

What is GOOD WRITING?

★ IDEAS

- **An important main idea.** What's the one most important thing the author wants the audience to know? Why is it important to the author? Why is it important to the audience?
- **Interesting details.** Which details are the most interesting? How do they help the audience understand the main idea?
- **"Showing," not just telling.** Where does the author use "showing" details? How does the "showing" help to improve the audience's understanding?
- **A clear and meaningful purpose.** Why did the writer write this? Why is this a good reason to write something? What does the author want the audience to think and/or do?
- **Something surprising or unusual that works.** What is surprising or unusual about the writing? How does this differ from other things you've read?

★ WORD CHOICE

- **Strong verbs that tell how actions are performed.** Where has the author used strong verbs? What makes them effective?
- **Adjectives and adverbs that make things more specific.** Where has the author used adjectives and adverbs to make the writing more specific? How does using these adjectives and adverbs improve the reader's understanding?
- **Words and phrases you can remember long after you've finished reading.** Which words and phrases do you remember? Why are they so memorable?
- **Words and phrases used accurately and effectively.** Is the writer's usage accurate? Are there any improvements or corrections you would suggest? Where has the author used unusual words effectively? Where has the author used common words in new ways?
- **Language that is appropriate to purpose and audience.** Are the words the author has used appropriate for the writer's purpose and audience? Are there any words or phrases that are too casual, too formal, too hard to understand, or possibly offensive?

★ ORGANIZATION

- **Catches the audience's attention at the start; makes them want to read more.** How does the beginning catch the audience's attention? Why would the audience want to read more?
- **Feels finished at the end; makes the audience think.** How does the ending make the piece feel finished? What does it make the audience think about?
- **Parts arranged in the best order.** Can you easily identify the different parts of the piece? Does each part follow logically from the next? Is the sequencing effective and entertaining?
- **Spends the right amount of time on each part.** Why does the author spend more time in some parts than in others? Are there places where the author moves ahead too quickly or hangs on too long?
- **Easy to follow from part to part.** How does the author move from part to part? How do these transitions work?

★ SENTENCE FLUENCY

- **Variety in sentence beginnings.** What are some of the different ways the author begins sentences? Do you notice any patterns? Does the author ever begin two or three consecutive sentences in the same way?
- **Variety in sentence length and structure.** Does the author vary the length and structure of his or her sentences? Do you notice any patterns? Does the author use the same length or structure in two or three consecutive sentences? What sentence structures does the author use most often?
- **Easy to read expressively; sounds great when read aloud.** What are the most expressive parts? What is it about how they sound that makes them so much fun to read out loud?
- **Uses rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and other "sound" effects.** Where has the author used rhythm, rhyme, alliteration or other effects to make the writing sound interesting? How does this improve the piece?
- **Sentences are structured so they're easy to understand.** How does the author use connecting words and punctuation marks to make sentences easy to understand? How does the order of sentence parts make the writing easy to understand?

★ VOICE

- **The author cares about the topic.** How can you tell that the author cares about the topic? Where can you find evidence of strong opinions?
- **Strong feelings; honest statements.** Where are the author's strongest statements? How can you tell that the author is saying what he or she really thinks?
- **Individual, authentic, and original.** Does this writing feel as though it could only have been written by one person? Does the writing sound like it was written by a real person? How original is it?
- **Displays a definite and well developed personality.** How would you describe the author's personality in this writing? What examples from the text tell you you're right?
- **Appropriate tone for purpose and audience.** Is the writer using an appropriate tone for this situation? How can you tell? Which parts, if any, seem inappropriate?

★ CONVENTIONS

- **"Outside" punctuation.** Has the author used periods, question marks, and exclamation marks in ways that make sense to the audience? Is it easy to tell where ideas end and begin?
- **"Inside" punctuation.** Does the author's use of commas, colons, dashes, parentheses, and semicolons make sense to the audience? How does the author's use of these marks help make sentences with many parts easier to understand?
- **Capitalization.** Has the author used capital letters in ways that make sense to the audience? Is it easy to tell where new ideas begin? Has the author capitalized the word "I", as well as names, places, and things that are one of a kind?
- **Paragraphing.** Has the author grouped related sentences into paragraphs in ways that make sense to the audience? Has the author started a new paragraph each time a new person starts speaking? Has the author indented or skipped a line to show where new paragraphs start?
- **Spelling.** If the writing has spelling mistakes, do these errors make the piece difficult to read and understand? How does the author's spelling affect the way the audience feels about the writing and the person who wrote it?