

CHAPTER 3

Namaste: Mindfulness and Respect as Foundation for the Workshop Classroom

(A Guide for Teacher Coaching and for Peers Helping Peers in Writing Circles)

Just embrace somebody to your heart and you are creative. Just look with loving eyes at somebody ... just a loving look can change the whole world of a person.

—Osho

The tree that is beside the running water is fresher and gives more fruit.

—Saint Teresa of Avila



INTRODUCTION:

Namaste: Healing and Growth through Classroom Relationships

Audrey's Story, Part 1

She sits silently in her seat, looking like the other sixth-grade girls. This is a rural Midwest classroom, not a world of \$250 jeans or high-brand blouses or shoes. But her straight shoulder-length blonde hair seems clean and neat. And working from the salvage of Target and Kohl's, her clothes look every bit as respectable as the other girls. But those blue eyes are not easy to read—her expression, too steadily neutral. She gives attention to the moment, but something suspenseful remains, something under the surface that will come out. And sometimes, as if an overhead flashing light has gone on and then off, her expression widens and then shadows over, showing her fear ...

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As I have explained, research on trauma-informed healing approaches not only establishes that these approaches can well support the learning of all students but also clarifies that these approaches can be taken while keeping in stride toward high academic achievement. It is not a question of setting aside high standards. Rather, it is a question of providing both high expectations and, also, supportive scaffolding to achieve those expectations.

I have laid out in chapter 1 the reasons for moving our teaching toward trauma-sensitive practices and explained some of the key ingredients for such a move. In chapter 2 I presented more exactly how we can tune the elements of our lessons to both foster healing and also to help students achieve high-quality writing. The entire remainder of this book is devoted to how to implement that blended approach in your classroom.

Most fundamentally, the trauma-sensitive classroom described by Susan Craig, combined with the discourse-safe environment that I am clarifying, can build a mindful and mutually respectful environment as a foundation under student risk-taking. Craig suggests we begin this with a “respect agreement” to establish a community of caring for the group work. And she suggests the need for a pervasive predictable kindness—in

word and tone—to succeed with the dialogic relationships in the room.

Teaching the mindfulness concept of *namaste* at the outset of my work with students establishes a shared understanding of our safe relationship that I have found even elementary school students can quickly grasp. Further, the positive response protocol that I utilize for all classroom response to writers and their writing—by teachers and student peers alike—provides a healing and supportive scaffold as underpinning for all critique of in-progress writing. I have witnessed this combination of features restore confidence to young writers and also provide clear guidance for next steps the writers can take toward quality writing. Together, the foundation of *namaste* combined with the positive response protocol constructs and enacts the basic respect agreement needed by all, though by some more urgently than others.

When I introduce the concept of *namaste* to students as a basis for our working together, I also present it right off as a foundation for responding to other writers. I offer a lesson on the word itself. I emphasize that this is the essential concept we will use to frame our relationship to one another. I suggest they say this word to one another as a greeting for the day and that they say it silently inside their heads as they prepare to respond to someone else's writing. And then, in the next few days, I proceed to teach how to do writing circles, as I am going to teach you in this chapter.

What I Say: What, How, Why

I explain to students that *namaste* is a Sanskrit term literally meaning “I bow to you.” Because the term comes from the East, people in Western culture have often experienced it in yoga or meditation. It is also related to the bowing at the opening of a martial arts session. It is often helpfully translated as “The spirit in me bows to the spirit in you.” At the end of her wonderful book *Warriors Don't Cry*, Melba Pattillo Beals—one of the “Little Rock Nine” who integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1957—closes by saying to her readers, “*Namasté* (the God in me sees and honors the God in you).”

When I had the privilege of teaching a group of high school students from several different countries at the African American History Museum in Detroit not long ago, I asked them if they knew this term. Several of the twenty or so group members did know it. One young girl from Brazil explained that in her country, the term meant “The light in me is the same as the light in you.” I like that translation very much.

After providing some information and then asking students to share what, if anything, they know about the term, I explain, “To me, the term

is best understood as meaning something like ‘I recognize that you are a sacred child of the universe—that you are special and valuable to the universe. And I know that the universe expects me to help take care of you.’” I add that when they say this to me, it carries the same meaning from them to me. Then I say that the reason I am teaching this term is because it is necessary for us to feel this respect and appreciation—and this caretaking responsibility—for each other if we are to be the most helpful writing community for one another.

