Workshop Guide

Franki Sibberson

Writers in Transition

Teaching Revision Strategies in Grades 3–6

CHOICE LITERACY PRODUCTIONS, INC.

Contents

ISBN-13: 978-1-60155-004-0
ISBN-10: 1-60155-004-9

Introduction


Commonly Asked Questions

Franki Sibberson

HANDOUTS FOR WORKSHOPS

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Writers in Transition is designed so that it can be used flexibly in workshop settings. The goal of this guide is to give workshop leaders plenty of suggestions for possible uses of each videoconference segment, without the leaders being locked into one progression or plan for using the materials. These segments were filmed over two days in Franki Sibberson's grades 3 and 4 multiage classroom, but they represent the kinds of lessons teachers might complete over a week or month or more in their own classrooms. Each school community is different, and we know you will need to adapt the video viewing to a host of time constraints and a wide range of workshop formats.

You might start any workshop by having participants view the introductory two-minute sequence on the DVD, which gives important background information on the classroom, the time of year the DVD was filmed, and Franki's thoughts on working with transitional readers and writers. As an alternative, you can distribute the "Commonly Asked Questions" handout (page 13), which provides much of the same information, but with greater depth.

If time doesn't allow for either viewing or reading these materials, you may want to keep the "Commonly Asked Questions" sheet handy so that you can answer these questions as they arise.

WORKSHOP 1 Looking Closely at Fonts

Cue the DVD to Chapter 2: "Looking Closely at Fonts," and view the segment.

Questions for Discussion

- Franki explains that she began her revision unit of study with fonts because it is "nonthreatening." What are your favorite opening lessons for a study of revision? Why are these effective?
- Why might a study of fonts be particularly effective with transitional readers and writers?
- How does Franki help the students connect reading and writing in the discussion?

If time permits, show segment 3: "Small Group on Revising Fonts." Distribute copies of "Organizing Writing Groups" (page 17). Discuss the following:

- What do you think about students choosing their own writing groups?
- How are groups formed in your classroom?
- How often do you meet with small groups in writer's workshop?
- What differences do you see between your use of small groups and those of your colleagues?

Franki launches the group, but quickly decides her presence isn't needed as students work.

- What do you notice about Franki's role as the teacher?
- What is your role in writing groups? How does it vary, depending upon the group or the students?

Workshop Activity

Distribute books with lots of different fonts (in both nonfiction and fiction genres) and a copy of "Noticing Fonts" (page 14). Ask participants to fill out this three-column form as they browse and chat, and then to discuss in groups.

Potential Classroom Extension

Distribute copies of the "Font Revisions" template (page 15). Ask participants to try out the discussion of fonts in their classrooms as a mini-lesson in writing workshop, having students complete the form. In a follow-up workshop, discuss what was learned through the activity and student response. What implications does this have for future teaching?

WORKSHOP 2 Revision Tools

Cue the DVD to Chapter 4: "Revision Tools," and distribute copies of the "Revision Tools with Young Writers" handout (page 16). While viewing, have participants keep a running list of the following:

1. Tools currently available in their classrooms
2. Tools currently available but new options discovered from viewing
3. New tools

Questions for Discussion

- What ideas did you get for new tools in your classroom?
- How might you use existing materials in different ways?
- Why does Franki think it is important to share new tools with young writers?
- Franki doesn't tell students how to use the materials; instead, students share their ideas. What do you think works well with this strategy? What might be the drawbacks?
- What challenges have you had in the past when you've introduced a new tool?

Workshop Extension

Distribute a variety of materials within a study group and ask the group to make a revision to an existing entry in their writer's notebooks. Reflect together as a group on what tools we are drawn to as writers and why. Discuss the different ways that people chose to use the same tool. What did you see someone else do that might work for you?

Potential Classroom Extension

Ask everyone to share a new tool or tools with students, or to launch a whole-class discussion of new uses for existing tools. Come back together as a group in a week or two and discuss what participants learned.

WORKSHOP 3 Whole-Class Share: Revision Tools

Cue the DVD to Chapter 5: "Revision Tools Whole-Class Share." While participants view the segment, have them keep a running list of tools students use. If time permits, you can show the DVD segment "Revision Tools" before or after viewing, to compare the tools presented to students with the ones actually used.

