

*MINNESOTA WRITING PROJECT*  
*DEMONSTRATION LESSON*

Title: If You're Not...You Can't Know: Preparation for Writing Literary Nonfiction from Nonfiction Reading

Grade appropriate: 6<sup>th</sup> grade but can be adapted

Approximate length of time to complete lesson: two fifty minute periods.

Objective (s) to be covered:

- Students will identify facts embedded in a piece of fiction
- Students will write about something in which they have unique knowledge.
- Students will make a list of passions, interests, and wonderings to prepare to write a literary nonfiction piece.
- Students will record thoughts and collected facts in their writer's notebook.

Specific standards addressed:

Reading:

- Respond to literature using ideas and details from the text to support reactions

Writing:

- Gather and synthesize information from a variety of sources, including electronic and print.

Brief summary/outline:

This is the introductory lesson for a unit on literary nonfiction genre. The idea is to get beyond the initial resistance that students have around doing research and synthesizing that information into their own writing. In elementary school, students have traditionally been taught to read nonfiction texts, take notes and spit it all out in a report without plagiarizing. In literary nonfiction, students read the nonfiction, take notes and then embed the information they collect in

a narrative, an alphabet book or a series of poems. This process helps students be more engaged in their final product and makes it more difficult for students to plagiarize.

1. Begin by reading If You're Not From the Prairie... by David Bouchard.
2. Have students tell what they learned about the prairie from listening to the story. Tell them that the author is an expert on the prairie, because he lived on it for many years and that they are experts on things too.
3. Challenge them to make a list of those things they know about from their own experience. It could be they are experts on living in St. Paul, or being the youngest, or being a fisherman or being a Xiong. Then have them write a poem telling us what they know that we wouldn't have known before. They can use the phrase from the book "If you're not....you can't know..."
4. After sharing have students brainstorm a list of the interests, passions and wonderings that they might like to research and write about. Then have them begin collecting facts about these ideas and putting them in their notebooks

Resources:

If You're Not From the Prairie... By David Bouchard and illustrated by Henry Ripplinger, Aladdin Paperbacks, New York, 1995 ISBN 0-689-82035-6

**Contact for additional information:**

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