

Lucy Calkins

with Colleagues from the Teachers
College Reading and Writing Project

Up the Ladder

Accessing Grades 3–6
Writing Units of Study



SERIES OVERVIEW

- ◆ Tools and methods to accelerate the development of students' skills in narrative, information, and opinion writing
- ◆ Resources to build teachers' expertise in workshop instruction
- ◆ Embedded daily assessment to guide instruction

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Contents

Dear Educator,

Above all, we want you to know that the *Up the Ladder: Accessing Grades 3–6 Writing Units of Study* series embodies the one mission that is closest to the hearts of all of us at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. For us, the most important word in the title of this series is this one: *access*.

Nothing matters more than the mission of giving all young people access to the beautiful, important work that happens in reading and writing workshops.

Giving access to the richest possible writing instruction—and through that, to the power and beauty, awareness, and intimacy that comes in a writing workshop—isn't just a hum-de-hum, run-of-the-mill aspiration. It is one of the cardinal principles of our profession. It's the mission of our lives.

Best wishes,

*Lucy, Mike, Alicia, Hareem,
Shana, Kelly, and Celena*



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Who Should Use *Up the Ladder* Units?



The *Up the Ladder* books are designed for children in grades 3–6 who may not yet have had many opportunities to practice writing narrative, information, and opinion pieces, or might not have had those experiences in workshop-style classrooms. The units give these children opportunities to engage in repeated successful practice and to move rapidly along a gradually increasing progression of challenges.

The TCRWP staff spent a long time studying how to successfully accelerate children’s growth in narrative, information, and opinion writing. They analyzed the progression of skills taught across elementary and middle-school grades, identified the most critical foundational skills for each of the three genres, and then devised a pathway to support the development of these key skills.

The *Up the Ladder* Units give upper grade kids the chance to get the writing process into their bones through work on a sequence of quick publications. The units begin by inviting students to write lots of small pieces that contain the essential characteristics of a specific genre, and to do so within especially motivating, supportive, and clear instruction.

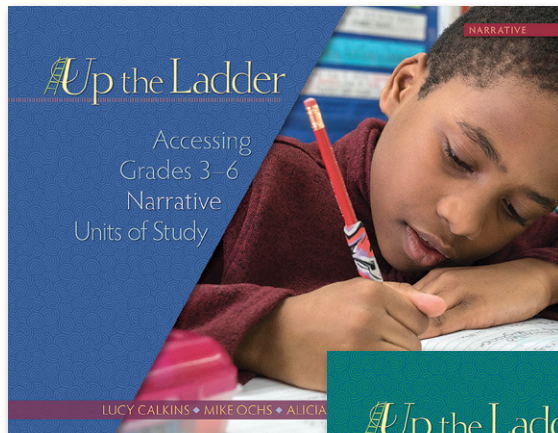
Students repeatedly plan, draft, revise, and do that work mostly outside the writing notebook, in booklets that make concrete manipulative revision easy. Kids cut pages apart to insert a quote, they add flaps off the edges to elaborate on a key part, they tape new leads and endings onto the first and last pages of booklets. Frequent checkpoints channel kids to double-check that their work has gotten substantially better. At each of these checkpoints, they—and you—will see that their growth has been dramatic.



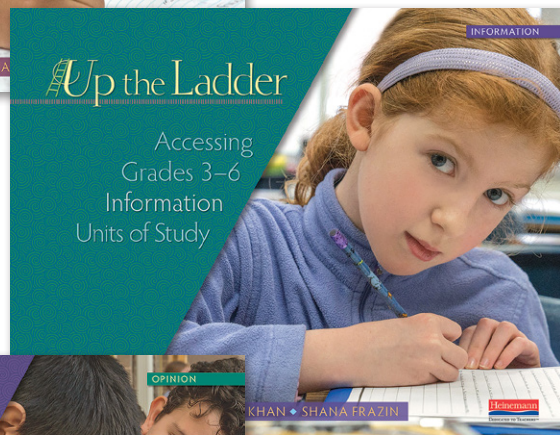
What Does the *Up the Ladder* Series Contain?

Lucy Calkins and her TCRWP colleagues have helped thousands of teachers teach writing workshop and have gleaned insights from watching that work in action. The *Up the Ladder* units include their best high-leverage advice, methods, and tools for teaching writing workshop.

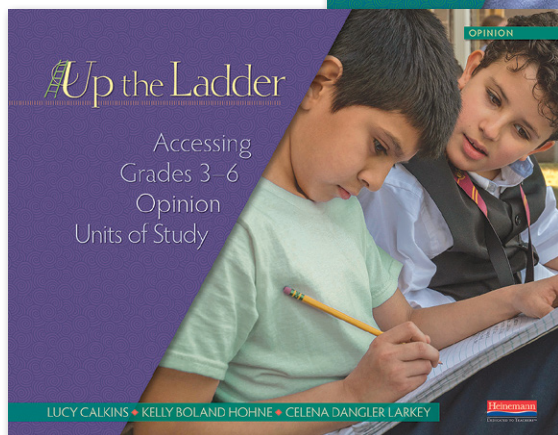
Three *Up the Ladder* Units (20–22 sessions in each)



