

“I Am My Favorite Author!”

**Spark the Reading
and Writing Connection
in K-2 Classrooms**

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Kindergarten Studies

(1992 & 2005)

- To provide up-to-date information about kindergarten practices and to plan appropriate professional development and teacher preparation
- 1992: Vermont kindergarten teachers
- 2005: Vermont and teachers in 6 MI counties

Some Findings

1992

2005

- 3% (VT) taught full day program
- 95% (VT) reported "much" or "very much" autonomy in program and daily decisions.
- Researchers observed very little literacy instruction. Classrooms play and inquiry-based.
- 58% (VT) taught full day program
- 60% in both states reported "much" autonomy over daily curricular decisions
- Literacy instruction and materials prevalent in all classrooms--greater use of independent writing, guided reading, shared reading, shared writing, mini-lessons, literacy centers.....



Teacher's Voices: Teacher Autonomy

- “What I *believe* that kindergarteners should do, and what I *must* do are often very, very different.”
- “There seems to be less confidence in teacher expertise or knowledge to give us the discretion to do what we think is best for our students.”



Teacher's Voices: Child-centered vs. Curriculum-driven

- “We are forced to teach a curriculum that is not developmentally appropriate.... I continue to be concerned about disappearing free exploration, recess, playtime, singing, snack! I hope we’re not burning them out at too early an age.”
- “Too much, too soon, too fast! There will be a cost to all of this push down of curriculum.”



Teachers' Voices: Developmentally Inappropriate Literacy Expectations

- “Teaching reading and writing in kindergarten today is what first grade used to be just a few years ago. I feel like I have to sneak play into learning, rather than let the children learn through play.”
- “Kindergarten teachers are focusing on teaching reading and writing before students are developmentally ready. This is due to the pressure from upper grades and administration.”
- “Can you believe it? We are actually expected to teach 5 year olds to write before they are ready!”



READY? For what?

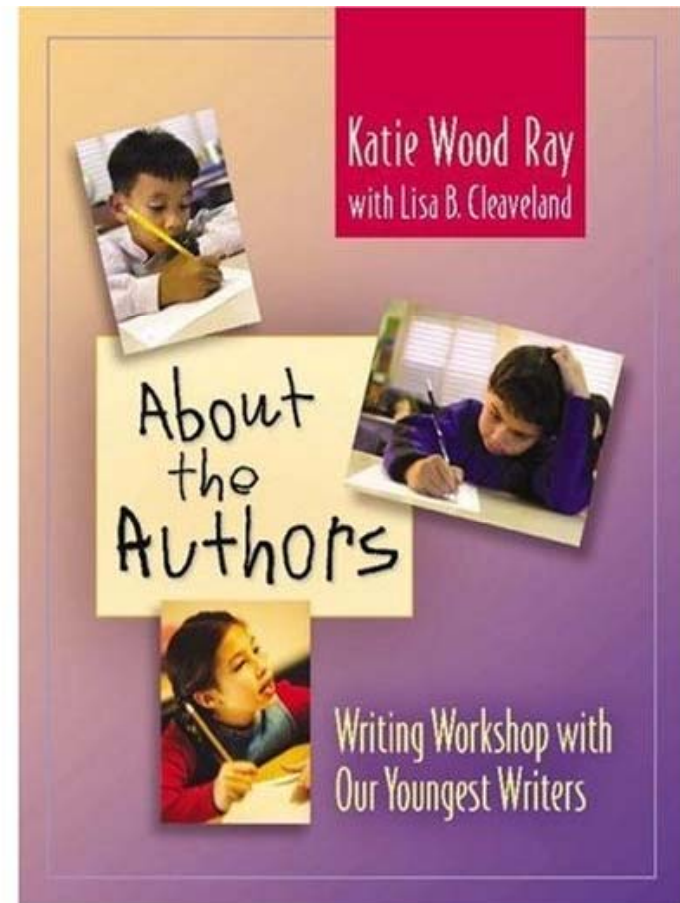
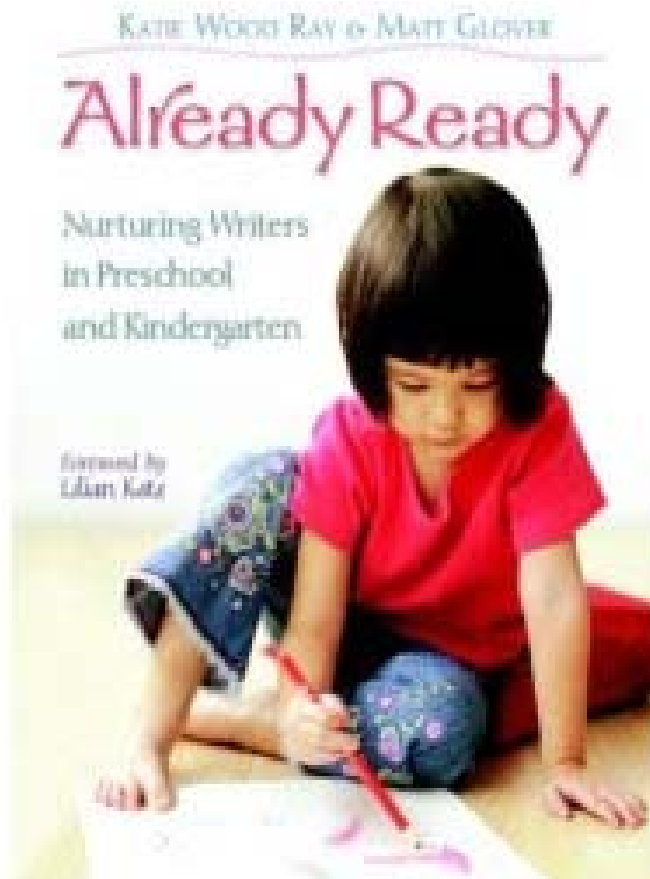
- Children of all ages can become writers and illustrators if they spend time doing what writers and illustrators do.
 - Make books about topics that interest them
 - Interact with others who respond in ways that support their identities.
 - Talk about the child's work as a writer just like they talk about professional writers' work



