

## A Writing Workshop: one teacher's approach

from Corbett Harrison, NNWP Consultant

### Structure of my Workshop:

For many years as a teacher, I successfully implemented a Writing Workshop in my classroom. Authentic writing poured from my students during those semesters. The topics that were written about belonged to my students; the structure of their writing time was mine. Ideas seemed recklessly up for grabs at times, yet learning always occurred. It was an exciting time to teach, and it was my Writing Workshop that made it happen inside my classroom.

I based my classroom workshop on a presentation I'd seen by fellow NNWP-consultant Candy Carter up at McQueen High School. I had only been a Writing Project consultant for less than a year then, and I was still looking for better ways to structure the writing classroom I was attempting to build. When students came back to me the following fall, I introduced them to a new structure that would dominate my classroom. Candy had generously shared her workshop format, which ended up being subtly different structurally from my own. When it comes to a Writing Workshop, I think it's good when teachers don't take exact structures from fellow teachers; workshops need to be 50 percent borrowed, 50 percent self-created. Take what you want from these following pages, but don't integrate yours exactly like mine. Add those pieces that make the workshop unique to your style of teaching.

### My Writing Workshop schedule:

#### **My Writing Workshop's overarching goal & schedule:**

In eighteen weeks, students will take 5 papers completely through the writing process. Ideas for writing topics will be explored through the students' daily use of journals in response to class curriculum. Ideas are then drafted into papers and worked through the entire process on the one day a week committed to Writing Workshop. Final drafts are reflected upon, and they end up in the students' portfolios.

The first assignment for their portfolios will be a highly-structured, all-class assignment that should take 3 to 4 weeks to finish. The entire class walks step-by-step through the writing process (drafting, responding, revising, editing, and publishing) with this first paper, so they can independently repeat the process four more times. All topics after the first assignment are to be chosen by the students.

Three different genres will be represented in each student's portfolio at the end of this process, and the portfolio papers will be scored using a 6-traits rubric. Mini-lessons on the different genres and the 6 traits will occur throughout the semester.

| <b>Monday</b>   | <b>Tuesday</b>  | <b>Wednesday</b>  | <b>Thursday</b>   | <b>Friday</b>  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Daily journal write (5-10 minutes)<br>Students use journals to explore topics that might become larger papers on Fridays. Optional journal prompts asked them to explore themes from my classroom's literature. | Daily journal write (5-10 minutes)<br>Students use journals to explore topics that might become larger papers on Fridays. Optional journal prompts asked them to explore themes from my classroom's literature. | Daily journal write (5-10 minutes)<br>Students use journals to explore topics that might become larger papers on Fridays. Optional journal prompts asked them to explore themes from my classroom's literature. | Daily journal write (5-10 minutes)<br>Students use journals to explore topics that might become larger papers on Fridays. Optional journal prompts asked them to explore themes from my classroom's literature. | Writing Workshop (Full period)<br><br>Students spend the entire period drafting, responding, revising, editing, or publishing a piece of writing that will end up in their portfolios. |

My workshop worked this way: Monday through Thursday, we wrote in our journals. Our journals were places to begin interesting idea development through writing. I challenged students with daily journal writing time to either a) write what was on their minds or b) write their ideas on a topic of

relevance to what was going on in class itself or in the class's literature. I warned them that they were required to write to the assigned topic several times a week to make sure some of their writing linked back to my curriculum. I needed student journals to be seen as places to not only write freely but also to write about the big picture ideas from my daily lessons on literature and language.

My big picture for them was a five-paper portfolio; I had my students for 18 weeks, and I thought they could achieve that if they were given one day out of the week (Friday) to take an idea from their journals and attempt to turn it into a bigger statement through writing and the writing process. Had I done this with a year-long class, I probably would have only increased the number of portfolio papers to eight, but I would add harder assignment elements to one or two of the required portfolio assignments.

The first paper was a well-explained, step-by-step walk through the writing process. For three weeks, we shaped an idea based on a mutual class assignment. We talked about the shape of our ideas with each other. We learned how to take and make suggestions based on 6-trait mini-lessons throughout those three weeks. Even the reluctant revised. As a class, we edited, and we created a final draft of the idea that had begun as a simple writing prompt on the first or second day of class.

A week after the first paper was completed, I told them it was time to begin the same journey again. I told them they'd be taking this journey four more times as the semester progressed, and the product at the end of their explorations would determine the majority of their grades for the class. They were to go back into their journals and find some smaller idea they'd written about and attempt to turn it into a more profound piece of deeper thought. All this would be done through writing, of course. We created portfolio folders to hold their first papers, which were graded using the traits as criteria, and prepared space for the next four papers to come. On Fridays, they learned the routine: a) check-in with Mr. Harrison by telling him where you are in the writing process with your current portfolio assignment and b) be able to show that you've made it to the next step in the process by the end of workshop.

