

A Collection of Student Writing and Scripts

The following is a collection of different scripts/songs and raps that students have written (with the guidance of Skylight artists). They can be used as a starting point for a project, or to teach various concepts. Feel free to use or change whatever you need for your classroom. If you would like complete scripts, please let us know.

The following is a script written by 4th graders at Vieau School about the 1960s. Students created individual responses to the question "Why is there war" and related it to their knowledge of the 60s. Student writing was then timed into speeches as if they were at a rally.

Lila: In the 60s people were protesting. They were for civil rights and against the war in Viet Nam.

In California, there were lots of demonstrations.

(All sing *Blowin' in the Wind*, verse 1. Then oooing underneath the first speeches)

Jorge Matamoros

Why is there war?

War happens when people don't try to talk out a problem.

They just fight and fight.

If people would solve their problems with just talking it out, our world would be more peaceful.

(Crowd cheers)

If war keeps going on then more people are going to suffer.

(Crowd -Stop the war!! 3 times)

Carlos Venegas

The reason there is war is because of food, shelter and terrorism.

People should be equal because we are just humans and who cares about the color you are?

We are just people and we are all the same!

(Crowd cheers)

Rodolfo, Marco + Kaylenn

(By Rodolfo)

Rodolfo: War happens because some people aren't treated equally.

Marco: But what's bad is that people's family's get killed or injured.

Kaylenn: And like Martin Luther King junior said everyone should be treated equal.

Rodolfo: That's why there's war!

Kaylenn: And one time a woman named Rosa Parks got on a bus and sat at the front of the bus and black people were supposed to sit in the back.

(Bus-Anthony, Sharon drives up, Keshawn as Rosa Parks gets on the bus)

Anthony *Move to the back of the bus!!*

Keshawn *NO! (Policeman, Esai, enters and escorts Rosa off the bus and off stage)*

Marco: Rosa Parks fought for her rights. Now everyone can sit anywhere they want!

Rodolfo: See, people should be treated equally!!!

(Crowd cheers)

Melissa S

(By Brianna Soto)

War is bad.

(Crowd cheers)

Why can't we just live in peace with nobody fighting?
Peace means that everybody is treated equally not "These people get this and these people get that."
Everybody should get the same belongings.
Finally we should live in peace.
(Crowd cheers)

Ramon: I'm really hacked about the war, man.
Adonnys: I thought that speech was so cool, man.
Daniel: Yeah, peace now, man.

Keshawn: That speech was totally bad, man.
Alexandria: No, I thought it was a gas!
Keshawn: Man, "Bad" means awesome.
Alexandria: Oh yeah, "bad."
Asminda: Yeah, dude, stop the war!
All: Stop the war. Stop the war! Stop the war!

Isaiah

Why is there war?
Why is there war?
There is no need for war.
Why can't we get along?
Stop the war!
Why should we make families suffer from deaths in war?
So tell me, would you rather have your son or daughter die in a war or live in peace?
Crowd: Peace! Peace! Peace!
It's your choice.
(Crowd cheers)

(All sing 2nd verse of *Blowin' in the Wind*)

The following is a script created by 4th and 5th grade students at Vieau School who studied the Mayans for their portion of the Native American residency. It is a simple retelling of a story that they had read and studied in class, and as a class, students worked with a teaching artist to come up with this script.

The Quest for Corn

Intro: The following is Room 26s retelling of a Mayan legend about how people and animals discovered corn.

Narr: Once upon a time, really long ago, people and animals had no corn or other crops. They ate only fruits and roots from the forest. Corn was hidden under a mysterious rock. No one knew its hiding place except the leaf cutter ants. One day a fox was going along and he saw the ants carrying some strange kernels. He picked up some kernels that he had dropped and ate them. He went to talk to the ants.

Fox: Ants! May I have some more of those kernels that look and taste so good?
Ants: No!

Narr: So the fox waited until night and followed the ants to the mysterious rock. He could not fit through the small opening in the rock. Instead he ate more of the dropped kernels and returned to the forest to find his animals friends. The other animals noticed the sweet smell of the corn on the fox.

