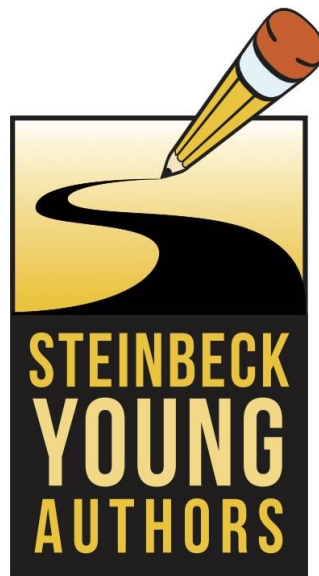




NATIONAL STEINBECK CENTER



**Writing Coach Workshop Guide
2019-2020**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Steinbeck Young Authors Program Description	3
Stage One: Classroom Component	
Stage Two: Day of Writing	
Stage Three: Awards Ceremony	
Steinbeck Young Authors Role and Responsibilities of the Writing Coach	4
“The Gift” Synopsis	5
Characters	
Setting	
Synopsis	
“The Pearl” Synopsis	6
Characters	
Setting	
Synopsis	
Steinbeck Young Authors Guidelines for Student Meeting and Coaching	7
Suggested Sequence for Student Meeting/Coaching Session	
Introductions	
Discussion about Writing	
Writing Coach Evaluation	

Steinbeck Young Authors Program Description

"I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist... It might even be the greatest of arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit."

John Steinbeck, 1955

Developed to address the need to improve middle school student writing, the Steinbeck Young Authors Program also is intended to emphasize the joy of writing and to introduce students to the idea of higher education, as well as to the works of John Steinbeck and the National Steinbeck Center. The Steinbeck Young Authors Middle School Writing Program consists of three stages: a classroom component, a day-long event for teacher-nominated student finalists, and an awards ceremony.

Stage One: Classroom Component

6th, 7th and 8th grade English teachers implement a drop in curriculum unit which includes engaging classroom activities and progressive writing activities organized around the study of Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* or *The Pearl*. The curriculum includes a rubric for assessing the students' writing skills, that will be used by the coaches and the judges in Stages Two and Three. The goal of the drop in curriculum unit is to enhance students' writing skills and to support proficiency toward Common Core State Standards. The project does not replace the existing curriculum taught in the classroom.

Each teacher selects two students who will move on to the next level of the program, in one of the following categories: Proficient/Advanced Writer, Emerging Writer, or English Language Learner Writer. Students are not aware of the category in which their essay is to be judged. The goal is that every participating student is a winner.

Stage Two: Day of Writing

During March, nominated student finalists from participating teacher classrooms attend a day-long event, the Day of Writing, at the National Steinbeck Center. The schedule for the Day of Writing includes: relevant hands-on activities; students writing to a prompt related to one of Steinbeck's novels studied by the student in class; lunch with a coach to discuss the student's writing; and additional time for students to edit and revise their draft into a final essay. By the end of the Day of Writing, students submit their finished essay for review to a panel of judges.

Stage Three: Awards Ceremony

A panel of writing experts judge the student writing in each category (Advanced/Proficient, Emerging, and English Language Learner). Winning essays are announced at the Awards Ceremony in April. All students who participate in the Day of Writing receive a certificate of participation and a copy of Gabilan Journal, which contains all student finalist essays. The Awards Ceremony recognizes participating students, students who receive awards, schools, and teachers. Members of the community are invited to attend.

Steinbeck Young Authors Role and Responsibilities of the Writing Coach

The primary purpose of the writing coach is to provide positive and effective feedback to a middle school student. This feedback assists the student in editing and improving his/her essay in accordance with the writing rubric. One of the secondary purposes is to impress upon the student the importance and practical use of good writing skills.

As a volunteer writing coach, your responsibilities are as follows:

- 1) Optional: Participate in the Writing Coach Training Workshop on either Thursday, February 20th, 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 pm or 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Greenfield Union School District Center. At the National Steinbeck Center, Friday, February 21st, 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. or Saturday, February 22nd, 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
- 2) Attend the Writing Coach Orientation on **the Day of Writing**.
- 3) After the Writing Coach Orientation, meet your student, have lunch with them, and take a photo which will appear in the Gabilan Journal. You will meet to discuss his/her essay draft and potential revisions. During this meeting, you will provide positive and effective feedback to a student on his/her writing.
- 4) Following your student meeting, we ask that you complete an evaluation form that provides feedback about the program.

In celebration of the student finalists, an Awards Ceremony will be held in May at the National Steinbeck Center. You are invited and encouraged to attend.

“The Gift” Synopsis

Characters

Billy Buck: an aging farm hand working at the Tiflin Ranch.

Mrs. Tiflin: the mother of Jody, responsible for cooking the meals.

Jody: a ten-year old boy, shy and polite.

