

Find Your Topic

Adapted from *6+1 Traits of Writing: Complete Guide for Primary Grades*

LESSON

1

GRADES K–2

If you believe that all children are writers, you also believe each has stories to tell, thoughts to share. It's just a matter of coaxing them out. You can teach students where ideas come from through modeling. In this lesson, students come up with four different ways of writing about a simple, everyday event.

MATERIALS:

Overhead projector or chart paper, drawing paper, markers, pencils,
Worksheet 1, Studenttreasures Publishing Kit

WHAT TO DO:

1. Order your free Studenttreasures Publishing Kit. As you complete these lessons, your kit will be mailed to you and arrive when your students are ready to start publishing their writing.

2. Ask the class, "What has happened so far today that we could write about?" and list all the things the students say. Make sure you write down what they observed and learned. You may start with an observation about yourself. "Remember when we were reading *Double Trouble in Walla Walla* and I laughed so hard I started to snort? And then Carlos joined in and had to hold his sides because they hurt from laughing? I love it when a story makes me feel that way."

3. Once you've picked a topic to develop, distribute drawing paper. Have students draw and caption it on their own. Encourage them to re-create the topic visually: "Let's draw a picture of what that looked like and see if we can do it so clearly it makes us laugh all over again. I'll come around and help you caption your pictures with the words you want to add."

4. Once students have completed their drawings, bring the class back together and create a list of new topics inspired by the original topic: "Let's make a list of all the other times you can remember laughing hard in

and out of school." Post the list so students can refer to it for future writing topics. Distribute **Worksheet 1**. Have students create their own list of topics inspired by the class activity. Encourage them to add to their list as they think of new ideas. We want writers to know that good topics don't just happen; they evolve over time.

5. Using the list for inspiration, have students come up with a story idea. First, walk them through a series of questions: Could we write a story that has someone laughing in it? Who would be in this story? What would he or she be doing? What would happen? Display the story elements or key details that surface from this discussion so students have material to draw from in case they choose to develop the story later. Then have them develop their own story ideas on their worksheets.

6. Explain to students that if they decide to develop the story, they will need to be sure they have all the information they need to address the topic accurately and completely. Ask, for example, "Does anyone ever wonder why people say laughing is good for you? What do you suppose happens to the human body when we laugh? How would we find the answers to our questions? Who might know?" Although we know young students won't be using the media center to do extensive research, they can ask an adult or older student their questions. They can make a phone call, look up simple facts, and report back what they find. You may want to assign students to investigate facts related to their stories as a homework assignment.

Prewriting with primary students should be fun. Exploring possible topics, considering what they already know, figuring out what they need to know, narrowing down the ideas, reflecting on personal experience, drawing what they see in their minds—young writers can do all of these things. And in the process, they discover what they have to say about what matters to them.

After completing all three lessons, gather your students' work into a hardcover book using the free **Studenttreasures Publishing Program**. Now your students will have the wonderful experience of seeing their words in print. For more about publishing, please visit studenttreasures.com or call 888-393-6528.

PUBLISH IT!

Find Your Story Topic

WORKSHEET

1

GRADES K-2

Make a list of story topics:

Write a story idea using one of your story topics. Use details, characters, and actions.

FACTS BOX

Think about all the information you will need to tell your story. Talk to an adult or do some research to gather facts to add to your story.

Revising Student Work

Adapted from *6+1 Traits of Writing: Complete Guide for Primary Grades*

LESSON

2

GRADES K–2

Focusing on one trait of writing during revision gives students a powerful mental model to apply to their own work. So here is a simple lesson you can use to model revision.

MATERIALS:

Overhead projector/board, **Worksheet 2**

WHAT TO DO:

1. On the board or overhead, write a poorly written short paragraph that repeats words, such as: "I love spring. Spring is the best. Spring is fun and I love it. When I think about spring I think about all the fun things about it." Read your piece aloud. Students may giggle because they recognize that using the same word over and over isn't effective. Great! That's what you are hoping for.

2. Ask, "Boys and girls, did the words I used in my writing help you to picture this time of the year?" They will most likely tell you—in their own words—that because you used *spring* so often, without the use of specific, supporting details, they found the paragraph distracting and not very visual.

3. Ask, "What does the word *spring* make you think of?" On the board or overhead, make a list of all the ideas students contribute. Spring is when:

- the flowers start to bloom
- the grass turns green
- the cows have little baby calves
- I get to play baseball
- the days start getting longer
- *American Idol* is on TV
- we can go outside to play again
- I can get my bike out and ride to my friend's apartment

4. Move students through a series of questions, such as:

- What does spring smell like? (fresh, wet, warm, tingly)
- What does spring taste like? (cake with gooey frosting for my birthday in April; barbecued hot dogs at the T-ball game; sandy, like when we go to the beach for spring break)

- What does spring feel like? (breezy, hot and cold, windy, itchy, sunny, rainy)

5. On the board or overhead, revise your short paragraph, thinking aloud as you go. Explain which words and descriptions you're going to use and which you will save for later. Walk the walk. Show students that you consider their ideas, but reserve the right to decide what's best for your next draft. Explain to students why you are following their advice sometimes but want to make your own decisions at others. That way, you link sharing and revision in students' minds and reinforce process over product. Your next draft may look more like this: "Spring is barbecued hot dogs at the T-ball game and baby calves taking first steps in the open, grassy fields. Spring is when the air smells like the beach and freshly mowed grass. Spring is birthday candles and gooey chocolate frosting. I love spring."

