

More About the Authors

Authors and
Illustrators
Mentor Our
Youngest
Writers



LISA B. CLEAVELAND

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For all the authors and illustrators who have
helped me to grow as a teacher
(from stapled books to published books)



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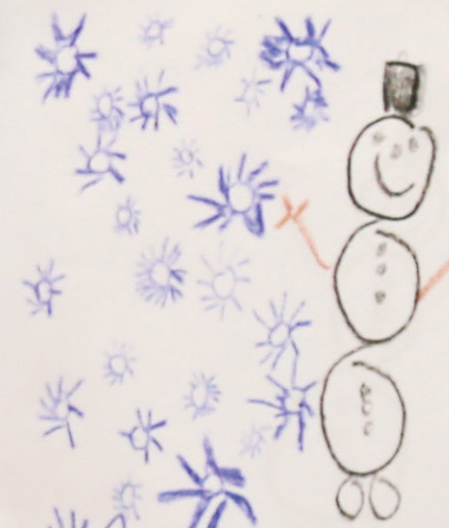
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Shifting the Focus from Mentor Texts to Mentor Authors

In the fall of the year, author and illustrator Ivy Jones entered my writing workshop. She was five years old, and for the next nine months, she would spend some time every day making books. A hundred and eighty days, more or less. A hundred and eighty days of time to experiment and explore, to share stories and teach others. A hundred and eighty days to make books about what she knows and loves best in the world. A hundred and eighty days to make plans and decisions and to develop a sense of who she is as an author and illustrator, to become *known* in that way to herself and to others. One unforgettable day she explained, very matter-of-factly, to the class that reversing her letters was “kind of my issue right now.” She owned it, but she seemed to understand “her issue” was just one small and temporary part of all the many parts of her that added up to something so much more than a backward *L* here and there.

If you could “search” for Ivy Jones and her books on Amazon, you would pull up a long list of titles. The first one that might catch your eye is the cover of her book *Chickens* (see Figure 1.1). You can’t help but notice that the chicken is scratching away, its leg clearly in motion.

Intrigued, you read the description of the book and learn that it is a nonfiction book that’s beautifully illustrated and includes great information about



1.1 *Chickens* by Ivy

chickens. There's a "see inside this book" feature, so you click on it to see the sample pages (see Figure 1.2). The first page explains that chickens can live in all kinds of places, and the illustration shows four of those places: hutch, house, pen, and cage. If you ever decided to keep chickens yourself, this would be really helpful information.



1.2 Places chickens live

The other sample page shows different kinds of chickens and food they eat (see Figure 1.3). You know you are in expert hands with Ivy as your teacher when you look closely at the illustration. Carefully labeled, she shows you different kinds of chickens: Barred Rock, Rhode Island Red, Guinea, and Eastern Guinea. And she is very clear about the food they eat: pellets, corn, grass, grain, and worms.



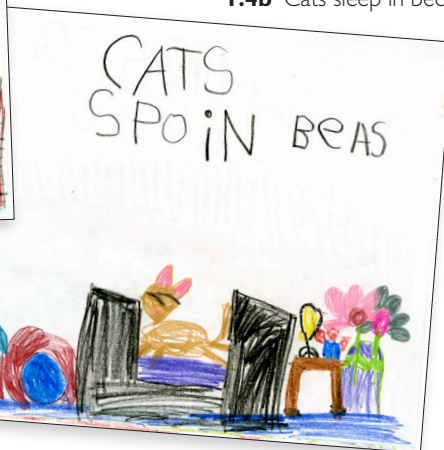
1.3 Kinds of chickens and the food they eat

You wonder if Ivy Jones is specifically a nonfiction writer, maybe an up-and-coming Gail Gibbons or Nicola Davies. You see at least three other non-fiction books listed for her: *Cats and Kittens*, *Horses*, and *How to Grow a Garden*, which she illustrated with author Noah Hale. "Ivy Jones seems to know a lot about animals and the outdoors," you think, and you can't resist the "see inside this book" feature once again (see Figures 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6).



