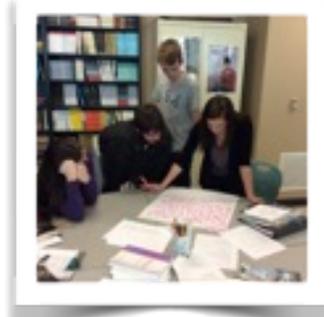
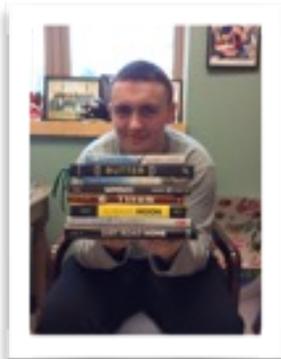


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# read & write beside them

increase confidence & independence with daily reading, writing, & revising

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*It has become clear that teaching consists of moment by moment interactive behavior, behavior that can only spring from inner conviction. ~ James Britton*

Never hesitate to imitate another writer. Imitation is part of the creative process for anyone learning an art or a craft. Bach and Picasso didn't spring full-blown as Bach or Picasso; they needed models. This is especially true of writing. ~ *William Zinsser*

Exercise the writing muscle every day, even if it is only a letter, notes, a title list, a character sketch, a journal entry. Writers are like dancers, like athletes. Without that exercise, the muscles seize up. ~ *Jane Yolen*

If you tell your students what to say and how to say it, you may never hear them, only the pale echoes of what they imagine you want them to be. ~ *Donald Murray*

People my age enjoy crying and speculating dramatically over how people our age could die. Take it from one who knows. Take it from one whose role has been, for years, *The Girl I Knew Really Well Who Tragically Died One day*.

Not that I've died yet. I am still totally here. Which is why all the artistic, goth morbidity is a bummer.

Adults want to talk about death way less than people my age do. Death is the Santa Claus of the adult world. Except Santa Claus in reverse. They guy who takes all the presents away. Big bag over the shoulder, climbing up the chimney carrying everything in a person's life, and taking off, eight-reindeered, from the roof. Sleigh loaded down with memories and wineglasses and pots and pans and sweaters and grilled cheese sandwiches and Kleenexes and text messages and ugly houseplants and calico cat fur and half-used lipstick and laundry that never got done and letters you went to the trouble of handwriting but never sent and birth certificates and broken necklaces and disposable socks with scuffs on the bottom from hospital visits.

And notes you kept on the fridge.

And pictures of boys you had crushes on.

And a dress that got worn to a dance at which you danced by yourself, before you got too skinny and too breathless to dance.

Along with, probably, though this isn't worthy of huge thinking, a soul or something.

Anyway, adults don't believe in Santa Claus. They try hard not to believe in Santa Claus in Reverse either.

At school, the whole rare-disease-impending-doom situation makes me freakishly intriguing. In the real world, it makes me a problem. Worried look, bang, nervous face, bang: "Maybe you should talk to someone about your feelings, Aza," along with a nasty side dish of what-about-God-what-about-therapy-what-about-antidepressants?

Sometimes also what-about-faith-healers-what-about-herbs-what-about-crystals-what-about-yoga? Have you tried yoga, Aza, I mean have you, because it helped this friend of a friend who was supposedly dying but didn't, due to downward dog?

No, I haven't tried yoga to cure my thing, because yoga isn't going to cure my thing. My thing is a Mystery and not just a Mystery, but Bermuda—no sun, only Triangle.

~Maria Dahvana Headley, *Magonia*

## ***Maybe A Fox* by Kathi Appelt and Alison McGhee**

“Knock-knock,” came Sylvie’s voice again. “Come on, Jules, let me in.”

“There’s no lock,” Jules called. “Duh.”

There had never been a lock on their door. Even though she was upset, Jules still had to admire that Sylvie hadn’t just barged right in the way she, Jules, might have done. The doorknob turned and there was Sylvie, tall and skinny in her pajamas. She got straight to the point.

“Why are you mad?”

“I’m not,” Jules lied.

Sylvie just pointed at the rocks laid out on Jules’s bed, a sure sign that Jules was trying to calm herself down.

