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This paper addresses the viability of the Writing Workshop in the high school classroom. Though many theorists and educators have written on the success of using the workshop method to teach writing, most research has been focused on primary grades. This paper seeks to address the practicality of using the workshop approach in secondary grades.

The literature review reflects on the current research on teaching writing. In the literature review, I consider current theories on teaching writing. Beginning with a broad perspective of writing pedagogy, I look at the theoretical reasons why the writing workshop is effective. This section also looks at the projected benefits of using the writing workshop, along with suggestions for implementing the workshop in a classroom.

My own field research shows the process of implementing the writing workshop in two high school classrooms. Using primarily qualitative research, I sought to explore questions of the practicality of using the workshop approach for academic writing as well as personal writing. I recorded the outcomes of applying the writing workshop in my classrooms over five months. The research includes the process of setting up the workshop, and samples from the study. My findings reflect successful practices and further questions for using the writing workshop in secondary classrooms.

UTILIZING THE WRITING WORKSHOP IN THE
HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Imagine two classrooms. In the first, students are facing the whiteboard at the front of the room. A few notes, perhaps word web, covers the board. Students are writing, vigorously, while the teacher observes, answering questions by individual students and making overarching statements when a question is by numerous students. These students are learning how to write.

In the classroom across the hall, students sit in groups of four or five, desks forming small circles throughout the room. The students are writing, vigorously, talking with those in their groups and reading sections of their papers out loud. The teacher moves around the room, answering questions, listening to students' papers, giving immediate feedback, encouragement, and direction. These students are also leaning how to write.

What is the difference between these classrooms? Does the difference even matter, as long as both groups of students learn to write? The difference between the classrooms is that the second classroom is utilizing the Writing Workshop approach to teaching writing, while the first classroom is following a more traditional approach. One of the questions that this study seeks to answer is whether or not this difference matters, if students learn to write regardless.

Research indicates that using the workshop method produces better results in making students stronger, independent writers. The questions that naturally follow this observation are 1) in what ways can the workshop method be adapted to our increasingly technology driven classrooms and 2) how can workshopping work in skill and assessment driven curriculum? To both of these questions, I answer with an emphatic, “Yes!” The study will illustrate how the current research on Writing Workshops can be effectively applied in today’s secondary classrooms.

Research on Writing Workshops is available from the late 1970s to a reemergence in the 1990s and early 2000s. Despite the longevity of study, many teachers still do not use this approach in their own classrooms. A study published in 1981 by the National Council of English Teachers reports that “students were spending only 3 percent of their class time working on essays or other writing of at least paragraph length,” even though teachers consider writing a major component of their courses (Applebee 99). Donald Graves observed in 2003 that “teachers are expected to teach twice as much curriculum within the same number of hours under the scrutiny of any number of classroom specialists” (“What I’ve Learned from Teachers of Writing” 88). With these pressures, even if teachers agree with the principles behind the method, curriculum restraints, crowded classrooms, and looming standardized assessments discourage teachers from transitioning.

However, the attention of educators has begun to shift to a more student-centered, technology-based classroom dynamic. In seeking to answer the important questions about the practicality of using the Workshop method in today’s classrooms, I have implemented

the workshop method into the two sections of composition that I teach. I selected these courses for several reasons. First, since these classes contain students at a variety of academic levels, I can see the overall effectiveness of this method at the secondary level. Second, since the writing class curriculum addresses academic writing rather than creative writing, I can see if this method is effective for reaching these objectives. Throughout the first and third quarters of the school year, I will use surveys, interviews, personal journals and reflections, and progress comparisons to evaluate the effectiveness of workshopping in these classrooms. Tying technology into the research method, I will also use digital data gathering methods, such as Google Forms, to gather feedback.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“I hate Writing.”

“Writing is too hard.”

“Writing is hard and boring.”

“I’m good at grammar, but I can’t write.”

“I’m a bad writer.”

These comments are heard by English teachers on a regular basis. Paired with the less than encouraging statement from parents, “Good luck getting him to write,” many times it seems that the English teacher’s battle is lost before it even begins. We seem doomed to have students hate writing. We need a new perspective if there is any hope of changing our students’ (and their parents’) opinion of composition. By looking at established theories and methods, we can clearly see the successes and failures of our pedagogy. If we intend to reach our students, making them life-long writers (and consequentially readers), we need to pursue a teaching method that both establishes students in their roles as writers and readers and gives them the tools necessary to succeed in those roles. The Writing Workshop is one model that allows teachers to accomplish this goal.

In trying to diagnose the difficulty with teaching writing, I saw inconsistencies and extremes in practice. Many of our pedagogy problems extend from the fact that there

are many different approaches, and that the subject is complex by nature. English teachers integrate literature, composition, grammar, vocabulary, and study skills into one course, and often just do not have the class time to develop each area thoroughly. And these are not new problems. The first headline of *The English Journal*, a publication begun in 1912 by the National Council of Teachers of English, was entitled, “Can Good Composition Teaching Be Done Under Present Conditions?” In the article, Edwin Hopkins supports his simple answer, “No.” With the separation of composition into its own discipline, Hopkins saw immediately that teachers were under prepared and ill-equipped to do justice to the subject. The article reveals that the same problem persists from 1912 to current day: teachers are placed under too high of a standard with too little help to make any headway in teaching composition. Steve Graham points out in the opening chapter of *Best Practices in Writing Instruction*, second edition, that teaching practices for writing instruction have not progressed very far since the publishing of the book's first edition. In fact, he reports that past third grade, little time is devoted for teaching writing and students spend little time writing academically or personally. Despite the claim that writing is an essential skill for students, actual educational practice does little to support this claim (3). These problems with teaching writing carry over into students' perceptions of writing.

The Extremes of Past Practices

Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy have all gathered together under the banner of writing. Steven Lynn separates the disciplines of Composition and Rhetoric by

defining composition as "the process of writing" and rhetoric as "the art of persuasion"

(1). While these terms have complex and varying definitions, Lynn's succinct

descriptions highlight the difference between the terms. Prior to the 19th Century,

*Rhetoric was taught as a separate discipline. In the 1800s, universities such as Harvard began requiring all students to study basic writing. These areas have been necessarily linked ever since (Roberson 29). According to Edwin Hopkins' 1912 article, composition was seen as a necessary skill to develop, though little attention was given to developing the skill. Even the professors felt underprepared and ill-equipped to adequately teach this new discipline (Hopkins 2). The result was an overemphasis on form and conventions, and a denial of individual style and process.

Over the next century, composition teachers went through pendulum swings of theories and methods. During the early years of teaching composition, students were often divided into groups based on their writing abilities, ignoring both the different types of writers and the need for clear instruction on how to write. Linda Fernsten and Mary Reda point out that "before the 1980s, instructors and students alike often assumed those who struggled with academic writing tasks were somehow deficient, stunted, or underdeveloped in their growth as writers" (172). Even in our current time, writing is often reduced to a list of skills to check off a sheet. Such beliefs stereotype our students and stifle our ability to reach them.

Students often struggle with writing because of the process involved and because of the subject matter / content that writing involves. Educators have often favored either content (at the expense of process) or process (at the expense of content). Content area

teachers require students to write, focusing primarily on the ideas that students present. The process that students use is of little concern, and little time is spent addressing it. Two extreme practices have dominated the teaching of composition in our classrooms. The first is writing as a measurable skill (Graham 3). In this approach, writing is taught with the same methods as other skills. The teacher tells the students what to do, perhaps provides an example, and then the students model it. Teaching writing in this manner involves formulaic writing, such as the five paragraph essay, and rigid adherence to Standard English conventions. Writing is taught as a series of steps to following a particular order, formal outlines are emphasized, and red pens bleed on rough drafts and final drafts as conventions are emphasized over style. Or perhaps, as I experienced in high school, a point is deducted for every mistake, regardless of its impact on the work as a whole. Writing purely as a skill dwells on deficiencies rather than successes.

The other extreme practice is writing solely as personal expression. There are no rights or wrongs, conventions can be abandoned, and the only grade is effort. Will Fitzhugh rightly asks in response to this extreme, “Where’s the Content?” While not underselling the importance of individual style and voice, or personal connection with writing, Fitzhugh highlights the disservice teachers do to students by only teaching through personal experience. He states, “Limiting students to thinking and writing almost entirely about themselves in school is, well, limiting” (45). Thinking and writing beyond themselves is an important aspect of education that should not be ignored. Students need a balance of personal, reflective writing and content-rich writing.

Co-existing within these extremes are the different writing expectations held by instructors. My students frequently point out to me how different it is to write for me than to write for their History teacher, and they are correct. I tend to look for fluency, expression, and other stylistic features of their writing, as well as the content. Their History teacher is solely interested in content. This observation is not a criticism of her teaching methods – she is very clear with the students about expectations and consistent and fair with her grading. But since she does not view herself as a writing teacher, rather a History teacher who uses writing as a form of assessment, the criteria are different. And while we might expect there to be a difference between disciplines, even among English teachers, variations in meaning abound. For one teacher, “prewriting” means some form of graphic organizer for students to fill in, while just down the hall, “prewriting” means conducting the research required to write an essay. These variances in expectations do not endear the writing process to our students. Instead, they create self-conscious and self-doubting writers, as students focus more on what an individual teacher wants from them rather than on what they as a writer can accomplish through their writing. Students would benefit more from being taught how to navigate the writing process as it applies to their own style, and how to use their style to reach an audience, rather than memorizing what each individual teacher values as the “right” way to write.

A Brief Look at Composition Theory and Pedagogy

Why am I teaching my students to write? What am I trying to accomplish? What should my students achieve through writing? Before adapting any one method of teaching

composition, the writing teacher must answer these questions. Steve Graham identifies several benefits of writing in Chapter One of *Best Practices in Writing Instruction*. Writing is an avenue to reaching personal and academic goals, is a way to influence peers, is crucial for learning and communicating, aids students in reading comprehension, and builds reading skills (5-6). The teaching of writing should direct students towards these goals. However, without a proper understanding of composition theory and teaching methods, teachers are bound to repeat the same extremes of the past. Graham writes that the problem is not that teachers lack the knowledge for how to teach writing, but rather than an appropriate understanding of "why writing is important" and "how writing develops" is missing (4). He claims these standards are developed with objectives that do not match a true understanding of how students learn to write, and therefore create false expectations and standards (4). Changes in state standards increase teachers' confusion and frustration about what to focus on in the classroom. For example, North Carolina adopted Common Core standards in 2010, However, revisions to the Standard Course of Study are already underway to move away from the Common Core Standards, and will be implemented in the coming school years (Department of Public Instruction). With such changing expectations, we cannot be surprised that not all teachers have a clear understanding of why we teach writing, or what we are trying to accomplish through teaching writing. Teachers need realistic expectations and a clear purpose when approaching composition in the classroom.

To get a good picture of where we need to go, we first must look at where we are. In his article "Four Philosophies of Composition," Richard Fulkerson breaks composition

theory into the categories expressive, mimetic, rhetorical, and formalistic (4). He uses these categories to classify theorist and the teaching styles that accompany different theories. “Expressive” is the term that Fulkerson uses to classify theories that emphasize the writer. “Mimetic” describes theories that focus on the relationship of writing with reality. “Rhetorical” is the term Fulkerson uses when the reader, and the writing’s effect on the reader, is emphasized. Finally, “formalistic” indicates philosophies focused on the internal work, such as traits. Fulkerson goes on to describe the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. While other theories do not always use the same terms, these same ideas are apparent in other theorists as well. In looking at composition theory as it relates to pedagogy, I will be borrowing Fulkerson’s terminology.

According to Fulkerson, formalistic theories have the smallest influence in composition today, though much of our pedagogy is still influenced by them. Formalistic theories emphasize structure and conventions. Formalists see writing as a skill necessary for improving academic success. The focus tends to be on convention rules and conformity. I vividly remember a professor during my undergraduate studies who vehemently hated sentences ending in a preposition. Students knew and discussed that he would take off a whole point for this particular error. I had other professors who expressed ambiguity for this particular convention, believing that there are situations in which ending with a preposition is acceptable. For the latter professors, the content and voice of the paper greatly influences the application of conventions, whereas with the former professor, the rule has to be followed strictly because it is a rule. This rigidity can

spring from a formalistic approach to writing¹. Clearly, despite the dwindling number of formalistic theorists, remnants of formalism still plague classrooms as curriculum continues to focus more on conventions than other elements. In fact, countless articles addressing key problems facing English teachers begin by addressing the emphasis on rote grammar drills and labeling sentences. Why do we continue these practices? I believe it is partially because drills are easy to plan and assess, and partially because we lose focus on why we are teaching writing to begin with. Rather than focusing on developing individual writers, we slip into teaching a test or a convention.

