How Does The Use Of Picture Books During Instruction Improve Student Word Choice In Writing?

2005

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HOW DOES THE USE OF PICTURE BOOKS DURING INSTRUCTION IMPROVE STUDENT WORD CHOICE IN WRITING?

by

LAURIE ANNE MCADAMS
B.S. University of Central Florida, 2004

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning Principles in the College of Education at the University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

Summer Term
2005
ABSTRACT

The purpose of my research was to determine how the use of picture books during instruction would improve student word choice in writing. Donald Graves (2003), a renowned researcher in the teaching of writing, states, “All children need . . . to be surrounded with poetry, stories, information books, biography, science and history, imaginative and factual books.” Graves’ research presents successful classroom instruction when teachers incorporate literature as a fundamental part of their reading and writing instruction.

Likewise, Susan Anderson McElveen and Connie Campbell Dierking (2000) conducted a study with their students using picture books as “precise examples” to teach writing. Their analysis of data showed that using children’s literature, or picture books, served as a “bridge that linked the target skill with the reason for thinking, speaking, and writing like a writer” with their students.

The subjects of my study were my fourth-grade students. I obtained data for this study from student writing samples, anecdotal records of my students, my daily reflections, class discussions, debriefings, and writing activities. I assessed students’ writing samples using criteria for assessing word choice in the 6-Point Writing Guide in Vicki Spandel’s (2005) Creating Young Writers.

This study found that the majority of my students demonstrated improved word choice in their writing. Limitations of this study are discussed, as well as implications for future use of picture books during instruction.
I dedicate my Thesis to my students during the 2004-2005 school year. Each one of you has made my first year of teaching memorable.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thesis would not be complete without acknowledging the people who helped me in the process. First, I would like to acknowledge my family for making countless sacrifices during this process. My husband, Jason, was a vessel of support and demonstrated unwavering patience as I completed my courses and research. Thank you for your respect of the process, even when the understanding was unclear.

Additionally, my daughters, Casey and Katie, motivated me to continue and complete this process successfully. I sense your pride in my accomplishments and hope seeing me further my education serves as an inspiration for your future. I am endlessly thankful for your tolerance, consideration, and eternal love.

In addition, I must acknowledge and thank my parents, Michael and Barbara McGettrick, who have always had complete faith in my ability to complete any task. I appreciate your willingness to help me, whether it was watching the girls or just being a shoulder to lean on. I could not have made it through this year without each of you.

My advisor, Dr. Donna J. Camp, was a constant source of guidance and inspiration. Her belief in my abilities, as well as her concern for my learning, enabled me to fulfill my responsibilities completely in the process of writing my thesis. Dr. Camp, your influence has forever changed me and fueled my passion in the teaching profession.

Finally, I would like to thank each one of my students that participated in my research. I appreciate your honest efforts and willingness to be a part of something that was so meaningful to me. I will always remember each one of you. Your participation has made me a better teacher.
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESE</td>
<td>Exceptional Student Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>Limited English Proficiency</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The focus of my study was to determine how the use of picture books during instruction would affect student word choice in writing. I became interested in this topic because I teach fourth-grade in Volusia County, Florida, and fourth-graders are required participants in the statewide assessment program known as the Florida Writing Assessment Program – Florida Writes. During this assessment, students in fourth-grade receive either an expository or a narrative writing prompt and have 45-minutes to write a response. The purpose of this assessment is to measure students’ writing proficiency. According to the Florida Department of Education (2003), effective writing

- is focused on the topic and does not contain extraneous or loosely related information;
- has an organizational pattern that enables the reader to follow the flow of ideas because it contains a beginning, middle, and end and uses transitional devices;
- contains supporting ideas that are developed through the use of details, examples, vivid language, and mature word choice; and
- follows the conventions of standard written English (i.e., punctuation, capitalization, and spelling) and has variation in sentence structure.

To prepare for the Florida Writing Assessment Program, students in my school district complete three district writing samples, in addition to classroom writing instruction. In my classroom, I planned my writing instruction based on my students’ learning needs.

Upon review of my students’ district writing samples and class writings, I concluded my students were not taking risks in their choice of words. My students
incorporated “vague” words in their writings, such as good and said. These words give the reader a general idea, but do not depict a clear meaning (Spandel, 2005). Improving my students’ word choice in their writing became the focus of my instruction.

Vicki Culham (2005) defines word choice as “a knack for selecting the just right word or phrase to make meaning clear and to bring images or thoughts to life.” I decided to plan instruction for my students that focuses on teaching them how to select and use words that “create vivid images” (Spandel, 2005).

I graduated from the University of Central Florida in May of 2004, so I recently completed my undergraduate degree in Elementary Education. During several of the required courses, I learned many benefits of using picture books to teach a concept or educational standard. For example, in the course LAE 5295 Children’s Literature, my professor stressed the importance of using trade books during instruction in the classroom.

In one of our classes, my professor modeled how to teach students to sequence story events using the picture book Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak. My professor modeled this by reading the story to our class and allowing for a spontaneous response by asking, “What did you think about the story?” My peers and I shared what we liked and noticed about this picture book during this class discussion.

My professor continued to model this lesson by setting a purpose for listening before rereading the story. She told the class to pay careful attention to the order of events in the story. After rereading Where the Wild Things Are, my professor gave each of us a page from the picture book. She asked the class to line up at the front of the classroom. My professor instructed the class to place ourselves, with the page from
Where the Wild Things Are, in the correct sequential order. I enjoyed this activity and realized how picture books used during instruction can improve student learning.

As I compiled my literature review, I found that research supported the use of picture books during instruction. According to Donald Graves (2003), a renowned researcher and educator who has transformed how writing is taught in schools, “All children need . . . to be surrounded with poetry, stories, information books, biography, science and history, imaginative and factual books.” In his book, Writing: Teachers & Children at Work, Graves presents three different ways teachers use literature in “the center of an activity.” In one classroom, the teacher, Mrs. Peckrull, shared the writing of published authors as students shared their own writing. This enabled her students to see models of effective writing.

I also found a research project conducted by Susan Anderson McElveen and Connie Campbell Dierking (2000). They discussed their search for models of writing in the journal article “Children’s Books as Models to Teach Writing Skills.” McElveen and Dierking required “precise examples, in the form of good writing models” in order for their students to learn the skill at hand.

McElveen and Dierking (2000) found that using picture books served as a “bridge that linked the target skill with the reason for thinking, speaking, and writing like a writer.” They also noted that exposing students to models of good writing led to the development of enhanced language, such as onomatopoeia, similes, metaphors, and alliteration.

Based on my experiences as a college student and the literature I reviewed, I decided to research how the use of picture books during instruction would improve
student word choice. Culham’s book *Using Picture Books to Teach Writing With the Traits* contains over two-hundred annotations of “high-quality picture books” and recommends how to use these books during instruction. I chose three of the recommended books for teaching word choice: *Brave Potatoes* by Toby Speed, *Under the Quilt of Night* by Deborah Hopkinson, and *Hello, Harvest Moon* by Ralph Fletcher. I also decided to use a writing activity I learned about during the 12th Annual Spring Conference for the National Writing Project at the University of Central Florida (Morar, 2005). This activity uses Cynthia Rylant’s book, *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, as a model for writing.

I sought and received approval for my research from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Central Florida, the Volusia County Public School District, the parents and guardians of my students, and my students. I began my research on March 7, 2005. To collect my data, I used three different data collection strategies:

1. I collected a writing sample from each student to establish a baseline and note any growth in student writing,
2. I kept anecdotal records of student behaviors and comments during instruction, along with my daily reflections about each writing lesson, and
3. I facilitated class discussions about each weekly focus skill, which allowed students to engage in debriefings at the conclusion of each writing lesson.

To measure how my students’ use of word choice improved, I assessed each of my students’ writing samples, including the baseline, using one type of writing
assessment. I used the criteria for assessing word choice in the 6-Point Writing Guide in Vicki Spandel’s *Creating Young Writers*.

Using the 6-Point Writing Guide for word choice to assess each of my students’ writing samples enabled me to evaluate each piece of writing using the same criteria. In addition, Spandel (2005) advises that the six-point scale defines the performance of a writer at all six levels, with a 6 being the highest score and a 1 being the lowest. Furthermore, assessing with six levels enables the assessor to note even the most “modest growth in writing skills.” This permitted me to note any growth in my students’ ability to improve word choice in their writing.

After administering the baseline, I noticed that half of my class earned the lowest scores of a 2 or a 1. I analyzed these baseline writing samples and concluded that my students were not taking risks in their use of word choice.

During the first week of instruction, March 7, 2005 – March 10, 2005, I used *Brave Potatoes* to teach my students to use vivid verbs in their writing. Throughout our class discussions, we shared how vivid verbs make writing more interesting to the reader. After analyzing the *Brave Potatoes* writing samples, I determined that fourteen students showed improvement in their use of word choice from their baseline writing sample.

During the second week of instruction, March 14, 2005 – March 17, 2005, I used *Under the Quilt of Night* to continue instruction with vivid verbs. Through my anecdotal records and daily reflections, I realized my students had difficulty locating verbs in text. I made an instructional decision to continue teaching my students how to locate verbs in text instead of producing a writing sample this week. I did note in my daily reflections that my students showed improvement in this skill.
Next, I used *Hello, Harvest Moon* during the week of March 21, 2005 – March 24, 2005 to teach my students how to use poetic language, such as personification and alliteration, in their writing. My anecdotal records show that two of my male students disliked this type of writing. However, my analysis of students’ scores from their *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing samples show that fifteen students showed improvement from their baseline writing sample and eleven students showed improvement from their *Brave Potatoes* writing sample.

During the final week of instruction, March 28, 2005 – March 31, 2005, I used *When I Was Young in the Mountains* to teach my students how to use sensory words to create a clear message in their writing. Through our class discussions during writing activities, I noted my students recognized that using sensory words to describe sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste make their writing better. After reviewing my students’ *When I Was Young in the Mountains* writing samples, I concluded that 28 of my students, 87.5% of my class, scored a 3 or higher.

After analyzing my students’ writing samples, I concluded that using picture books during instruction improved my students’ use of word choice in their writing because picture books served as models of effective writing. I noted the connection my students made between the word choice in the picture books to their own writing as they incorporated the language from the picture books into their writing samples. For example, in Student 7’s *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing sample, she used several of Ralph Fletcher’s words, such as *bursting*, *nocturnal*, and *lunar* in her writing sample. Her word choice made this piece of writing memorable and created a vivid image for the reader.
I also found that using picture books during instruction kept the interest of my students. During each picture book read-aloud, I recorded in my anecdotal records how students were captivated and followed me with their eyes as I circulated the room. My students enjoyed the picture book read-aloud each week.

Furthermore, the class discussions and structured writing activities promoted student learning. Before each class discussion, I set a purpose for learning. For example, the week I used the picture book *Brave Potatoes*, I planned and focused each discussion and writing activity on the use of vivid verbs. Through the class discussions, I lead students to realize that vivid verbs make writing more interesting, as Student 14 pointed out. The writing activities provided my students with the opportunity to practice, share with others, and listen to their peers.

At the close of each lesson, debriefings allowed my students time to engage in metacognitive activities. Students were able to make sense of their learning, as well as valuable connections. For example, Student 1 made a text-to-self connection as he compared Rylant’s childhood memories of coyotes in the picture book *When I Was Young in the Mountains* to his own experiences with coyotes in Indiana.

After completing my research, I am curious to see how the use of picture books during instruction can improve students’ use of the other traits of writing: ideas, organization, sentence fluency, voice, and conventions. In addition, since my research worked well for my fourth-grade class, I am interested to see how it may affect students’ writing in other grade levels. I would also be interested in conducting a follow-up study of my students to determine if they are still applying what they learned in their writing.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In my study, I sought to determine how the use of picture books during instruction improves student word choice in their writing. This chapter presents a review of literature available on picture books, as well as the significance and benefits of using picture books in the classroom during instruction.

