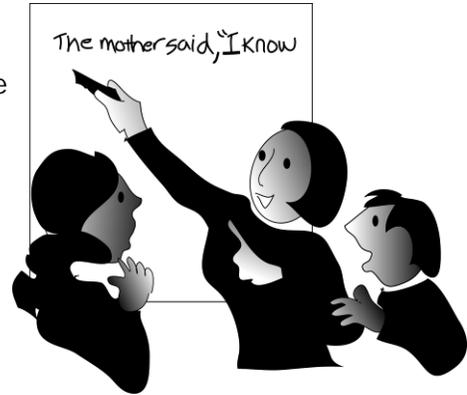


# Weeks 2-3: Shared Writing

In shared writing sessions the teacher and students compose writing collaboratively. They discuss the writing together to choose topics, words, and create the meaning they want. The teacher acts as a guide, not a director of the material. While acting as a scribe for the class she enables children to compose far more complex material than would be possible for students writing on their own. The teacher takes care to keep the experience democratic by **avoiding** suggestions such as, "*I would choose,*" or "*I don't think that should come next*" — instead invites their judgment with questions such as "*What do you think about...?*" or "*Does that fit in here next?*"



## Why use Shared Writing aka the Language Experience Approach?

- Offers a **perfect match** between the English language the student controls and the reading task at hand.
- Provides a means for teachers to discuss in detail **how texts work** and how words are written within the context of a meaningful experience.
- Demonstrates **conventions of writing**--spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Supplies reading material in the classroom that is meaningful and **readable for all students**.
- Focuses students on **composing**, and leaves the writing of the material to the teacher.
- Helps students see **new possibilities** for their own writing. Many students can share orally material which is far more complex and interesting than what they are able to write independently.
- Aids students to see how to **organize their writing** in terms of sequence, categories of information, and transitions.
- Builds a **sense of community** as class events, feelings, and thoughts are shared and written down.
- Enables both students and teachers to **gain confidence** in their writing ability.

# Shared Writing with Narrative

## STEP 1: Choose the Focus of the Writing

Brainstorm with the students possible elements for the story you will write together. You can have students provide their ideas via individual white boards and list these using the “no repeats” strategy. That means that when one person has shared their idea, others who have written the same idea on their white board check it off, so when it is their turn they don’t repeat the ideas. Your charts may look something like this for a Historical Narrative in 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

<p><b>Settings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oak forest</li> <li>• California Mission</li> <li>• Farm</li> <li>• Rancho</li> <li>• Camp during Gold Rush</li> <li>• Along a river during Gold Rush</li> </ul>	<p><b>Characters:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ohlone boy/girl</li> <li>• Tribe leader</li> <li>• Spanish missionary</li> <li>• Neophytes</li> <li>• Prospector</li> <li>• Pioneer</li> </ul>	<p><b>Possible Challenges/problems:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drought</li> <li>• Animals eat food</li> <li>• Learning to hunt</li> <li>• Missing family</li> <li>• Found/lost gold</li> <li>• Storm during travel</li> </ul>
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## STEP 2: Choose focus for story and do planning together

Have your students vote on, or otherwise choose the focus for the narrative you will write together. You may leave it up to them, or if you want to model something in particular via this shared writing experience, you may say something like, “today we are going to write a story together set in the period of the Gold Rush so that you can all understand this process, later you will get to choose the setting, characters and plot for your own narratives”. Sometimes it simply takes too long to choose a topic for the class shared writing, so it’s easier to determine this one since the focus is on the “how to” process, and the topics that are “hot” with the kids in terms of what they want most to write about can be reserved for their use in this way.

Display the planning form you are going to use for guided practice for your students. Examples of these are included in pages        :

Use input from whiteboards to fill in the planning form with the group. Take care to provide paired and small group discussion opportunities between each step of the planning to encourage full participation and not allow the planning choices to be dominated by few.

Personal Narrative Graphic Organizer	
Beginning	What? Where? With whom?
Middle	What happened? <span style="float: right;">Tell me more:</span>
End	Feeling or Solution

Narrative Story Planner	
Working Title: _____	
Author: _____	
Beginning	Characters
	Setting
	Problem
Middle	Events and action
End	Solution, what was learned?

