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My Classroom Writing Kit

By

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A project  
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in Education

School of Arts and Sciences  
January 2011



LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

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School of Arts and Sciences - Beirut Campus

Project Approval Form

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Project Title : My Classroom Writing Kit

Program : Master of Arts in Education. Emphasis: TESOL

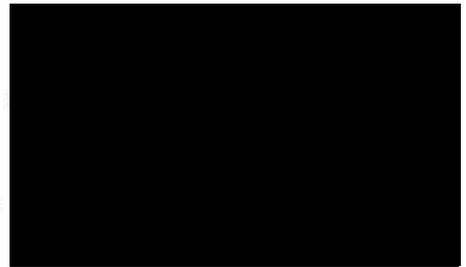
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### ***Acknowledgments***

*I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Bahous for constantly being a source of inspiration to me. The qualities of positiveness, humility, resourcefulness, promptness meticulousness, respect for people and yet strict approach that she possesses are prized attributes I hope I have learned.*

*I would also like to give special thanks to Dr. Harmoush for her perceptive contributions and reliability.*

*I would like to give special admiration to LAU library and staff for all their assistance in facilitating my research.*

*I want to thank my father for being a role model for life-long learning and continuous educational growth; an inclination that I will ever be grateful to inherit.*

*I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my mother and in-laws for their understanding, patience and for being there for me in my time of need.*

*Finally, I would like to express profound gratefulness to my beloved, ever supportive husband who never missed an opportunity to nudge me forward towards fulfilling my pursuits.*

***Dedication***

*I like to dedicate this work to my precious children, Joseph and Maria who are the  
highlight of my life  
the reason behind any development I allow myself to achieve  
the sparkle that ignites my efforts to soar higher*

## MY CLASSROOM WRITING KIT

Viviane Chedid Jabbour

### *Abstract*

Teaching writing has always been a complex endeavor for English teachers. Attempts at teaching writing by available text books have only made it more mechanical, traditional and uninteresting to both teacher and student. The present kit offers a non conventional approach to teaching *writing* which aims at allowing writing students to develop a love for writing before having to deal with requirements of academic writing. It is intended to be used in Lebanese schools with grade eight students who are not required to sit for a government exam for yet another year. The kit offers practical and useful ideas to teachers who want to train their students to be independent and active writers rather than suppressed ones. It is a relatively inexpensive and concurrently an invaluable writing resource that can change teachers' as well as students' outlook towards writing. The desired impact of this approach to writing is a generation who is "writing friendly".

**Keywords:** Writing kit, Grade Eight, Lebanese schools, non-conventional approach to teaching writing, writing resource.

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## **My Classroom Writing Kit**

### **Chapter One**

#### **I-Introduction**

##### 1.1-Overview

Writing is a significant vessel and a rich venue for expressing deeper, personal thoughts and feelings and also for communicating innovative kinds of information. Expressive writing is used for therapeutic purposes in psychology today and it is thought to bring about emotional and physical well being (Baikie & Wilhelm 2005). Much of the academic success requires proficient writing ability. Writing is indeed a craft that adds flavor to life and is required in many professions. Budig (2006) reminds us of the importance of writing in many recruiting firms. Good writing is considered a necessary asset for many employees without which, many if recruited may not be promoted to higher positions. Thus the responsibility of developing competent and proficient writing skills lies in the hands of schools and consequently teachers.

Creating a generation of writers is a very challenging and tedious job for both students and teachers, but the key to attaining this objective is writing then writing and again writing. Learning greatly takes place when learners have real role models. When teachers write during writing time and share the writing during sharing time, students will be triggered to pour themselves into their writing because they know they are in the same boat as the teacher (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2006).

What really count in writing are not just the ideas but how to mold, mix and present them (Carter, 2001). It is very well known that the more one uses a muscle, the stronger it becomes. The same goes for writing; the more students write and practice writing the more refined their writing would be. Writing is not innate. When students are given the right opportunity to unfold the writer in them, only there and then, writers will be born. Teachers need to give students freedom to discover themselves as writers, guiding them in the process without straining them.

## 1.2- Rationale

Most schools today teach process writing which can be found in writing textbooks in markets around the globe. Nevertheless, teachers and students still need incentives to teach and learn writing in an affable way that will change the attitude toward learning how to write in less restricted settings and more interesting ways.

The traditional process writing is a good starting point, but it serves as just one way of teaching writing. Furthermore, it frames and chains writing which otherwise would soar when students are given more autonomy. The need to teach process writing can not be rebuffed because academic writing makes good use of the structure employed in process writing. Yet, when a teacher wants to uncover the writer in a student then different strategies need to be utilized. In other words, instead of expecting teachers to teach forms, features, and discrete skills of writing, educators need to expect teachers to prod their writing students to take risks, develop ideas and relationship with their readers (Turvey, 2007).

Speaking her mind Miller (2010) speculates about the reasons behind the persistence of the five-paragraph essay in today's writing classes and envisions the vast writing possibilities the students can delve into without that five-essay formula. Students and teachers seem to find refuge in the safety confines of the predictable five-paragraph essay. When teachers conform to the five-paragraph essay they are sort of exempting students from decision making and robbing them the joy of engaging in their own writing. If the students are not learning to express themselves, explore and understand the world around them and use language to engage in meaningful authentic work, then there is no point to teaching. The next essay the students write does not have to be a replica in format to the previous one or else writing would be a tedious and unattractive task (Miller, 2010).

One of the principles underlying the Lebanese public English language curricula and objectives National English Language Curriculum (LNELC) supports the idea that students learn best when engaged in social and cognitive guided and semi-guided activities in and out of classroom context (Al Markaz Attarbawi lil Buhuth Wa Al Inmaa, 1997). Haykalyya, 1995). The purpose of this kit is to focus on such activities to bring about good quality writing. Since the Lebanese publicnational English language curricula and objectives value curriculum values group work, autonomous learning and positive attitude toward the target language (Al Markaz Attarbawi lil

Buhuth Wa Al Inmaa,1997), these three qualities are well promoted in the kit at hand. (Al Haykalyya, 1995).

Students can get along without grammatical terms like gerund, modal auxiliary verb, or demonstrative pronoun but as Wilson and Glazier (2006) put it, they ought to know basics of sentence structure and be able to recognize subjects and verbs. By Grade Eight students have basically acquired much foundational writing skills. At this level, they need to be further stretched. Students at this age are still discovering their inner souls, characters, life and people around them. They are keen and genuine learners and are so enthusiastic about many things happening around them. They can be extremely creative and imaginative. That is what makes it a perfect time for them to use and sharpen their writing abilities. By this grade level students are supposed to have enough language to compose a text and enough experience to deal with interesting and appealing topics. They also need variety in order to stay interested. Any student can write well provided s/he is offered the right circumstances and proper environment where the student feels free to experiment in writing and still feel challenged. The best way to learn how to write is by writing and not by reading about writing (Wilson & Glazier, 2006).

A very important requirement for dealing with this age, as with any other, is to help students sense that the teacher believes in them as writers who can go to lengths and reach heights. In this kit, we will see how teachers give students opportunities to honor their own writing by choosing what they want to share during little and grand occasions (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2006).

### 1.3-Research context

This kit targets Lebanese schools where English is taught as a second language. It is for Grade Eight students who are not required to sit for official exams for another year. Since there is no local and creative writing kits around in the Lebanese schools the kit at hand can serve as quite an economical resource that yields a valuable return; a kit that every school can afford to buy. The kit can be used as a writing resource alone or alongside another textbook depending on the time allotted for writing. It is a creative way for approaching the teaching of writing. It challenges the widespread regular approaches of teaching writing.

Any school that would like to venture to an enjoyable approach to teaching writing will choose to use this writing kit. The kit can be used as a whole to produce a

generation of life long writers who write because of a love for writing. It can also be used in parts to boost a writing program and create memorable writing moments that can be very insightful. The school may also adapt any of the ideas in this kit to fit in their program.

#### 1.4-The Kit

*My Classroom Writing Kit* aims at providing Grade Eight language teachers, in Lebanese private or public English medium schools, practical writing strategies. This kit may serve as an off the shelf-resource book to aid teachers in getting the students to work on their writing and yet to enjoy what they do. The variety of strategies used is believed to keep students at a high level of involvement in their writing which can create positive writing experiences that may prod them to write more, take more risks and explore more.

The kit includes a section on how to initiate writing even with students who for some reason or another refuse to write or whose minds are blocked the moment they are required to write. One example of a prompt can come through drawing what a student wants to write then elaborately explain what s/he drew so that finally the student can arrive at writing (Caggiago, 2004). Another prompt can be showing expressive photos that can instigate ideas for writing.

The use of rubrics by the students themselves is very essential to their growth as writers since they can help students realize and be aware of the requirements of good writing (Grisham & Wolsey, 2005). Understanding what counts in writing greatly improves writing skills for this purpose the kit contains a proposition for the kind of rubric that ought to be used by the students. According to Bruton (2009) research does not convey for sure that students' rewrites based on previous corrections will necessarily bring about language improvement. Thus, the idea behind students' use of rubrics is definitely not writing for the purpose of meeting the rubric as in teaching to the test (Thomas, 2004) but rather for highlighting central aspects or pitfalls of students' writing before they attempt to write.

Developing a good student-teacher relationship is the underlying aim of this kit. This is done through the student-friendly approach to writing that promotes trust without which any teacher feedback will not be well received by the student (Lee & Schallert, 2008).

The motto for this kit can be “Falling in love with writing”, a student may forget specific rules per se and may eventually internalize them but what will stay are those thrilling and successful writing experiences that s/he had once had. That same experience will keep him/her wanting to come back again and emerge as a writer. That same experience will concurrently and positively affect other aspects and render him/her successful in other walks of life. Ultimately creating an enjoyable working atmosphere to motivate writing and learning about writing is what *My Classroom Writing Kit* is all about.

