

A WRITER'S JOURNAL

Using journal entries to generate academic and creative writings

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Interact

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Table of Contents: A WRITER'S JOURNAL



Tab 1: Intro Plus

Student Introduction

Unused paper

A: **WORKS IN PROGRESS:** Writings not yet completed



Tab 2: Reflections

B: **DAILY ENTRIES:** Reactions to 24-hour time periods

C: **PERIOD ENTRIES:** Reactions to longer time periods

D: **MARKINGS:** Stepping stones of your life

E: **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES:** Expansions of MARKINGS

F: **CROSSROADS:** Roads taken and not taken



Tab 3: Conversations

G: **CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS:** Dialogs with people from your past and present

H: **CONVERSATIONS WITH BODY:** Dialogs with your physical and emotional selves

I: **CONVERSATIONS WITH EVENTS:** Dialogs with events, circumstances, and situations

J: **CONVERSATIONS WITH SOCIETY:** Dialogs with issues and aspects of your society

K: **CONVERSATIONS WITH WORK:** Dialogs with personal and public work



Tab 4: Introspections

L: **DREAM ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS:** Using your dreams as a source of ideas for writing and other forms of work

M: **IMAGERY ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS:** Using rumination to bring your unconscious ideas and images to the surface where you can work with them

N: **CONVERSATIONS WITH WISDOM FIGURES:** Dialogs with the seeds of your own inner wisdom and with historical and religious figures concerning life's most profound questions

O: **PERSPECTIVES:** Dialogs with past, present, and future periods of time



Tab 5: Applications

P: **FREE ASSOCIATION WRITINGS:** Ten minute non-stop writings

Q: **OTHER WISDOM LOG:** A collection of ideas, quotations, and reactions to readings

R: **POETIC WRITINGS:** Writings which share experiences and imply meanings

S: **FICTIONAL AND DRAMATIC WRITINGS:** Writings in which you create and expand by using facts and interpretations

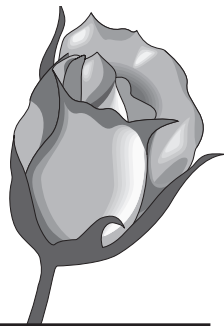
T: **NON-FICTIONAL WRITINGS:** Writings in which you inform and convince by using facts and interpretations

YOU AND JOURNAL WRITING - 1

I am placing in your hands a powerful tool that will unlock a tremendous amount of energy as you and your students become deeply involved in the journal process. The energy unlocked will not die. Some of your students will appreciate journal writing so much that they will continue writing journals for the rest of their lives.

You, the teacher, are an essential part of this journal writing program. You are among the first teachers in the world to use this technique for human development with adolescents. Although I have worked hard with my editors to make the following teaching suggestions clear, I realize future revisions will be necessary because of the feedback I receive about the problems you encounter.

More than 200,000 adults have used portions of this structured journal to open out their lives, release their creativity, and experience new growth. This teacher notebook is designed to help you set up your own journal and to use your own life as a foundation for your teaching. Since you probably haven't been to a workshop that provided specific training and instruction in these techniques, you will be training yourself by writing as many of the three sections' entries as you can—before your students begin using *A WRITER'S JOURNAL*.



“

... all of us have within ourselves a seed of un-lived potential that is unfolding throughout our lives ...

”

The premises on which this journal is based have to do with the nature of the human psyche. By this I mean the whole of the conscious and unconscious mind. To use a gardening metaphor, let's say that I believe that all of us have within ourselves a seed of un-lived potential that is unfolding throughout our lives. It is as if we had an acorn within us that knows our oak tree. And just as the acorn unfolds the oak throughout its life, so do we, too, grow and blossom. We move through successions of growth, first blossoming, then withering, in preparation for the next growth. This journal evokes blossoms and can be used to help the writer move through the inevitable periods when the ground is being plowed and nothing obvious seems to be happening.

