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# Unleashing the Writer Within: A Workshop Based Writing Course Designed to Release Student Fears, Cultivate Creativity and Develop Editing Skills

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**UNLEASHING THE WRITER WITHIN:  
A WORKSHOP BASED WRITING COURSE  
DESIGNED TO RELEASE STUDENT FEARS, CULTIVATE  
CREATIVITY AND DEVELOP EDITING SKILLS**

**BY  
KIMBERLY SUE CONNELLY  
B.A. REGIS UNIVERSITY, 1989**

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING DEGREE  
AT THE SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING,  
BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT.**

**August 2000**

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This project by Kimberly Sue Connelly is accepted in its present form.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Project Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

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## Abstract

Establishing a community of learners in a language classroom produces a fertile environment in which to teach any and all language skills. Building community was the focus of the Writing Workshop that I designed and taught to large classes of high beginner to advanced immigrants, refugees and international students in a college level ESL program. The activities I developed for the first weeks connect students to each other through creativity, music and art, authorize students to set their own goals, encourage them to examine their writing anxieties, and allow them to explore their identities as writers. By breaking down fears and fostering creativity within the community of learners, a safe classroom environment is created in which students can use and develop writing skills. Since the students are put in the role of creators, the ideas and content of the course come exclusively from them and their interests. As a result, a textbook selection is not necessary in my Writing Workshop. The students use themselves as material - their interest, ideas, experiences, joys, hurts, dreams, cultures, holidays. Ownership produces investment and attachment, which are among the goals of this approach to teaching.

The second half of the course focuses on three rhetorical writing forms and developing editing skills while still using the students as content and their experiences as the material for the class. Students learn and practice Peer Editing and Feedback while writing a Descriptive Essay. Peer Editing gives students the opportunity to hone their own editing skills. Students concentrate on understanding Mistake Analysis and utilizing Teacher Feedback while writing and editing their Definition Essay. The Opinion Essay uses students' opinions about social, political or cultural issues. Students learn the mechanics of using quotations in their work and finish the writing process by producing a final draft, which is published and stored in a portfolio. In this Writing Workshop I make my students mutual members, peer teachers and contributing resources in a community of language learners and writers.

**Classroom Technique**  
**Creative Teaching**  
**Large Group Instruction**  
**Student Teacher Relationship**  
**Teacher Education**  
**Teacher Improvement**  
**Teaching Methods**  
**Teaching Styles**  
**Writing Instruction**

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Many hours of frustration, agony and embarrassment have paved the way for the ideas presented in this paper. I remember vividly the hate in my students' eyes when I passed back papers that I had spent all night conscientiously correcting, trying not to miss a single syntax or spelling error. I agonized over the grades, trying desperately to be a fair, just teacher. But, my students did not appreciate my effort. In fact, they hated me for it. I felt like I was in quicksand, flailing helplessly. It was a negative return because the more I did and the harder I tried the more my students hated my writing class and me. I told myself that I had a right as their teacher to assign grades, but I couldn't justify the pain, hurt and disappointment I saw in the young writers' eyes those first few years of teaching. I can still see Isauo's anger and Mario's dejection. Some were hurt, some gave up and some withdrew. And I was scorned.

I began to see that there was something personal about writing. It was not like grammar, reading or math class. There was a personal, ego investment by the students, and it was fragile. The mounting negativity made it drudgery for me to go in class after class. I knew it could be better, yet the answer was just beyond my grasp. It stayed hidden from me, so for a long time I just tried harder and harder, but nothing changed. I knew I had what it took to be a great teacher: I was willing to create superbly orchestrated lesson plans; I had professional writing experience; I had a good grasp of the English language, as well as French, a foreign language for me. But, I was failing, and so

were all of my students. They did not just hate me – they hated writing. It came to me little by little that their hate was not so much about me as it was about writing.

So, writing had to become more enticing and welcoming, which meant my entire approach was going to have to change. I've come a long way from my early days of endless frustration when teaching writing was like trying to get a three-year-old to keep up – I held my students' hands and pulled as they dragged their heels. There was no way to entice my students with the traditional approach I used. I had to change. I could no longer be the all-knowing, wonderful master of the language who was the star of my own show, which I called a writing class. The spotlight had to be turned off me and the students had to take center stage.

I learned that in every student I met, I had a teacher. Each student had something unique to offer me, but I had to give him or her the opportunity and even the voice to do so. Then I had to confront and transform two main components of writing – student fears about and dislike of writing and the traditional way of editing student writing.

Tracing the evolution of change in my own teaching, I realize that I was a little slow at figuring out how to implement my teaching philosophy because I had not received any teacher training in college. I actually came into teaching by default. All through college I was not sure what my profession would ultimately be, but I was sure that I would not be a teacher. I knew that teachers as a profession were underpaid and under-respected. Although I wasn't highly motivated by the dollar, I wanted a job with adventure, change, exotic peoples and stories. So, I studied political science, communication arts and French, hoping that somehow the combination would land me an

international job. It seemed that law school was a viable springboard for international involvement; consequently, I was heading to law school immediately after graduation until I made a last minute u-turn a few months before my graduation.

I decided to join the Jesuit International Volunteers so I could travel outside the United States. The position required that I teach English. No problem – I spoke the language quite well. Thus I entered teaching fulfilling my own prejudices about teachers being underpaid and not respected--my volunteer salary was a mere \$50 a month, and I, myself, did not have a healthy respect or understanding of the job awaiting me. Little did I know that this easy, unrespected, anybody-could-do-it job would become my extremely challenging and deeply rewarding career.

I have been teaching English as a Second Language for ten years while feeding my love of stories, peoples and places. Over these past ten years my philosophy of teaching has blossomed into the ideas laid out here in this paper. The seeds were planted during my first year of teaching back in 1989. With no teaching degree nor teaching experience, I headed off to receive some of the hardest and best teacher training I've had in my life. I began at Ponape Agriculture and Trade School in the steamy jungle of Pohnpei where high school boys from all the Micronesian islands came together to learn English and some skills for life. I was dropped into a classroom with no materials, no xerox machine, and no idea what I was doing, and embarked on an adventure that has become a calling and a way of life for me.

Eventually, I returned to the States and found myself teaching in exotic lands in my own backyard. I spent a year substituting at Don Bosco, a refugee center, until January of



1993, when I landed a full-time teaching position at Donnelly College in Kansas City, Kansas. This program was begun in 1975 when the Hmong refugees first located here. During my time at Donnelly, enrollment grew to more than 350 students from over 45 different countries, filling both a morning and evening program. The Donnelly College Intensive English program offers instruction in four skill areas—Listening and Speaking, Grammar, Reading and Writing—for five different levels. I have always preferred to teach Reading and Writing together and was allowed to do so. Consequently, instead of only a 55 minute Writing course with a five minute break between classes, I had an hour and 55 minutes with students for five days a week.<sup>1</sup> So I designed a Writing Workshop, which I taught for over five years and to every level except the very beginning students.

My time at Donnelly saw my teaching practices take root and grow strong, yet it is all of my experiences—Pohnpei, Don Bosco, Donnelly and my graduate work at the School for International Training—and all the challenges and gifts of these contexts which have brought me to my method of teaching today. My strong beliefs about teaching and learning presented in this paper have evolved from my ten years of experience, my gradual development as a teacher and my students. Perhaps my students have been the greatest resource of all for me over the years.

Because my students have come from all over the world, I learned to see my students as resources for the course. They have vast life experiences, talents and degrees.

I have taught a female lawyer from Uzbekistan, chemists and housewives from the

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<sup>1</sup>Donnelly College follows the semester schedule, so we had sixteen weeks of instruction resulting in over 9,200 minutes or 153 hours of instruction for my writing workshop.

Ukraine, doctors, political activists, farmers and lawyers from South America, engineers, tailors and psychiatrists from Europe, teachers, theologians, statesmen, factory workers and musicians from Asia. Students in my course have ranged in age from 18-70 and have originated from Gambia, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Columbia, Cuba, Russia, Venezuela, France, and Saudi Arabia. How can all of this diversity in age, religion, culture, life experiences and education come together in a classroom? They have a common goal – to learn English. But even that goal is not the same. Some students want to improve their English skills in order to achieve a Master's or Doctorate degree here; others are looking for an undergraduate degree; others seek job advancement or merely employment; while others want only to communicate with their children's educators.

To further the diversity in a program like Donnelly College's Intensive English Program, we divide students into five levels based on their skill levels in reading comprehension, listening comprehension, writing, grammar and speaking. Students' skills in any given level vary tremendously. For example, a stereotypical Mexican student may have fluent conversational abilities, but may be unable to write with proper English syntax, whereas a stereotypical Vietnamese student may have a deep understanding of English grammar, yet be quite limited in his conversational skills.

Therefore, I capitalize on my students' strengths by giving them opportunities to demonstrate their language skills. I encourage my students to help each other learn through countless cooperative activities designed to allow them to share what they know with those who do not. They become resources to each other as one student's skill in English grammar is used to help another student's weakness with English syntax. A great

benefit with this approach is that students get the opportunity to receive one-on-one help with their skills from each other in a situation where it would be impossible for me to do it myself as I am clearly outnumbered. I am motivated to use my students' knowledge instead of being the only expert because I remain committed to keeping students at the center of our learning. Whether I have 15 or 25 students in my course, their learning and individual development is the focus.

In our course, we learn English, and we also learn about each other and our world. That is what keeps language interesting—the content—because language in itself is boring except to the select few grammarians who enjoy the intellectual aspect of language analysis. But, they are the exception; the rule is the students who want content besides the rules of language in their courses. So, my students and I learn about the world through them and their experiences. I do not feel pressure to be an expert on every topic, issue or question. In fact, I take myself out of the spotlight and put the students at center stage. I am not an expert on many issues or endeavors, but my classroom is full of knowledgeable individuals.

I do know English structure and my students trust me to cultivate their language skills so that they can communicate through speaking and writing who they are; what they know; where they have been; where they are going; and why. They want to be able to offer themselves and their expertise in another language. Being understandable, being understood, being helpful and being useful are my students' common goals. For these immigrants, refugees and international students, they want success in these areas, so they are willing to offer themselves as content and as resources in this course. They are not

simply compliant; they are compelled.

As an instructor, I am not the main attraction or the main event. I am the director, but I am also a participant, a fellow spectator and a learner. I am well prepared in my expertise, English, but I allow the students to be the stars. So we all learn about politics in Cuba, Russia and Central America, health care in Europe, South America and Africa, and educational systems and practices in the former Soviet Union, Korea and Japan. We share; we compare; we comment. In my course, the world is our classroom. It is a unique atmosphere with the population coming from all corners of the Earth, but this approach could work in any classroom because all students are unique, have stories to tell and live a life. As Mark Twain has said, "No life is uninteresting. It is an impossibility. Behind even the dullest exterior lies a drama, a comedy and a tragedy."

Today, students want to take my writing class. They request my class. It is not because I know English better than other teachers. It's not that I am more interesting or funny or more organized than other teachers. They want to be in my class because they have a voice in my class and they are transformed by the writing they do. They become colorful, poetic writers because their learning in my course mirrors their learning when they were three and four years old—it's natural, interesting and experimental.

Students often write letters after taking my class telling me what they thought of our writing workshop. Sofya from the Ukraine wrote,

Kimberly, I like your lessons very much. I think they are good organization and your speech may be a little bit fast but very clear. But for me is more important that I always feel comfortable in your lessons. I don't afraid to speak or to write all I think.

Maria, a Mexican student, shared,

At the beginning of the semester I felt that I didn't know about each person, but during the discussions I learned a lot about each person and now I felt closest to them and closest to you. I want to say thank you for everything, you are a great person in all the ways. If I come next semester I would like to have you for my teacher again.

Eugene, a Taiwanese student, revealed,

When first time I came to Donnelly for studying English, I was very shy to talk and write, because I thought I had many problems such as pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, etc. So, I lacked my self-confidence and I couldn't open my mouth. I couldn't write any essay even a short sentence or a paragraph. My mind was empty when I had to write something. Especially you taught us about writing free that make me more comfortable to write. It builds me to get my self-confidence back...If I were here next semester I would still take your class again.

Hang praised the class,

I have heard my friends talk about you a lot. They say that you're a good teacher...Now I know that is true. I like the way you teach, talk, and give us examples...You are like Mr. Escalante in "Stand and Deliver," who works hard for students. All of us are proud of ourselves.

Many of my students come in writing short, rigid paragraphs, and go out writing pages of flowing language. They write passionately because they write about what invokes their passion. They write beautifully because they write about what they find beautiful. They write meaningful essays because they write about what they find meaningful. Their writing is interesting because they write about what interests them. It is not magic. It is what happens when the writing class is given back to the students.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BUILDING COMMUNITY

#### **Kimberly's Journal Entry—The Human Urge to Express the Self**

*The fear and anxiety associated with trying to write perfectly, cleverly, is compounded 100 times when faced with writing in a second language. It's so huge that it can be completely debilitating; it can freeze student writers to the point of not being able to write a single word. We have all felt it and its source is the ideal of Perfection, and the fear of making a mistake. So, in my classroom, we establish a community of language learners in which making mistakes is a good thing.*

Establishing a community of learners in a language classroom produces a fertile environment in which to teach any and all language skills. Consequently, the methods and theories laid out in this paper, although illustrated through a writing course, could be applied to any language class. By building community, I theorize that I am able to break down fears and create a safe environment in which my students can use and develop language skills. The first few weeks of my writing course are critical, not only for establishing the camaraderie of a community of language learners and writers, but also for laying the foundation and procedures of the workshop. There are several key bricks that have to be laid, and they are all connected to the emotional state of the students. The students, as writers, need to feel like they belong to the community of the classroom and to become as comfortable with each other as possible. I, as the facilitator, have to work very hard at making the writers comfortable with themselves and their writing. I have designed activities for the first weeks that connect students to each other through creativity, music and art, that authorize students to set their own goals, that encourage them to examine their writing anxieties, and that allow them to explore their identities as writers.

The first three weeks of the workshop are designed around the essentials of community building through sharing, talking, listening, writing and giving feedback to each other. I have learned over the years how to take the quietest, shyest group and create a warm, accepting atmosphere, or the most boisterous, competitive group and foster respect and good listening skills. Determining classroom personality and directing the group's energy are my jobs. There are many ways I foster interest, respect, good listening and acceptance in my classroom. Essentially, they all start with me, the instructor. I must model the skills and require them, and not be afraid to instruct students, even adult learners, on classroom and community behavior. Time and time again, I have found that if a high standard of respect and community-based learning are consistently promoted as class values, the students will embrace these values and hold each other to these standards when the values are breached. Furthermore, in our program where student demographics are dominated by working students and parents, students miss class consistently for a variety of reasons. The dominant reason for absenteeism is that their life situations are more pressing for them than their attendance. So, my experience with our students has taught me that they need a more compelling reason to attend class than simply to improve their language skills. Consequently, I motivate my students to attend class by facilitating a class that offers them classroom fraternity as well as uses their time productively to work on language. My students come from cultures in which membership in a group obligates them to the other members of the group; consequently, I emphasize their membership in the community of classmates in order to cultivate obligation between them. As my students become confident that they belong, they feel obliged and committed to coming to class. By putting this interdependence at the center of our process, I utilize their own cultural

values. I make my students mutual members, peer teachers and contributing resources in a community of language learners. All of this manifests itself in regular attendance and participation in the writing course.

In addition to working to establish community among students, I also invite them to develop their creativity. Fostering creativity permits student writers to view themselves as artists in the process of writing. When they have this sense of being an artist, the writing becomes a treasured, enjoyable process of expressing the self, not the boring, tedium often found in a typical writing course. Adding creativity to their perception of Self builds their confidence, excitement, interest and sense of accomplishment.

Furthermore, when a foreign language is imposed upon students in a language classroom or in a foreign environment, language learners naturally experience a lack of control and power. They lose their natural navigational tools—they can become lost in the sea of foreign words and cultural nuances. However, by giving students the role of creators, I give them a footing and a way to gain their bearings and wade their way through the onslaught of foreign sounds. They can claim the role of navigator and captain of the ship on their own very personal journey of language learning. So I encourage my students to be creators in a second way that is slightly different from being poetic or artistic with the language. The second way of being a creator is much simpler than that. Simply put, I do not impose language on the students. Rather I coax the language out of them. The language and writing comes from inside them, so it belongs to them and is a part of them. In this way, the English language is no longer something outside of them - it is a part of themselves that they are birthing and offering to others. Because they are being creators of the language, they can, in effect, be in control of their learning process, and, in



the case of a writing course, their writing. As humans we are naturally more comfortable and at ease when we feel in control of our environment and what we are doing. In sum, we feel powerful when we are in control as creators. Keeping the very human side of my students in mind, I develop activities, in fact the entire course, in a manner that allows them to be creative, powerful and in control.

Since the students are put in the role of creators, the ideas and content of the course come exclusively from them and their interests. As a result, a textbook selection is not necessary in my writing workshop. It is always more interesting to the students to use *themselves* as the material—their interests, ideas, experiences, joys, hurts, dreams, cultures, holidays. In this way, the number of topics to read and write about is only limited by the number of minutes we have lived our lives and maybe not even by that. Again, students are in control of the learning environment; the topics are coming from them, so the language is not being imposed upon them. They are interacting with each other in a very real way as they offer themselves for their own as well as their peers' learning. This in itself connects them to each other, reinforcing their community as learners, because they are not practicing a dry conversation that was written by someone else. Essentially they are being learned in addition to being the learners, as their own ideas and experiences are the class content. They own it and it belongs to them. Ownership produces investment and attachment, which are among the goals of this approach to teaching.

Facilitating a writing course in the above described manner demands that I be aware of the class, be sensitive to their needs and be the director of the energy. Running a writing workshop does not demand that I know everything nor that I be a great, published writer myself, but rather it demands that I have great sensitivity and great organizational skills. In

fact, I participate in the writing workshop as a writer, while remaining focused on directing the flow of the class. By participating with the students in the writing process, I have a better connection with the students and am more aware of the topics that have energy in the room. Since I don't use a textbook, I must still provide a structure and an atmosphere for the course in which students can reveal the material we are to utilize. In other words, I provide an approach to writing, a framework within which we work, but my students supply the content. In fact, *they are* the content of the class. I tell them this at the onset and then I support it by all the choices I make and in the way I organize the course.

In order to feel free enough to be creative and to offer themselves as the content, students need to feel safety in the classroom. This comes from the sense of community and from breaking through their fears and anxieties about language learning and writing. Learning a language is scary and writing can be terrifying and upsetting for students. Dealing with negative attitudes towards writing is a step towards fostering a positivism that prevails in the classroom. My colleagues and I find that the majority of students dread their writing class, so it's essential for me to deal with any negativity or fear immediately. As one of my advanced Japanese students, named Go, wrote succinctly, "I really hate to write something, even in Japanese. I am not used to writing."<sup>2</sup> So, I prompt them to talk about the emotions associated with writing. At first, students often hesitate to express their fears and criticisms about a course because they do not want to offend the instructor or be penalized for their words. I reassure students that it is okay to have fears and hang-ups about writing.

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<sup>2</sup>All quotes, unless otherwise noted, are taken from students' work and questionnaires and are transcribed as written by the students.

It is okay to hate writing, and I will not be mad at the students for saying this, even though I am teaching a writing class. I show them that it's not a personal insult for me—I can listen to their complaints, worries and concerns in a very matter-of-fact way so that they know that I accept their fears and hesitations about the course. Although hesitant at first, in the end, students are relieved to share their disdain for writing.

It is my theory that students' fears about writing are rooted in their past experiences with writing. I do not believe that humans are born with hang-ups. Indeed, we develop our hang-ups through painful or even traumatizing events in our lives. And for a great number of people, writing courses have been traumatic at their worst and dull at their best. To get to the beginning of students' experiences with writing, I use an activity described in detail at the end of this chapter that delves into their earliest memories as writers. Eventually students understand that writing is not a negative experience, but rather a very natural extension of Self, in the way that talking is. Notably, some students will begin the course enthusiastic about writing and have very positive attitudes. Yet, I do not exclude these students from the discussions or the activities around writing anxieties because I do not assume these students to be free of fears about writing. Chances are they are more positive about writing because they have received good grades for their papers in the past. But, this doesn't mean that they are free of the mind-blocks and fears associated with writing. They may have just been better at the game of giving their teachers what they wanted, which according to my theory, almost guarantees that they have not had much opportunity to express themselves completely and honestly in their writing. These students with positive attitudes towards writing have mostly the same fears about being a "perfect writer" as the students with negative attitudes. Still, they

are able to share their enthusiasm for writing and their success stories. In this way, everybody contributes and shares his/her own writing experiences with the group.

At the end of the semester, students consistently reported on their final feedback that they were more comfortable and able to write more creatively and in greater length. Alejandra, an intermediate Venezuelan student, commented, "I was shy for expressing my feelings, talking and writing, and now I feel that has changed." Gemma, an advanced beginner student from Brazil wrote, "The beginning of the semester I afraid for writing because writing in English is very difficult. Now I can tell you writing in English is difficult but I feel comfortable for writing." Another advanced beginner student, Valeriy, from the former Soviet Union, added, "The writing at the beginning of the semester is very interesting and important for me. It is very good time for my ESL program."

In sum, I believe that building a community of language learners provides an environment in which students are motivated by accountability to one another. They perform because they are the creators in the classroom; they have power, control and safety. But community, creativity, power, and safety do not exist in a classroom environment without effort. Every exercise and activity we do must foster these aims. The following are a few examples of activities that I've chosen or designed because they produce the atmosphere of camaraderie and comfort we need for this writing course.

