

## NCTE Presentation: Even Children's Authors Read and Write Beyond Words

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**Puppets and Inferencing:** With young audiences (Pre-School-Gr. 2) puppets can be employed to aid students in developing inferencing skills, one of the most difficult literacy skills for young students to grasp.

-Select a text, perhaps with an animal or character that can be represented by a puppet. Either before or after reading it with students, the teacher "becomes" the puppet, and using a "puppet" voice, improvises a dialogue between him/herself, the puppet and the students. As in the example of "Teacup Pups" from "aRHYTHMetic" (Gumboot Books, 2009) questions such as, "Can you guess which pup I am?" or "Can you show me using your fingers how many biscuits you think I have?" will put the focus, through play, on developing inferencing skills.

**Critical Reading: Tableau and Tap In:** The example used in the presentation was once again from "Teacup Pups". Tableau and tap ins are the basic building blocks of drama and can be adapted to any age group.

-Tableau (frozen pictures). Read the text with students. Ask a student to come up and pose as the Yorkie. Once they have their pose, they must hold it, frozen for a number of minutes. Try to encourage the student to position themselves exactly as the pup in the illustration. Ask other students to come up and become the other pups in the illustration. The contrasting positions will show the differences between characters, a good point for discussion.

-Tap In: Once the tableau has been established, the teacher asks questions and asks the students to respond in character. Questions may be: "I notice that the Whippet has 10 biscuits and you, Poodle, have only 2, how do you feel about that?" Students can respond in character. This opens the story to deeper exploration along the themes of social justice and equality.

**Conventions:** The example used in the presentation was from "Jeffrey and Sloth" (Orca Books, 2007)

-Take one of the sentences from the book and read and act it out when different punctuation is added. Discuss how changing punctuation affects voice and action.

Lee Edward Fodi

Visualizing: Illustrate Characters: Illustrating characters whether from a template or freehand taps into the imaginative connections students make to literature.

-The Hero Template: Have students illustrate their 'hero' on one side of the page. On the other have them fill in the following: Hero's Name

Hero's Job

Assistants

Gadgets

Special Powers (this is measured out of 10) Luck, strength, gadgets, skill and intelligence.

-Clothes Make the Character: Using a template of one of the characters from "Kendra Kandlestar and the Box of Whispers", say the mouse, have students design and draw an outfit for the character that is suggestive of their personality and role. Display the illustrations and compare notes: What do the clothes say about the characters?

-Become the Character: Take a photo of each individual student in their everyday garb. Bring in a selection of costume pieces or have students do this. Allow them to select pieces and to wear them to develop their alter ego character. Have them pose as their alter egos and take another photo. Set the photos up with captions such as: Meet Grace...by day a grade 5 student. But by night, Grace is known as.....

-Map Making: Having students create maps representing their imaginative worlds is a very effective way to explore plot and setting. Have each student create a list of the features of their maps: The Natural Elements, Constructed Elements (man made), Geographical, and Storytelling (the character's adventure route, traps and treasures etc.) Have students draw their maps in detail.

-Potion Brewing: Create recipes for magic potions. Bring in materials for students to use and have them mix their own potions.

Lori Sherritt-Fleming

Voice as a Tool: Warm ups

To introduce drama and vocal work, these warm ups help to engage the student with text and make 'making sound' accessible and non-intimidating.

-BA! DA! GA! This is a simple call and answer. The teacher or student uses the words BA! DA! GA! (with a wide open mouth) and says the phrase with expression, emotion, character, pace etc. The class repeats this phrase exactly as they have heard it. Repeat several times, try with different phrases.

-Conductor: Choose a sound, perhaps an open vowel sound. Teacher or student acts as the conductor. Students get louder, softer, faster etc based on the direction given by the 'conductor'.

-Soundscapes: Using the setting from a piece of literature, ask students to create sounds using their voices, bodies or instruments that reflect the mood and space of the setting. For example, a pristine forest. Teacher directs the soundscape, making it louder, softer etc by playing the conductor as above.

Familiarity: Making Connections: Teachers can use familiar songs and rhymes as a basis for students to connect to characters, setting and plot.

-Sea Shanties: Read the story, "Rot-TEN Dragons" from "aRHYTHMetic" (Gumboot Books 2009). Discuss the dragons' messy activities. Teacher sings or plays a simple sea shanty, for example: "What do you do with a rot-TEN dragon, what do you do with a rot-TEN dragon, what do you do with a rot-TEN dragon, when he's really messy?!" Students can then, in groups be encouraged to come up with solutions as to what we can do with the rot-TEN dragons in the book. A sample might be: "Talk to them and teach them manners...(repeat 3X) When they're really messy!" The challenge here is to create a segment that has rhythm, repetition and reflects the theme of messy dragons.

-Musicality: Musical Gyst: High, Low, Fast, Slow.

Divide the class into 4 groups or sections. Each group is responsible for creating a repeatable sound and rhythm in 1 or the 4 categories: High, Low, Fast, Slow with a 4/4 rhythm in mind. Practice. Teacher acts as conductor again and melds all of them together. Once you have accomplished this, break into smaller groups (4-8) and using the same concept and rules (there must be a high, low, fast and slow element to each) ask students to add lyrics, 4 lines, that describe the dragons. Practice and share! If you don't feel comfortable singing, you can always chant!

