

The Center for Applied Research in Education

GARY ROBERT MUSCHLA

WRITING RESOURCE ACTIVITIES KIT



**Ready-to-Use
Worksheets
and
Enrichment
Lessons for
Grades 4-9**

Ray Thomas
March 1995
\$32.94

WRITING RESOURCE ACTIVITIES KIT

**Ready-to-Use Worksheets
and Enrichment Lessons
for Grades 4-9**

Gary Robert Muschla



**THE CENTER FOR APPLIED
RESEARCH IN EDUCATION**
West Nyack, New York 10995

**For my wife, Judy, who has
helped me in more ways than she can ever know.**

© 1989 by

**THE CENTER FOR APPLIED
RESEARCH IN EDUCATION**
West Nyack, New York

All rights reserved.

Permission is given for individual
classroom teachers to reproduce the
student worksheets and figures for
classroom use. Reproduction of
these materials for an entire school
system is strictly forbidden.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Muschla, Gary Robert.

Writing resource activities kit: ready-to-use worksheets and enrichment lessons for grades 4-9/Gary
Robert Muschla.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-87628-970-7

1. English language—Composition and exercises—Study and teaching. 2. Activity programs in education.

3. Teaching—Aids and devices. I. Title.

LB1576.M87 1989

808'.042'0712—dc19

88-39401
CIP

ISBN 0-87628-970-7



**THE CENTER FOR APPLIED
RESEARCH IN EDUCATION**
BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL DIVISION
A division of Simon & Schuster
West Nyack, New York 10995

Printed in the United States of America

About This Kit

The *Writing Resource Activities Kit* has been written for teachers of grades 4-9 who teach writing. Because the activities of this kit have been designed to meet the needs of children of various age and ability levels, teachers of slow, average, and advanced students will all find it useful.

Your role as teacher is vital to the effectiveness of any writing program. You are the model, motivator, and guide in the classroom. When students are aware that you value the power of words, they are more likely to develop similar appreciation for writing. Your enthusiasm for writing can stimulate young imaginations, encourage perception and understanding, and provide a means of expression. You can offer students the methods, skills, and forms for communicating their ideas, dreams, and visions.

Although writing is a complex discipline, methods and subject courses in writing are not usually stressed at colleges of education and, consequently, many teachers enter the teaching profession unskilled in teaching writing. To teach most other subjects, an individual must take several content courses. But to be deemed qualified to teach writing at the elementary and junior high/middle school grades, a teacher may have had only one course in basic composition—if that.

For this reason, the *Kit* has three major goals:

- To be a guide, helping you to teach writing effectively. The *Kit* offers numerous methods, strategies, and techniques, all of which have been used successfully in the classroom for teaching children how to write.
- To provide you with writing activities that you can use immediately. The activities are linked to specific skills and can be easily adapted by you to different age and ability levels, enabling students of various grades to benefit from the same activities.
- To be a resource to help you explain what good writing is while providing the necessary background needed to teach it.

Since children learn best when writing is meaningful to them, many of the activities and worksheets contained in this kit focus on firsthand experiences of students and topics with which they are familiar. This makes writing easier and more enjoyable.

Many people believe that the ability to write well is a talent: either you have

it, or you don't. This is a misconception: writing is a skill. It can be learned and it can be improved. Most children have never been taught that all stories and articles have common elements that can be controlled and arranged. They have never been shown how to come up with an idea, develop it into a story or article, and express it in an interesting fashion. They have never been taught that writing is a process that the writer can direct and enjoy.

Writing is a fundamental skill inseparable from thinking, speaking, and reading. If taught properly, every student can learn to write with clarity, precision, and confidence to his or her utmost potential. It is much easier for children to express themselves in nonthreatening environments where they can enjoy the experience of writing.

While the *Writing Resource Activities Kit* may not turn all your students into professional writers, it can help them acquire effective writing skills to serve them throughout their lives. Please accept my best wishes as you work to accomplish this important task.

Gary Robert Muschla

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Robert Muschla received his B.A. and M.A.T. from Trenton State College in New Jersey. For the past 13 years, he has taught at Appleby School in the Spotswood, New Jersey School District where he has developed a practical approach to the teaching of writing, conducted numerous writing workshops for students, and edited magazines of students' writing. In addition to his teaching experience, Mr. Muschla has been a successful freelance writer, editor, and ghostwriter. This book is the result of his teaching and writing experiences.

How to Use This Kit

Writing is a process, composed of several interconnected stages:

- generating and developing ideas
- writing the draft
- editing
- revising
- writing the final copy

An effective composition is the culmination of the successful management of these stages by the writer. The *Writing Resource Activities Kit* focuses on the various stages of the writing process, offering students meaningful experiences with each part.

Start with Chapter 1, "Where Children Get Ideas." Then go on to Chapter 2, "Developing Ideas into Stories." From there you can draw on the concepts and activities of the *Kit* to support your individual writing program. While most teachers will likely use the *Kit* in conjunction with their writing programs, the *Kit* contains enough activities to be used as the sole source of a classroom's writing curriculum.

A variety of over 250 writing activities and reproducible worksheets constitute a major part of this kit. Each activity or worksheet corresponds to specific writing skills. Included in each chapter are ten reproducible worksheets. Each worksheet offers a writing tip and directions for the student, and each is linked directly to the skills taught in the chapter. In addition, each worksheet includes an optional extension should you want to expand the activity. Lively illustrations, designed to encourage visual imagery and imagination, highlight the worksheets.

Each set of worksheets is preceded by a section containing teaching suggestions. These suggestions, presented in a lesson-plan format with objectives and ideas for development, greatly reduce your preparation time and enable you to implement the worksheets as meaningful assignments. Thus, the reproducible worksheets are fully planned and ready for your immediate use.

After the sets of worksheets are followup activities. These writing assignments are also tied to the skills taught in the chapter, cover a broad range of topics, and include teacher suggestions for easy implementation.

A special feature of *The Writing Resource Activities Kit* is the Skills Index. It will help you match writing assignments with particular skills you want to teach.

Finally, throughout the *Kit*, several information sheets are offered for both you and your students. For teachers, for example, are "Topics for Writing Tests," an "Evaluation Guide for Writing," and an "Individual Skills Analysis Sheet." For students, there is a form to develop "A Simple Outline," a "Basic Proofreading Guide," and "Editor's Proofreading Symbols."

The variety of activities, reproducible worksheets, and classroom aids offer students a diverse assortment of writing experiences. *The Writing Resource Activities Kit* will make your teaching of writing more effective and easier.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help, support, and encouragement of the following people: Dr. Robert Byrne, John C. Orlick, Carolyn Deacon, Julia Rhodes, Joan Intravartolo, and Ellen Gorham.

Special thanks are also in order to Robert E. Lee, my illustrator, and Evelyn M. Fazio, my editor, who helped me mold this book into its final form.

Skills Index

Chapter 1—WHERE CHILDREN GET IDEAS

Reproducible Worksheets

- 1-1 My Own Magical Creature
- 1-2 A High-Flying Imagining
- 1-3 A Day I'll Never Forget
- 1-4 An Imaginary Spring Walk
- 1-5 A Friendly Vision
- 1-6 My Favorite Room
- 1-7 To See or Not to See
- 1-8 Personally Speaking
- 1-9 Create a Story!
- 1-10 It's All Very Basic

Followup Activities

- FU 1-1 Animal for a Day
- FU 1-2 Invent a Story
- FU 1-3 Going My Way
- FU 1-4 Blast from the Past
- FU 1-5 You're the Expert
- FU 1-6 How Does It Taste?
- FU 1-7 Who Are You?
- FU 1-8 Can You Sell It?
- FU 1-9 Guess the Mystery Object
- FU 1-10 A Time I Got into a Lot of Trouble

Imagination	Visualization	Perception	Developing Ideas	Combining Ideas
X				
X				
	X			
	X			
	X			
	X			
		X		
			X	
				X
				X
X				
X				
	X			
	X			
	X			
		X		
		X		
		X		
		X		
			X	

Chapter 2—DEVELOPING IDEAS INTO STORIES

Reproducible Worksheets

- 2-1 A Personal Profile
- 2-2 What's on Tonight?
- 2-3 What's in a Role?
- 2-4 Stranded!
- 2-5 My First Memory
- 2-6 The Hypnotist
- 2-7 The Great Search
- 2-8 Making a Scene!
- 2-9 What (or Who) Is for Lunch?
- 2-10 Trouble's Brewing

Followup Activities

- FU 2-1 Taking a Trip
- FU 2-2 Holiday Cheer
- FU 2-3 King for a Day!
- FU 2-4 The Mysterious Object
- FU 2-5 Sweating It!
- FU 2-6 Brainstorm a Climax
- FU 2-7 A Modern Tall Tale
- FU 2-8 Threatened!
- FU 2-9 The Stranger!
- FU 2-10 The Case of the Missing Gym Bag

Outlining	Viewpoint	Story Structure	Building Scenes	Story Conflict
X				
X				
X				
X				
	X			
	X			
		X		
			X	
			X	
				X
X				
X				
	X			
	X			
		X		
		X		
		X		
		X		
			X	
			X	

Chapter 3—BUILDING BELIEVABLE CHARACTERS*Reproducible Worksheets*

- 3-1 A Superhero
- 3-2 Character Collage
- 3-3 The Haunted House
- 3-4 Create a Character
- 3-5 A Character Quiz
- 3-6 Things I Like to Do
- 3-7 Character Choices
- 3-8 Animal Characters
- 3-9 Add a Character
- 3-10 Character Makeovers

Followup Activities

- FU 3-1 Plant Characterizations
- FU 3-2 The Person I Admire Most
- FU 3-3 My Favorite Celebrity
- FU 3-4 Stormy Characterizations
- FU 3-5 Objects of Curiosity
- FU 3-6 A Best Friend's View
- FU 3-7 The Big Event
- FU 3-8 I'm Responsible
- FU 3-9 Cartoon Characters
- FU 3-10 Heroes and Villains

	Developing Characters	Motivation	Character Chart	Stereotypes
3-1 A Superhero	X			
3-2 Character Collage	X			
3-3 The Haunted House	X			
3-4 Create a Character	X			
3-5 A Character Quiz	X			
3-6 Things I Like to Do		X		
3-7 Character Choices		X		
3-8 Animal Characters			X	
3-9 Add a Character			X	
3-10 Character Makeovers				X
FU 3-1 Plant Characterizations	X			
FU 3-2 The Person I Admire Most	X			
FU 3-3 My Favorite Celebrity	X			
FU 3-4 Stormy Characterizations	X			
FU 3-5 Objects of Curiosity	X			
FU 3-6 A Best Friend's View	X			
FU 3-7 The Big Event		X		
FU 3-8 I'm Responsible		X		
FU 3-9 Cartoon Characters			X	
FU 3-10 Heroes and Villains			X	

Chapter 5—THE MECHANICS OF WRITING*Reproducible Worksheets*

- 5-1 Tricky Words
- 5-2 Spider Bites
- 5-3 The Missing Bike
- 5-4 Happy Holidays!
- 5-5 What Did You Say?
- 5-6 A Strange Event
- 5-7 When I Broke the Rules
- 5-8 Sports Challenge
- 5-9 The Most Fun I Ever Had!
- 5-10 Ask Dr. Know-It-All

Followup Activities

- FU 5-1 Feelings—Past and Present
- FU 5-2 Heading Home
- FU 5-3 A Spelling Bee
- FU 5-4 Making News
- FU 5-5 A Persuasive Letter
- FU 5-6 An Alien Conversation
- FU 5-7 Nonhuman Conversations
- FU 5-8 Silly Careers
- FU 5-9 My Advice
- FU 5-10 A Fantastic Tale

	Word Usage	Punctuation	Capitalization	Dialogue	General Mechanics	xi
5-1 Tricky Words	X					
5-2 Spider Bites		X				
5-3 The Missing Bike		X				
5-4 Happy Holidays!			X			
5-5 What Did You Say?				X		
5-6 A Strange Event			X			
5-7 When I Broke the Rules					X	
5-8 Sports Challenge					X	
5-9 The Most Fun I Ever Had!					X	
5-10 Ask Dr. Know-It-All					X	
FU 5-1 Feelings—Past and Present					X	
FU 5-2 Heading Home					X	
FU 5-3 A Spelling Bee					X	
FU 5-4 Making News					X	
FU 5-5 A Persuasive Letter					X	
FU 5-6 An Alien Conversation					X	
FU 5-7 Nonhuman Conversations					X	
FU 5-8 Silly Careers					X	
FU 5-9 My Advice					X	
FU 5-10 A Fantastic Tale					X	

Chapter 6—TEACHING THE WRITING OF NONFICTION

Reproducible Worksheets

- 6-1 Your Roots
- 6-2 Doing an Interview
- 6-3 Seeing It for Yourself
- 6-4 Writing a Book Report
- 6-5 What to Do When You're Bored
- 6-6 Sounding Off
- 6-7 My Top Three
- 6-8 Let's Go Exploring!
- 6-9 A Friendly Letter
- 6-10 Doing Business

Followup Activities

- FU 6-1 A Research Report
- FU 6-2 A Special Interview
- FU 6-3 A TV or Movie Review
- FU 6-4 The "In" Places
- FU 6-5 What I Think About School
- FU 6-6 Running for Office
- FU 6-7 A Friendly Note
- FU 6-8 Greetings from Far Away
- FU 6-9 Worthy of Praise
- FU 6-10 A Letter of Application

Skills Index

Library Research	Interviewing	Observation	Nonfiction Article	Friendly Letter	Business Letter
X					
	X				
		X			
			X		
			X		
			X		
			X		
				X	
					X
X					
	X				
			X		
			X		
			X		
			X		
				X	
				X	
					X
					X

Chapter 7—TEACHING THE WRITING OF POETRY*Reproducible Worksheets*

- 7-1 All About Alliteration
 7-2 Animal Sounds
 7-3 Seasons
 7-4 Compared to What?
 7-5 Pets and Animals
 7-6 It's a Favorite
 7-7 Writing Haiku
 7-8 Writing Cinquain
 7-9 Writing Limericks
 7-10 Writing Rhyming Poems

Followup Activities

- FU 7-1 Partner Poems
 FU 7-2 Looking into the Future
 FU 7-3 A Today Poem
 FU 7-4 Fun Things
 FU 7-5 Something That Bothers Me
 FU 7-6 Haiku
 FU 7-7 Cinquain
 FU 7-8 Limericks
 FU 7-9 Nature Poems
 FU 7-10 Reflections

	Alliteration	Onomatopoeia	Similes	Metaphors	Personification	Nonrhyming Poem	Haiku	Cinquain	Limericks	Rhyming Poem
7-1 All About Alliteration	X									
7-2 Animal Sounds		X								
7-3 Seasons			X							
7-4 Compared to What?				X						
7-5 Pets and Animals					X					
7-6 It's a Favorite						X				
7-7 Writing Haiku							X			
7-8 Writing Cinquain								X		
7-9 Writing Limericks									X	
7-10 Writing Rhyming Poems										X
FU 7-1 Partner Poems						X				
FU 7-2 Looking into the Future						X				
FU 7-3 A Today Poem						X				
FU 7-4 Fun Things						X				
FU 7-5 Something That Bothers Me						X				
FU 7-6 Haiku							X			
FU 7-7 Cinquain								X		
FU 7-8 Limericks									X	
FU 7-9 Nature Poems										X
FU 7-10 Reflections										X

Chapter 8—TEACHING REVISION

Reproducible Worksheets

- 8-1 Lizards
- 8-2 The Fishing Trip
- 8-3 The Lost Wallet
- 8-4 The Last Minute
- 8-5 The Big Game
- 8-6 Traveling Around
- 8-7 The Pluses and Minuses of Being a Kid
- 8-8 It's Only Make-Believe
- 8-9 A Meeting with the President
- 8-10 How to Get People to Like You

Followup Activities

FU 8-1 I Can Do It Better
FU 8-2 An Ideal Day
FU 8-3 My Fantasy Pet
FU 8-4 Come to My Place
FU 8-5 My Self-Improvement Plan
FU 8-6 A Good Article
FU 8-7 A Helping Hand
FU 8-8 The Smartest Person I Know
FU 8-9 The Problems of Studenthood
FU 8-10 Play It Again

Sentence Construction	X
Dialogue	X
Paragraphs	X
Verb Tense	X
Pronouns	X
Nonfiction Articles	X
Revision Basics	X X X X X X X X X X
Evaluating	X

CONTENTS

About This Kit.....	iii
How to Use This Kit.....	v
Skills Index	vii
Chapter 1 WHERE CHILDREN GET IDEAS.....	1
Developing the Imaginations of Children • 1	
Visualization and Writing • 3	
Visual Thinking Activity 1 (4) • Visual Thinking Activity 2 (4) • Visual Thinking Activity 3 (4)	
Perception • 5	
Perception Activity 1 (5) • Perception Activity 2 (5)	
Helping Children Generate Ideas • 6	
Providing a Flexible Structure (6) • The Importance of Choosing Relevant Topics (6) • Personal Experience—A Wellspring of Ideas (8) • Journal Writing (8) • An Idea Folder (9) • Advanced Idea-Generation Techniques (9) • Overcoming Writer's Block (10) • Working with Reluctant Writers (10)	
Teaching Notes for Reproducible Worksheets • 11	
Reproducible Worksheets 1-1 Through 1-10 • 16	
Followup Activities FU 1-1 Through FU 1-10 • 27	
Chapter 2 DEVELOPING IDEAS INTO STORIES.....	29
Setting a Purpose for Writing • 30	
Composing an Outline • 30	
Outline Activity (33)	
The Rough Draft • 33	
Selecting the Right Viewpoint (34) • Viewpoint Activity 1 (34) • Viewpoint Activity 2 (34) •	
Editing and Revising the Draft (35)	
The Basic Structure of Stories • 35	
The Opening (35) • The Middle (35) • The Climax (35) • The End (37) • Story Structure Activity (37) • Building Effective Scenes (38) • Conflict (38) • The Importance of Background Material (39) • Scene-Building Activity (39)	
Teaching Notes for Reproducible Worksheets • 39	
Reproducible Worksheets 2-1 Through 2-10 • 45	
Followup Activities FU 2-1 Through 2-10 • 55	
Chapter 3 BUILDING BELIEVABLE CHARACTERS	57
Revealing Character Through Action and Description • 57	
Revealing Character Through Action (58)	
• Revealing Character Through Description (58) • Revealing Character Activity (59)	
Characters and Motivation • 59	
Motivation Activity 1 (60) • Motivation Activity 2 (60)	
The Character Chart • 61	
Character Chart Activity (61)	
Avoiding Stereotypes • 61	
Teaching Notes for Reproducible Worksheets • 64	
Reproducible Worksheets 3-1 Through 3-10 • 69	
Followup Activities FU 3-1 Through FU 3-10 • 80	
Chapter 4 WRITING STYLE AND TECHNIQUE	83
Helping Children Develop a Writing Style • 83	
Style Inhibitors (84) • Style Builders (84)	
Sentence and Paragraph Building • 85	
Sentence Starters (85) • Sentence Building Activity 1 (86) • Sentence Building Activity 2 (86) •	
Developing Paragraphs (86) • Paragraph Building Activity (87) • Transitions (87) • Writing Transitions Activity (88)	
Action, Dialogue, Description, and Exposition • 88	
Writing Dialogue Activity (89) • Description Activity 1 (89) • Description Activity 2 (90)	
Some Basic Techniques for Children's Writing • 90	
Foreshadowing (90) • Plants (90) • Flashbacks (91) • Time Sequence (91) • Basic Technique Activity 1 (92) • Basic Technique Activity 2 (92)	
Teaching Notes for Reproducible Worksheets • 92	
Reproducible Worksheets 4-1 Through 4-10 • 97	
Followup Activities FU 4-1 Through FU 4-10 • 107	

Chapter 5 THE MECHANICS OF WRITING	111
Teaching Mechanics with Writing • 111	
Word Usage • 113	
Word Usage Activity (113)	
Grammar • 114	
Grammar Activity (114)	
Punctuation • 115	
Punctuation Activity 1 (115) • Punctuation Activity 2 (116)	
Capitalization • 116	
Capitalization Activity (116)	
Spelling • 117	
Spelling Activity 1 (117) • Spelling Activity 2 (118)	
Teaching Notes for Reproducible Worksheets • 118	
Reproducible Worksheets 5–1 Through 5–10 • 124	
Followup Activities FU 5–1 Through FU 5–10 • 134	
Chapter 6 TEACHING THE WRITING OF NONFICTION	137
Review Major Forms • 137	
Nonfiction Review Activity 1 (137) • Nonfiction Review Activity 2 (138)	
The Purpose of Nonfiction • 138	
Researching: Getting the Facts • 138	
Using the Library (138) • Notetaking (139) • Research Activity (139) • Interviewing (139) •	
Interview Activity 1 (140) • Interview Activity 2 (140) • Observing (142) • Observation Activity	
(142)	
Developing a Nonfiction Article • 142	
The Opening (142) • The Body (145) • The Conclusion (145) • Nonfiction Writing Activity 1	
(145) • Nonfiction Writing Activity 2 • (146)	
Letter Writing • 146	
Friendly Letters (146) • Friendly Letter Writing Activity (146) • Business Letters (146) •	
Business Letter Writing Activity (149)	
Teaching Notes for Reproducible Worksheets • 149	
Reproducible Worksheets 6–1 Through 6–10 • 154	
Followup Activities FU 6–1 Through FU 6–10 • 164	
Chapter 7 TEACHING THE WRITING OF POETRY	167
Poetic Techniques • 168	
Nonrhyming Poems • 168	
Nonrhyming Poem Writing Activity (168)	
Haiku • 168	
Haiku Writing Activity (170)	
Cinquain • 170	
Cinquain Writing Activity (171)	
Limericks • 171	
Limerick Writing Activity (171)	
Rhyming Poems • 172	
Rhyming Poem Writing Activity (172)	
Teaching Notes for Reproducible Worksheets • 173	
Reproducible Worksheets 7–1 Through 7–10 • 177	
Followup Activities FU 7–1 Through FU 7–10 • 187	
Chapter 8 TEACHING REVISION	189
The Three Parts of Revision • 189	
A Student Proofreading Guide • 190	
Editing Teams • 190	
Revision Activity 1 (193) • Revision Activity 2 (193)	
Writing Conferences • 193	
Teaching Notes for Reproducible Worksheets • 194	
Reproducible Worksheets 8–1 Through 8–10 • 200	
Followup Activities FU 8–1 Through FU 8–10 • 210	
Chapter 9 EVALUATION	213
Grading • 213	
Methods of Evaluation • 214	
Using Writing Samples for Evaluation (214) • Insuring Consistency in Evaluation (216)	
• The Evaluation of Poetry (216) • Individual Skills Analysis Sheets (216)	
The Importance of Sharing • 219	
A Final Word • 223	

1

Where Children Get Ideas

Effective writing starts with good ideas. If a writer's ideas are weak, underdeveloped, or clichéd, no amount of technical skill can turn the piece into a solid composition.

Ideas can be found everywhere. Every experience, every dream, and every feeling can provide the substance on which an idea can be built. Each of us has countless ideas every day that can be turned into sound premises for writing, and yet most people have trouble recognizing and refining fresh ideas.

This is particularly true of children. It is a rare teacher who, at some time during the writing lesson, has not heard from students such complaints as: "I don't know what to write about," or, "I don't have any ideas."

The generation of ideas depends greatly on imagination and visual imagery. These faculties exist to one degree or another in all people, and under the proper conditions can be enhanced. What this really means is that all normal children can learn how to develop fresh ideas if they are taught in the right way.

DEVELOPING THE IMAGINATIONS OF CHILDREN

Imagination is the ability to form mental pictures of something that is not actually present, something that has never been experienced, or something that has yet to be. Imagination is fundamental to generating ideas. It is no coincidence that imaginative individuals tend to be more successful in business, the arts, and

the professions. Success in virtually any field depends largely on ideas, and imagination is the wellspring of ideas. Everyone has imagination, but the quality depends on how often it is used.

There is much that you can do to encourage the imaginations of your students:

1. *The most important thing is never to accept from a student that he or she has no imagination.* Comments like, "I can't think of anything," or, "I don't know how to start," should be countered with positive statements such as, "Sure you can," or, "You can do it if you use your imagination." Explain to your students that the more they use their imaginations, the better their imaginations will become.

2. *Discussion of any topic offers the opportunity to stimulate the imaginations of children.* Whenever you can, ask questions that require students to think in terms of possibilities and consequences. Questions like the following trigger the minds of students to consider alternative causes and effects of given events.

What would happen if . . . ?

What might be a different ending?

How else might Tom have solved the problem?

What would you do if you were in that situation?

What other choices did Janice have?

Why do you think James did what he did?

Such questioning encourages children to use their imaginations in the learning process.

3. *The physical arrangement of a classroom is also important to the stimulation of imagination.* The setting should be bright, cheerful, and mentally exhilarating. Select posters and bulletin boards that excite the mind as well as the senses. While teaching the writing of newspaper articles, one teacher had students clip article headlines from newspapers, which the class then pasted randomly on a large piece of tagboard. The resulting display was a visual potpourri of just about everything a newspaper contains. Students were then asked to make believe they were reporters, choose a headline (other than one they brought in), and write an article. Their imaginations were the sources for their compositions.

4. *The mental atmosphere in a classroom is no less significant.* Try to reduce stress and worry in your classroom, for these interfere with imagination. Instead promote a setting in which children feel secure enough to experiment with ideas and share their speculations with others, no matter how silly or outlandish they might at first seem. Encourage questioning and analyzing which can stimulate the spontaneous fantasizing that is so important to imagination.

5. *Avoid dull, unexciting writing assignments.* One of the fastest ways to inhibit and stifle creativity is to bombard your students with boring, mundane, or meaningless writing assignments. Because there is little you can actually do to motivate your students to write or think, for these are internal processes that

come from within, you should offer assignments that stimulate the minds of your students. Writing is a deeply individual process, and students write better when the subject is one with which they are familiar. Always assign "real world" compositions that have meaning for your students. By providing children with situations they know and care about, you are giving them the solid launching pad from which their imaginations can take off and soar.

6. *Vary your writing assignments.* Giving your students different types of writing activities encourages creativity and reduces the chances of boredom. An assignment on cruelty to animals can take many forms: a story, nonfiction article, play, poem, myth, letter to the editor, an advertisement, even a tall tale. Presenting various activities bolsters the creative drive, for it forces students to consider new forms of written expression in order to communicate their ideas.

7. *Utilize teaching techniques and assign work that is appropriate to the grade and ability levels of your students.* If the writing activity is too difficult or if your students can't follow your instructions, they will feel insecure and at risk. Their imaginations and creativity will be blocked.

There is little magic in the generation of a good idea. Flashes of insight where a brilliant idea suddenly crystallizes in someone's mind are rare. Usually a great deal of prior thought, research, and analysis are undertaken before a good idea takes shape. Successful writers, artists, and other creative individuals do not wait to be inspired; they work toward inspiration. Students must be made to understand that they can generate interesting ideas if they are willing to work hard enough.

VISUALIZATION AND WRITING

Visualization is a faculty of the human brain for structuring complex information. Basically, it is the replication of images and impressions that are no longer present, or ones that are imagined.

Mental picturing, or visualization, is essential to writing. To create an idea, you must first see it in your mind's eye. In order to write an interesting composition, ideas must be conceived and developed in their totality. Imagery skills help not only in the creation of ideas, but in their explicitness as well. If a student wishes to write an editorial for the school newspaper about cafeteria food, she will undoubtedly visualize many experiences of cafeteria eating. Accurate and colorful images in the mind of the writer will lead to a more thorough and convincing article.

Further, to develop a scene or situation in detail, one must picture it clearly in his or her mind. Vibrant visualizations are the foundation of realistic scenes, the kinds that transport the reader to distant places and times, making the person feel a part of the action. It is difficult to write engagingly without strong imagery skills.

Visual Thinking Activity #1

Instruct your students to visualize a favorite place, the place they would most like to be. It might be on a little league baseball field, fishing at a gurgling stream, the beach, a treehouse, or their own homes. Be sure to emphasize a favorite spot, for these are most easily recalled.

Explain to your children to picture this place in their minds with as much detail as possible. They should try to see the colors, hear the sounds, and smell any distinctive odors. Tell them to imagine the feelings and sensations they have when they are at this place.

Ask them to write about their favorite places, based upon the images they have in their minds. Set aside time for your students to share their compositions.

Visual Thinking Activity #2

Tell your students to imagine a pet or a favorite animal. In a paragraph they are to describe it, including the following: type, size, color, shape, and manner of movement. Do an example with the class to insure that everyone understands the assignment. Provide time for sharing after everyone is finished.

Visual Thinking Activity #3

This activity is excellent for younger students as well as more advanced ones. On a nice day, highlighted by puffy cumulus clouds and a light breeze, take your children outside. In advance you might ask them to bring in old blankets or towels on which to lie.

Once outside, instruct your children to recline and look at the cloud formations that are floating overhead. Ask them what figures and shapes they see in the clouds. Encourage the students to point out the pictures they see to others. When you return to the classroom, have your students write descriptions of what they saw. If they wish, they might turn their visualizations into stories. Be sure to allow time for sharing upon completion of the activity.

Training can develop any ability. Reading can be improved by reading more. One can become more proficient in mathematics by working with numbers. The ability to picture things mentally with accuracy and vividness can be enhanced through regular use of our innate capacity to visualize. It should be a major goal of every teacher, and especially the teacher of writing, to advance and refine imagery skills which are vital to creative thinking.

PERCEPTION

Underlying skill in visualization is perception. Careful observation of the world around them enables writers to form accurate mental pictures. Explain to your students that they should look with awareness at whatever is in their visual field.

Take an object in class, perhaps a globe, desk, or film projector, and instruct your students to study it visually. Tell them to note as many characteristics of it as they can. They should consider the shape of the object, whether its lines are straight or curved. They should also look for the way light strikes the object. Is the color bright, dark, or changeable, depending on the way light shines on it? Next tell your students to notice the texture and finish of the object. Is it rough, dull, or smooth? Instruct your students to see the object in relation to other things in the room. Where is it situated? Is it dependent on other things or does it stand alone? After they have studied the visual aspects of the object thoroughly, ask your students to close their eyes and try to recall it as clearly as they can in its colors, texture, and relationships.

Keen perception is a valuable tool that can help writers see and interpret situations accurately. Like most human processes it can be enhanced through practice. There are many simple activities that teachers can utilize to promote the perceptive abilities of their children.

Perception Activity #1

Have your students study an inanimate object, perhaps a chair, table, desk, building, pen, pencil, or curtains. Instruct them to describe what they see in detail in a paragraph. Tell them to include as many features of the object as possible, such as size, shape, weight, color, and function. Be sure to set aside some time afterward so that students can share their descriptions.

Perception Activity #2

Have your students study a living thing. They might choose a dog, cat, horse, fish, tree, shrub, or flower. Unless you have several kinds of animals and plants in your classroom, this activity should be given as a homework assignment. Instruct your children to describe what they see in detail in a paragraph. Explain to them to include as many traits as possible, such as size, shape, weight, color, and type of movement. Allow students to share their descriptions the next day in class.

Keen and penetrating perception provides the visual and auditory stimuli that are necessary for lifelike visualizations, which are critical to the generation and development of ideas. Because of the importance of visual thinking to the

entire writing process, visualization activities should be a significant part of any writing program.

HELPING CHILDREN GENERATE IDEAS

There are many methods you can utilize to help your students come up with good ideas. Following are several that have worked for me. They will be explained in the following pages.

1. Provide a flexible structure that encourages creativity.
2. Choose relevant topics for writing.
3. Encourage the expression of personal experience.
4. Encourage the use of journal writing.
5. Encourage the use of idea folders.
6. Use specific idea-generation techniques such as forcing relationships and juxtaposing topics.
7. Treat writer's block as a natural occurrence.

Providing a Flexible Structure

In any writing assignment the teacher is the catalyst. She presents a situation, experience, or problem that elicits opinions, emotions, and, most importantly, ideas from her students. The teacher should offer a loose structure, but should remain flexible enough so that children's creativity can flow unimpeded.

The example of Kim illustrates this well. Kim was a sixth grade student who seldom wrote about topics I suggested. She always came up with her own. For one assignment I asked the students to imagine that they were a pet or their favorite animal, and write a short story about an ordinary day in the life of that animal, told from the animal's viewpoint. Kim, however, who had several pets, wanted to express her feelings on the happiness her pets brought her. She asked me if she could write a poem instead. I agreed because I felt that her enthusiasm was a powerful motivating factor. Kim was a student who enjoyed writing, and throughout that year I gave her the freedom to develop her ideas and use the mode that she felt best expressed those ideas.

A teacher should never limit writing to just stories and articles. Writing can take many forms, and you should encourage your children to experiment with as many of them as possible. Figure 1 contains a sample of several types of writing that should be included in every writing curriculum.

The Importance of Choosing Relevant Topics

For a writing lesson to be effective, the assignment must be relevant to the students. Writing is made up of the reality of your students' lives, their minds, hearts, and dreams. Good writing is inseparable from the individual, and it is always more intense and moving when the person is writing about something that has personal meaning.

"What I Did on My Summer Vacation," is a good example of an irrelevant topic. Many teachers like to begin the year with this type of assignment, but

Types of Writing

Advertising writing	Informational articles
Advice columns	Jokes
Allegories	Journals
Anecdotes	Mystery stories
Autobiographies	Newspaper articles
Ballads	Plays
Biographies	Poetry (various kinds)
Comic strips	Puzzles
Diaries	Quizzes
Editorials	Realistic fiction
Essays	Resumés
Fables	Reviews (book, movie)
Fairy tales	Science fiction
Fantasy stories	Speeches
Folk tales	Tall tales
Greeting cards	TV commercials
How-to articles	TV scripts

Note that this is only a partial list, containing some of the more common forms of writing. A school's writing curriculum need not be limited to just these.

Figure 1

unless something truly extraordinary happened most students find it meaningless. Their writing will be flat and uninteresting because they will have little to say about the topic.

Marsha was a bright 11-year-old who did not like to write. Her favorite excuse was that she never knew what to write about. When a writing assignment called for students to write an opinion article on any topic they chose, Marsha of course gave me her typical excuse. Knowing that she was a sensitive girl who was interested in animals, I asked her how she felt about animals being used for testing in medical experiments. She was strongly opposed to it, her emotions were aroused, and she went on to write an excellent article. With few exceptions, students write better when a topic means something to them.

Personal Experience—A Wellspring of Ideas

Many children do not realize that personal experience, and the resultant feelings and emotions, can be a well of ideas that never runs dry. It is constantly being replenished by new experiences that lead to new ideas. Moreover, this source of ideas is not limited just to things that happen directly to the individual, but encompasses anything that he or she comes to know about. Things that have happened to relatives or friends, or even things a student has just heard about can provide the basis for ideas which can be developed into compositions. Your neighbor's house being burglarized may not directly affect you in a material sense, but it most assuredly will evoke strong emotions. Reflections arising from personal experiences can be transformed into dozens of ideas that can be presented in various forms of writing.

Journal Writing

One way to help insure a constant flow of ideas is to encourage your students to keep creative writing journals. The purpose of a journal is to give children an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings without the worry of being criticized or graded. Because the topics include anything of importance to children, the journal becomes a deep reservoir of ideas and an excellent device for motivation. It also enables children to grow in self-awareness for it provides a place they can write their ideas down and later reflect upon them.

To facilitate journal writing, make sure that each student has a notebook. This may be a looseleaf, spiral, or composition book. Explain the purpose of the journal and suggest some possible titles such as "My Idea Notebook," "My Creative Writing Journal," or "A Diary of Thoughts and Ideas." Encourage your students to come up with their own titles. A title is important because it emphasizes the overall purpose of the notebook.

You should spend about ten minutes per day allowing students to write in their journals on any topic they wish in whatever way they wish. The intention of a creative writing journal is not mastery of grammar and mechanics, which come later—it is to foster new ideas. Be sure to stress that the journals are private and are for the eyes of the author only. If children think that you or their classmates will be looking at their most personal thoughts, they will feel

inhibited and not commit those thoughts to paper. The purpose of the journal will then be severely undermined.

An Idea Folder

Along with a creative writing journal, you should encourage your children to keep an idea folder. This can include any ideas or questions students might have. Pictures, clipped newspaper and magazine articles, and notes that cover anything of interest to the student can go into the idea folder. Encourage your children to regularly review their idea folders, for the folders can be an excellent source of ideas during those times when no new ideas come to mind.

Advanced Idea-Generation Techniques

By the time children reach the middle grades, most are intellectually mature enough to be able to grasp more advanced techniques for generating ideas. Two techniques I have found most helpful to students are forcing relationships and juxtaposing ideas.

Forcing Relationships. Forcing relationships is an idea-generation strategy that most children can master quite easily. Basically it is putting together two or more unlikely characters or elements and building a situation around them. Examples are a boy and a girl who have opposite viewpoints but must plan a school fund raiser, or a cat, a dog, and a mouse working together to solve a neighborhood mystery, or a wolf cub (predator) and a rabbit (prey) helping each other to survive in the wilderness. In each of these cases the difference between the characters will lead naturally to compelling situations.

Similar to forcing relationships is to take a situation and extrapolate results. You can use this example with your students: Imagine a forest fire and the destruction it causes. Now consider how that fire would affect the creatures of the forest. A story possibility might be how a particular raccoon family survives and finds a new home. Often, many story ideas can be developed from a single situation.

Juxtaposing Topics. A technique for generating ideas that you can use with advanced students is juxtaposing topics. This technique is built on the understanding that people have basic needs: food, shelter, health, clothing, security, relationships, and self-worth. Choosing a topic and combining it with a basic need can lead to unique situations that can be developed into interesting compositions.

For example, the topic is homework. Combine homework with the basic need of relationships. Ask your students to think about all of their relationships—with parents, brothers and sisters, and friends—that might, in some way, be affected by homework. One idea for a story or article might be how homework puts strains on parents and children. Another might be the conflicts that arise between friends when one wants to copy the other's homework.

Here is another example. The topic is grades, combined with the need for self-worth. Tell your students to consider all the ways grades affect the way they feel about themselves. Good grades make a person happy and confident; poor grades lead to negative feelings of self-worth. Various story and article ideas can be developed from that basic observation, including:

1. An article on why good grades are important.
2. An amusing story about a student desperately cramming before a major test.
3. An article on how to study effectively.
4. A story about a student who just can't achieve good grades no matter how hard he or she tries.
5. A story about a student who believes that high grades are the most important goal in life, to the exclusion of other worthwhile things.

Combining topics with basic needs presents the imagination with possibilities and situations that can be developed into original ideas for writing. An idea is a spark that sets the writing process into motion. Without it the process stalls.

Overcoming Writer's Block

There will be occasions, of course, when your students have difficulty formulating ideas. This is natural. The condition is called writer's block. You should explain to your children that even professional authors experience writer's block from time to time.

It is much like a car that has trouble starting. The driver must keep trying until the engine finally turns over. Assure your students that the best way to overcome writer's block is to keep working on their ideas. Every idea they consider and reject brings them closer to the one that will work and prove to be the foundation for a good composition.

WORKING WITH RELUCTANT WRITERS

Despite all of your efforts to encourage your students to write, there will be some who because of a lack of confidence, underdeveloped motor skills, boredom, or just plain stubbornness will be unwilling to commit the simplest ideas to paper. And yet, if handled with skill and sensitivity, most of the children who fall into this category can be inspired to write well.

Here are five steps to follow when you work with reluctant writers:

1. *The first thing to do is focus your attention on the student's self-concept.* Many children who don't like to write do not feel good about themselves. Writing is sharing our thoughts and feelings, and many of these children do not want to share because they believe they have nothing worth sharing. Try to draw such students out. Find out what interests them and show them that you are interested in them. Offer praise whenever possible, for this proves to children their worth. Without question, when we feel good about ourselves, we are more willing to express our thoughts and feelings.

2. *You should allot substantial time for reluctant writers to generate ideas.* Frequently, because they do not wish to write in the first place, these children have great difficulty in formulating and building ideas. Rather than trying to turn ideas into complete stories or articles, concentrate on short assignments. Writing classified advertisements, letters of complaint or thanks, and short descriptions of objects and situations work well because they are less threatening than writing a major composition.

3. *Be flexible with your assignments to reluctant writers.* If one of these students comes to you and asks to write an account of his or her last fishing trip, even though everyone else is writing a tall tale, let the student do it. The most important consideration here is that the student is writing.

4. *Sometimes it helps to talk through a first draft with children who lack the confidence to write.* Go through it step by step if necessary to build the child's confidence. Telling it first is often the boost that is needed to start the student writing a good composition. The time you spend will be translated directly into a firm foundation for written expression.

5. *Finally, you must understand that there will be times when you will have to back off rather than force a student to write.* Threatening a student with failure will only discourage the writing process.