### **Activity to Build Community**

The first activities that I present allow students to get to know each other while being creative. The exercise I usually use the first day of class, which introduces students to being poetic while writing prose, is a simple ice breaker/writing activity in the form of a guessing

game. For this game, I use musical instruments because music inherently suggests creativity, freedom and beauty. It never fails to produce positive results. Prior to meeting my class, I write names of musical instruments on nametags. When the students arrive the first day, I stick one on each student's back so that they can play a game similar to twenty questions. They have to ask each other yes/no questions about their instrument until they are able to guess what instrument is on the tag on their backs. For example they can ask, "Is it made of wood?" "Is it made of brass?" The playfulness of the game allows the students to relax, enjoy themselves and to not worry about their language skills. It also gives students the message that language learning is about interaction between people, and it can be fun and interesting. After the students have finished playing the game, we have a short discussion about music, musical instruments, and their favorite instrument. Depending on the class and if we have sufficient time, we might even talk about the music of language, and how all languages have their own unique rhythms and melodies. It can be a very interesting aside to compare the rhythm of English to the musicality of Russian, Portuguese, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese and any other language represented by the students taking the course by having students use their native language to say the same two sentences into a recorder. Then we replay the sentences for comparisons and analysis.

Next, we turn to a short writing endeavor. First I read an example of a short paragraph I have written about my favorite musical instrument as a way to ease students into writing one of their own:

### **The Flute**

By Kimberly Sue Connelly

The flute is like the wind through trees – whistling through leaves over grass, among clouds and dancing through the flowers. It soars; it flows effortlessly over

mountaintops and into the ocean waves. The flute joins the birds in flight and accompanies butterflies...It speaks of long forgotten memories; faint remembrances are beckoned and dreams yet spoken or told become alive under the melodic touch of the flute...The flute calls gently, encourages, and surrounds the soul.<sup>3</sup>

After I read this aloud, students read it silently, and after some discussion of content and style, students are asked to write their own paragraphs during the remaining class time.

Because I like to have students write a fun, creative, low-pressure piece, I assure them that they shouldn't worry about spelling and grammar. Instead, they should just let their ideas flow.

There are no expectations and no restrictions for this short piece. Surprisingly, I never encounter resistance to this assignment. Students dive right in and have quite a bit of fun writing, and I am always impressed with their beautiful results.

Jin-hee, an intermediate Korean student, wrote about a violin:

### **The Feeling of the Violin**

By Jin-hee

The violin transforms. It becomes a gentle mommy for a baby, dance music at the parties and pain relief for the tired people. Sometimes it sounds like the roar of lions, the leap of horses and the flying of birds. The violin can create all of nature. When I get nervous, the violin makes me comfortable. The feeling of the violin is very good to me.<sup>4</sup>

The next class, students share their paragraphs with a partner by first reading aloud and then exchanging papers to read silently. Students are cautioned to not edit or criticize each other's work at this point. They should simply listen to each other. These instructions are given in order to foster a safe environment, which puts the focus on being creative and

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<sup>3</sup>My writing presented in this paper is previously unpublished works written specifically for my writing course as they were mostly written during class at the same time students were writing.

<sup>4</sup>Student essays are transcribed in whole are part as written by the students. The essays are samples written by students from a variety of levels and span a three-year teaching period.

cultivates the community of learners. Next, I give them a second writing of my writing, "The Flute." This time, it has some changes:

### **Kimberly - The Flute**

**Kimberly** is like the wind through trees – whistling through leaves, over grass, among clouds and dancing through the flowers. **Kimberly** soars; **Kimberly** flows effortlessly over mountaintops and into the ocean waves. **Kimberly** joins the birds in flight and accompanies butterflies...**She** speaks of long forgotten memories; faint remembrances are beckoned and dreams yet spoken or told become alive under the melodic touch of **Kimberly**. **Kimberly** calls gently, encourages and surrounds the soul.

I put students in pairs and instead of rewriting their own essay, they are told to rewrite their partners' essays and exchange the instrument for their partners' names. This twist comes as quite a surprise to students, and with giddy enthusiasm they tackle the paragraph! A collaborative piece of creative writing benefits the students by taking pressure off of them, (they aren't afraid of looking or sounding stupid or silly). It also builds community and peer responsibility, as well as confidence, excitement and a shared sense of accomplishment. Sarah, from Gambia, rewrote Jin-hee's paragraph like this:

### **Jin-Hee - The Violin**

Rewritten by Sarah

**Jin-hee** transforms. **She** becomes a gentle mommy for a baby, dance music at the parties and pain relief for the tired people. Sometimes **Jin-hee** sounds like the roar of lions, the leap of horses and the flying of birds. **Jin-hee** can create all of nature. When I get nervous, **she** makes me comfortable. The feeling of **Jin-hee** is very good to me.

Jin-hee and Sarah were very pleased with the results of their writing together, as were the other students. I follow up by editing for verb tense, spelling and minor syntax problems while introducing students to a different style of teacher editing. I am very careful to be consistent in what I say and what I do in the classroom. So, right away I write comments in their margins

that give the students positive reinforcement of their creative expressions as well as constructive advice for their writing (see next page for an example). Furthermore, I never write a grade on a student's essays. I always give them quantitative evaluations as opposed to qualitative ones because, with my instructions and prompting, students always continue to improve and usually do not get discouraged. I believe an "A" doesn't necessarily encourage improvement, and an "F" or even a "B" usually discourages writers. We do not analyze this approach to editing at this time, but we do look at the different stages of editing throughout the semester and in the second half of this paper.

The fear of failure, of not being adequate, of not being creative enough, expressive enough or fluent enough usually sends students into a frenzy when they are faced with a creative writing assignment. As Annette, an advanced Danish student wrote at the end of the semester, "I didn't think I could write creatively and if I did, I thought it was very "artificial" for me. The process of writing seems more natural for me now. I try to create something during my writing. Before I wrote more concrete. Now I try to express my opinions and feelings in my writing." Overall, students discover ease in writing this first creative piece because students become poetic and creative effortlessly. They aren't "trying" to describe themselves nor trying to compare themselves to an instrument. It was accomplished without their even knowing it.

#### **Activity to Set Goals and Identify Personal Interests**

The first activity focused on creativity while this next elementary activity is important in letting students know that they count as individuals in the classroom. It directly and simply conveys to students that their individual goals and expectations can be met, and that I am committed to a writing course that will be determined by this present group of learners.



## Sample of Teacher Comments on Student Writing

### Ideas About Writing

by Jun Yol — *check your spelling!*

Why do/did you hate writing?

I think that I started writing when I was able to read. Actually, I really hate writing since when I was start <sup>sp</sup>wrrittig but I knew how to explain my feeling on the paper. It made me something like very fresh and magic. I

*great words!*

This is an excellent observation

think writing is a little bit different compared to talking. Talking can be not present after who said something. But writing, he can keep it and read it

Yes! This is why some people prefer letters to phone calls.

again. So, that mean is very <sup>sp</sup>memorable. When I was start <sup>sp</sup>wrrittig I didn't worry about anything. Just I <sup>sp</sup>cnccerend about topic and didn't worry about

The fact that we can put ourselves on paper is AMAZING.

grammar, phrase. Now, I think it was very amazing that I could explain my thinking on the paper.

This is a great attitude. Keep writing - You'll only get better + better!

In this way writing can be a gift to ourselves

it seems like you have a positive feeling now! You need to keep the feeling, value and cherish your writing. If you do not Cherish the beauty nor experience the pleasure then writing is just a chore.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is short, but strong. You chose powerful adjectives - "Shock" "electric" "wild"

### The Guitar by Erol

The guitar is like an electric shock. It sounds like driving a porsche at 100 miles an hour. It makes me feel wild and when I listen to the guitar I don't think about anything else. I really enjoy myself with the guitar.

Erol - I really enjoyed this description. It seems like a true description - expression of you. Always write from there - What you believe and think. Then your writing will always be ORIGINAL.

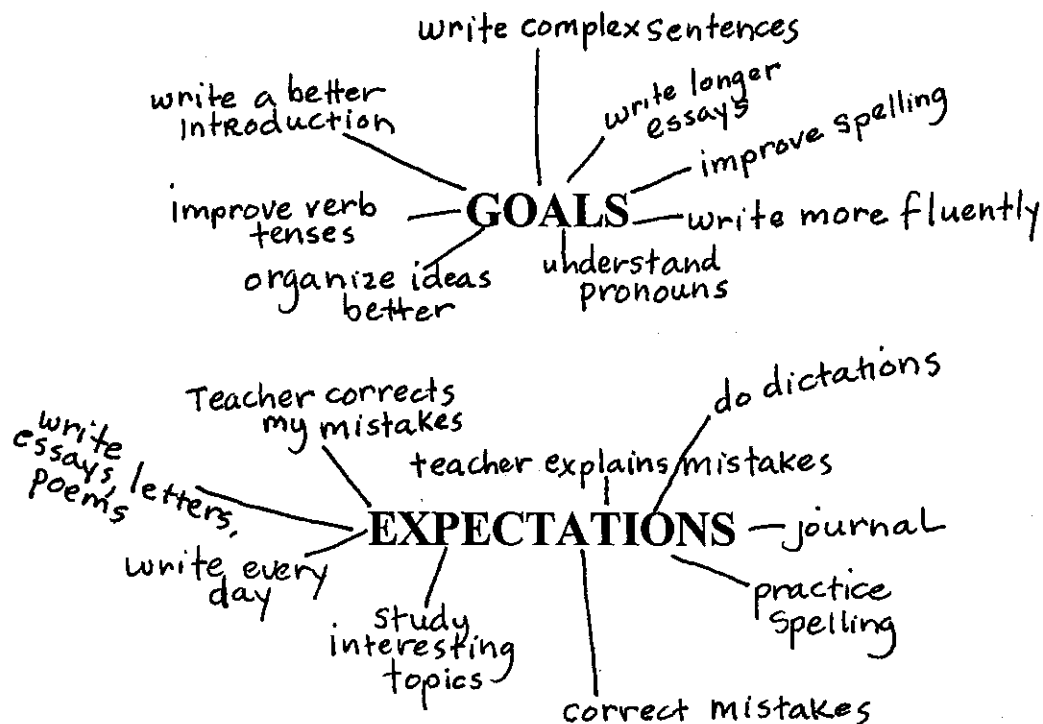
Erol

Erol is like an electric shock. Erol sounds like driving a porsche at 100 miles an hour. He makes me feel wild and when I listen to Erol I don't think about anything else. I really enjoy myself with Erol.

Do you agree? Is this a reflection of your personality?

I provide an approach to writing, a framework within which we work, but my students supply the content. In fact *they* are the content of the class. I tell them this at the onset, and then I support it by all the choices I make for class content and in the way I structure the class. Therefore, I find it important to pass out a questionnaire asking students for their individual goals for the semester, their needs, their expectations, their suggestions, their interests, their likes and dislikes to guide my choice of materials (see appendix one). Before I pass out the questionnaire, we talk about goals and expectations as a class. Then I send the questionnaire home with students asking them to write about their personal writing goals and expectations. During the next day's class, students talk about their goals, expectations, likes and dislikes. Finally, I have students diagram their responses on poster paper and we hang them on the walls to remind us throughout the semester.

Below is an example of what the students come up with:



When I present this exercise to the class, students often question the purpose. I give them the analogy of sending someone to the grocery store for "fruit." Without stating exactly which fruit, the shopper may come home with apples. The sender exclaims, "But I didn't want apples! I wanted grapes!" By having students formulate their needs and desires into words, they can be sure that they get what they want out of the class—they won't get apples when they wanted grapes! This activity is so simple, yet so profound in its effect on the students and in my gaining trust as their instructor.

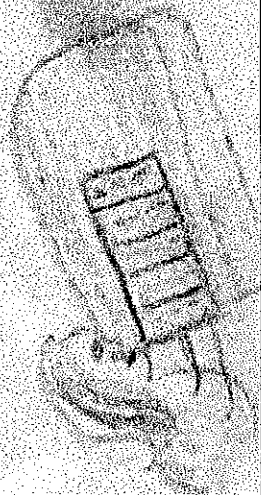
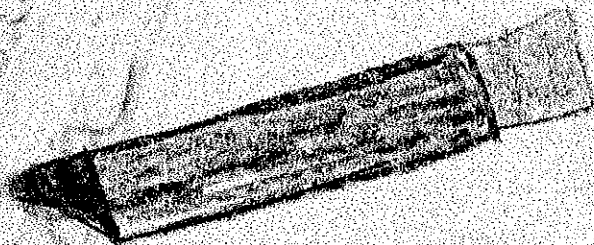
### **Activity to Address Students' Anxieties about Writing**

In order to be effective in this writing course, it is essential that students trust that I am directing a course for them as individuals, and that I am providing a safe environment for practicing language. A way to allow security and comfort to flourish is to diminish their fears about writing. Fears are rooted in students' past, so I use an activity that delves into their earliest memories as writers. I have students draw a pictorial history of themselves as writers starting with their earliest childhood memories of writing. We then use this picture to share aloud their different experiences as writers. Later, when they are asked to write their experiences in their journal, their ideas are flowing, vocabulary words are readily available and their writing is less of a task.<sup>5</sup> I initiate the activity by having students illustrate three or four of their writing experiences including their earliest and most significant memory (see next page for example).

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<sup>5</sup>Idea developed by the faculty members at the School for International Training (S.I.T) in Brattleboro, Vermont which I experienced during the Summer of 1995.

Dear Dad  
Big Chief



Dear Susan  
I love  
you. You  
are my best  
friend.  
Love,  
Penny

Good

Penny

Then I put students in small groups to look at each other's drawings and discuss their various experiences. Discussion is a critical step in the writing process. When students are talking to each other, they are comfortable, so their stories open up, their ideas grow, their vocabulary flows, and they discover that they actually have something to write about. (This step in the writing process more completely covered in Chapter 5).

When students move into small groups or to partners to talk, I always instruct students to talk for one minute without interruption before rotating to the person on their left.

These simple directions are always necessary for reminding students to be courteous, for allowing each person his/her chance to share without interruption, for insisting that shy students talk as well as the boisterous ones, and for promoting the community atmosphere.

After I give students about ten minutes to share their pictorial histories and to talk, I have students write in their journals for five minutes about their very first memory of writing while their ideas are fresh in their minds, on their tongues and in their ears. I prompt their writing with questions like:

- \*How old were you?
- \*Where were you?
- \*Who was with you?
- \*What could you see/smell/hear?
- \*Was it a good experience? Why?
- \*Was it a bad experience? Why?

After my students have journaled, they read their journal entry aloud to a partner. Minji wrote in her journal:

My earliest memory of writing made me so embarrassed. In my recollection it was hard and difficult work, so writing has always bothered me a lot. When I was a student in elementary school, my teacher whom I was afraid of gave us the hardest subject of writing. I could not imagine and draw a picture in my head. However I had to be hurry to finish the writing in the class. At that time I was scared. I could not think of anything at that time. I

thought that I had to write special things. That idea made me a lot of stress. So after that happened, I have been always nervous about writing. I could not explain easily my own opinions by writing; therefore, I have become a bad writer.

Then, we repeat the process for two or three other writing memories. Finally, I share my history as a writer with my students. Sharing my own writing is yet another way of building student trust in me as well as offering an example of an appropriate reading for writing activity which would be hard to find in a mere textbook.

The following is my history as a writer:

### **My History as a Writer**

By Kimberly Sue Connelly

The world of writing unfolded for me slowly, quietly as a kind of becoming. I don't remember the day or the hour that I knew I was a writer – I just simply am. I love writing and I suppose that I have always been a lover of words... It began with my making up fantastical stories when grown-ups would ask silly questions like, "How was church?" So, I would make up stories that I thought were more interesting than simply answering, "Church was fine." I remember my first writing as I carefully and methodically made my letters over and over. I didn't exactly enjoy that process and I've never been impressed with my penmanship. But, I was soon into writing letters to my best friend Susan Sweeney. I learned early about the thrill and anticipation of receiving letters. I have kept some of these letters, and I occasionally look at these letters and remember the excitement and pleasure with which I wrote and received them. My imagination abounded in my writing in grade school as I tried to add spice to otherwise boring book reports and social study reports. I continued my writing in college and later as reporter for a newspaper, and I treasure the first moment I saw my name, my article and a photograph I took in the Kansas City Star. Writing has been a major part of my life as I have used it to tell stories, to contact friends, to get a good grade, to argue, to release frustration, anger and anxiety. But, the most satisfying writing is when I write creatively as an expression of me.

The purposes and benefits of writing are numerous, and I always explore them by sharing famous writers' reasons for and feelings about writing, as well as more of my own writing on the subject (see appendix two) with my students. Isabelle Allende's heroine in the novel Eva Luna writes about her own experience as a writer,

I had written almost every night, but I felt that today was different, something that

could change my life...I took a clean white piece of paper—like a sheet freshly ironed for making love...Then I felt something odd, like a pleasant tickling in my bones, a breeze blowing through the network of my veins beneath my skin. I believed that that page had been waiting for me for more than twenty years, that I had live only for that instant, and I hoped that from that moment my only task would be to capture that stories floating in the thin air, to make them mine (251).

This helps the students to appreciate the reasons why people write and to explore their own motivation for writing. If students see the value and necessity of writing in their lives, they will have a stronger desire to dedicate themselves to a writing workshop. Using what we've read and discussed my students write a short paragraph about the reasons for writing (see appendix three). Mr. Lee, a Korean student, expresses his own feelings about writing:

I like to write and receive letters because I know the power of letters which supply happiness, friendship, the recovery of a relationship etc. But, it is difficult to write a letter in English because I haven't carefully learned how to write English. I think that writing is treated [as] unimportant in my country...I recognized that writing is very important for someone who liked to learn English...Recently, I occasionally think about becoming a good writer, and I try to write."

Sister Lidia Orozco, from Mexico, writes,

I am not really used to writing a lot, but now I write more than before because I am convinced that this will surely help me to know more of myself. I write specially in the days of retreat when I have enough time to do it. When I write, I can see what was in my soul and I didn't know it.

After reading about and discussing people's reasons for writing, students complete a "history of themselves as writers" using their journal entries that they have already accumulated. Firoozeh, an intermediate Iranian student, wrote this about her history:

### **History of Myself as a Writer**

By Firoozeh

What do I have to say? And what should I write? I am gathering all of my thoughts about my history as a writer. It is so hard, I don't remember when I wrote for the first time, but writing has always been difficult for me. When I want to write about a subject, my mind stops and I can't concentrate at that moment. I always regret my ability when I see other people describe subjects so clearly and creatively because these people are

able to bring their beliefs on the paper. Writing has often taken a lot of my time. While I was in my country in school, I had to write my thoughts in Persian. Right now, I have a bigger problem because my language has changed to English and I have to write in English. Can you understand me?

Firoozeh didn't start out with a lot of confidence, but she reported that she "loved writing" in our writing workshop. Irene, an advanced student from Gambia, had had some very positive experiences before coming to our class. She wrote in her essay:

During my childhood, I treasured writing like a silver spoon. I loved writing so much that I could not stay without it...I clearly remember when I was five to six years old. I enjoyed writing on the floor because it had a lot of space and I would write my name all over the floor...When I went to elementary school, we learned how to write letters to our parents, friends...I felt I should continue writing in school because I won awards.

Dealing with students' hang-ups about writing, putting them in the role as the creator and building community doesn't end the first week or two. Rather these are on-going goals and the very foundation of the course. But we begin immediately with these initial writing activities. Students dive right in to the writing process by brainstorming and generating ideas, talking, reading, journaling and completing a piece of writing.

At this point, I do only basic editing to give students focus in their rewrites without overloading them or blasting them to pieces with red ink. After these initial writing activities, which focus on student fears, we move on to examine the rival forces in our writing conscious: The Creator and the Editor. Most people do not realize that there are these two opposing voices inside of their heads telling them what to do and what not to do. Furthermore, most students are not aware that the voices can actually stifle their writing; consequently, I spend time explaining these voices and helping them identify the voices. Once they can do that, my students are able to tune out the voices in order to write freer.



## CHAPTER THREE

### CREATOR VS. EDITOR

#### **Kimberly's Journal Entry – "Creator vs. Editor"**

*Then there are the endless criticisms and the editing...a painful blow to the ego. There isn't a built-in step of encouragement for the Self, for the creativity. We jump right in with a knife and gut it. It's not that guidance and editing are not important; they certainly are. However, it's like insisting that a baby draw like Rembrandt. There is more to writing than the editing and that is Content. Content is why we read and editing helps us understand and follow. Editing gives us the signals and directions that lead us down winding unexplored roads to the depths of another's psyche, but without any content, there isn't a journey -- only directions. This happens to students who have locked up their Selves in the pursuit of good grades.*

*My class puts the emphasis on creativity—on the Creator. We are all creators- capable of creating and giving this as a gift to the world. My job as a writing instructor is to put the emphasis back on the Self, back on the content, the ideas. I give students permission to write. We need to work with grammar and syntax, but there has to be content or meat on the bones first, otherwise language becomes punctuation and a lot of empty words. Students have to have permission to express their deepest thoughts and emotions—permission to write without fear or anxiety of making mistakes. So, I am careful to give students room and allow poetic license with the language during the first stages of the writing process...*

Theoretically, there are two voices inside our heads at all times, and especially when we sit down to write or create—the angel and the devil, the mother and the slave driver, the lover and the hater. One voice is positive, creative, optimistic and loving; however, the other voice is boring, stuffy, deadly and very, very negative. Whereas the first is often a whisper, the second is usually a screaming alarm that jolts us constantly into reality. This keeps the good stuff submerged at the subconscious dream-level. The Creator, as Natalie Goldberg has named it, never gets its share of air time, never gets to write her side of the story because the Hater is so much louder and pushier. Therefore, I, as the

instructor, must point out these two opposing voices to the students in order that they can become aware of the warring forces inside of their heads. Then they can monitor these two voices who are like two children warring over a toy and say, "Now dears, you both get a chance to play, but, the Creator gets to go first. When she is done, you, Editor, get your turn. Until then, since you are so very, very pushy, I'M GOING TO LOCK YOU IN A SEPARATE ROOM." Once students realize that this is possible, they are completely relieved. I have developed two activities that allow the Creator to come out first, while the Editor waits awhile. (These will be explained in detail later in this chapter).

