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Living the Life of a Writer 5th Grade

Background Information

This unit has been designed with a focus on students developing an identity for themselves as writers. They will grow in their capacity to be members of a responsive literate community. They will learn ways of reading the world like writers, collecting ideas with variety, volume, and thoughtfulness. They will learn ways of reading texts like writers, developing a sense of craft, genre, and form in writing. It requires that students work on and refine one culminating piece in any genre that demonstrates a plan for the organization of the piece, an effective use of language, and an adequate development of the writer's message.

"The changes in their [fifth grade] writing happened not as these children learned new techniques but as they learned new trust. And I was reminded that the quality of writing in our classrooms grows more from the tone, values, and relationships of our classroom communities than from anything else.

This is true for writers of any age, and yet it is also, I believe, *the* issue for those of us who teach writing in the upper elementary grades." (The Art of Teaching Writing by Lucy Calkins p. 142)

Teaching Objectives:

To have students develop:

- ❑ The habits of writers
- ❑ An eye and ear for writing craft
- ❑ Methods for collecting noticings / try- its / story lines, etc. in their notebooks
- ❑ Rituals and Routines: ways of working productively, resourcefully and independently in a workshop
- ❑ Personal preferences about style; hence, the need for mentor authors and mentor texts

Reasons for a focus on developing an identity of themselves as writers

- ❑ Fifth graders are at an age where they can reflect on their writing in a new dimension. They can develop the ability to coach and critique themselves as they write.
- ❑ It is an important age for building trust in the environment and in the personal interactions they will find there.
- ❑ One of the best ways to help students see themselves as writers is the modeling we do in our interactions. Teachers who view students as writers ask different questions and set up different learning experiences.

Recommended materials:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| NCEE | 2001, <u>Writing Monograph Series</u> , Washington, DC |
| Fletcher, Ralph | 1996, <u>A Writer's Notebook</u> . Avon Books |
| Fletcher, Ralph | 1998, <u>Craft Lessons Teaching Writing K-8</u> . York, Maine: Stenhouse |
| Fletcher, Ralph | 2000, <u>How Writers Work</u> . New York: Harper Collins |
| Ray, Katie Wood | 1999, <u>Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom</u> . Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann. |
| Ray, Katie Wood | 2001. <u>The Writing Workshop</u> . Illinois: NCTE |



Before Starting this Unit

The teacher should not assume the students already know or have background knowledge of the Writer's Workshop framework. The rituals and routines for Writer's Workshop must be established/ revisited.

The teacher should select several touchstone texts and mentor authors' work to use during this first unit of study. Books by Cynthia Rylant are used as examples in many of the lessons in this unit. Other suggested authors might include: Vera Williams, Patricia Polacco or Judith Viorst.

The Structure of Writers' Workshop

Time: Day to day, over the course of the year

- Mini Lesson (direct instruction, whole class) 7-10 minutes
- Independent Writing Time 35-45 minutes
- Closure or Sharing Time 5-10 minutes

Mini Lesson – This is direct teaching to the whole class on a specific topic that usually lasts from ten to fifteen minutes.

Connection – Making connections to previous lessons, touchstone texts and/or prior knowledge

Active Involvement – At the end of the mini lesson students are given the opportunity to try out something from the lesson either through partner sharing, writing in their notebooks or whole group discussion.

Link – Before you send students off to write, encourage them to use the concepts learned in the mini lesson during their independent writing time.

Writing time – Students write independently while the teacher is meeting or conferring with students.

Conferring – The teacher has the option of meeting with students individually or with small groups depending on the needs of the class. Keep in mind that when conferring with students you are coaching the writer and not correcting the writing. The purpose of the conference is to help students develop as writers. A guiding question might be, “What can I teach this child (one or two strategies) that he/she will be able to use in other pieces of writing as well as the one he/she is currently working on?”

Response Groups – Students can be working with three or four students or with a partner. The purpose of response groups is for students to help each other develop a well written piece. Response groups are taking place during the independent writing time.

Closure or Sharing Time – At the end of the writing time, students meet at a gathering spot to share their writing or some of the strategies that they used. Before students share, reinforce the concept presented during the mini lesson. Sharing may be in any of these forms:

Popcorn Share – One at a time all students share a sentence or section of their piece of writing or a strategy.

Author's Chair – The author sits in a chair designated for sharing and reads his/her writing or a section of it. The author may select two to four students who wish to respond to the writing.

Partner Share – Students share with the person sitting next to them, either an entire piece of a section of their writing.



Lesson Sequence

It is important to read through the entire study before beginning to teach. This study is intended as an overview rather than a scripted unit. Each week has an overarching goal as well as a series of mini lessons and homework. During this study the students will begin to keep their notebooks, will learn how reading published authors will improve their writing and carry a piece of writing through the writing process.

Week One – We all have stories to tell

- Lesson One – Getting Started with Writers’ Workshop
- Lesson Two – Thinking about ourselves as writers
- Lesson Three – Introduction to Writers’ Notebooks
- Lesson Four – Special objects remind us of stories
- Lesson Five – Options during Independent Writing Time

Week Two – Choosing a seed and learning to nurture that seed

- Lesson One – Choosing a seed idea
- Lesson Two – Writing like real authors
- Lesson Three – Rereading to make our writing better
- Lesson Four – Good writers have a plan
- Lesson Five – Words and phrases real authors use

Week Three - Teaching students to read like writers

- Lesson One – Good writing strategies
- Lesson Two – Using a writing strategy
- Lesson Three – Using good writing strategies
- Lesson Four – The importance of revision
- Lesson Five – Partner Response Groups

Week Four – Writing Standards

- Lessons One and Two – Good Writing Habits Rubric
- Lesson Three – Editing our Work and Status of the Class
- Lessons Four and Five – Good Writing Rubric

Week Five – Publishing and Celebrating a Writing Piece

- Lesson One – Publishing a Final Piece of Writing
- Lesson Two – Celebrating our Writing