Animals: MMM! What have you been eating! It smells so sweet.

Fox: The usual food. I'll see you later.

Narr: The animals decided to follow the fox because he was acting very suspicious. They found out what he had been eating.

Animals: You're lying to us. We want food!

Fox: What! You've been following me?

Animals: We just wanted to have some of what you are eating.

Narr: The fox and the animals see the ants come out from under the rock and ask them for some of them for some of the kernels of corn.

Animals/Fox: May we have some of your delicious food?

Ants: No, there's too many of you.

Narr: The animals were all too big to fit through the crack. They decided to go to the people and ask for help.

People: Yes, we will help. We'll ask the mams, our thunder gods to break the rock with a thunderbolt.

Narr: The first three gods were unable to break the rock, but the 4th, Yaluk, the greatest of them all, finally said he would try. He asked the woodpecker to help.

Yaluk: Woodpecker, tap the rock to find the thinnest point and then hide behind the ledge. When I throw my thunderbolt, I command you not to lift your head out or you might die.

Narr: Yaluk threw the bolt of lightening and the rock broke open. Just at that moment, the woodpecker stuck his head out, was hit by some flying rock and his head began to bleed.

Woody: AAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

Narr: That is why, to this day, a woodpecker has a red head. As for Yaluk, it took so much energy to throw the thunderbolt that he fainted. The other 3 mams came and stole the unburned corn which remained white.

3 Mams: We will take all the best white corn and leave the burned red corn and the smoke covered yellow corn for Yaluk.

Narr: When Yaluk awoke, he realized what the other mams had done. He decided to punish them.

Yaluk: I will plant my red and yellow corn and it will grow into tall stalks. The others will have to plant their white corn three times before it will grow.

Narr: The three mams tried and tried but their corn produced very poor crops. This is how corn came into the world.

In the following script, students at Vieau School studied aspects of their heritage and wrote a story focusing on part of their history.

Narr: In the village of Tenochitlan, near the fountain of Poppcatepetl, The Aztecs were having a cocoa festival.

(DANCE)

Narr: A little girl left the festival to go down to the beach to wish on the moon. As she wished on the moon, a boy came along on his pet donkey. They looked out to sea and saw a big ship. So the two children ran back to the festival to tell about what they saw. Emperor Montezuma goes down to the beach to meet the strangers.

Cortez: I am Cortez!
Soldiers: And we are the Conquistadores!
Montezuma: Welcome!
Cortez: Where is your gold?
Soldiers: Where is your gold?
Montezuma: Come to the temple tomorrow and we'll give it to you.
Cortez: You better or else!
Narrators: Montezuma went back to the village.
Cortez: We will sleep on the beach
Montezuma: We're going to change history! We must fool these greedy people!
Everybody gather rocks and paint them yellow to fool the soldiers.
Narrators: The next morning,
(SUN APPEARS)
Cortez and his soldiers march into town.
Cortez: Where is the gold?
Soldiers: Where is the gold?
Aztecs: Here it is!
(THEY TAKE THE GOLD FROM THE AZTECS)
Cortez: Back to the ship!!
Soldiers: Back to the ship!
Narrators: The Aztecs go down to the beach and wave goodbye to the conquistadors!
Aztecs: Buh Bye!!
Montezuma: Now back to the festival!!

The following writing is an excerpt from a script created by two classes of 8th grade students at Vieau School. Students were broken up into groups according to activity (ex. Soccer, gossiping etc.), then worked together to create a short skit demonstrating their section of the piece.

"Those used to be the days" by Erika Lezama, Vieau School- 8th grade

The bells ring and everyone runs to the door.
Kids are noisily lining up waiting for the teacher to dismiss them
The teacher says "Go!"
Every single kid runs outside for recess
Girls are chasing the boys they're crushing on
But once they reach them they don't know what to do
So they just hit em and run away
Other kids are getting married
And most boys are playing soccer. Woooooh!
Those used to be the days
Today now that we're in 8th grade everybody tries to fit in
Everyone wants to bring up their social status in order to be remember as being "cool"
Couples finding every single moment they can be together and hold hands.
Girls usually gossiping
And guys talking about last nights game
One finds it so hard to believe how different our mentality was
Just a few years back.
But whatever everybody grows up... that's life.