◀ Narrative

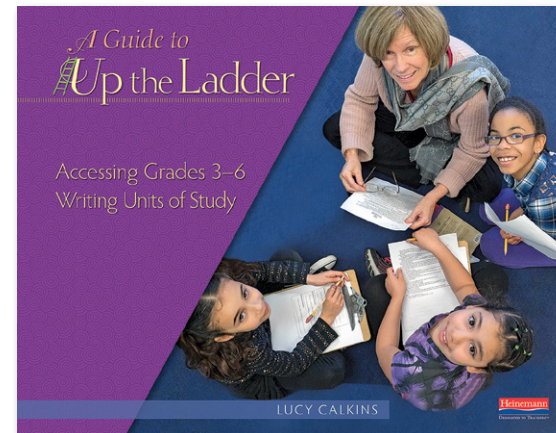


Information ▶



◀ Opinion

A Guide to the *Up the Ladder* Units



The Guide orients teachers to the *Up the Ladder* books, providing guidance on the essential principles, methods, and structures of effective writing workshop instruction.

GUIDE CONTENTS

Chapter 1: An Overview of the *Up the Ladder* Series

- The Relationship between the *Up the Ladder* Books and Units of Study
- The Thinking that Informs the Series: How Do We Give Writers Access?

Chapter 2: Methods and Structures for Teaching Writing

- The Predictable Schedule of Every Day's Writing Workshop
- A Closer Look at the Essential Structures of a Writing Workshop
- Provisioning Your Writing Workshop

Chapter 3: Addressing Predictable Concerns

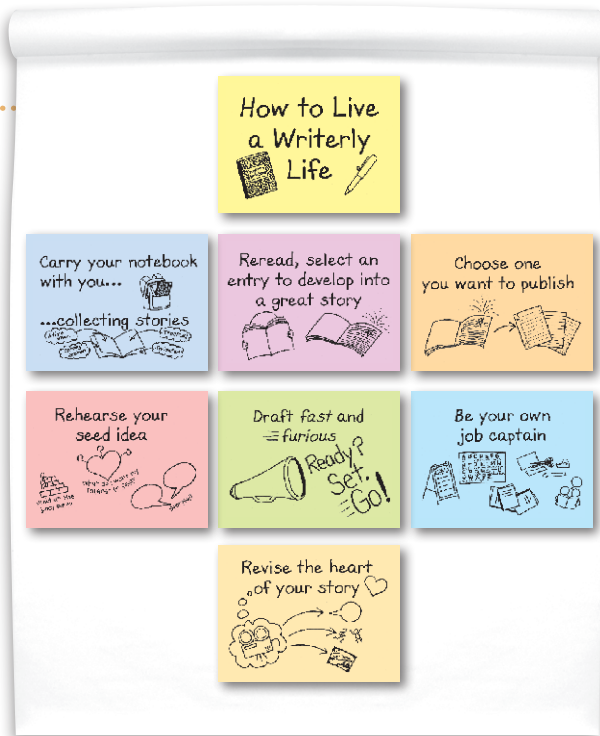
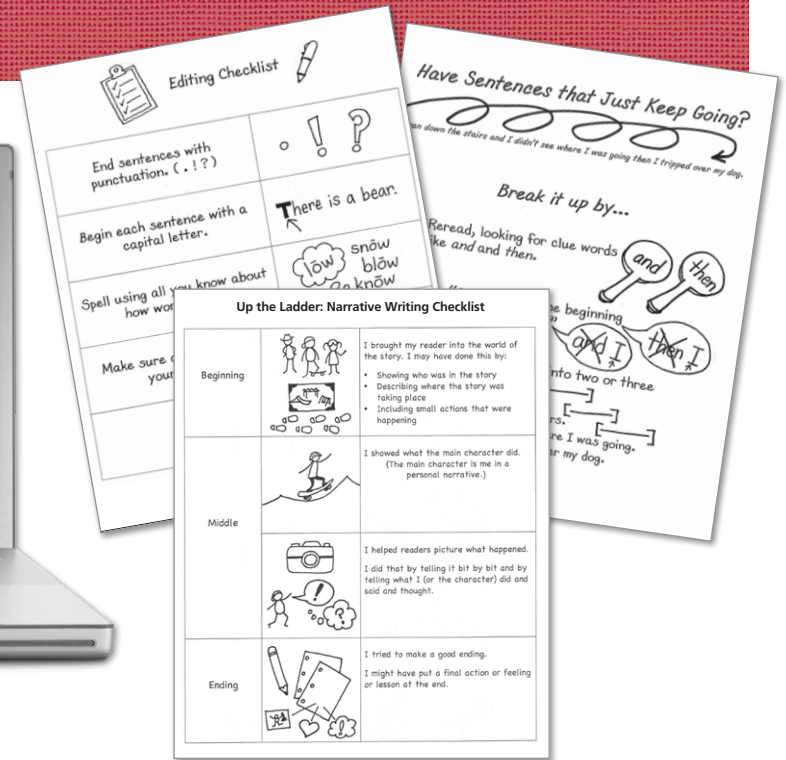
- What if my teaching has gotten ahead of my students' work (e.g., What if I'm teaching them to revise and they haven't finished drafting)?
- What if my students' writing doesn't show that my teaching is sticking?
- What if my students seem dutiful and compliant, rather than deeply invested?
- What if I have writers who don't like to revise?
- What might the long-term plan be for a school's use of *Up the Ladder* units? Might next year's teacher reteach one of these units?

