

# Content and Writing Instruction Unite!

Creating Expository Writing Units

Laura Dreyer  
April 27, 2022

# Goals for the Evening

- Explain why the nation is ready for writing reckoning
- Explore what the research says about effective writing instruction
- Outline process for developing expository writing curriculum
- Share examples of various writing units

The Writing's on the Wall

# Why is writing so important?

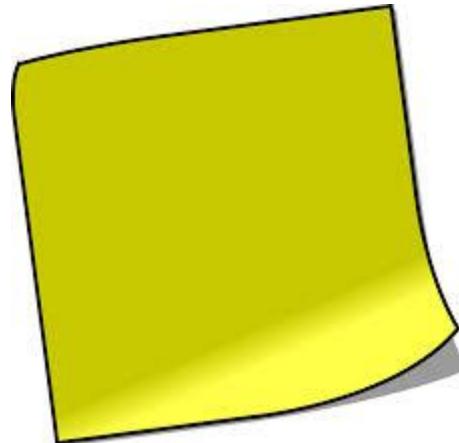
- Communication
- Learning
- Self-expression

But above all:

The internet!

# Why is writing so difficult?

- Written language is different from spoken language
- Written communication requires more precision and clarity
- Writing involves many cognitive processes



# How are we doing?

- 70% of students in grades 4-12 are low-achieving writers (Persky et al., 2003)
- $\frac{1}{3}$  of high school students who intend to enroll in college do not meet benchmarks (ACT, 2005)
- American businesses spend approximately \$3.1 billion annually on remediating employees' writing (National Commission on Writing, 2005)
- 27% of students in grades 8 and 12 scored proficient or higher on the 2011 NAEP writing assessment

assigning writing  $\neq$  teaching writing

The Write Stuff

# The Ladder of Reading & Writing



Learning to read seems effortless; challenging content likely needed (5-10%\*)

Learning to read is relatively easy with broad instruction; explicit instruction for spelling & writing likely needed (35%\*)

Learning to read/spell/write proficiently requires code-based, systematic, & explicit instruction (40-45%\*)

Learning to read/spell/write requires code-based, systematic, explicit, intensive instruction & frequent repetition (10-15%\*)

\* Percentages estimated based on available evidence

\*\* Terms defined and references at [www.nancyyoung.ca](http://www.nancyyoung.ca)

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Extended learning & enrichment likely essential\*\*

Facets of a structured literacy approach likely valuable\*\*

A structured literacy approach likely essential\*\*

Data informs instruction & practice: Differentiated content & process\*\*  
Linguistic processes, executive functions, psychological aspects & environmental circumstances affect learning & vary within person & group \*

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# Principles of Structured Literacy Instruction

- Explicit
- Systematic & Cumulative
- Hands-on, Engaging, & Multimodal
- Diagnostic & Responsive