Benefits of Picture Books

Research indicates that reading aloud to children fosters many positive aspects. Reading aloud to young children “nurture language development, concepts of print, comprehension, understanding of story structure, literary development, and real world knowledge.” Likewise, reading aloud to older children produces “continued vocabulary, language, reading, and literary development, as well as content knowledge and experiences” (Johnson, 2002).

In *Picture Book Read-Alouds*, Johnson (2002) indicates that picture books are excellent resources. In addition to the above-described benefits, picture books assist in the development of visual literacy. Visual literacy is becoming an increasingly important skill for children to master as they encounter an overwhelming amount of visual images through television programming, the Internet, and print media.

So what exactly is a picture book? A picture book is a brief text, usually spread over thirty-two pages, in which text and literature combine to tell a story. The text is minimal and the illustrations support the text (Tompkins, 2003). In authentic picture
books, the text and art are interwoven and inseparable. This is what makes picture books unique: they are defined by format, rather than genre. Many picture books tell a story, contain folklore, poetry, or information (Galda, 2002).

Picture books play an important role in every classroom. While many students and teachers may view them as a resource specifically for primary classrooms, picture books provide a “valuable literary experience” through the combination of illustration and text within their pages (Hurst, 1997, para. 1). All genres of picture books offer children the opportunity to attain information, experience different perceptions from their own, familiarize themselves with print, and enjoy great literature.

Picture books also support learning in every subject area: mathematics, science, social studies, music, and art. A nonfiction picture book is capable of clarifying a concept more clearly than an encyclopedia or textbook (Galda, 2002).

The number of picture books published each year conveys their increasing importance. For example, the United States published a mere 984 picture books for children in 1940. However, by 1997, this number multiplied to 5,353 picture books.

Research indicates that sharing picture books with young children fosters “language and literacy development.” Teachers, researchers, and parents have recognized the importance of reading aloud to children in order to develop oral language and literacy skills (Mendoza, 2001, para. 8). In this same manner, reading to older children increases comprehension skills and creates more extensive vocabularies (Rasinski, 1995, para. 6).

Another advantage of using picture books instead of novels with older children is the issue of time. Reading a novel aloud in class can take two to three weeks. However,
using a picture book to introduce a unit of study can take approximately ten minutes. While students experience enjoyable reading, they also encounter gorgeous illustrations that connect to the meaning of the text (Hurst, 1997, para. 2 & 3).

In addition, many contemporary picture books are more highly developed and aimed for the mature reader. These contemporary picture books address complex, and even controversial issues, relevant to older readers (Curriculum Materials Information Services, 2001, para. 1).

These picture books, sometimes referred to as “micro texts,” contain more text on each page than a traditional picture book. Written with an older audience in mind, micro texts contain “riskier” presentations and “more sophisticated” story lines (Culham, 2004). Micro texts also encourage multiple readings and provide materials to develop visual literacy (Curriculum Materials Information Services, 2001, para. 1).

Galda (2002) also points out the number of nonfiction picture books dominating the children’s section within public libraries, as well as the elementary public school media centers. Children find recently published nonfiction picture books “interesting . . . appealing, [and] attractive.” Nonfiction picture books encourage critical thinking, provide numerous pictures, and make comparisons easily available.

**A Look at Picture Books in the Classroom**

According to Donald Graves (2003), “All children need . . . to be surrounded with poetry, stories, information books, biography, science and history, imaginative and factual books.” Graves’ research indicates that children work with an extensive range of
reading materials when “information is the classroom focus, and literature is the center of activity.” In *Writing: Teachers & Children at Work*, Graves presents three different examples of teachers incorporating literature as a fundamental part of their reading and writing instruction.

*Mr. Lopes: Incorporating Reading with Writing*

Mr. Lopes worked with twelve-year-old students and changed how he taught writing. On Fridays, he reduced the 48-minutes allotted for writing to twenty minutes. During the remaining twenty-eight minutes, he placed students in groups of four to read selections of favorite authors. As students read in rotation, each group received and asked the reader questions. This process gradually taught students how to identify good selections to read based on the reactions of their peers. Eventually, Mr. Lopes’ students took turns reading their own writings in this small group format.

Mr. Lopes also used literature to “heighten the children’s sensitivity to language.” He began a “Famous Quotes” bulletin board in which students would share specific language from the writing of professionals. This concept eventually led to an additional quote board that displayed lines from the students’ own writing (Graves, 2003).

*Mrs. Andersen: Teaching the Language of Poetry*

Mrs. Andersen used literature with seven-year-olds to fuel poetry instruction. Beginning on the first day of school, Mrs. Andersen taught her students to listen, speak, and write poetry together. When introducing a new poem, Mrs. Andersen recited the
poem twice to the students while they watched her. Then, the students began reciting the poem with her. After three recitations, the children knew more than half of the poem. By the end of the week, the students knew the entire poem (Graves, 2003).

During a school year, Mrs. Anderson’s students learned over twenty-five poems through choral speaking. Students enjoyed the rhythm of the words and began discussions about the meaning behind some of the lines. The ability to recite the poems through memorization allowed the students to carry the language with them, and eventually “became part of their writing” (Graves, 2003).

Mrs. Peckrull: Sharing the Works of Published Authors

Mrs. Peckrull surrounded her class of ten-year-olds with literature. Mrs. Peckrull shared the writing of published authors as students shared their own writing. Whenever possible, Mrs. Peckrull showed students “how books came into being” by demonstrating the processes authors go through in gathering information and creating drafts (Graves, 2003).

Additionally, Mrs. Peckrull used role-playing of book characters and authors to introduce books and fuel discussions after reading a book. This allowed her to show students the options that characters, readers, and authors have for interpreting events and passages. Participation in effective role-playing required Mrs. Peckrull’s students to engage in reading background information. Role-playing combined with the reading of background information allowed her students to see the diverse interpretations of an author, text, or character in a selection (Graves, 2003).
Graves (2003) points out that each of these examples contains similar elements: the reading and writing programs possess an inseparable relationship, and each program allows the students to “hear, read, and experience the sharing of literature with others.” Through these examples, Graves illustrates how teachers use literature to allow children to make literature.

**Connecting Reading and Writing with Picture Books**

According to Timothy Rasinski and Nancy Paddock (March, 1995) making the connection between reading and writing during instruction is crucial: writers gain “interesting ideas and models of good expression” when they are read to. With this in mind, picture storybooks contain literary devices, such as metaphor, imagery, parody, foreshadowing, simile, and analogy. Likewise, excellent nonfiction also gives children models for their expository writing.

Lee Galda and Bernice Cullinan (2002) state that using picture books to teach a literary concept is a successful approach because the books are slender, well-crafted pieces of literature, the literary elements shine through clearly, students can see and understand the concept, the sparse text visualizes a literary concept, and the concept appears in an uncluttered environment.

With this in mind, Susan Anderson McElveen and Connie Campbell Dierking (2000) relay their search for models of writing in the journal article “Children’s Books as Models to Teach Writing Skills.” For their study, McElveen and Dierking required “precise examples, in the form of good writing models” in order for their students to learn
the skill at hand. They found that using children’s literature, or picture books, served as a “bridge that linked the target skill with the reason for thinking, speaking, and writing like a writer” with their students.

In addition, McElveen and Dierking (2000) noted that exposing students to models of good writing led to the development of enhanced language, such as onomatopoeia, similes, metaphors, and alliteration. Furthermore, immersing students in a “literature-rich environment” and providing daily opportunities to write helped their students develop the thought processes and language of a writer. For example, sharing and discussing the writing techniques found within the pages of a picture book allowed their students to “think, speak, and write like writers.”

Likewise, Seung-Yoeun Yoo (1997) discusses the importance of exposing children in the early childhood setting to literature. Frequently reading to young children allows them to discover and develop language while making personal connections to the text. In addition, Seung-Yoeun Yoo states using children’s literature in the early childhood setting fosters a child’s “natural development of language, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing” while experiencing pleasure.

Goodman (1977) suggests that children discover how language works as they read books (cited in Yoo, 1997). Moreover, children broaden their vocabulary through reading and carry this into their writing. Reading children’s books enables children to uncover the structure of a story, as well as enhance their ability to create stories.

As children write their own stories, they “borrow” parts from stories they have encountered. For example, Rental & King (1983) and Blackburn (1985) note that children may use or adapt certain words or ideas, or combine plots, theme, and characters
from previous stories into their own. In other words, children develop new stories based on their knowledge of previous stories (cited in Yoo, 1997).

Moreover, picture books serve as excellent models of the author’s craft. Tompkins (2003) says that many picture books serve “as examples of descriptive writing.” While students enjoy a read aloud from a picture book, they are also developing their desire to read. Students also encounter story organization, rich language, and build background knowledge. Additionally, Spandel (2005) states picture books are a “powerful means available for teaching the traits to beginning writers.” She claims that the most beloved books are strong models of the traits of writing, such as word choice.

Reading and writing are naturally connected. Constant modeling supports instruction involving the mechanics of written language. As students experience trade books repeatedly, they are seeing what good writers do, and eventually they begin incorporating these techniques into their own writing (Calhoun, 1999). Lucy Calkins (1986) adds that when children listen to picture books, they “learn a way of listening that is essential to writing.” In addition, students can discuss the choices authors make in their writing during class discussions (Galda, 2002).

Calkins (1986) details the importance of reading and writing connections in The Art of Teaching Writing. Children must be aware of “an author’s technique.” Otherwise, they will be less likely to incorporate it into their own writing. With this in mind, discussion about the authors’ techniques are crucial, such as asking the students to identify what the author did in order to elicit a response from the reader.
Students can also refer to picture books as resources when they encounter problems while writing. For example, if a student experiences difficulty writing a lead, he or she can consult a picture book for ideas and guidance (Calkins, 1986).

Diane Kern, et. al (2003) share how their suggested use of narrative and expository texts can increase a student’s literacy skills, while meeting the demands of writing assessments in their journal article “Less is More: Preparing Students for State Writing Assessments: The Demands of U.S. State Writing Assessments are Daunting for Students. However, Teachers Can Support their Students’ Success by Using Guiding Principles of Best Writing Practice Combined with the U.S. English Language Arts Standards.”

In constructing the guiding principles for their writing curriculum, the authors note that Peter Elbow (2000) believes meaningful reading activities foster good writing (cited in Kern, et al, 2003). Each of the authors’ lesson plans follows Elbow’s belief and adheres to writing standards set by the U.S. National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association. Kern asserts that using literature, such as picture books, provides students with an authentic purpose to write, as well as a clear model to imitate.

Kern et. al (2003) share four lesson plans each of them created that incorporate both narrative and expository picture book texts as models for writing activities.
Using Picture Books to Compose a “How-To” Text

Rebecca Schilke’s lesson plan requires the teacher to read aloud one or more of the following picture books: *How to Go About Laying an Egg*, *How to Get Rid of Bad Dreams*, and *How to Make a Mud Pie*. Listening to these stories gives students an opportunity to become acquainted with the structure of “how-to” texts. Students then engage in brainstorming and discuss ideas with each other regarding their own personal experiences.

Afterwards, students begin to organize the steps for their story in a “How-to Chart” template as shown in Figure 1. Students create the template by folding an 8” x 10” piece of white construction paper to make ten boxes. Each box contains appropriate labels to guide the students as they sequence their story.

