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# Publishing class books in first grade: Making the reading-writing connection

H. Lawrence Heywood

# PUBLISHING CLASS BOOKS IN FIRST GRADE
# MAKING THE READING-WRITING CONNECTION

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

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by

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## ABSTRACT

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to provide first grade teachers with a resource guide to help them engage students in writing and publishing class books. Such activities help children learn language and learn about language by using it functionally, purposefully, and meaningfully.

Many teachers break language down into small parts, strip it of meaning, and advocate exercises on artificial language. This makes language learning difficult. The activities suggested in this project, however, keep language whole so children learn to read and write naturally as they engage in authentic literacy experiences.

Procedure

In a review of literature supporting this project four issues were explored: the language learning process, whole language, student writing, and class book publishing. The literature revealed that children acquire language as they use it functionally for real purposes, that whole language teachers model this process by providing authentic literacy events so children can use language meaningfully, that in whole language classrooms children learn to write by writing, and that one popular whole language teaching strategy is writing and publishing class books.

These issues helped shape the goals of this project. The first goal was to expound on how writing and publishing class books aids language acquisition.

The second was to provide a resource guide with strategy lessons rooted in whole language theory that engage students in authentic literacy experiences.

In fulfillment of these goals, a number of key links between class book publishing and language acquisition were researched and cited. Also, many teaching strategies involving the writing and publishing of class books were developed.

Conclusion

Sixty strategy lessons for writing and publishing class books were developed or adapted for this project, and a theoretical basis for using them was established. Each activity keeps language whole. Each lets children explore real language in meaningful, functional ways. Each allows children to learn to read by reading and to write by writing. Each is founded in whole language theory. Each helps children learn language and learn about language the way they do it best—by using it.

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# STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

## Introduction

Before becoming a teacher, I worked as an instructional aide in a junior high school remedial reading lab for three years. I witnessed firsthand the decoding and skills-based approaches to "teaching" reading. I saw students perform numerous tasks identifying short and long vowels, distinguishing the multiple sounds of y and oo, trying to discern words with the schwa sound, learning complex systems of categorizing and sub-categorizing sounds, and so forth. I supervised students reading multitudes of isolated sentences, paragraphs, and short pieces followed by multiple choice quizzes in a seemingly endless search for main ideas, context clues, figurative language, and so on.

The primary contact these students had with their teachers or the instructional aide was when their worksheets or answer sheets were corrected and they were told they had passed and could go on to more exercises on a higher level, or they had failed and had to do more exercises on the same level. It was during this time I began forming my beliefs about language development, reading and writing instruction, and the roles of the curriculum and the teacher.

It seemed obvious to me that the phonics and skills-based approaches were, for the most part, ineffective, at least for these "poor" and "reluctant" readers who were assigned to the reading lab. This was my first experience as an educator but I questioned the following concepts: that good reading instruction was a continuous stream of multiple choice quizzes, that a reading teacher's main function was to sit with an answer key with A's, B's, C's, and D's on it, and that children were somehow learning to read when their A's, B's, C's, and D's matched the ones on the teacher's answer key. I was surprised that this

was the way reading was taught, but the teacher had a master's degree in reading and a Reading Specialist Credential and I was just beginning my career in education, so I did as I was told.

Discussion of Key Issues

Still, beyond my own instinctive distaste for this method of "reading instruction," it was easy to see that most of the students disliked the class immensely. One incident with a disgruntled student was particularly enlightening. One day a girl was quite upset about a worksheet she was doing.

"What's the matter," I asked, hoping to help.

"I hate reading!" she blurted out in a hostile tone.

"You don't really mean that," I said.

"I mean it! I hate reading!" she answered.

"Have you ever read a book that you enjoyed?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Which book?"

"*Charlotte's Web*."

"And you liked it, right?"

"Yes."

"See, you don't hate reading."

"But that's not reading," she snapped. "That's a book!"

This so-called reading class had taught her that reading was doing dull, meaningless worksheets and skill pages day after day, and that real reading—the kind she enjoyed—was something else. I had gained an important insight: not only was the effectiveness of the phonics and skills instruction questionable, it was turning these kids off to reading because it was not real reading.

It seemed to me that even "poor" readers could find enjoyment in reading if it was approached in a different manner. After all, I had seen these same students who hated the "reading" they were doing in class poring over their magazines, baseball cards, notes from friends, words to songs, and even an occasional book they had chosen for themselves. ("Poor" readers transformed into "poring" readers. I wondered how it was possible.)

I surmised that "reluctant readers" were ones who were disinclined to read the irrelevant worksheets and reading lessons their teachers expected them to read, but who were "eager readers" of things that had meaning or relevance to them or their lives. I concluded that reading instruction at any grade level, with any students—"high" or "low"—would be much more effective if the reading material was real and was relevant or interesting to the student. I determined that when I became a teacher I would strive to make reading instruction meaningful, purposeful, and relevant to my students.

Theoretical Orientation / Foundation

During this time, I was working towards acquiring my own teaching credential, and I was introduced to whole language teaching. Whole language theory both verified and augmented many of the beliefs I had developed while working in the reading lab.

Goodman (1986) explains that language is "learned from whole to part" (p. 19), and that many school traditions have actually impeded language development. He states:

> In our zeal to make it easy, we've made it hard. How? Primarily by breaking whole (natural) language up into bite-size, but abstract little pieces. It seemed so logical to think that little children could best learn simple little things. We took apart the language and turned it into words,

> syllables, and isolated sounds. Unfortunately, we also postponed its natural purpose—the communication of meaning—and turned it into a set of abstractions, unrelated to the needs and experiences of the children we sought to help. (p. 7)

Routman (1988) further explains that the philosophy of whole language refers to teaching and learning that is meaningful, real, and relevant. "Whole language respects the idea that all the language processes (listening, speaking, reading, and writing—including spelling and handwriting) are learned naturally and in meaningful context as a whole, not in little parts" (p. 26).

Whole language teachers have been greatly influenced by Holdaway's developmental model (as cited in Routman, 1991): 1. young children acquire language developmentally by observing real language used for real purposes, 2. by being encouraged to participate actively in the use of real language for real purposes, 3. by practicing the use of real language independently, 4. and by gradually becoming confident and competent. Teachers who embrace the whole language theory do not believe that reading is simply a decoding process nor the mastery of isolated skills, but "an active process by which we predict, sample, and confirm or correct our hypotheses about the written text" (Weaver, 1988, xvii), which is why F. Smith (1978) asserts that "children do not need nonsense in order to learn to read; they need to read" (p. 128).

Because of these beliefs, whole language teachers generally develop a thematic, literature-based curriculum within a print-littered environment. They include an abundance of oral language, advocate authentic reading and writing experiences, never have children read or write without a purpose, sometimes use the Language Experience Approach, foster literature extension activities, encourage children to use functional spelling when writing, and are inclined to be more process than product oriented.

I strive to follow these same practices. I believe F. Smith's (1978) declaration that "*children cannot be taught to read.* A teacher's responsibility is not to teach children to read but to make it possible for them to learn to read" (p. 6). I believe whole language is the best way to accomplish this, therefore, I involve my students in activities that keep language whole and authentic, which help children learn to read by reading and to write by writing. I involve them in literature-based thematic units which include activities such as: shared reading, partner and triad reading, one-on-one and small group assisted reading, and choral reading; daily journal writing and other writing for real purposes, wherein students use invented spelling; theme cycles; literature response logs and literature extension activities, including drama, music, poetry writing, and the publishing of individual student books and class books.

Purpose of the Project

This project is a reference guide for first grade teachers on how to link reading and writing through the publication of class books. Class books, as defined for the purposes of this project, are: 1. books created by an entire class collaborating with one another and the teacher, 2. books created by small collaborating groups, 3. class sets of a duplicated text (such as song lyrics or poems) which are illustrated by the students, and 4. books wherein each child contributes one or several pages to a class or group project.

This guide presents procedures to help first grade teachers lead their students in the creation of class books in six categories: class books as literature extensions, class books within thematic units, class pattern books, class books for basic instruction, class books of songs and poetry, and class books from original ideas.

Being involved with the creation of class books will help students make important reading and writing connections. Through this process children learn that writing makes sense, that authors communicate meaning to readers through written language, that readers use life experiences to construct meaning as they interact with printed language, and that there are standard conventions which help the author convey meaning to the reader.

Furthermore, by being involved in the process of constructing authentic writing, students will naturally learn reading skills and writing conventions, will try to derive sense from texts they read, and will naturally acquire a sense of story elements such as plot, characterization, setting, and so on, without having to do worksheets. Additionally, because the students themselves are the authors, class-made books are predictable, and the support of the predictable text helps the emergent reader achieve success. Finally, children have a vested interest in books they helped to write and illustrate, making them relevant and highly desirable to be read and re-read.

Conclusion

For years, schools have unwittingly been making language difficult to learn for young learners by breaking it into little bits and pieces. They have fragmented it, decontextualized it, and watered it down all in the name of good teaching. These practices unravel the wholeness of language, stripping it of meaning, and making it more difficult to learn.

Fairly recently, some educators—who believe in the whole language theory—have challenged these practices. They maintain that language should be kept whole, real, and meaningful. They believe that just as children acquire oral language naturally through meaningful interactions with others who use real

language for real purposes, they can learn to read and write by interacting with others who use real written language for authentic purposes. They believe that children learn to read by reading and to write by writing.

Whole language teachers use the language learning process, the natural process through which children acquire oral language, as a model for learning and instruction. Whole language teachers believe that "language learning is easy when it's whole, real, and relevant; when it makes sense and is functional; when it's encountered in the context of its use; when the learner chooses to use it" (Goodman, 1986, p. 26). Therefore, they "begin with real reading and writing experiences that focus on meaning because they want their students to quickly learn that reading and writing are for communication" (Powell & Hornsby, 1993, p. 9). Publishing class books is one teaching strategy that will help teachers achieve these goals.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In reviewing the literature, four significant areas emerged: 1. the language learning process, 2. teaching from a whole language perspective, 3. writing in a whole language classroom, and 4. the publishing of class books. These are the cornerstones of this project. The first three explain the rationale behind the project—the "whys" of class book publishing—and the fourth reveals the widespread and varied use of this teaching strategy in whole language classrooms.

### The Language Learning Process

The language learning process, the natural process through which children acquire oral language and begin to speak, is used as a model for learning and for instruction by whole language teachers. It is therefore pertinent to any discussion about whole language and the methods and practices used in whole language classrooms.

Harp and Brewer (1991) define language "as a system of communication used by human beings that is produced either orally or by signs" (p. 4). Three major characteristics help define language. First, all languages are governed by rules, and, though native speakers of the language learn these rules intuitively, most likely they will not be able to verbalize them unless they make a scientific study of the language. Second, language is arbitrary. The connections between the sounds used to name something and the actual thing named are not logical but are socially agreed upon. Third, language changes continually; new words and meanings spring up while others are abandoned or altered.

Language is formulated by using various systems: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Harp & Brewer, 1991).

Phonology includes the sounds of a language and the rules for their use. Morphology deals with units of meaning. Syntax comprises the rules for putting words together into phrases or sentences and provides the language learner with cues about word meanings because of the placement of the words in a sentence. Semantics refers to the meaning of words and necessitates the acquisition of vocabulary and the understanding of meanings associated with words. Finally, as they learn the pragmatic system, language learners grasp the social use of language as they communicate intentions, use language to get things done, and learn culturally appropriate language usage.

Children demonstrate their natural language learning abilities as they learn to talk. They instinctively assimilate these various systems of language without being taught in a direct, focused manner. Weaver (1988) explains that "we do not directly **teach** children how to talk. They **learn** to talk, by transacting with us in a language-rich environment" (p. 178). She summarizes some significant observations about children's language acquisition: rules of language structure are not taught directly by adults to children, rather, they are internalized by children as they experience social transactions in a language-rich environment; children begin with whole ideas and move to the parts, that is, beginning with whole ideas they want to convey, they gradually become more and more adept at articulating the parts that will help them communicate those ideas; adults expect that children will imminently become successful speakers; and adults generally do not correct the imperfect forms of young children's attempts at language since they understand that the process of language acquisition takes years.

Goodman (1986) stresses that children learn to speak easily in their homes without having language fragmented into tiny parts and without formal teaching. They are able to do this because the language encountered there is whole and is used functionally, meaningfully, and purposefully. Harp and Brewer (1991), sum up children's natural language acquisition in these words:

> Learning of language occurs without formal instruction. Parents do not give language lessons to their children. With the exception of such rituals as 'peek-a-boo' and 'this little piggy,' parents rarely teach language directly. They play with children, sing with them, make cookies with them, show them the world, and supply words to label the environment, but they do not focus on teaching the child to speak. Participating with the child in daily living is the focus, and language comes as one result. Language is learned through use in meaningful contexts, not through talking about it or analyzing it. (p. 11-12)

They conclude that "children learn language in the process of living in a social situation and participating in activities with others" (p. 12). Likewise, Holdaway (cited in Routman, 1988) believes that young children become competent and confident language users in a supportive home environment because they are able to observe demonstrations of functional, meaningful language, are encouraged to become active participants in the use of language, and try out or practice language independently.