Rubric for Habits of a Good Writer

4 A Fantastic Writer	3 A Good Writer	2 A So-So Writer	1 A Writer Who Needs To Improve
<i>writes a lot. Has many ideas and each idea is well developed</i>	<i>writes often and sometimes develops ideas</i>	<i>writes fairly often but doesn't develop ideas much</i>	<i>doesn't write very much</i>
<i>writes about what he/she knows</i>			
<i>has his / her writing tools ready</i>			
<i>works hard during writing time to produce best work</i>			
<i>starts right away to make good use of writing time.</i>			
<i>shares his/her writing.</i>			
<i>keeps a notebook</i>			
<i>writes in his/her notebook at many different times</i>			
<i>has different kinds of entries in his/her notebook</i>			



Rubric for the First Piece of Writing

	4 Fantastic writing	3 Good writing	2 So-So writing	1 Writing that needs improvement
<i>Organization</i>	<i>is well planned and the controlling idea is clear</i>	<i>shows some planning and has a controlling idea</i>	<i>is not well planned and may not have a controlling idea</i>	<i>has no evidence of planning and no clear controlling idea</i>
<i>Lead</i>	<i>engages the reader right away</i>			
<i>Closure</i>	<i>has an appropriate sense of closure</i>			
<i>Artful use of language</i>	<i>attempts writer's strategies, e.g. repetition of words</i>			
<i>Clarity</i>	<i>has well formed sentences the reader can follow easily.</i>			
<i>Conventions</i>	<i>spelling, grammar and punctuation are correct</i>			



Living the Life of a Writer

Week One

Lesson One

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will learn the rituals and routines for daily participation in Writers' Workshop.

TEKS – 5.1 ABC, 5.2 A, 5.5 BDEF

Materials Needed

- Chart Paper and Markers
- Writers' Workshop schedule written out on a piece of chart paper or on the chalkboard
- Read aloud book appropriate for the beginning of the year that elicits memories about school, a teacher or a family experience

Before the Lesson

Think about the rules you want to establish for coming to a gathering spot for the whole class mini lessons.

Connection: Refer to previous year and the rituals and routines used in the classroom for Writers' Workshop.

Teach: Invite students to join you at a designated gathering spot in the room, usually at a carpet area and explain each component of the 60-minute Writer's Workshop. (Refer to schedule written out on chart paper or chalkboard.)

Explain to students the structure and each component of the 60-minute Writer's Workshop.

- Mini Lesson for the whole class at the gathering spot - 5-10 minutes
- Writing/Conferring Time - 35-45 minutes
(students work on planning, drafting, revising, rereading, editing, publishing or conferencing with the teacher or peers)
- Closure/Sharing Time - 5-10 minutes

Begin a discussion with the students regarding rules for coming to the gathering spot each day for the mini lesson and for closure. Record responses on the chart paper.

Read aloud the chosen book. Afterward use a "think aloud" strategy to model a response to the story that you might write in your Notebook. i.e. reminds you of a favorite teacher, a similar family experience, etc. based on the book used.



Active Involvement: Ask students to think about and share rules for gathering together each day during Writer’s Workshop. Record their responses on a chart entitled, “Gathering Together.” You’ll want to add any rules you’ve thought of and expect to be followed. The chart might include the following.

Come quietly and quickly to the carpet area
Sit with our legs crossed
Keep our hands to ourselves
Listen to the teacher or speaker

Link: Have students think about a personal association to the book read aloud.

Writing/Conferring Time

- Students write for 30 minutes. The teacher goes from desk to desk having informal conferences.
Focus: Praising specific examples, “Your writing is very descriptive.” “Your story reminds me of . . .”
- Look for writing that uses story elements that seem to be established from prior instruction. (e.g. dialogue, use of details, structure of story)
- Identify two or three students with specific features in their stories for sharing.

Closing/Sharing Time

Students gather together to listen to one or two students reading their work. Practice good listening habits and respectful responses.



Living the Life of a Writer

Week One

Lesson Two

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will develop an identity of themselves as storytellers and thus writers, building the capacity of the group to become a literate community.

TEKS – 5.1 AC, 5.2 ABCD, 5.4 AB, 5.5 C, 5.15 AFG, 5.16 AB, 5.19 AB

Materials Needed

One or two books that include stories passed between generations (suggestions: The Worry Stone by Marianna Dengler and Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco)

Before the Lesson

Think of a story from your life that you can tell students. Think of the story elements that you want students to include in their stories and be sure to have them in yours. (e.g. beginning, middle, end or interesting lead or descriptive details, dialogue, character description)

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Refer to characters from the read aloud as examples of stories passed down in families. Remind students that we all have stories too but sometimes we don't pay attention to them.

Teach: The teacher tells a story that has been passed down in the family or a story from his/her life. Point out the various story elements you want to draw attention to.

Read aloud a chosen book that illustrates passing down family stories. Point out the specific story elements in the book that you want to draw attention to.

Active Involvement: Have students work with a partner. Each student has one minute to tell a story. The partner listens. They then trade roles. The role of the listener can be emphasized at this time.

Link: Think of the story you told and the one you heard and decide which one you could write about.



Writing time/Conferring time

- Students write for 30 minutes. The teacher goes from desk to desk having informal conferences. Use the following questions in your conferencing.

Tell me about your writing or How's it going?

How do you feel about your story so far?

What part do you like best? Why?

Focus: Praising specific examples, "Your lead makes me anxious to read more to find out what happens."

- Look for story elements that seem to be established from prior instruction. (e.g. dialogue, use of details, structure of story)
- Teacher identifies two or three students with specific features in their stories for sharing.

Closing

Students gather together to listen to a student reading his work. Practice good listening habits and respectful responses.

Pick up on any story elements that you saw and start an attribute chart *Good Writing Has . . .*

Throughout this unit you will be developing two attribute charts to use when you create rubrics. As the lessons progress there will be a boxed suggestion of items in each lesson that you might want to add. Ensure that what is added reflects what is talked about in the lessons. The suggestions are here to help you remember to keep adding and referring to these charts during every lesson. Today you would add simply one or two items that you notice students doing so that you have the chart started.

