

# #agoodtimetowrite

## Resources to Write Bravely From Anywhere (Grades 1-8)

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*"No matter what...you can spill your thoughts and feelings onto paper."  
– Pretty S., 826 Valencia, Grade 10*

Welcome Teachers, Families, and Students,

Our communities, classrooms, and learning routines have shifted in significant ways in response to COVID-19. **826 is here to support you.** We've developed this collection of handouts and resources, adaptable for students in grades 1-8, to support and engage young writers at home. They all come from [826 Digital](#), our platform for educators that features more resources to ignite a love of writing.

Now is the time to write and create. Using your pencils, pens, markers, and keyboards, you can imagine new worlds, build understanding and empathy, and make change. Whether you publish a zine, invent a miracle elixir, or dream a new school, we believe this is a good time to write. Join us!

### What's Inside

This packet includes a collection of handouts followed by excerpts from their accompanying lessons. Handouts can also be used as standalone activities!

Follow the link to see the original lesson on [826 Digital](#).

You can also enjoy the words of young writers across the 826 Network in our [Student Writing Gallery](#).

- 1. Recipe Zines Template**
  - Students create their own zine that features a creative recipe.
  - From the Spark [Recipe Zines](#)
- 2. All About You Brochures**
  - Students draft, organize, and create brochures that feature themselves.
  - From the Project [All About Your Brochures](#)
- 3. Identity Poem Templates**
  - Students start identity-themed poetry with these poem templates.
  - From the Lesson [Write with Pride](#)

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## Resources to Write Bravely From Anywhere (Grades 1-8)

4. **Invent a Miracle Elixir Handout**
  - Students invent an elixir that magically addresses an identified issue.
  - From the Lesson [Miracle Elixir: Inventing Potions To Cure Baldness And Other Things the World Needs Right Now](#)
5. **Dream Schools Brainstorm Guide**
  - Students dream up a design for a new school or learning space.
  - From the Project [Dream Schools](#)
6. **Setting-O-Matic Handout**
  - Students create their own detailed setting and imagine how that place came to be.
  - From the Spark [Setting-O-Matic](#)
7. **Character-O-Matic**
  - Students imagine fears and desires of a character for their next story.
  - From the Spark [Character-O-Matic Protagonist & Antagonist](#)
8. **Fairy Tale Tweets Handout**
  - Students take on the persona of a fairy tale character and tell their story in 700 words.
  - From the Lesson [#Teamwolf: Writing Fairytales For Twitter](#)

### About #agoodtimetowrite

Writing is an act of joy and freedom. As our communities take to their homes to mitigate the further spread of Coronavirus, 826 National is bringing together young writers and some of their fiercest champions online. We believe now is a good time to write, so we're providing new writing opportunities and encouragement through 826 Digital and beyond. Let's take care and write on.

To learn more about 826 National, The 826 National Network, and #agoodtimetowrite visit us at [826national.org](http://826national.org)

### About 826 Digital

826 Digital is an online platform for educators that makes the 826 approach to teaching writing possible anywhere in the world. By providing adaptable, standards-based resources—designed to captivate young writers and empower their educators—826 Digital aims to reach students everywhere, whether they are aspiring authors or reluctant writers. All content is developed and field-tested by educators, volunteers, and students affiliated with the 826 Network. The platform's pay-what-you-wish accessibility is made possible in large part by the generosity of supporters.

Head to [826digital.com](http://826digital.com) to sign up and ignite a love of writing.

psst...remember measurements!

What makes up \_\_\_\_\_?  
LIST YOUR INGREDIENTS!

Now, sketch your ingredients!



STEP 3

STEP 2

STEP 1

Ready to get cooking?  
Put your directions here:



STEP 6

STEP 5

STEP 4

# Recipe for

\_\_\_\_\_

A CREATIVE RECIPE ZINE  
BY: \_\_\_\_\_

## Word Bank

### Strong Verbs

sprinkle...roast...whip...pour...

### Measurements

pinch...tablespoon...¾ cup...

### Sizzling Adjectives

fiery...rich...crunchy...gooey...

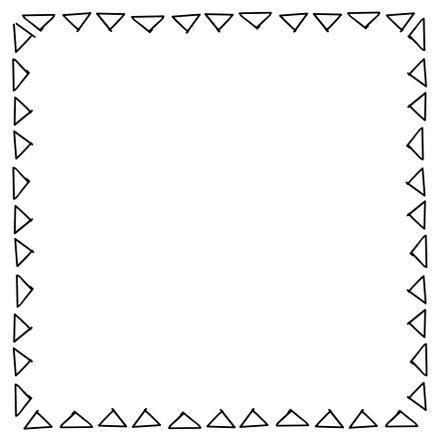
Imagine you're the host of a brand new cooking show!

