

Scribe Notes

Jennifer Allen: Thursday, July 24, 2008

I noticed as I entered the room that our group, The Bottled Blonde Bombshells, have been given an additional "B" becoming the Beautiful, Bottled, Blond Bombshells. I suspect this is meant to butter us up since it is our turn to bring lunch tomorrow!

My thoughts are interrupted by the approach of the "Shouldn't We Be Writing" time. Like good Pavlovian creatures, all fellows write until 9:00 a.m., when it is time to share. We are used to sharing now, so we are prepared. However, after a brief complaint earlier in the week that we always start on our side of the room, Carol graciously volunteers, or is volunteered, to share first. She shares a particularly powerful story about her previous evening and serendipity. Carol cries, then Marsha cries, and well you get the picture. We tend to be a sharing, crying lot.

After sharing, Jeanette shares the scribe report from yesterday; she does not cry. We are now in a routine of writing, sharing, reporting, writing, sharing ...well you get the picture! And if you don't, check our blogs since Barbara has assigned each fellow the task of adding pictures from the writing marathon to his or her personal space!

Following the scribe report, fellows report to small groups to review, repair and revise our Suite 2 pieces. My husband affectionately calls this time of day "group therapy" after having to set through readings of my masterpieces. Suite 2 seems to be well on its way to completion as we all eagerly or anxiously (I am not sure which) anticipate starting the next installment in our three piece suit (e).

Marsha presented a dynamic lesson on writing across the curriculum, specifically in math. She taught us a new equation that looks like this: $\text{Read} + \text{Write} + \text{Art} = \text{Math}$. Even with a math degree, I have never seen this equation and, I am very excited to explore it! Fellows are allowed to toss an inflated ball with math facts written on it across the room as part of the presentation. Although we were instructed not to throw the ball hard, Travis, being one of only two boys in the class, torpedoes the ball in Hillary's direction, hitting her snack plate. This sends splatters of fruit dip in all directions, including Jeanette's lap! Marsha, being the fabulous elementary teacher she is, proceeds to reprimand Travis for his actions. Go Marsha! However, Travis only gets a warning, no D-Hall.

We are then asked to write a story about a fact family. This was a fantastic way to incorporate creative writing into a math curriculum. We complete our stories by building paper plate dioramas to illustrate them. There were many creative stories to share! And we do love to share.

After writing letters to ourselves, which makes me feel only slightly schizophrenic, we go to lunch. I don't know about everyone else, but our lunch is quite entertaining! Before we know it, it is time to head back for Marci's presentation.

Marci presents a timely lesson on multicultural units including the RAFT writing technique. Fellows research Mexico (or in Paul's case, Canada) to gather information for projects. We are then asked to write as ambassadors, travel agents or journalists using the information we have researched. This is another fantastic lesson for fellows to incorporate in classrooms across several counties. One note that must be made at this point is that Barbara, our fearless leader, is put on the "hot seat" as she affectionately calls it and can't answer because she is busy taking notes. Funny how that happens, huh?

Following our second letter to ourselves, after which I am feeling very schizophrenic, Barbara gives a very brief minilesson on APA style for internal citations as we are all working on our research projects. This is followed by a meeting of the Beautiful Bottle, Blond Bombshells, which now includes Carol, to discuss the all important lunch for tomorrow. Fellows work on some research and reconvene to discuss the status of projects, clear up or cause some confusion, and call it a day! Whew! Now that's what I call a day!

Marsha Cobb: July 29, 2008

Coffee is perking
rich aroma begins to permeate the classroom
Students enter the writing haven
predictably moving toward the same chair
occupied day after day
Comfortable and secure in the familiar

The writers are a mixed group
slowly revealing their inner secrets
with each stroke of the pen
ink floods the paper

Writers sharing a common thread
A thread woven in and around
A thread that brings us together
A thread that defines us
The thread is teaching

Teaching begins the very moment we arrive
writing as one
leaders and followers writing together
some write
slowly, thoughtfully
some meanderingly
some urgently
some methodically
We write

Readings flow from writings
Tracing yesterdays threads
The threads that connects us to the larger group of writers
like warp and weft in a bolt of woven fabric

Old, sometimes forgotten rules of grammar
discussed keeping our writings organized and beautiful
The rules, like stitches in a quilt
keep our thoughts from unraveling

Shared hours and hours of research
enrich our minds and exhaust our bodies
Covering ourselves with a blanket of knowledge
woven by writers

Leah Devine: July 30th, 2008

Do you know where Golden Delicious Apples come from and where poetry hides? West Virginia author, Anna Egan Smucker, shared her story with the CWVWP fellows and friends on Wednesday, July 30th at the Author's Luncheon at the University of Charleston. From Weirton steel mills to Manitou and back to the West Virginia Hills, Smucker took fellows on a journey through her writings as she shared her journey as a writer.

Anna Smucker opened her presentation with No Star Nights, her published book. As she read through the pages, she described the illustration process and the steps she took in publication. She described the back and forth communication between the author, editor, agent, and illustrator as they planned and painted each illustration. We learned to expect rejection letters but to be at peace with this reality as every work can be revised and many will find their audience someday. She informed us that Dr. Seuss received thirty-seven rejection letters, and A Wrinkle in Time was rejected thirty times before winning the Newbury Award. As Smucker read, rhythmic prose and alliteration awakened our five senses. The river, the mills, the hills amidst a whirling world of smoke, spark spitting, and rusty red. Just as the steel was processed at the mills, No Star Nights had gone through a long process, one that had begun with a single seed and developed into a detailed intentional masterpiece in children's writing.

Stories continued as Anna Smucker read from Outside the Window, A History of West Virginia; To Keep the South Manitou Light; The Life of Saint Brigid; and Golden Delicious: A Cinderella Story. Her dedication to West Virginia and the writing process came across as she described the publication process. She reminded the group that nothing is ever lost; you must work through the process, and sometimes you have to cut out sections to make a story stronger. Golden Delicious' journey to publication had been filled with as much excitement as the first discovery of the apple in West Virginia. As fellows imagined crisp apples, Smucker educated the group on the historical and scientific significance of the apple.

The Golden Delicious apple couldn't hide from Smucker and neither could poems from the fellows. Smucker read Naomi Nye's "Where Poems Hide," and then asked fellows where poems hide in their lives. Soon, the group produced a collaborative poem where poetry hid in children's smiles, dust and dirt particles sprinkled on the kitchen floor like constellations, and Paw Pa's bedroom. Smells soon took the writers on a journey through memories as they recorded and shared lists of smells that carry personal significance. Fellows then took one smell and composed a personal detailed story beginning with "I am..." Moving from fact to fiction, fellows imagined hearing a noise behind them. They added a character to the scene and livened up the plot. Finally, the writers changed the story from first person to third person, creating a fictional narrative in the land of prose where memories were free to play with creativity.

Fellows and authors enjoyed a delicious lunch where they were able to share details of life over delicious roasted chicken, vegetables, rice, and pie. Earlier in the day, before arriving at the University of Charleston, fellows had

completed daily writing activities at Marshall University Graduate College and organized their notebooks with the assistance of Kelly Rucker, a 2007 CWVWP fellow. Wednesday's activities served as a culminating activity of the 2008 CWVWP Summer Institute at MUGC under the direction of Barbara Holmes, with the assistance of Paul Epstein and Carol Mathis, which began on July 14th and will end on August 1st.