As the teacher models completing Figure 1, students see how to break down each step of a set of instructions into a numbered box using transitional words, such as *first*, *afterwards*, and *finally*. After students complete their charts, they take turns sharing with a partner and make any necessary revisions.
Figure 1: “How-To Chart” Template

Students begin to write their how-to texts in complete sentences, using their completed Figure 1 as a guide. Students are also encouraged to use illustrations. Finally, students share their completed how-to texts with the class.
Using Picture Books to Teach Summarization

Wendy Andre’s lesson plan teaches summarization using the picture book *Faithful Elephants*. Before reading, Wendy administers an anticipation guide, as shown in Figure 2, to her students that make six statements related to the theme of the story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____</td>
<td>____ 1.  War only hurts people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____</td>
<td>____ 2.  People are more important than animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____</td>
<td>____ 3.  Wild animals have feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____</td>
<td>____ 4.  War can hurt animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____</td>
<td>____ 5.  Animals count on humans to protect them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____</td>
<td>____ 6.  It would be fun to be a zookeeper.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Anticipation Guide for *Faithful Elephants*

Students either agree or disagree with each statement. After discussing student responses on the anticipation guide, the teacher reads *Faithful Elephants*, allowing for student responses and discussion afterwards.

After the class discussion, the teacher administers the anticipation guide again. Students may change their previous responses after developing a connection to the
picture book. Students then create sequence boxes to aid as a visual guide in summarizing the main events of the story (see Figure 3).

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Figure 3: Sequence Boxes

Students create Figure 3 by folding a large piece of construction paper into eight boxes. In each box, students illustrate the main events of the story in sequential order. Students can also include a one-to-two sentence description about the illustration in each box. Afterwards, students then transfer their sentences from the sequence boxes onto their writing paper.
Using Picture Books to Teach Cause-and-Effect

Margaret Conn McGuire’s lesson plan uses Kat Kong, a narrative picture book filled with language play and humor, to teach cause and effect, a difficult skill for many students. The teacher begins by posting a large graphic organizer (see Figure 4) divided into three parts: Cause, Event, and Effect, in a visible location for students.

After a review of each term, students read an article from a recent newspaper. The teacher models how to locate both the causes and effects of an event within the article, and eventually students work with the teacher to complete Figure 4. In addition to developing a deeper understanding of cause-and-effect relationships, students begin to identify words that signal causation, such as hence, then, and therefore.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 4: Cause, Event, and Effect Graphic Organizer
Before reading the picture book, *Kat Kong*, the teacher sets a purpose for listening by asking students to listen for the events in the story, as well as the signal words for causation. While reading, the teacher may also ask leading questions to direct the students’ focus on the causes and effects of events. Students can also take notes to track important events, as well as signal words.

After reading, students begin to complete their own copy of Figure 4, using events from *Kat Kong*. With guidance from the teacher, students can go back into the story and reread in order to determine the causes and effects of important story events. After a student completes Figure 4, they begin to piece together sentences in the following order: one cause + related event + one effect. Students should incorporate signal words for causation in their sentences.

Once students demonstrate proficiency in this guided practice, they receive another copy of Figure 4. Students select an event from their life and fill in the causes and effects related to the chosen event. Using their copy of Figure 4 as a guide, students develop a rough draft and peer-edit for spelling, punctuation, and use of signal words.

*Using Picture Books to Teach Drawing Conclusions*

In James Barton’s lesson plan, he uses *The Great Migration*, an expository picture book, to teach drawing conclusions. *The Great Migration* is about the journey African
Americans in the South made during World War I to search for better lives in the industrial cities of the North.

Since *The Great Migration* contains striking illustrations, Barton suggests that before reading students should look through the illustrations in sequential order, trying to infer as much as possible about the text. Afterwards, the teacher then reads the text aloud.

After reading, the teacher and students engage in a discussion that relates events from the story into a chain of cause-and-effect relationships. Class discussion then shifts to the personal implications of these United States events in history. Afterwards, students choose to write from the following options:

1) Write about the circumstances that brought your family to its current location.

2) Write about the problems, reactions, actions, and outcomes your family might face as you leave your current circumstances and travel to a new place of your choice in search of a better life.

Each writing option requires students to reflect and synthesize information from the class readings, discussions, and personal connections.

The lesson plans presented by Diane Kern, et. al (2003) use children’s literature, effective guiding principles for writing, and English language arts standards to engage in “thoughtful, focused, and strategic” writing activities. This approach to teaching writing may better prepare students for standardized writing assessments, but more importantly, create better writers.
Word Choice in Writing

Vicki Spandel’s (2005) *Creating Writers through 6-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction* provides a shared vocabulary that describes the traits of writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. Understanding these traits and using a common language for writing assessment allows educators to give students precise feedback on their writing performance.

In order to internalize these traits, students must see, hear, and practice these traits. Picture books are excellent teaching tools that allow students to see and hear good writing (Spandel, 2005).

One aspect of the six-trait model, word choice, is comprised of more than the writer’s use of words. Words create a “bridge” connecting the writer’s message to tone and voice. A writer can convey meaning more clearly by selecting the “just right word.” A writer’s choice of words possesses the unique ability to paint a mental picture for the reader (Spandel, 2005).

In order to describe ideas and experiences effectively, students must learn to choose words carefully. Specific and vivid words breathe life to a piece of writing. Spandel (2005) states that good use of word choice includes specific nouns, vivid verbs, colorful adjectives and adverbs, synonyms to avoid repetition, and avoidance of commonly used words. Teachers can focus writing instruction on these elements of good word choice through the “energized” writing of published children’s authors (Tompkins, 2004).
Writers require tools, such as a thesaurus and dictionary. However, “the most powerful tool” a writer has “is language itself” (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998). Since picture books are brief texts, authors do not have many words to work with. Therefore, an author's word choice must provide clarity, as well as create sounds, feelings, textures, and images (Culham, 2004).

Finally, Tompkins (2004) lists five techniques in descriptive writing that call upon the use of appropriate word choice: adding specific information, choosing words carefully, creating sensory images, making comparisons (similes and metaphors), and dialogue. Effective lessons geared towards teaching these concepts must include “basic information about the technique,” “examples from the literature,” and writing activities for the students.

The review of literature presented in this chapter reveals the significance and benefits associated with the use of picture books in the classroom. In the following chapter, I present the methodology and data collection procedures I used in my study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

My study sought to determine how the use of picture books during instruction improves student word choice in writing. The methodology I present in this chapter was sufficient to collect the necessary data from the subjects of my study.

The subjects in my study were the students in my fourth-grade class. Since my research involves the use of humans as subjects, I sought and received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Central Florida and the Volusia County Public School District. Upon approval (Appendix A) on January 18, 2005, I distributed permission forms to the parents and guardians of my students (Appendix B). Each parent and guardian granted permission for his or her child to participate. Finally, I distributed an assent form (Appendix C) which each student signed.

My elementary school is located in Port Orange, Florida, a metropolitan community with a population of about 50,000 people (City of Port Orange, 2003). The 2003 – 2004 No Child Left Behind School Public Accountability report for my school recently published the student demographics for my school, as shown in Table 1.

I have 33 students in my class – sixteen girls and seventeen boys. One of my students is in his second year for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) services and is not completely fluent in English yet. In addition, two of my students are former Exceptional Student Education (ESE) resource students currently on consultation. My students range in age from nine to eleven. I have presented my students’ age, gender, ethnicity, and other pertinent data, such as ESE students and LEP students, in Appendix D.
Table 1: Student Demographics for 2003-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial/Ethnic Group</th>
<th>School %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically disadvantaged</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To collect my data, I used three data collection strategies:

1. I collected a writing sample from each student to establish a baseline and note any growth in student writing,
2. I kept anecdotal records of student behaviors and comments during instruction, along with my daily reflections about each writing lesson, and
3. I facilitated class discussions about each weekly focus skill, which allowed students to engage in debriefings at the conclusion of each writing lesson.

I first collected a writing sample from each student in order to establish a baseline. Since the focus of my study was to determine how picture books improve student word choice in writing, I needed an analysis of how my students used word
choice in their writing before I began instruction in order to note any growth in using word choice.

I determined that I would establish the most accurate baseline if I gave my students a writing prompt administered in the same format as the Florida Writing Assessment Program – Florida Writes. Administered statewide to students in grades 4, 8, and 10, the Florida Writing Assessment Program measures students’ writing proficiency. During a designated testing period of 45-minutes, students write to assigned topics (FL DOE, 2003).

I located examples of writing prompts that prepare students for the Florida Writing Assessment Program on the School District of Manatee Florida’s website. I selected a writing prompt I felt my students could easily write to (see Appendix E).

To get this sample, I administered Appendix E in the same format as the Florida Writing Assessment Program. I laid a sheet of paper with the prompt typed at the top upside-down on each student’s desk. Once every student received their prompt, they turned their paper over and had 45-minutes to complete their writing. During this time, students did not get out of their desks, talk, or work on other tasks. After forty-five minutes, I collected the prompts.

I assessed how well my students used word choice in their writing samples using the criteria for assessing word choice from the 6-Point Writing Guide in Spandel’s Creating Young Writers (2005). The 6-Point Writing Guide (see Appendix M) is a part of assessment with six-traits. Six-trait writing is a way of thinking about writing using the six traits of writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. I felt this form of assessment was best for this particular study because
Appendix M gave me a consistent way to assess the trait of writing that was the focus of my research: word choice.

After establishing a baseline, I made anecdotal records of student comments and behaviors while students wrote and participated in class discussions. For example, if students were struggling with an activity or making connections between their learning and the lesson in a class discussion, I would record this in my anecdotal records.

After our writing lesson each day, students went to lunch for twenty-five minutes. While the students were out of the classroom, I reflected on the lesson while it was still fresh in my mind. I wrote about what worked well during each lesson, what may have not worked well, as well as anything that may have been interesting during the lesson. For example, in my reflection after a writing activity related to the picture book *Under the Quilt of Night*, I determined my students were struggling to identify verbs. Based on this reflection, I made an instructional decision to continue activities that would help my students with verbs.

For my final data collection strategy, I paired class discussions with debriefings to foster students’ metacognitive thinking. A class discussion allows for spontaneity and stimulates thinking (Carroll and Wilson, 1993). I led each class discussion by asking specific questions and incorporated activities aimed at a specific purpose. This allowed students to learn how to improve their word choice in writing. For example, in one week of lessons I focused on vivid verbs, which make writing more “powerful and memorable” (Culham, 2004). After reading *Under the Quilt of Night*, I led a discussion by asking students, “What did you notice about the author’s choice of words?” Once students
discussed how the vivid verbs made the author’s writing better, I taught students how to use vivid verbs to improve their word choice in their writing.

Debriefings followed class discussions. Debriefings last approximately five minutes and foster students’ metacognitive thinking – students thought about their thinking by sharing thoughts about what they had learned (Carroll and Wilson, 1993). Debriefings allow students to reflect on their understanding, make connections, and make sense of their learning. For example, one of my weekly lessons focused on writing through the five senses (sight, taste, touch, sound, and smell). I used Cynthia Rylant’s picture book *When I Was Young in the Mountains* as a model for this lesson. In her book, Rylant relays memories of her childhood using sensory details. At the conclusion of the first lesson, I asked my students to evaluate Rylant’s writing. This allowed students to attach personal meaning to the author’s craft.

To continue collecting my data, I planned a routine to follow on Monday through Thursday of each week. I felt it was important for my students to recognize the continuity and connectedness of each writing activity. Each week I used a different picture book that focused on a specific skill, following the routine indicated in Table 2.
Table 2: Weekly Schedule

| Monday               | • Introduce weekly focus skill with an activity  
|                     | • Introduce picture book and set a purpose for listening  
|                     | • Read picture book  
|                     | • Allow for a spontaneous response  
|                     | • Debriefing  
| Tuesday             | • Access students’ prior knowledge  
|                     | • Reread picture book  
|                     | • Activities related to the weekly focus skill  
|                     | • Lead class discussion  
|                     | • Debriefing  
| Wednesday           | • Writing activities related to weekly focus skill  
| Thursday            | • Writing activities related to weekly focus skill  

March 7, 2005 – March 10, 2005

For my first week of instruction, I adapted a lesson that focuses on using descriptive words in writing from Culham’s (2004) Using Picture Books to Teach Writing with the Traits. I introduced this weekly focus skill by giving each student a raw potato and allowing them to handle and explore the potato for several minutes. On a sheet of notebook paper, students jotted down words that described their potato. I posted a large piece of white construction paper on the wall, and I asked students to select one
word from their list. I recorded student responses on the white construction paper.

