

Creating Class Books

By Larissa Juliano



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Children creating a classroom book for our book collection this year has been one of the most motivating and inspirational writing projects I've done in my 10 plus years of teaching. A class book is when each student contributes a page about a topic (decided ahead of time by the teacher- inspiration ideas below) and the teacher creates a cover (definitely laminated!) and binds all the responses together for

everyone's reading pleasure.

A collection of each child's words and pictures is so enticing for children as they eagerly grab these class books and giggle over their classmates depiction of a 'funny part of the story', creative illustrations, interpretations about the ending or resolution to a story (ie: how could have a character helped _____ in the story? What would you have done during this problem? etc.

What I also love about class book creations is it allows children to *view and take in* other classmates work more informally and with additional processing time. This can be very motivating for some kids as they notice how their classmates writing might be more legible, pictures seem to be more thoughtfully illustrated, etc. It's like going into other teacher's classroom and getting some great ideas to bring back to your own personal space- and in this case taking ideas and motivation back to their own writing and drawing journals!

Something I am LOVINGH! To kick off the year (and writing workshop) we start our with handwriting practice and word wall dictation/writing, it is the perfect warm-up before we transfer these words into our class book.

BONUS: A personal goal of mine is to create enough books that each child in my classroom gets to take one home..what a special keepsake for them to re-visit

time and time again, and also to see growth in their writing as the school years continue. Parents also love reading these as they get a sense of the children in the class, not just academically, but more personality and interest wise. Class books make the best conversation starter!

Ideas for Class books can come from EVERYWHERE!

Obviously, wonderful literature is my *biggest inspiration*. After reading, I love bringing out my 'Caring Sharing Bear' to pass around the class and share our thoughts and questions about these books as a whole group first. Applying these wonderful topics of conversation into our class books is the next natural step (oral to written). Make the prompts something you know they will have a personal connection to.

When it is time to write- let them write! Allow them ownership with their writing. If some of my students want to write about something a little off topic from the sentence starter, I usually encourage it as long as it still connects with the book somehow. Use your judgement! In a future Teaching Toolbox column, we will go more in depth about journal writing.

Here are some ideas to get started! ***Note: prompts can be much more specific and tailored to the literature read prior to writing time- these are just general suggestions!***

General Fiction Literature Class Book Prompts

My character likes to.....

I liked when...

I enjoyed...

My favorite animal is...

I think the [character] should have....

I feel sad/happy/mad when...

I visualized...

This reminded me of...

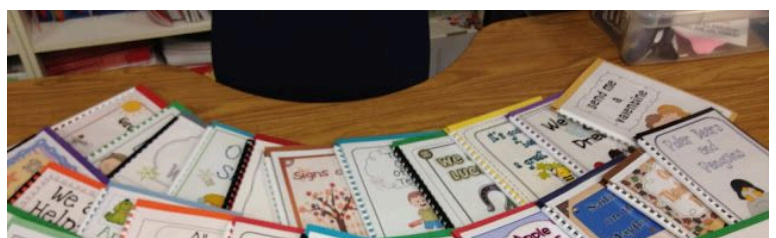
Non-Fiction Class Book Prompts:

Questions children may still have beginning with the 'W' questions- Why, where, what, who, when?

We learned...We noticed...

I want to be a...

I wondered about...



Math Class Book Prompts:

My story problem is about...

This is my adding/subtracting/counting picture about...

My favorite shape is...

I am heavier than a _____ but lighter than a _____ (our measuring unit)

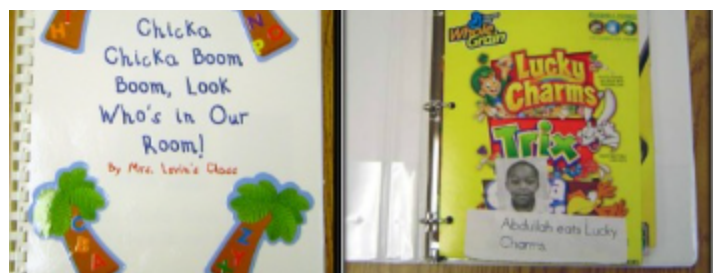
These sentence starters can be provided on the bottom of a paper ahead of time by the teacher, or children can write the whole sentence. I have found that as their writing skills develop and mature, they like to start the sentence in their own way (although still responding to the prompt) and in fact prefer that. It puts a little twist on their page and allows them choice and more authenticity in their writing. *Note:* Class books can absolutely be created by older children with longer writing responses, writing from the viewpoint of a different character, changing the ending of a story, etc., poetry anthology...the possibilities are endless!

My general lesson plan when starting a classbook (this is sort of an extension of our regular writing workshop, so conventions have been introduced, spacing between lines, etc. These writing expectations are always a given during this time, and of course modelled explicitly when appropriate). Also, I will often make copies of my student's work in the classbook if it's something I want to save for a writing folder, parent conference, etc.

Class Book Lesson - approximately 30 minutes

Goal: To understand and respond to fiction and non-fiction literature and/or lessons using grade level appropriate conventions, along with sight words and sound spelling trickier words to our best ability (always getting as many sounds as we can!)

- Share story (or lesson if it is a math or social studies lesson)
- Discuss prompt (this is when I pass around my sharing bear in a circle)
- Pass out dry erase (I do not always do during class book lesson time, but often)
- Practice handwriting, sight words, etc. on dry erase boards (reference word wall!)
- **On dry erase boards, model, then guide students to write their response (i.e: I liked when...)** This is the time to notice who will need a bit more support during the writing time. Although, as educators you already know who will need more guidance! *Hold boards in the air for checking!*
- Pass out papers and have students write and illustrate their responses. Circulate and



assist with writing and adding more to their responses if they're ready! This will be so fresh in their minds after all the discussion and writing prep work!

- Lastly, teachers make covers and bind the responses to make a book. A student, teacher, and parent keepsake!

Do your students love being authors? Have you made class books before? What are some books that were sources of inspiration? What about older students? Have you noticed these are the most popular picks during “Book of Choice Time” (I have!)? I would love to hear from you!

Larissa Juliano is an elementary teacher in upstate New York. She lives in upstate New York with her husband and three children. Reading and writing are passions of Larissa's and she hopes to spread this love of literature to readers of all ages.

Check out Larissa's Gracie Lou series and many other books at

www.larissajuliano.com

Other favorite mentor texts for class books:

