



<p><b>OWW Lesson 3.2</b></p> <p><b>Narrowing the Focus</b></p> <p><b>Learning Objective:</b> <i>students see that one general topic has many subtopics and practice narrowing down the focus of their writing based on what interests them</i></p> <p><b>Mentor Texts:</b> <i>a selection of two or more texts on the same general topic</i></p> <p><i>Trees of New England; A Pine Tree and A Maple Tree (RS WA7); The History of Arbor Day; Aani and the Tree Huggers; How a Forest Grows</i></p>	<p><b>Connection :</b> You are beginning to get lots of ideas of topics to write about (trees, cats, volcanoes). The next step as a writer is to figure out what it is about that topic that is most interesting or important to <i>you</i>. Thousands of books have been written about trees, but they each say something a little different. Today we are going to practice narrowing down a topic, and choosing a focus for our writing.</p> <p><b>Teaching :</b> Authors start out by learning a little about a topic that interests them and then choosing one aspect of it to learn more about and write about in detail.</p> <p>I looked for some books on trees, and found a book about why people should plant more trees; one about all the ways people benefit from trees; and one about how a forest grows. [Read brief excerpt(s).] Each of these authors chose to write about an aspect of trees that interested <i>them</i>, or that they thought was most important for people to understand.</p> <p>Authors are good at figuring out what interests them. Today you will get a chance to figure out what you think is most interesting or important about the trees outside our school.</p> <p><b>“Try It”</b></p> <p>Turn to your partner and tell them three things you already know about trees.</p> <p><b>Instructions to students for Independent Outdoor Writing</b></p> <p>Prepare your notebook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>record the date, time and weather on the left-hand page of</li> </ul>
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<p><i>Help students see how any one of the things they found to be important or interesting might suggest a writing focus:</i></p> <p><i>“squirrels live in my tree”... could become a report on all the ways squirrels use trees;</i></p> <p><i>“baby pine cones are growing on a branch” could lead to an informational text on pine cones, or to a comparison of a pine tree and a maple;</i></p> <p><i>“there are no leaves on my tree....” could lead to an explanation of how trees change through the seasons;</i></p> <p><i>“the bark is peeling off” could lead to a guide to identifying a trees by their bark.</i></p>	<p>your notebook and leave the rest blank to sketch your tree;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on the right-hand page make a T chart, labeled “interesting” on one side and “important” on the other.</li> </ul> <p><i>Circle up outdoors, and identify the tree(s) students can observe.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Get to know your tree. Look at it from a distance and up close. Look at it from the perspective of an ant, or a bird, or a human. Touch it. Look at how it is similar to the trees around it and how it is different</li> <li>2. Make a quick sketch of your tree. Sketch the whole tree, and a tiny part of the tree.</li> <li>3. Talk to your partner about what you think is most interesting about your tree (something weird, or surprising, or familiar?) and write down the <i>most interesting</i> things to you.</li> <li>4. Talk with your partner about how your tree is important; write down what you think is most <i>important</i> about your tree(s).</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Back indoors (or outdoors in good weather)</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Use one item from your list of interesting and important things as the focus for writing a short piece about your tree.</li> </ol> <p><b><i>Share Out</i></b></p> <p>Have students share their writing.</p> <p><i>Note how many different ways they chose to write about the same topic, and how much more interesting it is if an author has a narrower focus that is important to her.</i></p> <p><b><i>Applying the skill</i></b></p> <p>Writers are good at noticing what interests them. When you first start thinking and learning about a topic try making notes about the things that really stand out to you. Which of those things are most interesting, or important to you? Try choosing <i>one</i> of them as a focus for your writing.</p>
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