

***Core Creativity: Lessons Using Nonfiction for Imaginative Writing and Thinking
(For Teachers Who Crave Authentic Teaching and Learning Beyond Tests)***

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Stories can be told in many ways and through many lenses, from nonfiction to poetry to fiction. Work on strategies, sources, and handouts that support reading, writing, and thinking critically in multiple genres while engaging students to connect creatively and authentically to their own and others' stories. Match students' developmental interests with a focus on structure, use of detail, and narrative appeal to the reader. Use nonfiction to inspire and guide students to write and create in a variety of genres, including essays, narratives, poems, and postings for publication in traditional print resources, videos, blogs, Google docs, Twitter, and social media.

1. Empower students to write and go public with their writing by sharing their stories and using those of others in 21st Century paperless venues.

- A. Examine lessons, sources, and models using multimedia, such as video, blog, Google docs, Twitter, and social media.
- B. Discuss strategies for student research
- C. Explore resources and techniques to generate student digital writing
- D. Discuss opportunities for student work to be shared within the classroom and beyond.

2. Teach critical reading and writing skills:

- A. Explore multi-genre approaches to class investigations of historical or scientific events.
- B. Inspire students to write human-interest stories about the effect of an historic or scientific event on a person, or a family, or even a particular population.
- C. Use excerpts from fiction or non-fiction as a springboard for a found poem
- D. Research a significant historic migration or event to inspire the creation of a family memoir, imagined story, or a one-act play

3. Develop techniques that encourage students to read non-fiction using close reading techniques, critical thinking, and creative, authentic writing.

- A. Examine models of nonfiction articles and argument essays.
- B. Explore the process of responding to non-fiction by writing opinion pieces, letters, articles, interviews, found poems, persona poems.
- C. Help your students get real by using models and writing or authentic audiences.
Explore various resources for young writers to go public with their writing.

Digital Tools/Resources for Creating Content in the English Classroom

Canva

Canva is a website that allows students to create their own posters and infographics. This is an excellent creative tool as students can incorporate many different components such as images, effects, and text. Their creative projects can then be shared via social media outlets.

Edmodo

Edmodo is a closed social media site where students can interact with one another. They can also talk about a range of subjects, post their writing, and take assessments.

Flipboard

Flipboard is an application that allows students to gather articles from a range of publications on a topic, creating a collection of articles on that topic from a diverse range of sources.

Google Applications for Education

Students can use Google applications to create and share documents and multimedia projects. Google Classroom, Google Documents, Google Presentation, Google Drive, Google Build, Google Draw, Google Hangout, Google Sites, Google Forms, Blogger, etc. are just some of the many tools that motivate students to create content and collaborate with each other.

iMovie/Animoto

Students write scripts and produce films. Students edit on an iPad or computer. Students add sound effects, visual effects and text. These tools are easy to use and always a hit!

Minecraft for Education

Students can build settings from their books and/or explore other worlds such as ancient civilizations, etc.

Popplet

This tool allows students to create graphic organizers and mind maps. Students can create visuals to organize their own thoughts or to outline a sequence of events.

PowToon

PowToon is a fun presentation tool that students can use to create short animated films.

Prezi

Prezi is a web-based way for students to present information and collaborate with others. Prezi makes it easy to import media, images, YouTube videos, etc.

Slipp

Slipp is a tool that students, teachers, and even entire classes can use to create their own original magazine. Students can incorporate links, images, animations, audio files, videos, and text! Their creative projects can then be shared via social media outlets.

Storify

Using Storify, students can work together to create their own stories incorporating their favorite websites and social media outlets. These stories represent many different perspectives as students collect the stories of others and integrate their own.

Thinklink

Thinklink is an application where students can use their own original images or images they have found online (giving credit/receiving permission) and then make them interactive with links, icons, quotes, etc!

Twitter

Twitter is a tool for students to use to follow authors, blogs, or organizations of interest. They are also able to share their work with others in an authentic way. It can be used as a professional learning community for all.

Vimeo

Vimeo is a tool that can be used to upload videos and share with peers. This is a great tool to collect videos such as book trailers in one place.

VoiceThread

VoiceThread is a presentation tool that allows the audience to interact from anywhere in the world. Peers can comment on presentations using audio recordings, video and written comments.

YouTube

YouTube is the most extensive resource available to find content/examples of videos to use as resources. In addition, students can upload their own work to YouTube and share it with others.

Resources

"Best Websites for Teaching & Learning 2014." *American Library Association*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Oct. 2014.

"Educational Technology and Mobile Learning: 8 Excellent Concept Mapping Tools for Visual Learners." *Educational Technology and Mobile Learning: 8 Excellent Concept Mapping Tools for Visual Learners*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2014.

