

This is American Writer!



*Who will make it to
"Hollywood"?*

American Writer

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Printed in the United States

Order number LS022010

S&T Publications, LLC
143 Whip O Will Road
Abbeville, SC 29620

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American Writer

Based on the very popular television hit *American Idol*, this contest will generate a ton of excitement from your students! Follow these steps as you hold an American Writer contest in your classroom or at your school.

1. Have your students write two narratives on the following prompts.
 - ❖ Write about a time in your life when you found yourself afraid.
 - ❖ Write about a childhood memory.
2. There are several peer-editing, revision, and rubric forms included in this packet. Choose the one(s) that you think would benefit your students when revising. You may want to allow a week or two for students to revise, edit, and write their final drafts for the contest.
3. Give the students a letter explaining the American Writer contest. There is a sample letter in this packet. You can use it, or make up your own. Make sure that your students understand that they are to submit one narrative, and that it should be their very best work. No rough drafts should be submitted. The following rules/instructions are included in the sample letter:
 - ❖ No names are to be placed on or in the paper.
 - ❖ To keep the papers anonymous, students should make sure they do not use a family member's name or any other information that would "give away" who they are.
 - ❖ Students are encouraged to have their parents read their story and even help with revision but are warned that they may not allow someone else to write their story.
4. Show students the samples included in this packet so they know what to expect. Explain to them that Paula's job will be to point out the good in each story; Simon will find something to critique (and he may sometimes be a little harsh), and Randy can go either way, pointing out the good and the bad.
5. Assign each student a number to go with his/her story, and keep a record of names with corresponding numbers. There are some forms in this packet to help you with this.

6. Now you're ready for the "auditions". There are a few ways that you can go about "judging" the papers. Read the following suggestions, and choose the one best for your students.
 - ❖ Divide your class into groups allowing one group to be "Randy", one group "Paula", and one group "Simon". If you have a visual presenter, read each story while looking at it with the students. Together as a class, score the story using your state writing rubric, and discuss the accomplishments of the story and those things that need to be improved. Look for mistakes in punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. Then, have your groups get together to write their "statements". Paula's group should try to find something positive about the story. Simon should try to find something to critique, and Randy can go either way. Discuss these comments as a class to make sure they are appropriate, and then vote to see if the paper should "go on to Hollywood".
 - ❖ Instead of dividing your class into groups, you may want to come up with the statements of the three judges together.
 - ❖ If you teach more than one class, you could let your first period read, score, and judge your second period's stories. Your second period could do your first period, and so on.
 - ❖ If there is another ELA teacher in your grade, you could switch stories with that teacher so that his/her students are judging your students' stories, and your students are scoring his/her students' stories.
 - ❖ If you do not have a visual presenter, divide your class into groups. Assign each group three or four stories to read, score, critique, and evaluate. Have the group write statements for Simon, Paula, and Randy. As a group, have them decide which stories can go on to "Hollywood".
7. Those stories that move on to "Hollywood" go to the next level. Copy the "Congratulations, you made it" sheet (included in this packet) on yellow paper. Cut these in half, and staple one to those stories that achieve that goal.
8. "Hollywood" can be you as the teacher deciding on a winner, or a third party of teachers reading the stories and choosing the winners. You can have class winners, cluster winners, and then ultimately a grade winner. If this is a school wide endeavor, there could be a school winner, also known as the "American Writer"! Once the stories are narrowed down to a few "top" ones, you could read them to grade levels at lunch, over a loud speaker or on a morning school TV program, and allow the students to "vote" for the final winner!
9. To save time, you could choose a few stories from each class for "auditions" instead of reading, scoring, and judging every student's writing. If you do this, you want to choose some papers that would score high, medium, and low.
10. Once you have the runner-ups and the winner, award prizes. Give out certificates, candy, free homework passes, or any other prize that the kids would love to have!

American Writer

This is American Writer. Like *American Idol*, this is a contest to find the best of the best. You will submit one narrative for the contest. You can submit the story you wrote about a time you were afraid or the story you wrote about a childhood memory. You may revise and rewrite that story or write a completely new story for one of those prompts. You may not copy someone else's story or allow someone to write a story for you. Make sure that your name is not on or in the story. Also, to keep the papers anonymous, make sure that you do not include a family member's name or any other information that would "give away" who you are. Your paper will be assigned an entry number.

