

A D R I E N N E G E A R

Powerful Writing Structures

Brain Pocket Strategies
for Supporting a Year-Long
Writing Program.



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for Supporting a Year-Long
Writing Program

Adrienne Gear



Pembroke Publishers Limited

To Richard, Spencer, and Oliver — always and with love

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Contents

Preface 6

Introduction 7

1: A Balanced Writing Program 9

Writing Structures and Brain Pockets 9

Introducing Brain Pocket Writing 11

Elements of a Balanced Writing Program 13

Formative Writing Assessment and Responsive Teaching 14

Writing Joy 14

Writing Goals 15

Writing Routine 16

Mini Lessons 17

Word Work 17

Independent Writing 18

Anchor Books and Mentor Texts 19

Writing Conferences 19

Implementing Weekly Practice Writes 21

Introductory Lesson 22

The Importance of Planning 22

Draft Day 23

Revising and Editing 24

2: Memory Pocket Writing: Personal Narrative 37

Walking Stories 37

Walking Story Topics and Anchor Books 38

Mini Lessons for Walking Stories 39

Word Choice: Triple-Scoop Words 40

Interesting Details 41

Organization Drawers 45

Sensory Details 46

Similes 48

Personification 50

Event Stories 57

Introductory Lessons 58

Deconstructing Event Stories 58

Planning Event Stories 58

Mini Lessons for Event Stories 60

Transition Words 60
Stretching the Moment 62
Effective Event Story Endings 63

3: Fact Pocket Writing: Nonfiction 67

Introducing Nonfiction Writing 69
Text Structures 69
Text Features 71

Descriptive Writing 76

Introductory Lesson 77
Mini Lessons for Description 78
Dash Facts Research 78
Putting the Facts Together 80
Hook Your Reader with a Great Beginning 81
Find Your Voice 82
Too Much Icing 83
Effective Endings for Description 83
Descriptive Writing in the Content Areas 85

Instructional Writing 95

Introductory Lesson: What? What? How? 96
Mini Lessons for Instruction 97
The SAD Formula 97
Text Features for Instruction 98
How-To Tips 99
Expert Writing 99
Instructional Writing in the Content Areas 101
How to Be an Animal 101
How to Be People 103
Indigenous Ways of Knowing 104

Persuasive Writing 114

Introductory Lesson: What? Why? Why? Why? What Was That Again? 115
Mini Lessons for Persuasion 116
The Language of Persuasion 116
Planning 117
Effective Introductions: The Top of the Diamond 119
Focusing on the Why 121
Effective Endings: The Bottom of the Diamond 122
Persuasion in the Content Areas 124
Catalogues 124
Bubblegum Letters 124
Famous People Persuasion 124
Everyday Inventions 125

Comparison Writing 134

Introductory Lesson 134
Mini Lessons for Comparison 136
The Language of Comparison 136
Independent Practice 137
Comparison in the Content Areas 138

Comparing Animals in Science 139
Comparing Early Humans/Civilizations in Social Studies 139

Explanatory Writing 145

Introductory Lesson 145
Mini Lessons for Explanation Writing 147
 Modeling Explanatory Writing 147
 Flow Charts and Diagrams 147
Explanation Writing in the Content Areas 148

Biography Writing 154

Introductory Lesson: Who? What? Where? When? How? Wow! 155
Mini Lessons for Biography Writing 156
 Time Lines 156
 Past Mini Lessons 156
 Biography of a Classmate 156
Biography in the Content Areas 157
 Change Agents 159
 Author Biographies 161

4: Imagination Pocket Writing: Story Writing 168

Introductory Lesson 169
Mini Lessons for Story Writing 170
 What's the Problem? 170
 Character Development 172
 Planning the Plot 173
 The Story-Writing Process 174

Final Thoughts 189

Acknowledgments 189

Professional Resources 191

Index 193

1 A Balanced Writing Program

Writing Structures and Brain Pockets

It's hard to bake cookies without a recipe. You can guess how much flour and baking soda to add, how hot the oven should be, and how long to bake them, but without knowing the exact formula, it is unlikely your cookies will turn out. They might resemble cookies, and you may have included high-quality chocolate chips and expensive butter, but they likely won't look very appealing or taste very good. It's the same with writing: if you don't have the recipe and know the formula, it is likely your writing won't turn out. You may have included some great words, some impressive literary techniques, and your capitals and periods, but the writing falls flat. You get where I'm going. Without knowing the recipe, it's hard to bake; without knowing the text structure, it's hard to write.

Text structure is the key to successful writing. It's the keys to the car, the frame to the house, the combination to the safe, the recipe for the cookies. Every piece of writing, whether a persuasive letter, a story, or a comparative essay, has its own unique structure. Without knowing what that structure is, writing a successful piece is as about as likely as baking delicious and beautiful cookies without a recipe. (Okay, enough with the cookie analogy!)

Often, I hear friends with children in middle and high school saying their kids are “stuck” in their English homework because they don't know how to write their essay, story, or report. And the most likely reason they are stuck is not that they have nothing to say, but is instead that they don't know how to organize their thoughts. In a school year, students are expected to be able to write a wide range of different writing forms—from persuasive to narrative, from report to comparative. But how many of us are actually teaching our students explicitly about the importance of knowing the text structure for each of these forms? When you know the structure, frame, or skeleton of a piece of writing, it helps you organize your ideas and then the “filling in” becomes much easier.

We write differently for different purposes. In a balanced writing program, students are exposed to a variety of different writing forms throughout the year. Explicit instruction in the structure, language, and traits of that particular writing structure is provided and students are given many opportunities to practice. Among the different structures children need to be comfortable writing in elementary school are personal narrative or personal recount (there are two substructures within this category), nonfiction writing (there are several substructures within this category, including description, instruction, and persuasion), and story writing (one main structure). Each is unique, with its own form, language, and writing techniques. These different forms of writing are not intended to be taught in a single one-off writing lesson, but rather are taught, modeled, and practiced with many different topics over several months.

Brain Pocket Writing has become my way of helping students understand different types of writing, and I thought it would be a useful way of organizing my year-long writing program. Based on the three Brain Pockets—Memory, Fact, and Imagination—I developed a plan to focus on one form of writing per term. The order you teach them is entirely up to you, however, there are reasons behind my choices. I like to start my year focusing on Memory Pocket Writing (personal narrative) because it allows me to get to know my students through their writing. Also, because it is a relatively easy structure, it allows me to introduce a variety of literary devices (word choice, similes, sensory details) through mini lessons. As well, the anchor books I use for Memory Pocket Writing also work well for teaching students the Power of Making Connections, with which I like to start my year. Fact Pocket (Nonfiction) Writing has several different structures, including description, instruction, persuasion, comparison, explanation, and biography, and each one can be easily linked to your content areas. I recommend that teachers choose only two nonfiction structures per school year so that students can get lots of opportunities to practice and to link this form of writing to a content area you are working on. I like to introduce Story Writing, the most challenging type of writing to teach and master, towards the end of the school year, after students have developed sound writing skills and techniques, and when they are ready for the challenge of new literary elements, including character development and plot development.

For more on Making Connections, see *Reading Power* (2nd edition).

	Personal Narrative	Nonfiction	Story Writing	Poetry
Brain Pocket	Memory Pocket	Fact Pocket	Imagination Pocket	Any
Structures	Walking Stories: topic/detail/detail /detail Event Stories: beginning/middle/ end	Descriptive Instruction Persuasion Comparison Explanation Biography	Climbing Stories: setting/character/ problem/solution/ ending	Free verse Acrostic List Cinquain Limerick Concrete Sonnet
Suggested Writing Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interesting details word choice hook sentence endings using the senses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organization text features transitions effective openings effective endings voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> character development dialogue transitions plot development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> simile/metaphor/personification word choice using the senses
Language Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> transition words word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> transition words interesting fact phrases comparative words persuasive words instruction words tips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> transition words sensory description voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rhyme repetition rhythm

Although poetry lessons are not included in this book, poetry can be written about anything: memories, facts, and imaginative things. I make a point of weaving poetry lessons into all three Brain Pocket structures.

Poetry

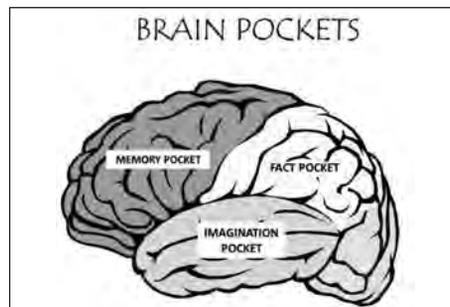
Teachers either love teaching poetry or they don't; they either avoid it and "run out of time" or make it a staple throughout their school year. For me, poetry is reading, writing, speaking, and celebrating language. There is no better way to teach structure, language, and writer's craft than through poetry. I encourage you to find ways to weave poetry throughout your yearly writing program and to share the joy of poetic language with your students. I will often use an anchor text to teach a specific poetic structure or literary technique. Whenever you share an anchor poem, I recommend writing it out on chart paper so that students can see the form of the poem and, as well, visibly identify features, such as rhyming words or repeating words or phrases. It is important to introduce poetry to your students and discuss the key features of this type of writing. After reading aloud several poems, brainstorm some of the key features of poetry and create an anchor chart.

Poetry...