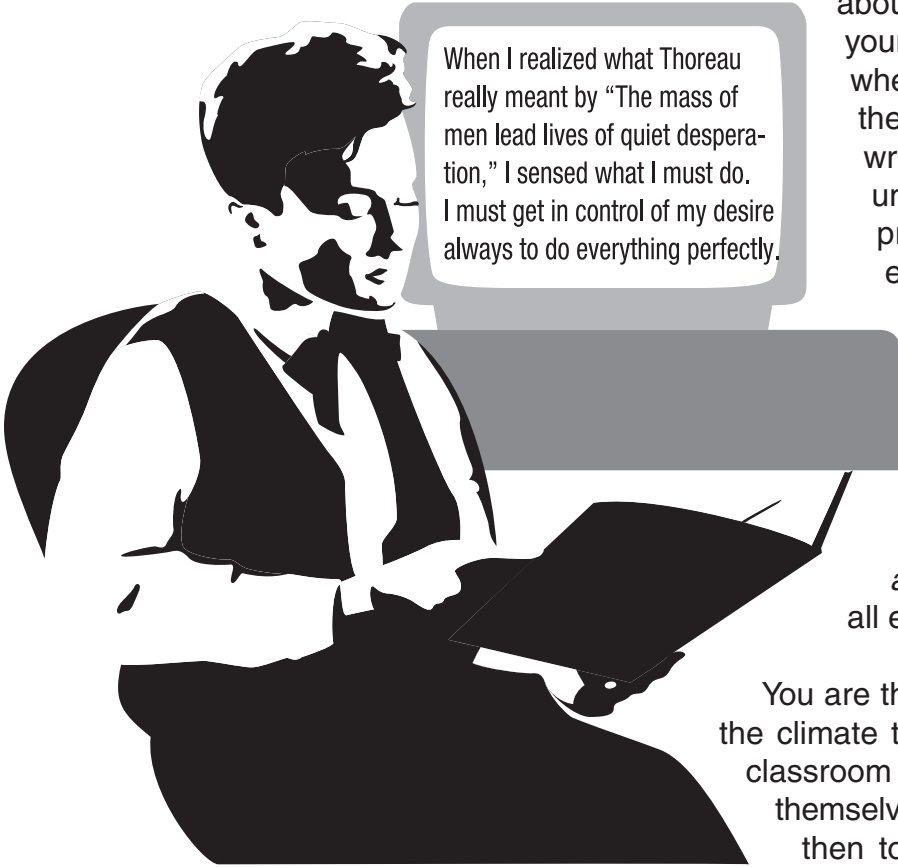
YOU AND JOURNAL WRITING - 2

When your students are conscious of the fact that you are keeping a journal while they are keeping theirs, you will inspire them. My success with A WRITER'S JOURNAL over the years is directly related to the hours I have spent writing in my own journal. I usually share my journal with my students in order to stimulate them or to clarify a section's requirements if they seem to be confused

about procedures. You may share your journal by reading to them whenever you like. If you write all the entries *before* your students write them, you will convey your understanding of this journal process more clearly whenever a student asks a probing question. There will be questions, many of which will surprise you. However, you will encounter fewer surprises and you will be more comfortable if you know the material *personally* because you have written all entries.

You are the most important element in the climate that must be created in your classroom in order for students to make themselves visible—first to themselves, then to you. Becoming visible is a stunning experience. You and your students will discover things about

yourselves that will delight and amaze you. I hope you will be as happy with A WRITER'S JOURNAL as I am to share it with you. Almost all of your students will also be happy with this writing process because they will work in a climate of privacy, because they will respect the difficulty of the work and its power to build a forward momentum in their lives, and because they will find out that they *can* write.



When I realized what Thoreau really meant by "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," I sensed what I must do. I must get in control of my desire always to do everything perfectly.

When you keep A WRITER'S JOURNAL along with your students and share with them some of what you write, there will be two benefits:

- *you will better understand the process; and*
- *your students will perceive you as a more authentic teacher and human being.*

TEACHER INTRODUCTION - 1

Tab 1

Intro Plus

Purpose I wish to explain my philosophy about writing as a means of self-discovery and to describe the structured journal process. I teach my students that writing must be honest and specific. When we first meet, many of them do not like to write, believing that it has little to do with their lives. Others are disappointed in the work they produce. But I have found that students handle the English language competently—even eloquently—when they discover they have something *authentic* and *unique* to say.