NAME YOUR SHOW:

\_\_\_\_\_

WHAT TYPES OF RECIPES WOULD YOU SHARE?

Draw a portrait of your finished product:



\* It's a masterpiece!

# Brochures to Showcase YOU!

Directions: Think about your life, and what parts you would want to include in a brochure of everything you.

## **Brainstorm: Sections for Your Brochure**

Think about sections that you might want to include in your brochure to give people an idea about what makes you, uniquely you! Brainstorm with your tutors and your teammates, or use some of the listed examples!

After you have brainstormed, CIRCLE SIX IDEAS TO USE AS SECTIONS FOR YOUR BROCHURE.

*About the Author*  
*Favorite places to visit or go*  
*10 Things you may not know about me*  
*Favorite foods/restaurants*  
*My neighborhood/where I grew up*  
*Favorite books/movies*  
*When I grow up, I want...*

## **Section 1: About the Author**

What is your personal history? What do you want people to know about what makes you special? What is your background? Do you want to mention your school, family, interests, or favorite activities?

# Brochures to Showcase YOU!

## Section 2: Ten Things You Might Not Know About Me

What makes you unique or special? What makes you different from other kids? This could include interesting facts, things you want to accomplish, special skills, games you play, nicknames, or anything else!

10.
9.
8.
7.
6.
5.
4.
3.
2.
1.

# Brochures to Showcase YOU!

## Section 3: Favorites

What is your personal history? What do you want people to know about what makes you special? What is your background? Do you want to mention your school, family, interests, or favorite activities?

<p><b>Favorite Places to Go or Visit</b> <i>What are your favorite locations and places to visit in San Francisco? Where do you love going? Be sure to describe the place and explain why you like it so much!</i></p>	<p><b>Favorite Foods and Restaurants</b> <i>What is your favorite food? Tell about your favorite type of food, snack, favorite restaurant, favorite meal, or favorite food. Be as descriptive as possible!</i></p>	<p><b>Favorite Books or Movies</b> <i>What is your favorite book? Why? What movies do you like to see? What music do you listen to? Do you have a favorite video game? Be sure to explain why!</i></p>

# Brochures to Showcase YOU!

## Section 4: Something That Might Surprise You To Learn About My

Neighborhood/Family: What is something that makes your neighborhood different than other cities? What is an interesting thing that not everybody knows about where you live or go to school?

## Section 5: The Future

What do you want to be when you grow up? What do you want to happen around you? What would you wish if you could have any wish you wanted?

*Now that you are finished planning, you can start the final draft of your brochure!*

COLUMN 2: Behind Column 1

Picture of your favorite place:

Favorite Places to Visit:

COLUMN 6: Back of Brochure

My Favorite Books or Movies:

When I Grow Up, I Want To...

COLUMN 1: Front of Brochure

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

About the Author:

Self Portrait:

COLUMN 3: Inside Left Column

Ten Things You Might Not Know About Me:

- 10.
- 9.
- 8.
- 7.
- 6.
- 5.
- 4.
- 3.
- 2.
- 1.

COLUMN 4: Inside Middle Column

Favorite Foods/Restaurants

Food Photo:

COLUMN 5: Inside Right Column

Something that might surprise you to learn about my family or my neighborhood:

# Portrait Poem

Template from "8 Portrait Poems and Examples" by Art Belliveau.

I am \_\_\_\_\_.

First name

Son/Daughter of (or brother/sister of...) \_\_\_\_\_.

Who needs \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Who loves \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Who sees \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Who hates \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Who fears \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Who dreams of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Who has found poems of \_\_\_\_\_.

