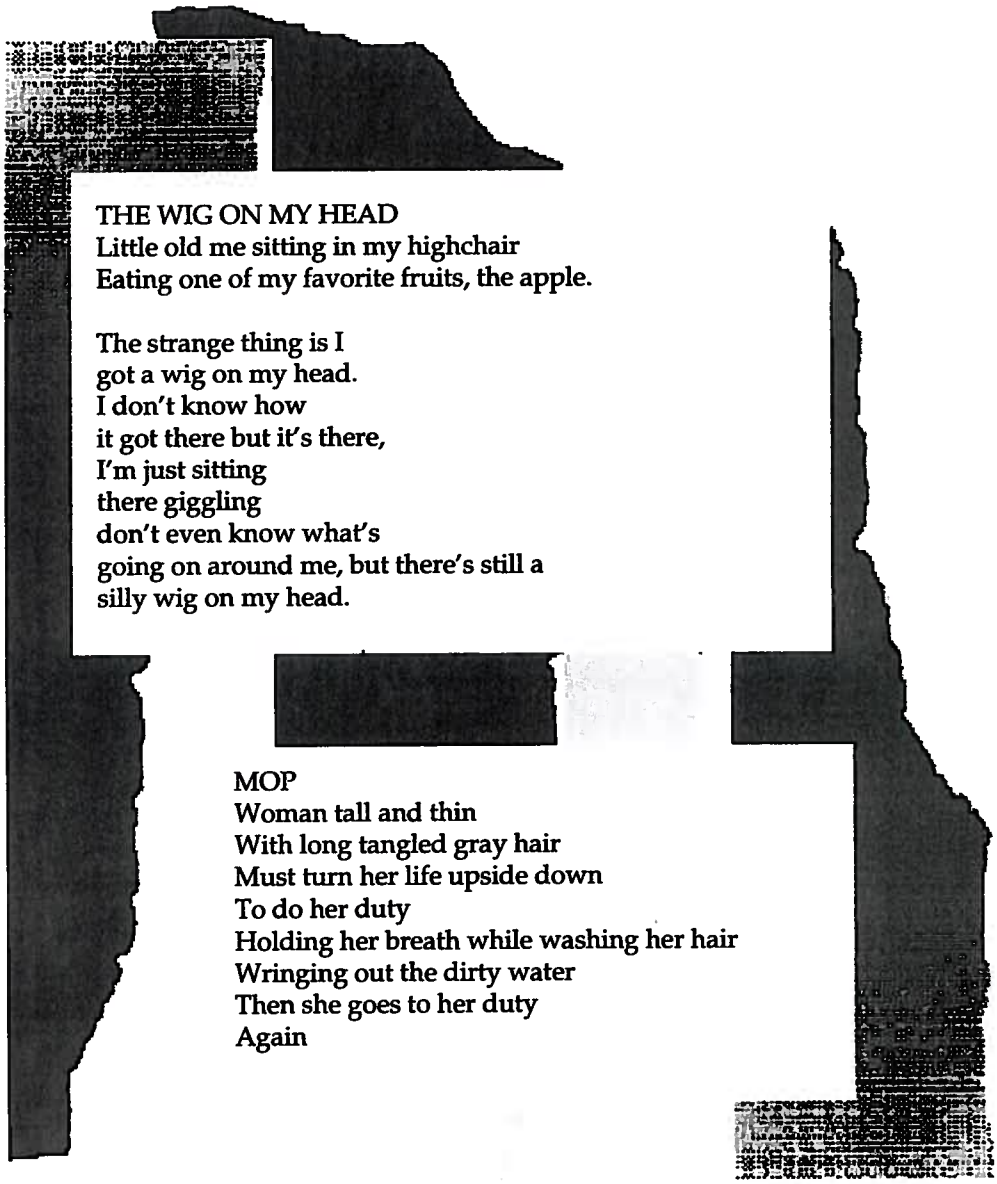
ARTS PROPEL:

A HANDBOOK FOR IMAGINATIVE WRITING



THE WIG ON MY HEAD
Little old me sitting in my highchair
Eating one of my favorite fruits, the apple.

The strange thing is I
got a wig on my head.
I don't know how
it got there but it's there,
I'm just sitting
there giggling
don't even know what's
going on around me, but there's still a
silly wig on my head.

MOP
Woman tall and thin
With long tangled gray hair
Must turn her life upside down
To do her duty
Holding her breath while washing her hair
Wringing out the dirty water
Then she goes to her duty
Again

This handbook was prepared by Roberta Camp, Steve Seidel, Dennie Wolf, and Rieneke Zessoules, with the help of teachers and administrators from the Pittsburgh Public School System.

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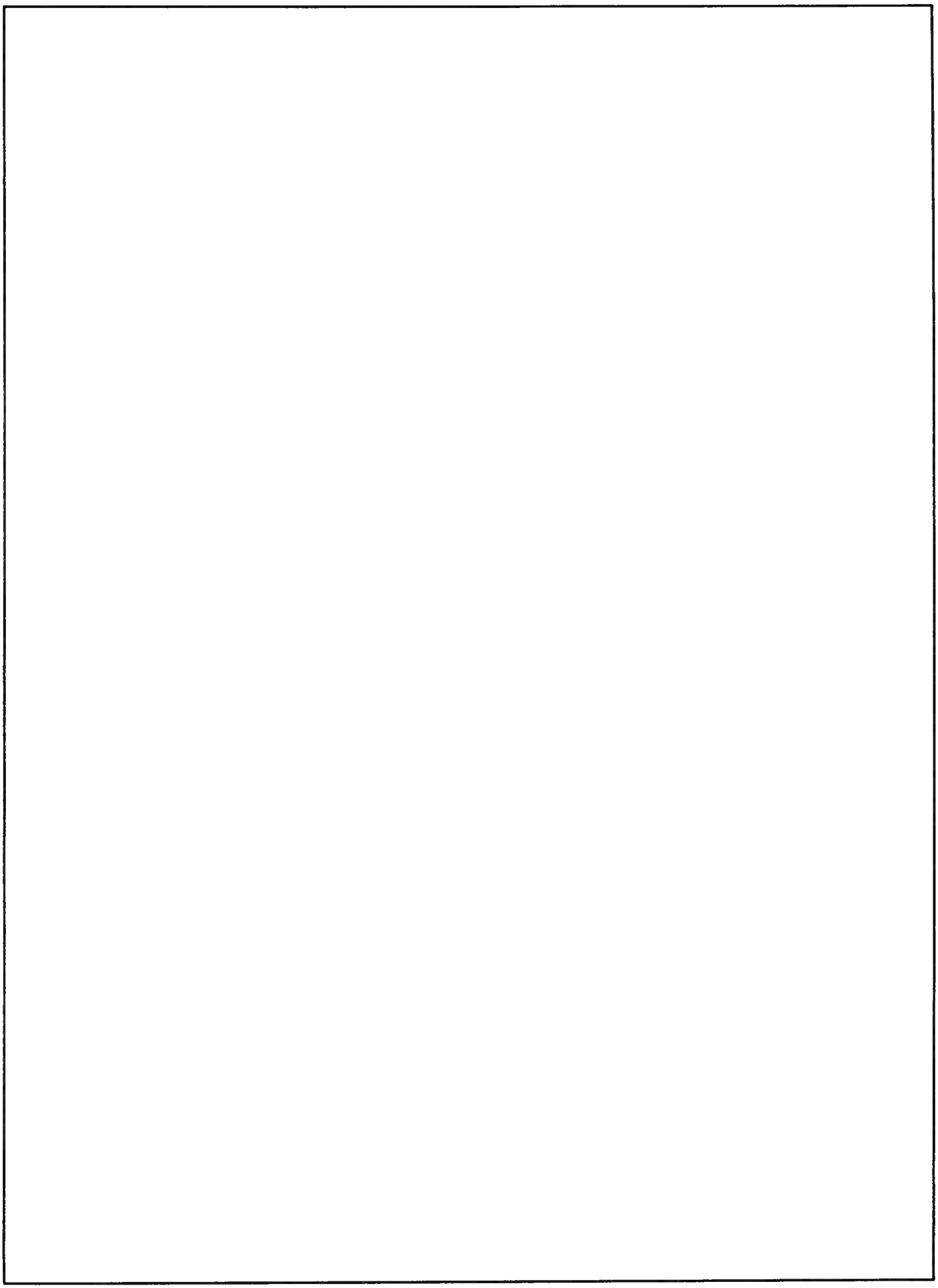


CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Almost daily, we hear that American students read meagerly, without inference or imagination, and that they write more like scribes and clerks than authors: woodenly, plainly, and only on demand. The following chapters present the collaborative work of a group of teachers, students, administrators, and researchers who together, and across five years, went to work changing this picture of literacy. Together, in those years, we investigated how writing, reading, speaking and listening could change in urban classrooms. We did so as a part of a much broader exploration of teaching and assessment in the arts and humanities. The project was Arts PROPEL.

The outgrowth of a larger effort in the reform of school curriculum and assessment funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, Arts PROPEL brought educators and researchers from Harvard Project Zero and Educational Testing Service together with teachers, administrators, and students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools for five years of exchange. In those five years we developed and implemented classroom practices that led to alternative forms of assessment.

In most English classes, students are spectators. They only look in on literature: they read it and they write essays about it. We asked ourselves what would happen if we were to put *authorship* right in the middle of the curriculum, where, for so long, reading and critical response to others' writing have stood alone. We asked, too, what would happen if reading and critical response became integral parts of what it takes to write well — as it is for adult poets or playwrights. Finally, we asked, "If students in classrooms become authors and critics in this way, what else must change?" Notably, we realized that one way in which we respond to student work — our daily and our more focussed and high-stakes forms of assessment — would need to change radically. Assessment would need to become an episode of learning, not simply an occasion for correction. Assessment would need to teach students how to recognize the signs of good work, how to reflect on their own work, and how to take and offer good criticism.

This handbook is our effort to summarize what we have learned about a kind of literacy based in literature and in authorship. It presents a view of the curriculum, the classroom teaching practices, and the approaches to assessment which emerge once the *writing* of literature becomes central in English classes. We begin with an introduction to authorship literacy. We then describe the collaborative process used by teachers, supervisors, and researchers to develop classroom projects in which writing, reading, and critical response — or production, perception, and reflection on one's own and others' work — were combined. In Chapter 2, we look at students engaged in writing poetry. Also in that chapter, we take up the discussion of a key problem in assessment: developing a classroom language which focuses students' and teachers' attention on the central issues and essential understandings of a particular kind of work. In Chapter 3

we look at students learning to write dramatic dialogues and then an entire scene. In this chapter, we take up an additional issue in assessment: the design of processes in which both students and teachers can become thoughtful critics of students' writing. In Chapter 4, we examine how students' writing can be encouraged, improved, and finally, assessed using portfolios of work — not unlike the sheaves of poems, or the scripts, that authors circulate to friends, colleagues, and finally, to publishers and readers. Here, we explore first how such portfolios can provide the basis for more than ongoing grading. Second, we discuss how classroom data, like portfolios, might provide schools or districts with information about how well their students write. In Chapter 5, our conclusion, we draw out the lessons learned from this kind of work in writing instruction and assessment.

Writing and Critiquing as Authors: A Point of View

The work that we have done was initially concerned, not with writing of all kinds, but specifically with imaginative writing. We started with imaginative writing because it is in inventing a world, in breaking with the plain, daily forms of language, or in trying to write in someone else's voice, that students become intensely aware that they are working in a medium —that the words, rhythms, pauses, and the images they evoke are much like clay or musical notes. As we continued to work with students and teachers, we recognized that if students were to become authors, and if they were to generate writing worthy of serious assessment, they would need to be presented with certain opportunities:

- ***the opportunity to engage the imagination***

  We believe that writing is practiced most effectively and honestly when the writer's imagination is engaged. In the moments when imagination is engaged, students are able to see new possibilities and to take steps toward thinking and working as writers. Therefore, the first and essential condition for students' learning is the stimulation and engagement of their imaginations and the encouragement to write as much as possible during these periods of engagement.

- ***the opportunity to write as poets and playwrights***

  A goal of the classroom activities we developed is to encourage students to think as poets and playwrights. To take these first steps, students must be encouraged to write frequently, and they must be able to explore a variety of genres, not by experiencing single episodes, but by engaging in sustained encounters with a particular kind of writing. By investigating what it is to write for the stage in contrast to what it means to write for a poetry journal or a newspaper, students come to know the possibilities and particularities of playwriting, poetry, and journalism. And by writing many dialogues, many poems, and many articles, students come to know what it means to think as a playwright, a poet, or a journalist. It is this level of understanding that allows students to become active and informed authors.

○ ***the opportunity to write for real audiences***

If we want students to be able to think as writers, then we must help them bring their writing to a real audience— that is, an audience beyond the classroom teacher. For it is only when a young writer finds that her work actually affects another person— a parent, peer, or stranger— that she can begin to understand the power of writing as a form of communication. There is more potential in that moment to encourage a new writer to continue than in all of the pleas, requests, urgings, and assignments from a language arts teacher to "write more" or to "write better." For this reason, teachers must encourage students to share their work with peers and to develop a sense of the community of writers and readers working together and responding to one another's experiences.

○ ***the opportunity to be thoughtful judges of quality in writing***

Writing in itself isn't enough to ensure the development of competent writing skills. In order for students to figure out how to work toward getting better as writers, they need to become sophisticated judges of quality in writing. One way to nurture the ability to make discriminations about quality is through frequent and very open talk about different kinds of writing and writing on different levels of accomplishment. Students must also be encouraged to understand what makes one piece of writing effective and another tedious. Discussions of intent and effect, of the distinctive properties of different genres, and of differences in reaction and taste can lead toward deeper and stronger capacities for discrimination in young readers and writers. These discussions also provide a critical foundation for reflection and self-assessment.

○ ***the opportunity to develop reflection as a habit of mind***

The ability to tackle the complex craft of writing thoughtfully grows out of students' capacity to judge and refine their efforts before, during, and after they have written. Students' ability to confront the challenges of writing— to understand their work as it changes over time, to build on their strengths, to see new possibilities and challenges in their work— depends on their capacity to look carefully at their work and form new insights and ideas about themselves as writers. As they continue to write, students develop their abilities to judge and their capacity to enhance and reveal the best of their knowledge and understanding. In this respect, reflection is an essential tool for learning and an integral part of students' work as writers.

○ ***the opportunity to revise***

As students learn to become better judges of quality in writing, they need to practice returning to "finished work" to see what else can be done to strengthen it. Student writers' ability to hear, understand, and work with the responses of their colleagues is crucial to their success in revising their work and improving as writers. When students learn to respond to one another's writing in this way, their writing process begins to parallel the "real world" processes of poets reading and revising their poems, and of playwrights drawing on directors', actors', and audience responses to "overhaul" and "fine-tune" their plays.

In thinking about authorship for students, we took on an additional responsibility: that of creating deliberate sequences of activities that would model the way in which experienced writers move from one challenge to the next, pursuing a line of thought, technique, or theme. Thus, the poetry projects form a sequence: students begin with the apparently simple task of making a poem based on a list, then move on to the more open-ended task of creating a poem where mystery and power reside. Similarly, in the drama projects, students begin with dialogue and move to scenes. Finally, building on their experience in the poetry and drama projects, students engage in the larger work of creating a portfolio of their writing.

Thinking Through Assessment

Each of the types of work described here — the poetry and playwriting projects and the formation of a portfolio — highlights a particular issue in assessment, underscoring how complex the conduct of good assessment is. In the poetry work, teachers and students worked together on one ingredient in good assessment: the creation and application of a shared vocabulary for responding to and judging student poems. In the drama sequence, two other ingredients came to the fore: teaching students to be wise critics of their own work and helping teachers to become acute observers of student development.

We argue that only with a basis in this prior assessment work does it makes sense to form and judge larger collections of student work, or portfolios. In constructing portfolios of writing, students must make wise selections and teachers must draw on an established common language for thinking about quality in poems, scenes, or other forms of writing. However, judging and responding to portfolios takes the work of assessment several steps further. It involves establishing common dimensions for judging many kinds of writing, and common expectations, or standards of achievement, for students of different ages. Thus, as we discuss assessment in the context of poetry, playwriting, and portfolios, we present one view of how a community of teachers and outside readers can move steadily and thoughtfully towards fair, demanding, and broad judgments of student writing.

Collaborative Development of Teaching and Assessment Activities

Teachers, supervisors, and researchers contributed equally to the development of the teaching and assessment activities we will describe. The first ideas for a project were often sketched out by PROPEL researchers drawing on what they had observed or knew to be successful in language arts classrooms. The projects then entered a cycle of development in which each member of the team contributed different kinds of expertise. In this cycle, the entire group of teachers, administrators, and researchers discussed the initial ideas, researchers refined them, teachers tried out the project activities in their classrooms, then reported on the experience and brought forward examples of student work for examination by the rest of the team. The discussions of teachers' and students' experience and of the student work samples led to further revisions and refinements, which in turn were tried out in classrooms, and the resultant student work was examined. Proceeding in this way, we were able to discover which

activities required additional support for students and which needed to be modified.

This cycle of development resulted in domain projects in which students are challenged to address concepts central to poetry writing and playwriting. But it had benefits beyond the design of specific domain projects. As a result of their involvement in discussing and reshaping the domain projects, teachers were fully aware of the purposes of the activities and therefore alert to possibilities for adaptation to the particular circumstances of their classrooms. Because their supervisors had been part of the discussions and were clearly supportive of their efforts, teachers felt free to take on the risks presented by the domain projects. In time, teachers came to see themselves as full-fledged members of the research and development team. They became advocates for the ideas and approaches represented by the domain projects as they described them to their colleagues through in-service presentations and informal discussions.

The cycle of development also had a second wave of benefits. In effect, it resulted in an important fusion between teaching, learning, and assessment. All too frequently, student learning is assessed with unit tests or standardized instruments that are discontinuous with the materials and issues that have been central to classroom discussion and individual work. PROPEL writing teachers, administrators, and researchers were all involved in the design of instruction, and could see how daily forms of evaluation amplified student understanding. We thus moved jointly to find forms of assessment that acknowledged the interplay of reading, writing, and reflection and that were rich enough to capture students' grasp of writing processes as well as their final products.

How To Use This Handbook

The materials in this handbook are stories and possibilities, not recipes. Our hope is to present core issues in teaching and assessment, without in any sense prescribing either the particular projects we created, or the particular portfolio process that we evolved. Each of the different chapters contains materials from several classrooms, and where possible we have pointed out ways in which teachers have used the broad structural outlines of domain projects or portfolios to inform a sequence of teaching, learning, and assessment that reflects their own classroom approach.

CHAPTER 2

DOMAIN PROJECTS: WRITING POEMS

Poems and their making provided the initial opportunity for developing in-depth, long-term domain projects in which students could become authors, engaging directly with the demands and techniques of a specific kind of writing, and learning to make reflection and assessment part of their writing process.

Poetry is often a short, and unloved, stop in the language arts curriculum. Many language arts teachers, even those who teach poetry writing, have had little experience teaching poetry writing and find it hard, if not impossible, or threatening, to evaluate students' poems. In addition, few teachers have the time or resources to locate and become acquainted with poems written by major contemporary poets and accessible to middle school and high school students. But the brevity and immediacy of such poems —the opportunity to transform or to see into a phrase—offers possibilities for experiences of authorship that should not be ignored.

At the same time that we worked on these initial poetry domain projects, we were developing models for bringing together the processes of reading and writing, for fusing instruction and assessment, and for collaborations among teachers, administrators, outside researchers and students. We were also, in combination with parallel efforts in visual arts and music, defining the key features of Arts PROPEL domain projects.

FIVE KEY IDEAS ABOUT DOMAIN PROJECTS

1. *Domain Projects are composed of a series of interrelated activities that emphasize process, require revision and reflection, and are accessible to students with various levels of technical skills.*

2. *Domain projects are open-ended projects with multiple solutions. They invite students to discover and invent their own solutions, and to explore others' solutions.*

3. *Domain projects stress production as the central activity: reflective and perceptual activities grow out of, and feed back into, the creative process.*

4. *Domain project work is assessed not only for the finished product, but also for the learning, growth, and increased understanding that has occurred.*

5. *Domain projects pose problems that stimulate students to increase their role in defining their own problems to pursue.*

An Introduction to Poetry: From Lists to Mysteries

The PROPEL poetry materials include two domain projects focusing on techniques that are central to poetry writing but open to beginning writers; they are deliberately "just across the line" from the language and forms that students use daily. The first project introduces students to the technique of using lists or catalogues to structure a poem. The second helps students to understand the ways in which a writer can create a sense of awe or mystery in a poem by describing ordinary objects and experiences in unforeseen, magical, even startling, ways. The two domain projects complement one another; the first helps students to see the connections between poetry and the rhythms and patterns of everyday language, whereas the second emphasizes the qualities of language and perception that set poetry apart from ordinary uses of words.

Each project consists of a series of integrated, cumulative activities spanning several class periods. In some classrooms a project may be completed in as little as a week, and in others in as much as three weeks, but most teachers allow about two weeks for each of the poetry domain projects. The point in each is to provide students with a sense of the process of writing a poem. This process, we believe, involves much more than inspiration and inscription. It extends even beyond revision and recopying. In fact, both domain projects insist that the making of a poem involves production, perception, and reflection. Or put differently, poetry-making involves the work of writing, reading what others have written, and thinking critically. Consequently both domain projects involve students in activities like drafting and revising, browsing and reading aloud, and evaluating their own and other students' writing.

Writing a List Poem

To draw students' attention away from the "rhymes and roses" caricature of poetry, and to attract them to the metaphorical and inventive work of writing poems, we began by asking them to create what we termed "a list poem," in which the contents, the order, and the wording of an ordinary sequence can open up the lyrical, surprising, and non-literal possibilities of language.

In working with the list poem, students begin by reading several examples of published poems where the writer uses a listing or catalogue technique. They read such poems as Nikki Giovanni's "Knoxville, Tennessee," Carl Sandburg's "Arithmetic," Langston Hughes' "April Rain Song," James Tate's "First Lesson," or Susan Astor's "Night Rise." Students also read some examples of list poems written by other students. In class and together, they examine closely the poet's use of the listing or catalogue technique in one or more of the poems, marking up a copy of one of these poems to indicate more specifically how the technique shapes the poem (FIGURE 2.1).

The class may work all together, with the teacher marking up an overhead transparency of the poem to reflect decisions made in the discussion, or students may work in small groups with multiple paper copies, using a series of guidelines. This practice of having students mark up the poem was added as a result of teachers' classroom observations.

Suggestions for Marking Up a Poem: Perception

1. • Circle words (nouns) that name concrete or specific things.
   • Circle any action verbs.
   • Put a box around nouns for things that are abstract.
   • Write in the margin the feeling conveyed by the things named in various parts of the poem.
   • Explain how the things in the poem convey the feeling or feelings identified.

2. • Underline patterns of words at the beginning of one line that are used again at the beginning of another line or lines.
   • Use arrows to show which beginnings are like which other beginnings (or use pencils of different colors, if you have them).
   • Put a wavy line under patterns of words at the beginning of a line that are different from the beginnings of other lines around them.
   • Explain how the similarities and differences at the beginnings of line create connections among things described in the poem or set them apart from one another.

3. • Put a bracket around groups of lines that seem to go together.
   • Explain why the lines seem to go together: because they name similar kinds of things? or because they use similar patterns of words? or both?
   • Use a wavy line to circle any part of the poem where you find something unexpected or surprising or out-of-the-ordinary from the rest of the poem or where you find anything that confuses you.

Figure 2.1

The teachers found that many students need the marking up exercise to become conscious of the poet's use of technique before they think about the choices of technique they would make if they put themselves in the poet's place. As students read a poem, they analyze it following these guidelines. This helps students become conscious of the poet's choices so that they may then become aware of their own choices as they compose a poem.

Questions for Discussion of List Poems:
Perception

1. • What specific details could you add to the poem?
   • Which are most appropriate for the poem?
   • Where would you put them in the poem?
   • How would they affect the poem?

2. • What words would you use at the beginning of a line if you wanted to add a new line to the poem?
   • Where in the poem would you use different beginnings?
   • What other beginnings can you think of that you might be able to use if you wanted to?
   • How would your beginnings affect the poem?

3. • How would you begin the line or lines in which you add your new details? Why?
   • If you were to add a new line to the poem, where would you put it?
   • How would your new line begin?
   • How would your details or your new line affect the poem?

   • *Optional:* Where do you think you might find or create a sense of discovery, or of something unexpected or out-of-the-ordinary in the poem?

Figure 2.2

The teacher and students then discuss the poem from the perspective of readers and writers. They pick out the parts of the poem they find most interesting or surprising, or they discuss the feeling they get when they have finished reading the poem, and how different choices on the part of the poet — such as different openings or endings for the poem — would affect it. The students then look at the techniques of the poem as if they were themselves authoring the poem, using a set of questions that parallel the guidelines they used earlier for marking up the poem. They may even try their hands at inserting lines (FIGURES 2.2-2.3).

