

Praise for Writing Boxes

Writing Boxes is a really smart, kid-centered, and easy-to-replicate program. I'll be recommending it wherever I go.

Jon Scieszka, National Ambassador for Young People's Literature

A call to action, a jolt to the senses, and a repository of all around good advice.

Elizabeth Bird, Collection Development Manager, Evanston Public Library

This is an indispensable handbook for anyone who wants to encourage writing in classrooms or libraries or after-school programs.

Jennifer M. Brown, Children's Librarian, Bank Street College of Education

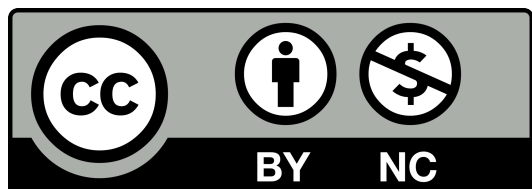
The author combines superlative credentials, including experience as a school and academic librarian and teacher, with knowledge of children's literature and child development, and offers an abundance of "hands-on" information in this practical guide.

Jean M. Stevenson, PhD, University of Minnesota, Duluth

Copyright

Writing Boxes: The Reading/Writing Connection in Libraries

Copyright © 2019 by Lisa Von Drasek



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

You are free to:

Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format
Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially.
The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

NonCommerical — You may not use the material for commercial purposes

The author and publisher are grateful for the following permission to use or adapt copyrighted material. Original student work throughout the book used with permission. “Where I’m From” © 1993 by George Ella Lyon.

Although every precaution has been taken to verify the accuracy of the information contained herein, the author(s) and publisher assume no responsibility for any errors or omissions. No liability is assumed for damages that may result from the use of the information contained within.

Edition: 1.0
University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing
Minneapolis, Minnesota

eISBN

For additional formats of this book, including print, visit this book online at:
z.umn.edu/writingboxes

Writing Boxes

Writing Boxes

The Reading/Writing Connection in Libraries

Lisa Von Drasek

University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing

Minneapolis



Writing Boxes by Lisa Von Drasek is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

3

Dedication

For Paul, who the writers of 826 MSP called a gentleman and a gentle man.

And for all the librarians serving children and young adults, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Contents

- [Foreword](#)
- [Why Should Youth Services Librarians—Public & School— Encourage Writing?](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Creating a Nonjudgmental Space](#)
- [Starting a Writing Box Eight-Week Program](#)
- [Helpful Hints](#)
- [Defining Success](#)
- [Main Body](#)
- [Why Should Youth Services Librarians—Public & School— Encourage Writing?](#)
- [1. Resources](#)
- [Creating a Nonjudgmental Space](#)
- [Starting a Writing Box Eight-Week Program](#)
- [Defining Success](#)
- [Parents & Other Partners](#)
- [Selecting Mentor Texts for Writing Box Programs](#)
- [In Which I Model the Writing Box Workshop Process](#)
- [Maps](#)
- [Map Making Program](#)
- [Comics & Cartoons](#)
- [Comics & Cartoons Program](#)
- [Hieroglyphs & Secret Codes](#)
- [Hieroglyphs & Secret Codes Program](#)
- [Menus & Recipes](#)
- [Imaginary Menus Program](#)
- [Parts of a Menu](#)
- [Recipes Program](#)
- [Recipe Information Sheet](#)
- [Letters & Postcards, Emails, Facebook, Twitter, & Text Messages](#)
- [Letters & Postcards Program](#)
- [Poetry](#)
- [Poetry Program, Session I: "Red Sings"](#)

- [Poetry Program, Session II: Poem in Your Pocket Day](#)
- [Poetry Program, Session III: Concrete Poems](#)
- [Poetry Program, Session IV: Where I'm From](#)
- [Newspapers, Zines, & Blogs](#)
- [Newspapers, Zines, & Blogs Program](#)
- [Informational Writing & Research](#)
- [Fact-Checking: How to find a fact in an informational book](#)
- [Fact-Checking Program](#)
- [Memoir](#)
- [Memoir Program](#)
- [Memoir Program: Under 9](#)
- [Combining Workshops](#)
- [Scaling Up to Young Adult](#)
- [Publishing: Writing & Revision, Process & Product](#)
- [Handmade Books Program](#)
- [Reflections](#)
- [Acknowledgements](#)
- [About the Author](#)
- [About the Publisher](#)

4

Foreword

Every library, no matter how small or how large, including public, academic, and others, can and I believe should be a special kind of makerspace: a makerspace for the mind.

-Walt Crawford, "Foreword: Makerspaces for the Mind," *Library Publishing Toolkit*

What took me so long? What took me so long to commit to paper, to share with my fellow librarians, my passionate insistence that every youth services librarian, public and school, should—yes, should—have a writing component in every reading program and every class period, every makerspace, every preschool program? Yes, I see the irony.

I am passionate about supporting writing in libraries because of its obvious connection to one of our core missions. We librarians accept our role in providing support materials for a literate population. That literacy has been defined in the general consciousness simply as reading is a disconnect. Reading is the ability to decode symbols (the alphabet) on a page or tablet or sign or label and make meaning from them. To be a reader is to be able to understand what is being communicated through writing.

It is indisputable that most people need to know how to read to make their way successfully in life. Most people must also be able to write competently, and communicate by putting symbols on the page. Who would argue that these skills are exponentially of value to English language learners? Competency, and the enjoyment of reading and writing from intrinsic motivation, are critical for active participation in a democracy.

The ability to write is essential to the skills of literacy, but the role writing plays in reading fluency is often overlooked—especially in libraries. School librarians may say that writing is the purview of the classroom teacher, and public youth services librarians may say “This isn’t part of my job.” I disagree. If we accept that facilitating literacy is the responsibility of all youth services librarians, facilitating writing is an essential facet of our mission. The public or school library is the perfect center for “out of the classroom” literacy activities.

It’s not unusual for a librarian to hear a third grader proclaim that she “HATES reading.” We know this statement is rooted in negative classroom experiences or the insistence of the adults in her life that she read only “good” books. Many adults claim to “HATE writing” because of their own history of schoolwork or homework struggles. We librarians can intervene. We can short-circuit the negativity. If we can inspire fluent reading, we can inspire fluent writing. We are The Librarians. (Cue dramatic music: Dum dum dum dum.)

We are already reading mentors. We should be writing mentors as well.

I am asking youth services librarians to deliberately embed writing into their programming and classroom practices. To have Writing Boxes available for note taking, list making, and map making. To make wish lists, book suggestions, and building-renovation fantasies. I am asking that we partner with classroom teachers, parents, and caregivers to build an expectation of writing in libraries. Writing is part of what we do to support literacy in our communities.

My gratitude to Sharon Edwards and Robert Maloy for inspiring me to write and permission and encouragement to write this book.

I

Why Should Youth Services Librarians—Public & School— Encourage Writing?

Origin of the Writing Boxes

In 1993, I was newly matriculated into a Masters of Library Science Program. I was employed as a Librarian Trainee II with the Brooklyn Public Library, posted to the Park Slope Branch, a mixed-class neighborhood. And I had a dark secret: I couldn’t write. I was nauseated by the thought of college essays and research papers. How was I going to get through graduate school? I had barely made it through my undergrad classes, creatively providing and producing alternative assessment products (anything except research papers) to survive my writing anxiety.

Luck, miracle, or fate brought Dr. Robert Maloy and Sharon Edwards, authors of *Kids Have All the Write Stuff*¹, to my small branch library. They were on an author tour, and the publisher offered to have them visit for a parent education program.



Dr. Maloy, a University of Massachusetts professor, and Ms. Edwards, an elementary school teacher, had created a writing program designed to inspire young children to write on their own. Dr. Maloy's research on writing anxiety in students of every level, from elementary to college, had brought him to Ms. Edward's second-grade class. He came to the conclusion that writing anxiety begins as children start learning to write in the classroom setting. The pressures of forming letters on the page, acquiring fine motor skills, developing literacy skills, and learning to spell all lead to rampant perfectionism and paralysis. The consequence? A lifelong inability to put words on a page to communicate ideas.

To encourage writing as an enjoyable activity they provided Writing Boxes, one for each child in Ms. Edward's class. These boxes were plastic containers with writing materials (pencils, pens, markers, crayons, glue, paper, etc.). Children brought the Writing Boxes home with no restrictions; they could write what they wanted, when they wanted, and how they wanted. The experiment succeeded beyond the authors' wildest hopes. There was an explosion of writing by the students, who created signs, poems, recipes, maps, cartoons, letters, journals, and handmade books. Reading scores improved. Edwards and Maloy determined that the success of the program lay simply in its having provided the children with writing materials, opportunities to write, and a nonjudgmental writing space.

That evening, in my library, Ms. Edwards and Dr. Maloy spoke in practical terms about literacy, child development, and the reading/writing connection. They encouraged parents to inspire reading and writing by simply providing materials, space, and non-judgmental reflections.²

As I watched them describe how to put together Writing Boxes for school and home, I wondered if we could do this Writing Box thing as a public library program. I also had my first graduate school paper due in two weeks in my Services to Children class. Could I write about Writing Boxes for this assignment? I was curious to see if I could give myself permission to "write to please myself," to "take off the editor's hat" and be non-judgmental while I was writing.

I read and reread their book, with the goal of creating a safe and creative space for writing in my public library. After persuading Ann Kalkhoff, the Branch Librarian, to allow an experiment in the children's room, I created Writing Boxes filled with supplies, raided the recycling box next to the copier/printer for

paper, and set up Writing Box workshops for the upcoming summer reading program.

My background in children's literature and experience working in children's museums informed my understanding of how to structure a weekly workshop around writing. That summer, I experimented with cartooning, secret codes, map making, jokes, picture book making, recipes, and the retelling of fairy tales, and made two Writing Boxes available for use in the library (they were labeled as Reference Materials) in the afternoons.



Park Slope Library Branch, Brooklyn Public Library, 1995

Success

The weekly workshops were successful in enticing 10–20 children, ages 5–12, to drop in on Wednesday mornings from 10:00 to 11:30 as part of our summer reading program. We had the Writing Boxes on the tables, but supplemented their contents with additional supplies. The Writing Boxes were then available in the children's room to sign out for use in the library. With one designed for preschool children and one for those in elementary school, each contained developmentally appropriate supplies such as rounded safety scissors in the box intended for younger writers.

We discovered that parents and children enjoyed writing together. And while we initially feared that supplies might disappear or be misused, this never happened.

A surprising opportunity to continue the program came when the New York City Mayor delayed school openings for 11 days while workers performed asbestos abatement on more than 100 schools, including those closest to our branch.³ Parents scrambling for childcare turned to the public libraries for a safe space for their children while they were at work. During the next week, we consistently had 50–60

children who were happily occupied reading and writing. This experience confirmed that the workshops and materials were suitable for a diversity of ages, and could be scaled up or down as needed.

Measured by engaged writers and returning participants, the success of the Writing Box program inspired us to recruit other branches for the next summer, and the program office of the Brooklyn Public Library generously provided materials to all of them. In its third year, 63 branches engaged in some form of the program. A year later, I presented a workshop at the New York State Library Association Conference, encouraging librarians to include Writing Boxes as part of the New York State Summer Reading Program.



Professional Development

Getting started

Over the last 20 years, wherever I've been a librarian, there have been Writing Boxes. I've conducted Writing Box workshops with librarians and teachers in systemwide training for the New York City Department of Education and for Maricopa County Libraries in Arizona, as well as at conferences like those of the New York Library Association, the Minnesota Library Association, the American Library Association, and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). The program works.

The Why

No one questions the role of youth services librarians in the promotion of literacy. We develop collections for this purpose, selecting the best of the best so as to surround readers with high-quality materials. We partner with teachers to support their curricula with high-interest, age-relevant materials, and provide summer reading programs to prevent the loss of skills.⁴ Many public libraries now provide summer learning opportunities beyond reading, including STEM programs (Science Technology Engineering Math) and Maker Spaces, which encourage creativity.⁵ Youth services librarians have responded to the call to provide enrichment programs to support summer learning, working to stem what has been termed the "summer slide," and to prevent a loss of reading and math skills in elementary aged students.

One of the most significant initiatives of the ALSC and the Public Library Association (PLA) divisions of the American Library Association, which serves children ages 0–18, focuses on literacy. The Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® (ECRR) program (everychildreadytoread.org) incorporates simple, research-based practices, to help parents and caregivers develop early literacy skills in children. By teaching the primary adults in a child's life about the importance of early literacy and how to nurture pre reading skills at home, ECRR multiplies library efforts many times over. We would be hard pressed to find a person who doesn't believe that part of a school or public libraries' mission is to support reading fluency or literacy in citizens of all ages.

What isn't so obvious, however, is the reading/writing connection. Just as children's librarians encourage reading aloud and the sharing of books, it is essential that we share the joy of writing and communicate the links between writing and literacy. We're not there yet; more than 25 years after Edwards and Maloy's experiences in the classroom, teachers continued to experience students' dismay when faced with writing time.⁶



Preschooler scribbling/writing

This deficit in writing competence continues

We know that achievement gaps in educational experiences exist for children of marginalized communities. These children need practice with their skills of attention and fine motor skills, as well as a better understanding of the world around them.⁷ We also know that the library is the literacy center that welcomes everyone to programs like story times that feature early literacy skills. I encourage librarians who serve children and young adults to add a component of writing to their literacy programming for all ages.

Reading involves decoding symbols (words constructed of letters of the alphabet) on the page and making meaning from them, while writing is the creation of symbols to communicate meaning. More than once, a preschooler has attended one of our Writing Box programs with an older sibling. We simply provide paper taped to the linoleum floor and two or three large, water-soluble markers. The preschooler creates what we would call scribbles, and we perceive random marks. But if I ask about what is written on the page, the child can point to the symbols and tell me that story. In the reading and communication

of those symbols, we see the beginnings of literacy.⁸

As part of the Public Libraries' summer reading program, the Writing Box activity increases parent engagement, promotes family literacy, and, above all, is fun. The Writing Box program is easy to replicate, inexpensive, requires very little prep and no technology, and is relevant to all ages. The writing workshops described in this volume have all been successful in my public and school libraries.

Who are these programs for?

The structured programs are for ages 6–14. Any Writing Box program can be adapted to meet a range of ages—including early elementary (first through third grades), middle elementary (third through fifth grade), or middle school (fifth through eighth grade). (Yes, these may overlap.)



We write anywhere

Endnotes

Notes

1. Edwards, Sharon A., and Robert W. Maloy. *Kids Have All the Write Stuff: Inspiring Your Children to Put Pencil* to Paper : *or Crayon, or Felt-tip Marker, or Computer*. New York, N.Y.: Penguin, 1992. Print.
2. Frederick, Heather Vogel. "'Writing Box' Helps Kids Enjoy Writing, Aids Reading. (Sharon Edwards', Robert Maloy's Hands-on Tools)." *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 Dec. 1992: 12. Web.
3. Dillon, Sam. "Asbestos in the Schools; Disorder on Day 1 in New York Schools." *The New York Times*, 21 Sept. 1993.
4. Roman, Susan, and Carole D. Fiore. "Do public library summer reading programs close the

- achievement gap?” *Children and Libraries* 8, no. 3 (2010): 27-31.
5. Heather Michele Moorefield-Lang, (2014),”Makers in the library: case studies of 3D printers and maker spaces in library settings,” *Library Hi Tech*, Vol. 32 Iss 4 pp. 583-593.
 6. Paquette, Kelli R. “Encouraging Primary Students’ Writing through Children’s Literature.” *Early Childhood Education Journal* 35, no. 2 (2007): 155-65.
 7. Grissmer, David, Grimm, Kevin J., Aiyer, Sophie M., Murrah, William M., & Steele, Joel S. (2010). Fine Motor Skills and Early Comprehension of the World: Two New School Readiness Indicators. *Developmental Psychology*, 46(5), 1008-1017.
 8. Beginnings of Literacy, Joan Brooks McLane and Gillian Dowley McNamee, Erikson Institute, *Zero to Three Journal*, September 1991. z.umn.edu/wbr1

Resources

Bennett-Armistead, V. Susan, Nell K. Duke, and Annie M. Moses. 2013. *Beyond Bedtime Stories : A Parent’s Guide to Promoting Reading Writing, and Other Literacy Skills from Birth to 5*. 2nd edition. ed. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Edwards, Sharon A., and Robert W. Maloy. 1992. *Kids Have All the Write Stuff: Inspiring Your Children to Put Pencil* to Paper : *or Crayon, or Felt-Tip Marker, or Computer*. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books.

Fletcher, Ralph J. 2011. *Mentor Author, Mentor Texts: Short Texts, Craft Notes, and Practical Classroom Uses*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Frederick, Heather Vogel. ““Writing Box” Helps Kids Enjoy Writing, Aids Reading (Sharon Edwards’, Robert Maloy’s Hands-on Tools).” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 Dec. 1992.

Gadzikowski, Ann. 2007. *Story Dictation: A Guide for Early Childhood Professionals*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Goodman, Kenneth S. 1986. *What’s Whole in Whole Language?* 1st. U.S. ed. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.

Grissmer, David, Kevin J Grimm, Sophie M Aiyer, William M Murrah, and Joel S Steele. 2010. “Fine Motor Skills and Early Comprehension of the World: Two New School Readiness Indicators.” *Developmental Psychology* 46 (5):1008.

Hoban, Tana. 1983. *I Read Signs*. 1st ed. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Jones, Cindy D, and D Ray Reutzel. 2015. “Write to Read: Investigating the Reading-Writing Relationship of Code-Level Early Literacy Skills.” *Reading & Writing Quarterly* 31(4):297-315.

Kobrin, Beverly. 1995. *Eyeopeners II!: Children’s Books to Answer Children’s Questions About the World around Them*. New York: Scholastic Inc.

McLane, Joan Brooks, and Gillian Dowley McNamee. 1991. “The Beginnings of Literacy.” *Zero to Three Journal* 12.

Miller, Steve. 2005. *Developing and Promoting Graphic Novel Collections, Teens @ the Library Series*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers.

Mo, Ya, Rachel A Kopke, Lisa K Hawkins, Gary A Troia, and Natalie G Olinghouse. 2014. "The Neglected "R" in a Time of Common Core." *The Reading Teacher* 67(6):445-453.

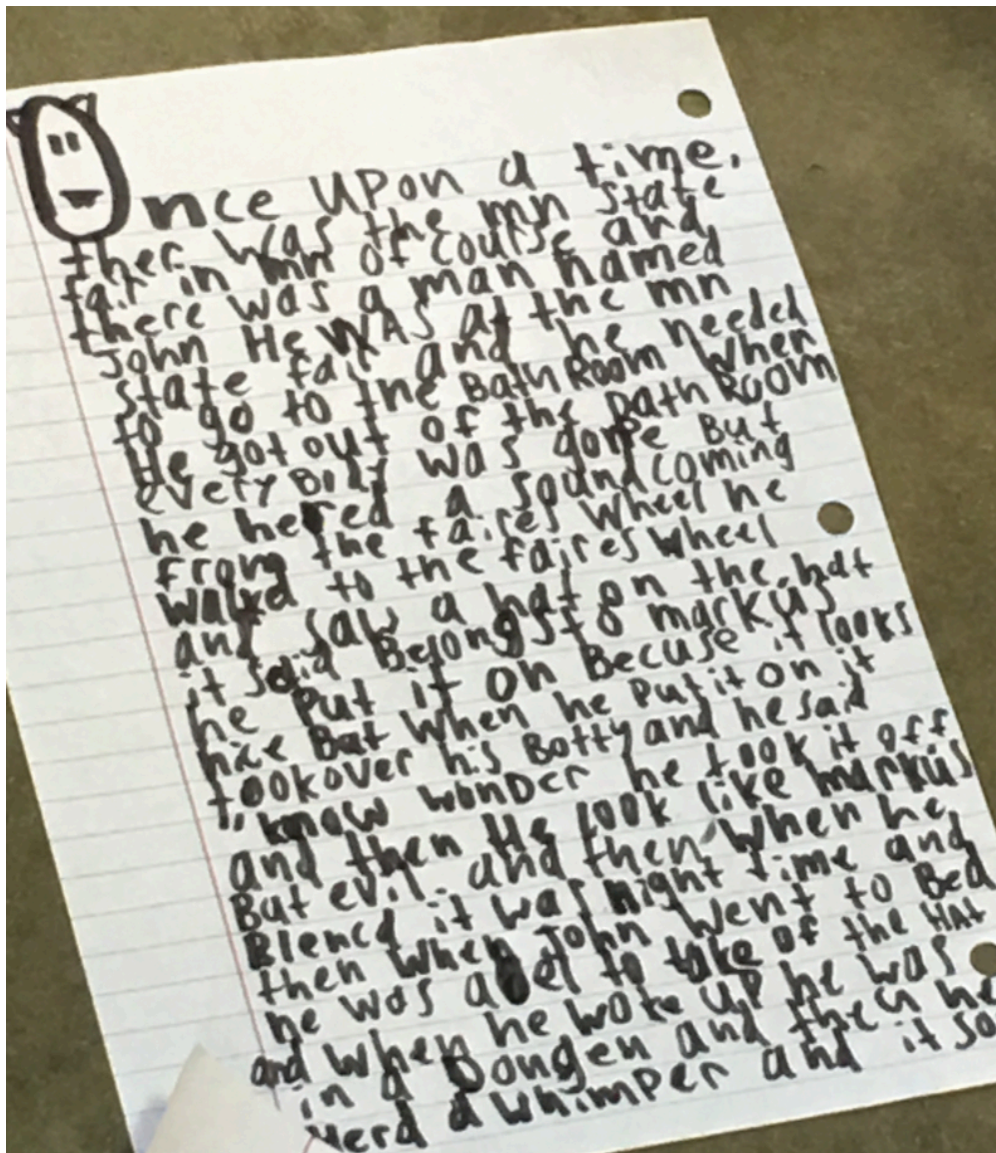
Moorefield-Lang, Heather Michele. 2014. "Makers in the Library: Case Studies of 3d Printers and Maker Spaces in Library Settings." *Library Hi Tech* 32 (4):583–593.

National Council of Teachers of English. Committee on Literature in the Elementary Language Arts., and Linda Leonard Lamme. 1980. *Raising Readers: A Guide to Sharing Literature with Young Children*. New York: Walker.

Paquette, Kelli R. 2007. "Encouraging Primary Students' Writing through Children's Literature." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 35 (2):155–165.

Roman, Susan, and Carole D. Fiore. 2010. "Do Public Library Summer Reading Programs Close the Achievement Gap?" *Children and Libraries* 8 (3):27–31.

Trelease, Jim, and Jim Trelease. 1995. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*. 4th ed. New York: Penguin Books.



Original student work. Used with permission.

Creating a Nonjudgmental Space

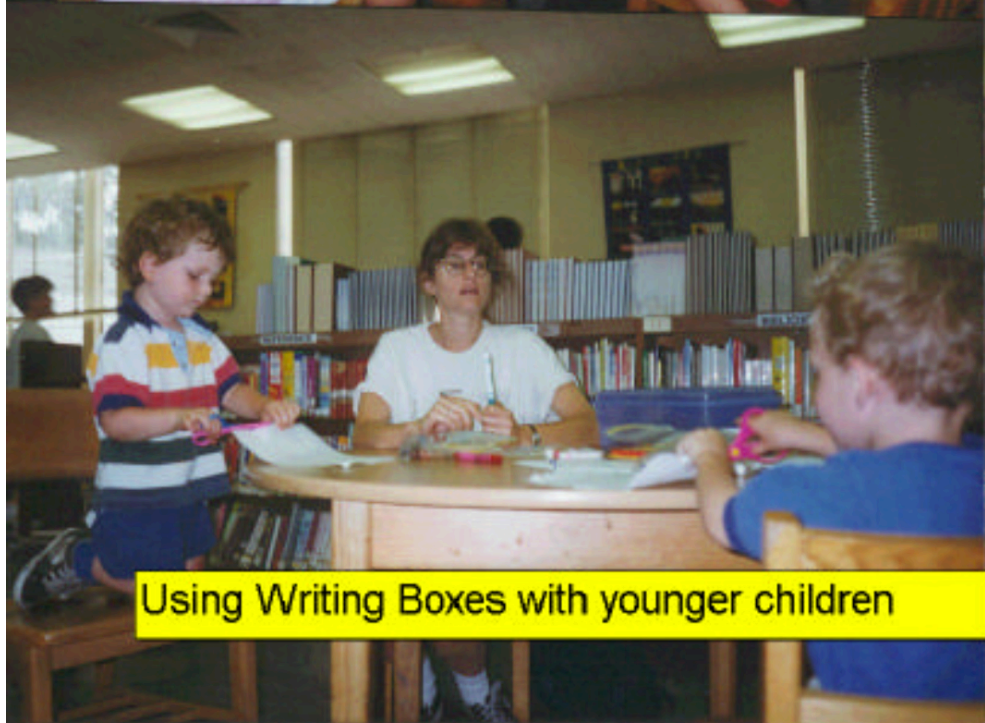
Tips for creating an appropriate and comfortable space for writing

- Set up the room with books, placed face out, on the related topic.
- Model the writing activity and verbalize why you are doing it: "I am drawing a map. Here is my house. I am writing 'my house.' I am listing who lives in the house. Paul and Lisa live in this house. What is across the street? The firehouse is across the street. I am writing 'Firehouse.'"

- *Stand back while writers are writing.*
- *Refrain from comparing or complimenting. (“I really like that.” “Isn’t Marly’s cartoon cute? Everyone look at Marly’s cartoon.”) These observations foster competition and comparison. Each child’s work is unique, and it is freeing to know their work is not being judged.*
- *Address the writer who wishes to share with an open question: “What would you like to tell me about your work?” “Would you like to read to me what you wrote?”*
- *Encourage adults to join in—not to observe, but to participate. You might say, “Mrs. Fox, is there anyone that you would like to send a letter to?”*
- *Encourage older children to help the younger ones at their table, but keep in mind that they should also have their own writing experiences.*
- *Have a dictionary or online spelling resource available, but encourage the children not to worry about spelling and don’t let them get bogged down by it. Remind them that we are writing, not editing.*
- *In the Writing Box program, there is no place for awards, ribbons, or prizes*



Discover Writing - Using Writing Boxes in the library



Using Writing Boxes with younger children



As part of a program



Adult participation



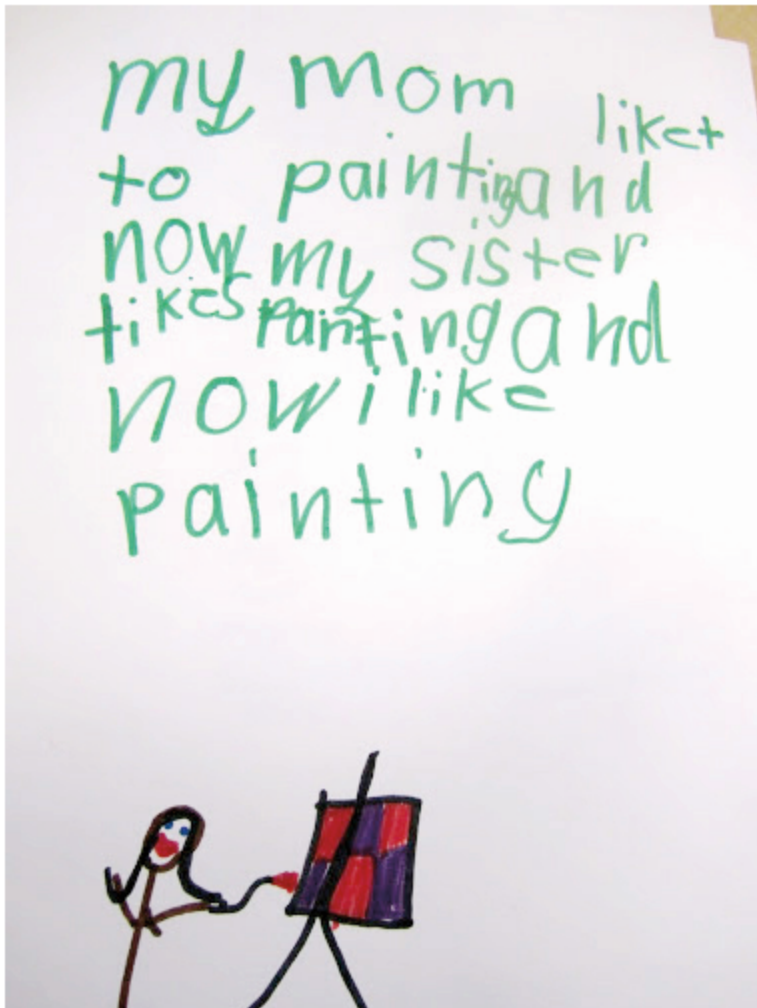
II

Starting a Writing Box Eight-Week Program

We ask librarians to create “purposeful programs.” Purposeful writing by young writers might include postcards, greeting cards, bookmarks, brochures, menus, ads, personal notes, maps, lists, book recommendations, and newspapers. Even the youngest writers can understand the purpose of these writing formats. And unlike the completion of a tedious worksheet, the creation of products like these is an authentic writing experience.

*At the beginning of each Writing Box workshop, we ask writers to engage thoughtfully with a piece of literature or text as a prompt to their writing. When we talk about memoir, I might, for example, begin a workshop by talking about families. There are all different kinds of families. My mentor texts might include Susan Kuklin’s *Families*, Todd Parr’s *The Family Book*, and John Coy’s *Their Great Gift: Courage, Sacrifice, and Hope in a New Land*.*

*I would then read aloud Dan Yaccarino’s *All the Way to America: The Story of a Big Italian Family and a Little Shovel*. On the surface, this is an immigration story. Delving a little deeper, however, we discover that it is about what gets passed down in families: objects like shovels or pieces of clothing, genetic traits like curly hair, aptitudes like a talent for singing or drawing. As we reflect on the story, I chart these sorts of things on an easel pad. I may also suggest that we can write about what we hope to pass down to the next generation. (Some children do not have families where objects are passed down, are not with their biological parents, are with temporary caregivers, or have experienced devastating life events like evacuation or fires or homelessness). I may mention that I wish to pass down my love of reading or my knowledge about teaching.*



"My mom likes to paint and now my sister likes painting and now I like painting"

As we begin to look at the details of setting up a Writing Box program, it's important to recognize that as public librarians we are not imitating school practice. During summer reading programs, we are not teaching children to read, and during Writing Box programs, we are not teaching children to write. We know that self-selection of materials is a key component for readers who are choosing to read. Similarly, we are facilitating writing as a self-selected activity.

On the other hand, partnering, collaborating, and consulting with literacy specialists, classroom teachers, and after-school programs is to be encouraged, as these educators enrich and support our own programs and practice.

The public library can give children and adolescents opportunities to develop their literacy skills outside of the confines of school and the classroom. Just as librarians are charged with the mission of providing materials for the "freedom to read," we must also provide the "freedom to write."

The skills required for the themes described in this book build upon each other. A writer who can draw can make a map, and a writer who can make a map can dictate labels for it. A writer who can draw and write can make both a map and a label. A writer who can draw and label maps can tell a story. A story can be told by drawing pictures and labeling with words, and a writer can dictate a story to accompany

the pictures. As writers gain confidence in their own written words, the workshops ask for more and more writing as the weeks go on.

Mentor Texts

Mentor texts—books or materials that model writing for our writers—are essential to the success of a Writing Box program. Writers can use these texts as inspiration: “I want to do a map like that!” “I LOVE Baby Mouse. I am going to write a story about yesterday in gym class but they are going to be kittens instead of mice.”

Think about diversity when selecting mentor texts, and about, as Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop notes, the importance of books providing windows to other lives as well as mirrors to our own.

It is likely that many of the mentor texts suggested in the chapter lists are already in your library. Planning a Writing Box program is a terrific excuse to refresh your collections in these subject areas.

More about selecting mentor texts in Chapter 4.

Starting A Writing Box Program

Post on large chart paper and read aloud the Bill of Writes at each session. Sometimes I ask another grown-up to do the read aloud.

A Bill of Writes (adapted from Kids Have All the Write Stuff)

- 1. I write to please myself.*
- 2. I decide how to use the Writing Box.*
- 3. I choose what to write and know when it is finished.*
- 4. I am a writer and a reader right now.*
- 5. I have things to say and write every day.*
- 6. I write when I play and I play when I write.*
- 7. I can write about my experience and my imagination.*
- 8. I enjoy writing with technology.*
- 9. I spell the way I can and learn to spell as I write.*
- 10. I learn as I write and write as I learn.*

Begin with a plan

To begin, you need to create a workshop plan. For example, in the public library setting, I suggest the following topics. They are ordered in a way that helps participants build their skills, starting with the simple skill of map making and moving to more complicated writing activities.

- 1. Maps*
- 2. Cartoons*
- 3. Menus and Recipes*
- 4. Hieroglyphics*
- 5. Newspapers and Newsletters; Blogs, Facebook, and Twitter*
- 6. Postcards and Letters*

7. Poetry
8. Handmade Books

Each workshop should be one hour long, and each suggested program has five common elements:

1. Books or materials related to the topic; we call these mentor texts
2. Creation of an example by the librarian
3. Modeling of the action of writing
4. A simple interaction with the children
5. Writing Boxes, which are available for reference checkout during library hours from the reference, information, or circulation desk.

Finding a good space

It seems self-evident, but the next step is to find a good space for writing. The children's room is fine. Tables and chairs are great but not essential. My school library had moveable soft furniture and wooden stools and benches. We did all of our writing on clipboards. Children wrote sitting up, lying down, wherever they were most comfortable.