Expressive theories are predominant in composition studies, and have caused a shift in pedagogy. Theorists focusing on the expressive typically emphasize personal and responsive writing, with a growing emphasis on defining the role of the writer. Pedagogy based on expressive theories tries to place students within an identity as a writer, and develop a recognition that writing must be more than processes and formulas. For example, in my classroom when we read the narratives of America's earliest settlers, such as John Smith and William Bradford, we discuss why they wrote, and how much history would have been lost if they hadn't. Then my students write their own journals, chronicling what they feel are significant moments in their lives. This exercise uses their roles as readers to establish the need for them to be writers as well, while providing literary examples to model. I encourage students to notice the different styles of these writers, and to try to mimic the author that they most enjoyed. Assuming that the process

¹ I want to emphasize that not all formalistic theory leads to such a legalistic interpretation of rules. The intent here is to highlight where theory can lead pedagogy astray, not to fully elaborate on every aspect of the theories themselves.

used to gain and communicate language is more influenced by social situations than cognitive abilities (Schultz), approaches such as these help students make the connections between what they are reading and writing in class, and what they are experiencing themselves. In this view, pedagogy should be more geared towards highlighting the process of individual students in acquiring and utilizing language. Literacy and composition are intertwined. Students' interactions with the text leads to heightened awareness of themselves, inspiring composition that places the student in communication with the text. The same social context that informs poetic analysis will inform a reflective essay. Within expressive theories, language apart from social context is meaningless (Schultz 54). Expressive philosophies also lend themselves to a process-oriented focus rather than a product-oriented focus, which will be explored more later.

For Fulkerson, rhetorical theory focuses more on the reader's response than the writer's style. When we look at the history of Rhetoric, we see that this is not a new perspective. For Aristotle, audience was connected to both the speaker and the content, making audience a key component in communication. The basis for the Rhetorical Triangle is that audience, speaker, and content all interact with each other in order for the message to be most effective. Modern theorist Peter Elbow discusses the role of audience in writing as well in his article, "A Method for Teaching Writing." Elbow suggests that content and style are not the only two measures of writing. The third is the audience's reception of the message (115). Elbow is not alone in his thinking. Often, modeling writing in the classroom begins with some variation of the question, "What did the writer do well in this essay?" Rhetorical theory couples well with reader-response theory as we

incorporate literature into the classroom. This approach demands that students are constantly reading, evaluating, and writing.

Mimetic theories emphasize the thought process involved with writing, and correspond with cognitive writing theories. Since research has connected critical thinking with critical writing, many educators use writing to build and assess thinking skills (Capossela 12). In high school, for example, we often use writing assignments not just to develop the skill of composition, but also to get students to think more critically. When I have my students write about Jane's search for identity in *Jane Eyre*, I am not solely looking at their essay structure or diction. I want to see that they can think beyond the surface plot and truly understand Jane's struggle placing herself in the world around her. Then, when I ask them to contrast Jane's struggle with Pip's from *Great Expectations*, the goal is that they critically analyze each story individually, then draw connections between the two on their own. Within the mimetic approach to composition, writing is a medium to display higher levels of thought. The emphasis here is on content and depth rather than fluency or style. In cross-curricular writing, these critical thinking skills are often the aim of the assignment, as in my earlier example of the history teacher.

In truth, writing is a collection of all these elements. Debbie Sydow points out the failings of a solely expressive approach to writing, namely ignoring the rest of the writing process (2). Similar shortcomings exist whenever we limit our teaching to one theory and one approach. Writing demands cognitive participation, it flourishes under personal expression, and it relates through social context. In teaching writing, then, we must find a way to balance these four models in our already limited time.

Theory Meets Practice: The Writing Workshop

Ann Berthoff writes “the chief purpose of a theory of composition is to provide teachers with ways to present writing so that it can indeed be learned by writing” (3).

Educators have struggled over the years with translating theory into usable pedagogy, causing the existence of extremes, such as one teacher focusing on rules and another on content. As Berthoff goes on to say, “One reason the teaching of English is stymied is that the sense of method as theory brought to bear on practice has been lost” (41). In other words, without application in the classroom, theories remain just that, theories.

Steve Graham defines writing instruction as "involv[ing] the teacher explaining the purpose and rationale of the strategy (as well as when and where to use it); modeling how to use the strategy (often multiple times); provide students with assistance in applying the strategy until they can apply it independently and effectively; and facilitating continued and adaptive use of the strategy (again through explanation, modeling, and guided practice)" (17). I propose that the Writing Workshop model offers one of the best transformations of theory into practice.

The Writing Workshop

The Writing Workshop as a pedagogical approach in the classroom gained popularity in the 1980's with books published by Lucy Calkins and Donald Graves. In 1983, Donald Graves published *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*, Graves advocated the children have the desire to write, and will write if given the proper tools. Teachers have used the guidelines in this book to create writing workshops in their

classrooms, along with the principles in Graves' book *A Fresh Look at Teaching Writing*. Lucy Calkins' book *The Art of Teaching Writing* was published originally in 1986. In her book, Calkins establishes the philosophies behind the Writing Workshop, what it aims to accomplish, and how to integrate this method into the curriculum. Building off this foundation, other educators and writers have offered advice to teachers for making an effective workshop in their classrooms. In these books, the Writing Workshop is established as a place for writers to come together and practice writing in an encouraging and open environment.

There is no one right way to implement the Writing Workshop. Rather, the precepts or underpinning of workshop are based on creating an environment in which everyone is a writer. Ralph Fletcher describes the workshop as “an environment where students can acquire [writing] skills, along with fluency, confidence, and desire to see themselves as writers” (1). We can, then, view the Writing Workshop as more than just a different teaching method. It establishes an entirely new classroom dynamic by putting students in control of their own writing. The Writing Workshop model emphasizes the importance of having students write every day. Through this approach, teachers can focus on the skills needed to improve writing as well as helping students enjoy the process. By placing students in an active and collaborative environment, teachers can more effectively help students define their roles as both a reader and a writer, and help them situate themselves in relationship with texts and peers. Teacher instruction, modeling, and conferencing foster the development of the skills involved in writing, while a more student-oriented approach to classroom structure and assignments allow students to

experiment with their own styles and interests. As Graham points out, writing is both a social and cognitive activity (8). The peer groups help students engage in both of these activities. Furthermore, since understanding the process of writing helps students understand the process of reading (Graham 6-8), talking about writing with both peers and teachers help students understand the reading process better.

Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi, in their book *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*, describe writing workshops as a teacher-created environment where the students are able to make choices, work together, and take responsibility for their own learning (2-3). The Writing Workshop is designed to emphasize the process of writing, rather than emphasizing the final product alone. Jennifer Berne describes it this way; “teaching the writing process, sometimes called the writing workshop approach, is less a set of practices than a philosophy or stance about the way students learn to write” (3). While there are common components used in writing workshops, ultimately what makes it an effective approach to teach writing is that it focuses on the entire journey of creating a text rather than just on the final product. Through the workshop, students are invited to take ownership of their writing while teachers are given freedom to treat writing as both an art and a skill.

If Ralph Fletcher is correct in saying that “writing is not so much one skill as a *bundle* of skills that includes sequencing, spelling, rereading, and supporting big ideas with examples,” then an effective approach to teaching writing must include these skills (1). One major concern with the workshop model is whether it will allow for the necessary skill development students to progress academically. This concern is a valid

one, as writing workshops require class time and preparation time, which takes away from the standard text-based curriculum. As Fletcher observes, though, a bigger problem exists in the current dynamic: students cannot translate the skills they are being taught into their writing effectively. Since the entire justification for these skills is their implementation into writing, a new model is warranted (88-89). The workshop model coordinates skills, content, and application. It calls for instruction, conferences, collaboration, and most importantly, practice.

Within this model, goals and expectations change from the traditional literature or grammar centered instruction. One of the major goals of the writing workshop is get students to take risks in their writing, to create and think as well as communicate. According to Graham, the best environment for writing involves a safe and supportive environment, where students can involve themselves in a variety of types of writing (12-16). Within a safe environment, students will be willing to take risks with their writing. Different professionals describe risk-taking in different ways. Penny Kittle relates risk-taking to freedom in writing, discussing risks as a part of her quick-writing (31). Tom Romano relates risk-taking to building confidence as a writer (19). Regardless of how different experts describe or define this term, the idea remains the same: risk-taking is when a writer steps beyond the known, formulaic, or expected and does something new and radical with his or her work. Romano quotes one of his former students as writing, "A writing teacher's main goal should be to open up the channels in students, to let them put their ideas and emotions and personality on paper" (25). In a nutshell, this is risk-taking. Risk-taking is a part of taking ownership of one's writing, and positioning oneself

as a writer (rather than a person who is forced to write). And it is the teacher's responsibility to help students take risks.

Teachers utilizing the workshop model encourage students to get away from the standard five paragraph essay, and to explore genres and formats that best fit their writing purpose. Choice is emphasized in this model, both giving students choice in assignment and format, and teaching students to make choices that best serve their purpose in writing (Fletcher 23). Penny Kittle begins her writing class each year by establishing her expectations for the workshop. She presents her "seven interlocking principles" of the workshop, which promote choice, flexibility, collaboration, and exploration (63-64). Choice and flexibility allow students to take ownership of their writing by allowing them to make decisions and to use different forms of writing. These principles also encourage students to approach writing with creativity and ingenuity. Through collaboration, students develop a community of writers. Collaboration encourages students to experience the dynamic relationship between audience, purpose, and text. Exploration is the process of discovery that comes through writings, leading students to deeper insights about themselves, their peers, and the world around them. These principles are important for creating lifelong writers.

Setting Up and Organizing the Workshop

Different teachers set up their workshops in different ways. In Penny Kittle's writing class, she divides her time into these parts: introduction, silent sustained reading, quick writes / writer's notebook, mini-lesson, writing workshop, and closing (70).

However, in a classroom that is not exclusively a writing course, a different schedule is necessary. According to Fletcher, three components are needed for any writing workshop, regardless of the type of classroom or the level of instruction: "time for whole-group instruction, time for writing, and time for structured response" (10). Fletcher also encourages teachers to have set spaces where these activities take place (16-17) to help students know what is expected of them. For example, a teacher may designate every Friday for the writing workshop, and may rearrange the room to create a different environment for workshopping.

Establishing the purpose of the workshop is an important aspect of getting started, and then making sure students understand the purpose. Ruth Mirtz points out that students often have their own perceptions of small groups and workshops that they bring with them, especially if a previous teacher has used this method. She goes on to add that some students will never embrace the structure of a small group, no matter how well a teacher implements the workshop (86). However, making expectations clear to students helps engage students and overcome any negative assumption they may have.

Establishing a clear purpose and expectation for the workshop also helps students overcome the fear of the unknown. Mirtz also writes from her own experiences that students tend to hold back if they are not confident in the subject matter or procedure of the workshop (88). By communicating the purpose and goals of the workshop at the beginning, some of these fears are relieved. Giving guidelines for communications within groups and modeling behaviors relieves the rest of their fears (see Modeling below).

Using her own personal experiences, Mirtz talks about different problems she encountered in her own workshops, and how these troubles are connected to purpose and expectations within the groups. When Mirtz tried to have groups with a reading focus, she found that groups were hindered when not all students had completed the required reading. In writing groups without clear guidelines, students were either too nice to give constructive feedback or so harsh that no one wanted to share. If she gave too specific of guidelines, groups were hindered in their own creative thought and opinion, but if she didn't give any directions, students were unsure what to talk about or try to accomplish and easily went off topic. If she rigidly graded the groups, they became so focused on completing the list of assignments that she felt it wasn't much better than having students independently answer worksheet questions (88-91). For Mirtz, the solution was to reevaluate the purpose of the groups. When she made peer groups more about giving responses than critical feedback, changing from suggesting "what writers should do to what writers could do" (90), she saw the groups become productive.

These issues show that teachers need to set up their workshop schedule and expectations clearly at the beginning of the class or course. Not every aspect of the workshop takes place in a peer-grouping, and as Mirtz's narrative displays, those times within peer groups may have different purposes with different expectations.

The Writing Process

An important term to define before proceeding further is *writing process*. Generally, when this term is used, people think of the prescribed steps in writing:

brainstorming (or prewriting), organizing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Through the workshop approach though, writers discover a different perspective on the writing process. "We don't want to teach our students *the* writing process; rather, we want each one of them to find *a* process that works for him or her. This process will inevitably differ from student to student" (Fletcher 62). Rather than teaching students to follow a list of procedures, teachers demonstrate different processes that are essential. In this way, *writing process* is defined as the way each individual writer produces writing.

Planning, typically step one in the writing process list, offers a good example of this different definition of *writing process* and how the writing workshop utilizes it. In the typical approach to the writing process, "prewriting" or "brainstorming" is often taught using outlines and graphic organizers. However, teaching students effective free writing could be more beneficial. Free writing allows students to get comfortable with the writing process. "The key is comfort" (Urbanski 62). Free writing allows students to see writing teachers in the role as coach, audience, encourager -- rather than heartless grader. Cynthia Urbanski describes a session in a writing center which illustrates the problem most students have with free writing. Watching a student struggle over every word, punctuation mark, and formatting guide, her student's "free writing" produced only frustration and surface-level insight into his writing assignment (53). Free writing should be the space in which students translate thoughts into characters on the paper. To be most successful, free writing should be separate from revising and editing. The goal is not to get the conventions right, but to explore ideas and content at a deeper level.

The practice of free writing seems to be the most promoted way of familiarizing students with the writing process in the workshop setting. Urbanski uses "daybooks" also called "writer's notebooks" for students to store their free writing (62). These daybooks become a place for exploring ideas, making lists, reflecting on the process, and so forth. She also keeps her own daybook and uses it to model for her students how to free write. Penny Kittle uses a version of a writer's notebook in her teaching as well. Her version of free writing involves "quick writes" on different topics, then sorting through those writes to find common themes or ideas (51). Though certain graphic organizers may be used in specific situations, free writing on a daily basis is a common practice within the workshop.

