

**A Study Guide for *I Can Write Like That! A Guide to Mentor Texts*
*and Craft Studies for Writers' Workshop, K-6***

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A Letter to the Facilitator

Thank you for choosing *I Can Write Like That!* for your professional study. We believe that you and the other study participants will find it to be a useful tool for those who are new to author's craft, as well as a valuable resource for those looking to expand their use of mentor texts.

We realize that professional development can take many shapes—from book clubs to personal learning communities to undergraduate or graduate level courses. Our goal in designing this guide was to provide a flexible framework that you can adapt to your group's needs while facilitating discussions about the big ideas presented in *I Can Write Like That!* We have tried to incorporate the kinds of practical, hands-on activities that we have found to be the most useful during our own experiences as teachers participating in professional development.

The guide is loosely structured by tasks that will walk you through the book. We have incorporated these tasks into "sessions." We envision that a typical session will take about 90 minutes. You may find that some tasks will require a single session, whereas others will extend across multiple sessions. You may even find that condensing two sessions into one will work to your advantage. This will depend largely on the length of time you have allotted for each of your sessions but also on the makeup, context, and chemistry of the group.

In general, sessions are structured around a consistent format that includes

- Materials
- Reflections
- Exploration
- Share
- Homework

We suggest you read through this entire guide prior to your first session, so you have a broad view of the professional study and can plan prior to your first session.

To allow for great participation from all participants, we have designed most of the exploration activities for small groups. The size of the groups will depend on the number of participants in your professional study. Our recommendation is to have, *at minimum*, pairs for these activities to allow for sharing of thoughts and exchange of ideas as the exploration unfolds.

Keep in mind that the success of this study is directly linked to the picture books you'll be using as mentor texts. Perhaps the most daunting challenge for you, as the facilitator, will be gathering the mentor texts for each session. Again, planning ahead is key. First, read through the guide and make a list of the books you'll need as you go. Then locate copies for each participant, but—important!—share the burden with the other participants. You might consider distributing the booklist to participants (preferably via e-mail before the first meeting) to determine which titles they will be able to share from their own collections or school libraries. Plus, don't overlook the public library as a resource. If your local library doesn't have a book, ask if the book is available through an interlibrary loan. Gathering the books will require some legwork, but the effort will pay off over the course of the study as participants have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the writing of talented authors.

In conclusion, have fun with this! Take time to treasure these exceptional picture books. And make time for collegial sharing. It's something for which we teachers never allow ourselves adequate time. It is our hope that each participant will walk away from this professional study feeling that it will have a lasting and positive influence on his/her teaching and, most important, on students' learning.

If we can serve as a resource in some way during your professional study, please contact us (sehmann@smithtown.k12.ny.us and kgayer@smithtown.k12.ny.us). Furthermore, we would love to hear feedback on how it's going. We're always open to suggestions. Enjoy!

Session 1: Getting Started

Materials

- Getting Started Questions
- One of the following picture books to read aloud:
 - *Come On, Rain!* by Karen Hesse
 - *A Quiet Place* by Douglas Wood
 - *Up North at the Cabin* by Marsha Wilson Chall
 - *Water Hole Waiting* by Jane Kurtz and Christopher Kurtz
 - *When the Fireflies Come* by Jonathan London

Reflections

Use the following questions to get discussion rolling. This exercise is a valuable investment of time that will allow participants to self-reflect while establishing a rapport with one other. These are key factors in determining the success of the learning experience, so make every effort to allow time for this exercise.

Getting Started Questions

- If you could have only one book in your classroom library, what would it be and why?
- Have you ever done an author study? Why? Why not? Name one author you chose to study and tell why you chose that author.
- Who is a favorite character from a picture book? What made that character memorable?
- What characteristics do you look for when selecting picture books for read-alouds?
- Have you ever used a picture book to teach a writing lesson? How did you use it?
- What is your definition of mentor texts? Craft studies?
- What are your goals for this professional study? How will you connect these to classroom application and student learning?

Exploration

Select a book from the suggested booklist and read it aloud to the group. During the reading, have participants jot down any craft techniques they notice that the author uses to capture the reader.

Share

Share findings. Talk about why the author may have chosen to employ these techniques for this particular book. Ask participants to point out the techniques that they found especially effective and then explain why.

Homework

Have participants

- Write about a childhood writing experience.
- Reflect on today's session and jot down questions and comments they would like to share next time.