Figure 5 contains the responses students shared during this activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smells bad</th>
<th>Lumpy</th>
<th>Brown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Fat</td>
<td>White speckles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round</td>
<td>Good with butter</td>
<td>Roots pooping out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>A big wet spot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umpa lumpa</td>
<td>Scary</td>
<td>Circular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turdy</td>
<td>Rotten banana</td>
<td>Oval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelly</td>
<td>Odd-shaped</td>
<td>Tan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>Bumpy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Students’ Potato Responses

Then, I showed the cover of the picture book *Brave Potatoes* and told students to listen for how the author, Toby Speed, describes potatoes. I read the picture book aloud, circulating the room so students could see the illustrations as I read the text. After I finished reading, I allowed for a spontaneous response by asking students, “What did you think about this book?” Student 8 said he liked it because “it was funny in parts.” Student 11 said she liked the part where the potatoes were at the fair. Student 19 pointed out that the author used “a lot of adjectives.”

To conclude Monday’s lesson, I asked students to debrief by comparing the words Speed uses to describe potatoes with the words they used to describe potatoes. Student
22 said he liked the words Speed uses in *Brave Potatoes*. Student 7 pointed out that Speed’s word choice was “way different” from the list we created in class.

In my reflections, I noted that students were captivated while I read. As I circulated the room, I noticed students would turn around in the chair and follow the direction I walked. I also noted that students were not engaging in off-task behaviors during this lesson (See Appendix F).

On Tuesday, I followed the weekly schedule in Table 2 by accessing students’ prior knowledge. I hung up the white construction paper we created in Figure 5 on Monday. I read aloud each of the words and reminded students that these were the words they thought of to describe potatoes. I then gave students a large yellow Post-It note and told them to write down the words that Toby Speed uses to describe potatoes as I reread *Brave Potatoes*. I noted students were writing down words as I reread the picture book in my anecdotal records.

After reading, I led a class discussion by asking one of my students, Student 10, to share his list. His list consisted of the following words: *sneaky, aviators, brave,* and *courageous*. I then asked Student 27 to share her list. Her list consisted of the following words: *snoring, wide-awake, mesmerizing, death defying, fearless, brave, aviating,* and *courageous*. I asked students, “Are these were words that we would normally use to describe potatoes?” Students indicated that we would not, and we then discussed how Speed’s word choice makes the story more interesting for the reader.

I asked students to debrief by imagining how different Speed’s picture book would be if he used the list we created in Figure 5 to describe the potatoes. Student 14 said she thought it would be “boring.”
On Wednesday, I placed students in random pairs and distributed back their Post-It note from Tuesday. I instructed students to take turns sharing the words they had written down and discuss which words they liked the best with their partner.

After this activity, I handed students a potato and instructed them to write a story about their potato. I reminded students to think about how Speed uses descriptive words in *Brave Potatoes*. We ran out of time on Wednesday, so students continued this activity through Thursday.

March 14, 2005 – March 17, 2005

The following week I decided to adapt another lesson from Culham’s (2004) book that focused on using vivid verbs in writing. I felt this particular picture book, *Under the Quilt of Night* by Deborah Hopkinson, was a wonderful extension for my students’ learning because we recently completed a unit in social studies on the Civil War. *Under the Quilt of Night* is about a runaway slave girl that uses signals from quilts as she travels on the Underground Railroad.

On Monday, I introduced the weekly focus skill by asking students to predict what the book was about based on the book title and cover art. Figure 6 shows responses that students volunteered (see Appendix G).
I then asked students to write on a sheet of notebook paper what they remembered about the Underground Railroad from social studies. After a few minutes, I flipped through the picture book and read aloud only the chapter titles: Running, Waiting, Watching, Hiding, Traveling, and Singing (Hopkinson, 2002). I asked students what they noticed about these titles. Student 7 noticed that they all end in the letters –ing. Student 25 recognized that each chapter title was a verb.

I asked students to listen for these verbs as I read Under the Quilt of Night. I then read the picture book aloud. Once again, I circulated the classroom as I read so students could see the illustrations while I read the text. After reading, I allowed for a spontaneous response by asking, “What did you think about the story?” Students were very enthusiastic and positive about this picture book. Student 32 said, “Wow!” Student 26 exclaimed she like it. Student 9 eagerly replied, “It was really good.”
I asked students to debrief by comparing *Under the Quilt of Night* with what they had recently learned in social studies. Student 18 related the events of the picture book to a presentation done by a guest speaker that had recently visited our school. The presentation focused on the involvement of African Americans in the Civil War and included a reference to the secret messages contained in certain quilts for runaway slaves.

In my reflections, I noted that Student 18 made an excellent connection to his learning. In addition, my reflections note that students seemed more interested in this picture book than the one from the previous week.

On Tuesday, I accessed students’ prior knowledge by reminding them how quilts held secret messages for runaway slaves during the Civil War. Before I reread *Under the Quilt of Night*, I asked my students to listen for the verbs Hopkinson uses and write them down on a sheet of notebook paper. I then reread *Under the Quilt of Night*, circulating around the classroom.

After reading, I asked students to share their word lists in their table groups, which consists of five to six people. I circulated the classroom and noticed that some students included words that were not verbs. For example, Student 17 had included the phrase *dark, deep blue* on her list.

I decided to lead the class discussion by asking one of my students to define what a verb was. Student 5 correctly answered, “An action word.” I then wrote the words *Vivid Verbs* on the chalkboard and asked students to share the “verbs, or action words” from their list. As students volunteered the words from their list, I wrote them on the chalkboard. After I wrote down a word, I would ask that student, “Is this word a verb?
Does it show action?” If the student correctly determined their word was not a verb, I erased it.

To debrief at the end of this lesson, I asked how Hopkinson’s word choice creates a clear mental picture for the reader. I pointed to the words Hoeing and Picking on the chalkboard and asked, “What if the author had written, ‘Working in the garden’ instead?” Student 16 said, “It [the story] would be more boring.”

In my daily reflection, I noted the difficulty some of my students had in correctly identifying verbs. Therefore, I made an instructional decision to have my writing activities for the next two days focus on identifying verbs from the text of Under the Quilt of Night.

On Wednesday, I handed each student a copy of Figure 7, which shows the text from two different pages in Under the Quilt of Night. The text is broken up into verses, so I first read the verse aloud and then I asked the students to read with me in unison. I then gave students approximately two minutes to go through the verse we read and circle the verbs. Next, I asked students to identify which words they circled. We did not proceed until we correctly identified all of the verbs in each verse. After successful completion of this activity, I asked students to write on the side of the paper three verbs that they liked the best.

On Thursday, I gave each student a copy of Figure 8, and we followed the same sequence of events from the previous day: I would first read a verse, students would read in unison with me, students circled the verbs in that verse, and correctly identified the verbs. I noted in my anecdotal records that students began to pick out the verbs from the text more easily as we continued this activity.
Name: ___________________________________________

Under the Quilt of Night

I run so fast,
I lead the way;
The ones I love race right behind.
Pounding dirt and grass,
Jumping rocks and roots,
My feet make drumbeats
On the path.

I’m running so far
Away from the farm where the master worked us,
Hoeing and picking,
Mending and sewing
Till my hands got raw.

Figure 7: Text from Under the Quilt of Night for Wednesday
Runaways like us
Must hide in daylight.
So come morning
We crouch in the bushes
Till night.

It’s hot.
Sweat dribbles down my neck.
Thorns rake my arms and legs.
In the still afternoon,
Mosquitoes whine and tease
Just like the overseer’s children did.

All I can do is wait
For the cover of darkness.
Oh, if only
I could dance into the open
And sing so loud
The stars would hear
And hurry to guide our way!

Figure 8: Text from *Under the Quilt of Night* for Thursday
For the next week of lessons, I chose *Hello, Harvest Moon* by Ralph Fletcher because I decided my focus skill was to show my students how to use poetic language in their writing. For example, Fletcher (2003) refers to the moon in this verse: “With silent slippers/ it climbs the night stairs, / lifting free of the treetops/ to start working its magic, / staining earth and sky with a ghostly glow.” Fletcher’s use of personification and alliteration is an excellent model of descriptive writing through specific word choice.

I adapted Culham’s (2004) lesson for *Hello, Harvest Moon*. On Monday, I allowed students to choose their small groups and asked each group to brainstorm phrases containing the word *moon* onto a big yellow Post-It note.

My class had recently studied the moon and its phases in science, and as I circulated the room, I observed that many groups were including words related to this unit of study, such as new moon and half moon, on their Post-It note. I stopped the activity and clarified that the purpose of this activity was to brainstorm phrases containing the word moon, such as “moonstruck” or “once in a blue moon.”

The students continued this activity for two minutes and then each group took turns sharing the words on their Post-It note. I noted in my anecdotal records that some of the groups came up with some interesting phrases, such as *moonbeam, the cow jumped over the moon,* and *moonlight.* I also noted that none of the groups came up with the phrase, “harvest moon,” which the students needed background knowledge about before I could proceed with the lesson.
At this point, I wanted to activate students’ background knowledge, so I asked the students what they knew about the term “harvest moon.” Many students knew that the harvest moon had to do with the season of autumn. In order to provide my students with more information, I located a poem by Ted Hughes (1982) entitled “Harvest Moon” and read this aloud to my students. This poem provided the necessary background knowledge so I continued with the lesson.

Before reading *Hello, Harvest Moon*, I asked my students to listen for the descriptive language that the author uses. I read the picture book aloud to my students as I circulated through the classroom. I noted that students turned in their chairs to follow me as I walked around reading.

After reading, I allowed for a spontaneous response by asking, “What did you think about the book?” Student 16 said she “really liked it a lot.” Student 8 said, “It [the book] was hard to follow.” I asked him to explain why, and he shared that some of the words, such as nocturnal, were hard to understand. Once I explained that the word nocturnal means night, I reread the passage that contained this word. Student 8 said, “It makes sense now.”

I asked the students to debrief by comparing how Hughes and Fletcher describe the moon. Student 30 pointed out that Hughes uses rhyming and Fletcher did not. Student 25 shared that she “liked Fletcher’s book better” because “of his words, like ghostly glow.” Student 19 said he “liked the pictures” in Fletcher’s book.

On Tuesday, I had students go back into the groups from the previous day. I gave each group their Post-It note containing their brainstormed list of moon phrases. I gave
each group one minute to read aloud their list to the group members. This activity reminded students of their own words before reading *Hello, Harvest Moon*.

I then handed each student another yellow Post-It note. I set the purpose for listening by asking students to write down the words and phrases they liked as I reread *Hello, Harvest Moon*. As I read, I circulated the room and noted that students were compiling large lists on the Post-It notes. Student 15 usually demonstrates poor participation in classroom activities, but he had more than 10 words on his Post-It note.

When I finished reading, I began our class discussion by calling on students to share their lists. After a student shared their list, I randomly selected one word from their list and asked that student to “tell us what literary device Fletcher uses.” Figure 9 displays student responses during this activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Phrase from Story</th>
<th>Literary Device</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><em>Whispers, brushes</em></td>
<td>Vivid verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td><em>Double-dipped</em></td>
<td>Alliteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Hide-and-go-seek</em></td>
<td>Personification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td><em>Nocturnal, lunar</em></td>
<td>Repetition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: Students’ Responses from *Hello, Harvest Moon*

I noted that in the beginning of this activity, I provided more support for the students. For example, I asked Student 12, “What literary device is Fletcher using with the words ‘whispers’ and ‘brushes?’” Student 12 said she did not know, so I asked,
“What kind of words are ‘whispers’ and ‘brushes?’ Are they adjectives? Do they
describe a noun? Are they nouns? Are they a person, place, or thing?” Eventually
Student 12 identified them as verbs and quickly said, “Oh, they’re vivid verbs!”