Tab 2

Reflections

A structured journal Experience has taught me that I learn most readily when I search for information from past knowledge or experience and then work to organize this knowledge so that I can make sense of it. I have learned, too, that I can most easily do this by keeping a structured journal. To help my students organize and make sense of the knowledge and experience of their lives. I teach them how to develop a journal framework consisting of five separate tab sections of a 3-ring notebook:

Tab 3

Conversations

- **Intro Plus** This first tab section contains the program’s student introduction plus sheets of 3-hole paper upon which students write their journal entries.
- **Reflections** In these entries they write about past moments in their lives—“from birth to the latest moment.”
- **Conversations** In these entries they write dialogues with persons and events in their lives.
- **Introspections** In these entries they write about what they discovered while they went “inside” themselves.
- **Applications** Here students write or draw fragmented notes, outlines, paragraphs, diagrams, essays, and letters. They are planning creative and academic writings for school assignments, or other writings for responsibilities, understandings, and pleasure within their real lives.

Tab 4

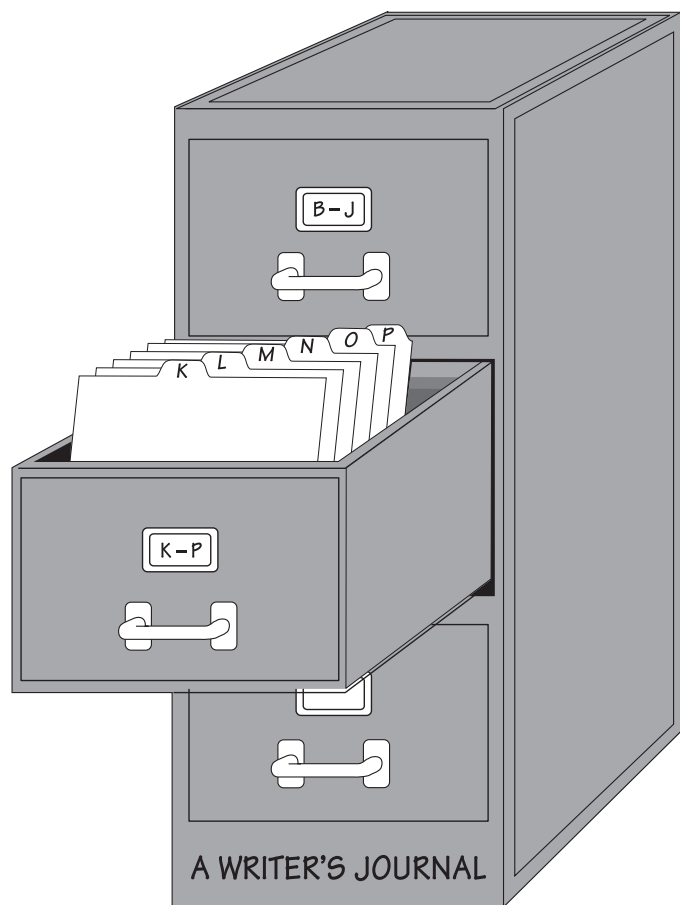
Introspections

Fitting the program to the classes While helping students develop their writing skills with A WRITER’S JOURNAL, I use this program differently in different classes. If students are taking a creative writing course, I make A WRITER’S JOURNAL one of the course’s core experiences—a pre-writing source for their actual poems, stories, and scripts. In such a course students are assigned to write most entries. They must also write regular Progress Reports. (See the *Progress Reports* paragraph on the next page.) On the other hand, in other English classes I assign only those entries appropriate for the course’s objectives and students’ ages and abilities. However, I always give students the option of writing as many entries as they wish, and I reward them for the amount they write—as well as for any evidence they can give me that keeping this journal has helped them write more effectively or understand themselves more fully.