IDA Structured Literacy Fact Sheet

# Eleven Elements of Effective Adolescent Writing Instruction

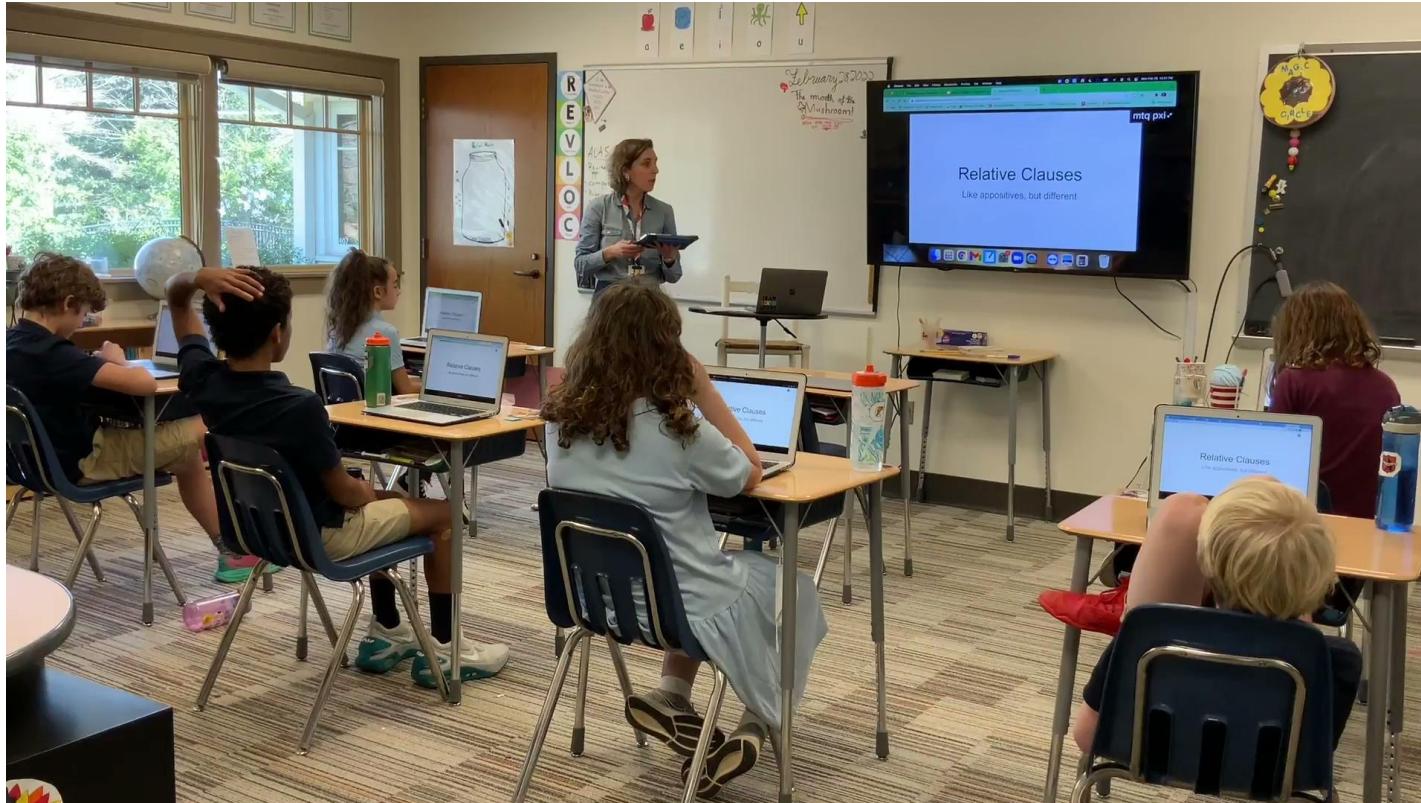
1. Writing Strategies
2. Summarization
3. Collaborative Writing
4. Specific Product Goals
5. Word Processing
6. Sentence Combining
7. Prewriting
8. Inquiry Activities
9. Process Writing Approach
10. Study of Models
11. Writing for Content Learning

Graham & Perin, 2007

# Gradual Release of Writing Responsibility

- Teach strategies explicitly
- Model & provide time for oral practice
- Push onus on to students as they show they are ready

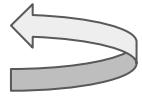
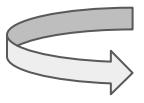
# Strategy Instruction in the Classroom



# Expository Writing

- Explains or informs
- Based on factual information
- Clear, concise & linear
- Examples include essays, newspaper articles, instruction manuals

# Writing and Content



- Writing about content helps teachers assess what their students know
- Writing about content helps students cement the information they are learning