Generating new ideas is hard work. Even professional writers rely on specific techniques to maintain a constant flow of ideas. If left on their own, most children quickly become tired of trying to develop ideas for stories and articles. By showing children how to use their imaginations and creativity, teachers can help children to develop their idea-generating capacity. Not only can children learn how to think up fresh ideas, they can be shown that story and article ideas are all around them.

TEACHING NOTES FOR REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS

1-1. MY OWN MAGICAL CREATURE

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a paragraph describing a magical creature of their own invention.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your students that writers sometimes invent strange, magical, and unusual things when creating stories. This can add excitement and suspense to their writing. Next mention that magical creatures have appeared in legends and folklore since ancient times. You might talk about dragons, griffins, winged horses, leprechauns, and gremlins. If possible, show your children pictures of some magical creatures. If you wish, you can ask students to draw pictures of their magical creatures. Allow time for sharing at the end of the assignment.

EXTENSION: Ask your children to write a poem about their magical creatures. Emphasize that their poems do not need to rhyme or have a specific meter.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

1-2. A HIGH-FLYING IMAGINING

OBJECTIVE: Students are to imagine flying like a bird, answer questions about this imagining, and write a paragraph describing it.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your students that writers use their imaginations to see scenes in their minds. This helps them to imagine what it would be like to be in that place. Tell your students to imagine they are a powerful thoroughbred, galloping toward the finish line in a race. Ask the class to volunteer information about how they feel and what they see. List their

comments on the board. After listing several ideas, explain that this is how they will complete the questions on the worksheet. Further explain that after they have answered the questions, they will use their answers to develop a paragraph. Make provision for sharing at the end of the assignment.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think of a time they were home alone at night. Ask a few volunteers to describe how they felt. Now ask them to imagine being home alone at night and hearing strange noises. How would they feel? What would they do?

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ANSWERS.

1-3. A DAY I'LL NEVER FORGET

OBJECTIVE: Students are to select a topic, answer given questions about it, and write a composition.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Introduce this activity by telling your students that writers sometimes start with a topic, and then fill in details about that topic as they develop a composition. Instruct your children to select one of the given topics or one of their own to complete the worksheet. After the assignment is complete, display the compositions.

EXTENSION: Ask students to consider how their experience would have changed had an opposite (or radically different) event occurred. Ask them to imagine how this would have changed their feelings and the outcome of the event. Have them rewrite their compositions, assuming that the opposite had, in fact, occurred.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

1-4. AN IMAGINARY SPRING WALK

OBJECTIVE: Students are to visualize a specific scene, answer given questions, and describe their visualization in a paragraph.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Introduce the lesson by asking your students to close their eyes and think about something. It can be anything—a person, a thing, or some place. They will see it in their mind's eye. Explain that this is a visualization, and that visualizing helps writers to describe the people and scenes they imagine with great detail. Now tell your children to close their eyes again and imagine that they are walking in a field during the spring. Tell them to try to picture themselves in the field with as much detail as possible. Allow time for sharing upon completion of the assignment.

EXTENSION: Tell your students to think of their favorite season. Now ask them to think of the place they would most like to be during this season, and describe it in a paragraph.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ANSWERS.

1-5. A FRIENDLY VISION

OBJECTIVE: Students are to visualize a friend who is not present, answer given questions about their visualization, and write a description of that person.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your students that writers often visualize their characters before writing about them. Visualization helps writers to develop their characters as real people. Ask your students to close their eyes

and visualize a friend or relative who is not in the room. Tell them to focus on their image, getting it as clear as possible to complete the assignment. Allow time for sharing.

EXTENSION: Tell your students to imagine themselves standing in front of a full-length mirror, or seeing a picture of themselves. Ask them to write a description of themselves.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE DESCRIPTIONS.

1-6. MY FAVORITE ROOM

OBJECTIVE: Students are to visualize their room or a favorite room in their home and write a descriptive paragraph.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your children that visualizing a scene or setting helps authors to describe it accurately in their writing. Tell your students that their ability to visualize can improve with practice. A good exercise is to visualize something that is familiar, such as a room in their home. Tell them to close their eyes and visualize their room as accurately as possible. To help them you might ask questions like the following—

How big is the room?

What room, or rooms, is it connected to?

What colors are the walls and ceiling?

Is the floor wood, or is it covered with carpeting or some other material?

Does the room have windows? If yes, how many? Where are they situated?

Visualize at least four objects in the room. How are they arranged?

To reinforce the benefits of the activity, you can go over the worksheet with the class upon completion.

EXTENSION: Tell your students to visualize themselves standing in front of their house or apartment building. Tell them to visualize how their home looks from the outside. Ask students to describe what they see in a paragraph.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ANSWERS.

1-7. TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE

OBJECTIVE: Students are to describe in a paragraph several things that they see and hear on their way home from school.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your students that writers observe life around them with great interest. This enables them to write realistically. Ask your students to share some of the things they see and hear on their way home from school. This will generate enthusiasm and reduce any confusion over what they are to do. After the assignment, allow time for sharing, either displaying compositions or asking students to read their paragraphs to the class.

EXTENSION: Tell your students that lunchtime (particularly if they have lunch in school) is a time of many sounds and sights. Ask them to describe what they see and hear during lunchtime in a paragraph.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE PARAGRAPHS.

1-8. PERSONALLY SPEAKING

OBJECTIVE: Students are to take an event from their experience, list several details about it, and then write about the event as a story or article.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Tell your students that personal experience can often be a source of writing ideas. Emphasize that personal experience includes things that actually happen to a person, as well as things that the person comes to know about. Display the compositions or provide some other type of sharing upon completion of the assignment.

EXTENSION: Instruct your students to work with a friend. Explain that they are to talk about a personal experience with their friend, including the details, their feelings, and the outcome of the event. After sharing their experiences, each is to write about the experience of the other. Mention that this type of writing is called an "as told to account."

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

1-9. CREATE A STORY!

OBJECTIVE: Students are to develop story ideas and a story based on random sets of elements.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your students that various elements and events can be combined to create a story idea. Write the following words on the board—a magic carpet, a boy, a lost pony. Explain that these elements seem unrelated, but through imagination they can be turned into a story. Now ask your students to think of possible story ideas that include the three elements and share them with the class.

You can offer this one. The setting is a farm. While exploring the attic of his house, a boy happens to find an old trunk with strange markings. The trunk belonged to a magician who lived in the house many years ago. In the trunk is a carpet. The boy soon finds out that it is a flying carpet. When a pony strays off, the boy uses his flying carpet to help find it. Tell your students that this basic story idea can now be developed more fully. Display the stories upon completion of the assignment.

EXTENSION: Instruct your students to work with a friend. Explain that each student is to come up with three or more unrelated elements, like those in the activity. They are to work together to combine the different elements into a storyline, and then write a story. Stories can be silly or serious. Be warned—some of the stories will be quite amusing and unique!

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE STORY IDEAS.

1-10. IT'S ALL VERY BASIC

OBJECTIVE: Students are to match a basic need with a topic to create a story or article idea; they are to then take one of their ideas and develop it into a story or article.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain that people have basic needs, things they must have to live healthy, satisfying lives. These needs include food, shelter, health, clothing, security, relationships, and self-worth. Make sure that students understand what each means. Explain that by combining a need with a topic, a story or article idea can be developed. Give this example: Take the basic need of health. You can combine it with the topic of an accident. From here you can create a story that is based on the problems an accident victim has in rebuilding his or her life.

EXTENSION: Encourage your students to select a topic that is meaningful to them. Explain that they are to combine the topic with a basic need and write an editorial. Briefly review the features of an editorial, that it is a form of writing in which the writer expresses his or her opinion about an issue, problem, or topic.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

Name _____

Date _____

MY OWN MAGICAL CREATURE

WRITING TIP: A writer's imagination is a precious resource. With imagination you can invent new things, go any place you wish, or do anything you want.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine a magical creature. Your creature can be anything you wish, but it must have magical powers. On the lines below, write several sentences that describe your creature. Tell about its size, shape, color, where it lives, and its magical powers. Then, on the back of this sheet, write a paragraph that describes your creature.

My magical creature is called a(n)



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

EXTENSION: After writing a paragraph about your magical creature, try writing a poem that describes it.

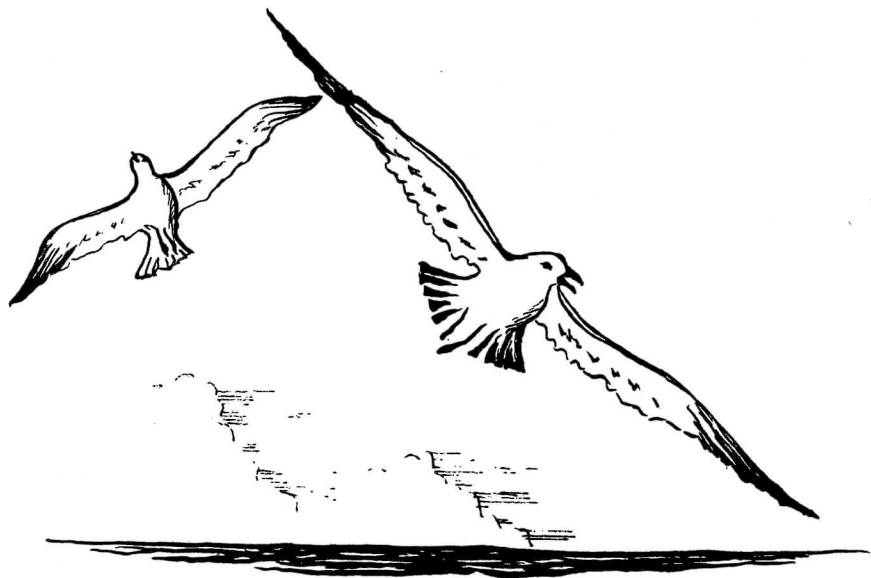
Name _____

Date _____

A HIGH-FLYING IMAGINING

WRITING TIP: Writers use their imaginations to picture scenes and situations in their minds. This helps them to write with realism. The more you practice using your imagination, the better it will become.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine the following situation with as much detail as you can. Answer the questions in complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, write about your imagining in a paragraph.

**IMAGINE FLYING LIKE A BIRD . . .**

1. Describe what you see. _____

2. Describe how the wind feels against your body. _____

3. How high and how long can you fly? _____

4. What do you like most as you fly? _____

EXTENSION: Imagine being home alone at night and hearing strange noises. Write a scene based on this imagining.

Name _____

Date _____

A DAY I'LL NEVER FORGET

WRITING TIP: Writers often start with a topic, and then fill in details about that topic. In this way, one idea builds on another.

DIRECTIONS: Choose one of the three topics listed (or select one of your own) and answer the questions in complete sentences. On the back of this sheet, use the information to write a composition.

TOPICS

1. My Happiest Day
2. I Did Something Really Nice
3. The Scariest Thing That Ever Happened to Me



1. In a sentence, summarize why you will never forget this day. _____

2. When did it happen? _____

3. Where did it happen? _____

4. Who was there? _____

5. What happened? _____

6. How did it end? _____

EXTENSION: Imagine the opposite happening in your composition. How would this change what you wrote? Rewrite your composition assuming that the opposite occurred.

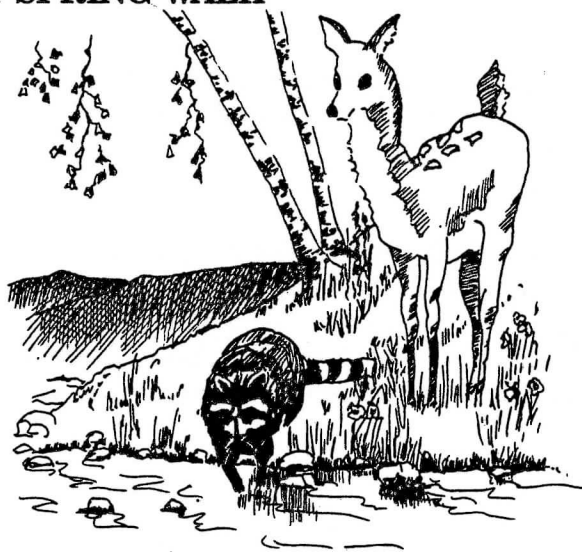
Name _____

Date _____

AN IMAGINARY SPRING WALK

WRITING TIP: By picturing scenes in their minds, writers are able to describe them to their readers. This is called visualization.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine that you are in a field during spring. With as much detail as possible, try to see yourself walking through the field. Answer the following questions in complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, describe your visualization in a paragraph.



1. What do you see? _____

2. What do you smell? _____

3. What sounds do you hear? _____

4. How does the ground feel beneath your feet? _____

5. You come to a pond. What color is the water? _____

_____ What does the water feel like? _____

6. What do you do next? _____

EXTENSION: Imagine your favorite season. Visualize the place you would most like to be during this season, and write a paragraph describing this place.

Name_____

Date_____

A FRIENDLY VISION

WRITING TIP: Writers often base the characters in their stories on real people. This helps them to make their characters believable and interesting.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine a close friend (or relative) who is *not* in the room. Answer the following questions in complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, describe the person you visualized in a paragraph.



1. Describe the person's face. Is it a round face, oval, or squarish?_____

2. What color is the person's eyes?_____

3. What color is the person's hair?_____

4. Is the person's hair long or short?_____

5. Describe the person's body. Is he or she short or tall?_____

Is he or she heavy or thin?_____

6. Describe how the person is dressed._____

EXTENSION: Imagine seeing a picture of yourself. Describe yourself in a paragraph.

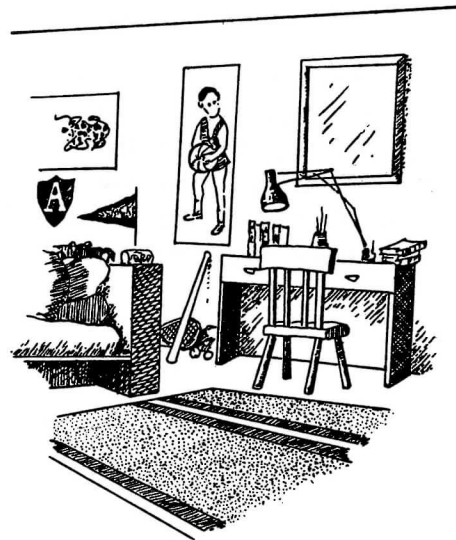
Name _____

Date _____

MY FAVORITE ROOM

WRITING TIP: Writers visualize scenes and settings in their minds before writing about them. Visual thinking helps make your writing realistic and lifelike. It helps you to paint images with words.

DIRECTIONS: Visualize your room, or a favorite room, in your home. Try to see it in your mind with as much detail as possible. Begin at one corner and work around the room. Based on your visualization, write at least five (5) sentences that describe your room. On the back of this sheet, expand the sentences you wrote into a descriptive paragraph.



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

EXTENSION: Imagine standing in front of your house or apartment building. What do you see? In a paragraph, write a description of your home, looking at it from across the street.

Name _____

Date _____

TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE

WRITING TIP: Most writers are keen observers of the world around them. This helps them to write with great accuracy.

DIRECTIONS: On your way home from school, make notes of the things you see and hear. On the lines below, list at least five (5) things you observed or heard. On the back of this sheet, write about your observations in a paragraph.



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

EXTENSION: In a paragraph, describe several things that you see and hear during lunch.

Name _____

Date _____

PERSONALLY SPEAKING

WRITING TIP: Personal experience is one of a writer's best sources for ideas. By using your imagination, you can turn many of the things that happen to you into interesting compositions.

DIRECTIONS: Think of something that happened to you, or something you heard about that is meaningful to you. It might be something that happened to a friend or someone you know. It might have happened at school, home, or at some place in the world that you heard or read about. Do the following—

- a) On the first few lines, tell what the experience was in one sentence.
- b) List several details about the experience.
- c) On the back of this sheet, write a composition about the experience.



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

EXTENSION: Work with a friend. Each of you is to tell the other about a personal experience. After talking about your experiences, you are to write a paragraph about your friend's experience, and she or he is to write a paragraph about yours. Afterward, read each other's work and check it for accuracy.

Name_____

Date_____

CREATE A STORY!

WRITING TIP: Writers can create interesting stories out of what seem to be unrelated things by combining two or more ideas to make a story idea. You can do this too by using your imagination.

DIRECTIONS: Take each of the sets of ideas below and think of a story idea. Write your story ideas on the lines below. On the back of this sheet, choose one of your story ideas and write a story.



1. A lost wallet, two friends, an address ...

2. A fox, a rabbit, a farmer, a lettuce patch ...

3. A boy, a kite, a cat, a windy day ...

4. A baseball glove, a girl, her brother, a big game ...

5. An old house, two children, a ghost ...

EXTENSION: Work with a friend. Each of you suggests at least three unrelated ideas. Now, combine the ideas and work together to think of a storyline. After you have come up with a storyline, work together and write a story.

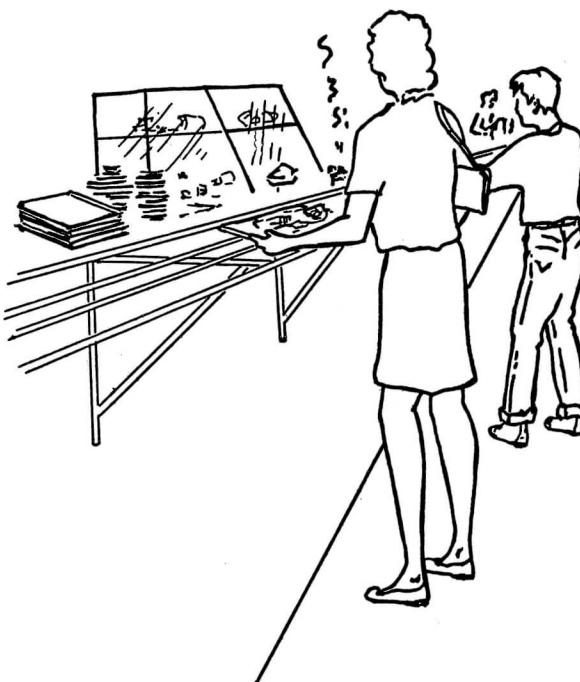
Name _____

Date _____

IT'S ALL VERY BASIC

WRITING TIP: Writers know that people have *basic needs*. A basic need is anything that a person must have to live. Basic needs include food, shelter, health, clothing, security, relationships, and self-worth.

By combining basic needs with special topics, writers can create interesting ideas for stories, articles, and books. For example, a writer can take the basic need for food, combine it with the topic of cafeteria eating, and several ideas can come to mind. One might be an amusing story about a group of students who try to start their own food service because they are unhappy with their school's cafeteria food. Another might be an article on how nutritious cafeteria food is. There are many other ideas.



DIRECTIONS: Combine an idea from section A with a basic need from section B. On the lines below each basic need and topic, write a story or article idea. Then, on the back of this sheet, choose one of your ideas and write a composition.

SECTION A

TOPICS

Overpopulation
Crime
Parents
Homeless people
Cheating
Pets
Sports

Doing the right thing
A balanced diet
Animal experiments
Brothers and sisters
Helping someone
A first date
Going on vacation

Exercise
Honesty
Children
Fashion
Growing up
Sickness
School

1-10 (continued)

Name _____

Date _____

IT'S ALL VERY BASIC

SECTION B

BASIC NEED

TOPIC

Food _____

Shelter _____

Health _____

Clothing _____

Security _____

Relationships _____

Self-Worth _____

EXTENSION: Select your own topic, one that is meaningful to you, combine it with a basic need, and write an editorial.

FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES

FU 1-1. ANIMAL FOR A DAY

Ask your students to imagine that they are their favorite animal. Ask them to think about how an average day would be, and write a diary about that day. Emphasize that they should try to see everything from their animal's viewpoint. Display the diaries at the end of the activity.

FU 1-2. INVENT A STORY

Ask your students to bring in several magazines. Have them work in groups of two or three. Students are to cut out pictures or photographs, paste them together on construction paper, and then write a story that describes the action of their pictures. Stories can be silly or serious. Display the stories and pictures at the end of the activity.

FU 1-3. GOING MY WAY

Have students select a particular place—home, a fast food restaurant, ice-cream shop, or playground are some possibilities—and ask them to write directions to that place from school. Tell them to close their eyes and try to see themselves walking or driving to their destination. Emphasize that they should be as accurate as possible with their directions. Display students' work at the end of the activity.

FU 1-4. BLAST FROM THE PAST

Ask your students to think of a truly funny or amusing event that happened to them when they were younger. Ask them to visualize the incident and write about it in a paragraph. You might have students read their paragraphs at the end of the activity, or display them. If you wish, you can hold a class vote for the best "blast from the past."

FU 1-5. YOU'RE THE EXPERT

Ask your children to think of something that they do well. This might be a special skill, hobby, craft, or even playing a particular sport. Tell them to visualize themselves performing this skill. The assignment is to explain to someone who knows nothing about the skill how to do it. Students should write their explanations in a paragraph. Remind them to be as accurate as possible. Display the paragraphs at the end of the activity.

FU 1-6. HOW DOES IT TASTE?

Make popcorn, iced-tea, or a similar delight with your class. Let students sample the goodies. As they eat or drink, they are to describe their sensations in a paragraph. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 1-7. WHO ARE YOU?

Ask your students to list five things about themselves. They are then to write a brief description about themselves without putting their name on their paper. At the end of the writing session, you can collect the compositions and redistribute them. Have volunteers read the compositions to the class, and try to guess what person the paper describes.

FU 1-8. CAN YOU SELL IT?

Ask your students to select a product that they like. This product may be a game, a radio, a skateboard, a video tape—any product they truly like. Explain that they are to imagine that they are advertising writers, and it is their job to write a description of the product in an attempt to sell it. Tell them to be sure to consider what makes the product good, worthwhile, and valuable, as well as what it looks like. Display the compositions at the end of the activity.

FU 1-9. GUESS THE MYSTERY OBJECT

Ask students to select a common object they might have—a pencil, pen, coin, eraser, crayon box, pair of scissors. Ask them to study the object carefully and describe it in detail in a paragraph—without naming it. You might ask them to do two or three objects. When the class is finished, students can share their paragraphs and try to have friends guess the object they are describing.

FU 1-10. A TIME I GOT INTO A LOT OF TROUBLE

Write the title of the activity on the board, and relate a personal experience to the class when, as a child, you got into a lot of trouble. We've all had those moments. Perhaps it was the time you filled the bathtub in preparation for your bath only to start playing with your favorite toy—forgetting entirely about the running water and flooding the bathroom. Ask for a few volunteers to tell about times they got into a lot of trouble. Then ask your students to write about their accounts in a paragraph. What did they do, and what was the result? Allow your children to read their paragraphs to the class after completion of the activity.

2

Developing Ideas into Stories

The best idea in the world will not produce a good story if it remains undeveloped. Just like a sculpture is carefully carved from stone, an idea must be shaped and polished if it is to deliver its message effectively. This can be a formidable task for children, even more difficult than the initial conception of good ideas.

Writing is a process that has several parts:

1. Idea generation.
2. Research, which can include observing, interviewing, examining information, and analyzing thoughts.
3. Preparation for the first draft, which includes sorting, refining, and organizing ideas.
4. Writing the draft, where the ideas are put into story form.
5. Editing and revision in which weaknesses or mistakes in organization, construction, punctuation, grammar, and spelling are identified, corrected, or rewritten.

Throughout this entire process idea development takes place. Sometimes the main ideas of the final copy do not resemble the original ideas at all. Children should be taught that a composition is like a living thing. It grows and evolves throughout the writing process.

SETTING A PURPOSE FOR WRITING

Before a story can be written, much preparation is necessary. Ideas must be conceived, a purpose, or reason for writing, must be identified, and a plan, showing the way to construct the composition, must be designed. The ease, or difficulty, that a student experiences writing a story can often be traced to the amount and quality of prewriting activities the student did.

Once a story idea has been selected, the next step is for the student to decide on the purpose of her story. The purpose helps clarify for the student the type of story she wants to write. A clear purpose acts as a beacon, drawing the student closer to the story she wants to write by helping to focus imagination and creative energy. Moreover, a purpose helps reduce overwriting because it keeps reminding the student of her intention for writing a particular piece.

The purpose of a story is the author's overall objective. It should be written in one sentence. If a student cannot state her purpose in one sentence, it is likely that she has not clearly defined what to write about. It is also likely that the student will have trouble organizing and writing the composition.

Following are some examples of purposes, which were taken from students' papers:

- The purpose is to write a scary story about a haunted house.
- My purpose is to write a funny story about a trip to a skating rink.
- The purpose is to write a suspenseful story about a lost boy.

The importance of identifying the purpose of writing cannot be overemphasized. Implied in the purpose is the audience for whom the student is writing. In the examples above, the intended audience was classmates, teachers, and parents. Encourage your students to recognize the likely readers of a given composition, as this will influence how they develop their ideas. Having a clear purpose and knowing for whom they are writing enables students to concentrate their efforts more directly on their objectives.

COMPOSING AN OUTLINE

After a student has decided on a purpose, it is time to compose a brief outline. Another essential prewriting activity, the outline is a blueprint that helps insure that the purpose of the story is achieved.

An outline promotes thinking through the details and situations of a story before writing. It stimulates imagination and creativity, and sets the subconscious to work on the scenes of the story. It makes the overall writing process easier because it provides direction and reduces false starts, meandering, overwriting, and rewriting.

Outlines should be a prewriting activity of every story. There are various types of outlines. Figure 2 is an example of an information outline I have designed and use for fiction. It is geared to the upper grades, and contains the major facts on which a story can be built. It lends itself to easy plotting and, with some practice, is manageable for most students. Of course you can develop your own outline, based upon your assessment of the needs of your students. It is not

Name _____

INFORMATION/PLOT OUTLINE

My purpose is _____

TITLE

A. Opening

1. Main characters (include names, ages, brief descriptions)
2. Description of scene (setting, time)
3. Problem(s) the characters have
4. Action caused by the problem
5. Result of the action

B. Middle Scenes

1. Scene One

- a. Characters
- b. Description of scene
- c. Problem the characters have
- d. Action caused by the problem
- e. Result of the action

2. Scene Two

(The number of middle scenes depends on the length of the story.)

C. Climax

1. Characters
2. Description of scene
3. Problem the characters have
4. Action caused by the problem
5. Result of the action; solution of the problem

D. Ending

1. Characters
2. Action

Figure 2

Name _____

SIMPLE OUTLINE

Opening

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Middle

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Climax

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

End

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Figure 3

the form of an outline that is important, but the substance. If an outline helps students to write what they intend, it is a valuable one.

For some children, an outline might consist of little more than a beginning, middle, and end, with a few phrases describing what happens in each section. An example of this type of outline is shown in Figure 3. For other children, an even simpler listing of ideas might be the best outline. An outline should never overwhelm students. Its value lies in the support it gives a student in developing a story.

Be sure to explain to your students that outlines are flexible. A story can change as it is written. Sometimes the final version of a story will be quite different from its original outline. However, the outline served its purpose by engaging the author's mind in the early going.

Outline Activity

Ask your children to think about their routines each morning before they come to school. Tell them that, obviously, everyone's routine begins with waking up. Ask for volunteers to share what they do next. Instruct your children to compose brief outlines (or lists if you feel this is more appropriate for your class) of their morning routines. After they have finished their outlines, they are to write a paragraph describing their morning routines.

THE ROUGH DRAFT

The rough draft is the stage of the writing process where children write down their ideas in story form, while referring to their outlines. Students should write as ideas flow and not be too concerned with structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling at this time. Mechanics will be polished later. The objective of the draft is to get ideas onto paper.

The teacher's role during the writing of the draft is varied. Primarily you should circulate, act as a resource, and offer encouragement. Answer any questions your students might have, and guide them in getting over the rough spots. One of the most important things you can do is to help them develop their ideas fully by asking specific questions.

For example, for a story about a flood, you might ask, "What is happening? Describe the scene. How does the water look? What does it sound like? If you were threatened by a flood what would your feelings be? What would you do to avoid drowning?" These kinds of questions help students to focus and clarify their thoughts.

As you interact with your students during writing time, keep in mind that everyone responds to approval. Whenever you can, offer genuine praise to your children. Be specific and always point out superior aspects of a student's writing.

While you are on the lookout for positive features of your students' writing,

you should also be alert to weaknesses. Catching and correcting problems early leads to faster and easier revisions.

Selecting the Right Viewpoint

Selecting and maintaining the proper viewpoint is one area in particular where children have difficulty. To maintain consistency, a decision on viewpoint, if not made during the outline stage, must be made during the draft. Stories are told either in the first or third person. A story in which the author is a participant, usually the main character, is told in the first person. The pronoun "I" plays a prominent role in any first-person viewpoint. A story in which the author is outside the story and is not a participant is an example of the third-person viewpoint. The pronouns "he, she, and it" are used to refer to the main characters.

First person singular: I took a trip.

First person plural: We took a trip.

Third person singular: He took a trip.

Third person plural: They took a trip.

Each viewpoint has advantages and limitations of which children should be aware. The first person is often easier for young writers because it lends itself readily to personal experience. However, the author's powers are restricted in the first person. The author cannot know, for example, what another character is thinking unless that character tells the author. Further, the author cannot describe an event unless he or she has experienced it or heard about it. In the third person, the author takes a position outside the story, relating the events as an observer. The author can choose how much information he or she will tell. Sometimes this can be a problem as children try to tell too much. Their material then becomes burdensome and they lose control of their stories.

For students who have trouble with viewpoints, here are two simple activities:

Viewpoint Activity #1

The student is to select a passage from a favorite story written in the first person and rewrite it in the third person.

Viewpoint Activity #2

The student is to select a passage from a favorite story written in the third person and rewrite it in the first person.

Editing and Revising the Draft

Upon completion of the draft, students should be instructed to edit their stories for ideas and mechanics. This is the time when ideas are further expanded and refined, writing is revised, and errors in mechanics are corrected. Techniques for editing and revision are explained fully in Chapter 8.

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF STORIES

Every story can be divided into four main parts: the opening, middle, climax, and end. These parts are composed of scenes. For students to write good stories they need to know what goes into them. Figure 4 contains the features of the four story parts.

The Opening

The opening of any story must capture the reader's attention. If it does not, it is unlikely that the reader will finish the story. Explain to your students that one of the easiest ways to seize the interest of their readers is to introduce the main characters and show them facing a problem or challenge. Tell your children to indicate the ages of their characters and offer brief descriptions, for this helps to bring their characters to life, making them seem like real people. The time and place that the story occurs should also be indicated in the opening. This helps the reader to visualize the action. Does the story take place in the past, present, or future? In a log cabin, a school, or on a moon base? Further, the mood of the story should be set. Is the story humorous, serious, or frightening? Finally, the opening should lead smoothly into the next scene. Emphasize to your children that the purpose of any beginning is to make the reader want to find out what is going to happen next.

The Middle

In the middle of the story, the main characters are developed—we learn more about them—and the problem they face is expanded and explained. The characters try to solve the problem, but the problem gets worse because stumbling blocks keep getting in the way. This is how suspense is built into a story. The middle of a story can consist of many scenes.

The Climax

As things seem to be hopeless for the characters, the story comes to its climax. This is where the characters solve their problem. Students frequently have difficulty with climaxes, because they do not appreciate the essential ingredients. For a climax to be satisfying to the reader, the problem cannot be solved through coincidence or a lucky accident. A good wizard who has not been mentioned in the story cannot suddenly appear and save the main characters from the trap the evil prince has sprung. Nor can the school bully abruptly become the friend of the children he has threatened simply because he has

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF STORIES

Every story can be broken down into four main parts:

THE OPENING

1. Must capture the reader's attention.
2. Introduces the main characters.
3. Shows the main characters facing a problem or a challenge.
4. Shows the setting of the story.
5. Tells the time the story takes place.

THE MIDDLE

1. Tells more about the main characters.
2. Tells more about the problems that the characters face.
3. Shows the main characters trying to solve the problem, but the problem grows worse.

THE CLIMAX

1. Shows the main characters solve the problem.
2. Shows that the main characters have learned something from their experience.

THE END

1. Should be brief.
2. Is the part of the story where all the loose ends are tied up.

Figure 4

decided to change his ways. These types of climaxes leave the reader frustrated and dissatisfied. The story crumbles.

For a climax to work, the problem must be solved in some way through the resources of the main character. The main character must do something to force the climax. Further, the main character must realize what he or she has done, and from this understanding comes personal growth. The main character changes; he or she has learned something from the experience. Students often have trouble grasping this. While some students will continue to have trouble here well into high school, the concept should be introduced for those students who are able to understand. Point out to your children that change is one of the few constants of life. We are always changing.

A story is a mirror image of some aspect of life, and therefore it, too, must show change if it is to have power and appeal. A story in which there is no change, no growth, leaves the reader with a letdown feeling. The reader feels cheated.

The End

Following the climax is the ending of a story. The ending should be brief. While the climax is the dramatic scene where the problem is resolved, the ending is the aftermath in which all the loose ends are tied up. The young hero saves the princess in the climax, and they are shown to live happily ever after in the ending.

The degree to which you explain the importance of the opening, middle, climax, and end of stories will depend on the abilities of your children. For some, just being aware that a story must have these four parts will be sufficient. For advanced students, it might be appropriate to go into each section with great detail. A basic understanding of the major parts of stories is helpful to children, for it encourages them to focus their efforts on one section at a time, making the overall writing of the composition easier.

Story Structure Activity

Have your students work with a partner. Explain that for this activity they are to assume the roles of editors. Ask your children to take out a story that they have written.

Hand out copies of Figure 4 and briefly go over it with the class. Tell your students that they will exchange their stories with their partner. Each student, now acting as an editor, will read his partner's story and will try to identify the four main story parts.

After reading the stories, the students are to return the papers to their owners and discuss the strengths and weaknesses they found in each other's stories. Students can then revise their stories and exchange them again. After editing a second time, they can discuss the positive changes that were made.

You can ask volunteers to describe some of the weaknesses they found in their own papers and how they improved them.

Building Effective Scenes

Scenes are the events that make up a story. Many children lack the skill to develop interesting scenes. The scenes in their stories are merely strung together with little continuity or flow.

Interwoven through every scene is the plot of the story. Simply, the plot is a story's action plan. The typical plot has a lead character who has a problem. As he tries to solve the problem, he is confronted by obstacles that make the problem worse. Finally, at the climax he is able to solve the problem.

If a plot is the skeleton of a story, the scenes are a story's flesh. The two are inseparable, for without an effective plot scenes are meaningless and without good scenes even the best plots lose impact.

All scenes in a story must be related; they must have a bearing on the plot. If an event does not bear directly on the plot of the story, it should be eliminated.

Every good scene has five important elements:

1. Characters.
2. Setting.
3. Time.
4. Main action.
5. Reasons for the action happening.

To gain the full scope of a scene, the reader must know who the characters are, where and when the scene takes place, what is happening, and why it is happening. If any of these elements are missing, the scene will be weakened.

Conflict

A major aspect of every effective scene is conflict. Arising from the problems confronting the main characters, conflict is the essence of action. It builds suspense, makes a story interesting, and helps hold the reader's attention.

Most children have little understanding of the importance of conflict to stories. When teaching conflict, explain it in terms of goals. Every character has a goal, which is the motivating force of that character's action—the goal is the reason he or she does what he or she does. When a goal is blocked, the character tries to attain it anyhow. This results in conflict.

As an example, suppose a girl's pet is lost. The goal is to find the pet. She searches the neighborhood but no one has seen her pet. She calls the police to report her pet missing but the police, who have other more important matters, seem unwilling to help. She then tries to retrace her pet's routine, trying to figure out what might have happened, but she cannot come up with a single clue. Every attempt at tracking down her pet is blocked. She is in conflict with those obstacles, and the plot naturally arises from that situation.

Problems and the resulting conflict must be believable. When they are, they enhance the action of a story. The reader begins rooting for the main character, because he or she can understand the character's problem and sympathize with the character's suffering.

The Importance of Background Material

Developing effective scenes depends on thorough knowledge of background material just as much as on acceptable characters and action. A happy scene is enhanced when the surroundings and action are pleasant. A horror scene is heightened when the surroundings and actions are foreboding and terrifying. The setting must be described with realism so that the reader can see, hear, feel, smell, and taste the action.

Children are often unsure of themselves when it comes to research. Emphasize that the setting and background of their stories must be detailed and specific if the story is to be believable. To make a particular place come alive in a story, students should study the type of people who live there, their history, customs, and culture, as well as the geography and climate of the area. Accuracy is essential. Tell your students that they can obtain much information about background and locales from geography and history books, atlases, maps, almanacs, and encyclopedias.

Scene-Building Activity

Using yourself as the main character, select one of the following and develop a scene that takes place:

1. In a haunted house.
2. In a spaceship.
3. In a time machine.
4. At school.
5. On the playground.
6. Any place you select.

Be sure to include the five elements of good scene building: characters, setting, time, main action, and reason for the action happening.

You might ask your students to suggest possible situations for scenes and list them on the board. Group brainstorming like this promotes enthusiasm and often emboldens the shy or timid to share their ideas. Be sure to list on the chalkboard or bulletin board the five elements of effective scenes.

Many children become tense and nervous when given a writing assignment because they don't know how to begin. You can alleviate much of this concern by showing your students that writing is a process they can understand and control.

TEACHING NOTES FOR REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS

2-1. A PERSONAL PROFILE

OBJECTIVE: Students are to make a profile poster, and write an autobiographical sketch.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: For this activity, students will need construction paper, scissors, glue and old magazines. A few days in advance, you might ask your students to bring in old magazines from home.

Explain that a profile is a short biographical sketch that focuses on the most important characteristics of a person. Tell your students that they are first to list several of their personal traits on the activity sheet. Next, they are to clip words and pictures that describe themselves in some way from magazines, and paste them onto construction paper, making a personal representation. Each student is then to write an autobiographical sketch, based on his or her artwork. Be sure that your children understand that an autobiographical sketch is a short description that they write about themselves. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your children to reread their autobiographical sketches. Instruct them to rewrite the information in the form of a poem. Emphasize that their poems do not need to rhyme or have a specific meter.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

2-2. WHAT'S ON TONIGHT?

OBJECTIVE: Students are to list several TV shows according to given categories, and write a summary of their favorite show.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask how many of your students watch television. Undoubtedly, all hands will go up. Now generate a discussion about the different kinds of shows—ask them to name some categories and shows. Answers might include comedy, adventure, police shows, fantasy, and so on. Tell them that this is what they will do for the assignment. They are to list at least three TV shows for each of the categories on the activity sheet. They are then to select their favorite show and write a summary of the last episode they saw. On the back of the activity sheet, they are to answer the who, what, when, where, and how questions. Explain that this makes up a very simple outline or listing of important ideas that will help organize their thinking and help them to write their summaries. They should write their summaries on a separate sheet of paper. Display the summaries at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your children to imagine that they are TV writers and have been given the assignment to write an episode for their favorite show. Instruct them to briefly outline or list their ideas and then write a summary of their story.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE SUMMARIES.

2-3. WHAT'S IN A ROLE?

OBJECTIVE: After listing details about a role they have, students are to write a paragraph describing that role.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain that everyone has many roles that they play each day. Ask your children to consider the different roles they have. One role might be to care for the family's pet, another might be to do the lawn or take out the garbage. Instruct them to select one of their roles and list the steps required to perform that role. After they have completed their lists, instruct your

children to write paragraphs describing their roles. Be sure to permit sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your children to think of the roles their parents play. Tell them to select one of the roles of either their mother or father, and describe that role in a paragraph. Remind them to briefly outline or list their ideas first.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE PARAGRAPHS.

2-4. STRANDED!

OBJECTIVE: After completing a simple outline, students are to write a story about being stranded on a deserted island.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: A good way to start this activity is by showing a filmstrip, movie, or cassette about Robinson Crusoe or a similar story. (You may also tie this assignment into a reading activity by having students read about Robinson Crusoe.) This will generate ideas as well as enthusiasm.

After a brief discussion of the story, ask your students to imagine that they have become stranded on an island. First they are to fill in details on the brief outline, using words or phrases, and then, based on their outlines, write their stories. Display the compositions at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to once again consider that they are stranded on a deserted island. Instruct them to write a paragraph describing what they would miss most. Why would they miss it? Encourage them to briefly outline or list their ideas first.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

2-5. MY FIRST MEMORY

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a paragraph describing their first memory, focusing on the use of the first-person viewpoint.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your children to think back as far as they can to their first memories. Explain that they will write a paragraph about their first memory, and that they should use the first-person viewpoint. Review this writing mode if necessary.