The following script was created from the theme “The Future” by a student at Victory school. Although the piece is very short, it allows for many students to be involved and if desired it can also allow for creation of costumes/props.

“DinoGiraff” by Crystal Sammer, Victory School- 8th grade

There was a dinosaur that was hiding for the past 10,000 years. *(Students as dino come stomping out)*

He saw a giraffe and decided he liked her. *(Students as giraffe come out. They put their arms around each other)*

They ended up having a baby called Dinogiraffe. *(Large dinogiraffe enters)*

The baby had a big head, long neck, fat tail, medium sized tummy.

The dinogiraffe had spots on it representing how many times he got stuck in a tree branch.

This dinogiraffe looked very scary to people. *(Group of people gasps and freezes in positions of fear/terror)*

When people saw the dinogiraffe they got scared and ran for help. *(Group runs screaming away from dinogiraffe)*

Dinogiraffe got angry so he messed up the town. *(Dinogiraffe stomps around and makes loud sounds)*

The chaos caused animal control to come and catch him and they put him in a zoo.

(Animal control comes and grabs dinogiraffe’s tail and pulls him back to his initial spot)

Finally dinogiraffe found a place where he could make friends and people adored him for his unique looks. *(Group now becomes tourists who take pictures and point at dinogiraffe lovingly)*

“We Love you dinogiraffe” *(group smiles at dinogiraffe)*

The following pieces are from the Kidswrites script, “Emotions”, All of the pieces have a variety of different actions in them that allow many students to be involved in small/large groups or individually and act out the words on the page.

“The Boy with no Emotions” by Brandon Hart, Tippecanoe- 6th grade

Once upon a time there was a boy who was feeling embarrassed.

His mom just showed his baby pictures to his friends.

He wished he never had emotions so he couldn’t feel the pain of embarrassment

His mom called to him and said, “We are having burgers tonight.”

Usually the boy would be jumping for joy,

But he couldn’t,

He couldn’t feel any emotions.

His wish had come true.

He had no emotions.

He couldn’t feel angry, sad, shy, embarrassed, or love,

He would never be able to love his family.

He could never feel all the good emotions.

Happy, joyfull, hyper, thrilled.

He remembered all the times he felt the good emotions.

Right then he wished he had all of his emotions back.

Then a tear fell from his eye.

It was an emotion, sad.

Then he was jumping for joy,

He had his emotions back.

So he ran downstairs and gave all the people and things a great big hug.

He was so glad he had his emotions back.

(Then he had his burger.)

The following piece is very simple and can be left open to many interpretations when acted out. When it was performed for last year's KidsWrites show, the actors tossed around a small box (filled with cans and various items that would make noise when it was thrown) that although is not mentioned in the piece, was the vehicle to spur what the student author wrote. The actors reacted to this "scary" box and made the dialogue fit the actions.

"Fear" by Christopher Robers, Roosevelt- 6th grade

Scared
Alone
Crying for help
Run
And leave it behind
Get it away
And make
Me
Brave

Writing and performance can also be used to discuss difficult topics such as bullying found in the following piece from KidsWrites "Emotions."

"On the playground" by Greta Zimmermann, Tippecanoe- 6th grade

Walking down the playground
Happy, joyfull, and skipping.
I see the trees, the leaves, falling.
Orange, yellow, red, green, brown,
Oh the colors.
What is coming my way?
Sadness.
Nancy, the bully, calling me names
A hard, cold feeling inside.
Leaves feel like the rain,
The playground, a lonely place to me.
Anger.
Standing up to her, the bully, not hurting her,
Just telling her what I feel.
Afraid.
I stand up, but I want to sit down, twiching
I can't move!
She gives the feed back.
It was a mirical and thrilling that I, a 6th grader standing up to a bully
Had almost seemed that the stillness was just thawing away.
I tell her what I want to tell her.
I'm proud and feel empowered.
The playground is not lonely after all.
There a kids out there willing to be my friends.