### 1.5-Conclusion

This chapter discussed the importance of teaching writing for grade eight classes in Lebanese schools. Teaching writing for its own sake without the burden of complying with certain forms and test requirements may prove to produce a change toward the teaching and learning of writing. This may also give the chance to grade eight writers that were once dormant and buried under mechanics, processes and rules to bloom into real writers.

The next chapter will review the literature related to writing as it is connected to evaluation, assessment, correction, motivation, self-perception, process, product, form, content, literature, social activity, technology and grammar.

## **Chapter Two**

### **II-Literature Review**

#### 2.1-Writing evaluation, assessment, and correction

Research shows that children in middle school find writing daunting because it is taught based on genres and graded more harshly than it had been in previous classes. The burden of failure becomes too heavy and thus too discouraging for the student writer especially when teachers place a high premium on correcting mechanics. For this reason, Weaver (2008) suggests that teachers need to recognize students' effort, growth, and intended meaning. Boscolo and Gelati (2006) also endorse that students' writing discoveries should not be made handicapped by a teacher's early evaluation of the written product.

Regarding assessment Haynes (2007) points out the importance of informing the students about how the work will be assessed early on. When the students know what the goal is, they will more likely be able to reach it. He suggests that focusing on few criteria per piece of writing would be more efficient than attempting to correct all at the same time. He also regards assessment as a continuing process rather than a one time event and when done in collaboration with the student coupled with the right spirit, it produces much of the anticipated results. Eventually, teachers want the students themselves to be able to do the work properly and independently.

In the same line, Grisham and Wolsey (2005) found that when students evaluate their own and others writing they become more aware of what good writing is or is not which in turn help them learn writing. They also found that creating their own rubrics helps students become more competent writers and evaluators.

Rief (2003) explains that she seldom corrects spelling or punctuation of first drafts because she wants students to soar with their thoughts rather than be tied down with conventions of writing. When Rief prods her students to develop their quickwrites she believes that at that point they do need constructive feedback from her as well as their peers so they would obtain more polished and finalized pieces of writing.

Writing per se is an interesting activity yet in a teaching-learning situation such as a classroom, assessment is essential. When it is not done in the right perspective

assessment can be a hateful drudgery to the teacher and a meaningless, negative deed to the student. Huot and Perry (2009) contend that the paramount purpose of assessment should be to help improve student artifact. They believe that returning students' corrected pieces of writing only lays the burden on the teacher rather than teaching the students how to be responsible for their own writing. The idea is involving the student in the process of assessment which best serves the purpose. Grading the writing just shifts the teacher's function away from teaching. The student should be trained, Huot and Perry (2009) assert, to judge and assess their own writing and assume authority over what they write and while they write. They continue to say that even though students are not equipped to assess they can be taught in several ways. They believe that only through being involved in the evaluation process can they raise their sense of self-awareness and consequently improve as writers. Portfolios can be a good choice for assessing literacy acquisition particularly when they are used to assess the progress and the quality of writing (Huot & Perry, 2009).

Calfee and Miller (2007) differentiate between assessment (evidence of learning) and evaluation (interpretation of evidence). The aim of evaluation would then be to guide growth. Sound writing assessment starts when writing is initially linked to authentic learning outcome of a specific school subject that also represent a meaningful goal (Calfee & Miller, 2007; MacArthur, 2007). Substance of a written excerpt which is often absent from writing assessment systems should be given due importance and not only the mechanics.

Calfee & Miller (2007) and also MacArthur (2007) recommend that teachers train students to use rubrics to assess their own work; a job though tedious at first will eventually pay off in school reform. This practice helps students be independent learners who are responsible for their own learning. Thus, the teacher will focus on discussing students' reading of their own work (Calfee & Miller, 2007).

The pertinent question that is posed by writing teachers is: What kind of response to students' writing will bring in quality improvements? Teacher training is a key element in providing effective feedback that can be specific, descriptive, oral or written (Beach & Friedrich, 2006). Teachers need to also train students to peer correct and self-correct since this will bolster teacher feedback or response. The timing of feedback which can be in the final draft or during the early writing stages may influence students' reception and understanding of their errors (Sommers, 1982). In other words, response to grammar, mechanics, and usage should not come in the early

stages of formulating and organizing ideas otherwise it would be very discouraging as it defeats the purpose of writing development. Teacher feedback may range from written comments, to face-to-face or online conferences with the latter having precedence since it allows for discussion and practice of self- assessment (Beach & Friedrich, 2006).

Teaching writing in its full construct can not thrive under the pressure to achieve target levels of attainment or state writing assessments. Sainsbury (2009) focused on writing through the lens of assessment and noticed how assessment can hinder creativity and empowerment that comes with authentic writing. She proposed that the construct of the test i.e. shape and marking should be designed in such a way as not to interfere with good teaching. Rubrics should credit creativity and crafting so markers should be trained, monitored and encouraged to apply the spirit of the rubrics not just its wordings (Sainsbury, 2009).

The means to achieving good writing is not the correction of errors as mistakenly many teachers rush to do. Since writing is not an object but a process that Wilson (2010) regards as similar to 'giving birth', teachers need to learn how to respond pedagogically to it. Wilson (2010) shuns the idea of treating texts like a mechanic treats cars to be repaired in lonely garages. She would rather have teachers work with the student on the text in order to develop writers instead of using their expertise to fix a text like editors do without inviting real change in a writer. Teachers' response should help students recognize, and develop their internal intention and thinking to bring about a text's possibilities into consciousness. When teachers stop focusing on corrections and the five-paragraph-essay only then they would convey the message that writing is not restricted to a one way formula. Teachers need to provide opportunities that invite students to think and engage in the writing and not give formats and formulaic instruction that would allow them to bypass thinking and decision making that ought to be done. Due to the impossible task of responding pedagogically to heaps of assignments that students write Wilson (2010) suggests that teachers respond thoughtfully to only a few assignments and have the students revise until the piece is satisfactory to both the writer and the responder. Imig (2010) learned that she should not leave grading to the end product because by then her on line students would not want to work with it any longer for they are pressed to start the next assignment. She found a way to get involved in her students writing from the onset of the process.

There is a recent tendency to disregard rubrics and guidebooks altogether by replacing them by what is called “Prominent Feature Analysis” (Swain, Graves, & Morse, 2010). This analysis does not replace holistic or analytic scoring, but it is intended for use in the classroom. The analysis is believed to be helpful in guiding classroom instruction that would address the characteristics that stood out in a bundle of student essays that are not influenced by teacher or peer support. A single or a team of experienced teachers may look deeply into and analyze students’ writings and come up with positive and negative features and thus articulate the quality of the writing. After this classroom instructional session, writing practices will be geared towards those features.

## 2.2-Writing and motivation

Nowadays students’ attitude towards writing is at the lowest level of motivation because the writing activities employed are very traditional and irrelevant to student lives (Boscolo, 2009). Interesting topics coupled with meaningful writing tasks can result in more quality as well as motivated writing. Boscolo (2009) suggests that to arrive at a motivated-to-write student, teachers should cultivate student interest, and value in writing as well as the “what” and the “how” to write. When I think of motivating students I can easily refer to Doecke and McClenaghan (2009). They highlight the notion that teachers should not confine the contents of students writing to the conventions and classifications of writing forms. Teachers should rather allow the diversity of students’ backgrounds, experiences, media exposure, and values to emerge through the writings and learn to appreciate uncommon and more distinctive pieces of writing. Things do not need to be the same so that they will have value in them. Writing does not need to be classified under the expected categories that educators have dictated as the norm (Doecke & McClenaghan, 2009). I suppose students will be more motivated-writers when teachers stop focusing on benchmarks and accountability and conversely allow students more space to explore their potential writing capabilities.

The crucial point about students’ writing is creating student’s interest in writing and also maintaining that interest. Boscolo and Gelati (2006) relate some possible reasons for students’ lack of motivation to write which may be due to teachers’ rigid conformity to text types and conventions, and also due to detached and uninteresting writing activities. Every writing teacher should aim at helping her students perceive

writing as an attractive and worthwhile activity. In other words, an interesting topic coupled with a developed interest to write is what motivates the student to write and perceive writing positively. Boscolo and Gelati (2006) developed a frame of three guidelines of instructional practices that interests students. First, they highlight the usefulness of the writing activity. The communicative function of writing comes second and providing students with challenging tasks comes third. Motivating writing lessons are flexible and do not necessarily conform to text types. Such writing lessons connect many classroom situations to other subjects. Motivating writing lessons are also achieved through a collaborative activity between writer, reader, and reviewer where the teacher facilitates the writer's self-correction.

The teacher's role is crucial in promoting motivation to write for several reasons. The teacher must help students find personal meaning through the multiple facets of writing within the literate community. S/he should be intentional in choosing continuous activities that endorse interest as well as involvement, collaborative as well as individual writing, and evaluation that may come through as a portfolio (Boscolo & Gelati, 2006).

Weaver (2008) advocates the nurturing of the social context of writing by sharing and discussing written texts. She believes that a positive environment raises confidence and lowers anxiety. A nurturing social context and a positive environment, I suppose, are conducive to increasing motivation as well.

In the social constructivist approach writing is viewed as a cultural activity which thrives in meaningful, authentic, and collaborative settings. These settings are believed to instill motivation to write (Boscolo & Hidi, 2006). Consequently when students perceive writing as useful (relevant and linked to other school activities and subjects) they are more likely to be motivated writers.

