

# Introduction: Writerly Life

## Grades 3-8

This Writerly Life Unit is designed to help students create a vision for the writing work they will be doing throughout the school year, so it is launched at the beginning of the school year. In our version of this unit, students will be introduced to the writing process by participating in a condensed study of personal story. We chose to use personal stories for this unit because we know that students will have been exposed to lots of stories already in their lives, and that each student will be able to think of a story he or she can write. Teachers who have many years of workshop teaching experience, and students who are already familiar with writing workshop from previous grades, may feel comfortable allowing students to write in any genre of their choice during the Writerly Life unit. This will mean students are working in a wide variety of genres, some crafting poems, some personal stories, some realistic fiction, some feature articles, etc.

It is most important for teachers to remember that a writerly life unit of study is a starting point for the school year. A publication at the end of a writerly life unit will not look as polished as a piece of writing that is published later in the school year. It is also important that the teacher participate in the writing process with the students. There will be many times throughout this unit of study, and the school year, when the teacher will refer to his or her own writing efforts in mini-lessons. Because you are doing exactly what you are asking your students to do, you will become a part of the learning community and not separate from it. *And* you will be modeling for students exactly what they will be asked to do.

Included in this module you will find video resources, sample lesson plans, sample mini-lessons, and other handouts that will support you in teaching a Writerly Life unit. These resources can support you in thinking about your own teaching in a Writerly Life unit but they aren't a one size fits all plan for the classroom. As mentioned before, you may opt to invite students to choose their own genre in this unit. You may choose different mini-lessons that teach the routines of writer's workshop, and introduce students to the common habits of professional authors. As stated before, this unit suggests that a Writerly Life unit includes students making a personal story. The lesson grid you see below also does that, but it could be adapted to allow students to have more choice over what their finished piece of writing is.

## Indiana Partnership for Young Writers: Writerly Life (01: Introduction)

Attached below is an outline of one possible Writerly Life unit. You are encourage to read it, perhaps even noting your immediate questions, before continuing to the next page in this module.

# Writerly Life Unit

## First 10 Days of Writing Workshop Teaching in Upper Grade Classrooms



### Goals and Teaching Points for Writerly Life Unit

1. Students will learn the rituals and routines of writing workshop.
2. Students will engage in lots of talk about the stories of their lives.
3. Students will think about what they have read that is like what they trying to make.
4. Students will begin to read like writers and see craft in the texts around them.
5. Students will see themselves as writers who are capable of using writing to communicate meaningful messages with real audiences.
6. Students will learn about authors' habits and "what writers do" as a basis for developing their own habits as writers.
7. Students will become active members in a writing community who share their writing and give/receive feedback.
8. Students will become familiar with genres as "containers" for writing.
9. Students will develop a repertoire of strategies that will lift the quality of their writing.

Mini-lesson Focus	Key Concept	Resources Needed
<p><i>Day 1</i> (During Interactive READ ALOUD read: Story selection)</p> <p>Assessment: Students demonstrate writing abilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can learn about writers in our community by reading their writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desks in clusters</li> <li>• Loose-leaf paper</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give instructions for collecting a writing sample: We will do a lot of writing this year. I don't know anything about you as writers, but I can learn a lot about you as a writer by looking at a sample of your writing. Today, I want you to do some writing. You can write about anything you want. When you think you are done, re-read what you have written and try to make it even better. I will collect your pieces at the end of workshop time and read them over tonight. I am looking forward to learning something about the kind of writers you are.</li> <li>• Teacher HW: Make a tally sheet with two columns: What my kids can do/What my kids are trying to do. Note with tally marks what you notice about each student's piece. Some things you might pay attention to: Use of end-mark punctuation, comma use, understanding of 5 story elements, sentence variation and complexity, use of literary devices (metaphor/simile, intentional repetition, alliteration, etc.), dialogue that moves story along or develops character, and any other qualities of writing you notice. Use results to inform your teaching.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Day 2</i> (During Interactive READ ALOUD read: Story selection)</p> <p>Tools of the Trade: Notebooks/pens</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many writers use notebooks to hold onto their thinking</li> <li>• Writers keep notebooks that are a reflection of who they are as writers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First day in meeting area</li> <li>• Your Writer's Notebook and new marble journals for students</li> <li>• R. Fletcher's, <i>A Writer's Notebook</i></li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach ML: Read out loud first chapter in Fletcher. Show students decorated cover on your writer's NB and explain the ways in which it is a reflection of who you are as a writer. Distribute NBs</li> <li>• (For homework: Decorate NB covers)</li> </ul>

