ALOHA! Below are the updates for this week.

The “Write” Stuff
As this semester comes to an end, we’d like to thank each of you for all that you’ve done to increase the amount and type of writing you have integrated into your curriculum. Your efforts certainly have not gone unnoticed! We look forward to a productive second semester.

Practice makes perfect...sense
In Leah's class, here is how the students' MyAccess! writing prompt submissions for Of Mice and Men Writing are looking.

22 students scoring at the advanced level
12 students scoring at the proficient level
4 students scoring at the "at risk" level

Remember, practice makes proficient. Here are a few last minute ideas to help students do well on the writing prompt next week.

1. Make certain students understand the key vocabulary words - admirable, victim, & villain
2. Encourage students to generate ideas for each word and determine which best reflects their thoughts about Curley’s wife.
3. Read aloud the character analysis to give students other ideas. (see below)
4. Have students complete a graphic organizer so they can “see” their ideas. (see below)
5. Encourage students to openly discuss their thought about Curley’s wife.

Curley’s wife
Character Analysis

Curley’s wife has no name and is initially seen as the possession of her husband. She is also a good-looking lady who wears quite a bit of makeup, form-fitting dresses, and ostrich feathered-high heels. As the only woman on the ranch, Curley’s wife is lonely and sad - something her marriage to Curley only makes worse. She reveals throughout the course of the story that she is unhappy in her marriage because her husband seems to care little for her, and is really more interested in talking
about himself than anything else. Further, she laments her lost potential; she details twice that she could’ve been a Hollywood movie star, though the chance was taken from her by her mother, who worried she was too young.

But Curley’s wife has another side that is petty, cruel, and almost as self-obsessed as her husband. She flirts deliberately with the ranch hands and causes them to suffer Curley’s hot-headed, glove-wearing wrath. Further, she does little to hide these flirtations from her husband, though they’re likely to infuriate him and make him feel even smaller. Come to think of it, this is probably why she does it at all.

You’re likely to lose all sympathy for this woman as a desperate captive of ranch-living the moment she barges in on Lennie, Crooks, and Candy in Chapter Four. She singles the men out, calling them the weaklings of the pack, left behind for a reason. In her conversation with the men, she reveals her strange dilemma – while she scorns and mocks these ranch men, they’re the only ones she has to talk to, and talk she will, whether they’ll listen or no. Still, in order to make herself feel bigger (especially relative to those who won’t give her the time of day), she has to seek out those who are smaller. She cruelly cuts down Candy for his old age and meekness, Lennie for being “a dum dum,” and most harshly, she threatens Crooks with a lynching.

Finally, Curley’s wife, like Lennie, has no ability to self-evaluate. Unlike Lennie, she doesn’t have the excuse of being mentally slow.

She’s just self-obsessed, and unable to judge herself and her position honestly. It seems at every chance she gets, Curley’s wife likes to talk about her lost opportunities. She speaks of a traveling actor who told her she could join their show, without gathering that this is a pretty standard pick-up line. Same with the offer to go to Hollywood: Curley’s wife has convinced herself that her mother stole the letter, rather than realize the men weren’t really interested in her for any actual talent. Curley’s wife’s obsession with herself ultimately leads to her death.

She knows Lennie is supposed to stay away from her, but thrives on his attention and wants his praise for her soft hair. It is not coincidental that she ends up losing her life because she didn’t want Lennie to mess up her hair. This final event sums up Curley’s wife’s role fairly neatly.


Of Mice and Men: Character Analysis

Curley’s Wife

Would you consider her to be... and why?

Admirable
(someone who others admire/look up to/deserving of respect/high regard)

Villain
(a wicked or evil person)

Victim
(one who is harmed by another)

NOTE: A similar format is also available in the handbook sent to you last week.
And more about practice

On the *Is Cheating Always Wrong* writing prompt that Lokahi Academy students did, ten students scored at the advanced level (5.0 - 6.0). Most of these students revised their essay at least once and one student even did so 6 times and his progression looks something like this.

Submission 1: 2.0
Submission 2: 2.5
Submission 3: 3.2
Submission 4: 3.3
Submission 5: 4.8
Submission 6: 5.1

Sixteen students scored at the proficient level (4.0 - 4.9). Another student’s data/progression looked like this.

Submission 1: 2.4
Submission 2: 2.9
Submission 3: 3.4
Submission 4: 3.8
Submission 5: 4.1
Submission 6: 4.7

Sixty-seven students are scoring "at-risk" (1.0 - 3.9). Many of these students aren’t far away from proficiency and turned in multiple revisions to try and increase their score.

Additionally, a total of 93 students turned in the assignment -- a huge improvement over the last writing assignment.

The TOWL

Since last week was about story beginnings, let’s talk this week about story endings. Just like “Once upon a time” wasn’t a thrilling beginning, “they all lived happily ever after” isn’t a very exciting ending. That ending is not only cliché and rarely true, it also belongs to the early childhood genre of fairy tales, though I see it too often in the student writings.

Last week, when we talked about story beginnings, we saw the importance of a beginning that entices the reader to continue with interest. Likewise, a good ending entices the reader to think about something; hopefully they think the writer is clever to pull the story together with the beginning, and maybe even add a twist. Let’s take the story beginnings from last week:

1. Once upon a time, the little town of Kapa`a had a fire.

2. As the sun rose over the mountains in the sleepy little town of Kapa`a, no one knew that such a peaceful start to a summer day would turn to chaos.
Corresponding endings might be:
1. The fire was out and everyone went home.
2. As the summer day came to a close, the sun set peacefully over the shores of Kapa`a; the sleepy little town, looking over what was left of their mountain, wondering if lightning really does strike twice.

One way to write a good ending is to tie it back to the beginning in some way. Which ending is more interesting? Which ending leaves the reader with something to think about?

Happy writing for this week:)
Aloha, Julie

Food for Thought:
http://www.cartoonstock.com/cart.asp?from=stock&basket=yes

Professional Development:

Our next PD Session will take place on February 5th, 2011. It will focus on the many ways of giving feedback on written products, and more about MyAccess! After that, our final PD of this school year will take place in early April, 2011.

It’s not where you start that matters, it’s where you end up!