

GETTING STARTED: THE FIRST 20 DAYS OF INDEPENDENT READING

The only joy in the world is to begin.

— CESARE PAVESE

More than anything else, establishing routines and procedures for managing independent reading will get your reading workshop off to a good start. Best of all, a tight, thoughtful organization will enable your students to read for a substantial period of time every day. Early in the year, you will want to present any number of minilessons on managing reading and writing, but once students have established the routines, you will rarely need to revisit these lessons.

For your students, a successful experience with independent reading begins with knowing the basics: how to use the book collection, choose books, and record their reading. Also, you will want to establish independent reading as a quiet, productive time; insist on silence from the start. When students are engrossed in their independent reading, you can more easily confer with individuals or work with small groups in guided reading and literature study.

During the first month of reading workshop, you have two critical goals:

1. Help your students think of themselves as readers by reading books that they enjoy and have them participate in all the choices and decisions readers make.
2. Establish the roles and routines of the reading workshop.

In this chapter we share classroom vignettes in which teachers achieve these early goals. They are not

meant as scripts to follow but as a vision of what the first few weeks of independent reading can look like.

Figure 9-1 itemizes minilessons for the first twenty days of independent reading. Each minilesson is described in more detail in this chapter. After you have taught these minilessons several times, you will develop your own style and language. You will also determine the sequence of lessons that fits your particular students. For example, you may need to spend more than one session on a particular lesson or prioritize lessons that your students need before others. Figure 9-1 is just one sample sequence and selection.

It works best to be specific; use clear statements and clear demonstrations of procedures. Also, you want your lesson to be short and to the point, so it helps to think ahead about what you will say. We provide suggestions for language, particularly opening statements, that teachers have found helpful in communicating clearly with students. These examples appear in italics. Some of our example minilessons include specific classroom dialogue, presented as a script. Our comments are woven throughout the examples and appear in regular type.

You will notice that each minilesson has an opening statement and a demonstration or example. Lessons build on each other; points are repeated; charts are posted in the room and referred to again and again. The first day's lesson will be a little longer than usual because you want to help students learn two critical routines—caring for books and reading silently.

Independent Reading: The First Twenty Days of Teaching			
Minilesson (M,S,L ¹)	Key Concepts	Learning Outcomes	Resources Needed
Day 1 (M) Selecting Books and Enjoying Silent Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ We have specific ways to select and return books in our classroom so that we all can find and use them easily. ❖ We read silently and do not talk with others so we can do our best thinking while reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students learn how to maintain the organized classroom book collection. ❖ The routines of silent individual reading are established. 	Organized classroom book collection. Chart— <i>Reading Is Thinking</i>
Day 2 (M) How Readers Choose Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Readers choose books in many different ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students use several different kinds of information to help them choose books. ❖ Students think carefully about book choice. 	Chart— <i>Ways to Choose Books</i>
Day 3 (S) Making Good Book Choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Books can be easy, just-right, or challenging for a reader. ❖ Readers should choose just-right books most of the time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Readers have criteria to judge whether a book is just right for independent reading. 	Chart— <i>Easy, Just-Right, Challenging</i>
Day 4 (S) Thinking and Talking About Your Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Readers are always thinking about what they understand and about how they feel about what they understood. ❖ Readers can talk about their thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Readers are aware of their thinking and remember it in order to share with other readers. ❖ Readers talk with each other about their thinking. 	Chart— <i>Reading Is Thinking</i> Example Stick-on Notes
Day 5 (M) How to Buzz with Each Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ We can do our best talking about reading when we “buzz” well with a partner or in small groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students learn how to listen to each other and share effectively as partners or in small groups. 	Chart— <i>How to Buzz Effectively</i>
Day 6 (M) Abandoning Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sometime readers abandon a book for specific reasons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students learn that, after a good try, they may have a reason to abandon a book. 	Chart— <i>Why Readers Abandon Books</i>
Day 7 (L) Distinguishing Between Fiction and Nonfiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are two types of books: fiction and nonfiction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students are able to distinguish between two types of books as a foundation for learning about genre. 	Chart— <i>Books We've Shared</i> Examples of books that have been read aloud
¹ M=Management Minilesson S=Strategies and Skills Minilesson		L=Literary Analysis Minilesson	

Figure 9-1. Independent Reading: The First 20 Days of Teaching

Independent Reading: The First Twenty Days of Teaching (continued)			
Minilesson (M,S,L)	Key Concepts	Learning Outcomes	Resources Needed
<i>Day 8 (L)</i> Different Kinds of Fiction Different Kinds of Nonfiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are many different kinds of fiction. ❖ There are many different kinds of nonfiction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Each genre has specific characteristics. Students learn to categorize types of fiction and types of nonfiction so that they can vary their reading. 	Chart— <i>Books We've Shared</i> Chart— <i>Fiction</i> Chart— <i>Nonfiction</i>
<i>Day 9 (M)</i> Keeping a Record of Your Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Readers keep a list of books they've read so that they can evaluate the breadth of their reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students will begin to use section one in their reader's notebook. ❖ Students begin to record books they have read using specific procedures. 	Chart—Enlarged journal page Reader's Notebook
<i>Day 10 (M)</i> Guidelines for Reading Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ As readers and writers, we follow specific guidelines to work together and help one another do our best learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students learn to use section three in their reader's notebook. ❖ Students are aware of and follow specific guidelines for independent reading. 	Chart— <i>Guidelines Reading Workshop</i> Reader's Notebook
<i>Day 11 (S)</i> Writing Responses to Your Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Readers can share their thinking about reading by writing a letter in a reader's notebook. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students learn to follow procedures for writing letters in reader's notebook. 	Personal letter from teacher on chart paper Reader's Notebook
<i>Day 12 (M)</i> Writing Letters in Your Reader's Notebook Each Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Use the teacher's letter as a guide to writing your letter in your reader's notebook. ❖ Readers write one letter each week and place it in the <i>Completed Letters</i> basket. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students learn to respond to the teacher's letter as part of their letter writing in notebooks. ❖ Students follow procedures for the weekly letter. 	Reader's Notebook with typed teacher letter glued in Chart— <i>Day Letter Is Due</i> "Completed letters" basket
<i>Day 13 (S)</i> Proofreading Your Letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The letters you write in your notebook will be your best work if you proofread them using guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students learn to use guidelines to proofread letters they write in their notebooks. 	Chart— <i>Proofreading Your Letter</i> Reader's Notebook
<i>Day 14 (S)</i> Topics for Your Reader's Notebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are many different kinds of thinking that you can write about in your reader's notebook. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students learn that there are a variety of topics that they can write about in their letters. ❖ Students learn to refer to a chart to help themselves. 	Chart— <i>Topics You Can Write About in Your Reader's Notebook</i> Reader's Notebook

Figure 9-1. Independent Reading: The First 20 Days of Teaching (continued)