Thoughts moved in and out of my classroom as the students took their portfolio responsibilities to task. Ideas to write about were discovered both independently and from classroom discussions. My students approached journaling in a different way those years. They began to understand that the five to ten minutes I gave them daily to write their ideas had an important purpose. They liked their journals. They saw them more authentically.

Some struggled to fill their portfolios with five papers. Many had the time to write more—six or sometimes seven papers; I told those students that six papers would earn them a place on the Hall of Fame Poster I'd created, which—believe it or not—was actually a good enough incentive. I'd also told these students that seven carefully crafted papers was the only guaranteed way to get an A in my class these days, and that information kept them focused on their portfolios for all eighteen Fridays we wrote together. I always passed the students who made it through three or four of the paper assignments, as long as they never got caught goofing off during Friday writing time. Both my special education and English language learning students succeeded within this structure.

The first year I tried it, I had much success but equal amounts of struggle. I modified for year two, but it wasn't until year three that I felt I had it to where I wanted it. I used it in all my classes (I had poetry, mythology, and sophomore composition back then) because it worked so well with any type of curriculum. My students got it! They realized how they were required to *think* while in my classroom, and that the majority of their grade was earned while taking five of their independent thoughts through the writing process.

I loved my classroom those years. I remember my students by their papers, by their independent explorations through writing. There was excitement in my classroom back then, and our daily lessons, when we weren't doing the Friday workshop thing, often ended with questions like, "Can write about this [what we had learned that day] and put it in our portfolio?" Writing Workshop built a great community for my classroom.

My Writing Workshop resources are found on the next 16 pages.

## **A Writing Workshop Introductory Handout for Students**

Keep this page with your writing folder. During the course of the semester, you will be required to turn in five separate, polished pieces that show your developing skills as a writer. Each piece must be thorough and complete. Not having five polished and revised pieces in your portfolio at the end of the semester might cost you your English credit.

The topics for your pieces are to be your own choice, but you may use any ideas, literature, or journal pieces from class to help you choose a topic for your paper. At the end of the semester, your portfolio must contain the following:

- 1 creative piece.....purpose: to entertain the reader
- 1 informative piece.....purpose: to present factual information
- 1 persuasive piece.....purpose: to examine a controversy
- 2 "own choice" pieces.....purpose: any purpose

See the attached page for explanations of these types of writing.

Fridays will be Writing Workshop in class. You must use this time to compose or improve your papers or you will not get all five papers done by the semester's end.

### **The process: (Follow this guide when writing all five papers)**

1. Choose any of the types of writing from the next two pages of this handout.
2. Compose a rough draft (minimum: 1 1/2 pages) that expresses your story/idea from beginning to end. A rough draft completely attempts to explore a topic or an idea.
3. Have two responders respond to your paper. Your responders need to be people willing to suggest improvements, not just people who will tell you how good your paper is. One of your responders can be someone not in this English class.
4. Compose a second draft based on your first two responders' comments and any teacher suggestions. Make sure that you include more detail and begin focusing on spelling/punctuation on the second draft (minimum: 2 pages).
5. Turn in your rough and second drafts to your teacher by placing it in the "Needs to be read" file on the teacher's desk. Allow several days for your teacher to read your second draft.
6. Write a third and final draft of your paper that is as perfect as you can make it (minimum 2 pages). This final draft must follow these criteria:
  - a. Final drafts must be written in ink or typed. If typed, they must use double spacing between lines;
  - b. Final drafts must be written neatly on only one side of the paper;
  - c. Final drafts must be stapled on top of the first and second drafts of the same assignment;
  - d. Only one final draft can be turned in each week. Don't put off all your final drafts until the last weeks of the semester or they will not be read.
7. After you've seen your final draft grade, place all three drafts of each completed paper in your classroom portfolio. At the end of the semester, all five of your papers must be located in the portfolio in order to earn your grade. Update your portfolio checklist when each paper is returned.

### **Creative Papers:**

A creative paper is a story created by the writer to entertain the reader. The story created can be completely fictional, loosely based on fact, or completely based on fact but told in an interesting, exciting way. I look for the following when I grade creative papers:

1. A good use of interesting vocabulary, especially with verbs and adjectives.
2. Characters that have been described so well that I can see them in my mind as I read.
3. Settings that have been described so well that I can see them in my mind as I read.
4. Action that makes sense and whose purpose is explained creatively by the writer.
5. A good, attention-grabbing or thought-provoking introduction and conclusion.

