

### **Get Student Writing to \*Sparkle\***

How? Students need to read like writers, then they will think and write like writers.  
How do you do this? By teaching them to analyze good writing for the many craft techniques real authors use, then they will see all the possibilities for their own writing.

#### **What makes good writing?**

Lots of details	Strong verbs	Fresh imagery, similes, and metaphors
Alliteration	Onomatopoeia	Attention-grabbing beginning
Strong characters	Strong ending	Good use of repetition
Good use of dialogue	Show, don't tell	Tight writing, using just the right words
Using questions in the text		Combining longer sentences with short ones
Words and phrases that match the topic of the story, make a list of them before writing		
Using original words, such as hyphenated words		
(example: Use one-of-a-kind-only-you-have-thought-of-really-descriptive adjectives.)		
Giving the main character problem after problem, and ones that he or she must solve		

What will make a student's (or anyone's) writing better?

1. By reading good books! Or having good books read aloud. (I have *never* met, or read about, an author who was not passionate about books and reading. Reading and writing go together!)
2. Instruction in each of the "good writing" topics above, such as in a classroom "writer's workshop." Also, pointing out to students what makes certain writing so good, such as the fresh imagery in a sentence. Be "writing detectives."
3. Practice and lots of revising. Not giving up.
4. Good constructive feedback. Plus, focusing "small," on a specific part of a piece that can be improved, such as coming up with an exciting beginning sentence.
5. Sometimes having the freedom to write about what he/she wants to write about vs. always having writing assignments where given topics must be used.
6. Seeing good writing by someone his/her own age (would use anonymous student) to know the level of good writing that's possible.

Additional tried-and-true ideas for teaching writing...

1. Have students keep journals, or writers' notebooks, to express feelings, jot down ideas, and/or write down phrases of fresh writing they come across.
2. Use picture books at any age to teach good writing since picture books use tight writing and often lots of fresh imagery.

A few ideas on how to make writing fun in the classroom...

- Have a writing "mascot" each student gets to take home (a night/weekend). Students write about the experience in a "mascot notebook" from the mascot's point of view.
- Have Theme Days/Weeks where all books, writing, etc. revolve around a theme.
- Find an intriguing picture in a picture book. Students write his/her own story about it.
- Make writing meaningful. Send classroom "book/s" students have written to a nursing home, local library, etc.

**Happy Writing!!**

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Handout by **Rhonda Gowler Greene**, children's book author and speaker 2/2008

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A few good books that use outstanding writing craft, so they're great to use in the classroom...

### **Picture books**

Baylor, Byrd	<i>If You are a Hunter of Fossils</i>
Burleigh, Robert	<i>Home Run</i>
Carlstrom, Nancy White	<i>The Snow Speaks</i>
Chapman, Cheryl	<i>Snow on Snow on Snow</i>
Frasier, Debra	<i>On the Day You were Born</i>
Gray, Libba Moore	<i>My Mama had a Dancing Heart</i>
Martin, Jacqueline Briggs	<i>Snowflake Bentley</i>
Rylant, Cynthia	<i>The Relatives Came</i> (any books by Cynthia Rylant)
Yolen, Jane	<i>Owl Moon</i>

### **Poetry books**

Bauer, Caroline Feller, ed.	<i>Snowy Day</i>
Crist-Evans, Craig	<i>Moon over Tennessee A Boy's Civil War Journal</i>
Esbensen, Barbara Juster	<i>Swing Around the Sun</i>
	<i>Words with Wrinkled Knees</i>
Fleishman, Paul	<i>Joyful Noise</i>
Florian, Douglas	<i>Winter Eyes</i> (all poetry books by Douglas Florian)
George, Kristine O'Connell	<i>The Great Frog Race</i> (and others by K.O. George)
Grimes, Nikki	<i>A Pocketful of Poems</i>
Lillegard, Dee	<i>Hello School!</i>
	<i>Wake Up House!</i>
Moore, Lilian, ed.	<i>Sunflakes</i>
Sayre, April Pulley	<i>girl coming in for a landing</i>
Singer, Marilyn	<i>Turtle in July</i>
Worth, Valerie	<i>all the small poems</i>
Yolen, Jane	<i>Bird Watch</i>

### **Novels**

Codell, Esme Raji	<i>Sahara Special</i>
Creech, Sharon	<i>Love That Dog</i>
DiCamillo, Kate	<i>Because of Winn-Dixie</i>
Hannigan, Katherine	<i>Ida B and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World</i>
Hesse, Karen	<i>Out of the Dust</i>
MacLachlan, Patricia	<i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i>
Paterson, Katherine	<i>Bridge to Teribithia</i>
Paulsen, Gary	<i>Hatchet</i>
Perkins, Lynne Rae	<i>Criss Cross</i>
Rylant, Cynthia	<i>Missing May</i>
Sachar, Louis	<i>Holes</i>
Stauffacher, Sue	<i>Donuthead</i>

### **Other**

poem "The Bells" by Edgar Allan Poe

