

## Introduction

*Writing Skills: Nonfiction* is one of two books designed to help your students write. The fourteen activities in this book ask students to write essays and reports on nonfiction topics of special interest to upper primary students. In each activity the students record their own feelings and opinions. The students fill in blanks, answer questions, and use this information to create a finished essay.

## Organization of This Book

The activities are organized into three sections of increasing difficulty. In the first section, "Organizing Thoughts," each exercise prompts students' ideas by asking directed questions and providing space for lists, phrases, and short answers.

Activities in the second section, "Expressing Opinions," provide an organized framework for the essay but require students to supply more detail and write more prose. The questions and directions for each paragraph ask for extended thinking as students identify and express their opinions.

In the third section, "Investigating Ideas," the activities ask students to research facts on each given subject and to integrate those facts with their own opinions in a full report. Students include short bibliographies listing their sources of information. The students get practice in organizing a report as they rearrange the material to determine the most effective sequence for presenting the information.

## How to Use the Activities

The activities in this book were originally developed for upper primary school students. They can be presented as a four week unit in essay and report writing aimed at teaching students the difference between expressing their own thoughts (nonfiction) and inventing stories (fiction).

The exercises are also appropriate for interest centres. For example, each week students might choose from among different exercises displayed at interest centres. The complete assignment would be to write, correct, and rewrite an essay in final form.

Essay topics can also be presented singly. They are constructive activities that can be used as needed to fill periods of unplanned time. They make good independent seatwork for the gifted or accelerated student.

Although there is no required sequence, the activities are most effective when the students progress through the levels of difficulty by doing one or two essays from each of the first two sections as preparation for the larger research projects in the third section.

## Getting the Students Started

To help your students begin any of the activities, remind them that they each have individual thoughts and opinions. Suggest that by writing down their opinions clearly, students can communicate their ideas to others. Emphasize that there is no right answer to any question of opinion. The students must look inside themselves for the answers.

Be sure that students can distinguish between inventing story ideas and making observations for a nonfiction essay. Help them focus on what they really think and how they really feel. Review the process that all professional essay writers must go through: sorting out several thoughts and choosing the one that best expresses the writer's opinion on a particular subject.

## How Much Time to Allow

The two-page activities in the first two sections can be handled as one-day assignments. The four-page activities in the third section should be considered as three- to five-day assignments, depending on the length of the daily work period and the independence of the students. These longer assignments can help students learn to budget their time

and meet deadlines. You can assist less independent students by setting due dates for short sections within a single activity.

### **Doing the Activities**

Students should work in pencil, which makes it easier for them to change details as they go along and to correct errors during a later editing stage. Consider pairing students to read and edit each other's work for spelling mistakes and incomplete sentences. Emphasize that an essay is not complete until it has been corrected. Your final edit and approval will provide closure.

### **Follow-up Discussion**

Students write better when they know they have an audience. It is important that they be the audience for each other's work. When an activity is completed, gather the students into large or small groups for reading and discussion. One approach is to collect all the essays and read them aloud without identifying the authors. Alternatively, students can volunteer or be chosen to read their own work. With either approach, have students discuss differences of opinion and different choices of detail in the essays read. When the author is known, all feedback should be addressed directly to that student.

There are many benefits to this type of follow-up discussion. Hearing alternative essays on the same topic clearly shows students the impact of details in their writing. Also, hearing each other's work acquaints them with other's opinions, gives them confidence in their own ideas, and creates an atmosphere of respect for an author's work. This process helps students learn to give and receive helpful criticism. The entire activity—writing and discussion—demonstrates to students that writing is communicating, and that they can do it.

Books in this series: Writing Skills: Fiction  
Writing Skills: Nonfiction

# Contents

## Organizing Thoughts

Hot Lunch .....	1
Television .....	3
Teasing .....	5
Teenagers.....	7

## Expressing Opinions

Fun Food .....	9
Money .....	11
Assigned Seats.....	13
Adults .....	15

## Investigating Ideas

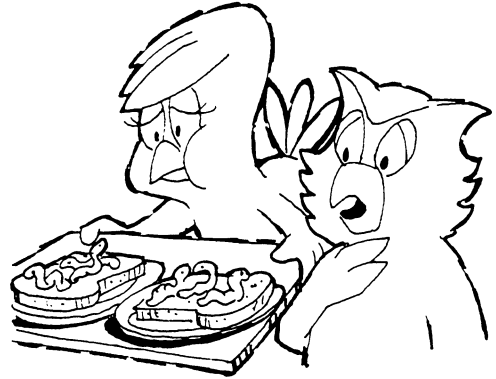
An Animal .....	17
Punishment .....	21
Chocolate.....	25
Sport Scoop .....	29
The Bike.....	33
False Claims .....	37

# HOT LUNCH

Organizing thoughts in 2 pages

Birdseye and Solomon were served cold worms on toast. It was not their idea of a good hot lunch.

What do you have for lunch at school? What do you have for lunch on the weekends? What is your ideal lunch?



My favorite things to eat for lunch are:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Three things that are true about the food available at my school are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The worst lunch I ever had was:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**HOT LUNCH** page 2

The most mouth-watering lunch I could be served would be:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The kind of hot lunch that I would like my school to have is:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Three advantages of having a hot lunch are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I prefer to (tick one):

\_\_\_\_\_ bring my lunch to school    \_\_\_\_\_ buy lunch at school

because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# TELEVISION

Organizing thoughts in 2 pages

Almost everyone watches TV, but not everyone likes the same programs. What are your favorites? Is there anything you don't like about TV? How does it fit into your life?



These are my three favorite TV programs and the reasons I like to watch them:

Program: \_\_\_\_\_ time: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons I like it:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_ time: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons I like it:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_ time: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons I like it:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

The worst program on TV is \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_