



# The Story Never Ends

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An Acadiana Writing Project and  
GEAR UP Collaboration



# National Writing Project

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It is part of the philosophy of the National (and Acadiana) Writing Project that writing should be taught at every grade level. While there is not one correct method or strategy to teaching writing, it is important for teachers to be well informed and effective in their teaching. There are numerous approaches to the teaching of writing and effective teacher-led professional development is one way to share various approaches to teaching writing.

# GEAR UP

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Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a competitive grant program of the U.S. Department of Education that increases the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education by providing states and local community-education partnerships six-to-seven year grants to offer support services to high-poverty, middle and high schools.

# Day 1

# Activity 1: Word of the Day

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# The Procedure

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## 1. How to Choose Words:

- The teacher may select words deliberately to correlate with the lesson or content for the day

- Students may all write one word (with their name on it) on a 3X5 index card and place their card in a “fishbowl” (I use a gallon size ziploc bag with the class period written on it) to be selected at random

# The Procedure

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2. JUST KEEP WRITING!

3. The word of the day is intended as a jumping off point to get students warmed up with writing. If the writing strays from the word, that is OKAY! They simply must keep writing, even if they are writing, “I don’t know what to say.”

# Activity 2: Six-word Memoirs

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# Classroom Applications

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--Bellringers

--Entry/Exit slip with academic vocabulary or topic/concept taught in class

# The Procedure

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1. Free write about a memory of an educational experience.
2. Show video clips(s) from Smith Magazine about six word memoirs.

\*\*Links can be found in the Google Drive folder.

3. Write a six word memoir.

# The Procedure

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4. Provide students with a restaurant menu (Social or Acme Taco are good examples) and have them create a word bank with 25 words from the menu.
5. Now, write a six word memoir using only words from the menu word bank.
6. Next, write a six word educational memoir with at least two words from the menu word bank.

# The Procedure

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7. Review the educational memory you wrote about at the beginning of the activity. Write a six word memoir of how the educational experience happened. Then, write a six word memoir of how you perhaps wish the experience happened.
8. Teachers: Write a six word philosophy of teaching.

# Background

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\*\*Additionally, feel free to share the background of the Ernest Hemingway story and how six word memoirs came to be.

-- “For sale: baby shoes, never worn.”

# Classroom Applications

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- Improving the blank page
- Condensed review of topic studied
- Entry/Exit slip

# Activity 3: POV Exercise

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# The Procedure

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1. Pass around a variety of photos to music. Students will choose one character from the photo (if there is only one person in the photo they may choose to be the photographer) and write from that person's point of view. This can be done with as many photos as desired.
2. Have students pick one narrative from the photos they wrote about and write a letter from their personal point of view to a character from one of the photos.



# The Procedure

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3. Discuss the process as a whole group. Ask:

-- Who wrote to which picture?

--Which character's point of view did you write from for the various pictures?

# Classroom Applications

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- literary character's perspective, historical events/scenes/people
- mini-lesson on letter writing

# Activity 4: Scenes that Move, Scenes that Matter

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# The Procedure

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1. Brainstorm/ freewrite for 2 minutes: What makes a scene, discuss: Dialogue, characters, conflict/action, setting, imagery ,etc.
2. Model note card (whole class sample):
3. Create individual scene on note card

# The Procedure

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On the notecard:

- i. Setting: interior or exterior? When?
- ii. Plot: Keep it simple--one sentence (try for it to be 6 words or fewer).
- iii. Imagery: include three specific images, using different senses
- iv. Emotional conflict: +/- There should be some sort of change in emotion.
- v. Physical conflict: >/< There should be a change in physical action.

# The Procedure

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4. Take a blank sheet of paper, turn it sideways, and fold evenly into thirds with the following symbols at the top of the page.

+>	+ → - / >/<	-/<

# The Procedure

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5. Now, draw the scene in three images (like a cartoon strip). You may include one sentence of context for each new image.

**\*\*Optional:** Write out the entire scene now that it has been broken down.

**\*\*Optional:** Allow students to work in groups to recreate/act out scene.

# Classroom Applications

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- creative writing, scene writing
- act out an argumentative paper: consider each main point as a scene
- scene from literature or historical event for comprehension



# Day 2

# Activity 1: Word of the Day

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# Activity 2: Letter to Self with revision activity

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# The Procedure

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1. Have students write a letter to their future self. You may choose to do this several ways depending on when you do it.

We suggest:

- a. beginning of the year to return half way or at the end of the year
- b. end of the school year to return at the start of the following school year

# The Procedure

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2. Depending on when you assign your letter and what you want your students to focus on will determine the content. You may choose to:

- a. have students write about what they hope to do this school year
- b. what they were successful at during the year
- c. what they hope to improve upon in the future

# The Procedure

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\*\*For our activity, write:

- 2 things you did well or enjoyed in regards to writing last year
- 2 things you could improve upon in regards to writing
- 1 goal for your writing club next year

# The Procedure

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3. Read the Raymond Carver poem, “Loafing”

4. The poem is exactly 66 words. Instruct students to cut 11 words from the poem.

\*You may choose to have a few volunteers read their new poem or have students share in a small-group setting.

5. Continue the process of removing 11 words from the poem at a time until only 11 words remain.

6. Have all students share their remaining 11 words in their new poem.

# The Procedure

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7. Now, have students cut down their letter to future self down to just 11 words. Students may then transfer this to the back of a postcard or seal it in an envelope.

8. The teacher will return (in class or through the mail) the letter later to remind the student of their goals and plans for academic success.



# Classroom Applications

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- Beginning or closing activity for the school year
- Ice breaker to get to know students
- Means of creating a class goal or motto for the year

\*\*This could be connected to six-word stories!

# Activity 3: Anecdotal Storytelling

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# The Procedure

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1. Character sketch: Write a 5-6 sentence character sketch. (This could also be a bulleted list.)
    - a. Think of a character you want to tell a story about.
    - b. What is their gender? Age?
    - c. What are some background details about your character?
- \*\*Note:** You can incorporate this with POV exercise and expand character sketch from POV quickwrite OR you can create an entirely new character.

# The Procedure

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2. You may choose to share the short story, “Why Don’t You Dance?” by Raymond Carver.

3. Make list of 25 concrete items your character owns/ has owned in their lifetime.

\*\*Keep these items simple. No explanation necessary.

\*\*This is a means to characterize people and make character richer by seeing the things they carry/have.

# The Procedure

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4. Find a partner and swap work (character sketch and list of items).

Read their character sketch, select one item from the list and tell the story of the character and that item.

Write from the POV of a friend of the character (or someone else that would know them..co-worker, family, etc.)

5. Write 3-4 paragraphs of how that person acquired the item. Have fun with this!

# The Procedure

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6. Return your partner's writing and the paragraphs you wrote about how their character came to own that item. Then, write a "rebuttal story" from your character's POV.

This is a correction to your partner's story of how your character **really** acquired the item.

\*\*Note: You want to pull elements from your partner's writing but change the story to how your character experienced it (rather than how their friend retold it).

# Classroom Applications

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- have students gain a deeper understanding of a literary character or historical figure
- a means to have students utilize rich, more descriptive language

# Activity 4: How to Scene Writing

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# The Procedure

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1. On a new sheet of paper, create a “how to” list for a simple, concrete task. For ex: making a cup of coffee. Try to keep this between 5-7 steps. Collect this paper when everyone is finished making their list.
2. On a separate sheet of paper, write about a conflict between two people with just dialogue between the two people.

# The Procedure

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3. Shuffle “how to” papers and redistribute so that no one has their own list.

4. Now, rewrite the argument scene you have while the two people are completing the “how to” activity.

\*Note: The how to steps make up the actions happening in the story. One person is not showing the other how to do the activity.

# The Procedure

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5. Now, rewrite the argument scene a third time, this time, without any dialogue. If you can still incorporate the “how to,” do so, but if not you can change the scene completely.

**\*\*You are showing that there is an argument through body language.**

# Classroom Applications

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- In creative writing, requires action to be included within the conflict to make stronger, more purposeful writing
- “How to” could be a classroom procedure or a skill taught in class that the students would have to be able to explain. For ex: How to participate in a Socratic Seminar; How to use a power saw

Day 3

# Activity 1: Word of the Day

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# Activity 2: Action of a Sentence and So Much Depends Upon

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# The Procedure

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1. Share the poem, “Young Poets,” by Nicanor Parra.
2. Fold a blank sheet of paper in half vertically, keep it folded and on one side make a list of 10 nouns
3. On the next side: think of a job/occupation and come up with 10 verbs that someone in that job would do

\*Note: If you can't think of 10 verbs for that job, you may think of a second job to pull verbs from.



# The Procedure

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4. Open your paper: look for unusual, surprising combinations between noun and verb (Draw lines to connect 1-3 combinations).

\*Remember: You want to avoid cliches or obvious pairings (the dog barks) but you still want the new sentence to make sense.

# The Procedure

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5. You may choose to ask students: Have you ever gone fishing and not caught anything? If so, what do people say when that happens?

