

WRITING RIGHT FROM THE START: THE PRIMARY WRITING WORKSHOP

GENERAL WORKSHOP

WHY BOOK MAKING MAKES SENSE FOR THE YOUNGEST WRITERS

Making Books . . .

is developmentally appropriate. Young children love to make things and they bring an easy sense of play to making things that is critical to development. The verb *make*, as in “let’s make books” is a much more inclusive verb than *write* for young children as it hints at all the things one might do to make a book.

helps children do bigger work and develop stamina for writing. Learning to face down blank pages and a ticking clock is the central reality of a writer’s work, and book making creates a developmentally appropriate context in which children come to understand this kind of work. Multiple pages invite children to stay with writing for longer stretches of time, and staying with it builds stamina.

helps children live like writers when they aren’t writing. The only work some children know in school is work that is always quickly finished. These children never experience the creative urgency that comes from leaving something unfinished, knowing they’ll return to work on it later. To learn what it’s like for a project to “live on” in their thinking, even when they’re not working on it, children need to engage in work that lasts more than one day, more than one sitting.

makes the “reading like writers” connection so clear. Young children are surrounded by picture books at school, so it makes sense that their writing should match the kind of texts they know best. And when they see themselves as people who make picture books too, people just like Mo Willems and Marla Frazee, young children notice and pick up all kinds of ideas for writing and illustrating from the books adults read to them.

helps children begin to understand composition and decision making. Making a book from start to finish is a process of constant decision making. *What will I write about? What should come first? How should I draw it? Does this look the way I want it? Etc. etc.* These decisions are given over to children as they make books, and the experience of making so many decisions over time nurtures compositional development in so many important ways.

helps children begin to understand genre, purpose and audience. A sense of genre gives writers *vision* for writing: *I’m writing a memoir, an op-ed piece, a movie review.* Writers have a sense of what the writing will be – in terms of genre – when it’s finished. Young children start out with the broad vision of making picture books, but they soon begin to understand the subtle nuances of genre — that there are different kinds of writing inside picture books that do different kinds of work in the world of writing.

helps children believe in the future of finished work: Writers are called on to believe in a finished product that will exist only if they “act and act strategically” (Peter Johnston’s words) to bring it about. Writers must have the will to go from *nothing* to *something*, and with enough experience making books, children come to have faith in a future of writing that doesn’t yet exist.

WHAT IS WRITING WORKSHOP?

Time

A time (as much as possible) set aside each day when students make books. Some students will make more books during the year than others, but the goal is to have students work daily as writers and illustrators so they get experience with all parts of the process and develop the stamina for writing.

Whole class teaching

During the writing workshop there is always some whole class teaching that typically lasts from ten to fifteen minutes. The teaching may be teacher directed, or it may be developed through inquiry with students. The day-to-day teaching is part of a larger unit of study that lasts anywhere from one week to five or six weeks. During each unit of study, students make books "under the influence" of the study, trying whatever genre, craft or process lessons make sense for them in their own writing and illustrating.

Work on writing

After the whole class teaching each day, students work independently making books for thirty-five to forty-five minutes.

Writing conferences

While students are making books, the teacher is having writing conferences with individual students about their work. Each conference typically lasts about 5-7 minutes and the teacher typically has 4-6 conferences a day.

Inquiry

Sometimes, as part of a unit of study, students use their writing workshop time to engage in inquiry – most often reading and studying the kind of writing they are planning to do themselves. These inquiries generate important curriculum that students then use to help them make books.

Talk about writing

Each day's writing workshop ends with a time for sharing from the day's work - usually this lasts from 5-10 minutes. Typically, the teacher asks a few students to share with the whole class the smart strategies they've used in their work. The time may also be used for small pairs or groups of students to share from their on-going work on their books.

What Matters Most in the Teaching of Writing?

- Time
- Meaningful work
- Talk
- Expectation
- Vision
- Teaching

TIPS FOR LAUNCHING CHILDREN INTO BOOK MAKING

- Be careful not to have too many directions for how to go about making books in writing workshop when you first get started. If you do, children will quickly become dependent on you to tell them what they need to do.
- Remember: most children will do *something* if they have paper and markers in hand, and most others will follow along. It's really not difficult to get them started with very little direction.
- The first few weeks, the main goal is for children to become independent as book makers and to develop stamina. If you can attain this goal, you'll make a great space for your teaching for the rest of the year.
- Those first few weeks, whatever children are doing with the paper and markers, if they are doing it independently and for a long time, you can value it because that's the goal.
- All you really need to get started are pre-stapled books (4-5 pages), a timer, tools available for drawing and writing (markers, crayons, pencils) and places in the room for children to work..
- Show the children how the timer works and explain that writing workshop is a *time* each day, not a *task* to be completed. Explain that each day, they will work at book making until the timer goes off.
- Right from the start, highlight *long work* on books. Hint at how long it might take children to make a single book (many days). Show them books by other children that clearly took a long time to make. Create a culture where *long work* is celebrated.
- Those first few days, talk a lot about the people who make books: professional authors and illustrators, the teacher, and other children. Show children a developmental range of writing and illustrating done by other children, as well as books made by you and professional authors and illustrators. Consider having books made by children available and displayed in the room so it looks like a place where approximations are valued.
- During share and reflection time, talk a lot about what children are writing about. They will get lots of ideas from each other and many of them will likely write about the same things.
- Take as many notes as you can during those first few weeks as you observe children and see what they know already about writing and illustrating.

WRITING WORKSHOP ACROSS THE YEAR

Before children arrive at school...

- Find a big, predictable block of time in the schedule for writer's workshop
- Blank, unlined books are pre-made and ready to go (5-6 pages)
- Timer
- Places to work throughout the room
- Tools out and available (markers, colored pencils, crayons, pencils, ABC charts)

The first few weeks of school...

- Choice in writing is absolutely critical for children to take ownership and become independent in this work.
- Emphasize stamina and long work on books.
- Build a concept of authorship from an author-illustrator study.
- Management and routine grow from the talk about the work children are doing every day.

Structures that support the work across the year...

- Routine, routine, routine
- Anchor charts to revisit as needed – for example:
 - *Workshop routines *Writing strategies
 - *Finished book chart *Study charts
- Hanging file folders to store students' books
- Word study at times *other* than writing workshop
- "Not afraid of my words" interactive talk
- Predictable pattern to studies

Across the day, surround the writing workshop with teaching about how the language system works...

- *daily letter-sound-word study

- *a room saturated with environmental print

- *daily read aloud (more than one when possible)

- *games involving language exploration

- *shared and interactive writing

- *content area writing

- *demonstrations (teacher writing in front of children)

- *maintenance writing (signing in, signing up, notes, observations, signs, etc.)

- *language songs

- *language fascination

Young writers need lots of one-on-one teaching in the form of writing conferences:

- Understandings about process
- Understandings about composition (genre, organization, purpose, etc.)
- Conventions (letter formation, print orientation, spacing, spelling, punctuation, etc.)
- Techniques for crafting writing
- Understandings about self as writer

A KEY INSTRUCTIONAL DECISION

If children *initiate* making books on their own, as a general rule adults do not write for them (dictation) or after them (transcription). Why?

- This kind of assistance is very far removed from a beginning writer's zone of proximal development.
 - If teachers are writing for children, then children aren't getting any experience which will allow them to develop the ability to transcribe on their own.
 - Children need to believe in their own abilities and understand and accept their own approximations (adults need to accept them too).
 - Many children become frustrated by conventional print in their books because it's beyond their reading ability.
 - If an adult needs a transcription to remember a child's approximations, s/he can write the transcription somewhere other than the child's book (in the conferring notes, for example).
-

Children do benefit from seeing an adult turn "talk into print," so the teacher needs to *initiate* writing on a regular basis so s/he can demonstrate this. For example:

- writing observations of something the class has observed
- writing ideas for something the class is brainstorming
- inviting children to co-author a book the teacher wants to write
- recording class news and announcement
- writing an account of something the class has experienced together
- making a list of things needed to complete a project

FINISHING EXPECTATIONS FOR THE YOUNGEST WRITERS

Understanding what it means to be finished is an important part of understanding the *process* of writing. Begin with simple expectations for finishing so all writers can be successful:

I know I'm finished when...

- all of my inside pages are full of writing and illustrations.
- I have illustrated the cover.
- I have placed my name and a date stamp on the front of my book.
- I have read through my whole book myself and shared it with a friend.

Later, as you teach into these ideas and children develop as writers, you may add expectations. For example:

I know I'm finished when...

- all of my pages are about the same idea.
- all of my illustrations match my words.
- I can tell you what kind of book I've made.
- I have used spacing between my words.
- I can read the words I've written.
- I have used punctuation in my book.
- I have checked the spelling of high frequency words.

Note: Make sure your expectations are developmentally appropriate for children. Different children may need different finishing expectations.