Questions for Reflecting on Inserting Lines

1. • What specific details did you add to the poem?
   • Why did they seem to you to belong in the poem?

2. • What words did you use to begin your new lines?
   • Did you use the line beginnings established in the poem?

3. • Why did you put your lines into the poem where you did?
   • Do the details you added fit into an existing group of similar details in the poem?
   • If so, how? If not, why not?
   • Did you create a new group of your own?
   • Why or why not?

4. • Do you find any interesting or surprising combinations of details in what you added?
   • What makes these combinations interesting or surprising?

5 • How do the lines you inserted affect the poem?
   • What do you like about the lines you inserted?
   • Is there anything you would now like to change?
   • Why or why not?

Figure 2.3

Students then engage in writing a short poem of their own, using the techniques they have observed and discussed in the published poems. This phase gives students their first experience with producing a poem. The students evaluate their works using a set of guided questions similar to those they used earlier to examine the published poems (FIGURE 2.4). This is their first experience in looking back at their own work, in practicing reflection.

Questions for Reflecting on Your Own Poem

1. • What specific details did you use in the poem?
   • Do they seem to you to belong in the poem? Why or why not?
   • Do they seem to belong where you have put them? Why or why not?

2. • Did you use similar patterns of words to begin two or more of the lines in your poem? If so, which lines?
   • Do the lines with similar patterns seem to belong together?
   • Did you use any variations in the patterns at the beginning of lines?
   • What is the effect of these variations or this lack of variation?

3. • Are there any groups of lines that seem to belong together in your poem? Where are they and why do they belong together?
   • Are there any lines that would be better moved to somewhere else in the poem?

4. • Are there any parts of the poem that seem surprising or interesting as you come to them, or that make you see something in an unexpected way? If so, which parts?

5. • What do you like about the poem?
   • Is there anything you would now like to change? Why or why not?

Figure 2.4

With this preparation in mind, students write a second poem of their own, using the technique they have explored and examined in their own and others' writing. Finally, the students respond to one another's poems and reflect on their own, making decisions about possible revisions with the help of a set of questions and evaluation criteria. FIGURES 2.5-2.10 show one student's work in this poetry sequence. Figure 2.5 shows the student looking back on the poem that evolved in Figures 2.6-2.10. Other students' list poems, along with sample teacher comments, can be found later on in this chapter in Figure 2.15.

What follows is the student's reflection on his work with the list poem. Written sometime after the student had completed the poetry activities, it indicates how he looks at the finished poem and the process he used to create it.

COVER SHEET FOR WRITING SELECTION

Name_____
Grade 8
Teacher_____
Date 12-19-91
Audience Teacher and class

Please describe the writing assignment.
We had to right a list poem on any subject.

What do you like best about this piece of your writing?
I like my opening line alot. I also think that there is at least one like or dislike like everyone can relate to. I also thought I used all of the good qualities of a list poem. (pattern: suprise lines, repetion, images, and efective ending)

Which of your writing skills or ideas are you least satisfied with in this piece? I really thought my poem was good so I guess my grammar was the worst thing.

Why? I can't spell or use punctuation.

Please describe the most significant revision you made to this piece of your writing. Well I started with just a bunch of ideas. The biggest revision I made was deciding with likes and dislikes to choose.

Figure 2.5

Here the student is comparing the two list poems he wrote. The one he likes better is the one we see him creating in the pages that follow.

I really believe that my second list poem was better. I think it was partly because of the fact that we got to choose our subject. The first poem I felt was very different in a way that the images you got were deeper. But the second poem was funnier. I also spent a lot more time arranging my lines to try to get the best images possible. !

Figure 2.6

This is the student's earliest work on his second list poem. He has decided his poem will be about things he likes and dislikes and is thinking on paper about what he might include.

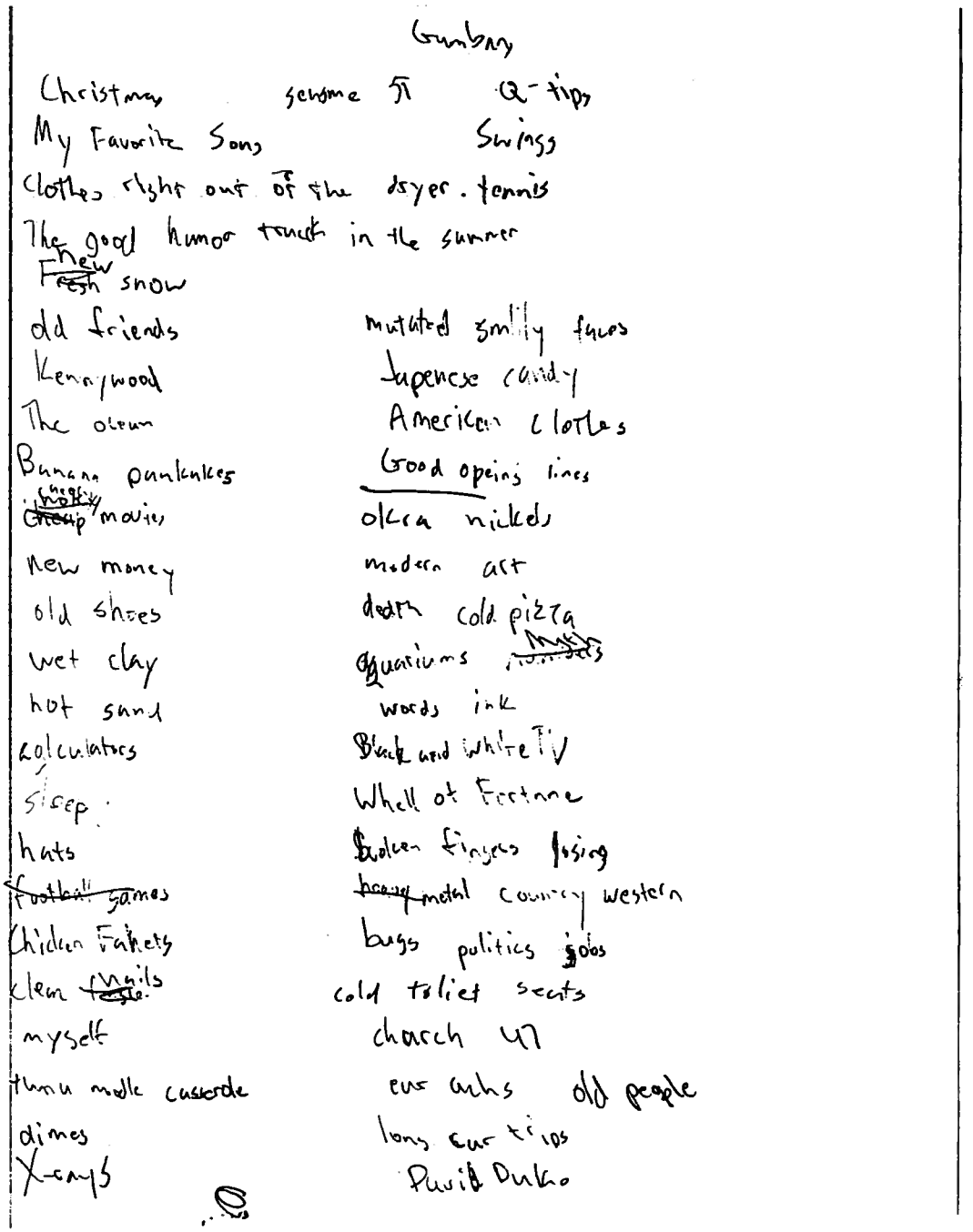


Figure 2.7

The student is now establishing clear distinctions between the things he likes and those he dislikes. He is also deciding which things to include in his poem.

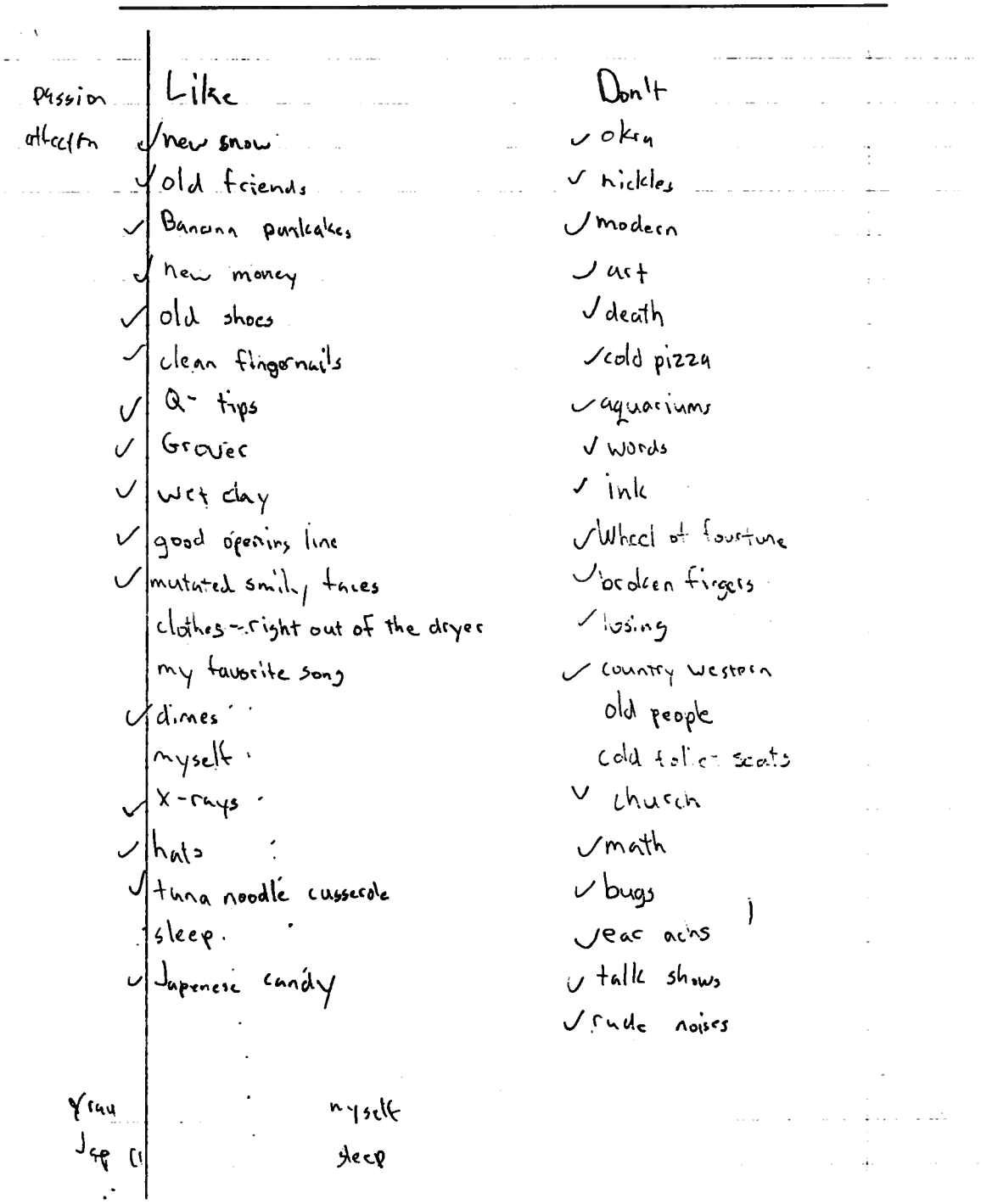


Figure 2.8

This is the student's first draft for his list poem. He has marked up the draft to show where he thinks he will make changes in the order of things named.

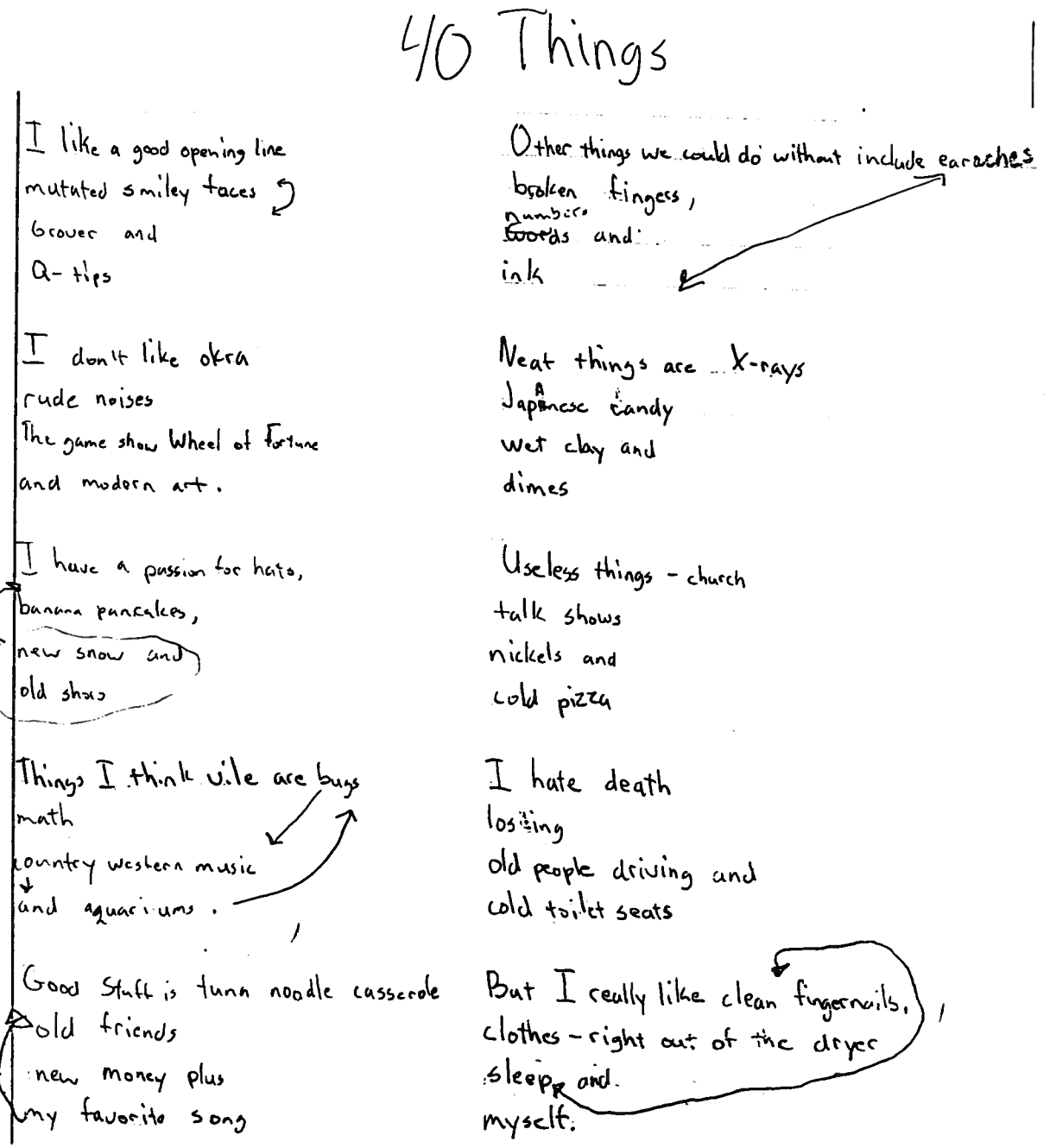


Figure 2.9

Here is the student's final draft of the poem.

---

40 Things

I like a good opening line,
Grover,
mutated smiley faces
and Q-tips.

I don't like okra
rude noises,
the game show Wheel of Fortune
and modern art.

I have a passion for hats
banana pancakes
new snow and
old shoes.

Things that I think to be vile are aquariums
math
bugs and
country western music.

Good stuff is tuna noodle casserole.
my favorite song
new money plus
old friends.

Other things we could do without include ink
broken fingers
numbers
and earaches.

Neat things are X-rays
Japanese candy
wet clay
and dimes.

Useless things - church
talk shows
nickels and
cold pizza.

I hate death
losing
old people driving
and cold toilet seats.

But I really like sleep
clothes - right out of the dryer
clean fingernails and
myself.

Figure 2.10

Exploring Mystery in Poems

To expand on students' sense of the possibilities available in writing poems, we introduced a second domain project. This project emphasizes the way in which poems lead readers and writers to observe closely the details of objects and experience, and from such close observation to create a vision that is truly extraordinary.

Students begin by reading poems in which a strong image or set of images creates a feeling of mystery or wonder. They may read brief poems by Issa, Machado, or Charles Simic, for example, or an American Indian poem, or such longer poems as Charles Simic's "Stone," W. S. Merwin's "The Unwritten," May Swenson's "Living Tenderly," or one of Pablo Neruda's odes to common objects such as socks or salt or watermelon. They may also read poems written by other students. Focusing together on one poem, the students answer questions which help them discover the power of close observation and precise description. They discuss what they have learned about the poems through the following kinds of questions:

Finding the Magic in Poems: Perception

1. *What do you see when you read this poem?*
2. *How does the writer build the picture you get in your mind when you read the poem?*
3. *What feeling do you get from the picture the poem creates?*
4. *Where does the poem suggest mystery or magic or power in the physical objects it describes? (Mark the place or places in your copy of the poem.)*
5. *How does the writer create that quality in the poem?*

Through such close examination of the poem, students come to understand how precise description and vividness of detail suggest wonder or surprise in the perception of objects. They see how a poet can create a magical moment in a poem by conjecturing about unknown or invisible aspects of the observed object, by making wild comparisons, or by revealing unexpected beauty in an object typically considered ordinary or ugly.

In preparation for writing their own poems, students examine and explore one of a group of objects that they and their classmates, or their teacher, have brought in to the classroom. These might include such humble objects as a thimble, a safety pin, the shell of a bullet, or an old bottle; or objects from the natural world, such as a piece of bark, a bird's feather, or a sea shell.

Students are aided in this exploration by the following questions, which focus their attention on the object before them:

Finding the Magic in Objects: Getting Ready to Write

1. *What are the physical characteristics of this object? How does it look?*
2. *How does the object feel when touched or held in the hand?*
3. *What is unique about this object? How is it different from any other?*
4. *What does the object remind you of?*
5. *What would it be like to <u>be</u> the object and to experience the world as the object?*
6. *What would it be like to go inside it?*
7. *What guesses can you make about aspects or parts of the object that are invisible or unknowable?*

In this exploration, students exercise the kinds of perceptions they have observed at work in the poems they have read. In this way, they prepare themselves to write poems in which they too use precise description to lead the reader to a new vision.

Students read their poems to one another or exchange them for silent reading, primarily to get a sense of how the poems communicate to another person — what stands out, what is especially moving, what is puzzling. They then revise their poems, taking into account the perceptions of their fellow students as they think appropriate. Some student poems from this project are found in Figure 2.11.

Following this experience of writing about objects, or in place of it, students may read and write poems in which the focus is on a photograph or drawing. In these poems, the interest is in the description of objects to get at the experience or emotions of the character or characters in the photograph. Students read together some examples of such poems, perhaps Patricia Hampl's "The Car in the Picture," or Maggie Anderson's "The Wash in My Grandmother's Arms," or some student poems. They look carefully and imaginatively at photographs they have brought in or the teacher has supplied. Young students may be asked to bring in and examine photographs of themselves from their earlier years.

In thinking about the photographs, students are encouraged to enter imaginatively into the world of the photograph, and to make guesses about what might have happened just before or after the picture was taken, or about why the people or objects appear as they do. Students then write their poems, using precise description to reveal the emotions or the hidden story suggested by the photograph. They share their poems with one another and revise as they judge best, taking their peers' perceptions into account.

MOP

Woman tall and thin
With long tangled gray hair
Must turn her life upside down
To do her duty
Holding her breath while washing her hair
Wringing out the dirty water
Then she goes to her duty
Again

ALARM CLOCK

Bright eyes gleaming
In the dark of night
Deep voice screaming
at the break of day
Doesn't tire, but goes on
screaming
Unless it is muzzled
In one of three ways.

OLD NEWSPAPER

Thrown from a paper boy's sack
waiting on the porch
to affect the lives of many
full of news
good and bad
politics, countries at war
murders, trials, fires
marriages, obituaries, sports
pictures and weather of the day
banded around
read by many
saved and put away
history and memories
lie within
turning yellow and more delicate
day by day.

STOVE

Four eyes that burn
A mouth that heats up your life

FIG. 2.11 Sample student poems that convey wonder and surprise about common subjects

THE WIG ON MY HEAD

Little old me sitting in my highchair
Eating one of my favorite fruits, the apple.

The strange thing is I
got a wig on my head.
I don't know how
it got there but it's there,
I'm just sitting
there giggling
don't even know what's
going on around me, but there's still a
silly wig on my head.

MY FIRST BIRTHDAY

On my first birthday,
I didn't know what to do.
I saw a cake sitting in front of me.
I thought to myself "Ah food."

My uncle was sitting next to me.
Then I stuck my hand in the cake.
Everyone started to laugh.
I climbed up on the table to the cake.
My face fell in,
I started to laugh.

LAST SHOT ON THE ROLL

The gray clouds pass overhead
After dropping their burdens.
The dusty smell of hot cement
suddenly cooled rises up in waves.
A car splashes by, its wipers
moving lazily. Somewhere a
bird chirps merrily.
I lean over the porch, my hands
soaking up the cool spheres
gathered on the railing.

"Hey Pops, a rainbow!"

He snaps the shutter closed,
trapping the fading colors.

Figure 2.12 Sample student poems written in response to photographs

One student's process of revision for these poetry writing projects is partially illustrated on page 26 of Arts PROPEL: An Introductory Handbook. The examples in Figure 2.12 show the kinds of poems students write in response to photographs.

Both of these sequences of activities are carried out in a workshop-like atmosphere. The teacher sets up each of the activities for the project and facilitates their progress by supplementing and adjusting them to meet the particular needs of the students in the class. The teacher also acts as mentor and coach, providing models and suggesting alternatives as needed, and responding to students' poems in terms that encourage them to develop appropriate criteria and standards for reading and writing poetry.

In addition to giving the students direct experience with writing poetry, the poetry domain projects help students become more perceptive readers of poetry. They put students in the situation of writers making choices about techniques to be tried and effects to be created. Having been in that situation and made choices of their own, students become more acutely aware that any published poem is really a record of choices on the part of its author. In this context, students begin to ask themselves why a poet in one line of a poem varied a pattern established in previous lines, or what the effect might be of including or excluding a particular detail in a description.

Developing Assessments that Capture Learning

A major challenge for the poetry domain projects was to develop a vocabulary and criteria that teachers could use in discussing and evaluating the full range of students' learning as writers and readers of poetry. We felt the need for a vocabulary that would go beyond familiar concepts like line, stanza, and image to help teachers conduct the small daily forms of assessment that come in asking questions, provoking revisions, or forging connections between poems that have been read and those that are being written. Similarly, we wanted criteria that could be used not only to evaluate student poems, but to shape reflection and assessment by teachers and students discussing what makes a particular poem strong, arresting, or memorable.

As a first step toward meeting that challenge, a small group of teachers and researchers examined a representative collection of students' list poems. In this process, teachers took the role of responsive readers, looking at each poem, first describing the qualities that made it strong and later on describing those that weakened it. Then, working together, researchers and teachers developed a common language for assessing student poetry by synthesizing different terms for the same qualities and making distinctions where general terms were being used for different qualities. Eventually, with discussion and refinement, the set of qualities seemed adequate for the purpose of looking at poems of sixth through twelfth graders, across all kinds of variation in topic, length, and technique. We identified qualities that fell into five categories:

1) specificity, concreteness, immediacy

2) movement, beginnings, endings, transitions

3) unity, wholeness

4) use of sound, sense of line

5) candidness, originality, surprise

As a next step we took on the challenge of finding out whether this language could effectively inform the judgments of a larger group of teachers, supervisors, and researchers. Working together, the full PROPEL writing team examined nearly 150 student poems across the sixth- to twelfth-grade range. We discussed the qualities identified earlier and shared examples of student poems exhibiting these qualities. Three independent readers then evaluated each poem on a four-point scale for each of the five categories. We were pleased to find that teachers could do more than assign a global score — they could recognize when a student's poem should receive high scores in some categories and lower scores on others. It became evident to us that, with the opportunity to discuss student work and to think through the dimensions of assessment, teachers could become thoughtful and discriminating assessors of students' work in imaginative writing.

From this work emerged the beginnings of a system of assessment built on teachers' perceptions of students' writing. Participating teachers found that the experience of looking together at student poems created among them a community of readers. In the evaluation sessions, the need to indicate a judgment about the quality of students' work meant the participants had to take risks, to put their heads and hearts on the line among fellow professionals. When teachers discovered that by and large they were neither too harsh nor too easy in their evaluations of student work, they became more confident not only in their role as assessors, but also as researchers investigating students' learning. Furthermore, they discovered in the discussions of the qualities exhibited in students' poems that each participant had insight to contribute and that each could learn from the others.

