



A Writing Recipe from the Kitchen of Mrs. Tom: **I Always Like Summer Best**

**Perfect for:**

- End of the year as students begin dreaming about summer.
- Any time you want students to write about seasons or activities they love best (i.e. I Always Like Skiing the Best).
- Writing about a favorite season in a favorite place (i.e. summer in Knoxville, Tennessee).
- Reflecting about a favorite field trip experience (i.e. I Always Like the Santa Barbara Zoo the Best).

**Ingredients:**

- Copies of “Knoxville, Tennessee” by Nikki Giovanni. Google the title and you’ll find it on the web quick.

NOTE: This is an entry level copy change poem. Since the structure and writing aren’t too challenging, this is a good one for learning the process behind the piece. Then, when students do more challenging pieces, they can concentrate on creating fabulous writing instead of process procedures.

I’m including two versions of the recipe – one without commentary and one with all my saucy comments – kinda like microwave and conventional oven directions – pick the one you have time for today. *Bon appawriting!*

**Microwave Instructions:**

1. Read poem aloud.
2. Read a sample copy change piece aloud (mine is included at the end of this handout if you’d like to use it).
3. Brainstorm a list of things kids like to do in your community during the summer.
4. Give students writing instructions:
  - a. Write a copy change of “Knoxville, Tennessee” describing what you love about summer.
  - b. Begin your poem with –

*I always like summer best.*



*You can...*

*and...*

*and...*

- c. Create your own last line or end with *I always like summer best*.
5. Do a quickwrite. If you don't know what this is, refer to #5 in the long-version instructions.
6. When writers are done (or even if they aren't), ask them to underline one golden line in their piece, but keep it top secret.
7. Share with a partner by doing SAYBACK response (see #7 in the long-version instructions, if needed).
8. Do whole group sharing. Students can share individually, or do SNAKE SHARE (see #8 below for more details, if needed) with everyone's golden lines.
9. Optional: Type up everyone's golden lines so you have one giant class poem!

### **Conventional Oven Instructions:**

#### **1. Read poem aloud.**

I like to give students their own copy of the poem. This way they can highlight their favorite lines, and refer back to it when they write their own versions of the poem. I'd read it two times. You read it all the way through the first time. Then, I would give students one line each and they can read it aloud a second time. Or, students pick their favorite line (I call this a golden line) and then go around the room sharing. Tell them it doesn't matter if lots of people have the same line. If they do, have a short conversation about why lots of people picked a similar line. Was it the content? Was it something the writer did to get the reader's attention?

#### **2. Read a sample copy change piece aloud (mine is included at the end of this handout if you'd like to use it).**

After reading the sample (it's even better if you write your own!), note that the poem begins with *I always like summer best*. *You can...and...and...and...* It's a list with lots of ands.

#### **3. Brainstorm a list of things kids like to do in your community during the summer (this will vary if you've selected a different topic).**



#### 4. Give students writing instructions:

a. Write a copy change of “Knoxville, Tennessee” describing what you love about summer.

b. Begin your poem with –

*I always like summer*

*Best*

*You can...*

*and...*

*and...*

c. Create your own last line or end with *I always like summer best*.

Some students may NOT love summer best. That’s fine. Encourage them to write about winter or they could also do *I always like summer **least!*** (Or, see other writing options in the **PERFECT FOR** section above.)

#### 5. Do a quickwrite.

a. Here’s a quick **overview** of a Quick Write: Write for about 12 minutes without stopping or talking. Bam. Done fast. Read below for the HOW and WHY of Quick Writes.

b. **Writing fast** for a short period of time helps writers outrun the inner voice that says, “You can’t write. You are bad at this!” Tell your students this very thing! Continue with, “We’re in this together. We don’t have time to listen to that nasty voice. Let’s go for it!”

c. **Write for about 12 minutes.** I always say something like, “Scientists have determined that the perfect amount of time for this piece is 12 minutes and 13 seconds.” The accuracy of that data is a lie, but honestly, time’s up when I finish writing my piece! Often, I give students a one minute warning – and then ask, “Does anyone need just a bit more time?” Then, I tack on another minute.



d. I always **write with my students**, and drumroll, I hope you do, too. On days when I was just too tired, I might have written a grocery list, but I always wrote something. It will change everything. Promise.

e. Keep **pen/pencil/keyboard moving** the entire time.

f. If writers get **stuck**, write **I'm stuck I'm stuck I'm stuck** until they aren't anymore. Cross that part out later.

g. **Don't worry** about spelling.

h. Then, I say, "Any last minute questions? Ready? Go!"

h. NO talking or getting up or asking questions once teacher is seated and writing.