### 2.3-Writing and self-perception

Everybody likes to be efficient in what they do since this specific feeling propels people to undertake further tasks and very likely succeed at them. How a person views him/herself creates that self- fulfilling prophecy. Students as well are affected by their sense of self-efficacy to the extent that what they think, believe and feel has direct effect on their academic performances. Students' self efficacy beliefs are supposed to affect how well they acquire knowledge, how much effort they exert to accomplish an activity, how motivated they are and whether or not they persevere in

the face of difficulties. Self-efficacy beliefs may come from different sources: previous performance, social persuasion, observation of others' performance, and emotional states (Pajares & Valiante, 2006). Writing teachers who strive to increase student self-perception by working on the thought, confidence, competence and emotional levels of their students would consequently reap an increased writing ability for such interventions. In other words, nurturing confidence in writing is at the core of cultivating successful writers. Teachers are very influential in developing self-efficacy and consequently motivation as two life-long attributes that lead to success. For this reason, the kit at hand takes this perspective to heart and acts on nurturing writing self-efficacy beliefs as a prominent foundation in order to help students achieve their writing potential.

Boscolo (2009) insists that stimulating topics and tasks can raise students' self-perception as writers and can also present writing as a meaningful experience. Moreover, he points out that believing in the student's potential ability as a writer is essential in building a love for writing and a love for the language.

#### 2.4-Writing process, product, form, and content

Looking back to the previous writing level helps ensure that the present level does not become simply circular. The aim is developing a spiral writing curriculum where a student is stretched and moved on (Haynes, 2007). When teachers target both the process and the product of writing, Haynes assures, that they would be pointing an arrow at two targets. Haynes suggests that a teacher should focus on one thing at a time either on the act of writing or on the editing, for this will make it easier for both the student and the teacher. He emphasizes that at the early stages of writing, students should focus on themselves as writers whereas at later stages they ought to look at their writings from the reader's point of view. Specifying the audience is also a key issue for students to keep in mind as they write because doing this renders the writing task unambiguous as Haynes explains. Haynes (2007) contends that not every piece of writing students write should go through all the six processes of writing. A good idea, he continues, would be to consider teaching explicitly one process at a specific stage in the curriculum or decide which processes are appropriate with which pieces of writing.

Previous research on writing has shown that there has been a trend in the teaching of writing which focused on form rather than content. Hillocks (2005) finds it very

important for this trend to be replaced with a focus on content. He noticed that this obsession with form has basically been caused by three major practices. First, teachers think that teaching general principles would produce effective writing. Second, teachers are pressured to teach to the state writing tests. Third, the teaching methods seem to be promulgated by officials who promote focus on form above content. Conversely, Hillocks (2005) suggests that change can come through three pathways. First, change can come through instilling a new crew of teachers and training them differently. Second, it can come through training of current teachers thus encouraging a paradigm shift towards a new kind of teaching of writing. Third, change is probable if state tests are revisited so as to include a considerable weight toward content which in turn would prod current teachers to help students deal with the content of writing.

It is time to rethink about conventional teaching of writing that has been so popular but not necessarily right. Brannon, Courtney, Urbanski, Woodward, et al. (2008) challenge the status quo of writing which has been preserved under the form of the five-paragraph essay. Thinking out of the tight box of the five-paragraph indoctrination has become threatening to the system. The rigidity of writing rules just silences the voices of those who try to think critically, explore, imagine, feel the power of words, and use ideas to inspire and change the world. Sticking to this pre-fabricated mechanism that has been persistently sustained in textbooks and by overtaxed teachers denies the student-writer the right to make-meaning, freely communicate with an audience, think as an individual, and be creative. If a student is required to fill in a certain format trying to adhere to the five-paragraph essay, writing becomes a mechanical and passive task. On the contrary, writing should be mirror to thinking, feelings, and speculation: an invitation to actively experience the power of ideas and making meaning through words and the use of language. As teachers give students the 'writing tools' that come in the form of worksheets, formulaic writing, organized structures, mechanisms and rigid set of standards, they are signing up their students in a non writer and non thinker category. Writing is a messy undertaking that requires flexibility, space, and time to be accomplished. Ultimately writing teachers would have reached their goal when students view themselves as participants in constructing knowledge and therefore believe in themselves as writers (Brannon et al., 2008).

## 2.5-Writing and Reading

Rief (2003) stresses a lot on connecting reading to writing. She gives her students inspiring and well-written pieces of writing, and prompts her students to quick write anything that comes to their mind and keep those ideas in their notebooks for further development whenever they need them. She believes this approach gives students a stimulating good starting point provided that the chosen texts are rich in language, sensory images, evocative feelings, thought provoking ideas and ones that are relevant to adolescent interests. Quickwrites help students think critically by reading and making meaning and eventually arrive at the actual process of writing, after considering, pursuing other embedded potentials and developing more possibilities of their initial writing (Rief, 2003).

Rijlaarsdam, Braaksma, Couzijn, Janssen, Kieft, Raedts, Van Steendam, Toorenaar, and Van Den Bergh (2009) discussed how audience awareness in writers may be enhanced by the observations of writers and their readers. Furthermore, accumulating experience with real readers and real reading processes will lead to more audience awareness, and thus deserves to be part of writing the instruction. Readers' perspective and feedback has an effective role in writing development. So presenting writers with opportunities to know their audience and collect real feedback is where the classroom writing environment should be heading (Rijlaarsdam et al., 2009).

## 2.6-Writing as a social activity

Vygotsky's theory that social interaction precedes learning, highlights a need for creating safe and constructive social interactions between learners/teachers and learners/peers. A student plays an active role in his/her learning as he/she collaborates with others in a classroom environment (Learning Theories Knowledgebase, 2010). One way to implement Vygotsky's social and constructivist theory of learning can be accomplished through designing learning centers within the writing classroom for the purpose of learning through small group instruction. Learning centers foster independent learning, proficiency, and appropriate behavior under the teacher's support (King-Sears, 2005).

Collaborative writing among students adds a social aspect to writing which became a highlight in current talk about writing (Calfee & Miller, 2007; MacArthur, 2007). Eventhough writing is wildly acknowledged as a solitary task, Carroll and Wilson (2008) deem it necessary to obtain the input of others along the way. Collaboration,

they point out, is considered a particularly required skill in students' current lives as well as their future projections. Using writing in a socially collaborative and interactive atmosphere makes writing more authentic, helps students give and receive feedback, discuss ideas and be purposeful in their writing (Carroll & Wilson, 2008). Showing students models of other pupils writing and also of the teacher's own writing, in Haynes (2007) point of view, helps students better appreciate and understand writing. Imig (2010) found that building a virtual writing community helps student writers move beyond traditional writing. Building such a community encourages students to be creative within a haven, helps them experience other models before creating their own, have a forum where they can practice and also display their work.

### 2.7-Writing and technology

Using the internet is very indispensable in the lives of most students so why not make the most of it to enhance writing ability in our classrooms today. Karchmer-Klein (2007) advocates the use of WebQuests (an internet-based inquiry practice), and Collaborative Internet Projects (CIP). More experienced teachers, she continues, can create websites for their classes where students can post their latest work and receive feedback from authentic audience. This will produce a motivated writing atmosphere. Chances are that students will pay more attention to spelling conventions and the final product of their articles. Reading will definitely be a cornerstone in such practices.

One can not ignore the effects screen-based communication has on writing. Expectations are that mechanics and stylistic forms of writing that were once educators' focus will no longer be of great importance in the years ahead. In contrast with teachers' concerns about the quality of e-communications, the question today is why waste our efforts lingering in the past when we can enrich what writing will be like in the future. Following up on the rapid change of digital communication is quite a challenge but can only be made by adjusting pedagogical approaches, providing resources and ensuring professional development (Merchant, 2008). Change is emerging so it is no longer a matter of whether or not educators are going to respond but rather a matter of "how" they are going to do so. Embracing information and communication technology (ICT) requires a major paradigm shift in the way writing teachers gear their teaching. One definite advantage to ICT is that it enhances students' social skills and motivation two very important aspects for learning.

Merchant (2008) admits that more work should be done as to the 'how' of implementing digital writing in classroom practices but he insists that doing so is imperative if educators do not want to perpetuate a disadvantage for learners in a wildly pervasive digital age.

MacArthur (2007) points out that word processing is a helpful revising tool that relieves students from the burden of recopying. It also helps producing a finalized draft for publication which adds further incentive for revising. After revising much research on the subject MacArthur (2006) believes that when word processing is coupled with instruction, it can help students develop better writing skills. He points out that technology's impact on writing will possibly come but most probably through students' out of school experiences and requirements.

Moving away from the actual classroom that is confined by walls to the virtual one in the teaching of writing can be quite innovative. Provided that teachers give students the time, space and opportunity to write, things will work well just as they would under these conditions in the regular classroom. Same questions, problems and challenges that haunt the teacher in the traditional classroom may haunt her in the virtual classroom (Imig, 2010). As long as the student writer feels that his/her ideas matter and the situation is non-threatening s/he will start budding beyond traditional writing. Imig believes that for writers to thrive in an online learning as anywhere else they should not be impeded by fixed and rigid curricula. Using the online class whiteboard can be very helpful because it allows collaboration and immediate feedback on student work (Imig 2010).

## 2.8-Writing and grammar

Weaver (2008) is an advocate of teaching Grammar only in connection to writing. She believes that grammar taught at the point of need rather than for its own sake will be better grasped and will have positive effects on the teaching of writing. While teachers address some grammatical lessons in students' writing they should not forget to show appreciation towards students' work per se. Only few grammatical concepts should be taught separately whereas the rest should emerge out of need and developmental readiness of individual students. She points out that students ought not to be bogged down by knowing grammatical terms as much as using proper grammar in their own writing. Correcting students' technical errors proved to be very harmful due to the fact that it did not produce better student writers. Better writers are created

after exposure to reading and language-rich environments rather than grammar terms, rules and explanations (Weaver, 2008). Teachers may slay a paper and bombard it with corrections and still come out with a low rated product because the paper lacks worthwhile content. The key is to first respond to the writer then to content and finally to mechanics, creating a positive environment that encourages risk taking and accepts mistakes as learning opportunities. Weaver (2008) maintains that the role of grammar is to make writing effective, help generate ideas, use just the right words and phrases, organize, and create voice and style.

