Best in Show: Judging Our Collections

BEND]





IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that when writers care a lot about something—dogs, hats, T-shirts, superhero figures—they often collect examples of that topic, and then spend time judging all they have collected, thinking, "This is the best because . . ." They try to convince others of their opinions.

GETTING READY

- Student writing folders, emptied of all previous writing, which has been sent home, filed, or published
- Each child's shoebox collection of his or her favorite things
- Your own shoebox collection. This will thread through the unit. I use a collection of five plastic dogs. More would not be better! (see Teaching)
- Chart paper with prewritten heading, "To Judge Fairly" written at the top, markers, clipboards, and a judge's hat (see Active Engagement)
- ✓ Stacks of First Place Blue Ribbon paper at each table as well as a fully stocked writing center (see Mid-Workshop Teaching) ↔
- Post-it[®] notes of varying colors (see Share)

Common Core State Standards: W.1.1, W.2.1, RI.1.8, SL.1.1, SL.1.4, L.1.1, L.1.2, L.1.5.a

Session 1

People Collect Things and Write Opinions about Their Collections

S IX-YEAR-OLDS COLLECT STUFF. Go for a walk with a six-year-old—it can be through the woods or along the beach, it doesn't matter. When you arrive home, the youngster's pockets will be full—a few acorns (looking like elves) and two rocks, one with veins of gold running through it, the other bearing the faint impress of a fern. Or dig through the child's backpack, lunch box, or cubby. You'll find a collection of stickers or bracelets, trolls or baseball cards.

If you think about it, the stuff that a person collects is the grist for that person's writing mill. After all, Celena, Liz, and I collect writing by young children and stories from heroic teachers. And then, when we sit down to write, we spin all that we have collected into sentences, chapters, proposals, speeches, books. Do children know that they can do the same?

In this session, you create a glorified show-and-tell session, but this time, instead of asking children to bring one robot, one baseball cap, or one Barbie to school, you ask each child to bring a small collection, with the collection stored neatly into a shoebox. Some children may forget or may claim to have no collections, in which case they can easily make collections of beloved books from the classroom library. Or with just a pen and some index cards, they can make a collection of favorite movie titles or favorite toys, favorite songs, or favorite places. Have on hand empty shoeboxes for children who need to gather and create a collection in class, along with spare collection items, such as books, photographs of animals, or plastic creatures. Once children have collections in hand, instead of following the traditional show-and-tell format in which each child takes his or her seat, in sequence, at the front of the room and then talks (on and on) about whatever that child wants to share, you can teach children that they can use writing to think and "talk" about the stuff of their lives. You will be teaching them not only to build on their interests and follow their passions—an important life lesson—but also to use writing to form, convey, and support their opinions.

If you wonder how this session fits with the announced topic of *Writing Reviews* know that the progression is that children learn to evaluate, to rank, first the items in shoebox collections, then they progress to doing similar work with restaurants, books, and the like as they write more traditional reviews. Always, however, they are forming opinions and supporting them with evidence. The Common Core State Standards for first-grade opinion writing are not high; the standards ask only that children at this age learn to introduce their topic, state their opinion, supply a reason, and—with help from adults—add details to strengthen this reason, and then provide some closure. This unit will support much more complex work than this!

We have a larger purpose, above these standards and beyond our goals for opinion writing: we want children to adore writing time. We want them to go home and tell their parents stories about the fun things they do during writing time. We want them to feel as we do: that writing is a way to wrap one's mental arms around all that is most important in life, to embrace topics and causes and objects and obsessions that define us, and in doing so, to grow insights about all that matters most to us.

So, go into today's teaching, aiming for your youngsters to enjoy the work. That's half the point of the minilesson. During the first session or two in any unit of study, the teacher always tries to issue a wide and generous invitation for youngsters to participate in a new kind of work, approximating that work with eagerness and energy (if not with a whole boatload of skill). Today is the day to welcome youngsters into the work of making and supporting judgments. Later you can help them perfect this work and help them to see that persuasive writing is far more weighty than today's pretend dog show might suggest.



SESSION 1: PEOPLE COLLECT THINGS AND WRITE OPINIONS ABOUT THEIR COLLECTIONS



MINILESSON

People Collect Things and Write Opinions about Their Collections

CONNECTION

Explain that people use writing to think about stuff and to get others to think about stuff as well—the stuff might be a collection.

"Writers, we've often talked about how kids use writing to do things: to tell stories, to teach people. Today we're starting a new unit, and in this unit, you will use writing to form opinions about stuff... and to persuade other people to share those opinions. Do you remember that last year, you studied ways to get readers to share your opinions about problems in your class and in the world? You wrote things like, 'It is bad when people run in the halls,' or 'People should not pollute.' Well, this year, you'll be convincing people to think as you do about *stuff*.

"So I brought a collection of stuff in my shoebox. How many of you remembered to bring a collection in your shoebox?" Most children signaled that yes, they'd brought a small collection. "If you don't have a shoebox full of something stickers, rubber Ninjas, baseball cards, hair bands, Lego guys—you can later get some favorite books or pens or math manipulatives and make yourself a collection right after our minilesson," I said. "Or you could make a list of favorite places, or songs, or whatever you want."

Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that people who know a lot about something—like people who keep collections—often think, 'Which is my favorite? Which is next?' And people write and talk to tell others about their opinions. They even try to *convince* others about their opinions."

♦ COACHING

One of the challenges in devising a K-8 curriculum is that it is important not only to convey that one unit is unique and different from the rest but also that the skills one learned earlier are skills that are meant to be used and built upon for a lifetime. This unit stands on the shoulders of the Persuasive Writing of All Kinds unit in kindergarten and yet approaches opinion writing from quite a different trajectory.

Minilessons are a form of oral instruction. We write them down to share them, but they live as spoken language. I find that the best minilessons have an informal, intimate, spokenlanguage quality. Whenever helping teachers write minilessons, I suggest they avoid writing them at the computer and, instead, write them by talking and then jotting with a pen on paper, old-fashioned style. This helps to make the minilessons feel more homespun, more oral.

TEACHING

Show children your collection (mine is of rubber dogs, of many breeds), and recruit them to join you in judging your collection (in my instance, creating a dog show).

"In a few minutes, you are going to have a chance to do what people do—to think about the things you know about, that you collect, and then to write some of your opinions. But first, do you mind helping me to think about my collection?"

From my shoebox, I produced five toy dogs. "Have any of you ever watched a dog show, either in real life or on television? A judge with a clipboard inspects each dog. He checks the shape of the dog's head, feels its fur, and looks into its eyes. Then he says, 'Walk your dog' and he watches the dog walk in a circle. After a while the judge will announce, 'Ladies and gentleman, we have our winners. In first place . . .' and he will announce the winner. Later, he'll have a bunch of reasons for why that dog was more special than the others."

Explain that in this unit, they'll be judging not just dogs but items in their own collections, and movies, books, and restaurants.

"I'm telling you this because what that judge does—deciding which dog is the best and giving his or her reasons—is something you will do a lot in this unit. You can help me be a judge for my dogs, and you can be a judge for your own collection—of Lego guys, hair bands, stickers, baseball cards, and the like. Later on in this unit, you'll also be the judge for restaurants, TV shows, movies, and books."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Recruit a volunteer judge. Role-play what not to do, contrasting that with a list of what responsible judges should do. Channel the judge to weigh one trait at a time, across contenders.

"For now, let's learn some things about being a good judge by judging my collection of dogs. I need a volunteer to be our dog show judge, and we'll all notice what you do to judge and see if we can think about what a really serious, really fair, judge should do. 'Cause would it be okay if I judged the dog show like this?" I glanced at the dogs, threw my hands up in a "whatever?" gesture, and flicked a finger at one dog and said, "He's the best. I don't know why, just 'cause . . ." Shifting out of the role of a cavalier judge, I asked the children, "Would *that* be what you'd expect of a dog show judge?"

On cue, the children chimed, "No . . ." and one came to the front of the room to role-play being a judge. I gave Bradley a clipboard and a hat. I put the dogs in a line for him and channeled him to look closely at the first one, then at the next one.

"Writers, will you talk quietly with each other, naming what you see Bradley doing that seems like wise judging?" Children articulated what they saw Bradley doing, and Bradley continued his judging. I whispered to Bradley that it would By now, you will have seen that an enormous love for dogs winds in and out of these books. There is nothing essential about bringing dogs into your teaching, but your teaching will be more intense and intimate if you bring whatever you love to it. If you adore owls and have owl coffee cups and owl doormats in your house, your kids want to know that, and they'll want to help you assess whether the screech owl is better or worse looking than the barn owl. The fact that dogs thread in and out of these minilessons should signal that you need to bring your life to your teaching.

When acting the "what not to do" part, always exaggerate to bring home the point and give kids some fun.

Keep your eye on the clock. Kids do not need to see one child weighing the pros and cons of a beagle versus a German shepherd for very long! Make sure your judge moves along quickly and gets through this without going into excessive detail. help if he looked into each dog's eyes, one by one, and thought which had the best eyes. As he did this, I inquired, in a voice all the children could hear, "So, Bradley, are you looking into each dog's eyes? Is that the plan? To look at the same thing—like for now, the eyes—on each of your dogs?" Again, I asked children to tell each other what they noticed the judge was doing that they could do when it was their turn to judge their collections.

As the students shared their ideas with partners about what they noticed the judge was doing, I quickly jotted what I had overheard on a piece of chart paper.

To Judge Fairly:

- 1. Put everything in a line.
- 2. Compare the same thing (eyes, fur, and so on) on each,

thinking, "Which has the best . . . ?"

