Praise for
The Quickwrite Handbook

"I used to think I knew what quickwrites were until I met Linda Rief. Linda makes mentor authors accessible and makes putting words on a page possible as she lovingly nudges us all toward a belief in our potential as writers. Everything with Linda is an invitation and you can't help but RSVP, 'Yes! I can do this!' This book will move your writing, your student writers, and your teaching to new places."

—Sara K. Ahmed, author of *Being the Change* and coauthor of *Upstanders*

"Linda Rief models the essential moves a teacher must make to increase engagement and joy in writing in The Quickwrite Handbook. *And here's a confession: it took me a long time to read this book. It seems small, but it is packed with invitations I dare you to resist. Linda has an uncanny ability for finding texts that create an urgency for study and imitation. I wrote next to her sample texts, her ideas, and her stunning student examples for weeks. You simply must have this book."*

—Penny Kittle, English teacher, coauthor of *180 Days*, and author of *Book Love*

"In this valuable resource, Linda Rief shares the models from literature that inspire her students and exactly how she uses them. The mentor texts in this book are jumping-off places. They build vision for what strong writing looks and feels and tastes like. They provide the necessary scaffolding that will allow young writers to outgrow themselves and create something they (and we) can be proud of."

—Ralph Fletcher, author of *Joy Write* and coauthor of *Writing Workshop*

"Perhaps you have had the experience of finding that your car will not start because the battery is dead. Maybe you said a few choice words or stomped around a bit before you paused to take a breath and think. It is likely that you phoned someone who came with jumper cables and hooked the battery of your car to the battery of their car. Then, you took another breath, opened the driver's door, and sat down behind the wheel. And when the ignition switch rewarded you with the purr of your engine you exhaled with relief. Linda Rief's book is that friend with the jumper cables coming to the rescue. Her text is filled with sage advice that is steeped in years of classroom practice and Linda's calming manner. She offers each of us a clear and concise guide to understanding why quickwrites work and how to give them power in our daily practice."

—Lester Laminack, coauthor of *Writers ARE Readers* and *Bullying Hurts*

LINDA RIEF

THE Quickwrite HANDBOOK

MENTOR TEXTS

to Jumpstart Your Students' Thinking and Writing

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Contents

Several times a week, at the beginning of class, I project a short piece (*most of the time* no more than one page) of writing on the whiteboard, read it out loud, and ask students to do a quickwrite in response. This writing is done in the response section of their writer's-reader's notebooks. The results of this simple routine are astounding. Consider the following example, written by Lindsay O. after I read aloud Cynthia Rylant's picture book *When I Was Young in the Mountains*.

Remembrance
For My Grandmother
Clarice Smith Chapman, 1914–1989

by Lindsay O.

I remember . . . we collected wild strawberries
And made mud pies and built
Block houses and guided
Our cart down the supermarket aisle
And picked carrots and washed
Dishes and baked cookies and cut
Paper dolls and watched chickadees
And played checkers and ate scrambled eggs and
Took our time on the stairs
And you never told me you were dying.

I wanted the chance to say goodbye.

In two to three minutes look what Lindsay was able to do: find a focus, bring the relationship with her grandmother to life with such specific details of all they did together, use the stylistic device of linking everything together with *and* to emphasize how well she remembered everything and how much these things meant to her, and capture surprise for the reader at the end with this turn—the turn by which she herself was surprised.

Poignant and powerful, but not so exceptional that other students can't do just as well. I've found that inviting students to write off a found idea or borrowed line for just two to three minutes produces good writing—often *really* good writing. Students are always surprised by the thinking that spills onto the page. I used to be; I'm not anymore. (I now use Lindsay's poem as a model for quickwrites, to

stimulate the thinking and writing of other students; it's included in this collection on page 89.)

I have also found that helping students find a way to get their initial ideas on paper helps them build the confidence to realize they do have something to say. When the writing is so focused, so detailed, and so poignant so quickly, it gives them a solid direction for expanding on that idea.

