

Study Guide

CRAFT MOVES

Lesson Sets for
Teaching Writing
with Mentor Texts



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Summary

How do you choose mentor texts for your students? How do you mine them for the craft lessons you want your students to learn?

In *Craft Moves*, Stacey Shubitz does the heavy lifting for you: using twenty recently published picture books, she creates more than 180 lessons to teach various craft moves that will help your students become better writers.

Stacey first discusses picture books as teaching tools and offers ways to integrate them into your curriculum and classroom discussions. She also shares routines and classroom procedures to help students focus on their writing during the independent writing portion of writing workshop and helps teachers prepare for small-group instruction.



Introduction

Overview

In this opening section, author Stacey Shubitz shares several ways to make strong reading-writing connections for students. She shows teachers how to use mentor texts, which can include books, short stories, articles, and letters, to expand the range and quality of students' writing.

A Quote to Ponder

Some teachers encourage students to dissect mentor texts in an effort to glean as much as possible from the writing. Yet over-studying a text can extract the joy from reading like a writer (4).

Guiding Questions for Discussion

- On page 5, Stacey talks about the importance of having window and mirror books as part of your mentor text collection. Review your existing mentor text collection. If your books are mostly mirrors, consider the kind of books you could add to your collection in order to highlight the experiences of people who are different from your students. If your books are mostly windows, how could you add more books that will allow your students to see themselves in the mentor texts you use?
- Reflect on Stacey's comment: "Our students don't stay with us forever. Helping students to use mentor texts well is one of the greatest gifts we can give them" (6). Write about your experiences of guiding students with published mentor texts. Have your students' reading-writing connections been meaningful or superficial in the past? Use the written reflection as a springboard for a group discussion with colleagues. Talk about how you will help all students make meaningful reading-writing connections so they can do this work independently after they leave your classroom.

Chapter One

Choosing Picture Books for Mentor Texts

Overview

This chapter suggests techniques that will help you craft small-group lessons from picture books. Stacey also suggests techniques for finding favorite mentor texts and authors.

A Quote to Ponder

Authors are like trusted colleagues we invite to teach alongside us. Their books inspire us, their personal stories and struggles resonate with us, and they show us new ways of understanding. When we welcome authors we trust into our classrooms, we can use their work to show students how professionals become better writers (15).

Guiding Questions for Discussion

- Review Stacey’s process for mining picture books for craft moves. With your colleagues, talk about how Stacey’s process is similar to or different from your approach. Discuss how you can integrate Stacey’s process with your own protocol for teaching students how to read like a writer and mine texts for craft moves.
- Reflect on Stacey’s comment: “All kinds of figurative language—metaphors, personification, hyperbole, and so on—can make writing stronger. But deep figurative language instruction can wait until kids have a grade-level command of structure, development, and language conventions” (12). Do you agree or disagree with the way she decides what to teach students when she confers with them or meets with them in small groups?
- Discuss the cupcake metaphor Stacey invokes on page 12. As a group, talk about when you might teach students how to write with figurative language in a craft lesson using a mentor text.
- With your group or team, discuss when, why, and how you will use picture books as mentor texts across grade levels.

Suggested Activities

- Using Stacey’s process or the protocol you have developed, choose a mentor text to mine for craft moves alongside one or more of your colleagues.
- Use Figure 1.5 on page 15 to help you and your colleagues ask questions of a mentor text you plan to use with your students.



CHAPTER TWO**Reading Picture Books for Pleasure and Purpose****Overview**

Chapter 2 provides a discussion of picture books as a teaching tool and offers ways to integrate them into the curriculum, workshops, and classroom discussions. We see how read-aloud time can become a cherished part of the school day during which we can model comprehension strategies, cultivate classroom community, and share the connections among reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

A Quote to Ponder

It's wise to spend a few days immersing students in the genre in which they are going to write (Bomer 2010; Caine 2008; Eickholdt 2015; Ray 2006). Engaging with good writing helps kids develop a vision for their own texts (21).