Students respond well to learning information if it is in a fun and creative way. The following are a variety of raps that have been written; some in collaboration with students, some by students, and some from Skylight Artists. By giving the words a beat and some movement it makes it easier to memorize information.

United States Rap- Vieau School 4th and 5th grade students

(All)

Introduction: stamp, stamp, stamp, clap (4 times)

To learn the states in order
you don't need to find a quarter
Cuz from border to border you can visualize a map
If you listen to the words of the United States Rap

Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap- The Northeast States
Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap - The Southeast States
Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap - The Midwest States
Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap - The Southwest States
Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap - The West---- States
Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap now we're ready here we go

Room 24 - stamp, stamp, stamp, clap The Northeast States

Room 22

Maine

Vermont

New Hampshire, Massachusetts

Connecticut, Rhode Island

Let's swim back to shore cuz New England is through

Now the mid Atlantic states we're gonna list them for you

New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania

Delaware are fun

(sing) Mary had a little lannnnnnnnD. Our region now is done

Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap - The Southeast States

Room 31

Alabama, Louisiana (clap),

Florida, Kentucky

Georgia, Arkansas,

Mississsssssssipi(clap,clap) like the river

Now we're gonna go on—gonna stand and deliver

(stamp) (hands out)

North Carolina, South Carolina

Easy as can be---

West Virginia(clap)Virginia

End with Tennessee

Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap - The Midwest States

Room 39
The Great Lakes States
Illinois, Indiana,
Michigan, Minnesota
O - o - o - o hio,
Moo-----Wisconsin

The Plains States
Iowa,
Kansas,
Missouri,
Nebraska
North Dakota, South Dakota
Right next door to Minnesota
Now - we're - through ---
Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap - The Southwest States

Room 30
Te-----xas
Where the cowboys ride on the range so wide (ride your horse)
Arizo-----na, New Mex—ico,
Oklaho----ma
Where they hold the rodeo (swing rope over your head)
Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap - The West-----States

Room 24
The Mountain States
Colorado, Monta-----na,
Neva----da, Wyom-----ing,
Utah, Idaho where the tater tots grow

The Pacific States
Washington
Oregon
Ca-li-for-ni-a
Hawaii and Alaska
Play in sun or snow all day

(All)
Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap
Stamp, stamp, stamp, clap
We did the states in order
We don't need to say no more!
Clap ---- stamp!

(at the end of the show only) Be----cause we're done~~~~~!

President's Rap Created with Jack Wilson with Vieau 4th and 5th graders

Don't go to sleep,
Don't take a nap
Now we're gonna zap you with

The President's Rap!
WASHINGTON
ADAM

JEFFERSON
MADISON
MONROE
(snap snap)
AND ADAMS #2
JACKSON
(clap)
VAN BUREN
(clap)
HARRISON
TYLER
POLK
(clap)
TAYLOR #1
and MILLARD Fillmore
(breath- clap-clap-clap-slam)
PIERCE
BUCHANAN
LINCOLN wore a tall hat
JOHNSON
GRANT
And how about that?
HAYES
GARFIELD

ARTHUR CLEVELAND for the 1ST time
HARRISON and then
CLEVELAND once again
MCKINLEY
TEDDY BEAR ROOSEVELT
TAFT
WILSON
HARDING
COOLIDGE
HOOVER
F.D. ROOSEVELT
TRUMAN
The buck stops here!
EISENHOWER
KENNEDY
JOHNSON #2
NIXON FORD
CARTER the peanut butter farmer
REAGAN was a movie star
BUSH #1
CLINTON and then
BUSH the son
And now we're done,
At least for now!

"All gotta end" by Felicia Ocanas, Victory- 7th grade

Yo,
It's 2010 and it's all gotta end
All this drama has a mama on the edge
All this violence has to come to a silence
Little kids gotta gun
Cause a gang war has just begun
A man got shot,
His blood left a dot
A little girls in the hospital crying
Cause her dad just got done dying
Yo,
It's 2010 and it's all gotta end
All this drama has a mama on the edge
All this violence has to come to a complete silence.

