacts.

Of course, there is probably no single lesson that we could include in this series that has more power for us than this one. The fact that we (the coauthors of the series) teach is the single most important contributor to our writing. As we write, we see the faces, know the stories, of the teachers who fill our lives. When writing is a way to teach people we don't yet know but already care about, this transforms the writing.

TEACHING

Recruit the class to help one student prepare for teaching a familiar topic to another class, using this to demonstrate that preparing for teaching can lead a person to embellish notes and to anticipate interests and questions.

"Class, I need your help on something. Robert has been invited to go to Mr. Finnerty's room to teach his kids about Paul Revere's ride—and I know you *all* know a lot about that topic. So I'm hoping we can help Robert get ready for his teaching. If we can help Robert teach Mr. Finnerty's class well, I think that we can also figure out some things that will help everyone in this room teach better—and I'm talking about teaching in person, and also teaching on the page.

"I'm a teacher, so why don't I start by giving you some tips about what people do to get ready to teach. Before a teacher teaches, he or she needs to have a plan. The plan is usually a list of the main topics that I will teach, with notes about the important points. In a way, a lesson plan is the same as a plan for a piece of writing. It is important for you to read over the plan and to think, 'What do I want my audience to learn?' 'What will interest people?' I also think, 'What might confuse them, what I can clarify?'" I flipped to the next page of my chart paper pad, showing questions I ask.

Questions Teachers Ask When Planning to Teach

- What do I want my audience to learn?
- What will interest people?
- What might confuse them that I can clarify?

Debrief in a way that makes this a lesson not on teaching but on writing teaching texts, as the students are doing.

"Asking those questions helps me think of ways I can make my teaching as interesting and informative as possible. Writers do that as well, of course—and especially writers of information texts, because the goal is to write in such a way that the writing acts like good teaching."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

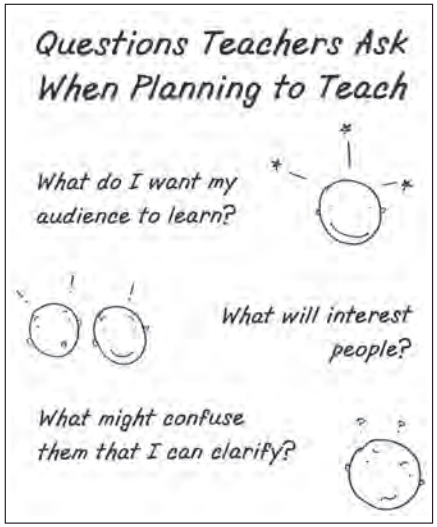
Recruit the one student to share his teaching plan with the class, inviting the class to give feedback to help make the student's teaching plan as good as possible

"Robert, will you share your teaching plans with us? We'll all listen, trying to think about ways that your teaching can be as interesting and as informative as possible to the kids in Mr. Finnerty's class."

Robert clambered up on his knees. "See, I'm gonna teach about Paul Revere and so I thought I'd tell about the things that happened before that night, and then the lights from the church signaling to him, and then how he rode around to Lexington and all."

We trust that children will glean that the work with Robert is really not just about preparing Robert. It is, instead, all about students in general learning how to bring their knowledge of teaching into the writing they'll do.

When I want kids to return later to a list that I say aloud, I try to leave a written copy of that list. Making it during the minilesson can actually slow things down fairly dramatically, which is why I had my chart at the ready.



When you shift from the demonstration to debriefing, students should feel the different moves you are making just by the way your intonation and posture changes. After most demonstrations, there will be a time for you to debrief, and that's a time when you are no longer acting like a writer. You are the teacher who has been watching the demonstration and now turns to talk, eye to eye with kids, asking if they noticed this or that during the previous portion of the minilesson.

As Robert spoke, I jotted his plan:

Paul Revere's Midnight Ride

Before the ride
The signal
Riding to warn the patriots

I said to the class, "Let's remember that Robert needs to think first, 'What do I want my audience to learn?' To answer that, he had to think about all the main points of his topic and make sure his teaching addressed those main points. Do you think Robert's plan addresses the main points about Paul Revere and his midnight ride? Turn and talk to your partner."

I listened in while Grayson said to her partner, "I am writing about the Midnight Ride, too. And I think he has got to add more about what happened after. He got arrested by the British!"

After the children talked for a minute in partnerships, I voiced over, "Will you shift now to another thing that teachers think about—what will interest people? Have you got ideas for what Robert could do to be sure his teaching interests people as much as possible?"

"I have a good idea," said Mitchell to Lucie, "Robert should tell about how the guard at one of the houses told Paul Revere not to make so much noise. And he said something like, 'You'll get a lot more noise soon when the British come!'" Others suggested Robert add details like how Paul Revere wrapped his oars in cloth to muffle the noise.

I voiced over, saying, "So you are thinking that Robert's teaching—and eventually his writing—will be more interesting if he adds more details. Let's think about the third consideration teachers take into account—what might confuse the kids in Mr. Finnerty's class, and how Robert could clear up confusion."

"The kids might be confused about why he's such a big shot when all he did was ride around," Sam said, adding "and he wasn't the only rider. I'm confused about that, so I can't really fix it up. Why isn't William Dawes as famous?"

I reconvened the group. "I was able to hear a lot of what you were suggesting Robert could do, but Robert needs to hear your thoughts, as well. Tell them to Robert." A minute later Robert was being reminded that he hadn't told that much about what occurred after the ride (which was especially interesting in this case). I added that subtopic to the list of what Robert planned to cover in his teaching, and said, "It almost always happens that when you teach about a topic, new ideas come up. So the work Robert is going to do—adding that subtopic to his plans—is something every one of you will do whenever you are writing an informational text."

Soon others had suggested other "juicy bits" that Robert could add, and I pointed out that to add interest, they had all suggested details: quotes, anecdotes, quirky facts. Robert wasn't sure how to fit in a part of his teaching where he addressed people's confusions, so we suggested he include a part where he says, "You may be confused about . . . "

When you have set students up to follow a list, it is important that your teaching follow that list as well. Be aware that jumping about in the sequence of the list causes extraordinary confusion. So it might seem like no big deal to do that, but actually it is a big deal. Refer often to the list, too, just by touching a bullet point, so that you show children the way in which your teaching is built upon that infrastructure.