All participants felt that they came away from the poetry evaluation sessions knowing more about how to look at student work than they had known before. Teachers found that the experience sharpened their perceptions and informed their later conversations about poems with students in their classrooms. Clearly, the group evaluation and discussion of students' work was an important part of the teachers' on-going professional development.

But even assessment schemes benefit from assessment. It was critical to know, for instance, whether the qualities teachers and researchers had developed would be, in some larger sense, important to strong poetic writing. Consequently, we invited three poets experienced in teaching poetry writing in New York City schools and the director of Teachers and Writers Collaborative to meet with a small team of PROPEL teachers, supervisors, and researchers to discuss the list poem project, samples of student work, and the proposed assessment dimensions.

As a result of this meeting with poets, we developed an expanded vocabulary for evaluation, with seven major categories and a number of terms within each category. (See Figure 2.13) Many of the qualities named are similar to those to be found in the work of professional poets, although the poems of older and more professional writers might exhibit additional qualities not named in this vocabulary.

The qualities named in Figure 2.13 are taken from a series of discussions in which teachers and poets examined a variety of poems written by students engaged in the list poem activities. They are presented here as vocabulary that may be useful to teachers and students discussing the qualities exhibited in their own and one another's poems.

Similar qualities are grouped together for convenience in sorting. None of the qualities is in principle more important than the others, although some qualities will be more important than others to the success of a particular poem. No poem should be expected to exhibit all the qualities named here; in fact, some qualities are antithetical (for example, **conciseness and extension/expansion of metaphor**). The vocabulary simply names the many and various ways in which any particular list poem can succeed.

1. Concreteness — Exactness of language
   Specificity — Precision
   Vividness

2. Variety of details
   Variety in things named or experiences pointed to
   Resourcefulness in using the details of an experience
   Juxtaposition of things that are different without explicit transition or connection

3. Compactness — Intensity
   Condensation — Succinctness
   Conciseness

4. Continuity — Flow
   Movement — Consistent pursuit of an idea

5. Use of patterns of natural speech — Dynamics / drama
   Use of repetition — Rise and fall in structure
   Use of variation in pattern — Use of form integral to content or thinking
   Buildup and release of tension

6. Use of rhythm
   Use of line breaks for interest, movement, or integrity of ideas
   Use of patterns of vowels and/or consonants
   Use of rhyme

7. Playfulness — Use of language to surprise or reveal
   Humor — Extension or expansion of metaphor
   Leaps in scale of things named

And finally, qualities of students' behavior that are not necessarily observable in their poems but that have much to do with their learning from the experience of working with poems:
   Engagement
   Commitment
   Participation

Figure 2.13 Vocabulary for evaluation of list poems

What emerged is much more than an assessment scheme, or a rubric for scoring or grading student poems. Each category points to a major attribute of poetry written by sixth- to twelfth-grade students, while the terms within the category indicate various qualities that might contribute to that attribute. Thus, the assessment scheme is also a tool for teaching and for classroom discussion of many kinds of poems.

It is also a tool for helping students to become increasingly skilled critics of their own work. Figure 2.14 (below) shows how one student who wrote a large number of poems was able to reflect skillfully on his own work.

When I look back at my early poems, they were very basic in the beginning, they were all rhymed haiku because that is all I knew about before this. Then I experimented with going more with the feelings or ideas. My mom said don't kill yourself going over the rhymes, go with what you feel. I did that for 2 months. Then...that's now...I started compacting them, shortening them to make deeper meaning. Mostly about how much I cared and loved her. I could see that it would make more of a point, so I washed out the the's and and's and if's. Thirty-one is the one that comes out of that work. Now I am working on something different, sort of the morals. Like if one day her car broke down, I might write that night about how the fish got caught, or the feeling of not being able to swim. I am not trying to write like just how I feel, but metaphors I think that is what you call them ... about what happens for her to show her that I understand and that I notice and I care sort of more long distance since we broke off some. So it is like the feeling is like a curtain over all of it, or back of it. But I don't come right out and say I love her or miss her.

You see it's like you move along. Like every 10 poems I write a big one, I might spend like two or three pages on it. And then every 25 or so, I try to do something different. It's almost like a number set, in 25 poems I will get really good at something, or at least enough to get to 100, I should be able to add them all together, you know like do them all at once. (From Wolf, in press.)

Figure 2.14 A student reflects on his writing

The usefulness of these assessments becomes clear in looking at specific poems. Figure 2.15 shows one example, a poem from a Pittsburgh student, with a summary of comments made by the group of teachers and supervisors from Pittsburgh and poets from Teachers and Writers Collaborative discussing the poem. The categories and qualities for evaluating poems also guide teachers to possible dimensions of students' success with poems, giving even those teachers inexperienced in poetry writing a framework to shape their perceptions of student poems and a language for responding to student work. For example, a teacher might find that a student's poem is strong in two major respects: because it is concrete and because it presents a variety of details. In discussing the poem's concreteness with the student, she might point out instances in the poem in which the language is exact or precise and where it focuses on specific details. In discussing variety of detail, she might indicate that the student included details from a variety of experiences related to the subject of the poem.

Once the vocabulary has been developed for a particular kind of poem, it can shape the discussion of all teachers and students looking at similar poems. Examples of student poems accompanied by sample teacher comments are presented in Figure 2.16 to illustrate further how the qualities identified for list poems are perceived in student work.

It is exactly this kind of discussion that the teachers involved in Arts PROPEL have found to be among the most valuable experiences of the project. The group interaction around student work helps participating teachers to refine their own observations and to gather new insight from other teachers' perceptions. The evolution of a vocabulary for response and evaluation is a direct outcome of the group discussions among PROPEL teachers, but it also represents a major step toward informing the experience of teachers who have not been part of the project.

One of the major lessons to emerge from this experience is how important it is to begin and sustain a robust conversation about what matters in students' writing. That conversation is all the richer if it includes classroom teachers from a number of different grade levels, observers who can raise questions, and adult practitioners (like the poets) who can draw the connections between the dimensions used to evaluate skilled and expert work and those that teachers use for assessing student work.

Each group of participants made its distinctive contribution to the conversation about qualities to be valued in students' poems. Middle school teachers insisted, for example, on the importance of playfulness in the evaluation of student work. Several teachers across grade levels pointed out the value of qualities of student behavior such as engagement, commitment, and participation, even though these are invisible in final texts. In their turn, the poets urged teachers to fill out their descriptions of qualities with language drawing attention to specific technique and its effect.

In all, the teachers and poets believed that the poem shown in Figure 2.15 made good use of the listing or catalogue technique, but they suggested that the writer be encouraged to resist the impulse in the last two lines of the poem to suggest in effect that the events described are not real, that the experience is "only a dream" — an impulse all too common among young writers. However, they did acknowledge the possibility that the writer was attempting to get at the mental state of passing between wakefulness and dream.

WHY YOU HEAR NOISES AT NIGHT

It's the brown lady creeping,
My dog being murdered,
A burglar sneaking,
A mouse eating the last of the LIFE cereal,
A lock being broken,
My dad eating all the Ben & Jerry's,
A possessed pair of shoes walking down the stairs,
A mass murderer rapist who loves my wallpaper,
Or maybe it's the sandman
creeping into my head.

Looked at in the framework of the assessment, readers could pick out and agree on these strengths of the poem:

- the concreteness of detail in line 4 ("A mouse eating the last of the LIFE cereal")
- the exactness of the language ("LIFE cereal", "possessed shoes")
- the effective juxtaposition of ordinary domestic events and preternatural, fear-inspiring ones ("My dad eating all the Ben & Jerry's" and "a possessed pair of shoes walking down the stairs")
- effective movement through the poem, with a developing sense of drama
- intensity in the direct descriptions of real and imagined events
- playfulness and humor ("A mass murderer rapist who loves my wallpaper").

Figure 2.15 An example of assessment: "Why you hear noises at night"

Sample Student Poems and Teacher Comments

WHAT IF....

You were me
I was you
The world was flat
I was taking a bath and fell down the drain
My tears could fill an ocean
You got what you always wanted
I fell in a hole and landed in China
Your brother was an alien
We could fly and birds couldn't
My goldfish read me this poem.

Teacher comments: *The poem moves toward greater and greater preposterousness, and that's what this kind of poem is about. "You" and "I" alternate through the first six or seven lines, then the poem reaches out to include a brother ("we"), then birds and goldfish. At the end it brings us around to the poet and the poem. Nice movement and transitions. Good juxtaposition of dissimilar experiences and perceptions, "the world was flat" and "I was taking a bath," for example. The poem shows humor and playfulness. It also takes us through some unexpected turns as we move from line to line, as in "My tears could fill an ocean" and "you got what you always wanted."*

Figure 2.16

MY GODMOTHER

My godmother is fun
She calls her boyfriend 'hun'
She likes to spend money
She acts real funny
I hate it when she's mean
I love it when she's clean
She has a nice car
She drives it real far
She takes me to the park
She locks me in the dark
My godmother is nice
She does not have mice
I love my Godmother sweetly
Until she smothered me.

THINGS I REMEMBER

I remember:
the scabs on my knees, i remember
tripping, i remember
breaking my glasses, i remember
tearing my clothing, i remember
all those tears, i remember
screaming from pain, i remember
a big scrape on my leg with my
pants and a blurred black stain
I REMEMBER FORGETTING ALL
THIS.

Teacher comments: *The "scabs on my knees" in the second line seems to trigger a flashback, which is described in the rest of the poem. What we see from line to line takes us through a series of events, creating movement from beginning to end. The repetition of "i remember" suggests a kind of chant. I like it better at the end of the lines than I would at the beginning, because it makes for an interesting rhythm — it throws the reader into the next line. Breaking the pattern of "i remember" toward the end puts emphasis on the image of the scrape and the "blurred black stain," which is very strong. Also, the language in these lines is quite vivid and exact.* Somehow the last lines about forgetting are unexpected and interesting. In a way they make sense for a flashback.

I try to discourage students from using rhyme this way. They pay too much attention to getting a word to rhyme at the end of each line, and they don't think about what they're saying in the rest of the line. Still, I sense some commitment to the poem here, even with the humor and playfulness. The poet gets a rhythm going, with two beats per line on the average, and some variations. The language and the images are fairly concrete. And the poem suggests a dark side of the godmother that builds up and culminates in the last line.

Dreams come from
The songs leaves sing
The tales old frogs tell
The reflection of night clouds
The sparkling diamonds in the snow
The strike of 13
The world inside a mirror
and from
the echoes
of a lonesome heart.

Babies come from
open gates
cherry tree roots
next door neighbors
airplane wings
drowning fish
and from
baby factories.

Teacher comments: *This really seems like two separate poems. The section on dreams pursues a single idea; it seems complete with the "echoes of a lonesome heart." The next section has a different mood and focus. In the first three lines in each section, the language is very specific, very exact. These lines are also concise, condensed — a lot is said in a few words. Lines two and three in the first section make good use of sound with the s's and t's. There's good movement and continuity in this section. The end even brings us back a little to the beginning. The second section has a strong, hard rhythm — almost every word gets its own beat. And the language is vivid. I'm not so sure about the ending of the second section, but in the earlier lines there's some wild juxtaposition in the things named ("cherry tree roots" and "next door neighbors," "airplane wings" and "drowning fish"). I also see playfulness and surprise in these lines.*

COLD

Even in the summer there is cold everywhere
It comes from out of refrigerators and freezers
From a cold drink
From an ice cream cone
From jello
Out of air conditioned stores
From a stare
From a sharpened knife.

Teacher comments: *This poem is close to the "Night Rise" poem in many ways. But the student has found his own subject and his own poem. The poem has continuity as it moves from beginning to end; each of the specific things mentioned builds on the idea of hidden cold being revealed, and there's a progression from literal cold to metaphorical cold. The language is exact, and it describes fairly precisely. We get the sense of cold as something unpleasant or unnerving, especially at the end, which is quite effective — even "chilling."*

Integrating Poetry Domain Projects into Curriculum: High School

As the poetry domain projects were refined, the benefits of the approach to reading and writing developed in them provided the basis for creating similar projects in the district-wide program of high school curriculum and assessment, known as the Syllabus Examination Program (SEP). This effort to see that all students receive demanding instruction and assessment is built around units of curriculum; each unit is designed to deliver approximately four weeks of instruction at a specific grade level, as well as thoughtful assessment of students' learning.

The challenge for teachers and supervisors designing SEP curriculum and assessment is to present enough guidance and structure — thereby assuring comparable preparation for the assessment — and yet to allow enough flexibility so that teachers can adapt the curriculum to their own students' needs and their own teaching styles. After the Arts PROPEL poetry project was carefully translated into a sequence of SEP lessons, the lessons were field tested. Participating teachers and students responded to surveys gathering information about their reactions to the activities. On the basis of findings from the surveys and analysis of student work, the activities were further refined in another round of field testing and then presented to the remaining teachers and to all students in the district.

Through this process, the Arts PROPEL poetry project on the use of lists and catalogues eventually became the basis for the SEP poetry unit now presented to all tenth grade students in Pittsburgh each year. An especially interesting feature of the SEP unit is the use of a small-scale portfolio of poetry writing exercises and reflection as the final assessment. In this sequence of activities, students select a poem from the folder of poems they have written during the unit. They are then asked to decide whether or not to revise the poem and to explain in specific terms why they decided as they did. The students' explanations are scored holistically using a scoring rubric. The "mini-portfolio" from this sequence of activities replaces an earlier final assessment of a more traditional kind, one based on multiple-choice and essay responses to questions about published poems.

Integrating Poetry Domain Projects into Curriculum: Middle School

The experience of middle school teachers with the poetry domain projects suggested that specific adaptations were needed for younger students. Shorter, more flexible units of instruction suitable to the pace of the middle-school curriculum were needed to create access to poetry for students unfamiliar with its forms and techniques.

A small group of PROPEL middle-school language arts teachers consulted with supervisors and researchers to create a series of encounters introducing students to poetry. The conviction that students' experiences with poetry at this age should build on the immediacy of oral language and engage their sense of play led the group to focus on short, highly structured forms such as haiku and acrostics.

Over a period of a year, the group developed several poetry projects, for grades 6, 7, and 8. Like other PROPEL classroom projects, these integrated reflection and revision as part of the activities in which students engaged. The middle school poetry

projects were presented to and discussed by a larger group of teachers, piloted in middle school classrooms, and eventually made part of curriculum and assessment throughout the district.

In the middle-school poetry projects, teachers introduce students to a poetic form through oral reading and discussion around a number of example poems. The teachers also model the process of writing and revising a poem, illustrating the kinds of decisions the poet makes in giving shape to a poem. Students then write poems of their own, share them with one another, and revise. Students are encouraged to write several poems, from which they select one they consider most accomplished. They complete the series of activities by looking back at their work on the poem they have selected.

In the haiku project, for example, students write and revise four poems. They choose one poem to put into "publishable form" on a separate page. They reflect on the poem they have selected, answering one question about the poem itself and another about what they learned from working on it. Teachers and students evaluate the haiku work, taking into account not only the final product but the process of creating it.

The pages that follow show drafts and reflections written by a sixth-grade student for the haiku poetry project. Student revision is evident not only in the succession of drafts, but also in the material crossed out.

Draft Page

Name _____

Haiku #1

Draft 1

~~Snow kills the sun~~
~~Wind wips the trees~~
~~People fight winter~~

Draft 2

~~Snow falls to ground~~
~~#~~ and cools the ground

Haiku #2

Draft 1

~~Trees~~ tall Walls ~~of~~ water
braking like ~~a~~ glass

Draft 2

Tall walls of water
braking like glass

Draft Page

Name _____

Haiku #3

Draft 1

Moon light shines
off the water ~~like a~~
~~candle burning bright~~
not a ripple

Draft 2

Moon light shines
off the water ~~like a~~
~~candle burning bright~~
not a ripple

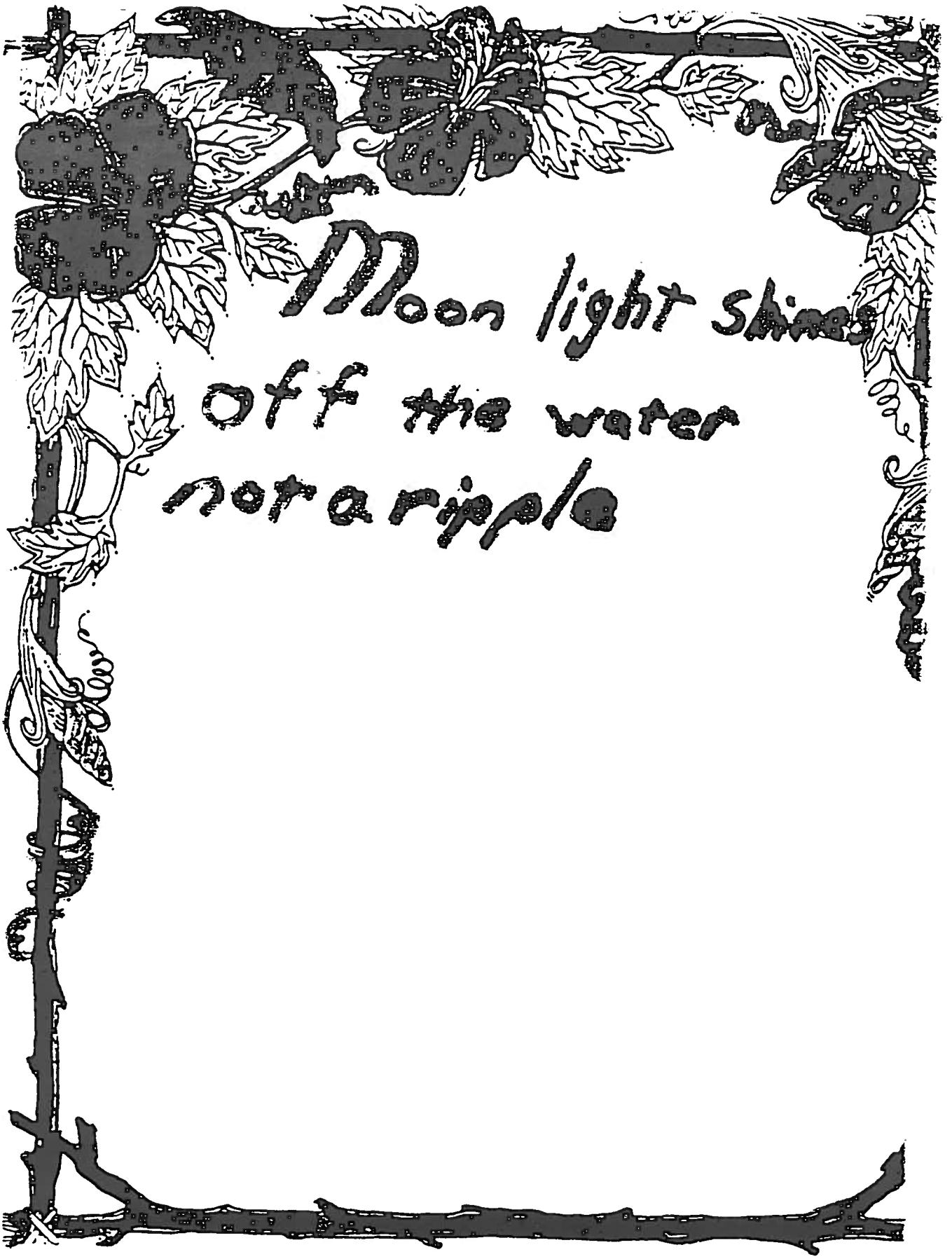
Haiku #4

Draft 1

Pizza
Peperonis cheese
anchovies yuk !

Draft 2

Pizza
Peperoni :cheese
anchovies yuck


Moon light shines
off the water
not a ripple

Reflection Page

Name _____

How does your haiku capture a moment in time?

It describes a split second that I think

What have you learned about writing from this piece?

you can write a simple poem that is descriptive

CHAPTER 3

DOMAIN PROJECTS: WRITING SCENES

A quick survey of language arts curricula reveals that often when playwriting is taught, it is used primarily as a tool to teach quotation marks in middle school or to understand a body of literature in high school. If this is so, why insist on anything else? Playwright Jonathan Levy argues that through experience with playwriting, students pick up habits of mind that belong to dramatic imagination. Specifically, says Levy, students develop from playwriting:

- *imagination of the moment and the ability to think in vivid instances*
- *habit of close observation of human behavior and details*
- *ability to think through and see through clichés*
- *ability to tell a story from the point of view of all characters involved*
- *ability to be concise and economical*

These skills, while they may emerge in writing dialogue, are essential in active reading, and are key to much good writing. Just as poetry writing teaches attention to the subtle workings of word choice, playwriting holds out the possibility of alerting students to voice, to innuendo and subtext, to the power of lean writing — skills that matter as much to a journalist as to a dramatist.

Moreover, many students are ripe for doing strong work as playwrights. While most middle and high school students have little or no exposure to theater (except through many hours of TV and film), they are not "blank slates" with regard to drama. Simply by virtue of their years of observing people and interpreting the real and often hidden meaning of words, actions, silences and inflections, these students already have a storehouse of images and understandings which comprise a significant part of the playwright's resources.

Our interest in playwriting presented several challenges:

1. The design of a curriculum that would encourage students to work thoughtfully and develop as young writers using materials and forms that were new to them.
2. The development of a model for teachers that would introduce them to the art of playwriting and sensitize them to the subtle indications of growth in novice playwrights;
3. The cultivation of assessment practices that would allow both students and teachers to recognize and trace students' learning.

The Playwriting Projects

Two playwriting projects grew out of the long-term work of an experienced high school teacher, Steve Seidel. His work as a teacher, actor, and director offered valuable insights into what it is like to write first scenes. In addition, we turned to colleagues from the theater, classroom teachers, and school administrators for expert guidance and support. Finally and most important, many students were essential and energetic collaborators in this work.

The drama projects, like all Arts PROPEL domain projects, are based on several assumptions about the teaching of writing: the importance of integrating production, perception, and reflection activities; the importance of opportunities for sustained encounters with central problems or concepts in a discipline; the importance of peer- and self-assessment; and the opportunity for discovering the importance of process through revision, experimentation, risk, failure, and discovery.

Like the poetry curriculum, the playwriting projects form a deliberate sequence: "Writing Dramatic Dialogues" and "Writing Dramatic Scenes." The sequence is designed to model how a playwright moves from simpler to more demanding issues in dramatic writing. Each project takes from two to three weeks of class time, although some teachers abbreviate or expand on the sequence of activities. The same domain projects can be used, with minor adaptations and modifications, by teachers from grade 6 through grade 12, with students from a wide range of background and abilities. There is no expectation that students will write whole plays or even one-act plays. Instead, they create a collection of dramatic pieces.

At the same time, however, each playwriting project provides students with the opportunity to build toward a portfolio of work with the support of classroom activities. On its own, each project models how the processes of reading, writing, reflection and assessment become integral parts of playwriting. Together the two domain projects present novice writers with increasingly demanding playwriting challenges. In this way, the playwriting domain projects provide a critical link between the poetry domain projects and the creation of larger, more diverse portfolios of work.

Project 1: Writing Dramatic Dialogues

The first sequence, "Writing Dramatic Dialogues," is built on the idea that dialogues are always set in a particular time and place and that any two characters have a relationship. The sequence begins with a production activity: students write a brief dialogue as a class. By using their ear for conversation, students create short fragments of dialogues a line at a time with individual students alternately contributing to each dialogue. They then move to working with partners and later to writing alone. Below is a sample lesson, the second lesson from the first playwriting project.

SECOND PLAYWRITING PROJECT LESSON

This session begins with another dialogue writing exercise. This time, however, students write in pairs, each creating the words (lines) for one of the characters. Once each pair has established some basic elements of their scene (setting, time, characters and relationships), they are able to discover the rest of the scene through writing and without talking. The two students pass the paper back and forth, each time reading what the other has written for their character and then writing the response of their own character. They try to write approximately ten lines of dialogue together.

1) Collaborate to Write Scenes with Two Characters

At the start of this session, students choose partners for writing and hand out lists of different settings and times. In their pairs, students look over these lists and choose a time and a setting which they agree are interesting and pleasing to imagine. The "where" and "when" of a scene are crucial elements of a dramatic situation. The choice of vivid and compelling settings and times which are evocative of particular moods or feelings is a major aspect of the challenge of playwriting. It can be a source of great stimulation to the imagination of the writer while enriching the whole scene. The characters we create, like ourselves, are affected by all aspects of their environment (weather, noise, other peoples' moods, etc.) and the more we know (imagine clearly) about these environments, the more we understand the conditions of our characters' lives.

It is in clearly imagining particular places at particular times that students can begin to picture who might be in their scene and what might be going on. If, in their pairs, students choose a time and place but cannot imagine any characters in that environment, they may need to go back to the lists and make some new choices. If they remain stuck, they may be helped by taking a few minutes to describe the time and place they imagine in as much detail as they possibly can to each other.