Objective of This Book

The major objective of this book is to put a collection of writing that offers compelling models for quickwrites in the hands of teachers. These models are accessible, valuable, and meaningful invitations to writers, but they are only the beginning. As teachers, we have to find ways of helping students expand and build on these initial ideas so that they will *want* to write and, therefore, *will* write and read. It is through the actual process of developing writing that students learn to write. First, though, they need to get those initial ideas onto paper. Our written and oral responses to students in conferences as they write, and through craft lessons as they draft, help them build on these nuggets of possibilities. Quickwrites are one way to generate these nuggets.

What Is a Quickwrite?

A *quickwrite* is a first draft response to a short piece of writing, usually no more than one page of poetry or prose, a drawing, an excerpt from a novel or a short picture book. Since I did my first collection of quickwrites (Rief 2003), I have seen lots of prompts labeled as quickwrites, or freewriting exercises that last five to ten minutes, also labeled as quickwrites. That is not how I define the term.

I want students to write fast, but I want them to see an example of how someone else took an idea to the completion of a finished product. A mentor text. This is the indirect message I give the students each time I put a piece of writing in front of them for a quickwrite. I want the writing they are seeing and hearing to push them into their own ideas, either as a whole or through borrowing a line—any line—and writing from that line, even if that line sends them meandering in a completely different direction. This is writing to find writing, but using someone else's words to stimulate their thinking. Ralph Fletcher defines what I am asking students to do (I had three of his four sons in my eighth-grade language arts class) as "riding the wave of someone else's words," until you find your own. I love that image—riding a surfboard of words again and again until you find your own way of pushing yourself up, toes gripping, knees bent, body centered to stay on and ride that board with your own words, in your own style.

Kathryn Harrison, a novelist and memoirist, recently said in *The Atlantic* (Fassler 2016) that

> Writing is a process that demands cerebral effort, but it's also one informed by the unconscious. . . . I teach writing, and before

> I taught I never would have guessed the thing I say most often is: "Please stop thinking." But people really write better without thinking, by which I mean without self-consciousness. I'm not calculating about what I write, which means I have very little control over it. It's not that I decide what to write and carry it out. It's more that I grope my way towards something—not even knowing what it is until I've arrived. . . . Of course, the intellect wants to kick in—and, in the later drafts it should.
>
> Writing a first draft you can become paralyzed (with critical voices in your head). . . . I don't sit there waiting for that perfect, beautiful sentence, because I know I'm going to sit there forever. So, as I tell students—start out by tripping, why don't you? Then get up and fall over again. Just as long as you go.

This is what quickwrites do: allow us to write fast without censoring—it's what the subconscious allows us to say. We are surprised to realize we didn't know we knew what we knew until we wrote it down. With quickwrites I am asking students to grope and trip their way into finding what really matters to them.

To do a quickwrite, students and teacher write for two to three minutes off a found idea or borrowed line from a text, responding to something that sparks a reaction in the mind of the reader/listener. This process helps writers generate ideas and get words on paper. When I have students do a quickwrite, I specifically ask them to do the following:

- Write as quickly as they can for two to three minutes, capturing anything that comes to mind in response to the work as a whole.
- Borrow a line or part of a line (one of their own choosing or a particular line that I might suggest) from the work and write off, or from, that line nonstop for two to three minutes.
- Use a specific line or particular style as a model from which to write, as in the example of suggestions for Lindsay's poem, "Remembrance: For My Grandmother, Clarice Smith Chapman" (see page 89).

Paula Bourque, a teacher in Maine, describes the value of quickwrites this way:

> In this high-stakes world of educational achievement students need opportunities to flex their creative and reflective thinking muscles without risk and judgment in order to discover more about themselves, their thinking, and their world. Given the ever-constraining limits of time on our teaching day this can be difficult to achieve. Quickwrites, microbursts of writing that are daily, short, and ungraded pieces of writing, can allow for that.

For years I watched many students staring into space, claiming they were "brainstorming" or they had nothing to write about. Just telling them to "write anything" didn't help; they already couldn't think of "anything." Quickwrites stimulate their thinking so that they can find words. Joel, an eighth grader, told me one day, "The quickwrites help me write down some things I didn't remember I knew. When I see them it makes me *want* to write, so I *do* write."