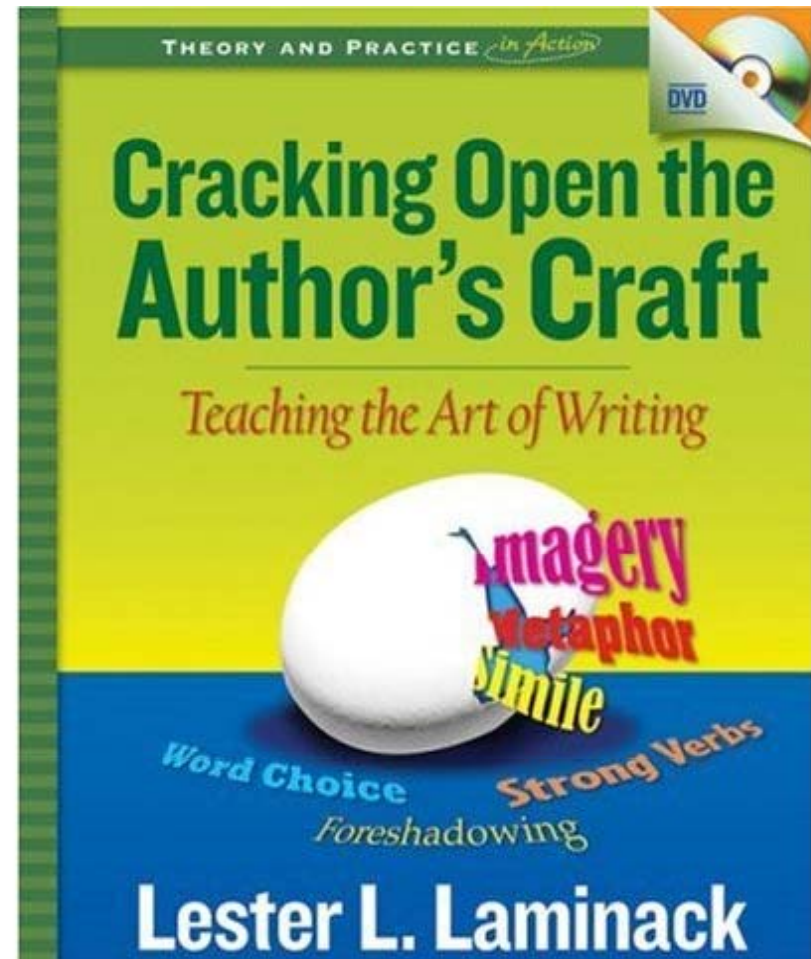
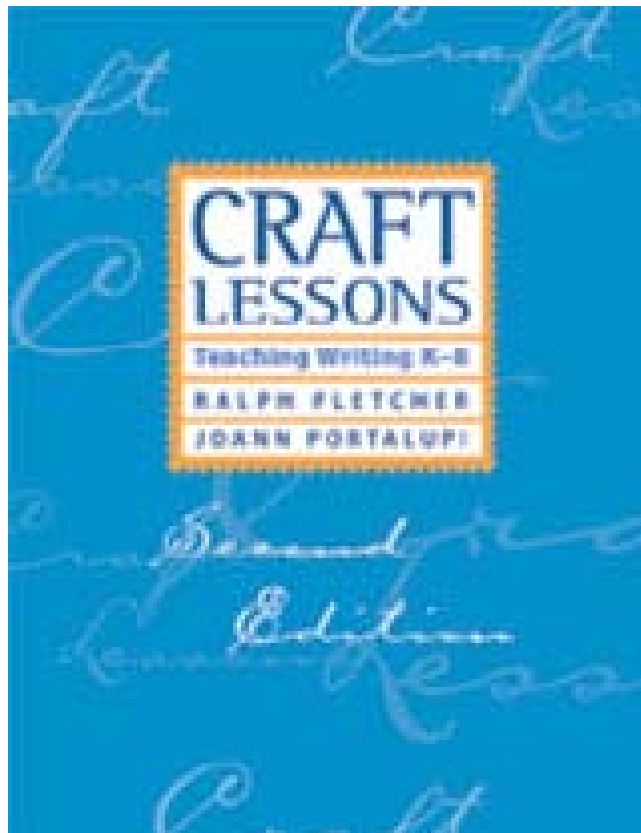
Goal of this talk:

- Rethink beliefs and practices about early writing
- Describe teacher attitudes and classroom contexts that support writers
- Discuss an approach for teaching young authors to think about the craft of writing
- Promote early engagement in the business of writers and illustrators: making books

Supporting Youngest Writers



Teaching Authors' Craft





Examining Beliefs

- What can happen when teachers believe that very young students are “*writers*” - not “emergent writers” or “ready to write”?



Examining Beliefs

- Do you believe that Belinda *is* a writer?
- What does she know about writing?



So.....

- How can teachers create a context to support writers like Belinda?
- How can you interact with your K-2 students to show them that they can be five, or six, or seven years old *and* a writer?
 - Or....ELL *and* a writer?
 - Or....other special needs *and* a writer?
 - Other identities *and* a writer?



Teacher Beliefs & Actions

In Belinda's classroom

- Teacher is comfortable with approximations. Finished work will look like that of a 5, 6 or 7 year old.
- Teacher values writing primarily because it supports development as a *writer*.
- Teacher see process, composition, craft as developmentally appropriate

In many classrooms

- Teacher scribes under children's writing to show what correct writing looks like.
- Teacher values writing primarily because it supports development as a *reader*, giving emphasis to getting the words down right.
- Teacher gives priority to practices that support knowledge of the letter sound system.



The Context

In Belinda's classroom

- She writes.
- She uses writing to make picture books. She composes.
- She goes through her own process to make books: chooses ideas, decides what goes on each page, makes changes, declares when it is finished.

