

**Building Academic Literacy through Writing****Activity 1**

If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose? Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save. Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations.

Book I would choose: _____

What I need to know about the Topic	What I need to know about Writing

How Can Instruction Help Adolescent Students with Writing?

Several instructional strategies have been found to be effective in improving the writing of struggling adolescent readers. These strategies include using direct, explicit, and systematic instruction; teaching students the importance of prewriting; providing a supportive instructional environment; using rubrics to assess writing; and addressing the diverse needs of individual students.

Use Direct, Explicit, and Systematic Instruction to Teach Writing

Direct, explicit, and systematic instruction is the most widely suggested instructional practice for improving writing skills. Directly teaching adolescent writers strategies and skills that enhance writing development allows educators to build upon students' prior knowledge and introduce new information contextually [33, 75, 83]. Examples of strategies and skills that can be taught across content areas include the steps of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, and editing) and skills relevant to editing and revision (See Appendixes F and G). To use direct, explicit, and systematic instruction in writing:

1. Explain the writing skill or strategy and model how to apply it in writing in a manner that is similar to what students will be asked to do,
2. Guide students in using the skills and strategies in their writing assignments and provide corrective feedback,
3. Provide time and opportunities for independent practice with the writing skills and strategies, and
4. Repeat these instructional steps until students are able to use them independently in their writing.

Teach Students the Importance of Prewriting

Students need to learn the steps of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, and editing) [75, 86]. Too often students do not take the time to plan before they write nor do they revise and edit after they write. Research has indicated that prewriting or planning, in particular, provides students with time to figure out what they know about their topic and organize their thoughts [88, 89]. Regardless of the content area, prewriting or planning is helpful.

In a typical ninth grade social studies class, students might be expected to write an essay or a research report on the industrialization of America. Prewriting allows students to think through what they know about American industrialization and what they might need to research regarding this topic. In addition, the organization of the essay or report can be planned during this prewriting stage.

The most common types of prewriting strategies taught are:

1. Brainstorming and making lists,
2. Developing outlines, and
3. Using graphic organizers [75, 88].

National Institute for Literacy, National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, and United States Department of Education. (2007). *What content-area teachers should know about adolescent literacy*. Washington, DC: Author. (Pages 32-34).

These planning activities can help students shape their loosely organized thoughts and ideas into a useful framework [88]. With brainstorming, teachers should encourage students to speak and think freely. It is only later that the most relevant information to the topic is extracted from the list created from the brainstorming activity. Outlines have the potential to become too elaborate for struggling adolescent readers, so teachers should encourage students to prepare less detailed outlines to help frame their thoughts [88]. These outlines could be only three layers with main topics, subtopics, and supporting details. Graphic organizers, such as spider maps, series-of-events chains, and compare-and-contrast matrices, are useful in helping students to visualize connections between the information to be included in an essay or report (see Appendix B) [6, 88, 90].

Provide a Supportive Instructional Environment for Students

Writing skills are best developed with practice in a supportive instructional environment [83].

Providing students with substantial support at each step of the writing process is important to their success with writing [33, 75, 83]. Suggestions for providing a supportive environment for writing include:

- Make writing a regular part of the activities in every class, across content areas;
- Give students opportunities to engage in extended writing;
- Ask leading questions that prompt students to plan next steps in the writing process. For example, you might ask a student who has decided to write about cars but has not decided what type of writing to produce, “So would you like to create your own story about cars or persuade someone that one kind of car is better than another?”;
- Model a love for writing by sharing your work with students;
- Convey the ways in which writing will be useful to them in their lives outside of school;
 - Connect writing to reading and other academic subjects; and
 - Display the students’ writings in prominent places.