- Can be about anything
- Is usually written in shorter lines
- Has a unique form and shape
- Includes at least one of the 3 R's: rhyme, repetition, rhythm
- Often ends with a surprise
- Has a title
- May be serious or humorous
- Can express important personal feelings

Introducing Brain Pocket Writing

Brain Pockets originated from a student in my class many years ago. I admit that when this student raised his hand, I avoided eye contact. His ideas were filled with imagination and creativity, but often not connected to what we were learning about. I wanted to find a way to gently guide his thinking, while not squashing his creativity, and so I developed Brain Pockets as a way of redirecting his thinking.



If you use the Daily 5, or some version of it, Brain Pocket Writing works fits nicely into the Work on Writing stage.

I explained to him that our brains hold our thoughts and ideas in three different "pockets": one pocket stores our experiences and memories; another holds facts and information; and the third holds our imagination. Depending on what

we are reading or learning, we can find thoughts in our brain pockets to help us understand and make connections. If reading a story about friendship, we might visit our memory pocket; if reading about volcanoes, we would go into our fact pocket. I told him that I noticed that he seemed to be spending a lot of time focusing on his imagination pocket, which was obviously very full of amazing imaginary thoughts. I pointed out to him that sometimes he needed to visit his other pockets! A few days later, he told me, “Ms Gear, you know that imagination pocket place? I think I live there.”

For more on Independent Writing, see page 18.

Since then, I have used Brain Pockets not only for teaching reading and making connections, but also when I teach writing as Independent Writing. At the beginning of the school year, I provide students with a blank Brain Pockets page (see page 31) and invite them to record different ideas from their three brain pockets that they could possibly use as a writing topic.

Anchor Books for Introducing Brain Pocket Writing

Hanlon, Abby. *Ralph Tells a Story* (memory pocket)
 Bram, Elizabeth. *Rufus the Writer* (memory pocket)
 Lehrhaupt, Adam. *Idea Jar* (imagination pocket)

McNaughton, Colin. *Once Upon an Ordinary School Day* (imagination pocket)
 Stead, Phillip C. *Ideas are All Around* (all pockets)

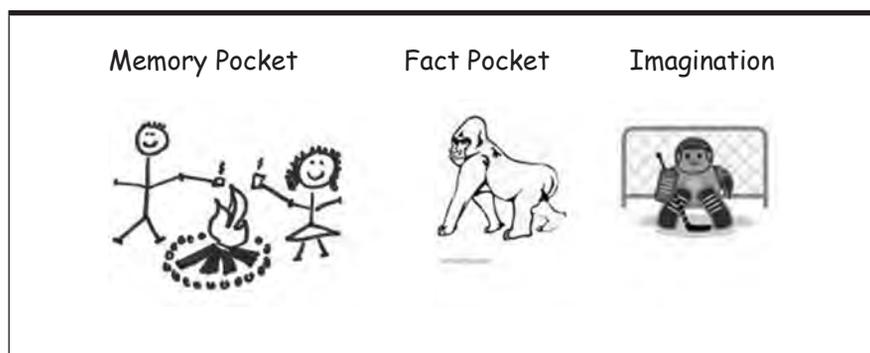
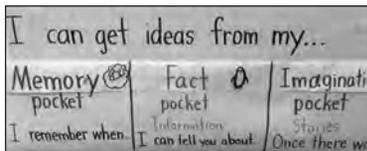
INTRODUCTORY LESSON

- Ask students, “Where do writers get their ideas for writing?”
- Tell them that our brains are powerful places in our body that store all our thinking. Explain that our brain stores our thoughts in three big pockets: Memory Pocket, Fact Pocket, and Imagination Pocket.
- Draw and label the brain pockets; see page 11.
- Explain that writers use their brain pockets to help them find ideas for writing. Depending on what they are going to write about, they might visit different pockets.
- Give examples of what you might have stored in your different pockets:

Jessica Suurallik, teacher from Rutland Elementary School in Kelowna (SD 23) developed an amazing lesson when she introduced brain pockets to her class. She created actual pockets with folded chart paper, placed small cards with topics into each of the pockets, and provided excellent prompts: *I remember when...* (Memory), *I can tell you about...* (Fact), *Once there was...* (Imagination).

I have lots of camping stories in my memory pocket, so I’m going to add *camping* to my memory pocket. I know a lot of facts about gorillas, so I will put *gorillas* in my Fact pocket. I was imagining one day about a penguin who plays hockey so I will put *Penguin Goalie* in my imagination pocket.

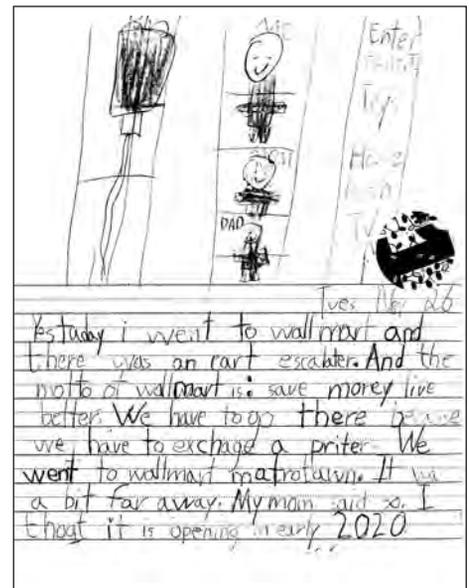
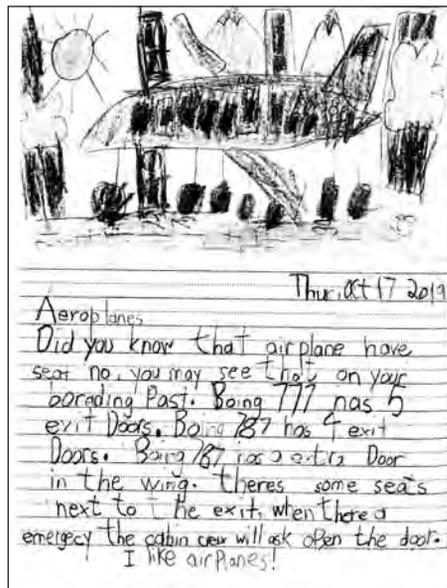
SAMPLE OF MODELING BRAIN POCKETS



- Explain that not every thought in our brain pockets will get turned into writing, but that it's helpful to think about different ideas that you could write about.
- Pass out the blank Brain Pocket handout (page 31). Invite students to use them to make their own personal Brain Pockets and draw and label ideas in each pocket.

Once complete, the brain pocket ideas can be glued into a lined or half-lined notebook. Instead of weekly journal writing, your students can do brain pocket writing in their Brain Pocket Notebook. Encourage them to look over ideas from their Brain Pocket plan and choose one pocket they would like to write from that day. Making the shift from journal writing to brain pocket writing has made a huge difference to my students' free writing. It is far more focused, interesting, and enjoyable to read.

Grade 1: Fact Pocket Writing (left)
Grade 2: Memory Pocket Writing (right)



Elements of a Balanced Writing Program

Reflect and *refine* are two of my favorite “teacher words.” I often invite teachers at workshops to take time to reflect on their current practice, to think about what is working well and what may need a little tweaking or refinement. It’s not about changing everything, but recognizing that there is always room for a little tune-up. A balanced writing program consists of a variety of elements, from explicit instruction to independent free-choice writing; from word work to writers workshop. While there is no one perfect writing program, there are some components I believe support an effective one. I encourage you to reflect on your own practice and think about one or two elements you could refine or add to your current writing program:

- Formative Assessment to inform teaching practice
- Writing Joy: a positive attitude towards writing
- Writing Goals
- Writing Routine: weekly practice writes with a focus on process
- Mini Lessons: explicit instruction with regular teacher modeling in writing structure, language, and writer’s craft

- Word Work
- Independent Writing
- Anchor Books/Mentor Texts to use as models for language, structure, and techniques
- Writing Conferences: regular one-on-one meetings with students to discuss their writing and to develop personalized writing goals

Formative Writing Assessment and Responsive Teaching

"I don't know how you can teach kids until you know what they know."
— "The Sisters" Gail Boushey and Joan Moser

Teaching writing looks easy on Pinterest. So many shiny objects to choose from, some with glitter, others with fancy borders and sparkles. But the problem with Pinterest is that it promotes isolated writing lessons that might look fantastic when complete but that aren't helping students, over time, develop their writing skills by doing them. So how do you know what lessons to teach? Be responsive. Look up! Look up to see where your students are as writers and discover their strengths and stretches. Find the gaps! Fill the gaps! The most effective writing teachers teach lessons their students need, not ones they find on Pinterest.

Ongoing assessment of your students' writing is important for helping them focus on specific writing skills they need to work on. While I believe the most value we can provide happens during individual conferences (see page 19), using a basic rubric for different writing structures can also help track your students' progress. See rubrics for different forms of writing on pages 38, 69, and 169.

I believe the most important first step in developing an effective writing program is formative assessment: assessment to inform our practice; assessment that leads to responsive teaching. This is usually done in the form of a writing sample from each student at the beginning and end of each school year. The purpose of the fall assessment is to see how well the students are doing; I like to think that the purpose of the spring assessment is to see how well I did! I am not a fan of "cold writes," but like to have a writing sample done in the context of a regular writing lesson, beginning with a read-aloud and allowing time for students a chance to brainstorm, plan, and discuss their ideas prior to writing. The only difference from a regular lesson is that there is no modeling of the writing by the teacher, and that students are given a limited time to write and only a few minutes at the end to read over their writing and make any changes they wish to make.