While libraries are not the shushing quiet spaces of yesteryear, it is good to remember that writing is a noisy business. Children and young adults are not quiet when they're excited about their work. Find a room or a space where noisy activity does not disturb others.

Who should participate?

The Writing Box program was initially designed for the school-aged child, but we discovered there was no reason to limit attendance by age. Welcome anyone who wishes to write to participate in the program. This means moms and dads, caretakers and babysitters, sisters and brothers, teachers and grad students—whoever is interested. Sitters can write postcards home while babies are asleep in carriages. Grandfathers have discovered their own artistic and writing talent while creating comic memoirs.

Supporting and separating the grown-ups

The Writing Box program should not be a drop-off program. In our libraries, all children ages eight and younger were required to have an adult in the room or nearby (within sight). Encourage adults to actively participate and create their own writing pieces.

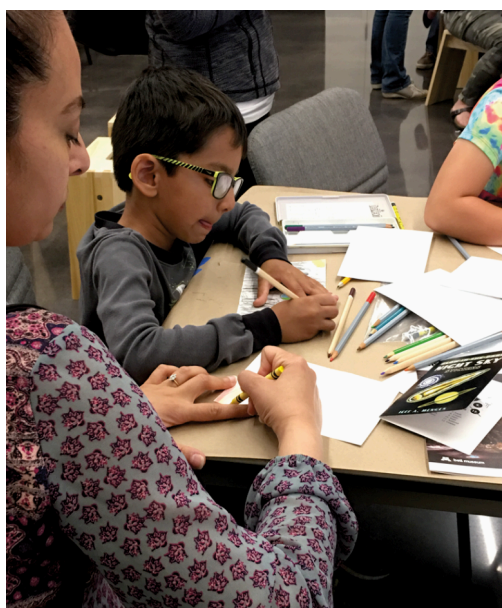
You might need to separate an adult from a child if the adult becomes too involved with their child's writing. Announce this possibility at the beginning of the program, speaking directly to the adults after reading aloud the "Bill of Writes." You can use language like this:

"Grown ups. I know it's hard to sit back as your child misforms letters, misspells easy words or asks 'how do you spell cow?' It's hard to break the habit of perfectionism.

"If your child is young, ask if you can take dictation. If your child knows how to write, perhaps move to another table or say 'I am working on my own writing, why don't you try to do it on your own for awhile and we can edit afterwards?'"

Adults often making critical comments while a child is writing. "You know how to make your r's better than that." "That's not how a map is supposed to look." "Is that all you are going to write?" "That's

not how you spell dinosaur.” are examples of over-involvement. Encourage the adults to focus on their own work, or keep their eyes on their own papers. Remind them that writing is not editing, and that there will always be time for editing later.



Kids and grown-ups writing together

Practical advice

Writers can be pre-registered, or workshops can be open access. I have used both systems. Librarians know their populations best.

At the Brooklyn Public Library, we found that our teen book buddies (ages 12 and up) were a terrific help in the preparation, maintenance, and checking in and out of our Writing Boxes. The young adults enjoyed the responsibility of being in charge of these elements of the program. In my school library, we had library helpers from the fourth and fifth grades charged with retrieving books and stocking supplies. These older helpers can all take dictation from the younger writers and listen as they share their work.

Helpful Hints

- *Set up the room with books, placed face out, on the related topic.*
- *Model the writing activity and verbalize why you are doing it: “I am drawing a map. Here is my house. I am writing ‘my house.’ I am listing who lives in the house. What is across the street? The firehouse is across the street. I am writing ‘Firehouse.’”*
- *Encourage adults to join in—not to observe, but to participate. You might say, “Mrs. Fox, is there anyone that you would like to send a letter to?”*
- *Encourage older children to help the younger ones at their table, but keep in mind that they should also have their own writing experience.*
- *Have a dictionary or online spelling resource available, but encourage the children not to worry about spelling and don’t let them get bogged down by it. Remind them that we are writing, not editing.*
- *In the Writing Box program, there is no place for awards, ribbons, or prizes. The process IS the product.*

Defining Success

Use the following questions to help you determine how well your program is working.

In the School Library

- *Are students engaged in the work?*
- *Are they excited about their writing, about sharing it, and about their peers’ work?*
- *Do the thematic skills—map making, writing recipes, creating cartoons—support the grade-level curriculum?*
- *Have I connected the program to what is happening in the classroom? If, for instance, third graders are studying memoir, have I provided an opportunity to create cartoon memoirs?*
- *Have I collaborated with classroom teachers to provide extensions for their curricula in my library classes?*
- *Do my students independently choose to write during their library time after their books are checked out?*
- *Do children and adults use the Writing Boxes during after-school visits?*
- *Do students, teachers, and other adults have an expectation that writing is part of my literacy program?*
- *Is my classroom writing experience aligned with our state standards, and does it support the Common Core?*

In the Public Library

- *Are the children and young adults engaged in the work?*
- *Are they excited about their writing, about sharing it, and about their peers’ work?*
- *Is attendance steady or growing?*
- *Are participants engaged?*
- *Do they write?*

- *Are their adults writing?*
- *Do they seem excited to be there, or are their adults making them attend?*
- *Is the topic open enough to engage writers of different skill levels and ages?*

Outcomes

- *Are participants borrowing titles on display, and titles that tie in with a session's project?*
- *When materials are available at the reference desk, are writers requesting and using them?*
- *Have we had requests for an expansion of the program?*
- *Have community groups like the Girl Scouts of America asked to participate?*

The most significant outcome of a Writing Box program is a cohort of participants who gain confidence and competency in their writing.

III

Main Body

1

Why Should Youth Services Librarians—Public & School—Encourage Writing?

Origin of the Writing Boxes

In 1993, I was newly matriculated into a Masters of Library Science Program. I was employed as a Librarian Trainee II with the Brooklyn Public Library, posted to the Park Slope Branch, a mixed-class neighborhood. And I had a dark secret: I couldn't write. I was nauseated by the thought of college essays and research papers. How was I going to get through graduate school? I had barely made it through my undergrad classes, creatively providing and producing alternative assessment products (anything except research papers) to survive my writing anxiety.

*Luck, miracle, or fate brought Dr. Robert Maloy and Sharon Edwards, authors of *Kids Have All the Write Stuff*¹, to my small branch library. They were on an author tour, and the publisher offered to have them visit for a parent education program.*



Dr. Maloy, a University of Massachusetts professor, and Ms. Edwards, an elementary school teacher, had created a writing program designed to inspire young children to write on their own. Dr. Maloy's research on writing anxiety in students of every level, from elementary to college, had brought him to Ms. Edward's second-grade class. He came to the conclusion that writing anxiety begins as children start learning to write in the classroom setting. The pressures of forming letters on the page, acquiring fine motor skills, developing literacy skills, and learning to spell all lead to rampant perfectionism and paralysis. The consequence? A lifelong inability to put words on a page to communicate ideas.

To encourage writing as an enjoyable activity they provided Writing Boxes, one for each child in Ms. Edward's class. These boxes were plastic containers with writing materials (pencils, pens, markers, crayons, glue, paper, etc.). Children brought the Writing Boxes home with no restrictions; they could write what they wanted, when they wanted, and how they wanted. The experiment succeeded beyond the authors' wildest hopes. There was an explosion of writing by the students, who created signs, poems, recipes, maps, cartoons, letters, journals, and handmade books. Reading scores improved. Edwards and Maloy determined that the success of the program lay simply in its having provided the children with writing materials, opportunities to write, and a nonjudgmental writing space.

That evening, in my library, Ms. Edwards and Dr. Maloy spoke in practical terms about literacy, child development, and the reading/writing connection. They encouraged parents to inspire reading and writing by simply providing materials, space, and non-judgmental reflections.²

As I watched them describe how to put together Writing Boxes for school and home, I wondered if we could do this Writing Box thing as a public library program. I also had my first graduate school paper due in two weeks in my Services to Children class. Could I write about Writing Boxes for this assignment? I was curious to see if I could give myself permission to "write to please myself," to "take off the editor's hat" and be non-judgmental while I was writing.

I read and reread their book, with the goal of creating a safe and creative space for writing in my public library. After persuading Ann Kalkhoff, the Branch Librarian, to allow an experiment in the children's room, I created Writing Boxes filled with supplies, raided the recycling box next to the copier/printer for

paper, and set up Writing Box workshops for the upcoming summer reading program.

My background in children's literature and experience working in children's museums informed my understanding of how to structure a weekly workshop around writing. That summer, I experimented with cartooning, secret codes, map making, jokes, picture book making, recipes, and the retelling of fairy tales, and made two Writing Boxes available for use in the library (they were labeled as Reference Materials) in the afternoons.



Park Slope Library Branch, Brooklyn Public Library, 1995

Success

The weekly workshops were successful in enticing 10–20 children, ages 5–12, to drop in on Wednesday mornings from 10:00 to 11:30 as part of our summer reading program. We had the Writing Boxes on the tables, but supplemented their contents with additional supplies. The Writing Boxes were then available in the children's room to sign out for use in the library. With one designed for preschool children and one for those in elementary school, each contained developmentally appropriate supplies such as rounded safety scissors in the box intended for younger writers.

We discovered that parents and children enjoyed writing together. And while we initially feared that supplies might disappear or be misused, this never happened.

A surprising opportunity to continue the program came when the New York City Mayor delayed school openings for 11 days while workers performed asbestos abatement on more than 100 schools, including those closest to our branch.³ Parents scrambling for childcare turned to the public libraries for a safe space for their children while they were at work. During the next week, we consistently had 50–60

children who were happily occupied reading and writing. This experience confirmed that the workshops and materials were suitable for a diversity of ages, and could be scaled up or down as needed.

Measured by engaged writers and returning participants, the success of the Writing Box program inspired us to recruit other branches for the next summer, and the program office of the Brooklyn Public Library generously provided materials to all of them. In its third year, 63 branches engaged in some form of the program. A year later, I presented a workshop at the New York State Library Association Conference, encouraging librarians to include Writing Boxes as part of the New York State Summer Reading Program.



Professional Development

Getting started

Over the last 20 years, wherever I've been a librarian, there have been Writing Boxes. I've conducted Writing Box workshops with librarians and teachers in systemwide training for the New York City Department of Education and for Maricopa County Libraries in Arizona, as well as at conferences like those of the New York Library Association, the Minnesota Library Association, the American Library Association, and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). The program works.

The Why

No one questions the role of youth services librarians in the promotion of literacy. We develop collections for this purpose, selecting the best of the best so as to surround readers with high-quality materials. We partner with teachers to support their curricula with high-interest, age-relevant materials, and provide summer reading programs to prevent the loss of skills.⁴ Many public libraries now provide summer learning opportunities beyond reading, including STEM programs (Science Technology Engineering Math) and Maker Spaces, which encourage creativity.⁵ Youth services librarians have responded to the call to provide enrichment programs to support summer learning, working to stem what has been termed the "summer slide," and to prevent a loss of reading and math skills in elementary aged students.

One of the most significant initiatives of the ALSC and the Public Library Association (PLA) divisions of the American Library Association, which serves children ages 0–18, focuses on literacy. The Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® (ECRR) program (everychildreadytoread.org) incorporates simple, research-based practices, to help parents and caregivers develop early literacy skills in children. By teaching the primary adults in a child's life about the importance of early literacy and how to nurture pre reading skills at home, ECRR multiplies library efforts many times over. We would be hard pressed to find a person who doesn't believe that part of a school or public libraries' mission is to support reading fluency or literacy in citizens of all ages.

What isn't so obvious, however, is the reading/writing connection. Just as children's librarians encourage reading aloud and the sharing of books, it is essential that we share the joy of writing and communicate the links between writing and literacy. We're not there yet; more than 25 years after Edwards and Maloy's experiences in the classroom, teachers continued to experience students' dismay when faced with writing time.⁶



Preschooler scribbling/writing

This deficit in writing competence continues

We know that achievement gaps in educational experiences exist for children of marginalized communities. These children need practice with their skills of attention and fine motor skills, as well as a better understanding of the world around them.⁷ We also know that the library is the literacy center that welcomes everyone to programs like story times that feature early literacy skills. I encourage librarians who serve children and young adults to add a component of writing to their literacy programming for all ages.

Reading involves decoding symbols (words constructed of letters of the alphabet) on the page and making meaning from them, while writing is the creation of symbols to communicate meaning. More than once, a preschooler has attended one of our Writing Box programs with an older sibling. We simply provide paper taped to the linoleum floor and two or three large, water-soluble markers. The preschooler creates what we would call scribbles, and we perceive random marks. But if I ask about what is written on the page, the child can point to the symbols and tell me that story. In the reading and

communication of those symbols, we see the beginnings of literacy.⁸

As part of the Public Libraries' summer reading program, the Writing Box activity increases parent engagement, promotes family literacy, and, above all, is fun. The Writing Box program is easy to replicate, inexpensive, requires very little prep and no technology, and is relevant to all ages. The writing workshops described in this volume have all been successful in my public and school libraries.

Who are these programs for?

The structured programs are for ages 6–14. Any Writing Box program can be adapted to meet a range of ages—including early elementary (first through third grades), middle elementary (third through fifth grade), or middle school (fifth through eighth grade). (Yes, these may overlap.)



We write anywhere

Endnotes

Notes

1. Edwards, Sharon A., and Robert W. Maloy. *Kids Have All the Write Stuff: Inspiring Your Children to Put Pencil* to Paper : *or Crayon, or Felt-tip Marker, or Computer*. New York, N.Y.: Penguin, 1992. Print.
2. Frederick, Heather Vogel. “‘Writing Box’ Helps Kids Enjoy Writing, Aids Reading. (Sharon Edwards’, Robert Maloy’s Hands-on Tools).” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 Dec. 1992: 12. Web.
3. Dillon, Sam. “Asbestos in the Schools; Disorder on Day 1 in New York Schools.” *The New York Times*, 21 Sept. 1993.
4. Roman, Susan, and Carole D. Fiore. “Do public library summer reading programs close the

- achievement gap?” *Children and Libraries* 8, no. 3 (2010): 27-31.
5. Heather Michele Moorefield-Lang , (2014),”Makers in the library: case studies of 3D printers and maker spaces in library settings,” *Library Hi Tech*, Vol. 32 Iss 4 pp. 583-593.
 6. Paquette, Kelli R. “Encouraging Primary Students’ Writing through Children’s Literature.” *Early Childhood Education Journal* 35, no. 2 (2007): 155-65.
 7. Grissmer, David, Grimm, Kevin J., Aiyer, Sophie M., Murrah, William M., & Steele, Joel S. (2010). Fine Motor Skills and Early Comprehension of the World: Two New School Readiness Indicators. *Developmental Psychology*, 46(5), 1008-1017.
 8. Beginnings of Literacy, Joan Brooks McLane and Gillian Dowley McNamee, Erikson Institute, *Zero to Three Journal*, September 1991. z.umn.edu/wbr1

1. Resources

Bennett-Armistead, V. Susan, Nell K. Duke, and Annie M. Moses. 2013. Beyond Bedtime Stories : A Parent’s Guide to Promoting Reading Writing, and Other Literacy Skills from Birth to 5. 2nd edition. ed. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Edwards, Sharon A., and Robert W. Maloy. 1992. Kids Have All the Write Stuff: Inspiring Your Children to Put Pencil to Paper : *or Crayon, or Felt-Tip Marker, or Computer. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books.*

Fletcher, Ralph J. 2011. Mentor Author, Mentor Texts: Short Texts, Craft Notes, and Practical Classroom Uses. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Frederick, Heather Vogel. ““Writing Box” Helps Kids Enjoy Writing, Aids Reading (Sharon Edwards’, Robert Maloy’s Hands-on Tools).” The Christian Science Monitor, 14 Dec. 1992.

Gadzikowski, Ann. 2007. Story Dictation: A Guide for Early Childhood Professionals. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Goodman, Kenneth S. 1986. What’s Whole in Whole Language? 1st. U.S. ed. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.

Grissmer, David, Kevin J Grimm, Sophie M Aiyer, William M Murrah, and Joel S Steele. 2010. “Fine Motor Skills and Early Comprehension of the World: Two New School Readiness Indicators.” Developmental Psychology 46 (5):1008.

Hoban, Tana. 1983. I Read Signs. 1st ed. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Jones, Cindy D, and D Ray Reutzel. 2015. “Write to Read: Investigating the Reading-Writing Relationship of Code-Level Early Literacy Skills.” Reading & Writing Quarterly 31(4):297-315.

Kobrin, Beverly. 1995. Eyeopeners II!: Children’s Books to Answer Children’s Questions About the World around Them. New York: Scholastic Inc.

McLane, Joan Brooks, and Gillian Dowley McNamee. 1991. “The Beginnings of Literacy.” Zero to Three Journal 12.

Miller, Steve. 2005. *Developing and Promoting Graphic Novel Collections, Teens @ the Library Series*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers.

Mo, Ya, Rachel A Kopke, Lisa K Hawkins, Gary A Troia, and Natalie G Olinghouse. 2014. "The Neglected "R" in a Time of Common Core." *The Reading Teacher* 67(6):445-453.

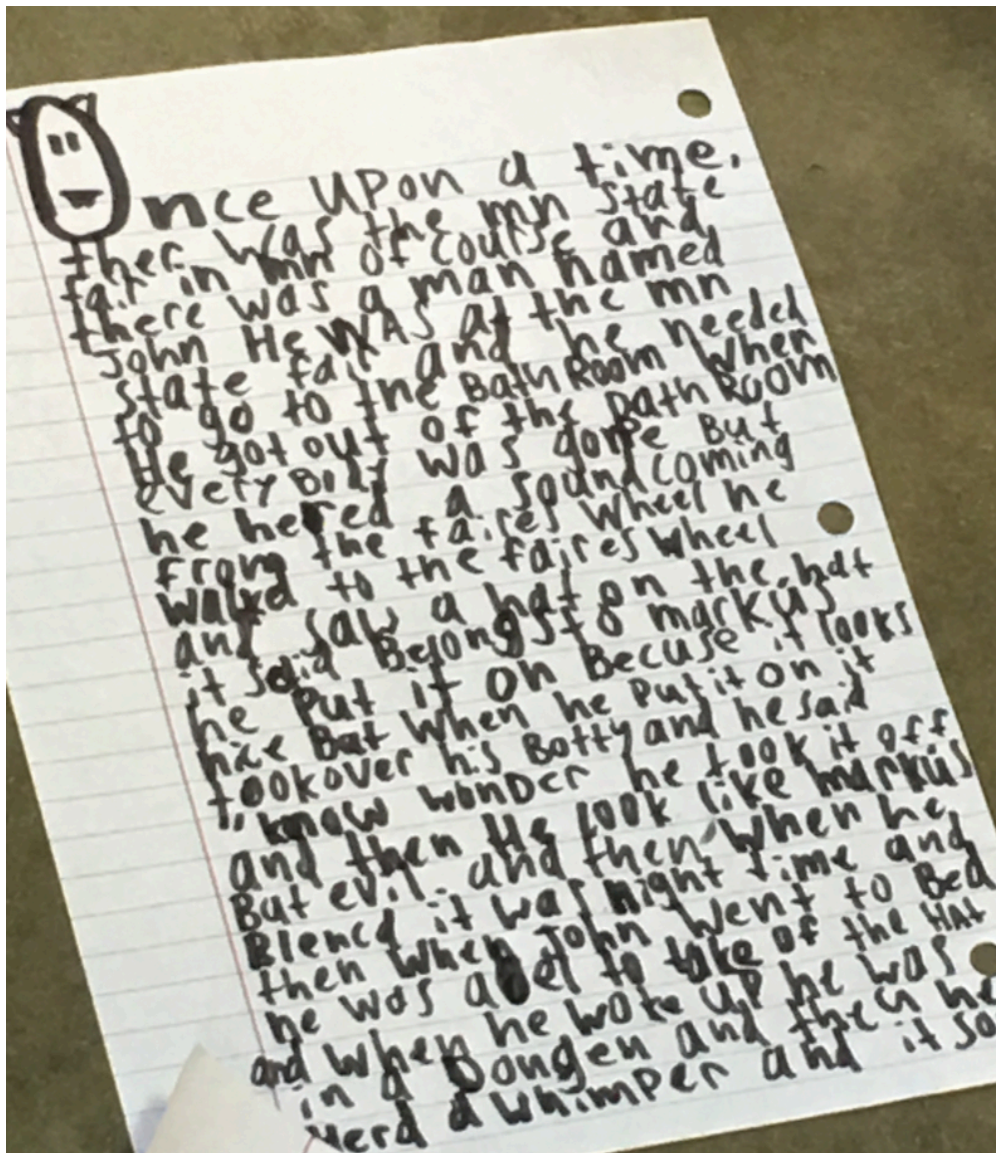
Moorefield-Lang, Heather Michele. 2014. "Makers in the Library: Case Studies of 3d Printers and Maker Spaces in Library Settings." *Library Hi Tech* 32 (4):583–593.

National Council of Teachers of English. Committee on Literature in the Elementary Language Arts., and Linda Leonard Lamme. 1980. *Raising Readers: A Guide to Sharing Literature with Young Children*. New York: Walker.

Paquette, Kelli R. 2007. "Encouraging Primary Students' Writing through Children's Literature." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 35 (2):155–165.

Roman, Susan, and Carole D. Fiore. 2010. "Do Public Library Summer Reading Programs Close the Achievement Gap?" *Children and Libraries* 8 (3):27–31.

Trelease, Jim, and Jim Trelease. 1995. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*. 4th ed. New York: Penguin Books.



Original student work. Used with permission.

Creating a Nonjudgmental Space

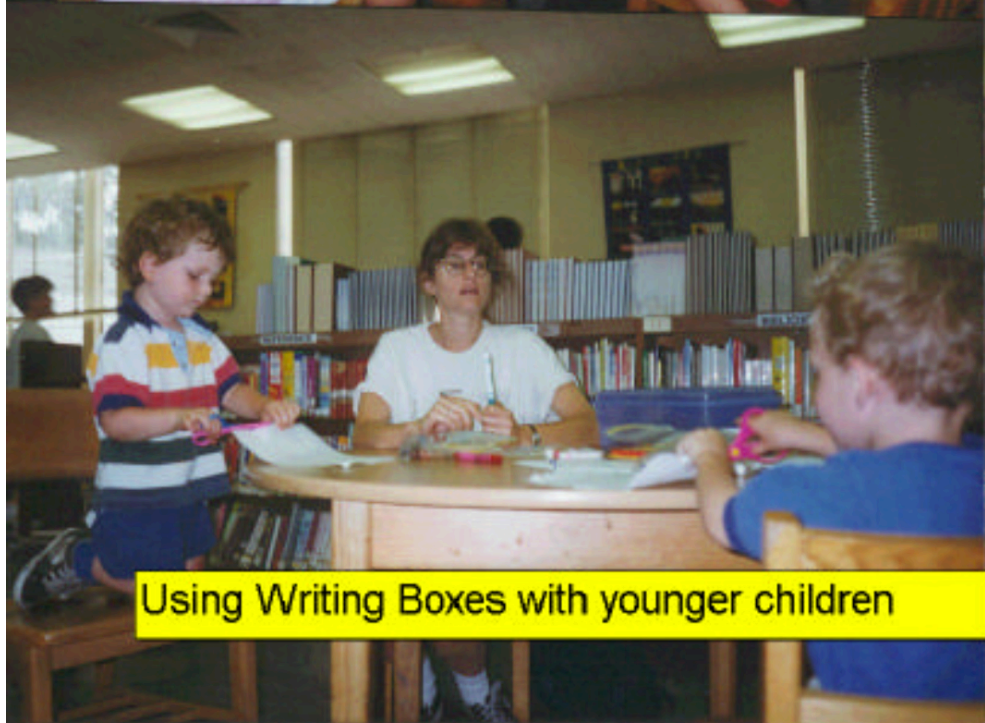
Tips for creating an appropriate and comfortable space for writing

- Set up the room with books, placed face out, on the related topic.
- Model the writing activity and verbalize why you are doing it: "I am drawing a map. Here is my house. I am writing 'my house.' I am listing who lives in the house. Paul and Lisa live in this house. What is across the street? The firehouse is across the street. I am writing 'Firehouse.'"

- *Stand back while writers are writing.*
- *Refrain from comparing or complimenting. (“I really like that.” “Isn’t Marly’s cartoon cute? Everyone look at Marly’s cartoon.”) These observations foster competition and comparison. Each child’s work is unique, and it is freeing to know their work is not being judged.*
- *Address the writer who wishes to share with an open question: “What would you like to tell me about your work?” “Would you like to read to me what you wrote?”*
- *Encourage adults to join in—not to observe, but to participate. You might say, “Mrs. Fox, is there anyone that you would like to send a letter to?”*
- *Encourage older children to help the younger ones at their table, but keep in mind that they should also have their own writing experiences.*
- *Have a dictionary or online spelling resource available, but encourage the children not to worry about spelling and don’t let them get bogged down by it. Remind them that we are writing, not editing.*
- *In the Writing Box program, there is no place for awards, ribbons, or prizes*



Discover Writing - Using Writing Boxes in the library



Using Writing Boxes with younger children



As part of a program



Adult participation

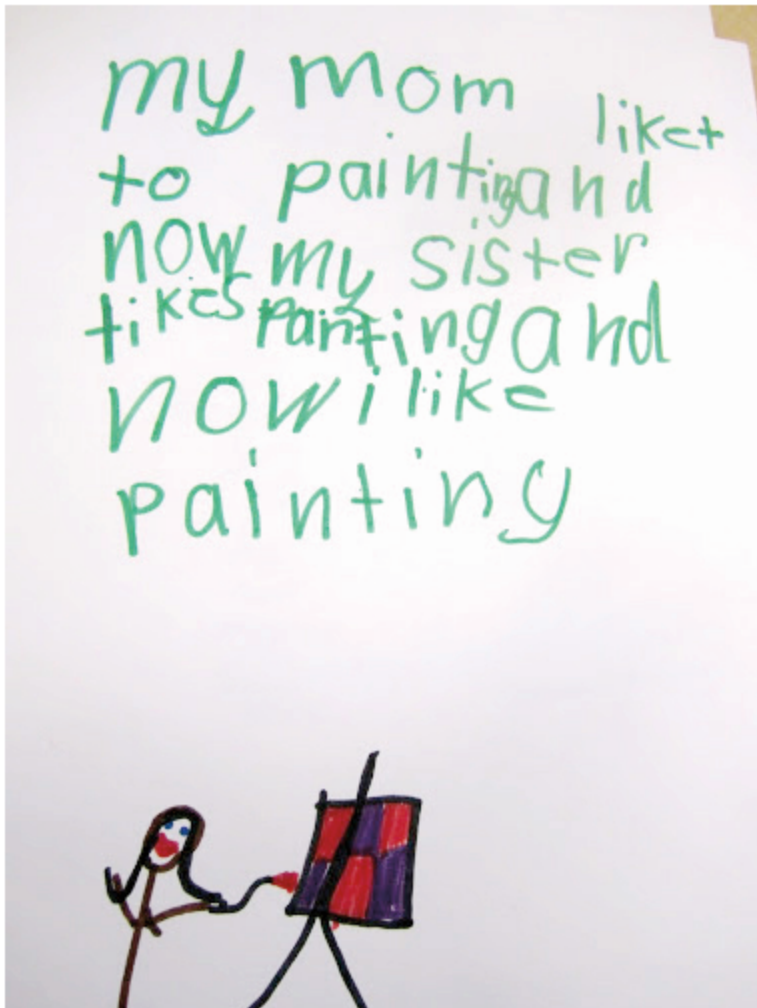


Starting a Writing Box Eight-Week Program

We ask librarians to create “purposeful programs.” Purposeful writing by young writers might include postcards, greeting cards, bookmarks, brochures, menus, ads, personal notes, maps, lists, book recommendations, and newspapers. Even the youngest writers can understand the purpose of these writing formats. And unlike the completion of a tedious worksheet, the creation of products like these is an authentic writing experience.

*At the beginning of each Writing Box workshop, we ask writers to engage thoughtfully with a piece of literature or text as a prompt to their writing. When we talk about memoir, I might, for example, begin a workshop by talking about families. There are all different kinds of families. My mentor texts might include Susan Kuklin’s *Families*, Todd Parr’s *The Family Book*, and John Coy’s *Their Great Gift: Courage, Sacrifice, and Hope in a New Land*.*

*I would then read aloud Dan Yaccarino’s *All the Way to America: The Story of a Big Italian Family and a Little Shovel*. On the surface, this is an immigration story. Delving a little deeper, however, we discover that it is about what gets passed down in families: objects like shovels or pieces of clothing, genetic traits like curly hair, aptitudes like a talent for singing or drawing. As we reflect on the story, I chart these sorts of things on an easel pad. I may also suggest that we can write about what we hope to pass down to the next generation. (Some children do not have families where objects are passed down, are not with their biological parents, are with temporary caregivers, or have experienced devastating life events like evacuation or fires or homelessness). I may mention that I wish to pass down my love of reading or my knowledge about teaching.*



"My mom likes to paint and now my sister likes painting and now I like painting"

As we begin to look at the details of setting up a Writing Box program, it's important to recognize that as public librarians we are not imitating school practice. During summer reading programs, we are not teaching children to read, and during Writing Box programs, we are not teaching children to write. We know that self-selection of materials is a key component for readers who are choosing to read. Similarly, we are facilitating writing as a self-selected activity.

On the other hand, partnering, collaborating, and consulting with literacy specialists, classroom teachers, and after-school programs is to be encouraged, as these educators enrich and support our own programs and practice.

The public library can give children and adolescents opportunities to develop their literacy skills outside of the confines of school and the classroom. Just as librarians are charged with the mission of providing materials for the "freedom to read," we must also provide the "freedom to write."

The skills required for the themes described in this book build upon each other. A writer who can draw can make a map, and a writer who can make a map can dictate labels for it. A writer who can draw and write can make both a map and a label. A writer who can draw and label maps can tell a story. A story can be told by drawing pictures and labeling with words, and a writer can dictate a story to accompany

the pictures. As writers gain confidence in their own written words, the workshops ask for more and more writing as the weeks go on.

Mentor Texts

Mentor texts—books or materials that model writing for our writers—are essential to the success of a Writing Box program. Writers can use these texts as inspiration: “I want to do a map like that!” “I LOVE Baby Mouse. I am going to write a story about yesterday in gym class but they are going to be kittens instead of mice.”

Think about diversity when selecting mentor texts, and about, as Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop notes, the importance of books providing windows to other lives as well as mirrors to our own.

It is likely that many of the mentor texts suggested in the chapter lists are already in your library. Planning a Writing Box program is a terrific excuse to refresh your collections in these subject areas.

More about selecting mentor texts in Chapter 4.

Starting A Writing Box Program

Post on large chart paper and read aloud the Bill of Writes at each session. Sometimes I ask another grown-up to do the read aloud.

A Bill of Writes (adapted from Kids Have All the Write Stuff)

- 1. I write to please myself.*
- 2. I decide how to use the Writing Box.*
- 3. I choose what to write and know when it is finished.*
- 4. I am a writer and a reader right now.*
- 5. I have things to say and write every day.*
- 6. I write when I play and I play when I write.*
- 7. I can write about my experience and my imagination.*
- 8. I enjoy writing with technology.*
- 9. I spell the way I can and learn to spell as I write.*
- 10. I learn as I write and write as I learn.*

Begin with a plan

To begin, you need to create a workshop plan. For example, in the public library setting, I suggest the following topics. They are ordered in a way that helps participants build their skills, starting with the simple skill of map making and moving to more complicated writing activities.

- 1. Maps*
- 2. Cartoons*
- 3. Menus and Recipes*
- 4. Hieroglyphics*
- 5. Newspapers and Newsletters; Blogs, Facebook, and Twitter*
- 6. Postcards and Letters*

7. Poetry
8. Handmade Books

Each workshop should be one hour long, and each suggested program has five common elements:

1. Books or materials related to the topic; we call these mentor texts
2. Creation of an example by the librarian
3. Modeling of the action of writing
4. A simple interaction with the children
5. Writing Boxes, which are available for reference checkout during library hours from the reference, information, or circulation desk.

Finding a good space

It seems self-evident, but the next step is to find a good space for writing. The children's room is fine. Tables and chairs are great but not essential. My school library had moveable soft furniture and wooden stools and benches. We did all of our writing on clipboards. Children wrote sitting up, lying down, wherever they were most comfortable.

While libraries are not the shushing quiet spaces of yesteryear, it is good to remember that writing is a noisy business. Children and young adults are not quiet when they're excited about their work. Find a room or a space where noisy activity does not disturb others.

Who should participate?

The Writing Box program was initially designed for the school-aged child, but we discovered there was no reason to limit attendance by age. Welcome anyone who wishes to write to participate in the program. This means moms and dads, caretakers and babysitters, sisters and brothers, teachers and grad students—whoever is interested. Sitters can write postcards home while babies are asleep in carriages. Grandfathers have discovered their own artistic and writing talent while creating comic memoirs.

Supporting and separating the grown-ups

The Writing Box program should not be a drop-off program. In our libraries, all children ages eight and younger were required to have an adult in the room or nearby (within sight). Encourage adults to actively participate and create their own writing pieces.

