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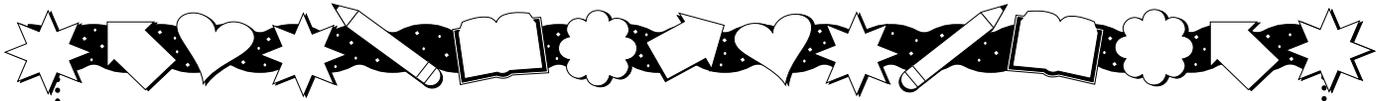
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Introduction

“You’ve got to read this!” boasts a teacher who just read an incredible piece of writing by one of her students. Her voice rings with delight and pride. Teachers feel such joy when sharing wonderful stories, reports, or poems that their students have written. Both teacher and student have worked hard to get to this point and have earned the right to celebrate.

Guiding children to write well and produce excellent writing samples takes dedication, persistence, and time to practice, yet it can be extremely rewarding. It is our hope that this book will help you in your pursuit of growing wonderful writers. The explanations and graphic organizers in this text are meant to help make your teaching more powerful and your planning easier.

What Are Tiered Graphic Organizers?

Tiered graphic organizers are leveled, visual planners on which students record information in a logical way. The recorded information is then used in the writing activity. According to Tomlinson (1999), teachers can modify *content*, *process*, or *product* to meet the diverse needs of learners. When using tiered graphic organizers, teachers are modifying the product. Bender (2002)

acknowledges that it is through the product that “learning is observed and evaluated.” Students demonstrate what they know and can do through the products they create. If the task is too easy or too difficult, it doesn’t reflect the student’s full potential. You’ll see that organizers on three instructional levels (introductory, intermediate, and challenging) accompany each skill introduced in this book. By designing graphic organizers at three different levels, we offer teachers the necessary materials to match students with “just right” activities.

Why Use Tiered Graphic Organizers?

In order to meet the diverse needs of students in today’s classroom, teachers must be able to design lessons that (1) meet individual instructional requirements, (2) stay within what is often mandated curriculum, and (3) ensure consistent outcomes for all students. Time constraints place limits on the amount of individual instruction we can provide. In *Teaching Writing Through Differentiated Instruction With Leveled Graphic Organizers*, we’ve structured each whole-class mini-lesson around one central objective and then modified the follow-up activities to meet student



needs. For example, our objective for descriptive writing is “to write a clear description of an object.” We’ve included in the chapter specific directions for instruction. Adjectives, sensory images, and similes are introduced. All students participate in the lesson. Not all students will be successful, however, if given the same follow-up, reinforcing activity to complete. That’s where the tiered graphic organizers come in. Students are not responsible for learning at the same pace, yet each one is responsible for demonstrating an understanding at a level that is developmentally appropriate.

How Is This Book Organized?

Each chapter focuses on a specific writing skill and includes:

- ✿ a description of the target skill and criteria to use in measuring understanding of the skill
- ✿ a model passage that illustrates the target skill
- ✿ a mini-lesson, which can be used for whole-class, initial instruction
- ✿ instructional tips
- ✿ suggested texts (mostly children’s literature) where additional examples of the skill can be found
- ✿ three tiered graphic organizers for students to use to demonstrate their understanding of the skill.

The chapters in the book are designed as both stand-alone chapters and as

units of study that reinforce and extend learning across several chapters.

For example, if you are working on persuasive writing, you may want to include in your instructional plans the chapter on persuasive writing. When completed, it may make sense to introduce the chapter on book reports, where students apply what they’ve learned about persuasion to make recommendations for or against the books they review.

Is This a Workbook?

No. We struggled with our philosophical stance as we created this book. It is not, and has never been, our intent to write a workbook for writing. Although workbooks may be appropriate to use with some students in some situations, they often focus on subsets of skills and tasks that are closed (as opposed to open-ended), such as circling all the adverbs in a series of sentences.

