



Lesson: 2

Minilesson Focus: Onomatopoeia Lead

Writing Traits Connection: Organization, Voice

The Background: Most teachers agree that it is important to teach students the importance of leads. We often use the terms “grabber” or “hook” to explain to students the importance of the beginnings of their pieces of writing. It is also important to give students specific choices of exactly what they can do to “grab” or “hook” their readers. The “Onomatopoeia Lead” is one of those choices.

The Goal(s): 1) Students will be introduced to the idea of starting with an interesting noise to grab the reader’s attention and will begin to use it in their own writing.

Teaching the Minilesson:

- Explain the importance of a beginning of a piece of writing, *the lead*, to that piece of writing.
- Explain that one way to begin a piece of writing is with onomatopoeia.
- Introduce Onomatopoeia
 - Teach that it is a fancy writing term for a noise or a sound
 - Give a few examples:
 - Buzzzzzz, went the bee
 - My wet sneakers went squish, squish, squish as I walked down the school hallway
 - As I fell asleep in my tent, I could hear the crackle crackle of the fire still burning in the night.
 - Show the “Onomatopoeia Lead” poster
- *Option 1:* The teacher models how to use the Onomatopoeia Lead with a piece of his/her own writing.
 - Start with a noise.....then write the piece
 - *(**Teachers who made their own planner of “Things I Might Write About” from Lesson 1 should use a topic from it, modeling for students meaningful topic choice.**)*
- *Option 2:* Use “Valentine’s Day Dilemma” to teach the Onomatopoeia Lead
 - Highlight the “Thumpthumpthumpthumpthumpthump” beginning

Student Writing:

- Students spend their writing time writing on a topic that they have selected themselves, using the “Things I Might Write About” planner if they are stuck trying to find a topic. Encourage students to try out an Onomatopoeia Lead.

After Writing:

- Tell students that in a few minutes you will put them with a partner or in a small group of 3

- Their jobs will be to take turns reading what they have written. While they are reading, their partners or group members will listen and then will try to answer this question: “Does the writer have an interesting lead? Why or why not? Give examples.”
- Before breaking the students into groups, the teacher should do some modeling.
 - Ask for a volunteer who will be the teacher’s partner
 - Have the student read his/her piece out loud in front of class
 - Teacher responds to question:
 - “Yes, the writer has a good lead. (Give an example of the good lead). This helps me as a reader because.....”
 - “No, the writer’s lead could use some work. (Give an example of how the lead could be better.) This would help me as a reader because....”
- Put students into their groups or with their partners and let them discuss

*(**Note: This after activity will take some time to model and get going at first. Over time, though, once students understand the process, it should go more quickly.)*

Valentine's Day Dilemma

Tim Hargis

Thumpthumpthumpthumpthumpthumpthumpthumpthumpthumpthumpthump.... My heart was beating so fast, I thought it might explode as I stood at the end of the driveway looking at my house. It was Valentine's Day, and I was nine years old. I had just gotten off the bus after a day in the third grade at Pleasant Hill Elementary. In my left hand I held my metal lunch box that was shaped like a mailbox. In my right hand I held a chocolate heart, wrapped in pink and silver aluminum foil. It was that chocolate heart in my hand that was making the real one in my chest beat so stinkin' fast.

The chocolate heart was a gift from Cathy Rodriguez. She was my third grade spelling partner and was the girl who had chipped my tooth in gym class three months earlier. We had gotten over that and had become close—so close, in fact, that Cathy gave me this special chocolate heart on Valentine's Day right before we got on our buses to go home.

My cheeks got all warm and red when she gave it to me. But it made me smile—big—and I smiled on my bus all the way home. I didn't want to eat it, because I knew if I did, it would be gone. I just wanted to hold it in my hand and smile. When I got off the bus, though, that's when the smiling stopped.

I stood at the end of the driveway and looked at my house and knew that this chocolate heart could cause me some serious trouble once I got inside. The problem, you see, was older sisters—five of them, and once they found out that a girl had actually given me a chocolate heart wrapped in pink and silver aluminum foil for Valentine's Day I knew my life would be miserable.

They would start singing and chanting, things like, "Timmy's got a girlfriend! Timmy's got a girlfriend!"

I knew I had to do something. I knew I couldn't walk in the door of my house and have my sisters find out I had a special Valentine's Day gift from my spelling partner, Cathy Rodriguez. I had to think fast. The chocolate heart was way too big for me to eat before I got up the driveway. Then I saw it. Sitting by the kitchen door was our garbage can. It was my only way out of the teasing and the singing that I just couldn't take.

I walked slowly up the driveway, my chocolate heart now heavy in my hand. When I got to the door, I quickly and quietly opened the lid of the can and let that chocolate heart fall to the bottom before going into my home. Thud.

The next day at school my spelling partner, Cathy Rodriguez, asked me if I liked the heart. I told her that I did. I said, "It was the best chocolate heart I've ever had." And I knew it would have been, too.

Onomatopoeia Lead



Start with an
interesting
noise to catch
your reader's
attention!