

Do	Don't
Ask a provocative question	Simply restate your thesis statement
Leave with an interesting quotation	Introduce a brand new idea
Call for action	Focus on a minor point of the essay
Loop back to the anecdote in the introduction	Use the following phrases: "In conclusion," "In summary," or "In closing"
End with a warning	Add extra information that should have been in the body of the essay
Paint a strong image	
Express your hopes	
Answer the "So what?" question	
Point to broader implications	

Sources: University of Richmond Writing Center 2010  
Maple Woods Community College Writing Center 2011  
The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill 2011

Figure 7.5 Writing a Conclusion: Dos and Don'ts

When I finished this draft, I asked students to look at the "Do" column in Figure 7.5 and then identify which of the strategies I employed. They noticed that rather than simply sticking to a single strategy, I used three of them: I asked provocative questions, I issued a warning, and I offered hope.

Students then drafted their own conclusions. Luis, for example, used questions and intentional repetition in his conclusion:

Isn't it time to put an end to all this crime? Isn't it time to end all the madness surrounding marijuana use? Isn't it time to control this drug? Outlawing marijuana has not stopped millions of people from using it; therefore, it is time to try a new approach. Proposition 19 is a new approach worth trying. It is time to vote yes on Proposition 19.

## Proposing Solutions

Educator Edward Tufte once said, "The point of the essay is to change things." With this in mind, I want to bring my students beyond simply

taking a stand and move them into writing that actually proposes solutions. I want their writing to be calls for action, and as such, I want them to convince their readers to *do something*.

To get my students thinking in this direction, I introduce The Earthworks Group's (1989) 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth. Here, for example, are five things you can do to help our planet:

1. *Look for ways to practice precycling.* "This means buying things which come in packages that can be recycled (not turned into garbage), or are made of materials that have already been recycled" (29).
2. *Feed the worms.* Begin composting. "Build a special bin for compost and put all your organic garbage in it. Turn it over every once in awhile and watch it become part of the Earth again" (37).
3. *Save water.* "When you brush your teeth, just wet your brush, then turn off the water . . . and then turn it on again when you need to rinse your brush off. You'll save up to nine gallons of water each time. That's enough to give your pet a bath" (45).
4. *Hang on tight to balloons.* When balloons fly away, they often end up in the ocean where they are eaten by sea creatures. Sea turtles and whales have died from eating balloons. "If your school plans to let lots of balloons into the air during a celebration, tell them about the dangers to sea animals" (73).
5. *Use rechargeable batteries.* "Most batteries contain mercury, a dangerous metal that can leak into the ground when the batteries are thrown away" (106). Buy rechargeable batteries and a recharger.

After introducing five steps students can do to save the earth, I share similar lists of "Five Things You Can Do To \_\_\_\_\_" to get them thinking in this direction:

#### **Five Things You Can Do to Simplify Your Life**

1. *Drop one commitment.* "Think about all the things you do in your life that you're committed to doing, and try to find one . . . that takes up a lot of time but doesn't give you much value." Drop it.
2. *Move slower.* "Do less. Walk slower, shower slower. Work slower. Be more deliberate."
3. *Free up time.* "How? Watch less TV. Take a walk. Only check your e-mail once a day. Choose a period to shut off your phone."

4. *Clean out a drawer.* "Discard the clutter. Give it away, donate it, recycle it, trash it. Reorganize the drawer without the clutter."
5. *Single task.* "Do one thing at a time. Avoid distractions. Stick to it until it is finished." (Babauta 2011)

#### **Five Things You Can Do to Promote World Peace**

1. *Handwrite a letter* to senators and representatives from your state advocating peace. Be heard (Lira-Powell 1992).
2. *Inform yourself* through university talks, alternative magazines and Web sites, books, and documentaries. Do not rely on the mainstream media for unbiased and complete news information. "According to a study by Bill Moyers, CNN gave 29 minutes of air time to opposing views of the U.S.-Iraq War from a total of 2,900 during the first four months of the U.S. troops buildup just before the Gulf War" (24). Only twenty-nine minutes of opposing viewpoints in 2,900 hours of prewar coverage? This study underscores why it is important to read alternative news sites.
3. *Visit outside of the United States.* Learn another language. Familiarize yourself with other cultures.
4. *Buy nurturing toys for children.* Buy toys that "nurture and enlighten children. Many toys develop motor skills while others expand their understanding of music, math, geography, or science" (51). Avoid toys that encourage violence.
5. *Do your homework before voting.* Be sure to "judge candidates by their actions, not their words or their 30-second sound bites. Find out what the real issues are, then see what the candidates' positions are in relation to them" (60).