Audrey’s Story, Part 2

I understand if some teachers might worry that this lesson moves the classroom toward religious issues. For this worry, I offer two responses. First, the concept of namaste is a spiritual practice that does not advocate for any specific religion or belief. It simply brings a concern for each other’s well-being into our classroom community—a concern that, I believe, is overdue.

Second, student responses have shown me how much they value this foundation for their writing workshop community. One example is Audrey, the girl pictured in the opening scene of this chapter, from a sixth-grade group I worked with over several weeks. I noticed her as I observed the teacher interact with the class. Then, as I spoke on that first day, I could see by her intent gaze that she was carefully attending to this opening lesson on namaste. Afterward, in a break, she approached me to explain that she had been the victim of a harsh stepfather who, thankfully, was no longer in her family and who, she said to me, she was no longer permitted to see. With her mother’s permission, she then began to write about those harsh experiences.

Subsequently, before our group convened each day, Audrey walked up to me wherever I was—whether unpacking my materials or chatting with the teacher—paused, and bowed, saying, “Namaste.” I always then bowed to her and replied, “Namaste.” I sensed she understood that we were making a promise to each other about how people were going to be treated in that room, and she deeply appreciated the atmosphere of respect I was working to co-construct for her in her work. Later, as the class planned an upcoming evening of sharing our writings with parents and friends, Audrey and another girl volunteered to explain the concept of namaste as an opening greeting to our visitors.

Respect Agreement

Even though I have been presenting the potential importance of utilizing the direct approach of mindfulness based on the mutual exchange of

“Namaste,” it is quite possible to implement Susan Craig’s idea of a respect agreement as a classroom foundation entirely without reference to namaste. I do both. I have designed my own four-point respect agreement (below). You may find this version suitable for you, or you may prefer to devise your own—or you may begin with mine and revise as you go. Ordinarily, having taught the idea of namaste, I elaborate by presenting the guidelines of our classroom respect agreement:

Respect Agreement

- We are making a promise about how we are going to treat each other—this includes everyone.
- We are a family of writers who are going to take care of each other.
- We are practicing “making the kind choice.”
- We fulfill this promise partly by how we respond to each other’s writing (PQS).

I read each point aloud and expound briefly upon each. I clarify the word “promise” as a commitment we are making. I point out that we are learning traits of a healthy family. I then take up the words “family” and “kindness” dialogically, inviting the students to join in describing and elaborating about each. Together, we name healthy family traits such as offering help and support when needed, being willing to be interested in what is important to another family member, and having an underlying intention to be caring.

In taking up the word “kindness,” I point out how almost all religions teach it. Then I ask students to help give a definition for kindness. I ask them to give example moments of kindness in their lives. I ask them to explain what kindness “looks like” and “sounds like.” They usually do this well. I make certain we clarify that kindness involves placing caring in your heart and then making your speech and actions match that caring. Then I say, “You will have six or twelve, or more, times each day when someone does something or something happens, and you will have the opportunity to choose how to respond.” And I remind them, “At those times, we are practicing making the kind choice.” Finally, I say I am soon going to teach them a way to respond to each other’s writing and that I have chosen this way of responding with our classroom family because it is both what research on “response” recommends and also a kind way to respond.

Two Key Principles Guiding Response

1. Teaching writing must involve coaching the individual writers toward their goals.

The teaching of writing, even more than many other subjects, is really the teaching of each individual learner. Lessons and instructions are offered from the front of the room, but at some points, individual coaching must also occur. The saving grace is that not all of this coaching needs to come from the teacher. If prepared and practiced properly, peers often can provide useful coaching advice to one another.

2. The workshop must occur in the midst of a mutually respectful classroom conversation.

This is a point fundamental to adapting our work to mindfulness and to trauma-informed practice. Our mantra: How we talk to each other in the classroom makes all the difference to the learning that goes on.

Students have an intuitive awareness of whether they are being spoken to respectfully (Moffett, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, 1983). When we respond to a student notebook entry or their freewrite or to an early draft with immediate correction or judgment, we are not being respectful or helpful. First of all, this is not the time to “correct.” If a student shows you a bold and interesting new vocabulary word in their rough draft and you pounce upon the fact that the word is misspelled, the result you get is not a better speller but a student less inclined to experiment in writing with bold words—because no one seeks out negative judgment. Further, you get a student who no longer wishes to show you their writing.

