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Introduction

Reading Success
We all have a story to tell. Some, like the storyteller, can weave a tale that entrances us; some, like the writer, can spellbind us with the flourish of a pen. Others can do neither of these things; how can they be heard? (Casey, 2000) It is the children who have difficulty learning to read and write alongside their peers that are most often at risk in our schools. Delays and difficulties in learning to read and write are the most common reasons given for Retaining children, labeling them, and placing them in special classes or programs. In the schools we have, children who do not experience early school success too often experience no success at all. (Allington, 1996) Knowledge Adventure Books by You™ will provide all your students with the tools that good readers use in making sense of print. It will allow them to create their very own books with authors’ credits and help every one of them become members of the literacy club and experience reading success.

Research shows that our beliefs about ourselves are often self-fulfilling prophecies. Students who believe they can’t read may often go a lifetime not learning to read. It is your job to “hook each student on books,” to change their attitude to “I am a reader.” Fortunately, Books by You is just the program that can help you do that. As a reading specialist, I worked with a 12-year-old student who was told in first grade that “you have dyslexia and will never learn to read.” He didn’t learn to read and at age 12 was in my remedial reading class. Putting him on the computer did the trick; he found success writing on the computer and no longer had trouble with reversals and other things. The point is that if students think they are poor readers and cannot read, they won’t. You as a teacher have to turn this around. Using Books by You can be the tool that turns their attitude around from “I hate to read” to “I am a reader and an author!”

Engagement and Motivation
Research has proven that we learn based on interest and our need to know. Without these two elements, learners of every age tend to turn off to teaching they cannot relate to or see the purpose of. Engagement and motivation are key components in creating successful readers. Students learn to read by reading stories that interest them or that they have been able to create using their own ideas. They learn to write by writing their own experiences and selecting the characters they wish to write about. Technology in the classroom can provide every student with a tool that can enhance their writing ability, and enable them to create a professional
finished document all on their own. This environment needs to be in every classroom today. Creating your own classroom library of books students love to read and those created by them will give you a literacy classroom where all students find success in reading and writing.

**Home-School Connection**

The Home-School Connection is one of the most difficult ones for us as teachers. *Books by You* is the perfect addition to your classroom not only for Parent Night but to help provide parents and grandparents with books written by their child to have at home and share with siblings and friends. It is a perfect way to make family literacy a part of your school program. Sending books created in the classroom to the home for children to share with their family is very effective for fostering family enjoyment of books, the sharing of stories with one another, and pride in the authorship of their child.

Jean M. Casey, Ph.D.
Professor of Education
California State University
Get Your Reading Program Started

Activity: Interest Inventory

The first step in a good reading program is to know your students. Finding out your students’ interests early on is the key to successful reading development. For example, finding out that one of them loves soccer and then bringing a book about a great soccer player can be the match that “hooks” this student on books for a lifetime. Administer this reading inventory to your class before you start your reading program, or just to get to know them better whatever the time of year.

Goals:
• Get to know your students.
• Find out the interests of each student.
• Choose high-interest books for a classroom library.

Teacher Directions:
1. Fill in an inventory yourself and read your answers to your class. Self-disclosure is the way to get your students to tell you about them - and we all do like to talk about ourselves.

   “I would like to tell you some things about myself. My favorite book when I was your age was Judy Moody (show the book). I love to go to the movies. I have a dog named Lucky and a cat name Joey. I have three brothers (show a picture of your family).”

2. Distribute the About Me activity sheets to all students or give one to a new student on their first day in class.

3. Read the inventory aloud to students as they fill in the blanks. Tell them to fill them in with what they really think.
About Me

Name: ____________________________   Date: ______________

Directions: Fill in the bubble or write in your answer.

1. In my free time, I would rather:
   - Read a book
   - Watch TV
   - Work on the computer
   - Other - ________________________________

2. I would like my teacher to read books out loud to the class:
   - Every day
   - Almost every day
   - Once in a while
   - Never

3. The kinds of books I like to read are:
   - Mystery
   - Science fiction
   - Animal stories
   - Real-life stories of girls or boys my age
   - Adventure stories
   - Other - ________________________________

4. My favorite book is:
   ________________________________________

5. I like books about:
   ________________________________________
6. My favorite subject is:
_____________________________________________________.

7. My favorite movies are:
_____________________________________________________.

8. My favorite games are:
_____________________________________________________.

9. My favorite animals are:
_____________________________________________________.

10. My favorite computer/video games are:
_____________________________________________________.

11. My favorite TV shows are:
_____________________________________________________.

12. When I grow up, I would like to be:
_____________________________________________________.

13. I have ________ brothers and ________ sisters.

14. My favorite sports are:
_____________________________________________________.

15. My favorite foods are:
_____________________________________________________.

16. I have these pets:
__________________________________________________________.

17. Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________
Activity: Our Class Favorites

Goals:
- Create a classroom book with the answers from the inventories.
- Promote reading, skimming, scanning, and sharing.
- Get to know each other and find ways that everyone is alike.

Teacher Directions:
1. After each student has filled out an inventory, put the numbers 1-16 in a bag. Let a student draw one and answer that question in the inventory. For example, if the number 15 is drawn, the student would say, "What are your favorite foods? My answer is: my favorite foods are spaghetti and ice cream!"

2. Have the students raise their hands if they also picked spaghetti and ice cream.

3. Then ask what others liked and list them on a chart under “Our Favorite Foods.” You can do this for every item in the inventory and compile enough material for a book on “Our Classroom Favorites!”
Activity: Reading Attitude Survey

The next most important thing you need to know about your students is their attitude toward reading. Do they see themselves as readers? As good readers? Why or why not? Do they enjoy books and other reading experiences? How can we know this unless we ask them?

Goal:
- Determine your students’ attitude toward reading.

Teacher Directions:
1. Hand out the **Reading Attitude Survey** activity sheets to each student. Have them put their name and date on the top of the first page.

2. Give them the following directions: *Please circle the response that best describes how you feel about the statement. For example, if the statement said “I enjoy ice cream,” I would circle **Always**. If it said “I enjoy beets,” I might circle **Sometimes**, and if it said “I enjoy rutabagas,” I might circle **Never**!*

3. To score the survey, count three points for each happy face circled, two points for each mildly upset face, and one point for each very upset face.

Scores
A score of 36-25 is a positive, high-attitude score.
A score of 24-13 is a relatively indifferent score.
A score of 12 and under shows a negative reading attitude.

Students who score 20 and under are the ones that you really need to get excited about a favorite book. Have students find books that match their interests. Once they have completed using *Books by You*, give them the reading attitude survey again!
Reading Attitude Survey

Name: _______________________________ Date: _____________

Please circle the response that best describes how you feel about the following:

1. I enjoy my reading lessons.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

2. Reading is interesting.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

3. I like to read in front of people.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

4. I learn a lot when I read.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

5. Reading is my best subject in school.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never

6. It is easy for me to answer questions about stories I read.
   - Always
   - Sometimes
   - Never
7. I can read harder books than I used to.