Be aware that your story will be displayed for another class to read and score. Your name will not be on the paper, and the students will not be told whose paper is being read. However, if you have written a story which you do not want others to read, do not submit that story. Also, the class who is scoring your paper will serve as three judges: Randy, Paula, and Simon. You will receive feedback from these "judges".

Some of the stories that are judged will go on to "Hollywood". This means that your story moves to the next round of the competition where a third-party will read the stories and choose the best one. Winners will be recognized and rewarded.

Please allow your parent(s) to read over the story that you plan to submit, and have them suggest things you can do to improve it. They may help you revise, but they may not write the story for you. 😊

Have fun, and make sure you submit an awesome story! Good luck.

Peer Edit (Narrative)



Author _____

Editor _____

After reading the story, what questions do you have?

What part did you like the best?

What part do you think needs more details or suspense?

Did the introduction grab your attention and make you want to read the story?

Find and copy a sentence that contains figurative language. If there is not one, choose a sentence to which you feel figurative language could be added, and write it here.

Circle all of the strong verbs in the story. Write the best two here.

Is there dialogue in the story? Did the author:

- Use quotation marks?
- Have correct punctuation inside those quotation marks?
- Start a new paragraph each time the speaker changed?

If there are mistakes with dialogue, underline them in the author's paper.

Are there good descriptions in the story? Look for places that have really good word choice. Copy two or three of those words and descriptions below.



Ready, Set, Revise!

Name _____ Date _____

First Paragraph ~ Introduction

Grabber: Keep Change (circle 1)	Topic Sentence: Keep Change (circle 1)
Will this grabber make the reader want to read the rest of my story/essay? Yes No (circle one) If no, rewrite it. ☺	Is this topic sentence a complete sentence? Yes No (circle one) If no, rewrite it. ☺ Does the topic sentence match the prompt? Yes No (circle one) If not, rewrite it. ☺

Second Paragraph (FL=Figurative language V=Voice SF=Sent. Fluency D=Detail(s) WC =Word Choice)

Sentence Number / First word *	Keep Put a check if you are keeping this sentence.	I'm adding, taking out, or changing the following:	I revised this sentence for the following: (Use the key above.) Circle
1			FL V SF D WC
2			FL V SF D WC
3			FL V SF D WC
4			FL V SF D WC
5			FL V SF D WC
6			FL V SF D WC
7			FL V SF D WC

***This is a place for you to record the first word of each sentence in the body of your paper so that you can easily revise for sentence fluency. If you see repeated words, you know you need to go in and change some of the beginnings.**

Third Paragraph (FL=Figur. language V=Voice SF=Sent. Fluency D=Detail(s) WC=Word Choice)

Sentence Number / First word	Keep Put a check if you are keeping this sentence.	I'm adding, taking out, or changing the following:	I revised this sentence for the following: (Use the key above.)
1			FL V SF D WC
2			FL V SF D WC
3			FL V SF D WC
4			FL V SF D WC
5			FL V SF D WC
6			FL V SF D WC
7			FL V SF D WC

Fourth Paragraph (FL=Figur. language V=Voice SF=Sent. Fluency D=Detail(s) WC=Word Choice)

Sentence Number / First word	Keep Put a check if you are keeping this sentence.	I'm adding, taking out, or changing the following:	I revised this sentence for the following: (Use the key above.)
1			FL V SF D WC
2			FL V SF D WC
3			FL V SF D WC
4			FL V SF D WC
5			FL V SF D WC
6			FL V SF D WC
7			FL V SF D WC

Conclusion

My conclusion/ending is the best that I can write.

Yes No (Circle one)

I'm rewriting the conclusion/ending because I can do better.

Yes No (Circle one)

Editing

Check your homophones! (Your, You're, to, too, etc.)	Check for text-message writing! (u)
Check for run-on sentences or fragments!	Check punctuation!
Check for capitalization!	Check spelling!

Find Words to Revise



Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Go back and read through your paper looking for words that are dull, boring, or too simple. Replace them with better words. Record the words that you used and the new words that you replaced them with on the following chart. Use a thesaurus to help you.

Word	Revised Word



Rubric

Content and Development

- At least 5 strong verbs are used. _____
(Find and record five strong verbs here.)
- There are enough details to explain, persuade, entertain, or describe.
- Figurative language is used at least 1 time. _____
(Record the sentence with figurative language here.)
- The reader can “see what is happening”.
- The paper answers all parts of the prompt and does not get off topic.
- The paper holds the reader’s attention.