Channel all children to function as judges for your collection, reminding them how a judge goes about making fair decisions and leading them to choose the winner and to provide reasons.

"Let's each try being the judge at this dog show. I'll pass the dogs around so that you can look at each one closely (but quickly, please). Remember to look at the same thing on each dog. How about if for now, you look at the fur on each dog and assess it?" Then the dogs were paraded in front of all the judges. As they examined them, I said, "Be thinking which is first place, and why. How will you explain your decision?"

After the dogs had circulated, I said, "So, judges. Make your decision. Which dog is number one, and why? Tell your opinion and your reasons to your partner."

Ask one individual to report and defend his or her "Best in Show" choice, coaching into the one child's work in ways that help that child to elaborate.

Once I'd called for the class's attention, I asked for volunteers to announce their "Best in Show" choices and the reasons behind those choices. Thomas's hand shot up, and when I called on him, he scrambled to his feet, collected the collie from the pile of dogs, and held it high. "This guy is the best, the number one."

I said, "Thomas, do you think that is enough for a judge to say 'This is the best?' or do you think a judge needs to give his reasons?" Thomas looked at the dog in his hand, his finger rubbing gently over the back of the little rubber dog, then he held the dog up for the class to see and said, "His fur is good! This dog has all different colors of fur."

"Go on," I nudged as the room buzzed a bit with children who were murmuring their agreement, while others were shaking their heads, eager to share their choice and their opinions. "Say, 'Another thing . . .'"

Again, you really need to watch the time. You may just hold each dog up and "walk" it in front of the class. Don't let more than five compete!

Notice that when I ask, "Do you think it is enough for a judge to say 'This is the best' or do you think the judge needs to give reasons," I am not just saying, "Thomas, will you explain why you like this dog's fur the best?" The way that I word my coaching makes it applicable—transferable—to another day, another instance of judging, whereas if I'd simply asked a situationspecific question such as, "Why do you like this dog's fur the best?" that is not as transferable. "Another thing I really like about this dog that makes him my most favorite, is that his ears have spikes of fur coming out of them," Thomas said, again holding the dog up, with his fingers touching the tufts on the dog's ears.

Unpack, out loud, the reasons and details in the child's opinion in ways that help the rest of the children support their own choices.

"Whoa," I said. "Look at how Thomas explained his opinion! The reason he awarded this one 'Best in Show' is that this dog's fur is the best. And he gave details: this one has the most *different* colors in his fur. Some of you might have picked a different dog and decided it had the best fur for a different reason, like maybe you picked a dog because its fur was the softest. But Thomas gave his own reasons!

"Thomas gave another detail to support his judgment of the dog's fur—he said this dog's ears have tufts of hair coming from them. Thomas didn't just say, 'It's my favorite, it's the best,' and leave it at that. No way! He went on. He gave reasons and details. He said, 'This dog is my favorite *because* of his fur. It is colorful, and there are tufts of it in his ears.' We should add what Thomas did to our list of how to judge fairly." I added one final bullet:

> 3. Decide which is the best and give reasons, say "BECAUSE

LINK

Send children off to judge their own collections similarly, writing about the item they like best and their reasons for this judgment.

"I know you want to judge your own collections. Although you have heard of dog shows, you may not have heard of hair band shows, or Lego shows, but the truth is, people who have collections do think, 'Which is my favorite, next favorite, and why?'" I reminded children of our chart containing a list of ways to judge fairly.

"Writers often rank whatever it is they know about—sports teams, songs, outfits—deciding which is the best and saying why, and then offering up opinions. Use what you have learned about judging fairly to think about the items in your own collection and decide on your own opinions, then write reasons for your opinion. Later, when you put one of your things in the winner's circle, you can put your writing beside your choice.

"The kind of writing you will be doing is called opinion writing, and for this unit of study, you will learn to do it really, really well. In your whole, entire life, whenever you are writing an opinion, you will always need to explain your reasons, just like you are doing today. Okay, who is ready for a Lego show, a hat show, a car show? If you are ready, 'Judges on duty!' Off you go!"

Be aware that there are an armload of ways you can name what this one child has done. He has supplied evidence. He has substantiated his opinion. He has said more. He has elaborated. He has given examples. He has included details. I try to not name one action by ten different names—a different name each time I discuss the concept—but instead select the label that I'll use for this particular action and use that one label repeatedly for a long while. Only once the kids have a firm grasp of the concept will I provide a synonym or two, and at that point, I'll use both the now-familiar term and the new one.

Teachers, you will want to decide how much you want to emphasize the "Best in Show" metaphor, with the winner's circle and the accompanying blue ribbon, and how much you want to let go of that particular spin on the process of reviewing and judging and forming opinions. The kids will probably enjoy it as you play up the competitive angle, using terms like "Best in Show," but this work is more transferable to what writers do if you downplay that a bit and instead talk about the fact that they're reviewing and supporting opinions.

Again, you can decide to tone down the "Judges on duty!" talk and instead send kids off to review all the items in their collection, determine which they think is especially good, and decide upon their reasons.



Launching the Work by Supporting Thoughtful Evaluations

D URING THE FIRST DAY OF MANY UNITS OF STUDY, you'll want to circulate extra quickly to make sure that all of your children grasp what is being asked of them and are able to get engaged in the work, even if the details of what they are doing are not yet perfect. So instead of hovering with one child, luring that child to provide more elaborated reasons and to use more domain-specific vocabulary to describe his or her reasons, you'll probably accept more approximations than usual and mostly channel students into throwing themselves head over heels into this work.

The best way to recruit children to care about the work is for you to care about it as well. So as you move from one child to another, one collection to another, take the job of judging these collections seriously. Remember that although the little furry trolls in one child's box may not be your cup of tea, those trolls are as important to that collector as a collection of your students' drafts are to you. You'll find that if you approach children's collections with enormous interest and recruit children to tell you the criteria they use to assess their items, you'll put children in positions of expertise and help them to talk with authority about their collections. This, of course, will set them up to engage in exactly the kind of writing that you hope they do.

Although it can take just seconds to rank items from best to worst, this sort of work can also require a lot of thought. Your first goal will be to help children take their roles as judges seriously. Certainly children will need to be reminded that a judge looks at each entrant with one lens in mind, then looks at each entrant with another lens, and another. As the judge does this work, he or she is essentially thinking, "What makes this better or worse?" That is, what makes one dog's eyes rank better than another dog's eyes? Some children will be apt to shrug and say, "I dunno. I just liked it better," in which case you will absolutely want to teach children that being able to talk and think about qualities is essential, as is being able to cite evidence. Any judge needs to substantiate his or her opinions with evidence. Furthermore, it is helpful to not just point to the evidence but to discuss it, to "unpack" it. Why does fur that contains more color rate better than fur of just one color?

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING Help Children Imagine Forms for Their Opinion Writing

"Writers, can I have your attention for just one minute?" Once all eyes were on me, I continued on. "Writers, some of you are wondering what this kind of writing looks like. What paper do you use? I've put a pile of paper, each containing a first-place blue ribbon and lots of space for you to write the reasons for your choice, on your tables. But you can also invent other ways that your writing can go. You could decide to write a whole book that is just about all the reasons that your first-place dog or kind of candy or book is so special. On every page you could write, "It is special because . . ." and tell another reason. Or one page can be on the first-place dog or hair band, with the next page being for the second-place. These decisions are up to you because you are the author. There are paper choices in the writing center, if you decide to use paper other than the kind at the center of your tables."

As Students Continue Working...

"Oh, my goodness. Ashley just came up with a new idea that some of you might try as well. She is giving out red ribbons as well as blue ones! Red ribbons are for things that come in second place. Great idea, Ashley."

Of course, part and parcel of helping children take their judging seriously will be helping children move from looking at and talking about the items in their collections toward writing about them.

As I sat down beside Rosa, I noticed she had sketched quick pictures of her opinions, choosing the orange cat in her collection as her favorite, and had also added details by

awarding "second and third places" with numbers and labels (see Figure 1–1). After I studied her work for a moment, I began. "Hi, Rosa. Tell me about the work you're planning to do as a writer today."

Orange fluffy kitten, you are the winner! You are fluffy. Even fluffier than the black kitten. Winner! Winner! Winner! Fluffy! Fluffy! Fluffy!

Rosa paused in her writing and looked up at me. "I'm going to tell about my orange cat because I like him best. I drew my most favorite and the other two that I like."

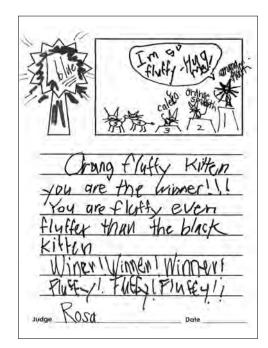


FIG. 1–1 Rosa is more clear as to which is her favorite than why.

I wanted to name for Rosa the work she was planning on doing, so that it would be clear to her that her strategy was transferable to other days, other pieces. Also, summarizing what a student tells me signifies to them that I am listening to what it is they are telling me. Their words are important. "So, Rosa, let me make sure I understand what you are planning to do today during workshop. You're planning to write a piece that tells your opinion about the cats in your collection. You looked at all the cats in your collection," I said, gesturing to the first step on the "How to Judge Fairly" chart, "then you compared the same thing on each?"

I paused for a moment and Rosa said, "Yeah. I looked at fur. I like the orange cat. It has fluff."

"Wow, you have big plans ahead of you. So, tell me, how's it going to sound when you write the rest of your opinion about the orange cat? Like, what are you going to put on the next page?" I wanted to push Rosa to imagine that she could extend her writing.

"I'm going to write that orange kitten is the winner because it is the fluffiest," Rosa said, as she pointed to the picture. "It's fluffiest and cute."

I said, "What other ways did you compare the orange kitten to the others in your collection?" Rosa stared at me, then looked back to her paper. "It's fluffier than the black kitten," she added.

"Rosa, you're definitely thinking like an opinion writer. Just like in the newspaper, when opinion writers write and share their thinking and choices, they tell what their opinion is so that the readers know their thinking. I want to remind you that as you write your opinion, you want to be sure to add a couple reasons that tell *why* it is your favorite. Look at step three on the chart," I said, and pointed to the chart still sitting on the easel. "You've told one reason—the fluffy fur—but you need to judge more than one trait. Consider personality or size or shape or eyes . . . then write 'because . . .' and tell more reasons. That helps your readers to understand your opinion."

Rosa looked solemnly at me and nodded her head. Before I left this conference, I took the opportunity to reiterate the writing strategy, stressing the importance of it being applicable to all opinion writing. As you write other opinion pieces this week, and next week, and from now on—keep doing that hard work of lining up all the choices, then comparing one to the others, and then writing several reasons why you chose the one you did. You'll use the word *because* to help explain your thinking.





Developing Systems to Organize Your Judgments

Teach the class the way one child developed a system for assessing one trait (on one color Post-it note) and then another trait, helping to solidify the trait-based assessment.

"Kids, I want to show you what Alejandro figured out to help him with picking the best in his matchbox car show! I asked Alejandro to set up right here on the top of this bookcase so you could see. What he did was this: he lined up all his cars. Then, he decided to use *blue* Post-it notes to judge the speeds at which each of his cars travel. So after putting a blue note in front of each car, he then wrote that car's speed on that paper. Look, he wrote 'terrible' speed on this one and drew just two stars. Meanwhile he wrote 'so-so' on some others, with four or five stars, and he wrote 'super super fast' on this one, with ten stars.

"He didn't just judge his cars' speeds. He also judged the cars' prices. On a *yellow* Post-it note, he wrote the price of any car he could remember, and he circled the most expensive car as the winner of that category.

"Do you see how this system works? Alejandro is using a different-color Post-it note for each quality that he is judging and making notes that capture his opinion on that quality—speed and price.

"Will you turn to your partner and talk about what the traits were than you used to judge the items in your collection. If you didn't have a system like Alejandro's, talk about whether that sort of a system could work for you." Session 2

Explaining Judgments in Convincing Ways

ANY OF THE ADULTS IN A SCHOOL never received the writing education that you are giving to your students. If you and your colleagues talk about the writing education that you each received, you will probably find that most of your colleagues usually wrote one draft only and then turned in that piece of writing for comments from the teacher. The paper would be returned with notes like "awk" or "details!" written in the margin and with no expectation that the writer would do something with that draft. If ever a writer was asked to redo a piece of writing, it was because the initial draft was really below par. Most adults in a school were brought up to believe that revision was punishment for writing that didn't make the mark.

It is a big deal that today, Day Two of this exciting unit, is a day for revision. Your children are growing up expecting that first-draft writing will almost always require revision, and they are being taught that revision is no big deal. Earlier this year, during their information writing unit, whenever they learned a new quality of effective information writing, they used that new quality both as they wrote their upcoming chapter and also as a lens for rereading and reconsidering all their so-called finished chapters. Writing was a process of "one step forward, one step backward." Today, you let writers know that this unit will be no different.

Prior to today, the children will probably have written several pages about the items in their collections that they like best and next best. It would be interesting to ask a few children, before today's class, "What do you think you'll be learning about and doing in today's writing workshop?" Your hope is that by now, your children have internalized the rhythm of writing, then rereading one's writing with an eye toward particular qualities of good writing, and revising that writing to improve upon it.

You, as well, should have internalized this rhythm. You should find yourself anticipating how units unfold, because soon the support you've been given for these four units of study will fall away, and you'll be left to hopefully design your own units. So notice that Day One, you issue a generous invitation, getting writers to write up a storm, and Day Two (or Three), you teach qualities of whatever kind of writing the children are doing and



IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that when writing about their opinions, writers need to give several reasons and provide supporting details for these reasons.

GETTING READY

- Students need to bring the shoebox collections to the minilesson (see Connection)
- Chart paper and marker to create "Convince Your Reader!" chart (see Teaching)
- ✓ Your own shoebox collection (see Active Engagement)
- An object that serves as microphone (it could be anything from a Mr. Microphone to your fist and thumb) to role-play being judges (see Active Engagement)
- Half-sheets of paper, tape, revision strips, Post-it notes, colored pens, and staplers set out on tables (see Link)
- Ribbon paper choice (see Mid-Workshop Teaching)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.1.1, W.1.5, W.2.1, RI.1.8, SL.1.1, SL.1.2, SL.1.4, L.1.1.g, L.1.2



encourage children to reread and revise so as to bring out those qualities. Start with the most accessible qualities and the ones that seem most needed. That is what led us to decide that today's lesson teaches elaboration. Opinion writers write with lots of reasons, not just one, and they support those reasons with detailed, specific observations, not just with generalities.

"Opinion writers write with lots of reasons, not just one, and they support those reasons with detailed, specific observations, not just with generalities."

Any lesson on a quality of writing will require instruction in strategies as well as qualities. You can think of the qualities as the goal, and the strategies as the process for reaching the goal. In this instance, the focus is more on strategies for revising—use tape to add on a half-sheet of paper—than on ways to think of additional reasons, because we figure that making writing seem malleable is especially essential. MINILESSON



Explaining Judgments in Convincing Ways

CONNECTION

Ask children to show off the item they are writing opinions about, and help them remember their reasons for their opinion by talking to their partner.

"Writers, right now will you get out your 'Best in Show'? Your best hair band or best baseball card . . ." For a moment, everyone dug through their shoeboxes, pulling forth one item or another. "So hold your 'Best in Show' high," I said, and the children waved their items overhead.

"Partner 2, pretend someone with a TV camera wanted to know what *you'd* chosen for your 'Best in Show.' They've just passed you an imaginary microphone and asked you to explain to all the people watching your TV show (really, to Partner 1) why you selected *this* winner as your 'Best in Show.' Talk as if you are the judge, explaining your choice. Go!"

The children made their explanations, speaking into imaginary microphones to support their choices. Henry said, "This car is the fastest" into his microphone.

Before I could signal with a rolling hand that he could continue to provide more reasons, he held his hand/microphone in front of Monique's mouth, nudging her to take a turn. Monique held up her purple foil candy wrapper from a long-ago-eaten chocolate egg and said into the imaginary mike, "This wrapper is the best because it still smells like candy. And it is purple."

Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that when you have an opinion, when you judge something, you need to give *a couple of reasons*, not just one, and say details about each reason. If you write, 'For example . . .' or 'I think that because . . . ,' then that helps you bring in some details."

♦ COACHING

Over time, you will come to have a handful of ways to recall prior learning. For example, you might bring out a chart from the day before, reading off each item while students point to places where they did that item. You might ask students to list "across their fingers" three things they learned about the topic at hand. This is a variation on those, for although it looks very different, the point again is to invite kids to consolidate what they have already learned, especially the aspects that are relevant to today's extension lesson.

This minilesson is about elaboration, which is a major quality of good writing across every genre. In stories, writers elaborate with dialogue and details about the setting and internal thoughts. In opinion writing, writers elaborate by telling more reasons and by supporting the reasons the writer does put forward.

TEACHING

Retell an argument with no reasons, and contrast it with an argument with reasons. Let children know that strong arguments have reasons.

"Has it ever happened that you and someone in your family have different opinions about where you want to eat or what you want to do on a special day? Maybe one of you wants to go out for pizza, and someone else, for tacos. So you could just go like this:

'Pizza.'

'Tacos.'

'Pizza!'

'Tacos!'

'Pizza is the best!'

'No, tacos are better!'

"Do you think getting louder and louder is the best way to win the argument?" The children all chimed that no, that was no way to win an argument. I nodded. "You are so right! The better way to convince people is to give reasons that support your opinion. So you might say, 'I think we should go for pizza. *I think this because*, one, there is a nice place to sit at the pizza shop and so we can talk and have fun, *and*, two, pizza is better because it is cold out, and pizza will warm us up.'

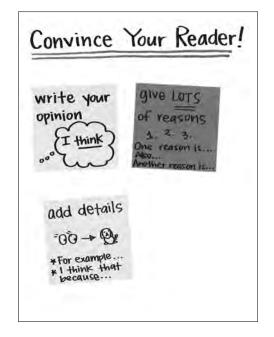
"So, writers, when you want to convince your readers, it is important to write your opinion and to give lots of reasons. Think to yourself, 'After I tell my opinion, I'll give one reason and then talk a lot about it, and then I will give another reason, and talk a lot about it . . .'" I started the "Convince Your Reader!" anchor chart by placing two Post-its on chart paper.

"Here is a tip: when you want to say more about a reason for your opinion, it helps to say, 'I think this because . . .' or 'For example . . .'" I added a third Post-it to the chart.

Once again, this is a negative example of what not to do, so remember that you are just trying to make a quick point. Play this up; allow children to recognize themselves in this little argument and to laugh at themselves.

Make sure you play this up when you teach the minilesson. Keep the kids laughing and engaged.

When you list reasons for pizza, remember to use the graphic organizer of your fingers!



ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Divide children into groups. Ask each group to come up with and say more about their reasons for judging something as best.

"If you want to convince people of your opinion about the best item in your collection, it's usually important to say a few reasons and details about each reason. Instead of just saying, "The cocker spaniel is the best dog," it helps to give reasons why.

