

Writer's Notebooks: Setting the Stage for Effective Writing

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Goals for the Session:

- Increase awareness: what is a writer's notebook?
- Realize the importance of using a writer's notebook
- Explore sources for "seeds" in a writer's notebook
- Identify potential links between writer's notebook entries and writing projects

Lois Lowry, in *Guiding Readers and Writers, Grades 3-6*, Fountas & Pinnell, p. 424.

- "Stories don't just appear out of nowhere. They need a ball that starts to roll."
- The writer's notebook is that ball.

A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You

Fletcher, R. (1996). New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Reference

- “A writer’s notebook gives you a place to live like a writer, not just in school during writing time, but wherever you are, at any time of day.”

Fletcher, R. (1996). *A Writer’s Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

About my personal writer’s notebooks

- Physical appearance
- Use: when, why, how
- Evolving nature/types
- Sections (optional)
- Examples

“A powerful way to motivate students is to be a writer with them, and share your work.”

Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G.S. (2001). *Guiding Readers and Writers, Grades 3-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, p. 427.

Rationale for Student Use

- Students generate materials for writing projects. They will notice, collect, and record such things as:
 - thoughts, wonderings, ideas, observations, memories, poems, bits of conversations, facts, webs, sketches, feelings, lists, artifacts, diagrams, photos, interviews, and more.
- Students organize their thinking around a topic before beginning a writing project.

“Your notebook can be used as a place to gather writing that inspires you.” (p. 107)

“I’ve learned that if I am going to write well, I need to surround my words with the beautiful writing of others.” (p. 108)

Fletcher, R. (1996). *A Writer’s Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You*.

Planting Seeds

■ Fiction:

Chall, Marsha. 2001. *Up North at the Cabin*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books.

■ Nonfiction:

Hooper, Meredith. 1998. *The Drop in My Drink: The Story of Water on Our Planet*. New York: Putnam.

Reference

“Students can use their writer’s notebooks to record ideas that intrigue them, their initial questions, and quick bits of information they think might lead to investigations.”
(p. 429, 432).

Fountas & Pinnell, *Guiding Readers and Writers, Grades 3-6*.

Creating Lists in Writers' Notebooks

- Taps into students' prior knowledge and previous experiences
- Extends their thinking about one of those experiences
- Helps them consider facts about a topic
- May lead to a more complex writing project such as a persuasive essay or research

How do students learn to use a writer's notebook?

- Teacher modeling
- Mini-lessons
- In-class practice
- Out-of-class practice (homework)
- Classroom sharing
- Revisiting and rereading

Benefits of Using a Writer's Notebook

- Provides a collection place for ideas, facts, and wonderings
- Gathers materials for different types of writing projects: point of view, poetry, interviews, narrative, informative, persuasive, editorials, descriptive, research, etc.
- Try out writing craft: practice leads, closings, descriptive phrases, poetry stanzas, etc. for use in writing projects
- Organizes thoughts before writing
- Helps us be more attuned to the world around us, inspires us think more like writers

Sources for Seeds

- Literature: fiction and nonfiction
- Memories and events
- Newspaper articles, headlines, and comics
- Photos and illustrations
- Objects/people/animals
- Observations and conversations
- Interesting words and phrases
- Favorite authors

Indicators

- Writing Applications
- Writing Process
- Research

Indicator: Writing Applications

- Informal writing for various purposes
- Use vivid language/descriptions
- Compare/contrast; cause and effect
- Research: using references and resources
- Informational writing: facts, examples, details in logical order
- Write narratives that maintain a clear focus and point of view
- Write persuasive essays that establish a clear position.

Indicator: Writing Process

- Pre-writing: develop clear main idea for writing
- Develop purpose and audience for writing
- Use organizational strategies
- Use descriptive words and details
- Use resources and references
- Conduct interviews and surveys
- Keep a list of writing ideas (5th and 6th grade)
- Use different kinds of language, including that which mimics the writing style of books

Indicator: Research

- Choose topics from a list of questions, or personal area of interest
- Gather information from multiple sources (books, magazines, interviews, observations, etc.)
- Show findings in a systematic way (notes, outlines, charts, sketches, graphic organizers)
- Compare/ contrast
- Use quotes to support ideas