

Touchstone Texts

Purpose

First grade is fun, questionable, experimental, a convergence of “I can do it myself” and “I don’t know how.” The children are beginning to seek independence and value being in charge of their own learning. As I worked through this writing class, I realized that I had no idea how to teach the children writing beyond topic choice and conventions. My students were not being taught how to be a writer and certainly not how to *read like a writer* because I didn’t know how. Teaching, also, is fun, questionable, experimental, a convergence of “I can do it myself” and “I don’t know how.”

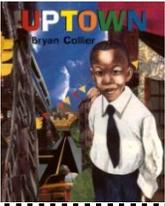
I chose to research touchstone texts to learn how to *read like a writer*. I want to understand how share the texts I love with early learners and show them the craft of writing within these texts. I want to learn how to *teach the writer, not the writing*. And, of course, I want to know how to do all this while embracing the common core standards.

Objectives

- 1) Through various touchstone texts, children learn to gather ideas from authors and their craft to utilize when choosing a writing topic.
- 2) Through exposure and inquiry into touchstone texts, children will learn to read like writers and evaluate writing through discussion and in their own writing.
- 3) Through rich touchstone text examples, children will study how text format and punctuation can make writing interesting and apply these techniques in their writing.
- 4) Through touchstone text, children will expand vocabulary and word choices and apply to writing (rich vocabulary, created words, similes, etc).
- 5) Children will study simple text structures and apply a self-selected structure to their writing.

The green box denotes genre, type of book and the objectives

CCS demonstrates the common core standards that can be covered by the text and its writing support in grade one.



Uptown

By Bryan Collier

Fiction/Poetic

Picture Book

Objectives: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Multigenre Text – Collier shifts his writing in a pattern on each page using a poetic beginning with “Uptown is _____,” and completing and ending with why Uptown is perceived as described. Sometimes the second paragraph is informational and others an opinion exposing similes and text shapes that match meaning.

Seesaw Text - The text seesaws back and forth on each page beginning with a statement then an explanation.

Summary:

Uptown takes you on a tour of Harlem from a young boy’s perspective. He introduces you to his family, community, culture and lifestyle through the poetic words of Collier. Each turn of the page, the Uptown takes you to a new place in Harlem from the boy’s point of view from the brownstones to the barbershop. Collier infuses information and history about Harlem throughout the book.

Supports for Writing Objectives:

The very first line bends up and down like a caterpillar as Collier has matched the text shape to the meaning.

- **“Uptown is a caterpillar”(n.p.).**

The following line is informational line that describes the poetic line.

- **“Well, it’s really the Metro-North train as it eases over the Harlem River” (n.p.).**

Collier introduces the children to comparisons using similes to entice word choice.

- **Uptown is a row of brownstones.”...”They look like they’re made of chocolate” (n.p.).**

This text offers writers a simple structure they can apply in their writing.

- **“Uptown is little sisters.” They’re on their way to church in matching yellow dresses” (n.p.).** They may try: Pittsburgh is fans. They’re on their way to the Steeler game in matching black and gold jerseys.

The final page shows the boy in his apartment and the words declare, **“Uptown is my home” (n.p.).** opening an opportunity for the children to discuss how they could use this author’s craft in their own writing. Could they write about a place that means something to them?

CCS: 1.cs.lit.4 1.cs.info.4,6 1.ttp.3 1.pki.4 1.pki.6 1.vau.5 1.vau.6

Collier, B. (2000). *Uptown*. New York: Henry Holt.



Ish

By Peter H. Reynolds

Fiction

Picture Book

Objectives: 1, 2, 4, 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Narrative Text with focus on Words– Reynolds uses a classic narrative text structure, but weaves creative sentence structure, word choice, and use of punctuation to entice the writer’s mind.

