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Write On!

**42 Lessons for Acquiring Writing
Skills and Thinking Creatively**

R. E. Myers

Dedication

Dedicated to Laurel Beckett, whose talents continue to amaze me.



GOOD YEAR BOOKS

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Common Core State Standards

Write On! contains lessons and activities that reinforce and develop writing skills as defined by the Common Core State Standards for students in grades 6 to 8. See www.goodyearbooks.com for information on how specific lessons correlate to specific standards.

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Introduction

An Overview of the Lessons

Despite our advanced society's many technological developments that seemingly make pencils and pens obsolete, it is nevertheless essential in this modern age that young people learn to write. From school reports to electronic communication with family and friends, students need to know how to put words together meaningfully and express themselves effectively in their writing.

As is true for the earlier volume in this series, *Time to Write*, the basic method of the lessons in *Write On!* is to show students the elements of good writing in various genres, then give them practice in using those elements in their own writing. Good writing involves putting words, sentences, and paragraphs together in clear and economical ways. It is also accurate and easy for the reader to follow. Great writing goes a step further by making both the writer and the reader think.

Teachers and parents often prefer students to write according to established standards. While mastering the basic methods and standards of writing is important, it is likewise vital for students to branch out mentally in responding to the ideas presented here. These lessons instruct students in the fundamentals of writing, then go a step beyond by challenging them to think creatively and critically. Many of the lessons also include a healthy dose of humor to keep young people engaged as they learn. This approach not only trains students to write academically, but also entertainingly prepares them for the more advanced writing and thinking skills that will be required of them in the years to come.

How to Use This Book

If you are familiar with and have used the lessons in *Time to Write* with your students, you will find that *Write On!* offers you additional activities to teach a particular skill, such as composing a cinquain or writing a complete sentence. Above all, the volumes in this series offer you variety in what to offer students in your writing instruction.

As in *Time to Write*, every lesson in *Write On!* includes a page that outlines suggestions for teaching the lesson. There are usually three parts, or levels, to an exercise:

1 The First Level

Many teachers have found that giving students the initiating or first-level activity orally is a good way to warm them up for a writing experience.

The warm-up is a well-established part of the creative thinking process, and it is especially important in allowing young people to orient themselves and free themselves of inhibitions in their thinking.

2 The Second Level

The second level takes the student a bit deeper into the subject. There is a gentle push to get the student more involved in thinking about the topic at hand.

3 The Third Level

The third level of most lessons asks students to produce a piece of writing. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence that suggests that in creative thinking activities, it is probably wise not to demand a product. Encourage, but do not insist.



In addition, you'll find a list of targeted outcomes for the student, as well as suggestions for student responses to questions in the lesson. Many lessons include additional extension ideas called **Following Through** so you can take students even further with a particular type of writing.

Evaluating Student Writing

According to the National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy at Berkeley, California, self-evaluation through editing and rewriting is all-important. When students complete a lesson, they can use the following six criteria of the “writing in process” approach to evaluate their writing:

1. **Ideas and content:** Is the message clear? Does the writing hold the reader's attention? Are the ideas fresh and original?
2. **Organization:** Does the writing have an inviting beginning? Are there supporting details placed in a logical order? Can a reader move through the text easily?
3. **Voice:** Does the writer speak directly to the reader? Is the writer aware of the needs of the audience?
4. **Word Choice:** Are the chosen words specific and accurate? Do lively verbs energize the writing? Is the writing free of jargon and clichés?
5. **Fluency:** Does the writing have a cadence and easy flow? Are the sentences structured so that they flow easily from one to the next? Do the sentences vary in length and structure?

6. **Conventions:** Does the writer exhibit a good grasp of standard writing conventions, such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling?

In addition, when you read over students' work, observe these principles:

- Return papers without much delay. If they are returned long after they were written, it risks students losing that enthusiastic feeling about what they wrote.
- Don't demand too much revision from students. They may begin to feel negative about their compositions if they have to labor too long in revising them.
- Praise students who show effort and improvement. You can make "before" and "after" comparisons so that they can see their progress.

In some cases, you may decide to have students do some peer editing, which involves trading papers so that they can edit each other's writing. This is a nice way for students to see how their peers write and gives students a chance to make editorial comments instead of simply receiving them. If you decide to do this with your students, first go over the concept of offering compliments for what they like about a piece of writing before offering editing suggestions.

Let's Get Started!

The lessons in this book are designed to give students a strong foundation in the fundamentals of writing while challenging them to think creatively and critically. Above all, it is important that students have room and time to express themselves in meaningful ways.

Scrambled Syntax

Identifying Subjects and Predicates

Targeted Learner Outcomes

The student will:

- Recognize subjects and predicates.
- Recognize that sentences begin with capital letters.

About the Lesson

“Scrambled Syntax” involves elements of both punctuation and sentence structure. The nine scrambled sentences are broken up into subjects, predicates, prepositional phrases, and relative clauses. It isn’t necessary for the student to recognize that fact, but he or she will intuitively realize the syntax of the sentences while splicing them together. A bigger clue is capitalization. Students know that sentences begin with capital letters, so they won’t ignore those clues.

This first lesson is designed to put students in a playful mood so that they feel comfortable with humorous ideas when writing. Sometimes it takes time for those ideas to germinate and bear fruit. This lesson, and most of the others in this book, assumes that the student will have enough time to think about what he or she is invited to do.

Here are the nine sentences as originally written. It is quite all right if students come up with different ones—the more humorous the sentence, the better.

- Kittens are roly-poly and are usually playful.
- Children who constantly watch TV don’t study much.
- Monkeys with special training act like people.
- Most ladies who can’t talk are uncomfortable.
- Dogs that bite are dangerous.
- Heavy eaters with little willpower get indigestion.
- Babies, when being fed, make soft, gurgling noises.
- Little, old women in bathing suits are often uneasy.
- Middle-aged men, when skipping rope, look rather foolish.

Subjects (without modifying phrases)

- Kittens
- Children
- Monkeys
- Most ladies
- Heavy eaters
- Little, old women
- Middle-aged men

Predicates

- Are roly-poly and are usually playful
- Don't study much
- Act like people
- Are uncomfortable
- Get indigestion
- Make soft gurgling noises
- Are often uneasy
- Look rather foolish

Scrambled Syntax



Name _____ Date _____

1 The following phrases were originally nine sentences. These fairly sensible statements were each broken into three parts and then jumbled up as you see them below. See if you can put them back together into their original sentences.

Kittens	are often uneasy	that bite
who constantly watch TV	Middle-aged men	and are usually playful
with special training	look rather foolish	get indigestion
act like people	Heavy eaters	when skipping rope
Little, old women	Most ladies	in bathing suits
when being fed	don't study much	Dogs
are roly-poly	are dangerous	with little willpower
make soft, gurgling noises	Monkeys	Children
who can't talk	Babies	are uncomfortable

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____