Chapter 4: Assessment

Online Resources

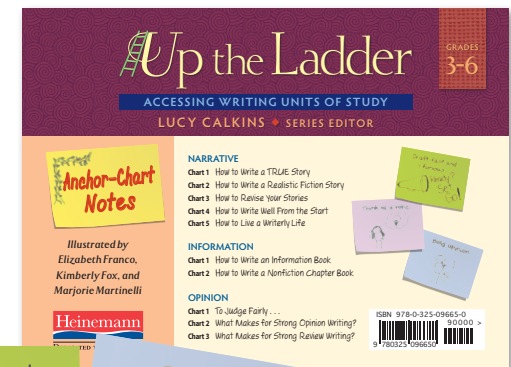
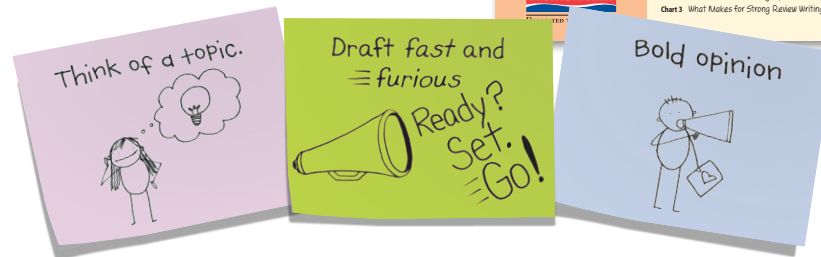
The Online Resources offer teachers a wealth of information and tools to support their teaching including:

- ▶ Downloadable charts, paper-choice templates, samples of student work, student checklists
- ▶ Links to digital texts
- ▶ Demonstration Videos modeling the teaching of every minilesson across all three *Up the Ladder* units.



Anchor-Chart Sticky Notes

Large-format preprinted Anchor-Chart Sticky Notes with illustrated teaching points help teachers create and evolve anchor charts across each unit.



How do the *Up the Ladder* Units fit with the *Units of Study in Writing, Grades 3–6*?



Lucy Calkins and her TCRWP colleagues have written the *Up the Ladder* units to give you and your students access to the rich, research-based curriculum in the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* for grades 3–5.

When Lucy and her coauthors worked on the *Units of Study*, they had to make a choice whether to “make shoes that fit—or shoes to grow into.” They chose the latter, writing the curriculum for kids who are growing up within *Units of Study* writing workshops. This means that each unit assumes students have experienced the unit that came before it. But that, of course, won’t be the case for upper-grade students entering writing workshop for the first time.

These *Up the Ladder* books are designed to help classes filled with upper-grade students who are currently working below benchmark levels in writing or who are new to writing workshop instruction. The units meet students where they are and accelerate the development of their skills in narrative, information, and opinion writing. The *Up the Ladder* units are designed to be absolutely engaging for students in grades 3–6, but the primary goal is to ensure that students make rapid, dramatic progress toward grade-level writing work.

There are many ways that a teacher can use the *Up the Ladder* units alongside the four units in the grade-level *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing*.

Suggested Options

Option 1 Alternate between Narrative *Up the Ladder* and a grade-specific narrative unit, then do the same for Information and for Opinion.

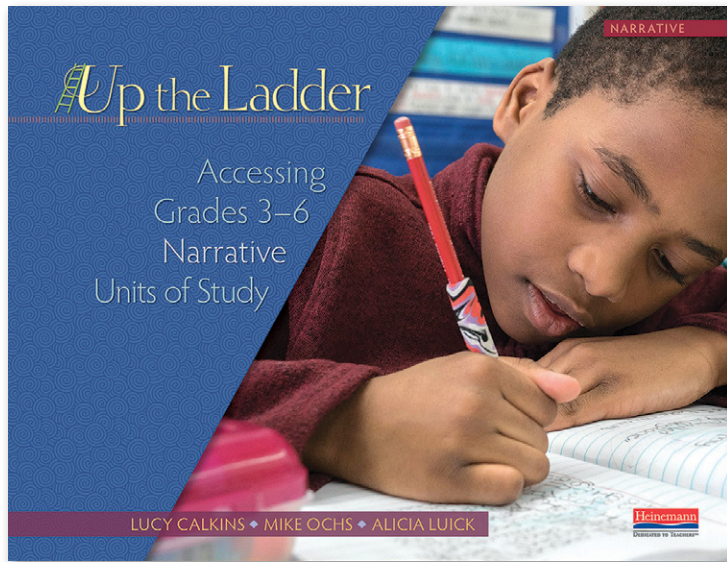
Option 2 Use one of the *Up the Ladder* units to start your year, and then proceed through your grade-specific *Units of Study* until you encounter an upcoming unit that feels especially challenging. When that happens, use the aligned *Up the Ladder* unit to provide your students with a ramp to that unit.

Option 3 Start your year with the three *Up the Ladder* books, then proceed to the four *Units of Study* books.

Some people ask whether it is possible for the three *Up the Ladder* books to be distributed across the grade levels so that, for example, the Narrative book gives a leg up to third-graders, the Information book to fourth-graders, the Opinion book to fifth-graders. The answer to that question is yes. Teaching in sequence (first Narrative, then Information, then Opinion) will have advantages, because the later books in the series make some references to the earlier ones. However, we encourage you to experiment with all the possible ways in which these resources can be useful to you and your students.



