



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

# LEARNING LAYER

## Writing well: A tool for any storyteller

Why do some stories stay with humanity for generations, while others fade away? A scientist might say it is the importance of the content. But a journalist, at least a good one, would say it was because the story was well told.

### Writing activities on several levels:

**Flashlight:** Take a sample of your writing and check its Flesch score using Microsoft Word. Follow [these directions from Microsoft](#), which also suggest how to interpret the score. After exploring [editteach.org](http://editteach.org), rewrite the piece to see if you can raise your score. What did you change?

**Spotlight:** Ask students to find some electronic examples of what you consider to be great writing (Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, etc.). Have them run the Flesch score test. How did they do? Now look in the [Sunlight Foundation's](#) database of congressional speeches and find your local representative. What did he or she say about a current issue? How well did they do on the Flesch scale? The score aside, do you feel they could have been more clear? How would you have said the same thing?

**Searchlight:** Many writers remember the first time someone told them they could write. Ask your students to think back: Do they remember that? Who was it? A teacher? Have them tell the story any way they would like: in a poem, a song, a video, a poster, a graphic, an animation, a video, a blog item, a long story, a documentary. Exactly what happened? Ask students to post their work online. If a student doesn't have a story, why not give them one by telling them they can write?

**Extra credit:** Dive into the readable, practical books on writing. Here are just a few: *Writing for Story*, by Jon Franklin; *The Only Grant Writing Book You'll Ever Need*, by Ellen Karsch; *Writing for a Good Cause: the Complete Guide to Crafting Proposals and Other Persuasive Pieces for Nonprofits*, by Joseph Barbato; *Fundraising for Social Change*, by Kim Klein, and *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers Guide from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University*, by Mark Kramer and Wendy Call.