Independent Reading: The First Twenty Days of Teaching (continued)			
Minilesson (M,S,L)	Key Concepts	Learning Outcomes	Resources Needed
<i>Day 15 (M)</i> Using Stick-on Notes to Prepare for Journal Writing	❖ Quick notes can help you remember your thinking when you are ready to write your letters and when you confer with the teacher.	❖ Students learn a process to help them remember their thinking so that they can write about it and talk about it.	Stick-on notes
<i>Day 16 (M)</i> Creating a List of Your Reading Interests	❖ Keeping a list of your reading interests will help you find books that you enjoy.	❖ Students learn to record their reading interests in section two of the reader's notebook and use that information to guide their choices.	Enlarged print version of <i>Reading Interests</i> Reader's Notebook
<i>Day 17 (M)</i> How to Write Book Recommendations	❖ Readers choose books by listening to the recommendations of others. ❖ You can recommend books to others.	❖ Students learn to evaluate books. ❖ Students learn how to write a brief book recommendation. ❖ The class builds a collection of recommended books.	Special place in classroom for recommended books Index cards Examples of book recommendations
<i>Day 18 (S)</i> Checking for Understanding as You Read	❖ Readers notice when the text doesn't make sense to them. ❖ Readers have different ways to figure out the author's meaning.	❖ Students learn to check on their understandings as they read. ❖ Students learn ways to make sure they understand as they read.	Chart— <i>How to Be Sure You Understand the Author's Message</i>
<i>Day 19 (S)</i> Solving Unknown Words	❖ Readers have a variety of ways to solve unknown words.	❖ Students learn a variety of ways to solve words.	Chart— <i>Ways Readers Solve Words</i>
<i>Day 20 (S)</i> Using Punctuation to Understand	❖ Readers use punctuation to understand the author's message.	❖ Students learn how the punctuation helps them understand the author's message.	Chart—paragraph from a book [<i>Russell Sprouts</i> used as example in text]

Figure 9-1. Independent Reading: The First 20 Days of Teaching (continued)

Day 1—Management Minilesson: Selecting Books and Enjoying Silent Reading

Part 1

This year you will get to read many wonderful books in our classroom and at home. I'd like to introduce you to our classroom collection of books. Let's talk about how we can choose, read, and return them in a way that lets us all find and use them easily.

Share the way books are organized; point out books categorized by author, by genre, by topic, by series, by illustrator, by format, by award winners, or by any other category you've established. Show students the place where each category of books is kept. Then show students how to take books out and return them to each basket.

We will all get to share these wonderful books in our classroom this year. If we are responsible for selecting and returning them to the baskets, we will always be able to find the books we want to read.

Part 2

Write "Reading Is Thinking" on a chart.

Today you are going to have a good block of time to enjoy your reading. Reading is thinking, and you can do your best thinking when it is quiet. When we do our independent reading, you will need to read silently without talking to the person next to you or to anyone else. The room is completely quiet so that you and your classmates can do your best thinking. When I am talking to a reader, I will be sure to whisper. So will the reader I'm talking with, so that we will not interrupt anyone's thinking. When we gather for our group meeting later we can talk about how well we did at keeping the room completely quiet so we could all do our best reading.

Day 2—Management Minilesson: How Readers Choose Books

Each of you has chosen a book to read from our classroom collection. We choose books to read in many different ways and for many different purposes. For example, I love to read mysteries, and so I often look for that type of book. What do you think about when you choose a book to read?

Write student responses on a chart. In Kristen's classroom, the students came up with the list in Figure 9-2.

Today we have listed many of the different ways you might choose books to read. I'll leave this list of ways readers choose books on the wall because you may think of other ways you choose books to read and we can add them. Now you can find a comfortable seat and enjoy your book. Remember, reading is thinking—so you will need to read silently. Do not talk, so that your classmates can do their best thinking. When you return, we'll quickly share how you chose the book you are now reading.

Day 3—Strategies and Skills Minilesson: Making Good Book Choices

One of the most important goals of early minilessons is getting your students reading "just right" books that they enjoy. As you teach the minilesson, create a chart with three categories, indicating the characteristics of *easy*, *just-right*, or *challenging* under each.

Today we are going to talk about how readers choose "easy," "just right," or "challenging" books to read. I'll make some notes on this chart to help you. Remember each kind of book we talk about.

Sometimes, easy books are fun to read. They're the kinds of books you read when you want to relax. You might pick a favorite picture book you've heard read aloud or a book that you have read before and enjoyed or a new book that won't take a lot of effort for you to read and understand. You can read the book easily and understand it very well. I'll write E on the chart to indicate "easy."

Just-right books are those that you understand well and can enjoy. You read the book smoothly and have only a few places where you need to slow down to figure out a word or think more about the meaning. These are the books that will help you become a better reader each time you read. Most of the time you should read just-right books. I'll write JR, for "just right," on the chart.

Challenging books are very difficult for you to read. You have trouble reading many of the words and don't understand most of what you are reading. These are books that are too difficult for you to enjoy right now, but you may find you will enjoy them later. Challenging books are not usually good choices for right now. I'll write C on the chart to stand for "challenging." There may be some times when you would choose a challenging book, such as when you needed to find some facts on a particular topic, but most of the time, you would save challenging books until they are "just right" for you.

Ways We Choose Books

- Front cover / inside jacket
- Back cover information
- Characters we've read about in other books
- Another book in a series
- Interesting title
- Great illustrations
- Authors we know and like
- Book recommendations from teachers, friends, and critics
- Books that are movies

- * Genres we like to read
- * Try the beginning
- * Read some of the middle
- * "Must-read" rack in our room
- * New / popular book
- * Sequel to a book we've read
- * Heard it read aloud
- * Read it before and enjoyed it

Figure 9-2. Ways We Choose Books

When you are reading today, think about whether the book you are reading is easy, just right, or challenging for you. When you return to the group, be prepared to share a category that best describes your choice. Yesterday you did a wonderful job reading silently so everyone could do their best thinking. Let's do the same today.

Day 4—Strategies and Skills

Minilesson: Thinking and Talking About Your Reading

When I read I am always thinking about what the author is saying and how I feel. For example, when I read *The Water Room*, by Gary Paulsen, I was thinking about riding my uncle's farm when I was a child. My aunt baked bread just like Eldon's mother did, and I could almost smell it. I felt that everything on the farm was old and well used. I liked the description of the names carved on the beds—names they didn't even know because the

beds were so old. I wondered what the author was suggesting when he wrote: "I don't know what he meant exactly, but many questions I ask Father are answered that way, with words around the edges."

You will be thinking as you read your book today. You may be thinking about what you like or don't like, things the book reminds you of in your life or in other books, or questions you have. You might be making predictions, noticing something about the author's language or style, or thinking about how a character reminds you of someone in your life. I'll write some of the thinking we talked about on this chart to remind you. We can add more later.

Take a moment to list the kinds of thinking on the "Reading is Thinking" chart that you started on the first day. List topics such as how the book reminds you of another book, or something that confuses you.

Today while you are reading, mark two places in your book where you might share some of what you were thinking about as you read. Use stick-on notes to help you remember the place so we can share our thoughts when we

gather in our group. We might want to add more kinds of thinking to our list.

Following the reading time, invite students to talk together about the thinking they did about their reading. Explain that they can talk about what they are thinking about their reading.

Day 5—Management Minilesson: How to Buzz With Each Other

Yesterday we talked about how readers think while they read, and you shared the thinking you were doing as you read. When we talk with a partner or in a small group, we are going to refer to our talking with each other as a “buzz.” Let’s talk a little bit about how we can buzz with each other well so we can do our best talking and learning. I’ll write our thoughts on this chart.

Elicit the students’ suggestions, shaping them to create a simple, clear set of guidelines. Marcella created the chart shown in Figure 9–3 with her students.

When we are finished reading today, we will buzz in threes about what is capturing our interest in the books we

are reading. Then we will use our chart to evaluate how well our buzz sessions are going.