What will Students Learn in the Narrative Unit?



Up the Ladder: Accessing Grades 3–6 Narrative Units of Study by Lucy Calkins, Mike Ochs, and Alicia Luick

This unit inducts inexperienced writers into the structures and expectations of a writing workshop and gives them opportunities to engage in repeated successful practice in writing narratives. In the first bend, students write True Trouble Stories, learning to plan and label the parts of their stories and to elaborate and revise. The second bend closely parallels the first, but this time students write a series of booklets featuring the same fictional character, writing longer and with more detail over the course of the bend. In the third bend, students return to personal narratives, but now begin to use notebooks to generate ideas and gather stories before they draft their narratives. The unit culminates with a celebration of students' published pieces and the dramatic growth they've made as writers.

NARRATIVE UNIT CONTENTS

Bend I: Writing and Revising True Trouble Stories

- Think, Plan, and Write
- Revising by Telling Important Parts, Bit by Bit
- Planning Your Story in Three Parts
- Using Drama to Bring Characters (and Writing) to Life
- Varying End Punctuation
- Letter to Teachers—A Mini-Celebration

Bend II: Writing a Series of Short Fiction Stories

- Fiction Writers Create Characters with Real Wants and Troubles that Matter
- Because Endings Matter, Fiction Writers Draft Several
- Writers Are Job Captains of Their Writing
- Developing Characters Across a Series
- Bringing Out the Secret Thoughts and the Quirkiness of Characters
- Editing and Celebration

Bend III: From Story Booklets to Notebooks

- Living a Writerly Life
- Writers Zoom In to Focus on a Moment
- Storytelling as Rehearsal for Drafting Out of Notebooks
- Writers Do the Stuff They Have Already Learned to Do
- Revising from the Heart
- Learning from the Pros
- Comma Comprehension
- Celebrate Good Times, Come On
- Gallery Walk



To view additional sample pages, please visit
<http://hein.pub/up-the-ladder-sample-sessions>

What will Students Learn in the Information Unit?

INFORMATION UNIT CONTENTS

Bend I: Writing Lots of Books that Teach

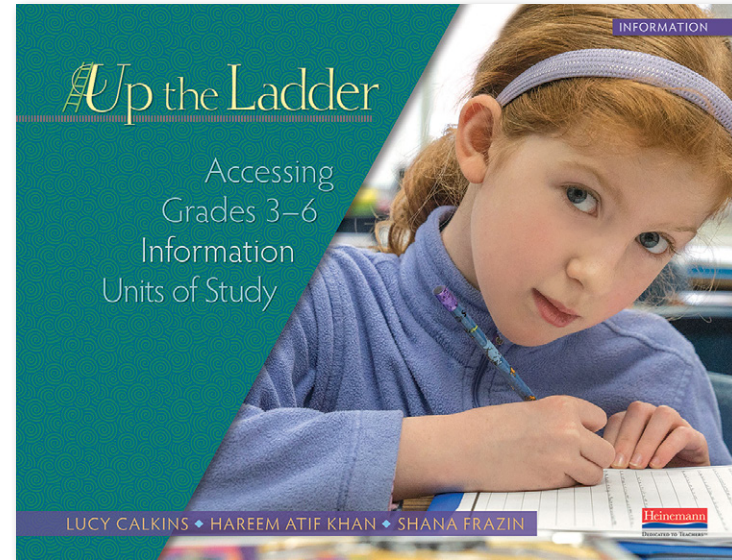
- Gallery Walk: A Vision for Growth
- Writers Write to Teach
- Elaboration: Writers Ask “Who, What, Where, Why” Questions
- Writing with Detail: Adding Exact Names, Numbers, Colors, Sizes, Shapes, Quotes
- Reading Your Writing through the Eyes of a Stranger: Revision
- First Things First: Beginnings Matter
- “How Do I Write This Kind of Writing Well?”
- Editing for Run-On Sentences
- Presenting Your Work in Celebration

Bend II: Writing Chapter Books that Teach with Organization and Detail

- Organizing into Chapters: Planning in Preparation for Writing Chapter Books
- Rehearsing for Writing by Teaching
- Writers Are the Bosses of Their Writing
- Designing Your Pages
- Editing for Paragraphs
- Celebrating Growth by Giving Feedback

Bend III: Taking Your Writing from Good to Great

- Gallery Walk: Taking Writing from Good to Great
- Goal-Driven Deliberate Practice Matters
- Information Writers Are Investigators: Conducting Interviews and Taking Surveys
- Balancing Facts with Thinking
- Studying Mentor Texts to Create a Revision Plan
- Deliberate Punctuation: Commas
- Dressing Up Your Writing



