

## Encouraging Writing (Tips for Tutors)

I began my teaching in a rural area of North Carolina. At that time, I had just discovered a book called Wishes, Lies and Dreams by Kenneth Koch. The book offered many examples of children's writing all of which began in the form of lists. Each list provided a repetitive structure from which the student could list their ideas. Some of the lists included: I wish, I think, I hear, I would like to have, I dream etc. each new line started with the same words. Since I didn't exactly know what I was doing at the time, I tried the ideas with my first class and lo and behold they wrote. After a while they broke from the structures and found their own ways but the structure showed the students a way to get thoughts on paper and that was magic for them. I have continued to use ideas from that book for more than thirty years.

For the adult learner, who has struggled with writing and spelling for a long time, it may be very hard for him/her to get anything down on paper. You might find that your student asks you how to spell every other word. Lists work great with adults. Tell them to begin each line the same and not to worry about the spelling, in fact tell them you are not about to help with spelling until the writing is finished.

My wife Joani and I have worked with several students this winter. One of them has really grown to enjoy writing in her journal. We give her an idea such as *I remember*. Before writing, we each share a few things we remember then the writing takes off by itself. The possibilities are endless.: Things to do in Farmville, places to hide a message, quiet things, etc.

If you emphasize the importance of the message over the exactness of spelling and usage you might be surprised by the results. I think of the soldiers during the Civil War who had little education. They used what they had to send letters home (invented spelling, no punctuation) and wrote some poignant letters as time went by. They learned to write by writing. You might be surprised by what your student is able to do.

*Glen G. Coats 2/17/07*

## **I Remember**

I remember I help my sisters choose  
boyfriends.

I remember my mother break a bottle.  
I said, "It's good you break that. Nobody  
will fuss at you." That time I was about  
7 or 8 year old. My mother still telling  
me in 1990 when we went back China  
to visit them.

I remember when I was little when I cough,  
my mother help me and pat my back.  
Something gave me warm put on  
my chest.

I remember my mother take very good  
care elderly homeless people, especially  
cold weather. She give them hot tea or soup  
and clothes. Sometimes let them stay in the  
house. She take good care problem  
people, always give them more. But younger  
people, she not give that much or she not  
give at all. She said younger they can  
find job to work. I remember one time  
my mother not at the door that time,  
I give the homeless man a bowl rice.  
He was mad at me, said I not give  
enough then he put that bowl rice all  
over my floor. I was scared, cried,  
and my mom came out. Then the man  
went away. I forgot how old I was, I  
think not over ten years old.

*By Sandy Pin  
February 2007*