6. Ask students if they feel the second version is better than the first and why. Use phrases that reinforce the word-choice trait such as "painting a picture," "creative use of everyday words," "sensory images," and so on. Prewriting with primary students should be fun. Exploring possible topics, considering what they already know, figuring out what they need to know, narrowing down the ideas, reflecting on personal experience, drawing what they see in their minds—young writers can do all of these things. And in the process, they discover what they have to say about what matters to them.

7. When students have completed a first draft, use **Worksheet 2** to guide students in revising their writing. Make sure you select one area to focus on at a time so that students are not overwhelmed by trying to revise all the traits of writing at once. Parents and/or teachers may need to work with younger students to help them read and consider the questions on each of the revision slips.

When you model revision for your students, you read your work aloud, ask for feedback, question yourself, and then work to clarify the odd bits that don't make sense while seeking new ways to say what's on your mind and in your heart. Lessons don't get more important than that, do they?

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PUBLISH IT!

Revision Slips

WORKSHEET

2

GRADES K-2

Teachers: When revising, choose one writing trait to work on at a time. After your students have finished their first drafts, provide them with one of the slips below to help them revise their work based on questions about ideas, organization, voice, word choice, or sentence fluency.

IDEAS

- Does my writing make sense? _____
- Do I know my topic? _____
- Is my writing interesting? _____



ORGANIZATION

- Do I start off strong? _____
- Is everything in the right order? _____
- Are similar things together? _____



VOICE

- Can you hear me in the writing? _____
- Can you tell that I care about this idea? _____
- Have I added some sparkle? _____



WORD CHOICE

- Do these words sound and feel right? _____
- Have I tried new words? _____
- Have I painted a picture with my words? _____



SENTENCE FLUENCY

- Can I read my writing aloud? _____
- Do my words and phrases go together? _____
- Have I tried to use sentences? _____

Preparing for Publication

Adapted from *6+1 Traits of Writing: Complete Guide for Primary Grades*

LESSON

3

GRADES K–2

Creating text with visual appeal is challenging for young writers. It's hard for them to make everything fit together in a clean, polished way. So here are some clear guidelines you can share with your students.

MATERIALS:

Worksheet 3, markers, Studenttreasures Publishing Kit

WHAT TO DO:

1. Explain to students: *Now that we have completed drafts of our stories, we are going to publish them!* Publishing is an important step because it provides evidence of the students' position as writers. Now your students will prepare to have their work bound into a hardcover book by the Studenttreasures Publishing Program.

2. Explain that before they can publish their work they have to make sure to present it in as clear and neat a way as possible. Write the following list on the board:

- I have white space (or margins) all around my writing and pictures.
- I formed all my letters carefully.
- My writing is neat and clear.
- I left space in between words and went to the next line when I ran out of space.
- I drew my pictures carefully.
- I only have a few cross-outs or ink spots.

3. Explain to students that presentation relates to how the writing looks on paper. Tell them that carefully presented writing shows that the writer cares about her or his work. Discuss each bullet point (from step 2) with students. Make sure they understand the importance of each presentation point.

4. Provide students with manuscript pages. Allow them to take time to slowly and carefully write their stories on the manuscript pages. Note: Students should also do a draft of their drawings and create their final drawings as they are preparing to publish.

5. When students have completed copying down their stories, distribute **Worksheet 3**. Have students assess their presentation using My First Scoring Guide for Presentation. For younger students, you may want to do this as a group or class activity, or assign it for homework.

6. When your class's work is complete, submit your manuscript materials to Studenttreasures for publishing into a hardbound book. When students receive their completed books, have a fun publishing party where students can share their work and celebrate their accomplishments.

Now your students will have the wonderful experience of seeing their words in print. For more about publishing, please visit studenttreasures.com or call 888-393-6528.

PUBLISH IT!

My First Scoring
Guide for

Presentation

WORKSHEET

3

GRADES K-2

Strong

I've Got It!

- My paper is neat—no smudges or cross-outs.
- My letters are printed and written clearly.
- I have margins that make a frame.

Developing

On My Way

- My paper can be read, but it's not my best.
- Some of my letters are well done, but some are not.
- My margins work better in some places but not others.

Beginning

Just Starting

- My paper is very hard to read.
- My letters are a mess.
- I forgot to use margins.

Teachers: Share this student-friendly scoring guide with students when they are ready to assess their writing presentation.