

Portraits of the WKU WP
"Delicate Flower"

The Student:

6th grade, Language Arts, Butler County Middle School

The Teacher:

Cheryl Gilstrap, 6th grade Language Arts, Butler County Middle School, Project IX

The Assignment:

Students were asked to write a poem at the end of a unit of poetry. Students learned the difference between lyric and narrative poems. Students were given copies of several different scoring guides for poetry—including the scoring guide used for seventh grade portfolios. Students had already produced several poems; this poem was written during a "free write" session at the end of the unit.

The Text:

Delicate Flower

You're a delicate flower

as you hover in the wind . . .

I watch your feathers glisten, in the midday sun.

As I watch you . . . I lay in the hammock—I know you are scared

so I hold still

Only my hand moves to sketch your feathers.

Now I wait in the spring

for you to return.

In my hand I hold the sketch . . .

of the delicate flower hovering in the wind.

Student Commentary: What about this assignment helped me learn to write.

When I was young, I wasn't always writing or into books; in fact, I hated it. I thought it was a waste of my time, but when I found the right subject and I had a pencil in my hand, the words just roll out on the paper. When my teachers saw it they liked it. I guess I didn't start liking writing until about sixth grade. I won first place in a poetry contest at school about the differences in people. I was unable to accept the prize because I was leaving to go on a trip. Mrs. Gilstrap really helped me with my writing. She would tell me what would make the feelings in a poem come out. I thank Mrs. Gilstrap and the rest of the writing teachers for helping me get up to this level of writing.

Teacher Commentary: What I do to help students learn writing.

There are many things that I do to make students more proficient writers. I build a classroom environment rich with literature of every genre. I purposely build bridges of trust and I applaud situations where students take risks with writing. I also model good writing with my students. I publish my own writing in the classroom and I ask for opinions from my students (because they are my audience) about what is effective and what is ineffective in my writing. Understanding the writing process is one thing; working in a reading/writing workshop allows students to experience the process for themselves.