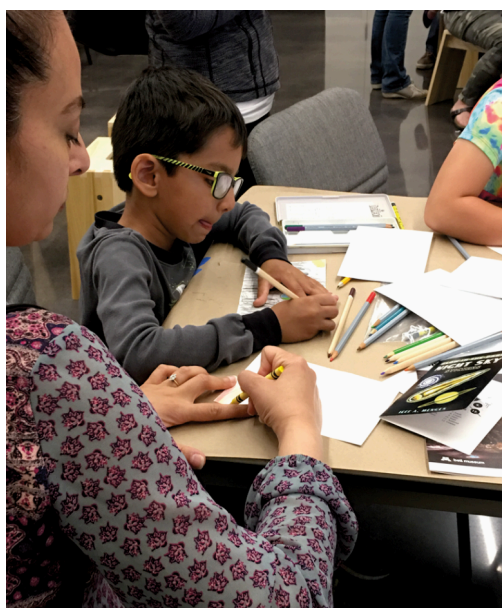
You might need to separate an adult from a child if the adult becomes too involved with their child's writing. Announce this possibility at the beginning of the program, speaking directly to the adults after reading aloud the "Bill of Writes." You can use language like this:

"Grown ups. I know it's hard to sit back as your child misforms letters, misspells easy words or asks 'how do you spell cow?' It's hard to break the habit of perfectionism.

"If your child is young, ask if you can take dictation. If your child knows how to write, perhaps move to another table or say 'I am working on my own writing, why don't you try to do it on your own for awhile and we can edit afterwards?'"

Adults often making critical comments while a child is writing. "You know how to make your r's better than that." "That's not how a map is supposed to look." "Is that all you are going to write?" "That's

not how you spell dinosaur.” are examples of over-involvement. Encourage the adults to focus on their own work, or keep their eyes on their own papers. Remind them that writing is not editing, and that there will always be time for editing later.



Kids and grown-ups writing together

Practical advice

Writers can be pre-registered, or workshops can be open access. I have used both systems. Librarians know their populations best.

At the Brooklyn Public Library, we found that our teen book buddies (ages 12 and up) were a terrific help in the preparation, maintenance, and checking in and out of our Writing Boxes. The young adults enjoyed the responsibility of being in charge of these elements of the program. In my school library, we had library helpers from the fourth and fifth grades charged with retrieving books and stocking supplies. These older helpers can all take dictation from the younger writers and listen as they share their work.

Helpful Hints

- *Set up the room with books, placed face out, on the related topic.*
- *Model the writing activity and verbalize why you are doing it: “I am drawing a map. Here is my house. I am writing ‘my house.’ I am listing who lives in the house. What is across the street? The firehouse is across the street. I am writing ‘Firehouse.’”*
- *Encourage adults to join in—not to observe, but to participate. You might say, “Mrs. Fox, is there anyone that you would like to send a letter to?”*
- *Encourage older children to help the younger ones at their table, but keep in mind that they should also have their own writing experience.*
- *Have a dictionary or online spelling resource available, but encourage the children not to worry about spelling and don’t let them get bogged down by it. Remind them that we are writing, not editing.*
- *In the Writing Box program, there is no place for awards, ribbons, or prizes. The process IS the product.*

Defining Success

Use the following questions to help you determine how well your program is working.

In the School Library

- *Are students engaged in the work?*
- *Are they excited about their writing, about sharing it, and about their peers’ work?*
- *Do the thematic skills—map making, writing recipes, creating cartoons—support the grade-level curriculum?*
- *Have I connected the program to what is happening in the classroom? If, for instance, third graders are studying memoir, have I provided an opportunity to create cartoon memoirs?*
- *Have I collaborated with classroom teachers to provide extensions for their curricula in my library classes?*
- *Do my students independently choose to write during their library time after their books are checked out?*
- *Do children and adults use the Writing Boxes during after-school visits?*
- *Do students, teachers, and other adults have an expectation that writing is part of my literacy program?*
- *Is my classroom writing experience aligned with our state standards, and does it support the Common Core?*

In the Public Library

- *Are the children and young adults engaged in the work?*
- *Are they excited about their writing, about sharing it, and about their peers’ work?*
- *Is attendance steady or growing?*

- *Are participants engaged?*
- *Do they write?*
- *Are their adults writing?*
- *Do they seem excited to be there, or are their adults making them attend?*
- *Is the topic open enough to engage writers of different skill levels and ages?*

Outcomes

- *Are participants borrowing titles on display, and titles that tie in with a session's project?*
- *When materials are available at the reference desk, are writers requesting and using them?*
- *Have we had requests for an expansion of the program?*
- *Have community groups like the Girl Scouts of America asked to participate?*

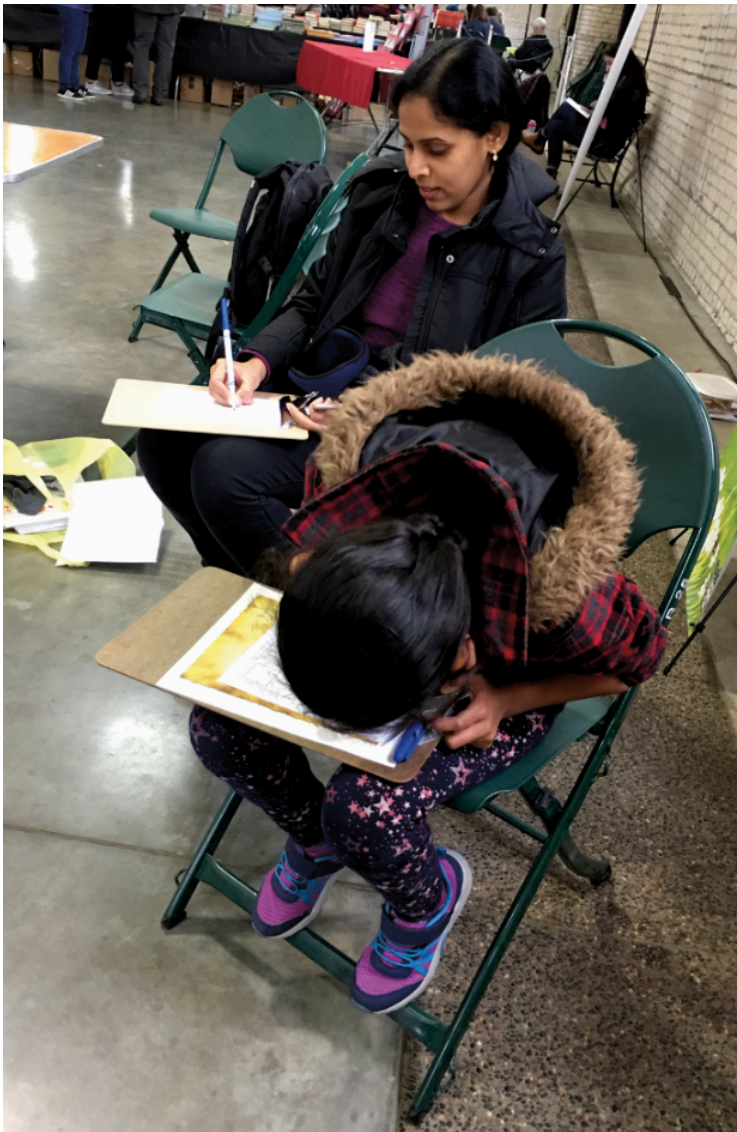
The most significant outcome of a Writing Box program is a cohort of participants who gain confidence and competency in their writing.

3

Parents & Other Partners

Parents are children's first teachers. One study found that parents teaching their children the alphabet, reading words to them, and printing words for them predicted kindergarten alphabet knowledge and Grade 3 reading fluency. Shared storybook reading predicted kindergarten vocabulary and the frequency with which children reported reading for pleasure in Grade 4.¹

Parents don't need to be told that reading aloud to children is a good practice for cognitive development. In his study of parents reading aloud, Dominic Massaro concluded that the vocabulary and language in picture books are more linguistically and cognitively enriching than everyday speech.² Most parents are advised to read to their children. Children who are read to and read with are more likely to select reading as a choice for recreation.



Librarians already partner with parents, caregivers, and Head Start program teachers by providing and modeling actions that impact the frequency and quality of interactions between adults and young children. We read, sing songs, recite nursery rhymes, and play finger games, all to model behavior that will support children's success in learning.

*If we accept the premise that reading in the home by parents and caregivers is a positive influence that predicts the acquisition of literacy, we can also encourage these adults to write in the home with their children as well. Sharon Edwards and Robert Maloy's *Kids Have All the Write Stuff: Inspiring Your Children to Put Pencil to Paper* encourages parents to create a successful literacy learning environment.*

Edwards and Maloy observed parents and their children writing over a four-year period, then developed a formula for successful children's learning:

$$\text{Play} + \text{Choice} + \text{Approximation} + \text{Risk-Taking} = \text{Children's Learning}$$

Play

The Writing Box program supports playful writing. Writing is not "work." There is no "right way" to

write.

Choice

We give parents and children a choice of prompts and materials. We know that competent writing, like reading, takes practice.

Approximation

This means accepting good tries at spelling and sentence structure, and even at different ways of communicating meaning, without constantly criticizing or correcting.

Risk-Taking

We ask all participants to take a risk, to be willing to try something new: “I have never made a map before!” Librarians can model enthusiasm in the face of a fear of failure, and help parents overcome the instinct for perfectionism: “Let’s get the writing down on the page. We can look up how to spell when we revise later.”

As librarians, we can use this formula to facilitate children’s writing and guide parent/caregiver interactions. We can share our knowledge of literature and early childhood learning in the Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® (ECRR) programs (everychildreadytoread.org). We can encourage caregivers, babysitters, and parents to engage in writing with their children during and after Writing Box workshops.

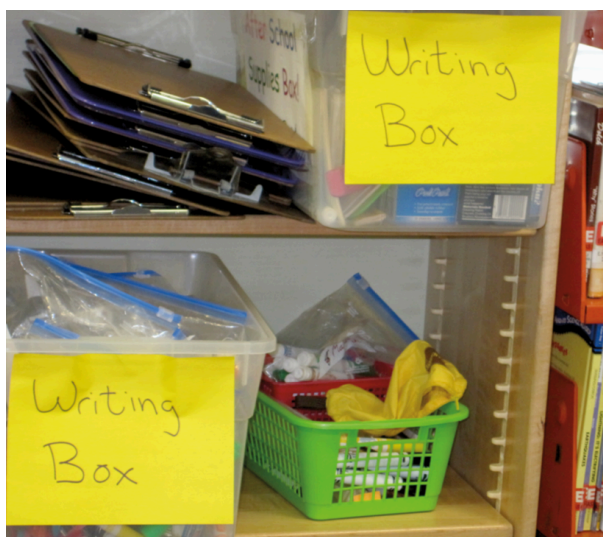
*The Writing Box program provides an opportunity to honor the cultural and socioeconomic diversity of our communities, and allows us to select materials to share that speak to our populations. In my St. Paul community, for example, many families grow thriving gardens. Some products of these efforts are for family tables, while others are destined for sale at the local farmers’ market. As we select books for our own Writing Box program, it is a delight to support independent publishers like Readers to Eaters, whose mission is to create books that offer, through authentic story and delightful writing, a fresh perspective on what and how we eat. A read aloud of the mentor text *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin can, for example, generate a variety of writing prompts:*

- *If you farmed Will’s table, what would you grow?*
- *Describe your ideal farm.*
- *Draw a map of your neighborhood. Where is the garden? Create a plan for the garden.*
- *Do you have a recipe for any of the food that Will grows?*
- *Here is the map of my garden plan. What else could I plant?*

As we encourage adults to participate, we support their voices, creating an opportunity for a successful literacy experience for them as well as their children.

Public Access

It is essential that the library provides public access hours to Writing Boxes and program materials. Writing Boxes that can be checked out from the reference or circulation desk are an essential component of a successful program.



Create a folder or file with writing prompts and writing samples that can be referred to during writing times. Provide materials for an array of writing activities for “out-of-workshop time.” Reproduce and have available cartoon frames, poetry prompts, map outlines, and hieroglyphic keys.

Resources

Clay, Marie. 1987. *Writing Begins at Home: Preparing Children for Writing before They Go to School*. ERIC.

Eamer, Claire, and Sa Boothroyd. 2012. *The World in Your Lunch Box: the Wacky History and Weird Science of Everyday Foods*. Toronto: Annick Press.

Martin, Jacqueline Briggs, Eric-Shabazz Larkin, and Will Allen. 2013. *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table*. Bellevue, Washington: Readers To Eaters.

Massaro, Dominic W. 2015. “Two Different Communication Genres and Implications for Vocabulary Development and Learning to Read.” *Journal of Literacy Research* 47 (4):505-527.

Mendez, Sean. 2011. *One World Kids Cookbook: Easy, Healthy, and Affordable Family Meals*. Interlink Pub Group.

Mo, Ya, Rachel A Kopke, Lisa K Hawkins, Gary A Troia, and Natalie G Olinghouse. 2014. “The Neglected “R” in a Time of Common Core.” *The Reading Teacher* 67 (6):445-453.

Morrison, Timothy G., Gregory Bryan, and George W. Chilcoat. 2002. “Using Student-Generated Comic Books in the Classroom.” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 45 (8):758-67.

Page, Stefan. 2014. *We’re Going to the Farmers’ Market*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books LLC.

Sayre, April Pulley. 2013. *Let’s Go Nuts! Seeds We Eat*. First edition. ed. New York: Beach Lane Books.

Sénéchal, Monique, and Laura Young. 2008. “The Effect of Family Literacy Interventions on Children’s

Notes

1. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). "Learning to Read and Write: What Research Reveals." z.umn.edu/wbr65
2. Massaro, Dominic W. 2015. "Two Different Communication Genres and Implications for Vocabulary Development and Learning to Read." *Journal of Literacy Research* 47(4):505-527.

4

Selecting Mentor Texts for Writing Box Programs

The process of selecting and evaluating materials for a Writing Box program is no different from any other collection development for a children's library.

You may notice that the majority of the mentor texts mentioned at the end of chapters are picture books or short poems. This ensures that a workshop can be completed within a one-hour time period.



Mentor texts

While pulling books from the shelves or ordering new ones to support the program, ask yourself the following questions:

What am I looking for in the books I select?

- *A riveting story (whether fiction or informational)*
- *Juicy language (is the language rich and varied?)*
- *Compelling art (does the art reflect and illuminate the text?)*
- *Dramatic page turns (the art of the picture book hinges on compelling page turns)*
- *Age relevance: does it engage and inform its intended audience?*
- *Consistent style (is it excellent throughout, and is the voice consistent?)*
- *Read-aloud-ability (is it a joy to read aloud?)*

Looking at the art of the book?

- *What media is used? Do watercolor illustrations serve the story? Is the accomplished or amateur?*
- *Is this a serious biography?*
- *Do visual elements add to or distract from the text?*
- *Is the layout clean and communicative, or is it confusing? Are pieces of the pictures lost in the gutter?*
- *Are the chosen typefaces easy to read? Do they reflect the tone of the content?*
- *Does the art expand on the story told by the text?*

Diversity: Through whose lens is this story being told?

- *Do the titles on display for the Writing Box workshop reflect the dominant white culture of the US?*
- *Am I considering racism, sexism, and ableism in choosing portrayals of US history?*

Resources for mentor text selection

My own go-to resources to give me insight into these issues and inform my selections are Rethinking Schools (rethinkingschools.org) and Teaching for Change (teachingforchange.org). The Zinn Education Project also promotes and supports the teaching of people's history in classrooms across the country, and provides resources to guide explorations of history and social movements (zinnedproject.org/about).

How am I thinking about diversity? By diversity I mean more than culture, religion, nationality, and the color of someone's skin. As you collect texts for your program, ask yourself the following questions:

- *Are all the characters white, or are there characters of color? Characters/people from many nations, religions, regions, home languages? Not every book has to fulfill this criterion, but books displayed for mentoring should provide mirrors and windows for the participants' own lives.*
- *Are the books that exhibit diversity included on lists of recommended readings, or have they received awards from their communities or from experts in the field? See z.umn.edu/ALACollectionDevelopment for resources on finding backlisted titles, along with lists of field expert journals.*
- *Are they authored or illustrated by members of the communities they represent?*
- *Do the titles provide a diversity of gender? Are all the protagonists boys? Seek out books not only with strong girl characters but with characters who are not always gender conforming. Stumped? Look for inspiration at z.umn.edu/wbr4.*
- *Have I considered ableism?*

“Ableism is a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be ‘fixed’ in one form or the other. Ableism is intertwined in our culture, due to many limiting beliefs about what disability does or does not mean, how able-bodied people learn to treat people with disabilities and how we are often not included at the table for key decisions.” Leah Smith, The Center for Disability Rights, Inc. (CDR) cdrnys.org/about/

And finally, am I thinking about accessibility?

- *Are mentor texts available in a variety of formats? Audio, text to speech etc.*
- *Is information about the program is available to users in different formats? Does it include information about accessibility and requesting accommodations?*
- *Does signage designate accessible routes, restrooms?*
- *Do the program spaces account for the needs of those who are other than neuro-and physical typical?*
- *Do we know how to assist with access requests?*
- *Do I have tables that are accessible for writing from a wheelchair?*
- *Is there an accessible restroom near the workshop area?*
- *Have staff been trained to integrate disability-related topics?*
- *Do I have a range of writing materials?*

- *Have I asked if any of the participants need an interpreter or accommodations?*
- *Is my program autism friendly?*
- *Have I accounted for neurodiversity in the selection of mentor texts?*
Neurodiversity is a concept in which neurological differences are to be recognized and respected as any other human variation. These differences can include those associated with dyspraxia, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyscalculia, autistic spectrum, Tourette Syndrome, and others.
- *Do the titles I've selected to read aloud and display reflect all kinds of people of differing economic and social backgrounds, and of different physical and cognitive abilities?*



Children at the library

Accessible Materials

- *Are the information and resources available in multiple formats?*
- *Are the electronic materials readable by assistive technology?*
- *Are videos and films captioned and audio described?*
- *Do I remember to describe what I am doing as I do it?*
- *Are assistive technologies and programs available on library computers?*
- *Are web and online materials accessible?*
- *Is a process for requesting alternative formats of print materials established and available?*

Recommend resources for finding and evaluating mentor texts

The following recommended resources (with a few updates) were part of a collection development workshop presented by Betty Carter, Professor Emeritus, Texas Woman's University; Thom Barthelmess, Youth Services Manager, Whatcom County Library System, Bellingham, WA; Vicky Smith, Children's Editor, Kirkus Reviews; and myself. We presented at the ALSC National Institute, September 23–25, 2010, at the Emory Conference Center in Atlanta, GA. The handout containing recommendations and resources and can be found at z.umn.edu/ALACollectionDevelopment.

Review Journals

Booklist (ala.org/booklist)

The Bulletin for the Center of Children's Books (BCCB), or The Bulletin (bccb.ischool.illinois.edu)

The Horn Book Magazine (hbook.com)

Kirkus Reviews (kirkusreviews.com)

Publishers Weekly (publishersweekly.com/pw/home/index.html)

School Library Journal (SLJ; slj.com)

VOYA: Voice of Youth Advocates in Libraries (voyamagazine.com)

The Treasure on Gold Street / El Tesoro en la Calle d'Oro: A Neighborhood Story in Spanish and English (Cinco Puntos Press, 2003) is a perfect read-aloud prompt for writing and for making maps about neighbors, neighborhood, and community.

As Kirkus Reviews writes, "Employing simple declarative sentences and a distinctly child's-eye view, Byrd creates a full and subtle treatment of the interaction of a mentally disabled woman and the neighbors and family members who surround her. Byrd's tale evokes not simply Isabel's circumscribed but happy life, but also the life stages of 'ordinary' children as they grow through differing attitudes toward the disabled."

Subject-Specific Journals

Except for Science Books and Films and Multicultural Review (which are review journals), the journals below sometimes review books for children and young adults and frequently mention young adult and children's literature in their articles. They are aimed at subject-area educators.

Mathematics Teacher (z.umn.edu/wbr5): Official publication of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Multicultural Review (ala.org/rt/emiert): Official publication of the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table of the American Library Association; reviews books that provide a glimpse into our diverse society.

Reading Teacher (z.umn.edu/wbr6): Official publication of the International Reading Association, targeting teachers of reading in elementary/middle schools.

Science and Children (nsta.org/elementaryschool): Official publication of the National Science Teachers Association.

Science Books and Films (z.umn.edu/wbr7): Review journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (which publishes *Science*), in which subject-area specialists evaluate science books for children, young adults, and adults.

Social Education (z.umn.edu/wbr8): Official journal of the National Council of the Social Studies.

Online Resources

Bank Street College of Education, Children's Book Committee (z.umn.edu/wbr9): The Children's Book Committee members evaluate current literature for children and publish booklists to guide parents, librarians, and teachers in the selection of developmentally relevant reading materials.

Capitol Choices (www.capitolchoices.org): "Our mission is to identify and select a yearly list of outstanding titles for children and teens."

Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC; ccbc.education.wisc.edu/default.asp): A unique examination, study, and research library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the go-to resource for thematic bibliographies, current book awards, and lists, as well as for identifying current books of excellence.

GLSEN [Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network] **Booklink** (www.glsen.org): As stated on their website, “The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.” Recommended titles reflect this mission.

No Flying No Tights: A Website Reviewing Graphic Novels for Teens (www.noflyingnotights.com) The title says it all. Multiple contributors cover all aspects of graphic format, including adult crossover.

Shelf Awareness: Daily Enlightenment for the Book Trade (shelf-awareness.com): Shelf Awareness is “an email newsletter dedicated to helping the people in stores, in libraries and on the Web buy, sell and lend books most wisely” and includes reviews of current and upcoming titles of interest.

Sidekicks: A Website Reviewing Graphic Novels for Kids (z.umn.edu/wbr10): Part of this site is devoted to presenting graphic-novel reviews for kids and those who work with them, including librarians, teachers, and parents.

Blogs

American Indians in Children’s Literature (americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com): Debbie Reese (Nambé Pueblo) provides critical perspectives of indigenous peoples in children’s Mentor texts, poetry and young adult books, the school curriculum, and society at large.

The Brown Bookshelf (thebrownbookshelf.com). The Brown Bookshelf is designed to push awareness of the myriad Black voices writing for young readers.

Blue Ox Review (www.continuum.umn.edu/kerlan/): Recommended reading from my blog and thematic lists.

Fuse 8 (z.umn.edu/wbr11): A Fuse #8 Production, on the School Library Journal website, provides a forum for the personal, entertaining reviews, reactions, and op-eds of Elizabeth Bird, Children’s Librarian at the New York Public Library.

I’m Here. I’m Queer. What the Hell Do I Read? (www.leewind.org): Lee Wind’s blog addresses gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and gender non-conforming teens by raising issues of importance and reviewing relevant books.

Kidlitosphere (www.kidlitosphere.org): This blog clearinghouse “strives to provide a

passage to the wonderful variety of resources available from the Society of Bloggers of Children's and Young Adult Literature." In other words, it lists every blog under the sun.

Oyate (z.umn.edu/wbr13): *Oyate is a Native organization working to see that our lives and histories are portrayed with honesty and integrity, and that all people know that our stories belong to us.*

Reading Rants (www.readingrants.org/): *Jennifer Hubert Swan, middle-school librarian at the Little Red School House and Elisabeth Irwin High School in Greenwich Village in Manhattan, takes on current literature for young adults ages 12-18.*

Individual American Book Awards

AAAS/Subaru/Science Books and Films Awards (sbfonline.com/prizes.htm)

American Indian Youth Literature Award (z.umn.edu/wbr12): *The American Indian Library Association sponsors this award.*

Américas Children's and Young Adult Literature Award (z.umn.edu/wbr14): *The Américas is sponsored by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs and given to a number of books (including picture books, middle-grade readers, and young adult titles) written in either English or Spanish that "authentically and engagingly portray Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinos in the United States."*

Arab American Book Award (z.umn.edu/wbr15): *Sponsored by the Arab American National Museum, this award is given to a children's or young adult book that "celebrates the lives of Arab Americans."*

Asian Pacific Awards for Literature (z.umn.edu/wbr16): *These awards, administered by the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association (an affiliate of the American Library Association) recognize one picture book and one youth literature award to "promote Asian/Pacific American culture and heritage."*

(Mildred L.) **Batchelder Award** (z.umn.edu/wbr17): *The Batchelder is given by the Association for Library Service to Children to the publisher of the most outstanding book "originally published in a foreign language in a foreign country, and subsequently translated into English and published in the US."*

(Pure) **Belpré Medal** (z.umn.edu/wbr18): *The Association for Library Service to Children and National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking (REFORMA) jointly present the Belpré to a Latino/ Latina writer*

and illustrator whose “work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth.”

Boston Globe–Horn Book Awards (z.umn.edu/wbr19): Sponsored by the Boston Globe and The Horn Book, these prizes are given every year for the best book for children or young adults in three categories: fiction and poetry, picture book, and nonfiction.

(Randolph) **Caldecott Medal** (z.umn.edu/wbr20): The Caldecott Medal is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children to the “artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children” published the previous year.

Carter G. Woodson Book Awards (z.umn.edu/wbr21): These awards recognize books in three areas: elementary, middle level, and secondary. Given by the National Council for the Social Studies, the awards are for “the most distinguished social science books appropriate for young readers that depict ethnicity in the US.”

Charlotte Zolotow Award (z.umn.edu/wbr22): The Cooperative Children’s Book Center at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, administers this award, given annually to the author of the most distinguished picture book text in a US book published the preceding year.

Children’s Africana Book Awards (z.umn.edu/wbr23): Supported by the Outreach Council of the African Studies Association, these two awards—one for a book for young children and one for older readers—are presented annually.

(The) **Cook Prize** (z.umn.edu/wbr24): Awarded to the best Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) picture book for 8-10 year olds. The Cook Prize is the only national children’s choice award honoring a STEM title.

Coretta Scott King Book Awards (z.umn.edu/wbr25): The Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table of the American Library Association administers these awards, recognizing an African American illustrator and an African American author who made an outstanding contribution to literature during the previous year. The John Steptoe New Talent Award recognizes excellence among debut creators, and the Virginia Hamilton Award recognizes lifetime achievement.

E. B. White Read Aloud Awards (z.umn.edu/wbr26): Established by the Association of Booksellers for Children, these awards honor two books (one picture book, one book for older readers) published each year that “reflect universal read-aloud standards.”

(Theodor Seuss) **Geisel Medal** (z.umn.edu/wbr27): Selected annually by a committee

from the Association for Library Service to Children, this award goes to the most “distinguished American book for beginning readers published in English in the United States.”

Irma Simonton Black and James H. Black Award for Excellence in Children’s Literature (z.umn.edu/wbr28): *The Bank Street College of Education presents this award annually to “an outstanding book for young children—a book in which text and illustrations are inseparable, each enhancing and enlarging on the other to produce a singular whole.”*

Jane Addams Children’s Book Awards (z.umn.edu/wbr29): *The Jane Addams Peace Association selects the winners of these awards for children’s books published the “preceding year that effectively promote the areas of peace, justice, and world community.”*

(Michael L.) Printz Award (z.umn.edu/wbr30): *A committee of the Young Adult Library Services Association selects the winner of this award in recognition of a book of outstanding literary excellence published expressly for young adults.*

National Book Award (z.umn.edu/wbr31): *The National Book Awards recognize one book annually for excellence in young people’s literature.*

(John) Newbery Medal (z.umn.edu/wbr32): *The Newbery is awarded annually by a committee from the Association for Library Service to Children to the “author of the most distinguished contribution to American Literature for Children.”*

Odyssey Award (z.umn.edu/wbr33): *Given annually by a committee of members from the Association for Library Service to Children and the Young Adult Library Services Association for the best audiobook produced for children/young adults.*

Orbis Pictus Award (z.umn.edu/wbr34): *The National Council of Teachers of English gives this award to the best nonfiction book published each year.*

(Robert F.) Sibert Informational Book Medal (z.umn.edu/wbr35): *Awarded by a committee of the Association for Library Service to Children for the best informational book of the preceding year.*

Schneider Family Book Award (z.umn.edu/wbr36): *Awarded by the American Library Association to recognize “an author or illustrator for a book that embodies an artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences.”*

Sydney Taylor Book Awards (z.umn.edu/wbr37): These awards recognize three outstanding books published the previous year that “authentically portray the Jewish Experience.” Books for younger, older, and teen readers are honored by the Association of Jewish Librarians.

Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award (z.umn.edu/wbr38): Sponsored by Texas State University, and recognizing one book that “honors authors and illustrators who create literature that depicts the Mexican American experience.”

YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults (z.umn.edu/wbr39): Given annually to “the best nonfiction book published for young adults” by a committee from the Young Adult Library Services Association.

Lists

Américas Children’s and Young Adult Literature Commended Titles (z.umn.edu/wbr40): This list includes additional outstanding books considered for the Américas Children’s and Young Adult Literature Award.

Best Fiction for Young Adults (z.umn.edu/wbr41): This annual list, developed by the Young Adult Library Services Association, recommends outstanding fiction for young adults, ages 12-18.

Children’s Choices (z.umn.edu/wbr42): Annual list of books selected across the U.S. by children (ages 5-13) in the year the books are published; administered by the International Reading Association and the Children’s Book Council.

Great Graphic Novels for Teens (z.umn.edu/wbr43): These titles are selected annually by a committee of the Young Adult Library Services Association.

Notable Books for a Global Society (z.umn.edu/wbr44): An “annual list of exceptional multicultural literature” compiled by a special-interest group of the International Reading Association and covering books for children in grades K-12.

Notable Children’s Books (z.umn.edu/wbr45): Compiled annually by a committee of the Association for Library Service to Children, the Notables list honors the year’s most outstanding books for children, ages birth–14.

Notable Children’s Books in English/Language Arts (z.umn.edu/wbr46): The National Council of Teachers of English compiles this list of outstanding children’s books.

Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People (z.umn.edu/wbr47): Annual list compiled by the National Council of Social Studies and the Children's Book Council.

Outstanding International Books List (z.umn.edu/wbr48): Compiled each year by the U.S. Board on Books for Young People to recognize outstanding books published or distributed in the U.S. and that originated or were first published in another country.

Outstanding Science Trade Books (z.umn.edu/wbr49): This annual list, administered by the National Science Teachers Association, recognizes outstanding books for students in grades K–12.

State Reading Lists (z.umn.edu/wbr50): It is important to know those books highlighted by your own state each year. Children's and young adult author Cynthia Leitich Smith provides links to individual state reading lists at her website.

Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers (z.umn.edu/wbr51): This list, compiled annually by a committee from the Young Adult Library Services Association, identifies outstanding books that have great appeal for reluctant young adult readers.

Rainbow List (z.umn.edu/wbr52): The Rainbow List is an annual list sponsored by the American Library Association's Rainbow Project and identifying outstanding books "for children and teens that contain significant gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer or questioning (GLBTQ) content."

Teachers' Choices (z.umn.edu/wbr53): Teachers from the International Reading Association identify books that can both be enjoyed by children and used across the curriculum.

Young Adult Choices Reading List (z.umn.edu/wbr54): This list, administered through the International Reading Association and the Children's Book Council, is created by middle- and high-school students across the U.S. who select their favorite books published each year.

5

In Which I Model the Writing Box Workshop Process

The following is a step-by-step description of the Mapmaking Workshop.

Imagine me standing in front of you. Imagine a table full of face out titles—picture books, chapter books, poems, adult books, atlases. An easel with chart paper and Sharpies

stands next to me. There are tables with chairs around them, and a stack of clear shoebox-sized boxes with lids.

The Writing Box

Any plastic container with a lid will work well; it should be big enough to hold the contents easily without crowding. A clear or translucent rectangular box is best for keeping materials in order and is also visually appealing. It can be big enough to hold paper and supplies, or shoebox size, to contain supplies only, with paper available separately. Writing Boxes are to be shared by the writers; place one or two boxes on each table.

Organizing the Contents

Take the supplies out of their original packaging and place them in resealable plastic bags, one bag of each material for each Writing Box. Using a permanent marker, label the contents on the side of each bag; this will make it easy to clean up and to check contents.

Begin on a small scale, with markers, pencils, sharpeners, and erasers, and add other items as time goes on to freshen each Writing Box. I sometimes buy markers in bulk and sort them into resealable bags.

The Writing Box concept can be adapted for 3–6 year-old children by having a separate box available for that age group. Young children communicate by writing and drawing. Large crayons, thick colored markers, masking tape, and rubbing forms are popular items you can include.

Paper

It's my experience that clean white paper and lined notebook paper are best given out separately, rather than included in the Writing Box. Give children as much paper as they want, and always have a box of scrap paper with old flyers and pieces of leftover construction paper available for children to take from as needed. There is no such thing as "wasting" paper.

Final check

Are your supplies in order? Are there eight differently colored markers in each plastic bag? Do you have paper? Maps can be made on plain copy paper, but for the session on maps you can also have brown paper bags or some heavy stock available. Age some paper for pirate maps by wiping it with damp tea bags.

I place the supplies to the side of the room.

Suggested Contents

- *Crayons*
- *Pencils*
- *Pens*
- *Fine-tipped, water-soluble, colored markers*
- *Thick-tip, water-soluble, colored markers*
- *Erasers*
- *Pencil sharpeners*
- *Colorful stickers*
- *Post-it notes*
- *Press-on letters*
- *Rubber stamps*
- *Stencils (shapes, numbers, letters)*
- *Safety scissors*
- *Glue sticks*
- *Transparent tape*
- *White glue*
- *Clear rulers*
- *Wooden rulers*
- *Brass fasteners*
- *Hole punches*

Mentor Texts

I pull a variety of titles and materials that reflect the topic and place them on display the week prior to the program. I may also create a display to publicize the workshop, including the materials, books, and a Writing Box. It's a good idea to hold a few mentor texts back for the actual event. For the Writing Box session on maps, I select a few titles—picture books about geography and stories that have maps, as well as historical atlases—across the curriculum. For suggestions, see the bibliography of children's books by topic. I mix fiction and nonfiction.