My coaching, of course, follows the list that I had introduced earlier and I will add to the anchor chart when the minilesson is done.

and then address those confusions. I added on to the chart "Getting Ready to Write an Informational Book," a few of the specific strategies we discussed under step 5.

Debrief, pointing out that the steps writers took to plan for teaching are steps that will help with their writing.

"Writers, whenever you are writing an informational text of any kind, it helps to teach a real audience about the same topic on which you are writing. By thinking about the people you are going to teach and about building a lesson plan to help those people learn, you make your plans with the audience in mind right from the start. You'll find that when you need your thinking about a topic to help some people who are right there with you actually learn things—all of a sudden the presence of those people makes it really important that your teaching matters and that it works. So any time, when writing an informational book, your process will go like this . . . " As I read over the updated anchor chart, I highlighted the new information underneath step 5.

LINK

Set the class up to teach before they write, reminding them to use their teaching as a way to improve upon their writing.

"I want that magic for your writing. So right now, without a word, while you are still sitting on the rug, make a plan for how you will teach someone today. Just jot the topics you'll teach, in order, and then, after you make that plan, consider whether you've taught the important points, interested your student, and answered the questions that the student is apt to be asking. Once I see that you are ready, I'm going to give you a student—not your partner, but someone who hasn't talked to you about your topic.

"And remember, teaching about a topic can always help you rehearse for informational writing, now and always.

"As you teach or right after, jot some quick notes about how you'll change your information writing. Okay, teachers—plan!"

As children worked, I voiced over with some prompts. "After you run dry on one subtopic, say, 'Another part that I want to teach about is . . . ,' then add another paragraph!"

A minute later I voiced over, "I love seeing so many of you jotting specific facts and details (see Figure 4–1). You are right that information writing is built with the bricks of information, not just swirls of words."

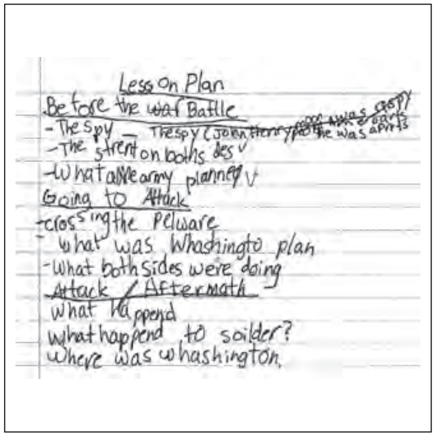


FIG. 4–1 Edward's teaching plan

Getting Ready to Write an Informational Book

1. *Choose a topic.*
2. Think about how your writing might go. What kind of writing might each chapter (or part) be?
3. Plan a way to take notes and to jot ideas for each part.
4. Take notes, fitting what you learn into your plan for the writing.
5. Plan for teaching others about your topic, and then do that teaching to rehearse for writing.
   - What do I want my audience to learn? (Add missing parts.)
   - What will interest people? (Add quotes, anecdotes, quirky facts.)
   - What might confuse them, that I can clarify? (Add, "If you are wondering . . ." or "You may be confused about . . .")
6. Draft!

Coaching Listeners

THE WRITING WORKSHOP WILL BE DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS TODAY, and your conferring and small-group work will reflect that division. While children are teaching each other, you might make the decision to devote yourself entirely to working with the listeners. We all know what it is to talk to someone whose eyes are roaming as we talk, who seems to be waiting for us to cut to the chase and be done talking. On the other hand, we know what it is to talk to someone who listens raptly, who is so responsive to everything we say that it is as if that person is priming our pump, bringing more and more out of us so that we end up saying far more than we dreamt of saying. Your children will probably need help listening with that sort of attentiveness. You may decide that you can lift the quality of listening that is occurring in the classroom just by joining one partnership, then another, and in each instance, listening with rapt attention and responding as that sort of a listener does. Your model alone, however, may not be enough. You may need to ramp this up by whispering into the ear of some of your listeners. You might prompt, "Oh, that's interesting! Tell your partner to say more about that!" or "Wait! Are you confused? Ask your partner to say that again in a different way."

If you feel that almost every listening partner needs some direction, you might call out in a loud voice, "I need all listeners over here," and then give the listening partners a one-minute pep talk (quietly, away from the ears of the partners who are functioning as teachers).

Either way, after ten or fifteen minutes, you'll shift your class into writing, and then of course the kind of support you'll need to give will change. Be sure that writers are using their teaching to strengthen their drafting. For starts, it will be important that the structure that writers selected when planning their teaching is evident also in their drafting. One signal of this will be that they have clearly defined categories of information, and that they are grouping information into appropriate categories. Related to this, you can check in on their use of linking words and phrases.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

Teaching Others Should Prime the Pump of Your Writing

"Writers, in the old days, before the modern pipes we have now, people had to get their water from a well. Before they could pump water out of the well, they had to do what's called 'priming the pump,' that is—they had to give the handle a few pumps, like this," I mimed that I was pumping from a well. "Pump, pump, pump, and then the water would come spurting out. The teaching that you just did was sort of like priming the pump for your writing.

"You got yourself going a little bit—pump, pump, pump—by teaching others. Your teaching hopefully gave you lots of new ideas of what you could add to clear up confusion and to make things interesting. And now, your writing can come spurting out in a gush.

"Once you have primped the pump of your writing, pick up your pen and start writing. Be sure to think about ways to convey the important things about your topic, to interest your reader, and to answer questions he or she will be asking. We have about twenty minutes of writing left—plan to finish at least two more pages!"

SHARE

Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting

Ask writers to reflect on all they already know about good informational writing, and use the Information Writing Checklists to set some goals for their writing.

"Writers, I want to remind you of one key principle of writing—and that's that writers bring forward everything they know about the kind of writing they are doing. I know you did some informational writing in third grade, and it's important that you carry that with you as you tackle these books. I also thought that it would be helpful to take a look at the goals for information writing that you'll be looking to master and exceed this year." I showed students the two-columned checklist.