The most important thing is to get the thoughts down before any attempt to deal with grammar. Writing teachers, Carroll and Wilson (2008) point out, do teach grammar but not in isolation. They contend that grammar is best learned in context, and especially when marked up and written by students according to each student writer's specific need. Grammar should be dealt with in the writing process on the mechanical stylistic level, the sentence level and finally on the paragraph level. Basically, it will better be learned when and where it matters to the student's written product. When teachers create a non-threatening environment where students write daily, the students will consequently want to get their ideas clearly across and there is when they are ready to learn grammar (Carroll & Wilson 2008).

## 2.9-Conclusion

The research above sheds light on the futility of traditional and conventional teaching of writing that lay more emphasis on form rather than content, and on process rather than product. Lately, there has been a new awakening regarding the teaching of writing where the student writer is given back the right to be an active thinker. The new approach to writing advocates a student writer's right to be motivated, involved and responsible for his/her own writing; an approach that allows the student writer to take risks, make meaning, and feel the power of words and ideas. There has also been a pull away from the predictable five-paragraph essay to a more innovative out-of-the-box writing that gives students more freedom to explore their writing potentials without the meticulous over care for mechanics and the like.

Recent writing research reduces the burden of failure due to corrections and revisions and promotes a more positive outlook on writing attempts so as to increase self-perception which is considered to have a major role in writing success.

This journey from the rigid to the more flexible teaching of writing has many concerns before it is fully realized. Those concerns has many facets e.g. teaching the grammar that is only connected to the writing need, the use of word processing to reduce revising, having students create their writing rubrics, and handing them most correction responsibilities, focusing on growth, effort, intended meaning and content when correcting papers etc. However, the most pivotal of these concerns lay in motivating students by providing authentic and meaningful writing tasks. Keeping student involved and interested in writing is at the core of teaching writing and this is the focus of our next chapter.

### **III-The importance of creating a kit**

Writing is at the very core of the language classroom and almost every profession requires some type of writing. Before reaching academic writing students need to learn how to use words for self-expression. They need to feel the power of words and the effect that word may have on readers. They need to learn that writing is an enjoyable act that can bring about change in others. They need to let go of their imagination and watch the heights they can reach without being confined with conventions and mechanics of writing. Students need to feel some freedom in their ability to take risks, make their own decisions, be independent writers and above all develop a craving for expressing their lives through writing. The common writing process by which writing is taught does not necessarily allow students to exert their writing ‘rights’ as conveyed in the previous lines.

Teaching writing has always been a challenge for English language teachers. During my twelve years of teaching experience I was expected to teach process writing which went very well. However, I have always wondered why teachers have to constantly teach writing in that box. The writing class needs some vigor that would keep the students highly motivated. Finding a practical writing book far from process writing confinement was very rare.

Having a practical, locally produced inexpensive writing kit is a valuable innovation for schools in Lebanon that wish to unleash writing capacity in their students. A kit that would encourage students to become thinkers, and independent writers is indispensable in the writing classroom. This kit is an invaluable

breakthrough that somehow provides a challenge to the norm of the ‘tamed’ process writing.

## **Chapter Three**

### **IV-The Kit**

#### **4.1-Treasure Trove**



Image -1-

##### **4.1.1-Cherished Ideas**

The following is a bunch of favorite writing ideas that can be adapted and many of which can be used with the section ‘Writing in other disciplines’. The variety of ideas offered hopefully create motivated writing and render this endeavor an enjoyable effort.

- 1-Write a review about your favorite TV show telling why you selected it and why you recommend it.
- 2-Describe your favorite person, vehicle, place, event or pet. As an alternative activity or an extended one persuade someone why that is needed or important.
- 3-Create a poster to persuade others into reading a certain book you found ‘A Must Read’.
- 4-Writing game  
What am I? Choose your favorite vehicle, object, or sports game and write a paragraph with clues about your topic. Publish it in a magazine and check who will guess your topic.
- 5-Design a bookmark that contains your favorite book characters accompanied by a brief explanation of each.
- 6-Create a cartoon or just an imaginary conversation between two famous characters, between you and a famous character, between two concepts, insects, animals, or objects in the unit of study.
- 7-Describe a time when you were deeply embarrassed. Explain why and give

- advice to others when they are embarrassed.
- 8-Write an advertisement about your favorite food, product, restaurant, or upcoming events.
- 9-Create a PowerPoint presentation about your school, home, or country.
- 10- Write directions to a place, or to make something.
- 11- Rewrite an ending to a well-known book.
- 12-Write a script for a story, a poem, a historical event, a science topic (between the earth and the moon) be creative and inventive.
- 13-Compare and contrast two of your favorite pastimes.
- 14- Design a postcard about your town. Write a note why someone should visit.
- 15-Pretend you were a millionaire, twice as tall, or a genius. What would you do? Write a poem or just a report about your adventures.
- 16-Survey your classmates about a certain topic. Chart the results. Write a summary of the results in the class newsletter.
- 17- Write a newspaper article describing your worst fear or greatest delight.
- 18-Create a shape book to present facts about your favorite pet for example. The shapes can range from a door to a house, a key, a window, a bottle, shoes, a coin, a ball, a mug or anything you can imagine that would help trigger writing.
- 20- Make a speech as though you are a character in one of the stories you have read.



Image -2-

- 21-Develop a job description of a character.
- 22-Write a list of character traits, attributes, or descriptors. You can include physical appearance, contributions, actions, deeds, thoughts, or words.
- 23-Write a caricature of a famous person or story character.
- 24-Put yourself in someone else's shoes and describe your thoughts and feelings and your possible deeds.
- 25-Write a biography or tribute for an important individual, such as a local hero or role model.
- 26-Conduct environmental investigations and write possible solutions to the concerns you have.

27-Creative writing: If 'open sesame' can open doors in your life which ones would you want opened. Write a story about the adventures you would encounter when one opens.

(Adapted from and inspired by Chapman & King, 2009).

28-Shape poem or story: pick an object or animal. Write a poem filling an outline shape of that object (e.g. bell) the subject of the poem has to have a link to the shape you chose (Adapted from and inspired by Evan & Moor, 2000).

29-Pupils imagine they are 80. They write a story in the form of chapters for each stage in their lives i.e. youth, young adults, middle age and old age.

30-Give pupils two situations one for the beginning of a chapter and one for an end then let them devise a plot to get from beginning to end.

31-Students read one another's introductory paragraphs of a story they have written and guess what the other's story will be about.

32-Genres beyond the ordinary

Students can be asked to write a complaint, confession, diagnosis, forecast, hymn, menu, motto, nursery rhyme, plan, petition, prayer, prophesy, proverb, quiz, receipt, recommendation, sermon, slogan, speech, or will.

33-Purposes beyond the ordinary

Students can be asked to write for a range of purposes. The following can be some:

Accuse, alert, appeal, apologize, appraise, arrange, assert, bemoan, bequeath, bid, blackmail, cancel, celebrate, challenge, clarify, comfort, commend, confuse, criticize, defraud, disagree, discourage, placate, rebut, refuse, remind, teach, and request.

(Adapted from and inspired by Haynes, 2007).

34-Students select a special market product that they all like and write persuasive, descriptive, explanatory, and narrative paragraphs about the product.



Image -3-

35-Read about a subject (e.g. littering) then write persuasive pieces about it from different points of view e.g. the man picking garbage from the street, other people who are using the same path, animals in the neighborhood, an

environmentalist etc.

36-Explode the moment: students take one moment in their writing and explore it in more specific detail.

### 37-Literary examples

Provide different genres (historical fiction, mysteries, realistic fiction, folk tales, fantasy, science fiction, biographies, memoirs or informational texts) for students to read and draw out the characteristics of. Students can use these characteristics in their own writing.

38-Similarly students can be provided with types of writing (expository, narrative, persuasive, descriptive, procedural, or report writing) from which they will develop a list of criteria or a description of each type. These can be a starting point to students' own writing.

39-Same can be done with a variety of formats including diaries, letters, brochures, editorials, posters, magazine articles, and newspaper articles. Students learn a lot when they see what others have done.

(Adapted from and inspired by Anderson, 2004).

40-Free write about any topic of study without regards to mechanics, grammar or punctuation).



Image-4-

41-Wet ink: students keep on writing for two minutes non-stop just to keep the flow of writing and jot down any idea that comes to mind.

42-Trigger words: teacher or students suggest a trigger word about which the students write jotting down any associations that come up.

43-Everybody's narrative: Every student starts a line for his/her narrative after which all the narratives rotate so all the students can add a story line.

44-Given a topic, students have to study it from different perspectives: description, association, application, analysis, comparison, contrast, and arguing for or against. Thus students move progressively through higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy as they write.

45-Students ask wh- questions (who? what? where? when? why? how?) about a

topic, person, piece of literature, or an event to explore the depth of a specific issue, person ... and to uncover information to write about.

46- Write a letter to a character in the literature.

47-Fill in the gaps

Students would read a story, a passage, a chapter, rules, directions, experiments...etc. As they read they would consider what the author did not tell and add it. Later students can check if they were right or change their projections.

48-Write yourself into it

After reading a story, a passage, a scientific invention or a math problem students can insert themselves into the situation. The only condition is not to alter the information.

(Adapted from and inspired by Carroll & Wilson 2008).

49-Extend your thoughts

Have students write letters from a character in a fairy tale to another as the events of the tale unfolds. Let them include how they felt. One variation could be when students let the character address his/her letter to a member in the class.

50-Let students bring an object to class (button, scarf, key...etc) and write a story about that object. Students should include the history of that object.

51-Have students research events that happened on the day or the year of their birth and write an article about it.

52-Have students bring his/her choice of a hat (cook, policeman, captain, soldier, clown...etc.).Students will be asked to write about personalities, characters or professions of the people who might wear those hats. They might write documentaries or stories.

