

micro lessons in writing

big ideas

for

getting
started

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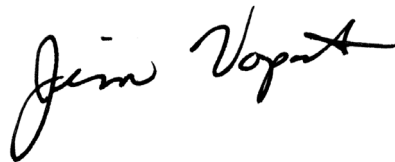
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welcome

We all know as teachers we have a tendency to maximize instruction. Not the beating a horse to death at the front of the classroom kind of maximized instruction; more like “so little time, so much to teach.” That has been one of the attractions of mini lessons: they help dial down the formal front-of-the-classroom instruction while creating more time for students to write. **micro lessons** strives to dial down the volume some more. Here the medium is the message: a minimal book format with minimal text, one micro lesson per page, an invitation for you the teacher to complete the narrative with your students through their writing. Less is more. Often the best ideas are the simplest to explain and adapt to your specific learning situation. Students become better writers by writing, not listening to us talk about writing.

micro lessons that appeal to students in all grade levels across the curriculum. **micro lessons** that support students as writers and promote writing as a process.

Welcome. The next thing you hear will be the sound of writing.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Vogt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

big ideas for getting started

If the writing class is a journey, then certain things are necessary before heading out: a wealth of personal writing topics, a sense of the possible, and a writer's habit of mind. The **micro lessons** that follow are meant to get your students packed and on their way.

CLIMATE

writing workshop walk through

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as a writer 5

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comfortable writing 6

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* in the text indicates **micro lesson** cross reference.

writing workshop walk through

“This open area is where my young writers and I gather for mini lessons, readings from the Author’s Chair, and class meetings. Writing Folders are in bins next to the windows and plants. Student writing is up on the walls and embraces us. The Word Wall is where everyone can see it; on the other side of the aquarium is a place for posting workshop procedures and mini lessons. I wish we had more computers, but every year we add a few. Instead of rows of desks, there are movable tables and chairs and numerous centers, or as they say in travel, *destinations*: the Grammar Hospital, Editing Corner, Conferencing Area, library of non-fiction, fiction, and student-made books. Showcase Portfolios are in the library too. Go to the Publication Center for different sizes and colors of paper and bookmaking supplies. Pens, markers, crayons, scissors, glue, sticky notes, and index cards are there as well as other areas of the classroom. Materials are labeled for easy return. The Mail Center is for Literature Letters, dialogue journals, e-mail, exit and admit slips.”

“Wouldn’t make sense to walk through without pausing to experience the reason the classroom is organized the way it is. Find a place for writing. Anywhere in the room is fine. If you have your writer’s notebook, you’ll probably want to use it. If not, there are journals and paper in the Publication Center.”

“Everyone comfortable?”

interview/innerview

What happens on the first day of writing class is like an overture—it sets the tone for what’s to follow. A writing overture that gets students listening, asking questions, organizing, and thinking is the interview. Ask students what they want to know about each other as a way of generating possible interview questions. Have some questions of your own ready—like what name the student wants to be called in class, how they feel about writing, something about them that no one would guess. Students interview each other in pairs, making notes of questions and answers. Don’t exclude yourself from the interview process unless you want to throw in some dissonance. If there’s an odd number, a group of three will work. After about 10 minutes taking turns interviewing each other, students introduce the person they interviewed to the rest of the class using the notes in any way they are helpful.

When introductions are through, students reflect in writing about the experience and share responses with their original interview partner. Is there anything in the interview that can be added to the What I Want to Write About list?