

## **Real Heroes**

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### **Overview**

The purpose of this unit is to combine reading, writing, and learning so that students examine the concept of a hero/human, write about it, and authorize their own conception of a hero/human. This unit proposes to extract the human and heroic qualities that are within the students and to motivate them to observe, to remember, and to record the heroic characteristics of another person in their lives. The students should become so immersed and committed to perfecting their story of the hero/human that they would want to preserve the heroic/human qualities for eternity by publishing a book.

According to the introduction in World Mythology, a hero is a model of human behavior for the betterment of the community or society. A hero is more thoughtful and sensitive because of his or her trials and decisions. In fact, because a hero is not perfect, her weaknesses are instructive. Her inner battles between desires and responsibilities to the community guide her to become better. Her humanity is an inspiration for others to emulate. The deeds that a hero performs for the community or for her society give her everlasting fame. To be a hero is to be human.

Students must relate these heroic characteristics to their own experiences and contributions. They must then link someone else's experiences and contributions as a hero. That hero may be a parent, grandparent, sibling, friend,

neighbor, community member, or an historical figure. Using the characteristics of a hero in World Mythology, students must write their own personal narrative.

Although this unit is centered on twelfth grade African-American students in English class, it can be applied to all content areas and adapted to any grade level. Students should be motivated to realize that their writing is a teaching tool – a continuum of Ancient African Wisdom – a model for the “children of the great.”

Students should be able to gather and compare information about a hero described in World Mythology, grasp and understand the characteristics of a hero, and apply and connect those characteristics to their own experiences and the lives of others. As “observers,” students should be able to paint a picture of a personal hero/human so that the reader will be able to say, “I know someone just like that.”

## **Rationale**

As teachers, mediators, and facilitators, how do we inspire high school students to seek, welcome, actively participate, and communicate knowledge as fuel for the future? How do we motivate our students to write and to view themselves as writers - as authors who must share their special gifts to the world? How do we prod them to rigorously plod through the process of writing to be published? How do we convince our students that to write is not a burden but a cultural treasure and inheritance, and that to write is to be a “human being (hero) on paper”?

More specifically, as teachers of African-American students, how do we guide students to “locate themselves within the context of their own cultural references?” (Asante p. 339) As contributors to the continuum of world history and world civilizations, African-American students must see themselves as subjects not objects. They must be writers, who are not outside the universe but universal human beings. African-American students should feel a responsibility to engage in world literacy — to make their truths beautiful — to make sense out of life. Africa’s contribution to world literacy was the first written language — hieroglyphics — MDW NTR — Divine Speech. Listening, learning, speaking, and the writing on the walls of the pyramids transmitted wisdom and truth. These writings have endured for thousands of years. These writings have given the world historical truths and wisdom. The ancient master teacher, Ptahhotep, was instructed to go ahead and teach the Ancient Wisdom so that he could become a model for “the children of the great”.

As learners as well as teachers, how do we convince our students that they are at the center of their own learning? Writing is learning. "Writing enables students to find their own voice to express what is learned." The learner, as a writer, has the power to make language choices. She asks, "How do I know what I think until I see what I say?" (Mayer p. 36) Learning, thinking, and writing are active processes. The learner tries to make sense of new information by connecting it with what she already knows. The writing process compels the learner to clearly and publicly express connections. The writer is needed to capture and interpret events and information into a bank of knowledge that continues to prosper.

Writing is not just recording information. Writing captures, transforms, and interprets events, emotions, and knowledge into a world of information that makes sense. Toni Morrison says the writer "bears witness." Writing is a way of knowing - a way of thinking. Writing is thoughts on paper. Writing is used to organize, manipulate, channel, build, balance and give power to thinking.

How will students read, consider, comprehend, form, create, and apply the concept of a hero as a human? How will learning, therefore reading and writing, become lifelong processes? How will students envision writing and learning and learning and writing for eternity? Perhaps we could study the ancient Dogon people's mystery system of the development and acquisition of thought and knowledge: First the world is thought, realized, and organized into a whole. Then it is disordered into a system of links and connections. The symbol of the world is the spoken word. The story or the *astonishing word* explains or illuminates the world. The story is told and understood in graduated or consecutive stages until the words are more explicit and complete.

The first stage of understanding is called *giri so* or *fore-word*. This is an introduction to the existence of the word or concept. The learner would gather past experiences and memories.

In the next phase, *benne so* or *side word*, the explanation of the idea is deeper, with visuals and examples to model and imitate. The learner should be able to look at the concept more closely and begin to discuss and make connections.

At the *bolo so* - the *back-word* or *word from behind* - stage the learner would look at all of the parts and patterns and link them as a whole and create her own.

*So dayi* - *clear word* or *good word* - could take a lifetime. The learner has committed to building and preserving a structure that lasts for eternity.

To fit the Dogon Mystery System into learning and writing, the student would get a sense of the word hero and the fundamentals of writing (*fore - word*). Next the student would study and compare models to label and differentiate heroes and expressive writing (*side view*). To create and specify a unique hero, the student would then synchronize the models and her own experiences of heroes and impressive writing (*back word*). To preserve her writing style and her special story of a hero, the student would edit, revise, edit, revise, and rewrite the narrative to be published, read and housed in the school library (*good word*).

Prior to their reading the characteristics of a hero in World Mythology, students believe a hero is a superman who leaps through tall buildings to save one person. The images of heroes seen on television or the movies usually characterize a man who is disconnected or separated from the environment, humans, and reality. Physically and mentally this man is better than everyone. Of course no one can beat him or even be him. Therefore, it seems to be impossible for a high school student to be a hero. Today the false, degrading, and incomplete representations of a hero negatively influence African-American children. What hero portrayed in the media has such human qualities that benefit the eternal survival of his people? To be “like Mike” is to promote a brand of sneakers.

According to Dr. Kaufer, this type of stereotyping is both good and bad. The writer and the reader can both begin by agreeing on the image. Their assumptions have unity. The writer has the reader’s attention. The reader can associate and connect to a series of images as soon as the writer mentions “hero.” In order to prevent the story from becoming boring, the narrator must move beyond this cliché. As the narrative unfolds, the writer must go on to present and explain what makes her hero so unique. The writer must take her hero out of the box.

For background information, students should understand that to be a hero is to be human in the world. Characters in many myths, fictional stories, and the media are portrayed as heroes. Students should be able to analyze a character or a person’s deeds according to criteria that benefits the well-being of her community and the world. Asa Hilliard has extensively researched what the creators of the first civilization used as a criterion to be human in the world. He reports that in ancient Egyptian culture an individual was considered part of a group—a collective. The ideal for the individual was to become “godlike” by adhering to the principles of truth, justice, harmony, order, reciprocity, and balance. Humans would always strive to become more like god or good in order to reach “perfectibility.”

Students should be aware of their own contributions and the contributions of the people in their lives to the world community. Students should then analyze and compare the specific deeds and attributes of a hero/human. Writers should see the connections between their own comprehension of a hero and their deeds as heroes. Then the writers should connect the contributions of their personal hero to the reader's perception of a hero. These connections should bring meaning to the printed page for the writer as well as for the reader. The writer must guide the reader to make associations.

George Washington Carver, the genius scientist, closely watched his plants, talked to them, and asked them to reveal their secrets. By complementing the Dogon mystery system, Congolese educator and philosopher, Kimbwandende Fu-Kiau says that if one is very quiet, she can hear the voices of the ancestors. Both of these traditional approaches may help a writer peel and present layer after layer of the meaning of a hero. To spark meaning, students as writers must listen and observe closely.

The writer should develop an intimacy with the reader so that she helps the reader become acquainted with her hero. As a photographer, explains Dr. Kaufer, the writer is painting a picture for the reader to "see" this hero according to the student's interpretation and imitation of a hero. The writer gives the reader a concrete model with whom to identify. The writer should describe the character as if she were taking a picture. The reader needs the picture so that he can visualize and become familiar with the character. To help the reader discover how the hero interacts with others, this character should come alive with conversation. The dialogue or even monologue should reflect the culture, age, region, tone, and attitude that are relevant to the background of the narrative. Being a hero is so special that the writer will want the reader to share the experience.

A hero is judged by her actions. The description of the hero must have some connection to the larger world. Therefore the writer must give the reader an account of activity over time and space. What happened to force the hero to make decisions and learn lessons? What outside forces influenced the hero? What values would she uphold? What is the environment and space that influence her and her group? According to Dr. Kaufer the writer of a "real" hero must be an observer, an artist, a designer, a photographer, an interviewer, an eye witness reporter, a detective, a tour guide, a biographer, an agent and a seeker of truth and balance. The learner, the writer, and the hero strive for perfectibility—to grasp, apply, and preserve for eternity.

## **Objectives**

Students will be able to understand, analyze, evaluate, and apply the characteristics of a hero.

Students will be able to orally tell their experiences and contributions as heroes.

Students will be able to read as writers, asking questions and using answers to generate more questions.

Students will be able to understand and apply the processes of reading and writing.

Students will be able to create a narrative that reflects the characteristics of a hero.

Students will be able to evaluate and organize their writing for an audience.

## **Strategies**

The lessons integrate and coordinate listening, speaking, reading, writing, and learning. Students will follow the reading and writing processes. Students will use listening, speaking, reading, and writing to generate ideas and to learn.

Students will use graphic organizers to arrange ideas. Students will be expected to read, reflect and discuss independently, in pairs, in groups, and with the whole class. During writers' workshop, students will share their progress with writing with their group. By reading stories, questioning the authors, and examining the authors' craft, students will establish models for writing strategies. The teacher, as facilitator, will conference with each student about the student's assessment of her progress or any obstacles she might be experiencing. The teacher's role will be as learner, writer, and facilitator, not as evaluator. Based on the elements of good writing, the students and their peers will establish the standards by which the writing will be assessed.

The lessons will meet the communications content standards so that students will be reading and writing for a variety of purposes, thinking and judging critically, and exchanging information. Through word processing and imaging, technology will be integrated into the lessons.

## **Classroom Activities**

*Please refer to the Notes (1), (2), and (3) at the end of the lessons.*

(1)

## ***Activity One***

### Lesson One:

Compose a letter to the class about your writing experiences. Describe how the writing process has worked for you. Include: How do you get started? Describe the fears, the risks, the triumphs, and the frustrations. What decisions did you make? How do you plan and organize? What have you learned about yourself and your interactions as a reader and a writer? How do you check for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and clarity?

### Lesson Two:

Share and read your letter on a large screen so students may ask questions. Have students respond by letter about their own experiences in writing. Let students share and read their letters on the large screen.

### Lesson Three:

Discuss by comparing and contrasting students' and the teacher's views about writing. Ask students to summarize the discussion by writing in their Journals.

## ***Activity Two***

### Lesson One:

1. Make a chart of conclusions about students' and teachers' views on writing on the Smart Board. Include authors' views across the heading (students – teacher – Maya Angelou – Malcolm X – Margaret Walker – Toni Morrison – Stephen King – The Last Poets – Chinua Achebe).
2. Divide the class into groups.
  - “Maya Angelou’s Interview at Central State”, Foundations 3 pp. 4-8
  - Excerpt from Autobiography of Malcolm X, “Coming To an Awareness of Language”, Foundations 1 pp. 38-40
  - Conversations With Toni Morrison pp. 30-42
  - How I Wrote Jubilee pp. 50-65
3. Each group will read, discuss, list, and present to the class the writing experiences of one of the authors. Have a recorder from each group add the author’s view on writing to the chart. Discuss.

Lesson Two:

Have students listen to Stephen King's tape two, On Writing. Show the video, First Drum, which is about The Last Poets, the beginnings of rap in the sixties, and the evolution of rap up to now. For homework have students look up on the Internet:

[www.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/achebe2.htm](http://www.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/achebe2.htm) featuring Chinua Achebe's views on writing about the "value and functions of literature and storytelling" In Journals have students respond and/or question the authors' ideas on writing. Have students discuss the similarities and differences between all of the authors.

***Activity Three***

Have students explain and discuss their ideas and examples of a hero. Throughout the week students should keep a log of heroes observed, described, and defined on television, movies, in print, or in public.

Lesson One:

Divide the class in pairs and have students read pages XV, XVI, and XVII in World Mythology. Each pair should list the six characteristics of a hero. Let each pair be responsible for teaching the class one of the characteristics, giving examples and visual explanations.

Lesson Two:

Read from The Black Hero : "Winds of Change" pp 190-201

"Our Shining Black Prince" pp 164-166

"The Pocketbook Game" pp 88-89

Discuss how the characters have human flaws, but guide students to pick out the descriptions and actions of the characters as heroes.

Have students summarize or respond to the stories in their Journals.

Lesson Three:

In groups, each student will tell the group of an experience when she showed one of the characteristics in school, at home, work, or during leisure time. The student will start: "Let me tell you about..." One other person from the group is responsible for retelling the story, imitating gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Within the group everyone should have a turn telling and retelling a story. Select volunteers from each group to retell one of the stories to the whole class. The class will analyze and reflect on the experience of telling a story. As the class listens they should note:

- What were some interesting details?
- What words were used to paint pictures?
- How was the story organized?
- What was the beginning to draw listeners' attention?
- How did the closing bring everything together?
- What words or intonations were used to connect to the audience?
- How was telling the story compound to writing the story?

#### Lesson Four:

For homework during the week, students should collect newspaper stories that tell of people showing the characteristics of a hero. Students will point out the language strategies that the writer used to draw the reader into the story.

- How did the writer go from general to specific?
- How did the writer help the reader "see" the subject?
- What questions beg to be answered?
- What is the tone of the article?

#### Lesson Five:

While students read stories from the Language and Literature Anthology Unit One "Glory and Honor," have them write in their Journals as Learning Logs. Students should note and respond to the characters as heroes, answering the following questions:

- How does the author introduce the reader to the character?
- How does the author fit the setting to the character, giving him or her a sense of place?
- How does the author make the reader know the character?
- How does the writer portray the character as imperfect but a human, striving to be perfect?
- What figurative language did the author use?
- What technique did the writer use to give the reader background information about the character?
- What made the character like other types and what made her stand out?
- What are some examples from your own experiences?
- What arguments or questions do you have?
- Select, explain, and respond the particular dialogue in relation to the culture and add any other comments.

- Write a letter to your classmates about any point of the story.
- How might you practice any of the qualities of a hero or any of the actions of the characters?
- Compare the antagonist to the hero.

Have students read Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe. This novel is an excellent example of rich writing. Achebe is a master at using metaphors, proverbs and lively descriptions. The readers meet a hero that is so real that they will both hate and admire him as he struggles to make decisions that may or may not uphold the culture he represents.

Once a week invite students to share their responses.

#### Lesson Six:

Have students brainstorm about a person in their family, community, or a friend who has done something for the good of all. Students will make a chart with three columns. The first column will have a description of the person. The second column will have the deeds of the person. The third column will compare which deeds match the characteristics of a hero. Students will share their chart with a partner.

#### Lesson Seven:

“Description is the physical evidence about a person—the facial shape, features, hair, skin, texture, and odor. Readers can see characters’ faces and bodies up close with gestures, expressions, fashion and their particular walk.” (Kaufer, lecture)

Orally read the example of description in Principles of Writing, pp 57-58. In pairs, students should note the examples of how the writer deliberately chose words to help the reader see the grandmother described in the sample.

- Students will name the literary devices the writer used.
- Students will free write a description of their real people as heroes.
- Students will share their free writing while peers point out the deliberate ways each student used the language to help the reader “see.”
- Students will provide background information or a biographical sketch of each character.

#### Lesson Eight:

Randomly match students in pairs, facing each other. Have each partner look at her mate as if taking a photograph. For five minutes each student should write words and phrases that describe her partner, including expressions, gestures, textures, color tones, and attitude. Students should be given ten minutes to shape their words into a meaningful paragraph.

Let students share their descriptions as the class decides the accuracy of the descriptions.

(2)

Lesson Nine:

Have students silently read Maya Angelou's description of Mrs. Flowers. (Scope English Anthology pp. 320-327) After they are finished, have students draw a picture of a Mrs. Flowers, noting key descriptive words the author used. Discuss how Maya Angelou painted Mrs. Flowers as a special hero/human:

- How did she introduce the reader to Mrs. Flowers?
- How did Mrs. Flowers stand out?
- How did the author bring you, the reader, closer or more intimate with Mrs. Flowers?
- How did Maya Angelou preserve the qualities of Mrs. Flowers to last for eternity?

(3)

Lesson Ten:

Have students discuss what makes good writing in groups. Each group will present by giving lists, explaining with a visual. Follow up with a PowerPoint Presentation to reinforce the qualities of good writing. Have students develop a rubric, based on the elements discovered from authors, readings, and discussions.

Lesson Eleven:

"Setting creates the world in which characters live and struggle. (Fletcher p. 114)" Refer back to Pearl S. Buck's use of the setting and sense of time in the present past and future, as well as cultural background of Mrs. Wang in "Old Demon.", Literature and Language pp. 35-43. Have students compare the sense of place in China to their neighborhood. How would a character benefit the community in an African-American neighborhood? What clues tell Mrs. Wang's age, demeanor, and culture?

Lesson Twelve:

Dialogue allows the reader to eavesdrop on the characters own words or conversation (Kaufer, lecture). "Spoken dialogue can conjure up a whole world." (Fletcher p.139)

- Orally read Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Notes from a Birmingham Jail" or listen to the tape from the Birmingham Jail. They should

try to record as accurately as they are able to hear, including the grunts, sighs, interruptions, and grammatical errors.

- Have students listen to conversation in the cafeteria or at home. Students will use the Smart Board or chart paper to show the whole class how to format and punctuate the dialogue they recorded.
- Ask students to change the words as if the Vice-principal were saying them.
- Students will analyze how phrases change according to age, status, region, and culture.
- Have students turn a paragraph into a dialogue between two characters.

#### Lesson Thirteen:

“Let the reader experience the hero’s actions over biographical time.”

(Kaufer, lecture) Read Honey, I Love by Eloise Greenfield.

- Point out how she goes through her experiences with language rich enough to give visual images and the character’s responses and decisions.
- Now read “To Build A Fire” by Jack London to show the character’s experiences, changes, and decisions as something goes wrong. The responses and decisions reveal the character.
- Have students write to include their character’s actions, conflict, and decisions. Make sure they refer to using dialogue to move the action.
  - Something happens.
  - Something changes.
  - The character has to make decisions.
  - The reader should be glued to the story.
  - Will the hero make a decision that benefits the community or will the hero decide to help only himself?
- Have students share and respond in pairs.

#### Lesson Fourteen:

Vocabulary—“Language permits us to see. Without the word, we are all blind.” (Fletcher p. 67)

- Write common, tired words on the board such as sad, mad, glad, bad, good. Have students find twenty related words.
- Have students collect their own special words in their journals. Discuss the meanings of some Hip-Hop language e.g. “chill,” “the bomb.”
- Ask students to underline which of their choice of words sing, dance, and shout on the page.

- Use poetry as models of figurative language, creating imagery with few words.

#### Lesson Fifteen:

Patterns of Organization - How will ideas be organized to tell the story?

Have students read “On Being Seventeen, Bright and Unable to Read”

Foundations 1 pp. 142-143 to note the chronological order of the narrative. Explain and give examples to choose patterns of organization: cause and effect – exemplification – comparison/contrast – classification – spatial

Have students read “From Poets in the Kitchen” Foundations 4 pp. 91-93 as an example of developing the main idea with vivid details.

#### Lesson Sixteen:

The hardest task for students is to revisit, revise, or re-see the whole picture and then look at each individual part to find connections, organization, clarity and shape—just as one mixes and bakes rolls.

Without the right elements, the bread falls flat. “The limits of art are never achieved; the skills of the artist are never perfected.” (Plahhotep)

Stress the following to your students as they read their narratives aloud to themselves, with a partner, or the teacher:

- The writer must transform writing for the reader.
- Details help the reader get close. They specify. They use the senses.
- The writer has experiences worth sharing and has something to say.
- Writing is like quilting. All the pieces fit into a beautiful picture.
- What needs to happen to make the writing work?
- Does the writing build the reader’s experience, interest, and understanding?
- Does the writing carefully guide the reader deeper and deeper into the world of the writer?
- What questions would the reader have?
- Has the writer established a close relationship with the reader?
- Has the writer induced the reader to think?
- Ask questions of the writing. Make the writing live.
- Has the writer explained and shown enough information?
- Has the writer shown a relationship, a connection to the subject, and to the writer and reader’s own experiences?
- Has the writer interpreted the information enough for the reader?
- Would the writer or the reader say, “so what” or “I know exactly what you mean”?

“Good writing is a vivid and continuous dream.” (Gardner p. 61). Students will work in writing groups of four to read their paper to the group. The group will ask the writer:

- What are you trying to say about your hero?
- How did you paint your picture?
- What is outstanding?
- Where are you stuck?

While the rest of the class is working on revisions, schedule conferences with each student. Reflect and restate the writing. Don't evaluate. Lead students to begin to evaluate their own writing by examining examples and models of advanced writing and referring to the questions above..

#### Lesson Seventeen:

“Easy reading is hard writing and hard reading is easy writing.” (Angelou p. 4) Ask students to recall how they check for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure and clarity.

- Have students listen to their mistakes to correct them.
- Discuss the importance of publishing to perfectibility for a live audience. If the rules of the language aren't followed, the ideas aren't exchanged. Students should shape their narratives to be published in a book of heroes that will be displayed in the library.
- After each student has finished her narrative, have her choose an illustrator from the class to interpret and select a visual image from the Internet or clipart that represents the narrative.
- Have students decide on a fitting cover and title for the book. Inside make a title page and a table of contents.
- Use a bookbinding machine to compile the stories into the book.

#### Notes:

(1) *As the lessons evolve, students should proceed with the writing process (generating ideas, drafting, revising, editing, drafting, revising, editing, and drafting), continually visiting this narrative throughout the year in order to reach perfectibility.*

(2) *Twelfth graders are usually mature enough to describe each other candidly but thoughtfully. If needed, caution students to be considerate.*

(3) *Refer to the appendix of Ralph Fletcher's What a Writer Needs pp. 165-177. Choose any of the selections to help teach and model the essential elements of good writing - beginnings, endings, characterization, voice, sense of place, time, tension, conflict, humor, and language.*

## **Annotated Teachers' Bibliography and Resources**

African American Literature *Voices in Tradition*. Florida: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

This anthology presents a world of rich African literature and history.

Abary, Abu S., Asante, Molefi Kete, editors. African Intellectual Heritage. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

This book includes the many speeches and philosophies of world – wide African scholars and activists from the beginning of civilization to the present.

Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart. London: Heinemann, 1958.

Okonkwo, the hero of this story is full of flaws that make him struggle to be human. He is faced with conflicts that force him to question and make decisions eventually for the good of his culture. Has Okonkwo earned everlasting fame? This novel should be an assignment for class and homework.

Bennett, Barbara. Words Take Wing, A Teaching Guide to Creative Writing for Children. Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1983.

Although this book is dated and is for elementary teachers, it has some creative ideas and lessons with examples of different genres and skills.

Bomer, Randy. Time for Meaning. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1995.

Randy Bomer shares his lessons and experiences as an English teacher in secondary school.

Boone, Beth, Farmer, Margorie, Yesner, Seymour, Bemelman, Steven.

Composition and Grammar. Illinois: Lardlaw Brothers, 1985.

This book is one of the many that students can use to edit their writing.

Brandvik, Mary Lou. Writing Process Activities Kit. New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1995.

The reproducible lessons are invaluable and the section describing “good writing” is a helpful PowerPoint resource.

Dunn, Kathleen, Ebert, Daniel J, Kovacs, Mary Anne, Manear, John. Advanced Placement Writing—Strategies for Honors, Gifted, and AP Students. New York: The Center for Learning ,1999.

This manual has samples of student responses to prompts from the Advanced Placement Writing Tests. The samples and the evaluative comments are helpful for students to see what is considered scholarly writing.

Dieterlen, G; Griaule, M. The Pale Fox. Paris: Continuum Foundation, 1965.

These men spent ten years trying to learn the sacred and ancient mystery systems of the Dogon people. They wanted to know the foundation of the Dogon that gave them the sustaining secrets of the stars without a telescope and a written language thousands of years ago.

Fletcher, Ralph. What A Writer Needs. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1993.

Donald Murray is absolutely right when he says this book is the best guide to teaching writing. The wording is teacher-friendly with samples across the grades and the curriculum. The Appendix is filled with books for all the techniques for writing. All teachers of writing need this book.

Foundations. Foundations for Learning Language 1, 2 3, and 4. New York: Scribner Educational Publishers, Mac Millan, 1987.

This is a workbook that provides an interview with Maya Angelou on reading writing, and excellence. An excerpt from Malcolm X in Volume I describes how Malcolm X became aware of his lack of language skills and how he tackled the problem. This series emphasizes the combination of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking skills.

Fu-Kiau, Kimbwandende. Self-Healing Power and Therapy: Old Teachings from Africa. New York: Vantage Press, 1991.

If the writer must connect to the reader and the ideas to the whole story there must be a study of cultures that have made these connects as an essential part of their lives.

Goheen, Richard, Craig. Literature and Language English and World Literature. Illinois:

McDougal, Littell & Company, 1992.

This the core anthology textbook adopted by the Pittsburgh Public School District. The students will read and discuss stories to compare the heroic qualities of the characters.

Gunthrie, Danielle Taylor, editor. Conversations with Toni Morrison. Jackson: University

Press of Mississippi, 1994.

The editor has collected interviews of Toni Morrison. In “The Seams Can’t Show . . .” Toni Morrison talks about her beginnings as a writer, her awareness of the reader, the setting, her experiences to the page, and her immersion into the character.

Hilliard III, Asa. SBA The Reawakening of the African Mind. Florida: Makare, 1997.

This book is a guide for advancing the education of African American children as a continuum and a connection of ancient systems and the future possibilities.

Hord, Fred Lee; Lee, Jonathon Scott. I Am Because We Are Readings in Black Philosophy. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.

Molefi Asante explains the theory of education centering on the African American child. He reports the teachings of Ptahhotep to reveal the ancient principles of education that enabled a people to build the pyramids that are still standing today.

Kaufers, David S; Butler, Brian S. Designing Interactive Worlds with Words, Principles of Writing as Representational Composition. New Jersey: Lawrence Cilbaum Associates, 2000.

The book gives a refreshing and motivating view of the writer’s responsibility and relationship to the reader. The ideas presented guide the writer to visualize and create different genres. In this book the writer seems so important to the world of literature. According to the authors, the reader/writer actually becomes an author and not just fulfilling an assignment. The reader and the writer become one.

Liestner, Nancy; Mayher, John S; Pradl. Learning to Write / Writing to Learn. Heinemann, New Hampshire: 1983.

This is an engaging book from cover to cover with ideas on teaching writing and using writing to learn.

McKeown, Margaret; Beck, Isabel L; Hamilton, Rebecca L; Kucan, Linda. “Questioning the Author” Assessibles, Washington: Wright Group McGraw Hill, 1999.

This book is a guide, explaining how to form questions that build on students learning during the discussion of reading material.

Murray, Alma and Thomas, Robert, editors. The Black Hero. New York: Scholastic

Magazines, Inc., 1970.

This anthology of poetry and narrative essays is divided into section naming some of the characteristics of a hero. The subjects in these selections are ordinary people.

The National Commission on Writing. The Neglected “R” The Need for A Writing Revolution: 2003.

Even though tests are requiring writing proficiency, school districts haven’t been committed to teaching writing from kindergarten up through high school. This book gives a comprehensive testament to the need to teach writing in all grades before testing for competency.

Obenga, Theophile. Africa, the Cradle of Writing. San Francisco: Pilar Edition, 1999.

The significance of the first writing in Africa should motivate African-American students to write for eternity.

Robinson, Katherine, editor. Scope English Anthology Level 3. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1988.

There are many short stories, essays, and poems from which to choose as models of the elements of writing.

Rosenberg, Donna. World Mythology. Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1986.

The introduction of this anthology of world myths and epics provides an explanation of common themes in most cultural stories.

Shujaa, Mwalimu, editor. Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education, “Notes on an Afrikan-Centered Pedagogy”. New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1994.

Agyei Akoto clearly defines the role of the teacher in an African-centered classroom.

Stone, Randi. Best Practices for High School Classrooms. California: Corevin Press, Inc, 2002.

Based on their high level thinking ideas, these teachers really deserved the reward of being Teacher of the Year.

Thomas, Lorenzo, editor. Sing the Sun Up—Creative Writing Ideas from African American Literature. New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1998.

Lorenzo Thomas has collected ideas and genres to write as responses to African-American literature.

Welty, Eudora. Thirteen Stories. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1937.

The introduction gives the background about Eudora Welty's life, her views, and the editors review of her writing.

Wynn, Ellen C. The Short Story: Twenty-Five Masterpieces. New York: St Martins Press, 1979.

Any anthology of short stories will do to provide students with examples of writing techniques, story elements, and characterization of the hero, but this book includes what is considered the masters of short story writing.

Television Program:

“First Drum”. Bravo Channel, New York. February 2003.

This documentary is an inspiring commentary of The Last Poets' contribution to rap and hip-hop. Students will love the references to their favorite rap artists and the honor the rappers give to The Last Poets. Each member of the group tells how compelled he was to write and spread the “good word” or “good speech” for the benefit of African people.

### **Annotated Students' Bibliography**

Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart. London: Heinemann, 1958.

Okonkwo, the hero of this story is full of flaws that make him human. He is faced with conflicts that force him to question and make decisions eventually for the good of his culture. Has Okonkwo earned everlasting fame? This novel should be an assignment for class and homework.

African American Literature Voices in Tradition. Florida: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

This anthology presents a world of rich African literature and history.

Boone, Beth, Farmer, Margorie, Yesner, Seymour, Bemelman, Steven.

Composition and Grammar. Illinois: Lardlaw Brothers, 1985.

This book is one of the many that can be used to edit students' writing.

Dunn, Kathleen, Ebert, Daniel J, Kovacs, Mary Anne, Manear, John. Advanced Placement Writing—Strategies for Honors, Gifted, and AP Students. New York: The Center for Learning, 1999.

This manual has samples of student responses to prompts from the Advanced Placement Writing Tests. The samples and the evaluative comments are helpful for students to see what is considered advanced writing.

Foundations. Foundations for Learning Language 1, 2 3, and 4. New York: Scribner Educational Publishers, Mac Millan, 1987.

This is a workbook that provides an interview with Maya Angelou on reading writing, and excellence. An excerpt from Malcolm X in Volume I describes how Malcolm X became aware of his lack of language skills and how he tackled the problem. The lessons in the series emphasizes the combination of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking skills.

Goheen, Richard, Craig. Literature and Language English and World Literature. Illinois: McDougal, Littell & Company, 1992.

This the core anthology textbook adopted by the Pittsburgh Public School District. The students will read and discuss stories to compare the heroic qualities of the characters.

Gunthrie, Danielle Taylor, editor. Conversations with Toni Morrison. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994.

The editor has collected interviews of Toni Morrison. In “The Seams Can’t Show . . .” Toni Morrison talks about her beginnings as a writer, her awareness of the reader, the setting, her experiences to the page and her immersion into the character.

Murray, Alma and Thomas, Robert, editors. The Black Hero. New York: Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1970.

This anthology of poetry and narrative essays is divided into section naming some of the characteristics of a hero. The subjects in these selections are ordinary people.

Robinson, Katherine, editor. Scope English Anthology Level 3. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1988.

There are many short stories, essays, and poems from which to choose as models of the elements of writing.

Rosenberg, Donna. World Mythology. Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1986.

The introduction of this anthology of world myths and epics provides an explanation of common themes in most cultural stories.

Walker, Margaret. How I Wrote Jubilee. New York: Feminist Press, 1990.

Margaret Walker talks about her life writing, other writers, and her views and opinions of world affairs and people.

Welty, Eudora. Thirteen Stories. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1937.

The introduction gives the background about Eudora Welty's life, her views, and the editors review of her writing.

Wynn, Ellen C. The Short Story: Twenty-Five Masterpieces. St Martins Press, New York:1979.

Any anthology of short stories is sufficient in providing students with examples of writing techniques, story elements, and the characterization of the hero, but this book includes what is considered the masters of short story writing.

#### Audio Tapes

Carson, Clayborne, Shepard, Chris, editors. The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, "Address to the First Montgomery Improvement Association Mass Meeting". New York: Time Warner, 2000.

Students should listen to this tape to be able to determine and describe his character just by his speech and the setting. How does a hero come through trials and tribulations and make decisions?

King, Stephen. On Writing. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

Students love Stephen King's movies. He had written a book on his views and the craft of writing. Since he does use a lot of profanity, listen first and use caution. On tape two, he provides the listener, reader, writer and learner with the steps of reading, writing, and integrating the two.

Television Program:

“First Drum”. Bravo Channel, New York. February 2003.

This documentary is an inspiring commentary of The Last Poets’ contribution to rap and hip-hop. Students will love the references to their favorite rap artists and the honor the rappers give to The Last Poets. Each member of the group tells how compelled he was to write and spread the “good word” or “good speech” for the benefit of African people.

## **Appendix I**

### **Pittsburgh Public Schools' Communications Content Standards**

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, to inform and to persuade in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotype and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that is designed to persuade, inform or describe.
9. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.

### **Pittsburgh Public Schools' Citizenship Content Standards**

1. All students demonstrate an understanding of major events, cultures, groups and individuals in the historical development of Pennsylvania, the United States and other nations, and describe the patterns of historical development.
2. All students examine and evaluate problems facing citizens in their communities, state, nation and world by incorporating concepts and methods of inquiry of the various social sciences.
3. All students develop and defend a position on current issues, confronting the United States and other nations, conducting research, analyzing alternatives and, organizing evidence and arguments, and making oral presentations.
4. All students demonstrate their skills of communicating, negotiating and cooperating with others.

5. All students demonstrate that they can work effectively with others.
6. All students demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of prejudice and relate their knowledge to current issues facing communities, the United States and other nations.
7. All students demonstrate an understanding of the various roles they can play as citizens through participation in a community service project.