Good Writing Has . . .

details that create a picture in your mind

a lead that engages the reader

Follow Up

Homework - Have students ask adults at home about family stories.



Living the Life of a Writer

Week One

Lesson Three

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will be introduced to the Writer's Notebook, make connections to published authors and realize the variety of entries that are possible.

TEKS – 5.15 ACDEFG, 5.19 AB

Material Needed

- Teacher's notebook with three or four entries chosen to share with the students.
- Chart paper entitled *Kinds of Entries You Might Try In Your Notebook*.
- Notebooks for each student

Before the lesson

- Read Chapter 1 “What is a Notebook?” from the book *A Writer's Notebook* by Ralph Fletcher. The teacher shares quotes from authors telling how they use notebooks. Let students talk about prior experiences they have had keeping a writer's notebook.

“Write about things that you really experience! When the story has a great deal of meaning for you, it very probably will have meaning for others as well.” Patricia Polacco

“The ideas leap into my head from real life . . .” Mem Fox

“I get my ideas from living my life wide-eyed and awake. I sit on the edge of my chair. I pay attention to wherever I am. My writing notebook is with me most always, and I often think I'm a much more interesting person with my notebook than without because it keeps me alert. With paper at hand, any idea that flies by gets a place to land.” Drew Lamm author of *A Prognosis: A Mixed Up Tale*

“I take notes all the time.” Jean carries little spiral notebooks with her on her forays into the natural world. Jean Craighead George author of *Julie of the Wolves*.

“Start by writing the things that you know. Write about your own experiences and your own feelings. That's what I do.” J. K. Rowling in *J. K. Rowling – The Wizard Behind Harry Potter, An Unauthorized Biography* by Marc Shapiro, St. Martin's Griffin, 2000

Longer quotes from Katherine Paterson and Paul Fleischman may be referenced from *A Writer's Notebook* by Ralph Fletcher.



Mini-Lesson

Connection: The teacher explains that authors follow a process by which they create and eventually publish their writing. Tell students they will follow the same process as a real author does to polish/revise and publish their work..

Teach:

1. Post a chart of the stages involved in the writing process: gathering entries, selecting a seed, nurturing a seed, writing a draft, revision, editing and publishing. Discuss each one and remind students of their discussion about how writers use a notebook to keep special memories.
2. The teacher gives a “tour” of his/her notebook by reading three or four selected entries. Point out different kinds of entries and begin a chart entitled *Kinds of Entries You Might Try in Your Notebook*.

(Perhaps a list, an entry inspired by a clipping from a paper or magazine, an entry about a photograph, a memory, etc.) Three or four kinds will be enough as tomorrow students will add to this chart. The teacher shows how he/she has personalized the writer’s notebook.

Active Involvement: Have students turn to a partner and tell some of the things that they want to write about in their notebooks.

Link: Quotes from some authors about using notebooks may be posted around the room.

Writing time/Conferring time

- Students write in their notebooks on a topic of their choice for 30 to 40 minutes as they will each day.
- Conference informally from desk to desk. As you circulate find students who have different types of entries. Record their names so that you can ask them to share. *Focus: praise the habits of good writers. “You are writing about things that have happened to you. That’s what good writers do.”*

Closing

Author’s chair – Have two or three students share from their notebooks and enter the type of entry they have on the class chart.

Start a second attribute chart listing one or two behaviors of good writers. Possible things to notice are on an attached list.

Good Writing Has . . .
details that create a picture
a lead that engages the reader

Good Writers . . .
start right away to make good
use of writing time
write about what they know

Follow Up

Homework - Write 20 minutes in your notebook. Try two different types of entries. Bring a special object from home to share. Think about a story that this object brings to your memory.



Kinds of Entries You Might Try In Your Notebook

- Very close observations of things, capturing sights, sounds, textures, moods, and so on.
- Snippets of interesting things people say--talk written down!
- Entries that ask lots and lots of questions about a subject, person, thing, place, and so on.
- Lists of things you want to think about later or just want to keep in lists.
- Quotations from music, movies, books, magazines, and so on that interest you.
- Writing about photographs or pictures that interest you.
- Plot ideas from things you hear on the news or hear other people talking about.
- Memories, memories, memories--ask questions such as "What does this remind me of?" Look at things from your life, and think about what they make you remember.
- Things you see that are interesting. Remember, a writer is someone who notices and is enormously taken by things other people walk right by.
- Character ideas from people you observe. Try to imagine the smallest details of their lives.
- Setting ideas from interesting places where you are writing. Try going somewhere interesting and writing about it as a setting.
- Entries about things that interest you as a person--Antarctica, inchworms, vacuum cleaners, mountain biking, soccer, snakes, WHATEVER
- Research facts about your interests. Get them from the Internet, books, the Discovery Channel, and so on.
- Great first lines for things you'd like to write--first chapters of novels!
- Poems that just "come to you."
- Reflections (thinking) about things you see, hear, or think about.
- Play around with words you like.
- Family stories that you know orally. Write them down!
- Talk to people about a subject that interests you then write about what they say.
- Lists of people's names and the names of places that you might like to use someday.
- Long entries about things you care about.
- Any other ways you can invent to collect material for your writing life.

The Writing Workshop by Katie Wood Ray p.70



Good Writers . . .

start right away to make good use of writing time
a lead that engages the reader
dialogue
descriptive details
structure / predictability
basic element of a genre
a lot of information
words and phrases that run smoothly
well organized thoughts
sentences that are well formed
artful use of language

Good Writing Has . . .

details that create a picture
write about what they know
come to writing time with a plan for their writing
have their writing tools ready
work hard during writing time to produce their best work.
start right away to make good use of writing time
share their writing
keep a notebook
write in their notebooks at many different times
have different kinds of entries in their notebooks



Living the Life of a Writer

Week One

Lesson 4

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will participate in building a trusting community for developing as writers and experience being reminded of stories by special objects.

TEKS – 5.15 ACDEFG, 5.19 AB

Before the lesson

- Read *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem.
- Your special object from home to use for modeling about writing a memory entry in your notebook from an object

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Remind students of workshop format pointing out that today the focus of the lesson will be on writing about a memory based on an object.

