

Workshop 3

Reading Like a Writer

Video 5: Reading Like a Writer

Video 6: Reading/Writing Connections

How can you use literature in your writing workshop and teach students to look for writing strategies as they read? In this workshop, you will learn how to use “touchstone” and “mentor” texts to teach students new writing techniques. By watching classroom examples, you will also see how teachers immerse students in literary genres and use engaging texts to set the stage for writing.

“When you read like a writer, books should weigh twice as much because of what you can see inside the book.”

—Isoke Nia, literacy consultant

Learning Goals

In this workshop, you will explore how to:

- create a classroom library filled with great literary models
- use literature to help students explore different writing options
- teach students to read literature closely by looking at it through the lens of a writer
- illustrate and teach specific elements of writing craft using passages from literature

Materials Needed

- Examine the Literature Response Chart (included at the end of this chapter and available as a PDF on the *Inside Writing Communities* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting)
- Lesson descriptions and classroom handouts listed in the section Teachers and Lessons Featured in Workshop 3 (included in the Appendix and available as PDFs on the Web site)
- “An Invitation to My Library: The Craft of Text Structure” and “Another Invitation to My Library: Ways With Words,” chapters from Katie Wood Ray’s *Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom* (available as PDFs on the Web site)
- Key Practices To Observe (included in the section Analyze the Videos and available as a PDF on the Web site)
- Journal or notebook

Facilitators: You may want to have several copies of the two chapters available for participants without Internet access, as well as copies of Key Practices To Observe, Examine the Literature Response Chart, and the lesson descriptions and classroom handouts.

Prepare for the Workshop

To prepare for this workshop, you will review the strategies you already use and read two chapters from the book *Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom* by Katie Wood Ray.

Facilitators: Have participants complete these activities before arriving for the workshop.

What Do You Do?



Think about a text (a picture book, a novel, an essay, a poem, etc.) that you have used to help you teach writing. In your notebook, briefly jot down specifics about the way in which you incorporated this text into your instruction. Then answer the following questions:

- How did your students respond to the piece?
- What impact did the text have on their writing?
- How would you compare the success of this lesson with one that did not include a literary text?

If you do not regularly use literary texts in your writing instruction, think of one of your favorite pieces of children's literature and then write down ideas about how it might be incorporated into a writing lesson.

Examine the Literature



To complete this activity, use the Examine the Literature Response Chart found at the end of this chapter.

Read each chapter listed below, recording your ideas on the chart during and after reading. When you have finished, save your chart to submit as an assignment.

You can download PDFs of these chapters on the *Inside Writing Communities, Grades 3–5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting.

An Invitation to My Library: The Craft of Text Structure

This chapter examines how to select books to teach lessons on writing conventions and text structure.

Ray, Katie Wood. "An Invitation to My Library: The Craft of Text Structure," from *Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom*, 139–159. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000.

Another Invitation to My Library: Ways With Words

This chapter examines how to teach students to see the strategies writers use to create engaging text and to apply these strategies to their own writing.

Ray, Katie Wood. "Another Invitation to My Library: Ways With Words," from *Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom*, 161–186. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000.

Analyze the Videos

Facilitators: When the workshop begins, you may want to spend a few minutes discussing the group's responses to What Do You Do? and the readings. You also may want to direct the participants' attention to the Key Practices listed below.

Key Practices To Observe

"Reading Like a Writer" and "Reading/Writing Connections" explore how teachers use literature to help students become better writers. They feature commentary from experts on teaching writing at the elementary level as well as classroom illustrations highlighting the practices of several teachers.

As you watch, look for the following key practices:

- Teachers think about texts from the viewpoint of a reader, a writer, and a teacher.
- Teachers demonstrate strategies that help students learn to read as writers.
- Teachers use "touchstone texts" to help illustrate and clarify writing craft for students.
- Students choose "mentor texts" by authors they admire and/or with whom they identify.
- Teachers and students look for specific "craft moves": what writers have done to make the text work for readers.
- Students identify with the choices made by professional writers.
- Teachers give students the opportunity to write the kinds of texts they like to read.
- Students experiment with the craft moves they observe in their reading.
- Students identify and critique craft moves in their own writing and analyze how their writing will affect the reader.

Teachers and Lessons Featured in Workshop 3

Descriptions of the featured lessons, along with related handouts, are included in the Appendix.

