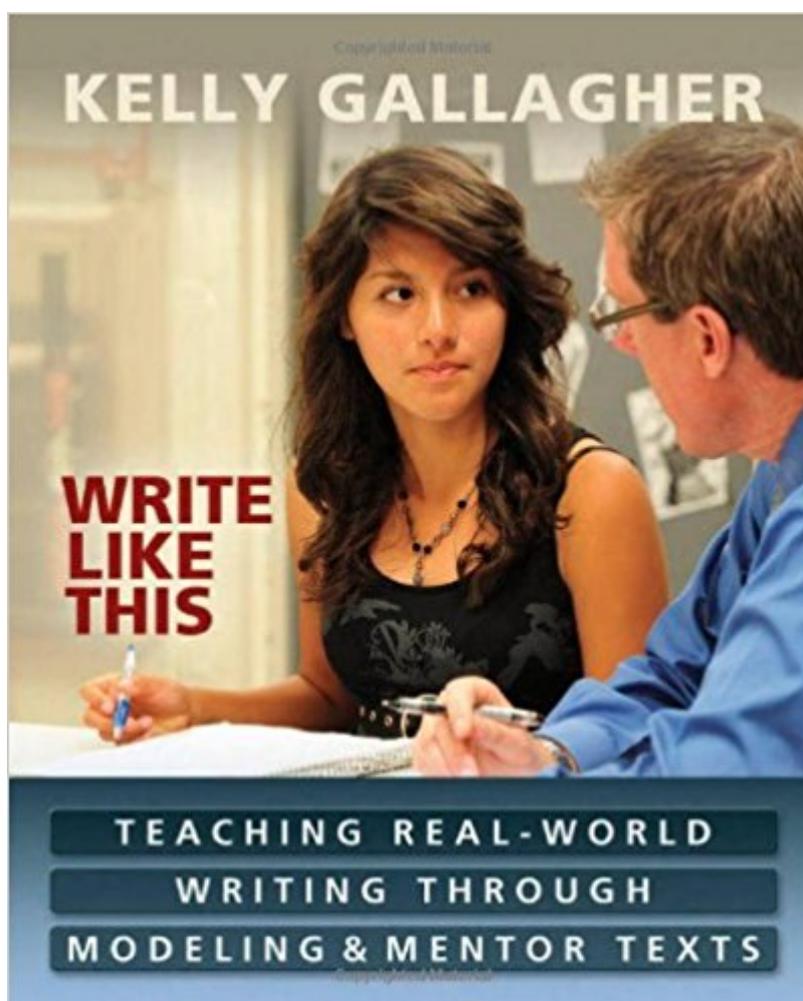


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# Write Like This: Teaching Real-World Writing Through Modeling And Mentor Texts



## Synopsis

If you want to learn how to shoot a basketball, you begin by carefully observing someone who knows how to shoot a basketball. If you want to be a writer, you begin by carefully observing the work of accomplished writers. Recognizing the importance that modeling plays in the learning process, high school English teacher Kelly Gallagher shares how he gets his students to stand next to and pay close attention to model writers, and how doing so elevates his students' writing abilities. *Write Like This* is built around a central premise: if students are to grow as writers, they need to read good writing, they need to study good writing, and, most important, they need to emulate good writers. In *Write Like This*, Kelly emphasizes real-world writing purposes, the kind of writing he wants his students to be doing twenty years from now. Each chapter focuses on a specific discourse: express and reflect, inform and explain, evaluate and judge, inquire and explore, analyze and interpret, and take a stand/propose a solution. In teaching these lessons, Kelly provides mentor texts (professional samples as well as models he has written in front of his students), student writing samples, and numerous assignments and strategies proven to elevate student writing. By helping teachers bring effective modeling practices into their classrooms, *Write Like This* enables students to become better adolescent writers. More important, the practices found in this book will help our students develop the writing skills they will need to become adult writers in the real world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'And this is what I love about Gallagher: he practices what he preaches. In *Write Like This*, he takes

the reader by the hand and shows how the teaching process occurs in his own classroom, warts and all.' --MiddleWeb'Specific approaches to teaching effective writing and analytical skills make Write Like This a fine pick for high school to college collections alike, packing in plenty of examples for effective writing development.' --California Bookwatch'This book grips you from the beginning to end. It is logical, reasonable and passionate in other words, it is well written. It is the kind of guide to have at hand, to refer to often, and to put into action.' --Professionally Speaking

Kelly, a "baseballaholic" and a self-described expert at negotiating airports, is in his 33rd<sup>th</sup> year of teaching at the high school level. He currently teaches at Magnolia High School in Anaheim, California. He believes that "there is no greater pleasure than teaching someone something." Teaching is "artistic, it matters a great deal, and I can never get the job done perfectly." Kelly thinks that professional development should treat teachers as such - professionals. "I know in the classroom that good things happen when my students have meaningful discussions. I know as a teacher myself that my craft sharpens when I am given the opportunity to have meaningful discussions with my peers. And let's have a laugh or two while we are at it." Writing his six books for Stenhouse was a solitary experience. "Though I have written outlines prior to each of my books, I have yet to follow any of them step-by-step. That is why I find writing rewarding - because the act of writing itself generates new thinking, and new thinking is always exciting."

