

# Preparing for the Presentations

## A Picture's Worth a Million Words, Lives and Dollars: Essential Media Literacy in a Global Age (Grades 5-12)

Even if the average American youth experiences over 3,000 advertisements a day, they should not think of media texts (billboards, newspapers, music, TV shows, and the internet, among other things) as “natural.” From her years of international experience in open media as a television producer and as an educator, Ms. Conover works with youth of any age to deconstruct embedded points of view and values in media. Understanding and comparing how media world-wide shapes what each society knows and understands about each other is a critical first step in helping youth navigate their lives through a global media society. Presentation: 50-55 minutes, any size group. A classroom-sized group will allow a more interactive learning experience.

### Required Materials:

- LCD Projector and screen
- Overhead projector (if computer and LCD projector are not available)

## A World of Wisdom (Grades 3-12)

From time immemorial, people everywhere have asked, what is truly important? The question has been answered in a myriad of ways, and the world's wisdom traditions represent the sum of the answers. These traditions tell us what is most valued in a particular culture, and why. They encompass a culture's collective, and best, thinking on deep and difficult matters. Ms. Conover loves to read and discuss stories from her books on world wisdom traditions. Through stories, proverbs and poetry, Ms. Conover can speak about the ethics common to all wisdom traditions, or she can entertain an audience with stories and discussion from a single wisdom tradition from any of her books. Presentation: 50-55 minutes, any size group. A classroom-sized group will allow a more interactive learning experience.

### Required Materials:

- LCD Projector and screen
- Overhead projector (if computer and LCD projector are not available)

## Writes of Passage: From Poetry to Personal Narratives Writing Workshops

(Elementary – Graduate Levels Students)

Sarah Conover's underlying passion is facilitating communication. She believes that writing is thinking and we are all thinkers, therefore, we are all writers—some of us just haven't discovered it yet. Ms. Conover offers the Writes of Passage Workshops to elementary through graduate level students, groups as well as individuals. Each workshop can fit into a class period (the teacher would then allow students to practice their new skills in follow-up classes), or Ms. Conover can present each workshop as a mini-series of several class periods. Each workshop has embedded formative assessments that allow both teacher and student to workshop and evaluate progress continually.

### Required Materials:

- Document camera and projector
- Name tags for students
- Paper and pencils for writers

- **First Paragraph Promises:** the first paragraph of a piece of writing makes a commitment to the audience to pursue a question, a tone, and a style among other things. All the writing that follows is set up in that crucial first paragraph. We zoom in on the first paragraph to deconstruct the essential elements for a successful piece of writing. The technique easily lends itself to formative assessments and peer workshops for the entire school year.
- **Beginnings and Endings:** what are the components that make a great hook? They're not as hard as students think; they follow some invariable rules.

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What makes an engaging, thoughtful, conclusion? How do you end a piece without being trite or boring? This workshop focuses in those beginnings and endings that students find so challenging while giving them plenty of ways to be creative and successful. The techniques lend themselves to continuing formative assessments and peer workshops for any level of writer.

- **A Writing Rubric for Everyone:** Unlike more technical writing rubrics (but easy to use in conjunction with them), Ms. Conover's writing rubric works well for 4<sup>th</sup> graders to professionals, for poetry to personal narratives. Is the writing clear and honest? Does it build by snapshots, does it have some insight for the audience to consider? How do we evaluate these (and two other) essential qualities of all good writing? How do we find the evidence for our claims? Students enjoy using my rubric because it is simple, natural and non-threatening. They can evaluate mentor texts with it easily, they can peer workshop utilizing it, and they can pinpoint their own writing's strengths and weaknesses. The rubric and extensions lend themselves to on-going peer workshops and formative assessments.
- **The Sensory Grid—a Palette for Writers:** want your writers to really learn showing more than telling? Want them to see the evidence that they're doing it successfully? We use a student-made sensory grid to help writers develop the ability to build scenes moment by moment, detail by detail. This workshop provides an excellent and easy way for students to learn how to use sensory detail in writing and quickly assess their progress. The technique lends itself to on-going formative assessments and peer workshops.

\*If it is not too much trouble, it is helpful if Sarah has a bottle of water during her presentations so she does not lose her voice.

# How to Make the Event a Success

There are several things you can do to ensure a successful author visit. The following are some suggestions for giving your school an event to remember.

## Scheduling

In setting up the schedule, there are a few things you can do to maximize the fun and make the day flow smoothly:

- 1) Please limit the total number of presentations to four. This allows Sarah to maintain a high level of energy throughout the day. ***Also, please be sure to indicate in the schedule the grade levels and number of students expected in each session.***
- 2) Please allow at least 15 minutes between presentations.
- 3) The writing workshops, when presented in cafeterias or gymnasiums, don't seem to be as effective as when they are presented elsewhere. If at all possible, please schedule these sessions in a classroom or in the library.

## Make sure the students are aware of the upcoming visit.

If students know something about the event *before it happens*, it really adds to the energy of the assembly. Please read the book "enemy pie" to each class, distribute to the teachers the enclosed "pre-visit" projects, and let the students know that when the presentations begin, they are going to have a blast!

## Events

It is nice to have someone introduce Sarah. Also, giving the students nametags adds some great energy to the event.

## Lunch with the Author (Full-day Events Only)

On the day of the visit, Sarah will be eating lunch with up to ten of your students. Some schools choose to bring in pizza or sandwiches for the group and some schools offer the lunch as a "brown bag" affair. Please let me know your plans for this portion of the visit.

## Book Orders

For students, having a book signed by an author with whom they have interacted is often a magical thing. For one reason or another, the world of reading and writing often becomes more tangible, adventuresome, and real. It is much more valuable for a student to be there, in person, when his/her book is signed, rather than having his/her teacher hand him/her that same book. If it is at all possible, please schedule a time at the end of the day, after the presentations, when students can come to the library and have their books signed.

It is helpful to have a parent volunteer organize the book ordering and distribution. Please have the order forms distributed to students at least one month in advance of the visit. One week before the visit, please let me know how many books have been ordered. Please allow a sufficient amount of time for the autograph session, as it takes approximately one minute to sign each book.

# Checklist for Author Visit

## One month before visit:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Send home book order forms with students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Return signed event contract.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure library has a copies of Sarah Conover's books.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide teachers with supplemental activity information.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Email driving directions and presentation schedule to Michele Kophs at [michele@provatomarketing.com](mailto:michele@provatomarketing.com).

## One week before visit:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Collect book order forms.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact local media to make them aware of the event.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Email Michele Kophs at [michele@provatomarketing.com](mailto:michele@provatomarketing.com) with book order information.

## Day of visit:

- \_\_\_\_\_ For slide presentation assemblies, set up PowerPoint projector and computer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make final lunch preparations for "lunch with the author" group.