Next explain that students will work in groups of two or three, and will discuss their first memories. Encourage them to take notes as ideas come to them during the discussion, and explain that their notes will be the basis for their paragraphs. When they return to their seats, they are to list several ideas about their first memories and from their lists write their paragraphs. Be sure to allow time for sharing at the end of the activity by either displaying the compositions, or asking volunteers to read their paragraphs to the class.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to raise their hands if they have ever had an argument or disagreement with a parent, brother, or sister. Now ask them to recall the last argument they had, and try to look at it from the other person's viewpoint. Ask them to imagine that they are the other person, and write a description of that argument from that person's viewpoint. The description should be written in the first person. Remind your children to briefly outline or list their ideas first.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

2-6. THE HYPNOTIST

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a story using the third-person viewpoint.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to think about one of their favorite TV or movie characters. Have volunteers name some of their favorite characters and tell why they like them. Now ask your children to imagine that their character was hypnotized by an evil doctor. (Using a familiar character relieves students of the burden of having to develop a fresh character for the assignment, which focuses on viewpoint.) Explain that they will write a story based on that supposition, using the third-person viewpoint. Review the features of the third-person writing mode so that everyone understands what they are to do. Before writing their stories, instruct your children to answer the questions, which will help them to organize their thoughts. Display the compositions at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to imagine that instead of their favorite character being hypnotized, their best friend was. Ask them to rewrite their stories from this angle, using the third-person viewpoint.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE STORIES.

2-7. THE GREAT SEARCH

OBJECTIVE: Students are to compose an outline and write a story, focusing on development of the four story parts.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your students that most authors plan their stories before writing them. Many use outlines. Mention that outlines come in different forms, but have the same purpose—which is to help the writer develop and organize ideas. This can help reduce the changes and rewriting that need to be done later. Just as a road map helps you to find an unfamiliar town, an outline helps you go from one part of a story to another.

Based on the abilities of your students, hand out either the “Information/Plot Outline” (Figure 2), or the “Simple Outline” (Figure 3). Discuss the outline with your class and answer any questions they might have. Instruct your students to compose their outlines on the back of the activity sheet, then write a story about “The Great Search!” At the end of the activity, you should display some of the outstanding outlines along with the compositions.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to consider an object that is valuable to them, and suppose it was missing. Ask them to describe in a paragraph what they would do to find it. Remind them to briefly outline or list their ideas first.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

2-8. MAKING A SCENE!

OBJECTIVE: Based on a given illustration, students are to develop and write a scene.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your children that stories are made up of scenes. Give this example for a story about a student: One scene may take place in school, another scene may take place at home, and a third may take place at a friend’s house. The scenes combine to make the story. Review the five

elements of an effective scene: characters, setting, time, main action, and reason for the action happening. Instruct your students to study the picture on the worksheet, then develop and write a scene based on the action that is depicted. Encourage your children to briefly outline or list their ideas first. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to consider the same story idea as that of the illustration, but to change the setting. The setting can be anywhere they wish. Ask them to think about the changes this would cause in the scene. Students are to develop and write a new scene, based on a different setting. Encourage your students to briefly outline or list their ideas before writing.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE SCENES.

2-9. WHAT (OR WHO) IS FOR LUNCH?

OBJECTIVE: Students are to expand a simple scene into a more complex one.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Review what a scene is, and discuss the five elements of effective scenes: characters, setting, time, action, and reasons for the action. Tell your children to read the simple scene on the worksheet. Ask them what is missing. Answers should include that the scene needs descriptions of the setting and characters, and reason for the action—Zac, the fox, is hungry too, and his favorite meal is Woodrow the rabbit. Instruct your students to expand the scene, improving the weaknesses and adding an ending. Encourage them to briefly outline or list their ideas first. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Explain that the scene they expanded was written in the third person. Briefly review the first- and third-person viewpoints if necessary. Now ask your children to imagine themselves as being either Woodrow or Zac, and rewrite the story from the first-person viewpoint of that character. Encourage them to briefly outline or list their ideas first.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE SCENES.

2-10. TROUBLE'S BREWING

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a story based on a conflict situation.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your children that every story has a problem that must be solved. This is known as conflict. You might briefly discuss two or three familiar stories and identify the central conflict. Emphasize that all the action of a story arises out of the conflict situation.

Next explain the worksheet. There are four possible situations for conflict. Students are to write a sentence that describes conflict that can arise for each situation. Put this example on the board: Parents/student. An example of a possible conflict situation is the student wanting to go out to play instead of doing his homework. After your children have completed the conflict situations, they are to select one and write a story based on it. Remind them to briefly outline or list their ideas first. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think about a situation in which they were in conflict with someone or something. After outlining or listing their ideas,

students are to describe this situation in a paragraph. Encourage them to include what caused the conflict, what happened, and how it ended.
ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

Name _____

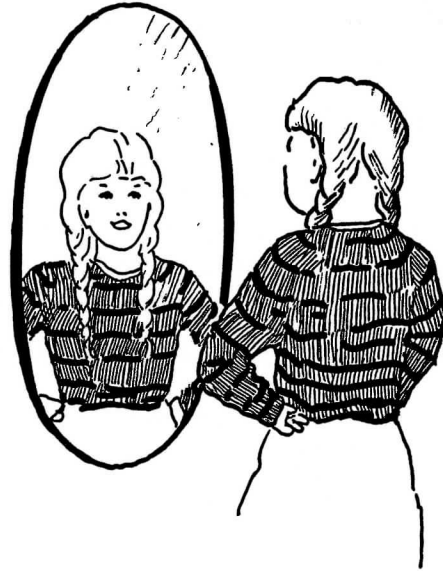
Date _____

A PERSONAL PROFILE

WRITING TIP: One of an author's most important skills is the ability to collect, sort, and organize information. This is done before writing, and makes the overall writing process easier.

DIRECTIONS: For this activity you will need an old magazine, construction paper, scissors, and glue.

First, consider your personality and list several traits about yourself on the lines below. Use complete sentences. Next, select an old magazine and clip words and pictures that describe you. Using glue, paste the words and pictures onto construction paper, making a poster that shows your real self. After you finish your poster, on a separate sheet of paper, write an autobiographical sketch.



MY PERSONAL TRAITS ARE:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

EXTENSION: After writing your autobiographical sketch, try writing a poem about yourself.

Name _____

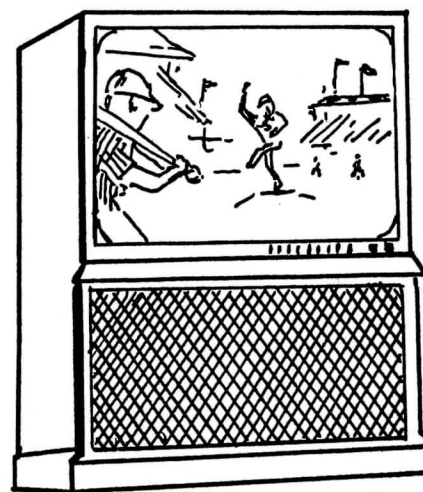
Date _____

WHAT'S ON TONIGHT?

WRITING TIP: Gathering, classifying, and organizing information before writing can help make writing easier.

DIRECTIONS: List at least three TV shows for each of the following categories below. Choose your favorite show, and write a summary of the last episode you watched. To help you write your summary, first answer the following questions on the back of this sheet—

1. Who were the main characters?
2. What happened?
3. When did the story take place?
4. Where did the story take place?
5. How did the story end?



Comedy

Drama

Science Fiction/Fantasy

Good Guys and Bad Guys

My favorite show is _____

EXTENSION: Think about your favorite show. Imagine a story you might write for it. Write a summary of your story. First list the information you want to include in your summary.

Name _____

Date _____

WHAT'S IN A ROLE?

WRITING TIP: Sometimes authors will simply list their ideas as they prepare to write about a topic. Writing down their ideas first helps them to organize their thoughts.

DIRECTIONS: Think of a role you have. There are probably many. You may be responsible for watching your little sister or brother after school, you may deliver newspapers, you may babysit, or you may help your father on Saturdays. Choose one of the roles you play and list several details on how you perform it. Use the lines below. Then, on the back of this sheet, write a paragraph that describes your role.



My role is _____

EXTENSION: Think of the roles your mother or father plays. Take either your mother or father and describe one of their roles in a paragraph. List your ideas first.

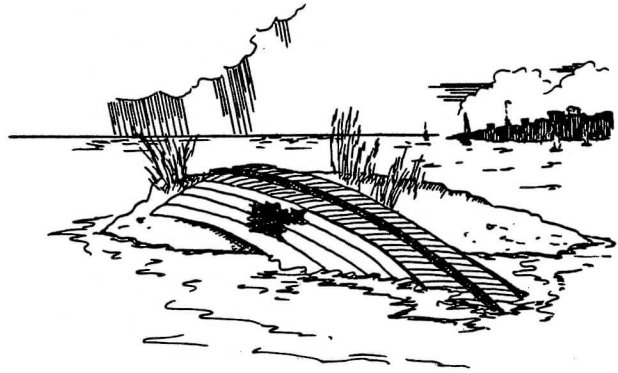
Name _____

Date _____

STRANDED!

WRITING TIP: Many authors begin stories by composing an outline. Sometimes an outline is very simple, and is little more than a list of ideas. The importance of any outline is the help it offers an author in focusing his or her thoughts before the actual writing begins.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine you have been stranded on a deserted island. Fill in the outline to help you organize your thoughts. Then, on the back of this sheet, write a story about your imaginary experience.



Title: _____

I. How I became stranded

A. _____

B. _____

II. My biggest problems

A. _____

B. _____

III. How I was rescued

A. _____

B. _____

EXTENSION: If you were actually stranded on a deserted island, what things would you miss most? Write a paragraph that tells about the things you would miss most and why you would miss them. List your ideas first.

Name _____

Date _____

MY FIRST MEMORY

WRITING TIP: When an author writes a story as if he or she were the main character, he or she is writing from the first-person viewpoint. The main character is referred to as "I" in the story.

DIRECTIONS: Working in groups of two or three, discuss your first memory with your group members. You may take notes as your ideas come to you. When you return to your seat, list several ideas about your first memory on the lines below. Use complete sentences. Then on the back of this sheet, write a paragraph describing your first memory, and be sure to use the first-person viewpoint.



EXTENSION: Think about an argument you recently had with your mother, father, brother, or sister. Now imagine the argument from that other person's point of view. Would he or she see things differently? Assume you are the other person, and write a paragraph describing how he or she felt about the argument. Use the first-person viewpoint. List your ideas first.

Name _____

Date _____

THE HYPNOTIST

WRITING TIP: When an author writes a story from a position outside the action, he or she is writing in the third-person viewpoint. The characters are referred to as "he," "she," or "they."

DIRECTIONS: Think about one of your favorite TV or movie characters. Now imagine that your character has been hypnotized by an evil hypnotist. Below are some questions that will help you focus your thoughts. Answer them in complete sentences. Then on the back of this sheet, write a story about your favorite character being hypnotized. Be sure to use the third-person viewpoint.



1. Why was your character hypnotized? _____

2. What did your character do while he or she was hypnotized? _____

3. How did your character return to normal? _____

EXTENSION: Imagine that instead of your character being hypnotized, your friend was. Why was he or she hypnotized? What happened? How did your friend get back to normal? Write a story about this imaginary experience. Use the third-person viewpoint. List your ideas first.

Name _____

Date _____

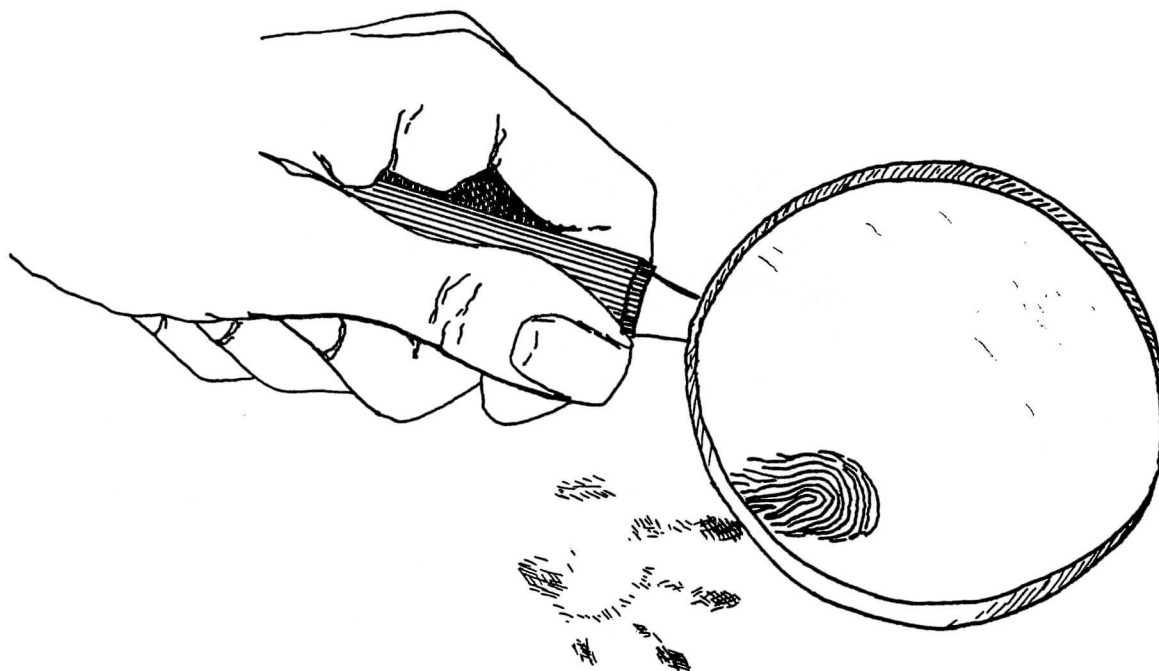
THE GREAT SEARCH

WRITING TIP: To help them organize their stories, some authors use outlines that focus on the different parts of stories.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine that a close friend has lost something very valuable. It might be a ring, a pet, a key—something that *must* be found. How would you help him or her find it? What would you do? Would you be able to find it?

Use the outline guide your teacher gave you to help you develop a story about “The Great Search.” Pay special attention to developing each story part: the opening, the middle, the climax, and the end. You can write your outline on the back of this sheet. After completing your outline, write your story on a separate piece of paper.

To help you focus your thoughts right from the start, be sure to write a clear purpose for your story.



EXTENSION: Think about something that is valuable to you. One day you suddenly realize it is missing. What would you do to find it? Describe your actions in a paragraph. List your ideas first.

Name _____

Date _____

MAKING A SCENE!

WRITING TIP: Stories are made up of scenes. Every good scene contains five important elements: the characters, the setting, the time it takes place, the main action, and a reason for the action happening.

DIRECTIONS: Study the picture below. What is happening? Based on the picture, develop a scene. First list your ideas on the lines under the picture. Use complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, describe the scene in a paragraph. Try to use all five elements of good scenes in your paragraph.



EXTENSION: Using the same story idea as in the picture above—someone being injured while on a trip—change the setting and rewrite the scene. List your ideas first.

Name _____

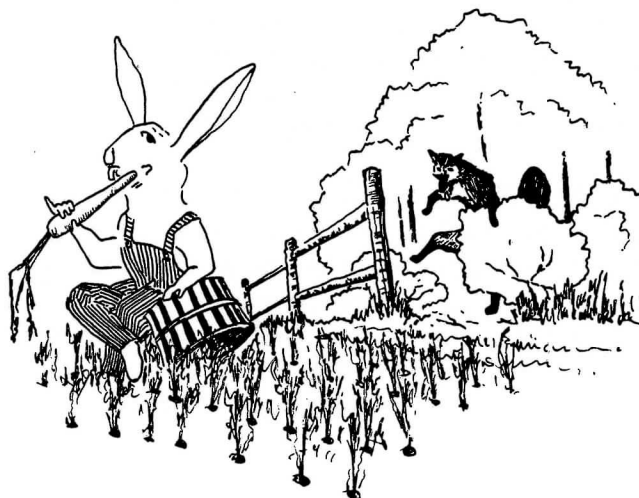
Date _____

WHAT (OR WHO) IS FOR LUNCH?

WRITING TIP: A scene is a part of a story. Sometimes a story may have only one or two scenes. A novel may have hundreds. Effective scenes help make a story interesting and exciting.

DIRECTIONS: Below is a short scene that lacks many of the elements of an effective scene. On the back of this sheet, rewrite the scene, expanding it so that it is improved. Also, add an ending to the scene. Remember the five elements of a good scene:

1. Characters.
2. Setting.
3. Time.
4. Action.
5. Reason for the action.



It was lunchtime. Woodrow, the rabbit, sat eating a carrot. It was delicious.

He didn't see Zac, the fox, sneaking up on him.

Quietly, Zac crept closer. He stepped on a twig and Woodrow's ears twitched.

EXTENSION: The scene you just wrote was in the third person. Rewrite your scene from either Woodrow's or Zac's point of view, using the first person. Notice the changes you had to make. List your ideas first.

Name _____

Date _____

TROUBLE'S BREWING

WRITING TIP: Every story must have trouble, or conflict. This leads to the problem or challenge that the main character faces. The characters of a story may be in conflict with other people, nature, or even themselves.

DIRECTIONS: Below are four potential situations for conflict. For each, write a possible conflict situation on the lines. Use complete sentences. Next, choose one of the situations and develop a story. On the back of this sheet, outline or list your ideas for your story. Then write your story on a separate sheet of paper.



1. Brother/sister _____

2. Earthling/alien _____

3. Storm/boy or girl _____

4. Witch/boy or girl _____

EXTENSION: Think about a recent situation in which you were in conflict with someone or something. Describe this situation in a paragraph. List your ideas first.

FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES

FU 2-1. TAKING A TRIP

Ask your students to think of a trip they took. When and where did they go? What did they do? Instruct them to develop a brief outline or list some details about their trips. Students are then to describe their trips in a paragraph. Display the paragraphs at the end of the activity.

FU 2-2. HOLIDAY CHEER

Ask your children to think about an upcoming or favorite holiday. Ask why they like this holiday. What is special about it? Instruct them to first outline or briefly list their ideas, then, in a paragraph, describe what makes this holiday special. Display the paragraphs at the end of the activity.

FU 2-3. KING FOR A DAY!

Ask your students to imagine that for one day they could be whoever they wished. They might be a rock star, a professional athlete, or even the President. They are to write compositions of what they would do when they became the person of their choice. Remind them to write their compositions from the first-person viewpoint. Suggest that they do a brief outline first, which can be of three parts: I. Morning, II. Afternoon, III. Evening. Display the compositions at the end of the activity.

FU 2-4. THE MYSTERIOUS OBJECT

Ask your students to imagine a situation in which two children find a mysterious object. Use these questions to stimulate thinking on the topic: What is the object? Where did it come from? What does it do? Instruct your children to first briefly outline or list their ideas, then write a story about the mysterious object. Remind them to write their stories from the third-person viewpoint. Display the activities at the end of the activity.

FU 2-5. SWEATING IT!

Ask your students to think of a time they were very nervous, on the spot, and "sweating it." We have all had experiences like that. Ask them to write a composition describing their experience, focusing on a story opening that captures the attention of the reader. Suggest that they briefly outline or list their ideas first. At the end of the activity, allow time for sharing. One possibility is to collect the stories and make a class "Sweating It" book.

FU 2-6. BRAINSTORM A CLIMAX

Choose a short story and read it aloud to your students. Your school library undoubtedly has many collections from which you can choose. Read up to the

point of the climax and stop. Instruct students to divide into groups of three or four and brainstorm ideas about possible climaxes. After allowing your children about 10 to 15 minutes to discuss the story, they are to return to their seats and write their own climaxes for the story. Remind them to briefly outline or list their ideas first. Upon completion of the assignment, ask for volunteers to read their climaxes to the class.

FU 2-7. A MODERN TALL TALE

Read or show (via filmstrip, movie, or cassette) a tall tale to your students. Discuss the features of a tall tale and point out the major parts: the opening, middle, climax, and ending. (You might also mention that all stories follow this basic pattern.) Ask your students to write a modern tall tale about some aspect of their school or home. Instruct your children to briefly outline or list their ideas first and remind them to concentrate on all four story parts. Display the tall tales at the end of the activity.

FU 2-8. THREATENED!

Ask your students to imagine being threatened. To focus their thoughts, ask them these questions: Why are you being threatened? Who or what is threatening you? How do you feel? What would you do? Explain to your children that they are to write a story about a time they felt threatened by someone or something. The story can be based on a real or imagined event. Ask your students to briefly outline or list their ideas first, and remind them to focus on developing the four story parts. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

FU 2-9. THE STRANGER!

Ask your students to imagine the appearance of a stranger in their neighborhood. Being members of their neighborhood anti-crime watch, they are suspicious and secretly follow this person to find out what he or she is up to. Where did the stranger come from? What is the stranger doing? What finally happens? Instruct your children to briefly outline or list their ideas, and then write a story about "The Stranger." Encourage your children to focus special attention on the development of realistic and exciting scenes.

FU 2-10. THE CASE OF THE MISSING GYM BAG

Ask your students to imagine that they are the school's resident private detective. A serious problem has developed. Gym bags are missing. Are they being stolen? If yes, who is doing this terrible deed? Why? Instruct your children to write a story about the missing gym bags. Remind them to first briefly outline or list their ideas, and encourage them to focus on good scene development. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

3

Building Believable Characters

Characterization is the way a writer distinguishes his or her characters from one another by revealing their individual natures. Strong characterization adds to the realism and interest of a story because it brings the characters to life, making them seem like real people. Readers identify with and care about believable characters more than they do characters who are one-sided, inconsistent, or contrived.

The characterization of the stories written by children is often weak. Characters are presented in general terms without enough details to make them come alive. Moreover, young writers frequently overlook the motivation that is necessary to make the actions of their characters acceptable to the reader. Another common problem is the reliance on stereotyped characters. Given the proper experiences, however, most children can learn the principles of effective characterization.

REVEALING CHARACTER THROUGH ACTION AND DESCRIPTION

Character can be revealed in many ways. While a single trait is adequate to describe the minor characters of a story, the major characters must be delineated and shown to have distinct personalities. The reader must be able to form individual pictures and impressions of each. There are two basic options through which to characterize: action and description.

Revealing Character Through Action

Action is a potent method of characterization because it arouses immediate interest and draws the reader into the story. There are five ways to characterize through action:

1. *Through what the character does.* Is the character mean, kind, compassionate, or courageous? Is the character willing to sacrifice for what he feels is right, or does the character ignore his conscience?
2. *Through what the character says.* Characters may lie or speak the truth. They may speak well or ill of others. What a character says, and the way he says it, can tell the reader much about the type of person the character is.
3. *Through the character's reactions.* Does the character remain calm in a crisis, or does he panic? Upon hearing bad news, does the character sulk or determine to overcome the situation?
4. *Through what others say about the character.* Do other characters in the story speak highly of the character? Do they feel admiration, jealousy, or hate toward the character? This method allows the writer to offer her feelings about a character without interrupting the action of the story.
5. *Through self-examination.* Character can be revealed by thoughts and feelings. The child who reflects on his or her feelings after having shoplifted is an example. Guilt indicates a conscience; remorselessness signals something quite different.

Revealing Character Through Description

Description is important to revealing character because it enables the reader to form an image of the character. The sentence, "She had long golden hair, blue eyes, and white skin," forms a well-defined picture in the mind of the reader. There are four ways to characterize through description:

1. *Physical attributes.* Is the character tall, short, heavy, or thin? What color is the character's hair? Is it long or short? What color are the character's eyes? What is the character's voice like? Is it soft, or does it sound harsh and threatening? What are the character's facial expressions? Does the character have a broad smile or a deep frown? Does the character have any outstanding physical attributes such as great beauty or strength? Attention to such details provides the reader with a distinct image of the character.
2. *Clothing.* What type of clothing does the character wear? Is it expensive, poor, clean, or dirty? Does the character usually wear jeans, dresses, flannel shirts, or suits? Along with physical traits, the clothes that the characters of a story wear help the reader to form colorful mental pictures.
3. *Names.* Since names carry impressions with them, they can influence the image a reader forms of a character. It is vital therefore to select names that fit characters. Jennifer is a wholesome-sounding name. It would fit a bubbly, enthusiastic young girl. Barker is a loud, rough-sounding name and would fit a tough person.

4. *Character tags.* These include any repeated action of a character. Some examples are favorite phrases or words a character might use, a gesture such as snapping the fingers, or a mannerism like clicking the tongue.

Revealing Character Activity

For this activity, students are to work with a friend. If you have an odd number of children, you can allow three to work together, or you can take part in the activity and work with a student yourself. Explain that writers paint visual pictures of their characters in the minds of their readers. They do this by telling their readers what their characters do and how they look.

Instruct your children to write a paragraph that characterizes their friend. They should include a physical description and some of the actions that are typical of their friend. Typical actions might include the use of particular expressions, habits, or things their friend likes to do. Tell them not to reveal the name of their friend in the paragraph.

When everyone is done, collect the papers, redistribute them randomly, and have students read the papers to the class. Let the class guess who fits the characterization.

CHARACTERS AND MOTIVATION

People in real life always have reasons for doing things. Sometimes those reasons might seem irrational to others, but nevertheless, to the individual, the reasons are meaningful. In stories, too, every action of a character must have a reason; the action must be motivated.

Motivation must arise out of a character's basic nature. This makes the behavior of the character believable. Explain to your children that when they develop a character in a certain way, that character's actions must agree with the type of person he or she is. If the character is portrayed as a hero, his actions must be heroic. If the character is developed as a coward, with no clue given that he can be brave, he cannot do something courageous as this will undermine believability. The characters of a story must always act within their natures.

When teaching characterization, emphasize to your students that the way their characters think and behave is influenced by the character's background. One's personality evolves throughout life. Just as real people are influenced by their social and economic environments, so too must be the characters in a story. A character from the South will have different opinions than one from the North. A poor person will naturally look at things differently than a rich one. Mention to your students that girls often see things differently than do boys. Understanding the effects of background is vitally important to characterization.

To help your students develop strong motivation in their characters, encourage them to empathize with others. Tell them to observe the actions of others and try to understand why people act the way they do. Further, explain to your

children that they should think of their characters as complete human beings. Urge them to put themselves in the places of their characters and imagine what their thoughts, feelings, and actions would be in the same situations. Changing places with their characters is one of the best ways to anticipate the behavior of their characters.

Following are two activities for developing skill in characterization:

Motivation Activity #1

Tell your students to imagine themselves in the following situation: You see a friend steal something from another student. What was it? How would you feel? What would you do?

Now instruct them to develop a scene about this situation and focus on strong characterization. Encourage them to include thoughts, feelings, motivation, action, and physical descriptions.

The makeup of your class will determine the extent to which you go into this activity. To insure that everyone knows what to do, take an example—a student stealing a pen—and ask volunteers to offer some possible reasons. List these on the board and explain that these are examples of motivation. Now ask the class to imagine that they witnessed this action. Ask volunteers to describe their feelings and what they would do.

You might also encourage the class to generate possible situations for this activity, which you can list on the board. This would help insure that everyone has a topic.

Allow children to read their compositions to the class at the end of the activity, and be sure to point out good examples of characterization.

Motivation Activity #2

Ask your students to think of a person who is very special to them. This person might be a relative, friend, or someone they have read or heard about. What makes this individual special?

In a paragraph, students are to describe this person, including possible motivations for his or her actions—why does this individual do what he or she does?

Encourage your students to read their paragraphs to the class at the end of the activity.

THE CHARACTER CHART

Effective characterization depends on an author being able to paint individual pictures of each character in a story. Authors do this by coming to know their story characters better than many of the real people they know. It can be an onerous task for children to distinguish the traits of various characters while trying to write a story. They can become confused as they try to do too many things at once. The use of a character chart can help. Completed as a prewriting activity, a character chart enables students to delineate the features of their characters before they become involved with the actual writing.

Character charts can be used with children of various ages and abilities. Figure 5 is an example of a simple chart that can be used with younger students or older children working at lower ability levels. It requires that the student list only the main traits of his or her characters. The chart can be simplified even further by asking children to list just three or four traits. Figure 6 is an example of a more detailed character chart. It would be used with advanced students. After completing this chart, students should have a distinct visual image and thorough understanding of their characters.

Following is an activity designed to give students experience working with character charts.

Character Chart Activity

Tell your students to imagine their "dream person," the person they would most like to be. Ask them to first fill out a character chart, then write a descriptive paragraph about their dream person. Use the character chart that is appropriate to the abilities of your children. Allow your students to read their paragraphs to the class at the end of the activity.

AVOIDING STEREOTYPES

A stereotype is a familiar character whose traits have been reproduced countless times in countless stories. We have all met the rugged police detective; the bent, crooked old witch; and the sloppy teenage boy in stories we have either read or seen on TV. Stereotyped characters weaken a story because they produce worn-out and predictable situations.

Children use stereotypes all the time. Most have never been told that stereotypes detract from what otherwise might be a good story, nor have they been shown how to avoid using stereotypes. When discussing stereotypes, explain the concept fully to your children and offer several examples. Ask your students to offer some examples. Once they understand what a stereotype is, you will be surprised at how many examples they can name. Stress that new and interesting characters make it easier to write fresh stories.

There are three basic ways that children can eliminate stereotypes:

NAME _____

A SIMPLE CHARACTER CHART

List the following information about your character:

Name: _____

Age: _____

Color hair: _____

Color eyes: _____

Height: _____

Weight: _____

Clothing (jeans, dress, sweatshirt, suit, t-shirt, etc.): _____

Basic nature (nice, happy, greedy, mean, etc.): _____

Additional notes: _____

Figure 5

NAME _____

AN ADVANCED CHARACTER CHART

List the following information about your character:

Name: _____

Age: _____

Color hair: _____

Color eyes: _____

Height: _____

Weight: _____

Clothing: _____

Positive traits: _____

Negative traits: _____

Background: _____

Goals: _____

Special traits (beauty, great strength, scars, handicaps, etc.): _____

Additional notes: _____

Figure 6

1. If a character is a clear stereotype, the opposite can be created. Instead of the dashing secret agent, students might use an older, fat, balding one. Instead of the ugly witch, a beautiful one can be used. Instead of the boy who moves to a new school and acts shy and unsure, one who acts bold and brash can be developed.

2. Your students can create characters whose behavior arises out of the characters' backgrounds. The character who is afraid of heights because of a serious fall suffered years earlier is one example. The character whose most important goal is to become a doctor because his or her younger brother died of an incurable disease is another.

3. Students can create characters by drawing upon their personal experiences with the people they have met. By taking different features from people they know and then combining those features, unique characters can be developed.

The depth to which you teach characterization will depend on your class. For younger children, it is enough to point out that the characters in a story must have basic differences. For advanced or older students, it might be necessary to go into the details of characterization extensively. Even if these students do not use everything you teach them about characterization, you are setting a firm foundation for the next year's teacher.

TEACHING NOTES FOR REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS

3-1. A SUPERHERO

OBJECTIVE: Students are to list the character traits of a superhero of their own creation, and write a short story about their superhero.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: To start the activity, initiate a discussion about superheroes. Ask your students to give some examples of superheroes, and discuss their traits. Emphasize that superheroes, like real people, have both physical and personality traits. Be sure to explain the directions for the worksheet. You can suggest that your students list or briefly outline their ideas for their stories before writing. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think about the traits of their superheroes. Now ask them to invent a supervillain and describe this character in a paragraph.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE STORIES.

3-2. CHARACTER COLLAGE

OBJECTIVE: Students are to create a collage of people and activities, select a character from their collage, and write a descriptive paragraph of that character.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Before beginning this assignment, you should assemble the necessary materials: old magazines, construction paper, scissors, and glue. You might ask your children to bring in old magazines from home a few days in advance.

Explain to your children that writers often get ideas for characters from things they hear and see. This activity focuses on developing characters from pictures. Tell your students that they will make collages of people, select one of those people, and imagine the type of person he or she is. After listing what they feel are the character's traits, each student is to write a descriptive paragraph of his or her character. Emphasize the importance of giving their characters a name. Display the collages and paragraphs at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Suggest that each student exchange his or her collage with a friend. They are to reveal which character they described, but should not share their paragraphs. Each student is to write a descriptive paragraph of his or her friend's character. Encourage your children to compare their paragraphs, and see how they are alike and different. You should mention that differences are likely, because people perceive things differently.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE PARAGRAPHS.

3-3. THE HAUNTED HOUSE

OBJECTIVE: Given an illustration, students are to list five traits of each character, and write a story based on the illustration.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to study the illustration on the worksheet. What do they see? Ask them to describe the house and the characters. Point out that one character clearly wants to go in, one is not sure, and the other is indifferent. Based on these perceptions, ask your students to imagine what other traits these characters might have. Explain that they are to list five traits of each character (these can be physical and personality traits), and then write a story about "The Haunted House." Remind your students to focus on strong characterization. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to select one of the characters from the picture, and develop a character based on his or her opposite. Now ask them to think how the change in character would affect the story they wrote. They are to describe the changes in a paragraph.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE STORIES.

3-4. CREATE A CHARACTER

OBJECTIVE: Students are to select two people they know, combine some of their character traits to create a fictional character, and describe this fictional character in a paragraph.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your children that writers often create characters by observing real people. Sometimes a character will be a combination of the traits of several people a writer knows. Tell your students to select two people they know well. On the worksheet, they are to list several physical and personality traits of each person. Then they are to combine some of those traits to create a fictional character. Encourage students to give a name to their character. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to refer to the list of character traits of the two real people they selected for this activity. They are to compare these two people in a paragraph.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE PARAGRAPHS.

3-5. A CHARACTER QUIZ

OBJECTIVE: Students are to complete a character quiz, and write a descriptive paragraph of themselves.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Start off by telling your students that writers sometimes base their characters on themselves, as well as on people they know. Next explain that the first part of this activity—a character quiz—is designed to help them think about their own character traits. Instruct your children to complete the quiz. Based on their answers, they are to write a paragraph in which they describe themselves. Display the paragraphs at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Explain that authors often base their characters on other people. Instruct your students to use the character quiz to identify the traits of one of the following: their mother, father, sister, or brother. (You can hand out extra copies of the quiz, and remind students that instead of themselves they will use it to describe another person.) Students are to take the information from the quiz and write a descriptive paragraph of the person they chose.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE PARAGRAPHS.

3-6. THINGS I LIKE TO DO

OBJECTIVE: Students are to list at least five things they like to do, and write about these things in a paragraph.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your children that the characters of a story always do things for reasons. All actions must be motivated, otherwise characters will not seem like real people. Ask your children to think of five things they like to do. Ask them why they like to do these things, and explain that their reasons are motivations. Instruct them to list at least five things they like to do and the reasons they want to do them on the worksheet. They are to write a composition about the things they like to do. Remind them to include their motivations. Display the compositions at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think of some things they don't like to do, but nevertheless do. Ask for some examples, which might include watching younger brothers or sisters, doing chores, or doing homework. Now ask them to think about why—if they don't like to do these things—they still do them. Reasons might include that their parents want them to, they might earn an allowance, or they might feel guilty if they don't. Point out that their reasons are their motivations. Instruct your students to write a paragraph about things they don't like to do.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

3-7. CHARACTER CHOICES

OBJECTIVE: Students will read a given story situation, answer questions about the characters, and then complete the story.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to raise their hands if they ever had to make a choice between things. Certainly, everyone has. Explain that just as people must make choices, so must the characters in stories. And just as people have reasons for the choices they make, so must characters. This is

motivation. Ask your children to read the story situation, answer the questions on the worksheet, and then complete the story. Remind them to include the physical and personality traits of the characters, as well as their motivations. Encourage students to list or briefly outline their ideas first. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think about what they would do if they found the answers to a test. Ask them to describe the actions they would take in a paragraph. Encourage them to include their motivations.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE STORIES.

3-8. ANIMAL CHARACTERS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to select an animal, complete a character chart, and write a short story in which their animal is the main character.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your students that many authors use character charts to help them create interesting characters. Point out that character charts need not be used only with human characters. Go over the worksheet with your students so that everyone understands what to do. If they wish, students may choose a pet or other animal for the activity. Display the character charts and stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Mention that in fantasy stories, plants sometimes take on special or even human characteristics. Ask your students to select a plant and complete the character chart of the worksheet for it. (You may wish to distribute extra copies of the worksheet. Emphasize that students can use the same chart by merely changing the word "animal" to "plant" at the top.) After students have characterized their plants, they are to write a paragraph comparing their plants to their animals.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

3-9. ADD A CHARACTER

OBJECTIVE: Students are to create a new character for a favorite TV show, and then write a summary of an imaginary episode in which their character is a guest star.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: First, hand out the simple or advanced character charts (Figures 5 and 6). The abilities of your children will help you determine which chart to distribute. Emphasize that character charts are important because they help writers create interesting characters. Briefly review the chart.

Now ask your students to think of their favorite TV show. Ask some volunteers to tell the class what their favorite shows are, and why they like them. Now ask your children to think of the characters on their shows. What are these characters like? How do they interact? What are their relationships to each other? Instruct your students to think of a new character for their show, and develop this character by completing the character chart. Mention that the new character should fit in with the other characters.

Explain that after they have developed their character, they are to imagine a new episode for their show in which their character is a guest star, and write a summary for the show. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas

before writing. Display the character charts and summaries at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to select one of the characters from their favorite TV show, and use the character chart to create the character's opposite. (You should hand out extra charts for this.) Instruct students to write a paragraph comparing the original character to his or her opposite.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

3-10. CHARACTER MAKEOVERS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to rewrite two stereotyped characters, select one, and write a story.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Discuss with your children the meaning of stereotypes. Tell them that stereotypes detract from a story because they have been overdone and worn-out. They are examples of poor writing. Discuss the two examples of stereotypes on the worksheet. Instruct your students to rewrite these characters, making them exciting and interesting, then choose one and write a story. Encourage your children to list or briefly outline their ideas for their stories before writing. Be sure to display the stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think of a character they have read about, seen on TV or at the movies, and who they feel is a stereotype. In a paragraph, they are to describe why they feel this character is a stereotype, and what they would do to make the character more interesting.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

Name _____

Date _____

A SUPERHERO

WRITING TIP: To create realistic, exciting characters, some authors list the traits of their characters before writing. This helps them to see their characters clearly in their imaginations.

DIRECTIONS: Suppose that you could create a superhero. What would he or she be like? What would your superhero be able to do? What special powers would he or she have? List your superhero's traits and powers on the lines below. Use complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, write a short story in which your superhero displays his or her super-qualities.



My superhero's name is _____

Physical Traits: _____

Personality Traits: _____

Special Powers: _____

EXTENSION: Create a supervillain. What are his or her traits? Write a descriptive paragraph about your supervillain.

Name _____

Date _____

CHARACTER COLLAGE

WRITING TIP: Sometimes writers create characters based on pictures or images they see. Once they have an idea for a character, they use their imaginations to make the character come alive.

DIRECTIONS: For this activity, you will need old magazines, construction paper, scissors, and glue.

Choose a magazine and cut out pictures of people in various scenes. Do several. Paste these pictures onto your construction paper, making a collage of people and activities. Select one of the people, and imagine the type of person he or she is based on the picture on your collage. List the traits of your character on the lines below. Use complete sentences. Then on the back of this sheet, write a paragraph describing your character.



My character's name is _____

Physical Traits: _____

Personality Traits: _____

EXTENSION: Exchange collages with a friend, but don't show each other your descriptive paragraphs. Write your own descriptive paragraph for your friend's character. Compare your paragraphs. How are they alike? How are they different?

Name _____

Date _____

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

WRITING TIP: Realistic characters help to make a story interesting. Authors often show what kind of people their characters are by the way they act in a story.

DIRECTIONS: Study the picture below. Pay close attention to the actions of the characters. How do their actions tell you what kind of people they are?

Based on what you see in the picture, imagine what each character is like. On a separate sheet of paper, list at least five traits that you think each character has. Use complete sentences. Then write a story based on the picture. Be sure to give the characters names and characterize them clearly.



EXTENSION: Select one of the characters from the picture, and list several traits of his or her opposite. In a paragraph describe how this would change the story you wrote.

Name_____

Date_____

CREATE A CHARACTER

WRITING TIP: Writers often develop their characters by observing real people. Sometimes their characters are a combination of traits they have seen in others.

DIRECTIONS: Select two people you know. These people might include a teacher, school administrator, neighbor, friend, or TV personality. Below, list several physical and personality traits of each. Use complete sentences. Then, under "Fictional Character," take some of the traits of each of the people you know and create a fictional character. Include both physical and personality traits. On the back of this sheet, describe your fictional character in a paragraph.



PERSON NUMBER 1—NAME_____

PERSON NUMBER 2—NAME_____

FICTIONAL CHARACTER—NAME_____

EXTENSION: In a paragraph, compare the character traits of the two real people you selected for this activity.

