

SO, YOU WANT To Be a WRITER?

How to Write,
Get Published,
and
Maybe
Even
Make It
BIG!

Teacher's Guide

by Vicki
Hambleton &
Cathleen
Greenwood

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Guide prepared by Cathleen Greenwood, author of *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

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About the Book

Designed to inspire creative expression and help aspiring young writers achieve their dreams, *So, You Want To Be a Writer?* takes readers through the fulfilling step-by-step process of becoming a professional writer, from learning how to generate ideas to getting published and promoting your work.

Aspiring writers will learn how to tackle writer's block, improve technique, approach publishers, and more. An updated list of magazines, websites, contests, and book publishers looking for young authors will keep readers' eye on the prize, while exclusive interviews with bestselling authors and young published writers will keep them engaged and inspired.

So, You Want To Be a Writer? includes exclusive insights from well-known authors, such as the late Jurassic Park author Michael Chrichton and fantasy author Amanda Hocking, who self-published her first novels to huge buzz. Profiles on young writers are out there working right now—from a Vanity Fair blogger to a lyricist—give a real-time perspective to the dream profession.

"Soup-to-nuts overview on all aspects of developing a writing career, from picking a genre to publicizing a finished work. Part instructional, part inspirational, this writing primer is a good first stop for budding young scribes."

—Kirkus Reviews

About the Authors



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Dear Teachers,

Welcome to *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*, a kid-friendly book for young writers who want to be inspired, encouraged, informed, and excited about writing...and maybe even get published.

Using accessible language, chapters include engaging openings, enjoyable writing exercises, inspiring interviews with writers of all ages, and writing samples in a variety of genres. There is also practical and pedagogically sound advice on writing for and submitting to contests and publications, and a glossary of writing terms.

In *So, You Want to Be a Writer?* you will find a variety of readings, writing prompts, and other activities that can be used during class time, for homework, and for independent student work. The book was written for young writers to purchase and use on their own, so feel free to allow students to select and move through selected chapters or pages independently. However, if you want to send the message to your students that you value what they are doing to develop their writing skills, be sure to use the coin of the educator's realm: class time. Young writers deserve time in class to get started and work through various readings and writing activities. This guide provides many ideas and resources for you to use with *So, You Want To Be a Writer?* that will complement what you are already doing in your writing curriculum.

In addition, a list of applicable Common Core English Language Arts College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards follows each lesson and activity. Both the book and this guide are solidly aligned with all of the standards, offering you powerful tools to help students develop range and content in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

We hope you enjoy learning and writing alongside your young writers with *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*, and that you too are inspired to share your writing with the world in your own way.

Sincerely,

Cathy Greenwood



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acrostic
advance
archetype
autobiography
bibliography
biography
blog
call for manuscripts
character
characterization
direct description
dialogue

actions
cite/citation
climax
conflict
internal conflict
external conflict
contract
cover letter
dialogue
diary
draft
rough draft
final draft

editor
epilogue
exposition
fable
found poem
free writing
genre
guidelines
imprint
inciting incident
journal
manuscript
market

So, You Want to Be a Writer?
Teacher's Guide

memoir	query
metaphor	reader
models	revise
monologue	rights
personification	royalty
plagiarism	SASE
plot	style guide
point of view	theme
prologue	writer's guidelines
prompt	writing group

Suggestions for Using Components that Appear Throughout *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

Common Core Anchor Standards:

So, You Want to Be a Writer? was written as a guide for young writers. The content and activities are solidly aligned with educators' Common Core Anchor Standards in all areas of English/Language Arts: Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. This *Guide for Teachers and Parents* includes specific references to Common Core Anchor Standards at the end of each lesson and activity, delineating the specific standards that apply in each case. The Common Core Anchor Standards descriptions can be found at the end of this *Guide for Teacher and Parents* along with the abbreviations used to designate specific standards referenced within the lessons and suggestions.

Chapter openings:

Each chapter in *So, You Want to Be a Writer?* begins with a paragraph that directly addresses the reader about what it's like to be a writer in terms of that particular chapter's topic. Written in the second-person voice, these paragraphs are meant to continue the conversation that the book's title suggests, speaking directly to *you*, the reader, who (we hope!) wants to be a writer.

These chapter-opening paragraphs work well as class starters, since they pose essential questions or scenarios relevant to the chapter focus and aims.

Consider asking a student volunteer to read the opening paragraph, then continue having students, taking turns, read the discussion paragraphs that follow and that ultimately lead to activities embedded in the chapter.

Quizzes, questionnaires, checklists, and activities:

(See the Detailed Table of Contents in this teachers' guide to locate these items.)

Each chapter has at least two activities, such as quizzes, fill-in-the-blank character sketches, checklists for running a writing group, checklists for the writing process, and questionnaires connecting students' personality traits to reading and writing genres. Students really enjoy these kinds of activities because they are having fun while thinking more deeply, developing ideas, and learning more about the topics and themselves.