#### **Five Things You Can Do to Get Healthy and Stay Healthy**

1. *Eat a healthy breakfast.* "A healthy breakfast is the cornerstone of a good diet. It is a meal that provides the opportunity to eat a serving of whole grains, a digestible protein, and have a serving or two of fruit. The energy from a healthy breakfast can carry you through your morning in a more stable way than by eating stimulating foods such as sweets and coffee."
2. *Drink lots of water.* "Water is fundamental to all life on earth. Our bodies are made up of 60% water. It is involved in every function in the body, including circulation, digestion, absorption of nutrients and the transmission of electrical currents in the body, which control our nerves, muscles and hormones."

3. *Connect with other people.* “By our very nature, humans are social animals. We nurture our young, form families and identify ourselves as part of larger social groups such as circles of friends, neighborhood ties, and memberships in clubs and organizations. Connecting with other people and forming bonds of communication and intimacy nourish our emotional and spiritual health as much as a healthy diet nourishes our bodies.”
4. *Express your emotions appropriately.* “Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has always recognized that emotional factors play an important role in health and illness and notes seven emotions that particularly affect the body: joy, anger, sadness, grief, pensiveness, fear and fright. These emotions are not by themselves thought to be pathological and all constitute emotional aspects of healthy people. However, if any of these emotions are excessive over a long period of time or arises suddenly with great force, it can generate imbalances and illness.”
5. *Spend at least 30 minutes outdoors.* “Sunlight is every bit as central to our health and well-being as proper nutrition, clean water, and exercise. Naturopathic Doctors often recommend that we spend at least 30 minutes a day outdoors.” (San Francisco Natural Medicine 2009)

#### **Five Things You Can Do to Ensure Cyber Safety**

1. *Change your passwords.* It is important that your passwords be changed periodically to minimize the chances of hacking.
2. *Make sure your antivirus software and firewalls are up-to-date.* Hackers continually change their tactics. You should too.
3. *Back up important files.* Store important information somewhere other than on your computer.
4. *Subscribe to the national Cyber Alert System from the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team* at [www.us-cert.gov](http://www.us-cert.gov). This service offers the latest tips on how to ensure cyber safety.
5. *Talk to the people you know*—children, coworkers, friends—about good online safety and security habits. Share tips found at [www.staysafeonline.com](http://www.staysafeonline.com). (US-CERT 2011)

After sharing various lists with my students, I put them in groups and have them brainstorm possible ways to complete the following stem:

Five Things You Can Do to \_\_\_\_\_.

### FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR WRITING

1. **Read more.** People who read more write better. As a teacher, I can always tell when I am reading a paper written by a reader. Readers write papers that have longer development, more mature vocabulary, and better and more diverse sentence structure. Stephen King, one of the most prolific writers living on the planet, said, "Reading is the creative center of a writer's life" (2000, 147). King, who reads seventy to eighty books a year, understands that reading is the number one activity that builds the foundation that all writers need.
2. **Write more.** Writing is a skill, like swimming or painting. You have to do it a lot to get good at it. If you are to become a good writer, you have to develop a writing habit. Most serious writers I know have a particular time each day when they sit down and write. Peter Elbow, a noted teacher of writing, said, "Freewriting is the easiest way to get words on paper and the best all-around practice in writing that I know" (1998, 13). Force yourself to sit down each day. Practice, practice, practice.
3. **Don't fall in love with your first draft.** Get used to the idea that your first draft will almost always be crummy. As one prominent writer says about lousy first drafts, "All good writers write them. This is how they end up with good second drafts and terrific third drafts" (Lamott 1994, 21). If your writing is going to get good, you will have to move past the "I wrote it; I'm done" mentality.
4. **Get feedback.** Sharing your writing with others is scary, but doing so is an absolute essential step if we want to move our writing to a better place. Sometimes we have gaps or sequence problems that we are blind to in our own writing. Having others provide meaningful feedback to our writing helps us to overcome these kinds of problems. Every time I send a draft to my editor I sort of cringe, but every time he sends it back with suggestions—tips that will help me improve my draft.
5. **Notice what other writers are doing.** We learn best when we stand next to someone who knows how to do the skill and observe how it is done. The same is true with learning how to write better. Rather than focusing on what the writer is saying, developing writers should also pay attention to how the writing is constructed. Once recent study found that "teaching students to focus on function and practical application of grammar within the context of writing (versus teaching grammar as an independent activity) produced strong and positive effects on student writing" (Fearn and Farnan 2005, 21). In other words, we should notice what good writers do and then try to practice these skills in our own writing.

