

GRADE 8 English Language Arts Writing Lesson 9

Read aloud to the students the material that is printed in **boldface type** inside the boxes. Information in regular type inside the boxes and all information outside the boxes should **not** be read to the students. Possible student responses are included in parentheses after the questions.

Any directions that ask you to do something, such as to turn to a page or to hand out materials to students, will have an arrow symbol (\implies) by them.

Purpose of Lesson 9:

In this lesson, the tutor and students will

- ◆ practice strategies for overcoming the fear of writing,
- ◆ practice prewriting strategies, and
- ◆ practice writing descriptive paragraphs.

Equipment/Materials Needed:

- ◆ chart paper on a stand
- ◆ paper
- ◆ pencils
- ◆ Student Worksheet: Writing Lesson 9-1

Introduction:

For our last writing activity, you wrote paragraphs describing someone in this room. After each of you read your paragraph aloud, we had to figure out which one of your classmates you described. You did such a good job that we didn't have any problem identifying the person you described. Today you will write another descriptive paper. This time you will write about yourself.

Let's review some important points about writing before you get started. First of all, the reason we write is to give a message or tell about something.

What is one strategy to overcome the fear of writing? Pause. (practice telling about something before writing about it) **Yes, remember: *what you can talk about, you can write about; what you can write about, someone can read about.***

What is the first step in a writing assignment? Pause. (getting your thoughts written down without worrying about everything being perfect)

What can you do if you don't know how to spell the words you want to use? Pause. (spell them the best you can and mark them so you won't forget to check for correct spelling later)

For example, if you worry so much about spelling every word perfectly, you might forget about your good ideas.

After you have written your thoughts down in complete sentences, what should you do next? Pause. (reread what you wrote to be sure your sentences connect and make sense, rewrite sentences that don't make sense)

What is the next step? Pause. (proofread for spelling and punctuation errors and make corrections)

⇒ Distribute Student Worksheet: Writing Lesson 9-1.

Here is a list of important things to remember about writing. If you do not have your copy from the last lesson, you can use this one to help you remember these things when you do a writing activity.

Before writing your descriptions, let's list a few writing prompts to help organize your thoughts.

Write the following list on the chalkboard, including any student suggestions that are appropriate.

- your age
- how you look (hair, eyes, skin)
- kind of clothes you usually wear
- things you like to do; things you don't like to do
- anything you want to write about yourself

Now you have some *writing prompts* to help you remember what you want to write about. If you think of something else, you can add to this list. The list is just to help you get started.

(Use a think aloud approach to model the prewriting stage. You can talk about yourself, which would add authenticity and meaningfulness to this activity, or use the example below. As you talk, write a list of specific writing prompts on the board. An example of such a list is included at the end of the following example of a think-aloud.)

Now suppose I wanted to write about myself, and you could "hear" my thoughts as I planned what to write. I would use these prompts to write the first paragraph about my age and my appearance. (Point to the writing prompts listed on the board.)

First I have to think a minute about my age. Let's see...I know I was born November 14, 1952, so I must be 48 years old. For some reason, I can't always remember my age, so I'll write this number before I forget.

Now, what can I say about the way I look? (You may get suggestions from the students; feel free to incorporate them.)

I have to think about this for a minute. I know what color my hair and eyes are; that part is easy. I'll add *long, straight brown hair* and *blue* eyes to my list. I know I am kind of tall, because it is always difficult to find clothes that fit me well; so I'll add *kind of tall* to my list.

What else can I say about how I look? My family and friends say I can't be still, so I'll add *always moving around* to my list. I also need to think about the kind of clothes I wear. If I'm teaching, I usually wear a dress, or skirt and blouse. I always wear the most comfortable, casual clothes that I can. *I hate* to dress up; *I really hate* wearing *high heel shoes*. My favorite clothes are just comfortable, old jogging pants or jeans and t-shirts.

For the second paragraph, I'll talk about the things I like to do. My favorite *outside things* to do are working in my yard, mowing the lawn, planting flowers, fishing, canoeing, and riding the 4-wheeler.

***Inside things* I like to do are reading good books and getting on the Internet to check the stockmarket. I also *love* to eat good food—when I don't have to cook it. I love eating almost anything chocolate – without nuts. One more thing I really love to do, whether outside or inside, is playing with Amanda, Sarah, Tyler, and Tommy: my grandchildren.**

I also need to talk about things I don't like. That part is easy. I *hate* to cook and clean the house, and I don't like to watch television very much.

1st Paragraph – my age and the way I look, clothes

- ◆ 48 years old, long, straight, brown hair, blue eyes, kind of tall
- ◆ always moving around
- ◆ like comfortable old clothes, jogging pants, jeans; hate dressing up, high heels

2nd Paragraph – things I like to do

- ◆ Outside: mow lawn, plant flowers, fish, canoe trips, play with grandchildren
- ◆ Inside: read good books, watch good movies, internet, stockmarket, chocolate

3rd Paragraph – things I don't like to do

- ◆ cook, clean house, watch tv

I think these prompts would be enough writing prompts to help me write a description of myself. If I think of something else when I begin writing, I will add it to the list.

You are ready to begin writing your paragraphs now. Write at least two paragraphs describing yourself. If you would like to add a third paragraph, you may do so. After you have written your paragraphs, turn them into me. When everyone has finished writing, I will read each of your paragraphs, without telling who wrote them. Then everyone will figure out which one of you the paper describes.

Remember:

- ◆ **Use the first list of writing prompts I wrote on the board (point to this list) to help you think about things to write.**
- ◆ **Make your own list of specific writing prompts similar to the one I wrote to help me organize my thoughts. (Point to the list on the board.)**
- ◆ **Use the writing guide I gave you earlier. You might not have enough time to proofread your paper very thoroughly. Just do the best you can today. You will have a chance to proofread your papers very carefully during our next proofreading lesson.**

While the students are writing their paragraphs circulate among them to encourage and assist as needed. You may have to prompt some students to get them started. If a student doesn't know what to write, begin describing the student in your own words and prompt him or her to elaborate.

After students have written their paragraphs, read each description aloud while others try to identify the person being described.

***Save students' papers for a future proofreading lesson.

Writing: Sending a Message

- ◆ *overcoming the fear*
- ◆ *remembering the purpose*
 - ◆ *getting started*
 - ◆ *getting finished*

Step 1: Write down your important thoughts first. Think about what you really want to say; write down these important thoughts. Don't worry about spelling or writing in complete sentences at first; just write the words the best you can, and write in short phrases or sentences. ***Remember, the purpose of writing is to send a message.***

Step 2: Organize your thoughts into main ideas. Use an outline or a story map to organize your story into sections with main ideas and supporting details.

Step 3: Rewrite your thoughts in complete sentences. Be sure that your sentences connect and that they are in an order that makes sense. Be sure your main idea has details that support it.

Step 4: Read what you have written; revise. The most important thing about your writing is that it makes sense. If necessary, rewrite sentences to make better sense or provide more details. If possible, ask another person to read what you wrote to make sure it makes sense.

Step 5: Proofread for errors. After being sure that your writing makes sense, look carefully at it to check for correct spelling and punctuation.

Step 6: Correct spelling and punctuation errors. Do the best you can to find all of your errors and correct them.

If you can say it, you can write it. If you can write it, someone can read it. Writing your thoughts on paper is just another way of saying something.

Note. Developed for Middle School Reading/Writing Workshop, November, 2000, by Deidra Frazier. Reprinted with permission.