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Teaching with Field Trips

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FIELD TRIPS: FOR THE YOUNG AND OLD

I taught creative writing for a number of years at a school of the arts and continue to teach, both at writing conferences and local writing groups. I've seen kids in every age group, from young to old. And while you might think the young ones are partial to field trips, but the older ones are not, think again. One of wackiest writing trips I ever took was to a funeral museum with my "grown-up" writing group. We had a blast and all sorts of stories came out of that trip.

STIMULUS

As we talked about in an earlier lesson, creativity for the writer often depends on a stimulus. Your students, regardless of age, need to be stimulated. And you, as their teacher, need regular stimulation, as well. Sitting behind a computer—or even standing in front of a classroom—won't cut it. You've got to get out there. See the world. Where else can you see, smell, taste, touch and hear what's going on around you than on a field trip?

FIELD TRIP IDEAS

I'm such a strong believer in getting out of the classroom that I came up with a host of ideas for field trips that you can use, either alone or with your students. Click to discover [101 Field Trip Ideas for Writers](#). We'll travel to a couple of those places together in a few minutes, and I'll show you how to fully take advantage of them. The point of it all? To write what you see when you're out and about.

"Out and about" are the key words. If you really want to grow as a teacher, then teach your kids to travel. Field trips provide an excellent way to teach! They provide students a break from the "hum-drumness" of the daily grind and offer teachers a new and refreshing way to approach "ordinary" places in an "extraordinary" way.

JUMP OUT OF THE BOX!

It's all about creativity! Getting "out of the box" is the goal. Once you've done that, nearly ANY place can become a field trip possibility. You'll be surprised at how many academic or arts-related subjects can be covered on a simple outing to the park or the airport. You'll be stunned at students' writings when you provide them with a new point of view.

If you're looking for some ideas for your class or group, these field trip ideas are intended to be a springboard, offering basic ideas for places to go and things to do. Use your creativity skills to take these exercises a step further, if you like. Shape them to suit your own personal needs or the needs of your students.

LET THE WORLD COME TO YOU

If you're in a situation where you truly can't leave the classroom, then let the world come to them. Bring in videos or photographs. Try offering interesting food products to the kids. Let them do art projects and then write about them. The point is to experience life outside of the norm.

LET'S HIT THE ROAD!

Ready to hit the road? When you set out on field trips, be sure to take along paper, pens, calculators, or any other items you might need along the way. Most of all, take your imagination. Use it freely. Make up your mind to expand your thinking. Get creative. Go for it!

We're going to take a couple of "pretend" field trips together. Hang onto your hat, teachers! We're going to have a blast.

#1

Where to Go: A Restaurant

What to Do: Write a detailed description of the food from a food critic's POV

Additional Exercise(s): Pretend you're starting a restaurant of your own. Create your menu.

#2

Where to Go: A Television Station

What to Do: Tour the facility, writing about your experience

Additional Exercise(s): Imagine you've been given the task of writing a television sit-com. What would it be? What sort of characters?

#3

Where to Go: A Local Food Pantry

What to Do: Write a story from the POV of a basket of food

Additional Exercise(s): Imagine you're running the food pantry. What is your life like? What struggles do you face? What makes you happy?

OTHER PLACES I'VE BEEN WITH STUDENTS:

Out of state: Writing conferences

Out of the country: Missions trip to Nicaragua

The inner city: Feed the homeless, meeting people who are different

Specific events: Local "Visit the Theater" day, restaurants to plan menus, the tallest building in town, the lowest spot in town.

Local Church: Church sanctuary, outdoor steps of the church to watch the clouds, a stained glass window.

That's it for now, teachers. Remember to use the world around you as a stimulus for writing. Anything—and anyplace—can become a writing exercise. Challenge your students to use their senses as they go, and you'll be surprised at the works they produce as a result. So, what are you waiting for? Get out there and enjoy the world!

By **JThompson**

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