"Let's divide our class into quarters and then each quarter of the class can practice saying a couple of reasons for a judgment. We can use my dogs." I drew an imaginary line down the midpoint of the room starting from the front, going to the back, and starting from one side, going to the other. I showed the children in each quarter that they could pull together into a quick small group, then went from one group to another, giving each one dog from my pile, asking them to pretend for now that the dog I gave them was the group's candidate for "Best in Show."

"Talk together as a group, and gather some reasons why your dog is the best. As you come up with reasons, try to say more about your reasons, using 'I think this because . . . ' and 'For example '' I pointed to the sentence starters.

Pretend to be a TV reporter, and interview a representative from one of the groups to learn what that group has selected as "Best in Show" and why.

After a few minutes, I said, "I'm from NBC, morning news, and I understand you were one of the judges for this dog show." The stunned "judge" giggled and nodded. "So can you tell all our viewers why you selected this collie as the 'Best in Show,' as your best dog?"

Miguel looked out over his audience. I whispered loud enough for all to hear, "Tell your reasons, Judge. Tell the audience why this dog is the one you think is the best."

Miguel nodded and ducked his head down to speak into my imaginary microphone, "The reason I chose the collie as the best dog is because the collie is the biggest."

I made an "add-on" gesture and whispered to Miguel, "Say more. 'I think this because . . .'"

Miguel said, "I think she is the biggest because she is bigger than my hand! And the other dogs are only up to my here," and he pointed to the knuckle of his thumb.

If children seem to need more scaffolding to do this well, you might invite the whole class to help the first judge say more, or you might tap other "judges."

"What do other judges think?" Soon Monique had announced that her small group had selected the cocker spaniel as the best. As I passed the microphone, I said in a stage whisper to the others, "Let's see if she gives several reasons,

Notice that in this instance, instead of suggesting children turn and talk to their partners, I've channeled them to work in four small groups. Children will appreciate the ways in which you vary the ways your teaching unfolds. But, of course, if it feels unnecessarily complex to orchestrate these groups, you can decide to continue relying on partnerships.

Once children are older, it will be common for you to suggest they stop and jot, but for now, jotting is time-consuming enough that you are much more apt to rely on children writing in the air. Teach them to actually dictate the words they will write rather than chatting about what they might write later.

Recruit a second judge only. You certainly won't call on half a dozen.

not just one. And let's see if she can say more about her reasons." Then I said, "So can you tell all our viewers why you selected the cocker spaniel as the best dog?"

"She's got the curliest hair."

Tapping the sentence starters on chart paper, I whispered to Monique, "Try, 'I think this because . . . '"

Monique popped out with "I think this because her fur is so curly I want to pat her!"

I repeated Monique's words and then turned to the class. "Turn to your neighbor, and help Monique say even more. Can you think of another reason why the cocker spaniel might be the best dog? Turn and talk."

LINK

Ask children to think back on what they've learned about writing in not only in the past few days but also in the past few months, and decide what to do to improve their writing and thinking today.

"So, writers, before you get started on today's work, let's take a moment to plan. Think about your own choices from your own collection, and think about the writing you did yesterday. Now, with all that you've learned about writing in the last few days, and since you started school," I gestured to the charts about writing around the room, "will you think of some ways in which you could improve on the writing you did yesterday?" I modeled thinking silently about writing plans for a moment, letting each child think to him- or herself.

"How many of you have plans to add onto what you wrote yesterday, thumbs up? Might some of you want to revise what you wrote—adding more reasons and more details and things like that? I've left some half-sheets of paper on your table, and some tape, revision strips, and some more pages that can be stapled together into books on your desks. Here is the biggest question of all: might there be a writer or two in this room who decide to do the *really* brave and hard working choice—starting writing over, writing Draft Two? Because, of course, I have blank books and new award pages on your tables as well. So get started—and I will be admiring what you do."

I would have preferred for Monique to start at the beginning, saying, "I think my cocker spaniel is the best of all the dogs because she has the softest fur and the curliest."

Instead of moving in to hear more children's choices, recruit the class to extend what the one child has done.

Describe revision as brave work. It is!



CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Supporting Students in Elaboration

YOUR CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK will be fast paced, complimentary, and responsive. You'll make sure you touch base with the majority of your writers, circulating to make sure that they are churning out writing at a nice clip. If you aren't entirely smitten with the work your students are producing, now is not a good time to show that, because your engagement with and support for their work is going to nourish their own engagement. So if a child has awarded a blue ribbon to a hair band and has just a tiny list of supportive reasons for that, the best response will be to look with great seriousness at her collection, to be spellbound with interest over the reasons for her evaluation—and to trust that your attentiveness will lead the writer to become more invested in this work. If you worry that some of your writers have produced a page of work and now have that "I wrote a page and now I'm done" feeling, perhaps you might convene a small group that aims to teach writers to write more. You may decide to pull a group of writers and remind them that it is helpful to reread their writing, drawing on a toolkit of revision materials such as strips of paper, tape, and colored pens. The revision tools lure writers to produce reasons and examples. The chart you made during the miniles-son—teaching children how to elaborate by saying "For example" and "I think that because"—can play a part in many of your conferences today. Of course, you'll also want to grant wait time for children, resist the urge to jump in and offer examples of how to say more; instead touch one of the elaboration prompts, nod to the writer, and

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING Detailed Observations Are More Persuasive Than Sweeping Generalities

"Writers, can I have everyone's attention for a minute? Your pages are filling up with more and more reasons why you think one hair band or action figure is the best. And I appreciate that you are adding specific, detailed observations. In a minute, I want you to listen to the way that Katerina describes her best troll. She doesn't just go:

I love my troll. She is great. She is the GREATEST. I love LOVE LOVE!!! her. She is great, great, great.

"No way! Instead, Katerina adds specific details that come from really studying her favorite troll and noticing the tiniest details that make it special. Katerina, show the class your troll so they can think of their own details they might add to a piece about her."

Katerina circled the class, troll in hand. "People, think of exact words you could use to describe why you like the troll," I coached.

After the children talked for a minute, I said, "Class, listen as Katerina reads her writing, and let's give a thumbs up whenever she tells specific detailed observations about her troll."

Katerina read this, while I led the class in noting the detailed observations:

My best troll is the one with purple hair. I call her Wild Girl. Wild Girl is the best troll because she still has all her hair, <u>except for one little bare spot.</u> She is also the best because she has an outfit. It is a pink vest and some pink pants <u>but her belly button still shows.</u> I don't care about the belly button. I have other clothes for her from a old bear I got for Christmas <u>but those clothes do not sparkle. They are the</u> <u>not-fancy clothes.</u> Wild Girl's fancy clothes are very fancy and they do sparkle.

(continues)

"Writers, did you notice the way Katerina added very specific details to her writing? She talked about the one little bare spot in her troll's hair and how her shirt is so short that her belly button shows. It is clear that Katerina has studied her troll very, very closely, making very specific observations about it.

"Right now, take a moment to reread your writing. Are there places where you could write the way Katerina did, with very specific details? You can use a revision flap to make some changes."

As Students Continue Working...

"Writers, as you work, I want to remind you that a judge gives a red ribbon for second place, and a yellow ribbon for third place. Some of you are making whole books with pages for blue, red, yellow, and so on. Just be sure that you use your observing skills to write precise details supporting your opinions."

give a lean, yet firm, "Think about it, try it." Then, wait to see what the writer comes up with on her own. Be ready to respond to ideas, regardless of grandeur. Perhaps the child will respond simply, "I think it's best because it's pretty." Repeat the phrase, cradling each word as though it were gold, then tap the writer's paper to convey the urgency of getting those precious words down on the page. If Annabelle has written, "The strawberry sticker is the best sticker in my whole collection. When you scratch it, it smells like a bowl of strawberries!" then you can teach her, as well as the other writers in the group, to reread her writing and to elaborate by giving an example of one time when she tried scratching her sticker. It's not too much to hope that her writing will soon read, "The strawberry sticker is the best sticker in my whole collection. When I scratch it, it smells like a bowl of strawberries! One time I scratched it, and I could smell the strawberries on my sticker and I could smell strawberries on my finger! It is so so smelly, like jam."

You may also decide to gather a small group of writers who are stuck, who have produced a sentence stating their favorite item, and that is it. You'll want to try to figure

my BEST trol is the one with purple I have other clath for her from a a hair I call her Wild Gril I get for Gristmas but thos do not sparkel Wild girl is best because she still has They are not fance cloths Wild Girls all her hair ecept for one little bar clotch are ver fonce and to sparkel! Spol Shells also best because she has a outfit It is pink and some pink parits but her belley but in still shows I son fare about the belly but in FIG. 2–1 Katerina includes specific details based on careful observations to support her opinion.

out what is in their way. Presumably if they like a baseball card or a book best, they will have some reasons, so what is keeping them from writing those reasons? What you will probably find is that these youngsters are not, in fact, following the steps you laid out for judging fairly. They are probably not even going through the judging process at all. They just have a pile of cars, know that one is their favorite, and award that car their blue ribbon. When nudged to defend the choice, they generate one descriptor. "My blue car is the best because . . . it's cool."

You will want to remind this group of the process of judging. First the judge chooses a trait—say, color—and then considers the colors on each car and ranks the cars by color, with reasons one is the best in the Colors of My Cars contest. Then the judge considers the speed of the car, pushing each one off in a similar fashion and observing which rolls along the fastest. This, again, produces a car that outdoes the others. The winning car wins in several categories and these become reasons.

