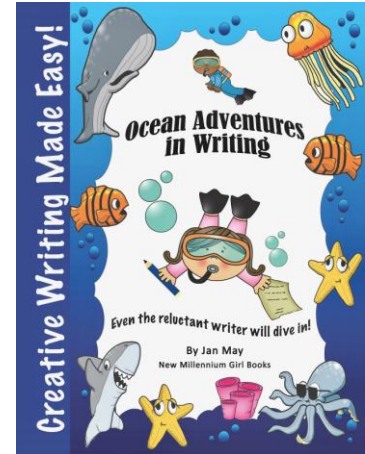


Review of Jan May's Ocean Adventures Creative Writing Curriculum

by Sally Matheny



Do you have a young, reluctant writer in your home? I do. My fourth-grader freezes over when he's required to write. He hates it. Which is why I was eager to try out Jan May's curriculum, *Ocean Adventures in Creative Writing*. Clearly stated on the front cover is the statement, "Even the reluctant writer will dive in!"

Not only did I plan to get my reluctant writer's toes in the water, but I also hoped the curriculum would splash enthusiasm into a homeschool co-op class I was teaching.

The students ranged in ages from eight to twelve. Only a third of the class professed to enjoy writing. Here are a few of their comments upon completion of the class:

I liked writing a story about my ocean adventure. I liked being able to choose my own animal instead of being assigned one. – Meredith (10)

I've never been able to write this much in one week before. I never wanted to write this much before this class. – Samuel (8)

I loved how fun it was. I liked the ocean theme. [The lessons] were easy to understand. – Zac (10)

What makes this curriculum so likable to students?

Freedom

- to research an own ocean animal of their own choosing
- to create their own ocean community setting
- to devise their own characters and plot
- to focus on the story more than grammar and punctuation

Bite-Sized Lessons

- Character, Setting, and Plot

- Writing beginnings, middles, and endings
- Spicing up your story
- Editing

Fun Factor

- Opportunities to interact with friends
- Additional art and craft ideas
- Spotlight presentation at the end

What makes this curriculum attractive to teachers?

Easy

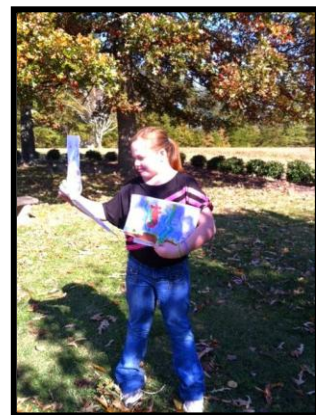
- Easy to follow teacher notes
- Clear and concise worksheets for students
- Printables of twenty ocean animals and handwriting paper with an ocean-themed border

Adaptable

- Easily incorporated into other school subjects
- Written primarily for ages 8-12, it is great for use by students of various ages, within the same setting
- For students at various writing skill levels

The curriculum offers ten lesson plans before students present their final story. Jan May offers additional ideas that could easily stretch this curriculum over several months, if desired.

A “spotlight theatre” is suggested for the culminating project where students present their stories. However, my class opted for a sunlight theatre outside.



The reluctant writers may not be in the deep waters of writing yet, but they sure enjoyed wading out past their knees.

After presenting their stories, several students experienced the exhilaration of riding their first wave. That's a great feeling and usually it prompts a desire to do it again!

If your students are dreading writing, consider sending them a fun, tropical breeze with the *Ocean Adventures Creative Writing* program.