“Come on. Tell me. I’m your one and only sister.”

“Stop.”

“What? I am, aren’t I? Unless you’ve got a secret other sister somewhere?”

Sylvie sat down on Jules’s bed, careful not to disturb the rocks. Then she sidled her pointer finger bit by bit, like a snake, through the rumpled blankets toward Jules. She had been doing that ever since they were tiny, and it always made Jules laugh. Jules looked away so she wouldn’t start to soften.

Sylvie abandoned the finger-snake and instead picked up the one piece of obsidian in Jules’s collection. She hefted the small polished oval in her hand.

“I remember when Mom gave you this,” she said. “It was your fourth birthday. You were already crazy about rocks.” She rolled her eyes in a what-a-weird-little-kid-you-were kind of way. “Seriously, what four-year-old kid is a rock fiend?”

That was it! Jules snatched the obsidian from Sylvie’s hand. Once again, Sylvie had invoked Mom. Obsidian was caused by volcanoes, an eruption of steam and gas so furious that it melted the earth itself into this hard, shiny object. Right then, Jules felt hard and shiny.

“You and Dad,” she said. “You’re like a secret club.”

“What are you talking about?”

“When the two of you get going about Mom. How do you think it makes me feel?”

Sylvie looked puzzled. Jules kept going. “It’s like you remember everything about her!” Jules rubbed her thumb along the smooth surface of the obsidian. “But me? I hardly remember anything. All I see when I try to picture her is her hair, which is exactly like . . . like . . .”

She stopped talking and carefully placed the obsidian back on her bed, back into the vertical category of igneous rocks.

“Mine,” Sylvie finished the sentence. “The same color as mine. Is that what you were going to say?”

Jules nodded. Yes. That was what she was going to say.

What she wasn’t going to say: that no matter how hard she tried, her memories of their mom grew smaller and smaller, each one folding in on itself, so that not even her 10x magnifier could see them.”

## ***LaRose* by Louise Erdrich**

THE DAY CAME. Romeo and Landreaux ambled into the go-home line and lingered at the very end. Bowl Head stood by the open bus door, scanning her checklist. Each student in the line held a sack of clothing. Romeo and Landreaux had sacks too. At the last moment, they ditched, sneaked around the tail end of the bus, rolled into shadow, then wormed into the guts of the machine. There was a flat foot-wide bar they could hang on that ran down the center, and beside it two catch pans that could help them balance. They put their bags in the pans and fixed themselves in place on their stomachs, feet up, ankles curled around the bar, face-to-face.

A thousand years passed before the bus roared violently to life. It bumbled along through the town streets. The boys could feel the gears locking together, changing shape, transferring power. As they pulled onto the highway the bus lurched, then socked smoothly into high gear.

They lifted their heads, dazzled, in the vast rumble of the engine. Their ears hurt. Occasionally bits of stone or gravel kicked up and stung like buckshot. Seams in the asphalt jarred their bones. Their bodies were pumped on adrenaline and a dreamlike terror also gripped them. On their stomachs, feet up, ankles curled around the bar, face-to-face, they clung fear-locked to their perch.

The pain burrowed into Romeo's eardrums, but he knew if he lifted his hands to his ears he'd die falling off. The pain got worse and worse, then something exploded softly in his head and the noise diminished. The boys tried very hard not to look down at the highway. But it was all around them in a smooth fierce blur and the only other place to look was at each other.

Landreaux shut his eyes. The dark seized and dizzied him. He had to focus on Romeo, who didn't like to be looked at and did not ever meet another person's eyes, unless a teacher held his head and forced him. It wasn't done in Landreaux's family. It wasn't done among their friends. It drove white teachers crazy. In those days, Indians rarely looked people in the eye. Even now, it's an uneasy thing, not honest but invasive. Under the bus, there was no other place for the two boys to look but into each other's eyes. Even when the two got old and remembered the whole experience, this forced gaze was perhaps the worst of it.

