

Teaching Writing With Author Studies

Choose an author.

Mo Willems, Jan Brett, Ezra Jack Keats, Eric Carle, Laura Numeroff, Robert Munsch, Keiko Kasza, Doreen Cronin, Helen Lester, Cynthia Rylant, Frank Asch, Lois Ehlert, Denise Fleming, Angela Johnson, Eve Bunting, Patricia Polocco, Jane Yolen, Douglas Florian, Peggy Rathmann, Gail Gibbons, Jack Arnosky

Create a bulletin board.

Display a picture of the author and biographical information. Find where they live on a map. Display pictures of some of their books.

Read, read, read.

Read aloud every day!!! This will fill your students with the sounds of words.

Read each book as a writer. Look at the crafting techniques and structures that each author uses and envision how your students could use them. Study the style, word use, and illustrations. See the possibilities! Discuss with your students why the author chose to use this craft.

Writing is individual, not unique!

Study the techniques in the books you read aloud. As students notice things in the texts, create a name to the technique as a class.

Create anchor charts.

Chart the techniques. Find examples to place on chart.

Envision how your students could use the technique. Teach them to think: If I am writing and I want to _____, then I can use this technique. Model this in mini lessons during writing workshop. Model by “writing in the air”.

Define author’s purpose

Create a chart for author’s purpose.

- To entertain
- To inform
- To explain
- To persuade

List books on the chart as you read good examples.

Conferencing

Keep a basket of books at your fingertips to use during writing workshop as examples for your students. When a student verbalizes what they want to do and they need a little support, pull out a book and show them an example.

Celebrate your student’s attempts at using an author’s writing techniques. Share these with the class.

Teach the writer, not the writing. Focus on a strategy or writing craft that the student can use again in any writing situation.

Dialogue

- Ask “What are you working on as a writer?”
- Compliment something the writer did well. “I like the way you...”
- Tip – “Can I tell you 1 thing or Let me show you 1 thing that will help you as a writer

Just have some fun.

Watch videos of the author on their websites. Mo Willems explains how he writes and why he writes.

Reader's Theater – look on websites or create your own.

Art – pull in illustrating techniques as part of your study.

Use as starting point for other writing lessons. For example, write a letter to the characters in the stories.

Writing Process

Keep the writing process in mind as you teach author lessons. How did they think of ideas, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Take your students through the steps JUST LIKE REAL AUTHORS!

Pre-writing – thinking and talking about topics and genres – where do writers get ideas

Drafting – use voice, writing craft, emotions

Revising – Does it make sense? What can I add or delete – use anchor charts

Editing – mechanics; How does the punctuation help the reader? Use anchor charts

Publishing – celebrate with publishing parties

Structural Crafting:

Circular Texts – beginning and ending match

The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

If You Give a Mouse A Cookie by Laura Numeroff

When the Elephant Walks by Keiko Kasza

Conversation Texts – entire text is a conversation

Elephant and Piggie by Mo Willems

Pigeons by Mo Willems

Yo, Yes by Chris Rashka

Let's Do Nothing by Tony Fucile

Texts Embedded with Response – comments are asides

The Great Fuzz Frenzy by Janet Stevens

Goldilocks and the Three Hares by Heidi Petach

Letter Texts

The Gardener by Sarah Stewart

Dear Mr. Blueberry by Simon James

The Jolly Postman by Allen Ahlberg

Click Clack Moo Cows That Type by Doreen Cronin

Give Hints – Each page gives a hint about upcoming action

Badger's Fancy Meal by Keiko Kasza

The Umbrella by Jan Brett

All Day Long Text

A Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats

Kittens Full Moon by Kevin Henkes

The Great, Gracie Chase by Cynthia Rylant

All About texts

All About Snakes by Jack Arnosky

Apples by Gail Gibbons

Other popular structures: ABC books, number books, diaries, geographical

Poetry

Douglas Florian is my FAVORITE! He is so creative in how he places words on the page to convey meaning.

Word Crafting

Make a long story short – use a sentence to tell the whole story

The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

On Your Mark, Get Set, Go – Colons or Ellipsis – action continues or no words for something

Tulip Sees America by Cynthia Rylant

The Little Old Lady Who Wasn't Afraid of Anything by Linda Williams

Dog Heaven by Cynthia Rylant

Effective use of “and”

Welcome to the Green House by Jane Yolen

When I Was Young In the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant

Repeating lines

My Lucky Day by Keiko Kasza

All of Eric Carle’s books

Make Up Your Own Words

An Angel for Solomon Singer by Cynthia Rylant

Home Run by Robert Burleigh

Show, Not Tell

Ruby The Copycat by Peggy Rathmann

Charlie’s Checklist by Rory Lerman

Writing give students power as readers, thinkers and composers of meaning –
Lucy Calkins

Resources

Wondrous Words by Katie Wood Ray

Authors As Mentors by Lucy Calkins

About the Authors by Katie Wood Ray

