

Unit 1: Launching the Writing Workshop (2 weeks)

Rationale

Why is this unit important and appropriate for this grade level and at this time of the year?

During this unit, students are introduced to the daily routines of writing workshop. Writers build upon their knowledge and experiences using the writer's notebook through discussion of the many entry styles and purposes the notebook serves. Students consider themselves as writers who write for many purposes. This unit serves as the foundation for the year and therefore motivating and exciting students about writing is a component of the unit.

Learning Outcomes

What do we expect students to know and be able to do at the end of the unit?

Students will:

- Follow the routines and procedures of the writing workshop
- Learn the purpose of keeping a writer's notebook
- Write a variety of entry styles across a range of genres
- Write for many purposes with stamina
- Incorporate craft moves into writing

Minilessons/Notes/Tips

What minilessons will lead to student learning outcomes?

Possible Minilessons:

- Selecting and caring for the writer's notebook
- Organizing ways to set up the writer's notebook
 - Entries section (the largest section)
 - Vocabulary section
 - Mentor text section
 - Strategies learned (during minilessons, guided writing, conferring) section
- Discussing habits for using a writer's notebook (e.g., skip a line, only write on one side of the page; make sections in the notebook for different types of writing)
- Identifying genres and types of writing that should go into a notebook (e.g., observations, memories, questions, wonderings, opinions, lists)
- Discussing where writers get ideas (e.g., expert lists, heart maps, possible topic list in the back of notebook)
- Establishing routines and procedures for what writers do when they think they're done
- Using literature as a springboard for writing ideas (see suggested mentor texts)
- Explaining workshop management procedures (e.g., what to do if you need help and the teacher is conferring, what to do if you finish an entry during writing time)
- Introducing routines for bringing the notebook back and forth from school to home
- Using quick writes as a way to help students develop writing stamina, volume
- Brainstorming craft strategies learned previously and creating an anchor chart (List will differ depending on the strategies the students have learned but some possibilities include the following)
 - Showing not telling
 - Using voice to add interest and engage the reader
 - Choosing words carefully to tell a story using descriptive and precise language
- Incorporating some of the craft strategies reviewed into notebook entries
- Establishing routines for selecting a promising entry to bring out of the notebook onto loose leaf paper

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to expand and revise (i.e., drafting stage of the writing process)

- Editing writing to reflect grade level expectations for grammar, punctuation, capitalization (see Common Core Language Standards)
- Publishing and celebrating writing at the end of the unit

Notes/Tips:

- ***By the end of the unit, students should be writing during the workshop time independently for a minimum of 30 minutes. Students who finish their work related to the minilesson should continue writing in their writer's notebooks as a way to build writing volume and stamina.***
- On Demand Writing #1: After students have published their in process piece at the end of the Unit 1 (and prior to the start of Unit 2) the teacher will have students do an on demand writing piece. Over the course of two writing workshops students will plan and write independently. The teacher will give the following prompt, "write a personal narrative or true story from your life. Use all of what you have learned about personal narrative writing from the past few years as well as Unit 1 to compose your story. You will have two writing workshop periods to work independently on the piece and move through the writing process." The teacher will analyze the student writing to identify student strengths and areas for instruction. Resources (e.g., writing continuum, rubrics) to guide assessment can be found in the District Literacy Binder. The teacher will use the data collected to plan for whole group, small group, and individualized conferences during Unit 2 (Personal Narrative).
- Students edit their pieces daily. Refer to the District Conventions Continuum to determine appropriate convention objectives (punctuation, capitalization, syntax) to teach during the unit. Copies are available in the grade level literacy binders and on the district website http://ww3.mamkschools.org/ela/Units_of_Study.html.
- Be mindful of boy interests when suggesting activities such as decorating the notebook as well as in choosing mentor texts.
- Students should be encouraged to continue writing in their notebooks after meeting the goal of the day's lesson.
- It is very important for students to bring their notebooks home in order to use it as a genuine writing tool. In order for students to view writing as a "life activity" rather than a "school based activity" it is important for them to write outside of the school building. In addition, students will generate many more entries in a short amount of time if they are writing outside of the school day.
- Meet with guided writing groups consistently as a way to differentiate writing instruction.
- Invite students to bring their third grade writer's notebook to class and share and discuss how it was used. Possibilities include the types of writing explored, craft moves attempted and favorite entries.
- Many teachers find it beneficial to have students do quick writes a few times a week. Quick writes are "starters" that writers read and then write rapidly about for approximately ten minutes. The goal is to begin writing right away and to write for the entire time. The essential difference between a quick write and a traditional writing prompt is that quick writes nudge writers to discover topics that matter, not to respond to a question that may have nothing to do with the writer's experience. (See the professional resources for recommended book of quick writes.) Quick writes are done outside of the writing workshop and help students get writing quickly.
- Suggested mentor texts to use during the unit include:
 - *Baseball, Snakes and Summer Squash* by Donald Graves
 - *Hey World Here I am* by Jean Little
 - *Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street* by Roni Schotter
 - *Fireflies* by Julie Brinckloe
 - *The Paperboy* by Dav Pilkey
 - *Apt. 3* by Ezra Jack Keats
- It is critical that students publish work in every writing unit beginning with Unit 1.
- It is important to highlight student work through writing celebrations (read aloud opportunities, silent museum, published pieces become part of the classroom library) and display.
- Students are encouraged to publish writing using word processing tools such as Word or other online publishing tools.
- **To view Grade 4 archived artifacts for the unit please visit the Grade 4 reading/writing page. Select "Resources" from the top nav bar. To access the units of study website use the link http://ww3.mamkschools.org/units_of_study/.**
- To view sample unit specific anchor charts for various units of study in reading and writing use the following link: <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-charts/third-eighth-grade.html>
- To view samples of student writing across genres and grade levels use the link

Professional Resources

What professional resources will be helpful in planning the unit?

- *The Common Core Writing Book* by Gretchen Owocki
- *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing, Grade 4* by Lucy Calkins et al
- *The Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts* by Katie Wood Ray
- *Units of Study for Teaching Writing Grades 3-5* by Lucy Calkins and Marjorie Martinelli (Launching the Writing Workshop, Volume 1)
- *The Art of Teaching Writing* by Lucy Calkins
- *The Writer's Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts* by Katie Wood Ray
- *Boy Writers* by Ralph Fletcher
- *Notebook Know How* by Amy Buckner
- *The Writer's Notebook* by Ralph Fletcher
- *The No Nonsense Guide to Teaching Writing* by Sharon Hill and Judy Davis
- *Guiding Readers and Writers* by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell
- *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K-6* by Lynne R. Dorfman and Rose Cappelli
- *100 Ideas for Writing* by Linda Rief
- *My Quick Writes for Inside Writing* by Donald Graves and Penny Kittle
- *Guided Writing: Practical Lessons, Powerful Results* by Lori D. Oczkus
- http://ww3.mamkschools.org/ela/Units_of_Study.html (See the District Conventions Continuum)