Once the writing samples have been assessed (by using a criteria-referenced performance standard rubric provided by your school district, region, province, or state), the information you have gathered can be analyzed and next steps can be planned. Look for trends in your class and ask yourself: *Collectively, what are they doing well? What do they need to learn through whole-class instruction?* Your students will show you what they need through their writing. Look for small groups of students who might need support with certain skills. You can use the Assessment Summary Sheet on page 26 to help you track your students' assessment results as well as to help you analyze, look for trends and needs in your current class, and help you plan your next steps. Through this process, your students' writing will tell you what they need support with.

Writing Joy

"Teaching writing is a matter of faith. We demonstrate that faith when we listen well, when we refer to our students as writers, when we expect them to love writing and pour their heart and soul into it."
— Lucy Calkins

One of my very first writing lessons at the beginning of the year is meant to establish why it is important to learn to write well and to promote writing joy!

- Ask students "Who likes writing?" Survey a quick show of hands.
- Extend the conversation by asking anyone who said no to explain why. Invite them to discuss with a partner. Most often you will get answers like these: *it's boring; I don't have anything to write about; not good at it.*

- Now ask students what the difference is between *having* to do something and *getting* to do something: “have to” is something you don’t want to do; “get to” is something you do want to do.
- Invite students to discuss in partners and try to give examples: e.g., “I *have* to clean my room”; “I *get* to play with my friends.”
- While they are discussing, write on the whiteboard or chart stand: *This year, you don’t have to write...* Invite students to read the sentence and ask, “What do you think?” (Be prepared for cheering and fist pumps!)
- Tell them that the sentence isn’t quite finished and add *You get to write*. Invite students to discuss what they think that means.
- Explain that one of your goals this year is that everyone in the class not only learns to become better writers, but also grows to love writing. You don’t want to hear anyone in the class saying, “Ahh... do we *have* to write?” You want everyone to say, “Yeah! We *GET* to write!!!”
- Tell students that you love to write and you want all your students to love writing too.

Writing Goals

“Don’t write for the market, write for your readers. It’s not about writing a best seller, it’s about sharing something that can touch hearts and shift minds.”
— Bryana Beecham

- Show a picture of a party invitation or ask students if they have ever been invited to a birthday or a special event where they had to bring a gift.
- Describe going to a store to pick out the perfect gift for your friend, then taking it home and wrapping it up in special paper. Invite students to think about the excited feeling they have when they give that gift to their friend, and the anticipation of watching their friend opening the gift, knowing what it is and that they picked it out especially.
- Explain:

When you write this year, I want you to feel the same way as when you give a special gift to your friend. When we write, we are actually “gifting” our reader with a gift of words and ideas. And just like we make sure that the gift we give our friends is special and wrapped up in nice paper with a bow, writers always want to make sure that their writing is special and wrapped up with a bow. Nobody gives their friend a broken, used toy wrapped in an old paper bag. So as writers, we don’t want to be giving our readers “broken toys” to read. We want to always make sure that our writing is the very best gift we can give our reader!

- Explain that, in order to make sure we are gifting our readers with our very best writing, we need to focus on two writing goals: 1) Making the writing **interesting** for my reader; 2) Making the writing **clear** for my reader.
- Discuss the common idea in both goals: the reader.

The reader is the most important part of your writing.

- Create a class anchor chart of the two goals written at the top.
- Begin with goal #1: *Make Writing Interesting for My Reader*. Tell students that the bottom line is if your writing is boring, your reader will be bored. Explain that there are many things a writer can do to make their writing interesting. Begin listing: *interesting details, triple-scoop words, similes, good hooks*, etc.
- Move to goal #2: *Make Writing Clear for My Reader*. Explain that if the present you give your friend is too complicated or hard to figure out, they likely

won't want to play with it. Similarly, if writing is too confusing or hard to read, a reader likely won't want to or be able to read it. Explain that to make writing clear you need to focus on spacing, spelling, punctuation, etc. Create a list under that goal.

- Depending on the grade, students can create their own Goal Chart to include or glue inside in their writing folders to keep track of the lessons as they learn them.

MY WRITING GOALS

To make sure my writing is
INTERESTING for my reader

- Interesting details (page 41)
- Triple-Scoop words (page 40)
- Similes (page 48)
- A great beginning (pages 81, 119)
- A great ending (pages 63, 83, 122)
- Using the senses (page 46)
- Voice (page 82)
- Nonfiction text features (page 71)

To make sure my writing is CLEAR
for my reader

- Spacing
- Spelling: No-Excuse Words (page 17); GUM It strategy (page 18)
- Punctuation
- Organization (page 45)
- Stay on target

Writing Routine

One of the most important aspects of an effective writing program is establishing a writing routine. Students work better when they know what is expected of them; I teach better when I know what I'm doing! My weekly writing routine is based on three stages of the writing process: Plan, Draft, Revise. Each week, over the course of three writing blocks in my timetable, the students spend time working on a short practice write, focusing on one stage of the writing process per day. This way, when students see *Writing Power* or *Writing Workshop* on their agenda, they know exactly what is expected of them each day. New writing skills are introduced or reinforced through weekly mini lessons and students are encouraged to apply the new skill or technique to their weekly practice writes. By the end of the week, my students will have completed a revised practice write.

Practice writes are just that—practice. Classrooms that provide children with regular opportunities to express themselves on paper without feeling too constrained by correct spelling and proper handwriting help children understand that writing has real purpose (Graves 1983; Sulzby 1985; Dyson 1988). I encourage students to try their best, but not to worry or focus too much on conventions or spelling during this stage of the writing process. They will have time to edit later; the important part about drafting is getting their ideas down. While I encourage students to finish their practice writes, not all will finish every piece, and that's okay. There will be another practice write next week. I never send the practice writing home as homework. Students publish only one practice write per term and the rest are kept as practice writes in their writing folders.

Here is an example of a weekly writing routine schedule. Part-time teachers or those who may not be able to fit this schedule into a single week can spread it over two weeks.

See page 21 for Implementing Weekly Practice Writes.

2 Memory Pocket Writing: Personal Narrative

Walking Stories

I begin with walking stories and spend about six weeks focusing on them before I transition into teaching event stories, which requires a new set of specific writing techniques.

Personal narratives or personal recounts are writing based on the writer's own personal experiences, memories, and feelings, the contents of what I refer to as our memory pocket. Because writers use ideas from their own lives, as opposed to researching facts or developing characters and plots, I find personal narrative the simplest structure to teach. It also allows maximum time to front-load key writing routines and techniques that will carry students throughout the year. This is why I like to begin the school year with this type of writing. I spend the first term of school teaching a focus on personal narrative practices and the mini lessons connected to this style of writing. I find that the topics and anchor books I use to teach personal narrative are often the same ones I would be using to get to know students at the beginning of the year, such as stories about family, friendships, school, and feelings. If you are using Reading Power, these anchor books also work well for teaching the power of making connections.

Under the broad umbrella of personal narrative, I have discovered two sub-structures: *walking stories* describe a personal topic (me, my friend, my pet, my culture, my school, etc.) and *event stories* are about a personal event with a beginning, middle, and end (my field trip to the pumpkin patch, going skating, my birthday party, etc.).

WALKING STORIES AT A GLANCE

A Walking Story...

- stars you!
- comes from your memory pocket
- is all about a person, place, or thing that you know a lot about
- uses lots of interesting and visual words
- sometimes has anchor lines (repeating words or phrases)

A Walking Story does NOT...

- contain a problem
- show time passing with a beginning, middle, and end
- use move-along or transition words
- include imaginary characters

Walking Story Mini Lessons

- Word Choice: Triple-Scoop Words (page 40)
- Interesting Details (page 41)
- Organization Drawers (page 45)
- Sensory Detail (page 46)
- Similes (page 48)
- Personification (page 50)

Walking Story Anchor Books

Browne, Anthony. *My Dad*

Carlson, Nancy. *I Like Me!* (P)

Clark, Emma Chichester. *I Love You, Blue Kangaroo!* (P)

Curtis, Jamie Lee. *My Brave Year of Firsts*

Heide, Florence Parry. *Some Things Are Scary*

Henkes, Kevin. *My Garden*

Parr, Todd. *It's Okay to Make Mistakes* (or any Todd Parr book) (P)

Reid, Barbara. *The Party*

Rylant, Cynthia. *Birthday Presents*

Rylant, Cynthia. *When I Was Young in the Mountains*

Shannon, David. *No, David!*

Shannon, David. *Too Many Toys!*

ASSESSMENT

This rubric can be used for both walking and event stories. It is not based on a specific grade, but focuses on the overall skills I look at when assessing personal narratives. You will need to make adjustments to the expectations for your students' particular grade level.

Personal Narrative Assessment Rubric

	Description	Approaching	Developing	Applying	Extending
Meaning	Writing makes sense: easy to follow; centred around a main idea; based on personal experiences; stays on topic				
Style	Writing is engaging: evidence of writing techniques, including word choice, details, voice, imagery				
Form	Writing is organized: sentences are grouped (paragraphing); evidence of transition words; clear beginning-middle-end (where applicable)				
Conventions	Writing is clear: accurate spelling of high-frequency words; evidence of appropriate punctuation and spacing				

Walking Story Topics and Anchor Books

The topics children can write about when it comes to walking stories are endless—their memory pockets are jam-packed with stories about themselves, their family, friends, their favorite toy, a special place, a special grown-up. We never run out of memory-pocket topics! When students focus on walking stories, they are writing about a topic from their memory pocket, sharing interesting details with their readers about that topic. When choosing topics for weekly practice walking-story writes, I like to choose topics around anchor books that I share with the students. These books anchor my lessons; they provide me with topics and themes for discussing and connecting, and inspire great writing. The suggested anchor books are organized by Walking Story topic. You can use them for your weekly practice writes to share with students as a way of introducing the topic and stimulating brainstorming and discussions prior to writing.

