

Advanced Writing

in Four Blocks and Big Blocks Classrooms

Conference-Pro
Philadelphia July, 2006
Presented by: Amanda Arens
amanda@arensconsulting.com
www.arensconsulting.com

Writing Goals

- To have students view writing as a way of telling about things
- To develop fluently writing
- To teach students to use grammar and mechanics in their own writing
- To teach particular writing forms
- To allow students to read through writing
- To maintain the motivation and self-confidence of struggling writers

Writing the Four Blocks Way

- Released in May 2005
- Last to the "series"
- Appropriate for K-6
- New chapters on Editing, Revising, Genre Instruction, and more

Five Cycles of Writing Instruction

- Cycle 1 = Self-Selected Writing and Sharing
- Cycle 2 = Self-Selected Writing, Editing/Conferencing, Sharing
- Cycle 3 = Process Writing with Revising, Editing/Conferencing, and Publishing
- Cycle 4 = Focused Writing with Revising, Editing/Conferencing, and Publishing

When do you do each cycle?

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Upper Grades
EARLY In the Year	Cycle 1	Cycle 1	Cycle 1 Cycle 2	Cycle 1 Cycle 2	Cycle 1 Cycle 2 Cycle 3
MOST of the Year	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 2 Cycle 3	Cycle 2 Cycle 3	Cycle 3 Cycle 4
LATE In the Year	Cycle 1	Cycle 3	Cycle 3	Cycle 3	Cycle 4

Struggling Writers

- Chapter 10 – page 178
 - Many reluctant writers (179)
 - Can't Stop Writing (184)
 - Terrible Spellers (187)
 - Unreadable Handwriting (189)
 - Lack of a sense of audience or purpose (191)
 - English Language Learners (196-203)

Can't Stop Writing

Grades 2 and above

- Specified amount of time
- Works on fluency instruction
- Model it in a mini-lesson
- When you run out of ideas, your pencil still moves writing:
 - “I don't know what to write. I don't know what to write. I don't know what to write.”

The Five Steps

For Kdg and 1st grade

- Model the process in a mini-lesson
 - 1. Think
 - 2. Draw a picture
 - 3. Write something about it
 - 4. Write your name
 - 5. Copy or stamp the date
- Caution: DEAD END! Don't change the order of the steps. Avoid resistance or procrastination.

Show Don't Tell

- We climbed that hot, scary, fearful stairway and found ourselves in a cold, frightening, ugly room.
- We climbed the stairs, suffocating from the hot air and stumbled into a room that chilled us to the bone. Stiff mice dangled from the ceiling by their tails; icy green mold painted the wooden walls.

Pronouns

- Alex and William built a fort in the woods behind our house. When I went out looking for Alex and William I saw the tree where Alex and William had been building. The thing I saw looked like a nest! I asked Alex how long it took to build. Alex told me he had been working on the fort for a long time.

Sentence Variation

- Our dogs are Jake and Norman. They are so wild and crazy! We never know what they'll do. They chew on everything in sight. They even chew up our delivered packages. Is it because they are just puppies?

Sentence Variation

- Our dogs ~~are~~ Jake and Norman. ~~They~~ are so wild and crazy! We never know what they'll do. They chew on everything in sight. ~~They even chew up~~ our delivered packages. Is it because they are just puppies?

Reading Like a Writer

- Read through any book and decide what can be taught
- Use the same text to teach multiple things
- Helps students see how books try to bring all the concepts together

Reading like a writer . . .

- Katie Wood Ray
 - What You Know By Heart 2002
 - “The world is full of writing that makes us slam on our brakes when we’re reading and think, Ooo . . . *Look at that. I need to show that to my students. That’s really good writing.*”

Reading like a writer . . .

- “When we first start trying to teach ourselves to read like teachers of writing, we often struggle because we’ve never really looked at texts in this way . . . We have to move forward and trust that once we train our eyes to look at how texts are written (in addition to what they’re about), it will get easier and easier, and before long it will start to snowball. We’ll know more about how to write well than we’ll ever need.”

Wondrous Words

Katie Wood Ray

- The five parts to reading like a writer
 - 1. *Notice* something about the craft of the text.
 - 2. *Talk* about it and *make a theory* about why a writer might use this craft.
 - 3. Give the craft a *name*.
 - 4. Think of *other texts* you know. Have you seen this craft before?
 - 5. Try and *envision* using this crafting in your own writing.

Wondrous Words

Katie Wood Ray

- *Notice* something about the craft of the text
 - Readerly” vs. “writerly” observations
 - Lots of description, very descriptive Readerly
“Where exactly is the descriptive . . . ?”
 - The beginning is so great. It just draws you in.
Readerly
“What words accomplish this great beginning?”

Wondrous Words

Katie Wood Ray

Talk about it and *make a theory* about why a writer might use this craft.

- Rich discussion
- Look for exact places
- Incorrect theory??

Wondrous Words

Katie Wood Ray

- Give the craft a *name*.
 - Captures the essence of how used
 - Often short phrases
 - If the technique has a name, use it
 - Take the opportunity to provide the instruction
 - If not, make one up!