Video 5: Reading Like a Writer

- Lindsay Dibert, Fifth Grade: "Revising Leads"
(Handout: Sample Leads)
- Silvia Edgerton, Fifth Grade: "Teaching a Revision Strategy: Zooming In"
(Handouts: Excerpts Used To Illustrate Zooming In; *Charlotte's Web* graphic organizer)
- Latosha Rowley, Third Grade: "Lessons in a Poetry Unit"

Video 6: Reading/Writing Connections

- Sheryl Block, Fourth Grade: "Introducing Personal Narrative"
(Handout: Reflecting on My Writing)
- Mark Hansen, Third Grade: "Introduction to Persuasive Writing"
(Handouts: Persuasive Letter Planner graphic organizer; Sample Student Letters)
- Christine Sanchez, Third Grade: "Lesson on Word Choice"
- Cristina Tijerina, Fourth Grade: "Using Picture Books To Teach Writing to Intermediate Students"

Analyze the Videos, cont'd.

Guide to Video 5: Reading Like a Writer

Use this chart to help identify the pause points in Video 5. Zero your counter at the Annenberg logo at the very beginning of the tape. The entry points below are approximate.

Segment 1 (00:00-14:33)	Interview (beginning at 00:50) Reading like a teacher of writing	Isoke Nia
	Introduction (beginning at 01:00)	
	Interview (beginning at 02:25) Learning craft from published writers	Isoke Nia
	In the Classroom (beginning at 02:48) Introduction to leads	Lindsay Dibert
Segment 2 (14:33-21:42)	Interview (beginning at 15:08) "Touchstone" texts	Isoke Nia
	In the Classroom (beginning at 15:57) Introducing touchstone texts in a poetry unit	Latosha Rowley
Segment 3 (21:42-end)	Interview (beginning at 22:32) "Mentor" texts	Isoke Nia
	In the Classroom (beginning at 22:58) Discussing mentor texts during a teacher-student conference	Silvia Edgerton

Analyze the Videos, cont'd.

Video 5: Reading Like a Writer

Watch the 30-minute video “Reading Like a Writer.” If you prefer to watch the video in segments, you can stop it at the times suggested below or use the detailed Video Guide outline on the previous page to help you determine other places to stop for discussion. The Video Guide is also available as a PDF at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting.

Answer the questions that accompany each segment below, jotting down your responses in a notebook or using them as discussion starters.



Using Literature To Teach a Craft Lesson (approximate times: 00:50-14:30)

In the first segment, Lindsay Dibert uses excerpts from several children’s books to teach a craft lesson on leads. (Stop after Lindsay’s student/teacher conference.)

- What criteria has Lindsay used to select the leads included on her handout?
- Lindsay’s students meet in small groups to reach consensus on their three favorite leads. How does this teaching strategy enhance the students’ learning about writing craft?
- Using the published leads as models, the students write several alternative leads for their personal narratives. What does this activity teach the students about writing and revision?
- Think of at least one other writing strategy you could teach using excerpts from children’s literature, and share your ideas with your colleagues.

Introducing Touchstone Texts (approximate times: 14:30-21:45)

In this segment, Isoke Nia talks about the importance of “touchstone texts,” texts teachers use to illustrate and model writing, and Latosha Rowley introduces two touchstone poems to her students and reflects on her choices. (Stop after Latosha’s interview about touchstone texts.)

- What teaching strategies does Latosha use to introduce the Langston Hughes poem “Mother to Son” and “Purple” from the book of poetry by Nikki Grimes, *Meet Danitra Brown*? How do her third graders respond to the poems? In your opinion, what makes these poems appropriate (or inappropriate) writing models?
- What “teachable items” does Latosha focus on in the poems? Identify one or two other examples of writing craft in the poems that could become the focus of a mini-lesson.
- Think about a specific poem you have introduced to your students. Would this poem be a good touchstone text for a unit on writing poetry? Why or why not? In your notebook, jot down a list of possible criteria for choosing touchstone texts, and discuss your criteria with your colleagues.

Analyze the Videos, cont'd.

Working With Mentor Texts (approximate times: 21:45-end of video)

In the final video segment, following Isoke's comparison of touchstone texts and mentor texts, Silvia Edgerton confers with one of her fifth graders about a draft he is working on and then reflects on the conversation. (Play to the end of the video.)

- How does Silvia's student demonstrate his understanding of the use of mentor texts? How could touchstone texts help students learn to use mentor texts more effectively?
- Think about Silvia's questions and responses during the conference. How does she reinforce what the student has learned about imitating and adapting craft moves from other writers? What does her subsequent interview reveal about her approach to teaching writing?
- Consider your own students. What strategies could you use to help your students find appropriate mentor texts?

