

Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3–5

Tabbed Book Overview Script

Show the complete *Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3–5*.

Highlight the picture of Lucy on the cover of *A Guide to the Writing Workshop*.

Refer to the complete *Units of Study for Primary Writing*.

Show each of the individual units of study

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce you to *Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3–5*.

Since this is a firsthand classroom resource from educators you know, trust, and depend on let's kick off this overview with a **brief introduction to the series' authors—Lucy Calkins and her colleagues from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project**.

For more than three decades Lucy has been teaching, researching, and writing about the teaching of reading and writing. As an acclaimed author and literacy specialist you may know Lucy through her many books including the foundational texts, *The Art of Teaching Writing* and *The Art of Teaching Reading* or her *Units of Study for Primary Writing*; the DVD *Big Lessons from Small Writers*; and *One to One: The Art of Conferring with Young Writers*.

Lucy is also the Founding Director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University's Teachers College. For more than twenty-five years, the Project has been both a think tank, developing state of the art teaching methods, and a provider of professional development. This world-renowned organization is staffed by teachers and educational researchers who are committed to instigating and sustaining school-wide and system-wide educational reforms. In the course of their work Lucy Calkins and her colleagues from the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project have helped hundreds of thousands of teachers become experts in the teaching of writing.

In 2003 they wrote an unprecedented series of books chronicling units of study for a year-long writing curriculum for primary (K–2) writers. This acclaimed series, *Units of Study for Primary Writing*, has helped launch writing workshops and advanced writing instruction across the country. Now Lucy and her colleagues are extending their writing curriculum to the upper-elementary grades with *Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3–5*.

IN A NUTSHELL, *Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3–5* offers crystal-clear advice on how to lead **strong, efficient writing workshops in upper-elementary classrooms**. Organized within a carefully crafted spiraling curriculum, the series' six sequential units of study help you teach **narrative and expository writing with increasing power and intimacy**.

Before we get into the details of individual books, let me first provide you with a **overview of the components that make up this resource**.

UNITS OF STUDY FOR THE TEACHING OF WRITING, GRADES 3-5 CONTAINS SIX SEQUENTIAL UNITS OF STUDY.

- Unit of Study 1 is *Launching the Writing Workshop*
- Unit of Study 2 is *Raising the Quality of Narrative Writing*
- Unit of Study 3 is *Breathing Life into Essays*
- Unit of Study 4 is *Writing Fiction: Big Dreams, Tall Ambitions*
- Unit of Study 5 is *Literary Essays: Writing About Reading*
- Unit of Study 6 is *Memoir: The Art of Writing Well*

Each unit of study lays out four to six weeks of instruction. Together the units provide the **teaching points, minilessons, strategies, and tools** you'll need to jump in and teach writing to your students with power and skill.

Show *A Guide to the Writing Workshop*

TWO OTHER RESOURCES PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT.

A Guide to the Writing Workshop is a comprehensive overview of the series. This volume equips you to:

- teach a productive, well-managed writing workshop,
- introduces you to the methods that underlie writing instruction, and
- helps you plan a yearlong writing curriculum.

Show *Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM*

Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM provides print and video resources to support your teaching over the course of the year and includes a full compliment of:

- **homework options**
- **alternative minilessons**
- **instructional charts**
- **letters home**
- **assessment rubrics**
- and much, much more.

NOW LETS TAKE A DEEPER LOOK AT EACH OF THESE COMPONENTS AND HOW THEY ARE STRUCTURED FOR SUCCESS.

Show *A Guide to the Writing Workshop* page v

We'll start where most teachers will likely start when they receive this package—the first book in the bundle, *A Guide to the Writing Workshop*. A look at this book's Table of Contents (page v) highlights some recurring themes that run throughout this series.

THE FIRST 3 CHAPTERS INTRODUCE AND CONTEXTUALIZE THE SERIES.

Chapter 1: About the Series is a brief introduction to the motivations and ideals behind the series and is an inspirational call to action for implementing writer's workshops.

Chapter 2: The Foundations of a Writing Workshop describes the shared principles and structures common to writing workshop.

Chapter 3: The Writing Process for Upper-Elementary Grade Writers examines the developmental needs of upper-elementary students and how they impact how you teach the writing process to eight-, nine-, and ten-year-olds.

Chapters 2 and 3 highlight **two recurring concerns that play off each other throughout the series**. This series emphasizes the importance of following a **set series of consistant principles and structures throughout the writing workshop**. At the same time instruction is constantly responding to the **idiosyncratic needs of students** and building on their unique insights and understandings.

Adhering closely to a set framework and focusing on the insights and experiences of the individual are not mutually exclusive concerns, they actually advance each other. This might be best explained in Lucy's own words.

“If the writing workshop is always changing, always haphazard, children remain pawns waiting for their teacher's agenda. For this reason and others, I think it is so important for each day's workshop to have a clear, simple structure. Children should know what to expect. This allows them to carry on; it frees the teacher from choreographing activities and allows time for listening. How we structure the workshop is less important than that we structure it.” (*A Guide to the Writing Workshop*, page 36)

With these two recurring themes in mind lets take a look at the rest of the Table of Contents. **Chapters 5 through 8 detail the structures and rituals** that characterize a productive well-managed writing workshop. **Chapters 9–12 offer practical strategies on how you can tailor instruction** to meet the individual needs of your students and how to address the practical realities of the contemporary classroom.

NOW LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE OVERARCHING STRUCTURE OF THE 6 UNITS OF STUDY. As I mentioned earlier **each of the six unit books will support 4–6 weeks of writing instruction**, helping you plan goals, minilessons, independent writing time, share sessions, and assessment for that unit. These books are **sequentially organized**, with each unit building on the learning from the preceding unit.

AS WE GO THROUGH EACH UNIT NOTE HOW THE CAREFULLY-CRAFTED LEARNING PATHWAY DRAWS ON A STUDENT'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

Show Unit of Study 1: *Launching the Writing Workshop*

The first unit of study, *Launching the Writing Workshop* initiates students into the **structures and rituals of the writing workshop while it reviews and teaches the essentials of writing**—collecting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. In addition to introducing practical strategies for finding topics and generating writing, children practice the strategy of making movies in their minds and writing so readers can picture exactly what is happening. Students also learn the value of focusing on small moments in such detail that readers feel they are experiencing the event.

Show Unit of Study 2: *Raising the Quality of Narrative Writing*

Building on the learning from the first unit, the second unit of study, *Raising the Quality of Narrative Writing*, lingers another month on personal narrative writing. **Increasing the level of sophistication, the lessons in this unit help students write more significant, graceful personal narratives.** Students learn strategies for generating narrative entries that stand a greater chance of having emotional weight such as the first (or last) time they did something, a time they learned something, and a time they felt a strong emotion— hope, worry, sadness. Students learn how to focus their writing and how to turn timelines into cohesive, engaging story mountains.

Show Unit of Study 3: *Breathing Life into Essays*

Having developed a heightened understanding of how to structure a compelling personal narrative, students translate these new insights into a different writing genre in Unit of Study 3, *Breathing Life into Essays* and focus on **expository writing**. Here students learn how to **craft thesis-driven essays drawn from personal experiences and expertise**. Throughout this unit students learn how to collect seed ideas, develop a thesis statement, organize their thinking into subordinate ideas, and use a range of evidence to support their argument.

Show Unit of Study 4: *Writing Fiction: Big Dreams, Tall Ambitions*

After a month of writing essays students return to the land of narrative writing, but this time they get to write what students want to write most: short fiction. **Writing Fiction: Big Dreams, Tall Ambitions encourages students to live like fiction writer:** to collect story ideas by observing their own lives; to create characters with wants and struggles; and to use story arcs to create rising action. Children also revise their writing in significant ways. They reread with various lenses, including looking for “cardboard characters” and thinking about ways to ground their stories in a well-developed setting.

Show Unit of Study 5: *Literary Essays: Writing About Reading*

In the fifth unit of study students draw on what they have learned about writing stories to read stories well. They use what they learned in the personal essay unit to help them craft analytical essays that respond to literature. **Literary Essays: Writing About Reading models how literary essayists observe a text closely;** craft a thesis statement that reflects their personal view of a story; and collect and “unpack” evidence from the text to support their argument.

Show Unit of Study 6: *Memoir: The Art of Writing Well*

The writing of memoir is the last and biggest writing project of the year. **Memoir: The Art of Writing Well invites children to search for Life Topics, the recurring themes found in their writing.** To focus on these big ideas and write with greater depth, students apply such

strategies as writing-to-learn and writing about a topic from several perspectives. As in the previous units, students turn to published texts to consider other strategies for writing in depth and to get ideas for ways to structure their own texts. Students also consider the expressive potential of internal timelines and emblematic details and how to create metaphors and meaning from tiny details.

In addition to these six Units of Study, *A GUIDE TO THE WRITING WORKSHOP* DESCRIBES ALTERNATIVE UNITS OF STUDY YOU MAY WANT TO CONSIDER AND PROVIDES DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS ON WAYS TO DEVELOP YOUR OWN HOMEGROWN UNITS OF STUDY. (See Chapter 9, “Authoring Your Own Units of Study.”)

It is important to remember that the goal of these six units of study is to **help you watch thoughtful, reflective teaching in ways that enable you to extrapolate guidelines and methods, so that on another day you’ll feel ready to invent your own teaching.** A detailed look at a specific session will help you understand how the sessions are structured to achieve this overarching goal. For our detailed session walkthrough we’ll take a look at Unit of Study 1, *Launching the Writing Workshop*, Session 15, “Developing the Heart of a Story,” pages 157–167.

Show Unit of Study 1: *Launching the Writing Workshop*

Tab 1: page 157

Each unit of study contains 14 to 18 sessions. The regular structure of each session provides a coherent framework on which to build your own curriculum.

Each session opens with the support you need to get started.

- **In This Session** provides a concise summary of the session.
- **Getting Ready** lists the materials needed to teach each session.

Each session also opens with an **INTRODUCTION** that describes the thinking behind the session and explains its place in the larger curriculum.

THE NEXT PAGE INTRODUCES SOME KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS WORTHY OF NOTE:

- One important feature introduced here is **Lucy’s side-column coaching commentary.** The side column of each session allows Lucy to whisper professional insights into your ear as you picture the teaching. Lucy coaches you:
 - to realize why she’s taught the way she has,
 - to see other choices she could have made,
 - to notice the aspects of today’s teaching that are transferable to other days,
 - to understand ways one day’s teaching stands on the shoulders of previous days, and
 - to consider ways the teaching could be adapted for children with different needs.
- The **boldface guidelines** that subdivide a session outline the session’s **teaching moves.** These clear, scannable guidelines provide a step-by-step framework that you can easily follow if you choose to teach with the text open on your desk or lap.
- The **running text** between the boldface guidelines **models the teaching language** and chronicles the classroom discussions that bring a session to life. Developed in hundreds of classrooms, this language has been crafted for optimum effectiveness. **The specificity of the narrative allows for a sort of DEMONSTRATION TEACHING.** You can listen in on and observe Lucy as she is teaching.

After the Introduction, the next part of a session is a brief **MINILESSON** that inspires and rallies students to apply the strategy or concept to be learned. Lucy describes minilessons as rather like the huddles in the midst of a football game or like the gathering of art students around one person’s easel. Each of these gatherings contains a mix of informality, clarity, and

urgency.

Each minilesson is sub-divided into four components

- CONNECTION
- TEACHING
- ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT
- LINK

The **CONNECTION** stage of a minilesson begins by **linking a session to students' prior learning**. Oftentimes this involves explicitly stating how the day's lesson builds on a previous session. **Then the Connection clearly states the teaching point**, helping students focus on what they will learn that day.

Tab 2: page 159

The second phase of a this minilesson begins on the next page. In the **TEACHING** phase of the Minilesson the teacher shows children how writers go about doing whatever is being taught. Usually this involves a demonstration, which the teacher sets up and explains. Providing the instructional language of the lesson, this Teaching component chronicles Lucy's conversation with her students and the discussion of the writing sample.

HERE ARE TWO OTHER SPECIAL DESIGN ELEMENTS THAT SUPPORT EACH SESSION.

- A rich array of **student writing samples supports each session**. These samples, rendered in the students own handwriting, document their struggle to express a feeling or experience. As primary source documents, these samples vividly highlight how students edit and revise their work. *Full-size versions of many of the student writing samples are included on the Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM. You can download and use them for class discussions.*
- Transcripts of the **student writing samples in distinct easy-to-read type** are also seamlessly integrated it into the narrative.

Tab 3: page 161

The **ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT** part of a Minilesson gives children a chance to **practice (for a minute) what has just been taught**. The teacher scaffolds their work so they can be successful. During Active Engagement Lucy oftentimes sets children up to be able to work successfully with what is essentially a whole-class text. Because they are all working with the same text for a moment or two, they are better able to learn from each other's work. In this Active Engagement, Lucy has her students collaborate on the revision of a miniature exercise text. This shared activity immediately involves the students in applying the strategy and builds momentum for the writing time that will follow.

Minilessons conclude with a **LINK** where the teacher **crystallizes what has been taught**, adding it to children's growing repertoire. Children are reminded that today's lesson pertains not only to today, but to every day. To help her students apply their new learning to their ongoing work, Lucy uses this Link to review the steps for using this revision strategy and then she encourages them to be job captains for themselves and consider if and when they will apply the strategy to their own writing.

Tab 4: page 163

After a minilesson each session contains a **WRITING and CONFERRING** feature. Writing and Conferring provides tips and ideas for making the most of **one-to-one conferences and small-group strategies**. As Lucy says, **"Conferences are essential: when a teacher talks with a child about the child's rough drafts, the child internalizes this conversation and, in the end, is able to talk with himself or herself in the midst of writing. The writing process, in a sense, is an internalized conversation that occurs within any skilled writer."**

It is inevitable that in the midst of a writing workshop, a teacher will want to interrupt the hum of the workshop to teach the entire class. Often this teaching builds upon the minilesson. For this purpose **MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING POINTS** are a regular component halfway through each session. Most mid-workshop teaching points either **extend what children are working on or corrects the course of their work.**

Every writing workshop ends with a **SHARE**. This provides one more opportunity to sneak in some pointers. Usually during the share, Lucy will highlight one child's work in a way that creates a trail that others can follow, and then she'll channel each child toward a **productive conversation with his or her writing partner.**

Tab 5: page 165

The Share phase of a session concludes with a **HOMEWORK** option and a **TAILORING YOUR TEACHING** strategy.

- The **Homework** feature at the conclusion of each session suggests ways students can **extend the concept or strategy at home.** Written to be read by children, homework options always include a pep talk (a miniature minilesson) and sometimes include exemplar work. *Homework options are also provided in a modifiable format on the **Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM.***
- **Tailoring Your Teaching** helps you adapt minilessons to the ability and interests of your students. Some suggestions are ways to reteach the session's key concepts. Others are ways to adjust your curriculum to reinforce and deepen your students' understandings as they revisit minilessons in the second or third year of study. *Lucy Calkins and co-author Kathy Collins offer additional follow-up minilessons on the **Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM.***

Tab 6: page 167

ONE OF THREE SPECIAL FEATURES CLOSES EACH SESSION: **MECHANICS, COLLABORATING WITH COLLEAGUES, AND ASSESSMENT**

- **MECHANICS** provides you with practical and also inspirational ways to deepen your students' understanding of the **conventions of written language.** These sections help you teach spelling, punctuation, syntax, and vocabulary both within the writing workshop and during word-study time. *The Mechanics features from each unit, as well as the mechanics instruction within each session, are listed on the **Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM.***

Tab 7: page 133

- **COLLABORATING WITH COLLEAGUES** highlights ways that you and your colleagues can use study-group time productively in support of this unit.

Tab 8: page 178

- **ASSESSMENT** suggests lenses you might use at this particular time in your children's development and helps you imagine ways to make sense of what you will probably see.

Tab 9: inside backcover

Assessments occur in little and big ways throughout a unit of study. Sometimes they are quick interventions focused on a specific concrete topic. Other times they are big unit-level rubrics. **ASSESSMENT RUBRICS** are provided at the end of each unit of study and **present clearly specified goals that help you assess each child's progress and your own teaching.** *These Assessment Rubrics are also provided on the **Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM.***

THAT IS THE REGULAR STRUCTURE THAT FRAMES EACH SESSION. Just as the clear, simple structure of the writing workshop helps children know what to expect, allowing

them to carry on idependently, the consistant, coherent framework of each session will help you internalize these effective methods for teaching writing. By detailing the way Lucy teaches writing

- the choices she makes (or could make),
- the theories and experience she draws on, and
- the resources she uses—

each unit of study will enable you to extrapolate guidelines and methods so that you will feel ready to invent your own clear, sequenced, vibrant instruction in writing.

Show Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM

There is one more resource in this curriculum that we have touched on but that deserves special attention, it is the *Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM*. As I have already mentioned the *Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM* provides print and video resources to support your teaching over the course of the year. That includes:

- **Homework** options in a modifiable format
- full-size versions of the **Student Writing** samples
- **Tailoring Your Teaching** strategies (alternative minilessons) and
- each unit's **Assessment Rubric**

In addition the CD-ROM also provides:

- The **instructional charts** from each session in a modifiable format.
- Customizable **letters home** that describe each unit of study and communicate to parents the important work students are doing.
- **Bibliographies** of professional and children's literature

Plus, video clips allow you to watch Lucy teach and confer with students.

That is an overview of *Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3–5*. But just like in learning how to write, you will learn more by actively practicing a strategy rather than listening to someone else describe it, and since this program is designed for educators who learn best by simply getting started, I encourage you to jump in and try a few sessions on your own.