However, freewriting is not always the best way to gather ideas, and is not a strategy that works for every student. Cindy Lassonde and Janet C. Richards present a different perspective on planning in their chapter "Teaching Planning for Writing" in *Best Practices in Writing Instruction*. Rather than focusing exclusively on the ways to engage students in writing, they focus instead on helping students see planning as a necessity. Lassonde and Richards counter other scholars who downplay the importance of planning, pointing out the most experienced writers spend a significant amount of time planning what they will say (198). Students do not grasp the full necessity of planning, according to this chapter, and teachers need to better emphasize the importance of planning well. They claim that there are two primary types of planning: the "top-down approach" and the "bottom-up approach" (193-194). Some writers plan and organize first -- whether by outline or graphic organizer. Some writers plan as they write, discovering ideas and

content through the process of writing. The bottom-up approach connects most closely with the practice of free writing promoted by many proponents of the Writing Workshop.

These strategies illustrate the need for an individualized approach to the writing process. While planning is important, it will and should look different for different writers and different writing purposes. Lassonde and Richards reference a group of graduate students assigned to write "a two-or-more-page turning point memoir." The majority of these students admittedly did not spend time planning first (9 of the 11). Considering the genre and the advanced level of the students, perhaps in this instance freewriting is more accurate about the level of planning necessary. However, for a group of secondary students writing a four page research paper, Lassonde and Richards emphasis on planning must be heeded.

All these writers do agree about one thing with planning – it must be individualized. Lassonde and Richards explain how each of them had their perspectives of planning challenged through experience, including an anecdote about a student who drafted and then went back to fill in the required graphic organizer (201-202). This particular story is striking because it captures one of the big problems in teaching writing. Since all students approach subjects differently, the effective writing teacher needs to equip students with tools they can use individually, in a variety of situations. Students need to learn how to make the writing process work for them, rather than trying to fit themselves into someone else's (usually the teacher's) process. Again, the Writing Workshop helps teachers teach young writers how to be successful writers inside and outside of the classroom, rather than just going through the motions. Since the workshop

approach allows the teacher more time to individually work with students, it also allows teachers to customize approaches with different students.

Something practical that Robert Brooke points out is that teachers cannot always give students in class the time they need to engage in the writing process (17). However, time is crucial. He writes that when he meets with students one on one, he discusses making time for writing and how they will fit writing into their schedules (17). Although he is talking about college students, I can see applications for this in the high school setting. A big part of high school is learning time management and developing study habits. A great conversation to have with students at the beginning of an assignment is "How will you manage your time for this project?" Talk with students about what they were able to accomplish in class, and what they still need to accomplish. "If it took you 30 minutes to get this far, how much time do you think it will take you to get the next step done? When will you plan to do this before next class? Let's go ahead and write that in your planner so you don't forget" etc.

As teachers guide students through the processes of planning and writing, teachers are teaching students the life-long skills of time management and problem solving. By helping students work through their writing in with their own process, rather than a predetermined, teacher-directed process, students are able to develop skills that are applicable in other disciplines, and in life in general. Since these are not easy skills to develop, teachers should model and illustrate these skills in through their own writing.

Components of the Workshop: Teaching, Modeling, Conferencing, and Sharing

Four main actions guide the workshop approach: teaching, modeling, conferencing, and sharing. A common concern and misconception about the writing workshop model is that teachers no longer teach. Rather, they simply facilitate and establish routines. In a successful writing workshop, though, teacher instruction and modeling is key to the process. Berne explains that "direct instruction...helps students build their tool kit of writing methods and ultimately expands their ability to communicate in writing" (71). It is through direct instruction that teachers address writing traits, genres, and conventions. Teaching in the workshop takes the form of a mini-lesson rather than a long, teacher-focused lectures in the workshop model. Mini-lessons include whole class instruction followed by one-on-one interaction with students while they work on their writing. "Minilessons are short, focused, and direct" (Fletcher 10). During these brief (10-15 minutes) times of direct instruction, teachers reinforce procedural strategies, writing processes, qualities of good writing, and editing skills (Fletcher 10-11). The goal is to pair instruction with application, making each lesson practical and meaningful without lecturing for forty-five minutes.

Mini-lessons also create a platform for reading to be taught in conjunction with writing (and vice versa). Reading and writing are irrevocably connected. Improving literacy helps to improve writing and vice versa. Therefore, one should not be done without the other. Penny Kittle writes about her mini-lessons, "There is the study of great products (other writers' work) and the study of process -- mine" (Kittle 73). She goes on to talk about the mini-lesson as a place to teach students how to read and think like

writers (74) as they work through genres, forms, grammar techniques, and analytical processes. The mini-lesson does not solely focus on writing skills or genres, because that isolates composition as a discipline rather than aligning it with all avenues of language development. Kutz and Roskelly point out that writing is a “tool for interpretation,” and emphasize the connection between reader and text (208). They go on to say that reading allows “transactions between the individual and community, between thought and language” (211). For students to have a chance to connect with the text and connect it to their own thoughts and experiences, the teacher needs to give time and space for students to talk and interact. Rather than having a 40 minute lesson, breaking down all the aspects of a text for the student, the idea of the mini-lesson is that teachers spend 15-20 minutes demonstrating a concept and then let the students apply it to the text at hand (be it a literary text, professional model, or their own composition).

Reading is essential in direct instruction and conferencing. Kutz and Roskelly write that reading and writing “mutually reinforce, enhance, and shape each other” (189). Students can use texts to draw inspiration for their own writing. Texts also allow students to hear effective writing, and to familiarize themselves with the process of writing (Berne 71). Since writing engages our thoughts, voices, and ears, reading out loud is especially necessary for building strong writers (Fletcher 74). Reading together also builds a common knowledge base between students that allows ideas to be shared more freely and communally (78). Incorporating literature into the workshop helps students build their critical thinking skills as well, and gives them a chance to translate those thoughts into coherent writing. Toni-Lee Capossela points out that literacy is directly connected to

critical thinking, and eventually critical writing (8-9). When we teach reading and writing together, we create an environment in which our students learn what good composition sounds like, analyze and build arguments about composition, and then create their own forms of composition. And since observation is key in developing language skills, literature becomes an essential component for the developing writer (Kutz 148). By using reading, the teacher is again able to apply all four categories of theory.

These texts used in the writing workshop are often called mentor texts. Mentor texts allow for the inclusion of literature in different genres and provide students with ideas for their own writing. Shelley Harwayne points out that adult writers gain inspiration from the contents of other works, yet we often discourage our students from the same practice (60-61). Using mentor texts in the mini-lessons gives students inspiration for their own writing as well as examples to imitate or expand upon. Mentor texts also help us connect reading and writing for our students, something not all students do on their own.

There is no set list of mentor texts, or clear definition of what qualifies as a mentor text. For Katie Woods, mentor texts come in the form of newspapers, magazines, collections, picture books, and any other short, manageable writing (66-72). Cynthia Urbanski highlights the benefits of using student papers themselves as literature in the classroom (146). Most importantly, mentor texts should be chosen based on what they can teach the students about writing and how they could inspire young writers to explore and take risks in their own writing.

Mini-lessons also allow the teacher to make the assignment and expectations clear to the students. Alan Ziegler encourages assignments that help students narrow their scope of vision, but still allow them room to make their own choices within their writing (5-6). On the other hand, Fletcher doesn't see the writing workshop as the proper place for teacher-assigned writing (12). I find this somewhat idealistic. In a perfect world, teachers would be able to give students this amount of freedom. Most teachers are working within a traditional system, which includes specifics about grading. Most teachers simply cannot give the amount of freedom Fletcher describes. Ziegler's approach seems to be more practical for today's secondary classrooms; giving students choices within the set objectives or goals.

Since the goal of the workshop is not simply to teach writing skills but to create a community of writers, every proponent of the workshop method emphasizes that teachers must model for their students. By modeling, or writing with students, teachers engage students in the entire process of writing, start to finish. Too often teachers jump from instruction to independent practice. I have fallen into this trap myself; I have modeled writing by presenting a well-thought, prewritten paper and talked at my students about how the paper came together. Cynthia Urbanski describes a similar experience in her own classroom. After showing her piece, discussing in detail with her students how to come up with ideas, even doing class brainstorming, she found her students still couldn't mimic her process. Why? Because she had only modeled revising and editing. The work of thinking, planning, struggling, had been completed in private (36-39). Students need to see the entire process.

Perhaps one of the hardest steps in the writing process is the first one, just thinking of something to write. Kelly Gallagher talks about how beneficial it is for his students to see him struggling for the right word, or even having an "off" day (*Improving Adolescent Writers*). Though this realization does not mean we have less work or planning to do, there is something tremendously freeing about not having to be perfect all the time. Teachers, myself included, sometimes shy away from sharing our early drafts because we fear students seeing our flaws or finding our mistakes. Truthfully though, mistakes are part of the process. They are also the very thing our students need to see to gain confidence in their own writing. Urbanski points out that approaching teaching writing (and literature) in this way can "supercharge our planning time" (30). Rather than using precious planning time to map out exact illustrations, topics, texts, etc., we can model these processes in the classroom and use our planning time to better respond to our students' writings.

If our goal is to help our students to be better writers and readers, we must write and read with them. Urbanski observes, rightly, "Runners run. Carpenters work with wood. Painters paint, sculptors sculpt. Writers write and readers read" (26). I believe that we understand the concept Urbanski is expressing, which is why most teachers have students read or write daily. However, when teachers write *with* their students, they reinforce the sense of community (we are all writers together, and we all struggle sometimes) and give students a visual of the process.

Teachers writing with their students is part of what makes the workshop approach effective. Penny Kittle writes, "I now believe you really can't teach writing well unless

you write yourself" (7). She goes on to say, "I believe that the only way I'm going to be able to teach writing tomorrow is because I did it today" (8). In order to create a community of writers, and to help students see themselves as writers, teachers have to take an active role. After discussing her own struggles with modeling (such as not feeling that she herself was a writer), Kittle emphasizes that once she began modeling the process of writing for her students, she understood why it was necessary. As great as professional and literary writing is, these pieces model "products" not the "process" (9). Students need to see the process.

Interacting with students in the writing process through modeling can also help with assessment. In *How to Handle the Paper Load*, Nancy L. Roser and Julie M. Jensen write that by being interactive with students will they are in the process of writing, teachers can give immediate feedback and reduce the amount of at home grading at the same time (Stanford 31-33). The temptation while students are writing, and I have been guilty of this myself, is to sit back and create a completely silent environment. The students work at their desks, the teacher works at his/her desk. Or perhaps students write at home, and class time is devoted to other concepts. There may be times when it is appropriate to have a silent and still environment. Some students need this quiet environment to get focused or to stay on topic. The philosophy guiding workshopping, though, is that teachers interact with students through their own writing and by engaging students throughout the process of writing. Active, continued modeling versus passive observing is part of what makes this method unique. Like Urbanski, Gallagher, and Kittle, when I have students write independently, I will put my own rough draft on the

projector screen and write alongside them. This way, the students can see me engaged in the writing process. They can see me focused. They can see me make mistakes. They can see me rearrange. After writing for a while on my own draft, I will walk around to interact with them about theirs. In this way, we connect as writers rather than as students and teacher.

Even in the small group setting, modeling is important. In her college workshops, Ruth Mirtz tries to make herself a part of the group rather than simply an observer or critiquer. To do this, Mirtz will bring her own writing with her as she visits different groups (98). By becoming a participant in the group, and by offering her own writing for the group to consider, Mirtz is able to model both how small groups should work and the principles of writing she is trying to instill in her class.

Modeling does not just have academic benefits, though. Urbanski discusses how modeling builds trust within the classroom (27). By seeing their teacher writing, struggling, and ultimately completing the same assignments as the students, students can connect with the teacher in a different way—as a fellow writer. No longer are assignments lofty, intellectual exercises, which have little meaning outside of school. No longer are assignments time fillers, busy-work, or unproductive homework. When the teacher engages in the activities with the students, assignments become accessible and bring the classroom into a sense of community.

Another way that that writing workshop creates community is through conferencing. Two types of conferencing make the workshop model effective: teacher conferencing and student conferencing. Fletcher observes that “conferences depend on

the teacher's skill in bringing out the reader in the writer" (82). As teachers build off their mini-lessons, drawing in texts as examples and texts as inspiration, conferencing allows them to guide their students to connect reading and writing. Teachers help students establish themselves in the roles of both reader and writer, and then show them how these roles influence their writing. Teacher conferences are used to help guide students through their own writing process. Through conferencing, teachers are able to share their own writing experiences with their students (Berne 102). Building from the mini-lesson, teacher conferencing allows teachers to model their own writing practices. Kutz and Roskelly note that students develop their language skills (written and oral) through the observation of others (141). Conferencing allows teachers to illustrate through example how to apply language skills.

Illustrating good writing is not the only goal of the teacher conference. Fletcher insists that teachers must be able to listen as a reader, as well as evaluate positively as a mentor (49). We can use conferencing to model effective reading. Jennifer Berne notes that when students approach literature in a way that connects them to the author's voice and perspective, they are able to develop a clearer understanding of writing style, and are therefore more likely to mimic what they read (71). She also emphasizes the importance of incorporating different types of texts, and not limiting ourselves to classical literature. We can use our one-on-one time with the students to model how to "read like writers and write like readers" (Berne 71). This is when we help our students think critically, discovering their own voice in the process. When my students work on persuasive writing, I guide them to articles from *The New York Times* that deal with their topics. We read those

articles, and the comments others have made on the article. We ask questions about the topic, and how the author addresses the topic. I ask what they agree with and what they disagree with, and why. The answers to these questions become the first stage of brainstorming. Through this exercise, the students and I have practiced reading, reflecting, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. We have also addressed comprehension skills, critical thinking skills, and composition skills. In this way, we have used teacher conferencing to incorporate all four composition theories addressed earlier, along with literacy.

