

TEACHING

VOICE

WHAT YOU'RE GOING FOR

- * Feelings
- * Enthusiasm for writing
- * Individuality
- * Passion

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. READ! READ! READ!

Read and discuss lots of literature with voice. Look everywhere. Picture books are great (see Picture Books: An Annotated Bibliography, described in the chapter on "Using Reading to Teach Writing," for more ideas); but they're not the only source. Also check the paper, and magazines (especially ads, movie reviews, books reviews, and editorials). Check food labels, brochures, junk mail, etc. Go for the strong and the weak, always asking, "Did you like this writing? Would you like to hear more? Why? Why not?" Join in these discussions yourself. Let it be known that you value and seek voice in writing. If you run across something you love in your own reading, bring it in to share—even if it's difficult. Your love of good language and feeling is more important to convey than the meaning of the text.



2. LOOK FOR INDIVIDUALITY

in both pictures and print. Point it out. Praise students for their differences: "This is so unusual, so unlike anyone else's!"

3. PLAY THE "VOICE" GAME

Students can sit at their desks for this, but it works much better if they gather in a circle on the floor or outside on the lawn, where seating is random. Ask students to close their eyes as you roam through the group. Periodically, touch a student gently on the head or shoulder; that's their signal to say, "Hello out there" (or any phrase of your choice). Others try to guess who is speaking. After the game, talk about how you recognize different voices.

4. WHO WROTE THIS?

Ask students to complete a thought or share opinions on the same topic. For example, you might ask everyone, "The BEST thing (or WORST thing) about school is...." Keep responses private. Share them later individually and anonymously to see if classmates can recognize one another's responses. (Let students know in advance you will be playing this guessing game.)

5. WHAT IS THE WRITER LIKE?

As you share literature, ask students. "What kind of person is the writer? What do you picture? If you had lunch with this person, what would he/she be like?"

6. SHARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT PIECES OF WRITING

by different authors. Ask students which piece they think has more voice. Then, share a third piece by one of the author –a piece that has the same sound as the first one by the same author. Ask students to identify the writer of the third piece. Ask them to explain how they knew which one it was.