

DEVELOPING THE CRAFT OF WRITING IN THE SIXTH-GRADE CLASSROOM

Maggie's hand shot into the air and remained there until I called on her. My students were discussing the use of grabber leads in writing, and Maggie was anxious to share an excellent lead that she had discovered in a story by one of her favorite authors. She not only described the lead to her classmates, but also shared her appraisal of why the lead was so effective in grabbing the reader's attention. Maggie was "reading with a writer's eye."

A major goal I have for my sixth-grade students is for them to develop the ability to read with a writer's eye. Reading with a writer's eye refers to the ability to appreciate the style and techniques (e.g., unforgettable language, grabber leads) that writers have used to express their thoughts and experiences. At the beginning of the school year, I set in place structures that allow the students to develop this ability. We read poetry, novels, picture books, and nonfiction that provide common experiences with quality literature. Students also develop a writer's notebook that gives them a way to begin capturing their own thoughts, observations, and queries about the world around them. Continual conversations in the classroom that revolve around books and the students' own writer's notebooks help to build a community of writers and set the stage for students to work seed ideas into crafted pieces of writing that attempt to emulate the quality of the work they have been reading.

This paper discusses some techniques and lessons I have successfully used to assist students in reading with a writer's eye, observing the world with a writer's eye,

and developing the craft of writing. These techniques and lessons include the writer's notebook; grabber leads; show, not tell; unforgettable language; and voice. An element essential to the successful use of each technique and lesson is the development of a community of writers, wherein my students and I share our experiences as writers and are encouraged by and learn from one another.

The Writer's Notebook

Jack Prelutsky, as quoted in Pamela Lloyd's (1990) book *How Writers Write*, tells a story about how he gets ideas for a poem. Prelutsky states:

I am aware of the world in a certain way. For example let's say there's a four-year-old kid out there on a street with his puppy, who's having a great time with a fire hydrant which is on. Now, if I'm walking by and I'm a barber, I'll notice that the kid could use a haircut. If I'm walking by and I'm a veterinarian, I'll wonder if the dog has had its shots. If I'm a fireman, I'll wonder why the fire hydrant is turned on.

But I happen to be walking by as a poet, and I'll say: this is a wonderful idea for a poem.

Ideas come from everything that happens to us. They come because we are humans, and if we are aware humans it's impossible not to have ideas.

Prelutsky's perspective about poetry captures what I want to communicate to my students about seeing the world with a writer's eye.

Viewing the world with a writer's eye is not, however, sufficient for becoming a successful writer. One must develop the habit of capturing that perspective in written form to serve as the basis for later writing.

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Sixth-grade students who think they have nothing to write about actually have a mind full of experiences and ideas that provide excellent material for writing.

This is the role of the writer's notebook (e.g., Bomer, 1995; Calkins, 1994; Fletcher, 1993, 1996; Harwayne, 1992; Heard, 1995; Hindley, 1996). The writer's notebook serves as a repository of personal observations and reflections about the world, and as a place to record favorite or interesting words and phrases that might be used in subsequent writing. Therefore, keeping a writer's notebook is an essential step for students as they seek to develop the craft of writing.

As teachers we must model what we expect our students to do. In introducing the writer's notebook to my students, I share entries from my own notebook dealing with words and phrases from my favorite authors as well as personal experiences, observations, and memories I may wish to use in my writing. By sharing the contents of my notebook, I demonstrate how I read with a writer's eye, collect unforgettable language, and record memories and events that may grow into a written work. In doing so, I am giving the students part of myself. This sharing sets them on the edge of their seats, ready to begin their own writer's notebook.

One entry I sometimes share with students is a memory of an incident concerning my grandmother and my father:

My grandmother called my father crying hysterically and managed to tell him between the sobs that Oscar had died. My father couldn't recall an Oscar being in my grandmother's circle of friends, and knew there wasn't one in the family. Wanting to console my grandmother but needing more information to do so, my father gently replied, "Oscar who?" The phone was abruptly hung up by my grandmother. Oscar, you see, was her beloved pet bird!

My students enjoy hearing these types of entries about personal experiences from everyday life. They provoke memories of the students' own experiences that can serve as the basis for entries in their writer's notebooks and possible writing projects. For example, following the amusing story

about my grandmother and father, one student approached me and said, "Mrs. Eggemeier, I remember the last time I saw my grandmother. We went to Arizona to see her. She gave me a teddy bear and I will never part with that bear." This memory subsequently became the foundation of a wonderful story that the student wrote about his grandmother.