SHARE



A Partner Talk Fishbowl

Channel writers to sit around the edges of the rug, and convene a partnership inside that frame, creating a "fishbowl" so that kids learn from watching others and from your voiceovers.

When the writers walked back to share today, I asked everyone to find their partner and move to the edge of the carpet and make a "fishbowl." There was some smiling from student to student as I told Boone and Tucker to move into the middle of the bowl to be our fish for the day. "Boone and Tucker are going to let us spy on their partner talk. They are going to show us how they talked about their writing, and we are going to listen to the things they say."

I gestured for Boone to begin. He said, "I wrote more writing today than I did yesterday. I made a blue ribbon piece and a red ribbon piece! I'm writing a lot. I only wrote one yesterday, and today two!" Boone touched the place in his piece where he had written more than the day before.

"Did you hear how Boone told *what he did* as a writer? He did not just read his writing to his partner and then say, 'I'm done.' He talked about what he did and tried to do when he was working." I added, "Your turn, Tucker!"

Tucker held up his writing and said, "See," showing off the length of it. Then he was silent. I said to the class, "Think about what hint you hope Boone whispers to Tucker. We don't just want him to show his final piece, we also want him to ... what?"

Then Boone said, "You gotta say what you did, Tucker, like what you was trying to do."

Tucker slapped his hand over his mouth as if to say, "Oh, my gosh!" and then he said, "I put a lot of reasons in. I wrote a whole bunch, and I added little details and arrows to 'em."

I voiced over, "Tucker, I love the way you told your partner *what you did* as a writer today." Then I turned to the class and said, "Now you try. Partner 1, please go first."



IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that writers read and study the work of other writers and then try to incorporate what they have learned into their own writing.

GETTING READY

- Opinion Writing Checklist, Grades 1 and 2, copied onto chart paper as well as individual copies for each student (see Connection, Teaching, and Active Engagement)
- Student writing folders and revision pens
- A white board and marker, or chart paper and marker, to record the kinds of writing students recall having written (see Connection)
- Enlarged copy of Brandon's writing as well as individual copies for students and Post-it notes (see Teaching and Active Engagement)
- Your own writing sample to be used to demonstrate spelling tricky words (see Mid-Workshop Teaching)
- "Ways to Spell Words" chart from the Nonfiction Chapter Books unit (see Mid-Workshop Teaching)
- Student writing folders, Post-it notes, pens (see Share)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.1.1, W.1.5, W.2.1, RI.1.1, RI.1.8, RL.1.1, RFS.1.2, RFS.1.3, SL.1.1, SL.1.2, L.1.1, L.1.2

Session 3

"How Do I Write This Kind of Writing Well?"

HIS LESSON ASKS YOUNGSTERS to do a lot of challenging work. They are expected to recall the characteristics of good writing, and then to examine a text that represents a new kind of writing. They will be asked to make a comparison. How is the new kind of writing similar to texts they have admired before now—and how is it different? Finally, children will set goals for ways in which they can engage in substantial revisions of the writing they already made. This will help them to self-assess, applying criteria to their judgments of their own writing.

How often have you been asked to engage in such heady intellectual work? Think of the times a professor has asked you to collect and organize all you know about many different kinds of writing, to study an exemplar of a new kind of writing so as to identify the defining features of that writing, and to chart a course for yourself as you set out to make that kind of writing. Chances are fairly good that you haven't often been invited to participate in such heady intellectual work—and I suspect that reading this, you feel as I do. It would be fun.

Of course, it is not clear that six-year-olds will do a perfect job at any of this—nor would you or I. But learning can start with people giving something a go, plunging in to try their hand at something. In fact, it's reasonable to suggest that once a learner has had a chance to try something, that learner is especially well positioned to learn.

In any case, today's teaching is an experiment. There is no question that you are inviting learners to participate in work where the cognitive demand is high. If your school studies Webb's Depths of Knowledge, then bring your colleagues and your principal in to see this lesson because this will be a time when you provide your students with a Level 4 lesson. And the important thing is for you to watch what happens to your children when you pose challenges like this for them.

The worst thing that can happen is that some of your children will show you they need more practice doing the high-level cognitive work of evaluating, monitoring their own learning, setting goals, and the like. The best thing that could happen is that your learners might be on fire, full of gritty resolve and high aspirations for the journey they'll make across this unit. MINILESSON



"How Do I Write This Kind of Writing Well?"

CONNECTION

Ask writers to list the kinds of writing they've learned to do this year and to list qualities of good writing for each of those kinds of writing. Set them up to create a similar list of qualities of strong opinion writing.

Before calling students to the meeting area, I placed a copy of the Opinion Writing Checklist on each child's rug spot, along with copies of the mentor text that we would be studying. "Writers, when you join me in the meeting area today, please bring your writing folder and your green revision pen. There are several things waiting for you on your rug spot. We won't need any of it for a little bit, so just put your folder on top of the pile and take a seat. Sound good?" Once all the students had joined me on the rug, I began.

"Writers, will you think back across this whole year of writing, and will you and your partner list across your fingers all the different kinds of writing you have learned to do?" Soon the room was filled with children listing what they'd learned. I gathered their attention and told them what I'd heard:

Kinds of Writing

- Small Moment stories
- information (teaching books) writing

"If we thought about each of these kinds of writing, would we be able to say ways writers do that kind of writing well? Let's try it. I'll call out one kind of writing, and you and your partner see if you can, quick as a wink, list ways to do that kind of writing well." I waited, looked around as if I was collecting racers on the starting line, and then said, "Small Moments: what do you do to write Small Moments well? List across your fingers."

After a minute, I said, "You guys are good. You ready for something harder?" I again waited, as if letting the racers come to the starting line. "Think just about teaching books (also called information writing, or all-about writing). List across your fingers ways to do that kind of writing well!"

COACHING

Someone once said that a fiction writer's hardest task is moving a character from here to there. Moving a whole class of kids is no easy feat either! It's like moving a school of minnows.

Throughout these units of study, you'll find that we encourage you to let kids in on the larger principles that inform your teaching. Just as I want you to understand the logic of these units so that you can create your own, you want children to understand the logic of your work with any particular kind of writing, because you want children to grow up learning not just the specifics that you teach about particular kinds of writing, but learning, also, how to go about studying and producing any kind of writing. In this portion of the lesson, you let the kids in on the logic that informs some of your teaching, and you connect today's teaching not just to *yesterday's, as is commonplace, but also to your* yearlong curriculum.

"You know a lot about all those kinds of writing," as I gestured to our list. "But now, writers, we are working on a kind of writing that you haven't done yet this year. The job that a writer has when starting a new kind of writing is to look closely at the work other people have done and think, 'How do writers make this kind of writing really good? What did that writer do that I could try, too?'

"Writers, the writing you are working on in this unit is writing about ideas, about thoughts. That is especially challenging because instead of writing about what you do and what you know—the facts—you are writing your ideas, your thoughts. People actually call this kind of writing 'opinion writing' because the writer tells his or her opinion, his or her ideas."

Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that when you write something, it is important to understand the kind of writing you are doing and to figure out ways people do that kind of writing really well. Then, you can try to do those things in your own writing."

TEACHING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Set up children to study a piece of writing, comparing it to the Opinion Writing Checklist to find and name attributes of effective opinion writing.

"So, this is the challenge: how do people write *opinion* writing really well? One way to answer that big question is to look closely at some really good opinion writing and find out what that writer did.

"Just like those dog show judges use a checklist to help them figure out which dog is the 'Best in Show,' writers use checklists, too." I pointed to the Opinion Writing Checklist for Grades 1 and 2, and gestured toward the small copies on the rug in front of them.

"This is the checklist that you'll use this year, in first grade, to set goals and reflect on the progress you are making as opinion writers. Remember, this is old news! You've seen charts like this before, when you thought about narrative writing and about information writing. The only thing that makes this chart different is that it is about opinion writing. Always notice that throughout these books we glorify work that is harder and assume that for any writer, the invitation to tackle something that is challenging will be an appealing one. When teaching writing, one can also teach values in general, and Carol Dweck's research reminds us all that children profit from growing up in a culture that values hard work.

| | Grade 1 | YES! | STARTING TO | NOT YET | Grade 2 | YES! | STARTING TO | NOT YET |
|--------------|---|------|----------------|------------|--|------|----------------|------------|
| | Structure | | | | Structure | | | |
| Overall | I wrote my opinion or my likes and dislikes and said why. | | | | I wrote my opinion or my likes and dislikes and gave reasons for my opinion. | | | |
| Lead | I wrote a beginning in which I got readers' attention. I named the topic or text I was writing about and gave my opinion. | | | | I wrote a beginning in which I not only gave my opinion, but also set readers up to expect that my writing would try to convince them of it. | | | |
| Transitions | I said more about my opinion and used words such as and and because. | | | | I connected parts of my piece using words such as also, another, and because. | | | |
| Ending | l wrote an ending for my piece. | | | | I wrote an ending in which I reminded readers of my opinion. | | | |
| Organization | l wrote a part where l got readers' attention and a part where l said more. | | | | My piece had different parts; I wrote a lot of lines for each part. | | | |
| | Development | | | | Development | | | |
| Elaboration | I wrote at least one reason for my opinion. | | | | I wrote at least two reasons and wrote at least a few sentences about each one. | | | |
| Description | I used labels and words to give details. | | | | I chose words that would make readers agree with my opinion. | | | |
| | Language Conventions | | | | Language Conventions | | | |
| Spelling | I used all I knew about words and chunks of words (<i>at, op, it,</i> etc.) to help me spell. | | | | To spell a word, I used what I knew about spelling patterns (<i>tion, er, ly</i> , etc.). | | | |
| | I spelled all the word wall words right and used the word wall to help me spell other words. | | | | I spelled all of the word wall words correctly and used the word wall to help me figure out how to spell other words. | | | |

"I'm going to take a moment and read over the items on this checklist, and you can follow along on your own copies. As I'm sure you can see, there are a *lot* of things that opinion writers need to do to make their writing strong and powerful. On this side, you'll notice what opinion writers in first grade are expected to do." I pointed to each item as I read through it on the checklist. Then, I moved toward the right column of the checklist. "There are also things on this checklist that second-grade opinion writers are expected to do. But maybe, *you* are doing some of these things already! You are growing so fast and learning so much!"