Writing practice or journaling is part of the activities I've developed because it is my belief that this is a very important component in allowing the Creator to emerge. This type of writing is unstructured and although it is often shared with their classmates, it is not collected and corrected by me. In my experience, students must journal to unleash the creative voice inside of themselves. My students keep all of their practice writing and use some of it for final writing assignments. Journals are necessary for a writing workshop, as are a binder for handouts, a portfolio, paper, and an English-only dictionary. I constantly remind my students that their journal is a **journal**. Their journal should not be used for taking notes or dictations. Likewise, it is not a place for final drafts, so I do not read or correct students' journals. Their journals, by definition, are for writing practice, which I do not treat like homework. It has been my experience that students do not like to have a lot of journaling homework that is collected at the end of the week or quarter. In fact, Youngmin, a Korean student, wrote about the problems he encountered with journaling when it was considered homework:

Most Korean students in elementary school were expected to write diaries to improve their writing skills, but they failed and I was no exception. I had to write a diary every day and my teacher examined my writings. There was always a comment with mine. But I really hated to be examined and write it. Furthermore, it was homework during vacation. I used to postpone writing in my diary until the end of vacation. So I had to finish it in just one day. It was a big mountain that didn't allow me to climb. Now, I confess that what I wrote was fake... From that time on, I became afraid of writing and expressing my thought or ideas in sentence.

In fact, we do almost all of our journaling in class because it's better for the students for several reasons. First of all, class discussions and sharing revolve around the journaling. We discuss ideas; students journal; then they share their journal writing. We do at least one journaling session a class, but may do three or four entries in an hour and a half class. This ensures that students are getting writing practice, in addition to developing content for future essays every day. Students are immediately held accountable for their writing practice because they follow up by reading their entries aloud to a partner. Furthermore, they are able to journal while their ideas and stories are fresh in their mind. This makes journaling so much easier because students are simply putting on paper what they have just expressed verbally to their classmates.

In addition, my students are forced to follow Natalie Goldberg's, "The Rules of Writing Practice" from *Wild Mind: Living the Writer's Life* (Goldberg 1990, 1) when journaling. I am right there making sure that their hands are moving, that dictionaries are not being consulted, and that they are not spending half of their time for writing practice erasing what they have written. Additionally, with the use of classical music, I can create the optimal environment for their journaling. Students can relax and just write.

Students reap the benefits of journaling throughout the semester, which is reflected in these

students' words. Dan, an advanced Chinese student, explains, "Journaling can boost my writing. Everyone have to do it if you want to boost your writing." Hakan, an advanced student from Turkey, enthusiastically wrote, "I'm sure journaling is one of the most useful things that we are doing in class. Before I came here I didn't know that journaling is a thing that [is] this much fun. I really enjoyed the time while I was journaling." Elham, an advanced student from Iran agrees, "Free writing is one of the important rules for writing a composition because I will write a lot of good point in my free writing which I can use in my composition and all of them are helpful. If you look at my journal you can find out that I just keep my hand moving and I did not mention the grammar, spelling and so on. Just like me when I am talking in Farsi." Journaling and practicing "The Rules" is a successful way, as Hang, an intermediate Vietnamese student puts it, "to get out something stuck in my mind."

In tune with the idea of relaxing and letting the ideas flow, I always play music while students are writing. Using the Suggestopedic method, developed by Georgi Lazonov, I play baroque music to help the writers to focus as well as relax. According to Lazonov's theory, the brain works on two levels; music helps occupy the part of the brain that tends to wander and daydream instead of focusing on writing. Students are often surprised by their positive response to writing with music, since this is the first experience for most of my class. Kaori, an intermediate Japanese student, explained, "[before] writing was hard work for me. I always thought too much and took a long time in silence. This situation make me be in a hurry. I don't know why, but the music during class make me comfortable. This is the first time I listen to music in class in my whole life as a student." Lee, an advanced beginner Korean student wrote, "When I write, I am strained. But your music is helped me. It [made] me comfortable.

Your idea is very good.” Hyunju Yu, an advanced beginner Korean, added, “I have a good time. I think that [was] a good idea. That give me power [to] learn English.” Yet, some students felt too relaxed. Minji, an advanced Korean student, commented, “Sometimes when I come to the class in the morning my mood is so empty and dry, so music makes my feeling to soft and smooth. But, sometimes it has been unuseful. It makes me to fall in sleep or to think another think. Also makes me depressed.” In my experience, using music is another component in achieving consistency in the course between what I say I believe and what I do. When I play music, I know that I am helping students relax and supporting them as Creators.

### **Activities to Focus on the Creator and Silence the Editor**

Allowing the Creator is not accomplished by naively saying, “OK. Go be creative!” First I have to organize the left brain into some kind of order. I do this with a left-brain activity based on Natalie Goldberg’s, “The Rules of Writing Practice.” Rules are great for organizing the left brain because they are inherently very left-brainy, and they provide a useful security blanket for the creatively impaired writers that we all are.

When I pass out a copy of Goldberg’s “Rules,” I instruct the students to read the handout for homework without stopping. I don’t want them to struggle with vocabulary, spend hours looking words up or make themselves miserable and the process painful. I say, “Read through it. I don’t care if you understand it or not. Just get through it and we will work with it tomorrow.” The next day, we do a collaborative summary of Goldberg’s “The Rules.” I break the students into small groups of 3 or 4 students. They have 10-15 minutes to read, discuss, and paraphrase one of the rules. While they are working, I play classical music in the background and walk around the room to be available for questions

or problems. After the time is up, we go around the room and share their information. Then we make a class poster of "THE RULES OF WRITING PRACTICE," with each group writing on the poster its' interpretation of the Goldberg rule they were assigned to explain. Then the poster is hung in the classroom, allowing all the students to refer to it during the semester. The student made poster reads like this:

#### **THE RULES OF WRITING PRACTICE**

1. Keep your hand moving – don't stop no matter what!
2. Lose control – say whatever you want – don't be afraid.
3. Choose specific words – use "pencil sharpener" not "thing."
4. Don't think – just write!
5. Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar.  
Don't correct yourself. Don't erase while writing.
6. You are free to write boring, terrible writing.
7. Write about what scares you, what upsets you, what makes you happy or sad.

Finally, I instruct my students to copy the above on the front cover of their journal notebook as yet another reminder of our writing practice rules. Let me emphasize that these rules are crucial in getting students to journal and practice writing because they give students security. Security helps these student writers relinquish their fears. "The Rules" will be referred to hundreds of times during a semester as these seven rules make up the bible of our writing workshop. "The Rules" are reinforced in the following Listing Exercise, which later leads into a free-flowing journal entry. In this activity, students actually practice the rules while they write in their journals. When practicing the rules, they can not censor their own writing, rather, they can only be creators, within the safety of the "Rules". I begin by writing a word on the board. For example: WINTER. Then, students write a list of words that are somehow associated to WINTER -- or not. Students simply write whatever words pop into their minds; there will probably be no rhyme or reason, and they will not be asked to explain the connection.

Here is an example of Listing:

**WINTER**

snow  
snowflakes  
snowmen  
carrot nose  
Frosty the snowman  
songs  
Christmas  
Christmas caroling  
caroling  
cold  
hot chocolate  
sledding  
sledding  
cold  
hurt  
hurt  
clear skies  
stars  
stars

I assure students that repetition is okay and probably even necessary for keeping their hands moving. We all get stuck – whether native language writers or not. In order to work through being stuck, we must write without editing. No stopping is allowed – hands **must** remain moving.

I walk around the room making sure that the students are not erasing, (remember spelling and grammar are not important yet!), and that their pen or pencil does not stop. If this happens, I gently remind the students of the writing rules and insist that they return to them. This is neither an opportunity for me to correct students' grammatical or spelling mistake nor to answer spelling or grammatical questions. If I'm asked, I simply point to the rules.

I am very consistent in the classroom integrating what "The Rules" say and what I do because I want to build the students' trust in their writing process. Remember, a lot of students have had their feelings hurt when they were young and told "You can't write or you aren't interesting." But, I am telling them, "Go ahead and make mistakes. You don't have to be perfect here. In fact, I don't want you to be because your idiosyncrasies are quite interesting." So, if writing teachers correct their students' journals or writing practice, students could remain distrustful of the teacher, become concerned about not making a mistake in order to please. This will freeze up their writing and their ability to learn.

Next, we use the words from the Listing Exercise above for a discussion and journaling activity in which students read their list to a partner, circle three words from the list and then talk about one of the three words that they have circled. After a minute of talking for each person, the students journal on this subject for five to ten minutes. Next, the students share their writing with another partner. Finally, I might offer an example of my own writing practice such as the one here for them to read for homework:

### **Journaling - Stars**

By Kimberly Sue Connelly

I love stars. I'm not sure why I'm so fascinated with stars except they twinkle, shine and they promise – they show us the absurdity of being sure of what's "real". We see a light, a star and we say, "It exists" because we can see it. But does it really?!? We know that the light from a star is only the remnant, the memory, of a star that once existed, but is no longer there. And is that the same with humans too? A soul seems stronger than a star's light, so couldn't we also catch/see/perceive the light of someone who lived hundreds of years ago? Someone who shone so brightly and with such intensity and passion that their light, energy and strength are here today? And would we realize that the light we see is a reflection of a spirit from before? I see light reflected...I want to be a star myself. I look at the stars and my soul, spirit is stirred, impassioned to be powerful, brilliant and to continue to be seen for years after I exist. But, somehow, it should just happen, as with a star. A star doesn't try to be seen for years after it has burnt out, it simply DOES because it was a star...And with me, if I am simply me, the light of my soul should be seen for years after I cease to exist simply because I existed...



The previous listing exercise is so basic, but it can lead to a brilliant word, idea or sentence. I constantly remind my students that the entire entry does not have to be great, in fact the entire entry can be trash, as Goldberg says, but, by consistently practicing their writing in this way, my students develop their fluency in English. Eventually, this practice will reveal a word, a phrase, a sentence, an essay that will be pure creative genius.

### **Activity to Focus on the Creator**

Another activity that I have developed for highlighting the Creator introduces students to similes and metaphors in English. Brainstorming similes or metaphors that reflect students' true judgments about writing is a way to uncover writing anxieties. To begin, we define "simile" and put examples on the board. Then students complete the sentence "Writing is like \_\_\_\_\_". If all their examples tend to be positive, (most likely to please me as the teacher), then I will specifically ask for negative examples from students who I know to have negative feelings about writing. We usually get some funny similes during this exercise, and I find that students really enjoy being able to say what they think and feel about writing. I usually have students take five minutes to write at least three original similes that reflect their view of writing. Below are some students' examples:

#### **Negative Similes:**

- "Writing is like a shot."
- "Writing is like going to the dentist."
- "Writing is like a car wreck."
- "Writing is like a bad dream."

#### **Positive Similes:**

- "Writing is like a dream."
- "Writing is like Spring."
- "Writing is like a dance."

I too have my own simile for writing that I share:

### **Writing is Like a River**

By Kimberly Sue Connelly

Writing is like a river which is always flowing, moving and taking us to unknown places. Writing pours from us and moves us. The thoughts are rapid and bumpy – falling, dipping, swirling, dancing, and foaming. Some areas are dangerous, scary or threatening; yet other areas ventured upon in our writing are calm, serene and peaceful. The thoughts come slow; the thoughts come fast, but as long as the pen keeps moving, writing will be an adventure down the river of our thoughts to the deepest recesses of our subconsciousness.

My sample provides students with an example of how to develop a simile into a comparison paragraph. I then ask them to choose one simile from their journal list to develop into their own paragraph about writing.

An intermediate Iranian student named Sohila, shared her positive simile for writing:

### **Writing is Like a Trip**

By Sohila

Writing is like a trip which is always going, moving and taking us to interesting places. We can go everywhere and feel the other people. We can fly in the sky over the oceans. We can take a rest in the wet grass and smell fresh flowers. We can touch the beautiful butterflies. In our trip of writing, we can see happiness, peace, famine, suffering, and kindness. Finally writing is a trip that you know where it starts, but you don't know where it will finish.

Not all students write positively about writing. Kaori, an advanced Japanese student, expresses some of her frustration, "Writing in English is like driving on the mountain which is feels insecure for me. It makes me feel pressure. I have to go through many difficulties." And Seo, an advanced beginner Korean student expresses a lack of control in writing, "Writing is like a dream. . . I can't remember what I wrote after writing. Sometimes it makes me scared like a dream."

Terry, an intermediate Vietnamese student, reflects students' fears in the following:

### **Writing is Like a Snake**

By Terry

Writing is like a snake. I'll keep a distance from it because I'm really scared of it. I'm afraid that it will bite and hurt me. Sometimes I feel writing is like a snake which will kill me with one poisonous bite...Writing sounds silent. You could not say anything -- you just think and move your hand...

A fun way to introduce students to using metaphors in their writing is through songs. After listening to a song and working with the similes and metaphors in it, my students write a paragraph that describes or compares the topic of their choice. Minji, a student from Korea wrote metaphorically about Spring:

### **Spring**

By Minji

Spring is a girl. She gives people cheer, hope and challenge. She cares about people so much and helps them. So, she keeps in touch with them. She wants to heal people who have wounds in their hearts; therefore she visits them and goes into their mind directly. When they are disappointed, she comes to them and whispers that they are special and lovable. She says, "Love yourself and also love others." She shows them how much life is worth and what is available. But, occasionally, she is so freakish and cantankerous. She changes her mood many times in a day because she also wants everybody to care of her as much as she does [him/her]. When there is not enough good, she gets mad, gloomy and lonely. As a result, she turns over from people and becomes so cold as if it is for forever. However, she always forgives people and forgets and acts like that happened just like an accident. She cannot keep these kind of bad feelings so long because she loves people as much as possible. It is well-known that she could not exist without people and love. Who would not love Spring? Nobody.

Due to the opposing voices of the Creator and the Editor, writing can be difficult for students in general, and for many, writing in English is an almost formidable task. This second unit in my workshop is designed to silence the Editor and give the Creator voice airtime. By the end of the semester, most of my students have achieved an increased comfort level with

writing in English as attested to in their feedback. Gemma, an intermediate student from Brazil who struggled with syntax problems throughout our two semesters together wrote, "Writing in English is difficult, but I feel comfortable." Her African classmate, Ousman wrote, "It was not a big problem for me, but now I am more confident to write an essay." Joy, an advanced Korean student commented, "I am really interested about writing now. My feeling is free in spite of [my having] a lot of mistakes." And her Korean classmate Youngmin explains, "When I started to write this semester, I was embarrassed because I had never taken writing class before. It's still not easy, but it takes less effort than before." ESL students deal with lots of fears and anxieties while they are living in a foreign culture trying to maneuver daily in a foreign language. Besides writing, students are faced with having to do a lot of challenging academic tasks, such as reading. Yet, reading is a necessary component in acquiring English proficiency and developing skills in writing. In the following chapter, I will focus on how I use reading to help students become better writers.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### READING'S CONNECTION TO WRITING

#### **Kimberly's Journal Entry—Reading Authors' Works**

*Reading other writer's work is exhilarating. I can read for hours and hours and not want a book to ever end. When I read authors like Isabelle Allende, Julia Alvarez, Anne Lamott and Natalie Goldberg, I want to hold on to their words; I want to hold on to the beauty and the eloquence and share it with others. I want my students to experience the beauty of English and of this writing. I want them to smell the sweetness, feel the soft fur, take a huge bite and feel the sticky nectar of great authors' writing drip down their chins.*

Reading is one of the most beneficial activities an ESL writer or any writer can do. For an ESL student, reading patterns the brain. Students who read more absorb more language, more of the English patterns, more of the English grammar and more of the vocabulary. And absorbing means that it is happening at a subconscious level—the students don't have to try to learn; it just happens naturally as they read. The reading of English ultimately trains the brain to think in English. Likewise, if a person reads in French or any other language, he/she will think in the language in which he or she is reading. Students who understand this benefit will embrace reading. Finally, if a person wants to improve at anything, he/she will look to those who are already better at it. In Wild Mind: Living the Writer's Life, Natalie Goldberg writes, "If you write without ever reading other authors, you are writing in a vacuum...it seems obvious that the other half of writing is reading"(Goldberg 1990, 42).

I try to make reading an enjoyable experience for students by choosing topics that I know to be interesting to each group of students based upon the questionnaire students have filled out and discussions we've already had in class. I choose the reading materials carefully in order to expose my students to good writing. Again the purpose of reading is exposure to the

language, development of vocabulary, context and background, and gathering of information, facts, opinions or ideas. Therefore, students should read of variety of pieces on a given subject—an article from a magazine, a poem, an essay and an excerpt from a book, and, since we use ourselves as the content in the class, our own writing. As Anne Lamott writes about reading in her book Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life, “Books help us understand who we are and how we behave. They show us what community and friendship mean: they show us how to live and die. They are full of all the things that you don’t get in real life--wonderful, lyrical language, for instance, right off the bat. And quality of attention: we may notice amazing details during the course of the day but we rarely let ourselves stop and really pay attention. An author makes you notice, makes you pay attention, and this is a great gift” (Lamott 1994, 15).

In my workshop, the writing process demands that students read a piece, comment on it in their journals, share their journal entries with partners, discuss it with a partner or in a small group, answer questions about themselves related to the reading and the theme, journal again, and then read someone else’s journal entry. As a result of this process, students aren’t simply reading published works. They are reading their own classmates’ work, and the benefit for them as creators is that they get ideas from each other. Another benefit of reading each other’s work is that it must be such a relief to read other people’s unedited (and perhaps bad!) writing. It helps to relieve that perfectionist pressure!

On the other hand, good student writing can be a boost for my students’ confidence. Therefore, in addition to reading their classmates’ journal entries, I also hand out exceptional student writing from that class or previous semesters. Students always enjoy this because they

see this beautiful, powerful writing and know that it is possible for them as well. It gives them both hope and a goal for which to strive.

One of the most beneficial experiences I've had as a student was in Paul Levasser's Reading and Writing class at S.I.T. He offered his own writing practice to us, his students, and in doing this, shared a part of himself with us. This was my first exposure to an instructor sharing his writing with his students, and it made a significant impression on me. Although I had used my own writing for my classes when I first started teaching in Pohnpei, I wrote and used my writing for a different reason than Paul. I wrote because I wanted to have culturally appropriate text that focused on specific areas of instruction, so I was not offering myself in the way that Paul did. But after being in his class, I decided to incorporate this in my writing courses too. I began writing less structured pieces for my students, and my motivation behind sharing my writing completely changed—I shared in order to connect with my students, not to just instruct them.

Teachers may fear sharing their writing unless it has been published. A teacher, like her students, is exposed through her writing. She puts herself right out there to have her writing criticized, her ideas criticized, herself criticized. She may even fear that her instruction will be undermined in some way. I offer my writing not because it's great and not because I expect or want my students to copy me. I offer my writing because it can help their organizational skills. But more importantly, I offer it because of the emotional boost it gives my students and the trust that is built. By offering my writing, I am going through what I'm asking the students to go through. I make myself vulnerable, and I live by my philosophy that as writers we don't have to be perfect—even if we are instructors. I offer journal entries I've written during

writing practice in class, so they are current and imperfect. My students enthusiastically find and correct my mistakes and we laugh about them.

Generally, my students have been positive about reading my writing. Robert, an advanced student from Colombia commented, "It shows me a confident environment, and it helped me to write sincerely." Go from Japan explained, "Your writing has been a valuable reference. I could get how American write a writing, and I was surprised that you write a composition like a poem." And many like Tang, an intermediate student from Vietnam, simply thought, "We read your writing to gave us some idea [of] how to write our writing."

Not only do I read my journaling aloud to the class, but students also read their entries aloud to each other on a daily basis. Because there can be resistance to this step in the writing process, I must repeatedly enumerate the benefits of sharing one's journal with others. The benefits of reading aloud are that students are able to let go of their writing, become less attached, and less concerned about being perfect because it is released as they read. While reading to each other, my students generate ideas, build community, teach each other, and get very supportive, individualized attention. When a student reads his/her journal entry aloud to another student, I instruct him/her to simply listen, without interrupting and without comment. Likewise, if a student is instructed to read another student's journal entry silently, again, he does so without comment or editing. This first step is an exercise in sharing, not in editing. It is not a time for badgering the writer with a bunch of questions. Students do eventually help each other edit during the writing process. However, I find it crucial to take the process one step at a time in order for bad habits to be broken and a good rapport established between students. When this happens they can instruct each other when the time comes to do so.



"It is important to read aloud what you write," writes Natalie Goldberg in her essay "Reading Aloud." "It is part of the writing process, like bending down to touch your toes and then standing up again. Write, read, write, read. You become less attached to whether it is good or bad" (Goldberg 1990, 81). I find students get so used to the routine of discussing, journaling, and reading aloud, that the predictability alone is a comfort. Usually they realize from reading aloud that they all make mistakes, and that this step in the process of writing is not about mistakes, but about creating.