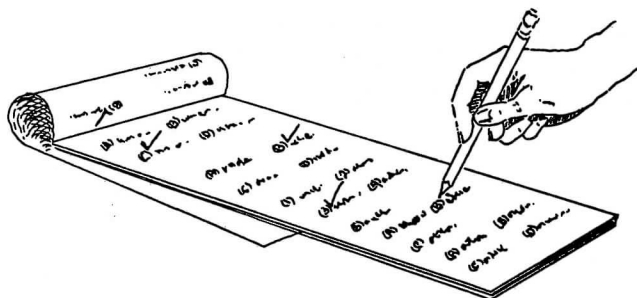
Name _____

Date _____

A CHARACTER QUIZ

WRITING TIP: To create realistic characters, authors often base their characters on themselves or on people they know.

DIRECTIONS: Think about your traits. Describe yourself by completing this quiz below. After you have finished answering the questions, write a paragraph on the back of this sheet that describes your character traits.



1. What color is your hair?

blond	brown
black	red

2. Circle the words that describe your hair:

short	long	fluffy	bouncy
wavy	curly	straight	medium length

3. What color are your eyes?

brown	green
blue	black

4. What is your height?

tall	average	short
------	---------	-------

5. What is your weight?

heavy	average	thin
-------	---------	------

6. Circle the words that describe you:

brave	strong	fun	unhappy	honest
shy	athletic	silly	cowardly	timid
smart	kind	sneaky	calm	confident
energetic	happy	lazy	reliable	trustworthy

7. If you could pick only one trait to describe yourself, which one would it be? Why? _____

EXTENSION: Use the Character Quiz to identify the traits of one of the following: your mother, father, brother, or sister. Write a paragraph describing this person.

Name _____

Date _____

THINGS I LIKE TO DO

WRITING TIP: The characters of a story always do things for reasons. This is called motivation. Motivation is important to making characters believable.

DIRECTIONS: Think of the things you like to do. On the lines below, list at least five, and tell why you like to do them. Use complete sentences. On the back of this sheet, write a composition of things you like to do. Be sure to include your motivations.

**THINGS I LIKE TO DO:**

EXTENSION: Think of three things you have to do, but *don't* like to do. What are they? Why don't you like to do them? What are your reasons for doing them? Describe the things you don't like to do in a paragraph. Be sure to include your motivations.

Name _____

Date _____

CHARACTER CHOICES

WRITING TIP: Characters often must make choices in stories. Just as you do things for certain reasons, so must the characters in your stories. These reasons are called motivation.

DIRECTIONS: Read the story situation that your teacher gave you. Answer the questions below in complete sentences. Then finish the story on the back of this sheet. Be sure to include the motivations of the characters. You may list or briefly outline your ideas for your story on the lines after the story situation.



1. Describe Tom's character. What type of person do you think he is? _____

2. Describe Jennifer's character. What type of person do you think she is? _____

3. Describe Luis's character. What type of person do you think he is? _____

EXTENSION: If you found the answers to a test, what would you do? Why? Describe the actions you would take, and the reasons for your actions, in a paragraph.

3-7 (continued)

Name_____

Date_____

CHARACTER CHOICES

Read this story situation to answer the questions on the first page of this activity.

It was after school. Tom was waiting outside for his friends Jennifer and Luis. When he saw them, he waved.

"You're not going to believe what I found!" he said excitedly.

"What?" Jennifer said.

"You look like the cat that caught the mouse," Luis said.

"I feel better than that," Tom said. He showed them a sheet of paper.

Jennifer's eyes widened. "That's the answer key to our social studies test tomorrow."

"Where did you get it?" Luis asked.

"It was just lying on the floor in the hall," Tom said.

"What are you going to do?" Jennifer said.

"I'm going to use it to study for the test," Tom said. Jennifer and Luis looked worried. "It's not like I stole it," Tom said.

Jennifer began shaking her head. "I don't know."

"Well, I do," Luis said. "You should give it back to Mrs. Simpson."

"No way!" Tom said. "If I get an A on this test, I get an A for the marking period. And I get ten dollars from my father."

His friends were still not sure.

"What about you, Jennifer?" Tom asked. "Didn't you say that you need an A on this test?"

Slowly, Jennifer nodded.

"This is your chance," Tom said, smiling.

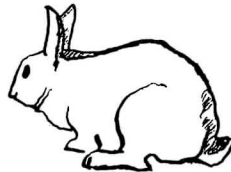
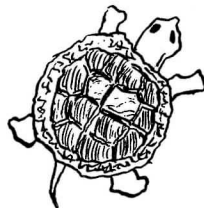
Name _____

Date _____

ANIMAL CHARACTERS

WRITING TIP: A character chart helps authors create interesting characters. Character charts can be used to develop human, animal, or even plant characters.

DIRECTIONS: Below are pictures of animals. Choose one and complete the character chart for it. If you wish, you can choose an animal that is not pictured. After you have completed your character chart, write a story in which your animal is the main character.



Complete the following information about your animal:

My animal is a/an _____. His/Her name is _____

Size: _____

Height: _____

Weight: _____

Physical description: _____

Color: _____

Type of movement: _____

Basic nature: _____

Outstanding trait: _____

EXTENSION: Select a plant. Complete a character chart for it. In a paragraph, compare your plant to your animal. How are they different? Are they alike in any ways? If yes, how?

Name _____

Date _____

ADD A CHARACTER

WRITING TIP: To create fresh, exciting characters, many authors use character charts. There are many kinds of character charts. Any chart that helps you to create interesting characters is a good one.

DIRECTIONS: For this activity you will use the character chart your teacher gave you.

Think of your favorite TV show. Think about its characters and some of the situations you have seen on the show. What are the characters like? How do they interact?

Create a new character for the show. To help you develop your character, use the character chart. After you have developed your character, imagine a new episode for the show in which your character is a guest star. Write a summary of this imaginary episode. Feel free to use dialogue if you wish. List or briefly outline your ideas for your summary on the lines below. Use the back of this sheet for your summary.



EXTENSION: Select one of the characters from your favorite TV show. Create his or her opposite. Use a character chart to help you. Write a paragraph that compares the original character to his or her opposite.

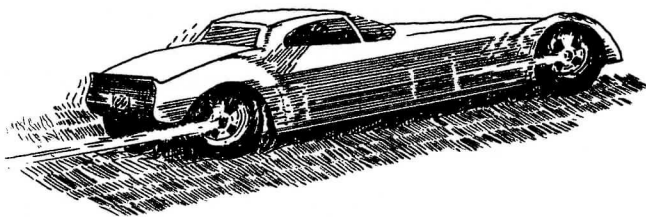
Name _____

Date _____

CHARACTER MAKEOVERS

WRITING TIP: Characters that have been used so often in the past that they are familiar are called stereotypes. Stereotypes weaken a story because the reader can guess what they are going to do. Original characters make stories interesting because the reader is not sure what they will do next.

DIRECTIONS: Below are two stereotyped characters. On the lines below each, give them new traits so that they are original and interesting. Use complete sentences. Then, choose one of your recreated characters and write a story. Use the back of this sheet for your story.



SECRET AGENT. . . . He is tall, handsome, confident, and brave. He uses super-secret weapons and gadgets, and always outwits his enemies.

WITCH. . . . She is old, bent, ugly, and mean. She talks with a cackle, and always has her broom and black cat by her side.

EXTENSION: Think of the stories you have read and watched on TV or at the movies. Think of the characters. Choose one that you feel is an example of a stereotype. In a paragraph, describe why you feel this character is a stereotype. Also, tell how you would change the character to make him or her more interesting.

FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES

FU 3-1. PLANT CHARACTERIZATIONS

Take your class outside where the children can examine trees, flowers, shrubs, or other plants. Instruct them to select a plant to study closely, and encourage them to take notes on its physical features. Ask them to imagine that the plant could have human qualities. What would these qualities be? After returning to the classroom, students are to write a paragraph characterizing their plants, including human qualities if they wish. You might also encourage your children to illustrate their compositions. Display the students' work at the end of the activity.

FU 3-2. THE PERSON I ADMIRE MOST

Have students list several character traits of the person they most admire. After listing this person's traits, instruct your students to describe the person in a paragraph. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 3-3. MY FAVORITE CELEBRITY

Ask your children to name some celebrities. Encourage them to name TV or movie stars, singers, professional athletes, and other people who are in the public's eye. Now ask them to think of a favorite celebrity. What do they like about this person? What do they dislike? What are some of the celebrity's physical traits? What are his or her personality traits? Instruct your children to write a descriptive paragraph that characterizes their celebrity. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 3-4. STORMY CHARACTERIZATIONS

Ask your students to choose either a tornado, snowstorm, thunderstorm, hurricane, or another type of major storm, and list its characteristics. To make their characterizations more interesting, suggest that they personify their storms and give them imaginary human emotions. In a paragraph, students are to describe their storms. You can also encourage your students to illustrate their compositions. Display the compositions (and illustrations) at the end of the activity.

FU 3-5. OBJECTS OF CURIOSITY

Ask your children to select an inanimate object—a pen, a radio, a piece of furniture, perhaps their rooms—and characterize these objects in a paragraph. Suggest that they add imaginary human traits to the object. Do their objects like being what they are? Why or why not? Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 3-6. A BEST FRIEND'S VIEW

Ask your students to imagine that they have exchanged places with their best friend. Ask them to consider how their best friend sees them. Instruct your students to write compositions, characterizing themselves from their best friend's viewpoint. If their best friend is in the classroom, encourage students to share their paragraphs. You might ask students to read their paragraphs to the class, or simply display them at the end of the activity.

FU 3-7. THE BIG EVENT

Ask your children to think about something important that happened to them and has made a lasting impression. It might have been watching an exciting event, witnessing an accident, receiving a special gift, or some other occurrence. However, it should be something that has changed them. (For students who have trouble identifying an important event, suggest that they imagine that something important happened.)

Ask your children how the event changed them. For example, watching an air show might result in a young boy striving to become a pilot. Having had a friend who suffered a serious injury at the hands of a drunk driver might make a young girl resolve to campaign against drinking. Instruct your children to write a paragraph describing this event and focus on how it has changed them. What have they learned from it? Display the paragraphs at the end of the activity.

FU 3-8. I'M RESPONSIBLE

Ask your children to think of something for which they are responsible. Some examples include caring for their pet, working hard in school, or helping a younger brother or sister with homework. Why do they accept this responsibility? What are their motivations? Instruct your students to write a paragraph about a responsibility they have and their motivation for accepting this responsibility. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 3-9. CARTOON CHARACTERS

Ask your students to select one of their favorite cartoon or comic strip characters. (You might ask students to bring in the comics section of the newspaper a few days in advance, so that they can refer to the comics as they complete the activity.) Hand out copies of either the advanced or simple character charts (Figures 5 and 6), and have students complete the chart for their character. After they have finished the chart, students are to write a descriptive paragraph about their characters. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 3-10. HEROES AND VILLAINS

Write the word "Hero" on the board. Then, across from it, write the word "Villain." Generate a discussion of the qualities that heroes might have and list them on the board. Do the same for villains. Now ask your children to think of a hero and a villain they know from a story, movie, or TV show. (The heroes and villains can be from different shows.) Instruct them to write a composition that

compares the character of their hero to that of their villain. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

4

Writing Style and Technique

Good style and an understanding of the basic techniques of written expression can enhance any composition. Style and technique are inseparable.

Good style is the effective use of words so that they express the ideas of the author clearly. Style is what makes us feel joy, fear, or suspense in a story. Horror stories are more frightening when written in an eerie, foreboding style. Amusing stories are more entertaining when written in a light style. Myths are more believable when the style captures the imagery and color of the land and times.

Whereas style focuses on the use of words, technique refers to the skills necessary to put words together in the most effectual ways. Technique includes the creation of action, dialogue, and description, as well as specific authors' devices such as foreshadowing, plants, and flashback. While neither style nor technique can compensate for the absence of good ideas, they are vital for ideas to be communicated in a satisfying manner.

HELPING CHILDREN DEVELOP A WRITING STYLE

Style is highly individual. It develops from a writer's life experiences, growing out of the influences of everyday living. Factors that shape style include heredity, background, reading, and language habits. Just as no two people can be expected to write a description of an ocean scene in the same way, no two people

will write stories or articles in the same way. Each author interprets a subject according to his or her viewpoint.

Because style is greatly affected by a person's life, it cannot be taught. However, there is much a teacher can do to promote its natural development. The first step is to eliminate the effects of style inhibitors.

Style Inhibitors

There are five great inhibitors of style: (1) writing about meaningless topics, (2) incorrect use of language, (3) overwriting, (4) insufficiently developed ideas, and (5) clichés.

1. *Writing about meaningless topics.* When children are given writing topics that are vague, boring, and purposeless, they will not become emotionally aroused or engaged with the work. Consequently, their writing will lack vigor, excitement, and focus—factors which are vital to the emergence of an individual style.

2. *Incorrect use of language.* The misuse of English undermines style. If a student's writing is full of errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling, and sentence construction, style will not surface. While attention to mechanics need not be a priority on the first draft, it should be a major consideration during revision.

3. *Overwriting.* Overwriting hides style. The more words a child uses to bring across his or her ideas, the more confusing the writing usually turns out to be. Overwriting fattens style and has a negative effect on reader interest. Clarity depends on succinctness.

4. *Insufficiently developed ideas.* When ideas are not fully or logically developed, a writer will struggle to express them. The writing will be rough and patchy.

5. *Clichés.* Clichés are overworked phrases or words. "Bright" sunshine, "tall, dark, and handsome" heroes, and words like "really" and "very" are good examples of clichés. They are regularly overused in literature. While younger students might have trouble grasping the concept of clichés, by the middle school years clichés should be introduced and thereafter emphasized. To overcome clichés it is necessary to rewrite them.

When discussing style, tell your children that style is the written expression of the way they see the world. Emphasize that they should write so that people can hear their "voice" speaking. Just as everyone has a unique set of fingerprints, every writer has her own style. The effectiveness of that style depends on how hard a person works to develop it.

Style Builders

Style is built from the interaction of various sentence elements. By encouraging the use of these elements you can do much to promote the growth of style in your students. Following are what I call style builders:

1. *Action words.* Stress the use of strong action words to your children. Action words, particularly verbs, add power to writing. "We went hiking," is weak

and colorless. "We hiked through a tangled forest is better," for "hiked" is stronger than the passive compound verb "went hiking." Moreover, the phrase "through a tangled forest" adds imagery to the action.

2. *Specific words.* One of the foundations of good writing is the selection of the proper words. "A woman entered the room," is nonspecific. "A nun entered the room," is better because it is specific, evokes a clearer picture in the mind of the reader, and thus adds interest. Further, a short word containing the same information is almost always preferred to a long one. "Poor" is usually better than "impoverished."

3. *Descriptive words.* Descriptive words also enhance the images of the reader. "We fished all day," is nondescriptive. "We fished all day in the little stream behind Timmy's house," is not only more descriptive but informative for it includes location. Emphasize that descriptive words should be varied. The same words should never be used over and over again in the same scene.

4. *Similes and metaphors.* The use of similes and metaphors can improve the writing style of children. You should introduce these devices, give several examples, and encourage your students to use them. "His racer looked like a ship from outer space," is an example of a simile. Here is a metaphor—"He was a lion in battle." Similes and metaphors make writing more potent.

5. *Dialogue.* Many children are uncomfortable using dialogue. They might be unsure of the proper punctuation, or they might have trouble writing conversation. However, dialogue is a powerful stylistic device that can heighten interest for it enables the reader to participate in the action.

Style is what gives writing individual flavor. Good style is an extension of the author, coming from his or her interpretation of life. It cannot be forced or copied, but grows naturally through writing. Understanding the components of effective style speeds students in the development of their writing skills.

SENTENCE AND PARAGRAPH BUILDING

The development of a writing style depends directly on a student's ability to build sentences and paragraphs. Although this is a fundamental skill, many children lack proficiency in it.

The first thing you should do is make certain that your students understand the various forms of sentence construction: declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory. From there you should explain and encourage the use of simple, compound, and complex sentences. Also emphasize that varying the form and length of sentences can enhance the flow of writing.

Sentence Starters

One of the easiest ways children can write sentences of varying construction is through the use of "Sentence Starters," words and phrases that naturally result in a variety of sentence forms. During writing sessions, encourage your students to use many different sentence starters.

Below is a list of some of the more common ones. You might put this list on the board, and ask your students to volunteer additional ones.

Last night ...
Suddenly ...
Yesterday ...
Beyond ...
Rather than ...
When ...
Since ...

In spite of ...
Finally ...
Before ...
Instead of ...
Although ...
After ...
If ...

Sentence Building Activity #1

For this activity, you will ask your students to write about their most memorable dream. To begin, share one of your dreams. Ask your students if they dream in color, if they dream about people and places they know, if there are strange things in their dreams, if there are conversations in their dreams. Ask if they ever wake up in the middle of a dream. Once the discussion has started, you might ask a few students to share their dreams with the class. Children find dreams fascinating, and this topic should generate much enthusiasm.

After the opening discussion, instruct your students to write a paragraph describing their most memorable dream, and encourage them to use various sentence constructions. At the end of the activity, display the compositions. You might also conduct a class vote on the scariest, funniest, and strangest dreams.

Sentence Building Activity #2

Ask your students to consider this statement—Silly things can happen everywhere. Share with them something silly that happened to you, and encourage your children to share some of the silly things that have happened either to them or to someone they know. Tell them that they are to write a paragraph, based upon a silly experience. The event can be either real or imagined. Encourage them to use various types of sentence construction in their paragraphs.

Developing Paragraphs

Once children understand how to construct interesting sentences, they must be taught the proper way to combine those sentences into paragraphs. This is a skill often taken for granted by teachers of writing, and yet, paragraph building is a weakness for many children. Students need to understand the features of a well-developed paragraph.

A good paragraph:

1. Focuses on a single topic.
2. Has a topic sentence.

3. Develops a topic logically.
4. Contains sentences that are related.

In addition, a long paragraph:

5. Should end with a sentence related to the topic that leads into the next paragraph.

Paragraphs provide the structure through which the ideas of a composition are communicated. If the organization of the paragraphs is weak, a writer will struggle to express his or her ideas.

Paragraph Building Activity

Share with your students an experience that is a whopper, a story that is so incredible that it is hard to believe. All of us have experienced a whopper at one time or another, or we know someone who has. Instruct your students to write a whopper of their own. It may be true or fictional, funny or serious.

Tell them to first list the details about their whopper, and then write about it, being sure to use good paragraph form. Display the compositions at the end of the activity. You might conduct a class vote for the biggest whopper.

Transitions

For paragraphs to flow together smoothly, they must have transitions. Transitions are words, phrases, or sentences that unify writing. Without them writing is rough and choppy. For many children transitions are a particular weakness, being either too abrupt (or absent entirely) or too long.

When teaching transitions, emphasize their importance and explain that they must be brief, smooth, and clear. Tell your children that one way to write good transitions is to give clues that a change is about to take place. This allows the reader to anticipate the change, which makes the change of scene or time smoother.

Here is an example:

It was a terrible year for the little raccoon. But in time things got better. He learned to hunt food by himself. He grew stronger. He even forgot how much he missed his family.

The sentence, "But in time things got better," indicates that a change is coming. The reader is thus prepared for that change, making the transition to the next paragraph and new ideas easier.

Another good way to write transitions is to carry an idea over from one paragraph to the next. An example:

It was a sad time for Amy. After her parents had died there was no one

in town who could take care of her. She had to go to New York City to live with her Aunt Em.

Leaving the town she grew up in was hard, but as the skyline of the city came into view Amy's spirits lifted. She realized that this was the start of a new life.

Notice how the idea of moving to New York was carried over from the first paragraph to the second. This allows the story to flow smoothly into the next scene.

Writing Transitions Activity

Ask your students to write about "moving." This moving might be about actually moving to a new home, or moving (traveling) from one place to another—for example, on a vacation. (One junior high student wrote a clever composition about moving from class to class through crowded halls.) The concept of movement provides the underlying framework for utilizing transitions in this assignment.

Instruct your children to write about their experience. Remind them to use transitions between paragraphs.

ACTION, DIALOGUE, DESCRIPTION, AND EXPOSITION

Stories are composed of action, dialogue, description, and exposition. The quality of a story is the result of how well a writer creates and combines these story parts.

Action is any part of a story where there is movement or talking. It is essential to every scene because it draws the reader into a story, allowing him or her, via imagination, to see things happening. Call your children's attentions to different action scenes in some of the stories they have read.

An important element of action is dialogue. By speaking characters take on an added dimension of reality. Instead of being figures moving wordlessly through a story, they become people like you and me who talk and communicate. For dialogue to be effective, it should sound the way people really speak. Tell your children to write conversation as spoken sentences, not written ones. Repeating dialogue aloud often helps children to write realistic conversation.

When teaching dialogue, begin with a review of quotation marks and their use in written speech. Children must feel confident about punctuation for dialogue, otherwise they will be reluctant to attempt conversation in their stories. Many children routinely avoid the use of dialogue whenever they can.

Emphasize to your children that dialogue can help add life and interest to their stories. A good way to give your students practice in writing dialogue is the following activity.

Writing Dialogue Activity

Divide your students into groups of two or three. Have each group imagine a conversation between unlikely or amusing things. For example, a group of two students may imagine a conversation between a pencil and a sheet of paper. A group of three might imagine a conversation between a lamp, sofa, and rug.

Each student takes the part of one of the objects and writes dialogue for it. For groups of two, the first student takes the part of the first object, and the second student speaks for the second, and the conversation begins. For groups of three students, the conversation becomes a three-way dialogue between objects.

To get the activity started, you can ask the class to generate several ideas for conversation pairs. Be sure to set aside time at the end of the activity for students to share their work. When children share, ask the members of the groups to read their parts to the class. Children enjoy this activity and many unique conversations are the result.

Whereas action allows a reader to live the events of a story, description enables him or her to picture it vividly. Description helps to build the mood by showing the reader how things look. For description to be effective, it must appeal to the reader's senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. The more a reader's senses are stimulated the more real the action becomes. Words therefore must be selected with precision so that they communicate exactly what the writer intends while simultaneously evoking sensory perceptions in the imagination.

Description Activity #1

Developing awareness of the five senses is essential for children to write realistic descriptions. Instruct your students to describe each of the following in a paragraph. Remind them to use precise words in their compositions.

1. How a snowflake tastes.
2. How a flower smells.
3. How a sunset looks.
4. How a puppy feels.
5. How a classroom sounds.

You can easily generate more examples. A good technique is to let the class as a whole suggest ideas that you can list on the board. In this way students will have a variety of ideas from which to choose.

Description Activity #2

Instruct your children to select a partner and walk around the block, or around their yards, or even around the school. There is a catch, however. The first student is to keep his eyes closed and his partner acts as a guide. Students then reverse their roles. Of course, stress that students must be careful.

Explain that the focus of this activity is the senses. In a paragraph students are to write about the things they hear, smell, taste, and touch. Encourage your children to put all of their senses—except sight—to work.

In every story, interwoven with action and description is exposition. The basic purpose of exposition is to impart information to the reader, helping him or her to understand what is going on. Many young writers have trouble with exposition, often adding unnecessary details that clutter their writing, or inserting information that is inconsistent with the action or characters. Unless information is vital to the story, it should not be included.

For many children, a simple understanding that stories are composed of action, description, and exposition is adequate. Certainly younger students need not be burdened with the details of these different story parts. However, even young students should be introduced to the terminology because this underscores the component aspect of writing and builds the background that will help them in later years.

SOME BASIC TECHNIQUES FOR CHILDREN'S WRITING

Professional authors use many writing techniques. While it is not necessary or advisable to attempt to teach all of them to young writers, by the middle grades students should be introduced to the basic ones. Four basic writing techniques include: foreshadowing, plants, flashback, and time sequence.

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a method by which a writer arouses anticipation. It is a hint of events to come. Here are two examples:

- Although the day is calm, the character notices that animals appear jittery. The next day an earthquake hits the town.
- Two boys do not believe in ghosts, but they have heard stories about a haunted house. When they take a dare to explore the house, strange things begin to happen.

Because it offers clues of coming action, foreshadowing helps to make that action believable. When disaster strikes, the reader can look back and see a clear development of events.

Plants

Plants are similar to foreshadowing; however, instead of hinting at events to come, they justify unexpected twists in a story. For a story to work, it must be

developed logically but it also must have elements of surprise. Surprise cannot be the result of mere luck or good fortune though; it must be an outgrowth of a reasonable progression of events. Following is an example of how a plant works:

The hero and other characters are hiking, and someone is bitten by a poisonous snake. The hero calmly gets out his snake-bite kit, administers antivenom, and the crisis is resolved.

Without the proper plants and buildup, this scene will leave many readers grumbling that the problem was solved too easily. Credibility will be undermined and interest will drop. For this scene to be acceptable it must be mentioned (planted) earlier that the hero is an expert hiker, and that he carries a snake-bite kit, and he knows how to use it. It should also be planted that the area through which the party is hiking is infested with poisonous snakes.

Plants must be subtly inserted into a story. They can occur in dialogue, description, exposition, or the thoughts of characters. They must be obvious enough so that the reader notices them, but not so plain that the reader figures out what is going to happen.

Flashbacks

Unlike foreshadowing and plants that are concerned with future events in a story, flashbacks focus on explaining current events in the light of past action. Whenever it is necessary to look back in a story to understand the present, a flashback is appropriate.

Once students learn the use of flashbacks, many make the mistake of using them too often. Unnecessary flashbacks slow the action and invariably decrease interest. Flashbacks are justifiable only when a past event (or events) affects current actions. One example is an explanation of why the main character returns home after having been away for several years. Another is an explanation of why a boy runs from a fight. The reason may be that he had previously suffered a severe beating. Emphasize to your children to use flashbacks only when necessary and only include information that is essential.

Time Sequence

While many authors' techniques focus on specific parts of stories, time sequence affects the whole story. Stories must be developed logically from beginning to end. Even in stories that incorporate flashbacks, consistent development is essential. The reader must clearly realize that A comes before B.

One of the most common mistakes in time sequence is the haphazard development of events. In such cases, effects may come before causes, or the causes leading up to something are out of order. Logic is disrupted and the reader becomes confused.

Another common problem of young writers with time sequence is the misuse of tenses. Some children write stories in the present tense. Others switch from past to present throughout their stories. These students typically switch into the present whenever the action becomes exciting, because they are writing the event as it happens in their imaginations. Stress to your students that since the action

in stories occurs before it is written, most stories are best written in the past tense.

Proper sequence is important because it insures that a story is developed logically. It provides the necessary order for the reader to follow the story from beginning to end.

Following are two activities that focus on basic writing techniques:

Basic Technique Activity #1

Instruct your students to find examples of foreshadowing, plants, flashbacks, and proper time sequence in some of the stories they have read. Have your children share their examples with the class.

Basic Technique Activity #2

Instruct your students to write a story based on the following situation: You wake up one morning and find that you have changed into an animal. Perhaps you have become a mouse, a dog, an insect, or a bird.

Present your students with the following questions—What caused this? What happens now? How do you get back to your human form?

The story should include at least one of the basic writing techniques—foreshadowing, plant, or flashback—as well as demonstrate proper time sequence.

An effective style and sound technique are important to any story for they can give it the uniqueness that makes it stand out. Without them it is unlikely that a superior level of written expression will be achieved.

TEACHING NOTES FOR REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS

4-1. A COSTUME PARTY

OBJECTIVE: Students are to identify clichés in a given paragraph, then write the paragraph and rewrite the clichés.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Introduce the concept of clichés in writing. Offer the examples from the text, and ask student volunteers to rewrite them. Emphasize that writing full of clichés tends to be boring and uninteresting. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask students to imagine they are going to a costume party and that they can wear any costume they wish. Students are to describe their costumes in a paragraph. Remind them to try to use fresh words and phrases, and avoid clichés.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ANSWERS. (Clichés include “really,” “out of

this world," "made my mouth water," "to the last drop," "green Martian," "flying saucer.")

4-2. TELL IT LIKE IT IS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write at least five specific or descriptive words or phrases for given settings; they are to select one of the settings and describe it in a paragraph.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain the importance of writing style. Emphasize that everyone's style is unique and that one of the best ways to improve style is to use colorful, exciting, and specific words. To insure that your students understand the assignment, do a sample together. Write the name of your school on the board. Ask students to volunteer words and phrases that describe your school. Emphasize that the best words and phrases are those that are specific and genuinely descriptive. At the end of the assignment, have students share their paragraphs with the class.

EXTENSION: Encourage students to choose a setting of their own. Ask them to list several specific or descriptive words and phrases about it, and then write a paragraph that describes their setting.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE DESCRIPTIONS AND PARAGRAPHS.

4-3. MY MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT!

OBJECTIVE: Students are to answer given questions and write a paragraph about an embarrassing event; to vary their sentence construction, they are to use at least four sentence starters.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain that writers make their writing more interesting by varying their sentence construction. If every sentence in a paragraph was written in the same way, the writing would become boring and flat. Discuss with your students the list of sentence starters that is included on the worksheet. Ask your children to volunteer more, which you may write on the board. Display the compositions at the end of the assignment. Your students will enjoy reading about each other's embarrassing moments.

EXTENSION: Instead of an embarrassing event, ask your students to think about a time when they attained an important goal. Ask them to write about their most triumphant moment.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE PARAGRAPHS.

4-4. COMPANY'S COMING!

OBJECTIVE: Using a given list of phrases, students are to complete partial sentences, organize the sentences, and write a paragraph.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your children that authors use various sentence types. This is one of the things that makes writing flow smoothly and keeps it interesting. Put this sentence on the board: "Tom walked." Ask student volunteers to expand it. One way is, "Tom walked to school." You can expand this further to: "Yesterday morning Tom walked to school." Offer several examples to your children, demonstrating many possible variations that can be built from a very simple sentence.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think about a time when they had company coming. The company might have been relatives or friends. Students are to write a paragraph describing how they prepared for their company. Encourage your children to use various types of sentences.

ANSWER KEY:

1. arriving in a few minutes
2. As Roberta looked at her desk
3. Hurrying around her room
4. into their holder, onto the shelf, into a drawer
5. and smiled with satisfaction
6. and put them into the hamper
7. If only
8. carefully straightening the sheets

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE PARAGRAPHS.

4-5. A BIG WHEEL

OBJECTIVE: Students are to organize given sentences and write them in a paragraph.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Begin by reviewing the essential elements of a good paragraph. Emphasize the importance of the main idea and the topic sentence, and explain that the other sentences in a paragraph must support the topic sentence. Remind your students that paragraphs are indented.

EXTENSION: Ask students to think about a time they went to a carnival, circus, or amusement park. Ask them to describe their experience in a paragraph. In case some students have not had this experience, emphasize that the details of the paragraph can be real or imagined.

ANSWER KEY: Does not belong—George Ferris, inventor of the Ferris Wheel, was an engineer.

The first Ferris Wheel was built in Chicago in 1893. It was the biggest Ferris Wheel ever built. The wheel was 250 feet in diameter, and had 36 cars. Sixty people could ride in each car. That original Ferris Wheel could hold more than 2,160 people.

4-6. MY SUPER-VACATION

OBJECTIVE: Students are to answer questions about the topic of a super-vacation; they are to write a paragraph describing their super-vacation.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Initiate a discussion about vacations. Ask a few students where they have gone. Then ask students to think about a super-vacation. If they could have an all-expenses-paid trip anywhere for one week, where would they go? From the discussion, introduce the worksheet.

Before students begin working, stress the elements of a good paragraph. Especially emphasize that the sentences in a paragraph must support the topic sentence. Make provision for sharing.

EXTENSION: Ask students to imagine they are a travel agent, whose job it is to convince customers to go on a super-vacation. Ask your students to consider

why their super-vacation is better than other vacations. They are to write a paragraph detailing their reasons.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE PARAGRAPH.

4-7. MAGIC MISCHIEF

OBJECTIVE: Students are to answer questions on a given topic and then write a composition on the topic.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Begin the activity with a discussion about leprechauns. Tell your students that leprechauns are elves of Irish folklore said to have magical powers. It was also said that they could be quite mischievous. Ask your students to imagine that they are leprechauns. What kinds of tricks would they play on people?

Emphasize the elements of a good paragraph. Note that paragraphs are combined to make a composition. Just as the sentences in a paragraph support the topic sentence, the paragraphs of a composition support the overall topic of the composition. Be sure to display the compositions at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Again ask your students to imagine that they are leprechauns. Ask them to think about an ordinary day. How would their life be different from what it is now? How would it be the same? Ask them to compose their thoughts in a composition.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITION.

4-8. LOST AND FOUND

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write transitions for given passages; they are then to select one of the passages and develop it into a story.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Discuss that transitions are sentences, phrases, or words that help writing flow smoothly from one paragraph to the next. Explain the worksheet and go over the sample. Point out that there are many possible transitions for the sample. Have volunteers offer more and write them on the board. One possibility is, "Since he did not know what else to do, John waited." At the end of the activity, allow time for sharing.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think of a time they lost something important, or became lost themselves. Ask them to describe this experience in a composition. Tell them that their compositions can be real or imagined. This will prevent anyone from saying that they never had such an experience and therefore have nothing to write about.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

4-9. SILLY CONVERSATIONS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to select a pair of "things" from a given list and write a dialogue between them.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Start by explaining the importance of dialogue to stories. Conversation helps characters become more realistic and interesting. Before beginning the assignment, review the use of quotation marks and punctuation for dialogue. You can share the work of your students by having volunteers read their conversations to the class.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to consider what others might say about them. Now ask them to imagine that they are invisible. While in their room, they overhear two inanimate objects talking about them. They are to write that conversation.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE CONVERSATION.

4-10. WHAT COMES NEXT?

OBJECTIVE: Students are to put the events of a given story in a chronological sequence; they will then expand the sequence into a paragraph.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your children the importance of logical sequence in stories. Emphasize that when facts or events are not in the correct order, the reader will become confused and will lose interest. Go over the directions, and make sure that students understand what they are to do. Display the paragraphs upon completion of the assignment.

EXTENSION: Ask your children to think about their usual after-school routines. They are to write a paragraph describing their routines. Emphasize the importance of using proper time sequence.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE PARAGRAPHS.

ANSWER KEY: Accept any reasonable order; one possibility is—

2. eats cookies and drinks glass of milk
3. does his homework
6. takes a bath
1. comes home from school
5. plays with his dog Jingles
7. goes to bed
4. eats dinner with his family

Name _____

Date _____

A COSTUME PARTY

WRITING TIP: Clichés are words, phrases or ideas that have been used so much in writing that they have become stale. They weaken your writing, and should be eliminated and rewritten.

DIRECTIONS: Following is a paragraph that has several clichés. First, circle the clichés. Then, on the back of this sheet, copy the paragraph over and rewrite the clichés.



Last Halloween I went to my first costume party. It was really exciting. There were lots of guests and all of the costumes were out of this world. Savina showed up as a moon goddess, Jeb wore a big box designed as an asteroid, and Kiel was a comet.

The refreshments were great, too. The chocolate cake made my mouth water, and the punch was so good that I could have finished it to the last drop.

By now you're probably wondering what kind of costume I wore. I chose a simple one. I wore only a mask and went as a green Martian. Unfortunately, I couldn't stay as long as I would have liked. You see, I left my flying saucer in a no-parking zone.

EXTENSION: Pretend you are going to a costume party and can design your costume. It can be any costume you wish. In a paragraph, describe your costume.

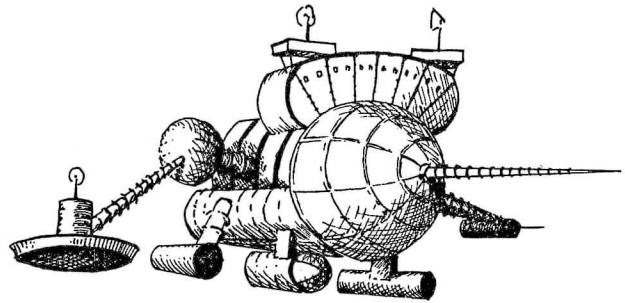
Name _____

Date _____

TELL IT LIKE IT IS

WRITING TIP: Authors add style and interest to their writing by using specific and descriptive words and phrases that excite the imaginations of their readers. They describe how things look, feel, taste, sound, and smell.

DIRECTIONS: Below are four settings. List at least five specific and descriptive words or phrases for each one. Then, on the back of this sheet, select one of the settings and describe it in a paragraph.



1. your town ...

2. a department store ...

3. a starship ...

4. a park ...

EXTENSION: Select a setting of your own and list five specific or descriptive words and phrases. Write a paragraph about your setting.

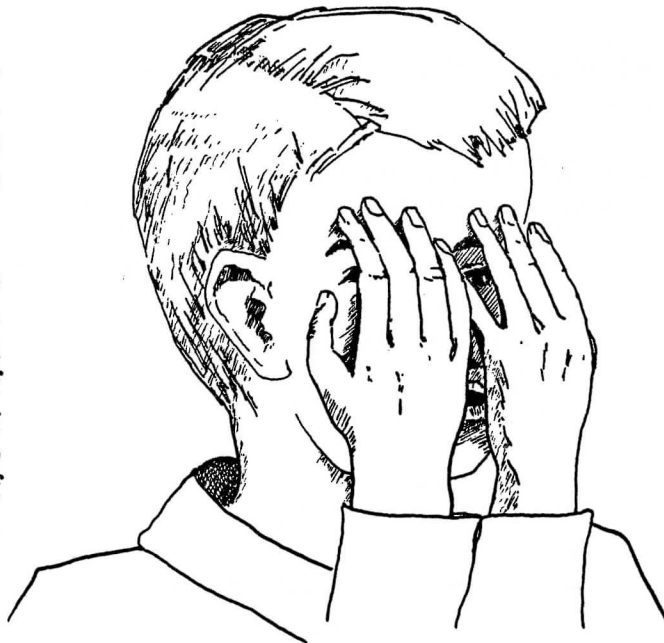
Name _____

Date _____

MY MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT!

WRITING TIP: Authors make their writing interesting by varying their sentence construction. Often they use words and phrases called "sentence starters" to do this.

DIRECTIONS: Think about a time when you did something embarrassing. First, answer the questions below in complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, write a paragraph describing your most embarrassing moment. To vary your sentences, use at least four of the sentence starters below.



1. What happened? _____

2. Where did it happen? _____

3. Who was there? _____
4. What did you do afterward? _____

SENTENCE STARTERS . . .

when
suddenly
yesterday
if

rather than
in spite of
finally
while

instead of
as
although
on the way to

EXTENSION: Instead of your most embarrassing moment, think of your most triumphant moment—the time you achieved a very important goal. Write a paragraph describing this experience.

Name _____

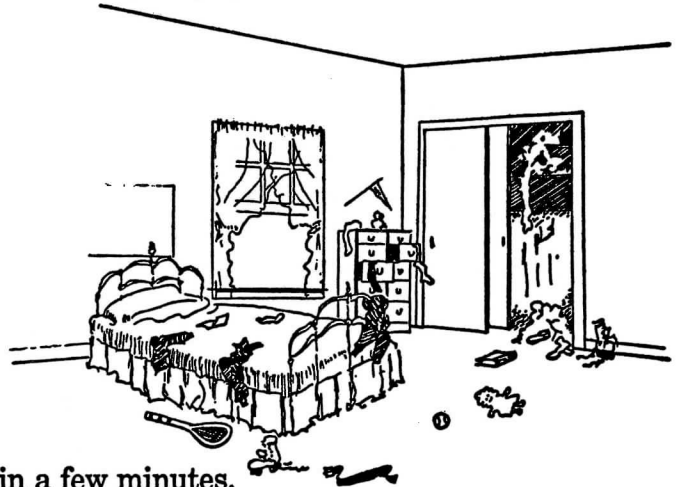
Date _____

COMPANY'S COMING!

WRITING TIP: Authors make their writing interesting by varying the type of sentences they use.

DIRECTIONS: Use the following phrases to complete each of the partial sentences below. Number 1 is done for you. After completing the sentences, organize them logically. Then, on the back of this sheet, write the sentences in paragraph form.

into a drawer
carefully straightening the sheets
if only
as Roberta looked at her desk
arriving in a few minutes
into their holder
hurrying around her room
onto the shelf
and put them into the hamper
and smiled with satisfaction



1. Roberta's friends would be arriving in a few minutes.
2. _____, she saw that it was covered with papers, pencils, and books.
3. _____, she started cleaning.
4. She put her pencils _____, her books _____, and her papers _____.
5. At last she looked around her room _____.
6. She picked up her dirty clothes, _____.
7. "_____ I could be this organized all the time," she thought.
8. Next she made her bed, _____.

EXTENSION: Think about a time you had company coming. Write a paragraph describing how you prepared for them. Be sure to use various types of sentences.

