

Acadiana Writing Project: Crafting Creativity in the Modern Classroom



H. Michelle Kreamer and Dr. Toby Daspit

National Writing Project

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.

Day 1:

Activity 1: Word of the Day

The Procedure

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

--JUST KEEP WRITING!

--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.”

Classroom Applications

--Bellringers

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

Activity 2: Letter to Self (with revision exercise)

The Procedure

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

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

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

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

- 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:
**“All I really needed
to know...”**
**(with 6 word
stories)**

—

The Procedure

1. Assign students a piece of informational text to read (this could be done independently, small-group, jigsawed, etc.)
2. When they are finished they will write a six-word summary of the text, followed by a four-five sentence expanded summary of the text.
3. Write personal connection to text in four-five sentences.
4. Condense personal connection to one final six-word story/reflection.

Classroom Applications

-- POV exercise in English /ELA courses: two summaries are from various character perspectives or perspective of character and reader

-- Informational writing: compare two similar events, pieces of writing, individuals, etc.

Ex: Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi

-- Use to debate two different sides of a controversial issue

Want more information on six words stories?

Visit the following links to read more about six word stories and check out SMITH Magazine online for more examples:

<http://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/>

<http://sixwordmemoirs.com/about/category/six-word-memoirs-in-schools/>

<http://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/teens/index.php>

Activity 4: Bless Press Address

The Procedure

1. Tomorrow you will be placed into writing groups. In these groups you will share your writing from the week and receive feedback from your group members.
2. In writing groups: everyone gets a turn to share something out loud to their group members. Each listener will write comments, feedback, etc. to give to the reader when they are finished sharing their piece.

The Procedure

3. Depending on the stage of writing the piece is in, the reader may choose to have their listeners BLESS, PRESS, or ADDRESS their work.

- Bless → offer compliments and positive feedback; maybe the reader is self-conscious or the piece is in its very early stages
- Press → offers constructive criticism on any and all aspects of the piece; the reader might be more confident or in the final stages of revising

The Procedure

- Address → this is a specific aspect that the reader wants feedback from listeners about; this could be characterization, dialogue, setting the scene--anything the reader feels they need to focus/improve upon

Classroom Applications

-- this allows for purposeful peer-revision for both creative and academic writing

--by keeping students in the same writing groups for a set amount of time (maybe one grading period, semester, or the whole year) they are building relationships with their peers and working with a variety of people

Day 2:

Activity 1: Word of the Day

Activity 2: How to Scene Writing

The Procedure

1. Begin with writing about a conflict between two people. Keep this broad. For ex: A father and son fight about responsibility.
2. On a separate sheet of paper, create a “how to” list for a simple, concrete task. For ex: making a cup of coffee. Try to keep this around 6-7 steps.

The Procedure

3. Collect these two papers from everyone in the room. Shuffle them up and redistribute. Once papers are redistributed everyone should have two new papers-- preferably from two different people.

4. Now, write out the scene with the new conflict you have while the two people are completing the “how to” activity.

Classroom Applications

--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

Activity 3: POV Exercise

The Procedure

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

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

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

Activity 4: Anecdotal Storytelling

The Procedure

1. Character sketch: Write a 5-6 sentence character sketch.
 - 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

2. Share passage out loud from *The Things They Carried*.

**Physical items the soldiers carry are a means to characterize them & to connect to their fears related to war.

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

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 1st person POV how the character came to own that particular item.

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

The Procedure

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

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 you saw it.

Classroom Applications

-- have students gain a deeper understanding of a literary character or historical figure

-- a means to have students utilize rich, more descriptive language

Activity 5: Writing Groups

Day 3:

Activity 1: Word of the Day

Activity 2: Episodic Nonfiction

The Procedure

1. Draw a circle in the center of a sheet of paper. Then draw four concentric circles around it. In the center circle write “Education.”

2. Each additional circle represents an age range. (adjust age ranges accordingly for your students)

0-5 → write 6 memories associated with learning during this age range; 6-12, 13-18, 19- and up adding one more memory for each additional circle

**These memories can be ANY type of learning.

The Procedure

3 Have students choose 1 memory from each circle they can recall most vividly.

4. Share/read “Ten Stories About Coyotes I Never Told You,” with a focus on the coyote motif and the lack of transitions

5. Go through the 8 rules of episodic fiction.

Classroom Applications

-- allows room for creative nonfiction writing to happen in the classroom; can be used at the beginning of the year to get to know students better

-- can be modified to review “big ideas” from units of study:

- Literary works or time periods in ELA
- Wartime events in Social Studies

Activity 3: Scenes that Move, Scenes that Matter



The Procedure

This activity is a way to ground students in their stories with definitive scenes (beginning, middle, and end).

This can be used for creative writing, personal narratives, argumentative essays, analysis.

*Note: You may choose to have students pass their note card after each addition to the card or you may choose to allow them to keep their card throughout the activity.

The Procedure

1. On a 3x5 index card write:
 - a. Setting → write where and when your scene takes place (interior or exterior, time of day, etc.)
 - b. Plot → write a one-sentence description of what is happening in the setting (try to keep this to two characters)
 - c. Imagery → Create three images that are happening in the scene (use ALL senses)

The Procedure

d. Character → A conflict needs to be happening, some sort of emotional change. (+/- indicates some kind of change)

Ex: She starts off confident and ends up unsure.

e. Physicality → A physical change needs to occur; the more it connects to the emotion, the better. (>/< indicates a physical change)

The Procedure

f. With a blank, horizontal sheet of paper, divide it into thirds and use the following markers to indicate change in the scene:

+ >

+ → - / > → <

- <

g. Have students try the scene in three moments.

The Procedure

h. Write a six-seven sentence summary of the scene.

****Differentiation:** A group of 3-4 students can share their scenes, practice them, and act them out in front of the class.

Classroom Application

- creative writing, the parts of a story, the writing process
- means to review a text or literary work studied

Activity 4: Writing Groups

Day 4:

Activity 1: Word of the Day

Activity 2: Independent Writing Time

Activity 3: Writing Group

Activity 4: Author's Chair

Activity 5: Final Reflection
