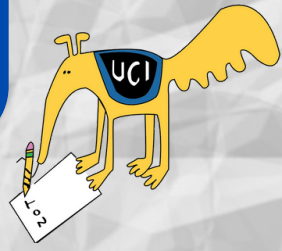




WordPlay



The newsletter of the UCI Writing Project

February 2024

WELCOME
to the UCI Writing Project's Newsletter

What will you do this summer?



Teach a Summer Youth class

Instructors are still needed to teach Summer Youth classes.
2 or 3 - week long programs in Tustin, Irvine, and Orange.
For more information, contact
uciwritingproject@uci.edu

What's inside

- A letter from the Editor
- A creative writing opportunity from NWP
- Spotlight on two of our new fellows
- Spotlight on a veteran fellow's experience
- Book reviews and teaching strategies
- Library resources to enhance writing
- Coming events to feed your teacher soul

Need a "Brain Spa?"
Make plans now to join us at WP2 in the Fall.

Don't miss out on all the fun and fellowship.



Read the complete newsletter on our website:
<https://writingproject.uci.edu/>

WordPlay staff: Liz Harrington, Editor, Carol Mooney, Assistant Editor, Laseanda Wesson, Megan Grint, Elizabeth Taireh, Allison Serceki, Lynne Pantano

A Letter from the Editor

Dear Writing Project Friends,
You may have noticed that a common theme among many of the contributors to WordPlay over the years, has been how inspired they were by the life-changing experience that is the Summer Institute, as well as how much the Writing Project still enhances their professional lives.



How many of us, on reaching that final day of the Summer Institute, lamented and wished it would never end? Well, of course, it doesn't have to end, because there is Writing Project II to provide us all with that Writing Project "special sauce." WPII was started many years ago, at the dawn of UCIWP, in order to meet the desire to continue the professional development, networking and inspiration that began in the Summer Institute.

This year's WPII focused on the talents within our own Writing Project community. In earlier years we have read and discussed professional books, heard renowned speakers and researchers, conducted our own action research projects, developed lesson plans and units, and much more. WPII is a very special and unique gathering at which teachers from all grade levels and many different school districts can get together, share ideas, and have fun. It is truly, as one Writing Project fellow put it a few years ago, a "Brain Spa."

With all of this in mind, I want to encourage you to make space in your busy calendars to attend next year's WPII when it starts up again in the Fall. Even if you don't feel you can commit to attending every meeting, come to one or two. Chances are, you'll be hooked, and will find a way to keep coming back!

With best wishes

Liz Harrington

WordPlay Editor

News from the NWP



Celebrating NWP's 50th Anniversary

January of 2024 marks the calendar-year beginning of a campaign to celebrate the 50-year history of the National Writing Project. Don't miss a minute of it! Here's what you can do this month:

- [Follow @nationalwritingproject on Instagram](#) to see the faces of the Writing Project today along with moments in the storied history of NWP.
- [Visit Tend the Flame](#), our community poem celebrating the teaching of writing, and add a verse.
- [Bookmark nwp.org/50](#) to get the latest updates.
- And if you want to help keep the magic going with a donation to support the work of NWP, consider subscribing to the 1974 campaign, and [make a recurring donation](#) of \$19.74 each month this year to support future Writing Project endeavors.

Tend the Flame

This model poem draws from lines written by National Writing Project teachers who participated in a writing workshop at the NCTE Annual Convention in November 2022 in Anaheim, California. On the next page, you will find some writing prompts to inspire you to add your own stanza to the community poem.

I want to cultivate a classroom
where solving for X and self-expression go
hand in hand.

I want my students to explore unexpected
thoughts,
to meander down back roads and side
streets,
and be surprised at the places they end up,
more myth than history.

I want them to discover where joy hides in
the alphabet.

I praise the inner voice of one student
speaking to the inner voice of another.
I praise those who resist silence and step
into brave spaces,
make good trouble,
then rest their weary heads.

In my classroom I am the open book.
I sit down willingly at the table,
make my mistakes visible,
at the centerpiece of a new day.
In my classroom brown is beautiful,
black is radiant,
white is warm –
every color framing the canvas of learning.

I give my students a word, and they give back
lightning and thunder, a storm of future
possibilities.

I give them my time, experience, and
vulnerability,
and they give back my heart,
multiplied, and enlarged.

Together our voices speak a powerful magic.
We tend the flame, turn kindling into bonfires
that light the world outside these walls.

Creative Corner

Share your Voice

Select one (or more) of the 5 prompts below and write a stanza to add to the community poem celebrating NWP's 50th anniversary. When you have finished, you may upload your poem here:

<https://sparkpoems.com/tend-the-flame/share>

I want... Think about what you want, in this moment, for your students. Start with the phrase "I want..." and write a declarative statement that ends with a specific desire.

For example: "I want to cultivate a classroom where solving for X and self-expression go hand in hand" Or: "I want them to discover where joy hides in the alphabet."

I praise... We can encourage and guide our students by naming what we value and admire in them. Start with the phrase "I praise..." and describe that quality in your students or in the larger classroom community.

For example: "I praise the inner voice of one student speaking to the inner voice of another." Or: "I praise those who resist silence and step into brave spaces, make good trouble, then rest their weary heads."

In my classroom ... Think about what kind of classroom culture you want to nurture and cultivate. Then write a declarative statement that begins, "In my classroom ..."

For example: "In my classroom brown is beautiful, black is radiant, white is warm - every color framing the canvas of learning."

I give and they give back ... Write a statement that expresses the exchange of gifts and the spark of inspiration between you and your students. Try to include both concrete images and metaphors.

For example: "I give my students a word, and they give back lightning and thunder, a storm of future possibilities."

Together ... Convey the power of our collective voices and creative action through concrete images. Begin with "Together our voices..." or "Together we..."


For example: "Together our voices speak a powerful magic."





Spotlight on New Fellows

Jessica Reyes



I am currently in my 17th year of teaching and am so grateful for all the opportunities that I have had to work with students in Santa Ana Unified. I have had the privilege to work with grades Tk-8, in Dual & SEI settings. I'm also a mild/moderate education specialist by training, but in my current position as a TOSA at the district office, I get to work with all student populations.

I came to the UCI Writing Project with the goal to change my perspective on writing. Based on my parochial education and the way I was taught to teach writing, writing was not a subject area that I ever looked forward to teaching or doing in my own personal life. After four weeks with my amazing cohort and mentors, I have come to see the value and power that writing can have for myself, and more importantly for a community like Santa Ana.

This led me to developing and piloting a writing unit that utilizes visualization strategies through mentor texts, pictures, and music, to engage students of all levels. As students become more comfortable and confident with the idea of writing, I know that they will understand that writing is another way to use their voice. I look forward to empowering more teachers at SAUSD to teach writing the UCI way!





Spotlight on New Fellows

Jennifer Kloster

Since graduating from UC Santa Barbara's M.Ed. program in 2019, I've taught in LA and Santa Ana, and am currently teaching in Laguna Beach USD. This is my fifth year teaching and 4th year in 2nd grade!



It has been incredibly rewarding to witness my student's growth and their developing love for reading and writing. Growing up, I struggled with reading and writing, but I was fortunate to have teachers who provided me with support and empowerment I needed to overcome the challenges. Now, I strive to provide the same level of support and opportunities to my students so they can discover their own unique gifts.

For my inquiry project, I delved into the question, "How can I build background knowledge?" Recognizing the crucial role background knowledge plays in students' writing, I sought innovative ways to enhance their understanding. I integrated informational videos and virtual reality into my lesson, leveraging the evolving technology to support the development of background knowledge. I used these tools to facilitate a persuasive writing piece on whether we should or shouldn't have zoos, allowing students to explore different perspectives and make informed arguments. I am committed to helping students unlock their full potential by providing them with the necessary tools and opportunities to thrive. I am incredibly grateful to participate in this program. I have learned so many different ways I can support and engage my future students.



Spotlight on a Classroom

In Search of Success

I used to dread teaching writing. Unfortunately, my credential program only focused on strategies, so when I started teaching 3rd grade, I had no idea how to approach writing. Then we got a new principal who loved writing instruction. Through her on-site professional development I learned about mini lessons from Ralph Fletcher, student engagement strategies from Lester Laminack, and how to use Writer's Notebooks as a safe place for experimentation from Elizabeth Hale.



I felt better about writing instruction, but I still had a lot to learn. A colleague encouraged me to attend the Summer WP. When I gave my presentation I was terrified! As an elementary teacher I didn't believe I had anything meaningful to share with a group of secondary teachers and wasn't sure how they could possibly help me either. I was so wrong! I realized we all have similar needs and can use each other's ideas and strategies to become better! I was hooked!

And my WP journey continued. With Liz Harrington as my Peer Partner, we explored writing conferences. I discovered the power of sitting next to my students to celebrate their work as writers and set individual goals for each one. I realized the potential purposeful praise! By writing with my students - modeling my own struggles, making revisions, and asking them for help when needed - a new level of community was created within our class! I saw my student's writing, thinking, and confidence grow, not only in Writers' Workshop but across other subjects like math, science, social studies, and reading because we wrote to understand and reflect about new concepts and ideas.

That one summer opened doors I never imagined! I "Drank the Writing Project Kool-Aid" and I never left. Now I look forward to every meeting because I always come away with a heart filled with friendship and inspiration!

Mary Widtmann



More Than a Book Review

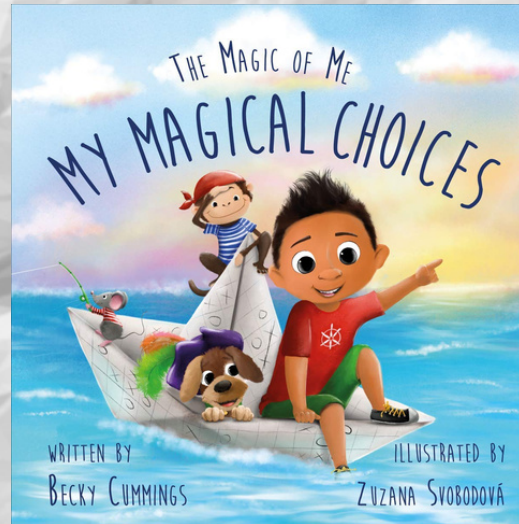
Ideas for Your Reading Classroom



Elementary

The Magic of Me: My Magical Choices

Written by Becky Cummings,
Illustrated by Zuzana Svobodová



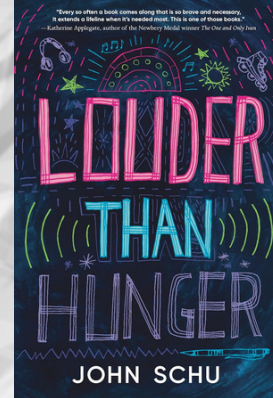
Do you know how a book speaks to you due to things going on in your own professional life? This book was such a book for me this past month. As an administrator, my last month has been repeatedly focusing on discussions with students where they need to make better choices when in a situation. This book helps students think about choices in various situations they can make as issues arise. I plan to use this book with our TK through second-grade students to discuss ways to infuse these concepts into our daily school activities. I plan to read a page daily and create a chart where we think about ways we choose to be responsible at school, patient during sports or outdoor activities, calm in our reactions to others, etc. I look forward to using this book in a proactive way to address some of the situations arising as spring emerges on our campus. Let me know if you find it helpful too!

Allison Serceki



More Than a Book Review

Ideas for Your Reading Classroom



Middle School **Louder Than Hunger** **by John Schu**

About a year ago one of my students came to visit me after her track practice was over. She collapsed on my floor, exhausted, unable to move. I asked her if she was all right and asked what she had eaten that day.

“Ms. Grint... the girls in my grade don’t eat,” was her response. I know that she was being somewhat hyperbolic because she has definitely eaten Hot Cheetos out of her backpack in my room before... but what if that was all she had eaten that day? Her words continue to ring in my ears as though we were still in my classroom, her sweat dripping into my carpet.

John Schu’s new book, *Louder Than Hunger*, follows Jake, a young 8th grader struggling with anorexia nervosa. This silent disease plagues many students both knowingly and unknowingly, like Jake. Schu’s book has us follow Jake’s journal, written in verse, as he struggles to calm his loud, angry, and controlling inner monologue that tells him he isn’t good enough. The voice continually tells Jake that he shouldn’t eat, that he doesn’t deserve to take up space. When a loved one in Jake’s life notices his significant weight loss, his mother checks him into Whispering Pines, an eating disorder clinic for adolescents. Jake struggles at first, unwilling to talk and open up. The voice continues to consume Jake as Jake continues to consume... nothing. The staff and other patients, along with Jake’s ill, beloved grandmother help him on his healing journey to health.

I think this would be a great novel to utilize in a book club or as a launching point for a research paper. Eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia, orthorexia, etc.) have always been an issue for teens and young adults, but with the prevalence of social media, I am noticing more and more students with body dysmorphia and other issues. By reading a first person narrative about the subject, students might be able to see themselves in Jake and choose the healing journey like he does. I think this book warrants discussion, especially discussion amongst peers.

Megan Grint



More Than a Book Review

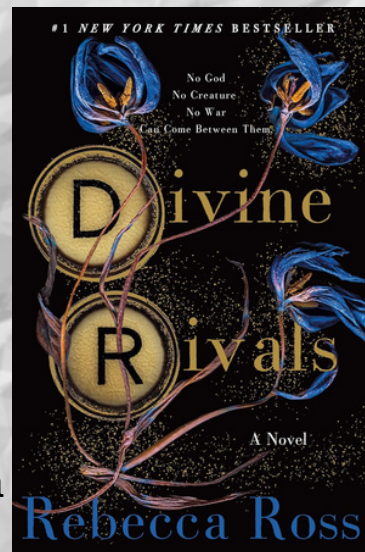
Ideas for Your Reading Classroom



High School

Divine Rivals by Rebecca Ross

A magical typewriter. A war. Two rivals. Love. This romantic fantasy suspends belief but still feels like historical fiction. This prolific writer describes the book as You've Got Mail meets Lovely War. Divine Rivals is a book that appeals to middle school all the way through adult.



The novel starts with Iris. Her brother is missing at war. Roman Kit, her rival at the newspaper, is cold and precise. She starts writing to her brother using her typewriter, slipping them under the wardrobe. Little does she know that it is her co-worker Kit who is getting the letters. And then he writes back. He is aware who is sending the letters, but she is completely unaware. Their love grows in anonymity while Iris's coolness to Kit continues to deepen. When she decides to head to the war front of a WWI like war fueled by the gods, her life takes the most unexpected changes.

The world building in this book is top notch as is the character development. If you need to escape, this is a beautiful and rich place to live.

Extension:

Read the first page or few pages of the novel. Have students identify instances of descriptive language. Identify what kind of description they see: similes, metaphors, adjectives, etc.

Liz Taireh





Beyond Books

Library Resources to Enhance Writing

Making Google Work for You

What is the worst thing about research papers? When the authors go rogue, find their own “reliable sources” and you have to figure out how to explain to them that they are incredibly wrong. There are some ways to ensure that your students find the most reliable websites.

First, google “Advanced Search.” This used to be on the main page but googling is the easiest way to find this tool.

Then, show students how each of the search bars does something different. I love showing the exact search. I use this example: whale shark vs “whale shark.” By using the exact search (or “”), you will reduce your results by 90% or 900 million fewer results. This is important for key phrases like “high school” but not for an entire sentence or question.

Scroll a little bit further down to the search field that says site or domain. Enter .gov or .edu and all of the results will be a government or education website. It isn’t always 100%, but it is better than many of the Google searches.

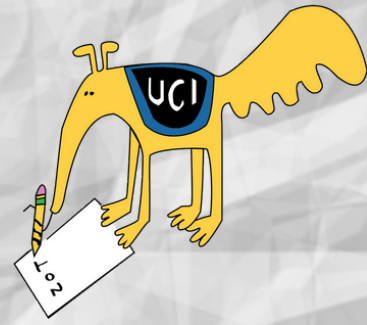
This is just the beginning of ways you can make Google work for you. For more information, check out this presentation:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1q67mbIM76-B6jRn5fVaXTBm-ixGWcliwNmUipbwBXDE/edit#slide=id.ga073618e60_0_16

Liz Taireh



Coming Events



Wednesday, April 17, 2024 Call for Change: Argument and Action for Election 2024 4:00 p.m. PDT (Zoom)

Join the National Writing Project and KQED to unpack the genre of civic commentary, which combines both personal experience and research-based evidence, then start your own audio commentary to use as a model with students.

To receive the Zoom link to join the workshop, go to <https://kqed.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwvdOGsrzkvE9Or6Ai3AehEu3KM i7cc0hCa#/registration>



Wednesday, April 24, 2024 The More Things Change...Why Are We Still Failing to Educate All Children? 4:00 p.m. Webinar

A free webinar with Professor Lisa Delpit

This webinar explores how the distorted beliefs in our country's consciousness affect how we see children and the strategies employed to teach them.

Register at https://uci.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Hhn-0U16ROWXDUkcwg1Llw#/registration

Friday, May 17, 2024 Teaching for Justice Conference 2024 (Virtual)

**Saturday, May 18, 2024
Teaching for Justice Conference 2024 (In-Person)
9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.**



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**Register at
teacheracademy.uci.edu**