Using this resource

This writing unit is huge because I wanted to include absolutely everything that the teacher would need to teach, practice and assess writing for eight weeks. Even though the resource is very large, I wanted to make it easy for you to find what you need. Therefore, I have organized all of the materials two different ways.

Weekly Files

I have given you eight weekly files. Inside each file you will find everything you will need for that week: lesson plans, anchor charts, mentor texts, printables and more. I hope that this will make it easy to plan your week.

Component Files

I have given you files for each component of the writing unit. I hope that these files will make it easy to print just one part of the unit. For example, you may want to make copies of the student printables at the start of the unit. They can all be found in one file rather than going through all of the weekly files.

VIDEOS

I have typed up these detailed teacher instructions, but if you prefer, I have recorded a collection of videos that explain many components of my writing units and give tips and suggestions for implementation.

Click on the image below to view these exclusive videos.

Free email course

Would you like some more help implementing these units? Would you like free lesson plans and anchor charts for the first week of introducing writing workshop? Sign up for my FREE writing email course!

Click on the image below to get signed up!

a typical day of writing

Almost every day will have the same basic format. Students are much more productive when they have clear procedures and routines!

With the exception of assessment days, writing will begin with a mini lesson. During the mini lesson students will read mentor text passages or have the passages read to them. The skill for the day will be introduced. During the first half of the unit, students will often be creating anchor charts to help remember the skills being taught.

After the mini lesson, students will be working independently on their masterpiece writing. They will be focusing specifically on the skill taught that day and implementing it into their writing.

At the end of the work time, students will have the opportunity to share with the class or with their shoulder partner. They might be sharing something that they learned or they might be sharing a specific part of their writing. Share activities are listed on the lesson plans.

During the last three weeks of the unit, students will be working more independently. The mini lessons will be much shorter and students will be given more independent writing time. At this point, they should have built up a bit more endurance.

I believe that approximately 45-60 minutes should be set aside for writing each day. If you do not have this much time, then modify the times to meet your class needs.

First 5 weeks	Last 3 weeks
Mini Lesson: 20 minutes	Mini Lesson: 10 minutes
Work Time: 20 minutes	Work Time: 30 minutes
Share Time: 5 minutes	Share Time: 5 minutes

the writing notebook

Every student will need a composition notebook for this writing unit. The use of a composition notebook is highly encouraged due to their durability. If a composition notebook cannot be provided, a spiral notebook is the next best thing.

The notebook will only be used for this eight week unit. I highly suggest using a different notebook for each unit. This will help students to be more organized and to differentiate between the types of writing that they will do throughout the year.

I do recommend finding a place to keep their notebooks after the unit is complete. Once you have completed a couple units, you may want to review or provide prompts for the different types of writing. The notebooks can be used to review and practice all year. It can also be a fast finisher activity all year!

The notebook will be divided into three sections using the provided dividers. I strongly encourage you to print the dividers on cardstock! This will help to ensure they last for the entire unit.

1. writing resources

This section will be used for anchor charts and other resources that students complete during mini lessons. This is also a good place to keep student goals and a word list.

2. masterpiece

In this section, students will be writing their two major masterpiece reports. The first masterpiece report will be highly guided through mini lessons. During the last three weeks, students will complete a second masterpiece report that is done more independently.

3. more essays

In this section students will keep stories that they write when they finish the specific work task early. They can also write stories in this section when they finish work early during other times of the school day. It helps to keep students organized if they are not writing additional stories right in the middle of their masterpiece that is still being revised.

the Masterpieces

During this eight week unit, students will write two masterpieces. These masterpieces are guided pieces of writing. Students will be doing small tasks everyday that relate to the mini lesson for the day. For example, on day 11 the mini lesson is about writing a good lead. After the lesson, students will work to revise the lead for their masterpiece writing. Rather than starting a new piece every day or week, students will spend time really perfecting two essays.

The first masterpiece will take longer because the lessons are longer and students are being guided more. The second masterpiece will be done with shorter review lessons and with more student independence.

tips for the Masterpieces:

1. Ask students to skip lines when drafting. This makes it easier to do revisions later.
2. Have students draw a line about 2/3 of the way across each page. When they are drafting. Have them leave the right third of the page empty so that they have more room for revisions.
3. Only have students write their two masterpiece stories in this section. If they write a new report on the next page, they won't have room to complete all of their revisions and their work gets unorganized.

Fast Finishers

Every day students will be given a task to complete during their work time. For example, they might be adding details or topic sentences. After they complete the task for the day, students can work on other essays. These pieces should still be opinion essays and students should be encouraged to use all of the skills they have already practiced in mini lessons. These fast finisher pieces should be written in the last section of their writing notebook so that they do not get mixed in with their masterpiece writings.

Writing prompt task cards are included in the unit and can be used for fast finishers.

Students can also write additional pieces anytime they have extra time during their day rather than just during writing.

Mentor text passages

Writers grow by reading and hearing examples of great writing.

All of the necessary mentor texts for this writing unit are included! You do NOT need to buy additional books! (I did include a list of suggested books just in case you want to add more mentor texts to the lessons.)