PERSONA POEM

Source: *So, You Want to Be a Writer?* by Cathleen Greenwood and Vicki Hambleton. Simon & Schuster/Beyond Words Publishing NY:2012. Download the free teacher's guide, aligned to Common Core State Standards <http://scr.bi/writer-teachers-guide>

Halloween All Year (OR: Life Behind a Face)

When you write about a character, you are actually putting on a mask and creating his or her voice and movements and feelings. Sometimes a real mask can get you going in directions you never considered. Look around your house, ask friends, or visit a party or costume shop and find a few interesting masks.

Put your mask on, look at yourself in the mirror, and start talking in your new *persona* (role). Write down what your character might say if talking to others. Then, write what she might say to herself—the truth about how she feels about herself and what she must do in her life. Use this character and your observations as the basis of a story or poem.

LIFE BEHIND A FACE

Behind this face
there are wrinkles
that hurt
the wrinkles of memory,
of being
crushed up
like paper,
being chewed
like bubble gum.

I try to act out
pride,
to fight off
the memory
of how it hurts.

When someone
calls me names,
I feel soft
and spongy inside,
not like the outside
which gets so hard
it cracks.

- Author unknown

MINSTREL MAN

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter
And my throat
Is deep with song,
You do not think
I suffer after
I have held my pain
So long?

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter,
You do not hear
My inner cry?
Because my feet
Are gay with dancing,
You do not know
I die?

-by Langston Hughes (1902 – 1967)

Source: *So, You Want To Be a Writer?* by Cathleen Greenwood & Vicki Hambleton. Aladdin/Simon&Schuster 2012.
Download free teacher's guide keyed to CCSS: <http://scr.bi/writer-teachers-guide>

FOUND POEMS: Want to write a poem but can't think of any good words or phrases? Try stealing some! This is actually legal – and expected! – when you write *found poetry*. (Of course, you have to acknowledge your source with a citation at the end of the poem.) This technique is a lot like those magnetic poetry kits, but you use paper and scissors, or the cut-and-paste function on your computer.

The idea behind writing found poems is to find language that is NOT trying to be poetic and reshape it into your own poem. Look for writing in textbooks, appliance directions, informative magazines, or boring newspaper articles. Once you've chosen a piece of writing to work with, copy down thirty to eighty words and/or phrases by hand or on your computer. Next, cut out the words and phrases and start rearranging them in front of you, keeping words you like and those you don't like. Eventually you'll see your word shaping themselves into new meanings and ideas.

Your poem does not have to rhyme or have a specific rhythm. Feel free to change verb tenses, change endings from singular to plural, and change pronouns to fit he/she or them/they/it kinds of problems. You can repeat lines, words, or phrases as you see fit, and you can insert or change punctuation to help your reader understand your meaning.

Although strict found poems require that you not add *any* words, this is your poem, after all, so allow yourself two new words. But only two. Give your final poem a title, put your name at the bottom of the poem, and be sure to write where you found the words (see samples below).

Safe Behind the Sofa—
aftermath of the Birmingham bombing

"Hey Kenny--you hanging out behind the sofa?"

"uh-uh"

"You wanna eat somethin'?"

"uh-uh"

"You wanna watch TV?"

"uh-uh"

"You wanna play ball?"

"in a minute"

"You ever gonna change out of them PJs?"

"oh yeah"

"Man, no one's gonna hurt you here. You home.

You gonna be all right, baby bruh.

I swear for God.

You gonna be cool.

You related to me you know."

(Found poem based on a scene from
The Watsons Go to Birmingham.
by Christopher Paul Curtis))

Central High, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957

White people line the streets as far as I can
see.

Armed Police and soldiers watch, indifferent
to the chaos.

Cameras flash, voices scream hate and rage at
me.

"Niggers go home--back where you belong."

I stand motionless, stunned by the cruel words.

"Two, four, six, eight, we ain't gonna integrate."

The frenzy of the crowd builds like steam
in an exploding volcano rushing to destroy me.

Angry faces, wide-open mouths screaming rage
increasingly vile, fueled by fear

of black children in a white school.

(Found poem based on a scene from
Warriors Don't Cry by Melba Pattillo Beals)

Resources for Young Writers to Submit and Get Published

Note: This material was excerpted from So, You Want To Be A Writer? written by Cathy Greenwood and Vicki Hambleton (Aladdin/Simon & Schuster, 2012). See “Chapter 11 Resources for Young Writers” for more places to publish and submit writing, as well as other resources that guide and support young writers. Free online teacher’s guide with all lessons keyed to <http://scr.bi/writer-teachers-guide>

To the writer: Before you submit a manuscript, be sure you are familiar with the publication and check the submission guidelines. These can be found in the front of the magazine, on the publisher’s website, or can be requested by mail from the publisher.

