

The Good Old Days

by Ralph Fletcher

Sometimes I remember
the good old days

sitting on the kitchen floor
with my brothers and sister

each on our own square
of cool linoleum.

I'm fresh from the bath,
wearing baseball pajamas.

Mom gives us each two cookies,
a glass of milk, a kiss goodnight.

I still can't imagine
anything better than that.

Exploratory Writing

“Students should be learning an unpretentious prose about the world around them.”

William Zinsser in Write To Learn (HarperCollins)

Can be used to....

- *ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE
- *GENERATE QUESTIONS, WONDERINGS, SPECULATIONS
- *MAKE A MAP OR WEB OF YOUR TOPIC
- *COLLECT SURPRISING INFORMATION, FACTS, STATISTICS
- *REACT: WHAT AMAZES/APPALLS YOU ABOUT THE TOPIC?
- *MAKE A PREDICTION
- *BUILD A LEXICON OR GLOSSARY OF WORDS OR TERMS SPECIFIC TO THE SUBJECT
- *DRAW OR SKETCH
- *SIFT, SORT, SUMMARIZE
- *TRY A “FLASHDRAFT” ON THE TOPIC

RALPH FLETCHER RESOURCES FOR THE WRITING CLASSROOM

Books for Writing Teachers

The Writing Teacher's Companion: Embracing Choice, Voice, Purpose & Play (Scholastic)

Joy Write: Cultivating High-Impact, Low-Stakes Writing (Heinemann)

What A Writer Needs, 2nd edition (Heinemann)

Mentor Author, Mentor Texts (Heinemann)

Pyrotechnics on the Page: Playful Craft That Sparks Writing (Stenhouse)

Boy Writers: Reclaiming Their Voices (Stenhouse)

Teaching the Qualities of Writing (Heinemann)

Lessons for the Writer's Notebook (Heinemann)

Craft Lessons, 2nd Edition & Nonfiction Craft Lessons (Stenhouse)

Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide Guide (Heinemann)

Breathing In, Breathing Out: Keeping a Writer's Notebook (Heinemann)

RALPH FLETCHER RESOURCES FOR THE WRITING CLASSROOM

Books for Young Writers

Guy-Write: What Every Guy Writer Needs to Know (Henry Holt)

A Writer's Notebook. (HarperCollins)

Live Writing. (HarperCollins)

How Writers Work. (HarperCollins)

Poetry Matters. (HarperCollins)

How To Write Your Life Story (HarperCollins)

Instructional Videos (available through Stenhouse)

Dude, Listen To This! (nurturing boy writers)

When Students Write (comprehensive video on teaching writing)

Talking About Writing (the writing conference)

In The Beginning (working with kindergarten writers)

OLYMPICS: Skeleton Plunges Face-First Back Into the Winter Games

By RICK BRAGG New York Times

SALT LAKE CITY, Feb. 17 — Picture riding the lid of a turkey roaster pan down a roller coaster rail after an ice storm.

Picture it at almost 80 miles an hour, with wicked turns, at G-forces so powerful that you cannot raise your helmet from the ice, which glitters just an inch away.

Now picture making that ride face first.

"I was screaming inside my helmet," said Chris Soule, as he described the first time he tried the ominous-sounding sport of skeleton. It returns to these Olympic Winter Games after a 54-year ban.

Soule, the 2002 World Cup gold medalist from Trumbull, Conn., says it is not as dangerous as it looks, sliding down a twisting, turning course belly down on a tiny sled, his helmeted head leading the way.

That may be, but whenever he tells the Olympic athletes in other sports what he is there for, they say much the same thing: "Oh. You guys are crazy."

Perhaps it is appropriate that international competitions for this event, perhaps the most perilous of all here, now begin with a moment of silence.

There is no affectation here, no baggy pants and thrash music like the snowboarders have, no ice skater's sequins and storied history, no cinematic skiing glory, acted out by a rugged Robert Redford, as in the downhill.

This is just fast and mean and a little bit insane, and if you mess up, if you are clumsy and brush the wall, there is pain and often blood. Soule used to wrap parts of his body in duct tape—the ice on the walls tended to eat his sweater off his arm.

Now, after petitioning Olympic officials to reinstate the sport—which gets its name because frames of earlier sleds resembled a skeleton—he and the rest of the world's most daring sliders will get a running start, hurl themselves and their sleds down a chute of hard ice and show the world what it means to ride the bones. The men's and women's competitions are scheduled for Wednesday.

"I haven't told my mother yet," said Lincoln DeWitt, one of Soule's Olympic teammates, when asked what his family thought of his competition here, which has been banned not once but twice from the Games.

It is a sport ruled, and abused, by gravity.