



# WRITE FROM THE BEGINNING...AND BEYOND

## NARRATIVE WRITING (GRADES K—8)

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# NARRATIVE WRITING

## OVERVIEW

### § WHAT IS NARRATIVE WRITING?

Narrative writing is often referred to as story writing. A story can be told or written, long or short, true or made up. Stories have been passed on for generations as a form of entertainment, but also as a way to teach us life's lessons. They have existed as long as mankind. Children of all ages love to hear stories; they are naturally attracted to them whether they are told orally, through books, through television, or some other form of media.

Stories can be realistic; they tell us about someone or something that seems real. They can also be fantasy; they have characters and places that are not like real life. Even realistic stories can be made up when a writer uses people and things from real life. Whether realistic or fantasy, a piece of narrative writing is a work of art, carefully crafted by the author to provide entertainment for the reader.

Oral narratives appear to come naturally and are much easier to produce than written narratives. When telling stories aloud, narrators may tell events out of order or they may leave out some important details. The gestures, expressions, and tone of the storyteller's voice can relay quite a bit of information; and those that are listening can ask questions if necessary. Written narratives, on the other hand, require much more thought. The information must be presented in an organized manner with a central idea, a plotline, vivid description, and some type of culminating event. Written narratives require a strong structure and essential elements that are unique to this type of writing. For this reason, students need explicit instruction in how to create a narrative composition.

All narratives are not the same. There are at least two types of narrative writing that students will need to encounter. The first is the **personal experience narrative**. This kind of narrative focuses on the experience of the writer rather than the characters in the story. The personal experience narrative might be organized chronologically as the incident is told as a series of events that move through time. *Sunshine Home* by Eve Bunting is an example of a narrative that moves chronologically. The personal experience narrative might also be organized categorically. When organized in this manner, the narrative tells about an experience but not as a chronology of events; instead, there are numerous personal experiences that support one overall theme or big idea. Cynthia Rylant’s book, *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, is organized in this way. In this simple picture book, Rylant relates varied experiences that she has had in the mountains with her grandparents. The overall “feel” or big idea of the book is that she enjoyed her time in the mountains. Her writing appears more reflective and circular than event driven. *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros contains numerous personal experience narratives that are organized categorically.

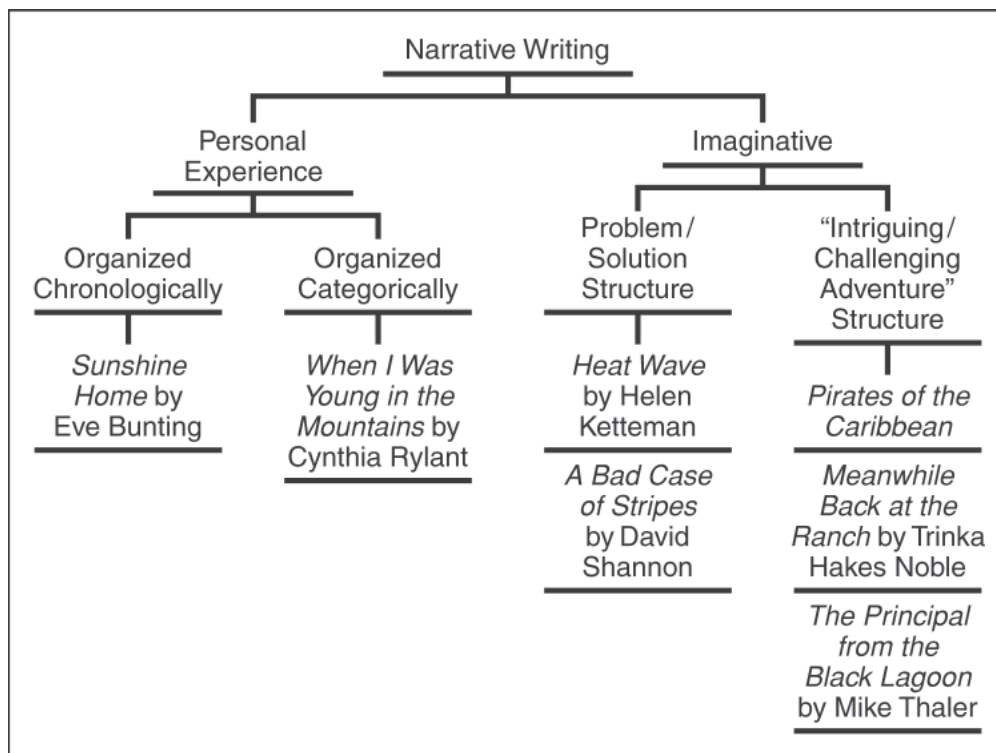
Whether organized chronologically or categorically, the personal experience narrative relates something that is important to the writer and something that the writer wants to share with others. The feelings and emotions of the writer and vivid language are essential components of the personal experience narrative.

The second type of narrative is the **imaginative narrative**, a story that involves strong characters, a distinct setting, a problem or situation, and some type of solution or resolution. This type of writing, in its simplest form, is structured in a problem/solution format. Using this structure, the main character encounters problems that he or she tries to solve through numerous attempts throughout the story. In the end, the problem is solved and the character is a type of “hero.” In some instances, there is resolution rather than solution to the problem as the main character becomes resigned to the situation. *Heat Wave* by Helen Ketterman and *A Bad Case of Stripes* by David Shannon are both examples of the problem/solution format.

A more sophisticated variety of imaginative narrative involves an “intriguing or challenging adventure.” Instead of encountering and attempting to solve one particular problem, the main character deals with a “situation,” which can either be problematic or increasingly unrealistic or imaginative. Throughout the story, the main character/characters must either overcome a series of obstacles or experience increasing intensity of the situation. The movie *Pirates of the Caribbean* is an example of an intriguing adventure with obstacles or challenges that must be overcome. Most adventurous movies and stories/books fit into this category and are popular with students. The book

*Meanwhile Back at the Ranch* by Trinka Hakes Noble is an example of an intriguing adventure with increasing intensity as Rancher Hick’s wife gets richer and richer as he experiences boredom in town. Another example of the increasing intensity variety is the book *The Principal from the Black Lagoon* by Mike Thaler. In this story, a young boy sits and waits to go into the principal’s office to receive punishment for an infraction. As he waits, he imagines increasingly bizarre punishments that he could receive (e.g. “she turns some kids into coat racks”).