When planning, consider making copies of these hands-on pages if your students are not allowed to write in their books. This way, students can use them on their own in class or for homework and attach them in their journals or binders for future reference.

Be sure to give students a chance to "Turn and Talk" with each other about activities and readings. This will help them develop ownership of the writing topics and skills they have practiced in the activity, learn from each other, and deepen their understanding. Perhaps most important is that this kind of

small-group work is a social activity, promoting solid learning as well as a sense of community among your young writers and in your classroom. To sustain focus, write on the board three things they should discuss with their partners after they have finished the activity.

Consider turning this into a “Think, Pair, Share” activity by asking for volunteers from the pairs to share their insights with the class.

Turn and Talk Focus Statements/Exit Slip:

1. While doing this activity/reading, I noticed that _____

2. One idea that this activity/reading gave me about the topic was _____

3. One thing that I learned from this was _____

(Common Core Standards: R1, R7, SL1, SL4, W5)

Author interviews and profiles (See list below):

Young writers can sometimes feel lonely; they don't always get the same support, recognition, and encouragement that basketball team captains or science contest winners might receive. Each chapter includes at least one interview or profile of a published writer that offers insight and inspiration for kid writers, often describing what writing was like for the published writer while a teenager and that person's experiences while growing as a writer.

Use the interviews within one chosen chapter, or select two or more interviews from the list below that work for your assigned genre or lesson goal. If the interview is followed by the author's writing, be sure to give students time to read the writing as well. Consider having them read it in class or for homework before or after the lesson.

Suggest that your students read these interviews in small groups of four, with one pair of students reading one interview out loud to the other pair (one student in each pair taking the part of the interviewer and the other reading the author's answers). After the groups finish each pair taking the lead, ask them to report to the class out loud, or have each group or student fill out an exit slip to submit at the end of class. Consider using the focus statements below:

Author Interview Report & Focus Statement

1. Student Name(s): The name of this author is _____
2. The author has written (write title and genre) _____
3. One thing the author said in the interview that surprised me was _____
_____ because _____

4. I think the most important thing the author said was (copy a phrase or sentence) _____
_____ because _____

(Common Core Standards: R1, R2, R5, R8, R10, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4)

List of Author Interview and Profiles:

- p. 3 Interview, Bestselling Author: Michael Crichton (*ER*, *Jurassic Park*, *Disclosure*) How One Author Got His Start
- p. 4 Interview, Young Author: Julie Weiner, blogger for *Vanity Fair*
- p. 8 Profile, Young Author: Victoria Ford, national scholarship winner Scholastic Art and Writing Awards
- p. 19 Interview, Young Author: Reeves Wiedeman, fact-checker at the *New Yorker*
- p. 24 Interview, Bestselling Author: Todd Strasser (*The Wave*, the *Help! I'm Trapped!* YA series, et al.) How One Author Finds the "Write" Stuff
- p.27 Profile, Young Author: Alina Mahvish Din, winner Roald Dahl Essay Contest
- p. 39 Interview, Bestselling Author: Wendelin Van Draanen (the *Sammy Keyes* YA mystery series) How One Author Chose Her Genre
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- p. 53 Profile, Young Author: Zakiyyah Madyun, poet
- p. 59 Profile, Young Author: Jemma Leech, winner Scholastic Arts and Writing Awards
- p. 75 Profile, Young Author: Jesse Shulman, winner Scholastic Art and Writing Awards
- p. 87 Interview, Bestselling Author: Chris Crutcher (*Ironman*, *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*, *Stotan!*) One Author's Writing Process
- p. 90 Profile, Young Author: Alexandra Franklin, portfolio gold medalist, Scholastic Art and Writing

Awards, and editor *Best Teen Writing 2011*

- p. 103 Interview, Bestselling Author: Amanda Hocking: "A Self-Made Success Story"
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- p. 147 Interview, Young Author: Mattie J.T. Stepanek, bestselling poet at age 11
- p. 154–157 Real Writers Talk about Their Careers
 - p. 154 Screenwriter, Cynthia Whitcomb; Poet, Michael Strelow
 - p. 155 TV Writer, Vicki Hambleton; Editor, Claudia Wallis; Journalist, Janis Campbell
 - p. 156 Playwright, Bridget Carpenter; Children's Book Writer, Debbie Dadery
 - p. 157 Freelance Writer, Kelly Milner Hall
- p. 159 Interview, Editor: Stacy Cortigano, copy editor
- p. 175 Interview, Young Author: Nicholas Feitel, film/arts/theater critic

Published Writing by Young Authors (See list below):

We all know that it is critical for writers to read samples of the genres that they are expected or want to write. However, it is often difficult for teachers and parents to find age-appropriate, well-written, engaging pieces by young writers. Chapters in *So, You Want to Be a Writer?* contain award-winning, published pieces written by successful young authors, accompanied by interviews or profiles of the writers.