Resident of \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

Last name

# I Am Poem

I AM Poem

## FIRST STANZA

I am (two special characteristics you have)  
I wonder (something you are actually curious about)  
I hear (an imaginary sound)  
I see (an imaginary sight)  
I want (an actual desire)  
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

## SECOND STANZA

I pretend (something you actually pretend to do)  
I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)  
I touch (an imaginary touch)  
I worry (something that really bothers you)  
I cry (something that makes you very sad)  
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

## THIRD STANZA

I understand (something you know is true)  
I say (something you believe in)  
I dream (something you actually dream about)  
I try (something you really make an effort about)  
I hope (something you actually hope for)  
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

# Just Because Poem

Just Because... \_\_\_\_\_

Just because I'm \_\_\_\_\_

Doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_

Doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_

And doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_

Just because \_\_\_\_\_

Doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_

Doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_

Doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_

Just because \_\_\_\_\_

Doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_

Doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_

Doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_

Just because \_\_\_\_\_

(Question) \_\_\_\_\_

(Question) \_\_\_\_\_

(Question) \_\_\_\_\_

(Statement) \_\_\_\_\_

# I Am From...

*Adapted by Levi Romero and inspired by "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon.*

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (an everyday item in your home) from \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_ (products or everyday items in your home) I am from the  
\_\_\_\_\_ (description of your home) \_\_\_\_\_ (a  
detail about your home – a smell, taste, or feel) I am from the \_\_\_\_\_ (plant,  
flower, natural item) The \_\_\_\_\_ (plant or tree near your home) whose  
long gone limbs I remember as if they were my own. I'm from \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_ (a family tradition and family trait) from \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_ (family members) I'm from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
(family habits) and from \_\_\_\_\_. (family habit) I'm from \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_ (things you were told as a child) and \_\_\_\_\_ (a  
song or saying you learned as a child) I'm from \_\_\_\_\_ (a family tradition)  
I'm from \_\_\_\_\_ (place of birth) and \_\_\_\_\_ (family ancestry, nationality or place)  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (family foods) From  
\_\_\_\_\_ (a story about a family member)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (detail about the story or person) \_\_\_\_\_  
(description of family momentos, pictures or treasures) \_\_\_\_\_ (location of  
momentos – under my bed, on the wall, in my heart)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (more description if needed).

# Miracle Elixir

## What is it?

What's the biggest problem that the world is facing?

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Whose lives are affected by this problem?

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What will happen if no one fixes this problem?

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Why do you care about this problem?

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**Inventor's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Product name

What's the name of your product?

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## How do you use it?

Write down instructions on how to use the elixir. Who should use the elixir?

**Usage:**

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**For:**

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## What's in it?

Write a list of ingredients for your miracle elixir.

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# Imagining BRAND NEW design for schools!

1. Using your experiences at your school, or other school that you have been to before, list some things that you notice about **what schools usually look like?**

- *Hint: What do you see in classrooms? What do you notice about how your school is organized? What do you see on the walls? What about other schools? What did you see when walk into any of the entrances? What would you expect in a space that is meant for students to learn?*

Outside of school/spaces within schools	Classrooms
Cafeteria	Bookshelves

2. In your group, list some ideas about what are some elements and important things you would want to include in the **design of your new school.**

- *Hint: What if your school had a room just for writing? What other things do kids need to learn? Do kids need desks and classrooms? What about a play area? What about a garden? What would you want to see if you could imagine anything in this new school you are designing? What elements would make a school helpful for students who visit? What would you need if you were a student in this new school?*

# Imagining BRAND NEW design for schools!

3. In your group, list some ideas about what you would want to be **a part the classrooms/learning spaces** in your brand new school design.

- *Hint: What would make a classroom awesome? What would you want to see if you could imagine anything the learning spaces of your new school? What elements would make a classroom helpful for students? What would you need if you were a student at this school?*



4. On the next piece of paper, draw what your new school could look like. Be sure to include **captions to explain all of the awesome designs you are adding!**

# Setting-O-Matic

**Name:**

**(What is this place called?)**

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**Pick a specific location that this story will take place.**

**(Example: A submarine, a cave, ancient ruins, etc.)**

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**Use the five senses to describe what this place is like.**

**(Example: A rusty, miniature submarine that constantly smells of rotten eggs and is filled with framed portraits of fluffy kittens in teacups.)**

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**Give us a few details about the LARGER world this story's setting is within.  
(Is this submarine on Earth? Beneath Chicago? On a distant planet far, far away?)**

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**What are the rules/boundaries of this world?  
Do inhabitants have magical powers? Are there inherent dangers to this world?**

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**What sort of people/creatures live in this world? What are their daily lives like?**

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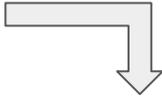
# Character-O-Matic

Age:

Name:

Where do they live?

Write 3 adjectives that describe your character



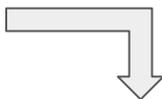
Character description circle

Character secrets box

Your character's SECRETS



Your character's DESIRES



Character desires box

Character fears circle

Your character's FEARS



# Fairy Tale Characters In 700 Characters

Fairy tales are stories that have what is called “longevity” – even though they were first written and told many years ago, their lessons are still interesting to people in modern times.