Romeo's rat-colored buzz cut flattened and his pupils smoked with fear. Landreaux's handsome mug was squashed flat by wind and his lush hair was flung straight back. His eyes were pressed into long catlike slits, but he could see—oh, yes he could see—the lighter brown splotches in Romeo's pinwheel irises, mile after mile. And he began to think, as minutes passed, endless minutes mounting past an hour, a timeless hour, that Romeo's eyes were the last sight he would see on earth because their bodies were losing the tension they needed to grip the bar. Arms, shoulders, stomach, thighs, calves—all locked but incrementally loosening as though the noise itself were prying them away from their perch. If they hadn't both been strong, light, hard-muscled boys who could shimmy up flagpoles, vault fences, catch a branch with one arm, and swing themselves into a tree, over a fence, they would have died. If the

bus hadn't slowed exactly when it did and pulled into a rest stop, they would also have died.

They were speechless with pain. Landreaux gagged a few words out, but they found they could hear nothing. They watched each other's mouths open and shut.

They cried sliding off the bar as blood surged back into muscle. From beneath the bus, they saw Bowl Head's thick, creamy legs, and the driver's gray slacks. Then the other kids' boney ankles and shuffling feet. They waited on the tarred parking lot ground until everyone had gone to the bathrooms and was back inside. The doors closed, the driver started the bus idling, and that's when they rolled out from underneath. They dove behind a trash barrel. Once the bus was gone, they staggered off into a scrim of thick blue spruce trees on the perimeter. For half an hour, they writhed beneath the branches and bit on sticks. When the pain subsided just enough for them to breathe, they were very thirsty, hungry too, and remembered they'd left their sacks stuck beneath the bus. They sharply recalled the bread they'd squirreled away with their clothes.

## Why Sentence Study?

Penny Kittle

While she poured, chair legs scraped the floorboards, ice cubes cracked between molars, and silverware clattered against plates.

~Adelle Waldman

This sentence can be used to teach several important things at once when students are invited first, to study the sentence and list things they notice about the way it works, and two, imitate the sentence with their own.

- The use of sound as a sensory detail that engages readers.
- The use of parallel structure to expand an image and create a pleasing rhythm at the same time.
- The use of specific verbs to carry a sentence.
- Smart alliteration in a sentence ('cubes cracked')
- Consonance (poured, boards, molars; clattered, plates) is pleasing to the ear—feels as if a writer is paying attention to words as he writes

I model what I mean by “noticing” just like I do when we study mentor texts. I also use student annotations to teach approximations... how observations, even when you don't know the name of the tool are important.

I also model imitation, creating a sentence like the one above with my own experiences. When students imitate a pattern, of course, they learn its elements deeply. I create an imitation sentence live in front of them, struggling to find words or images for the sentence as they watch. (When I create my example sentence before the lesson, my students miss out on all of the teaching my model can show them—how to think as you craft sentences.)

What do you notice about this mentor sentence from a non-fiction feature article? (List with a partner.)

Try an imitation of one that follows the pattern of the sentence.

Early mornings are a wondrous time on the backside of the racetrack. The shed rows are alive with pre-dawn activity, the stalls getting mucked out, the hay racks restocked, the feed tubs refilled. Floodlights partially sweep aside the darkness. Mist hangs in the heavy air. Seabirds swoop past in low arcs.

~Barry Bearak, *“The Jockey”*, *New York Times*

## NOTEBOOKS

### Penny Kittle

#### **Passage Study... helping students imitate great writing to understand conventions better and to generate ideas for other writing**

*The important thing about my family being Baha'i was that growing up I was exposed to lots of big ideas about philosophy, art, spirituality, and the human condition. Don't get me wrong. My parents were dysfunctional misfits who couldn't effectively parent a sack of russet potatoes. But they were good hearted dysfunctional misfits with eclectic and expansive ideas. (Wilson, x)*

The important thing about my family being in crisis in neighborhood of perceived perfection is that I was taught to lie to cover up my father's absences from work, the bounced checks at grocery stores, or the new scrapes and dents in our cars. Don't get me wrong. My parents were funny and lively and serious and playful, creative and thoughtful and truly generous people who were always extending themselves to help others. But in the first 12 years of my life when alcoholism had ahold of my father, we spun like a wobbly top keening from one side to another, unable to right ourselves for long. Lying was not only expected, it was practiced, perfected, and used regularly to minimize immediate consequences, and that is volatile skill to teach a pre-teen.

