

An Educator's Guide to *The Best Teen Writing of 2019*

Prepared by the National Writing Project

Use the works of these National Medalist teen writers to inspire discussion and guide writing exercises with students.

1. Short Story

The relationship between setting and mood— *35 minutes*

Goal: Students explain how authors establish mood through details of setting (time and place).

Activity: Choose a story for review that contains many evocative details of setting (time, place, weather, etc.). Ask students to read with a highlighter, making note of the plot elements.

List on the board.

Discuss: What would it feel like to be here? Why do you think so? Choose a "favorite element." How did that particular detail add to your feeling about the place?

Revising for mood: Students choose a story they are working on, or a story from *The Best Teen Writing*. Add details of setting to enhance the mood being conveyed. Share with a partner for response.

2. Short Story

Writing with focus on characterizing the narrative—*35 minutes*

Goal: Students restructure a narrative with another narrator, creating the same story with a different perspective.

Activity: Ask students to take on the voice of one of the other characters and tell the story from that point of view, filling in blanks that the original narrator left. Challenge students to use important characterizing details in the reading to give color to their entries.

3. Poetry

Writing with focus on form—*30 minutes*

Goal: Students write using different structural techniques.

Activity: Have students write two poems on one topic of their choosing. Begin with a prose poem, in which they write freely on that topic; then have them write another poem on the same topic with a focus on line breaks to emphasize changes in rhythm or highlight specific phrases. Discuss the differences after sharing the results.

4. Personal Essay & Memoir

Writing with a focus on structure and pacing—*45 minutes*

Goal: Students will write an organized and coherent memoir imitating the format of a *Best Teen Writing* piece.

Activity: Select a Personal Essay & Memoir from the anthology to read out loud with your students. Talk about the format in which the memoir is written. Discuss the choices made and how those choices are inherently personal, therefore inherently suited to convey a personal essay.

Ask your students to write their own memoirs modeled after the memoir you have selected. Have the students share their work and discuss choices that each student makes, including how those choices convey something personal to the reader.

5. Genre-Shifting Exercise

Blackout Poetry—*40 minutes*

Goal: Students will explore form's relationship to function by distilling the language in a single piece of prose, into a piece of poetry.

Activity: Have the students choose a page of prose in *The Best Teen Writing*. Students then scan the page for words that are interesting and lightly circle or underline those words with a pen. Next students read the page from top to bottom, looking for more interesting words, or words that might relate to the circled words. They should circle these, too. Finally, students begin to black out

all the words on the page that they aren't using, in a sense "whittling away" the words that aren't part of the poem they've found within the text.

6. Blog Exercise

40 minutes and homework time

Goal: Students will use critical-thinking skills to offer critiques and analysis of specific works or the anthology as a whole.

Activity: Ask students to write a blog post expressing thoughts about a specific piece of their choosing. Posts will be sent to the Alliance for consideration to be included on the Alliance blog.

- Students should express their opinions, offering positive feedback or constructive criticism, on a specific work in *The Best Teen Writing*. Alternatively, they may discuss the anthology as a whole.
- Posts may be emailed to info@artandwriting.org, with subject line "*The Best Teen Writing of 2019* Student Blog Post."

Educators: Continue the discussion! Explore with your peers even more ways in which *The Best Teen Writing of 2019* can inspire students in your classroom! Feel free to share new ideas about how to use *The Best Teen Writing* by sending your ideas to programs@nwp.org.

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Ceramics & Glass
Comic Art
Design
Digital Art
Drawing & Illustration
Editorial Cartoon
Fashion
Film & Animation
Future New
Jewelry
Mixed Media
Painting
Photography
Printmaking
Sculpture
Video Game Design
Art Portfolio*

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