Whether the imaginative narrative is structured in a problem/solution format or as an intriguing adventure, strong characters and setting, as well as vivid language are essential components of the writing. This type of writing also incorporates humor, suspense and tension, or drama into the story.



**Note:** This manual on Narrative Writing is presented in two parts. The first part focuses on Personal Experience Narratives, and the second part focuses on Imaginative Narratives.

# THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVE

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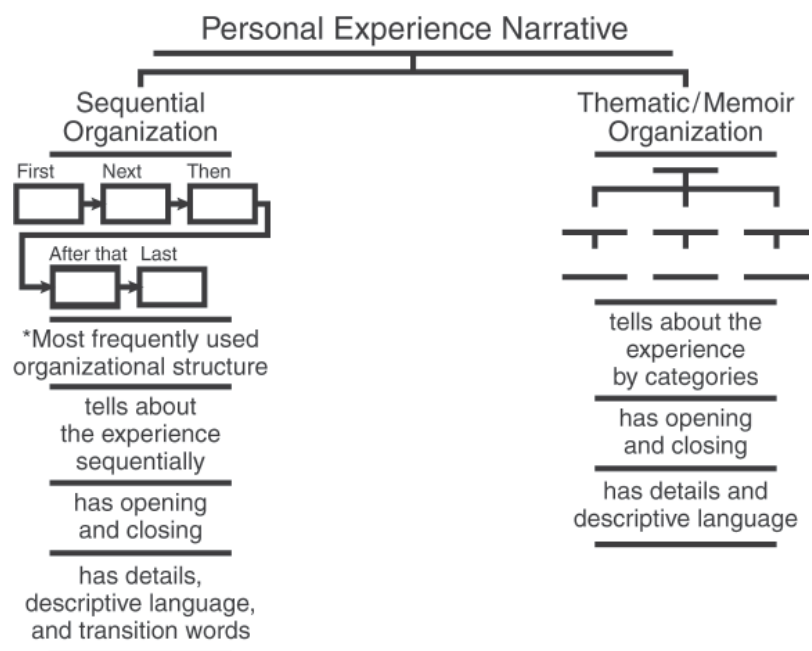
## IN SECOND GRADE

### § WHAT DOES THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVE LOOK LIKE IN SECOND GRADE?

Second graders should be able to compose a personal experience narrative organized in a **chronological** format. It should have beginning and ending sentences. Between the opening and closing sentences there should be several sentences that depict a logical sequence of events within an obvious time frame.

While the chronologically organized personal experience narrative is the format most frequently used by teachers and in assessments, second graders can also learn to compose a personal experience narrative organized in a **thematic/memoir** format. This composition should have beginning and ending sentences. Between the opening and closing there should be several sentences organized categorically or logically in such a way as to create an overall general impression.

In each type of writing students should use some detail and descriptive language. The ability to perform these competencies will be facilitated by extensive teacher modeling as well as numerous opportunities for practice and individual conferences.



## Addressing the Prompt

Second graders will spend many of their writing sessions developing topics that they have chosen. However, these students will also need practice writing to specific prompts to enable the teacher to evaluate more effectively their development as writers. Through teacher modeling and mini-lessons, students learn to identify key words in the prompts that must appear in their writing. For example, a prompt might read:

***Tell about a time that you received a gift from someone in your family or from a friend.***

Students should be directed to underline key words like *received*, *gift*, *family* or *friend*. As students begin to compose, they should constantly refer to the prompt to make sure they are staying focused on these key words.

## The Opening Sentence

The opening sentence is the forerunner of the introductory paragraph students will compose as their writing skills become more developed. Second graders should be able to write an opening sentence that tells what the writing will be about. For example, they will state *Who? Did what? When?* if composing a narrative (e.g. “Last Christmas my friend Susan gave me a special gift.”). The opening sentence should always address the prompt; however, it should never restate the prompt.

## The Middle Sentences

The middle sentences in the personal experience narrative that is organized sequentially tell the events in the order in which they happened. Teacher modeling should be used to introduce and develop the use of transition words and phrases as chronological markers. Teachers should use extreme caution not to use fixed, slotted-in transition words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *last*. It will be helpful to keep charts in the classroom with lists of multiple transition words to which students might refer.

The middle sentences in the personal experience narrative that is organized categorically tells about the experience through like ideas or categories of information. For example, if a student writes about visiting his grandparents, he could tell about baking cookies with his grandmother, chopping wood with his grandfather, and playing with his grandparents’ pet dog. The student narrates an experience; however, it is not told in the exact order in which the events occurred.

The middle sentences represent an opportunity for second graders to engage in the use of details and descriptive language. Through teacher modeling and mini-lessons, students can be directed to “tell me more” regarding their sentences. For example, if a student writes “First we saw a bear,” the teacher asks questions such as *What color was the bear? Where was the bear? What was the bear doing?* The goal is for the student to learn to write sentences such as: “First we saw a brown bear. He was sitting in the corner of his cage eating berries for his lunch.”

### **The Closing Sentence**

The closing sentence is the precursor of the closing paragraph that students will compose as their writing skills become more developed. Second-grade students should be able to write a closing sentence that brings some type of closure to the written piece. In other words, they should be able to state what they learned, an opinion, or a feeling about the experience about which they have written. It is beneficial for the students to use key words from the prompt in their closing sentences; however, they should not restate the prompt in their closings. Teachers should use extreme caution not to model or accept fixed, slotted-in closure such as “I felt happy.”

## Student Sample of Personal Experience Narratives (organized sequentially)

The best day I ever had at school was when we learned how to make rockets.