Another benefit of teacher conferencing is that it allows direct instruction in a practical way. While the class-wide mini lessons typically focus on areas of composition relevant to everyone, teacher conferencing allows the teacher to give immediate feedback and supply needed instruction. Teachers fill the role of instructor, mentor, coach, and audience in the teacher conference, and must be wary of becoming only a facilitator or a critic. In writing about his own conferencing experiences, Donald Murray observes that his students are typically more critical of their work than he is, and that he sometimes has to offer the positive, less harsh review of their work to help the student move forward (98). Part of the teacher's job in conferencing is to promote self-confidence while providing useful feedback. An effective conference builds the student's confidence in his/her writing while guiding towards improvement, focusing on clear communication of ideas and development of personal voice and style.

Remembering that risk-taking is one of the broad goals of teaching writing, conferencing can encourage students to continue to take risks in their writing. By giving

students more individualized instruction and feedback, teachers can bolster self-confidence in their students. However, if the conference is mishandled, students can leave defeated and discouraged. Urbanski encourages teachers to approach student writing first as a reader and responder, not as a writing teacher (122). Early drafts especially are not for marking and grading, but commenting and encouraging. "The number one reason to conference with students is that we want them to see themselves as writers" (Urbanski 124), and to allow students to work through their own writing and writing process (128). Many times, early conferences are just confirming and bolstering the student's ideas and progress, leaving assessment for later.

Teacher conferences look different depending on their purpose. Kittle moves from student to student during writing time, meeting with students in short intervals and checking their progress. Gene Stanford uses a similar process, emphasizing the importance of interacting with students while they are writing and giving immediate feedback (31-33). Kittle (like Calkins and Urbanski) lets students speak first (86). Conferencing is a time to address questions, ideas, structures, and generally help students work out how to move their drafts forward (Kittle 87-89). Gallagher uses teacher conferences for both one-on-one feedback and to teach small groups. He will group together three or four students who are struggling with the same concept, and use some of his conferencing time to reteach and illustrate the concept (Gallagher *Improving Adolescent Writers*). Regardless of the method, teacher conferences give students important feedback and build relationships between the student and teacher, and the student and their writing.

Student conferencing gets students involved in thinking about the writing process. As they interact with their peers, students develop their own abilities to read and write critically, respond positively, and evaluate effectively. It allows for the rhetorical and mimetic theories to be applied by students to their own writing and the writing of their peers (Elbow “Methods of Teaching Writing”). For student conferencing, Penny Kittle uses "Response Groups." In these groups, students look at mentor texts as well as read and respond to each other's work. Within these groups, students are able to get diverse perspectives on their writings, more thorough than a single teacher could accomplish (91). Keeping in mind that one of the goals of the writing workshop is to create independent writers, having students collaborate to identify and troubleshoot problems, prompt each other to elaborate ideas, and give concrete feedback fosters independence at the same time that it develops community. However, Berne rightly observes that student collaboration will not happen purposefully with guidance and structure (21-22). Teachers must clearly communicate the expectation for student collaboration, peer-reviews, and critical feedback. Fletcher advocates simple directions for conferencing, whether teacher or student guided. He writes conferencing “begins with understanding and moves towards teaching a particular skill, technique, or strategy” (52). If I give my students a list of ten different elements to revise for (which, I with shamed-face admit that I have done in the past), there are two likely outcomes. One, the student will painstakingly look for the first two or three, and then fizzle out. Two, the student will look at the list, look at his/her peers’ paper, and decide that it is just easier to say that the paper is good. Neither produces quality feedback or group interaction. Instead, if I give the students one goal for

their reviews with clear directions about how to accomplish that goal, my classroom becomes a community of writers.

Unfortunately, there does not seem to be one easy solution to peer groups. Evidence shows that they are important, but making them effective seems to be highly individualized. However, giving her first-hand experience with peer-groups, Mirtz does offer helpful advice, sharing her successes and failures. First, Mirtz says that peer response groups were the most effective type of groups for her (90) but required her to model it (91). In this way, we see that the component of modeling effects all other areas of the workshop. Mirtz writes that after eaves-dropping on small groups, she learned that they didn't really know what was expected of them (93-94). To make peer groups truly effective, students need direct guidelines as well. Mirtz points out that without direct guidelines, students in a workshop will either go back to habits established in a previous workshop / small group environment or will simply do nothing (97). Clearly communicated purpose separates a productive workshop from a group of students working next to each other. While how peer groups operate may differ according to the class dynamic and teacher personality, making the expectations and guidelines clear and easy to follow, and modeling for students the correct use of those guidelines, is crucial to peer groups being effective. Mirtz also addresses changing groups, saying how she tries to avoid switching the groups once they are established because it disrupts the flow and community of the group. She has also observed that most students are resistant to new groups (97). Another key to effective peer groups is commitment and familiarity. By using the same groups repeatedly, students are able to become familiar and comfortable

with the members of their groups, making them more likely to give and accept feedback. Additionally, keeping students in the same groups allows them to feel invested and committed to each other's writings, as well as their own. Students have the opportunity to see themselves as a community of writers working together, rather than students working side by side on an assignment.

Sharing student writing is the last essential element to a successful writing workshop. Sharing their writing helps boost their confidence and give a goal and purpose to their writing. As Peter Elbow observes, "Reading your words out loud is push-ups for the specific muscle used in taking responsibility for your words" (*Writing with Power* 23). We are too often guilty of making students write without a clear mode of publication. "Students will write better if they know their writing will be shared" (Muschla 93). Thinking back to rhetorical theories, we must recognize that writing needs an audience. How can we convince students that they are writers if there is no sharing (publishing, as the writing process typically identifies it)? Sharing our writing with our students, and having students share their writing with us and with their classmates, gives writing a purpose. It helps us illustrate to students what we mean when we tell them to "consider their audience" (Park 233). Park also observes that the nature of an audience is often ambiguous and that composition teachers are not doing a great job clarifying it (240-241). And Park is not the only one realizing this. Elbow highlights that writing for teachers often lack a particular audience (223). However, when sharing is integrated into the classroom, we give audience a definition and a face. My students know fairly quickly

if their persuasive essay was truly persuasive, or if their reflection on “Two Roads Diverged” resonates with anyone else.

As we can see, the familiar components of writing are all part of the Writing Workshop, but no longer presented as a set of steps to be followed. Fletcher describes the writing process as a cycle for this reason (62). Within the new model, the writing process is a cycle of ongoing procedures, adding to the overall understanding of what good writing is and how to do it well. Elbow illustrates a similar approach to the writing process, calling it “the loop writing process” (*Writing with Power* 59). Utilizing the writing process in this way allows our students to combine the creative and analytical components of writing at the same time (*Writing with Power* 59-60). The process of thinking about the process is as vitally important as the outcome. The writing workshop engages students in the writing process, drawing attention to the process and product. Murray notes that when he conferences with students, he is not only teaching the writing process, he is modeling it for his students as well (100). He conferences with students throughout the development of their papers, giving feedback along the way. This approach helps students become well-rounded writers, showing them how all the elements work together to produce a cohesive piece.

Evaluation and Assessment

The question that plagues teachers about writing is “how do I assess this?” Fletcher and Portalupi, among others, suggest grading the student’s work and growth over time rather than selected papers (105). For most of us, this concept seems

impractical. Most school systems have their own requirements and guidelines for assessing, including the types and frequency of grades. Stakeholders typically want grades more definitive than periodic checks on progress and improvement. At some point, the teacher has to get into the evaluator position, and be fair yet realistic. Berne suggests using formative assessments and summative evaluations during the writing workshop (101), emphasizing the difference in these terms. Formative assessments should be integrated in teacher conferences, and focus on the writing process (Berne 102). In this sense, formative assessments are opportunities for revision. As my students write, I give them comments and instruction to direct and improve their writing. This feedback is a form of assessment. Summative evaluations focus on the final product, and should be fair and consistent (Berne 136). Cynthia Urbanski relates editing and grading writing to coaching her running team. She relates that when the race is finished, she discusses with her runners their successes and missteps during the race (99). As teachers, we can approach grading writing in the same way. For starters, teachers can let go of the thought that every piece of writing needs to be formal evaluated. We also need to move away from the view that writing is ever “final” or “done.” Since we are constantly growing and changing, our writing will, too. We know this is true (otherwise we would not see multiple editions of a book), yet we often lead our students to think that the writing they turn in for a final grade must be “final.”

The product of writing is not the only thing that we are assessing, though. If a large part of class time is dedicated to workshop groups, whether they are peer response groups, reading groups, brainstorming groups, or another grouping, students’

participation and growth within the groups have to be assessed. Ruth Mirtz admits that evaluating workshop groups is especially difficult (109). It is hard to gauge involvement and to give fair assessment of a very subjective practice like participation. She acknowledges that grading the group as a whole does not promote fairness, so each person receives an individual evaluation. To make it more objective, Mirtz will have students submit self-evaluations and group evaluations.

Portfolios are good ways to evaluate the entire writing process along with the final product. Penny Kittle writes, "If I were in charge of the world -- or my school -- I'd leave all grades out of the picture until the final portfolio" (223). While this is not our current reality, final portfolios are one of the most telling forms of assessment. Kittle has her students organize their writings from best to worst, providing explanations for their order (223). The final portfolio not only shows the teacher what the students have accomplished and how they have progressed, but also forces the students to think about their own writing. My students may start six or seven assignments, but only two or three are revised thoroughly and shared with the class. Our portfolios allow me to see the progress that they made on all the assignments, and the choices they made in revising certain ones. Berne also emphasizes that evaluations are based off what was taught and modeled (141). We risk becoming formalistic if we only look at conventions. We become unrealistic if we look at elements that we have not yet taught. I have to keep my mini-lessons and models in mind when I create my grading standards if I want to have valid evaluations.

One final thought: Anne Berthoff writes, “Meanings don’t just happen: we make them; we find and form them [...] Learning to write is learning to do deliberately and methodically with words on the page what we do all the time with language” (69). Teachers carry the responsibility of teaching students how to make language mean something to themselves and to the world. While the Writing Workshop is not a perfect model, it is a very usable and practical method to incorporate major writing theories in a way that is accessible to students. Using the workshop in our classrooms will allow teachers to focus on what is truly important about composition while providing students opportunity and freedom to enjoy the writing process. And that is, after all, our goal.

CHAPTER III

IMPLEMENTING THE WRITING WORKSHOP IN MY CLASSROOM

Background

This study is set in a K-12 private school, with a high school (9-12) attendance of approximately 150 students. The specific classes involved in this study are two composition classes. This school requires a composition course for all freshmen and transfer students. The goal of the course is to teach students writing for academic purposes, particularly in preparation for essay writing and writing on standardized tests. The course was created twelve years ago as an elective and became a requirement for graduation ten years ago as a response to feedback from graduates entering college.

When I began teaching ten years ago, I was excited to teach the composition class. I vividly remember my own seventh grade teacher encouraging me to write, and giving me personal feedback and inspiration to continue writing. I also remember feeling completely overwhelmed when I entered undergraduate studies, because while grammar and creative writing were a big part of my high school education, academic papers and essays were not. Since I already enjoyed writing, I came to understand and even like writing essays, but I felt that I was rushing to catch up. I desperately wanted to provide my high school students with the foundation I had lacked. Looking back, I think that is why I was so diligent to teach form, structure, and rules for writing. I did not want any of my students to feel behind.

I originally structured the composition class as a traditional classroom. I would give a lesson, students would write their papers, we would peer edit before submitting finals, and then students would submit a final draft. Students all worked on the same assignment at the same time. They submitted three final drafts every quarter, which served as their three required test grades. This approach met the basic objective of teaching students the structure and content of academic essays. Students learned the different types of academic writing, became familiar with the writing process, and were exposed to the traits of writing. However, the emphasis was often on the final product. I taught the writing process as it was taught to me -- a linear list of steps. Students with a natural affinity for writing excelled. Students who struggled with writing muddled through. We all had moments of frustration. At the end of the class, students had a cursory understanding of writing types and academic structures, mostly of essay writing and the expectations of teachers when they assign essays rather than a sense of themselves as writers. The class was not a complete failure, but it didn't encourage students to embrace writing or to become life-long writers. The goal of the class was to make students proficient academic writers. I discovered two inherent flaws in teaching students to write proficiently. First, they never took ownership of themselves as writers, or the words they were writing. Many students wrote to accomplish the assignment. They regurgitated facts or examples from myself and other teachers. They wrote formulaically, showing no connection with their ideas. Second, they continued to isolate concepts. If we talked about sentence structure as we wrote compare/contrast essays, then students compartmentalized sentence structure with compare/contrast essays and could not see

how it related to other types of writing as well. I wanted to see my students move beyond this isolated understanding of writing principles, and began wondering how I could help my students see themselves as ever-growing writers, rather than students forced to write sometimes. This question led me to the workshop approach and this particular study on how effectively it can be used in the secondary classroom.

