

Book Selections

WRITING

The Writer's Workout Book : 113 Stretches Toward Better Prose by Art Peterson (1996). Art Peterson, presently a senior editor for National Writing Project publications, draws on his thirty years of experience as a junior and senior high school teacher to detail over one hundred "minilessons" that cover the oft-neglected ground between fluency and correctness. The book provides brief and engaging activities on topics as varied as developing concrete details, writing for an audience, ordering paragraphs, varying sentences, and choosing words. The book also features a number of short, humorous essays about life as a writing teacher that will resonate with anyone who has ever been there. Although the first audience for the book is intended to be college, high school, and middle school teachers, the text has also been used by creative elementary school teachers who are able to adapt these lessons for younger students. Teachers and other adults who wish to sharpen their own prose use this book, as do students in college-level English methods classes.

Writing for a Change : Boosting Literacy and Learning Through Social Action Edited by Kristina Berdan, Ian Boulton, Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, Jennie Fleming, Launie Gardner, Iana Rogers, and Asali Solomon (2006, Jossey-Bass). Growing out of NWP's five-year partnership with the Centre for Social Action in England, *Writing for a Change* shows teachers how to engage students in real-world problem-solving activities that can help them to acquire voice and authority—and passion for both reading and writing. Written in collaboration with the Centre for Social Action, the book describes the innovative Social Action process for encouraging students to collaborate on problems of their own choosing—to analyze options, develop action plans, discover solutions, and finally to reflect on their work. Featuring stories by teachers who have successfully used the method, the book shows that first-graders as well as high school students can enjoy this exciting and educational process. Practical guidance for applying the process to any curricular area is provided, along with an extensive list of classroom activities developed by Jennie Fleming and Ian Boulton from the Centre for Social Action.

Writing Our Communities : Local Learning and Public Culture Edited by Dave Winter and Sarah Robbins (2005). Emphasizing student inquiry and writing, this rich collection offers teachers ready-to-use classroom resources with a sound basis in best practice. Student engagement with community becomes the centerpiece of the book, an engagement that takes place across disciplines through projects involving history, environment, culture and more. These lively, classroom-tested lessons are easily adapted to different teaching levels and settings. The book also effectively addresses curricular guidelines specific to local, regional and state settings, as well as to national standards. (Co-published with National Council of Teachers of English)

Writing Your Heritage : A Sequence of Thinking, Reading, and Writing Assignments by Deborah Dixon, foreword by Sheridan Blau (1993). Deborah Dixon wrote this book as she worked through her experience helping college freshmen, many of whom were the first in their families to go to college, to learn about their heritage. But the book outlines a framework and suggests activities useful and usable by teachers at all grade levels. As the title suggests, the book is a sequence of lessons developed to not only increase students' understanding of their roots, but also to move students to higher levels of thinking skills as they read, write, work in groups and develop a final project. Dixon's strategies for fostering academic success among these students are apparent throughout *Writing Your Heritage*.

30 Ideas for Teaching Writing. The National Writing Project's *30 Ideas for Teaching Writing* offers successful strategies contributed by experienced writing project teachers. Since NWP does not promote a single approach to teaching writing, readers will benefit from a variety of eclectic, classroom-tested techniques:

1. Use the shared events of students' lives to inspire writing.
2. Establish an email dialogue between students from different schools who are reading the same book.
3. Use writing to improve relations among students.
4. Help student writers draw rich chunks of writing from endless sprawl.
5. Work with words relevant to students' lives to help them build vocabulary.
6. Help students analyze text by asking them to imagine dialogue between authors.
7. Spotlight language and use group brainstorming to help students create poetry.
8. Ask students to reflect on and write about their writing.
9. Ease into writing workshops by presenting yourself as a model.
10. Get students to focus on their writing by holding off on grading.