Many educators, however, disregard what is known about early childhood language acquisition and make language learning difficult when children enter school. Goodman (1986) observes that "language sometimes seems ridiculously easy and sometimes impossibly hard. And the easy times are outside school, the hard times in school" (p. 7). This is the result of not keeping language whole, of breaking it down into small components and thereby stripping it of meaning in a part-to-whole approach which handicaps children in

their efforts to learn rather than helping them. "When schools break language into bits and pieces, sense becomes nonsense, and it's always hard for kids to make sense out of nonsense....That's why learning language in the real world is easy, and learning language in school should be easy, but is often hard" (p. 8). F. Smith (1978) likewise professes "that 'breaking down reading' makes learning to read more difficult because it makes nonsense out of what should be sense" (p. 5). On the other hand, by applying what is known about early language acquisition to the school curriculum teachers can help make language learning in school easy. Cordeiro (1992) reflects, "As children learn to read and write in the same way that they learned to talk, educators observe 'literacy without tears'" (p. 8).

A number of factors can be cited which make language either easy or difficult to learn. Goodman (1986) capsulized several of these considerations, attesting that when language is kept whole and used in authentic language events, when it is kept real and natural, it is easier to learn because it is interesting and makes sense. On the other hand, when language is fragmented into small parts it is difficult to learn because it is artificial, contrived, nonsensical, and often dry, tedious, and uninteresting. Also, whereas language which the learner chooses to use for authentic purposes is relevant to the learner and therefore easy to learn, language imposed by others which has no perceived purpose and is irrelevant to the learner is difficult to learn. Commenting on Goodman's insightful discussion about what makes language easy or hard to learn, Harp and Brewer (1991) write:

> For the development of language and literacy, the implications of Goodman's statements are clear. Children need to talk about, read about, and write about interesting experiences in their lives. They need

> to have their language accepted and valued. They need to use language, reading, and writing for purposes of real communication. (pp. 16-17)

These are some of the issues driving the current movement known as whole language which disputes traditional teaching methods that fragment and decontextualize language. Using what is known about children's natural language acquisition as a learning model, whole language teachers strive to "keep language whole and involve children in using it functionally and purposefully to meet their own needs" (Goodman, 1986, p. 7). Kucer (1991) notes, "A strength of the whole language movement has been its attempt to link classroom and real world activities. Because meaning generation is the focus of literacy use in the world, advocates of whole language have rightfully insisted that classrooms should reflect this fact" (p. 532). Mills and Clyde (1990) applaud whole language teachers because their philosophy and methods of teaching reveal "their understanding that children learn to read and write in the same way they learn to talk: they interact with language—written language—in meaningful ways" (p. xxiii).

Teaching from a Whole Language Perspective

Edelsky, Altwerger, and Flores (1991) state that "whole language weaves together a theoretical view of language, language learning, and learning into a particular stance on education" (p. 7). Some tenets of that "stance" were reviewed by Watson (1994). Reporting on an organization known as the Whole Language Umbrella (WLU): A Confederation of Whole Language Support Groups and Individuals, she recounted the WLU's summation of what whole language teachers believe in:

1. A holistic perspective to literacy learning and teaching;
2. A positive view of all learners;

3. Language as central to learning;
4. Learning as easiest when it is from whole to part, in contexts, and functional;
5. The empowerment of all learners, including students *and* teachers;
6. Learning as both personal and social, and classrooms as learning communities;
7. Acceptance of whole learners including their languages, cultures, and experiences; and
8. Learning as both joyous and fulfilling. (p. 602)

These beliefs motivate whole language teachers to create a holistic learning environment that is learner-centered rather than curriculum or teacher-centered, in which students enjoy learning because the material has meaning and relevance to their lives.

The relationship between early childhood language acquisition and whole language theory is summed up by P. G. Smith (1989):

> Whole language teachers assume that children will learn to read and write just as naturally as they learned to talk if given the proper environment. This is the most basic assumption of whole language learning. It says that learning to read and write (and spell) are as assuredly developmental processes as is learning to talk. (p. 88)

Because of their holistic, developmental, learner-centered view of teaching, whole language teachers have rallied behind Goodman's (1986) call to "put aside the carefully sequenced basal readers, spelling programs, and handwriting kits. Let the readiness materials, the workbooks, and the ditto masters gather dust on the shelves...Instead, invite pupils to use language" (p. 7).

Writing in Whole Language Classrooms

Therefore, whole language teachers invite their pupils to learn language by using language. In whole language classrooms students learn to read by reading and learn to write by writing. Rhodes and Dudley-Marling (1988) state that "children learn language by using language" (p. 14). They briefly describe

the natural acquisition of oral language then draw a parallel between learning to talk and learning to read and write. Children learn to talk when they are immersed in oral language and have continual opportunities to use it and hear it used for diverse purposes in diverse situations. Likewise, children learn to read and write by reading and writing in an environment in which they have "frequent opportunities to use reading and writing and to see reading and writing used for a variety of purposes, in a variety of settings" (p. 14).

From his studies of early literacy, Harste (1990) drew similar conclusions. He asserts, "Language is learned through use rather than through practice exercises on how to use language" (p. 316). He believes that classrooms must provide an environment where children see language being used for real purposes. In regards to writing instruction, he recommends that teachers write with students so they can see effective demonstrations of successful written language use. He believes children should interact with print in a variety of contexts using many expressive forms, such as:

> listening to stories, sharing and talking about books, writing and illustrating stories, composing stories in block play, enacting stories through drama, interpreting stories in art and music, reading and writing recipes for cooking, interpreting music through dance, composing and writing music, writing math problems, reading poetry, and reading and writing predictable books. (p. 318)

Real, purposeful writing for authentic reasons helps students understand the functions, purposes, and characteristics of writing, as well as learn standard writing conventions. Harp and Brewer (1991) explain that "children need opportunities to learn the purposes and functions of print personally....They need to have experience in seeing their own words being recorded and hearing them read at a future time" (p. 41-42). A classroom environment where this occurs

fosters understanding of the power and intentions of print. This understanding provides students with personal reasons for reading and writing, and their motivations to do so become intrinsic.

Calkins (1981) recognizes that children learn to write by writing. "When children write, they reach for the skills they need. Writing demands initiative. Writers do not receive learning. They make it....The urge to tell leads them to pursue the skills they need" (p. 46). As students learn about the subjects they write about, they garner writing skills and conventions along the way. "Writing makes children become experts on Greek traditions, a broken radio, the stomach of a salamander. They become experts also on pronoun agreement, punctuation, and cursive penmanship" (p. 46). Graves (1991) affirms that "unless children actually read and write they will not understand what reading and writing are for or gain the skills necessary to become independent learners" (p. 13).

One skill students acquire developmentally as they learn to write by writing is spelling. As Routman (1988) described experiences with first-grade journal writing, she reported that students used their knowledge of letter-sound relationships to "invent their own spellings" (p. 105). Adults in her classroom did not spell for the children, but rather encouraged them to do the best they could using the sounds they heard. The children then read what they had written to an adult who transcribed words too difficult to decipher. The students gradually became more proficient writers and spellers. From these experiences she concludes that "the sheer act of writing every day positively affects handwriting, length, content, spelling, and mastery of writing conventions" (p. 108). Milz (1990) also relates how "children grow and change as writers" (p. 101), as

evidenced by her first grade students who progressed from invented spellings to conventional forms, continually demonstrating increased abilities "to communicate more proficiently" (p. 101).

Strickland and Morrow (1990) report that many teachers who formerly used the Language Experience Approach (LEA) exclusively, are now focusing more on independent writing where "uniqueness and invented spellings are encouraged" (p. 423). The motive for such change was research showing that children in print-rich environments who are encouraged to experiment with writing on their own are both interested in and capable of generating written text without adult aid. Furthermore, analysis of the children's texts revealed "what they learned when they were given the opportunity to experiment on their own and how they went about learning it" (p. 422). Many of these teachers, in addition to their group LEA activities, are now stressing non-dictated personal journals which are "more characteristic of an emergent literacy perspective" (p. 422).

The use of invented spellings by young children is demonstrative of emergent literacy according to Newman (1984). After citing a number of examples of children's writing using invented spellings and their analyses Newman concluded:

> A vital part of becoming a successful language user is being comfortable with the 'messing around' that must go on. In other words, experimentation is essential for learning language....Learning to be a successful language user is a risky business.
>
> Yet if no risks are taken, little can be learned. One doesn't learn language as a watcher from the sidelines; one has to be a participant in what's going on. Expecting children to produce exact, correct language, whether oral or written, places unnecessary pressure on them as language users....Children need to be able to experiment with what they want to say, to whom they want to say it, and how they want to say it.

> They need to experiment with form and format, spelling and punctuation. Learning to be a writer involves the refinement of many aspects of the process at the same time. That refinement comes about as a consequence of experimentation. (p. 31)

This summation is in agreement with Goodman's (1986) insightful declaration that "language learning is a process of social and personal invention" (p. 18). He believes every individual invents language anew while striving to communicate with others. These inventions entail the use of the individual's environmental language and "they are constantly being tested, modified, abandoned, or perfected in use against it" (p. 18).

Evidence of this experimentation in young children's writing is commented on by Bakst and Essa (1990): "When children begin 'writing,' the product may be a combination of scribbling, mock letters and real letters" (p. 147). Harste (1990) explains that this experimentation begins as children sort out how language is used and they begin to "explore the graphophonemic system of language. Their phonetic writing has been called invented spelling and has been found to progress systematically and predictably" (p. 317). Coate and Castle (1989) found that in kindergarten classes this systematic progress can be observed in several identifiable stages of spelling.

The five main stages of spelling development researchers have observed in young children's writing is discussed by Weaver (1988). First, in the ***prephonemic stage***, a child realizes that letters are associated with writing, and therefore strings letters together. These letters, however, do not yet represent their corresponding sounds. The ***early phonemic stage*** follows. Typically, in this stage each word is represented by one or two letters—usually the first consonant or the first and last consonant. The third major stage is the ***letter-name stage***, in which children still use letters to represent sounds, though more

than one or two. The use of vowel sounds also appears in this stage. In the ***transitional stage*** children begin to show the influence of standard print by implementing correct spellings not possible using the letter-name strategy. Over-generalizations of some patterns (rules) of written language also begin to appear. The final stage (which no one ever completely attains) is the ***standard spelling stage*** in which all spellings are conventional.

Cunningham (1991) believes invented spelling affords students a look at reading from the inside out:

> Writing is an approach to reading that allows children to figure out reading 'from the inside out.' As children write, they spell words which they later see and recognize in their writing. Even when they can't spell a word perfectly, they try to 'sound it out' in order to spell it and actually put to use whatever phonics they have learned. (p. 579)

The skills of literacy are learned as children use real language for meaningful, authentic purposes. "Children pick up many of the skills of literacy through their writing. When children 'invent' their spellings, they demonstrate one of the best examples of applied learning for sound/symbol relationships" (Graves, 1990, p. 77). Many of the ideas referred to in this project encourage children to use invented spelling to write a contribution for a class book.

In summary, students in a whole language classroom will learn to write by writing. They will learn the functions, purposes, and characteristics of language through authentic, real-world use of language. They will gather writing skills along the way, including spelling.

The publishing of class books is just one teaching strategy that provides students with an opportunity to use language functionally, meaningfully and purposefully. These activities can help students make important reading and writing connections, help them learn that writing makes sense, that they can

communicate meaning through written language, that there are standard conventions which help the author convey meaning to the reader, and can help students acquire reading and writing skills naturally.

Publishing Class Books

This section addresses the specific teaching strategy of writing and publishing class books, however, it should be noted that publishing class books is not whole language, but rather, a strategy used successfully by whole language teachers. Goodman (1986) defines whole language as a philosophy of teaching and learning with "a strong theory of learning, a theory of language, a basic view of teaching and the role of teachers, and a language-centered view of curriculum" (p. 26), **and not as a specified set of strategies**. Mills and Clyde (1990) emphasize that "whole language is not a set of activities" (p. 91).

Addressing this same issue, Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores (1987) state that "whole language is not practice. It is a set of beliefs, a perspective. It must become practice, but it is not the practice itself" (p. 145). Their elaboration on the set of beliefs called whole language includes the following: language is for making meaning, what's true of oral language is generally true of written language, multiple cuing systems operate simultaneously in language, language use always occurs in a situation, and situations are critical to meaning-making. Real reading and writing, as opposed to exercises in reading and writing, are therefore espoused. This is why use of literature and other real-world, meaningful print is at the heart of whole language instruction. They lament that many innovations in education are ill-fated because they are often distorted by educators who are poorly informed or have received inferior training. They stress that "whole language is too good an idea to suffer such a fate" (p. 144),

and express hope that teachers will understand the substance and not just use the label of whole language.