Creating a Sample

Before each workshop, I create a sample. For this session on map making, I draw a map of my own neighborhood using markers or crayons on a plain piece of paper, and label locations: "my house," "fire station," "pizza," and "library." I spend less than five minutes on this sample, and I make a few copies for each table and extras to hand out.



Response work



Map making

A Sample Writing Box Session: Map-Making

Allow one hour for the session. Have sticky name tags available for participants to write their names on. As participants enter, say hello to familiar faces and welcome newcomers.

I welcome writers into the room ten minutes before the program's start time to let them

get settled. The mentor texts—books, transit maps, and city maps, in addition to reference materials like atlases—are on the tables, but the Writing Boxes are not. Writers may explore the books and materials while they wait for the program to begin.

Step 1: Introduction to the topic

I begin by saying “Hello, and welcome to the Writing Box program. Today we will be making maps. We will talk about maps for about ten minutes, we will write for about 25–35 minutes, and we will clean up for five minutes. We’ll then regroup, and those who wish to share their work will have an opportunity to do that. If you don’t finish your work right now or want to write some more, you can get a Writing Box at our reference desk from 2:00 to 5:00 every day that we are open.

Watching the clock, I spend five minutes on defining maps.

“Can someone tell me what a map is?”

“That’s right, it can be a picture of a place.”

*“Maps show us where things are. There are all kinds of maps. We can have a map of our school. We can have a map of our neighborhood. Maps can be of real places [I show a map of Minnesota] or of imaginary ones. I hold up a copy of *How I Became a Pirate*, showing the interior of a pirate map.*

Step 2: Modeling

I spend less than five minutes to model the writing activity. With a thick colored marker, I draw a map on a large piece of paper. (Allow the map to be imperfect; it is important to model imperfection.) As I draw the map, I say aloud exactly what I am doing. I may purposely spell something wrong, like writing “firehous” instead of “firehouse.” Our writers need to practice writing without wearing their editorial hat.

Step 3: Writing Prompts

I then spend less than five minutes listing the writing prompts, and ask the writers for suggestions of the kind of maps they might want to make. They may suggest:

- A map of their neighborhood*
- A map of their body*
- A map of the inside of their house*
- A map of an imaginary place or planet*
- A map of a fairytale (where exactly is Sleeping Beauty sleeping?)*
- A map of a story they like Where is Harry Potter’s aunt and uncle’s house? What do the grounds of Hogwarts look like? Diagon Alley? We can imagine the world*

Beverly Cleary creates. How far is Ramona's house from school? Where do Henry and Ribsy live?

- *A map of a buried treasure.*

Spend a total of about ten minutes on these first three steps.

Step 4: Writing

Allow 25–35 minutes for this activity.

Next, I announce that it's time to write. I ask for volunteers from each table to place paper and the Writing Boxes on the tables. (I've found that it's distracting to have the Writing Boxes and/or materials already on the table while I introduce the program). I gather up a few of the books on display and place those on the tables for inspiration, then circulate and give suggestions if a writer seems stuck.

And then? I stand back and observe for the next 20–35 minutes. It can be hard—keeping quiet, standing back. Occupy yourself by gathering statistics. How many kids? What is the age range? How many adults? Are the adults writing? What kind of maps are the writers working on? Perhaps take pictures of them writing, to use for future displays. (At registration, request permission to reproduce written work and take photographs for displays and promotion of the program. Your institution might require photo release forms.) This is the hardest part. Keeping quiet. Standing back. It is also a good time to encourage grown-ups to draw and write their own maps.

Step 5: Cleanup

Allow five minutes for cleanup. Ten minutes before the end of the workshop, I say, "Please finish your thoughts, we will be cleaning up in five minutes." And I remind writers when the Writing Boxes will be available for use in the library.

Step 6: Sharing

Depending on the group's vibe, I may walk around and ask if anyone would like to share their work. Other times, I ask for volunteers. Ask the child or adult to stand up and describe their work: "I made a map of my room, but how I would have it if I could have anything I want. Here is my bed. Here is my desk. Next to the desk is my swimming pool."

Notes

When calling on writers to share, be aware of internal biases. If you call on a boy, call on a girl next; if you call on an older child, call on a younger one next. If more children want to share than there is time for, let them know that you'll be available afterward for them to share one-on-one. Never take a child's writing to keep or for display. A child cannot give informed consent if a figure of authority requests something from them. If you

want to document the work, take a digital picture or scan it.

Respect privacy. Do not hover over writers while they are writing. Do not insist on writers sharing their work either in the group or one-on-one.

Resources

Bakis, Maureen. 2012. *The Graphic Novel Classroom: Powerful Teaching and Learning with Images*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press.

Duncan, Randy, and Matthew J. Smith. 2009. *The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture*. New York: Continuum.

Frey, Nancy, and Douglas Fisher. 2008. *Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons, and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Jaffe, Meryl. 2013. *Using Content-Area Graphic Texts for Learning: A Guide for Middle-Level Educators*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Pub.

McCloud, Scott. 1993. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. Northampton, MA: Tundra Pub.

Monnin, Katie. 2010. *Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Pub.

Morrison, Timothy G., Gregory Bryan, and George W. Chilcoat. 2002. "Using Student-Generated Comic Books in the Classroom." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 45 (8):758-67.

Tabachnick, Stephen Ely. 2009. *Teaching the Graphic Novel, Options for Teaching*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.

Websites

Graphic Novel Reporter (graphicnovelreporter.com): teacher links and suggestions.

ReadWriteThink (readwritethink.org): lesson plans and activity ideas for graphic novels.

Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (cbldf.org/using-graphic-novels): column on Using Graphic Novels in Education.

The National Council for Teachers of English (ncte.org).

6

Maps

***Note:** This chapter may seem repetitious. It is! This is intentional. In Chapter 5, I'm modeling my approach. The following chapters describe Writing Box Workshop programs, and include descriptions of the pedagogical underpinnings of each thematic program along with lists of materials, mentor texts, and prompts. The book is structured so that the librarian, the writing mentor, can open to a program and have everything they need as well as a checklist of what to do. We know we learn from repetition. Perhaps, I should have titled this chapter "Maps, again!"*

Why Maps?

*In 1916, Lucy Sprague Mitchell founded the Bureau of Educational Experiments, which later became Bank Street College of Education. Mitchell was a disciple of John Dewey and a proponent of experiential learning. Accordingly, Bank Street instructors took an innovative approach to teaching and learning; their students were taught to find opportunities to develop their own curricula. Teachers were also encouraged to take children into the neighborhood to explore local businesses, animals, plants, and events. During those trips, teachers discovered that making maps was the perfect way for children to process and communicate their experiences. In her book *Young Geographers: How They Explore the World and How They Map the World*, Mitchell encouraged those who work with children ages 5–12 to integrate map making into most subjects. We can make maps of the human body, of the library, of the neighborhood, of mythical kingdoms, and of literary landscapes.*



Child sharing their work

*When I was reading Kate DiCamillo's **Because of Winn-Dixie** aloud, it was a natural progression to ask the students to create a map of the neighborhood that the protagonist, India Opal Buloni, explores throughout the story. Having students make maps is also a creative way to assess their comprehension of the material.*

What do we need to know?

MAP: *A graphic representation of selected characteristics of a place, usually drawn to scale on a flat surface.*

CARTOGRAPHER: *A person who makes maps.*

*The acronym **DOGSTAILS** makes it easy to remember the important parts of a map:*

Date, Orientation, Grid, Scale, Title, Author, Index, Legend, Source A map can tell you when it was made or updated (date), which direction is north (orientation), how to find places on it (grid), how distances on the map relate to distances on the ground (scale), what it is about (title), who made it (author), what the symbols mean (legend or key), where to find selected places on it (index), and where the map's information comes from (sources or credits).

Not every map contains each of these elements, but they are things to think about when you're making a map.



Mentor Texts

Barner, Bob. 1998. Which Way to the Revolution? A Book About Maps. 1st ed. 1 vols. New York: Holiday House.

Fanelli, Sara. 1995. My Map Book. 1st American ed. 1 vols. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Hartman, Gail, and Harvey Stevenson. 1991. As the Crow Flies : A First Book of Maps. 1st American ed. New York: Bradbury Press.

Hawkins, Colin, and Jacqui Hawkins. 2007. Pirate Treasure Map : A Fairytale Adventure. 1st U.S. ed. 1 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press.

Hennessy, B. G., and Peter Joyce. 2004. The Once Upon a Time Map Book : Come on a Tour of Six Magical Once Upon a Time Lands. 2nd ed. 1 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press.

Hughes, Susan, and Willow Dawson. 2008. No Girls Allowed: Tales of Daring Women Dressed as Men for Love, Freedom and Adventure: Kids Can Press.

Long, Melinda, and David Shannon. 2003. How I Became a Pirate. 1st ed. 1 vols. San

Diego: Harcourt.

Merritt, Ed, Andrea Mills, and Anne Millard. 2008. Atlas of Exploration. New York: DK Pub.

Mizielińska, Aleksandra, and Daniel Mizieliński. 2013. Maps. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press,.

Ross, Stewart, and Stephen Biesty. 2011. Into the Unknown: How Great Explorers Found Their Way by Land, Sea, and Air. 1st U.S. ed. Somerville, Mass.: Candlewick Press.

Shulevitz, Uri. 2008. How I Learned Geography. 1st ed. 1 vols. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Walters, Virginia, and S. D. Schindler. 1999. Are We There yet, Daddy? 1 vols. New York: Viking.

Resources

Chohan, Sukhdeep Kaur. 2011. "Any Letter for Me? Relationships between an Elementary School Letter Writing Program and Student Attitudes, Literacy Achievement, and Friendship Culture." Early Childhood Education Journal 39 (1):39-50.

Chua, Boon Liang. 2008. "Harry Potter and the Coding of Secrets." Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School 14 (2):114-121.

Jackson, Roberta M. 1992. "The Untapped Power of Student Note Writing." Educational Leadership 49 (7):54-58.

LeVine, Judith E. 2002. "Writing Letters to Support Literacy." The Reading Teacher 56 (3):232.

Mitchell, Lucy Sprague. 1963. Young Geographers; How They Explore the World & How They Map the World. New York: Basic Books.

Rothschild, D. Aviva. 1995. Graphic Novels: A Bibliographic Guide to Book-Length Comics. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited.

Map Making Program

Preparation

Step 1: Gather atlases and maps (bus maps, street maps, and maps of the library work well).

Step 2: Using markers or crayons, draw a map of your own neighborhood on a plain piece of paper to use as an example. Label locations: “my house,” “fire station,” “pizza,” or “library.” Spend less than five minutes on this map. Allow it to be imperfect. Make copies of the example to hand out or draw it with a thick colored marker on a large piece of paper or whiteboard (whichever you have available) so that it’s big enough for everyone to see.

Step 3: Check Writing Box supplies.

The Workshop

Step 1: Show the group the atlases and maps you have gathered and ask the children what kinds of maps they have seen before.

Step 2: Show the children the map you drew of your neighborhood and, if possible, quickly draw another map as they watch—a map of the inside of your house, for example, or a map of the children’s room in the library.

Step 3: Ask for suggestions of different kinds of maps the children could make and list some other possibilities:

- *A map of their neighborhood*
- *A map of their body*
- *A map of the inside of their house*
- *A map of an imaginary land or planet*
- *A map of a fairytale: Where exactly is Sleeping Beauty sleeping?*
- *A map of a buried treasure*
- *A map of a story they like: Where is Harry Potter’s aunt and uncle’s house? What do the grounds of Hogwarts look like? What does Harry’s room look like? Imagine the world that Beverly Cleary creates. How far is Ramona’s house from school? Where do Henry and Ribsy live?*

Step 4: Give the writers markers, crayons, paper, and mentor texts. If writers are stuck for ideas, help them with labeling or with suggestions.

Step 5: Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind writers when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.

Step 6: Take a few minutes to share the work.

7

Comics & Cartoons

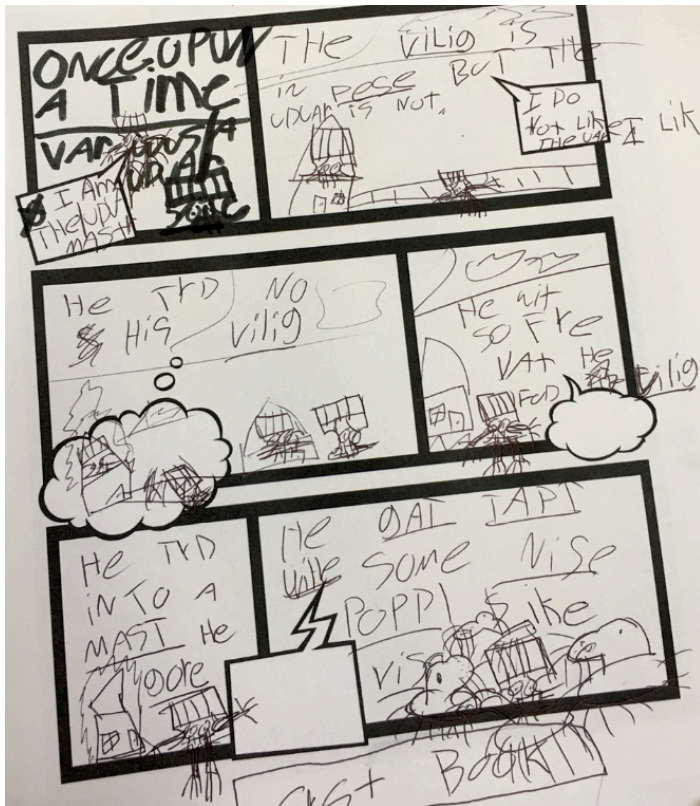
I don't think I'm going out on a limb by saying that every library should have comics and graphic novels as part of its Children's and Young Adult collections. When I began working as a school librarian in a PreK–8 lab school, we had no comics on our shelves. No Garfield, no Simpsons. My supervisor justified this collection development decision by saying that comics did not support the school curriculum, kids could get them at the public library, we had no money for them, and there was not enough room on the shelves. When kids asked why we didn't have comics, I answered "The Library Director doesn't think that comics belong in the school library collection." (Looking back, I wish I'd said "I'm working on it.")

Already, though, we owned all of Ed Emberly's drawing instruction books. From there, it was a short walk to How to Draw the Marvel Way. Then, of course, to the Little Lit, Maus, Adventures of Tintin, Bone, and the Captain Underpants series. The graphic format started to receive national coverage, including articles in School Library Journal, Publishers Weekly, and The New York Times. Trade publishers were creating new imprints, like First Second and Graphix, that produced graphic format specifically for kids and young adults. The No Flying No Tights website appeared on the scene.

I read Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art by Scott McCloud; my eyes were opened, and I was able to articulate what I already knew to be true. Comics are essential materials for high-interest reading. For many resistant readers (those who can read but choose not to), comics are the gateway to improved literacy, to greater reading comprehension and fluency.



Comic creation



Child response

I use the terms comics, graphic narrative, and graphic format interchangeably; they are all forms of illustrated, sequential storytelling or communication. Any topic can be explored using graphic format; it can encompass informational, autobiographical, speculative, or contemporary content, and more.

Talking with my supervisor at the time, I contended that comics and graphic format

supported our literacy curriculum as well as the use of cross-genre writing. That year I spent my entire materials budget on comic-format books.

Teachers in our school began incorporating titles like Persepolis, an autobiographical graphic novel by Marjane Satrapi, into the eighth-grade social studies curriculum; Régis Faller's comic picture book The Adventures of Polo into the second-grade literacy program; and George O'Connor's Olympians series into the Upper School's mythology curriculum.

This format was perfect for resistant readers AND fluent ones. I became evangelical. Eventually, the classroom teachers and I partnered in creating a comic curriculum for our fourth graders. And we created comics in the library.

To provide a brief overview of the benefits of comics, the Comic Book Defense League has published Raising a Reader: How Comics & Graphic Novels Can Help Your Kids Love to Read! by Meryl Jaffe, PhD, with foreword and illustrations by Jennifer Holm (z.umn.edu/wbr70).

The revolution is over. In January, 2016, comic/graphic writer and artist Gene Yang was appointed the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature by the Library of Congress and the Children's Book Council.

Comics have won their place in the library and the classroom.



Mentor texts

Young

Cammuso, Frank, and Jay Lynch. 2008. Otto's Orange Day. New York: Toon Books.

Castellucci, Cecil, and Sara Varon. 2013. Odd Duck. 1st ed. New York: First Second.

Davis, Eleanor. 2008. Stinky, Toon Level 2. New York: Toon Books.

Davis, Jim. 1982. Garfield Treasury. 1st ed. New York: Ballantine Books.

Elder, Joshua, and Chris Giarrusso. 2014. Reading with Pictures: Comics That Make Kids Smarter! Kansas City, Missouri: Andrews McMeel Publishing. still image.

Faller, Régis. 2006. The Adventures of Polo. 1st American ed. New Milford, CT: Roaring Brook.

Hayes, Geoffrey. 2009. Benny and Penny in the Big No-No! A Toon Book. New York: Toon Books.

Meister, Cari, and Marilyn Janovitz. 2010. Airplane Adventure, My 1st Graphic Novel.

Minneapolis, Minn.: Stone Arch Books.

Rosenstiehl, Agnès. 2008. Silly Lilly and the Four Seasons. New York: RAW Junior.

Runton, Andy. 2004. Owly. Marietta, Ga.: Top Shelf.

Smith, Jeff. 2009. Little Mouse Gets Ready: A Toon Book. New York: Toon Books.

Venable, Colleen A. F., and Stephanie Yue. 2010. Hamster and Cheese, Guinea Pig, Pet Shop Private Eye. Minneapolis: Graphic Universe.

Weitzman, Jacqueline Preiss, and Robin Preiss-Glasser. 2002. You Can't Take a Balloon into the Museum of Fine Arts. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Middle Grades

Bell, Cece, and David Lasky. 2014. El Deafo. New York, NY: Amulet Books.

Gownley, Jimmy. 2010. When the Past Is a Present. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Guibert, Emmanuel, Joann Sfar, and Emmanuel Guibert. 2006. Sardine in Outer Space. New York: First Second.

Hatke, Ben. 2010. Far from Home. 1st ed, Zita the Spacegirl. New York: First Second.

Hergé. 1959. The Secret of the Unicorn, The Adventures of Tintin. New York: Golden Press.

Holm, Jennifer L., and Matthew Holm. 2005. Babymouse: Queen of the World! 1st ed. New York: Random House Children's Books.

Holm, Jennifer L., and Matthew Holm. 2011. Squish, Super Amoeba. Squish. New York: Random House.

Jamieson, Victoria. 2015. Roller Girl. New York: Dial Books.

Kibuishi, Kazu. 2008. The Stonekeeper. Amulet. New York: Graphix.

Krosoczka, Jarrett. 2009. Lunch Lady and the Cyborg Substitute. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Larson, Hope. 2008. Chiggers. 1st ed. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Larson, Hope, and Madeleine L'Engle. 2012. A Wrinkle in Time: The Graphic Novel. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin, Nate Powell, and Small Press Expo Collection (Library of Congress). 2013. March: Book One. Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions. still image.

Mack, Stanley, and Susan Champlin. 2009. Road to Revolution! The Cartoon Chronicles of America. New York: Bloomsbury.

McDuffie, Dwayne, Robert L. Washington, John Paul Leon, Denys Cowan, Derek T. Dingle, and Michael Davis. 2009. Static Shock: Rebirth of the Cool. New York: DC Comics.

Nobleman, Marc Tyler, and Ross MacDonald. 2008. Boys of Steel: The Creators of Superman. 1st ed. 1 vols. New York: A.A. Knopf.

O'Connor, George. 2010. Zeus: King of the Gods. Olympians. New York: First Second.

Peirce, Lincoln. 2012. Big Nate: What Could Possibly Go Wrong? New York, NY: Harper.

Pilkey, Dav. 2010. The Adventures of Ook and Gluk: Kung-Fu Cavemen from the Future. New York: Scholastic.

Robbins, Trina. 2007. Bessie Coleman: Daring Stunt Pilot, Graphic Library Graphic Biographies. Mankato, MN.: Capstone.

Siegel, Siena Cherson, and Mark Siegel. 2006. To Dance: A Memoir. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Soo, Kean. 2008. Jellaby. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Spiegelman, Nadja, and Sergio García Sánchez. 2015. Lost in NYC: A Subway Adventure: A Toon Graphic. New York, NY: TOON Books.

Spiegelman, Nadja, and Sergio García Sánchez. 2015. Perdidos En Nyc: Una Aventura En El Metro: A Toon Graphic (Spanish Edition). New York, NY: TOON Books.

Spires, Ashley. 2012. Binky Takes Charge (a Binky Adventure). Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press Ltd.

Sturm, James, Andrew Arnold, Alexis Frederick-Frost, and Center for Cartoon Studies. 2009. Adventures in Cartooning. New York: First Second.

Telgemeier, Raina. 2010. Smile. New York: Graphix.

Telgemeier, Raina, and Gurihiru. 2012. Drama. New York: Graphix.

Varon, Sara. 2007. Robot Dreams. New York: First Second.

Varon, Sara. 2011. Bake Sale. New York: First Second.

Watterson, Bill. 1990. The Authoritative Calvin and Hobbes: A Calvin and Hobbes Treasury. Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel.

Yang, Gene Luen, and Gurihiru. 2014. The Search. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Books.

Yang, Gene Luen, Sonny Liew, and Janice Chiang. 2014. The Shadow Hero. New York: First Second.

Yolen, Jane, and Michael Cavallaro. 2010. Foiled. New York: First Second.

Ages 12 and up

Bechdel, Alison. 2006. Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Long, Mark, and Jim Demonakos. 2012. The Silence of Our Friends. New York: First Second.

Nicholas, Jamar, and Geoffrey Canada. 2010. Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun: A Personal History of Violence. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Roman, Dave, and John Green. 2015. Teen Boat! The Race for Boatlantis. New York: Clarion Books.

Satrapa, Marjane. 2003. Persepolis. New York: Pantheon Books.

Sautter, Aaron, Erik Doescher, and Tim Levins. 2015. How to Draw Batman, Superman, and Other Dc Super Heroes and Villains. North Mankato, MN: Capstone Young Readers.

Sims, Guy A., Dawud Anyabwile, and Walter Dean Myers. 2015. Monster: A Graphic Novel. First edition. ed. New York, NY: Amistad.

Small, David. 2009. Stitches: A Memoir. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Spiegelman, Art. 1986. Maus: A Survivor's Tale. New York: Pantheon Books.

Tamaki, Mariko, and Jillian Tamaki. 2010. Skim. Toronto: Groundwood Books/House of Anansi Press.

Tamaki, Mariko, Jillian Tamaki, and Small Press Expo Collection (Library of Congress). 2014. This One Summer. New York: First Second.

White, Tracy. 2010. How I Made It to Eighteen: A Mostly True Story. New York: Roaring Brook Press.

Resources

Amara, Philip. 2012. So, You Want to Be a Comic Book Artist? The Ultimate Guide on How to Break into Comics! New York: Aladdin, Beyond Words.

Bakis, Maureen. 2012. The Graphic Novel Classroom: Powerful Teaching and Learning with Images. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Corwin Press.

Frey, Nancy, and Douglas Fisher. 2008. Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons, and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Jaffe, Meryl. 2013. Using Content-Area Graphic Texts for Learning: A Guide for Middle-Level Educators. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Pub.

McCloud, Scott. 1993. Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art. Northampton, MA: Tundra Pub.

McKee, Lori L, and Rachel M Heydon. 2015. "Orchestrating Literacies: Print Literacy Learning Opportunities within Multimodal Intergenerational Ensembles." Journal of Early Childhood Literacy 15 (2):227-255.

Monnin, Katie. 2010. Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Pub.

Monnin, Katie. 2011. Teaching Early Reader Comics and Graphic Novels. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Pub.

Morawek, Alison. 2011. "Get Cooking with Words! Creating a Recipe Using Procedural Writing."

Rothschild, D. Aviva. 1995. Graphic Novels: A Bibliographic Guide to Book-Length Comics. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

Tabachnick, Stephen Ely. 2009. Teaching the Graphic Novel, Options for Teaching. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.

Weger Bowman, Elayne. 2015. "Embracing Common Core State Standards One Project at a Time." The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas 88 (3):91-95.

Websites

Graphic Novel Reporter (graphicnovelreporter.com): teacher links and suggestions.

ReadWriteThink (readwritethink.org): lesson plans and activity ideas for graphic novels.

Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (cbldf.org/using-graphic-novels): column on Using Graphic Novels in Education.

The National Council for Teachers of English (ncte.org).

Comics & Cartoons Program

Preparation

Step 1: *Gather mentor texts on cartooning and drawing, such as How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way and Draw 50 Dinosaurs, as well as books in cartoon format, such as Calvin and Hobbes collections. Cartoon pages from newspapers and magazines that use a cartoon format, like Zillions, are also good resources.*

Step 2: *Reproduce the cartoon frames from the template below.*

Step 3: *Draw a cartoon example with a caption, or invite a staff member or a child hanging around the reference desk to help make cartoon examples. Make copies for the workshop.*

Step 4: *Check Writing Box supplies.*

The Workshop

Step 1: Distribute books, magazines, and comics. Talk about the different kinds of cartoons and where they can be found.

Step 2: Show your example and, if you can, create one or two frames of a cartoon as the children watch. Emphasize that you don't have to be an expert or a "good" artist to create a cartoon and that cartoons don't have to be funny. A cartoon can be about anything that happened that day.

Step 3: Give out crayons, pencils, markers, erasers, and cartoon templates, along with as many templates as the kids want.

Step 4: Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind children when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.

Step 5: Take a few minutes to share the work.

8

Hieroglyphs & Secret Codes

Secret code books were among the highest-interest titles in my public and school libraries. There's something irresistible about being able to write a message that only you and your friends can read. When I was a kid in middle school, a self-proclaimed group of geeks produced an entire newsletter written in Middle Earth Elvish.

Hieroglyphs can give writers the same feeling of mastery, and tie into the Ancient Egypt curriculum familiar to most elementary school students.

The ancient Egyptians created the form of picture-writing known as hieroglyphs around 3100 BCE. (These facts are from the National Endowment for the Humanities Website, z.umn.edu/NEHhieroglyphs.) Each picture was a symbol representing something they observed in their surroundings. A simple drawing of the sun represented the sun, a drawing of a vulture signifies a vulture, a drawing of a rope indicated a rope, and so on. But certain objects, and more particularly ideas, were difficult to represent with a single drawing. Eventually, a system evolved in which a symbol was drawn to represent a specific sound (a consonant). Several symbols were written together to make a word. This is the closest the Egyptians ever came to creating an alphabet. Vowels were not written, but were added (usually eh or ah) by the reader.

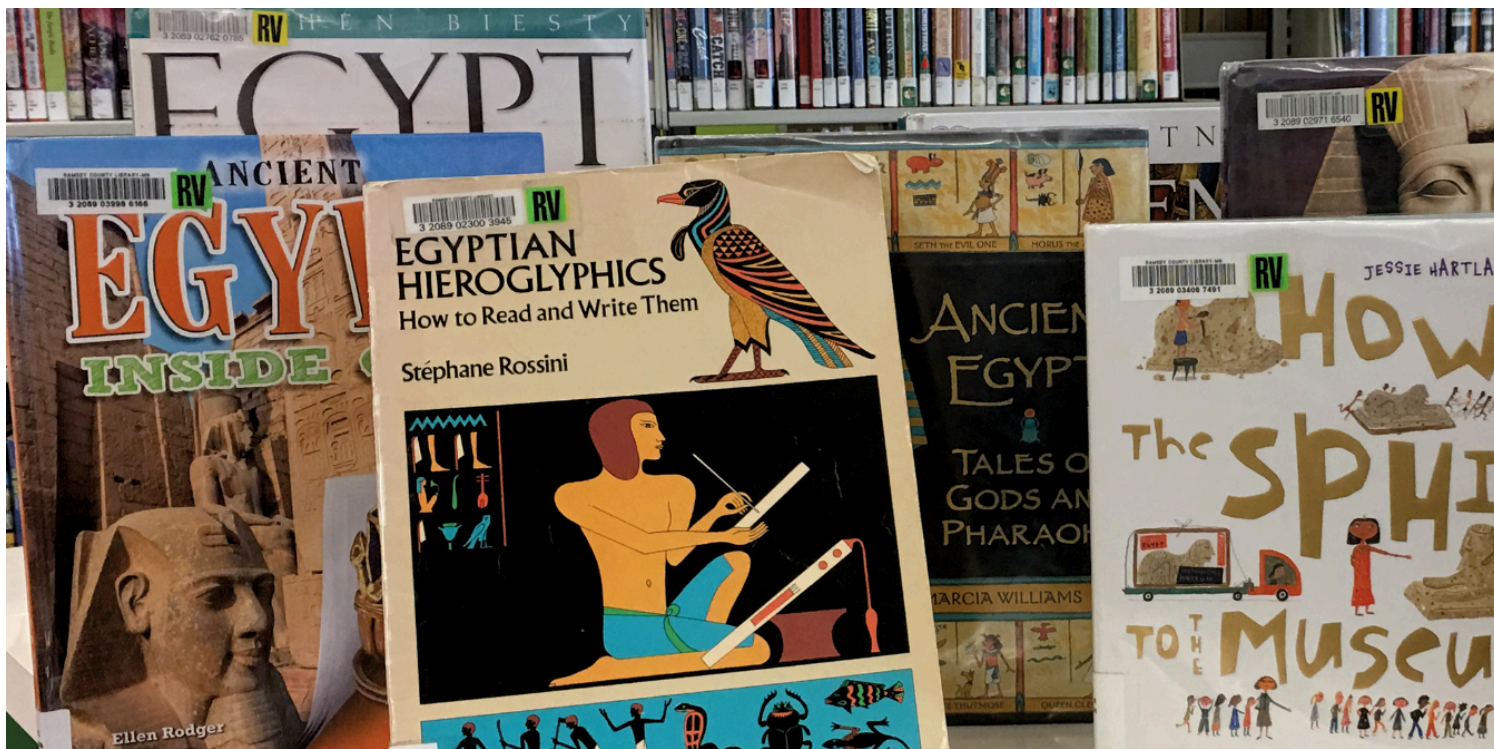


Hieroglyphics

Hieroglyphs were written vertically (top to bottom) or horizontally (left to right or right to left). To read a horizontal line, one moved toward the faces of the animal symbols, which all faced in the same direction. There was no punctuation, and to save space two small symbols often occupied the space of one larger one. Although there are thousands of symbols, the most commonly occurring are a set of 24, which modern archaeologists use as a working alphabet.

The one-on-one correspondence of alphabet/phonetic sounds with the Egyptian hieroglyphic symbols creates an opportunity to communicate through writing. Because the project in this workshop is to create a short message and/or sign, it's a great ice-breaker activity. Writers anxious about "amount of writing" or "filling the page" can communicate without pressure to produce volume.

In our workshops, we find that our writers can also easily create their messages by drawing the glyphs themselves. We give each writer one sheet of paper with the hieroglyphics key and another with an Egyptian-style frame around a space for writing a message.



Mentor texts

Adams, Simon, and Peter Chrisp. 2002. Code Breakers: From Hieroglyphs to Hackers. 1st American ed, Dk Secret Worlds. New York: DK Pub.

Allen, Kathy, and Mari Bolte. 2012. Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphs. Mankato, Minn.: Capstone Press.

Arlon, Penelope. 2014. Ancient Egypt. Scholastic Discover More. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Blackwood, Gary L., and Jason Henry. 2009. Mysterious Messages: A History of Codes and Ciphers. New York, NY: Dutton Children's Books.

Chua, Boon Liang. 2008. "Harry Potter and the Coding of Secrets." Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School 14 (2):114-121.

Colson, Mary. 2011. Destroy after Reading: The World of Secret Codes, Culture in Action. Chicago, Ill.: Raintree.

Deady, Kathleen W. 2012. Ancient Egypt Beyond the Pyramids, Fact Finders Great Civilizations. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.

Ewert, Marcus, and Lisa Brown. 2015. *Mummy Cat*. Boston: Clarion Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Giblin, James Cross. 1990. *The Riddle of the Rosetta Stone : Key to Ancient Egypt, Illustrated with Photographs, Prints, and Drawings*. New York: Crowell.

Ham, Catherine. 2017. *You Talking to Me? Discover the World of Words, Codes, Emojis, Signs, Slang, Smoke Signals, Barks, Babbles, Growls, Gestures, Hieroglyphics & More*. Lake Forest, CA: MoonDance.

Huckle, Helen. 1995. *The Secret Code Book*. New York: Dial Books.

Iggulden, Conn, and Hal Iggulden. 2007. *The Dangerous Book for Boys*. New York: Collins.

Janeczko, Paul B., and Jenna LaReau. 2004. *Top Secret: A Handbook of Codes, Ciphers, and Secret Writing*. Cambridge, MA.: Candlewick Press.

Langley, Andrew. 2010. *Codes and Codebreaking, Spies and Spying*. Mankato, MN: A+/Smart Apple Media.

Lee, Stan, and John Buscema. 1978. *How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Macaulay, David. 1975. *Pyramid*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Morawek, Alison. 2011. "Get Cooking with Words! Creating a Recipe Using Procedural Writing."

Osborne, Mary Pope. 1993. *Mummies in the Morning*. New York: Random House.

