

6+1 Traits of Writing

Ideas

The Secret Knowledge of Grownups (book)

1. Brainstorm a list of rules they have heard from grown-ups at home.
2. Discuss the reasons for these rules, then tell them the reasons are far more sinister than they can imagine.
3. Read the book.
4. Invite students to rise to the challenge at the end. Create their own "top-secret" truth to explain the rule, using the book as a model.

Flashback

-Have students bring in an old toy that used to be their favorite.

Favorite Places

-Think about a favorite place. Bring in a photograph.

R.A.F.T.S.

Role of the Writer

Audience for the piece of writing

Format of the material

Topic of the piece of writing

Strong Verb (the action of the writing or purpose)

Call It Out

1. Pick a category, such as animals.
2. Call out questions - go from general to narrow.
3. Keep asking questions until the category has been examined from many angles.
4. Record narrowed topics on the board and let the students do a quick-write.

Building Blocks

1. Use each "block" to construct more interesting and elaborate ideas.
2. Write a simple sentence on the board, then expand it with blocks.
3. Blocks are: when, size, name a place, add a name.

Show Me, Don't Tell Me

Take a non-specific statement and turn it into a showing statement.

i.e. Frogs are nice. (telling)

Warty mossy frogs that gurgle in the brook are beautiful. (showing)

6+1 Traits of Writing

Organization

Strategies for Organization

Introduction (a lead that hooks)

Middle (a core that is logically organized)

Conclusion (ending that leaves the reader satisfied)

The Birthday Present (book)

Introduction: handing the gift to the recipient

Middle: contents - main idea and details

Conclusion: the ribbon and paper that holds it all together

Transitions

Location: above, beneath, amid, beyond

Compare or Contrast: however, even so, otherwise, in the same way

Time: first, second, third, next, later, then, soon

Conclude or Summarize: finally, to sum up, as a result, in conclusion

Add Important Information: besides, in addition to, for example

Sequencing

Mix It Up - reorder a poem, recipe, paper, etc. Cut the text into pieces and have the students play with it like a puzzle. Ask them to look for transition words, lead sentence (hook), and conclusion.

Putting It In Order - read aloud a familiar story. Choose a child to tell the beginning, then another to tell the end. Then choose children to tell the middle, putting them in logical order as they tell parts of the story.

Step by Step - write directions for a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Have classmates follow the order of the directions to make a sandwich.

6+1 Traits of Writing

Voice

Greeting Cards with Voice

Gather samples of birthday cards and categorize them, i.e. romantic, cute, funny, sincere, sarcastic

1. Hand out packets of cards with sticky notes. Write descriptions on each sticky note about the type of voice each card has.
2. Switch packets and repeat.
3. After the students have worked with several sets of cards, ask them to call out words they used to describe the voices. List on the board.
4. Group them into synonyms.
5. Take out individual cards and choose one voice word.

New Voices, New Choices

Have students write the first sentence of a letter to five different audiences. Discuss how the voice in the writing will change, depending on the intended audience.

Act It Out

Use a list of voice descriptors. Write them on individual slips of paper and ask students to draw a voice out of the hat. He or she has to act it out until a classmate guesses it. Ask students to reflect on the clues that were the most helpful in guessing the voice.

Shopping List

Have students bring in a five item shopping list from their parents of the most often purchased groceries. Use this list to write imaginative description, with pictures.

Cookies

"We need cookies. I hate the kinds that are all hard and crumbly, so get the squooszy ones. Be careful to get a good value. Some of those packages have only six cookies in them - the nerve! They may be good, but we aren't millionaires here. I know you like chocolate, but I'm rather partial to those lemon snicker-doodles or the cinnamon raisin oatmeal little bites of heaven."

6+1 Traits of Writing

Word Choice

The More Detail, the Better

Have all students study the same object to see who can observe the most details – and the most unusual. Give students one minute to study the object, then put it away. Allow one minute for students to write down everything they can remember about the object. Make one big list of details.

Is More Always Better?

Compare original sentences to rewritten ones. More isn't always better.

Caution: Children Crossing

You better slow down a little. There are some pretty nice kids who go to school here and they often walk or ride their bikes along here. Sometimes they aren't listening and looking for traffic, and it could be dangerous for them if you didn't slow down.

Describe It – Build It

Create two identical collections of materials. Have students work in teams of three. One student builds something while a second student waits in another room. The third student observes the first construction, then describes it in detail to the second builder, who tries to replicate the creation of the first builder. As a class, discuss the role of specific and accurate details, particularly when giving instructions or directions.

Your Personal Top Ten

Ask pairs of students to create a list of 25-50 words they like. Challenge them to pare down their lists to top ten favorites. Share them. Then, have students create their personal top ten lists and keep them in their writing notebook. Ask them to change their lists regularly and use the words in their writing. Lists must always be kept to ten, so if a word is added, one must be deleted. Share the lists often.

Rice Cakes or Salsa?

Rice cakes – less interesting words

Salsa – exciting, spicy words.

Yummy Words

Give students an apple and direct them to eat it the way you tell them to:
nibble, gobble, munch, snarf, pick at, etc.

Shaping Up

Gather art supplies and brainstorm a list of favorite words (maybe choose from their Top Ten)? Discuss what words can mean visually. Have the students create a visual representation of their word.

6+1 Traits of Writing

Sentence Fluency

Sentence Stretching

Start with a short sentence or group of words. Pass it around to about six students, with the rule that each person must add or change one word to make the sentence more specific and interesting.

Matthew ate the pizza.

Matthew snarfed the pizza.

Matthew snarfed the cheesy pizza.

Matthew snarfed the steamy, cheesy pizza. (etc.)

Picture Your Sentence

Have students select a piece of their writing. Have them draw rectangles around their sentences. If all of the boxes are about the same size, their sentences are similar in length. If they are different lengths, they have fluency and there is good variety.

Using Punctuation to Add Meaning

Give students a text without punctuation. Have them add whatever punctuation they want, wherever they think it makes sense. Ask students to read the piece aloud and discuss what was added and why. Then, give students a copy of the original text and discuss the differences.

Pass It On

Give students a short beginning sentence - "The night was dark and stormy." They will then take the last word of the sentence and begin the next sentence with that word: "Stormy wasn't even the half of it!" Keep going until the stories are finished, but don't let it go on too long (it gets very silly).

6+1 Traits of Writing

Conventions

Be Accountable

Have students choose what convention they will be accountable for in one piece of writing.

Editor's Marks

Give each student a copy of basic editing marks and use them often throughout the year. Start with one and build up to your appropriate amount.

Reading Backwards

Have the students read their papers backwards to check for spelling.

Remember that editing and revising are different!

6+1 Traits of Writing