

Who Is Talking?

Objective

Given writing samples, the student will identify strong voice by answering specific questions. Given a description of a fictional character, the student will write in the “person’s” voice.

Standards

- Standard 1D: Evaluates own and others’ writing (e.g., identifies the best features of a piece of writing, determines how own writing achieves its purposes, asks for feedback, responds to classmates’ writing)
- Standard 1J: Writes expressive composition (e.g., expresses ideas, reflections, and observations; uses an individual, authentic voice; uses relevant details; and presents ideas that enable a reader to imagine the world of the event or experience)

Materials

- Who Is Talking? (pages 39–40)
- Sample stamped envelope and letter addressed to you at school

Preparation

Copy pages 39–40 onto either one transparency or onto five separate transparencies so that you can display the sample letters to students one at a time.

Lesson Opening

Ask students if they are able to tell who wrote the letter to you just by seeing the envelope. Might they be able to identify the author if they read it?

Lesson Directions

1. Review the characteristics of the voice trait.
2. Show one overhead or one letter at a time from pages 39–40. Ask the students questions about each piece of writing:
 - Who do you think wrote this?
 - Who is talking here? Is it a male or female? How old is the person?
 - What might this person’s job be?
 - Does the writing sound like a real person talking?
3. List specific characters on the board, e.g., a 17-year-old football player, an 80-year-old book seller, etc. Have students write a letter to the class in the voice of one character.

Lesson Closing

Read two or three student paragraphs aloud anonymously. Ask the class if they can match the paragraph to a character on the board, and if so, which one. Does it sound like that “person” wrote it? or did the student’s own voice come through?

Who Is Talking? *(cont.)*

Teacher Directions: Copy this page and the following onto overheads, or make a separate overhead for each paragraph (see page 38).

Sample Paragraph #1

I like to begin walks on the bridge at One Mile. There's always action here in the park near my house. Water rushes over the dam. Trout and trout shadows dart about the still spots. In summer, there's a sweet, creek, sycamore smell.

Today it's early September and oak galls are dropping—the puffy golf-sized balls oak trees form around wasp larvae. A blackened gall spins on a step of the dam below the bridge. The gall bobs under the tiny falls and hops back up in a circle like a science class experiment nobody's watching but me.

Sample Paragraph #2

I am bidding you goodbye now, my friend. Surely my days on this Earth are of even fewer count than I had figured.

Last night I got home from work; put on my new orange helmet; wheeled my screaming-orange, 21-speed, rapid-fire shifting mountain bike out of the garage; and prepared to ride to the local fire station to license the creature.

A brief break in traffic afforded me the chance to pedal across semi-busy Wilson Street. I stood on the pedal and pulled on the handlebars for momentum and—boom!—my feet kicked out from under me and my chest hit the bars. I flopped down in the middle 'turning lane' of Wilson with cars coming from both directions! When I recovered my senses, I saw my one pedal lying back at the driveway entrance to the apartments. I gathered the parts and limped back to my own abode, where I discovered that the bike shop had not screwed in my pedals!

Who Is Talking? *(cont.)*

Sample Paragraph #3

We now have a cement slab for the new house next door west to us. I suspect tomorrow will be the day they begin putting up the sides and rafters. It has been interesting to watch all the steps from our kitchen window. Last Friday when the slab was poured, it took at least eight fellows, maybe more.

Sample Paragraph #4

I feel violence is a problem because of the effect it has on ordinary people. I don't understand how people can be so ignorant, how they can do such mean things to other people. It is scary when you hear on the news how somebody has killed seven people, or . . . There should be harsh punishments for such things. Sometimes I think the death penalty is not even enough.

Sample Paragraph #5

So, how's it going? Were you a little scared on the first day of school? I was a little bit curious but not really scared. My border on my name tag was really terrific. I just wish the teacher had spelled my name right. But what can you expect with a name like Flingenbocher? I wish I had a name like yours, Hill.

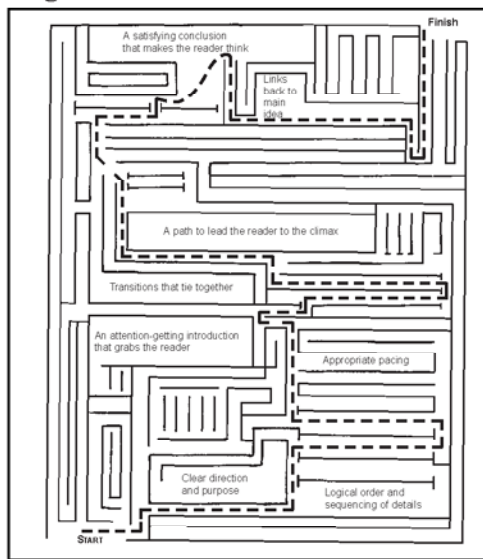
Answer Key

Pages 39–40: Voices are from the following individuals. Your students will present a wide variety of answers. Accept reasonable responses.

1. middle-aged female, writer (permission granted by Susan G. Wooldridge, November 1999)
2. 42-year-old male, youth worker, speaker (permission granted by Dennis Blackwell, April 2000)
3. 82-year-old female, retired librarian (permission granted by Helen Lantis, April 2000)
4. 15-year-old female, student (permission granted by Amber Mullins, April 2000)
5. 11-year-old male, student (permission granted by Kenneth Mabry, April 2000)

Note to the teacher: You may wish to copy the corrected paragraphs and pages that follow onto overheads to display to students for correcting their own work, or you may make regular paper copies to give to students for the same purpose.

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Page 59

There are many kinds of cars and trucks. Sometimes a car quits running and needs to be repaired. A mechanic fixes cars. He uses different tools to work on them. A mechanic's most useful tools are pliers, a wrench, and a screwdriver. It is important for him to use the right tool to do the job.

The tire on my car was flat yesterday. I pulled over to the side of the road. Then I opened the trunk and got the jack out. The nuts on the tires were too tight for me to get loose, so I used a special tool that is called a star wrench. Changing a tire is hard work.

Writers use tools, too. They need to fix their writing to make it better and easier for people to read. Spelling and punctuation are important writing tools. It is also important to put capitals where they belong.

Page 61 (Corrections include title and conclusion. Student titles and ending will vary. Have students check their conclusion against the traits of organization.)

[Title]

Once upon a time there **were** two brothers. They lived in a cream colored house surrounded by towering fir trees. **Every** morning they fought because one of them liked to get up early and the other wanted to sleep in.

One day, Thomas decided to solve the problem. He tied a thin string to the light switch.

"Now I need the black rope," he **muttered** to himself. "Where is it, Keith?"

"Don't ask me. Look in the junk bucket. Or maybe under your bed."

Thomas **rummaged** around and soon pulled out a thick rope. He tied it to the thin string, and looped it across the hammock hanging over the bed. **He** walked back and forth across the room, from the bed to the light switch, testing his **invention**.

"Look, Mom!" he called, "**I** can lay in bed and turn the light off."

"That's not fair," Keith said. "I'm going to rig up a way to turn the light on again. Thomas, have you seen my rope?"

"It's probably in the bucket, where I found mine. You look."