Questions for Discussion

- How does the share session focus student learning?
- How does the share session benefit students who do not share? How does it benefit the students who do share?
- How can boards and anchor charts be used to support more sharing among students?
- What kinds of questions or comments do you use to support whole-class conversations?
- How is this type of share different from the author's chair?
- What opportunities do you give students to share their writing (with peers, adults, outside audiences)?
- How is student sharing incorporated into your writing workshop time?
- What do you learn about students as writers by listening to them share their thinking about their process as writers? What do the writers in your room learn through this routine?

Potential Classroom Extension

Change something in a whole-group share session with students, based on something you learned at the workshop. Notice the ways in which your students respond. Is it effective? What information do you get from the share session? How does it support the writers in the classroom?

WORKSHOP 4 Writer's Craft: Character

Cue the DVD to Chapter 6: "Writer's Craft: Character" and distribute copies of the leads to *A Little Princess* and *The Secret Garden* (pages 24–25).

Have participants read the excerpts before viewing the segment, highlighting words that capture character (evocative language). View the segment, and compare group notes on the writing with the student responses. You might also choose to do a "Read Around," with everyone sharing one line that evoked a sense of character.

Questions for Discussion

- How can you use shared reading during writer's workshop?
- What connections does Franki make between this reading task and the writing children choose in writer's workshop?
- Why is it important that Franki brings her history as a reader into the conversation?
- What is Franki's role in the conferences with students?
- How would you adapt this lesson for use with your students?

Potential Classroom Extension

Have participants try the activity with students. Have them bring in students' highlighted pages and class charts to the next study-group meeting. What do teachers notice about student responses? What patterns do you see? Do you notice similarities?

You might also have students read through their own writing and highlight words that they think they used to develop their characters.

WORKSHOP 5 Titles


Confessions of a Reader

Carol Wilcox

Almost spring.
A spider
Stakes a claim
On a corner
Of the eight-foot window
In our living room.

Each morning
I admire
Taut guidelines
Carefully placed spokes.
Dancing gown threads,
Architecture unrivalled.

My mother
Would not tolerate
Such slovenly housekeeping.
She would get a broom
And knock down
This errant squatter's palace.

I do not.

I am waiting for Charlotte
To leave a message.

HANDOUTS FOR WORKSHOPS

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Cue the DVD to Chapter 7: "Titles," and distribute copies of the Carol Wilcox poem (page 27).

Questions for Discussion

- Why might a lesson on titles be a good choice for intermediate writers?
- Why does Franki bring her own writing experience into the conversation?
- Franki has students do a quick write in the midst of the lesson, allowing all children to try out the strategy and share their responses. What are your thoughts on this activity? Is it something you might try? Why or why not?

Workshop Activity

Have participants generate a title for something they've been working on in their writing. Participants are then to generate a list of alternative titles for this writing idea. Have teachers share their original thoughts and the alternative titles that they generated. Ask the group what they notice about their own process as writers. Teachers are usually very willing to share their lists of titles because it is a lot less intimidating than generating or sharing personal writing.

Potential Classroom Extension

Distribute a variety of familiar picture books—books that students know well. Have them work in small groups to look at the title of their book and think about the reason the writer made the decision to use that title. How do you think they made this decision? Does it work? How does it affect your understanding of the author's message?

As an alternative, distribute a variety of picture books to students. Have them work in small groups and look at the titles of the books. What titles grab their attention? Why are they drawn to certain titles? What can you infer about a book by the title? Have students revisit a piece of writing and ask them to generate alternative titles. Have students share their original titles and then the newly generated titles. What title do they like best? How many students stick with the original title?

WORKSHOP 6 Leads Small Group

Cue the DVD to Chapter 8: "Leads Small Group," and distribute copies of "Types of Leads" (page 26) and "Organizing Writing Groups" (page 17). If time permits, view the "Fonts Small Group" segment after "Leads Small Group" so you can compare and contrast Franki's role in the groups.

Questions for Discussion

- One boy in the group clearly struggles with understanding the term lead as it is used in writing. How do you handle differentiating instruction during small groups?
- Franki refers to the writing from a book used in read-aloud. How do you use previous read-aloud texts as anchor texts for teaching in the writing workshop? How might you use a book you've read aloud to the class as an anchor text for a small-group lesson?
- Why did Franki pull the leads group together?
- How is Franki's role different in the two groups? What are the similarities?