Video 6: Reading/Writing Connections

Watch the 30-minute video "Reading/Writing Connections." Apply what you have learned in "Reading Like a Writer" as you observe the classroom examples.

Answer the questions that follow each segment, jotting down your answers in your notebook or using them as discussion starters.



Christine Sanchez's Class (approximate times: 00:30-05:00)

Christine Sanchez's third graders are preparing to write about food. To introduce an important craft lesson, Christine reads a passage from *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder, and then shares a similar passage she has written herself.

- What makes *Farmer Boy* a good writing model for Christine's students?
- How does Christine reinforce what the students have learned from listening to the passage from *Farmer Boy*?
- Based on your experience and what you learned and observed in "Reading Like a Writer," jot down one or two ways in which Christine might proceed with this lesson.

Cristina Tijerina's Class (approximate times: 05:00-07:00)

In this excerpt from her interview, Cristina Tijerina explains why the picture book *The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash* by Trinka Hakes Noble is an ideal text to use with her fourth graders.

- What are Cristina's reasons for using *The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash*?
- In some ways, the picture book shows students what *not* to do in their descriptive writing. Based on your experience and what you learned and observed in "Reading Like a Writer," think of an alternative way Cristina might use literature to teach the same concept.

Analyze the Videos, cont'd.

Sheryl Block's Class (approximate times: 07:00-13:30)

Sheryl Block emphasizes the importance of providing students with a roadmap before they begin writing a new genre. She shares with her fourth graders a personal narrative from *Highlights* magazine, and then invites a former student to read a personal narrative she published in the fourth grade.

- Why would Sheryl want to use the published work of students as well as that of professional writers to model a new genre for her class?
- What are the benefits of immersing students in multiple examples of a genre?

Mark Hansen's Class (approximate times: 13:30-end of video)

Another way teachers can use books to inspire student writing is illustrated in Mark Hansen's third-grade classroom. In the early part of a unit on persuasion, Mark uses the picture book *The Wonderful Towers of Watts* by Patricia Zelter to introduce his students to the thinking and writing strategies they will need to use in their persuasive pieces.

- How does the structure of Mark's reading lend itself to the learning goals he has set for his students?
- What do Mark's interactions with his students and their interactions with each other reveal about his classroom and his teaching?

Looking Closer

During the whole-class discussion of *The Wonderful Towers of Watts*, Mark Hansen calls on a student who speaks only Spanish. Mark responds in Spanish, clarifies and translates the student's comments, and adds them (in English) to the chart. Mark's natural inclusion of this student in the discussion underscores the importance of recognizing and respecting everyone's contribution and mode of communication. If you don't speak a student's language, you can ask another student or an ESL teacher to translate.

Extend Your Learning

Examine Your Practice

This workshop examines the relationship between reading and writing during a writing workshop. In the videos, teachers and other experts talk about what it means to read like a writer. When you are reading like a writer, you begin to notice how things are written because you write yourself. Likewise, knowing you are going to write in a certain genre changes the way you read it.

Read the following quotation, consider your own students, and answer the questions below.

“To read like a writer is to apprentice yourself to another writer. We try to teach kids to create their own style by learning the styles of other writers and taking on those craft moves that they think they can do and that they think will enhance their writing, without imitating the exact structure of the other writer’s piece.

“Teachers should be able to first, read like a reader—take it in and enjoy it. Then, read like a writer—look into a text and notice the craft. And then, read like a teacher of writing—be able to identify the craft that you can teach to your students, what your students need to learn.”

—Isoke Nia

Guiding Questions Notebook:

Reflect on the quotation from Isoke Nia and consider your own students. Then write your answers to the questions below in your notebook. If you are working in a group, share your responses.

1. Think about how you read text. Do you switch “lenses” easily when you’re reading, going from reader to writer to teacher? What are some specific aspects of a text that you focus on as a reader? As a writer? As a teacher?
2. Describe how you could model reading like a writer outside of your language arts instruction.

Try an Activity

Examine Writing Techniques Interactive:

Go to the *Inside Writing Communities, Grades 3–5* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/elemwriting

To teach writing techniques, teachers often rely on passages from well-loved children’s literature. In this interactive, you will identify writing techniques involving the use of detail and dialogue from different children’s books.