53-Have students write the ending or the middle of a story first and then go back to the writing the beginning.

54-Bring a new shiny product to class and have students write descriptions of it, how it might be used, write instructions for its use, and create an advertisement to sell the product (Adapted from and inspired by Bumgardner, 1996).

55-The Tomato: idea stimulation exercise (Locat, 2006)



Image-5-

The students use the tomato as a prop to initiate related topics for writing activities which they may use later in their writing. For example Locat's class came up with the following:

- Tomato dishes
- Allergies, especially food allergies
- Cooking methods used with tomatoes
- Tomatoes in songs and movies
- Collocations with “tomato”
- Countries where tomatoes are grown or heavily used
- Chemicals or nutrients in tomatoes
- History of tomatoes
- Tomato-colored objects
- Idioms and expressions using “tomato”
- Tomato statistics and records (word’s largest, smallest, etc.)
- Famous people who liked tomatoes
- Companies that feature tomato products
- Tomato stories and anecdotes
- Words that can be made using the letters in the word “tomato”

56-Describe an ad (Sherman, 2003)

Students select, study and describe a TV commercial in order to write descriptions and evaluations.

57-Lipreading and mindreading (Sherman, 2003)



Image-6-

Students watch soundless scenes from a short drama clips and construct a dialogue to act along with the actors before viewing the clip with sound. They can write the ‘interior text’ of the scenes when the characters are obviously saying one thing and thinking of another.

58-Effects (Sherman, 2003)



Image-7-

Students will read a book scene together and decide how they would shoot the scene. They would then write down their plans of lighting and sound effects and finally view the original scene and compare.

59-What a story! (Lindstromberg, 2004)



Image-8-

Students will pair-up to tell each other the story about a personal item (clothing or -accessory etc...).-Then they would write each other's stories altering them and adding new elements to make them better stories. They may want to add humor, suspense, surprise ...etc.

60-A group of students will be asked to mime a text while the others write down an essay about what they reckon the story is all about. Later, they will be asked to read the text and compare ideas.

61-The teacher and/or students will wear masks to represent the theme of identity. Then students will consider all types of masks people wear either metaphorically or physically and for what reason. Finally, students will be asked to write stories or discussions that revolve around the theme of masks.

62-Given questions about any text students will be asked to write the text inductively based on the questions asked about it.

63--Construct new meaning by using old words and phrases. The words and phrases could come from magazines, newspapers, songs, stories, etc...(Boscolo & Gelati, 2007).

## 64- Advertisements and Application Letters



Image-9-

Students will read classified ads in a newspaper. They will choose one advertisement and write a letter of application explaining where they saw the ad, inquiring about it, exhibiting their qualifications, experience and interests and explaining why they would be perfect fits for the ad. Students will finally read, peer edit each other's letters and decide which letters would be considered most fit and why.

## 65- Book Walk and Creative Prediction



Image-10-

Students will recall the latest books they have read, and what made them choose those books. Then will be asked to preview books in the library. After looking at the front cover, back cover, title, introduction, table of contents, any pictures or illustrations in the book, and the index, they are supposed to choose a book to write a creative prediction about. In their essays, students should support their predictions by referring to details of their preview. Students will finally read the book and check where their predictions went right and where they went wrong.

## 66- Election Campaign



Image -11-

Students will reflect on~~consider~~ school elections and what would make them choose one

candidate and not the other and they would consider efficacy of campaign slogans. Students will look up a list of slogans that would fit school elections campaign and pick the most appealing and persuasive ones. Students would pretend that they were candidates to go for presidency of student council. Then

they are supposed to write persuasive speeches explaining what would make them the best candidates that other students should vote for. Students would finally deliver their speeches to the rest of the class. Listening students would write a review of whether they consider their classmate's speech persuasive enough and how it could be improved.

67- Your Teacher has a Life!



Image-12-

Students may have permission to look at their teacher's or other teacher's homepages facebook or profiles and jot down information about their personal lives. Information they gather could be about the teachers' likes, dislikes, families, hobbies and etc. Then students are supposed to write essays describing their teachers' lives out of the school context. Students would finally compare each other's essays and peer edit before handing them in.

68- Order, sketch and write



Image-13-

Students will be given cut paragraph strips from any text chosen by the teacher and prepared ahead of time. In groups of four, students are supposed to put the paragraphs in the right order and fill in the missing paragraphs. When they finish they are supposed to read the original one and compare it with their improvisations.

69- Students are asked to create a new text by modifying and renewing an old one.

They can rewrite the text by changing some elements like the protagonist, motives, sequence (of episodes to get a creative ending within the constraints of text coherence), setting, and goal of the story. The changes should respect the structure of and be consistent with the original text (Boscolo & Gelati, 2007).

70- Students are asked to produce a multigenre paper. They can include a letter from the editor, a news article, a sports article, a feature article, a book review, classified ads, interviews, etc. (Weaver, 2008).

71- Life map assignment

Students are asked to draw a map or time line depicting fifteen of their life events starting with their birth date. In chronological order they would write the dates of the fifteen events with two words describing each event and a symbol representing it. Then they would choose one of the events to write about in detail

(Weaver, 2008).

72-Using literature as writing models.

After choosing a piece of literature students are asked to jot down on a chart the techniques, and the actual words or sentences an author uses, and also the effect the author's craft has on the reader. The students would then use those same techniques, words, craft and effects in a writing of his/her own (Weaver, 2008).

73- Students are asked to come up with their own myths as creative explanations to things around them (e.g. why the moon has a sad face, why the ostrich walks instead of flies).

74- Students are asked to pick a comic strip and transform it into a story.

75- Conversely students are asked to change a story to a comic strip, play script or a rhyming poem.

76- ~~Students-students~~ are asked to listen to or read real world news and then write reflections about it.

77- Students are asked to change a story they have read into a news report.

78- Students are to come up with a list of 'what ifs' then choose one to develop into an essay.

**4.1.2-Expressive photos**

1-Students will be provided with twenty different faces showing different emotions.

They will create a story of one person using all of those faces.

Use these expressive faces to write a story:

crying



having the blues



happy 😊

up-beat 😄

unexpressive

extremely happy



jealous



uninterested



interested,

excited 😄



peaceful



anxious



confident 😊

worried



inquisitive



proud



2-Students can design their own picture writing books. They may decide to collect personal photos or miscellaneous pictures of their choice and write up an interesting story that goes with the pictures (Van Horn, 2008).

3- Have students select a photograph that depicts a sensitive moment in their lives. They need to write about what is in, behind, and around the picture. They can also add what happened before and after the picture (Van Horn, 2008).

4- The following is a ready set of photos to be used for various writing topics (pictures taken from Art.com and from Google images):

The students can tell the story of or expand on the moment depicted in any photograph (Van Horn, 2008).

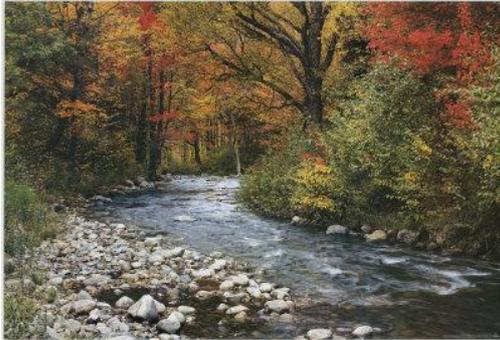


Image-14-



Image-15-



Image-16-



Image-17-



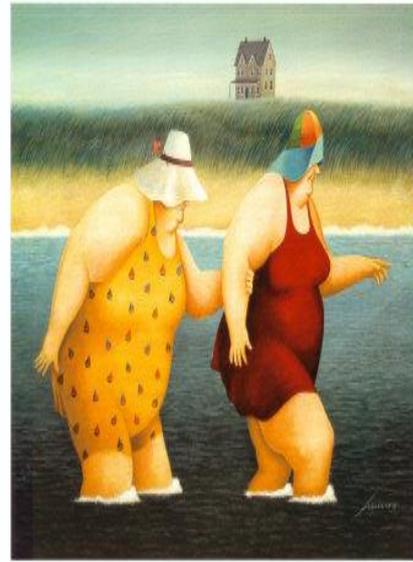
Image-18-



Image-19-



Image-20-



LOWELL HERRERO 1993 JUDY & MARGE

Image -21-



Image-22-



Image-23-



Image -24-



Image-25-



Image -26-



image-27-



Image-28-



Image-29-



Image-30-



Image-31-



Image-32-



Image-33-



Image-34-



Image-35-



Image-36-



Image-37-



Image-38-



Image-39-



Image-40-



Image-41-



Image-42-

### 4.1.3-Technology

- 1- Students can be taken on a learning journey by using a webquest. Teachers can write their own webquests or they can surf the net for many ready to adapt webquests.

(e.g. check [www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=39910](http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=39910))

The following is an example webquest that you can use in the English writing class. It was prepared for Educational Technology course (EDU 805).