Summary:

The opening page shows a little boy smiling and drawing and Reynolds’ lead is clear and simple, **“Ramon loved to draw. Anytime. Anything. Anywhere”** (n.p.). One day he is ridiculed by his older brother and loses confidence in his artwork. He throws away his work and eventually gives up drawing until his little sister rejuvenates his desire and motivation. He discovers that she has an art gallery of his crumpled attempts hanging in her bedroom. She tells him they look “ish” so Ramon is inspired to create once more...”ish” drawings...and “ish” poems.

Supports for Writing Objectives:

Reynolds’ lead on the first three pages catches the writer’s eye. He writes one word sentences to express how surely Ramon will draw, **“ Anytime. Anything. Anywhere”** (n.p.). Children can envision using this simple lead in their own writing and the topic is almost universal. If the writer doesn’t envision drawing as a topic, they can be led to use the lead: _____ loved to _____.

Twice Reynolds uses sentence fragments, both occurring when Ramon is blissfully and eagerly drawing. Almost as though there wasn’t time to finish the words for slight of the artwork.

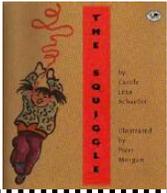
- **“He began to draw what he felt – loose lines. Quickly springing out. Without worry”**(n.p.).

The title alone makes the reader curious; Reynolds artfully creates a new word that rejuvenates Ramon’s faith in his abilities. His sister explains that his drawing looks vase-ISH.

- **“Well, it looks vase-ISH! she exclaimed”** (n.p.). **“They do look...ish,” he said”** (n.p.).

CCS: 1.cs.lit.4 1.ttp.3 1.pdw.5 1.cc.1,2 1.pki.5,6 1.cse.1,2 1.vau.4,5

Reynolds, P. H. (2004). *Ish*. Massachusetts: Candlewick.



The Squiggle

By Carole Lexa Schaefer

Fiction

Picture Book

Objectives: 1 2 3 4 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Text with Thread-Backs – Schaefer demonstrates structural technique when her main character revisits her string adventure for her classmates on the last few pages of the book.

Summary:

A young girl discovers a string while on a class walk. As she plays with it, it becomes different objects and scenes in her imagination. At the end, she calls to her classmates to turn and see all that she can create with a little string. Schaefer uses words that mimic different sounds and writes them on the page in the same manner shows why how sounds can make a story interesting.

Supports for Writing Objectives:

Students will enjoy the possibilities of using this text to guide their writing. The lead is a simple description of an everyday occurrence, but turns to an imaginative piece that even concrete thinkers could follow to create fictional writing.

Schaefer invites writers to use words to create sound using a mix of common and made up words:

- ***“Crack crickle hiss-the sky trail of popping fireworks”*(n.p.).**

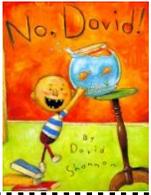
Schaefer transitions the little girls string imaginations using ellipses:

- ***“Slither slish. It could be...”* (n.p.).**
- ***“Ripple shhh-the circle of a deep still pool. Or even...”* (n.p.).**

The text offers possibilities for early writers to use real experiences and their imagination at the same time. Observing the thread-back technique gives them a wonderful ending option.

CCS: 1.cs.lit.4 1.ttp.3 1.pdw.5 1.cc.1, 2 1.pki.4, 5, 6 1.cse.1, 2 1.vau.4, 5, 6

Schaefer, C.L. (1996). *The Squiggle*. New York: Crown.



No, David!

By David Shannon

Realistic Fiction

Picture Book

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Conversation Text – Right or wrong, I would classify this as a conversation text though you only hear one side of the conversation, David's mom's imperatives! Maybe it could be the Imperative text structure.

Summary:

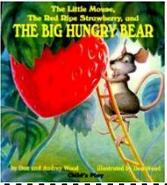
David goes through a series of mischievous childhood antics which repeatedly gets him into trouble. While all of David's voice and characterization are demonstrated through illustrations, his mother's voice is definite and reprimanding on each page as she yells, "No, David!" and "Stop!".

