

GRADE 4 English Language Arts Writing Lesson 7

Read aloud to the students the material that is printed in **boldface type** inside the boxes. Information in regular type inside the boxes and all information outside the boxes should **not** be read to the students. Possible student responses are included in parentheses after the questions.

Any directions that ask you to do something, such as to turn to a page or to hand out materials to students, will have an arrow symbol (\implies) by them.

Purpose of Lesson 7:

In this lesson, the tutor and students will

- ◆ connect oral language to written language,
- ◆ practice strategies for overcoming the fear of writing,
- ◆ practice prewriting strategies, and
- ◆ practice writing descriptive paragraphs.

Equipment/Materials Needed:

- ◆ chart paper on a stand
- ◆ paper
- ◆ pencils
- ◆ Student Worksheet: Writing Lesson 7-1

Advance Preparation:

Write the names of all the students on small pieces of paper and fold them so the names are not visible; the names will be drawn later during the lesson to determine writing assignments. Include your name also for the drawing.

Introduction:

Before we begin our writing activity, let's review some important points about writing.

First of all, what is the purpose or reason for writing? Pause. (to give a message)

What is one strategy for overcoming the fear of writing? Pause. (pretend to tell about something before writing about it) **Yes, remember: *what you can talk about, you can write about; what you can write about, someone can read about.***

What is the first step in any writing assignment? Pause. (getting your thoughts written down on paper without worrying about everything being perfect)

What should you do if you don't know how to spell the words you want to include in your writing? Pause. (spell them the best you can and mark them so you won't forget to go back and check for correct spelling) **If you worry too much about writing perfectly, you might forget about your good ideas for writing down your thoughts.**

After you have written your thoughts down in complete sentences, what should you do next? Pause. (Reread what you wrote to be sure your sentences connect and make sense; rewrite sentences that don't make sense)

What is the next step? Pause. (proofread for spelling and punctuation errors and make corrections)

⇒ Distribute Student Worksheet: Writing Lesson 7-1.

Here is a list of important things to remember about writing. If you do not have your copy from the last lesson, you can use this one to help you remember these things when you do the next writing activity.

For today's writing lesson, we will play a game. Do any of you know how to play the game *I Spy*? Pause; ask students who respond *yes* to explain how to play the game. Then paraphrase or clarify as needed.

For those of you who may not know how to play this game, it is really simple. One person describes an object in the room while the others guess what it is. Describe an object in the room to illustrate the game. **For example, I might say, "I spy something green, dusty, big, and shaped like a rectangle." Does anyone know what it is?** Pause (the chalkboard) **This one wasn't too difficult to find because I gave you lots of clues. How many clues did I give?** Pause. (four) **What if I had given you only one clue and said, "I spy something big"?** **Would this object have been easy to find?** (No, because there are many big things in this room; we wouldn't know which one you meant.)

Describe any white object in the room by using only the word *white* for description. **Let's do another one. "I spy something white." What is it?** Pause. (Students should guess several times before finding the object, because there will be so many white objects in the room. After the object has been identified, discuss the reasons for the difficulty in doing so. **Why was this object difficult to find?** Pause. (There are so many white things in this room; we don't have enough clues.)

It's easy to see why it is important to give lots of details when you are describing something. The more details you give, the easier it is to get a *mental picture* of it. A *mental picture* is the picture we have in our heads when we *imagine* something.

Our assignment today is to write a description of someone. Before you get started on this assignment, I am going to describe a boy. Help me think of some things I might include in my description. Thinking of ideas before writing is sometimes called *brainstorming*. Help me brainstorm ideas for writing a description of someone.

Write the following list on the chalkboard, including any student suggestions that are appropriate.

- his age
- how he looks (hair, eyes, skin)
- kind of clothes he usually wears
- things he likes to do
- interesting or different things about him

Now I have something to help me remember what I will write about this boy. If I think of something else, I will add it. The list is just to help me get started.