ASSESSMENT

Developing Process Habits of Mind With Our Youngest Writers

Children learn about writing as a process by...

writing regularly

talking (and listening to others talk) about process in conferences and share times

accounting for process in their finished work

experiencing teaching that comes from process

studying process with intention (units of study in process)

Questions that help children tell their stories of process

- Where did you get the idea for this book?
- Is this the first time you've written about this topic?
- How long have you been working on this?
- How far along are you with this book?
- Do you write first or illustrate first?
- What are your plans for continued work on your book?
- Do you know how the whole book will go, or are you thinking of it as you make it?
- Have you made any interesting decisions about your words or illustrations?
- Why did you decide to write/illustrate this part this way?
- Why did you decide to add this part? Change this part? Take this part away?
- Have you thought about what you might do with this book once it's finished?
- How does this book fit with all the other things you've written?

Whole class process studies that make sense for primary writers

- How and where writers and illustrators get ideas for writing and illustrating
- Ways to gather ideas for writing and illustrating out in the world (beginning notebooks)
- Different ways to plan ahead for writing and illustrating
- How to work with a peer on writing and illustrating (conferences and collaborations)
- How writers and illustrators revise (words and illustrations)
- Strategies for proofreading

Remember: The writing process is the story you tell *after* you've written!

Four Lenses for Assessment

- Looking closely at individual pieces of writing
- Watching and listening as children are engaged in the process
- Asking children to be articulate about process
- Looking across the work of a single child over time

Dimensions of Composition Development

Essential Understandings About Texts

- Writers focus on a topic when they compose a text.
- The ideas in a text should be organized in logical ways.
- The language in written texts has been crafted in particular ways.
- The symbols in texts (words and illustrations) hold consistent meaning over time.
- Different publishing formats have particular features writers use to make meaning.
- Different kinds of writing in the world serve different purposes for different audiences, and have features in common which readers expect.
- Writers use both illustrations (graphics and layout) and written text to make meaning.

Essential Understandings About Process

- Writers are purposeful and engage in a continuous process of decision making as they compose a text.
- Writers make changes to clarify meaning, enhance style, make texts more readable, etc.
- Writers think ahead as they compose, keeping the text as a whole in mind.
- Writers often use crafting techniques to make their texts more engaging for readers.
- Writers must stick to the task of writing to see a text through to completion (stamina).
- Writers must be problem-solvers.

Essential Understandings About What It Means To Be A Writer

- Writers choose topics which are meaningful (or find meaning in their assigned topics) and write for purposeful reasons.
- Writing that is made public will be read, and writers are often mindful of potential readers as they compose.
- Composing often helps writers find new meaning in the process of expressing existing meaning.
- Writers often find aspects of composing to be very challenging.
- Over time, writers come to know themselves in this particular way (as writers) based on their experiences.
- Writers are responsible for the words they put into the world.

ASSESSING A CHILD'S COMPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

Assessment Lenses	Essential Understandings About Texts
Is the child's book <i>about</i> something?	Writers focus on a topic when they compose a text.
How has the child organized this book? What is the connection between ideas?	The ideas in a text should be organized in logical ways.
When the child reads the book, does it sound like a book?	The language in written texts has been crafted in particular ways.
Does the child read the book in basically the same way over time?	The symbols in texts (words and illustrations) hold consistent meaning over time.
Is the child making the book <i>in the manner of</i> other picture books he's seen?	Different publishing formats have particular features writers use to making meaning.
What does this book show the child understands about genre?	Different kinds of writing in the world serve different purposes for different audiences, and have features in common that readers expect.
How is the child representing meaning in this book?	Writers use both illustrations (graphics and layout) and written text to make meaning.

Assessment Lenses	Essential Understandings About Process
Is the child intentional about what she is representing on the page?	Writers are purposeful and engage in a continuous process of decision making as they compose a text.
Does the child engage in revision while composing the picture book?	Writers make changes to clarify meaning, enhance style, make texts more readable, etc.
Is there any evidence the child is thinking ahead about what she'll write next?	Writers think ahead as they compose, keeping the text as a whole in mind.
Has the child made any intentional crafting decisions in the book?	Writers often use crafting techniques to make their texts more engaging for readers.
How long has the child worked on this book? In one sitting? Over time?	Writers must stick to the task of writing to see a text through to completion (stamina).
Does the child exhibit a willingness to solve problems as she writes?	Writers must be problem-solvers.

ASSESSING A CHILD'S COMPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

Assessment Lenses	Essential Understandings About What It Means To Be A Writer
How (and why) has the child decided to write this book?	Writers choose topics which are meaningful (or find meaning in their assigned topics) and write for purposeful reasons.
How interested is the child in an audience's response to the book?	Writing that is made public will be read, and writers are often mindful of potential readers as they compose.
Has the child composed in a way that led him to new meaning as he was writing?	Composing often helps writers find new meaning in the process of expressing existing meaning.
Can I see in this book that the child has been willing to take compositional risks?	Writers often find aspects of composing to be very challenging.
As I interact with this child around this book, does it seem he has a sense of self as a writer? A sense of history?	Over time, writers come to know themselves in this particular way (as writers) based on their experiences.
Does the child show he understands his powerful position as author of this book?	Writers are responsible for the words they put into the world.

Conferring: The Talk That Fills Our Classrooms

❖ Interview the writer

- *Have the writer tell you what she is doing and where she is in the process.
- *You might begin the conference by asking, "Tell me about..."
- *You might build the interview off past conferences.
- *Try to avoid opening with yes/no questions.

❖ Keep the tone positive (pep talk, not poop talk)

- *Try to leave children with energy for next steps in writing.
- *Be specific about what children are doing well.
- *Don't be afraid to show interest in children's ideas and thinking.
- *Keep the tone helpful and conversational.

❖ Decide to teach the writer something useful for him going forward

- *Draw on everything you know about the writer to make a decision.
- *Think about what would stretch the child's understandings just a little (zone of proximal development).
- *Decide on something that will nudge the child toward your curriculum goals.
- *Decide based on what the child is doing at the time.
- *Remember, you can't teach everything in one conference.

❖ Teach the writer something

- *Teach strategies, conventions, techniques and understandings which will outlive a single piece of writing.
- *You might draw lessons from your own writing life as you teach.
- *When it makes sense, refer to literature the class has shared, a conversation the class has had, or the work of another student to exemplify your teaching point.

❖ Make a record of the conference

- *Note the basic content of the teaching.
- *Note any other information you learned about the writer that might be helpful in the future.
- *Find a system for these notes that is efficient and feels comfortable to you.
- *You may review notes for share time or mini lesson ideas.
- *Review notes regularly for student assessment.

❖ Share regularly from conferences

- *Use the last 5-10 minutes of writing workshop to share interesting process stories from your conferences that day.
- *Teach children to tell their stories of process in a narrative way.
- *Encourage children to make connections with other writers' processes as you share (i.e. "I do it that way too!" or "I do just the opposite." Etc.)

Word Making Development

Below is a general description of the typical kinds of development you will see as children learn to make/spell words. This development is not always linear, some children may never use some written forms, and often children will utilize different written forms at the same time.

- **Pictures but no words.** The marks on the page may be indistinguishable. When asked, the child says the marks represent a picture of something, but that there are no words on the page.
- **Pictures and words.** These marks may also be indistinguishable, but when asked, the child distinguishes between which marks are the picture and which marks are the words.
- **Scribble Writing.** Children see adults writing quickly and try to do the same thing by making linear, scribble like lines across the page. Children sometimes do this very early on, and sometimes they use scribble writing later on as a placeholder for words even when they have more letter-sound knowledge. This form of writing often looks like “mountains and valleys.”
- **Mock Letters/Letter Like Forms.** Children experiment with letters by making forms that look like letters and have the features of letters — loops, tails, humps, etc. — but (for the most part) aren’t actual letters.
- **Random Strings of Letters.** Once children are able to form multiple letters, they will often make words with letters they know how to write, even though the letters don’t correspond to the sounds in the words they are writing. It’s important to note that sometimes what appear to be random strings of letters are not. Children are actually writing letters for the sounds they hear, but the spellings are still so approximated they appear to be random.
- **Beginning Phonetic Spelling.** Children apply a growing knowledge of letters and sounds to approximate spellings, usually starting with initial letter sounds, then ending sounds, medial consonants and vowels.
- **Mixed Phonetic and Sight Spelling.** Children combine sounding out with a growing visual memory of how words are spelled, and their texts become increasingly filled with more and more conventional spellings. Transcription becomes increasingly fluent as spelling becomes more automatic.

Composition Dimension: Consistency of Meaning

Developmentally, the way a child reads a book will typically change some with each reading. The changes happen because most young children don't have enough conventional print to carry the message, so they must rely on illustrations and memory for each new reading.

When children reread their books in a different way, they are often making changes and adding details which make the books more interesting or easier to understand. Try not to pin down a child's exact meaning in a book too quickly and miss out on these often richer readings.

