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 TreefrogYourselfA water dropletA leaf  | A tourist The Mayor A Ladybug An Earthworm | A Newspaper ArticleAn 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.