Suggestions for using the pieces as writing samples:

When using a specific chapter for a class lesson, have students read the excerpts included in that chapter. Ask students to write down three reasons why that piece was chosen to be included in that chapter, particularly how the piece reflects ideas or concepts that the students learned in the chapter. Encourage them to use words or phrases from the chapter to explain their ideas. If volunteers share with the class, list their key phrases on the board to give the class a guide to what they have learned and seen applied in the writing.

(Common Core Standards R9, R10)

Ask your students to read the piece that accompanies an author interview and have them discuss where it reflects or echoes an idea from the author's words in the interview.

(Common Core Standards R9, R10)

Use the list of writing samples below to choose pieces written in the genre of a specific writing assignment. As a prewriting assignment, have students read the samples in small groups and generate lists of writing elements the pieces contain (such as methods of structure and organization, use of language, narrative point of view) that the students will need to use in their own work in that genre.

(Common Core Standards R5, R9, R10)

Choose writing pieces from the list below to use as models in form, genre, or content. Read one or two pieces out loud (or share on a screen or in handouts, one or two samples) before having students do a

quick write or free write based on one of the twenty writing prompts in chapter 5.

(Common Core Standards R5, R6, R9, R10, W9, W10)

List of Writing Samples: Young Writers' Published and Award-Winning Writing in *So, You Want To Be a Writer?*

- p. 8 Personal Essay/Memoir: "Like an Event Horizon" by Victoria Ford
- p. 54 Poetry: "No Such Thing As Silence" by Zakivyah Madyun
- p. 59 Journalism: "Read Like A Wolf Eats," Gary Paulsen Tells Young Readers" by Jemma Leech
- p. 69 Poetry: "Learning A Language" Sam Sack
- p. 71 Poetry: "The Wonderful World of Plastic" Mary Charlotte Borgen
- p. 75 Personal Essay/Memoir: "Split Ends" by Jesse Shulman
- p. 90 Non-fiction: "Editor's Introduction" by Alexandra Franklin
- p. 92 Short Story: "Cheating at Cards" by Alexandra Franklin
- p. 95 Poetry: "At a Dinner Party the Night Before the Divorce Is Finalized" by Alexandra Franklin
- p. 107 Short Story: "The Spectrum" by Kevin Hong
- p. 131 Query Letter: by Daryl Bernstein
- p.150 Poetry: "About Wishing" by Mattie Stepanek

Note: TeenInk.com is an excellent resource for teen writing in all genres. Check it out for more writing samples to use in class and encourage your students to submit their writing for online publication.

Suggestions for Using Chapters in *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

Chapter 1 What's It Like to Be a Writer?

This beginning of this chapter is fun to read out loud in class, having students take turns with paragraphs.

When they come to the quiz on page 2, ask them to do the activity and continue reading silently.

Consider having students work in pairs to read the author interview and writing at the end of the chapter, using the Author Interview Report and Focus Statements" on page 9 of this guide.

(Common Core Standards: R1, R2, R5, R8, R10, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4)

Chapter 2 Getting Started with the "Write" Stuff: Time, Tools, and Turf

This is a great chapter to share with parents at the beginning of the school year. Many parents want to know they can help their children do well in writing; this chapter offers checklists of writing tools and home resources that are helpful for parents as well as their children.

This chapter works well as silent reading during class time and for homework. Suggest that students do a "Turn and Talk" (see p. 8 in this guide) to generate a short list of the pages they found most helpful and why.

(Common Core Standards: R1, R7, SL1, SL4, W5)

Consider having students work in pairs to read the author interview and writing at the end of the chapter using the Author Interview Report and Focus Statements on page 9 of this guide.

(Common Core Standards: R1, R2, R5, R8, R10, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4)

Chapter 3 Poetry, Fiction, Sci-Fi and More: Exploring Different Genres

Read the opening paragraph to the class and then have students continue silently, taking the quiz "What's Your Genre?"

After they have taken the quiz, students can break into genre groups based on their personalized results on page 33 of the book.

10–17 points = journalism and non-fiction

18–25 points = screenwriting and other scripts

26–33 points = fiction

34–41 points = sci-fi, fantasy, mystery

42–50 points = poetry

In their groups, students can read the remaining sections that apply to their genres.

Instruct the groups to “Turn and Talk” to each other about their genres and then complete a “Turn and Talk” exit slip to share with the rest of the class or submit upon the end of class.

(Common Core Standards: R1, R7, SL1, SL4, W5)

Consider having students work in pairs to read the author interviews of the television writer and the lyricist using the “Author Interview Report and Focus Statements” on page 9 of this guide.

(Common Core Standards: R1, R2, R5, R8, R10, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4)

Chapter 4 Choosing Your Topic: What Will You Write About?

This chapter works well for silent reading.

Assign students to write answers to the list of questions on page 51 of the book. This way they will generate a list of personalized writing topics that they can go back to when they are stuck.