Using a think aloud approach, write the following on the chalkboard.

First I want to talk about his age and his size. I have a picture of him in my mind and will try to describe it. I will indent the first line because I am beginning a paragraph. Then I will talk about how he spends his time.

When I think of this ten-year old boy, I see someone who always seems to be moving. With a smile on his face, he is often seen running with his friends, either chasing something, or being chased. He is small and slender, but you should not be fooled by his size. Even though he is much shorter and smaller than most of his friends, he is very lean, muscular, and strong. He can run, jump, climb, and swim all day without ever seeming to get tired. He would probably do well playing many kinds of sports.

(After writing the above on the board, read it aloud.)

Now I need to read my description aloud to make sure it makes sense. Read the paragraph aloud. **Does this paragraph make sense? Can anyone guess who I am describing?** Pause. (Mowgli, from *Jungle Book*)

If students do not guess correctly, do not tell them the answer before reading the next paragraph.

(Read the second paragraph about Mowgli, below.)

To see what this boy's face looks like, you have to see him when he is still. The only time he is still is during the night when he is sound asleep after a long day with his friends. Then, if his dark brown, tangled hair isn't hiding his face, you can see that his face is almost as dark as his hair. Like his arms and long legs, his face is a very dark, brown color, partly because he spends so much time outside. In fact, he sleeps outside under the trees, or sometimes in a cave.

Since I have given more clues now, can anyone figure out whom this paragraph describes? Pause (Mowgli)

Now I think you are ready to write your descriptive paragraphs. First we need to decide whom you will describe. To do this, we will draw names. My name will be drawn also, because I will do the same writing assignment you will do.

Place the folded pieces of paper with names written on them in a container and ask each child to draw one; then you can draw the last name.

When you draw a name, carefully unfold the paper without allowing others to see whose name you have drawn. If you draw your name, you must put it back and draw another.

After each student has drawn a name, give the following instructions.

Your assignment is to describe the person whose name you have drawn. You must write at least one paragraph with at least five sentences. If you would like to write more than one paragraph, you may.

Remember to use the list of important things to remember about writing that I gave you earlier. Be sure that you have gone through each step. When we have finished writing our descriptive paragraphs, we will take turns reading them aloud. After each student has read his or her paragraph aloud, the rest of us will try to figure out whom the paragraph describes.

While the students are writing their paragraphs, circulate among them to encourage and assist as needed. You may have to prompt some students to get them started. If a student doesn't know what to write, ask her to tell you what the person looks like. Listen to her describe the person and prompt her to elaborate.

After most of the students have written their paragraphs, begin allowing them to read their descriptions while others try to identify the person.

Writing: Sending a Message

- ◆ *overcoming the fear*
- ◆ *remembering the purpose*
 - ◆ *getting started*
 - ◆ *getting finished*

Step 1: Write down your important thoughts first. Think about what you really want to say; write down these important thoughts. Don't worry about spelling or writing in complete sentences at first; just write the words the best you can, and write in short phrases or sentences. ***Remember, the purpose of writing is to send a message.***

Step 2: Organize your thoughts into main ideas. Use an outline or a story map to organize your story into sections with main ideas and supporting details.

Step 3: Rewrite your thoughts in complete sentences. Be sure your sentences connect and are in an order that makes sense. Be sure your main idea has details that support it.

Step 4: Read what you have written; revise. The most important thing about your writing is that it makes sense. If necessary, rewrite sentences to make better sense or provide more details. If possible, ask another person to read what you wrote to make sure it makes sense.

Step 5: Proofread for errors. After being sure that your writing makes sense, look carefully at it to check for correct spelling and punctuation.

Step 6: Correct spelling and punctuation errors. Do the best you can to find all of your errors and correct them.

If you can say it, you can write it. If you can write it, someone can read it. Writing your thoughts on paper is just another way of saying something.

Note. Developed for Middle School Reading/Writing Workshop, November, 2000, by Deidra Frazier. Reprinted with permission.