### **Informative Papers:**

An informative paper is a paper that proves the writer has knowledge about a topic. It introduces its topic, discusses several aspects of the topic, and uses facts to support the paper. I look for the following when I grade informative papers:

1. A thorough introduction to the paper's topic. Always introduce your informative papers under the assumption that your reader has no idea what your paper's topic is.
2. Thorough details which are factual and which show you truly have knowledge of the given topic. Summarize, don't plagiarize!
3. An intelligent transition from thought to thought as you discuss the topic.
4. A thought-provoking, conclusive thought to leave the reader thinking even after the paper is written.
5. Organization that keeps the paper's thoughts easy to follow.

### **Persuasive Papers:**

A persuasive paper is a paper where the reader is shown several sides of a controversial issue, including the writer's side. The paper should be designed to make the reader think about an issue, without forcing an opinion on him/her. I look for the following when I grade persuasive papers:

1. A thorough introduction to the topic of controversy. Explain to the reader why it's an important/interesting topic.
2. Organization that gives a fair amount of writing to show both sides of the issue. Don't be biased or too subjective by talking more about one side over the other(s).
3. Persuasive facts are always a nice addition, especially facts that show why there's a controversy in the first place.
4. A thought-provoking conclusion that lets the reader essentially make his/her own choice in being persuaded.
5. Strong, interesting use of language that helps me hear the writer's voice.

### **Own-choice Papers:**

An own-choice paper can be any genre or writing, or take on any purpose of writing. Many own-choice papers serve multiple purposes (to entertain **and** to persuade, for example). I look for the following when I grade own-choice papers:

1. Commitment and conviction from the author on the topic chosen. Choose those topics of most interest to you when writing an own-choice paper for portfolios.
2. Dedication and attention to the writing process and the writing traits when writing any own-choice paper.
3. Simultaneous creativity and logic from the writer.

# Genres for papers

(Please keep this page in your journal or your portfolio)

You may choose any of these paper genres to base your papers; however, once you have chosen one type of writing from these lists, you may not write a second paper that is the exact same genre. Don't limit yourself to but one type of writing when you craft these pieces for your portfolio; explore your horizons. As an additional note, keep your paper-cleanliness rating at PG, please.

## Some Creative Genres

A children's book  
A ghost story  
A love story  
An adventure story  
A horror story  
A mystery  
A story with a flashback  
A parody  
A fake newspaper  
An Old West story  
A melodrama  
A memoir  
A magazine article  
A comical piece of fiction  
A comical true story  
A science fiction story  
A story about a bizarre person  
A narrative about something that happened  
A short play with several characters  
A comic book  
A love poem  
A humorous poem  
A poem that tells a story  
A sensory description  
A creative response to a poem  
A creative response to a story  
A creative response to a novel  
Other (Ask your teacher, please)

## Some Informative Genres

An interview  
An expository essay on:  
    a. a famous person/writer  
    b. a historical event  
    c. a current event  
    d. a piece of literature  
    e. a topic of interest to you  
A book report

A movie report  
Detailed instructions for doing something  
A family history  
A news story  
A research paper  
A brochure  
An informative poster series  
Business letters or e-mail exchanges  
Other (Ask your teacher, please)

## Some Persuasive Genres

A letter to the editor  
A book review to persuade another's reading  
A movie review to persuade another's viewing  
A "what if" scenario that forces reader to think differently  
A research paper that persuades immediate action  
A paper that defends one side in a controversial issue  
A paper that attacks one side in a controversial issue  
An advertising campaign  
Other (Ask your teacher, please)

## **A Writing Workshop: one teacher's approach** (continued)

### **Response and Revision alternatives during a Workshop:**

Training students to serve as quality responders is a key to a successful Writing Workshop. Without guidance and good tools, student response stays at a very basic level that can be seen as pointless by students, and that hurts the workshop approach.

I eventually developed many different tools to inspire quality response and thoughtful revisions from students on the papers they crafted for their portfolios. On the following four pages, you will find response sheets my students were trained to use as they prepared to take their writings from rough draft to second draft. Over the years, I developed many alternatives to this generic type of response. These alternatives include:

- 6 trait-based revision checklists (found in the revision section of this writing guide);
- 6 trait-based revision contracts (found in the revision section of this writing guide)
- Revision dice (found in the revision section of this writing guide)
- Revision beach ball (found in the revision section of this guide)
- Revision challenge games (found in the revision section of this writing guide)
- Internet-generated response (found at [http://www.eduplace.com/kids/hme/6\\_8/evalstation/index.html](http://www.eduplace.com/kids/hme/6_8/evalstation/index.html)) for 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

I did discover over 6 years of running Writing Workshop that students appreciate a variety of revision tools. When I used the same revision tool with my students for too long, my tools became predictable and unchallenging for my students. Having a variety of revision techniques at my fingertips ready to toss into my Writing Workshop helped my students and I stay interested in our Writing Workshop challenges.