Tab 5

Applications

TEACHER INTRODUCTION - 2



In my classroom I have A WRITER'S JOURNAL file cabinet. There I keep all the program's handouts. Consequently, both my students and I can access them whenever they are needed. (I encourage students to open this file and take out handouts for either of two reasons—because they want to earn bonus points for their grades ... or ... because they want to write certain entries for their personal growth.)

Private and public writing While teaching the development of this journal, I make a clear distinction between *private* and *public* writing. Students first write *privately* in all five sections. This private writing gives the students an opportunity to get in touch with their unique life histories, joys, sorrows, plans. It serves as a reservoir of ideas, a way to tap the sources of each student's inner life and creativity. The private portion of the journal is read by no one but the writer—unless he or she wishes to share some writings. To be truly public, the writer takes ideas from the Applications section and produces something to be shared with one or more persons.

Progress Reports In creative writing courses I stay aware of student progress in private writing as follows. I check each journal for quantity by quickly scanning selected pages and for quality by periodically reading the Progress Reports each student submits. (A PROGRESS

REPORT SUMMARY SHEET is found on page 35 of this tab section if you wish to use it as a handout.) In such reports, the student describes how his/her journal writings reflect both academic and personal progress. Of course, I often require public writings that are graded for content and mechanics.

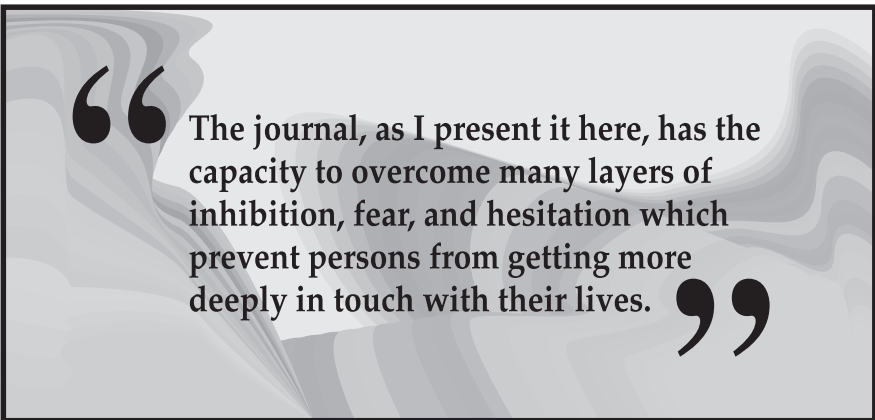
Success with the program Over the past two decades while using this process, I have been very pleased with the success of my students in various types of English classes. In my regular and remedial classes, students become deeply involved in keeping their journals as they explore their own feelings and life situations. They begin to experiment with ways to organize and clarify the spontaneous thoughts and images written in their journals. Students who generally ignore correct spelling and grammar become eager to polish their public writing because it reflects some important aspect of their private writing and, hence, of themselves. I am particularly proud that even students enrolled in my English make-up class passed the basic skills examination required for promotion, mainly on the basis of journal motivation.

TEACHER INTRODUCTION - 3

Creative writing classes In my creative writing classes students revise at least eight journal entries into poetic or fictional form. They photocopy their revisions and share them via small group “read-arounds.” Using this method in the past, my students selected writing to publish in a school literary magazine which received an All-American honor rating from the National Scholastic Press Association for four sequential years. Of course, I do not expect all my students to write for publication; however, I do encourage each of them to develop a distinctive style of writing which he or she can be proud of and find personally rewarding.

Final comments As a final encouraging word, may I refer you to the philosophy of writing instruction developed by language arts specialist James Britton. My students have behaved exactly as Britton predicted they would if they were taught *expressive* writing (e.g., personal diary or journal) before being asked to produce *transactional* writing (e.g., expository paragraphs or essays) and/or *poetic* writing (e.g., short stories or poems). Britton’s research, involving more than 2000 writing samples from 65 secondary schools, led him and his associates to conclude that expressive writing is the source of both transactional and poetic writing.

