## **Modeled Writing**



"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) <u>A Fresh Look at Writing</u> 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 narratives about surprising life events involving family, pets, or outdoor adventures. 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 opportunities for stories to tell. 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.

**2. 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 story off with the sound of my cat meowing to get the reader's attention. Let's see, I could write......Meeeooow, meeooow! A howling noise outside the window interrupted dinner at the Jones' house...... *Ok, that's a start, it tells when it happened and where, now I need more detail....* Suddenly, Ms. Jones realized she hadn't seen my cat since she got home from working late at school...... *Ok, so now they know the main character is a teacher......* Not again! What are we going to do about Jason's cat! He seems to want to cause a nuisance every day."

This dialogue will let the readers know the character doesn't like this cat.

- **3. 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.
- **4. 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 howling: "a *mournful howling*" might sound better.

You can show the students how to insert more language with a carat.  $\wedge$ 

- **5. 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.
- **6. 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.

## **Photos of Modeled Writing**

Questions ?? How did you feel when you left Anna? Sad ... When will I see her again How did you feel when you Saw her? I felt complete love! What did she look like? burrito - wrapped up tight Anna cap on head absolutely perfect. WOW Fishmouth sucking noices soft and warm rocked to sleep This teacher has modeled on chart paper her

thinking as she got ready to compose a short descriptive piece about seeing her granddaughter for the first time. She used questions and notes for answers, as well as a photo and some sketching to get her thoughts organized.

Anna When I walked into the hospital room and saw my little Anna for the first time my heart just swelled with love. She was wrapped up in a receiving blanket like a soft warm burrito. She had a little "cap on her head and she was making wet sucking sounds with her tiny rosebud lof a mouth. My son David handed her to me and as I held her against my chest she nuzzled up against my neck. She made quiet mewing sounds as I rocked her back and swaying gently to sooth her. torth When I put her in my lap to look her. her dark eyes looked around Curiously She smelled so good! Welcome to the world Anna love you!

Then she composed a paragraph full of rich sensory detail to describe just how that special moment unfolded. This sample text can be left up for students to refer to as they are composing short personal narrative pieces of their own.

Draf Muc sthought this would be her best was downstairs. As she was wall birnnday ever! She was excited to be going stairs, she tripped and fell in the to Raging Waters Water Park, with her parents. They had a fun day but were exhausted from all the fun they had. Instead of driving home tired, they stayed at the only hotel in town. The hotel was called The Old Creek Hotel. Mya Knew right away something was different about this hotel. When they checked in to there is no body to hug! She see the & lobby, it was dark and the lights were flicken. Then a rat ran across Musis tot. She jumped and is so scared that she runs be

and screamed. She wasn't so sure about spending her hirthday night in this hotel.

Then Mya decided she needed some ice for her tea. She found the bellboy who told her the ice machine cried out in pain over her hurt ank darkness, a nurse appeared to hell put ice on Mya's ankle and wrap bandage. Then Mya begins to wants to hug the nurse good bye au before getting back to her parent WORTY. Mya reaches for the nurse uniform floating in the air. She room. She tells them they need to 1 because this notel is haunted!