Information Writing Checklist

	Grade 4	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!	Grade 5	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
	Structure				**Structure**			
Overall	I taught readers different things about a subject. I put facts, details, quotes, and ideas into each part of my writing.	☐	☐	☐	I used different kinds of information to teach about the subject. Sometimes I included little essays, stories, or "how-to" sections in my writing.	☐	☐	☐
Lead	I hooked my readers by explaining why the subject mattered, telling a surprising fact, or giving a big picture. I let readers know that I would teach them different things about a subject.	☐	☐	☐	I wrote an introduction that helped readers get interested in and understand the subject. I let readers know the subtopics I would be developing later as well as the sequence.	☐	☐	☐
Transitions	I used words in each section that help readers understand how one piece of information connected with others. If I wrote the section in sequence, I used words and phrases such as *before, later, next, then,* and *after.* If I organized the section in kinds or parts, I used words such as *another, also,* and *for example.*	☐	☐	☐	When I wrote about results, I used words and phrases like *consequently, as a result,* and *because of this.* When I compared information, I used words and phrases such as *in contrast, by comparison,* and *especially.* In narrative parts, I used phrases that go with stories such as *a little later* and *three hours later.* In the sections that stated an opinion, I used words such as *but the most important reason, for example,* and *consequently.*	☐	☐	☐
Ending	I wrote an ending that reminded readers of my subject and may have suggested a follow-up action or left readers with a final insight. I added my thoughts, feelings, and questions about the subject at the end.	☐	☐	☐	I wrote a conclusion in which I restated the main points and may have offered a final thought or question for readers to consider.	☐	☐	☐
Organization	I grouped information into sections and used paragraphs and sometimes chapters to separate those sections. Each section had information that was mostly about the same thing. I may have used headings and subheadings.	☐	☐	☐	I organized my writing into a sequence of separate sections. I may have used headings and subheadings to highlight the separate sections. I wrote each section according to an organizational plan shaped partly by the genre of the section.	☐	☐	☐

"I know that you've seen a checklist like this before for the other writing units, but I just want to remind you how this works. In the first column are the goals for fourth-grade information writing. And in the next column are the goals for *next* year, for fifth-grade information writing. You might be thinking: What? Fifth grade? Next year, already? But you might be surprised to see that you are already starting to meet some of these fifth-grade goals. Right now, what I'd like you to do with the piece of writing that you've been working on today, is use this checklist to assess what you've done. Check 'yes' next to the things on the list that you are already doing and check 'starting to' if you're sort of doing it. Put a check in the 'not yet' column if you don't yet see evidence of that element in your writing." I gave students a few minutes to do this work.

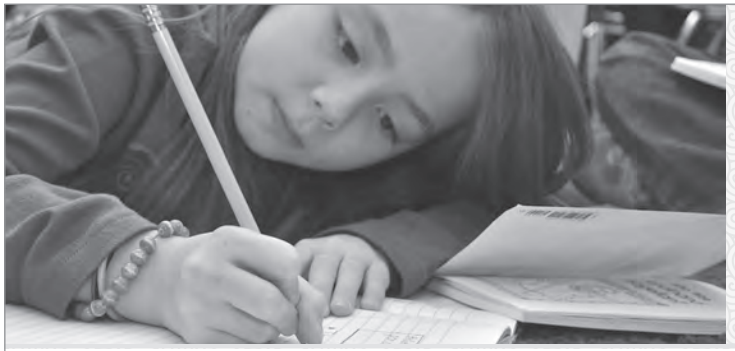
"It looks like everyone is done. Now, with your partner, will you share one or two goals that you have for yourself? You can choose from any of the items on the checklist for which you checked 'starting to' or 'not yet.'"

The Information Writing Checklist, Grades 4 and 5 can be found in the online resources.

30 MINUTES—JUST WRITE!!

Writers, you have done a lot of priming the writing pump. You've planned writing, taught writing, assessed writing, set goals for writing—the one part of all this that you haven't done enough is—*writing*! So tonight, set your clock to half an hour. Put your pen on the paper and start writing, and write, write, write for the full half an hour. If you aren't sure of a fact, just write "whatchamacallit" so that you don't pause to research anything.

In that half hour, you should be able to write at least a page and a half, and probably well over that amount. We'll admire what you get done tomorrow.



Session 6

Citing Textual Evidence

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that writers use direct quotes to support their claims about a text. You'll teach them ways writers are discerning, choosing only the quotes that best support their ideas.

GETTING READY

- ✔ Students' booklets, to be brought to the carpet, along with a pen or highlighter
- ✔ "How to Write a Literary Essay" chart (see Teaching)
- ✔ Three quotes from the mentor text that could support one of your reasons, written on separate pieces of chart paper. We use the following sentences for our essay on *Fox*:
  "And so Dog runs, with Magpie on his back, every day, through Summer, through Winter." "In the evenings, when the air is creamy with blossom, Dog and Magpie relax at the mouth of the cave, enjoying each other's company." "Magpie tries to warn Dog about Fox. 'He belongs nowhere,' she says. 'He loves no one.'" (see Teaching)
- ✔ "When Choosing a Quote, Essayists Ask . . . " chart (see Teaching)
- ✔ "Ways to Bring Quotes into an Essay" chart (see Share)

SKIERS HAVE DOZENS OF DIFFERENT WORDS for snow: new, fluffy snow that's perfect to ski on is called *powder*, melting snow that you slip and slide on is *mush*, hard icy snow that will cut your legs if you fall is called *crust*, and so on. Since the quality or type of snow impacts skiers' rides down the slopes, it makes sense that they have all these specialized terms for it. Children will need specialized terms for their essay writing as well. When children first learn to write about literature, they will probably talk often about the need to cite evidence (or examples) from the text. The goal will be to "give evidence." Most of your students will not yet know that, just as skiers might call on a specific set of words and phrases to refer to snow, literary essayists draw on a set of terms to help state claims and make cases in different ways. Literary essayists have a vocabulary—and a system—to help them incorporate evidence from a text into an essay.

In the preceding session, children learned that they can find bits of a text that illustrate the idea they are advancing and then retell those bits as micro-stories. Today you'll help children learn that as literary essayists, they have a palette of options for referring to the text under study. They will sometimes choose to tell a story to make a point, but other times they'll quote a section of the text to provide evidence, using the exact words of the author. Quoting not only helps to bolster the essayist's claim, but it also works to enrich the essay with the beautiful language the author has used. It is almost as if the essayist is saying, "I cannot say this better myself, so let me tell you what the author has said, or how this part of the story goes, to show you what I mean." Quoting a text is also another way youngsters learn to shift between abstract ideas and concrete details.

MINILESSON

Citing Textual Evidence

CONNECTION

Contextualize today's lesson by helping children understand the power of quotes to express ideas.

"When you graduate from high school, there will be what is called a yearbook that will contain a photo of each person in your graduating class. You may have seen your mother or father's yearbook. Traditionally, right under each person's photo, there is a quote—a sentence that comes from a book or a song or a poem—that captures the essence of that person.

"Sometimes the quote will be a beautiful saying about friendship or about the joy of working hard or the importance of family. For an athlete, the quote might be, 'It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game.' For someone with a big imagination, it might be 'If you can dream it, you can do it.'

"The tradition could be different. The tradition could have evolved so that people put a little picture in that space in a yearbook, or a list of accomplishments. Instead, the tradition is to include a line or two of words that say something just right about you. If we were making a yearbook right now, what quote would go under your picture?" I left a pool of silence. "Any of you have an idea?

"I'm talking to you about quotations because as you get older, you'll find there are more grown-up expectations on you and your writing. And one of those will be an expectation that you include more direct quotations in your writing. I'm pretty sure that if you were to write a story about something your family did together, you'd include the exact words that some of your family members said to each other. Using exact quotes makes a story come to life. So it shouldn't be surprising to you when I say that as you move toward middle school and high school, it becomes just as important, when writing about texts, to directly quote those texts.

"It goes without saying that choosing the quote is a really big deal—whether it is for your yearbook photo or for your literary essay."

◆ COACHING

There are lots of ways we could talk about quotations without leaving the terrain of writing about literature, but part of the challenge is to keep your teaching lively. Bill Zinsser, the author of On Writing Well, *says the most important quality of good nonfiction writing is surprise.*

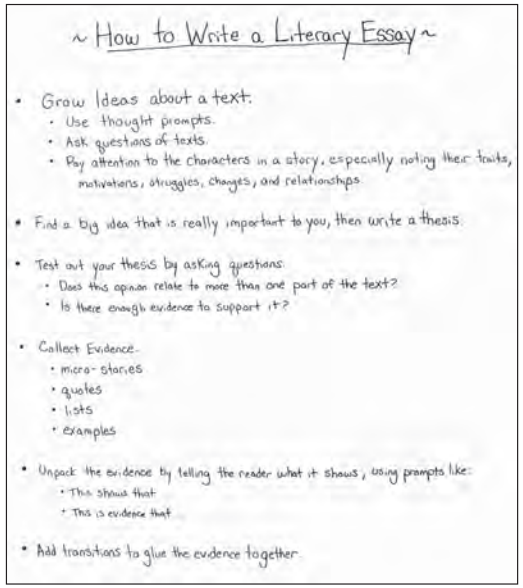
Of course, we shamelessly take every occasion we can find to cheerlead some of the values that matter to us—a beautiful saying about friendship or about the joy of working hard. We play the violin for the importance of family as well.

Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that essayists work hard to find 'just-right' quotations to include in their essays. A passage is 'just right' for citing when it provides strong evidence for a claim, making readers say, 'I see what you mean.'" As I spoke this last part, I unveiled our anchor chart with this new bullet added.

How to Write a Literary Essay

- Grow ideas about a text.
  - Use thought prompts.
  - Ask questions of texts.
  - Pay attention to the characters in a story, especially noting their traits, motivations, struggles, changes, and relationships.
- Find a big idea that is really important to you, then write a thesis.
- Test out your thesis by asking questions.
  - Does this opinion relate to more than one part of the text?
  - Is there enough evidence to support it?
- Collect evidence.
  - micro-stories
  - quotes



TEACHING

Recruit children to help you weigh and choose between several possible quotes that could serve as support for your thesis about the book *Fox*. Explicitly teach two considerations you take into account when selecting citations.

"So in my essay about *Fox*, my thesis is that Dog is a good friend. We found a lot of evidence of that, didn't we? Remember in *Strega Nona*, how Big Anthony's house overflows with magic pasta? In the same way, *Fox* overflows with passages that support the idea that Dog is a good friend. The important thing is always to weigh which of the quotes provides the strongest evidence for our ideas. I've hung a chart that I think will help us." I unveiled the following chart.

When Choosing a Quote, Essayists Ask . . .

- Can I point to specific words or actions that support my bullet?
- Can I explain exactly how these words or actions support my bullet?

"Let's start by looking at some of the quotes I found to support my first bullet, or reason: 'Dog is a good friend because he is caring.'" I showed children three quotes I'd copied onto separate pieces of chart paper (so that I could move their order around and remove some once they were eliminated from consideration.) "Let's weigh which provides stronger evidence."

- "And so Dog runs, with Magpie on his back, every day, through Summer, through Winter."
- "In the evenings, when the air is creamy with blossom, Dog and Magpie relax at the mouth of the cave, enjoying each other's company."
- "Magpie tries to warn Dog about Fox. 'He belongs nowhere,' she says. 'He loves no one.'"

Explain and demonstrate how you go about selecting between a number of possible passages that you could cite, including showing how you use the questions mentioned above.

"What I do is, I just reread the passages I could cite, thinking, 'Which would be the strongest? Next strongest?' Will you look with me and give me a thumbs up when you've decided?" I then read each one in turn to myself, mulling over the candidates. As I did this, I narrated my thought process, saying things like "That one looks really good—wait, I should read through all of them before I decide," and "Hmm, that's a good sentence, but let me check my claim again to see if it matches."

