Study Guide

Chapter One

The overriding goal for writing instruction in elementary classrooms is *to push all students to write effectively for as wide a range of purposes and for as wide a range of audiences as possible.* The purpose of the following activity is to explore the variety of purposes and audiences for an array of texts and consider how to include students in instructional conversations that challenge their academic proficiency and are grounded, authentic, and meaningful.

Collect "touchstone" texts (e.g., emails, text messages, story books, magazine or news articles, recipes, web pages, journal entries, etc.) that illustrate one or more purposes. With colleagues (or students) role-play a simulated "interview" with the author of each text and address the following:

1. What was the specific purpose for writing this text?
2. Who was the intended audience?

Step #1

Use responses to these questions to construct a chart.

Text	Specific Purpose(s)	Audience(s)
Example: Article in *Time for Kids* Magazine, "Planets with the Most Moons" (5/8/09)	Provides information or facts on solar system, might be helpful for personal interest or for writing reports.	Kids in grades 4–6
Example: Recipe for chocolate cake	Giving directions: Provides instructions for ingredients and procedures for cooking.	Home or professional cooks
Example: Fill in your own texts!		

Source for "Planets with the Most Moons" in Time for Kids: *http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/teachers/wr/article/0,27972,1895392,00.html*

Step #2

"Text Sets" that align with particular purposes can serve as excellent models as students prepare their own writing. For example pick one text to explore more closely. What are other types of texts that might fit a similar purpose and that might provide a text set for exploring this type of writing with your students?

1. How well does this text accomplish some of the following common purposes for writing: *entertaining, recounting experience, socializing, exploring a question, describing, explaining, persuading, instructing*?
2. What other texts might also fit these purposes?
3. How might you plan an instructional conversation as a prewriting activity that uses "touchstone" texts to plan a writing lesson with an "authentic" purpose and audience?

Chapter Two

Case Study: Carl

Carl is a second-grade student whose parents home-schooled him for his kindergarten and first grade years. Mrs. Mitchell noticed that Carl was trying very hard to make new friends. As part of her ongoing assessment of Carl's writing development, she made the following notes:

> During whole group discussions, Carl raises his hand whenever I pose a question. If I call on him, he often is not prepared to answer or hasn't really given the question much thought. . . . Based on several running records and retellings . . . Carl is able to decode text at second-grade level fairly fluently. However, when reading grade level narratives or discussing trade books during read-aloud, he doesn't make deeper text-to-self or text-to-text connections. He also doesn't ask questions or initiate comments about the content of what he has read. This is surprising since he seems so eager to be recognized during class discussions. . . . Carl's reading response journal entries are sparse. He's a good speller and writes simple sentences but doesn't seem to know how to discuss characters or "the problem" in narrative texts even with prompts.

Mrs. Mitchell wished to address Carl's need to fit in socially and to teach him to reflect more deeply on what he is reading as well as connect that to his written literature responses. Therefore, she decided on the following goals for Carl:

1. Scaffold Carl's involvement in partner and group work in ways that encourage him to see reading and writing as ways to become socially connected with his peers (e.g., develop strategies for group discussions including reflecting on his answers before volunteering and listening carefully to what others have to say to better focus his own responses).

2. Explicitly teach narrative story structures to help him focus him on characters, setting, plot (problem/solution), and themes that he can draw upon when responding to his reading.

Activity

Using the above information, carefully review Mrs. Mitchell's writing workshop in Chapter 2. Choose one or more components of this

workshop—Minilessons, Independent Writing, Conferences, or Sharing—and develop a lesson plan that addresses her goals for Carl.

Chapter Three

The following activities will help you explore minilessons and think about how they can be used in the context of a writing workshop.

Activity #1

Semantic maps help some writers plan and organize their writing. On pages 39–40 we offer an illustration of the use of semantic mapping as preparation for writing narrative fiction. Examine the map on page 41 where Mr. Gorka models how he created a semantic map to plan a recount of his trip to New Mexico. Study his map and think of a how you might create a similar map for a piece of writing you wish to attempt. Consider how you might use this in a minilesson in your own classroom.

Activity #2

Sharing the pen while drafting a piece of writing is a chance for teachers to engage in dialogue with groups of students to write and revise their writing. Writing a set of instructions or a procedure provides an opportunity to model clear, precise language that is considerate of the needs of readers who must follow directions. Try using the classic "Directions for Creating a Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich" or some other activity such as "How to Make Play Dough". Reflect on the sorts of explanations and elaborations students needed to include as they created this writing as a group.