First made the rockets

Next we went outside

Finally They blasted off

with a camera roll  
and alka-seltzers

put the rockets  
outside

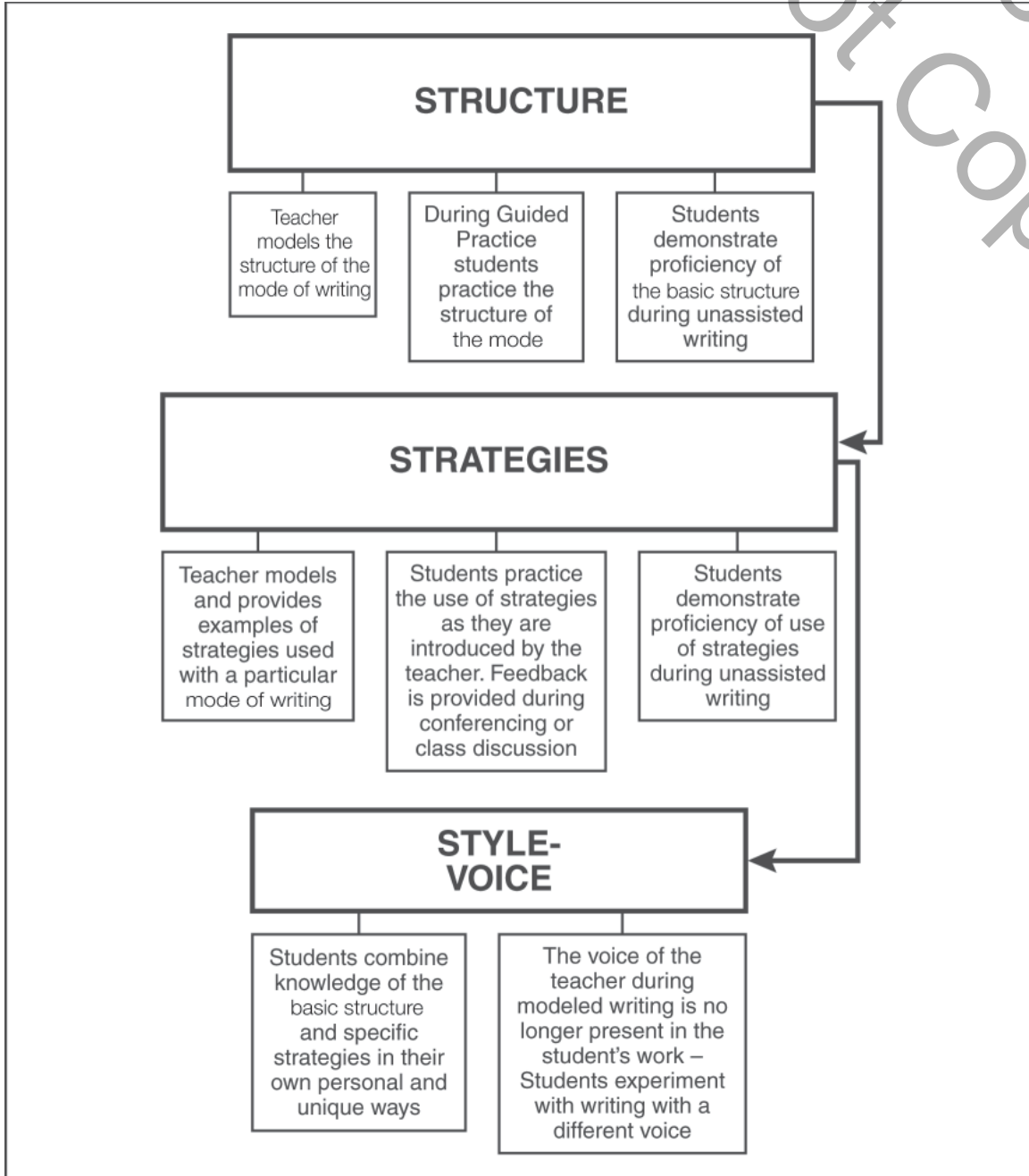
very quickly  
up above the school

I enjoyed blasting the rockets

The best day I ever had at school was when we learned how to make rockets. First we made the rockets. We made them with a film roll and alka-seltzer. Next we went outside. We put the rockets outside. Finally they blasted off. They went very quickly. They even went high above the school. I enjoyed blasting the rockets.

### THIRD GRADE PERSONAL CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE RUBRIC

	<b>Criteria for Evaluation</b>	<b>Scoring Guidelines</b>
<b>1</b>	The student writes multiple paragraphs with a minimum of 15–18 complete, coherent, and logically sequenced sentences focused on a single topic. Do not count sentences if the student has at least 2/3 of a page focused on a single topic.  (6 possible points)	<b>6 pts</b> — 15 or more sentences or 2/3 of a page focused sequentially on the topic <b>4 pts</b> — at least 10 complete sentences focused sequentially on the topic <b>2 pts</b> — at least 8 sentences focused on the topic <b>0 pts</b> — fewer than 8 sentences on the topic, or sentences are off prompt
<b>2</b>	The student correctly spells most words. Inventive spelling used can generally be read by others.  (1 possible point)	<b>1 pt</b> — most words spelled correctly; all incorrectly spelled words easily decipherable <b>0 pts</b> — spelling interferes with readability; one or more of the incorrectly spelled words is indecipherable
<b>3</b>	The student correctly uses common capitalization and punctuation.  (2 possible points)	<b>2 pts</b> — no capitalization or punctuation errors, or errors appear to be errors of draft <b>1 pt</b> — some obvious errors that need attention, but do not interfere with readability <b>0 pts</b> — numerous errors interfere with readability
<b>4</b>	The student writes an opening paragraph that addresses the prompt and identifies characters and setting.  (2 possible point)	<b>2 pts</b> — concise; at least 2 sentences that set up the writing and do not get into the action <b>1 pt</b> — 1 stand-alone opening sentence <u>or</u> opening is not concise <b>0 pts</b> — no opening <u>or</u> a single opening sentence that gets into the action
<b>5</b>	The student uses relevant detail sentences to support a topic sentence. Comment sentences such as “It was fun” do not count (see additional information after rubric).  (3 possible points)	<b>3 pts</b> — 2 or more events, <u>each</u> with <u>at least</u> 3 elaborations <u>or</u> 1 event with 6 elaborations <b>2 pts</b> — 2 or more events <u>each</u> with <u>at least</u> 2 elaborations <b>1 pt</b> — 2 or more events <u>each</u> with <u>at least</u> 1 elaboration <b>0 pts</b> — does not meet any of above criteria
<b>6</b>	The student uses descriptive words and phrases to help readers more vividly visualize the events, person, or object being described. Should include precise nouns/language and strong verbs.  (2 possible points)	<b>2 pts</b> — 5 or more examples other than color and size words <b>1 pt</b> — at least 3 examples other than color and size words <b>0 pts</b> — fewer than 3 examples
<b>7</b>	The student uses a closing paragraph expressing some observation, opinion, reaction, or feeling. (Do not count “going home” or “going to bed.”)  (2 possible points)	<b>2 pts</b> — closing paragraph with at least 2 sentences expressing some observation, opinion, reaction, or feeling <b>1 pt</b> — 1 stand-alone sentence meeting above criteria <u>or</u> closing not concise <b>0 pts</b> — no closing or does not meet above criteria
<b>8</b>	The student uses varied and appropriate transition words and phrases denoting passage of time or sequence of events.  (2 possible points)	<b>2 pts</b> — 3 or more transition words/phrases other than <i>first</i> , <i>next</i> , <i>then</i> , or <i>last</i> <b>1 pt</b> — 3 or more transition words/phrases including no more than one of the words <i>first</i> , <i>next</i> , <i>then</i> , or <i>last</i> <b>0 pts</b> — fewer than 3 transition words/phrases



