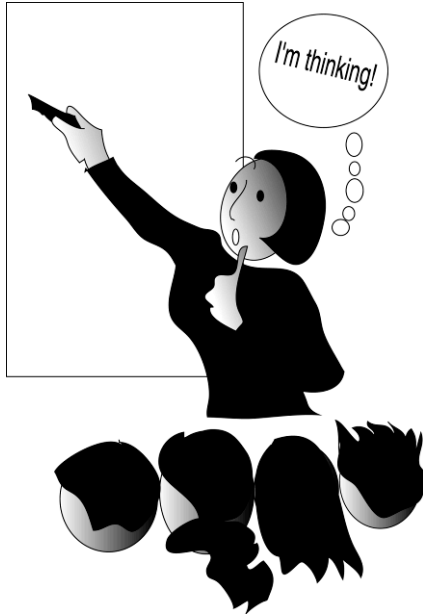


# Modeled Writing



*"Students can go a lifetime and never see another person write, much less show them how to write. ...Writing is a craft. It needs to be demonstrated to your students in your classroom...from choosing a topic to finishing a final draft. They need to see you struggle to match your intentions with the words that reach the page."*

Graves, D. (1994) *A Fresh Look at Writing* p. 109-10.

*"...when I stand in front of the classroom, take off the top of my head, turn on the overhead projector, and invite them to hear my thinking and see what I do as an adult writer, they learn about purpose, patience, and love. They begin to understand the hundreds of choices I make every time I write. They see that almost nothing is accidental, that whenever I write I try deliberately to write well, to create literature about something that matters to me, not merely do another piece for the folder. I show them how I plan, confront problems, weigh options, change my mind, read and reread my own writing as I'm writing it, use conventions to make my writing sound and look the way I want it to or my readers will need it to, and consider questions of audience, intention, craft, and coherence every step of the way."*

Atwell, Nancie (1987/2013)

*In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning*, p. 332

"The Top 5 Things I do to ensure students become excellent writers: Demonstrate that I am a writer who *always writes with a reader in mind* (sometimes that the reader is myself) and make my writing and thinking processes visible."

Routman, R. (2004) *Writing Essentials*.

## MODELED WRITING PROCEDURES:

- 1. PLANNING:** prepare for what you are going to write in front of the students ahead of time. You'll want to review the standards for the text type you're modeling, check out anchor papers and other mentor texts from literature to think about any techniques you may want to include. Most importantly, make it REAL for you as a writer. Students are fascinated to hear about their teacher's life or things he/she cares about. I typically write fairly simple narratives about surprising life events involving family, pets, or outdoor adventures. Take care not to choose topics for your writing that are beyond the imagination or background experiences of your students. Help your students see through your modeling that their every day lives may provide opportunities for stories to tell. Once you've decided the direction of your modeling, take some notes on a post-it to keep handy

during the lesson, it can be challenging to be thinking out loud as a writer, while also managing a classroom full of students.

- 2. DRAFTING:** Gather the students to the rug or draw their attention to your chart or writing projected on-screen. Tell them that you are going to show them what you do while you are writing, and that their job is to simply observe what you do to see if they can pick up some tips for writing. Older students may even take notes about what you do as you write. Remind them that this is your writing, not a shared writing. To make this literal start by writing your title and listing yourself as the author.

Begin writing and keep a running dialogue going about every step of your thinking process. Your monologue might sound like this:

*"So I was looking at my notes and thinking I might want to start this story off with the sound of my cat meowing to get the reader's attention. Let's see, I could write.....Meeeeooow, meeoow! A howling noise outside the window interrupted dinner at the Jones' house..... Ok, that's a start, it tells when it happened and where, now I need more detail.... Suddenly, Ms. Jones realized she hadn't seen my cat since she got home from working late at school..... Ok, so now they know the main character is a teacher..... Not again! What are we going to do about Jason's cat! He seems to want to cause a nuisance every day."*

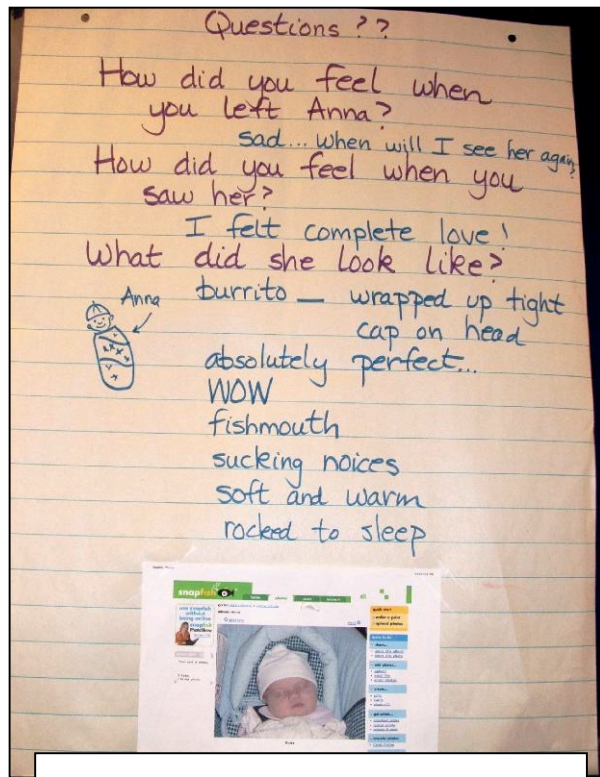
This dialogue will let the readers know *the character doesn't like this cat.*