I can't work in a void, and neither can students. Quickwrites help them find words for their ideas in a concrete way. Once students have words on paper, I can help them develop those thoughts into effective, compelling pieces of writing. Quickwrites help all of us get out of the void. The main purpose of doing a quick-write is simply to get words and ideas on paper.

The Benefits of Quickwrites

Writing and teaching writing can be intimidating. It is hard work, and it takes time. Quickwrites offer an easy and manageable writing experience that helps both students and teachers find their voices and develop their confidence, as they discover they have important things to say. This quick exercise pulls words out of the writer's mind. I am always surprised at the precision of language, level of depth and detail, and clarity of focus I hear when a student reads a three-minute quickwrite out loud. When the models for quickwrites are compelling and carefully chosen, students are able to focus closely and write clearly.

I do want to mention that I still have students who stare at me, stare at the blank page, stare at their pen as they roll it back and forth between their fingers, and write nothing. If they continually tell me they have nothing to say even by borrowing a line, or nothing to say even when I kneel beside them and ask them to talk to me about their thinking, I ask them, no, *tell them*—as a last resort—to copy the poem or the first few paragraphs of the essay into their writer's-reader's notebooks. They cannot sit, just staring into space. They must put words on paper. Ultimately, *in most cases*, they find their own words as they write the words of the text that sits in front of them.

Of course I have kids who really struggle getting their thinking on paper, even with a line in front of them to stimulate their thinking. I kneel next to those students, asking them to tell me what they are thinking, letting them talk it out first. Sometimes I jot down what they tell me to show them they do have ideas. They do have words. The first time I did this for Matt—he was talking, I was writing what he said—I asked him to read what I wrote out loud. He did, then said, "You are such a good writer." I laughed and said, "Those are *your* words, exactly what you said. *You* are such a good writer." Sometimes we have to do that several times to convince those kids that they have good ideas.

Over the years of using these invitations to write with students in my classroom and with teachers in workshops and courses, I've discovered so many of their benefits.

Quickwrites bring out the writer. They:

- give students ideas and frames for their own writing so they are not working in a void
- help students build a volume of writing from which to draw ideas for more extensive and developed pieces
- focus students' attention and stimulate their thinking at the beginning of a class
- provide and capture the nuggets of ideas for more expanded pieces
- encourage writing about important ideas, chosen to make us think and feel as we learn
- give students choices about what they write, how they write, and what works and does not work in a low-stakes situation
- are ungraded, allowing students to be creative, imaginative and reflective in their thinking
- help students focus on one subject in greater detail by giving them examples filled with sensory detail
- introduce students to a variety of stylistic devices and craft moves they might try in their writing.

Quickwrites build students' confidence. They:

- offer surprise when students discover that they didn't realize how much they know, or what they are thinking, until they begin writing
- allow kids to take risks in a nonthreatening, informal situation
- build confidence when students see the quality of their writing
- make writing accessible to all students, even those who struggle the most with words and ideas, because quickwrites are short, quick, nonthreatening, and directed toward a specific task.

Quickwrites develop fluency by increasing volume. They:

- keep students writing several times a week
- keep students writing beyond the quickwrite when they find themselves committed to a topic that matters to them
- offer ongoing practice for writing in sensible, realistic, and meaningful ways on demand or in timed situations.

Quickwrites bring out the reader. They:

- teach students to become better readers as they hear, see, and craft language
- teach students critical reading as they choose significant lines, and then draft and reconsider their ideas in the clearest ways
- provide examples of fine, compelling writing from their peers, their teacher, and professional writers
- introduce students to a variety of writers: poets, essayists, and fiction and nonfiction writers.

Quickwrites help teachers grow as writers. They:

- allow us time to write for two to three minutes each class period
- help us find ideas for writing and our voices as writers
- clarify our understandings of the difficulty of the task we are asking students to do, because we're doing what we ask them to do.