Generally, too, workbook pages are used one time; once the answers have been identified, the page has served its purpose. Conversely, the activities in this book are open-ended and may be used over and over again as your students continue to grow and develop. They are designed to help students build awareness of criteria that distinguish one form of writing from another. For example, we investigate what it takes to write an effective memoir (page 79), to create dialogue that moves a plot along



(page 73), to write figurative language that makes writing more interesting (page 19), and so on. As teachers, we need to analyze writing products, deduce the criteria, and be assured that our students understand the components and expectations of the writing task at hand. This book does not address isolated skills; rather, it examines the content, processes, and differentiated products that move students from being less experienced to more accomplished writers.

How Should I Use the Graphic Organizers?

We designed the graphic organizers to be used with a wide variety of topics and experiences. Teachers tend to use them in two ways: first, to differentiate instruction and products in order to meet the needs of individual learners, as discussed, and second, as a scaffolding experience. As such, a student may be matched to a graphic organizer at the introductory level and be successful. Then, along with additional instruction and teacher support, the student can work through the levels in sequence to develop the skills necessary to complete the more cognitively challenging activities.

It is our intention to have the graphic organizers in each chapter look equally as appealing and demanding. We don't want a student working at the introductory level to think her work is less rigorous than that

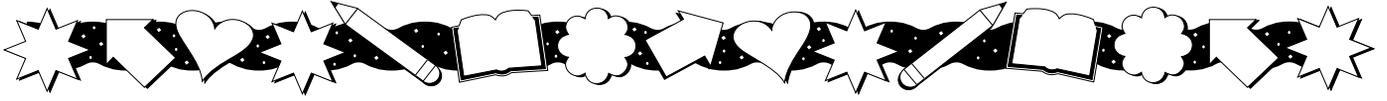
of a student working at a higher level, and vice versa. If matched carefully, all students should be working at a "just right" level. You may want to enlarge the graphic organizers to 11 by 14 inches when students work in pairs or need more space than is provided.

Final Thoughts

It is our hope that this book will inspire you to design other focused lessons and tiered graphic organizers to supplement your writing instruction and address the needs of your students. We are confident that the tiered organizers, paired with focused instruction, will help students improve the quality of their writing.

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- Kaufer, D. S., & Carley, K. (1994). Some concepts and axioms about communication: Proximate and at a distance. *Written communication*, 11 (1), 8–42.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.



Finding a Voice

Skill: Use language that conveys one's personality.

Overview

For many of us, “voice” is a nebulous element of writing. We all talk about adding voice, but what exactly do we mean? It’s difficult to define *voice* because it is a stylistic quality unique to each writer and to each purpose. By *voice* we’re really talking about the result created from the use of words—a product, not a process. Voice is the result of word choice, sentence length, images, and details presented. All these pieces come together to reveal a personality behind the words, the unique characteristics, attitudes, and feelings of the writer.

Model

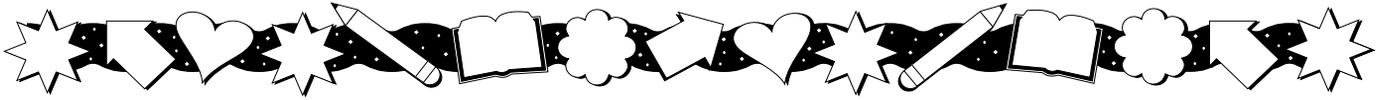
Finding Love

It’s been almost fourteen years since my sister, my parents, and I stood in the basement of Mrs. Lake’s house watching a litter of English Springer Spaniels run wildly around, jumping on us, barking at each other, and investigating every available nook and cranny. They had no way of knowing that they were auditioning for an important part in our future.

Some puppies were black and white, others brown (or, as I was informed, liver) and white. Each one had an adorable face, with big eyes and long floppy ears. If given the chance, I would have picked George, a peppy black and white male who got this name because he was so curious. But I knew the puppy was going to be Mom’s birthday present. She would choose.

To my delight, George came home with us. Mom wanted him to have an English name, so we called him Thatcher, after Margaret, the prime minister of England. Thatch, as he came to be called, quickly learned to shake, fetch, and give kisses. I even taught him how to retrieve the mail sticking through the slot in the front door. He had to stop doing this, though, when Mom complained that the bills had holes from Thatcher’s teeth.