Having shared from my notebook, I encourage students to make entries in their own writer's notebooks. Sixth-grade students who think they have nothing to write about actually have a mind full of experiences and ideas that provide excellent material for writing. However, the students must be stimulated by their teacher and one another to reflect on such experiences and record them. I have found that an effective means of providing this stimulation is through sharing entries from writer's notebooks in a classroom where a sense of community has been engendered.

The writer's notebook has proven essential to my students in their development as writers. Through use of their notebooks, my students have fine-tuned their ability to see the world as writers and have become more aware of the world around them. The students are inspired by their observations, thoughts, and feelings, and these serve as the basis for written works. In essence students are planting the seeds in their notebooks for their future final-copy work. The relationship between the writer's notebook and a final work is nicely illustrated for students in Ralph Fletcher's books *Spider Boy* and *A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within*. Some of the seeds for *Spider Boy* can be clearly seen in *A Writer's Notebook*, and I use these two books to provide a concrete example of the relationship between the ideas jotted in the writer's notebook and the resulting work. Many students have remarked that reading both of these books provides an excellent example of the purpose and use of the writer's notebook.

Students' reactions to the writer's notebook provide a good perspective on the impact and importance of the notebooks. For example, one shy student stated, "If I am the bird then my writer's notebook serves as my wings that allow me to get away to plant a seed." Students do a lot of seed planting in writer's notebooks. Another student said about his writer's notebook, "It's a gateway to my soul: feelings, observations, my life." Still another student observed: "My writer's notebook helped me improve as a writer because I write all the time. It helps me to think and express my ideas. It is a place that always has my voice." Writers' notebooks not only allow students to express their voices, but much more importantly, provide students the opportunity to hear their voices.

Craft Lessons to Support the Development of Writing

In addition to the writer's notebook, a number of lessons for teaching the craft of writing are mainstays in my classroom. Grabber leads; show, not tell; characterizations; unforgettable language; voice; endings; and a sense of flow are topics we discuss throughout the school year. Criteria established for the students to evaluate final copies of their work have these elements, no matter what the genre of the work. The following sections briefly describe some of these craft lessons.

Grabber Leads

"It's like you're on a boat on the Ohio River and you hit a rock. The rock is the lead, and once you get past the lead the writing just flows like the river." This was the way one of my students described leads. As he was struggling with his lead, another student explained, "It's like a roller coaster that has such a hard time getting up that first hill. You get to the top or to the lead, and you zoom the rest of the way. Well, there are

some bumps along the way, but the lead is always the hardest part for me."

It is crucial for students to begin with a good lead in any piece of writing, whether it be a persuasive letter, memoir, or nonfiction. Therefore, we study leads. We look at the leads from the novels students are reading. For example, *Journey of the Sparrows* by Fran Leeper Buss begins:

My sister, brother, and I were pressed together in the dark crate. I felt the body of the fourth person, the boy Tomas, tight against me as we all held our breath and lay without moving. "Immigration, *la migra*. Be still!" warned the man who was smuggling us north.

This great lead is a favorite of students and motivates them to read on to discover what will happen in the story. This, of course, is one of the primary functions of a lead, and it illustrates nicely for students the motivating aspect of a grabber lead. Another favorite lead of the students is from Walter Dean Myers's *Slam*:

Basketball is my thing. I can hoop. Case closed. I'm six four and I got the moves, the eye, and the heart. You can take my game to the bank and wait around for the interest. With me it's not like playing a game, it's like the only time I'm being for real.

After reading this lead, one student commented, "It's like he wrote this in my voice. He knows how we talk." I read several such leads to the students, and we discuss why each is a great grabber lead. I choose 10 books and read one lead after another. Then I pose the question, "What makes the leads in these stories good?" Students respond with answers such as: "It makes you want to read on," or "I wonder what the author meant by . . .," or "It yanks you into the piece of writing." We make lists of good leads and also enumerate the components of good leads.

