

A rewarding routine

The warm-ups use colloquial language and real-life situations but still include course material. The students are active from the first minute of class. My students never seem to tire of the warm-ups and always rate them highly on end-of-semester evaluations. Lastly, I especially enjoy these first minutes of class when the students are standing, smiling, and doing the warm-up they expect every day.

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Report Writing for Lower Level ESL Students

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In the elementary grades, every one of us made reports on various topics such as “The Pyramids” or “Volcanoes.” We would find information – usually from one source – to complete an assignment. As we proceeded to higher grades and high school we learned to find information from various sources and to avoid using exact words, expressions, phrases, and sentence structure. We learned the proper way to paraphrase and quote informational material to protect sources and make writing uniquely our own, not only in expressing facts and ideas, but also in relating an opinion or thesis about a topic.

In early grades we learned the basics by using exact language from text. I devised a student-centered exercise to work on this basic skill by writing a class report from several sources. My students were second-third level (high-beginner) Clark College ESL students in their 20s and 30s from Russian, Spanish, and Asian backgrounds. The class had previously taken a field trip to the public library and become familiar with the types of material available and how and where to locate information (see Library Worksheet in Appendix A).

First, I took out five simplified biographies of Martin Luther King Jr. from the library. One biography came from the Internet via a relative of one of the students. Next, I made a set of questions about Dr. King’s personal information, education, family, work, activity, and beliefs (see Table 1 below). I gave one biography and a set of questions to each of six groups of students and asked each to write the title of the book, author, library call number, whether illustrated, number of pages, and pages where answers to the questions were found.

Following that, in cooperative learning fashion, we shared the answers on one worksheet that had the sixteen questions. (See answers to the questions in Table 2 below.) To examine relationships between ideas, I asked each group to cut out the sentence answers, decide how best to organize them into a report or story, and paste them together. I then typed the final form into a paragraph and listed the “references” in alphabetical order at the bottom of the page. The result was the final paragraph in Table 3. Finally, the class read the resulting draft. They understood the information they had collected,

although the sentences would have been too difficult without any previous familiarity.

Students had ample opportunity to process information through first identifying it with key words, then writing sentence answers, and finally ordering and drafting the answers into a version including the salient facts of the topic. This exercise proved to be ideal for helping lower level students begin to collect and present information as a first step in eventually handling the more difficult task of writing up research in higher levels.

Table 1. Martin Luther King Jr. Questions

Name:

Date:

Directions: *Look through the book to find answers to the questions below. Then, write the answers to the questions, title, author, call number, illustration, number of pages, and pages of information for the book on the lines provided.*

Title of book: Illustrated?
 Author of book: Number of pages:
 Call Number: Pages of information:

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. When was Martin Luther King Jr. born?
2. Where was he born?
3. Where did he live?

Title of book: Illustrated?
 Author of book: Number of pages:
 Call Number: Pages of information:

II. EDUCATION

1. Where did Martin Luther King Jr. go to school?
2. What degrees did MLK receive?
3. Was he a good student?

Title of book: Illustrated?
 Author of book: Number of pages:
 Call Number: Pages of information:

III. FAMILY

1. Who was Martin Luther King's father? What was his job?
2. Was MLK married?
3. Did he have children? If so, how many?

Title of book: Illustrated?
 Author of book: Number of pages:
 Call Number: Pages of information:

IV. WORK

1. What was Martin Luther King's job?
2. Where did MLK work?

Title of book: Illustrated?
 Author of book: Number of pages:
 Call Number: Pages of information:

V. ACTIVITY

1. What activities did Martin Luther King Jr. have?
2. What organizations did MLK belong to?

Title of book: Illustrated?
 Author of book: Number of pages:
 Call Number: Pages of information:

VI. BELIEFS

1. What was the name of Martin Luther King's famous speech?
2. Did MLK like the Indian freedom fighter Mahatma Ghandi? How do you know?
3. Was there any music that helped MLK speak? If so, what was it?

Table 2. Martin Luther King Jr. Answers

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929. He lived in Atlanta, Georgia. (Lambert, p. 15)

Martin Luther King Jr. was awarded his doctorate from Boston University. (Patrick, p. 24)

Martin Luther King Jr. was the best student in high school. His grades were so good that he was given the chance to skip ninth and twelfth grades and begin college early. (Patrick, p. 17)

Martin Luther King's father was the Reverend Martin Luther King Sr., a minister. (Patrick, p. 13)

Coretta Scott King was Martin Luther King Jr.'s wife. (Jakoubek, p. 79)

Martin Luther King Jr. had four children. (Patrick, p. 58)

Martin Luther King Jr. was a reverend in the Baptist Church. He was a leader of black people who were trying to win their rights. (Murphy, p. 1)

Martin Luther King Jr. worked at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. (Schloredt, p. 58)

Martin Luther King Jr. asked black people to march and carry signs. He also asked black people not to fight. (Murphy, p. 7)

Martin Luther King Jr. belonged to Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). (Retrieved from the internet on January 18, 2007)

Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech was "I Have a Dream." (Murphy, p. 18)

Martin Luther King Jr. believed very strongly that American blacks should adopt the methods of nonviolence advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. (Schlordt, p. 12)

The hymn that helped Martin Luther King Jr. speak was "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty we are free at last!" (Murphy, p. 18)

Table 3. Martin Luther King Jr. Paragraph

Martin Luther King Jr. was a reverend in the Baptist Church. He was a leader of black people who were trying to win their rights. Born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, Martin Luther King Jr. was the best student in high school. His grades were so good that he was given the chance to skip ninth and twelfth grades and begin college early. He was awarded his doctorate from Boston University. After college, he worked at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. His wife was Coretta Scott King and he had four children. In order to win rights for black people, he asked them to march and carry signs. He believed very strongly that American blacks should adopt the methods of nonviolence advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. Therefore, he asked black people not to fight. His famous speech was "I Have a Dream" and the hymn that helped him speak was "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty we are free at last!"

References

- Jakoubek, R. (1989). *Martin Luther King Jr.* Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Lambert, K. K. (1993). *Martin Luther King Jr.* Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Martin Luther King Jr.* (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/about_king/biography/

Murphy, C. (1991). *Martin Luther King Jr.* Utah: Aro Publishing.

Patrick, D. (1991). *Martin Luther King Jr.* New York: Franklin Watts.

Schlordt, V. (1988). *Martin Luther King Jr.* Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens Publishing.

Diane Tehrani has taught beginning, intermediate, and advanced ESL at Clark College for fifteen years. Her special interests are writing and intercultural learning.

Appendix A: Library Worksheet

Name:

Date:

Directions: *After a visit to the library, write answers to the following questions.*

1. Call the Ft. Vancouver Library at (360) 695-1566. What are the hours the library is open?
2. Does the library have books in languages other than English? If it does, what are three of the languages?
3. Does the library have movies and cassette tapes? If it does, what is one movie or tape you might take out to watch?
4. How do you get a library card?
5. For how long can you take a book out of the library?
6. Look in the Portland telephone book. What is the name of a restaurant you might like to visit?
7. What are three levels of Easy Reading?
8. What is the name of the book at Call Number:
a) 423.9171 b) 428.34
SHAPIRO Collis
9. What is the call number for the World Book 2006?
10. What is an atlas?