In many classrooms

- An adult takes dictation, writing words as children say them.
- Children write, but in more functional ways--in explorations, making notes, lists, signs.
- Teachers assign topics connected to themes, provide formatted pages, some prewritten sentences



The Context

In Belinda's classroom

- She makes books that look and sound like those her teacher reads every day by professional authors.
- She can work on writing and illustrating her book for a stretch of time.
- Her book stays in the classroom and she reads it again and again to different audiences.

In many classrooms

- Children are given a single piece of paper and asked to draw a picture and write something about it.
- Children don't stay with a writing task long. They write something, but don't make it into something.
- Once the writing is finished, the writer doesn't need it any more. Children cannot read the transcribed books, which are beyond their reading abilities.



Writing Workshop

(Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1994)

- Authors need
 - Time to write
 - Authentic reasons to write
 - Careful responses to their writing
 - Choices and responsibilities
 - Literature as models for strategies and craft

K-2 Writers Make Books

(Ray & Cleaveland, 2004)

- “Writing workshop will be at this time every morning and we will make books.”
- Making stuff is developmentally appropriate
- Making books involves many decisions
 - What will it be about?
 - What type of paper?
 - Illustrations?



Making books helps children live like writers and illustrators.

- People who make books (writers) get ideas all the time. They listen and look for fresh and interesting language and ideas.
- Writers and illustrators think about their work even when they are not writing if the work is big enough to carry them through time.



Discuss Decisions Writers and Illustrators Make

Composing is a continuous process of intentional decision-making

- Help children build a repertoire of crafting techniques in both illustrating and writing.
- Embed talk about what happens in the books as a result of writers' and illustrators' decisions



Read Aloud to Show Them How to “Read Like Writers”

- When you read like a writer you notice and think about how a text is written and envision possibilities for your own writing, because that’s what people who write do. Stop to think aloud about the author and the text as you think....connect it to their writing, and your writing.
- A writer goes back and rereads favorite books to see how the author handled specific craft elements



Talk about authors...

- As familiar people
 - Read names of authors and illustrators as they read and re-read, as if you know the person.
 - Find photographs of authors on websites, read the blurbs on the covers, dedications. Children will include these elements in their books.



Reread to know authors better.

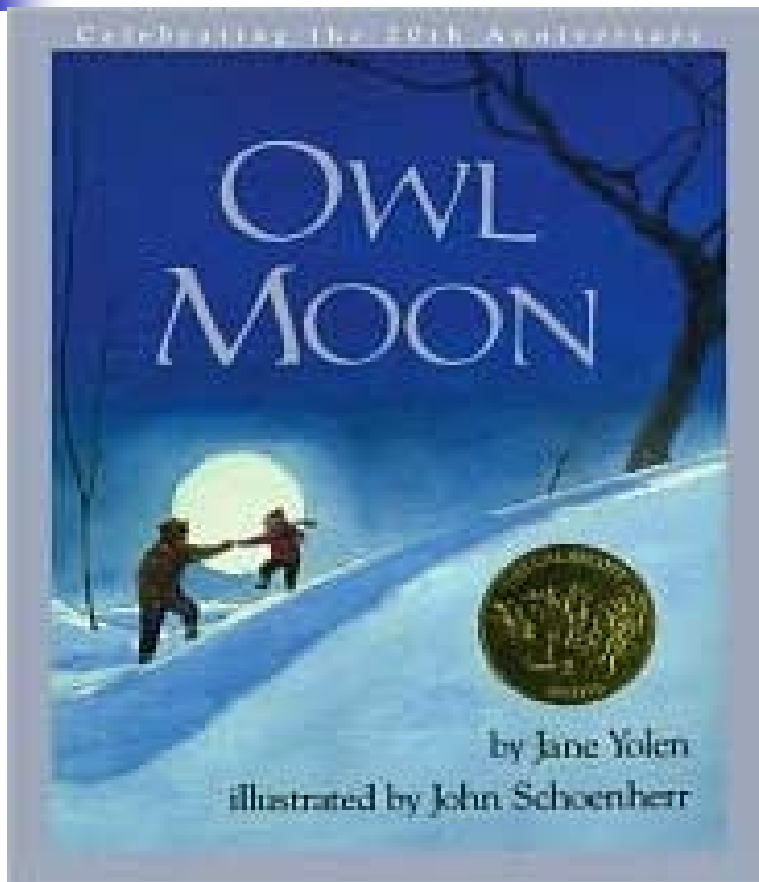
- Re-read to deepen concept of authorship and keep names of authors and illustrators familiar
- Reading multiple books by the same authors and illustrators fosters authors' way of thinking: "What will I write next?"
 - Have both books with you when you introduce the new one.
"Here is another Eric Carle book....."
 - Talk about why the writer might have chosen the topic.