A peripheral benefit of using quickwrites is that they enhance students' ability to cope with timed writing assignments on specific topics. I remind them to approach such assignments as they would a quickwrite and use the same process to develop, expand, revise, and edit their thinking as they take the writing to a best draft. They are better able to face such daunting, timed tasks precisely because their quickwrite practice has made them more fluent and proficient.

Teaching with Quickwrites

In my teaching, I always try to remember that:

- The more I want students to know how to do something well, the more often they should do it.
- We learn to read by reading and writing.
- We learn to write by writing and reading.
- A person can read without writing, but cannot write without reading.

Quickwrites support all four of these principles. Following are some practices I've developed around quickwrites to help students read and write successfully.

Engage Students in Writing

- Share any of the pieces of writing in this book or other pieces that you find are meaningful and compelling to your students.
- Let the students see the pieces by projecting them on a whiteboard.
- Read the piece aloud to the students so they can hear it (practice ahead of time so that you really know the writing well).
- Ask students to try writing or drawing quickly based on any of the "Try This . . ." ideas at the bottom of each page.
- Write or draw your own quickwrites with the students. (Every one of us can spare two to three minutes, especially when we realize the value of writing for ourselves and for our students.)
- If more than half of the students are still writing after two or three minutes, let them continue for another minute or two.
- Give students credit (Tom Romano calls it "good faith participation") for doing the quickwrites, considering this first-draft thinking part of their notebook or journal writing.

Engage Students in Reading

- Ask if anyone would like to read what he or she wrote.
- Thank volunteers for sharing and comment specifically on what they did well.
- If you do several quickwrites in one period or during the week, ask students to read what they wrote (during the day or at the end of the week) and star the quickwrite that surprises them the most or that they like the most. This gives them a focus for what they might go back to as they develop more extensive pieces from the quickwrite.
- Read your own quickwrites to the students (ones you don't like as well as ones you like), and frequently show them how you develop some of the ideas into fuller pieces.

Extend the Quickwrites

- Allow the students a choice in which quickwrites remain undeveloped and which matter enough to expand or craft further into finished pieces. (All writing does not necessarily begin with a quickwrite. This is only *one* of the ways where we find possibilities for more developed pieces.)
- Teach the students the craft of revision as you talk with them about their writing, whether it comes from quickwrites or other sources.
- Every few weeks ask students to go back into their writer's-reader's notebooks and find the quickwrites or any other thinking that surprised them or they want to say more about, indicating that this thinking could be developed into a more expanded piece. (This is easier if the quickwrites are all kept in some kind of writer's-reader's notebook.)

Extend This Collection

- Add your students' writing and your own writing to this collection.
- Add the writing of professionals that you especially like to this collection.
- If there are particular kinds of writing you would like students to become more adept at, find models you can use as quickwrites to help them craft that kind of writing (essays, persuasive pieces, informational pieces, poetry, description, etc.).

Relooking at the Models

Any one of the models, both quickwrites and interludes, included in this book can be looked at a second or third time to help the students gain insight about leads, endings, line breaks, use of punctuation, titles, layers of meaning, fragments, word choices, and so on. The possibilities for using the models to explore craft elements are virtually limitless. At the end of the introduction I have included a chart that could be used to help students develop a list of craft moves from the models in this book that might help them make their own writing stronger.

In the same way you model your own writing when soliciting feedback to that writing, give students some examples of what you notice in these models of writing to help them develop the habit of reading as writers, noticing what a writer does to craft his writing. Also essential to this insight is the ability to notice and describe what the craft move does to the writing and/or the reader.

Don Murray said again and again that good writing makes us think *or* feel something; the best writing makes us think *and* feel something. So many of the students whose writing is in this collection, as both quickwrites and interludes, didn't think they had anything to say. Giving them another student's words or the words of professionals to hold onto, until they found their own, gave them the confidence to know they could show us what they think *and* feel.

