

“Quick Tries” for Writing

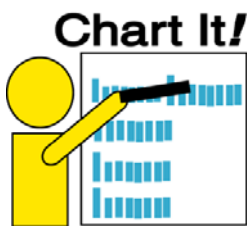
Letting students “have a go” with a writing idea

An effective way to get students to put a mini lesson or shared writing demonstration to use right away is to encourage **Quick Tries**. Following any lesson, have students try out the demonstrated strategy. For example, if you’ve just produced a piece of your narrative during shared or modeled writing with lots of visual detail, ask students to close their eyes and visualize the opening scene of their story. Next, ask them to write out what they saw as quickly as they can without worrying about spelling or even neatness! This is very similar to a “free write” but strategically focuses on the writing element the students just learned about. This also removes any pressure for correctness that students may feel when they are adding writing to a larger project.

Other examples of “quick tries” while teaching narrative writing might include:

- Write a piece of dialogue for your character. What would your character say to someone in your scene?
- Write to show how your character is feeling without using any feeling words
- Write a few sentences to describe what it sounds like in your setting

You’ll need to model this for your students to help them see how to really go for it during “quick tries”. Go ahead and show students how you try an idea, cross out and start over, or even stop mid-sentence if it isn’t going well. You may want to create a chart like this to free students up:



Quick Try Tips:

- Keep your pencil moving
- Don't worry about spelling
- Don't get too picky
- Try several ideas and don't worry about which is best

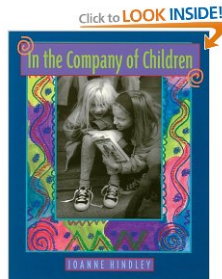
Writer's Notebooks

Many teachers have students keep a notebook with all of their writing ideas, drafts, and “quick tries” or “free writes” in it all year. Some teachers encourage students to really live like a real author by carrying their writer’s notebook with them at all times. These teachers encourage students to jot down notes with impressions, ideas for stories, words and phrases they like, and personal journal entries throughout their day and at home.

Professional Reading Resources for Writer’s Notebooks:



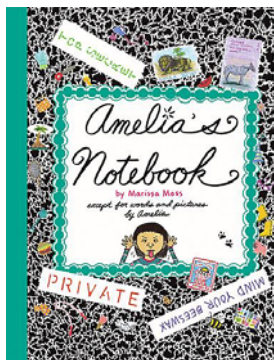
Notebook Know-How, by Buckner, Aimee, Fletcher, Ralph (2005)



In the Company of Children, by Joanne Hindley (1996)

“A writer’s notebook can be many things: a place to make mistakes, to experiment, to record overheard conversations or family stories, to remember an inspiring quotation, to free associate, to ask questions, to record beautiful or unusual language, to jot down the seeds of unborn stories or story beginnings, to tell the truth or to lie, to record memories, to embellish memories, to remember what you’ve been reading, to record stories you’ve heard about other people, to remember one word that conjures up an image, to remember things you’re surprised by, to observe, to record impressions, or to describe a picture or a person or an image you can’t get out of your head. A writer’s notebook is a receptacle, a tool to hold on to things.”

Joanne Hindley, *In the Company of Children*



Amelia's Notebook, by Marissa Moss starts a series of books which are written entirely in the format of the main character’s notebook or personal journal. They are full of drawings, stories, and notes about her life as she grows up all the way through high school. These can inspire students who are inclined to use a notebook to record their thoughts and ideas.