6 checks = 5 points 4-5 checks = 4 points 3 checks = 3 points
2 checks = 2 points 1 check = 1 point 0 checks = 0 points
Total points _____

Organization

- There is an introduction.
- There is a notable grabber in the introduction.
- There is a topic sentence in the introduction.
- There are three paragraphs in the body.
- Transition words are used to begin each paragraph in the body and the conclusion, and “they fit”.
- There are at least 3 detailed sentences in each paragraph of the body.
- There is a conclusion.
- The conclusion is effective.

8 checks = 5 points 6-7 checks = 4 points 4-5 checks = 3 points
2-3 checks = 2 points 1 check = 1 point 0 checks = 0 points
Total points _____

Word Choice

- Words that “sizzle” are used. _____
- A great noun, verb, or adjective is in each paragraph of the body. _____
- Strong verbs are included.
- Strong verbs are in each paragraph of the body.
- The same words are not repeated.
- Some words or phrases will linger in your memory...*The forest was awakened by the sunshine.*
- All the words in the paper “fit”.
- Words are vivid and not too “simple”...Example: *humongous instead of big*

8 checks = 5 points 6-7 checks = 4 points 4-5 checks = 3 points
2-3 checks = 2 points 1 check = 1 point 0 checks = 0 points
Total points _____

Voice

- The paper is funny, sad, suspenseful, or amusing.
- It has personality.

2 checks = 5 points 1 checks = 3 points 0 checks = 0 points
Total points _____

Sentence Fluency

- There is variety in the types of sentences (simple, compound, complex).
- There is variety in the way the sentences begin.

2 checks = 5 points 1 check = 3 points 0 checks = 0 points

Total points _____

Conventions

- Capitalization is correct in all sentences.
- Punctuation is correct at the end of all sentences.
- Commas are in place where they should be in most sentences.
- Endings on words are correct. (He walked in the room. Not – He walk in the room.)
- There are no run-on sentences.
- There are no fragments.
- Correct English is used. (correct use of verbs, no double negatives, etc.)
- There is no more than one misspelled word.

8 checks = 5 points 6-7 checks = 4 points 4-5 checks = 3 points

2-3 checks = 2 points 1 check = 1 point 0 checks = 0 points

Total points _____

Total points _____

Score _____

Scale

30 = 100

29=96

28=92

27=88

26=84

25=81

24=77

23=74

22=72

21=70

20=65

19= 60

18=55

17=50

16=45

0-15=40

SCORE SHEET



Grabber

5	4	3	2	1	0
Great!		OK		Bad	Not one

Introduction (Grabber and Topic Sentence)

5	4	3	2	1	0
Great!		OK	Only 1		No introduction

Details

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Lots!					Good					Not enough
Felt like					but needs					to understand
I was					more					what happened
there!										

Voice

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Wow!					Parts					BORING!
Interesting					had					
and					voice					
suspenseful!					but not enough					

Word Choice

5	4	3	2	1	0
Great		Few good			All "baby words"
word choice		words but			
Took time!		more needed			

Sentence Length

5	4	3	2	1	0
Great!		OK			All same length

Sentence Beginnings

5	4	3	2	1	0
Great!		1 or 2			Five or more start
		same			same way

Figurative Language

5	4	3	2	1	0
Original		Not original			No figurative language
and fits					

Strong Verbs

5	4	3	2	1	0
Lots!		Few			None

Repetition

5	4	3	2	1	0
None		1 repeated			3 or more repeated
Great!					

Transition Words

5	4	3	2	1	0
All there!		Missing 2			None

Ending

5	4	3	2	1	0
Great!		OK			No ending

Capitalization

5	4	3	2	1	0
Great!		2 mistakes			Terrible!

Punctuation

5	4	3	2	1	0
Great!		2 mistakes			Terrible!

Spelling

5	4	3	2	1	0
Great!		2 mistakes			Terrible!

Run-on Sentences




































5	4	3	2	1	0
None!		2 run-on sentences			Paper full of them!

Grammar

5	4	3	2	1	0
No		3 mistakes!			Lots of mistakes with
Mistakes!					grammar

Student Contestant Numbers

Assign each student a number, and staple the square to his/her story.

Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 
Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 
Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 
Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 
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Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 
Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 	Contestant # 



Contestant # _____

Paula:

Strengths (check ones that are strengths)

- Word choice
- Organization
- Sentence Fluency
- Voice
- Suspense
- Details
- Conventions

The best part about your story was _____

Additional comments:

Simon:

You really need to work on _____

Additional comments:

Randy:

Yo, Dawg, I thought _____

Additional comments:

**Sample 1
Low Score**



Imagin a scary night no one is around your all alone. I will never forget the time when walking in the Paster I fell in a deep hole all alone.