Wondrous Words

Katie Wood Ray

- Think of *other texts* you know.
 - Very important step
 - Gets easier and easier
 - Be on the lookout all year long!
 - Will happen quickly when you truly learn to read like a writer!

Wondrous Words

Katie Wood Ray

- Try and *envision* using this crafting in your own writing
 - Envisioning is important to usage
 - Not necessary for every draft to include
 - Define techniques so they are accessible
 - Writing in the air
 - Must know your students topics/interests

The Relatives Came

Cynthia Rylant

So they drank up all their pop
and ate up all their crackers
and traveled up all those miles until finally
they pulled into our yard.

Wondrous Words

Katie Wood Ray

What is the author doing? (example)	Why is the author doing this?	What can I call this crafting technique?	Have I ever seen another author craft this way?	Examples of this technique in my writing.
So they drank up all their pop and ate up all their crackers and traveled up all those miles until they finally pulled into our yard.	Try to make time move quickly in the story - letting a lot happen in one sentence	Making a long story short	Yes. Rylant in <u>I Had Seen Castles</u> . "After the war ended, America made Germany its friend, Russia its enemy, and it helped build Japan." (whole outcome of war in one sentence)	Writing about my baseball game: "Innings came and went, runs were scored, and then we found ourselves with one out left."

The Relatives Came

Cynthia Rylant

Then it was into the house and so much
laughing and shining faces and hugging in
the doorways.

It was different going to sleep with all that
new breathing in the house.

We were so busy hugging and eating and
breathing together.

What is the author doing? (example)	Why is the author doing this?	What can I call this crafting technique?	Have I ever seen another author craft this way?	Examples of this technique in my writing.

Night in the Country

Cynthia Rylant

There is no night so dark, so black as night in the country.

In little houses people lie sleeping and dreaming about daytime things, while outside – in the fields, and by the rivers, and deep in the trees – there is only night and nighttime things.

Night in the Country

Cynthia Rylant

There are owls. Great owls with marble eyes who swoop among the trees and who are not afraid of night in the country.

Night birds.

There are frogs. Night frogs who sing songs for you every night: *reek reek reek reek*.

Night songs.

What is the author doing? (example)	Why is the author doing this?	What can I call this crafting technique?	Have I ever seen another author craft this way?	Examples of this technique in my writing.
-------------------------------------	-------------------------------	--	---	---

<h3>Awakening the Heart</h3> <p>by Georgia Heard</p>	
<p>Six-room Image-poem</p>	
Image	Light
Sound	Questions
Feelings	Repeating Word(s)

<h3>Awakening the Heart</h3> <p>by Georgia Heard</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Room one: Think of something you have just seen. Close your eyes and imagine it, picture it, see it as clearly as a photograph. Notice all the details – describe it accurately, don't think about poetry – just describe it

Awakening the Heart

by Georgia Heard

- Room two: Same image – but just think about the light. Is it bright, dull, shadows? If that is unclear – make it up
- Room three: Same image – focus only on sounds. If it is silent – what kind of silence? Empty? Lonely? Peaceful?

Awakening the Heart

by Georgia Heard

- Room four: Write down any questions you have about the image. What do you want to know more about? What do you wonder about?
- Room five: Write down any feelings you have about the same image
- Room six: Look over the five rooms and find a few words, a phrase, a line, or a sentence that feels important and write it three times

Awakening the Heart

by Georgia Heard

- Now look over what you wrote in the six rooms and see if you can create a poem! Rearrange the rooms in any order, eliminate rooms, words, or sentences. Just try and create a poem.

Awakening the Heart

by Georgia Heard

- Other suggestions for writing additional rooms:
 - Three different similes or metaphors to describe the same image
 - Smells
 - What it might feel like if you touched it, make it up if “untouchable” (night sky, etc)
 - What would it taste like?
 - Favorite line or quote from another poem or book and weave into your poem
 - If it could speak, what would it say?

Looking at Writing Samples

- Classroom teacher benefits
 - Force yourself to look for positives
 - Get a better picture of individual writers
 - Gain ideas for mini-lessons
- Professional Development Ideas
 - use with grade level teams
 - use with vertical teams
 - can be done in 10 minutes

Looking at Writing Samples

Process

- Fill out independently
- Discuss “Can Do” side first
- Focus only on content – no mechanics when your discussion begins
- Use more time to discuss both sides, both content and mechanics

Using the T-Chart

- In the classroom –
 - Teachers can look for trends in the classroom to make instructional decisions
 - Use on a reasonable number of students from time to time to see drafts in progress
 - What do students need from you?

Research Supports Teaching Writing Day to Day (Chapter 12, page 226)

- Focus on teaching students how to write, not *about* writing
- Students learn how to write better while actively engaged in writing activities, rather than just *listening* to the teacher
- Students learn how to write better when their writing activities are designed and supervised by the teacher without being *presentational*
- Students must learn how to read and evaluate their own papers for specific criteria
- Build students' writing fluency