Does responding come easily to students? Of course not. In those first three-weeks of school (while walking together through our first and only guided-paper for the portfolio), multiple mini-lessons and much modeling were the basis for most of my instruction. We practiced and set response group norms. We continued to learn through mini-lessons the multiple ways of being a better responder and a thoughtful resposdee as the semester progresses. Don't sell response short...just because it's never easy to get them to do it well. Work on quality responding skills in those first few weeks, continue to remind them throughout your semester, and you'll be amazed at how much better your students get at it by the end of your semester together.

Writer's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Responder's name: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Creative Paper Response Sheet***

**Student Instructions:** Creative writing might not be easy to respond to well, so use this response sheet as a guide more than a worksheet. Find 4-6 questions from this list that somehow pertain to the story/narrative you are responding to. Circle those questions...then provide your response to all of them in one of two places: a] on the draft itself (in the margins or on Post-its®) or b] on a sheet of lined paper that you staple alongside this response sheet to the draft of the paper. Somewhere, you must respond in writing to 4-6 questions that you circle from the list below:

1. Who are the most important characters in this writing? Are they described enough to give you a good idea of who they are physically and what their personalities are like? Comment/Suggest on one character from the writing at least.
2. What is the setting for this story? Does the author include enough information for you to see the setting in your mind as you read? Comment/Suggest on one aspect of the setting from the writing.
3. A good story has conflict between the characters and something else. Does the conflict make complete sense to you as you read the story? Ask, at least, one question about the conflict that you have for the author as you finish the paper.
4. Has the author effectively organized the story into paragraphs? If you cannot easily understand why the author has divided the action into paragraphs, mark the draft where you feel paragraphs should exist. Leave a short comment that explains why you think a paragraph should be added.
5. Select five weak verbs from the author's draft and circle them. Suggest a better, more exciting verb below for each circled verb.
6. Suggest four alternative titles for this story.
7. Does the story end effectively? When you reach the ending, do you feel satisfied that enough of the story has been included in the paper that you've read? Suggest one idea that you might add to the paper's ending.
8. Find eight weak nouns or adjectives. Underline them. Write suggestions for improving those underlined words from the draft.
9. Comment/Suggest on the paper's strongest moment.
10. Comment/Suggest on (with kindness!) the paper's weakest moment.
11. Other topic I can comment on when responding to this story (write it below, then circle number 11.):

Writer's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Responder's name: \_\_\_\_\_

***Persuasive Paper Response Sheet***

**Student Instructions:** Persuasive writing isn't easy to respond to, so use this response sheet as a guide more than a worksheet. Find 4-6 questions from this list that somehow pertain to the persuasive paper you are responding to. Circle those questions...then provide your response to all of them in one of two places: a] on the draft itself (in the margins or on Post-its®) or b] on a sheet of lined paper that you staple alongside this response sheet to the draft of the paper. Somewhere, you must respond in writing to 4-6 questions that you circle from the list below:

1. After reading this paper, explain in your own words what you think the writer was trying to persuade you to feel or do. Comment/Suggest on the chosen topic.
2. Why even talk about this topic? Where does the writer explain why he/she is putting these ideas in written form? If he/she does not include this in the writing, comment/suggest on what might happen if he/she did.
3. To be persuasive, a paper might explain what could happen if one doesn't do what the writer has suggested in writing. What did the writer suggest? Comment/Suggest on how the writer helped the reader to see a "better way" through the piece of writing.
4. Is the introduction to this paper interesting? Does it grab your attention right off? Suggest a way for the author to make the entire introductory paragraph even **more** interesting.
5. Does the conclusion leave you satisfied...or anxious to change the way you think? Is a final plea of persuasion given at the very end? Suggest a way for the paper's conclusion to be even more persuasive.
6. Do you have any questions of the author? Ask at least one question that you feel the author needs to answer for you to be completely persuaded?
7. Effective persuasive writing requires writers to not only present their side of an issue but also to mention the opposing side of the same issue. Does the writer do that? If not, suggest a place in the paper for the author to mention the opposition.
8. Does the author back up his/her persuasive idea with any facts. Suggest a place where facts would help you to agree with the author's argument even more. Should/Can the facts be cited to improve his/her believability.
9. Comment/Suggest on the paper's strongest moment.
10. Comment/Suggest on (with kindness!) the paper's weakest moment.
11. Other topic I can comment on when responding to this paper (write it below, then circle number 11):