My Heritage Rap Vieau School 4th and 5th grade students

My heritage is my history
My heritage is my identity
My heritage unlocks the mystery
Of everything that makes me who I am...

All the faces,

(1st verse- clap 4 times)

(2nd verse- lyrics fast)

All the places,

(clap 4 times)

All the people

(clap 4 times)

All the races

(clap 4 times)

Everything and everyone

That makes me who I am

My heritage is my history

My heritage is my identity

My heritage unlocks the mystery

Of everything that makes me who I am...

All the faces

All the places

All the people

All the races

Faces, places, people, races

Everything and everyone

That makes me who I am

“School Lunch” by Abigail Frias, Vieau- 8th grade

Most of the lunches we have at school are crummy

Almost none of them are yummy

Some of the things that I have to eat

Make me want to leave my seat

We sometimes have nasty chicken

And freeze pops that you might want to give a lickin’.

We always have the same thing to drink

The colors of the milk come in white, brown, and pink.

I’ve noticed that the food portions are beginning to shrink.

I’m starving here!

Doesn’t that stink?

“In the future we will...” by Sonia Grabowski, Victory- 8th grade

In the future we will be happy

In the future violence will go away

Everything is peaceful

Moms and dads are happy

Sisters and brother clapping

Everybody’s enjoying life as one family

Money don’t matter

No one gettin fatter
Exercising daily
Not having young babies
Everybody loves life
Life is so good,
Now it's no such thing
As the hood
Everybody wealthy
Ain't got no problems
Friendly neighbors
People that talk out they problems
Social health is wealthy
We living all classy
The future of 2020
Ain't going to be trashy

"Dreamz" by Jazmine Gladney, IDEAL-6th grade, KidsWrites "Dreams"

If ya got dreams you should do what ya gotta do.
Because there will always be haters that will hate on you.
I want to be a lawyer, a singer, a rapper,
People will say you won't make it
But they don't matter.
The results of a believer will make it big.
If yo show is tight
They'll get you a gig.
There will always be people who gossip about ya all over the place.
But when you make dat money
They'll be all in ya face.
So why should you give up now?
You've just begun.
Just remember the words and you'll get ya career done.
Always keep ya head up
And be proud of all the dreams you've made
Continue to dream and don't neva let it fade.
Always try your best to be to perfection
Because when you look in the mirror
You'll have a great reflection

"Lazy-Boy" by Jeremy Wodago, Morse- 7th grade, KW "World Around me"

I'm sitting in my Lazy-Boy drinking lemonade
Thinking about what I'm going to do for the next decade
I think I might sit here and watch Rocket Power.
Or go to my room and sleep for another half-an-hour
I got so little to do in so much time,
I hope no one again has to listen to this rhyme.

American Sports by Neisha Stokes, Vincent- 12th grade, TeenWrites "The News"

Sports, sports
American sports
I love the way you dribble down the courts
Basketball, football, play the game
Being a star
People know your name
You ain't gotta be good just do your best
Doing your best will bring you success
Put it in the hoop
Make a score, kick a field goal
You'll get 3 more
Basketball, football you gotta love to play
To get better just practice every day
Don't worry if you slack
You got team mates to make up what you lack
So don't forget no matter what sort
You got to love American sports.

In a project entitled "House, Home and Family" students worked in pairs to create short poems about different types of homes as found in the following pieces.

"My House" students at Victory School

Sarah Revolinski and Celina Lopez
My house is made of chocolate chips
With pool, hot tub and bar
The Mexican and Puerto Rican flag
Will cover up my car

Amy Baxter and Brittanie Smith
My house is made of candy
And tastes oh---- so sweet.
The couches are just so comfy
And the food just can't be beat

Dawood Dawood and Carl Reed
My house is made of marshmallows
I love to watch tv
And in my own home theatre,
All the movies are about me.

Marilyn Morales and Yasmin Sandoval
My house it is a big white mansion
With somewhat of a ghetto fashion
My Lamborghini is parked outside
If you want I can take you for a ride

Crystal Sammer and Tamara Deliz
My house is built of graham crackers
And a chocolate river running through
With windows made of Jolly Ranchers
Big Marshmallows that make you say ooooo

The following piece was written by a student at Vieau school. He took the beat and rhyming pattern from a familiar song ("This is why I'm hot" by rapper "Mims") and created his own lyrics. Students collaborated to create the same beat through stomps and claps as well as other movement.

"Vieau School" by Sergio Zuniga, Vieau School- 8th grade

This is why we're hot
We know how to read
We can write a paper every day of the week
We represent Vieau School
We got it on our backs
People say MPS lost
But we're going to bring it back.

We love them large textbooks
Because they show us words
The classes start to bounce
As we hit the floor
But in 8th grade
We like to take it slow
That's why we're dangerous
And carry our own swords

When we do our presentations
This is what we say
From facts to new generations
We do it everyday

But all of you know that we're fly
That you like how we dress and our style
We'll rock Vieau School from side to side
If you don't like it this is how we reply.

This is why we're hot
We know how to read
We can write a paper every day of the week
We represent Vieau School
We got it on our backs
People say MPS lost
But we're going to bring it back.

In trying to incorporate music into the classroom it is sometimes useful as a class to take preexisting songs and change/create new lyrics to learn about song writing, rhyming patterns and relate it to curriculum being studied. Another way to connect music to the curriculum is to look for popular songs in pop culture, Disney movies etc. because they sometimes have a good foundation for teaching. If a pianist isn't available most songs are easy to download through i-tunes, particularly Karaoke versions that take out the vocals and allow you to have students sing their own lyrics. The following pieces are rewrites of preexisting songs.

It's the Hard-Knock Life (from Annie) rewritten by students at Victory School

It's a hard-knock life_ for us! It's a hard-knock life_ for us!
Lots of homework, yes, it's true- More than we can ever do!
It's a hard-knock life!

All your friends say this and that, then they go and leave you flat! (that's right)
Pressure comes from everywhere, makes you feel like no one cares.
It's a hard-knock life.

(spoken)
Life is hard because sometimes you get stressed
And you just need to lay down and rest
You just have to listen to others
And no one wants to listen to their brother or their mother.

Sometimes there are people that make you mad
You always get in trouble while being bad
And then you really think that you have friends
But then they go and talk about you then the friendship ends

Won't you stop and listen to our plea,
Won't you stop and just notice me!
It's the hard-knock life, Yes, it is
It's the hard-knock life, Yes, it is
It's the hard-knock life!

Food Glorious Food (from Oliver) rewritten by students at Victory School

Everyday the lunch bell chimes and we all get into line
But they serve the same ol' food
Everyday we say a prayer, will they change bill of fare,
Still, they serve the same ol' food
There's never lobster, or shrimp to be had
Never strawberry shortcake with cream
But there's nothing to stop us from getting a thrill
When we all close our eyes and dream of

Food, glorious, food! Fried chicken and tacos,
And we're in the mood for cotton candy and nachos
Brats, hot wings and apple pie! What next is the question?
Bowls of ice cream a mile high, then indigestion?
Food, glorious, food! We're anxious to try it,
Pizza ordered *our way*, our favorite diet!
Just picture a great big steak, fries, chocolate cake too,
Oh food, wonderful food, marvelous food, glorious food!

(dance section)

Food, glorious food! What wouldn't we give for,
Great barbecued ribs, that's all that we live for
Why can't they just understand that we're all in the mood for
Food, wonderful food, fabulous food, tastier food,
Greasier food, our kind of food, -----Glo-----ri-----ous-----
food!-

A great way to introduce poetry is through group writing poetry exercises. This is done by writing the beginning of a sentence at the top of a paper such as "My dream is..." being purposefully ambiguous so that it can be interpreted many different ways, and have students either pass it around the room or set up various stations with different sentences on each paper. By the end of the class there should be a poem that incorporates all the students' ideas and voices. These pieces are very useful when creating a script to help transition from one idea to the next. The following are some examples of various group poems from KidsWrites projects.