Although students may have mixed initial reactions to reading each other's journal entries, overall they come to see the benefits. Antonio, a Venezuelan student, commented, "In this way I enriched my ideas about topics with universal and personal ideas." Kaori, a Japanese student, wrote, "We can know other writing ways or expressions by reading others papers." However, some students do not appreciate this exercise. Eugene, a Taiwanese student, explained, "It's hard for me because some classmates' hand writing was difficult to read. I have to spend a lot [of] time to read." Liderman, a Venezuelan student agreed, "I don't like reading student writing because it makes me more confused sometimes." Even with ambivalent or negative attitudes about reading other students' journal entries, my students will do the task, and over time, I have seen their writing improve from this step in the writing process. Furthermore, one of the goals of the class is to use ourselves as the class content, so it is a necessary step in my approach to teaching writing.

Since the students need to read in order to activate schema, which means to stimulate their own knowledge and related experience, for writing, they need to be instructed on **how** to read for a writing workshop. The first reason student writers read is for pleasure, so to maintain

the process as a pleasurable one, they need to read quickly, basically skimming the reading to get the main ideas and opinions. The students have to be reminded over and over, not to get bogged down in the individual vocabulary words. If the students piece-meal their reading, the pieces will not bring them enjoyment or information, but only major headaches which could increase their distaste for writing classes. When introducing reading as a tool for writing, I share the introduction from, The Way a Writer Reads, by Elizabeth Cowan Neeld. She writes,

While you are learning to be a writer, you can also learn to read like a writer. The first way a writer reads? Just to *enjoy*. When writers sit down to read, they read to enjoy and appreciate the way another person has interacted with life and then written about it. Writers read to enjoy and appreciate information others have gathered. Writers read to go places they haven't been to, to learn things they don't know. Writers read with the recognition that every person who puts words on paper is risking something, and writers appreciate this courage (Neeld 1995, 4).

There are a lot of reading /writing activities one can do in class, but I never approach reading for writing as a vocabulary class. Students will certainly build their vocabulary through reading, but vocabulary exercises are not needed nor, I believe, wanted in this forum.

As I stated earlier, the purpose of reading in a writing course is multi-level. For me, it's important to remind my students why they read in our writing workshop as well as why we do everything we do in class. I talk to my class and ask for their feedback regularly. This way, the lines of communication are open between my students and me. Because I openly ask for feedback instead of simply guessing about students' nonverbal reactions, my students are comfortable asking questions regarding the purpose or intent of our exercises. I am prepared to answer the questions because I have thought out how each activity connects to their developing writing skills and their overall acquisition of English. My experience with students has shown me that students will be more cooperative and even more appreciative of the

activities if they understand where they are going and the reason for heading there. My students have been receptive to reading in our writing workshop by virtue of the fact that they have understood the connection to their writing in addition to being able to appreciate reading for the sheer enjoyment it brings them. Annette, an advanced Danish student, wrote, "Reading articles is a great source to get information. People who wrote the articles has a specific goal of their writing and I like to hear those well-argued thoughts." Minji, an advanced Korean, commented, "It was good to improve my vocabulary scale." Eun Jeung, an intermediate Korean, added, "It gave me information I didn't know about."

My experience shows that there is rarely resistance to reading articles, essays and books. In general, students enjoy reading or at least realize that it is vital to their language acquisition. However, I have seen great resistance to reading without translating. Students who are in the habit of translating while reading can have a painful, difficult transition in my class. Translating or using a dictionary is not allowed in my class. I explain to students that using a dictionary is like using a crutch to walk when a person has an injury. The person with the crutch cannot walk the same as a person who walks without the crutch, so eventually the injured person has to give up the crutch. A dictionary is a crutch, and the student who relies on it will never communicate like a person who does not translate. Translating will prevent a student from achieving fluency. I have to be very firm about this because most students come in to my class with this habit. When students insist on taking out their dictionaries or translators, I will tell them to put it away. If they continue to do it other days, I will calmly walk over and very matter-of-factly take their dictionary away. I explain that since they don't need a dictionary, I'll keep it till the end of class. Typically, the ones that hold on tightly to their dictionaries are my

older students. Their dictionaries are their security blankets, so they are afraid to be without one. In addition, I have learned from my students and from my own observations that students' attachment to their dictionaries is often due to their cultural or educational background. For example, my Korean and Chinese students feel scared without their dictionary, but will follow my directions not to use it because I am their teacher. Whereas, my students from the former USSR are the most reluctant to give up their dictionaries and will challenge my position on dictionary usage every day because they enjoy the argument. I have to convince them to give up their dictionaries by showing them language acquisition progress. I recognize my students' insecurities behind their needing the dictionary; consequently, we have always been able to negotiate an understanding. Since most of my students have developed the bad habit of translating, I use a few exercises to engross students in their reading instead of being engrossed in a dictionary.

### **Activity to Promote Reading for Enjoyment**

Because the way students read for writing is critical in using reading for writing, I use a simple activity to get students in the practice of reading quickly for the main idea. For this exercise, I give students five minutes to read an article. At the end of the five minutes, I have them put the article aside and write about the article in their journals for five to ten minutes. I don't give them specific questions about the article. Instead, I suggest broad questions like "What did you learn?" "What is the author's opinion?" "What was interesting for you?" In a slightly different version of this exercise, I shorten the time students have to read and focus on summarizing. For this exercise, I give students two minutes to read a short article or essay. At the end of the two minutes, I pass out index cards as the students are instructed to turn over

the article or put it away. In one minute's time, students summarize the article or essay. This forces students to read quickly, think quickly and summarize succinctly in their own words. Since they can't refer back to the article, they aren't able to just copy the author's own words. I can do one every class or as often as I want to remind students to read quickly and to show them that they can understand main ideas without using a dictionary.

### **Activity for Writers to Reflect on Reading: "My History as a Reader"**

Just as we looked at our first experiences with writing, we also look at our first experiences with reading. I follow the same format and have students draw a pictorial representation of their history as a reader. Later, we use this drawing to facilitate small group discussions. After sufficient discussion and sharing, students then write about their first memory of reading. After all the journaling and sharing is completed, I share my own writing about My History as a Reader.

### **The Secret Society of Reading**

By Kimberly Sue Connelly

As a young child, I knew that reading had something to do with being an adult, with being grown-up. To be able to read was like belonging to a secret society, and I felt excluded. I sensed that there was this "other world" I was being deprived access to, and I wanted desperately to have access to it and experience it myself.

From the beginning, reading fascinated me, and I remember reading as being something fun. My first experience with reading was my mother reading stories to me written by Dr. Seuss, a famous author of children's books. He wrote zany stories using colorful, rhyming words and crazy illustrations to accompany them. Because the words rhymed, I could remember them easily. I felt like an accomplished reader when at three years of age I could recite a whole book by myself. I wasn't truly reading – I was only remembering, but at that age, I thought that I was actually reading.

I also remember being at my grandmother's house and "reading" a Reader's Digest magazine. My idea of reading at this time was to imitate the adults who would read silently. So, I silently let my eyes roam over the pages full of nonsense and proclaimed myself a "reader".

When I finally went to school and could actually read, reading became less attractive to me. It wasn't mysterious or magical to read, "See Jane run. Run Jane. Run." I wasn't entering a New World – just a new dimension called boredom. I think my first

experiences reading scaled-down, simple English have influenced my teaching of reading to ESL students. I try not to take the pleasure out of reading by using texts with simple English when teaching my students.

Luckily, I discovered books and through this many other places, times and adventures. I became entranced with histories about cowboys, Indians and pioneers, and at age seven, vowed to marry an Indian. I moved on to sneaking mystery stories, horror stories and romance novels out of my mother's library of books. These were **forbidden**, so the thrill of reading them was intensified. I was inducting myself into the secrets of the adult world, and it was fascinating!

Today, I continue to read for pleasure and for my work. My idea of a vacation or a respite from the crazy world is time alone with an entrancing book. Although I belong to the "Club of Readers," I still think that reading is a kind of "Secret Society"—a club too many people have not joined! There are too many individuals who are illiterate, who have no access to books or schooling, or who have just not been introduced to the beauty and wonder of books and literature. Recruiting reading members is something I work for today, and I imagine a world in which everyone has entrance into the "Worlds of Reading."

Students use their journal entries to write their own histories as readers. Sohila, an intermediate Iranian student wrote,

As a reader, I know that reading is a window that opens to a strange world. That world has many beautiful, interesting and wonderful places. I have been a witness of birth, life and death in books that I have read.

When I was a child, some strong feeling pushed me to the reading world. I imitated my older sister. My eyes roamed over the pages of nonsense. I looked at the pictures and guessed about the meaning of words.

I finally went to school. After finishing the first grade, my parents gave me a book. That was the first window into reading. I practiced looking out this "little window" every day.

Another student Hyunju remembered,

I remember my first experience. This is so interesting and makes me smile. I learned the first time with my mother. I was very young, so my mother had to read me children's books and I only knew the titles. I just looked at the pictures of the book, but my mother was happy to read to me. She didn't care that I couldn't read to me. Later, my mother wrote simple words on paper with a picture. So I learned these words and was improving my reading. I think now that that time in my life was very enjoyable (see appendix four for complete essay).

In this unit I have concurred with writing experts' belief that writers must read in order to be better writers, and my students agree that reading has a positive influence on their writing. As Elam, an advanced student from Iran, offered, "I think this [reading articles and essays] is a good idea because I can find quotes in that point and I can use it as a support for my essay and also it will give me ideas [for] writing my composition." Students not only need to read to be good writers, but they must also be good listeners. Because listening is a skill, I spend a unit exploring listening, its' connection to writing, its' importance in learning as a whole and more specifically in learning English as a second language.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### LISTENING AND TALKING'S CONNECTION TO WRITING

#### **Kimberly's Journal Entry—Listening**

*Listening is basic to being human; most of us are born with the ability to hear and the mental interest and capacity to listen. We listen to everything, absorb everything and learn everything, including our native language... But, the older I get the more I realize that listening is a skill that has to be taught to students again. Listening is taught again because we all knew how to listen as babies and then we unlearned it as we got older. Why/how could we unlearn something we already knew how to do? Could it be that our first teachers' example of listening showed us a different way to listen, showed us bad listening habits and we learned to copy these bad habits? Perhaps this is why children who are listened to, truly listened to, do so well in learning. They do well because they maintain good listening habits and these listening habits aid them in learning at home, at school and in any environment.*

Listening to each other is essential for a positive classroom atmosphere. Listening is a skill. Most of us are born with the capability of hearing, but the mental concentration and activity it takes to listen must be discussed, developed and practiced daily lest we forget. Reading article about listening, discussing good listening habits, and role-playing are good ways to begin developing listening skills in the classroom. We engage in these during the first few weeks of the semester. These activities set the tone and establish a community process early on. ESL students in particular are interested in the connection between being a good listener in their first language, and being a good language learner!

Students resist sharing at first either out of shyness or out of superiority. Some students do not see the benefits of listening to or reading a classmate's mumbled, jumbled words. But, the number one benefit of having a good listener available is for the writer, not the listener. It's a gift my students learn to give each other because they learn to value it and appreciate it for themselves. It's somewhat selfish because they will give so they can receive. Goldberg agrees,



"If you don't read aloud, the writing tends to fester like an infected wound in your notebook...the simple act of reading it aloud allows you to let go of it" (Goldberg 1990, 81).

Still some students will resist listening to their classmates because they are sure that this person has nothing of importance to say. But, as Brenda Ueland writes in her book, If You Want to Write, "I have been writing a long time and have learned some things. . . This is what I learned: that everybody is talented, original and has something important to say...Everybody is talented because everybody who is human has something to express." My students and I always read Ueland's essay together to remind us of this fact – that we are all human and all deserving of being listened to, of having a chance to speak – even if the person has an extremely difficult, heavy accent. Part of being in the classroom together demands patience and tolerance of each other. It also reminds students that they are in a partnership in class.

Toshi, a Japanese student, journaled on listening. He wrote,

Listening is like playing catch. We can not do it by ourselves. We need to get a partner. The most important in our lives is communication...Life is like education which is [how] you improve yourself. People can study without textbooks. I am young and do not have enough experience in everything. Whoever is older than me, he or she must have more experience than me. I like to listen [to] them. They are like my teachers or textbooks.

Hang, an intermediate Vietnamese student, commented, "It is great to listen to others because no one [has] perfect writing." Robert, an advanced student from Colombia, explained about listening, "I felt proud of my classmates' development." Wenli, a Taiwanese student, wrote, "To be a good writer, [I] must first be a good listener and reader." Minji, a Korean student, added, "I think sharing is good things. I listened [to] their opinions, and I learned many things from them." Tang, a Cambodian student,

commented, "I like listening to others' writing because they wrote some words that help me to learn and give me some ideas." Hakan, from Turkey, wrote, "It was very good to have an idea about other people's feelings and opinions on the topic that we are working on for that week."

Just as Toshi said earlier that we all need partners, talking is the partner to listening. Most students appreciate and enjoy the discussion part and talking part of the writing workshop, but it is still essential to bring their attention to the purposes of talking in a writing workshop. Talking gets their juices flowing, it gives the students material about which to write. After discussion, when I instruct my students to write, they will exclaim and whine, "But I don't have anything to write!" And I respond, "Just write down what you just said, what you just talked about." Natalie Goldberg writes in her essay, "Talk is the Exercise Ground," "Get together with a good friend and tell stories. When you tell friends stories, you want them to listen, so you make the stories colorful; you might exaggerate, even add a few brilliant white lies...It is good to talk. Do not be ashamed of it. Talk is the exercise ground for writing. It is a way we learn about communication – what makes people interested, what makes them bored" (Goldberg 1990, 77-78).

All people have experiences or stories to tell like what happened "at the grocery store yesterday when I backed my car into that man's truck in the crowded parking lot with my baby crying and the eggs that fell out of the back seat and onto the floor and left egg white all over my English books." So, being a writing workshop facilitator I have to facilitate talking and discussion and story telling and sharing. I do this by having three to five questions ready for every class. The questions come from something my students have shown interest in or are

related to our theme of the week. I either type out the questions or I write them on the board. These questions become springboards for daily writing in the students' journals. Sometimes the students have to move around the classroom and change partners because movement alone can also get the juices flowing and keep their conversations going. Sometimes they share with a partner, sometimes a small group of four, sometimes an inner-circle/outer-circle, sometimes a cocktail party.<sup>6</sup> I have to facilitate variety and routine and variety within the routine in order to keep students interested, to keep students coming to class and to keep them at their comfort levels. They have to be intrigued or enticed back by what we *might* do today, and yet they have to trust that my reassuring approach will be consistent day after day. Hakan summed up his feelings about talking in class when he wrote, "Actually, this is the speaking part of composition class. We are having the chance to talk to others about the topic and we are also having the opportunity to get different ideas about the topic to write much better essay." Antonio wrote, "It is useful for me to talk. The other students correct my pronunciation and give some new ideas."

In sum, ESL students see a lot of benefit to discussing topics in class as an exercise or warm-up for the writing. Of course, these activities also help with other language skills and with pronunciation. This whole language approach is natural and provides comfort plus endless academic and practical benefits for the students. Since listening is a skill that needs to be learned and practiced, I structure activities that focus my students' attention on their own listening habits in order to bring about improvement in this area.

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<sup>6</sup> A cocktail party refers to having students mingle just like a party while they ask each other questions.

## Activities to Develop Listening and Talking

I pass out a student listening inventory which students do for homework (see appendix five). We follow up this inventory with discussion of students' listening skills. Later, I set up a listening role-play in which I demonstrate different listening strategies (developed by S.I.T. faculty, Summer 1994).

The listening strategies I want students to see are "the uninterested listener," which is a listener who looks all around the room instead of listening; "the questioning listener," who asks questions instead of allowing the talker to talk; "the talking about self listener," who talks about him or herself instead of listening to the talker; and "the active listener," who listens carefully, makes mental notes, and restates the talkers ideas. My students find this role-play extremely funny because it over-emphasizes our bad habits. They think it is funny to see a teacher being so obviously impolite and they can recognize themselves in at least one of these bad listening habits, so they are able to laugh at themselves. I follow up by giving every student the opportunity to practice Active Listening skills in a small group situation. I begin by writing a personal question on the board. Then I instruct each person to take turns answering the question for one minute, while the person to his or her left does active listening. After all four group members have talked, each person has one minute to summarize on a note card what was said when he or she was the Active Listener. In this way, the students are held accountable for their listening. I do not forewarn them the first time. That way, if a student does not listen actively and is caught off guard, she will be compelled to listen better and more actively the next time we do this exercise.

Another listening activity I like to do involves Natalie Goldberg's essay "Listening" from

Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within. We read this together to reinforce the importance and beauty of listening in our writing. Goldberg states, "Writing, too, is ninety percent listening. You listen so deeply to the space around you that it fills you, and when you write, it pours out of you. . . You don't only listen to the person speaking to you across the table, but simultaneously listen to the air, the chair, and the door. And go beyond the door. Take in the sound of the season, the sound of the color coming in through the windows. Listen to the past, future, and present right where you are. Listen with your whole body, not only with your ears, but with your hands, your face, and the back of your neck"(Goldberg 1989).

Students then do a writing activity, which involves listening with their whole beings. I take my students outside. They sit and close their eyes and listen for one minute. After listening, students write what they have heard during that one minute. Next, students close their eyes and smell for a minute followed by writing about this olfactory experience. Then, students close their eyes and concentrate on what they can feel – the air, the coolness/heat, the ground etc. Following this, they record once again what they have experienced.

I like taking my students through this exercise because they respond enthusiastically to it. Students feel great when they can integrate being human, their environment and nature into their learning experience. This simple exercise gives students a respite from the doldrums of the classroom atmosphere. It opens a window into their creativity and it encourages them to use sensuality in their writing

Goldberg has another excellent essay I like to share with my students entitled, "Talk is the Exercise Ground." In this essay, Goldberg supports students' need to talk and talk before they ever write. It assures students that they are not wasting their time by talking. In fact, through

talking and listening, my students are acquiring an abundance of material for their writing.

Furthermore, a person never knows what will be revealed in a conversation. There is always a great story waiting to be written by someone. Most of my students came to truly enjoy and appreciate the talking and listening in which they habitually engaged in our class. Julietta wrote enthusiastically about the process of talking,

My trouble began when I must share with other person, that for me was a great sacrifice. But when I began to share my life or experiences, I felt free because I could see that my other classmates felt the same feeling like me. Besides I know more people from different country, life, culture, etc. and that teach me a lot to know more about other countries...I think this sharing help us to forget ourselves and give freedom to our lives in order that we are able to receive from other persons peace, love, joy, freedom, courage, etc.

From these units on building community, being creative, reading for writing and listening and talking as a writer, I move my students into content themes in which we continue to use this foundation we have established to explore interesting topics for our writing.

## CHAPTER SIX

### A PLAN FOR WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY

#### **Kimberly's Journal Entry—Interesting Themes**

*OK, I just spent the first part of the semester building community and building a strong foundation. Now we get into the meat. We can cover fun, interesting topics while keeping the students at the center of the classroom. I want the students to choose the topics because I want them to feel invested in the class; I want them to have a sense of control. I need to retain their trust – the trust we've worked hard at building. I've told them, "You have a voice. You are creative. You have something important to share and say." Now, I give them the chance to show what they do know about life. They get to strut their stuff... I don't want them to feel like they are being forced to write about subjects they know nothing about or that they find boring. I hated that in school. I detested it when a teacher came up with a topic during the last minute of class and assigned us to write an essay without any discussion or even explanation. I usually had absolutely no interest in the topic anyway. This is not the way I like to learn, so it is definitely NOT the way I am going to teach.*

The first four to six weeks of the semester is spent laying a firm foundation, pursuing the course goals of creating community, breaking down students' fear and resistance to writing, having students recognize that they can write, getting students comfortable with discussing, listening, journaling, sharing their work, and reading for their writing. All of this comes into play the rest of the semester as I use it to teach students writing skills and to motivate them to write essays. During the process of laying the foundation, my students write, but I do not instruct the students on form. I am also very careful to limit my editing to a few simple grammatical problems like verb tense and pronoun agreement because I do not want to discourage them. The rest of the semester is spent building the students' editing and writing skills while maintaining an environment that encourages them to experiment with the language in their writing. Time and time again, I remind my students that editing is not a one-step

process in my approach. My students learn to edit their own work while involving classmates and me. The process includes peer editing and feedback, student rewrites, my feedback, student rewrites again, and publishing. As we explore editing and different rhetorical forms of writing, I model and explain the editing process one step at a time. I also focus on one aspect of the writing format at a time like the introduction, body or conclusion. I do this in the context of writing full-length, five paragraph essays. The key to keeping my students comfortable and creative is my being able to break everything down into simple, manageable steps. We build our essays one brick at a time otherwise my students will get overwhelmed and retreat from the writing process. My goal is to keep them engaged so that they can keep learning language and improving their writing skills.

Generally in my writing workshop, the first full-length essay my students write is a descriptive essay that concentrates on the introduction of a five-paragraph essay. The part of the writing process that we focus on initially is giving and receiving Peer Feedback. The editing process consists of many steps; all of which are incredibly important. I make a big deal out of the editing steps—giving positive feedback, understanding student feedback and rewriting—while downplaying mistakes. I do this so that students become less attached to their first drafts. They learn that no matter how brilliant they think their piece is or how rotten they think it is, they will be doing four to five drafts. It takes time and work (lots of work!) to get an essay to the final draft stage where students publish it and save it in their portfolios. During the first theme unit, I start with Peer Feedback in my class, as opposed to Teacher Feedback because I want to take the attention off of my editing and draw students in to correcting others and themselves.



