

Title of Session: WriteTalk
Moderator: Sandra Shattuck
Title of File: 20071213writetalk
Date: December 13, 2007

Room: WriteTalk Group

SandraS: Welcome to Tapped In, Molly!

SandraS: And welcome to WriteTalk!

MollyMS: it's my first time joining a tapped in chat

MollyMS: thanks :)

SandraS: very cool!

DavidW: Welcome to the Tapped In community, Molly

MollyMS: this is indeed cool

MollyMS: this session sounded interesting to me, I am a high school English teacher

MollyMS: and we are always journaling!

SandraS: What grade, Molly?

MollyMS: 9th honors, 11th, and AP 12

SandraS: excellent...just a few preps each day, eh?

MollyMS: hahaha riiight

MollyMS: we are on block scheduling

MollyMS: so yes, right now, I have three preps

SandraS: ah ha...you heard my sarcasm very well...I know how hard it is having lots of preps!

SandraS starts up the espresso machine and hands around the double-chocolate brownies

DavidW . o O (yum!)

MollyMS: delicious

SandraS grins

MollyMS: I'm getting this down

SandraS: Molly, we usually start with introductions.

DavidW checks to see if there is any leftover Chanukah Gelt to pass around

SandraS: what we teach and where...

PatrickRC joined the room.

MollyMS: ok

SandraS: Hello, Patrick.

SandraS: We're just getting started with introductions.

PatrickRC: Hello.

SandraS: Great photo of you on your profile page, Patrick!

MollyMS: well, as before, I'm mainly 11th and 12th grade English, and I teach in a rural part of PA..outside of Erie

SandraS: Thanks, Molly.

SandraS: I teach literature and writing at University of Alabama in Huntsville

DavidW: I'm David Weksler. I'm in New Jersey and I'm one of the HelpDesk volunteers

MollyMS: excellent! I'd love to be a professor some day

BJB2: I teach remedial communication and am located in south central PA

SandraS: Patrick, would you like to tell us what you teach and where?

PatrickRC: I'm attending college in Michigan. I am taking up history and political science.

SandraS: Great!

SandraS: OK, so I start the WriteTalk sessions talking a bit about the National Writing Project

SandraS: and then we'll get to Natalie Goldberg's book

SandraS: Writing Down the Bones

SandraS: and will talk about freewriting

SandraS: So, the National Writing Project or NWP

SandraS: is about thirty years old

SandraS: a professional development organization that is federally funded

SandraS: began at UC Berkeley in 1974

SandraS: and it has about 200 sites around the nation

SandraS: these sites are located at universities and serve k-16 teachers

SandraS: each site has a summer institute

SandraS: which is how teachers get involved with NWP

SandraS: once you go through a summer institute, you're a NWP teacher consultant

SandraS: you can go to national writing retreats

SandraS: conferences

SandraS: do in-service

SandraS: the three basic tenets of NWP are:

SandraS: teachers are the best teachers of other teachers

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

SandraS: and

SandraS: writing is a great learning tool across all subject areas

SandraS: ok, so let's take a look at the NWP website

SandraS: which is full of resources

SandraS: once I give you the URL

SandraS: be sure you hit the control key when you click on the link, so you disable pop-ups

MollyMS: so do some people leave teaching jobs to work for the NWP?

MollyMS: ok

SandraS: yes, some people do

SandraS: there's a fairly large national infrastructure

SandraS: but a lot of folks who lead workshops and retreats are also full-time teachers

SandraS: you can click on the map to find a NWP site near you

SandraS: once you find that site, you can check it out and see about a summer institute

SandraS: so why don't we visit the site

SandraS: take a couple minutes

SandraS: the search function is excellent

SandraS: so see if there's a site near you

SandraS: then type in an interest about writing you have in the Search box, see what comes up, and report back here

SandraS: any questions?

SandraS: ok...here's the site

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

SandraS: anybody back yet?

MollyMS: I'm just looking to see where sites are

SandraS: great!

SandraS: ok -- are we ready to come back together as a group?