In short, though many specific strategy lessons are widely used by whole language teachers (Harste & Short, 1988; Mills & Clyde, 1990; Routman, 1991; Watson, 1987), their use does not necessarily reflect a whole language orientation (Freeman & Freeman, 1992). Some teachers may use big books, thematic units, book publishing, process writing, or other strategy lessons commonly associated with whole language, and believe they are whole language teachers, when in fact they are not—they use the label of whole language but lack the substance.

Still, this does not discount the fact that these and many other strategies which "help children explore the functions and forms of language and encourage children's awareness of their own linguistic knowledge and abilities" (Watson, 1987, p. 3), are used in successful whole language classrooms, and indeed, are openly shared with others attempting to apply whole language principles to their teaching (Harp & Brewer, 1991; Harste & Short, 1988; Mills & Clyde, 1990; Routman, 1991; Watson, 1987). This key to the use of strategy lessons is offered by Kucer (1991): "The generation of meaning is always at the center of strategy lessons with structure and graphophonics serving to support the development of meaning" (p. 533).

Goodman (1996) explains that just as "oral language occurs in speech events....Written language occurs in literacy events" (p. 21). Expounding on that incite, he concludes that just as children learn oral language by using it in authentic speech events, they learn written language "by using it in authentic literacy events that meet their needs" (p. 24). One specific strategy lesson many

whole language teachers use to create authentic literacy events is the writing and publishing of class books (Harp & Brewer, 1991; Harste & Burke, 1988; Jensen, 1989; Nathan et al., 1989; Routman, 1991; Watson, 1987). Graves (1981) endorses whole-group activities of this nature: "In our rightful concern to individualise we don't need to overlook whole-class activities like choral recitation or producing a class magazine—activities that build community spirit and complement solo and small group learning" (p. 15).

The process of writing and publishing class books, used in harmony with other authentic language events, affords children many opportunities to learn language and learn about language (Harste, 1990; Mills & Clyde, 1990; Routman, 1991; Trachtenburg & Ferruggia, 1989). One major advantage of these activities is the social literacy interaction described by Kucer (1991) which advances young children's understanding of how language operates:

> Advocates of whole language have argued that children actively construct the literacy system through interaction with, and mediation by, others....Guiding the child in this constructive process are adults or more capable peers who demonstrate how reading and writing operate, both as cognitive as well as social enterprises. (p. 533)

Graves (1991) expounds on the social aspect of written language as well. He writes, "Reading and writing are social acts in which children and teachers together share the books and authors they enjoy and their own composing in the various genres" (p. xiii). He explains that "children learn from our demonstrations about reading, writing, and learning" (p. 13). He professes that teachers must read and write with their students regularly to show them how they (the teachers) read and write and solve problems.

Teachers cite a host of other reasons why they believe publishing class books is a valuable part of their curriculum. Class book publishing projects, in which teacher and students (or students and students) collaborate on the writing, illustrating, and publishing of class books, are "an excellent way to teach reading" (May, 1986, p. 247); "engage...the students and help...them make the reading-writing connection" (Sipe, 1993, p. 24); "engage children in reflective thinking and involve the range of language arts: speaking, listening, reading, and writing" (Brain, 1993, p. 529); "reinforce...and support...the reading process" (Routman, 1991, p. 61); demonstrate that "interactive, whole class techniques, positive self concepts, and rapid skill attainment appear to be inextricably linked" (Trachtenburg & Ferruggia, 1989, p. 285); integrate "oral and written comprehension, retelling, sequencing, fine motor skill and eye-hand coordination, plus meaningful group discussion" (Cassady, 1988, p. 210); create a collaborative environment which is "especially valuable in helping the children learn how to work cooperatively with peers" (Zucker, 1993, p. 669); and present authentic situations for the teacher to "encourage students to observe and discuss one another's composing strategies or to notice certain aspects of the written message" (Harste & Burke, 1988, p. 279).

Furthermore, class book projects provide "an efficient, effective means of teaching developing readers and writers how to proceed through the difficult process of making meaning with text, either composing their own or comprehending someone else's" (Lewin, 1992, p. 588); "demonstrate...the conventions of writing—spelling, punctuation, and grammar" (Routman, 1991, p. 61); enhance "reading and writing readiness...through direct involvement in literacy activities that are meaningful to the child and encourage experimentation

and exploration" (Isom & Casteel, 1991, p. 521); and result in authentic books that "are meant to be read over and over in shared readings" (Karges-Bone, 1992, p. 744). Ultimately,

> they integrate the language arts in authentic, meaningful, and very natural ways. Yet, the activities prove to be so engaging and enjoyable that it is easy to overlook the fact that the children are involved in relevant reading and writing, collaborative learning, and the application of planning and organizing skills and strategies. (Matz, 1993, p. 72)

Harp and Brewer (1991) comment on the widespread acceptance of class book publishing as a viable strategy for affording students authentic language experiences:

> One of the most popular ways of sharing writing is to publish books. Individual students may author books, or a class may collaborate on a book. Books may be written independently or in conjunction with a science or social studies theme. Anyone who has witnessed a child's glow of pride in a book he or she has published can never doubt the worth of the activity. (p. 86)

Class book publishing affords students many opportunities for writing purposeful, meaningful, authentic texts for real purposes and for real audiences.

Publishing class books allows younger or less adept students the opportunity to experience success with the writing process in a low-risk context. L. Scott (1994) has observed that young children are generally fascinated by the thought of publishing their own book but sometimes are overwhelmed by the idea of writing a book entirely by themselves. She believes class books take the pressure off as children either work independently to make a single contribution, or they collaborate using the Language Experience Approach. Harste and Burke (1988) also stress the supportive value of group composed books:

> Writers are supported in the writing process when they share in writing texts with other writers. Through a shared writing process, writers are

> able to offer demonstrations to each other about strategies they use while composing. Less proficient writers are supported by the group process and feel less overwhelmed by the amount of writing they need to contribute to the book. (p. 277)

Kucer (1991) underscores the importance of this type of supportive social learning: "Initially, through collaborative, socially supported situations, the child develops literacy abilities that are interpsychological in nature. That is, the child is able to read and write with the support of others" (p. 533). Kucer explains that through repeated substantial literacy experiences in these social contexts, the literacy abilities of a child typically increase until the student eventually becomes independent.

Several approaches are used by whole language teachers as they facilitate the publishing of class books. One is the Language Experience Approach (LEA). Peterson, Scott, and Sroka (1990) highlight several positive aspects of LEA when used in a whole language classroom. They explain that LEA is a teaching approach "in which learner-generated stories serve as the reading material. These stories are meaningful to the child, contain familiar vocabulary, and offer the potential for increased motivation due to a greater sense of ownership of the story" (p. 28). Harp and Brewer (1991) relate that when LEA is used, students are presented with some sort of stimulus like a poem or story or common experience to which they are asked to respond or write a story. As they dictate their responses, the teacher records the exact words on a large chart the whole group can see. "Dictating a story affords the child pride in ownership of the written words" (p. 57). The writing they produce is then used for reading instruction, and, since the reading material is composed of the children's own words, it is typically easier for them to learn to read. Harp and Brewer reflect:

> The language-experience approach to reading brings together the child's experiences and the child's expressions about experiences through the processes of speaking, reading, and writing. This connection between experience and language is the greatest advantage of using language experience....Language experience is also highly motivating. No words are quite as precious to us as our own words. (pp. 257-259)

LEA is just one strategy for acquiring the text of a class book. Taking dictation for the specific purpose of making a class book does not preclude students from doing their own writing on the same topic. "The main use of dictation should be to record group responses rather than individual responses" (p. 266).

Another technique which is a variation of LEA is called shared writing by some (Combs & Beach, 1994; Harste & Burke, 1988; Routman, 1991). Routman offers this definition:

> Shared writing, where the teacher and students compose collaboratively, with the teacher acting as a scribe and expert to her group of apprentices,...goes beyond language experience in which the teacher takes dictation from the child's language. In shared writing, the writing is a negotiated process with meanings, choices of words, and topics discussed and decided jointly by students and teacher. (pp. 59-60)

The advantage of this method is that the teacher can model the writing process and help shape the writing through questioning and discussion about what makes the story more interesting. Harste and Short (1988) explain that when using the shared writing technique to compose a class book "a great deal of coordination and cooperation must occur among writers. The teacher needs to attend to the group dynamics and help students develop decision-making strategies as they struggle to reach consensus as a group" (p. 278).

A third method is for children to work alone, with partners, or in small groups to compose a page or portion of a class book. In this situation they would use invented spellings which could later be edited and conventionalized

for the final publication. Mills and Clyde (1990) maintain that when children have daily opportunities to "encounter authentic literacy experiences" (p. 62) such as being able "to contribute to a class book" (p. 62) as well as many others, that the "children learn to read and write while using reading and writing to learn" (p. 62).

Several principles about writing that can help in creating an environment where children can learn how to write have been drafted by Nathan, Temple, Juntunen, & Temple (1989). These principles can be valuable for any thoughtful teacher of writing. They can serve as a guideline for any student writing, including the publishing of class books. First, students do their best writing when they write about things that matter to them and to audiences who care about their ideas. Second, when students serve as audiences for their classmates they often teach each other more effectively how to write than a single teacher can. Third, students do their best writing when they have models around (both writing and writers) to demonstrate how to write. Fourth, sometimes direct teaching of specific points is more effective. And fifth, writing requires reflection which often leads the writer to new incites, thus becoming a powerful learning tool for all subjects. The application of these principles can help make class book publishing projects meaningful and successful.

One of the most exciting features of the strategy of class book publishing is its unlimited possibilities. In her second grade classroom, L. Scott's (1994) students have written class books "for every conceivable reason" (p. 678). They have published class books to culminate units in social studies and science, about dinosaurs, career options, and holidays, to name a few. They have done their own versions of trade books, especially students' favorite books. "The

possibilities are endless in all areas of the curriculum" (p. 679). They read them in class, share them with other classes, with their principal, with visitors to the class, and they take them home and share them with their families. Scott believes it is an excellent way to communicate with parents, make important links between home and school, and that parents not only enjoy the product but come to realize the importance of the process.

There are numerous ways teachers have incorporated the publishing of class books into their curriculum. The ideas and examples are as varied and unique as the teachers and children who created them.

One class book publishing experience designed to help a kindergarten class make the transition from kindergarten to first grade less traumatic was described by Brain (1993). She characterizes the experience as a "whole language lesson that incorporates listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (p. 527). Using LEA, she listed on chart paper the children's responses to what they knew about first grade. Next, they listed what they wanted to know. The kindergartners then interviewed first-grade students about first grade experiences. The acquired information was written into a big book which they illustrated and bound.

Matz (1993) believes that publishing class books helps students make the reading-writing connection. He reports that after sharing predictable books with their classes many teachers extend the experience by inviting their students to write their own versions of the stories. He emphasizes that not only do children enjoy doing this, but "the activity can be an effective way to make the reading-writing connection clear and meaningful" (p. 70). He often chooses books with a

pattern that is easy to imitate and has students work alone or in pairs to write their own page which then becomes part of a class book.

Copying the patterns of trade books to create their own class books is a popular practice in many classrooms. Milz (1990) reviews how her class imitated the pattern found in Martin's (1967) Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?, using the names of her students along with their photographs (see Appendix, p. 64). In the processes of writing and reading the book, not only did many of the children learn to read the names of their classmates, but Milz believes they grew as readers and writers as well. Milz explains that during the course of a year her classes write and publish many class books together, often as extensions to literature.

The account of one class writing a book based on a published pattern book about important things is recounted by Harp and Brewer (1991). After the teacher read the book several times and discussed the pattern with the class, the children selected topics for their individual writing. Each child chose something he or she thought was important and wrote about it. The entries were typed by a parent volunteer and illustrated by the children before being bound into a class book. Harp and Brewer point out, however, that students' experiences writing class books must not necessarily be limited to this type of repetitive book. "Children can write and publish a variety of books based on all kinds of picture books. They can write and publish a variety of unusual page cutouts or fold-outs (as in the Eric Carle books) and make their own pop-up books" (p. 275).

The use of storytelling to explore issues in social studies is proposed by Combs and Beach (1994). Among other follow-up activities, they suggest writing

the stories down for inclusion in class books. They recommend using children's personal stories and family stories, as well as stories from children's literature. They believe that when stories are used to teach social studies students develop a personal interest in both the past and the present. "Such stories could become an important part of the social studies curriculum, helping children realize how social studies is the study of people and their lives" (p. 464).