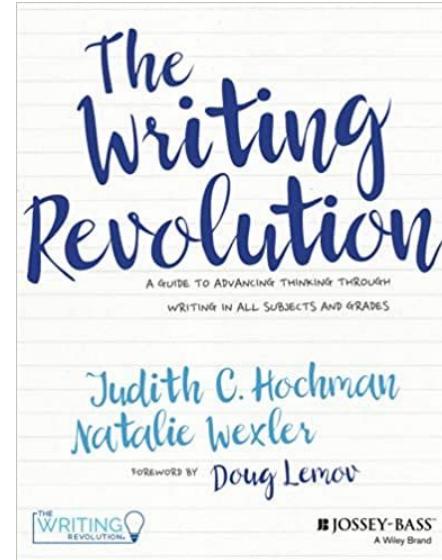
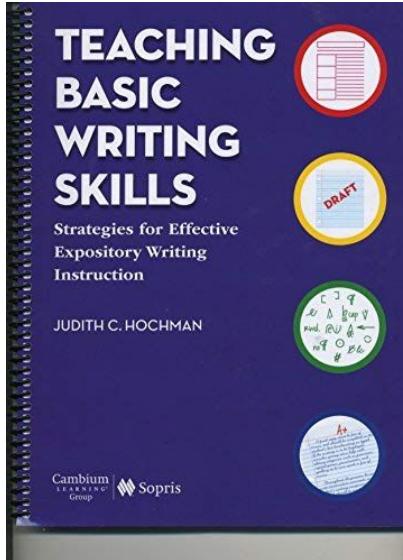
“A student’s ability to comprehend a text will vary depending on his familiarity with the subject; no degree of ‘skill’ will help if he lacks the knowledge to understand it.”

*The Knowledge Gap*, Natalie Wexler

# Why create expository writing units?

- Maximize classroom time
- Practice specific writing skills
- Explicitly teach vocabulary and language structures unique to writing
- Most writing assignments in middle and high school are expository

# Trust the Process



# Step 1: Pick a Topic

- Consider what you are covering in social studies or science
- Select something of high interest to the students
- Use whatever periodical your class enjoys



## Step 2: Annotate the Article

- Look for the key points and text structure to hit the main ideas
- Pick out any vocabulary you want to incorporate in your activities
- Plan to read with your students and really sell it