What would the characters in these fairy tales say if they could use Twitter? Re-tell the story of the fairy tale in five Tweets or fewer.

**Things to remember:**

- One Tweet = 140 characters, or two short sentences.
- Hashtags are a way of sorting Tweets and adding humor to your writing. **You must use at least two hashtags** in your five Tweets. We’ve suggested a few, but feel free to use your imagination!
- Vibrant word choices will help you write concise Tweets.

The fairy tale I am retelling is:

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The character I am portraying is:

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My character’s Twitter handle would be:

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*(A Twitter handle identifies each user on Twitter. Examples: @BeanstalkJack, @TheRealCinderella, @BigBadWolf\_05. You may use numbers and letters in your Twitter handle.)*

**My Character’s Tweets:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Fairy Tale Characters In 700 Characters (Continued)

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Fairy Tale Characters In 700 Characters (Continued)

5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### When You've Finished Re-telling The Story:

A Twitter bio is an opportunity for a Twitter user to tell the world something interesting about who he or she is. It is also limited to 140 characters, or two short sentences. You may use hashtags and other users' Twitter handles in your bio.

### Example: @TheRealCinderella

#Princess #TheGoodSister #NeatFreak Just a girl who met my @PrinceCharming. BFFs: @Rapunzel @TheSleepingBeauty @SnowWhitest

My character's Twitter bio would be:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\* SPARK

# Recipe Zines

GRADES 3–8

**TYPE**  
INFORMATIONAL  
NARRATIVE  
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL  
LEARNING

With a little folding and loads of creativity, students make their own zines that feature abstract recipes.

## WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN

Students will produce and publish a zine featuring a creative recipe. They'll consider ingredients that make up themselves, their family, or their community, provide step-by-step directions, and write with strong verbs and adjectives.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Recipe Zine Template — Handout (print one for each student)
- Scissors
- Pens, colored pencils, markers, etc.
- Collage materials and glue stick (optional)

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

This zine-making Spark asks students to consider a central question: what makes you, you?

Students will create zines that feature creative recipes. They can choose to write a recipe of themselves, their community, their family — or something else altogether.

If students are new to the wide world of zines, it may be

helpful to grab a few examples beforehand or show a few versions online. We recommend this [introduction to zines](#) from YA author Celia C. Pérez. Remind students that they'll be using a zine template today, but it is just a starting point. If they'd like to start with a blank piece of paper instead of the template, tell them to go for it! As Pérez writes, "There are no set-in-stone rules for making zines...Making a zine is all about self-expression and creativity."

Next, walk through the directions for folding and cutting their mini-zine. You could [watch a video](#) of how it's done, or model the process following the directions below, from [Umami Design Studio](#):

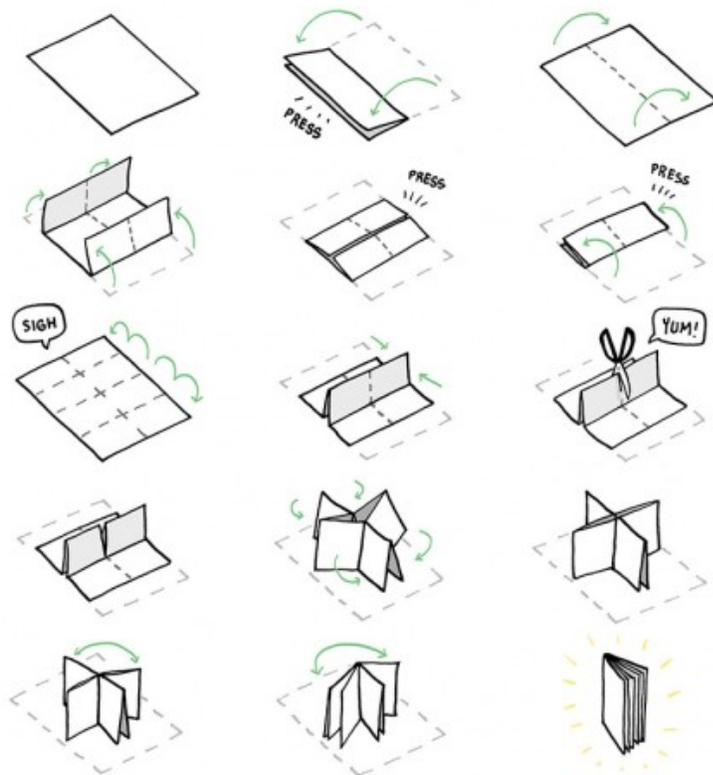
**Zine Making Instructions Article by Cecilia C. Pérez**

