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# Introduction to Reasons for Writing

*Reasons for Writing* provides:

- ★ **flexibility**, to encourage **creativity**
- ★ **structure**, to promote **confidence**
- ★ **format**, to guide **application**

## The Program

*Reasons for Writing* is a series of open-ended creative writing activities that encourage students (year 4 and above) to write freely and creatively while they are guided and supported by the framework of the writing process.

The program includes twenty three activities covering various writing formats and stages in the writing process. Each activity consists of a teacher information page and from one to seven student reproducible pages. Appendices A–D include a definition of the writing process, a writing rubric, writing-process checklists and a page of proofreader's marks.

Some activities are based on the ideas of Connie Markey.

⇒ **Order** We suggest that the activities be done in the order in which they are presented in the book. The concepts and procedures in the activities move from familiar and simple to more abstract and complex. The formats move from structured (with scaffolding) to more open. While some activities reference previous activities, it is possible to do each activity without having done the others.

⇒ **Confidentiality** For writing to be truly creative, students need to feel safe in expressing feelings and in writing about potentially sensitive personal issues. Though *Reasons for Writing* encourages students to share their writing with others, it also allows students to keep certain pieces private—by not having them peer-edited and/or by not placing them in their writing portfolio.

## Teacher Information Pages

**Students' Purpose:** statement of the activity goal for students

**Organisational Formats:** list of the formats that students use to gather and organise information for the activity (graphic organisers and so on)

**Materials:** list of the materials that each student will need for the activity

**Discussion:** suggestions for a whole-class teacher-led discussion in preparation for the activity

**Directions:** step-by-step teacher-oriented direction guides, coordinated by icon (★) to the directions on the student activity page(s)

**Teacher Notes:** additional information, references, and cautions—as well as suggestions for the editing/proofreading stage and for student writing portfolios

## Student Reproducible Pages

The Part I activities consist of one teacher information page and one or two student activity reproducible pages. The Parts II–V activities consist of one teacher information page and from two to seven student activity reproducible pages. The student pages include information-organising activities as well as drafting and revising sheets. You may reproduce the blank revising sheets for students to use at the final edit stage.

If computers are available, you may wish to have students use them to produce final hard copy.

# Introduction (continued)

## The Writing Process

The multistage writing process provides an underlying framework for the activities in *Reasons for Writing*. You will find a definition of the writing process in Appendix A.

In the *Reasons for Writing* Part I activities, students focus on the pre-writing stage of the writing process—brainstorming and gathering details about themselves and their world. The activities move from the personal and immediate (the self), to others (family and friends), to the outside environment (school), to more abstract concepts. These activities not only give students practice in pre-writing, they also encourage students to think about literary concepts and structures such as character traits, setting, comparison and problem/solution.

In the Parts II–V activities, students work through the pre-writing, drafting and revising stages of the writing process. If you guide students (individually or in pairs) through the editing/ proofreading stage, use the writing-process definition and the writing rubric in Appendices A and B as guides. You may decide to give students a copy of the definition and the rubric to use along with the Editing/Proofreading checklist.

After the editing/proofreading stage, you may go on to guide and assist students in sharing or publishing, their work.

The components of the various stages of the writing process are delineated and clarified in the Appendices.

## Writing Portfolios

Though the use of writing portfolios is not mandatory in *Reasons for Writing*, the use of student-centered writing portfolios as a classroom assessment tool has grown rapidly in recent years among educators across the United States and Canada. With portfolios, you and your students (as well as parents and administrators) can chart students' learning, performance, and growth over time—rather than merely from test to test. Portfolios provide authentic measurement of what students are doing rather than what they are not doing.

You and your students may choose writing selections from any of the *Reasons for Writing* sections to put into students' writing portfolios. A writing portfolio can be a notebook or a three-section folder in which students place writing selections representing various stages of the writing process (or various genres).

## Appendices

The appendices include materials that you can use to help students improve and assess their writing.

