

Play to Discover Support and Elaboration - the Theory

... We have insisted on a constructive nature of teaching and writing: both activities require their practitioners to design and build. We may be handed blueprints – teach to this objective, use this graphic organizer – but if the writing and the teaching are to matter, we must make them our own; we must become designers and builders.

Most builders use tools, of course. But as we have suggested, even a huge stockpile of the best tools in the world will not help the builder who does not know what she is building – or why (66).

---*Teaching Writing That Matters: Tools and Projects That Motivate Adolescent Writers*
Chris W. Gallagher & Amy Lee. Scholastic. 2008.

As you might suspect, I'm going to remind you that good feelings in the classroom enhance the dopamine production. What is it that you can do that is behavioral; that actually bumps up the production of this neurotransmitter? First, repetitive gross motor activities will do it, (e.g. marching, power walking, etc.) Get the movement going in your classroom! Second, succeeding at a challenging task will raise the D-levels. Third, camaraderie and team spirit can help do it. Finally, just the anticipation of pleasure can do it. Hook them with a promise of something good coming up soon! Why do all this? Enhanced dopamine levels support better working memory, enhance memory formation, and better decision making. But here's the really amazing thing: the reverse actually works, too! Better decisions bumps up the dopamine! New skills learned bumps up dopamine. Is this awesome or not? Let's cut to the chase: everything you do in your classroom is like to have SOME effect on the brain. Brain-based education says, "Be purposeful about it." Now, go have some fun!

---*Top 10 Brain-Based Teaching Strategies*
Eric Jensen, <http://www.jensenlearning.com/index4.php> for free copy

I want to suggest that to write to your best abilities, it behooves you to construct your toolbox and then build up enough muscle so you can carry it with you. Then, instead of looking at a hard job and getting discouraged, you will perhaps seize the correct tool and get immediately to work (114).

---*On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*
Stephen King. Scribner. 2000

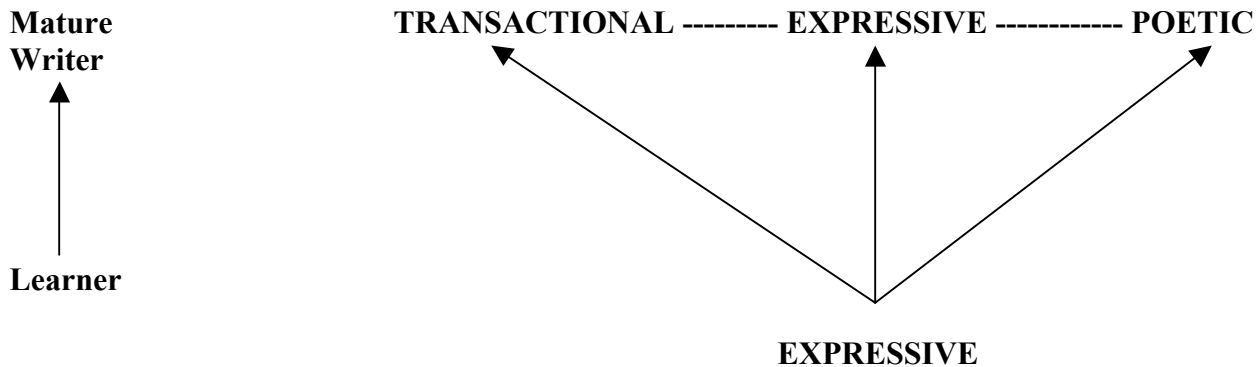
The essay writer invites the reader to stand beside the writer on a promontory and observe the geography of the essay and comment upon it. The writer can be a narrator who objectively reveals a situation, an advocate who is for or against, a historian who puts an immediate concern in perspective, a student of the issue who dissects it, a humorist who points out how the ironies or the ridiculousness of the event, a futurist who speculates how the issue will produce change, a pragmatist who reveals what will work and not work, an optimist who celebrates the event or issue. The range of ways the essay writer responds to life is a wonderfully diverse as human a response to the individual experience of life.

The most effective essays, I believe, are those that find a way for the writer to reveal a process of thought that invites the reader to think alongside the writer. The writer does not talk down or up to the reader but across to the reader. The master essay writers – Didion, E. B. White, Orwell, Dillard – respect their readers. They do not preach, exhort, attack, but share. Their writing is an invitation to thought.

---*Crafting a Life in Essay, Story, Poem*
Donald M. Murray. Heinemann. 1996.

The notebook is a place to record honest perceptions of and reactions to the world. You will want to record important specifics but you may also be tempted to move away from strict accuracy and begin to invent. Go for it! The impulse toward play begins immediately in many writers, from the initial act of breathing in the world and writing down perception. Such play can take place through analogies, metaphor, puns, or personification. Many writers use their notebooks to play with images from the everyday world.