Writer's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Responder's name: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Informative Paper Response Sheet***

**Student Instructions:** Informative writing isn't easy to respond to, so use this response sheet as a guide more than a worksheet. Find 4-6 questions from this list that somehow pertain to the essay/report you are responding to. Circle those questions...then provide your response to all of them in one of two places: a] on the draft itself (in the margins or on Post-its®) or b] on a sheet of lined paper that you staple alongside this response sheet to the draft of the paper. Somewhere, you must respond in writing to 4-6 questions that you circle from the list below:

1. Comment/Suggest on why you think this writer wrote about this topic in the way that he/she chose to write about the topic.
2. Is the introduction to this paper interesting enough? Does it grab your attention and make you want to read on what could be a rather dull topic, if not written well? Suggest a way that the writer could make the entire introductory paragraph even **more** interesting.
3. Has the paper been organized into paragraphs? Does each paragraph focus on one specific idea or too many ideas? If the writer needs more paragraphs, mark on the draft where you feel the paragraphs should occur and explain why in as few words as possible to the writer.
4. After reading this paper, why do you think the writer wrote it? Were you ever told in the writing what the purpose of the writing was? Comment/suggest on how the author has indicated his/her purpose in writing.
5. How do you feel about the author's conclusion to this informative paper? Does it sum up all that you should have learned or leave you a little confused? Suggest a way the author can make the conclusion more helpful to the reader.
6. A well-written informative paper includes interesting, well-chosen facts that help build the paper's interest-level. Circle the three most interesting facts in the paper. Do these facts tend to all be located in the same place in the paper? If so, suggest how the author could spread the facts out evenly. Or comment on any facts that might be made more interesting.
7. Are there any points in this paper where you became confused? Mark the confusing points on the draft, and suggest a way to remove the confusion.
8. Highlight two facts in the paper where the author has not mentioned where he/she found the facts. Comment on whether the facts might be better and more believable if they were cited?
9. Comment/Suggest on the paper's strongest moment.
10. Comment/Suggest on (with kindness!) the paper's weakest moment.
11. Other topic I can comment on when responding to this paper (write it below, then circle number 11):

Writer's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Responder's name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Poetry Response Sheet

**Student Instructions:** Poetry isn't easy to respond to, so use this response sheet as a guide more than a worksheet. Find 3-5 questions from this list that somehow pertain to the poem you are responding to. Circle those questions...then provide your response to all of them in one of two places: a) on the poem itself (in the margins or on Post-its®) or b) on a sheet of lined paper that you staple alongside this response sheet to the draft of the poem. Somewhere, you must respond in writing to 3-5 questions that you circle from the list below:

1. A poem should attempt to describe something or some occurrence in a way that it has never been described before. Unique description: that's what a poem is. Comment/Suggest on this poet's use of unique descriptions inside the poem.
2. Some poets use *rhyme* as one of the poetic writing tools (often called *poetic devices*) that help make the description unique. If this poet used *rhyme* as one of the poem's devices, comment/suggest on the poet's use of *rhyme*.
3. Some poets use *imagery* as one of the poetic writing tools (often called *poetic devices*) that help make the description unique. *Imagery* in poetry means adding words and phrases that affect all five of the senses when describing. If this poet used *imagery* as one of the poem's devices, comment/suggest on the poet's use of *imagery*.
4. Some poets use *simile* or *metaphor* as one of the poetic writing tools (often called *poetic devices*) that help make the description unique. *Simile* and *metaphor* in poetry means comparing things in very unique ways. If this poet used *simile* or *metaphor* as one of the poem's devices, comment/suggest on the poet's use of *simile* or *metaphor*.
5. Some poets use *personification* as one of the poetic writing tools (often called *poetic devices*) that help make the description unique. *Personification* in poetry means to treat non-living things as if they were alive...in an attempt to describe uniquely. If this poet used *personification* as one of the poem's devices, comment/suggest on the poet's use of *personification*.
6. Some poets use *rhythm* or *onomatopoeia* as one of the poetic writing tools (often called *poetic devices*) that help make the description unique. *Rhythm* in poetry means adding words and phrases that make the words sound more interesting...perhaps when read aloud you can hear a beat. *Onomatopoeia* means using many words that impersonate sound effects to give the poem a more interesting sound. If this poet used *rhythm* or *onomatopoeia* as one of the poem's devices, comment/suggest on the poet's use of *rhythm* or *onomatopoeia*.
7. Comment/suggest on the form of the poem. Does it look enough like a poem? Does the shape make the poem more interesting or meaningful somehow?
8. Comment/suggest on the word choice in the poem. Does the poem go out if its way to use interesting verbs and precise adjectives and nouns?
9. Comment/suggest on the meaning of the poem. Does it leave its reader with a better understanding the topic of the poem? Or with a more interesting perspective? What was this poem trying to say about its subject matter?
10. Does the poem both begin and end well? Comment/suggest on the poem's introduction and conclusion.
11. Suggest four alternative titles for this poet's piece of writing.
12. Other topic I can comment on when responding to this poem (write it below, then circle number 12):