Eventually, the meanings in children's books will become more and more consistent as their spellings become more accurate and they are able to hold the meanings more efficiently with words.

Here are some descriptions of typical development you will see as children are learning to keep their meanings consistent. Think about ways you might help children move forward in their development in this composition dimension.

- **Illustration changes in the moment.** A very young child might start off drawing a dinosaur, change it to a dog halfway through, and when it's finished it's a picture of a daddy. The illustration literally changes as it's being composed and continues to change with each reading.
- **Meaning changes with each reading.** The meaning of the child's book changes with each reading. One time the book is about a family, the next time it's about playing outside, and the next time something else.
- **The book is about the same topic but the details change.** The child's book is always about his or her family, but the exact people or what the family is doing changes from reading to reading.
- **The book is about the same topic and many of the details stay the same.** The meaning of the child's book stays basically the same with each reading, but some of the details change or new details are added.
- **The child reads the book the same way each time the day it's composed, but the words change on subsequent days.** This often happens as words start to hold more and more of the meaning, but the spellings are still very approximated. The child forgets the logic of his spelling approximations over time and struggles to reread and recapture his meaning.
- **The child reads the book the same way from day to day.** This usually occurs when a child has mostly near-accurate spelling carrying the message.

Staying On Topic: What is your book about?

Sometimes beginning writers don't realize each page of a book should be about the same thing or tell the same story. You will see quite a range of understandings like the ones described below related to this important composition dimension:

- **The child does not state a topic.**

Teacher: "What is your book about."

Child: "I don't know."

- **The child's book is on topic, but she doesn't state the topic.** For example, a child's book is all about animals, but when asked what the book is about, she doesn't say or realize it's about animals. The writer simply may not be familiar with the question, "What is your book about?"
- **The child states a topic, but the book isn't on that topic.** For example, the child says his book is about snakes, but there are no snakes in the book.
- **The child uses the first page as the topic.** The child states the topic by telling about the first page, but the rest of the book isn't about that. For example, the child says his book is about snakes, but only the first page is about snakes. The rest of the book is about other animals or other things.
- **The child makes on-the-spot connections.** The child's book isn't on a topic, but when she reads the book to the class she creates a story or makes a list book by connecting unrelated objects or events from the pictures.
- **The child states the topic by telling about each page.** For example, the child says, "This book is about dogs and my mom and the park and rainbows."
- **The child uses a very general topic to summarize across pages.** For example, when asked what a book is about, the child thinks for a bit and says, "everything." This shows the child understands his book should be focused on one idea, even if he has written his book with no specific topic in mind.
- **Child is somewhat on topic.** Child states the topic for the book, and some of the pages are on that topic, but some are not.
- **Child is on topic.** Child states the topic of the book and each of the pages are connected to the stated topic.

Units of Study

UNITS OF STUDY

Definition

A unit of study is a series of whole class conversations, demonstrations and inquiry on a focused topic. The unit of study may be as short as one week or as long as five or six weeks.

Why units of study?

Because the whole class teaching in a writing workshop is very focused from day to day, we sometimes need to organize this teaching in ways that add up to bigger understandings across time for writers. We don't want our teaching to have a "hit and miss" feel to it with a new writing issue every day. We want to stay with the important issues and give them time to get big in the room.

What kinds of things do we study?

Studies need to be "big" enough that writers at many different places can thrive inside them. Basically, all studies will have something to do with either the *process* of writing or the *products* of writing (or both). These are issues that anyone who will be writing will need to spend time thinking about at some point. Here are examples of types of studies:

Process Studies	Product Studies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Living a writing life, and getting and growing ideas for writing.▪ A writers' work other than writing: research, observation, talk, etc.▪ An overview of the process of writing.▪ Revision.▪ Editing.▪ Using a notebook as a tool to make writing better.▪ How writers have peer conferences.▪ How to get published in the media.▪ Studying our histories as writers.▪ How to co-author with another writer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Genre study: memoir, fiction (of all sorts), commentary, poetry, feature articles, essays, reviews (of all sorts), etc.▪ How to read like writers and see writer's craft everywhere.▪ How writers structure texts in powerful ways.▪ How writers use words or sentences or paragraphs in powerful, crafty ways – i.e. language study.▪ How to make illustrations work with text.▪ Finding mentor authors for our writing.▪ How writers use punctuation in powerful ways as a crafting tool.▪ An overview of the kinds of writing that exist in the world.

Selecting units of study

To decide which units of study to do during the year, consider several factors: state or district curriculum guidelines, your students' past experiences, your students' current needs (from our assessment) and your own passions as teachers. Students will experience some of the same units of study in more than one school year and even in the same school year. The goal is to get more sophisticated with each study.

Goals for studies

At the end of each study we expect to see students produce pieces of writing that are written under the influence of the study. Students should either be very articulate about the aspect of *process* we have been studying and how it influenced the writing; or, in a product study, students should be able to show actual excerpts from their finished pieces of writing that show the influence of the study.

AN EXAMPLE:

A Year of Study in a First Grade Writing Workshop

Over the course of the year, we studied...

*The kinds of things writers make (an overview of the kinds of writing that exist in the world) and how we'll make them in this room (getting started management).

*Where writers get ideas.

*How to read like a writer.

*Finding writing mentors. Donald Crews as a class mentor, then finding our own mentors.

*How to structure texts in interesting ways.

*How to make illustrations work better with the written text.

*How to have better peer conferences.

*Genre study: Literary nonfiction

*How to use punctuation in interesting ways.

*Genre study: Poetry

*How to revise by going back to a piece and adding on.

A BASIC REPERTOIRE OF TEACHING MOVES

As I (Katie) plan for whole class teaching in any kind of study, this is my entire menu of possibilities for how I might go about the teaching:

Inquiry Based Strategies (often unfold over a series of lessons)

- Read (independently or together) just to get a feel for something.
- Read aloud together. Notice together. Turn noticings into specific curriculum.
- Read or look at texts independently (during the workshop or at home). Make notes of noticings. Come back together and turn noticings into specific curriculum.
- Read or look at texts independently with a question or focus in mind(during the workshop or at home). Come back together and turn noticings into specific curriculum.
- Talk about issues of process and develop students' insights into specific curriculum.

Teacher Directed Strategies

- Read aloud together, teacher points out the specific curriculum in the writing (usually an understanding about genre or a crafting technique), explains it, and, if applicable, demonstrates trying it out.
- Demonstrate (model) any aspect of writing as a process (notebook keeping, rehearsing, drafting, revising, editing).
- Share a quote from a writer and develop curriculum from the quote.

*In most any study, I plan for a mix of both inquiry based and teacher directed instruction.

The Predictable Rhythm of *Genre or Craft* Study in the Writing Workshop

*Gather a stack of picture books that are good examples of what you want to study.

*On the launching day, make sure students know what it is you're studying and that they'll be expected to make books *like* the books you are studying.

*Immerse yourselves in reading and talking about the texts you've gathered and what you notice about how they're written. Be sure to highlight the authors' and illustrators' decision making as you talk about texts.

*Study a few of them closely until you've become articulate (and can chart) the main things you're learning about the genre or the particular aspect of craft you're studying.

*Throughout the study, children are making books that should show the influence of the study on their decision making.

(whole-part-whole instruction)

Note: Remember to aim for *depth*, not *coverage* in any study.

The Predictable Rhythm of *Process* Study in the Writing Workshop

We spend time “talking” and “listening” to people who write and we find out how they do what they do.

{Curriculum resources: authors’ notes in books, interviews with writers, books about *how* to write, our own writing process histories}

We chart the strategies and understandings about process that we are learning from writers. We try some of them out.

We finish a piece of writing (in any genre) and are very articulate about the particular aspect of process we have been studying and how it influenced our writing.

Kinds of things we might study:

- Where writers get ideas and how they decide which to pursue.
- Using a notebook as a tool to make our writing better.
- A writer’s work *other* than writing (research, reading, etc.)
- Different ways writers plan before drafting.
- What writers think about during drafting and revision.
- How talking to someone can make our writing better.
- The process of getting something published.
- Dealing with predictable problems (writer’s block, organizing stuff, committing time to writing, etc.)
- Using strategies and tools for editing (proofreading).

Note: Remember that the main way students learn about process is by engaging in writing *often*. The main vehicle for *teaching* about the writing process is share time. Students are recruited each day to talk about the smart process-thinking they are using to get their writing done. In a sense, then, we are always teaching about process whether it is the topic of the study or not.

Deepening Curriculum Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing

Genre

- What kind of writing is this? How is it different than other kinds of writing in the world?
- What *work* does this kind of writing do in the world (topics, audiences, purposes)?
- Why would people want to read this kind of writing?
- Do you know other writing that is like this?
- What do people have to do to get ready to write this kind of thing?
- How long, generally, is this kind of writing? Is it different lengths in different containers?
- What do you notice about how this kind of text is written?