Session 2: I Can Write Like That! What's It All About?

Materials

- Copy of *I Can Write Like That!* for each participant (needed for each session hereafter)

Reflections

As a follow up to the previous session, take a few minutes to share and discuss questions and comments from the previous session. Then ask for volunteers to share their written responses about a writing memory. Allow time for feedback. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- Did you enjoy writing when you were a child/student?
- Did you ever try to model your writing after a favorite author?
- Did you have a teacher whose guidance and encouragement inspired you to write? Or perhaps a teacher whose criticism discouraged you from writing?

Exploration

To better understand the content and structure of *I Can Write Like That!*, read aloud the Table of Contents. Encourage questions and comments.

After reading, allow time for participants to read the Introduction to themselves.

Share

Now it's time to dig in! Discuss the Introduction as a group. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- What does writing instruction look like in your classroom? In your district?
- Are you familiar with the experts Sue and Kellyann mention (e.g., Lucy Calkins, Ralph Fletcher, Katie Wood Ray, Judy Davis)? Do you have writing mentors who have inspired your teaching?
- What is your philosophy of writing? Compare your philosophy to Sue and Kellyann's. After listening to the other participants' philosophies, what similarities and differences do you notice among the group?
- Have you participated in professional development specifically focused on writing instruction?
- How do the goals that Sue and Kellyann outline for their readers (pp. 5–6) compare with your expected outcomes for this study?
- What was your reaction to the poem that concludes the Introduction?

Homework

Have participants read Part 1, "Craft Elements" (pp. 9–25).

Session 3: Author's Craft

Materials

- Mentor texts for the craft elements receiving in-depth study (Refer to the list of exemplar mentor texts that accompanies each craft element in Part 1 [pp. 9–25]. Find additional books in the quick-reference craft elements matrixes in Part 3 [pp. 66–77].)

Reflections

Discuss the homework assignment. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- Is it realistic to expect K–6 writers to learn the 27 craft elements that Sue and Kellyann cite in Part 1? Why? Why not?
- Have you previously explored any of the 27 craft elements? If so, discuss your experience. If not, explain why.
- Are there craft elements that you were surprised to see excluded from the list?

Exploration

Organize participants into groups and assign each group one or more craft elements to explore. Based on the number of participants, the availability of mentor texts, and the length of time you have to devote to this session, determine which elements will receive in-depth study.

Distribute the selected mentor texts to each group. Each group should spend time looking through the books and discussing why they titles were chosen as exemplars for that particular craft. Each group should then select their favorite exemplar.

Share

Bring the groups together. A representative from each group should present the group's favorite mentor text and explain why group members found it to be the most effective model for that particular craft. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- What examples of author's craft did you find particularly effective? What made them work so well?
- Did the author's writing evoke a response in you as the reader? In what way?

Homework

Have participants write a short piece about a favorite place. Ask that they choose one or more of the craft elements studied during the session to incorporate into their writing.

Session 4: Craft Search, Part 1

Materials

- Mentor texts (Do not use books from the previous session. Refer to the craft elements matrixes [pp. 66–71] to find books that use a variety of craft elements.)
- Sticky notes for each participant

Reflections

Ask for volunteers to share their written responses about a favorite place. Participants should be encouraged to listen with their “writers’ ears.” Allow time for feedback, emphasizing craft usage. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- Did you notice the use of any craft elements?
- What did you find particularly effective as the listener?
- Are you able to make some generalizations about the craft elements that evoke a sense of time and place?

Exploration

Organize participants into groups. (Feel free to use the same groups from the previous session or form new groups.) Based on the number of participants, the availability of mentor texts, and the length of time you have to devote to this session, determine how many books each group should receive. Keep in mind: The more opportunity participants have to search for craft in children’s books, the more adept they will become at seeking out mentor texts to help them meet their instructional goals.

Distribute the selected mentor texts to each group and have groups work to discover the craft elements found within each book. Participants should jot their findings on sticky notes, affix the notes to the corresponding book pages, and leave the notes in the books in preparation for the next session.

Share

Most of the work from this session will be shared during the following session, but allow a few minutes to bring the groups together. Rather than having participants share their findings, encourage them to discuss the process. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- Is it becoming easier to spot author’s craft now that you have been immersing yourself in craft investigation?
- Does this exercise get you thinking about how you can help students become adept at identifying author’s craft? If so, how do you envision this type of investigation in your classroom?