By giving and receiving Peer Feedback, my students are honing their own editing skills. In this way, they become better writers because they can find and correct their own mistakes. But students will not find their own mistakes initially because they believe that if they were capable of finding them, they would not have made them to begin with. They believe that only a teacher is capable of finding mistakes. Truthfully, most students do not know where to begin with editing.

It is an overwhelming job; consequently, they have to be trained to break it down into little packages like spelling or verb tenses. I developed this approach after experiencing the frustration of hours of correcting and grading a paper while students were not spending time to understand and correct their mistakes. I thought, "This is ridiculous. I know English, but I'm the one spending all the time on these essays. I've got more work than the students and I'm learning more than they are."

So, I decided there would be no grades on the papers. When I put a grade on the paper, the grade was all my students cared about. Time and time again, I witnessed hours of my work crumpled up and thrown in the trashcan with only a cursory glance at the top where the grade was circled. Nothing else mattered. Without a grade on top, my students have to look carefully and read to see what I think about their essays. In addition, since every student does Peer Feedback, they realize how much time and effort goes into correcting a paper. Therefore, the feedback has more value to the students. Moreover, with everyone doing Peer Feedback, everyone is working. Not just me.

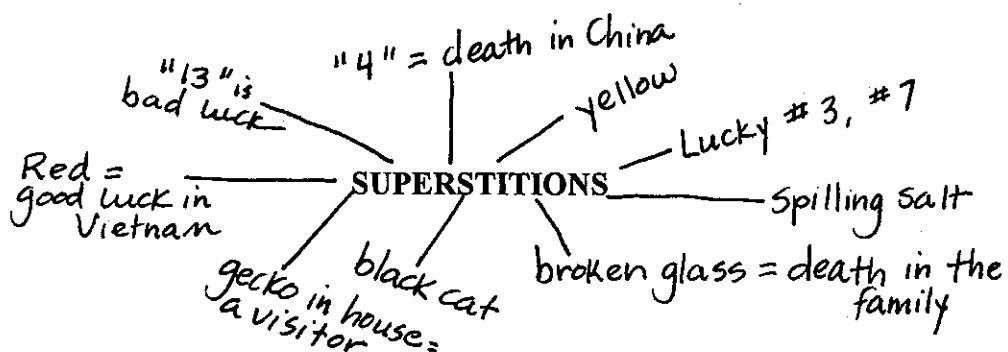
In response to giving and receiving Peer Feedback, Ali an intermediate Saudi Arabian student wrote, "It was helpful to me because I recognized my mistakes and I will not make that

mistake.” Youngmin, an advanced Korean, commented, “When other students gave me good suggestions, I had to change my writing, but it was good because I have to think one more time about my writing.” Elham, an Iranian student, concurred, “It helps me because when 2 or one comment on my composition, I can understand my problems and I found them and rewrote them. Because every time one student find one of my problems and I could rewrite that and I remember my mistake.” Go, a Japanese student, explained, “It is difficult for me because my English is not perfect, but it makes me to think, so good for me.” Giving and receiving the Peer Feedback was not an easy task for my students, but as they attest, it is an important step in the writing process.

Since the students provide the content of the semester, I generally begin these first essays by exploring their superstitions and holidays. These are really fun, easy subjects for students to recall, talk about and describe. Students of all levels truly enjoy the opportunity to talk about their favorite holiday celebrations and unusual superstitions. Some other possible themes that I have used successfully for writing a descriptive essay include zodiac signs and horoscopes, family, seasons of the year, non-verbal communication/gestures.

### **Activities to Develop the Theme**

The topics for students to write a descriptive essay on are limitless. I might begin having students look at a family member, a friend, an event in their lives, holidays or superstitions. If we begin with superstitions, for example, then I activate schema by writing the word **SUPERSTITIONS** on the board. I might start by having students define the word and give examples of it, which I then write on the board so it looked like this:



This activity builds students' schema by getting them to think about this topic, and to assure that they have an understanding of the idea. After all the students understand the word "superstitions," everyone gets a questionnaire with the following five questions about superstitions on it:

In your country,

- \*What number/numbers are considered unlucky?
- \*What day/days are considered unlucky?
- \*What color/colors are considered unlucky?
- \*What else is considered unlucky?
- \*What are you superstitious or afraid of?

Students spend five minutes interviewing a partner and writing down his/her answers.

Every five minutes the students switch partners until they have interviewed three classmates.

Afterwards, students break into small groups to discuss their different unlucky superstitions.

Typically, I give my students ten minutes to journal about their own countries' particular superstitions and ideas of what's unlucky or bad luck. Then they read their writing aloud to the person sitting on their left or right.

Students gather in groups by country and make a "bad luck poster" and a "good luck poster" with symbols and drawings that illustrate what is considered lucky and what is considered unlucky in their country. Then we hang these posters on the wall in the classroom for their classmates to peruse at their leisure.

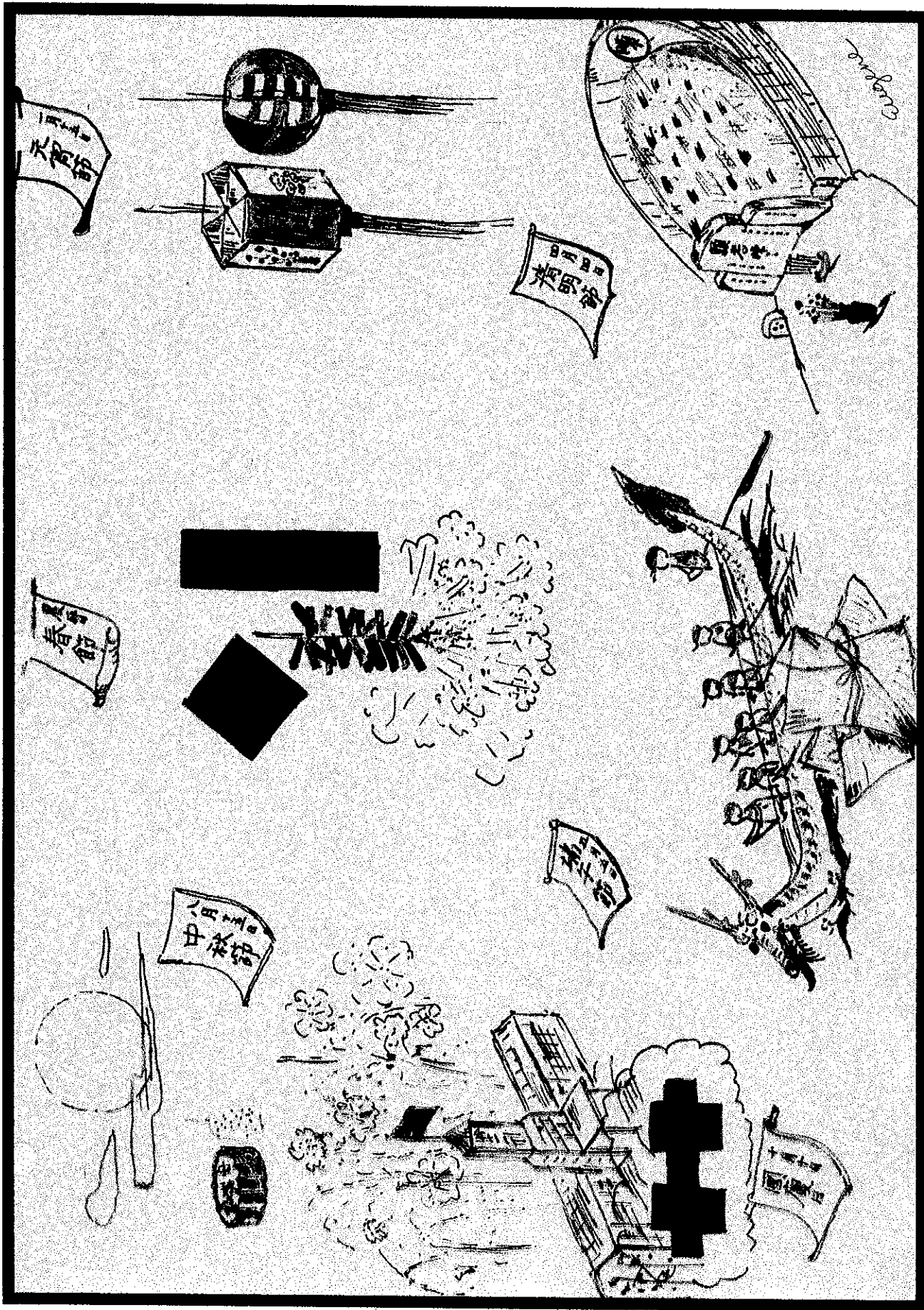
We do similar activities looking at holidays, an event in their life or a person they admire so that when students are asked to write their descriptive essays, they have a choice. Additional activities done to build language for writing about the theme include: reading my essays on American superstitions, Halloween or Saint Patrick's Day, reading student descriptions from past semesters on an event in their lives or a person they admire, answering questions, talking, journaling and reading aloud from their journals daily, doing listing exercises or drawing a scene from their favorite holiday (see next page for example), the person they admire or an event in their lives (see appendix six for student essays).

### **Writing an Introduction**

Some students have a lot of experience with writing introductions while others have had none; consequently, I cover all of the basics. I often use the description of an introduction on page 32 of Weaving It Together: Book 3 for all of the different levels I teach. It gives a very simple, understandable explanation which states that the introduction has two parts:

1. General statements, which introduce the topic of the essay and give background information.
2. A thesis statement, which is the last sentence of the introduction, states the specific topic, may state the sub topics, and may state the method of organization.

We go over this and it's accompanying diagram and follow up with questions. I use the exercises on page 33 of Weaving It Together: Book 3. This exercise consists of introductions whose sentences are mixed up. This forces students to analyze the sentences and decide whether they are general statements or the thesis, which of the general statements is the most general, which are the least general, and then create a good introductory paragraph by writing the sentences in the proper order.



This is a good exercise with which to use small-group collaboration. I pass out one jumbled up introduction to each group and let them figure out as a group the order of the sentences. Then each group writes the unjumbled introduction on a transparency. A spokesperson from each group reads the introduction and justifies the group's work. The other students agree or disagree with the work until we arrive at the correct answer.

To reinforce the elements and organization of an introductory paragraph, students get a jumbled introduction to practice by themselves for homework. Another reinforcement activity for introductions is reading an introduction from an essay I've written on either Halloween or St. Patrick's Day<sup>7</sup> (see appendix seven for the complete essays). The following is the introduction to the essay on St. Patrick's Day:

People all over the world set aside special days. These holidays give us a break from the daily routine and a reason to celebrate our lives and our history. March 17<sup>th</sup> is recognized in the United States as an Irish-American celebration in which all people can participate. The popularity of this holiday is linked to the history of the Irish people as well as the festivities of the day.

After we read the introduction, students offer the general statements—"People all over the world set aside special days. These holidays give us a break from the daily routine and a reason to celebrate our lives and our history." Then, they identify the thesis—"The popularity of this holiday is linked to the history of the Irish people as well as the festivities of the day." Students follow up by writing a rough draft of an introduction for their descriptive essays using the entries in their journals.

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<sup>7</sup> I use the Halloween essay in the Fall and the St. Patrick's Day essay in the Spring. In this way students learn about American customs and culture while learning the elements of an essay at the same time.

The following is an introductory paragraph written by Joy, an advanced Korean student who describes a favorite teacher in her essay:

All people learned from everything and everywhere. They especially learn from each other; therefore, everybody has a person in her memory that she has never forgotten. I have that too. She has influenced my whole life, and I always remember what she said and what she did for me.

### **Understanding Feedback**

Giving and receiving feedback is a critical step in the writing process, but most students view this stage of writing simply as correcting. In fact, because of the complexity involved in editing well, I break the process into several steps and provide practice at each stage. Before coming into my class, most students have not practiced editing. As a result, my students need practice and they have to be trained on how to give positive comments and how to find mistakes in someone's writing. I have found that step one, articulating the positive aspects of an essay, is especially hard. Students prefer to simply circle the misspelled words that they recognize because doing that takes a lot less effort and thought. Yet, I insist that they write positive comments because it requires more of them as editors/readers; they have to understand what they are reading/editing; they have to take more time; and they have to think, and all the while, they are getting more writing practice as editors. I guide students in how to give constructive feedback, and I look over the feedback they give each other. I make the giving of feedback a mandatory step of the writing process, and if someone gives inadequate feedback, the student will be required to do the feedback again. Giving feedback is to help the writer with his or her writing; however, it is equally important for the editor in developing the necessary editing skills to be a good writer.

To teach my students about each step in the editing, I follow a pattern of working as a whole group using a sample on an overhead projector, having individuals practice this editing step, having partners read and discuss their feedback and having individuals rewrite the paragraph. So, to introduce Peer Feedback I put a student's introduction on a transparency and use an overhead projector in order for me to illustrate how to write comments on another student writer's work. When doing any editing, I instruct my students to first read through the writing without making any comments. It is so important to read the first time without commenting in order to really understand what the writer wants the reader to understand. Then, they read through the writing a second time writing down their positive comments. So, during this exercise, my students first read the introduction displayed on the overhead projector. Then we reread it together while concentrating on giving positive feedback. After doing this, the paragraph looks something like the following introduction written by Vladimir:

Good first sentence - { Many people in the world believe in  
it is general. { superstitions. I know many different } move to personal/  
specific here  
superstitions and many times I understand that  
superstitions have had magical power in my } interesting  
phrase  
we know } life. Many superstitions have influenced my } Thesis is  
essay will } specific  
cover 2 } personal  
Superstitions. }  
He promises }  
the reader here.

After we study Vladimir's introduction, students exchange introductory paragraphs and spend five minutes writing positive comments. In step two of editing, the students and I look



at Vladimir's paragraph again, focusing on:

- \*one suggestion
- \*spelling
- \*verb tenses
- \*word choices

I don't ask the students to correct every possible mistake. Instead we focus on only a few specific mistakes.

Now his paragraph looks like this:

Good first Sentence - { Many people in the world believe in } /\* add another sentence to the introduction

It is general { superstitions } SP { I know many different } VT we { } move to personal/ specific here

{ superstitions } SP { and many times I understand that } VT we

We know essay will cover 2 Superstitions He promises the reader here. { superstitions } SP { have had magical power in my } interesting phrase

life. Many superstitions } SP { have influenced my } VT

life, but two of them I remembered } VT { all the time. } Thesis is Specific + personal

After we work on adding suggestions to Vladimir's introduction together, the students add suggestions to their partner's introduction. Then, students return the introductions to the writers and they read through their comments together in order to make sure that they understand the suggestions that were made. I have found that it is extremely important for peer feedback partners to review their comments to each other together otherwise students will not read the comments and they will ignore the editing when they do their rewrites. I think

students have a tendency to ignore feedback because they do not understand it and they can be a little bit lazy. Occasionally, students will disagree on a grammar point, in which case, they are told to consult me. Students reread their introductions rewrite with minor corrections. I am always available to answer any questions they have when rewriting.

### **Understanding Peer Feedback Forms**

After my students have reached the point of writing a rough draft of their essay from the material they have compiled in their journals, I explain the Peer Feedback form to them so that they can fill it out for a partner. Using an overhead projector, I show students the Peer Feedback form (see appendix eight for a completed form) that they will use to give their classmates feedback on essays for the rest of the semester. I explain how to fill it out. Then I put a transparency of an example of a Peer Feedback form that had been done by a student. Again, we have to spend time going over Peer Feedback in order to emphasize the benefits they receive as writers by doing it. I list the ways I think that doing Peer Feedback is helpful for them and add any ideas additional ones that they may offer. For example, doing a Peer Feedback form helps them to:

- \*figure out verb tenses and grammar
- \*practice spelling
- \*ponder syntax
- \*practice formulating thoughts and opinions in the comments

I always experience great resistance from my students because doing Peer Feedback is difficult. It is very hard work and takes time, effort and thought. For all of these reasons, students should do feedback. Additionally, knowing how much time feedback takes, students

will more fully appreciate the feedback I do for each of them. Most students don't know how to give feedback and need to be coached. Likewise, most do not know how to receive feedback and need to be reassured. Students can be intimidated and even embarrassed by having another student correct them, so I tell students:

\*Your classmates have your best interest in mind.

\*They are not being negative, they are trying to help you.

\*It's OK to be corrected by another student and to correct another student because that is not just my job.

Incidentally, student writers believe that I should do **all** of the correcting because it is my **job**. But, I tell them that they are resources for each other too. I am not the only resource, nor the only expert in the room. Some students will know verb tenses, others will know adjectives, others vocabulary, others spelling, and others organization. I encourage them to use all of the available resources since that is what being a community is all about. Students carefully fill out the form, then they consult each other. The following is an excerpt from a Peer Feedback form:

#### **Peer Feedback Sheet**

**Date:** 09/16/96

**Name of Reader:** Alejandra

**Name of Writer:** Eugene

#### **Personal Reaction or Comments:**

I think that your experience was very interesting. I enjoyed your experience. I agree with you when you said, "Language is very important to communicate with other people. I would like to know Japan some day." I am sure that you are going to be a good writer and speaker, OK?

#### **Overall Strengths:**

1. Your writing is clear.
2. Good Sequence.
3. Good development of ideas.

After students make corrections, they turn their essays in to me for my feedback.

In this unit, my students have written a descriptive essay, studied and practiced introductions and practiced giving and receiving feedback. In the next chapter, I facilitate discussion on other topics of interest with the intent of writing a definition essay as we shift the focus from the introduction to the body of the essay; from Peer Feedback to Teacher Feedback and mistake analysis.

## Chapter Seven

### A Plan for Writing a Definition Essay

#### **Kimberly's Journal Entry – Students are Responsible for Learning**

*Putting all the pieces together is complicated. I want my students to learn skills and write essays, but still maintain trust in me. I also don't want to do all the work myself. Students want the teacher to do all the work, but then they gain nothing. You know the saying, "Give them a fish and they eat for a day. Teach them to fish and they eat for a lifetime." Well, my students have to feed themselves. They have to do the learning – I can only guide and facilitate. I won't waste my time giving them feedback if they are not going to use it, so I have to teach them how to use it; I have to insist that they use it. Really, my feedback is a gift. It's a gift of precious time and care. I want my students to understand this.*

After completing their first essay and focusing on introductions and Peer Feedback, we progress to writing a definition essay. I remain committed to using the students as the content; their experiences remain the material for the class. While working on this theme, I include the properties of an essay's body and receiving and using my feedback. Teaching students how to receive and use my feedback is really important to me as an instructor and is at the heart of why I developed a different approach to teaching writing. As I stated earlier, it has been my experience that students do not benefit as writers when a grade is put at the top of their page. When I used to give students a grade for their essays, the students who got A's were complacent and unmotivated to improve; the students who received B's were disappointed and unmotivated to make changes; the students who received C's were dejected and overwhelmed by all the work that needed to be done; and the students who received D's or F's were angry and embarrassed and refused to work on their essays. In sum, grading essays did not produce student writers who were thinking, experimenting and taking risks with the language. In actuality, assigning grades did the exact opposite with my students. Furthermore, how can I

ask my students to reveal a very personal, courageous or tragic event in their lives, like escaping at midnight, in a tiny canoe, under the blanket of darkness, and then mark a big C at the top because of poor syntax. Peoples' life stories and deeply profound experiences are worth more than a grade. They deserve to be treated with deference and an understanding that something holy has been offered to my class and me every time a student shares part of his or her life story. These stories are moving, personal, and very, very fragile.

So, as I have indicated, I came up with a new approach and have transformed my role as editor in the classroom. I am not my students' number one editor—they are their own editors as stated in the last chapter. As a result, I see my role as both their personal cheerleader as well as a person who can help them tell their stories a little clearer, which allows the important ideas or events to be conveyed to the reader. I still spend hours going over student essays—reading, commenting, giving feedback and filling out the Teacher Feedback form. The way I give feedback requires a big investment on my part; consequently, I refuse to let my time be wasted. I require students to spend time with my feedback. I will not allow them to be lazy or to throw my work in the trash.

As ironic as it may sound, students are not accustomed to having to think for themselves. Students from all over the world have been trained to take in information and regurgitate it out for their instructors. Unfortunately, most students have not been trained to take the information and apply it in very practical, real situations. As a result, throughout the semester, I am teaching my students to think and to be their own experts.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This technique is based on the Silent Way approach developed by Caleb Gattengo.

I want them to be able to figure out their problems and find the solutions without automatically turning to me for the quick answer. Because the reality is, in a very short time – a semester to be exact, they will be without me and they will have to rely on themselves. A simple example of this is, “Teacher, how do you spell ‘people’?” I do not give the answer, instead I return the question, “How *do* you spell ‘people’?” I respond. The student will begin spelling and if he or she gets stuck, then a classmate will help. Many times, the student knows the correct spelling. But, if the correct spelling does not emerge from the questioner or the class, then the student is referred to the English-English dictionary, and he or she is required to report the correct spelling to the class. By giving the questions back to the students, I allow them to gain confidence in their own knowledge and in their classmates as resources to each other. I do have students who are completely drowning in the complexities of English syntax and have no way of finding the surface themselves. For a handful, their entire essays are written in a way that is too garbled to simply edit, and I work closely with these students. I have them tell me what they are trying to say, and once we are able to make sense of their ideas, I tell them how to say it clearly, and then they write it down like a dictation. Then, they go through the normal editing process like their classmates because there are still mistakes to be found and corrections to be made. I have an occasional incomprehensible sentence from most of my students, and I do not guess at what the writer may be trying to say. Instead, we dialogue about his or her sentence in order to preserve the purpose and integrity of that thought.