Put It Into Practice

The videos, activities, and readings in this workshop illustrate several strategies for helping students read like writers. Now apply what you have learned to develop a mini-lesson to help your students notice specific writing techniques and develop their writing skills as they read.

Create a Craft Mini-Lesson Assignment:

Based on what you've learned from the workshop videos and activities, use one or more pieces of literature to teach a writing craft mini-lesson that relates to your students' current writing work. The lesson could be genre-specific (using space in poetry or adding descriptive detail to personal narratives), or it could reflect a more general need among your students (learning how to write dialogue or where to make paragraph breaks). Be sure to include the following:

- materials needed, including the literature itself
- your plan for sharing the literature with students (handouts, overhead, read-aloud, etc.)
- the writing technique your students are learning
- specific passages that illustrate that technique
- the structure of your lesson, including how your students will apply what they have learned in their own writing

After you teach the lesson, answer the following questions:

- How did your students respond to the literary example(s)?
- What evidence did you see that they understood the craft lesson?
- How would you change the lesson if you were to teach it again?

Reflect on Your Learning

What Did You Learn? Assignment:

Summarize what you have learned about using published literature in a writing workshop from the experts' statements, classroom examples, and the readings and activities in this workshop. Use the questions below to guide your thinking. When you have finished, save your written summary to submit as an assignment.

- Which classroom practices from the two videos reflect what you currently do?
- Which practices or ideas are new to you?
- What changes do you plan to make?
- What support and/or resources will you need to implement these ideas?

Assignments

If you are taking this workshop for graduate credit, submit the following assignments for Workshop 3: Reading Like a Writer:

1. Examine the Literature

Read two chapters from Katie Wood Ray's book *Wondrous Words* and complete the Examine the Literature Response Chart.

2. Create a Craft Mini-Lesson

Use one or more pieces of literature to create and teach a writing craft lesson that relates to your students' current writing work or needs.

3. What Did You Learn?

Write a summary of the ideas and strategies you explored in this workshop.

Related Resources

Web Resources

Children's Literature Reviews

<http://www.childrenslit.com/th.htm>

This site features interviews with children's book authors and illustrators, and several sets of themed reviews archived for continued reference.

The Doucette Index

<http://www.educ.ucalgary.ca/litindex/default.html>

The Doucette Index is a searchable database of book and Web site resources that provides literature-based teaching ideas and lesson plans.

100 Best Books for Children

www.teachersfirst.com/100books.htm

Selected by the National Education Association as great reading for children and young people, this site offers recommendations are grouped by age level and include links to the books and authors.

WritingFix

www.writingfix.com/Picture_Books_and_Traits.htm

Designed by teachers for teachers, this site features writing lessons inspired by favorite picture books—designed by teachers for teachers.

Related Resources, cont'd.

Print Resources

Flynn, Nick, and Shirley McPhillips. *A Note Slipped Under the Door: Teaching From Poems We Love*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2000. ISBN: 1571103201

Each chapter begins with a “mentor poem” and then moves into an examination of how that poem could be used in a writing workshop setting to teach students particular poetic techniques and elements and to inspire their writing.

Hansen, Jane. *When Writers Read*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001. ISBN: 0325003009

Hansen explores what students can do to better evaluate themselves as readers and writers and what teachers can do to help them.

Harwayne, Shelley. *Lasting Impressions: Weaving Literature Into the Writing Workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992. ISBN: 0435087320

The author addresses the diverse ways in which teachers can incorporate literature into writing instruction in grades K–5.

Harwayne, Shelley. *Novel Perspectives: Writing Minilessons Inspired by the Children in Adult Novels*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005. ISBN: 0325008779

This book offers 57 lessons for grades 3–8 based on passages about children from writers including Toni Morrison, Barbara Kingsolver, Philip Roth, Ann Beattie, and Jamaica Kincaid.

Nagin, Carl. *Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Our Schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003. ISBN: 0787965626

This book is a research-based assessment of the relationship between reading and writing and the necessity for building strong writing programs in schools.

Ray, Katie Wood. *Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1999. ISBN: 0814158161

This book provides a theoretical basis for using literature to help elementary students learn to write and offers practical suggestions for combining reading and writing in the classroom.

Workshop 3: Reading Like a Writer

Examine the Literature Response Chart

Title	Big Ideas	Notes and Questions
1. An Invitation to My Library: The Craft of Text Structure		
2. Another Invitation to My Library: Ways With Words		

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