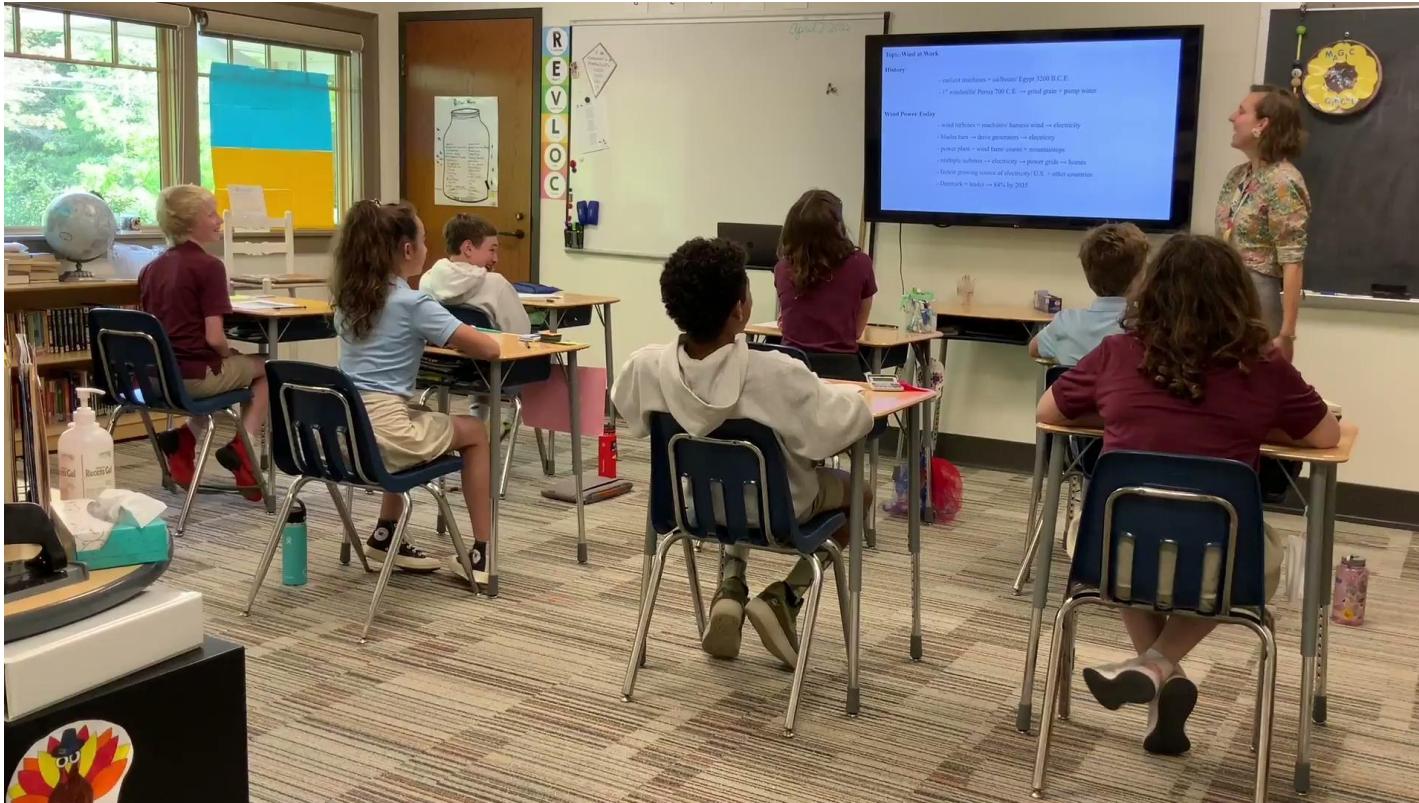
# Expository Text Structures

- Descriptive
- Sequence or Process
- Compare and Contrast
- Cause and Effect
- Problem / Solution

## **Topic: Nugget Nation**

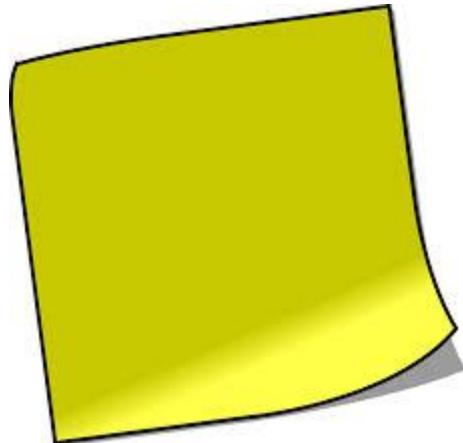
- Before 1950 / chicken = fancy food / required kill / pluck / dress
- 1950s / plucked chickens available / too much time prepare
- Robert Baker = scientist hired by chicken farmers / experimented ways cook chicken
- Developed “Chicken Crispie” / bite-size chunk ground meat w/ gold-brown batter
- Published recipe ↪ did not become popular
- 1977 Fed. gov’t recommended ppl eat less beef & more chicken → “burger crisis” @ McDonalds
- Used Baker’s recipe → introduced Chicken McNuggets 1983
- Not healthier than burgers / American classic anyway
- Currently consume >2.3 billion order annually

# GO in Action



## Step 3: Plan Your Sentence Activities

- Reinforce writing strategies students have already learned
- Writing activities can be done with the entire class or independently
- Try out your activities before using them with the students



# Because / But / So

1. Americans did not eat a lot of chicken before the 1980s because *it took too long to prepare and cook.*
2. Americans did not eat a lot of chicken before the 1980s, but *the chicken nugget changed the American diet.*
3. Americans did not eat a lot of chicken before the 1980s, so *chicken farmers hired Robert Baker to invent new chicken recipes.*

# Sentence Fragments

1. to make chicken easier to cook

*Robert Baker developed many recipes to make chicken easier to cook.*

2. the United States government

*In 1977, the United States government recommended that Americans eat less beef and more chicken.*

3. 2.3 billion orders of chicken nuggets

*Last year, Americans consumed 2.3 billion orders of chicken nuggets.*

# Converting Key Words and Phrases into Sentences

1. 1950s / chicken = unpopular b/c too much time / prepare

During the 1950s, chicken was unpopular because it took too much time to prepare.

2. Robert Baker = scientist / invented new ways / cook chicken

Robert Baker, a scientist, invented many new ways to cook chicken.