Activity #3

Children's picture books are excellent "touchstone texts" for minilessons illustrating the qualities of good writing in published texts. Consider the minilesson on character development using Choi's picture

book, *The Name Jar* (pages 46–47), and the minilesson on connector words that show sequence in Cronin and Lewin's book, *Click, Clack, Moo!* (page 46). What picture books can you find that lend themselves to some of the qualities for good writing that can serve as good minilessons to writing projects in your own classroom?

Chapter Four

Writing is an inherently social activity that often includes collaboration on the construction of texts. After reading Chapter 4, try out one or more of the following activities. Record or take notes of the "talk" that occurred around the shared or collaborative writing activities. What was the nature or content of the talk? What kind of talk helped students better understand the writer's craft? What did you learn by recording and analyzing the "talk" that occurs during the writing process?

Activity #1

Try doing a *written conversation* with a colleague or a student. Make an audiotape or take detailed notes on the "talk" during the writing or reflect about the process after the fact.

Activity #2

Author sharing with peers who provide constructive peer feedback is a useful way for students to determine if their writing is effective. Sharing provides both authors and audiences with experience analyzing the effect of texts from the reader/listener's perspective.

Step #1: *Quick Write* (page 59). Pick a recent event from today's newspaper. Write a 5–10 minute response in the form of a letter to the editor or a blog entry sharing your opinion about this event.

Step #2: *Author share*. Read your response aloud and ask a colleague for questions and comments about what works or suggestions about how to make this piece more effective.

Step #3: Record the questions, comments, and suggestions. Reflect on which helped you revise. Consider how this information might help you plan a minilesson on feedback or use as criteria for a teacher/student writing conference.

Chapter Five

The goal of this study guide activity is to practice uncovering how authors identify and use different language features to make their writing effective for a particular purpose and audience. When Kobe (pages 82–83) was asked to write about his gardening experiences he used a mix of genre features but his recount was hard for the reader to follow. What Kobe needs is guidance that includes:

- Defining the purpose and audience for his writing.
- An understanding of what language he might use to create an effective text.

This activity will give you a chance to analyze what Kobe was being asked to do, how he might focus on that goal, and what language features might help him to accomplish this goal.

Step # 1

Writing for an authentic purpose and audience engages students in ways that artificial "prompts" do not. In Kobe's case, the class was engaged in a highly motivating unit creating a garden in front of the school. Most of the children had little experience with a garden and were eager to participate in hauling compost, planting seeds and seedlings, watering, and checking the growth of the new plants each day. Kobe and his friends also enjoyed using the different garden "tools" Ms. Moran provided, such as a trowel and a cultivator. After each visit to the garden, Ms. Moran asked the children to record their experiences in their garden notebooks. Think about how you might use the high interest unit to challenge students to grow as writers by addressing the following questions:

- Why do gardeners keep journals?
- What sorts of writing would you expect to find in a gardener's journal?
- How does writing in a gardener's journal compare and contrast with writing you might find in trade materials with the following titles:
  - *The Guide to Creating and Caring for your Rose Garden*
  - The TopRate Seed Catalogue
  - *Recollections on a Year of Gardening*
  - *Gardening with Kids in the City*
  - *Andy and the Apple Seed*
- What are some different types of writing that Mary's students might create using the information recorded in their journals?

Step #2

Think about an authentic set of experiences that might offer meaningful writing experiences for your own students. This could be a content unit that has a science, history, or literary focus. What sorts of texts might students create? How might you help them participate in planning effective texts for particular purposes and audiences?

Chapter Six

In Chapter Six you will find an example of how Kobe's writing to "recount" his garden experiences might include explicit instruction of the language features of "recount" writing. The gardening unit and notebook writing described in this chapter provide an excellent opportunity to see how a particular set of genre features can link assessment and teaching. For example, Kobe and his teacher might conference to determine the purpose and audience for revising pieces from his journal. For example, Kobe might decide to revise his notebook entry to write a letter to bring home to "recount" to his family what is happening in the garden each week. This would involve language that is personal and uses recount features. He might also decide to create

instructions about "How to Plant a Garden" for some other children in the school. This text would rely more on procedural recounts, description, or explanation.

