



Writing Fundamentals

Collecting I: Who Can You Ask?

Launching

Rationale:

Writers often conduct research through direct observation and by asking questions and opinions of others. Students will use questions and observations to collect information on a writing topic they choose.

Preparation:

- *My Basketball Book* by Gail Gibbons
- *Night in the Country* by Cynthia Rylant
- *Writers' Notebooks*
- *Chart or transparency of "Strategies for Collecting"* (see Appendix)

Teaching:

Inform

Once you have selected an idea to write about, you may find that to create a finished piece, you want or need more information. Most writers use their writings as an opportunity to learn (as well as pass on) even more information about the topics they're excited about. Today, I want us to talk about some of the ways we can go about collecting information and details to add to your writing projects in progress.

Present

One great way to collect information is to interview or talk to people involved with your subject. That's what Gail Gibbons did to make her basketball book. In the dedication, Gail thanks a Vermont physical education instructor for her help in making the book. She must have asked her lots of questions about the ins and outs of basketball. I bet she also watched a lot of games. She observed how the players move the ball, how offense works, and what defense is. She even made sketches to help herself remember what she saw, and then used those sketches to help her readers understand more about her topic. *Turn to the court diagram on p. 4.* A great way to collect information on your topic is to ask questions, observe people or things in action, and then draw and take notes to record what you learned, and collect your ideas in your notebook. *Begin a class chart based on the sample provided in the Appendix.*

Engage

Not all of our topics are fact-based like Gail's. What if you're writing about a memory from your past or making up a story about kids on a playground? How could you collect information, do you think? Well,

you can do exactly the same things! When Cynthia was writing her book, *Night in the Country*, I bet she went to the country and stayed up at night, and she watched and listened. She sat still in the backyard and listened to the apples falling and the frogs singing. She wrote down what she saw and heard. I bet she sketched the owls or the night sky or even took pictures of the animals on her visit. She might even have asked a farmer about how the animals on the farm behave at night. *Read over the "Strategies for Collecting" chart. Then have students discuss with a partner which of the strategies will work best for collecting the information they need for the kind of writing they will do.*

Reiterate

No matter what kind of writing you are doing, these are strategies for researching and collecting information that you can use. *Have students share with the class which strategies they will use and why.* Today, you will go back into your Writer's Notebook and start collecting more information around your seed ideas.

Conference Questions:

- Who will you interview, survey, or ask questions of for this project? Why?
- Which of the other collecting strategies we covered today will help you?
- How will you go about doing this?

Extension:

Have students create interview or survey questions and ask them to use these to gather information on their topic. Students can share their findings with the class the next day.

Appendix:

"Strategies for Collecting"





Strategies for Collecting

*Here is a list of different ways of researching.
Choose one or two ways that fit your topic.*

- *Ask an expert.*
- *Speak with a witness or participant.*
- *Survey attitudes of others.*
- *Make observations.*
- *Draw sketches or make diagrams.*
- *Take or gather pictures.*