Roehrig, Catharine H., and Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1990. *Fun with Hieroglyphs*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: Viking.

Rumford, James. 2003. *Seeker of Knowledge: The Man Who Deciphered Egyptian Hieroglyphs*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Williams, Marcia. 2011. *Ancient Egypt: Tales of Gods and Pharaohs*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

Resources

Chua, Boon Liang. 2008. "Harry Potter and the Coding of Secrets." *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School* 14 (2):114-121.

Discovering Egypt: discoveringegypt.com

Hieroglyphs & Secret Codes Program

Preparation

Step 1. Gather informational books on ancient Egypt, mummies, and pyramids as well as fiction books such as *Mummy Cat* by Marcus Ewert, illustrated by Lisa Brown, *Under the Mummy's Spell* by Kate McMullan, and *Cat Mummies* by Kelly Trumble.

Step 2. Reproduce the hieroglyphic key sheet and the Egyptian-style frame sheet.

Step 3. Create an example by writing a simple secret message like "Keep Out!!" or "Brian's Desk" or "Give Me Pizza" in hieroglyphs inside the frame.

Step 4. Check Writing Box supplies.

The Workshop

Step 1. Talk about the ancient Egyptians and about how their writing was different from ours. Demonstrate how we can write in hieroglyphs by using the symbols that correspond with the sounds of the letters. The words don't have to be spelled correctly; they just need to sound right. "Keep" can be spelled "Kep" because the symbol for a long "e" needs to be written only once.

Step 2. Show the example sheet, and have all the children decode the message together.

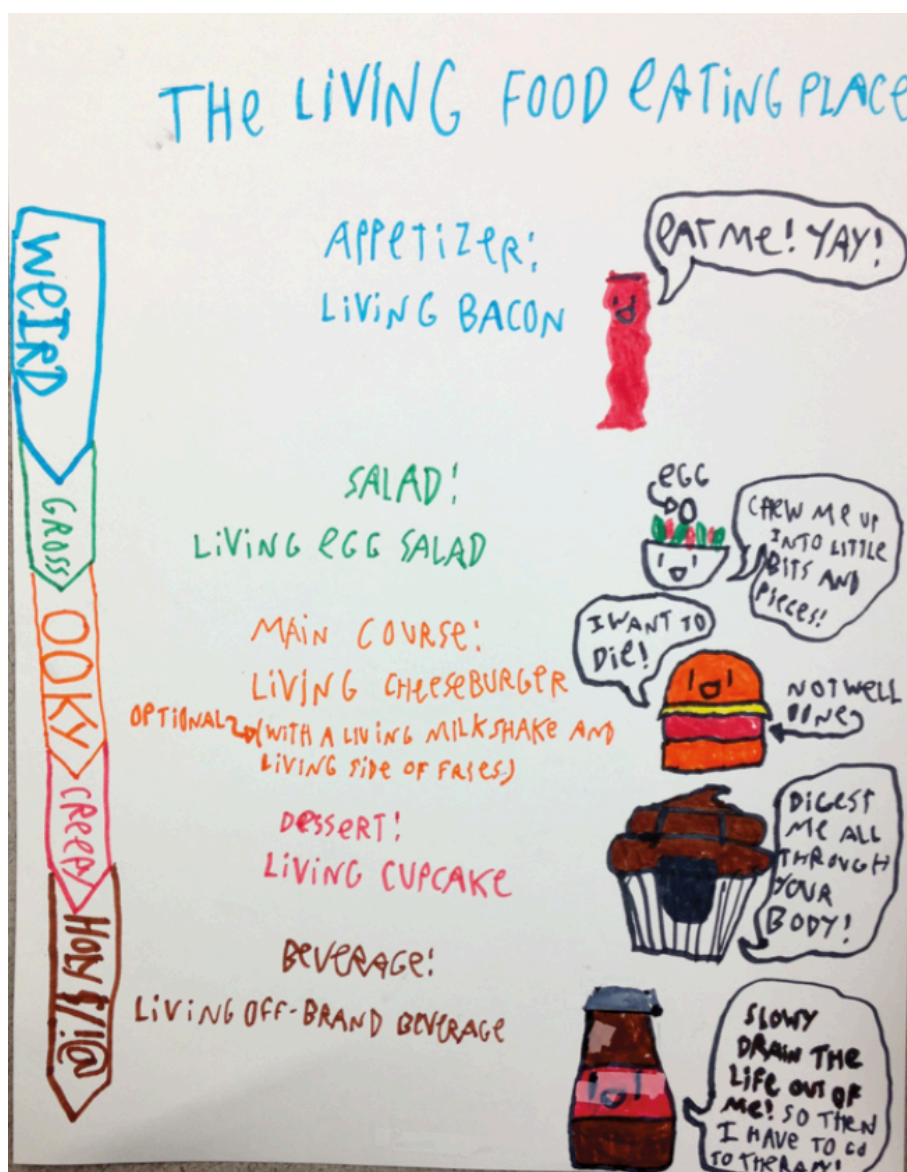
Step 3. Hand out key sheets, Egyptian-style frame sheets, scrap paper (for trying out messages) and markers, crayons, pencils, and erasers.

Step 4. Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind the children when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.

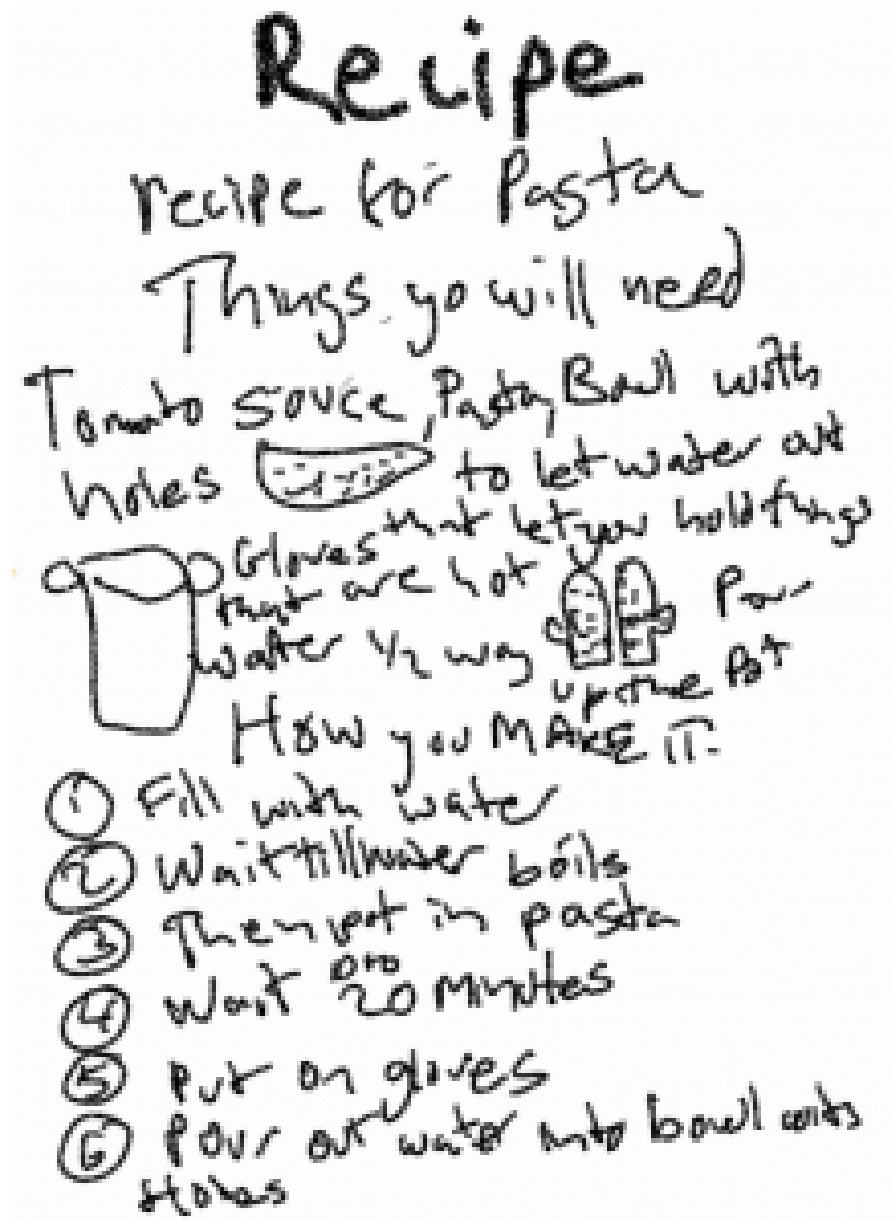
Step 5. Take a few minutes to share the work.

Menus & Recipes

Were I to investigate, I bet I'd find that cookbooks comprise one of the leading informational subject areas in circulation statistics at my school library. For children in third grade and younger, they'd be right up there with dinosaurs. When I was a new public librarian, the first Dewey number I could rattle off from memory was 651.5. As a school librarian, I didn't need to run a report to see that among the library's highest circulating books were the Star Wars cookbooks. Chronicle Books, which publishes these titles, has reported that more than half a million copies have been sold to date. And in the Writing Boxes workshops, I've found that the recipes and menus programs often lead to the most animated writing sessions.



Child's menu



Child's recipe

I attribute the high interest in cookbooks to a few factors. Most of us like to eat, for one thing. And for many children, cookbooks are an easy read. They're predictable in format, and you don't have to cook to enjoy them. Some, like *Pretend Soup*, have step-by-step illustrations to follow.

Cooking is one of the first family literacy experiences a child has with an adult. The simple question "What do we need from the store to make cookies?" introduces a child to lists, to the act of decoding symbols on a page, and to the connection of those symbols to ingredients at the store and, later, in the mixing bowl.

Creating and writing a recipe is another process that supports family literacy. Writing recipes is the perfect intergenerational activity. Adults can take dictation, or young writers can. It's a shared experience.

This type of procedural writing can be adapted for other types of do-it-yourself projects. In writing programs, prompts for recipes ("How do I make applesauce?" "How do I bake bread?") can be opened up for other activities ("How do I make a paper airplane?" "How do I start using Minecraft?" or cross-curriculum, "How do I draw a cartoon of a cat?").

Notes on the Recipes Program

I usually begin by asking, "Does anyone know how to cook?" "YES!" "Grilled cheese!" "Scrambled eggs!" "Mac and cheese!" "Salad!" I choose a child who named something pretty simple and ask them to teach me how to make it.

What do I need to make scrambled eggs? I write the list of ingredients and draw a simple sketch of each. Am I missing anything? I write the names of any additional ingredients and draw a picture of each.

- *"What do I make it in?" I ask.*
- *"A pan," states the writer.*
- *I write "pan" and draw a picture of it.*
- *"Mix the eggs with milk," says the writer"*
- *"How many eggs?" "In what? With what?" "How much milk?"*
- *"Two eggs, in a bowl, with a fork," says the writer, "and a splash of milk"*
- *I list the ingredients and write the instructions.*
- *"Then I cook the eggs? With what?"*
- *"On the stove."*
- *"How do I know how to set the stove?"*
- *"Oh, turn the burner to medium."*
- *"Stir the eggs," instructs the writer.*
- *"With what?" I ask.*
- *"A spoon."*

I add spoon to the list of tools, label it, write the next instruction, and mime the act of stirring.

- *"Take them out of pan when finished," the writer says.*
- *"How do I know when they are finished?"*
- *"They are hard and not wet," says the recipe writer.*

For a writing session, we can do either topic or both on two different days.



Mentor texts

Ainsworth, Mark, and Culinary Institute of America. 2016. The Young Chef: Recipes and Techniques for Kids Who Love to Cook. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Bucholz, Dinah. 2012. The Unofficial Narnia Cookbook: From Turkish Delight to Gooseberry Fool. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks Jabberwocky.

Bugni, Alice, and Erik Brooks. 2016. Beluga Whales, Grizzly Tales, and More Alaska Kidsnacks: Fun Recipes for Cooking with Kids. Seattle, WA: Little Bigfoot.

Cherkasky, Lisa, and Elisa Chavarri. 2016. You're the Chef! A Cookbook Companion for a Smart Girl's Guide: Cooking. Middleton, WI: American Girl Publishing.

Colella, Jill, Katharine Ibbs, Nicola Graimes, and Denise Smart. 2015. Complete Children's Cookbook. New York: DK Publishing. still image.

D'Amico, Joan, Karen Eich Drummond, and Tina Cash-Walsh. 1997. The Math Chef: Over 60 Math Activities and Recipes for Kids. New York: J. Wiley.

French, Deborah, and Leah Ehrlich. 2015. The Cookbook for Children with Special Needs: Learning a Life Skill with Fun, Tasty, Healthy Recipes. London: Jessica Kingsley

Publishers.

Grant, Amanda, and Harriet Russell. 2009. The Silver Spoon for Children: Favorite Italian Recipes. New York: Phaidon.

Gunard, Sebastien, and Aladjidi Virginie. 2014. Big Meals for Little Hands: Flying Eye Books.

Hartland, Jessie. 2012. Bon Appetit! The Delicious Life of Julia Child. New York: Schwartz & Wade Books.

Katzen, Mollie. 1999. Honest Pretzels: And 64 Other Amazing Recipes for Cooks Ages 8 & Up. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.

Katzen, Mollie, and Ann Henderson. 1994. Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes: A Cookbook for Preschoolers & Up. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.

Knisley, Lucy. 2013. Relish: My Life in the Kitchen. New York: First Second.

Marsico, Katie. 2015. Kitchen Math, Math Everywhere! Minneapolis: Lerner.

McCallum, Ann, and Leeza Hernandez. 2011. Eat Your Math Homework: Recipes for Hungry Minds. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

McQuillan, Susan. 2015. Let's Cook! Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Mendez, Sean. 2011. One World Kids Cookbook: Easy, Healthy, and Affordable Family Meals: Interlink Pub Group.

Miller, Pat, and Vincent X. Kirsch. 2016. The Hole Story of the Doughnut. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Morris, Ann, and Ken Heyman. 1989. Bread, Bread, Bread. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books.

Palatini, Margie, and Howard Fine. 1995. Piggie Pie. New York: Clarion Books.

Pépin, Claudine, and Jacques Pépin. 2015. Kids Cook French = Les Enfants Cuisinent à La FrançAise. Beverly, MA: Quarry Books.

Robertson, Emma, Emilia Terragni, Tara Stevens, Adriano de Campos Rampazzo, and

Colin White. 2014. *Chop, Sizzle, Wow: 50 Step-by-Step Kitchen Adventures*. New York, New York: Phaidon Press Ltd.

Ruhlman, Michael. 2009. *Ratio: The Simple Codes Behind the Craft of Everyday Cooking*. New York, NY: Scribner.

Sampson, Sally, and Carl Tremblay. 2013. *Chopchop: The Kids' Guide to Cooking Real Food with Your Family*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Seaver, Barton. 2014. *National Geographic Kids Cookbook: A Year-Round Fun Food Adventure*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic.

Starr, Lara. 2014. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Cookbook*: Chronicle Books.

Waters, Alice, Bob Carrau, Patricia Curtan, and Ann Arnold. 1992. *Fanny at Chez Panisse*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Winslow, Marjorie, and Erik Blegvad. 2010. *Mud Pies and Other Recipes*. New York: New York Review of Books.

Resources

Morawek, Alison. 2011. "Get Cooking with Words! Creating a Recipe Using Procedural Writing." z.umn.edu/wbr56.

Imaginary Menus Program

Preparation

Step 1: Gather cookbooks such as *Chef Roy Choi and the Street Food Remix* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin and *June Jo Lee and Pretend Soup* by Molly Katzen, menus such as Chinese take-out menus, and books like *The Outside Inn* and *How To Eat Fried Worms*.

Step 2: Create three menus of your own. The first can be a restaurant menu with everything you would love to eat (perhaps an all-chocolate menu, with chocolate shrimp, chocolate salad, and chocolate chips. The second menu might be filled with food you deeply dislike, perhaps beets and cabbage and anchovies. And third could be a nonsense menu, filled with things no one could eat, or with imaginary delights such as caramel mud pies. Create one example recipe, outlining how to make one of the dishes (real or imagined).

Step 3: Reproduce examples to hand out. Check Writing Box supplies.

The Workshop

Step 1: Talk about different kinds of menus. Ask the writers what kind of menus and restaurants they know. Show them the different sections (appetizers through dessert), along with the menus you've made. Demonstrate how a plain piece of letter-sized paper can be folded in thirds to create a menu. Read aloud *Chef Roi Choi and the Street Food Remix*, *Outside Inn*, or a few poems in *Frankenstein Bakes a Cake* by Adam Rex. Pass the take-out menus around.

Using chart paper, model the creation of a menu for a made-up restaurant: What do we need to know? What is the name of the restaurant? What kind of food do we serve? What are the parts of the menu? Categories of dishes?

The facilitator can crowdsource this information.

Step 2: Give writers markers, crayons, and paper. Help with words or offer suggestions when writers seem stuck for ideas.

Step 3: Give a five-minute warning for clean up. Remind writers that the Writing Boxes will be available at the reference desk. Clean up and put away supplies.

Step 4: Ask for volunteer to share their menus, or pair up the writers to share with partners or their table.

Parts of a Menu

Name of the restaurant

Where is it located?

Appetizers or starters:

Soup or salad:

Main courses:

Dessert:

Today's special:

Notes

Recipes Program

Preparation

Step 1: Gather mentor text cookbooks such as *Pretend Soup* by Molly Katzen or the *Star Wars* cookbooks.

Step 2: Write out a recipe of your own—something simple to demonstrate the format and components of a typical recipe.

Step 3: Reproduce your recipe to hand out.

Step 4: Make copies of a handout with the following components to help the writers plan their recipes:

- *How many people will the recipe serve?*
- *Ingredients*
- *Kitchen tools*
- *What do I need to know to make this recipe? For example, what does it mean to “cream the butter”?*

The Workshop

Step 1: *Talk about what a recipe is, and ask the writers about favorite foods they like to make. Ask for a volunteer to tell the group how to make a simple dish or sandwich. Model the recipe writing, describing its different parts, and the importance of being accurate in giving written directions.*

Step 2: *Sometimes it’s helpful to partner writers for this activity. Ask them to talk through the recipe with their partner before getting the words on the paper. Give them markers, crayons, and paper. Help with words or offer suggestions when writers seem stuck for ideas.*

Step 3: *Give a five-minute warning for clean up. Remind the children that the Writing Boxes will be available at the reference desk. Clean up and put away supplies.*

Step 4: *If there is time, ask for volunteers to share.*

Recipe Information Sheet

What am I making?

What tools do I need?

What foods do I need? How much?

Steps to make this dish

1.

2.

3.

4.

Notes

10

Letters & Postcards, Emails, Facebook, Twitter, & Text Messages

It is not unusual to hear moans of pain and sighs of dread from young participants when we announce that we'll be writing letters. Letter writing often means an adult standing over a child, insisting on correct format and punctuation while the child grips a pen to squeeze out a few words of gratitude for that itchy hand-knit Christmas sweater—a moment enjoyed by neither adult nor child.

*My favorite mentor text for letter writing is the short story “Your Question for the Author Here,” by Kate DiCamillo and Jon Scieszka in *Guys Read: Funny Business*. In the story, a student’s homework assignment is to write to a famous author. The audio of Kate and Jon reading the letters is snarky good fun and less than five minutes long. I sometimes begin a Writing Box session reading a portion aloud or playing the authors’ reading for inspiration.*

There is no more authentic form of writing than the letter or postcard. A message on a piece of paper that arrives unexpectedly is a joy. Writing a letter or postcard is an intentional act that says to the recipient “You are important to me. I was thinking about you. I have news for you.”



Families and friends also, of course, keep in touch electronically through email and Facebook. Many of our young writers do a significant amount of their writing and reading through emails, Instagram, Twitter, text messages, and other electronic formats. But we must recognize that many of our populations do not have electronic access. We have therefore chosen to go lowtech for this Writing Box program. The blank space on a postcard is finite, and not as overwhelming in size as a blank piece of paper. And handcrafted postcards can be sent through the US Postal Service when postage is attached.

Our postcard session in the public library was especially popular with adult participants, and there was high interest among writers for whom English was a second language, who were eager to send their postcards to family and friends back home.



Mentor texts

Ada, Alma Flor, and Leslie Tryon. 2001. With Love, Little Red Hen. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Ahlberg, Janet, and Allan Ahlberg. 1986. The Jolly Postman, or, Other People's Letters. Boston: Little, Brown.

Benke, Karen. 2015. Write Back Soon! Adventures in Letter Writing. Boston; London: Roost Books.

Berger, Samantha, and Julia Patton. 2018. Snail Mail. New York: Running Press Kids.

Campbell, Rod. 2007. Dear Zoo: A Lift-the-Flap Book. New York: Little Simon.

Cleary, Beverly, and Paul O. Zelinsky. 1983. Dear Mr. Henshaw. New York: Morrow.

Danziger, Paula, and Ann M. Martin. 1998. P.S. Longer Letter Later. New York: Scholastic Press.

Danziger, Paula, and Ann M. Martin. 2000. Snail Mail No More. New York: Scholastic Press.

Gil, L. M. 2014. Letters from Heaven = Cartas Del Cielo. Houston, TX: Piñata Books,

Arte Público Press.

Hesse, Karen. 1992. Letters from Rifka. New York: H. Holt.

Holt, Kimberly Willis. 2015. Dear Hank Williams. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett, and Renée Flower. 2000. Yummy!: Eating through a Day: Poems. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

House, Silas, and Neela Vaswani. 2012. Same Sun Here. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

Jones, Kelly, and Katie Kath. 2015. Unusual Chickens for the Exceptional Poultry Farmer. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Klise, Kate, and M. Sarah Klise. 2004. Regarding the Sink: Where, Oh Where, Did Waters Go? Orlando, FL: Gulliver Books/Harcourt.

Klise, Kate, and M. Sarah Klise. 2009. Dying to Meet You. Boston: Harcourt.

Loewen, Nancy, and Christopher Lyles. 2009. Sincerely Yours: Writing Your Own Letter, Writer's Toolbox. Minneapolis, MN Picture Window Books.

Mazer, Anne, Ellen Potter, and Matt Phelan. 2010. Spilling Ink: A Young Writer's Handbook. New York: RB Flash Point/Roaring Brook Press.

McDonald, Megan, and Peter H. Reynolds. 2006. Stink and the Incredible Super-Galactic Jawbreaker. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Moyle, Eunice, and Sabrina Moyle. 2017. Happy Mail. Lake Forest, CA: Walter Foster, Jr.

Orloff, Karen Kaufman, and David Catrow. 2004. I Wanna Iguana. New York: Putnam.

Pak, Soyung, and Susan Kathleen Hartung. 1999. Dear Juno. New York: Viking.

Pattison, Darcy, and Joe Cepeda. 2003. The Journey of Oliver K. Woodman. San Diego: Harcourt.

Pennypacker, Sara, and Marla Frazee. 2008. Clementine's Letter. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Ruzzier, Sergio. 2014. A Letter for Leo. Boston: Clarion Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Scieszka, Jon, and Adam Rex. 2010. Guys Read: Funny Business. New York: Walden Pond Press.

Sís, Peter. 2015. Ice Cream Summer. New York: Scholastic Press.

Standiford, Natalie, and Nathan Durfee. 2016. The Only Girl in School. New York: Scholastic Press.

Tonatiuh, Duncan. 2010. Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers.

Williams, Vera B. 1981. Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Williams-Garcia, Rita. 2013. P.S. Be Eleven. New York, NY: Amistad.

Woodson, Jacqueline. 2009. Peace, Locomotion. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Resources

Chohan, Sukhdeep Kaur. 2011. "Any Letter for Me? Relationships between an Elementary School Letter Writing Program and Student Attitudes, Literacy Achievement, and Friendship Culture." Early Childhood Education Journal 39 (1):39-50.

Jackson, Roberta M. 1992. "The Untapped Power of Student Note Writing." Educational Leadership 49 (7):54-58.

Johns, Jerry L, and Thomas E Wheat. 1984. "Newspaper Readability: Two Crucial Factors." Journal of Reading 27 (5):432-434. z.umn.edu/wbr59.

LeVine, Judith E. 2002. "Writing Letters to Support Literacy." The Reading Teacher 56 (3):232.

Letters & Postcards Program

Preparation

Step 1: *Gather books that have letter writing as a theme or format, such as Ezra Jack*

Keats' Letter to Amy, Stringbean's Trip to the Shining Sea by Vera B. Williams, and Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary.

Step 2: *Cut pieces of 8½" by 11" heavy stock into rectangles for postcards. They can be all sizes. If you like, draw imaginary postage stamps and a vertical line to separate the address area from the writing space. If you have a die-cutting machine, you can produce folded stationery (or just use plain paper).*

Step 3: *Create your own letter and postcard.*

Step 4: *Reproduce your examples.*

Step 5: *Check Writing Box supplies. This is a good project for bringing out the rubber stamps. Hint: You don't need stamp pads. Just ink the rubber stamp with a thick marker.*

The Workshop

Step 1: *Display mentor texts and different kinds of postcards and letters. Explain why we send them, and ask the kids if they have received or sent any letters or cards.*

Step 2: *Read your postcard and letter aloud and describe their different components: date, salutation, return address, etc.*

Step 3: *Give the writers markers, crayons, and paper, and rubber stamps if you have them. Help with words or offer suggestions when writers seem stuck for ideas.*

Step 4: *Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind the children of when the Writing Boxes will be available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.*

Step 5: *Take a few minutes to share the work.*

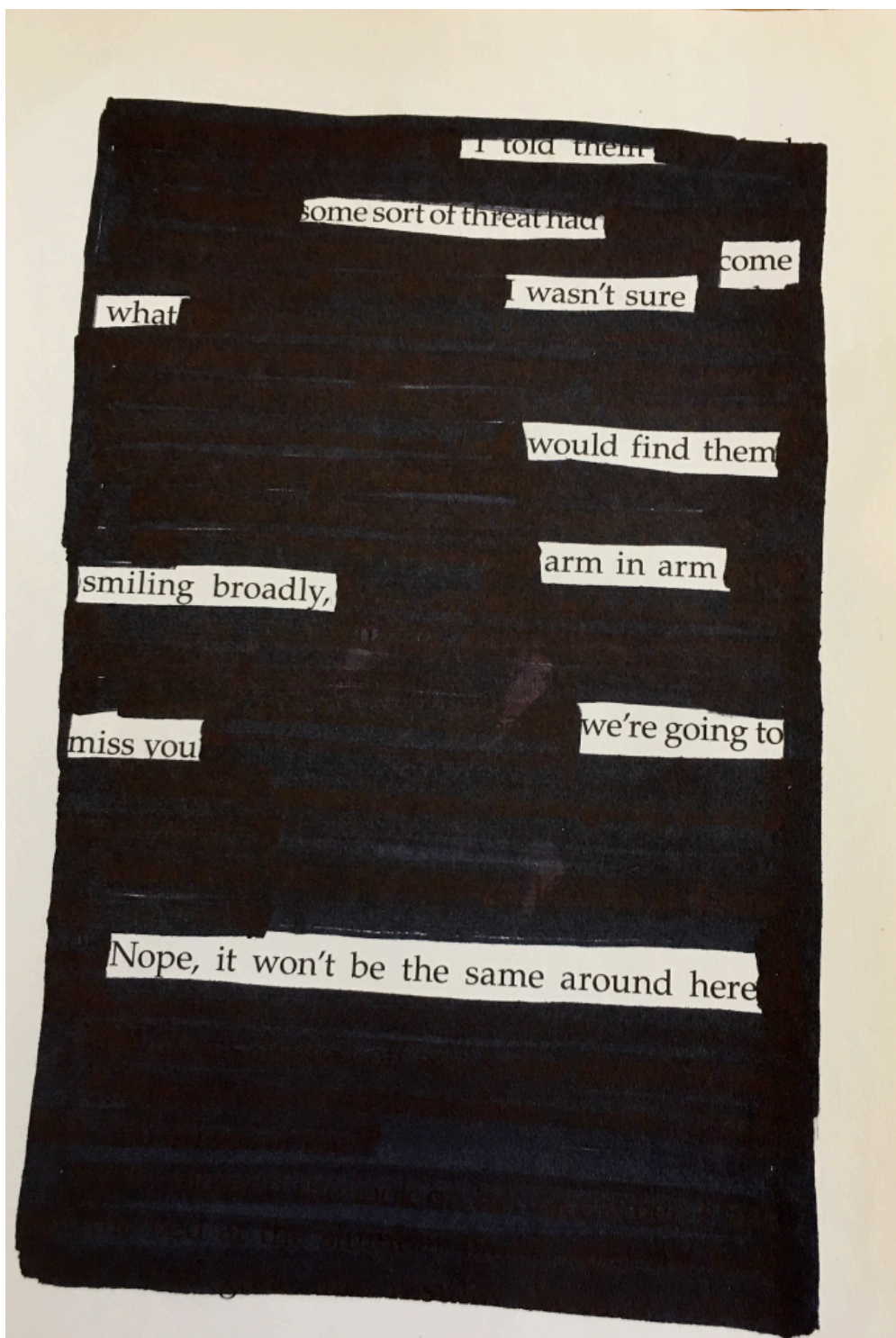
11

Poetry

Poetry surrounds us from birth. We encourage new parents to sing and to read aloud, to recite nonsense songs and nursery rhymes. All of these activities expose babies and toddlers to vocabulary, language, phonemic awareness, and wordplay, and connect words to the world around them. "A told B and B told C, 'I'll meet you at the top of the coconut tree.'" I didn't have a group of first graders in Brooklyn who couldn't complete that verse: "Chicka chicka boom boom, Will there be enough room?"¹



Sharing



Blackout poetry created from discarded Gregor the Outlander

Full disclosure: I was someone who gave up Poetry (with a capital P) after the exhausting interpretive gymnastics of English 101. I was allergic to dudes in triboli hats declaiming their imitations of "Howl" from the postage-stamp-sized stages in the back of Brooklyn coffee shops. But when I became a children's librarian, I became a poetry lover. I discovered Jack Prelutsky, Shel Silverstein, Kristine O'Connell George, Doug Florian,

Jane Yolen, Pat Mora, Janet Wong, Nikki Grimes, Nikki Giovanni, Marilyn Singer, Marilyn Nelson, Judy Sierra, Naomi Shihab Nye, and Joyce Sidman. The rich collections selected by X. J. Kennedy and Lee Bennett Hopkins provided me with icebreakers for visits with classes of all ages. If the word “poetry” sets your teeth on edge, I have some words of hope for you: Poetry can be fun, poetry can be silly, and often at the same time—poetry can express emotions and states of feeling with a unique power.

*If you have never heard a poem spoken, it’s like never hearing a song sung.
-Ashley Bryan*

In particular, poetry for children often exemplifies a special union of laughter and profundity. The esteemed poet, anthologist, and teacher Lee Bennett Hopkins wrote, “The first thing I think of when planning a collection is the child—what I want the child to reap. When it comes to poetry—pure poetry—I want children to see beauty in the world, feel emotion, compassion, to breathe deeply, utter, ‘Yes, this is how it is.’”²

Those revelations can come surprisingly early. I’ve found it’s possible to jolly a two-year-old out of an incipient breakdown by dramatically reciting these lines from Andrew Fusek:

*I’m the no-no bird,
That’s right, that’s me.
I live up in
The Tantrum Tree.
I’m the no-no bird,
I won’t say why
I stamp my feet
And shout and cry.*

*This can be found in *Here’s a Little Poem: A Very First Book of Poetry*, a collection co-edited by Fusek and the esteemed poet Jane Yolen. The genius of these selections is that they reflect the developmental interests of young children. Wordplay, humor, and tongue-twisting verse about big feelings, baby brothers, and ice cream are all part of the landscape, brought to life with strong imaginative illustrations by Polly Dunbar.*

*Poetry is also an intergenerational delight, perfect for sharing with grandparents and great-grandparents, neighbors, and friends. Characters familiar to young and old make an early appearance in A. A. Milne’s 1924 collection, *When We Were Very Young*. “Disobedience,” for example, begins rhythmically:*

*James James
Morrison Morrison
Weatherby George Dupree
Took great
Care of his Mother,
Though he was only three.
James James
Said to his Mother,
'Mother,' he said, said he:
'You must never go down to the end of town,
if you don't go down with me.'*

National Poem in Your Pocket Day

National Poem in Your Pocket Day is observed each April. This day was created to share the joy that poems bring by carrying one in your pocket and sharing it throughout the day with others.

Across the country, businesses, libraries, schools and individuals have shared a poem on National Poem in Your Pocket Day. A short poem might appear on your lunch receipt, or perhaps the mailperson will recite one in exchange for the outgoing mail.

HOW TO OBSERVE

Memorize a poem or two to share with the people you meet throughout the day. National Poem In Your Pocket Day is the perfect day to share your poem on Social Media using #PoemInYourPocketDay or #PocketPoem.

HISTORY

National Poem In Your Pocket Day has been celebrated as part of National Poetry Month since 2002. The Office of the New York Mayor, along with the New York City Departments of Cultural Affairs and Education, initiated the annual city-wide Poem In Your Pocket Day. The Academy of American Poets took Poem In Your Pocket Day national in 2008.

Mentor texts

Clinton, Catherine, and Stephen Alcorn. 1998. I, Too, Sing America: Three Centuries of African-American Poetry. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Florian, Douglas. 2000. Mammalabilia: Poems and Paintings. San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt.