#### Works Cited:

- Elbow, Peter. 1998. *Writing with Power*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fearn, L., and N. Farnan. 2005. "An Investigation of the Influence of Teaching Grammar in Writing to Accomplish an Influence on Writing." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada, April.
- King, Stephen. 2000. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. New York: Scribner.
- Lamott, Anne. 1994. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor.

Figure 7.6 My Model List of Proposing Solutions for Ways to Improve Writing

Once students have completed their brainstorming, they choose their individual topics. By now, this far into this book, you know that I will model first. I show them my example (see Figure 7.6), and ask them what they notice about it.

They notice I have listed five things you can do to improve your writing, of course, but then they also see that I have raised the bar a bit by using research to support my reasons. This is where I introduce the idea of citing sources, and I use the handy one-page guide from Prentice Hall's *Literature* series (see Figure 7.7) as a guide.

Book with one author	Pyles, Thomas. <i>The Origins and Development of the English Language</i> . 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971.
Book with two or three authors	McCrum, Robert, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil. <i>The Story of English</i> . New York: Penguin Books, 1987.
Book with an editor	Truth, Sojourner. <i>Truth</i> . Ed. Margaret Washington. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.
Book with more than three authors or editors	Donald, Robert B., et al. <i>Writing Clear Essays</i> . Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1996.
A single work from an anthology	Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Young Goodman Brown." <i>Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing</i> . Ed. Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1998. 376-385. [Indicate pages for the entire selection.]
Introduction in a published edition	Washington, Margaret. Introduction. <i>Narrative of Sojourner Truth</i> . By Sojourner Truth. New York: Vintage Books, 1993, pp. v-xi.
Signed article in a weekly magazine	Wallace, Charles. "A Vodacious Deal." <i>Time</i> 14 Feb. 2000: 63.
Signed article in a monthly magazine	Gustaitis, Joseph. "The Sticky History of Chewing Gum." <i>American History</i> Oct. 1998: 30-38.
Unsigned editorial or story	"Selective Silence." Editorial. <i>Wall Street Journal</i> 11 Feb. 2000: A14. [If the editorial or article is signed, begin with the author's name.]
Signed pamphlet	[Treat the pamphlet as though it were a book.]
Pamphlet with no author, publisher, or date.	<i>Are You at Risk of Heart Attack?</i> n.p. n.d. [n.p. n.d. indicates that there is no known publisher or date.]
Filmstrip, slide program, or videotape	<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i> . Dir. George Stevens. Perf. Millie Perkins, Shelley Winters, Joseph Schildkraut, Lou Jacobi, Richard Behmer. Twentieth Century Fox, 1959.
Radio or television program transcript	"The First Immortal Generation." <i>Ockham's Razor</i> . Host Robyn Williams. Guest Damien Broderick. National Public Radio. 23 May 1999. Transcript.
Internet	<i>National Association of Chewing Gum Manufacturers</i> . 19 Dec. 1999 < <a href="http://www.nacgm.org/consumer/funfacts.html">http://www.nacgm.org/consumer/funfacts.html</a> > [Indicate the date you accessed the information. Content and addresses at Web sites change frequently.]
Newspaper article	Thurow, Roger. "South Africans Who Fought for Sanctions Now Scrape for Investors." <i>Wall Street Journal</i> 11 Feb. 2000:A1+. [For multipage article, write only the first page number on which it appears, followed by a plus sign.]
Personal interview	Smith, Jane. Personal interview. 10 Feb. 2000.
CD (with multiple publishers)	Simms, James, ed. <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> . By William Shakespeare. CD-ROM. Oxford: Attica Cybernetics Ltd.; London: BBC Education; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995.
Signed article from an encyclopedia	Askeland, Donald R. (1991). "Welding." <i>World Book Encyclopedia</i> . 1991 ed.
Unsigned article from an encyclopedia	"Saint Swithin's Day." <i>Encyclopedia Britannica</i> . 1986 ed.