Unfortunately for student growth, according to Britton, most English teachers require impersonal, transactional writing before assigning expressive writing experiences, if they assign such at all. This tradition inhibits the writing process because the student cannot—or sees no reason to—integrate his or her life into the process. Students using A WRITER’S JOURNAL avoid such inhibition by working directly with their own unique life stories *before* they move to more impersonal writing.



“ The journal, as I present it here, has the capacity to overcome many layers of inhibition, fear, and hesitation which prevent persons from getting more deeply in touch with their lives. ”

The journal, as I present it here, has the capacity to overcome many layers of inhibition, fear, and hesitation which prevent some persons from getting more deeply in touch with their lives. Out of the thousands of separate experiences that your students have had, a forward momentum of writing can be built into their journals. All students, regardless of their writing ability when they enter your class, can learn to open out

TEACHER INTRODUCTION - 4

their lives and go to their own inner sources for leads, ideas, and story lines that can be used for academic and creative writing.



In conclusion, I am interested in your reactions and your suggestions for how this program might be improved. Consequently, after you have tried *A WRITER'S JOURNAL* and have had an opportunity to examine the writing that your students generate, write me directly, care of Interact, 10200 Jefferson Boulevard, Culver City, California 90232-0802.

Please make your comments as personal and specific as you can. ***Thank you!***

OBJECTIVES - 1

“ ... it integrates the cognitive, affective, experiential, and expressional domains ... ”

A WRITER'S JOURNAL presents a unique journal method structured to include a wide spectrum of the intellect and emotions. Unlike traditional, unstructured diaries in which the writer often churns through material over and over again, this journal technique elicits forward movement. Incorporating A WRITER'S JOURNAL within your classroom—as a requirement or as a student option—will humanize the educational process because it integrates the cognitive, affective, experiential, and expressional domains. Depending upon how extensively students use the program inside and outside class, they will experience some, much, or all of the following knowledge, feelings, and skills:

Knowledge

Students will become familiar with the following:

1. Writing styles of fictional and nonfictional literature
2. Authors who have used journal writing as a tool
3. Specific writing techniques to use in exploring their own lives and as an aid to improved creative and other forms of academic writing

Feelings

Students will experience the following:

1. Competence in exploring personal potentials and capabilities
2. Inspiration in discovering the inner workings of one's life
3. Creativity in writing poetry and fiction based upon one's unique life story.
4. Increased sensitivity from sharing writings and hearing classmates share theirs
5. Respect and inner strength as a result of understanding more deeply their inner selves
6. Understanding and improvement in communication with others—including authors and characters in literature
7. Awareness of one's life
8. Establishment of a positive self-image

Skills

Students will demonstrate the following:

1. Capturing the spontaneity of the subconscious on paper
2. Enriching general language through including vividly described life experiences
3. Evoking rhythm in poetry through syllable manipulation
4. Writing summaries of general journal observations in polished, public writings without grammatical or organizational errors
5. Writing autobiographical sketches
6. Writing dream poetry
7. Writing seven and ten syllable poetry
8. Writing personal experience essays

OBJECTIVES - 2

9. Writing short stories with dialog
10. Writing biographies
11. Standing up and reading formally before the class
12. Making decisions based on “authentic” rather than “imposed” values
13. Using the English language correctly
14. Writing clearly and expressively
15. Expanding personal creativity and appreciating it in others
16. Expressing personal thoughts and feelings in writing
17. Thinking more deeply about one’s own and others’ life situations
18. Becoming familiar with traditional as well as modern modes of literary thought
19. Gaining insight into the nature of language and creativity
20. Developing critical and analytical thinking abilities
21. Summarizing journal writings and organizing and evaluating

them in the form of periodic Progress Reports

○	<p>Progress Report 3</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Susan Andrews</i> Period 3 Mrs. March</p>
	During the last few weeks I have written five entries that are
	helping me understand several events in both my life and the
	life of a character in the novel <i>Pigman</i> .
	First of all, the set of MARKINGS I wrote on the ...