1.4a *Cats and Kittens*

1.4b Cats sleep in beds



1.4c Cats also need food and water

1.5a Horses

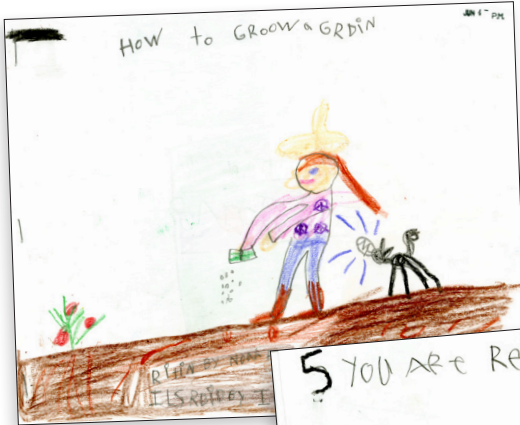
1.5b Inside: brain, bones, backbone, leg bones, gall bladder; heart, lungs



1.5c Outside: forelock, back, legs, hoof



1.6a How to Grow a Garden



1.6b Plant the seed in the ground



1.6c You are ready to pick

From these few sample pages, you can see that Ivy Jones is an illustrator with an eye for color and detail, and her writing style is direct and informative. A picture of her begins to emerge, and you can almost imagine her out working with animals when she's not making books. Scrolling through her other titles, it's clear that Ivy also has published in the slice-of-life genre, and two books in particular show you were right to imagine her away from her desk. The sample pages from two books leave no doubt about how Ivy has acquired so much knowledge about animals in her young life. *Me and My Mom* features Ivy and her mom feeding the Barred Rocks and Rhode Island Reds (see Figure 1.7).

1.7a *Me and My Mom*



1.7b *Me and my mom feed the chickens*



And inside *Me and My Dad Farming*, you see Ivy at work with her dad on their farm, feeding animals, riding the tractor and baling hay, and planting a huge garden (see Figure 1.8).

In title after title, what Ivy knows and loves best is clear in all the books you see. Just before you leave her page, one more cover catches your eye. You must have missed it as you scrolled through. It's her most recent release, actually, written a full year after the other books, at the end of first grade. The topic and the sample pages are so enticing, you can't help yourself, your finger hits the "Buy Now with 1-Click" button and you order it: *The Truth About Lice*. When it arrives, you tear it open and read it immediately (see Figure 1.9).



1.8a Me and My Dad Farming



1.8b Me and my dad feed the animals

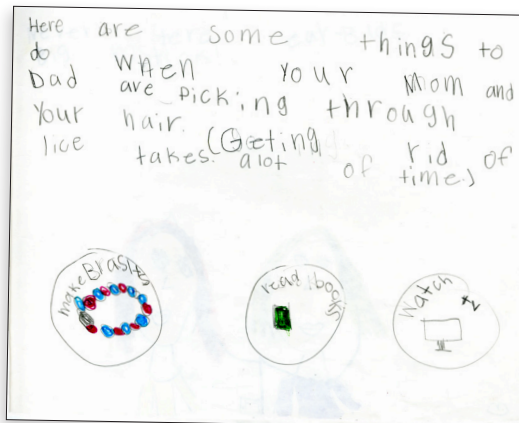
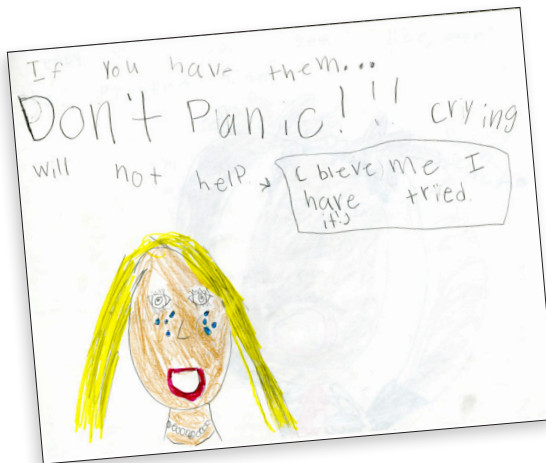
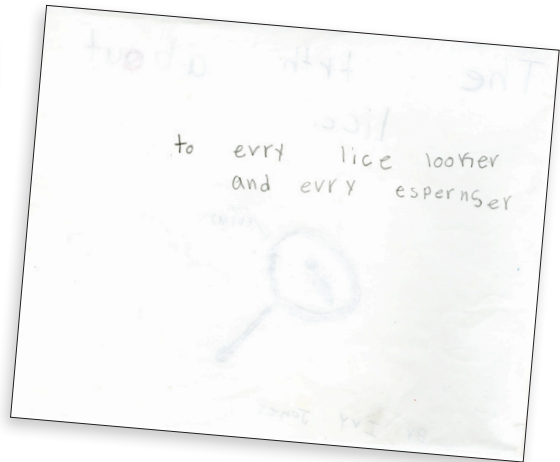
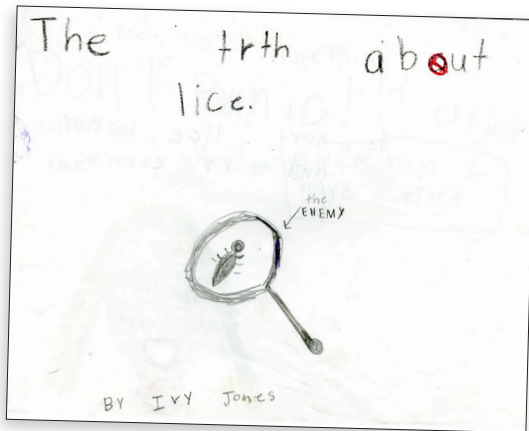