Day 6—Management Minilesson: Abandoning Books

Once in a while readers choose a book to read and even after they have given it a good chance, they find that they are not enjoying it. They’re not interested in reading it anymore, and they want to stop. They may decide to read it later. When a reader stops reading a book, it’s called “abandoning the book.” Today let’s talk about why readers might abandon books.

As students give different reasons readers abandon books, create a chart. One class made the chart shown in Figure 9–4.

Are any of you reading a book that you are really not interested in? Of course, it’s important to give a book a chance before you decide to abandon it, but readers do abandon books sometimes. If you’re considering abandoning your book, why is that? Have you given it a good chance? When we gather to share today, we’ll check in with one another to see whether any readers abandoned the books they were reading so far this year and they can explain why.

Day 7—Literary Analysis Minilesson: Distinguishing Between Fiction and Nonfiction

If this subject is too basic for your students, skip it and go on to Day 8.

There are just so many different kinds of books to read. We have read many kinds of books together. Let’s look at the list of books we’ve read aloud together so far this year.

Refer to your list of books on the chart headed “Books We’ve Shared.” You’ll update this list every time you read a book aloud to the students.

We read some fiction books like *Pink and Say*, by Patricia Polacco, *The Rough-Faced Girl*, *Fig Pudding*, *Sadako*, *Spider Boy*, and *Baseball Saved Us*. Fiction books are not true stories, though the ideas may have come from experiences that really happened. We’ve also read some information books, such as *Amistad: A Long Road to Freedom*, *Alvin Ailey*, *Safari*, and parts of *The Snake Book*. All of these books are nonfiction. That

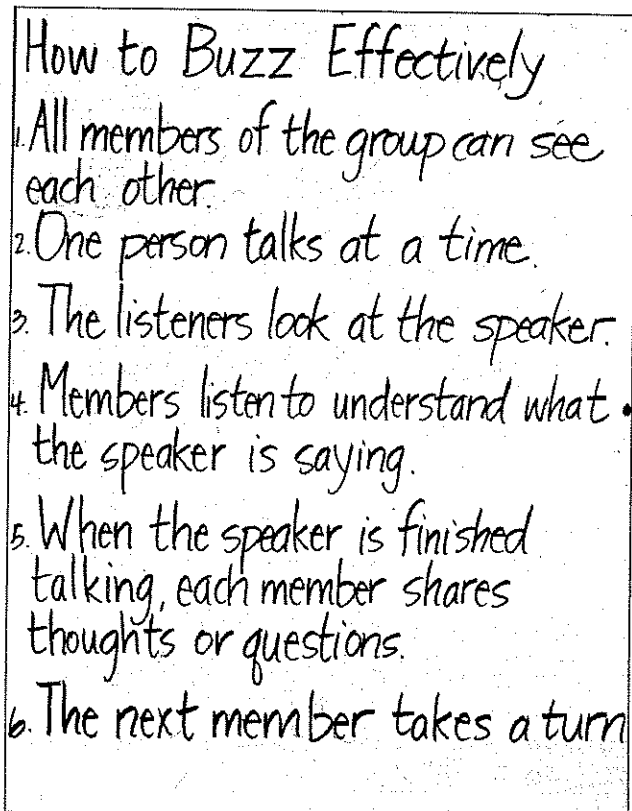


Figure 9–3. How to Buzz Effectively

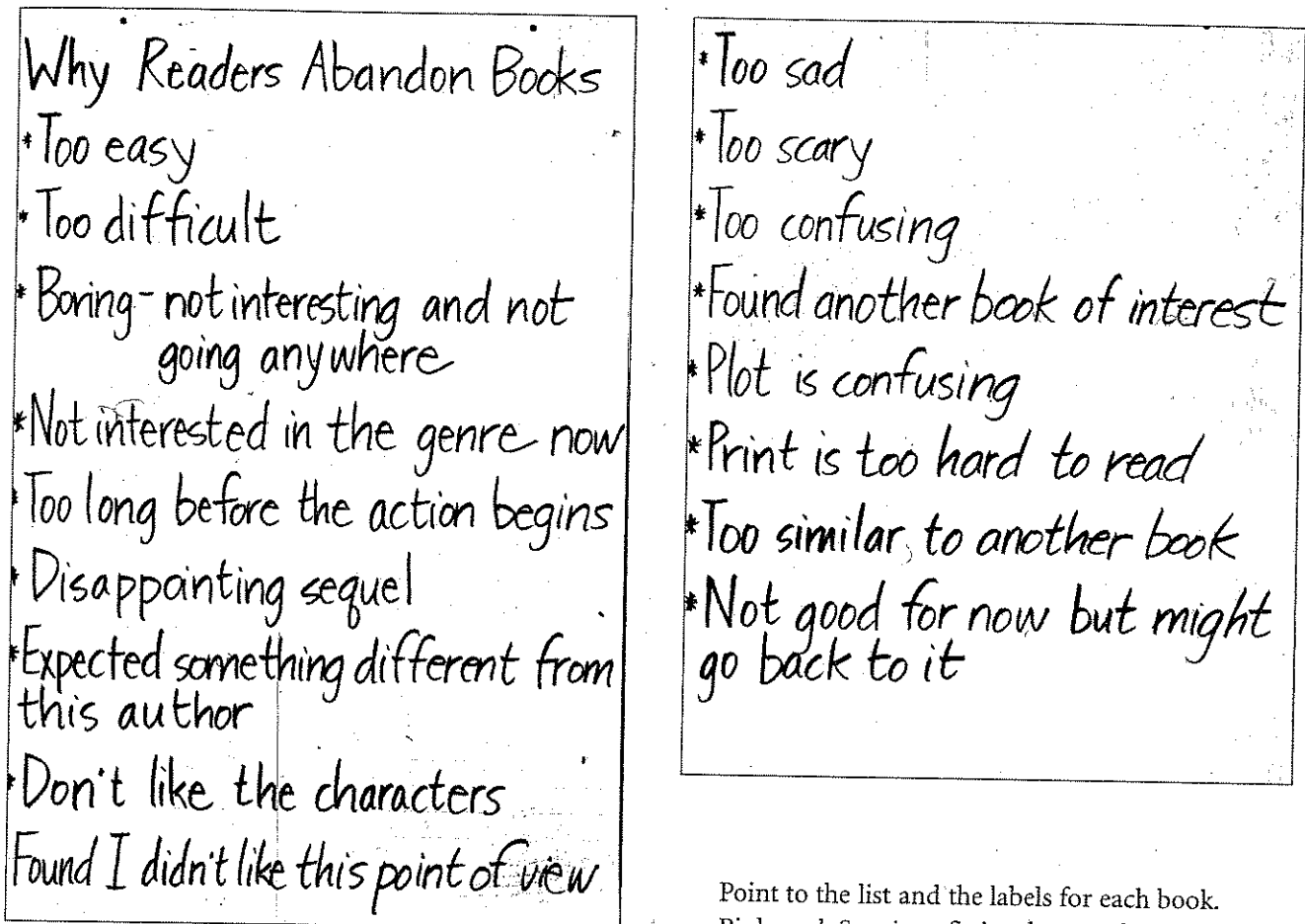


Figure 9-4. Why Readers Abandon Books

means they are not fiction. In other words, they are true stories and should contain accurate information.

Today, think about the kind of book you are reading. Is it fiction or nonfiction? When we share today, be prepared to tell whether the book you are reading is fiction or nonfiction and how you know what type of book it is.

Make a chart that says fiction texts are basically not true. Nonfiction texts contain accurate, truthful information. Put one or two examples of each.