---*Breathing In Breathing Out: Keeping a Writer's Notebook*
Ralph Fletcher. Heinemann. 1996.



Expressive --- writing close to the self, not intended for a public audience: diaries, DAYBOOKS, letters, lists, notes, scribbles, drawings, brainstorming, planning, clustering, daily pages, freewriting...

Poetic --- writing for making something, not for doing something: creative writing, plays, fiction, poetry...

Transactional --- writing for getting things done: essays, tested writing, newsletters, letters to the editor, persuasive, arguments, news reports...

---*The Development of Writing Abilities*
James Britton, Tony Burgess, Nancy Martin, Alex McLeod, Harold Rosen

Play to Discover Support and Elaboration Lesson

WRITING WARM UP CONNECTION

1. Have you ever been stuck for something to say? Have you ever been so caught up in something and you can't see your way through it? What do you do?
2. Pair-Share.

MATERIALS

1. DocCam or overheads of pages 4 to end.
2. Students need daybooks or paper.

TEACHING POINT

Sometimes when writers are stuck, they try techniques that free up their brains. They find that “playing with writing” helps them discover their main points.

TEACHING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

1. Brainstorm a list of strong emotions (expressive).
 - Mark the one you want to write about today.
2. Make a list of the times when you felt that way (expressive).
 - Mark the idea you'd like to write about today.
3. Quickwrite on your topic (expressive).
 - Share with a partner. You can paraphrase or read.
4. Underline the key words in your quickwrite. Turn the key words into a poem, a found poem (poetic). Put the words or phrases together in any order that seems right. Add any words or phrases you need to make it the way you like it.
 - Share with a partner. You can paraphrase or read.
5. Write a claim (transactional) – a general statement that reflects what you believe. I imagine it will be something you discovered while you were writing and talking with your partner today.

REFLECTION (Written or shared orally)

Ask students to reflect on what they learned about writing today. In addition, ask them how they will apply the lessons they learned to other writing tasks they will confront.

LINK

Writing in the expressive (writing you don't normally share with anyone) and poetic (creative writing) prepares you to write in transactional (writing that gets things done). By writing on the same topic in a variety of ways (in this case – quickwrite, narrative, and poetry – you learn your topic better. You make connections you may not have discovered before. You feel more ready to write transactional writing (essays, arguments).

FOLLOW UP

Students could write their claims into essays after they do some research and thinking out loud on paper or with others. See the debate lesson plan on this Website page. Ask the students to select what genre in which they will write. It seems natural for me to write a letter to the phone company. Others may want to write letters to the editor of their local newspaper. Others may want to write to a family member. The audience will determine the form, the voice, the research needed, the style. If the piece can really be sent to someone, the writing will be more meaningful and therefore the students will take the writing more seriously.

Brainstormed list:

happy

upset

surprised

anxious

mad*

List of times I felt that way:

Returning from a consulting job – the tunnel was completely blocked because of an accident

Bought a new LG phone and found that I have to pay a data plan - \$10 a month for nothing!*

Crashed the car into a telephone pole

Quickwrite:

After 3 years nursing my old phone, I'm ready for a new one. Not happy about it, mind you, because even though my phone is old, I love it. It gives me good reception and it's been with me through thick and thin. But I'm ready for texting! My old phone doesn't do that well. Excitedly, I made by trip to my phone company and picked out a phone. Truth be told, this actually has been a yearlong process of looking at phones. When I go to sign up, I'm told I have to pay \$10 a month for a data plan or \$30 a month for an unlimited plan – the only one that is actually worth something. I talk to the rep, the store manager, the 611 rep, the supervisor. I can't make them budge. Other providers don't charge. But then, I like my friends at my place.

Underline the main points in your quickwrite:

After 3 years nursing my old phone, I'm ready for a new one.

Not happy about it, mind you, because even though my phone is old, I love it. It gives me good reception and it's been with me

through thick and thin. But I'm ready for texting! My old phone doesn't do that well. Excitedly, I made by trip to my

phone company and picked out a phone. Truth be told, this actually has been a yearlong process of looking at phones.

When I go to sign up, I'm told I have to pay \$10 a month for a data plan or \$30 a month for an unlimited plan – the only one

that is actually worth something. I talk to the rep, the store manager, the 611 rep, the supervisor. I can't make them budge.

Other providers don't charge. But then, I like my friends at my place.

Turn your main points into a found poem.

old
new
I'm torn

my old phone
at my side
through thick and thin

but, new phone
texting!
slick!

expensive. Huh?
monthly, costly data plan
comes with my free phone

I argue
I threaten to leave
no choice, they say

old
new
progress?

Make a claim you could support with evidence.

Phone companies should not be allowed to make customers pay for services they will not use.