- A. Definition of the Writing Process (for teacher/student information)
- B. Writing Rubric (for teacher/student reference); a three-level rubric for students at the intermediate level (grade 4 and above)
- C. Revising Checklist and Editing/Proofreading checklist (for student use)
- D. Proofreader's marks (for student use)

# Part I: Generating Details

## Part I Purpose:

Students will generate many different kinds of details about a very familiar topic—themselves. They will use fill-in and completion formats, as well as a variety of graphic organisers, to arrange the details. Students will use some of the details that they generate in Part I to write an autobiographical sketch in Part II.

Note: If students need more space for writing or drawing, they can use the reverse side of the activity sheet.

## The Writing Process:

Students will focus on the pre-writing stage of the writing process in Part I.

## Appendices:

Use the writing-process definition (Appendix A) and the writing rubric (Appendix B) to help students assess and improve their pre-writing skills.

## Writing Portfolios:

You may help students choose selections from Part I to keep in appropriate sections of their writing portfolio. (See the introduction, page 5, for information about writing portfolios.)



# I

# Teacher Information

## WHAT I LOOK LIKE

**Students' Purpose:** to generate details about their physical appearance

**Organisational Formats:** completion, visual depiction

**Materials:**

- pencil or pen
- copy of reproducible activity **What I Look Like**, page 9
- coloured pencils or markers (optional)
- photograph (optional)
- removable tape (optional)

**Discussion:**

Remind students that before they write about anything, they have to focus on a topic and gather and organise details about the topic. All details should give relevant information about the topic. All the activities in Part I are about a topic that is special to students—themselves. In Activity 1, students will write details that describe what they look like.

**Directions:**

- ★ Students fill in blanks to describe their hair (colour, texture), eyes (colour, shape), skin (colour, texture) and size (height, weight, overall shape).
- ★ Students draw a picture or attach (with removable tape) a photograph of themselves.
- ★ Students write several words that tell more about what they look like (hair style, clothing style, special features, someone famous whom they resemble).

**Teacher Notes:**

- If students are sensitive about any aspects of their physical appearance, encourage them to focus on the aspects about which they feel comfortable.
- Gathering details about themselves will give students practice in visualising and in creating story characters.

# What I Look Like

1



⇒ **Complete this page to describe what you look like.**

★ Everyone is special and different and that includes me.  
Here's some information that describes what I look like.

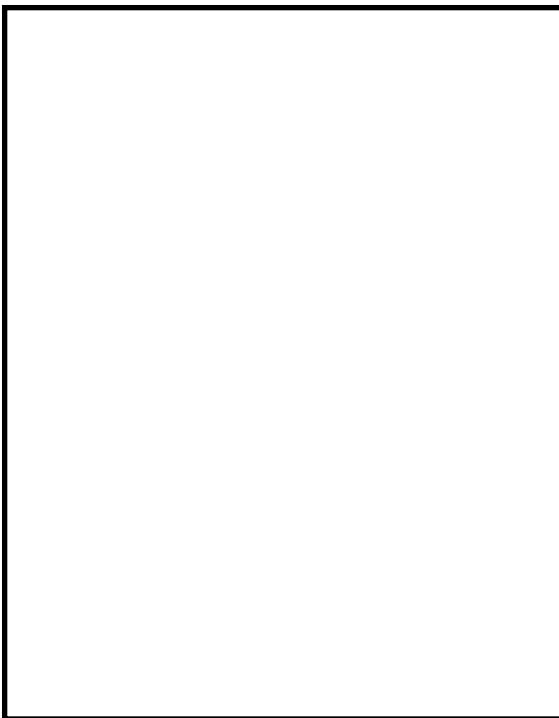
Hair: \_\_\_\_\_

Eyes: \_\_\_\_\_

Skin: \_\_\_\_\_

Size: \_\_\_\_\_

★ Here's a picture of what I look like.



★ Here's some more information describing what's special about how I look.

\_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_