The goal is for students to identify two characters they can imagine in the chosen place and time. Partners discuss whether these characters knew each other before this scene and if so, what their relationship has been. They choose names for their characters. For most students these decisions should come pretty easily and quickly. For some, it will be more difficult and may require a little coaching.

There are several things to keep in mind when facing a writing pair that can't start writing. They may, as suggested above, have made an unpromising choice of setting and time. They may simply need to articulate what they can imagine about these places in order to get their imaginations synchronized. They may, on the other hand, be experiencing some difficulty in their relationship with each other. We are asking them to collaborate on an imaginative activity, which is not always an easy process—especially if one or both of the partners are not very confident about their writing or their use of imagination.

There may be good reason for these students to lack confidence in collaborating, writing, or imagining. They may not have been asked to practice these activities very often in their schooling, and so they may feel awkward at this moment when all three are required. On the other hand, these are all extremely satisfying activities presented in very manageable proportions for most students. A little coaching is usually all that is necessary to get partners on their way. Asking what they have established and where they have become stuck, listening to their descriptions of setting and time, and encouraging each of the partners to respond to what the other has presented are effective ways of helping these students connect imaginatively and overcome some of the shyness and awkwardness they may be feeling.

Once the characters have been established, the partners are to write a brief description of the setting and the time of the scene at the top of the page. Then they begin to write what they imagine these characters are saying to each other in this setting. They pass the paper back and forth and usually don't need to talk about what they are going to write. They try to avoid planning where the scene is going to go. They simply respond, in character, to whatever the other has written, line by line.

2) Read the Scenes Aloud

The goal is for each pair to write about ten lines of dialogue in approximately twenty minutes. At this point, everyone stops their writing and the teacher explains that they are not expected to have finished their scenes. In fact, their scenes will be open and growing.

Students read their scenes aloud while the group listens. All the scenes are read before there is any discussion. They are reminded again that they are representing people talking to each other and that they should try to talk and listen to each other and, as much as possible, look at each other.

3) Discussion

The intention is the same for this discussion as for previous discussions—to encourage students to accurately describe what they visualized as they heard the scenes read aloud; to practice identifying the places in a dialogue where specific images are suggested; and to begin to understand the connections between the text, the imagination of the writer, and the imaginations of the reader/listeners.

The instructions are, in brief, to choose one of the scenes to start with, and then:

- Ask students to describe the scene in as much detail as possible.
- Ask whether there is agreement on the descriptions.
- Whenever there is a question or disagreement over the details of a description, ask the describer to point out exactly where or when in the dialogue they got the idea of that detail.

4) Before the Class Is Over

All of the scenes are collected.

Everyone is encouraged to do more writing on their own or with others. They could work on a continuation of any of the scenes already begun or on new ones. They are encouraged to share any new writing they do with the class.

When responding to their new writing, judgmental comments on the quality of the work are avoided. It is too early in their experience as playwrights to judge issues of quality. At this point quality is of far less concern than their feelings about what they are doing.

At the teacher's suggestion, students may begin to keep a journal or notebook of "ideas"— where and how they got the ideas and images for scenes they have written and a collection of new ideas for scenes to be written in the future. This kind of reflection on past work and stockpiling for new works is an essential aspect of any artist's on-going process. It is an attempt to understand one's imaginative processes, to value one's creative impulses and ideas, and to track the path of an idea from conception to realization.

The goal of this first playwriting project is to encourage students to engage their imaginations, by choosing dramatic situations and working with partners to create dialogues. As with any PROPEL domain project, reflective and perceptual skills and habits of mind are interwoven with production activities. Almost every class session features writing followed by reading aloud.

In discussions, students are called on to find evidence for the choices they make about setting, character, and relationship. Fragments of scenes from published plays are introduced as a way of enhancing students' understanding of dialogue and their range of writing options. Figure 3.1, for instance, contains an excerpt from Carson McCullers' "The Member of the Wedding," which is presented by some PROPEL teachers for this purpose. Figure 3.2 illustrates how one teacher, Carolyn Olasewere, uses it to spark a discussion of how scenes work (from Wolf & Pistone, 1991, pp. 20-22).

At the end of the project, students re-read their collection of dialogues and write observations of and reflections about their writing: what they liked and didn't, where they found surprises, and what they noticed. Thus, by the end of the first project, students create a small collection of dialogues and written reflections — the beginnings of a playwriting portfolio.

Excerpt from "The Member of the Wedding" by Carson McCullers

BERENICE: Come on. Don't act like that.

FRANKIE *[her voice muffled]:* They were so pretty. They must have such a good time. And they went away and left me.

BERENICE: Sit up. Behave yourself.

FRANKIE: They came and went away, and left me with this feeling.

BERENICE: Hosee! I bet I know something. *[She begins tapping with her heel: one, two, three—bang! After a pause, in which the rhythm is established, she begins singing.]* Frankie's got a crush! Frankie's got a crush! Frankie's got a crush on the *wedding!*

FRANKIE: Quit!

BERENICE: Frankie's got a crush! Frankie's got a crush!

FRANKIE: You better quit! *[She rises suddenly and snatches up the carving knife.]*

BERENICE: You lay down that knife.

FRANKIE: Make me. *[She bends the blade slowly.]*

BERENICE: Lay it down, Devil. *[There is a silence]* Just throw it! You just!

[After a pause Frankie aims the knife carefully at the closed door leading to the bedroom and throws it. The knife does not stick in the wall.]

FRANKIE: I used to be the best knife thrower in this town.

BERENICE: Frances Addams, you goin' to try that stunt once too often.

Figure 3.1

FRANKIE: I warned you to quit pickin' with me.

BERENICE: You are not fit to live in a house.

FRANKIE: I won't be living in this one much longer; I'm going to run away from home.

BERENICE: And a good riddance to a big old bag of rubbage.

FRANKIE: You wait and see. I'm leaving town!

BERENICE: And where do you think you are going?

FRANKIE *[gazing around the walls]:* I don't know.

BERENICE: You're going crazy. That's where you going.

FRANKIE: No. *[solemnly]* This coming Sunday after the wedding, I'm leaving town. And I swear to Jesus by my two eyes I'm never coming back here any more.

BERENICE *[going to Frankie and pushing her damp bangs back from her forehead]:* Sugar? You serious?

FRANKIE *[exasperated]:* Of course! Do you think I would stand here and say that swear and tell a story? Sometimes, Berenice, I think it takes you longer to realize a fact than it does anybody who ever lived.

BERENICE: But you say you don't know where you going. You going, but you don't know where. That don't make no sense to me.

FRANKIE *[after a long pause in which she again gazes around the walls of the room]:* I feel just exactly like somebody has peeled all the skin off me. I wish I had some good cold peach ice cream. *[Berenice takes her by the shoulders.]*. . . But every word I told you was the solemn truth. I'm leaving here after the wedding.

Classroom Discussion of "The Member of the Wedding"

Events start in the middle. The talk is about unknown events; it is tight with innuendo. Students resist jumping in midstream:

"Who is Berenice? I can't tell."

"Is Frankie a boy or a girl?"

"I don't get what she means here. What's going on?"

But Olasewere is intent:

> Slow down. There are clues. What is Berenice saying to Frankie? What kind of person would say that to her? There are clues. You tell me. You eavesdrop on people all the time.

As the students discuss the dialogue, Olaseware pushes them to bring to their interpretation everything they know. . . Then she asks them to read the dialogue. . .

She pushes them to use everything they know as conversationalists and listeners. Finally, Olasewere asks students to read the dialogue aloud as a way of proving their guesses about Berenice, Frankie, and the emotional traffic between them. With this assignment, students are thrust into performing. They have to raise their voices where Frankie is angry and petulant, they have to pause, swallow, or look out the window when her sadness and loss come to the surface. Several different pairs read, giving different versions of Frankie and Berenice. Olasewere picks out differences in the small, almost invisible gestures and contours of their performances:

> Olasewere: How come we have two different Frankie's?
>
> Eesha: It just happened.
>
> Marcus: No, I think she was angry, she hated the wedding, or whatever it was.
>
> Olasewere: How can you tell?
>
> Marcus: The stuff she does with the knife.
>
> Jauneline: No, she's sad. Everyone's gone. She's left. The knife stuff is just covering up.
>
> Olasewere: Is one right?

From this kind of reading students take away a better understanding of drama as a kind of blueprint or score that can be played in many different ways.

Figure 3.2

Project II: Writing Dramatic Scenes

In the second playwriting project, "Writing Dramatic Scenes," students learn to bring a dramatic situation to a point of completion or temporary resolution. In this way, the sequence presents students with challenges more demanding than those of the first project, and so models the process of artistic development. The sequence also takes up the processes of revision, experimentation, and rehearsal as playwrights' tools. In it, students think about developing the characters and conflicts, not forcing resolutions, but finding the logical sequence of actions and behaviors that brings to life this moment in the characters' lives.

Students begin by choosing one of the dialogues from their playwriting portfolio as a starting point for further development. During this project, students write at least two complete scenes. In addition, they work in groups to rehearse each others' scenes and prepare them for presentation to the class. There is time for revision after each rehearsal. At several points, the class reads and discusses whole scenes from published plays. Two lessons from the second project appear below.

SECOND PLAYWRITING PROJECT LESSON: Beginning To Find Endings

In most cases, this second sequence of lessons in playwriting is taught after a break following the first sequence of lessons. If that break is of any length it is important to allow students some time to get back into the spirit and practice of playwriting. This lesson begins with an opportunity for students to remember the work they did in the first project and to consider that work as a starting point for the work of the second project. As in the experience of any playwright, we want this project to reflect that all writing grows out of and refers in some way to the earlier work of the writer. Consciously or unconsciously, new work often grows in reaction to previous work. The sense of success or failure in earlier work often determines what kind of directions and risks a writer will take in his next work.

Students are given their work folders from the first playwriting project and asked to re-read all of their previous work including the reflection they wrote at the end of the project. They consider whether their choice of a favorite piece still holds as they re-read their work now. Does anything surprise them about their earlier work? Are they pleased by what they read or displeased? Proud or embarrassed? Do they have any new insights or thoughts about this early work? The group engages in a brief discussion of these questions, and then students write a new reflection entry noting some of their observations about their earlier work. In addition, they choose one scene which they feel would be interesting to develop. Presumably this scene does not have an ending.

To introduce students to the idea that they will work on developing dialogues into scenes with starting points and ending points, copies of a short dialogue are handed out. Volunteers read the dialogues aloud once or twice, and then the class brainstorms as many possible directions for the scene as they can come up with. Students are encouraged to express their ideas as opinions about what these characters might do and how the scene might develop. They are asked to consider what might happen that would be an ending point for the scene. By following their ideas for how this situation

might develop to a conclusion, students get an opportunity to try out the process they will be practicing in their writing throughout this sequence.

If there is time, students are asked to take the scene they have chosen for further development and identify the point at which they would pick up on the action to continue the dialogue. Many will choose to pick up at the last line they wrote but everyone should see that they can choose any moment to interrupt the dialogue and continue in a new direction. They may, for example, have put a sudden ending on their early scene which, if edited out, would leave the action of the scene at a very interesting point with lots of possibilities for new developments.

A short time at the end of the period is left to hand out the **Playwriting Work Logs**, in which students can enter brief notes on choices and accomplishments, problems and discoveries at the end of each class session. If students learn to use these logs, they can be of equal use to the teacher as a way of looking in quickly on what the students are up to and how they feel their work is going. (At first, students may not have much idea how to make good use of this log. Occasionally reading aloud some particularly thoughtful entries may help students see how best to use the log.)

SECOND PLAYWRITING PROJECT LESSON: Starting All Over Again

In this lesson students start work on a new scene. They are faced with the problem now of where to find their ideas for this new dramatic work. In a number of ways, this moment is an opportunity to see what kind of changes have occurred since the beginning of the first project. Students may have generated a variety of ideas that will emerge now as possible starting points for a new scene. Perhaps they will try something very different from anything they have done before or perhaps they will return to ideas they worked with earlier and are ready to return to now.

In any case, it would be wonderful if every student quickly created new characters, situations, and settings to write scenes about. Of course, some students will need help or coaching from the teacher. They may need to only be reminded of the sources of their earlier ideas and may then move right into their new work.

Some students may have further difficulties choosing a starting point for a new scene. This trouble may indicate the student's continuing lack of comfort or confidence with her imagination. It could also suggest that the student is struggling on a different level now with choices of the content of her dramas. Most likely, students will have become more sensitive to the potential power of dramatic writing. Inevitably, though, for some students the awareness of this potential will create a sense of responsibility, a feeling that what they write must honestly and thoroughly reflect what they know and feel about their subject. This perception is not surprising or inappropriate, but it can be crippling. While acknowledging the seriousness of the young playwright's sensibility, we want to encourage these writers to trust their instincts, take chances, and retain the sense of fun that they may have experienced in the first playwriting "exercises."

Time permitting, everyone reads their scenes to the class. Discussion of the questions from the previous lessons is useful ("What catches your attention in this scene?" "What questions does the scene create in your mind?"). Again, students are

reminded to make notes in their **Playwriting Work Logs.**

In the second project, reflection becomes a daily event, with brief entries into a playwriting log forming an on-going account of choices and thoughts. During and after rehearsals, students respond to the work of their peers. The project concludes with students reviewing their expanded playwriting portfolios, which now include dialogues, scenes, and log entries. Using these materials, they assess their own growth and learning. The daily practice of reflection— both formal and informal— represents a significant shift in students' roles as learners. They've taken on the responsibility of self-assessment. At the same time, students take on the role of critical audiences for each other's playwriting. After watching in-class performances of scenes, they offer reactions and comments. For example, Figure 3.3 presents a student's scene that has gone through this process.

"Working for a Hard Boss"

Scene: Construction site 2 P.M.. Friday. It's a hot day and Rodger, Mrs. Benson's ex-son-in-law, is laughing and joking with his friends.

MRS. BENSON: Wilson, get your behind over here!

RODGER: What do you want Ms. Benson? I am a little busy.

MRS. BENSON: [Shouting *from her office door.]* When I say get over here, snap to it!

RODGER: *[All the men look at him and he's embarrassed]* Who do you think you are? I am getting a little tired of you talking to me like a kid in the street.

MRS. BENSON: You good for nothing punk. As long as you're my employee you will do anything I want. In fact, you're suspended for today. No money today, Buddy.

RODGER: You think you can get away with this stuff cause you are a woman. *[Clenching his fists.]* If you weren't a woman I would knock that dumb look off your face.

MRS. BENSON: Just shut the door when you leave Rodger and you're also fired. You will receive your last check in the mail.

RODGER: Guess what? I'm already going to start a new job tomorrow.

MRS. BENSON: Just get out of my office Rodger now and I mean now! *[He laughs as he walks out of the door.]*

RODGER: Don't come crawling on your hands and knees asking me to come back when this place comes down around that silly little head of yours. [Smiling.] I'll call you; don't call me.

MRS. BENSON: I see why I never liked you. You're a brainless fool!

RODGER: Stop acting like a kid. What difference does it make if you like me? Grow up, I don't like you either, but I do my Job. I won't work for you, ex-boss!

MRS. BENSON: Get out or I will throw you out myself!

RODGER: Real big ex-boss picking on a little employee like me. *[Slamming the door hard and loud.]*

Figure 3.3

The scene didn't come this far just through paper and pencil editing or contemplation. In part, it became as tense and as particular as it did because the writer moved from the roles of play-reader and playwriter, to the position of director. He cast two classmates as Rodger and Ms. Benson. And then another two, and then another two. As he watched, he learned how he thought Rodger ought to stand and then cross the yard and what Ms. Benson might do as she hollered across to him. He heard Rodger's sentence, "I am a little busy" come out as level, as sneering, and as fierce. He decided on the level version, so that Ms. Benson's following shout could sound abrupt and so that Rodger could be genuinely embarrassed in front of his co-workers. That way Rodger's reply ("Who do you think you are?"), could be indignant. As the student worked through these decisions, he discovered implications as subtle as those that bind the steps of any argument or experiment. He sensed many possibilities he hadn't thought of before. He saved them, marking his copy, almost as a musician might mark a score.

Several weeks later, a group of students read his most recent draft. They caught the movement from joking to surprise, to indignation, to fight. But they still had suggestions:

Student 1: It goes too fast. I want to know what he did, just enough so I can tell how bad he really is.

Student 2: How come he already has a job all picked out? That doesn't go with him being surprised. Is he just faking?

Student 3: What are the other guys doing?

Student 4: No, no — he could be in line for pay, and when he gets up to her, she starts in.

These student-critics went at the script, independent of their teacher. They had begun to understand the way particular details of speech and action work in theater. But equally important, they had learned something about what it is to work as a critical audience. Such work inevitably involves a chorus of opinions — no two actors play Rodger the same way, no two readers appraise the text in identical ways. These students were beginning to understand that assessment is a matter of offering informed judgments, not simply a matter of marking the number correct (Wolf & Pistone, 1991, pp. 23-24).

Assessment in Playwriting: The Hard Work of Self-Assessment

A student like the author of "Working for a Hard Boss" is being asked to do what playwrights do: read the reviews, think, and then make his own decisions. His work illustrates how our approach to assessment in Arts PROPEL was primarily concerned with a problem drawn from the work and development of professional playwrights: the problem of self-assessment and the ability to make choices directing one's own growth and development. The primary goal of these efforts was to help students become accomplished judges of quality and growth in writing by helping them to look carefully at their own work, to make judgments about that work, and finally to choose new challenges, new directions, and new projects. It is absolutely essential that students be given the opportunity to exercise and nurture these skills.

If a significant part of the work of students is to become thoughtful judges of their own writing, then the role of teachers is to become accomplished coaches of the process of self-assessment. Teachers become responsible for listening, observing, noticing, guiding, questioning, encouraging, and challenging their students to become sophisticated judges of their own and others' work. This kind of awareness requires a trained clinical eye. The special challenge of the work is the simultaneous need to address teachers' inexperience in the realm of dramatic arts and to capitalize on the wealth of professional experience they bring to the task of teaching. They are, at one moment, novices and experts. As with students, failure to support teachers' endeavors or value their wisdom jeopardizes the enterprise.

Features for Promoting Self-assessment: Mini-portfolios and Reflections

Two features of the drama projects are crucial to teaching students to be wise critics and teachers to be strong coaches for self-assessment. These are: 1) the development of mini-portfolios as a vehicle for learning what it is to "think as a writer," and 2) the practice of reflection.

O *Mini-portfolios*

During the course of the drama projects, students put together a body of their own work— dramatic dialogues and scenes. In addition, they are asked to keep a folder of all their notes, log entries, and reflections from this work. The resulting mini-portfolios are intended to be used as part of the daily work of writing plays — students are constantly returning to earlier work to extend it, revise it, or draw from it. In this sense, the mini-portfolios provide a forum for students to reflect on their work and progress and to bring their writing to an audience beyond their classroom teacher. As students review their body of work, they begin an investigation of their own understandings, development, and engagement with important problems and questions. As they consider quality in their own and others' work, they become sophisticated judges. And as they share their work and discover that what they write can affect other people— peers, parents, or strangers— they begin to see writing as a powerful form of communication.

O *Playwriting logs and the practice of reflection and self-assessment*

One way to encourage students' ability to make discriminations is through the practice of reflection and self-assessment. In the drama projects, students are encouraged to look at their own writings as a world to enter and explore— searching for intentions, developments, accidents, accomplishments, and new directions. This kind of exploration is new to most students and must be practiced regularly, in a variety of forms and settings.

For instance, in the first playwriting project students are encouraged to make discriminations about quality work through frequent and open discussions of published works and works from their peers. These discussions are first attempts to understand

what makes one piece of writing effective and another boring. These conversations are seen as the critical foundation for the practice of reflection and self-assessment.

In the second sequence, playwriting logs complement discussions. Students make brief, daily entries into their logs, naming choices they made such as whether to return to an old piece of writing or move to a new piece, whether to revise a passage or seek a new approach. Teachers are also encouraged to keep their own logs and journals about their students' learning or their teaching. In class discussions, students share log entries and excerpts as starting points for conversations about the work of writing plays; teachers may also share thoughts and reflections from their journals. Figures 3.4-3.6, for instance, show two students and a teacher reflecting on their work in playwriting.

Classroom discussions in the project focused on the same questions that reflective writing might address— questions about what it means to get better as a writer, strategies for improvement, questions about quality and effect and intent. These discussions serve as models for students of thoughtful, critical and open consideration of the process and products of their writing.

In addition, in each project, there are formal moments for reflection on all of the works done over a period of time. Students are asked to capture what strikes them as surprising about the writing they have done, to share any insights they have about the process by which these pieces of writing were produced, and to attempt to picture developments and growth in their work. These reflections are crucial for documenting students' evolving understandings about the complex work of writing plays.

Reflection is not simple work. Students may struggle with the unfamiliar task of articulating what they see and learn from their writing. No matter how brief or inarticulate reflections may seem to be, they should not be considered insignificant. Students are sharing their best attempts to come to grips with the quality of their writing and their responsibility to know, own, and talk about their work. Over time, students will identify pieces they like and pieces they are frustrated with; they will articulate what they were trying to accomplish or how they assess their success, and they will discuss moments where they were striving for something new and how they feel they met that challenge. The value of the insights these comments provide for those who read students' work— at the end of the term, the year, or beyond— will be commensurate with the care those readers bring to their task.

The regular practice of reflection and self-assessment and the use of mini-portfolios in the classroom are crucial foundations for more extended portfolio work in language arts classrooms. Mini-portfolios and the practice of reflection set the stage for a rigorous investigation of students' development and engagement with important problems and questions, and they enhance students' ability to consider the quality of their own work.

The Playwriting Domain Projects: Teachers as Assessment Coaches

The playwriting domain projects also provided an opportunity to think about how teachers become acute observers of student growth. Our task was to identify the ideas, skills and understandings growing in students as they practiced writing scenes and dialogues. To this end, we developed assessment guidelines to complement the

A Student's Reflections

November (Written after reading an excerpt from Raisin in the Sun in class.)

I pictured a young man about 20 talking to his mother. It seems like they're hicks. Like they live in their old beat down, screen-door barn. Walter's mother doesn't want him to leave home. She don't want to lose him. He wants to go out on his own and start his own living. Sort of like "Sanford & Son." Walter wants to go off and start a business with Will Harris. His mother is scared. She's getting old and she's real insincere. The scene is taking place in their old house early in the morning. They probably got up early to go do chores. Walter is mad. Mother doesn't want him to go and also upset or sad because he knows he has to. This warm summer morning he'll probably go to Willis and tell him he'll go with him. Also he'll assure his mother that he will stop back to visit her.

It's important as a writer to picture the scene because it makes the story better. It gives it a real life image. Just making characters and lines without a picture of the setting just wouldn't fit. The story would be weak.

March (Written after the student reviewed his folder from the first drama sequence)

Nothing I write is serious. I'm pleased with what I read. I had some good dialogues. They were pretty funny. I'm very proud of what I wrote. I feel my dialogues were some of the funniest in the class.

April (an excerpt from the student's log)

What do I need to think about? Well, first of all, my scene must appeal to the audience. The audience must like my scene. Also, I have to please myself with it. I'm not gonna just write something because I think others will like it. I must like it to. It would be good to write about past experiences. A real life situation. My scene must be actable. I have to be able to act it out, put some humor in my scene. I need real life characters. No fairy tale dialogues. There should be tension between the characters.

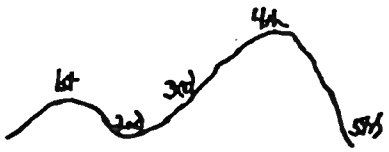
May (Excerpts from the student's final reflection)

My approaches changed but my style always stayed the same. I've tried to be humorous the whole sequence. In the beginning, I thought of the most ridiculous scenes. I tried anything to be funny and now that I look back on it, it was weak....Now when I write scenes I always try to do them real-life and be humorous at the same time....A playwright has a tough job. It's not easy to come up with a good scene....If I knew someone just starting to write plays, my advice would be: Write about real-life experiences. Have solid characters, don't make their attitudes change line-by-line. Try to be funny. Have some conflict or tension. And most important is to have fun. Just relax and have a lot of fun doing the scenes. Also keep the audience in mind. Write a scene to please yourself and also one that will please your audience.

Figure 3.4

A Student's Reflections

I feel like my writing has formed a little, like this.



I was writing good, to my standards, then it started lacking ~~what~~ what I thought made it good. Then I started climbing again, this time greater than my first one. Finally, my last dialogue was terrible.

