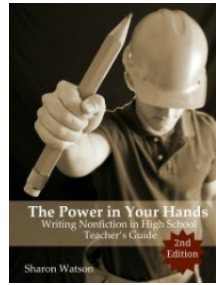


Ideas for Teaching *The Power in Your Hands* in a Co-op



Here's how I cover the material for the first two chapters:

1. Before students come to the first class, they need to have read and completed all the material in chapter 1. I think it's important for students to express their ideas and feelings about writing. It seems to pull the plug on some of their fears. They are to bring their brainstorming assignment (practice 1.2) to class so they can tell the class what they came up with.
2. They should also have read pages 7-9 in chapter 2 and completed practice 2.1 for discussion in class.
3. I teach the lessons on point orders, pages 9-17, and they complete the practices associated with those lessons, sometimes together in class (with me at the white board recording their answers) and sometimes by writing down their answers on paper and then we talk about them. I like these short discussion times because those who are struggling can get ideas from those who are confident. Also, there's usually a humorous student in the class and that helps loosen everyone up. When kids are tense, they don't learn and they can't think enough to write anything.
4. I conclude with the material on intros and conclusions and also show students how they are to submit their essays (pages 18- 28). Then I give the essay assignment and answer questions, and then assign any reading I want them to do in preparation for next week's lesson.

Every week there's an essay assignment and a reading assignment from the next chapter.

I used lots of discussion and fun board work (brainstorming as a class, for instance) to teach or reinforce material. We were very creative with our brainstorming!

The position paper (chapter 13): I taught the first half of it one week. The assignment that week was to email their thesis statement and main points to me the night before we were to meet again. That way, I could tell if they were on track and had workable material. The next week, I taught them the basics of documentation, along with other things, and then assigned the paper, which was due the next week.



Many of the skills for writing research papers are embedded in chapters 1-12. When students get to chapter 13, they learn even more: a method of taking notes, organizing, signal phrases and how to cite their sources with parenthetical citations in the body of their paper, how to cite their sources in a works cited page, and a host of other skills needed to complete a research paper. In *The Power in Your Hands*, a research paper is called a position paper.

Because the Modern Language Association (MLA) has a new edition out, we've created a free download for those who want to stay current on how to document sources (chapter 13 of *The Power in Your Hands*). [You can find that free download on this page. >>](#) Scroll down a little on that page until you find the red button labeled "Click for your free Works-Cited Lesson."

Also, I do not require students in my classes to cite everything in the beginning of the year because they are unfamiliar with the concept. But as soon as I teach it, I expect them to cite their sources. It's polite. It's honest. And it keeps them from plagiarizing. I let my students know ahead of time which method of citing to use: the whole works-cited page or simply in-text citations like those found in publications such as magazines and newspapers. In-text citations are taught in chapter 5, the logical persuasive essay, and are used in many essays in the course after that.

Skip chapters? You might also want to decide ahead of time which chapters to teach. For instance, you might want to cut out a certain type of persuasive essay or the chapter on letter writing. Really, it's up to you which chapters you teach. One year, I realized we wouldn't have enough time to learn all the essays, so I gave my students ballots with four essay types on them and let the students vote on which ones they wanted to do the most. I taught the two that received the most votes, and because the students had voted themselves, they really were interested in the ones I taught.

If you skip any chapters, consider teaching the "extra" material in those chapters. For example, if you skip chapter 6 (compare-and-contrast persuasive essay), you'll still want to teach the grammar factoid on using vivid verbs instead of turning them into dead nouns. Those grammar factoids and other material are important and are mentioned in the essay checklists at the end of the chapters.

Proofreading: You've probably already noticed that many of the check boxes at the ends of the chapters contain the actual information students will learn in the proofreading chapters. I've introduced the habits to them without their even knowing it was officially proofreading. Take a look at the checklist on page 53. You'll see many of those questions repeated on page 154 in the "Be Your Own Editor." The concepts have been incorporated before they get to chapters 9 and 10. Then in those chapters, I've gathered that information together to show them what they already have been doing, and they learn new material there as well.



Sometimes I have the students trade papers and look for specific things. For instance, if we're studying point orders, I ask them to critique their classmate's essay based on how effective the points and the point orders are. Then I have them hand in the assignment. That way, I can let the student know whether I agree or disagree with the other student's assessment.

I don't feel it's my job to make students great writers. It's my job to teach them to be great writers, give them the tools they need, and then let them learn as much as they are willing to learn. It's like putting food on the table. I can serve up a tremendous meal, but it's up to them to eat it.

My classes were 2 and ½ hours long, so we covered a lot of material and had time for discussions and brainstorming. We have not developed a co-op schedule because everyone's is so different in their frequency of meeting and length of class time. So these ideas are just the way it worked well when I taught the class.