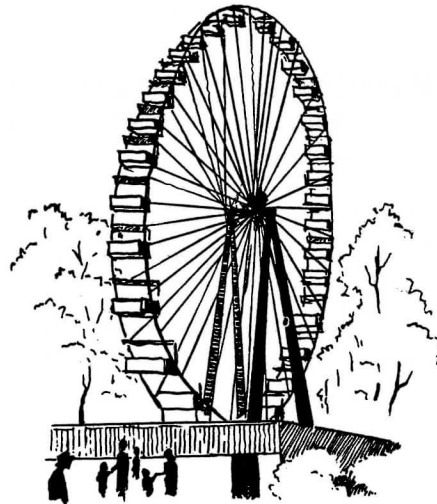
Name _____

Date _____

A BIG WHEEL

WRITING TIP: A paragraph is made up of sentences that explain the same idea. The first sentence of a paragraph is called the topic sentence. Other sentences in the paragraph give details about the topic sentence.

DIRECTIONS: Read the sentences below. Put a line through the one that *does not* belong. Then put the sentences in the correct order and write them in paragraph form. The topic sentence is done for you.



The first Ferris Wheel was built in Chicago in 1893
 Sixty people could ride in each car
 It was the biggest Ferris Wheel ever built
 That original Ferris Wheel could hold more than 2,160 people
 George Ferris, inventor of the Ferris Wheel, was an engineer
 The wheel was 250 feet in diameter, and had 36 cars

* * *

The first Ferris Wheel was built in Chicago in 1893. _____

EXTENSION: In a paragraph describe a trip to a carnival, circus, or amusement park. It can be real or imagined.

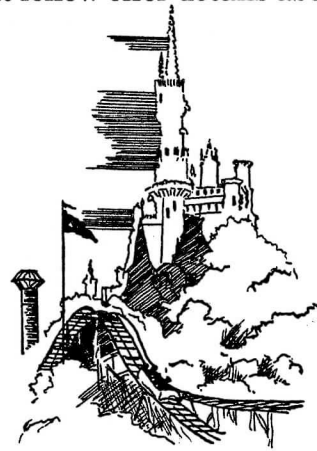
Name _____

Date _____

MY SUPER-VACATION

WRITING TIP: A paragraph is a group of sentences that explains or describes the *same* idea. A topic sentence starts a paragraph. The sentences that follow offer details about the topic sentence.

DIRECTIONS: Suppose that you could go anywhere you wanted for a one-week, all-expenses-paid vacation. Answer the questions below in complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, write a paragraph about your super-vacation.



1. Where would you go? Why? _____

2. Describe the setting. _____

3. What would you have to take with you? _____

4. If you could invite one person, who would it be? Why? _____

5. What would you do on your super-vacation? _____

6. What do you think would be most memorable about your super-vacation? _____

EXTENSION: Pretend that you are a travel agent and it is your job to convince people to go on a super-vacation. In a paragraph explain why your super-vacation is better than other vacations.

Name _____

Date _____

MAGIC MISCHIEF

WRITING TIP: Good paragraphs help make writing smooth and interesting. Remember, the sentences of a good paragraph all explain one topic or idea.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine you are a leprechaun and can play magical tricks on people. Answer the following questions in complete sentences. On the back of this sheet, write a paragraph about your mischievous tricks.



1. What kinds of tricks would you play on people? _____

2. Who would you play tricks on? Why? _____

3. Where would you play your tricks on people? _____

4. What would be your favorite trick? _____

EXTENSION: If you were a leprechaun, describe how your life would be different from what it is now. In what ways might it still be the same?

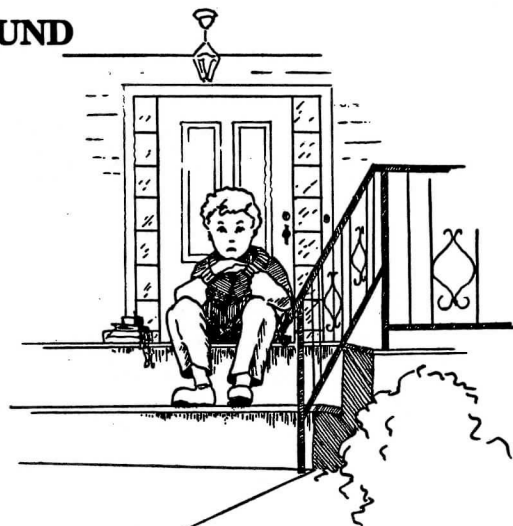
Name _____

Date _____

LOST AND FOUND

WRITING TIP: Transitions are sentences that help your writing flow smoothly from one paragraph to the next.

DIRECTIONS: Read the two passages below and fill in the blanks with a transition. Then select one of the passages and develop it into a story. Be sure to use paragraphs and transitions. (A sample is done for you.)

**SAMPLE**

One day John came home from school and found the house locked. He reached into his pocket for his key, but he didn't have it. After searching everywhere, he realized that he must have left for school without it.

There was nothing he could do, so he sat down on his steps and thought for a while. Finally, he decided to go to Mrs. Martin's house and wait for his mother. Just as he got up, he saw his mother's car coming up the street.

1. Jennifer couldn't remember where she left her baseball glove. Where could it be?

She searched _____

She had to find it. The big game was today!

2. The boys were lost. The idea of staying in the forest alone through the night was scary.

But they had no choice.

They built a fire and waited, hoping that someone would come.

EXTENSION: Take a personal experience in which you lost something important, or became lost yourself. Write a composition about the experience. Remember to use paragraphs and transitions.

Name _____

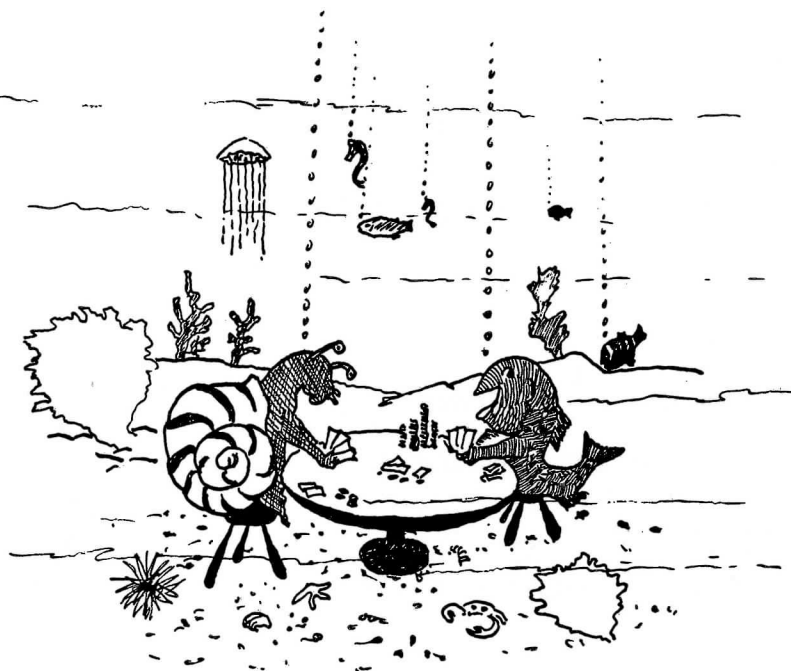
Date _____

SILLY CONVERSATIONS

WRITING TIP: Dialogue is an important element of any story. Authors can make characters come “alive” by the things they say. This makes a story more interesting.

DIRECTIONS: Select one or more of the paired “things” below and write a conversation. (If you wish, you may select your own subjects.) Use the back of this sheet. Remember to use correct punctuation.

1. The Sky and the Earth
2. A Snail and a Guppy
3. A Shoe and a Sock
4. A Cat and a Dog
5. Two Snowflakes
6. The Sun and the Moon
7. A Car Tire and a Curb
8. The Wind and a Cloud
9. Thunder and Lightning
10. A Cup and a Saucer



EXTENSION: Pretend you are invisible and you overhear two or more inanimate objects in your room talking about you. The objects might be your bed and dresser, your floor and door, or even your window and shade. Write a conversation of what they might say about you.

Name _____

Date _____

WHAT COMES NEXT?

WRITING TIP: Authors work hard to make sure that their stories and articles are developed in a logical manner. Each scene must be in its right place, otherwise the writing will not make sense.

DIRECTIONS: Following is a list of things that Jimmy does after school. Read them, and then number them 1 through 7 in the order you think he does them. After numbering them, expand the phrases and write a paragraph. Use the back of this sheet for your paragraph. **HINT:** Use starter words like "afterward," "next," and "finally" to help your paragraph flow smoothly.

____eats cookies and drinks glass of milk

____does his homework

____takes a bath

 1 comes home from school

____plays with his dog Jingles

____goes to bed

____eats dinner with his family



EXTENSION: Think about your typical routine after school. Write a paragraph about the things you do. Be sure to use correct time sequence. To help your paragraph flow smoothly, use starter words.

FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES

FU 4-1. FRIENDLY FIGURES OF SPEECH

This activity has two parts. First, review similes and metaphors with your students. Put a few examples on the board.

Divide your class into groups of two. Each student is to make a list of at least five things—an example list might include cat, dog, mountain, caveman, jet. After compiling their lists, students are to exchange them with their partners. Each student writes two sentences for each item on the list, one sentence containing a simile and the other a metaphor. Sentences may be silly or serious.

For the second part of this activity, each student is to select one of the things from either list and write a descriptive paragraph. Emphasize that the paragraph should contain at least one simile and one metaphor. You can have volunteers read their sentences to the class, and you can also display the paragraphs upon completion of the activity.

FU 4-2. STRETCH A SENTENCE

Break your class into groups of about five. For this activity your students will start with very simple sentences and expand them into longer ones.

Put this example on the board: *She ate.* Explain that this is a simple sentence. It has a subject and predicate. However, it certainly doesn't tell us much. Ask for volunteers to add something to the sentence. One possibility is: *She ate a big dinner.* This tells us what she ate. Ask for ways to expand the sentence even more. Here's one: *Last night she ate a big dinner of steak, potatoes, and vegetables.* Notice that this sentence tells us *when* as well as *what* she ate.

For the assignment, one person in the group starts a simple sentence, writing just a subject and predicate. He passes the paper to the next person, who expands the sentence by adding a word or phrase. That person then passes the sentence to the next person who adds still more. Sentences can be silly or serious.

If you wish, you can let each group decide on a specific topic they would like to use. You may suggest the topic of animals, and may list several on the board—gorilla, giraffe, porcupine, duck, snake, monkey, lion, rabbit, turtle, penguin, mouse, and alligator are a few. Asking the class to name more will help to get students involved in the activity from the start.

Be sure to allow sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 4-3. GIVE YOUR SCHOOL A GRADE

Ask your students to think about and list five things that they consider good about your school. Now ask them to consider five things they feel could be improved. Students are to write a composition evaluating your school. Remind your children to use sentence starters to vary their sentence construction.

Display the compositions at the end of the activity. Your children will be quite interested to see how others feel about their school.

FU 4-4. SEE AND TELL

Ask your students to look around the classroom and list at least seven things they see. After compiling their lists, ask them to write a paragraph describing the room. Display the paragraphs at the end of the activity, and encourage students to compare. It is likely that the paragraphs will be quite different.

FU 4-5. HERE'S HOW

Ask your students to select a personal grooming skill. It may be brushing their teeth, combing or blow-drying their hair, or washing their faces. Ask them to first list the steps they take. From their lists, students are to write a paragraph describing their skill. Display the paragraphs upon completion of the activity.

FU 4-6. MY FAVORITE MOVIE

Ask your students to think about their favorite movie. To help them sort their thoughts, you can write the following questions on the board:

1. What is the name of the movie?
2. Who were the main characters?
3. What happened? How did it end?

In a paragraph, students are to summarize their favorite movie and tell why it is, in fact, their favorite. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 4-7. IF I COULD BE

Ask your students to consider this statement: If I could be whatever I wished, I would be_____. Tell them that they can allow their imaginations to roam on this one. They can be astronauts, brain surgeons, acrobats, or ace detectives. Students are to describe, in a paragraph, what they would be and give reasons for their selections. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 4-8. LET THE ANIMALS TALK

Ask your children to imagine two of their favorite animals having a conversation. They are talking about humans—what they like and dislike about us. Your students are to write the dialogue of this conversation. Allow your children to read their dialogues to the class upon completion of the activity.

FU 4-9. A HORRIFYING EXPERIENCE

Ask your children to imagine that they have become a werewolf, vampire, or similar horrifying creature. How did they come to be in such an unhappy state? How do they return to normal? Is there any hope at all? Students are to write stories about this imaginary experience. Emphasize that this type of story lends itself easily to such techniques as flashback, plants, and foreshadowing. Encourage your students to use at least one basic technique in their stories. Display the compositions at the end of the activity.

FU 4-10. WHEN I WAS YOUNG

Begin this activity by generating a discussion about aging and change—what does it mean to grow older? We change physically and emotionally. We see things in different ways. Ask your children to think about what they were like when they were younger, and compare what they were then to what they are now. Ask them to consider how they look, their feelings, emotions, likes and dislikes, and fears. Students are to write compositions comparing their present selves to their former selves. Remind them to use correct time sequence. Display the compositions at the end of the activity.

5

The Mechanics of Writing

Correct mechanics are necessary for good writing. Mechanics, defined here as word usage, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, are similar to road signs and traffic signals. Instead of directing the smooth flow of vehicles, however, they facilitate the clarity of the writer's message.

TEACHING MECHANICS WITH WRITING

Mechanics are taught most successfully when incorporated with writing. In this way students see the purpose for using correct forms of language.

Many children feel threatened by the technical nature of mechanics and allow their feelings to interfere with the development of ideas. To minimize their concerns, talk about mechanics as being a normal part of the writing process. Explain that they are not bad writers if they make mistakes in mechanics, and encourage them to use dictionaries, grammar, and style books as tools to improve their work. To help your students catch their mistakes in mechanics, hand out copies of the "Checklist for Writing Mechanics," Figure 7.

By far the best time to explain mechanics to your students is during a teacher and student conference. When meeting with a student to discuss his or her draft, you can point out mistakes and explain why the mechanics in question are necessary. This method of teaching is more meaningful to children than group instruction. Most children respond better one-to-one, and are more likely to ask questions about things they do not understand.

CHECKLIST FOR WRITING MECHANICS

To make sure you have used correct mechanics in your writing, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Have I used all the words in my writing correctly? Have I used the correct forms of pronouns, verbs, and adjectives?
2. Have I used correct spelling?
3. Have I used correct ending punctuation?
4. Have I used commas for series, setting off main clauses, dates, addresses, and direct address?
5. Have I used quotation marks for dialogue?
6. Have I used apostrophes for possessive nouns and contractions?
7. Have I capitalized the first word of every sentence?
8. Have I capitalized the pronoun "I"?
9. Have I capitalized the important words in titles?
10. Have I capitalized proper nouns and adjectives?

Figure 7

WORD USAGE

Appropriate word usage depends on the subject matter and reading audience. In a story, "it ain't," can be quite proper, but in an article written for an intellectual audience use of that construction would be a serious mistake. Based on the material and reader the author wants to reach, an afternoon in the park can be peaceful or dull, a person can be thrifty or cheap, and a food can be mild or tasteless. Without question word selection and usage affect the development of a composition.

There are several reasons why children do not use words correctly. Many children have great difficulty with denotative and connotative meanings of words, the idiomatic use of words, and figurative language.

Aside from confusing the meaning of one word with another, children often fail to understand the differences between denotative and connotative meanings. In the sentence: "He managed the deal like a businessman," the word businessman takes on extra meaning. Depending on the context, businessman might refer to someone who is shrewd and crafty instead of its literal meaning of someone engaged in a commercial or industrial activity.

Many young writers also have trouble distinguishing the idiomatic uses of words. In the sentence: "Dirt bike racers must be willing to take the bumps," some children will assume bumps are uneven parts of the course rather than the injuries that often come with racing.

Word Usage Activity

Select three words from your students' spelling or reading lists. Choose words that have multiple meanings and uses.

Instruct your children to write three sentences for each word, using the word in a different way. Sentences can be silly or serious. Tell your students that they can use prefixes and suffixes, and can change the part of speech, using words as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Encourage them to use dictionaries so that they will use the words correctly in their sentences.

When your students are done, ask volunteers to read some of their sentences to the class. Be sure to discuss the sentences, and point out the different ways that the words are used.

Figurative use of words confronts children with much the same problem. In the sentence: "Big trucks are modern dinosaurs," some children will have trouble seeing the relationship between trucks and dinosaurs.

Word usage can be enhanced by incorporating vocabulary expansion with the writing process. Children do not learn new words by simply looking them up in a dictionary and writing a sentence to illustrate their meanings. They often fail to comprehend the multiple meanings of words if this is all that is required. You should teach vocabulary expansion by showing your students the structure of

words, their denotative and connotative meanings, and their idiomatic and figurative uses.

Word usage is much more than merely combining words into sentences. It requires students to use the right words in their proper forms and contextual meanings.

GRAMMAR

Grammar is closely related to word usage. In recent years many teachers have come to treat usage and grammar as being the same; however, there are important distinctions. Word usage focuses on selecting the best words for a situation. Grammar is the technical use of words, based on specific rules. Occasionally, superior usage, in a strict sense, might not be grammatically correct.

"I ain't gonna do it," the boy said, stampin' his foot. And his momma knowed that there warn't nuthin' in the world that could make him.

This is an example of a story written from a backwoodsman's point of view. The word usage is excellent for it conveys a feeling of the man. If measured by the usual standards of grammar, the writing is abominable.

Knowledge of grammar is important to written language, but teaching grammar does not necessarily lead to good writing. The desire and ability to write is not contingent upon grammatical expertise. And yet, while too much emphasis and practice on grammar can reduce the amount of time children spend writing and improving their overall use of language, not enough time spent on grammar leads to unacceptable mistakes that suggest a writer is careless or uneducated.

One of the best ways to teach grammar is to make it a positive part of writing. When going over drafts with your students, refer to sentence parts as subjects, predicates, or objects. Point out nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions and explain how they are used. Familiarizing your children with the terminology will facilitate understanding of grammatical forms and purposes.

Following is a grammar activity that most children find enjoyable and stimulating.

Grammar Activity

Organize your students into groups of two or three. Tell them that they are to agree on a topic they would like to write about. Offer some examples—school, a sport, an activity, or hobby.

Explain that each student takes a turn writing a sentence about the topic. There is a catch of course—the student who is not writing calls for a particular part of speech. Depending on the abilities of your children, you can limit the choices, perhaps to nouns, verbs, and adjectives. You should review the parts of speech at the beginning of the activity so that everyone has a basic understanding of their function and use in sentences.

After a student calls for a part of speech, the writer of the sentence must then compose a sentence on the topic that contains the called-for part of speech. He or she must underline the part of speech. Explain that students are to take turns writing sentences, and that each sentence should build on the idea of the previous one. Students should do at least five sentences each.

When they have finished their sentences, instruct them to work together and expand their sentences into a story. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

Here is an example. The topic is fishing.

Student A calls for a verb.

Student B writes: The boys *went fishing* yesterday.

Student B calls for a pronoun.

Student A writes: *They* walked through the forest to get to the stream.

Student A calls for a preposition.

Student B writes: Tom tangled his line *in* a tree.

This activity is valuable for several reasons. It strengthens the students' understanding of the different parts of speech, stimulates imagination, promotes the writing of complete sentences and the development of stories.

PUNCTUATION

Punctuation is a part of writing that many children find maddening. It is too easy to overlook the need for a comma, misuse a colon, or forget to put the period at the end of a sentence. Like grammar, punctuation is important for effective writing, but too much emphasis on it can hinder the development of writing ability.

Punctuation Activity #1

Ask your students to think about something they like to do. It might be a hobby, a special interest, a sport, or a job. Tell them to imagine that they are describing this activity to a stranger. What would they say?

Instruct your students to write a descriptive paragraph about this activity. After they have finished writing, instruct them to carefully read their paragraphs aloud and listen for the natural stops, pauses, and changes in emphasis. Explain that these are signals for punctuation. Encourage your students to correct their paragraphs for punctuation.

When children do not use punctuation correctly, they usually fall into one of two categories: they do not use it enough or they use it too much.

Your language text can serve as a good foundation for teaching punctuation. Basic punctuation rules that should be covered as soon as students are intellec-

tually ready include: ending punctuation, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, and italics (underlining).

The degree to which you cover these areas will be determined by the ability levels of your students. Generally, the more advanced the student, the more you should stress punctuation.

Punctuation Activity #2

After your students have written compositions, instruct them to exchange their work with a friend who assumes the role of an editor. The editor reads the composition and notes any errors in punctuation. The students then discuss the mistakes, and the writer of the composition makes the necessary corrections.

A variety of worksheets from numerous publishers are available for teaching punctuation. However, the best way to teach punctuation is with writing so that students can see how and why the symbols are used.

CAPITALIZATION

While basic rules of capitalization can be reviewed directly from your language text, and dozens of worksheets can be assigned, the most effective way of getting children to employ the rules correctly and consistently is to demand their use in writing. Although you need not burden your students with long lists of capitalization rules, you should insist on consistent capitalization of the following as soon as possible.

1. The pronoun "I."
2. The first word in a sentence.
3. The important words in titles.
4. Words referring to the deity.
5. Proper nouns and adjectives.

Capitalization Activity

Divide students into teams of two or three. Tell them that they are about to compete in a capitalization round robin. Explain that a round robin is an event in which individuals or teams compete against each other, the champion being based on the total number of wins.

For the capitalization round robin, each team is to make two or three lists of ten words or phrases of proper nouns and adjectives. The words or phrases can be titles, names of places, events, and so on. Examples include the book title *Alice in Wonderland*, the Bay of Bengal, and World War II. Encourage your students to use texts and reference books to compile their lists.

After writing their lists correctly, students are to rewrite their lists

with mistakes in capitalization. They then exchange their lists with another team. Each team must correct the lists they are given. They cannot use reference books or texts at this point. When the teams are done, the lists are returned to their owners and are corrected. The team with the fewest mistakes wins. Each phrase counts as one, which means there can be only ten mistakes per list. This makes scoring easy.

Teams continue exchanging their lists with other teams. They are free to use whichever list of theirs they wish. In the event of a tie (both teams get two wrong for instance), each team provides the other with three additional words or phrases. The team that does best wins.

At the end of the round robin, the team with the most wins is declared the champion. You might wish to display the champions' names on the bulletin board.

SPELLING

Spelling correctly in the English language is not easy, for English spelling is illogical and inconsistent. The saying, "There is an exception to every rule," is an apt description of the dilemma. Just consider—

- board and bored
- through and threw
- new and knew
- pneumonia
- children and chorus
- cease and saddle
- receive, believe, and recede

and you get an idea of the confusing vowel and consonant sounds and blends that make English spelling a rigorous exercise. Accurate spelling is important to good writing however.

Spelling Activity #1

Have each student develop a personal spelling dictionary, containing words that he or she finds difficult to spell. The list should be maintained in rough alphabetical order and should always be handy during writing.

A good way to design the list is to use looseleaf paper and a notebook. As the words are entered, advise your children to skip a few lines between them so that they can enter new words when necessary.

While your spelling program can provide the basis of the vocabulary your students use in their writing, you should encourage them to try to use new words. Tell your children to spell a word the best they can on their drafts. After the draft is completed is the time to check a word's spelling in the dictionary.

A good time to teach spelling is when going over student drafts. If necessary

write the correct spelling on the student's paper and point out the differences with the incorrect word. If you notice that a child has a particular spelling weakness, help him or her generate a list of similar words, such as "believe, retrieve, receive." Show your students the similarities and differences between the words.

Spelling Activity #2

Develop a class dictionary of hard-to-spell words. You can do this on tagboard or poster paper. As class members come upon difficult words they can enter them into the dictionary. In this way difficult words gain more exposure. Including a brief definition of each word will strengthen your students' vocabularies.

When teaching spelling, explain to your students that many professional authors are poor spellers, but that they compensate for their weakness by using dictionaries. There is no reason for any final copy to be marred by numerous spelling mistakes.

Mechanics are a necessary part of writing. They should never be considered unimportant; yet, neither should they be awarded greater importance than they warrant. While mechanics are an essential element of the whole, and should be taught as a major part of writing, they should be recognized as subject to the overall process and never be elevated above it.

TEACHING NOTES FOR REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS

5-1. TRICKY WORDS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to complete a crossword puzzle, then use the words of the puzzle in a story.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: To begin this activity, write the words "it's" and "its" on the board. Ask for volunteers to explain the difference between the two words. Ask for someone to give sentences that use each word correctly. Explain that these words are examples of the many "tricky" words in English that are easily confused. Tricky words may be homographs, homophones, or words that are merely similar. Emphasize that consulting a dictionary is the best way to avoid mistakes in usage.

Instruct your students to work with a partner and complete the crossword puzzle. Encourage the use of dictionaries. When students are done with the puzzle, they are to write a story of a trip to Magic Land. The story can be silly or serious, but students must use each of the tricky words of the crossword puzzle in their stories. Encourage your children to list or briefly outline ideas for their stories, and remind them to concentrate on using correct mechanics. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Explain that homophones—words that sound the same—can be some of the trickiest tricky words. Working independently, students are to

create a crossword puzzle for the given pairs of homophones. You can further expand this activity by encouraging children to compose their own lists of tricky words and have them make additional puzzles. Using graph paper can make the construction of the puzzles easier.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE STORIES. Answers to crossword puzzle—Across: 2-further, 4-lay, 5-sit, 6-lie, 7-there. Down: 1-set, 2-farther, 3-their.

5-2. SPIDER BITES

OBJECTIVE: Students are to unscramble a given article and rewrite it, supplying the missing capitalization and punctuation.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students how many of them like spiders. Only a few, if any, will likely raise their hands. Explain that contrary to popular belief, most spiders are harmless. Tell your children that for this activity, they are to rewrite the sentences, correcting them for capitalization, commas, and ending punctuation. Then they are to organize the sentences and rewrite the article on the back of the sheet. Be sure to provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students how they feel about spiders. Instruct them to describe their feelings in a paragraph. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first, and to concentrate on using correct mechanics.

ANSWER KEY:

1. They should not be.
2. Spiders are found in nearly all parts of the world.
3. There are about 30,000 different kinds of spiders.
4. For example, the bite of the black widow spider is harmful to humans.
5. Many people are afraid of spider bites.
6. But the black widow, like most spiders, prefers insects to humans.
7. While the bites of most spiders are too weak to break human skin, the bites of a few spiders can be painful.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE PARAGRAPHS; following is one possibility:

Spiders are found in nearly all parts of the world. There are about 30,000 different kinds of spiders.

Many people are afraid of spider bites. They should not be. While the bites of most spiders are too weak to break human skin, the bites of a few spiders can be painful. For example, the bite of the black widow spider is harmful to humans. But the black widow, like most spiders, prefers insects to humans.

5-3. THE MISSING BIKE

OBJECTIVE: Students are to rewrite the beginning of a given story, make corrections for capitalization and punctuation, and then complete the story with their own endings.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to think about how they would feel if something valuable of theirs was stolen. What would they do? Explain that the story of this assignment deals with that problem. Instruct your children to rewrite the first three paragraphs of the story, and make the

necessary corrections for capitalization and punctuation. Next they are to finish the story by adding their own endings. Encourage them to list or briefly outline ideas for their endings on the lines at the bottom of the page, and remind them to use correct mechanics. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to imagine that something very important of theirs was stolen. Ask them to think about what their feelings would be. What would they do to find their stolen property? Students are to describe their feelings and the actions they would take in a paragraph.

ANSWER KEY:

"The Missing Bike"

One day when his mother and father were not home, Jimmy went outside to ride his bike. As he stepped out onto the porch, he saw that his bike was gone. He had left it by the steps a few minutes ago.

Quickly, Jimmy looked around the yard. Maybe he hadn't left it by the porch. He couldn't find it anywhere. He knew that someone had stolen it.

Rushing inside, he called his friends. They would mount a search party to find his bike.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ENDINGS.

5-4. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

OBJECTIVE: Students are to capitalize a given list of special days. They are then to select one of the special days and write an informational article about it.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Begin this activity by asking your students what a holiday is. You might discuss that holidays often commemorate historical, religious, or special events, or that they may honor individuals who have made significant contributions or sacrifices for the betterment of others. Next, explain the worksheet. For the informational article, encourage your students to use reference books, and emphasize that they should list or briefly outline their ideas before writing. Remind them to use correct mechanics, and suggest that they illustrate their articles. Display the work of your students at the end of the activity. You might collect the compositions and make a class "Holiday" book.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to imagine that they are able to designate a holiday of their own. They are to write a paragraph about their holiday, telling why it is special and what would be celebrated.

ANSWER KEY:

1. Lincoln's Birthday
2. Independence Day
3. Martin Luther King Day
4. Washington's Birthday
5. Columbus Day
6. St. Valentine's Day
7. Thanksgiving Day

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARTICLES.

5-5. WHAT DID YOU SAY?

OBJECTIVE: Students are to study an illustration, answer specific questions about it, then write a story.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Tell your students to study the illustration. Ask someone to explain what has happened, and what is happening now. Point out the broken window in the background, the angry homeowner, and the incriminating evidence of the bats and gloves of the children. Ask your students to imagine what the characters might be saying. Instruct them to answer the questions, and then write a story based on the illustration. Encourage them to use dialogue to make their stories more interesting, and also remind them to use correct mechanics. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think of a time when they broke something. (For students who claim they never broke anything, ask them to imagine that they did.) Instruct your children to write a descriptive paragraph about this event, including what happened and their feelings.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE STORIES.

5-6. A STRANGE EVENT

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write an account of a strange event.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your children to think about a strange event they have experienced or heard about. All of us have witnessed or know of some unusual occurrence that defies logical explanation. Ask volunteers to share their accounts with the class. Share an account of your own. For the activity, instruct your students to first list their ideas in complete sentences, and then write their accounts. Remind them to use correct mechanics. Display the accounts at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Instruct your students to choose a partner and exchange their accounts. Each student is to assume the role of an editor and proofread his or her partner's work, circling mistakes in mechanics. Hand out copies of the "Checklist for Writing Mechanics" (Figure 7) which will help students in proofreading. After the return of the papers, students are to rewrite their accounts and make the necessary corrections.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

5-7. WHEN I BROKE THE RULES

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write an account describing an incident in which they broke a rule.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to raise their hands if they have ever broken a rule. It might have been a school rule, a rule set by their parents, a rule in a game, etc. It might have been a major or relatively minor rule. Ask for volunteers to share their examples of rule-breaking with the class. For the activity, instruct your students to first list details about the time they broke a rule, and then write an account of this incident. Remind students to use correct mechanics. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think of a rule they would like to change. They are to write a paragraph explaining why this rule should be changed.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

5-8. SPORTS CHALLENGE

OBJECTIVE: Students are to answer given questions about a sport they like, and write a composition describing this sport.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your children to think about a sport they like. It may be one at which they excel, one at which they would like to improve, or one that they would like to try. Instruct them to first answer the questions on the worksheet, and then write a composition describing their sport and why they like it. Remind them to use correct mechanics. Be sure to display the compositions at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think about the sports they play. Ask them to recall the "best" and "worst" move or play they ever made. Instruct them to select either their best or worst move and describe this event in a paragraph. Remind them to use correct mechanics.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

5-9. THE MOST FUN I EVER HAD!

OBJECTIVE: Students are to answer given questions and then write a composition about the most fun they ever had.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to think of the most fun they ever had. It might have been during a vacation, playing with friends, going to a special place, or taking part in an exciting event. Ask for volunteers to share their experiences with the class. Instruct your children to first answer the questions in complete sentences, and then write a composition about the time they had the most fun. Remind your students to use correct mechanics, and display the compositions at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your children to think of a sad or unhappy experience. Instruct them to describe this event in a paragraph. Encourage them to briefly list or outline their ideas first, and to use correct mechanics.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE COMPOSITIONS.

5-10. ASK DR. KNOW-IT-ALL

OBJECTIVE: Students are to assume the role of advice columnists and write responses to given letters.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to raise their hands if they have ever read an advice column. Mention a few examples of national or local columnists, and discuss the purpose of advice columns. For this activity, explain to your students that they will assume the role of advice columnists. They are to read the two letters and write responses, offering advice. Encourage your students to use correct mechanics. For sharing, ask students to read their responses to the class.

EXTENSION: Divide your students into pairs. Ask them to think of a problem they have, and write a letter to their friend describing the problem. The problems can be real or imaginary, silly or serious. They are to exchange letters

and write letters of advice to each other. Remind your students to use correct mechanics.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE LETTERS.

Name _____

Date _____

TRICKY WORDS

WRITING TIP: Writers must always be careful that they don't make mistakes with any of the tricky words of English. When they are not sure how to use a word, good writers consult their (not there!) dictionaries.

DIRECTIONS: Following are eight words that are easily confused in writing. Work with a friend and complete the crossword puzzle, using the words from the word bank. You may find that you will need to use a dictionary.

Next, write a story with your partner about your trip to Magic Land. Your story may be silly or serious. There is a trick to this story, though—you must use each of the tricky words of the word bank correctly in your story. Use the back of this sheet to list or briefly outline your ideas, and write your story on a separate sheet of paper. Be sure to use correct mechanics.

Across:

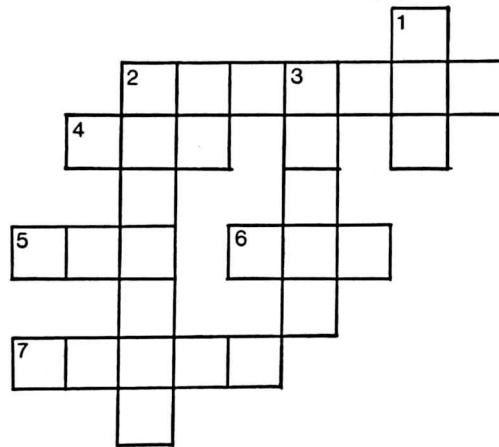
2. In addition; another idea; moreover.
4. to put something down.
5. you do this in a chair.
6. when you go to sleep, you _____ down.
7. in that place.

Down:

1. to place or arrange; _____ the table.
2. having to do with a greater distance.
3. pronoun meaning "of them."

Word Bank

lay	further	lie	there
sit	farther	set	their



EXTENSION: Homophones—words which sound the same but are usually spelled differently and have different meanings—are tricky words that people often use incorrectly. Make a crossword puzzle for the following homophones: bored/board, principle/principal, piece/peace, ant/aunt, cell/sell, heard/herd, write/right, straight/strait. Exchange puzzles with a friend and try to complete the puzzles.

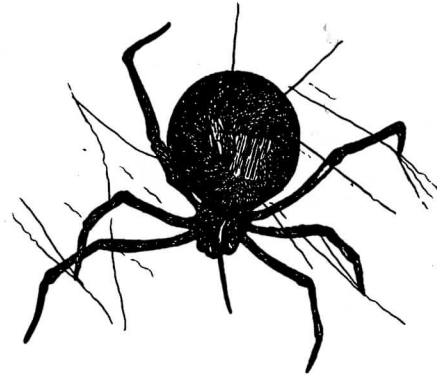
Name _____

Date _____

SPIDER BITES

WRITING TIP: Punctuation and capitalization are to your reader what traffic signals are to the driver of a car. They tell your reader when to start and when to stop. They control the flow of your writing.

DIRECTIONS: Following is a short article on spiders. The sentences are scrambled and lack capital letters, commas, and periods. First, correct each sentence on the line below it. Then, organize the sentences into two paragraphs and write an article entitled "Spider Bites" on the back of this sheet.



1. they should not be

2. spiders are found in nearly all parts of the world

3. there are about 30,000 different kinds of spiders

4. for example the bite of the black widow spider is harmful to humans

5. many people are afraid of spider bites

6. but the black widow like most spiders prefers insects to humans

7. while the bites of most spiders are too weak to break human skin the bites of a few spiders can be painful.

EXTENSION: Write a paragraph describing your feelings about spiders. Be sure to give reasons for your feelings, and use correct mechanics.

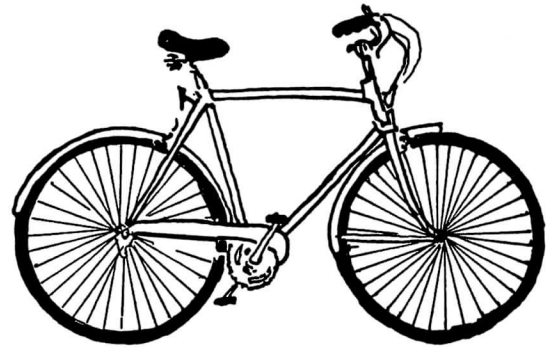
Name _____

Date _____

THE MISSING BIKE

WRITING TIP: Punctuation provides your writing with the natural stops and pauses that make it flow smoothly. Rereading your writing carefully and paying attention to the stops and pauses will help you avoid mistakes in punctuation.

DIRECTIONS: Following is the beginning of a story that is written without capital letters or punctuation. You are to rewrite the story on another sheet of paper, and correct it by adding capital letters, commas, and ending punctuation. Then, on the back of this sheet, complete the story by adding a conclusion. On the lines below, list some ideas for your conclusion.

**"The Missing Bike"**

one day when his mother and father were not home jimmy went outside to ride his bike as he stepped out onto the porch he saw that his bike was gone he had left it by the steps a few minutes ago

quickly jimmy looked around the yard maybe he hadn't left it by the porch he couldn't find it anywhere he knew that someone had stolen it

rushing inside he called his friends they would mount a search party to find his bike

EXTENSION: Think of something very important to you. Imagine that it was stolen. How would you feel? What would you do? In a paragraph, describe your feelings and the likely actions you would take to get your property back. Be sure to use correct mechanics.

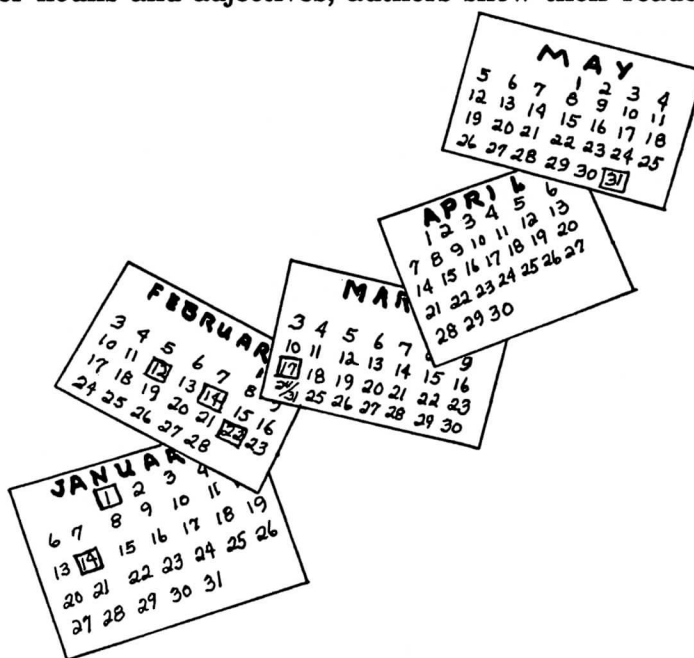
Name _____

Date _____

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

WRITING TIP: Capital letters are used to separate proper nouns and adjectives from common ones. By capitalizing proper nouns and adjectives, authors show their readers that these words are special.

DIRECTIONS: The holidays written below have mistakes in capitalization. Correct the mistakes. Then choose one of the holidays and write an informational article about it. You might include the history about the day, when, why, and how it is celebrated. List or briefly outline your ideas for your article on the back of this sheet, and write your article on a separate paper. As you write your article, be sure to use correct mechanics. You can illustrate your article if you wish.



1. lincoln's birthday
2. independence day
3. martin luther king day
4. washington's birthday
5. columbus day
6. st. valentine's day
7. thanksgiving day

EXTENSION: If you could make a special day or a holiday of your own, what would it be? Why would it be special? What would it celebrate, and how would it be celebrated? Write a paragraph describing your special day. Be sure to use correct mechanics.

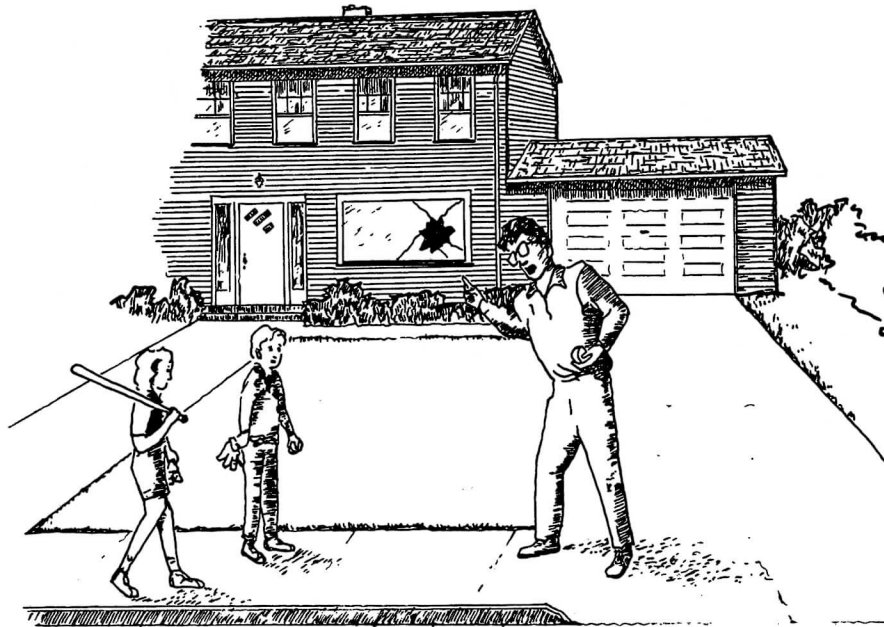
Name _____

Date _____

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

WRITING TIP: Dialogue makes stories more interesting, because the reader, through imagination, can hear what the characters are saying. Writers show dialogue by using quotation marks.