The model for a respectful conversation, according to James Moffett, is how we speak interactively with a friend. My homespun illustration for this goes like this:

Your friend says to you, “I just saw the best movie I have ever seen last night.”

You do not say, “That would have been a better sentence if you had included the title of the movie in it.”

Instead, you say, “Oh, that’s great! I’m glad to hear that. Tell me about the movie.”

Donald Graves has argued that by treating students’ writing primarily with correction and judgment, instead of coaching them graciously and supportively, we have created a society of people who treat a writing occasion as if they have been invited to an uncomfortable formal dinner. They arrive late, hope not to be noticed, and leave early.

It is to help us achieve the above coaching and discourse goals that I recommend the teaching of *namaste* as a basic part of a respect agreement—as a guide and reminder of our discourse intentions at all times. Further, I recommend the PQS, or positive response, protocol as part two

of that agreement, because it is a powerful way to establish a supportive coaching response to writers and writing. This PQS response framework is widely supported by the work of discourse theorists. It is recommended by current research on the helpful coaching of students, as summarized by John Hattie and Helen Timperley in the article “The Power of Feedback” (2007). These guidelines I recommend are true to Hattie and Timperley’s research, as well as to those of Carol Dweck and Peter Johnston, but are my own steps and language. Here is a brief, self-contained presentation I provide for both teachers in workshops and students in classrooms on the PQS response pattern.

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PQS: Positive Response Protocol

Research on helpful response asks us to coach the writer in a positive direction, not merely to offer our judgment (Dweck, 2007, 2015, Hattie and Timperley, 2007, Johnston 2012). One type of supportive and yet coaching response to a writer about a piece of writing is the PQS, or positive response, protocol. In responding to a writer during sharing time or in a conference, the teacher or peer follows this pattern:

- 1) **(P)raise:** What do you like best about the effort or paper?
 What seems most interesting or vivid?
 What do you remember best after reading?
 (I prefer: What do you remember best?)

Also: What craft steps do you see being used? Or, What is most successful in this piece so far?

- 2) **(Q)uestion:** What are you confused or curious about as a reader?
 Ask two or three questions.
- 3) **(S)uggestion:** Make your best one or two suggestions for what you feel would be the most helpful next steps for the writer and this piece.

We use this approach for several reasons. First, it is a tool to help the reader/coach—you get to know the piece by appreciating and questioning a bit before you feel prepared to coach next steps. A coach’s best ideas are not usually off the top of their head but come after making contact with the writer and piece.

We use this approach to help the writer/learner. It is important to remember that in situations of anxiety, the listener cannot effectively hear you if their fear or anxiety rises too high. This is why people take someone

with them to receive a doctor’s diagnosis sometimes—so the less involved person can hear. If we want our suggestions followed, we need to make the suggestions in a context in which the learner is comfortable and feels safe enough to be able to hear them.

Finally, we use this approach for technical reasons. No one can follow a multitude of suggestions. Humans do better at following one or two. By proceeding with appreciation and reflection first, you increase the likelihood you will offer your best one or two suggestions.

To be effective, this approach must be honest, specific, and relevant. You must refer to specific places in the paper and explain your points. Telling a writer that a piece is “great” when it is not is harmful because that response is vague and because it miscommunicates how much work good writing takes. When you become practiced in this protocol, you may examine a rambly freewrite and be able to *not* say, “My, you have a disorganized mess here!” And to say instead, “There is a vivid sentence halfway down the page—I wonder if that’s what you should write about?”

* * *

Responding to student writing efforts is a point where great help can be offered, or it can become a point where great harm is done. To ensure that we offer help rather than deliver harm, the PQS response protocol becomes the consistent and fundamental way we respond to writing. As I have said, James Paul Gee makes this fundamental point about language use: We are never just delivering information when we speak or write. We are constructing a world (Gee, 1999, 11).

Johnston cautions that praise should be focused on the process and not offered as a blanket judgment of the person (38). Judging the person is not the goal, but praising their effort or willingness to try new steps can help them work toward important growth.

