

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.

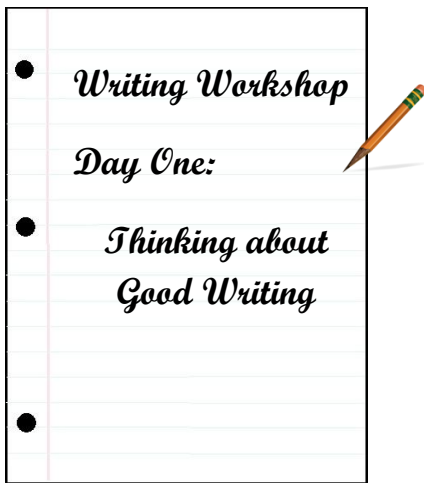
In this series I'll go into more detail on each one:

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 happens 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.



Discussion with the Kids:

What do you need to create a good book or story?



My kids came up with...

pencil, mind, knowledge, imagination, period, punctuation, letters or words

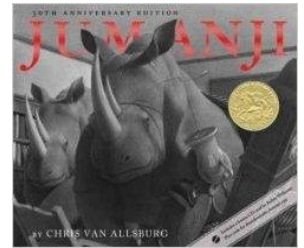
I wrote all of their ideas on a piece of paper.



Those are great ideas. Today we're going to read *Jumanjí*.* It won a prestigious award called the Caldecott Metal. I want you to think about why this story might have won that award.

After we read the book:

Now after reading the book, do you have any other ideas we should jot down about what makes for a good story? [excitement, tension, suspense, descriptive scenes...]



What was *Jumanjí* about? What details made this book exciting? Let's look at the book again... what details made the book come alive in your mind?

My kids talked about the monkeys crashing and pulling everything off the shelves. DD said, "I could hear everything crashing." LD said that he could really imagine all that smoke.

*You could use any book that you have on hand. My kids really loved the story and we read it several more times that week.

Independent Writing:

When you go off to write today, you might think about making your story exciting and creating a lot of suspense, but of course you can write anything you want.

Sharing our Writing:

My kids were 5, 7 and 9 when we started using this writing workshop model. We set the timer for 10 minutes. We all wrote during that time (including me). Then I asked if anyone wanted to share what they had written. We listened to each other's stories and made a few (positive) comments only about the content. For the first several months we/I made no comments about spelling, grammar, style or anything. My main goal was to get the writing, writing, writing!