Teach:

Read aloud the book, *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox. Lead a discussion centering on objects that trigger memories for us which in turn will remind us of stories.

Point out any story elements that are on the Good Writing attribute chart you started as they occur in *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*. Add any new attributes to the chart as appropriate.

Show your object from home, tell your story about it and read or show on the overhead your notebook entry based on the object you brought.

Active Involvement: Have students take out the special object they brought from home. Invite volunteers to share the object and a brief story about. Limit the time to 1-2 minutes for each story.

Link: Different things trigger our memory about what to write in our notebooks. Sometimes it is a special object, sometimes it is a special person and sometimes it is a special place.



Writing/Conferring Time

Send students to their desks to write an entry in their notebooks using the object from home as a stimulus.

Circulate from desk to desk conducting informal conferences. Offer specific feedback centering on descriptive language and sequence of events in the story about the object. Look for story elements from prior instruction.

Use the following questions to help struggling writers.

- Tell me more about _____
- What is most unusual about _____?
- What else might you add to your story?
- How did you feel when (something happened, related to object)?

Closure/Sharing Time

Call students back to the gathering spot.

Partner Share – Have students share a portion of their notebook entry with a partner on the carpet.

Follow-up/Homework

Students may want to finish or write more about their special object.

Good Writers. . .

share their writing

work hard during writing time

to produce their best work

Good Writing Has . . .

words and phrases that run

smoothly together



Living the Life of a Writer

Week One

Lesson Five

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will understand the range of acceptable activities which can occur during independent writing time.

TEKS – 5.15 ACDEFG, 5.19 ABCDFGI, 5.20 BDE

Materials Needed

- Chart Paper and Markers
- Handout of “Kinds of Things to Do” from *The Writing Workshop* by Katie Wood Ray (at the end of this lesson)
- Box or basket of writing activities on index cards for “Try Its” (listed at the end of this lesson)

Before the Lesson

Prepare the handouts and “Try It” samples on index cards.

Connection: Sustained writing time is crucial to the development of competent writers. Helping students understand their options when they think they’ve finished a piece is important to maintain the flow during Writer’s Workshop. All writers deserve to have concentration time or uninterrupted time to write.

Teach:

Remind students that the focus of the mini lesson today is what to do during independent writing time. Tell the students that Writer’s Workshop is different from many learning experiences at school. During the independent writing time, 35-45 minutes, they are expected to be responsible for planning their own time.

In this lesson the goal is to spell out what things students may choose to do. The intention is to present the range of acceptable choices even though it is understood that students will need instruction in each of these activities at a later date.

Make clear that the student’s goal is to become a better writer. Every day each student should make progress toward that goal. Begin to establish that each student will be working on a personal goal to improve his/her writing. Use the attribute charts to help students identify their goals.

Read over the handout of possible activities for the independent work time. Be sure students have an understanding, even if not complete, of each of the choices.



Active Involvement:

Have students think for a minute about what they will choose to write about today. When they go to their desks, have them staple the handout list in their notebooks.

Link:

What is your goal for improving as a writer? What will you do if you finish before the work time is over?

Writing/Conferring Time

- Students write for 30 minutes. The teacher goes from desk to desk having informal conferences.
- Look for students who are using their time wisely and productively; praise them using specific references to the handout of options
- Identify two or three students who want to share their writing

Closing/Sharing Time

Students gather together to listen to one or two students reading their work. Have students volunteer to share what they did if they finished early during independent writing time.

Good Writers . . .

Share their writing

Have their writing tools ready

Have different kinds of entries
in their notebooks

Good Writing Has . . .

words and phrases that run smoothly
together

A lot of information



Kinds of Things to do During Independent Writing Time

- Write new stuff in your writer’s notebook.
- Go back through what’s in your notebook already and “play with” those ideas. Write more about them or try to turn them into other kinds of writing.
- In your notebook, try some writing “exercises” recommended by professional writers. You’ll find these in baskets around the room. Return these to the baskets when you’re finished. You might try these with a friend.
- Work on writing drafts of pieces you want to publish.
- Have a writing conference with another author about something you are working on (either in your notebook or in a draft for a published piece).
- Read touchstone books we have in the room. Always be sure to ask, “How did this writer write this poem? Could I try that too with my topics?”

***The Writing Workshop* by Katie Wood Ray p. 68**



Examples of Try It Writing Exercises

Take something you feel strongly about, whether it is positive or negative, and write about it as though you love it. Go as far as you can, writing as though you love it, then flip over and write about the same thing as though you hate it. Then write about it perfectly neutrally.

Write in different places—for example, in a laundromat, and pick up on the rhythm of the washing machines. Write at bus stops, in cafes. Write what is going on around you.

Visualize a place that you really love, be there, see the details. Now write about it. It could be a corner of your bedroom, an old tree you sat under one whole summer, a table at McDonald's in your neighborhood, a place by a river. What colors are there, sounds, smells? When someone else reads it, she should know what it is like to be there. She should feel how you love it, not by your saying you love it but by your handling of the details.

What is your first memory?

Begin with "I remember." Write lots of small memories. If you fall into one large memory, write that. Just keep going. Don't be concerned if the memory happened five seconds ago or five years ago. Everything that isn't this moment is memory coming alive again as you write. If you get stuck, just repeat the phrase "I remember" again and keep going.

Choose a color—for instance, pink—and take a ten-minute walk. On your walk notice wherever there is pink. Come back to your notebook and write for fifteen minutes.

Give me your morning. Breakfast, waking up, walking to school. Be as specific as possible. Slow down in your mind and go over the details of the morning.

Write about "leaving." Approach it any way you want. Write about a divorce, leaving the house this morning, or a friend or pet dying.



Tell about the quality of light coming in through your window. Jump in and write. Don't worry if it is night and your curtains are closed or you would rather write about the light up north – just write. Go for ten minutes.

