**“Courage”** **by Anne Sexton**

It is in the small things we see it.

The child’s first step,

as awesome as an earthquake,

The first time you rode a bike,

wallowing up the sidewalk

The first spanking, when your heart

went on a journey all alone.

When they called you crybaby

or poor or fatty or crazy

and made you into an alien,

you drank their acid

and concealed it.

Later,

If you faced the death of bombs and bullets

You did not do it with a banner,

You did it with only a hat to cover your heart.

You did not fondle the weakness inside you

though it was there.

Your courage was a small coal

that you kept swallowing.

If your buddy saved you

and died himself in so doing,

then his courage was not courage,

it was love, love as simple as shaving soap.

Later,

if you have endured a great despair,

then you did it alone,

getting a transfusion from the fire,

picking the scabs off your heart,

then wringing it out like a sock.

Next, my kinsman, you powdered your

sorrow,

you gave it a back rub

and then you covered it with a blanket

and after it had slept a while

it woke to the wings of the roses

and was transformed.

Later,

when you face old age and its natural

conclusion

your courage will still be shown in the

little ways,

each spring will be the sword you’ll sharpen,

those you love will live in a fever of love,

and you’ll bargain with the calendar

and at the last moment

when death opens the back door

you’ll put on your carpet slippers

and stride out.

**Student Practice with Writing and Strategy Use via Sexton’s “Courage”**

* Pre-writing:
  + What is courage? (dictionary definition)
  + Summarize Sexton’s poem. What additional statements could you add about the nature of courage based on her writing?
* Identify a time when you or someone you know (from real life, literature, or other popular culture) demonstrated or witnessed one of the types of courage Sexton described.
  + Share your experience or observations orally with your peers. As you listen to your peers’ stories, tell them your reactions. What details stand out to you? What questions did you have? What do you want to know more about? What do you think their story said about the nature of courage?
* Guided freewrite
  + Using the five W’s (who what where when why and how) approach, list as many details as you can about that time.
* Drafting:
  + Next, use your list of details to write a narrative about your experience with courage.
    - Use Microsoft Word to type your draft.
    - Do your best to write complete sentences, spell words correctly, and use paragraphs, but don’t get caught up in organizing this draft.
      * Get your ideas down on paper without worrying too much about mechanics. We will edit later.
      * Focus on comparing your experiences with courage to the experiences the author writes about in this poem.
        + We will organize our drafts when we revise.

(In a class I would have students confer and revise for additional detail and information, then share their drafts for peer editing and sentence combining, revise for conventions, and publish.)

**Teacher Practice with Writing and Strategy Use via LDC, CASL, CHETL, and KCAS**

* Using the LDC task template of your choice, how would you write an LDC writing task prompt for your students in your classroom? You may use another text you are actually teaching if you wish in order to make this practice more relevant, or you may choose to use the content around Sexton’s poem as a model.
* What learning targets would you use to focus your instruction and your students’ thinking and work as writers?
* How would you adjust your rubric to ensure it is focused on the explicit targets you chose while maintaining students’ accountability for basic “correctness” in organization and mechanics?
* How would you organize the writing process to optimize the use of research-based strategies?
* How would you organize the writing process sequence related to your LDC assignment in order to optimize student success?