Anchor Books: Walking Stories

CELEBRATE ME!

Carlson, Nancy. *I Like Me!* (P)
Ewald, Wendy. *The Best Part of Me*
Miller, Pat Zietlow. *Remarkably You* (P)
Nyong'o, Lupita. *Sulwe*

Muhammad, Ibtihaj. *The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family*
Myers, Walter Dean. *Looking Like Me*

MY NAME

Alexie, Sherman. *Thunderboy Jr.*
Choi, Yangsook. *The Name Jar*
Henkes, Kevin. *Chrysanthemum*
Martinez-Neal, Juana. *Alma and How She Got Her Name*

FEELINGS

Cain, Janan. *The Way I Feel*
Hoffman, Mary. *The Great Big Book of Feelings*
Miller, Pat Zietlow. *When You Are Brave*
Parr, Todd. *The Feelings Book* (P)
Poulin, Andrée. *When You're Scared*

WORRIES

Black, Michael Ian. *I'm Worried*
Browne, Anthony. *What If...?*
Henkes, Kevin. *Wemberly Worried*
Parr, Todd. *The Don't Worry Book* (P)

FRIENDSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP CHALLENGES

Brown, Peter. *You Will Be My Friend*
Fergus, Maureen. *Buddy and Earl* (P)
Ferry, Beth. *Stick and Stone*
Fitzpatrick, Marie Louise. *The New Kid* (P)
Henkes, Kevin. *Chester's Way*
McBratney, Sam. *I'm Sorry* (P)
O'Neill, Alexis. *The Worst Best Friend*
Rodman, Mary Ann. *My Best Friend*
Rosenthal, Amy Krouse. *Friendshape*

A SPECIAL GROWN-UP

Browne, Anthony. *My Dad*; also *My Mum*
Gritz, Ona. *Tangerines and Tea, My Grandparents and Me*

Juster, Norton. *The Hello, Goodbye Window*
Liu, Sylvia. *A Morning with Grandpa*
McLeod, Elaine. *Lessons from Mother Earth*
Ryder, Joanne. *My Mother's Voice*; also *My Father's Hands*
Verplancke, Klaas. *Applesauce*

MY FAMILY IS SPECIAL

Hoffman, Mary. *The Great Big Book of Families*
O'Leary, Sara. *A Family Is a Family Is a Family*
Parr, Todd. *The Family Book* (P)

MY FAVORITE SEASON

Gray, Heidi Pross. *Autumn Is Here!*; also *Winter Is Here!*,
Spring Is Here!, *Summer Is Here!*
Iwamura, Kazuo. *Good-bye, Winter! Hello, Spring!*
Pak, Kenard. *Goodbye Autumn, Hello Winter*; also
Goodbye Summer, Hello Autumn

FAVORITE TOYS

Caudill, Rebecca. *The Best Loved Doll*
Clark, Emma Chichester. *I Love You, Blue Kangaroo!* (P)
Cousins, Lucy. *Maisy's Favorite Toys* (P)
Shannon, David. *Too Many Toys*

MY SPECIAL PLACE

Croza, Laurel. *I Know Here*
Gilmore, Rachna. *Island Morning*
Juster, Norton. *The Hello, Goodbye Window*
Larsen, Andrew. *See You Next Year*
Maclear, Kyo. *The Specific Ocean*

MY IMAGINARY PLACE

Henkes, Kevin. *My Garden*
Thomson, Sarah L. *Imagine a Place*
Van Deusen, Chris. *If I Built a House*

Mini Lessons for Walking Stories

Because of the simple, linear structure of walking stories, teaching them first leaves space for me to focus on mini lessons on several key writing techniques that enhance the quality of personal narrative stories, as well as that of other structures. Depending on what class trends I notice early in the school year and what gaps I see in my students' writing, I choose a lesson to focus on. I don't teach all these mini lessons in a row. Using the Plan–Draft–Revise weekly practice writes, students quickly get into the flow of our writing routine. Usually I teach one technique or craft on Draft Day (see page 17 for weekly schedule), and then students practice applying it to their practice writes for several weeks. As often as I can, I use anchor books to introduce and model a specific technique.

Word Choice: Triple-Scoop Words

The simple fact is that interesting words make interesting writing. Many of us could quickly rattle off the most cringe-worthy, overused, and boring words we encounter in children's writing: *good, nice, fun, bad, mad, sad, stuff*, for a start. I use a lot of analogies when I teach, and *triple-scoop words* is my reference to word choice. Some other terms I have heard teachers use are “million-dollar words” or “juicy words.” What you call word choice is not important; what is important is that you are encouraging students to expand their vocabulary and take risks in their word choice so that their writing is more interesting to read.

Anchor Books: Word Choice

Banks, Kate. *Max's Words*

Bryant, Jen. *The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus*

Hutchings, Jessica Lee. *Delores Thesaurus*

O'Connor, Jane. *Fancy Nancy (P)*

Reynolds, Peter H. *The Word Collector*

Rowe, Chelsea H. *Ebenezer Has a Word for Everything*

Schotter, Roni. *The Boy Who Loved Words*

Van Slyke, Rebecca. *Lexie the Word Wrangler*

Wimmer, Sonja. *The Word Collector*

- Begin the lesson:

Writers, today we are going to focus on an important thing a writer can do to make sure their writing is interesting—choosing interesting words to include in their writing. If a writer uses boring words, their story will probably be boring, and their reader might just fall asleep!

(Feel free to add snoring sound effects here)

Principal Sue Stevenson gives each class in her school a single-scoop word written on a paper cut into the shape of a cone. She challenges each class in her school to come up with as many triple-scoop words as they can for their word and displays these in the hall of the school. This challenge could also be done in a class, with cones being given out to small groups of students.



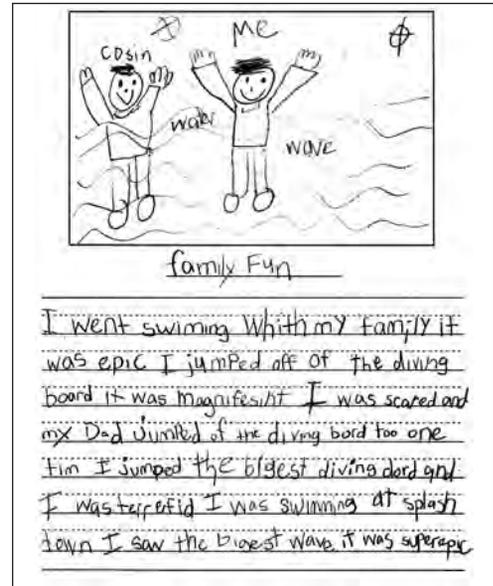
- Invite students to visualize going to an ice-cream shop and lining up to buy an ice-cream cone. While they wait, they look through the glass case at the buckets to choose what flavors of ice cream to order. Tell them that they really want to order the triple-scoop in a waffle cone, but when they go to order their cone, their mom or dad orders them a kiddie cone. So instead of bubblegum, cotton candy, and sticky chewy chocolate, they get a half a lump of ice cream in a yellow Styrofoam cone. They say thank you but, inside, they were secretly wishing for that triple-scooper!
- Tell students that you have been talking about ice cream, but really you were talking about their writing. Explain that sometimes when you read their writing, you are wishing for some triple-scoop words, but all you get is “little lumps” of words that are not very interesting!
- Brainstorm some single-scoop words: *good, nice, fun, bad, sad, mad, stuff, big, small*. List them on one side of a T-chart.
- Invite students to think of some triple-scoop words that can be used instead of the words listed. Divide the class into small groups and give each group one of the single-scoop words. Invite them to try to come up with triple-scoop words for that word.
- Results can be made into a class anchor chart or a Triple-Scoop Word Challenge, or students can work on their own Triple-Scoop list. See page 52 for the Triple-Scoop Word Chart template; see page 53 for a template for early primary students.

TRIPLE-SCOOP WORDS
SAMPLE

	
big	humungous, gigantic, enormous
good	amazing, fantastic, outstanding
sad	upset, depressed, devastated

- Read a few of the anchor books on page 40 over the next few weeks.
- Set a goal:

Writers, for the next few weeks, I would really like to see you trying to include at least three triple-scoop words in your practice write.



Grade 1, Practice write using triple-scoop words

Interesting Details

“You need to add more details to your sentence.” How many times have we said that to our students? Too many to count! And what I have found is that, if we don’t explicitly show writers what an interesting detail looks like, they make their sentences longer, but the sentences are still boring! I have found that this lesson, which gives students specific words to use when adding details, is foolproof.

- Begin the lesson:

Writers, today we are going to focus on a way we can work on our Writing Goal #1: making our writing interesting for our readers.

- Explain that you would like to share some of your writing with them and discuss whether they think it is interesting. Have these sentences already written on the whiteboard or chart stand. Read them out loud:

I like snow.
I like books.
I like red licorice.

- Ask students what they think of the writing. (*boring!*) Why? (*repetitive, no details, no triple-scoop words*)
- Tell them that you are going to show them how to turn these boring sentences into interesting ones.
- Invite students to write three boring sentences about things they like. (*food, people, sports, activities, animals, etc.*)

I like _____

I like _____

I like _____

With younger students, I refer to this as “robot writing” and read it aloud in my “robot voice”—flat tone with no expression or intonation.