1.8c Me and my dad ride the tractor

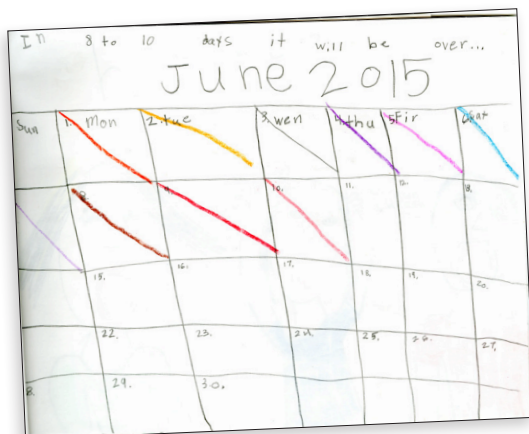


1.8d Me and my dad grow a garden

1.9 The Truth About Lice



1.9 The Truth About Lice (continued)



Children as Authors and Illustrators



It's fun to imagine finding a student's books like Ivy's featured on Amazon, but the idea behind imagining this is actually quite serious. When I think about the children I have taught in years past, I think of them in sort of an Amazon-like way. There's Helena, the author of *How My Dog Gets Dirty*. There's Dirk, the author of *Trucks* and *Camping*. There's Logan, the author of *Big Blue Whale*, and Jose, the author of *Puppy Poems*. There's Jayla and Anna, the coauthors of the series 12, 13, and 14 Year Old Girls. I remember my students by the books they made. They exist in my mind as the authors and illustrators I know them to be. Even when I see them years later and they are very grown up, I can't help it: I still think of them as Brandy, the author of *Apples*, and Cauley, the author of *Snakes*.

I believe each of the children I teach, every single year, develops an identity as an author and illustrator because they work at making books every single day. Just as Ivy knows that reversing letters is her issue, my students know themselves in all kinds of ways as authors and illustrators. They know what they like to write about. They know what they're good at, and whether they prefer colored pencils or markers. They can name the titles of the books they've written and share ideas for books they'd like to write. And I believe if you *could* look them up on Amazon and peek inside all the different books they have made, a picture of each child would emerge, just as it does for any author or illustrator you find there. Certain books stand out, just as they do in my memory years later, but no single piece of writing defines any of my students. You have to *scroll through* to understand who they are as authors, to see, "That Ivy. She's quite the girl on the farm."

The idea that we need to "teach the writer, not the writing" has been spoken and written about so many times now, it's easy to forget the important message behind those words. What does it really mean to do this? How does planning a unit of study look different if we aim to teach the writer, not the writing? How does conferring sound different? How do we ask students to work at their writing when we aim to teach the writer, not the writing? How do we ask them to share with other children? I believe a focus on teaching writers instead of writing impacts every single decision I make about my teaching, and nowhere is that clearer than in the role mentors play in that teaching.