Doiron (1994) advocates using more nonfiction for shared readings and their writing extensions. While acknowledging the value of shared readings in successful literacy programs, he challenges the predominance of fiction in read-aloud sessions. He writes, "This sort of bias towards fiction is at best unrealistic and at worst too one-sided to meet children's full literacy needs" (p. 617). He suggests that not only can reading for information be fun, it also expands children's knowledge of how language works in different contexts which will help them with their own writing. "By listening to nonfiction and talking about it, children will gain respect for expository language as well as learn to emulate the best examples in their own writing" (p. 619). Many teachers have found that nonfiction texts are often perfect springboards for the publication of class books.

A variation on the publishing of a non-fiction class book is suggested by Young and Vardell (1993). They recommend having students extrapolate information from a factual book, rewrite it into a script format, and perform it as a Reader's Theatre activity. The information could then be transferred to pages, illustrated by the students, and published as a class book.

In a discussion about the use of alphabet books in the classroom, Chaney (1993) suggests that "practically all alphabet books can spearhead a writing activity" (p. 99), and that the alphabet book format is an excellent one for student

writers to imitate. Routman (1991) regards alphabet books as invitations for writers to write and an excellent organizational format for students' writing. Harp and Brewer (1991) relate how one class studying a thematic unit on water published a class book entitled The ABC's of Water. Each child selected a letter of the alphabet and wrote an entry related to water. The entries were typed, bound into a class book, and eventually placed in the school library. The possibilities for class-written alphabet books based on thematic units is, of course, limitless.

Another genre of class-published books was suggested by Sipe (1993). He relates how his class compared traditional tales and some of their modern variations then created their own versions. They began by reading favorite children's tales such as "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," "The Three Little Pigs," and "The Emperor's New Clothes." Next, they read modern versions such as Tolhurst's (1990) Somebody and the Three Blairs, Calmenson's (1989) The Principal's New Clothes, and Scieszka's (1989) The True Story of the Three Little Pigs. After analyzing each pair of stories in depth, they developed charts to compare and contrast the stories and their modern "transformations" and discussed the various ways the stories had been transformed. Finally, working together in small groups, they wrote their own stories which were eventually photocopied and bound into a book for each student. Sipe reflects that this project "engaged the students and helped them make the reading-writing connection. Doreen summarized it best: 'All the things we did helped me to know how writers think about stories. I finally feel like a real writer'" (p. 24).

Class books are an excellent way to publish a collection of students' poetry. Grant (1990) relates an activity she involved her third grade class in

which integrated art and poetry. After discussing a classic piece of art and several poems it had inspired, Grant's students wrote their own poems and illustrated them. They culminated the project by publishing them in a class book. Grant defines such language events as "shared, active learning in which artificial boundaries—such as those separating reading from writing and language arts from content areas—melt away" (p. 133). McClure, Harrison, and Reed's (1990) Sunrises and Songs chronicles their efforts to teach students how to write poetry. The children's poems were sometimes combined to create joint anthologies which were then published as books.

Publishing class books is a common practice in some special education classrooms as well. Zucker (1993) writes about her success in a special education class for children with language learning disabilities in which she incorporates the whole language philosophy into her teaching techniques. She focuses on language processes, emphasizes a developmental approach, does not fragment language but keeps it whole, provides for multi-sensory language learning experiences, and uses a variety of "whole language techniques...to creatively teach the subject matter" (p. 661). Class big books are frequently the result of group writing sessions. Subsequent to a discussion about the theme they are studying, Zucker uses LEA to generate the book text. The class dictates the pages as she writes down their words. The students then illustrate each page. When the big book is complete, the children take turns reading it to the class. Reflecting on the "lasting impact" (p. 669) of a whole-language program with activities such as this, she writes that the students in her special education class

> came to see themselves as readers and writers, rather than as failures. They evolved into successful students who were able to employ alternative strategies for achieving independent learning. They were more sociable and communicative because of their experience in a supportive environment that fostered their development. (p. 669)

Class published books usually become an integral part of the classroom reading program. Many classes publish big books (enlarged versions of books) which are then used for shared readings, a very popular strategy in whole language classrooms. Routman (1991) explained that shared readings with big books allow teachers to share literature with students in a format that can easily be seen by all children in the class at the same time. Children not only hear the story being read by a proficient reader but can easily see the illustrations which offer visual cues that help students better understand and predict the text. Students are also encouraged to join in with the reading when they are ready. As the teacher points to each word as it is read, "the one-to-one correspondence between the spoken word and the written word aids fluency, left to right progression, sight vocabulary, and successful reading. Quite naturally, with teacher guidance, children become aware of the concept of a word, spaces between words, and the conventions of print" (p. 38).

A study by Coombs (1987) revealed that the shared reading of big books significantly improves students' recall of details and story elements, increases students' enthusiasm and interest in the stories, improves students' attentiveness and willingness to interact with the teacher and classmates, and increases students' interest in the relationships between the print and the meaning of the story. Additionally, many teachers have found that class-made big books add further interest and excitement to the shared reading experience because they are the students' own words.

A reading/writing/reading cycle occurs when teachers use shared reading experiences as springboards for the publishing of class books. Cassady (1988) explains this cycle. After reading and re-reading big books in shared reading experiences, she makes the books (or normal-size copies) available to the students to look at, enjoy, discuss, retell, and read. One follow-up activity she often invites the children to do is to make their own big books. Cassady explains, "Children learn by doing, but the doing should be purposeful and pleasurable" (p. 21). She adds that the class-published big books are then used again and again for even more shared reading experiences. Cassady asserts that activities such as this "allow children to manipulate language and become literate in an enjoyable and meaningful way" (p. 23).

The effectiveness of the reading/writing/reading cycle generated by shared reading coupled with class-book publishing is attested to by J. Scott (1994). She uses the cycle with nonfiction books. She refers to a non-fiction shared reading as "one of the most effective methods of sharing literature with children" (p. 676). She points out that this not only lets children hear a story being read aloud but allows them to participate in it. She suggests extending the experience by using the words of the book along with student illustrations or photographs to publish a class book. "The book could then be easily used for individual and choral readings and lessons on conventions of print" (p. 677).

A similar reading/writing/reading cycle was developed by Trachtenburg and Ferruggia (1989) after exploring the research on "the worth of the child's own oral language...the value of repeated readings...and the power of a whole language, shared book experience" (p. 284). Using aspects of the research along with literature, they created a class big book featuring the students'

retelling of a piece of literature which the students also illustrated. The big book was then used for repeated shared readings and other language lessons. Eventually, a regular-size copy of the big book was produced for each child. The teachers report that day by day "more children achieved fluency, confidence, and self-esteem" (p. 286). Reflecting on this very positive and successful literacy event, they wrote: "There is no more rewarding experience for primary grade teachers than to witness the metamorphosis of their students from non-readers to readers. After our shared book experiences, reading came alive both in and out of the classroom" (p. 288).

Conclusion

Young children learn oral language as they encounter it being used meaningfully, functionally, and purposefully. When they are invited to become active participants in such language use and have a rich variety of opportunities to experiment with it—to try it out—they gradually become competent, proficient, and confident language users. This process takes place without formal instruction.

This model of language acquisition is used by whole language teachers to assist children in learning to read and write the same way they learned to talk. When children encounter written language being used meaningfully for authentic purposes and become active users of it, having frequent and varied opportunities to use it, they become adept, skillful, and confident readers and writers.

Many educators, however, make language difficult to learn by breaking it down into little bits and pieces, stripping it of meaning and turning it into nonsense. They espouse practice exercises on artificial language rather than

the use of real language for real purposes. In their efforts to help children learn language, they actually hinder them.

Whole language teachers, on the other hand, advocate that language be kept whole and be used in real language events for authentic purposes. They believe when language is kept natural and used purposefully for real communication, it becomes easy to learn. They make every effort to create an environment in their classrooms that makes natural language learning possible, so that children can learn to read by reading and learn to write by writing.

Though whole language is a theory, a perspective, and not a set of specified teaching strategies, many strategies are used by whole language teachers to accomplish their purposes. One of these strategies is the writing and publishing of class books. This practice helps students make important reading and writing connections. Harp and Brewer (1991) explain:

> Writing and reading are closely connected. Students need to experience and understand the connection. Children need to understand that both reading and writing involve ideas. Just as they write ideas when they compose, they are also reading ideas when they read....It may be that writers and readers are in fact doing the same things. Writing involves planning, composing, and revising. Good readers do exactly those things. They plan their reading. They compose a tentative meaning as they read, and they revise meaning as they come ever closer to unlocking the message intended by the author. The linkage between reading and writing is very clear. (pp. 54-55)

Writing and publishing class books helps make those vital connections and is one way many whole language teachers "keep language whole and involve children in using it functionally and purposefully to meet their own needs" (Goodman, 1986, p. 7). The purpose of this project is to help teachers help their students make the reading and writing connection through the publishing of class books.

## GOALS AND LIMITATIONS

### Goals of the Project

The primary goals are to expound the important reading and writing connections which occur naturally in the process of writing and publishing class books and to furnish specific strategy lessons which engage students in authentic writing and reading experiences. The specific objectives of the project are:

1. To help students become better writers by participating in the writing and publishing of class books;
2. To help students understand that writing makes sense;
3. To help students naturally learn writing, spelling, and punctuation conventions by involving them in authentic writing events;
4. To help students realize that authors communicate meaning to readers through written language;
5. To help students understand that writers and readers use life experiences to construct meaning as they interact with printed language;
6. To help students naturally acquire a sense of story elements such as plot, characterization, setting, and so on, without having to do worksheets;
7. To help students create some of their own reading material in which ownership and predictability of the text helps them achieve greater success;
8. To help students make vital connections between the curriculum and their own lives.

Limitations of the Project

The first limitation of this project is that it highlights only one of numerous issues which must be considered in a whole language program—the writing and publishing of class books. Though this teaching strategy is used in many whole language classrooms, it doesn't necessarily follow that those who use it are whole language teachers. It is easy to adopt the label of whole language while lacking the substance thereof. This strategy can be a valuable tool in any classroom, but teachers who adopt it should not automatically think they are "doing whole language."

Second, this project is not all inclusive. The examples of writing events given are just a few of a seemingly limitless number of possibilities.

The third limitation is its focus on the primary grades, particularly first grade. Though publishing class books is appropriate for any grade level, most of the ideas presented herein are for beginning or emergent writers and readers.

The final limitation is the inherent need of supplies. The most critical aspect of each literacy event is the writing process, but the natural result is the publication of a book. This requires paper, a computer or typewriter (though text can be hand-printed if need be), and binding materials, which might include some sort of machine to aid in the binding process. Though most schools would provide the needed materials, this could be a limitation for some. Also, a number of the literacy events cited are based on specific pieces of children's literature which may or may not be available to the teacher.

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# Appendix

## INTRODUCTION

Children learn language as they use it. The strategy lesson suggestions in this project encourage the writing and publishing of a variety of class books, creating literacy events in which children use language in meaningful, purposeful, and functional ways. Each event involves children in thinking, listening, speaking, writing, reading, and illustrating.

### Why Write and Publish Class Books?

Understanding the ***whys*** of these activities, however, is perhaps more important than tackling the ***hows***. When teachers understand the reasons for doing what they do, it breathes life into their curriculum and gives purpose to their teaching. This is especially true of whole language teachers, whose methods and actions are "firmly anchored in both practical theory and in theoretical practice" (Watson, 1987, p. vii). Following are some of the ***whys*** of the suggested activities.

Engaging students in the process of writing and publishing class books can help them:

1. learn language and learn about language by using it;
2. participate in meaningful and purposeful writing;
3. use their life experiences to construct meaning as they interact with printed language;
4. learn that meaningful communication is the purpose of reading and writing;
5. realize that reading and writing make sense;
6. have opportunities to integrate purposeful reading, writing, speaking, and listening;

7. become familiar with standard writing conventions;
8. acquire naturally a sense of story elements such as plot, characterization, setting, and so on;
9. develop planning, organizing, and sequencing skills;
10. experiment with the functions of language;
11. appreciate written language;
12. explore print in a variety of forms;
13. integrate writing and art;
14. discover language patterns;
15. exercise and develop their language abilities;
16. develop a number of writing strategies;
17. respond to literature by thinking, talking, writing, and drawing;
18. make important connections between literature and the curriculum and their own lives;
19. become part of a community of writers;
20. achieve success and develop self-confidence as writers.

General Guidelines

Class books, as defined for the purposes of this project, include: 1. books created by an entire class collaborating with one another and the teacher, 2. books created by small collaborating groups, 3. class sets of duplicated texts (such as song lyrics or poems) which are illustrated by the students, 4. books wherein each child contributes one or several pages to a class or group project.

Following are some general guidelines for planning and carrying out the activities. They are included here because they are not "spelled out" in each activity description, but should be kept in mind while planning.