When praising student effort, we may be simultaneously praising a specific point of accomplishment in their work—as suggested in the “praise” part of the PQS response. Noticing as a teacher or peer coach where a craft step is well used or at what point the student made a kind of writing breakthrough is important.

I have visibly seen the glow that comes over a student’s face when told of the pride in their work felt by their parent or teacher. We can say, “I am proud of the effort you put into this paper,” or, “I am proud of the breakthrough you achieved by persisting in solving the problem.” These statements allow us to be proud of someone’s effort or achievement without making it a blanket judgment of the person.

Conducting Writing Circles

The PQS protocol offers the “partially scripted” steps and words for response that students recovering from trauma may especially need—as speakers and as listeners. However, in my classroom experiences, I have found the language and steps of this protocol to be the guidance we all need. Through practicing this protocol, teachers and students alike teach ourselves how to be respectful responders so that we effectively nurture and coach. The soothing assurance that response will always begin with the positive is much needed by all students in the room.

Teachers are sometimes their own biggest problem in relation to response to student writing. I have met many teachers who must do the equivalent of biting their tongue in order not to correct spelling or commas as soon as they see a piece of writing. If they give in to this habit or impulse to immediately correct, then research suggests, and I deeply believe, they are simply satisfying their own obsession, rather than helping the student writer. So, practicing the PQS pattern of response rigorously can be difficult for teachers. I sometimes say to teachers, for emphasis, “When a student shows you a piece of writing, the first thing you say must be positive.”

However, we also need to teach our students to be such responders, so that learners can benefit optimally from coaching they receive from one another. My additional classroom recommendation for response, then, (in addition to the use of the PQS protocol), is to establish student writing circles in your classroom that also utilize this pattern.

Writing Circles

Teaching students to be effective peer coaches might seem like a tall order, especially with certain groups of students. However, unless we take the extra time and trouble to teach them these approaches and skills, there is always going to be a bottleneck in the classroom in which students are literally or figuratively lined up, waiting for the relatively rare opportunity to be coached by the teacher. Also, learning to be effective analysts of each other’s writing is powerful as a tool for becoming more critically analytical about your own writing. And finally, although the teacher knows the most about writing, sometimes it is the advice of a peer that strikes just the right chord with the writer and opens up new possibilities for revision.

I have found writing circles to be effective with groups as young as first graders, and I am familiar with these circles working well on up through high school and college. In all settings, to begin I recommend that the teacher guide one small group of four in a “fishbowl” modeling of writing

circles for the whole class. The teacher ideally solicits a volunteer small group, but, if need be, a group can be required to demonstrate for the good of the class. The guide sheets I have adapted for my own classroom use are based on but not exactly like those in Jim Vopat's book *Writing Circles* (2009). These classroom guide sheets are presented at the end of this chapter.

The students agree on a timekeeper/leader for the day, and they establish which writer(s) will share by listing "Writer 1" and "Writer 2" at the start of the session. At the start of a series of sessions, writers might volunteer for the Writer 1 and Writer 2 slots, but in subsequent sessions, a new leader will be named each time, and the remaining writers, whose work has not yet been shared and discussed, will fill the Writer 1 and Writer 2 slots.

If a writer does not want to share their writing but only be a responder in the group, that can be accepted as a temporary, or an occasional, role. We would prefer that writers feel "ready" to share their work. But, ultimately, some sort of balance must be sought, one that asks writers to expect to share on a regular basis with their writing circle group members.

In the first-grade classes I was recently working with, the teachers used a fishbowl approach in an ongoing manner so that only one writing circle was operating at a time in the class. The remaining members of the class stood around the circle and observed this one group, and they shared their ideas also at the conclusion of each point (praise, question, suggest).

However, even as early as second grade, I have been directly present where writing circles throughout the room readily succeeded. The first day I taught writing circles to second graders, we did have a day of marginal chaos after the fishbowl session. Some groups were able to function right away, while other groups floundered, and all the while one little boy was almost perpetually wandering along behind me earnestly repeating, "Our group needs help!"

Each time he appeared in my wake, I assured him that I would shortly be over to help his group, and I kept this promise. In general, I tried to maintain a good-natured demeanor about the relative chaos, assuring the students that we were starting a new and somewhat difficult step. I let them know that I expected confusion while we practiced, and I promised that once we learned how to do them, the writing circle sessions would become a valuable part of our writing workshop classroom.

