

Professional Resources

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59 Reasons to Write: Mini-Lessons, Prompts, and Inspiration for Teachers

by Kate Messner

Stenhouse Publishers, 2015

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Writing wisdom abounds in this collection of well-curated lessons and reflections from the popular online writing camp, Teachers Write.

The process of writing is messy, time-consuming and often filled with self-doubt. It requires feedback, dedication and community to write well. Exposure to books of all kinds is one of the joys of teaching and over time, some educators find they want to immerse themselves in this world, looking for opportunities which can help promote better communication within their field, ultimately improve student writing and grant them the pure joy of getting the right combination of words on the page.

59 Reasons to Write arose out of this desire. In the spring of 2012, Jen Vincent, an educator who is active on Twitter (@MentorTexts) and a prolific educational blogger (www.teachmentortexts.com), commented that she wanted to focus on her own writing and wished there was a support group to help her. Kate Messner thought a “fun, free, and super-casual... online summer writing camp for teachers and librarians” would be a great idea.

Messner was the perfect person to initiate this group. She had been a middle school English teacher for fifteen years before she became a

professional author and knew the demands of teaching. She has also published over twenty texts in all areas of children’s fiction in the last six years alone. The extremely successful #TeachersWrite was born. A measure of the success of the program? Over 2500 educators have participated in this online program, primarily through Messner’s blog (www.katemessner.com).

59 Reasons to Write is a celebration of the best of the Teachers Write program. In a typical week in Teachers Write you warm-up on Mondays with author, Jo Knowles. You explore “new ideas or extend a Work In Progress” on Tuesdays and Thursdays by participating in mini-lessons hosted by current authors. On Q & A Wednesdays you get to ask authors the questions you’ve always wanted to ask and Friday is the time

for feedback. Gae Polisner’s blog is the place to post your own writing for critique from authors and participants. You could fill a Pinterest board with the mini-lessons and nuggets of wisdom dispersed in one week alone.

Luckily, you don’t have to. Messner has taken 59 of the very best posts, mini-lessons and prompts and organized them into this worthwhile book. Each chapter focusses on an aspect of writing like Organizing, Characters, Setting, Plot and Pacing, providing us with lessons from published authors that educators can take away and use in their classes. Every chapter also included various Q & A responses from those authors on the technicalities of particular aspects of the craft of writing.

Dream of developing your own writing skills, want more confidence when writing blog posts or online newsletters to communicate with parents and professionals, or just want to provide your students with the wisdom of real writers? *59 Reasons to Write* is for you, and if you enjoy it, give Teachers Write 2016 as whirl!

School Library Makerspaces: Grades 6 – 12

by Leslie B. Preddy

Libraries Unlimited, 2013

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An essential acquisition for those interested in setting up and exploring a wide variety of hands-on activities for makerspaces.

In a time when schools are focusing on raising test scores, it is important to engage all of our students with their