Always  Sometimes  Never

8. I think I am a good writer.

Always  Sometimes  Never

9. I like for other people to read what I write.

Always  Sometimes  Never

10. I really like to write on the computer.

Always  Sometimes  Never

11. I love to write and talk about my own books.

Always  Sometimes  Never

12. I like getting books from the library or bookstore.

Always  Sometimes  Never
Creating a Classroom Library

Goals:
• Fill your classroom library with books that match student interests.
• Read chapter books aloud to the class.

Teacher Directions:
The following are some favorite stories librarians and teachers recommend. Choose some to read to your class that fit the information you learned from the About Me activity sheets.

Fiction Chapter Books

Auch, Mary Jane
Blume, Judy
Bond, Michael
Byars, Betsy
Christopher, Matt
Cleary, Beverly
Clements, Andrew
Dahl, Roald
Danzinger, Paula
Giff, Patricia Reilly
Hurwitz, Johanna
Warner, Gertrude Chandler

Angel and Me and the Bayside Bombers
Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing
Paddington Abroad
Wanted...Mud Blossom
The Seven Treasure Hunts
Spy on Third Base
Ralph S. Mouse
Frindle
The Janitor’s Boy
Fantastic Mr. Fox
The Enormous Crocodile
Amber Brown Is Not a Crayon
Fourth-Grade Celebrity
Kids of the Polk Street School series
School Spirit
The Boxcar Children

Favorite Second Grade Chapter Books

Bulla, Clyde R.
Herman, Charlotte
Kline, Suzy
Sharmat, Marjorie W.
Stevenson, James

The Chalk Box Kid
Max Malone Makes a Million
Horrible Harry in Room 2B
The Great Genghis Khan Look-Alike Contest
Yard Sale
Favorite Third Grade Chapter Books

Adler, David
Cameron, Ann
Christopher Matt
Greenburg, Dan
Lowry, Lois
McDonald, Megan
Osborne, Mary P.
Roy, Ron
Rylant, Cynthia
Sachar, Louis
Scieszka, Jon

Cam Jensen and the Mystery of the UFO
The Stories Julian Tells
The Dog that Pitched a No-Hitter
Through the Medicine Cabinet
Gooney Bird Greene
Judy Moody
Dinosaurs Before Dark
The Absent Author
In Aunt Lucy’s Kitchen
Marvin Redpost: Kidnapped at Birth?
Knights of the Kitchen Table

Favorite Fourth Grade Science Fiction Books

Asimov, Isaac
Becker, Bonny
Byars, Betsy
Cameron, Eleanor
Coville, Bruce
Gardiner, John
Gauthier, Gail
Greer, Gery
Manes, Stephen
Pinkwater, Daniel
Service, Pamela
Slote, Alfred

The Heavenly Host
My Brother, the Robot
The Computer Nut
The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet
My Teacher Is an Alien
Top Secret
My Life Among the Aliens
Max and Me and the Time Machine
That Game from Outer Space
Slaves of Spiegel
Stinker from Space

Favorite Fourth Grade Mystery Books

Avi
Clifford, Eth
Corbett, Scott
Giff, Patricia Reilly
Gilson, Jamie
Osborne, Mary Pope
Sobol, Donald
Vigor, John
Woodruff, Elvira

Who Stole the Wizard of Oz?
Harvey’s Marvelous Monkey Mystery
The Trouble with Diamonds
Kidnap at the Catfish Café
Soccer Circus
Spider Kane and the Mystery Under the May-Apple
Encyclopedia Brown and the Case of the Treasure Hunt
Danger, Dolphins and Ginger Beer
The Ghost of Lizard Light
Introduce a Chapter Book

Goals:
- Learn about the important elements of a chapter book.
- Practice prediction, summarizing and story comprehension.

Teacher Directions:
1. Share a chapter book story with your students. Choose one that you really like and think they will too. You know them best after doing your reading interest inventories on each of them. Show the book you are reading to them while explaining these features:

"Today we will look at what makes a good chapter book. A chapter book has a longer story with many characters, settings and happenings. There is a beginning, a middle and an ending to the story, but it is broken up into a number of chapters."

2. Read aloud the first chapter.

"The first day I will read one chapter to you, and at the end of each chapter I will summarize for you what happened. You can help me with this, so listen closely while I read so you remember the parts you like. After the first day, I will read another chapter and pick one of you to summarize what the story was about."

3. Read aloud one chapter a day or encourage at-home reading as a family. Some questions to pose at the end of a chapter are:

"Will someone summarize what has happened so far in the story?" "What do you think will happen next in the story?" "Who are your favorite characters and what will they do next?" "Why?" "What would you do?"

4. These kinds of conversations set the stage and help students think about the interesting elements of a story that make the reader want to read the book.
Introduce a Mystery Book

Goals:
- Learn about the important elements of a mystery book.
- Create background for the Books by You experience.

Teacher Directions:
1. Discuss the importance of descriptive words in mysteries. Ask the students to practice a memory exercise. They should close their eyes and remember:
   - the smell of their favorite snack
   - the feel of the coldest thing they have ever touched
   - the loudest sound they have ever heard
   - the hottest thing they have ever felt

2. After each memory exercise, make a class list of the words they would use to describe that event. Discuss how some words are scent words, sound words or feeling words.

3. Brainstorm with the class the important elements of a mystery:

Characters: Discuss the types of characters that are found in some favorite mystery books:

- Heroic Characters
  Talk to your class about heroes and heroines in books or movies they have enjoyed. Have them brainstorm with you words that they think describe them, like brave, courageous, fearless, etc.

- Funny Characters
  Talk about funny characters they have read about in books, and brainstorm what makes them funny: words like grumpy, goofy, outrageous, etc.

- Strange Characters
  Talk about aliens they have seen in movies or read about in books, and brainstorm about how they would describe an alien: huge purple hands, fuzzy antenna, etc.
Exciting Events: Discuss what kinds of events make up good mysteries. Brainstorm the most mysterious events students can think of and list them on the board:

“What are some things you like that happen in a mystery, like monsters dancing around the room.”

Scary Settings: Discuss what kinds of settings a mystery story can take place in. Brainstorm different kinds of settings and list them on the board:

“Think of a scary setting, like we walked into the house and heard strange, groaning sounds.”

4. Now is the time to introduce Books by You:

“I’ve noticed how much you enjoy hearing or reading chapter books. You have told me about many exciting ideas you have and stories you would like to write. Here is our chance to create our own class chapter book.”
How to Use Books by You
Writing and Editing Chapter 1

Goals:
- Use the question sections in Books by You as a way of developing a connection to the material students are about to read.
- Use questions to relate students’ experiences to what they will read.

Teacher Directions:
You and your class may be able to complete the following steps in one class period or over several days. Using the projection monitor or SmartBoard, start the Books by You program. You may choose a student to type in the responses as you lead the discussion.

Step 1: Select a story from the main screen.

Goals:
- To use the title and illustration to make predictions.
- To generate interest in a story.

Ask students to vote on the story they want to write as a class. Discuss reasons for the selection of the story. Then play the introduction by John Lithgow.

Knowledge Adventure Books by You™
Step 2: Read and answer the questions for Chapter 1.

Goals:
- Predict and activate background knowledge before reading.
- Help students make connections and set a purpose for the passage that will follow.

As a question appears on the screen, discuss the kinds of answers possible and why the class would choose one answer over another:

In creating a hero: “Why do you want the hero to be a boy or a girl? What difference would it make to the story? What kind of character do we want to create - brave, funny, silly?”