Next, the students conduct grabber-lead research in our classroom library of over 2,000 books. During this process, students discover effective grabber leads and

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share them with other students. Our writer's notebooks are on our desks, and chart paper entitled "Grabber Leads" is available on the classroom wall for students to post the effective leads they have found. The entire class then shares grabber leads and discusses the reason(s) for their effectiveness. This search for excellent grabber leads continues the process of reading with a writer's eye that was begun earlier and focuses the process by providing assistance with this specific aspect of the writer's craft.

We also study nonfiction from sources such as newspapers for examples of grabber leads. Consider, for example, this lead from an article by Tom Archdeacon, a columnist with the *Dayton Daily News*. Archdeacon recounts a 1985 trip to Berlin by Marty Glickman, a U.S. Jew who was denied his right to participate in the 1936 Olympics.

He found himself slowly being drawn from the top of the stadium down to the field and the running track that encircled it: "I ended up on the backstretch—the part of the track I was supposed to have run—but as I replayed what should have been, I happened to glance over at the stands and that private box where Hitler and his henchmen . . . had sat. (Archdeacon, 1998, p. 10)

Archdeacon's work regularly provides examples of excellent grabber leads, and the endings to his articles are integrated with the leads. Archdeacon concludes his article about the 1936 Olympics with the following observation by Glickman:

I was sitting there alive and Hitler had been dead a long, long time. I got to admit, there was some real satisfaction in that. Maybe there was some Olympic justice in that stadium after all.

Within the classroom, we develop a file folder of well-written newspaper articles and other works of nonfiction. Some students use authors such as Tom Archdeacon as writing mentors and attempt to model the leads of their mentor authors.

During beginning lessons on leads, I encourage students to write three to five

different leads for their current piece of writing. Then we reexamine the students' writing and ask the question: "What did you do to make a better lead?" Consequently, the students become lead collectors, finders, and writers. This is a big step for many students. This grabber lead from a story by one of my students not only commands the reader's attention but is humorous as well: "All the ad said was that my dog would 'receive a slight correction.' Instead it changed my dog's life forever. It had been a week since our invisible fence had been installed." Given this lead, I want to read on. Yes, the student yanked me into the story. Likewise, an informational report on Rosa Parks began, "The sound of police cars was heard racing up Cleveland Avenue on a cold December day near a bus stop in Montgomery, Alabama. After a few minutes a black woman in her mid-forties was seen being forced into the back of a police car."

Despite their proficiency with leads within one context, students need to be reminded of the importance of leads when beginning a new genre such as persuasive writing. In such cases, students typically begin with "I am writing this letter to . . ." After many attempts, one student began his letter to the game warden of a local lake about the decreasing number of fish with the following: "Either the fish have become smarter or most have been caught." If I were the game warden, I would pay attention to the contents of this letter!

Writing effective grabber leads is one of the first craft lessons I teach my students. The students become very good at leads because leads are an important assessment measure of any piece of writing.

Show, Not Tell and Characterization

"Don't say the old lady screamed—bring her on and let her scream." This quotation from Mark Twain is posted in my classroom as a reminder to the students to "show, not

tell.” Sixth-grade students are good at telling readers, “He is nice.” This and other such passive descriptors are common at the beginning of the year. In discussing characterization, we talk constantly about how authors let us know about the characters they have developed. Techniques include (1) active description of the character and her or his appearance, (2) dialogue between the characters, (3) actions of the characters, and (4) others’ comments to the character. In the beginning of the school year, I read the picture book *Miss Maggie* to demonstrate how one of our mentor authors, Cynthia Rylant, developed the character. Rylant writes:

Sometimes Miss Maggie rode to the grocery store with Nat and his grandfather. Nat would wait in the truck when Miss Maggie went into the store, because she always had a wad of tobacco in her jaw and she’d spit it just anywhere she pleased. Nat was afraid people might think he was a relative.

Students immediately understand the technique of show, not tell in this piece. At this age, they tend to relate to Nat, and they feel his embarrassment with Maggie. In groups students read and discover characterization and show, not tell in other books by Rylant. Together we discover how the author informs us about her characters without directly telling us. In turn, students look at their own mentor authors with a writer’s eye, discovering how these authors use show, not tell. For instance, in *Maniac Magee* Jerry Spinelli describes the father of two of his characters in this way:

The front door opened, and seconds later a man clomped into the kitchen. He wore no winter jacket, only a sleeveless green sweatshirt, which ballooned over his enormous stomach. Tattoos blued his upper arms. His hands were nearly pure black. Stale body odor mingles with that of fries and burgers coming from the Burger King bag he held. Dropping the bag next to the bird remains, he bellowed “Chow!” and took a beer from the fridge; he downed a good half of it; in one swig, belched, double-clutched, and belched

again. He had to know someone besides himself was standing in the kitchen, and, just as obviously, he didn’t care.