Today Thatcher doesn’t race around the yard like he once did. The arthritis in his back legs has slowed him down. Even making his way up and down the steps is difficult. When he loses his footing and falls, which seems to happen quite regularly now, he looks up with his sad, hopeful eyes for someone to boost him upright again. He’s glad to have a friend help him and quickly returns the favor with a shake, kiss, or wag of his stubby tail. For the last few years, Thatch has shared our house with a younger Springer, Tessa, a brown (or, should I say, liver) female. She’s nice, I guess, but she sure isn’t any Thatcher!



How to Teach

Let's take a closer look at the model above. Ask, *What words, details, and images were used to express the strong feelings the author has for Thatcher?* Record the ideas on a chart like the following:

Words: adorable; curious; sad, hopeful eyes.

Phrases: "To my delight," "She's nice, I guess, but she sure isn't any Thatcher."

Details: dog used to race around but doesn't now, has arthritis, falls easily

Images: puppies playing; Thatcher learning to shake, give kisses, retrieve mail; Thatch is helped up and he shakes, kisses, or wags stubby tail.

Next, talk about how these words create feelings of love and sadness. While reading books with students, select passages in which the author's or character's voice shines through. In pairs, ask students to determine if it's the word choice, sentence construction, details, images, or some other factor that conveys feelings, attitudes, emotions, or a particular stand on an issue.

To reinforce this idea, you may create "voiceless" passages and have students work together to revise the passages so a voice is evident. Here's one to use:

I went to the beach with my family. We made sand castles. A wave knocked over my sand castle. Later we played in the arcade. After dinner, we went home.

Name _____ Date _____

Let Your Voice Shine Through

1. Choose an event in your life to write about.

Event:

2. How did you feel about this event? Choose one of the following feelings or decide on a different one.

___ disgusted	___ disappointed	___ proud
___ delighted	___ overjoyed	___ other
___ confused	___ horrified	_____

3. Jot down specific words, phrases, details, and images that will let the reader know how you were feeling and reacting to what was happening.

<p style="text-align: center; border-top: 1px dashed black;">Words</p>	<p style="text-align: center; border-top: 1px dashed black;">Phrases</p>
<p style="text-align: center; border-top: 1px dashed black;">Details</p>	<p style="text-align: center; border-top: 1px dashed black;">Images</p>

On a separate piece of paper, write the words, phrases, details, and images.

Name Ben Date Feb. 5

Two Views, Two Voices

Decide on an event you can describe using two voices, one that is upbeat, funny, excited, or even bubbly (but keep it realistic), and one that is upset, disappointed, worried, scared, or frustrated. What's the event?

Event:

My friend's sleepover

First Paragraph
Fill in the shapes with words, phrases, details, and images you'll include in your paragraph to create a voice that is cheerful and full of life.

a fun birthday party	nice treasure boxes	ice cream and cake
fun playing games	going to bed at 1 am	

Second Paragraph
Fill in the shapes with words, phrases, details, and images you'll include in your paragraph to create a voice that is the opposite of the one above.

my pj's too small	pizza on my white shirt	forgot my toothbrush
-------------------	-------------------------	----------------------

Name _____ Date _____

Whose Voices?

What's the event?

Event:

First Description
What kind of voice will you create? _____

Fill in the shapes with words, phrases, details, and images you'll include in your paragraph to create this voice.

Second Description
What kind of voice will you create? _____

Fill in the shapes with words, phrases, details, and images you'll include in your paragraph to create this voice.

Write your paragraphs on a separate piece of paper.



Work together and have students experiment as they revise. What happens if you add long, complex sentences or short, choppy phrases? If you make the language more formal or colloquial? If you change the details, delete some, or add others? If you insert dialogue? Encourage students to make a conscious effort to create a personality and attitude that their readers can recognize. Once students begin to write with voice, have them share their work as models for others.