Frame, Jeron Ashford, and R. Gregory Christie. 2003. Yesterday I Had the Blues. Berkley, CA: Tricycle Press.

George, Kristine O'Connell, and June Otani. 1999. Little Dog Poems. New York: Clarion Books.

Gollub, Matthew, and Kazuko G. Stone. 1998. Cool Melons—Turn to Frogs! The Life and Poems of Issa. New York: Lee & Low Books.

Grimes, Nikki, and Javaka Steptoe. 2001. A Pocketful of Poems. New York: Clarion Books.

Heard, Georgia. 2019. Boom! Bellow! Bleat! Animal Poems for Two or More Voices. Honesdale, PA: WordSong.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett, and Chris K. Soentpiet. 2010. Amazing Faces. New York: Lee & Low Books.

Janeczko, Paul B., and Christopher Raschka. 2001. A Poke in the I. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Janeczko, Paul B., and Christopher Raschka. 2005. A Kick in the Head. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Janeczko, Paul B., and Melissa Sweet. 2014. Firefly July: A Year of Very Short Poems. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

Kennedy, X. J., Dorothy M. Kennedy, and Jane Dyer. 1992. Talking Like the Rain: A Read-to Me Book of Poems. Boston: Little, Brown.

Lewis, J. Patrick, and Lisa Desimini. 1998. Doodle Dandies: Poems That Take Shape. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Livingston, Myra Cohn. 1992. I Never Told and Other Poems. New York: M.K. McElderry Books.

Medina, Jane, and Fabricio Vanden Broeck. 1999. My Name Is Jorge on Both Sides of the River: Poems. Honesdale, PA: Wordsong/Boyd's Mills Press.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. 2018. Voices in the Air: Poems for Listeners. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books.

Nye, Naomi Shihab, and Ashley Bryan. 2000. *Salting the Ocean: 100 Poems by Young Poets*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Rosenberg, Liz. 1996. *The Invisible Ladder: An Anthology of Contemporary American Poems for Young Readers*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

Sidman, Joyce, and Pamela Zagarenski. 2007. *This Is Just to Say: Poems of Apology and Forgiveness*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Sidman, Joyce, and Pamela Zagarenski. 2009. *Red Sings from Treetops: A Year in Colors*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children.

Sidman, Joyce, and Pamela Zagarenski. 2013. *What the Heart Knows: Chants, Charms & Blessings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Singer, Marilyn, and Susan L. Roth. 2017. *Every Month Is a New Year: Celebrations around the World*. New York: Lee & Low Books Inc.

Yolen, Jane, Andrew Peters, and Polly Dunbar. 2007. *Here's a Little Poem: A Very First Book of Poetry*. Cambridge, Mass.:

Poet websites

Jorge Argueta: www.jorgeargueta.com

Rebecca Kai Dotlich: www.rebeccakaidotlich.com

Douglas Florian: <http://floriancafe.blogspot.com>

Kristine O'Connell George: www.kristinegeorge.com

Nikki Grimes: www.nikkigrimes.com

Lee Bennett Hopkins: www.leebennetthopkins.com

J. Patrick Lewis: www.jpatricklewis.com

Deborah Ruddell: www.deborahruddell.com

Joyce Sidman: www.joycesidman.com

Janet Wong, Poetry Suitcase: www.janetwong.com/poetry-suitcase

Resources

Heard, Georgia. 1999. *Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry in Elementary and Middle School*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Heard, Georgia. 2016. *Heartmaps: Helping Students Create and Craft Authentic Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Janeczko, Paul B. 2003. *Opening a Door: Reading Poetry in the Middle School Classroom, Theory and Practice*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.

Koch, Kenneth. 1973. *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? Teaching Great Poetry to Children*. New York: Random House.

Koch, Kenneth, and P.S. 61 in New York City. 1970. *Wishes, Lies and Dreams; Teaching Children to Write Poetry*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers.

Livingston, Myra Cohn. 1991. *Poem-Making: Ways to Begin Writing Poetry*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Livingston, Myra Cohn. 1997. *I Am Writing a Poem About—a Game of Poetry: Edited by Myra Cohn Livingston*. New York: McElderry Books.

McKee, Lori L, and Rachel M Heydon. 2015. “Orchestrating Literacies: Print Literacy Learning Opportunities within Multimodal Intergenerational Ensembles.” *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 15 (2):227-255.

McNair, Jonda C. 2012. “Poems About Sandwich Cookies, Jelly, and Chocolate: Poetry in K-3 Classrooms.” *YC Young Children* 67 (4):94.

Vardell, Sylvia M., and Janet Wong. 2018. *Great Morning! Poems for School Leaders to Read*. Princeton, NJ: Pomelo Books.

Weger Bowman, Elayne. 2015. “Embracing Common Core State Standards One Project at a Time.” *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 88 (3):91-95.

Wood, Jaime R. 2006. *Living Voices: Multicultural Poetry in the Middle School Classroom*. Urbana, IL.: National Council of Teachers of English.

Resource websites

National Education Association, *Bringing Poetry to the Classroom, Grades K–5*: z.umn.edu/wbr57.

Poem in Your Pocket Day: z.umn.edu/wbr58.

Notes

1. Martin, Bill and Lois Elbert. 1989., *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
2. Lee Bennet Hopkins, email message to author, May 25, 2016.

Poetry Program, Session I: "Red Sings"

Preparation

Step 1: Gather poetry books. Make sure to get a good, broad selection, such as *A Poke in the I*, *Talking Like the Rain*, *Rolling Harvey Down the Hill*, *Joyful Noise*, *Something Big Has Been Here*, *Little Dog Poems*, *A Full Moon Is Rising*, *Red Sings from Treetops*, *Hip Hop Speaks to Children: A Celebration of Poetry with a Beat*, edited by Nikki Giovanni, and *Mammalabilia*. Include some rhyming picture books, such as *My Little Sister Ate One Hare*, and *Maxi the Taxi Dog*, and some books in verse, like *My People*, by Langston Hughes, *Yesterday I Had the Blues*, or a novel in verse, like Kwame Alexander's *The Crossover*.

Step 2: Choose a few poems that speak to you. Practice reading them aloud.

Step 3: Choose a mentor text poem, like *Red Sings from Treetops*.

Step 4: Create a prompt for the writers to finish. Select a color and a verb. Example: *Blue swishes ... Yellow dances ...*

Step 5: Create your own poem in that style.

The Workshop

Step 1: Display various kinds of poetry books and talk about the different kinds of poetry.

Step 2: Read one or two of your favorite poems aloud. Talk about rhymes. Call out words and ask children for rhyming words—e.g., call out “cat,” and the children will respond with *mat*, *sat*, *at*, *pat*, *Nat*, or *bat*. Talk about poems not always rhyming.

Step 3: Read aloud a few poems from *Red Sings from Treetops*, including “Red sings.”

Step 4: On chart paper or whiteboard, model writing a color poem using the example poem you have written and the prompt beginning with a color and a verb.

Step 5: Read the poem aloud.

Step 6: Give the children markers, crayons, and paper. Help with words or offer suggestions when writers seem stuck for ideas.

Step 7: Children may want to read their poems aloud. Allow time for sharing.

Step 8: Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind the children when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.

Poetry Program, Session II: Poem in Your Pocket Day

Every year, the Academy of American Poets invites us to celebrate Poem in Your Pocket Day (z.umn.edu/wbr58). This day is sparked by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers poem, *Keep A Poem In Your Pocket*. It begins: “Keep a poem in your pocket / And a picture in your head / And you’ll never feel lonely / At night when you’re in bed.”

Preparation

Step 1: Gather poetry books. Make sure to get a good, broad selection, such as *A Poke in the I*, *Talking Like the Rain*, *Rolling Harvey Down the Hill*, *Meet Danitra Brown*, *Joyful Noise*, *Something Big Has Been Here*, *Little Dog Poems*, *Red Sings from Treetops*, and *Mammalabilia*. Include some rhyming picture books, such as *Little Blue Truck*, *My Little Sister Ate One Hare*, and *Maxi the Taxi Dog*.

Step 2: Have Writing Boxes and 5" by 8" cards (colorful ones are nice) available.

Step 3: Choose a few poems that speak to you. Practice reading them aloud.

Step 4: Choose a mentor text poem—a poem you would keep in your pocket—and copy it on a colored 5" by 8" card.

Step 5: Memorize “Keep a Poem in Your Pocket”

Step 6: Copy a few poems to hand out as examples.

The Workshop

Step 1: Recite “Keep a Poem in Your Pocket.”

Step 2: Share the poetry books.

Step 3: Ask each of children to select a poem that speaks to them and copy it on a 5" by 8" card. Each child will create two cards, one to keep and one to post for anyone to take on Poem in Your Pocket Day.

Step 4: Have children practice reading aloud the poems they have chosen.

Step 5: Pair kids up and have them ask each other if they have a poem in their pocket, then have them read their poems to each other.

Step 6: Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind the children when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.

Step 7: Take a few minutes to share the poems

Poetry Program, Session III: Concrete Poems

I could create a whole book of poetry workshops! There are people who have. Look for books like Poetry Aloud Here!: Sharing Poetry with Children in the Library, by Sylvia M. Vardell. Lee Bennett Hopkins has more than 100 poetry anthologies sharing thousands of poems. Concrete poems. These are the simplest poems to make, with the words of the poem on the page creating a picture of the subject. Pick a topic, like dogs. What are the attributes of a dog? Wet nose, warm paws, wet tongue, soft fur, waggy tail. Using the words, create a quick picture of the dog. That is a concrete poem.

Preparation

Step 1: Gather poetry books. Make sure to get a good, broad selection, such as *A Poke in the I: A Collection of Concrete Poems*, edited by Paul B. Janeczko, *Wet Cement: A Mix of Concrete Poems*, by Bob Raczka, and *Meow Ruff: A Story in Concrete Poetry*, by Joyce Sidman.

Step 2: Have Writing Boxes and heavy stock paper available.

Step 3: Choose a few poems that speak to you. Practice reading them aloud.

Step 4: Choose a mentor text poem.

Step 5: Copy a few poems to hand out as examples.

The Workshop

Step 1: Show and recite a concrete poem

Step 2: On chart paper, ask the children the attributes of a dog. Write each word on the chart paper in the shape of a dog silhouette. Example: the tail is formed with the words tail, wag, wag, wag.

Step 3: Ask each of children list words that will form an animal or object and then create thier own concrete poem.

Step 4: Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind the children when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.

Step 5: Take a few minutes to share the poems.

Poetry Program, Session IV: Where I'm From

George Ella Lyon has published forty books for readers of all ages, including Educators Catalpa, an Appalachian Book of the Year; Come a Tide, a "Reading Rainbow" feature; and Borrowed Children, winner of the Golden Kite Award. She is best known for "Where I'm From," a poem featured in the PBS series: The United States of Poetry and used as a writing model by teachers around the world. This prompt can be used with children as young as eight years old. We can begin writing "Where I'm From" poems by listing words, phrases, colors, smells, memories, physical descriptions, tastes, sounds, feelings, family traditions, and places.

Select one or two of these things and finish the sentence: I'm from

Preparation

Step 1: *Gather memoir/first person books. Make sure to get a good, broad selection, such as The Cross-Over, by Kwame Alexander; Love That Dog, by Sharon Creech; This Same Sky, an anthology by Naomi Shihab Nye; and Brown Girl Dreaming, by Jacqueline Woodson.*

Step 2: *Have Writing Boxes and paper available.*

Step 3: *Read, reread, and read aloud "Where I'm from." Practice reading it aloud.*

Step 4: *Print out copies of "Where I'm from" for a mentor text. Print out the prompt on the top of the page to hand out to participants.*

Step 5: *Write your own "Where I'm from" poem*

Step 6: *Copy a few poems from the memoir mentor texts, like "A Girl Named Jack" from Brown Girl Dreaming.*

The Workshop

Step 1: *Read "Where I'm from" aloud.*

Step 2: *On chart paper write, Where I'm from... and finish the sentence with your own words.*

Step 3: *Ask participants how they would complete the sentence. Brainstorm a list of people, places, foods, sports, music, family sayings, etc., that have made you You. Like: I'm from snow, and cold, and sleet. I'm from warm wool blankets and wood fires. I'm from four sisters. I'm from ponds and crappies.*

Step 4: *Hand out scrap paper for brainstorming.*

Step 5: *Pass around mentor texts. Time to write.*

Step 6: *Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind the children when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.*

Step 7: Take a few minutes to share the poems.

Where I'm From by George Ella Lyon

*I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening
it tasted like beets.)
I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
whose long gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.*

*I am from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.
I'm from the know-it-alls
and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!
I'm from He restoreth my soul
with cottonball lamb
and ten verses I can say myself.*

*I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost
to the auger
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.*

*Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures.
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments —
snapped before I budded —
leaf-fall from the family tree.*

(reprinted with permission of George Ella Lyon)

The I Am From Project

George Ella Lyon has partnered with Julie Landsman, a writer, teacher, and activist based in Minneapolis to create the I Am From Project. Through their website, <https://iamfromproject.com>, they

inspire people of all ages and backgrounds use the “Where I’m From” poem as a prompt to write about experiences that shape them. They hope to bring these voices together in community, get them heard locally, and create a national river of voices, reminding America that diversity is our origin and our strength. Help them expand the river of voices by sending your I Am From poems and other creations to: iamfromproject@gmail.com.

George Ella Lyon

George Ella Lyon’s recent poetry collections include She Let Herself Go, Many-Storied House, and Voices from the March on Washington, co-written with J. Patrick Lewis. A freelance writer and teacher, Lyon is particularly interested in the poetry of witness. She served as Kentucky Poet Laureate in 2015–2016. You can contact her at rubyjomountain@gmail.com.

Julie Landsman

Julie Landsman is the author of many articles poems and three books on education: Basic Needs: A Year with Street Kids in a City School (Milkweed Editions, 1993), A White Teacher Talks About Race (Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), and Growing Up White: a Veteran Teacher Reflects on Racism (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008). She is also the editor of many collections of essays, stories and poems. She is a retired teacher and consultant who loves poetry and believes in its power to change the world.

12

Newspapers, Zines, & Blogs

Do people even read newspapers anymore? They’re so old-fashioned! Don’t we get our news from TV shows, websites, and social media outlets? Isn’t everything on the internet? Survey after survey during the last ten years, however, concludes that children and teens prefer physical print to electronic reading. Librarians know that competent readers who choose not to read (formerly referred to as reluctant readers) will read if given a choice of magazines, comics, and graphic novels.

We know that newspapers and magazines provide information in unexpected, serendipitous ways. As we browse the pages, a headline catches our interest and we read about lemurs in Madagascar. And they’re low-tech—no Wi-Fi necessary. Paper and a writing implement are all we need to create our own newspaper.

Newspapers and magazines are the perfect format for high-interest short reads. Although common wisdom states that newspapers are written on a fifth-grade reading level, studies show that they range beyond this, to high-school-level writing. And we know that if the interest is there, young readers will stretch to meet the challenge. In addition, there are many periodicals created specifically for kids. In our library, for instance, we like to surround young readers with American Girl, National Geographic for Kids, Discovery, Ranger Rick, Cricket, Mad Magazine, and more.

For this version of the Writing Box workshop it’s good to plan ahead, collecting newspapers before the day of the workshop to use as mentor texts. (The one time I didn’t plan ahead, every single paper in NYC had front-page headlines trumpeting a sex scandal.)

Newspapers are also an excellent format for creative writing and assessment. Is a fifth- or sixth-grade class in your school studying the civil rights movement? Partner with the teacher for a research assignment gathering facts about a topic like the Woolworth counter sit-ins, and have students create the front page of a newspaper from that time. To start, ask them to think about point of view: whose story is being told? Who are the readers of this paper?



Mentor texts

Johns, Jerry L, and Thomas E Wheat. 1984. "Newspaper Readability: Two Crucial Factors." Journal of Reading 27 (5):432-434.

Leedy, Loreen. 1990. The Furry News: How to Make a Newspaper. New York: Holiday House.

Leedy, Loreen. 1991. Messages in the Mailbox: How to Write a Letter. New York: Holiday House.

Taylor, Barbara. 1993. Create Your Own Magazine. New York: Sterling Pub. Co.

A selection of recommended magazines

American Girl: Informational text, stories, activities. American Girl Publishing Group; Ages 7 and up.

Ask: Arts and Sciences for Kids: Features puzzles, riddles, cartoons, and articles. Cricket Publishing Group; Ages 7 and up.

Babybug: Boardbook-type pages. Cricket Publishing Group; Ages 6 months to 2 years.

Boys' Life: Games, jokes, and how-to articles. Boy Scouts of America, Ages 8-17.

ChickaDEE: Informational content of puzzles, games, pictures and activities focused on animals and people. OwlKIDS; Ages 6-9.

Chirp: "The See and Do, Laugh and Learn Magazine. Short stories, jokes, puzzles and other games. OwlKIDS; Ages 3-6.

Click: Non-fiction articles, stories, cartoons, and activities. Cricket Publishing Group; preschool and early elementary.

Cobblestone American History for Kids: American history, with each issues focused on a specific topic such as the Civil Rights Movement or WWII. Back issues available. Cricket Publishing Group; Ages 8 and up.

Creative Kids: The National Voice for Kids: One of the few magazines for children that includes stories, games, opinions, poetry, drawings, and more written by kids for kids. Prufrock Press; Ages 8-14.

Cricket: The classic in the field; features children's literature, poems, stories, articles, songs, crafts, and jokes. Contributors include some of the most award-winning and renowned illustrators and writers. Cricket Publishing Group; Ages 8-12.

Dig: Archeology and earth science in single-focus thematic issues, with content often expressed in photographs and graphics. Cricket Publishing Group; ages 9-14.

Faces: Peoples, Places and Cultures: Explores the world through maps, photographs, news, and activities. Single focus thematic issues on topics like Hong Kong, Argentina, and Greenland. Cricket Publishing Group; Ages 9-14.

High Five: Encourages early childhood education skills through easy-reading and craft activities developed to share with parents and caregivers. Highlights Group; Ages 2-6.

Highlights for Children: Childhood classic periodical, with poems, stories, puzzles, jokes, riddles, rebus stories, crafts, and hidden pictures. Highlights Group; Ages 5-12.

Kids Discover: Factual information in single-topic issues; lavishly illustrated with high quality photographs and graphics. Themes include nature, science, and geography. Ages 8 and up.

Ladybug: Contains numerous learning activities, with a particular focus on reading and understanding. Cricket Publishing Group; Ages 2-7.

Magic Dragon: One of the few periodicals that accept child-created submissions. Each issue contains writing prompts and “how-to” activities. Association for Encouragement of Children’s Creativity; elementary grades.

Muse: Informational articles about science, nature, poetry, and the arts. Cricket Publishing Group; Ages 9-14. (Odyssey Magazine for Kids has merged with Muse.)

National Geographic Kids: High-interest, lushly illustrated magazine with a focus on geography, nature, exploration, and wildlife. The website includes links to stories, fun facts, games, and other activities. National Geographic Society; Ages 8-14.

New Moon: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams: International magazine designed “for every girl who wants her voice heard and her dreams taken seriously.” Features girl editors and contributors from around the world, and includes stories, poems, artwork, personal profiles, and a variety of informational articles. Ages 8-14.

OWLkids.com: Aims to interest children in nature, science, and the world around them. Includes links to Chirp (ages 3-6), Chickadee (ages 6-9), and Owl (9-13), as well as parent resources.

Plays: The Drama Magazine for Young People: Monthly publication (October thru May); each issue includes 8-10 plays for elementary, middle, and high-school aged students.

Ranger Rick: Monthly magazine with colorful animal photos, funny drawings, and exciting stories that inform children about nature, outdoor adventure, and helping the environment. The online version of the magazine includes websites for homework help, monthly activities, games, sections for parents and teachers, and a sneak preview of the current issue. National Wildlife Federation; Ages 7 and up.

Ranger Rick Jr.: Monthly magazine featuring information and photos about wildlife. Related website offers animal facts, short stories, games, and more. National Wildlife Federation; Ages 4-7. (Big Backyard and Wild Animal Baby, previously published by the National Wildlife Federation, have merged with Ranger Rick Jr.)

Skipping Stones: An International Multicultural Magazine: A nonprofit children’s magazine, Skipping Stones provides a playful forum for sharing ideas and experiences among children from different lands and backgrounds. The magazine accepts art and original writings in every language and from all ages. Non-English writings are accompanied by English translations. Each issue (5 during a school-year)

also contains international pen pals, book reviews, news, and a guide for parents and teachers. More information and a sample issue are available on the magazine's website. Ages 8-16.

Spider: Stories, articles, poems, drawings, cartoons, and letters, aimed at getting children interested in reading. Cricket Publishing Group; Ages 6-9.

Sports Illustrated for Kids: Monthly magazine for elementary age children; includes interviews with sports heroes, comics, and action photos. Web version contains interactive features.

Stone Soup: International magazine written and illustrated by children ages 8-13. ***Time for Kids:*** Weekly print magazine with teacher's guides; website features news, games, and activities, as well as sections for teachers and parents.

Zoobooks: Animal-focused magazines from Ranger Rick, with stories, games, and other activities. Includes Zookies (ages 0-3), Zootles (ages 3-6), Zoobooks (ages 6-12), and Zoodinos (ages 5 and up). National Wildlife Federation.

Newspapers, Zines, & Blogs Program

Preparation

Step 1: Gather newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, local daily papers, and the library newsletter. Gather books about newspapers, such as *The Furry News*.

Step 2: Using an 8 ½" x 14" or 11" x 17" piece of paper folded in half, create your own tabloid newspaper. Use fine-point and thick markers to achieve the multi-typeface look. Remember to include all the different sections: the masthead, the lead story with a headline, advertisements, comics, sports, local news, announcements, entertainment, etc.

Step 3: Reproduce your example newspaper.

Step 4: Check Writing Box supplies.

The Workshop

Step 1: Display the different kinds of newspapers and talk about their different sections. Ask the kids if they read any papers and, if they do, which ones.

Step 2: Show them your homemade newspaper and describe the different sections. Read one of the articles aloud. Talk about what an interview is and show how what a person says is placed inside quotations.

Step 3: On chart paper or whiteboard, crowdsource a front page as a group. Choose a name for the newspaper—for instance, *Library Times*. Draw a big square to have space for a picture. Create a headline: "Spike the Dragon Lizard Missing from the 4/5s Classroom." Write the lead paragraph together.

Step 4: Give the children markers, crayons, and paper. Help with words or offer suggestions when writers seem stuck for ideas.

Step 5: Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind the children when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.

Step 6: Take a few minutes to share the work.

13

Informational Writing & Research

When we think about writing prompts, we often neglect to consider informational texts, which I define as any piece of writing conveying factual information. This includes facts about our natural world, cultural information, and biographical information, as well as do-it-yourself procedural information. In the programs described so far, the content of the writing may be either informational or fictional. A map of a real neighborhood can be created at the same table as a map of a land where unicorns that fart rainbows reside. A librarian might offer a program focused on science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) topics, or a topic that includes art as well (STEAM), like storyboards or comics.

For resistant readers of any gender, informational books are high-interest reading materials.¹ If we generously define “research” as an investigation of a subject in order to uncover facts, a Writing Box session or series of sessions can be devoted to informational investigations and the writing up of the results.

The Writing Box program is adaptable to any topic or investigation that supports a writing practice.

Let’s walk through the creation of a sixty-minute writing workshop. This is one I call Fact-Checking. It can be adapted for all kinds of books—historical fiction, adventure stories, animal books, or biographies.

Suppose that the topic is bees, and the writers are in first through fifth grade. Perhaps the librarian is partnering with a fourth-grade classroom teacher to help build skills in the common core segment CCSS RI.4.9:

Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.



Mentor texts

Mentor texts

Books about bees

Buchmann, Stephen L. 2010. Honey Bees: Letters from the Hive. New York: Delacorte Press.

Dyck, Sara van. 2005. Bumblebees. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Company.

Florian, Douglas. 2012. Unbeelievable: Honeybee Poems and Paintings. New York: Beach Lane Books.

Frisch, Aaron. 2015. Bees, Seedlings. Mankato, Minnesota: Creative Education and Creative Paperbacks.

Gibbons, Gail. 1997. The Honey Makers. New York: Morrow Junior Books.

Glaser, Linda, and Gay W. Holland. 2003. Brilliant Bees. Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press, Inc.

Hall, Kirsten, and Isabelle Arsenault. 2018. The Honeybee. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Heinrichs, Ann. 2002. Bees, Nature's Friends. Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point Books.

James, Joyce. 2008. *Bees, Nature's Children*. Danbury, CT: Grolier; Scholastic.

Markle, Sandra. 2014. *The Case of the Vanishing Honey Bees: A Scientific Mystery*. Minneapolis: Millbrook Press.

Markovics, Joyce L., and Brian V. Brown. 2010. *The Honey Bee's Hive: A Thriving City, Spectacular Animal Towns*. New York, NY: Bearport Pub.

Nargi, Lela, and Kyrsten Brooker. 2011. *The Honeybee Man*. New York: Schwartz & Wade Books.

Prischmann, Deirdre A. 2006. *Bees, Bridgestone Books World of Insects*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.

Riggs, Kate. 2013. *Bee*. Mankato, MN: Creative Education.

Rockwell, Anne F., and S. D. Schindler. 2005. *Honey in a Hive*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Silverman, Buffy. 2012. *Can You Tell a Bee from a Wasp?* Minneapolis, MN: Lerner.

Starosta, Paul. 2005. *The Bee: Friend of the Flowers, Animal Close-Ups*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

Stewart, Melissa. 2009. *How Do Bees Make Honey?, Tell Me Why, Tell Me How*. New York: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark.

Wimmer, Teresa. 2007. *Bees, My First Look at Insects*. Mankato, MN: Creative Education.

Winchester, Elizabeth. 2005. *Bees!* New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Winters, Kari-Lynn. 2013. *Buzz About Bees*. Ontario, Canada: Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

Woodward, John. 2001. *Honeybees, Animal Families*. Danbury, CT: Grolier Educational.

And books about bugs

Arlon, Penelope, and Victoria Harvey. 2011. *Bugs*. London: Dorling Kindersley.

Cleary, Brian P., and Martin Goneau. 2013. *Butterfly, Flea, Beetle, and Be: What Is an Insect?* Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Press.

Eaton, Eric R., and Kenn Kaufman. 2007. *Kaufman Field Guide to Insects of North America, Kaufman Field Guide*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Evans, Arthur V., and National Wildlife Federation. 2007. *National Wildlife Federation Field Guide to Insects and Spiders & Related Species of North America*. New York: Sterling Pub.

Greenaway, Theresa, and DK Publishing Inc. 2000. *DK Big Book of Bugs*. New York: DK Publishing.

Hughes, Catherine D. 2014. *Little Kids First Big Book of Bugs*, National Geographic Kids. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society.

MacQuitty, Miranda. 1996. *Amazing Bugs*. New York: DK Publishing.

McGavin, George. 2000. *Insects, Spiders, and Other Terrestrial Arthropods*. New York, NY: Dorling Kindersley.

Milne, Lorus Johnson, and Margery Milne. 1980. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Insects and Spiders*. New York: Knopf.

Murawski, Darlyne, and Nancy Honovich. 2013. *Ultimate Bug-Opedia: The Most Complete Bug Reference Ever: More Than 400 Amazing Color Photos Throughout the Book!* Washington, DC: National Geographic.

Veitch, Catherine. 2014. *Learning About Insects, The Natural World*. Chicago, IL: Raintree.

York, Penelope. 2015. *Bugs*. London: DK Publishing.

Resources

Aliki. 1986. *How a Book Is Made*. New York: Crowell.

Christelow, Eileen. 1995. *What Do Authors Do?* New York: Clarion Books.

Elbow, Peter. 1998. *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Evans, Elaine. 2007. *Befriending Bumble Bees: A Practical Guide to Raising Local Bumble Bees*: University of Minnesota Extension.

Guthrie, Donna, Nancy Bentley, and Katy Keck Arnsteen. 1994. *The Young Author's Do-It-Yourself Book: How to Write, Illustrate, and Produce Your Own Book*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

Lee-Mäder, Eric, and Xerces Society. 2011. *Attracting Native Pollinators: Protecting North America's Bees and Butterflies: The Xerces Society Guide*. North Adams, MA: Storey Pub.

Mitgutsch, Ali. 1988. *From Picture to Picture Book*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books.

Wilson, Joseph S., and Olivia Messinger Carril. 2016. *The Bees in Your Backyard: A Guide to North America's Bees*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Websites

East African Network for Taxonomy (BioNet-EAFRINET), with fact sheets on the bees of East Africa: z.umn.edu/wbr72.

Clay Bolt, *Beautiful Bees*: beautifulbees.org

bumblebee.org

discoverlife.org

Encyclopedia of Life: eol.org

Great Sunflower Project: greatsunflower.org

Heather Holmes, Pollinators of Native Plants: pollinatorsnativeplants.com

Iowa State University, Department of Entomology: Bug Guide, bugguide.net

USDA Forest Service: z.umn.edu/wbr73.

Wikipedia (search bee species or genus name)

Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation: xerces.org

A list of informational books for this kind of workshop can be found on the website of The Bank Street College of Education (bankstreet.edu). The Cook Prize winners are all picture books that lend themselves to research and fact checking. Samples here are from *The Honeybee Man*, a book on that list.

Notes

1. Caswell, Linda and Nell K. Duke. 1998. "Non-narrative as a Catalyst for Literacy Development." *Language Arts* 75, no. 2: 108.

Fact-Checking: How to find a fact in an informational book

Topic: Bees do a dance to talk to each other.

Step 1. Select a book on bees or insects.

Step 2. Go to the back of the book to the index; the index is in alphabetical order by topic.

Step 3. If an insect book, look for Bees, 18, 22, 40 (the numbers are the page numbers to go to for information. Or Bees, dances, 18, honey, 22, pollinators, 40.

Step 4. Turn to the pages to see if the information agrees or disagrees with the information from the mentor text.

Step 5. Write down the exact language in quotes and the source of the supporting information. Include the title, the author, the publisher, and the date published. Example: "Bees communicate in the hive using the waggle dance." *The Bee Book* by Charlotte Milner, DK Children, 2018.

Step 6. Find at least three sources to corroborate the original fact. Websites can be used, but pre-screen them for authority.

Fact-Checking Program

Preparation

Step 1. Gather books that include facts about bees. They can be poetry books, picture books, and field guides to insects and bees.

Step 2. Select a picture book title to read aloud. I've used *The Honeybee Man*, by Lela Nargi, as well as Doug Florian's *UnBEElievables: Honeybee Poems and Paintings*.

Step 3. As preparation to the program, read the title and identify facts that may come up in discussion. If the writers don't offer any facts or are shy, you might prompt with "How do we know there's a queen bee?" Illustrated informational picture books like *About Bees*, by Cathryn Sill, can also be prompts for a fact-checking workshop.

The Workshop

Step 1. Read the book aloud.

Step 2. Solicit facts gleaned from the text, and write them out on chart paper. You may have to start with an observation of your own to model. Then lead a five-minute discussion around the question "How do we know something is true?"

Step 3. Define fact-checking. The goal is to prove something is true by looking in other sources for confirmation. If the group contains children of ages nine and up, you might include information about the authority of the writer. And you can point out parts of a field guide, including the index and table of contents.

Step 4. Model how to find a fact in an informational book.

Step 5. Divide children into groups of three or four and hand out bee books and field guides. If you have access to computers or technology, provide database links for fact-finding.

Step 6. Give the group 15–20 minutes to find the facts, assigning one fact per group or letting the writers choose. They can write the facts on sticky notes or bookmark the page where the fact was found.

Step 7. Regroup, and solicit the confirmed facts. Model the importance of noting the book page information for each fact.

Step 8. Ask "How did the research process go? Was it easy or hard? Were there any surprises?" A technique for this discussion can include KWL: What did I know? What did I want to know? What did I learn?

Step 9. Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind children when the Writing Boxes are available

to use in the library. Clean up the area, put away supplies, and put the books back onto the shelving cart.

Step 10. Take a few minutes to allow children to select informational books of interest or share their findings.

14

Memoir

You don't have to go that far outside yourself for the beginning of a story you want to tell.
-Hope Anita Smith

When I was a brand-new librarian at the Brooklyn Public Library Central Children's room, Saturdays were extraordinarily busy. The back-to-back reference desks faced lines of people more than 50 feet long, and we helped them, with no breaks, from 10 to 5. What I recall most was one particular kind of request: a child around six or seven years old would ask for an autobiography for a homework assignment. You mean a biography, I would authoritatively correct. No, they would say, an autobiography. A book about a real person written by the person it is about.

Twenty-five years ago that request was a real stumper. Most autobiographies are not written at a first- and second-grade reading level.

It wasn't until I was hired as the children's librarian at the Bank Street College of Education that I understood what was going on.

Children were encouraged to write as they were learning to read. One of the prompts for the writing practice was finishing sentences like:

- *When I was little I liked...*
- *When I was little I hated...*
- *When I was little, the best thing that happened was...*

Teachers were assigning mentor texts to be read aloud at home or to bring to school.

Fortunately, there are now more and more picture books that fit that request. They are memoir. A slice of a person's life. A memory.

A memoir is made up of memories.

Brainstorming: The activity of brainstorming is to make a list of words and phrases that describe memories. Let go of judgement. Let go of opinions. Write the first words that come to mind when completing the following prompt:

- *I will always remember:*
- *I will always remember:*
- *I will always remember:*

- *I will always remember:*
- *I will always remember:*

- *I will always remember: how scared I was of sounds in the hallway*
- *I will always remember: there was nowhere safe*
- *I will always remember: saying I will never forget*
- *I will always remember: laying my head on my best friend's dog's chest and breathing*
- *I will always remember: Looking for Matlack's grave.*

Mentor texts

Andrews, Troy, and Bryan Collier. 2015. Trombone Shorty. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers.