Title: How to Make a Zine: A Kid-Friendly DIY Guide  
url: <https://www.readbrightly.com/how-to-make-zine/>

**Zine Folding Instruction Video (Youtube)**

Title: How to make a zine from one piece of printer paper  
url: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ixqr9e3wCxI&feature=youtu.be>

HOW TO FOLD A  
**SHEET-O-PAPER**  
 INTO A  
**8-PAGE ZINE**



Once the mini-zines are folded and cut, prompt students to unfold their paper and complete their zine. Students will write, draw, and sketch out a recipe on their chosen topic. Encourage students to make their zine both highly visual and highly personal, something *only* they could have created.

For an optional group activity, you could ask students to complete the word banks on the “back cover” of their zine. What strong verbs, measurement types, and sizzling adjectives can they think of? Share

out the strongest words from the brainstorm to create a class word bank for students to pull from as they write.

When everyone is finished, have students swap to read each other's zines, and then consider who else they'll share it with: zines are made to be given away!

Get inspired by even more [Creative Recipes](#). This Spark, written by Jillian Wasick at 826 Valencia, directly inspired our printable zine.

**& PROJECT**

# All About You Brochures

Session 1 of 3

## STEP 1: PLANNING AND DRAFTING

In this session, students take a look at brochures and begin to plan and draft a brochure that will showcase their lives.

### YOU WILL NEED

Brochures to Showcase YOU! — Handout

### STEP 1 (5 MINUTES )

#### Activator

Preview the purpose of the lesson with students by giving them a few minutes to flip through sample brochures. Try to provide brochures that present a variety of information about a single topic. Students will ultimately create brochures with various sections containing information about themselves and their lives. The purpose of their brochures will be to inform their readers about their life, likes, dislikes, habits, etc...

To get students thinking, you might ask:

- *Where have you seen brochures used before?*

- What is the purpose of a brochure?
- What do you notice about what it looks like? How is it set up? How is it different from other types of writing?

## **STEP 2 (10 MINUTES )**

### **Sections**

Next, students will brainstorm sections they might want to include in a brochure about themselves to give a multi-faceted glimpse into their lives. Ideas to get students started in their planning might include:

- Descriptions of your neighborhood
- Favorite places to go
- Favorite things to see
- Favorite foods/restaurants
- Favorite book/movie reviews
- 10 facts that might surprise a person about them
- About the author
- Description of family

To get students thinking, you might also ask them:

- *What would you want to teach someone about your life?*
- *What are some of your favorite places to visit? People to see? Things to do?*
- *What would give someone a window into your likes and dislikes?*

**STEP 3 (25)****Drafting**

Students have now thought a little bit about how they would portray their life to an audience. From there, once again, students will look at samples of brochures as a way to build prior knowledge about the purpose of brochures and then begin to draft and plan the different parts of a brochure to showcase their lives:

- Something that might surprise you to learn about my family or neighborhood....
- Favorite place to visit...
- Favorite books or movies...
- Favorite food or restaurants...
- 10 things you might not know about me...
- About the Author
- When I grow up, I want to...

Here are a few questions that might help guide students:

- *How does this connect to other pieces you have written about your life, family, or neighborhood?*
- What are you most proud of about your life?
- What do you want to do next?
- Where would you send a visitor who had never been to your community before before?
- What is your favorite thing to eat, read, watch, listen, or do?

\* SPARK

# Write with Pride

GRADES 7–12

**TYPE**  
POETRY

**EDITOR'S NOTE**  
THIS SPARK WAS DESIGNED FOR GRADES 7-12 BUT WE INVITE STUDENTS OF ALL AGES TO WRITE ABOUT THEIR IDENTITIES.

Students consider the influence that labels hold and write poetry to become empowered to describe themselves however they want.

## WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN

In this Spark, your class will create an open and safe space, free of judgment, for discussion and creativity. Students then consider the meaning and effect of labels and write portrait poems, where they can use writing to become empowered to describe themselves however they want.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Internet, projector, writing utensils
- Poem Templates — Handout

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

Share the YouTube video clip [“Coming Out: I am Gay, I am Human”](#) with students.

Next, give students five minutes to freewrite on what labels mean to them, specifically when it comes to LGBTQIA issues (or any other letter they feel should be included in that acronym). Some questions to help students get started:

- How do labels make you feel?
- Do you like them? Hate them?
- Does it depend on the label or who is using it?

