

Thank you

FOR YOUR
INTEREST IN
CORWIN

In this excerpt, author Molly Ness explains the benefits to literacy-rich activities and includes some activities to try out with students.

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WHY YOU NEED THIS BOOK

I've written this book to honor two realities: (1) your instructional time is precious and how you use it affects student learning, and (2) you are busy, and you don't have time to scour the Internet for shiny new ideas. The purpose of this book is to maximize the learning potential of every moment in the classroom—from the second that students enter in the morning to the final bell. ***Every Minute Matters* provides literacy-rich activities to optimize transitional times and minimize lost instructional minutes.** You'll open this book searching for ways to make the most of your instructional day, but en route you will begin critical reflections about your use of time and your instructional priorities.

The literacy-rich activities in this book are not meant to detract from the curriculum, program, or approach that comprises your literacy block. In no way do I intend to replace the effective language arts instruction that already occurs. Instead, I have written this to help you become magicians of time (à la Hermione Granger and her Time-Turner!). After reflecting about your use of instructional time with the framework presented in the next chapter, you may begin to shift your priorities. Perhaps you realize that your morning minute has exceeded the intended 15-minute time frame, and you've got an additional 4 minutes. What literacy-rich experience could your students have here?

While this book is not intended to be a classroom management manual, its ideas may likely lead to improvements in your students' behavior, motivation, and focus. Research confirms that when teachers minimize transitional time, off-task behavior decreases as literacy achievement and student engagement increase (e.g., Codding & Smyth, 2008; Day, Connor, & McClelland, 2015). As we make the most out of every instructional moment, our students are more likely to be on task, engaged, and successful in their learning.

I intend this book to be your go-to resource of literacy activities that make every minute in your classroom matter. I've compiled instructional ideas, routines, games, and activities to maximize every moment of the day. The book provides ample engaging, easy-to-prepare activities to infuse literacy throughout the day. Among the ideas will be wordplay, puzzles and riddles, and conversation starters all geared toward reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

As a reading researcher, I understand the importance of language and the power that words hold. Thus, I am deliberately rejecting the common lingo of “sponges” or “time fillers.” *Sponge* implies that we are soaking up and excess of something; as teachers, we know face a shortage of time, not an excess. *Time fillers* implies that we are merely occupying time willy-nilly, with little purpose or intentional decision. As I've pointed out, our instructional time is too precious to simply fill. I've intentionally compiled activities that are *purposeful*. I include activities that further develop students as better speakers, listeners, writers, and readers.

Let me acknowledge that I am not always the original creator: I'd love to say that I created the brilliant Hink Pinks, but that is not true. Although I am not the original author of all of these ideas, this book is intended as a one-stop shopping compilation. So in addition to curating these ideas, I've done much of the vetting for you. Are you familiar with the term *dogfooding*? In her Cult of Pedagogy Podcast (a must-listen!), Jennifer Gonzalez defines dogfooding as “the act of using your own product as a consumer in order to work out its glitches, the metaphorical equivalent of eating your own dog food.” Gonzalez suggests the following:

Dogfood our lessons whenever possible. This means trying our own assignments. Taking our own tests. Doing our own homework. Attempting to actually complete those big projects. By doing this, we can detect all kind of problems that we'd never notice if we just created tasks and gave them straight to students.

During the year in which I wrote this book, I dogfooled these activities—either with children that I tutor, my own family members, or in classrooms where my friends teach.



“I WONDER” WRITING

Link to Literacy



Writing

START OF DAY

Materials Needed

- Student writing journals, or age-appropriate writing paper
- Curiosity-provoking props (see explanation in directions)
- Anchor charts with question-generation language

Quick Overview and Rationale

Kids are naturally curious. A survey of 1,000 mothers showed that children ages 4 to 10 ask an average of 288 questions a day (Telegraph Staff, 2013). “I Wonder” Writing aims to harness the power of student-generated questions, as questioning motivates students, creates engaged and purposeful readers, and increases memory (see Ness, 2015). In my work around student-generated questions, I invest in a weekly time for questioning; I often use children’s questions as a way to connect nonfiction text to their innate curiosity. For instance, a first grader’s question of “If there is a Big Dipper and a Little Dipper, why is there no Medium Dipper?” led us to investigate the answer with books on constellations.



Step-by-Step Directions

Teacher Modeling

- Model some teacher-generated questions, and discuss why you asked this question. Here are some examples:
 - » As I walked to school, I found this piece of an eggshell, which I think came from a bird. It made me wonder all sorts of questions that I can write for my I Wonder writing. I wonder what kind of bird this egg came from? What are eggshells made of? What happened to the baby inside this egg? Can you help me think of some other questions that I might ask?
- On anchor charts, display question-generation academic language, such as these:
 - » I wonder....
 - » Who?
 - » What?
 - » Where?
 - » When?
 - » Why?
 - » How?

STUDENT PRACTICE

In 5 to 10 minutes, allow students to generate a list of their questions. Younger students might draw an illustration of their questions.