- Invite students to read their sentences to a partner in a really boring voice.
- Model how, while they were writing, you added some interesting details to your sentences:

I like snow because it's fun.

I like books because they're awesome.

I like red licorice because it's good.

- Ask students if they think your details make your sentences more interesting. (No) Why not? (*Because the writing does not give the reader anything to think about.*)
- Explain that when you add details, you need to use a linking word to join the fact with the detail. Ask them what linking word you used. (*because*) Explain that the word *because* is a good word to use for answering questions or explaining something, but not a good choice for adding details.
- Model again, asking the students if these are more interesting sentences:

*I like snow. **When** it snows, I always do a snow dance in the kitchen.*

*I like books. **Sometimes**, I sniff new books in the bookstore.*

*I like red licorice. **Once**, I ate a whole bag in the movie theatre.*

- Discuss what happens in our brains when we read these sentences. (*we visualize, connect, wonder*) Explain that good writing activates the reader's thinking and gives their brains something to do, and that is what makes the writing more interesting.
- Show students “magic” words that help make sentences more interesting:

Once (one time)

If

When

Sometimes

- Remind students that the detail you add must connect to the fact. Show examples and discuss:

I like my friend Jessica. Once upon a time, a dragon broke the castle. (detail doesn't match the fact)

I like my friend Jessica. Sometimes my brother pinches me. (detail doesn't match)

I like my friend Jessica. Sometimes Jessica tells funny jokes to make me laugh. (Great!)

- Invite the students to practice making their boring sentences more interesting by using the magic words *once, if, when, and sometimes*.
- Have students share their interesting sentences with a partner: e.g., *I like hockey. One time, I scored the winning goal and got the MVP award.*
- Set a goal:

Writers, for the next few weeks, I would like you to really try to use at least three different magical detail words in your weekly practice write.

FIVE-FINGER MINI LESSON FOR EARLY AND EMERGENT WRITERS

The magical detail words may be challenging for beginning writers, so I have adapted a lesson from Lori Jamison Rog that has been successful in many classrooms.

Grade 2: Sample writing using Five Finger Planner



- Write this “story” on the whiteboard or chart stand:

I have a cat. The end.

- Tell students, “Writers, I wrote a story and I’d like to share it with you.” Read the “story.”
- Ask students what they think about your story. (*it’s too short, boring, no details*)
- Ask them what is missing. (*Interesting details!; e.g., name of the cat, color, what the cat likes to do*)
- Tell students you would like to show them a way to add interesting details to your story.
- Hold up your hand, one finger at a time, beginning with pointer finger and ending with your thumb. Say: “Topic, Detail, Detail, One time, Feeling.” Repeat this, holding up a finger with each word.
- Explain that this can help you add to your cat story. Model:

Topic: *I have a cat named Sumo.*

Detail: *Sumo is black with white paws and a pink nose.*

Detail: *Sumo likes to drink coffee.*

One time: *One time, Sumo fell in the bathtub!*

Feeling: *I love my cat Sumo.*

- Read the story again and ask students if it is more interesting.
- Practice the Five Finger Planner orally. Invite students to hold up their hand and think about Topic/Detail/Detail/One time/Feeling they can write about. Invite them to share their story with a partner before beginning their writing.

STICKY DOT/STOP SIGN MINI LESSON FOR EARLY AND EMERGENT WRITERS

Another lesson adapted from Lori Jamieson Rog is designed to help beginning writers add details as well as to introduce the concept of punctuation, specifically periods between sentences.

- Begin the lesson:

Writers, I’ve been thinking I’d like to write a story about something that happened to me. I’m going to write a memory story.

- Model this “story” on the whiteboard or chart stand:

Yesterday I went to the park. The end.

- Prompt students to read the story and ask them what they think of it. (*short, not interesting, no details*) Ask, “What else would you like to know?” Invite students to ask you questions. (*who did you go with?; what did you do there?; etc.*)

- Introduce the strategy:

Oh, so I need to add more details to my story to make it more interesting. Today we are going to write “sticky dot” details. I’m going to put three sticky dots on my hand. These are going to show me where to add details to my story.

- Model the strategy:

Yesterday I went to the park with my dad.

- Say, “Now I need to add a detail.”

(place sticky dot on writing)

I went on the swings.

(place sticky dot on writing)

My dad pushed me really high, up to the sky.

(place sticky dot on writing)

I was a little scared.

- Talk about the feeling word you added:

When writers add a feeling, it helps their reader make a connection. If your reader makes connections to your writing, it makes it more interesting for them.

This lesson also works well when teaching Event Stories to help with transitions (see page 60); sticky dots can be placed after each transition.

- Invite students to write about something from their memory pocket that they did recently at home, at school, at a community centre, at a restaurant, etc. Ask them to think of three sticky-dot details they would like to add. Encourage them to include one feeling detail.
- Before students begin writing, invite them to share their sticky-dot details with a partner.
- Pass out sticky dots (three per student) and ask students to place them onto the top of their hand. Remind them to stick their sticky dots onto their paper after every detail.
- The next week, you can repeat the sticky-dot lesson without actually using the sticky dots. Explain that writers don’t always carry around sticky dots, so they make a little dot with their pencil instead. It’s called a period. If you are able to use your model writing from the previous lesson, remove sticky dots and draw in periods.
- Explain that this dot is like a mini Stop sign and it helps readers know where one idea (sentence) stops and another starts. Remind them that sticky dots are round, so we need to make sure we are leaving a round space after the period before we start our next idea.
- Set a goal:

Writers, this week, try to add a little Stop sign period to show your reader that one idea has stopped and another one is going to start.

Organization Drawers

Focusing on writing techniques to help make writing interesting can help to improve the quality of your students' writing; however, it is important to balance your lessons to include ways to support Writing Goal #2: making writing more clear for your reader. Otherwise it's a little like a polishing a beautiful car that has no engine.

- Begin the lesson:

Writers, today we are going to focus on a way we can work on our Writing Goal #2: making sure writing is clear for your reader. Remember, if your writing is mixed up, then your reader will get mixed up!

- Explain that you will be showing them a way to group their ideas together to help their writing be more organized.
- Draw a chest of drawers on the board, whiteboard, or chart stand. Ask students to visualize their drawers in their bedroom
- Ask "What is this piece of furniture meant for?" (*to keep clothes organized*) "How does it help keep the clothes organized?" (*the drawers help to group all the same types of clothes together*)

Imagine if there were no drawers to separate your clothes. Everything would be mixed up in one big box. Confusing to find what you need!

- Invite students to visualize their chest of drawers in their bedroom. Describe yours as an example:

I have socks in my top drawer. They are different colors and different sizes, but the important thing is that they are all socks in the same place.

- Tell students to visualize closing their top drawer and opening the next one.

What's inside that one? Maybe it's your underwear drawer.

(prepare for giggles)

They might be different colors but they are all underwear grouped in the same drawer.

- Continue "looking in your drawers" with the class.
- Explain that, just like real drawers help us organize our clothes, as writers, invisible drawers help us organize our writing.
- Model by drawing a large chest of drawers on the whiteboard or chart stand.

Let's say I want to write a walking story about my dog.

(write *My Dog* on the top of the chest of drawers)

After deciding my topic, I am going to think about what I want to put in each of my drawers. I have four drawers, so I need four big ideas, one for each of my drawers. What big ideas do I think my readers would like to know about my dog?

3 Fact Pocket Writing: Nonfiction

The world of nonfiction writing is huge. It is compiled of a wide variety of different text structures to share different kinds of information for various purposes. Whether you are writing a persuasive letter, instructions, or a descriptive report, each form has a specific purpose, unique form or text structure, and particular language features associated with it. Most elementary teachers are familiar with descriptive report writing and, while this type of writing is important, children need exposure to and practice in other forms during their elementary years. In Tony Stead's book, *Is That A Fact?* (2001), he outlines the different forms of nonfiction children should be learning and practicing in school, including Description, Instruction, Persuasion, Explanation, Biography. In my book *Nonfiction Writing Power* (Pembroke 2014), I added Comparison writing, as students are often asked to compare and contrast subjects in upper grades.

NONFICTION WRITING FORMS AND PURPOSES

Structure	Type of Writing	Purpose
Description	All-About writing	To give the reader the facts and information about a single topic
Instruction	How-To writing	To give the reader the step-by-step instructions on how to achieve a specific task or goal
Persuasion	Make-Me writing	To influence or change the reader's thoughts or actions
Comparison	Same-Different writing	To describe to the reader similarities (compare) and differences (contrast) between two or more things
Explanation	How? Why? writing	To explain to the reader how or why something happens, usually in nature
Biography	Who's That? writing	To summarize, in sequence, the main events in a person's life

As I outlined in *Nonfiction Writing Power*, the intention is not for one teacher to teach all six forms of nonfiction writing in a single school year, but ideally to teach two forms per grade. I suggest that a school plan is developed whereby each grade would focus on two different structures and link the structure to a content area you are focusing on. This way, by the time students are moving on to middle or high school, they would have at least some exposure and practice

in a variety of different structures. In teaching nonfiction writing, I spend time supporting students through several practice writes with non-research topics so that they become familiar with the language and structure. Once students have had practice, I look for ways to link the writing form to a content area that we are focusing on in social studies or science. This usually requires additional lessons and practice in research and note-taking, but the application of writing after the research is complete is much easier because students are already familiar with the writing form. I recommend spending four to six weeks on a specific nonfiction form as each requires its own mini lessons and because, depending on the topic, students might need to spend time researching and gathering information for their writing.