From there, ask students to discuss their thoughts in small groups and share their writing if they want.

Then discuss the video and student thoughts in a large group:

- What did you think?
- What stood out to you?
- What was the overall message the video was sending?
- Does anyone agree or disagree?

### **Introduce Portrait Poems**

Tell students that they are going to write their own “I Am” poems, called Portrait Poems, so that they use writing to become empowered to describe ourselves however we want. This doesn’t have to focus solely on LGBTQ pieces of their lives; the poem should address any and all parts of their identities.

Show examples of Portrait Poems, of which a variety of examples can be found here:

<http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/portrait.html>

### **Portrait Poem Writing**

Now, it's time for students to write their own portrait poems. You can provide templates that students can use if they want. Students can write multiple poems exploring different parts of themselves.

To conclude, students who want to share can share a few lines of their poem.

Or, do a **bonus activity**: Write a list poem using one of the following phrases as the beginning of each sentence of your poem:

1. I wish people knew that I...
2. Being myself is....
3. I am proud because...

**\* SPARK**

# Invent a Miracle Elixir

GRADES 5–6

**TYPE**  
PERSUASIVE

Students will use creative thinking to innovate an imaginary elixir that targets a problem they see in the world.

## **WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN**

This activity will encourage students to identify and think critically about real world problems by creating a product description, ingredients list and usage instructions for an elixir that fixes their targeted problem.

## **WHAT YOU WILL NEED**

- Copies of “Miracle Elixir Inventor” handout

## **WHAT YOU WILL DO**

Start by asking your students to raise their hand if they’re interested in becoming an inventor. Next, ask them if they know what a miracle elixir is.

Then, provide a definition and examples of what a miracle elixir is. For example: “A miracle elixir is a liquid that can cure any illness or transform any object into something amazing through magic. One of the very first miracle elixirs ever invented could turn ordinary metal into gold.

A miracle elixir can also be a medicine. A liquid that when you drink it, can cure any illness you may have.

Together as a class, brainstorm a few ideas for elixirs your students would like to see exist. What kind of problems would they like to solve?

Next, give each student a copy of the “Miracle Elixir Inventor” handout. Ask them to identify the biggest problem that the world is facing and come up with an imaginary elixir that would fix it.

**& PROJECT**

# Dream Schools

Session 1 of 6

## SESSION ONE

In this session, students begin designing their dream school by brainstorming components they want in these new and improved learning spaces. Students then illustrate the nuts and bolts they want to design and add to their dream school.

### YOU WILL NEED

- Dream Schools Brainstorm — Handout

### STEP 1 (10 MINUTES)

#### Activator

Begin by asking students to list the features that exist at their current school, or another schools they have attended or visited, to establish some common elements of schools. You might brainstorm a list together as a class, or students can brainstorm individually using their handouts and then share out.

Questions to prompt students include:

- What do you see in classrooms?

- What do you notice about how your school is organized?
- What do you see on the walls?
- What do you see in the classroom?
- What does the outside of the school look like?
- What about other schools?
- What did you see when walk into any of the entrances?
- What would you expect in a space that is meant for students to learn?

## **STEP 2 (10 MINUTES)**

From there, facilitate a discussion about the design and set-up of most schools. Students should be familiar with these designs: often there will be a courtyard or play area, rooms with desks, hallways, and a cafeteria and/or gym and auditorium. Encourage students to share their experiences about different schools they have experienced, and help them them come up with ideas about important components of a learning space.

Next, divide students into pairs or small groups and have them discuss and list components that they would want in their brand new and super-improved, imagined new schools. Students should jot down some common answers on the “Dream School Brainstorm” handout. You might prompt students by asking them some questions about previous school experiences:

- What will the set-up of the rooms and buildings?
- What makes a space’s setup conducive to writing and learning?
- What things do kids need to learn?
- Do kids need desks and classrooms?
- What about a play area?
- What about a garden?

- What would you want to see if you could imagine anything in this new school you are designing?
- What elements would make a school helpful for students who visit?
- What would you need if you were a student in this new school?

### **STEP 3 (20 MINUTES)**

#### **Dream School Brainstorm**

Students should then begin to individually brainstorm the elements they want to add to the designs of their new schools. They should get more and more specific in their brainstorming, recording ideas for classrooms and learning spaces on their handouts.