The Opinion Writing Checklist, Grades 1 and 2, can be found on the CD-ROM.

"So now that we have an idea of what makes opinion writing strong and powerful, let's look at Brandon's writing and see how he measures up. Brandon is a boy your age, and you each have a copy of his writing right in front of you. (See Figure 3–1.) Let's read it together, and then we'll come back to this checklist and see what he did." I displayed an enlarged copy of Brandon's writing and then read it aloud.

All the bugs in my collection are gross and that is cool! I like a lot of the bugs but the one I like best is the Giant Pinching beetle because its pinchers really grip things, even someone's finger. When you squeeze its back, the pinchers snap close. The beetle is better than the fly even though the fly's eyes are cool and glossy green. The beetle is better because it's bigger and because the fly doesn't do anything good like pinch things, it just stays still. Today I made the beetle grab the fly and pinch it and then I pretended it ate the fly for its dinner.

"Now let's look at some of those bullet points and see how Brandon's writing compares." I thought aloud as I ticked through some of the bullet points, modeling for the students how I compared a mentor text to established criteria. "Okay, 'I wrote my opinion or my likes and dislikes and said why.' Brandon certainly did write his opinion. I know that he likes the bugs in his collection, and that the giant pinching beetle is his favorite. He says it right there." I pointed out that line in Brandon's writing. "Okay, what else? 'I wrote at least one reason for my opinion.' Hmm . . . it looks like one of the reasons why the beetle is his favorite is because the pinchers really grip things. Look, he said that the pinchers can even grab someone's fingers! So that's one reason.

Pass the baton to children, pulling back to let them carry on where you left off. Then convene the class.

"Writers, now it's your turn. Take a few minutes with your partner, and check how Brandon's writing measures up to some of the other bullet points. Did he write an ending for his piece? Did he make his writing easy to read?" I gave the class a few minutes to turn and talk, listening in on their conversations so I could help focus the group when we came back together.

"So, what did you think? How did Brandon's writing measure up to the Opinion Writing Checklist?"

"He did better than he was supposed to!" shouted Miguel.

Brandon PINCTINAY All the bigs in My collesson are gross and that is cool. I like a lot of the bugs but the one I like best is the Giant Pisher beetle Its kinshers really grip things even some open finger when you there its back the pishers snap close the beetle is Better than the PN LEVEN the the flys eyse are cool and glosey green The beetless better because its blogen and be cause The fly dosn't do anothing good like pich things it just rtays still Today I made the beatle grab the Ply and Algh it and then I per pertendititate a fly for its dinner

FIG. 3–1 Brandon's collection writing provides students with an exemplar, serving as a visual support for the expectations outlined by the checklist.

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"Well, he was supposed to give at least one reason that he liked his beetle the best, but I count three reasons!" said Miguel. "He must really love his bugs, I'd love to see them, too!."

"He put a lot of periods. Every time the sentence is over, he used punctuation. And over there, he put an exclamation point," Katerina remarked.

"You are absolutely right, Katerina! Ending each sentence with a punctuation mark helps make Brandon's writing so much easier for us to read," I reinforced.

LINK

Ask writers to compare their writing to the Opinion Writing Checklist and then make a plan for today's writing.

"Okay, writers, before you go off to write today, I'd like you to take a moment and compare your own writing to the Opinion Writing Checklist. I'll read through the highlighted items on our checklist again, and this time, use your revision pen to find places in your writing where you are *already* doing those things. Then you can draw a star right there in your writing! Do you remember what you do if you can't find a place in your writing where you are doing something from the checklist?"

"Shoot for the stars!" kids exclaimed with arms shooting toward the ceiling.

"That's right. Draw a star beside the things on the checklist that you need to work on next! Okay then, let's get started!" I read through each bullet on the checklist, giving students a chance to look over their opinion writing, evaluating their work and making plans for revision. Once students had finished evaluating their writing, I asked them to make plans for the day's writing. "How many of you think you might reread all the opinion writing you have been doing and think about ways you can make that writing better, shooting for the stars?" Many so indicated.

After a bit, I said, "Once you know what you will be doing today, get yourself started. You can leave the meeting area when you have a plan ready for what you will be doing today. If you need some extra help, stay right here on the rug."

Notice that, as always, only a few children actually talk into the whole group. This is deliberate because we're always working to save time for writing. Any portion of a minilesson could easily become long-winded if you don't guard time.

You'll become accustomed to reading about ways we support youngsters to use these checklists. This time, we provide less support than we did earlier. We don't read each item aloud and leave time for children to assess their work in relation to that item. The fact that children now work with more independence shouldn't surprise you.



Conferring to Help Students Draw on Learning from Prior Units of Study

LWAYS, AT THE START OF A NEW UNIT, one of the most efficient things you can do is to remind writers to continue to draw on all they learned in previous units. You may, for example, want to bring out charts from earlier units that especially pertain to children's work today, making those charts front and center in your children's writing. This, too, may be the day that you lead small-group work to convey to the students who never go back to rework completed writing that they need to draw a line in the sand, decide "that was then and this is now." Writers revise. It will be important for writers to know that they should be able to initiate revision without needing you at

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING Sk-ska-skating to Hear and Spell All the Chunks in a Word

"Writers? Pens down, eyes up," I said, stepping toward the "Ways to Spell Words" chart. "I want to teach you another way to make sure your spelling is its very best, especially on the trickiest of tricky words. Many of you use this same strategy as a reader, so let me teach you how to say and listen to each part of the word by *sk-ska-skating* across the word and writing the parts you hear."

I enlarged a piece of my own writing and modeled how to *sk-ska-skate* across a word to do my best spelling. I said, "I want to spell the word *undercoat*, but it is a tricky word. Watch how I sk-ska-skate across it. First I say the entire word slow and stretchy, 'u-n-d-e-r-c-o-a-t.' Now I say each part of the word I hear, and I sk-ska-skate across each part and write it on my page." I said the first part of the word, "un," and wrote it. Then I said the next part I heard, "der," and I added a "der" so the word now read "under." Then I said the last part of the word, "coat," and I added that to the other two parts so the word read, "undercoat."

"There," I said, "I sk-ska-skated across the word, listening and writing each part I heard. I'm not sure it is perfect, so I will put a circle around it to remind myself to go back during editing, but it is as close as I can get right now.

"I have a great idea! Right now, just like at the roller rink, let's have an *all-skate* dance. Everybody, as you keep writing, when you get to a tricky word, try to

sk-ska-skate across the word! I'll put some music on while you do your best skating. Each time you find a word that you need to sk-ska-skate across, after you skate across it, stand up and do a little skate around your desk to show the other writers how you are skating through the tricky-to-spell words!"

As the students began spelling and skating, I added the new spelling strategy to our spelling chart so that it now read:

Ways to Spell Words

- Say it, slide it, hear it, write it.
- Use snap words.
- Listen for little words inside.
- Sk-ska-skate across the word.

their side. Part of this is making sure that there are accessible revision tools readily available at every table.

One way to be prepared to teach students to reread and revise completed writing is for you to carry your own writing folder with you as you confer, making sure that your folder contains a bunch of opinion writing. That way, you can model how you go back to every piece and add more onto each. You'll say, "It's not enough to only make *one* of my pieces as good as I can. No way! Now that I know how to do all of these amazing writing moves, I must, must revise all the way through my folder! That's how I make my writing muscles bigger and bigger!"

I sat beside Roselyn as she opened up to her piece about her favorite Tech Deck skateboard toy. I asked Roselyn if I could take a peek at her writing folder while she worked. She nodded and began to reread her current piece. Although it can be hard, I try to resist the urge to act solely off of the current piece of writing with which students are engaged. Instead I take a moment to assess pieces across the folder, looking for patterns that writers display across several pieces of writing. These patterns often depict areas of greatest need. I find that by doing this I have much more important data to inform the best way in which I should proceed with each conference.

As I looked across the two pieces in Roselyn's folder and read the current piece over her shoulder, it became clear to me that while Roselyn included several reasons in her writing, along with some examples, she would benefit from strategies to help her elaborate further on her opinions.

I complimented Roselyn, saying "Roselyn, you do something in all of your opinion writing that makes it very convincing. You don't just include *one* reason why you like something, you include *lots* of reasons, and you even give examples to go with those reasons." I pointed out several places across her writing where she had done this.

Beaming, Roselyn said, "You have to put details in your writing to make it good, like here, I put the colors it comes in," she pointed to her page.

"You are right. That detail helps your writing. And Roselyn, one tip I have is that when you do something that really works in a piece of writing. it usually helps to do that thing a lot, not just once. Are there other places where you could use your talent for adding details and add still more details?"

As she reread, she realized another detail she wanted to tag on, and soon she'd pulled a revision strip from the basket at the middle of the table and scrawled out an additional sentence (see Figure 3–3).

Home Roselyn My faver it tek dek is called planB becuse it has allong favorite colors on it It is black bloo and white ant it has a draing I also like it brease it goes the fastest on the Vramp and on the stair rost

FIG. 3–2 Roselyn's collection draft includes several reasons, using detailed observations but has opportunities for elaboration.