Use and model a variety of describing words: “Which adjectives best describe that hero?”

Complete the question section and move on to the next section.
Step 3: Read and edit the chapter.

The teacher or class leader can read the text that has been created with the class input. As the text is read aloud, the teacher can take the opportunity to:

- Ask questions involving prediction.
- Ask students to restate passages or retell them in their own words.
- Discuss new words as they appear in context.
- Select images that illustrate the passage best. Ask the class to defend their choices as a way of illustrating the meaning of the passage.

Goals:
- Read and edit Chapter 1.
- Model good reading habits.
- Write a short summary of Chapter 1.

Chapter 1: A Fire at Goatopolis Farm

It is a fact that most young people do not live on goat farms. It is also true that even fewer young people know how to make cheese. And it is for these reasons that Emily Smith was a highly unusual girl. She grew up on a bustling goat farm called Goatopolis Farm. It was here that she helped her Aunt make a rare type of cheese called Stinky Citrus cheese.
Step 4: While looking at a page of the story, point out the words and phrases in different colors.

Goals:

- Understand how to select colored text indicating that students can change parts of their story.
- Understand that red highlighted text indicates new vocabulary words with their meanings.

"Look at the words in purple. These are the answers to the questions that you have written. If you don’t like how they sound in the story, you can click on them and answer the question again."

"Look at the words and phrases underlined in blue. These are extra words and phrases you can change in the story."

"Look at the words in red. These are new vocabulary words that you might not know. Click on them to read the definitions."

The red highlighted words serve to extend students’ vocabulary. Challenging words are introduced and defined in context.
Step 5: Write a short summary of Chapter 1.

Goal:
- Write a summary.

After the first chapter is complete and all edits have been made, have the students write a short summary of the chapter. Choose a few students to read theirs aloud. Discuss differences between the summaries.
How to Use Books by You
Adding Images to the Story

Goals:
• Add images that support the context and details of the story.
• Import images.

Teacher Directions:
After the chapter is finished, show the class how to change images.

1. Click on the picture’s arrow to see other picture choices.
2. Click on a picture to place it in the story.
3. Click on the arrow button on the picture tray to close it.

To import your own picture:
1. Click on a picture’s arrow to open the picture tray.
2. Click the Import arrow. An Import dialog box will appear.
3. Find your picture and import it to see it in the story.
4. Click the arrow button on the picture tray to close it.

Students can also draw pictures and scan them into the computer. Students love to put their own artwork, whether it is a drawn picture or a photograph, into their work to say “this is mine!”
How to Use Books by You
Writing and Editing the Following Chapters

Goals:
- Practice summarizing and predicting.
- Engage in questioning and comprehension strategies before reading.

Teacher Directions:
It might take several days to complete a chapter book. Again, using the projection monitor or SmartBoard, start the Books by You program. You may choose a student to type in the responses as you lead the discussion.

Step 1: Summarizing

Goals:
- Practice recall.
- Discuss the main idea.
- Discuss critical details.

Ask students to read their summaries of the previous chapter. Brainstorm what might happen next. Ask questions that relate to their own experiences:
  - Do they know anyone who lives in the kind of place the hero comes from?
  - Have they ever seen anything that they couldn’t explain?
  - Have they ever had a pet that they loved?

Select Chapter 2 and play John Lithgow’s introduction to the chapter. Discuss how the student summaries were similar to or different from Mr. Lithgow’s summary.

Point out that in preparing for each subsequent chapter, the students will be building on knowledge from the previous chapter. Their predictions should get better and their story more interesting as a result.

Step 2: Question/Answer

Goals:
- Read with past information in mind.
- Help students learn to self-question as they read.

Use the same questioning techniques as practiced in Chapter 1. As the process continues into later chapters, seek out class leaders to lead...
discussions during the question/answer sessions. Continue until completion of the chapter book.

**Step 3: Conclusion**

After the last chapter is completed, ask students to help summarize the story and answer the following questions in a class discussion:

- Retell the story with a beginning, middle and end.
- Describe the setting of the story.
- What was the problem of the story?
- What was the resolution of the story?
- What was the most important event in the story?
- Who was your favorite character?

**Step 4: Finishing Touches**

Be sure to change or add pictures in the story. Have different groups of students choose the pictures they want to illustrate the words.
How to Use Books by You
Writing a Dedication

Goal:
• Write a dedication based on the qualities of a famous person.

Teacher Directions:
1. Brainstorm a list of famous people. The list can include people who are current or historical. Write the list on the board. Next, write words that describe the famous people next to each name.

2. Divide the class into teams of two or three. Assign each team a famous person (or the team can pick a new person). Each team must write a dedication of a book to the famous person they were assigned.

3. Use the dedication that is shown in the help feature of the Books by You Dedication page as a model.

   Why are they written?
   How would you feel if a book had been dedicated to you?

5. Each team should share the dedication they created with the class.

6. As a class, decide to whom you will dedicate the book you have written. Write a dedication page for the class story.
How to Use Books by You
Writing the Author’s Biography

Goal:
• Write a personal biography.

Teacher Directions:
1. Discuss the idea of a biography. Brainstorm the most important elements to be included in any retelling of someone’s life:
   What are the important facts?
   What are the interesting things about a life?
   What influences are important?

2. Divide into pairs. Ask each student to interview his or her partner using the questions brainstormed in class. For class work or homework, each student should write a biography of the person they interviewed.

Whenever students create a book, by themselves, with a partner or in a group, make sure they have time to write an author’s biography. This will appear with a picture at the end of the book. This empowerment and recognition as an author, a writer, and a reader is the secret to literacy success!
How to Use Books by You with One Computer in Your Classroom

You have modeled the program, the students loved it and everyone wants to create a book…but you only have one computer available. Here’s how to make it work.

Teacher Directions:

"Here’s how we will all get to make our books. We will start with "student x. “ When that student finishes the first chapter, the student will check off Chapter 1 on the sign-in sheet. Then that person will select the next student. It is his turn to do his first chapter. The student who finished will answer any questions the next student may have and help him get started.”

Here are some ideas for choosing which student will use the program next:

- Hold a drawing for the first person to try the program.
- Select the Good Worker for the Week or the winner of whatever reward you use in your classroom to start.
- Pick a student familiar with computers, who then can serve as a computer tutor for others.
- Put everyone’s name on popsicle sticks and have the person finishing pull out the next person’s name.

Once students have finished their books, you can begin the Read-Aloud activities.
Read-Aloud Experiences

**Activity: The Author’s Chair**

Students will experience the success and pride of sharing a book they have created and demonstrate success in communicating the story to the class.

**Goals:**
- Oral language presentation.
- Practice fluency.
- Students take pride in their work.

**Teacher Directions:**
1. Create a banner with the words **Author’s Chair**. Place the banner on the chair where you or the students will sit to read a story.

2. Discuss with the students the importance of the Author’s Chair. Each student will have a chance to sit in the Author’s Chair and read his or her book or story to the class. Having their work heard by an audience is a very important part of authorship.