DIRECTIONS: Study the illustration below, and answer the questions in complete sentences. On the back of this sheet, write a story based on the picture. Be sure to give your characters names, and use dialogue to add interest to the story. Remember to use quotation marks and correct mechanics.



1. Based on what you see in the picture, what probably happened earlier? _____

2. What do you think is happening now? _____

3. What do you think the characters are saying? _____

EXTENSION: Think of a time you broke something. What was it? How did you feel? What happened? Describe this event in a paragraph. Be sure to use correct mechanics.

Date_____

WRITING TIP: The correct use of mechanics provides the form and structure for an author's work. Think how hard it would be to read something if the words were not capitalized and the sentences had no punctuation.

A simple line drawing of a ghost. The ghost has an oval body, a triangular head, and three black eyes. It has a surprised expression with a wide-open mouth. The ghost is floating and moving towards the right, indicated by a long, wavy tail behind it.

My event

EXTENSION: Exchange accounts with a friend. Each of you is to read the other's work and circle any mistakes in punctuation or capitalization. After returning your papers, each of you is to correct any mistakes.

Name _____

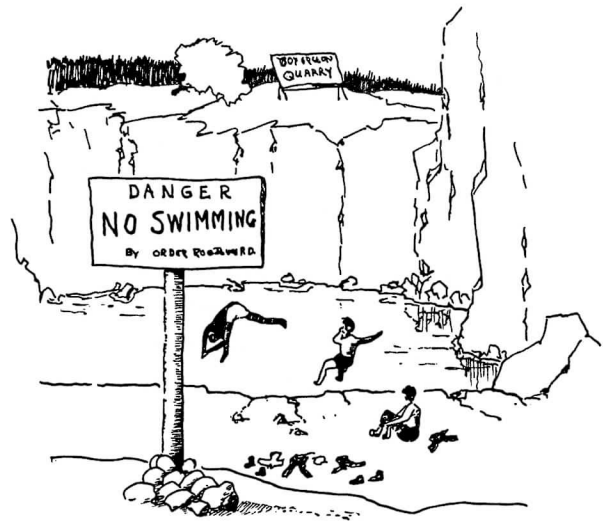
Date _____

WHEN I BROKE THE RULES

WRITING TIP: Without rules it would be impossible to play the simplest game. Everyone would be confused over what to do. Mechanics are the rules of writing. Correct use of mechanics helps make writing understandable.

DIRECTIONS: Think of a time you broke some rule. It might have been a safety rule, school rule, a rule at home, or some other rule. Why did you break it? What happened? What could have happened?

On the lines below, tell what rule you broke, then list details about this event in complete sentences. On the back of this paper, write an account about the time you broke the rules. After you finish writing, reread your composition and check your use of mechanics.



The rule I broke was _____

EXTENSION: Think of a rule at school or home that you would like to change. Write a paragraph explaining why you feel this rule should be changed. List or briefly outline your ideas first. Be sure to use correct mechanics.

Name _____

Date _____

SPORTS CHALLENGE

WRITING TIP: Just like sports, the correct use of mechanics in writing can be a challenge. Also like sports, the more you practice using the mechanics of writing, the better you will become.

DIRECTIONS: Think of a sport at which you are good, one at which you would like to become better, or one that you would like to try. On the lines below, first name your sport, and then answer the questions in complete sentences. On the back of this sheet, write a composition describing your sport, and why you like it. Be sure to use correct mechanics.



My sport is _____

1. What are the basic rules of this sport? _____

2. Why do you like this sport? _____

3. What abilities does a person need to play? _____

4. What can a person do to improve at this sport? _____

EXTENSION: Think of the "best" and "worst" move you ever made while participating in a sport. Select either your best or worst, and describe this event in a paragraph. List or briefly outline your ideas first, and use correct mechanics in your writing.

Name _____

Date _____

THE MOST FUN I EVER HAD!

WRITING TIP: The correct use of mechanics can help smoothen writing and make it clear. A composition isn't done until the author has checked its mechanics.

DIRECTIONS: Think of the time you had the most fun. It might have been at home, while on vacation, a time with friends, or even at school. On the lines below, first describe this time in a sentence, then answer the following questions in complete sentences. On the back of this sheet, write a composition about the time you had the most fun. Be sure to use correct mechanics.



The most fun I ever had was _____

1. Where were you? _____

2. Who was with you? _____

3. What made this event so much fun for you? _____

EXTENSION: Think of a day you were very sad or unhappy. Describe this day in a paragraph. List or briefly outline your ideas first. Be sure to use correct mechanics.

Name _____

Date _____

ASK DR. KNOW-IT-ALL

WRITING TIP: Whether you write a story, an article, or a letter, the correct use of mechanics is necessary to make your writing clear.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine that you are Dr. Know-it-all, a famous advice columnist. Below are two letters from students who have problems. Read the letters and then write letters to them, offering your solutions to their problems. Use the back of this sheet for your letters. Be sure to use correct mechanics.



Dear Dr. Know-it-all,

I can't ever get my homework done. I try, but things like playing with my friends, watching TV, eating, and sleeping always get in the way.

My dad says that if he gets one more note from my teacher about my homework not being done, he's going to ground me until I'm 30! What can I do?

Desperate in Duluth

Dear Doc,

I got this problem. You see, I'm a boy and my kid sister's a girl. Well, she's always hanging around me and my friends. I ask her politely to get lost, but she never does.

When I tell my folks about this, they say that my sister likes me. I like her too, but not when I'm with my pals. Tell me what to do. Please!

Big Brother in South Bend

EXTENSION: Work with a friend. Write a letter to your friend, telling him or her about a problem you have. At the same time, your friend writes a letter to you, telling you about a problem. (The problems can either be serious or silly.) Exchange the letters and write answers to each other's problems. Share the letters and answers with others. Be sure to use correct mechanics.

FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES

FU 5-1. FEELINGS—PAST AND PRESENT

Ask your children to think how they felt yesterday. What kind of day was it? What were their emotions? Now ask them how they feel today. Instruct them to compare their feelings of yesterday to their feelings of today in a composition. Remind them to concentrate on their use of verb tenses. Point out that they will use past tense in describing their feelings of yesterday, and present tense in writing about today. Remind them to use correct mechanics in their writing. Display the work of your children at the end of the activity.

FU 5-2. HEADING HOME

Instruct your students to make a list of proper and common nouns they see on their way home from school. They are to describe their trip home in a paragraph, including as many of the nouns as possible. Remind your students to concentrate on using correct mechanics. Display students' work at the end of the activity.

FU 5-3. A SPELLING BEE

For this activity, students are to use as many words as they can from either their spelling or reading lists in a story or article. Offer the topic "The Spelling Bee." Instruct your students to write either an informational article that describes a spelling bee, a personal account in which they participated in a spelling bee, or an imaginary story about a spelling bee. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first, and use as many of their list words as possible. Remind them to concentrate on using correct mechanics. Display the compositions at the end of the activity.

FU 5-4. MAKING NEWS

Divide your children into groups of three, four, or five. Tell them to imagine that they are news reporters, and that they are to write a newscast. The information they use can be silly or serious, and can be national, international, or local. Suggest to your children a few days in advance to watch some of the newscasts on TV. This will help them to develop their ideas. You might also encourage them to bring in newspapers, from which they can gather information.

Each group acts as a news team. One student might be the anchorperson and write the main news, another might write a feature, one might do sports, and another can do a weather report. Set up a table or desks in front of the room and allow students to act out their versions of the news.

Encourage the use of correct mechanics in their writing. Be sure to provide time for sharing by displaying the work of your students, as well as permitting them to act out the reporting of their news.

FU 5-5. A PERSUASIVE LETTER

Tell your students to think of something they want very much. It might be a product, pet, their own room, or a place they would like to go. (You might wish to open this up to imaginary desires.) Tell them to list the reasons they want this, and why it is good or worthwhile.

Instruct your children to write a persuasive letter to their parents, convincing their parents to give them their desire. Remind your children to use correct punctuation. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity, and suggest to your students that they show their letters to their parents.

FU 5-6. AN ALIEN CONVERSATION

Ask your children to imagine that the people of earth have made contact with an alien civilization. The aliens are friendly, and, to improve relations, exchange students have visited both worlds. Tell your students to pretend that two alien children have recently observed your classroom. How would they describe your classroom and its routines?

Instruct your children to write a story about these two aliens discussing the routines of your classroom. What would they say? Encourage your children to use correct mechanics in their stories, especially focusing on the writing of dialogue. You might encourage your students to illustrate their stories. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

FU 5-7. NONHUMAN CONVERSATIONS

Instruct your students to choose any two animals, two plants, or a plant and an animal. Tell them to imagine a conversation between these nonhuman characters. What might they talk about? What might they say? Instruct your students to write a dialogue between their characters. Remind them to use correct mechanics, and pay particular attention to quotation marks. At the end of the activity, you can have students read their dialogues to the class.

FU 5-8. SILLY CAREERS

Ask your students to imagine the silliest, wackiest career they can. What is it? If they could, would they like to have this career? Instruct your children to write a descriptive composition about their silly career. Encourage students to use correct mechanics. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 5-9. MY ADVICE

Tell your children to select a character from a story they recently read. Ask them what the character's goal in the story was. Explain that characters, through their actions, either reach their goals or fail in their attempts. Encourage your students to think of another way the character of their story might have managed to reach his or her goal. Instead of doing what he or she did, what else could have

been done? Instruct your children to write a paragraph in which they offer advice to their character on how the character could have achieved his or her goal. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 5-10. A FANTASTIC TALE

Divide your children into groups of two or three. Write the following phrases on the board:

a strange event
walking with my friends
couldn't believe
a spooky, glowing
wanted to run, but

Tell your children that they are to write a group story, using all of the phrases. The stories can be silly or serious. Encourage your students to brainstorm as a group, and list or briefly outline their ideas first. Remind them to focus on correct mechanics. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

6

Teaching the Writing of Nonfiction

Nonfiction writing, except in the form of reports and letters, is seldom taught in schools. Yet, most of the writing that is done by professionals and nonprofessionals alike is nonfiction. Some of the major forms of nonfiction writing include: informational articles, editorials, essays, biographies, columns, book and movie reviews. Advertising, letters, and resumés (in most cases) are other types of nonfiction writing.

REVIEW MAJOR FORMS

Because many children are not aware of the scope of nonfiction, the best way to begin teaching nonfiction is to review its major forms with your class. The following activities can help your nonfiction unit get off to a good start.

Nonfiction Review Activity #1

Ask your students to bring to class copies of various newspapers. Study and discuss the articles and features. During the discussion, point out the different sections: news, financial, sports, fashion, editorial, comics, obituaries, and classifieds. Help your students to develop an appreciation for the variety of information newspapers offer.

Nonfiction Review Activity #2

Have your students bring to class various magazines. Study and discuss the articles and sections. Note the differences between features and columns. Compare the purpose and format of magazines with that of newspapers.

THE PURPOSE OF NONFICTION

The typical nonfiction composition has a specific goal. The writer might wish to inform, persuade, or merely entertain the reader. A how-to article informs, editorials and advertising attempt to persuade, and a humorous article entertains. Some articles may have more than one of these goals. A travel article can inform and entertain. It might also persuade the reader to visit a particular place.

The purpose of any nonfiction article arises from the goals of the writer. Having a specific purpose clearly in mind can help children focus on their topics and avoid overwriting. As with fiction, encourage your students to write the purpose of their nonfiction compositions in a single sentence. Following are three examples:

- The purpose of my article is to tell about my hobby. (The goal is to inform.)
- The purpose of my article is to show that children should not be given more than 30 minutes of homework a night. (The goal is to persuade.)
- The purpose of my article is to tell about funny things that can happen on a fishing trip. (The goal is to entertain.)

A well-defined purpose enables a student to sort out her ideas. She is more likely to discard irrelevant ones and build on those that are important to what she wants to say. A purpose provides a student with direction, makes organizing easier, and helps the student to narrow down her topic. She can write more directly and say exactly what she wants to say, thereby avoiding the frustration that comes with writing around a topic rather than writing on it.

RESEARCHING: GETTING THE FACTS

Skill in putting words together is essential to good writing, but the end product also depends on gathering accurate information. For writing to be effective, it must be specific and contain precise details. If the reader suspects that the writer is not in control of his or her facts, credibility is lost.

There are three ways of researching:

1. Use of written materials, photographs, drawings, and recordings.
2. Interviewing.
3. Observing.

Using the Library

Much of the research children do for writing takes place in the library. It is extremely important that students know how to use the library. Children may

know that libraries have different sections of books, they may understand the basic use of the card catalog, they may even know how to use some of the reference books, but they can still lack the skills necessary to research a topic thoroughly.

Make sure that your children know how to utilize the library. Take your class to the library, examine and discuss the value and use of reference books such as dictionaries, dictionaries of biographies, almanacs, atlases, encyclopedias, and other special sources. Also, encourage your children to use the card catalog to find appropriate research materials.

Notetaking

One of the biggest problems children encounter while researching is the identification of key information. Some children take so many notes that it becomes impossible for them to organize their material. At the other extreme you will have students who take so few notes that there will be little substance to their compositions. And then there are children who take notes that do not relate to their topics at all.

Discuss these notetaking mistakes with your students and explain that the best way to avoid them is to have a topic and purpose clearly in mind before starting specific research. Only information with a direct bearing on one's topic should be taken down. Of course as a student finds out more information about a subject, his purpose or topic might change, which is often the case, but the important thing is that the research was undertaken with a distinct objective.

Research Activity

Instruct your students to select one of the following individuals and write a biographical sketch. Encourage them to research thoroughly and briefly list or outline their ideas before writing.

1. Thomas Jefferson.
2. Eleanor Roosevelt.
3. Johnny Appleseed (John Chapman).
4. Muhammad Ali.
5. Susan B. Anthony.

You can offer other individuals for the biographical sketch, but be sure to select people who are interesting and fairly easy to research. Steer your students away from individuals on whom they will have difficulty finding information. The focus on the activity should be on notetaking, organizing, and writing.

Interviewing

Although most children use the library for research, they should know that interviews can also be an important source of information. Gathering informa-

tion from people who can offer insight to a topic not only can result in obtaining information that cannot be found in libraries, but can add to the human interest of an article. Readers like to get information from someone who is an expert, or who has personal experience, on a subject.

While a good interview is the result of many factors, including the rapport established between the people involved, there are basic elements of interviewing to which students should be exposed. Figure 8 contains a list of steps for conducting an effective interview.

Effective notetaking is essential during an interview. Encourage your students to write down only what is necessary. To facilitate notetaking, tell your students to develop their own system of shorthand, using abbreviations whenever possible. John Doe becomes D, the school principal becomes P, the cafeteria becomes caf, and the playground becomes plg.

Notetaking with pencil and paper is an acceptable method for most children, but expect some to resist taking notes in this manner. You might ask these students to conduct interviews using a tape recorder. A major benefit of recording interviews, aside from its being an excellent motivational device, is that it permits the interviewer to focus on the conversation without being distracted by having to jot down notes and ideas. A drawback is that some people feel uncomfortable having everything they say recorded.

Interview Activity #1

Tell your children to pretend that they are to interview one of the characters of a book or movie that they like. Instruct your students to select a topic for the interview, do background research (which may involve rereading the book or viewing the movie again), and prepare a list of questions. Students are then to write an imaginary interview based on a conversation with their character.

Interview Activity #2

Have your children interview a friend about a hobby or special interest. Encourage your students to do the necessary background research and formulate questions before conducting the interview. You can distribute copies of Figure 8, "Interviewing Guidelines," to help your students plan their interviews.

During the interview, the interviewer should take notes. You may permit your children to use a tape recorder for notetaking.

After the interview the students change places and the process is repeated. For a culmination of the activity, students are to write brief articles based on the information obtained from the interviews.

INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES

The following guidelines will help you to conduct an effective interview:

1. Collect background information on your topic.
2. Consider who would be a good candidate to interview. The best people are those who know firsthand about the topic.
3. Prepare a list of questions before the interview. Use questions that encourage the person to offer explanations.
4. Anticipate the answers to your questions. This can help you to come up with more questions.
5. During the interview, be polite and be willing to listen.
6. Take notes, but do not try to write everything down. Write only key information.
7. When you want to quote someone, be sure to use his or her exact words.
8. In concluding, recheck important facts, and thank the person for his or her time.

Figure 8

Observing

The third major method of research is observation. Firsthand observation can be crucial to understanding some topics. We can read about the effects of an oil spill that washes up on a beach, but to actually see its results can make a far more powerful impression.

Children should be encouraged to observe things they want to write about whenever possible. Instruct them to take notes while observing, because if they wait and record their findings afterward they might lose the impact of fresh insights. Tell them to try to capture their thoughts and feelings as they happen.

Observation Activity

Instruct your students to develop and write an article based on observation. Offer the following topics:

1. A typical day in the school cafeteria.
2. A school sporting event such as a football, soccer, basketball, or baseball game.
3. A school assembly.
4. A special event in town.
5. Games of the playground.

You can encourage students to come up with their own topics; however, you should insist that the topic can be developed primarily through observation.

Each research method provides information in its own way. Children should be taught when, as well as how, to use each one effectively. Some topics are best researched by only one of the methods while others can be researched by all three. If you help your students to recognize when each method is appropriate for their purposes, you have taught them a valuable skill.

DEVELOPING A NONFICTION ARTICLE

Any nonfiction composition can be divided into three parts: the opening, the body, and the conclusion. Good articles don't just happen; they come from planning, research, organization, and effective writing. An outline is especially important for it provides direction for the organization of an article.

Like the fiction outline examined earlier, an outline for nonfiction need not be overly complex. It might be no more than a simple listing of a few major points with supporting details. It should never be more involved than necessary.

Figure 9 is an example of a nonfiction outline you can offer to your students. Figure 10 is a breakdown of the parts of a nonfiction article.

The Opening

Of the three parts of a nonfiction composition, the opening is critical. Some professional writers say that they spend more time proportionally on the opening

NONFICTION OUTLINE

Purpose: _____

I. Title

A. Opening

1. detail
2. detail
3. detail

B. Body

1. major idea
 - a. detail
 - b. detail
 - c. detail
2. major idea
 - a. detail
 - b. detail
 - c. detail
3. major idea
 - a. detail
 - b. detail
 - c. detail

C. Conclusion

1. final idea
2. closing

Figure 9

THE PARTS OF A NONFICTION ARTICLE

A typical nonfiction article has three parts: the opening, the body, and the conclusion.

OPENING

The opening should:

1. Capture the reader's interest.
2. Introduce the subject.
3. Lead smoothly into the body of the article.

BODY

The body should develop the article according to the five W's:

1. What happened?
2. Who was involved?
3. When did the event happen?
4. Where did it happen?
5. Why did it happen?

CONCLUSION

The conclusion should:

1. Be brief.
2. Contain a final idea or last point for the reader to consider.

Figure 10

than the rest of the article. The opening has three functions: (1) capture the reader's interest, (2) introduce the subject, and (3) lead smoothly into the body. While professional authors use various techniques in writing openings, children should be made aware of some of the more common ones, including:

1. Quotations.
2. Interesting or alarming statistics.
3. Statement of a problem.
4. Questions asked directly of the reader.
5. Exaggerations.
6. Anecdotes.

Discuss these different types of openings and show examples of them to your children. You might ask your students to find examples of openings and share them with the class. Magazines and most reading texts are good sources.

The Body

In the body, ideas build on one another. Emphasize to your children the importance of breaking the body down into paragraphs, with individual paragraphs addressing major ideas. For your advanced students, explain the use and value of subtopics. Moreover, encourage your students to develop the body of their articles with regard to the Five W's—What, Who, When, Where, and Why. The article must clearly and logically communicate “what” is going on, “who” is involved, “when” the event happened, “where” it happened, and “why” it happened.

The Conclusion

After the body of an article comes the conclusion. Often the conclusion is the shortest part of an article, but this does not make it any less important. The conclusion should be brief. Contrary to the advice given by many teachers of writing, it should not be a summary of the article, a rehash of what was already told. Rather it should contain a final idea, a last point for the reader to consider, or a strong call to action. The conclusion drives the message of the article home.

Nonfiction Writing Activity #1

Ask your students to bring in various magazines and newspapers. Reading texts and books obtained from the school library might also be a good source of articles.

Read and discuss several different articles, focusing on the opening, body, and conclusion. Pick out the features of each part. Ask your students how they might develop an article for a magazine.

Nonfiction Writing Activity #2

Have your students select a magazine and imagine that they are to write an article for it. Encourage them to develop a topic of their own and write an article. Tell them to keep in mind the three distinct parts—the opening, the body, and the conclusion—of any article.

For students who have trouble thinking of their own topic, encourage them to select an article in a magazine of their choice and develop an article similar to it or its opposite. For example, an article on model airplane building might give way to an article on model car collecting. An article on ocean pollution might be changed to air pollution. A serious article on water safety might be rewritten as an amusing one that points out safety rules in a lighthearted way.

LETTER WRITING

Letter writing is a skill that virtually all students will use at one time or another. They should understand the two most common types of letters: the friendly letter and the business letter. Although the forms are similar in many ways, students should be made aware of the important differences.

Friendly Letters

The purpose of a friendly letter is to share thoughts or ideas on a subject with someone who is a close acquaintance. Friendly letters are most often written in a light, easy style on unlined or decorative stationery. They have a standard form, which is shown in Figure 11.

Friendly Letter Writing Activity

Ask your students to write a letter to a friend or relative, telling about something exciting that happened at school. This event might have been an interesting lesson, a sports event, an unusual class, or an unexpected occurrence. To help your students use good form for their letters, hand out the sample friendly letter form of Figure 11. Display the letters at the end of the activity.

Business Letters

Unlike friendly letters, which are sent to people the writer knows, business letters are often sent to strangers. To insure that the letter goes to the right person and company, as well as identifying the writer, the letter should start with the address of the writer, the date, the name of the person to whom the letter is being sent, and the company name and address. There are several forms of business letters. Two of the most common are the block and semiblock forms. Either is acceptable. Figure 12 shows examples of both.

SAMPLE FRIENDLY LETTER FORM

Your Street Address
City, State, ZIP Code
Date

Dear (person's name to whom you are writing),
(Paragraphs are indented)

Sincerely,

Your name

Figure 11

SAMPLE BUSINESS LETTER FORMS

BLOCK FORM

Your Street Address
City, State, ZIP Code
Date

Name of Person
Company Name
Street Address or P.O. Box
City, State, ZIP Code

Dear (Person to whom you are writing):

(Paragraphs are not indented)

Sincerely,

Your Name

SEMIBLOCK FORM

Your Street Address
City, State, ZIP Code
Date

Name of Person
Company Name
Street Address or P.O. Box
City, State, ZIP Code

Dear (Person to whom you are writing):

(Paragraphs are indented)

Sincerely,

Your Name

Figure 12

The purpose of a business letter may be to order a product, inform a company of satisfaction or dissatisfaction about a product or service, or inquire about employment possibilities with the company. Because business people are busy, letters should be clear and brief.

Business Letter Writing Activity

Ask your students to think of a place they would like to go on vacation. It can be anywhere they wish. Instruct them to write a letter to an imaginary travel agency or tourist bureau for information about the place they would like to visit. (Students can use imaginary addresses.) To help your students use good form, hand out the sample business letter forms on Figure 12. Display the letters at the end of the activity.

It is most unfortunate that the schools offer little formal instruction in nonfiction writing techniques. By neglecting the teaching of nonfiction writing, educators miss a valuable opportunity to teach children the kind of writing that most will eventually use.

TEACHING NOTES FOR REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS

6-1. YOUR ROOTS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write an article about the country from which their family originated.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your children what their roots are. What is their ethnic heritage? You might explain that the United States is known as a melting pot because its population is made up of people whose parents or grandparents were immigrants. Even the ancestors of the American Indians came from Asia. Tell your students that for this assignment they will write an article about the country from which their family came. Encourage them to focus their articles on a specific topic such as the history of the country, its people, culture, government, or problems that the country is currently facing. Explain that focusing their ideas will help them in their research. Instruct them to use the bottom of the worksheet for their notes (they can use additional sheets if necessary), and encourage them to use at least two sources for their research. To help your students with their research, you might schedule some class time in the library. Be sure to display the articles at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students if they have ever visited the country from which their family came. If they have, ask them to write a paragraph describing their visit. If they haven't, ask them if they would like to one day visit. Instruct these students to write a paragraph about what they would expect to find and learn.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARTICLES.

6-2. DOING AN INTERVIEW

OBJECTIVE: Students are to choose an adult they know, interview this person about his or her job, then write an article describing the person's job.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Tell your students to think of an adult they know who has an interesting job. Instruct them to interview this person, and answer the questions on the worksheet. After they have interviewed this individual, students are to write a descriptive article about the person and his or her job. To help your students with their interviews, hand out copies of Figure 8, "Interviewing Guidelines." Discuss the guidelines. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Students are to interview a friend about a favorite activity. Activities might be sports, or pastimes such as listening to music, or playing video games. Instruct your students to write at least five questions that they will ask during the interview. After the interview, students are to write an article describing their friend's activity.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARTICLES.

6-3. SEEING IT FOR YOURSELF

OBJECTIVE: Students are to choose a place to observe and write an account of what they see.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your students that observation is an important researching tool. Few things can be as enlightening as seeing something for yourself. Tell your children to select a place to observe. This can be anywhere they wish, but it should be a place where there is much activity. The school cafeteria, the front lobby of the school, a busy bus stop, mall, park, or playground are some possibilities. Instruct your students to plan to stay at their chosen place for at least 20 minutes, and take notes of everything they see and hear. They are to write an article based on their observations. Display the articles at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Students are to choose a machine or appliance. An example is observing a father operate a power tool, or a mother load and set the controls on the washing machine. Either operating it themselves or watching someone else operate it, they are to write a paragraph describing the steps necessary to operate the machine or appliance.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARTICLES.

6-4. WRITING A BOOK REPORT

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a book report.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Instruct your students to select a book they have recently read or would like to read. Tell them that they are to write a book report. Emphasize that a book report should be an insightful summary of the book that includes the author's opinion. A good book report tells what kind of book it is—for example fantasy, adventure, informational, etc.—includes the main idea of the book, and describes what the author feels are the book's strengths and weaknesses. After students have read their books, they are to

answer the questions on the worksheet, and then, based on the information they provided, write a book report. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask students to think of the various books and stories they have read. Ask for volunteers to name their favorites and tell why they liked these stories the best. Instruct your students to select their favorite book or story, and, in a paragraph, explain why it is their favorite. What was the story about? What did they like most about it? What didn't they like about it? Encourage your students to list or briefly outline their ideas before writing.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE REPORTS.

6-5. WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE BORED

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write an article on the topic "Things to Do When You're Bored."

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to raise their hands if they have ever been bored. It is hard to imagine a student who hasn't been at least once. Now ask for volunteers to explain what they do when they are bored. You might also share how you overcome boredom. Explain that for this assignment students are to first list at least five ways boredom can be beaten. They are then to write an article, describing how these ideas can alleviate boredom. Remind your students to organize their articles with an opening, body, and conclusion. Hand out Figure 10, "The Parts of a Nonfiction Article," which your students can use as reference. Display the articles at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students if they have ever felt that they had too much to do. Exam time is a good example—there are not enough hours in the day to do all that has to be done. Explain that everyone needs to relax from time to time. As an example, tell your students how you relax. Instruct your students to write paragraphs describing some ways to relax. Encourage your children to list or briefly outline their ideas before writing.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARTICLES.

6-6. SOUNDING OFF

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write an editorial on an issue of their choice.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Discuss the features of an editorial with your class. Point out that the purpose of an editorial is to persuade the reader to accept the writer's position on a specific topic or issue. For the worksheet, instruct your students to choose an issue and list their ideas under the appropriate category on the lines below. They should use the information they provide as a basis for their editorials.

Explain that most editorials follow a standard form: an introduction which reveals the main point of the editorial, a body in which the main point is developed, and a conclusion that includes a strong call for action.

EXTENSION: Instruct your students to exchange their editorials with a friend. Students are to read each other's editorial and write a paragraph, offering an opinion as to the strengths and weaknesses of the editorial. Have your children focus their attention on the opening, development of ideas, and the overall persuasive power of the editorial. After returning the papers to their

owners, students are to share their ideas and discuss how the editorials could be improved.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE EDITORIALS.

6-7. MY TOP THREE

OBJECTIVE: Students are to pick an area of interest and write an article about the three best individuals in that field.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your children to think about an area of interest. This might be sports, music, television, dancing, wrestling, rodeo events, and so on. Ask them to think who they feel are the three best performers in that field. Why are these people the best? On the worksheet, students are to identify their area of interest, name their top three performers, and list reasons why they believe the three individuals they chose are, indeed, the best. After listing their reasons, students are to write articles about their top three. Hand out copies of Figure 10, "The Parts of a Nonfiction Article," and encourage your students to develop their articles around the basic structure of an opening, body, and conclusion. Display the articles at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to consider their top three once again. If they had to make a choice of number one—who would it be? Why do they feel this person is the best? Students are to write a paragraph describing their number one choice. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARTICLES.

6-8. LET'S GO EXPLORING!

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write an article about a time they explored something.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to think of a time they explored something. It might have been an amusement park they visited on vacation, a new store, their grandmother's basement, or an empty field. Ask them to recall what they found. What were their feelings? What did they learn about the place? What did they learn about themselves? For example, after returning home, did they feel more confident or brave?

Next, explain the worksheet. Remind your students that nonfiction articles have three parts—the opening, body, and conclusion. You can hand out Figure 10 for reference. Instruct your students to list details about their experiences, according to the sections on the worksheet. After listing their ideas, students are to write their articles. Display the articles at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Tell your students to imagine that they could explore any place they wished—an underground cave, the moon, a mysterious part of town. Instruct them to write a paragraph describing why they would like to explore this place, and what they would expect to find. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARTICLES.

6-9. A FRIENDLY LETTER

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a friendly letter to a well-known individual.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Begin this activity by explaining that friendly letters are an important means of sharing ideas between people. Also explain that friendly letters have a specific format. Hand out Figure 11, which shows the format of friendly letters.

Ask your students to think of a famous person to whom they would like to write. This person may be a political leader, singer, dancer, sports figure, or religious leader. Instruct them to first answer the questions on the worksheet, and then write a friendly letter. Remind them to use proper form. At the end of the activity you can display the letters, or you might encourage your children to find the addresses of the people to whom they wrote and mail the letters. Most celebrities and famous people have mailing addresses that are made available to the public.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to imagine that they had dinner with the person to whom they wrote. They had an opportunity to ask this person as many questions as they liked. He or she was most gracious and your students had a delightful time. Instruct your children to write a thank-you letter.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE LETTERS.

6-10. DOING BUSINESS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a business letter in which they order items from a catalog.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: For this activity, you will need several copies of mailorder catalogs. A few days in advance, you might ask your students to bring some catalogs in from home. Ideally, you should have one catalog per student; however, students can share.

Ask your children if they, or their parents, have ever ordered anything through the mail. Explain that this is a common method of shopping. Point out that in many cases shopping by mail requires the use of a business letter. Hand out copies of the examples of business letters on Figure 12, and discuss their special formats.

Next, distribute copies of mailorder catalogs. Tell your students that they can order any five items they wish. Their budgets are unlimited! Instruct them to complete the information on the worksheet, and then use the information to write a business letter, ordering their items. Remind them to include all the necessary information and total the orders correctly. Display the letters at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think about a product that they or someone they know bought, which was defective. Instruct your students to write a letter to the company, explaining their dissatisfaction with the product and asking for their money back. Tell your students to use an imaginary address for the company (for it is unlikely that they will know the actual address). Remind them to use a proper form for their letters.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE LETTERS.

Name _____

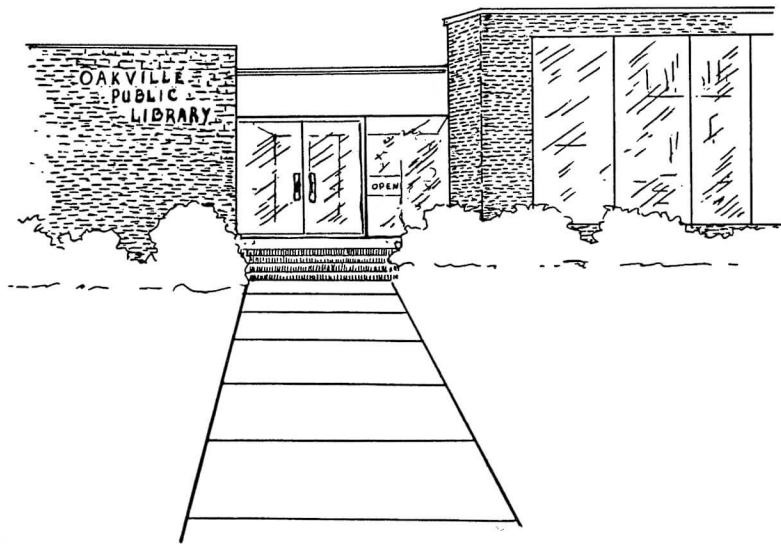
Date _____

YOUR ROOTS

WRITING TIP: The library is a place where a writer can find information on just about everything. It should be the first place you check when you are writing a nonfiction article or report.

DIRECTIONS: Think of the country your family came from. Perhaps it was England, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Mexico, Japan, Puerto Rico, or maybe your family belongs to one of the Indian tribes of North America.

For this activity, you are to write an article about the country from which your family came. You might write about the country's history, people, culture, government, or current problems that the country is facing. Use the ruled lines for your notes. If necessary, use additional sheets of paper. After you have gathered your information, organize your article into an opening, body, and conclusion. Then write your article.



EXTENSION: Have you ever visited the country from which your family came? If you haven't, would you like to visit? If you have visited it, write a paragraph describing your visit. What were your feelings? What did you see? What did you learn? If you haven't visited it, write a paragraph explaining whether or not you would like to visit. What would you expect to find?

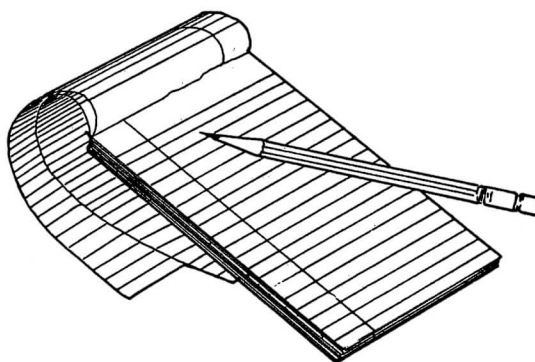
Name _____

Date _____

DOING AN INTERVIEW

WRITING TIP: Interviews offer a writer a chance to get firsthand information. A good interview is the result of many factors, one of the most important of which is asking the right questions.

DIRECTIONS: Select an adult you know, and interview him or her about his or her job. This person may be a relative, a teacher, or friend. Use the questions below in your interview. After the interview, use the information you gathered from the questions to write a description of the person's job.



1. Where do you work? _____

2. What is your job? _____

3. How long have you been working at your job? _____

4. What special skills are required for your job? _____

5. What do you like best about it? _____

6. What do you like least? _____

7. Would you recommend your job to others? Why or why not? _____

EXTENSION: Interview a friend about a favorite activity. Before conducting your interview, write at least five questions you will ask. After conducting your interview, write a description of your friend's favorite activity.

Name_____

Date_____

SEEING IT FOR YOURSELF

WRITING TIP: Observing something is one of the best ways of researching. By seeing for themselves, writers can learn much about issues and events.

DIRECTIONS: Select a place and set aside a time when you can visit it. Some places you might consider include a mall, street corner, a park, or a playground. Take a pad and pencil, and plan to stay at least 20 minutes. When you are there, take notes on the things you see and hear.

When you return to class, answer the questions on this worksheet in complete sentences, and write an article about the place you observed.



1. What place did you observe?_____

2. What did you see there?_____

3. What sounds did you hear?_____

4. What impressed you most about this place?_____

EXTENSION: Choose a machine or appliance such as a computer, a dishwasher, washing machine, or a power tool. Either observe someone using the machine, or you might use it yourself. (If you use it yourself, use the proper caution.) How does it work? What steps must a person follow to make the machine work properly? Write a paragraph describing the steps necessary to use the machine or appliance.

Name _____

Date _____

WRITING A BOOK REPORT

WRITING TIP: A book report should be an insightful summary of a book. A good report tells the reader what the book is about, and offers the writer's opinion of the book.

DIRECTIONS: Select a book that you have recently read, or would like to read. It may be fiction or nonfiction. After reading the book, answer the questions below. Use complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, write a book report, based on the information you provided for the questions.



1. What is the title of your book? _____

2. Who is the author? _____

3. What kind of book is it? _____

4. Briefly summarize the book. _____

5. Do you think others would enjoy this book? Why or why not? _____

EXTENSION: Think of the different books and stories you have read. What one is your favorite? Why? Write a brief summary of this book or story, and explain why it is your favorite.

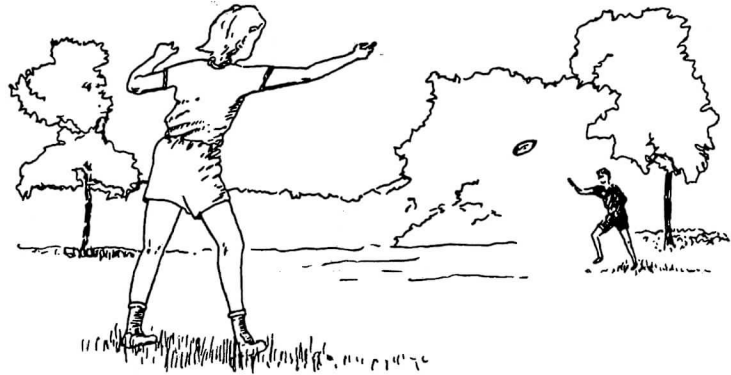
Name _____

Date _____

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE BORED

WRITING TIP: The purpose of many nonfiction articles is to give information to readers. These are called informational articles, and they are written in a clear, simple style.

DIRECTIONS: Think about the things you do when you are bored. Perhaps you like to listen to music, go for a walk, or call a friend. On the lines below, list at least five things students can do when they are bored. Use complete sentences. On the back of this sheet, write an article for students on the topic, "What to do when you're bored." Be sure to organize your article with an opening, body, and conclusion.



EXTENSION: Sometimes your problem may not be boredom. It might be having too much to do. At times like that, everyone needs to relax. How do you relax? Write a paragraph describing how you relax.

Name _____

Date _____

SOUNDING OFF

WRITING TIP: Editorials are articles in which the writer offers his or her opinion about an issue or problem. The purpose of an editorial is to persuade the reader to accept and support the writer's position.

DIRECTIONS: Select one of the following issues (or develop one of your own), and write an editorial. The issues are—

1. Should students be permitted to use calculators in math class?
2. Should your school have a detention policy?
3. Are animal experiments necessary to advance medical science?

First decide how you feel about your topic. Next, list your ideas under the appropriate category on the lines below. Use complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, write an editorial.



The issue I chose is _____

DESCRIPTION OF PROBLEM: _____

WHY I FEEL IT IS IMPORTANT: _____

WHAT TO DO: _____

EXTENSION: Exchange editorials with a friend. Read each other's editorial, and write a paragraph describing its strengths and weaknesses. Did it have a good opening? Were its ideas developed? Did the writer persuade the reader to accept his or her position? Return the editorials and share your paragraphs.

Name _____

Date _____

MY TOP THREE

WRITING TIP: Good nonfiction articles are developed according to a simple structure: an opening, body, and conclusion.

DIRECTIONS: Select an area that interests you. It might be sports, music, acting, drag racing, wrestling, dancing, etc. Choose three people who you feel are the best in the field you picked. Why do you feel these people are the best?

On the lines below, name your top three, and list reasons why you feel they are the best. Use complete sentences. On the back of this sheet, write an article about your top three. Organize your article with an opening, body, and conclusion.



My area of interest is _____

My top three are: _____

My reasons: _____

EXTENSION: Of your top three, who is the best? Write a paragraph explaining why you feel this person is the best of the best.