Workshop Activity

Pass out a couple of pages with your favorite leads from novels and nonfiction. Bring in many popular and award-winning books, and allow ten minutes for participants to browse. After they browse, have everyone share the first few sentences of a great lead they discovered, in round-robin fashion. Discuss how they might use the lead in a craft or revision writing lesson.

Potential Classroom Extension

Pass out a variety of picture books to your students. Have students read the leads for the books. Ask students to think in their own words about the type of lead the author used. Have students share their thinking about the leads from the books. You might also have students go through books they are reading independently or at home to find good leads. Chart the students' thinking to build on as they continue to build their understanding of good leads.

WORKSHOP 7 Starting a Board: A Fresh Twist on Anchor Charts

Distribute copies of "Using Foam Boards in Writer's Workshop" (page 19). Cue the DVD to Chapter 9: "Starting a Board" and view the segment.

Questions for Discussion

- Franki uses foam boards as a different kind of invitation to response in writer's workshop. How do the boards encourage alternative ways of responding and sharing writing strategies?
- Franki also finds that these boards save space in the classroom and build community. How might the use of foam boards do that in your classroom?
- What displays do you have now in your classroom that you might convert to foam boards?
- What potential uses do you see for these boards during small groups?
- What boards might you create with students? Why?

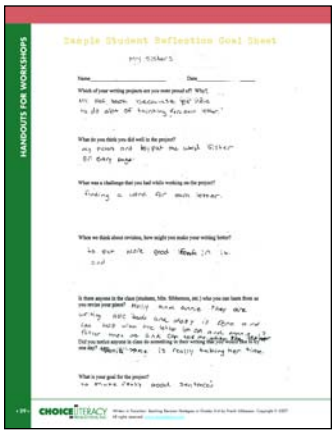
Workshop Activity

Start a board in your study group or workshop session that is open-ended, with the theme of sharing something learned during writer's workshop in each participant's classroom. Distribute paper for everyone to write responses, post them on the board, and discuss connections participants make between their ideas and those of their colleagues. The key to the boards is that they become invitations for paying close attention to new learning. Encourage participants to post artifacts from their classrooms, such as photos, student samples, and so on.

Potential Classroom Extension

Distribute blank foam boards in different colors for teachers to take back to their classrooms and use. Go around the room quickly and have everyone give their first thoughts on how they will use the board. In a follow-up session, bring in the boards and compare uses. Ask the teachers questions such as the following: How did students respond? Was the time spent worthwhile? What surprised you about students' responses?

WORKSHOP 8 Reflection Goal Sheets



Cue the DVD to Chapter 10: "Reflection Goal Sheets," and distribute copies of the blank template (page 28), sample student form (page 29), and "Assessing Student Writing" (pages 20–21).

Questions for Discussion

- How do you currently use reflection or goal sheets in your classroom?
- Franki sometimes uses goal sheets instead of detailed notes from conferences. What notes do you keep during conferences? How might goal sheets enhance or replace some of this note taking?
- How might a similar goal sheet be used in a content area to build the reading-writing connection?

Potential Classroom Extension

Brainstorm as a group different questions that might be useful to include on a writing reflection sheet, tied to the units of study currently being completed in classrooms. Design a reflection sheet with a few alternative questions, based upon the interests of the group and discussion. Ask everyone to try a version of the reflection sheet in their classrooms with students, and have everyone bring the student samples to a follow-up meeting. Questions for the follow-up workshop might include the following:

- What did you learn about your students?
- What questions worked well?
- Which might you abandon when you revise the sheet?
- What questions might you adapt?
- How did you help students who struggled with the task?

BONUS SEGMENT Room Tour

Cue the DVD to the bonus track "Room Tour."

Questions for Discussion

- What ideas do you get for rearranging materials in your classroom?
- How do you arrange books?
- Franki's seating options are unusual. How do they compare with those in your classroom?
- What do you notice about Franki's use of space?

Commonly Asked Questions

Franki Sibberson

What is your daily schedule?