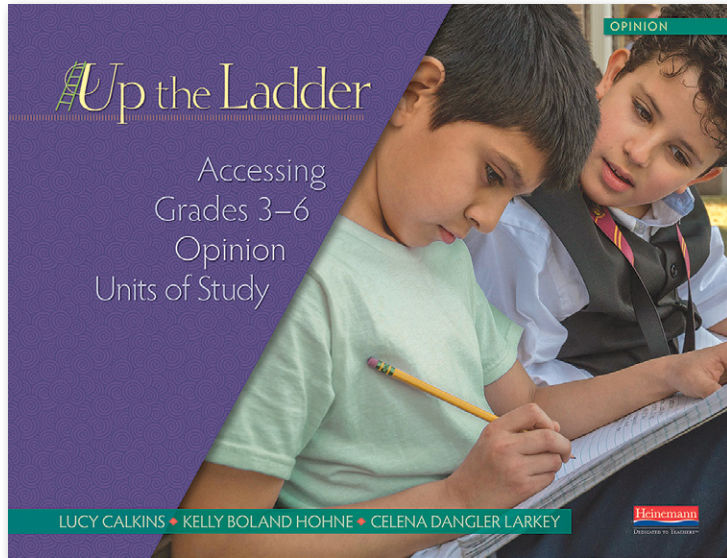
Up the Ladder: Accessing Grades 3–6 Information Units of Study by Lucy Calkins, Hareem Atif Kahn, and Shana Frazin

This unit provides students with lots of opportunities to write information texts on topics of personal expertise. The unit helps them envision the larger topic of an information text as being comprised of smaller subtopics, and to write about each of those subtopics separately, bucketing them. Students are given repeated opportunities to practice doing this work and a handful of important planning and revision strategies to help them. They also learn to write with concrete, specific information and to elaborate, saying more about kernels of information. The goal of the unit is to accelerate students’ growth in this genre while also helping them to build their identities as writers and their volume of writing.



To view additional sample pages, please visit
<http://hein.pub/up-the-ladder-sample-sessions>

What will Students Learn in the Opinion Unit?



Up the Ladder: Accessing Grades 3–6 Opinion Units of Study by Lucy Calkins, Kelly Boland Hohne, Celena Dangler Larkey

In the first bend, students write lots and lots of opinion pieces about items in collections. They learn to write a clear claim and to support the claim with a reason or two. Students practice revising in concrete, manipulative ways using revision strips, Post-its®, and flaps stuck off the edges of a page. The second bend shifts students to writing reviews. Bend two begins with a giant inquiry into what makes for good review writing and then asks students to apply all they learned in the first bend to this new kind of opinion writing. In bend three, students move from writing many shorter pieces to developing one lengthier persuasive speech with a clear claim, reasons to support the claim, and a variety of evidence (details of observations, quotes from interviews, results from surveys). They think about their audience and go through the process of planning and developing, revising, and editing. An optional fourth bend designed especially for fifth- and sixth-grade students helps these writers learn to incorporate text evidence into their writing.

OPINION UNIT CONTENTS

Bend I: And the Award Goes To . . . : Evaluating and Ranking

- To Judge Fairly, People Categorize Things and Make Judgments within Those Categories
- Having More and *More* Opinions
- “How Do I Write This Kind of Writing Well?”
- “But My Writing Is Awfully Short”: Elaborating on Your Opinion
- A Gallery of Revision
- Hear and Spell All the Chunks in Long Words
- Live from the Red Carpet!

Bend II: Writing Reviews

- Writing Reviews to Persuade Others
- Hooking Your Reader
- Providing Convincing Reasons for Reviews
- Interviewing to Add Quotes to a Review
- Making Sure Writing Is Easy to Read
- Celebrating Achievements in Review Writing

Bend III: Persuasive Speeches to Make a Real-World Difference

- Persuasive Speech Boot Camp
- Planning Persuasive Speeches
- Living Like a Magnet with Your Speech in Mind: Developing Your Speech
- Flash-Drafting Persuasive Speeches
- Studying Mentor Texts Well to Revise Writing in Big Ways
- Celebrate: Presenting Speeches to Audiences

Bend IV: Taking on a Shared Cause and Incorporating Text Evidence into Opinion/Argument Writing

- Taking Up a Cause as a Class: Getting Informed
- Writing with Audience in Mind
- Bringing Text Evidence into Opinion Writing
- Celebrating Activism and Growth as Opinion/Argument Writers



To view additional sample pages, please visit
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What Does Daily Instruction Look Like in the Writing Workshop?

As in the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing*, the predictable writing workshop structure undergirds the *Up the Ladder* units. Each session, in all of the units, is a day, and each day's writing workshop is fifty to sixty minutes. Each session begins with a minilesson. Kids sit with a long-term partner while in the minilesson. The minilesson ends with the kids being sent off to their own independent work. As they work, the teacher confers with them and leads small groups. Halfway through that time, the teacher stands and delivers a mid-workshop teaching point to remind writers to do something important as they work. The workshop ends with a share, and often this interval also sets kids up to show their partner the work they did that day.

At the start of every session, there is a section titled **"In This Session"** that crystallizes the focus for the minilesson and gives a brief synopsis of what students will do that day.

A section titled **"Getting Ready"** gives teachers important information they will need as they prepare to teach the session, including a QR code that links to a video demonstration of the day's minilesson.

Session 3

Planning Your Story in Three Parts

IN THIS SESSION

TODAY YOU'LL teach students that writers often plan stories with structure in mind. In a good story, there are hints of trouble early on, the trouble gets worse, and then it's resolved.

TODAY STUDENTS will generate a new idea for a story, one that follows a predictable story structure, and write the story across the pages in a booklet.