Supports for Writing Objectives:

- Once the writers have discovered that Shannon has written a whole book of imperatives or commands it may spark ideas about creating books with other constants, like questions.
- Shannon wrote this after his mother had sent him a book called *No, David* that he had written when he was little. This will help early writers realize that we can have drafts in our notebooks for years and still go back and take it to publication.
- The children can observe how the setting changes, but the story and words remain similar throughout the text.
- Notice how the mood of the story changes (second to last page) when Shannon writes **"Davey, come here."(n.p.)**. The author changed David's name to Davey and the mood softened. On the final page he reverts back to David to let the reader know that even as "David" his mom loves him: **"Yes, David...I love you"(n.p.)!**
- Shannon does not use quotation marks, yet the whole book is speech. It is important to share this so the early learners can begin to identify ways writers show conversation/dialogue (link with: **Yo? Yes!** and **There's a Bird on Your Head**).
- This text offers writers a simple structure they can apply in their writing.
- I would be remiss if I didn't suggest looking at commas in the text. Commas are difficult for K/1 learners (everyone) and it would be worth mentioning.

CCS: 1.cs.lit.4 1.ttp.2,3 1.pdw.5 1.cc.1, 2 1.pki.4, 5, 6 1.cse.1, 2 1.vau.6

Shannon, D. (1998). *No, David!* New York: Blue Sky.



The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry and The Big Hungry Bear

By Don and Audrey Wood

Fiction / Animal

Picture Book

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Participation with a Twist Text – This text allows the reader to become the narrator of the story, but this text has a twist. You, the narrator, also speak directly to the main character and participate in the entire text.

Summary:

Little Mouse is convinced by the narrator that a big hungry Bear is on its way to steal his freshly picked, ripe, red strawberry. The mouse goes through a series of humorous events to keep the strawberry from the Bear. The narrator (you) speaks directly to the Mouse essentially to get the mouse to share the strawberry with you. (You play devil's advocate?)

Supports for Writing Objectives:

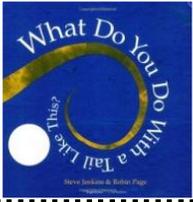
- Wood and Wood give writers an interesting challenge of setting themselves as the narrator. While teaching early writers second person point of view may not be appropriate, this book would lend well to an organized inquiry. They may discover who is talking to the Mouse and may try this technique in their own writing.

Wood and Wood are wonderful word-crafters:

- offering suspense and the urgency of doing something with the strawberry by repeating the **big, hungry Bear** five times throughout the text.
- Adjectives! The text lends well to a discussion of descriptive words. *Striking Adjective:* **“The Bear will tromp through the forest on his big, hungry feet, ...”(n.p.)**. The word, ripe, would be a striking/or new essential adjective for early learners, as most would not have this in their vocabulary.
- Striking verbs should be noticed to encourage early writers to spice up their writing: **“The Bear will tromp through the forest ...”(n.p.)**. **“or how it is disguised”(n.p.)**.
- Wood and Wood invite writers to use words to create sound and match the size of the Bear character with its action using text size and punctuation:
“BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! The bear will tromp...”(n.p.)
“...SNIFF! SNIFF! SNIFF! Find the strawberry...”(n.p.)

CCS: 1.cs.lit.4,6 1.ttp.3 1.pdw.5 1.cc.1, 2 1.pki.4, 5, 6 1.cse.1, 2 1.vau.4,5,6

Wood, D., & Wood, A. (1998). *The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear*. Maine: Child's Play Inc.



What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?

Steve Jenkins and Robin Page

Nonfiction/Q&A

Picture Book

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Seesaw Text – The text follows a question and answer pattern.

Summary:

This informational text focuses on ways animals use their unique features – eyes, nose, mouth, feet, ears, and tail. The pages follow a pattern of “what do you do with a [tail] like this?” and “If you’re a [monkey] you [swing...]”, wonderfully intertwining factual information and illustrations to teach the reader about the different features of animals. Notes at the end of the book give more information on each animal featured.