*☐ ***National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Promising Young Writers Program*** (grade 8; grade 11). NCTE member teachers are asked to nominate a few students (based on the size of the school’s population) to participate in this prestigious program. The student must submit a sample of best writing plus one impromptu theme on a topic selected by NCTE. January Deadline www.ncte.org

*☐ ***Scholastic Art and Writing Awards*** (grades 7-12) Short story, essay, dramatic script, poetry, science fiction, fantasy, humor, persuasive writing, writing portfolio. Deadline each January. This is THE contest for young writers and artists! www.artandwriting.org

*☐ ***TeenInk*** (grades 7-12) Fiction, poetry, non-fiction, reviews, interviews, in monthly newsprint magazine, quarterly poetry magazine, and on website Teen Ink’s *RAW* – the largest site for young writers in the world. Submit writing and art online www.teenink.com or send submissions to: Teen Ink, P.O.Box 30, Newton, MA 02461; Contact: editor@teenink.com

☐ ***The Apprentice Writer*** (grades 9-12). Short stories, personal experience essays, profiles, poems, and photo essays are all published in this annual. It is distributed to schools in the Middle Atlantic states. www.susqu.edu

☐ ***Cicada*** (ages 14–21) This magazine comes out six times a year and features fiction, poetry, and book reviews for young adults. Stories from readers are welcome. www.cricketmag.com

☐ ***Cricket*** (ages 6-16). A different contest is announced in each month’s issue. Genres vary: Poetry, short story, non-fiction, art. www.cricketmag.com

☐ ***The Claremont Review*** (ages 13-19). A literary journal targeted for young adult writers in North America. Fiction, poetry, and short plays are judged according to maturity of content and evidence of meticulous editing. www.theclaremontreview.ca

☐ ***Cyberteens*** (ages 19 and younger). Teen writers and artists are featured on this e-zine. Stories, articles, poems, reviews of software, books, and music, and opinion pieces are all found on the site. Web: www.cyberteens.com

☐ ***KidSpirit Magazine***. This online magazine publishes articles, reviews, poetry, and artwork by teens. www.kidspiritonline.com

☐ ***Merlyn’s Pen*** This pioneering magazine for young writers of all genres is back in e-zine form. www.merlynspen.com

*☐ ***Letters About Literature Contest*** (grades 4-12). Annual national contest sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. “Write a letter to an author – living or dead – explaining how the author’s words changed the way you view the world ... or yourself.” January deadline. www.Lettersaboutliterature.org

❑ ***New Moon Girls*** (ages 8-14 girls) This bi-monthly magazine is edited by and for girls and accepts letters, poems, stories, drawings, and jokes written by girls. www.newmoon.com

❑ ***Pinetree Poetry*** (grades 6-12) This is a very nice hardcover anthology of student poetry published once a year. www.pinetreepoetry.com

❑ ***Polyphony H. S.*** This student-run national literary magazine for high school writers publishes poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. Email: info@polyphonyhs.com. www.polyphonyhs.com

❑ ***Scholastic Scope (grades 6-12)*** This magazine has high interest current and classic articles, scripts, and interviews. Each piece includes a writing or speaking activity and contest or submissions opportunity for young writers to go public. Terrific online teachers guide with supplemental materials and online resources; all lessons and articles are keyed to CCSS. www.scholastic.com/scope

❑ ***Skipping Stones*** (ages 8-16). This magazine welcomes articles on different cultures as well as fiction written by young authors. www.skippingstones.org

❑ ***Speak Up Press*** (ages 13-19). This online teen literary journal features fiction, nonfiction, and poetry by teens. They also accept book-length young adult nonfiction submissions. Speak Up Press is guided by an advisory board of teens who help decide on content. Email info@speakuppress.org. Web: speakup.choprock.com

❑ ***Stone Soup*** (ages 8-13) Poetry, book reviews, artwork, and stories from contributors under the age of 14 are found in each issue of this magazine. www.stonesoup.com

❑ ***Write It!*** is Scholastic's website for young writers . Publish your work, chat with fellow writers, build your own portfolio, and join a master class with featured writers. www.scholastic.com/writeit

❑ ***The Writer's Slate***. This online magazine publishes poetry and prose from students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Contact: kristenworthington@writingconference.com.