1. First, these are not meant to be isolated activities, but should be linked to a theme, the curriculum, and the children's lives.
2. The students should engage in pre-writing activities, such as discussion; webbing or mapping; or brainstorming possibilities for plot, setting, characterization, format, and examples of text as applicable. Pre-writing activities are invaluable in helping the children develop ideas. It should be noted that directions are sometimes given in the guidelines of an activity such as "Generate a list...," or "Brainstorm ideas...." Naturally, these mean to involve the children in the process.
3. Subsequent to whole group pre-writing activities, children will often work alone, with a partner, or in small groups to create the text. Some activities lend themselves to whole group collaboration, such as "Our Rule Book" on 95. Others seem better suited for small group participation, such as "Points of View" on page 54. Still others are natural vehicles for individual efforts, such as "Our Favorite Books" on page 49. Suggestions for grouping are offered in most of the outlined activities, but ultimately this decision is up to the teacher.
4. Trust the students to come up with ideas. It is amazing how creative they can be in a non-threatening, supportive atmosphere.
5. There are several ways of acquiring the text. In whole group settings, text can be recorded using the Language Experience Approach (LEA) or shared writing. In LEA, the children dictate the text and the teacher records their exact words on a large chart or overhead projector. In shared writing, the teacher and students collaborate on the text, discussing topics, choice of wording, plot, and so on, with the teacher

acting as scribe, consultant, editor, and specialist. This allows the teacher to model the writing process and help make the text more interesting through questioning and discussion. A third method for writing text is for children to work alone, with partners, or in small groups to compose a page or portion of a class book. This would generally be done after being involved in pre-writing activities with a small group or the entire class. In this situation they would use invented spellings which could be edited and conventionalized for the final publication. Emergent writers, whose spellings are difficult or impossible to decipher, should read their pieces to a scribe soon after writing so they can remember what they wrote.

6. Let the children help create the titles. This can be done before writing, but is often easier once a piece is finally completed.
7. Printing of the final text can be done on a computer, on a typewriter, or by hand. It is often easier to delegate this task to a conscientious aide or parent helper.
8. The children should generally illustrate each page.
9. Some ways of assembling books are by stitching, lacing, stapling, or using commercial book binding machines. Several suggestions for book covers are: laminated construction paper, tagboard, or cardboard from cereal boxes covered with fabric or wall paper.
10. Many of the suggested activities, though presented as class projects, can spawn individual writing as well. Also, teachers may want to photocopy some of the class books to provide the children with their own individual copies.

Organization

The activities in the next section are grouped into six categories: Class Books as Literature Extensions, Class Books Within Thematic Units, Class Pattern Books, Class Books for Basic Instruction, Class Books of Songs and Poetry, and Class Books from Original Ideas.

## CLASS BOOKS AS LITERATURE EXTENSIONS

Literature extensions are activities which help students respond in some way to literature they have experienced. Their purpose is to "extend and enhance the understanding and enjoyment of literature in the classroom without resorting to worksheets" (Routman, 1991, p. 87). Routman suggests several guidelines for their use. They should evolve naturally from a literature event, should involve the students with thoughtful examination of the text, should demonstrate something the students have gained from the literature, should foster personal enjoyment, and should help connect literature to the students' lives. Literature extensions can be done individually, in pairs or groups, or by the whole class. One popular literature extension is the writing and publishing of class books.

This section will present some suggestions about how classes might extend specific pieces of literature in the form of class books.

## Our Favorite Books

This idea gives children the opportunity to share their favorite books with others by writing about them. The children write summaries of their favorite books, including reasons why they like them, perhaps relating a part they particularly enjoyed. These are bound into a class book.

### What to do

1. The students choose their favorite books. Encourage them to choose several so duplications can be avoided.
2. The children write brief summaries of their favorite books and tell why they like them.
3. Print each summary on a separate page.

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Adapted from: Crowley, P. (1987). Literature response logs: Making meaning, not borrowing it. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (pp. 35-36). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## Retellings

For this activity children retell their favorite stories. This can be done as a whole group or in small groups. Their retelling is written down and becomes the text of a class book which they illustrate.

### What to do

1. The children choose a favorite story they can easily retell, such as "Red Riding Hood," or "The Three Billy Goats Gruff."
2. Through collaboration, they retell the story.
3. Write down their retelling.
4. Print the retold version on pages to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## That's Good! That's Bad!

by Margery Cuyler

This story develops around a string of related events that are good one moment and bad the next, or vice versa. A little boy goes to the zoo with his parents. When they buy him a balloon that carries him into the sky, the text reads:

*Oh, that's good. No, that's bad!*

Bad because it carries him into a jungle and pops.

*Oh, that's bad. No, that's good!*

Good because he lands in a river and rides a hippo to shore.

*Oh, that's good. No that's bad!*

Bad because ten baboons are there who chase him up a tree.

This pattern continues until finally a stork carries him off. Bad? No, good—it drops him into his parents arms.

### What to do

1. Use the book's beginning or write a new one.
2. Start with an event that appears good but ends up bad.
3. Continue by having the bad event turn out good.
4. Maintain this pattern throughout the story.
5. Use the book's ending or write a new one.
6. Print each event on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Clap Your Hands

by Lorinda Bryan Cauley

The format of this book is easy to copy. It is a rhymed list of fun actions to do. The text begins:

*Clap your hands, stomp your feet.*

*Shake your arms, then take a seat.*

*Rub your tummy, pat your head.*

*Find something yellow, find something red.*

This pattern continues throughout the book, ending with:

*Fly like an airplane high in the sky.*

*It's time to go now, so wave bye-bye... Bye-bye!*

A rhymed version would be a challenge, but isn't necessary. Keep the actions simple ones the children will enjoy doing.

### What to do

1. Make a list of many fun, simple actions, for instance:

   *Act like a monkey, bark like a dog.*

   *Walk like a chicken, grunt like a hog.*

2. Use the book's ending or write a new one, such as:

   *Hold your nose, and count to ten.*

   *Now read the book all over again.*

3. Print each action on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

Look! Look! Look!

by Tana Hoban

This is a visual riddle book. A 1 1/2" by 2" hole in one page reveals a portion of a photograph on a second page. The children look through the hole and try to identify the object on the second page. Children can make similar books by using pictures from magazines. Though Look! Look! Look! has no text, text can be added to the class book if desired.

What to do

1. Provide construction paper (a color that can not be seen through) with a small window cut in the middle.
2. The children find magazine pictures that would be challenging to identify through the window. Pictures that hint of the object but do not reveal too many identifying details are best.
3. The students glue the pictures on the second page, using the window to help them position the picture in such a way that it is somewhat difficult to identify. Some children may need help with this part.
4. Simple text can be added if desired, such as:

   *What is it?* [on the window page]

   *It is a herd of zebras.* [on the picture page]

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Points of View

After the class is thoroughly familiar with a particular piece of literature, they can rewrite the story from a different point of view. For example, "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" could be told from the baby bear's point of view. Text can be created by a whole class or in small groups.

### What to do

1. Discuss the concept of point of view, using specific examples of familiar literature to point out how the story might change if told by a different character.
2. The children select a story they would like to tell from a different point of view.
3. Guide them to tell the story from a different character's point of view, for instance the baby bear's story might include what they did on their walk, how he felt when he realized someone had been in their house, his feelings when he found Goldilocks in his bed, and so forth.
4. Print the text on separate pages to be illustrated.

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Adapted from: Nelms, E. D. (1987). Points of view. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (pp. 134-135). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## Frog and Toad Diaries

Lobel's Frog and Toad have many experiences together. In this literature extension students create diaries for Frog and Toad by writing diary entries based on their escapades. The writing can be done in any group setting, whole, small, partner, or individual.

What to do

1. Read and discuss the Frog and Toad stories again and again so the children know them very well.
2. Familiarize students with diaries and their purposes.
3. Divide the students into two groups—one will write as Frog, the other as Toad.
4. Decide who will write about which adventures.
5. Pretending they are either Frog or Toad, the students write a diary entry about an adventure. It could consist of a summary, personal comments about their friendship, and possible plans for future fun.
6. Print each journal entry on a separate page to be illustrated.
7. Make two books: Toad's Diary and Frog's Diary.

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Adapted from: Romatowski, J. A. (1987). Author! Author!. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (pp. 37-38). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## An Alexander Day

Viorst's Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day gives children an excellent model to imitate.

What to do

1. Read the book and let students relate the tales of woe that have occurred on their own "Alexander Days."
2. Write events that might happen before school, such as:

   *I tripped and fell down the stairs.*

   *I missed the bus and had to walk to school.*
3. Write events that might happen at school, for instance:

   *We had a substitute. Her name was Viola Swamp.*

   *At recess the seat of my pants ripped out.*
4. Write things that might happen after school, such as:

   *The TV broke and I couldn't watch cartoons.*

   *My sister flushed my homework down the toilet.*
5. After the first two sections (before and during school) add Alexander's bemoaning, *"I could tell it was going to be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day."* After the last section, *"It **has been** a terrible..."*
6. Add other treatments from the story as desired.

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Adapted from: Raines, S. C. (1987). An Alexander day. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (pp. 49-50). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## CLASS BOOKS WITHIN THEMATIC UNITS

Many teachers organize curriculum around themes. When doing themes it is important they not be superficial. Activities centered around a topic may be fun but may lack substance. Routman (1991) cautions, "We need to begin asking ourselves whether such units are worth the enormous teacher preparation and class time that they require and whether they effectively foster the development of important concepts and skills" (p. 277). Worthwhile themes integrate related materials and also make meaningful connections to literature, to the curriculum, and to children's lives. In one approach called theme cycles, teachers and students negotiate the curriculum by developing their own units of study based on the children's interests.

Class books can enhance a thematic unit or be used as a culminating activity. They provide a format for students to demonstrate what they have learned or to make connections between the subject and their own lives. They also can be read again and again, shared with families and other classes, and be added to the class or school library.

This section will present procedures for establishing theme cycles and some suggestions on how classes might use class book publishing to enhance or culminate thematic studies.

## Theme Cycles

Classes develop their own curriculum and explore topics through reading, writing, and other activities.

### What to do

1. Negotiate a list of topics to study for the year from student interests and mandatory topics.
2. Using the LEA method, make three lists about a topic: "what we know" (about the topic), "what we want to know," and "how we can find out" (sources).
3. The students select what interests them from the "what we want to know" list and the teacher and students participate in a variety of learning activities—reading, writing, art, drama, music, movement, and so forth—to explore the subject. Through this process, many of the questions on the "what we want to know" list are answered and information on the "what we know" list is expanded, confirmed, or refuted.
4. To culminate the study, students present their findings in written and oral reports, diaries, plays, drawings, class or group books, and so forth.

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Adapted from: Harste, J. C., & Short, K. G. (with Burke, C.). (1988). Creating classrooms for authors: The reading-writing connection. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

## Our School Book

For a unit about School, the children can use this idea to create a simple encyclopedia-type book telling about things and people at their school. This could be bound as a book, or kept in a loose leaf notebook so new pages could be added continually.

### What to do

1. Generate a list of words related to school, for instance:

   *playground, cafeteria, principal, library, tetherball, teacher, desk, school bus, quiz*

2. As a class, in groups, with partners, or individually, the students select words and write a descriptive sentence or two about them. For example:

   *PLAYGROUND*

   *We play on the playground at recess. Our favorite games are hopscotch, jumprope, and kickback.*

3. Print each word and its description on a separate page to be illustrated.
4. Organize the pages in alphabetical order so the format is like a dictionary or encyclopedia.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Signs at School Help Us

This is a good activity for units about School, Communities, or Environmental Print. The class goes for a walk reading and recording all the environmental print on signs, doors, and so on. They duplicate each sign for a page in a book and create text that explains the purpose of the sign, what it means, and how it helps people.

### What to do

1. Take the class for a walk around the school. Read and discuss all the environmental print they find, such as:

   *Boys, Girls, Office, Cafeteria, Library, No Parking, Visitors please sign in at the office*

2. Duplicate each sign in the upper portion of a page.
3. As a whole class, in groups, as partners, or individually, the students write text for each sign that explains the purpose of the sign, what it means, and how it helps people.
4. Print the text on each page under the sign.

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Adapted from: Stires, S. (1987). An environmental print walk. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (p. 7). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## Biographies of Important People in Our School

The class interviews the principal, a teacher, or other school personnel, then writes a biography of that person as part of a unit on School or Community Helpers.

### What to do

1. Arrange for the interview in advance.
2. Collaborate on some questions, for example:

   *Where and when were you born?*

   *Tell us some stories about your childhood.*

   *Tell us about your family.*

   *Why do you like being a principal?*
3. Write at least one question for each child on 3x5 cards and have the students practice reading them.
4. On the day of the interview the children take turns asking questions. Record the interview or take notes.
5. Collaborate on a simple text for the biography, using the children's memories of the interview along with the recording or notes.
6. Print the text on pages to be illustrated.

