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The Story of My Thinking: Expository Writing Activities for 13 Teaching Situations

By Gretchen Bernabei, Dorothy N Hall

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"If students used structures that more closely tracked the movement of their mind, weaving their own slaloms between the twins of knowledge and experience, readers would be more inclined to lean in and vicariously experience that movement of the mind. Wouldn't they?" Gretchen Bernabei and Dorothy Hall

In their signature easy-to-implement style, Gretchen Bernabei and Dorothy Hall offer new options for teaching expository writing that more realistically match the way readers actually think and writers actually write. While many state assessments as well as the Common Core ask students to write about their opinions, the goal in *The Story of My Thinking* is to help teachers take their kids through the various stages of the writing process (from generating ideas to publication) in a way that breaks down the barrier between "academic" writing and "creative" writing and helps kids produce vibrant nonfiction with voice and conviction.

The Story of My Thinking provides 13 writing activities for familiar teaching situations, with step-by-step lessons that help you bridge the gap between narrative and informative writing. Using the same classroom-tested strategies that made *Crunchtime* a bestseller, the authors give the flexibility of dipping in and out of the lessons as you need them. For example, "If you want them to explore topics for deep development and systemic growth," use Gretchen's "Inner Streams/Gritty Life" activity along with the tools that help students plan their thinking. Choose the lesson that matches your teaching situation today, and then another one tomorrow.

When authentic, personal experiences replace canned, pre-written topics, and students are provided with structures that reflect how readers read, their writing transforms from formulaic to passionate. And when students have plenty of chances to write about topics that are meaningful to them, in a variety of ways, for a variety of situations, then they will be ready for *any* writing assignment.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Gretchen Bernabei has taught middle school and high school for 28 years. An author and an educator, Gretchen's other books include *Why We Must Run with Scissors: Voice Lessons in Persuasive Writing* (2001, Discover Writing Press), *Reviving the Essay: How to Teach Structure Without Formula* (2005, Discover Writing Press), *Lightning in a Bottle* (2003, Trail of Breadcrumbs), *Sparklers: High Scoring Test Essays and What We Learn from Them* (2007, Trail of Breadcrumbs), *The Good Writer's Guide* (2006, Hampton-Brown/National Geographic School Publications) and a chapter in *Teaching "The Neglected R"* (2007, Heinemann). She currently lives with her husband and two children in San Antonio, Texas. In her recent Heinemann book, *Crunchtime*, Gretchen Bernabei and her coauthors Jayne Hover and Cynthia Candler share the strategies they have developed for helping students be successful in the literate world and on writing tests. Growing out of their own work in Title I schools, Gretchen, Jayne, and Cynthia's strategies have proven to be especially effective in helping ESL and special education students.

Dottie Hall has been an educator for 32 years, teaching English in San Antonio. Currently a principal, she has won several teaching awards in Texas.

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