Setting Up the Study

For my study, I drew strategies from a variety of the theorist mentioned, but I leaned most strongly on Lucy Calkins definition of the writing workshop at the secondary level as a “combination of clear structures and endless flexibility” (161). In my application of the Writing Workshop, I wanted to create an environment in which students shared ideas, received feedback, and took risks together. To accomplish this, we wrote individually and collaboratively. We had brainstorming workshops, drafting workshops, and peer response workshops. I began by laying out my daily structure, modeling my routine off of Penny Kittle and Ralph Fletcher’s examples. Our classes operate on a 90 minute alternating schedule, so I have students every other day. We tried to begin each day by sharing progress and goals. Then, we did a 15-20 minute mini-lesson. After the mini-lesson, our routine had two primary variations. In the first variation, students wrote independently for an extended period of time. During their independent writing, I met with students one-on-one. We ended class in workshop groups, where the students read sections of their writing from that day, gave feedback, and asked questions. During this time, I rotated through the groups, listening and chiming

in when I felt it necessary. In the second variation, after the mini-lesson, students went to their workshop groups with the purpose of sharing ideas for their writing and asking questions about their drafts. After their brainstorming workshop, we wrote independently and often still ended with workshop groups (Appendix A).

Some classes, our schedule changed because of assemblies, half-days, class pictures, and other interruptions. Because of the 90 minute class periods, we were able to adapt to these changes easily, and able to be flexible. In a shorter period, a more definitive schedule would be necessary. The draw back to an alternating class schedule is that it took students a longer time to get used to our class routine, since they did not have class every day.

My study concentrated on two classes, Composition Class A and Composition Class B. Some elements of the workshop were incorporated into other classrooms as well, but not with the same consistency as my composition classes, which were exclusively workshop classes this year. Composition Class A has twenty-three students, seven boys and sixteen girls. In this class, one student is a senior, nine are juniors, and thirteen are freshmen. Six students are minority students. Composition Class B has twenty-six students, two girls and twenty-four boys. The class has one senior, one junior, and twenty-four freshmen. There are two minority students in this class. Because of the dynamics of these classes, some of my observations include the differences between males and females as writers, though this was not an intentional element of my study.

The grading requirements for the school state that every quarter must have at least three test grades, along with several daily grades (at least one a week). Tests are weighted

60% and any daily work, including homework and quizzes, are weighed 40%. In structuring the assignments for the workshop, these criteria had to be considered. To meet these standards in my own classroom, each quarter consisted of a graded portfolio and two final drafts, which made up the three test grades. Thinking back to Gene Stanford's suggestions in *How to Handle the Paper Load*, I made daily grades largely participation grades, and along with meeting important deadlines. In the first quarter, my classes focused on personal writing and explored writing with purpose and the writing traits. To meet the objectives for academic writing, we focused on research writing in the second quarter, expositional writing in the third quarter, and persuasive writing in the fourth quarter. Research writing looked different in the workshop than the other sections, because we spent class time researching as well as writing. Students could move through the portfolio in their own order and pace for the most part, but I found it necessary to give benchmark dates (have 3 drafts completed by the 23rd) in order to motivate students to work diligently. For an example of my 1st quarter Portfolio assignments, refer to Appendix B.

Utilizing Technology

Integrating technology into the classroom is a big focus in today's secondary schools. By utilizing different technologies in the Writing Workshop, I am able to engage students more and reduce the workload for both my students and myself. We use an online submission platform, which allows for easy peer and teacher reviews along with plagiarism detection (*Turn It In*) and collaborative platforms (such as *Google Docs*) to

allow for easy access and sharing. One thing that I have learned is that while today's high school students enjoy gadgets, they are not always proficient on basic computing and typing skills. Part of getting started for my classes is setting up accounts on turnitin.com and Google (the two predominant technologies I use for composition). For my workshop classes especially, it is important that we establish how to use technology immediately. I also use this as an opportunity to get to know my students a little better before we progress too far in the year. The first "homework" assignment for my composition classes is to set up a Google account and then complete a survey that I have created. This assignment shows me 1) that the students can use our "Portal" (the schoolwide online site for class information, similar to Blackboard or Canvas), 2) that the students have successfully set up a Google account, and 3) how the students feel about writing as they come into my class (Appendix C).

The results from the survey were not an overwhelming surprise, but they did help confirm where my class was. I provided the students with a series of statements that they had to rate their agreement with on a scale of one to five. I ended with a couple of more specific questions at the end, allowing students to give more candid responses. The survey results showed that my students had a variety of experience and comfort with writing. The two areas that scored the lowest were getting ideas about what to write, and reading for pleasure, confirming for me the connection between reading and writing. The survey also revealed something about the students' perceptions of writing. Looking at the top rankings (4 or 5), 57% of percent said they were familiar with the writing process, 61% said they had received meaningful grammar instruction, and 52% said they were

comfortable writing for school. However, only 37% ranked their confidence in writing as a 4 or 5. To me, this revealed that students are disconnected from their writing. They have knowledge of the components, but do not connect with writing with personal confidence. The open-ended questions provided me with the most insight into my class. Several students talked about their grammar skills, and several expressed fear of sharing their writing with others. Knowing what to say, or coming up with an idea for their writing, was the other most cited concern. These responses helped me gauge where my class was, and where we needed to go.

My composition classes also utilized our computer lab on occasion. Since the lab is a shared space, extra planning had to take place in order to use this resource. However, allowing students to type papers in class, and using an online medium for reviewing and submitting papers, made it easier to track what each student has accomplished. This approach also eliminated many of the excuses I have received in previous years for not submitting work. Since students typed everything in Google Docs, they were able to access their writing from any location without needing a flash drive, or even to sit at the same station each time. In our computer lab, there is a master computer that teachers can use to oversee activity on all other connected stations, giving additional accountability to students. Though not a necessary tool, it was helpful to be able to see all the students' progress at once. I could tell who was stuck, who was distracted, and who was making progress immediately, which allowed me to know where to focus attention. I could also give immediate feedback through the messaging system, another nice tool when it

worked, but not completely necessary. Students seemed to like getting a message from me straight to their computer versus me walking around and talking with them.

The downside of using technology is that it often fails. When the master computer station was down (which happened several times), I had to be more proactive about moving around the room and checking in with students. I learned to have a plan B, just in case the Internet was down, computers weren't working, etc.

Creating Groups

One of the hardest aspects of the writing workshop for me was figuring out the logistics of grouping students. Clearly, establishing groups is an important part, possibly the key component, of a successful workshop. The process of grouping high school students into productive groups, however, was a challenge, especially at the beginning of the year. I recalled Mirtz's discussion of grouping, observing that students are resistant to new groups after they were settled (97), and wanted to create meaningful groupings for students

I started the grouping process with what I knew to be true of high school students. I know that high school students are extremely socially aware. I also know that teenagers are sensitive and tend to take all their experiences personally -- even being assigned a groupmate that they do not particularly get along with. Grouping students purely by friendships can lead to very distractible groups. Grouping students by ability offers two potential problems. First, the writing workshop is about learning and improving together. Separating higher achieving students limits the quality of peer

tutoring students can receive. Second, and possibly more importantly, students know. They know who the "smart" kids are, and they recognize that they have been separated because they do not learn as quickly, or read as well. The writing workshop exists to build up readers, and separating by ability seems to immediately tear them down. I am not claiming that grouping by ability never works, but at the high school level with my particular goals, this approach was less than ideal.

Throughout the semester, I tried a few different ways of grouping students, trying to limit the groups to 3-5 students (four was my preference). For the first three classes, I allowed students to group themselves. After the mini-lesson and independent writing, I instructed students to move into groups. I emphasized that the purpose of workshop groups is to give honest feedback and encouragement, to help us grow individually as writers and together as a community, and to give an audience to our writing. Then I gave them goals and procedures for their groups (Appendix A). As I visited and observed the groups, I took notes. First, I wrote down who immediately grouped together and who struggled finding a place. Then, I wrote down where the groups placed themselves in my classroom. Throughout the group time, I made notes about who was contributing, who was off task, etc. (Appendix D). My goal was to capture the dynamics of these self-made groups, seeing what (and who) worked, and what did not work. The second and third classes of observing, I also noted the changes that happened. These notes were fairly informal, and I walked around with a clipboard and paper. Of course, I also used the time to talk with students about the assignment, see the progress they were making, etc. But my primary goal was to get to know the dynamics of my class.

After my three observations, I sat down with my notes and reviewed the details I recorded. I started by pairing students with one person they repeatedly chose to be in a group with, and that did not cause them to be unusually distracted. (I say unusually distracted, because a certain amount of distractibility should be counted on). After establishing my pairs, I worked through the ones who did not seem to gravitate towards any one person, or who were highly unfocused in their groups. For these students, I went by what I had observed in the class the first few days. Students who were easily distracted were placed with students who had a higher focus. Students who struggled finding a place were placed with students who were warm and welcoming. Was every student completely satisfied? No. But, by observing first and then assigning groups, I was able to place students with at least one classmate with whom they were already comfortable and limit potential distractions by separating harmful dynamics.

I wanted to change the groups every quarter. Changing groups too often interrupts the community of the group. I like for students to be able to have the same peer group the entire time they are working through a rough draft or portfolio. However, having the same groups for too long can create a place for complacency. For my writing class, I have found that changing every quarter, which also marks the end of one portfolio and the beginning of another, works the best. This year, as we approached second quarter, I had my Writing class students complete a survey online using Google Forms. I was the only one who saw the results of the survey, but I did ask them to put their names on it. Among other questions, I asked each student to share people they felt they could work well beside and people they felt hurt their ability to get work done. Not everyone

completed the survey, but the results I received informed my next grouping of students. Of course, looking over the surveys I noticed that some students just wrote their best friends as the people they work with well, which is not always true. I partially honored these requests, but with much monitoring on my part. As for the people they could not work with, some just wrote people that they do not like or with whom they were fighting. I was actually okay with this, though, and respected it. The writing groups are supposed to promote honest sharing and constructive feedback, which will not happen in a group of students who do not get along well.

Our First Day

I used Penny Kittle's exercise this year, writing a short reason "why" we write to my students and add Kittle's reason for doing this. To get the first Composition class started, I shared with the classes a piece that I wrote, introducing myself and giving my desire and goals for the course (Appendix E). After sharing my introduction, I had students write a letter introducing themselves to me. I told them to include their own goals for the course, as well as general academic and personal goals. I encouraged students to tell me anything about themselves that would help me get to know them better and teach them better.

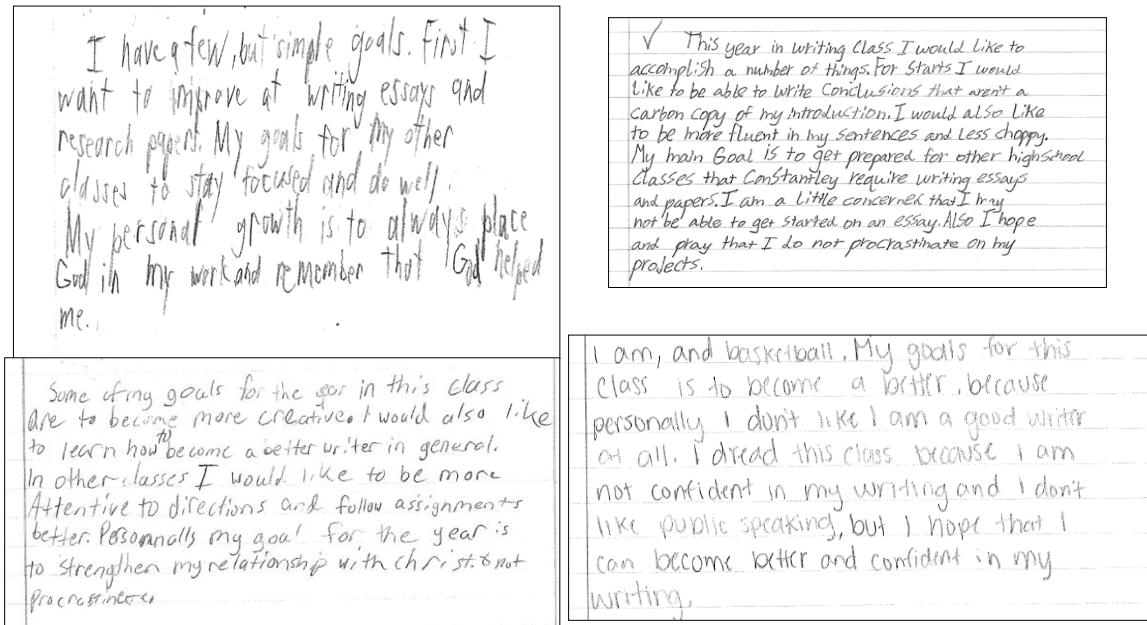


Figure 1. Student Samples from the First Day of Class.

One of the things that struck me as I read their responses is that a number of them defined their writing goals by some grammatical improvement. One student wrote, “Learn to use semicolons correctly.” Another wrote, “Get better at research and essays.” I also saw responses such as, “Be able to correct my writing,” and “Get better at writing.” While these were not the responses I hoped to see, they did show me what aspects of writing previous teachers had emphasized. I wanted them to focus more on improving their content and thinking more critically about their topics. Looking back, I think I had false expectations. I was looking for a connection to writing that they had not yet developed. Nancy Atwell writes that teachers must create meaningful contexts that encourage students to think critically and connect with their writing (52). I had not yet

done this, and needed to make this a goal for myself rather than expecting students to get there on their own.

Starting with Purpose

This year, we began by talking about audience and purpose, using Kelly Gallagher's mini-purposes handout (Appendix F). Students built portfolios first quarter around these different purposes, focusing mostly on personal writing.