Literature Sources for Other Models

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Bonnars, S. (2002). *Making music*.
New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
(Read Mrs. Bergstrom in "New Neighbors.")

Lowry, L. (2002). *Gooney bird greene*.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
(See Ch. 2.)

Turner, A. (1987). *Nettie's trip south*.
New York: Macmillan. (picture book)

Teacher to Teacher

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It seems that younger writers have less difficulty writing with voice than do students in the upper elementary grades and beyond. Perhaps older students are reluctant to expose emotions, passions, or beliefs. In some cases, we can help students find their voices by having them slow down the pace of their writing and add relevant details to it.

Using the Tiered Organizers

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While you are modeling ways in which voice can be created, check to see which students' voices are already coming through. Once this begins to happen, you are ready to match them with one of the activities that follow:

Introductory: **Let Your Voice Shine Through**

Students identify an event, decide what feelings they want to reveal as they write about the event, and brainstorm specific words, phrases, details, and images that bring out their voice.

Intermediate: **Two Views, Two Voices**

Students select words and phrases to describe an event in a voice that is happy, upbeat, funny, or excited. Next, they select words and phrases to describe this same event in a voice that is upset, disappointed, worried, scared, or frustrated. Specific words, phrases, details, and images help them convey these voices.

Challenging: **Whose Voices?**

Students choose an event and describe it using two different voices. They may write in the voices of characters wildly different from themselves. Specific words, phrases, details, and images help them enact the voices they choose.



Let Your Voice Shine Through

1. Choose an event in your life to write about.

Event:

2. How did you feel about this event? Choose one of the following feelings or decide on a different one.

disgusted disappointed proud
 delighted overjoyed other
 confused horrified _____

3. Jot down specific words, phrases, details, and images that will let the reader know how you were feeling and reacting to what was happening.

Words

Phrases

Details

Images

On a separate piece of paper, write a paragraph about this event. Make sure you include the words, phrases, details, and images that show what you were feeling and thinking.



Two Views, Two Voices

Decide on an event you can describe using two voices, one that is upbeat, funny, excited, or even bubbly (but keep it realistic), and one that is upset, disappointed, worried, scared, or frustrated. What's the event?

Event:

First Paragraph

Fill in the shapes with words, phrases, details, and images you'll include in your paragraph to create a voice that is cheerful and full of life.

Second Paragraph

Fill in the shapes with words, phrases, details, and images you'll include in your paragraph to create a voice that is the opposite of the one above.

Write your paragraphs on a separate piece of paper.

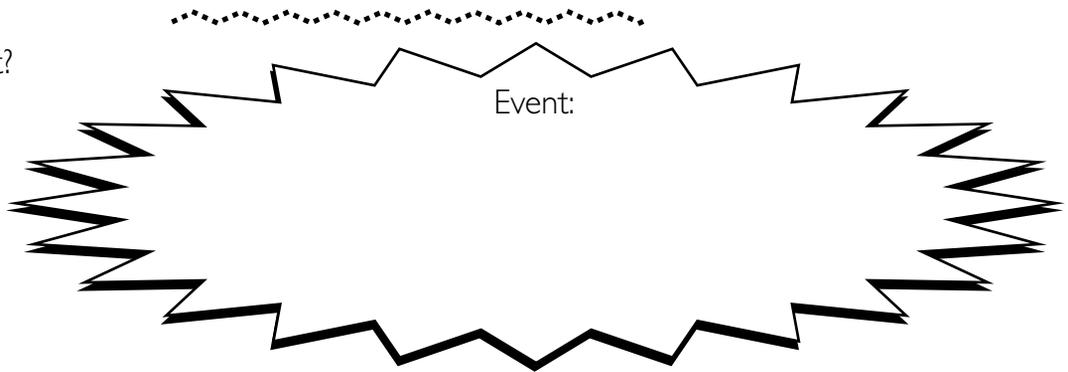
Name _____

Date _____



Whose Voices?