## Put the Pieces Together

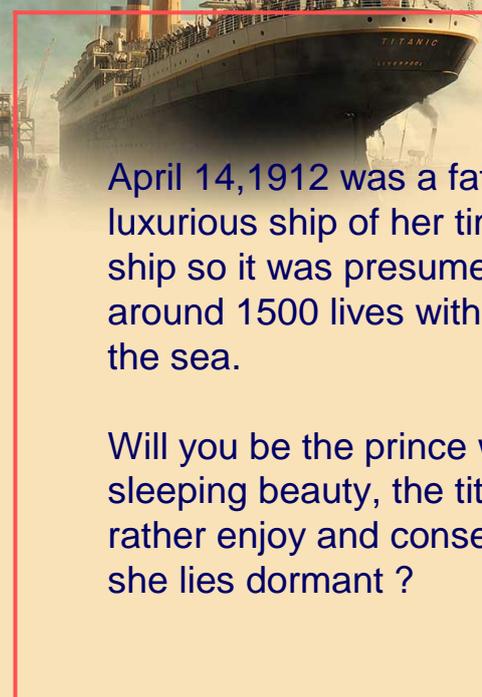
**Perspectives  
on the  
Titanic Legend  
and Dilemma**

**A WebQuest  
for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade English class**

Designed by  
Viviane Chedid Jabbour  
[vcjabbour@hotmail.com](mailto:vcjabbour@hotmail.com)



[Introduction](#) | [The Task](#) | [The Process](#) | [Resources](#) | [Evaluation](#) | [Conclusion](#)

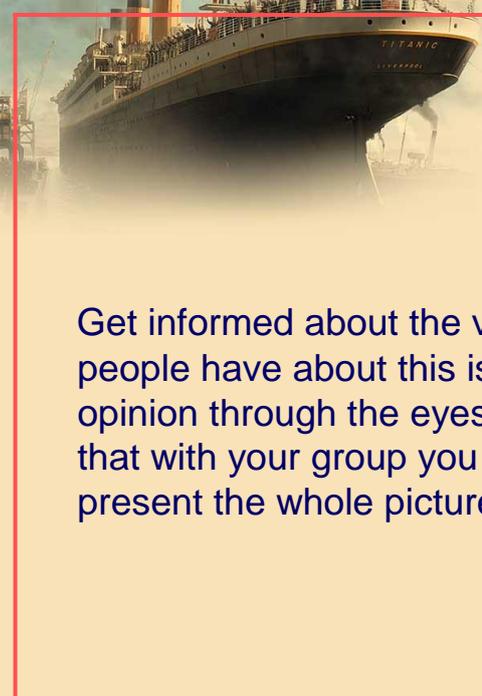
A large, dark-hulled steamship, the Titanic, is shown from a low angle, partially obscured by a thick layer of white fog or mist. The ship's name "TITANIC" is visible on the bow. The background is a hazy, overcast sky.

## Introduction

April 14, 1912 was a fateful date for the most luxurious ship of her time. The unsinkable ship so it was presumed to be, sank taking around 1500 lives with her to the bottom of the sea.

Will you be the prince who raises the sleeping beauty, the titanic, up or would you rather enjoy and conserve her beauty as she lies dormant ?

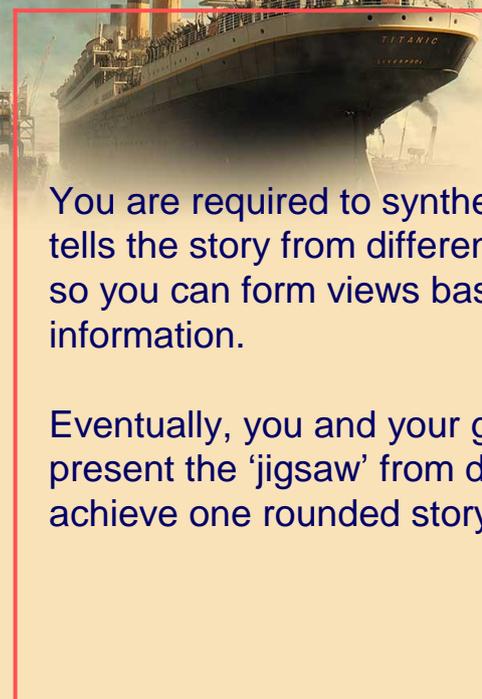
[Home](#)

A large, dark-hulled steamship, the Titanic, is shown from a low angle, partially obscured by a thick layer of white fog or mist. The ship's name "TITANIC" is visible on the bow. The background is a hazy, overcast sky.

## Introduction cont'd

Get informed about the various perspectives people have about this issue and formulate your opinion through the eyes of a certain survivor so that with your group you can compile and present the whole picture.

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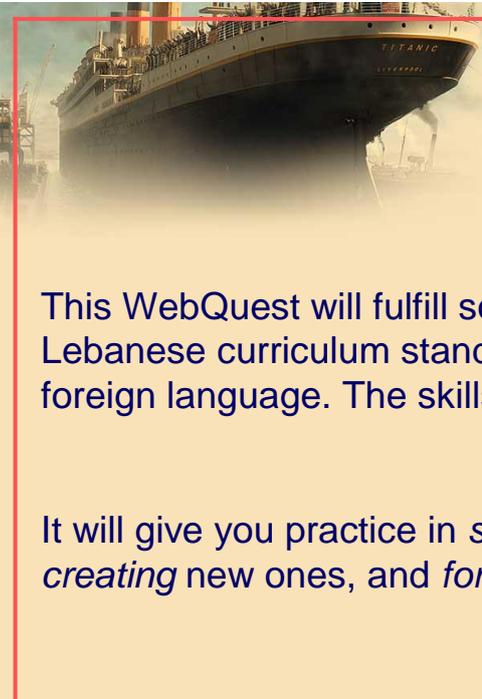
A large black and white photograph of the Titanic ship, viewed from a low angle, with the name 'TITANIC' visible on the hull. The ship is set against a hazy, industrial background with cranes and smokestacks.

## The Task

You are required to synthesize the information that tells the story from different people's perspectives so you can form views based on the factual information.

Eventually, you and your group should be able to present the 'jigsaw' from different perspectives to achieve one rounded story.

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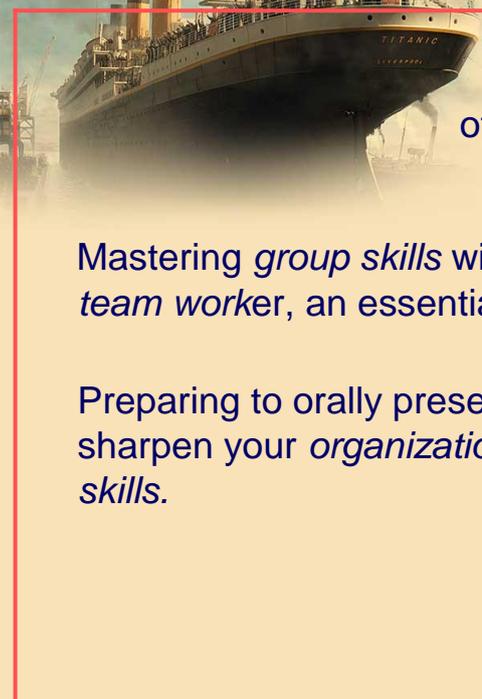
A large black and white photograph of the Titanic ship, viewed from a low angle, with the name 'TITANIC' visible on the hull. The ship is set against a hazy, industrial background with cranes and smokestacks.

## Overview of the learning task

This WebQuest will fulfill some of the skills in the Lebanese curriculum standard for English as a foreign language. The skills are italicized below:

It will give you practice in *synthesizing* texts, *creating* new ones, and *forming points of view*.

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A large black and white photograph of the Titanic ship, viewed from a low angle, with the name 'TITANIC' visible on the hull. The ship is set against a light, hazy background.

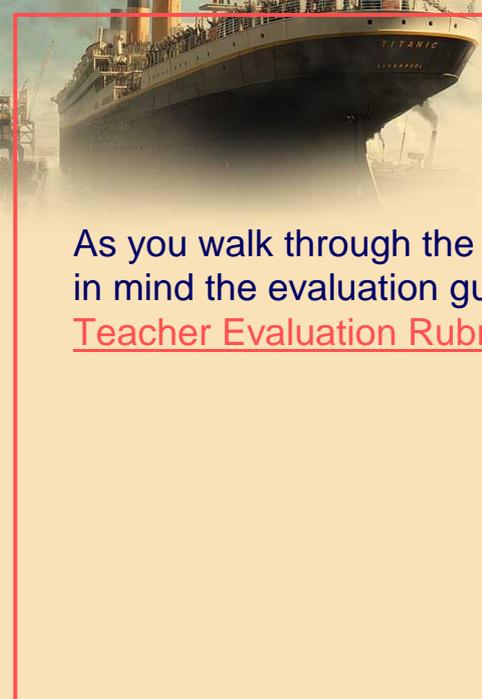
## Overview

of the learning task cont'd

Mastering *group skills* will make you a better *team worker*, an essential skill in the workplace.

Preparing to orally present your project will help sharpen your *organization* and *presentation skills*.

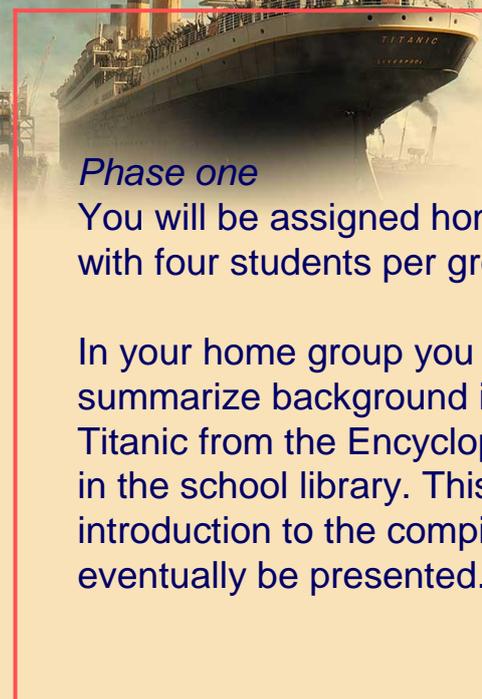
[Home](#)

A large black and white photograph of the Titanic ship, viewed from a low angle, with the name 'TITANIC' visible on the hull. The ship is set against a light, hazy background.

## The Process

As you walk through the process you should keep in mind the evaluation guidelines (Check [Peer and Teacher Evaluation Rubrics](#)).

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A large black and white photograph of the Titanic ship, viewed from a low angle, showing its massive hull and smokestacks. The ship is set against a light, hazy background.