Approach

- What do you imagine the writer knew about how the text would ‘work’ when s/he set out to draft it?
- Has the writer made any decisions that impact the way the entire text is written? For example, used an interesting text structure? Written from a particular point of view? Used the form of one genre to do the work of another?

Craft

- Which parts are particularly good? What’s happening with the writing in these parts?
- How is the text organized? What are the “chunks” of it? How does the text move from one chunk to the next? Does it move through time or through a list of ideas?
- Look closely at the lead and the ending – how does the writer manage these two critical chunks of the text?
- How has the writer focused the piece? What’s included, and what has likely been left out?
- Are there different modes of writing at work in the text (description, exposition, narration, etc.)?
- Does the writer use punctuation in any interesting ways?
- Any insights about how page-break (in picture books) or paragraph-break decisions were made?
- How do graphics, illustrations, layout, font, etc. add to the meaning and the appeal of the piece?
- How does the title of the piece relate to the meaning? How was it likely chosen?

Convention

- Does this text confirm your understandings about written conventions, or might you need to make room for new understandings based on what you see this writer doing?

“Because as fellow writers we realize we’re not reading mere words, a “product”; we understand that we’re reading the end result of another writer’s effort, the sum total of his or her imaginative and editorial decisions, which may have been complex. We know, as perhaps ordinary readers, nonwriters, wouldn’t care

to know, that despite romantic notions of divine inspiration, no story writes itself...the story before us has been consciously, in some cases, painstakingly *written*.” Joyce Carol Oates, *Faith of a Writer*

What have you read that is like what you're trying to write?

Some Genre Study Possibilities that Make Sense for Primary Writers

General Feature Articles: Randy Bomer defines a feature article as something written “to inform readers about something they never realized could be so complex and interesting.” Basically, this definition covers a wide range of nonfiction which is *engaging* to read and is also *informative* and can be about any topic. Magazines, newspapers and internet sites are full of all kinds of feature articles. **Beginning writers will fulfill these intentions in picture books**, and you will find many, many examples of writers and illustrators who fulfill the dual intentions of engaging and informing in picture books. We often call these picture books *literary nonfiction* or *creative nonfiction*. Poetry can also do the work of engaging and informing.

Practical How-To Writing: An article or book that explains how to do or make something, and also tries to convince the reader that it would be an interesting thing to do or make. For second graders, you can find simple, one-page how-to articles in lots of children’s magazines.

ABC Articles and Books: A type of list piece, organized alphabetically, that has almost become its own genre. You might look at all the different genre intentions that can be fulfilled with this kind of article or book, think about the expectations readers have for this structure, and look at the many different ways the alphabet is used to organize texts.

Topical/ Descriptive/ Odes: In these texts the writer is writing about a topic in an engaging way, but *without any clear drive to include factual information*. The purpose seems almost celebratory in the writer’s stance to the topic. The writing is often very list-like and descriptive. It may move through time, as in Cynthia Rylant’s *Night in the Country*, but it’s not telling a story in time. This distinction is one with a lot of gray area around it, especially in terms of what counts as factual information. Easily stacked in the picture book container (but found in articles too), it’s a suitable study all the way through high school because of the range of sophistication found in these kinds of texts.

Memoir: A type of nonfiction where a writer takes a reflective stance in looking back on a particular time in his/her life. Almost always written in first person, memoir may or may not be narrative in mode, and the *sense of distance is key*. Memoir can be found in picture books, chapter books, collections, magazines and sometimes even in newspapers. Sometimes the only way to know for sure whether something is memoir (or just a good piece of fiction that sounds like memoir) is to know from the author whether s/he has taken the memoir stance. Memoir can also be written in the form of poetry.

Slice of Life Writing: Writing in *first* person, writers capture little bits of every day life and write about them – what humor columnists do in the “life” sections of newspapers and magazines. Slice-of-life may be or may contain “small moment” personal narrative, but it doesn’t have to be narrative. Slice-of-life doesn’t have the distance of memoir. People like to

read a good slice of life because they see everyday life reflected in them. Poetry often does the work of slice of life writing.

Reviews (second grade): A review is something written to help a consumer make a decision about purchasing something. Or as Randy Bomer says, it's written "to offer helpful advice to a reader who has some need of advice." There are reviews of books, movies, television shows, new music CD's, video games, restaurants and all kinds of products. They are often (but not always) distinguished by having some kind of rating system the writer uses to make a final evaluation. Reviews are found in magazines, newspapers, and are attached to almost any online store. For beginning writers, toy reviews are a great place to start and are easily accessed from online sites such as Toys-R-Us.

Short Stories of Realistic Fiction: The writer creates a realistic setting and at least one character to be in that setting and then sets a story (movement through time, plot, change) in motion. Found in picture books and short story collections, many children's magazines also publish short realistic fiction. Poetry can do the work of realistic fiction.

General Poetry: For classroom study, I gather anthologies written by single poets (as opposed to collections of poems by many different poets) who are exploring single topics with a collection of poems. This is what I would require students to write – an anthology of poems (at least 5-7 poems) on a chosen topic.

A Few Craft Studies that Make Sense for Primary Writers

- Illustration study
- Punctuation study (how writers use punctuation in interesting ways)
- Text structure study
- Mentor author/illustrator studies
- Word crafting studies

Mugford, S. *Sharks and Dangers of the Deep*
-----*Reptiles and Amphibians*

Literary Nonfiction Book List

Older, J. *Ice Cream*
O'Sullivan, J. *101 Places You Gotta See Before You're 12!*
Patridge, E. *Moon Glowing*
Pfeffer, W. *From Tadpole to Frog*
-----*Wiggling Worms at Work*
Piven, H. *What Athletes Are Made Of*
Prager, E.J. *Sand*
Prap, L. *Why?*
Pratt, K.J. *A Walk In The Rainforest*
Pratt-Serafini, K.J. *Salamander Rain*
Prosek, J. *A Good Day's Fishing*
Richards, J. *A Fruit Is a Suitcase for Seeds*
Riley, L.C. *Elephants Swim*
Rose, D.L. *Into The A, B, Sea*
Ryder, J. *Shark in the Sea*
Ryder, N.L. *In the Wild*
Rylant, C. *The Journey: Stories of Migration*
Sanders, S.R. *Crawdad Creek*
-----*Meeting Trees*
Sayre, A.P. *Trout Are Made of Trees*
-----*Vulture View*
Schaefer, L. *An Island Grows*
Siebert, D. *Cave*
-----*Mississippi*
-----*Mojave*
Stevens, J. & S. Crummel. *Cook-A-Doodle-Do*
Stewart, M. *Under the Snow*
-----*When Rain Falls*
Stockdale, S. *Fabulous Fishes*
Sturges, P. *Bridges Are To Cross*
Thornhill, J. *Before and After: Nature Timescapes*
Troll, R. *Sharkabet: A Sea of Sharks from A-Z*
Wallace, K. *Gentle Giant Octopus*
-----*Think of an Eel*
Ward, J. *Forest Bright/ Forest Night*
Weeks, S. *Without You*
Winer, Y. *Birds Build Nests*
-----*Butterflies Fly*
-----*Frogs Sing Songs*
Winters, K. *Tiger Trail*
Wright-Frierson, V. *A Desert Scrapbook*
Wulfson, D. *Toys!*
-----*The Kid Who Invented the Trampoline*
Yolen, J. *Welcome To The Green House*
-----*Welcome To The Ice House*

-----*Welcome To The Of River Grass*

Literary Nonfiction Crafted as Poetry

Asch, F. and Ted L. *Cactus Poems*
Bulion, L. *Hey There, Stink Bug!*
Florian, D. *Poetrees*
-----*Comets, Stars, the Moon, and Mars*
George, K.O. *Hummingbird's Nest*
Hopkins, L.B. *Incredible Inventions*
Igu, T. *I See the Rhythm*
Johnston, T. *An Old Shell: Poems...Galapagos*
Lewis, J.P. *Monumental Verses*
Lewis, J.P & R.K. Dotlich. *Castles*
Myers, W.D. *Jazz*
Sidman, J. *Ubiquitous*
----- *Dark Emperor & Other Poems of the Night*
-----*Butterfly Eyes*
-----*Song of the Water Boatman*
Yolen, J. *An Egret's Day*
-----*A Mirror to Nature*
-----*Fine Feathered Friends*
-----*Least Things*
-----*Wild Wings*
-----*Sacred Places*
-----*Sea Watch*

Also look for books in these nonfiction series
and by these publishers:

Snapshot•Picture•Library: Fog City Press

Smart Kids: Priddy Books

I Wonder Why: Kingfisher Publications

DK (Dorling Kindersley)

Eye Know

See How They Grow

Eyewitness

DK Readers

First Discovery: Scholastic Reference

Let's Read and Find Out: Harper Collins

QED (UK) or QEB (USA) Publishing

Under the Sea

Green Kids

Awesome Animals

Mighty Machines

Dinosaur Dig

Planet Earth

Machines at Work: Sandy Creek

Crabtree Publishing

Some Common Approaches to Informational Nonfiction

Many picture books and some feature articles will actually use a combination of these approaches to engage and inform readers.