The fish weren't biting.

A bad day fishing beats a good day working.

People do not say that they are bad fishers though. Likewise, we should not say that we are bad writers.

Also, note that students **have improved the blank page.**

# The Procedure

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6. Share poem, “The Red Wheelbarrow,” by William Carlos Williams out loud. Think about imagery as the poem is recited. Then, everyone will add one image to the poem that reflects the image they see in their head. \*\*Note: Remember that imagery connects to all five senses.

7. Share copy of poem to discuss structure: Stanzas, words per line, shape of stanzas (imagism)

# The Procedure

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8. Have cd with a variety of different songs (one minute clips of 10 different songs is what we did) and instruct students to write continuously for each song, indicating a break between songs and focusing on images. The writing should come from memories that the music evokes in the listener. Try to connect to all of the five senses. Writing does not have to be in complete sentences.

# The Procedure

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9. Look over your writing and select five concrete images/phrases that you wrote that stood out to you from the memories evoked by the songs.
10. Write a poem following the structure of “The Red Wheelbarrow.” You may begin with *So much depends upon* and create a poem using the images just circled. Also, feel free to go back to noun-verb combinations for poem inspiration.

# Classroom Applications

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- improving the blank page
- deeper understanding of imagery (using all the senses)
- means to create a word or phrase bank (songs to music) to build vocabulary
- to strengthen characterization

# Activity 3: Imitation is the Highest form of Flattery

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# The Procedure

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1. Freewrite about a group activity you have participated in (dance class, teacher in-service, band camp) for 3 minutes.
2. Share the passage from *The Things They Carried* (in Google Drive.)



# The Procedure

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3. Go back to the free write and rewrite the activity while you mimic the structure of the novel passage for things carried. Include both the general things everyone carried and the specific things individuals carried. Include both concrete and abstract things carried.

4. Share samples from other authors with distinct styles in various genres. Rewrite the piece again where they mimic a different piece.

# Classroom Applications

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-- lesson on structure, voice, and style

-- historical perspectives of various individuals and groups of people

# Activity 4: Out in Out



# The Procedure

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1. Students will participate in a gallery walk. While they are viewing the art they should create a word bank of 25 words that they see during their viewing.
2. Then, they will pick a piece of art that stood out to them. They will write a descriptive narrative of the piece using concrete details--only description at this point.

# The Procedure

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3. Share poem “The Simple Truth” and discuss the three different sections.
4. Have students write about a memory the artwork evoked without talking about the piece of artwork and the connection (that comes in part 3).

# The Procedure

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5. Students will re-examine the final part of the poem.
6. Write about the connection made between the art and the memory for the third part of the writing.

# Classroom Applications

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- deconstruction activity for argumentative paper (research, personal connection, good opening paragraph of paper)
- could be combined with 6 word stories (the out) with a text summary or personal connection
- POV activity

# Day 4



# Activity 1: Word of the Day

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# Activity 2: The Sixth Sense



# The Procedure

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1. Make a word bank of abstract words/phrases.
2. Write: “smells like...” “looks like...” “feels like...” “tastes like...” “sounds like...”
3. Select an abstraction from the word bank and clarify what it means with specific, concrete details.
4. Have students mix different abstractions with various sensory details.

# Classroom Applications

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- requires students to use stronger imagery
- allows for creative and abstract thinking

# Activity 3: Truth or Fiction

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# The Procedure

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1. Students will write one true story or experience and one false story or experience.
2. They will share one of the pieces in their small group.
3. Group members will be able to ask the reader three questions each that they will be expected to answer.

# The Procedure

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4. Group members will guess if the story was true or false. The reader will reveal if the story was real or not.
5. Repeat this process until everyone has shared one of their pieces.
6. Students can revise one of their pieces to make it a stronger (true or false) story.

# Classroom Applications

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- requires students to be more detailed and specific in their writing
- can be used as a review game



# Activity 4: Episodic Nonfiction

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# The Procedure

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1. Draw a circle in the center of the paper and draw four concentric circles around it. Write the word “Education” in the center circle.
2. Each additional circle represents an age range. Write memories associated with learning during those years.
3. Choose one memory from each circle that you remember vividly and can write about.

# The Procedure

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4. Share “Ten Stories About Coyotes I Never Told You” with a focus on motif and lack of transitions.
5. Go through 8 rules of episodic nonfiction.
6. Explain how episodes should be connected thematically and with a recurring motif and give students time to write their four episodes.

# Classroom Applications

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- deeper understanding of *theme* and *motif* for an ELA class
- storytelling
- recounting historical events, could be paired with performance

Thanks!