

Writing, Grades 4-6

Introduction

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This course focuses on students' progression through the different phases of the writing process, from their introduction to the basic concepts to learning about writing's many purposes and forms.* Consider the content of this course within the context of the *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!* classroom, in which students learn to make connections between reading and writing.

Using the genre of personal narrative, students will learn to express their ideas in writing. From choosing a topic through final presentation, students will progress through the different phases of the writing process (prewriting/planning, writing/drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing). They will consider their topics, think carefully and critically about what information must be included and what can be left out, write drafts, revise, proofread, and publish their work. They will share their ideas and give each other feedback. They will experience the pleasures of writing and learn how exciting, challenging, and rewarding it can be.

Teaching Example 1

In Teaching Example 1, James Garvin begins the lesson's writing assignment by introducing the personal narrative. Using the writing process as the underlying structure, Mr. Garvin guides his students through the process as they apply it to writing a personal narrative.

After introducing students to examples of personal narratives, he ensures that they understand what a personal narrative is by working as a class to read and discuss the *Language Arts Handbook* pages on personal narrative. Then Mr. Garvin and his students brainstorm what they might want to write about. Later, students will choose a specific event or topic.

Introduction and Brainstorming

Prewriting is the process by which writers develop an idea and plan their approach for a writing assignment. Brainstorming, or coming up with ideas, is the first step in the prewriting process. In this lesson, students already know they will be writing a personal narrative; often, though, deciding on the genre is part of the preplanning and prewriting that goes into good writing.

To help his students through the brainstorming phase of their writing, Mr. Garvin:

- Prompts each student to suggest something to write about.
- Helps students consider what they might say about each of these suggested topics.
- Reviews their choices.
- Helps them narrow their choices down to one writing topic.

As the students create their lists of potential topics, Mr. Garvin circulates around the room, using conferences to provide support and encouragement and to help his students clarify their ideas. Although brainstorming and planning can be time-consuming, they are valuable activities that allow students to begin articulating, defining, and organizing their ideas.

Teaching Example 2

Teaching Example 2 continues the prewriting phase of this writing project. Using the **Writer's Workbook** as an organizational tool, Mr. Garvin and his students work together to plan their writing. Using a graphic organizer helps the students organize their thinking; Mr. Garvin models what he would need to include in his personal narrative about his dream home before students begin.

After prewriting has been modeled for the students, they take time to think about what they will write. Following the discussion, the students use their **Writer's Workbook** to help them complete their planning. Again, Mr. Garvin circulates around the room, monitoring his students' progress and conferencing with them as they complete their graphic organizers.

Prewriting/Planning

Inexperienced writers often want to jump right in and start writing. Experienced writers, however, have learned the benefits of planning. In the planning phase, writers think about their topics and assess the kinds of information they will need to include in their writing. They also think about the genre they will work within and their intended audience. Approaching writing in a patient and systematic manner allows writers to complete their writing with direction and intent. They know what information they have and what they still need. They understand the structure of their chosen genre, and they know their audience's tastes. The knowledge gained by planning makes students' writing flow more smoothly and keeps them on track.

In this course, personal narrative is the designated genre. The students must choose an event from their lives and ensure that they have enough information to write a short personal narrative. Since the goal of the lesson is to teach students about writing personal narratives, most of the instruction revolves around learning the basic structure and components of this specific genre.

Teaching Example 3

In Teaching Example 3, the students will write the first draft of their personal narratives. Before the students begin to write, Mr. Garvin discusses different ways to introduce variety into their writing. By helping them see how they can vary their writing, he encourages them to write rich, complex, and interesting sentences and paragraphs.

After clarifying the writing assignment, Mr. Garvin has his students refer to the graphic organizers they worked on in their **Writer's Workbook**. As the students write, Mr. Garvin circulates around the room, offering encouragement and suggestions. Finally, several students present their work, and Mr. Garvin and the other students offer feedback.

Writing the First Draft

At this point, the writer has developed a plan and has an idea of what he or she wants to write. Students should write as much as they can about their subjects, keeping in mind that this is a draft and that their ideas and stories are still subject to change and revision. In this phase of the process, writers should focus on putting all their ideas on paper. They will focus on clarifying ideas and writing conventions as they revise and proofread.

Teaching Example 4

In Teaching Example 4, the students revise their first drafts. Mr. Garvin begins instruction on this phase of the writing process with a discussion of author's voice and how it can affect their writing. In addition, he and the students discuss the purpose and goals of revising and acknowledge that making revisions is a difficult but necessary part of good writing.

The students use a checklist as a tool to help them focus on different aspects of their stories. In addition, they work with partners, providing feedback on each other's stories and helping each other with revisions. As the students review and revise their stories, Mr. Garvin circulates and conferences with individual students.

Revising

It has been said that there is no good writing, just good editing. The purpose of the revision process is to make sure that writers have expressed their ideas clearly and completely. Inexperienced writers are often resistant to making revisions. They simply don't want to go back and rewrite; they usually feel they got it right on the first try. By approaching what they have written as a reader, rather than as a writer, even new writers can often recognize the strengths and weaknesses of their own work and make changes in their own writing.

Teaching Example 5

Teaching Example 5 addresses the last two phases in the writing process: proofreading and publishing. Mr. Garvin begins instruction with a discussion of what to look for while proofreading. The students use a proofreading checklist provided in the **Writer's Workbook**. The students correct their stories, rewrite them, and then share them with each other.

Proofreading and Publishing

Writing that is free of grammatical, spelling, and technical mistakes is clearer and easier for readers to understand. By proofreading their pieces, students also notice which errors they make repeatedly and learn not to make them in the future.

Proofreading is an integral part of all the writing students do with **Open Court Reading** and **SRA Imagine It!**. They are taught to proofread their own work as early as kindergarten and from that point on are responsible for the correctness of what they write. By proofreading their own work, students learn to be responsible and attentive to their work and grow to understand that they need to attend to all aspects of their writing.

In publishing their work, the students share their ideas, knowledge, and feelings. They may choose to publish a piece through writing, reading it orally, recording it, or a combination of different approaches. It is the sharing that is the goal, regardless of what form it takes.

Please note: Mr. Garvin is a fifth grade teacher and therefore, is using Level 5 of **Open Court Reading**. Although the content is different, the instructional methods used in this course can be easily applied to the writing lessons in Levels 4 and 6.

For users of **SRA Imagine It!**, a variety of resources, including the writing transparencies, graphic organizers, and writing samples, are available digitally on the [eSuite](#). These can be used and displayed on individual computers and interactive whiteboards. The student activity pages for writing in **SRA Imagine It!** are located in the **Skills Practice** workbooks.

* See the Program Appendix.