GETTING READY

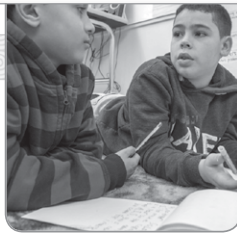
- ✓ Prior to today, divide the class into partnerships. Avoid pairing students solely by ability or by gender. Think of partners as audiences and champions for each other (see Connection).
- ✓ Assign students to spots in the meeting area, and label each spot with the student's name and either 1 or 2 (see Connection).
- ✓ Prepare six-page booklets with pages labeled "Beginning: The Trouble Starts," then two pages labeled, "Middle: The Trouble Gets Worse," and a final two pages, "End: Change/Solution" (see Connection and Active Engagement).
- ✓ Ask students to bring their writing folders containing their pink Post-it (from yesterday's share) and a blank booklet for a new story with them to the meeting area (see Connection).
- ✓ Prepare to read from sections of *Shortcut* by Donald Crews (see Teaching).
- ✓ Be ready to add to the "How to Write a True Story" chart (see Active Engagement).
- ✓ Write the "Questions listeners can ask of a storyteller" onto chart paper (see Share).
- ✓ Assign writing spots to partners for writing time, and figure out how to communicate the seating chart to students. Remember that some can work on the floor, and that students needn't sit at their own desks all day. The tops of desks can be treated as communal real estate (see Link).
- ✓ Today's minilesson video: 
hein.pub/UTLNAR_3



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Before launching into teaching, the teacher specifically names the **teaching point** for the day. Teaching points generally include a goal and a step-by-step strategy.

The **teaching** portion of the minilesson usually demonstrates the step-by-step way in which you go about doing something. This part of the minilesson typically takes about 3–5 minutes.



MINILESSON

Planning Your Story in Three Parts

CONNECTION

Introduce children to writing partners and establish how partnerships will work together.

"Writers, as you come to the meeting area today, I need each of you to bring the pink Post-it from yesterday's share, the one containing ideas for a story you might start today. Bring your folders as well. When you get to the meeting area, find the spot on the floor that has your name and a 1 or 2 on it. Sit right on top of it! Sit on your folder as well."

Once students had settled into their new spots, I began. "From now on, for every minilesson and for the shares in which we gather, you and your partner will sit beside each other, in these spots. One of you is Partner 1 and the other is Partner 2. Remember who's who so you can easily follow directions. Guess what else! I've also changed your seats during writing time so you'll be able to sit near your writing partner during writing time, too. Later when you go off to write, you can find your new writing spots."

"Today, your partners will help you plan new stories. I'm going to teach you some more about how stories go, so that planning will be challenging. You'll be glad to have the help of a partner!"

✿ Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that writers often plan new story ideas with story structure in mind. A good story has three parts: a part where the trouble starts, a part where the trouble gets worse, and a part where the trouble is resolved. Each part is like a Small Moment scene, lasting several minutes."

TEACHING

Review the way that the class story includes a part when the people are doing something and the trouble starts, a part where the trouble gets worse, and a part that ends the story.

"Writers, you'll see that stories usually go that way. In the first page or two, the characters are doing or saying something and readers can see the start of a problem. Like—we're reading quietly, the door opens, and Mrs. Kennedy is clearly mad."

◆ COACHING

Be sure that you have put a blank story booklet into each child's folder. For each writer, choose a blank booklet in which the number of lines on each page seems just right for that student. Make sure that there are six pages in each booklet, with the first labeled "Beginning: The Trouble Starts," then two pages labeled, "Middle: The Trouble Gets Worse," and the final two pages, "End: Change/Solution."

This is just one possible way to manage the chaos that setting up new partnerships could create. If some of your students are English language learners, partner children so that one has stronger English skills than the other. Be sure that your English as a New Language (ENL) students aren't isolated because they are acquiring English.

Detailed **coaching notes** at point of use offer teachers extra support and promote reflective practice.

Pacing of Minilessons

The minilessons are designed to be brief—no more than ten minutes. Keeping minilessons brief may sound daunting, but it is actually easily done. To help teachers see how manageable this is, TCRWP staff developers videotaped themselves teaching each minilesson in this series to an imaginary class of kids. These videos help teachers get a sense of the pacing that the minilessons require to give kids the maximum time to write. QR codes in each session take teachers to the videos.

"Then the next page or two, the trouble gets worse. She yells at us to be quiet and we're thinking, 'Huh? We were quiet.'"
 "Then there is a solution, or a change."

Review a second story, this time a picture book that the class has heard read aloud, emphasizing that each of the three parts is a scene or a small moment.

"Writers, let's think about the parts of *Shortcut*. In the beginning, the characters are doing and saying things that show the problem, or the trouble." I opened the book and read a bit of it:

*We should have taken the road.
 But it was late, and it was
 getting dark, so we
 started down the track.*

"Do you see how Donald Crews sets up the first scene? He has the characters doing something, saying something, and already there are hints of the trouble to come. In that one beginning scene, we see what the characters want—to get home quickly—and we see the start of the problem—it was getting late, so they decided to walk on the train tracks.

"And then, in the middle of the story, the problem gets worse and worse, right?" I flipped ahead to the middle of the book to read another snippet, the part where the kids hear the train whistle and begin to yell and run and jump off the tracks. "Do you see how this middle scene shows the problem getting worse and worse? Do you see also that it takes place in a small moment that spans just a few minutes?" Students nodded, and I continued.

