13 Activities for Vibrant Nonfiction Writing

The Story of My Thinking
Expository Writing Activities for 13 Teaching Situations

“The power of Gretchen’s work is that it reimagines academic writing as voiced and authentic—as something a reader might want to read. In the current climate, this is a hugely important task.”

—Thomas Newkirk

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Grades 4-12 / 978-0-325-04239-8 / 2012 / 200pp / $19.00

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While many state assessments as well as the Common Core ask students to write about their opinions, Gretchen’s goal in *The Story of My Thinking* is to help teachers take their students through the various stages of the writing process (from generating ideas to publication) in a way that breaks down the barrier between “academic” writing and “creative” writing and helps kids produce vibrant nonfiction with voice and conviction.

*The Story of My Thinking* provides 13 writing activities for familiar teaching situations, with step-by-step lessons that help you bridge the gap between narrative and informative writing. Using the same classroom-tested strategies that made *Crunchtime* a bestseller, Gretchen gives the flexibility of dipping in and out of the lessons as you need them. Choose the lesson that matches your teaching situation today, and then another one tomorrow.

When authentic, personal experiences replace canned, pre-written topics, and students are provided with structures that reflect how readers read, their writing transforms from formulaic to passionate. And when students have plenty of chances to write about topics that are meaningful to them, in a variety of ways, for a variety of situations, then they will be ready for any writing assignment.

*Winner of the 2010 James Moffett Award*

“If students used structures that more closely tracked the movement of their mind, weaving their own slaloms between the twins of knowledge and experience, readers would be more inclined to lean in and vicariously experience that movement of the mind. Wouldn’t they?”

—Gretchen Bernabei

**Gretchen Bernabei** has taught middle school and high school for 30 years. She is a coauthor of the bestselling *Crunchtime: Lessons to Help Students Blow the Roof Off Writing Tests—and Become Better Writers in the Process*, and author of *Why We Must Run with Scissors: Voice Lessons in Persuasive Writing*, *Reviving the Essay: How to Teach Structure Without Formula*, *Lightning in a Bottle*, *Sparklers: High Scoring Test Essays and What We Learn from Them*, *The Good Writer’s Guide*. Gretchen was also a contributing author of *Teaching “The Neglected R”*. 