

Discovering Language Arts

Beginning Writing

Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 3–5

Curriculum Focus: Language Arts

Lesson Duration: 2–3 class periods

Program Description

Prewriting Skills (5 min.) – Before you begin writing, it is helpful to develop a writing plan. You can use graphic maps, webs, or organizers to organize your thoughts.

Write and Revise: A Medieval Practice (5 min.) – Adding information and details, varying your language, and thinking about your work as a whole will help you become a better writer.

Editing and Publishing (4 min.) – When you edit and publish your work you improve the language and look of your writing for its finished version.

Time Lines, Maps & Pictures (4 min.) – Time lines, maps, and pictures are some of the visual tools that add greater detail to a piece of writing.

Reviewing Your Writing: Sacagawea (5 min.) – When evaluating someone else's writing it is important to remember to say something nice and then make specific suggestions for improvement.

Write for Your Audience (4 min.) – The language that you use and the information that you provide in your writing will change, depending on your audience.

Reasons for Writing (5 min.) – When we write for different reasons we write in different ways.

Expository Exposé (5 min.) All expository writing is factual and contains a main idea supported by examples and explanations that strengthen the main idea.

Parts of a Story: Huck & Jim (5 min.) – Stories have characters, a setting, and a plot. The more clearly you describe the characters and setting in a story the more clearly a reader can understand them.

Writing Dialogue: Huckleberry Finn (6 min.) – Dialogue can tell a story, build a relationship between characters, and show thoughts, feelings, and personalities.

My Amusement Park Adventure (4 min.) – Autobiographical writing describes something from your life using your own words and feelings.

My Galápagos Excursion (5 min.) – Writing about a personal experience describes what you saw and what you felt.

Analyzing Moby Dick (5 min.) – A book report contains the summary of a story and your interpretation of what you read.

Writing to a Pen Pal (5 min.) – Writing a letter is a great way to share your thoughts and feelings with someone else.

Onscreen Questions

- Write a paragraph about knights using the web you just created.
 - Draft a paragraph about becoming a knight. Then revise what you have written.
 - Write two sentences about castles. Be sure to edit your work.
 - Think of important events in your life and make a time line showing the events.
 - Exchange pieces of your writing with a classmate. Then practice giving each other helpful suggestions.
 - What did you like best about the orangutans? Write a journal entry about what interested you in the orangutan story.
 - Write an entertaining paragraph about gorillas. Then share your paragraph with a friend.
 - Write a few sentences explaining how slaves and former slaves helped end slavery.
 - Write a story about what you think Huck or Jim did next. Try to imagine what happened to Huckleberry Finn when he set off for the West or what Jim did once he was free.
 - Think of a conversation you had today. Write it as dialogue.
 - Write an autobiographical essay about a special day in your life. Share it with your classmates.
 - Write a personal essay about something you did. It might be a trip you went on or even something you did last weekend.
 - Do you think there was a hero in the story of *Moby Dick*? Write a short paragraph discussing this idea.
 - Write a letter to a friend or family member using what we practiced here. Everyone loves to receive real letters.
-

Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Demonstrate the use of a word web to organize prewriting ideas.
- Compose five autobiographical paragraphs. Each paragraph will include a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a closing sentence.

Materials

- *Beginning Writing* video



- Writing paper
- Pencils and erasers
- White construction paper (approx. 9 by 11), at least 6 sheets per student
- Black felt tip markers
- Rulers
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- 3-hole punch
- Yarn or colored string

Procedures

1. Watch *Beginning Writing* with your students and discuss the brainstorming web introduced in the prewriting segment. How does a web help writers organize their thoughts and ideas before writing?
2. Next, talk about autobiographical writing and tell students that they are going to be writing five paragraphs about themselves for a book called "All About Me." They will first need to create webs to come up with the ideas they would like to write about. Make a sample web on the board using yourself as the topic. Write some things about yourself, such as physical characteristics, your likes and dislikes, and favorite memories, in supporting bubbles.
3. Discuss your web. Which of the ideas in the web would make good topic ideas for a paragraph? Which ideas would work better if used in supporting sentences? Create new webs using the ideas from the first web that the class thought would make good topic ideas. Come up with a few supporting ideas for each web.
4. Demonstrate writing a paragraph on the board with the ideas from one of the webs you created. Have students help you use the topic and ideas in the web to create a topic sentence, three supporting sentences, and a closing sentence for your paragraph. Talk about the punctuation used to end each sentence and guide students in using descriptive language to make the sentences more interesting. Explain that autobiographical writing should be told from your point of view and should express your feelings. Discuss the details that could be included in each supporting sentence.
5. Tell students that they will be creating similar paragraphs about themselves for their "All About Me" book. Have them make a web using themselves as the topic. Then have them create five new webs based on the ideas generated in their original web and use these webs to write five paragraphs about themselves. If students are having trouble coming up with topics to write about, suggest things like "My favorite activity" or "What I look like." Give students time in class to write their paragraphs and assign them as homework.
6. Check the finished paragraphs or have students peer-edit the finished paragraphs to make sure they are complete and descriptive. Then have students rewrite each paragraph on a piece of white construction paper with a black felt tip marker. First, ask them to divide the paper in half