MollyMS: I am

PatrickRC: The search does really well with scholarly articles

SandraS nods to Molly

MollyMS: the materials look great

SandraS nods to Patrick

SandraS: The Quarterly is the journal put out by the NWP

SandraS: it's an excellent resource

SandraS: now entirely online

SandraS: there's a neat resource called 30 Ideas for Teaching Writing

SandraS: which you can access under publications

SandraS: it's also entirely online

MollyMS: wow

SandraS: but it's got these short blurbs that are linked to the longer Quarterly articles

SandraS: then there's a whole section under Resources

SandraS: you can access material on technology, reading, ESL

SandraS: Patrick and Molly, do you want to share anything you found out on your quick NWP website journey?

MollyMS: I was just looking for the 30 ideas

MollyMS: I can't find it

SandraS: ok, hang on

MollyMS: um no it's interesting...my district uses the Collins Writing Program right now, I'm not sure if you are familiar with it

MollyMS: anyhow it's used in an attempt to improve PSSA scores

MollyMS: but I often feel it is not the right program to use

SandraS: here's the link, Molly

MollyMS: maybe utilizing the NWP would be

MollyMS: ok

SandraS: <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/922>

MollyMS: aha

MollyMS: thakn you!

SandraS: I typed in "30 ideas" in the search box and it came up

SandraS: I don't know the Collins Program

PatrickRC: I have seen the Crossroads Writing Project here at Ferris, but I didn't know what it was. It's nice to see them involved.

SandraS: Hello, Celeste.

SandraS: oh, great...you've got a site at your school, Patrick

MollyMS: this list is excellent, I'm adding it to my favorites

MollyMS: we don't have any sites close to us

SandraS: I love _30 Ideas_!

PatrickRC: I think that I have actually used articles published through the NWP without knowing what it was.

SandraS: Sorry to hear that, Molly.

MollyMS: it looked like the nearest was Pitts., which seems odd to me considering the number of surrounding high schools that are struggling

SandraS: Strong writing project in Pittsburgh

SandraS: Molly, you'll just have to take a summer off and find a writing project...there's one in the Virgin Islands....

MollyMS: I'm sold!

DavidW smiles

MollyMS: I tan easily

BJB2 smiles and thinks about changing disciplines

DavidW . o O (Pittsburgh is a LITTLE closer)

SandraS chuckles

SandraS: ...there's also Alaska...

SandraS: any other questions? comments?

MollyMS: but truly, how does one go about training etc.

MollyMS: is it costly? timely?

SandraS: each writing project sets up its summer institute a little differently

SandraS: the one I went to offered a stipend

SandraS: many of them offer graduate credit

SandraS: professional development credit

SandraS: but the institute usually last 4 weeks

SandraS: pretty intensive

MollyMS: right

SandraS: and you're together with about 20 k-16 teachers

MollyMS: ok

SandraS: lots of writing, response groups, reading, studying the teaching of writing, teacher demonstrations

MollyMS: excellent

SandraS: many teachers attend and then become transformed NWP folks...

SandraS: that was my experience

SandraS: I've been teaching over two decades and I've been involved in educational experimentation

SandraS: but NWP really gave me a boost in my teaching and writing

SandraS: it's a joy to hang out with so many dedicated and creative teachers

MollyMS: I would think so

MollyMS: it's very enticing to me

MollyMS: I'm currently working on my masters

MollyMS: I'm only in my second year of teaching

MollyMS: I could see myself doing this

SandraS: the teaching profession is lucky to have you, Molly!

MollyMS: well thanks!!

DavidW . o O (Sandy is a GREAT recruiter)

SandraS: NWP is great too because you've got the whole range of beginning to experienced teachers

MollyMS: ah, a necessity

SandraS: easy to recruit for a great program!

DavidW agrees

MollyMS: sounds like it

SandraS: ok, so if there are no more NWP questions, we'll move on to freewriting...

SandraS: let's start with some kind of common definition maybe

SandraS: how do you each understand freewriting?