Carl Tiflin: Jody’s stern father, a disciplinarian.

Setting

A farm in the valley outside of Salinas. “The Gift” begins at the end of summer and concludes during the rainy season.

Synopsis

The story starts with Carl and Billy Buck taking some cows and horses into Salinas after breakfast. Jody watches them leave and observes buzzards circling overhead. Jody suspects an animal has died nearby because of the presence of the buzzards. “Jody hated them as all decent things hate them, but they could not be hurt because they made away with carrion (page 5).” Jody then returned home, was inspected by his mother, and then walked to school. He started the journey by filling his pockets with white quartz that lay in the road. He came home from school and completed his chores (filling up the wood box and collecting eggs from the chickens).

Carl and Billy Buck came home after dark, and wouldn’t tell Jody what they had done. Jody’s father sent him to bed early since he was going to “need him in the morning” (page 7). After breakfast the next morning, Carl and Billy Buck took Jody to the barn where there was a new pony. Carl warned Jody that he would sell the pony if Jody did not take care of it properly. After Carl left, Billy Buck talked to Jody about how the pony was obtained from a Sheriff’s auction in Salinas, how Jody was to care for the pony, and showed Jody the new saddle. Jody decides to name the pony Gabilan Mountains, until Billy Buck suggests he should shorten the name to Gabilan, which means ‘hawk’.

Gabilan became a source of pride for Jody. He brought over friends from school to show off his new pony. After Jody received the pony, he got up early every morning just to spend time with it. Jody listened carefully to the horse stories that Billy Buck shared with him because Billy Buck was one of the most knowledgeable horsemen in the area. In the fall, Billy Buck and Jody began the training of Gabilan, first by halter breaking, then working with the long halter, and then fitting the saddle. Carl told Jody that he could ride Gabilan on Thanksgiving. Shortly before Thanksgiving, Jody asked Billy Buck if it was going to rain that day, since he left Gabilan outside in the corral. Billy Buck said it would not rain, and the pony would be fine if it got a little wet. “A little rain never hurt anything” (page 23).

It did rain. After the afternoon in the rain, Gabilan became sick, and Jody began to worry. Billy Buck worked with Gabilan while Jody was at school, but the pony continued to get worse. Billy Buck diagnosed Gabilan as having the strangles. Billy Buck created concoctions to clear Gabilan’s nasal passages, lanced his boils and eventually cut a small hole in the pony’s neck to help it breathe. Jody stayed with Gabilan overnight in the barn. In the morning, Jody awoke to find Gabilan gone. He followed the trail to find Gabilan dying under the circling buzzards. Just as the pony died, a buzzard began to eat the head. Jody ran towards the buzzard, caught it as it took off, and killed it with a piece of white quartz in his pocket. Billy Buck pulled Jody off of the buzzard while Carl said to Jody, “the buzzard didn’t kill the pony. Don’t you know that?” (page 37). Billy Buck then became angry with Carl and replied “Jesus Christ! Man, can’t you see how he’d feel about it?” (page 37).

“The Pearl” Synopsis

Characters

Kino: a fisherman

Juana: his young wife

Coyotito: their baby boy

Juan Tomás: Kino’s older brother

Setting a small village in La Paz, on the coast of the Baja Peninsula.

Synopsis

The story begins in the brush house of Kino, Juana, and their baby, Coyotito, a family of Mexican indigenous people. In the midst of Kino and Juana’s morning routine, Coyotito is stung by a scorpion. Juana orders that the doctor be gotten and when the doctor refuses to come to them, insists they go to the doctor themselves. The family of three and their neighbors proceed together to the city. When the servant reports their arrival at his gate, the doctor, is insulted by the mere notion that he would “cure insect bites for ‘little Indians’” without compensation. The servant informs Kino that the doctor will not be able to see them and Kino leaves infuriated by the doctor’s evident discrimination.

Kino and Juana set off in his canoe to search for pearls. He dives down to the seafloor and finds one oyster lying alone, gleaming from within. Upon returning to the canoe, Kino opens this oyster last and finds within it the most perfect pearl; and, it becomes known as the Pearl of the World. News of Kino’s pearl spreads rapidly through the town, inspiring desire and envy in the townspeople. When Juan Tomás asks Kino what he will do as a rich man, he responds that he and Juana will be married in a church, they will have new clothes, he will have a rifle, and that his son will receive an education.

The priest visits the brush house to remind Kino and Juana to thank God. Then the doctor, inspired by the news of the pearl, arrives in order to treat Coyotito. He administers a first treatment and predicts that the poison will strike within the hour. Within the hour, Coyotito indeed becomes ill and the doctor administers a second treatment to cure him. Kino promises to pay the doctor after selling the pearl, which the doctor feigns not to have heard about.