Name _____

Date _____

LET'S GO EXPLORING!

WRITING TIP: Organizing their thoughts before writing helps authors to write more clearly and effectively. An easy way to write a nonfiction article is to organize your thoughts according to the parts of the article: the opening, body, and conclusion.

DIRECTIONS: Think of a time you explored something. It might have been a pond, a deserted field, a long bike ride to an unfamiliar section of town, a place you visited while on vacation, a new shopping mall, etc. What did you see? What were your feelings? What did you learn about the place? What did you learn about yourself?

On the lines below, list details about this experience in complete sentences. Organize your ideas according to the parts of a nonfiction article. On the back of this sheet, write an article describing your experience.



OPENING: _____

BODY: _____

CONCLUSION: _____

EXTENSION: Imagine you could explore any place you wished. Where would it be? Why? What do you think you would find? Describe this place in a paragraph and include your reasons for wanting to explore it.

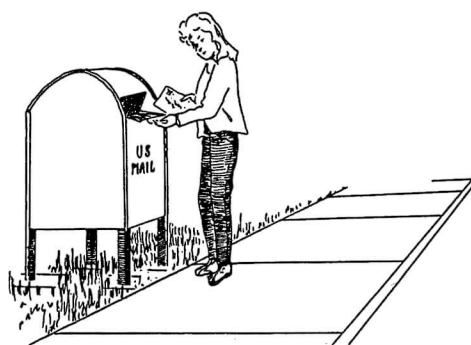
Name _____

Date _____

A FRIENDLY LETTER

WRITING TIP: Although less formal than a business letter, a personal or friendly letter must be written clearly if the author is to communicate his or her ideas.

DIRECTIONS: Think of a sports star, a celebrity, or a political leader that you admire. Write a letter to this person. First answer the questions below in complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, write your letter. Be sure to use the proper form for a friendly letter.



I am writing a letter to _____

1. Why do you admire this person? _____

2. What would you like to tell this person about yourself? _____

3. What questions would you like to ask this person? _____

EXTENSION: Imagine that you actually met this person for dinner. Of course you had a wonderful time. Write a thank-you letter to this person.

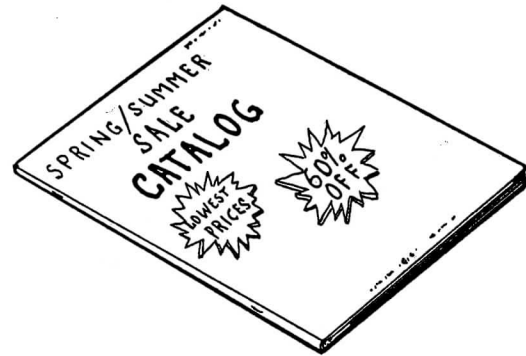
Name _____

Date _____

DOING BUSINESS

WRITING TIP: One of the most useful types of nonfiction writing is the business letter. A good business letter is clear and concise. It follows a standard format.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine that you could order whatever you wished from a mailorder house. What would you order? Using the catalog your teacher handed out, select five items you would like. Use the lines below to help you with your order. On the back of this sheet, write a business letter to order the items. Be sure to use a standard format for your letter.



NAME AND ADDRESS
OF COMPANY

ITEMS

Pg. #	Catalog #	Description	Size	How Many	Cost
TOTAL					\$

EXTENSION: Think about a product that either you or someone you know bought, which was defective. It just didn't work right. Write a letter to the company, telling them about the problem, and ask for your money back.

FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES

FU 6-1. A RESEARCH REPORT

Select current topics that your students are studying in science or social studies. Ideally, offer four or five topics that the children will find interesting. If you don't teach these subjects, you might ask their social studies or science teachers to give you some topics.

Tell your students that they will write research reports. They are to select a topic you provide (or develop one of their own). Encourage them to look for information in nonfiction books, encyclopedias, and magazines. Insist that they use at least two sources, and include their sources at the end of the report. Instruct them to take notes and list or outline their ideas before writing. Remind them to organize their reports with an opening, body, and conclusion. You may allow children to illustrate their reports. Display the reports at the end of the activity.

FU 6-2. A SPECIAL INTERVIEW

For this activity, instruct your children to choose either their father, mother, or some other adult to interview. Students are to interview this person about a special skill or hobby. For example, a mother might be interviewed about a special recipe she prepares, a father might be interviewed about his woodworking skills, an uncle about his expertise in camping. Students are to write an article based on their interviews. Remind your students to follow the steps for conducting an effective interview. Display the articles at the end of the activity.

FU 6-3. A TV OR MOVIE REVIEW

Instruct your students to select a television program or movie that they would like to review. After watching the presentation, students are to write a review of it. Encourage them to include the following information: title, main characters, setting, plot, a brief summary, and a recommendation. Remind your students to include an opening, body and conclusion for their reviews. At the end of the activity, display the work of your students. You might collect the reviews and make a class TV and movie guidebook.

FU 6-4. THE "IN" PLACES

Instruct your students to write an informational article about the "in" places of town. Where do kids go to have fun? What do they do? If students complain that there are no places for young people, have them write articles describing the types of places and activities that the town should have for its youth. Encourage your students to include all three parts of a good article: an opening, body, and conclusion. Display the work of your students at the end of the activity.

FU 6-5. WHAT I THINK ABOUT SCHOOL

Tell your students to select either of the following topics: "Things I Like About My School," or, "Things I Don't Like About My School." They are to write an informational article on the topic they choose. Encourage them to concentrate on the opening, body, and conclusion of their articles. Display the articles at the end of the activity.

FU 6-6. RUNNING FOR OFFICE

Ask your students to imagine that they are running for office—the class president, the mayor of the town, or even President of the United States. Students are to write a speech explaining why they are the best candidate for the job. Point out that speeches, like other types of nonfiction writing, follow the general structure of opening, body, and conclusion. Either display the speeches, or permit students to give them in front of the class.

FU 6-7. A FRIENDLY NOTE

Ask your students to think of a friend or relative to whom they would like to write a letter. Instruct your students to write a letter to this person, describing the major events that happened during the past school year. Remind them to use the proper form for a friendly letter. Either display the letters or permit students to read each other's letters at the end of the activity.

FU 6-8. GREETINGS FROM FAR AWAY

Ask your students to imagine that they are on vacation. They may go anywhere they wish. Instruct them to write a letter to a friend or relative. Encourage them to describe where they are, what they are doing and whether or not they are enjoying themselves. Remind them to use the proper form for a friendly letter. Display or permit students to exchange their letters at the end of the activity.

FU 6-9. WORTHY OF PRAISE

Ask your students to think of a product they bought and with which they are well pleased. This might be a radio, bicycle, television, typewriter, etc. Instruct them to write a letter of praise to the manufacturer of the product. Remind your students to use the proper form for a business letter. Permit students to use fictitious addresses if they do not know the manufacturer's actual address. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 6-10. A LETTER OF APPLICATION

Ask your children to imagine that they are applying for a position they would like. This position might be for a job, being appointed to the safety patrol, or going to another school such as vocational school or college. Instruct your students to write a letter of application. In their letter they are to write about their qualifications—why they would do well in their new position. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

7

Teaching the Writing of Poetry

The writing of poetry is often neglected in schools, or at best taught in a cursory fashion. There are several reasons for this. Many educators consider prose to be more important. For others, there is not enough time to squeeze poetry into heavily overloaded curriculums. Still other teachers are not comfortable teaching poetry. They feel threatened by the complexity and symbolism of poetry, subjects that have no simple answers.

For every teacher who does not like to teach poetry, there are dozens of students who do not like to study it. Indeed most children can quickly reel off several reasons why they should never have to write poetry, including that poetry is babyish, it has no purpose or lacks action, or that they do not like to use fancy words, meter, and rhyme. Many poems do, of course, use figurative language, have a particular beat and rhythm, but there are just as many that do not. Further, while the purpose and action of some poems might be subdued and subtle, there are others in which the purpose is quite clear and the action is powerful.

Despite the negative feelings of some teachers and students, poetry is important. It is a major literary form of which children should be made aware. Poetry can provide an outlet for emotions and feelings, and can promote self-awareness. It has the power to paint strong mental pictures and stimulate the imagination. Because poetry relies on the unity of words, it helps instill in children a sensitivity to the melody and flow of the English language.

With the proper stimulation and guidance, most children will participate in poetry writing. While you should encourage your students to write various kinds of poems, some are especially well suited for young writers. These include: nonrhyme, haiku, cinquain, limericks, and simple rhyme, and will be the focus of this chapter.

POETIC TECHNIQUES

Most poems create strong images and emotions in the minds of their readers. The authors do this by utilizing a variety of techniques. While these techniques also appear in prose, they often are the foundation of a poem. The most common of these techniques are alliteration, onomatopoeia, and figures of speech, including similes, metaphors, and personification. They are detailed in Figure 13.

NONRHYMING POEMS

Nonrhyming poems make up the bulk of written poetry. They provide an excellent opportunity for teaching children how to write poetry because they can be on any topic and they are nonthreatening. Children do not worry about rhyme or meter, which allows them to focus on their ideas.

When introducing nonrhyming poems, you should read and discuss several examples with your children. Any good poetry anthology can serve as a source. Following is an example:

I went grocery shopping today.
I filled my wagon.
Then I thought about the hungry people.
The bounty of my wagon left me empty.

Nonrhyming Poem Writing Activity

Instruct your students to write a nonrhyming poem on a topic of their choice. It might be about school, feelings, a pet, talking on the telephone, watching TV, listening to the radio, playing, daydreaming, wishing—whatever they like. Remind them not to try to use “poetry” words; instead they should choose the words that best express what they want to say. Encourage sharing at the end of the activity.

HAIKU

Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry. The original purpose of haiku was to present an observation of nature. It is written in three lines, with five syllables to the first line, seven to the second, and five to the third. This is referred to as a five-seven-five count, each syllable representing one count. Following is an example:

ALLITERATION, ONOMATOPOEIA, AND FIGURES OF SPEECH

Authors can enhance the sound and imagery of their poems through alliteration, onomatopoeia, and figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, and personification.

- *Alliteration* is the repetition of words that have the same beginning sounds:

The big, blue balloon floated away.

- *Onomatopoeia* is the use of words that suggest the sounds they make:

Bees buzz

Firecrackers pop

Cows moo

- *Similes* are figures of speech that use the words *like* or *as* to make comparisons:

The cave was like a cold tomb.

The cave was as cold as a tomb.

- *Metaphors* are figures of speech that *do not use* the words *like* or *as* to make comparisons:

She was a delicate flower.

The thief was a fox.

- *Personification* is a figure of speech in which human qualities are given to nonhuman things. Personification may be used with animals, objects, or ideas:

The bird chirped a song of joy.

The rug was tired of being walked on.

The land was glad that spring had finally come.

Figure 13

The glorious sun
burns and fills the world with light.
A new day begins.

Haiku offers several advantages to the teaching of poetry writing. It is nonrhyming, and therefore allows children to focus on their thoughts. The syllabic count provides an easy structure for children to follow. Because of its short length, haiku offers slow learners the opportunity to write poetry successfully.

Before asking your children to write haiku, read several examples to them. Discuss the special structure of haiku and make sure that they understand the syllabic count. To elicit ideas for writing you can ask your class to volunteer nature words, which you can list on the board. Some nature words you might include are: snow, wind, flowers, insects, animals, clouds, the sun, the moon, mountains, fruits, trees, a sunset, and the seasons.

Haiku Writing Activity

Instruct your children to write haiku. Encourage your advanced or faster workers to write more than one. Remind your children of the five-seven-five syllabic structure of haiku, and also remind them that the purpose of haiku is to communicate a thought about nature.

At the end of the assignment, encourage your students to share their work with the class.

CINQUAIN

Cinquain is another type of Japanese poetry. Like haiku, it has a specific structure but no rhyme and therefore is an excellent poetic form for children. It is composed of five lines in the following manner:

The first line contains one word, which is the title.

The second line contains two words that describe the title.

The third line contains three words that express action about the title.

The fourth line contains four words that express feeling about the title.

The fifth line contains one word that is a synonym for the title.

Following is an example of cinquain:

Me,
Happy, sad,
Discovered someone unique,
Astonished at the parts.
Myself.

To teach the writing of cinquain to your children, read and discuss several examples. At first your students might feel uneasy about the structure, but after your explanation they will become more comfortable. To reduce any lingering doubts, you can have a class exercise of writing cinquain on the board.

Cinquain Writing Activity

Instruct your students to write cinquain on a topic of their choice. Encourage your advanced students to write more than one. At the end of the activity, ask for volunteers to read their poems to the class.

LIMERICKS

Limericks are a structured, humorous form of poetry. They were popularized by Edward Lear, an English painter and humorist who is credited with giving the limerick its modern form and cadence. It has been my experience that children enjoy writing limericks just as much as they like reading them.

Limericks can be written about anything, the funnier the topic the better. Lines one, two, and five, called a triplet, rhyme, as do lines three and four, which are called a couplet. The rhymes of limericks are generally easy for children, because almost everything is acceptable. Following is an example of a limerick:

There was a man named Mulroon,
Who had a giant balloon.
One day on a dare,
He pumped in hot air,
And he floated away to the moon.

To teach limericks, as with teaching the other forms of poetry, you should read several examples first. Discuss the structure, emphasize that limericks can be on any topic, and that they are humorous. You might do a limerick on the board as a class exercise. You probably won't need to supply much motivation for your children to write limericks; most will be anxious to begin.

Limerick Writing Activity

Instruct your students to write at least two limericks on topics of their choice. If you wish, you might allow your children to work in groups of two or three, each student offering a separate line. But be warned—group work on limericks can result in an ebullient atmosphere. Encourage your children to share their limericks with the class upon completion of the activity.

RHYMING POEMS

When children think of poetry, they usually think of poems that rhyme. So common is this association that most of the poetry that is written in schools rhymes. Although many children feel uneasy when asked to write a rhyming poem, this poetic form offers a marvelously rich experience in the combination and flow of words.

Rhyming poems can be on virtually any topic. Following is an example:

The rabbit tracks in the snow
 Show which way the rabbits go.
 Here and there,
 Far and near
 To the fence, to the wood pile,
 They romp for a mile,
 Making more and more tracks in the snow.

You should teach the writing of rhyming poems by first reading several examples. If you have access to a rhyming dictionary, you can show your children its use. More importantly perhaps, encourage your children to generate rhyming word lists for their topics. Explain that such lists can be developed for any topic. Offer them this example about winter:

skate	ice	frost	breeze	cold
late	nice	lost	sneeze	hold
date	twice	cost	wheeze	told
fate	entice		trees	gold
great	suffice			
snow	sled			
grow	tread			
know	led			
no	fed			
glow				
flow				

Rhyming Poem Writing Activity

Instruct your students to pick a topic and write a rhyming poem. Suggest that they compose a rhyming word list first. Encourage your children to share their poems at the end of the activity.

Writing poetry can be an enriching experience for children, and is an important part of any thorough writing program. Because poetry focuses on the precise use of words, it can help children gain a greater understanding of language. When presented in the right way, it can also be quite enjoyable.

TEACHING NOTES FOR REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS

7-1. ALL ABOUT ALLITERATION

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a poem about a favorite pastime; the poem is to contain examples of alliteration.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Introduce this activity by explaining that alliteration is an author's technique in which the beginning sounds of words are repeated. Alliteration can add emphasis and style to writing. Hand out copies of Figure 13, "Alliteration, Onomatopoeia, and Figures of Speech." You might ask for volunteers to offer examples of alliteration, which you can write on the board. Next, ask your students to think of the things they like to do. What are their favorite pastimes? Instruct them to complete the worksheet and then write a poem about a favorite pastime. They may write either a rhyme or nonrhyme poem. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Instruct your students to write a poem about a chore or job they have. Encourage them to use examples of alliteration in their poems.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE POEMS.

7-2. ANIMAL SOUNDS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a poem about an animal; the poem is to contain at least one example of onomatopoeia.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain that onomatopoeia is an author's technique in which words that suggest sounds are used. Hand out Figure 13, "Alliteration, Onomatopoeia, and Figures of Speech," and give some examples—wolves howl, bells ring, and tires screech. Instruct your students to complete the worksheet by writing sentences that contain examples of onomatopoeia for the five animals. They can use the words from the word bank or use words of their own. Next, they are to write a poem on an animal of their choice. They may use an animal from the worksheet or another animal. Encourage your students to include at least one example of onomatopoeia in their poems. They may write rhyme or nonrhyme poems. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Students are to write a poem on a topic of their choice, and include examples of onomatopoeia.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE POEMS.

7-3. SEASONS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a poem about the seasons; they are to include at least one simile in their poems.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Begin by explaining that authors often compare things in their writing. When they compare things by using the words like or as, they are using similes. Hand out Figure 13, "Alliteration, Onomatopoeia, and Figures of Speech," and discuss these examples: (1) Her smile was like a sunny day; (2) His heart is as cold as ice. Instruct your students to first complete the similes on the worksheet. Next they are to write a poem about a season, or some aspect of a season. They may write either rhyme or nonrhyme poems. Allow them the freedom to develop their poems the way they wish, but encourage them to use

at least one simile in their poems. Display the poems or permit students to read their poems to the class upon completion of the activity.

EXTENSION: Instruct your students to select a special topic on a particular season, write three similes about the topic, and then write a poem that includes at least one of their similes.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE POEMS.

7-4. COMPARED TO WHAT?

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a poem on a topic of their choice; they are to use at least one metaphor.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain that writers can compare things by using similes and metaphors. Emphasize that similes use the words like or as to compare things, and that metaphors do not use the words like or as. Hand out Figure 13, "Alliteration, Onomatopoeia, and Figures of Speech," and offer this example of a metaphor: His heart was ice. Ask your students to volunteer some metaphors, which you can write on the board. Next, explain the worksheet. Students are to write metaphors for the paired words. Then they are to write poems in which they use at least one metaphor. Encourage your students to select subjects of their own for their poems; however, for those who have trouble finding a topic, suggest they write about school, home, or friendship. Students may write rhyme or nonrhyme poems. Point out that they can use the metaphors they write for the worksheet, or they can use new ones for their poems. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Students are to write another poem on a topic of their choice. Encourage them to use metaphors in their poems.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE POEMS.

7-5. PETS AND ANIMALS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a poem about a pet or favorite animal; they are to use examples of personification in their poems.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain that writers often give animals, objects, and ideas human qualities. This is called personification. Refer to Figure 13, "Alliteration, Onomatopoeia, and Figures of Speech," and offer this example: It was so hot that the flowers were afraid they were going to melt. Ask for volunteers to share other examples, which you can write on the board. For the activity, instruct your students to write five examples of personification. The personifications may be about a pet or a favorite animal. After writing the personifications, students are to write poems about their animals, including some of their personifications. Students may write rhyme or nonrhyme poems. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Instruct your students to write a personification for the following: the sky, the earth, a flower, a tree, the wind. Tell your children to choose one and write a poem, including their examples of personification.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE POEMS.

7-6. IT'S A FAVORITE

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a nonrhyme poem about a favorite activity.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your students that most poems do not rhyme, and that they can write a simple nonrhyme poem by following a specific plan or pattern. Discuss the line pattern on the worksheet, and make sure that everyone understands what they are to do. Ask your children to think of a favorite activity, and write a poem about it, based on the line pattern. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Instruct your students to write a nonrhyme poem about a responsibility that they or someone they know has. Tell them that they can use the same line pattern if they wish, or they can invent one of their own.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE POEMS.

7-7. WRITING HAIKU

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write haiku.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain that haiku is a form of Japanese poetry that celebrates nature. Point out that haiku has a special line pattern. The first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, and the third line has five syllables. You might have the class write a haiku, which you can put on the board. This will help generate enthusiasm and encourage your reluctant writers. For the assignment, instruct your students to select one of the suggested topics on nature (or they can choose their own) and write haiku. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity; you might wish to compile a class book of haiku.

EXTENSION: A similar form of Japanese poetry is senryu. It has the same pattern as haiku, but it can be written about any topic. Instruct your children to write senryu on topics of their own.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE HAIKU.

7-8. WRITING CINQUAIN

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write cinquain.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain to your students that cinquain is a form of Japanese poetry that is composed of five lines. Discuss the specialized structure of cinquain that is provided on the worksheet. To make sure that everyone understands the structure, you can write a class cinquain in which volunteers suggest lines that you write on the board. For the assignment, instruct your students to write cinquain by following the directions on the worksheet. Encourage your students to choose their own topics; however, for those who are unable to develop their own, suggest they do one of the topics given on the worksheet. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Encourage your students to choose another topic and write another cinquain.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE CINQUAIN.

7-9. WRITING LIMERICKS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a limerick.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Introduce limericks as an amusing form of poetry. Discuss their special rhyme pattern and rhythm, and have someone read the example given on the worksheet. Emphasize that limericks can be on any

subject—the only criterion is that they are funny. Instruct your students to write limericks of their own. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity. You might encourage your students to read their limericks to the class.

EXTENSION: Instruct your students to work with a friend and write more limericks. Working together on limericks can be double the fun.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE LIMERICKS.

7-10. WRITING RHYMING POEMS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write poems with rhyme.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain that poetry has many special forms. One of the most common of these forms is rhyme. Tell your students that composing a list of rhyming words can help them to write poems. Discuss the sample rhyme list on the worksheet, and emphasize that a list does not have to be extensive to be helpful. The purpose of the rhyme list is to generate words that can be used in the poem. Instruct your students to work with a friend (permitting students to work together makes writing rhyme less threatening), choose a topic that interests both of them, compose a list of rhyming words, and then write a poem. Suggestions for topics are something in nature, in school, at home, or a problem they have or have heard about. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Encourage your students to select a new topic and write another poem with rhyme. This time students are to work individually.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE POEMS.

Date_____

WRITING TIP: Alliteration is the repetition of the beginning sounds of words. Authors use alliteration to add emphasis and style to their writing. Alliteration is often used in poetry.

He was a member of the Thompson Town tennis team.

[illegible]

EXTENSION: Write a poem about a chore or job that you do. Include some examples of alliteration.

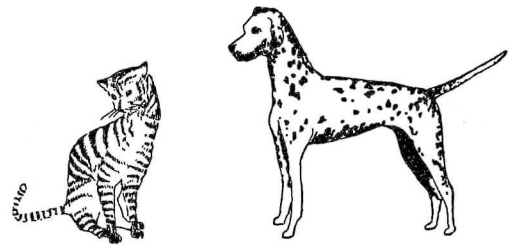
Name _____

Date _____

ANIMAL SOUNDS

WRITING TIP: Onomatopoeia is a technique in which an author uses words that suggest sounds. Onomatopoeia is used in prose as well as poetry.

DIRECTIONS: On the lines below, write an example of onomatopoeia for each of the five animals. Use complete sentences. You may use the words from the word bank or use words of your own. An example is done for you. On the back of this sheet, write a poem about an animal of your choice. Include at least one example of onomatopoeia.

**WORD BANK**

roar	meow	buzz	cluck	purr	chick
hiss	howl	snarl	grunt	shriek	bowwow

For example:

When he saw the people, the lion roared.

dog _____

chicken _____

bee _____

cat _____

snake _____

EXTENSION: Write a poem on a topic of your choice. Include examples of onomatopoeia.

Name _____

Date _____

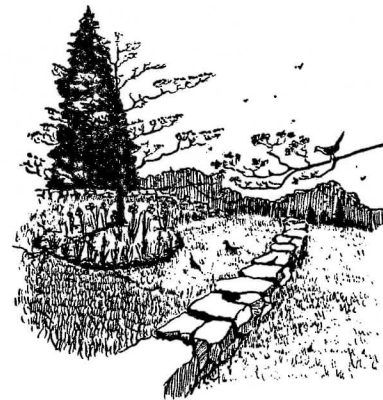
SEASONS

WRITING TIP: By comparing one thing to another, writers can create strong mental images in the minds of their readers. A construction in which two things are compared by using the words *like* or *as* is called a simile.

DIRECTIONS: The topic for this activity is "Seasons." First, complete the similes below. An example is done for you. Then, on the back of the sheet, write a poem about the "Seasons." Use at least one simile in your poem.

For example:

The sun was *like a giant red ball* in the sky.



1. The flowers bloomed _____

2. The leaves fell _____

3. The birds chirped _____

4. Frogs croaked _____

5. The snow glistened _____

6. The wind howled _____

7. The roses smelled _____

8. The stars sparkled _____

EXTENSION: Choose a topic on a particular season—such as snow, rain, football, skating, etc.—and write three similes for it. Then use the similes in a poem about the topic.

Name _____

Date _____

COMPARED TO WHAT?

WRITING TIP: A metaphor is a comparison of two things. Unlike similes, metaphors *do not use* the words *like* or *as* for comparing.

DIRECTIONS: Below are six pairs of words. Write a metaphor for each pair in complete sentences. An example is done for you. On the back of this sheet, write a poem on a topic of your choice. Include at least one metaphor in your poem. Some topics you might consider for your poem are school, home, or friends.



For example:

book/knapsack—The heavy book was *a piece of lead* in her knapsack.

1. wet floor/frozen pond _____

2. friend/rock _____

3. homework/mountain _____

4. messy room/jungle _____

5. ten-speed bike/rocket _____

6. radio/explosion _____

EXTENSION: Write a poem on a topic of your choice. Include examples of metaphors.

Name_____

Date_____

PETS AND ANIMALS

WRITING TIP: Writers often give human qualities to animals, objects, or ideas. This is called personification.

DIRECTIONS: Think of your pet or a favorite animal. If your animal was human, what kinds of qualities or traits would it have?

On the lines below, write five examples of personification that describe your animal. Use complete sentences. On the back of this sheet, write a poem about your animal. Be sure to include examples of personification.



For example:

The puppy felt sad because no one wanted him.

EXTENSION: Write an example of personification for each of the following—the sky, the earth, a flower, a tree, the wind. Choose one of the topics and write a poem. Include your example of personification.

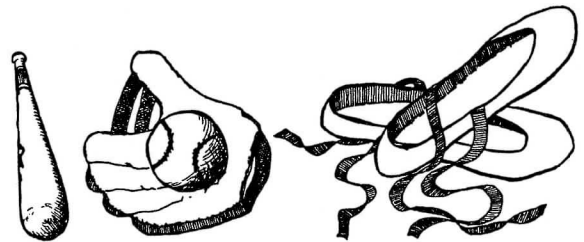
Name _____

Date _____

IT'S A FAVORITE

WRITING TIP: Most poems do not rhyme. Many writers feel that they can express their thoughts better with nonrhyming poems than with poems that possess rhyme and meter.

DIRECTIONS: Use the following pattern to help you write a nonrhyme poem about your favorite activities. Your poem may be about sports, dancing, hiking, reading, listening to music, or simply being with friends. Write your poem on the lines below. You may use the back of this sheet if you need more space.



LINE ONE: Name your activity.

LINE TWO: Describe what you do with your activity.

LINE THREE: Tell why you like this activity.

LINE FOUR: Tell if your activity requires others, or if it is a solitary one.

LINE FIVE: Tell how the activity makes you feel.

LINE SIX: Conclude with a personal comment about your activity.

EXTENSION: Use the same pattern to write a poem about a responsibility that you or someone you know has.

Date_____

WRITING TIP: Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry. Haiku has three lines and follows a specific syllabic pattern. The purpose of haiku is to celebrate the wonders of nature.

LINE THREE: 5 syllables.

[illegible]

EXTENSION: Senryu is a form of Japanese poetry that is similar to haiku. It has the same pattern—three lines with a five-seven-five syllabic count. Senryu, however, may be written on any topic. Write senryu on a topic of your choice.

Name_____

Date _____

WRITING CINQUAIN

WRITING TIP: Cinquain is a form of Japanese poetry that has a special structure, composed of five lines.

DIRECTIONS: Follow the pattern to help you write cinquain on the lines below. Choose your own topic. Some ideas you can consider include yourself, friendship, school, sports, or something in nature.

夏
世
冬
春

LINE ONE: One word, which is the title of the poem.

LINE TWO: Two words that describe the title.

LINE THREE: Three words that express action about the title.

LINE FOUR: Four words that express feeling about the title.

LINE FIVE: One word that is a synonym for the title.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

EXTENSION: Choose another topic and write another cinquain.

Name _____

Date _____

WRITING LIMERICKS

WRITING TIP: Limericks are humorous poems that can be written about anything. They have special rhyme and rhythm patterns.

DIRECTIONS: Follow the pattern and example to write a limerick on the lines below. Limericks can be written on any topic, and just about anything is acceptable—provided it is funny.

LINES ONE, TWO, AND FIVE RHYME.
LINES THREE AND FOUR RHYME.

EXAMPLE:

There was a man named Mulroon,
Who had a giant balloon.
One day on a dare,
He pumped in hot air,
And he floated away to the moon.



EXTENSION: Work with a friend and write another limerick. Remember, the funnier, the better.

FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES

FU 7-1. PARTNER POEMS

Divide your students into groups of two or three. Instruct them to choose a topic that is meaningful to each member of the group, and write a nonrhyme poem. For students who have trouble selecting a topic, you might suggest these: homework, television, or the problems of being a kid. Encourage your students to use authors' techniques such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, and figures of speech. Either display the poems or ask for volunteers of the groups to read their poems to the class.

FU 7-2. LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Ask your students to think about their futures and to consider what they might be doing 10 or 15 years from now. Instruct them to write a nonrhyme poem about the future that they expect, and encourage them to use authors' techniques such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, and figures of speech. Allow time for sharing upon completion of the activity. You might consider compiling a "Future Book" that contains the poems of your students.

FU 7-3. A TODAY POEM

Ask your students to think about today. What kind of day is it? Instruct them to write a nonrhyme poem about it. Encourage them to use alliteration, onomatopoeia, and figures of speech. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 7-4. FUN THINGS

Ask your students to think of things that are fun. Fun things might include playing, watching a good movie, listening to music, taking a trip to the beach or a park, or simply being with friends or relatives. Instruct your students to choose something that is fun and write a nonrhyme poem. Encourage them to use alliteration, onomatopoeia, and figures of speech. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 7-5. SOMETHING THAT BOTHERS ME

Ask your students to consider things that bother them, or things with which they are upset. Topics might range from having to abide by parental rules to too much homework, nuclear disarmament, or the tragedy of homeless people. Instruct your children to write a poem about their feelings on the topic they choose. Encourage them to use alliteration, onomatopoeia, and figures of speech. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 7-6. HAIKU

Instruct your students to write haiku. The topics should focus on some aspect of nature. For students who have trouble finding a topic, suggest doing haiku on day or night, or the changing seasons. Remind your children of the five-seven-five syllabic count of haiku. Encourage your students to write more than one haiku, and provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 7-7. CINQUAIN

Instruct your students to write cinquain. They can select any topic they wish, but must conform to the special structure of cinquain. For students who have trouble choosing a topic, suggest that they do cinquain on a favorite sport. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 7-8. LIMERICKS

Instruct your students to write limericks. They may select any topic they wish. For students who have trouble finding topics, suggest that they use school or playgrounds as a subject. Remind your children of the special rhyme and rhythm pattern of limericks, and be sure to provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 7-9. NATURE POEMS

Ask your students to select an aspect of nature and write a poem. Suggest that they do a rhyming word list first. Encourage the use of alliteration, onomatopoeia, and figures of speech in their poems. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 7-10. REFLECTIONS

Ask your students to think about themselves. What are their likes and dislikes? What are their personalities? Instruct them to write a rhyming poem that describes themselves. Suggest that they compose a rhyming word list first. Encourage them to use alliteration, onomatopoeia, and figures of speech in their poems, and permit sharing at the end of the activity.

8

Teaching Revision

Revision is a major part of writing. It requires the critical assessment of one's writing, the correcting of mistakes in mechanics, and the rewriting of any part of a composition that can be improved. Effective revision puts the final polish on writing and can make any piece of writing better. A composition is not complete until it has been revised.

THE THREE PARTS OF REVISION

When discussing revision with your students, explain that it is a vital stage of the writing process. Revision can be broken down into three parts: rewriting, editing, and proofreading.

Rewriting involves reorganizing and restructuring any sections of a composition that must be reworked. It may mean improving a sentence or revising an entire page. To help your children get started with revision, tell them to view their writing as their audience would. Encourage them to read their writing objectively, and look for places that need more details, clarification, or development. Suggest that they read their writing aloud, which can help them to identify parts that are weak or unclear. Urge your students to listen for their voice coming through—are they saying what they truly want to say?

The second part of revision is editing. Editing focuses primarily on mechanics, spelling, and usage. It includes eliminating excess words and phrases, substituting specific words for general ones, and checking to make sure that words are used correctly.

The last part of revision is proofreading. After a composition has been

rewritten and edited, the writer reads through it again, looking for any remaining errors and oversights. These might be in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, or usage. Proofreading is the final check of writing.

When you first begin to teach revision, start with short compositions. It is easier for children to learn how to revise one or two pages than four or five. Gradually build up to longer pieces. In addition, show your students the value and use of dictionaries, thesauruses, language texts, and style books, for these can provide important information and guidelines.

The best time for revision is after the draft has been completed. The student can then see his or her writing as a whole from beginning to end, and is more likely to find weaknesses in development and ideas.

A STUDENT PROOFREADING GUIDE

An excellent method for teaching revision is the use of a proofreading guide. Children need directions on how to proofread for mechanics as well as for content. A good proofreading guide offers students specific instructions. Figure 14 is an example of a proofreader's guide you can use with your students. Figure 15 contains proofreader's symbols that you may encourage your students to use when they act as editors and proofread the work of a friend.

Effective writing depends as much on revision as it does on creativity and style. Encourage the creative expression of your children, urge them to experiment with writing forms and ideas, but demand that they incorporate revision into their writing routine.

EDITING TEAMS

Many children find it difficult to revise and edit their own work. They are too close to it. To overcome this problem, you can create editing teams.

In the beginning of the year, or when you begin to teach revision, divide your students into editing teams of three to five members. When a member of the team completes a writing assignment, he gives the composition to another member of the team to edit. Be sure to insist that students take on the task of editing only after they have finished their own writing, or when they have come to a natural pause in their work. Don't allow editing another member's work to become a way for students to avoid finishing assignments.

When an editor receives a composition, she reads it and circles mistakes and weaknesses. If you wish, you can instruct your students to use editing symbols. When the editor is finished, she returns the paper to the writer, who then revises the writing.

Encourage members of the editing teams to discuss the mistakes and corrections they make on their assignments, as this is a way they can share ideas on writing and help improve each other's work. The use of editing teams emphasizes the importance of revision, and helps to insure that revision becomes a major part of the class's writing routines.

BASIC PROOFREADING GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Use this guide to help you proofread your composition for mistakes and weaknesses. Then make the necessary revisions.

1. What was my purpose? Have I written according to my purpose?
2. Do my ideas follow each other logically?
3. Are my sentences complete?
4. Do my sentences begin with a capital letter? Do they have correct ending punctuation? Does each have a subject and a predicate?
5. Does each sentence say what I really want it to say?
6. Are any of my sentences unnecessary?
7. Are my transitions smooth?
8. Have I indented all of my paragraphs?
9. Are my characters realistic? Do they seem like real people?
10. Have I used quotation marks for conversation?
11. Does the conversation of my characters fit smoothly into my story? Does the conversation sound real?
12. Have I spelled each word correctly?
13. Have I used commas correctly?
14. Have I used each word as it is supposed to be used?
15. Have I used correct pronouns throughout my story?
16. Are all of my facts correct?
17. Are all of my descriptions accurate?
18. What do I like best about my composition?
19. What do I like least about my composition?
20. Am I satisfied with my work?

Figure 14

EDITOR'S PROOFREADING SYMBOLS











Symbol	Meaning	Example
	Begin a new paragraph	to the store. ¶ Next, they
NC	Not clear.	Yesterday, we are going to the movies.
	Capitalize this letter.	billy went home.
	Use lower case.	Billy went home .
	Eliminate this word.	The big large monster.
	Separate these.	Last night they went to the movies.
	Combine these words or letters.	play g round
	Add a letter, word, or punctuation mark.	letter tomor o w word Jennifer climbed the tree. comma They bought meat and potatoes, milk.
	Add a period.	She likes kittens o
	Quotation marks needed.	I'll see you later, he said.
	Switch these letters or words.	They w o nt to class. They to went class.

Figure 15

Revision Activity #1

Organize students in pairs (this also works with groups of three), and instruct them to edit a composition of their partner. As editors, students are to circle the mistakes they find and return the papers to their owners. The students then discuss the circled items.

After discussion each student revises his or her work. Partners exchange their work again and reread the compositions to see if they have been improved.

This activity enables students to see another's perspectives on their work in a nonthreatening manner.

Revision Activity #2

Ask your students to select a recent composition of their own, and instruct them to edit and revise it. You can link this activity with a fresh writing assignment if you wish. In this way students can work on a composition from the idea stage through revision.

WRITING CONFERENCES

Writing conferences are an extremely important part of a classroom writing program. They provide the opportunity for the teacher and student to share their feelings and concerns about the student's writing on a personal level.

Writing conferences are beneficial for several reasons:

1. Conferences allow for individualized writing instruction, which has been shown to be more effective than group instruction.
2. Conferences show the student that the teacher is interested in him or her personally.
3. Shy or reluctant writers often open up more on an individual basis.
4. The teacher can make more effective responses to student questions or problems.
5. Generally, students learn more during an individual conference.
6. Conferences can promote self-learning and enthusiasm.
7. Conferences tend to be one of the most effective uses of a teacher's time.

You do not need an elaborate setup to conduct teacher-student writing conferences. A desk and two chairs located in a corner of the room is fine.

Ideally, a conference should be between the teacher and one student at a time. Conferences may be short, a minute or two, or as long as necessary or time permits. This depends on the writing, the ability levels of the students, and class time.

The number of conferences you hold during the year also depends on your situation. They should be held regularly, although there are several plans to accomplish this.

You might schedule short conferences with students after the completion of

each composition. This allows you to focus on the current strengths and weaknesses of your students and enables you to make specific suggestions for the next assignment.

Another plan is to schedule conferences after the draft has been revised, but before the final copy. I like this method because it allows the teacher to suggest additional revision if necessary, as well as remark on positive points prior to the writing of the final copy.

Instead of conducting conferences after each writing assignment (time simply does not permit this for some teachers), you might schedule them at set intervals throughout the year. You might hold conferences after every two or three assignments, at the end of each week, or at the end of each month. Scheduling conferences at set intervals allows you to write them into your plans, which often results in more time for conferences. However, keep in mind that conferences which are scheduled too far apart can lose effectiveness and purpose.

During the conference, limit the discussion to a particular composition. You should talk about weaknesses or writing problems, but focus on just one or two to avoid discouragement. Always offer specific suggestions for improvement. Now is the time to guide students in reworking weak sections. You might focus on the lead, the conclusion, a scene, development of a character, or supporting details for a main idea.

In addition to noting weaknesses, be sure to offer praise for the strengths of a composition. If a lead is good, tell the student when you feel it is strong. If a character is well developed, share your impressions. If a student has written a fine descriptive scene, talk about its detail. Children need to hear what they have done well just as much as they need to be made aware of mistakes and weaknesses.

Unquestionably, revision is an essential part of writing. There are many facets of revision, including proofreading, reorganizing, and rewriting. Revision brings all of the loose ends of a composition together. It is the final step in the expression of written ideas, and therefore should be given major emphasis in any writing program.

TEACHING NOTES FOR REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS

8-1. LIZARDS

OBJECTIVE: Students are to revise a paragraph, and correct mistakes in sentence construction, spelling, and usage.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Explain that revision is an essential part of the writing process. For this assignment, tell your students that they will need to correct run-on sentences and fragments, as well as mistakes in spelling and usage. Instruct your children to make their corrections on the worksheet, and rewrite the paragraph on the back. Display the revised paragraphs at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Instruct your students to research more information about lizards and write a paragraph about what they learned. They may use the suggested topics on the worksheet, or topics of their own. Encourage them to list

or briefly outline their ideas first. Also, emphasize that they should revise their work.

ANSWER KEY: Rewritten paragraphs may vary. Following is one possibility.

Lizards are reptiles that live in many places around the world. They like the warm parts of the world best. Many lizards live in desert regions. When the temperature is cool, they come out in the sun. When the sun becomes too hot, they seek shade.

Many people are afraid of lizards, but most lizards are harmless. Only two lizards are poisonous. They are the bearded lizard and the Gila monster.

8-2. THE FISHING TRIP

OBJECTIVE: Students are to revise a story, and correct mistakes in punctuation, spelling, usage, and capitalization.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Instruct your students to revise the story on the worksheet. Tell them to pay close attention for mistakes in the use of quotation marks. Students should make their corrections on the worksheet, and rewrite the story on the back. Display the revised stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Instruct your children to write an ending to the story. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first. Remind them to revise their work carefully.

ANSWER KEY: Rewritten stories may vary. Following is one possibility.