<p>Day 3 (During Interactive READ ALOUD read: Story selection)</p> <p>Community Building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writers learn from other writers (students/you) in their writing community</li> <li>Writers learn from other published writers about living in the world like a writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructions on board telling students to bring NBs with pens tucked inside to sit in meeting area</li> <li>Quote sheet from published writers</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach ML: Yesterday, we learned something about a writer's tools from Ralph Fletcher, who also helped us understand how to put 'stuff' in our NBs. Today we're going to look at what some other published writers have to say about their own writing lives. As we do, think about which writer says something that sounds like <u>you</u> as a writer –like that person could be your writing partner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce quotes: Give each student a copy of quotes. Read aloud what these published writers have said about themselves. Have students choose one quote that sounds the like kind of writer they are.</li> <li>Tell students that one way to begin to find words to talk about themselves as writers is to borrow words from more experienced writers.</li> <li>After making choices, have students write in their NBs why they made the choice they did. In what way(s) are they like the writer they chose?</li> <li>Share: Why did you choose the writer you did. Notice who else in your writing community chose the same writer. These writers might be 'like' you as a writer. Also notice which writers are not like you as a writer. Knowing this will help you understand more about who might be a good writing partner for you.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Day 4 (During Interactive READ ALOUD read: Story selection)</p> <p>Importance of NBs &amp; how to fill them up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writers pay attention to the world differently</li> <li>Writers think of themselves as people who have something important to say</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructions on board telling students to bring NBs with pens tucked inside to sit in meeting area</li> <li>Chart paper &amp; markers</li> <li>Video clip: Gantos NB video (<a href="http://www.indianayoungwriters.org">www.indianayoungwriters.org</a>)</li> <li>Strategies for Collecting &amp; Cultivating Ideas (hand-out to be taped into NB)</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach ML: For some of us keeping a NB is hard. Often what makes it hard is that we don't yet think of ourselves as writers or as people who are going to make something in writing. Many of us would rather just talk. But writing is permanent. It can reach many more people, it can't be misquoted, and it is not just talk written down. Writing is crafted—speech is not. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What might be some reasons for keeping a NB? Chart responses on chart paper. Be sure that among these reasons you include that a NB is one way to collect things that you pay attention to in the world, with the intention of making it into something (for example: story, poem, article, essay, commentary, memoir, etc.)</li> <li>Show video clip of Gantos or other writer sharing NB</li> <li>Show how you have made entries in your own NB. Teach 3</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<p>strategies with time following each for try-it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Distribute hand-out.</li> <li>○ Student HW: Put (5) more entries into your NB</li> </ul>
<p><i>Day 5</i> (During Interactive READ ALOUD read: Story selection)</p> <p>Choosing a seed idea &amp; writing discovery drafts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writers reread their notebooks, selecting and committing themselves to an idea they'll develop into a finished writing piece (for this unit, students will be asked to write a <u>story</u>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructions on board telling students to bring NBs with pens tucked inside to sit in meeting area</li> <li>• Transparency of Living the Cyclical Writing Life diagram</li> <li>• Transparency of entry from your own NB identified as 'seed idea.'</li> <li>• Overhead projector</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach ML: When writers make something like a story, poem, feature article, or commentary, they usually go through many stages. The first stage of this writing process is to look at the writing that you have already created and think about which one has potential to be developed. This piece of writing is called the seed idea. The end product (the poem, story, essay, or article, etc.) that the writer envisions does not look like the seed idea. Like a cultivated seed from any plant, the emerging fruit is full of potential itself. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Show overhead of an entry from your NB where you found something that is significant to you and you have figured out why it is important for you to develop it. (This becomes your seed idea).</li> <li>○ Have students read through their own entries and choose a seed idea. Write in NBs the significance of this entry to them.</li> <li>○ Mid-workshop TP: Begin developing seed idea (Refer to Strategies for Collecting &amp; Cultivating in NBs) to make discovery drafts</li> <li>○ Share: Choose 4-5 students to tell how they chose their seed ideas.</li> <li>○ Student HW: Discovery drafts (1-2)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Day 6</i> (During Interactive READ ALOUD read: Story selection)</p> <p>Writers learn about writing well from published writers they love</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writers reflect on the writing they have done, making choices about which texts to develop and how to make them better</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructions on board telling students to bring folders holding NBs with pens tucked inside</li> <li>• Copies of short Mentor text of choice</li> <li>• Transparency with entry from your NB where you have used this mentor author to influence the writing you did on your own topic.</li> <li>• Overhead projector</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach ML: There is so much to understand about writing well, and this is a challenge not just for writers like us, but even for published writers. One way writers make their writing better is to look closely at the writing of other authors they love. That's what we're going to do too and then we're going to try something that they have done in our own writing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Distribute copies mentor text</li> <li>○ Read it aloud, then show how you used this text to make an entry in your NB about your seed idea that is influenced by the craft</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<p>moves of this mentor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tape/paste mentor text into NB</li> <li>○ Have students 'try-it' in their NBs with their own seed ideas</li> <li>○ Student HW: Study some of your favorite writers. Put 2-3 text examples that you like and might try into your NB to share in class tomorrow.)</li> </ul>