Kellie, one of my students who had adopted Spinelli as a mentor author, was amazed at this passage. She observed that the author never uses the words *bad*, *dirty*, or *horrible father*; but readers definitely know these things from Spinelli’s description.

Following are excerpts from the writer’s notebooks of two students who successfully used the show, not tell technique as they described experiences of being in the school orchestra. Although they never actually tell readers they are nervous, their entries very clearly show the emotion they experienced.

My hands trembled as I lifted my cold, long, slender flute to my lips. I could feel the pounding of my heart in my chest. My music teacher’s voice hit me like a 2,000 pound weight. All of the eyes in the band room lifted and put their glance on me. I closed my eyes as tight as I could, and blew out the first note of the song.

Another student expressed the same type of feeling in her piece.

Sweating palms, a heart beating as loud as a drum. My weak fingers pick up my clarinet that only weighs about 1,000 pounds. At the very moment I started to play I thought my stomach had flipped . . . I had finished in a flash. I almost dropped my clarinet. There was a burst of applause and cheers. I put my head in my hands. Some people whispered and said they thought I had first chair.

How do students become comfortable with the use of the show, not tell strategy? I model it for students from the beginning of our discussion of the writing process. I do not name it right away, but it is incorporated into each lesson as we study characterization. In such instances, I read aloud from a piece and ask the students to consider and articulate how the author brought the characters to life. Once again, the process involves developing students’ ability to read with a writer’s eye.

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Unforgettable Language

In our classroom, this is language so surprising or striking that we have to pause and read the phrase again. It is something that, when read, we think, "I wish I had written that" or "How did she ever come up with that?" It is a beautiful mixture of words, meaning, and thought. To illustrate such language, I read to the students a book such as *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen. During the reading, I sit as if mesmerized by the sound of the words in my ears and the feel of the words in my mouth. My student Libby began her own research on the work of her mentor author, Sharon Creech. For Creech's book *Chasing Redbird*, Libby used Post-it notes to record those sentences and phrases that struck her as rich language. She noticed that Creech uses many similes, such as "This plan zipped through my brain like a dog tearing up a pea patch." "Words were whirling around in my head like moths fluttering around a light bulb." "When an idea like that takes root in my brain, it grows like weeds on the riverbank." Libby also noted this description: "In the morning a thin bank of copper seeped above the horizon, and dew clung to cobweb bridges woven through the grass." We study our individual mentor authors for examples of such language and to further develop a writer's eye.

There are special places in the students' writer's notebooks for unforgettable language. We read it, see it, write it, collect it, and we become totally immersed in it. Soon it spills into our own writing as we surprise ourselves and others with our craft of language. Development and use of unforgettable language takes work and constant revision.

One student who initially lacked some confidence as a writer wrote this about a fire in the house next to his home: "The fire fighters are fighting the fire like a prince against a dragon. They beat the reddish orange beast . . ." He certainly felt like a

writer after the other students' positive response to that unforgettable language. When another student wrote the following, our student writing community celebrated:

She inched her way into the kitchen, petrified. Sweltering drops of sweat were gliding down her face. She knew she shouldn't, but a wretched voice inside of her was pushing her to move on. She staggered toward the elegant dessert resting upon the ridged table. It looked so majestic and so desperately waiting to be peeled open. Her heart started beating like a drum while her bony, dangly fingers encircled the jagged knife. . . .

Larry L. King, as cited in Murray (1990), has remarked that "The best kind of writing, and the biggest thrill in writing, is to suddenly read a line from your typewriter that you didn't know was in you." My student and the entire class felt a thrill when she read the previous passage about desert. Still another student felt this thrill when she wrote, "Silence is a blanket. Warm and comforting, but usually covering something up." The following poem with unforgettable language was written by a learning disabled student:

Shells

Shells are like tape recorders
recording only the ocean
that is so very near
When you stick your ear to hear
it will play the sweet sounds of life
the sweet sounds of joy
the new sound
a different sound
every time.

