

Title of Session: WriteTalk - Partner Poems

Moderator: Sandra Shattuck

Title of File: 20070614writetalk

Date: June 14, 2007

Room: WriteTalk Group

BjB: Welcome to today's WriteTalk discussion

JosephA: I can't wait, I've been looking forward to it all day.

BjB: Sandy, let's start with introductions, please.

SandraS: wonderful, BJ

BjB: I teach remedial communication in Pennsylvania

SandraS: I teach literature and writing here in Alabama, college level

JosephA: My name is Joseph Acevedo, I am a student working on becoming a teacher. I'm from Kingsville, Tx.

SandraS: Welcome, Joseph

SandraS: Joseph, would you mind sharing where you are a student?

JosephA: I'm a student at Texas A&M University Kingsville

SandraS: cool

SandraS: I did my graduate work at UT Austin

JeffC: I'm on Tapped In Helpdesk, an ex-English teacher... am also interested in perhaps working towards a grant with the Gates Foundation on using speech to text in K-4 schools.

JosephA: cool

SandraS: woohoooo

SandraS: Gates Foundation grant sounds good

SandraS: Welcome to WriteTalk

SandraS: I usually start with a spiel about the National Writing Project

SandraS: and then we go on to whatever the topic is

BjB listens to the spiel

SandraS: THE NWP is a professional development organization

SandraS: that started in 1973

SandraS: at UC Berkeley

SandraS: three tenets are central to the organization

SandraS: that teachers are the best teachers of other teachers

SandraS: (no canned inservice or professional development)

SandraS: that teachers teach writing more effectively if they improve their own writing

SandraS: and that writing is a great learning tool across all subjects

SandraS: the NWP is federally funded

SandraS: and funding has to be renewed each year

SandraS: the budget hovers around 30 million dollars

SandraS: and it

SandraS: is money very well spent

SandraS: there are close to 200 sites nationally

SandraS: all at universities

SandraS: serving primarily k-12 teachers

SandraS: great bridges across k-12 and universities

SandraS: the core program at each site is the Summer Institute

SandraS: there's an annual convention

SandraS: national writing retreats

SandraS: areas that concentrate on ELL, Reading, urban initiatives...

SandraS: Any questions so far, Joseph?

JosephA: What is the website?

SandraS: aha! you anticipated my next move...

SandraS: I'll give the url and if you want to go visit for a bit and then come back here, that would be great

SandraS: you can check the link for the map at the top and see if there's a site near you

SandraS: <http://www.writingproject.org>

SandraS: Joseph, just let me know when you're back here, and we'll continue.

JosephA: I'm back I saved the website under my favorites.

SandraS: ok, excellent

SandraS: there are a ton of resources

SandraS: you can also see publication

SandraS: The Quarterly is the main journal

SandraS: it's searchable and online

SandraS: so lots of great articles

SandraS: any questions, Joseph?

JosephA: no I'm fine. thanks

SandraS: great

SandraS: ok, so this evening I thought we'd play

SandraS: I'm not sure how this will work with a small group, so we may need to revise the plan later

BjB nods

SandraS: But I have two plans for writing.

SandraS: Let's talk about the one we probably can't do....the Partner Poems.

SandraS: I uploaded a file that describes the two activities and also provides some URLs

SandraS: Joseph, if you look on top of this chat box

JosephA: yes

SandraS: you should see the file under "check this out..."

SandraS: it's labeled "WriteTalk14june07.doc"

SandraS: I thought I'd come up with the term "partner poem," but like everything in teaching, a gazillion other brilliant teachers have come up with the same idea!

SandraS: Lots of variations with partner poems

SandraS: The first url I give shows examples where one writer poses a question starting with "Why.."

SandraS: The partner does not see the question.

SandraS: But the partner writes an answer starting with "Because..."

SandraS: The partners put the two parts together to form one line of the poem.

SandraS: Let's see if I can put the URL up here and we can all take a look at it....

SandraS: <http://www.mcps.org/linkous/creativity/partnerpoems.html>

BjB chuckles

SandraS: cool, eh?

SandraS: actually, we could try this right now...

BjB : perfect for that age group

SandraS: I had envisioned us pairing off and using the personal message option of tapped in

SandraS: but I think we can just do it together right here

BjB nods

SandraS: how about if BJ and Jeff come up with Why questions

SandraS: and Joseph and I can come up with a Because phrase

SandraS: then we'll put it together

BJB: you want the why questions entered in chat?

SandraS: how does that sound?

SandraS: yes...after we've all come up with our phrases....

BJB: ok

JosephA: sounds good

SandraS: so, think of your phrase

SandraS: you can type it in the chat line, but just wait to enter until I ask you to...

SandraS: BJ, why don't you start with your why phrase and then I'll enter my phrase...

BJB: Why do birds sing?

SandraS: because angels read comic books

SandraS: Jeff, if you have a why phrase, please enter it and then Joseph you can enter your because phrase...

BJB: well, gosh, that makes sense to me!

SandraS: heh!

JeffC: Why do fools fall in love?

SandraS: I agree

JosephA: because I'm pretty

SandraS guffaws

SandraS: ok, that was fun

SandraS: I want to do one more set...anybody else game?

SandraS: we can reverse

BjB nods

JosephA: sure

SandraS: Joseph and I can do the why questions and BJ and Jeff can do the because phrases....

SandraS: Let's do Joseph and Bj

SandraS: and then me and Jeff

JosephA: Why do hippos like water?

BjB : Because time waits for no man (or woman).

SandraS: Why is the grass green?

SandraS: Well, we'll leave that question for now...

SandraS: Ok, any thoughts about applications?

BjB . o O (Jeff is on the phone)

JeffC: Because elephants tiptoed through the tulips.

SandraS: How would this be helpful in the classroom..

BjB laughs

SandraS: Great line, Jeff...

JeffC is multitasking (as usual)

JosephA: It would make the students get more involved with writing. They'll have fun at the funny things they create.

SandraS: I agree, Joseph

SandraS: I think it takes the pressure off, too

SandraS: because there's this formula

SandraS: and because you don't see what the other person writes

BjB : and there is no right or wrong answer!

SandraS: yeah!

SandraS: you can see, too, that we had fun...so any grade level, eh?

JosephA: I think that any grade would appreciate that.

SandraS: it could draw out reluctant writers

SandraS: also illustrates that writing can be collaborative

SandraS: I think there are all kinds of ways one could structure partner poems

SandraS: not only for writing but also for performing

SandraS: but there was a really cool article about using partner poems to deal with stereotypes

SandraS: and I included the url on the file

SandraS: the article is written by two teachers who met at the Portland Writing Project

SandraS: I'm telling ya, writing project teachers come up with great stuff!

SandraS: an African American and an Asian American teacher met

SandraS: and worked up this idea for partner poems

SandraS: if you go to the url

SandraS: check the right menu and click on their poem "A Woman of Color" and just read that....then come on back....

SandraS: http://rethinkingschools.org/archive/18_04/doll184.shtml

BjB: cool...different descriptions of the same object

JosephA: That is awesome.

SandraS: right...the authors talk about that

SandraS: I agree Joseph

SandraS: the article is great, too...both teachers talk about how they came up with the ideas and what they did in their separate classrooms

SandraS: what worked, how they would tweak the lesson

SandraS: so that's a more in-depth complex use of partner poems than the Why-Because ones...

SandraS: any thoughts? comments? questions?

JosephA: Were they given a set of questions to answer independently?

SandraS: you mean the students in the classes or the two teachers writing the poem?

BjB: you could use any topic....I wish or I feel poems would be fun

JosephA: Both

SandraS nods to BJ

SandraS: the teachers worked it through on their own

SandraS: then with their classes, they had the students read the poem

SandraS: and identify the areas

SandraS: but the classes had been talking about stereotypes in the media for a while before that

JosephA: Cool

SandraS: they used T-charts to show the areas and the descriptions

SandraS: then they paired the students

SandraS: and students came up with their own areas and their own descriptions

SandraS: the authors of the articles discussed when there were snags

SandraS: some students couldn't find categories...

SandraS: so the teachers worked with them

CarolE joined the room.

SandraS: Hello, Carol

CarolE: Hi

CarolE: Is there a session now?

SandraS: Yes, we are in WriteTalk

SandraS: We've been talking about partner poems.

SandraS: Would you like to introduce yourself?

CarolE: Sure. ---- Hi! I am Carol.

BjB smiles

CarolE: I teach in a middle school in NJ.

SandraS: Welcome!

JosephA: Hello Carol.

CarolE: Hi!

SandraS: OK, the next thing on the agenda is Round-robin blitz prompts!

SandraS: Here's how it works:

SandraS: I start by yelling out (typing out) a prompt

SandraS: and everyone writes for a minute

SandraS: then I yell time and call on someone else, who then yells out another prompt and we all write for a minute

SandraS: and so on

SandraS: what we'll do here is that as soon as I call time,

SandraS: you can enter what you've written

SandraS: so when you write on the prompt, just type in the chat box, but don't enter until you see I've called time....

SandraS: does that make sense?

JosephA: yes

CarolE: yes

SandraS: wonderful...

SandraS: here's the first prompt

SandraS: spring dusk

SandraS: TIME

SandraS: spring dusk sings harp song tickles one toads underbelly and kisses me
goodnight

BjB: I sit in the afterglow and breathe in the smells of new life. Warmth seeps from the
earth and travels back to the sky

JosephA: I was walking outside one night when all of a sudden I came upon a cow, who
was minding her own business. I looked around and realized what time of the year it
was, it was spring, how I loved winter, and dreaded the spring. I then saw that it was
almost time for my brother to wake up and milk the cow, I

CaroleE: I am experiencing writers block. sorry.

SandraS applauds wonderful writing

SandraS: no problem Carol

SandraS: when I do any kind of freewriting

SandraS: I always talk about the guidelines for freewriting that I use

SandraS: If it's ok, I'll interrupt this round-robin just to go over those...

SandraS: they're adapted from Natalie Goldberg's Writing Down the Bones

SandraS: and she has 7 guidelines

SandraS: Keep your hand moving

SandraS: in this case, keep tapping on the keyboard

SandraS: this cuts through our internal editor

SandraS: Lose control

CaroleE smiles

SandraS: this means don't worry about etiquette or being polite

SandraS: Be specific

SandraS: try to be specific (green dented 57 chevy...instead of car)

SandraS: but don't worry if you can't think of specifics

SandraS: Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar...

SandraS: that's a great rule

SandraS: Don't think

SandraS: that means just take the first thoughts that come up

SandraS: You're free to write the worst junk in America

SandraS: I love that guideline...

SandraS: and

SandraS: Go for the jugular

SandraS: that means when you feel something, follow it...don't avoid it

SandraS: ok, so those guidelines help with any kind of free writing

SandraS: or timed writing practice, as Goldberg calls it

CaroleE: Thank you.

JosephA: Those are great.

SandraS: My pleasure...I've got a file for those ... I think it's in this room...I'll check in a bit...

SandraS: ok, I get to choose someone to give the next prompt

SandraS: then we write again

SandraS: I yell time

SandraS: we enter our writing...

SandraS: Joseph?

JosephA: Samurai warriors

SandraS: TIME

SandraS: Samurai warriors swing swords swiftly

CaroleE: In a heated fight the Samurai warriors worked through the room defeating all of the evil rabbits. The evil rabbit had been forcing the children to eat their vegetables for far to long.

SandraS: Samurai warriors swing swords swiftly

JosephA: That's a good one Carol, very creative.

SandraS chuckles at Carol's evil rabbit

CaroleE smiles

BjB : samurai fat string creeps up butt crack

SandraS guffaws

CaroleE: Very good!

SandraS: Samurai warriors swing swords swiftly singing silly spring songs sitting softly and knitting afghans

CaroleE: Neat!

SandraS: cool! ok, Joseph you get to choose the next person to do the prompt

JosephA: Okay, Carol.

CaroleE: morning coffee

SandraS: TIME

JosephA: I awake each morning and remember the nigh as a child that Santa Claus told me he no longer wanted milk he wanted coffee in order to stay awake all night and he would give me that nintendo I wanted so badly. I now drink coffee every day and night, hoping that one day it will be morning and I can wake up and say hello to the entire world who will sing songs while being hyper with coffee. Coffee is very beautiful in texture and in smell

CaroleE: The sweet smell of morning coffee filled the room, but it was the smell of bacon that actually awoke Sara. It had been a long time since she had....

SandraS: life blood nirvana juice morning coffee makes me breathe makes me see the sun water my pink and white peonies and be able to write in my journal morning coffee puts the morning in my day

SandraS: those are lovely....and I want to hear more!

SandraS: great stories...

CarolE: Yes! Same here.

JosephA: they are pretty good, this is fun

SandraS: Thank you so much for playing with that!

CarolE: Good night guys. I guess I should have actually had coffee this AM.

SandraS: OK, so how about applications in the classroom?

SandraS: Ha!

SandraS: By Carol

CarolE smiles

CarolE left the room (signed off).

SandraS: Thanks for coming by and sharing.

SandraS: Joseph, we're about at the end of the hour.

JosephA: Okay.

SandraS: Do you have any final questions or comments or thoughts?

JosephA: Thank you, this has been a very great experience and I had a lot of fun

SandraS: I'm so glad you came by

SandraS: And I really enjoyed your writing!

JosephA: I enjoyed your lessons. Thanks

SandraS: Good luck with your studies.

JosephA: Thank you. Bye

SandraS waves bye