~Penny Kittle

*More than once did Elizabeth in her ramble within the Park, unexpectedly meet Mr. Darcy.—She felt all the perverseness of the mischance that should bring him where no one else was brought; and to prevent its every happening again, took care to inform him at first, that it was a favorite haunt of hers.—How it could occur a second time therefore was very odd!—Yet it did, and even a third. ~Jane Austen*

More than once did Penny in her first reading conferences with students, unexpectedly discover a history of non-reading—and she felt all the perverseness of the misfortune that should bring a student through three years of high school without reading a wit; and to prevent it from recurring, took care to inform him of the wealth of books that might be just right and worthy of his effort.—How it would occur moments later in another conference was therefore very sad!—Yet it did, and even a third. ~Penny Kittle

*Depending on when you met me, I might have been: a checkers champion, the kid who squirted Super Glue in his eye, a competitive Ping-Pong player, Tweedle Dum, a high school valedictorian, a fake blond, 1/12 of an all-male a capella group, a graduate of the Vanderbilt School of Engineering, a nomad, a street musician, or a pigeon assassin.*

~Devon Gundry

Depending on when you met me I might have been: a curler, a kid who set a boy's pants on fire, a competitive tennis player, Big Bird, a soda jerk, the second-shortest in my class, 1/5 of the varsity football cheerleaders at Franklin High School, a graduate of cooking school (twice), Lady Macbeth, a dedicated, early a.m. runner, or a clown at children's birthday parties. ~Penny Kittle

*My family members could not be more different from one another. The mix includes one rocket scientist brother; one fashionista sister; one honey-harvesting, lover-of-all-creatures-big-and-small mother; and one classic music enthusiast father. And then there's me—a camera junkie and jetsetter with a penchant for tasty type treatments (and alliteration). ~Golriz Lucina*

### **And from non-fiction...**

*Early mornings are a wondrous time on the backside of the racetrack. The shed rows are alive with pre-dawn activity, the stalls getting mucked out, the hay racks restocked, the feed tubs refilled. Floodlights partially sweep aside the darkness. Mist hangs in the heavy air. Seabirds swoop past in low arcs. ~Barry Bearak, "The Jockey", New York Times*

Early afternoons boil with energy on the backside of a school day. The classrooms empty of teenagers, the locker doors slam, the voices and shouts bounce toward the exit, cars fill then stack onto Eagles Way, nudging slowly toward the traffic light. Athletes sweep aside the silence of the practice fields. Drummers spinning sticks with fast hands gather and march through the now-empty parking lot. Teachers clear white boards, shelve books, gather papers, and begin reading, marking, learning. ~Penny Kittle

## Select sentences and passages to study from writing in the world:

I have broken my wrists, fingers, tibia, a fibula, chipped a handful of teeth, cracked a vertebra and snapped a collarbone. I have concussed myself in Tallahassee, Fla., and Portland, Ore. I've skittered across the sooty hoods of New York cabs and bombed down many of San Francisco's steepest avenues.

For many years I was a professional skateboarder. I first stepped on a skateboard at 11. The nomenclature—switch-stance frontside tailside, kickflip to nose manual—was the language of my first friendships, with wild, strange boys who were as ill-suited for school and team sports as I was. They were from broken homes. Poor homes. Group homes. We were like little cement mixers, keeping ourselves in constant motion, our skateboard's movement the only thing preventing us from hardening into blocks of pure rage.

~Michael Christie, "All Parents are Cowards," *New York Times*

Certainly there are more interesting, more original, and more accurate ways to answer the question how are you? How about: I'm hungry for a waffle; I'm envious of my best friend; I'm annoyed by everything that's broken in my house; I'm itchy.

Yet busy stands as the easiest way of summarizing all that you do and all that you are. I am busy is the short way of saying—suggesting—my time is filled, my phone does not stop ringing, and you (therefore) should think well of me.

~Amy Krause Rosenthal, *Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life*

Someone asks, "How do you evaluate multigenre papers?"