SAMPLE SCHOOL PLAN FOR TEACHING NONFICTION FORMS

Grade	Nonfiction Form	Possible Links to Content
K	Instruction Description	Social Studies: <i>How to dress in _____ (Season)</i> Science: <i>Describe an insect</i>
1	Instruction Comparison	Social Studies: <i>How to help in your community</i> Science: <i>Compare living and nonliving things</i>
2	Persuasion Explanation	Social Studies: <i>Persuasive letter to support a school event</i> Science: <i>Explain the water cycle</i>
3	Instruction Biography	Social Studies: <i>How to have a Smudging Ceremony (Potlatch, Sharing Circle)</i> Science: <i>The life of a famous scientist or inventor</i>
4	Explanation Comparison	Social Studies: <i>Explain the impact of colonization</i> Science: <i>Comparing two biomes</i>
5	Comparison Persuasion	Social Studies: <i>Compare two different regions in Canada</i> Science: <i>Which extreme weather is the most dangerous? (persuasion in first person)</i>
6	Biography Explanation	Social Studies: <i>Biography of a change agent</i> Science: <i>Explain basic function of one body system</i>
7	Comparison Persuasion	Social Studies: <i>Compare early humans, ancient civilizations, or ancient inventions</i> Science: <i>Persuasive letter about a social issue; e.g., climate change, poverty, homelessness</i>

You will find more detailed lessons in all six nonfiction forms in my book *Nonfiction Writing Power* (Pembroke, 2014).

NONFICTION WRITING ASSESSMENT

The rubric on page 69 can be used to assess any of the nonfiction forms. While it is not text-structure specific, it does assess whether a student has communicated the information clearly and demonstrates a basic understanding of nonfiction text structure and language.

Nonfiction Assessment Rubric

	Description	Approaching	Developing	Applying	Extending
Meaning	Writing communicates information clearly: topic is clear; easy to follow; centred around a main idea or purpose; provides accurate information with supporting details and examples.				
Style	Writing is engaging: evidence of writing techniques, including clear beginning and ending; interesting details; effective word choice; variety of sentence length.				
Form	Writing is organized: effective use of structure; information is organized and grouped clearly; effective use of transition words; includes relevant text features where applicable.				
Language	Writing is effective: effective use of language features specific to text structure.				
Conventions	Writing is clear: accurate spelling of high-frequency words; evidence of appropriate punctuation and spacing.				

Introducing Nonfiction Writing

You will find specific rubrics for each nonfiction text structure in my book *Nonfiction Writing Power* (Pembroke, 2018).

Before launching into one of the nonfiction forms, I like to do a lesson introducing students to nonfiction text structure and a lesson on text features. Both lessons help students learn important key elements of all nonfiction texts and what makes information writing different from narrative and story writing.

Text Structures

Prior to this lesson, visit your school or local library and gather several examples of each of the different nonfiction writing forms, along with picture book, a chapter book, and a novel.

Depending on the grade you teach and how many books you have for the lesson, try mixing up the different types of texts and divide the books among groups of students to sort. Groups should be able to name and explain their categories.

- **Description:** “all-about” books describing animals, insects, countries, seasons, etc.
- **Instruction:** “how-to” books about cooking, drawing, crafts, sports, etc.
- **Persuasion:** persuasive books, brochures, catalogues. Some fiction titles will work for this as well; e.g., *I Wanna Iguana* by Karen Orloff or *Earrings!* by Judith Viorst
- **Comparison:** nonfiction books comparing subjects. The *Who Would Win?* series by Jerry Pallotta is a popular example.
- **Explanation:** books explaining scientific phenomenon, usually with “How” or “Why” in the title; e.g., the *I Wonder Why?* series by Kingfisher
- **Biography:** book about a famous person (explorer, scientist, athlete, entertainer, etc.)

- Begin the lesson:

Writers, today I would like to explore some different types of writing with you. I have gathered books from our library that I would like to share with you.

If you have introduced walking and event stories to your students, you could be more explicit about the breakdown of fiction books to include examples of those forms.

- Hold up the fiction books. Ask students what is different about the three books. (*different stories; different sizes; hardcover vs. soft cover; picture book, chapter book, novel; some have pictures, some don't; etc.*)
- Explain that even though the books are different in many ways, they have something in common. Ask students what they think is the same about these books. (*all fiction; all have characters, setting, problem, solution, ending*) Depending on the grade, you may need to prompt a little for these answers.
- Tell students that fiction books, while they tell different stories, share a similar inner structure or skeleton. Writers know that, if they are going to write a story, they need to use the story structure, in which a character in a setting has a problem and the problem gets solved.
- I like to explain text structure by using the analogy of building a house. When you build a house, you don't start by buying the furniture or putting up the artwork. You begin with the frame, the structure that holds the entire house together. Once the frame is secure, then the walls, furniture, and paintings have a place to go. Writers are like builders—they need to start with a solid frame or else their writing will fall apart.
- Hold up the description books. Ask students what is similar (*all information books, nonfiction*) and different about them. (*different information; e.g., one is about bears, one is about trains, and one is about Japan*)
- Explain that these books tell the reader all about a topic. They are called *description* books and they have their own special structure or frame. Start an anchor chart to list the different structures.

FICTION/NONFICTION ANCHOR CHART

Fiction	Nonfiction
Characters Setting Problem Solution Beginning-Middle-End	Description Instruction Persuasion Comparison Explanation Biography

Magazines like the Owl group—*Chirp*, *Chickadee*, and *OWL*—are great resources for teaching text structure. They often include a wide variety of text structures, including cartoons, recipes, crafts, nonfiction descriptions, poems, and scientific explanations. Invite children to use sticky notes to identify the different structures they find.

- Hold up the instruction books. Ask students what is different about them. (*different information; e.g., one is about making cookies, one is about making crafts, one is about playing hockey*). Ask students what is the same about them. (*all how-to books*)
- Explain that these books tell the reader how to do something or make something. They are called *instruction* books and they have a different structure or skeleton. Add this word to the anchor chart.
- Continue holding up different groups of books and discussing their structure and purpose.

Persuasion: information books stating an opinion or point of view that try to convince the reader

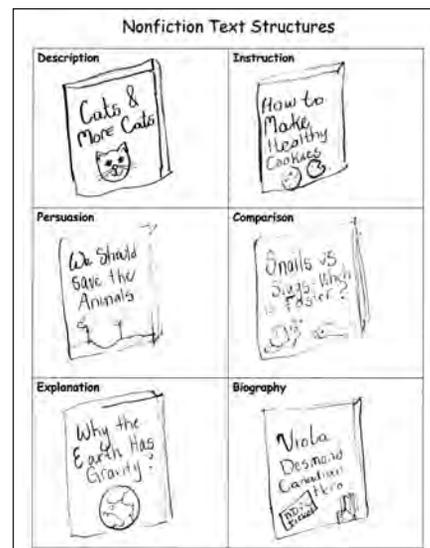
Comparison: information books comparing two or more topics, how they are the same and how they are different

Explanation: information books explaining how or why something happens, usually something in science and nature: e.g., How do clouds form? Why are some eggs brown and some blue?

Biography: information books that tell about the lives of important or famous persons

- End the lesson by reflecting on the fact that fiction writing has one main structure for telling stories, but that nonfiction writing has many different structures, depending on what information is being shared. Knowing the structure before you start to write helps writers to organize their ideas and makes the writing clearer.
- Use the Nonfiction Text Structures template on page 74 and invite students to use visuals of book covers with titles showing each of the different text structures.

Grade 5: Nonfiction text structures



Text Features

One of the most significant differences between fiction and nonfiction texts can be seen when you open up the books and compare them visually. Fiction books have text with or without illustrations; nonfiction texts represent and present information in different ways through a variety of text features. Nonfiction features are an essential part of information texts and are included to help readers better locate, navigate, access, and ultimately understand the information. As writers of nonfiction, students need to understand the purpose of text features and know how to create them as a way of representing information more clearly to their readers.

There are several guided reading series that provide sets of paired fiction and nonfiction books. I use the Take Two Books by the Wright Group (McGraw Hill) because the leveled nonfiction books are filled with text features.

Prior to the lesson, pair up several sets of fiction and nonfiction books from the library: e.g., *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle and a nonfiction book about spiders; *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell and a nonfiction book about owls; *Bringing in the New Year* by Grace Lin and nonfiction book about Chinese New Year.

- Begin the lesson:

Writers, today we are going to continue exploring fiction and nonfiction books together. Yesterday we talked about different nonfiction text structures.

(you may wish to review them)

Today we are going to talk about text features.

- Hold up two books on the same topic, one fiction and one nonfiction. (I like *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey and *Watch Me Grow: Ducklings* from DK Publishing.) Ask students how the two books are the same. (*both about ducks; both have titles, pictures*) Ask students how the two books are different. (*photographs vs. illustrations; fiction vs. nonfiction; story vs. information; titles are different*)
- Open the books to the middle and show the inside of the books. Ask the same two questions: How are they the same? How are they different? Ask students what they notice about the way the books look on the inside. (*fiction: same size text and illustrations on every page; nonfiction: many different visuals on the page, different size fonts, words are in different places, etc.*) Depending on the books you have and the grade you teach, you may have students start to identify some of the different features; e.g., map, chart, fact box, Venn diagram, etc.
- Continue the lesson:

Now we understand that fiction and nonfiction books are about different things, and we are noticing that they also look very different. We've noticed that pages of fiction books have words or words and pictures, but pages of nonfiction books have many different things on the pages—maps, charts, headings, fact boxes. These are called *nonfiction text features* and they are a very important part of nonfiction writing.

