

Teaching Ideas

Using *Beginnings IV*

Several suggestions for using the writing found in *Beginnings IV* follow. These ideas may encourage you to do more than simply read the forceful pieces of writing contained in the book.

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- O As you read each piece, make notes about what makes the writing powerful. If you are working in a group, share your ideas with each other. Draw some group conclusions about the things writers can do to add strength and power to their drafts. Then work with a draft of your own writing to make it more powerful.
- O As you read each piece, decide who the intended reader or listener is. Share your ideas in a small group. Can you make any generalizations about writing with an audience in mind?
- O Use Bleich's Heuristic (NOTE: [Link here](#)) as a way to respond to a particular piece of writing. To do this, think and make written notes about these three questions:
 1. How did this piece affect me?
 2. What did the author do to prompt this reaction? What in my own background prompted the reaction?
 3. What do I think is the most important word (or for longer pieces, sentence or paragraph) in this piece? Why do I think so?

If you are working in a group with others who have also read the particular piece, share your ideas.
- O Find two or three longer pieces in the book. As you read them, make notes about the interesting or important words that the authors used. Then look at this list of words or jot them down on small scraps of paper. Organize them and draw some conclusions about effective vocabulary. If you are working with others, share your ideas.
- O Several of the pieces in this book evoke powerful images of places (pp. 3, 71, and 82). Read them. Then analyze them. What do they have in common? How do they differ? What are the qualities of an effective description of a place? You might want to organize your thoughts using a Venn Diagram (NOTE: [Link here](#)).

Finally, use your conclusions to develop your own description of a place that is meaningful to you.

- O "Copy change" is a writing activity that involves using another author's framework for your own writing. To do a copy change, you use the other author's general format, but you insert your own ideas. The diamantes (pp. 77 and 81), the description of refurbishing old cars (a hobby; see p. 93), or the story told from newspaper clippings (see p. 56) can be used for copy change writing.
- O "Found Poems" make use of powerful phrases found elsewhere, such as in newspaper or magazine advertisements. Read and analyze the "found poem" on p. 91. Then try it yourself. First, think of a topic for your poem. Then look through magazine and newspaper ads; TV commercials might be another good source. Make a list of powerful or catchy phrases that relate to your topic. Finally, organize them into a poem.
- O Read the essays in this volume (see pp. 9, 19, 39, 72, 85, and 93). As you read, make notes about how the authors organized their essays. What belongs in the first paragraph, for example? The middle paragraphs? The concluding paragraph? How do authors decide when to begin a new paragraph? Use what you have learned about the organization of essays to revise of your own essays.

If you are interested in reading *Beginnings IV* or the three *Beginnings* books from previous years on the OLRC website, just follow these brief directions.

1. Type in the address: <http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/beginnings.html>
2. Once you are at the website, click on the *Beginnings* book of interest. *Beginnings IV* is 2001.
3. Once this page appears, you can select either the book (click on "Table of Contents") or photographs from that year's Ohio Writers' Conference. Enjoy!