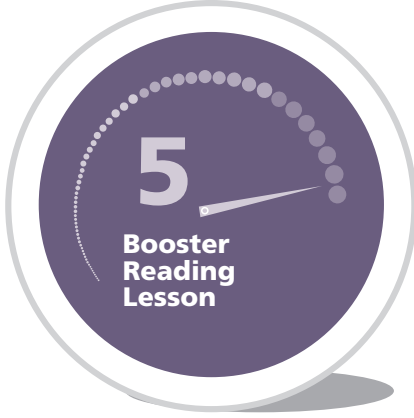


*Thank you*

FOR YOUR  
INTEREST IN  
CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *The Common Core Companion: Booster Lessons, Grades K-2*, by Janiel Wagstaff. The first part of this lesson explores reading mentor texts for parts of a letter; the second part shows how to use interactive writing to inform about and present knowledge.

**LEARN MORE** about this title, including Features, Table of Contents, and Reviews.



# Reading Mentor Texts for Parts of a Letter

## Getting Ready

### *The materials:*

- Copy of *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* by Doreen Cronin
- Chart paper
- Document camera

## Context of the Lesson

We enjoy the book *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* and study the letters exchanged back and forth between the animals and Farmer Brown. We study how the letters are written to prepare for writing our letter to our partnering fourth-grade class.

## The Lesson

“Since we’ll be writing a letter to our fourth-grade buddies today, we need to study how letters are written. One way to do this is to look closely at some sample letters to see what parts they have. In this book (*holding up book*), the cows write letters to Farmer Brown and he writes back. I’ve studied the letters to make sure they are written correctly and they are! So, first we’ll enjoy this silly story together and then go back and study the letters closely.”

I read aloud *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* in big-book format, tracking the print. We then go back and echo read the letters written by the cows, Farmer Brown, and finally the ducks.

“What is the first thing you notice that all of these letters have in common or that is the same?” (*I have a piece of chart paper standing by titled Parts of a Letter.*)

**S:** They say “Dear somebody.”

**T:** Yes, that is called a *greeting*. We can use different words for a greeting, but *Dear* followed by the name of the person or group is a nice way to start a friendly letter. Let me write that here on our chart so we remember letters start with a greeting. (*I record the words greeting and Dear \_\_\_\_\_.*) Let’s go back and examine each of the letters. Do they all start with a greeting? (*After looking back*) What else do you notice that is the same about all the letters?

**S:** They all say, “Sincerely somebody.”

**T:** Yes. That is called the *closing*. All letters should have a closing so the reader knows who it is from. *Sincerely* is another word for *truthfully*, meaning everything said in

## Core Connections

### Kindergarten

#### Reading Literature

##### Standard 1

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

#### Reading Literature

##### Standard 10

Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

## Core Practices

- Identify Purposes for Reading
- Read for Enjoyment
- Echo Reading
- Reread
- Identify Elements of a Letter
- Shared Writing
- Book Talk
- Independent Reading (by choice)

the letter is true, and it is a kind way to end a letter. I'll write that on our chart, too, because we want to remember to have a closing. (*I record the words closing and Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_.*) Let's go back and examine each of the letters. Do they all end with a closing? (*After looking back*) What else do you notice that is the same about all the letters?

**S:** They have something in the middle.

**S:** The animals say what they want.

**S:** Farmer Brown says he wants milk and eggs.

**T:** OK, so there is a middle to each letter. The middle is called the *body* of the letter and it includes the main message, what the writer wants the reader to know. In our letter, we'll inform Ms. B's class of the results of our interviews. So, not every letter's body is about something somebody wants. We will study more letters in the future so you learn different types and purposes for letters. (*I record the words body and main message on our chart.*)

"Wow! We've learned a lot about letter writing already. We know the three parts we need to have for now. We will add more information to our chart as we study more letters. I have several copies of *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* if you'd like to reread it during independent reading time. Also, the author, Doreen Cronin, wrote this book (*holding up the book*) *Giggle, Giggle, Quack*. In it, Farmer Brown goes on vacation and leaves his brother, Bob, in charge. Those clever animals do some more interesting writing you've just got to see. (*I read the first funny note from duck and show the picture, where duck is clearly shown holding a pencil and piece of paper. By now, the students are laughing and chatting about what they think is going on.*) I have several copies of it, and a basket of other books by this author, that you might like to read."

## FYI

Book talks are like magic in the classroom. Like so many teachers, this is a strategy I use often to pique students' interest for reading a variety of books. I read just a bit—something funny or intriguing to get their attention, and show a picture or two. This often gets them talking. Some may have read the book and they proceed to tell a bit more and recommend it to their friends. Students are then invited to read the books during independent reading or check them out to take for home reading. Later in the year, I ask students if they'd like to do brief book talks for the class. I have them sign up for dates and intersperse them with my own talks. Their recommendations often have more power than mine!

