

# Writing Unit



## Miss Nelson's Writing Review

For this beginning-of-the-year writing review, Miss Nelson is Missing by Harry Allard serves as a springboard for improving descriptive, classificatory, persuasive, expository and narrative writing. This will give teachers a fun way to see what skills sets each student has in the different forms of writing.

### Day One: Make Lists of Character Traits and Descriptions

Dedicate this day to having students list character traits. Read the first half of Miss Nelson is Missing aloud, being sure to share the pictures. Have students record words that describe Miss Nelson in File 1 of their AlphaSmart. After reading, give everyone a few minutes to finish his or her lists. Have volunteers share their lists with the class. Give students a few more minutes to add any new words to they lists. Repeat the same procedure in File 2 describing Miss Viola Swamp.

### Day Two: Write a Description

On this day, students will write a descriptive paragraph. Model this activity by having a picture or drawing of someone to display in front of the class. Describe the person's physical traits – going head down to feet – and their character traits to the students. Stress that one trait needs to be fully described and elaborated on before moving to another trait. Then, using their lists in File 1 or 2, have students choose to write a description of Miss Nelson or Miss Viola Swamp. Tell the students their objective is to give so much detail that the reader could reproduce the character's image from reading this paragraph. Store this in File 3.

### Day Three: Make a Venn diagram

Teach students to compare and contrast through the use of a Venn diagram. Model this by comparing and contrasting movies and television, hamburgers and hot dogs, cats and dogs, etc. Have students do a Venn diagram of Miss Nelson and Miss Viola Swamp.

### Day Four: Write a Classificatory Paper

Use your sample Venn diagram from the previous day to model how to write this classificatory paper. Emphasize that their similarities should be detailed in one paragraph while their differences belong in a separate paragraph. Then have each student write a paper that compares and contrasts characteristics of Miss Nelson and Miss Swamp using their Venn diagram from Day 3. Store this in File 4 of your AlphaSmart.

### Day Five: Write a Persuasive Letter

Model this style of writing by using a topic such as school uniforms – yes or no? or traditional schools versus a year-round school. Show how to write reasons for supporting one or the other in a logical way. Then ask students to pretend that they are

tired of being a member of Miss Swamp's class. Have the student write a letter to Miss Nelson persuading her to return quickly and replace their awful substitute. Remind the student to support each reason with an explanation or an example. Store this in File 5 of your AlphaSmart.

### **Day Six: Write an Expository Paper**

Today's writing will be a paper that explains a specific process. Write the steps for making a banana split on the board. Point out to the students that explaining how to make a banana split require a list of ingredients. Show students how to position this near the beginning of the paper. Then, explain that the steps needed to make the split must be given in a logical and sequential order. Then hold a brief discussion about appropriate class behavior. Steer students toward discussing the actions of students who are thought to be well behaved. Have students conclude that Miss Nelson's class was out of control before she left. Then ask each child to write a short paper explaining how to be a well-behaved student. Point out that the student is not to give classroom rules, but logical and sequential steps that any child could follow to become well behaved. Store this in File 6 of your AlphaSmart.

### **Day Seven: Write a Narrative Story**

On this day have students write a real or fictitious story in which the main character overcomes a problem. Remind students that simple stories have 3 parts – a beginning where the problem is identified, a middle where the action builds, and an ending where the problem is resolved. Ask students to pretend that they are in either Miss Nelson's or Miss Swamp's classroom for one day. Have each student write a story about a problem she has in the class. Have her use specific details to describe the problem, develop two or three incidents related to the problem, and then resolve the problem. Store this in File 7 of your AlphaSmart.

### **Day Eight: Culminate the Review**

Have students finish up any writings they haven't completed. Go to the printer and print out each file and staple together into a writing booklet. Then read the rest of Miss Nelson is Missing aloud to the class. If time permits, read another book by Harry Allard such as Miss Nelson is Back or Miss Nelson Has a Field Day.

(Adapted from Mailbox, 96-97 yearbook, pp 70-71, by Kathy Sue Sanford – Gr. 6, Stephen F. Austin Elementary, Lake Jackson, TX)