If you want to learn how to shoot a basketball, you begin by carefully observing someone who knows how to shoot a basketball. If you want to be a writer, you begin by carefully observing the work of accomplished writers. Recognizing the importance that modeling plays in the learning process, high school English teacher Kelly Gallagher shares how he gets his students to carefully observe the work of model writers, and how doing so elevates his students' writing abilities.

*Write Like This* is built around a central premise: if students are to grow as writers, they need to read good writing, they need to study good writing, and, most important, they need to emulate good writers.

In *Write Like This*, Kelly emphasizes real-world writing purposes, the kind of writing he wants his students to be doing twenty years from now. Each chapter focuses on a specific discourse: express and reflect, inform and explain, evaluate and judge, inquire and explore, analyze and interpret, and take a stand/propose a solution. In teaching these lessons, Kelly provides mentor texts (professional samples as well as models he has written in front of his students), student writing samples, and numerous assignments and strategies proven to elevate student writing.

By helping teachers bring effective modeling practices into their classrooms, *Write Like This* enables students to become better adolescent writers. More important, the practices found in this book will help our students develop the writing skills they will need to become adult writers in the real world.

Kelly Gallagher, a full-time English teacher at Magnolia High School in Anaheim, California, has been teaching high school for twenty-five years and writing about how to effectively teach reading and writing for almost as long. Kelly's titles include *Readicide*, *Reading Reasons*, *Deeper Reading*, and *Teaching Adolescent Writers*. He is also featured in a number of videos, including *Building Adolescent Readers*, *Improving Adolescent Writers*, *Twenty Questions Homework*, and *Article of the Week*. Kelly is the former codirector of the South Basin Writing Project at California State University at Long Beach. Keep up with Kelly at www.kellygallagher.org and follow Kelly on Twitter: @KellyGtoGo.
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Introduction

Author Kelly Gallagher shares strategies that will elevate student writing and prepare secondary students for writing tasks required in the real world. Using mentor texts (professional samples as well as models he has written in front of his students), Kelly provides engaging ways to teach secondary students how to express and reflect, inform and explain, evaluate and judge, inquire and explore, analyze and interpret, and take a stand/propose a solution.
Chapter 1: Moving Writing to the Front Burner

This chapter explains why and how teachers must center effective writing instruction in real-world writing purposes.

Quote to Ponder

*Students who are taught how to write without being taught the real-world purposes behind authentic writing are much more likely to end up seeing writing as nothing more than a school activity—nothing more than a series of obstacles to overcome in order to pass the state test or to get to graduation. . . . When students see why writing is important in a post–high school world, they are more likely to give writing the time and attention it deserves (7–8).*

Suggested Activities

- Review the example of the exam given to candidates for the California Highway Patrol on pages 1–2. With your colleagues, brainstorm other examples of writing required to gain and keep meaningful employment. Discuss how you could share these examples with students on a regular basis, giving them exposure to various professions and establishing the context for real-world purposes behind authentic writing.

- Reflect on Kelly’s comment that “of all the strategies I have learned in my twenty-five years of teaching, no strategy improves my students’ writing more than having my students watch and listen to me as I write and think aloud. None” (15). Discuss your experiences of writing and sharing your own writing with your students. If you have not yet done so or have had a negative experience in the past, share your vulnerabilities and ask the group for suggestions. As a group, ask a colleague who is comfortable with modeling to demonstrate a few quick-writes for different writing purposes.
Chapter 2: Express and Reflect

This chapter helps teachers understand the differences between expressive and reflective writing and how to convey those distinctions to students through authentic tasks.

Quote to Ponder

*The teacher is the best writer in the room (that's you and me); therefore, it is critical that the best writer in the room models the confusion, the messiness, the stopping and starting, the hesitation that comes with trying to compose* (33).

Suggested Activities

- Review the comparison chart of expressive and reflective writing that Kelly shares on page 25. Discuss the differences between expressive and reflective writing, and share any disagreements or questions.
- In this chapter, Kelly shares twenty-two activities that he uses with students to move them from purely expressive writing to reflective writing, which “moves beyond recounting the past; it brings new insight to the writer” (24). Choose at least two of the activities to practice with your students and schedule a time to share the experiences with your colleagues.
- With the group or your team, brainstorm additions to the sample activities provided in the book.
Chapter 3: Inform and Explain

Whether enumerating details about poor service on a recent airline trip or listing instructions for the babysitter, we routinely need the ability to inform and explain through writing. In this chapter, Kelly shares a range of practical activities to help students understand why writing to inform and explain is a necessary skill in high school and beyond.

