

# Real-World Writing Purposes: Inform & Explain

Ideas and activities retrieved from Kelly Gallagher's books  
*Teaching Adolescent Writers* and *Write Like This*

## Real-World Writing Purposes

1. Express and Reflect
2. Inform and Explain
3. Evaluate and Judge
4. Inquire and Explore
5. Analyze and Interpret
6. Take a Stand/Propose a Solution

If we want to work to develop our students as authentic, lifelong writers, we should help them to see that there is value in writing and that there are types of writing that we do for various purposes outside of school. Not all writing is the same. Writers create different types of writing depending on their purpose.

## 1 Topic - 18 Topics

Shows the importance of purpose/audience.

Works with any topic.

Enables students to see various angles from which a writer may approach a topic.

topic:



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1 Topic = 18 Topics

Purpose	Possible Writing Topics
Express and Reflect	
Inform and Explain	
Evaluate and Judge	
Inquire and Explore	
Analyze and Interpret	
Take a Stand/Propose a Solution	

-Use local newspapers with your students to have them find examples of the various types of writing to help them internalize and understand that not all writing is the same.

-Have students pick a big topic that interests them and show them how they can adapt their topic and change their purpose and audience within their topic. Eventually you could have them write a paragraph on these individual topics and this helps us to focus our writing.

-Share an example of your own. Teachers try it. (copies)

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2. **Inform and Explain**
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# Inform and Explain

- My Favorite Words
- I Was a Witness
- Black Sheep
- How Does \_\_\_\_ Work?
- My \_\_\_\_ History
- Job Hunting
- How to Survive \_\_\_\_
- Unwritten Rules
- What is the Perfect \_\_\_\_?

**My Favorite Words** - Choose a favorite word and conduct some research. Why do you like the word so much? What's the word's etymology? When and where was it born? How has it evolved?

**I Was a Witness** - Consider events you have witnessed in your life and create a list (Kelly's lists pg. 71). Have students consider the history they have witnessed and through their writing explain what they saw.

**Black Sheep** - We all know someone who is a "black sheep" (a person who causes shame or embarrassment because of deviation from social standards of her/his group). Have students consider black sheep they have encountered. (Model this carefully - KG talks about his sister who led a life of drug abuse and was in and out of jail.) More mature audience. Not mandatory because of the sensitive nature of the topic.

**How Does \_\_\_\_ Work?** - The book *The Way Things Works* explains how numerous everyday objects work from your CD player to the magnetic strip on the back of a credit card. Students brainstorm possible answers to the question "how does \_\_\_\_ work?" Practices with "how does Google work?" Students pick one interesting question and go find the answer.

**My \_\_\_\_ History** - Encourages students to look at various histories of their lives. (my soccer history, my travel history, my drawing history, my reading history, etc.) Students select their topics and explain their histories. They can include visual if time

permits.

Job Hunting - Research future jobs they think might interest them. Collect information. Search by industry or geographic location. Look at earnings. Two-part paper - part one, inform the reader about what they have learned about the job. Part two, describe the path they will need to take if they were to someday work in that field.

How to survive \_\_\_\_ - How to survive a day at Disneyland, how to survive algebra, how to survive sharing a room with your sibling, etc.

Unwritten Rules - Taken from The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian. The unwritten rules of fisticuffs. Come up with your own unwritten rules found in your life. Unwritten rules of band, of choir, of baseball, etc.

# Writing Practice - What is the Perfect \_\_\_\_\_?

What is the perfect day? -or- What is the perfect vacation?

KG models this writing activity with his piece of “what is the perfect student?” (pg. 84)  
Students then create a list and define the perfect (teacher, sport, principal, sister, dog, boyfriend, day, parent, meal, vacation, etc.).

# CCSS ELA - Writing Standard 2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

Establish and maintain a formal style.

Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.



# Writing Resources

[Common Core State Standards - ELA](#)

<http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/writing/secondary/content.html>

<http://www.oneword.com/>

<http://writingprompts.tumblr.com/>