Guiding Questions for Discussion

- Stacey recognizes that there's never enough time when you're a classroom teacher (18), which is why she suggests selecting mentor texts that can do double and triple duty. However, she does caution teachers not to focus too much on one particular book (19). How do you and your colleagues think you can achieve a delicate balance of using a text across a school day?
- Do you and your colleagues think immersion days (20-22) are worth the investment before jumping into a unit of study? If so, consider how many immersion days you will need before your next unit of study begins.

Suggested Activities

- Discuss how some of the suggested texts in Chapters 5 and 6 can fit into other parts of your school day/curriculum.
- Plan immersion days (20-22) for your next unit of study with your colleagues. Think about the books you're going to share with students and how you will help them notice the craft moves in those books.
 - How will you use or adapt Figure 2.1 on page 21 to help guide your

students' mentor text explorations?

- Use Figure 2.2 on page 23 to help you plan different kinds of share sessions for your immersion days.



CHAPTER THREE

Establishing Routines and Procedures for Writing with Mentor Texts

Overview

Chapter 3 helps us see how creating special writing workshop expectations, developing a predictable workshop rhythm, teaching students how to be responsible for classroom supplies, and timing yourself can help you meet with as many students as possible during independent writing time, which should be the heart of your writing workshop.

A Quote to Ponder

It's important for all students to know they cannot interrupt you—unless it's an emergency—while you're leading a writing conference or small-group strategy lesson (31).

Guiding Questions for Discussion

- Stacey talks about the importance of having scheduled writing workshops (25) so that students have regular opportunities to practice writing and work within a community of writers. Are your students writing for forty-five to sixty minutes, at least four times a week? If not, what can you do to increase the time and/or frequency of your writing workshop?
- With your teaching team or collegial study group, take on the topic of stamina. What does independent writing time look like in your classroom? How long can your students sustain writing? If stamina is an issue, talk about some ways to build stamina in small increments (27). Plan to revisit this topic during your next meeting so you can discuss what worked and next steps.
- Discuss how you will make mentor texts available to students (31) if your budget prohibits you from buying multiple copies of picture books.

Suggested Activities

- If you don't already have a list of expectations for writing workshop (26) that you've cocreated with your students, then schedule a time to make one. Write down a list of your nonnegotiables before you head into this planning session with your students.

- Create a conferring toolkit (29) with the members of your grade-level team.



Chapter Four

Small-Group Strategy Lessons: Talking with Students About Their Writing

Overview

Chapter 4 provides strategies for small-group instruction during writing workshop. There are a variety of ways to form small groups. Some students meet once, whereas others meet for a series of lessons to help them reach a goal.

A Quote to Ponder

Small-group strategy lessons are not a substitute for one-to-one conferences. Although it seems easier to meet with groups of students than to confer with them individually, you won't develop rich writer-to-writer relationships if you meet with children only in small groups (34).

Guiding Questions for Discussion

- Stacey cautions against over-scaffolding in strategy lessons (34). With your colleagues, discuss ways to ensure students are doing most of the work in small-group strategy lessons.
- Use Figure 4.3 (on page 38) to help you and your colleagues think about the four methods of instruction. Which of these methods seems most appealing? Which seems most daunting? Which method(s) would you want to try first, and why?
- Talk about the Kiara scenario Stacey presented on page 41. How might the work we do with reading-writing connections in mentor texts lay the groundwork for students to notice and note craft moves they admire when they're reading independently?

Suggested Activities

- Review the different kinds of small-group formations Stacey suggests on pages 35–37. Pick two ways you can use to form small groups. Then, create a plan for implementing small-group instruction based on the kind of formations you select.