3. McDonalds est. Chicken McNugget / 1983

McDonalds introduced Americans to the Chicken McNugget in 1983.

# Jeopardy

**Q:** Why was there a burger crisis in 1977?

**A:** because the U.S. government told people to eat less beef

**Q:** When did Robert Baker work with chicken farmers and companies?

**A:** in the 1950s and 1960s

**Q:** What was Robert Baker's favorite chicken creation?

**A:** a bite-size chunk of ground chicken called a “Chicken Crispie”

**Q:** How could people be convinced to buy more chicken?

**A:** by making it easier to cook and eat

# Sentence Expansion

1. They hired Robert Baker.

Who? poultry farmers

When? 1950s

Why? help increase chicken sales

Expanded Sentence:

*In order to help increase chicken sales, poultry farmers hired Robert Baker in the 1950s.*

*In the 1950s, poultry farmers hired Robert Baker to increase chicken sales.*

2. They were a hit.

What? Chicken McNuggets

When? 1983

Where? across the nation

Expanded Sentence:

In 1983, Chicken McNuggets were a hit across the nation.

Chicken McNuggets were a hit across the nation in 1983.

# Sentence Types

- Declarative

Chicken used to only be served for special occasions.

? Interrogative

Who invented the chicken nugget?

! Exclamatory

Americans eat over two billion orders of chicken nuggets each year!

- or ! Imperative

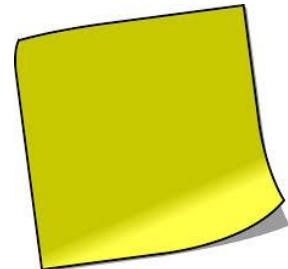
Make chicken easier to cook.

# Single Paragraph Outline

T.S. Last year Americans placed more than 2.3 billion orders for chicken nuggets, but 40 years ago no one knew this food existed.

1. 1950s chicken = unpopular / too much time prepare
2. Chicken farmers hire Baker / make chicken easier cook & eat → invented “chicken crispie”
3. 20 yrs later / fed. Gov’t “burger crisis” / rec. eat less beef & more chicken
4. McD’s used Baker’s recipe → introduced chicken McNuggets / 1983

C.S. Thanks to Baker, we are now a nation of chicken eaters.



# Outlining Testimonial



Last year, Americans placed more than 2.3 billion order for chicken nuggets, but 40 years ago no one knew this food existed. In the 1950s, chicken was an unpopular item at the supermarket. People did not want to buy it because it took too much time to prepare and cook the bird. As a result, chicken farmers hired an inventor named Robert Baker to find a way to make chicken easier to cook and eat. After many experiments, he developed a bite-size chunk of ground chicken covered with golden batter which he called a “Chicken Crispie.” Twenty years later, the federal government created a burger crisis by recommending that Americans eat less beef and more chicken. McDonald’s used Baker’s recipe and introduced the American palate to the Chicken McNugget in 1983. Thanks to Baker, we are now a nation of chicken eaters.

## Step 4: Share!

- Share writing units with your colleagues or divide what you want to develop together



Just the Tip of the Iceberg

# Shirley Chisholm



## Shirley Chisholm's historic run for president

By Biography.com, adapted by Newsela staff on 02.08.21

Word Count **713**

Level **830L**



Image 1. Shirley Chisholm declared her candidacy for the presidency in January 1972, making her the first African American to run for president of the United States as part of a major party. Photo: Richard Drew/AP.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Writing



Topic: Shirley Chisholm

**Directions:** Use the appositive phrases in sentences.

1. the first Black woman elected to Congress

Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman  
elected to Congress, made history by  
running for president.

---

2. a historic undertaking

Chisholm's presidential campaign, a historic  
undertaking, was short-lived since it lacked  
money.

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3. the first Black and South Asian vice president

Kamala Harris, the first Black and South  
Asian vice president, was inspired by  
Shirley Chisholm.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Writing

Topic: Shirley Chisholm

**Directions:** Use the key words to combine the following sentences.

1. Shirley Chisholm ran for president with a political party.

The political party was major.