When children first come into my kindergarten classroom, five years old and—for many of them—their first time in school, I am already thinking about the long list of books each of them will have published by the end of the year. In my mind the covers are blank, of course, but I know the children will fill them with the colors and words of their lives. They are already writers and illustrators to me because I can imagine this future for them, and my teaching goal is to make sure that future is real. And it's because I see them as writers and believe my job is to teach them as writers that I bring them mentors from the very first day to the very last.

Authors and Illustrators as Mentors



The term *mentor text* is commonly heard in conversations about teaching writing these days, and whole books and websites are devoted to helping teachers find and use mentor texts. Teachers use mentor texts—picture books, feature articles, essays, poems, basically whatever students are going to write—to show students qualities of good writing, and sometimes they use them for inquiry and let students discover qualities on their own. With mentor texts, teachers *show* students what good writing looks like, they don't just *tell* them how it's supposed to be. Most teaching I've seen or read about using mentor texts makes perfect sense and seems like smart, sensible practice. In fact, it actually looks a lot like the teaching you'll read about in this book, but with one key difference.

After the discussion in this chapter, you won't read the phrase *mentor text* again in this book. Why? Because in my classroom, authors and illustrators are mentors, not texts. This may sound like a matter of words, but I believe it changes how you teach and what your students learn. When authors and illustrators are your mentors, you pay attention to parts of books you've never thought much about before (Chapter 2). You use different language to talk about what you notice, and you teach students more *how* to learn from their mentors than *what* to learn (Chapter 3). When authors and illustrators are mentors, students ask very different kinds

of questions (Chapter 4), and you plan your study units differently and with different intentions (Chapter 5). And perhaps most important of all, you see your students differently when you see them as mentors themselves (Chapter 6). My hope is that *More About the Authors* will help you see how shifting your thinking about mentors can effect a dramatic change in your teaching. In this chapter, we'll consider all that's behind the shift from mentor texts to mentor authors and illustrators, and learn what this shift means to the children we teach.

A Mentor Is a Person

In the world outside school, the word *mentor* refers to a person when it's a noun. Merriam-Webster defines a mentor as "someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person." The word is used less often as an adjective, but when it is, it's almost always followed by a kind of person: mentor teacher, mentor player, mentor salesman. The whole concept of mentorship is based on people and the learning relationships between them, so the only authentic way to approach the idea of mentorship with children is to focus on relationships. I believe a six-year-old author and illustrator like Ivy Jones comes to be because she sees herself as being a lot *like* the mentors she knows by name and face and even personality. If she'd spent a year learning from "mentor texts," I don't think she would have grown to have the same sense of self. It would be hard for her to see herself as being like a text.



Mentorship is all about relationships. If I asked you to think about mentors in your own life, you would think about people who've helped you along the way to become your best self. When you think about how important mentors could be to children throughout their lives, it's hard not to see how a healthy, positive view of mentors is so important. When my students face situations where they lack experience and are learning something new, I want them to be completely comfortable with the idea that they can find a mentor to guide them.

Because mentorship as a concept matters to me, using the word *mentor* to refer to a text—even as a metaphor—doesn't really work. After a few short weeks in my class, my students would see right through the whole idea of mentor texts. Why? Because books don't make themselves, authors and illustrators do, and my students know this because they make books too. Even if I wanted to, I'd have trouble talking to them about how a book is written without talking about the person who

decided to write it that way. They know better. They know how hard it is to decide which words to put on the page or how to make an illustration look a certain way. When I show them a picture book, they know somebody started out with just an idea and then worked for a very long time to make that book look that way and sound that way. They can't help but wonder, "How'd she *do* that?" when they see



or hear something really powerful in a book. If I want my students to understand what a mentor is, then the whole idea of a mentor "text" won't work for them because they totally get that people—people like them—make books. My students need the real deal. They need *mentors*.

A Mentor Does What You Do (But with More Experience)

A mentor is a person who does the same thing you are learning to, but with a lot more skill and experience. This is why it is so important that children in my class make books. If they were just writing on lined paper or in a journal or even in a *booklet*, they wouldn't see themselves as doing the same kind of thing as the authors and illustrators of picture books are doing. All the work I plan to do all year long depends on my students' seeing themselves as book makers just like their mentors. It's an identity I need them to have, so the work I ask them to do each day and the way I ask them to do it really matters.