Even by the end of that first day in second grade, I felt I was already hearing helpful, intelligent conversations in the different groups. Students would be deliberating out loud whether it would be better for the writer to add a new section on such and such or to simply expand an existing section with more details—precisely the kind of response and reflection that I had hoped for.

Michael's Story

Over the next few weeks, I observed the second-grade class growing more and more at ease with the experience. One student, Michael, who had never previously shared with his peers—regardless of whether the opportunity was in the writing workshop or any other subject—volunteered to share as Writer 1 for the second session of his writing circle group. Michael volunteered so matter-of-factly that the teacher and I only knew of it by hearing from his excited group afterward. Part two of his story came soon after, when it was time for students to be selected to read aloud before a visiting group of parents and friends. The teacher drew names from a jar. When his or her name was read aloud, the student could say “yes” or “no, thank you” with respect to their willingness to read aloud on the celebration day.

Most students said yes readily, but when Michael's name was drawn and read aloud by the teacher, there was a sudden suspense in the room as eyes turned toward him. After only a brief pause, he said “yes,” and the classroom burst into spontaneous applause.

To make that moment explicit—a second-grade boy who was known for not sharing became willing to share with not only his class but also with a visiting group of parents and friends after only a few weeks of writing circles—writing circles that carefully adhered to the PQS protocol.

Complementing Teacher Conferences

Not only are individual responses like Michael's helpful—and joyful—in their own right, but the auxiliary benefits are many of constructing a classroom environment in which students can get thoughtful and helpful feedback from their peers on an ongoing basis and are rescued, as I have pointed out, from waiting in line for the moment when the teacher finally has time for a conference with them.

The goal, of course, is not to replace teacher conferencing with writing circles, but rather for writing circles to companion with and supplement the teacher conference. I would argue that even if a teacher sees each student only once per month in a conference over a nine-month school year, those nine conferences are a powerful boost in coaching for the student to receive.

As to how often to do writing circles, there are a variety of possibilities. A teacher might devote Friday each week to writing circles. Or a teacher might pause and spend one entire week on writing circles if much of a class

now has drafts to share of a particular writing project. Once established, and after some practice time, the students can help select when to work in writing circles by letting the teacher know they feel the time is right.

The instructions on the guide sheet direct the leader to begin by asking the writer to read their piece aloud to their group. After the paper is read aloud once, the leader responds, “Thank you. Please read it again.” This reading of the paper twice may seem laborious—and, indeed, you are free to choose a one-reading approach, of course. However, I have always found students to be receptive to this, and I feel I see the improvement in their responses after two hearings. In the case of very long pieces of writing, we found it quite workable for the writer to briefly tell about their piece overall and then read a section that they wanted the group to hear and respond to.

A compassionate classroom environment based on a respect agreement is important. If this respect incorporates the mindfulness concept of *namaste*, that is an even fuller providing of classroom culture—and an additional reminder of kindness. The PQS response protocol helps implement this respectful approach. A nurturing response to writing becomes an essential part of this classroom respect that helps support risk-taking, which in turn brings out the best in our student writers. And, though important for all students, this may be the crucial step needed for sustaining and growing connections with students who have experienced trauma.

Discourse Review: Restorative Conversations

Here are the important review points for establishing the concept of *namaste* as the basis of a respect agreement and foundation for your writing workshop. And here are reminders of the core issues of the PQS protocol for responding to writing. First, the word *namaste* carries, most of all, a sense of reverence for the basic personhood of the other as an individual. It is a request and a reminder to place the intention of kindness in all of our classroom interactions. Ongoing in life, there are choices of how to relate to another person. Usually, if we are sufficiently aware, we can see that one choice may be more kind than another. Here we are practicing and teaching ourselves to make the kind choice.

Students who have experienced trauma sometimes do not hear teacher instructions the first time because the student is particularly noticing the tone or physical gestures. Being sure to pair up our tone and gestures with a respectful discourse is important. Providing a collaborative dialogic environment that allows for student questions and includes opportunity for

pair sharing of understandings can also be important to helping these students enter the action.

Similarly, in utilizing the PQS protocol, it is important to achieve consistency. When we inadvertently start with suggestions, or when we offer minimal positive noticing and move instead to extensive suggestion-making, that is rightly received as negative judgment by the writer.