When the teacher or parent sits in the chair to read chapter books aloud to students, they model the technique by naming the author, and illustrator, and sharing something about the book. When teachers show a book they have written, they explain something about why they wrote it before they read it. Students learn to do the same kind of presentation when they are the author and have the privilege of sitting in this special chair, introducing the book they wrote, explaining why they wrote it, and then reading it to their peers.

**Activity: The Director’s Cut**

Students will share their class book on the large screen and have the class choral-read the story with them as they present it.

**Goals:**
- Social collaboration.
- Oral communication.
- Choral reading.
- Practice fluency.
**Teacher Directions:**
1. Using a large-screen TV, computer or SmartBoard, let a student or a team of students show the class their book on the large screen.

2. Let the students lead the class in a choral reading of the story. Or let them assign parts: characters, narrator, etc. Be sure to model inflection and enthusiasm in your voice as you join in with the students.

Choral reading is a very powerful approach for your special-education and ELL students. They will be able to read along with the group, getting the fluency of the language and mastering the vocabulary.

**Activity: Books on Tape**

Students will record their own story for the listening center.

**Goals:**
- Ability to record their own story.
- Practice fluency.
- Experience pride in authorship.

**Teacher Directions:**
Have students record their own stories on tape so that you can have a listening book center. Your auditory and second-language learners can look at the book at the same time as they listen to it.

Using this strategy, all your learners will finish the year as readers, writers, authors and lovers of books.
Classroom Collaboration Writing Experiences

**Activity: Our Class Book**

Students will collaborate with the teacher as they create a class book. This activity really helps create a team feeling of accomplishment in the classroom and pride in working together.

**Goals:**
- Create a story together as a class.
- Engage and motivate students to collaborate and write.

**Teacher Directions:**
1. Using the projection monitor or SmartBoard, start the *Books by You* program and create a class story together. Select different students to answer questions and make choices for each part of the activity. Choose a student to type in the responses. Stop at the end of Chapter 1.

2. When the first chapter of the class story is complete, it is time to edit. Have the students join you in a choral reading of the chapter.

3. After the class reads the first paragraph, select editors in the class. Ask these questions:
   - *Did our paragraph make sense?*
   - *Was it interesting? If not, how could we make it better?*
   - *What do you think makes a story good?*
   - *What images will best support our story? Do we need to create our own images?*

**Activity: Buddy Books**

Working as a team, students will collaborate and discuss ideas while creating a new book.

**Goals:**
- Collaborate on story ideas.
- Cooperate to type the story on the computer.
- Develop ideas as a team.
- Expand vocabulary.
- Practice fluency.
Teacher Directions:

“Today you will pick a partner. Remember our rules about a good partnership: partners take turns and listen to each other’s ideas. They come to an agreement about which story they want to do and the kinds of characters they would like to include.”

1. Have the students take turns answering questions and typing. In the editing mode, have them practice reading the story back to practice fluency.

2. Partners can present their completed book to the class; they can create an oral summary of their book; or they can take turns reading pages from the entire book.

Pairing up students allows them to practice brainstorming and negotiation skills to create a finished product.
Activity: What’s Your Job?

Students will select a job and collaborate on the creation of a book.

Goal:
- Collaborate as a creative team to write a book.
- Learn about the different jobs in writing and publishing a book.

Teacher Directions:
"Today we are going to take a look at the different jobs that people have when writing and publishing a book. Let’s talk about all the people who work on a book."

1. Describe the author’s role. Choose a book that you and the class have recently read together.
   "We just read the book “x.” Let’s take a look at the book. Here on the cover it lists the author. What does the author do? Yes, the author writes the words for the story! What did you like about the words the author used in this story?"

2. Describe the illustrator’s role.
   "The cover also has the name of the illustrator. Who is that? What does the illustrator do? What did you like about the illustrations?"

3. Describe the role of an editor. Show that the editor has to check all the words for spelling, punctuation and grammar. All the words have to make sense in the story.

4. Divide the students into groups of three. Let them each choose their role as author, illustrator or editor. They then collaborate on the Books by You title they select: the author answering the questions, the illustrator choosing pictures to be included, and the editor editing each chapter as completed.

   Students should be allowed to switch roles so that they experience each type of activity on the next books they select. This activity also allows students who have special talents in art to shine, as well as those with talent in writing.
Writing on My Own!

Activity: Story Maps

Students will write, edit and illustrate their own stories and share them with the class. Children all have a story to tell, if given the opportunity. Nothing adds more to their self-concept than to become an author and have created their own story.

Goal:
- Write an original story.
- Read and reread for comprehension.
- Edit, looking for spelling, punctuation, capitalization and grammar mistakes.
- Illustrate the story using art or digital pictures.
- Use graphic organizers.
- Practice fluency.

Teacher Directions:
1. To get started with ideas, use a graphic organizer such as a story map to get the ideas on paper. Several organizers are included on the following pages so that students can choose the kind of organizer they would like to use.

2. Use a word processor to write the story. This may take several sessions to complete. Make sure that the students edit their work, checking for spelling, grammar, punctuation and capitalization.

3. Add illustrations or digital pictures to illustrate the story.

4. When the stories are complete, have students share them with each other. Have them read their stories to other classes.

5. Have the students who are listening write down three questions to ask the author. They can be about details of the story or how the author came up with his or her ideas.

"Why did you pick that character?" "What things that happened in your story to move it along did you like best?"
Story Map

Name: ________________________ Date: ___________________

Step 1:
- Who: Characters
- What: Problem
- Where: Setting
- When: Time

Step 2:
- Story Event 1
- Story Event 2
- Story Event 3
- Story Event 4

Step 3:
- How the problem is solved.
- The Ending
### Story Picture Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture of the main character:</th>
<th>Picture of the setting:</th>
<th>Picture of the problem:</th>
<th>Picture of the first event:</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture of the next event:</th>
<th>Picture of the next event:</th>
<th>Picture of the solution:</th>
<th>Picture of the end:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
The Publishing Classroom

Your students have different gifts, interests and strengths. In a publishing classroom, you can easily accommodate them. Your artistic students can be the ones who have the digital cameras and capture just the right picture to be included in the many chapter books that will be created in your classroom. Some children love to talk but not to write or type, and others love to listen; so match them up and let the talkative students dictate the story to the students who would love to type it in for them. Others will create the flyers and invitations as you have students go to classes to read their works or invite classes to your room to be part of the author-publishing classroom you have created.

All students in your classroom can be a success if you just recognize their strengths and help them succeed.

Special-education students really benefit from the empowerment they get using the computer. ELL students are equally successful, especially when paired with another student who can help with the English vocabulary.

Activity: Book Binding

Students will bind a book. The books can placed in the classroom, school or home library.

Goal:
- Follow directions.
- Get creative.
- Bind a book.

Bookbinding Materials:
- Story printed pages, and two blank pages the same size as the printed pages
- Two pieces of cardboard, each 1/2" longer and wider than the paper for the inside pages
- 1" or wider tape and some glue
- Stapler or needle and thread (depending on the way you wish to attach the pages)
- Cover material (colored butcher paper, wallpaper, wrapping paper, etc.) which is 1" larger on all sides than the two pieces of cardboard when they are placed side by side.
**Bookbinding Directions:**
1. Place the pages of the book in a neat pile with one blank page on top and one on the bottom.

