



## Close Writing Teaching Tips NCTE 2015



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*Close Writing:* Cultivating a relationship between the writer and his or her writing through mindful and purposeful rereading, reflecting, and revising.

- Teach students *how* to read their writing so that they can get *into it* and not just *through it*.
  - Writer Reading=Pace, Pause, Punch, Play
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRQjFm8jhVE>
- Teach students to take a stance when reading their writing
  - Authorial Reading=Read for Me/ Read for You
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzCJb60W4Bw>

### CLOSE WRITING PROCESS

<p><b>Prewrite</b> Reread previous work, Analyze/understand genre structure, Oral Rehearsal – “Talk it Out”, “Pictures in My Head”, “Making Movies”</p>
<p><b>Discovery Draft</b> Explore a topic, character, plotline-maybe with the end in mind-but the route is being discovered. “Quick Write”, “Talk It Out” “Movie in my Mind” Self-awareness of routines and attitudes</p>
<p><b>Close Reading</b> –With a variety of lenses, stances/purposes. Writer Reading (Pace, Pause, Punch, Play) Authorial Reading (Read for Me/Read for You)</p>
<p><b>Revise</b> Focus on a growth mindset, not about “fixing” up this one piece, Envisioning possibilities, trying on techniques/ideas, learning from mentors, writing conferences invite reflection, imitation, and imagination.</p>
<p><b>Close Reading</b> “Read for Me”-how do these revisions meet my purpose &amp; strengthen my piece, enhance my writing? “Read for You”- what else my readers want to know or need from me? Revise as often as needed</p>
<p><b>Edit</b> “Flash Edit”- Don’t save all editing for “The End”, focus on 1 aspect at a time, Vary how we look AND listen, Reflect on both strengths and weaknesses</p>
<p><b>Share</b> Presentation fits the purpose, Establish “Look Fors”, Reflect on new learning Connect with Author Identity, Save work as Student Mentor Texts</p>

## **Sarah Albee**

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### **Listening for Voice:**

After deciding on my topic, doing the research, and determining the structure (chronological? Narrative? Mini post-hole?), I focus on voice:

1. Who is my audience? (age group, market). What is my goal? (entertain, inform, spark reader's curiosity)
2. I revise for interesting headers, strong openings in each chapter/section, vivid verbs, rhythm, line length, simile, metaphor, alliteration—in short, all the elements that make for good writing but that also make my voice consistent throughout the manuscript.

## **Selene Castrovilla**

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### **Sensory Details:**

Having written a scene with character and dialogue in mind, in revision I perform a sensory detail check.

1. I make a list of every possible sensory detail I can include within the setting.
2. I read the scene aloud; inserting sensory details which best fit.
3. I go over my list and see if I've left out anything that could still work.
4. I re-read aloud five times, each time checking for a specific sensory detail.
5. Using an active verb may bring in a sensory detail: double duty!

### **Finding the humanity in nonfiction and historical fiction:**

1. How can you make the story character-driven?
2. How can you show their similarities to us?
3. How can you create a timeless element, while honoring history?

### **Relatability merges with truth.**

Often, the key is to reveal characters' passions/wants.

# Kate Messner

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Students (and authors!) may choose to use the following strategies for Close Writing:

1. Use a "zoom lens" to focus on character
  - Brainstorm characters' interests, quirks, desires, weaknesses, voices
  - Write notes from one character to another to shine light on relationships
2. Study mentor texts to identify strategies used in admired texts
  - How might an author handle the sudden introduction of \*magic\* into the world?
  - How do authors handle leads, emotional change, transitions, chapter endings, etc.?
3. Return to earlier steps in the writing process to identify strengths/weaknesses
  - Make an outline after writing to see what you wrote
  - Map out the action/character development on charts, timelines, etc.
4. Return to research
  - Ask questions as you read. Do more research to answer them.
  - Highlight details that need to be fact-checked.
5. Start big & get smaller, closer with revision and editing
  - Big picture issues, organization
  - Line by line, sentence-level revision and word choice
  - Save copy editing (grammar, spelling, punctuation) for last

## **Linda Urban**

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Some of us write by sight. We see the action in our heads and transcribe what goes on. For me, I hear the story being told -- the voice of the character, the rhythm of the language, the pacing of the sentences.

### Some things that help me in revision:

1. Reading aloud. I can hear clinkers. I can hear unintentional echoes. I can hear words that seem out of tone or character.
2. Moving with the reading. My body responds to the sound and the pacing. I bet yours does, too. Try letting students move a pen or a pencil around on a paper as a selection is being read -- or let them move their whole bodies. See if this helps them understand pace, tension, emotional change.
3. Recording your own reading and playing it back can be useful, too.

## **Lester Laminack**

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See Lester's website for thoughts on writing and check out his new book: Writers ARE Readers available now through Heinemann.