

Guide to Teaching TWSS while using the History Based Writing Books

Classical Conversations utilizes the methods and techniques of Institute of Excellence in Writing's (IEW) *Teaching Writing Structure and Style* (TWSS) for the writing portion of the Essentials class. It's comprehensive and classical approach to writing takes the student through nine different structures of writing while also introducing various stylistic devices used in writing. The technique depends strongly on source texts to instruct students in these areas. Classical Conversations has chosen to use the History Based Writing texts distributed and written by IEW as our source texts to provide nationwide consistency to our Essentials program.

Teaching Institute in IEW while using *Teaching Writing Structure and Style* (TWSS) as the basis can be a bit confusing when working with the History Based Writing (HBW) books. The key to remember is that we are to teach using the method and planning schedule according to TWSS while using the appropriate History Based source text. To do this effectively, Essentials tutors need to go through the *Teaching Writing Structure and Style* seminar, either by attending a live event or by viewing the DVDs that accompany the program. It is also imperative that an Essentials tutor keep the TWSS notebook and DVDs handy when preparing and leading the Essentials class.

One rule of thumb when planning lessons is to make sure that the source texts are at or below the students' reading level. Classical Conversations has opted to use the History Based Writing Books that coincide with the Foundations curriculum cycle. These texts were designed for Level A and B students, so they work well in the Essentials classroom. However, when a student struggles with the reading, it can hinder his ability to key word outline (KWO) effectively. If you find yourself in a position where you have source texts too difficult for your students, you can use another text for that unit. This, however, is a parent's job to decide. As a tutor, we can direct parents to alternate sources. (See document, *Scaling*, for more helpful hints.)

Similarly, younger students, who have not developed the fine motor skills to write for longer periods of time may also find themselves in need of scaling longer lessons to meet their needs. Again, you should refer to the document, *Scaling*, for ideas to give parents who need this type of help.

Here is a break-down of what each TWSS Structure Unit covers and how they build on each other:

Units 1 & 2 deal with learning to KWO and then using the KW notes to compose a new text. Source texts will be one paragraph long. You will find information on teaching these units in TWSS pp. 5-14. DVD #1 at 27:58 begins the instruction for Units 1&2.

Unit 3 is the Narrative Story unit and will move the children from writing 1 paragraph to writing 3. KW notes are taken a different way in unit 3 and children will learn to look at the structure of their paper when making decisions about how to KWO their source text. "Each paragraph has a purpose." Pages 27-36 in TWSS guide you through unit 3 and DVD #2 at 4:13 begins the instruction for this unit.

Unit 4 is the first non-fiction writing unit and is foundational for students to review/learn before moving into unit 6. KW notes will be taken from facts found in one source text. Two skills are practiced in this unit in particular--limiting facts to what is interesting and important to the child and creating topic and clincher sentences. TWSS addresses this unit (along with unit 6) in pages 37-46 and in DVD #3 at 24:25.

Unit 5 is Writing from Pictures. It is the first abstract writing assignment of the cycle and may be challenging to some students. KW notes are taken from the answers to questions asked about each picture and the result will be a complete “event description.” Children will continue to practice topic and clincher sentences by using the central fact of each illustration. Pages 47-52 in TWSS explain this unit as does DVD #4 at 15:06.

Unit 6, takes the students back to non-fiction writing, but this time we will be taking notes from multiple source texts. Students will have had the practice in limiting their notes to what is interesting and important to them, thanks to unit 4, but will now be faced with what to do when required to have multiple resources. The “fused outline” will be practiced in unit 6. It is a new concept to most parents, and is often met with confusion and slight resistance (because of its newness); be very familiar with this unit before teaching it. Unlike most of the other units in IEW, Unit 6 tends to be the most difficult for new (and veteran) tutors to explain. Review TWSS pp. 37-46 and watch DVD #5, starting at the beginning of the disk.

Unit 7 teaches note taking and structure for Creative Writing. Some students may feel a bit of relief venturing back to fictional writing. However, this unit teaches the all-important “Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs.” It encourages students to also think three themes before taking notes. Review TWSS pp. 53-58 and DVD #5, scene 2 at 3:10 to prepare for this unit.

Unit 8 introduces the Essay. It is a good spot to also show advanced students how to create a “super essay” which will be required in upper level high school and college writing assignments. TWSS pp. 59-66 and DVD # 6 , at the beginning, will be helpful to review in preparation for this unit.

Unit 9 introduces the Critique. Otherwise known as the “book report” unit, the structure of the critique is clearly explained to lessen the anxiety with which this assignment is often met. Even better for the student, the tutor will revisit Unit 3, narrative stories, to teach the concepts and vocabulary introduced in Unit 9. Review TWSS pp. 67-72 and DVD #6, scene 2 at 1:04:05 continuing on into scene 3.

Stylistic techniques are taught in TWSS pp. 15-23 and on DVDs #2, 3 and 4. Read the scaling document to make a better determination as to how to introduce the techniques and guide the parents in deciding when their child is ready to move onto new concepts. These techniques are not to be rushed into practice unless a child is ready. As a tutor, you are expected to introduce the dress-ups, openers and decorations, but parents must understand that pushing their child to use more than what they are ready for will ultimately lead to frustration and discouragement.