2. Staple or sew all the pages together along the left edge.

3. Place the cardboard pieces side by side and tape them together, leaving a little space of approximately 1/2" (for the spine) between the two pieces.

4. Put glue along all four edges of each piece; center them on the cover material, glue side down.

5. Fold the edges of the cover material up over the cardboard on the inside, and glue them down.

6. To attach the book, glue the blank sheets at the front and back to the inside of the cover.

**Activity: Our School Book**

Now that your students have all experienced being authors, illustrators, and editors, they will work together to create a book about the school. This project fosters a literacy school and highlights what is happening in each classroom.

**Goal:**
- Collaborate with a group.
- Write questions and conduct an interview.
- Contribute to the school book.

**Teacher Directions:**
1. Divide your students into groups depending on how many classes are in your school. If you have many classes in each grade, you might divide the students to cover a grade.

2. Brainstorm with your students to create a series of interview questions for the classes or grades. Sample questions might include:
   "Tell us about a class project that you have enjoyed doing this year."
   "What books has the class read? Which have been the favorites?"
   "Do you have a class pet? How do you take care of it?"

3. Let the student groups make an appointment with their assigned class or grade to come and do their interviews. At the approved time, the students can interview the teachers and students, take interesting pictures with digital cameras, and collect any stories or materials that are interesting to the classes.
4. After they’ve collected all the information, they will return to the class and begin to create a book about the school. Each group of students will contribute a chapter.

Notify the local newspaper about the literacy classroom that you’ve set up, and they may want to write a story about what your classroom is doing to promote reading. The community needs to know the literacy accomplishments of your students in your classroom.

**Activity: Books as Gifts**

Have your students make a book as a gift for cousins, friends, and birthday parties. Creating a book using information about the person receiving it makes it a very personal, valued gift to keep. Most of all, it helps develop the lifelong love of reading and storytelling so vital to our culture.

**Goal:**
- Sharing the love of books with others.
- Personalize a book to give as a gift.

**Teacher Directions:**
1. Encourage your students to use *Books by You* and write personalized stories about family and friends that they can give as gifts.

2. When students have finished their *Books by You* stories, they can store them at a website that can be shared among family and friends. Send a note to parents telling them how access the site [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com). The family can order a professionally bound softback or hardcover book at the site. This keepsake book makes a great gift.

One of the greatest gifts you can give to your students is the love of stories: reading them, writing them, telling them, and graphically communicating them through technology. When readers consider themselves to be potential members of “the literacy club,” they acquire the enormous amount of information that writers possess. (Frank Smith, 1988)
Book Reviews

**Activity: Our Book Reviews**

Students will write book reviews.

**Goals:**
- Write a book review.
- Understand and retell stories.
- Skim and scan text for important information.

**Teacher Directions:**
1. Bring in the local book section of the paper and read some book reviews to your students. Discuss what makes a good book review.

2. Let each student select another student’s book to review. Hand out the **Book Review** activity sheet. Each student should write a book review on the book they selected.

3. Collect the reviews and place them in a class notebook called “Our Book Reviews.” Have the book reviews available for students when selecting a book they would like to read. This is a wonderful activity for instilling the love of books in all the students.

Give students a list of chapter books to find in the library and review for the class. Make sure you let each reviewer select the book they are interested in reviewing. Do not assign titles. This will really help students find exactly what they would like to read most, because students need to be able to select things that are interesting to them.

**Activity: School Authors**

Inviting local authors of children’s books to come to your classroom to talk about their books is a wonderful way to inspire and motivate your students. You can locate these authors by visiting [www.schoolbookings.com](http://www.schoolbookings.com) or contacting your local school or city librarian for information about which authors are available in your area.

**Goals:**
- Read aloud to younger children.
- Listen and learn about authors.
- Practice fluency.
- Build confidence.

**Teacher Directions:**
After your students have created some books, volunteer to go to lower grade classrooms. The students can read the books aloud or display the stories on a
large screen. This activity will give your students a lot of confidence being an author and presenting their book. You could even do a book signing and present the classroom with a copy of the book for the class library.

**Activity: Classroom Book Talks**

Students will each create a poster of their book, display it to the class, and give a short book talk about it.

**Goals:**
- Practice oral language.
- Create a poster.
- Summarize a story.

**Teacher Directions:**
1. Students can create a poster using *Books by You*.

2. After selecting a finished story in the product, click Publish at the bottom of the screen. Click Poster to create a poster.

3. Select different students to sit in the author’s chair and do a book talk with their posters. They should summarize their story, tell why they picked their characters and what choices they made in creating their story, and then read a small section of their book aloud to the class. Reading what they have written aloud will improve their oral language skills and their ability to present to a group.
Book Review

Name _______________________________ Date _________________________

Title _________________________________________________________________

Author _________________________________________________________________

This story was about ______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

My favorite character was ________________________________________________

A funny part was when ____________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What I liked most about this book was ________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

I rate this book: 😊 The book was great! 😐 The book was OK. 😞 The book was disappointing.
Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary is very important to reading comprehension. Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean. As children learn to read more advanced texts, they must learn the meanings of new words that are not part of their vocabulary.

**Activity: Vocabulary Squares**

Given a vocabulary word, students will identify its meaning using definitions, synonyms, antonyms, pictures, parts of speech, etymology, and context.

**Goals:**
- Learn vocabulary words.
- Identify definitions, synonyms, antonyms, and parts of speech.
- Draw a picture to define a word.
- Learn where and how the word originated.
- Use the word in context.

**Teacher Directions:**
Hand out the *Vocabulary Squares* activity sheet. Have your students fill it out for each vocabulary word.

**Activity: Crossword Puzzles**

Challenge students to create a crossword puzzle that uses the vocabulary words. How many words can they fit into a puzzle?

**Goals:**
- Create a puzzle.
- Learn vocabulary words and their definitions.

**Teacher Directions:**
Explain the premise of crossword puzzles to your students before starting the activity. Be sure they number the clue sentences to match the numbers in the puzzle boxes. Students will write brief definitions for each word, then determine if the word will be presented horizontally or vertically. When planning crossword placement, students should allow for sharing of letters within the puzzle. Use graph paper to help with placement of the squares.
Activity: Mystery Message

Students can make mystery messages for other students to complete. They read the clues and deduce the meaning.

Goals:
- Create a word puzzle.
- Learn vocabulary words and their definitions.

Teacher Directions:
Come up with a mystery message. Pick a vocabulary word that contains a letter from the message. Line up the letters so that the mystery message is aligned. Hand out the Mystery Message activity sheet as an example.

Activity: Scrambled Words

Unscramble the letters to spell one of the vocabulary words.

Goals:
- Create a word puzzle.
- Learn vocabulary words and their definitions.

Teacher Directions:
1. Let the students scramble a list of vocabulary words for others to solve.
2. Choose a word of the day and scramble it. See who can be the first to unscramble it. Use the definition as a hint.

Activity: Word Bingo

Play bingo to learn vocabulary words.

Goals:
- Play a word game.
- Learn vocabulary words and their definitions.