Invitations to Writing

This book is a series of invitations to students and teachers, intended to help them find ideas for writing. It does not attempt to oversimplify a complex process. Quickwrites offer beginnings, support, connections, and encouragement in a practical, concrete, accessible, and provocative way. They help students realize they do have something to say, and that they are capable of saying those things in a way that engages readers.

Adolescents are often uncomfortable and insecure about writing. Quickwrites are nonthreatening precisely because they are short and quick, yet focused. They provide accessible entry into significant matters because they are chosen for their compelling topics, well-crafted language, and unique styles. When carefully selected so that students can readily relate to them, they give students models that stimulate their thinking about their own topics in concrete, specific ways. As they experiment and craft their ideas, observations, beliefs, knowledge, and opinions, students develop into critical readers and thinkers. They also develop as human beings, answering their biggest questions: *Who am I? Where do I fit in this world?*

Kira, a language arts teacher who was a student in a course I was teaching at the University of New Hampshire, literally came running to me at the beginning of the third class, breathless. "You know how I told you I hate writing and was petrified about teaching it and that I had nothing to say and no matter what you did I knew it wouldn't help me but I can't believe what I've done with these quickwrites and I was so excited I've been working with my kids all week and I've written things I didn't know I knew and they've written things they didn't know

they knew and every day I can't wait to work on this writing and neither can they and I can't believe their writing can be this good."

And the writing *is* good. There is something about asking students to write quickly and for a short period of time, with good examples in front of them, that leads them to think in detailed, explicit, focused ways that are imaginative, creative, and unique. They say things they didn't know they were going to say. They are allowing themselves the opportunity to engage in cognitive surprise.

Leading Students to Literacy

Don Graves often said to me that "democracies are dependent on the quality of their citizens' thinking. . . . And one of the best ways to develop solid thinkers early on is by asking children to think clearly through a written text."

In our attempts as a nation to lead our children to literacy, we have nearly abandoned writing—writing for real reasons, for real audiences. I believed this twenty years ago and still believe it is true today—unfortunately. I think we have also forgotten that a person can read without writing, but he or she cannot write without reading. If we neglect writing while focusing our attention almost exclusively on reading, it is also *at the expense of reading*.

What has happened to the writing that used to flourish in classrooms? Have we forgotten, ignored, or—even worse—abandoned it? Have we dismissed long-term, real writing while focusing all our attention on one-word answers or formulaic paragraphs to standardized, shortened passages of reading, supposedly to determine our students' critical reading skills?

Have we forgotten that *writing is thinking*? When students write, they are engaged in a recursive process of critical thinking: Have I said clearly what I want to say? Are my thoughts well organized and clearly developed? Have I used the sharpest, tightest, most vivid language? Does my lead capture readers and give them a clear direction and focus? Does my writing make the reader think, or feel, or learn something?

When students are engaged in the process of writing something that matters to them, they do write and they do read, thoughtfully and thoroughly.

Our goals should be loftier than raising reading scores or raising writing scores. Our classrooms should be laboratories of high-level thinking where the activities stimulate our students' curiosity and imagination, where the students are the problem solvers, the thinkers. It is through speaking, reading, *and writing* that our students become articulate, literate, confident, and thoughtful citizens of the world.

Quickwrites get students thinking.

Excerpt from *The Running Dream*

by Wendelin Van Draanen

I AM A RUNNER.

That's what I do.

That's who I am.

Running is all I know, or want, or care about.

It was a race around the soccer field in third grade that swept me into a real love of running.

Breathing the sweet smell of spring grass.

Sailing over dots of blooming clover.

Beating all the boys.

After that, I couldn't stop. I ran everywhere. Raced everyone. I loved the wind across my cheeks, through my hair.

Running aired out my soul.

It made me feel *alive*.

And now?

I'm stuck in this bed, knowing I'll never run again.