Day 8—Literary Analysis Minilesson: Different Kinds of Fiction

This minilesson is for readers who already understand the categories of fiction and nonfiction. If your students are not ready for this lesson, skip to Day 9.

We have discussed the difference between fiction and nonfiction. Today let's look at the different kinds of fiction books we have read together.

Point to the list and the labels for each book.

Pink and Say is a fictional story that takes place during the Civil War. The author tells a story that seems real and took place in the past or in history, so it is called "historical fiction." Often, an author tells a fiction story using actual people or events of the past. But some of the story came from the imagination. Are there any others we've read together that are historical fiction?

Spider Boy is a story about a boy and his adventures that could be happening today. It seems real, so it is called "realistic fiction."

Fiction books that tell about supernatural events are called "science fiction." They are a kind of fantasy based on science. Books like *Charlotte's Web* that contain unrealistic elements are called "fantasy." Books like *The Rough-Faced Girl* are traditional stories or stories that were passed down orally throughout history. They include folktales, fairy tales, myths, and legends. Both fairy tales and folktales are traditional tales, but fairy tales have magic in them. Folktales are just old stories that people tell, and sometimes they have a lesson in them. Have we read any other folktales or fairy tales? So the old stories that are passed on from generation to generation are called traditional stories.

Discuss and label all the books on the list headed “Books We’ve Shared” with the letters RF for realistic fiction, SF for science fiction, HF for historical fiction, F for fantasy, and TL for traditional literature.

When we talk about the type of book you are reading, we are talking about its genre. Before you start reading today, think about the genre of your book. If you are reading fiction, is it realistic fiction, historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, or traditional literature? Is the fiction book you are reading a traditional story? When we share today, we’ll ask you to tell the type of fiction book you are reading and to explain why you believe it is that type.

Day 8—Literary Analysis Minilesson: Different Kinds of Nonfiction

Depending on your students, you might complete the fiction and nonfiction minilesson on one day or choose to have two shorter lessons.

We have discussed the different kinds of fiction texts. (Refer to yesterday’s chart and give examples of traditional literature (folktales, fables, myths, legends, fairy tales) and fantasy, science fiction, realistic fiction, and historical fiction—to review those categories.)

Today we are going to talk about different kinds of nonfiction texts or texts that give accurate, truthful information. There are two types of nonfiction texts. The first is Informational (Write an I next to an informational book on the Books We’ve Shared chart.) Informational texts are those that give us information about history, science, language, or other subjects. The second is biography. (Write a B next to titles of biographies on the Books We’ve Shared chart.) Biography texts tell about people’s lives. If a person is telling a story about his/her life, it is called autobiography. If an author tells about some memories or certain experiences in his/her life, it is called a memoir.

Before you start reading today, think about whether you are reading an informational book or biography. We will talk about the nonfiction books people are reading at group share.

Day 9—Management Minilesson: Keeping a Record of Your Reading

You have been doing lots of wonderful reading and thinking about your books. Readers sometimes keep a list of books they’ve read so they can look back at their reading. Today I am going to give you a very special notebook that

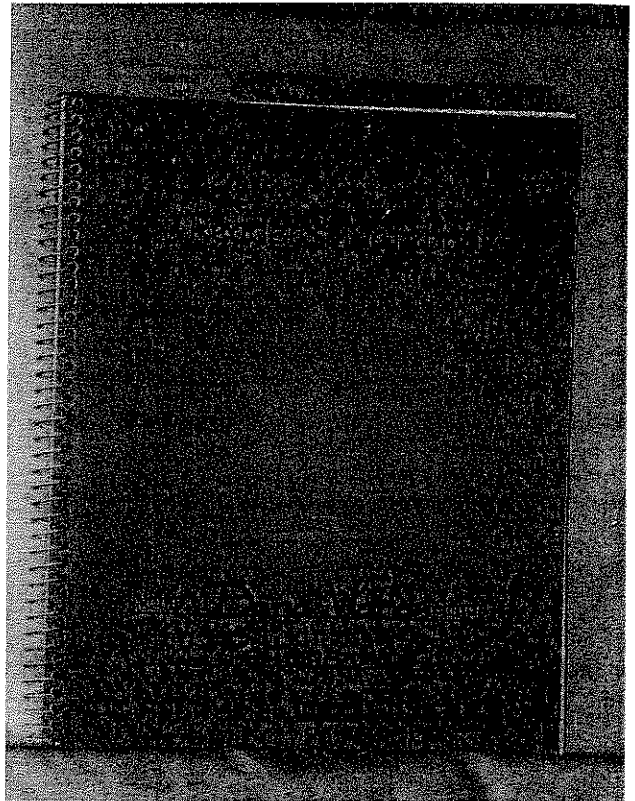


Figure 9-5. Example of a Reader’s Notebook (Heinemann, 2000)

is just for you to help you remember the books you have read. You will be using your reader’s notebook to help with your reading. In one part there is a place for you to record the titles you are reading.

Hold up a reader’s notebook (see Figure 9-5).

Your notebook will have four sections. The first section is called “Reading List.”

Point to the section label on the large-print copy of the Reading List form you have prepared and posted on chart paper. (See the reproducible version in Appendix 13.)

This is a page on which you can keep a record of the books you have read.

Continue talking about and demonstrating how students will use their notebook. Here is a detailed description of a part of one teacher’s minilesson:

TEACHER: Nicola, what book are you reading right now?

NICOLA: *The View from Saturday.*

TEACHER: On Nicola’s reading list, when she starts to read a new book, she writes the number 1 for the first book she is reading. [Writes 1 in the column on the chart.] Under

"Title," she copies the title, explaining that she is putting capital letters where they belong. [*Copies the title.*] Nicola, who is the author of your book?

NICOLA: E. L. Konigsburg.

TEACHER: Nicola will write the author's name in the "Author" column, spelling it correctly because she is copying it from the book. The next column says "Genre." You have learned how to think about the genre, or type, of the book you are reading. Nicola, what is the genre of your book? Explain how you decided its type.

NICOLA: *The View from Saturday* is a fictional story that could take place today, so we would call it realistic fiction.

TEACHER: When Nicola finishes her book and is sure this is the genre, she will write RF for *realistic fiction* in the column labeled "Genre," and write the date she completed the book. [*Writes RF in the genre column.*] I'll write tomorrow's date just for this example. [*Writes date.*] In addition, Nicola will fill in the last column with an E, JR, or C to tell whether the book was easy, just right, or challenging for her. Nicola, since you have read most of your book already, can you tell us whether it is easy, just right, or challenging for you?

NICOLA: Just right.

TEACHER: So I'll write JR in the column to show it is a just-right book for her. Usually you will fill that in when you have completed reading the book. [*Summarizing.*] The directions for filling out your reading list are at the top of the page in your journal if you forget. Let me read them to you. [*Reads the three sentences at the top of the reading list.*] Today, list the number 1 and write the title and author of the book you are reading. Each time you start a new book you will list it. When you finish the book, fill in the genre, date, and difficulty level. If you have already finished some books this year, just fill in the information on the list and then write the one you are reading now. I'll put this chart on the wall with Nicola's book listed as an example of how to record your books on

your list. Remember, your journal will be a special book for you this year, and you will want to take very good care of it. Your name is on the front, and you will want to keep it in your book box so you can find it when you need it. When we gather for group share today, bring your reading journal so partners can check each other's reading list to be sure we've all started to use it correctly.

Day 10—Management Minilesson: Guidelines for Working Together

Note: You may want to teach the minilesson earlier, e.g. on Day 7. The reason we place it here is because now the students understand what each one means (except for writing).