BEFORE YOU BEGIN - 1

How much of this program will you use?

Depending upon the time you wish to give to this journal writing and the degree to which you are committed to its purpose, you will likely use A WRITER'S JOURNAL in one of three ways:

- **Considerable time and commitment** You would have your students write most or nearly all of the 18 entries in the four sections during your course's time schedule. You would do this because you are teaching a creative writing course or because you really believe A WRITER'S JOURNAL should be a core process around which you build much of your course.
- **Some time and commitment** You would have your students write about one-third to one-half of the 18 entries in the four sections. (You would select only those which you feel are appropriate for your course.) Of course, you would encourage students interested in the journal process to write as many entries as they wish in all four tab sections—for extra course points.
- **Less time and commitment** You would have your students write only a few of the 18 entries in the four sections. (You would select only a few entries which you feel are appropriate for your course.) Of course, you would encourage students interested in the journal process to write as many entries as they wish in all four tab sections—for extra course points.



Note: *I can't emphasize enough how important it is for you to write your own journal entries as you use this program with your students. You might want to reread my comments on page 2 of this Teacher Materials section.*

Setup Directions

1. **Your copy of A WRITER'S JOURNAL** Keep this notebook close at hand. Place it either on your desk or in your briefcase (or in whatever else you use to carry home papers to evaluate). Begin writing the entries in advance of your students so that you have a feel for what happens to a writer writing particular entries. Also make this notebook *your journal* by adding other teaching ideas and articles to its tab sections. Be ready to tell students, other faculty members, and loved ones: "This is *my journal*. Please do not open it or read it without my permission."
2. **Student notebooks**
 - a. When you introduce A WRITER'S JOURNAL to your students, have them organize its five tab sections either into a *separate* personal 3-ring notebook or inside a *portion* of a school 3-ring notebook—depending upon time and commitment—so that they are ready to write as many entries as you assign or that they themselves choose to write.
 - b. Students keeping a separate 3-ring notebook should have notebooks that are at least *one-inch deep* since they will eventually contain a large number of pages.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN - 2

- c. If you wish your students to have separate journal notebooks and they are willing and able to spend a small amount of money, you may wish to locate stores near your school where they can purchase new three-ring notebooks and appropriate tab dividers.
- d. Students may also be able to find notebook tabs in a nearby store. Point out that tabs with no printing on them are best. However, rather than purchasing tabs, you and your students may wish to use your imagination and creativity to develop tab dividers for the five sections. These dividers do not have to be professionally printed. Students can make them out of old manila folders or any available cardboard. Artistic individuals will want to draw images on their section dividers.
- e. If your students lack the money for the 2b-c-d above, help them obtain any serviceable three-ring notebook.
- f. Above everything else, encourage each student to feel, "This is my private and personal journal."



You will be amazed by what your students can create while making their own tabs.

3. **Classroom arrangement** Set up the A WRITER'S JOURNAL classroom file or set of classroom boxes with 21 folders: 1 for the five page Intro Plus handout (pages 1:1 through 1:5; 20 for the A to T entries handouts. Place this file or set of boxes in a readily accessible classroom location. **Note well:** *Do not keep your masters in these 21 folders. Keep them in your teacher notebook.*
4. **Duplication** Duplicate the following:
 - Title page and TABLE OF CONTENTS page (class set—on 3-hole paper, back to back, if possible)
 - INTRO PLUS INTRODUCTION (class set—on 3-hole paper, back to back, if possible)
 - the remaining entry handouts you plan to assign (class sets—on 3-hole paper, back to back, if possible)
 - all remaining entry handouts (10 or more copies—on 3-hole paper, back to back, if possible)
 - WRITING A PROGRESS REPORT (class set—but only if you intend to use the Progress Report for student evaluation when you are committed to using quite a few of the entries—see **Considerable time and commitment** on page 9)
 - PROGRESS REPORT SUMMARY SHEET (several class sets—but only if you intend to use them for student evaluation when you are committed to using quite a few of the entries—see **Considerable time and commitment** on page 9)