Take a poetry book. Open to any page, grab a line, write it down, and continue from there. A friend calls it “writing off the page.” If you begin with a great line, it helps because you start right off from a lofty place. If you get stuck, just rewrite your first line and keep going

The stars
The most frightened you've ever been
Green places
Reading and books that have changed your life
A teacher you had
Don't be abstract. Write the real stuff. Be honest and detailed.

Quoted from *Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg p.20 and 21
These are formatted so that you can copy on labels and adhere to 3/5 cards.



Living the Life of a Writer

Week Two

Lesson One

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will identify one entry in their notebook that meets two criteria:
1) It is important enough to work on for a period of time 2) the student can imagine it growing.
Students will develop their seed idea.

TEKS – 5.15 ACDEFG, 5.19 ABCDFGI, 5.20 ACD

Before the Lesson Make handout **Nurturing the Seed Idea – Living With a Topic** available for students who need help. Preview your own notebook entries and select 2-3 entries that you'll model for selecting a seed idea.

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Before talking about a writing seed, talk about a regular seed. What happens to a regular seed? What does it need to grow? A writing seed is like a regular seed. It is a piece of writing that you are going to take care of for one week. Over the course of the week, your seed will grow as you think about it more and add more to it.

Teach: The teacher models selecting a seed by reading three entries from his/her personal notebook. Use a “think aloud” strategy as you read about how each piece might develop further. After deciding on one entry the teacher writes SEED on top of the notebook page.

Using the handout, **Nurturing the Seed Idea – Living With a Topic**, explain each technique and demonstrate with examples from your own writing as appropriate.

Active Involvement: Students turn to a partner and tell the two criteria that will influence their choice of a seed.

Link: The teacher asks students to list their seed topic beside their name on a piece of chart paper after they have studied their notebooks.

Writing/Conferring Time:

Students return to their desks and begin extended writing on their seed idea.

Please note: Students will develop their seed idea during writing time over the next few days and for homework each night.



Possible Problems Around Choosing A Seed

1. The student chooses a seed idea and then says that he/she has nothing more to say about the seed idea.

Conduct a mini-lesson with the individual student or with a small group of students around choosing a seed idea. Tell the children they should choose something that is important. Ask them to choose something in which they can imagine saying more. For example, say, "If you want this seed as your writing idea it needs to be something you know a lot about or have a lot of information about."

2. The student says I want to change my writing seed idea.

Children should be able to change their seed idea within a specified amount of time (around 4-5 days). There is a point when children need to commit to their seed idea. It is recommended that you set a deadline with your children.

3. The student's seed idea is too general. For example, a child might say, "My seed idea is my trip to Mexico."

Simply tell the child that his/her seed idea is too big. Say, "Out of all that you have to say about this trip which part are you dying to write about?"

4. The student chooses a seed idea that is not in his/her Writers' Notebook

In order for a child to see his/her notebook as a place to grow ideas, he/she needs to choose a seed idea from his /her notebook. If a child is adamant about writing about a topic not in his notebook suggest to him/her to build up this seed idea in is/her notebook first.

Nurturing a Seed Idea -Living With a Topic

- Write everything that comes to mind when you think about your seed idea.
- Make a really long list of words that come to mind
- Choose one word and write a lot about it
- Try to write about your seed idea like your favorite author
- Draw a picture that makes you think about your seed idea
- Look at photographs that make you or others tell stories about your seed idea
- Gather artifacts that force memories and writing.
- Observe closely
- Talk / ask questions about your seed idea to gather information (go public)
- Do some real research on your see



Living the Life of a Writer

Week Two

Lesson Two

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will understand that the process they go through in Writer's Workshop is the same process published writers go through.

TEKS – 5.19 A-I

Before the lesson

The teacher reads *How Writers Write* by Ralph Fletcher and selects passages that are appropriate for sharing with the class. A touchstone text to use would be *If You Were a Writer* by Joan Lowery Nixon.

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Review of writing process: Gathering entries, selecting a seed, nurturing the seed, writing a draft, revision, editing and publishing.

Teach: Use selected quotes to illustrate what published authors do. Use your own writing notebook to demonstrate each suggested idea in the quotes.

Active Involvement: Students turn to a partner and share their experiences with the writing process. Everyone thinks for a minute about what places, times and materials help them produce their best writing. One or two students share with the class.

Link: Remind students to check the chart listing different kinds of entries as they continue to write about their seed idea. “*How do you get started? Where do you get your ideas? Think about yourself as a writer.*”

The teacher can comment on some of the good writing behaviors and qualities of good writing he/she has seen during the lesson. Add these observations to the ongoing charts.

Good Writers . . .
write in their notebooks at
many different times

Good Writing Has . . .
structure and predictability
basic elements of a genre



Writing/Conferring Time:

Students return to their desks to continue developing their seed idea in their writer's notebook.

Note: It may be appropriate here to review the procedures established for accessing materials during Writer's Workshop.

Circulate and conduct informal conferences with students. The following prompts or questions may be helpful.

- Tell me more about . . .
- I don't understand what you meant when you wrote . . .
- Is there anything unusual about . . .?
- What title would you give this piece?
- What part do you like best? Why?
- Do you have enough (too much) information?
- Why is this important to you?
- How did you feel when _____ (something happened)?

Closure/Sharing Time:

Invite volunteer students to share the process (how) they've used to nurture their seed idea.



Quotes from authors about the writing process

Gathering entries

"I keep pens and pencils within reach wherever I am. My favorite writing spot is in my bed."

Jerdine Nolan

"I get my ideas from living my life wide eyed and awake. I sit on the edge of chairs. I pay attention to wherever I am."

Drew Lamm

"I write for a couple of hours every morning. But it's what I do during the other twenty two hours that allows me to do that writing."

Don Murray

Selecting a seed

Katherine Paterson says there must be an "emotional core" at the heart of every good poem or story. In other words, the writer needs to write it from deep inside. If that emotional core is missing, and writing is going badly, it may be a signal that it's time to seek a different topic to write about.