On the first day of kindergarten I explain that writing workshop is a time each day when children get to make books. By workshop time, we have already read at least one book, usually by Eric Carle (more on that in later chapters), so I show them his picture and remind the children that Eric is the person who made the book. Next we look at books made by other kindergartners so children will think, "Hey, I can do that," and then I show them photographs of former students making books in my class so they can picture themselves working in the same ways. I show them the very simple supplies: blank books with six or seven pages of unlined paper stapled together, and a variety of markers, pencils, and crayons. And then I send them out to get started.

You may wonder, "Don't you give them any directions about what to do first or maybe model how to get started?" The answer is no, I don't, and the reason is that I want them to start making their own decisions right from the very start. This first day sets the stage for all the days that will follow, and if I really want them to

see themselves as being like their mentors, I have to step back and let them own their work. And yes, I see the whole range from children who just basically scribble and make random shapes on the paper, to children with more experience who actually write and make drawings to match the words (see Figure 1.10). But at the end of the day, or at least at the end of several days, they all see themselves as perfectly capable of making books and when they do, they begin to see the authors and illustrators of the books we share differently. Mentorship starts as soon as students see themselves as book makers.

1.10 Two book covers showing the range of development at the beginning of the year



A Mentor Teaches Directly and Indirectly

What children will learn from mentors is a combination of direct and indirect instruction. If you think of a mentor in your own life, that person probably taught you things very directly, showing you how to do something or explaining a new possibility. You also learned a lot indirectly from watching how your mentor went about his or her work and interacted with colleagues. It's the same with children. When I look at Ivy's books across the year, I see a lot of things she's doing as a writer and an illustrator that I know we studied and talked about together. I also see her doing a lot of things she's picked up on her own. She can't help herself. Her identity as a book maker is strong so she's naturally learning every time she sees a book, on her own or with the class. Her mentor David Shannon, in particular, taught Ivy so much about humor in writing and illustrating, and he also showed her

it was okay to write a book about having lice. No shame there, and as one of the designated nitpickers at my school, I'm so happy to have this book to share for just that reason.

In *About the Authors*, we explain four reasons why it's important for children to make books. Making books:

- is developmentally appropriate;
- helps children do bigger work;
- helps children live like writers all the time; and
- helps students read like writers.

Children like Ivy learn indirectly from their mentors because they are reading *like* writers and illustrators. As their teacher, the "like" part is all on me because I'm in charge of what children are asked to do in my class. When you think about it this way, some of the simplest decisions can make a huge difference. The first paper we use is blank paper because people who make picture books don't use lined paper. We use color because other picture-book makers—like us—use color. We spend a long time on our covers because covers are a big deal to other picture-book makers. The "like" part of reading like writers depends on all of this, and the "like" part is what leads to so much indirect learning, which I simply don't believe happens when the focus is on texts instead of the people who make them.



A Mentor Lives with You over Time

Just like all relationships, the relationships my students and I have with our mentors are living ones that change over time. The better we get to know certain authors and illustrators, the closer we read and the more we see when we look at their books. The first time we meet someone like Lauren Stringer and read one of her books is completely different from when we are reading the seventh or eighth one of her books. If we start with *Mud*, for example, by the time we get to *Tell Me About Your Day Today*, we expect to see Lauren do certain things in her illustrations. We know she most likely will use acrylic paints to make bold, colorful pictures. We know she might put in a "backstory" that's not in the words, zoom in and out a lot, or maybe even put in tiny details that hold great surprises. Ever since we saw that she'd placed the book *Scarecrow* by Cynthia Rylant on a table in

her book *Snow*, a later collaboration with Rylant, we wait to find something like this in every new book.

We come to expect certain things because we know our mentors so well. And just like in other relationships, sometimes our mentors surprise us and do something we really weren't expecting. When we first saw *City Dog, Country Frog*, we had to get to know Mo Willems all over again. This book felt really serious when he's usually so funny, and what's more, he didn't illustrate the book himself. Our focus on the people behind the texts is what leads us to read like insiders in this way. When the focus is on individual texts instead of authors and illustrators, you just have no way of developing this same kind of insider feeling. Mentorship is not about a text, it's about someone's work over time.