I asked students to debrief by imagining Fletcher’s book without his descriptive
word choice. I reread one of the sentences on page 7: “It comes up round, ripe, and huge/
over autumn fields of corn and wheat” (Fletcher, 2003). I asked students to consider how
the meaning would change if Fletcher wrote, “The moon rose above fields of corn and
wheat.” Student 32 said that Fletcher “makes me see it better” in Hello, Harvest Moon.

On Wednesday, I handed students their Post-It from the previous activity. I
instructed students to look over their list of words and phrases and circle five that they
liked the best. I asked students to create their own piece of writing, including the five
circled words from their Post-It note. I noted that my students really got into this activity.
Some of the students came up to me and shared snippets of their story.

In my daily reflections, I wrote about the enthusiasm and pride students exhibited
during Wednesday’s activity. I made an instructional decision to continue the activity on
Thursday as well.

March 28, 2005 – March 31, 2005

On January 29, 2005, I attended the 12th Annual Spring Conference for the
National Writing Project at the University of Central Florida. During one of the 75-
minute training sessions, I learned about a writing activity that uses Cynthia Rylant’s
(1982) book, When I Was Young in the Mountains. This activity uses Rylant’s book as a
model for teaching writing through the senses to students. I decided to adapt this activity for the next week of lessons.

On Monday, I introduced the weekly focus skill by asking students, “What are the five senses?” As students relayed the five senses to me, I wrote them on the chalkboard: *sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.* I told students I was going to share a book where the author recalls childhood memories through her senses. I set the purpose for listening by asking students to listen for how Rylant describes her childhood memories using the five senses of sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.

I read *When I Was Young in the Mountains* aloud, circulating the classroom. I noted that students were turning around in their chairs as I walked around, following me with their eyes. I also noted that my students giggled at Rylant’s (1982) use of onomatopoeia: “A bobwhite whistled in the forest. / Bob-bob-white!”

After reading, I allowed for a spontaneous response by asking, “What did you think about the story?” Student 26 said she liked Rylant’s “vivid verbs,” such as “shivering and giggling.” Student 12 shared that she liked, “how she [Rylant] kept saying, ‘When I was young in the mountains.’” I said, “Oh, you like how Rylant used a repetitive line?” Student 12 agreed. Student 3 said that she liked, “Bob-bob-white!” This made students giggle again, and many of them kept repeating this line.

I asked students to debrief by comparing Rylant’s childhood memories with their own. Student 1 made a text-to-self connection by sharing that when he lived in Indiana, he had coyotes and rabbits in his yard, “just like Cynthia Rylant.” I have included these anecdotal records in Appendix I.
Before Tuesday’s lesson, I typed the text from *When I Was Young in the Mountains* (Figure 10) for students and created a sensory chart (Figure 11) for Tuesday’s writing activities. I also made a transparency of both Figure 10 and Figure 11 for instructional purposes.

During Tuesday’s writing lesson, I distributed a copy of Figure 10 to students and asked them to follow along on their paper as I reread *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. I reread the book, circulating the classroom and noted that students were using their finger to follow along on Figure 10 as I read.

After reading, I told my students that Rylant’s text paints a clear mental picture to the reader because she incorporates so many sensory details. I asked student 31, “What are the five senses?” Student 31 correctly responded, “Sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound.”

I placed the transparency I made from Figure 10 on my overhead projector so that students had a copy of the text on their desk, as well as the overhead projector screen. I walked through each verse and asked students to identify Rylant’s vivid descriptions that called upon our senses.

For example, I read aloud the first verse: “When I Was Young in the Mountains, / Grandfather came home in the evening/ Covered in the black dust of a coalmine. Only his lips were clean, and he used them/ to kiss the top of my head.” I asked, “What is a vivid description that Rylant uses that tells us what she saw, smelled, tasted, touched, or heard?” Student 11 said, “When Grandfather had that black dust all over him.” I replied, “That’s right – she saw her Grandfather covered in black dust.” I then underlined the words *black dust* with a vis-à-vis pen on the transparency.
I continued this instructional activity until we went through each verse. I noted that students were underlining on their copy of Figure 10 what I was underlining on the overhead projector. Appendix J shows the transparency after completion of this activity.

I then handed each student a copy the sensory chart (Figure 11) and placed the transparency I made of Figure 11 on the overhead projector. We continued instruction by transferring the underlined words in the text and categorizing them according to the appropriate sense on the top chart. For example, I called upon Student 11 again and asked, “Where should we categorize ‘black dust’?” She replied, “Under Sight.” I then wrote the words black dust in the column labeled Sight. We continued this activity until students categorized correctly each underlined phrase. Appendix K shows the completed chart.

I asked students to debrief by looking over Figure 11 and evaluating how Rylant describes her childhood memories to the reader. Student 29 said she could “see what she [Rylant] was talking about.” Student 7 said she “felt like she was there in some parts.” I asked her for an example, and she said, “When she [Rylant] was talking about her family on the front porch, I could actually see her Grandmother shelling beans and her Grandfather holding her [Rylant’s] pencils.”

On Wednesday, I began by asking students what was so memorable about Rylant’s picture book When I Was Young in the Mountains. Student 2 remarked, “When she kept saying ‘When I Was Young in the Mountains.’” Student 9 said, “All of her details about what she saw and stuff.” I then displayed the sensory chart we completed in class the day before on the overhead projector and read each sense along with the corresponding details. I handed students their copy of Figure 11 back.
I asked students to think back to kindergarten, when they first began school. Using the sense chart on the bottom of the overhead transparency of Figure 11, I used the think-aloud strategy to model how to complete the sense chart as I recalled what I saw, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled during my days in kindergarten.

For example, I said, “Let me think . . . What do I recall seeing in my kindergarten classroom? Oh – I remember there were these big blocks stacked on bookshelves.” I then wrote the word Blocks on the sense chart under the category labeled Sight. I continued, “Oh, and there were these inflatable alphabet people that the teacher used while we learned about the letters of the alphabet.” I then added Alphabet people to the sense chart. I continued this think-aloud strategy until I had approximately two to three words in each category on my sense chart. Appendix L shows my completed sense chart from this activity.

Next, I gave students about 15-minutes to complete their sense chart from their memories in kindergarten. I circulated the classroom as students sat at their desks completing their sense chart. I noted that many students were enthusiastic and sharing what they wrote on their chart with me as I walked by their desks.

When students completed their sense chart, I referred to my completed sense chart on the overhead and orally imitated Rylant’s style of When I Was Young in the Mountains. I accomplished this by using my details from my sense chart and the repetitive line, “When I was young in kindergarten.” For example, I pointed to the category labeled Sight and said, “When I was young in kindergarten, I saw a big stack of colorful blocks on the wooden bookshelves. Mrs. A, and all of the other inflatable alphabet people, stood in line along the wall, ready to teach me the alphabet. I also
When I was Young in the Mountains
By: Cynthia Rylant

When I was young in the mountains,
Grandfather came home in the evening
Covered with the black dust of a coalmine.
Only his lips were clean, and he used them
to kiss the top of my head.

When I was young in the mountains,
Grandmother spread the table with hot
Corn bread, pinto beans, and fried okra.

Later, in the middle of the night,
She walked through the grass with me to
the Johnny-house and held my hand in
the dark. I promised never to eat more
than one serving of okra again.

When I was young in the mountains,
We walked across the cow pasture and
through the woods, carrying our towels.
The swimming hole was dark and muddy,
and we sometimes saw snakes, but we
jumped in anyway.

On our way home, we stopped at
Mr. Crawford's for a mound of white
butter. Mr. Crawford and Mrs. Crawford
looked alike and always smelled of sweet
milk.

When I was young in the mountains,
We pumped pails of water from the well at
the bottom of the hill, and heated the
water to fill round tin tubs for our baths.

Afterward we stood in front of the
old black stove, shivering and giggling,
while Grandmother heated cocoa on top.

When I was young in the mountains,
We went to church in the schoolhouse on
Sundays, and sometimes walked with the
congregation through the cow pasture to
the dark swimming hole, for baptisms.

My cousin Peter was laid back into the
water, and his white shirt stuck to him, and
my Grandmother cried.

When I was young in the mountains,
We listened to frogs sing at dusk and
awoke to cowbells outside our windows.
Sometimes a black snake came in the yard,
and my Grandmother would threaten it
with a hoe.

If it did not leave, she used the hoe to kill
it. Four of us draped a very long snake,
dead of course, across our necks for a
photograph.

When I was young in the mountains,
We sat on the porch swing in the evenings,
and Grandfather sharpened my pencils with
his pocket knife. Grandmother sometimes
shelled beans and sometimes braided my
hair. The dogs lay around us, and the stars
sparkled in the sky. A bobwhite whistled
in the forest. Bob-bob-bobwhite!

When I was young in the mountains,
I never wanted to go to the ocean, and I
never wanted to go to the desert. I never
wanted to go anywhere else in the world,
for I was in the mountains.
And that was always enough.
Figure 11: Sensory Chart

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sight</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hearing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Touch</strong></td>
<td><strong>Taste</strong></td>
<td><strong>Smell</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

49
remember the big carpet with squares on it at the front of the classroom where my class would sit during story time.”

I continued modeling this by repeating the line “When I was young in kindergarten” before I orally relayed the memories in each column for the remaining senses. When I finished, Student 23 said, “Wow – that was good!”

I told students that it was their turn to be like Cynthia Rylant and share their memories about their days in kindergarten. I instructed students to begin a rough draft of their own using their sensory details and the recurring line “When I was young in kindergarten,” just as I had modeled.

Students did not complete their rough draft during this time. I instructed students to take Figure 10, Figure 11, and their rough draft and staple these three pages together. This allowed me to distribute their papers back on Thursday more easily.

In my daily reflections, I noted that I overheard Student 15 say that he did not want to write about kindergarten. I also recalled that Student 25 had a difficult time getting started. I decided to have an individual conference with each of them the next day.

On Thursday, I handed each student back his or her stack of stapled papers. Students continued working on their rough drafts. I called Student 15 up to my desk and asked him, “How is your writing going?” He replied, “Not good.” I inquired further and he shared that he had a hard time remembering what happened in kindergarten. I told him he could write about another school year instead. He agreed and said it was “easier to remember third grade.”
Remembering my reflection about Student 25, I called her up to my desk and asked, “How is your writing going?” She said, “I can’t think.” I asked her to bring me her staple papers, and I turned to her copy of Figure 11. She had written, Kindergarden (sic) is all noisy and smelly. Nasty little babys (sic). I concluded that she did not understand what she was supposed to do. I asked her, “What do remember seeing in kindergarten?” She said, “A hat rack,” and she began to tell me about the different kinds of hats her teacher kept on this hat rack. I stopped her and said, “Let’s finish the sense chart first.” I wrote the words hat rack under the column labeled Sight.

I then asked, “What did you remember hearing in kindergarten?” Student 25 said, “There were kids screaming.” I inquired further, “When?” She said, “They screamed at playtime.” She watched me write down Kids screaming at playtime under the column labeled Hearing. We continued to go through each sense on her copy of Figure 11, following the same sequence as above. When we finished, Student 25 said, “I get it now,” and went to work on her rough draft.

As students continued to write, I walked around the classroom and noted the effort and excitement they maintained about their rough draft. Some students came up to me and read what they really liked about their writing, and others read to classmates.

In my daily reflections, I wrote about this observation and decided that I needed to make time for students to share these in class. With this in mind, I told my students the next day that they were going to share their “When I Was Young in Kindergarten” drafts. I received an enthusiastic reply. I randomly selected students to share their drafts until everyone had a chance to read aloud their draft to the class.
I was curious to see how the use of picture books during instruction improved my students’ use of word choice in their writing. A discussion of the results from my students’ writing samples is offered in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The focus of my study was to determine how the use of picture books during instruction improves student word choice in writing. I collected my data using three data collection strategies:

(1) I collected a writing sample from each student to establish a baseline and note any growth in student writing,
(2) I kept anecdotal records of student behaviors and comments during instruction, along with my daily reflections about each writing lesson, and
(3) I facilitated class discussions about each weekly focus skill, which allowed students to engage in debriefings at the conclusion of each writing lesson.