Quote to Ponder

*If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.*

—Albert Einstein

Suggested Activities

- Using the Rick Reilly piece in Figure 3.1 as an example, choose a mentor text to show your students how to turn a simple list of suggestions into a literary essay. Make sure that your selection has a clear point of view and speaks to a topic relevant to teenagers. Model your writing for students, and then ask them to draft their own versions.

- Choose a content standard that you are responsible for addressing (such as the Common Core State Standards ELA-Literacy standard for Grades 9–10: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content) and develop a practical writing activity for your students. If you are reading this book as part of a collegial study, choose different standards and activities and then share your creations with one another.
Chapter 4: Evaluate and Judge

How do we teach students to critically evaluate information and use it to navigate their cultural world as well as make deeper literacy connections? Start with comparison-shopping exercises, move students through other evaluative writing, and then help them flow between the work of school and the world beyond.

Quote to Ponder

. . . [I]t is the very teaching of how to evaluate literature that sharpens our students’ ability to evaluate more important, real-world elements (113).

Suggested Activities

• To help students understand the importance of critical reading and reasoning, start a class discussion about how too-casual reading caused them problems. Examples could be wide ranging, such as missing an appointment because they ignored the details of a note on the kitchen table, losing the chance to get a product refund because they didn’t carefully read the store’s sales policy, or getting a lousy test grade because they answered questions before fully reviewing the directions. Then, choose one or more of the exercises in the chapter to help them develop good judgment.

• In this chapter, Kelly shares, “It is modeling revision—taking a rough draft and moving it to a better place—that is critical if our students are to sharpen their writing skills” (95). Building on the classroom work with modeling that you practiced from Chapter 3, share with students your efforts to improve the “stuff” of your own evaluative writing. Choose a method to make the changes visible to students to help them understand that “rewriting is where good papers emerge” (95).
Chapter 5: Inquire and Explore

Exploratory writing “is used as a vehicle to learn and to think” (118). In this chapter, Kelly urges teachers to build better writers by helping students use writing to answer their questions, pursue their interests, or challenge conventional thinking.

Quote to Ponder

“If we want our students to develop into deeper thinkers, we must move them beyond the kind of writing that is used to simply check surface-level comprehension and have them extend their thinking in writing activities that encourage inquiry and exploration” (117).

Suggested Activities

- Using the “Burning Questions” activity on pages 126–127 as an example, ask students to choose their favorite pastime or hobby (sports, video games, playing an instrument, and so on). On a single sheet of paper with a simple two-column format, ask them to write down all the burning questions they have about the topic in the left-hand column. Set a sixty-second timer to keep the pace quick. Then, have them swap papers and ask partners to write questions about their peer’s first questions in the right-hand column. The goal is to help each student think more deeply about the topic. For example, a question seeking clarification might mean more information or explanation is needed. A question indicating curiosity might encourage the first student to provide more details to satisfy the interest. Keep this response process to sixty seconds as well. Afterward, let the two partners discuss the questions for several minutes and then give each student five more minutes to refine a topic for an exploratory writing exercise.

- Collect an assortment of resources with “Can You Believe It?” themes. (Ask a librarian for help.) Choices might include Ripley’s Believe It or Not!, Discover magazine, research from www.snopes.com, or excerpts from the Smithsonian Channel. Give students time to review and chat about the discoveries and then collate a list of the most memorable ones on the whiteboard or computer. Ask students to write a series of two-minute radio scripts about the factoids that they can record and post to a podcast.
Chapter 6: Analyze and Interpret

Recognizing how writing can evolve from simple summarization to rich analysis and interpretation can strengthen students’ thinking and writing skills and enable them to make deeper connections as readers.