For each approach, I have listed two examples from my own personal library. Showing students more than one example of a particular approach deepens their understanding of it significantly.

There is no need to use the books or magazines I have listed here, however. You'll want to revisit your own school and classroom libraries to see what examples of these approaches you have on hand (in picture books and magazines), and also other approaches you might find that aren't listed here.

- Information is conveyed in a series of questions and answers.
Why? Lila Prapp
How Many Ways Can You Catch a Fly? Steve Jenkins and Robin Page
- Writing about a topic over the course of some natural time period: a day or night, or through months or seasons.
Birdsongs Betsy Franco
A Day in the Salt Marsh Kevin Kurtz
- A first person narrator engages the reader in what he/she is doing and information is shared along the way.
A Field Full of Horses Peter Hansard
A Good Day's Fishing James Prosek
- A second-person *you* asks the reader to imagine being something animate or inanimate.
If You Were a Penguin Wendell and Florence Minor
Tiger Sherry Been
- Writing in the first-person voice of something animate or inanimate.
My Light Molly Bang
Atlantic Brian Karas
- A single concept or idea is considered across many different places, people, animals or objects.
Move! Steven Jenkins and Robin Page
When Rain Falls Melissa Stewart
Leaving Home Sneed B. Collard
- Information is written as a list of ideas about a topic.
Animal Dads Sneed B. Collard
A Seed Is Sleepy Diana Hutts Aston
- A repeated phrase is used in a list of ideas about a topic.
Bubble Homes and Fish Farts Fiona Bayrock
Plant Secrets Emily Goodman

- Using present tense verbs, the text is written as if it the reader is watching something happen before his or her eyes.
The Eyes of the Gray Wolf Jonathan London
Wolfsnail: A Backyard Predator Sarah C. Campbell
- The text is written to follow the process of how something is formed or made or unfolds in nature.
An Island Grows Lola M. Schaefer
Trout Are Made of Trees April Pulley Sayre
- Writing about a topic in an engaging way, and embedding separate, factual information around the main text.
The Emperor's Egg Martin Jenkins
Surprising Sharks Nicola Davies
- Writing about a topic in an engaging way, and including related factual information at the end of the text.
Vulture View April Pulley Sayre
Close to You: How Animals Bond Kimiko Kajikawa
- Writing about a topic in an engaging way, and including related factual information at the beginning of the text.
Sharkabet: A Sea of Sharks from A-Z Ray Troll
One Tiny Turtle Nicola Davies
- Crafting an actual story (with all the story elements) and embedding factual information around the main text of the story.
White Owl, Barn Owl Nicola Davies
Cook-A-Doodle-Do Janet Stevens and Susan Stevens Crummel
- The writer crafts a series of poems about a topic and then includes factual information about the topic of each poem.
Hey There, Stink Bug! Leslie Bulion
Song of the Water Boatman Joyce Sidman
- The text is written as a series of journal or diary entries which convey information.
Look to the North: A Wolf Pup Diary Jean Craighead George
"Backyard Hummers" Ellen Lambeth *Ranger Rick* April 2009
- Letters between two (or more) voices are used to frame the topic.
Around the World: Who's Been There Lindsay Barrett George
"Letters from Loon Lake" Kate Hofman *Ranger Rick* June 2008

Booklist of Topical/Descriptive/Odes

Asch, F. *The Earth and I*

----*Water*

Aston, D.H. *An Orange in January*

Banks, K. *Fox*

Beach, J. *Names for Snow*

Borden, L. *America Is...*

Bouchard, D. *If You're Not from the Prairie*

Blyler, A. *Finding Foxes*

Browne, MD. *Give Her the River*

Buchanan, K. *It Rained on the Desert Today*

Bunting, E. *Red Fox Running*

----*Secret Place*

Burleigh, R. *Hoops*

Carlstrom, N.W. *The Snow Speaks*

----*Goodbye Geese*

Chall, MW. *Up North at the Cabin*

Christian, P. *If You Find a Rock*

Cisneros, S. *Hairs/Pelitos*

Collier, B. *Uptown*

Cooper, E. *Beach*

----*A Good Night Walk*

Croza, L. *I Know Here*

Day, N.R. *A Kitten's Year*

Depalma, M.N. *A Grand Old Tree*

Doyle, M. *Cow*

Duncan, L. *I Walk at Night*

Fletcher, R. *Hello Harvest Moon*

----*Twilight Comes Twice*

Fogliano, J. *And Then It's Spring*

Frazee, M. *Stars*

----*Santa Clause The World's*

Number One Toy Expert

George, J.C. *To Climb a Waterfall*

----*Morning, Noon, and Night*

Henkes, K. *Birds*

High, L.O. *Under New York*

Isadora, R. *A South African Night*

Jakobsen, K. *My New York*

Johnson, D. *Hair Dance*

Johnston, T. *The Barn Owls*

Katz, J. *Meet the Dogs of Bedlam Farm*

Kinsey-W., N. *When Spring Comes*

Koch, M. *By the Sea*

Kroll, V. *She is Born*

Lesser, C. *A Wonderful Day to Be a Cow*

----*Storm on the Desert*

----*The Goodnight Circle*

Lewis, R. *In the Space of the Sky*

Lindbergh, R. *North Country Spring*

London, J. *Sun Dance, Water Dance*

Lyon, G.E. *Dreamplace*

----*Book*

Mayo, M. *Dig, Dig, Digging*

Meyers, S. *Everywhere Babies*

Milbourne, A. *The Rainy Day*

----*The Windy Day*

Mortensen, D.D. *Ohio Thunder*

Murray, M.D. *The Stars are Waiting*

Myers, C. *Black Cat*

Nevius, C. *Baseball Hour*

Nikola-Lisa, W. *Night is Coming*

Parker, M.J. *City Storm*

Paulsen, G. *Canoe Days*

----*Dog Team*

Ray, M.L. *Mud*

Rucki, A. *When the Earth Wakes*

Ryder, J. *The Goodbye Walk*

Rylant, C. *Snow*

----*In November*

----*Long Night Moon*

----*Scarecrow*

----*The Whales*

Schnur, S. *Spring Thaw*

Seibert, D. *Heartland*

----*Mojave*

Sidman, J. *Red Sings from Treetops*

Smith, CR., Jr. *Diamond Life* (Baseball)

----*Rimshots* (Basketball)

Sorensen, H. *Your First Step*

Spinelli, E. *Summer Bath/ Winter Bath*

----*Rise the Moon*

----*Here Comes the Year*

----*If You Want to Find Golden*

Stafford, K. *We Got Here Together*

Stringer, L. *Winter is the Warmest Season*

Swanson, S.M. *to be like the SUN*

----*Letter to the Lake*

Turner, A. *Rainflowers*

Wood, A. *Birdsong*

Yolen, J. *Nocturne*

Zeifert, H. *One Red Apple*

Memoir Picture Books

Bogacki, T. *My First Garden*
Carle, E. *Flora and Tiger*
Creech, S. *Fishing in the Air* (memoir-ish)
Crews, D. *Big Mama's*
Depaola, T. *26 Fairmont Avenue*
Erdrich, L. *The Range Eternal*
Garza, C.L. *Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia*
-----*In My Family/ En mi familia*
Gray, L.M. *My Mama Had a Dancing Heart*
Herrera, J.F. *Calling the Doves/ El canto de las palomas*
Iglesias, T. *Two Mrs. Gibsons*
Jimenez, F. *The Christmas Gift* (memoir-ish)
Laminack, L. *Saturdays and Teacakes*
Lasky, K. *Before I Was Your Mother*
Nickens, B. *Walking the Log*
Polacco, P. Most all her books!
Rylant, C. *Christmas in the Country*
-----*When I Was Young in the Mountains*
-----*The Relatives Came*
Steckel, R. and M. *The Milestones Project*
Steig, W. *When Everybody Wore a Hat*
Uhlberg, M. *Flying Over Brooklyn*
Velasquez, E. *Grandma's Records*
Wong, J.S. *The Trip Back Home*
Yolen, J. *All Those Secrets of the World*