During my research, I chose to assess each of my students’ writing samples, including the baseline, using one type of writing assessment. I selected to use the criteria for assessing word choice in the 6-Point Writing Guide in Spandel’s *Creating Young Writers* in Appendix M (2005).

The 6-Point Writing Guide (Spandel, 2005) is a part of the assessment with six-traits (see Appendix M). Six-trait writing is a way of thinking about writing using the six traits of writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. I selected this assessment for this particular study because the 6-Point Writing Guide gives a consistent way to assess the trait of writing that was the focus of my research: word choice.

Using the 6-Point Writing Guide for word choice to assess each of my students’ writing samples enabled me to evaluate each piece of writing using the same criteria. In
addition, Spandel (2005) states the six-point scale defines the performance of a writer at six different levels, with 6 being the highest score and 1 being the lowest. Furthermore, six possible scoring levels enables the assessor to note even the most “modest growth in writing skills.” This permitted me to note any growth in my students’ ability to improve word choice in their writing.

I used Appendix M to obtain each student’s baseline writing sample score (see Table 3). A score with the letter “A” in Table 3 means the student was absent. Using the scores displayed in Table 3, I made a chart to explain where the majority of my class ranked according to Appendix M. Figure 12 presents the students’ baseline scores from Table 3. The blank area for Student 20 is due to his absence.

![Figure 12: Chart of Baseline Writing Scores](chart.png)
Table 3: Students’ Baseline Samples

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<tr>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A = Absent
These baseline scores represent how my students used word choice in their writing before I included picture books as models of word choice in my writing lessons. Immediately, I noticed that most of my students, 44.75 % of my class, earned a 3. However, closer analysis showed that 50 % of my students only earned the lowest scores, a 2 or a 1.

Since the majority of my students’ baseline samples earned a 3 or less on the six-point scale, I analyzed these samples and concluded that these students were not taking risks in their word choice. As indicated in Appendix M, the students’ choice of words are “generally clear but imprecise” and require the reader to “work hard even for general meaning” (Spandel, 2005). The words students included in their baseline writing samples do not incorporate vivid, striking words. I made a chart of some of the most often used students’ words and phrases (see Figure 13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Get</th>
<th>fun</th>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>bad</th>
<th>nice</th>
<th>best</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>I would</td>
<td>like</td>
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<td>said</td>
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</table>

Figure 13: Words and Phrases from Baseline Samples
The first week of lessons focused on expanding students’ word choice with vivid verbs using the book *Brave Potatoes* as a model. Table 4 shows the students’ writing scores using Appendix M, along with their baseline sample as a basis for comparison.

I concluded that fourteen students improved their writing score from their baseline writing sample. Students’ writing in response to the picture book *Brave Potatoes* contained many vivid verbs, as well as striking words and phrases, as shown in Figure 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vivid Verbs</th>
<th>Striking Words and Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Screamed</em> (Student 2)</td>
<td><em>Squirmy little legs</em> (Student 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Highjacked</em> (Student 4)</td>
<td><em>Blood-currdling scream</em> (Student 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Haunting</em> (Student 9)</td>
<td><em>Atomik wegy</em> (Student 5)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Marching</em> (Student 9)</td>
<td><em>Slap!</em> (Student 7)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Demanding</em> (Student 9)</td>
<td><em>Squeeky voice</em> (Student 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Commanded</em> (Student 9)</td>
<td><em>Slimy, guey monster</em> (Student 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Exploded</em> (Student 9)</td>
<td><em>Small, worthless potato</em> (Student 16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14: Students’ Word Choice for *Brave Potatoes*

In my analysis, I found that Student 9 made a drastic improvement in his word choice. His baseline writing sample score was a 3, while his *Brave Potatoes* writing sample score was a 6. I am including his baseline writing sample and *Brave Potatoes* writing sample as Appendixes N and O respectively.
As Appendix N shows, Student 9 used generic words, such as *like, say,* and *cool.* As Appendix M indicates, his language appears to be his “first thought” and lacks verbs. However, Appendix O shows Student 9 incorporated strong verbs, such as *demanding, commanding,* and *exploded,* which are vivid verbs and compelled me to continue reading his writing sample.

In addition, Student 18 earned a 3 for his baseline writing sample. He used words, such as *teach, some,* and *fast.* These words create a clear meaning for the reader, but are imprecise. However, like Student 9, Student 18 improved his use of word choice in his *Brave Potatoes* writing sample.

Student 18 dramatically improved his use of word choice by using vivid verbs, such as *escape, exclaimed,* and *clattered.* In addition, his use of unique phrasing, like *world domination* and *smells like warm root beer,* makes his writing powerful and memorable. I am including Student 18’s baseline writing sample as Appendix P and his *Brave Potatoes* writing sample as Appendix Q.

I also noted that four of my students produced a lower score with their *Brave Potatoes* writing sample. As I compared their baseline writing sample to their *Brave Potatoes* writing sample, for Students 23, 24, 25, and 32, I noticed the length of each of their baseline writing samples was longer. My analysis indicates that the topic of the baseline writing sample was more interesting to these students than writing a story about a potato.

I made a chart that compares students’ baseline writing sample scores, along with the scores from their *Brave Potatoes* writing sample (see Figure 15). The purple line
shows student baseline writing scores, and the cream-colored line shows students’ *Brave Potatoes* score.

Table 4: Scores for *Brave Potatoes* with Baseline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Brave Potatoes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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*A* = Absent
During this week, I continued instruction in vivid verbs with Hopkinson’s *Under the Quilt of Night*. My anecdotal observations and daily reflections made me realize several of my students struggled with identifying verbs. Instead of providing students with an opportunity to create a writing sample, I decided to continue writing activities with my students regarding identifying verbs.
During the writing activities with Figures 7 and 8, I observed that most of my students improved in their ability to locate verbs. For example, Appendix R shows that Student 4 had incorrectly circled the words “drumbeats” and “on” on Figure 7. However, as I continued instruction, Student 4 located the verbs more easily with the text on Figure 8 (see Appendix S).

March 21, 2005 – March 24, 2005

The following week, my writing lessons focused on expanding students’ use of lyrical, poetic language using Ralph Fletcher’s *Hello, Harvest Moon*. Fletcher uses many literary devices, such as alliteration, vivid verbs, and similes in this picture book. For example, Fletcher (2003) writes, “Outside, the yards and streets seem to be/ covered by a sparkling tablecloth./ Birch trees shine as if they have been/ double-dipped/ in moonlight.”

According to my anecdotal records and daily reflections, Students 31 and 32, both males, shared that they “did not like” Fletcher’s choice of words. They demonstrated a lack of motivation during class discussions and debriefings. Their *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing sample scores were both the lowest score – a 1. Students 31 and 32 appeared to plug in random words in their writing sample to fill the page.

I displayed all of the students’ scores for their *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing sample, alongside their previous scores from their baseline writing sample and *Brave Potatoes* writing sample in Table 5. I noted that 15 students improved their writing score
for *Hello, Harvest Moon* compared to their baseline. In addition, 11 students had improved their writing score with this writing sample compared to their *Brave Potatoes* score.

I made a chart to represent all three scores in Figure 17. The purple line shows student baseline writing scores, the cream-colored line shows students’ *Brave Potatoes* writing scores, and the teal line shows the students’ *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing scores.

The students’ writing that demonstrated growth incorporated strong poetic language in their writing. The captivating phrases some of students used in their *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing samples, as shown in Figure 16, make their writing impressive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Moon-lit night</em></td>
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<td><em>gostly glow</em></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td><em>cloaked in the moonshadow</em></td>
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<td><em>double dip moon</em></td>
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<td>13</td>
<td><em>covered with another crisp, yellow moon</em></td>
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<td><em>emerged with greatness</em></td>
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<td><em>sparkling blue</em></td>
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<td><em>cloaked in rags</em></td>
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<td><em>lunar light</em></td>
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<td><em>sparkling in the air</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><em>lunar flower</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td><em>ripe sunset moon double dipped in honey</em></td>
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</table>

Figure 16: Students’ Words and Phrases from *Hello, Harvest Moon*
Table 5: Previous Scores and *Hello, Harvest Moon*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Brave Potatoes</th>
<th>Hello, Harvest Moon</th>
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*A = Absent*
Student 7’s *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing sample demonstrates tremendous growth in word choice. In the criteria for a score of 6, Spandel (2005) states that the writing uses “everyday language . . . in original ways” (see Appendix M). Student 7’s choice of words follows this criteria. For example, her first sentence reads, *Once upon a time in*
the darkness of my brain, a tiny bird, a little bird called Night Hawk made a bursting bucket of green ooze. With this in mind, Student 7’s writing scores for use of word choice have improved as I introduced a different picture book each week. She earned a 3 on her baseline writing sample, a 4 on her Brave Potatoes writing sample, and a 6 on her Hello, Harvest Moon writing sample. I am including each of these writing samples as Appendixes T, U, and V, respectively.

March 28, 2005 – March 31, 2005

During the final week of lessons, I focused instruction on sensory writing using Cynthia Rylant’s When I Was Young in the Mountains. Sensory writing is writing to activate the reader’s five senses of sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. Using Rylant’s picture book as a model, my students included a recurring line of, “When I was young in kindergarten,” throughout this writing sample. The ultimate goal was to tell the reader what the writer experienced through their senses during their days of kindergarten.

Students’ scores shown in Table 6 compare scores from their baseline writing samples, When I was Young in the Mountains writing samples, Brave Potatoes writing samples, and Hello, Harvest Moon writing samples. Students’ writing scores, displayed in Figure 18, compare each of the above-mentioned writing samples on a chart. The purple line represents student baseline writing sample scores, the cream-colored line represents students’ Brave Potatoes writing sample scores, the teal line represents the
students’ *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing sample scores, and the blue line represents students’ *When I Was Young in the Mountains* writing sample scores.

During my analysis, I noted that almost every student received a 3 or higher on the *When I Was Young in the Mountains* writing sample, which is the exact opposite of my analysis of the students’ baseline writing sample scores. Sixteen students, or 50% of my class, scored a 3 on their *When I Was Young in the Mountains* writing sample, and eight students, or 25% of my class, scored a 4. Thus, 87.5% of my class scored a 3 or higher on the final writing sample that used picture books as models to improve student word choice in their writing.

Figure 18: All Writing Scores
### Table 6: All Writing Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Number</th>
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<th>Brave Potatoes</th>
<th>Hello, Harvest Moon</th>
<th>When I was Young in the Mountains</th>
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</table>

A = Absent
As I analyzed each of my students’ writing samples, I looked for student growth in word choice. Students’ baseline writing samples gave me an idea of where each student stood in regards to their use of word choice before I began my research. As I scored students’ baseline writing samples, I noticed that my students’ writing lacked vivid verbs, as well as striking words and phrases.

With this in mind, I planned writing lessons each week that included picture books as models of effective use of word choice. Based on the data I collected, I found that using picture books during instruction improved my students’ use of word choice in their writing. In their writing samples, my students incorporated the language from the picture books. For example, in Student 7’s Hello, Harvest Moon writing sample, she used several of Ralph Fletcher’s words, such as bursting, nocturnal, and lunar in her writing sample. Her word choice made this piece of writing memorable and created a vivid image for the reader.

I also found that using picture books during instruction kept the interest of my students. During each picture book read-aloud, I recorded in my anecdotal records how students were “captivated” and followed me with their eyes as I circulated the room. My students remained on-task during the picture book read-aloud each week.

Furthermore, I conclude that the class discussions and structured writing activities helped promote my students’ use of word choice. I planned a purpose for learning before each class discussion. For example, during the week of Brave Potatoes, I planned and focused each discussion and writing activity on the use of vivid verbs. Through the class discussions, I taught students that vivid verbs make writing more interesting. Student 14 pointed this out when she said that writing without vivid verbs would be “boring.”
Likewise, the writing activities provided my students with the opportunity to practice, share with others, and listen to their peers. I was curious how my students had improved at the end of my research. I compared the scores my students first received from their baseline writing sample to their scores from the final writing sample, *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. Students’ writing scores, shown in Table 7, compare these two writing samples. In addition, I created a chart to display the results (see Figure 19).

This analysis of the data I collected showed that twenty-six students demonstrated improved word choice in their writing.

![Baseline and When I Was Young in the Mountains](image.png)

Figure 19: Baseline and *When I Was Young in the Mountains*
Table 7: Baseline and *When I was Young in the Mountains*

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CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Study Overview

The focus of my study was to determine how the use of picture books during instruction improves student word choice in writing. To conduct this study, I used picture books during instruction as models of good word choice for my fourth-grade class. To collect my data, I used three different data collection strategies:

(1) I collected a writing sample from each student to establish a baseline and note any growth in student writing,

(2) I kept anecdotal records of student behaviors and comments during instruction, along with my daily reflections about each writing lesson, and

(3) I facilitated class discussions about each weekly focus skill, which allowed students to engage in debriefings at the conclusion of each writing lesson.

During the course of this study, I measured my students’ use of word choice in each writing samples, including the baseline, with the 6-Point Writing Guide in Vicki Spandel’s (2005) Creating Young Writers. This method of assessment enabled me to evaluate each piece of writing using the same criteria and note even the most “modest growth in writing skills.”

My students’ baseline writing samples confirmed that my students were not taking risks in their use of word choice. More than half of my class earned the lowest scores of a 2 or a 1 on their use of word choice. With each week of writing lessons, I
selected a picture book and planned activities that focused on specific aspects of word choice.

I began the first week with Toby Speed’s *Brave Potatoes* to teach my students to use vivid verbs in their writing. During this week, my students discussed how vivid verbs make writing more interesting to the reader. After analyzing the students’ *Brave Potatoes* writing samples, I determined that fourteen students showed improvement in their use of word choice from their baseline writing sample.

I continued instruction with vivid verbs the following week with Deborah Hopkinson’s *Under the Quilt of Night*. As I reviewed my anecdotal records and daily reflections, I realized my students had difficulty locating verbs in text. Therefore, I decided to continue instruction on verbs instead of requiring a writing sample from my students this week. My reflections note my observations that students improved in locating verbs within text.

The following week I used Ralph Fletcher’s *Hello, Harvest Moon* to teach my students how to use poetic language, such as personification and alliteration, in their writing. My anecdotal records show that two of male students disliked this type of writing. However, my analysis of students’ scores from the *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing samples show that fifteen students improved from their baseline writing samples, and eleven students improved from their *Brave Potatoes* writing sample.

For the final week of instruction, I used *When I Was Young in the Mountains* to teach my students how to use sensory words to create a clear message in their writing. Through class discussions during writing activities, I noted my students recognized that using sensory words to describe sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste make their writing
better. After reviewing my students’ *When I Was Young in the Mountains* writing samples, I concluded that twenty-eight of my students, 87.5% of my class, scored a 3 or higher.

At the conclusion of my study, I compared my students’ baseline writing samples to their *When I Was Young in the Mountains* writing samples. Analysis of the data showed that twenty-six students demonstrated improved word choice in their writing.

**Implications for Future Practice**

The results from this study indicate that using picture books as models of good word choice during instruction improved these students’ use of word choice in their writing. At the beginning of my study, students’ baseline writing samples gave me an idea of where each student stood in regards to their use of word choice before I began my research. As I scored students’ baseline writing samples, I noticed that my students’ writing lacked vivid verbs, as well as striking words and phrases. Throughout the remainder of my study, I looked for student growth in word choice in their writing samples.

As I reviewed students’ writing samples, I noted the connection my students made between the word choice in the picture books to their own writing as they incorporated the language from the picture books into their writing samples. For example, in Student 7’s *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing sample, she used several of Ralph Fletcher’s words, such as *bursting*, *nocturnal*, and *lunar* in her writing sample. Her word choice made this
piece of writing memorable and created a vivid image for the reader. My research supports the importance of using published literature to teach writing.

Donald Graves (2003), a renowned educator and researcher in the teaching of writing, states, “All children need . . . to be surrounded with poetry, stories, information books, biography, science and history, imaginative and factual books.” He also stresses the importance of literature being in “the center of an activity.” Previous research also indicates the importance of literature in the teaching of writing.

In a 2003 report, the National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges reported about one-quarter of students write above a "basic level.” They produce “rudimentary and fairly run-of-the-mill prose.” The other three-quarters of students do not write "elaborated responses . . . [with] the use of rich, evocative and compelling language." These results do not indicate that students cannot write; they indicate that students cannot write well.

The analysis of data from my study shows me the importance of incorporating picture books during writing instruction. Since picture books worked well in teaching word choice to my students during my four-week study, picture books may also work well in teaching the other traits of writing: sentence fluency, voice, organization, ideas, and conventions. Students would benefit from the model of what a writer does well. Therefore, I intend to use picture books, along with class discussions, debriefings, and writing activities, over the span of a school year, addressing each of the above-mentioned traits of writing.
Limitations of this Study

One of the limitations during this study was my students’ attendance. During the time I conducted this study, several of my students were absent. For example, Students 8 and 15 were absent the day my class wrote their *Brave Potatoes* writing samples (see Table 4). In addition, Student 20 was absent for most of study, including every writing sample.

Student absences could affect learning. If students were absent during class discussions, debriefings, small group writing activities, or my whole-group instruction, they missed valuable writing instruction. I felt that absences, especially excessive absences, inhibited student learning.

Another limitation of this study was student interest. During one week, I used Ralph Fletcher’s *Hello, Harvest Moon* to teach my students how to create lush, lyrical language using literary devices, such as similes and alliteration. According to my anecdotal records and daily reflections, Students 31 and 32, both males, shared that they “did not like” Fletcher’s choice of words. They demonstrated a lack of motivation during class discussions and debriefings. Their *Hello, Harvest Moon* writing sample scores were both the lowest score – a 1. These students appeared to plug in random words in their writing sample to fill the page. Their lack of interest in this type of word choice affected their learning.
Lingering Questions

Conducting this study challenged me as a first-year teacher. Being a recent college graduate, I had no previous experience in teaching writing to fourth-graders. However, to complete my study, I planned my own writing activities, class discussions, and lessons. I learned so much from this study that I feel I have grown both professionally and personally.

I realized the importance of modeling to facilitate student learning. The picture books served as excellent models of good word choice in writing for this study. I also saw the benefits students received from me modeling during instruction. For example, as I completed my sensory chart (Figure 11) for the *When I Was Young in the Mountains* writing sample, I saw how the talk-aloud strategy I utilized enabled students to see and hear my thought patterns. This provided the information students required to complete this task successfully.

During this study, I developed a bond with my students and became very familiar with each students’ writing. I enjoyed seeing how each student grew as a writer. As I completed this study, I possessed a few lingering questions:

- *Are my students going to apply what they learned about word choice in their writing next year?*

Both the students and I worked hard during this study, and I am confident that my students understand the importance of word choice in their writing. I am curious if what they learned during the course of this study will be evident in their writing during the
next school year. I would enjoy conducting a follow-up study to monitor my students’ use of word choice.

- *Are my students going to think about author’s craft as they read independently?*

  Will my students be able to recognize vivid verbs, sensory writing, or other literary elements that make the writing memorable? During our class discussions, students discussed what made the writing of an author memorable. For example, after I read *Brave Potatoes*, Student 7 recognized the way Speed described potatoes in his picture book was “way different” from the list we created in class describing our potatoes. Student 7 realized the author’s word choice made his writing more enjoyable for the reader.

- *Would this type of study work well across grade levels?*

  I am curious how a similar study in different grade levels would affect the writing of those students. For example, would first-graders benefit from this type of study? Likewise, would students in tenth grade benefit from the use of picture books during writing instruction? How would instruction need to be adapted if a study is conducted in a different grade level?

  Conducting this study has been a tremendous learning experience for me. I am honored each student participant applied his or her best effort into this study. In addition, I am grateful I was able to teach writing in a different way to these children. Many times, they were shocked that writing instruction did not involve pencil, paper, and a writing prompt. I hope the instruction stays with each student as they continue their education.
January 18, 2005

Laurie Anne McAdams
5834 Westport Drive
Port Orange, FL 32127

Dear Ms. McAdams:

With reference to your protocol # 2278 entitled, “How Does the Use of Picture Books During Instruction Improve Student Word Choice in Writing?” I am enclosing for your records the approved, expedited document of the UCFIRB Form you had submitted to our office.

Please be advised that this approval is given for one year. Should there be any addendums or administrative changes to the already approved protocol, they must also be submitted to the Board. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur. Further, should there be a need to extend this protocol, a renewal form must be submitted for approval at least one month prior to the anniversary date of the most recent approval and is the responsibility of the investigator (UCF).

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 407-823-2901.

Please accept our best wishes for the success of your endeavors.

Cordially,

Barbara Ward, CIM
IRB Coordinator

Copies: IRB File
APPENDIX B: PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSION FORM
February 10, 2005

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

We are experiencing a terrific school year, and I am thankful for your interest and involvement in your child’s education. As many of you know, I am in the midst of completing my master’s degree at the University of Central Florida, and I am beginning to work on my thesis. In order to complete this requirement, I must conduct an action research project in my classroom. Action research uses a problem-solving approach to improve teaching practice and student learning.

Since a large focus of fourth-grade is writing, I chose to conduct my action research project in this area. The question I will research is: How does the use of picture books during instruction improve student word choice in writing? During the course of my action research project, I will engage in a continuing cycle of action, observation, and reflection. During this process, I will research how the use of picture books will improve student writing.

In order to carry out this project, I will:

- Use picture book during instruction
- Analyze student writing before and after the use of picture books
- Survey the teachers at Horizon about their feelings and attitudes towards the use of picture books during instruction
- Survey the students about their feelings and attitudes towards the use of picture books during instruction

During the course of this study, I will maintain confidentiality of all participants. Students will be referred to by number and any writing samples will not contain their name. If you do not want your child to be included in this study, please let me know in writing. Please keep in mind that the purpose of this project is to improve how I teach and how students write.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me at the school by telephone (322-6150) or email (LAMCADAM@mail.volusia.k12.fl.us). Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Laurie Anne McAdams

I agree to let my child take part in this project. I know what she/he will have to do and that she/he can stop at any time.

_________________________  __________________________
Parent Signature    Date

_________________________  __________________________
Student Signature    Date
January 13, 2005

My name is Mrs. Laurie McAdams, and I am a student at the University of Central Florida. I would like you to participate in lessons for writing.

I will read several picture books, and we will look at the word choice the authors use. I would like for you to fill out a survey about each book.

You may stop being a participant at any time.

Would you like to do this? ________________________

_____________________________  ______________________
Student Name (printed)          Date

_______________________________
Student Signature
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What if you could spend one day with any person, real or fictional, from the past or present? Who would you choose and why?
APPENDIX F: ANECDOTAL RECORDS AND REFLECTION FROM
3/07/2005
3/7/2005

Referring to the chart was great
to refer to before reading the book.
It reminded them of their descriptive
potato words.

The book is great - students
were captivated while I read.
After reading, I asked, "What did you
think of the story?"

#8 [redacted] shared he liked it because it
was funny in parts.
#11 [redacted] liked the part about
the potatoes riding the ride at the fair.

#9 [redacted] said it had a lot of adjectives
he liked - they described the potatoes
well.

#24 [redacted] enjoyed the rhyme
pattern.

I had to explain some parts that
Students did not understand, such as the reference to Romeo & Juliet.

Debrief:

- #22 liked Speed's word choice better.
- #7 his words were very different from the words we had. "Way different!"
APPENDIX G: ANECDOTAL RECORDS FROM 3/14/2005
"What is this book about?"