An additional example of unforgettable language was provided by a student who was writing about the experiences of soldiers on an aircraft carrier during the Vietnam War: "There wasn't a day where you weren't surrounded by danger or a night where the loud screeching of the airplane's fingernail-tires against the chalkboard-runway kept you awake." Fingernail-tires and chalkboard-runways—this is unforgettable language.

Also consider the following student poem that wraps the reader in an ocean experience.

The Ocean

So deep and rough
As your mind gets when you're dreaming
but it can change
so soft and calm
as butter melting on a crisp, soft biscuit

you forget about how dangerous
it can be
you open your eyes underwater
you snap right back into reality
the stinging is unforgettable.

Voice

"Taking a piece of your personality and putting it into your writing." "Putting your voice into writing is like making the paper a big fingerprint." These two characterizations of voice written by my students aptly describe the objective of voice: personalizing writing so that who you are is clear from your writing.

Sixth-grade students usually do not use voice at the beginning of the school year. I give craft lessons early in the year when the students choose to write either a thank-you or a friendly letter. These letters are usually very predictable. They start with "Thank you very much for . . ." or "Hi, how are you?" In order to illustrate the use of voice, I show examples of letters that my former students have written. Here is part of a letter Chris wrote to a Holocaust survivor thanking her for the talk she gave to our class:

Dear Mrs. Frydman,

Your speech really had a profound impact on my life! It caused me to think about a lot of things, not the least of which is hate.

Now, instead of wasting my time on hate, I think of what you said and realize that hate gets me nowhere. Hate is a poison, a fire that eats away at the soul and must be extinguished!

It was a real inspiration to hear the story of someone who actually lived through the Holocaust, the longest night in the history of humankind. You made it clear that there's no

purpose in hate and it's up to us to keep the Holocaust from happening again . . .

In the future, I hope that we will be able to put an end to hate and war. We certainly stand a much better chance with people like you around! You are a vivid speaker and you've deeply affected us all.

The world needs more people like you.

I describe to my students how letters such as these stand out from the basic "thank you very much" format. Voice is extremely difficult to teach and usually begins to develop in a student's writer's notebook or in a thank-you letter that goes beyond the basic format.

My efforts to help students develop the use of voice have been generally successful. For example, our daily newspaper publishes students' comments. Sandy Eichhorn-Hilt, coordinator for the Newspapers in Education Program at the *Dayton Daily News*, once said to me, "I can always tell letters I receive from your students and a few other teachers. I can't put my finger on what it is, but they stand out from all the others." I found this observation intriguing. In examining my students' letters, I discovered an answer—voice. The letters were written in such a way that readers knew there was a person behind each letter and that no one else could have written it in exactly the same way. These students read with a writer's eye, emulate their writing mentors, and use the strategies they learn in their writing—thus, their voices carry through their writing.

At the end of the school year, my students read historical fiction and nonfiction about World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, or the Gulf War. The students interview a veteran from one of these wars. This is the first time in my classroom that the students use a primary resource for their research. What a difference this primary resource makes in their writing! The contents of the interviews with many of the veterans are breathtaking. Some have never previously talked about their war experiences with their families. The students

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We become a community of writers whose voices are heard and read in the newspaper and by veterans, parents, grandparents, principals, other teachers, brothers, and sisters.

write thank-you letters to these veterans for the interviews. These letters have voice and demonstrate the progress the students have made in writing. The letters also represent complete examples of each student's development in the craft of writing. Following are excerpts from some of the thank-you letters to the veterans written by my students:

I know it is not cool to see other people dying. To see the destruction a war can cause. People go to war, not because it's cool, but because they want to stand up for what's right. I want to thank you for teaching me that. . . . While you were answering my questions, you made the war happen again inside my mind. It opened up a whole new world for me. I saw what you saw. I felt what you felt. I did everything you did. I was right there with you fighting for freedom.

I guess war is about people giving up everything to fight for everything they have. The war life is like a bad dream, one day you wake up and you are fighting for your country, your friends are being shot right in front of your feet. And in your nightmare, you can't escape the fear that you may not come back. Only the survivors wake up from this bad dream but they still have to hold onto the nightmare of the war they lived through I guess we don't need history books to learn everything, all we need to do is ask the people who have lived the history.