with a light pencil line. The top half should not be written on so that students can draw pictures in their book after they finish with their writing. They may use rulers to create lines on the paper if that makes it easier for them to write in a straight line and should first write their paragraphs in pencil to avoid any mistakes.

7. Have students draw corresponding pictures on each page of their books and decorate an “All About Me” cover. Make sure they include their name on their book cover.
8. After finishing their pages and cover, have students punch holes in the left-hand side of their pages and tie them together in the order of their choosing (making sure the cover is on top) with yarn or string.
9. Divide students into groups of three to four and ask them to read each other’s books. Have students comment on the things they liked best about one another’s work and discuss some of the new things they learned about their peers by reading their autobiographical books.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students’ work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** The students clearly demonstrated the ability to use word webs to organize thoughts and ideas before writing;; composed five autobiographical paragraphs that included identifiable topic sentences, supporting sentences, and a closing sentence; had no grammatical or spelling errors in their paragraphs; and constructed colorful, unique books.
- **2 points:** The students demonstrated the ability to use word webs to organize thoughts and ideas before writing; composed at least three autobiographical paragraphs that included somewhat identifiable topic sentences, supporting sentences, and a closing sentence; had few grammatical or spelling errors in their paragraphs; and constructed somewhat colorful, unique books.
- **1 point:** Students were unable to demonstrate the ability to use word webs to organize thoughts and ideas before writing; composed two or fewer autobiographical paragraphs or wrote unintelligible paragraphs that did not include topic sentences, supporting sentences, and a closing sentence; had many grammatical or spelling errors in their paragraphs; and constructed incomplete books.

Vocabulary

autobiographical

Definition: Describing a biography of a person written by that person

Context: When you write about something from your own life, it is called autobiographical writing.

details



Definition: Small, elaborated elements of design or description

Context: Supporting details tell more about your main idea.

organize

Definition: Arrange things in an efficient and methodical way; put things in order

Context: You can also organize your thoughts using a web.

paragraph

Definition: A distinct division of written or printed matter that begins on a new, usually indented, line; consists of one or more sentences; and typically deals with a single thought or topic or quotes one speaker's continuous words

Context: This paragraph is written in the first person, or from the author's point of view.

supporting

Definition: Providing corroborating evidence for; acting in a secondary role

Context: Next, organize your supporting details.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Language Arts—Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process; Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing; Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions
- Language Arts—Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

The National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association have developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching the English language arts. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>.

This lesson plan addresses the following English standards:

- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes
- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes



- Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts
 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes
-

Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the [DiscoverySchool.com](http://school.discovery.com) Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
-

DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How to Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index – Here the video is divided into sections indicated by video thumbnail icons; brief descriptions are noted for each one. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Curriculum Units – These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

Standards Link – Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.



Teacher Resources – This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

I. Prewriting Skills

Graphic maps and webs can help you organize your thoughts before writing a story. Practice prewriting skills to become a better writer.

II. Write and Revise

Revising your writing can improve the quality of your work and make it more interesting. Watch a video about medieval knights and learn about the revision process.

III. Editing and Publishing

A published story must be neat and well organized and should not contain grammatical errors. Watch a story about castles and practice ways to edit your writing.

IV. Time Lines, Maps, and Pictures

Pictures, maps, and time lines are visual tools that help readers understand ideas and information. Use information about the Lewis and Clark expedition to learn more about these visual tools.

V. Reviewing Your Writing

Examine what to look for when reviewing your own writing and when evaluating someone else's work.

VI. Write for Your Audience

Good writers think about their audience and use the appropriate language and information. See how the language in a friendly e-mail message differs from a school report.

VII. Reasons for Writing

Authors use different styles, depending on their reason for writing. Compare works about gorillas to learn more about persuasive, informative, and entertaining writing.