### STEP 3: Draft the writing with student input:

At this point, you can write the narrative on chart paper in front of the students, or type it into your computer projecting the text on the screen. Title the piece and list the name of your class as the author so that students don't later copy from this text that has already been written.

As you write each sentence of the narrative, talk out loud about each element and get input from the students about the writing via whiteboards or sharing aloud. Having students write their ideas for the sentences takes time, so you may only do that for key elements you want to focus on such as a great opening line, a piece of dialogue, or vivid word choice to include in particular sentences. Encourage students to "try on" several ideas for each sentence before writing it into the piece to support flexibility in their own writing and help them see how writing is really about making choices about what to say.

Reread from the beginning of a paragraph or section before adding each new sentence. This will model a critical element of the writing process as well as keep the class focused on the task. After rereading say something like, "I wonder what we could say next to help the reader....." "Do we like the way that sounds?" Check off items from your planner as you compose the piece so students can see explicitly how to use a planner to create connected text.

### STEP 4: Reread and Revise:

If time allows, come back to the text the next day and reread for any revisions. This may include refining word choice, adding detail, providing a stronger conclusion, etc. Use a different color of text to help the students see the changes.

### STEP 5: Label the Model and Create a How to Chart:

#### Writing a Historical Narrative:

1. Choose a time period to set your story in.
2. Read and review information from that period to plan details about your setting.
3. Choose a main character that could have lived during that period.
4. Plan your story with a problem or challenge that goes with the time.
5. Draft your story.
6. Read it out loud to at least one person and revise.

Think about:

- Using transition words to signal sequence
  - Adding dialogue to move the story along
  - Using sensory detail to help the reader experience what is going on
7. Edit your writing
  8. Publish and share

Once complete, take time to label the piece with all of the elements you included such as story starter, description of setting, introducing and describing characters, dialogue, conflict or problem in plot, resolution, etc. You'll also want to highlight or point out verbal elements included in the rubric for your grade level such as transition words, sensory language, vivid verbs, etc.

Finally, create a "how to" chart that lists the steps of piece you created together. It may look something like this:

Analyzing Historical Fiction		
<small>Use the boxes below to get your ideas down on paper then write at least one paragraph for each box below.</small>		
<small>Name:</small> Title of your book: Author of your book: Time period of your book: Did the book interest you? Why or why not? What did you learn from reading this book?	<small>Did the writer do a good job at describing the historical period? Give at least one example from the text.</small>	<small>What research did you find that supported the book's accuracy or inaccuracy? Be sure to include where you got this information.</small>
<small>What elements or characters in the book do you think were imagined by the author and what did the author include from history?</small>	<small>How did the culture or time period presented in the book influence the characters and/or plot? What about the theme(s)?</small>	<small>Would you recommend it? Why or why not?</small>

Adapted from: <https://education.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2018/08/2018-2019%20History%20Grade%204%20Cognitive%20Assessment.pdf>  
These activities are covered under CCS Reading Literature Standards RL 2, 5, and 9, and Reading Informational Text Standard RI.9.

## Teacher Tips for Making Shared Writing Flow Smoothly

### Pacing:

Keep it lively! Remember the focus is on the content of the writing, and the “how to” of the decision making along the way. Don’t distract or slow down for conversation about conventions, spelling, or taking too long to choose the “perfect” word. You may want to spread the creation of a shared writing piece over several sessions to keep each session to 15-20 minutes.

### Teacher Talk:

Use respectful language that honors contributions from the class. Say things like:

- Great idea, let’s include that
- Thanks for sharing your thinking about that
- That’s one way to say that, here’s another, what do we think?
- What else do we want to add to our piece?
- Interesting idea, why don’t you keep that one for your piece (if the idea is off topic or there isn’t room for it in the class piece)

Encourage focus on the content from the readers perspective:

- How can we say that so the reader will know.....
- What words shall we use here to let the reader know this is about.....
- Let’s reread, do you think our reader will be able to visualize.....do we want to add some more detail to help them?
- How can we start so that the reader will want to read our piece?

### Professional Reading resource for Shared Writing:

Routman, R. (2005) *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.