Connected to this, one of the happiest kinds of days in my classroom is when we get our hands on a newly released book by one of our favorite mentors. Sometimes we have known it was coming for a while and were just waiting, and sometimes we discover it by surprise. Take the day we received our copy of Marla Frazee's *Boot and Shoe*. We'd had it preordered for a while and had been studying her other books closely because I was going to meet her at a conference (see Chapter 4). It felt like Christmas to unwrap the packaging and see what was inside. My students and I were bursting with anticipation and excitement.

New books are wonderful, but often my students also find books by one of our mentors in the library, at home, or at a bookstore and bring them in for us to see. "Ms. Cleaveland, I found a Mem Fox book at a yard sale on Saturday! I bought it!" This is a cause for celebration, too. My students know authors and illustrators by name and look for them out in the world, and I love that they think of books in this way: a *Mem Fox* book. The promise of new books that haven't even been made and the happy discovery of old books we didn't know existed are among the best things about having real people as our mentors. What it boils down to is this: a mentor text gives you lessons; a mentor author gives you a relationship.



A Mentor Shows You Many Possibilities (Instead of Just One)

One of the things I love most when I look at a whole stack of books a single child has made is how much of that child's personality, tastes, and interests shine through in that stack. Think about how much you know about Ivy Jones from the

few pages of her book making you see here. At the end of the year, if I place one child's stack of books beside another's, the books will be as different as the children who made them. Some are written in the same genre, of course, but the topics and crafting inside them are very individual. By filling the writing workshop with the study of mentors, my students see so many possibilities for ways their writing and illustrating can go. They each pull from this pool of possibilities in ways that suit who they are and who they are becoming as book makers.

From experience, I know that my students' work at the end of year would look very different if I anchored my teaching in modeling instead of mentors. Mostly, it would look the same, and it would look a whole lot like whatever I modeled every day or so to show them how to write. It happens every time. If I decide for



some reason to show students something by modeling it directly in my writing, practically all of them go out and write almost the exact same thing I did! When they do this, there isn't anything wrong with the writing itself, it's just that the whole process of getting there feels off.

While I know this is controversial, and I know that in some places teachers are told they have to model every day in writing workshop, I have to say that I have given up modeling as a teaching tool in writing workshop. Children see me write in front of them multiple times a day where I can demonstrate all the mechanics of language and how it goes on paper, but I'm not going to make my own books in front of them. Now, I sometimes show them books I have made in the past and talk about decisions I made in those books, but that's different from modeling as a way to show them how to make their own books. I've turned that teaching over to their mentors.

My students don't need me to model how writing and illustrating go because they are surrounded by models in books by their mentors. If I set up a teaching routine where students are always looking to me to show them how it's done, they become dependent on me to move them forward as writers and illustrators. If I want them to be independent in their work, I have to teach them how to look at lots of possibilities (models) and then decide themselves what they want and need to do. This is something they can do for the rest of their lives whether I'm there or not. What I do model, I suppose, is the habit of mind, detailed in Chapter 3, that shows children how to think their way from something they notice in a book all the way to being able to do it in their own books. I model this over and over again as children learn from their mentors all year long.

A Place for Daily Mentorship



If you have this book in your hand, chances are you are familiar with its “prequel,” *About the Authors*, which I coauthored with Katie Wood Ray. That book takes a close look at the nuts and bolts of a daily writing workshop with young children, and I’d recommend it if the whole idea of workshop is new to you. But even if you are familiar with writing workshop, it still is useful to describe briefly the workshop routine in my classroom so you understand the context for the work you will read about in this book.

In the twenty-plus years I’ve been teaching, my kindergarten and first-grade students have always had time to explore with writing. In my early years, I didn’t know many of the things I know now about how to teach “into” this writing, but I still gave them time just to write and draw freely every day. It was actually more their idea than mine to make books at first, but I watched what happened when they did and could see the promising energy in their work. As time went by and I learned more and more, I saw ways to teach into that energy and bring a sharper focus to my daily workshop.