- 3. REREADING:** Modeled writing gives teachers an authentic excuse for teaching students to reread as they write. After you add each sentence or two, tell the students you need to reread what you have so far to see about what you will write next. Continue to reread and add more writing until you are done with the whole piece or the section you are working on for that day.
- 4. REVISION:** Modeling allows you to show students in a natural way how some revision happens as you are writing a piece. Feel free to modify words or sentences as you go during modeled writing. For example in the piece above, I may, after rereading the first part, add a descriptor to howling: "a *mournful howling*" might sound better.

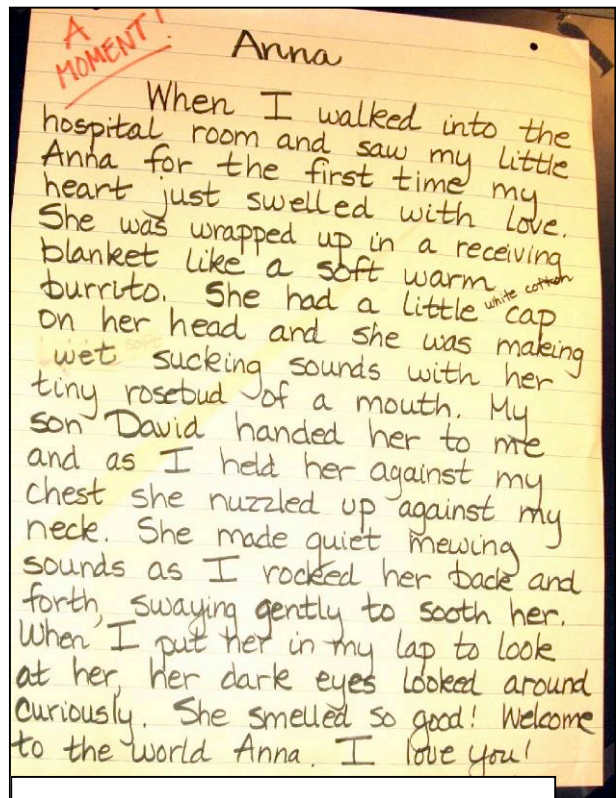
You can show the students how to insert more language with a caret. ^

- 5. CONVENTIONS:** Modeled writing is not the time to focus on conventions. Making errors on purpose so that your students can "catch" you, takes the focus away from the purpose of modeled writing which is to demonstrate for students what good writers do in their heads as they write. Belaboring the modeled writing process with talk of the conventions will distract.
- 6. DEBRIEFING:** When you are finished, ask students to share with you what they saw you doing as a writer. You may want to start a chart labeled "What Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ does when she writes" and list there what the students notice that you do so they can remember literally what you did when they are working on their own pieces.

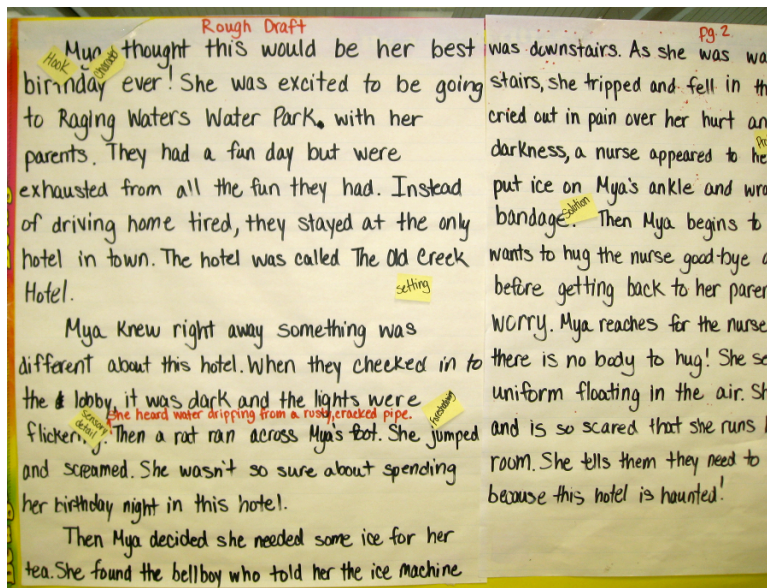
# Photos of Modeled Writing



This teacher has modeled on chart paper her thinking as she got ready to compose a short descriptive piece about seeing her granddaughter for the first time. She used questions and notes for answers, as well as a photo and some sketching to get her thoughts organized.



Then she composed a paragraph full of rich sensory detail to describe just how that special moment unfolded. This sample text can be left up for students to refer to as they are composing short personal narrative pieces of their own.



This image shows a rough draft of a student's writing, with several yellow sticky notes highlighting areas for revision and improvement.