Slice-of Life Book List

Alexander, S. *One More Time, Mama*
Appelt, K. *Incredible Me!*
Bauer, M.D. *When I Go Camping With Grandma*
Bennet, K. *Not Norman: A Goldfish Story*
Bluemle, E. *My Father the Dog*
Bowen, A. *How Did You Grow So Big, So Soon?*
----*I Loved You Even Before You Were Born*
----*When You Visit Grandma and Grandpa*
Braun, S. *On Our Way Home*
Carlson, N. *It's Going to Be Perfect*
----*I Like Me*
Cooke, T. *The Grandad Tree*
Cumpiano, I. *Quinito, Day and Night/Quinito, dia y noche*
Derby, S. *My Steps*
Fisher, V. *My Big Brother*
----*My Big Sister*
Fletcher, R. *Grandpa Never Lies*
Franco, B. *Summer Beat*
Frazee, M. *Walk On!*
Goode, D. *Thanksgiving Is Here*
Helldorfer, M.C. *Silver Rain Brown*
Herron, C. *Nappy Hair*
Hesse, K. *Come On, Rain!*
High, L.O. *Beekeepers*
----*Under New York*
Hundal, N. *Camping*
Jenkins, E. *The Little Bit Scary People*
----*What Happens on Wednesdays*
Johnson, A. *One of Three*
----*Do Like Kyla*
----*The Aunt in Our House*
----*Tell Me a Story Mama*
----*When I Am Old With You*
Johnson, D. *Sunday Week*
Juster, N. *The Hello, Goodbye Window*

Kuskin, K. *I Am Me*
Laminack, L. *Snow Day!*
Lee, S. *The Zoo*
London, J. *Puddles*
Lyon, G.E. *Mama is a Miner*
Masurel, C. *Two Homes*
Murphy, M. *I Like It When...*
Nolen, J. *In My Mama's Kitchen*
Numeroff, L. *What Mommies/Daddies Do Best*
Partridge, E. *Whistling*
Perkins, L.R. *Pictures from Our Vacation*
Pham, L. *Big Sister, Little Sister*
Ray, M.L. *Red Rubber Boot Day*
Reiser, L. *My Way/ A mi manera*
Rodman, M.A. *My Best Friend*
Rollings, S. *New Shoes, Red Shoes*
Rosenthal, A.K. *Bedtime for Mommy*
Ryder, J. *My Mother's Voice*
Rylant, C. *Birthday Presents*
----*This Year's Garden*
Shannon, D. *Good Boy, Fergus!*
Smalls, I. *My Nana and Me*
----*My Pop Pop and Me*
Smith, C.R., Jr. *Loki and Alex*
Spinelli, E. *Someday*
----*In My New Yellow Shirt*
Steen, S. *Car Wash*
Thomson, S.L. *Feel the Summer*
Weeks, S. *Sophie Peterman Tells the Truth*
Wild, M. *Our Granny*
Woodson, J. *We Had a Picnic...Sunday Past*
Yolen, J. *Grandad Bill's Song*
Zweibel, S. *Our Tree Named Steve*

Note: You will have to decide whether or not to include texts illustrated with anthropomorphic animals in your slice-of-life stack.

Story-List Distinction

As teachers, we sometimes make the mistake of using the word *story* much too loosely. We call every picture book a story, even when it's not.

As teachers of *writers*, it's important we are accurate when we use the word *story*.

So what is a story? A story must contain all the elements of story: setting, character, movement through time, plot, and change.

Lots of the books children read and make themselves are not stories. They simply tell *about* something and move through a list of ideas instead of through time. We often call these *list books* in our teaching to make a simple distinction from story books.

For example, consider the texts of these two books, both of them about a sister named Shauna, but one is a story book and one is a list book.

Shauna Dents the Door

I have a sister named Shauna.

Once when we were little, we were staying by ourselves while my parents were out.

I took Shauna's favorite toy into the bathroom and locked the door so she couldn't get to it or me. On the other side of the door, Shauna yelled and yelled, but I stayed put.

Finally, she kicked the door, BAM, and dented in the wood. We both panicked because our keep-away game had turned out badly. Mom and Dad would be so mad when they found out. We made a secret pact not to tell them and hoped they wouldn't notice.

Weeks went by, and they didn't notice. We thought we were safe.

Then one morning when my mom was vacuuming, we heard her yell out and we knew we were busted.

"No more allowance for the rest of your lives!" She screamed.

(But she didn't really mean it).

My Sister Shauna

I have a sister named Shauna.

She's three and a half years older than me (and always will be!).

Shauna has beautiful red hair (straight, not curly like mine) and freckles, and she always wears a smile.

Shauna is a nurse and she helps people all day long. She is kind and considerate and makes sick people feel better just because she's there.

Shauna has a husband named Charlie, a son named Eric, a daughter named Hannah, and a dog named Daphne.

Shauna loves to read and sing and walk Daphne (Daphne loves that too).

Shauna and I live far apart now and we don't get to see each other much, but we're never far apart from each other's thoughts.

If I could have picked my sister out myself from the special sister store, I'd have picked Shauna, for sure.

Children often write books about things they have done which seem to straddle the story-list distinction. In these books, writers list the different things they did, sometimes even organizing the list of events as they happened through time. These books sound something like this.

Shauna and Katie Go to Big Adventure

My sister Shauna and I went to Big Adventure. We left early in the morning to get there.

We rode the go carts first. I was way faster than Shauna.

We did the skee balls and I won two prizes. Shauna won three.

For lunch we had foot long hot dogs. They were delicious.

There were lots of people there and all the lines were very long the whole day.

The last thing we rode was the water ride. We got so wet it was time to go home.

We had so much fun at Big Adventure.

Books like this are essentially list books. *Shauna and Katie Go to Big Adventure* has a setting and characters and it moves through time, but it's missing the two other critical story elements, plot and change. The events listed don't work together in any way to form a plot. The writer is telling *about* what she did rather than telling the *story* of something specific that happened while she was there.

Poetry Book List

Adoff, A. *Street Music: City Poems*

-----*Love Letters*

-----*Touch the Poem*

-----*The Basket Counts*

Adoff, J. *Small Fry*

Alarcon, F. *Laughing Tomatoes*

-----*From the Bellybutton of the Moon*

-----*Poems to Dream Together*

Ashman, L. *Stella, Unleashed: Notes...Doghouse*

Berry, J. *Isn't My Name Magical?*

Borden, L. *Off to First Grade*

Brand, D. *Earth Magic*

Brown, M.W. *Give Yourself to the Rain.*

Bryan, A. *Sing to the Sun*

Bulion, L. *Hey There, Stink Bug!*

Clements, A. *DogKu*

De Fina, A. *When a City Leans Against the Sky*

Dotlich, R.K. *Lemonade Sun*

Esbensen, B.J. *Echoes for the Eye*

Fletcher, R. *Ordinary Things*

-----*A Writing Kind of Day*

-----*Moving Day*

Florian, D. *Poetrees*

-----*Comets, Stars, the Moon, and Mars*

George, K.O. *Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems*

-----*The Great Frog Race*

-----*Little Dog Poems*

-----*Little Dog and Duncan*

-----*Old Elm Speaks: Tree Poems*

-----*Toasting Marshmallows: Camping Poems*

-----*Hummingbird Nest: A Journal of Poems*

-----*Fold Me a Poem*

Gollub, M. *Cool Melons Turn to Frogs*

Gottfried, M. *Our Farm*

-----*Good Dog*

Graham, J.B. *Flicker Flash*

Greenfield, E. *Honey, I Love*

-----*Under the Sunday Tree*

-----*The Friendly Four*

Grimes, N. *When Gorilla Goes Walking*

-----*Oh, Brother*

-----*Meet Danitra Brown*

-----*My Man Blue*

-----*It's Raining Laughter*

-----*A Pocketful of Poems*

-----*Thanks a Million*

-----*Shoe Magic*

-----*Come Sunday*

-----*Under the Christmas Tree*

Harrison, D. *Bugs: Poems About Creeping Things*
-----*Wild Country*

Heard, G. *Creatures of the Earth, Sea and Sky*

Hines, A.G. *Pieces: A Year in Poems and Quilts*

High, L.O. *A Humble Life: Plain Poems*

Hopkins, Lee B. *Incredible Inventions*

-----*Small Talk: A Book of Short Poems*

Hubbell, P. *Earthmates*

Hughes, L. *My People* (illus. by Charles R. Smith)

Issa, *Today and Today*

Johnson, D. *Sitting Pretty: Celebration of ... Dolls*

Joseph, L. *Coconut Kind of Day*

Katz, B. *Once Around the Sun*

Lewin, B. *Walk a Green Path*

Lillegard, D. *Wake Up House! Rooms Full Poems*

Lindamichellebaron. *The Sun Is On*

Little, L.J. *Children of Long Ago*

Livingston, M. C. *Sky Songs*

Ludwig-Vanderwater, A.

www.poemfarm.blogspot.com

MacLachlan, P. & E. Charest, *I Didn't Do It*

-----*Once I Ate a Pie*

Maynard, B. *Santa's Time Off*

Medina, T. *Love to Langston*

Miller, K. *Poems in Black and White*

Moore, L. *Poems Have Roots*

-----*Mural on Second Avenue & Other City Poems*

Mora, P. *This Big Sky*

Morrison, L. *Slam Dunk*

Otten, C. *January Rides the Wind*

Paolilli, P and D. Brewer. *Silver Seeds*

Park, L.S. *Tap Dancing on the Roof*

Robinson, F. *Who Needs Birds When Dogs...*

Rylant, C. *Baby Face: A Book of Love for Baby*

Schertle, A. *A Lucky Thing*

-----*Advice for a Frog*

Schmidt, A. *Loose Leashes*

Schnur, S. *Autumn: An Alphabet Acrostic*

-----*Summer: An Alphabet Acrostic*

Shaw, A. *Until I Saw the Sea*

Sidman, J. *This Is Just To Say: Poems of Apology*

-----*Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night*

-----*Ubiquitous: Celebrating Nature's Survivors*

-----*Song of the Water Boatman...Pond Poems*

-----*Butterfly Eyes and Secrets of the Meadow*

-----*The World According to Dog*

Singer, M. *Shoe Bop!*

-----*Sky Words*

-----*Central Heating: Poems... Fire and Warmth*

-----*Fireflies at Midnight*

-----*The Company of Crows*

Poetry Book List, Cont.