Figure 3.5

A Teacher's Reflections

I really believe that reflection is the key that allows the teacher to unlock the picture of students' growth. You can see some change in their writing, but to get the total picture, you must have their reflections. And this is what really opens up the dimensions for assessment to a much broader range of skills that may not have been in your lesson plans. It's more complicated than grading. You see in grading we often tend to think in terms of "the facts;" did they do the assignment, do they have the proper heading, is it neat. Those are the facts and we assign A, B, C, or D. But the way we've been talking about assessment, it's not about the facts, it's about learning skills. In the drama project, we are assessing skills and abilities of students understanding of a particular art form. You have to accept whatever lesson comes out for the student—and that may not be in your handbook. Be ready for surprises. When students are doing all this writing and they have all of these reflections, they have created a body of work that they can identify with. There's no predicting where these new understandings may take them or you.

Figure 3.6

sequences. Through the presentation and discussion of representative samples of first efforts at playwriting, we analyzed the qualities that early student work may exhibit. What follows are excerpts from the guidelines, a set of questions to ask about student writing and reflection, and observations about an example of student work.

Key Questions For Students' Dialogue Writing

What evidence do you notice in this scene that students are working to establish

- *setting and time?*
- *clearly drawn characters and their relationships?*
- *conflicts and problems between characters?*

What evidence to you see that students are developing

- *an engaging opening?*
- *the believable unfolding of events?*
- *"true" endings?*

How about evidence concerning the inner life of characters?

- *implied history*
- *the unspoken*
- *conflicts and problems within characters*

What evidence do you see that indicates the engagement of the writer?

- *something to say*
- *chosen challenges*

What evidence do you notice that the student is aware of the possibilities and limitations of stage performance?

- *stageworthiness*
- *development of the script through rehearsal*

Key Questions for Assessing Student's Reflections

- *How does the student seem to have more to say about his or her work over time?*
- *How do the entries become more specific?*
- *How does the student ever make comparisons between one day's work and another's? Can he or she make varying judgments of the work?*
- *How does the student ever make observations about the nature of the genre in which he or she is working?*
- *How are emotional qualities ever expressed (likes, dislikes, frustration, boredom, joy, pride)?*
- *How does the student ever write about new ideas for things to try in the future?*

This approach to assessment relies on teachers' ability to respond to and critique student efforts. It is in this respect that teachers act as coaches.

The kind of learning we are talking about— the gradual construction of new ideas, the emergence of deeper understandings and the development of skills— is often quiet rather than dramatic. In an ideal world, it is good to look at student writing (look, not correct) daily. At wider intervals — once a week, or once in ten days — it is important to read a student's work in greater depth, talking, reacting, and making comments.

What exactly do we consider as evidence of students' accomplishments in writing? The drama team looked for evidence, not just in finished products, but in students' successive revisions, their reflections, their perceptions and participation in classroom activities. The result of these careful looks should be an informed and detailed picture of the kinds of knowledge students have been constructing. Through identifying specific evidence of students' learning, teachers develop new strategies for challenging and supporting students in their efforts to become better writers.

Example of Dialogue Written in Pairs

The scene in Figure 3.7 was among those written by students in a playwriting workshop using the PROPEL seven session sequence of dialogue writing exercises. Written in the fifth session, it shows the progress these students have made from their first efforts at writing dialogues. No longer are the characters "disembodied voices." The writers are imagining whole characters. They have also begun to write with a sense of creating a dramatic structure to their scene, incorporating a simple but clear narrative.

These two students had not written together before this class. The setting was taken from the list of suggestions and seemed to be enough to start them off writing. They wrote without stop and, it seemed, with little planning or conversation for the entire 25-minute writing time.

An Example of a Dialogue Written in Pairs

Who: Two friends

Where: Neighborhood Park. After School; 2:00 P.M.

Characters: Nancy and Kayla

Nancy: *[Running after Kayla]* Kayla, hold on! You're walking too fast. I'm run..... I'm running out of breath.

Kayla: Well, Jesus Christ, you walk so slow. I'm in a hurry. I've got to see "One Life to Live."

Nancy: "One Life to Live." Oh brother. That's what's making you walk like that? "Days of our Lives" is the best.

Kayla: Hah! I got no time for comparisons. I could be missing that special moment when Cord kisses Tina and Max.... Nancy, what are you doing?

Nancy: Look.....Kayla, look. It's your boyfriend with Linda Thompson.

Kayla: Where?

Nancy: They went into the Pizza Shop. *[Grabbing Kayla.]* Let's go!

Kayla: Oh no! I ain't goin' in there. What if he sees me?

Nancy: So. Don't you want him to see you?

Kayla: Are you crazy! He could just dump me right on the spot.... in front of Linda.

Nancy: Are you nuts? What does Linda have that you don't?

Kayla: Money, a car, boys, a banking account, Derrick.... shall I continue?

Nancy: OK. So she has more things than you. But are you going to let her keep Derrick?

(This is as far as they wrote in the time they had to write.)

Figure 3.7

Some Observations on This Dialogue

The first student, writing in the role of Nancy, has started the scene right in the middle of a physical action, and that action is reflected in the dialogue. Even if she hadn't written the stage direction "(running after Kayla)," we would have been able to figure out that Nancy had been chasing Kayla from her opening line. She not only tells us that she is out of breath but, even more effectively, she tries to capture the halting speech of someone who is breathless.

Three lines later, Kayla stops in mid-speech to see why Nancy has stopped walking or moved away from her. It's unclear whether the two students discussed this turn of events or not. It is a sophisticated writing choice to have Kayla see Nancy stop and not know why she has stopped. She has endowed her character with sight and something to see but has not felt an obligation to tell us in her dialogue exactly what is going on at every moment. She is depicting this action as it might actually happen.

Whether this development in the scene was planned or not, it is a very well executed example of the "something unusual happens" process of story building. In this process, a story begins with a relatively common or everyday situation. In this case, two girl friends are on their way home from school debating the merits of their favorite soap operas. And then "something unusual happens" and the story is really on its way. In this case, the unusual is the discovery of Kayla's boyfriend, Derrick, with another girl.

The two students managed to establish quickly and clearly that these girls have completely different ideas about how to handle this nightmarish discovery of the unfaithful boyfriend. They leave plenty of room for an interesting on-stage struggle between the friends, avoiding a shift in the focus of the scene to off-stage concerns—in this case, the boy, the new girl, and the potential confrontation.

Collaborative Assessment Conferences

The design of the Collaborative Assessment Conferences grew out of the work of the Arts PROPEL drama team—the teachers and researchers who focused on planning and evaluating experiments in teaching and assessing playwriting. The conferences became an invaluable tool in helping each team member expand his or her understandings of the wide range of qualities that may contribute to the success of student-written dramas, the many ways in which young people enter into writing short dramas, and the countless problems they set for themselves in attempting to become effective playwrights.

The goal of these conferences is to help teachers see more in the work their students produce—more of the seriousness, accomplishments, intentions and thematic concerns. Perhaps the central question these conferences are designed to address through the careful and collaborative reading of student work is, "What is this student really working on in this (or these) piece(s) of writing?" Secondarily, the conferences address how the teacher can help the student achieve what he or she is trying to accomplish.

In repeated practice with these conferences, we found their primary value to be the enhancement and refinement of teachers' perceptions of student work. The Collaborative Assessment Conferences are not efficient as a procedure for the evaluation of every students's work. However, as a regular practice, they enable teachers to develop the expertise they need to become acute observers and helpful judges of students' learning. First, they uncover levels of intent, effort, and accomplishment in student work that are often not immediately apparent or easily discovered. Second, teachers' insight grows from hearing the multiple interpretations and perspectives of their colleagues. Finally, the conferences provide teachers with the experience of considering and responding to collections of student work, and hence provide the foundation for assessing portfolios.

Structure of Collaborative Assessment Conferences

These conferences usually take about 45-60 minutes, although they can sometimes be shorter. It is important to establish the structure and rules of the conference clearly, follow that structure through the judicious guidance of the facilitator, and then proceed in a relaxed atmosphere in which there is time for all comments that follow the guidelines.

It is also important to remind participants that in this assessment practice there is no need to come to absolute consensus or agreement. An essential element of this practice is the multiplicity of perspectives that come from a very free and open (not contentious or decision-driven) inquiry into what can be seen and discovered in student work. Therefore, differences in what people see or report as striking in a particular work are encouraged and seen as especially valuable given the premises and goals of the practice. Descriptive observations rather than evaluative comments are the foundation of these sessions. This focus on description is often quite difficult to maintain, as most assessment structures are typically designed to produce evaluative judgments or scores.

Teachers are the primary participants in these conferences. Administrators, supervisors, researchers, and domain professionals (such as playwrights and actors) can also be valuable participants. All participants in the sessions should be familiar with the schools from which student work is being presented and the basic educational goals behind the assignment.

There are five participants in each session. Observers are not only welcome but can sometimes be very useful in later consideration of the effectiveness of this practice. The assignment of participants to particular roles should be rotated so that as many teachers as possible get to present work from their classrooms and everyone accepts the responsibility of being a facilitator. Here is a brief description of each of the roles participants may take in the conference.

- The "presenting" teacher brings a single piece, a folder, or a portfolio of writing from a student. He or she may also bring any relevant supporting materials, including reflections, journals, or self-assessments by the writer. (Multiple copies of this work should be made in advance to facilitate the reading of the work by all participants.)

- Three "informed colleagues" are drawn from those in attendance. Usually they have not been previously involved in on-going work with the student. Outsiders' eyes are key to bringing fresh perspectives to the reading of the work presented.
- The "facilitator" chairs the meeting, keeps track of time, asks for clarification, and 'evidence in the work' for any points made by the other participants.

A Brief Description of the Four Phases of the Conference Format

I. Read the presented work.

This must be given as long as necessary and should probably be done in silence. Casual comments are discouraged as participants take time to seriously consider the writing they are reading and their responses to it without distraction.

II. The "informed colleagues" speak.

Taking turns, the informed colleagues address the following questions:

1. *Please describe what you see in this work in simple, clear, language, and without judgment. In other words, what is there? Describe what the student has created.*
2. *What questions about the work and about its creator come up for you when you read this work?*
3. *Is there evidence of questions, concerns, or problems of genuine importance to the student in this writing? In other words, can you tell what this student seems to be working on in these pieces?*

The informed colleagues are then given a short period of time in which to discuss one another's observations and, most importantly, to add new observations to the conversation.

III. The "presenting" teacher speaks.

The "presenting" teacher has been silent, listening and often taking notes, to this point in the conference. Now he or she is asked to address the following questions:

1. *Were there any surprises for you in your colleagues' observations of your students' work?*
2. *Do you have any observations about the work you would like to add to those already made?*
3. *Is there information about this student that might challenge or confirm any of the observations made in this conference?*
4. *Did the informed colleagues' comments raise any questions for you about this work or how you approach supporting and challenging this student as she does her writing?*

IV. Present strategies for response.

The facilitator calls on any of the participants to address any of the following questions:

1. *What do we feel we know about what this student is really working on in her writing? (This may or may not include those problems outlined in the teachers' assignment.)*
2. *What might be a good 'next step' for this student? Has she exhausted her interest in the problems she took on in this writing? Or does she seem still engaged in a long-term pursuit of certain ideas, issues, and/or attempts at mastery of particular skills?*
3. *What kind of response might encourage this student to do more work and work of increasingly high quality in the future? Some students use written comments well, but what other forms of response might be helpful in this case? Who else could this student go to for thoughtful response to this writing?*

V. Reflect on the conference.

At the conclusion, it is probably a good idea to take a few minutes to discuss the conference itself. It is important for everyone to have a chance to say how the structure worked for them, or didn't. Ideas for changes to the conference structure can be offered and considered at this time. (This is especially important the first few times participants engage in these conferences. It becomes less important over time, although it is important again as new people join the assessment group.)

Sample Student Work

The following pages present excerpts from the mini-portfolio of one of the students whose reflections appeared earlier (Fig 3.4). Here we see some of the same reflections, but now in the context of his writing and other reflections, including scenes and dialogues, daily logs, and final reflections. They were presented at Collaborative Assessment Conferences during a drama team meeting in Pittsburgh. The collection is followed by observations and comments that teachers made during assessment conferences.

What is immediately apparent in the student's folder is his energetic approach to playwriting, which marks even his earliest work. In one of his earlier reflections, the student wrote candidly about his role and responsibility as a playwright and the importance of having a real audience:

> *It made me happy that the class enjoyed my scene. After all, isn't that what it's all about? Pleasing the audience. I'd rather write something that makes the people watching it happy than write something technically good that the class doesn't really get into.*

In the excerpts on the pages that follow, we see him working steadily on this challenge, filling his folder with many comic sketches, scenes, and dialogues. At the end of the playwriting sequence, he looks back over his work to see how successfully he has achieved his goals. This final reflection appears first in the excerpts from his work.

A Student's Folder: Final Reflection

I see some changes in my writing. My approaches changed but my style always stays the same. I've tried to be humorous the whole sequence. In the beginning, I thought of the most ridiculous scenes. I tried anything to be funny and now that I look back on it, it was weak. I always tried crazy voices. A lot of my scenes from the beginning were false. Unrealistic. Like the one, Igor & Master. They were false characters. Also, they're not my own characters. At the time it was written I really liked it but now that I read it again it doesn't do anything for me.

As I read through my old scenes I found about 2 that I liked. They were the ones between Tyler & Lisa, and Master & Student. They were my only real-life scenes. They were the only ones written about real-life people. Now when I write scenes I always try to do them real-life, and be humorous at the same time. I like to write about things I've seen or experienced. Like the one between Mr. Jones & Raul. I think everyone noticed where that came from. Jones & Harris. I wrote about Miami vice. I feel these scenes came out better.

I've learned a lot in doing this. I learned that a playwright has a tough job. It's not easy to come up with a good scene. I learned you just have to focus in on some real-life situation and arrange a dialogue. Scenes that aren't realistic are weak. The only thing my unrealistic scene had was humor. If I knew someone just starting to write plays my advice to them would be: Write about real-life experience. Have solid characters, don't make their attitudes change line-by-line. Try to be funny. Have some conflict and tension. And most important is to have fun. Just relax and have a lot of fun doing the scenes. Also, keep the audience in mind. Write a scene to please yourself and also one that will please your audience.

My favorite piece from my folder is the scene between Mr. Jones & Raul. That's a scene a lot of people can relate to. There's a few people in this class that could fit the character of Raul. I wrote Raul's part as myself for the most part. This made it easy to act out.

My least favorite piece would be Igor & Master. The only thing that was good were the voices. Me & Rick came up with good voices. There's nothing to the scene though. There's no tension and the time & setting isn't clear. It wasn't clear in a lot of my early scenes. In the one between Mr. Jones & Raul and Harris & Jones the time and setting were very clear. Mr. Jones & Raul takes place about 8:05 first period.

Me and Brandi were tryin' to think of something to write. Suddenly I thought about doing a Kung Fu scene. What made me think about it is that we were talking earlier about two of my friends who take Kung Fu. And I always do their voice like either a Chinese guy or a German guy. I always say you play hard, You play strong, You play fast and you like it. Dad came up with the line, You practice flying drop kick & you like it! And we went from there. Brandi like the idea so we did it. I was just tryin' to be funny with my character. I think a big part of Creative writing is humor.

****

Setting: English Class 1st Period
Characters: Teacher, Raul

Teacher: Raul, You're five minutes late for class.

Raul: Chill out man. I got tied up.

Teacher: Well, stand for the rest of the period.

Raul: Dude, you gotta' be kiddin'. You want me to stand for 40 minutes.

Teacher: That or go see the Principal.

Raul: Ah. Uncool, man.

Teacher: What's uncool is that you're late for my class every day. Be glad I don't write you up. Now, class. Let's continue with the lesson.

Raul: Um,...Excuse me Mr. Jones. What page are we on.

Teacher: 296. And next time raise your hand.

Raul: Oh. My fault, man.

Mr. Jones: Jim, please read the next paragraph.

Raul: Mr. Jones, can I borrow a pencil.

Mr. Jones: You don't need a pencil.

Raul: Oh. And a piece of paper, too.

Mr. Jones: Raul! One more word out of you and you're going to the principal's. Now, I'm sick & tired of you comin' in here everyday and disrupting my class.

Raul: Mr. Jones, Dude. Come down a few degrees.

Mr. Jones: That's it! You got detention!

Raul: As long as it's not on Thursday or Friday. I got things to do those days. *[Bell rings]*

Mr. Jones: Raul

Raul: Yes, Mr. Jones.

Mr. Jones: Here is your detention slip. Also tell your mother she can be expecting a phonecall from me tonight. And if you come in here late tomorrow

Raul: You'll send me to the principal, right. I'm tired of hearing that, man.

Mr. Jones: Well than do something about it.

****

Dad: Did you see your idols on T.V.?

Son: What are you talking about?

Dad: Those rock stars you so greatly admire. Did you see them receiving their Awards on the award show.

Son: Yes, I saw them. That don't mean they are all like that.

Dad: They all would've got up and did the same thing. They're all alike.

Son: No! No they're not. There's a lot of good musicians who wouldn't of did that. They were only one of the few that would.

Dad: Look at them. They're all the same.

Son: Well, if Art Garfunkel would've got up there and did that would all the musicians from his time be put in that same category.

Setting:

At New York City in a quiet neighborhood. Dave is in his tux listening to Slayer on his stereo which is turned up to about 8 or 9. While next door George is decked out in his denim smokin and listening to symphony #9.

George: *[Calls Dave's House]* Hey Dave. Why don't you turn your music down.

Dave: No. George. If I don't want to I don't have to!

George: Well, I rented this tape of Symphony no. 9 and I can't hear it.

Dave: So. Turn it up if you can't hear it. You were always deaf anyway!

George: I'm sorry. I missed what you said. The flute solo was on.

Dave: Well one of my favorite songs is on! So why don't you just shut up and listen to your fruit solo!

George: That singer should sing solo ... So low that I don't hear him!

Dave: Well put in ear plugs! Or get miracle ear for your stupid tape you rented!

George: Put in ear plugs and listen to your garbage.

Teacher Comments on the Student Folder

This student is absorbed in his role as a comic playwright. Mindful of the many possibilities in playwriting, he points directly to his chosen challenge— to write comedies. Given this perspective, he demands a new and different kind of attention to his work. In effect, he is telling us how to read his work: what to look for, what to pay attention to and what to question in it. He is working to gain insight into what makes a scene funny, keeping in mind his chosen audience and anticipating the added dimensions and qualities of performance. Already he is taking pride in and learning from his accomplishments.

There is much playfulness and much mindfulness in his work. He has come a long way in discerning exactly what makes a scene funny, directly confronting the issues and problems central to this work. By embracing the opportunity to experiment with different approaches to humor, he has come to better understand the particular qualities and characteristics of comedy.

CHAPTER 4

PORTFOLIOS

The experience of teachers and students with the poetry and drama projects created an environment for sustained work and reflection, thus paving the way for portfolios. Students were learning to see themselves as writers making choices in their work and engaging in relatively long-term endeavors. Through the reflection activities in the projects, students were also becoming aware of the choices they made, alternatives they could consider, and possibilities for future pursuit. Teachers and students were engaged in conversation about the qualities of strong writing.

At the same time, it was clear that if the portfolio was to have a place in English and language arts classrooms beyond the life of the Arts PROPEL project, it would need to accommodate all varieties of writing in the English and language arts curriculum. A portfolio designed only for imaginative writing would not be likely to survive.

In thinking about designing writing portfolios, three questions were foremost:

- *What do we want students to learn about themselves from their experience with portfolios?*
- *What do we want to learn about students?*
- *What kinds of writing experiences would help students to learn these things and help us to discover whether they had learned them?*

The first of these questions has most to do with portfolios as a tool for instruction and student self-assessment, whereas the second has to do with assessment in a more public sense. The third concerns the kind of curriculum that would support the making of useful and revealing portfolios.

As a result of thinking about portfolio design in this way, we worked out a year-long portfolio process in which students write abundantly, reflect on and apply high standards to their own and others' work, and discuss the demands of different forms of writing.

The Design of the Arts PROPEL Writing Portfolio

Students do not necessarily come to portfolios with extensive experience in writing, reflection, or making selective judgments. Therefore, the portfolio process begins long before students begin collecting and reviewing their work. In this early period, teachers work with students to establish a climate of trust and to help students develop a view of themselves as writers creating a body of work. In addition, teachers introduce students to the practice of reflection and to possible ways of talking about

their own and others' writing. These conversations provide the basis for later written reflections and more extended reflections.

This process can take as much as eight weeks for middle-school students who are new to it, but for older students or students more experienced with portfolios and reflection it can take much less. Teachers know that their students are ready to make portfolios a formal part of their learning when they begin to:

- *express ownership of their work*
- *refer to writing previously completed*
- *seek out responses to their work*
- *want to look back at earlier drafts of their writing.*

At this juncture, if not before, the students begin to collect all of their writing: major pieces and drafts, brainstorming notes, and notes on ideas for writing go into their portfolios. The pieces of writing come from the ongoing curriculum of their classes. In Pittsburgh, that curriculum often includes domain projects like the poetry or playwriting work. It may also include journals, responses to literature, or research reports. The title of each major piece, along with the date of composition, is entered into a table of contents for the folder. By the end of the year, this table of contents becomes a record showing the range, quantity, and sequence of the student's writing.

Starting even in this early period, teachers respond in writing to each major piece of student writing, using a separate comment sheet. On this sheet the teacher indicates one thing the student has done well and one aspect of writing that needs improvement. The two parts of the teacher's comments correspond to questions the student will soon use in written reflection on major pieces of writing. In this way the teacher's comments prepare for and eventually reinforce the written reflection students will conduct on their own work.

When the students become comfortable with oral reflection and the idea of the writing folder, when they show signs that they are thinking as writers, they begin writing reflections. Upon completing a final draft for a particular piece of writing, students respond to three questions:

- *What do you like best about this piece?*
- *What are you least satisfied with?*
- *Why?*

Then students' responses are stapled to the piece of writing and the notes and drafts that preceded it. The entire packet goes to the teacher for her response, which is expressed on the comment sheet in terms parallel to the students' reflection — one thing done well, one that needs further work. The full packet, which now includes the finished piece with accompanying notes and drafts, the student response sheet, and the teacher comment sheet, is put into the folder for future reference.

At intervals during the school year, students are asked to select pieces of writing from the folder, to reflect in depth on the pieces selected, and then to put the selected piece and the in-depth reflection into their portfolios. In each case the in-depth reflection is stapled on top of the packet for the piece of writing selected. Thus the portfolio consists of a collection of writing that is smaller than the collection in the folder, but each piece is accompanied by in-depth reflection on the piece and in most cases by evidence of the process the student has used in creating it. In this way, the portfolio becomes a growing body of writing and the reflections which comment on it.

The Components of the Portfolio Collection

In all, the completed portfolio includes five to six pieces of writing selected from the folder, seven to eight pieces of in-depth reflection, and a table of contents.

The Table of Contents is a record of the pieces in the portfolio and the dates on which they were written and selected.

The Writing Inventory asks the student to describe briefly some aspects of his or her experience as a writer.

The Important Piece of Writing is selected by the student using his or her own criteria; the student is asked to give reasons for the choice and to answer a series of questions about the piece and the experience of writing it.

The Satisfying Piece of writing and the Unsatisfying Piece are selected by the student, who then describes what makes the one piece satisfying and the other not, what has been learned from working on them and what might now be done differently.

The Biography of a Work asks the student to select a piece that illustrates the process he or she uses to create a piece of writing; the student then answers questions and writes the "story" of the work's development.

The Student's Free Pick is a piece selected by the student to round out the portfolio as a picture of him/herself as a writer. The student is asked to explain the reasons for the choice.

The Teacher-Student Negotiated Free Pick is an opportunity for the teacher to suggest an additional piece to be added to the portfolio if one seems necessary to create a representative picture of the student in the portfolio.

The Final Reflection invites the student to look at his or her writing for the year and to describe whatever changes are seen in the writing and in him/herself as a writer.

At each moment when students select or reflect, they are guided by open-ended questions that invite them to think about what they see and value in their writing and what they have learned. The activities proceed gradually from the immediately accessible to the more complex and demanding. For example, students reflect first on a single piece of writing, then on two pieces looked at together, and eventually on all of their writing for the year. The sequence provides the opportunity for students to develop and refine their own criteria and standards for writing — influenced by interactions with peers and teacher — and to take on increased responsibility for their writing. To help students make the most of this opportunity, teachers watch for indications in students' work habits and in their interactions with others that they are ready for the increased responsibility represented by the next selection or reflection activity.

The Arts PROPEL portfolio is based on a view of teaching and learning in which students' classroom experiences are designed to help them develop the resources they need to assume increased responsibility for their learning. The teacher sets up, monitors, and facilitates activities in which students can develop the necessary tools and abilities. She first models for students the processes involved, then encourages the students themselves to engage in the processes, then responds to their evolving work, suggesting alternative strategies where appropriate. Writing is seen as a complex performance drawing on a wide repertoire of skills and knowledge; the aim of instruction and assessment alike is to help students increase the range of their skills and knowledge and to become more expert in applying them. Eventually this approach leads students to become capable of self-assessment. They become active participants in the evaluation of their work.