My favorite Tech Deck is called Plan B because it has all my favorite colors on it. It has black, blue and white and it has a drawing. I also like it because it goes the fastest on the U Ramp and on the staircase.

Ithaz thwords Radster under the draling

FIG. 3–3 Roselyn used a spiderleg to add more.

It has the words "Radster" under the drawing.

I pointed out to Roselyn that she might add more details later, after I moved on to another child, and then she could check that item off on her checklist. "And then, then you could see what else the checklist says that you could try," I said, expecting that to be a closing for the conference.

Roselyn, however, immediately scanned the checklist, and said, "Oh! I can tell a little story. Like when I played with my Tech Deck at home, and it was so cool because it kept flipping over and over!"

"Now all you need to do is to decide where in your writing that might fit best," I said. "It helps to reread your piece from the beginning and think, 'Where can I add this?'"

Before concluding the conference, I restated the work Roselyn had done in a way that would make it transferable across all her writing, as well as urged her to continue this with each and every piece in her folder. "So, Roselyn, remember whenever you are working on a piece of writing, it is important to think about *everything* you have learned. You can use the charts in the classroom to help you, too. I bet you can find places to make the other writing in your folder just as amazing as this piece! After all, you're so much smarter already about this kind of writing. You can make the pieces you wrote earlier this week even better using all you know now!"

Later, after the workshop was over, I noticed Roselyn had added this flap onto her draft:

One time 1 put it on a box at home The box was About 10 inches long and i used my fingers to the it over It fliped two times in the air and it landed on its weeks It was soo Itrijed to do it again burFI uldat do

FIG. 3–4 Roselyn's revised to include an anecdote that supports her opinion.

One time I put it on a box at home. The box was about 10 inches long and I used my fingers to flip it over. It flipped two times in the air and it landed on its wheels. It was so cool! I tried to do it again but I couldn't do it.



SHARE

Writers Set Goals

Channel students to set goals for their writing by rereading and using anchor charts around the classroom.

Today's work was ambitious, and I knew, even before calling students back to the meeting area, that they would be hesitant about putting their writing away, insisting on more time to finish the big plans they had set off to do. I decided that now would be an important time to talk up the value of goals.

"Writers, I can see that you're hard at work! Bring your folders, as well as a Post-it note and your writing pen, to your spot in the meeting area. Don't worry if you're not finished because you'll be able to keep going with your writing tomorrow!" Once the students had gathered, I began, "Today, you looked at the Opinion Writing Checklist and then each of you made big plans for the work you wanted to get done today. But sometimes our plans are *so* big that it's hard to imagine getting it all done! Do *you* sometimes feel as if you don't have enough time to finish everything?"

Many faces nodded back at me in agreement. "Well, here's a top-secret tip." I peered over each shoulder, then leaned in close to whisper intently, "you can set your own goals!" The children stared back with wide-open eyes. "Professional athletes set goals all the time—how many home runs they'll hit, or points they'll score, or how many new tricks they'll learn. Writers can do that, too! You can think, 'How long am I going to work on this piece, and what am I going to do next?' or 'How many sentences will I write? How many more pages will I add?' You can set a goal and stick to it by recording your goal so you remind yourself what *big* plans you have for writing workshop each day.

"Think about the goals you'd like to set for yourself. Look back at the pieces in your folder, and let's spend the next few minutes making plans for tomorrow. Be sure to jot down a few words to remind yourself of your goals."

I voiced over as students recorded their plans, "You can even make different notes for different goals and put them on the pieces in your folder! Maybe you'll use the charts in the room to think about strategies you want to push yourself to try. Maybe you'll count your sentences, or how many pages you have already, to set a goal to write longer." As children worked, I coached in to help writers set strong and attainable goals.

I reconvened the group to prompt them to carry this goal-setting work into the coming days and weeks. "Keep these Post-it notes right in your folder because you'll use them to get started on your writing tomorrow. When you reach your goal, or even pass your goal, you can pick up your note, read it out loud, then crumple it up, and kiss it goodbye! That way, you can make more notes to set new, bigger, and bolder goals each and every time you write!"

Making an analogy helps engage young writers in the work of goal-setting, while encouraging children to reflect on their writing to make purposeful plans for their pieces. Session 4

Opinion Writers Expect Disagreement

HIS SESSION BEGINS with you weighing the pluses and minuses of various book covers and proposing a rather outlandish choice for the best one, knowing that children will definitely disagree with your opinion. "How many of you agree that this book cover is the best?" you ask, knowing full well that most won't agree. Think back to all the minilessons when you have said, "Is this the way to be a good partner?" and then acted in a way that you knew would produce cries of "No way!" Or other times, when you said, "Is this what writers do when they finish their writing?" and then you wrote a last line and flicked the writing out of view, never to be reconsidered again. Often, you extol the characteristics of good work by contrasting the ideal with not-so-good work.

Today, you use this method to help draw attention to a new characteristic of effective opinion writing. The *method* you use is that of contrasting what's good with what's less good—and interestingly enough, the characteristic of effective opinion writing that you are spotlighting is that when judging something as good, you can highlight your judgment by pointing out what would not be good. That is, you essentially let kids in on the fact that opinion writing gets its life force from the fact that the writer is not just saying one item or one idea is good, that writer is also saying the one item or idea is better than others, that it can be contrasted with other options that are less good.

This lesson goes one step farther. It begins to introduce a concept that children will be learning for many years, and that is the fact that the real challenge in opinion writing—and the life force in this genre—comes from the fact that people do not all agree. Why bother to provide reasons and examples and evidence in support of an opinion save for the fact that others see things differently? That is, this lesson introduces counterargument.

It is interesting to note that despite the Common Core State Standards' tremendous focus on opinion and argument writing, the standards do not pay any heed to the place of a counterargument until writers are in sixth grade. Our opinion is that postponing the existence of a contrary opinion until sixth grade is too late. We believe that opinions get their life force through counter-opinions. This lesson, in a very child-centered way, illuminates that.



IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that writers don't always share the same opinion. When people disagree, this leads writers to back up their opinions with reasons.

GETTING READY

- The dullest, most boring book cover you can find to use as a model; we suggest taking the festive jacket off a well-loved book so that only the plain, woven cover remains (see Connection)
- Students' shoebox collections set out on the tables, with their "Best in Show" choices highlighted (see Teaching and Active Engagement)
- Chart paper, marker (see Link)
- Student writing folders (see Share)
- "Convince Your Reader!" chart (see Share)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.1.1, W.2.1, RFS.1.3.g, SL.1.1, SL.1.2, SL.1.3, L.1.1.g,j; L.1.2, L.1.6

MINILESSON



Opinion Writers Expect Disagreement

CONNECTION

Announce that you like a particular book cover better than others, choosing one that you know the kids won't like, thereby setting up the students to have an opinion that counters yours.

"How many of you agree with me that, of all the book covers on this year's read-aloud books, this book cover is the best?" I purposely pointed to the least colorful, least likely-to-be-popular cover, differentiating it from a long row of more beautiful book covers, propped up along the chalk tray. "If you agree with me, stay perfectly silent. If you have a *different* opinion, turn and tell your partner *your* opinion."

I paused just for a second for the chatter to be heard. "Wow. I thought you would all agree with me—after all, I'm the grown-up. But you certainly have your own opinions. Let me just clarify. How many of you agreed that the book cover I like is fantastic?"

No one indicated that they agreed. I feigned astonishment. One child called out, "I like this one," and pointed to the cover of *Charlotte's Web*.

"How many of you liked the *Charlotte's Web* book cover the best?" More hands shot up, but many called out other choices. "We don't all agree, do we? We think different things. That's pretty exciting! Maybe, if we heard each other's reasons for liking one cover or another—or one dog or another, one hair band or another—we might change our own minds, which, of course, is one of the best things in the world to do."

Explain that when putting opinions out into the world, writers expect some will hold contrary views.

"Writers, not only is it exciting that in one class of first-graders there are lots of different opinions about which book cover is best, it is also important. The only way that the other kids in this class (and in this whole school and this whole world) can know what you think, what your opinion is, is for you put your opinion out into the world. People may say, 'I agree with you.' People also may say, 'I disagree with you.'

"You will want to learn what people don't like about your book cover or your choice of the best dog or hair band because maybe they'll convince you. Also, if you know what people think, you can fight back for your choice. You can be more persuasive." COACHING

In an earlier minilesson, you reenacted a family quarrel over what to eat: pizza or tacos, and children agreed that simply yelling one's opinion louder and louder is no way to get one's opinion across and convince others. This time, you again highlight what you want to say by using a contrasting example.

😵 Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that writers don't all agree. If one person has written his or her opinion, someone else can say, 'I agree. My opinion is the same,' or, 'I disagree. I have a different opinion.' When we don't agree with someone else's opinion, that's a good time to write our own opinion and back it up with tons of reasons."

TEACHING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Coach children to rehearse writing an opinion about a collection other than their own, using what they now know is required in effective opinion writing.

"I wonder—since people think differently—if you have ever looked at someone else's collection and thought, 'I think differently.' Have you ever looked at what someone else says is their best car or dog or baseball card or book and then thought, 'No way that I think that's the best!' Because if you have ever read or heard someone else's opinion and thought, 'I disagree,' that's a good time to . . . to do what?" Some kids called out that this was a time to write their own opinions, and I nodded. "You are right. When you hear or read an opinion and think, 'I have a different opinion,' that's a good time to write your own opinion.

