

Revision

Published authors, names students will recognize like Louis Sachar and Eloise Greenfield, have said they revise their drafts five, six or even 15, 16 times! Author Michale Crichton (Jurassic Park) once said, "Books aren't written, They're rewritten. It is one of the hardest things to accept, especially after the seventh rewrite hasn't quite done it." So, working like professional authors, we devote much of a unit of study to revision. When we talk about revision in a writer's workshop, we are really talking about how a writer can "re-see" his piece of writing. During the revision phase of the writing process writers would be thinking about what they want their piece of writing to say. They would be considering how they might move, add and delete sentences to get at the heart of their writing. This is the messy part of the writing process where students might actually cut their writing apart to create space for additional lines or tape paper over a part of their writing that doesn't work for them anymore. Writers will actually spend time on revision over days, thinking about how to get their piece of writing to say exactly what they intended for it to say.

In the picture below you can see how one writer deleted many pages of her memoir when revising. This picture can help demonstrate to students just how much a revised draft might change.

Memoir-in-progress



How many pages I wrote for the first draft.



How many pages I kept for next draft.



Unit of Study: Writerly Life Day/Date: Revision

Focus (What one thing will you teach and why?):

Writers can “crack open” their sentences to change the tone of their writing and make it come alive for readers.

Connection (What will you say to the students about why you are teaching this?):

We have been working on drafting a piece of writing. Today I am going to show you how you can go back into your draft and look for places where your writing has been vague and “crack them open” to make them more descriptive and engaging to read.

Give Info: (How will you teach this? What exactly do you want to say?)

Think about some words and sentences that are overused, tired or worn out. Think about words that have no images, are vague or abstract, used too much that they have lost their meaning, obvious, clichés or words that we use too frequently as writers. (Some examples you might use include; It was a nice day. I had a lot of fun. The flowers were colorful. Snow is nice. She is a wonderful person.)

Model for students how I might crack open one of these sentences by imagining it and describing what I have imagined in words.

Active Involvement: (How will students “try-it” before they go off to work independently?)

(After making a list of worn out words and sentences...) Now chose one of these sentences to “crack open”.

Close your eyes and resee, for example, what is nice about snow. Imagine the nice things about snow that you may have experienced and include all of your senses as you imagine. Now describe what you see in you mind using words and write it down.

Link: (What is the relationship between what you taught and what you expect them to do during workshop time?)

Now go back to your seats and look through your draft and reread it. See if there are places in your draft where you can “crack open” your writing just as we did in this mini-lesson.

Share: (How will students share the work they did w/ each other to further develop TP?)

Have a couple students share places where they cracked open their writing. Share both versions of the exerpt, before and after revising.

RE-VISIONING

There are at least two important things to consider when making decisions about your revisions:

- keep in mind the intentions of your piece (What do you want a reader to know by reading it) and,
- read your piece with all your senses “on” (listening, seeing, smelling, hearing, feeling, remembering).

Ask and answer questions, such as: *how can I make this piece better? Is this piece really clear?*

STRATEGIES FOR REVISION

- Add to your piece. Look closely at the beginning, middle, and end. Did you leave anything out? Find the heart of your piece and zoom in on it. Make a sketch and then add what's important in your sketch to your writing
- Try starting your piece in a different place, Move parts around.
- Look closely at the **beginning**. Try a different beginning (begin with dialogue, a quote, in the middle of the action, with the setting, by describing setting, etc.)
- Think about the **ending**. Ask yourself, “What is it I want the reader to remember about this piece?” *and* “how can I craft my words to make that happen?”
- Re-read your draft and think about who is telling the story. Is it a character? Is it you? Where are you? How much do you know? Where are you standing?
- Be very careful about the control of time. Stretch out some moments that are important and shrink others.
- Add dialogue and/or dialect to let reader know more about you or the characters.
- Add the inside (internal) stuff. Make sure there are places where readers can see what you are thinking, feeling.
- Look at the genre “examples” and use one to mentor your own writing.
- Turn your piece into a new genre
- Turn a single sentence into an entire page
- Break open some verbs by *showing* not just *telling*
- Zoom-in on the “hot-spots.” Stretch this moment out by adding lots of details (dialogue, action, inner feelings/thoughts, description of place/setting, etc.)
- Find places in your writing where you've used adjectives. Replace these with an action or image that does the work of this adjective to ‘show’ instead of ‘tell’
- Do a detail audit. Check to see that the details you have included ‘matter’ to your piece. Take out all the details that have no significance to your piece
- Ask yourself, “What do I want the reader to feel? What emotions do I want them to have?” Then, look for places where you can craft words that help to make that happen
- Think about the effect of first-, second- or third-person writing. Try writing in different ‘person’ to change the reader’s experience.