Homework

Have participants explore Part 3, “Mentor Texts to Demonstrate Craft Elements” (pp. 65–140). Ask that they first read the introduction in full and then spend time exploring the matrixes and annotated bibliography.

Session 5: Craft Search, Part 2

Materials

- Mentor texts from the previous session

Reflections

Discuss the homework assignment. Spend time letting participants share their thoughts on how they envision using the matrixes and annotated bibliography as resources for writers' workshop. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- What do you think will be most helpful about the bibliography?
- Will the matrixes be helpful? Why? Why not?
- Is there anything that could make these resources even more helpful to you as a writing teacher?

Exploration

Have participants form into the groups from the previous session. Be sure each group has its stack of books from the previous session.

Now it's time to delve into their work! In the Annotated Bibliography (pp. 78–140), Sue and Kellyann list all the craft elements they found within each book, along with examples from the books. Have participants compare their findings with those of Sue and Kellyann by checking their sticky notes against the bibliography.

Share

Bring the groups together. Allow time for participants to share their work. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- How did you do? Did you identify all the craft elements found? Did your findings mirror Sue and Kellyann's?
- Are you noticing that some books have many more examples of author's craft than others? And that the craft in books that have fewer examples can sometimes take your breath away? How does this affect your thinking as you begin to put together a mentor library of your own?
- Do you have a favorite example from your investigation that you would like to share with the group?

Homework

Have participants read the introduction to Part 2, "Selected Craft Study Lessons" (pp. 27–30). Part 2 includes 10 craft study lessons using mentor texts. Learning in the next phase of this professional study should concentrate on each of these craft studies so that participants can create craft study lessons of their own.

Session 6: Selected Craft Study Lessons

Materials

- Mentor texts for each craft study lesson (Refer to the booklist that accompanies each craft study in Part 2 [pp. 31–63.])

Reflections

Discuss the homework assignment. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- How does the format that Sue and Kellyann use for craft study lessons compare with others you have used or read about?
- How do you envision weaving craft study into writers' workshop? Will you need to make adjustments to your day?
- Where do you see your students along the continuum of understanding about craft? Are some students new to a particular craft? Are some sophisticated writers, able to adopt several crafts as their own and work them into their writing with intention and fluidity?

Exploration

Organize participants into groups. (Feel free to use the same groups from a previous session or form new groups.) Each group should select one or more of the 10 craft study lessons highlighted in Part 2. Based on the number of groups, determine how many craft studies to assign to each group. Keep in mind, however, that you must assign all 10 lessons for further exploration, even if it means you need to stretch this exploration over multiple sessions. The ultimate goal of this professional study is for participants to be able to create their own craft studies using a variety of appropriate mentor texts. It is important that this investigation be thorough and focused so that a deep understanding is forged.

Covering so much material may seem intimidating, but using a Jigsaw approach will make it less so. Using this approach, each group is responsible for a piece of the puzzle—in this case, reading and understanding its designated craft study and then “teaching” the content to the other groups.

Having mentor texts on hand will help each group present the lessons most effectively. For some lessons in the book, you will find that specific books are required. For others, suggested booklists are provided. Depending on the books you have, you may want to supplement with other books that incorporate the craft being studied (see Annotated Bibliography, pp. 78–140).

Finally, don't forget about the reproducible recording sheets in Appendix A (pp. 141–146). Encourage participants to use them, expand on them, and design their own.

Share

Bring the groups together to allow for teaching of the individual craft studies. Groups can present the content in a number of ways. For example, one group might model a lesson, with one participant adopting the role of teacher and the other participants adopting the roles of students. Be sure to encourage creativity!

Share as many of the craft studies as time permits, but don't rush this important process. Keep in mind that you can discuss any remaining studies in subsequent sessions.

Homework

If participants are practicing teachers, have them try out the lessons in their classrooms. Have nonteaching participants try the writing exercises on their own. Here are some additional suggestions for nonteaching participants:

- Come up with an adaptation to take the craft study up or down a grade level.
- Come up with celebration ideas that are well suited to the craft study.

Session 7: Design Your Own Craft Lesson

Materials

- Mentor texts for each craft study lesson. (Refer to the craft elements matrixes [pp. 66–77] and annotated bibliography [pp. 78–140].)