Appelt, Kathi, and Arthur Howard. 2002. Bubba and Beau, Best Friends. San Diego: Harcourt.

Bell, Cece, and David Lasky. 2014. El Deafo. New York, NY: Amulet Books.

Bottner, Barbara, and Michael Emberley. 2010. Miss Brooks Loves Books (and I Don't). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Bridges, Ruby. 1999. Through My Eyes. New York: Scholastic Press.

Bruchac, Joseph. 1997. Bowman's Store: A Journey to Myself. New York: Dial Books.

Byars, Betsy Cromer. 1991. The Moon and I, In My Own Words. New York: J. Messner.

Chen, Jiang Hong, and Claudia Zoe Bedrick. 2008. Mao and Me: The Little Red Guard. New York: Enchanted Lion Books.

DePaola, Tomie. 1999. 26 Fairmount Avenue. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Grimes, Nikki. 2019. Ordinary Hazards: A Memoir. Honesdale, PA: WordSong.

Henkes, Kevin. 2010. My Garden. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books.

Herthel, Jessica, Jazz Jennings, and Shelagh McNicholas. 2014. I Am Jazz! New York, New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Howard, Lee, Jon Scieszka, David Gordon, Loren Long, and David Shannon. 2008. What a Wreck! New York: Little Simon.

Kelley Hall, Megan, and Carrie Jones. 2011. Dear Bully: 70 Authors Tell Their Stories. New York, NY: HarperTeen.

Kuklin, Susan. 2006. Families. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

- Kuklin, Susan. 2014. *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.
- Mason, Tom, Jon Scieszka, Dan Danko, David Gordon, Loren Long, and David Shannon. 2008. *Ride Along with Dump Truck Dan!* New York, NY: Little Simon.
- McMullan, James. 2014. *Leaving China: An Artist Paints His World War II Childhood*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Young Readers.
- Montgomery, Sy, and Rebecca Green. 2018. *How to Be a Good Creature: A Memoir in Thirteen Animals*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Noah, Trevor. 2019. *It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood; Adapted for Young Readers*. New York: Delacorte Press,.
- Paulsen, Gary. 1996. *Puppies, Dogs, and Blue Northerners: Reflections on Being Raised by a Pack of Sled Dogs*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Co.
- Rabinowitz, Alan, and Catia Chien. 2014. *A Boy and a Jaguar*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Rivera Marín, Guadalupe, and Diego Rivera. 2009. *My Papá Diego and Me: Memories of My Father and His Art*. San Francisco, CA: Childrens Book Press.
- Robinson, Fiona. 2011. *What Animals Really Like: A New Song Composed & Conducted by Mr. Herbert Timbertooth*. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers.
- Scieszka, Jon. 2008. *Only Viking Presents Knucklehead: Tall Tales & Mostly True Stories About Growing up Scieszka*. New York: Viking.
- Scieszka, Jon. 2009. *Knucklehead Tall Tales and Mostly True Stories About Growing up Scieszka*. Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Audio.
- Scieszka, Jon, David Gordon, Loren Long, David Shannon, and Design Garage. 2008. *Zoom! Boom! Bully*. New York: Aladdin.
- Scieszka, Jon, David Gordon, Loren Long, David Shannon, and Design Garage. 2008. *Snow Trucking!* York: Aladdin Paperbacks.
- Siegel, Siena Cherson, and Mark Siegel. 2006. *To Dance: A Memoir*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Skrypuch, Marsha Forchuk, and Brian Deines. 2016. *Adrift at Sea: A Vietnamese Boy's Story of Survival*. Pajama Press.
- Williams, Vera B. 2001. *Amber Was Brave, Essie Was Smart: The Story of Amber and Essie Told Here in Poems and Pictures*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
- Woodson, Jacqueline. 2014. *Brown Girl Dreaming*. New York: Nancy Paulsen Books).

Resources

Gantos, Jack. 2017. Writing Radar: Using Your Journal to Snoop out and Craft Great Stories. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Kephart, Beth. 2013. Handling the Truth: On the Writing of Memoir. New York: Gotham Books.

Memoir Program

Preparation

Step 1: Gather mentor texts, such as the *Ordinary Hazards: a memoir* by Nikki Grimes, *Knucklehead: Tall Tales and Almost True Stories of Growing up Scieszka* by Jon Scieszka, *El Deafo* by Cece Bell, *Real Friends* by Shannon Hale, illustrated by LeUyen Pham, *Smile* by Raina Telgemeier, *Bowman's Store* by Joseph Bruchac, *Moon and I* by Betsy Byars, *Hey, Kiddo* by Jarrett J. Krosoczka, *Stitches: A Memoir* by David Small.

Step 2: Choose a piece of memoir to read aloud. Using the "I will always remember" brainstorming questions find a memory to write about. Using the cartoon frame template tell one short memory using stick figures to illustrate.

Step 3: Reproduce your example to give to attendees.

Step 4: Check Writing Box supplies.

The Workshop

Step 1: Display the mentor texts and define memoir.

Step 2: Read selected memoir text aloud.

Step 3: Show attendees your own memoir cartoon and describe how you made it.

Step 4: On chart paper or whiteboard, ask the attendees to answer the "I remember" prompt or the "when I was little prompt" Sketch the fragment with stick figures.

Step 5: Give the children markers, crayons, and paper. Help with words or offer suggestions when writers seem stuck for ideas.

Step 6: Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind the children when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.

Step 7: Take a few minutes to share the work.

Memoir Program: Under 9

This program uses simple prompts to spark a thought that can grow into a longer piece of writing. All the Way to America is a family story prompt. We ask the writers, “What is passed down in your family?” With Bubba and Beau, “Did you have a comfort object when you were younger? What was it? Do you still have it?” With What Animals Really Like, we ask “What do people think you like? What do you really like best?”

Preparation

Step 1: Gather mentor texts, such as the *What Animals Really Like Best* by Fiona Robinson, *All the Way to America* by Dan Yaccarino, *Bubba and Beau: Best Friends*, by Kathy Appelt.

Step 2: Choose one picture book to read aloud.

Step 3: Create an example. I might, for instance, describe the little pillow that I had my whole life and brought with me to college and on my honeymoon. Reproduce your example to give to attendees.

Step 4: Check Writing Box supplies.

The Workshop

Step 1: Display the mentor texts and define memoir.

Step 2: Read *Bubba and Beau* aloud.

Step 3: Ask attendees if they had any comfort objects to write about.

Step 4: Read your example aloud and draw a quick sketch of it.

Step 5: Give the children markers, crayons, and paper. Help with words or offer suggestions when writers seem stuck for ideas.

Step 6: Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind the children when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.

Step 7: Take a few minutes to share the work

15

Combining Workshops

For me it is sometimes impossible to select one theme. Would this be a poetry response? Would it be cartoons? Why can't it be both?

Just as librarians emphasise the importance of self-selection of titles to read, the Writing Boxes program

encourages self-selection in writing formats. These “containers” for writing—cartooning, mapping, poetry, and so on—, and so on—can be sparks to writing practice. We provide the materials and format, then let go.

When I am selecting mentor texts, often a title is suitable for more than one writing response.



Patty

*An example of this would be memoir. I might, for example, read aloud *Bubba and Beau: Best Friends* by Kathy Appelt, illustrated by Arthur Howard. This picture book about a baby and a puppy and their favorite pink blankie is the perfect prompt for workshop participants to remember their own beloved comfort objects, like a stuffed platypus. We can then list the attributes of Patty on chart paper:*

- *Platty was/is a dark cherry color.*
- *Platty has a duck bill.*
- *Platty is shaped like a three-pound avocado.*
- *Platty was as long as my arm when I was four-years-old.*
- *Platty's head fit right under my chin when I went to bed.*
- *I liked to chew on his front feet.*

I can create a cartoon that has each of these statements and a picture in one square.

*We might also start with a memoir prompt like “Where I’m from,” and that can become a memoir cartoon. A mentor text for this would be *Hey, Kiddo*, written and illustrated by Jarrett J. Krosoczka.*

Best selling graphic artist Raina Telgemeier (*The Baby Sitters Club*, *Smile*, *Drama*, *Sisters*) created a guide for anyone who wishes to write their memoir in comic format. In *Share Your Smile: Raina's Guide to Telling Your Own Story*, Ms. Telgemeier provides suggested writing prompts like looking through family photographs, and talks about jotting down our own memories. The book contains practice pages for drawing your family members along with cartoon templates. Just as we do in the Writing Box sessions, Telgemeier shows how she would draw and write her travel story from her own childhood.

A recent public program

For the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, I was asked to do an evening pajama party read aloud. I didn't know the ages of the participants in advance. The session was one hour long. I gathered mentor texts: poetry like *Moon Have You Met My Mother*, by Karla Kuskin; picture books like Kevin Henkes' *Kitten's First Full Moon*, *A Kite For Moon* by Jane Yolen and Heidi Stemple, and Grace Lin's *Big Mooncake for Little Star*; story collections like *Thirteen Moons on Turtles Back* by Joseph Bruchac; and informational books like Brian Floca's *Moonshot* and *Moon! Earth's Best Friend* by Stacy McAnult. I displayed factual texts, books about the planets and the solar system, and a richly illustrated, oversized volume titled *Planetarium*. And I provided Writing Boxes and postcard templates for a writing response after the read alouds.

We had over 300 attendees who were scheduled in two sessions, at 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm. In each session, I read aloud for half an hour; then we wrote poems and postcards; three young participants spent that time fact checking in the reference books.

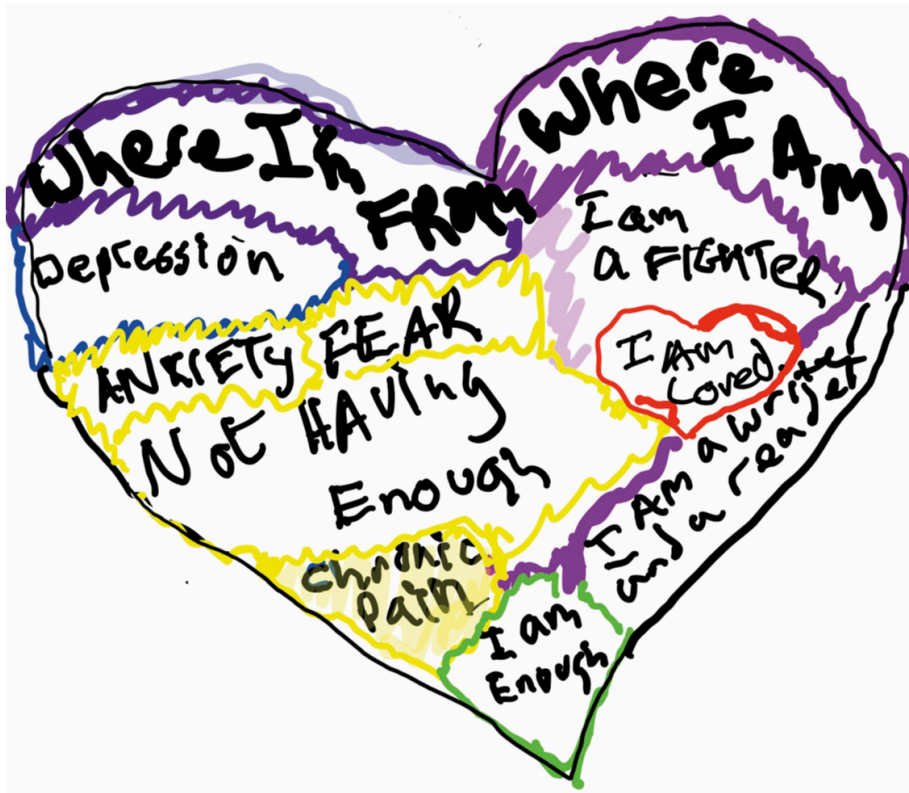


Moon books

HeartMaps

In *Heart Maps*, Georgia Heard shares 20 unique, multi-genre heart maps to help writers, young and old, to write from the heart. Her suggested formats include the First Time Heart Map, Family Quilt Heart Map, and People I Admire Heart Map. Heard's clear, concise instructions and inspiring prompts help the writing mentor librarian produce a workshop that will facilitate authentic writing. Heart Maps are the perfect activity for intergenerational programming, helping families sharing stories.

With Heard's permission, I am sharing this uniquely creative process. For my example, I first brainstormed from the "where I'm from" prompt, thinking about struggles of my childhood and young adulthood. Then I thought about where I am now. Here is my heart map.



The author's Heart Map

Zines

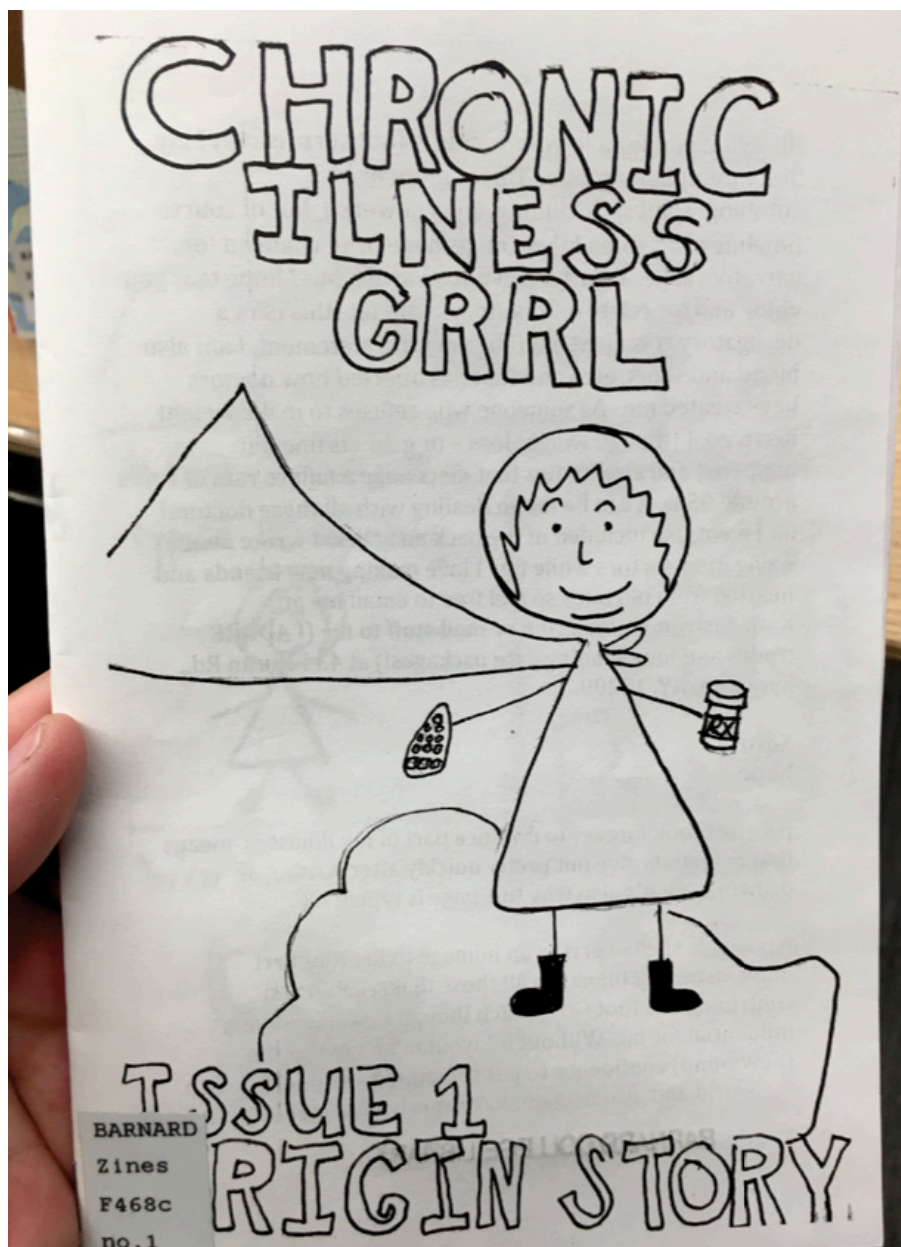
Zines are also included in the chapter on newspapers and zines, and in the publishing chapter. Zines are generally defined as self-published, small print-run publications. Often, zines are written by and for a community whose members are enthusiasts of a certain subject or literary genre.

All you need for a zine is paper, a copy machine, and a stapler. (May I suggest the Bostitch No-Jam Booklet Stapler.)

Jenna Freedman is a librarian, zine maker, and zine librarian who manages the zine collections at Barnard College Library in New York City. In *Zine Librarian Zine: DIY-IYL, Do it Yourself in Your Library*, she describes how to catalog and preserve a zine collection—helpful information not only for

creating a collection of mentor texts for program participants, but for pitching a collection to administrators. This zine was edited by Rachel Murphy, Jenna Freedman and Alycia Sellie, with the blessing of the original Zine Librarian Zine-ster, Greig Means. The cover is designed by Torie Quiñonez.

Zines can be also memoirs in comic format, like *Chronic Illness Grrl #1: Origin Story*, by Katie Tastrom. Or a librarian might partner with a classroom teacher—like a health teacher—for a research project. JC Parker, an eighteen-year-old from D.C., created *Tributaries #4: An intro to arthritis in youth* using factual information illustrated with out-of-copyright images digitized from the National Library of Medicine.



Chronic Illness Grrl: Issue 1, Origin Story



From the Barnard zine collection

*In combining workshops, it's easy to see how a class collections of poems or recipes or cartoons or informational text about butterflies can be transformed into a zine, perhaps in a bookmaking workshop, a culminating subject project, or as part of an out-of-school makerspace program. We might, for instance, look at the informational mentor texts about bees and create a new publication, like *The Flower Lovers: a little zine about pollinators, No.1: Twelve Wild Bees*.*

*The community of writers in a library may also wish to create a zine, with the mentor-librarian giving format guidance and suggestions about previous themes that could provide the content, including informational writing, cartoons, and poetry. The Phoenix Public Library, for instance, facilitates the creation of a teen zine, *Create!zine*—a publication by teens for teens in the Phoenix area that gives teens the opportunity to be published and to contribute to the arts in Phoenix.*

Combining & Building on Workshops Prompts

- *A letter to a friend from a previous neighborhood containing a map of the new neighborhood.*
- *A text message to Dad to containing the grocery list for the birthday cake.*
- *A letter to a fictional character with information they'll need for their journey.*
- *A thank you note to an author whose books you love.*
- *A letter in a secret code.*
- *A letter with a recipe someone else gave you.*

Resources

Arnold, Chloe. A Brief History of Zines. z.umn.edu/wbr60.

Krosoczka, Jarrett J. 2018. *Hey, Kiddo: How I Lost My Mother, Found My Father, and Dealt with Family Addiction*. Graphix.

Parker, J. C. 2014. *Tributaries #4: An into to arthritis in youth*.

Phoenix Public Library. *Create!zine*. z.umn.edu/wbr61.

Tastrom, Katie. *Chronic Illness Grrl #1: Origin Story*. z.umn.edu/wbr62.

Weber, Greta. *Zines Deserve a Bigger Place in DC Punk History. Here's Why*. z.umn.edu/wbr63.

16

Scaling Up to Young Adult

Hold close and remember the things that made you who you are in the story of your life. – Kao Kalia Yang

Did you ever ask a teen “What are you reading for fun?” and hear them say “I have no time for reading.” Breaks my heart.

That goes double for writing. Self-selecting writing as a leisure activity seems pretty rare. Yet any time that I have provided Writing Boxes and prompts for an event, young adults are drawn to the supplies like flies to honey, like ants to a picnic, like me to a puppy.

Teens are expected to write competently and confidently. And they do, on their devices, in emoji shorthand and text speak.

In their academic world, their writing is constantly judged and found wanting. The revision process is boring and painful.

Writing Boxes for young adults in libraries provide a nonjudgmental possibility to shake free from perfection paralysis. Mentor texts and librarian-created examples provide a window into doability. An understanding that these teens “have something to say.” An opportunity to say “I can do this.” “I am good at this.” Practice builds competence. Competence builds confidence. Writing Boxes programs facilitate these growth processes.

All of the writing exercises described in this book can be scaled up for young adult participants.

I recently presented two days of professional development workshops on mentoring writers in school libraries. Day one was focused on elementary, with a few schools being K–8, while day two was focused on high school library service. Each presentation was very much the same, yet very different.

The same? Each group needs the following. (Forgive the repetition, but these points bear repeating.)

A topic of exploration

A theme for the writing.

*A selection of mentor texts.
Librarian-made example.
Writing Box and supplies.
A nonjudgmental space.
Time to write.
Time to reflect and share.*

Different? For the high schoolers, I needed to think about adolescent social, emotional, and intellectual development, adapting my selection of mentor texts to address these issues as well as looking at how the Writing Boxes in practice provide space for both critical thinking and communication skills. And I talked about creating workshops that align with personal objectives—writing college application essays, resume writing and cover letters, public speaking, and zines.

Working with teens also gives the writing mentor librarian the opportunity to go deeper into each of the topics.



Mural created by high school students in Skillman, NJ, with teaching artist Gail Scuderi. See more photos on [iamfrom](http://iamfrom.org)

What do I need to know to scale up?

What is my understanding of what a teen is? Am I thinking about 13-year-olds or 16-year-olds? Developmentally and socially, these two are very different creatures. Is a teenager in Roseville, Minnesota different from one in Brooklyn, NY? Do I change my programming to meet the individual needs of different communities? Do I have an understanding of teen growth and development, and do I use that knowledge to plan, provide, and evaluate library resources, programs, and services that meet the multiple needs of teens? Do I ask for help in understanding culture and languages that are not my

own?

Thinking about teen services and writing

There are times that youth services librarians find themselves serving age groupings that aren't in their comfort zones. Sometimes this means moving from elementary aged programming to teen programming, due to staff shortages, reorganizations, and coverage. The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) provides extensive resources for serving this population of library users. They provides a checklist of competencies—what a librarian needs to know to be successful, including how to identify developmentally appropriate materials, how to engage with the community, and how create a culturally respectful environment and ensure access to all..

Example: scaling up “recipes & menus”

Ellen Frank Bayer is the school librarian at Flushing High School in New York City. She has provided a writing program for her students that includes all of these elements, and I've reproduced it here with her permission.

The participants

The participants were students in the library's “books with bite” club. Bayer also coordinated with the leadership class.

The preparation

*Ms. Bayer selected mentor texts to read aloud to her participants, and partnered with Amber Loveless, a librarian from the Queens Public Library, who visited the group and read excerpts from the cookbook, *Indian(ish)* by Priya Krishna. Ms. Bayer also created a writing sample describing her own childhood memories of her mom baking honey cake from her grandmother's recipe.*

Introduction

*Ms. Bayer first read pages 134–137 from Shelley Pearsall's *All of the Above*, then reviewed the process of citing sources.*

The prompt

- *Share and jot: what are three foods you like to eat?*
- *Choose a food or dish that reminds you of home, and expand it into a family memory. What memories are brought about when you eat the food? (Write 50–100 words.)*
- *Find a recipe online or in a cookbook to adapt and reproduce.*

The outcome

A book of recipes, each including a short essay—a snapshot memoir.

My Mom's Honey Cake

Ellen F. Bayer

My Mom, Gladys Reznik Frank, made this honey cake for the Jewish New Year and shared it with her family. It was my Grandmother's recipe and always took my mom back to the times when she lived with her family in Bensonhurst.

When I was going to school in Boston, my Mom made me bring it back to share with my great aunt, Ethel, my grandmother's sister, who happened to live a block away from me. My aunt shared with me that it wasn't really her favorite cake but she loved getting it, just to keep the memories alive.

My mother also baked the cake and shared it with my uncle Sidney, who also loved to eat it, even though it contained a lot of honey and really wasn't good for him.

On sad occasions, the cake was made too. We brought it to the cemetery to eat after the unveiling of my Uncle Nussie's tombstone.

My Mom died in 2009 but I still make it each year to celebrate the Jewish New Year. The sweet smell fills my kitchen and brings my Mom close to me.

My Uncle Sidney, my mom's last remaining brother, died in 2015. The cake lives on. I mailed it to my aunt just this past October. Memories of the Reznik clan will live on through the delicious sweet heavy dark brown honey cake.

Ingredients

*5 eggs
2 cups sugar
1 lb. honey (can also substitute 8 ounces of
honey and one banana)
2 heaping tablespoons of Crisco or Spry
1 lemon grated with rind
1 orange grated with rind
2 teaspoons cinnamon
¼ cup raisins
1 walnut
1 cup hot coffee
1 flat teaspoon baking soda (put baking soda
into hot coffee)
4 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder*

Directions

- 1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Prepare a large pan (8 x 11).*
- 2. Beat sugar with shortening for five minutes until it is creamy.*
- 3. Add orange and lemon.*
- 4. Add eggs one at a time, beating after each addition.*
- 5. Slowly add coffee, with baking soda already added, into the batter.*
- 6. Add honey and cinnamon.*
- 7. Add flour, baking powder, and one walnut. Batter will be very thick.*

8. *Pour into prepared pan.*
9. *Blanch the almonds (take skin off).*
10. *Place almonds gently on top of the cake right before you put it into the oven.*
11. *Bake for one hour.*

This recipe comes from Ellen's grandmother, Belle Reznik Frank.

The mentor texts

Ms. Bayer provided a variety of mentor texts including cookbooks, websites, and a newspaper article from The Washington Post titled "We asked ambassadors where they eat when they're homesick...." Ambassadors from around the world wrote about foods that reminded them of home. The Irish ambassador, Daniel Mulhall, recalled his courtship of his wife when they both lived in India. In Washington, DC, they enjoy having dinner at a restaurant, Rasika. "I'll order a chicken dish, prawn for her; we enjoy the cucumber raita and fall in love again."

The South Korean ambassador, Cho Yoon-je wrote, "Naengmyeon. What would summer be without this dish? Chewy noodles in a slushy broth that's tangy and a little sweet; there's nothing more refreshing on a hot day, especially when it's served with a slice of Asian pear. And yuk gae jang. It may not be one of Korea's most famous soups, but I used to eat it all the time when I was a student. Shredded beef and vegetables make it as nutritious as it is delicious, and the broth is so spicy you can't stop eating it, lest the heat catch up and overwhelm you. In the summer, Koreans like to say you should 'fight fire with fire,' and there are few soups better suited to that task than yuk gae jang."

On reflection and revision

Ms. Bayer asked her participants to share what they had written with their friends. She also asked them to reflect on their pieces: What images do you see in your mind when you read the piece. Is it descriptive? How can you improve the writing?

My Mom's Pulao

Adiba

Pulao, a cultural dish from India and its surrounding countries, is a dish that always indicates celebration. From a young age, it created an aura of ingredients such as eliaiches, garlic, onion, and chillies that wafted through the house, and it informed me that a special occasion was at bay. It was and still is a popular dish to serve, come the time of Eid, a religious celebration, to congratulate us for fasting during the time of Ramadan. It can be eaten with eggs, chicken, beef or salads. It was a large dish to make so I couldn't necessarily help out in the kitchen, but watching my mother throw together all the ingredients and work her cooking magic was a mesmerizing thing to spectate.

Ingredients

*4 ½ cups Basmati rice
6 cups water
vegetable oil*

2 onions
2 tablespoons ground cumin
1 teaspoons garlic powder
2-inch pieces of cinnamon stick
4 cloves garlic
1 teaspoon ground ginger
10 cardamom seeds
2 teaspoons salt
¼ teaspoon saffron threads or turmeric

Directions

1. Fry onion and garlic in oil.
2. Season with cinnamon sticks, garlic, cumin, ginger, salt and crushed cardamom.
3. Add 6 cups of water to pot.
4. Add rice to pot.
5. Boil rice with the spices for about 20 minutes. If using saffron threads, put threads in boiling water to steep, add the water which was flavored to the pot.

Text from student of Ellen Bayer, School Librarian, Flushing High School, NYC. Writing response, "Books with bite."

Recipe from Sigrid, "Indian Rice (Pulao) Recipe." Allrecipes, 11 Sept. 2006, z.umn.edu/wbr74.

826

You'll find more about 826 National in the next chapter. For scaling up to older ages, I look to the work of the participants at 826 Minneapolis, AKA the Mid-Continent Oceanographic Institute (MOI), which provides a safe space for after-school writing, field trips for school classes to immerse themselves in the creative writing process, and the embedding of staff and volunteers into schools to facilitate writing as part of the classroom practice.

The two "Where I'm From" poems included in this chapter are products of the 826 Minneapolis embedding classroom program. The volunteers and teachers encourage writing from the heart, along with revising for publication. The program supports the classroom teachers as they guide their young adults in gaining the literacy skills needed to succeed in this world. For these teens, reading and writing skills are by-products of a creative process where adults are truly listening and caring about what they have to say.

Where I'm From

Ktru Moo

*This poem is from *Adventures Within Another: Stories of Identity and Culture* from Como Park High, published by the Mid-Continent Oceanographic Institute (MOI), an 826 affiliate. MOI empowers underserved K–12 students to think creatively, write effectively, and succeed academically alongside a community of caring volunteers. Volunteers worked at Como Park High School in St. Paul, Minnesota, for a school year, and were embedded in the classroom.*

*I am from where the rice is grown,
The weather is fresh, under the feet.
I'm from under a leaf, blanket, and covers,
Smiling face and fire burnt the candle.
I'm from where birds flew away to settle.
Like a seed under soil that needs water.
I'm from this little hand can pray,
And faith leads us like water.*

*I'm from houses, not a home, and crawling with feeling.
I'm from eight lives, eight minds,
Eight hearts and smiles.
I'm from "don't sing while you eat"
or the tiger eats you.
I'm from the wind singing, leaf dancing,
And "things don't last forever."*

*I'm From under a roof but not under a roof,
And even permanent marker doesn't last.
I am from Hill Tribe house, made of bamboo,
Dirt, leaves and smoke flying.
I'm from spicy food, wheat fields, green forest,
And strong root.*

*I'm from looking up at the moon, wishing on a star,
And moving on.*

*My family is like a watered flower.
When the flower is grown it becomes lovely, beautiful,
And it feels special like a dead tree is still growing.
We are a blast of brightness,
To know it is a blessing of God,
Whether we are close or far,
We are a family in love like moon and star love each other.*

*Ktru Moo has a cat named Grey. They live in St. Paul with their parents.
Reprinted with permission of MOI.*

I Am

Gloria Yellow

*I am from my dad
Working Hard to make sure the
rent's paid*

*I am from donuts
I don't like plain donuts
I am from sleeping 'til 10:00 a.m.
My brothers wake me up from
being so loud
I am from money don't grow on trees
scholarship
I am from the microwave
Thrown on the floor in an
argument
I am from one of my mom's
tweaked-out stories
None of the stories are school
appropriate
I am from my grandma's house
One-bedroom house, the smell of
hairspray,
hangover soup
I am from my brothers
"Better not have no boyfriend Gloria"*

*Gloria Yellow is a 10th grader at South High in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
Reprinted with permission of MOI.*

Indigenous Originated

Just published in Spring of 2019, Indigenous Originated: Walking in Two Worlds is an anthology of youth voices by 9th and 10th grade All Nations students from South High in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Produced by MOI as a culminating project, the book is a perfect mentor text for young adults, providing them an opportunity to see their own lives reflected in poetry and prose. The book gives voice to marginalized populations and honors their lived experiences.

Indigenous Originated is a professional development treasure trove. The appendix contains writing prompts that ask writers to explore moments of othering, the capacity of the creative writing process to change how we see ourselves in the world, and the ways in which confident and competent written words can empower a community.

Selecting mentor texts for teens

Every book I read and love makes me think "Wow, that would make a great mentor text for writing." Here are some recent ones.

Ross Gay's Book Of Delights, an adult book, is a collection of short essays about how important it is to be observant about the many items, moments, kindnesses, words, and ideas that may delight in this finite life we lead. And to write about them. So I did; I've included my piece here.

Big Ideas for Curious Minds is a collaboration of illustrator Anna Doherty, designer Katie Kerr, and publishing manager Srijana Gurung, who together have created an accessible compendium of things to think about. The contents page is a who's who of well-known philosophers, and the book has a joyful vein running through some pretty serious ideas. In particular, take a look at "Know Yourself, with Socrates," "Learn to Say What's on Your Mind, with Ludwig Wittgenstein," "When Someone Is Angry, Maybe It's Not You Who Is Responsible, with Ibn Sina," and "People Are Unhappy, Not Mean, with Zera Jacob." That last one struck me hard. Hmm. What a good prompt. The publisher has given me permission to reproduce that one here.

Dan Brown's Unwanted: Stories of Syrian Refugees, an award-winning informational book, is an important, timely, and eye-opening exploration of the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis. The graphic format suggests it as a mentor text for combining research and comics workshops. Because of the timeliness of subject matter, it is also the perfect mentor text for fact-checking and intertextual connections using newspapers, websites, and journals.

My library received a donated copy of Griffin and Sabine: An Extraordinary Correspondence. This romantic mystery novel told in the form of letter has inspired a lifetime of postcard writing. While certainly not a children's book, it's a perfect mentor text for teens.