Repositioning Revision

- something that is done throughout the process of writing, not just when you're done
- not punishment but rather an integral, natural part of the process writers experience
- may focus on meaning, content, structure, or style
- it does not include the surface changes (editing) that occur at the end of the process just before a piece is published

Making Revision a Regular Part of the Writing Workshop

1. Highlight "process shares"
2. Share quotes from professional writers about their experiences revising
3. Encourage students to develop and articulate a writing identity and sense of how they work best as a writer
4. Teach strategic mini-lessons that offer revision strategies for writers

The Red Wheelbarrow By William Carlos Williams	Love that Dog By Jack (Sharon Creech)	WNB entry	<i>Try it</i>
<i>So much depends upon</i> <i>a red wheel barrow</i> <i>glazed with rain water</i> <i>beside the white chickens.</i>	<i>So much depends upon</i> <i>a blue car splattered with mud speeding down the road</i>	A baby. A vanilla diet coke, two lemonades, and a baby. What is it with drive thrus?	So much depends upon that little babe blessed with life anticipating life

5. Expose students to a variety of good literature
6. Teach craft lessons
7. Invite kids to revise self-selected pieces
8. Teach students to self-evaluate their own writing
9. Encourage confidence and independence as writers
10. Teach mini-lessons on the acts of decision making

WORDS

Lessons you might imagine teaching:

- Worn-out words—What do they really mean?

It was a nice day =

The sun came up behind the cabin and peered into my bedroom window. Waking with the sunlight, I walked down to the shore with coffee in hand. Dangling my feet alongside the edge of the dock, that cold water lapping against my feet moved me farther away from the deep cold cabin slumber and closer to the beauty of the coming day.

- Collecting Words
 - Words you like the sound of
 - Words you don't know the meaning of but want to find out
 - Words that look interesting
 - Strong image
 - Evoke a memory
 - Personal meaning
- Personal Thesaurus
- Extra Words
- Specificity of Words
 - VERBS (engines)
 - The boat _____ in the water.
Glides, skims, sails, floats, slides, runs, treads, sinks
 - NOUNS (wheels)
 - The _____
flower, sunflower, black-eyed Susan, weed-like plant
- Two-column writing
- Asking questions, adding details

every poetic

STRUCTURE

Lessons you might imagine teaching:

- ✧ Leads
 - question/statement

- action
- surprise
- statement
- image
- dialogue

“Pittsburgh was darkness. The taste of smoke in one’s throat and heavy smog and dark soot. That was Pittsburgh.” C. Rylant *I Had Seen Castles*

“Look at that strange boy!” C. Myers *Wings*

I don’t want to
because boys
don’t write poetry. S. Creech *Love that Dog*

“We are going home, Carlos,” Mama says, hugging me. E. Bunting *Going Home*

✧ Flashback

- Present day-past-present day

✧ Play with time

- BIG SWEEPS

“As time went on, and the months and years came and went, he was never without friends.” P. 183 of Charlotte’s Web

- SLOW MOTION

He pushed his chair back. It made a hollow scraping sound on the hearthstones and the dogs stirred. Lottie, small and black, wagged her tail and lifted her head. Nick slept on.

I turned the bread dough over and over on the marble slab on the kitchen table.

“Well, Papa doesn’t sing anymore.” Said Caleb very softly.

P. MacLaughlin *Sarah Plain and Tall*

✧ Zooming In

✧ Creating Scenes

My Mimi love her radio shows. =

At 85, she moved into a room at the nursing home, just down the hall from her apartment. She took her toothbrush, her Kleenex, and robe. My mom later brought pictures. But when I came she asked for her Radio. Her Bose radio that she had picked out herself just a few years before. I sat quietly in her room for no more than five minutes, and then the sounds of WCAL filled the room with the afternoon concert—Bach. She sat back in her chair as we left, older, more frail, but her intent listening to the music carried by the radio waves was a familiar image.

- ✧ Genre Groups
- ✧ Prose to Poetry
- ✧ Rearranging
- ✧ Endings
 - Circular
 - Emotional
 - Surprise

VOICE

- ✧ 1st, 2nd, 3rd Person
- ✧ Writing with you as object.
- ✧ Put yourself in it
- ✧ Internal Monologue
- ✧ Dialogue
- ✧ Non-Fiction
- ✧ Characters

REREADING

“One mechanical aid to achieving a critical eye is to read out loud and I do. Hearing what I’ve written gives me a fresh way of seeing what I’ve written” *E. L. Konigsburg*

- Reread with different lenses
 - Clarity
 - Truth
 - Best Writing
 - Sound of language
 - Focus

CONFERENCES--Revision

- Identify a part to revise
- Adding details or images
- Revising lead/ending
- Cracking open a word, a sentence
- Play with time
- Expand a sentence to a page
- Change a point of view
- Give a revision challenge

REVISION CENTERS

“Now I see *revision* as beautiful word of hope. It’s a vision of something. It means you don’t have to be perfect the first time. What a relief!”

Naomi Shihab Nye