The schedule changes daily because of our curricular support position. Depending on the day, one of us teaches in the morning and one of us teaches in the afternoon. Some days I have longer language arts and social studies sessions than others. Here is a typical schedule:

9:00–9:15	Nonfiction Reading Time (T/R) Inquiry Time (M/W) Poetry Friday!
9:15–10:30	Math
10:30–11:15	Science
11:15–11:30	Word Study
11:30–12:15	Writing Workshop
12:15–1:00	Lunch and Recess
1:00–1:30	Read-Aloud
1:30–2:10	Reading Workshop
2:10–2:40	Social Studies
2:40–3:30	Related Arts

What is the schedule for writing and reading workshop?

The schedule varies, but read-aloud for twenty-five to thirty minutes is an anchor. Although it isn't a mini-lesson, this is often when a great deal of teaching happens.

In writing workshop, I start with a quick five- to seven-minute mini-lesson, often with a picture book or a piece of short text. Students then have twenty to thirty minutes of writing time while I confer and meet with small groups. We usually end with a quick share.

Reading workshop often follows the same format. In terms of longer lessons, I often need to teach a lesson that will take twenty to forty-five minutes. Often it connects to content learning, so the time comes from there. At other times, we skip independent writing time for one day. This happens only every few weeks.

Why don't students have assigned seats?

Ideally, our classroom doesn't have assigned seats, although there are some weeks that we need to put temporary seats in place. Not having assigned seats gives kids more opportunities during the day to work in groups and in locations that support their learning. Without assigned seats, students are freer to choose a seat based on their own needs at that time.

What writing assessments do you use with students?

I use a variety of assessments. The most critical assessments are the conversations that we have throughout the day—both formal and informal. I use many reflection sheets, and I look at their writer's notebooks often. I take rough conference notes when I find out something that is critical about a child. Each Friday, the students write letters home to their families, sharing their learning with them. They show work and reflect on the week. I also use this as a weekly check on some of the conventions we have been talking about.

What is the English language learner population in the classroom?

A few students attend ESL classes, and a few others speak a different language at home than they do at school.

Noticing Fonts

Font Style/Source	How does the font help the reader?	What could the font teach a writer?

Font Revisions

Words where you may change the font	How will you change it?	What message will it give to readers?

Revision Tools with Young Writers

Franki Sibberson

I think revision is hard for students to think about at first when they reach the intermediate grades. For many children, revision and editing before third grade is, for the most part, the same process—it's about fixing it when they're already finished without putting much thought into it. I want the kids in my classroom to start thinking more deeply about what they can do to improve their writing through revision, and make it an enjoyable part of the process.

In my own writing, I find that getting the ideas down on the page is the fun part—somehow I have to find a way to get that energy back when it's time to go back and revise, saying things in a new or different way. Getting my students to see that revision is as exciting and worthwhile as a drafting process is probably my biggest goal with them at this age.

For many children, trying out a new tool is a way in to the revision process. The excitement of using a new kind of paper or Post-it or pen can get them willing to go back into writing they might have considered finished in previous years.

I try to keep revision tools everywhere for students to see and use. They have in the middle of their tables a lot of supplies like Post-its and highlighters and Sharpies—those are also placed all over the room for shared use. There's really nothing they might use to revise in terms of tools that they don't have access to or can't locate. I also introduce different things at different times, paying attention to the kind of tools kids are using in ways that I hadn't imagined. I make sure that if a child uses a tool in a new way that I highlight that tool for the whole group. I might put it closer to the front of the room, so kids remember that they can use it during writing time.

Students use a variety of revision tools and enjoy laying out their drafts in different ways.

I have a photocopier for student use—it was an inexpensive model, and it allows students to cut up multiple versions of drafts while preserving the original.

Student working with draft after making a photocopy.

Organizing Writing Groups

Franki Sibberson

Many times I'll form a writing group based on what I'm noticing as I observe children in writer's workshop. They will tell me what they need in conferences, or I'll see patterns across the class. I might ask kids, "Who's having trouble with their lead?" and pull a group based on student response. I might notice that three children are writing something with a sports theme, so I might pull those students together to look at sports writers.

As I notice patterns, I'll also bring together students who need some interactive writing, or who need to get more organized in their writing. There's nothing too cut and dried about it—I look for what's needed in this moment in the classroom for these students to move forward. I look for things kids need at this moment to move forward this week. Many times when I perceive a need in the class, I'll put out an invitation for a group and see who signs up.