### INTRODUCING PLUS #3 (EMBEDDED TRANSITION WORDS, PHRASES, AND DEVICES)

The teacher begins by explaining the concept of embedded transition words, phrases, and devices. This strategy can be referred to as the momentum of the writing. It is the strategy that keeps the writing moving forward in a timely manner.

Up to this point, students have focused on using transition words and phrases to introduce each new movement (stage on the Flow Map) in their writing. For this reason, they will need some frontloading activities that involve identifying embedded transitions in published pieces or high-scoring student samples. For example, the teacher can provide a handout and students can work in pairs to highlight each transition word or phrase that they can find. It is through activities like these that students begin to develop an awareness of both the concept of “embedded” and “transitions.”

A transition in narrative writing is any word, phrase, or device that

either moves the reader forward in time or orients the reader in time. There are three types of transitions that students should know. The first is the simple transition word: *first, next, then, last, finally, as*, etc. The second type of transition, the transitional phrase, is more sophisticated than the simple word and is easier to embed within a piece of writing. Transition phrases include examples like *when we arrived, later on, at the end of the day, just as the clock struck one, before we knew it*, etc. The third type of transition is the transitional device, particularly dynamic symmetry.

Dynamic symmetry is not foreign to students’ ears. They have been surrounded by it all of their lives: *ready, set, go; swimmers up, take your mark, go; I came, I saw, I conquered; stop, drop, roll*. Students, however, tend to employ even-numbered compound structures, when uneven combinations such as three, five, or seven are more pleasant to our ears. The rule of dynamic symmetry—the theory that unequal distribution is better—has been around since the sixth century BC. Many creative people recognize this awareness, including painters, landscape designers, and architects who have incorporated it into the visual domain. Patterns of three in writing tend to break the rhythm while advancing the action.

In the spring of 1996, the first softball game of the school year was to be played in the afternoon during physical education class. We always played on a dusty field just beside the school. When the two captains chose their teams they always chose the other boys first so Ted and I waited until the very end to be chosen. After all the other players had batted, I came up to bat with two runners on base. As my teammates urged me to try for a walk, I heard players on the other team yelling “Easy out, Easy out.” I was determined not to make an out so I kept my eyes on the ball as it came to me. After waiting for just the right second, I stepped in and swung the bat with all my might. Instantly, the ball flew over the right fielder’s head as I ran past first base and on to second. Later in the game, when it was my time to bat once again, I made it to third base on my hit. From then on I was not the last one chosen for the team.

## **INTRODUCING STRATEGY #4 (QUALITY ELABORATION)**

Up to this point, the students have used vertical and horizontal elaboration in their writing. Now, the teacher introduces a new and different way to elaborate called “The Five Media Questions.”

The teacher explains that the job of television news commentators is to help viewers “be there” when something unusual or disastrous happens. One way they do this is by providing graphic, up-close pictures. Another way they do it is by interviewing those that were there.

Following is a detailed explanation of “The Five Media Questions.”

### **Introducing The Five Media Questions**

Much can be learned from the events of September 11, 2001, when two commercial jets crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City. The media tried to capture that moment in history and to allow television viewers to come as close to the experience as they could. Television commentators wanted viewers to be there. In an effort to do this, they employed two strategies:

- *Slowed-down, step-by-step replay of the actual event.* As the jets headed for the buildings, commentators described the angle, and as the jets first hit the buildings, the impact was described. Viewers, after seeing this over and over, had a clear idea in their minds of exactly what happened.
- *Personal Interviews with those involved.* Over and over, the media sought out those who were actually in the buildings when the tragedy took place. The same five questions were asked during these interviews.

1. What did you do when this happened?
2. What were those around you doing?
3. What were you thinking?
4. How did you feel?
5. Can you describe what you saw?



**INTRODUCING STRATEGY #9 (INDIRECT CHARACTERIZATION)**

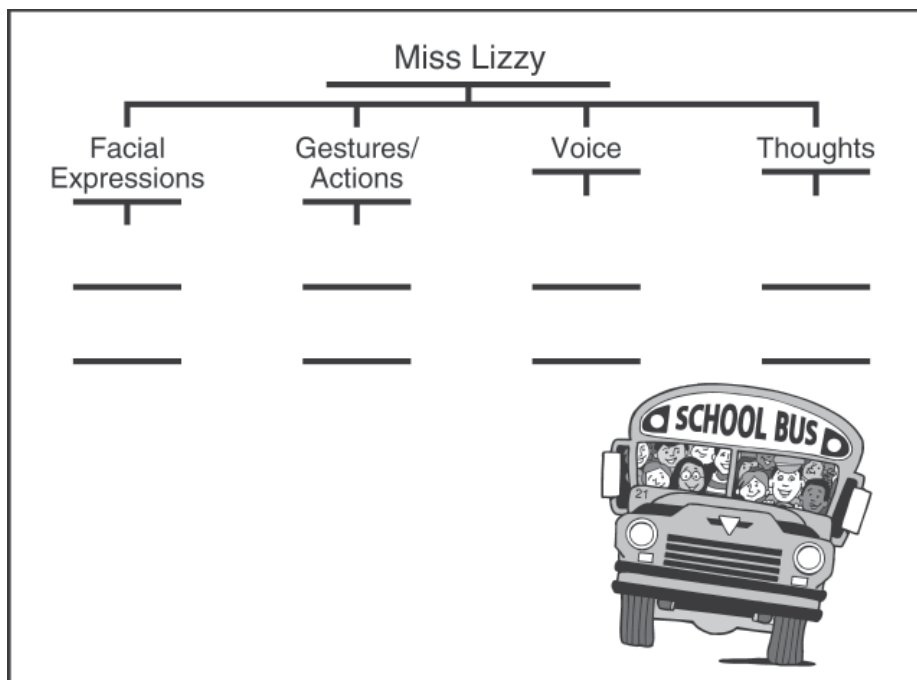
It is important for the teacher to provide an extended explanation of indirect characterization and to provide numerous opportunities for students to practice the strategy.