Use Authors and Texts as Mentors

- “Every encounter with a picture book is simply saturated with literacy learning material.” (Wood & Glover, 2008).
- Identify mentor texts: literature that you can return to and reread for many different purposes
- Choose 2 or 3 authors and illustrators to study
 - Whose work the children like
 - Who illustrate their own books
 - Who have a body of work (4-5 books)
 - Who show craft in explicit ways
 - Who have a variety of books on a variety of topics

Mentor or Touchstone Texts



- A familiar book
- Look at its lead sentence and those of several other touchstone books during a mini lesson.
- Will not be disembodimenting those leads or tearing them from their contexts, because if these are **touchstone books**, they will already know the book as a whole



Notice Leads (Fletcher and Portalupi, 2007)

My grandmother lives on the other side of the earth.

From Sitti's Secrets by Naomi Shihab Nye

Pirates have green teeth--when they have any teeth at all.

From How I Became a Pirate by Melinda Long

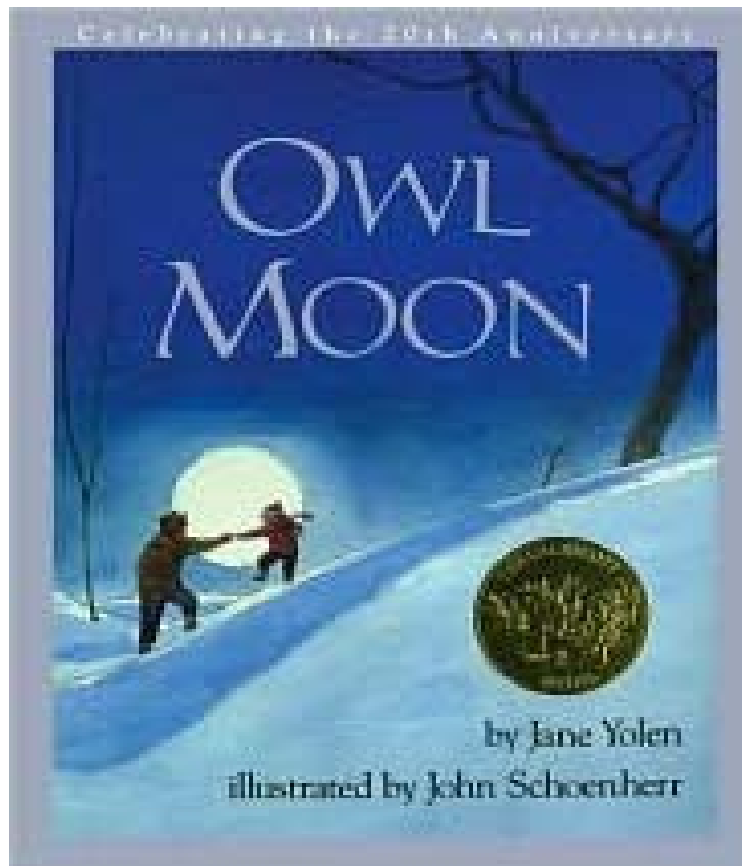
Ben went to pet his dog good morning. She didn't open her eyes.

She was an old dog.

From The Old Dog by Charlotte Zolotow

His mother was ugly. His father was ugly. But Shrek was uglier than the two of them put together.

