Phoebe’s Family Free Writes

With the school year coming to an end, we wanted to offer a few take-home activities for families to try over the summer. It can be a challenge to keep kids reading and writing while on break, but even a few engaging activities can have major benefits for learning. These can all be done together; either side by side, or collaboratively. Have Fun! --Phoebe Coles, Instructional Coordinator, School Life news, 6/18/22.

***Option 1: An Open Mind Portrait***

This option combines art with writing to think more deeply about a character or important person, and to understand their viewpoint. These portraits have two parts: the face of a person on the front, and the “mind” of that person on the back.

**Step One: Research**

Choose a character or important person that is of interest to you. This could be a character from a movie, tv show or book, real or fake. Make a list of important things about this person. This could be personality traits, physical characteristics, family history, causes they are passionate about, special interests or anything else your research brings up.

*Note: research can be done in your library, on the internet, from an interview etc.*

**Step Two: Make a portrait**

Take out some art supplies and try your hand at drawing the face of this character on a blank page. You could add details that define this person to you.

**Step Three: Design the Mind**

On the back of your portrait write in phrases, quotes, pictures, key facts or anything else that might be in this person’s mind given your research.

**Step Four: Create a Front Page**

See the examples in your toolbox from Saturday Academy. Turn your Open Mind Portrait into the Front Page of a newspaper.

***Option 2: Interactive Writing***

In interactive writing, a more experienced writer shares the pen with a less experienced writer to create a story. They “share the pen” as they write. Each person takes turns writing to create a story that is truly collaborative. For older kids this can be done sentence by sentence, and for younger kids they can write individual words to contribute to the text.

**Step One: Observe and take notes**

Choose anything you would like to observe; such as, a squirrel in a tree, a piece of fruit, the clouds- anything. Choose someone to take notes for all the observations. Use your five senses to create this list of observations.

**Step Two: Write your story**

Let everyone have a turn with the pen and paper to transform your notes into a story. Each person writes a sentence, and passes it along for the next person to do the same. Have a great time creating together!

*Note: If a younger writer is involved in the story, they can practice their writing skills by adding a word or even a single letter.*

***Option 3: Get into Nature* -**Choose a park, or another place in nature that you enjoy. Bring along your reporter’s notebook and pencil to try this writing activity.

**Step One:** **Observe and Take Notes-** Start by making observations and writing them down. This is a good place to think about your five senses and what information you are getting from each. Once you’ve spent a few minutes taking notes, you are ready to write!

**Step Two: Write-**  There are many different ways to approach a creative writing piece. For this activity you will be choosing four elements to the writing piece:

Your Role- Who are you as the writer?

Your Audience: Who will read this?

Your Format: Will this be a newspaper article or something else?

Your Topic: What are you writing about?

Here are some examples to choose from for each category, circle one thing from each category to come up with your writing piece. For example: A leaf could be the author of a newspaper article for earthworms describing the details of what they could experience above ground.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Role:** The author | **Audience:** The reader | **Format:** What is being written | **Topic:** What is the story about? |
| A Treefrog  Yourself  A water droplet  A leaf | A tourist  The Mayor  A Ladybug  An Earthworm | A Newspaper Article  An Interview  A friendly letter  A fairytale | Use your observations to create the details to your writing piece.  Are you writing about the experience?  Did an event happen?  Does some action need to happen?  Is there something you could explain? |

These activities are just a few ideas to practice with reading and writing. Even a small effort this summer could have large gains come September. Here are a few more ideas to consider:

* **Investigate your public library's summer reading program.** Most libraries offer a special program or two during the summer free of charge.
* **Listen up!** Audiobooks are a great way to engage readers and can introduce students to books above their reading level. Many libraries have audiobooks available for check out.
* **Make your own audio book!** Most phones and computers have simple recording apps on them which are perfect for making homemade audio books! Have your child make up a story, or reread a favorite loved book.
* **Point, shoot, and write.** Most families have access to a digital camera, iPad or camera phone. Snap some photos and then encourage your child to write a caption for each photo. Not feeling that ambitious? Take a marker to the newspaper or a magazine and write captions for what’s there.
* **Write it down.** Encourage your child to keep a simple journal or summer diary. Track interesting things like the number of fireflies seen in one minute, the number of mosquito bites on a leg, or the different types of food that can go on the grill. Each entry is a chance to be creative.