"Are you ready to try something we have never ever done? In a minute, let's make one little part of our minilesson include a time for you to walk absolutely silently around the classroom, looking at the collections that your friends have laid out, noticing their 'Best in Show' choices. And will you think about whether maybe, just maybe, there is an instance when your friend has one opinion and you have another? If you find one of those places, give me a thumbs up, from wherever you are. You ready? Zip your mouths closed, and open your eyes so you can really, really look. Off you go! You have two minutes only."

After two minutes, I reconvened the class on the rug. "Did any of you look at someone else's opinion and think, 'I disagree'?" Children all signaled that yes, they'd had their own ideas. "This is such a class of strong thinkers, ready to make up your own minds!"

LINK

Send children off to writing time, inviting them to write counter-opinions, and reminding them to rely on all they've learned about effective opinion writing.

"So, writers, today you are going to have a chance to write your opinions about *other people's* collections. This time, though, your writing is going to be extra powerful because there will end up being two opinions beside a collection, with one person saying, 'I think *this* is the best and here's why' and another saying, 'I disagree. I think, instead, that *this* is the best, and here's why.' Remember when we talked about your family arguments over where to eat—Tacos! Pizza! *Tacos*!—and we decided that the best way to convince people is to write your opinion, writing really well. You'll want to remember what we know about good opinion writing."

Imagine the classroom with collections of action figures, plastic horses, hair bands, and the like set up along the window sill, the counter, the back table, with each collection containing some blue ribbon and red ribbon selections, showcased with pieces of writing that extol their virtues. Now...into that mix...comes counter-opinions! What excitement!

Notice that I'm not suggesting children write contrasting opinions by listing the reasons they don't like their friend's item. That could hurt feelings. "Right now—quietly—write your opinion of another person's collection 'in the air.' Now in your mind, say a reason for your opinion. Oh, I can see from the sparkles in your eyes, you have so much to say! It is going to be so interesting to hear all the different opinions developing about these collections. That is so much more interesting than when everyone just goes along and agrees, without really thinking and looking closely.

"So I'm not going to say, 'Get going to your writing spot,' because I guess what you will do today is to go to the places around the room where people have their collections set up, and their opinion writing, too. And you'll look over your friend's collection, decide which item *you* think is the best one, and then you'll see if your friend agreed or thought differently. So your writing will either start, 'I agree with . . . I think . . . is the best . . . in this collection.' Or you will start your writing by saying, 'I disagree with . . . I do not think . . . is the best in this collection. Instead, I think . . .' and you'll be off and writing!" I had already put the words I was suggesting children use on large chart paper, and now I displayed them prominently. Save time, when you can, by doing this writing ahead of time.



Counterargument Requires Respectful Attention to Opposing Views and Complex Sentence Structure

T IS HELPFUL FOR YOU TO APPROACH THE DAY'S WRITING WORKSHOP with a clear L sense of a progression of work that you expect to see from more novice writers to more proficient writers. When teaching writers the skills of counterargument, one of the progressions you'll note relates to the treatment given to the opposing view. The more novice writer will either ignore other views altogether, simply presenting his or her opinion, or this writer will speak in black-and-white terms, defiantly disagreeing and dismissing everything that another person has said. The writer who is just starting to learn counterargument will sling around terms such as, "It is stupid to say that the collie is the best dog. It is *ugly*! It is *horrible*. You are all wrong, wrong, wrong." The far more sophisticated counterargument would go like this, "I can understand why you'd argue that the collie is the best dog. It is a very impressive dog, with soft fur, and a proud way of walking. Although the collie has some good features, I still think that the flat-coated retriever is an even more impressive dog. Like the collie, it In addition, it" This progression should make sense to you. After all, the thoughtful people in your own life are probably the people who are not inflexible in their thinking, and nor do they dismiss every idea that is different than their own. Instead, they are willing to entertain ideas that are different than their own.

Now, I am in no way suggesting that first-graders will become skilled at entertaining each other's ideas and will be able to adjust their own opinions to show that they've taken into account counterarguments. But it is helpful for you to approach today's teaching confident that considering the other person's choice carefully and respectfully is not just what polite people do, this is also what a skilled debater does. And actually, perhaps the highest goal of all is for a person to listen to the counterargument and revise his or her original argument to take into account part of the counterargument. So absolutely, you will want to teach children some of the phrases they can use that can help them to show respectful attention to the ideas they will be disagreeing with.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

Use the Transition Because and Spell It Well

After students had been circulating for a while, I called them back to the meeting area with their writing. "Writers, I know you have been working to make sure others can read your opinions. Everyone is reading everything! Here's a tip: in every kind of writing there are particular words that writers end up needing to spell a lot. Opinion writers need the word *because*. You often want to tell people the reasons for your choices, and so you want to write, 'I think this because . . .' But *because* is not an easy word to spell, and stretching it out doesn't help you get any closer to spelling it right. It is a word that needs to be spelled in a snap and that is why it lives on our word wall! Eyes on the word wall. Find 'because.' It goes like this: 'B-E-C-A-U-S-E.'

"Right now, will you look at the spelling of *because* and notice interesting things about how it is spelled?" I gave the children a moment of silence to think about this. "Tell your partner what you notice," I said. Soon I'd called on a few children.

Bradley announced, "The *b* is tall and then it is all small."

Skylee added, "There are a whole pile of vowels. And you can't sound them out. They don't make any sense."

I agreed. "This is not a word that you'll want to stretch out and try to spell that way. It is easier to just chant it and get it into your mind. Can you all say it with me: b-e-c-a-u-s-e, because, because, because.

"Before you continue writing, will you reread what you have written so far with your partner? I am pretty sure you will find that you have used this word—*because*—in your writing. So fix up the spelling of it, okay? Try and spell it in a snap if you can, but if not, check and use the word wall to get it spelled just right." Be prepared, in your conferring and small-group work, to leave behind cheat sheets such as this one:

Some Polite and Thoughtful Ways to Disagree with Another Person's Opinion

- Some people think . . . They say . . . This makes sense because . . . still I think . . .
- I can understand why . . . thinks . . . but I disagree. I think that . . . is even more I think this because . . .
- In my opinion, ... is the (best) | know other ..., but | still think ... is the best.

One of the challenges in this work is that it requires not just more careful looking, more evidence, and, ideally, more discussion of the evidence, but it also requires more complex sentence structures. This is also an opportune time, then, to pull together a small group of your writers who need help using more sophisticated sentence structures. After all, this is the work expected of first-graders by the Common Core Language Standards. Bring together children who tend to write in a series of short thoughts, perhaps linked together with conjunctions such as *and* or *so*.

You might decide to devote a few minutes of your small-group time to playing a version of "Conjunction Junction." Make index cards with the words *but*, *also*, and *because*. Then show children that they can sometimes use words like these to join two of their sentences together. You might decide to use these words to link together the sentences in a simple piece you produce for the occasion.

This game is not about right and wrong but about exploring ways sentences can sound and look. *"I like the black lab the best. He has silky black hair"* can become *"I like the black lab the best* because *he has silky black hair."* You could reach for higher goals: "Although I like the collie, I like the flat-coated retriever even better!" (Guess what kind of dog *I* own?) Oral rehearsal and verbal play are surefire ways to develop more complex sentence construction.

Be sure to keep this work short, explicit, and, above all, fun so that children may return to their writing spots to compose new sentences, or revise old ones, energized with the growing understanding of ways to incorporate more complex sentence structure into their own writing.

Whenever you find yourself incorporating language and word-study instruction into writing workshop, be mindful of where your writers fall across the stages of language development and spelling acquisition. It is unwise to ask a new English language learner to construct, or worry, about compound sentence construction as a beginning writer. That work develops through oral language by listening, speaking, and having conversations with peers. Rely on the research and wise words of Marie Clay who taught us, "The longest utterance a child can make predicts what they can read and write. So when they burst into your classroom and they tell you a story, you can think about what they are saying and how they are saying it and how that matches with the books they read and what they are writing." Hold fast to this knowledge as you support students with language development.

SHARE



Strategies for Persuasion

Pretend to be a new child in the room, and get the class reteaching you, a pretend novice, what they've learned about writing opinions well. Elicit the value of reasons, at a minimum.

"Writers, we talked about how the best way to get someone to go for pizza or to agree on your choice of the best dog or bracelet or Lego man is not just to *yell* your opinion louder and louder. So can you pretend I am a new kid to this class, and will some of you tell me how a person *does* convince people of their opinion?"

I jumped out of my seat at the front of the meeting area and walked into the room like I was a little lost child. "Hi, I'm new to the class," I said, trying to make my voice seem like I was a new six-year-old. "I heard I gotta write about my best thing—best color or whatever—and show people why it's my best. Can I just go like this"—and I tightened my face, my fists, my voice, and said with great intensity—"ORANGE! Is that how you show people your opinion?"

The kids all climbed up on their knees, trying to talk at once. "You gotta say *why*," they said. "You gotta tell 'because' and have reasons. Like why not red? Or purple?"

"Oh!" I said, as if all this was totally new to me. "So good opinion writers say their opinion and then say reasons. Like ...? What would my reasons be? I like orange because I do."

"Maybe it makes you happy 'cause it is not dull," one child volunteered. "Or because Halloween is your favorite holiday?" another one said.

"Oh! I got it." I tried again. "I like orange because it is a happy color, and I have a lot of orange clothes?"

"And, you gotta use nice words like sparkly diamonds," Will announced, and based on this, the class was soon helping me use sparkly words to pump up the value of the color orange.

Channel writers to show each other ways they have used to make their own writing convincing. Harvest what children say to give the class yet more options.

"So right now, will you show each other what you have done in your writing to be convincing? Turn and talk."

