

Discovery in Writing

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Introduction

It is Monday morning and time to write in a second grade classroom. The teacher tells her students to write about something they did over the weekend. After a few minutes, she looks out into the classroom and sees a blank look on all the faces of the 8-year-olds sitting at their seats. She walks around the room and asks one student, “Why aren’t you writing anything?” The little girl replies, “I don’t know what to write about.” Then the teacher slowly meanders over to Josh’s seat and asks, “What are you going to write about?” Josh moans, “I didn’t really do anything over the weekend.” Finally, the teacher visits Mary. Mary has very neat handwriting and is good at the conventions and creativity involved in the writing process. “So Mary, what are you writing about?” Mary sighs and says, “Mrs. Allen, I really didn’t do anything that great over the weekend. My family just stayed at home. I don’t have much to write about.” Mrs. Allen then tells her class that if they do not write about something during their writing workshop time, then they will need to do the assignment at recess. The students look at Mrs. Allen in dismay and grumble as they try to come up with *something* to put on their paper.

Does this scenario sound familiar? Do you have students in your class who do the same thing when it is time to put their thoughts on paper? Do you think your students are enjoying their writing time? Are students making strong connections and generating new ideas? My goal is to create a unit where children are experiencing the power of their own writing to better understand themselves, as well as to make sense of the ever-changing world around them.

Overview

Although there are numerous amounts of professional resources available for teaching writing in a K-5 classroom, not many specifically target how to reflect, integrate, or interpret concepts through the writing process. The majority of writing resources focus on basic elements (for example; organization, details, main idea, vocabulary use, and conventions), or how to successfully create different genres of writing (for example; expository, narrative, persuasive, descriptive, and poetry). Although we need to teach our students about basic elements and genre, we also need to give them the opportunity to explore and grow as individuals from topics and content through a comprehensive writing process.

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study for second grade emphasizes the critical infusion of literature into the writing process. However, many of us limit our students by teaching only a small part of what is represented in the standards. The five language arts competency goals for second grade, according to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI)ⁱ include the following:

1. The learner will develop and apply enabling strategies and skills to read and write.
2. The learner will develop and apply strategies and skills to comprehend text that is read, heard, and viewed.
3. The learner will make connections through the use of oral language, written language, and media and technology.
4. The learner will apply strategies and skills to create oral, written, and visual texts.
5. The learner will apply grammar and language conventions to communicate effectively.

We often teach the *concrete* criteria of each standard. We focus on explaining that text can be understood by looking at the author's purpose, making predictions, asking questions, and analyzing word choice. We tend to direct students towards determining fact or opinion, recognizing figurative language, and drawing conclusions. We teach our students to recall the main idea and details from a text, as well as discuss similarities and differences within and between texts. Students are taught to explain story features such as plot, setting, major events, problems, solutions, characters and vocabulary from the different genres read in the classroom. All of these skills help our young children better understand and interpret texts. However, are students analyzing literature in such a way that helps them to better understand themselves, their role in the world, and how occurrences and people actually shape who they are today? Do they comprehend how the accomplishments of others, major worldwide events, and societal values and norms affect who they are and what they can be? What does all the information in various types of texts really mean to their current and future roles as people? Romanoⁱⁱ reports that we are limiting our students if we are only teaching the concrete standards without including opportunities for young children to write and develop their own narratives where they can see themselves, new information, and literature through their own lens, not the one *we* create for them. I want to give my students the opportunity to decide for themselves how to interpret and connect literature, life events, and new information to their own growth as a person.

Patrick Finnⁱⁱⁱ, in his article, "Literacy with an Attitude", explains how many children are taught to follow steps or certain procedures to create work that is done in the classroom. Rarely are students provided with an explanation as to how their assignments are connected to what they need to know as human beings. Wouldn't it make more sense if a student knew the benefits of an assignment, or how it could help them better

understand something else, maybe even themselves? It would certainly have more meaning to the child, and in turn, be more motivating to complete. Finn also reports how many teachers feel that their job is to just teach the knowledge in textbooks, without teaching children how to link this knowledge to life and personal experiences. If we want our future generation to become critical thinkers, evaluators, and understand how their own growth impacts society, then we need to offer more thought-provoking opportunities as educators.

Connelly and Clandinin^{iv} discuss the importance of “living the story” in the article, “Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry.” Children read stories and talk about the key elements. Rarely do they retell the story in terms of their own interpretation, and then reflect on how the events and ideas from that story impact their own life and thoughts. Making inquiries and connections from text is powerful in looking at one’s self, and in developing creative, action-minded, reflective citizens. We see ourselves connected to others and life’s occurrences; we become part of the whole, and not just some tiny fragment floating around with no meaning attached to it.

As teachers, we want our students to think. I repeatedly tell my class that I just want them to think, to use their brain, to wonder, and to generate their own ideas. As referenced in the article, “Thinking Out Loud on Paper”^v, we need to remember that students should make connections and see the *whole* picture of how their individual thoughts intertwine with past events and decisions. This in turn, creates new thinking, knowledge, and interpretations that form us as individuals and impacts the choices we make in our lives. Furthermore, applying the higher categories in *Bloom’s Taxonomy* to the content and standards learned in multiple subject areas can push students towards integrated thinking and synthesis.

It is one thing to interpret, analyze, pull together, and evaluate text in one’s mind and through discussion. Even so, it is an entirely different learning experience when one puts all of that knowledge into an interpretive writing process. Using a journal to write ideas and thoughts, and then going back and thinking about it some more, is helpful in understanding text. It is the “pulling out” part, about something a person wrote, that is important to evaluating concepts on a deeper level. Making the connection to one’s self and to the world helps us see the whole picture, not just the fragmented part that was in the original text. Students need the opportunity to actually incorporate this extra writing process into their educational day. In Notebook Knowhow, Aimee Bucker^{vi} suggests that we teach children to write down their ideas in a notebook so they do not forget all the information and thinking they just did while in a group discussion about text. So many times we have these amazing discussions with our students to later forget about the highlights of the discussion and move on to something new. We need to teach our students to write down their thoughts so that they can later go back and reflect on, make connections to, or apply different ideas to what they originally thought. Writing it down offers them the chance to “rethink” their thoughts. Remember, we want our students to

think as much as possible both in and outside the classroom. Aimee Bucker also talks about the connection between reading fluency and writing fluency. Reading fluency is a major skill that we teach young children in the primary years, but what about writing fluency? Writing fluency is “the ability to generate text – a lot of it - in a short period of time. This gives children something to work with when it comes to rereading, revising, and even editing”.^{vii} We need to remember that by giving children opportunities to reflect upon and expand ideas through writing, without worrying about perfecting spelling or grammar, that we are giving them the chance to develop their writing fluency.

The last point I want to make is related to ranking and evaluating students in elementary education^{viii}. We are required to give our young students so many standard assessments, yet I think there needs to be more of a balance between using student-driven work and multiple-choice common assessments in judging one’s overall knowledge. Testing can limit us in finding out what a child actually knows or thinks about a subject, while their written work can take us deeper into the personal connections and thoughts they have about a topic. If we want to teach our children to be divergent thinkers, flexible problem solvers, communicators, and analyzers, then we need to give them the opportunities in class to express themselves. Teaching our students to write fluently about their ideas, concepts learned in class, and reflections on literature, can open up a new avenue for students to go back and rethink what they have learned in the classroom as it applies to their own lives.

Objective

By incorporating many of these writing techniques into the daily schedule of a primary classroom, we give students the chance to think deeper and gain a better understanding not only about what they are reading and learning in the classroom, but about how the content and/or application of the literature content impacts them and the surrounding world. My objective is to utilize the writer’s notebook on a daily basis with literature readings in class. My unit focuses on the *Junior Great Books Curriculum*.^{ix} The interpretative foundation of the curriculum, combined with appealing stories and shared inquiry, provides a great foundation for using this literature for my writing unit. Nonetheless, the strategies and activities in this unit can be done with various types of literature in different grade levels.

Many of my second graders are motivated and high performing in reading. Sixty-five percent of my class population comprehends at least one grade-level above standard second grade reading material. My class consists of 24 students, 14 male and 10 female. One student is Hispanic, and the other 23 are Caucasian. Children range between 7 and 8-years in age, and only one student is currently below the second grade benchmark in reading. I feel that this writing curriculum will not only deepen the thought process for many students, but will also enhance the quality of writing that they contribute at a second grade level. The use of the writer’s notebook was foreign to my students when they began second grade; however, they have quickly adopted it as a “safe” place to write

without the worry of perfection. Students will be asked to reflect on specific occurrences and ideas from literature read in class, as well as share some of their writings with their literacy group so that the group as a whole can discuss and reflect on shared ideas. They will then use the notebooks as a resource to go back to for future writing topics and more in-depth analysis. I believe that the objective for my curriculum unit applies to all the competency goals of the North Carolina Second Grade Standard Course of Study.

Strategies

Strategy One: How to Use the Writer's Notebook

One of the first strategies to incorporate into the curriculum is showing your students how to use their writer's notebook. They need to know that this notebook will be used differently, and separately, from their literacy journal. The notebook will *not* be the place where they write spelling words, practice grammar, or write dictated sentences. The notebook *will be* the place where they write freely, reflect, analyze, take notes, and rethink ideas to later be framed into a writing piece. It is important that students keep their writer's notebook organized with designated sections. I have my students divide their notebook into three main parts: (1) free write, (2) literature shared inquiry/discussion notes, and (3) reflection. Inserting a tab or a colored piece of paper, to divide each section, can easily segment the notebook for students.

Children are not used to writing for themselves, instead, they want to write for us. They are also not used to writing without the worry of neat penmanship, correct spelling and grammar, and proper punctuation. Children need to write everyday and experiment with language. Here are a few ideas from Kirby and Liner^x that will help students become familiar with the purpose of a notebook:

1. Have students bring in a photograph that is important to them. Encourage students to write about the photograph; why it is important; who is in the photo; how they feel when they see the picture; or describe something that occurred during the time it was taken.
2. Have students listen to music and write about the sounds, words, or instruments they hear in the music. Have them write about what the music makes them think about, or how it makes them feel.
3. Read a poem and have students record how they feel or what they think of, in both pictures and words.
4. Conduct a "speed writing" session in which students write at least one-half of a page of writing in 10-minutes. Ask students, "What color do you feel like today? Why did you pick that color? Tell about your favorite song. What is the song about and why do you like it?" You can use various cues to motivate the "speed write" process.

5. Have students go back and read their notebook entries. Have them write about a word they used, or a subject they wrote about, from a different point of view. Encourage them to expand upon and go deeper as to how a certain event or person made them feel.

It is important that we encourage children to express themselves, experiment with language, and write from their hearts. This initial introduction to the notebook is the first strategy that is needed before applying the notebook to a literature study. It is also important to write in your own notebook along with your students. Sharing your entries will help them understand that the notebook is a place for them to express their inner self. As they become more familiar with using the notebook, they will discover that they are writing for themselves; to learn and rethink ideas, and that the purpose of their writing is not to appease someone else.

Strategy Two: Language Study

Language study is not just about defining a word, but realizing the power and image of the words we read and write. Yes, students need to know what unfamiliar words mean, but they will also benefit from knowing the impact that a word or phrase has on how they think and perceive different concepts. According to Fletcher^{xi}, it is important that the teacher let the students experiment with words in their writing without simply looking for common language that completes the writing process.

Method one: Define and analyze unfamiliar words from text.

I usually make a list of new, interesting, or challenging words from a specific chapter or story and write the page number, of where it is used in the text, next to the word. I type the list on a small piece of paper, copy, and distribute the list to my students, as this provides a good way for them to glue the list in their notebook (in the literature/discussion notes section) for future use. As a group, we read the words and then re-read the passages where they are used to see if we can determine the meaning. Next, I distribute other sentences and short passages with the same word for the group of students to read and interpret (I create these materials prior to the activity). We discuss what the meaning of the word could be and then try to write our own sentence, or put on a small skit, using or depicting the word. Finally, I assign two words to each student in the group. They are responsible for looking up the word in the dictionary, identifying the part of speech, and writing the definition(s). We share our dictionary findings with the group and compare our information with what was already written about each word in our notebooks.

Method two: Word reflection and connection

Many times a word chosen for a language study will be used more than once in a story. If a word is used again in a succeeding chapter, I will ask students to reflect back on their notes to determine how the word was interpreted during the first inquiry. Students will

mark the word with an asterisk in their notebook if it is used more than once in a story. We compare our original findings with how the word is used the second time in the text. Does it have the same meaning? Does the word connect with a different character or event within the same text or across texts that we have read in the classroom? Students may add additional notes, diagrams, or pictures about the word to form a more meaningful connection.

At the end of a story, students go back and reflect on the language study pages of their notebook. They are asked to choose one or several words (this can be done independently or with a partner) to expand on in a written activity. I offer several activities that will allow them to express their understanding and interpretation of the words from the study. A few examples are as follows:

1. *Create a dramatic scene.* Students can choose a few words from the language study to write a detailed scene from the story, or an original movie scene of their own. Next, when writing the scene, students are encouraged to describe the setting, use dialogue, narrate the story from an involved character, include visual details, and accentuate word use to depict meaning and comprehensive thought. Students can even draw or build a model of the scene.^{xii}

2. *Repeated phrases or comeback lines.* Students can choose a word from the language study pages of their notebook. They can use this word alone, or within a phrase, as they write a story. The repeated word(s) are to remind the reader of the main idea or an important concept.^{xiii}

3. *Shared writing.* Students choose a word or group of words from the language study pages of their notebook. They work with a partner and create sentences using that word (for example; 1. She looks *pitiful* as she stands in the rain without an umbrella or coat. 2. The old man was *pitiful* as he tried to climb the stairs without any help. 3. It was a *pitiful* sight as the construction crew bulldozed the maple trees in the backyard). Next, students choose one sentence to expand into a detailed paragraph.

4. *Scene maker.* Students choose a word, or group of words, from the language study pages of their notebook. They use a pictorial organizer (divided into 4 parts) to write four consecutive scenes of a story. The words they choose are used in the writing of all four parts. Pictures can be added.

5. *Quick reflection.* Students choose a word or group of words from the language study pages of their notebook. They write the word at the top of a new page in their notebook. Next, for 10-minutes, they write every thought that comes to mind when they think or say the word. Afterwards, they go back and read their thoughts and highlight those that have the most meaning, or are most important to them. The last step is to expand on that particular thought by writing a passage that includes emotions, visual details, and voice.^{xiv}

Strategy Three: Organizers

Discussion organizers are helpful in teaching a young student how to take notes during an inquiry-based discussion. A discussion organizer can come in many forms, depending on the level of your students. Many times I will create my own note-taking organizers that provide space to both write and draw. I clearly outline the guidelines and purpose of the discussion organizer for my students:

1. A discussion organizer is used for each new discussion session. It is dated, titled (usually with the title of a single story or a chapter from story) and stapled into the writer's notebook.
2. At some point, the teacher will collect the discussion notes for review and grading.
3. Use key words, phrases, or ideas when writing notes. Notes do not have to be written in complete sentences; the "idea" is more important than spelling and grammar.
4. Model how to take notes and then show your students. Choose an important concept from your notes to reflect on, analyze, and make connections to as a concrete example for your students.
5. Preface each discussion by stating that the notes taken from the shared inquiry will serve as a guide for future writing and interpretation.
6. During the discussion, teachers can make comments like, "That is really important, I would write that down", or "That is a great thought, I wouldn't forget that." Such comments will assist students as they learn to determine what is relevant and significant information to add in their writer's notebook.

Pictorial and outline organizers are a helpful way for students to visualize what is happening in a story. Using bubble maps, Venn diagrams, sequencing charts, and cause and effect organizers can help students better understand the happenings in a story, as well as be able to write about them in their notebook. The organizer is stapled right into their notebook next to the written page about that part of the story. Introduce each organizer one at a time. Have students practice using the organizers using personal information or information that is presented in a short story. It is a good idea to first use the organizers together and discuss the information presented by students. There are many different types of organizers available on the Intranet to meet your lesson needs and the needs of your students.

Strategy Four: Writing to Learn

Most of the time we write to inform, entertain, or communicate with others. However, when we write to learn, we rethink and synthesize events and emotions to better understand our self and the surrounding world. Students can reach higher levels of

thinking if we introduce them to various ways to analyze and think about topics across literature and in life.

Bloom's Taxonomy levels of learning mesh well into this strategy as it provides differentiated questioning to encourage students to think at higher levels instead of just recalling facts and events. *Bloom's Taxonomy* organizes the different levels of knowledge often seen in education. It begins at the lowest level of "remembering" and continues through the highest level of "creating".^{xv}

Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning

(highest level)	Creating	(create a new product or point of view)
	Evaluating	(justify a decision using information)
	Applying	(use information in a new way)
	Understanding	(explain ideas and concepts)
(lowest level)	Remembering	(recall or remember information)

Examples of the differentiated questioning based on Bloom's Taxonomy can be found at <http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/researchskills/dalton.htm>

Strategy Five: Parts of the Whole

The teacher and group of students discuss the main idea and author's purpose about a text. The teacher explains that the big issues of the story contain smaller parts. These parts are what make up the whole. Inquire and discuss with students some of the scenes or events that they really wondered about or thought were interesting to the big issue of the story. Have students write about the visual image they obtain from that part, and take notes about what the group talks about regarding that experience from the text. Students will focus on the parts that are most meaningful to them, and write about their thoughts with a deeper connection to the text.

Strategy Six: Shared Inquiry

Shared inquiry^{xvi} is a manner in which students explore, discuss, and find answers to concepts from texts read in the classroom. The group facilitator's role is to ask questions that inspire students to think at higher levels, and for participants to support their thoughts by referring to story events, making inferences, and applying their current knowledge about a topic. The essential elements of shared inquiry are differentiated questioning, joint collaboration about ideas, open debate, and allowing students to reach their own interpretations about texts.

Strategy Seven: Voice in Writing

“The inner voice is spokesperson for the inner life”.^{xvii} Having students write with voice means that they are not just telling the story as they see it, but they are telling it from the internal point of view of the characters and the external point of view of the storyteller. When writing has voice, it has feeling and authority. You can tell that a passionate person has written the text. It is a good idea to read different examples of text; some that have voice and some that do not, to give students a comparison model. Have students practice telling a story or describing an experience to a partner. Next, have them write down each part of their story just as they verbalized it to their peer. Ask them, who is your audience? Are you speaking in your writing to that audience?

Classroom Activities

Activity One

Students independently read, *The Tale of Nutkin Squirrel* in the 2nd grade first semester series of *Junior Great Books*. The story is about an *impertinent* squirrel that tells silly riddles to an old owl. Students then meet in a group with the teacher. Ask students to write an answer to the question, “Why does Squirrel Nutkin tell Old Brown Owl so many riddles?” Without giving your own opinion, ask students to share and record their response. Next, have students look at the picture of Nutkin Squirrel at the beginning of the story. What can they infer about Nutkin Squirrel by looking the picture? Share and write.

Activity Two

After the first independent reading of the story, *The Tale of Nutkin Squirrel*, students write down any words or phrases that they do not understand, in addition to words that are repetitive, interesting, or funny. The teacher also makes a list of words that they feel will help students better comprehend the story, or specific phrases that will encourage students to “rethink” what they have read. In this story, I chose the phrase, “But Nutkin was excessively impertinent in his manners. He bobbed up and down like a little red cherry, singing...”^{xviii} Students talk about what this phrase means in the story and they write down individual or group responses in their discussion organizer.

The second reading of the text is conducted together in a small group (students take turns reading aloud). Facilitated by the teacher, the group reads the story for a second time and then looks back at the text to see how the unfamiliar words from the first reading were used in a particular scene. A discussion is conducted and students record personal responses in their notebook. Students also comment on each other’s ideas and questions. They write their interpretation of the word with the option of drawing a picture for a meaningful representation. The students are then given words on index cards that the reader may use to describe Nutkin Squirrel. Students choose the words that they feel

best describe Nutkin Squirrel and provide reasons for their choices by stating examples from the story. The word *impertinent* is used throughout the story to describe Nutkin. Students read their notebook entries on the word and then share with the group a time when they witnessed someone being impertinent.

Next, the group discusses the word or phrase and tries to make a connection to his or her own life. The same process is used for other words that are entered in the notebook. Last, students pick a word or phrase that they related to the most and use it to tell about something in their own life, using the word itself in their written text. They can share their writing aloud and the group can ask questions or comment on each other's perspective. They also choose one writing activity from the list of *word connection and reflection strategies*.

Activity Three

Students gather in a circle. In the middle are index cards with individual character traits written in each one (words such as; pitiful, lazy, funny, adventurous, useful, crazy, naughty, impertinent, foolish, busy, etc.) Altogether there are 25 character trait cards dispersed in front of the reading group. Students read the words aloud. Next, they are asked to pick a word that they feel describes the main character, Nutkin Squirrel. One by one, students choose a card, read the word, and explain why they feel it describes Nutkin Squirrel by giving examples from the text to support their claim. Each child takes a turn until there are only a few cards left on the floor. They decide that the character traits that still remain do not describe Nutkin Squirrel and they provide examples from the text to defend their claim. Next, the same activity is repeated, with the exact same words. This time students are analyzing a character from a previous story that was read the week before titled, *How the Camel Got His Hump*. Camel and Nutkin Squirrel have similar characteristics. Students choose and defend the character traits for Camel, and then pick out the traits that represent both characters. Using two thin ropes, we construct two overlapping circles on the floor. Students place the cards in the appropriate spot on the Venn Diagram, placing those character traits that pertain to both characters in the overlapping center of the two circles, and those traits that do not describe either character on the outside of the circles. As a group, they discuss a few changes, supported by events from each story. They then go back to their seats and recreate the floor model onto a hard copy of a Venn diagram graphic organizer. The last part of this activity is to choose one trait that best describes each character and support it with details from the story in written form. Students share their idea with the group.

Activity Four

1. Students write in their journal as if they are in the story themselves. How are their feelings and how are their thoughts impacted by what is happening in the story? What kind of relationship do they have with the other main characters, and why?
2. Using what they already know about *The Tale of Nutkin Squirrel*, students rewrite an important paragraph from the story from a different point of view. This viewpoint may be from another character, from someone not involved in the story, or they may use personification where they write it from the perspective of something non-living in the story (for example, from the perspective of Old Owl's tree).
3. Students predict what life would be like today if certain people were *impertinent*, like Nutkin, and how such behavior would impact others around them. Students share ideas, discuss, and write down their personal thoughts as to how the traits of the characters from the story would impact current society.
4. Students look through the eyes of the character and let the character write the narrative from their perspective. Inquire and talk about how the story would change given that a different character is telling the story. In this case, Nutkin Squirrel or Old Owl could narrate the story.
5. Students discuss and write about the feelings and inner being of characters in the text. They consider cause and effect relationships. Students verify the actions of both Nutkin Squirrel and Old Owl throughout the story, and they ask questions as a collective group and write notes on why the characters feel the way they do during an experience in the story.
6. Students develop a plan or generate solutions to help Nutkin Squirrel and Old Owl get along and be friends in the story. What would Nutkin have to change? What would Old Owl need to change or compromise? How does the relationship between Nutkin and Owl compare to a relationship they have with another person in their own life?

Activity Five

Looking closely at the parts of the story is essential in evaluating and analyzing the text, and in figuring out what the author really wants us to learn and interpret from the story. Students can take a picture walk through the text, or they can use a pictorial organizer to list some of the events that make up the story in the beginning, middle, and end. *The Tale of Nutkin Squirrel* has several black and white pictures depicting some of the small detailed parts of the story. Students can interpret a great deal from these pictures. Students are asked to choose a picture or paragraph from the text and write in their own words what the part means. They look at the phrase or word from their chosen part and focus in on it as if they had a microscope. What do you see? What stands out to you? What is special? Students share, comment, and take notes on the discussion.

In addition, I have students focus on the last part of the story. The ending is somewhat surprising with Old Owl finally teaching Nutkin a lesson. I ask students to evaluate Old Owl's decision to skin Nutkin's tail, and to give their opinion as to if it was the best way to handle the situation. Would Nutkin have acted the same if his tail were never skinned? Were Old Owl's actions necessary or effective in solving his problem with Nutkin? Why or why not?

Activity Six

Shared inquiry can be done in several ways for most stories. One method is to have students write down a question they have about the story (after the first read), or a comment about a particular event or character from the story. This inquiry is then posted on a bulletin board for another student to glue in their journal and respond to in writing in their notebook. Students share the inquiry and response with the group. A second method is to lead the shared inquiry discussion with tiered questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy. Examples of some leveled questions to ask for this activity involving *The Tale of Nutkin Squirrel*^{xix} are as follows:

1.) Does Nutkin know that Old Brown Owl doesn't care for riddles? What clues in the story support your answer? 2.) Do the squirrels admire Nutkin for not acting afraid of Old Brown? Are the squirrels frightened of Old Brown, or are they too busy to care about what Nutkin does? 3.) Are the squirrels polite to Old Brown because they are afraid of him or because they think he deserves respect? Explain your answer. 4.) Why is it considered impertinent for Nutkin to ask Old Brown riddles? Why does Old Brown shut his eyes *obstinately* when Nutkin tells his first riddle instead of just telling him to go away? 5.) Why, if you ask him a riddle today, will Nutkin "throw sticks at you and stomp his feet?" 6.) Do you think Old Brown Owl could have handled Nutkin's impertinent behavior in a better way than skinning his tail at the end of the story? 8.) Design a plan for the other squirrels to convince or motivate Nutkin to help them collect nuts on Old Brown's island. 9.) Does Nutkin remind you of anyone you know? Why?

Throughout the shared discussion, students write ideas in their notebook about what they feel is important or interesting. This will be helpful when they go back and read their notes from the shared inquiry and choose a topic to write about in more detail. Students can also leave room in their notebooks to draw pictures or symbols that help them better connect to the text.

Activity Seven

Students go back and read their notebook comments and entries on *The Tale of Nutkin Squirrel*. They highlight those entries that are of particular interest or those they really connected with during the activities completed throughout the week. They choose a topic to expand and write about using the concept of voice to portray their feelings and ideas

about the subject matter. They decide on an audience, and then verbalize their main thoughts aloud to their peer prior to writing their piece.

Notes

ⁱ North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2009). Essential standards for K-5 mathematics. Retrieved online 09/25/2010}from: URL.

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/mathematics/scos>

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ⁱⁱⁱ Finn, Patrick J. "Literacy with an Attitude: Educating Working-Class Children in Their Own Self-Interest." State University of New York Press (1999): 9-25.

^{iv} Connelly, Michael F. and Clandinin, Jean D. "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry." *Educational Researcher*, June-July 1990, 2-14.

^v Brannon, L., S. Griffin, K. Haag, T. Iannone, and C. Urbanski, eds. 2008. *Thinking Out Loud on Paper*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

^{vi} Buckner, Aimee. *Notebook Know-How: Strategies for the Writer's Notebook*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

^{vii} Buckner, Aimee. *Notebook Know-How: Strategies for the Writer's Notebook*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005, 6.

^{viii} Elbow, Peter. "Ranking, Evaluating, and Linking: Sorting Out Three Forms of Judgment." *College English* 55, no. 2 (1993): 187-206.

^{ix} *Junior Great Books: Teacher Edition, Series 2, First Semester*. Chicago, IL: The Great Books Foundation, 1992.

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^{xi} Fletcher, Ralph. *What a Writer Needs*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993.

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the classroom. It also highlights numerous lesson plans that promote and encourage student writing.

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Appendix

Implementing District Standards

The unit focuses on all of the Literacy Standards for 2nd Grade. I have listed some specific strategies and activities that address each standard from the curriculum unit.

Competency Goal 1: The learner will develop and apply enabling strategies and skills to read and write.

a. Strategies One through Seven

Competency Goal 2: The learner will develop and apply strategies and skills to comprehend text that is read, heard, and viewed.

a. Strategy Two: Language Study - *Method one: Define and analyze unfamiliar words from text. Method two: Word reflection and connection.*

b. Strategy Three: Organizers

c. Strategy Four: Writing to Learn

Competency Goal 3: The learner will make connections through the use of oral language, written language, and media and technology.

a. Strategy Six: Shared Inquiry

b. Strategy Five: Parts of the Whole

c. Strategy Two: Language Study - *Method one: Define and analyze unfamiliar words from text. Method two: Word reflection and connection.*

d. Strategy One: How to Use the Writer's Notebook

e. Strategy Four: Writing to Learn

Competency 4: The learner will apply strategies and skills to create oral, written, and visual texts.

a. Strategy Three: Organizers

b. Strategy Six: Shared Inquiry

c. Strategy Five: Parts of the Whole

d. Strategy Two: Language Study - *Method one: Define and analyze unfamiliar words from text. Method two: Word reflection and connection.*

Competency Goal 5: The learner will apply grammar and language conventions to communicate effectively.

a. Strategy Seven: Voice in Writing