11. Use casual talk about students' lives to generate writing.
12. Give students a chance to write to an audience for real purpose.
13. Practice and play with revision techniques.
14. Pair students with adult reading/writing buddies.
15. Teach "tension" to move students beyond fluency.
16. Encourage descriptive writing by focusing on the sounds of words.
17. Require written response to peers' writing.
18. Make writing reflection tangible.
19. Make grammar instruction dynamic.
20. Ask students to experiment with sentence length.
21. Help students ask questions about their writing.
22. Challenge students to find active verbs.
23. Require students to make a persuasive written argument in support of a final grade.
24. Ground writing in social issues important to students.
25. Encourage the "framing device" as an aid to cohesion in writing.
26. Use real world examples to reinforce writing conventions.
27. Think like a football coach.
28. Allow classroom writing to take a page from yearbook writing.
29. Use home language on the road to Standard English.
30. Introduce multi-genre writing in the context of community service.

Relations, Locations, Positions: Composition Theory for Writing Teachers Editor(s): Peter Vandenberg, Sue Hum, Jennifer Clary-Lemon This anthology for beginning teachers and graduate students in composition studies and other related fields begins with the premise that writing is always social, a dialogue between self and other. This —social turn|| not only underscores the value of the writing process by encouraging students to prewrite, draft, and revise together, but, more important, it also focuses on postprocess by foregrounding approaches to teaching writing that highlight the importance of context. Thus, this anthology seeks to move —beyond process|| by building on the valuable lessons from process pedagogy and by promoting the idea that writing stands for a radically complex network of phenomena. Editors Vandenberg, Hum, and Clary-Lemon have organized the essays collected here in three overlapping sections: **Relations**, which assumes that writing occurs through conversations and negotiations with others, highlights the concepts of literacy, discourse, discourse community, and genre; **Locations**, which explores how writing is shaped by material places and intellectual spaces, emphasizes the importance of contact zones, ecocomposition, materiality, and place; and **Positions**, which identifies how writing reflects the contingency of our beliefs and values, considers markers of identity such as sex, gender, race, class, ableness, and sexual orientation. To show how some of these ideas are demonstrated or experienced in actual classrooms, each section ends with brief —pedagogical insights|| written expressly for this collection.

Voices On Voice: Perspectives, Definitions, Inquiry Editor(s): Kathleen Blake Yancey. "Voice, yes, that's what I want in my students' writing," many teachers say. "Voice? Doesn't exist—an anachronistic, romantic concept of the self in writing that fails to account for what we know of the postmodern self," some scholars assert. "Oh, yes, voice—that's what the teacher says he wants but that he won't let me keep in my writing. He wants voice, all right—his own," the student explains. What is *voice*? Is it compatible with postmodern views of the self and of writing and reading? And if so, how can it be translated in ways that both respect students and challenge them? Those are the questions and issues that *Voices on Voice: Perspectives, Definitions, Inquiry* seeks to explore from a diversity of perspectives—from that of writers such as Toby Fulwiler; from readers such as Carl Klaus and Laura Julier; from scholars such as Peter Elbow; from teachers such as Paula Gillespie; from cross-cultural rhetoricians such as Gwen Gong and John Powers; and from the "unvoiced" world of the deaf. Other perspectives—the feminist, the Native American, and the postmodern electronic—situate voice differently still. That is, in part, the point of this work: We all hear voices, those we admit, acknowledge, and can construct. How we listen to those voices—as individuals, in communities, as writers, and as readers—is the point of departure of *Voices on Voice*. ***Family Message Journals: Teaching Writing through Family Involvement*** by Julie Wollman-Bonilla. Bursting with the energetic voices of young writers and their families, this book follows the development of emergent and beginning writers as they explore the power and joy of written communication. Wollman-Bonilla's analysis of how two primary grade teachers implement Family Message Journals in their classrooms illustrates that the journals are a workable, realistic, and effective strategy for literacy and content-area learning. Wollman-Bonilla focuses on the journal entries of four representative students and their families; questions widespread assumptions about teaching writing;

and identifies teachers' and families' roles in helping elementary students appropriate new genres, topics, and purposes for writing. By the end of the book, readers will understand why these children protested the rare day of class that did not include writing in their Family Message Journals.

