



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1986 Volume IV: The Process of Writing

Approaches to Writing

Guide for Curriculum Unit 86.04.01
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This curriculum unit will be used as an elective semester course or as a complete year's course for honors, college, and basic English III and IV students. It could also be adapted to coordinate with the English III, American, and English IV, English literature courses. If sequential, stimulating and frequent writing assignments are well-planned, English teachers can make a difference in the power, depth and quality of their students' writing.

Objectives: 1. To teach five pre-writing techniques which emphasize the writing process and help to overcome writing barriers. 2. To expand students' ability to write by providing work on various stages of the writing process and on a variety of styles. 3. To help students achieve fluency, vividness, depth, and preciseness of expression. 4. To stimulate students to create original prose pieces and poems which express their own life experiences and are engaging to read. 5. To have students become familiar with a variety of writings in contemporary fiction and poetry. 6. To help students discover their own reality and their own distinct voice, through poetry and prose. 7. To help students prepare a portfolio of their best work—revised, rewritten, arranged, titled, and polished.

In the first segment of the curriculum unit, I shall focus on five successful techniques which aim to help students to overcome writing obstacles and achieve power and depth of expression in narrative and expository writing. These five techniques are as follows: making a list, freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, and modeling. In order for students to generate ideas, to warm up, and to express their thoughts, each writing activity may begin with a class discussion. The students will be guided by the teacher, who will ask pertinent questions about the topic.

I especially endorse the teaching of imaginative writing in the second segment of the curriculum unit because it serves as a humanizing activity. Stimulating young people to create stories, poems, and prose pieces about their own experiences and their insights into outside experiences will enable them to probe more deeply into the nature of themselves and other humans. Writing frequently will help students to express themselves more clearly, vividly, and precisely; to respond to what they see as important; and to cope better with their problems. Moreover, the writing unit will help students to organize their thinking, to think logically, and to support their ideas with evidence and concrete details.

During the second segment students will produce original poetry and prose that will focus on their life experiences. The development of each student's own distinct voice will be emphasized. They will become

familiar with a variety of writers in contemporary fiction and poetry, including Maya Angelou, Raymond Carver, Annie Dillard, Susan Donnelly, Kenneth Koch, Mary Oliver, Laurence Perrine, May Sarton, May Swenson, and Alice Walker.

Various methods will be used for achieving the writing goals. Students will write prolifically with in-class exercises and homework assignments. They will learn to reshape, revise, and polish their writings after they have been critiqued, as well as to evaluate the writings of their peers during the workshop sessions. Students will have conferences with the teacher periodically in order to receive encouragement and specific helpful suggestions.

(Recommended for Creative Writing classes, grades 10-12; Approaches to Writing, grades 11-12; English 3 and American Literature classes, grade 11; English 4 and English literature classes, grade 12)

Key Words

Narrative General Writing Instruction Poetry Short Stories

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