Indirect characterization refers to how characters reveal information about their likes and dislikes or their personality by the way they act, what they say, or what they think. For example, if a person who is afraid of bugs sees a spider, that person might scream, move away quickly, or swat at the spider. The person does not have to say “I don’t like spiders.” Anyone who watches the encounter can tell how the person feels. Good writers use this strategy to reveal information about themselves or a character in an interesting way. In other words, the writer “shows” readers rather than “tells” readers.

A good beginning for teaching this strategy is to examine pieces of literature for evidence of indirect characterization. Arnold Lobel’s book *Fables* (1983) is a good source for this strategy. For example, in the fable “The Ostrich in Love,” Lobel writes using indirect characterization for someone in love:

*He walked at a distance behind her, putting his feet in the very places she had stepped. He forgot to order dinner himself. He was too happy to be hungry. On Friday the Ostrich ordered a new suit of clothes. He fluffed his feathers, feeling fine and handsome. He hoped that his beloved might notice.*

Next, the teacher can draw a Tree Map on the board, like the one below.



## Follow-up

The teacher asks the students to work in pairs to select a different sentence from the book and elaborate on it. The elaboration can be vertical, horizontal, or a combination of the two. Afterwards, the pairs should share their writing with the entire class as others try to determine the type of elaboration that has been used.

### SAMPLE FOURTH/FIFTH GRADE MINI-LESSON #2

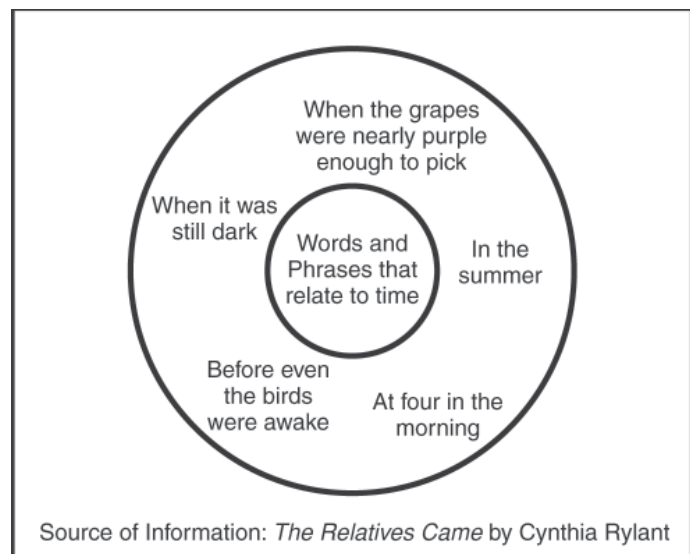
**Objective for Basic Structure Personal Experience Narrative:** Students will identify the transition words and phrases in a piece of literature and classify them according to those that are “fresh” and those that are commonplace.

## Activities

The teacher reviews with students what they have learned about transition words and phrases, including the use of dynamic symmetry. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that those transitions that are embedded in the body of the paragraphs, and even the individual sentences, are more powerful than those that are blatant and jump out at the reader at the beginning of each paragraph or movement.

Next, the teacher draws a Circle Map on the board with “Words and Phrases that relate to time” in the small circle and asks students to create one just like it.

The teacher explains that she is going to read from a piece of literature, such as *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant, and that she wants students to record all the transition words and phrases that they hear. It is important for the teacher to give students adequate time to process the information. It is also permissible to debrief at the end of each page so that all of the students have Circle Maps that look similar as they collect the information.



# THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVE

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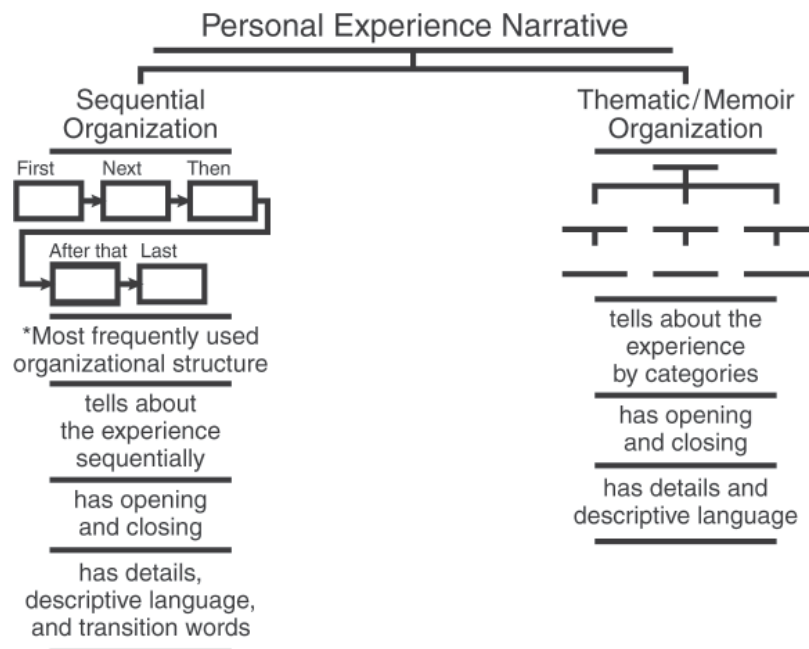
## IN SIXTH THROUGH EIGHTH GRADE

### § WHAT DOES THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVE LOOK LIKE IN SIXTH THROUGH EIGHTH GRADE?

Sixth through eighth graders should be able to compose a personal experience narrative organized in a **chronological** format that includes beginning and ending paragraphs and body paragraphs that depict a logical sequence of events within a limited time frame.

While the chronologically organized personal experience narrative is the format most frequently used by teachers and in assessments, sixth through eighth graders can also learn to compose a personal experience narrative organized in a **thematic/memoir** format. This composition should have beginning and ending paragraphs with body paragraphs organized categorically in such a way as to create an overall general impression.

In each type of writing, students should use details and descriptive language. The ability to perform these competencies will be facilitated by extensive teacher modeling as well as numerous opportunities for practice and individual conferences.