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Adapted from: Bondy, E. (1987). Reading and writing biographies of important people in our school. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (pp. 17-18). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## Look Inside

by Lilly Ernesto

This story about buildings and activities associated with them is good for units on Communities or Occupations. It has a two-part pattern: Buildings are viewed from the outside, then from the inside. The text begins:

*Big and little, old and new, buildings are all around you. Wouldn't you like to know who is inside them?*

Then the outside of an airport is pictured. The text reads:

*This is an airport. Look inside it. Who can you see?*

The next page is inside the terminal. The text reads:

*I see passengers.* [someone in the building]

*They run to catch their planes.* [what they are doing]

This pattern continues for a post office, a school, a hospital, and so forth.

### What to do

1. Use the book's beginning or write a new one.
2. Determine which buildings will be used.
3. Write the text, following the pattern above for the outside and inside of each building.
4. Print the text for each "outside" picture on a page and its accompanying "inside" on the following page to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## We Are Experts

Whether it's rollerblading or baking cakes, soccer or taking care of hamsters, most children are "experts" at something. If they aren't, they can become experts with a little bit of help and research. This is one culminating activity for a theme entitled All About Me, in which students have explored their own personal characteristics, abilities, desires, preferences, and lives. It invites children to share and demonstrate their expertise through writing. They are then compiled into a class book.

### What to do

1. Help the children determine what they are experts at or would like to become experts at.
2. Those needing some help choose a field and are helped by parents, teachers, and peers to become an expert.
3. The children write reports about their fields of expertise. For instance, they could write about horseback riding, baking cookies, how to play soccer, how to care for a particular pet, archery, whales, or anything else they have experience with or knowledge about.
4. Print each one on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Who Do You See?

This idea uses the pattern found in Martin's Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?. The pattern begins:

*Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?*

*I see a Redbird looking at me.*

In this variation students' names and photographs are used. It could be part of a unit on Me, School, or Our Class.

### What to do

1. Take photographs of the students.
2. Duplicate pages with the following text:

   _____, _____, *who do you see?"*

   *I see* _____ *looking at me.*
3. Have a student write his or her name in the blanks:

   _____, _____, *who do you see?"*
4. The child whose name appears in the blanks draws a picture of himself or herself looking at the photograph of another child whose name provides the answer:

   *I see* _____ *looking at me.*
5. The last student writes about the first student.

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Adapted from: Milz, V. E. (1990). Supporting literacy development: On the first day in first grade and throughout the year. In H. Mills & J. A. Clyde (Eds.), Portraits of Whole Language Classrooms (pp. 93-106). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

## It's So Nice to Have a Pet Around the House

Most children have or have had pets. This activity invites students to share information about their pets with others through writing. It would fit nicely into units on Pets, Animals, Responsibility, and All About Me, or as a literature extension for stories about pets.

### What to do

1. Generate a list of specific information children could share about their pets (type, name, care of, traits, description, joys and problems of owning, behaviors, and so on).
2. Using this list as a framework, the children write about their pets.
3. Print each child's informational piece on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Adapted from: McCoy, C. (1987). It's so nice to have a pet around the house: learning about animals. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (pp. 158-159). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## Stories About Our Pets

This activity differs from the previous one in that students write true stories rather than information about their pets. It works well in units about Pets or Animals, or as a literature extension for stories about pets or animals.

### What to do

1. Generate a list of categories for true pet stories, such as sad stories, funny stories, dramatic stories, how pets were acquired, unusual pets, pets giving birth, and so on.
2. Using the list to inspire ideas, the children write true stories about their pets.
3. Print each child's story on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Favorite Sounds

Some sounds are pleasant, others irritating. Some signal enjoyable events, others connote unpleasant ones. In this activity students write about sounds they like and don't like. It can be used in a unit on The Senses or other themes, such as sounds of school, home, the farm, or city.

### What to do

1. Develop a list of sounds. For instance,

   *school bells ringing, sirens, a fire alarm, the ice cream truck, waves splashing, bacon sizzling*

2. Choosing from these or others they think of on their own, the students write about one sound they like and one they dislike and explain why. For example:

   *I love the sound of bacon sizzling because it makes my mouth water and I know I'm going to have bacon for breakfast. I LOVE BACON!*

   *I hate the sound of thunder because it scares me and makes me cry. I wish there wasn't thunder.*

3. Print each sound on a separate page to be illustrated.

4. Make two books, if desired. For example:

   *Sounds We Like* *Sounds We Dislike*

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Adapted from: Tiedt, S. W., & Tiedt, I. M. (1987). Language arts activities for the classroom (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

## Silence Is...

Students can write free verse poems about silence and compile them into a book. This activity can be part of a unit on The Senses, School, or The Environment.

### What to do

1. Have one minute of silence in the classroom or outside.
2. The children each write a list of the sounds they heard. (Alert them beforehand to listen for even the faintest sounds like someone breathing.)
3. They organize their lists as free verse poems, such as:

*Silence is...*

*cars going by*

*breathing*

*coughing*

*feet moving*

*a crow cawing*

4. Print each poem on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Adapted from: Tiedt, S. W., & Tiedt, I. M. (1987). Language arts activities for the classroom (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

## How Rude!

This idea came from a unit about Getting Along With Others. Being courteous and considerate of others is a concept children must be taught. One method is to invite the children to write about the opposite of courtesy, rudeness. They can do this as a whole class, in small groups, with partners, or individually.

### What to do

1. Write a beginning if desired, for instance:

   *It is not nice to be rude to others.*

   *When you are rude it makes people feel bad.*

   *Here are some rude things we shouldn't do.*

2. The children write things that are rude, such as:

   *It's rude to push people.*

   *It's rude to interrupt people who are talking.*

   *It's rude to throw things at your dog.*

3. Print each one on a separate page to be illustrated.

---

Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Important Words

This idea provides a format for children to organize information they have acquired during a thematic study. It helps them create a basic, simple dictionary or encyclopedia of key words or terms related to a specific topic.

### What to do

1. Throughout a thematic unit, develop a list of key words and terms relative to the subject. For instance, a unit on bees may result in the following partial list:

   *honeycomb, drone, beekeeper, royal jelly, proboscis, colony, queen, worker, cell, hive*

2. Working individually, with partners, in small groups, or as a whole class, the children write a definition, description, or explanation for each word.
3. Print each word with its definition on a separate page to be illustrated.
4. Organize the pages in alphabetical order so the format is like a dictionary or encyclopedia.

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Adapted from: Evans, M. A. (1987). Bees, bees, bees. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (pp. 160-162). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## Autobiographies

No story is more compelling to tell than the story of our own lives. This idea allows children the opportunity to write their autobiographies. They then are bound together as a class book. This idea can be used in conjunction with units on All About Me, Families, or Ancestors.

### What to do

1. Generate a list of questions the children can use with their parents and relatives to gather information for an autobiography. For example:

   *Where was I born?*

   *Were there unusual circumstances about my birth?*

   *What is my family tree?*

   *What were my first words?*

   *What funny things did I do or say as a toddler?*

2. Using the list as a guideline, the children consult with their parents and other relatives to write simple autobiographies including important events and people in their lives.
3. Print each autobiography on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Getting to Know You

For this activity the children interview each other. Using invented spelling and pictures, they record their information which is edited for a book. This activity is good for units about School, Friends, or All About Me.

What to do

1. Collaborate on a list of questions to ask, for instance:

   *Tell me about your family.*

   *Do you have any pets?*

   *What are some things you like to do?*

2. Each child is paired up with a partner.
3. The children interview each other using the questions, variations thereof, or any others they may want to ask. (Teach them how to ask about specific details.)
4. They take notes using invented spelling or pictures.
5. Print each "portrait" on a separate page. For example:

   *Megan has five people in her family, her mom and dad, two sisters, and her. She has a brown dog named Bart. Megan likes to swim.*

   [and so forth]
6. The children draw pictures of their partners or photographs could be used.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Add-a-Line Stories

These stories are created a line at a time by students taking turns adding a new line to the previous ones. This activity can be done with any grouping and can be used to write stories related to any thematic unit.

What to do

1. Pre-writing should involve discussions about the concepts of setting, plot, and characterization, and the topic if being used as part of a thematic unit.
2. Someone begins a story by making up a title or the first line, for instance:

   *I was walking to school.*
3. The next student adds a line to the story, such as:

   *A car came down the street very fast.*
4. Continue in this manner until the story is complete. Help the children as needed so the story flows logically and makes sense.
5. Record the text as it is created by each student by writing it down or recording it on a tape recorder.
6. Print the text on separate pages to be illustrated.

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Adapted from: Tiedt, S. W., & Tiedt, I. M. (1987). Language arts activities for the classroom (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

## CLASS PATTERN BOOKS

Using pattern books as reading material is common in many first grade classrooms. Because of their predictable, rhythmic, often repeating, or sometimes rhyming patterns, they are easy for children to learn to read. Regarding reading material for beginning readers, Goodman (1986) holds the view that "the best books at this stage are predictable books. Their familiar content and structure, and the often repetitious, cyclical sequencing makes them predictable....It's easy for kids to get a sense of where the book is going and to predict what is coming next" (p. 47).

Some classes publish their own pattern books which are subsequently used in the reading program. These can be original works using a pattern originated by the teacher or the students, imitations of published pattern books, or student illustrated versions of a published book using the author's original text. Class published pattern books are often created as big books to be used in shared readings.

This section will present some suggestions about how classes might use the pattern book format to write their own class books.

## Cookie's Week

by Cindy Ward

This story about a kitten named Cookie can be used in a unit about Pets or Cats. The text begins:

*On Monday, Cookie fell in the toilet.* [an event]

*There was water everywhere.* [the resulting mess]

The pattern continues each day (*On Tuesday..., On Wednesday...*) with Cookie doing things that result in a mess each time. The last few pages say:

*Tomorrow is Sunday... Maybe Cookie will rest!*

The final picture shows her off again to get into mischief.

### What to do

1. Decide on a main character. For example:

   *a cat, a baby, a monkey, a dinosaur, a student*

2. Write an event and mess for each day, such as:

   *On Monday, Charlie* [a baby] *found some crayons.*

   *There was scribbling everywhere!*

3. Print each event on a separate page and the resulting mess on the following page to be illustrated.

4. Use the book's ending or write a new one, such as:

   *On Sunday, Charlie's mom rested. But Charlie didn't!*

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## The Growing Up Up Up Book

by Veronica Buffington

The three-part, repetitive pattern of this book is very easy to understand and imitate. The text begins:

*I had a kitten.* [an animal]

*My kitten drank milk every day.* [what it eats]

*She grew up to be a cat.* [what it becomes]

The pattern continues with a colt that ate grass and became a horse, a tadpole that ate bugs and became a frog, and so forth. It ends with:

*I was a baby.*

*I drank milk every day.*

*And I grew up to be a big boy.*

What to do

1. Decide which animals to write about, what each ate, and what each grew into, such as:

   *I had a baby dinosaur.*

   *He ate a Stegosaurus every day.*

   *He grew up to be a Tyrannosaurus Rex.*

2. Print each of those details on a separate page for each animal to be illustrated. (There will be three pages for each animal.)
3. Use the book's ending or write a new one.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Who Am I?

by Nancy Christensen

This is a riddle book that is easy to imitate. Each page has a clue to the identity of an animal that is revealed at the end of the book. The text begins:

*I am not tall.*

*I am not small.*

*I have not any spots at all.*

Further clues are given, and finally the question is asked:

*Who am I?*

The last page reveals a cat. Though done in rhyme, the new version need not rhyme. This is a good book for whole class collaboration and can be adapted for any theme.

What to do

1. Decide on an animal, person, or thing.
2. Make a list of clues (many vague, a few specific).
   Clues can be positive (*I have..., I am..., I can...*)
   or negative (*I don't have..., I am not..., I cannot...*)
3. Print each clue on a separate page to be illustrated.
4. The ending should ask *Who am I?* or *What am I?* and the last page reveals the answer.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Sticky Stanley

by Thomas Crawford

Stanley has a problem. The text begins:

*Stanley liked candy.*

*Stanley liked sticky, sticky candy.*

Then, a three-part pattern develops: parts of his body get sticky, he sticks to things, people try to help but stick to him. Finally, firemen spray them and they come unstuck.

### What to do

1. Choose a name for the character.
2. Use the book's beginning or write a new one, such as:

   *Santa liked candy canes.*
3. Choose 3 parts of the body that get sticky, such as:

   *Santa's face was sticky.* [and so on]
4. Choose 4 things that the character sticks to, such as:

   *He stuck to his sleigh.* [and so on]
5. Choose 5 characters who try to help, for instance:

   *Rudolph tried to help.*

   *He stuck to Santa.* [and so on]
6. Use the book's ending or write a new one, for example:

   *The elves pelted them with snowballs until they came unstuck.*

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Freddie the Frog

by Rose Greydanus

This book has a five-part pattern. The text begins:

*Freddie the frog sat by a pond.*

*Along came a cat.*

*"Meow," said the cat.*

*Freddie tried to meow.*

*"Frogs cannot meow," said the cat.*

*"Only cats can meow."*

The pattern continues with a cow, a lion, a dog, and a frog. After the frog croaks, Freddie croaks and says:

*"Frogs can croak!"*

Each animal sound is then reviewed with the following text:

*Only cats can meow.* [and so on for each animal]

*But only frogs can croak.*

### What to do

1. Choose an animal for the main character.
2. Write a beginning line similar to the book's.
3. Choose several animals to come by and make their sound.
4. Follow the story pattern above for each animal.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?

by Bill Martin, Jr.

