

# Lesson Plan

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*In this lesson plan aimed at 4<sup>th</sup> graders, Teachers & Writers teaching artist [Susanna Horng](#) offers a fresh way to introduce young writers to the pleasures of revision. By looking at rewriting through the lens of genre instead of just “fixing” what has already been done, young writers get to experiment with style and voice—an exciting take on what students often think of as a “drag.”*

## **CHANGE IT UP**

### ***Exploring Genre Conventions through Revision and Rewriting***

by Susanna Horng

**Download:** **CHANGE IT UP.**

**Genre(s) taught:** Creative Nonfiction

**Grade(s) taught:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade.

**Workshop Objective:** A first lesson in revision: to rewrite the same “bare bones” paragraph in different genres, e.g., as a fairy tale, a mystery, a fantasy, a textbook, a Dr. Seuss book.

**Common Core State Standards:** (Refer to the Anchor Standards for Writing at [www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W))

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2.D**  
Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.B**  
Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.D**  
Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

**Guiding Questions:** What is rewriting? What are genre conventions?



Photo by Haraidi

## LESSON

**Ritual (5 min):** We begin each class with this free-writing prompt: for the next five minutes, write continuously. Put your pencil to your paper and write whatever comes into your head, even if it's your name. There is no right or wrong. This writing is just for you, to exercise your writing muscles.

**Introduction/warm-up activity (5-10 min):** First, have a short discussion about what exactly rewriting is. What are its purposes? Why is it important? Students generally think of rewriting as a drag—but this is a fun way to do it.

**Main activity (20-25 mins):**

1. Read an example of the same story written in different styles. One good one is *Exercises in Style*, by Raymond Queneau (check pages 15-21 of [this pdf](#)). Discuss genre—how does a fairy tale start? Where does it take place? What does Dr. Seuss sound like? Or a fantasy book? Or a diary entry? Or an adventure? Write some different opening lines on the board.
2. Ask students to rewrite one paragraph—either their own or one you provide for them—using these different genres: a fairy tale, a mystery, a fantasy, a textbook, a list, or a journal.

**Closing (5 mins):** It's nice to have students read their different genres—especially if they all started with the same paragraph. After, discuss how rewriting changed the story. They can reflect on the rewriting process as a whole—what did you learn about rewriting?—or on this specific experience.

**Materials:** Pencils, and paper.

**Vocabulary:** rewriting, genre, genre conventions, style

**Multi-modal approaches:** **intrapersonal**, through the opportunity for self reflection; and **linguistic**, through the use of words and reading aloud.

**Tagged:** genre, style, exercises in style, genre conventions, rewrite, rewriting