Mess up, deliberately, so you can show students how you check your decisions. In this instance, discover that actually, the words on the cited passage didn't exactly make the point you wanted to make.

By now, most of the kids had their thumbs up, so I numbered them myself, ranking, "In the evenings, when the air is creamy with blossom, Dog and Magpie relax at the mouth of the cave, enjoying each other's company" as the strongest piece of evidence.

"This looks like pretty strong evidence for my thesis," I said. "It shows that they're relaxing and enjoying each other's company, so they're being good friends to each other. Thumbs up if you agree that this is the strongest support for our bullet." Some, but not all, thumbs in the room went up.

"Not everybody agrees, which reminds me that instead of just jumping to the conclusion that this statement works the best, I should ask those questions about it that I'd suggested you ask as well."

A minilesson is always meant to spotlight a specific skill, showing how to do that skill. This means that the author of the minilesson always needs to decide what to skim past and what to teach in detail. Notice here that the passages have already been collected, and they are listed on chart paper. That part is backstory, occurring off stage before the drama of this minilesson begins.

Weighing or ranking evidence forces children to parse and analyze the quotes against each other to determine which are the strongest. A good essayist tosses aside the weakest evidence.

You'll notice that I attempt to make the process visible for children. As always, to do this, I slow down a process that actually happens quickly, under the radar. I make a show of thinking aloud, hoping to convey to children that this is not an easy, one-step process. Then too, I hope children will learn a thing or two from the questions I ask myself and the ways I try out many possibilities before settling on one quote.

One of the things to notice is the way that a chart threads its way through a minilesson and, indeed, through a unit. If we want charts to become part of kids' repertoire, we need to make sure this happens.

When Choosing A Quote, Essayists Ask . . .

- Can I point to specific words or actions that support my bullet?
- Can I explain exactly how these words or actions support my bullet?

"Let me first reread the quote to underline specific words." I read aloud, "In the evenings, when the air is creamy with blossom, Dog and Magpie relax at the mouth of the cave, enjoying each other's company."

"What should I underline? Hmm, the words show they're enjoying each other's company, but actually, hold on. My bullet is 'Dog is a good friend because he is caring.' I'm actually not sure that this part where they're enjoying each other's company proves that Dog is caring. Uh-oh! This isn't really very strong evidence for my first bullet after all!" I moved the quote off to the side.

Then I went back to my quotes and sorted them again, more quickly this time, narrating my new choices. "This last quote on the list shows what *Magpie*, not Dog, does. So that definitely doesn't show that Dog is a good friend because he is caring. How about this one: 'And so Dog runs, with Magpie on his back, every day, through Summer, through Winter'? The specific words that support my bullet are 'every day,' and they support the bullet because Dog is doing what makes Magpie happy every single day, even when it's cold and he probably doesn't want to, because he is caring."

Debrief in ways that are transferable to another text and another day.

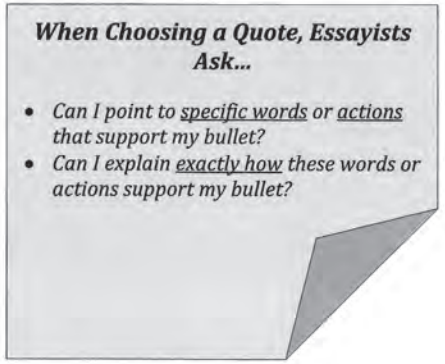
"So, as you can see, even a few minutes of working to sort quotes is helping us learn so much about how to find effective quotes. It helps to weigh which is best and to make sure there are specific words or phrases that match your bullet—your reason—and that you can explain how the passage supports your overall thesis."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Set students up to choose quotes for their own literary essays, repeating the same process you demonstrated to find the best supporting evidence.

"So that you get a chance to practice weighing possible quotes, selecting one that best makes your case, why don't you take one of the bullets from your essay and quickly skim your text to find and underline a few quotes that you might use as evidence for that bullet. Then, ask yourself those two questions," I pointed to them, "so that you can choose from among the quotes the one you think provides the strongest evidence. After a few minutes, you will have a chance to share your thoughts with your partner."

While students started this work, I moved among them, keeping an eye out for students who seemed as if they'd benefit from small-group instruction after the minilesson. As I did this, I also voiced over, saying things like, "As you underline,



Almost always, when wanting to show students how to do something, it helps to mess up and self-correct because this allows for more explicit instruction.

If children are quoting whole paragraphs of text from the stories to support their claims, you may decide to teach the ways to use only exact, meaningful quotes to support their arguments. When children are first learning to quote, they may be tempted to replace their own writing with large portions of the text they're writing about. Explain that using quotes often involves going back to the text and taking just bits of it to support, not replace, your argument. Often this involves a bit of summarizing, interspersed with portions of quotes.

think to yourself, do you need all of that quote or only part of it?" "Great, a lot of you are already weighing your second quote." And "Ooh, I see Parker looking up at the chart! Don't forget to say *why* you think the quote supports your idea."

Seeing that most of the students were almost ready, I invited them to turn and talk. The children talked for a minute or so, explaining and justifying the choices they'd made.

LINK

Send writers off to work, reminding them of the full array of potential activities they can be deciding between.

A few minutes later, I called them back together, saying, "So, writers, today some of you might still be filling your booklets up with angled stories. Others of you will be ready to start collecting quotes that support your bullets, or reasons. When you are doing this, remember that you don't have to settle for just any old quotes. You can choose really effective ones! One good strategy is to start by choosing a handful of possible quotes for each bullet and then to pick the best ones by thinking about which give the strongest evidence for that bullet and why."

CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Evaluating Evidence for a Claim

WHEN YOU DO SOME QUICK ASSESSMENTS DURING THE MINILESSON, this allows you to intervene more efficiently to provide some children with the leg-up that they are going to need. During the minilesson, you found that some children would benefit from hands-on practice evaluating evidence for a claim. If you pull those children into a small group, you can use the students' own work as a forum for teaching. For example, you can start by writing one student's bullet onto a Post-it and then creating two columns under that Post-it: one labeled "supports" and one, "does not support." If you or the writer jots a few quotes from the story onto additional Post-its, those can then be categorized into the proper category, asking the students to discuss which category each quote fits. After students have the hang of doing this, you can divide the categories into: "strong support," "some support," and "no support."