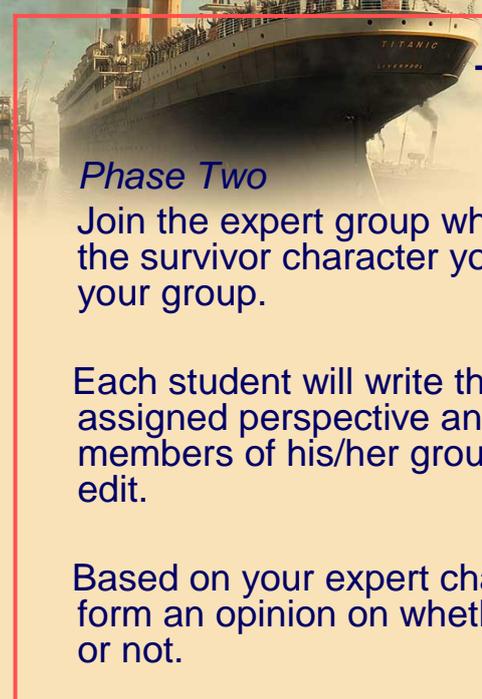
## Process cont'd

*Phase one*

You will be assigned home and expert groups with four students per group.

In your home group you will read and summarize background information about the Titanic from the Encyclopedia Britanica available in the school library. This will be used as an introduction to the compiled work that will eventually be presented.

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A large black and white photograph of the Titanic ship, viewed from a low angle, showing its massive hull and smokestacks. The ship is set against a light, hazy background.

## The Process cont'd

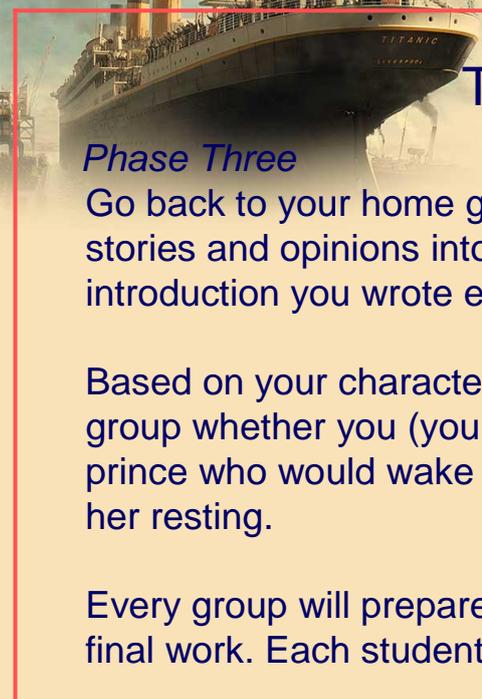
*Phase Two*

Join the expert group where you will research the survivor character your teacher assigns to your group.

Each student will write the story from his/her assigned perspective and will share it with other members of his/her group who will critique and edit.

Based on your expert character story you are to form an opinion on whether to raise the Titanic or not.

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## The Process cont'd

*Phase Three*

Go back to your home group and compile the stories and opinions into one whole including the introduction you wrote earlier.

Based on your character's opinions decide as a group whether you (your group) will be the prince who would wake sleeping Titanic or keep her resting.

Every group will prepare a presentation of the final work. Each student will present his/her part.

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## Resources

Check the following titles for your web search:

[Titanic Rescue Described by San Francisco Survivor](#)

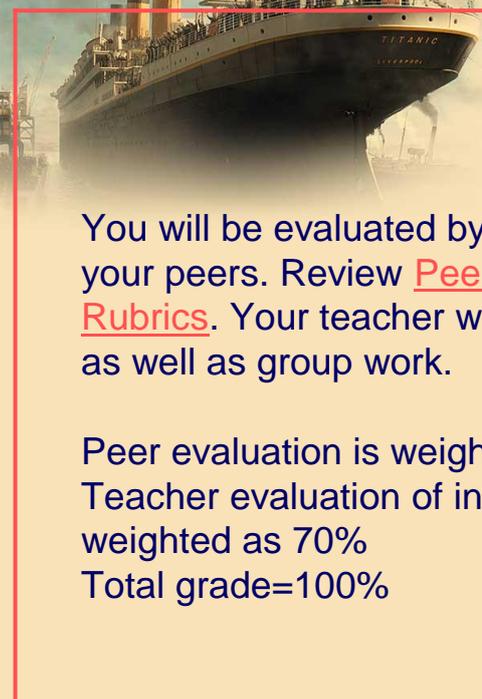
[Titanic Survivor Info, Passenger Stories & News-Page 2-Nova Scotia Online](#)

[Titanic Survivor Info, Passenger Stories & News-Nova Scotia Online](#)

[Jim's Titanic Passenger Stories and News](#)

[Letter by Titanic Stewardess](#)

[Home](#)

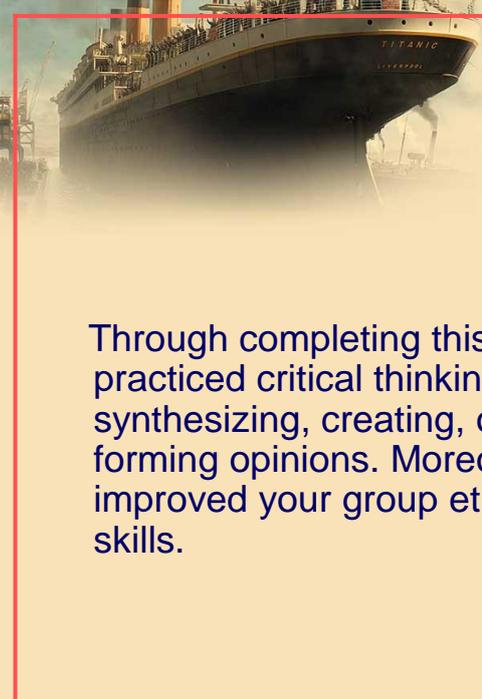
A large black and white photograph of the Titanic ship, viewed from a low angle, with the name 'TITANIC' visible on the hull. The ship is set against a hazy, light-colored background.

## Evaluation

You will be evaluated by your teacher as well as your peers. Review [Peer and Teacher Evaluation Rubrics](#). Your teacher will grade you for individual as well as group work.

Peer evaluation is weighted as 30%  
Teacher evaluation of individual and group work is weighted as 70%  
Total grade=100%

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A large black and white photograph of the Titanic ship, viewed from a low angle, with the name 'TITANIC' visible on the hull. The ship is set against a hazy, light-colored background.

## Conclusion

Through completing this WebQuest you have practiced critical thinking as employed by synthesizing, creating, organizing text and forming opinions. Moreover, you will have improved your group etiquette and presentation skills.

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A photograph of the Titanic ship, showing its bow and the name 'TITANIC' on the side. The ship is dark and appears to be in a harbor or dock area.

## Conclusion cont'd

Compiling and presenting your group project about the Titanic story and dilemma as seen from different perspectives ideally would have enhanced the above mentioned skills.

Now that you know a lot about the dilemma, you may wish to address it by writing your opinion and sending it to [Encyclopedia Britannica](#) [message Board Raising theTitanic](#).

A small speaker icon with sound waves, indicating an audio player.

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## Teacher's evaluation of students' individual and group work

	<b>Achievement Levels</b>	<b>Beginning 1</b>	<b>Developing 2</b>	<b>Advanced 3</b>	<b>Exemplary 4</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>C R I T I C I A L</b>	<b>Acceptance of others</b>	Shows little acceptance	Hesitant acceptance	Accepts well	Enthusiastic about task and about working with others	
	<b>Synthesis and assimilation of new information</b>	Below average. Shows little critical thinking	Fair. Sometimes shows critical thinking	Good. Shows critical thinking skills.	Excellent. Shows high critical thinking skills.	
	<b>Presentation</b>	Content is of little interest. Below average presentation skills	Regular content. Average presentation skills.	Interesting content. Fair presentation skills.	Very interesting content. Good presentation skills.	
	<b>Individual section of compiled work</b>	More than 5 grammatical and sentence structure mistakes. Opinion is not in line with the story character.	Not more than three grammatical or sentence structure mistakes. Opinion is sometimes in line with the story character.	Not more than two grammatical or sentence structure mistakes. Opinion is most of the time in line with the story character	No grammatical or sentence structure mistakes. Opinion is in line with the story character.	
	<b>Compiled work</b>	Needs a lot of organization. Needs a lot of work on the introduction. Uninteresting content	Needs little organization. Needs some work on the introduction. Regular content.	Organized. Interesting introduction and content.	Highly organized. Grabbing introduction and interesting content.	
	<b>Opinion</b>	Controversial	Considerable	Convincing	Highly convincing	
	<b>Group dynamics</b>	Members are quarrelsome. Show little learning	Members are sometimes quarrelsome but eventually reach consensus	Members show harmony and cooperation most of the time	Members always show harmony and cooperation	

## Peer Evaluation Rubric

	Achievement Levels	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Advanced 3	Exemplary 4	Score
C R I T E R I A	Editing and evaluation	Shows little acceptance of peer editing and evaluation	Accepts but does not edit and evaluate other students' work	Invites others to edit and evaluate	Invites others to share work and gives constructive comments	
	Collaboration and cooperation	Shows little interest in working with different people	Shows interest but does not share ideas	Cooperates well. Gives valuable input	Enthusiastically cooperates and helps guide others	
	Group etiquette	Shows little consideration to others	Sometimes shows consideration to others	Always listens to others and shares work	Always listens to others and shares work. Ensures and maintains supportive atmosphere while listening	
	Presentation	Content is of little interest. Below average presentation skills	Regular content. Average presentation skills	Interesting content. Fair presentation skills	Very interesting content .Good presentation skills	

2-Students can listen to a sound effect story (check Youtube.com e.g. Radio Promo by Balzac 308777 or Telling A Story Using Only Sound Effects by Peza16) and write stories that go with the sound effects (inspired by Lindstromberg, 2004).