As readers and writers we need to work together in our classroom, helping each other do our best learning. We have been talking about some of the ways we can help each other as readers and writers. On this chart are the ideas or guidelines for our workshop that we have already talked about and one that we will talk about soon.

You have already written the guidelines in large print on chart paper (see Figure 9-6) and glued them on the inside back cover of the reader's notebook.

Here is an excerpt from Michael's lesson on working together:

MICHAEL: Samantha, read our first guideline.

SAMANTHA [*reading*]: You must always be reading a book or writing your thoughts about your reading.

MICHAEL: You have been very good at focusing on your reading and soon you will learn how to write in your reader's notebook. Louis, read number 2.

LOUIS [*reading*]: You need to be working silently to enable you and your peers to do your best thinking.

MICHAEL: How well do you think we've been helping each other do our best thinking?

CLASS: Good. We're helping each other.

MICHAEL: I agree. We've all been able to do our best work. Number 3 says, "When conferring with the teacher, use a soft voice." This is another way we can help each other do our

Day 11—Strategies and Skills Minilesson: Writing Responses to Your Reading

Guidelines for Reading Workshop

1. You must always be reading a book or writing your thoughts about your reading.
2. You need to work silently to enable you and your peers to do your best thinking.
3. Use a soft voice when conferring with a teacher.
4. Select books you think you'll enjoy and abandon books that aren't working for you after you've given them a good chance.
5. List the book information when you begin and record the date when you finish.
6. Always do your best work.

Together we have shared our thinking by talking about books I have read aloud to you. You have been doing good thinking and talking about the books you have chosen to read. You have talked about your thinking with a partner and in groups. Now instead of only talking about your thinking, you're going to put your thinking on paper. When you write about your thinking, you can remember it and share it with others who read it.

In our class this year, you're going to share your thinking by writing your thoughts in a letter to me in your reader's notebooks. Each week you are going to write one letter to me, sharing what you are thinking about the book you are reading. I will read your letter and write a letter back to you. I have written a letter to you today to share my thinking about a book I'm reading.

Read the letter, which you have already written on chart paper. See the one in Figure 9-7 for an example, and adjust your own letter to the background and knowledge of your students.

What do you notice about the letter I wrote?

The following dialogue took place in Carol's classroom after she had shown her students the letter she had written:

JACKIE: You told how you were thinking of your family and other people.

MIKE: You told what you noticed about the way the author used words.

SARA: And you told about the kinds of books you like to read.

CAROL: That's a good description of my thinking. You described the content, the information about my thinking I gave my readers in my letter. Now let's talk about how the letter was written. What do you notice about its form?

NICOLA: You wrote the date in the upper right corner.

CAROL: Yes, so you will know when I wrote it. The month begins with a capital letter and is followed by a comma.

BRIANA: You wrote it like a letter, with "Dear Class," and signed your letter "Love, Ms. Won."

Figure 9-6. Guidelines for Reading Workshop

best thinking. Marion, read number 4.

MARION [reading]: Select books you think you'll enjoy and abandon books that aren't working for you after you've given them a good chance.

MICHAEL: Yes, we all want to enjoy the books we are reading. Matthew, read number 5.

MATTHEW [reading]: List the book information when you begin and record the date when you finish.

MICHAEL: You have all learned how to record your information. And number 6 says, "Always do your best work." These guidelines are written on our chart, and they are also glued into the inside back cover of your notebook to remind you. If we all observe these guidelines, we can do our best work. Any questions? It's time to start reading.

September 22, 1999

Dear Class,

The first thing I thought about when I read *The Keeping Quilt* is what it was like for my parents to come to the U.S. from Korea for the first time. Patricia Polacco's great-grandparents came from Russia. They faced many changes. There were other people from different countries and a new language. I think about how we are all here now but that we or our ancestors came as immigrants from other countries. We are different in a lot of ways but also have things in common, like our classroom community of learners.

Figure 9-7. Carol Won's letter

Another thing I noticed as I read was how the author creates pictures in the readers' minds. I like how she uses details to make scenes clear for the readers. For example, Polacco writes about "cut out animals and flowers from the scraps of clothing" while the quilt was being made.

I enjoyed this book because I really like books about families. I hope you enjoy your books, too!

Love,
Ms. Won

CAROL: Yes, you noticed the letter has an opening—a greeting to the person or persons receiving the letter—that starts on the left, begins with a capital letter, and is followed by a comma. You noticed the closing starts halfway across the page with a capital letter. It is also followed by a comma, and the name of the writer is directly below it. This is the conventional form of a personal letter. That means it's how readers will understand it is a friendly letter.

This is how you will write your letter each week—you will write your best thinking in the form of a personal letter. Our letters will be like a conversation between two readers. Any questions about the form? Okay, today I'd like each of you to return to your seat and write a letter about your thoughts on the book you are reading. Address it to me. Start your letter on the first clean page in your

notebook section marked "Responses." [Holds up a notebook.] Today in group share, you will be sharing the letter you wrote about your book with a partner, and then I will read them and write a letter to you. Now go to your seats and begin your letter. You should try to finish it today. At the end of reading time, you'll put your notebook in the basket marked "Completed Letters."

Day 12—Management Minilesson: Writing Letters in Your Reader's Notebook Each Week

Please bring your reader's notebook to our group meeting. Yesterday we talked about how each week you will be writing a letter about the book you are reading or have just finished. I've asked [Name] and [Name] to read their letters to the group. [The students read their letters.] In your reader's

notebook inside the front cover, you have a letter from me about how you will be sharing your thinking about books in writing this year. Please turn to that page.

Help students find the typed letter you've already pasted inside the front cover (see Figure 9-8).

*TEACHER: [Name], please read the letter aloud.
[The student reads the letter.] This letter is*

glued into your notebook to remind you about the writing you are doing. You can reread it or refer to it when you need reminding of what you should be writing.

If you finished your letter last time, you will notice that I have written a letter back to you. You can begin today's quiet reading time by reading my letter. Next week, when you write

Date _____

Dear _____,

This year, you and I will write letters to each other about books, reading, writers, and writing. Our letters will help us learn together. The letters will help you learn more about reading.

When you write letters in your reader's notebook, do your best work and share your best thinking. For example, you might:

- ❖ Tell what you like or dislike about a book and why.
- ❖ Tell about parts of your book that puzzled you or made you ask questions.
- ❖ Tell what you noticed about the characters, such as what made them act as they did or how they changed.
- ❖ Write about something in the book that surprised you or that you found interesting.
- ❖ Write your predictions and about whether your predictions were right.
- ❖ Ask for help in figuring out the meaning of your book.
- ❖ Tell about the connections that you made while reading the book. Tell how it reminds you of yourself, of people you know, or of something that happened in your life. It might remind you of other books, especially the characters, the events, or the setting.
- ❖ Write about the author's style and how it makes you feel.
- ❖ Write about the language the author used and why you think the author wrote this way.
- ❖ Write about the author's craft—what was effective about the way the author wrote.

Write a letter to me once each week. The completed letter is due on the day indicated on the notebook list. Use a letter form and include the title and author of your book. It is important that your letters are neat and easy to read so I can understand what you are thinking. Read through your letter to make sure that it says all you want it to say before you place it in the basket.

When I read your notebook, I will learn from you, and we will learn together about books. What fun we will have getting to know each other and books!