### **STEP 4 (10 MINUTES)**

#### **Writing Activity**

Students will use the ideas from their group and individual brainstorms about their designs from their dream school to illustrate a vision for a new school. Encourage students to label aspects of their design, including giving their school a name, and including captions to describe all the amazing details they are brainstorming. As students illustrate, prompt them to think about how to cram all their amazing ideas under one school roof!

- How can we fit our ideas into the design for the new space?
- What could the building look like?
- What would you need in a learning space and/or classroom?
- What would be the best way to design this space?
- What could the new school look like?

\* SPARK

# Setting-O-Matic

GRADES 4–7

TYPE  
NARRATIVE

Students learn to incorporate setting as a key element of a story, starting with inspiration from collages.

## WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN

Students ground a character in a world using sensory details and vivid imagery, and incorporate setting as a key element of a story.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Copies of “[Mighty and the Three Kids](#)” by Oscar
- Copies of the Setting-O-Matic – Handout
- Copies of *National Geographic* magazines or other publications or photographs with visually striking settings (optional)

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

A mini-lesson on setting applies to many kinds of writing and can be applicable to a host of student-inspired characters. Among other iterations of this lesson, this activity worked well as part of a project where students crafted short stories to explore an original, student-inspired monster’s fears, desires, and daily lives.

Where possible, we like to have students begin this activity by creating a collage using *National Geographic* magazine pictures—a new world and setting for their original character. They will end up with a setting that they find

engaging, and the mash-ups lend themselves to some really interesting narrative—perfect for a human or a monster!

You can choose to share the student example that accompanied the original project, “[Mighty and the Three Kids](#)” by Oscar, or a story of your choosing. Have students pay close attention to how the setting inspires the story. Together as a class, fill out a Setting-o-Matic with Oscar’s story, or that of your chosen character.

What setting do your students envision for their characters? Give students a few minutes to sketch out the world that they imagine for their characters, including an unexpected “rule” of this new world (Do fish turn to paper when it snows? Does everyone turn into a rainbow-crying fairy at midnight on Halloween? Does everyone use magic?.) All of the rules of a story can be written through the setting!

Students should fill out their Setting-O-Matic, taking inspiration from the collage they made. Share out in pairs or groups.

99 WRITING

# Mighty and the Three Kids

by Oscar, 826CHI

**TYPE**  
**NARRATIVE**

This is the story of a lifetime, starting in the village called Dullahan Village. The village was a kingdom ruled by a king. The village was made up of brick houses, a forest, mountains, and a huge waterfall. The village was like a festival, full of decorations, pearls, crystals, and jewelry. All of the Dullahans were half-man, half-horse, with no heads. They wore decorations like rings, headbands, bracelets, and necklaces. All the jewelry gave them great powers like magic defense, magic attack, and magic strength. They were fearless.

The king's son, Mighty, was so different that none of the Dullahans wanted him anymore. Mighty had once challenged three kids named Jared, Nyne, and Carly. He tried to defeat them, but he lost the fight. Jared had spiky hair that was dyed red and wore a shirt with a symbol for peace on it. He was adventurous and curious and he'd never give up on anything. Nyne had neat, well-kept hair that was light brown. He always wore shorts and a shirt with a symbol for

curiosity on it, and he was good at climbing rocks. Carly had beautiful long, black hair, and wore a dress that flowed in the wind. She also wore pearls and a headband that was black but patterned with leaves like a princess. Jared and Nyne thought she was beautiful and always full of happiness.

One day, mysterious creatures came to Dullahan Village and attacked. Everyone was like, “I’ve never seen this creature before.”

The king called out, “Attack!” and Mighty came to accept his challenge. He started to fight with swords. Mighty made the last attack and wounded the enemy’s shoulder. The creatures’ dirty-faced leader cried, “Arghhhhhh! I’ve never seen anyone fight like this!”

And off they went. The enemy leader went away, and people were cheering for Mighty.

His father was impressed, and he made Mighty a knight to protect people.

The next day, his father and Mighty were sitting together. His father said, “You did great out there, son. You protected our village.” Mighty thanked his father. Then his father bid him good night.

“Good night, Dad,” Mighty replied.

When Mighty went to sleep, his darkened room filled with dark spirits flying around.

They went inside Mighty's head. The next day, when Mighty woke up for lunch, he was talking in a scary voice, saying that all the Dullahans should be banished forever!

His father replied, "How dare you? This is how you repay me? You are kicked out of this village. Leave! Leave this instant!"

It was a harsh punishment, but hearing that the Dullahans would be banished had filled Mighty's father with fear. All the Dullahans were super angry and upset. The Dullahans scolded, "You are a disgrace to your father! Mighty, why would you do this? We're very disappointed, Mighty. Leave. You are banned from this village forever."