Figure 7.7 MLA Style for Listing Sources

This guide covers a majority of the kinds of sources students will cite. If what they are trying to cite is not found on this abbreviated page, I refer them to the full MLA guide, found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

Figures 7.8 and 7.9 show student sample lists from Eric and Monica.

### 5 WAYS TO BE MORE GREEN

- 1. Change the light bulbs in your home.** Incandescent light bulbs generate a lot of electricity. By buying compact fluorescent light bulbs, which have been shown to "use two-thirds less electricity for the same amount of light," we can use less energy and, in turn, save the Earth (West 1). Paying for these light bulbs may not seem like saving money, but as time goes by it is better to have fluorescent light bulbs than incandescent light bulbs. Changing only three or four light bulbs in a home can save up to \$120 a year. Many homeowners overlook this fact and feel that being green is a job for large companies and the government, but that job is for average citizens. It is not hard to do something so little when we realize the large impact it has.
- 2. Buy programmable thermostats and new air filters.** New thermostats can cost up to \$100 but can save more than that over time. Simply "turning a thermostat down while we are away can drastically make a difference" (Articles.cnn.com). The new thermostat would be able to be programmed to cause less CO2 emissions while a person is away. New air filters are always a good buy especially if they have an Energy Star label. Al Gore says, "This is a signal that you're getting an environmentally efficient appliance that's going to save you money at the same time" (1). They can help to cut a home's carbon dioxide output by four percent. Just by buying new equipment and replacing air filters, one can help the environment.
- 3. Unplug.** Leaving appliances and other electronic devices plugged in wastes energy. By taking a few minutes out of every day to unplug TVs, radios, and computers, people can save energy. Green.yahoo.com tells us that unplugging devices before going to work and turning off computers rather than letting them go idle can save hundreds of dollars a year. It may seem like a burden to check for all the plugs, but after a while it will become habit and it will save money. Appliances with a small light can be costly if not unplugged; even a small light can begin to stack up energy bills. Many people leave chargers and TVs plugged, but they still waste electricity while off. Unplugging them is a surefire way to get them to stop using electricity.
- 4. Pay for bills online.** Many banks and billing companies offer to let customers pay online. This is not only to save time, but to help the environment. By paying bills online, the company does not have to send paper checks or keep paper records. This allows for less deforestation due to the declined usage of paper. Signing up for the online billing is free and easy. Many people feel that preserving nature is above their capabilities; However, it is not that hard and this is one way that anyone can help the environment. Now you can pay bills while thinking of Mother Earth.
- 5. Eat your veggies.** It's simple, but it's effective. Eating vegetables can help reduce global warming immensely. Eating more fruits and vegetables help because raising animals for food produces many greenhouse gases. Just being vegan can help the environment. A 2006 report by the University of Chicago found that adopting a vegan diet does more to reduce global warming than switching to a hybrid car (Green Living 2). Many people think helping the environment can be too hard, but the truth is, it's as easy as eating your leafy greens at dinner.

#### Works Cited

- Gore, Al. "Five Ways to Go Green from Al Gore—CNN." *Featured Articles from CNN*. 23 Aug. 2007. Web. 07 Dec. 2010.
- "Top Ten Ways to Be Green | Yahoo! Green." *News, Blogs, and Tools for Living Green | Yahoo! Green*. Web. 07 Dec. 2010. <<http://green.yahoo.com/global-warming/lime-68/top-ten-ways-to-be-green.html>>.
- West, Larry. "Green Living—Five Ways to Help Save the Planet in 30 Minutes or Less." *Environmental Issues - News and Information About the Environment*. Web. 07 Dec. 2010.