The alarm clock went off at five A.M. Eight-year-old Linda sprang out of bed and hurried into her brother's room.

"Todd," she said, "wake up."

Slowly her older brother opened his eyes. "It's still dark out," he said, looking out the window.

"So what," Linda said. "Dad's taking us fishing today. Did you forget?"

"I never remember anything when I sleep." Todd said. He pulled the covers over his head.

"Come on," Linda said excitedly. With a yank she pulled the covers off his head. "The fish are hungriest in the morning."

"Who told you that?" Todd asked sleepily, pulling the covers back over his head. "A stupid fish?"

"Oh, Todd," Linda said, stamping her foot angrily. "You just sleep there. I'm going to wake Dad."

8-3. THE LOST WALLET

OBJECTIVE: Students are to revise a story, and correct mistakes in paragraphing, spelling, punctuation, usage, and capitalization.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Instruct your students to revise the story, "The Lost Wallet." Tell them to pay close attention to paragraphing, and remind them that new paragraphs are required whenever the writer introduces a new idea, or whenever a different character speaks. Mention that they should look for mistakes in spelling, punctuation, usage, and capitalization as well. Students

should make their corrections on the worksheet and rewrite the story on the back. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Instruct your children to write an ending to the story. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first. Remind them to revise their writing carefully.

ANSWER KEY: Rewritten stories may vary. Following is one possibility.

Jason and Laurie had gone to the store for their mother. As they got off their bikes, Jason saw a wallet in the grass next to the sidewalk.

"Look, Laurie," he said. He picked up the wallet and opened it. "There's a hundred dollars here," he said. "What should we do?"

"Return it," Laurie said. "Is there a name or an address in it?"

Jason looked through the wallet. At last he found a name card.

"Here," he said, handing the card to Laurie.

"Mrs. Myra Coyle," she read. "She lives on Devon Street. That's across town."

"I know where it is," said Jason. "Let's go."

The two children got on their bikes and headed for Devon Street. When they reached the home of Myra Coyle, they saw a big old house. It was set back on a lot covered with crooked trees, thickets, and weeds.

"What do we do now?" Jason asked.

Laurie was as afraid as Jason was, but to her way of thinking there was only one thing to do.

"We came here to return this wallet," she said. "So what are we waiting for?"

8-4. THE LAST MINUTE

OBJECTIVE: Students are to revise a paragraph, and correct mistakes in verb tenses, spelling, punctuation, usage, and capitalization.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Instruct your students to revise the paragraph on the worksheet. Tell them to pay particular attention to verb tenses. Most stories are written in the past tense, because the action has already happened. Students should make their corrections on the worksheet, and rewrite their paragraphs on the back. Display the rewritten paragraphs at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Students are to write endings to the story. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first. Emphasize that they should revise their writing carefully.

ANSWER KEY: Rewritten paragraphs may vary. Following is one possibility.

Tom's science report was due tomorrow. As he looked through the astronomy book in the library, he remembered his mother's warning. "Don't wait until the last minute," she said. Well, he had done just that. He doubted that he could finish the report in one night, but he would try. He closed his book and went to the check-out counter. As he left the library, Tom promised himself that he would never wait until the last minute again.

8-5. THE BIG GAME

OBJECTIVE: Students are to revise a story, clarifying the use of pronouns and correcting mistakes in spelling, punctuation, usage, and capitalization.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Begin by explaining that pronouns are words that take the places of nouns. To avoid confusion, whenever pronouns are used, it must be clear which nouns they are replacing. In the story, "The Big Game," there are several instances where the use of pronouns should be clarified. This can be done by simply replacing the pronoun with the noun to which it refers. Remind your students that they will find mistakes in spelling, punctuation, usage, and capitalization as well. They should make their corrections on the worksheet, and rewrite the story on the back. Display the rewritten stories upon completion of the assignment.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to imagine how this story might have started. Instruct them to write a beginning. Students should list or briefly outline their ideas first. Emphasize that they should revise their work.

ANSWER KEY: Rewritten stories may vary. Following is one possibility.

The score was forty-eight to forty-seven. Taylorville was behind. Only ten seconds were left in the game. Billy Jackson was Taylorville's star, and he had the ball.

Johnny Marsh was the Baker Ridge defender guarding Billy. Johnny knew that he couldn't let him have an open shot.

Johnny was tired, but he summoned up his last bit of strength for the final seconds. If he could stop Billy's shot, Baker Ridge would win.

Billy dribbled to his left. Johnny stayed with him, step for step. Billy's lungs strained for air, but he couldn't give up. He knew that the game would be won or lost on his next shot.

With two seconds to go, Billy stopped and sprang skyward, Johnny leaped with him. Johnny's arm and hand were stretched high. Expertly Billy shot the ball toward the basket. It hit the rim, bounced up, then dropped through.

Taylorville won!

8-6. TRAVELING AROUND

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write an article about a trip they took; they are to revise their work, focusing their attention on the accuracy and clarity of their details and facts.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to recall a time they traveled somewhere. This might have been a vacation, or a one-day trip to visit a relative, watch a sporting event, enjoy the beach, or go on a shopping spree. Students are to list details about their trips on the worksheet, and then write an account of their trips on the back. Remind them to revise their writing, and pay special attention to the details they used to develop their accounts. Display the student's writing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Students are to write a paragraph describing the preparations for their trips. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first, and revise their writing carefully.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARTICLES.

8-7. THE PLUSES AND MINUSES OF BEING A KID

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write an article on the topic, "The Pluses and Minuses of Being a Kid." They are to revise their writing.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to think about the ways their lives, as kids, are different than the lives of adults. Point out that they probably have more time to play and do the things they want. Likewise, however, because they are young, there are some things that they are not permitted to do. For this assignment, instruct your students to list at least three pluses, things they like about being a kid, and three minuses, things they don't like, on the worksheet. On the back of the worksheet, they are to write an article entitled, "The Pluses and Minuses of Being a Kid." Remind your students to revise their work carefully. Be sure to provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to pretend that they could change places with anyone they wished for a day. Who would they choose? Why did they choose this person? What would be the pluses and minuses of being this individual? Students are to write a composition on the pluses and minuses of being someone else for a day. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first, and to revise their work.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARTICLES.

8-8. IT'S ONLY MAKE-BELIEVE

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a story about one of their possessions becoming enchanted.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to imagine that one of their possessions—a bicycle, pair of sneakers, television set, etc.—becomes enchanted. Enchanted sneakers, for example, might have super-speed, while an enchanted television set might allow its viewers to communicate with beings from another planet. Instruct your children to answer the questions on the worksheet, and then write a story about their enchanted possession. Emphasize that they should carefully revise their writing. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think about their most important possession. Why is it so important? In a paragraph, students are to describe this possession and tell why it is so important. Encourage your children to list or briefly outline their ideas first, and revise their work.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE STORIES.

8-9. A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write a story in which they have lunch with the President.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students if they would like to meet the President. Probably most would. Tell them to imagine that they have won a contest and the prize is to have lunch with the President. They will be able to ask him any questions they wish. For this assignment, students are to list five questions that they would like to ask the President. Next, they are to write a story in which they ask him their questions, and he answers them. Emphasize the importance of using quotation marks for dialogue, and remind your students to revise their work carefully. Display the stories at the end of the activity.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think of a problem that confronts our country. You might suggest issues like drugs, unemployment, the plight of the homeless, nuclear disarmament, the economy, and so on. Instruct your students to write a letter to the President, explaining how they feel this problem might be solved. Encourage your students to list or briefly outline their ideas first. Also remind them to revise their letters.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE STORIES.

8-10. HOW TO GET PEOPLE TO LIKE YOU

OBJECTIVE: Students are to write an article entitled "How to Get People to Like You." They are to revise their work.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: Ask your students to think about some people they feel are nice. Undoubtedly, they like these people. Now ask them to think about the qualities of these people. How do these qualities affect others? Instruct your children to list several traits that they feel influence people to like an individual. Using this information, they are to write an article entitled "How to Get People to Like You." Remind your students to revise their work carefully, and be sure to allow time for sharing at the end of the assignment.

EXTENSION: Ask your students to think about some people they don't like. How are these people different from individuals they do like? What qualities do some people have that are sure turn-offs? Instruct your students to write an article entitled "How to be Unpopular." Encourage your children to list or briefly outline their ideas first, and revise their work carefully.

ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARTICLES.

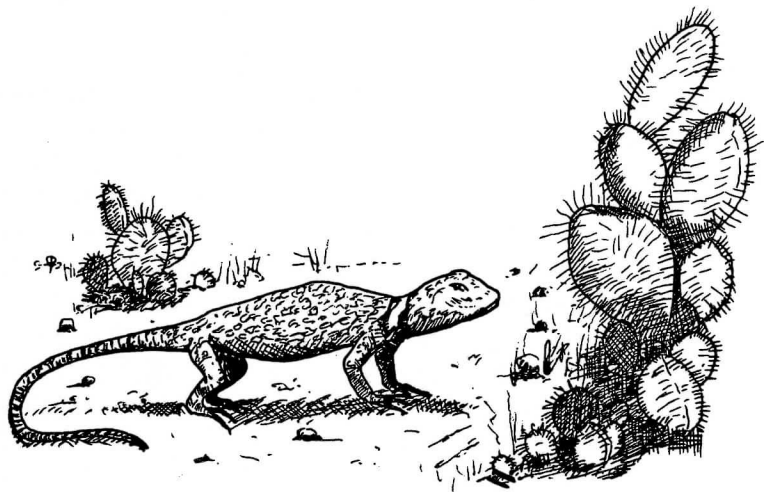
Name _____

Date _____

LIZARDS

WRITING TIP: One of the things authors look at during revision is the construction of their sentences. They try to make sure that they have not allowed run-on sentences or fragments to creep into their writing.

DIRECTIONS: Revise the following paragraphs on lizards. You will find mistakes in sentence construction. You will also find mistakes in spelling and word usage. Make your corrections on the worksheet, then rewrite the paragraph correctly on the back of this sheet. Be sure to vary the beginnings of the sentences to improve the flow of the paragraph.



LIZARDS

Lizards are reptiles that live in many places around the world. They like the warm parts of the world better, many lizards live in desert regions, they come out in the sun when the temperature is cool. Seek shade. When the sun becomes too hot.

Many people are afraid of lizards. Most lizards are harmless. Only two lizards are poisonous. The bearded lizard. The Gila monster.

EXTENSION: Research more information about lizards, and write your own paragraph about these reptiles. Some topics you might consider include: what lizards eat, what sizes they can grow up to, the largest or smallest lizards in the world, or poisonous lizards.

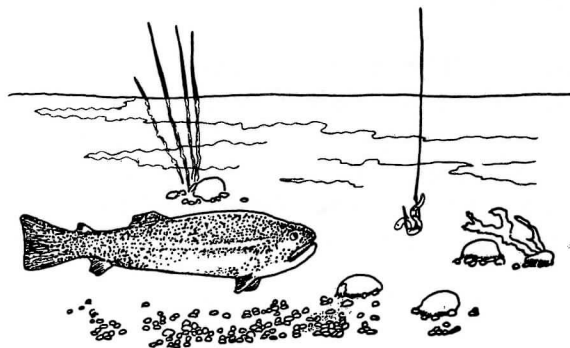
Name _____

Date _____

THE FISHING TRIP

WRITING TIP: Dialogue can make any story more interesting. It enables readers to hear what characters have to say, as well as witness their actions. However, to be effective, dialogue must be written with proper punctuation.

DIRECTIONS: Revise the following story. You will find mistakes in punctuation, spelling, word usage, and capitalization. Make your corrections on the worksheet, and then rewrite the story correctly on the back of this sheet.



THE FISHING TRIP

The alarm clock went off at five AM. Eight-year-old Linda sprang out off bed and hurried into her brothers room

"Todd, she said. "wake up."

Slowly her older brother opened his eyes. "Its still dark out he said, looking out the window.

"So what," Linda said. "Dad's taking us fishing today. Did you forget?" "I never remember anything when I sleep, Todd said. he pulled the covers over his head.

"Come on, Linda said excitedly. With a yank she pull the covers off his head. "The fish are hungrest in the morning."

"Who told you that?" Todd asked sleepily, pulling the covers back over his head. "a stupid fish?"

Oh Todd," Linda said, stamping her foot angry. You just sleep there. I'm going to wake Dad."

EXTENSION: Write an ending to "The Fishing Trip." Be sure to revise your work.

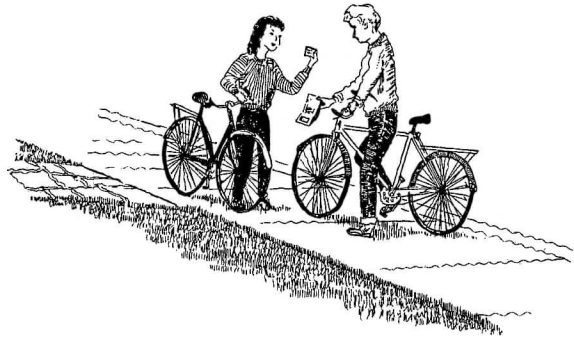
Name _____

Date _____

THE LOST WALLET

WRITING TIP: Whenever a new thought or idea is presented in a story or article, a new paragraph should begin. Also, a new paragraph is necessary each time a different character speaks in a story. Paragraphs provide structure for writing and help writing to flow smoothly.

DIRECTIONS: Revise the following story. You will have to decide when new paragraphs begin, as well as correct mistakes in spelling, punctuation, usage, and capitalization. Make your corrections on the worksheet, and re-write your story on the back of this sheet.



THE LOST WALLET

Jason and Laurie had gone to the store for their mother. As they got of there bikes, Jason saw a wallet in the grass next to the sidewalk. "Look Laurie" he said. He picked up the wallet and open it. "Theres a hundred dollars here he said. "What should we do." "Return it," Laurie said. Is there a name or an adress on it." Jason looked threw the wallet. At last he found a name card. "Here" he said, handing the card to Laurie. "Mrs. Myra Coyle," she read. "She lives on Devon street. Thats across town." "I know where it is" said Jason. "Lets go. The two children got on their bikes and headed for Devon Street. When they reached the home of Myra Coyle, they saw a big old house. It was set back on a lot covered with croked trees thicketts and weeds. "What do we do now" Jason asked. Laurie was as afraid as Jason was but to her way of thinking there was only one think to do. "We came here to return this wallet, she said. "so what are we waiting fore."

EXTENSION: Write an ending to the story. Be sure to revise your work.

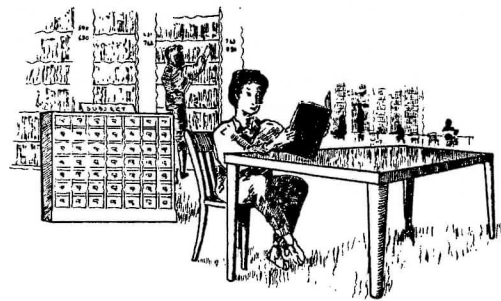
Name _____

Date _____

THE LAST MINUTE

WRITING TIP: Mistakes in the use of verb tenses are common in writing. Sometimes writers will slip from past tense to present tense without realizing. Fortunately, most mistakes in verb tenses can be caught by careful proofreading.

DIRECTIONS: Revise the following paragraph. You will find mistakes in verb tenses, spelling, punctuation, usage, and capitalization. Make your corrections on the worksheet, and then rewrite the paragraph correctly on the back of this sheet.

**THE LAST MINUTE**

Tom's science report was due tomorrow. As he looked through the astronomy book in the Library, he remembered his mother's warning. "Don't wait until the last minute" she said. Well he had done just that. He doubted that he could finish the report in one night, but he would try. He closed his book and went to the check-out counter. As he left the library Tom promised himself that he would never wait until the last minute again.

EXTENSION: Did Tom finish his report on time? Write an ending to the story. When you complete the draft of your ending, be sure to revise it.

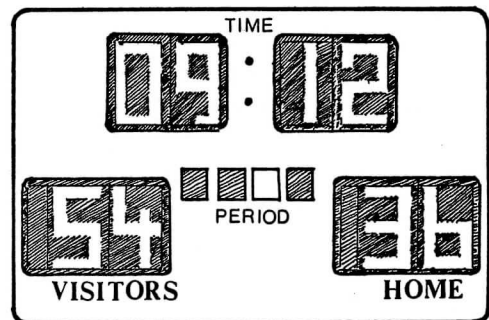
Name _____

Date _____

THE BIG GAME

WRITING TIP: Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns. They help an author to vary his or her writing. However, writers must make sure that the pronouns they use clearly refer to the nouns they replace.

DIRECTIONS: Revise the following story about a basketball game. You must clarify the use of pronouns, and correct mistakes in spelling, usage, punctuation, and capitalization. You can make your corrections on the worksheet, then rewrite the story on the back of this sheet.

**THE BIG GAME**

The score was forty eight to forty seven. Taylorville was behind. Only ten secends were left in the game. Billy Jackson was Taylorvilles star, and he had the ball.

Johnny Marsh was the Baker Ridge defender gard Billy. He knew that he couldn't let him have an open shot

He was tired but he summoned up his last bit of strength for the final seconds. if he could stop his shot, Baker Ridgd would win.

Billy dribbled to his left. Johnny stayed with him, step for step. His lungs strained for air, but he couldnt give up. He knew that the game would be one or lost on his next shot.

with two seconds to go, he stoped and sprang skyward. He leaped with him. His hand and arm were stretched high. Expertly he shot the ball toward the basket. It hit the rim bounced up then dropped through.

Taylorville won!

EXTENSION: Write a beginning for the story. Be sure to revise your work carefully.

Date_____

WRITING TIP: Some nonfiction articles are accounts of events as they actually happened. The facts must be accurate, otherwise the article fails to achieve its purpose.

[illegible]

EXTENSION: Think about the preparation you made for your trip. How did you get ready to go? What did you pack? How did you dress? Write a paragraph describing how you prepared for your trip. Revise your work carefully.

Name _____

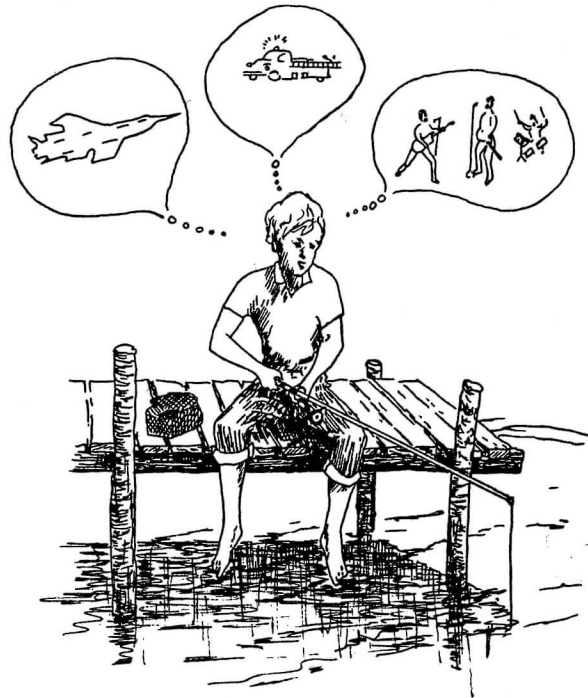
Date _____

THE PLUSES AND MINUSES OF BEING A KID

WRITING TIP: Revision is the part of the writing process when authors can check their work to make sure that they have included all important facts and details.

DIRECTIONS: Think of the pluses and minuses of being a kid. What's good about being a person your age? What's bad?

List at least three pluses and three minuses about being a kid on the lines below. Use complete sentences. On the back of this sheet, write an article on the topic. When you are done with your draft, revise your work carefully.



PLUSES

MINUSES

EXTENSION: If you could change places for a day with anyone you wished, who would it be? Why? What would be the pluses and minuses of being this person? Write a composition on this topic. List or briefly outline your ideas first, and revise your work carefully.

Name _____

Date _____

IT'S ONLY MAKE-BELIEVE

WRITING TIP: Every piece of writing benefits from revision. An article, story, or poem is not finished until it has been revised.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine that something you own suddenly becomes enchanted. Perhaps your bicycle, radio, tennis racquet, or sneakers have been given special powers.

Answer the questions on the lines below in complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, write a story about your enchanted possession. Be sure to revise your work carefully.



1. How did your possession become enchanted? _____

2. What happened after it became enchanted? _____

3. What did you like best about it being enchanted? What did you like least? _____

4. How did it return to normal? _____

EXTENSION: What is your favorite possession? In a paragraph describe your favorite possession, and tell why it is important to you. Be sure to revise your work.

Name _____

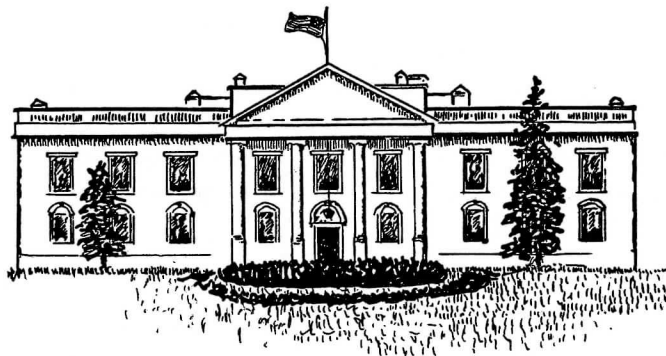
Date _____

A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

WRITING TIP: Virtually every author revises his or her work. Revision helps insure that writers communicate their ideas clearly.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine that you have won a contest that allows you to have lunch with the President of the United States. During this lunch, you may ask him any questions you wish.

On the lines below, write five questions that you would ask the President. Then, on the back of this sheet, write an imaginary story in which you ask the President your questions, and he answers them. Be sure to revise your work carefully, and pay special attention to your use of quotation marks and punctuation.



EXTENSION: Select one problem that you feel our country faces, and write a letter to the President explaining what you think could be done to solve it. Remember to revise your work.

Name _____

Date _____

HOW TO GET PEOPLE TO LIKE YOU

WRITING TIP: Revision involves more than just proofreading for mistakes in spelling, punctuation, sentence construction, and usage. While these are important, revision also means critically evaluating your writing to make certain that you are saying exactly what you want to say.

DIRECTIONS: Think about some people you feel are nice. You and others like such people. Why? What qualities do nice people have that makes other people like them?

On the lines below, list several traits that nice people have. Use complete sentences. Then, on the back of this sheet, write an article entitled, "How to Get People to Like You." Be sure to revise your work carefully.



EXTENSION: Think about people you don't like. What qualities do they have that cause you to dislike them? Write an article entitled, "How to Be Unpopular." List or briefly outline your ideas first. Be sure to revise your writing.

FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES

FU 8-1. I CAN DO IT BETTER

Ask your students to think of something that they can do better than a parent, older brother, or sister. This may be a job, sport, or special skill. Students are to write a composition describing how they do this activity. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first. When they have finished their drafts, instruct them to edit and revise their work, paying particular attention to clarity and mechanics. Display the compositions at the end of the assignment.

FU 8-2. AN IDEAL DAY

Ask your students to consider what would be an ideal day. What makes one day better than another? What makes an ideal day? Instruct your children to write a composition about "An Ideal Day." Remind them to list or briefly outline their ideas first, and concentrate on the use of specific words in their writing. During revision, encourage them to make sure that they have used correct mechanics and that they have used precise words in their descriptions. Display the compositions at the end of the activity.

FU 8-3. MY FANTASY PET

Ask your students to think of the strangest, silliest, or most wonderful fantasy pet they can. Instruct them to write a composition about this pet, describing what this unusual creature looks like, how it acts, and what it eats. Remind your students to list or briefly outline their ideas first. Also, remind them to revise their writing, focusing on the clarity and vividness of the descriptions of their fantasy pets. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 8-4. COME TO MY PLACE

Ask your students to visualize their neighborhoods. Ask them to imagine what their neighborhoods look like. For this assignment, students are to write paragraphs that describe their neighborhoods to strangers. Encourage your children to list or briefly outline their ideas first, and concentrate on using accurate, descriptive words in their paragraphs. During revision, students should focus on the overall clarity of their writing and the use of strong descriptive words. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 8-5. MY SELF-IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Ask your students to think about themselves, and discuss with them the idea of self-improvement. Now ask them to consider if they could change anything about themselves, what would it be? How would they do it? If there is nothing about themselves they would change, ask them to explain why. For this

assignment, instruct your children to write a composition on self-improvement, describing what they would like to change about themselves and how they could do this. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first. For revision, tell your students to focus on paragraphing and sentence construction, particularly their use of varying constructions. Display the compositions at the end of the activity.

FU 8-6. A GOOD ARTICLE

For this activity, students will need copies of magazines. A few days in advance, you might suggest that students bring in magazines from home, or you can provide magazines yourself. At the start of the activity, make magazines available to your students. You should have a variety of magazines, including sports, fashion, wrestling, TV, and general interest titles.

For the assignment, instruct your students to select an article they feel is interesting and write a summary of it. Tell them to use the five W's—who, what, where, when, and why—in their summaries to help them focus on the important features of their articles. Remind your students to list or briefly outline their ideas first, and to concentrate on writing clearly. For revision, students should focus their attention on sentence construction, especially subject-verb agreement, fragments, and run-ons. Display the summaries at the end of the activity.

FU 8-7. A HELPING HAND

Ask your students to think of the last time they helped someone. They may have helped their mother, father, brother, sister, a friend, neighbor, or a stranger. Instruct your students to write an account describing this event. Why was their help needed? What did they do? How did they feel afterward? Encourage your students to list or briefly outline their ideas first. When they revise their work, they should concentrate on good sentence construction. Allow time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 8-8. THE SMARTEST PERSON I KNOW

Ask your children to consider who is the smartest person they know. Instruct them to write a composition on this topic. Encourage them to list or briefly outline their ideas first. For revision, tell them to focus their efforts on the overall development of their writing, correct mechanics, and recheck their use of pronouns. Provide time for sharing at the end of the activity.

FU 8-9. THE PROBLEMS OF STUDENTHOOD

Begin this assignment by generating a discussion about the problems students have. You might conduct a class brainstorming session and list ideas on the board. For the assignment, ask your students to consider what they feel are the major problems that students experience. Instruct them to write a composition about "The Problems of Studenthood." Remind them to list or briefly outline their ideas first. During revision, they should give special attention to correct mechanics and sentence construction. Display the compositions at the end of the activity. You might consider compiling the compositions in a class book.

FU 8-10. PLAY IT AGAIN

Instruct your students to select a piece of writing they did earlier in the year, one that they have not read in some time. Tell them to revise this writing, rewriting it to improve any weaknesses they find. Display the before and after writings at the end of the assignment.

9

Evaluation

The evaluation of children's writing is an area of major controversy. One of the few points of agreement among teachers is that evaluation is a difficult task. Quality is hard to define, particularly when one considers that the real merit of a composition is the effect it has on an individual reader. Evaluation thus is a subjective process. The evaluator may have values and prejudices that affect his or her impressions of a paper, or the evaluator may simply like one paper over another. Such factors, arising from human nature, can affect scoring.

While there can be no absolute rules for evaluation, there can be consistency during the evaluative process. The teacher must focus on specific areas in the evaluation of each paper. When each paper is scored according to the same criteria, evaluation becomes easier for the teacher and more equitable for the students.

GRADING

Although some teachers feel that grades are detrimental to young writers, for they believe that grades inhibit the writing process, grades are an important part of the curriculums of most schools. Students and parents expect grades. Grades are a means of measurement and comparison. Most teachers need grades to determine if course requirements are met.

A grade is of most value when it is based on the totality of the paper. A paper's content, organization, style, usage, and mechanics should all be considered before that paper is given a grade.

However, grading should not be limited to assessing a student's paper and

placing a score at the top. One of the most important aspects of evaluation is the offering of specific suggestions for improvement, which can be written right on the composition. Writing comments takes time, but comments are one of the most effective ways that you can help your children improve their writing.

Along with suggestions for improvement, remember to praise good writing. Too many teachers focus only on mistakes, and evaluation thus takes on a negative connotation. In many cases praise can be more important than all of the corrections a teacher makes on a student's paper.

In most subjects a grade is simply a measurement of a student's knowledge and skills. For the teacher of writing, however, the process of grading can serve as an opportunity for helping children to write better.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Teachers can evaluate student writing in two ways: tests and writing samples. While each is a valid method of assessment, there are significant differences of which you should be aware.

During the typical writing test, students write on a given topic for a specific length of time, usually one class period. Time can be a major factor in the results of the test. Because students must complete the test within a time frame, they must organize, combine, and develop their ideas quickly. Moreover, they must write efficiently during the draft stage because they do not have time to make extensive revisions. Testing does not permit students the luxury of making many changes in their original writing.

Facing a deadline, many students feel pressured and often do not spend as much time on the development of ideas, editing, or revising. Consequently, many talented young writers who do not write well under pressure score low on tests.

The choice of topics may also affect test results. Students write better on subjects that they find meaningful, and on which they have some knowledge. For this reason, I recommend that students be given a choice of at least three topics for a writing test. Unquestionably, topic choice affects the quality of some compositions. Figure 16 is a list of possible test topics.

Despite the obvious drawbacks to writing tests, some teachers feel that they are a necessary part of evaluation. The time limit of the typical test forces students to rely on their strongest skills, which are prominent on their papers. Tests often provide a showcase for mastered skills.

Using Writing Samples for Evaluation

Many teachers feel that writing samples are the best way to assess the writing skills of students. Compositions for evaluation can be drawn from several assignments, providing a broad base for measuring writing skills and growth. Because a variety of samples can be evaluated, it is less likely that a student's grades will be affected by topic selection. Also, because time is not usually a major factor in assignments, students have a chance to do prewriting, editing, and revising, steps of the writing process that lead to better work. In general, evaluation by means of writing samples tends to provide a broader profile of a student's overall writing skills.

TOPICS FOR WRITING TESTS

A Day I'll Never Forget
A Time I Was in Trouble
The Best Day of My Life
The Worst Day of My Life
The Happiest Day of My Life
The Saddest Day of My Life
The Most Important Person in My Life
My Favorite Place
My Favorite Things to Do
Something I Thought Was Unfair
What I Would Change About Myself
What I Would Change About My School
What I Would Change About the World
What I Would Change About My Parents
The Perfect Pet
What Makes a Person Nice
My Biggest Gripe
Me
A Time I Did Something I Was Proud Of
What I Like About Being a Kid
What I Don't Like About Being a Kid
My Most Embarrassing Moment
The Person I Admire Most
Things I Like and Dislike
What I Would Do with a Million Dollars
Invisible for a Day
A Day I Broke the Rules
Where I Would Go with a Time Machine
The Day I Lost Something Important
A Famous Person I Would Like to Be
What Courage Means to Me

Figure 16

Whether you decide to evaluate the writing skills of your students through testing or by writing samples, there are some basics of assessments worth noting:

1. Report card or term grades should be based on at least three compositions. Even the most able students vary in the quality of their writing from day to day.
2. Topics for evaluation must be meaningful.
3. There must be enough time for students to develop and organize their ideas, write, and revise their work.
4. Scoring must be consistent.

Insuring Consistency in Evaluation

Probably the greatest problem in evaluation is consistency of grading. Many teachers evaluate papers without really knowing what to look for. While scoring certainly varies from teacher to teacher, an individual may grade inconsistently from assignment to assignment, or even paper to paper as the many elements of writing blend together. The grade of one paper may be based mostly on its content, the grade of another may be a result of its mechanics, while the grade of a third may be based on its style.

Most teachers can benefit from some form of guidelines for evaluation. I have developed a simple Evaluation Guide that focuses the evaluative efforts of the teacher on five categories of writing skills: content, organization, sentence construction, usage, and mechanics. Figure 17 is an Evaluation Guide for writing.

Once the evaluative efforts of a teacher are focused, grading becomes more equitable because the teacher looks at the same skills on each paper. The guide need not be adhered to rigidly; its purpose is only to offer direction. The teacher can adjust his or her scoring to fit the needs of particular students. For example, some skills noted on the guide may not have been taught. These would be ignored during evaluation.

The Evaluation of Poetry

If anything can be harder than the evaluation of children's prose, it is the evaluation of poetry. Poetry embodies strong emotions and feelings of children, and the teacher must be willing to accept a wide range of values.

As with prose, the teacher should focus on several important areas to insure consistency of evaluation. The areas include: content, originality, development, imagery, word selection, feeling, and mechanics. Figure 18 is an Evaluation Guide for Poetry.

Individual Skills Analysis Sheets

Skills analysis sheets provide a record of each student's strengths and weaknesses in writing. They take time, but not as much as one may initially think, and they can be quite helpful. An analysis sheet enables a teacher to focus on the individual skills of a student. It makes a teacher more sensitive to a child's writing and can help the teacher apply corrective efforts to those areas where the

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR WRITING

CONTENT:

- Are the ideas fresh, insightful, or original?
- If the topic (or plot) is familiar, does it have a new twist or is it treated from a fresh angle?
- Do the ideas relate to and expand the topic?
- Are the ideas fully developed?

ORGANIZATION:

- Does the paper have an opening and conclusion?
- Does it progress logically from beginning to end?
- Are the main ideas supported with appropriate details?
- Has the student used paragraphs?
- Are transitions smooth?
- If the piece is fiction, are the characters, settings, and situations realistic?

SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION:

- Are the sentences clear?
- Is the sentence structure varied?

USAGE:

- Are verb tenses formed correctly?
- Do subjects and verbs agree?
- Are pronouns used correctly?
- Does the paper use precise words in correct forms?

MECHANICS:

- Has the student used correct ending punctuation?
- Has the student used commas correctly?
- Has the student used capitalization correctly?
- Has the student used apostrophes for possessives and contractions?
- Has the student used quotation marks for dialogue?
- If the student used colons, semicolons, or dashes, were they used correctly?
- Has the student used underlining (italics) when necessary?

Figure 17

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR POETRY

CONTENT:

- Does the poem have anything to say?
- Does the poem have a sense of unity?
- Does the poem have a major theme?

ORIGINALITY:

- Does the poem offer any new ideas or thoughts?
- Does the poem look at life from a fresh perspective?

DEVELOPMENT:

- Does the poem focus on one subject? Or does it ramble?
- Is the subject developed in a logical manner?

IMAGERY:

- Does the poem paint pictures in the mind of the reader?
- Are the most effective words used?

FEELING:

- Does the poem evoke strong feelings and emotions?

MECHANICS:

- Are the mechanics consistent within the nature of the poem?

Figure 18

student is weak. Individual analysis sheets also are an excellent way to pass a student's writing record from one grade to another.

Analysis sheets can be elaborate, covering a variety of skills, or they can be quite simple, concentrating on a few major areas. Teachers should feel free to develop analysis sheets that fit their individual needs. A very simple sheet might consist of no more than the student's name, assignment, and date at the top, and the five areas of evaluation (taken from the Evaluation Guide mentioned earlier) listed along the left. Next to each area, strengths and weaknesses can be noted. There is also a space for corrective action you have taken. If there is nothing outstanding to note, the area is left blank. An example of this analysis sheet appears in Figure 19.

A more detailed sheet, in the form of a checklist, is shown in Figure 20. After each assignment the teacher checks the competency level of specific skills. There is also a space for noting corrective action taken.

While individual analysis sheets are valuable, they should never take the place of working closely with students. They should be used as a tool in helping your children learn to write better.

Evaluation is a difficult area for teachers of writing. No matter how objective we try to be, personal biases and feelings may creep into our evaluative efforts. Sometimes we just like one composition more than another, and score it higher. There are no easy, clearcut answers. It does, however, help if one considers that the ultimate purpose of evaluation should be to identify the weaknesses in a student's writing as a necessary step to improvement.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARING

Most students like to share their writing. They like to hear what others have to say about it. Sharing emphasizes the importance of writing, and can be a strong motivator for students. If students know that their writing will be exhibited, most will work harder. Thus sharing can build pride in one's work and foster self-respect.

There are many ways to share writing:

- Bulletin boards in class.
- Classroom and hallway displays.
- Reading sessions.
- Publication in class, school, or PTA newsletters or magazines.
- Producing class books of student writing, which may be displayed in school or the local library.
- Submitting student writing to local newspapers.
- Submitting student writing to magazines that publish the writing of children.

While sharing is important, you should never force a student to display his or her work if the student is strongly opposed. This may result in arousing negative emotions and may turn the student away from writing. Simply permit such students to complete their assignments, but do not display them.

STUDENT _____ DATE _____

ASSIGNMENT _____

INDIVIDUAL WRITING SKILLS ANALYSIS SHEET

Skills Analysis

Content

Organization

Usage

Sentence Construction

Mechanics

Figure 19

STUDENT _____ DATE _____

ASSIGNMENT _____

INDIVIDUAL WRITING SKILLS ANALYSIS SHEET

	usually	sometimes	seldom	not applicable
CONTENT:				
Ideas are original.				
Familiar topics are treated from fresh angles.				
Ideas relate to and expand the topic.				
Ideas are developed.				
ORGANIZATION:				
Compositions have an opening and conclusion.				
Writing progresses logically.				
Main ideas are supported with details.				
Paragraphs are used.				
Transitions are smooth.				
SENTENCE STRUCTURE:				
Sentence structure is correct.				
Sentences are clear.				
Sentence structure is varied.				

Figure 20

	usually	sometimes	seldom	not applicable
USAGE:				
Verb tenses are formed correctly.				
Subjects and verbs agree.				
Pronouns are used correctly.				
Precise words, in correct forms, are used.				
MECHANICS:				
Ending punctuation is correct.				
Commas are used correctly.				
Capitalization is used correctly.				
Apostrophes are used for possessives.				
Apostrophes are used for contractions.				
Quotation marks are used for dialogue.				
Colons are used correctly.				
Semicolons are used correctly.				
Dashes are used correctly.				
Underlining (italics) is used correctly.				
COMMENTS:				

Figure 20 (continued)

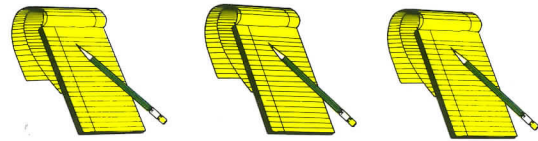
A FINAL WORD

It is not easy being a writing teacher. You will need plenty of patience and understanding. Some kids simply don't like to write no matter what you do. Others will show little growth after an entire year. But even here, you must realize that if you have planted the seeds of good habits and skills, those seeds will one day take root, grow, and perhaps blossom.

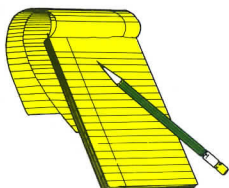
Writing takes time to master. But you can rest assured that by teaching students the fundamentals you have imparted valuable information to them.

Without question, writing is a vital skill. Writing demands thinking. When one formulates his or her thoughts in an attempt to write them down, he or she is analyzing and organizing those thoughts, a critical mental process essential to success in a modern world. As long as there is a need for new ideas, as long as there is a need to communicate, as long as we dream, there will be a need for writing.

This complete writing program provides teachers of grades 4-9 with over 250 exciting writing activities and reproducible worksheets for teaching students how to write effective compositions, essays, stories, poems, and more.



WRITING RESOURCE ACTIVITIES KIT



Each activity or worksheet is linked to such specific writing skills as generating ideas, outlining, describing scenes, character development, editing, and revising. And since children learn best when writing is meaningful to them, most of the activities and worksheets contained in this kit focus on their first-hand experiences and topics with which they are familiar.

For easy use, each of the Kit's 8 sections begins with background information on a particular set of skills, followed by:

TEACHING NOTES—Presented in a lesson-plan format, with objectives and ideas for development, these notes make it easy to use each worksheet as a complete, ready-to-teach assignment.

10 REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS—Each worksheet represents a self-contained lesson or project and includes a writing tip, directions for the student, and an optional extension for expanding the activity. And to encourage your students' visual imagery and imagination, lively, thought-provoking illustrations are featured on every worksheet.

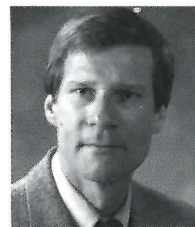
10 FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES—These highly imaginative writing assignments give students further practice in the particular skills covered in each section, and every activity includes teacher suggestions for easy implementation.

To make your job even easier, a Skills Index is provided to help you match writing assignments with the particular skills you want to develop, and there are several valuable information sheets including "Topics for Writing Tests," and an "Individual Skills Analysis Sheet."

The variety of teaching methods, strategies, and techniques used in this Kit makes it easy for you to adapt each exercise to students of different age and ability levels. This unique writing program will help you demonstrate to your students what good writing is, while guiding them through the entire writing process

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Robert Muschla has been teaching for thirteen years at the Appleby Elementary School in Spotswood, New Jersey. He has conducted numerous workshops for students, and has edited magazines of student writings. He holds a B.A. in History and a M.A. in Teaching from Trenton State College.



C-9707-5

ISBN 0-87628-970-7

