

Edward and the Pirates

by David McPhail

Writing Strategies ~ 6+1 Traits of Writing by Ruth Culham

Edward and the Pirates is an excellent text to use when you're teaching the trait of **Voice**. In the story, we really see Edward's passion for books, and can make connections to the books that have touched us throughout our own lives. It's also a great segue into lessons on the trait of **Ideas**, specifically discovering the best information (details) to convey the main idea. As we watch Edward's characters come to life, we remember what makes books come alive to us! The author's ability to include great detail directly impacts the reader's ability to visualize and experience the story!

*Teaching **Voice**: Finding the Golden Thread*

"Voice is the golden thread that runs through a piece of writing. It's how the reader knows it is really you speaking...the sense that a real person is speaking to you and cares about the message." ~ Culham, pg. 102

Edward is a good example of the **Voice** trait because the author, David McPhail relates to the reader on a very emotional level. He's speaking to those of us who have ever found ourselves caught up in a story, eager to keep turning the pages and disappointed when the excitement ends with the final page. When your students find themselves wishing they were a character in a story or identifying with the character's emotions, they're experiencing the author's **Voice**. It makes the reading experience that much more powerful.

Lesson Ideas for Voice:

- **Make a Book of Books You Love** (6 + 1 Traits, page 128)
The books we love most are often those that ring with voice. Make lists of favorites and share them aloud. Keep a class book of favorites and ask students to add names and titles to it regularly. And be sure to tell students what you've been reading. Share favorite passages and let them see how good writing affects you. Give students time to do the same, either in small groups, in large groups, or with younger students. Listen carefully to what they have to say. What a refreshing alternative to the standard book report. And, look, no papers to correct!

*See *6 + 1 Traits*, pages 125-128 for more lessons on Speaking Directly to the Reader.

*Teaching **Ideas**: Discovering the Best Information to Convey the Main Idea*

Oftentimes, the details we read in a story are so rich and vibrant that we're able to not only see the events playing out in our minds, but we begin to feel like we like we're actually there, experiencing the emotions of the characters and becoming swept up in the actions of the story. Edward enjoyed every story with this type of zeal, and in his mind he became the characters he was reading about. When an author includes just the right information, the reader is enveloped in the story, and can live it rather than just reading it.

Show Me, Don't Just Tell Me
(adapted from 6+1 Traits of Writing, page 65)

"Sometimes what Edward read seemed to become real. Once while he was reading a book about dinosaurs, he was convinced he'd seen a tyrannosaurus looking in his window."

What to do...

1. Take a statement that is non-specific, a "telling statement," and turn it into a detailed and unique statement, a "showing statement."
2. In pairs or small groups, have students select a telling statement or make up one of their own. Encourage the groups to brainstorm and write down as many details as they can about this general idea.
3. As the students to rewrite the general statement (telling) into one that is much more focused, interesting, and detailed (showing).

Here's an Example:

Telling Statement: *The weather is nice.*

Showing Statement: *We stepped off of the boat and into the sunlight. The sky was as blue as a robin's egg, and there wasn't a cloud in sight. There was a gentle breeze blowing, and you could feel the crispness of the fall air. Seagulls soared overhead, clearly enjoying the beautiful day as much as we were.*

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4. Share the pieces as a whole group. Students will be astounded by the impact of elaboration. Intensifying the idea with details can make a huge difference in the quality of their writing.

Other Lesson Ideas...

- As you and your students read books throughout the year, create a list of "Show Me, Don't Just Tell Me" books. Record titles of books whose authors really illustrated their stories with their words. Make a poster where you record excerpts of various books that are particularly rich in imagery.
- Make it a weekly routine to have students verbally describe things that they see in great detail. While you're walking to the playground, describe the shoes that a classmate is wearing. While you're in the classroom, describe a poster or decoration hanging on the wall. When you're outside, describe a tree or bird or even the playscape. Practice using the vivid, "juicy" words that paint pictures, and those words will begin to show up in your students' writing!

* See 6+1 Traits, pgs. 65-67 for more lessons on Details.