

Six-Traits Writing: Terrific Picture Books & Mini Lessons

- *IDEAS & CONTENT*
- *WORD CHOICE*

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Penny's Picks for Ideas & Content

Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street
Roni Schotter

The Mysteries of Harris Burdick
Chris Van Allsburg

Everybody Needs a Rock
Byrd Baylor

I'm In Charge of Celebrations
Byrd Baylor

The Secret Knowledge of Grown-Ups: The Second File
David Wisniewski

Owl Moon
Jane Yolen

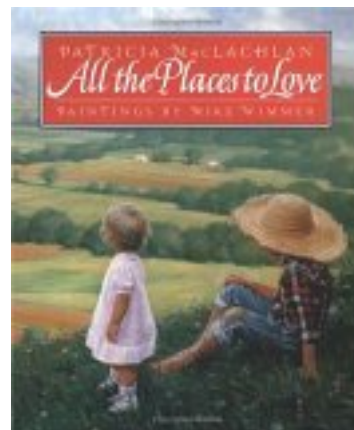
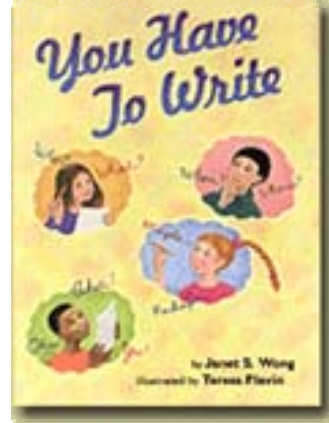
Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge
Mem Fox

You Have to Write
Janet Wong

All the Places to Love
Patricia McLachlan

Something Beautiful
Sharon Dennis Wyeth

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What Should I Write About?

IDEAS & CONTENT CHARACTERISTICS:

- *Narrow and focused topic*
- *Fresh and unique ideas*
- *Well-chosen details that elaborate on the main ideas*
- *Accurate information*

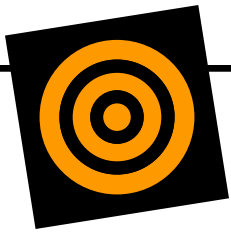
Knowing we can't always provide a writing topic for students, we need to teach them what topics are worthy of their time and energy. Instead of elaborate lessons focused on fancy topics, help students realize that everyday experiences are good writing topics.

1. Read aloud ***You Have to Write*** by Janet S. Wong (McElderry Books 2002), which explores the challenge of coming up with a topic. The author reminds the reader that they are the only ones who can tell their stories. Wong asks readers to “reach inside” and write about their own experiences.
2. Discuss with students what writing topics Janet S. Wong thinks are the best (everyday things). Encourage them to give examples from the book.
3. Ask students to make a list of 5 “everyday” things from their lives. They may want to talk to a partner to generate ideas. Compile your own list as well.
4. Share your list of everyday writing topics with the class and ask students to share their ideas. Students can staple their lists to the inside of their writing folders, so they can add new topics during the year.



LESSON EXTENSION:

Once you have created a list, write a short piece on the board or overhead modeling the next stages in the process: narrowing a topic and elaborating. It helps when students see you making ordinary topics come to life with vivid details. If they see their teacher writing about everyday experiences, they will start believing their lives are worth writing about.



My Authority List



Activity: You're In the Picture

Choose an illustration in a book and pretend you are in that picture. On the lines below, list what you hear, see, feel, taste, and smell. On a separate sheet of paper, write a description using the information from your lists.

Your Name: _____

Book Title: _____

I hear...  _____

I see...  _____

I feel...  _____

I taste...  _____

I smell...  _____



You're in the Picture

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To help students elaborate on an idea, they need to learn how to write with descriptive details using their five senses.