It took me a few classes to get the students into a routine, and even then unexpected disruptions will always be a part of school. As a class, we worked on papers with the purpose "express and reflect." I modeled my process as they wrote, and they helped me brainstorm and develop my ideas. Even at this early stage, the question I heard most frequently was "How long does this have to be?" followed closely by, "When is this due?" In fact, even now as we are wrapping up third quarter, I am still fighting against these questions from some students. Most have figured out our routine, or have at least learned not to focus on the final until I'm confident we are all ready for a final paper. My standard response is always, "Just keep writing until you run out of things to say. We'll worry about length later." I encouraged them to focus on getting as many specific details down as possible before they thought about anything else.

I have tried desperately to not proscribe lengths to assignments. Ralph Fletcher and other theorist emphasize not assigning a length and letting students work at their own pace. However, within two weeks of starting the workshop in my class, I found that for me at this point, this practice was not successful. Sure, the motivated students who want

A's on every assignment will naturally pace themselves and eagerly share their progress. But then there are all those students who hate writing, hate reading, and hate school. Or the students who are brilliant but unmotivated. I had to set some boundaries. Generally, I would see how long my own piece was shaping up to be, and then subtract half a page. That length became their minimum. When I started drafting my "express and reflect" paper, I determined it was shaping up to be about two and a half to three pages. The students' minimum became two pages. As for deadlines, I went by the pace of the majority. As I visited different groups, checking in on progress and hearing portions of the papers, I would gauge where the majority of the class was. Then, I would end class with a statement like, "If you haven't made it to the second page yet, your homework is to finish up to the second page before next class." The next class, we would start with a progress check and the students would get a daily grade for having two pages done. I know Stanford, Urbanski, and others say not to grade the progress, but I found that some students will not work if there isn't a grade attached to it. For the most part, it took one time of having to write two pages at home, or one time of getting a zero, to motive the student to be more focused in class. I have in the classes several students with accommodations specifically related to writing and/or timed assignments. For these students, I checked their individual progress and set individualized pacing. As I keep using the workshop approach, and keep growing myself as a teacher and writer, I hope that I will be able to give my students more freedom.

Modeling writing is strongly emphasized in the Writing Workshop, and honestly I was uncomfortable with it at first. Cynthia Urbanski stressed the importance of

modeling every stage of writing (Chapter 3). I had never taken this approach before. This first time I modeled my process, I tried to mimic what Kelly Gallagher did in his instructional video *Improving Adolescent Writers*. As we began talking about potential topics for the "express and reflect" purpose, I had my classes help make a list of broad topics that would have this purpose. After we talked generally about topics, I came up with three possible specific topics for my own express and reflect writing: graduating college, getting married, and buying a house. I told the students why these three events were memorable events for me. After briefly explaining each event, I let each class pick which topic they thought would be best for this assignment. One class picked graduating college, and the other class picked getting married (Appendix G). Over the next several classes, my mini-lessons focused on the six traits of writing and the components of the writing process (emphasizing for students to make the process their own). As we moved through these different elements, I continued to work on my own papers in front of the students and while they worked on their own.

Between the alternating block schedule, assemblies, and other interruptions like fire drills, the class got off schedule quickly. Here's part of the outline we tried to follow:

Day 1 -- Mini-lesson focus -- Ideas / Content. Modeling focus -- help Mrs. Snider pick a good topic for Express/Reflect -- Workshop focus -- Come up with some potential topics for your papers. Share details with your group, making sure to keep our purpose in mind. Informal Conferencing -- Meet with each group and hear the ideas they have come up with

Day 2 -- Mini-lesson focus -- Narrowing your topic and brainstorming specifics. Modeling focus -- help Mrs. Snider make a list of details she must include in her paper. Help her decide which details are most important. Workshop focus -- Decide on your most interesting topic. Help each other decide what details to include, and to distinguish between really important details and side-notes.

Day 3 -- Mini-lesson focus -- The power of Freewriting. Modeling focus -- Mrs. Snider freewrites on her own paper, projecting it on the screen. As she writes, she tells the class her thought process. When she gets stuck, she asks the class what they would talk about next. Independent Writing -- Students write their own freewrites, while Mrs. Snider keeps typing. Workshop Focus -- Read freewrites out loud (yes, it has to be out loud). After everyone has read, use the Conferencing Workshop guidelines (Appendix A) to give helpful feedback to your groupmates about their drafts. Homework -- Find an example of a piece of writing that expresses and reflects. It could be an article, a blog, a poem, a short story, etc. Bring it with you next class.

Day 4 --Modeling through Examples (E.B. White's "Once More on the Lake") -- Analyze examples in small groups. Where in the example do you see the purpose? What about the piece is well-written? What about the piece could be improved? Why do you feel that way? Mini-lesson focus -- Thinking about different styles of writing and matching style to your purpose. Independent Writing -- Keep working on Express and Reflect draft. Workshop Focus -- What did you add today? What areas are you struggling with still? Everyone shares.

Day 5 – Mini-Lesson Focus: Organizing your thoughts. Modeling focus: Students help Mrs. Snider decide what order her narrative should be in. Mrs. Snider rearranges her free-write to make the order logical. Independent Writing Focus: Reread your own free-write and organize your thoughts. Workshop Focus: Read your free-write in its new order. Ask your groupmates, “Is everything in a logical order?” “What still needs to be rearranged?” “Is there any information that doesn’t fit?” “Is there any information you want to know still?

Whenever students were in their Workshop groups, I would rotate between groups and talk with the students about their progress. Ralph Fletcher encourages teachers to keep conferences short, and to engage students in the conference (57). The first few times, I focused only on listening, giving encouragement, and answering questions. I tried to build trust and confidence before offering suggestions or critiques. I also didn't meet with students one-on-one for the first two weeks (five classes on our rotating schedule). When I visited groups, I'd start with "How's it going?" and then, "What questions or concerns do you have?" Then, I'd ask students to read me just a sentence or two. Before I moved to the next group, I'd remind students of what our goals were right then. I also had a standing assignment of, "If everyone finishes sharing, go ahead and work on your other portfolio assignments. You don't have to wait for the rest of us. Pick whatever you feel inspired to work on. The key is -- don't stop thinking about writing until the bell rings."

Having students bring in examples that they found was great in theory, but not all students really "got" the assignment. The idea behind the assignment was good - I wanted

students to see the application of what we were discussing in the real world. Some students did understand the assignment, and brought in examples from blogs, books, and poems to share. Even the ones that didn't understand what to bring in, though, benefitted from discussing the examples and finding sentences that illustrate the purpose. Not all responses were right on track, but the exercise was profitable to help students distinguish between the different reasons for writing.

Using the Workshop for Academic Writing

Since the majority of the objectives for my writing class involve academic writing, I shifted from personal writing to more traditional writing forms after the first quarter. The hardest part of the transition for students was using more formal language, abandoning the first person and expressing their opinions in third person.

Focusing on academic writing, we covered researching, types of expository writing, and other various forms of writing the students encounter in school settings (letter writing, writing from a prompt, timed writing). Research writing was the hardest to do in the Workshop model, as far as having a daily workshop. We did not have a workshop goal each class because we spent most of our time researching in the Computer Lab, or having students use laptops, tablets, and smart phones in the classroom to research.

When we did have established workshop time, I had students focus first on quality of information, and then on quantity. Part of our researching unit was learning where to find reliable sources, so the workshop groups often had the purpose of evaluating their

groupmate's sources. I also had the workshop groups focus on the amount of information. Students tend to write down every fact they find when they research, whether or not it relates to what they are trying to prove. One of the goals of their workshop groups was to help peers decide what information was relevant, what information was irrelevant, and what information was lacking. I did not have daily mini-lessons during this project, either. We had some mini-lessons, mostly focuses on correct citations, using databases, and other researching skills. Once we finished the researching stage and started writing, my mini-lessons were more frequent and covered issues such as integrating citations into a paragraph, balancing research with original thought, and writing thesis statements.

Literary Analysis from “The Scarlet Ibis”

After researching, we transitioned to other types of academic writing, beginning with a literary analysis on “The Scarlet Ibis.” On the first day, we read the story in workshop groups. After reading the story, students first had to write a personal response to the ending, and then in their groups, they had to list three possible themes that they saw in the story. Calkins emphasizes that successful workshops move away from exercises and “ditto” sheets (162-164), and let the students move through writing at their own pace and in their own order. Keeping this in mind, I did not want to prescribe for the students what themes to find. However, I wrongly made the assumption that they were already familiar with understanding themes. Some students were, and some were not. My informal conferencing for this activity was largely spent explaining theme to the groups.

Once everyone was on the same page about theme, I had students write on the board some themes they saw in the story. Most groups overlapped in ideas; almost all of the groups wrote something about the importance of family, several wrote about pride, and most wrote about suffering and loss. From these ideas, I started talking to the students about writing a literary analysis. On this first day, I modeled starting a literary analysis using one theme the students wrote on the board. We discussed together how that theme was seen in the short story, and came up with several examples to support the theme. Then, students workshopped their own ideas in their peer groups before my mini-lesson. The mini-lesson ended the class, as I walked students through the components of a literary analysis.

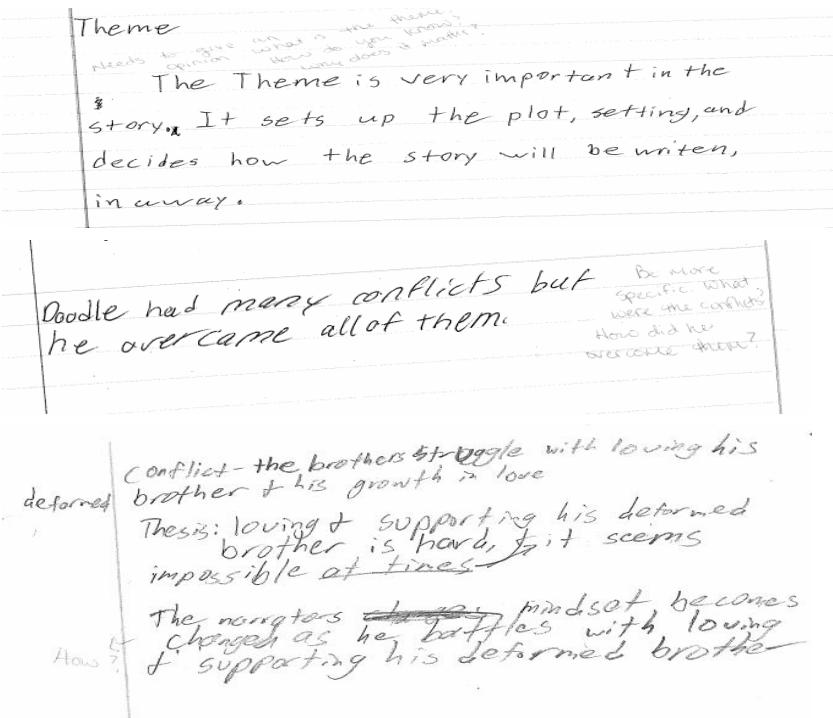


Figure 2. Examples of Thesis Statements for Literary Analysis.

The next several days of class were spent talking about different aspects of a literary analysis, including what types of elements to include in an analysis, how to structure it, and how to incorporate specific examples into the analysis. Getting students to write specifically without writing formulaically was difficult. First, I told students to try to use two or three specific examples to support each point. As I rotated between students writing, though, most students were grabbing random sentences from the story and sticking them awkwardly in the middle of a paragraph as proof. The next mini-lesson focused on finding examples that relate to the main purpose of the writing, rather than finding random examples. We also reviewed how to cite these examples in their writings.

Compare / Contrast Writing from "The Scarlet Ibis" and "Raymond's Run"

After spending a few days drafting a literary analysis, we moved to compare/contrast writing. I gave the students "Raymond's Run" to read, which pairs well with "The Scarlet Ibis." We had already discussed themes, conflict, symbols, and character development of "The Scarlet Ibis," and students had become more comfortable finding examples of these elements. The first day working on compare/contrast writing was similar to the first day of our literary analyses. Students read the story together in their workshop groups, with the goal of writing a personal response and determining how the story was similar to and different from "The Scarlet Ibis." Romano points out that students need to engage with literature, both literary texts and contemporary texts (43). He also encourages teacher to allow students to draw their own conclusions, saying that

what they conclude is not nearly as important as how or why they come to that conclusion (163). Entering into our literary analysis, I tried to practice these principles.

After going through some broad details on how to structure a compare/contrast piece, I gave my students several possible topics for writing about these two stories. I purposefully left the topics broad, wanting to give my students space to determine what details were important to them, and what aspects of the stories may be interesting to them. However, I chose one of the topics and modeled brainstorming and developing ideas with the students on the board.

For my example, I used the broad topic of "same theme, different stories." From there, I told the students that my paper would focus on how both stories show a theme of Growth and Change, although the characters experience very different situations. I then had the class help me brainstorm by listing examples on the board. We started with examples from each story that illustrated "Growth and Change." From "The Scarlet Ibis," the students said that Doodle changes because he learns to walk, and that the Narrator changes in his attitude towards Doodle. When we moved on to "Raymond's Run," the students said that Squeaky grew in her respect for her brother as well as other characters in the story. After focusing on ways that the theme is seen in both stories, we moved on to how the stories were different. The list was long, and ranged from the types of disabilities the siblings had to the language used by the author.