In many respects, the particulars of portfolio design are less important to the PROPEL approach than the classroom culture of which the portfolio activities are a part. In theory, a teacher could move students through the entire sequence of activities in the PROPEL portfolio design and not bring about the desired effects on student learning, if the classroom or school environment was not congenial to the views of teaching and learning that stand behind the design—if the culture necessary to portfolios had not been established.

The PROPEL model for portfolios does not specify a particular approach to instruction or a specific focus in curriculum. However, the portfolio culture essential to PROPEL portfolios requires a reflectiveness on the part of teachers and students that reaches deep into instruction and curriculum. As a result, even teachers who are quite experienced feel moments of frustration and uncertainty as they adjust their teaching to make portfolios a part of classroom life. They need the support of colleagues and administration as they take the risks involved in the transition to a genuine portfolio culture. They need clear and consistent indications from the school and district that they will be supported in their efforts to incorporate portfolio activities into their classrooms. For these reasons, it is important that the creation of portfolios and the assessment activities that surround them be part of teachers' on-going interactions not only with students but with colleagues, parents, and administration.

Assessing Portfolios

The approach to assessment represented in the Arts PROPEL writing portfolios involves students, the classroom teacher, parents, teachers from other classrooms, and administration. The portfolio contains evidence of student work that is examined by all of these parties, each of whom then indicates what they see and value in the writing. Through this process, the portfolio becomes the basis for a dialogue. The portfolio dialogue, which involves multiple parties and multiple perspectives, represents an expanded view of the nature and purposes for assessment in the classroom.

❒ Assessment in the classroom

In generating the portfolio, a student engages in a number of assessment episodes, as suggested above in the description of the portfolio design. When students engage with other students by responding orally to their writing, they are engaged in assessment; when they decide how they will respond to their peers' observations about their own writing, they are again involved in assessment. When students begin to write down their reflections on their own writing, they move toward a more formal phase of assessment — creating a written record of their evaluations. At that time, they also take the first step toward engaging with others in an assessment dialogue focusing on their work. If students use written reflection to respond to their peers' work, they engage in a second step toward formal assessment dialogue. Furthermore, in selecting pieces to go into the portfolio, students bring to bear a number of evaluative judgments, some directed toward the worth of the pieces themselves and others to sorting among the various possible criteria and standards that could be used in making judgments.

Teachers working with their students in the portfolio activities are also engaged in assessment. They respond to each major piece the student writes; in some classrooms teachers may use the occasion to assign a grade to the piece as well. Further, in nurturing a portfolio culture in the classroom, teachers often engage students in individual conferences, either informally by moving among students while they are writing or more formally in scheduled, sustained conferences. In these conferences, the teacher helps students to evaluate the evolving piece of writing and suggests alternative approaches where they seem likely to be helpful. Such conferences are part of the overall assessment process.

Teachers in PROPEL portfolio classrooms also help students to develop shared criteria and standards for evaluating writing. They often collate students' responses to the reflection questions, or extract key words from each of the responses, and then present them to the class to illustrate the variety of comments students have made in evaluating their writing. Following a discussion of the comments—what they suggest the students think is important about writing, what similarities and differences they indicate in the students' perspectives—the teacher helps students to develop a list of qualities of good writing. The list is posted in the classroom, so that students will have it before them during subsequent occasions for writing and reflecting. Each time the class has another discussion of comments, the teacher adds to or changes the list. In this way, the group discussions arising from the portfolio reflections help to create a shared vocabulary and a publicly displayed set of criteria that students can refer to.

❒ **Assessment by Parents**

Parents or other interested adults are an important audience for student writing. Realizing this, teachers have experimented in the last two years of the Arts PROPEL project with a procedure for sending student writing folders or portfolios home for review.

The procedure was pioneered by a middle school teacher, Kathy Howard. Her particular parent review process is presented here as a model that can be adjusted, abbreviated or extended (See Figure 4.1). The procedure that has been developed so far involves sending home the writing folders at the end of the first marking period when students have enough writing to make the folders informative. The student presents the portfolio to the parent, along with a sheet explaining the purpose of the portfolio and the purpose of the parent review. These explanations are followed by several open-ended questions, some of them parallel to questions students use in reflecting on their own work, and a suggestion that parents talk with their students about the writing in the folder. None of the questions requires professional expertise on the part of parents.

When the parents have completed the review, the students bring the folder and the written review back to the classroom. Students reflect on the experience of having their parents look at their work, indicating what they learned from it and what surprised them. Thus, the parent review becomes a learning experience for the students.

Although parent reviews hardly resemble traditional assessment, they address several functions of assessment, especially if assessment is understood in an expanded sense. The direct perception of the student's work and of the classroom dialogue around the work gives parents a more immediate and detailed understanding of their child's progress than do end-of-term grades or test scores. With increased experience, parents become perceptive reviewers of their child's work. In addition, the procedure invites parents to bring their views into the discussion about what is to be valued and nurtured in their children's writing. In this way parents become directly involved in the discourse necessary to a healthy and well-grounded system of assessment.

❒ **Teacher review sessions**

The criteria and standards of an effective assessment system have to be shared, both within and across classrooms. Furthermore, when teachers come together across classrooms to develop and apply shared criteria, their perceptions of student work within their own classrooms become more acute and their vision of possible student performance is enlarged. In the assessment of Arts PROPEL writing portfolios, teachers engage in three kinds of review sessions: Collaborative Assessment Conferences, teacher-supervisor conferences, and portfolio evaluation sessions.

1. The Collaborative Assessment Conference

A relatively small-scale procedure for encouraging the development of cross-classroom portfolio criteria and standards is an adaptation of the Collaborative Assessment Conference described for the playwriting projects. Four or five teachers from the same school or grade level examine duplicate copies of one student's portfolio or folder. One teacher acts as recorder and facilitator for the review session. The student's teacher listens while his or her colleagues describe the qualities of writing and

Parent Folder Review and Reflection

Student_____

Reader_____

Date_____

Please read everything in your child's writing folder, including drafts and commentary. Each piece is set up in back-to-front order, from rough draft to final copy. Further, each piece is accompanied by both student and teacher comments on the piece and the writing process. Finally, the folders also include written questionnaires where students write about their strengths and weaknesses as writers.

We believe that the best assessment of student writing begins with the students themselves, but must be broadened to include the widest possible audience. We encourage you to become part of the audience.

When you have read the folders, please talk to your children about their writing. In addition, please take a few minutes to respond to these questions:

- Which piece of writing in the folder tells you most about your child's writing?
- What does it tell you?
- What do you see as the strengths in your child's writing?
- What do you see as needs to be addressed in your child's growth and development as a writer?
- What suggestions do you have which might aid the class's growth as writers?
- Other comments, suggestions?

Thank you so much for investing this time in your child's writing.

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Figure 4.1

the evidence of learning they see in the portfolio. The teacher then provides any additional evidence from classroom observation that is directly informative to the discussion. The recorder-facilitator reads back notes on the discussion and helps the group to come to consensus about the qualities seen in the portfolio. Finally, each teacher other than the student's own offers suggestions about classroom activities that might be conducive to the student's further development as a writer.

The point of the Collaborative Assessment Conference is not to evaluate every students' portfolio, but rather to enlarge, reinforce, and refine teachers' perceptions of student writing. Although the information resulting from the conference is more likely to be descriptive than evaluative — the primary impulse is to describe what is seen rather than to judge — it is the foundation of responsible assessment. In addition, the conference ends with a focus that is most critical to assessment designed to serve students' learning directly — a set of suggestions about what to do next.

2. The teacher-supervisor conference

The use of folders of student writing as the basis for conferences between supervisors and teachers was well established in the Pittsburgh school district before the Arts PROPEL project. Experience with Arts PROPEL has helped supervisors and teachers to refine this procedure and give it clearer focus.

Each year language arts teachers in Pittsburgh select from the writing folders created in their classes three to five portfolios that they believe illustrate the range of student performance and growth. Teachers are provided with a set of questions for their advance review of the writing folders. These questions ask teachers for their perceptions of 1) students' strengths, 2) students' growth as writers, 3) possible next steps to be recommended to students, and 4) the strategies that teachers have used to bring about the growth they see in the student work. Teachers come to the conferences with notes on students' writing and with ideas and questions that quickly shape the conversation with the supervisor. In some cases teachers have also used the questions as the basis for classroom discussion with their students.

In the conference teachers explain to the supervisor their rationale for the evaluations they have given the folders; they also describe a single writing assignment from pre-writing to final copy, using the student work in one of the folders to illustrate the strategies they have used. The overall purpose of the conference is to discuss the teacher's evaluation of his or her writing program, using the folders as a basis for discussion, and to promote an exchange of questions, suggestions, and assistance between teacher and supervisor. The conferences collectively give supervisors a comprehensive understanding of writing instruction and curriculum as practiced throughout the district. They also help supervisors discover what kinds of support and in-service activities would be most useful to teachers.

The teacher-supervisor conference has little of the appearance of assessment as traditionally defined, and yet it fulfills important assessment needs. It gives teachers an occasion to enhance and refine their evaluation skills under the guidance of an experienced professional thoroughly familiar with the goals and curriculum of the district. It allows supervisors a view into the ways in which teachers translate the district curriculum into everyday classroom instruction. The conference thus informs

supervisors about teachers' use of pedagogical and assessment strategies, while its format encourages teachers to provide the context and rationale necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies they use. This information enables the supervisor to identify possible means of moving teachers toward more effective strategies where they seem called for. In addition, the information gathered from the conferences helps supervisors to make decisions about professional development needs that should be addressed in the district as a whole.

The teacher-supervisor conference thus provides information relevant to accountability, and specifically to an aspect of accountability that is often problematic for teachers and supervisors alike: the responsibility to see that mid-career teachers continue to exercise demanding standards for themselves and for their students. Moreover, because it draws on teachers' perceptions and because it is grounded in discussion of student work, the conference yields information that is not easily gained from other methods and is directly relevant to effecting desirable changes in teachers' understanding and behavior. However, as used by supervisors in Pittsburgh, the conference does not make teachers the passive recipients of judgment. Teachers take an active role in developing, interpreting, and presenting the materials that become the basis for the evaluation. In addition, the conference becomes itself an occasion for teachers' professional development; teachers have something immediately to gain from the experience — a possible strategy for solving a problem, or reinforcement for a new instructional approach.

3. Portfolio evaluation sessions

The most formal assessment associated with the Arts PROPEL portfolios occurs at the end of the school year when student portfolios are complete. Here we will describe the most complete of the sessions that occurred during the PROPEL research and development, in June 1991.

A sample of completed portfolios representing a range of student performance at each grade level from six to twelve was drawn from PROPEL classrooms. Teachers were presented with a sample portfolio and asked to assign ratings within the evaluation framework they had been applying to folders and portfolios-in-progress for the previous four months. They were also asked to jot down notes for themselves about evidence they found in the portfolio for each of the ratings assigned.

After this common standard-setting session, the group split into one section made up of middle school teachers and supervisors and another made up of high school teachers and supervisors. Researchers were equally split between the two sections. Another portfolio was presented to each section for rating and observation of evidence; the middle school section rated a middle school portfolio, and the high school section a high school portfolio. When sufficient agreement was reached about the ratings and evidence cited, each section began independent ratings of portfolios within their respective grade levels — middle school or high school. Each portfolio was read at least three times by raters other than the student's teacher. For a small number of portfolios, the student's complete writing folder was also rated, using the same framework, so that comparisons could be made of the ratings assigned to the portfolio and to the folder.

On the basis of the experience in the rating session and the discussion and analysis that followed, the current expectation is that future portfolio evaluation sessions will follow roughly the procedures developed in the experimental session, although writing folders will not be evaluated. Teachers from a number of classrooms and schools will rate a subsample of portfolios from the students in portfolio classrooms, using a sampling design assuring a representative range of performance. The rating session will begin with ratings of portfolios and discussion of ratings and evidence for them; in future sessions, less time may be necessary for discussion but more portfolios may be presented. Each portfolio will receive two independent ratings from teachers other than the student's own. Portfolios receiving discrepant ratings will be rated a third time to resolve the discrepancy. At the end of the rating session, teachers and supervisors will discuss the experience of rating the portfolios, as well as the implications of any patterns they have seen for portfolio design, for revision of the evaluation framework, and for curriculum.

Current projections call for aggregation of the portfolio ratings from the scoring sessions to create group profiles of student performance at the district and school level. Once a sampling design is developed to assure that portfolios represent the range of student performance within classrooms and schools, these profiles, accompanied by sample portfolios illustrating the levels of performance, can be used in combination with other information about students to describe achievement and growth.

Relationship of Assessment Processes to the Portfolio

Each of these assessment processes contributes to the development and evaluation of the portfolios, and each helps to articulate and refine standards and criteria to be applied to writing performance. What, then, is the relationship among the processes? When in the life of a portfolio does each make its contribution? The graphic representation in Figure 4.2 may help to clarify.

The student sets up the folder and collects writing in it. She engages in activities directed toward creating the portfolio; these involve self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment. The folder is sent home for parent review, another form of assessment. Sometime during the year some portfolios from her classroom, if not her own, are used as the basis for discussions in Collaborative Assessment Conferences and in teacher-supervisor conferences. All of these assessment activities contribute to the emergence and clarification of standards and criteria applied to writing and so to the portfolio-directed activities in her classroom. When complete, the student's portfolio might be among those sent to the portfolio evaluation session. If the student's portfolio is among those rated at the large-group evaluation session, the ratings will contribute to a group profile used to describe writing achievement at the district level.

When the components of the portfolio assessment process are seen together in this way, they indicate that the Arts PROPEL portfolio process draws on and contributes to the discussion of standards at the level of classrooms, communities of teachers, and the district. The assessment taking place around portfolios involves multiple parties interested in students' learning, providing each of them with information they need to arrive at their own understanding of student achievement and growth.

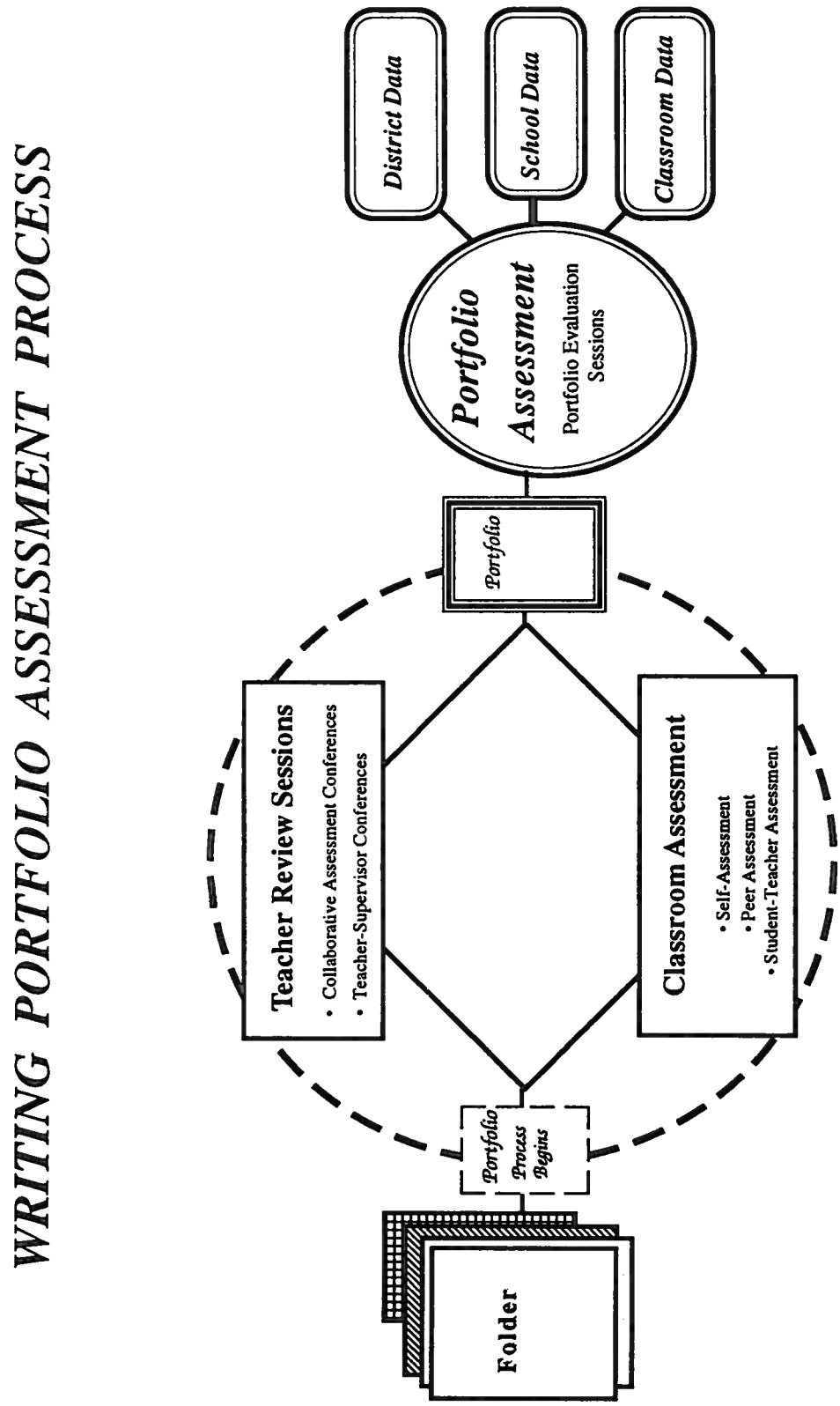


Figure 4.2 Arts PROPEL Writing Portfolio Assessment Process

Development of Criteria for Evaluating Portfolios

A major challenge for the portfolios designed by Arts PROPEL teachers, supervisors, and researchers was to arrive at a set of criteria for evaluation of portfolios. The contents of each portfolio are determined by the decisions made by the student while engaged in reflection on his or her work. The resulting variety among portfolios puts the burden of standardization quite strongly on the evaluation criteria and their application. Raters need an evaluation framework that will tell them what to attend to in the wealth of material provided by the portfolio.

In the hope of developing such a framework, teachers, supervisors, and researchers examined prototype portfolios generated by several classes in the 1989-90 school year. The procedure was much like the one used to develop a vocabulary and set of criteria for evaluating students' poems or scenes earlier in the PROPEL project. The group examined portfolios one by one, trying to determine in each case what could be said about the student as a writer on the basis of the evidence in the portfolio. The language used to describe students' writing development at this and later meetings was recorded. It was then synthesized and categorized to arrive at a shared vocabulary and a framework for evaluation. The framework was further revised as we looked at more writing folders. Still further refinements are bound to emerge as the framework is applied to larger numbers of portfolios from a greater variety of classrooms.

The resulting portfolio evaluation framework, which is presented in Figure 4.3, focuses the raters' attention on three major categories: Accomplishment in writing, Use of processes and resources for writing, and Development as a writer. Each portfolio is rated on a four-point scale from inadequate to outstanding performance for each of the categories. The ratings for the three categories indicate the broad outlines of the student's profile as a writer. Within each category is a list reminding raters of the traits in students' writing that might contribute to an overall judgment for the category. In addition to assigning ratings in the three categories, the rater is asked to generate a more qualitative description of the student's strengths and developmental needs.

1) *Accomplishment in writing*

This first major category includes most of the qualities attended to in traditional evaluations of writing, although some less traditional traits reflect PROPEL's emphasis on imaginative writing — use of the techniques and choices of the genre, for example, and humor, metaphor, playfulness. The evidence for Accomplishment in writing comes primarily from the pieces students have selected, although in some cases the writing in the student's reflections provides additional evidence.

2) *Use of processes and resources for writing*

This second major category is relatively new to writing assessment. It is relevant in Arts PROPEL portfolios because many of the pieces selected for the portfolio are accompanied by early drafts and other evidence of process. In addition, the activities involved in selecting the pieces ask students to address questions about the processes and strategies they used in writing the piece. One of the portfolio selections, the Biography of a Work, requires a

PORTFOLIO EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Student writer _____ Grade _____

Teacher _____ School _____

The contents of this student's portfolio demonstrate:
(Please check where appropriate)

	Inadequate			Outstanding
Accomplishment in writing	____	____	____	____

- meeting worthwhile challenges
- establishing and maintaining purpose
- use of the techniques and choices of the genre
- organization, development, use of detail
- control of conventions, vocabulary, sentence structure
- awareness of the needs of the audience
- use of language, sound, images, tone, voice
- humor, metaphor, playfulness

Use of processes and resources for writing	____	____	____	____

- awareness of strategies and processes for writing
- use of processes: prewriting, drafting, revision
- awareness of features important to writing
- ability to see strengths and opportunities in own writing
- ability to describe what one sees and knows about writing
- use of the classroom social context for writing
- use of available experience and resources (one's own, the school's, the community's)

Development as a writer	_____	_____	_____	_____

- progress from early to late pieces, growth, development
- increased understanding of features and options important to writing
- engagement with writing
- use of writing for different purposes, genres, and audiences
- sense of self as a writer, achievements and purposes as a writer
- evolution of personal criteria and standards for writing
- increased investment in writing tasks

This student's strength in writing include:

This student's developmental needs as a writer include:

Figure 4.3

sustained focus on process. Many of the traits in this category are related to metacognitive aspects of writing performance. Some of the evidence for judgments in this category comes from the pieces selected and their accompanying drafts and notes, but much of it is evident in the students' reflections.

3) *Development as a writer*

This third category is uncommon in writing assessment but clearly appropriate to portfolios generated over a year's time, and particularly for portfolios that ask students to focus on changes in their writing and comparison among pieces of writing. The traits here include engagement with writing, increased investment in writing tasks, evolution of personal criteria and standards for writing, and progress from early to late pieces. The evidence for this category may come in part from the pieces selected in some students' portfolios, depending on the selections made. However, the reflections provide a complementary source of evidence.

The evidence for judgments in the second and third categories are more difficult to discern in students' portfolios than is the evidence for the first category. Teachers and researchers alike are more familiar with qualities indicating accomplishment in writing and more practiced in making judgments about them. In addition, there is not yet much history of either writing curriculum or writing assessment that consistently evokes evidence of the traits associated with use of processes for writing or with development as a writer. With time and more practice in looking for such traits, and with further refinements in the evaluation framework, teachers and researchers alike are likely to become more comfortable and more expert in their judgments for these categories.

Assessment of a Sample Student Portfolio

To illustrate the application of the evaluation framework to portfolios, portions of a student portfolio are presented in Chapter 6. The work presented is by a seventh-grade student. It was evaluated within the expectations appropriate to middle school students' writing. Probably the best way a reader can approximate the experience of evaluating the portfolio is to read the student's portfolio along with the portfolio analysis provided in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5

LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In essence, the work of Arts PROPEL has been to give all students access to the tough standards that come from reading as writers, from writing with the understandings gained from reading, and from becoming curious and thoughtful critics. It is work that is accomplished, we discovered, through the efforts of individuals representing a range of interests and experience — students, teachers, parents, administrators and supervisors, researchers and experts on writing. Yet the agents most central to creating and applying such standards are the students themselves and their teachers.

Our work with the poetry and drama projects and with portfolios taught us many lessons. We think two of these lessons in particular may be valuable for others who would collaborate on changing curriculum, teaching, and assessment.

Lesson One: The importance of linking the creation of innovative curriculum with teachers' professional development and with assessment practices

For better or worse, the issues of teaching, learning, and assessment, no matter how carefully teased apart, merge again in actual classroom practice. The interconnectedness is desirable, and ultimately enriches each of the individual elements. To make meaningful innovations in curriculum requires more than the introduction of new materials or new statements about desired outcomes for learning. It involves teachers and students in moving in new and initially uncomfortable ways through their day-to-day classroom interactions.

To make new curriculum their own, and to make it work for their students, teachers need to assimilate its goals and activities into their instructional repertoire. Each teacher needs to incorporate new approaches into his or her current strategies for teaching, which may be the result of years of accumulated experience. Teachers are likely to find this transition to genuinely innovative curriculum extremely difficult unless they have opportunities to examine and discuss the curriculum with one another, to experiment and adapt it in their classrooms, and to compare their experiences with other teachers. Provided with such opportunities for professional interaction, however, teachers are able not only to implement new curriculum but to enrich it with their own perceptions and experience.

Curriculum that is genuinely new often calls for new assessment. Teachers and students alike need evidence of students' learning that is pertinent and informative to the immediate classroom experience provided by the curriculum as well as the long-term expectations embodied in it. Assessment that provides such information is best developed in tandem with curriculum. To do otherwise is to miss the most valuable opportunities for evoking and evaluating evidence of learning. It is also to run the risk of distorting instruction and subverting the goals for learning.

The challenge, then, is to make the most of the connections among teaching, learning, and assessment — to devise curriculum and assessment compatible with and informative of one another, and to make teachers central to the effort. Proceeding well means taking an approach to the work that involves the following:

Putting teachers in a central role. The perspectives and experience of teachers from a range of grade levels and types of classrooms need to be represented on the development team. Teachers should be full partners in the entire development cycle.