Teacher Directions:
Hand out a Bingo Board activity sheet to each student. Have them write a different vocabulary word in each space. Add a free space, too. Select one definition at a time. Read it aloud and have the students find the word and place a bean or marker on it. The first one to fill in a row or column calls out, “Bingo!” Check to make sure the answers are correct.
# Vocabulary Squares

Name: ___________________________  Date:  __________________

Directions: Write the vocabulary word in the top box. Next, fill in the other squares.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Etymology</th>
<th>Synonyms</th>
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<tr>
<th>Part(s) of Speech</th>
<th>Antonyms</th>
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<th>Sentence</th>
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Mystery Message

Name: _______________________________ Date: _____________________

Fill in the blanks with words that match the clues. (Choose from words listed at the bottom of the page.) When you are done, write the hidden message here:

___________________________________________________________

1.                                           ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

2.                      ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

3.                                                  ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

4.                                    ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

5.               ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

6.               ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

7. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

8. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

9.               ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

10.                                         ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

11.                           ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Clues
1. decreased, faded, shriveled
2. disaster, calamity, hardship
3. reported, narrated, described
4. pushed, prodded, edged forward
5. spread rumors, tell tales, blabbermouth
6. nervous, worried, alarmed
7. captivate, charm, fascinate
8. captivated, charmed, fascinated
9. angrily, grumpily, bluntly
10. sly, graceful, elegant
11. mission, search, hunt

Choose from these words: quest, nudged, misfortune, recounted, anxious, feline, mesmerized, gossip, dwindled, hypnotize, gruffly
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FREE
Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading.

Research over 30 years has shown that instruction in comprehension can help students understand what they read, remember what they read, and communicate with others about what they read.

According to the National Reading Panel (April 2000), the following strategies appear to have a firm scientific basis for improving comprehension:
- Monitoring comprehension
- Using graphic organizers
- Generating and answering questions
- Recognizing story structure
- Summarizing
- Using prior knowledge
- Using mental imagery

**Activity: Questions for the Author**

It is important for students to learn how to generate different types of questions about stories. This activity can be completed after students have written a story using *Books by You* or after they have written an original story. It can also be used after reading classroom or library books.

**Goals:**
- Generate questions.

**Teacher Directions:**
1. Discuss with the students that there are different types of questions that you can ask about a story or text passage. Some questions ask about details that can be found right in the text. Other questions have answers that may not be obvious in the text. Answers to these types of questions may need to be inferred based on prior knowledge and what students read in the text.

2. Hand out the *Asking Questions* activity sheet. Explain to the students that they are going to use the book they authored to write questions for the class to answer.
3. As students participate in the read-aloud activities in the classroom, let them pose their questions to the class.

**Activity: Characters Onstage**

Have student groups write questions and answers for an interview-style television show and play the role of a character from the story. Each group should focus on what makes their character unique from the other characters in the story. They should also note any events in the story that create changes in their character or to their character’s personality.

**Goals:**
- Pretend to be a character thus motivating more purposeful reading and writing.
- Summarize information from the story.
- Develop questions that could be answered by a character.
- Prepare answers to the questions based on an understanding of the character and his or her personality.
- Integrate the questions and answers into a television-show skit and then perform the show.

**Teacher Directions:**
1. Have your students watch a segment from a talk show and discuss how the host conducted the interview. Discuss how the host breaks down the segment into the introduction, the interview, and a closing. Remind students that all of these things will be important when they create their own interview talk show.

2. Break the students into groups for this project. Have them create a book with *Books by You* or an original story. Have each student choose a character in the story whom they would like to play the role in a talk show.

3. Have each group write the introduction, the interview questions and the closing for their talk show. Some of the questions might be about details that aren’t in the story but are important to building more information about the character. How a character reacts to situations might help to define the character’s personality. Each interview should be no more than 5–8 minutes long.

4. Assign different roles for the students. They can take on different roles depending on which segment is shown. Each group will need a talk show host, a character, a camera operator and a cue card person. Depending on how many students are in a group, there might be several talk show hosts so that each student gets a turn playing his or her character. The character who is being interviewed should dress the part and act like the character from the story.
Activity: Story Order

This reading activity is designed to help students recognize story structure. They will also practice summarizing, sequencing, and visualizing story elements.

Goals:
- Understand story structure.
- Summarize a story.
- Sequence a story.
- Illustrate story elements.

Teacher Directions:
1. Have your students reread one of the Books by You stories. They will be looking for story elements for this activity.

2. Hand out the Story Map activity sheet. Each student should list the important story events in the correct sequence in the story. They should limit the sequence to no more than six events, so some events may need to be combined.

3. Once the story events are written down, have each student illustrate the story elements.
Asking Questions

Name: ___________________________________  Date: ______________________

Directions: After you have written your story, write a question for each question type below.

WHO

WHAT

WHERE

WHY

WHEN

HOW
# Story Map

Name: _______________________________  Date: _______________________________

Directions: Summarize the story elements from the beginning to the middle to the end. Illustrate your events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning:</th>
<th>Middle:</th>
<th>Middle:</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle:</td>
<td>Middle:</td>
<td>End:</td>
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</table>
## Appendix A: Vocabulary Words