As you confer, consider the problems kids are getting themselves into, and when you find a fairly widespread problem, use that as your mid-workshop teaching point. Jessica, for example, had found evidence to support her point: "Gabriel is lonely because he doesn't have company at home." The evidence was this sentence: "On the stoop of a tall building of crumbling bricks and rotting wood sat a boy." The problem was that the fact that Gabriel sat apart from the rest of the group didn't seem to prove her bullet.

I asked Jessica why she had chosen that quote, and she happily started to explain, "Well, okay, so Gabriel is sitting on crumbling bricks and rotting wood, and that probably means his family is poor. And if his family is poor, they probably work a lot of hours to try to make money, so they probably are pretty tired at the end of the day and they don't have time to hang out with him. And he probably can't have friends over because he's too embarrassed about how his building is all falling apart and everything, so that would make him extra lonely when he's at home."

I complimented the way she had stuck to her bullet, focusing her thinking around ways to support her idea and not letting herself get distracted or off-topic in her thinking. "But can I give you a tip?" I asked, and she nodded.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

Making Sure Evidence Speaks for Itself

"Writers, can I have your eyes and ears? Jessica and I were just talking, and we realized that sometimes you find a passage from the text that can, in a way, sort of, kind of, be used to support a claim. For example, you *might* be able to stretch things to say that the passage that describes Dog and Magpie relaxing in the mouth of the cave *sort of* supports the reason that Dog is a good friend to Magpie because he's caring. After all, Dog wouldn't sit with Magpie if he didn't care for her, and being a caring friend is linked to caring for someone, in a way, kind of.

"But if it takes a whole lot of explaining and fancy footwork to show that a passage from the text illustrates a concept, then that passage is not the best possible one to cite. So, writers, right now, can you look back at the quotes you've chosen to support your bullets and check to make sure they are strong enough evidence that they don't require a whole boatload of explaining?"

I told her, "When writers look for effective quotes, they try to find ones that don't need a string of *maybes* and *probably statements* to explain why they support the bullet. Your explanation for why the sentence matches your reason had a lot of steps where you were guessing, and they were guesses that made sense, not just random crazy guesses. But still, someone else could say that maybe his family isn't poor, maybe they just live in an old house. Or maybe they are poor because they don't have jobs at all, so they have lots of time to spend with him. And if they said that, you wouldn't be able to prove them wrong. So, when explaining why a quote is effective, one *maybe* or *probably* is fine, but having a whole series of them should caution you that maybe you've strayed too far into guessing. Can you find another quote to use as evidence that you could explain without needing so many *maybe* or *probably statements*?"

After a moment of looking, Jessica decided on "His name was Gabriel and he wished for some company" as more effective evidence that Gabriel was lonely at home. I gave her a thumbs up, and she copied it into her booklet for later use.

SHARE

Transitional Phrases for Introducing Quotes

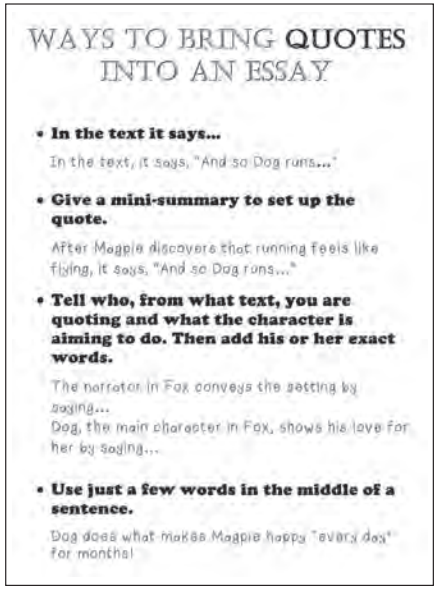
Show students that they can introduce quotes into their texts in a variety of ways by offering them many different options.

"You've been doing delicate, careful work, finding and selecting quotes. They're like jewels because they add so much sparkle to an essay. And like jewels, part of the work is to build a setting for each quote so that you show it off in your essay. Many of you have a phrase that you use as a setting for each of your quotes. Each time you want to reference the text, you say the same phrase to lead into the quoted passage—like perhaps you say, each time, 'In the text, it says . . .' That's a great setting for a quote.

"But here is the thing. You seem much more professional if you don't use the same setting for each quote since each quote connects to what you are trying to say in a different way. So while 'In the text, it says . . . ' should be in your list of options, it makes a big difference if you have a few other options as well." I revealed a chart of transitional phrases and asked one child to read it aloud while giving children a minute to read it over.

Ways to Bring Quotes into an Essay

- In the text, it says . . .
  (In the text, it says, "And so Dog runs . . . ")
- Give a mini-summary to set up the quote.
  (After Magpie discovers that running feels like flying, it says, "And so Dog runs . . . ")
- Tell who, from what text, you are quoting and what that character is aiming to do, and then add his or her exact words.
  (The narrator in Fox conveys the setting by saying . . .)
  (Dog, the main character in Fox, shows his love for her by saying . . .)
- Use just a few words in the middle of a sentence.
  (Dog does what makes Magpie happy "every day" for months!)



Ask students to try out the transitional phrases you've given them with their own quotes, sharing how they might introduce quotes in their essays.

"Right now, in your booklets, try out one of these strategies for setting a quote into your essay. Be ready to share your work in a minute!"

A minute later, I conducted a symphony share, tipping my imaginary baton toward one student, then another, starting with a few students whose work would, I knew, be exemplary and set the tone for the others.

Celia read, "Julian tried a cartwheel and fell over. He was embarrassed. He looked at Gloria to see if she was laughing but she wasn't. 'It takes practice,' she said."

John was next. "In the text, Clover says, 'I wonder why that girl always sits on that fence.'"

Then Emily read, "The narrator showed that Lupe did not give up by saying that Lupe 'tried again and again.'"