There are several different ways that you can use the mentor texts. Feel free to mix it up and vary the routine if you wish.

- Print a copy of the mentor texts for yourself and read them to the class in the same manner that you would read a book read aloud.
- Print a copy for each student and have them read it independently. This can be done during the writing lesson, as bell work or even during reading centers.
- Print a copy for each student and have them buddy read the passage with their partner.
- Print the mentor texts at 80% (change in your printer settings) and have students glue the texts in the resource section of the notebook so that they can look back as a reference.
- Project the mentor texts on your whiteboard. You can read it to the students while they follow along or the class can choral read them.

anchor charts

Anchor charts are part of many of the lessons in this unit. There are many ways that you can use the anchor charts that are included in this unit.

- Print and Display

You can print the anchor charts, using the PDF file. Display them on a wall or bulletin board in the classroom. If you print, you can choose the pre-filled chart that is ready to display or chose the blank chart and fill it in with students.

- Project on Smartboard or Whiteboard

If you have a projector, you can use the PowerPoint version of the anchor chart to display them on your class white board. Students will be able to see the chart and help you to fill in the missing pieces.

- Add to Student Notebooks

You can print the student versions of the anchor charts. Students can fill in the missing pieces and add them to the resource section of their notebooks.

Drafting tips

Since students will be spending quite a bit of time revising one report- it is important that they leave room for editing when they do their first draft.

I suggest asking students to skip lines whenever they are drafting. This will give them some room for additions when revising.

I have also had my students draw a vertical line straight down the paper. They put this line about 2/3 of the way across the page. Now they have a column for adding more lengthy revisions later. If you have them draw the lines before they start drafting, they won't forget!

WHY PRE-ASSESS?

On the first day of the unit, you will be asking students to write an opinion essay. You will be giving them a prompt that is included in the lesson plan. This ensures that they are actually writing an opinion piece.

You will be using one of the included rubrics to assess their writing. You will not be using this as a grade for report cards!

The purpose of the pre-assessment is to best meet each student's individual needs. If you know exactly where each student is starting as a writer, it will help you to plan conference time and possibly adjust unit lessons.

Also, during the second week of the unit, students will be looking at their pre-assessment and the rubric to make goals for themselves. Setting their own goals increases student buy-in and motivation. It also helps to make students more accountable for their growth.

If you have already conducted a similar writing pre-assessment, feel free to skip the day one lesson.

WHY POST-ASSESS?

At the end of the unit, students will be asked to write another opinion essay. You will probably want to give your students time the day before to generate a topic since writing time will be limited during the assessment.

The purpose of this assessment is to determine how much students have grown. It will also help you to know which students may need continued intervention. The post-assessment writing score can be used as an official grade for the report card.

It is also important that students are given time to reflect on their progress towards meeting the original goals they set for themselves.

Writing Grades

Most teachers are required to enter grades for writing on a regular basis. Students will only be creating two masterpieces and so you will probably need other ways to get grades. Please note that the pre-assessment should not be used as a report card grade.

Ways to get grades:

- Participation during mini lesson and daily work time
- Completion of mini lesson anchor charts.
- Completion of the daily work time task.
- Grade a specific part of their writing after they have been given time to revise. (For example, after learning about leads, have students write their lead and grade it.)
- Use the rubric to give a formal grade at the completion of each of the masterpieces.
- Post-Assessment
- Participation in the author share
- Speaking and listening grades can be obtained during daily share time and during the author share celebration.

Conferencing

Conferencing with your writers will help you to differentiate and meet students' individual needs. Conferencing can happen during the student work time. I do not recommend conferencing until you get to Day 11. By this time, students will have more to share during conferences and writers will be used to the expectations of independent writing time. This will allow you to focus on your conferences.

After you score the pre-assessment, put your students into five groups with similar levels and goals. (You will want to create fewer groups if you do not teach writing five days per week.) Assign each of the groups to a day of the week and post the conference groups using the posters that are provided.

On their assigned day, students will meet with you and the others in their group. During the conference time students should read a portion of their writing. You can give a compliment and a suggestion. After a couple weeks, you can have others in the group also give compliments and suggestions.

Keep notes using the provided conference recording sheets. If you asked a student to add more vocabulary, you will want to check back with them later to see how they are doing with that task.

Conferences should be as short as possible while being meaningful.

- Have students read their own writing. Reading their handwriting can slow us down. Also, it is tough to focus on content if mechanics are lacking. Content ability is generally more important than one's ability to spell.
- Only have students read the portion of their writing that pertains to their goal or the most recent mini lessons. Choose a focus for the conference.
- Give quick comments. If a student is really struggling, pull them aside later for one-on-one help.
- Let independent writers know that they should not interrupt during conference time.

The students that you are conferencing with will be missing some of their work time. Just encourage them to use time wisely and catch up within the next day. Most of the work time tasks will not take the full time allotted.

Don't worry if you miss a day of conferencing. Do a spot check. For example, have them point to a text feature in their writing as you walk around.