### Vocabulary List from *Books by You*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Word</th>
<th>How the Word Is Used in the Product</th>
<th>Synonyms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anxious</td>
<td>When you are anxious, it means you are worried. Some things that make people feel anxious are dark rooms, high staircases, biting dogs, and plates of unrecognizable food.</td>
<td>nervous, worried, alarmed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bustling</td>
<td>To move or cause to move energetically and busily. Note: This is pretty common on a goat farm.</td>
<td>humming, moving, active.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>captivating</td>
<td>A charming, fascinating person who holds the interest and attention of others is said to be captivating. Most likely, that definition doesn't fit your little brother.</td>
<td>attractive, appealing, entrancing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circumstances</td>
<td>A circumstance is something that must be considered when making a decision. Even in the best of circumstances, falling asleep at the table is not a good idea.</td>
<td>conditions, situations, events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commotion</td>
<td>This is a disturbance or total confusion, like when a skunk runs into your house and your mom is trying to shoo it out. You could say that skunk is creating quite a commotion.</td>
<td>disturbance, disorder, excitement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confession</td>
<td>When you admit that you have done something wrong. For instance, if you tell your mother that you secretly ate an entire pumpkin pie she made for dessert, this is a confession.</td>
<td>apology, excuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confused</td>
<td>You are confused if you are puzzled or baffled by something. When you stare at your older brother's math homework but can't make heads or tails of those numbers, then you are confused.</td>
<td>baffled, perplexed, bewildered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contribution</td>
<td>Let's say you give all your allowance to a campaign to get rid of broccoli. You have made a contribution to that cause.</td>
<td>payment, donation, gift.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cranky</td>
<td>Cranky people are grouchy and mean. They also aren't very much fun to be around because they tend to complain and fuss. This is why it's best to try to remain happy as much as possible. You will make the world a much better place.</td>
<td>grouchy, crabby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disaster</td>
<td>A terrible event, a horrible failure. For instance, you could sit up all night doing your homework only to discover you forgot it when you arrived at school the next day. That would be a disaster.</td>
<td>calamity, catastrophe, accident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Synonyms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dismayed</td>
<td>To be disturbed, alarmed, or upset. In other words, you might be dismayed at all the chores you have to do in order to get your allowance this week.</td>
<td>bewildered, upset, troubled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>displeased</td>
<td>You are displeased when you are annoyed with something. Being displeased is terrible, which is something you should remember the next time you do something to upset your mother.</td>
<td>angry, upset, ticked-off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distressed</td>
<td>When you are distressed, you are worried or troubled. You most likely would feel distressed if you forgot your homework on the kitchen counter.</td>
<td>concerned, upset, worried.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dwindled</td>
<td>When something wastes away or becomes less, one would say that it has dwindled - something you don't want to see happen to your weekly allowance.</td>
<td>decreased, faded, shriveled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emerged</td>
<td>When something has come out or come into view, it is said to have emerged. It's like if you've been in your room all afternoon and suddenly you appear at the dinner table, your parents might be surprised that you finally emerged from your room.</td>
<td>came out, surfaced, materialized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enthusiasm</td>
<td>Having enthusiasm means you are very excited or eager about something. If you were given a brand-new bike from Great Aunt Helen, you would probably show a great deal of enthusiasm towards her and her gift, even if she is a cranky old aunt most of the time.</td>
<td>eagerness, excitement, passion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enthusiastic</td>
<td>Being enthusiastic means you are very excited about something. If you were offered a brand-new bike, you would probably be very enthusiastic about this offer.</td>
<td>eager, excited, passionate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feline</td>
<td>This word means to be catlike. That includes acting sly, or slinky, or even graceful.</td>
<td>sly, graceful, elegant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gossip</td>
<td>When you gossip you spread rumors and tell tales. Gossip is a particularly nasty sort of thing, and you should probably steer clear of it. Strangely, people tend to love to gossip, but no one likes to be gossiped about.</td>
<td>spread rumors, tell tales, blabbermouth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grotesque</td>
<td>Something that is grotesque is strange and disgusting. This word should be part of any young writer's vocabulary. You can use it to describe the insides of your nose, dog vomit, and even a plate of steamed vegetables.</td>
<td>disgusting, hideous, terrible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gruffly</td>
<td>When you do something gruffly, you do it with a kind of rude, abrupt anger. People do things gruffly when they're not particularly happy about doing them.</td>
<td>angrily, grumpily, bluntly.</td>
</tr>
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hideous  Something is hideous if it's horrible, frightening, or extremely ugly. Hideous is a very useful word for describing things you absolutely cannot stand or find terrible.

horrible, terrible, gross.

hurricanes  A hurricane is a shockingly big storm. Hurricanes blow in from the Atlantic Ocean and can cause huge amounts of damage to people who live in their paths.

cyclone, typhoon, tropical storm.

hypnotize  To captivate or be charmed by something. For example, some people the smell of chocolate chip cookies baking in the oven causes them to be mesmerized or helpless to do anything else but wait for them to come out of the oven.

captivate, charm, fascinate.

inconsolable  When you are so unhappy that absolutely nothing can cheer you up. For instance, if you dropped a triple-decker ice cream cone on the ground, you would be inconsolable.

heartbroken, devastated, sad.

inspiration  You are sitting in creative writing class wondering what to write, and all of a sudden you have a bright idea; you have had an inspiration.

insight, flash, revelation.

luthier  A person who makes stringed instruments. If the guy living down the street makes violins and guitars, then he's a luthier.

luxurious  Luxurious things tend to be expensive, magnificent and comforting. Some see luxurious things as the key to a happy life. Others see luxurious things as useless and wasteful.

lavish, splendid, top-of-the-line.

meekly  If you act weak-kneed and want to crawl in a hole when you are around someone much bigger and stronger than you, you could say you are acting meekly.

lamely, humbly, timidly.

mesmerized  To be hypnotized or charmed by something. For example, the smell of chocolate chip cookies baking in the oven causes some people to be mesmerized or helpless to do anything else but wait for them to come out of the oven.

captivated, charmed, fascinated.

misfortune  A stroke of very bad luck. It is a great misfortune when you forget your homework, don't get dessert, or have to wake up early on Saturday. It's best to remember in these dreadful moments, however, that far, far worse could happen to you!

disaster, calamity, hardship.

nudged  To be pushed or prodded forward. If a friend of yours doesn't want to share his new video game, he might need to be nudged a bit. You could do this by begging, weeping, stomping around, and even threatening to tickle him.

pushed, prodded, edged forward.

quest  A quest is a search or expedition. For instance, you could find yourself on a quest to find the world's best doughnut.

mission, search, hunt.

recounted  When you recount, you are retelling or describing the facts in detail. For example, when you have given a book report in front of your class at school, you have recounted facts of the story.

reported, narrated, described.
remarkable

Something is remarkable if it is unusual and noteworthy. For example, it would be a remarkable thing if all young people suddenly loved broccoli.

impressive, distinctive, notable.

ridiculous

Something is ridiculous if it is silly and preposterous. Ridiculous also happens to be the single most useful word in the English language. There are just so many ridiculous things that happen. But being silly and ridiculous can be one of life's great pleasures.

silly, absurd, preposterous.

ridiculous

To be laughable. You might consider a clown wearing a pink polka-dotted shirt and purple plaid pants with bright red hair ridiculous.

absurd, silly, nonsensical.

rivals

When you compete with someone just about equal with you in a sporting event or activity at school, you could say that you two are rivals.

opponent, challenger, enemy.

scurried

This word is often used to describe how small animals run. For instance, you could say that a mouse scurried across the floor, but you'd never say that an elephant scurried.

ran, scampered, bounded.

skittish

To be frightened easily. For example, folks might consider you skittish if you jump a mile when you see an ant.

jumpy, edgy, wary.

sniveling

When you complain and whine and add in snuffling, you are said to be sniveling. It's not a pretty sight.

crying, weeping, bawling.

spasms

An involuntary movement or muscle contraction. Such a thing could happen when you are coughing and can't stop.

contraction, shudder, twinge.

tactic

A tactic is a plan or way to work toward a goal. For example, if you suddenly develop a stomachache just before it's time to do the dishes, your parents might accuse you of creating a plan or a tactic to get out of doing that chore.

plan, strategy, course of action.

universal

If something is universal, it has to do with the world or the universe. It's probably universal that kids don't like broccoli.

worldwide, entire, widespread.

veered

If you are heading down the hall and decide to suddenly turn or change direction, you have veered out of the way.

turn, swerve, change direction.

yammering

If you are talking loudly and endlessly, you could be said to be yammering. It's definitely something you don't want to try in class.

whine, howl, wail.
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Appendix B: Writing Tips

The following writing tips can be heard in the Books by You product.

All good stories have a beginning, middle and end. In the beginning, the story introduces the characters, sets the scene, and draws the reader into the story. In the middle, the characters usually face some type of conflict or challenge, and the main action of the story takes place. In the end, the character solves the problem and everything is resolved.

If you have a catchy title or subtitle for your story that makes it sound fun and interesting, people will want to read it. For example, instead of calling a story “The Brown Cat,” you might call it “The Smartest Cat in the Universe.” Now, that’s a story I’d want to read!

When you’re writing an important sentence, it is really important to capture the reader’s interest. You could write, “This is a story about what happened to Jim last Tuesday.” But wouldn’t it be more interesting to write, “Jim had a feeling that he’d never forget what happened to him on that fateful day”?