Ralph Fletcher p.48

Nurturing the seed

Like meditation, brainstorming invites you into a quiet room where you can think deeply about your subject before you start shaping your text. Brainstorming is sometimes called prewriting or even rehearsal. Whatever you call it, it refers to all the thinking, preparing, and mental jumpstarting that takes place before you start a particular piece of writing. It's a crucial part of what every writer does.

Ralph Fletcher p.22

Writing a draft

"For me, rough drafting is like facing a monster in the dark" says author Ben Mikaelson. "As long as the story is still in my head, it is still perfect. When I start writing it becomes flawed, and I struggle."

Revision

"I love revising but I don't think of it as rewriting. I see it as layering. I keep adding layers to my book, each time concentrating on a different area such as characters, detail, plot, description, etc."

Ben Mikaelson

A writer needs to "ache with caring" over a piece of writing.

Mem Fox

Editing and Publishing

"I think editing is the easiest part. You've already sweated out the literature, the story, the loops and curls. You've perfected the music and now you just have to check for the obvious stuff: spelling, grammar, all that. And if it's not obvious to you, this is the one part where someone else is welcome to jump in and help!"

Drew Lamm

"Having said all that, I will admit that it's nice to see your name in print. More than nice. It's TERRIFIC! Above all, writing is a form of communication, and it's wonderful knowing that an actual flesh-and-blood, person will read your words!"

Ralph Fletcher p.93



Living the Life of a Writer

Week Two

Lesson Three

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will reread some of the entries they have written so far on the seed idea to determine what it is that they want the reader to know.

TEKS – 5.20 ABCDE

Before the lesson

Read one of the touchstone texts you've chosen to use as a model for finding a focus in writing. Suggested titles include *Big Mama's* by Donald Crews or *Stringbean's Trip to the Shining Sea* by Vera Williams. These books talk about a general event made up of several smaller, related events. e.g. summer at grandma's or a cross country trip with a relative

Materials Needed

Touchstone Texts
Samples of your own writing

Mini Lesson

Connection: Remind students that they have collected three or four entries about one idea. It is time to think about what it is that they really want the reader to know about that idea; that is the controlling idea or establishing a focus in their writing.

Teach:

Read aloud the chosen touchstone text. *Stringbean's Trip to the Shining Sea* is used as an example here for the mini lesson. Point out that the book relates a cross country trip of a young boy and his uncle. The postcards sent home describe events at stops along the way. Use one of the "postcard" events to demonstrate how to reread entries and to elaborate on an event in order to "zoom in" or focus on one particular event or point in time. An analogy to use here would be how a photographer zooms in or takes a close-up shot of someone or a subject in pictures.

Talk through the concept with students of capturing bigger issues in their writing like feelings and passionate ideas related to experiences rather than describing simple happenings in our lives.



Active Involvement: Students reread entries so far on their seed idea and think about what it is they want the reader to know.

Link: As students write today, they should focus on capturing their controlling idea.

Writing/Conferring Time:

As you circulate around the room, conduct informal conferences that focus on questioning to get at the focus or controlling ideas in student's writing.

Try to identify one or two students who have been successful at narrowing their topic or zooming in on a particular event/feeling.

Closure/Sharing Time

Have selected students share a portion of their writing that illustrates the concept of finding a focus in your writing.

Add to the ongoing charts as appropriate.

Good Writers . . .

*Narrow their topic
Reread their writing*

Good Writing Has . .

*Dialogue
A specific focus*



Living the Life of a Writer
Week Two
Lesson Four

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will understand that good writers have a plan. Some writers do a great deal of prewriting; others prefer to simply start writing and see what happens. They discover how to organize their thoughts while they write.

TEKS – 5.19 ABCD

Before the Lesson

Read chapter 3 of *How Writers Work* by Ralph Fletcher. Fletcher gives seven ways to plan a piece of writing: talk, list ideas, make a web, free write, 3x3x3, informal outline, time line.

Materials Needed

The teacher prepares a chart of possible ways to plan a piece of writing including as many of Fletcher’s suggestions as he/she feels will be useful to the class.

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Ask students to look at all of their entries, and think about their controlling idea and consider how they will develop their piece. What is their plan for writing their first draft?

Teach: Using the chart the teacher models planning a piece of writing from his/her own notebook.

Add to the ongoing chart for good writing habits and good writing.

<i>Good Writing Has . . .</i> Well-organized thoughts	<i>Good Writers . . .</i> Come to writing time with a plan
--	---

Active Involvement: Using the chart students should think about how to plan their piece.

Link: “Whatever prewriting you do should build your energy to write, not deflate that energy.”
Ralph Fletcher p.30

Please note: You may need an extra day for extending or repeating one of these lessons.

Writing/Conferring Time:

Conference with students about organizing and planning their writing.

Closure/Sharing Time:

Have selected students talk about how they planned their writing today or how they used an organizer to help them plan.



Living the Life of a Writer

Week Two

Lesson Five

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will read a touchstone text and become very familiar with the words and phrases used.

TEKS – 5.15 G, 5.18 D

Materials Needed:

- Recommended books
- Chart Paper and Markers

Before the Lesson

The teacher reads chapter 6 of *Wondrous Words* by Katie Wood Ray.

Select and read a touchstone text that highlights an author's use of language, vivid and descriptive words and phrases. Prepare a "think aloud" on the book that points out the use of language. Suggested books include *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant, *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse and *Saint George and the Dragon* by Margaret Hodges.

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Remind students that they have enjoyed many of Cynthia Rylant's books. Tell them that the class is going to do a choral reading of *The Relatives Came*. Introduce the idea that we sometimes read thinking like a writer.

Teach: After rereading *The Relatives Came*, pass out a copy of the text so that each student has a copy for choral reading.

Note: If you do not have a class set of the recommended book, follow the alternative "Teach" plan.

Active Involvement: Do one reading as a whole class.

Possible extension: Divide the class into small groups of four or five. Let each group plan a choral reading of the text. Share each performance with the class.

Alternative Teaching Plan: Read aloud a touchstone text that illustrates an author's use of vivid, descriptive language.

Use a "think aloud" strategy to point out the various language devices used.

Create a chart of the various devices with specific examples listed from the text.