Many times kids just need a social group where they can talk quickly about where they're going in their writing. The group meets briefly, and then they go off on their own. This was the case with the fonts small group on the video. I try to judge how independent students are at the initial group meeting by giving them something to do on their own as soon as possible. Once they begin this independent work, I check back to see how much they are accomplishing on their own (either independently or in a group, depending on the task).

I meet with small groups for a variety of reasons—many are self-selected by students based upon their interests and needs.

While I meet in groups, the rest of the class reads or writes, depending upon where we are in the day's schedule.

In the case of the fonts group, those students all seemed to have a plan. They all seemed to come to the group knowing what they wanted to do next, and all their plans for revision made sense to me. In retrospect, I think they all just wanted to be part of that group to share what they were doing and to make sure they were on the right track.

With the leads group, we had already done some work with leads within the whole class, but it's a topic we'll return to throughout the whole year. I pulled those kids together to look at leads from a book that we had read, and to look more closely at all the different ways you could jump into a book. For some of the children in the group, the purpose was to help them understand what a lead is and why it is important. Other children in the group were ready to dive in and revise their leads in more sophisticated ways, based on the models presented. They were at all different levels in terms of their understanding of leads and needs as writers, but I was able to bring them together in a conversation by using a mentor text they could all benefit from. Later, I could refer to the experience in the leads group as I bopped around the room for conferences.

How often I meet with small groups and how often each child meets with a group depends on where we are in writer's workshop and where each child is in his or her development as a writer. When we're just starting the year and much of their writing is in their notebooks, I tend to pull together more groups that are freely exchanging ideas. As the year moves forward and we attempt different genres and styles, I'll pull together more targeted groups looking at specific skills and interests. I probably meet with groups a couple of times a week by late fall in writer's workshop. I'm meeting with children every day in individual conferences and in whole-class discussions, and the groups are a natural extension of those different kinds of conversations.

Small groups meet for a variety of purposes, but usually everyone has a chance to share during the group.

Using Foam Boards in Writer's Workshop

Franki Sibberson

Foam boards are a new teaching tool for me this year in writer's workshop. The idea came from my friend Ann Marie Corgill. She shared this idea with me when she was working at the Manhattan New School in New York City. I've always used a lot of wall space for writer's workshop, and have even gone beyond that to cover closet doors and the door going into the classroom with student work, ideas, and resources. There is never enough room to display or post everything we are working on and everything that might help build the writing community. The foam boards are a way to extend the display space flexibly all year long, and what's great about them is that they are so portable—each one becomes a moving, changing bulletin board tied to literacy topics we are studying and discussing together.

I use foam boards as an invitation to students to share their learning with classmates. For example, the board in the video started with this invitation: "If you're using a new revision tool, let me know and we'll add it to this board." I use many different invitations or prompts to start a board, but they all have the purpose of helping students pay attention to their writing process and then share it with others. They can go look at the board for revision ideas from others if they are stuck.

The boards move throughout the classroom. They can be sitting in front of the easel when we are first introducing and adding to them. If we reach the point where we aren't using a board much, we can put it in a storage area or stack it with others for a while. But if children need to refer to it in workshop or when they are with a small group, they know where it is and they can go grab it. Here are some of the foam board topics we've used in the past. Some of the boards are also invitations to look for certain types of writing in students' independent reading:

- New Ways Authors Use Italics
- Great Leads from Our Reading
- New Things I've Tried with Leads
- Great Words We've Tried in Our Writing
- Great Character Descriptions in My Reading
- Places in My Reading That Create a Picture in My Mind

Foam boards throughout the room are always available for students to use.

Assessing Student Writing

Franki Sibberson

The standards and testing movement almost made me lose sight of the "workshop" part of writing workshop. It's been hard to keep the energy, joy, and excitement of a thriving writer's workshop and still do all the things states and districts are asking us to do when it comes to assessment.

I decided before this year began to think really hard about third and fourth graders as writers—where they are in their learning at this stage in their lives, what excites them, and how to tap that energy in writer's workshop again. For me, the challenge has been combining the energy of writer's workshop and what we know works for teaching writers with all the standards and skills that are required by any district or state these days.

When I started my first writer's workshop with students nearly twenty years ago, I could do any genre study I wanted; I could do any skills work that I thought was needed. Now I must teach narrative writing, a requirement that wasn't there when I was a new teacher. Much of my curriculum is now dictated by the standards, so I have to think through my year well in advance. I consider what big things I want children to leave knowing, and I also think about how I can make sure they don't feel so much pressure to produce products that they lose a sense of the joy in the process of writing and revising a draft.