- "Night"
- he gets a special quilt
- they might be on a boat
- Black Americans (refers to the messages that quilts held) - connecting to many fears presentation
- runaway slaves
- Black people trying to escape
- runaway at nighttime & they use the quilt to hide"
APPENDIX H: REFLECTION FROM 3/15/2005
3/15/05

What a day! I began to notice students were having problems with what a verb was.

I realized this as I walked around as students shared their word lists in small groups.

Had written "dark, deep blue" on her list, which is clearly not a verb.

I feel that I need to address this in instruction.

Instead of proceeding with writing samples, I will use this picture book, "The Quilt of Night," to help my students locate words more easily.
APPENDIX I: ANECDOTAL RECORDS FROM 3/28/2005
#86
Descriptive, verb usage

#12
I like repeated line

#3
Favorite words "Bobwhite"

#1
T-to-S connection

Indiana: coyotes vs. rabbits in yard "just like Cynthia Rylant" 😊
APPENDIX J: COMPLETED OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCY
When I was Young in the Mountains
By: Cynthia Rylant

When I was young in the mountains,
Grandfather came home in the evening
Covered with the black dust of a coalmine.
Only his lips were clean, and he used them
to kiss the top of my head.

When I was young in the mountains,
Grandmother spread the table with hot
Corn bread, pinto beans, and fried okra.

Later, in the middle of the night,
She walked through the grass with me to
the Johnny-house and held my hand in
the dark. I promised never to eat more
than one serving of okra again.

When I was young in the mountains,
We walked across the cow pasture and
through the woods, carrying our towels.
The swimming hole was dark and muddy,
and we sometimes saw snakes, but we
jumped in anyway.

On our way home, we stopped at
Mr. Crawford's for a mound of white
butter. Mr. Crawford and Mrs. Crawford
looked alike and always smelled of sweet
milk.

When I was young in the mountains,
We pumped pails of water from the well at
the bottom of the hill, and heated the
water to fill round tin tubs for our baths.

Afterward we stood in front of the
old black stove, shivering and giggling,
while Grandmother heated cocoa on top.

When I was young in the mountains,
We went to church in the schoolhouse on
Sundays, and sometimes walked with the
congregation through the cow pasture to
the dark swimming hole, for baptisms.

My cousin Peter was laid back into the
water, and his white shirt stuck to him, and
my Grandmother cried.

When I was young in the mountains,
We listened to frogs sing at dusk and
awoke to cowbells outside our windows.
Sometimes a black snake came in the yard,
and my Grandmother would threaten it
with a hoe.

If it did not leave, she used the hoe to kill
it. Four of us draped a very long snake,
dead of course, across our necks for a
photograph.

When I was young in the mountains,
We sat on the porch swing in the evenings,
and Grandfather sharpened my pencils with
his pocket knife. Grandmother sometimes
shelled beans and sometimes braided my
hair. The dogs lay around us, and the stars
sparkled in the sky. A bobwhite whistled
in the forest. "Bob-bob-bobwhite!"

When I was young in the mountains,
I never wanted to go to the ocean, and I
never wanted to go to the desert. I never
wanted to go anywhere else in the world,
for I was in the mountains.
And that was always enough.
APPENDIX K: COMPLETED SENSE CHART
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sight</th>
<th>Hearing</th>
<th>Touch</th>
<th>Taste</th>
<th>Smell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black dust hoe</td>
<td>Bobwhite</td>
<td>Snake shirt</td>
<td>Cornbread</td>
<td>Sweetmilk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>Frogs</td>
<td>Baptized</td>
<td>Fried or maturity</td>
<td>Pencils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mound of white</td>
<td>Cowbell</td>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>Pinko beans</td>
<td>Johnny- hoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelled beans</td>
<td>Pencil</td>
<td>Braid hair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Pencils</td>
<td>Towels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencils</td>
<td>Rocking chair</td>
<td>Porch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towels</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bean</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
APPENDIX L: MY COMPLETED SENSE CHART
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sight</th>
<th>Hearing</th>
<th>Touch</th>
<th>Taste</th>
<th>Smell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blocks</td>
<td>Kids laughing on playground</td>
<td>Centers</td>
<td>Dairy eyeballs</td>
<td>New carpet &amp; paint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet People</td>
<td>scream at boys</td>
<td>hammer nail in wood</td>
<td>make snacks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big carpet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When I was young in Kindergarten
APPENDIX M: 6-POINT ASSESSMENT GUIDE FOR WORD CHOICE
**Word Choice**

6. Explicit, memorable words make message clear, sometimes quotable.
   Writer knows the language of the content area—uses it with ease and skill.
   Powerful verbs give writing energy, well chosen phrases add precision.
   Text free of wordiness, jargon, tired phrases, vague language.

5. Carefully chosen words make message clear, interesting.
   The writer knows the language of the content area—uses it correctly.
   Strong verbs give writing energy, well chosen phrases lend clarity.
   Minimal wordiness, jargon, tired phrases, vague language.

4. Functional language makes message reasonably clear.
   Writer familiar with language of content area, uses most terms correctly.
   Occasional strong verbs or "just right" phrases.
   Wordiness, jargon, and vague language not problematic.

3. Imprecise, vague language begins to cloud message.
   Some important terminology used incorrectly or omitted when needed.
   Strong verbs, "just right" words or phrases infrequent.
   Problems with wordiness, jargon, vague language—message gets through.

2. Generalities, vague words, or misused words create confusion.
   Writer lacks language to make message clear/effective.
   Word choice ambiguous, puzzling, or so general it lacks meaning.
   Wordiness, jargon, or vague language impair meaning.

1. Words create no clear message.
   Words are misused or not meaningful—what is the writer trying to say?
   Writer consistently chooses words or phrases that do not speak to readers.
   Reader struggles but cannot break the code.
APPENDIX N: STUDENT 9 BASELINE WRITING SAMPLE
What if you could spend one day with any person, real or fictional, from the past or present? Who would you choose and why? If I could spend a whole day with someone it would be Elton John, I chose him because I like his music a lot. When his songs come on in the car I say turn in up. My favorite song of his is Answer In The Sky. It would be cool if he let me take a tour of his house. Or if he gave me one of his cats. I like Elton John because I like his music and he bought my grandma a house. That’s I would spend a day with him.
One night a million potatoes were haunting the city. They were so bumpy, they hurt themselves. 30 minutes later I heard my bedroom door open. At first I thought I was hallucinating. I rubbed my eyes then I saw green, lumpy potatoes smoshing in my room. They came in with tanks and army helmets. Some were in jets shooting mini potatoes. The head commando demanded his troops to stop. Then he explained he said our troops had invaded the city. Then he commanded his lumpy troops open fire in a squeezy voice. Then I got up and went to the police station. I told them what happened. Honestly they believed me so they made a wanted poster. LOOK on back of paper for details. Then I heard a loud crash the police station exploded. I asked the police officers "Are you all right?" and said "Say hello to my little friend with a Sylvester Solone accent." I came home my mom cried. Justin Ware were you and what's that bag? I said just baked potatoes. Mom said lets eat. I picked up a potato and it said I'll give you the worst indigestion in a suit squokey voice."
APPENDIX P: STUDENT 18 BASELINE WRITING SAMPLE
What if you could spend one day with any person—real or fictional, from the past or present? Who would you choose and why? If I could spend one day with any person, real or fictional, I would choose Beckham or Brett Favre. I would choose him or her which I’m sure it’s him, but I would choose him so that he could teach me more about soccer which uses math so I could get better at soccer. He would teach me how to get in a better position for a header and a chest ball. He would help me with kicking the ball harder and farther also he would teach me some tricks that I don’t know.

But........ Beckham is also in between Brett Favre actually there even though Brett Favre could teach me how to throw a football farther and faster also to throw a bullet which is a really fast ball. He could also teach me to throw some plays and run them that I don’t know. But if I could pick both of them I would.
Once there was a potatoe which a hog
that could not get through the night.
One day, it decided to go to Mrs. McGee's house
because it wanted to scare her family.
Now this potatoe was no ordinary potatoe, this
potatoe was burned, ie, and was an unpelted potatoe.
These potatoes are the worst kind
because they try to scare ya by the
next morning you'll want to eat it.
It will take over your mind to cause
wreak dominion everywhere. And then
every baby will turn into slaves for every
single unpelted potatoe. Then, knock!
Knock, knock, Tinky, are you trying to scare
your little cousin. No, men! As I was
saying, then hell go to our family and
yours and all our cousins except us and then
turn them into unpelted potatoes and we'll
escape to a place where the sun is always
shining, and live and endlessly ride it. Also,
like warm carrots. Also, the unpelted potatoes
will feed every baby warm inside. They'll
live in a basement in the corner of the house
on unpelted unpelted, and they will go whisking
whit all the stuck kids. And the unpelted,
will go: "It's just for you, yeah! It's just
for you!" And in no longer than one
year, true me and my cousin
where they lived. They said things when
they exclaimed that the unpelted potatoes
have taken over and then we heard that
we have won a contest to live in that

113
114

ALBACURKE! ALBACURKE!!!

AALBACURKE!!!

No longer try to transplant our plains;

AALBACURKE!!!

AALBACURKE!!!

AALBACURKE!!!

AALBACURKE!!!

AALBACURKE!!!

No longer try to transplant our plains and

AALBACURKE!!!

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AALBACURKE!!!

AALBACURKE!!!

AALBACURKE!!!
Under the Quilt of Night

I run so fast,
I lead the way;
The ones I love race right behind.
Pounding dirt and grass,
jumping rocks and roots,
My feet make drumbeats
on the path.

I'm running so far
Away from the farm where the master worked us,
Hoeing and picking,
Mending and sewing
Till my hands got raw.
Waiting

Runaways like us
Must hide in daylight.
So come morning
Werouch in the bushes
till night.

It's hot.
Sweat dribbles down my neck.
Thorns rake my arms and legs.
In the still afternoon,
Mosquitoes whine and tease
Just like the overseer's children did.

All I can do is wait
For the cover of darkness.
Oh, if only
I could dance into the open
And sing so loud
The stars would hear
And hurry out to guide our way!
What if you could spend one day with any person, real or fictional, from the past or present? Who would you choose and why? **If I could spend one day with someone it would be my cousin Jessica and her boyfriend Rob.**

I would choose them because they are so much fun. Not really. The real reason is so I can torment them all day and call them Big Fat Losers, or B.F.L. for short. Also so I can gross Jessica out by telling her what happens when you smell something. And I would tell Rob about recycling water.

They are kind of like my best friends, except they are adults. Also, I would choose them because they are super weird and gross.
There once was a policeman named Drew. He lived in Kalamazoo. One day he was walking and heard someone talking about his new potato stew.

"May I try some?" asked Drew. "I might even buy some of your new potato stew!"

"Oh, said the man, "just come in here."

"Wow," said Drew, "where is the stew?"

"I won!" said Drew, he potatoe from Kalamazoo.
APPENDIX V: STUDENT 7 HELLO, HARVEST MOON WRITING SAMPLE
Once upon a time in the darkness of midnight, a tiny bird, a little bird called Night Hawk, made a bursting bucket of green ooze. "I shall call it Glow-Morning Horizon," he said. Night Hawk. "I know we can't sell it for money."

Soon him and other nocturnal night creatures sold Night Hawk's invention to creatures of the day.

A few weeks later he saw a ghostly glow docket in the moonlight. "Oohh!" he said. "I want your invention now!"

"Never will you get my invention," Night Hawk cried.

A few weeks after the intrusion, Night Hawk's employees found his bones in his attic. On his bones was a note that said: "In the light, you shall die as well." And they all led miserable lives.

THE END
LIST OF REFERENCES


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[http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/lithandbook.html](http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/lithandbook.html)


[http://www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/elementary/palmasola/wexpository.htm](http://www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/elementary/palmasola/wexpository.htm)