Eager to read your letter,

Figure 9-8. Example of a Letter

to me, you will want to review the letter to be sure you respond to what I wrote. If you did not finish your letter yesterday, you will need to do that first today and put your notebook in the "Completed Letters" basket.

This time you all wrote your letters on the same day so you could learn how to do it. From now on, you will have one week to finish your letter, and you can choose the day you want to write it. You will have an assigned day that your letter must be finished and put in the "Completed Letters" basket. Look at this chart to see what day your finished letter is due.

Review the chart called "Letters Due" with students (see Figure 9-9).

This means that on Monday, some of you need to turn in finished letters; Tuesday, some others; Wednesday, the next group of names; and Thursday, the last group. This will help me read some of your notebooks each day and do my best to get them back to you the next day. You will have five school days to write your letter, but on the day it is due you'll know it must be completed and put in the basket. It is important that you make sure to start your letter by the day before it is due. That means that Monday people need to be sure to start a letter on Friday and Tuesday people need to start by Monday. Now it's time for reading.

Initially, on the day before a group of letters is due, remind those students that they'll need to write their

letters that day if they haven't done it on their own yet. For example, on Tuesday, speak with the students whose letters are due on Wednesday so they can finish them in class. As students become more familiar with the process, they should not need reminders.

Day 13—Strategies and Skills Minilesson: Proofreading Your Letter

Your letters to me have been very interesting. I am enjoying our written conversations about the books you are reading. You are asking good questions, sharing what surprises you, and writing about how your book reminds you of something in your life or of other books. Today we're going to talk briefly about how you read over—or proofread—your letter to be sure it is your best work. To make sure your letter is your best work, what are a few things you need to check for? I'll write them on this chart.

Write the students' responses on a chart headed "Proofreading Your Letter" (see Figure 9-10).

Here is one class's conversation about proofreading:

TEACHER: It will be important to begin by rereading your letter to be sure it will make sense to the reader and that you have responded to what I wrote.

TESSA: Be sure you write the date.

IVAN: Be sure you can read it.

TEACHER: Yes, you need to be sure your reader can easily read your handwriting. You can choose to print or write in cursive, but be sure your writing is very clear and well formed. Anything else?

DIANE: Check for the opening and closing, and be sure they start with capitals.

SARAH: Do your best spelling and check punctuation.

TEACHER: Yes, that's important, too. Layla, please read all the reminders we have on our chart.

[Layla reads them] Today, begin by proofreading your last letter;

Letters Due			
<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>	<u>THURSDAY</u>
Maia	Ronny	Jennifer	John
Peter	Edward	Lara	Natalie
Lorinda	Erica	Pedro	José
Sam	Manessa	Ramir	Miguel
Gabriel	Rahim	Robert	Vladmir
Elijah	Jenny	Michael	Marinda
		Tessie	

Figure 9-9. "Letters Due" Chart

Topics for Your Reader's Notebook

- What the book is about
- How the book reminds you of another book
- How the book makes you feel
- How the author describes things
- Whether you like the book or not and why
- Why you think the author wrote the book
- Why you chose the book
- How you feel about the author's writing
- Whether or not you would recommend the book to another reader
- Why you abandoned a book
- What you predict will happen
- What you would change about the book
- Examples of stereotype or bias
- What you found interesting

Figure 9-11. Things You Can Write About in Your Reader's Notebook

- What you are wondering about
- Whether the book is easy, just right, or challenging and how you can tell
- About the genre
- What you think is the author's message
- What books you look forward to reading
- What you don't understand or questions you have
- How you feel about a character
- What you notice about the author's style/language
- Something about the author and what it has to do with the story
- What was funny to you
- What you like/dislike about the setting
- How the setting affects the characters
- About good word choices/special language
- What you think about the author's lead
- How the author captured your interest

CAROLYN: Avi.

PAUL: Paulsen.

[Teacher writes author names on the chart.]

TEACHER: The last section of the page is for listing titles you want to read. You might list titles from our book talks or titles recommended by friends. What is a title you are interested in reading?

ROYI: *Winter Room*.

MARA: *Shiloh*.

TEACHER: If it is a title you want to read, write the title, author if you know it. [Lists *Winter Room* and *Shiloh*.] After you read the book, you can place a checkmark next to it.

Today when you return to your seat, write at least one item on each list to get you started on collecting information on books

you want to read. When we share later, you will quickly tell about some of the items you put on your list today.

Day 17—Management Minilesson: How to Write Book Recommendations

One way readers find good books to read is by listening to the recommendations of others. See the revolving rack over there? That's where we'll display the books that we believe are so good we don't want our classmates to miss them! We'll call these books "Must-Reads."

If you read a book that you believe should be on the Must-Read rack, take one of these index cards and note the following information.

Write a book recommendation on a book you have

check for all the points we talked about. Every time you write a new letter you need to refer to the proofreading chart and check to be sure you have done your best work before placing your notebook in the basket.

Day 14—Strategies and Skills Minilesson: Topics for Your Reading Journal

Your writing is your thinking. In your letters to me, you have been telling about your thinking. Today we are going to make a list of all the different kinds of writing about books you have done and can tell about in your notebook letters. What are some of the topics you can write about in your notebook? I'll write them on this chart.

Create a chart similar to the one shown in Figure 9–11.

This is a very good list. I'm sure we will have many more to add as we continue to write about books we are reading. Let's place our list on the wall and you can suggest others to add as you think of them. If you are having difficulty thinking about what you want to share in your letter, this list may help you. We'll see if you have any more today at our group share. It's time to get started with your reading.

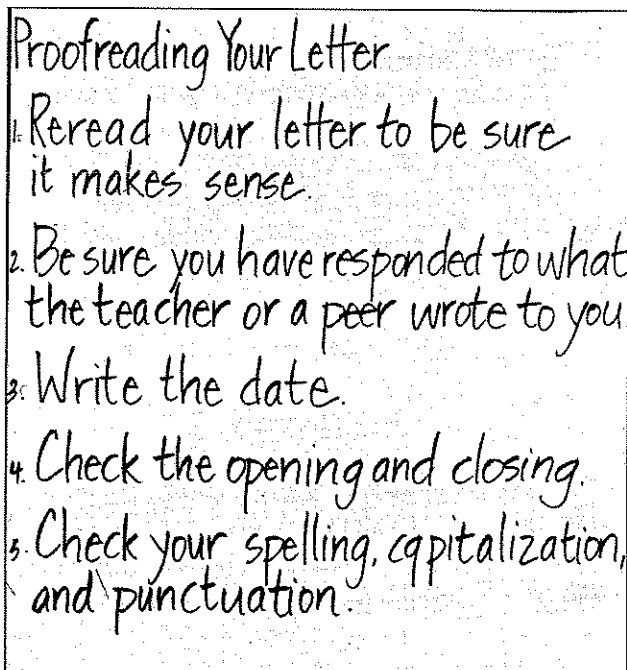


Figure 9–10. Proofreading your Notebook

Day 15—Management Minilesson: Using Stick-on Notes to Prepare for Letter Writing

We have been talking about all the different ways we think about what we are reading and how we share our thinking in our notebooks. As you read this week, stop one or two times to make some quick notes about your thinking on stick-on notes, and place them on the pages in your book that prompted you to have these thoughts. When you are ready to write your letter, you can use your notes about the marked places to help you remember the parts you want to write about. When I confer with you, you can share some of the places you marked and explain why you chose them. This may help you write letters that show lots of good thinking about your reading.