From Shrek! by William Steig



- “Another day we may notice metaphor, or description, or the sound of words, or dramatic scenes...
- As we return to the book again and again, we find ourselves noticing the author’s message, the author’s craft, more completely.”
- From *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1994) by Lucy Calkins



Teaching Description

Owl Moon

By Jane Yolen

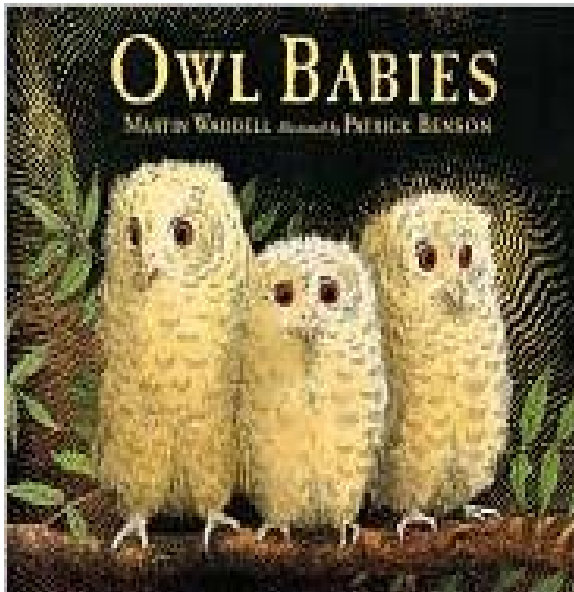
It was late one winter night
when Pa and I went owling.
There was no wind. The trees
were still as giant statues. And
the moon was so bright the
sky seemed to shine.

The daddy doghter dance

By Aubrey, grade 2

One cold wintr night, I was
going to the daddy doghter
dance. First we went to the
Fenton hotell. It was so so
yummy....
We started to wach dads do
this funny bubble rap dance.
They had to dance on
bubble rap..

Notice the author's language

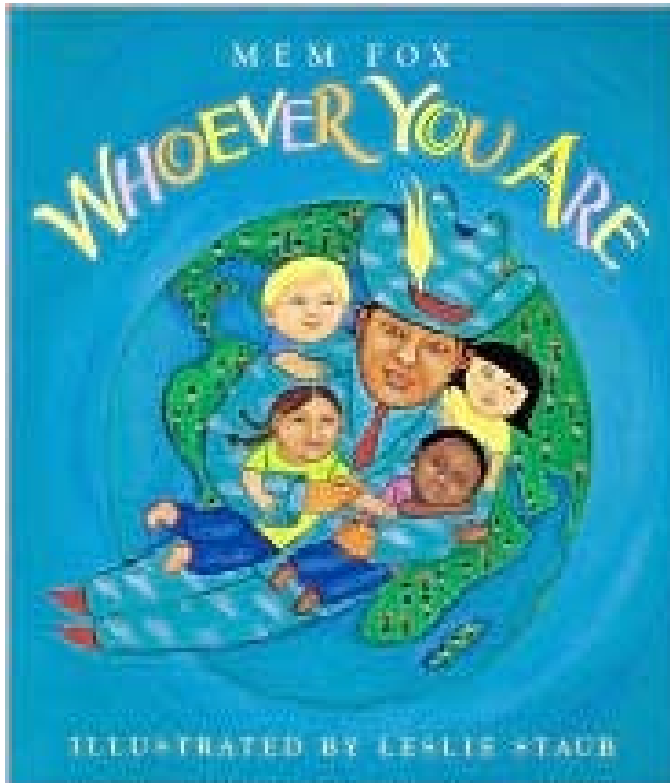


“Soft and silent she swooped through the trees to Sarah and Percy and Bill.”

(Pause) I love the way that sounds. Listen to it again with me.

- End craft lessons by directly envisioning what it would look like if someone in the room tried it in something they are writing.

Repeating words



Whoever You Are by Mem Fox

Their lives may be
different from yours,
and their words may be
very different from yours.
But inside,
their hearts just like yours,
whoever they are,
wherever they are
all over the world.

Their smiles are like yours,
and they laugh like you too.
Their hurts are like yours,
and they cry like you too.
whoever they are,
wherever they are,
all over the world.