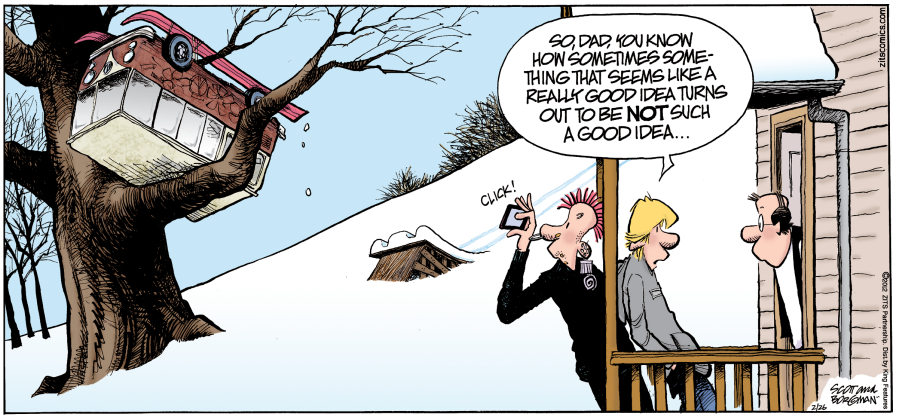
TRY THIS (as quickly and as specifically as you can for 2–3 minutes)

- Write out anything this excerpt brings to mind for you.
- Think about something you are passionate about (something that "airs out your soul," "makes you feel alive") and write down everything that makes this activity so important to you.
- Start with the line "I AM A _____" and fill in the blank, describing all that you do, think, feel, experience while doing this activity.
- Change the line to "I am not a _____," expanding on all the reasons why you are not.
- Her last two lines say she will never run again. What has stopped you from doing something you love doing?

TEACHER NOTE Notice the short, clipped sentences along with longer ones that give a cadence, or rhythm, to the piece, the way a runner might be getting into the rhythm of running and breathing. You could use this piece when looking at craft moves—especially length of sentences and layout on the page—and all they do for the reader.

Zits Cartoon

by Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman



TRY THIS (as specifically and as quickly as you can for 2–3 minutes)

- Write out anything that this *Zits* cartoon brings to mind for you.
- Start with the line "It seemed like a good idea at the time" or "you know how sometimes something that seems like a really good idea turns out to be not such a good idea" and let the line lead your thinking.

TEACHER NOTE If you look at page 156 in this book, you will see the piece titled "Tonsillectomy," which began as a quickwrite in my writer's-reader's notebook in response to this cartoon. With revision after revision it eventually became one of my best pieces. Share cartoons and pictures with your students. Ask them: What do you see? What do you notice? What do you think? What do you feel?

Interlude

Snip

by Lucas S.

It seemed like a good idea at the time to give my cat a hair cut. I was an imaginative four-year-old then, and my cat had very long whiskers. I thought it was time to give him a trim.

My cat was in the bathroom drinking from his dish of water when the idea crossed my mind. His pink tongue lapped up the water as I snuck up behind him. A sleek black and white coat of fur covered his plump body. A pair of red scissors hid in my hands. I felt their smooth, cool plastic handle as I gripped them behind my back. Slowly, I crept closer and closer until I could easily reach out and touch him. I moved my hand that clutched the scissors closer. "Snip!" It was a clean cut.

A couple of long, translucent whiskers fell silently to the floor as my cat, Tobey, ran away in fear. It sounded like nails on a chalkboard as his claws skidded across the wood floor. One side of his face had long drooping whiskers while the other had barely any. I knew then that I was in deep trouble if anyone found out. I needed to find Tobey before anyone else did and trim the other whiskers off, too, so it wasn't as noticeable.

"Tobey . . . Tobey," I called out across the house. No response. He usually meows when we call his name. I ran quickly around the house checking everywhere for him. First, I peered under the beds. No luck. Next I ran to look under the couches. No Tobey. Finally, I bounded down the stairs and looked up to the ledge in front of the window. He loved to sit there and gaze at the birds, but not this time. Then I galloped up the stairs, and ran around the house looking everywhere again, becoming more and more frantic. My heartbeat quickened at the thought of someone finding him with a terrible haircut. The noise I was making from running around frantically, boomed through the house.