I went to a Kelly Gallagher training session about reading instruction over a year ago, and it was, far and away, the best professional development that I've ever been to. It was one creative, practical, and student-friendly idea after another. I immediately read two books by Gallagher about reading instruction (Deeper Reading and Readicide--both highly recommended) and have been incorporating his ideas into my classes ever since. It was my summer goal to take a look at what he had to offer with regard to writing instruction. As it happens, Write Like This was every bit as useful as the reading books were. He offers his general philosophy of writing instruction: (1) that students need to read real-world models and write for real-world purposes and (2) that the teacher--as the best writer in the classroom--should demonstrate the decisions that good writers make before the students. He then divides the book by the six general purposes of writing and offers multiple suggestions for approaches to teaching that kind of writing. It's as easy to see how students would find these assignments compelling, and it's also easy to see how these strategies would help the students to be better writers. My only problem reading the book is not a flaw of Gallagher's. When I read it, I keep thinking,

“This is what teaching should be like. Think how much my students would grow and improve if we could just do this stuff all year. Of course, the sadness is that the district and state standards and the ridiculous testing my students will need to pass at the end of the year will mean that I’m forced to teach something of lesser quality and distorted purposes for at least a portion of the year. So it goes. I do think that every idea I pull from this book will make my class a better experience for my students.

First, a few facts of life about English teachers: 1.) They’re busy people. They endure one of the biggest paper burdens of any discipline, and they often have neither the time nor the patience for a professional development book pushed their way for consumption during the school year. 2.) If they DO bother reading a PD book, it had better be more practical than theoretical. Teachers are borrowers by nature. Activities and strategies thought out in advance and laid out logically in a book will attract them like honey draws bears. Meaning? If it’s your writing instruction that needs beefing up, *WRITE LIKE THIS* should find its way onto your to-be-read pile. It is as if Kelly Gallagher has lent you his “writing teacher” playbook -- a mix of writing plays he’s either created or borrowed himself over his career. Gallagher first breaks writing instruction down into six categories, then devotes a chapter to each. They are “Express and Reflect,” “Inform and Explain,” “Evaluate and Judge,” “Inquire and Explore,” “Analyze and Interpret,” and “Take a Stand/Propose a Solution.” These are followed with chapters containing helpful hints on revision and editing. You might consider writing for these purposes and these purposes only simplistic, but Gallagher acknowledges that they blend into each other all the time in real-world writing. Master them in isolation and students can eventually step up and combine these skills to good effect. Once you wade into the Big Six chapters, you will find creative activities doable in a single period as well as assignments that might take a few days of writing. Gallagher sends wave after wave, activity after activity, with succinct instructions and humorous asides. Your job is simply to cherry pick (did I mention that English teachers, both busy and practical, like cherries?). The foundation of all of these ideas is modeling. Gallagher believes the single most effective form of writing instruction is drafting in front of the class while you think aloud. That’s right -- first draft, warts and all. You may not consider yourself a very good writer, but you’re the strongest writer in the room. Also, Gallagher advocates the use of professional models for students to emulate. He provides authentic examples in each chapter (and in the appendix for copying and marking up). If this doesn’t sound attractive to the busy English teacher, I’m not sure what will. You can literally open it in the mail one day and have a ready-to-go writing lesson the next. Quibbles? Few of the strategies lead to full-length, more formal papers. If

that's what you're after, you might consider many of these exercises more of the warm-up variety. And the book suffers from more typos than an English PD book has a right to, telling me, perhaps, that its publication date was moved forward too quickly. That said, the book is more than worth your investment in time and money. Young writers need these compelling, creative, and quick activities to hone their skills. Thus, analyzing a painting or a chart (two ideas) will serve as a gateway for instruction on literary analysis later on. Bottom line? I recommend this book, especially if "busy" is one of your favorite words. Look at it this way: reading it and using it will actually make you LESS busy. It will also make your students happier with and stronger at their writing. What more could a teacher ask for? (Wait, don't answer that!)

Reading a book or two about teaching is something that is important to me as I keep trying to develop my skills as a teacher. I read another book by Kelly Gallagher a few years ago, so I wanted to read this one. I'm glad I did because it offered many excellent tips in how to help students write better. His main philosophy stems from these two premises: 1. Teach kids to write in the modes that they will need to write in college and in the real world. 2. Write along with your students. Gallagher is a seasoned teacher who clearly loves writing and teaching writing. He is a good mentor to have as I try to better equip my students to improve in writing. My only criticism is that there does not appear to be a frame around all these great activities. At times, things felt jumbled.

I am not a teacher, my English is a foreign language. I've been looking for exercises or methods that would help me practice writing. This book was the answer! It is excellent, I started writing, many many many ideas to write about not only in English but also in another foreign language too! I loved the topic exercise I now have plenty of ideas to write about, I already wrote some and I can't wait to write again, it is highly motivating!

I have been searching for a practical "guide" to use as I prepare a new 12th grade writing course that focuses on the modes of writing. Rather than use the traditional names for the modes, Gallagher divides his chapters into real-life writing purposes (express and reflect; inform and explain). Every chapter offers suggestions for assignments (each with a creative flair). His book is helping provide the framework for my course and the inspiration to move beyond literary analysis to writing that students will be called upon to "perform" in college and beyond. I highly recommend this text.

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