Shirley Chisholm made history.

(When)

When Shirley Chisholm ran for president  
with a major political party, she made  
history.

2. Chisholm's campaign lacked money.

The campaign was presidential.

Chisholm struggled to attract new voters.

(Since)

Since Chisholm's presidential campaign  
lacked money, she struggled to attract  
new voters.

3. Chisholm lost the primary.

The primary was Democratic.

Chisholm inspired many future leaders.

(Even though)

Even though Chisholm lost the  
Democratic primary, she inspired many  
future leaders.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Writing



Topic: Shirley Chisholm

**Directions:** Circle the correct verb.

1. Shirley Chisholm, a politician from New York, ( was / were ) the first Black woman to run for president with a major political party.
2. Voters in the United States ( decides / decide ) who serves in the legislative branch of the federal government.
3. The Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Women's Caucus ( was / were ) created when Shirley Chisholm was in the House of Representatives.
4. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ( was / were ) supposed to protect voting rights, many Black Americans ( was / were ) denied voting rights in the 1970s.
5. Presidential campaigns ( requires / require ) substantial fundraising in order to be successful.
6. Many politicians today ( remembers / remember ) the contributions made by Shirley Chisholm.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Writing

Topic: Shirley Chisholm

Directions: Use sentence starters to write illustration sentences.

for example      specifically      for instance      as an illustration

1. Shirley Chisholm broke barriers in the U.S. government. \_\_\_\_\_

For example, she was the the first Black  
woman to run for president.

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2. As a Congresswoman, Shirley Chisholm fought for various causes.

As an illustration, she supported education  
services like school lunches.

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3. Shirley Chisholm continues to be celebrated and recognized by

politicians today. Specifically, Barack Obama

awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom  
in 2015.

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## Multiple Paragraph Outline

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: Shirley Chisholm

Thesis Statement: Shirley Chisholm, a visionary leader, broke barriers for women and people of color in the federal government.

1.

Main Idea	Details
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- G.S.</li><li>- S.S.</li><li>- Th. St.</li></ul>
¶ 1 historic achievements ↓ T.S. 2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 1968 / 1st Black woman elected / House of Rep.</li><li>- supported ed. &amp; school services / found member Congressional caucuses</li><li>- Jan. 25, 1972 / announced candidacy → 1st Black American run w/ major political party</li><li>- support from women &amp; minority voters ↛ lost nomination McGovern</li></ul>
Conclusion ¶ 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Th. St. (rephrased)</li><li>- S.S.</li><li>- G.S.</li></ul>

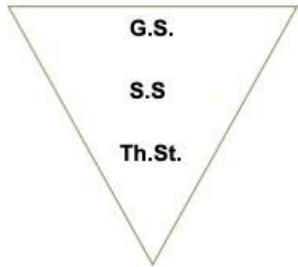
3.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Writing

Topic: Shirley Chisholm

**Directions:** Label the general statement G.S., the specific statement S.S., and the thesis statement Th. St.



**S.S.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Throughout American history, brave and brilliant individuals have led  
the way and shown others what is possible.

**Th.St.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Shirley Chisholm, a visionary politician, broke barriers for women and  
people of color in the federal government.

**G.S.**

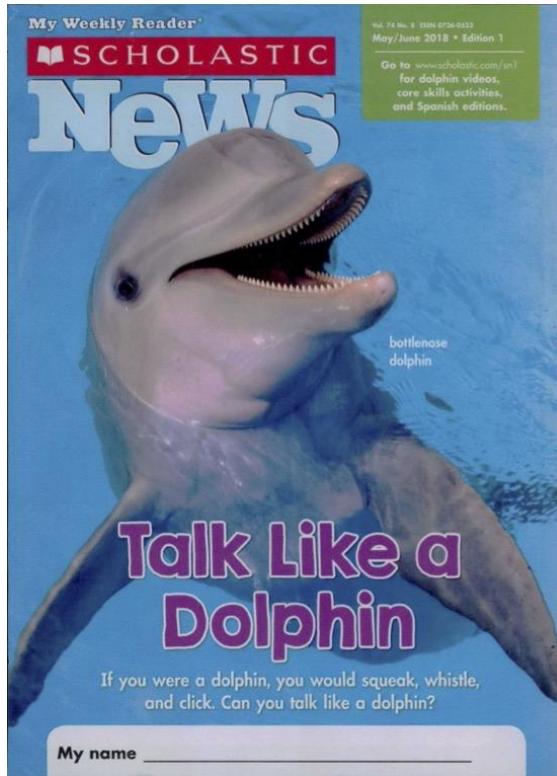
\_\_\_\_\_  
A trailblazer is someone who strikes a new path and forges a trail to  
guide others.