1. Read aloud the book ***All Places to Love*** by Patricia MacLachlan (HarperCollins, 1994), which is filled with beautiful illustrations showing the area around a young boy's home.
2. After reading, go back to the page showing a small child in a yellow raincoat squatting down in the mud to examine a turtle. Ask the students to imagine that they are "in the picture."
3. Prompt a discussion with these questions, and record responses on the board or overhead:
 - *What do you see? (a spotted turtle, mud, a bird)*
 - *What do you hear? (the squish of mud, drip of rain)*
 - *What do you feel? (cool breeze, mud between fingers)*
4. Continue with the other two senses as a whole group, or challenge students to brainstorm their own list. Another option for this part of the activity is to provide a template where students can record ideas during the class discussion and then add their own. (See next page.)
5. Explain to students that they are going to "put themselves" into this picture and write about what they see, hear, and feel by adding specific details. Discuss with the class their ideas for a good first sentence that will help the reader focus on the topic.



Student ideas:

"One spring day, I went for a walk."

"One rainy spring morning, I was going for a walk."

LESSON EXTENSION:

Invite students to choose an illustration from another picture book, put themselves into the picture, and list what they see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. Have them write a detailed description based on their ideas.

Penny's Picks for Word Choice

Night Noises

Mem Fox

Hello Ocean

Pam Munoz Ryan

I Love You the Purplest

Barbara M. Joesse

One Dog Canoe

Mary Casanova

I Wanna Iguana

Karen Kaufman Orloff

The Old Woman Who Named Things

Cynthia Rylant

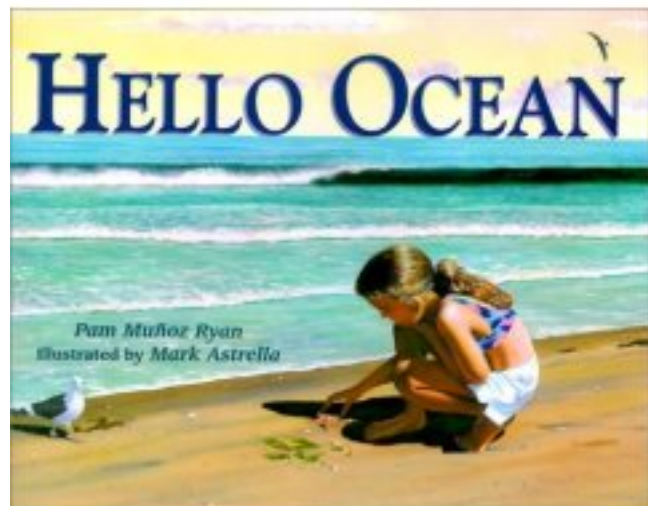
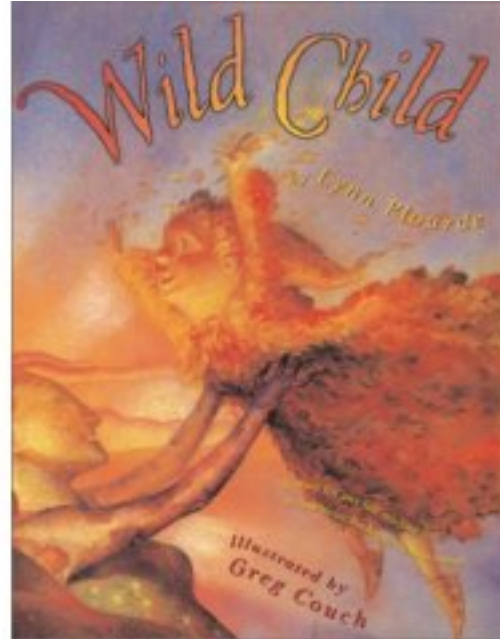
Wild Child

Winter Waits

Spring's Sprung

Summer's Vacation

Lynne Plourde



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Directions

Re-write these dull sentences by adding “juicy words”

Lily Laceby lived in a house.

Her hair was gray.

Her bones were noisy.

One night, she fell asleep and started dreaming.

Outside, clouds went by.

It was windy.