"Thanks for coming today," I say. "I'm afraid we're out of time."

Brief laughter. I've just suggested what many teachers wish they could do: avoid evaluation. Regardless of subject area, many of us grapple with evaluation: We want to be rigorous, yet fair; we want to set high standards, yet be true to our beliefs that learning is a matter of growth and development; we want to hold students accountable yet be sensitive to legitimate needs; we want to alert students to error, yet reward what's done well."

~Tom Romano, *Fearless Writing*

## Passage/Craft Study from *This is the Story of You* by Beth Kephart

The guy turned his head inside his hoodie. He crammed his fists inside the pockets of his green-and-purple madras shorts. He slapped the heel of one flip-flop, then *slapped slapped slapped* toward the single extra chair, sat his long self down, hood still up, eyes averted. He was a transfer from someplace.

My prime business in Haven concerned my brother, Jasper Lee, who was Home of the Brave to me, whose disease I knew all the long words to, because knowing the names of things is one small defense against the sad facts of reality.

Worrying was Deni's Job Number One. She'd lost the big things in life. A brother first (Afghanistan) and then a father (hole in the heart). The news that had changed Deni's life and consequently had changed Deni had arrived in suits seven months apart, a knock on the door—the army people, the police—and who could blame her for the thoughts she had, the days she didn't trust, the plans she was forever putting into place, the precautions she took. Shore Up. That was Deni's Project Flow. Dams, dikes, levees, green-blue corridors, sea gates, surge control, blue dunes, oyster reefs, wrap the city of Manhattan up in plastic, float Venice on buoys. Do something. Mitigate the risks. Do not disappear. Deni was cautious on behalf of every one of us. Deni was taking care.

We looked. We drew. We listened. We walked deeper in. Through the green shade, beneath the tree cover, into the smell of pine, old moss, cracked shells, root rot.

The atmosphere zinged with blue.

I stood looking out for a while, watching the inscrutable dark. The white teeth on the black sea seemed closer than before.

## Caged Warrior Alan Sitorner

Some kids have dads who raise them to be golfers. Others, quarterbacks. Still others to play tennis or soccer or baseball. I was raised to cage fight. Ever since I was three, my dad schooled me to brawl. Taught me to grapple, box, ground-and-pound, strike while standing up, and submit an opponent while lying down. From Sambo to Brazilian jiu-jitsu, Greco-Roman wrestling to Aikido, joint locks to pin holds to pressure-point manipulation, I'm an assassin in the art of hurt. My father wants me to do more than just defeat my opponents; he wants me to destroy them.

"It's how champions are made," he tells me. "And one day, you will be world champion."

"Yes, sir."

How do I feel about all this? Fact is, I don't really give much thought to those kinds of questions. Feelings are luxuries when there's a growl in your family's stomach.

The bell rang to begin Round Two. I rose from my stool and headed back out onto the dance floor, my body a weapon poised to strike.

It used to be that there were no rounds at all in underground cage fighting. When I first started out, opponents just went toe-to-toe gladiator-style until there was only one warrior left standing. However, a few years ago the Priests recognized that having seven-minute rounds followed by ninety-second battle breaks created more action.

And more bloodshed and more dynamite exchanges

and more destruction, too. Therefore, since those were the things that paying people loved to see, those were the things that paying people got. The only thing that really matters to the Priests anyway is the money. As the Mafia-style organization in charge of underworld cage fighting, the Priests of the Street were a criminal crew who understood that happy customers would also be returning customers. Sanctioned fights could be seen at home on TV. Raw, underage, gloveless, savage wars could only be seen live.

Funny, but bootleg recordings of the Sat Nite Fights and piracy wasn't really a problem for the Priests, either. Not at all. Ever. Anyone who had the balls to try to secretly film our cage battles to post on the Internet would discover the pleasure of tire irons shattering their shinbones or brass knuckles tickling their jaws. Too much money was being made on the weekend war circuit. And too much attention on the underground battles could jeopardize the other streams of black-market cash the Priests were raking in from their wide variety of extensive criminal enterprises.

Essentially, as a gang, the Priests had their fingers in all kind of pies, so they made sure every fan in attendance was aware of the rule: the No Cell Phone policy would be strictly enforced and violators would get no second chances.

