What Can I Do in My Classroom?

Suggestions for the Classroom Writer’s Workshop paraphrased from Ralph Fletcher’s *Boy Writers*

* Look at your classroom through the eyes of your boys. What is and isn’t working for them?
* Consider including high-interest stories your boys might connect with - i.e. Gary Paulsen, Edgar Allan Poe, Jon Sciezcka, Dav Pilkey.
* Make sure the boys have real and varied audiences for their writing. Sharing and celebrating should not be a rare occurrence but a regular event in the classroom.
* Don’t automatically outlaw stories with weapons.
* Think about language adults use to talk about the issue of violence. Revisit all the cut-and-dried rules about what students are allowed to include in their writing. Bring kids into the dialogue. The best classroom rules evolve from a discussion in which every student, plus the teacher, has a voice.
* Try not to judge students by what they write. Accept it, and help them make the writing better.
* Look for the humour underneath the violence. Much violent writing may actually be humor in disguise.
* Take your boys’ humor seriously. Look for the intelligence behind the apparent silliness.
* Try using new mental language for your thinking about challenging writing. Instead of “humour”, think “voice”. Instead of “silly”, think “satire”.

“I don’t suggest we completely revamp our writing classrooms so they are hand-tailored to fit the needs, styles, and whims of our boys – especially not at the expense of the girls. Rather, let’s create the kind of classroom where every boy who enters can say to himself: *This is a place where I can write, a place where I can bring all of myself to my writing.”* (p. 25)

References

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