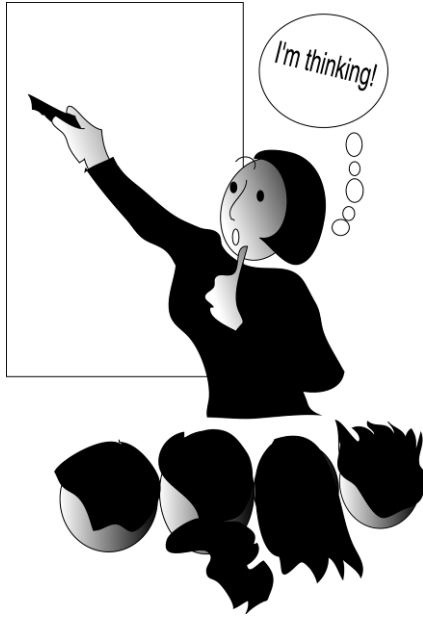


Modeled Writing for Opinion Writing K-2



"Students can go a lifetime and never see another person write, much less show them how to write. ...Writing is a craft. It needs to be demonstrated to your students in your classroom...from choosing a topic to finishing a final draft. They need to see you struggle to match your intentions with the words that reach the page."

Graves, D. (1994) *A Fresh Look at Writing* p. 109-10.

"...when I stand in front of the classroom, take off the top of my head, turn on the overhead projector, and invite them to hear my thinking and see what I do as an adult writer, they learn about purpose, patience, and love. They begin to understand the hundreds of choices I make every time I write. They see that almost nothing is accidental, that whenever I write I try deliberately to write well, to create literature about something that matters to me, not merely do another piece for the folder. I show them how I plan, confront problems, weigh options, change my mind, read and reread my own writing as I'm writing it, use conventions to make my writing sound and look the way I want it to or my readers will need it to, and consider questions of audience, intention, craft, and coherence every step of the way."

Atwell, Nancie (1987/2013)

In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning, p. 332

"The Top 5 Things I do to ensure students become excellent writers: Demonstrate that I am a writer who *always writes with a reader in mind* (sometimes that the reader is myself) and make my writing and thinking processes visible."

Routman, R. (2004) *Writing Essentials*.

MODELED WRITING PROCEDURES:

- 1. PLANNING:** Prepare for what you are going to write in front of the students ahead of time. You'll want to review the standards for the text type you're modeling, check out anchor papers and other mentor texts from literature to think about any techniques you may want to include. Most importantly, make it REAL for you as a writer. Students are fascinated to hear about their teacher's life or things he/she cares about. I typically write fairly simple opinion pieces about an current events issue I am personally tracking. Take care not to choose topics for your writing that are beyond the imagination or background experiences of your students. Help your students see through your modeling that their every day lives may provide sources for issues to write about. Once you've decided the direction of your modeling, take some notes on a post-it to keep handy during the lesson, it can be challenging to be thinking out loud as a writer while also managing a classroom full of students.

- DRAFTING:** Gather the students to the rug or draw their attention to your chart or writing projected on-screen. Tell them that you are going to show them what you do while you are writing and that their job is to simply observe what you do to see if they can pick up some tips for writing. Older students may even take notes about what you do as you write. Remind them that this is **your** writing, not a **shared** writing. To make this literal start by writing your title and listing yourself as the author.

Begin writing and keep a running dialogue going about every step of your thinking process. Your monologue might sound like this:

So I was looking at my notes and thinking I might want to start this opinion piece off with a question to get the reader thinking about this issue right away. Let's see, I could write..... "Do you really believe dogs should be kept on leashes at ALL times? Well, some people in our community think that's best." Ok, that's a start, it tells the reader what our topic is going to be.....now I need to give my statement of opinion..... I have to disagree. "Dogs and their owners are happiest when they get to spend some of their day running free." Let's see, let me re-read to see how that sounds.....Ohh.....I think I want to change running free.....some readers may think the dogs will get crazy and run all over when they are off-leash.....I'll change that to "freely exploring." Now I need to give my reasons, let me think about which I want to share first..... I think I'll start with exercise. "When dogs are walked without a leash they go twice as far and get much better exercise."

- REREADING:** Modeled writing gives teachers an authentic excuse for teaching students to reread as they write. After you add each sentence or two, tell the students you need to reread what you have so far to see about what you will write next. Continue to reread and add more writing until you are done with the whole piece or the section you are working on for that day.

- REVISION:** Modeling allows you to show students in a natural way how some revision happens as you are writing a piece. Feel free to modify words or sentences as you go during modeled writing. For example in the piece above, I may, after rereading the first part, add a descriptor to community: "**small** community" might give more information.

You can show the students how to insert more language with a caret. ^

- CONVENTIONS:** Modeled writing is **not** the time to focus on conventions. Making errors on purpose so that your students can "catch" you, takes the focus away from the purpose of modeled writing which is to demonstrate for students what good writers do in their heads as they write. Belaboring the modeled writing process with talk of the conventions will distract.

- DEBRIEFING:** When you are finished, ask students to share with you what they saw you doing as a writer. You may want to start a chart labeled "**What Ms. _____ does when she writes**" and list there what the students notice that you do so they can remember literally what you did when they are working on their own pieces.

Modeled Writing Example

Save the Ant

By Ms. Knox

I truly recommend that we save ants and not kill them when we see them in the street.

Little ants can't hurt you. They have big families. Ants are part of nature and should be able to live free.

That's why I hope no one squishes ants.

This teacher has modeled the opinion writing process by first reading the mentor text, *Hey Little Ant*, by P. Hoose, H Hoose, and D. Tilley.

Then the teacher generated a chart with student input listing the reasons the author used in the book from each side of the story (reading standard 8). After that, the teacher modeled the writing of an opinion piece that reflects her own opinion and uses some of the arguments from the picture book, along with the language frames offered to support the writing. Finally, the students and teacher color code the elements of the modeled writing with opinion statements, reason statements, and the closing statement. One could also label this model with post-its or arrows pointing out the features.