Once we had listed many examples on the board, I walked the students through how to use the brainstorm to help focus a paper. We looked at the ways both stories showed the theme first, and I pointed out to the class that even though we didn't have a

long list, everything on the list related to the main characters. Characters, then, would be a good focus for this paper, since we can clearly see the themes through the characters. After walking through the sample together, students chose their own topics and began drafting. Later, students were given the option to make a final draft out of either their literary analysis or their compare/contrast writing.

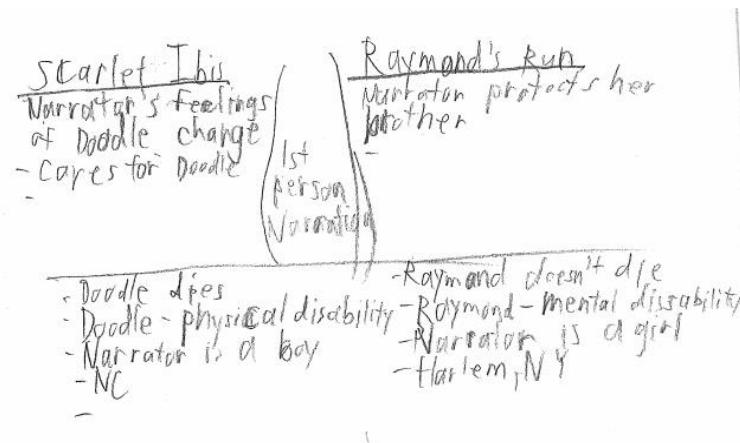


Figure 3. Compare/Contrast Ideas Examples

Teacher Conferencing

Teacher Conferencing is a key component to the workshop, and another element that isn't as easily implemented as it is read about. Informal conferencing as I visited groups and talked about their progress happened more organically than the individual conferences did. When students were in groups, I walked around and we chatted about their progress. Students were more at ease because they were surrounded by their peers, and they seemed more willing to share their own thoughts and feelings about their

writing. The biggest problem I experienced during workshop times was keeping students on task when I talked with other students.

Doing one-on-one conferencing, while necessary and helpful, was harder to get the students involved with. I used independent writing times to meet with students about their writings. Sometimes, I would just circulate around the desks, pausing at each student's desk to talk briefly with him or her about the paper. Other times, I would pull a student desk up to my desk, and call students up one at a time to have a longer conversations with them. In these conferences, I took notes about what the student and I discussed, so that next time I met with that student (whether informally or formally), I could check their progress on certain areas. I tried to give the students an encouragement, a recommendation, and a goal. I also started with "How's it going?" letting the student guide the conversation as much as possible, as Fletcher, Gallagher, and Calkins all recommend.

Throughout this process, I found two aspects of the one-on-one conference particularly troublesome. First, some students didn't want to talk. I'd ask, "How's it going?" and their response would be, "Good." I would follow up with, "Tell me about your progress." The student would hand me the paper. I would read over it, and ask a few more questions to try to get the student involved:

"What do you think is going really well? What areas are you having a hard time with?"

"I don't know. Nothing."

As I build relationships with students, some of the shyer students overcame their hesitancy. Other students never became comfortable with talking about their progress. I tried to remember Lucy Calkins advice about secondary students. She reminds teachers that some students will be reluctant to write. What reaches students, and what will ultimately make the writing workshop effective is that the teacher truly believes that students need the information and principles we are teaching (161). I stayed committed to the principles of the writing workshop and continued to try to connect with students.

The second problem I encountered is that for every student who didn't want to talk at all about their writing, there was a student that wanted constant feedback. As soon as I set students to their independent writing, the same five or six students are by my desk, asking questions about sentence structure, thesis statements, assignment clarity, etc. I love that these students eagerly ask questions -- that is not the problem. The problem is that the quieter students hide behind these students. The problem is managing my limited class time for one-on-one conferencing so that everyone gets attention, not just the ones that want attention. I found a few approaches that helped with this problem. The most obvious and effective fix was to let students know at the beginning of independent writing time that I would be calling them up one at a time to talk with them about their papers. I would encourage them to write down any questions that they thought of while waiting, so that we could be sure to talk about it when they came up. This solved one problem -- students lining up at my desk -- but it increased the anxiety of those who hated one-on-one meetings. Another solution was to let the initial students line up, talk them through their questions and note their progress, and then start talking with students who

hadn't sought attention. The draw-back to this solution was time. When I called students up one at a time and guided the conference, keeping each meeting to a set time was easier, allowing me to guarantee conferences with each student.

Balancing being an interested reader of my students' work and being a classroom teacher in managing my students was more difficult than I thought it would be. In truth, I used a mixture of these solutions. On days when a deadline was approaching, when portfolios or finals were due soon, I made the announcement about conferences and guided the timing so that I could speak with each student. Earlier in the process, I let students line up, I made notes of who I had talked with, and if I didn't speak to a student one class, I made sure to talk with them first in the next class.

When I first started conferencing, I had a form typed and printed for each student, with columns for me to track dates of conferences, the responses to my questions, and any feedback or additional comments necessary. I was determined to be beyond organized. I also created three-ring binders for each group, with a divider for each student. My goal was to keep all my comments very well organized, so that I could see clearly what each student needed and how they were growing. The binders themselves were a wonderful idea, and something I highly recommend. When I changed the groups, I simply shifted the students' dividers with all my notes to the correct binder. It took planning, but was worth the time. I abandoned the printed columns for conferencing fairly quickly, though. Not every conference fit into my mold, so my notes were becoming scattered any way. I found that regular notebook paper worked much better for me. I still had my questions laid out to keep the conference on track, but rather than

having printed paper with columns I listed the questions on the inside of each binder. I took notes on blank paper, and then added it to their divider later. This process also helped me when I met informally with whole groups. Originally, I took Group 1's binder, opened to the first student, asked him/her questions, wrote down answers, and then went to the next student. When I changed to notebook paper instead, I carried a clipboard around with me. I still wrote each student's responses down, but I moved around the room more organically. Later, I sorted my notes and put them in the appropriate places. (Appendix H).

Dialogue with a Student from Teacher Conferencing

(Writing about "The Scarlet Ibis". This particular student was trying to write about conflicts in the story)

Student: "Is this a good thesis"

(The story has three main conflicts: man vs. man, man vs. nature, and man vs. himself.)

Me: "Remember a thesis should prove something -- have some sort of opinion. What do you think you want to prove about the conflict?"

Student: "I think I got it"

(Writes: Conflict is essential in the story because it has three main types: man vs. man, man vs. nature, and man vs. himself.)

Me: "We are moving in the right direction. And you're right, conflict is essential to the story and there are multiple types of conflict in the story. But what I want to know is why that matters. Why do you think it's important that there are different types of conflict?"

Student tries to answer a few times, but then just shrugs. She's getting frustrated.

Me: Let's think of this a different way. Don't worry about thesis yet. Let's just think about conflict. And let's be really specific. (I take out a sheet of paper and write at the top "What's the conflict?" in one column and "Why it is important" in another.) What's one conflict in the story?

Student: Man versus himself.

Me: Ok, who's the man? What about himself is causing conflict?

Student: The narrator is in conflict with himself because he wants a brother, but then he wants to kill Doodle, and then he wants to help Doodle.

Me: Good! (writing the answer on the paper). Why is that important? What does our narrator learn because of it?

Student: I guess that family matters and is important.

Me: Great! I want you to think of some other conflicts. Be just as specific. Tell me why they matter.

I let the student work on the list while I talked with other students. When I came to her, we talked about her list. I asked questions like "what do all these conflicts have in common" and "if you had to put them in categories, what would you call them?" The goal was to let the student do the thinking, but to give her questions to help her thinking. She noticed that all of her "why it is important" answers showed the narrators attitudes -- positive and negative. We ended with "Conflict is essential in the story because it reveals the narrators positive and negative qualities." While the language could be more specific (something I told her to think about -- how can we make this more specific?), she was able to develop an opinion about conflict that goes beyond summarizing what the conflicts are.

Using Mini-Lessons to Adapt to Needs

As a result of a teacher's meeting conversation, my principal asked me to add units on note-taking and study skills to the writing class. Across the board, we noticed that students don't always know how to distinguish what is important when they are taking notes. Most students struggled taking notes from their own reading. Summarizing points was challenging. Writing class seemed like a logical way to address these problems. However, adding new units in the middle of the year is difficult, especially when you have your curriculum guides mapped out already. My solution for this year was to add these skills into my mini-lessons, only slightly altering plans I had in place already.

"The Revolt of the Evil Faeries" is a story that we normally read alongside "The Revolt of Mother." We compare and contrast the main characters and the nature of rebellions, and then students write about when rebellion or revolts are acceptable and when they are not. This year, I used "The Scarlet Ibis" and "Raymond's Run" to teach compare / contrast writing, and used "The Revolt of the Evil Faeries" to talk about note taking skills, with the end goals still being to write about when revolts are acceptable. I also added an informative text to help students with note-taking from nonfiction reading.

Changing plans to add new content created an interesting challenge. I once again saw the importance of planning (my own). Through this lesson, we had to make some adaptations and changes to address an area where students were struggling. Listening to their discussions, I realized how many assumptions I make about what students should know. I also realized that we teachers often fall into what Calkins (with a reference to

Atwell) describe as “exercises” (166). As much as I tried to stay away from prescribed lists and mimicking activities, sometimes it seemed like there was not another way to present the information. These types of practices are so common that students have come to expect them as well. Many times it seemed that students were lost if I did not provide them with a set list or structure to follow. Now that I am aware of this tendency (and the students’ dependency on “exercises”), I am making a more conscientious effort to change my approach.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

One of the mistakes I made along the way was assuming that if I gave students directions for a task, those directions would guide the workshop. I often set students to a task with a vague sense of what to accomplish, but not always the steps or ways in which to accomplish it. This is especially problematic when it comes to peer responses to drafts. I learned quickly that 1) students need to be taught HOW to respond to the drafts and 2) students need almost constant accountability. Part of the solution to this problem is modeling. When I sat with students and went over a sample or even their own writing, they had a better sense of what they needed to do on their own. Part of the solution to this problem was providing a set of questions for drafts. Especially when we did online reviews through Turn It in, having effective questions for the students to answer guided them through the process. At one point, a student asked me if I used the same questions when I graded finals. It was a great opportunity to explain my own process for grading. Another part of the solution was to assign tasks with the groups themselves. By having one student focus on ideas, another look at sentences, another at word choice, students were able to concentrate on one thing at a time, but everyone still received a balanced review. And finally, a BIG part of the solution was being organized myself. The more I had prepared and structured review sessions, the more productive they are.

In general, students have a hard time building on past concepts. For whatever reason, they want to separate concepts and disregard what they previously learned when a new assignment is given. I find myself saying often, "Well, remember what we talked about before..." and "Just like we did on the last draft..." Originally, I tried to have all new mini-lessons every day, also bringing in some new aspect of writing. There are so many aspects of writing that I want my students to grasp, I was over-eager in presenting new concepts. Half way through the first quarter, I realized that I was giving my students too many new concepts and not reviewing enough. I started repeating concepts. Not whole mini-lessons -- we never did the same exact lesson twice. But I would recycle concepts and apply them to a new style or genre of writing to help my students see that we are never "finished" with any one writing concept. For example, I spent time first quarter talking about creating titles. As the year went on, we revisited the concept of titles whenever they were preparing a final draft. In this case, I wouldn't do an entire mini-lesson on titles again. But their groups would check for titles, and I would make comments like, "Now remember, if you haven't given your piece an original title, take time to think of one. Ask your group mates to help you if you can't get a good idea. We want titles that connect to the purpose of our papers, but that are original. 'Compare/Contrast Paper' is not an original title. Tell me a little more than that."

Most of my findings from this study cannot be put in statistic form. I found that using the workshop method increased overall participation in assignments and general enjoyment of the class. For example, I had one student this year who was retaking my class after failing it last year. The student is very capable, but does not enjoy writing and

feels that he is a poor writer. The reason he failed the class previously was because he did not turn in assignments. This year, though, by changing the approach, that student not only passed but became a more confident writer. He consistently turned in work, and I saw an overall improvement in both writing style and attitude towards writing. At parent conferences, parents expressed surprise that their students were doing well in writing, and did not dread the class as much as they thought they would (which is high praise). One student began the year with her mother telling me how difficult writing was for her, and ended the year having one of the highest graded in the class.

This study was also a growing opportunity for me as a teacher and a writer, going through the process with my students as they wrote. By using the workshop approach, I had more time to figure out how to address the struggles mentioned above, and numerous other problems that surfaced along the way. This way of teaching writing does not automatically fix every problem that a teacher faces in the classroom. Some students still will not want to write, some will be tied to the length of the paper, some will always associate writing with spelling and punctuation. However, the majority my students have grown in their writing ability and in their writing confidence.

The workshop approach was not a magic fix-all for the problems seen in the traditional structure of the classroom. Some students still remained resistant to writing. We still had to meet the objectives of the course, which include thorough understanding and practice of academic writing. As a teacher, I still had moments of frustration when I just wasn't getting through to the students. The students still had moments of frustration of just not understanding the concepts, or often seeing the worth of our assignments. The

workshop method also didn't make planning less time consuming or classes easier to teach. What the change did accomplish, though, is making writing more interactive for the students, allowing me to give more immediate feedback, giving students opportunities to write at their own pace, and encouraging students to write to discover (among other benefits).

