Aloha Writing Team! Mahalo for your efforts and for hanging in there! Here’s what’s going on this week.

Upcoming Professional Development Session

Tie a string around your finger to remember that our next PD is coming up on Saturday, November 6th, from 8:30 – 12:30pm in the library. The focus on this session will be on practice and progress monitoring.

Dr. Julie’s Remarks

Some students are writing some very interesting stories, but many are not writing about the storm having much to do with the tree on fire. About 1/3 write about fireworks or arson, 1/3 write about kitchen fires, and 1/3 write about a storm, but make it a hurricane or locate the setting in places other than Hawai‘i. It makes sense that they write to their knowledge base and experiences. Since lightning is rare here and bolts that hit the ground are almost unheard of locally, most students treat the lightning storm in the picture prompt as background; they pay more attention to what’s happening in the foreground.

This causes some scoring issues. Generally they do not score high on the picture/story vocabulary based on the picture, but may score well on plot and overall story. As I’ve explained before, students are writing to their lived experiences – they know about fires started by fireworks, kitchen fires, or arson, but not by cloud-to-ground lightning.

The other peculiar thing is that not one student has identified the birdcage as such. Instead, if they identify it at all, they call it a mailbox. Truthfully, it’s hard to think of it as a birdcage, and even more difficult to think of a reason why a dog is tied to it. The placement looks like it could be a mailbox, and local experiences would make it more logical to see a dog tied to a mailbox than to a birdcage outdoors.

Staying within story composition, there is a wide range of descriptive
Mostly, students are minimally descriptive, adding few adjectives, adverbs, or literary devices (e.g., similes, metaphors). Some students do, but they are rare, and often these stories end quickly because it seems they run out of time.

That’s it for this week :)”

**Mari’s Tips on Writing to Picture Prompts to Share with Students:**

- Don’t just describe what you see in the picture.
- Do imagine a story about the picture.
- Do have a theme.
- Do describe and use the people in the picture as your characters.
- Do name characters and give them an age and a history.
- Do show what your characters see, feel, taste, touch, and smell.
- Do show what lessons they learn.
- Do use the setting of the picture as the setting of your story.
- Do make sure that if something is happening in the picture, it happens in your story as well.
- Do study the picture carefully and give specific details.
- Do add dialogue in order to “show” not “tell.”
- Do organize your thoughts and ideas in a web or a graphic organizer.
- Do use the first five minutes to prewrite/organize and the last five minutes to revise/edit.
- And above all, do enjoy writing! Only you can write your story.


“*The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightening and a lightning bug.*” Mark Twain