The break in the rounds, however, didn't just give fighters a small rest to collect their thoughts, regain their wind, and rethink their strategy; they gave the preps in the crowd more of an opportunity to place extra side-bets, too. Broke people just love to gamble, and the more money in the air, the more energy, excitement, and juice. In this country,

## **Consider how these claims in a book of fiction focus the story:**

What are our responsibilities? A Ms. Isabel question. To pay attention. To love the world. To live beyond ourselves.

I thought of the bigness of Mickey's heart and the bigness of this sorrow, and how anger ruins everything, and how much chance in life is lost.

Only thing in this world isn't replaceable is people. Find your family.

## **A study of dialogue:**

"Yo," Deni said to Eva, practically accosting her. "You coming to Rosie's?"

Which wasn't usually a question anybody ever asked, because Slurpees in off-season was our best-friend tradition. Slurpees was our gathering hour, our talk-it-over time, our gossip. Slurpees was unhitching our Modes from the racks at school, strapping our backpacks to our shoulders, and going.

But there was something about the way Eva was standing there, her ribbons of blond hair twining around her neck, her color high, her hands distracted, and Deni knew. She had her antennae way up, she was expecting as much, she was on the defense, standing close.

"Not so sure," Eva said.

"Not so sure?" Deni pressed.

"Think I'll skip it today."

"Something else to do?"

"Maybe?" Eva shrugged. She looked at Deni, looked at me, looked at her ten sparkle-decaled fingernails. "You have a Slurpee for me, okay?" Eva said to Deni, sweet as Eva always was, because Eva wasn't the kind of girl who would hurt on purpose. She was just the kind of girl who loved too much, stretched too thin, went way out of proportion too quickly, saw things that weren't there. The kind of girl who would loan her best find to a guy who'd kept his hood up all day.

## They Say/I Say Templates

### Why Templates?

Academic writing requires presenting your sources and your ideas effectively to readers. According to Graff and Birkenstein, the first element in the process involves “entering a conversation about ideas” between you—the writer—and your sources to reflect your critical thinking (ix). The templates allow you, the writer, to organize your ideas in relationship to your thesis, supporting evidence, opposing evidence, and the conclusion of the argument.

### The Most Important Templates:

On the one hand, \_\_\_\_\_. On the other hand, \_\_\_\_\_.

Author X contradicts herself. At the same time that she argues \_\_\_\_\_, she also implies \_\_\_\_\_.

I agree that \_\_\_\_\_.

She argues \_\_\_\_\_, and I agree because \_\_\_\_\_.

Her argument that \_\_\_\_\_ is supported by new research showing that \_\_\_\_\_.

In recent discussions of \_\_\_\_\_, a controversial issue has been whether \_\_\_\_\_. On the one hand, some argue that \_\_\_\_\_. On the other hand, however, others argue that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Introducing Standard Views:

Americans today tend to believe that \_\_\_\_\_.

Conventional wisdom has it that \_\_\_\_\_.

My whole life I have heard it said that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Making those Views Something You Say:

I have always believed that \_\_\_\_\_.

When I was a child, I used to think that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Writing a Summary:

She demonstrates that \_\_\_\_\_.

In fact, they celebrate the fact that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Introducing a Quote:

X insists, “\_\_\_\_\_.”

As the prominent philosopher X puts it, “\_\_\_\_\_.”

According to X, “\_\_\_\_\_.”

In her book, *Book Title*, X maintains that \_\_\_\_\_.

X complicates matters further when she writes that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Disagreeing:

I think that X is mistaken because she overlooks \_\_\_\_\_.

I disagree with X’s view that \_\_\_\_\_ because, as recent research has shown, \_\_\_\_\_.

### Introducing Your Point of View:

X overlooks what I consider an important point about \_\_\_\_\_.

I wholeheartedly endorse what X calls \_\_\_\_\_.

My discussion of X is in fact addressing the larger matter of \_\_\_\_\_.

These conclusions will have significant applications in \_\_\_\_\_ as well as in \_\_\_\_\_.

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: Norton, 2006.

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