

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
RELAXATION EXERCISE	7
CHAPTER 1: Making Corrections and Revisions	9
<i>Areas of Technical Focus</i>	9
<i>Literature Skills</i>	12
CHAPTER 2: Descriptive Visualizations	13
<i>Preliminary Exercises</i>	13
<i>Special Place Visualization</i>	15
<i>House Visualization</i>	19
CHAPTER 3: Writing Dialogue	23
<i>Dialogue Rules</i>	23
<i>Preliminary Exercises</i>	24
<i>Conversation Visualization</i>	25
CHAPTER 4: Characterization	29
<i>Special Friend Visualization</i>	29
<i>Internal Critic Visualization</i>	31
<i>Composing a Character</i>	33
<i>Character Visualization</i>	34
<i>Class Plays</i>	36
CHAPTER 5: Autobiography and Biography	37
<i>Time Machine Visualization (Future)</i>	37
<i>Autobiographical Exercises</i>	42
<i>Biographical Interviews</i>	43
CHAPTER 6: Lifestyles	45
<i>Fame, Fortune, and Family Visualization</i>	45
<i>Comparitive Composition of Personal Assets and Deficiencies</i>	50
CHAPTER 7: Science Fiction	51
<i>Another Planet Visualization</i>	51
<i>Self-Viewing Visualization</i>	54
CHAPTER 8: Visualization Through Music	57
CHAPTER 9: Developing Cross-Curricular Activities for the Lower Grades	61
<i>After School Visualization</i>	61
<i>Bird's Eye View Visualization</i>	65
STUDENT-GENERATED VISUALIZATION ACTIVITIES ...	69

INTRODUCTION

Visualization exercises have been used to develop relaxation and self-esteem in the classroom since the early seventies. However, little attention has been given to visualization activities as a stimulus and structure for teaching writing.

Guided visualization can serve as an excellent pre-writing activity. First the teacher reads the prepared text to the class. This takes about five to ten minutes for each assignment. The teacher can then watch his or her students produce exciting stories as they write, adding their own details to the supplied structure. Each of the activities provided in this text is presented within the context of a specific lesson (dialogue, similes, biography, etc.) and can be integrated with most reading anthologies. The visualization activities have the unique ability of drawing from the students' personal interests. They make writing a pleasing indulgence instead of a painful extraction because they allow the students to focus their attention on themselves.

Once the student has produced something that he is excited about, and when that student knows that he is going to be able to share his ideas with his peers, the hardest part of teaching writing—motivation—is satisfied.

Visualization activities are especially beneficial to the teacher who has students with a variety of skill levels in one class. The instructions are the same for all students and can be administered at one time, but what each student does with the assignment can vary in both complexity and volume.

At a time when our students are spending much more time watching TV than they are reading and in many cases even spending more hours watching TV than attending school, visualization can provide an important connection between these two, too often passive experiences. It allows students to use the information that they gather unconsciously from their

many hours of TV, to integrate this information into their own imagined experiences, and finally to express this through written language. Embedded in the hours of sit-coms are also the occasional viewings of an African veldt, an Australian koala, an underwater discovery, etc.: shows that students don't always talk about with their peers but often draw upon when given the free structure of the visualization activities. Our students have stored volumes of images that they have never translated into written language; the visualization activities allow them to discover more than they thought they knew.

The first chapter of this book may be used as a guide for each following chapter to make sure that the students are assimilating the skills that are taught. Many books are available on pre-to post-writing techniques, most of which can be integrated with these activities.

Outlines are provided that can be copied onto the board or given to students as handouts. Pages from this book can be copied and given to students who have been absent. Also, a copy of an activity with the instructions for presentation can be kept in a substitute file for emergencies.

The activities in this book give the teacher a safe structure with which to discuss the similarities and differences in the values of the students, a better chance to know the students themselves, and an opportunity for the students to know and trust their teacher as an important role model.

RELAXATION EXERCISE

Visualization is most effective after some type of relaxation activity. Any relaxation activity will do. The following is just one of many variations available.

Dim the lights and tell students to get comfortable. Allow only a minute or so for them to settle down. Then say the following:

“Close your eyes and settle yourself comfortably.

Focus all of your attention on your feet. If there is any tension or stiffness, move your feet around. Let go of the tension; feel it dissolve. Your feet should be completely relaxed.

Now move up to your calves. Let go of the tension; see it disappear from your lower legs. Continue with your knees and your thighs and do the same thing as you did with your feet. Have the tension dissolve so that your legs are completely relaxed—so much so that you can hardly feel them.

Concentrate on your stomach, your hips, and your lower back. If there is any stiffness or tension, let go of it so that your whole body is completely relaxed. Move up through your chest, your back, your shoulders. Let go of the tension so that your whole body is relaxed.

Think of your arms. If there is any tension, feel it start flowing down from the tops of your shoulders, through your arms, through your elbows, through your forearms, your wrists, your hands, until it flows right through your fingers and dissolves.

People often keep tension in their necks. Think about your neck now; rotate and relax it so that any stiffness that was there when you came into the classroom is gone and you feel your whole body relax.

The last place you are going to relax is your face. Relax your mouth, jaw, cheeks, eyes, and forehead. Concentrate on all of the muscles of your face until they are completely relaxed.

Now your body should be so relaxed that you can hardly feel it. If any part of your body is stiff, take control of that stiffness and release it, so that every inch of you is relaxed and you're free to see and experience the following activity."

Before administering any of the activities in this book, it is suggested that the teacher try the activity first, adding his/her own details. Not only will this help the teacher fill in any specifics that s/he thinks the students might need, but it will also give the teacher something to share with the students, giving them an opportunity to see how their writing is the same as or how it differs from that of the teacher.