The repetitive, sing-song, question and answer pattern is easy for children to learn and mimic. The text begins:

*Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?*

*I see a redbird looking at me.*

*Redbird, redbird, What do you see?*

*I see a yellow duck looking at me.*

The pattern can be used for any subject. People, animals, or things related to a topic are all linked together in the question and answer of the original pattern. For example:

Winter: *Snowman, snowman... I see an icicle...*

Christmas: *Santa, Santa... I see Rudolph...*

Astronomy: *Mercury, Mercury... I see Earth...*

Ponds: *Tadpole, tadpole... I see a minnow...*

What to do

1. Choose the theme or topic to write about.
2. Using the pattern, the children link animals, people, or objects that relate to that topic. For instance, a book about winter could have a snowman, an icicle, a sled, ice skaters, a snowflake and so on.
3. Print each one on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

Where do you live?

by Robert A. and Marlene J. McCracken

This book gives a question and answer format for reviewing animal homes. The text reads:

*Do you live in a cave?* [the animal home]

*No! No! No! Bears live in caves.* [the animal]

The pattern is repeated for a nest/birds, a web/spiders, and so on. The question is on one page, the answer on the next. The question page pictures a child in the animal's home (e.g., a child in the cave), while the answer page pictures the animal in its home (e.g., a bear in the cave).

What to do

1. Each child chooses an animal and its home and writes the text following the pattern above, such as:

   *Do you live in a hole?*

   *No! No! No! Snakes live in holes.*

2. Print the question and answer on separate pages.
3. The children illustrate their questions with a child in the animal's home (e.g., a child in the snake's hole).
4. The children illustrate their answers with the animal in its home (e.g., a snake in the hole).

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## I Can Do It Myself

by Emily Perl Kingsley

In this book every line begins with "*I can...*" and concludes with something a child can do. A sample of the text is:

*I can put my toys away.*

*I can button my buttons.*

*I can write my name.*

The ending page says:

*I can look at this whole book.*

*I can do it myself!*

What to do

1. The children write things they can do. For example:

   *I can tie my shoes.*

   *I can ride a bike.*

   *I can count to 100.*

2. Use the book's ending or write a new one, such as:

   *I can read this book all by myself!*

3. Print each sentence on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## What do you do?

by Robert A. and Marlene J. McCracken

This book gives a question and answer format for reviewing animal behaviors. The text reads:

*Do you swing by your tail?* [the animal behavior]

*No! No! No! Monkeys swing by their tails.* [the animal]

The pattern is repeated for barking at the mailman/dogs, pecking holes in trees/woodpeckers, and so on. The question is on one page, the answer on the next. The question page pictures a child doing the animal's behavior (e.g., a child swinging by its tail). The answer page pictures the animal doing the behavior (e.g., a monkey swinging by its tail).

### What to do

1. Each child chooses an animal and behavior and writes the text following the pattern above, such as:

   *Do you tunnel under the ground?*

   *No! No! No! Moles tunnel under the ground.*

2. Print the question and answer on separate pages.
3. The children illustrate the question with a child doing the animal's behavior (e.g., a child tunneling).
4. The children illustrate the answer with the animal doing the behavior (e.g., a mole tunneling).

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## SO BIG, so little

This idea uses exaggeration to compare the concepts of big and little. Other opposites could be used.

What to do

1. Make a list of things that could be big, for instance:

   *an elephant, a python, a giant, a house*

2. Make a list of things that could be little, such as:

   *a bug, a baby, a lizard, a flower*

   [Keep in mind: size is relative—all of the above examples could be on either list depending on your point of view.]

3. Start with "*The _____ was so big [or so little]...*" and write something for each thing, concluding with an exaggeration based on relative size. For example:

   *The T-Rex was so big she had a bus for a skateboard.*

   *The ant was so little he thought the sink was an ocean.*

4. Print each one on a separate page to be illustrated.

5. Alternate "big" and "little" pages.

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Adapted from: Alvermann, D., et al. (1989). Cats sleep anywhere (teachers ed.). Lexington MA: D. C. Heath.

## Can You?

by Phyllis J. Sanders

Pairs of rhyming questions are the basis for this book's pattern. The first question is silly, its companion question more serious. A sample of the text is:

*Can you row a goat? Oh, no!*

*Can you row a boat? Yes, yes!*

The illustration on each page depicts the question.

What to do

1. Make a list of actions suitable for the text, such as:

   *wear, eat, ride, drive, throw, bake, play*

2. Work backwards on this pattern, writing the second question first, since it must make sense. For example:

   *Can you swim in the sea?*

3. Think of a rhyming, nonsensical question, like:

   *Can you swim in a tree?*

4. Put the two questions together with their answers:

   *Can you swim in a tree? Oh, no!*

   *Can you swim in the sea? Yes, yes!*

5. Write more combinations in this fashion.

6. Put the pairs of questions on the same page or on separate pages to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## CLASS BOOKS FOR BASIC INSTRUCTION

There are a number of basic concepts children must be taught such as colors, numbers, shapes, opposites, and rhyming words. When children are familiar with trade books that present these ideas they enjoy making their own versions. The writing of such books not only reinforces the teaching of the concepts, but lets children demonstrate their understanding of them and produces a new book for them to learn to read. Once children are comfortable with this format, which explores a concept by discussing its various components, it can be used for many different subjects such as manners, kindness, good citizenship, and so on.

These books can be original ideas or be based on published works. They might use only one or two words on each page to teach single concepts, or more complicated texts to present more complex ideas or relationships. These often become some of the most popular books in the classroom library.

This section will present some suggestions about how classes might use concept teaching as a model for writing class books.

## Is It Alive?

by Kimberlee Graves

This book reinforces the concept of living and non-living things. It has a simple question and answer pattern. The text begins:

*Is the turtle alive? Yes, it is.*

This pattern continues throughout the book, referring to living as well as non-living things, such as:

*Is the rock alive? No, it's not.*

What to do

1. Make lists of living and non-living things.
2. The children select the ones they want to include in the book.
3. Write the text by following the question and answer pattern above.
4. Print each one on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Opposites

There are several ways to do books about opposites like happy and sad, over and under, and so forth. Students can use pairs of opposite words with illustrations, sentences which present opposites, or entire stories like Muffy and Fluffy, the Kittens Who Didn't Agree by Craig, which is about twin kittens who look alike but are opposites. Some of the text reads:

*If Muffy says yes, Fluffy says no.*

*If Fluffy plays in, Muffy plays out.*

What to do

1. Make a list of opposites.
2. Decide on a format: pairs of words, sentences, or a story.
3. If "pairs of words" is chosen, the children choose the words from the list they want to illustrate.
4. If sentences are decided on, the children choose which words they want from the list and write sentences.
5. If a story is picked, use the list of opposites and write a story together.
6. Print the text on separate pages to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Colors

Books about colors can be done in a number of ways. Children can use several words with an illustration (*Red Car, White Snowman*), phrases (*RED as a race car, WHITE as a snowman*), sentences, or entire stories.

What to do

1. Decide on a format: several words, phrases, sentences, or a story.
2. If "several words" is chosen, the children choose which colors they want and write the words.
3. If phrases or sentences are decided on, the children choose which colors they want and write phrases or sentences to represent the colors.
4. If a story is picked, write a story which uses color words abundantly.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Fractions Walk

Take the children on a "fractions walk." They search for things that represent fractions. They write their findings in a book.

What to do

1. After the children have a grasp of simple fractions, take them on a "fractions walk." As they discover each fraction, have them verbalize what makes it a fraction. For example, a basketball court represents halves because a line divides it into two equal parts.
2. "Manipulate" the objects to demonstrate other fractions. For instance, if the children stand in 3 of the 4 squares of a four-square game, 3/4 of the game has children in it while 1/4 is empty. Let the children think of ways to make different fractions.
3. The children write about and illustrate each fraction on separate pages for a book. For example,

   *We saw a four-square game. It was divided into fourths. We stood in 3/4. 1/4 was empty.*

   *We saw 8 trees. One was dead. 7/8 of the trees were alive. 1/8 was dead.*

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Word Problems

Once children understand word problems, they enjoy writing their own. It is easy to develop story problems based on thematic units. For instance, for a unit on whales, students could write word problems about migration, the number of whales in a pod, weight gain by baby whales, or fanciful problems about whales. Even first graders can use calculators, so large numbers are not a negative factor.

### What to do

1. After the children have had a lot of exposure to word problems and how they work, have them write their own.
2. They can use facts they have learned, or just have fun with language and write fanciful ones. For example:

   *Baby Beluga had a birthday party and invited some of his friends. Six dolphins came, three blue whales came, and Raffi came. How many friends came to Baby Beluga's party?*
3. Some will have trouble writing problems that make sense. Help them re-word their problems so they do.
4. Print several problems on each page of a book. Make sure every student has at least one problem included.
5. Reproduce the pages so each child can have a book.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Follow the Leader

Play a game of "Follow the Leader" with the children which involves many actions like going down a slide, hopping on one foot, zigzagging around trees, jumping off a bench, and so on. After the game have them write a book about the game describing everything they did.

What to do

1. Play "Follow the Leader" with many movements and actions.
2. Write a beginning. For instance:

   *Today we played "Follow the Leader." It was fun.*
3. The children write about each movement or action, such as:

   *We slid down the slide.*

   *We ran around the field.*

   *We hopped on the hopscotch game.*

   *We flapped our arms like birds.*
4. Print each description on a separate page.
5. Write an ending if desired. For example:

   *When the game was over, we were so tired we all took a nap. And we snored, just like the leader.*

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Dear Abby

This idea engages students in the writing of advice columns. The columns are then compiled into a book.

### What to do

1. Introduce children to the concept of advice columns and share some examples they can relate to from "Dear Abby" or "Ann Landers," or some original examples.
2. Think of a title like "Dear Know-It-All."
3. The children write problems, such as:

   *Dear Know-It-All,*

   *My boy friend dumped me. I am sad. What do I do?*

   *Frowning in Fontana*
4. Part of the fun can be thinking of a catchy pseudonym like "Frowning in Fontana."
5. Other students write the advice. For instance:

   *Dear Frowning in Fontana,*

   *Find a new one who is cuter.*

   *Know-It-All*
6. Print each question and answer on the same page.

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Adapted from: Saal, D. R. vom. (1987). All about radio for all. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (p. 156). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## Animals That Behave Like Humans: Personification

Students identify examples of personification in animal fantasy stories and record their findings in a class book.

What to do

1. Read many stories in which animals are portrayed with human characteristics and discuss personification.
2. List the human characteristics of the animals in these stories (e.g., talks, walks uprightly, wears clothes).
3. Organize a loose leaf notebook with subject dividers so there is a section for each characteristic.
4. Students find examples of each characteristic, they write about it, illustrate it, and add it to the appropriate section. For example, a section entitled **Ride Bikes**, might contain the following entry:

   *Frog and Toad are riding a bike on the cover of Frog and Toad Together. It is a bicycle built for two. Frog is in front and Toad is in back.*
5. Organize the pages of each section in the alphabetical order of the characters' names.

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Adapted from: Cutts, K. (1987). Animal fantasy: Personification. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (pp. 31-32). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## Our Rule Book

By the time children reach first grade they can articulate many "rules" about good and poor behavior. At the beginning of the year it may prove valuable to have the children brainstorm a list of rules for a class book. This book could be referred to throughout the year to address particular behaviors.

### What to do

1. Brainstorm a list of rules for desirable and undesirable behavior. For example:

   *Always say "please" and "thank you."*

   *You should share with others.*

   *Don't take cuts.*

   *Don't pull other people's hair.*

2. Add some "becauses" if desired. For instance:

   *Don't tear pages out of books because you'll ruin them and other people won't be able to read them.*

3. Print each one on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## I Can Read

Children often learn to read environmental print before other kinds of printed material. This idea helps students create a class scrapbook of environmental print.

### What to do

1. The children bring product labels, packaging, signs, or other environmental print from home, or cut them from magazines, newspapers, or advertising circulars.
2. After examining all the samples, the children choose ones they can read.
3. Provide each student with a blank page that has the child's name on top with the words *can read*. For example:

   *Sarah can read*
4. The children glue their selections (the actual box front, can label, and so on) below the text, such as:

   *Sarah can read*

   *Cheerios*

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Adapted from: Goodman, D. (1987). When will I read?. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (pp. 9-10). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## New Stories from Picture Clues

This strategy requires students to predict language from the content of pictures and write a story using only picture cues.