Figure 7.8 Eric's List

Monica  
Period 2  
1/21/11

### FIVE WAYS TO BECOME A BETTER MUSICIAN

1. **Dedication and Discipline.** Musicians aren't magically great at what they do. Musicians have to work to be as good as they are. Not everyone is a prodigy like Mozart, or Beethoven; people have to work hard. If you have dedication and discipline, you can reach the goals you set for yourself in no time at all. Don't allow yourself to get distracted; set rules for yourself.
2. **Don't give up, practice.** When you can't play a song, practice it slowly until you can play it perfectly. Like my band teacher, Aaron Yim the band director of Magnolia High School, says "perfect practice makes perfect." If you practice something wrong, then you will play it wrong all the time since that's how you learned it. Take your time when learning something difficult. Have patience. Take an easy pace, and before you know it you'll be able to play it perfectly. As Mr. Yim says, "What a player does best, he should practice least. Practice is for problems."
3. **Play in tune.** Playing in tune is very important. You don't want to sound bad when playing; no one wants to listen to something bad. If you play in tune, it'll become a habit. Play with a tuner in front of you, and see if you can find your tendencies. Once you find your tendencies, lip up or down on your mouthpiece to get that certain note in tune. Sit up straight while practicing, and you'll see that it'll help open up your airway. If you are a wind instrument, it'll help stabilize your airflow, making your sound clearer and more joyful to listen to.
4. **Strive to be the best you can be.** "When you are not practicing, remember, someone somewhere is practicing, and when you meet him he will win," says musician Ed Macaoley. You don't have to be the best, but if you don't want to improve, then someone else will gladly take your spot. You don't have to be the best, but you can be the best you can be.
5. **Perform.** Don't be shy of performing in front of people. The more you perform, the easier it gets. You end up setting higher standards when you perform in front of an audience because you don't want to sound bad. Performing is a sense of practicing, the more you do it the better you get at it and the more you improve. Make performing in front of people a habit, and it'll make you a more outgoing person who won't be as shy to talk in front of a class.

#### Works Cited:

Macaoley, Ed. [www.buzzle.com/articles/practice-and-quotes-about-it.html](http://www.buzzle.com/articles/practice-and-quotes-about-it.html) <<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/practice-and-quotes-about-it.html>>  
 "Practice and quotes about it." [www.buzzle.com/articles/practice-and-quotes-about-it.html](http://www.buzzle.com/articles/practice-and-quotes-about-it.html) <<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/practice-and-quotes-about-it.html>>  
 Yim, Aaron. Personal interview. 1 December 2010.

Figure 7.9 Monica's List

## Recognizing Problems: Small to Large

If we want our students to produce writing that proposes solutions, we must first have them identify a number of problems to consider. Here are two strategies I use to raise my students' awareness of the problems around them:

### Newspaper Hunt

Students are put in groups and given a copy of that day's newspaper. They read through the newspaper, noting all the problems described in a single

NEWSPAPER PROBLEM CHART			
Local Problems	State Problems	National Problems	World Problems

Figure 7.10 Newspaper Problem Chart

issue. To help them sort the problems, I distribute a Newspaper Problem Chart (see Figure 7.10). Students work their way through the day's newspaper, charting the problems into the appropriate columns.

### Twenty-Four-Hour Observation

Students are asked to make note of any problems they hear about, see, or encounter in a twenty-four-hour period.