Students have commented on my process of giving feedback and editing student writing very positively. Yolanda, an intermediate Mexican student, commented, “Getting my teacher’s

comments encouraged me so much because for me it was like a push to go further and deeper in my writing and I think that was good in my English writing.” Julietta, another intermediate student from Mexico, wrote thoughtfully, “Working in feedback was an excellent idea. For me it was very difficult to correct it, but I tried the best I can. Writing again and talking with you about our feedback helped me to improve my composition. Your comments in my papers helped me to keep going. I think that the teacher is not only to teach, but also to motivate the student. This is the way that the student learn faster.” Eugene, an advanced Taiwanese student, explained, “It’s helpful because you write something [that] encouraged for me. It make me more confident to do my writing.” Annette, an advanced student from Denmark, exclaimed, “It’s wonderful to see a teacher correcting essays so thoroughly and carefully. Your personal feedback has always been very positive.”

### **Activities to Develop the Theme**

For at least one essay during the semester, I like to use a book and a movie to vary our routine and activities for activating schema and introducing ideas and vocabulary. For this particular theme, my goal is to prepare my students to write an essay that defines courage, sacrifice, fear or war using their own lives and personal experiences to support their definition. The activities my students do in preparation for writing their essays include reading Lois Lowry’s, Number the Stars, listening to a recording of the book, responding to questions that relate to their own lives, completing Reader Responses, reviewing and cultivating vocabulary, and watching the movie Schindler’s List. All these activities are geared towards activating schema and giving students the vocabulary they need to tell their own stories. Since we use the same involved routine of activating schema, journaling daily, sharing constantly etc., that has



been previously discussed in this paper, it takes three to four weeks to complete this theme. Every day we discuss ideas related to the reading or the movie such as World War II, if a relative participated in any way, how it affected their country, courage, discrimination, hardship, fear etc. It is an absolute necessity to spend a good amount of time developing the theme in order for students to be able to create the content for their essays. I find my use of outside material (movies and books) leads to powerful writing from the students.

Other possible themes for a using a novel and a movie are the following:

READ	WATCH	DISCUSS/THEME	LEVELS
<u>Helen Keller</u>	<u>The Miracle Worker</u>	handicaps perseverance	ALL
<u>The Outsiders</u>	<u>The Outsiders</u>	outcasts society family	INTERMEDIATE +
Articles on "education"	<u>The Dead Poet's Society</u> <u>Stand and Deliver</u> <u>Mr. Holland's Opus</u>	education teachers	ADVANCED
<u>Bridge to Terebithia</u>	<u>Stand by Me</u>	death friendship family	INTERMEDIATE +

I enjoy using books and movies in the classroom, and the students share my enthusiasm. I asked for feedback on the book Number the Stars in the form of a questionnaire. Out of the fifteen students in the class, fifteen responded that reading the book was "helpful."

My students find reading the book useful in a variety of ways. "I think it was helpful because we get to know other different story and we learn from it. I like it. It was so interesting, and it helps practice reading and pronounce the words," wrote Claudia from Brazil.

"I liked read this book because when we finished reading through it I felt so proud. I can say "I read a book in English," added Lidia from Uzbekistan. "I got information about the life Danish people when the Nazi's occupied Denmark, about friendship, courage, people at that time," stated Raisa from Russia.

Thirteen of my students responded that listening to the recording was "helpful" and two responded that it was "not helpful." My students really like listening to a recording of the novel because they feel it helps them in many ways. As Claudia stated, "[It was helpful] because that way I could understand and listen how to pronounce the words." Jorge added, "This exercise help me to listen [to] the rhythm of the reading and try to read in the same way. It also helped me for to understand better the feelings or situations in this story."

Besides listening to a recording of the book and reading the chapters, students are asked to fill out a Reader Response<sup>9</sup> which consists of four parts—summary, comments/reactions, questions and vocabulary problems. This is a new form for them, so I illustrate how it should be used. Using the overhead projector, I give an example Reader Response form (see appendix nine) like they will use for Number the Stars. Most of my students need an example of how to do each of the sections of the Reader Response. But after filling out the form for the first few chapters, they are usually comfortable doing it. The first part asks them to summarize what they have read (one to three chapters) and I limit them to a couple of sentences per chapter. For example, Claudia, an advanced beginner from Brazil, wrote in her summary of Chapter 17 and the Afterward in Number the Stars:

It was sad because Peter got shot and he died. But at the same time it was happy

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<sup>9</sup>Adapted from a handout by Jack Gantzer presented at a workshop for Second Language Reading at S.I.T., 1995.

because two years passed and the war is gone, there's no more war. This history is true. The author wanted to write this book because he wanted to dedicate it to the Danish people. It was kind of a memorial to the Danish people.

The second part of the Reader Response asks for students to give their reaction to what they have read. I assure them that there is not a right or wrong answer for this section. I want them to just write what they think about what they are reading. Rosemary, an advanced-beginning student wrote in her comments/reaction:

It really nice story. I like the book because it was very real story about Danish and Germany people. The author created Annemarie and Peter, two courage personage. The Johansens' family was brave. Number the Stars was my first book about Jewish people. I learned a lot about the war II in 1943. It was a good experience for me. Thanks for give me this book and show me the movie.

The third part is for any questions the students have about what they have read. These questions can be about information that they did not understand, or simply about questions the book has raised in their minds. I tell my students that they must write at least one question. Claudia wrote, "Are you glad we finished the book?" and Rosemary wrote, "How much of Annemarie's story is true?" Again there is no right or wrong question to ask. This section is to make students aware of the fact that there are questions in their heads because questioning is a natural part of the reading process.

The last part of the Reader Response asks for vocabulary problems. I encourage students to limit the number of vocabulary words to ones of which they cannot guess the meaning from the content. For example, Rosemary wrote, "page 129—buried—They simply buried them there where they were killed." Vocabulary can be such a frustration for students and a very tedious process for a teacher, so I handle it in the following way: First, I put ten spaces on the board. My students come up to the board randomly and fill in a vocabulary word, the sentence

in which it appeared in the book, and their guess at the definition. Once we have ten words, we look at the words, the sentences and the definitions as a class. While we are doing this, I ask one student to be the class recorder and copy down the list. When we are done, I make copies of the list and give it to the students.

This has been an uncomplicated, successful way for me to deal with students' questions about vocabulary. I do not spend hours answering vocabulary questions and they should not waste time asking about it. This way they should get enough vocabulary practice to feel comfortable, but not so much practice that they feel bored. For some students, all of the vocabulary will be easy, for others, it will all be difficult. So, I ask them to work with the vocabulary that is new for them. They can create sentences in their free time, and I look at their work. But, I never do vocabulary tests.

Just as I give students enough time to complete essays during class time, I give enough time for students to finish reading assignments and their Reader Response in class. I do this because most of the population I have been teaching consists of workers and parents. They have many obligations, so if I send a critical assignment home with them, it may not be done. If the work is critical to the structure of the next class, we do it in class to avoid frustration for the class and me.

From the feedback on doing the Reader Responses, twelve students found the form "helpful" while three students said it was "unhelpful." Some students saw a lot of benefit in doing the Reader Response form. As Julietta, from Mexico, wrote, "Writing about this book help me to improve my writing and reading. Also, I learn how to do the summary more and more shorter." Nhon, from Vietnam, commented, "Writing R.R. that is helpful for us.

Summarizing and comment that will help us to understand.” Rindal, from Haiti, agreed, “I think it is a good way to improve your vocabulary and your understanding.”

However, not all students agreed. Some didn’t like doing it or found it too difficult: “Of course, if we didn’t write reader responses, we would not read in detail repeatedly. But, I think that weren’t effective [for] me,” wrote Jinny, from Korea. Yolanda, another advanced beginner student from Mexico, added, “[It was helpful], but for me was difficult to put sentences in order.” While Terry, a Taiwanese student, conceded, “Slowly it was helpful, but in the summary only.”

After reading the book, we take two classes and watch a movie that compliments the book. For Number the Stars, we watch Schindler’s List. Besides being positive about reading a novel, my students enjoy watching movies. Overall, my experience is that students love watching movies. They are perfectly content not understanding every word or even every scene. They still find watching a movie helpful in acquiring English. In fact, out of the fifteen students who answered the questionnaire, all fifteen found the movie to be “helpful.”

My students believe that the movie complimented the book quite well. “For me this, helped me to write more ideas and comments. It helps me to develop my thoughts,” Yolanda wrote. Julietta added, “This movie help me to understand more the book Number the Stars, but I got very sad about the treatment of Jewish people. But also help me to be courageous and do things that may be never I will do.” Jinny remarked, “As I see the movie, I could know well situation of the book.” “It made me to know the people who have had a difficult life, but they overcome that,” commented Hai. Claudia added, “The movie was so interesting. It help me because I learn something of the movie – not to be selfish. And help other people. It

makes me cry a lot, but I enjoy it.”

Once the theme has been completely developed, my students are ready to write their definition essays. My students read their journals and construct their essays from the ideas that have emerged during the course of this theme, and I encourage them to use the entries that are most powerful and interesting for them. For example, some students might write a definition on love, courage, fear, hate, family or discrimination (see appendix ten for full definition essays). The following is the introduction from an essay that defines discrimination written by Joan, an advanced student from Spain:

Discrimination is found everywhere in one form or another. It depends on who, where and how you are. We can't think about discrimination without taking part in it. That means that every one, somehow discriminates some others as long as they are different than himself or herself. When we describe people we are making differences, showing specific characteristics of the one we are describing. These characteristics are related to sex, race, age, physical handicaps, economical level and so on. So here is where discrimination begins.

Another student, Rosemary an advanced beginner from Brazil, wrote a definition of courage for her essay:

Courage is bravery. It's like a baby bird when he is trying to fly. Courage is putting your life in risk or saving a life. Courage is like energy. If a man is valiant and strong, he has courage. I love all those animals because all have courage to put their lives in risk.

### **Activities to Help Students Write The Body**

While developing the theme, I take the opportunity to instruct my students on the parts of an essay. During the last theme, I concentrated on the introduction, so for this theme, I concentrate on the parts of the body. I use Weaving It Together: Book 3, page 16-17 for students to see the way the body of the essay is outlined. There are ready-made exercises on

identifying the topic sentence and details of each paragraph of the body in this book, so I use them. Then, I give them an outline of the essay, which I wrote, on Halloween or St. Patrick's Day. I read my students the body of one essay like the following:

The Irish are very proud, nationalistic people. Although they have been in the U.S. for several generations, most Irish descendants still identify themselves as Irish. Irish-Americans are people who emigrated from a small island in Northern Europe after the Great Potato Famine in the 1840's over 750,000 Irish people died of starvation when their potato crops, which was their only source of food due to British control, rotted from a fungus. Half of the remaining population left the country in search of food, jobs and freedom from the British. Perhaps their forced immigration is what has kept the memory of Ireland so alive in the Irish hearts.

The reason for celebrating St. Patrick's Day is to honor the patron Saint of Ireland. The legend states that St. Patrick was a prisoner of the Irish and after his escape he returned to the island to bring Christianity to the heathens. At which time, he drove all of the snakes out of Ireland. So March 17<sup>th</sup> is supposed to be his day. However, perhaps the real reason the Irish celebrate this day with such unabashed enthusiasm is due to their desire to give honor to their Motherland, the Emerald Isle, and her overwhelming beauty; or it may be just the natural, nostalgic romanticism of the Irish that compels them to remember and long fervently for their motherland on this day; or perhaps the Irish partake in the day's festivities simply due to their love of drink, music and a great party.

Because the Irish love parties, they believe 'the more the merrier.' In fact, anyone can claim Irish heritage on St. Patrick's Day, whether they are or not. The Irish secretly believe that everyone has a little Irish in them, even if it is only a shared love of drink, dance and song. So, anyone willing to don green clothing in honor of the Emerald Isle may join the day's celebration.

Then, they go back and outline their own description essays. In this way, they are able to see how their main points make up the body of an essay. The following is the body of Joan's essay on discrimination:

Half of the world's population (more or less) is male, and the other female, so this opens the first kind of discrimination: sexism. When a child is born, and sometimes before that, everywhere in the world he or she immediately is sent to either the male or female role. Women have been those who have taken the worst part of that as they have been controlled by men for centuries, and even though nowadays everything is changing there's actually a long way to walk until we could be equal in fact.

Racism is another kind of discrimination that could be understood if we had been living forever in a closed society that ignored the existence of other races, but that is almost impossible to find unless we travel to the Amazon. Despite that, I have

never understood the reason why white people have been so hard, and sometimes violently, discriminating towards the rest of races while among those other races we can find surprise or laughing when a foreigner is seen.

### **Activities to Help Student Understand Teacher Feedback/Mistake Analysis/Editing**

During the process of writing and editing this essay, I turn my students' attention to Teacher Feedback. Understanding and using my feedback is a huge part of improving their skills as writers. I spend lots of time on each student's essay and I expect that they students do more work than I do because they are the learners. I am here to help them – **not to do the work for them.** In order for these writers to benefit fully from my feedback, they have to understand and practice the process. And they have to be forced to be good editors because editing is a tough job that they really don't want to do. In the end, I expect careful, thoughtful work and will accept nothing less. But, this doesn't create fear in my students. Because of the foundation and training I provide, they have their safety nets in place.

To introduce the Teacher Feedback form, I use the overhead projector (see appendix eleven). Students are already familiar with it because they have used the same format for the Peer Feedback form they do for each other. Next, I show them a completed form. The following is an example from a form I did for a student's essay:



## Teacher Feedback Sheet

Date: 5/9/96

Name of Reader: Kimberly

Name of Writer: Go

### Personal Reaction or Comments:

Go, I was amazed by the mistreatment of people due to divorce—especially the children!! I wouldn't want any culture to become more accepting or encouraging of divorce necessarily, but I hate judgmental attitudes. As we say, there are two sides to every story or walk a mile in my shoes if you wish to understand me.

### Overall Strengths:

1. Your examples from Japan and Thailand.
2. Your honesty in writing.
3. Picking a topic that interests you makes it more enjoyable for the reader (me).

Then, we analyze the mistakes I identified and how I marked them on an essay (I limit this to five or six different types of mistakes like capitalization, pronouns, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, spelling and punctuation). Using the same symbols I have used, we correct a paragraph together following this procedure: circle the problem, use a symbol to identify the type of problem, make the correction above the circled word. I named this process "Mistake Analysis." The following is an example of Mistake Analysis done by me on a student's essay:

### Mistake Analysis

I like to write and receive ~~X~~ letter because I know the power of letter which supplies happiness, friendship, <sup>and</sup> <sup>D.A.</sup> a recovery of a relationship. But it is difficult to write a letter by English. I think that writing <sup>pass.</sup> <sup>as</sup> treats unimportant in my country.

Students then practice their editing skills by rewriting the paragraph without any mistakes. It is amazing how many students will miss mistakes when they rewrite, so I have them turn this in to me. I circle what they have missed and they will have to rewrite the paragraph until it is perfect. It is my experience that students need to be trained to be careful editors. If they are careful, analytical editors, they will improve immensely from my feedback as they will analyze the mistake, correct it and incorporate the new knowledge into their writing (see appendix twelve for Mistake Correction Key and Mistake Analysis Exercises). Another ideal exercise for practicing their editing is a dictation. When I give students a dictation, I have students use Mistake Analysis on their own dictation and have them rewrite the dictation without any mistakes. Students then turn in their dictations so I can check their Mistake Analysis and Editing. Notice, that I am **not** checking their dictations, I give them feedback on how careful a job they did **editing**. Students will want me to correct their dictations, but I **never** correct the writer's dictation because by doing it themselves they are practicing editing skills.

By the end of approximately three weeks, we have written an essay of definition, reviewed and practiced the body of an essay, practiced receiving Teacher Feedback, learned and practiced Mistake Analysis and practiced editing.

In the next chapter, I will show how students' opinions about social/political/cultural/ issues can be used to write an opinion essay supported by quotations. Students will learn the mechanics of using quotations in their work, the basic structure of the conclusion and to finish the writing process by producing a final draft, which is published and stored in a portfolio.

## Chapter Eight

### Writing an Opinion Essay

#### **Kimberly's Journal Entry – Exploring and Respecting Opinions**

*There seems to be this common belief that when a diverse group of people gather together, that there is sure to be trouble, even violence. We should be afraid of diversity because with it comes dispute and disruption. However, this is the opposite of my experience. In my classrooms, there can be ten to fifteen different countries and cultures represented, with a vast difference in religious practices, educational backgrounds, and lifestyles. Even their reasons for being in the class and learning English are very different. However, these people have agreed to the same values of respecting each other by listening attentively, of helping each other reach their goals by being resources for each other, of committing themselves to the group by coming to class, and of allowing differences in experiences, perceptions, and opinions to be expressed. I am always so proud of my classes and it makes me proud of being human, of belonging to this world where peace, respect and collaboration are possible.*

Our class has progressed in the writing process through free-flow writing, to writing a rough draft, to giving and receiving feedback, to editing, and now we reach the final stages. The final writing project is an opinion essay. While working on an opinion essay, the students remain at the center of the learning as we use their opinions, theories and values to investigate social issues and cultural differences. Additionally, I teach the format of a conclusion and the skill of using quotations during this theme. I also focus on the last steps in the writing process where students complete a final draft, publish their work, present their work to the class and store their work in a portfolio.

This last stage of getting the students to rewrite their essays one more time neatly without overlooking any of the mistakes their peers or I have identified is a very important step in the whole editing process. Some students are content to rewrite their essays while overlooking a misspelled word or verb tense correction. Some students just rewrite too quickly and

inadvertently leave out words, phrases or whole sentences because when they get to this stage they just want to be done. It is the same phenomenon with any big project that has taken a lot of time and energy – the last details and finishing touches can be the hardest to complete. But, I insist that my students put the finishing touches on their essays. They have worked hard and their final draft should be a piece that they are proud of. So, I reread their final drafts to ensure that the students have done a complete job on their rewriting. Once their piece is completed, I think it is essential that students have some sort of venue for presenting their completed essays to their classmates. I randomly select students to read their essays in front of the entire class and display a xeroxed copy of their essays on our class bulletin board. The originals are put in the students' portfolios, along with all their rough drafts attached, and these portfolios are kept in the class so that students may read them at anytime. The portfolios allow the students to maintain a collection of their "published" works because I insist that they keep all their work in the portfolios. Like I've stated previously, I do not like students to crumple up their work and throw it in the trashcan. I want them to value their effort and achievement, and the portfolio gives them permission to view their work as something special and worthy of saving. Then, when the writing workshop ends at the end of the semester, the students take their portfolios home with them. In fact, I make an official presentation to the students in front of their classmates and they receive applause for their accomplishment.

Students were quite content to keep their completed works in a portfolio because they found it valuable. Annette commented, "It's nice to collect my writings during the semester in a portfolio. Maybe my children would like to read my essays one day."

Incidentally, when Annette returned to Denmark, she used her portfolio as part of her

resume in her job search. Robert, an advanced student from Columbia, wrote, "It's a new experience for me. I think I will use the final work someday to begin my own book. Who knows?" Kaori, a Japanese intermediate student stated, "It [her portfolio] will be one of my important things because it's my first writing file in English." Eunjeong from Korea added, "The portfolios are a good idea. Last semester I had some essays I wanted to keep forever because the teacher praised those essays. But now I don't know where these are. But in this semester, I don't need to worry about that. I will keep my portfolio forever."

### **Activities to Develop the Theme**

For this theme, we are working at using quotations in an opinion essay on a social, political or moral issue. As always the goal is to have students write about issues that relate to them and their own life experiences rather than being forced to write about an issue that they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with. So I would never assign a class topic like AIDS or Pollution. Rather students spend time exploring different issues in order to uncover the one that stirs their own passion. Because the issues my students are interested in are diverse, developing this theme, which includes students collecting their own quotations, is more complicated than the other themes. First of all, writing an essay with the use of quotations from an article and an interview seems like a huge, daunting task to an ESL student; consequently, it is important that I facilitate a process for this project that is simple and manageable. One way I do this is by passing out a timeline at the beginning, so that they are aware of what is involved in completing this essay and the days that each step should be completed.

Having each student research the area in which his or her unique interests lie is essential;

consequently, they must research their own articles from the library and conduct their own interviews with classmates in the classroom and community members outside of the classroom.

This particular theme requires an orientation to the college library; instruction on locating an article, practice using quotes to support an idea, practice writing interview questions, activities to generate ideas like Listing and a lot of discussion.

Additionally, I show them how familiar quotations are by beginning with famous quotes and adages. Initially, I begin by putting the word "QUOTATION" on the board and asking students to define it. This simple step is important because many students think that they do not know what a quotation is. Next, I give them examples. I write a famous quotation on the board, and my students suggest what it means. In small groups, students share their ideas on the quote and how it relates to their lives. As always, students journal and share aloud at regular intervals. Students also spend time recalling famous quotations from their countries or favorite writers. They record the ones they can remember. Then, they choose one to explain to a small group of peers. Finally, they are asked to write this quote on a piece of paper in a decorative way with a short explanation of the quotation and how it pertains to their lives. I hang these on our classroom walls. Other activities for this theme include taking a famous adage or quote and writing a short paragraph with it. I give my students an example of a paragraph I wrote using a famous quote:

Art is an escape. It takes a person into other worlds, other times. It tells stories of the past, present and future. Happenings documented and events yet imagined are revealed on the canvas. The medium seems one dimensional—a flat piece of cloth, but as one enters the magical world, the barriers fall, and a person is weightlessly transported out of the self into another world—into any world. As Twyla Thorpe writes, "Art is the only way to travel without leaving home." It's an immediate escape because minds and spirits are released, if only for a moment in time. Everyone has experienced this, even if the piece of art only initiated traveling back to one's own past... The mind wanders and the person

arrives in a different space and time. What an adventure art is!