"Finally, Donald Crews writes an ending part to his story, and the ending is another small moment, this time showing what the characters say and do when the problem is resolved. At the end, the train passes, and all the kids are fine. They decide to not walk on those tracks anymore, to not take the shortcut any more, and they promise each other not to share a word of what happened. The ending is another scene, and like the beginning and the middle, it is like a Small Moment story, it lasts just a few minutes."

Don't read too many pages of the story or hold too tightly to it. You will be recalling the story in ways that pop out (or exaggerate) your point that are more dramatic than the actual evolution of the story. So if you are reading bits, jump ahead from the opening scene to a mid-story scene.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Channel students to think of a new story idea, one that follows a story structure, and to touch and tell it across the pages.

"Will you try this with the story you are going to write next? Most of you already have an idea for your next book that you got from looking at each other's work yesterday. The idea will be on your pink Post-it. Will you tell your partner what you are thinking your next story will be? Partner 1, tell Partner 2 what you are thinking." The room erupted with talk.

SESSION 3: PLANNING YOUR STORY IN THREE PARTS

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After a bit, I voiced over, saying, "Will you make sure that you are writing about an important trouble? If it is something silly, consider changing it. You could write about the time you were new and didn't know who to play with, or a time you were teased, or a time you were really upset with your brother, or your friend. Talk some more about story ideas. Now will Partner 2 tell Partner 1 what you are thinking?" After another minute I said, "I'm hearing great ideas," and I repeated a few of them.

Before all the children had solidified their ideas, I pressed on. "Partner 1, take out your blank booklet and begin tapping and telling what will happen on each page. Make sure you follow the ways stories go: a page or two where the trouble starts, a page or two where the trouble gets worse, and a page or two where the trouble gets resolved. Partner 2, your job is to make sure that in each part, your partner tells just one small moment, one scene. When Partner 1 is done, you might have time to switch roles. Get started!"

I coached partner conversations for a minute or so, voicing over with comments such as, "Writers, think 'What am I doing, what am I saying?,' 'Remember to tell your small moments bit by bit,' 'You can jump ahead to the last part, to the solution,' and 'If I tap you and your partner on the shoulder, you can go off to sketch and write.'"

I leaned in to listen to a few partnerships talking, giving them little tips for how to talk: "sit knee to knee," "look at your partner," "speak loud enough to be heard," and so on. I also coached into their conversations for a half-minute, and then I voiced over to the whole class, saying, "Partner 1, tell the story again, but before you do, will you and your partner plan out what will happen on the first two pages that show the problem getting started. Then, when you tell the start of the story, say what the main character—that's probably you—is doing and saying at the start of the story."

ANCHOR CHART

How to Write a True Story

1. Think of something that happened to you.
 Hint: In stories, characters encounter trouble. Think of a time you had trouble, a time things were hard. Did it get solved in the end?
Think of the parts of your story:
What did you do first that shows the start of the trouble?
What did someone say or do that shows the trouble getting worse?
How did the trouble get resolved?
2. Touch the pages and tell the story.
 Hint: Say the actual words you might write.
3. Sketch what happened on each page.
4. Write!
 Hint: On each page, just write one part of the story.

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Starting the kids off like this makes it more likely they will have the characters doing and saying things. You are trying to steer them away from a summary of the story, which might go like this: "At first the boy is unhappy because he doesn't have those shoes." Instead, you want them to say, "Jeremy gripped his hand around his pencil so hard it almost broke."

Remind students that on the first two pages, they should write the start, then on the next two, the middle, then the end.



UP THE LADDER: ACCESSING GRADES 3–6 NARRATIVE UNITS OF STUDY

In the **active engagement**, students try to do what the teacher demonstrated in the minilesson. Everyone participates, sometimes working with a partner, sometimes working on his or her own.

The minilesson ends with a **link**, the term that is used to signal that this is a time when you ask youngsters to transfer all they have learned from whole-class instruction to their ongoing work.

After the partners talked for a minute, I said, "Okay, Partner 2, touch page 1 and start saying the exact word you're thinking you might write. Go!"

Debrief what you heard partnerships say in ways that can transfer to their own writing.

"Writers, I love the way you've done this. You touched the first pages to tell a Small Moment story that showed the trouble starting. Then you touched the middle pages to tell the trouble getting worse, and then touched the last pages to tell the trouble getting resolved.

"Writers, do you see that you can use your knowledge of a story's structure to help you plan your next story?"

LINK

Channel students to get started sketching the small moment that will start their next book.

"Writers, while you sit here, will you get started sketching exactly what happened at the start of your book? Who is doing what? Who is saying what?" The kids worked and once I saw that individuals were well on their way, I sent them to their work spots.

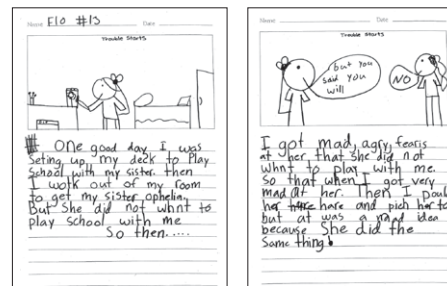


FIG. 3-1 One student writes a story, keeping structure in mind.

