Ordinary Miracles – Lesson 11

Writing is rewriting

Don't start rewriting sentences or changing around words, just make a note of the things that have to be changed. Anything that you think needs work should be marked, but your focus should be less on the individual words and more on the sentences and paragraphs – are they clear and comprehensible? Do they say what you want them to say? Do they flow?

- Ordinary Miracles, by Danny Iny, page 64

Lesson Goals

To help children understand the value and purpose of rewriting (distinct from proofreading).

Preparation

This lesson should fit into a literature class, in which the students are reading (or have just finished reading) a story that is at least partially character-centric (i.e. the characters are well-developed, and the reader gets a sense of *knowing* the character).

Activity

Have each student pick a key decision made by the character in the story (different decisions for different students). Then the students have to write a letter to try and convince the character to change their decision.

Danny Iny is the author of ***Ordinary Miracles – Harness the power of writing and get your point across!*** (ISBN 1-4116-7252-6)

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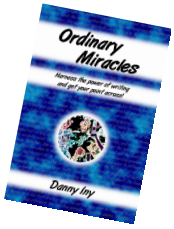

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Once the letters are written, the students should read them in pairs or small groups, and discuss which elements of the letter might cause the character to reject the student's position. After some discussion, the students should be asked to rewrite the letter.

This assignment can be graded based on the difference in effectiveness between the first and second drafts (without penalizing letters that were effective on the first draft, of course).

Notes

The logic behind this activity is that students don't like rewriting because they tend to see writing as a chore. Once you've done your chores, you don't want to do them again (imagine finishing to clean your room, and being asked to re-clean it).

By giving the writing meaning and turning it into a tool meant to accomplish certain goals (like an application letter, something aimed towards publication, or – as the case may be – a letter meant to change somebody's mind about something the writer cares about), rewriting stops being a chore, and becomes a logical step in pursuit of the writer's goals.

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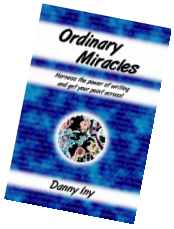
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