Group Writing Prompts for the theme "The Future":

In the future...
I hope...
My goal for the world is...
A goal for myself is...
How I want to succeed is...
Tomorrow...
The Impossible Dream is...
My hope for the future is...
If I could change one thing it would be...
When I grow up...
If I never grew up...
When I think of the future I imagine...
When I'm a parent...
Life in 50 years will look like...

"My advice is..." From "Our Years at Vieau"- 8th graders

Do the best you can in school
Don't fool around a lot
Choose your friends wisely
Take water to lunch- milk isn't always enough
Stay in school and finish college
Have fun, just chill

Talk less, get good grades
Work hard and respect other people
To do your work as best you can
To be the person you really are and everything will fall into place
Don't ever give up... not even for a day
Don't use the bathrooms too often, or cover the seats
Don't cry
Or get the teachers mad
Graduate
Try your best
And always listen.
If you pay attention in school, you get better grades
Never let go of the friends you have
Play hard
Don't grow up too quick
Stay a kid for as long as you can

When trying to stage a group writing piece some ways to break up who says what, is to assign a particular student (or students) similar lines that allow them to create a character for. Example: in the following piece taken from KidsWrites "Geography" there are several lines that relate to food, so the same actor/actors would say those lines. Also, keep in mind that each line can be said by individuals, small groups, all students or one student can say the line while others act out what is being said.

"Geography is..." by Meir, Roosevelt, Fritsche, from KidsWrites "Geography"

geography is places in the world
everwhere we walk
geography is travel
the places you want to go
the world and the food
Geography is safari adventures
maps and homework
not good
Geography is study of the dirt
Geography is something that most people deal with everyday.
a nine letter word
geography is big mountains and small caves
It's rainforests and more!
people and places
different cultures
Geography is chicken all around the world
worldly adventures
it is about everything and everybody
And it is boring and lots of pepel don't like it
Geography means that guy from the Skylight makes me write about it.
fellings
like a confusing book
a hard thing to learn
the more places in the world the more places you have to shop
the whole, wide world, good, evil...wow
too much work
Geography is stuff I don't know

nobody knows
What teachers make us learn every single year
boring
but important
everything
a map
a globe
a flower
a grave
zebras
tamarin monkeys
chicken
a world of wonders
geography is me.

Student writing can also create some very interesting individual monologues and different ways of story telling as found in the next two pieces. The first piece demonstrates the same scene told from three different perspectives. The second piece is a monologue from the point of view of a struggling teen. These can provide ways to discuss different issues and a vehicle to give voice to the things they see on a daily basis.

"A Crime" by Andrew Anderson and Jeff Schneider, Morse- 7th grade from KidsWrites
"World around me"

Person #1- Victim

I was walking into school and I had no clue
Then I heard gunshots come out of the blue.
They were comin' at my head, and I had no time
Then before I knew it I was the victim of a crime

Person #2- Onlooking

I saw this kid, he got shot
The killer was some guy who was dealing pot
I wish he wouldn't of gotten hurt
He got shot 3 times right through the shirt
I didn't even know him, but I really cared
I just wish his life would have been spared.

Person #3- Killer

I don't know whether to live or die
My life's going well, but I've lost the will to try
I had to much confusion in my head that I killed a guy.
I went out and bought a gun
My dad said, "you're a disgrace, son."
All of a sudden suicide started running through my head
Before I knew it another guy was dead
And guess what,
My fingerprints are the ones they found

Before I knew it I was in prison going hellbound.

The following is a list of themes/ideas we have worked on in the past:

History/5 regions of US- Classroom Projects:

Region and time – East (Roarin’ 20s) –20s

Song – “Give My Regards to Broadway” (song and tap number)

Region and time – West (Protest) – 60s

Song – “Blowin’ in the Wind”

Region and time – Southwest – 40s or 50s

Song – “I’m an Old Cowhand”

Region and time – Midwest (Depression) 30s

Song – “Brother Can You Spare a Dime”

Region and time – Southeast – present day

Song – “What Does It Mean to Miss New Orleans”

Science- Classroom Projects:

Human Body

Play: “The Case of the Missing Chromosome”

Song: “Dry Bones” (All)

Animal Kingdoms & Ecology

Story: “Grumpy the Grizzly Bear”

Writings: “Picture a World....”