Chapter 5: Writing Exercises (and Prompts): How to Get Unstuck Fast

Content: This chapter contains twenty writing prompts as well as detailed guidelines for free writing or quick writing, getting started, and getting unstuck (see list below). This is a goldmine for teachers as well as for writers; there are plenty of writing starters for many writing classes and homework assignments.

Differentiation: The writing prompts are varied to appeal to different kinds of learners and writers and can be applied to all genres. Many of the prompts can be used more than once by simply changing the topic or physical prop suggested (for example, use different postcards or photos on different topics).

Process, Range, and Content: Be sure your students have one place to keep their writing that they bring to class every day or every writing day (for example, start a weekly Wednesday Is Writing Day). This can be a journal, notebook, binder, or flash drive if your classes have easy access to computers. The idea is to have one place for writers to keep their quick writes and free writes so that they can go back to them and choose what to type up and develop into solid, polished pieces.

(Common Core Standards W5, W10)

Lessons, Short or Long: Each writing prompt can be as short as a ten-minute quick write or as long as a full class period, with additional days for expanding, revising, getting input from readers, conferencing, etc. (See chapter 6 in the book for activities to use during the writing process.)

(Common Core Standards R10, SL6, W5, W10)

Quick Writes: These are terrific ways to model good writing while generating lots of story starters, first

paragraphs, and first drafts to fill student writing journals. Use excerpts from the writing samples in the book or from literature you use in class. Quick writes can be used for any or all of the twenty writing prompts in chapter 6.

Directions for a Quick Write:

1. Choose a poem or short narrative excerpt to project on the screen or whiteboard.
2. Direct students to take out pencils and paper and write their names, the date, and “Inspired by {the author of the projected piece}_____.”
3. Read the piece out loud to the students.
4. Direct them to do one of the two following things:
 - a. Choose a word, phrase, or line from the published piece and copy it on your page. Then, as quickly as you can, write all that it brings to mind for you. (Do not worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar, paragraphs, or stanzas. Write as much as you can for the next three minutes, letting the words lead to more words. It is perfectly fine if you move from one topic to another.)
 - b. Read the passage carefully to yourself. Then, as quickly as you can, write all that it brings to mind for you. (Do not worry about spelling punctuation, grammar, paragraphs, or stanzas. Write as much as you can for the next three minutes, letting the words lead to more words. It is perfectly fine if you move from one topic to another.)

Connect: Choose a writing prompt that connects in style or content with literature your class has read, or with literary techniques and terms. For example, use the prompt “Can’t Touch It, Taste It...” for working with abstract concepts and personification, or use the prompt “Halloween All Year” to explore characterization.

Go Public! Encourage students to revise and finalize their writing. (See this guide’s notes on chapter 11 for more specifics on how to do this in your classroom.)

Submit finalized writing for publication in your class wiki, school literary magazine, or newspaper.

Have students read their pieces out loud to the class. Authors can read their own work or have another volunteer read the writing out loud. Plays can be read with different students taking the roles.

Submit for publications or to contests listed in chapter 11 of *So, You Want To Be a Writer?*, such as TeenInk.com, *Bookworm* magazine, Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, etc.

(Common Core Standards W4, W5, W6, W10)

List of Writing Prompts with Teaching Suggestions:

Writing Prompts:

Behind-the-Scenes Fairy Tale: (write a short story using first-person point of view, characterization, allusion, and archetypes) p. 58

Have students work in pairs to generate a list of three fairy-tale characters that might be fun to use. Then ask volunteers to write their favorites on the board. This will help students brainstorm broad choices from which to choose for writing, while having fun together remembering fairy tales and learning some they did not know.

Writing in the first person stretches and develops skills in characterization and point of view, while developing new ideas from archetypal characters and plot events.

Go Public! Encourage students to revise and finalize their writing, using Go Public! suggestions above for chapter 5 and in chapter 6 of *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

(Common Core Standards SL1, SL4, R6, W4, W10, L3)

Man, I Loved That (write a review) p. 58

It's fun to share your opinion, and young writers enjoy doing this even more when they are reviewing something that they already know about, such as music, concerts, books, or school plays.

Show students some samples of reviews of books, movies, music, concerts, or plays, or ask students to suggest a couple reviews to share with the class. TeenInk.com is an excellent source for reviews of all kinds written by teen writers.

Encourage a class discussion of elements of reviews that the students notice, including author/artist specifics, how reviewers use specific evidence/details to back opinions, etc.

Go Public! Encourage students to revise and finalize their writing, using Go Public! suggestions above for Chapter 5 and in chapter 6 of *So, You Want To Be a Writer?*

(Common Core Standards R1, R2, R4, R5, R6, SL1, SL3, W1, W2, W4, W5, W7)

Reality Field Trip (plan, conduct, and write an interview) p. 58

Select sample interviews in *So, You Want to Be a Writer?* (see the list of interviews earlier in this teach-

ing guide) or place like TeenInk.com to be read in class or for homework.