Providing ample time for development. Ideas need to be translated into curriculum and assessment, tried out in classrooms and revised, tried again and refined. The student work from the classroom tryouts should be analyzed, teachers' perceptions of successes and failures discussed, and the results of discussion used to guide revision and refinement of activities and materials.

Spreading the word among groups of teachers. Although only a few teachers may be involved in the early stages of developing curriculum and assessment, their work can be described to other teachers as part of a system-wide effort. Through in-service meetings, these additional groups of teachers can have the opportunity to experience the activities for themselves, and to think and talk about them and about samples of student work arising from them. The perceptions and reactions of these teachers should then be taken into account in future development and implementation.

Engaging district and building administrators and supervisors. The difficult work of creating curriculum and assessment cannot be accomplished by teachers in isolation. Supervisors and administrators, especially those with teaching experience, can provide the encouragement and support that teachers need to become innovators and researchers in their classrooms. The active participation, guidance, and commitment of supervisors and administrators is absolutely essential if teachers are to take the risks involved in both the initial development and the later implementation of new curriculum and assessment.

Inviting the contribution of outside experts. For curriculum and assessment built around authentic experiences with imaginative writing in particular, the expertise of professional artists and writers is extremely valuable. Practicing poets and playwrights, for example, especially those who have experience with schools and young writers, bring to the development effort a needed depth of understanding about the various genres of writing and the choices

and alternatives that each presents to the writer. They can also inform the discussion of qualities to be looked for in the writing that students create in those genres. Collaboration with artists, writers, or other outside experts depends for its success on the willingness of all participants to learn from one another. Any consultants invited to join the development team should familiarize themselves with the curriculum and with samples of student writing by observing classes and talking with teachers and students.

Lesson Two: The importance of involving students in the process of assessment so that assessment becomes an opportunity for reflection and learning

The idea of asking students to look at their own work and to indicate what they see in it and what they value is relatively new to assessment. Nevertheless, the practice of reflection — devoting careful attention to one's own and others' writing — has demonstrated its value for students' learning. In classrooms where teachers and students are involved in ongoing discussion about the strengths of individual pieces of writing and possible improvements, about intended purposes and achieved effects, students have unparalleled opportunities to learn about their writing and themselves as writers. In addition, because teachers in these classrooms are able to see more of the intentions and struggles that stand behind students' writing, they can guide and support students' learning in ways that are not otherwise possible.

The effect of students' use of reflection on their development as writers and independent learners is often surprising. A student whose writing has seemed generally wooden and listless may write a bit of reflection that is perceptive and engaging. Or a students' third reflective piece may indicate that he is attending to features of writing that previously escaped his notice entirely.

Sometimes, however, the effect of reflection of students' learning is even more dramatic. In these instances, students' reflections provide a glimpse into the long-range potential for putting students into a central role in the examination and evaluation of their work. The effect cannot be attributed entirely to reflection, of course. The student may have the benefits of a talented and dedicated teacher, a supportive classroom environment, or an interested parent. The experience with reflection and the understandings gained from it may be only part of the classroom and home environment for that child. Or the student may have been already poised for a leap in development that was merely facilitated by reflection.

However, such examples of student learning built on reflection indicate what is possible. They tell us what we might eventually hope to make possible for more of our students, if not all of them, if we make reflection a part of learning, not simply once or twice a year, but week in and week out through the school years.

To illustrate, an example of a student's final portfolio reflection is presented here. It is from an eighth grade student looking back at her work for the year. She is using her earlier experience with reflection to look now at all of her writing, and her reading, to discover how she has changed as a writer. She is an unusually strong writer, but it is in part through her experience with reflective activities throughout the year that she has become so. At the beginning of the year, she would not have written with such insight about her work, nor would she have demonstrated such power of reflection.

She first lets her audience know what this reflective piece of writing is about, and how she's approaching it:

> *All right. This being the end of the year, I've decided to write a final reflection. Well, actually, I've decided that I'd better write it. It's due tomorrow. Anyway, I've learned a lot this year, especially about myself as a writer. I've learned to be a lot more confident about my work. I used to think of writing as an activity that I enjoyed, but I always hated the pieces I wrote. I've learned this year that a piece can almost never be characterized as either fabulous or horrible. In every horrible piece of writing, there's got to be at least one good part. The reflection (pink) sheets that we've filled out have really helped me to pick out good qualities in my own and other people's writing. They've also helped me to be more aware of what can be improved and what to look for during revision. That's really helpful. And I interpret this assignment as being a large reflection, but rather than reflecting on a specific piece, I'd like to reflect on the writing I've done this year in general.*

Accustomed to looking at individual pieces of writing, and aided by the collection of her work in the writing folder and portfolio, the student is able to describe in detail what she has learned. She sorts out major from minor issues in her experience with literature and writing. She indicates also what she has learned through her interactions with classmates:

> *Let's start at the beginning (that usually is the best place to start). I'd like to do kind of a quick little analysis of each piece. The first piece we wrote this year was an ending to Stockton's "The Lady or the Tiger." I liked this piece at the beginning of the year, possibly because I really had no basis for comparison. Even now, when I think of how much I've grown this year as a writer, for me at that time, it was a pretty good piece. It helped me conquer my fear of reading my writing to the class. I've learned how to share my pieces and how to react when others share theirs. After all, we are all in the same boat - and often times we're stranded.*
>
> *Then it was on to October and on to longer, if not better, things. Or at least for me. That was fractured fairy-tale time. I liked my piece when I wrote it, but if I were to go back and revise it now, it would be a whole lot different. This was when I learned quite a bit about tact during revision. Even if you can't understand a piece, you can probably find something good to say about it. I couldn't understand a word of the piece I was revising, but not wanting to hurt my revision partner's feelings, I didn't tell him this. Plus, I didn't want to sound stupid. What if everyone else already knew what a necromancer was? Anyway, I'll talk more about that later.*

Furthermore, the student is not afraid to say when a piece of writing does not meet her standards, or to say what is difficult for her. She is capable of changing her mind about a piece she has previously liked, if in retrospect it doesn't measure up against her evolving standards:

> *In early November, we explored monologues. I had never written one before, and my first was a complete flop. I tried to write it in a German dialect. So what was the problem? Part of it was that I don't think I've heard anyone speak with a German dialect. Anyway, monologues were sort of interesting, but I find that it's a lot easier to hold an audience's attention when two or more characters participate in a conversation. My second monologue, also based on "The Last Leaf," was almost as bad as the first one. I still dislike it. I don't think that I captured the character's true essence, which is what I think a monologue should do. After that, I challenge you to find one example of a monologue in any of my pieces. I'll bet you have a hard time.*
>
> *About the time of the never-ending monologue struggle, we were reading Saint-Exupery's adorable story, The Little Prince. My "Matters of Consequence" piece, which was the first to actually make an appearance in my portfolio, stemmed from this. When I first wrote it, I really liked the piece. I thought it was my best one thus far, and I chose it as my first portfolio piece because I thought it told a lot about me as a writer. Now that I look back, it tells a lot about me as a person, but doesn't reveal much of my true writing style. Plus, the grammar is not good at all. It's the kind of piece that, if you saw it in an English book, would tell you to circle and correct all of the mistakes. And it would take forever. Oh well. As the old saying goes, you can't grammatize 'em all . . .*

From the perspective she has gained by the end of the year, the student can see strengths in a piece she originally disliked and describe what she learned from working on it. She also knows when she wants to stand by her original evaluation:

> *And you must remember the next piece. It went on and on and on and on and on and . . . Now I bet it's coming back to you. Since you've probably read my "Biography of Almond Cave" I'll just give you a short synopsis of my conflicting feelings about the "Almond Cave" piece itself. It was the first thing during this school year that I actually hated. And I hated it with a passion. It was nine typed pages of absolutely nothing. Or so I thought at the time. Now I like it. A lot. The piece that I hated so vehemently won me a writing award from the National Council of Teachers of English. Go figure! Anyway, this piece taught me a lot about the proper use of dialogue to really enhance a piece and about the value of multiple revision partners.*
>
> *And now it's January. Time for another free writing piece. This was one that I liked when I first wrote it, and one that I still like. It's about sheep. Now, you may ask "How could anyone write a story that makes any sense about sheep?!?" It was funny, okay? Here was where I learned that real life experiences can make a good fiction piece. If, that is, you twist them around a little bit . . .*

The student knows what kinds of writing — and reading — she does and doesn't like to do, and she lets her reader know about her values and perceptions:

> *And then in blew March. And Golding's Lord of the Flies. And the ideas of theses (or however you say that you have more than one thesis). This continued through April. I hope I never have to write another expository paper. I hated the book and I hated the theses that I wrote. They were a heart-wrenching struggle (well, maybe that's a* little *bit of an exaggeration, but not much) and, by my own standards, a dismal failure.*
>
> *Come May, we thankfully moved on to Edgar Allen Poe. I loved his work. I found him to be a captivating and absolutely fabulous author. I really enjoyed writing the Raven piece, especially since I love to write descriptively. I sometimes get very vivid pictures in my mind, and I love to try and describe them to an audience. What a relief. No more theses! (I'm* still *happy about that!)*

In addition, drawing on her experience throughout the year, the student is able to recognize the challenges in a particular assignment. She can say what strategies the assignment required that were new to her, and see their place in relation to her development throughout the year:

> *And finally, June rolled around. And with it, Animal Farm. What a great book! This time, however, we had to teach a lesson about power through one of a variety of creative genres. You might not think that was so hard, after reading Animal Farm, but this time, we had to write before we read, a hard transition for those of us who were used to having at least an example to go by. But from my own personal point of view, it wasn't that difficult. At least not after I got an idea. That took awhile. This is a piece that I like now, but after a month or two, who knows? But even if I decide that I hate it next month, it was just one of the many ways of writing we've explored over the course of the past year.*

Toward the end of her reflection, making good on an expectation she established earlier with her reader, the student provides a view into revision as it occurs in her classroom. In doing so, she describes the careful construction of a climate that supports her and her classmates as they learn to take the risks involved in genuine response to one another's work:

> *All right. So I've taken you through the whole year (the abridged version). But I still haven't told you about revision, which I did say I'd talk more about later. At the beginning of the year, we really didn't have much experience with peer revision. Usually, our parents read our pieces, or maybe the occasional close friend, but revision usually consisted of running the spellchecker and proof-reading for grammatical errors. So none of us knew quite what to say when we first got into revision groups. It was easy to say that a piece was good, but now we had to give the specific "latitude and longitude" of the good parts? And how could we tactfully say that the ending needed to be changed? It was hard. The first time we got into groups to revise, no one wanted to make comments. We were afraid to write on one another's papers. But little by little, everyone began to feel more comfortable with each other. After switching revision partners for a few*

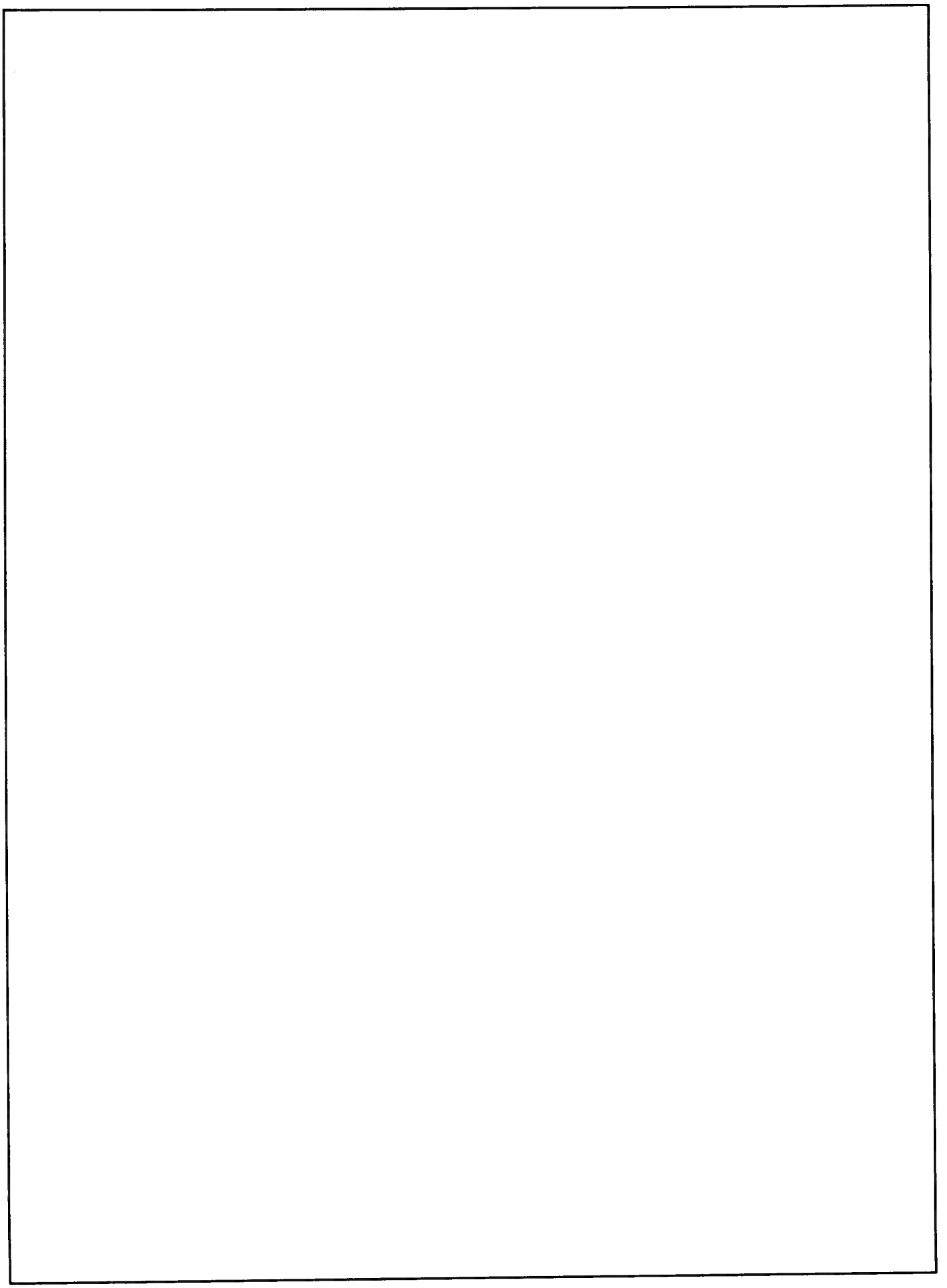
assignments, everyone sort of found their "niche" and at the same time found a partner on their level who could work constructively with them. We began to be less inhibited, we found ourselves not only able to write in the margins of people's papers, but we felt free to cross things out and write new ones in their place. We began trading papers, enlarging revision groups to make the maximum use of everybody's talent. And that's the best way to write. Or at least, we all think so.

Finally, the student sums up with a statement about the meaning of her classroom experience and an implicit tribute to the teacher and fellow students who created the environment for learning in which she has been able to learn and grow:

And so I've taken you through it all. But not really. A little white piece of paper, as expressive as the words written upon it may be, is not enough to express the true meaning of what Language Arts has become, not only to me, but I think to almost everyone in the class. It is a friendly environment of discussion and compatible argument, a place of freedom of the mind. A place where everyone, no matter where their talent lies, be it in writing, or music, or art, or even belly dancing, is welcome. A place to explore what the written word is and what it can be. A place to express the feeling deep within ourselves.

For the student who wrote this reflective piece, self-assessment is clearly more than an exercise practiced a few times a year. It is a habit of mind carefully nurtured by her teacher and supported by an environment of inquiry and discovery. The reader of the piece gains insight not only into this habit of mind but into the classroom in which it has developed, where students write and read, listen and respond, and where they discuss what they see in their own or someone else's writing, what they think is good and what they think could be improved. It is a classroom in which students evolve and apply personal standards that are at once ambitious and realistic. It illustrates the potential for students' involvement with assessment.

In many respects, this piece of writing also illustrates what the work in Arts PROPEL has been about. The aim of this work is not just the creation of projects in poetry or playwriting, nor even the development of portfolios, but the nurturing of an environment for learning in which students acquire the resources and dispositions they need to assume increased responsibility for their own learning. The writing that students do should then show signs of such an environment. As one of the supervisors working with Arts PROPEL has observed: "When you open portfolios and writing folders, you open the doors to the classroom."



CHAPTER 6

SAMPLE 7th GRADE PORTFOLIO

To illustrate the application of the evaluation framework to portfolios, a student portfolio is presented in this chapter. The work presented is by a seventh-grade student. It was evaluated within the expectations appropriate to middle school students' writing. Probably the best way a reader can approximate the experience of evaluating the portfolio is to read the student's portfolio and then read the portfolio analysis provided below.

The order of pieces in the sample portfolio is confusing because the student selected the same piece (the November 29 story, "I was awakened on this beautiful morning...") as the basis for her Biography of a Work and as the Satisfying Piece in her portfolio update. Therefore, the portfolio reader encounters two pieces of in-depth reflection (Biography of a Work and Writing Portfolio Update) and a cover sheet before coming upon the story itself. As indicated in the Table of Contents for the portfolio, the order in general for each piece is in-depth reflection, cover sheet, then final draft followed by rough draft and pre-writing exercises. The final draft of the story appears on pages 99-102; the pre-writing is on pages 110-111, and the first draft is on pages 103-109. The copy has been touched up to make it legible.

For **Accomplishment in writing**, the raters gave this portfolio the next-to-highest score, a 3. For some traits there seemed to be evidence of outstanding performance: setting and meeting worthwhile challenges, establishing and maintaining purpose, use of language, sound, images, tone, voice (especially tone and voice), and humor, metaphor, playfulness. The evidence for use of the techniques and choices of the genre, particularly in the first story and the newspaper interview, also suggests a high level of performance.

In the second category, **Use of processes and resources for writing**, the portfolio received relatively high ratings. The portfolio was seen by some raters as exhibiting characteristics of performance almost at the outstanding level for awareness of features important to writing (the use of plot and detail in the first story, the reflection on metaphor — or lack of metaphor — in the poem) and ability to describe what one sees and knows about writing (the very specific observations about text in several of the reflections). The raters did not find sufficient evidence to make any judgment about the writer's use of the classroom social context for writing. Although the writer says in the Biography of a Work that she did not share her writing, this statement about one piece of writing does not indicate that she never shares her writing. Overall, the evidence seemed to call for a rating of 3 in this category.

The portfolio received highest ratings in the third category, **Development as a writer**, where it was seen as exhibiting many of the traits of outstanding performance — though still with plenty of opportunity for improvement as a writer. This overall rating was especially interesting in view of the perception by most raters that the selections in

the portfolio did not themselves show clear evidence of progress. The earliest piece in the portfolio, the November 29 story, starts off at a fairly high level of performance, and the later portfolio selections illustrate variety more clearly than progress. Because the student consistently attempts new writing tasks in the pieces selected for the portfolio, the reader has little basis for direct comparison of skills in early and late pieces of writing. Nevertheless, the student's reflections reveal increased perceptiveness about her writing and an evolving sense of criteria for writing, both of which suggest genuine development. The portfolio received especially high ratings for use of writing for different purposes, genres, and audiences, for engagement with writing, for increased investment in writing tasks, for sense of self as a writer, achievements and purposes as a writer, and for evolution of personal criteria and standards for writing.

When asked to describe the student's strengths as a writer, the raters cited her willingness to set challenges and meet them, her engagement with and investment in writing, the use of writing for different purposes, and her sense of personal criteria and standards for writing. The raters thought the student's developmental needs would eventually be met if she continued to experiment with different purposes for writing. Their more specific recommendations were that the writer be encouraged to become more aware of the range of processes that can be used in writing, and in particular that she be encouraged to share her writing with others if she does not already do so. They felt that her control over conventions of writing would probably improve with time and experience, especially if she continued to invest the kind of attention to writing and revision that is evident in the portfolio.

Table of Contents for the Sample Portfolio

Biography of a Work
Reflection Sheet

1. Where did you get your idea (or ideas) for this piece?
I like stories about mid-evil times.
2. What was the process you went through in writing this piece? Consider what you did when you were

   A. prewriting. wrote down ideas that I saw on
   B. drafting. movies I put my ideas together as I went along
   C. sharing with others. I didn't share with others
   D. revising. I'm usually very skeptic about my work but this story wasn't that bad
   E. reflecting. I didn't reflect on this story

3. How did the piece change from rough draft to final copy?
I only changed a few things here & there.
4. What was hardest for you to do?
None it was all easy.
5. What was easiest for you to do?
It was all easy.
6. Did you ever get stuck when you were writing this piece? If so, what did you do?
Yes when I was trying to decide who the main character ended u
7. Did you share your writing with someone else to get their ideas about it?
NO
If so, how did this sharing change the way you looked at the piece?
8. How did you feel about the piece when you were writing it?
I was very confident,
9. Is there anything else you think is important about your work on this piece which adds to the picture of the "biography"?
No

WRITING PORTFOLIO UPDATE

1. Read everything in your writing folder and portfolio.
2. Select a piece of your writing which you would categorize as "satisfying" and one which you would categorize as "unsatisfying."
3. Respond to the following questions about your pieces.

A. The satisfying piece:

- Which piece did you select?

I selected my Make-Believe-World story

- Why do you characterize this piece as "satisfying"?

It had more depth than my usual writings

- What did you learn about yourself as a writer from your work and reflection on this piece?

My writing ability has improved.

B. The unsatisfying piece:

- Which piece did you select? My Spring poem
- Why do you characterize this piece as "unsatisfying"? Please give very specific reasons.

I don't like writing poetry Also I think I am capable of much better work. It is a very simple poem as opposed to deep

- Given the opportunity, how would you revise this piece?

Take out the "like"s and put in more metaphors. I could possably have made it longer.

Please place both pieces and this reflection in your portfolio.

Arts PROPEL--Pittsburgh Public Schools

COVER SHEET FOR WRITING SELECTION

Name _____

Grade _____

Teacher _____

Date 1/14/91

Audience 12-13 year olds

Please describe the writing assignment (2-3 sentences explaining what you were asked to do).

I had to put myself in a make believe world. The story had to be based on that place.

What do you like best about this piece of your writing?

It has alot of details, it's put together nicely.

Which of your writing skills or ideas are you least satisfied with in this piece?

I think I could have made it longer, but instead I made the end just cut off. Why?

English 7-2
Nov. 27, 1990

I was awakened on this beautiful morning in Terrianville by a comotion outside, in the town square. I walked to my window, and locked out, the flowers below me, pale & soft were almost to beautiful for me to care what was happen When I finally stopped admireing ou Kingdom I could hardly wait to see wha the fuss was about. I slipped an old pair of pants and a plain blue shirt, the pants were torn at the knee but I didn't care.

Running through our small kitchen to the front door my mother stopped me, "Clara," she began, "wh are you going in such a hurry?"

"I'm going to the square to see wh all the comotion is about."

"If there is a problem don't get to involved."

"Yeah" my sister Meghan nagged. Remember that time when you miss heard. Some and spread a rumor about a dragon you caused the knites to get read to slay a creature that didn't eve exist."

She was only a year younger than me but she sure knew how to make me mad. I had no reply to her comment.

It wasn't very proper for a girl my age, 11 years old, twelve in one month to be running around wearing dirty, torn clothes, and hanging around boys.

I ran quickly to the square. A I got closer I saw a beautiful carr with 2 white horses. There was a handsom young man in the middle of t crowd. He looked familiar in a way. He was explaining something. I pushed through the crowd to hear better.

"I am Prince Ian of Naughtingham," he began with a gentle, accent, "I am he in search of my younger sister, Prince Clarabelle. She got lost when she was only eleven months old, so everyone asum she had died, and eventually forgot about

Next month she would be 12 years old The girl he was talking about was a lot like me, she had the same name and the same age, I just thought of it as a coincedence.

Some one in the crowd said, "How do we know this girl you speak of realy existed?"

With that he braught out a scr it was a birth certificate. When he read it, the part he emphisised the most wa that she had an unusual birthmark on her knee

Just then he looked at me with unbelief, he sat me down and looked at the hole in my pants. I felt ashamed, but befor I could ask what he was doing he asked my name.

"Clara" I replied.

"I found you, and all because of the birth mark on your knee."

We went to my house. And explained the situation to my family, it was a very bad time. Half of me was overjoyed and yet half of me wished it had never happ

My mother explained to me that they found me and thought of me as

there own..

I packed my stuff with tears in my eyes thinking of all the good times we had and imagining what the future would be like, living in a castle. As I came downstares my family was smilin with bags at there sides. At first I thought they were happy that I was leaving.

"We're coming with you," my sister said

"This is no time for jokes," I said.

"It's true," Ian said, "we decided that since they raised you so well, all of you can live in our castle."

The last thing we packed were m torn pants, for they were the reason we all lived so happily together in th castle of Naughtingham.