Reflections

Allow time for teachers to share their experience of trying out a craft study in the classroom. Be sure to have them share examples of student work! Nonteachers can share their writing or ideas.

Exploration

Now that participants have explored 10 of the 27 craft elements highlighted in *I Can Write Like That!*, it's time to design their own craft studies. The ultimate goal of the book and this professional study is to make students better writers. Encourage participants to bear this in mind as they design craft studies. Throughout the process, participants should be asking, "Is this a realistic expectation for students and will it make them better writers?"

Organize participants into groups. (Feel free to use the same groups from a previous session or form new groups.) Have each group select 1 craft from the remaining 17.

Following the format used by Sue and Kellyann, each group's craft study should incorporate the following five components:

1. Notice and Name
2. Explore
3. Give It a Try
4. Celebration
5. Adaptations

Using the resources provided in Parts I and III, each group should select which picture books will serve as mentor texts for the lesson. This is the most time-consuming—and important—step in developing a craft study lesson. Be sure to provide adequate time for participants to find and pore through books. Also, don't rush the process! What could be more enjoyable than curling up with a great children's literature?

In addition, be sure groups include adaptations so that all participants can walk away with an invaluable resource filled with lessons that apply to a variety of students, no matter their grade or writing experience and proficiency.

Share

Have groups take turns presenting their craft studies. Allow adequate time for collegial sharing and critique. As each group presents its craft study, other participants should make notes about what is especially effective, what is unclear, what is unrealistic, and so on. Here are some suggested conversations starters:

- What did you like about the craft study?
- What needed clarification or further explanation?
- Did the craft study seem appropriate for the intended grade level?
- What did you enjoy most about designing the craft study? What did you find most difficult?
- Has this activity prepared you to develop craft studies in your classroom?
- What impact do you think this type of teaching will have on students' writing?

Homework

Let groups know that they are responsible for providing copies of each lesson to each study participant. The collection of lessons will serve as a valuable resource to supplement the lessons provided by Sue and Kellyann in *I Can Write Like That!*

Make sure groups know that they are responsible for typing and distributing their craft study lessons. Lesson copies can be distributed as hard-copy printouts or electronic documents.

Session 8: Children’s Books About Writing

Materials

- As many books as you can gather from Appendix B, “Additional Reading Lists” (pp. 147–149)
- *S Is for Story: A Writer’s Alphabet* by Esther Hershenhorn

Reflections

As this is the next-to-last session, this is the perfect time for participants to reflect on the entire professional study. Allow time for each participant to share his or her thoughts. Encourage each participant to share one takeaway from this study that will be reflected in his/her writing instruction. One very important question you might ask at this time is, “If you could select just one stylistic goal for students to master this year, what would it be?”

Exploration

Read the introductory paragraph from Appendix B and explain that the books in the appendix are children’s books that were specifically written about writing. Then share the copyright information for *S Is for Story* so participants can add it to the booklist from in Appendix B. This book, published after the release of *I Can Write Like That!*, is a must-have for teachers of writers’ workshop. In a large group or in smaller groups, spend time examining the books from Appendix B that you were able to gather.

Share

Give participants the opportunity to share their thoughts about the books and to suggest other books they might use to supplement their instruction. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

- Which of these resources would you use with students?
- How would you incorporate these resources into your instruction?
- Do you have a favorite resource that Sue and Kellyann did not include in the appendix?

Homework

Have participants come to the next session prepared to present a new mentor text. As a culminating activity for this professional study, each participant will be asked to “read like a writer” and seek a recently published picture book that is chock-full of craft. *I Can Write Like That!* includes books published through 2008, so have participants search for books published beyond 2008. This is a great way to build or grow mentor libraries.

Don’t feel as if you have to restrict this activity to new books. As an alternative, encourage participants to share old favorites that Sue and Kellyann did not include in the book. Take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate exceptional picture books!

Session 9: Reading Like a Writer

This final session is much less structured than the previous sessions, but this should not diminish its importance. Sue and Kellyann purposely designed the session this way to provide an opportunity for participants to spend their final session in a relaxed celebration of books.

Have each participant give a brief book talk about his or her chosen book. Make sure each incorporates excerpts of outstanding craft from the book and offers ideas on how the book might be used within writers' workshop. This activity allows participants to go through the process of selecting books for a mentor library. The bonus is that participants will have a list of new books in addition to the books already suggested by Sue and Kellyann.