That night, Kino hears noises in the house and manages to strike a thief looking for the pearl with his knife, but is also struck in return. Juana begs, to no avail, that they get rid of the pearl.

The next day, Kino and Juana and their neighbors, go to visit the pearl dealers. The first dealer Kino visits assesses the pearl at a mere 1000 pesos, declaring it too big and clumsy to be worth anything more, though it is clearly more valuable. Kino accuses the dealer of cheating him, so the dealer instructs Kino to ask around for other appraisals, which are even worse than his. Kino decides to go to the capital for a better estimate.

That night, Kino fights off another attacker. Juana tries to throw the pearl into the ocean, but Kino follows her, rips the pearl away from her, and beats her to the ground. A moment later, Kino is attacked yet again, and has killed his attacker. Now that Kino is guilty of murder, Kino and Juana must leave town. As Kino approaches the canoe to prepare for their departure, he sees that someone has made a hole in its bottom. Then, upon seeing that their house is on fire, the family seeks refuge in Juan Tomás’s house. They flee north at nighttime, pursued by trackers from the village.

The family retreats into a cave on a mountainside, under which the trackers come to rest at night. When it’s completely dark, Kino prepares to attack them but Coyotito lets out a cry, provoking one of the trackers to shoot at what he assumes to be a coyote. Though Kino succeeds in killing the men, Coyotito has already been shot dead. Juana and Kino, united and beleaguered, walk back to the village with Coyotito’s dead body in Juana’s shawl. Kino decides to finally throw the pearl back into the sea.

Steinbeck Young Authors Guidelines for Student Meeting and Coaching

The meeting between the student and the writing coach is an important element in achieving the goals of this program. Through the interaction with the coaches, the students should explore the excitement of writing and enhance their writing skills. Because middle school students can be very self-conscious and apprehensive, it is imperative that the feedback be encouraging and helpful. It is important that the coaches create a positive and enthusiastic tone for the conversation.

Suggested Sequence for Student Meeting/Coaching Session

- 1) Introductions: How did the writing go? Share some personal stories. Inquire about student activities from today and some of the student's interests.
- 2) Photo session and Lunch
- 3) Discussion about writing
 - A. Overview of writing experience
 - B. Encourage the student to read the first draft essay aloud and again silently
 - C. Emphasize the positive (two areas of strength)
 - D. Provide guidance and support (two areas for improvement)
 - E. Final encouragement
- 4) Writing Coach evaluation

Introductions

Each student is assigned a writing coach on the Day of Writing. You and your student will have your picture taken and lunch together, and then are invited to find a comfortable location in the museum to begin your coaching session.

To break the ice with your student, you might ask him or her to tell you about

- The horse demonstration that morning and what responsibilities are needed to take care of a horse.
- You may want to congratulate the student for being recognized for their writing at the student's school.

Discussion about Writing

- A.** We recommend that you start your meeting with the student by talking about writing in general.
- How does the student feel about writing?
 - Is it something he/she likes doing or is it nerve-racking?
 - Share your own feelings about writing and one or two examples of how writing has enabled you to accomplish a goal or do something "cool" (e.g., getting a job you enjoy, obtaining a college degree, traveling, winning a contest or award, helping someone in need, etc.). Please share these with the student. As a role model, we want you to model how writing is an important life skill and can be a vehicle for accomplishing great things.

B. Student reads aloud first draft essay.

- Ask your student to read aloud the first draft essay and be an attentive listener.
- The second reading of the draft may be a silent one.
- Encourage your student to write and become proactive with the draft essay.
- Provide encouragement and writing time for the student to add information into the essay, revise ideas, add details and examples while you are together in the coaching session.

C. Emphasize the Positive

After reading the student's first draft essay, read over the writing rubric and together select the two strongest components of the written work. The objective is to highlight the positive aspects of the student's work first. For example, the essay might be organized with an introduction, body, and a conclusion. In this case, you would tell the student that he or she has a well-organized essay and give examples of why you think so.

D. Provide Guidance and Support

Read over the writing rubric again, and together select the two weakest components of the written work. For example, the essay may have a central idea or thesis but seems to be missing specific details or supporting evidence or information. Gently tell the student that you think the essay would be stronger if he/she gave a couple of examples that support the thesis and give some examples of how he or she might do this. Encourage your student to tell his/her own story as support in the essay. A student might be weak in the area of grammar and spelling, so together you talk about and revise these areas.

If you have more time, you can talk about other strong and weak components of the paper.

E. Final Encouragement

End the coaching session with your student by congratulating him/her for representing their school in the program, thanking them for participating in the Day of Writing, and giving them encouraging words for the final editing of their essay.

Writing Coach Evaluation

Prior to leaving, please complete a Writing Coach Evaluation Form in the Coach Training Room. This information will be used to shape the Steinbeck Young Authors program next year and other writing programs at the National Steinbeck Center.

Thank you for volunteering to support student literacy!