### Recap: Key Lesson Steps

1. Read *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* aloud for enjoyment
2. Reread the letters
3. Identify and record the parts of a letter on a chart
4. Invite students to read independently
5. Give a quick book talk on another related book

### Wrap Up

Provide directions for the next step by saying something like, "We're ready to write our letter to Ms. B's class! I have our charts right here so we can refer to them to make sure we report our results correctly and have all the parts we need in our letter. Let's get to it!"



# Interactive Writing to Inform About and Present Knowledge

## Getting Ready

### *The materials:*

- Charts from this sequence
- Copy of *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* by Doreen Cronin
- Chart paper
- White sticky-tape
- Document camera

## Context of the Lesson

We review the data from our research and use interactive writing to write a letter to report the results to Ms. B's class. Once the letter is written, all students sign and we visit the fourth-grade class to present it to them through choral reading.

## The Lesson

“Before we write, let’s review our data. (*We reread our class data chart and talk briefly once again about the results.*) Aren’t you excited to present our findings to Ms. B’s class? They don’t know how the vote turned out! How should we start our letter?” (*We refer to our Parts of a Letter chart.*)

**S:** A greeting!

**S:** Dear Ms. B’s class.

**T:** That sounds good. Let’s look at our Parts of a Letter chart again as a reference. Who thinks they can come up and write the word *Dear* correctly on our letter?

A volunteer comes forward to write *Dear* as we all spell it aloud referring to our chart. We continue to negotiate what to write together and I remind students of the parts of a letter as we go. We also look back at the letters inside the book *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* to check on correct punctuation (particularly the commas after the greeting and closing. We add notations about these to our chart). Again, we segment words and refer to Word Walls and other charts to help us record letters and spell whole words. As we write, we reread and reread to make sure everything makes sense and looks right. We make changes as we go, if necessary. If a student comes forward and makes a mistake, we use white sticky-tape (purchased at office supply stores) to cover it up and fix it.

You’ll notice we have a few capital letters in the wrong places in our letter. Since it’s toward the beginning of the kindergarten year, I don’t have students fix these. I’m thrilled they are segmenting words to hear sounds and connecting those sounds to the right letters. However, once students are more automatic with these skills, we do correct

## Core Connections

### Kindergarten

#### Writing Standard 2

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts . . . (*We compose an informative letter.*)

#### Writing Standard 5

With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

#### Writing Standard 7

Participate in shared research and writing projects.

#### Speaking and Listening Standard 6

Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

## Core Practices

- Reread Reference Charts We’ve Written
- Interactive Writing
- Choral Reading
- Present to an Audience
- Debrief
- Celebrate

capital letters, especially since knowledge of when to use capitals becomes part of our work as writers (and is included in the language standards).

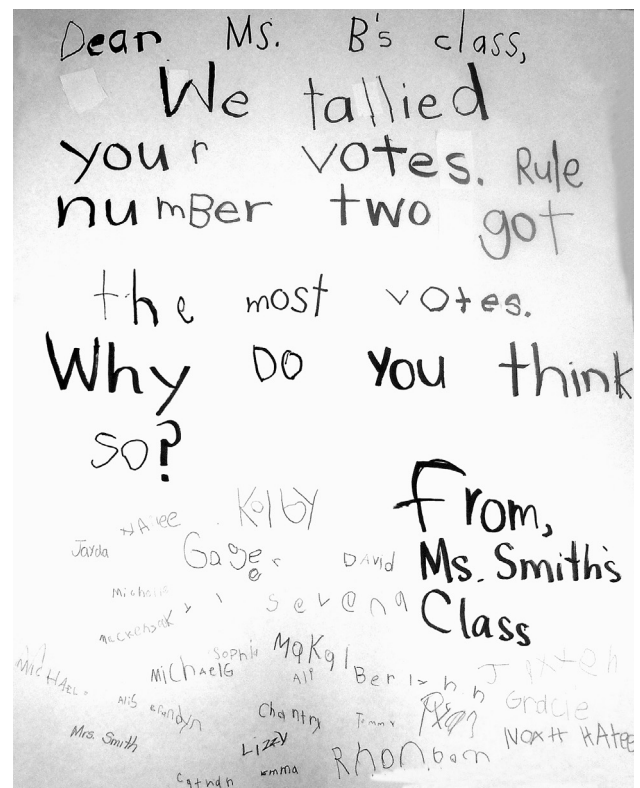
As we work, we continue to refer to our Parts of a Letter chart and the letters in the book. We negotiate which word we'd like to use for the closing and write examples of other words students share on our Parts of a Letter chart for future reference. Then, all students sign their name.

"Before we visit Ms. B's class to present our findings, let's reread our letter together a few times to make sure we can read it smoothly and easily. We want our audience to be able to hear us clearly and understand what we are saying. When you present something, you often have to practice to make sure you'll do your best job in front of an audience. People often get nervous, so the practice helps them feel more confident."

We chorally read the letter numerous times. Different children take turns tracking the print with a pointer as we read. We pull a name from our "names cup" to determine who will use the pointer to track the print for us as we read to the fourth-grade class.

After reading our letter aloud to Ms. B's class, the fourth graders clap and the kindergartners beam with pride! They also ask us some questions and a brief discussion ensues. So many fourth graders have something to say that Ms. B decides her class should write a letter back to us!