Return to the process of questioning to jump-start conversations about content instruction. For example, you might say, “Today we’re going to start our unit on weather. What do you wonder about weather?”

Questions beget questions, but some students might need a jump start. Props or photos work well to springboard questions. You might bring in an object from the natural world (a shell, a rock, a pine cone) or picture on your SMART Board. In a first-grade classroom, I displayed a picture of a construction site that was around the corner from the school. The picture showed mounds of rock and dirt, heavy machinery, and an enormous pit in the ground. Students were practically jumping out of their seats to share their questions!

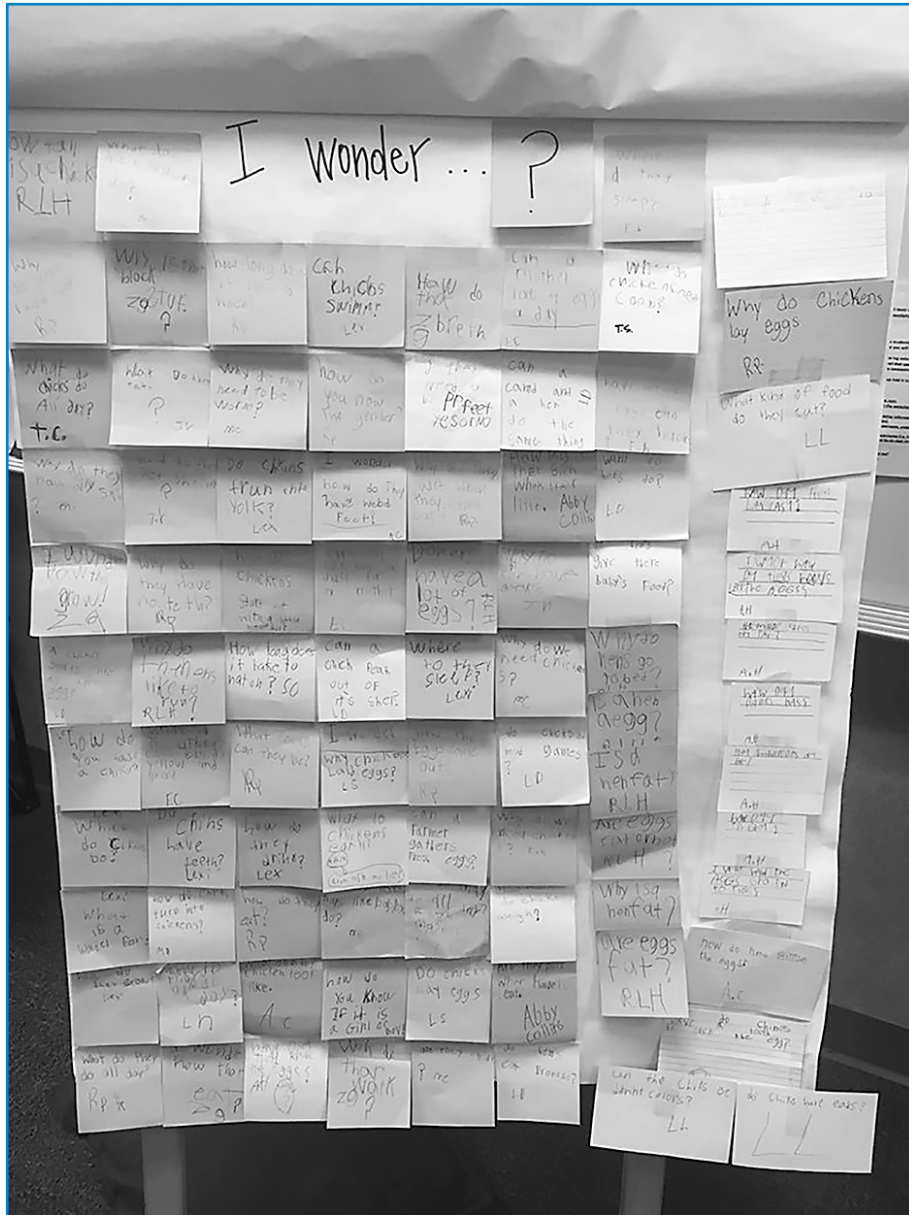
Moving Forward

- Students who need additional writing support will benefit from sentence starters, in which they complete prompts like “I wonder...” or “A question that I have is...”

Minute Mentor

For more information on “I Wonder” Writing, check out Harvey Daniels’s (2017) *The Curious Classroom: 10 Structures for Teaching with Student-Directed Inquiry*. Or check out these articles:

- Distefano, D. & Ness, M. (2018). Using hand symbols to scaffold student-generated questions in kindergarten classrooms. *Young Children*, 73, 22–28.
- Ness, M. (2015). *The question is the answer: Supporting student-generated queries in elementary classrooms*. Landover, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.



A Wonder Wall gives first graders lots of room to jot their questions.

Why are There
Bumps on your
Tongue?
..

Thank you
for reading
THIS NOTE
love all

A first grader writes down her daily wondering.