Students try a paragraph of their own in their journals. Another activity that I do is designed to get students to use quotations from their reading in their writing. I pass out Victoria Rowell's article, "Full Circle Mother", published in *Family Circle*, 10/10/95, page 165. Students read this silently. Then, students offer the main ideas and points. I use an exercise developed by the Faculty at the School for International Training where students reread the article and underline the three best lines in the article. Next, they simply read these three lines to a partner without comment. They choose one line to talk about with a partner. Then, I read them my commentary on Rowell's article, distribute copies, and students find the quotations in my writing. We look at the mechanics of using a quotation – the punctuation, the lead into a quote etc. Finally, I ask my students to write their own commentaries using a quotation or two from Rowell's article. Youngmin, a Korean student wrote:

After divorce, one of the parents will be left to take care of the children. In that case, a single parent should give them enough opportunities to keep in touch with the other parent so that they could understand themselves. According to the article of Victoria Rowell, "I know May is going to get some knocks, but one thing is certain—she won't have the heartache that I had with my family... Maya remains very close to her dad and his side of the family." It's a very important fact. Unless she has experienced what she did in her family, Victoria may not have been able to give this to Maya, and Maya would probably be hurt her self-esteem and confidence even though her mother loves her...

My students also write interview questions, conduct an interview and write using answers from the interview. Go, a Japanese student, wrote:

Now many people can speak different languages. Chinese is the most popular language in the world, and English is the second popular language as well as the international language. There are many people who can speak four languages. Even though a person can speak four languages, s/he has only one mother language. Shu-min, who came from Taiwan, said, "Chinese is the most beautiful language in the world. For example the expression, the vocabulary, the mood, and so on." Her mother tongue is Chinese, and she also can speak English very well. My English teacher in Avila College

always told us, "English is a rhythm and a beautiful language." But, I think that Japanese is the most beautiful language and Japanese can express more than all the others. I know the reason. Japanese is my mother language; Chinese is Shu-min's mother language and English is my teacher's. Everybody has the same opinion, and that is that our native language is the most beautiful in this world.

All these activities are geared towards making the students comfortable with using quotations in their writing as well as giving them the opportunity to explore different opinions and ideas in which they are interested. I show students how practical and self-serving quotations are in one's writing because they use the quotes to support their own opinions or ideas on issues (see appendix thirteen for opinion essay).

The development of this theme is time consuming, as always. But, once it is developed, my students have identified an issue that they are passionate about and are ready to write a well-developed essay with some basic quotations to support their ideas

### **Activity to Understand Conclusion**

In the process of writing our essays, my students have reviewed the introduction of an essay, the body and during our third theme, I review the structure and purpose of the conclusion. Again, I like to use Weaving It Together: Book 3 pages 16-17 to illustrate conclusions. The book gives a clear explanation and diagram. It states that the conclusion "is the last paragraph of the essay. It summarizes the main points discussed in the body or restates the thesis in different words." We read from Weaving It Together: Book 3 and do the accompanying exercises. Then students get into groups, and I pass out a set of paragraphs to each group. Students work in groups to identify paragraphs as either introductory, body or concluding. As a class we also look at and analyze conclusions that I've written like this one



that concludes my essay on St. Patrick's Day:

Although the day is supposed to recognize a Christian man, there isn't very much that is religious about the day, except the Irish's zealous, religious determination to have a good time. They gather with as many friends and family members as possible and toast their memory of a beautiful, magical land. For a day, they believe in their romantic reveries that anything is possible—if a person is lucky enough to be Irish.

Students also work on writing conclusions to their opinion essays. Trang, a Vietnamese student wrote a conclusion to an essay on cultural bumps,

A cultural bump is regular, I think. Everyone from different countries has to experience it. The importance is to accept it or not, to change or not and how to resolve the cultural bump.

Another student, Robert from Colombia, concludes his essay on learning in this way,

This knowledge is not only controversial, but it is also sacred, secret and quiet. The human being is coming back to nature in order to take its' teachings. This way could be a fantasy for most of you, but only the true dreamers can understand it. Life is learned living or dreaming. This is one point of view of learning.

### **Publishing Student Essays in the Portfolio**

After my students have finished writing their essays and I finish my feedback, they spend a class rewriting their essays. Some students type their essays while others handwrite a carefully edited, neat final draft. I skim through these final drafts again to make sure that students have not inadvertently overlooked mistakes that I have identified.

I do not expect their essays to be perfect English even when they get to the final draft because I miss some of their errors myself. Plus, I try not to overwhelm my students by having them correct every word to sound like a native writer. I try to maintain their personal voices while raising their awareness of English grammar and syntax. At the same time, I am trying to develop their ability to correct themselves, their own awareness of

mistakes, so if they overlook a mistake that has been identified, I have them go back and make the correction. Once these final drafts are completed, students put the entire project – articles, interviews, peer feedback, all drafts, teacher's feedback and the final draft in their portfolios.

My students' portfolios are kept in a file box all semester so that they don't get lost or forgotten, and every completed project finds a home here. I think the portfolio is essential because every piece of writing students complete is kept in one location. Since nothing is thrown away, students can see their progress from the beginning of the semester until the last essay they write. These portfolios become the objects of pride for the students as well as resources for them in the future as students are given their portfolios when they have completed the workshop. In addition, each portfolio has a feedback sheet attached to the inside cover (see appendix fourteen). I require my students to read three classmates' essays at their leisure and write comments to their classmates on the content of the essay. So students receive even more feedback on their writing.

When we have completed our third theme for the semester, we have covered the main parts of an essay, three different rhetorical forms, and all the editing stages. I purposefully break the process and the information into parts so that my students are not overwhelmed (see appendix fifteen for writing process steps). They are able to handle the process one step at a time, yet by the end of the semester, they have worked on an amazing number of skills by going through the entire writing process time and time again.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **CONCLUSION**

My students no longer scorn me or hate me. They are no longer afraid of writing or of a writing course. In fact, they have found enjoyment, pleasure, fulfillment and adventure in their writing. Their writing experience, themselves as students, the writing course and I as their instructor, have been transformed by one another. By participating in the writing workshop together, my students and I formed a community of learners; we became dependent upon each other in our learning; we relied on each other to learn about life, the world and ourselves. My students learned about each other – each other's worlds, cultures, customs, fears, dreams and successes through each other; my students learned about America, American culture and customs, English and writing through me; I learned about teaching, learning and the writing, creative and editing processes through them; and we all learned about ourselves as we talked aloud, read aloud, journaled and ultimately journeyed together through the writing workshop.

In the end we have forged a relationship, a partnership, and it served us well as we all were able to meet our goals: their goal to be better writers and to understand the English language better and my goal to be a more effective teacher with a writing approach that connects students to themselves and their writing. My students have faced their fears about writing; they have practiced being free in their writing; they have listened to the voice of the Creator first and later the voice of the Editor; they have talked and journaled and listened and journaled and discussed and journaled; they read and responded to their reading; they wrote one-paragraph and five-paragraph essays; they did Peer Feedback;

they edited and rewrote. In the end, my students learned that writing, like anything else in life, is a process, and it's the process—and everything that is learned along the way—that truly counts. My students' essays are a testament to this, but they also tell me and write me how they feel about the writing workshop. As Eun Jeong, a Korean student wrote,

I feel proud of myself whenever seeing my journals which I have written. First time, my assignments were complex and heavy to me. But later, it resulted in my pleasure and worth. You always prepare all stuffs for us almost perfectly. I am writing to you after seeing a Korean drama. In the last scene, the actor said, "The most important thing is love in the world." Forever, I hope you will receive love from every people and God and also love them.

Another student, Elham from Iran, wrote,

I think your class is really good especially in writing when you gave us seven rules for writing and you are asking us for freewriting...I like that because freewriting in first time help me more for have a good essay in the end. I like your encouragement because it give me more attitude for doing my best next time...

Annette from Denmark wrote,

The ideas are zooming in my head like a bee which cannot find the right flower to sit on...For me it's just fun to follow your lessons because you vary the way of teaching every day...I really enjoy this semester because I think my English skills have been used in a very creative way. Now I don't feel stupid when I'm writing in English even if there is a long way to reach the same level as in Danish.

The logical step for me after transforming the way I taught writing was to write my Independent Personal Project (I.P.P.) on my writing workshop. I was true to myself as a teacher in the writing of this thesis. My process started over ten years ago with my collecting my experience as an instructor. The changes and clarifications came until I developed my own beliefs about teaching a writing course. While teaching, I collected feedback from my students to support the work I was doing. Then, I began journaling

about my ideas and my passion for writing. All along the way, I have read authors on the writing process and discussed my beliefs and techniques with anyone who was polite enough to listen or interested enough to share.

Eventually, I got to the point of putting structure to my ideas in the form of my first draft. I did this in a very S.I.T. way with my lovely friend Angie Valente, M.A.T., who came to hold space for my writing endeavor. We wrote a poem together about my thesis process, played baroque music and I hunkered down and wrote my first solid draft. But during those three years, I had only let the Creator out. I still had the Editor locked in a room.

Then, Janis Birdsall, my advisor entered the scene and I thought the editing and drafts would never end. As I was going through the writing process, I became acutely aware of my students' needs and feelings as writers with fragile egos during the writing process, and it was confirmation of what I knew and of what I was doing in class. Janis was encouraging and positive, but I still wanted to run and hide from her editing. I went through the stages of denial, dejection and anger until the pending deadline forced me to deal with the immense amount of work I had to do as the Editor. I guess I'm partial to the Creator in my writing. Not just partial, but even protective because I really hated cutting out my beautiful words and ideas to create space for a coherent thesis to emerge. Ultimately, the process I have followed in writing my thesis has been true to the process I describe in my thesis, and this knowledge is what I hold inside and what makes this incredible effort worth the fatigue, frustration and headaches from editing.

My philosophy, beliefs and techniques for teaching writing have developed through

trial and error over the past decade. It took examining my students and their reactions to be able to stop and recall how I felt and how I operated as a student and as a writer myself. It took awhile for the truth to unfold because I had become so detached from myself as a learner. My own experiential knowledge lay buried under years of being taught in a way that did not honor the learning process. But gradually, I have come to a place where I teach my students in a way that I would want to be taught, in a way that respects them and their knowledge, in a way that honors their learning process.

Utmost was my desire as a teacher to connect with each of my students despite their vast personality, cultural and learning differences. In the beginning I had the desire to connect, but not the means to do so. Now, I have the means, so at the conclusion of every semester, I carry the stories and voices of my students with me in my heart and head, and I know they carry mine in theirs as well. I am no longer scorned. I am respected because I give my students respect, and I am loved because of the love we share for one another as fellow journeyers and storybuilders in this life.

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## APPENDIX ONE

## GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

**Directions:** Answer these questions for homework. Be very specific. Write as much as you can.

1. What activities, exercises etc. do you **want** to do in this class? (Name at least 5)
2. What activities, exercises etc. do you **expect** (think) that we will do in this class? (Name at least 5)
2. What will **you** do to help yourself learn in this class? (Write at least 3)
2. What do you want to **improve** and work on in this class? (Write at least 3)



## APPENDIX TWO

### CONNELLY/SAMPLE INTERVIEW

"Why do you write?"

"I write because I'm human and I have my opinions and ideas about the world and life. . ."

"Why do people care about your opinions?"

"It's not that anyone really cares about what I, Kimberly Connelly, think. But, they can relate to my ideas. People can understand and interact with my ideas in an intellectual way or a personal way."

"Can you explain that more?"

"Well, when someone reads my words, she says to herself, 'That's the same way that I feel.' Suddenly that person has connected with me, another person, and she doesn't feel so alone or isolated in the world anymore. You see, as humans, we want to connect with others because we are social beings."

"So, the reader recognizes him/herself in your ideas or words?"

"Yes, some of the readers, some of the time. But, not all of the readers all of the time."

"Why do you teach writing? No one likes to take writing in school anyway. It's a boring subject for all but 1% of the students."

"I agree that most students find writing class boring, but I don't think that it is due to the subject. I believe it is due to the way we teach the class. Truthfully, everyone has a desire to write."

"I disagree. I've had many people tell me that they hate writing."

"Yes, but why do people hate it? They hate it because writing is frustrating and difficult. It is difficult because they are trying to please a teacher or because they are trying to write something perfect. Instead, people need to JUST WRITE."

"And this is what you teach your students?"

"I don't really teach them -- I remind them. I remind them to express who they are and what they believe in when they write because this is what's interesting. . . I help them to let go of their fears, to let go of being perfect. I encourage them to simply BE. You see, everyone wants to write. Everyone wants to leave his or her mark on the world. We begin as toddlers the first time we take a crayon and leave our scribble on the wall. That desire never dies. Yet, some of us never get the opportunity to satisfy the desire. Before we do, some teacher in second grade tells us we can't spell, that our handwriting is sloppy, we can't write, and gives us an "F". To protect our SELF from the shame and hurt, we pretend that we don't like writing anyway. . . and we carry that lie all of our lives and attempt to squelch our innate desire to write. I find that desire still in most, if only smoldering. I feed it until it catches fire again and burns uncontrollably... It's every person's right to write after all... Who has the right to say someone can't?"

## APPENDIX THREE

### Writing Assignment

Using what we've read in class ("The Rules of Writing Practice," Eva Luna's "How it Feels to Write," and "Why Write," and the sample interview about writing) and the writing you've already done in your journal, do one of the following:

1. Write a page, double-spaced, describing your feelings about writing.
2. Write a poem about writing.
3. Write a conversation or interview between you and someone else about writing...pretend you're a teacher talking to a student or pretend you're a famous writer and you're being interviewed.
4. Pretend that the government has made writing illegal. Write a letter to the president expressing your position on this new law.

I expect a one-page, double-spaced draft (which means it doesn't have to be perfect—a draft is the beginning, not the end). You will share it with a partner, correct it and rewrite it before you turn it in.

### Student Sample

Martha's conversation

#### **\*How long have you been writing poems?**

I have been writing poems for thirty years. It's my life. When I write my hands and my mind work together. Since I was a teenager, I have been writing about my feelings of love and always my feelings are right about love.

#### **\*Why do you write only poems about love?**

Because love is everything. When I see people especially, when they are in love, for me it is fantastic to be a writer when the people love. I like to write about love of nature, the mountains or maybe the animals when they are in the forest. For me this is life.

#### **\*Do you think that your books are interesting?**

You need to read my book so that you know what is important for me when I write.

## APPENDIX FOUR

### "My History of Self as a Reader"

Hyunju

Most people think that reading is very necessary because reading gives us a good mind, important thoughts and a good chance to change. So I think, reading is very important for me too.

I remember my first experience. This is so interesting and makes me smile. I learned the first time with my mother. I was very young, so my mother had to read me children's books and I only knew the titles. I just looked at the picture of the book, but my mother was happy to read to me. She didn't care that I couldn't read to me. Later my mother wrote simple words on paper with a picture. So I learned these words and was improving my reading. I think now that that time in my life was very enjoyable.

I remember again about my reading experience. One day I accepted a gift from my father. It was a book and the subject was about a tall, lank man. This story was very interesting for me and I couldn't even sleep enough at that time, I couldn't study very well, but I think, this was a good enjoyable time in my life.

Now when I think about reading, I realize liked that I have reading since my youth. Someone who ask me "What's our hobby?" I can say, "My hobby is reading."

Sometimes I accept many kind of knowledge and changes in my mind when I read. So reading is very important and enjoyable time me.

I am thinking that reading is "good food for thought" because we are able to accept considerable knowledge and we will have many kinds of experience. Although we haven't had the experience ourselves. We can think about everything through reading. We also learn lessons from reading. I think, reading is a living lesson and reading has been a good lesson for me too. I believe that reading is very necessary for us. Although reading, we will have warm hearts and we will become rich people in our spirits.

## APPENDIX FIVE

### LISTENING AND SPEAKING CONNELLY LISTENING INVENTORY

#### P E R S O N A L   L I S T E N I N G   I N V E N T O R Y

No one can begin to improve in any way without first knowing what needs improvement. We all need to work on our listening skills daily, but how do we know where to start or what steps to take? Answer the questions below by putting an "x" under the correct column. Be honest with yourself!!

	NEVER	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALWAYS
1. I attempt to listen to several conversations at the same time.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. I sometimes pretend to pay attention to others when I'm really not.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. I end conversations I'm not interested in by acting bored or by giving my attention to someone or something else.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. When someone else is talking, I'm thinking about what I want to say.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. When a person's way of speaking (such as a low voice, muttering, slow delivery, accent) bothers me, I just ignore what he/she says.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. If the material in class is too difficult, I begin thinking about other things or daydreaming.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. If my instructor's voice is difficult to hear, I don't try to listen or I daydream about other things.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. If my instructor uses a word I don't understand, I act like I really do instead of asking a question.	_____	_____	_____	_____

9. If my instructor uses a word I don't understand, I immediately pull out my dictionary and try to find the word.

\_\_\_\_\_

10. If someone in my class begins talking to me, I respond even if the instructor or another student is talking.

\_\_\_\_\_

11. I try to do other things such as homework, letters and drawings when the instructor is talking.

\_\_\_\_\_

12. When someone else is talking I often interrupt or start talking about myself.

\_\_\_\_\_

NOW GO BACK AND SCORE YOURSELF. GIVE YOURSELF 4 POINTS FOR NEVER, 3 POINTS FOR SOMETIMES, 2 POINTS FOR OFTEN, AND 0 POINTS FOR ALWAYS. WRITE YOUR TOTAL IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

TOTAL POINTS: \_\_\_\_\_

#### UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCORE

- 45-50 points: Congratulations! You're probably a decent listener without many bad listening habits. But, remember, there's still always room for improvement.
- 40-44 points: Good, but be aware that you could easily develop some terrible listening habits if you're not careful!
- 30-40 points: Pay attention to your problem areas. Promise to work towards changing/listening your listening habits.
- 30 and below: You have some serious, bad listening habits. But, don't be discouraged. This is your chance to improve.

\*\* What kinds of problems might each of these listening habits 1-12 cause in relationships? in the classroom? \*\*

## APPENDIX SIX

### DESCRIPTION ESSAY

"Me and My Superstitions"

Vladimir

Many people in the world believe in superstitions. I know many different superstitions and many times I understood that superstitions have had magical power in my life. Many superstitions have influenced my life, but two of them I remember all the time.

I never believed that a black cat crossing the street was a bad omen, but one time I came to believe that it is true! One morning I met a black cat which went crossed my way. I walked on to the bus and quickly forgot about this cat. But my bus broke on the road and I was late for my job and received a record. Then in the afternoon I lost my briefcase with my documents and my month's salary. I was very upset. Finally, in the evening, I met some hoodlums near my home who took my last money. I came back home and thought "This is all due to the black cat."

How about good luck in my life. I remember the best day in my life. It was on February 19, 1980. In the morning, when I want to take out my trash, I found a big old horseshoe on the road and understood: "This is a very good superstition." I left out my trash bag and returned home. Wow! I saw a small but very nice gold key with a little letter "V" on the ring. It was my letter! It was definitely my lucky day! I put it on and went to my job. Then I met a very nice girl on the bus. We talked the whole time we were on the bus. I liked her the moment I set eyes on her. It was love at first sight. The next year we were married. Finally, that night I watche3d TV and looked for the results of the regular lottery. Wow! I won \$10,000. I was a lucky man! It was wonderful! That is why I remember this day all my life.

In conclusion, I can say that I believe in different superstition because they have been real in my life.

## DESCRIPTION ESSAY

"My Father"

Eugene Chen

Each time I saw his hair turning whiter and whiter. I knew he was getting older and older. When I saw him riding his bicycle from home. I knew he was going to the temple near my house with his older friends to talk and gossip. My father, a ninety-four years old man, used to be a farmer before he retired at seventy-two years old.

When he was young, he worked very hard because he had six sons and three daughters to raise. I remember when I was a kid he worked on the farm from early morning until the day was dark. At the time the society was poor and hungry. People didn't have machines to do their field work. People used their hands and some equipment to do their work. It was very hard and painful. For example, my father had to water about forty acres of plants by bucket every morning. When it was harvest season he went to his neighbor and called them to help. At the time they didn't have many people who worked for money. So they had to help each other. For example, I planted vegetables for my neighbor today, and he would water my field tomorrow.

My father is a nice and gentle person. His personality is quiet and serious. He usually didn't talk with any one else when he didn't have something serious to say. He was the first one to fix the equipment for the valley each time after a hurricane. I remember once when the hurricane came to the valley. People were busy taking care their farms so no one knew danger was coming to the valley, but my father went to prepare for the danger by himself without help.

In addition to being well-known as a hardworker, he has a good name in my hometown because all of his brothers and sisters are elder persons whose ages are over ninety years. They are still alive and healthy. My father has one of the biggest families in the town. My family had a big party for his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. On that day, the number of my family were more than three hundred people joined together. He was very proud and enjoyed the party.

Now, the only thing for him to enjoy is going around to each son's family and seeing his great-grand children. Sometimes when he has nothing to do he rides his bicycle to the temple where there is some entertainment for the elders to do - like telling stories, playing games and so on. I hope he continues to have a good life for the rest of his years.

## APPENDIX SEVEN

### CONNELLY HOLIDAY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

People all over the world set aside special days. These holidays give us a break from the daily routine and reason to celebrate our lives and our history. March 17th is recognized in the United States as an Irish-American celebration in which all people can participate. The popularity of this holiday is linked to the history of the Irish people as well as the festivities of the day.