When we return to class, we discuss student's reactions to reading in front of an audience. We celebrate our work by congratulating one another and shaking hands!



### Time Crunched?



Write part of the letter in one session and then finish it in the next writing session. Just be sure to reread before you make additions.

### Recap: Key Lesson Steps

1. Reread data chart
2. Negotiate what will be written in the letter
3. Use interactive writing to write the letter
4. Refer to charts, Word Walls, and the letters in *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*
5. Practice choral reading
6. Present the letter in the partnering class
7. Celebrate
8. Debrief (see Wrap Up)

### Wrap Up

We take a few minutes to debrief. I ask, "What did you like about doing this research? Would you like to do more of this type of research? What have we learned?"



## A Snapshot of the Varied Writing Modes

It's essential for K–2 teachers to understand the differences between and the benefits of the varied writing modes: modeled writing, shared writing, interactive writing, and independent writing.

As with reading, different writing modes provide different benefits for students. I wouldn't want to skip any of them because I want to support students' writing development in any way I possibly can.

During **modeled writing**, teachers are the writers. They do all the work. They think aloud, talking about what they are doing as they compose in front of the class under the document camera or on chart paper. Over time, as students listen and watch, they learn the strategies writers use while composing. We model what our students need most. We figure this out by looking closely at their everyday writing. At the beginning of kindergarten and first grade, we often need to model how to express ourselves on paper using nonexistent or very little letter-sound knowledge. So, we sketch, then we sketch and label while segmenting words to hear sounds. We model using the Word Walls and charts we've written together to help us problem solve how to write words. We model talking out what we want to write, rehearsing orally over and over to support what we record on paper. We continue to model at different proficiency levels as students gain skill and focus on the strategies writers use like rereading, playing with word choice, and making revisions to add details, for example. We can't forget the importance of modeling how to spell words at all levels, since poor spelling strategies can severely cripple a writer's ability to make progress.

During modeled writing, teachers work on pieces over time, just as we want our students to do. Students learn the ins and outs of the writing process as they see and hear the thinking and writing develop right in front of them in real time as you, a fellow writer, value, struggle, problem solve, and persevere.

During **shared writing**, we negotiate what will be written together with the students, talking out the content, giving it a try on paper, and making changes as we go. The content is owned by all of us, but the teacher is the one who does the physical writing. Since I have the pen, students can focus all their attention on content without worrying as much about spelling or mechanics. However, I still want to take the opportunity to encourage the use of references for spelling, and I often involve students in segmenting and spelling a few challenging words as we compose. Conventions like punctuation and capitalization are addressed, as well. For example, I might quickly remark as I write, "OK, we're starting a new sentence here so we need a capital . . ."

In contrast, during **interactive writing**, the teacher *and* students do the physical writing. The content is still negotiated jointly, but as students "share the pen," they grapple with spelling and mechanics continuously, thus working on their phonological awareness and phonics skills. (Since interactive writing promotes amazing growth in these areas and does so within the meaningful act of writing, it is a staple in my K–2 classrooms.) We work together to segment words into sounds and volunteers come forward to write corresponding letters. We refer to Word Walls to spell high frequency words correctly or use chunks we know. We use previously written charts as references, too. The teacher leads the students to write what they can but takes the pen when the task is too difficult. For example, when writing the word *shout*, perhaps you've taught and have a reference for /sh/ but haven't taught /ou/ or the *out* chunk. A volunteer could record the letters *s-h* then the teacher models writing the *out* chunk.

We need to keep students engaged during interactive writing sessions, so I often have everyone call out a spelling, make the letter, or spell a word in the air as the volunteer is writing, or I give everyone whiteboards to write on as we record on our chart. If students' attention begins to wane, I stop the interactive writing session and pick it up later that day or the next day. We always begin a new session by rereading what we've written.

In both shared and interactive writing, students have more responsibility for the writing than they do with modeled writing, but scaffolding and support are always available since the teacher is actively involved. In essence, these are forms of guided practice.

Note that any of these modes of writing can take place with the whole class, a small group, or even one-on-one and can be used for various purposes across the curriculum. Modeled, shared, or interactive writing sessions should be kept to 5 or 10 minutes depending on the grade level. Often pieces are worked on over time.

Obviously, students need opportunities to try out all they are learning independently, so having time in the day for Writing Workshop or **independent writing** is critical. Students will approximate the use of the strategies they've seen modeled and have tried during guided experiences. Though the teacher may be available to provide some support, it's important that students grapple with the act of composing on their own or with some assistance from peers. Teachers look closely at what their students are producing to help them determine next steps in their instruction.

Even our youngest, most emergent writers must have daily, independent writing time just as they need daily, independent reading time. If they are not given this time, how will their skills develop? They might begin by drawing and labeling or scribbling down letter-like forms, but the more teachers model and involve them in shared and interactive writing, the more they will grow. Naturally, the instruction they receive in phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, and vocabulary will also push their development as writers, but only if they are given daily opportunities to apply what they are learning!



Two students review our data as we prepare to write about our results.