



Writing Opinion Writing Book Books: What We Think Grades K-2

Rationale

- ✚ Students need to be able to express themselves both verbally and in writing so that they can convey feelings, thoughts, and opinions about the world around them. By expressing themselves through illustration, speech, and writing and discussing why the ability to do so is important, students will begin to see how expressing themselves can help them to do such things as make decisions and actively participate in social interactions. Students can then move from applying their expression abilities to academic situations to applying these abilities to additional areas of their lives.

Goal

- ✚ To express an opinion and the reason for that opinion through a written and illustrated response to literature

Standards

- ✚ **L.K.6** Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.
- ✚ **L.1.6** Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (e.g., I named my hamster Nibblet because she nibbles too much because she likes that).
- ✚ **L.2.6** Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe (e.g., When other kids are happy that makes me happy).
- ✚ **W.K.1** Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., My favorite book is . . .).
- ✚ **W.1.1** Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.
- ✚ **W.2.1** Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.

Objectives

- ✚ Students will express an opinion or thought through speech, illustration, and the written word.
- ✚ Students will write and illustrate a response to a piece of literature.
- ✚ Students will identify and discuss story details such as characters, events, and illustrations.
- ✚ Students will discuss the use of the word *because* as a way to convey and express the reason for an opinion or thought.

Materials

- ✚ One (or more) grade-level picture books (See **Teacher Tips** for suggestions)
- ✚ *Student Activity: What I Think!*
- ✚ *Student Activity: Writing Prompts for What I Think!*
- ✚ Crayons or markers
- ✚ Pencils
- ✚ Scissors
- ✚ Glue stick or tape

Procedures

- ✚ Say, “**Today, I am going to read a story. Think about things that you like, do not like, or look at in the story while I am reading it. Would you change anything about the story?**”
- ✚ Read story to students. Then say, “**It is okay if you thought about a thing in the story that is different from what someone else thought about. People do not think the same things about books just like they do not like the same foods, clothes, or music.**”
- ✚ Distribute the *Student Activity: What I Think!*
 - Students can be given *Student Activity: Writing Prompts for What I Think!* Have them choose a prompt to complete about the story, cut out that strip, and glue or tape it in the indicated space on *Student Activity: What I Think!*
 - You can affix a specific prompt to *Student Activity: What I Think!* Then, copy the page and facilitate as a whole-group activity.
 - You can make copies of *Student Activity: Here is What I Think!* Each set of pages can have a specific prompt. Divide students into groups to complete the activity. Each group will focus on an aspect of the story that reflects the prompt that has been given to it.
 - Students can complete the activity in groups using multiple books and/or multiple prompts.
- ✚ Say, “**We can use the word *because* to tell people why we think the way that we do.**” Make a *because* statement that relates to the book that you read to students, such as, “I like the story because it is about butterflies.”
- ✚ Then, say, “**Like is one word that we can use to tell people about our thoughts. We can use other words, too.**”

- For older students, discuss *I feel* and *I wish*. Make statements that relate to the book that you read to students, such as, “I wish the butterfly did not have to fly so far in the story because it takes a long time to fly.”
- ✚ Assist students with writing specific story details on the blank lines within a prompt strip. Depending on which prompts have been chosen for the activity, students will write words or phrases. Write this information on chart paper or the board so that they can see it.
- ✚ Next, have students complete their own *because* statements in the bottom section of *Student Activity: What I Think!* Circulate and be available to answer questions.
- ✚ Wrap up the first part of the lesson by discussing the use of *because*. You might say, “**What does the word *because* help us to do?**” Ask students to tell why they think *because* is an important word for them to know and use.
- ✚ In your next session, revisit your discussion about the use of *because* and talk about how the word applies to expressing thoughts about the visual aspects of a text, such as a book’s cover, illustrations, and end papers. Say, “**The word *because* can also help us tell what we think about the things that we see in books when we read them.**” Make a *because* statement that relates to a visual aspect of the story that you read to students during the previous session, such as, “I like the story because there is a black and orange butterfly on the cover of the book.”
- ✚ Have students draw an illustration in the space at the top of *Student Activity: Here is What I Think!*
 - The illustration should be related in some way to the prompt that students completed during the previous session. Discuss possible illustrations, such as illustrating the book’s cover, one or more of the characters in the story, an event that happened in the story, the story’s setting, or a student’s favorite (or least favorite) part of the story.
 - Tell students that since most illustrations in picture books are in color, their illustrations should be in color as well.
 - Circulate and be available to answer questions and assist students with their illustrations.
- ✚ When time ends, say “**Who wants to share what they think about the story? Tell why you drew the picture and wrote the words that you did.**” Encourage a response from each student, or from as many students in the class as possible. Remind students to use *because* when presenting the reason(s) for their drawing and writing choices.
- ✚ In conclusion, say, “**Telling what you think about a story and why you think that way is as important as reading the story.**” Discuss how thinking and interpretation are related to meaning, Say, “**Thinking about stories is one thing that can help good readers figure out the meaning of a story.**”
- ✚ **Closing:** Ask students to verbally finish this statement: “I am glad that we read this story because...”