### Ranking Problems

Once students have completed exercises to familiarize themselves with current problems, I ask them to begin sorting the problems from highest priority to lowest priority. As part of their consideration, I direct my students to the Web site of the Arlington Institute, a nonprofit research institute that specializes in thinking about the future: <http://www.arlingtoninstitute.org/wbp/portal/home>. At this site, the institute lists what it considers to be the five largest problems facing the world today:

1. The fragility of the global economy
2. Peak oil production

3. The global water crisis
4. The extinction of numerous species
5. Rapid climate change (*Arlington Institute 2005a*)

These problems fit the institute's two criteria for selection: (1) they are global in scope and (2) they have the potential to rapidly escalate into severe crises. Take the problem of peak oil, for example:

*Petroleum powers 96% of the transportation on the planet and is the key ingredient in plastics and fertilizers. Its integral role in human civilization cannot be overestimated—without it modern life would be impossible. Over the last century, the global petroleum supply could be counted on to meet demand; today however, the situation appears to be changing.*

*The developing world—led by China and India—is modernizing at a blistering pace, and their appetite for oil is driving up demand all over the globe. At the same time, production is declining in all but a few countries. For decades, scientists, government officials, and business leaders have warned of Peak Oil, the point at which global petroleum production reaches its maximum level and begins to drop. While many official sources claim that Peak Oil is decades away, numerous signals suggest that Peak Oil may happen much sooner than that. (Arlington Institute 2005b)*

The Arlington Institute doesn't simply stop at describing each of the five critical problems; they suggest solutions. In the case of peak oil, for example, they discuss the promise of the following emerging alternative energy sources: wind, solar, photovoltaic, geothermal, and tidal. When addressing transportation fuel, they look at the possibilities inherent in bioethanol, biodiesel, and hydrogen fuels, as well as the use of electric cars. This site, which looks at each problem in depth, helps my students to see that the papers they are about to draft must spell out the problems as well as suggest practical solutions.

### **Drafting the Problem-Solution Paper**

Thus far, students have looked at problems via a newspaper hunt, a twenty-four-hour observation period, and a Web site. It is at this point in the unit that I have students spread all these activities out on their desktops, and I ask each of them to select one problem worthy of addressing in

a problem-solution paper. I remind them that their selected problem should be “weighty” enough to carry a multiparagraph response.

To help them organize the essay, I suggest a rough outline calling for a four-part response:

*Part 1: Describe the problem.* Define the problem. Who says it is a problem, and why do they say so? Does your audience need convincing that this is a problem? Try to use specific facts and figures in describing the problem.

*Part 2: Propose a solution.* Describe your solution(s). Are your solutions practical? Are they obtainable? How so? Be very specific in outlining the steps of your solution.

*Part 3: Defend your proposal.* Why will your ideas work? Anticipate what the opposition will say and counter their concerns. Recognize that people may be reluctant to get behind your proposal, and explain to them why they should overcome their reluctance.

*Part 4: Conclude.* Remind the readers why this problem needs their attention. Readdress why they should care. What action do you hope is prompted by the writing of this piece? Tell the readers what they can do or how they can help.

I know that some teachers reading this may find this suggested template artificial and restricting. There is legitimacy in that concern. But I want to emphasize that the template is a *suggestion*, not a mandate, and that my most reluctant writers find comfort in having some scaffolding from which they can begin. Some of my better writers, however, ignore the template and outline their own essays.

Since I model the writing I expect from my students, I begin drafting first. (Remember, I go first, and then my students follow.) For this assignment one year, I picked a topic that was dear to me (and one I knew my students would not select): the decline of reading in adolescents. With the template in mind, I wrote the rough draft one section at a time, thinking out loud as I wrote. Here is my opening to the essay, where I describe the problem:

One problem facing our country today is that reading is falling out of favor with adolescents. When adolescents don't read, they become adults who do not read; this is far beyond a school problem. This is a cultural and societal problem. Why? Because

studies have shown that adults who read do things that nonreaders do not do. Readers get much more involved in their communities. They get more involved in their children's schools. They attend more cultural events. In short, they bring much more to our communities (cite source here). [As I drafted this in front of my students, I did not have the source handy. I wrote "cite source here" to model to them that I would have to return and cite the research.]

One recent study showed that there is a "universal, calamitous fall-off of reading that happens at around the age of 13" (cite source here). When kids become teenagers, they stop reading. We know many of the reasons for this—print-poor environments at home, time wasted on Facebook, video games that offer more immediate gratification. In addition to this list of usual suspects, allow me to suggest another factor that is contributing to the death of reading in our schools—our schools. Ironically, the one place where students go to learn the love of reading has become the place where students go to hate reading. Schools have become a large part of the problem, and this problem must be addressed, or as a society, we will pay the price.