If you visited my full-day kindergarten classroom today, you would find that I have an hour on the schedule set aside each day for writing workshop. Some days we go over a bit, but most days it’s an hour. It’s a big time commitment, but when I see all that my students are learning in addition to writing, the investment feels more than worth it. Their writing supports their reading development in a variety of ways, and of course they are also learning to do project-like work that happens over time. I use my workshop time like most other teachers do, making sure the longest part of it is devoted to independent work. Here is how time would break down on a typical day:

- 15–20 minutes, writers meeting
- 30–40 minutes, independent work time
- 5–10 minutes, share and reflection time

There are some notable differences to my teaching inside this familiar time framework, so let me explain each one briefly in that light.



The Writers Meeting

One of the reasons I need a full hour for my workshop is because I spend longer with the children gathered as a whole class. This is one of the reasons why I refer to this time as a “writers meeting” instead of a minilesson or focus lesson. Because so much of my teaching is connected to mentors, we often read aloud a whole book during this meeting. That takes time. Then we talk about what we notice and that takes more time. I connect what we’ve been talking about to students’ ongoing work, and that takes a little more time. I decided a long time ago just to quit worrying so much about time. I let my students’ clear—or not so clear—interest and engagement help me make decisions about time. On the days when we go over our hour, it’s usually because we got caught up in something really interesting in our writers meeting. I don’t take that time away from children’s independent work; I add it on, so we go over.

The other reason I switched to calling this time “the writers meeting” is because the teaching has a different feel to it than the teaching in a more traditional minilesson. It’s still teacher-directed time, but because I’m not modeling or following a specific lesson format, and because I so often develop the teaching points from what children notice or say, it’s simply different.

My students didn’t really need a new word to name this time, but I needed one in order to talk to other teachers about it. The picture people have of a minilesson doesn’t really describe what I’m doing.



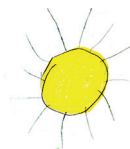
Independent Work Time

After only a few weeks, almost all my students love the time they spend making their books, and they’re happy to have as much of it as I’ll give them. Sometimes, when I have other teachers visiting and I get tied up talking with them about my classroom, my students’ just keep working away, oblivious that fifty or sixty minutes have passed. Children sometimes ask if they can work on their books at other times of the day, and when we have to keep the noise to a minimum because all the big kids are taking big, important tests, extended book-making time is my best solution.

I think there are several reasons why my students love independent work time so much, and because most of these reasons set this teaching apart from more

traditional workshops, they're particularly important to explain. First, my students are all making their own decisions about process, so they're not trying to follow along with what other children are doing. If you look around the room you see them all making books, but they are literally all doing different things at any given moment. In a workshop where students are basically doing what the teacher modeled in a lesson, everyone follows the same idea using the same steps and, like any other time they are following someone else's agenda, they get bored more quickly than when they are following their own agenda.

Second, there is no "finished" in my workshop. If a child completes a book, he starts another one. Now it takes some time and teaching to get us to this place. I have to build a clear sense of what it means to be finished, and then convince children I really do expect them to start another book, all on their own, without my permission. But they do understand eventually, and this helps move them happily through time as well. If you're having trouble imagining this, think about what children do when they are given, say, twenty minutes to play in the block area. If they build a tower, decide it's finished, and still have more block time, they build a boat. Or a barn. The same is true in writing workshop.



Third, I think my students love the time I give them to make books because I let them have color and I encourage them to compose with illustrations as much as with words. I know this position invites different opinions, but I believe the thinking children do when they compose their pictures is every bit as rich and important as the thinking they do when they compose with words. Katie Wood Ray and I have studied children's composing with pictures for years and explored how best to teach into it so children grow to understand it as a process (like writing). In her book *In Pictures and In Words* (2010), Katie describes this process and explains how much of the *craft* of writing and illustrating is the same for both.

Finally, I encourage my students to work a long time on their books—days and days, if they like. There is a certain energy or mindset specific to crafting something that you work on over time. It's different than the energy you use to do things quickly and check off on a list. As we pointed out in *About the Authors*, the nature of work that takes a long time is that you think about it even when you're not working on it. Children seem more ready to get back to their books each day because they've been thinking about them and have ideas about what they'll do next. They

wouldn't have this same desire if every day or two they were starting over with something new.