Grammar Alive! A Guide for Teachers by Brock Haussamen, Amy Benjamin, Martha Kolln, Rebecca S. Wheeler. NCTE's Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar provides this much-needed resource for K–college teachers who wonder what to do about grammar—how to teach it, how to apply it, how to learn what they themselves were never taught. *Grammar Alive!* offers teachers ways to negotiate the often conflicting goals of testing, confident writing, the culturally inclusive classroom, and the teaching of Standard English while also honoring other varieties of English. This hands-on approach to grammar in the classroom includes numerous examples and practical vignettes describing real teachers' real classroom experiences with specific grammar lessons—including ESL issues—as well as a review of grammar basics.

Grammar for Teachers: Perspectives and Definitions by Constance Weaver. Is there a connection between a teacher's knowledge of grammar and students' growth in language skills? Author Weaver examines that question as she provides specific examples of how teachers can put their knowledge of grammar to use without intimidating or overwhelming students. She also presents a basic grammar text for teachers that covers all three systematic grammars: traditional, structural, and transformational.

Motivating Writing in Middle School. This volume offers a variety of ways to stimulate student writing: through the use of artifacts, through exploration of the students' own experiences, memories, and aspirations, and through real-world writing tasks. The final section suggests ideas for engaging writers in peer editing, self-editing, and revision to turn their drafts into finished pieces. Throughout the book the emphasis is on the classroom as a writing community and the student as an increasingly skilled and confident writer.

Process and Portfolios in Writing Instruction: Classroom Practices in Teaching English, Volume 26 by Kent Gill. In this collection, English language arts teachers describe the benefits of using portfolios in assessing student writing and tell how portfolios and a process approach help students to build self-confidence and to develop sensitivity about what constitutes good writing. These teachers stress the value of student collaboration and the necessity of allowing students to rework and reshape their writing to meet the shifting demands of their own lives.

Go Public! Encouraging Student Writers to Publish by Susanne Rubenstein. Intended for middle and high school teachers, *Go Public!* offers specific writing ideas and classroom activities to help students develop the confidence and ability to publish in a wide market. This book is both a handy reference guide to publishing opportunities for students and an entertaining, useful collection of writing ideas that teachers can use within their established English language arts curricula.

Getting the Knack: 20 Poetry Writing Exercises by Stephen Dunning, William Stafford. Dunning and Stafford, both widely known poets and educators, offer this delightful manual of exercises for beginning poets. The 20 exercises, each covering different types or phases of poetry writing, as well as the authors' humor and nonacademic style, will appeal to experienced and novice poets of all ages.

Engaging Grammar: Practical Advice for Real Classrooms by Amy Benjamin, Tom Oliva. Does grammar instruction have to elicit moans and groans from students and teachers alike? Only when it's taught the old-fashioned way: as a series of rules to follow and errors to —fix|| that have little or no connection to practical application or real-world writing. Teacher, researcher, and consultant Amy Benjamin challenges the idea of —skill and drill|| grammar in this lively, engaging, and immensely practical guide. Her enlightened view of grammar is grounded in linguistics and teaches us how to make informed decisions about teaching grammar—how to move beyond fixing surface errors to teaching how grammar can be used as the building blocks of sentences to create meaning. In addition to Benjamin's sage advice, you'll find the voice of Tom Oliva—an experienced teacher inexperienced in teaching grammar—who writes a teacher's journal chronicling how the concepts in this book can work in a real classroom. The perspectives of Benjamin and Oliva combine to provide a full picture of what grammar instruction can be: an exciting and accessible way to take advantage of students' natural exuberance about language. Although she does not advocate for teaching to the test, Benjamin acknowledges the pressures students face when taking high-stakes tests such as the SAT and ACT. Included is a chapter on how to improve students' editing skills to help prepare them for the short-answer portion of these tests. By using sentence patterns, mapping,

visuals, and manipulatives, Benjamin and Oliva present an approach to grammar instruction that is suitable for a variety of student populations.

Designing Writing Assignments by Traci Gardner. Effective student writing begins with well-designed classroom assignments. In *Designing Writing Assignments*, veteran educator Traci Gardner offers practical ways for teachers to develop assignments that will allow students to express their creativity and grow as writers and thinkers while still addressing the many demands of resource-stretched classrooms. She explores how to balance pedagogical and curricular goals with the needs of multiple learners while managing everyday challenges such as mandates, testing, and the paper load. Gardner uses her classroom experience to provide ideas on how to effectively define a writing task, explore the expectations for a composition activity, and assemble the supporting materials that students need to do their best work. This book includes dozens of starting points that teachers can customize and further develop for the students in their own classrooms.