Once students see my model, they begin drafting. Here is Aine's rough draft of her introduction (she chose the problem of child trafficking):

Often poor children and their parents are unaware of their rights, and are desperate to live better lives. They are easily tricked by people with false promises of employment for their children. Thus, leading them to fall victims to the child trafficking industry. They are sometimes torn away from their families, they are forced to become child soldiers, they are turned into slaves in sweatshops, they are sexually exploited, or they are harvested for their organs. Child trafficking or Modern Slavery, as it is also known, is the second most lucrative crime around the world, next to the drug trade. It is found all over the world. Shockingly, according to ECPAT International "1.2 million children are trafficked each year" (1). Child trafficking is "one of the most appalling forms of human rights violation" (2). We cannot let this problem go unnoticed any longer.

Once my students have drafted their introductions, I restart the modeling process by drafting part 2 of the essay (propose a solution). I italicize my transitions to make them more visible for my students:

*If we stand any chance to reverse this problem, there are a number of steps that must be done. One step that needs immediate attention is to make sure that students have access to high-interest reading materials. I know that seems to be stating the obvious, but schools have placed all their focus on mandating that students read academic texts, and they have lost sight of the value of recreational reading. Yes, I like *Hamlet*, and I think it should be taught, but I also enjoy books like *The Hunger Games*. When all reading students are asked to do is academic in nature, recreational reading gets lost, and when this becomes standard operating procedure, we lose the opportunity to build lifelong readers. Schools provide *Hamlet* for students to read, but they are not surrounding students with high-interest, good books. In a way, this is like asking students to become good swimmers without putting any water in the pool. You have to have water to swim; you have to have good books if you are going to become a reader.*

*Another way schools are killing readers is by tying all reading assignments to endless multiple-choice exams. Students have been taught that the reason they should become readers is to pass a test. Think about this approach. If you went home tonight to sit in your favorite spot to read a good book, what would happen to your reading experience if you knew that your reading would be followed by a lame quiz the next day? It certainly would take the enjoyment out of it, wouldn't it? And this raises a huge issue: where has the enjoyment of reading gone? Where do kids read for fun anymore? On the contrary, by tying quiz after quiz to reading experience, schools are turning good books into extended worksheets.*

For a student to become a reader, three things have to happen: (1) he or she has to have a good book to read; (2) he or she has to have time to read it; and (3) he or she has to have a place to read it. For many students, school is the only place where these three factors intersect. Some students have time to read, but they share a crowded apartment with siblings and do not have a quiet place to read; some students have a place to read, but they leave school at the end of the day and go straight to work. But our schools ignore these factors. They do not give our students interesting recreational books. They do not give them a time and place to read for enjoyment. One recent study found out that kids, on the average, are only reading seven minutes a day in school (CITE XX). If we want to raise readers, this has to change.

Following the "I go, then they go" approach, my students draft part 2 of their essays. Here is Aine's rough draft of part 2:

A number of countries and organizations have proposed many solutions to the child trafficking situation. An exemplary demonstration of this movement can be found in Mexico, where they have launched an organization named "Blue Heart." A dozen number of significant buildings in Mexico City were lit up blue to raise awareness about their campaign. Blue Heart has made shelters to aid victims of child trafficking, has created a program that helps locate any child trafficking victim around the world, and has shared knowledge about this problem to families prone to falling victim to child trafficking. Blue Heart and its affiliates propose that in order to stop child trafficking, "we must be able to strengthen global cooperation and have more innovation in the battle against organized crime" (1). This quandary goes far beyond the individual being affected and his or her family. We all have to unite in the struggle against child trafficking. "Since almost everything we consume has been stained by the blood, sweat, and tears of trafficking victims, we all have a shared responsibility to act" says Antonio Acosta, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2). Acosta believes that taking action is not solely the accountability of the people's governments, but also of the people themselves.

About 60% of the world population is oblivious to child trafficking, and the culprits can be anyone, even your next door neighbor. If the entire world and its inhabitants could acknowledge these children, if the entire world were aware of their current situation, if the entire world were to bring to a standstill the child trafficking black market, then these children wouldn't suffer anymore and neither would numerous future victims.