❑ ***The Writing Conference, Inc. Writing Contest*** sponsors writing contests for elementary, junior high/middle, and high school students. Submissions may be poems, narratives, or essays, based on a different topic each year. Deadline January. www.writingconference.com

❑ ***Young Voices*** (grades K-12). This organization gives students a different prompt for a specific genre at different times in the year and then awards prizes for the best entries in each age category. E-mail info@youngvoicesfoundation.org. www.youngvoicesfoundation.org

❑ ***NewPages*** NewPages.com is online news, information, and guides to literary magazines, independent publishers, creative writing programs, alternative periodicals, indie bookstores, writing contests, and more. www.newpages.com

❑ ***Scholastic 2015 PSA Contest***. Empower students to research an issue and promote positive actions in their community by creating video public service announcements (PSAs). Grades 6–12. To enter, each participating student must create a storyboard or written script for a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) to **help prevent distracted walking**. One Grand Prize winner will win \$1,000 and a trip to NYC to have his or her PSA filmed professionally. Plus, the winner and PSA video will be featured on *Teen Kids News* and in select Scholastic magazines. Deadline February 15, 2015. www.scholastic.com/drive2life/

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Poems to accompany Watsons Go To Birmingham / Warriors Don't Cry

"Merry-Go-Round" and "Mother To Son" Langston Hughes; "We Real Cool" Gwendolyn Brooks
"We Wear the Mask" Paul Lawrence Dunbar; "Ballad of Birmingham" Dudley Randall

Selected short non-fiction articles:

- The Atlantic Magazine*: "Keeping the Faith: How childhood influences churchgoing" (Nov. 2014), "Passive Resistance: The active voice isn't always the best choice (Nov. 2014), "Why You Look Like Your Dog" (Nov. 2013)
- National Geographic Magazine*: "Mercurial Loons" (Nov. 2009), "Ahoy Reindeer" (Oct. 2009), "Boiling Point" (Nov. 2013), "Down to One (Rabb's)" (July 2013).
- Popular Science*: "Slactivism Drives Science Forward: Go on, dump ice on your head." (Nov. 2014)
- Reader's Digest*: "Why Shells Sound Like the Ocean" (Matt Soniak, August 2014)
- Sierra Club Magazine*: "Explore: Mount Rainier, Washington (Sep/Oct 2013)
- Smithsonian Magazine*: "Livewire: Philip Petit", "Hey Hey, We're the ...: Monkeys, bonobos, dogs, sea lions? Can they join the band?", "Your Move, Octavius: New research documents ancient obsession (with board games)", "Twist of Fate: Rubik's Cube should've fallen into obscurity – somehow it didn't", "Cheat Sheet: New Analysis of an ancient document reveals classical roots of fake wrestling" (Jul.-Aug. 2014); "How Do Birds Find Their Way Home?" (May 2012)
- "Debate/Essay Kit: Your Favorite Drinks Can Wreck Your Body" *Scholastic Scope* Sep. 2014: 17-21.
scope.Scholastic.com. Two writers debate. Your students decide who wins. Article includes activity page for organizing pro/con evidence. Teacher's guide has lesson keyed to CCSS plus links to online resources, including guided writing activity for your students' own argument/debate essays.
http://scope.scholastic.com/issues/09_01_14
- "Narrative Nonfiction: Call of Duty." *Scholastic Scope* Oct. 2014 4-9. *scope.scholastic.com*. The harrowing and inspiring story of Marine Corporal Jose Armenta explores the powerful bond between combat dogs and their handlers. Teachers guide with lesson plan including author's purpose, descriptive language, key ideas and details, inference, and Writing Contest Activity for writing a letter to Congress. Online resources with more support materials, including videos. http://scope.scholastic.com/issues/10_01_14
- "You Write It: Packing for Mars. We did the research. YOU write the story." *Scholastic Scope* Oct. 2014: 24. Students use the eye-catching infographic to write a website blurb convincing readers to take a trip to Mars. Online resources include guided writing activity, model text, & contest entry form.

Longer works for choosing short pieces:

- Cain, Susan. *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*. New York: Crown, 2012. Print. The introduction and first chapter are fascinating for teachers and high schoolers, showing how introverts are misunderstood and undervalued in our culture. Shows how being different can be an asset.
- Greenwood, Cathleen, and Vicki Hambleton. *So, You Want to Be a Writer? How to Write, Get Published, and Maybe Even Make It Big!* New York, NY: Aladdin, 2012. Print. Plenty of student models, writing prompts, step-by-step guidelines, lists of places to publish. Download free online teacher's guide with all lessons keyed to CCSS <http://scr.bi/writer-teachers-guide>
- Pollan, Michael. *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-eye View of the World*. New York, NY: Random House, 2002. Print. Highschoolers will especially enjoy the chapters on the apple, tulip, and potato.
- Rosa, Alfred F., and Paul A. Eschholz. *Models for Writers: Short Essays for Composition*. Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. Print. Great resource for teachers looking for student writing models.
- Wells, Ken. *Herd on the Street: Animal Stories from the Wall Street Journal*. New York: Free Press 2003.