- Pass out paired picture books (one fiction and one nonfiction on the same topic) to pairs of students and invite them to look through the books side-by-side, noticing similarities and differences, and paying special attention to different text features
- Come together as a class to create an anchor chart listing the nonfiction features that students have identified, along with their purpose.

NONFICTION FEATURE ANCHOR CHART

Feature	Purpose
Map	To show location: e.g., animal habitat, bodies of water
Web	To list connected items; e.g., list of food an animal eats
Diagrams and labels	To describe features of something; e.g., parts of a shark
Venn diagram	To compare two things; e.g., wasps and bees

Seymour Simon is the author of more than 200 science books for children and, while his books include amazing facts and photographs, he does not use any text features. If you want to find something in one of his books, you basically need to read every page! I like to use his books when I am teaching text features to highlight how difficult it is to read information without any features to help readers locate and navigate. Depending on what grade you teach, you can have your students “help Seymour Simon” by creating text features for his early reader books. More detailed lessons on using text features can be found in *Nonfiction Writing Power* (Gear, 2014).

Fact box	To highlight interesting facts
Flowchart	To show how things work together; e.g., life cycle, water cycle
Linear chart	To sort details; e.g., facts about different species
Labels/Captions	To explain a diagram or a picture
Timeline	To sequence events or dates
Headings	To help organize information

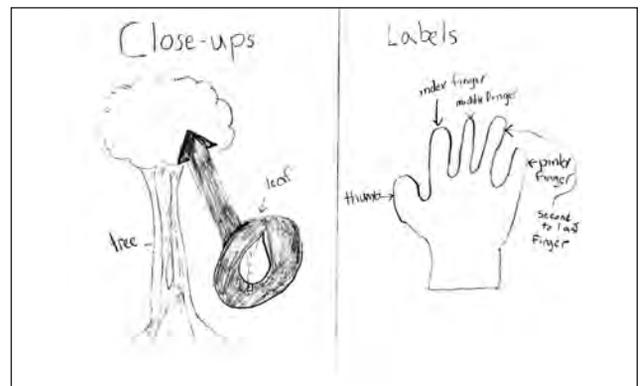
- Once you have created the anchor chart, ask students the all-important question: *Why?* Why do nonfiction texts have all these text features and fiction texts don't?
- Show students the two samples in *Which Is Easier to Read?* on page 75; if possible, project them one at a time onto an interactive whiteboard or screen. Ask students which one is easier to read. (Venn) *Why?* (fewer words; facts are sorted; information is clearer)
- Explain that nonfiction writers use text features to make information easier for their readers to access. Explain that students will be learning to use text features in their fact-pocket writing to help their readers access facts more quickly and easily.

LESSON EXTENSION

- Create Nonfiction Feature Dictionaries with your class. Fold three pieces of white legal paper in half and staple in the centre. Students can choose six different nonfiction text features to draw, color and label in these blank mini books.

Left: One teacher created a wall chart showing examples of different text features. Students could add to the chart if they found examples in magazines, newspapers or flyers.

Right: Grade 3: pages from Nonfiction Feature Dictionary



Nonfiction Text Structures

Name: _____

Description	Instruction
Persuasion	Comparison
Explanation	Biography

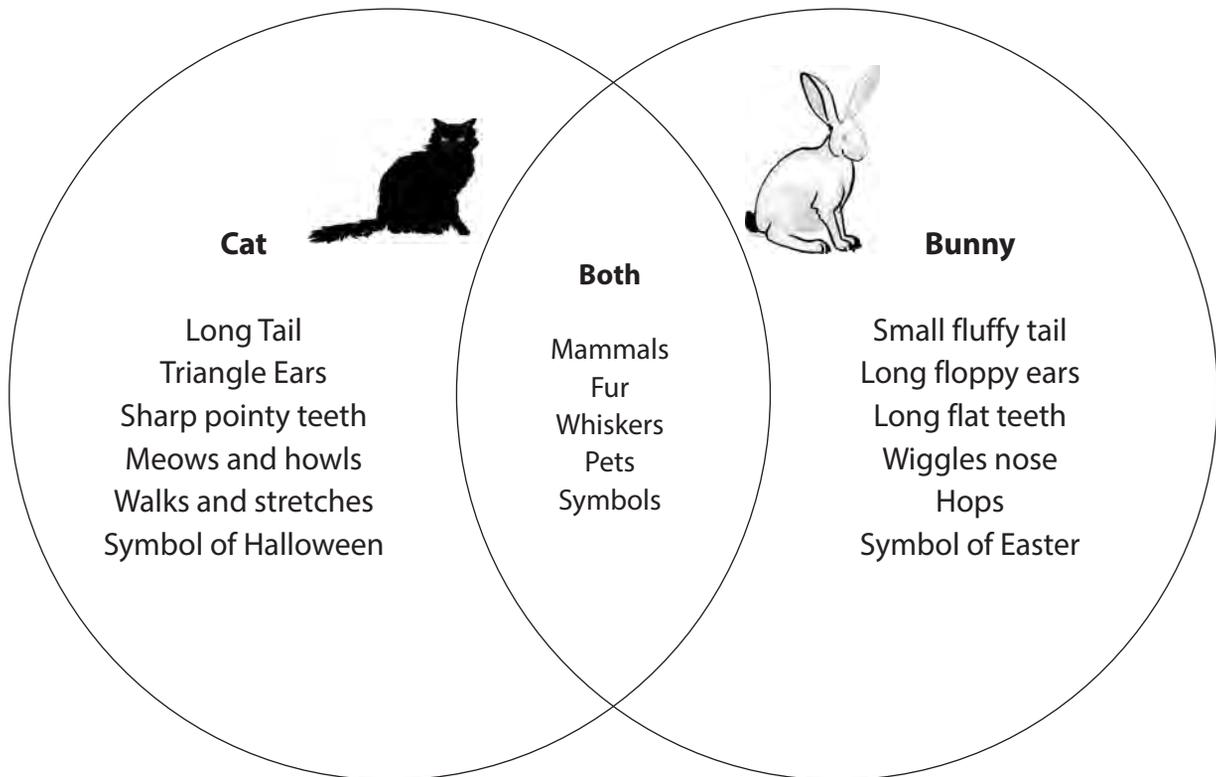


Which is Easier to Read?

Cats and Bunnies

Cats and bunnies have many similarities and differences. Both are mammals that are covered in fur. Both also have whiskers and a tail, and are similar in size. People enjoy having both cats and bunnies as pets. They are relatively clean animals and come in a variety of colors.

When comparing differences in appearance, you would notice the different ears and tail. Cats have long thin tails, while bunnies have short fluffy tails. Cats also have short triangle ears, while bunnies have long floppy ears. Cats make sounds like purring, meowing or howling sounds, while bunnies don't make any sound at all. Cats also like to eat mice, but bunnies eat vegetables, such as carrots and lettuce. Cats have sharp claws and sharp teeth, but bunnies have long, square teeth. Cats are a symbol of Halloween and bunnies are a symbol of Easter.



Index

- 3-2-1 Check It, 24–25
- ABC books, 87
- All About, 90
- Alphabet Book Planning, 94
- anchor books
 - balanced writing program, 19
 - biography writing, 154, 160
 - comparison writing, 134
 - descriptive writing, 77
 - event stories, 57, 60, 62
 - explanatory writing, 145
 - instructional writing, 95, 100–101, 102, 103–104, 105
 - persuasive writing, 114, 125, 126
 - story writing, 168–169
 - walking stories, 37, 38–39, 40, 47, 49, 50
- Animal Comparison, 144
- animals
 - comparison writing, 139
 - descriptive writing, 86
 - instructional writing, 101–102
- Assessment Summary Sheet, 26
- authors, 161
- balanced writing program
 - anchor books, 19
 - elements, 13–14
 - formative writing assessment, 14
 - independent writing, 18–19
 - mentor texts, 19
 - mini lessons, 17
 - responsive teaching, 14
 - word work, 17–18
 - writing conferences, 19–20
 - writing goals, 15–16
 - writing joy, 14–15
 - writing routine, 16–17
- Biography of a Famous Person
 - Primary, 166
 - template, 165
- Biography of Classmate, 164
- biography writing
 - anchor books, 154, 160
 - author biographies, 161
 - change agents, 159–160
 - classmates, 156–158
 - described, 154
 - introductory lesson, 155
 - mini lessons, 156–158
 - past lessons, 156
 - science, 158–159
 - social studies, 158–159
 - timelines, 156
- Brain Pockets / Brain Pocket Writing
 - anchor books, 12
 - described, 8
 - introducing, 11–13
 - introductory lesson, 12–13
 - template, 31
 - writing structure, 9–13
- bubblegum letters, 124
- catalogues, 124
- Champion for Change, 167
- change agents, 159–160
- character development
 - described, 172–173, 176–177
 - template, 184
- “cherry-picking” teaching, 7
- closing phrases, 85
- coaching, 20
- Comparison Planning Page
 - Primary, 143
 - template, 142
- comparison writing
 - anchor books, 134
 - animals, 139
 - described, 134
 - early humans/civilizations, 139–140
 - independent practice, 137–138