SusanR joined the room.

PatrickRC: Write what you are thinking and don't stop for a period of time.

SandraS waves to Susan

SusanR waves and listens

SandraS: I like that definition, Patrick

MollyMS: sentences on paper, on one topic, maybe of choice, maybe on a provided prompt, without regard to grammar, paragraph, etc

MollyMS: I like Patrick's more

SandraS: ok, yes...but both of your comments are essential to freewriting

SandraS: write what you're thinking

SandraS: don't worry about grammar and all that stuff

SandraS: use a certain amount of time

SandraS: use a prompt

SandraS: that pretty much wraps it up!

SandraS: ok, so when would you use freewriting in the classroom?

SandraS: or in your own writing?

MollyMS: journal

MollyMS: and prewriitng

SandraS nods

PatrickRC: when you get a writer's block

SandraS nods vigorously

SandraS: ok, so I have used freewriting more and more over the years, and for more and more areas

SandraS: for instance, I often use it as a way for students to process a reading assignment....

SandraS: freewriting tends to get categorized as a prewriting technique

SandraS: but as Patrick pointed out, it has so many uses...such as unblocking writer's block

SandraS: another critical component is that it isn't graded, isn't evaluated

SandraS: but it can be shared

SandraS: and as Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff say in Sharing and Responding

SandraS: just reading one's writing aloud with no feedback is a kind of sharing

SandraS: that's what I usually do with freewriting

MollyMS: no feedback, I like that

SandraS: we've got a prompt, we write for 5 minutes, then we each read aloud

SandraS: great way to coax the reluctant writer out

MollyMS: I've also found that

SandraS: especially those writers who have been traumatized by less than encouraging teachers

SandraS: it's amazing how many students believe they cannot write

SandraS: so let's take a look at Natalie Goldberg's ideas in _Writing Down the Bones_

SandraS: this book was published first in 1986

SandraS: and I first started using it for my own writing

SandraS: it's made up of very short chapters and there's a prompt at the end of each chapter

SandraS: but it's her guidelines that I've adopted for freewriting in class

SandraS: I've put these together in a file

SandraS: which you can find in this room

SandraS: if you go to the top of this screen

SandraS: you'll need to attach if you've detached...

SandraS: you'll see the file in the box with the heading "check this out..."

SandraS: scroll down to find that box

SandraS: and then you'll see "wrtpractNow.doc" under "Files"

SandraS: go ahead and download and read through it

SandraS: then come back and we'll talk...

MollyMS: this is outstanding

MollyMS: I am so glad I entered this chat! thank you!

SandraS: yeah!

SandraS: well, your participation makes all the difference!

MollyMS: I like number 6

SandraS: ok, so what do you think of the guidelines?

SandraS: yes, me, too!

MollyMS: sometimes I think I need better prompts

SandraS: ah...yes...

MollyMS: to really evoke feeling or ideas to write about

SandraS: Goldberg's books are great for that

MollyMS: I'm always scouring the web and books...but I still feel like they could be better

MollyMS: I'll have to find her books

SandraS: another idea is to have student-generated prompts

SandraS: this is one prompt I love: write about something you were afraid to do but did anyway

SandraS: that always generates some great writing

MollyMS: oh I like it!

SandraS: good prompts are worth their weight in gold!

SandraS: what I like about Goldberg's guidelines is that they encourage all kinds of writers to listen to their own voices

SandraS: to practice their own stories

SandraS: the first time I ask students to read what they've written, there's usually a few groans, a few shocked faces

MollyMS: oh yes

SandraS: but eventually they get used to reading their writing aloud

SandraS: and finally, they are often eager

PatrickRC: That is definitely needed. Most students, even here in college are shy about saying what they are thinking or what they have done in class.

SandraS nods

MollyMS: it takes a while to get them acclimated to the idea of it

PatrickRC: Most are ashamed at first, but if the teacher keeps a group discussion, they open up pretty well.