## **A Writing Workshop: one teacher's approach** (continued)

### **Teacher Response during Writing Workshop:**

I chose to trust my students to make quality suggestions to one another when responding to each other's ideas. Eventually, I trained my students to also serve as competent editors to each other.

In the early days of Writing Workshop in my classroom, I chose to not read all three of the students' drafts. At most, I was willing to read two, and I usually chose to be their editor instead of their responder, and their final evaluator; they began to trust me most as a reader of their second drafts, and they came to trust my competent editor's eyes. And so, my students had to get their first responses from each other; after revising, they could present the paper to me for editing. They had to indicate on their second drafts where they had put most of their revision ideas or else I would neither accept nor edit their paper; this kept them from simply copying their rough drafts neater...or printing it with bigger font to make it look longer.

When editing, I fixed errors that I suspected they would not know. My 30-watt stroke of genius in the process was this: I **highlighted** those sentences that contained spelling or conventional problems that I felt they should have knowledge on, at the very least because of my classroom mini-lessons. I informed them that highlighted sentences needed to be fixed, but they had to talk to each other to discover what the error of the highlighted sentence was. Occasionally, I had to hand a student a second draft back that was almost completely highlighted in yellow; I made certain to talk one-on-one with those students, as not to shut them down as writers just because they struggle with conventions.

I also made trait-based comments on the whole paper, giving them suggestions on something that would impress me if they attempted to better it in their final draft. The two pages that follow are two versions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft editing sheets I used over the years. In addition to editing, I liked to give students trait-based suggestions for improvement as they prepared to publish their papers for their portfolios; these sheets gave me a fast and easy method to communicate my thoughts to them

## Second Draft Response Sheet

### Organization

Your score: \_\_\_/5

Things to work on:

- \_\_\_ Make a more interesting lead
- \_\_\_ Create a stronger conclusion
- \_\_\_ Re-think paragraph division
- \_\_\_ Improve transitions between paragraphs
- \_\_\_ Eliminate one-sentence paragraphs
- \_\_\_ Improve pacing
- \_\_\_ Add more action to your action
- \_\_\_ Your paper needs a thesis statement

### Ideas/Development

Your score: \_\_\_/5

Things to work on:

- \_\_\_ Add more detail:
  - \_\_\_ really focus on setting
  - \_\_\_ paint pictures of your characters
- \_\_\_ Eliminate unnecessary items
- \_\_\_ Focus on just one idea
- \_\_\_ Make marked descriptions more clear
- \_\_\_ Make story more clear
- \_\_\_ Explain ideas with more detail
- \_\_\_ Plot is not strong enough
- \_\_\_ Cite borrowed information properly
- \_\_\_ Develop your argument more

### Voice

Your score: \_\_\_/5

Things to work on:

- \_\_\_ Make text more lively:
  - \_\_\_ use stronger verbs
  - \_\_\_ use stronger adjectives
- \_\_\_ Show more commitment to your ideas
- \_\_\_ Remember your intended audience
- \_\_\_ Put your personality behind the words
- \_\_\_ Read it aloud. Clear up awkwardness.
- \_\_\_ Make the sentences flow better by using more conjunctions
- \_\_\_ Shorten overly long sentences
- \_\_\_ Avoid repetition
- \_\_\_ Get rid of *get*, *got*, *gotten*, and *getting*
- \_\_\_ Begin no sentences with *And*, *But* or *So*

### Conventions

Your score: \_\_\_/5

Things to work on:

- \_\_\_ Check spelling more carefully
- \_\_\_ Conjunction punctuation (see backside of this sheet for help)
- \_\_\_ Participle punctuation
- \_\_\_ Dialogue punctuation
- \_\_\_ Run-on sentences
- \_\_\_ Comma Splice sentences
- \_\_\_ Fragment sentences
- \_\_\_ there vs. their vs. they're
- \_\_\_ your vs. you're
- \_\_\_ its vs. it's
- \_\_\_ too vs. to vs. two
- \_\_\_ a lot = two words
- \_\_\_ Capitalize proper names