When I'm teaching students about revision, instead of looking at the piece of writing from a student and deciding if it's a good piece of writing or not, I'll look at how the child revised. What kind of strategies did the student use? Did he or she go back and really focus on this part of the writing process?

I'll assess by having them meet with me or fill out a reflection form at the end of the process. I ask them, "Where did you revise? Why did you make these decisions?" They get these same questions from me or on a reflection sheet no matter what we are studying. In a genre study, it's a combination of their reflection about what they did as a writer, their reflection about

Student sharing a revision strategy with classmates.

During writer's workshop I bop around the room and confer informally.

Students explain their goals and writing strategies to me during conferences.

Students store their writer's notebooks, idea notebooks, and writing folders in storage containers.

how the genre works, and their understanding of the genre from their own writing.

I do a lot of conferring with students that involves assessment. I help them set individual goals throughout the process and reflect on their goals and writing when we reach closure on a unit of study or writing that has gone through revision. I want them to show me that they learned something in this piece of writing that will help them in the next piece of writing. If they learned something about revision that they haven't used much, but they know they're going to use it more next time, then I feel like they've met the goal of the unit.

In terms of records, students keep their writing in a writer's notebook and also have a writing folder for rough drafts when they're working outside their notebooks. I think the writing we save in these notebooks and folders is the best record of their growth. We look at those pieces together, writing and talking about the progress they've made from piece to piece, how they have learned and grown as a writer.

I also take notes. I have a notebook for my notes, and I also put notes on their reflection sheets. Students become comfortable with the questions I ask continually to help them reflect on their learning:

"What are you going to do today?"
"What did you do this week in terms of revision?"
"What mini-lessons helped you the most this month?"

I have the student work, my notes, and their reflections to look back at when I reach the end of each trimester and need to write about how each child has changed as a writer.

Whole class shares of new learning at the end of writer's workshop are common in my classroom.

Helping Struggling Writers

Franki Sibberson

I've found there are two kinds of struggling writers in my classroom, even though any struggling writer has some unique personality traits. At the start of the year, some students may not know what to write about. We spend a lot of time at the beginning of the year thinking about how to come up with things to write, and we talk pretty honestly about writer's block. Everyone has days when you don't have anything to write about—I certainly have those days myself.

After the mini-lesson early in the year, I send students off as they each share an idea they have to write about. Six children may leave the circle right off the bat, and as others think of ideas, they get up and move from the group. I'm usually left with three or four students who don't have anything to write about, so it's just a matter of processing different topics and resources for finding topics with them until they get the idea.

What I'm trying to do with students who are stuck for a topic is not to give them an idea for today but to help them think about ways they can think of ideas on their own. All students have a little notebook that we call an Idea Notebook. When they aren't working on a project or are inspired about a potential writing topic, they can pull out that small notebook and jot it down. The Idea Notebook keeps a lot of my students from ever experiencing writer's block.

I also have picture books out that are perennial favorites for jump-starting students' writing. I keep those in a special basket, and students know they can browse through it when they are stuck. It's near a really good window in our room with a great view, so between the books and the view out the window they often find something fresh to write about. This year, the students chose books that they thought would help them when they needed it. Students added the following books to the Writing Ideas basket this year, along with explanations of why they selected each book:

What! Cried Granny: An Almost Bedtime Story by Kate Lum
: It could remind you of a time you went to your grandma's house.

Amelia's Notebook by Marissa Moss
: It could help remind you of a time you moved to a new place.

The Younger Brother's Survival Guide by Matt by Lisa Kopelke
: It could remind you of ways your little brother annoys you.

Wanda's Roses by Pat Brisson
: It could remind you of a time you felt good about something you did.

The Mitten by Jan Brett
: It could remind you of a time you lost something.

AAAAAArrgghh! Spider! by Lydia Monks
: It could remind you of something you get freaked out about.

Earrings! by Judith Viorst
: It might remind you of when your mom and dad said no to something you wanted.

Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon by Pat Lovell
: It might remind you of how you can do anything.

Scaredy Squirrel by Melanie Watt
: If you were scared of something, this book might help you remember how that feels.