Publishing & Sharing

It is important that writers are given the opportunity to share their writing with others. That is the reason that a writer writes! Publishing a piece just means that the author is given the chance to share their work. This can be done many ways. Change it up to keep it fun and interesting!

- Give students daily opportunities to share their work with a partner. Closing activities are provided in the daily lesson plans.
- Give students occasional opportunities to share their work in front of the class. To speed things up, students can just share part of their story. When you work on leads, have a few students share their lead.
- Have students share their work in a writing conference. Have small group conferences and ask students to read their whole piece or just part of their writing to the small group.
- Allow students to use fancy paper to publish a final draft of their story. The final draft can be displayed in a class binder (cover and spine have been included) or on a bulletin board. Encourage students to read their classmate's work during their independent reading time!
- Allow students to use technology to type a final draft that can also be put in a class binder or on a bulletin board for classmates to enjoy.
- Host an author's share celebration. It's a great way to get those speaking and listening standards covered! I have included many suggestions for themed author celebrations.

adapting lessons

These lessons are meant to serve as a guide for your daily writing lessons. Please know that you can change a lesson if you have something that you prefer to do. You can skip lessons if you feel that your students have already mastered a skill. You can repeat lessons if you feel like the whole class needs additional practice. You can also combine two lessons if you need to cut the unit back from a full eight week time frame. You know your kids best! Always feel empowered to make the changes that you feel are needed!

using technology

Many classrooms are blessed with 1:1 technology or a handful of devices for students to use. Although not a necessity, technology can be a great tool to use during writing.

The drafting step in writing is the only time that I would strongly discourage you from using technology. It really helps students to focus on getting the entire story down on paper if they are not slowed down by typing and fixing spelling errors.

After the drafting is complete, it can be very helpful to have students type their pieces. This will make the revising and editing easier to do.

Typing pieces is also a fun way to publish. It makes students feel more like authors. Some states even have standards that require students to type some of their writing.

author share celebration

At the end of the unit, give students an opportunity to share their work and celebrate their growth as a writer by throwing an author share celebration. There are many types of celebrations that you can choose.

story time

Everyone can wear pajamas and bring stuffed animals and pillows. Authors will read their writing to the class while everyone relaxes.

camp share-a-story

Move the desks to the side and bring in sleeping bags. Setting up a tent is fun too! You can display a camp fire from a you tube video for extra effect. Students can use a flashlight as they share their work.

red carpet authors

Roll out the red carpet! Students can come to school dressed up and then walk the red carpet. Give them a microphone (not turned on!) to use to read their writing to the audience.

lights, camera, action!

Students can use technology to make videos of themselves reading their reports. Then the class can pop some popcorn and enjoy all the videos!

story buddies

Do you have a buddy class? Have students read their work to a buddy from a younger grade. It's a great experience for the buddy too!

open house

Invite families to the classroom. Student writing can be displayed.

Additional Mentor Text

The following is a list of books that are great examples of opinion text. These are not required since the unit includes mentor text passages. However, these books are great for read alouds and students who need intervention. These books make a great addition to the classroom library and many can probably be found at the library.

I Wanna Iguana by Karen Kaufman Orloff

I Wanna New Room by Karen Kaufman Orloff

Hey, Little Ant by Hannah Hoose

I Want a Dog: My Opinion Essay by Darcy Pattison

The Perfect Pet by Margie Palatini

Red is Best by Kathy Stinson

The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka

A Pig Parade by Michael Ian Black

Earrings! by Judith Viorst

Have I got a Book for You! by Melanie Watt

Opinion Writing Unit at a Glance

Day 1 Pre-Assessment	Day 2 Setting Up Notebooks	Day 3 What is an an opinion piece?	Day 4 Generating Opinion Ideas	Day 5 Generating Opinion Ideas
Day 6 Setting Goals	Day 7 Writing Strong Opinions	Day 8 Supporting your Opinion with Reasons	Day 9 Rehearsal and Drafting	Day 10 Rehearsal and Drafting
Day 11 Writing the Lead	Day 12 Revising your Reasons	Day 13 Consider your Audience	Day 14 Consider Opposing Opinions	Day 15 Support your Reasons with Examples
Day 16 Organize Writing into Paragraphs	Day 17 Topic and Concluding Sentences	Day 18 Word Choice	Day 19 Transitions	Day 20 Conclusion
Day 21 Editing	Day 22 Peer Editing	Day 23 Publishing	Day 24 Publishing	Day 25 Generating Deeper Topics
Day 26 Choose a Topic and Opinion	Day 27 Research	Day 28 Generate Reasons to Support your Opinion	Day 29 Rehearsal and Drafting	Day 30 Rehearsal and Drafting
Day 31 Revise Lead	Day 32 Revise your Reasons	Day 33 Support your Reasons with Examples	Day 34 Paragraphs with Topic and Concluding Sentences	Day 35 Word Choice and Transitions
Day 36 Revising the Conclusion	Day 37 Editing & Peer Editing	Day 38 Publishing	Day 39 Publishing	Day 40 Post-Assessment

Not So Wimpy Teacher

THANK you!

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