## Second Draft Response Sheet

### Idea Development:

- Show, don't tell
- Strengthen setting details
- Strengthen character details
- Don't wander from the topic
- Make your focus smaller
- Make your focus broader
- Favor quality details, not quantity
- Add unique details
- Add a personal experience
- Cite your facts
- Other:

### Organization:

- Improve introduction
- Improve conclusion
- Link introduction to conclusion
- Not enough paragraphs
- Too many paragraphs
- Slow down
- Speed up
- Add transitions between paragraphs
- Create a more interesting title
- Other:

### Voice:

- Interact more with your reader
- Sound more interested in what you're writing about
- Take more of a risk with your top
- Commit to your message
- Add honesty
- Add personality
- Consider your audience more:
- Other:

### Word Choice:

- Strengthen verbs
- Strengthen adjectives and nouns:
- Don't use words that don't sound like you.
- Take some risks with your words:
- Use words that enhance mood:
- Use words that color:
- Other:

### Sentence Fluency:

- Vary your sentence beginnings
- Vary your transition words
- Vary your sentence lengths
- Add some parallelism
- Add more complex sentences
- Add simple sentences for rhythm
- Other:

### Conventions:

- Spell check very carefully
- Comma check very carefully
- Apostrophe check very carefully
- Period check very carefully
- Dialogue check very carefully
- Run-on check very carefully
- Comma Splice check very carefully
- Homonym check very carefully
- Other:

### **Portfolios in my Workshop:**

75% of my students' grade was based on the pieces that made it to their portfolios. Not just the pieces were evaluated, but the steps of their writing process. I was teaching my students to use writing as their means to build and hone deeper thinking. Writing was their primary means to prove they were thinking about classroom topics. Their topics were loosely or directly based on the literature we were reading. Had I been teaching science or social studies, I could have kept the same system in place and built student thought towards different curriculums through a Writing Workshop. Writing Workshop became less about the writing process and more about the importance of voicing thinking through writing.

In my class, our workshop was their time to honor their independent thinking and each other's independent thinking. Along the way came my independent thoughts about their attention to all six of the writing traits, so writing was learned...but mostly it was about the thinking.

Their thinking didn't stop when they polished their second drafts into final drafts and dropped them in my box to have their entire process graded. After I had given them their summative grade, they reflected back on their process and recorded commentary in their portfolios. This commentary was talked about before the student began working on the next piece for the portfolio. We used portfolio checklists to keep them focused on the bigger goals. My portfolio checklist can be found on the following page.

### **Variations of Writing Workshop:**

I love visiting classrooms that use Writing Workshop. I've seen them used successfully with second graders, and I've seen them used successfully at the college level. The variations are always there, and that's what I enjoy looking for. Good writing teachers are masters of varying things to fit their classroom's style and subject matter.

I have included the variation I created for a Poetry Writing Workshop. I taught a class called "Poetry" for several semesters, which is why I invented the variation. As an experiment though, I used the same variation for my Freshman English class one semester. We were reading novels and non-fiction at the time, and for one semester, I decided they would develop their thinking through poetic writing. Of course, they had to learn basics about poetry in order to complete the required portfolios, but poetry was not our curricular focus; instead, poetry was our means to think about non-fiction, To Kill a Mockingbird, and Animal Farm. It turned out to be an amazing semester of writing and thinking.

The handouts I used for my Poetry Writing Workshop can be found on the 3 pages following the portfolio checklist.

## Student Portfolio Checklist

**Paper #1:** Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Final score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Purpose: To inform \_\_\_\_\_ Score before final draft: \_\_\_\_\_

- What writing skill is this paper a good example of? \_\_\_\_\_
- My opinion on this piece of writing can be summed up in these 25 words: \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper #2:** Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Final score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Purpose: To persuade \_\_\_\_\_ Score before final draft: \_\_\_\_\_

- What writing skill is this paper a good example of? \_\_\_\_\_
- My opinion on this piece of writing can be summed up in these 25 words: \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper #3:** Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Final score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Purpose: To entertain \_\_\_\_\_ Score before final draft: \_\_\_\_\_

- What writing skill is this paper a good example of? \_\_\_\_\_
- My opinion on this piece of writing can be summed up in these 25 words: \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper #4:** Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Final score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Purpose (Own choice) \_\_\_\_\_ Score before final draft: \_\_\_\_\_

- What writing skill is this paper a good example of? \_\_\_\_\_
- My opinion on this piece of writing can be summed up in these 25 words: \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper #5:** Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Final score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Purpose (Own choice) \_\_\_\_\_ Score before final draft: \_\_\_\_\_

- What writing skill is this paper a good example of? \_\_\_\_\_
- My opinion on this piece of writing can be summed up in these 25 words: \_\_\_\_\_

# Writing Workshop: Poetry for a Semester

## Introductory Handout for Students

Fridays will always be devoted to our Poetry Writing Workshop. Writing Workshop is a 6-step process where you will learn more about writing poetry as you explore your and other students' attempts at creating poems about self-chosen topics. Everyone will be required to participate in the process, your end product being 12 refined poems that you will publish for your writing portion of this course. Your writing grade constitutes 40% of your final grade in this class, but no one can pass this class unless they have published 10 poems at the semester's end by using Friday's Writing Workshop.

