Thoughtful Learning - Personal Writing Grade 3

Content Area: **English**
Course(s):
Time Period: **September**
Length: **3 weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

The personal writing unit focuses on the main reasons to write, writing to share and writing to learn. In this unit students develop an understanding of personal reasons for writing.

Enduring Understandings

Students will keep a learning log to write about subjects across the curriculum to learn about subjects more fully. Students will keep a personal journal to record things that happen and feelings they have. Students will keep a reading log to respond to the stories and books they are reading.

Essential Questions

Why keep a learning log? Why keep a personal journal? What types of writing are personal writing?

Instructional Strategies & Learning Activities

Writing in Journals and Logs - Start-Up Activity

Ask for a volunteer to explain what is happening in the illustration on pages 64–65. (Possible response: The writer, while sleeping, seems to be writing about an “outer-space” dream.) Then ask students to write about what they can remember from one of their own dreams or to write about something they would like to do. Have volunteers share their writing.

Then read and discuss the chapter introduction. Point out to students that the writing that they just completed is the very type that they can do in a journal.

Writing in a Personal Journal

Read and discuss the top part of this page, which lists the different types of things that students can write about in a journal. Then read the sample journal entry, based on something the writer has heard. Ask students to write a journal entry about something they have heard. Afterward, have volunteers share their writing.

Extended activity: Have students write journal entries whenever they have a class celebration, go on a field trip, have a special guest, etc.

Starting a Journal

Journal writing is a key form of personal writing. In a journal, you reflect on your experiences, explore your cares or concerns, ask questions, wonder, and so on. The choice is yours. And all it takes to get started is a notebook and pen or a computer.

Journal writing works best when you write regularly—every day or every other day. Once you get into a journal-writing routine, you will become more thoughtful and more confident in your ability to write.

> **Your Turn** Read the sample journal entry below, in which the writer reflects on a special music lesson. Then write your own journal entry following these guidelines.
>
> 1. Gather your writing materials (notebook and pen or computer).
> 2. Find a quiet and comfortable place to write.
> 3. Select a topic to write about—a lesson or practice, a class, a special event, a problem, a family gathering, and so on.
> 4. Date your journal entry. Then write for at least 5–10 minutes.
> 5. Continue writing about this topic or a new topic in your next writing.

Writing in a Reading Journal

A reading journal is a special type of journal in which students respond to the stories and books they are reading. Read and discuss this page; then have students respond in a journal for any reading assignments and encourage them to keep a journal for their pleasure reading as well. (Consider connecting your discussion of reading journals with “Reading to Understand Fiction” on pages 211–217 and “Reading to Understand Nonfiction” on pages 218–225.)

Writing in a Learning Log

The next two pages cover using a learning log. Students are usually familiar with writing to share information and to create stories, but they may not be aware that writing is an effective learning tool. Point out to students that a learning log is a type of journal in which they can write about the subjects they are studying in school. This type of writing can help them understand the subjects more fully. Then read and discuss page 68 and the top of page 69. Ask students to write a learning-log entry about their work in math, social studies, or science class.

Tips for Writing to Learn

Next, review “Tips for Writing to Learn” on page 69. Ask students to develop another learning-log entry in which they list questions about something they are studying, tell a friend about a new subject, or draw pictures to make a concept clearer. Have volunteers share their entries. Then make writing in a learning log an important part of your class.

Writing Lists - Start-Up Activity

Ask students why people make lists. Then ask them if they ever make lists themselves and if they know of other people who make lists. Next, read and discuss the introduction to the chapter. End by having students make a wild or crazy list (like the zookeeper’s list) to share with the class.

Writing Lists (Continued)

Pages 71–73 explain four reasons to write lists: remembering things, collecting ideas for writing, thinking in different ways, and having fun. After discussing page 71, work with students to create a list of things to remember in school. Then work with students to create a list of words to use in a writing assignment. (Display these words as the students do the actual writing.) After discussing pages 72–73, ask students to create a happy and/or fun list to share.

Integration of 21st Century Themes and Skills

The 21st century skills are a set of abilities that students need to develop in order to succeed in the information age. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills lists three types:

Learning Skills

- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking
- Collaborating
- Communicating

Literacy Skills

- Information Literacy
- Media Literacy
- Technology Literacy

Interdisciplinary Connections

Journaling can be utilized in science and social studies assignments. Students keep a Monarch Butterfly journal to record observations.

Differentiation

Modify expectations: Shorten or lengthen assignment depending on abilities.

Require basic or extended vocabulary.

Small group teacher instruction based on student's writing ability.

Pair students heterogeneously for centers to encourage students to learn from peers.

Allow for speech to text for longer writing assignments.

Provide choice extension projects as necessary to extend learning

Modifications & Accommodations

Refer to QSAC, EXCEL SPED Accommodations spreadsheet in this discipline.

IEP and 504 accommodations will be utilized.

Formative Assessments

You can provide this formative assessment during different types of writing conferences:

- **Desk-Side Conferences** occur when you stop at a student's desk to ask questions and make responses. Questions should be open-ended. This gives the writer "space" to talk and clarify his or her own thinking about the writing.
- **Scheduled Conferences** give you and a student a chance to meet for 3 to 5 minutes in a more structured setting. In such a conference, a student may have a specific problem or need to discuss or simply want you to assess his or her progress on a particular piece of writing.
- **Small-Group Conferences** give you a chance to meet with three to five students who are at the same stage of the writing process or are experiencing a similar problem. The goal of such conferences is twofold: first, to help students improve their writing and, second, to help them become better assessors.

Summative Assessments

Decide which assignments require summative assessment, and then grade the writing following this process:

- Ask students to submit prewriting and rough drafts with their final drafts.
- Scan final drafts once, focusing on the writing as a whole.
- Reread them, this time assessing them using the qualities of writing.
- Make marginal notations, if necessary, as you read the drafts a second time.
- Scan the writing a third and final time. Note the feedback you have given.
- Complete your rating sheet or rubric, and, if necessary, write a summary comment.

Instructional Materials

Writer's Express Skills Book

Writer's Express Handbook

Standards

LA.W.3.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self-correction and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.