Facilitate a class discussion of the different formats of the sample interviews (question and answer vs. prose narrative with quotes woven into the prose), listing the pros and cons of each format on the board as students suggest them.

Direct students to work in pairs to generate a list of the elements that make a good interview.

Ask students to name people, specific individuals or those in certain professions, they might like to interview or would enjoy reading about in an interview. List these names/titles on the board. Have each student write down three of these and then decide on one to actually interview.

Go Public! Encourage students to revise and finalize their writing, using Go Public! suggestions above for chapter 5 and in chapter 6 of *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

(Common Core Standards R1, R2, R4, R5, R6, SL1, SL3, W1, W2, W4, W5, W7)

A “Secret” Conversation (brainstorm, list, characterize, write a script) p. 61

Select and provide for students sample scripts for students from your classroom library or curriculum, *Scholastic Scope* magazine, *Read* magazine, or TeenInk.com.

Facilitate a class discussion of the different format and components of a script, such as setting descriptions, stage directions, use of the narrator as an actor, prologue, and epilogue.

Direct students to work in pairs to generate a list of the ways in which writing a script is different from writing a short story, such as having to characterize using dialogue, format, etc.

Encourage pairs to “Turn and Talk” to another pair about which genre (script vs. short story) might be easier for them to write, and which genre might be easier for them to read.

Go Public! Encourage students to revise and finalize their writing, then ask friends to volunteer to perform different roles while reading the script to the class. Go Public! suggestions are included above and for chapter 5 and in chapter 6 of *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

(Common Core Standards R1, R2, R4, R5, R6, SL1, SL3, W1, W2, W4, W5, W7)

Acrostic Poetry (write acrostic poetry) p. 61

Read this prompt with students in class, along with the student sample poems, and discuss the structure of acrostics.

Consider using curriculum topics for the acrostic spine words, such as words/names/titles from:

Characters in the book being read during shared class reading or independent reading

Vocabulary words

Literary terms and techniques

Titles of books, poems, plays, speeches

Author names

Go Public! Encourage students to revise and finalize their writing, using Go Public! suggestions above for chapter 5 and in chapter 6 of *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

(Common Core Standards R5, R9, R10, W4, W5, W10)

Fabulous Fables (read fables, research proverbs, write a fable) p. 62

Read a few sample fables to the class, or have students read them to each other in groups. One good resource is Aesops-Fables.org.

Facilitate a discussion of this genre to identify key characteristics, such as the use of animals with human characteristics, the short length, use of action and dialogue, and a moral at the end.

Invite volunteers to repeat the moral, what's often become a common saying, from the sample fables while you write them on the board for the class to see. Ask for more proverbs or wise sayings and add them to the list, such as: "Slow and steady wins the race;" "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again;" "Luck favors the prepared;" and "The early bird gets the worm." Discuss their meanings. Assign students to ask parents, grandparents, or other relatives for their favorite wise sayings or proverbs and bring at least two to share with the class.

Post a list of the proverbs and wise sayings from students and the sample fables. Instruct students to choose and copy three or four that they might want to use in their own fable and then select one for their writing.

Invite students to brainstorm a list of animals for their fables and the personality traits or qualities that are connected to these animals, such as fox = crafty; bull = strong, violent temper; peacock = vain; eagle = proud, patriotic.

Go Public! Encourage students to revise and finalize their writing, using Go Public! suggestions above for chapter 5 and in chapter 6 of *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

(Common Core Standards R1, R2, R4, R5, R6, SL1, SL3, W1, W2, W4, W5, W7)

Can't Touch, Taste, Smell, Hear, or See It, But...(create a character using personification of an abstract concept or a season) p. 63

Students enjoy the creative possibilities in this assignment using personification, especially the sugges-

tions for writing scenarios in their world with their fictional characters.

Go Public! Encourage students to revise and finalize their writing, using Go Public! suggestions above for chapter 5 and in chapter 6 of *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

(Common Core Standards W1, W2, W4, W5, W7)

Memoirs-R-Us (write a memoir, using dialogue and imagery.) p. 63

Read this prompt in class, noting suggestions on using points of view and including dialogue and imagery.

Instruct students to read the sample memoirs on pages 8 and 75 (“Like an Event Horizon” by Victoria Ford and “Split Ends” by Jesse Shulman). In each case, have students identify examples of imagery, dialogue, and point of view.

Have students do a quick write to list as many personal memory events they can think of, at least five, in two minutes.

Have each student star two events that might be juicy topics for memoirs, then double star one choice... and start free writing!

Go Public! Encourage students to revise and finalize their writing, using Go Public! suggestions above for chapter 5 and in chapter 6 of *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

(Common Core Standards R1, R2, R4, R5, W1, W2, W4, W5, W7)

Odes to the Ordinary (write an ode to something ordinary in your life, using the formal techniques of this poetic form.) p. 64

Project on the board or distribute copies of Pablo Neruda’s “Ode to My Socks.”

Generate discussion about what students notice about this poem’s language and content.

