

The Craft of Writing

Teaching the Craft P – 2

Ideas from Fletcher & Portalupi, 'Craft Lessons'
and various other resources.

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1

Details (general vs. specific)

- Make chart with 2 columns:
General Specific
- Under the first heading, write a list of general words (such as *nice, good, fun*)
- If I write, "My pa is very nice," it's hard to picture 'nice'.
- If I write, "My pa takes me to his attic. He takes out his old cane and top hat," I get a very different picture of pa.
- Go back to chart. List several specific details.

3

Beginning, Middle and End

- Read story from OHT (eg. The Two Goats)
- Show beginning, middle and end
- Read new story and tell them that you are going to ask, when you've finished, about the beginning, middle and end.
- "Today, I want you to think about this while you're writing. After you've finished, ask yourself, "Do I have a beginning, a middle and an end?"

2

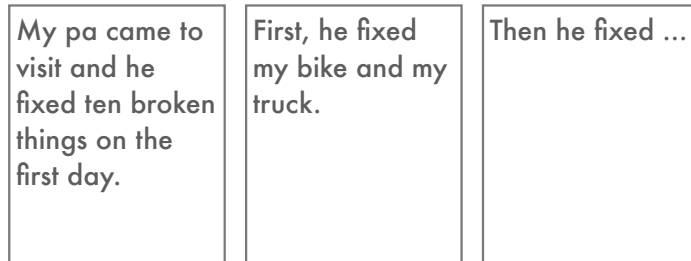
How to pace a story

- Show a piece of your writing that gives everything on one page.
- Show how you can "stretch it out" over two or three pages.
- PTO

4

How to pace a story

My pa came to visit and he fixed four broken things on the first day! He fixed my bike and my truck. Then he fixed....



5

How to pace a story

- Read, "Hunwick's Egg."
- Discuss the way Mem Fox gives bits of information on each page.
- Ask children to think about this during their writing today.

6

Setting

- Young writers often rush to highlight people or events. In their rush, they pay little attention to setting, yet it is one of the easiest elements of a story.
- Collect several favourite picture story books that take place in different settings.
- "Today, we're going to look at the pictures and I want you to tell me where the story is taking place."
- List the different places.

7

Setting

- 'Pigs and Honey' (Jeanie Adams) – Australian Bush
- 'Broken Bird' (Michael Broad) – City and Country
- 'Imelda' (Morris Lurie) – inside house; outside in the park
- 'Sparrow's Story at the King's Command' (Judith Crabtree) – castle; village; open fields; forests
- When children return to their writing, they think about where their stories take place.

8

New ways to write about an old topic

- Children often keep writing about the same thing.
- Donald Graves says we need to 'encourage writers to bring their obsessions into the writing workshop.'
- We can show them new ways of exploring the subjects they are passionate about.

9

Cause and Effect

- Young writers are spontaneous; they rarely do any planning. Consequently, their writing is sometimes 'random.' (Story begins one way, but then turns and bolts in a completely different direction.)
- We need to help young writers with 'sense,' 'plausability' and 'sequence.'

11

New ways to write about an old topic

- Share three texts about the same topic.
eg caterpillars
The Very Hungry Caterpillar (Eric Carle)
Caterpillar Diary (David Drew)
A poem about a caterpillar.
- One is a story (narrative), one is an information report, one is a poem. Discuss similarities and differences.
- Discuss with the children how they could do the same thing.

10

Cause and Effect

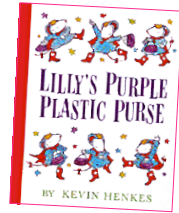
- Give example of cause and effect.
- eg. if you throw a rock into a beehive, that will probably cause the bees to get angry and fly out. That will probably lead to you getting stung.
- The 3 things are connected:

A → B → C

12

Cause and Effect

- Read *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* and highlight the cause and effect.
(Lilly loved teacher until he took her purple plastic purse. Now she's mad. She goes home and writes mean note. Gives it to teacher.)
- Discuss other stories like this. Apply to own writing.



13

Writing through a mask

- The rain (**stopped**) for two hours. (**slept**)
- The wind (**made a noise**). (**sang**)
- The window (**opened**). (**winked**)
- The rain (**wet**) my cheeks. (**kissed**)
- The sun (**warmed**) me. (**embraced**)
- We went to the (**centre**) of Australia. (**heart**)

15

Writing through a mask

- When writing gets stuck in a rut, we need a way to liven it up.
- Writing through a mask = personification (giving human qualities to animals or objects)
- Helps you to 'stretch language' and jazz up tired language.

14

Creating 'Mind Pictures'

- Young children have a lot of their personal recounts in their heads. They write skimpy retellings that seem complete because the details are in their heads.
- Tell one of your own 'stories'. A childhood story often works! eg. you were walking through the park to the train station, eating your hot chips, and a magpie did its droppings in your chips!



16

'Mind Pictures'

- At the end of your story, ask the children what pictures they saw in their minds (what they remember most).
- Encourage them to ask questions for more detail.
eg. 'Where did the magpie come from?'
'Didn't you see it coming?'
'How did it manage to drop in your chips?'
- Have children sign up to tell their own stories.
- The other children ask the storyteller for more details so that they can build their 'mind pictures'.

17

Focus: staying on the topic

- Have you ever noticed how a group of children play cricket or volleyball?
- At first it resembles the actual game, but suddenly the ball goes 'off course' and the game fluidly flows into 'chasey.'
- This is how it is with their writing. It starts as one thing and suddenly shoots off in another direction!

18

Focus: staying on the topic

- Tell children you are going to read the story, 'Changing a Tyre' (or one you have written yourself). Ask them to listen for places where the author wandered off the topic.
- Show story on overhead or on a chart. Discuss places where author got off the topic.
- On the board, write:
"Did I stay on the topic?"
- Encourage children to re-read their stories to check what they have written.

19

Repeating a word

- A simple technique to 'bring music' to their writing.



- Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream.

- Turtle, turtle,
You look so little
You walk so slow
You look like
an upside-down soup bowl.



20