- introductory lesson, 134–136
- language, 136–137
- mini lessons, 136–138
- science, 139
- social studies, 139–140
- structure, 135–136
- topics, 138
- crediting sources, 85
- Cycle Flow Chart, 152
- dash facts
 - described, 78–80
 - template, 88
- descriptive writing
 - ABC books, 87
 - anchor books, 77
 - Canadian animal posters, 86
 - crediting sources, 85
 - dash facts research, 78–80
 - described, 76
 - effective endings, 83–85
 - great beginning, 81–83
 - introductory lesson, 77–78
 - mini lessons, 78–85
 - putting facts together, 80–81
 - science, 85–86
 - social studies, 86
 - “too much icing”, 83
- diamond plan, 119
- Draft Day
 - In the Zone, 23–24
 - mini lesson, 23
 - partner share, 23
- editing, 24–25
- endings
 - descriptive writing, 83–85
 - persuasive writing, 122–124
 - story writing, 178–179
- event stories
 - anchor books, 57, 60, 62
 - assessment rubric, 38, 58
 - deconstructing, 58
 - described, 37, 57
 - effective event story endings, 63–64
 - introductory lessons, 58–60
 - mini lessons, 60–64
 - planning, 58–60
 - stretching the moment, 62–63
 - transition words, 60–62
- Event Story Planner
 - Primary, 66
 - template, 65
- expert writing, 99–101
- Explanation Flow Chart, 150–151
- Explanation Structure, 153
- explanatory writing
 - anchor books, 145
 - described, 145
 - flow charts and diagrams, 147–148
 - introductory lesson, 145–147
 - mini lessons, 147–148
 - modeling, 147
 - sample, 149
 - structure, 146, 147
 - topics, 148
- Fact or Detail: Cut and Sort, 89
- Fact Pockets
 - biography writing, 154–167
 - comparison writing, 134–144
 - described, 10, 67
 - descriptive writing, 76–94
 - explanatory writing, 145–153
 - instructional writing, 95–113
 - nonfiction writing, 67–75
 - persuasive writing, 114–133
- facts
 - dash facts, 78–80
 - putting facts together, 80–81
- fancy fact starters, 83
- Finding Your Voice, 92
- flow charts and diagrams, 147–148
- formative writing assessment, 14
- great beginnings, 81–83
- The Greatest Invention Planning Page, 133
- The Greatest Planning Page, 132
- GUM It strategy, 18
- handle sentence, 46
- Hook Your Reader, 91
- hooking readers, 81–83, 174–175
- How To
 - Early Primary, 109
 - template, 106
- How to Be an Animal
 - Planning Page, 110
 - Primary, 111
- How to Dress, 112–113

Imagination Pockets
 described, 10
 story writing, 168–181

In the Zone, 23–24

independent practice, 137–138

independent writing, 18–19

Indigenous culture
 story writing, 171–172, 179–181
 ways of knowing, 104–105

instructional writing
 anchor books, 95, 100–101, 102, 103–104, 105
 animals, 101–102
 described, 95
 expert writing, 99–101
 Indigenous ways of knowing, 104–105
 introductory lesson, 96–97
 mini lessons, 97–101
 people, 103
 SAD formula, 97–98
 text features, 98–99
 tips, 99

interesting details
 described, 41–43
 five-finger mini lesson, 43
 sticky dot/stop sign mini lesson, 43–44

introductions
 descriptive writing, 81–83
 persuasive writing, 119–121

inventions, 125–126

Let's Get Organized, 55

List Plan, 35

Memory Pockets
 assessment rubric, 38
 described, 10
 event stories, 57–66
 walking stories, 37–56

mentor texts, 19

micro-teaching, 17

mini lessons
 balanced writing program, 17
 biography writing, 156–158
 comparison writing, 136–138
 descriptive writing, 78–85
 event stories, 60–64
 explanatory writing, 147–148
 instructional writing, 97–101
 story writing, 170–181
 walking stories, 39–51

No-Excuse lists, 17–18

No-Excuse Words
 Grade 1, 27
 Grade 2, 27
 Grade 3, 28
 Grade 4, 29
 Grades 5–7, 30

Nonfiction Text Structures, 74

nonfiction writing
 anchor chart, 70, 72
 assessment rubric, 68–69
 biography writing, 154–167
 comparison writing, 134–144
 described, 67–68
 descriptive writing, 76–94
 explanatory writing, 145–153
 forms and purposes, 67
 instructional writing, 95–113
 introducing, 69–73
 nonfiction writing, 67–75
 persuasive writing, 114–133
 sample school plan, 68
 text features, 71–73
 text structures, 69–71

organization drawer, 45–46

partner share, 23

Pass the Senses, 47

people
 famous, 124–125
 how to be, 103–104

personal narrative
 assessment rubric, 38
 described, 37
 event stories, 57–66
 walking stories, 37–56

personification, 50–51

The Persuasive Diamond Plan, 130

The Persuasive Sandwich Plan, 129

persuasive writing
 anchor books, 114, 125, 126
 bubblegum letters, 124
 catalogues, 124
 described, 114
 diamond plan, 119
 effective endings, 122–124
 effective introductions, 119–121
 everyday inventions, 125–126
 famous people, 124–125

- features, 117
- focusing on why, 121–122
- introductory lesson, 115
- language, 116–117
- mini lessons, 116–124
- positive versus negative, 116–117
- sandwich plan, 117–119
- secrets of success, 116
- TSN technique, 122–123
- wrap-up formula, 123–124
- Persuasive Writing Planning Sheet, 128
- Picture Plan, 33
- Picture Plan Plus, 36
- plot, 173
- poetry, 10, 11
- Primary Persuasive Planning Page, 131
 - Primary Story Planning , 187
- responsive teaching, 14
- revising, 24–25
- SAD formula, 97–98
- sandwich plan, 117–119
- science
 - biography writing, 158–159
 - comparison writing, 139
 - descriptive writing, 85–86
 - instructional writing, 104
- sensory detail, 46–48
- Simile and You Will See!, 54
- similes, 48–50
- single-scoop words, 40
- Six Senses Planning, 56
- Smokin’ Pencils, 19
- social studies
 - biography writing, 158–159
 - comparison writing, 139–140
 - descriptive writing, 86
 - instructional writing, 103–104
- Somebody/Wanted/But/So/Then, 183
- Source Your Resource, 93
- Story Booklet Spread, 188
- story structure, 170–172
- Story Structure
 - Primary , 183
 - template, 182
- story writing
 - anchor books, 169, 170
 - assessment rubric, 169
 - character development, 172–173
 - described, 168
 - introductory lesson, 169–170
 - mini lessons, 170–181
 - plot planning, 173
 - process, 174–181
 - “what’s the problem?”, 170–171
- story-writing process
 - character development, 176–177
 - early primary adaption, 181
 - ending, 178–179
 - hook, 174–175
 - Indigenous focus, 179–181
 - pacing, 175–176
 - problem introduction, 177–178
 - problem solving, 178
- stretching the moment, 62–63
- Student Writing Goals, 32
- superhero writing, 125
- text features
 - fiction versus nonfiction, 71–73
 - instructional writing, 98–99
- text structures, 69–71
- Timeline template, 163
- Timeline Planning Sheet, 162
- timelines, 156
- tip words, 99
- “too much icing”, 83
- transition words, 60–62, 117, 177
- Triple-Scoop Word Chart
 - Primary, 53
 - template, 52
- triple-scoop words, 40–41
- TSN technique, 122–123
- Venn Diagram for Comparing, 141
- walking stories
 - anchor books, 37, 38–39, 40, 47, 49, 50
 - assessment rubric, 38
 - described, 37
 - interesting details, 41–44
 - mini lessons, 39–51
 - organization drawers, 45–46
 - personification, 50–51
 - sensory detail, 46–48
 - similes, 48–50
 - word choice: triple-scoop words, 40–41
- Web Plan, 34
- Weekly Practice Writes
 - described, 21
 - Draft Day, 23–24

editing, 24–25
implementing, 21–25
introductory lesson, 22
planning, 22–23
revising, 24–25
What? What? How, 107–108
What’s the Hook?, 127
What’s the Problem?
 Primary , 185
 template , 184
Which Is Easier to Read?, 75
word choice, 40–41
word work, 17–18
wrap-up formula, 123–124
writer’s voice, 82–83
writing conferences, 19–20
writing goals, 15–16
writing joy, 14–15
writing routine, 16–17
writing structures
 Brain Pockets, 9–13
 described, 9–10
writing workshop, 21

This timely book uses thinking structures to deepen student writing.

Powerful Writing Structures revolves around “brain pockets” to help students become familiar with the qualities of different writing forms. They learn to access memory pockets for personal narrative writing, fact pockets for writing nonfiction, and imagination pockets for story writing.

The thinking strategies in this practical resource focus on using structural aspects of writing forms to inspire and inform students learning to write. Detailed lesson plans revolve around anchor books and include sample student work from real classrooms, book lists, and assessment rubrics. Based on extensive classroom testing, this comprehensive approach to developing a balanced year-long writing program includes tips for implementing weekly writing practice and for using different forms of writing in the content areas.

This valuable resource shows teachers how to set up an effective writing program that focuses on process rather than product. The book includes:

- Lessons to introduce different forms of writing, including six types of nonfiction, personal narrative, and story
- Mini lessons on writing structure, language, and writer’s craft so that students can carry skills forward into writing practice
- Book lists of the best children’s books to anchor, support, and extend lessons
- Student examples that illustrate how strategies work in real classrooms

From writing goals to writing joy, **Powerful Writing Structures** helps teachers guide students through the skills, the structures, the language, and the beauty of effective writing.



Ian Sheh

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