Direct students to read this writing prompt out loud from the book, starring favorite possible topics for their own ode or adding a few topics of their own.

Give students time in class to write a short ode.

Go Public! Encourage students to revise and finalize their writing, using Go Public! suggestions above for chapter 5 and in chapter 6 of *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

(Common Core Standards R1, R2, R4, R5, W1, W2, W4, W5, W7)

You’ve Got Mail! (write a letter to an author or public figure.) p. 65

This prompt contains lots of suggestions in a checklist format for what to include in a letter to an author or public figure.

Go Public! Teach students letter format and how to locate addresses for authors and public officials. (For sample letters, go to the Library of Congress's LettersAboutLiterature.org for winning letters to authors by young writers.) Provide support (and envelopes!) for students to finalize, print, address, and mail their letters.

Some students will get replies; do encourage them to bring these to class. Celebrate them by reading the replies out loud and posting copies on your class bulletin board Wall of Fame.

Go Public! Have students write letters to authors (dead or alive) and enter the Letters About Literature contest sponsored by the Library of Congress. Winners are celebrated with prizes and publication on the website.

(Common Core Standards R1, R2, W1, W4, W5, W9, W10)

Writing with Props

Here are ten more writing prompts. The difference between these and those in the list above is that these prompts use props. For each prompt, locate the props needed ahead of time. Start the lesson by involving the class in reading the directions in the book. Then, supply and engage the students with the suggested props...and let the free writing begin!

Writing from a Photo. (use photos to inspire poems, short stories, memoirs, essays from various points of view.) p. 67

For interdisciplinary writing, collaborate with your students' social studies teachers to use photos from historical events or of historical figures that students are studying. For art and imagery, use postcards of classic paintings (Van Gogh works particularly well). For art that really tells a concrete story, use postcards of Norman Rockwell's work. All of these can be located and purchased online or in museums and art stores.

For memoir or personal essay writing, have students bring in some photos from home.

(Common Core Standards: W3, W4, W5, W10, R6, R7)

Use an Author as a Model (write to model a writer's style in use of language, sentence structure, and organization.) p. 67

This prompt provides a clear model of what students should do. It quotes a passage from *Alice in Wonderland* and then rewrites it, modeling Lewis Carroll's use of language, sentence structure, and organization.

Select and distribute copies of an excerpt or first paragraph from a work you have already read or studied in class (such as "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros, or *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, or "The Lady or the Tiger" by Frank Stockton). Direct the students to rewrite the paragraph, and encourage them to continue

with their writing, using the prompt's guidance.

Be sure to remind students to give credit to the author, using "A Note on Plagiarism" on page 68.

(Common Core Standards: L3, L4, W4, W5, W10, R4, R5, R6, R10)

Found Poems (write a poem using words from another written piece) p. 69

Found poems often turn out to be funny, and students love that. In class, read this prompt's description of how to write them and have volunteers read the sample poems written by young writers.

Give students time in the library or for homework to locate sources for their found poems and bring them to class. Some suggested sources: directions for use of a tool, toy, or computer game; school code of conduct; introduction to a textbook; review of a movie, book, concert, or CD; news article; editorial.

Allow writers time in the computer lab to use their sources and compose their poems. This exercise often requires much revising and shifting of line breaks, lines, and phrases, so it is much easier to write and revise on a computer.

(Common Core Standards: W4, W5, W10, R4, R5, R6, R7)

Journal Jewels (read over journals or writing notebooks to generate writing ideas) p. 71

Give students time in class to read over their journals and highlight or star words, phrases, or passages that they think are particularly strong.

Have them do a quick write using one of their selections.

Encourage students to extend, revise, finalize, and go public with these pieces, which may be in any genre they choose.

(Common Core Standards: R1, R4, W3, W4, W5, W8, W10)

Pet Rock (Generate free writing with imagination and an object) p. 71

Bring in some rocks to distribute to the class or assign students to bring in their own.

Ask a volunteer to read out loud the prompt directions.

Have the students do a quick write using the prompt (and their rock, of course!).

Encourage students to extend, revise, finalize, and go public with these pieces, which may be in any genre they choose.

(Common Core Standards: W3, W4, W5, W10)

Halloween All Year (write an interview, poem, or short story inspired by a new persona using appropriate characterization techniques in first or third person) p. 71

Invest in some of the wonderful cardboard masks available in museums and online. Try to find masks that cover only the top half of the face; they look very realistic, and they encourage students to speak and have dialogues with each other. Masks of people from different historical eras or animals work well.

Distribute the masks. Have students put them on, and encourage them to walk around and become the persona of their masks, having conversations with each other. Put one on and start the fun, introducing yourself and demonstrating your new persona with a different voice and posture.

Show students some models of poems that convey strong characterization and persona, such as “Minstrel Man” by Langston Hughes, “Richard Corey” by Edward Arlington Robinson, or “Bee, I’m Expecting You” by Emily Dickinson. Allow time for brief discussions of characterization and point of view.