### What to do

1. Select a book that is unfamiliar to the students, but which has good illustrations that tell the story.
2. Cover the text and show the children the illustrations. Go through the entire book several times encouraging discussion about what the story is about.
3. Working as a whole class, have the students write their own version of the story by dictating a text for each page.
4. Print the text for each page on a blank piece of paper.
5. The students illustrate the pages, using the original book as a guide.
6. Read both versions of the story and compare and contrast.

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Adapted from: Tyler, K. L. (1987). Creating a new story from picture clues. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (p. 64). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## Superlative Stories

This activity has students write stories using superlatives. A list of story starters using superlatives is generated, from which each student chooses a title and writes a personal experience or makes up a fictitious story.

What to do

1. Generate story starters using superlatives, such as:

   *The most interesting thing I have ever done is...*

   *The craziest thing I ever did was...*

   *The funniest thing that ever happened to me was...*

   *The saddest story I ever heard was...*

   *The scariest thing I ever saw was...*

2. Each student chooses one to write about and writes a true experience or invents a fictitious one.
3. Print each one on a separate page to be illustrated.
4. Group the stories by topic and make a book for each topic, for instance:

   *The Scariest Book*

   *The Funniest Book*

   *The Most Interesting Things We've Ever Done Book*

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Adapted from: Tiedt, S. W., & Tiedt, I. M. (1987). Language arts activities for the classroom (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

## What Do You Do?

In this activity, the children write short selections based on a question that begins with "What do you do...." For instance, "What do you do for fun on rainy days?" or "What do you do for fun in the car on long trips?" or "What do you do when someone hurts your feelings?" These are compiled into books that become classroom reading material and may be used to generate discussions on the topics. "What do you do?" questions can be generated for any theme.

### What to do

1. Brainstorm a list of questions such as the ones above that begin with "What do you do..."
2. Each student chooses one to write about and writes an explanation that answers the question.
3. Print each one on a separate page to be illustrated.
4. Group them by topic and make a book for each topic. For example:

   *What To Do On A Rainy Day*

   *What To Do In The Car On Long Trips*

   *What To Do When Someone Hurts Your Feelings*

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Adapted from: Tiedt, S. W., & Tiedt, I. M. (1987). Language arts activities for the classroom (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

## CLASS BOOKS OF SONGS AND POETRY

Song lyrics can be reproduced in class books and illustrated by the children. Harp and Brewer (1991) advocate using the words of songs to make class books:

> Singing is a celebration of language. Language naturally has rhythm and melody. One need only listen to the language of children to hear its rhythms and melodies. Children bring this natural music of language with them to the task of learning to read, and so using singing to teach reading draws on the native understanding of language that all children share....It makes sense to integrate music and reading in the elementary school classroom: language and music go together like walking and dancing....Song puts readers in touch with satisfying meanings....it represents another way of allowing children to experience language as a whole. (pp. 436-438)

Poetry and nursery rhymes also make excellent text for class books. Children love their rhythms and rhymes. Short poems or nursery rhymes can be collected into a book, one to a page, and the children can illustrate each one. Some poems can stand alone as the text of a book by putting one line on each page. There are also many simple poem forms that can be taught to young children so they can write their own poems for a class anthology.

This section will present some suggestions about how classes might use song lyrics and poetry in writing class books.

## Song Books

Song lyrics can be reproduced to make class song books.

What to do

1. Choose songs that the children already know.
2. Have the children sing the songs using a chart. Move a finger or pointer under each line of print.
3. Reproduce the lyrics of many songs, one to a page, into a collection that can be duplicated for each student.

   *or:* Make books with only a few lines of lyric on each page (one song for each book).
4. Duplicate the books for each class member.
5. Several activities children can do with the song books:
   A. Sing (read) the song with or to a friend.
   B. Follow the lyrics in the booklet while listening to the recorded song at the listening center.
   C. Use the song booklet to locate the words of the song in other songs, books, or magazines.
   D. Write additional verses to the song.
   E. Write a new song based on the same subject.

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Adapted from: Harp, B. & Brewer, J. (1991). Reading and writing: Teaching for the connections. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

## Name That Tune

Many favorite songs can be modified by adding new verses or creating new songs. Each new verse could be printed on a separate page and illustrated for a class book. Or, several songs could be modified, each one becoming a page in a song book. Some suggestions are: "A Hunting We Will Go," "Down by the Bay," "Billy Boy," and "Do Your Ears Hang Low?."

### What to do

1. Write the words of the song on the chalkboard.
2. Erase all the nouns or verbs or both, and discuss what other words would make sense in the blanks.
3. Make up new verses by inserting appropriate words in the blanks. For example, "The Farmer in the Dell" might become "The Student in the School." Possible verses might include:

   *The student did her homework.*

   *Her dog ate her homework.*

   *The teacher was mad.* [and so forth]

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Adapted from: Lau, C. (1987). A change of tune. In D. J. Watson (Ed.), Ideas and insights: Language arts in the elementary school (pp. 100-101). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

## Poetry Anthologies

Poems are an excellent literary form for children to learn to read. Thematic poetry can be reproduced for each child to illustrate and learn.

What to do

1. Create thematic poetry anthologies by collecting poems written about a certain topic, such as weather, clouds, autumn, family, pets, humor, Christmas, and so forth.
2. Print 10 or so poems about one topic on the bottom of separate pages, leaving room at the top for an illustration.
3. Duplicate the pages and staple them into booklets for each student. Leave the cover blank, with no title.
4. After reading a poem aloud several times with the class, have the students illustrate it.
5. Repeat this process for a week or so, until all the poems in the booklet have been illustrated. Meanwhile, read the previously illustrated poems again and again.
6. When all the poems are finally illustrated and learned, brainstorm titles for the book. Each child chooses a title, writes it on the cover and illustrates it.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Poems with Two-Word Lines

One simple but effective poetry pattern children can easily write consists of just two words on each line that help describe the one-word title. Rhyming is challenging, but not necessary. The finished poems can be compiled into a class anthology. The titles could come from any unit.

What to do

1. Develop a list of one word titles which are topics or themes the children know something about. For instance:

   *fun, winter, school, friends, sad, happy, games*

2. Each child chooses a title and writes a poem composed of two-word lines, such as:

   *Fun...*

   *Bikes racing,*

   *Balls bouncing,*

   *Skateboards rumbling,*

   *Kites pulling.*

3. Many other two-word patterns can be developed.

4. Print each poem on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Adapted from: Tiedt, S. W., & Tiedt, I. M. (1987). Language arts activities for the classroom (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

## Cinquains

Cinquains are five-line poems with a specific pattern. Classes can develop their own patterns. Once children learn the form, they can write cinquains on any subject and compile them into books.

What to do

1. Generate a list of one word titles which are subjects the children know something about, for instance:

   *puppies, rain, vacation, summer, swimming, ice*

2. Follow this pattern to write a poem:

   Line 1: one word (the title)

   Line 2: two words (adjectives describing the title)

   Line 3: three words (action words describing the title)

   Line 4: two words (feelings describing the title)

   Line 5: one word (a noun referring back to the title)

3. Here is an example:

   *Vacation*

   *Fun, great*

   *Swimming, camping, fishing*

   *Happy, tired*

   *Summer*

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Adapted from: Tiedt, S. W., & Tiedt, I. M. (1987). Language arts activities for the classroom (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

## Acrostic Poems

The special characteristic of the acrostic poem is that the first letters of each line spell a word vertically. Acrostics can be used to write about famous people, a topic of study, a season, and so forth.

What to do

1. Choose a topic.
2. Print the letters vertically, so each one begins a new line of the poem.
3. Write words, phrases, or sentences that describe the topic beginning with each letter. Following is an example for WINTER:

   ***W**hite snow everywhere*

   ***I**cicles hanging from my house*

   ***N**oses turning red*

   ***T**rees without leaves*

   ***E**verybody's bundled up*

   ***R**iding in a sleigh*

4. Print each poem on a separate page to be illustrated.

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Adapted from: Tiedt, S. W., & Tiedt, I. M. (1987). Language arts activities for the classroom (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

## CLASS BOOKS FROM ORIGINAL IDEAS

Class books do not always have to be extensions of literature or a culmination of class studies. They do not have to imitate trade books or teach basic concepts. They don't even have to fit into a thematic unit or a teacher's lesson plans. Sometimes children just want to write about something they are interested in, a common experience, or something they regard as important.

Teachers should be sensitive to situations—often spontaneous—which present opportunities for students to collaborate on a book, sometimes for no other reason than it seems like a good idea at the time. These ideas are often engendered by common experiences such as a field trip or school assembly, emotional events like the death of a schoolmate or the marriage of a teacher, or natural phenomena such as an earthquake or thunderstorm. If students are used to sharing their experiences through writing, and have written class books on a variety of subjects, it is very natural for them to suggest writing a book about something they have experienced or is important to them.

This section will relate several examples of original class books that were suggested by students and eagerly written by their class. They can be used as models for other class books.

## The Day the Wind Blew

## Very, Very, Very, Very, Very, Very Hard

One day the wind was blowing exceptionally hard. The children came in from recess talking enthusiastically about it. The conversation turned to some of the funny things that might happen as a result of strong gusts of wind. Someone suggested that we write a humorous book about it, and The Day the Wind Blew Very, Very, Very, Very, Very, Very Hard was conceived.

What to do

1. Compose a beginning together. For example:

   *One day the wind blew very, very, very, very, very, very hard. It blew so hard...*

2. Each child writes a sentence, such as:

   *It blew all my homework away.*

   *It blew my hair away.*

   *It blew King Kong away.*

3. Print the sentences on separate pages to be illustrated.

4. Write an ending if desired. For instance:

   *And then it stopped.*

---

Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Our Pledge of Allegiance Book: How to Be Good Citizens

One morning after the Pledge of Allegiance, we had a discussion about what it means to be a good citizen. It was suggested that we write a book about being good citizens. We called it Our Pledge of Allegiance Book: How to Be Good Citizens.

### What to do

1. Compose a beginning together. For instance:

   *When we pledge our allegiance to the flag, we are making a promise that we will be good citizens. These are some things a good citizen does.*

2. Each child writes a sentence, such as:

   *A good citizen doesn't litter.*

   *A good citizen is nice to other people.*

   *A good citizen doesn't waste water.*

3. Print the sentences on separate pages to be illustrated.

4. Write an ending if desired. For example:

   *We should all try to be good citizens.*

---

Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Some Words Make a Sound

In one story we read, a balloon pops. The author indicates the popping sound with: POP! This led to a discussion on words that "make a sound." We listed quite a few on the chalkboard. Someone suggested we write a book about them, so we did.

What to do

1. Compose a beginning together, such as:

   *Some words make a sound.*

2. Collaborate on a list of words that "make sounds."
3. Each child selects a different sound word and writes a sentence using that word in it, for instance:

   *The ocean roars against the rocks.*

   *A bee buzzes.*

   *When my car backfires it goes POP!*

4. Print the sentences on separate pages to be illustrated.
5. Write an ending if desired, for example:

   *Can you think of other words that make a sound?*

---

Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Remembering David

One year, a student in my first grade class passed away. The class wanted to write a book about him and give it to his family. The students wrote and illustrated memories they had of David. This activity can also be used when a student moves, a teacher retires, or other situations for which students may want to record memories.

### What to do

1. Compose a beginning together, such as:

   *David is our friend. We will always remember him.*

2. Each child writes a memory. For example:

   *I remember all the jokes he told us in class.*

   *He was a funny guy. He made me laugh.*

3. Print the memories on separate pages to be illustrated.

4. Write an ending if desired, for instance:

   *He will always be our friend. We will miss him.*

---

Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## Was That an Earthquake
## or Did a Train Just Run into Our House?

On February 28, 1990, two earthquakes rattled Southern California, one at 3:40 p.m. and the other at 7:20 p.m. The next day my class could not stop talking about them. Someone suggested we write our experiences into a book. We chose the above title because that's what one student said to her mother. This activity could be used for any natural disaster or any other common event shared by the children.

### What to do

1. The children write down what they were doing at the time of the earthquake (or other event), how they felt as it was taking place, and how it affected them, their class, or members of their family.
2. Print the reports on separate pages to be illustrated.

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Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

## The Wish Book

We had an assembly where a singing group performed. One of their songs was about wishing for things that would make the world a better place. When we got back to class we had a discussion about some of those things. It was suggested we write them in a book. We called it The Wish Book.

What to do

1. Compose a beginning together if desired, such as:

   *We wish the world could be a better place.*

   *Here are some things we think would make it better.*

2. Each child writes a wish, for instance:

   *I wish people would stop fighting.*

   *I wish that starving people had food.*

   *I wish that stray animals had a home.*

3. Print the wishes on separate pages to be illustrated.

4. Write an ending if desired. For example:

   *If we all do our part these wishes might come true.*

---

Developed by: H. Lawrence Heywood

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