Link: Remind students to use the charts on Language Devices as tools to help them become better writers.

Writing/Conferring Time:

Have students to continue to work on their planning or drafting. Informally conference with students focusing on their use of various language devices.

Closure/Sharing Time:

Have 2-3 students read excerpts from their writing that highlights the effective use of language in their writing.



Living the Life of a Writer
Week Three
Lesson One

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will create a chart of writing strategies.

TEKS – 5.15 AEFB

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Remind students of how much they have been enjoying *The Relatives Came*. Let's think about it as writers.

Teach and Active Involvement: Each child is given the text of The Relatives Came. “So what do you guys notice in the writing that you want to talk about?”

Chart everything they say. They will become more sophisticated about their noticing as the year goes on but at this point it is important to acknowledge all of their observations. As you record on chart paper separate noticings into two categories: **Structure** and **Ways With Words**. Be sure that you use the students' language. Below is a chart that came from children.

<p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– She writes it so that it makes a circle (<i>leaving Virginia, returning to Virginia</i>).

<p>Ways With Words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– She uses commas a lot.– She puts periods at the ends of words that aren't sentences (<i>Missing them.</i>)– She uses “funny” words together like <i>hugging time</i>.– She uses dashes.– She uses the same words a lot (<i>hugging, breathing, etc.</i>)
--

Link: As you write today, think about why Cynthia Rylant used some of the writing strategies that you noticed. We will talk more about it tomorrow.

<p><i>Good Writing Has . . .</i> <i>artful use of language</i></p>



Living the Life of a Writer

Week Three

Lesson Two

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will read *The Whales* by Cynthia Rylant like a writer, examining one of the writing strategies that they identified in the previous lesson.

TEKS – 5.15 ACDEFG, 5.19 ABCDFG

Materials Needed:

- Touchstone texts that illustrate writing or authoring strategies and techniques
- Chart Paper and Markers

Mini - Lesson

Connection: Reread the chart of strategies that the students noticed in *The Relatives Came*.

Possible list of strategies: circle story, dialogue, repetition, predictability, artful use of language, variety in sentence structure, a captivating lead, definite beginning, middle and ending, etc.

Teach: Distribute the text of *The Whales* or read aloud chosen touchstone text. Ask students if they can find any of the writer strategies that they have on the chart in this text. Select one of the strategies, give it a name and talk about what the author was trying to do by using this strategy. The teacher models the use of this strategy in his/her own writing on the overhead.

Add list of strategies to chart, **Good Writing Has . . .**

Active Involvement: Ask students to discuss with a partner how using this strategy changed the teacher's piece.

Link: As students work today, ask them to think about this strategy and experiment with it in a piece of their writing.

Writing/Conferring Time:

Students continue to nurture their seed idea, attempting to use a variety of writing strategies that emulate real authors.

Closure/Sharing Time:

Popcorn share as time permits. Have students share an example of a writing strategy they used in their writing today.



Living the Life of a Writer

Week Three

Lesson Three

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will reread *When I Was Young In The Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant like a writer, examining another of the writer strategies that students have identified in a previous lesson.

TEKS – 5.15 ACDEFG, 5.19 ABCDFG

Before the Lesson

Read *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant and prepare a “think aloud” on a writing strategy the author uses.

Possible strategies: circle story, dialogue, repetition, predictability, artful use of language, variety in sentence structure, a captivating lead, definite beginning, middle and ending, etc.

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Remind students of the strategy they examined yesterday and reread the chart of what they noticed in *The Relatives Came*.

Teach: Distribute the text of the *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. Ask students if they can find any of the writer strategies that they have on the chart. Select one, give it a name and talk about what the author was trying to do by using this strategy. The teacher has pre-selected a student’s writing (with student permission) and has it on an overhead or chart. Ask this student to try the strategy in his writing. Other students can help if they see a way to use the strategy in this writing.

The teacher may need to demonstrate the use of the strategy with his/her own writing on the overhead.

Active Involvement: Ask students to discuss with a partner how using this strategy changes the writing? One or two students share with the class.

Link: As you work today, think about this strategy and experiment with it in a piece of your writing.

Good Writing Has . . .
sentences that are well
formed



Living the Life of a Writer
Week Three
Lesson Four

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will understand the importance of revision.

TEKS – 5.19 CDFI

Before the Lesson

Teacher selects one of his/her own writing pieces to demonstrate the revision process.

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Remind students that adding to a piece of writing, deleting from it, reorganizing the structure or incorporating techniques from a mentor text are all forms of revision. Revision is the heart of the writing process.

Teach: Place the writing sample on the overhead.

Read the piece aloud and ask the students to give you suggestions for revising. Demonstrate how it should be done by writing between the lines or out in the margins.

Active Involvement: Ask students to suggest how the writing is improved by the revision.

Create a chart similar to the one below as a tool for students to use when revising their own work

When we revise...

We add or delete information

We move things around

We reread our piece

We clear up confusion

Link: As students work today, they focus on revising their work.



Writing/Conferring Time:

Conference with students on the content of their writing and the process of revision. Use the following questions to help the students understand revision.

- How can we improve this piece?
- Is there another way to say this?
- What is your purpose in writing this piece?
- I don't understand what you mean here . . .
- Do you have more than one story here?
- What if you add _____ or delete _____? How will that improve your story?
- What do you need help with?



Living the Life of a Writer
Week Three
Lesson Five

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students respond appropriately and respectfully to other student writers so that revision is meaningful.

Create the routine of peer response groups

TEKS – 5.19 CDG, 5.20 B

Materials Needed

Writing Process Chart

Chart Paper and Markers

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Explain to the students that sharing your work allows you to see how your writing is interpreted.

Teach: Review the chart with the steps listed in the writing process. Explain to students what active listening and giving feedback means. Using the example from the lesson on revision, ask students for feedback on suggestions they would make to you. Remind them to use the revision strategies on chart. Tell the students that they have had a chance to revise their own writing. Now it is time to work with a partner to help improve their writing.