When he tried to return, the other Dullahans just looked at him. They exclaimed, "Go away. Remember, you've been banned from this village."

Then, Mighty made an announcement that he wanted forgiveness. He told his people that he was sorry because something was controlling his head, making him do what he did to his father.

The Dullahans responded, "No," so Mighty cried and ran away.

He had nothing to eat or drink, but he still had his jewelry. He made fire. He had no comfort, he had no father, and something was happening to his brain. He got insanely crazy. He went out of control. He was not feeling good, and he was acting like

something else—all of his body had changed. His eyes changed color, and his DNA changed. He had a headache and was complaining that his head hurt. His skin and his whole body were in pain.

Meanwhile, Jared, Nyne, and Carly heard a voice say, "Swallow these light spheres," so the kids swallowed some blue spheres they'd found. Something weird was happening. Their throats were burning and their shadows were different. Three mythical shadow creatures came out of their shadows. Nyne's was a tiger, Carly's was a gecko, and Jared's was a bearded dragon. Now, the kids had even more magic and powers.

They left on a journey to get back to Snowflake Village, a village full of wooden houses and a wooden bridge. The village had a lot of snow and windmills. On the way, a giant lizard that was tied to a rope made them fall into a tunnel and into some ancient ruins. Nyne noticed something: a dark cave full with treasures and mythical creatures. They discussed that the place looked familiar, and Jared said, "Yes, this is the ancient ruins, full of treasures and creatures like Poo Snake."

Nyne was trying to explain the place to the others, and Carly was scared that the ancient ruins could be dangerous. In the ruins they met this creature who was a half-robin, half-human and wore a blue shirt. His legs were covered with feathers and his name was Bird Boy. Together, they joined forces and were more powerful. Together, they traveled all the way to their families.

Then, they saw something coming, and you know who it was? It was Mighty, running to those three kids. Mighty again accepted their challenge to fight, and the three kids used magic—all different kinds of magic. Mighty was using his sword and his power of Earth's realm. Mighty tried to beat them, but they were too powerful. Mighty started getting weaker and weaker because the three kids had been upgrading their magic with the light spheres.

Mighty was defeated and thwarted by the three kids. The three kids cheered for their victory.

Back in the Dullahan Village, the Dullahans were sad and crying about Mighty, because they hadn't seen him for a long time. They missed him after he was banished.

Meanwhile, inside the house, The King was watching the news and he heard that Mighty was dead. Mighty's dad shouted, "Nooooooooooooooooo! Mighty, I am so sorry."

The king made an announcement that Mighty was dead, and all Dullahans gasped and

cried, saying, “Mighty was a great man, we’re so sorry.”

The king decided that the Dullahans should walk into the waterfall as a tribute to Mighty, since that was how Dullahans showed that they were in mourning. One by one, the Dullahans walked through the waterfall, and once the last one passed through, the entrance to their village became magically sealed.

To this day, the waterfall is still known as the Waterfall of Sadness.

\* SPARK

# Character-O-Matic

GRADES 4–7

**TYPE**  
NARRATIVE

In this activity, students practice analyzing a character’s internal motivations and fears and develop their own original characters.

## WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN

In this activity, students will analyze and develop internal character traits for a character of their choice.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Optional: copies of [“The Story of the Wrecked Arm”](#) by Violeta or [“The Thing That Came From Above”](#) by Josh
- Copies of the Character-O-Matic – Handout

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

This is a versatile lesson that lends itself to myriad characters, stories, or genres. In one version of this activity, for example, we focused on the creation of monsters with complex feelings that students—and audiences—could empathizing with.

Have students think about and name their favorite characters from books, movies, or TV. As students provide examples of favorite characters, ask your students some questions.

- What do they love about them?
- What do they know about the character’s fears?

Using students' examples, ask questions that point to how a character's fears and desires shape a story.

Next, read a story together and model filling out the Character-O-Matic handout. You can choose to read the student writing used in the original lesson, or choose your own! If you choose to read either "[The Story of the Wrecked Arm](#)" by Violeta or "[The Thing That Came From Above](#)" by Josh, ask students to listen for character traits, then fill out a Character-O-Matic handout together, using Purpuly (the character from Violeta's story) as an example. If you have selected a different story, select a single character for students focus on.

Students can then either create their own characters, filling out a Character-O-Matic for their unique inventions, or use the handouts to individually explore an already existing character.