Activity #1

Based on the purpose and audience, Kobe's "recount" letter or his "instructions" text would have some similar but some different features. Below you will find a chart that explains language features commonly found in personal recounts. Based on your own knowledge, next look at some "how-to" texts (such as directions about how to plant a garden or bake a cake). Pick out what makes these most effective. Then, develop a similar chart for "instructions" or "procedural recount." Compare what is similar or different between these two genres.

Language Features of a Recount	
Criteria: How will I make my recount effective for my audience?	**Description**
Orientation:	My opening helps my reader *imagine* the time, place, and location of the event by telling who, when, where.
Series of Events:	My piece lists a series of events in order with language that elaborates on each event. I included quotes or dialogue to help show my point of view or that of my participants.
Conclusion or Reflection:	I don't just list the events that happened; I also share my own ideas or opinions during my recount and in the conclusion.

Language Features:	I name specific participants, such as people, animals, and objects.
	I use the past tense (e.g., *we walked, they sang, the ducks waddled*).
	I use a lot of action verbs.
	I use connector words to show when and where events happened and in what order (e.g., *first, next, later, then, on, in*).
	I include details that illustrate my key events.
	I use *I* and *we* to show that this tells about a personal experience.

Activity #2

After you feel comfortable with your charts try a piece of writing. Chose an activity that you have recently undertaken (e.g. preparing food, attending a concert, running a race). Decide on a purpose—whether you wish to write an interesting "recount" of your experience or whether you wish to provide instructions about "how to do" this activity. Decide on your audience (e.g. friends, family, or a more distant set of readers who may not know you). Develop your chart into a rubric similar to that found in Chapter 6.

Next write your piece. Use your rubric to check that the language you are using achieves the purpose for which you are writing (i.e. Is this effective for the intended audience? Why?).

Finally, think about how you might use concepts of purpose, audience, and genre features in your teaching. Remember, students are often expected to simply "absorb" these differences from their reading or writing OR they are given "templates" to fill in. Either way, they miss the chance to explore authentic writing and to talk explicitly

about the different language needed for writing to be effective across different purposes. It is our responsibility to help young writers negotiate how best to write for personal and academic purposes in ways that matter to them! Rubrics, conferences, and portfolio activities that include an explicit focus on purpose and audience provide solid performance criteria from which to teach and clear expectations for students to learn!

Chapter Seven

Chapter 7 provides information that helps teachers unpack the complexity of the orthographic system as well as suggestions about challenging students to investigate patterns in the English spelling system. Arguably, students who are invited to be "language detectives" across the curriculum are ready to engage in a problem-solving approach to learning spelling and punctuation.

Step #1

Review various approaches to thinking about English spelling patterns. For example:

1. Shared derivations common to groups of words (e.g., all words that contain *graph*)
2. Common word features such as:
    - Onsets (initial sounds) and rimes (word families) (e.g., *-ight*/*-ite*, *-art*/*-ale*).
    - Final sounds (e.g., *qua<u>k</u>e*/*du<u>ck</u>*, *ni<u>c</u>e*/*hop<u>s</u>*, *pri<u>nt</u>*/*ce<u>nt</u>*).
    - Short/long vowels (e.g., *m<u>a</u>d*/*m<u>a</u>d<u>e</u>*, *gr<u>i</u>p*/*gr<u>i</u>p<u>e</u>*).
    - Consonant digraphs (e.g., *ph*, *sh*, *ch*, *th*).
    - Vowel digraphs (e.g., *b<u>ea</u>d*, *d<u>ea</u>d*, *b<u>oa</u>t*, *f<u>ee</u>t*, *b<u>ay</u>*, *tr<u>ai</u>t*, *b<u>oi</u>l*).
    - Prefixes and suffixes (e.g., *pre-*, *re-*, *-ness*, *-er*).
    - Singular and plural (e.g., *dog*/*dogs*, *cat*/*cats*, *glass*/*glasses*, *child*/*children*
3. Structures that are related by meaning (e.g., sign, signal, signature)

Step #2

Using some of the instructional ideas provided, construct a lesson for the "language detectives" in your class. Make sure that the lesson includes:

- Words that are connected to meaningful uses of text
- An invitation to the lesson that will spark students' interest and engage them in the spirit of authentic "problem solving" as they study the words (e.g., Curt Dudley-Marling's word sorting lesson on pages 115–17).
- A focus on one of the approaches to thinking about the orthographic "system" listed above.

Step #3

Try your lesson out with colleagues in a workshop or with your students. Ask them for feedback before planning next steps. Also, try this with a focus on punctuation!