I consider the Writing Workshop process to be one of the most valuable experiences of this class. Please commit yourself fully to the end product: your Poetry Portfolio.

Attached, you will find your poetry checklist. It will go in your Poetry Portfolio, which is to be stored in class. Eight of your twelve assignments will have teacher expectations attached to them; the other four assignments may become any type of original poem you decide to build. The eight required assignments will be assigned in class at some point, and you will include these assignments into Writing Workshop pieces for your portfolio.

### The 6-Step Process for Writing Workshop:

(Please refer to this page until you have this process memorized)

1. Write a rough draft of a poem based on a topic which you feel you have something to say. Each rough draft needs to be theme-oriented, so choose a good topic **and** have an opinion about it; build a statement about an idea as you write a rough draft.
2. Attach a rough-draft response sheet on top of your rough draft. Have another student in the class answer the response sheet's questions after he/she has read your poem several times. You may choose to have a second fellow student respond if your first reader hasn't been thorough enough.
3. Based on rough draft suggestions, create a second draft to be edited by your teacher. Be extra careful with spelling and punctuation with your second draft, and try to expand on or re-shape the idea you began in your rough draft. Staple your second draft on top of your rough draft.
4. Attach a blank sheet of paper on top of the second draft of your poem. On it, write a note to your teacher that explains how you have tried to improve your poem since its rough draft. Your teacher will read it within 72 hours and hand it back to you. You may turn in your second drafts any day of the week, not just on Fridays.
5. Based on your teacher's suggestions, create a neat final draft that is either typed or neatly written on unlined paper. Decorated poems will earn extra credit. Turn your final poem, paper-clipped on top of the poem's other two drafts, in to your teacher for a final grade.
6. After it's graded, place your poem in your portfolio folder and update your Poetry Portfolio Checklist.



# Poetry Portfolio Checklist

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Poetry Piece #1:<br/><b>Own choice poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p> | <p>Poetry Piece #5:<br/><b>Poem about Poetry</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p>          | <p>Poetry Piece #9:<br/><b>Rhyming Poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p>  |
| <p>Poetry Piece #2:<br/><b>Own choice poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p> | <p>Poetry Piece #6:<br/><b>Personification Poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p>       | <p>Poetry Piece #10:<br/><b>Imagery Poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p> |
| <p>Poetry Piece #3:<br/><b>Own choice poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p> | <p>Poetry Piece #7:<br/><b>Sound Poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p>                 | <p>Poetry Piece #11:<br/><b>Color Poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p>   |
| <p>Poetry Piece #4:<br/><b>Own choice poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p> | <p>Poetry Piece #8:<br/><b><i>Where I'm From</i> Poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p> | <p>Poetry Piece #12:<br/><b>Rhythm Poem</b></p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Final Draft done on: _____</p> <p>Final Draft score: _____</p> <p>Self-rate your own poem:<br/>1 2 3 4 5<br/>(circle one; 1 = low, 5 = high)</p>  |

## Rules for Workshopping Poets:

(posted every Friday on overhead)

1. You will be given a participation grade every Friday. Be sure to keep yourself active in the process. If you're not reading someone else's poem, you need to be writing one of your own or talking to your teacher about one.
2. Rough drafts must be, at least, half a page in length. Second drafts need to show an attempt to expand your rough draft's ideas. These requirements become part of your final poem's grade.
3. You may have someone outside of the class respond to your rough drafts, but they must do a quality job or you will have to find an additional responder. Mr. Harrison does check to make sure you get and give good responses!
4. Final drafts must be typed or written neatly in ink on unlined paper. You will need to rewrite your final if it doesn't match do these things. Decorated poems earn extra credit and make your portfolio impressive.
5. Each week has limits: you may turn in one final draft and one second draft only. This is to make sure that you don't wait until the end of the semester to suddenly complete all of your poetry assignments. Workshop is an on-going process, so you should be turning things in regularly.
6. Be the most creative person you can as you workshop your poems. That's how you'll earn a good grade with your Poetry Portfolio.