

How do I get the kids to start writing?!



Writing Workshop Mini-Lessons

I have spent a lot of time writing about why we use a writing workshop, how we set up and structure our writing workshop, and even went into detail about our routine and the resources we have on hand. Setting up a space & routine for writing is nice and all that, but what do we actually DO?! What do I SAY? How do I get them to WRITE?

I wanted to share what happened on that first, second and third day of our "writing workshop" to get the kids *actually* thinking and writing.

I know when I first starting on this journey, I wanted to know, "What do I do *today* to start them on that path?" I knew what I wanted the end-product to look like (the kids happily picking up a pencil, opening their journals and writing), but I didn't know how to help them become comfortable... how to help them overcome self-doubt... how to let them take ownership of their writing (without my handing them an assignment or telling them what to write).

When I first started our writing workshop, I used mentor texts, well written books that I selected to help make a point. I hope you find these lesson ideas useful as you explore writing with your own children.

Here are some of our first mini-lesson topics. I used mentor texts and picked them apart to help the kids see some of the elements that make for good writing.

In this series I'll go into more detail on each one:

1. What makes a good book or story?
2. Make your story come alive with details and description.
3. Creating Interesting Characters
4. Story Openings: Set the mood or feeling of your story
5. Gathering story ideas from your own life

These happen to be some of our first lessons, but there's no reason you couldn't start with lesson 5 instead of lesson 1 or 2.

The first six months when we were first beginning our writing workshop adventures, I used children's literature a lot as a springboard for discussion and analysis of good writing.

The good news is that you can use practically any book you have on hand with these lessons.

- *Writing Workshop*

Day Five

- *Gathering story ideas from your own life.*
-

Read Aloud with the Kids:

We started this day reading *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*. It was about a young boy who befriends an old lady. She has begun to lose her memory. The little boy brings her all kinds of treasures he has gathered to help her find her memory. As she goes through the basket and pulls out the items one-by-one she is reminded of incidents from her own childhood.

Activity:

I told the kids to go gather 3-5 things that were special to them and had good memories. The kids ran off really excited! DD said, "Oooh this is just like show-and-tell!" I too went off find a few things to share with the kids.

Just like the story, we all had a lot of memories to share! I think the best moment for me was when the kids wanted me to put them in the sling that I had carried them around in when they were babies and toddlers. Even LD (age 9 at the time) wanted a turn! I was surprised to find just how easy it was to hold my 65 pound boy on my hip!

After talking and sharing (for quite a long time I might add!), we all went off to write. I loved LD's description of his two blue puppies, Thunder and Lightning. "What I like about them is not that I had them in Australia, but all the memories I have because they came with me on so many trips... Nashville, Williamsburg, fossil hunting, California."

The kids were very inspired by this book and mini-lesson! DD has begged me to do this again! We will -- sometime soon!