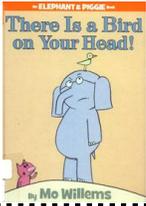
Supports for Writing Objectives:

- Jenkins and Page use an inviting way to look at nonfiction structures and styles. While the seesaw structure may be classic question and answer, the format and layout of the text is interesting, sometimes fanned to imitate the spray of a skunk or curved and elongated to represent the trunk of an elephant. The authors have made the text match the meaning of the words.
- Children could easily be prompted to try writing using this structure. Using other question and answer texts to link more ideas, such as ***Exactly the Right Egg*** and ***The Very Busy Spider***, could help them master this style and how they might frame the questions and answers.

Using descriptive words helps the writer craft well written questions and answers. When reading, ***“If you’re an egg-eating snake, you use your mouth to swallow eggs larger than your head” (n.p.)***. You might play with the words to have the question be the enticer: *What has a mouth that swallows eggs larger than its head?* For my students this would be easy to write and envision because we have a snake that eats mice twice the size of its head.

CCS: 1.cs.info.4,5,6 1.ttp.2 1.pdw.5 1.rbpk.8 1.cc.1, 2 1.pki.4, 5, 6 1.cse.1,2 1.vau.4,5,6

Jenkins, S., & Page, R. (2003). *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.



There Is a Bird on Your Head!

By Mo Willems

Fiction

Picture Book

Objectives: 2, 3, 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Conversation Text – The entire text is written as a conversation between characters. There is no narration. All speech is designated by speech bubbles.

Seesaw Text – The text seesaws back and forth through a series of questions and answers which becomes predictable.

Summary:

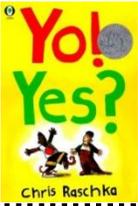
Gerald feels something on his head and asks Piggie what it is. Piggie answers that there is a bird on his head. From here the one bird turns to two birds, then to a nest, then to a nest with eggs, and then to a nest with baby birds. Gerald and Piggie have to figure out a way to get the birds off Gerald's head. The large fonts, speech bubbles, word repetition, and slapstick make this conversational text humorous.

Supports for Writing Objectives:

- Once the writers have discovered that Shannon has written a whole book of imperatives or commands it may spark ideas about creating books with other constants, like questions.
- Shannon wrote this after his mother had sent him a book called *No, David* that he had written when he was little. This will help early writers realize that we can have drafts in our notebooks for years and still go back and take it to publication.
- The children can observe how the setting changes, but the story and words remain similar throughout the text.
- Notice how the mood of the story changes (second to last page) when Shannon writes **“Davey, come here.”(n.p.)**. The author changed David's name to Davey and the mood softened. On the final page he reverts back to David to let the reader know that even as “David” his mom loves him: **“Yes, David...I love you”(n.p.)!**

CCS: 1.cs.lit.4,5,6 1.ttp.3 1.pdw.5 1.cc.1, 2 1.pki.5, 6 1.cse.1,2 1.vau.6

Willems, M. (2007). *There is a Bird on Your Head!* New York: Hyperion Books.



Yo! Yes?

Chris Raschka

Realistic Fiction

Picture Book

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Conversation Text – Raschka completes this text with a few 19 words. It is a childhood friendship developed through brief conversation on a street corner. The uncomplicated text makes it easier to consider as a writer.

Summary:

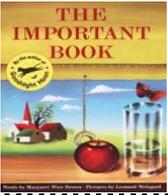
The author of this text takes you on a city sidewalk where two boys meet for the first time. One character is outgoing; the other is shy and apprehensive to respond. The outgoing boy persists and the lonely, shy boy accepts his friendship.