VIII. Expository Writing



Expository writing should present factual information in a logical way. Witness a revolt aboard the slave ship *Amistad* and practice techniques to help you write expository compositions.

IX. Parts of a Story

Every story includes a plot, setting, and characters. Discuss those elements in Huck & Jim and discover how to make a story come alive for your readers.

X. Writing Dialogue

Dialogue can make a story livelier and more interesting. Learn how the author Mark Twain used dialogue in his stories and see how dialogue makes *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* more exciting.

XI. My Amusement Park Adventure

Autobiographical writing is about things that happen to you. Join a science class as students visit an amusement park and write about their adventures.

XII. My Galápagos Excursion

Writing about a personal experience tells a reader something you did and how you felt doing it. Visit the Galápagos Islands and learn more about expository writing.

XIII. Analyzing Moby Dick

Include a story summary and a book's themes and characters when you write a book report. Discover the events, characters, and themes in *Moby Dick*.

XIV. Writing to a Pen Pal

When writing a letter, include your address, the date, a greeting, the body, a closing, and your signature.

Curriculum Units



1. Preparing to Write

Pre-viewing question

Q: How do you prepare to write a story?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How can you organize your thoughts before writing?

A: Start by thinking about the main idea of your story. Then organize your supporting details, the information that tells more about your main idea. You can use an outline, a web, or a graphic organizer.

2. Revising Your Writing

Pre-viewing question

Q: How do you decide when your story or essay is finished?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What should you think about when revising your writing?

A: Revisions of your work may include additional information and details, varying the language.

3. Using Visual Tools

Pre-viewing question

Q: Do you prefer to read books with or without pictures?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Why did Lewis and Clark draw pictures in their journals?

A: Lewis and Clark drew pictures in their journals to show more details about their expedition.

4. Evaluating Others' Work

Pre-viewing question

Q: How do you feel when a friend or classmate reads a story or essay you have written?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What should you keep in mind when evaluating someone's writing?

A: When you are evaluating a friend's or classmate's work it is important to be both kind and helpful. Always give compliments or say something nice about the work you are reviewing. Make specific suggestions on how the writer can improve.

5. Stories, Letters, and Reports

Pre-viewing question

Q: Who reads the stories, letters, or reports that you write?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How might your writing change depending on your audience?

A: When writing a letter or e-mail to a friend, you may use slang. But slang is not appropriate in a school assignment. A report should include specific details and information that show what you have learned about the subject matter. A story should include creative and imaginative details that you might not include in a report.

6. Entertain, Inform, or Persuade

Pre-viewing question

Q: Have you ever tried to persuade someone in your writing?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How do informative and persuasive writing differ?

A: Write facts and clear, direct sentences to inform. Write your feelings, opinions, and reasons to persuade your reader to consider your point of view.

7. Stronger Expository Compositions

Pre-viewing question

Q: Have you ever written an expository composition? What was the topic?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What are two ways to make expository writing clearer?

A: Based on facts, good expository writing should be written in an order that makes sense. Cause and effect shows a relationship between two events. Chronological order places facts in the order they occurred.

8. Setting, Characters, and Plot

Pre-viewing question

Q: Where does your favorite story take place and who are the characters?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What must you consider when describing the setting of a story?

A: It's best to think about where and when the story takes place. Then add descriptive details about what the setting looks like and how it feels to be there.



9. Uses of Dialogue

Pre-viewing question

Q: What do the characters in your favorite story talk about?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Why do writers use dialogue in stories?

A: Dialogue can be used to tell a story, build relationships between characters, and to show the characters' thoughts, feelings, and personalities.

10. Personal Experience

Pre-viewing question

Q: What was your most exciting adventure or vacation?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What should you keep in mind when writing about a personal experience?

A: Write in the first person or from your point of view. You should describe what you saw and how you felt, including the reasons you felt that way.

11. Writing a Book Report

Pre-viewing question

Q: Have you ever written a book report? What was the topic?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What key points should you discuss in a book report?

A: A book report contains a summary of the story and your interpretation of what you have read. You need to discuss the main events, the main characters, and the themes, or messages, in the book.

12. The Parts of a Letter

Pre-viewing question

Q: Have you ever written a letter? To whom?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What are the parts of a letter?

A: A letter should include your address; the date; a greeting (like "Dear" or "Hi"); the body, or the

main message; the closing (like "Sincerely" or "Love"); and your signature. Address the envelope clearly and include a return address.