Give students time to free write with their mask in front of them to focus on their characters using first- or third-person point of view.

Encourage students to extend, revise, finalize, and go public with these pieces, which may be in any genre they choose.

(Common Core Standards: W4, W5, W10, R1, R4, R5, R6, R7, R9, SL1, SL4)

Spin Off a Missing Chapter (write a chapter the author left out, or from a minor character’s point of view)
p. 72

Use this prompt with literature studied in class. This kind of writing often reveals the students’ understanding of plot and character, while allowing them to think about and analyze these elements in new ways.

Give students time to share their writing with each other and respond by pointing out what surprised them or what they noticed that was especially strong. They enjoy and learn the new ways into literature that their peers provide with these chapters.

Encourage students to extend, revise, finalize, and go public with these pieces, which may be in any genre they choose.

(Common Core Standards: W4, W5, W10, R1, R4, R5, R6, R7, R9, SL1, SL4)

Smell-O-Rama (use the sense of smell to generate, extend, and revise writing) p. 72

Put together separate small baggies of items with memory-evoking fragrances, such as cinnamon sticks, oregano, garlic, lemon peels, peppermints, rose petals, baby powder, popcorn, vanilla beans, or baby oil on a cotton ball.

Clip and collect peel-off perfume samples from store catalogs and magazines. The scent strips are often a full page, so cut them into two or three pieces. Collect enough to distribute at least one scent strip to each student. These are fun to hand out while students are writing short stories or poems; ask them to

stop and smell, and then continue writing with the scent's inspiration in mind.

Encourage students to extend, revise, finalize, and go public with these pieces, which may be in any genre they choose.

(Common Core Standards: W4, W5, W10)

Memories in the Attic (write a memoir, story, or poem inspired by childhood toys or artifacts in different personas) p. 73

Ask students to volunteer favorite toys and artifacts from childhood and create a list on the board to help them share ideas for topics.

Ask a volunteer to read the prompt's directions out loud.

Have students do a quick write using the prompt and their chosen topic. Suggest that they write in the voice of the toy or artifact.

Give students time to share their writing with each other and respond by pointing out what surprised them or what they noticed that was especially strong.

Encourage students to extend, revise, finalize, and go public with these pieces, which may be a poem or short story.

(Common Core Standards: W4, W5, W10, R1, R4, R5, R6, R7, R9, SL1, SL4)

10. Write a Script Based on Someone Else's Story p. 73

Use this prompt with literature you are reading in class, assigning students different chapters or parts of chapters to rewrite in script format. This is a great way for them to be involved in character, plot, language, and author's intent.

The editors of *Scholastic Scope* magazine and *Read* magazine often publish scripts that they have written as adaptations of classic novels. Consider showing a few of their issues to show as models of this genre.

Encourage students to extend, revise, finalize, and go public with their scripts.

Ask students to volunteer their scripts to be read in class as a way of going public. Make copies of the scripts and have students take parts and read aloud as a class for one script, or in small groups with different scripts.

(Common Core Standards: R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R10, W3, W4, W5, W10, SL1, SL6)

Chapter 6 The Process: Writing and Revising

This chapter works well when read out loud in class, having students take turns with each new paragraph.

In user-friendly language and layout, it presents the basic elements of good writing structure and the steps in the writing process have probably already encountered in English/Language Arts classes. It also includes fill-ins (character sketches and setting sketches), as well as author interviews (bestselling author Chris Crutcher and Scholastic Writing Contest award-winner Alexandra Franklin).

It is a good idea to use chapter 6 at the start of a writing assignment, so that students are learning about the writing process in the context of their own writing. Students enjoy doing the fill-ins for setting and character as a way to get them started in their writing. Download lists of baby names with the names' meanings or buy a few of those small books of names for babies that are sold at supermarket checkouts.

As students read the descriptions of the writing process, the elements of good writing structure, and the comments from author interviews, they will become more proficient in connecting these concepts to the process that they will be using to complete their own writing piece.

In the section on plot elements, each plot element (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution) is explained separately with an example from the plot of *The Wizard of Oz* to illustrate the element.

Before having the class read this section, you should probably review the basic plot of *The Wizard of Oz*. (Common Core Standards R1, R4, R5, R6)

When you read this chapter out loud in class with students taking turns, have one or two students at the board to write down key words and terms, such as *characterization* and *internal conflict*. You can cue the volunteers on when and what to write as the terms are encountered during the students' oral reading. By the end of the chapter, your board will be filled with a helpful list of the terms involved in plot elements and writing process. Point out to students that the terms are explained and defined within the chapter, and most are also defined in the Glossary at the end of the book.