The Irish are very proud, nationalistic people. Although they have been in the US for several generations, most Irish descendants still identify themselves as Irish. Irish-Americans are people who immigrated from a small island in Northern Europe after the Great Potato Famine in the 1840's. Over 750,000 Irish people died of starvation when their potato crops, which was their only source of food due to British control, rotted from a fungus. Half of the remaining population left the country in search of food, jobs and freedom from British rule. Perhaps their forced immigration is what has kept the memory of Ireland so alive in the Irish hearts...

The reason for celebrating St. Patrick's Day is to honor the patron saint of Ireland. The legend states that St. Patrick was a prisoner of the Irish and after his escape he returned to the island to bring Christianity to the heathens, at which time, he



drove all of the snakes out of Ireland. So March 17th is supposed to be his day. However, perhaps the real reason the Irish celebrate this day with such unabashed enthusiasm is due to their desire to give honor to their Motherland, the Emerald Isle, and her overwhelming beauty of picturesque, green, rolling hills; or it may be just the natural, nostalgic, romanticism of the Irish that compels them to remember and long fervently for their Motherland on this day; or perhaps the Irish partake in the day's festivities simply due to their love of drink, music and a great party, and St. Patrick's day offers a perfect excuse to enjoy everything the Irish love.

Because the Irish love parties, they believe "the more the merrier." In fact, anyone can claim Irish heritage on St. Patrick's day, whether they are or not. The Irish secretly believe that everyone has a little Irish in them, even if it's only a shared love of drink, dance and song. So, anyone willing to don green clothing in honor of the Emerald Isle may join the day's celebration. There are parades all over the US followed by gathering in the local pubs and bars for toasting to the Irish and wishing of "THE LUCK OF THE IRISH TO YE." If a person lives in Kansas City, the parade begins at Grand Street and Pershing and loops around downtown. The drinking continues in Westport especially at Kelly's bar and on Broadway at Fritz's Bar where it will be so crowded that a shamrock couldn't find room.

If a person actually belongs to an Irish family, a traditional

feast of Shepherd's pie, Irish stew, soda bread, corned beef and cabbage, potatoes and beer is prepared. This is a delicious meal, even though the Irish are not known for their culinary skills. They really aren't the best cooks which may be due to the fact that the Irish women were always spending more time working beside their husbands than in the kitchen. Besides, a person can't get too creative when potatoes are all that is available. . . Then again, after a few beers, the taste of food isn't so important. . .

There are a lot of symbols associated with the day because the Irish are known for being a queer mix of religious, mystical and superstitious people. Fairies, leprechauns (little green men), lucky charms, shamrocks, pots of gold attached to rainbows and other symbols of good luck are all part of the day. Green is everywhere, and if it is not, tradition dictates that a person not wearing green can be pinched, while those wearing green receive a kiss for being Irish.

Although the day is supposed to recognize a Christian man, there isn't very much that is religious about the day, except the Irish's zealous, religious determination to have a good time with as many friends and family members as possible while toasting their memory of a beautiful, magical land where they believe in their romantic reveries that anything is possible -- if a person is lucky enough to be Irish.

# HALLOWEEN

structure in his car...

Autumn is a time to celebrate because people are harvesting their food, but it is also a time of change -- the leaves turn colors and fall, the air becomes cooler, the sun shines less and less, and darkness comes earlier and earlier. These signs all point to the coming of winter, so Autumn used to be people's last time before hardship, cold and even death. From people's fear of the dark, winter and death, a festival arose a long time ago in Ireland as a kind of New Year's Eve called "Samhain" (Somane), which means "summer's end." This festival took place on October 31st because the Celtic or Irish New Year's was November first. The Irish believed that the spirits of the dead were free to roam the Earth on this night, and from their activities, the modern day American holiday called Halloween developed. Americans do many things to celebrate this holiday including decorating, going to haunted houses and trick-or-treating.



Jack-o-lantern



Spider's web  
Spider



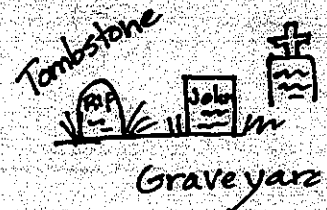
Ghost



Black Cat



Vampire



Graveyard



Bat



Goblin



Witch  
Witch's broom

# BODY-OUTLINE

## I. DECORATING

- houses, yards, stores and classrooms

- bats, witches, jack-o-lanterns, ghosts, goblins, spiders, webs

## II. HAUNTED HOUSES

- old buildings

- vampires, monsters, special lights, slides

- pay, walk through and be scared

## III. TRICK-OR-TREATING

- dress in costumes

- walk around and get candy

- go to malls and collect from stores

- have party with games like "bobbing for apples" and "pin-the-nose-on-the-witch"

- tell ghost stories

- eat candy, popcorn, caramel apples and drink apple cider

The first signs of this holiday appear at the very beginning of October when people begin decorating their houses, yards, stores and classrooms. The decorations for this holiday are easy to recognize because they are mostly orange, black and scary. People hang black bats, black witches with green faces, white skeletons, orange jack-o-lanterns, black and green goblins, black cats and more from their ceilings and trees and on windows. Some people put in a lot of work and effort to create a spooky atmosphere for the occasion.

To add some more spooks to the month of October, people go to haunted houses, which are a unique form of entertainment. They are a little like horror films in that people are paying to be scared; however, instead of being on a screen, the monsters and vampires are real. A haunted house is a house that is inhabited by ghosts and spirits, so people set up haunted houses for Halloween by putting people dressed up like vampires, crazy killers, and Frankenstein in old, abandoned buildings in the deserted sections in the city. When you go to a haunted house you pay about \$6.00 to walk through a dark, damp, unlit building and have creatures jump at you from behind doors and moving walls. A lot of people think they are worth the money as these houses do a great business every year.

When October comes to a close on the 31st, people celebrate Halloween in various ways. Most children dress in costumes, walk around the neighborhood, and trick-or-treat. Trick-or-treat entails knocking on the door, saying "trick-or-treat" and receiving candy or gum. But, some people prefer to take their children to



shopping malls because it is safer. In this case, the children walk around in costumes and get candy from the stores. Yet other people, especially adults, prefer to have a costume party with music, traditional games like "bobbing for apples" and "pin-the-nose-on-the-witch" and traditional food like popcorn, caramel apples, cake and cider. At costume parties, there is often a contest to see who has the best costume. Included on this night, as well as the whole month, is the old tradition of gathering and telling ghost stories.

Although Halloween seems to emphasize the dark side, evil and scary creatures, it's really a time to have fun, be scared and confront the dark side. It has a long history dating back over two thousand years, so people must find this holiday to be extremely important in their tradition of celebrating life and defying death. Whatever activity a person chooses for celebrating this holiday, Halloween is sure to be a night of spooks, goblins, witches and bats!



## APPENDIX EIGHT

### PEER FEEDBACK SHEET

Date: 9/16/96

NAME OF READER Alejandra  
 NAME OF WRITER Eugene

#### PERSONAL REACTION OR COMMENTS:

I think that your experience was very interesting.  
I enjoyed your experience. I agree with you when  
you said, "Language is very important to communi-  
cate with other people. I would like to know Japan  
some day." I am sure that you are going to be a  
good writer and speaker. OK?

#### OVERALL STRENGTHS

1. Your writing is clear.
2. Good sequence
3. Good development of ideas

#### CHECKLIST

#### GOOD

#### NEEDS WORK

1.	CREATIVITY	<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>
2.	CONTENT	<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>
3.	ORGANIZATION	<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>
4.	GRAMMAR	<u>      </u>	<u>X</u>
1.	SPELLING	<u>      </u>	<u>X</u>
2.	VERB TENSES	<u>      </u>	<u>✓</u>
3.	SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT	<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>

#### DIFFICULTIES TO WORK ON

1. You must take care about your spelling (communicate, should explain)
2. I think you need to work on your verb tenses  
because sometimes you write in past, you write in present
3. I found a few mistakes about subject verb agreement.  
You must be careful, but it is OK.

#### QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS

I think that if you review your little mistakes  
you are going to be an excellent writer. I wish  
you good luck in your life

## **APPENDIX NINE**

### **READER RESPONSE FORM**

1. Summary

2. Comments/Reactions

3. Questions

4. Vocabulary Problems (record sentence and page number!)



## APPENDIX TEN

### DEFINITION ESSAY

Alejandra

#### MY FAMILY

Families are the base of the society. In general, they consist of a mother, a father, brothers and/or sisters. Families offer support and together the members share and resolve all the problems that life presents to them. Although families share common characteristics, all families are different. They have their own beliefs and customs.

In my family we are five people, my mother, my father and my two brothers. We live together until my parents went to live in Nicaragua. My father and my mother are economists. They both are excellent workers and like to work, but my mother has not worked since she arrived in Nicaragua. Right now, she stays at home. My younger brother who is fifteen years old is living with them and studying at a High School in Nicaragua. My other brother is twenty two years old and is living in Lawrence, ks. He is studying Computer Engineering at the University of Kansas and is going to graduate next December. He is so excited for it. Because he lives in the area, he comes to visit Edgardo and me every Saturday, so we can go shopping and buy food at the supermarket. I miss my family because we are very united. My parents and my younger brother often call Edgardo and me to know how we are.

My family always plans trips for vacations in order to share beautiful moments together. Each trip that we take together is special for me because it helps us to remain more united. I remember a trip to the United States two years ago with my family and Edgardo. We were still in Venezuela and my family planned to go to Orlando, Fl. And Atlanta, Ga. for Christmas vacation.

At first, we left for Miami from Caracas by American Airlines. When we arrived in Miami, my parents rented a car and then, we went to Orlando. We were only there for three days. Although we were there for only a few days, we enjoyed ourselves so much. We went to Universal Studios and other places that were fun.

The third day arrived and we had to leave for Atlanta. I have my mother's family in Atlanta, they have lived there for many years. We were there for a week and a half. We did many things such as to go shopping, to know new places like The World of Coca Cola, The Underground, etc, and new people. I remember warmly my uncle playing chess with Edgardo every day. Before a match, they always said to each other "Vamos a la Revancha" which basically means "Time for Revenge."

Christmas day arrived and my aunt prepared all kinds of food. They were delicious. The dessert was the most delicious dish we ate. At midnight, we opened our presents. Christmas was beautiful. I remember these moments well.

New Year's day was the same as Christmas with delicious food. My uncle prepared a delicious "Paella" which is a food from Spain. This food has rice, chicken, shrimp, beans and meat. Also, the dessert was delicious. Because I like to share with my family and Edgardo, this trip is unforgettable for me.

This year my family is planning another trip for this December. They will come to Kansas for us and my brother who is living in Lawrence. We will go the L.A., San Francisco, Las Vegas, etc. Edgardo and I are excited for this trip.

I love my family, they are with me at all times and share my experiences.  
Although they aren't with me now, I always have them in my heart.

Family is love, understanding and support. They are with us in our bad and good moments of our lives. These experiences keep us close and connected to one another forever.

## DEFINITION ESSAY

Sohila Sadraie

### COURAGE

The meaning of courage is greater than I can write about. Courage is made of many real stories in the world. They have repeated acts of courage for many years and decades. Courage means some actions or reactions that brave people can do. Uncle Henrik explained. Courage as "Not thinking about the dangers, just thinking about what you must do." There are many definitions determined by all the courageous people in the world.

When I was a child and understood the meaning of life. Some new idea passed through my mind. One of the was courage. I thought if I could do something that nobody was able to do, it was courageous. I walked on top of the walls, played with boys and climbed the tress. Those were my courageous actions.

I went to school, read books and talked with people. My meaning of courage changed. In the classrooms I volunteered to answer questions and passed out tests. Then, I also like to play volleyball, but I didn't know how to play. I practiced every day by myself. It was my goal to learn how to lay volleyball. I wasn't disappointing. Actually I practiced, learned and joined the school's team. I was brave, wasn't I?

Than I grew up and I was 18 years old. Now, the meaning of courage changed again. I went to the university where I had a new community, new friends and new problems. We talked about poverty, government and a better life. We encouraged the other to be brave and to help the poor people. We took exception with the government not paying attention to the poor people. We had a student society where members were elected by the other students. My friends suggested that I run as a candidate in that election. I asked myself "Can I do that?" Than, I said: Don't be scared, try to be brave. It was strange and unusual for a girl to run in an election in my country. I made my decision and said, "Yes." Actually I won election and was elected. Everybody in the school pointed to me and said, "She won the election." I wasn't proud, but I tried to be responsible. My decision to run was a risk, but because I was courageous enough to Try. , I had the change to be successful.

I had a friend that helped me the election. He was so kind and concerned about poor people. We read books and he helped me to understand the meaning of the philosopher's ideas. One those days he didn't say anything about his hiding group. He was in a secret group that tried to help poor people and they worked against the king's regime. He was arrested by the secret police and was sent to jail. I lost him. Nobody knew what happened to him?

Two years later during the revolution, my husband saw him in the street. He called me and said that he had found my friend. I was so happy. My friend never mentioned about the jail. He was relaxed and brave. We talked about the people, politics and religions. Suddenly one day he disappeared, I lost him again. After two years, I was reading the new paper when I saw his name. He and his group had a secret home. One day that home was found and raided by the religious police, he and his group were killed. I cried three days for him. What was his faults? Nothing, he was brave, stable and kind. His example changed again the meaning of courage for me.

Now, I am a middle-aged woman. Now courage has another meaning. I am not young, but I try to teach my sons how they can be brave. I show them how to solve their problems so that they are able to be brave. My latest courageous was moving to another country. I miss my family and my friends. Learning this new language was difficult but I think, I have been mostly successful. Now I tell stories about my experience to my sons and push them to face life and encourage to be brave.

I have lived through and experienced many different examples of courage which have shaped and changed the definition of courage for me. Perhaps, there isn't a single definition of it. Maybe it consists of the endless number of heroes - famous and nameless - who have lived, fought, died and given through their many acts of courage.

## APPENDIX ELEVEN

### KIMBERLY'S FEEDBACK SHEET

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF READER \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF WRITER \_\_\_\_\_

PERSONAL REACTION OR COMMENTS:

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#### OVERALL STRENGTHS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### CHECKLIST

GOOD

NEEDS  
WORK

- |    |                        |       |       |
|----|------------------------|-------|-------|
| 1. | CREATIVITY             | _____ | _____ |
| 2. | CONTENT                | _____ | _____ |
| 3. | ORGANIZATION           | _____ | _____ |
| 4. | GRAMMAR                | _____ | _____ |
| 1. | SPELLING               | _____ | _____ |
| 2. | VERB TENSES            | _____ | _____ |
| 3. | SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT | _____ | _____ |

#### DIFFICULTIES TO WORK ON

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS

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# KIMBERLY'S FEEDBACK SHEET

Date: 10/96

NAME OF READER Kimberly  
NAME OF WRITER Seo

## PERSONAL REACTION OR COMMENTS:

You've picked an extremely interesting topic. It expresses a fear or a problem you have. It is unique. To write about this fear is ORIGINAL. We call people who can do many things "interesting" or well-rounded, but they may or may not be "talented." I am like you - good at many things, but wanting to excel at one.

## OVERALL STRENGTHS

1. Original topic
2. Reference to self and personal topic, experience
3. Cultural information

## CHECKLIST

		GOOD	NEEDS WORK
5.	CREATIVITY	(excellent) <u>+</u>	
6.	CONTENT		<u>x (longer)</u>
7.	ORGANIZATION	<u>x</u>	
8.	GRAMMAR		
	1. SPELLING	<u>x</u>	
	2. VERB TENSES	<u>x</u>	
	3. SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT		<u>x</u>

## DIFFICULTIES TO WORK ON

1. SVA... "If somebody ask me." (Subject is singular)
2. Work with your articles (the, a, an) and pronouns
3. Let's talk about that Korean expression.

## QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS

Let the ideas flow... Don't think too much otherwise you'll be thinking in Korean and translating.  
Work at writing more...

Teacher Correct  
Student Sample

Seo

What is something I do well...?

This is  
a great  
beginning.  
It's  
Captivating

What is something I do well? Sometimes I <sup>W.C.</sup> tell I can do

everything, but I can do nothing well. That's <sup>D.A.</sup> @ point that I want to say.

In Korea, people call like <sup>me</sup> those <sup>Sp</sup> persons who do all, but nothing do

Write  
this in Korean  
Then  
translate  
Talk to  
me about  
the  
translation

well, "Eight ways beauty." It means they can do everything, tennis,

baseball or any ~~other~~ sports any other social issue, topic etc But they have

we call  
these  
people  
talented  
well-  
Rounded,  
Interesting

no specialty—that's me. Exactly speaking, I'm a no-ways beauty. If

somebody <sup>S.V.A.</sup> ask me, <sup>PR</sup> <sup>WF</sup> what is my majority? I have no idea. That is my

<sup>D.A.</sup> problem. In future, I'm going to learn something that is my majority. I

<sup>to</sup> need. I have to ~~do~~, really.

I like this  
play on  
words.  
Instead of  
8 ways, you  
are  
0-ways  
☺  
Don't be  
too hard  
on  
yourself!

you sound determined.  
Good for you - I'm confident  
that you'll succeed Seo!

## APPENDIX TWELVE

### MISTAKE CORRECTION KEY

SP	=	spelling
PL	=	plural
S	=	singular
PR	=	pronoun
DA	=	definite articles (the)
IA	=	indefinite article (a, an)
WC	=	word choice
WF	=	word form
V	=	missing verb
VT	=	verb tense
VF	=	verb form (add "ing" or "ed")
HV	=	helping verb
SVA	=	subject/verb agreement
NC	=	no-count noun
Prep	=	preposition choice
Pos	=	possessive
Sub	=	missing subject
Cap	=	capitalize
WO	=	word order
0	=	move the word
word	=	leave it out
letter	=	leave a letter out
ID	=	idiom



## MISTAKE ANALYSIS EXERCISES

Directions: Find the Mistakes. Label them and make the corrections. Then rewrite the paragraph correctly.

### EXERCISE A

Families are the base of the society. They are constitued for a mother, a father, brothers or/and sister. They shade and resolve together all the problems that the life presents them. Besides, each family is different, they have their own beliefs and customs.

### EXERCISE B

Together is most impotent of family. families all over the world find ways differents spending time together, enjoy eachother. My family is not exceptional. Us enjoy be together as often as possible. We does many activity, but there was a difference of what we do today and what we did of my childhod. When I was younger, we celebrate holidays and happy birthday, go to the park together, eat dinner and watch programs special of tv. Now, still we celebrated hoiday and happy birthday, but we eat at restarants, takes vacations and play games from boards.

## APPENDIX THIRTEEN

### OPINION PAPER SUPPORTED BY QUOTES

Youngmin

#### DIVORCE

The rate of divorce is increasing not only in the U.S. but also in the whole world. Therefore, the number of single parents is also increasing. A single parent should be and act the rest part of the parents, but it's not so easy to do perfectly. There are a few solutions; before and after the divorce.

Before the divorce, parents should think of your children first as Korean couple who has a problem does. Children are usually the obstacles in the divorce in Western society while they are the protectors of family in Korea. In Korea parents often can't divorce simply because of their children. They don't want their children to be grown up under a single parent or a step parent. They try to understand each other and want to avoid the critique situation. The children give them a chance of being careful and making efforts to endure bad situation. People may not be in love or may not stay in love but basically, there are other reasons besides love to continue a marriage. They could be affection, trust, and children.

In spite of their efforts, sometimes they can't help meeting that terrible situation of divorce, after divorce, one of the parents will be left to take care of the children. In that case, a single parent should give them enough opportunities to keep in touch with the other parent so that they could understand themselves. According to the article of Victoria Rowell, "I know Maya is going to get some knocks, but one thing is certain - she won't have the heartache that I had with my family....Maya remains very close to her dad and his side of family." she said. It's a very important fact. Unless she has experienced what she did in her family, Victoria may not have been able to give this to Maya, and Maya's would probably be hurt her self-esteem and confidence even though her mother loves her. If the children lose one blood side, it is so miserable and they might be suspicious of and uncomfortable with themselves. By keeping contact with the other parent, the children can realize their origins and understand the situation easily.

Even the meaning of family is so important, most people recognize the fact, people still keep divorcing and producing single parents. I wonder if they care about their children. We should remember one is imperfect that's why we should be together and we've been getting married. Marriage is the oldest insurance system man made. Let our children get profits from that system.

## APPENDIX FOURTEEN

### PEER PORTFOLIO FEEDBACK

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Topics: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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### PEER PORTFOLIO FEEDBACK

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Topics: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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### PEER PORTFOLIO FEEDBACK

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Topics: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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## APPENDIX FIFTEEN

### WRITING PROCESS STEPS

Remember: All steps are important because **Writing is a Process**

1. Read articles and journal in class (1-2 weeks)
2. Receive assignment  
Read through your journal entries
3. Write a rough draft (using your journal entries that you like) (one class)
4. Do Peer Feedback (one class):
  - a. Exchange papers with a classmate
  - b. Read your partner's paper one time for the general feeling
  - c. Fill out "Personal Reaction or Comment" on the feedback sheet
  - d. Reread your partner's paper and make basic corrections
  - e. Fill out the rest of the Peer Feedback sheet
  - f. Talk with partner, discuss paper and corrections
5. Rewrite your paper carefully, double-spaced
6. Turn your paper in - with the Rough draft and Peer Feedback attached.
7. Kimberly does Feedback/corrections etc.
8. Kimberly passes back essay. Student corrects and asks question.
9. You rewrite a Final Draft (single spaced) one class
10. Kimberly OKs the Final Draft
11. You put the Final Draft with Kimberly's Feedback stapled to the 1<sup>st</sup> draft, 2<sup>nd</sup> draft and Peer Feedback in your Portfolio.