## Addressing the Prompt

Sixth through eighth graders will spend many of their writing sessions developing topics that they have chosen. However, these students will also need practice writing to specific prompts to enable the teacher to evaluate more effectively their development as writers. Writing to prompts will also teach students to complete a piece of writing within a specified time frame, which is consistent with many district and state writing assessments.

Through teacher modeling and mini-lessons, students learn to identify key words or idea in the prompt that must appear in their writing. Students should be directed to focus on these key words/ideas, and as they begin to compose their pieces, they should refer to the prompt from time to time to make sure they stay focused.

## The Opening Paragraph

The opening paragraph always addresses in some way the key idea in the prompt. The purpose of the opening paragraph is to tell what the story will be about or to “set up” the writing for readers without getting into any of the action of the story. In the narrative, students could include some of the following: *Who? What? When? Where?* and *Why?* The student might write:

***One evening last fall I had one of the scariest experiences of my life! Mom and Dad had gone to a meeting and I had to stay home alone. Nothing had prepared me for what was about to happen.***

Note that in the opening there is a bit of background information and a hint of what is to come. A good rule of thumb is to have approximately three sentences in the opening paragraph. Conciseness should always be the goal. Too much is as detrimental as too little.

## The Middle Paragraphs

The middle paragraphs contain the meat or heart of the writing. It is here that the real quality of the piece is determined. The chronologically sequenced personal experience narrative uses a time-ordered sequence of elaborated events that tell a story which happened within a specific time frame. The categorically organized personal experience narrative uses a logical progression of categories of information related to a particular person, place, or thing.

The middle paragraphs represent an opportunity for students to use their knowledge of topic sentences and relevant supporting details. Each of the middle paragraphs in and of themselves should flow either sequentially or logically. Through teacher modeling and mini-lessons, students can be directed to plan each paragraph as well as they plan the overall piece of writing.

## The Closing Paragraph

The final paragraph brings some type of closure to the writing and leaves readers with an impression. Narratives can end with a variety of closings; however, there is usually a reflection about what has been learned or why the experience is important to the writer since feelings play a big part in narrative writing.

Typically, effective endings are difficult for many students to grasp. Often their endings are blunt, trite, or unrelated and, therefore, they can take away somewhat from the writing. Exposure to and practice with writing effective endings should be modeled by the teacher and should be a subject of numerous mini-lessons.

## The Progression to Writing Proficiency

*Basic Structure:* Becoming proficient in a particular mode of writing, such as narrative, requires students to move through a progression of skills and understandings. This progression begins with understanding the basic structure of a particular type of writing. This proficiency develops as

- 1) the teacher models the structure of the mode,
- 2) students engage in guided practice of the mode, and
- 3) students finally demonstrate proficiency regarding the basic structure during unassisted writing.

*Strategies:* Once students have mastered the basic structure of a particular type of writing, they should be introduced to the strategies for that particular type of writing that will take their basic structure to a significantly higher level of proficiency. A good indicator of when to begin moving to strategies is when students can consistently score 18–20 points on the basic structure rubric for that particular type of writing.

Strategies attempted before the basic structure is in place are not beneficial to the overall writing and in some instances (as with inappropriate and lengthy dialogue) they can take away from the writing sample. However, this is not to say that the teacher should not introduce these strategies through mini-lessons. Students need repeated exposure to the strategies before they will become natural to them.

When strategies are introduced

- 1) the teacher models and provides examples of the strategies,
- 2) students practice the use of the strategies as they are introduced and receive feedback during conferencing and class discussion, and
- 3) students demonstrate proficiency in the use of strategies during unassisted writing.

*Style and voice:* Style and voice develop over time as students

- 1) combine their knowledge of the structure of the writing and specific strategies in their own personal and unique ways,
- 2) the voice of the teacher during modeled writing is no longer present in the students' work, and
- 3) students experiment with writing in a different voice.

The most proficient writers are those who understand and use the basic structure of a particular mode of writing, overlay the basic structure with numerous strategies associated with good writing, and compose with an authentic and engaging voice.

The Flow Map on the following page shows the developmental progression of writing from understanding the basic structure to proficient use of various strategies to the emergence of a distinct style and voice.

## SCORING RUBRIC FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INCIDENT WRITING (ORGANIZED CHRONOLOGICALLY)

Criteria for Evaluation	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs Attention
Introduction sets the context and identifies the central point			
Body is organized chronologically with rising action, climax, and falling action			
Details are <u>relevant</u> to stated or implied topic sentence			
Details are <u>specific</u> , not vague, abstract statements			
Details are <u>sufficient</u> to support the central point			
<u>Embedded</u> transitions are used to “move” the story			
Incorporates <u>varied</u> narrative strategies			
Slows down the action during the most important event			
Conclusion is satisfying, gives feeling of completion, and refers to significance of the event			
Sentences are complete and grammatically correct			
Sentences are varied — simple, compound, and complex structures			
Original ideas and insights are demonstrated through a strong voice			
<b>Comments:</b>			

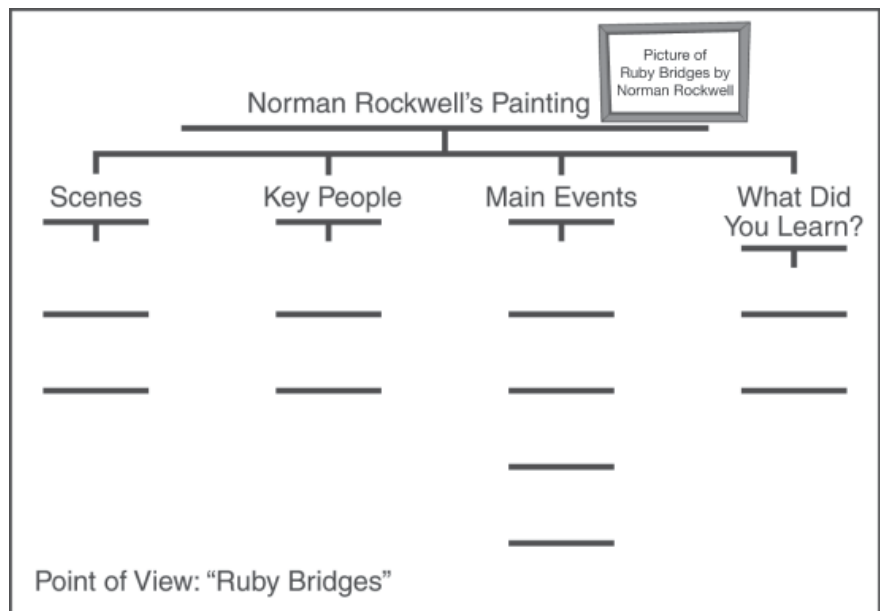
**§ USING VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS TO STIMULATE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INCIDENT WRITING**

Using visual representations, such as posters, political cartoons, and art, is yet another alternative and interesting way to stimulate “pseudo” Autobiographical Incident writing. When using this strategy, students assume the persona of the person in the representation and write an Autobiographical Incident as if they had the experience themselves.