Activities for an Interactive Classroom by Jeffrey N. Golub. Ask your students to write obituaries for objects instead of people. Encourage them to tell only creative "lies" in their writing. Work together to decipher junk mail. These are just a few of the numerous stimulating exercises Golub has devised in *Activities for an Interactive Classroom* to shift the process of reading and writing from a solitary activity to a group experience.

The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders by Janet Emig. Janet Emig reports on a case study in which eight twelfth graders were asked to give autobiographies of their writing experiences and to compose aloud in the presence of the investigator. Based on her findings, the author suggests changes in the way composition is taught and the way teachers are trained to teach it.

Computers in the Writing Classroom by Dave Moeller. In a few brief years, the end products of academic writing have evolved from typed versions of handwritten manuscripts to the polished, professional-looking texts of the word processor. For all students, the ability to write, to use a word-processing program, and to unite the two skills in a synergistic blend of form and content has become a key factor in achieving academic success. In *Computers in the Writing Classroom*, Dave Moeller presents teachers with a framework for helping them help students achieve this success. Divided into two parts, this book provides teachers with guidance for incorporating computers into the writing classroom and for making computers the essential tool for writing and writing instruction. Part I discusses the theoretical underpinnings of computer-assisted writing instruction, and Part II features a compilation of practical suggestions for teaching writing with computers, including a wide assortment of writing lessons specifically designed to exploit the more writer-friendly features of the word processor.

Write Beside Them (2008) by Penny Kittle. What makes the single biggest difference to student writers? When the invisible machinery of your writing processes is made visible to them. *Write Beside Them* shows you how to do it. It's the comprehensive book and DVD that English/language arts teachers need to ensure that teens improve their writing.

Across genres, Penny Kittle a flexible framework for instruction, the theory and experience to back it up, and detailed teaching information to help you implement it right away. Each section of *Write Beside Them* describes a specific element of Kittle's workshop:

- **Daily writing practice:** writer's notebooks and quick writes
- **Instructional frameworks:** minilessons, organization, conferring, and sharing drafts
- **Genre work:** narrative, persuasion, and writing in multiple genres
- **Skills work:** grammar, punctuation, and style
- **Assessment:** evaluation, feedback, portfolios, and grading.

All along the way, Kittle demonstrates minilessons that respond to students' immediate needs, and her Student Focus sections profile and spotlight how individual writers grew and changed over the course of her workshop. In addition, *Write Beside Them* provides a study guide, reproducibles, writing samples from Penny and her students, suggestions for nurturing your own writing life, and a helpful FAQ. Best of all, the accompanying DVD takes you right inside Penny's classroom. Its video clips explicitly model how to make the process of writing accessible to all kids.

Penny Kittle's active coaching and can-do attitude alone will energize your teaching and inspire you to write with your students. But her strategies, expert advice, and compelling in-class video footage will help you turn

inspiration into great teaching. Read *Write Beside Them* and discover that the most important influence for all young writers is their teacher.

Writing Circles: Kids Revolutionize Workshop (2009) by Jim Vopat. Read *Writing Circles* and find out how they lead students from practice to progress as they write, respond, and lead one another toward better writing, motivate and engage everyone through choice—including struggling writers and English learners, develop voice and encourage risk-taking across genres, rehabilitate the writing wounded and nurture growth through peer response—not critique, make teaching more efficient by reducing the need for one-on-one conferring. Vopat helps you get started with circles and shows how they can help you achieve instructional goals. He includes step-by-step guidance for implementation and assessment, activities that make management smooth, and mini-lessons that scaffold growth in skills, topic selection, and craft. Writing Circles are a revolution, not an evolution, in writing workshop—the missing link between independent student writing and whole-group instruction. Try them with your students; give kids the space, safety, and support they need; and see why circles are as powerful for writers as they are for readers.