Smith, C. R. *Shorttakes: Fast-Break Basketball*

-----*Hoops Kings*

-----*Hoop Queens*

-----*Perfect Harmony ... Boys Choir of Harlem*

Step toe, J. *In Daddy's Arms I Am Tall: African Americans Celebrating Fathers*

Stevenson, J. *Candy Corn*

-----*Popcorn*

-----*Cornflakes*

-----*Corn Chowder*

Swados, E. *Hey You! C'mere. A Poetry Slam*

Thomas, J.C. *The Blacker the Berry*

-----*Gingerbread Days*

-----*Brown Honey in Broomwheat Tea*

-----*A Mother's Heart, Daughter's Love*

Tiller, R. *Cats Vanish Slowly*

Tucker, K. *Do Cowboys Ride Bikes?*

Weatherford, G.B. *Sidewalk Chalk: Poems...City*

Williams, V. *Amber Was Brave, Essie Was Smart*

Wilson, B. *Jenny*

Wong, J. *Night Garden*

-----*Twist: Yoga Poems*

Yolen, J. *A Mirror to Nature*

-----*An Egret's Day*

-----*Wild Wings*

-----*Least Things*

-----*Fine Feathered Friends*

-----*Count Me a Rhyme*

-----*Meet the Monsters*

-----*Snow, Snow*

-----*Sea Watch*

-----*Mother Earth/ Father Sky*

-----*Sacred Places*

-----*Sky Scrape/ City Scape*

-----*Once Upon Ice*

-----*Water Music*

-----*Horizons*

Book List of Common Text Structures

compare and contrast- back and forth

Ayres, K. *Up, Down, and Around*
George, L.B. *Inside Mouse/ Outside Mouse*
Hall, D. *I Am the Dog? I Am the Cat*
Igus, T. *The Two Mrs. Gibsons*
Jenkins, E. *The Little Bit Scary People*
Lasky, K. *Before I Was Your Mother*
Peters, L.W. *The Sun, the Wind and the Rain*
Pham, L. *Big Sister/ Little Sister*
Smith, C.R., Jr. *Loki & Alex*
Spinelli, E. *Someday*
Voake, C. *Hello Twins*
Walsh, J.P. *When Grandma Came*
Wild ,M. *Our Granny*
Wood, D. *Making the World*

compare and contrast – two sides

Marlow, Layn. *Hurry Up and Slow Down*
Dragonwagon, C. *And Then It Rained...*
Numeroff, L. *What Do Mommies Do Best?*
Spinelli, E. *Summerbath/ Winterbath*
Ward, J. *Forest Bright/ Forest Night*

repeating phrase

Bateman, D.M. *Deep in the Swamp*
Borden, L. *America Is*
Browne, M.D. *Give Her the River*
Carrick, C. *Mothers Are Like That*
Chall, M. W. *Up North at the Cabin*
Christian, P. *If You Find a Rock*
Collier, B. *Uptown*
Henderson, K. *And the Good Brown Earth*
High, L.O. *Under New York*
Johnson, A. *Lily Brown's Paintings*
Murphy, M. *I Like It When*
Murray, M. *The Stars Are Waiting*
Parr, T. *Reading Makes You Feel Good*
Rylant, C. *In November*
-----*When I Was Young in the Mountains*
Spinelli, E. *In My New Yellow Shirt*
Stewart, M. *When Rain Falls*
Stringer, L. *Winter Is the Warmest Season*
Thomas, J.C. *I Have Heard of a Land*
Thomson, S.L. *Imagine a Day*

repeating phrase, cont.

Walsh, J.P. *When I Was Little Like You*
Wood, D. *A Quiet Place*
Yolen, J. & H. Stemple. *Not All Princesses
Dress in Pink*

moving thru a natural time period: seasons, days, weeks, months

Cooper, E. *Beach*
Clifton, L. *Everett Anderson's Christmas
Coming*
Day, N.R. *A Kitten's Year*
Demas, C. *Always in Trouble*
Derby, S. *My Steps*
Doyle, M. *Cow*
George, J.C. *Morning, Noon and Night*
Gray, L.M. *My Mamma Had a Dancing Heart*
Isadora, R. *South African Night*
Johnson, D. *Sunday Week*
Karas, B. *Village Garage*
Kurtz, K. *A Day in the Salt Marsh*
Lasky, K. *Pond Year*
Lesser, C. *What a Wonderful day to Be a
Cow*
McKissack, P. *Ma Dear's Aprons*
McQuinn, A. *Lola Loves Stories*
Miller, D.S. *Arctic Nights/ Arctic Lights*
Ryan, P.M. *Mice and Beans*
Rylant, C. *Long Night Moon*
Schnur, S. *Spring Thaw*
Spinelli, E. *Heatwave*
-----*Here Comes the Year*
Willems, M. *City Dog, Country Frog*
Zamorano, A. *Let's Eat*

beginnings and endings that match

Cooper, E. *Beach*
Johnston, T. *The Barn Owls*
Rylant, C. *Scarecrow*
-----*The Relatives Came*
Sayre, A.P. *Vulture View*
Willems, M. *City Dog, Country Frog*
Wong, J.S. *The Trip Back Home*

series of questions and answers

Jenkins, S. & Page, R. *How Many Ways Can You Catch a Fly?*

-----*What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?*

Kaner, E. *Who Likes the Rain?*

Prap, L. *Why?*

Sueling, B. *Winter Lullaby*

Zolotow, C. *Do You Know What I'll Do?*

single question and series of answers

Beach, J.K. *Names for Snow*

Coyne, R. *Daughter, Have I Told You?*

Moss, T. *I Want to Be*

Zolotow, C. *The Seashore Book*

moves through a series of people, animals, places

Jenkins, E. *The Little Bit Scary People*

Carlstrom, N.W. *Raven and River*

Cooke, T. *So Much*

Stojic, M. *Rain*

Yolen, J. *Grandad Bill's Song*

Rylant, C. *Tulip Sees America*

Stojic, M. *Rain*

Yolen, J. *Grandad Bill's Song*

moves through a physical place (takes the reader on a tour)

George, J.C. *To Climb a Waterfall*

Jakobsen, K. *My New York*

Roth, S. *It's a Dog's New York*

Rylant, C. *Let's Go Home*

moves through a series of colors

Hamanka, S. *All the Colors of the Earth*

Hindley, J. *A Song of Colors*

Nordine, K. *Colors*

Onyefulu, I. *Chidi Only Likes Blue*

Shannon, G. *White Is For Blueberry*

Sidman, J. *Red Sings from the Treetops*

Spinelli, E. *If You Want to Find Golden*

A Few of Katie's Favorite Books for Illustration Study

A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever. Written and illustrated by Marla Frazee.

A Good Night Walk. Written and illustrated by Elisha Cooper.

And Then It's Spring. Written by Julie Fogliano and Illustrated by Emily Stead.

Beach. Written and illustrated by Elisha Cooper.

Bedtime for Mommy. Written by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and illustrated by LeUyen Pham.

Big Sister, Little Sister. Written and illustrated by LeUyen Pham.

Birds. Written by Kevin Henkes and Illustrated by Laura Dronsek.

City Dog, Country Frog. Written by Mo Willems and illustrated by John J. Muth.

Dogs. Written and illustrated by Emily Gravett.

How to Be a Good Dog. Written and illustrated by Gail Page.

How to Heal a Broken Wing. Written and illustrated by Bob Graham.

"Let's Get a Pup!" Said Kate. Written and illustrated by Bob Graham.

Mud. Written by Mary Lyn Ray and Illustrated by Lauren Stringer.

Santa Claus: The World's Number One Toy Expert. Written and illustrated by Marla Frazee.

Scaredy Squirrel. Written and illustrated by Mélanie Watt. (any book in this series is great!)