**Activity**

Norman Rockwell is one of the most famous artists for capturing the human spirit and the human experience. His painting of Ruby Bridges depicts a young African American child going to school during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. She is surrounded by a law enforcement escort whose faces are not seen. Evidence of hate is seen on the wall beside her as she walks on with her eyes straight ahead.

The teacher generates a class discussion about the event and helps the class create a Tree Map to record the “Exploring the Memory” details from the point of view of Ruby Bridges.



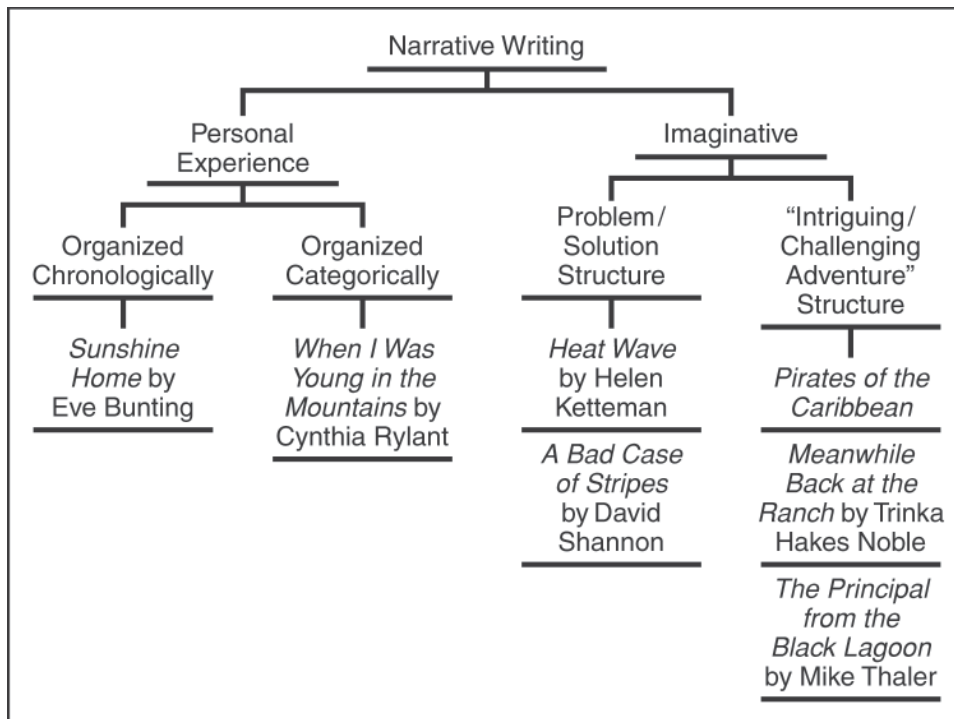
**Follow-up**

The students assume the persona of Ruby Bridges and write an Autobiographical Incident about that particular day.

# FOCUS ON IMAGINATIVE OR FICTIONAL NARRATIVES

## § FOCUS ON IMAGINATIVE/FICTIONAL NARRATIVES

The second type of narrative writing is the imaginative narrative, a story that involves strong characters, a distinct setting, a problem or situation, and some type of solution or resolution. This type of writing, in its simplest form, is structured in a problem/solution format. Using this structure, the main character encounters a problem that he tries to solve through numerous attempts all the way through the story. In the end, the problem is solved and the character is a type of “hero.” In some instances, there is resolution rather than a solution to the problem, as the main character becomes resigned to or accepting of the situation. *Heat Wave* by Helen Ketterman and *A Bad Case of Stripes* by David Shannon are both examples of the problem/solution format.



A more sophisticated variety of imaginative narrative involves an “intriguing or challenging adventure.” Instead of encountering and attempting to solve one particular problem, the main character deals with a “situation,” which can either be problematic or increasingly unrealistic or imaginative. Throughout the story, the main character(s) must either overcome a series of obstacles or experience an increasing intensity of the situation. The movie *Pirates of the Caribbean* is an example of an intriguing adventure with obstacles or challenges that must be overcome. Most adventure movies and stories/books fit into this category and are popular with students. The book *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch* by Trinka Hakes Noble is an example of an intriguing adventure with increasing intensity, as Rancher Hick’s wife gets richer and richer as he experiences more and more boredom in town. Another example of an intriguing adventure is the book *The Principal from the Black Lagoon* by Mike Thaler. In this story, a young boy sits and waits to go into the principal’s office to receive punishment for an infraction. As he waits he imagines progressively more bizarre punishments that he could receive (e.g. “she turns some kids into coat racks”).

Whether the imaginative narrative is structured in a problem/solution format or as an intriguing adventure, strong characters and setting, as well as vivid language are essential components of the writing. This type of writing also incorporates the essential elements of humor, suspense and tension, or drama into the story.

◆ THE IMAGINATIVE NARRATIVE IN KINDERGARTEN ◆

Young children often have difficulty distinguishing fantasy from reality; therefore, many of their personal experience stories often have a degree of imagination injected.

