



# THINKING OUT LOUD

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## Ideas for Writing by Joyce Sidman

*Different kinds of writing demand different styles, but all writing begins with you: what you are thinking, and feeling, and noticing. Here are some ways to explore what's on your mind.*

### 1. What's On Your Mind?

Writing starts with a nagging thought at the back of your mind. Ask yourself:

- What surprises me?
- What makes me different?
- What don't I understand?
- What do I wonder about?
- What is happening vs. what should be happening?
- What makes me happy/upset/angry? Why?
- What is different from what I expected?

Start your writing by asking a question. Then try to answer it.

### 2. Placing Your Reader

Good writing is full of sights, tastes, sounds, feelings. These descriptive details will slide your readers right into your shoes, letting them see the world the way you do.

- Describe an important scene or object from your point of view, with lots of details.
- What people are involved? Tell us how they act.
- What were you feeling before? At the time? What are you feeling now?

### 3. Write to Understand

We write not just to communicate, but to understand ourselves and the world. Your feelings and observations may be very personal or ordinary, but they become interesting to others when you tell us:

- What do you know that we might not realize?
- What have you learned about yourself? About others? About the world?
- What are you still uncertain about, still trying to understand?

Try to move toward a "universal truth" that you have discovered. Something that's true—not just for you, but for others. Then your writing will help us understand our lives, too.

#### **4. Don't Forget to Laugh**

Humor helps ease embarrassment and celebrates the unusual. Try to:

--Put a touch of humor in a serious essay, for relief.

--Put a touch of seriousness in a humorous essay, to remind us of deeper feeling.

#### **5. Share Your Writing!**

Others can help you pinpoint parts that aren't clear, or parts that need expanding.

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