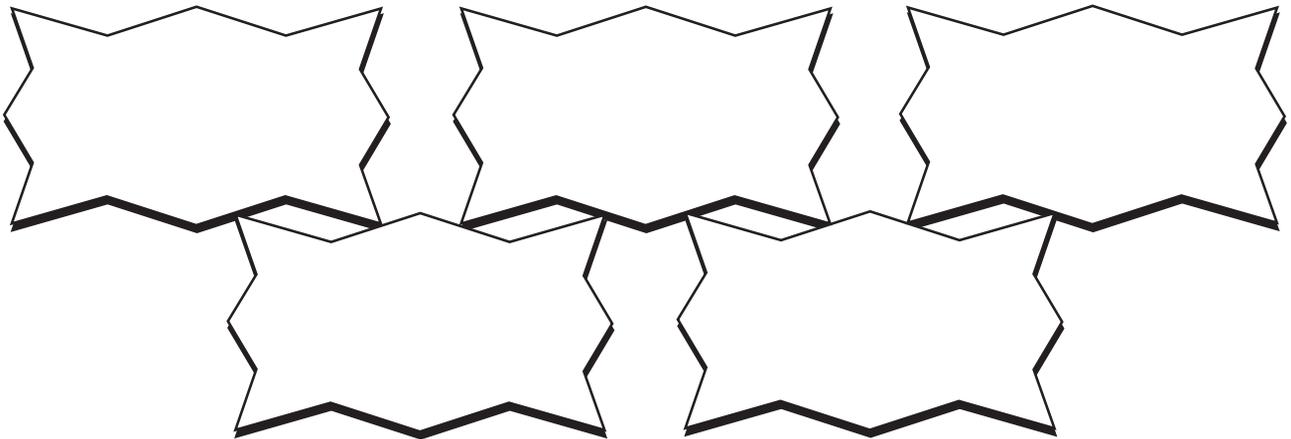
What's the event?



First Description

What kind of voice will you create? _____

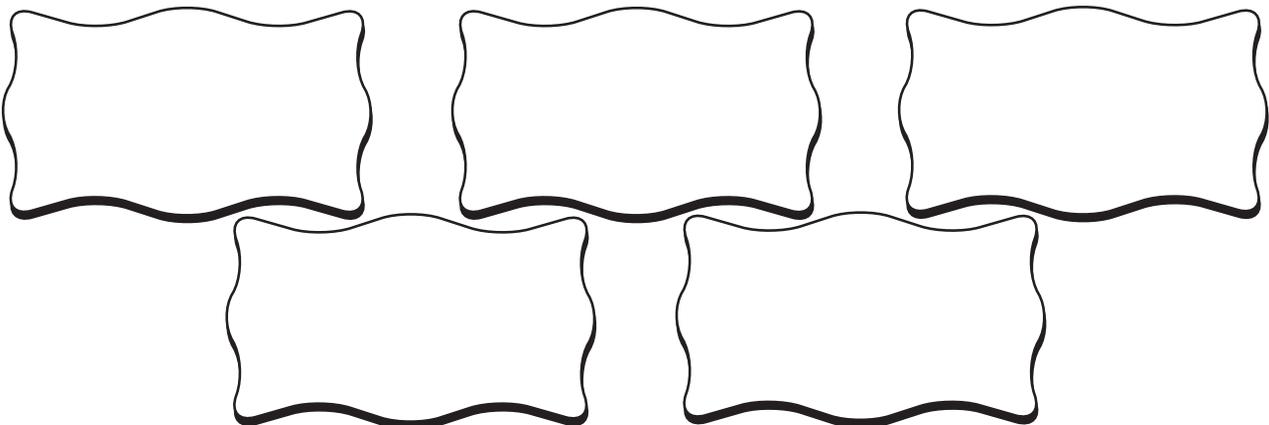
Fill in the shapes with words, phrases, details, and images you'll include in your paragraph to create this voice.



Second Description

What kind of voice will you create? _____

Fill in the shapes with words, phrases, details, and images you'll include in your paragraph to create this voice.



Write your paragraphs on a separate piece of paper.