Common Missteps: Supportive Coaching Moves

I have been in classrooms where students have difficulty with the first step of noticing and remembering something positive from a writing piece. I will then step in and model, showing how I do this. I will also utilize other strong students in the room—invite them into the group for a short time so that they can show how to do this part. I remind the students that we are practicing to do this—that it is okay to have difficulty, but that, in time, we will have sharpened our ability to notice and remember from another’s piece of writing.

Later, after working together for a bit, students may fall into a rut with their positive suggestions so that they become repetitious. “Add more detail” is a suggestion that first of all must be attached to a specific place in the writing. It is the task of the person making that suggestion to say, “Add more detail . . .,” and to then add “where” in the piece they recommend detail be added. Even so, if one craft step becomes what students are responding to, the teacher can intervene and model, for the whole class or for one writing circle group, other types of suggestions the teacher would make as a responder. Further, the teacher can remind students to consider noticing positively, and/or to make suggestions about, the latest craft step that the teacher has taught in a mini lesson.

Finally, students sometimes fall into a type of questioning that is actually negative comment. Either “Why did you write it that way?” or “Why are you writing about that?” could be useful questions at a certain point perhaps, but more often among novice PQS responders, they are accidental negative attacks. One way to help students adjust out of this is to state for them, “Let’s move away from the ‘why’ questions we have been asking into ‘how’ or ‘what’ questions.”

“How would you like readers to feel?” Or, simply, “What happened after that part happened?” can be much more productive questions.

It is not the job of students to automatically know how to do these things. Rather, it is the job of students to risk-take and try out these new practices. Then it is the job of the teacher to diagnose strengths and weaknesses of the student practice and to respond with further coaching to help the students move forward.

Reflection on Audrey and Michael

We may wish that students automatically felt safe in our classrooms, but that is often not the case. Others of us may think the students need to get tough because “life is not a bowl of cherries.” But actually, we ourselves are somewhat able to be tough in dealing with life’s challenges only because of the people in our lives who treated us with kindness at key moments in the past. Kindness and love build resilience—harshness harms the development of resilience. And only when we are direct about our caring do students realize they are safe to take risks in our presence.

Appendix A

Guidesheets for Writing Circles: Guide Sheet/Record Sheet for Writing Circles

Leader/Timekeeper: (Name)

(Makes sure everyone is ready. Reminds people to use PQS response protocol—and makes sure they respond with “remember” and “like” *first*. Asks writer to read their piece aloud. After the writer finishes reading, the leader says, “Thank you. Please read it again.” Then the leader invites responders to respond (immediately after hearing the second reading for younger students or, for older students, after they write a PQS note.)

- 1) First Writer: (Name, piece of writing)
- 2) Second Writer: (Name, piece of writing)

Guidelines:

- a. Writer reads their paper—or key parts of their paper. Writer can explain parts not read. Writer can ask for help with one part if they want.
- b. Responders use the PQS response protocol. (Responders may make “notes” to get ready to respond.)
 - (P) What do you remember? What parts do you like? Where is craft?
 - (Q) What are you curious or confused about? (Questions)
 - (S) Suggestions—your one or two *best* suggestions.

Comments on Writing Circle: Reflecting on Writing Circle Time: (Put this in your notebook/journal or on a sheet your teacher provides.)

- 1) What happened in writing circle, and also the best part?
- 2) What did I learn?
- 3) Ideas for improving writing circle?

Response Sheet for Writing Circles

Leader/Timekeeper reads aloud each category (P, Q, and S) to invite responders to join the conversation for each of the three steps (or, with older students, the leader may read each category twice—once so responders can write their response note, and once so responders can present their responses—aloud to the writer—after writing their response notes).

- 1) **Positive Response:** What do you remember best from this piece? What parts do you like best, and why? What is most interesting to you about this piece? What craft techniques or steps do you see being used by the writer?
- 2) **Questions:** What are you curious about in relation to the topic of this paper? What are you confused about? What would you like to know?
- 3) **Suggestions:** Based on what you think is the writer's purpose, what are your *best one or two suggestions*, especially for what the writer should:
 - **Add** to the piece? Does it need a new section, or is there a part that should be made longer?
 - **Take out** of the piece? Is a part unnecessary or repeated?
 - **Or change?** Is there a part that could be revised with a recommended craft step to improve it?