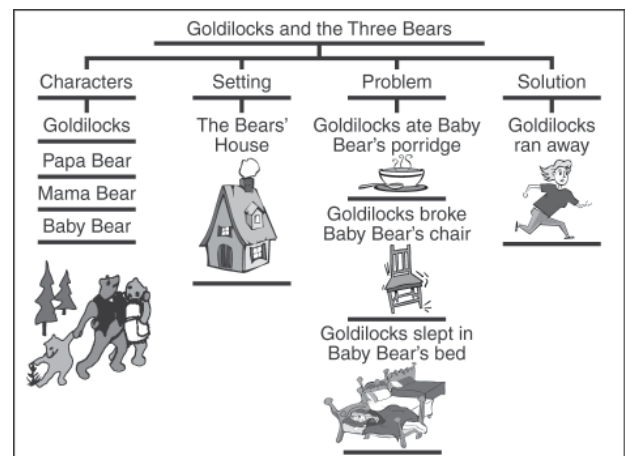
*My dog had ten puppies.*

*My dad makes a million dollars.*

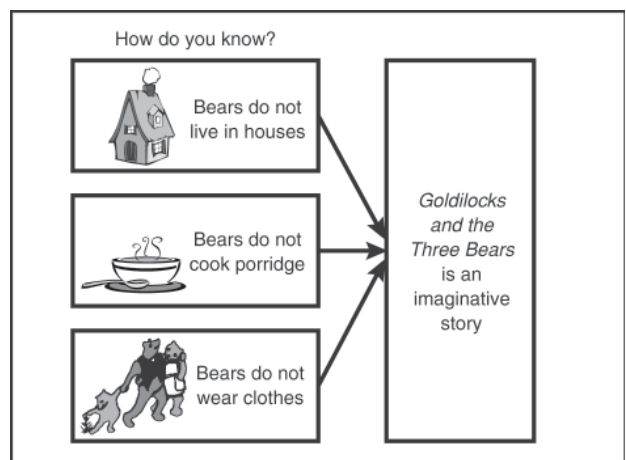
*My house is as big as a castle.*

For this reason, imaginative narrative instruction in kindergarten will involve the exploration of imaginative narrative literature and “What if?” scenarios during Focused Journal writing. The exploration of fictional/fairy tale literature should include these types of activities:

- 1) Creating a Tree Map of the story elements



- 2) Creating a partial Multi-Flow Map to explain why a story is imaginative/fictional



- 3) Practice retelling and acting out an imaginative story

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**SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR**

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**TEACHING WRITING (K–8)**

### General Interest Texts

- Allington, Richard and Patricia Cunningham. (2001). *Schools that Work: Where All Children Read and Write*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Anderson, Carl. (2000). *How's It Going? A Practical Guide to Conferring with Student Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Ayers, Ruth and Stacey Shubitz. (2010). *Day by Day: Refining Writing Workshop through 180 Days of Reflective Practice*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Clay Marie M. (1975). *What Did I Write? Beginning Writing Behavior*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Davis, Judy and Sharon Hill. (2003). *The No-Nonsense Guide to Teaching Writing: Strategies, Structures, and Solutions*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Dorfman, Lynne R. and Rose Cappelli. (2007). *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing through Children's Literature, K–6*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- . (2009). *Nonfiction Mentor Texts: Teaching Informational Writing through Children's Literature, K–8*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Ehmann, Susan and Kellyann Gayer. (2009). *I Can Write Like That! A Guide to Mentor Texts and Craft Studies for Writers' Workshop, K–6*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Fletcher, Ralph. (2003). *A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You*. New York: Harper Trophy.
- . (2006). *Boy Writers: Reclaiming Their Voices*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- . (2007). *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K–8*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- . (2010). *Pyrotechnics on the Page: Playful Craft that Sparks Writing*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

- Fletcher, Ralph and Joanne Portalupi. (2001). *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Graves, Donald. (2003). *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work—Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Harwayne, Shelley. (2001). *Writing through Childhood: Rethinking Process and Product*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Portalupi, Joann. (2001). *Nonfiction Craft Lessons: Teaching Information Writing K–8*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Ray, Katie Wood with Lester Laminack. (2001). *The Writing Workshop: Working through the Hard Parts (and They're All Hard Parts)*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Routman, Regie. (2004). *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results while Simplifying Teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Strickland, Dorothy S., Kathy Ganske, and Joanne K. Monroe. (2002). *Supporting Struggling Readers and Writers: Strategies for classroom intervention, 3–6*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers and Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

### **Books for Use in the Lower Grades**

- Avery, Carol. (2001). *And With a Light Touch: Learning about Reading, Writing and Teaching with First Graders*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Corgill, Anne Marie. (2008). *Of Primary Importance: What's Essential in Teaching Young Writers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Horn, Martha and Mary Ellen Giacobbe. (2007). *Talking, Drawing, Writing: Lessons for Our Youngest Writers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Jacobsen, Jennifer. (2010). *No More "I'm Done!": Fostering Independent Writers in the Primary Grades*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Ray, Katie and L. Cleaveland. (2004). *Writing Workshop with Our Youngest Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Schulze, Arlene, C. (2006). *Helping Children become Readers through Writing: A Guide to Writing Workshop in Kindergarten*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Stead, Tony. (2001). *Is That a Fact?: Teaching Nonfiction Writing, K–3*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

**Books for Use in Upper Grades**

- Anderson, Jeff. (2005). *Mechanically Inclined: Building Grammar, Usage, and Style into Writer's Workshop*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- . (2007). *Everyday Editing: Inviting Students to Develop Skill and Craft in Writer's Workshop*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Atwell, Nancie. (1998). *In the Middle: New Understanding about Writing, Reading and Learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- . (2003). *Lessons that Change Writers, Grades 5–9*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Firsthand.
- Beers, Kylene, Robert E. Probst, and Linda Rief. (2007). *Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise into Practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Bomer, Katherine. (2005). *Writing a Life: Teaching Memoir to Sharpen Insight, Shape Meaning and Triumph over Tests*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Buckner, Aimee. (2005). *Notebook Know-How: Strategies for the Writer's Notebook*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Daniels, Harvey, Steven Zemelman, and Nancy Steineke. (2007). *Content-Area Writing: Every Teacher's Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Fisher, Douglas and Nancy Frey. (2007). *Scaffolded Writing Instruction: Teaching with a Gradual-Release Framework*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.
- Gallagher, Kelly. (2006). *Teaching Adolescent Writers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- McMackin, Mary C. and Barbara S. Siegel. (2002). *Knowing How: Researching and Writing Nonfiction, 3–8*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Newkirk, Thomas and Richard Kent, eds. (2007). *Teaching the Neglected "R": Rethinking Writing Instruction in Secondary Classroom (Grades 7–12)*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Boynton/Cook.
- Robb, Laura. (2010). *Teaching Middle School Writers: What Every English Teacher Needs to Know*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Boynton-Cook.
- Zinsser, William. (2006). *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: HarperCollins.