Quote to Ponder

"Teaching students how to analyze and interpret literature should be seen as a starting point. If we are really going to develop our students’ ability to think, we need to move them beyond the literature and give them ample opportunities to analyze and interpret the real world." (172–173)

Suggested Activities

• In this chapter, Kelly provides a framework for moving students into analysis and interpretation, from reading nursery rhymes to making more sophisticated literary probes. Using the following chart, note the different genre and skills development that he offers. Then, in the third column, determine how you could adapt these for your classroom, linking analytical reading and writing with both practical and literacy aims.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENRE/FORMAT</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>CONNECTIONS TO MY CLASSROOM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURSERY RHYMES</td>
<td>• Making plausible interpretations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading actual interpretations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHARTS</td>
<td>• Analyzing and interpreting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Using metaphors</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PHOTOS/PAINTINGS</td>
<td>• Learning to look deeply</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Moving past first drafts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stating a claim</td>
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<tr>
<td>POETRY/PROSE</td>
<td>• Analyzing written texts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Reading for meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESSAYS</td>
<td>• Comparing and contrasting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reinterpreting writing</td>
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</table>

• With your teaching team or collegial study group, analyze some questions from your recent class tests. Each participant can share examples. Identify simple “What?” questions and brainstorm ways to turn them into “How?” and “Why?” questions that will help students become deeper thinkers. If you included some good “How?” and “Why?” questions on your tests, discuss how you layered the learning for students to prepare them for these types of questions. How well did they do?

• Choose one or more of the dozen writing ideas to sharpen students’ analytical and interpretation skills, which Kelly offers starting on page 152, and practice with your classes. Share the results at your next gathering.
This chapter shares strategies to help students consider multiple perspectives when writing. Understanding counterarguments is essential to good argumentation writing and encourages students not to rush to an opinion before they have thoroughly considered the other side of an issue.

**Quote to Ponder**

*It’s hard work, but having my students stand next to me and watch how I write has elevated their writing more than any other strategy I have employed in the classroom. “I go, then you go” works (200).*

**Suggested Activities**

- With your colleagues, discuss your most successful experience with getting students to develop writing stamina. If you have not been successful, what professional development would help you?
- Review the four-part response on page 195 that Kelly uses with his students to help them organize problem-solution essays. How could you use this strategy to avoid getting stacks of “stilted, five-paragraph essays” from your students, which contributes to a form of inauthentic writing that Kelly says makes him “want to jump off a bridge” (200)?
Chapter 8: Polishing the Paper

Moving students from a “one-and-done” mentality to understanding why and how good writers repeatedly revise their work to improve it may be one of the biggest instructional challenges for teachers. In this chapter, Kelly shares strategies to help all students learn how to do purposeful editing.

Quote to Ponder

*I* t is imperative that we teach our students that revision means much more than fixing capitalization and punctuation, and that skillful editing can actually add power to their writing (222).

Suggested Activities

- With your colleagues, discuss challenges you have faced when teaching students good revision skills. Be vulnerable enough to acknowledge gaps in your own understanding about techniques that sharpen and improve writing as it moves through multiple drafts. If you are not comfortable modeling the revision process with your students, ask a respected colleague to demonstrate effective strategies, either to you alone or to your larger collegial group. You might also set up a series of classroom observations so you can see firsthand how teachers can effectively model paper-polishing methods for students.

- Review Kelly’s Sentence of the Week Checklist, beginning on page 217. Choose some of the strategies that Kelly uses to sharpen students’ revision skills and try them with your students. Collect and review samples of student work at your next team or grade-level meeting.
Chapter 9: The Wizard of Oz Would Have Been a Lousy Writing Teacher

In this chapter, Kelly reviews and reflects on his ten core beliefs about the teaching of writing.

Quote to Ponder

*Our students don’t need the best writer in their classrooms to assign writing; they need the best writer in their classrooms to sit smack dab in the middle of those rooms and model the wrestling match we go through to produce worthwhile writing* (225).

Suggested Activities

- Many teachers who grew up writing and assigning five-paragraph essays believe they must uphold this tradition with their students. In contrast, Kelly’s Core Belief 5 is that “there is no such thing as a five-paragraph essay” (230). Using Figure 9.1 as a reference point, discuss with your colleagues whether it would be more valuable to focus on the purpose and essential components of essay writing than to strictly adhere to the five-paragraph structure.

- Take time to craft the core beliefs that serve as the philosophical underpinnings of your writing instruction. Periodically revisit the beliefs throughout the year, noting without judgment when you have strayed from your approach and reflecting on how you can get back on course. Consider sharing your list with a mentor or respected colleague, and discuss strategies for improving your writing instruction.