List of Writing Process Terms and Techniques in chapter 6:

first draft	terization	climax/turning point
final draft	indirect description/charac-	falling action
conflict	terization	conclusion/resolution
external conflict	dialogue	pre-write or free write
internal conflict	setting	responses
character	setting sketch	revise
character sketch	plot	edit
characterization	exposition	submission
direct description/charac-	rising action/build-up	publication

At the end of chapter 6 there are writing pieces by Alexandra Franklin, Scholastic Writing Awards winner, published young author, and editor. These pieces are very good examples of the process and elements of

good structure explained in chapter 6. Consider using the following activities to help students see the process and techniques at work in this young author's writing.

Writing Sample, Non-fiction: "Editor's Introduction" by Alexandra Franklin p. 90

Have students read this writing sample in pairs, taking turns with paragraphs. Then have the pairs work together to complete the following sentence starters:

Responses to "Editor, Best Teen Writing 2011" by Alexandra Franklin

1. Name(s) _____
2. The purpose of this writing piece is _____

3. It is meant for an audience of _____

4. The inciting incident that appears in the first paragraph is (describe) _____

5. One sentence that seems strong to me is _____
because _____

(Common Core Standards R1, R2, R4, R5, R10, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4)

Writing Sample, Short Story: "Cheating At Cards" by Alexandra Franklin p. 92

Have students read this story and identify the author's use of plot elements and a few writing techniques. Do this through a "Think, Pair, Share" activity. Write the following directions on the board or make copies and distribute to students. When students have finished, have them share their annotations with a partner, and then ask the pairs to volunteer their selections as you go through the list.

Read this story and underline and label in the margins where you notice the author's use of the following techniques:

- inciting incident
- direct description
- indirect description/characterization
- internal conflict
- external conflict
- climax/turning point
- dialogue
- resolution

Share your annotations with your partner.

Be prepared to share your examples with the class.

(Common Core Standards R1, R2, R4, R5, R10, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4)

Chapter 7 You've Written Your Masterpiece: Now What? p. 97

What Is a Reader? and Writing Groups: Use the suggestions in this section to create small groups in your class to share writing on a regular basis, perhaps every two weeks or once a month. You will be giving your young writers the wonderful gift of a writing community with time to share, hear the writing of others, and respond as readers and writers.

What to Ask Your Reader is an invaluable tool for your students (and their parents!). It explains how to respond to writing without just saying "Cool!" or correcting spelling and typos. There are seven questions from which writers can choose to ask their readers. These questions generate thoughtful and critical responses that support, encourage, and enlighten the writers.

Consider making copies of the seven questions on page 101 to distribute and facilitate reader responses while in writing groups.

Chapter 8 How To Get Published: Creating a Proposal, & Chapter 9 Getting Published: What to Do If They Say No—What to Do If They Say Yes!

Suggest chapters 8 and 9 to students who are interested in submitting for book publication. These chapters include are all the nuts and bolts required for this big step.

Do not miss reading the interview with Amanda Hocking on her phenomenal success in self-publishing and e-books. Be sure to share this with your students. p. 103

Chapter 10 Writing as a Career: You Mean I Can Get Paid for That?

This is a great chapter to read when kids start wondering why they need to keep learning about writing. It offers a wealth of interviews and descriptions of the huge variety of careers in writing.

Real Writers Talk About Their Careers: These pages offer short quotes that are enlightening and inspiring. A great list of other writing careers is on page 157.

Chapter 11 Resources for Writers

You and your classroom can become a publishing resource for your young writers! In fact, as your students'

English/Language Arts teacher, you *should* do this. After all, who else will? And when students realize that they are writing for real audiences and real purposes, their motivation to write well, revise, and finalize increases enormously. When students are encouraged to share writing with each other and the world, they read and write in a large variety of styles and genres and are motivated to grow and learn as writers in a community of writers. This is writing for more than a grade. It is writing for real.

Common Core Standards: The bonus is that by doing this, you are supporting all of the Common Core Standards, and especially the most difficult ones that refer to depth of range and content in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Ways to Create Classroom Supports for Publishing Writers:

Create a class-book binder prominently displayed in the classroom in which students can publish their finalized writing pieces. Have a student volunteer decorate the cover. Encourage students to read their peers' writing in the class book (give time in class and during study hall). Be sure to display this on parent and grandparent visiting days.

Create a page on your class wiki for the class book. This way students can not only read other's writing but also add comments.

Schedule a monthly author's day so that students can go public by reading (or having a friend read for them) their published pieces to the class.

Create a bulletin board on which to display places to go public with writing.* As the year progresses, post flyers for contests and calls for manuscripts, and copies of magazines that publish young writers.

*See *Get Your Writing Published* for annotated lists of where to submit a variety of writing.

Create a submissions box and display it for easy use in the classroom. Label a folder for each publication or contest that you are encouraging your students to enter. Tell students to drop the hard copies of their writing in the appropriate folders after checking that they have included the contact info required by the organizations and magazines. Go through the box every few weeks and mail the writing submissions/entries for the students.

Remind your students to go public with writing frequently, pointing to the bulletin board whenever you have them do free writing or quick writing, when a new contest comes in, or if a deadline is coming up.

Choose some reference books to have on your classroom library shelf for student reference: