

3Ds of

Journal Writing For High School Students

Name: _____

School: _____



- *Discovery*
- *Depth*
- *Differentiation*

3Ds of

Journal Writing

For High School Students



Educated Solutions

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J o u r n a l

JOURNAL COLLAGE

Ode to My Journal

Start with words—
First one word, two words,
Three or more—
Random, tandem, rhyming words
Inked upon a page—
Left to right,
Top to bottom,
Arranged, changed, rearranged
Meaning emerges—
Image, idea, feeling—
Coalesce, congeal,
Reveal patterns
Of letters, sounds, syllables, words
In sentences, paragraphs, and other contexts.

*Brenda Ellis
September 2007*

Journal [jur-nl]
noun (ME)
1. a daily written
record of experiences
and observations
2. a newspaper,
especially a daily one

- “Keep a journal. Explore different ways of doing so: not just what happened, but thoughts, feelings, portraits, snatches of conversation, quotations; not just by writing at the end of the day or week, but intermittently at odd times of the day” (Elbow, 1998, p. 96).
- “The journal is a word and a deed, a collection of words and deeds of a self in dialogue with itself to articulate its inner word and to embrace it. In retrospect it is our story but in its best moments of making it is our very process and our being. The journal is a deed and only when it has been a deed many times over does the accumulation become a history” (Simons, 1978, p. 12).
- “Though a journal may be many things—a treasury, a storehouse, a jewelry box, a laboratory, a drafting board, a collector’s cabinet, a snapshot album, a history, a travelogue, a religious exercise, a letter to oneself—it has some definable characteristics. It is a record, an entry-book, kept regularly, though not necessarily daily. . . . It is a record kept for oneself” (Macrorie, 1976, p. 150).

HOW TO USE

3Ds OF JOURNAL WRITING FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The purpose of this book is to assist teachers in implementing journal writing as a regular activity of the adopted curriculum. It is designed to enhance other materials and resources they are already using and may continue to use. Journal writing is most effective if it is an integral part of the curriculum rather than an afterthought haphazardly attached to a lesson or an activity in an attempt to cover any previously overlooked objectives. Journal writing should not be used for this purpose or to fill unused minutes at the end of a class period. Students are reluctant to participate in journal writing activities unless the activity seems meaningful and stimulating.

The journal provides an opportunity for students to think and talk on paper. By writing their thinking, students are able to read and reread what they were thinking at particular moments. Donald M. Murray in *Write to Learn* (2005) explains the writing-as-thinking idea: "Writing is not stenography. Writing is thinking, a process of trial-and-error experimentation in which failure reveals what we cannot yet say, but where the saying may lay hidden" (p. 16).

3Ds of Journal Writing for High School Students refers to

- **Discovery** of ideas, feelings, reflections
- **Depth** of meaning for a particular topic
- **Differentiation** of prompts that allows students to respond in uniquely diverse ways

If journal writing is a new facet of the curriculum, the teacher may choose to introduce a word or two from the Journal Jargon section each day and ask students to comment or write a response to a specific question about the Journal Jargon words. The first journal entries may be based on a response of 75-100 words, followed by slight, incremental increases as the students build their fluency. Because time is usually a concern in most classrooms, the expectations may remain constant throughout the year.

In the Discovery section of this book, the Freewriting A to Z provides word lists for every letter of the alphabet. Teachers can create journal prompts from one word each day or from a combination of words from various lists for the entire class or differentiate word-related prompts appropriately for students based on their individual needs. Students may be asked to use certain words in a particular context for a specific purpose and audience or to create a paragraph using certain words.

The Response section of this book contains various categories of prompts that ask students to write particular kinds of responses to stimuli that should be a part of almost all students' schema. The prompts do not require research or additional resources to write a logical response. Some of the categories may require the students to read and respond to a passage of text that will be provided to them.

One of the types of responses listed is a mini-writing marathon. Teachers can manipulate the parameters for staging mini-writing marathons to suit their schedules, school rules regarding movement throughout the school facility and on the campus, and visual representations or student performances that are available to students at a particular time. The teacher may need to create a mini art gallery in the classroom, in a hallway, or scattered throughout the building in order to let students view works of art, pieces of writing, collages, or PowerPoint® presentations that may be viewed by small groups of students as they move about and write what they see, hear, and think in their journals.

Pages 68–75 in this book contain pictures with quotations about writing made by professional writers. Pictures also appear on divider pages and on some of the Differentiation prompts. These pictures may be used as writing prompts and as examples of how to choose pictures to create your original writing prompts.

Each prompt in the Differentiation section of this book is actually multifaceted and can produce more than one type of response from students. Experienced student writers may accept the most challenging of the three prompts that are thematically linked, while moderately capable writers may choose the prompt that is somewhat more straightforward in the type of response required. Reluctant or beginning writers may choose to respond to the prompt that seems to require fewer words and perhaps no sentence or paragraph structure. Until the most reluctant writers or the students who possess the weakest skills build their confidence and their skills, they will need the scaffolding provided by the three-tiered model.

The three levels of prompts include:



- **Diamonds in the Rough**



- **Pearls of Wisdom**



- **Journal Gems**

Diamonds in the Rough represent the most challenging level of the three prompts. Although the most experienced writers should choose these prompts most of the time, the teacher may want to devise a rubric or scoring guide for the grading period that will allow all students to choose a certain number of prompts from all three categories based on each student's individual abilities and needs. **Pearls of Wisdom** are quotations, usually about writing or some other aspect of life to which the student is asked to respond. **Journal Gems** are prompts with a grammar-related question or instructional lesson that may not be needed by everyone in the class, but they are definitely needed by some of the students in the class if they are to become more capable and confident writers.

The three thematically linked journal prompts that can be used to meet the different needs of the students in the classroom are designated by their icons each time they appear rather than by the terms **Diamond in the Rough**, **Pearls of Wisdom**, and **Journal Gems**.

My NOTES

Lined writing area with blue horizontal lines and a pink top line.

DIFFERENTIATION

Students do not enter a high school classroom with the same sets of skills, talents, and writing abilities. Therefore, it is difficult to set the same goals or expectations for all students even though they must follow the guidelines of the state and local curriculum. The specific methods of achieving mastery of various aspects of the curriculum may be met in a variety of ways, depending on the needs and abilities of the students. Journal-writing exercises can be designed that will give students opportunities to examine their individual thoughts, feelings, and reactions to both serious issues and random musings about subjects that may not have been a part of their prior considerations. According to Ken Macrorie in *Writing to Be Read* (1996), "In writing journal entries a person should begin by concentrating on what he says rather than how he says it" (p. 155). Although the grammar may not be perfect, it is important for students to have opportunities to express their ideas in the best ways they can. The content is more important at first than the correctness of the effort. Journal writing allows each student to write at his or her proficiency level without fear of reproach for refusing to complete the assignment.

When students are apprehensive about their abilities to complete writing assignments, their fear causes their thoughts to stop flowing. Even if students possess adequate writing skills, if they are anxious about writing they will not be successful in completing assignments that are appropriate for their ability level. According to Kirby, Kirby, and Liner (2004), the only two real attainable objectives with the apprehensive or the inexperienced writer are "to build a feeling of confidence in students that they can write, and to help the student find a voice in writing" (p. 42). Because most English classes are formed from a variety of students of mixed abilities, it is necessary to vary the activities to meet the needs of the students studying the same curriculum.

Donald M. Murray in *A Writer Teaches Writing* (2004) reminds the teacher, "We must teach to those differences, glorying in the variety of background and voices our students bring to the composition class. We must learn to respond to their diverse needs, their diverse learning styles, the diversity of what they have to say and how they can say it. The solution to the problem of diversity is diversity—diversity of teaching and learning experiences" (p. 135).

In this section on Differentiation, the journal prompts are presented in groups of three thematically linked prompts. The three prompts will be labeled as



• **Diamonds in the Rough,**



• **Pearls of Wisdom,** and



• **Journal Gems.**

Usually the **Diamonds in the Rough** will require more writing at a deeper level. The **Pearls of Wisdom** require a written response to a quotation, and the **Journal Gems** invite the student to practice various writing skills and correct use of conventions. Teachers can decide if they want to use all the prompts for all their students or if they want to differentiate the prompts for groups of students.

My NOTES

A series of horizontal blue lines for writing notes, starting with a pink line under the header.

JOURNAL ENTRY# _____ **DATE:** _____

Adages, Epigrams, Old Sayings



An adage is a wise saying or statement that gains acceptance and popularity over time through widespread use. Benjamin Franklin's adages are often quoted because they were published in his book *Poor Richard's Almanac*.

Examples include:

- *A penny saved is a penny earned.*
- *Fish and visitors smell in three days.*
- *Genius without education is like silver in the mine.*

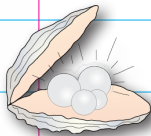
An epigram is also a short, wise, and usually witty saying that carries some widely accepted truth. Some epigrams may even be short poems such as the example by Benjamin Franklin:

*Little strokes
Fell great oaks.*

Write at least five adages or epigrams from memory or consult a library resource, an online resource, or a reliable authority who might know.

Proverbial Prompts

Choose one of the proverbs below and write an explanation (75 to 100 words).

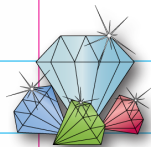


1. What was hard to endure is sweet to recall.
Continental Proverb

2. The devil's boots don't creak.
Scottish Proverb

Cans and Cannots

Write two sentences with *can* (positive statements) and two sentences with *cannot* (negative statements) used in a positive way, similar to the sample adages.



Can: *You can kill more flies with sugar than with vinegar.*

Cannot: *If you cannot say anything nice, do not say anything at all.*

ASSESSMENT OF JOURNAL ENTRIES

“How you respond to student journals is much more important than how you grade them” (Kirby, Kirby, & Liner, 2004, p. 72).

In a perfect world, journal writing could be left unread, ungraded, and unassessed. The world of the classroom, however, is not perfect, and it is often necessary to make formative assessments of at least some of the journal writing procedures. A climate of trust must be established between the teacher and the students to insure honest writing from students and confidentiality from teachers. In some schools, the teacher tells the students to turn down and crease the pages that the students do not want the teacher to read. Although this practice is acceptable, it should not be overused. Encouraging students to write material that can be revealed to other people will not present the teacher or students with a sensitive, legal, or moral dilemma. Students need to think and write about subjects that are enlightening, thought-provoking, and ingenious.

One common practice for assessing journals is to develop a system based on a point structure (**4, 3, 2, 1, and 0**) or a **check-plus, check, check-minus, minus, or zero scale** that rewards specific criteria. Because many of the journal prompts will elicit different types of responses, it will probably be more effective to have a variety of rubrics, scoring guides, or checklists to apply to various criteria for the subgroups of responses.

Another assessment option that many teachers choose is to simply count the number of entries possible for the grading period and count the student's completions based on that number. A combination of both types of assessment can be used if the students are informed at the time a prompt is assigned that the response will be a separate grade. For example, if the students have twenty journal entries for a six weeks' grading period, the teacher may give one grade for completion of journal entries, and three, four, or five separate daily grades on individual journal entries. When the grades are averaged in with the other grades the student has received in that class, the student will understand the importance of the journal to his or her overall grade. That fact should indicate the teacher's belief that journal writing is necessary for every student to become a better writer.