Song: “Picture a World” (All)

Great Inventions

Skit: “Young Inventors Convention”

Sound Piece: “Machine 22”

Oceans Wide

Poem: “Commotion in the Ocean”

Song: “Under the Sea” (All)

Outer Space

Skit: “The Magic School Bus Visits the Planets”

Song: “Space Rap”

Song: “Circle of Life” (All)

Native Americans- Classroom Projects:

Song: Earthchild

Intro: General introduction about Native Americans

Story: Maya “The quest for Corn” (play)

Story: Aztec- Government, Customs, Religion, Food

Song: Dream Catcher

Story: Menomonee- Historical skit

Song: Dream Catcher (small group)

My dream.... (group writing)

Dream Catcher (round)

Story: Oneida- Bear, Turtle, Wolf Clan skits

Story: Info and short skits on various tribes

Song: Native American Rap

POETRY WRITING ACTIVITIES

Reading:

Read poetry aloud. Find song lyrics, or ask students to bring in lyrics that could be read as a monologue. Musical theatre lyrics are a good example of a character's thoughts turned into a song.

Poetry grab bag

Each student gets 25 small pieces of paper. Ask each student to write five nouns, five adjectives, five verbs, five emotions, and five sounds, one on each slip of paper. Throw each category of words into five separate containers. Each student draws five from each container that they must arrange into a poem or poems.

Geography slam:

Review some of the different elements of geography (i.e. food, clothing, terrain) and have students write a poem that includes at LEAST 3 of those elements in it.

STORYWRITING ACTIVITIES

Free write/Stream of consciousness/Free association:

This is a good beginning for creative writing. Tell the students they will write for a set time. They should write anything, nonstop. Keep their pen or pencil on the paper, no time to pause and think, edit or correct. Often, people hold themselves back, develop writers block by telling themselves no rather than letting the ideas flow uncensored. Announce a topic the students must write about for a limited time, say 5 minutes. Encourage the students to write nonstop without judging their writing, to let ideas flow. They can edit, and correct later, but encourage them to be spontaneous and not hold back about anything they might want to write about.

Story building exercises:

You will need plain paper, markers, pencil or crayons in addition to lined paper and a writing utensil. Students will practice creating a character and a place through descriptive language. Students should be given the list of ideas to consider when creating their character (found below) and should write a description of who their character is. When they have completed their character writing they will trade what they have written with another student.

Each student will then take the description given and draw a picture of what they see in their head according to what is described in the writing of their classmate. Instruct students to write a picture that their reader can see as they read their writing. This will help them to understand how to be clearer in their writing so that others will be able to understand the real point and essence of what they wanted to create. The exercise can be repeated for the description of a place. For both of these exercises encourage students to think outside the box, and come up with characters and places that don't exist and are very different from who THEY are.

You can also have the students read their writing to the class, and discuss the differences and similarities in their writing. How many characters did they come up with that were almost the same thing? How many were really different than all the other characters, and how were they different? Encourage the students to think outside of themselves. Be original –No Bugs Bunny or other already created characters. Those are other people's ideas, not their own.

Start with a character

Invent and describe the character and consider these points:

- Age
- Gender
- Job or what they do (student, mother, doctor, Martian)
- Where they live
- Mood/Emotional state
- Name
- Likes/dislikes
- Anything else important that we should know about the person

Start with a setting

Imagine a place, real or invented. Using your five senses, describe the place.

- Give specific details using sensory imagery. If you are describing what the rainforest is like, think about what you might smell, or hear, touch and see. Do you hear birds or insects?
- Include any other details that might be important in describing your “place”

Group Activity: Grab Bag

You will need 3 pieces of paper for each student and 3 containers- hats, small boxes, buckets, whatever. On each piece of paper, the students will write a place, a character and an object. (The object must be school appropriate i.e. no guns, drugs, alcohol etc.) Put all the places in one container, all the characters in another container and all the objects in a third container. Each student then pulls a paper from each container, and writes a poem or short story using their three papers. When writing is completed divide students into small groups and have them read their stories to each other. Each group will then select a story to perform to the class.