I have also grown as a teacher through this study. There are many things that I know I will do differently next year. I will spend more time demonstrating what "workshopping" means, and make fewer assumptions about what the students know already. In the midst of things I want to improve, I have questions that I want to explore further, too. How can we better utilize our time? How can we help students retain concepts better, and apply them in other classes? Is there a better way to assess portfolios? As I continue to grow as a teacher and writer, these are questions I will seek to answer.

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APPENDIX A

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE AND GUIDELINES

8:10 - 8:15 -- Share Aloud Progress / Set Goals
8:15 - 8:35 -- Mini-lesson
8:35 - 8:50 -- Independent Writing / Teacher Conference OR Brainstorming Workshop
8:50 - 9:30 -- Guided Writing OR Independent Writing
9:30 - 9:40 -- Peer Conferencing OR Sharing with Class

Brainstorming Workshops:

Everyone shares their ideas. Everyone responds. Be positive, encouraging, and honest.
After each group member shares, discuss the following:

1. What did you like best about the ideas?
2. What would you (the audience) like to hear more about?
3. What questions do you have about the topic / idea shared?
4. What would help the writer develop this idea more?
5. What genre would be best for presenting this idea?

Conferencing Workshops:

Everyone reads, everyone responds. Be positive, encouraging, and honest. Use the following guidelines to respond after a group member reads. (Give feedback to one person at a time, rather than waiting until everyone has read. You may not remember your first thoughts if you wait.)

1. How well the purpose is accomplished?
2. What parts don't make sense?
3. What parts don't flow well?
4. Where should the writing go from here?
5. Is there anything distracting in the paper?
6. How is the style? What is done well? What should be improved?

APPENDIX B

1ST QUARTER PORTFOLIOS AND EXAMPLES

Your portfolio for this quarter should include the following items:

1. Drafts reflecting at least FIVE of the SEVEN purposes for writing we discussed (can be in different genres)
2. Professional examples of FIVE pieces with different purposes
3. Final draft of Narrative Essay
4. Final draft of any other writing from the quarter

My Writings:

Draft	Purpose Used	Genre Used	Date started	Date reviewed	Date Revised	Final Draft?
#1						
#2						
#3						
#4						
#5						

My Examples:

Title	Author	Purpose	Genre	Date(s) Read	Date Evaluated
1:					
2:					

3:					
4:					
5:					

My Writings:					
Draft	Purpose Used	Genre Used	Date started	Date reviewed	Date Re
#1	Express and Reflect	ESSAY			
#2	Evaluate & Judge	ESSAY			
#3	Analyze and Interpret	ESSAY			
#4					
#5					

My Examples:

Title	Author	Purpose	Genre	Date
1: Reflective ESSAY	Jessica - Sharron Henderson	Express and Reflect	ESSAY	
2: once more to the lake	E.B White	Express + Reflect	Narrative	
3: Why People Should Not Be Allowed to Keep Exotic Animals as Pets	Unknown	Persuade	Persuasive essay	9-10
4: Top 12 websites where the Most Affordable Clothing for College Students	Natalie Ray + man	Inform + Explain	Article	10-11
5: Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials	Ben Kendrick	Evaluate and Judge	MOVIE REVIEW	10-11

My Writings:

Draft	Purpose Used	Genre Used	Date started	Date review
#1	Express & Reflect	ESSAY		
#2	Take a Stand	Opinion Memorial	9/21/15	
#3	Analyze & Interpret	blog	10/4/15	
#4	Inquire & Explore	PERSUASIVE LETTER	10/4/15	
#5	Propose a Solution	testIMONIAL	10/4/15	

APPENDIX C
PARTIAL SURVEY RESULTS (FREE RESPONSES)

My biggest concern about writing is...	Any additional comments, concerns, or questions about writing
My biggest concern about writing is that I would accidentally plagiarize without knowing it. I feel like oftentimes plagiarism isn't very clearly defined and that anyone could plagiarize accidentally.	Another big concern I have about writing is that I may not convey my opinion in a way that my reader can understand. My thought process is very different from other people's, so I often worry if my reader can follow my train of thought.
It usually takes a little time for me to figure out what I will write. I think this is difficult for me because I'm a perfectionist and want my writing to be just right especially if it is being graded.	I also get nervous about peers seeing my work and judging me based on it because sometimes you think your paper is really good but in others' eyes it isn't.
Feeling intimidated by others' reading and writing skills. Sometimes it is hard for me to comprehend well when I read, and I feel as if I don't have the proper tools and enough information to write about it.	
I always run out of things to say in my conclusion so I just ramble.	
My biggest concern about writing is getting the format and grammar correct.	I enjoy writing however sometimes I wonder whether I am writing a good quality paper.
My biggest concern is talking in front of the class.	I don't really like standing in front of the class. I work more diligently by myself.
Basically, fully understanding all of the seven purposes in writing, being able to come up with a topic on time, and most importantly, saying or presenting anything in front of anyone. That is one of my biggest fears.	I have trouble with introductions and conclusions, but I have a little easier time with body paragraphs when they consist of mostly facts. I also hope to have some of these answers closer if not on the highest number possible by the end of this class.

Having to present it in front of the class. I sometimes have trouble with citing my sources.	I would like a little more information on the writing with a purpose/portfolio checklist.
Not being able to write just off the top of my head it takes me a while to decide what to write	I would like to fix my writing and make it more interesting and not have every paper sound the exact same

APPENDIX D

NOTES FROM “ONCE MORE UPON THE LAKE”

A few weeks ago this feeling got so strong I bought myself a couple of boat hooks and a spinner and returned to the lake where we used to go, for a week's fishing and writing and hunting.

I took along my son, who had never had any fresh water up his nose and who had seen all kinds of things from radio and television. The journey over to the lake began to wonder what it would be like. I wondered if the lake had ever marred this unique, this holy spot—the coves and streams, the hills that stand set behind, the camps and the paths behind the camps. I was sure that the main road would have found it out and I wondered in what other ways it would be desolated. It is strange how much you can remember about places like that once you allow your mind to return to the groove which load back. You remember one thing, and that suddenly reminds you of another thing. I guess I remembered clearest of all the early mornings, when the lake was cool and motionless, remembered how the bedroom smelled of the lumber it was made of and the wet woods and scents entered through the windows. The partitions in the camp were thin and did not extend clear to the top of the room. I was always the first to wake and did not eat until after the others, and could not immediately get outdoors and start out in the canoe, keeping close along the shore in the long shadows of the pines. I remembered being very careful never to rub my paddle against the gunwale for fear of disturbing the stillness of the cathedral.

APPENDIX E

TO MY WRITING CLASS

I am looking at my computer screen, and the blank page waiting on it. Casually, I lift my eyes and survey my kingdom – the partially set up classroom before me. Bulletin boards remain to be done, sections of the wall remain bare, and books sit ready to be distributed. But I have taken a break from those tasks, and have sat down at my desk. My current task is to capture for you, my students, why I do what I do – and why I feel that you should embrace it to.

Language Arts, English, Literature, Writing – my chosen field goes by many names. For the time, I am charged with teaching you Writing (or “Composition” in the more academic circles). I am fully aware that I have picked this specialty on purpose, whereas you have been placed here without your consent (and, for many of you, contrary to your wishes). But it is necessary. You must learn to write. And it can be fun, if you let it. My goal is that you become more confident writers, more fluid communicators, and more willing readers. These are the things I desire for you.

Let me tell you why I chose my profession. My mother is a teacher, and I always had great relationships with my teachers. I love to learn, I always have, and I won’t apologize for it. Both my parents are avid readers. Rather than getting paid to do chores, my sister and I were paid to read books. Through a variety of genres, I have traveled to worlds lost and undiscoverable within the confines of our reality. My thinking has been challenged, my sense of wonder expanded, and my vision of our world changed.

When I was in middle school, I began to desire to create worlds of my own, to record my own thoughts, and to articulate on paper things I would never communicate out loud. I was (am) shy. I was (am) non-confrontational. I was (am) slow to gather my thoughts in the moment. But writing allowed me to get them out, organize them, and fine-tune them until my thoughts were ready to be shared. As I grew as a writer, writing became a way to sort through information I received and to make sense of it. Writing has become the way I explore new ideas and thoughts, and how I prepare to share those thoughts with others. Writing has given me voice, and helped me discern what should be said.

Never mind all the academic reasons why we write. You will learn them in time, and we will deal with them together. For now, as we begin this new class together, here’s what I want you to embrace:

- You ARE a writer. I will teach you how to improve the craft, but you are already a writer.
- Writing is hard, but it isn’t a chore. It takes work to improve our ability to communicate, but it also opens doors to innumerable possibilities.

- You are different than I. Your writing shouldn't be a copycat of mine, because you aren't me. Your writing won't look exactly like your classmates, because we are each different. Our goal is to find the best way for you to express your thoughts.

As we start this new year, keep an open mind. Be willing to stretch yourself, and to even be uncomfortable sometimes. Remember that there is power in words, especially when they are written. Let's learn to channel that power together.

APPENDIX F

WRITING WITH PURPOSE - MY TOPICS

All writing has a purpose -- some goal that the writer is trying to achieve. Below is a chart of the primary purposes we see in writing. While this isn't a comprehensive list, it does cover the major genres and styles of writing that we will be studying this year. Some writing will overlap into various purposes, but good writing will always have a clear goal.

As readers, we should try to understand the purpose behind everything we read.
As writers, we should also determine our purpose BEFORE we begin serious drafting.

Purpose	Explanation	My Examples
Express and Reflect	The writer... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses or reflects on his or her life and experiences • Often looks backwards in order to look forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduating College • Getting Married • Buying a House
Inform and Explain	The writer... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States a main point and purpose • Tries to present the information in a surprising way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why I became a teacher • Who I am • What experience with Writing I have
Evaluate and Judge	The writer... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on the worth of person, object, idea, or other phenomenon • Usually specifies the criteria to the object being seen as "good" or "bad" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of teachers I have had • What makes literature "good"
Take a stand	The writer... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to persuade audiences to accept a particular position on a controversial issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why we need a dress code • Why marriage matters
Propose a Solution	The writer... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes a problem, proposes a solution, and provides its justification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a case for reading logs • Making a case for homework

Analyze and Interpret	The writer... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to analyze (break down into parts) and interpret phenomena that are difficult to understand or explain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application of a specific, meaningful passage in Scripture
Inquire and Explore	The writer... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrestles with a question or a problem • Hooks with the problem and lets the reader watch them wrestle with it (may or may not provide an answer or solution) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why no sin is small

Adapted from *Reading Rhetorically*, by Bean, Chappell, and Gillam

APPENDIX G

EXPRESS AND REFLECT MODELING

Purpose: Express and Reflect

My Possible Topics:

Getting Married
Graduating College
Buying a House

Writing B: Graduating College

Things to Include:

1. Major
2. GPA
3. Where
4. Age
5. How I felt when I got my diploma
6. Scholarships
7. How long
8. Friends
9. Clubs
10. Hobbies
11. Job while in school
12. Teachers / favorite teacher

*** Express and reflect -- How college changed me (this will become my thesis)

Writing A: Getting Married

1. Engagement
2. When and Where
3. How old
4. People in wedding
5. Husband / who I married
6. How it made me feel
7. Expenses
8. Anything strange / interesting
9. Colors / Theme
10. How I changed / How he changed

** Express and Reflect: How getting married changed who I am and what I value (this will become my thesis)

Getting Married

1. Engagement - Oct 2009 at Salem
2. When and Where - June 12, 2010 in Richmond, Va at Huguenot Baptist Church at 2:00 pm
3. How old - 25
4. People in wedding - sister, Steph G, Deborah, Jill, Courtney, Becky
5. Husband / who I married - James
6. How it made me feel - happy, nervous, stressed, relieved
7. Expenses - cheap
8. Anything strange / interesting - nephew threw up; Deborah went to ER that morning; nephew only made it halfway down the aisle; crazy wedding coordinator
9. Colors / Theme - Green / Yellow - Daisies
10. How I changed / How he changed - both grown closer to Christ, compromise, patience, how love works, mature, realistic, forgiving

I got married on June 12, 2010. It was in Richmond, Va at a church named Huguenot Baptist Church. My dad used to work there. We got married on a Saturday afternoon, at 2 pm. It was a low-key, small wedding, but that fits James and I both. Neither of us like being the center of attention, neither of us like big formal affairs. Instead, we wanted a simple, relaxed wedding where we could enjoy the beginning of our lives together and share that beginning with our friends and family.

as much as I wanted it to be stress-free, I am a person who stresses out easily. By the time the wedding started, I was a little overwhelmed. My nieces had been sick a few days before the wedding, and that morning my nephew was sick, too. I found out later that he threw up between the ceremony and the reception. I also found out later that one of my bridesmaids, Deborah, had been taken to the ER the morning of my wedding because she was having bad back pain. They were back in time for pictures, so I never knew.

APPENDIX H
TEACHER CONFERENCING SHEET

Original Form, Example of my free form notes

Student: _____

Date:	How's it going?	Compliment	Teaching Point	Student Questions	Goal for Next Conference

How's it going?	Compliment	Teaching Point	Student Questions	Goal for Next Conference
Take a stand Dress Code	Good length	Conventions	N/A	Keep working
1-TaS- 2-J+E 3-E+J	Dress Code -soccer - American great			

- Great length!
- Define pronouns w/ proper names
- Decide why this is important to share
- * weave it throughout
- Everything
- Intro + Conclusion