The Mixed-Up Chameleon by Eric Carle
: It could help you think about ways you are different from other people.

Reluctant Writers

Some students are reluctant to write, for all kinds of reasons—from lack of confidence to negative experiences in the past. The first six weeks of school I'm pretty accepting of whatever any student wants to write. Just lowering that threshold of what qualifies as acceptable writing in our classroom gets most students writing. Even if they are only writing a list of all the baseball players they know, they're filling their notebooks with thoughts and linking the writing to a personal passion.

About six or eight weeks into the year that kind of writing needs to move up a notch, so I'll work with those students to find a narrative, story, or nonfiction elements that can be revised or worked into a more sophisticated genre or style of writing.

For many students in the intermediate grades, reluctance comes early in the year because they are trying to figure out what the teacher wants. By giving lots of choice of topic and genre, I find kids do less worrying about doing the "wrong" thing and spend more of their time writing. There are always a couple of students with whom I might have to touch base more than others throughout the whole year just to get them started. I might have to remind them, "Okay, yesterday you did this. Where are you going to go with that today?"

Every year there are a couple of kids I just need to check in on more, but I don't ever have students who don't write. Some kids are more comfortable with more structured writing than others, and some kids are more comfortable with "Just let me go off and do this thing I do as part of my writing routine." As a teacher it's my job in those early weeks to learn which kids I will need to check in with more during writer's workshop to make sure they've gotten started and to know where they are going next in whatever they are working on.

Lead to *A Little Princess*

Frances Hodgson Burnett

Once on a dark winter's day, when the yellow fog hung so thick and heavy in the streets of London that the lamps were lighted and the shop windows blazed with gas as they do at night, an odd-looking little girl sat in a cab with her father and was driven rather slowly through the big thoroughfares.

She sat with her feet tucked under her, and leaned against her father, who held her in his arm, as she stared out of the window at the passing people with a queer old-fashioned thoughtfulness in her big eyes.

She was such a little girl that one did not expect to see such a look on her small face. It would have been an old look for a child of twelve, and Sara Crewe was only seven.

The fact was, however, that she was always dreaming and thinking odd things and could not herself remember any time when she had not been thinking things about grown-up people and the world they belonged to. She felt as if she had lived a long, long time.

At this moment she was remembering the voyage she had just made from Bombay with her father, Captain Crewe. She was thinking of the big ship, of the Lascars passing silently to and fro on it, of the children playing about on the hot deck, and of some young officers' wives who used to try to make her talk to them and laugh at the things she said.

Principally, she was thinking of what a queer thing it was that at one time one was in India in the blazing sun, and then in the middle of the ocean, and then driving in a strange vehicle through strange streets where the day was as dark as the night. She found this so puzzling that she moved closer to her father.

"Papa," she said in a low, mysterious little voice which was almost a whisper, "papa."

"What is it, darling?" Captain Crewe answered, holding her closer and looking down into her face. "What is Sara thinking of?"

"Is this the place?" Sara whispered, cuddling still closer to him. "Is it, papa?"

"Yes, little Sara, it is. We have reached it at last." And though she was only seven years old, she knew that he felt sad when he said it.

It seemed to her many years since he had begun to prepare her mind for "the place," as she always called it. Her mother had died when she was born, so she had never known or missed her. Her young, handsome, rich, petting father seemed to be the only relation she had in the world. They had always played together and been fond of each other. She only knew he was rich because she had heard people say so when they thought she was not listening, and she had also heard them say that when she grew up she would be rich, too. She did not know all that being rich meant. She had always lived in a beautiful bungalow, and had been used to seeing many servants who made salaams to her and called her "Missee Sahib," and gave her her own way in everything. She had had toys and pets and an ayah who worshipped her, and she had gradually learned that people who were rich had these things. That, however, was all she knew about it.

Lead to *The Secret Garden*

Frances Hodgson Burnett

When Mary Lennox was sent to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her uncle everybody said she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. It was true, too. She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression. Her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because she had been born in India and had always been ill in one way or another. Her father had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself, and her mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people. She had not wanted a little girl at all, and when Mary was born she handed her over to the care of an Ayah, who was made to understand that if she wished to please the Mem Sahib she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible. So when she was a sickly, fretful, ugly little baby she was kept out of the way, and when she became a sickly, fretful, toddling thing she was kept out of the way also. She never remembered seeing familiarly anything but the dark faces of her Ayah and the other native servants, and as they always obeyed her and gave her her own way in everything, because the Mem Sahib would be angry if she was disturbed by her crying, by the time she was six years old she was as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived. The young English governess who came to teach her to read and write disliked her so much that she gave up her place in three months, and when other governesses came to try to fill it they always went away in a shorter time than the first one. So if Mary had not chosen to really want to know how to read books she would never have learned her letters at all.