Caution: You will not want to overdo the use of stick-on notes because it will interrupt the reading process. (See Chapter 4.) Some children will not need the support of stick-on notes.

Day 16—Management Minilesson: Creating a List of Your Reading Interests

Please bring your reader's notebook to the group meeting today. An important part of being a reader is finding books you really enjoy. In your reader's notebook is a section called "Reading Interests." This is a place for you to make lists of topics, genres, authors, and titles that you want to read. Let's look at this chart, which is like the page in your notebook.

Point to the large version of the "Reading Interests" form that you have posted on a chart. (See Appendix 14 for reproducible version.)

In the first part you can keep a list of topics or subjects you want to read about such as basketball, space, the Holocaust, or camping. [Write these topics in column one.] In column two, you can list genres or types of books you are interested in. What genres interest you?

Here is an excerpt from the lesson:

GARY: I'm interested in science fiction.

TEACHER: I list science fiction in the genre section. [Writes it on the chart.] Talk with your partner about authors you want to read. [Students share with each other.] Now let's list some of the authors that you shared. I'll write them on the chart in the third section.

shared as a class to create a clear example together. Then review with students the guidelines on the chart headed "Book Recommendations" (see Figure 9-12).

Your recommendations should sound like a short commercial telling the good things about the book. Let's look at a couple of Must-Read recommendations written by others.

Project a transparency of a book recommendation such as Figure 9-13.

[Name], please read this recommendation aloud.

After the student reads the example out loud, discuss with the class how the person making the recommendation gave just enough

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

- * Write the title of the book (underlined) and the author's name at the top.
- * Tell a little summary without giving the whole story away.
- * Tell what genre the book is.
- * Explain why you liked it and why you think someone else would like it.
- * Be as specific as you can.
- * Write at least 5 sentences.

Figure 9-12. Book Recommendations

A Rat's Tale by Tor Seidler

The book A Rat's Tale, is a story about the adventures of a rat named Montague Mad-Rat. The author and illustrator are the same as in my last book. This book is about a poor, male, messy rat, and a rich, neat, female rat. When the poor rat, Montague, saves the rich rat, Isabel's life, they fall madly in love, but neither of their parents approve. The book starts out in central park, with Montague picking berries. The main characters in the book are Montague, Isabel, Mr. Pick person and Pembroke. I love fiction books so this was definitely a good book for me. This book is most likely on my top ten list of favorite books. If you have read and liked The Cricket in Times Square, or even Stuart Little, I think that this is just the kind of book that you have been waiting for. This book is great for long, rainy days because once I started I couldn't seem to be able to stop. I think that this is a great book for people of all ages, but especially for you and me.

Amanda

Figure 9-13. A Rat's Tale

information to entice other readers. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses. Then share a second recommendation (see Figure 9-14).

[Name], please read the recommendation for The Wainscott Weasel aloud.

Discuss with students the features of the recommendations and refer to the Book Recommendations chart.

Today, I'd like each of you to think of one of the best books you've ever read. Write a book recommendation on a white index card following the directions on our chart. Bring your recommendation to the group share. Use the same proofreading list you use to check your notebook entries to be sure it's your best work.

Whenever you find a book that you would recommend to others in the class, take an index card, write your recommendation, and clip it to the inside cover of the book. Then put it on the revolving rack. The rack will be a good place for us all to look for books that our friends and teachers have recommended.

You might also invite the student teacher, custodian, cafeteria personnel, and librarian to make book recommendations of titles they enjoyed as elementary students.

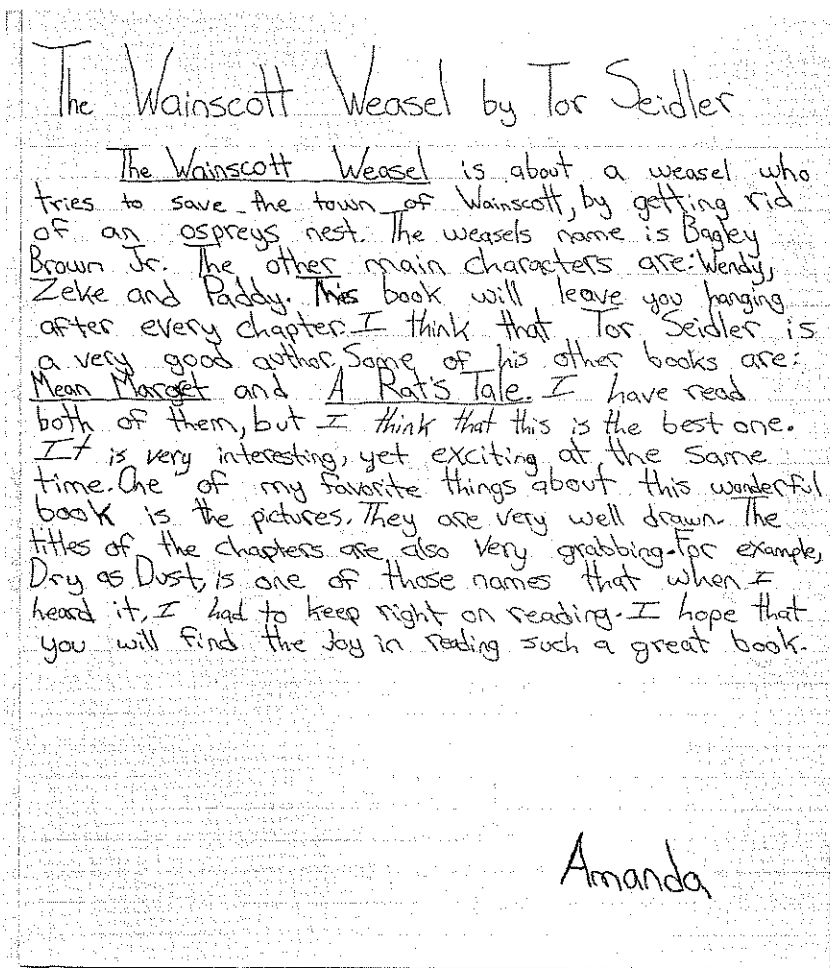


Figure 9-14. *The Wainscott Weasel*

Day 18—Strategies and Skills

Minilesson: Checking for Understanding as You Read

When readers read, they notice when something doesn't make sense and they take some action to resolve the problem.

When you are reading your book and something doesn't make sense, what do you do? I'll write your ideas on this chart.

Write student responses on a chart like the one shown in Figure 9-15.

Here is one group's discussion on this topic:

GARY: I stop and think about it.

ANNE: I keep on reading and figure it out.

TEACHER: [Writes these ideas on the chart.]

Sometimes you stop and think about what you know so far and that helps. You might think about what you already know about where the story takes place or the time in history. Or you might think about what you know from other books by the same author.

LINDA: I go back and read the paragraph again.

TEACHER: If you have tried all of these ways of figuring out the meaning and you still don't understand it, you can ask for help in our reading conference or when we are meeting in groups. You can also ask for help in your letter to me in your notebook. This chart will remind you that you need to notice when something doesn't make sense and that good readers have lots of ways to solve the problem.

Review the chart with your students.

Day 19—Strategies and Skills

Minilesson: Solving Unknown Words

When readers come to words they don't know, they have lots of ways to figure them out. You know some ways to figure out words. Let's list them.

Create a list with your students like the one shown in Figure 9-16, which was based on the following dialogue:

KARA: I sound it out.

BRIAN: The letters and sounds go together in a word and you can tell what it is.