Supports for Writing Objectives:

- Raschka invites writers to take an awkward situation like meeting someone for the first time and craft it into a wonderful text. Most people can identify with one of the characters. Children can be motivated to recall and write about a moment on the playground, a conversation at the cubbies, or a lunchroom chat.
- Raschka doesn't use quotations or speech bubbles to represent speech. This would be a good style to share with the students and compare with other conversational texts.
- In the beginning, characters are revealed through the size of their speech. The outgoing boy has LARGE lettering with an exclamation mark; the shy boy has small lettering with a question mark. As the text continues and the shy boy gains confidence, his print grows to be the same as the outgoing boy.
- Notice how the word color changes when the boys have become friends on the last page, they are speaking together and shout, **“YOW!”(n.p.)**. The author changed the color and the position of the words to change the mood.
- Punctuation could be a focus with this text if it is a need for the whole class, if not, use it as a mentor text on an individual or small group basis.

CCS: 1.cs.lit.4,5,6 1.ttp.3 1.pdw.5 1.cc.1, 2 1.pki.5, 6 1.cse.1,2 1.vau.6

Raschka, C. (1993). *Yo! Yes?* New York: Orchard Books.



The Important Book

By Margaret Wise Brown

Informational/Opinion

Picture Book

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Repeated, Wraparound Paragraph – Each paragraph begins and ends in the same manner, but the final sentence reiterates the first sentence. **"The important thing about ___ is ____.** [other descriptions of the object] **But the important thing about a ____ is ____."**

Summary:

Brown takes everyday objects that any child can encounter and creates a patterned book about the importance of the object. She describes the importance of a spoon, an apple, wind, snow, shoes, etc. She ends the text with the importance of being you, bringing the reader into the text.

Supports for Writing Objectives:

The pattern Brown uses is a simple structure that children can apply to their writing. Children could easily envision objects, people, or places that they could apply to this structure once they have studied the text as a writer. Early writers would have to be guided through the descriptive writing that lies between the wraparound texts.

Brown entices the senses because through her words, this is a style within the reach of young riders. It is a way for them to apply descriptive writing in a developmentally appropriate way. Some examples are:

- **"...and it sounds like rain...and it does not taste like anything, ..."**(n.p.)
- **"...you can feel it on your cheek...and see it bend trees, ..."**(n.p.)
- **"...it has a ticklish smell"**(n.p.) [daisy] What is a *ticklish* smell? This is a vibrant word to describe a daisy and may be worth a classroom discussion.

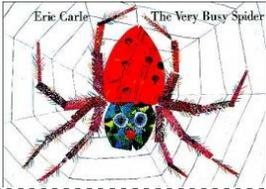
Notice Brown's way of creating a *Runaway Sentence* (which could also be a *Long, Short, Short Sentence*):

- **"It is cold, and light, it falls softly out of the sky, it is bright, and the shape of tiny stars, and crystals. It is always cold. And it melts"** (n.p.).

Some of the text is shaped to match meanings, such as the wispy font on the wind page, the light blue color on the sky page, and final page where "you" are the most important thing. On this page, the words you are in large fancy script to separate the importance of **you**.

CCS: 1.cs.lit.4,5,6 1.cs.info.6 1.ttp.1,2,3 1.pdw.5 1.cc.1, 2 1.pki.4, 5, 6 1.cse.1, 2 1.vau.4,5,6

Brown, M. W. (1949). *The Important Book*. New York: Harper and Row



The Very Busy Spider

Eric Carle

Fiction / Animal

Picture Book

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Narrative Sequenced by a Series of Animals – As in many Carle texts, he uses animals to sequence this story.

Seesaw Text - The text seesaws back and forth on each page beginning with a statement and a question followed up by a repetitive narrative.

Summary:

A spider begins spinning her web on a farm fence post. As she works, a line-up of animals periodically visit her and ask her to do something. The spider silently refuses each offer because she is too busy focusing on her task. Her hard work pays off when she catches a fly in the web and later sleeps comfortably at night.