SESSION 3: PLANNING YOUR STORY IN THREE PARTS

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You are teaching a lot in this session—asking a lot—and needn't expect kids to master all you are teaching. If some kids grasp the idea that they are telling a story that essentially jumps between two or three small moments, one that shows the problem escalating and one that resolves it, that's great. As you coach kids, steer them toward zooming in on small moments. One tells about the day the author stood on his porch and watched other kids ride off on their bikes. Then the next page starts, "A month later, on Christmas morning, my dad said, "Close your eyes," and readers learn that on Christmas morning, the author got a new bike.

Work Time

Students should have 35–45 minutes to write each day while the teacher confers and leads small groups. As students work, they will draw on a repertoire of strategies developed across the days of the unit. Throughout the *Up the Ladder* units, teachers will learn ways to help students self-manage and write with independence, freeing the teacher to respond to students' writing.



CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Quick, In-the-Moment Assessment and Response

YOU WILL WANT to do some lightning-fast assessment today to take tabs on what your youngsters are doing. When you look at your students' writing, you will want to see evidence that their texts contain:

- a sequence of connected micro-events;
- evidence that the writer has tried to elaborate, to say more about at least one bit of the story; and
- a story that makes sense to a reader.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Revel in Kids' Work**

"Wow, writers, do you know what I am noticing? We've only been in this writing workshop for a few days and already your writing is way, way, way better than it was at the start of our writing workshop. Look at the page you just wrote, and compare it to the first page you wrote on our first day." I gave students time to do this.

"Are your pages becoming longer? Thumbs up! Are you writing with more details? Thumbs up! And what stories you are telling! I'm lucky because I get to read a whole bunch of your stories—in a bit, I'll let you read each other's. But just know, we have stories about times you almost lost your best friend, times when your dog died, times you didn't know how to stop someone from being a bully. These are huge and important stories.

"When we started writing workshop, I didn't realize that we have so many people in this room with hidden writing talent. Let's get back to work—we can't waste a precious moment of that writing talent."

If you see students are having trouble . . .	Then you can try . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If writers are having trouble telling a sequence of micro-events	You'll want to remind them of what narrative writers do, and explain that they are not doing this. Give exaggerated examples of what they are doing instead. If they are hopping all around in time, tell them so. If they are talking all about something instead of saying what happened first, then next, then after that, point that out. You might show them how to pace out a timeline or a sequence of events by doing so with events these writers have experienced (i.e., the lineup that morning, the fire drill).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you don't see evidence that the writer has tried to elaborate	Point out what it is you want to see, perhaps by showing an example from your writing, and ask the writer to help you understand why he or she hasn't yet done this. "Are you just about to elaborate?" you might ask, and help the writer do so with and then without your support.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the story is very confusing	Teach the student that writers have to read their writing as a stranger would, knowing nothing about the true story, and ask, "Does this all make sense?" Explain that this strategy helps writers to find and revise parts that are confusing to readers. You could get the student trying this work right away, reading tiny parts of her writing and asking "Does this all make sense?" while you coach.

While students work, The teacher moves around the classroom, trying to touch base with and respond to as many writers as possible. This is the teacher's opportunity to meet students exactly where they are at and respond accordingly.

As students work and the teacher moves among them, there will be times when she find herself wanting to say the same thing to every writer. Those are times she will stand in the middle of the room, ask for all students' attention, and give a **mid-workshop teaching point**.



SHARE

A Partner Is Your First Audience

As partnerships are still dispersed across the classroom, gather their attention and channel them to listen to each other's writing, asking each other questions to clarify and elaborate.

"Writers, your partner is your first audience for any piece of writing. Your *final* audience will celebrate your writing, but your *first* audience—your partner, can help you make your writing be the best it can be.

"One way that partners help a writer is that partners listen and ask questions. Partners ask questions that help a writer show what the writer was doing, what the writer was saying, in ways that let readers know what the character was also feeling. These are some especially important questions." I revealed a list of questions.

"So, partners, will you be each other's first audience? Will you listen to your partner's writing and ask some of these questions? Partner 2, you go first. Read your writing so that Partner 1 can see it. And then, Partner 1, ask some of these questions to help your partner clarify and elaborate. Get to it!" As partnerships gave each other feedback, I encouraged students to jot ideas for future revisions in their margins.

WORKING WITH ENLS

This session is already very supportive for ENL students:

- ◆ Partnerships support language development. The coaching text in the connection give tips for how to group your students strategically.
- ◆ The fact that you first teach today's new content within the context of a familiar story helps to make your language comprehensible.

To provide additional support for ENL students you might:

- ◆ Channel a peer to help the child label his or her drawings with words that the writer can later use in the story. The labels provide the writer with a personal word bank. This is especially helpful for newcomers.
- ◆ If you decide that this session speeds across too many stories, you may make *Ish* be your second teaching example and set students up to work with their own stories during the active engagement time.

Questions listeners can ask of a storyteller...

??? What were you thinking (feeling) when...?

??? If I'd been watching, what EXACTLY would I have seen when...?

??? Can you tell me more about...?

??? Why did...?

At the end of each workshop, the teacher creates a way to capture the power of that day's work, to remind writers of what they have learned and to give them the satisfaction of an audience.

Specific support for working with **English learners** is included in every *Up the Ladder* session.



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