TEACHER: Yes, readers think about the sounds that go with the letters and sometimes the clusters of letters like *br* or *sh*. [Writes point 1 on the chart.] Sometimes you take a word

How to Be Sure You Understand the Author's Message

Readers notice when something doesn't make sense. They have different ways to solve the problem.

1. Readers stop and think about what they know.
2. Readers go back and reread the sentence or the paragraph to clarify the author's meaning.
3. Readers continue reading and look for more information.
4. Readers ask for help with understanding.

Figure 9-15. How to Be Sure You Understand the Author's Message

apart, noticing the parts. For example, if you are trying to figure out the word *candle*, you might divide it into *can*, which you know. You'd also know the *dle* ending and that would help you solve the word. How can we write that here?

TARA: Readers look at parts.

TEACHER: [Writes point 2.] You also use what you know about other words to figure out new words. For example, Brian was trying to figure out the word *telescope* when he was reading *Arthur Rocks with Binky* [Brown 1998]. He noticed that the first part of the word was like *tell* and like *telephone*. Then he thought about the letters and sounds and quickly solved the rest of the word. [Writes point 3 on the chart.]

KARA: I think about what would make sense.

TEACHER: Yes, Brian knew *telescope* would make sense because they were trying to get a

Ways Readers Solve Words

1. Readers look at the letters and letter clusters and think about their sounds.
2. Readers look at parts of words.
3. Readers use what they know about other words to figure out new words.
4. Readers think about what would make sense and then check with the letters.

Figure 9-16. Way Readers Solve Words

close look at something either with binoculars or a telescope. You can think about what would make sense and then check the letters in the word to be sure you are right. [Writes point 4.]

Day 20—Strategies and Skills Minilesson: Using Punctuation to Help You Understand

Readers use the punctuation to understand the author's message. When you read, the punctuation marks help you in lots of ways.

The following dialogue is one class's conversation about punctuation:

TEACHER: For example, the period lets you know when one thought ends. What does your voice do when you reach a period?

MARY: It goes down.

TEACHER: Yes, your voice drops. What do you do when you see a comma?

MARY: You pause a little.

TEACHER: So marks like that help us sound good when we read aloud, and we are thinking about them when we read silently. They

remind us to pause a little. Look at this paragraph. [*Points to the paragraph in Figure 9-17 from Russell Sprouts, which she has rewritten on a chart.*] Mary, read the second sentence that begins with *But*.

MARY [*reading*]: But instead, Mr. Michaels said the bad word.

TEACHER: Listen to the way Mary took a short breath after the word *instead*. That helped us understand the sentence. We've talked about quotation marks, or talking marks. They help us know when the characters are talking. Can you find a place in this paragraph where someone is talking?

KEN: Yes, Mr. Michaels is talking. He says, "Schmatz!"

TEACHER: You notice that in this sentence there are talking marks before and after the word *Schmatz*, showing us that this is what the character says. Did you notice how Ken read *Schmatz*?

DINA: He was excited.

Teacher: Ken, how did you know to read it that way?

KEN: Because there's an exclamation point.

TEACHER: You're right. Exclamation points also help us understand the author's

meaning. He wanted Mr. Michaels to sound irritated because Russell had soaked his pants leg. What Mr. Michaels said is inside the quotation—or talking—marks. It has its own ending punctuation, the exclamation point. What characters say is usually set off by quotation marks and has its own ending punctuation. Let's read this paragraph out loud together and observe all the punctuation. [*The students do so.*] Remember to notice and think about the punctuation while you read because it will help you understand what the author is trying to say. Have a paragraph from the book you are reading ready to share with a partner during group share later. You will read your paragraph to each other, observing the punctuation marks.

Implementing Independent Reading: The First Twenty Days

We have described one way of getting started with minilessons for independent reading and provided examples to show you how you might begin. Of course, the examples will not fit your students perfectly, and you may want to vary the sequence and/or the lessons. The important thing is to meet the unique needs of your own students.

Fine-Tuning Lessons for Your Students

You will want to think about what your students already know. Take your cues from your particular students and prioritize the kinds of lessons they need. Some of these lessons may be too simple for your students; on the other hand, you may need to repeat others. Many of them you will revisit several times across the year, such as topics for letters in notebooks. Some may be very effective with most of the students, but a small group may need reteaching in a guided reading or literature study group. Individuals may need reteaching or reinforcement in a conference setting.

Resources You Will Need

Consider the resources you will need (see the far right column of Figure 9-1). In general, the materials and

Russell was sure his father was going to scold him. But instead, Mr. Michaels said the bad word. It wasn't a real bad word. It was the one Russell had invented. "Schmatz!" Mr. Michaels called out loudly.

Figure 9-17. *Russell Sprouts*

resources needed for independent reading are simple and easy to use. For example, a list of all the books you have read aloud together as a class will help you create minilessons on book genres. In fact, the shared experiences with books and reading may lie at the heart of many of the minilessons you provide.

You will need to have a highly organized and well labeled classroom collection of books that matches your students' reading levels. See Chapter 23 for suggestions on acquiring books and Chapter 6 for suggestions on organizing them. Charts and notebooks are also must-have materials. See Chapter 10 for detailed descriptions of reader's notebooks and Appendix 16 for notebook page reproducibles. The notebooks will enable your students to reflect day by day on a quality body of work. What's more, the notebooks provide you and your students' families with visible evidence of their progress as well as insights into the breadth of their reading and the ways in which their interests change.

Early Minilessons as a Foundation

The minilessons we've featured are designed to establish independent reading as a quiet, structured, productive time in your classroom. While the first lessons focus mainly on routines, students are also reading a great deal and, in the process, becoming more aware of the essential elements of their reading. This system helps readers assume responsibility for their own learning. Everything they do in independent reading, even if it is a routine procedure, highlights aspects of reading that will support them as lifelong readers. For example, as they write their lists of reading interests, they learn that the book choices they make are not random but are governed by their unique interests. As readers, they learn to monitor their interests over time and note how they change. Accordingly, when we offer them a chance to select a book, we expect they'll choose a book that matches their interests.

Reading a book is not simply a task to get through; reading means thinking about and reveling in what you read. Thinking includes awareness of yourself as a reader so that you become the director and manager of your learning. This move toward independence is crit-

ical for intermediate students as, increasingly, they need to work as self-managed learners who can use literacy as a tool, fully realizing its rewards—both utilitarian and aesthetic.

Suggestions for Professional Development

1. Over the course of these twenty days, meet frequently with your grade-level colleagues to support one another in launching your workshops.
2. Follow a reflective process of implementing minilessons, gathering information about their effectiveness, and discussing them with colleagues.
3. Try out the first few minilessons. After each minilesson, make notes using these guiding questions:
 - What went well?
 - Were there any surprises?
 - What would you have done differently?
 - Would you have changed any of your language to be more clear?
 - How effectively did students follow up the minilesson by engaging in the behavior you wanted?
 - How effective was your chart? Did you refer to it again during the day or on subsequent days?
 - Were there opportunities to reinforce the points made in the minilessons or in conferences? in group sessions?
 - What did you learn about your students when they shared?
4. Meet with your grade-level colleagues to discuss the minilessons. Bring the materials you used and talk about your students' responses. Discuss the guiding questions.
5. Teach the next group of minilessons and repeat the process. If you have notebook responses from your students, bring in samples.
6. Repeat the process until you have completed all twenty minilessons. Discuss how you adapted the examples to meet the particular needs of your students.
7. Place your minilessons in your reading workshop binder along with your notes so that you can refer to them next year.

