Lesson 4: Overcome the Blank Page

UNIT: Bioluminescence

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, writers. It's Anne.

My friend went on a trip to a beach in a country called Wales. She sent me this video of the beach at night. Wow! As soon as I saw this video, I knew exactly what it was—it's bioluminescence. The water at this beach is full of teeny tiny bioluminescent organisms. They're so small, they make it look like the water is glowing.

You have been becoming a bioluminescence expert with all the research you've done, and now you can share what you know on your poster for the Deep Ocean exhibit at the aquarium.

My friend Jaden has been working on a poster, too. But when Jaden sat down to start writing, he didn't know how to start. The moment he looked at the blank page, he felt like all the ideas fell out of his head. And then the blank page started to feel bigger and bigger and bigger! It feels impossible to fill all that space with writing.

As a writer, I feel like this all the time. It's so hard to get started on a new piece of writing. To help me get started, I gather all my materials and plans, such as notes and my outline. I clear any other distractions off my desk and then I take my writing one part at a time.

Imagine that Jaden was a student in your class.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: What would you recommend Jaden do to help him get started writing?

HOOK 2

There are lots of things that writers do to help get started. I don't know what you said, but here's what I said to Jaden. I told him that writers feel like this all the time and to remember that he's not really starting from a blank page at all. He has an outline that is full of all the ideas and plans he wants to put in his writing.

Instead of feeling like he has to write everything, he can use his outline to write one paragraph at a time.

Once he got started, he was writing tons.

You are getting ready to write your poster all about bioluminescence. Just like Jaden, you can take it one small part at a time.

You might be able to draft your poster in one sitting, or you might spend a few different writing sessions working on it. That's okay. Everyone writes at their own speed.

And remember, drafts can always be changed, so you don't have to worry about getting it exactly right on the first try.

Today, you'll draft your poster about bioluminescence for the aquarium using the plans you made on your Outline. You'll write your draft on binder paper so you can make changes along the way.

In the next lesson, you'll make your final poster.

I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies.

STEP 2

Get your desk ready to draft. You'll be drafting your poster on your binder paper. Make sure you have your Outline and Notes nearby, a sharp pencil, and anything else you need to get started on your writing.

STEP 3

When writers make a draft, they know that they might make changes to it along the way, or later on.

To make room for changes, you can write on every other line of your lined paper. That way, you have space to add or change sentences later on.

On your binder paper, draw a small x at the start of every other line to remind yourself to skip those lines for now.

STEP 4

Your draft will have five paragraphs, just like your outline—an introduction, three body paragraphs with headings, and a conclusion.

You may not have time to draft your entire poster today, and that's okay.

As you write, you might decide that you want to go back to your notes to find more information or even back to the sources in your packet. That's okay. You can use all these resources to write your draft.

Your outline also has a transition phrase bank that you can use to help you turn your notes into complete sentences.

Begin by using your outline to help you draft your introduction. Then, you can move on to the next parts of your outline. Draft as much of your poster as you have time for today.

WRAP UP

Fantastic job, writers!

You're on your way to writing an amazing poster about bioluminescence. You've gathered information, made a plan, and started a draft of your poster. It's okay if you didn't get to finish your draft today. You can always finish it at another time.

In the next lesson, you'll revise and edit your writing to make it exactly how you want it to be. Your final posters are going to teach visitors at the aquarium lots about bioluminescence, and it will help them understand the amazing animals they are going to see.

Your draft pages are V.I.P.s, so be sure to keep them somewhere safe with the rest of your worksheets. I'll see you next time.