One frightfully hot morning, when she was about nine years old, she awakened feeling very cross, and she became crosser still when she saw that the servant who stood by her bedside was not her Ayah.

"Why did you come?" she said to the strange woman. "I will not let you stay. Send my Ayah to me."

The woman looked frightened, but she only stammered that the Ayah could not come and when Mary threw herself into a passion and beat and kicked her, she looked only more frightened and repeated that it was not possible for the Ayah to come to Missie Sahib.

There was something mysterious in the air that morning. Nothing was done in its regular order and several of the native servants seemed missing, while those whom Mary saw slunk or hurried about with ashy and scared faces. But no one would tell her anything and her Ayah did not come. She was actually left alone as the morning went on, and at last she wandered out into the garden and began to play by herself under a tree near the veranda. She pretended that she was making a flower-bed, and she stuck big scarlet hibiscus blossoms into little heaps of earth, all the time growing more and more angry and muttering to herself the things she would say and the names she would call Saidie when she returned.

"Pig! Pig! Daughter of Pigs!" she said, because to call a native a pig is the worst insult of all.

Types of Leads

Franki Sibberson

Note: This information can be useful to teachers of students in the intermediate grades as students begin to notice different elements of leads. It is not something I would distribute to students when we were discussing leads. My goal isn't for students to find leads that fit certain categories, but for them to begin to notice what is interesting about a good lead. These categories can be helpful to teachers as students highlight different leads they enjoy. At that point, the teacher might note for a student that the lead begins with dialogue, or a metaphor, or a climatic moment.

1. *The circular lead/close*. Does the writing begin with a story, idea, or quote, and then circle back to it at the end of the writing? The good thing about this technique is that you get a lead and an ending—all for the price of one!
2. *The humorous lead or ending*. Nothing builds rapport with readers more quickly than making them chuckle.
3. *The dialogue lead*. Talk puts readers right into the scene and the minds of the characters or people speaking.
4. *The climatic lead*. What's the high point of the writing? Move that right up to the start, and you've got readers sitting up and paying attention.
5. *The metaphor*. If it's hard to explain exactly what something is, writers often begin with a powerful passage about what something is like.
6. *The visual lead*. Is there a compelling drawing, image, or photograph to draw readers in?

Confessions of a Reader

Carol Wilcox

Almost spring.
A spider
Stakes a claim
On a corner
Of the eight-foot window
In our living room.

Each morning
I admire
Taut guidelines
Carefully placed spokes.
Dancing gown threads,
Architecture unrivalled.

My mother
Would not tolerate
Such slovenly housekeeping.
She would get a broom
And knock down
This errant squatter's palace.

I do not.

I am waiting for Charlotte
To leave a message.

Reflection Goal Sheet

Name _____ Date _____

Which of your writing projects are you most proud of? Why?

What do you think you did well in the project?

What was a challenge you had while working on the project?

When we think about revision, how might you make your writing better?

Who in the class might you learn from as you revise your piece? Why?

Did you notice anyone in the class do something in their writing that you might like to try one day?

What is your goal for the project?

Sample Student Reflection Goal Sheet

My Sisters

Name_____ Date_____

Which of your writing projects are you most proud of? Why?

My abc book because I had have to do alot of thinking for each letter.

What do you think you did well in the project?

my picters and I put the word Sister on every page.

What was a challenge that you had while working on the project?

finding a word for each letter.

When we think about revision, how might you make your writing better?

to put more good ~~f~~words in it. and

Is there anyone in the class (students, Mrs. Sibberson, etc.) who you can learn from as you revise your piece? Molly and annie they are writing abc books and Molly is done and can help with the letter im on and annie is father then me and can help me ~~with~~ writing the letter

Did you notice anyone in class do something in their writing that you would like to try one day? ~~Annie~~ annie is really taking her time.

What is your goal for the project?

to make really good sentences