Supports for Writing Objectives:

- Children can likely envision using this structure in their own writing. They can be lead to use their own life and experiences to use this technique. (Ex. "Hi," said _____. "Do you want to play ball?" _____ didn't answer. She was very busy _____.)
- Carle offers a simple way for children to study and consider voice.
- Carle exposes new word choices to replace **said**. These words, bleated, grunted, crowed, and cried open opportunities to enrich and improve writing. **Cried**, for early learners would be understood in the literal (bawling) sense, this would need to be clarified.
- How speech is delineated using quotation marks would have to be discussed with early writers. They may have been exposed to speech represented by just text (**Yo! Yes?**) and speech bubbles (**There is a Bird on Your Head!**), it is important to compare and contrast these writing styles.
- Punctuation could be a focus with this text if it is a need for the whole class, if not, use it as a mentor text on an individual or small group basis.

CCS: 1.cs.lit.4,5,6 1.ttp.3 1.pdw.5 1.cc.1, 2 1.pki.4, 5, 6 1.cse.1, 2 1.vau.4,5,6

Carle, E. (1984). *The Very Busy Spider*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.



Big Pumpkin

Erica Silverman

Fiction

Picture Book

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Narratives Sequenced by a Series of “People” – Silverman creates a sequence of creatures that assist a witch pulling her pumpkin off a vine. The characters’ lines are repetitive and predictable.

Circular Text - The text begins with the witch planting a pumpkin seed because she wants to make pumpkin pie. The ending takes her back to the patch to plant a seed so that she will be able to make pumpkin pie the next year.

Summary:

A witch tries to pick the gigantic pumpkin that she has been growing to make pumpkin pie. The witch cannot pull the pumpkin off the vine by herself. A ghost, vampire, and mummy pass by her struggling and offer to help - they all fail. Along comes a bat and offers to help to which he receives odd looks and laughter. The bat has everyone work as a team, the pumpkin snaps off the vine, and the witch makes pumpkin pie.

Supports for Writing Objectives:

Children will delight in the rhythm and repetition that Silverman provides in this text. Most lines repeat. The most significant (opinion) is:

- ***“But she thought about pumpkin pie and stepped aside” (n.p.).*** Silverman writes this line after the witch reluctantly accepts someone’s help. The same occurs as each new character joins.
- Also, a sense of urgency is demonstrated when the witch repeats: ***“It’s big and it’s mine, but it’s stuck on the vine, and Halloween’s just hours away” (n.p.).*** A conversation here would be helpful to early writers about how they can succeed at showing time and setting.

Italics are used four times in the text and each time it represents the action and sound of the pumpkin.

- ***“Snap!*** Off came the pumpkin” (n.p.).
- ***“Whoosh!*** It flew and it flew...” (n.p.).
- ***“Thud!*** It landed on top...” (n.p.).
- ***“Thump-bump, thump-bump, thump-bump”*** (n.p.).

CCS: 1.cs.lit.4,5,6 1.ttp.3 1.pdw.5 1.cc.1, 2 1.pki.4, 5, 6 1.cse.1, 2 1.vau.4,5,6

Silverman, E. (1992). *Big Pumpkin*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks.



Exactly the Right Egg

Alan Rubin

Informational/ Q&A

Picture Book

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Craft of Text Structure:

Seesaw Text - The text seesaws back and forth between four page spreads to include: a page of clues, a question page, an answer page, and an information page.

Summary:

This informational text focuses on animals that hatch from eggs. The animals included in the book are various birds, snakes, turtles, crocodiles, and butterflies. The pages follow a pattern wonderfully intertwining factual information and photos to teach the reader about the different animals that hatch from eggs. Pictures and labels at the end of the book recap animals that hatch from exactly the right egg.

Supports for Writing Objectives:

Rubin entices a writer from the first page with his bold, fun lead: “Crick, crick, crack!” his shapes the text to match the meaning and the font is enlarged to a dramatic size.

He uses a vibrant and inviting way to look at nonfiction structures and styles. While this is a style of seesaw structure, the layout is formatted in a four page spread, each right page being flapped. This allows the author to provide four bits of information/text on each animal.
Ex.