Teacher Tips

- ✚ Scaffold this activity for your students. You may want to just allow students to compose their own pages with their own prompts instead of deciding as a class. If your students are ready, they might be able to write out their own ideas without prompts. This helps them practice invented spelling and you may get some interesting and complicated words by allowing them more freedom to express themselves.
- ✚ Here are some picture books with illustrations or text to foster reader or listener response:
 - *Arthur's Pet Business* by Marc Brown
 - *How Chipmunk Got His Stripes*, by Joseph Bruchac and James Bruchac, pictures by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey
 - *Flower Garden* by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Kathryn Hewitt
 - *Miss Rumphius*, by Barbara Cooney
 - *The Art Lesson*, by Tomie dePaola
 - *Possum Magic*, by Mem Fox, illustrated by Julie Vivas
 - *A Weekend with Wendell*, by Kevin Henkes
 - *The Relatives Came*, by Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Stephen Gammell
 - *Big Plans*, by Bob Shea, illustrated by Lane Smith
 - *Seven Blind Mice*, by Ed Young
- ✚ For more advanced readers, consider the illustrations and/or text in books such as:
 - *Town Mouse, Country Mouse*, by Jan Brett
 - *The Memory String*, by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Ted Rand
 - *Grandfather's Journey*, by Allen Say
 - *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst, illustrated by Ray Cruz
- ✚ Copy the writing prompts on colored paper to help students visually see where the prompt ends and their response begins.
- ✚ Teachers may choose to use picture pages and/or sentence strips as an alternative to the standard ***Student Activity*** format.

Extension Activities

- ✚ Affix student responses to large sheets of butcher paper with the heading. *This is What We Think of (title and author of book)!* Next to this display, hang a large, blank sheet of butcher paper with the heading, *What Do You Think?*
 - Place a copy of the book used in the activity and a marker on a chair outside of the classroom for 3-5 days.
 - Ask teachers, students from higher grade levels, parents, the principal, and other support staff like aides, cafeteria workers, janitors, the school librarian, etc. to take a few minutes to sit and read the story that's outside of your classroom. Post a brief set of instructions that invites each person to write a short thought or two after he or she has finished reading the story. Let visitors also know that your students are interested in why people think the way they do about the story. Try to invite a mix of adults and students to respond so that each group is represented.
 - Discuss visitors' comments with your students and compare the comments to the comments from the class. A Venn diagram can be used to compare

and contrast what adults and students think about the story or what boys and girls think about the story. Another option is to create a bar graph of the number of responses that focus on various aspects of the book, such as the number of responses about characters, illustrations, story (plot), setting, or title.

- ✚ Discuss with students how the word *so* can also be used to tell why people think the things that they do. Make a *so* statement about the story that was read for the activity, such as, “*There are lots of pretty butterflies in this book, so I like this story.*” Have students make *so* statements about the story. Point out that the *why* (reason) comes at the beginning of a *so* statement and at the end of a *because* statement.
- ✚ Discuss how students can use *I* statements such as *I can, I feel, I have, I know, I need, I want, and I wish* in order to express themselves. Write these *I* statements on a large piece of butcher or chart paper, and ask students for additional examples (such as *I hear* and *I see*) to add to the list. Post the list in the classroom, and encourage students to use *I* statements when speaking or responding to others.

Student Activity: What I Think!

Title of book: _____

Author: _____

GLUE OR TAPE WRITING PROMPT STRIP HERE

Student Activity: Writing Prompts for What I Think!

I like the story because...

It was a good idea when

happened in the story because...

The character that I like the most in the story is

_____ because...

I don't like the story because...

It was a bad idea when

happened in the story because...

The character that I don't like in the story is

_____ because...

Student Activity: Writing Prompts: What I Think!

When _____
happened in the story, I felt _____
because...

I think this is a _____ story for kids
to read because...

I wish that _____
would have also happened in the story because...

Student Activity: Writing Prompts: Here is What I Think!

I would change

about the story because...

I think the pictures in the story are

_____because...

because...