Rough Draft

Name _____

Subject: _____

Date: _____

Job: _____

I was awakened on this beautiful morning in Terrianville by a comotion outside in the town square. The I walked to my the flowers pale and soft were almost to beautiful to for me care what was happening. When I finally stoped admireing our beutiful kingdom I could hardly wait to see what all the fuss was about in the kingdom. I sliped on an old pair of pants, and a plain old blue shirt the pants were torn at the knee but I didn't care I ran down through the small kitchens to the front door when my mother stoped

Rough Draft

Name: _____

Subject: _____

Date: _____

Job: _____

me. "Ch a," she began, "Where are you going in such a hurry?" "I'm going to the square to see what's the commotion about." "If there is a problem don't get to involved." "Yo" my sister, Megan nagged "remember the time you heard something wrong and started a rumor that a dragon in the kingdom, you caused all of the knites to get already to slay a creature that didn't even exist." She was only a year younger than me, but she was smarter and she knew how to make me mad, I had no reply to her comment.

Rough Draft

Name:

Subject:

Date:

Job:

PAR It wasn't very proper for a girl my age, 11-12 ~~1/2~~ 1/2 mo to be running around all the time with boys, and wearing dirty torn clothes. PAR I ran to the square, as I got closer I saw a ~~beautiful carrage~~ with 2 white horses. There was a handsom young man in the middle of the crowd. I could hear that he was trying to explain something, but befor he could finish they would interupt him. I pushed through the crowd to hear better. He began, PAR "I am ~~Hamlet~~ I am here in search of my younger sister, Princess

Rough Draft

Name

Subject:

Date:

Job:

Clarabelle, she ~~was~~ got lost when she was only ~~the~~ eleven months old, next month she would be 12 years old. If you have any information about her I would be greatly thankful I just hope she is alive."

so ~~the~~ everyone assumed she probably died so everyone forgot about her.

PAR Finaly people let him talk. Some one in the crowd said "How do we know she even existed" ~~[illegible]~~

PAR With that he brought out a scroll, it was a birth certificate. ~~The~~ When he read it, the part he emphisised the most was that she had an unusual birth mark on her knee.

Rough Draft

Name:_____

Subject:_____

Date:_____

Job:_____

Just then he looked at me with unbelief. He grabbed me and said, "This is the princess! People where shouting "How do you know," That was a question I should have asked, but before I could, he explained, through the hole in her knee I noticed the birth mark stated on the scroll. We went to my house. When we came in the house I wasn't quite sure if I believed the prince, I just needed my mother to tell me it wasn't true. Oh, and who might this be?" my mother said as she entered the room. I explain to her what he told

Rough Draft

Name:

Subject:

Date:

Job:

me. I wasn't fond of him any more, what a silly story, me a princess. My mother ~~said~~ called me into the other room where she and Prince Hansel were discussing the birth certificate. I said "I new it wasn't." She interrupted me "It is true Clarabelle we found you when you were a baby and we thought of you as our own since then," she was crying "I guess you ~~are~~ belong back in your own castle in your own kingdom with your real family." "You are my real family." I replyed. After lots of arguing about the situation, the Prince came up with a wonderful idea.

my family could come
with me to live in the cast
of Naughtingham. The Prince, my
brother said that since they
did such a good job bringing
me up that they deserve to
live in the castle. After we
packed everything an got rea
to leave I had one question
my brother the prince. "May I
bring my pants with me?
I know they aren't proper for
a princess, but they where the
thing that made you find me."
"You certanly may Princess Clara!"
Prince Jason replied. And we lived
happily ever after.

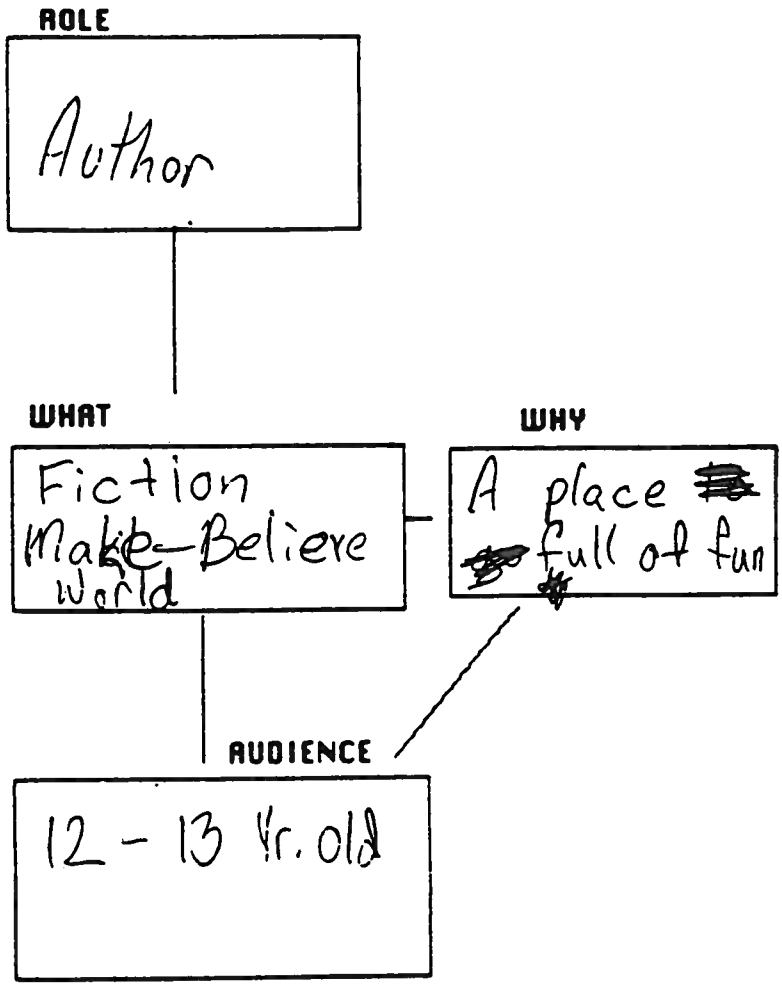
I Was Awakened on this Beautiful Morning

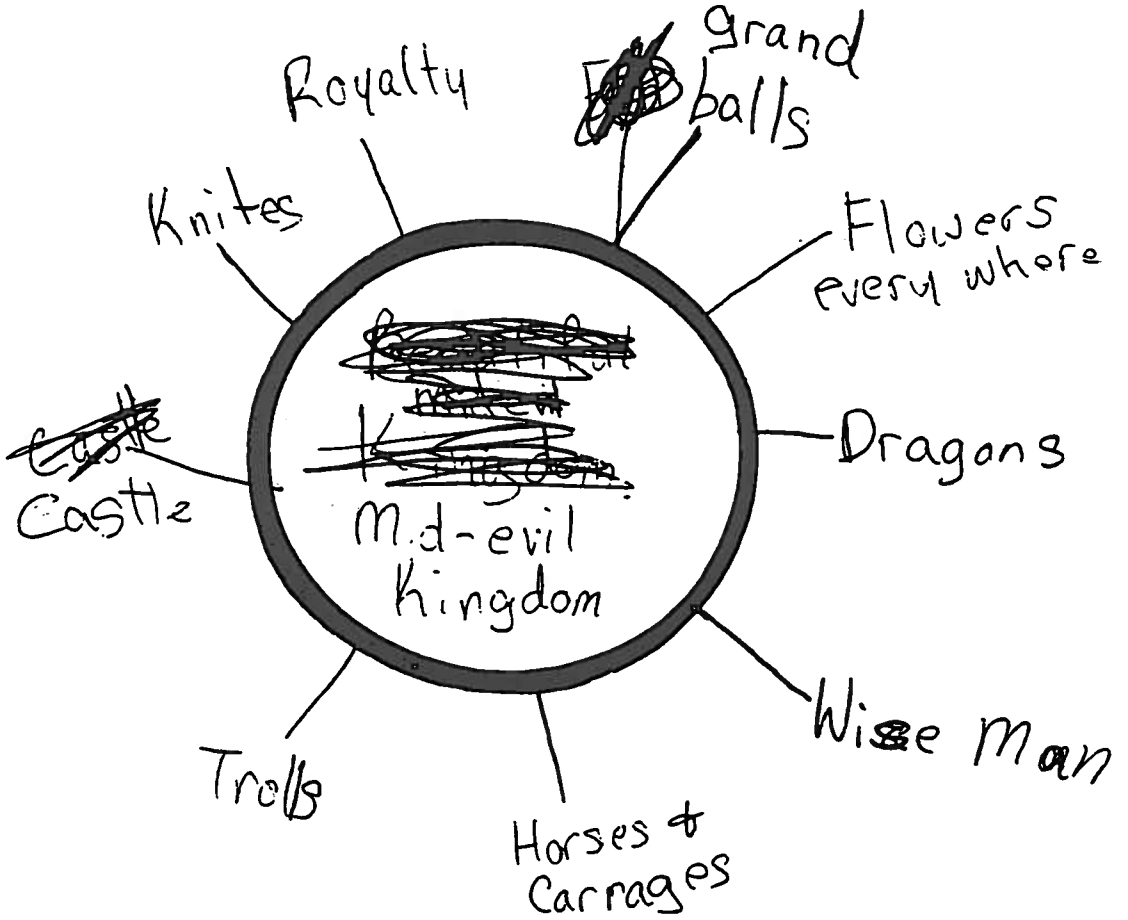
Pre-writing

NAME _____

DATE : 11/8/90

JOB : Make-Believe Worl




Royalty
grand balls
Knites
Flowers every where
Dragons
Castle
M.d-evil Kingdom
Wise Man
Trolls
Horses & Carrages

THINK

COVER SHEET FOR WRITING SELECTION

Name _____

Grade _____

Teacher _____

Date 5/15/91

Audience class

Please describe the writing assignment (2-3 sentences explaining what you were asked to do).

I had to write a poem about my thoughts about Spring.

What do you like best about this piece of your writing?

I like the similes that I used. I am too

Which of your writing skills or ideas are you least satisfied with in this piece?

I should have used at least one metaphor. - But the poem is good.

Why? There are to. many "like"s. I could b-

Arts PROPEL--Pittsburgh Public Schools

Spring

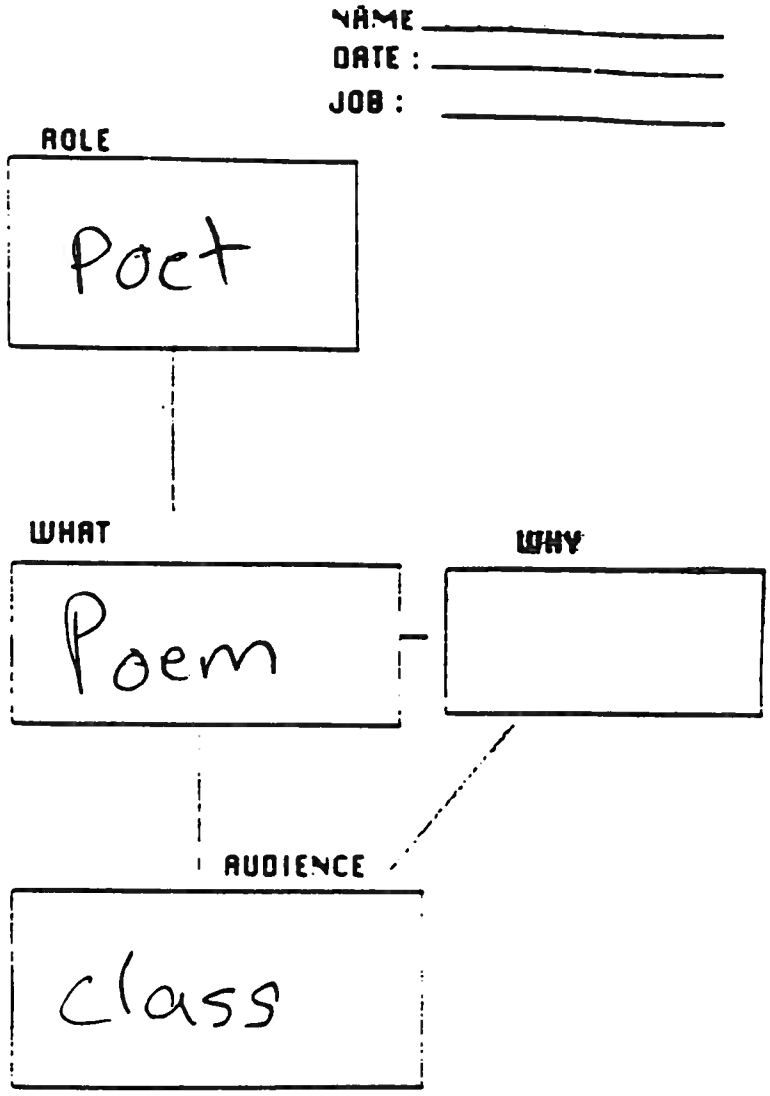
High winds blow
Like a fan on extra high speed
Thunder roars like a lion.
Rain pours down into streams.
Raindrops splash in puddles
causing ocean-like waves.
Spring rushes in, like a
hurricane.

Spring: Rough Draft

Name:
Subject:
Date:
Job:

High winds blow
Like a fan on extra high speed
Thunder roars like a lion
Rain pours down into the
streams
Rain drops splashing in
in puddls causing ocean-like
waves.
Spring rushes in, like a
hurricane

Spring: Pre-writing



Writing Portfolio

Free Pick

Selection News story

Date 5/7/97

Reasons for Selection This type of writing is different than other stories I wrote. that is why I liked it. I injoyed that type of writing.

COVER SHEET FOR WRITING SELECTION

Name _____

Grade _____

Teacher _____

Date March 7, 1991

Audience class

Please describe the writing assignment (2-3 sentences explaining what you were asked to do).
On this assignment I had to write a news story about Ms. Finney's court hearing as if I were a reporter in the courtroom.

What do you like best about this piece of your writing?
I got to look at the story from a different point of view.

Which of your writing skills or ideas are you least satisfied with in this piece?
unneeded information

Why? I shouldn't have put the stuff about the kids getting suspended in it

Name: _____
Subject: _____
Date: _____
Job: _____

Teacher, Ms. Finny of Dwight D. Eisenhower Junior High refused to say the Pledge. She says "I choose not to say it, I salute the flag each morning as a symbol of what this country is supposed to be, but I can't say the pledge. I'm a good American. I care about the country and the people in it." The board of education attempted to fire her. Ms. Finny's students became very attached to her and didn't want to see her get fired. They were so angry with

I'm sorry to say that I don't believe this country offers "liberty and justice for all"

Rough Draft

Name: _____

Subject: _____

Date: _____

Job: _____

the threat of her getting fired that they planned to stay in homeroom until they could talk to Mr. Stone, the principal about it. As a result, 4 students, Joel Anderson, Marcy Lewis, Nancy Theisden and Robert Alexander were suspended ~~The Board of Education~~ On the other hand, Mr. Stone wanted Ms. Finny fired.

At the hearings yesterday the Board of Education decided not to fire her To everyone's supris. She stood up and explained "This community has been split up

Name
Subject
Date
Job

on this issue so badly that, I doubt I can ever walk into my classes and be an effective teacher. Therefor, I feel I must resign, effective immediately. Nobody could believe their ears. Ms finny ~~[illegible]~~ thinks she did the right thing

NAME _____
DATE : Feb. 25, 1991
JOB : Reporter

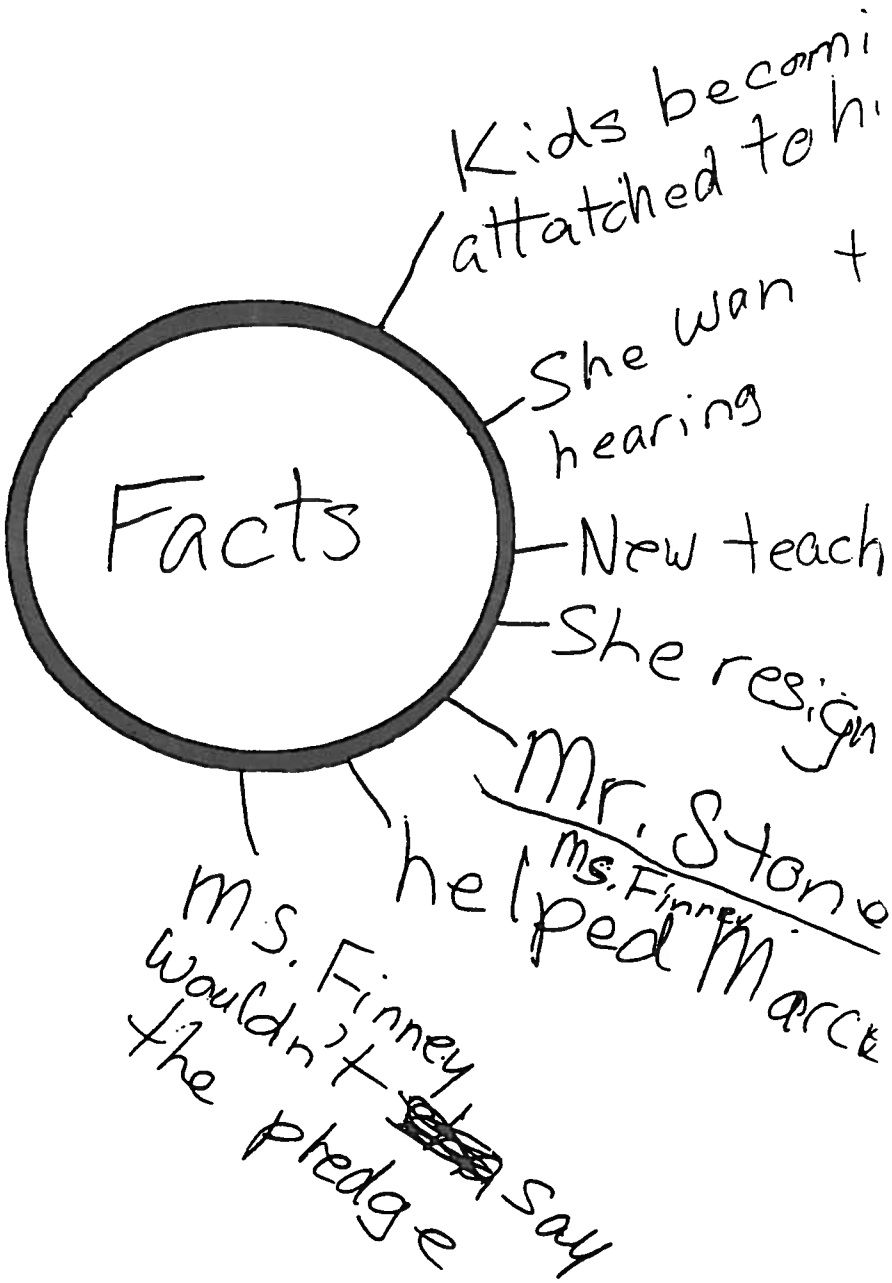
ROLE
Newspaper reporter

WHAT
News-story

WHY
to inform

AUDIENCE
Readers of Paper

Teacher, Ms. Finny of ... : Pre-writing



THINK

Newspaper – you are a reporter
:
1. 1st paragraph main or Lead paragraph

2. Back ground
-different points of veiw

3. -> Different veiw

4. Kids veiws

5. Summary

Final Reflection Sheet: Questions

Final Reflection

Finalizing Your Portfolio

Use the following questions to think about the pieces you selected and about how you have changed as a writer.

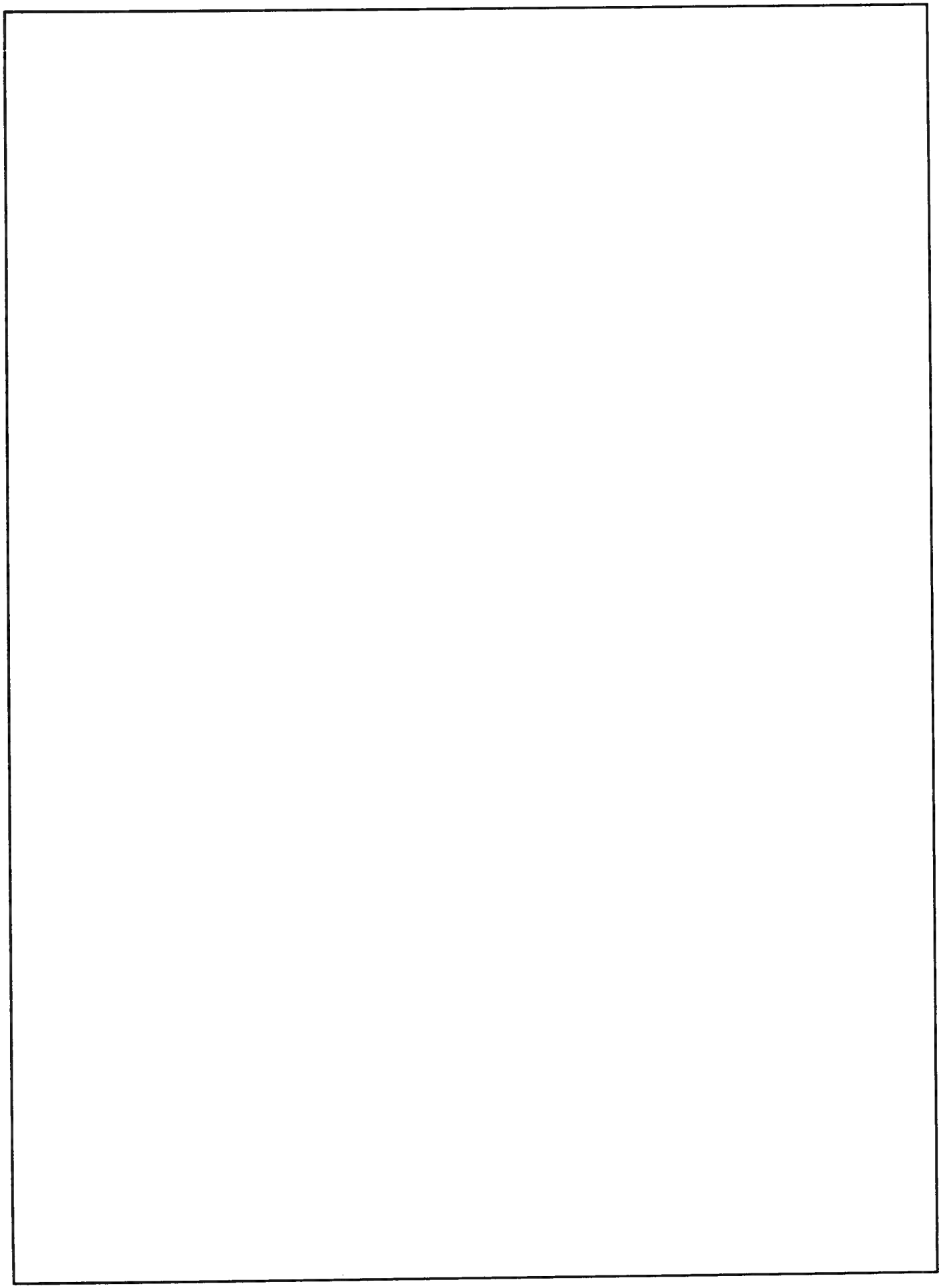
1. What do you notice when you look at your earlier work?
   I Notice that the things I was self Cantious about I now.
2. How do you think your writing has changed?
   I think my writing has improved
3. What do you know how that you didn't know before?
   I know how to add more depth to my stories and make them more like
4. At what points did you discover something new about your writing?
   I try to make eachof my writings unique
5. How do the changes you see in your writing affect the way you see yourself as a writer?
   Some of the changes make me Confident and want to write more
6. Are there any pieces you have changed your mind about over time--any that you liked before but don't like now, or any that you didn't like before, but do like now? If so, which ones?
   Most of my stories I didn't like before but like now
7. What made you change your mind about these pieces?
8. In what ways do you think your reading has influenced your writing?
   It gives me Ideas of diffrent types of things

Write in paragraph form a final reflection for your portfolio indicating how the pieces in your portfolio show the ways in which you have grown and changed as a writer. Conclude with a paragraph evaluating your strengths and setting your goals as a writer.

5. (cont) but some make me just want to quit, all + all they've mostly been pausative changes.

Final Reflection

I notice, when I look at my earlier work, that my writ are pretty good, and the things that I probably was self conci about, I like now. The stories I wrote got better as the year went on and that gives me confid and makes me want to write m On the other hand, I don't like writing poems and don't feel that I do it very well. This year I learned alot of valuable lessons about writing in class. Also the books we read gave me new ideas and new styles of writing. We learned how to write a newsstory interveur, write Haikus, and other things. I feel that all + all my changes were passative and that my writing will get even better and better.



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Address for Teachers & Writers Collaborative, which in addition to the books and tapes listed above publishes a newsletter with inventive ideas for teaching writing:

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5 Union Square West
New York, NY 10003-3306