Joy Ngozi Ezielo, Special Reporter on trafficking in persons, says "we need an enhanced cooperation among all actors involved in combating trafficking. This is essential to maximize available resources for families" (4). These children are driven to take false promises, to leave home, or to sell themselves due to their limited resources. Their families can't meet the expenses of food, shelter, and clothing. They may be uneducated, or they have dropped out of school to attempt to help the family, they are poor or are orphans. Volunteers from various organizations are helping out by going to these places and assisting them by giving them donations.

Part 3 of the outline suggests that the writer defend his or her proposal to fixing the problem. I write first:

There are some out there who might challenge my proposal. For one thing, they argue that giving students time to read “for fun” is a waste of school time. Schools, they argue, should be all about academic reading. They are wrong. There is a clear connection between time spent reading recreationally and scores on reading tests. In other words, kids who read the most for fun read the best on tests. But the issue is larger than test scores. The issue really comes down to whether schools want to raise lifelong readers. Have we really gotten to the point where the idea of putting high-interest, good books into the hands of our students is seen as a waste of time? When I run into a former student twenty years from now, I will not care what their reading score on the state test was when they were 15 years old. I will, however, care very much that they have grown into adults who like to read.

My students then follow me by continuing to draft part 3 of their essays. Here is Aine’s rough draft of part 3:

Some may say that one person cannot stand up to a drug lord who may possibly be at the head of the child trafficking black market, but a lot of people, an entire nation, and an entire world can rally together to stop it. One person at a time. You may not be aware about how much your contributions, donations, and assistance to these organizations help to fight this the worldwide dilemma. They are. Your help builds shelters, it gets victims back into school, and it provides desperately needed supplies to suspecting victims and their families. The more people that get involved in this effort to fight child trafficking, the more children we are able to save.

After writing part 3, it is time to conclude. Here is my rough draft of my conclusion:

Ray Bradbury once said, “You don’t have to burn books to destroy a culture, just get people to stop reading them.” Before our culture goes down the drain, let’s change the way we approach reading with our students. Let’s give them lots of good books, let’s give them a place to read them, and let’s give them time to read them. Now. Before it’s too late.

Aine's followed by writing her rough draft conclusion:

Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Because these innocent children cannot speak up for themselves, they need our voices to take the stage for them. They need us to take a hold of that microphone and speak into it louder than before to get the entire planet to hear. We can be that voice that stops this problem. Get involved with the organizations that fight child trafficking and keep yourself updated on their current activities against child trafficking, and see how you can help. Go to [NotforSaleCampaign.org](http://NotforSaleCampaign.org) and you will see what others are doing to fight child trafficking. You will get ideas on what you could do to support this campaign. You may think your action is too small, but every little action counts. It may seem insignificant at first, but to a victim of child trafficking it means much more than you can imagine. It just might mean a second chance at life.

It's hard work, but having my students stand next to me and watch how I write has elevated their writing more than any other strategy I have employed in the classroom. "I go, then you go" works.

To be honest, I have not always modeled how I write in front of my students. Early in my career I was more of an assigner than a teacher, and when I simply assigned a problem-solution paper, the introductions all began to look the same. Does the following introduction look familiar?

*There are many problems in the world, but the one that needs our immediate attention is the global problem of child trafficking. In this essay I will outline the problem and give three solutions to the problem.*

What followed were stilted, five-paragraph essays—the kind of essays that, after reading twenty of them in a row, made me want to jump off a bridge. After too many years of reading these essays, I slowly began to understand that if I wanted my students to write authentically, I had to show them how to do it. Today, the more I model my own writing, the better my students' writing gets. Because my models are rarely, if ever, five paragraphs in length, neither are theirs.

## A Closing Thought

As our students mature into adults, they will inherit an increasingly complex world. It is our responsibility as their teachers to help them learn the skills they will need to confront serious problems and use these skills to generate innovative, thoughtful solutions. So let's remember that when our students write, they think more deeply, and that innovative thinking is often discovered after extensive writing. When we ask our students to explore problems and possible solutions, let's be sure to provide them with ample writing time. The more practice they get today, the better thinkers they will be tomorrow.