After a handful of kids had shared, I addressed the group again. "There are lots of other ways to set a quote into an essay. If you invent another way, would you add it to our list of possibilities? And remember that as you get older, you are going to be expected to quote directly from texts that you read—and that will add as much to your essays as quoting from characters, or making people talk, has added to your stories."

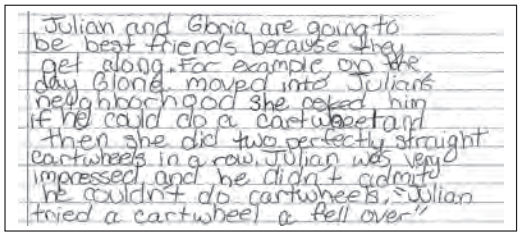

Julian and Gloria are going to be best friends because they get along. For example, on the day Gloria moved into Julians neighborhood she asked him if he could do a cartwheel and then she did two perfectly straight cartwheels in a row. Julian was very impressed, and he didn't admit he couldn't do cartwheels, Julian tried a cartwheel a fell over"

FIG. 6–1 Celia adds a quote.

SESSION 6 HOMEWORK

USING QUOTATIONS AS EVIDENCE

Read Jill's essay again and notice that she has used a quotation that is a complete sentence—it doesn't rely on Jill's words to prop it up. It stands alone, even though it has ellipses showing that a section of the sentence has been left out. Jill could have *instead* written with a partial quote, lifting just a phrase from "Eleven," like Rachel thought it was disgusting to put on a sweater that was "full of germs" that weren't even hers. That phrase, *full of germs*, isn't a full sentence. It is just a few words that support Jill's claim. As you saw today in our share, essayists use both kinds of quotations.

Tonight, take a few of the quotes that you have copied into your booklets today. For each quote, try at least two different possibilities for how you could put it into your essay. At least one should use the full quote, with a sentence before or after to set it up or explain its importance, and at least one should use just a few words of the quote, like the "Eleven" example above.

Professional Development Options from TCRWP

The Units of Study books are a curriculum—and more. Lucy Calkins has embedded professional development into the curriculum, teaching teachers the "why" and "how" of effective reading and writing instruction. The professional development embedded in this series can be further enhanced through the following opportunities.

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Judith.Chin@readingandwritingproject.com
Phone: (212) 678-3327

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Laurie@readingandwritingproject.com
Phone: (212) 678-8226

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In these live webinar sessions, Lucy and her TCRWP colleagues respond to questions from educators on a wide range of topics.

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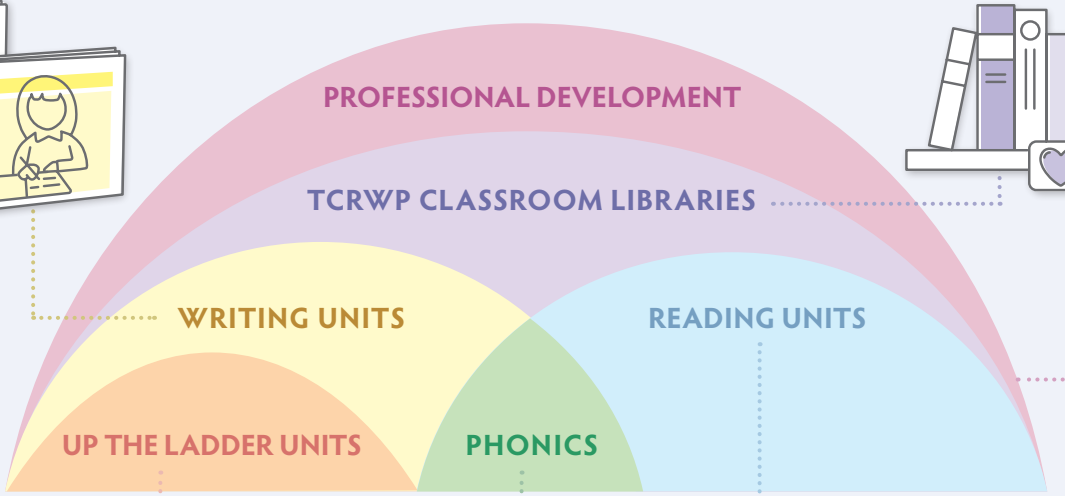
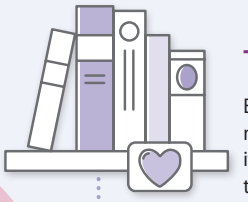
- help teachers use learning progressions to observe and assess students' writing, to develop students' use of self-monitoring strategies, and to set students on trajectories of growth
- give teachers crystal-clear advice and on-the-job support for teaching efficient and effective writing workshops



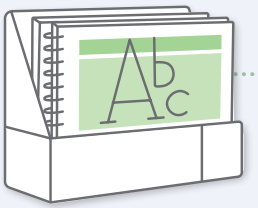


TCRWP Classroom Libraries

Each of the TCRWP Classroom Libraries is a miniature version of a great bookstore—if you can imagine a bookstore run by the country's greatest readers and the country's greatest teachers—and where every collection has been carefully and thoughtfully designed to lure kids into reading and to move them up levels of complexity.

Up the Ladder Units

The *Up the Ladder* units give less experienced writers opportunities to engage in repeated successful practice and to move rapidly along a gradually increasing progression of challenges. Although designed to ramp kids up to the work they will do in the grades 3–6 writing Units of Study, these units can be helpful in any setting where students need a boost in foundational elements of writing workshop.



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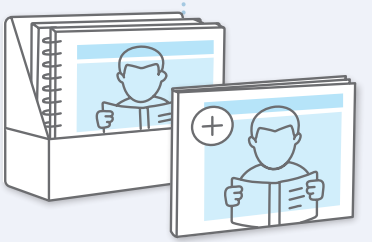
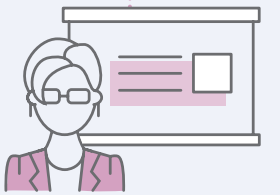
These lean, engaging phonics units are deeply grounded in best-practice research—and are also kid-friendly and fun. Lessons synchronize instruction across the reading and writing Units of Study, allowing opportunities to revisit high-leverage phonics skills across the day in ways that help students become stronger readers and writers.



