

A Note from the Authors

While team-teaching an ESL class of forty at a large adult education facility a few years ago, we searched for a writing textbook without finding one we loved. We turned to our colleagues. Several told us they kept writing instruction to a minimum, as they considered grammar, speaking, and listening much more important.

With no writing manual in hand, and little help from fellow teachers initially, we made up some lesson plans, tested them in our class, and retained the best ones. Our lessons worked, to spirited enthusiasm from our students and better and better results. Students became excited about writing. “I hated writing in my first language,” remarked one, “but I love writing in English!” “I think what I just wrote is really *good!* Can I read it to the class?” asked another. More and more strategies came to us, and one day, we looked at each other and said, “Wouldn’t it be fun to write a book?” We were on our way!

We moved on to separate schools, one of us to direct the ESL program at a local university, the other to become a community college instructor. At both locations, we found writing emphasized throughout the curriculum. We kept in close touch with each other over the years, meeting regularly to update, revise, and add freshness to meet current needs.

We are happy now to share these lessons with you. The units are autonomous and may be used in any order. Each one takes approximately an hour and a quarter of class time. In addition, the assignments may be expanded to cover several class periods, which allows time for editing and revision.

At the beginning of each term, we remind our students that they bring their backgrounds, values, and experiences into everything they write. Since these components are theirs alone, they will express themselves differently from each of their classmates. Their writing will become as individual as their fingerprints. We encourage them to “play with words” until they choose the best ones for their purposes. Mark Twain said, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.” Writing is an adventure!

Janet Morey and Gail Schafers

Talk and Write! ♦ **vii**

Introduction

How to Use This Book

This book is designed to help native or non-native speakers of English develop their writing skills and enjoy the process of writing. The activities are appropriate for learners in middle school, high school, community college, college preparation, and adult education courses. With minor adjustments, they also can be used with elementary school students. Non-native learners from the intermediate to the advanced proficiency levels and even those in TOEFL preparation courses find the structured development activities useful; some units can be adapted for high-beginner learners.

Students, particularly those learning English, frequently find writing the most difficult of the language skills to master. Good writing demands correct grammar usage and sentence structure; accurate spelling; varied, original vocabulary; and careful organization. Using this teacher-friendly material, students will learn to strengthen writing beyond these basics by focusing on such stylistic or artistic elements as imagery, mood, simile and metaphor, hyperbole, personification and point-of-view, hyphenated modifiers, dialogue, description, and narrative.

These activities have been designed to engage the students personally and creatively, instilling in them a love of writing as they learn to take pride in expressing themselves “on paper.” As the authors see it, while students are developing specific skills (see the skill index at the back of the book), they should also have fun. We encourage them to “play with words,” to enjoy the process, the adventure of writing and writing well.

Each unit has two pages, a teacher’s page and a *photocopyable* student handout. The teacher’s page first states the objective of the exercise. When materials are needed for the activity, they are listed. And then there is a step-by-step explanation of what the teacher and the students will do. Typically these steps begin with a teacher-led discussion explaining the activity and its purpose. This is followed by pairwork or small-group discussion. Then the handout is given to the students, and they follow the instructions given there.

There are six sections of the book. The first prompts learners to draw on personal memories, to share them in conversation, and then to write about them. The second section has the learners write descriptively using the senses of hearing, smell, touch, sight, and taste.

How to Use This Book, continued

In the third section, the authors ask the learners to write creatively about emotions, heroes, cultural celebrations, the fun of telling spooky stories, and the adventure of moving across cultures, of starting over. In this section, the teacher may want to keep the focus primarily on the learners' own experience or to introduce cultural material about five popular American holidays, Valentine's Day, Presidents' Day, St. Patrick's Day, Halloween, and Thanksgiving. An optional special reading on each holiday is appended starting on page 142.

In the fourth section of the book, the learners use their imaginations to write about a variety of fanciful "what-if" situations. In the fifth, they experiment with storytelling of various kinds, working in pairs and small groups. And in the sixth, learners are encouraged to play with the language, writing some simple poems.

This book is a *photocopyable* teacher's resource. It is structured so that it can be used as the basis for a writing course, following the sequence in which the units are presented. However, many teachers will want to pick and choose, selecting activities that will fit their students' particular needs and interests or to supplement a prescribed curriculum. Many of the skills practiced are stipulated in state assessment guidelines around the United States.

Janet Morey and Gail Schafers have adapted some of these materials from their 2001 book, *Write for You*. However, the format and process of these activities have been completely revised, and all the activities have been drawn from the authors' own classroom experience and tested with a variety of classes both by colleagues and themselves. This is a rich resource for any writing teacher, and we hope that you will enjoy turning your students on to the art and pleasure of writing as much as the authors have.

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