<p>Day 7 Writing a DRAFT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writers DRAFT <u>outside</u> their notebooks where making revisions is much easier</li> <li>• To make a DRAFT, writers must have a vision of what it is they are going to make (genre: poem, story, essay, feature article, etc.?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructions on board telling students to <u>leave NBs</u> at desk and come to meeting area</li> <li>• Transparencies of your own discovery drafts and story draft</li> <li>• Overhead projector</li> <li>• Writing folders &amp; paper for drafting</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach ML: Up to this point, we have been <u>thinking</u> something about our seed ideas by writing NB entries and discovery drafts. Now we are going to begin <u>making</u> something (a story) by writing a draft. Writers not only make decisions about what to write about, they also make decisions about what their ideas will become. This is what we will do today.</li> <li>• Demonstrate how you thought about your discovery drafts in order to make a story draft. Develop some connections about your knowledge of the story genre that comes from reading stories. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Distribute drafting paper &amp; Writing Folders</li> <li>○ Show students how to set up draft paper –box at the top that includes: name/date/seed idea/what they are making (genre: in this case 'story')/working title</li> <li>○ Directions for drafting: Return to seats and without looking at NB, begin making draft</li> <li>○ Student HW: Finish draft</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Day 8 Revision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision is one of the most important parts of a writer's process.</li> <li>• Writers revise to make their writing better</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructions on board telling students to bring writing Folders w/ pens tucked inside to sit in meeting area</li> <li>• Chart paper and markers</li> <li>• Transparency of your DRAFT w/ 2-3 revisions from strategy list</li> <li>• Overhead projector</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach ML: Revision is an important opportunity in a writer's process to go back and rethink what's written; to add more details to a particular part, to move things around, or develop characters by making them talk. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Show places in your own DRAFT where you have used revision strategies to make your own writing better</li> <li>○ Use chart paper to name and record these strategies, and perhaps a few more strategies you haven't tried but students could use</li> <li>○ Student HW: Make 2-3 revisions to your DRAFT</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p><i>Day 9</i></p> <p>Getting writing ready for readers: Editing &amp; Publishing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writers use writing conventions like spelling and punctuation to make their writing easy to read</li> <li>When writers finish a piece of writing they make it 'beautiful' for the public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructions on board telling students to bring Folders w/ pens tucked inside to sit in meeting area</li> <li>Transparency of student DRAFT to edit (w/ permission from student)</li> <li>Overhead projector</li> <li>Editing checklist for distribution</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach ML: Most times when writers publish they send their work to a publishing company where editors make it ready for readers. We are going to publish our own work, so we need to do for ourselves what a publishing company does for writers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose specific skills for students to focus on such as end-mark punctuation, comma use, spelling (circling words that don't look right), capitalization, etc.) Demonstrate using student work how you would read through the piece out loud and mark places that need to be (or might need to be) changed. Prepare an editing checklist and demonstrate use of it with student piece.</li> <li>Distribute editing checklists</li> <li>Student HW: Edit and fancy-up writing to make it public (add picture, re-write or type). These pieces will be put together into a class anthology.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Day 10</i></p> <p>Celebration/Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writers have publishing parties to celebrate the completion of such a significant writing project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructions on board telling students to bring Folders w/ pens tucked inside to sit in meeting area</li> <li>Small snack</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach ML: After investing so much time and energy in such a significant project, writers celebrate their accomplishments. That's what we will do today. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assign partners with whom students will share writing work and small snack</li> <li>As a whole class, talk together about this first piece process. How did it feel to go through this process? to have a NB? Are their writers in the room you identify with? Why?</li> <li>Keep track of who participates and record their comments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Resources for writerly life study:**

[www.indianayoungwriters.org/resources.html](http://www.indianayoungwriters.org/resources.html)

<http://www.readingrockets.org/podcasts/authors>

<http://www.adlit.org/media/author>

<http://www.ralphfletcher.com/tips.html>

<http://www.rcowen.com/AuthorAtWork.htm>

<http://www.justonmorebook.com/index.php?s=Janet+S.+Wong>.

The websites of authors you and your students love.

Indiana Partnership for Young Writers, July 2010