

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

by Mark Teague

Writing Strategies

This story is a good example of the **Ideas** trait for two reasons: **originality** and **elaboration!**

- **Selecting Original Ideas** – How often have we asked our students to respond to the topic, “What I Did on My Summer Vacation...”? The main character in this story takes that same writing task and comes up with a wildly imaginative response! We can also give our students the creative freedom to express their own ideas, considering what their ideal summer trip would have been, or how an ordinary summer event could have turned into something much more interesting. (See *6+1 Traits*, pgs. 51 – 54 for more lessons on Selecting an Idea.)

- **Elaborating on Ideas** – Ruth Culham explains that, “So often, though, student writers take the easy way out and summarize their ideas – ‘The trip was fun’ – which is one of the reasons their writing becomes so generic.” The young boy in this story selected his idea – his summer trip out west – and fully elaborated, adding details and a sequence of events that allowed us to better visualize his fantastic summer vacation. Encourage your students to really stretch their stories by adding details so that their audience can live their experiences with them! (See *6+1 Traits*, pgs. 59-64 for more lessons on Elaborating on Ideas.)

This month’s book is also a great example of **Word Choice**.

- **Natural Language** – As the narrator shares his story, he uses many words phrases characteristic of a cowboy’s vocabulary! He uses words like *cow camp, cattle boss, wrangler, roping, riding, roundup, cattle, stampede, charging, and buckaroo* to give us the feeling that he was an authentic cowboy, even for a while! Teach your students that the use of vocabulary related to their topic will help their story really appeal to their readers! (See *6+1 Traits*, pgs. 168-171 for more lessons on using Natural Language.)

Finally, our September Book of the Month is a wonderful example of **Sentence Fluency**.

- **Establishing Flow, Rhythm, and Cadence** – In this story, the young boy’s story is written with a rhyming pattern, making the lines flow smoothly together, and carrying us through the story from one event to the next. He always uses complete sentences, but ends each sentence with words that create a fun, song-like pattern. Just another fun way to keep your readers hanging on every word! (See *6+1 Traits*, pgs. 198-199 for more lessons on Establishing Flow, Rhythm, and Cadence.)