I slowly get to a writing spot (often strategically near someone I know will be struggling or disrupting) and I say, "Darlings, when my pen hits the paper, it will be silent in here cuz I've got some hard thinking to do in the next 12 minutes and 13 seconds! I need to think!" (Of course, someone will need to barf or the principal will make an announcement at that very moment, but I digress!) Show the kids that nothing is more important in that moment than writing.

"Oh...Mrs. Tom, you're so mean. I really can't ask another question?" Nope. Interruptions ruin the writing mojo. And I say, "Trust yourself as a writer. You can answer your own questions...at least for the next 12 minutes and 13 seconds."

**6. When writers are done (or even if they aren't), ask them to underline one golden line in their pieces, but keep it top secret.**

**7. Share with a partner by doing SAYBACK response.**

In SAYBACK, writer reads his/her piece ALOUD and listener says back what they hear as a golden line – with the exact same wording in the writer's piece. It's fun to see if the writer and listener picked the same golden line! The listener might



want to ask, “What golden line did you pick?” That’s it. No suggestions. No corrections. Celebrate what’s great and move on.

And don’t just switch papers and READ the writer’s piece. Listen to the writer read his/her piece. The writer needs to feel and hear the sound of his/her words out loud. This is one of the best ways to notice what’s working and/or not working in the piece.

**8. Do whole group sharing. Students can share individually, or do SNAKE SHARE with everyone’s golden lines.**

If everyone wrote about a similar topic, SNAKE SHARE is a fun and fast way to give every writer a chance to share. Every student picks one golden line from their piece. Then, pick a starting person and an ending person in whatever way you like. Next, point to everyone else in the class (kinda connecting the start and end person like a big ole snake – if you have a golden line, include yourself in the snake, too!). The starting person reads **I always like summer best. You can...**plus his/her golden line...and then everyone just reads their line when it’s their turn so the piece sounds like one giant poem. This is a technique I recycle a lot!

If time permits, you can also have individuals read their entire piece and then do SAYBACK response, but you give the response, or the writer calls on students for their response. If you’re feeling daring, note what the writer DID to make listeners pay attention to the line. You can even make up a name for the technique as a class.

Say to the writer who is sharing, “Hey, that thing you did in your golden line...you could do that again in another piece. You’re already doing that really well.”

Then, tell the rest of your class, “Hey, you can borrow Bob’s golden line idea and do that in your own writing, too. I might do it in my next piece! Wowza, good writing is contagious!”

**9. Optional: Type up everyone’s golden lines so you have one giant class poem!**

And then if you really want to go crazy, give students a copy. Have them secretly underline a golden line that isn’t their own (often, I don’t put names after lines so it’s a



little bit anonymous!). SNAKE SHARE just like you did in #8 above. If there are repeated lines, have a discussion. What did the writer do to get your attention? Could you do that in your own writing, too?

Isn't it amazing how deep you can go with one easy peasy piece? It's a process you can repeat over and over again (without having to reteach it over and over again) with writing that keeps increasing in difficulty. Oh la la!



### **I Like Summer Best**

I always like summer best.

You can sleep late

and stay in PJ's until noon

and eat BBQ chicken

and peaches dripping with juice

and you can ride big waves,

build sand castles,

and get burgers on the way home.

You can stay up late playing cards,

laughing and laughing

until tears run down your face.

You can relax on the porch,

knowing there's no homework.

You can hike in the mountains,

fly to see friends in Oregon

and still have time to relax

before school starts again.

I always like summer best!

*Written by Lorrie Tom under the influence of Nikki Giovanni's "Knoxville, Tennessee."*