The book I keep returning to is We Rise, We Resist, We Raise Our Voices, an anthology of essays, poetry, art, and song edited by Wade Hudson and Cheryl Willis Hudson. It includes a letter from Jacqueline Woodson urging her children when they go out into the world to be safe, be kind. What kind of letter would we write to our future children? What kind of letter do we wish someone had written to us?

Finding Delight

*It was a Saturday morning at
7:30 am and already I was
having a crappy day.*

*The temperature had
dropped from 60 degrees to
40, high winds and rain.*

*Each joint in my body felt like
it was on fire.*

*I told a friend I would meet
her at church and then we
would go for coffee.*

*As I was walking up the
sidewalk to the church door,*

*I am sure I was scowling. I
remembered that I was
supposed to find a delight.*

*Well, the rain stopped. That
was something. But not really
delightful.*

*Then I saw a movement out of
the corner of my eye.*

*A tree about 50 feet away had
bloomed apple blossoms.
Pinkish red, and they were
moving, shaking but it wasn't
the wind.*

*The tree branches were
heavy with birds who took
refuge from the wind and the
rain sheltered by the spring
green leaves.*

*Looking closer they were tiny
yellow finches, flapping their
wings, jostling the thin
branches that they gripped in
their claws.*

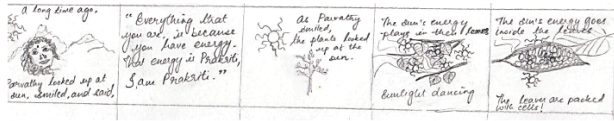
*Okay I thought.
This is a delight.*

Partnering with subjects teachers

Every teachable moment, I think, can be improved by putting it through the Writing Box process.

We know, for instance, that we learn concepts more deeply when called upon to teach them. Why not partner with a biology instructor asking the students to make picture books explaining the concepts that they are learning? Gayatri Narayanan was taking a biology class and as an independent study wanted to create a picture book on photosynthesis. The goal was not only to understand photosynthesis itself, but to evaluate the mentor texts, and to experience the creative process of the picture book and the uniqueness of its format for conveying information.

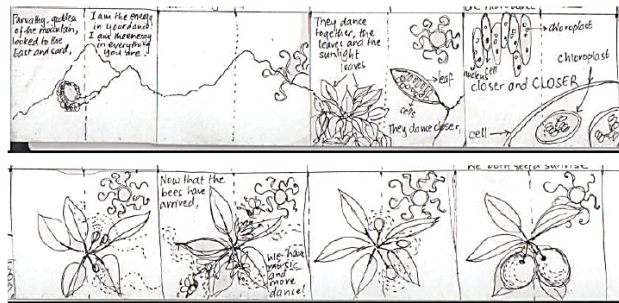
Set A.



Set B.



Set C.



Thumbnails for picture book

Photosynthesis

Photosynthesis is the process through which special cells in plants and some other organisms capture light energy and pack it into chemical energy. The primary source of light energy is the sun. The cells store the chemical energy in sugars. These sugars are used by the plants to produce energy that they use to grow, form flowers, and produce fruit. All our food contains the energy that the special cells originally captured from the sun. These cells are special because they contain an organelle called the chloroplast.



The Chloroplast

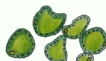
The chloroplast is a cell organelle that is the site of photosynthesis. Chloroplasts are 1-2µm in size. 1µm is 1/1000 of a centimeter. A chloroplast has two membranes and an inner folded membrane. The folded membrane makes discs called thylakoids. The thylakoids have fluid inside them and are stacked together to form grana. The grana are connected to each other by lamellae. The chloroplasts use light energy and carbon dioxide to make sugars. These sugars make droplets that we can see in the cell.

Chloroplasts are found in the cells of leaves in plants and green algae. In plants, the chloroplasts are found primarily in the mesophyll cells.



Palisade mesophyll cells

The palisade mesophyll cells are long, and packed close together. They use all the space they can, so they capture as much sunlight as possible. These cells are one of the special cells that contain chloroplasts.



Spongy mesophyll cells

The spongy mesophyll cells also contain chloroplasts. They are irregularly shaped and have lots of space between them. These spaces provide a way for the cells to take in and release gases. Just like palisade mesophyll cells are specialized to capture sunlight, spongy mesophyll cells are specialized to be the main sites of gas exchange. During photosynthesis, cells take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen gas.

Energy flow

The sun produces light energy in packets called photons. Chloroplasts use the energy in photons to make chemical energy. Chemical energy is stored in sugar packets. The sugar is used by the plant and herbivores directly. For example, bees collect nectar from the flowers, animals like giraffes and cows eat the leaves, and we humans eat the fruits. The nectar, leaves, and fruits contain the energy-rich sugars. Bees use this energy to buzz, cows to wander, and humans to write and draw.

References

1. Lambert, Hans and Josiah Bassham. 2018. "Phytoanthology | Importance, Process, and Significance." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/science/phytoanthology>
2. Chloroplast | Function, Location, & Diagram". 2018. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/science/chloroplast>
3. "Chloroplast". 2018. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/science/chloroplast>
4. "Phytoanthology, Chloroplast | Learn Science At Scitable". 2018. *Nature*. <https://www.nature.com/science-at-scitable/topics/phytoanthology>
5. "Spongy Mesophyll - Dictionary Definition Of Spongy Mesophyll | Encyclopaedia Com. FREE Online Dictionary". 2018. *Encyclopædia Com*. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/dictionary/definition/spongy-mesophyll>
6. "What Is Stained Green? Biology - Making Fun, Revision, Page 3". 2011. *Bbc Co Uk*. http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/revision/2006/06/2006_06_03_what_is_stained_green.shtml
7. "Phytoanthology & Respiration". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/science/phytoanthology>

Research for picture book

I recommended informational mentor texts like Molly Bang's My Light and online resources like Balloons Over Broadway, Melissa Sweet, and the Engineering of a Picture Book, a digital resource on how a picture book is made.

The recommendations were mine, the annotations are Gayatri's.

1. Kramrisch, Stella, and Praful C. Patel. 2007. *The Presence of Siva*. Motiala Banarsidass. Kramrisch draws on the Vedas, the primary religious texts in Hinduism, as her sources and makes their ideas accessible in English and to a novice in Hindu philosophy. The central idea of female energy and the opening prose in *Sunrise* is based on the story of Parvathy as Prakriti

- (the female energy) as told in *The Presence of Siva*.
2. Bang, Molly and Chisholm, Penny. *Rivers of Sunlight*. 2017. New York, The Blue Sky Press. Molly Bang's *Rivers of Sunlight* is a guide on the use of prose to supplement images with movement and wonder. *Rivers of Sunlight* is both scientifically sound and visually evocative of the water cycle. The prose also inspired the layout of sentences spread over two pages in *Sunrise*.
 3. Groves, Julia. *Rainforest*. 2017. Swindon, UK: Child's Play Ltd.. The end note on the Amazon rainforest in Julia Grove's *Rainforest* was the basis for the end note on photosynthesis in *Sunrise*. The notes give the reader a chance to look back at the book and connect information with the illustrations.
 4. Burton, Virginia L. *The Little House*. 1942. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. *The Little House* provided inspiration for the use of movement and stillness depicted in *Sunrise*. The impact of the contrast between stillness and motion is very powerful in *The Little House*, and the illustrations further the story independently of the prose.
 5. Pringle, Lawrence and Henderson, Meryl. 2017. *Spiders! Strange and Wonderful*. Honesdale, Pennsylvania: Boyds Mills Press. The book *Spiders!* provided a good reference for the use of watercolour to create scientifically detailed and accurate images. The medium chosen for *Sunrise* is watercolour, and so *Spiders!* was used to inform the level of detail, play of light/shadows with plants and insects, and show the progression of events in nature as in the fruiting of the orange trees.
 6. Bogan, Carmen and Cooper, Floyd. *Where's Rodney?* 2017. Dream on Publishing. The illustrations in *Where's Rodney?* use the entire page and show how text can be placed within the image to make the reading and understanding of the story flow smoothly, and how different amounts of text can be used at different places in the story to give the necessary amount of detail.
 7. Martin, Jacqueline and McGehee, Claudia. 2017. *Creeksfinding*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. *Creeksfinding* showed how conversational prose can be injected with detailed information, as it tells a story from the third person while describing the features of the creek. The layout of the prose was variable according to the information and its specificity to the image.

Guidelines for Teen Programming

from YALSA, the Young Adult Library Services Association

- Create programming that reflects the needs and identities of all teens in the community.
- Align programs with community and library priorities
- Facilitate teen-led programs.
- Develop interest-based, developmentally appropriate programs that support connected learning.
- Develop rich, mutually beneficial community partnerships.
- Staff programs sufficiently and appropriately.
- Participate in targeted and ongoing training to build skills and knowledge relating to programming.
- Host programs in spaces that support the engagement, growth, and achievement of teens.
- Develop appropriate and welcoming policies.

Remember

Honor teens where they are. It's crucial to provide a nonjudgmental writing space.

Honor privacy. Everyone has the right not to share. Writing is a powerful tool for expression, but also for processing privately.

Mentor texts

826 National. 2011. *Don't Forget to Write for the Secondary Grades: 50 Enthralling and Effective Writing Lessons*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Adventures within Another: Stories of Identity and Culture from Como Park High School. 2017. Minneapolis, MN: Wise Ink Creative Pub.

Bang, Molly, and Penny Chisholm. 2017. *Rivers of Sunlight : How the Sun Moves Water around the Earth*. First edition. ed. 1 vols. New York: The Blue Sky Press.

Bantock, Nick. 1991. *Griffin & Sabine : An Extraordinary Correspondence*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Bogan, Carmen. 2017. *Where's Rodney? Yosemite National Park, CA: Yosemite Conservancy*.

Brown, Don. 2018. *The Unwanted : Stories of the Syrian Refugees*. Boston ; New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Bruchac, Joseph, Miranda Paul, and Marlena Myles. 2019. *Thanku: Poems of Gratitude*. Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Press.

Burton, Virginia Lee. 1942. *The Little House*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin co.

Doherty, Anna H., and Alain de Botton. 2018. *Big Ideas for Curious Minds: An Introduction to Philosophy*. London: The School of Life.

Elder, Joshua, and Chris Giarrusso. 2014. *Reading with Pictures : Comics That Make Kids Smarter!* Kansas City, Missouri: Andrews McMeel Publishing.

Gay, Ross. 2019. *The Book of Delights*. First edition. ed. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

Graham, Paula W. 1999. *Speaking of Journals: Children's Book Writers Talk About Their Diaries, Notebooks, and Sketchbooks*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

Heard, Georgia. 2013. *Finding the Heart of Nonfiction : Teaching 7 Essential Craft Tools with Mentor Texts*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hudson, Wade, Cheryl Willis Hudson, and Ashley Bryan. 2018. *We Rise, We Resist, We Raise Our Voices*. New York: Crown Books for Young Readers.

Indigenous Originated: Walking in Two Worlds. 2019. Minneapolis, MN: Wise Ink Creative Pub.

Kramrisch, Stella. 1981. *The Presence of Śiva*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Krishna, Priya, and Ritu Krishna. 2019. *Indian-Ish : Recipes and Antics from a Modern American Family*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Martin, Jacqueline Briggs, and Claudia McGehee. 2017. *Creekfinding : A True Story*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Morgan, Richard. "We Asked Ambassadors Where They Eat When They're Homesick." *Washington Post*, May 16, 2019.

Morgerstern, Susie. 2006. *The Aspiring Writer's Journal*: Harry N. Abrams.

Pearsall, Shelley, and Javaka Steptoe. 2006. *All of the Above : A Novel*. 1st ed. New York: Little, Brown.

Pringle, Laurence, and Meryl Henderson. 2017. *Spiders! : Strange and Wonderful*. First edition. ed, *Strange and Wonderful*. Honesdale, Pennsylvania: Boyds Mills Press, an imprint of Highlights.

Wariyaa: *Somali Youth in Museums*. 2018. *Soo Fariista: Come Sit Down, A Somali American Cookbook*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Resources

826digital, with prompts, lesson plans, and inspiration: 826digital.com.

17

Publishing: Writing & Revision, Process & Product

Sharing our work

What now? Teachers are partnering with librarians to create safe spaces to read, write, and share. Paper, pencils, markers, and mentor texts are readily available. Kids of all ages are writing. Writers are creating poetry and newspapers, writing family recipes and sending postcards, making cartoons and mapping imaginary lands. We're reading, and we're excited about writing.

At one time, I did think that the writing was enough. I was a convert to the "process, not product" school of thought, in which the journey was the most important part of writing. I read everything I could find about teaching creative writing and about the whole language movement.¹ But as I developed and conducted writing workshops, I discovered that writers were eager to share their work. This sharing had become an essential element of the Writing Box experience.

We know children understand that writing is a way to communicate. At an early age, they can communicate by writing and/or dictating lists, menus, letters, and labels. Social media is all about communication and validation, which often comes easily, such as by getting “likes” on a Facebook page. On the other hand, some young writers have never had positive attention paid to their creative and informational writing.

826

It was with my volunteer work with 826 Minneapolis that I internalized the importance of publishing the work of young writers.

Dave Eggers, the publisher of McSweeney’s, had many friends and family members who were teachers, and who told him that many of the issues with illiteracy and achievement gaps could be addressed and in part resolved by providing one-on-one attention to struggling learners. The 826 model developed from an after-school drop in homework-help program into one encouraging adult volunteers to drop in for two hours whenever they could. I can attest to the transformative power of this simple program for creating and sharing the written word.

826 National arose from a tutoring center called 826 Valencia, named after its street address in the heart of San Francisco’s Mission District. 826 Valencia opened on April 8, 2002, and consists of a writing lab—a street-front, student-friendly, retail pirate supply store (that sells scurvy water and captain’s logs) in the front that partially funds the programs—and three satellite classrooms in nearby elementary, middle, and high schools.

The Wallace Foundation’s Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts, by Denise Montgomery, evaluates the 826 National programs. Montgomery finds that the programs’ success is due not only to the consistent and growing attendance of participants but also to 826 National’s ability to raise visibility through stakeholder ties.²

What does it mean to publish?

For a librarian, “to publish” means to publish professionally—to go through the publication process that includes editors, copy editors, and publishing or media companies who create a product and sell it in the marketplace.

But publishing can also mean simply sharing our writing: reading aloud, for instance, to an audience of one, or of thirty. Or making physical copies—one handmade book, or a collection of 30 stapled, bound copies of the same title. Technology today enables us to bind a paperback book of our writers’ collected works. The validation and joy that comes from holding a physical book, produced and distributed by its writers, cannot be measured. The outcomes can.

The work of 826 National and its Minneapolis affiliate, the Mid-Continent Oceanographic Institute, persuaded me that publishing can be done in many forms, and that publishing/sharing the work should be part of any writing program.

I witnessed this excitement in 55 fifth-grade writers who contributed short stories to Up, Up and Away: Advice and Adventures from the Future Authors and Astronauts of Farnsworth Aerospace. They read

aloud with confidence during their publication party. Their families—fathers and mothers, grandparents and cousins, aunts and uncles—beamed with pride as the authors signed their pages of the finished book.

Lauren Broder, PhD, director of research and evaluation of 826 National, confirmed the importance of publishing as one of the cornerstones of their program, and reiterated the importance of outside validation to support and inspire the young writers' work. (For more information about 826 National, contact Dr. Broder at laurenb@826national.org, 415. 864.2098.)

In his TED talk of February, 2008, Dave Eggers spoke of the value of the volunteer tutors, who sit “shoulder to shoulder” with the writers and whose “concentrated attention shining this beam of light on [the writers’] work, on their thoughts, on their self expression ... is absolutely transformative because so many of their students had not had that before.”

Young writers who know that their work is going to be published work hard. They revise and revise and revise to create a product worthy of publication.

Eggers stated that the 826 program also succeeded because there was no stigma attached to going to the pirate supply store. The kids who come for tutoring see themselves as the cool kids.

An 826 tutoring/writing center is a place where young writers' opinions and thoughts are of value. A library with a Writing Box program can be a similar safe place, where children and young adults can improve their literacy skills. Librarians who provide a platform for sharing writers' work are confirming the value of the children's writing. Isn't that the goal of every library's children and young adult services program?³

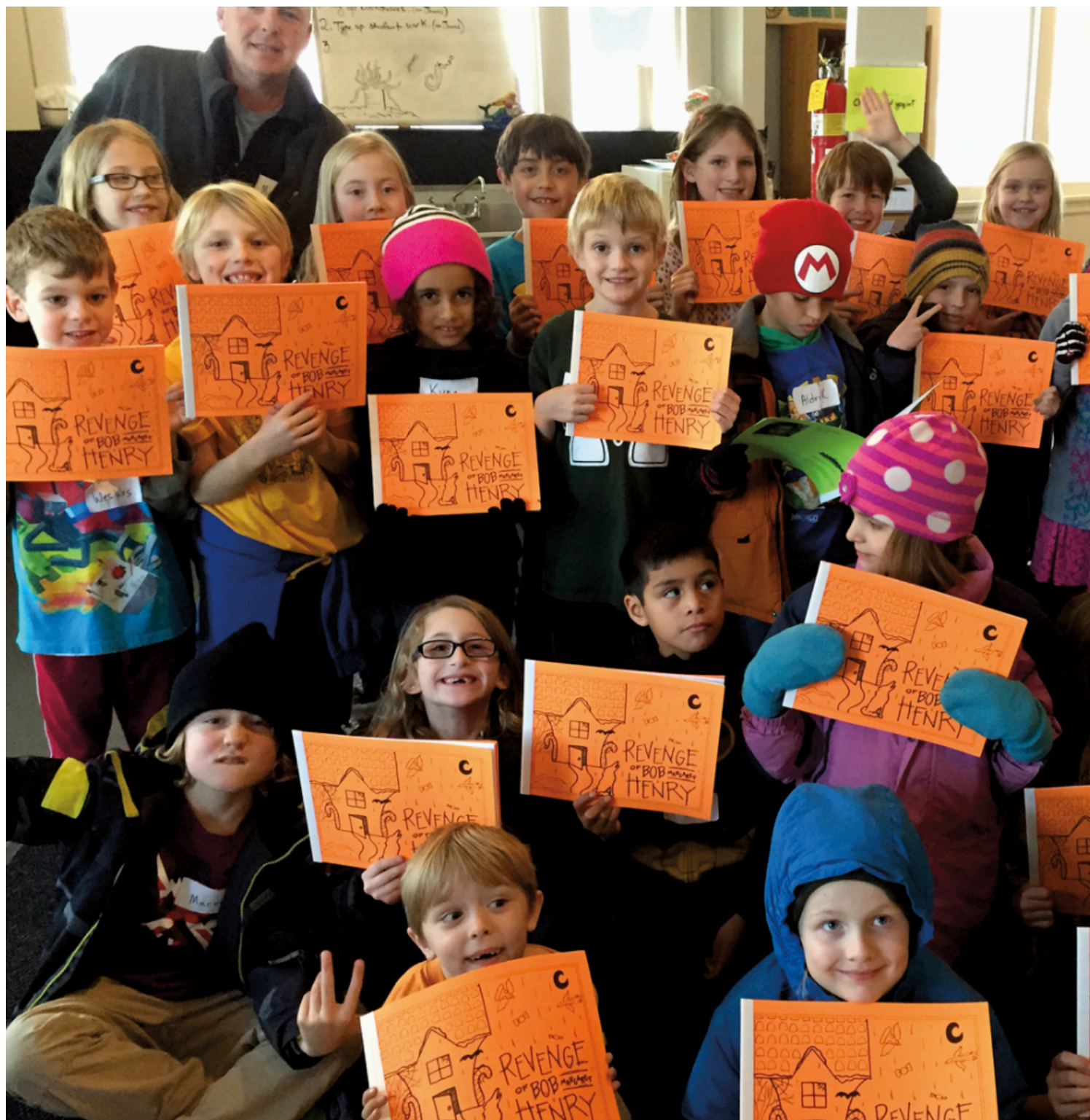


Story Factory, a spinoff of 826 Valencia

Means for sharing the writing product

Children can share one-on-one with parents, teachers, or peers. We can post work on bulletin boards or

tape it to walls and windows. We can take photographs and scan and upload them to websites, create handmade books or newspapers or zines. These are all forms of publishing. The writing product can be shared internally or disseminated to families or classes or buddies or to the community. The physical product of writing in any format creates a reality that this work is worthy of sharing.



A few words about revision

I recently had the opportunity to speak to a mom about a school assignment on which her young adult daughter was procrastinating. The daughter had a draft, but the mom felt it wasn't completed. The daughter didn't have any problem writing; in her mom's opinion, the kid had stalled in the revision process.

My advice wasn't very satisfying. Mostly I said "back off." The teacher here is really the editor, who will note unclear word choices and atrocious spelling and grammar. The writing was the joy. The revision is the work that makes a piece readable/publishable.

And then I remembered mentor texts. In the Children's Literature Research Collections of the University of Minnesota, where I am the curator, we have boxes and boxes, files and files of corrected and revised manuscript pages from children's and young adult writers like Sharon Creech, Christopher Paul Curtis, Katherine Paterson, and Kate DiCamillo.

*To illustrate the revision process, I have included here the first page of the first draft of *Because of Winn Dixie*, of the fourth draft, and of a draft very close to the published first page. Newbery medal winner DiCamillo told me that she donates her papers to the Kerlan Collection because she wants all children to know that writing begins with a big mess. And she wants adults to know that writing begins with a big mess.*

Resources

826 Valencia, and Miranda Tsang. 2014. *642 Things to Write About*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Aliki. 1986. *How a Book Is Made*. New York: Crowell.

Asher, Sandy, and Susan Hellard. 1987. *Where Do You Get Your Ideas? Helping Young Writers Begin*. New York: Walker.

Bauer, Marion Dane. 1992. *What's Your Story? A Young Person's Guide to Writing Fiction*. New York: Clarion Books.

Benke, Karen. 2010. *Rip the Page! Adventures in Creative Writing*. Boston: Trumpeter.

Bulloch, Ivan, Diane James, and Toby Maudsley. 1991. *The Letter Book*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Calkins, Lucy. 1986. *The Art of Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cleary, Beverly, Paul O. Zelinsky. 1983. *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. New York: Morrow.

Fletcher, Ralph J. 1996. *A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer within You*. New York: Avon Books.

Guthrie, Donna, Nancy Bentley, and Katy Keck Arnsteen. 1994. *The Young Author's Do-It-Yourself*

Book: How to Write, Illustrate, and Produce Your Own Book. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

Hambleton, Vicki, Cathleen Greenwood, and Vicki Hambleton. 2012. So, You Want to Be a Writer? How to Write, Get Published, and Maybe Even Make It Big! New York, NY: Aladdin: Beyond Words.

Hawkins, Lisa K, and Abu Bakar Razali. 2012. "A Tale of 3 P's—Penmanship, Product, and Process: 100 Years of Elementary Writing Instruction." Language Arts 89 (5):305–317.

Initiative, Common Core Standards. "English Language Arts Standards." z.umn.edu/wbr75.

Irvine, Joan, and Barbara Reid. 1987. How to Make Pop-Ups. New York: Morrow Junior Books.

Janeczko, Paul B. 1999. How to Write Poetry, Scholastic Guides. New York, NY: Scholastic Reference.

Katzen, Mollie, and Ann Henderson. 1994. Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes: A Cookbook for Preschoolers & Up. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.

Keats, Ezra Jack. 1998. A Letter to Amy. New York: Viking.

Kennedy, X. J., Dorothy M. Kennedy, and Jane Dyer. 1992. Talking Like the Rain: A Read-to Me Book of Poems. Boston: Little, Brown.

Kessler, Leonard P. 1986. Old Turtle's Riddle and Joke Book. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Loewen, Nancy, and Christopher Lyles. 2009. Sincerely Yours: Writing Your Own Letter, Writer's Toolbox. Minneapolis, MN: Picture Window Books.

Mavrogenes, Nancy A. 1987. "Young Children Composing Then and Now: Recent Research on Emergent Literacy." Visible Language 21 (2):271.

Shaskan, Trisha Speed, and Stephen Shaskan. 2011. Art Panels, Bam! Speech Bubbles, Pow! Writing Your Own Graphic Novel, Writer's Toolbox. Mankato, MN: Picture Window Books.

Traig, Jennifer. 2015. Stem to Story: Enthralling and Effective Lesson Plans for Grades 5–8: Jossey-Bass.

Williams, Vera B. 1981. Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Notes

1. Goodman, Kenneth S. (1992) "I Didn't Found Whole Language," The Reading Teacher 46(3) pp. 188-199
2. Montgomery, Denise. 2013. *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs from Urban Youth and Other Experts*. New York: Wallace Foundation.
3. Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries, created by the ALSC Education Committee, 1989. Revised by the ALSC Education Committee, 1999, 2009, 2015; approved by the ALSC Board of Directors at the 2015 American Library Association Annual

Conference.

Handmade Books Program

Preparation

Step 1: *Gather books about creating your own book, such as Alikì's How a Book Is Made, Sandy Asher's Where Do You Get Your Ideas? Helping Young Writers Begin, Donna Guthrie's The Young Author's Do-It-Yourself Book: How to Write, Illustrate and Produce Your Own Book, Marion Dane Bauer's What's Your Story? A Young Person's Guide to Writing Fiction, or How to Make Pop-Ups by Joan Irvine.*

Step 2: *Create a sample book. You can make a book simply by folding pieces of plain paper over and stapling them or tying them together at the fold with yarn. Or you can put together colored sheets of paper with cardboard covers, hole-punch them, and tie them together with pipe cleaners. Or, if you're more ambitious, you can follow the instructions at the end of this chapter to create your own blank book.*

Step 3: *Check Writing Box supplies. Make sure there are brass fasteners and hole punches, lanyards, string, ribbons, or yarn to tie pages together, and oak tag or cardboard for covers.*

The Workshop

Step 1: *Display different kinds of books, talk about how they are made, and describe their different sections (front cover, title, dedication, chapters, etc.).*

Step 2: *Show your own handmade book.*

Step 3: *Give the children paper, cover pieces, markers, crayons, and paper. Help them with taping, gluing, or tying. They may not have time to both make a book and write in it, so remind them that they can write in it anytime they like.*

Step 4: *Give a five-minute warning for cleanup. Remind writers when the Writing Boxes are available to use in the library. Clean up the area and put away supplies.*

Step 5. *Take a few minutes to share the work*

1

Reflections

When Maloy and Edwards spoke in my library that fall day, the clouds parted for me. Their philosophy of providing materials and a nonjudgmental environment was practical and sensible—and inspirational. Over the years, I have discovered that their approach to children and writing is applicable and replicable for a broad range of ages, cultures, and abilities.

Librarians who implement a Writing Box program may find new ways to build community connections

that in turn boost the program's visibility, not only raising public awareness of their efforts but also providing an imprimatur of quality. Positive media coverage, for example, can lead to more support and attract greater enrollment, and create pride among youth participants as well.

Business and civic partners (e.g., retail stores, corporations, and service organizations such as Rotary International) can be community connections that spotlight library programs, perhaps through internal communications vehicles such as e-newsletters. Partners can also help showcase youth writing, not only sponsoring book readings in the library but, for example, also partnering with bookstores, park programming, and afterschool programs to host book readings in those spaces as well.

To recap

- *Reading and writing are both essential components of a successful literacy initiative.*
- *Improving literacy is an essential goal of children's and young adult library services.*
- *Implementing a Writing Box program is a fun, inexpensive, and proven way of achieving that goal.*
- *Writing can be a part of every library program with an easily replicable Writing Box program and format.*

Coda

In the spring of 2018 I was asked to do a professional development workshop with teachers and librarians in Tokyo. A week before the meeting, I received an email requesting that, instead of the planned topic on archives and primary sources the organizers had requested, I change the program to speak about bridges, children's books, and literacy. This gave me an opportunity to model how to include writing and problem solving in a read-aloud program.

What did I need? A list of books about bridges.

Three Billy Goats Gruff came to mind.

And books about building bridges. And engineering. And architecture.

And informational books about bridges.

But the real hit was this great read aloud about the Golden Gate Bridge.



This Bridge Will Not Be Gray. Story by Dave Eggers, Art by Tucker Nichols

Containing graphically illustrated, factually accurate text with matter-of-fact subtle humor; this title presented an opportunity to explore engineering concepts and tie in creative problem solving with activities from Iggy Peck's Big Project Book for Amazing Architects.

The process was no different from that of a Writing Box program with children and young adults.

I provided a list of relevant titles for display, I read aloud, we did a writing activity that asked participants to create a bridge and describe its purpose, and they reflected on their work and shared their process.

The biggest surprise to me was the engagement of this group of adults, many of whom did not know each other, as they excitedly created their bridges on paper and helped each other problem solve.

As I walked around the room, I pretended to be overly concerned with one participant's work, leaning over him with a negative body language.



I interrupted the groups' work and through the translator spoke about how, as parents and teachers, it was important to step back and provide a nonjudgmental space.

After a few shared their in front of the whole group, I asked what they thought was the most important concept of the session.

It wasn't the selection of literature or the modeling of writing responses or the activity. It was the permission to provide all of these things and create a nonjudgmental space for writing.



The author

The reading/writing connection in literacy

I did not discover or invent the reading/writing connection in literacy. I was not the first to connect reading aloud with enabling children to read and write with ease and fluency.

I have benefited from The Writing Road To Reading (Romalda Bishop Spalding, revised edition 2012), Ralph Fletcher's Joy Write: Cultivating High-Impact, Low-Stakes Writing (Heinemann, 2017) and his Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide by (Heinemann, 2011), Paper, Pen Poem: A young writer's way to begin, by Kathy Appelt (Absey & Co 1997), Kenneth Koch's Rose Where Did You Get That Red (Random House, 1973)...I could go on and on.

Yes, and...

That brings us back to Kids Have All the Write Stuff and how Writing Boxes began in Sharon Edwards's second-grade classroom with Robert Maloy's insightful research into writing paralysis.

My hopes and dreams are that every librarian who serves children and young adults, parents and caregivers, teachers and professors becomes a writing mentor. That every time one of these librarians reads a book, ideas of how to incorporate writing response activities spring to mind unbidden.

I want to walk into a public library, a school library, and see grown-ups, young adults, and children reading and writing as a self-selected joyous activity.

These are my hopes and dreams.

2

Acknowledgements

This book and my writing practice wouldn't exist without the seminal volume, Kids Have All The Write Stuff: Inspiring Your Children to Put Pencil to Paper, by Sharon A. Edwards and Robert W. Maloy. Edwards and Maloy encouraged me to put pen to paper and share my work with teachers and librarians. I take off my writer's cap and my editor's hat to salute these two educators, both of whom continue to make a difference with their research, writing, and publishing.

Thank you to the faculty of the Pratt Institute School of Information and Library Science for the rigorous, meaningful, theoretical, and practical education that continues to inform my work as librarian to this day.

A heartfelt thank you to Ellen Loughran, who believed in the replicability of Writing Boxes and, as she called it, the ease of this "Instant Program," and who supported the program's early days in the trial branches of the Brooklyn Public Library. She is the model of the very modern mentor, and I aspire to be that to the next generation of youth services librarians.

Thank you to the Bank Street College of Education graduate faculty, the School for Children teachers, and the parents and children who taught me about literacy, pedagogy, child development, collaboration, diversity, critical thinking, reflection, and curriculum development. Above all, "play is the work of the child."

Thank you to the University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing Services Team. This book was shepherded by Emma Molls, Publishing Services Librarian. Thank you, Emma, for your vision. Thank

you, Susan Everson, for your exquisite design skills, copy editing, and above all attention to detail.

To the creators of the children's and young adult books that inspire all of us to read and write, create and reflect within our communities and beyond, thank you.

To the team at Children's Literature Research Collections of University of Minnesota and the Kerlan Friends, thank you for being willing first readers and guinea pigs for writing prompts, and for saying yes every time I wanted to program writing at library events on campus and in our community. Yes, Mary Schultz and JoAnn Jonas, I mean you.

And thank you to Paul Von Drasek, writer-in-residence, who understands and supports my passion for this work.

3

About the Author



Lisa Von Drasek is the Curator of the Children's Literature Research Collections of the University of Minnesota Libraries, an internationally recognized archive of rare books, manuscripts, and original art. She is a children's librarian with over 25 years experience in public library, school, and academic libraries, serving students, teachers, librarians, and caregivers. A book reviewer, Lisa has served on distinguished juries, including The New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Books and the Newbery and Caldecott awards. She is available for professional development workshops.

About the Publisher



University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing works with academic authors to publish digital monographs, journals, and textbooks at no cost to readers. Our publishing services align with the [University's land-grant mission](#) of "promoting access to higher education and collaborating to advance knowledge benefiting communities, the state, and world." The core principles of UMN Libraries Publishing are:

- We believe the Libraries serves as a critical, central resource for publishing expertise on campus and our essential services should be offered without charge.*
- We support scholars by contributing quality, scholarly works to the public commons through open access publishing.*
- We practice transparent production processes in order to promote critical understanding of the publishing landscape's range of production and economic models.*
- We support intellectual freedom by keeping the means of production in the hands of scholars.*
- We seek to create partnerships on campus and beyond, to help shape the future of scholarly publishing.*
- We support innovative publications and scholarly experimentation grounded in widely-used standards and time-proven practices.*
- We believe that the scholarly ecosystem works best when creators retain their copyright.*
- We leverage replicable and scalable tools and services to support the economic sustainability of common publishing activities on campus.*
- We work to decrease the cost of higher education for students through the production and integration of open content into course curriculum.*
- We provide leadership to the broader library publishing professional community on developing new models of scholarly publishing.*

To learn more, visit lib.umn.edu/publishing