Reading Units

The Units of Study for Teaching Reading offer a framework for teaching that:

- provides a comprehensive, cross-grade curriculum in which skills are introduced, developed, and deepened
- supports explicit instruction in reading skills and strategies and offers extended time for reading
- provides strategic performance assessments to help teachers monitor progress, provide feedback, and help students set clear goals for their reading work
- gives teachers on-the-job guidance in powerful reading workshop teaching



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

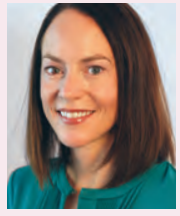
Lucy Calkins is the Founding Director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. In that role, Lucy's greatest accomplishment has been to develop a learning community of teacher educators whose brilliance and dedication shine through in the Units of Study books, which have become an essential part of classroom life in tens of thousands of schools around the world. Take in the sheer excellence of their work, and you will understand why Lucy tells everyone that the Project is as dear to her as her own two sons, Miles and Evan Skorpen.

Lucy is the Robinson Professor of Children's Literature at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she co-directs the Literacy Specialist Program. She is the author, coauthor, or series editor of the Units of Study in Opinion/Argument, Information, and Narrative Writing, Grades K–8; Up the Ladder: Accessing Grades 3–6 Writing Units of Study; Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Grades K–8 series; and Units of Study in Phonics, Grades K–2; as well the lead curator of the TCRWP Classroom Libraries, Grades K–8 (all published by Heinemann); and has authored scores of other professional books and articles.

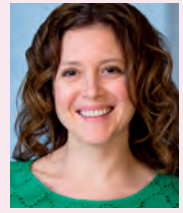
Kelly Boland Hohne, EdD, is a Writer-in-Residence and Senior Research Associate at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Kelly was part of the leadership team for a think tank sponsored by the Council of Chief School Officers, in which researchers from both CBAL (the research arm of Educational Testing Service) and TCRWP studied learning progressions in argument writing. In all of her work, Kelly draws on her experience as a classroom teacher at PS 6, one of TCRWP's mentor schools. Kelly is coauthor of several books in the units of study for reading and writing series, among them, *Changing the World* (Grade I), *Boxes and Bullets* (Grade 4), *Argument and Advocacy* (Grade 5), and *The Art of Argument* (Grade 7). She also curated the Grades 5–6 "High-Interest Nonfiction" shelves in the TCRWP Classroom Libraries collections.

Colleen Cruz, Director of Innovation, is a writer of children's literature and of professional texts for teachers, including *Independent Writing; A Quick Guide to Reaching Struggling Writers, K–5; The Art of Information Writing* (Grade 3); *The Arc of Story,* (Grade 4); *Writing Realistic Fiction: Symbolism, Syntax, and Truth* (Grade 7); *Fantasy Book Clubs: The Magic of Themes and Symbols* (Grade 5); and *The Unstoppable Writing Teacher*.

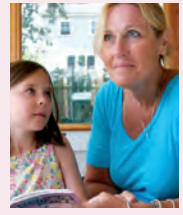
Cory Gillette is the Literacy Coordinator for Darien Public Schools in Connecticut. She previously worked for Teachers College Reading and Writing Project for over ten years as a Staff Developer, presenter, and reading researcher. Cory played a lead role, while at the Project, in a think tank on whole-book assessments and was involved in developing performance assessments for nonfiction reading. Cory has a post-master's degree in educational leadership from Stony Brook University as well as a master's degree in elementary education from the University of Pennsylvania.



Anna Gratz Cockerille, co-author of *Bringing History to Life*, was a teacher and a literacy coach in New York City and in Sydney, Australia before joining the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project as a staff developer and writer. One of her primary focuses was content area literacy, where she helped shape the TCRWP's work integrating best practices in literacy instruction into social studies. Anna also has been a researcher for Lucy Calkins, contributing especially to *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* and Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing. In her current role as editor at Heinemann, Anna's projects have included Units of Study for Teaching Reading, K-5; Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Middle School Grades; and Units of Study in Phonics, K-2. Anna also writes regularly for the Heinemann blog. Her passions also include writing for children. Her latest title, *Soap Box Rosie*, will be published in 2019.



Alexandra Marron was a Staff Developer, Researcher, and Writer-in-Residence at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Her responsibilities included leading a yearlong study group for master teachers, presenting at conferences, teaching at summer institutes, and above all, helping teachers and principals in dozens of schools lead state-of-the-art reading and writing workshops. She is coauthor of numerous books in the Reading and Writing Units of Study series including *Writing About Reading; The Literary Essay; Narrative Craft, Shaping Texts; Interpretation Book Clubs;* and *Reading Pathways*. Ali has played a leadership role in developing learning progressions in argument writing, and participates in a study group on the subject, sponsored by the Council of Chief School Officers, involving Educational Testing Service and TCRWP. Prior to this work, she taught at PS 6, and while there contributed to the book *Practical Punctuation: Lessons on Rule Making and Rule Breaking in Elementary Writing* (Heinemann 2008).



For more than 20 years, **Kathleen Tolan** was a Senior Deputy Director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. She had special responsibility for the Project's work with reading instruction, organizing instruction for staff developers and the Project's four summer institutes. She was also instrumental in the creation of the content literacy institutes and coaching institutes. Kathleen provided staff development at schools in the South Bronx, Harlem, Manhattan, and Scarsdale. A coauthor of numerous books in the Units of Study for teaching reading and writing series, she is also featured in many of the TCRWP's online videos. Throughout her career, Kathleen remained a consummate professional and a champion for kids and for literacy.

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For more than thirty years the **Teachers College Reading and Writing Project** *(readingandwritingproject.org)* has been both a provider of professional development to hundreds of thousands of educators and a think tank, developing state-of-the-art teaching methods and working closely with policy makers, school principals, and teachers to initiate and support school-wide and system-wide reform in the teaching of reading and writing.

The Teachers College Reading & Writing Project

ISBN 978-0-325-10512-3
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07.2018