As much as possible during independent work time, I have to think about whether or not the work I've set up for students to do matches, as closely as possible, the work of their mentors. I know that professionals don't start each day with a writers meeting and end it with a time of sharing and reflection, but professionals do go to their studios or offices or back porches and carry on with whatever they need to do next to make their books. That's what I want my students to do, too.

Share and Reflection Time

Like most teachers, I try to end each day's writing workshop by pulling the children back together as a group and talking about the work they've done that day. This is prime time, when children become mentors for each other, and it's essential for that reason. It's the time when we really get to know each other as writers and become the powerful community we hope to become at the beginning of the year. Chapter 6 deals with this topic in much greater detail.



If you are familiar with *About the Authors*, you may wonder why *More About the Authors* is necessary. Let me explain a few ways this book extends the work of that one. First, this book is razor sharp in directing attention to mentors in the primary writing workshop. While *About the Authors* presents an overview of the writing workshop as a whole, this book focuses on a single, incredibly powerful teaching tool. Having a focus like this allows me to go into a lot more depth in the exact spot where there is so much depth to be had.

Related to this, in the years since *About the Authors* was published, many teachers I've worked with have commented on how I approach teaching differently than they have been trained to approach it. As best I can tell, the difference comes down to the role that mentors play in my teaching. *More About the Authors* has been

written as a response to this, as a way to help readers understand more deeply the differences they see—from my decision to turn modeling over to mentors, to my decisions about paper and color, to the amount of time I spend teaching into what students notice in a mentor’s work.

Another difference has to do with a change in my teaching. A couple of years after *About the Authors* was published, I left my first grade teaching position and went back to teaching kindergarten where I had started my career years before. Even though children were only a year younger, I found myself having to rethink my teaching in important ways to support children who were developmentally very different from first graders. Because most children attend kindergarten in my home state, all my first graders had experience as readers and writers, but for many of my kindergartners, it is their first time in school. They are much less experienced and need even more support from mentors who can help them see how to make meaning with pictures as well as words. *More About the Authors* extends *About the Authors* by including illustrators as mentors across the year instead of in a single study.



Finally, the *more* in *More About the Authors* represents the new learning I have developed since the first book came out more than ten years ago. While literature certainly plays a huge part in the teaching described in our earlier book, the idea of “finding writing mentors” is confined to a single unit of study possibility. What I have realized in the years since is that it’s *all* about finding mentors for writing and illustrating. Every study, whether about craft or genre or process, is about finding mentors. I spent years becoming clear about—and able to explain—why the expression *mentor texts* didn’t feel right to me. I spent more years figuring out what a practical difference it makes in teaching to shift the focus from texts to people when it comes to mentors. This book represents that new learning.

My hope is that *More About the Authors* will really feel like *more* to you and that it will help you to see new possibilities for the young authors and illustrators you teach. Before we head out on that journey, let’s take one more peek inside an Ivy Jones book so we’re clear on where this journey is meant to take us. The book is a classic “the time I went to” sort of book, titled *The Time Me and Macy and Mom Went to the Hotel* (see Figure 1.11).

First, just look at the cover and imagine the writer and illustrator who created it. Imagine the time it took to create a cover that’s so beautiful to look at. Think

1.11 The cover of Ivy's hotel book



about how, in spending this time and taking this care, Ivy is doing exactly what Lucy Calkins (1994) says she does when she writes—holding what she finds in her life in her hands and declaring it a treasure. The topic is a treasure, but so is everything about how Ivy brings this trip to life in her book. A single-page spread says it all (see Figure 1.12).

1.12 Getting ready to go



The scene shows Ivy and her mom and Macy getting ready to leave, and the detail Ivy captures here is remarkable. The difference in height in the two girls. The black suitcase open on the striped bedspread, both real-as-can-be details from her life. The layout of the kitchen, the mountain outside the window, the mom on the phone taking care of last-minute details. Even the blue purse in the mom's hand. *All* real. This is not, after all, just another book about a trip. This is a real treasure from a real child. And because I see so clearly that there is a child's life behind *this* book, I have a responsibility to help Ivy and her classmates understand there is a life behind *every* book.