- Snake page 1 (clue): **“The animal that hatches from these eggs are long and thin” (8).**
- Snake page 2 (ques.): **“What will hatch from one of these eggs” (8)?**
- Snake page 3 (ans.): **“It’s a baby snake” (n.p.)!**
- Snake page 4 (info.): **“Snakes shed their skin as they grow” (n.p.).**

Children could easily be prompted to try writing using this structure. Using other question and answer texts to link more ideas, such as **What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?** and **The Very Busy Spider**, could help them master this style and how they might frame the questions and answers.

It would be best to have an early writer choose one object, person, animal to focus on, rather than a whole book. A whole class book could be created from those writers that try this author’s craft.

CCS: 1.cs.info.4,5,6 1.ttp.2 1.pdw.5 1.rbpk.8 1.cc.1, 2 1.pki.4, 5, 6 1.cse.1,2 1.vau.4,5,6

Rubin, Alan. (2004). *Exactly the Right Egg*. Texas: Steck-Vaughn.

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Analysis and Reflection

Uses

A sudden move to first grade has made me rethink some of the texts I will be using this year. This project has helped me, not only rethink my teaching, but also to look at my favorite texts as a writer and how they can improve my students' writing. The texts listed in this project are some that are important to me, that I know children enjoy, and texts with important messages or information from which I hope my children will learn.

I'm using my great grandmother's old suitcase to house our collection. I figure the suitcase is fitting, as the children and I go on a journey to discover the craft of writing. I will likely have our suitcase packed full of well-crafted texts. This suitcase will sit open under our vocabulary tree and be available to the students, myself, and visitors to use as needed. I will house these annotated sheets, and future ones, in a binder.

Uptown, Ish, The Squiggle, No, David!, and *The Important Book* will be used first in the year. I have been studying these texts and hope to be ready to work with these authors to support my new budding writers.

Limitations

This list of books is important to me, and the format is organized in a way that makes sense to me, but others may look at this and find it a complete mess. So, this project may be limited to only benefit me, but my greatest desire is that it benefits my students.

There are not enough texts on the list. My original pile had 38 texts, as I couldn't stop finding literature I love and wanted to read as a writer and discover the writer's craft. I was limited by time. Some books took me near an hour and 15 minutes to read, and read, and read, then sticky note the author's craft and ways with words, summarize, research, and demonstrate objective supports. This is not a complaint, rather a discouraged remark because I wanted to do so much more.

I think the format I chose to report my findings would better serve me (maybe others) if I put it in Excel in a learning matrix style. Last month I started an Excel sheet to catalog all my books (I'm only on 384 of some 1,200), and I could see adding a Touchstone Texts column. It would be valuable to have some texts identified for writing use, rather than just reading comprehension skills/strategies and levels.

I think it is important have book links so that you can find other texts that reinforce an author's craft or techniques to share with the children (I'm sure I read this in Ray's book somewhere). I provided a few book links in my list, but it is limited. I would like to start noting this as I continue creating my touchstone text list.

Evaluation

I wish I could quote Ray's entire chapter ten here. It sums up my learning experience so completely. My mind is overloaded with information and possibilities to improve my teaching, understanding, and my students' writing. Ray (1999) suggests, "Sometimes, maybe we can learn too much too fast. Sometimes, we can learn so much—all at once—that it *changes who we are*. When this happens, the idea of returning to our day-to-day selves is scary" (pp. 207-208). This happened to me and I felt like I was standing beside Ray saying, "Oh my gosh, we do learn to write from writers. How do I make this happen" (1999, p. 208)?

I have learned that she continues to be right and get me, reshaping my thinking and overhauling my teaching is hard, unsettling, and takes a lot of time. But it is so worth it. I just hope I can make it worthwhile for my little writers. So, I'm beside Ray again thinking, "I have to figure out how to make my new knowledge base fit with my day-to-day teaching act" (1999, p. 208). This process will take many years, but this project has set the ball rolling and I am *growing taller in my teaching*.