These students have felt war through the eyes of the veterans and have developed the skills to record effectively their feelings and reactions.

After the interviews, we hold a classroom celebration to which we invite the veterans. During the celebration, the students read stories and poems they have written about the veterans. Here is one example of the poems that students read at the celebration for the veterans:

Him

Fear,
racing through his soul,
with a new meaning.

Fright,
filling his mind
with endless horrors.

Death,
pounding on the door to his heart
and still he goes to war

Maybe,
he wanted to keep his country free.

Maybe,
he loved others so much
he would risk his life for them.

Maybe,
God's hand was resting on his shoulder,
pushing him forth,
encouraging him to go
and fight for what was right

Yes,
God's hand
was on his shoulder.

Voice is present in every letter and poem. Can you imagine being the recipient of one of these letters or poems? One of the veterans said during the ceremony, "I have never been honored like this. I will treasure the poem I received, and it will be hung in a place of honor."

A Community of Writers

Regardless of the specific lesson being taught or the aspect of writing being addressed, an essential element of refining the craft of writing in my classroom is the development of a community of writers. I am part of a writing community with my students that matures throughout the school year. As a community, we master and share strategies through craft lessons on writing. We learn from books and other students' writing about how to read with a writer's eye. We also acquire skills by emulating writing mentors who are drawn from sources such as our local newspaper, poets, and the great authors of young adult novels. As our community develops, we write for a purpose and an audience. We are heard through our writing and we do have an impact on people. In this way we become a community of writers whose voices are heard and read in the newspaper and by veterans, parents, grandparents,

principals, other teachers, brothers, and sisters. My students write, and I marvel at the writers they have become within our sixth-grade writing community. The development of the craft of writing through this community is what I strive for in the classroom.

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Lingering Questions

1. Is it important that each student identify an individual mentor author early in the school year? Is it acceptable for those students who do not have an individual mentor author to use a mentor author identified by the entire class throughout the year?
2. During the study of a book in literature circles, should the primary focus of the study be developing the ability to "read with a writer's eye"?

The Interview

The most forceful integrated unit of study I conduct with my students concerns the Holocaust and several wars (World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Gulf War). The students are required to interview someone who participated in one of these wars. The students may either video or audio tape this interview. Many students interview a relative. After the interviews, the students write thank-you letters to the veterans expressing their appreciation for the interview and the veteran's service. The culminating activity of this unit is a classroom celebration of the veterans' stories and service. Based on information from the interview, each student prepares a poem or story about the veteran to be read at the celebration. This unit generates the very best writing the students do all year. This approach may be adapted to any unit of study in which the students interview someone.

Guidelines Provided to Students for Conducting Interviews

Preparing for the Interview

1. Choose a person who served in one of the wars.
2. Set up an appointment to interview the person. Set up a time and place. Let the person know your purpose for conducting the interview and approximately how long the interview will take. Ask permission to audio or video tape the interview.
3. When you are arranging the meeting, find out from the veteran where he or she was stationed during the war and any background information about the person that will help you develop your questions. For example, Where was he or she located or stationed? In what branch of the service

(e.g., Army, Navy) did the veteran serve, and what was his or her job in the military? These questions will serve as the introduction of the veteran at the beginning of the interview.

4. Develop a list of open-ended questions that will encourage the person to give more than a yes or no answer. For example, "How did you feel when . . . ?" "What do you think about . . . ?" List the questions in chronological order and then in order of importance. It is important to realize that the list of questions is a reference for *you*. When the veteran answers one question, you may want to know more. If this is the case, ask for additional information. Piggyback questions as we do during literature circle. You will not be totally dependent on the questions you prepared. You will see this during our mock interview and the interview I conducted with my father.

Conducting the Interview

1. Be on time, smile, shake hands, and talk to the veteran for a few minutes before beginning the tape for the interview. This will make you both feel more comfortable.
2. Use good eye contact with the veteran and listen carefully. This will demonstrate your interest in the person and what he or she has to say. Make the interview seem more like a conversation than a list of questions.
3. To let the veteran know that you are ending the interview, you may want to say "I have one last question." Also, ask the veteran if he or she has any final comments or anything else to add.
4. At the end of the interview, thank the veteran for his or her time and comments.
5. Send a thank-you note to the veteran.