It all started when I was walking throw the woods. The night was pich black I was all alone. I told my mom where I was going out walking but I gess she didn't hear me. Enaway I stared out the door to the woods It was so quit you couldn't hear a pen drop. All thought I like walking it helps you tink.

Next I stared on the trial, I was thinking where is the path ineway. I wasn't on the trail so I fell in a big hole. This was the wrest day every, all of a sunden I heard cruch! Cruch! Something was coming!

After I was setting there and very nevers I thought I would never get out. So stared yelling Help! Help! Help! But no one could hear me, laying there hopping someone would hear me, I thought to my self this is very bad.

As you can see I've learned my lesson never go in the woods alone expaly at night because something bad could happen.



Contestant # Sample 1

Paula:

Strengths (check ones that are strengths)

- Word choice
- Organization
- Sentence Fluency
- Voice
- Suspense
- Details
- Conventions

The best part about your story was your description of the woods. I like how you said it was so quiet you could hear a pen drop.

Additional comments:

I liked the onomatopoeia that you included... crunch! crunch! crunch! If you'll work on your spelling, you could really be a good writer!

Simon:

You really need to work on making sure what you writes makes sense! Your spelling is atrocious!

Additional comments:

For the record, *enaway* is not a word! It's *any way*. Your spelling really just made your story dreadful. Try using a dictionary next time!

Randy:

Yo, Dawg, I thought it was ok.

Additional comments:

Yo, I liked your introduction. I was really looking forward to your story after hearing it. I have to agree with Simon on your spelling. I mean, Dawg, just use a dictionary. You know what else; your story could have been better if you would have added some more details about the part when you were in the hole. I mean, how did you feel in there? How did you get out? What were you thinking? Work a little harder next time, Dawg.

**Sample 2
Medium Score**



Imagine being slung ten feet in the air, slaping water. I'll never forget the time I flipped the boat.

It all started when Paw Paw, Big Steve, and I were going fishing in Paw Paw's pond. We had all the equiptment and poles loaded up. I pushed the little green john boat in the water and started fishing. A few minutes later we were catching fish like there was no tomorrow. Big Steve caught a two pound bass. I, the best fisher, snagged twenty crappies. Paw Paw reeled in four brim.

Suddenly the bucket was loaded with fish. So Paw Paw says "Boy, fill that ole bucket up with water." As I bent down out of the cold blue, I was flying. Paw Paw's chain flipped the boat. Boy I tell you, I was in that water faster than a light being flipped on. I turned to see Big Steve and Paw Paw struggling to swim in the deep spot. So I flipped the boat back over and headed over to them. Big Steve almost flipped us again. When we all got to the and I asked Big Steve, "Big Stever, was you crying." He said, "No, but I saw the light and got laughed at by a ten pound cat fish." We all laughed.

In the end, all of us lived and Big Steve got saved but we all will never forget that life changing memorie.



Contestant # Sample 2

Paula:

Strengths (check ones that are strengths)

- Word choice
- Organization
- Sentence Fluency
- Voice
- Suspense
- Details
- Conventions

The best part about your story was when Big Steve said a catfish laughed at him. Great job using personification that way!

Additional comments:

You did a good job with figurative language. Your grabber was really good too. Keep up the good work. You have great potential as a writer!

Simon:

You really need to work on your order of details. It was hard to figure out when you were in and when you were out of the boat.

Additional comments:

Go back and check your spelling! A third grader can do a better job at checking to make sure words are spelled right!

Randy:

Yo, Dawg, I thought it was a good and funny story.

Additional comments:

Yo, I liked your story. I laughed out loud, especially when Big Steve fell out of the boat. You know, though, it could have been even better with more details, Dawg.

Sample 3
High Score



It attacks everyone: the best of us, men, women, and children, all races, all ages... all of us. It can grip you tighter than a vice and conquer all five of your senses. It can wrap its cruel fingers around you in an instant. I'm talking about fear. I'll never forget when this sinister feeling paid me a visit one October evening.

It all started when Mama dropped me off at home and she went to her meeting. Skipping downstairs to get me a pack of chips, I heard a car pull up in the driveway. "That's just my neighbors," I casually thought to myself. Paying no attention, I walked down the hallway heading to my room. I stopped cold in my tracks when I heard faint, unfamiliar men's voices. Panic spread over me as the hairs on the back of my neck began to prickle. Yes, fear had arrived.