#### 4.1.4-Journaling

1-Here's a list of journals you can use (Chapman & King, 2009):

Photo scrapbook journal

Comic journal

Content journal

'What are you thinking?' journal

EQ journal

Log journal, partner journal

Note journal



Image-43-

Dear diary journal

Observation journal

Another voice journal

Scientific journal

Roving reporter journal

Survey journal

Journalist journal

Homework log journal

Math log Journal

Response journal

Subject journal

Data collection journal

I SPY journal

Technical journal

Learning journal

Interview journal

Diary entry about a lucky day you had

2-Let students keep academic journals from which they can draw words, ideas, concepts from the subjects or literature they are being exposed to (Carroll & Wilson, 2008).

## **4.2-Writing within other disciplines**

### **4.2.1-Reading**

#### **1-Text ownership**

Students are assigned a book, a chapter, a poem, an article, a section in a social studies lesson, a lab report, a math word problem. They are supposed to keep the basic info, get rid of extraneous ones, interpret and improvise the text at hand i.e. create their own version of the text. This strategy creates ownership of the text in an effort to repeat information they are being exposed to (Carroll & Wilson, 2008).

2-The teacher will ask students to silently read the text and at the same time note down whatever comes to their mind in the margins. After that the class would discuss the text and relate their comments and notes.

3-The teacher can ask the students to draw faces that express the right emotions of the characters as they read a story. Then they describe in an essay the emotional trip along the storyline.

4-The teacher will ask students to draw one day time line and jot the events on it as they read.

5-The teacher will give students charts such as Connections T-Chart to fill out as they read or as they do second reading.

### **4.2.2-Math**

1-Learning logs: Students would write as a closure what they have learned during each math class: an ideal way to see what was internalized (Carroll & Wilson 2008).

2-Students can create a dialog that went on between two math items for example an isosceles triangle and a cube or multiplication table and the division. They may want to come up with a story or an argument.

### **4.2.3-Science**

1-Describe a new invention that carries out a specific task (Chapman & King, 2009).

2-The students may be asked to fill a science observation log so they will have ideas to write science journals about what they observe and learn.

- 3-The students will be asked to observe and write the details about an object in nature (e.g., an animal behavior or a plant), Then they will be asked to write down any ideas that are associated with the details they have observed. Finally, they will be asked to write the connections they have made in an innovative way.
- 4- Students can write a story about any two science subjects for example like molecules and cells.

#### **4.2.4-Social Studies**

- 1-Write a song to a familiar tune to describe facts about a topic in the current study (Chapman & King, 2009).
- 2-The writing teacher along with the social studies teacher would instruct the students to pick a famous character they have studied about in social studies class. Students are asked to assume those characters and write journal entries that those characters might have written. The journals should include factual information and actual dates.

#### **4.2.5-History**

- 1-Generate several writing prompts from every theme in the history or social studies lesson (Carroll & Wilson, 2008).
- 2- Write a letter to a character in history (Carroll & Wilson, 2008).

#### **4.2.6-Music**

- 1- Students listen to classical music and are asked to imagine or make up a story that matches the music they hear. They can finally read their stories with the music in the background to the rest of the class.
- 2-Creating recreations: The teacher reads poems, pieces of literature or songs while students listen. Then upon his/her second reading students would take notes and jot down words, phrases and ideas to use in their recreations and improvisations of that reading.



Image-44-

#### 4.2.7-Arabic

- 1- The teacher will organize with the Arabic instructor a hearing of an Arabic song about masks “Sakata El Kinah” by Magida Al Roumi. The teacher will ask



Image-45-

the students to write a story using the pictures that come to mind as they listen to the words and hear the beat of the music.

#### 4.2.8-Arts

- 1-Write a poem about your favorite actor, actress, or singer (Chapman & King, 2009).
- 2-The teacher would previously have arranged with the art teacher to give a face painting lesson and paint the students faces with different characters. Later the whole class can write persuasive essays on whether they would recommend face painting for small children and what the advantages and disadvantages are.
- 3-Students will be asked to draw what they want to write. After that they can explain with details the contents of their drawings. Finally, they can write elaborately about what they have drawn (Caggiago, 2004).

#### 4.3-Assessment

##### 4.3.1-Peer Revision

- 1-Students put out the writing they are working on. Students will rotate reading each other’s pieces leaving remarks, comments or questions on sticky notes (Anderson, 2004).
- 2-For Peer Editing  
Students get engaged in writing to a secret classroom visitor who in turn writes back messages to them (Aderson, 2004).
- 3-For Revision focus should be on content first then mechanics (Anderson, 2004).

#### 4.3.2-Rubrics

The best rubric is the one developed with the students and for student use. When the student reaches this ideology that he/she is responsible for his own learning he/she is more prone to learn and make progress. Wilson (2006) contends that the use of the common writing rubrics may just cripple the real act of writing so the solution may reside in considering different premises than our present practices. One may find many writing rubrics that focus on content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. One can also have computerized writing assessments. However, writing is a subjective endeavor it is just fair to keep its assessment a subjective one rather than a mechanical one. Since writing rubrics should place the highest premium on the content and the meaning that the student is trying to get across, below are some helpful guiding questions to include in a rubric that encourages the nature of writing:

- How is the student using words or the language to communicate with or affect readers?
- How expressive is the communicated meaning?
- Is the student showing growth in what they have to say and how they are saying it compared to last piece of writing?
- Is the student maturing as a writer who is making meaning and in the way he/she gets across his/her ideas?
- Is the student using the power of words to create effects and reactions in readers?
- Is the student showing effort in his writing like in making new connections, and reaching depths of thoughts and ideas?

#### 4.3.3-Portfolios

Portfolios in this kit are supposed to store students writing for various purposes. First, they help students and teachers to reflect on growth over time. Second, they promote students ownership of learning and self-evaluation. Third, they provide a collection bank from which students can choose pieces

to develop, extend, publish or share. Fourth, they can provide fair and comprehensive implication for teacher assessment. Fifth, they can hint at and track prominent student needs that teachers should address during mini lessons. Six, they provide an incentive that urges students to perfect their pieces of writing in all aspects because that are writing for keepsake.

#### 4.3.4-Mini lessons

The teacher can give Mini-lessons or focus lessons on students' specific writing needs as they come up in their essays. These needs may vary between students so the teacher can group students according to the similar needs (Aderson, 2004).

### 4.4-Writing as a social activity

#### 4.4.1-To connect

##### 1-Focus Cards (Buteau & Cantor,WAC, vol. 9)



Image-46-

Students will be asked to write their queries, comments, observations likes or dislikes after every class. The teacher will return them with written feedback and may address common concerns at a later class. This is helpful in establishing a personal connection with students in a large class.

#### 4.4.2-Writing centers

##### Writing groups

1-The teacher can form writing groups in a fun way through color, number, or season preferences. Some groups can be formed according to the genre students are comfortable working with (Carrol & Wilson, 2008).

2-Classroom writing centers can be located in the four corners of a class and each focusing on a writing topic. Students will be working collaboratively in groups for a writing project specified by the teacher or even decided on by teacher and students such as producing a radio program, a skit, a

magazine and newspaper. Centers may focus on different writing genres for instance poem, biography, fiction, and description. Every time the teacher can be creative in varying the writing activity in each center.

#### 4.4.3-Publishing/sharing: Little and grand occasions

##### 1-Publishing

Students can take turns to read their finished piece of writing and upon finishing may ask listeners what they liked most about their writing.

2-Possible publishing places can be bulletin boards, hallway, library, writing contest, and book fairs (Carroll & Wilson, 2008).

3-Instant Magazines (Elbow, 1994)



Image -47-

Students will take their and their classmates' writing seriously as they assemble on the spot class magazines from their own previously written essays. Publishing is a very effective way to share writing. Publishing a class magazine every quarter would be an incentive to students for good writing.

4-Students may also publish their writings on class, school and or internet websites. This will help students be more responsible in producing good writing for there is a wider audience in perspective.

5-Students can pick pieces they like to read in open house events where students, parents and teachers can be invited to hear. The objective is to honor a piece of writing and take it from private to public.

## **V-Conclusion**

Writing needs to reflect renewal since it mirrors the soul. When writing has to look the same (as required in the popular five-paragraph essay) every time a student writes it becomes a de-motivating activity. Moreover, reaching benchmarks, successfully meeting government test levels and having to use textbooks that abide by the current marketed writing trends are mostly what plagues our teaching today. Writing cannot thrive in the rigid environment of conventions. Teaching writing needs to respect the needs of this craft by giving

the writer proper space and freedom to excel. Using *My Classroom Writing Kit* can be an effective tool in providing teachers with great ideas and shedding light on proper ways to approach correction and publishing at the same time preserve writers' self-esteem without which no student can become a writer. The kit is also effective since it reminds the writing teacher of the wide scope of writing when integrated with other school subjects. Moreover, it reminds the teacher to use today's most efficient learning tool: "technology", to enhance the writing experience. The writing that is promoted in this kit echoes much of what George Ella Lyon (2009) wrote in his poem the *Writer*:

The page is not your limit.  
This book, this room, they are not  
your margins. You can write  
on a street, a state, a continent.  
You who wove your words out of  
meadow grasses and hawk feathers,  
write on the river. Write on the sky.  
Write in between November sycamore  
branches, on the line of a prairie  
horizon. Write back to history.  
Answer every note you ever received,  
including those from birds. Ask your  
dreams questions. Ask your body  
for secrets. What words lodge  
at the base of your spine  
or under the heft of your breast?  
Each stroke of your heart sends  
rich red ink on its errands,  
picking up food and air, brightening  
speech. Think: you are never  
inkless, always in the flow. You  
have only to pick up a pen, small  
wand that taps your great tree of life.  
This is the season. You are  
what you are.

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