The beginning of your story has to grab the reader’s attention. Try reading the first page of your story and then ask yourself: would you want to read the rest of the story? Do what you can to make it as interesting as possible.

One way to capture your reader’s interest right away is to start your story right in the middle of an exciting event. You don’t have to start with lots of explanations and introductions of the characters. Begin with something exciting and then fill your readers in on the details as the story unfolds.

Most readers will identify with the first character they meet. Introduce your main character first and the other characters later in the story.

By giving answers that all relate to one subject or idea or even person, you add an extra layer of information that gives your story more flavor or an additional meaning.

Create an interesting setting for your story. Describe as much as you can for your readers so they can really imagine what it’s like to be there.

Use interesting details to make your story seem more real and to help the reader imagine what’s happening.

Use descriptive phrases to create pictures in the minds of your readers that help them see what you want them to see. For example, instead of writing, “Her eyes were blue,” you might write, “Her eyes were the color of a cloudless sky on a bright summer day.”
Verbs are words that describe action, like “walked” or “whistled,” or “was.” Choose verbs that do more than just tell what happens, but also *describe* how it happens. You could always write, “Mary ran home,” but how much more fun is it if you say, “Mary strolled home,” or “Mary *sprinted* home”?

Adjectives are words that describe a person or thing. If you use colorful and interesting adjectives to describe the people and things in your story, your readers will have a vivid picture of the world you’ve created.

You don’t want to keep using the same words over and over again, or your readers will get bored. Usually, there’s more than one word that can be used in any given situation. Try to change your vocabulary as much as possible, using the most interesting words you can think of.

Use descriptive words to describe how things look, feel, sound, smell, or taste. It will draw your readers into your story, and they will feel as if they are right there alongside your characters.

**COMPARE!** One way to be more descriptive in your writing is to compare things in your story with other things that the reader understands. For example, “Sergio was as fast as a speeding train,” or “Sergio was as slow as a snail crawling through molasses.”

Adverbs describe how something is done, and they can be a good way to add detailed descriptions of the action in your story. But when you can, it is a good idea to use stronger verbs that can describe the action by themselves. So instead of writing, “He spoke loudly,” you could write, “He shouted.” Or instead of “She quickly got off the train,” you could write, “She bolted from the train.”

Details will make your story more believable and interesting. For example, instead of mentioning a dog, describe a lazy Rottweiler or a nervous Chihuahua. Instead of having someone sleep, say your character is napping, dozing, or snoring; instead of something being cooked, make it grilled, boiled, or fried.

Don’t be afraid to use inventive and creative words. They’ll make your story much more entertaining. They’ll also give your readers a more exact understanding of a story’s characters and events.

Keep your characters original and interesting. If you make sure your main character is someone your readers would enjoy spending time with, they’ll be with you for the entire story!

Just for fun, instead of giving your characters common names, think about using a fruit, a vegetable, an animal, a place or even a funny word as a first or last name.

Don’t just *tell* readers how your characters feel. *Show* how the characters feel by what they do and what they say.

When you’re off writing on your own, remember to create interesting situations
for your characters. The most interesting choices for characters to make are when there are both good and bad things that could happen no matter what they choose.

The way your character thinks helps your reader understand the character, so you’ll want to let the reader in on what your character is thinking every now and then.

One way to make a character memorable and interesting is to give the character an unusual mannerism – a habit or behavior – that they repeat in different ways throughout the story.

The best stories often have some kind of conflict or problem that the main character has to overcome. The problem in your story should be something your readers will really care about. This will keep them interested right to the end. They’ll want to find out if the main character solves the problem, and if so, how.

As you write lines for your characters, remember that good dialogue does more than just tell the reader what a character is saying. It shows what your characters are like, how they feel, and what they are thinking.

Breathe life into your characters! Let your readers know how your characters think and feel, in addition to what they do and what happens to them. This will make your readers care about your characters the same way they’d care about a real person.

What your characters do will say more about who they are than what they say. Find ways to have your characters do things that show the reader what they are really like.

Real people are almost never all good or all bad. Not even me. Showing a little of the bad guy’s good side and the good guy’s bad side makes your characters more real and interesting.

A story is always more interesting if your characters learn something about themselves because of what happens in the story. Maybe they discover strengths or talents they didn’t know they had in order to solve a problem.

This is one of my favorite writing tips: you can create a seemingly predictable situation where your readers think they know what will happen next, and then startle them with an unexpected twist. By introducing lots of surprises, you can keep one step ahead of your readers.

Remember that the worse the situation gets for your main character, the more rewarding it will be for your readers when the character finally overcomes whatever obstacles you have created for him or her.

If you are having trouble thinking of what your characters should say, think of someone you know and imagine what they would say in the same situation.

Try reading your character’s dialogue out loud to see how it sounds. Does it
sound like something the character would say? Is there another way to say it that would tell your readers more about your character’s personality or what the character is feeling?

Your readers can’t see the expression on your character’s face, so the words they speak need to tell a lot about how they are feeling. Make sure your character’s feelings are clear from what they say.

Most stories are based on real life, but what makes them *interesting* is how they are different from everyday real life. It’s your imagination that makes your story unique.

Things have to happen in your story for a reason – usually because a character wants or needs something. Make sure the things that happen in your story have a reason that will make sense to your readers, and they’ll want to read more.

If your main character overcomes an obstacle or solves a problem in a clever and resourceful way, your readers will probably come to like the main character. The more obstacles or problems that are solved, the more fun and interesting the story will be.

When you write, try introducing something a little bit mysterious into your story and don’t explain everything about it right away. Even if it’s minor, this makes your readers wonder and people will keep reading because they just *must* find out the answer to the mystery.

Think about every scene in your story and imagine what it would be like to actually be there. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? Add those details and your reader will be able to imagine it also.

When you write, it’s a good idea to make things worse for your character before everything gets better. It keeps your readers interested and rooting for your main character when the character tries and fails, but then tries again and succeeds. Readers love heroes!

The names you give your characters can tell something about them. A friendly, happy girl might be named Sunny or June. A serious and grumpy man might be named Mr. Stern.

If something new or exciting happens in your story, it’s best to have one of your characters discover it. You could just describe it yourself, but it’s better to let your readers experience it through the eyes of your main character.

Remember that in a satisfying story, everything ties together in the end. And if the story is really good, your readers will feel like that’s the only way things could have possibly turned out. If you want your readers to like the story, it’s important to give them a satisfying ending that they will like.

The editing mode is your opportunity to put even more of your personality in the story. Don’t forget to click the red text to make the descriptions yours!
Proofreading all the underlined words is a great way to make sure that your answers are spelled correctly, and it also gives you a chance to make sure that you’re still happy with your answers, now that you see how they fit in your story. Just click an underlined word if you want to change it.

Be as serious or silly as you want to be...but it’s best to make sure that you’re being serious or silly *when* you want to be. Proofread your story carefully and make sure the answers you gave are telling the story the way *you* want it told.

For *you* (comma), I have a *great* tip (period). Keep a very close watch on the punctuation around the answers you gave (period). You might have put a comma or a period at the end of one of your answers at the same place this program put one (comma), and you’ll want to fix that.(period).

Ask not what you can do for your story. Ask what your story can do for you!