Try the author's form

For Sale by S. Silverstein

One sister for sale!
One sister for sale!
One crying and spying young sister
for sale!
I'm really not kidding,
So who'll do the bidding?
Do I hear a dollar?
A penny?
Oh, isn't there, isn't there any
One kid who will buy this old sister
for sale,
This crying and spying young sister
for sale?

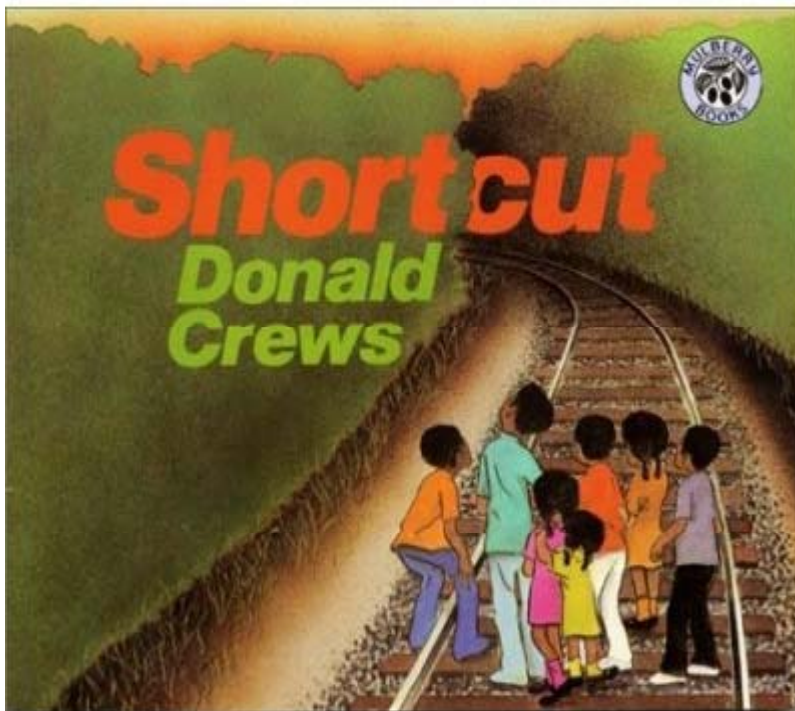
Best Friend for Sale!

by Amy grade 2

Best friend for sale!!!!
Best friend for sale!!!!
All she does is talk and she's
free!!!!
So how much money are you
offering?
\$1 \$2 \$100?
OK \$100 wins
Here you go
And now time for a playstation 2!

Play in the author's syntax

(Dorfman & Cappelli, 2007)



“I HEAR A TRAIN!”

Everybody stopped.

Everybody listened.

We all heard the train
whistle.

Should we run ahead to
the path home or back
to the cut off?



You try it!

- I _____ the _____
- Everybody _____
- Everybody _____
- We all _____
- Should we _____
- Or _____



Lesson Framework (Laminack, 2007; Ray, 1999)

- 1. Notice something about the craft of the text.
- 2. Talk about it and make a theory about why a writer might use the craft.
- 3. Give the craft a name.
- 4. Think of other authors you know. Have you seen this craft before?
- 5. Try to envision using this in your own writing.



In text, draw attention to: (Ray & Glover,2008)

- Print manipulations--bold, italics
- Spelling manipulations
- Interesting uses of punctuation
- Text layout -- Where are the words in relation to the illustrations?
- Repetition in a variety of forms (words, phrases, sentences, sentence structures, beginnings, endings)
- Dialogue
- Sound words
- Beautiful or interesting language



In Illustrations:

- Perspective
- Interesting use of color
- Presence or absence of detail
- Presence or absence of white space in the background
- Borders and other graphic features that enhance
- How words are matched with illustrations
- How illustrations show more than words
- Illustration lay out--where the illustrations are in relation to the words

(Ray & Glover, 2008)

Did you stand on an author's shoulder to write this?

(Ray & Cleaveland, 2004)





Resources About Craft

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Resources about authors craft

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