Snow. Written by Cynthia Rylant and Illustrated by Lauren Stringer.

Stars. Written by Mary Lyn Ray and Illustrated by Marla Frazee.

Swim! Swim! Written and illustrated by James Proimos.

The Emperor's Egg. Written by Martin Jenkins and illustrated by Jane Chapman.

The Stray Dog. Written by Reiko Sassa and Illustrated by Marc Simont.

"The Trouble With Dogs," Said Dad. Written and illustrated by Bob Graham.

The Village Garage. Written and illustrated by G. Brian Karas.

The Zoo. Written and illustrated by Suzy Lee.

What Do Roots Do? Written by Kathleen Kudlinski and illustrated by David Schuppert.

Wolves. Written and illustrated by Emily Gravett.

Yucky Worms. Written by Vivian French and illustrated by Jessica Ahlberg.

Helping Young Children Learn to Illustrate in More Meaningful Ways

Every picture book is filled with interesting things to notice about illustrations. Here is a list of ten guiding questions for studying illustrations with young writers. Remember that the point of pursuing all these questions is to come up with new visions for things your young writers might try in their picture books.

- How are the words and the illustrations laid out on the page in relation to one another? Is the layout consistent or does it change from spread to spread? Is there anything particularly meaningful about the layout?
- What layout features are used in the text – borders, boxes, white space, labels, insets, etc.?
- How do the illustrations and the words work together to make meaning? Do the illustrations extend the meaning in any way?
- Is there anything happening in the illustrations that isn't happening in the words?
- What media was used to create the illustrations?
- Has the illustrator used color in any way to convey meaning in different illustrations?
- What are the different angles and focuses (zoomed in and out) of the illustrations? Do these relate to the meaning in any way?
- Do illustrations ever stand alone in the text? If so, how do they carry the meaning without words?
- Are there any words or print contained inside the illustrations themselves?
- Is there any manipulation of the print (size, color, font, left-to-right orientation) that is meaningful in the text?

For more on illustration study, see:

About the Authors: Writing Workshop With Our Youngest Writers.
By Katie Wood Ray with Lisa Cleaveland. 2004. Heinemann.

and

In Pictures and In Words: Teaching the Qualities of Good Writing Through Illustration Study. By
Katie Wood Ray. 2010. Heinemann.

Supporting Children's Thinking About
Illustrations in Writing Workshop Helps Them:

build stamina for creative kinds of work

develop habits of process: planning,
designing, drafting, revising and editing

utilize an important habit of mind:
how to read like writers

learn about qualities of good writing
in a parallel context

Instructional Tips for Helping Children Build Stamina in Illustration Work

- Teach children to date-stamp their books when they begin working on them and when they move on to a new book.
- In writing conferences, make it a habit to ask children how long they've been working on the book you are conferring about. Over time, the familiar question will teach them that you expect them to think about the process of their work over time.
- Explain to children that it is fine for them to sometimes put a book away for a while and then decide to come back and work more on it later. Writers do some of their best work when they've been away from something for a time. If children do this, encourage them to put a new date stamp on the book to show the day they picked it up again.
- Go public when you see evidence of children exhibiting good stamina in their work. During share and reflection times, have these children talk about their process and how they've managed to stay with their work for so long. Let good stamina be a badge of honor in the room.
- Save books from year to year that are good examples of work that took a long time to do. Early in the launching of the writing workshop, look at these books together and have the children help you name things they see in the books that must have taken a long time to do.
- In writing conferences, help individual children imagine ways they might stay longer with a book. Help them imagine possibilities for how they might fill up the white space with images and words.
- Consider a demonstration lesson where you model your own thinking about how to spend a long time on a book you're making.
- Encourage children to talk with people at home about their (the children's) ongoing books. Set aside time for the children to report on their conversations from home. Children may come to class with great ideas they got from talking about their books with family members. And all of this talk helps them to think of themselves as "in the midst" of something, even when they're away from the actual work of it.
- If you have access to professional writers or folks who write a lot as part of their professions, invite them to visit the class and share about their work—how long it takes them to work on a project and how they manage their work over time.
- When looking up information (in books and on websites) about illustrators to share with children, be on the lookout for any mention of stamina and time. Share what you learn with children.

Instructional Tips for Supporting the Composing Process in Illustration Work

- * In writing conferences, ask children to talk about the decisions they've made in their illustrations. You may ask them generally, "Tell me all about what you were thinking as you illustrated this page." Or you may ask them more specifically, "Tell me about the border you've drawn around this illustration. What made you decide to use a border?" Use language that communicates your belief that everything was the result of some decision made, and over time they will come to understand process as decision making.
- * When children talk about their illustrations, look for opportunities to name their thinking using the language of process. If a child says, "On the next page, I'm planning to draw a turned-over truck," you can say, "Oh, you're planning that ahead. You're prewriting it." Or if a child says, "I added more red to her face so you'd know she is hot," you can say, "That revision makes your meaning so much clearer."
- * Speak often of readers when you talk to children about their decision making in the books they make. This will help children internalize a sense of audience. This kind of talk can take different forms. "What would your reader likely think if you zoomed in really close in the illustration of your dog's face on this page?" Or in a study of informational nonfiction, you might ask, "What can a reader learn from your illustration on this page?"
- * Tell stories of children's process decisions during the share and reflection time at the end of writing workshop. Make smart thinking and decision making public, and just as you do in conferences, use the language of process to help children tell these stories.
- * Take time sometimes just to watch and listen as children are making books. Look for evidence of interesting process decisions, and you will begin to see them unfolding all around you. Interrupt children in the midst of interesting work you see them doing and ask them about it. They are often much more articulate about their decision making when you catch them in the act.
- * Demonstrate your own thinking as you make decisions about illustrations in books you're making. You may actually compose the illustration in front of children and think aloud as you do it, or you may have already composed the illustration and simply share the thinking you did with the children. Again, be sure to use the language of process as you demonstrate.
- * Consider having children use a sticky note as an assessment tool and mark the page they think shows their most interesting illustration work in a finished book. Just having the expectation that there will be something to note may promote more intentional thinking about illustrations. Children may write about their decision on the note, or simply talk about it.
- * Look for information about the process of composing on the websites of illustrators you and your students know and admire. Be prepared to find contradictions in what different illustrators say about process. Just as with writing, there is not just one way to go about composing an illustration.

Instructional Tips for Supporting Children to Read Like Writers in Illustration Work

- * Because seeing oneself as *like* another person is so critical to reading like a writer, children need to see authors and illustrators as more than just names printed on books. They need, literally, to see them. If they're not already pictured on the book flaps, find photographs of authors and illustrators online, print them, and tape them inside your books. Seeing the actual person who made all the decisions in a book helps make that connection more concrete for children.
- * Always read the author and illustrator notes and dedications in books and talk about them. The information in them often make authors and illustrators seem more like real folks to children, just as photographs do.
- * Make the question, "What do you notice about the illustrations in this book?" a predictable, expected question in your discussions about books. As the question becomes routine, so will the habit of mind.
- * When children point out something they notice in a book, use the authors' and illustrators' names as you discuss the decisions they've made. "Look at how Donald Crews shows the wind in the sails of that boat."
- * Get comfortable with thinking imaginatively in front of children. Demonstrate how you can picture a child or someone else trying out a technique in a different book about a different topic.
- * Let children know you are interested in them reading like writers on their own. Ask them to let you know if they find an interesting illustration technique in a book they are reading independently. Make time for them to share these techniques and teach other children about them.
- * When you know a child has used a specific illustrator as a mentor, consider displaying pages from the child's book alongside pages from the books of the illustrator. You might add labels such as, "Look what Thomas learned from Marla Frazee! How to show many things happening at once."

Instructional Tips for Supporting Illustration–Writing Connections

- * If you read chapter books aloud to your students, you might consider selecting excerpts and exploring illustration–writing connections. Read an excerpt (more than once if necessary) and ask students to imagine how they might picture the meaning of the words in an illustration. The thinking students do will help them see the connection between what words do to make meaning and what illustrations do to make meaning.
- * Whenever you demonstrate your own thinking about composing an illustration, be sure to point out how you would write your meaning if you were using only words and not pictures. You can just do this quickly in response to your drawing, or you might consider extending the teaching demonstration over two days. On the first day you model your thinking about composing the illustration, and on the second day you show children how you made the same meaning with writing. Of course, it won't be *exactly* the same meaning because the modes have different potentials, but the subtle differences will make for good talk that should deepen children's understandings.
- * As you confer with children, you might share with them the words that come to mind as suggested by their illustrations. For example, if a child has drawn a picture of a very tall building, you might say, "That building looks like it almost touches the sky. All the other buildings are so small around it. It seems like the king of the buildings." Just respond naturally with whatever words come to mind. The point is to show children how pictures suggest meanings that can be expressed by words.