

Write through the Grades

Teaching Writing in Secondary Schools

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Foreword

Everyone is talented, original and has something important to say.

Brenda Ueland wrote those words in a small book called *If You Want to Write*, first published in 1938. It is a book I recommend to aspiring writers; one I fondly refer to as one of my “best friends.” It has served me well in my own writing and in the teaching of writing. A wise friend gave it to me as a gift.

As I read *Write through the Grades*, I realized that Robin Bright is living proof of Ueland’s philosophy—as both writer and educator. So is this book. Bright’s approach and understanding of the writing process with teens demonstrates that they have authentic voices and visions. Even better, this committed educator, eager to enlighten others and empower the voices of our youth, shares what she has discovered. And it is a generous sharing. We are given the benefit of her experience, research, and scholarship. We are offered her open-hearted reflections and sense a fully engaged spirit, as well as team spirit, at work. We get concrete strategies and specific exercises to encourage teen voices to find expression on the page. There are helpful suggestions on how to guide student writers through various stages and nurture excellence. Then? Bright tackles a big question: how can this creative process fit and benefit students within a system where standardized testing is “here to stay”?

Best of all, Bright lets the teens speak. Their observations of themselves as writers were, for me, often jaw-dropping. Here were insights that I am just beginning to articulate after 20 years! Their creative writing is, by turns, brilliant, funny, poignant, luminous. The “practice” is moving testimony to the theory.

I met Robin Bright on a bus trip travelling between Edmonton and Calgary one summer when we were both speakers at a literacy conference. When I heard her speak I was not just impressed, I was re-energized. Talking on the bus reassured me. I seemed on the “right” track as a teacher of writing. I bought her book *Write from the Start* and have used it in my own work ever since.

Like Ueland's, Bright's book *Write through the Grades* will become a work I call one of my "best friends." For any reader or teacher fortunate enough to discover this book, I am certain you will read it and come away feeling like I did: you have just been given a forever useful, beautiful gift by a wise friend.

Sheree Fitch, BA, MA, PhD (honours), poet, author