My mother was due to have a baby in a week, and she was very sick. She almost never took naps, but she must have dozed off by accident while she was

TEACHER NOTE "Snip" began in Lucas's writer's-reader's notebook, the place where he can play with ideas, as seen here. Once he knows this is the piece he wants to craft into a fully developed story, he takes it to the computer, to bring to a fuller piece that still goes through the process of revising and editing.

Interlude

folding laundry. Startled awake by the ruckus, my mother came upstairs to check if I was all right. She walked up each step slowly and carefully. A line from lying on the pillow streaked across her cheek. She rubbed her drowsy eyes, asking "Lucas. Are you okay?" as she watched me run from place to place. "What are you looking for?"

"I'm looking for Tobey," I replied.

I paused for a second. The room fell silent. I knelt on the blue Oriental rug that lay across the hardwood floors in our living room. Little pieces of black and white Star Wars Legos were scattered across the carpet. I looked down at them while my heartbeat quickened; all my muscles tensed. A soft pitter-patter of pawsteps approached from behind us. Then, the dreaded sound stopped as a timid "meow" floated through the room. My eyes widened as my mom turned around to see the lopsided haircut staring up at her. I looked at Tobey again and saw the left side of his face with long, white whiskers; on the right side there was nothing but some tiny little stubs.

My mom's jaw dropped and she narrowed her eyes, as if trying to get a better view. Then her face changed and her mouth closed into an angry scowl. She furrowed her eyebrows. But, before she could speak, I ran to my room and locked the door behind me. I jumped into my bed and started screaming into my pillow. I felt a lump growing in my throat and I curled up into a ball on top of my Spider-Man bedspread. My favorite stuffed hippopotamus stared blankly at me, as if he was judging me for what I had done. I tossed him across the room. My mind whirled. I always hate doing something wrong, and it had begun to dawn on me that what I had done was very wrong.

The shadows of my Lego sets grew longer and longer as the sun fell towards the horizon. Finally, my father came home. I could hear some quiet murmurs from the other side of the door, and a loud, "What?!" Then came heavy footsteps

continues

Interlude

continued from previous page

down the hall. He unlocked the door with the key that always sat above the doorframe. The sound of metal on metal as the key clicked into place made my stomach tighten.

I was worried that he would start to yell, but instead, he spoke in a worried voice. "Luke, you know that cats need whiskers to sense their surroundings." I did not know that, but I nodded. I stared at his long tie to avoid looking at his frustrated brown eyes. "That was a very poor choice. I am disappointed." A long family talk then followed about the proper use of scissors. A hunt began for all the scissors in the house, even the little safety ones. They were corralled like little accomplices and put in their jail atop the fridge.

I thought it would have looked better if I had been able to cut the other side off. Tobey looked lopsided to me. But I decided not to say a word. It didn't take long for the whiskers to grow back, but it was four months before my parents allowed me to use scissors at home again.

TRY THIS (as specifically and as quickly as you can for 2–3 minutes)

- Write out anything this poem brings to mind for you.
- Borrow any line, letting the line lead your thinking.
- What does Collins make you think about when he says, "This is the beginning of sadness."
- When you were four or seven or nine or any age, what did you pretend or imagine or believe or do, that has somehow lost its importance or its delight now that you are older?

On Turning Ten

by Billy Collins

The whole idea of it makes me feel
like I'm coming down with something,
something worse than any stomach ache
or the headaches I get from reading in bad light—
a kind of measles of the spirit,
a mumps of the psyche,
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

You tell me it is too early to be looking back,
but that is because you have forgotten
the perfect simplicity of being one
and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.
But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.
At four I was an Arabian wizard.
I could make myself invisible
by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

But now I am mostly at the window
watching the late afternoon light.
Back then it never fell so solemnly
against the side of my tree house,
and my bicycle never leaned against the garage
as it does today,
all the dark blue speed drained out of it.

Appendix B

Chart for Identifying Craft Moves in the Mentor Pieces

Title of Writing	Craft Move(s)	How Does This Impact the Writing and/or the Reader?

Go back to the piece of writing that surprised you the most or that you liked the most, and try one or more of the craft moves you noticed to make the writing stronger and better.