The next thing I knew, I was storming up the stairs as fast as a tornado spins. As soon as I reached the top, I realized the house phone and my cell phone were both downstairs, and I couldn't call for help. "I'm going to die!" I thought to myself as I started sneaking back downstairs to try to grab my phone. My whole body trembled as I peeked over the banister. At that moment, BOOM! I heard what I knew to be a gun shot. Glass shattered everywhere. I knew that the men had shot the sliding glass door that leads into our living room.

Seconds later, I was running back up the stairs again. "I've got to hide," I told myself. My heart was a bomb about to explode. Quickly, I ran into my brother's room and hid in his attic. I sat stone still and tried to calm my breathing. After sitting for what seemed like an eternity, I heard footsteps. I could hear the men walking around and rummaging through things. Wiping back tears, I sat and prayed that they wouldn't find me. When I was sure that they had left my brother's room, I zoomed down the stairs while I had the chance to call 911. Moments after grabbing the phone, I heard their footsteps coming back down the stairs. I knew I had to get out of the house, or my mom and dad would return to find me dead. I raced to the back kitchen door and ran outside. I still had the cordless phone in my hand. "911, what is your emergency?" the dispatcher said. "Someone is in my house!" I screamed frantically. "What? Please speak clearly," she said. I realized that I had lost the signal because I had taken the phone too far away from the house. When I reached my neighbor's house, I heard a car cranking at my house. Then, I watched as it sped off into the night.

Fear paid me a visit that night, a visit that I will forever remember. I'm sure one day it will return, and when it does, I will try to remember that it can't stay forever. Sooner or later, it has to leave!



Contestant # Sample 3

Paula:

Strengths (check ones that are strengths)

- ✓ Word choice
- ✓ Organization
- ✓ Sentence Fluency
- ✓ Voice
- ✓ Suspense
- ✓ Details
- ✓ Conventions

The best part about your story was definitely your introduction. I love how you personified fear, and then brought it up again when you said, "Yes, fear had arrived." Then, you wrapped it up in the end by talking about fear returning to pay you a visit. That was awesome!

Additional comments:

This was an awesome story! The suspense what phenomenal. I was on the edge of my seat! I say yes a thousand times!

Simon:

You really need to work on writing more stories! You are very talented for a writer your age.

Additional comments:

It was good. I'm not saying you're ready to publish a novel, but it was good.

Randy:

Yo, Dawg, I thought it was off the chain!

Additional comments:

Yo, I loved this story, Dawg. Your details and suspense had the reader all into your story! Yo, I really loved that metaphor too: "*My heart was a bomb about to explode.*" And your ending was tight! I say yes to Hollywood!

*American
Writer*

**Congratulations!
You made it!**

**You could be the next
American Writer!**

*American
Writer*

**Congratulations!
You made it!**

**You could be the next
American Writer!**

*American
Writer*

Writing Award

In recognition of your outstanding academic achievement and exceptional performance.

Congratulations!
You are the American Writer!

Check out our other writing materials at S&T Publications!

<http://www.sandtpublications.com>

Extreme Makeover~ Writing Edition

This book is primarily designed for teachers of writing grades five through nine. The idea came from the hit television reality show “Extreme Makeover Home Edition”. Viewers watch as builders tear down a run-down house and rebuild it so that it becomes someone’s dream home. So, why not take this concept and transfer it to the world of teaching kids how to revise? *Extreme Makeover Writing Edition* takes a process approach to revision and is divided into eight steps. After teaching mini-lessons, students are divided into “design teams” where they work collaboratively to “tear down” a rough draft and “rebuild” it with the tools of revision. Check out the following link for free samples from this book!

<http://www.sandtpublications.com/f/Microsoft Word - extreme makeover writing edition samples for web site.pdf>

MY PEPPERMINTS

This book provides a step-by-step process to teach students how to revise their writing. No longer will they simply copy a rough draft and call it done. This book provides a simple, fun acronym that will help students remember what to do when it is time to write that final essay! Check out the following link for free samples from *MY PEPPERMINTS*!

<http://www.sandtpublications.com/f/Microsoft Word - MY PEPPERMINTS samples FREE!.pdf>

LIFESAVERS

This book has the same concept as *MY PEPPERMINTS*; however, it is geared for grades four through sixth. Check out the following link for free samples from this book!

<http://www.sandtpublications.com/f/Microsoft Word - LIFESAVERS samples FREE!.pdf>