- Setting goals for every student can help us create small-group lessons for students who have the same goals (36–37). Set aside time to examine your conferring notes and your students' writing to think about their writing goals. Then, look for commonalities, which will help you create small-group lessons for students with similar goals.
- If small-group craft lessons are new to you, use Figure 4.4 on page 39 to help you plan what you'll say during your first strategy lesson. You can use these prompts and short questions to help you script the craft lessons Stacey has shared in Chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter Five

Fiction Lesson Sets: Ten Texts, Thousands of Possibilities

Overview

Chapter 5 contains strategy lessons—from ten different fiction picture books—that you can teach students to help them become better writers. Stacey shows teachers how to choose picture books that represent a variety of religions, races, and sexual orientations. She explains that every time she reads a picture book for consideration, she looks for two things: power craft moves she can teach to kids, and characters and themes that probe the range of human experience. Many of these texts will invite your students to imagine a world or lifestyle different from their own, which may also increase their desire to write with a wider lens.

A Quote to Ponder

I believe all students deserve to read mirror books, in which they can see themselves, and window books, in which they can learn about others (43).

Interacting with the Lesson Sets

- Examine the different kinds of leads shared throughout the chapter. Develop a small-group course of study for teaching leads to your writers who struggle with hooking their readers. (You may wish to develop an endings course of study for your writers who struggle to conclude their narrative writing in a way that's satisfying to their readers.)
- If you have students who speak more than one language, encourage them to code-switch in their writing by alternating between their home language and English. Read through the code-switching lessons on pages 53 and 91. Determine what will be the most meaningful way to teach your students this process and share it with them. Afterward, reflect with a colleague. Consider teaching a second small-group lesson to help your students become more comfortable with code-switching. You also may need to confer with one or two students to make sure they can add code-switching to their writer's toolboxes.
- Look at the way turning point is presented across several texts (lessons on

pages 58, 72, 80, 90, 104, 112, and 122). Which one of these lessons might be best to start with when inviting your students to create defining moments for their main characters? In addition, consider how you could plan a course of study for a group of students who struggle with structuring their stories and creating turning points.

- There are a variety of lessons that will help you teach students how to create voice by experimenting with different kinds of punctuation. If you don't already have a grammar goal for each student, spend some time setting them. Next, form groups of students who have similar needs and identify "punctuation to create voice" craft moves lessons that will help your students reach their goals.

Chapter Six

Nonfiction Lesson Sets: Moving from Narrative to Informational Writing

Overview

Chapter 6 contains strategy lessons—from ten different nonfiction picture books—you can use to help students strengthen their information writing skills. Stacey also explains her support for diversity and a broad inclusion of voices represented in nonfiction picture books chosen as mentor texts.

A Quote to Ponder

The We Need Diverse Books organization comprises children’s literature enthusiasts who advocate for “essential changes in the publishing industry to produce and promote literature that reflects and honors the lives of all young people” (127).

Interacting with the Lesson Sets

- Teaching kids to embed content-specific vocabulary into their writing can be tricky. We want them to use a teaching voice, but we also want to make sure their writing makes sense. There are several books that include lessons for both content-specific vocabulary and teaching tone (*Big Red Kangaroo*; *Founding Mothers*; *I See a Pattern Here*; *No Monkeys, No Chocolate*; and *The Slug*). Study these lessons to see how they fit tongue-and-groove. Then, plan some small-group strategy lessons to help improve your students’ ability to embed technical language into their writing while maintaining a teaching voice.
- Have you been struggling to help your students attribute their sources properly? Do they need help using quotations? If you answered yes to one or both of these questions, read through the quotes and sources lessons. The lesson from *A Splash of Red* (141) will help you teach students how to embed citations at the end of their text, and the lesson from *Founding Mothers* (167) will help you show students how to embed partial quotations in their writing. Although these lessons are presented for use with a small group, they could easily be adapted into a mini-lesson with all students.
- Many lessons can help you teach your students how to incorporate text

features (e.g., captions, fact inserts, graphic style, headings, maps and pictures, print layout, speech balloons, time lines, and types of print) into their writing in meaningful ways. Which text features would be most helpful to your students? Which lessons can be reserved for small groups? Are there any craft lessons you think all of your students might need? If so, you could teach those as mini-lessons.