Lead a discussion on establishing procedures for revising your work with a partner. Chart the procedures. (See sample below)

Partner Response Group Procedures
Go to the designated area in the classroom Decide who will read their writing first Use whisper voices to read Actively listen to the reader Using the language of the rubric, ask questions or make comments such as: I would like to know more about . . . I'm wondering about . . . Is there more you could say about . . . What do you want to do next with your writing?

Active Involvement: Choose two students to role-play this procedure.

Model the behavior of active listening and giving feedback, making suggestions referring to the revision strategies that were charted in the previous lesson.



Writing/Conferring Time:

Assign or have students pick a partner to read their draft writing with. Assign places in the room where they can work, using quiet/whisper voices.

Closure/Sharing Time:

Bring students back together at the gathering spot. Talk about the partner response groups. Review the procedures chart and add any new procedures that come up in the discussion. Ask students how it felt to read their writing and receive feedback from their peers. Ask students how they think the feedback will help them become better writers.



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Living the Life of a Writer Week Four Lessons One and Two

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will participate in creating a behavior rubric for good writers **Rubric for Habits of a Good Writer** using the attribute chart *Good Writers* which has been growing throughout the study.

TEKS – 5.20 ACDE

Materials Needed

- The *Good Writers* attribute chart
- Butcher paper divided into the grid for the rubric and markers

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Many of the students are now revising and getting ready to edit and publish. It is important to have the standards of good writing and the behaviors of good writers in a format that students can use to revise their work.

Teach: In order for students to understand the form and function of rubrics begin working with them to create the **Rubric for Habits of a Good Writer**. Have students describe what behaviors they know good writers have. Start by describing a Level 4 behavior for a good writer, perhaps *writes a lot. Has many ideas and each idea is well developed.* Then move to describing a Level 1 behavior, perhaps *doesn't write very much.* Level 2 and Level 3 are probably the most important because that is where many of the students are. Level 2 might be *writes fairly often but doesn't develop ideas* and Level 3 *writes often and sometimes develops ideas*

Active Involvement: After students have completed one descriptor, have them judge their own behavior as writers. Where do they fit on the rubric? Students and teacher would then define another descriptor. Starting with (4) , then (1) and finally (2) and (3). Continue process to complete the behavior rubric.

Please note: On days when the class is creating a rubric the mini lesson will take longer.

Remember to look at the example of the rubric at the beginning of the study.



Living the Life of a Writer
Week Four
Lesson Three

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will edit their first published piece.

TEKS – 5.19 EI, 5.20 ACDE

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Now that the students have made their revisions they are ready to edit their work in preparation for publication.

Teach: Explain to students the difference between revision and editing. Review an editing checklist. Suggest to students that they look for one thing at a time e.g. punctuation, grammar, word usage, or spelling.

Active Involvement: Share with a partner what you will edit first in your writing.

Link: Invite students to have a friend edit their piece before conferencing with the teacher for a final edit.

Writing/Conferring Time:

Circulate around the room conducting final revision and editing conferences as appropriate.

Please Note: Students will recopy their edited pieces as their first published piece.

Closure/Sharing Time:

Popcorn Share – Have students share how they began editing their writing piece. For example, have them talk about conversations with a partner on what to edit first, rereading their piece, prioritizing skills to edit, etc.



Living the Life of a Writer
Week Four
Lessons Four and Five

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will participate in creating a rubric for good writing entitled **Rubric for the First Piece of Writing** using the attribute chart **Good Writing Has** which has been growing throughout the study.

TEKS – 5.20 ACDE

Mini Lesson

Connections : Remind students of their previous work creating and using rubrics

Teach: At this point the students have an understanding of a reasonable number of writing strategies and are working to employ these strategies in their own writing. The teacher and students should work together to create a second rubric which addresses the quality of the first piece of writing.

Refer to the charts you've created on **Good Writing Has . . .**

Have students describe the attributes they know good writing has. Start by describing a Level 4 attribute of good writing, perhaps *has details or dialogue*. Then move to describing a Level 1 behavior, perhaps *few details and no dialogue*. Level 2 and Level 3 are probably the most important because that is where many of the students are.

Active Involvement: After students have completed one descriptor, have them judge their own writing. Where do they fit on the rubric?
Students and teacher would then define another descriptor. Starting with (4) , then (1) and finally (2) and (3).
Continue process to complete the good writing rubric.

Active Involvement: Using the same procedure as in the previous lesson on Writing Habits Rubric, negotiate the language for the descriptors.

Link: Ask students to compare their writing to the rubric.

Please note: On days when the class is creating a rubric the mini lesson will take longer.

Remember to look at the example of the rubric at the beginning of the study.



Living the Life of a Writer
Week Five
Lesson One

Mini-Lesson Goal

Students will publish their first piece of writing for the year.

TEKS – 5.19 EGH, 5.20 ACDE

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Now that the students have made their final revisions and edited their work, they are ready to complete the process for publication.

Teach: Explain to students that the final piece of writing for publication must be error free and must be copied over in neat handwriting or word processed using a classroom computer, if available.

Active Involvement: Students will be completing the publication of their first piece of writing.

Link: Tell students that you will be conducting final editing conferences so that they may publish their work.

Writing/Conferring Time:

Conduct final editing conferences with students as appropriate.

Note: It may take two days for all students to finish their writing for publication.



Living the Life of a Writer Week Five Lesson Two

Mini-Lesson Goal

- Students will celebrate this first published piece, contributing to the sense of a literate community.

TEKS – 5.20 ACDE

Mini-Lesson

Connection: Talk about book events at which authors do signings or interviews for new publications.

Teach: Review with students the difference between responding to a published piece and responding to a work in progress.

Sharing: There are many different ways to share published writing. For example, the students each sit at their desk with their writing while another class comes in and walks around the room to read the pieces.

Each visiting child has three sticky notes and can leave one on any child's work if there are not already three there.

Another way of sharing is for each child in the class to read his/her whole piece and children who want to respond raise their hand. The teacher chooses five students to respond on a sticky note.

Closing: Display all of the writing on the bulletin board at a height that is easy for the students to read.