Using Rubrics to Assess Writing

Although this section describes writing instructional strategies that may be useful to teachers as they teach within their content area, it is important to address how the writing will be assessed. Assessment tools such as rubrics are available, and teachers should make students aware of these tools during instruction so that the students will understand the standards and expectations of good writing before they begin the writing process. In addition, students can use the rubrics to evaluate their own writing and the writing of their peers. Thus, the rubric becomes an assessment tool for the educator while also promoting self-evaluation, student autonomy, and student collaboration [91]. Rubrics are important in assessing writing because they do not simply attribute a grade or score to the writing assignment but detail a clearer understanding of strong and weak areas. This insight provides students the information needed to improve their writing [83].

National Institute for Literacy, National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, and United States Department of Education. (2007). *What content-area teachers should know about adolescent literacy*. Washington, DC: Author. (Pages 32-34).

Address the Needs of Diverse Learners

A “one-size-fits-all” writing program does not address the diverse needs that are encountered by most teachers in their classrooms. The needs of struggling adolescent writers vary depending upon their prior knowledge, skills, motivation, and level of self-regulation. Periodically allowing students to write about a topic of their choice is an important means of promoting individual diversity and tapping into the personal interests of students. Teachers should strive to motivate struggling adolescents to write by exploring topics of interest to them [33, 75, 83]. Teachers need to stress the importance, particularly in high school instruction, of the significance and usefulness of writing beyond the classroom and emphasize the value of writing in success in college or in the workplace.

National Institute for Literacy, National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, and United States Department of Education. (2007). *What content-area teachers should know about adolescent literacy*. Washington, DC: Author. (Pages 32-34).



Building Academic Literacy through Writing

Activity 2

Activity 2 Page 1	<i>Direct, Explicit, and Systematic Instruction</i> (p. 32)	<i>Importance of Prewriting</i> (p. 33)	<i>Supportive Instructional Environment</i> (p. 33)	<i>Using Rubrics</i> (p. 34)	<i>Needs of Diverse Learners</i> (p. 34)
Main Points from the reading					

Building Academic Literacy through Writing

Activity 2 Page 2	<i>Direct, Explicit, and Systematic Instruction</i> (p. 32)	<i>Importance of Prewriting</i> (p. 33)	<i>Supportive Instructional Environment</i> (p. 33)	<i>Using Rubrics</i> (p. 34)	<i>Needs of Diverse Learners</i> (p. 34)
Making Connections across Contents					
English					
Math					
Science					
Social Studies					

**Building Academic Literacy through Writing****Activity 3: Looking at Student Work**

Writing Sample selected: _____

1. List the Content and Writing skills the student has demonstrated.**2. On the Scoring Guide (Rubric), highlight the indicators that the student has demonstrated.**

SCORE assigned:

3. List the instructional strategies teachers can use to improve this student's writing.

Sample Released Items for Writing – 2002 NAEP

Grade 8 Scoring Guide (Rubric)	Grade 12 Scoring Guide
<p><u>Excellent</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and shapes information with well-chosen details across the response. • Well organized with strong transitions. • Sustains variety in sentence structure and exhibits good word choice. • Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding. 	<p><u>Excellent</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is presented effectively and consistently supported with well-chosen details. • Information is focused and well organized, with a sustained controlling idea and effective use of transitions. • Response consistently exhibits variety in sentence structure and precision in word choice. • Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.
<p><u>Skillful</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and shapes information with details in parts of the response. • Clearly organized, but may lack some transitions and/or have occasional lapses in continuity. • Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and some good word choices. • Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding. 	<p><u>Skillful</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is presented clearly and supported with pertinent details in much of the response. • Response is well organized, but may lack some transitions. • Response exhibits some variety in sentence structure and uses good word choice; occasionally, words may be used inaccurately. • Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.
<p><u>Sufficient</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops information with some details. • Organized with ideas that are generally related, but has few or no transitions. • Exhibits control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure, but sentences and word choice may be simple and unvaried. • Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding. 	<p><u>Sufficient</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is presented clearly and supported with some pertinent details. • Information is generally organized, but has few or no transitions among parts. • Sentence structure may be simple and unvaried; word choice is mostly accurate. • Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.
<p><u>Uneven</u> - May be characterized by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents some clear information, but is list-like, undeveloped, or repetitive OR offers no more than a well-written beginning. • Unevenly organized; the response may be disjointed. • Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may have some inaccurate word choices. • Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding. 	<p><u>Uneven</u> - May be characterized by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is presented clearly in parts; other parts are undeveloped or repetitive OR is no more than a well-written beginning. • Organized in parts of the response; other parts are disjointed and/or lack transitions. • Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may exhibit some inaccurate word choices. • Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.
<p><u>Insufficient</u> - May be characterized by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents fragmented information OR may be very repetitive OR may be very undeveloped. • Very disorganized; thoughts are tenuously connected OR the response is too brief to detect organization. • Minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate. • Errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the response. 	<p><u>Insufficient</u> - May be characterized by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides information that is very undeveloped or list-like. • Much of the response is disorganized or unfocused, OR the response is too brief to detect organization. • Author has minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate. • Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the response.
<p><u>Unsatisfactory</u> - May be characterized by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to respond to prompt, but provides little or no coherent information; may only paraphrase the prompt. • Has no apparent organization OR consists of a single statement. • Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response. • A multiplicity of errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation severely impedes understanding across the response. 	<p><u>Unsatisfactory</u> - May be characterized by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to prompt but may be incoherent OR provides very minimal information OR merely paraphrases the prompt. • Little or no apparent organization. • Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response. • Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation severely impede understanding across the response.

Grade 8 – *Seventeen and In Between*

1. A novel written in the 1950's describes a world where people are not allowed to read books. A small group of people who want to save books memorize them so that the books won't be forgotten. For example, an old man who has memorized the novel *The Call of the Wild* helps a young boy memorize it by reciting the story to him. In this way, the book is saved for the future.

If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose?

Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save. Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations.

I would save "Seventeen and In Between" because it is about a girl growing up. She faces many problems like her boyfriend, friends, school, friends, peer pressure, and her mom. Everything she is going through is the same thing most kids in their teenage years go through. It would be a good book to tell to teens because they could relate to how the girl in the book is feeling. They would also learn that it's ok to have problems and that there's a way to solve them. Even though all teens are different they have the same problems and would probably like the story. They would also like the book because it is fiction and not fantasy and could actually happen to a person. A person not going through problems would find "Seventeen and In Between" an interesting book.

Grade 12 – The Odyssey

1. A novel written in the 1950's describes a world where people are not allowed to read books. A small group of people who want to save books memorize them, so that the books won't be forgotten. For example, an old man who has memorized the novel *The Call of the Wild* helps a young boy memorize it by reciting the story to him. In this way, the book is saved for the future.

If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose?

Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save. Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations.

If I could only choose one book for future generations, I would choose the book, *The Odyssey*. I would choose this book because it contains many morals in life that could be used. The story is about a man named Odysseus and his journey home from the Trojan War. After many long years of fighting, the Trojan War ended and Odysseus, the hero of the war was anxious to go back home. However on his homeward journey, he is met with many obstacles to overcome because of the gods' curses on him. From standing face to face with a cyclops to being seduced by a witch's spell, Odysseus was being held somewhere all the time without a clear path back home. Then when he finally got home, there were suitors in his house wanting to marry his beloved wife, Penelope. However, great strength and determination wins over his problems at the end. This book has many morals and shows many obstacles that can be overcome and that is why I would choose it as my book to save for future generations.

Activity 3 – Looking at Student Work
Scoring Annotations for Released Items

Grade 8 – *Seventeen and In Between*

Scorer Comments:

"Sufficient" responses were clear and developed information with some details. Ideas were usually generally related with few transitions. The response shown below offers some information but uses few transitions to guide the reader through the response. Sentences and word choices are simple.

Grade 12 – *The Odyssey*

Scorer Comments:

"Sufficient" responses presented clear information and supported it with some pertinent details; transitions were often lacking. The response below offers some details about *The Odyssey* but lacks development and is missing several transitions. Occasional errors do not interfere with understanding.