SandraS: many of my college students are not used to voicing their opinions

SandraS: I agree, Patrick

MollyMS: I remember it took me a while to be able to do so

PatrickRC: That atmosphere does seem to be changing here though.

PatrickRC: Student-centered learning is the term that they have been using.

SandraS: I also always write with the students, and I share my writing, too

SandraS: yes, "student-centered" ... one would think that the adjective is unnecessary, eh?

MollyMS: I have only done that a few times, I should do it regularly

SandraS: isn't all education student-centered?

PatrickRC: I like that - a vulnerability - creating intimacy. (the teacher writing too.)

SandraS: exactly, Patrick...and it's also modeling....a writer at work

SandraS: with other writers

MollyMS: sometimes I journal my own thoughts on my whiteboard, and I can truly see them feeling okay with opening up

MollyMS: and sharing their own

SandraS: that's cool...whiteboard journaling!

MollyMS: but now I'm recognizing and being reminded the value in it is enough to make me do it more often

SandraS: I think it was Donald Murray who said we've got to make room for writing...

SandraS: that in fact students get very little time to actually write

SandraS: the time it takes to freewrite and then read aloud is time well spent, in my experience

SandraS: also helps to create a writing & learning community

MollyMS: indeed

SandraS: so if the writing prompt is about the assigned reading, everyone gets to hear a myriad of opinions, ideas

SandraS: there's one great exercise in Writing Down the Bones

SandraS: Goldberg asks you to choose a profession

PatrickRC: yeah - we did those in a few of my classes - "microthemes"

SandraS: then write 10 verbs associate with the profession

SandraS: then list 10 nouns

SandraS: any 10

SandraS: then write sentences

SandraS: so if you chose "chef"

MollyMS: awesome! I've never heard of that

SandraS: your verbs might be

SandraS: dice, cook, sauté, burn, flambé

SandraS: let's say you've got "dinosaur" as a noun

SandraS: you might come up with

SandraS: The dinosaur's bones sautéed in the mud.

SandraS: It's a great way to underscore the vibrancy of verbs.

MollyMS: hahaha

MollyMS: so wait

SandraS listens

MollyMS: you pick one profession and then list ten verbs and ten nouns that you can think of that are related?

MollyMS: and then form sentences?

SandraS: almost....just list 10 verbs for one profession

SandraS: the list of nouns does not have to be related

MollyMS: oh ok

SandraS: just any 10 nouns

MollyMS: so that makes it a little more fun

MollyMS: haha

SandraS: then you just put one noun with a verb and make a sentence

MollyMS: ok I got it now

SandraS: so...let's try "pilot" as the profession

SandraS: what verbs do you come up with?

MollyMS: fly zoom

MollyMS: umm

MollyMS: I'm terrible! haha

MollyMS: speed

SandraS: land, bank, stall

MollyMS: ok thanks

SandraS: ok, let's just list 5 nouns...any nouns

SandraS: book

MollyMS: hamburger

SandraS: parade

MollyMS: slipper

MollyMS: penny

SandraS: The hamburger stalls in my stomach.

MollyMS: haha I'm laughing out loud

MollyMS: this will be fun!

SandraS: The penny zooms out of my pocket.

SandraS: OK, we're at the end of our session!

BJB2: wow, that hour flew!

MollyMS: excellent

SandraS: Thank you so much for participating!

MollyMS: yes it did! are they always this great?

MollyMS: no really, thank you

MollyMS: I'm thrilled, I learned a ton in that hour

SandraS: there are fantastic teachers here!

BJB2: The next WriteTalk discussion will be the second Thursday in January

MollyMS: I'm in!

SandraS: Yeah!

BJB2: Have a safe and happy holiday, Sandy

SandraS: If you join the group, you'll get an email reminder of the next meeting.

MollyMS: I think I did

SandraS: Same to all of you!

MollyMS: I'll double check

SandraS: Great, Molly.

BJB2: Molly already joined the group :-)

SandraS: I look forward to seeing y'all again!

MollyMS: thanks again Sandy, you are wonderful! happy holidays :)

SandraS: Take good care