A trailblazer is someone who strikes a new path and forges a trail to guide others. Throughout American history, brave and brilliant individuals have led the way and shown others what is possible. Shirley Chisholm, a visionary politician, broke barriers for women and people of color in the federal government.

During her political career, Shirley Chisholm accomplished many firsts in the United States. In 1968, Chisholm became the first Black woman elected to the House of Representatives. As a congresswoman, she supported improved education and school services while also becoming a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Women's Caucus. On January 25, 1972, Shirley made history again by announcing her candidacy for President of the United States. She was the first Black American to run for president with a major political party. Even though Chisholm won support from women and minority voters, she lost the Democratic nomination to George McGovern.

Shirley Chisholm paved the way for all Americans who want to enter politics. During her seven terms in Congress, she continued to shake things up. She encouraged others to follow her path stating, “If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring your own folding chair.”

# Would You Like to Be a Dolphin?



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Writing

Topic: Dolphin Life



Directions: Expand the following sentences.

1. They swim to the surface.

dolphins

Who? .....

When? .....

because they cannot breathe  
underwater

Why? .....

Expanded Sentence:

Dolphins swim to the surface  
once or twice a minute because  
they cannot breathe underwater.

2. They communicate.

dolphins

Who? .....

How? by making clicking or whistling sounds

Expanded Sentence:

Dolphins communicate by making  
clicking or whistling sounds.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Writing

Topic: Dolphin Life



**Directions:** Combine the following sentences.

1. Dolphins live in pods.  
The pods are large.

**Dolphins live in large  
pods.**

2. Pods take care of dolphins.  
The dolphins are injured.

**Pods take care of injured  
dolphins.**

3. A signature whistle is a sound.  
The sound is special.

**A signature whistle is a  
special sound.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Writing



Topic: Dolphin Life

**Directions:** Label the sentence as a statement or a question and add punctuation.

?

1. How do dolphins breathe?

question

2. Dolphins take care of the members of their pods.

statement

3. Each dolphin chooses its own name or signature whistle.

statement

?

4. What do dolphins do for fun?

question

5. Pods of dolphins work together to get food.

statement

### SINGLE PARAGRAPH OUTLINE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

T.S. Dolphins and people have a lot in common, but life  
in the water is very different from being on land.

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1. breathe through blowhole / swim to surface 1x or 2x a minute .....
2. live in pod = large group / protect each other / help find food .....
3. communicate w/ clicks + whistles / each dolphin has signature whistle
4. play / ex. Surf / blow bubbles / dress up .....

C.S. Clearly, dolphins have a pretty good life!

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Dolphins and people have a lot in common, but life in the water is very different from being on land. Dolphins breathe through blowholes on the tops of their heads, so they must swim to the surface one or two times every minute. Dolphins live with large groups called pods. Pods of dolphins protect each other from enemies like sharks and they help each other find food. Dolphins cannot talk, but they communicate by making clicking and whistling sounds. Each dolphin is called by a special sound called a signature whistle. Dolphins also like to play. They surf on waves, blow bubbles, and play dress up with leaves and seaweed. Clearly, dolphins have a pretty good life!

# Summary

- Being able to write well is only becoming more important
- A structured literacy approach to teaching writing will benefit almost every student
- Strong writing skills begin at the sentence level and require ample deliberate practice
- Tying writing instruction to content maximizes classroom time
- Making writing units is fun but time consuming, so find people to share the labor of love

Thank you for joining!

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