

# The ABC's of Good Writing

## Directions

- 1 Ask students to think about what it means to be a good writer.
- 2 Next, ask students to describe what a good writer does in order to create an interesting and well-written story. What does it take to be a good writer?
- 3 Place the transparency on the overhead projector, and distribute copies of the blackline master. Explain to students that, together, you'll be thinking of words or phrases that describe good writers.
- 4 Point out the letters A to Z on the transparency. Tell students that each letter can be used as a prompt to think of words or phrases that describe good writers. (For example, the letter A might prompt a student to think of "Appreciate the audience.")
- 5 Write students' responses in the appropriate boxes on the transparency, and encourage them to do the same on their copy.
- 6 As students offer responses, reinforce their participation with verbal acknowledgment.
- 7 Continue to encourage students to add more ideas to the transparency. Discuss each idea as it is given. If students have difficulty finding connections with some of the letters, offer verbal clues.
- 8 Once the transparency has been completed, encourage students to incorporate each of these ideas into their writing.

## To Extend the Lesson

- \* Have students form small groups. Then ask them to refer to their favorite trade books for examples of responses listed on their chart.
- \* Make the chart into a class calendar. Each day of the week represents a letter on the chart, so students would focus on that writing strategy for the day. For example, on day three, the letter is C and the strategy is "choose exciting and interesting words". For that day, students would focus on using descriptive vocabulary in their writing.

### \* Purpose \*

This lesson helps students recognize the key strategies proficient writers use when writing a story. After creating the overhead transparency together, you and your students will discuss, share, and model the characteristics of a strong writer.

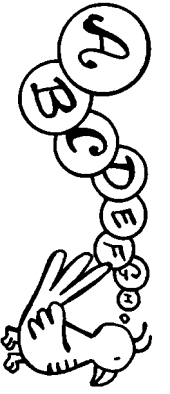
### \* Suggested Books \*

The perfect extension for this lesson is to share autobiographies written by some of your students' favorite writers. Students will enjoy reading about the lives of their favorite authors. It may help students' own writing to see how these authors incorporate the key writing concepts and ideas discussed during this lesson.

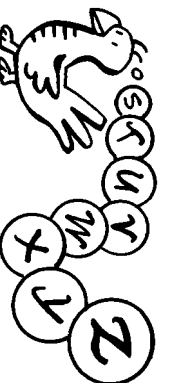
*Knots on My Yo-Yo String*,  
by Jerry Spinelli

*The Moon and I*, by Betsy Byars

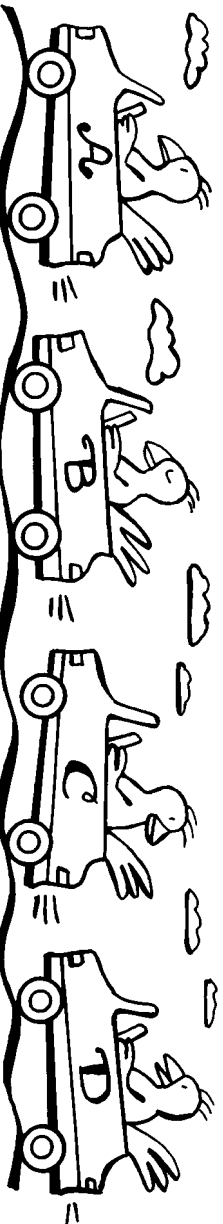
*Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio*, by Peg Kehret



# The ABC's of Good Writing



A	B	C	D	E	F
G	H	I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X
Y	Z				



# Great Beginnings Grid

## Directions

- 1 Before class, gather a wide variety of children's books featuring strong beginnings. Make copies of the blackline master.
- 2 Start a discussion about the many different ways authors begin a story. You might share a few beginning lines from favorite books and encourage students to analyze the effectiveness of each one.
- 3 Tell students that they'll be looking at a variety of books to identify the different ways authors begin their stories. Be sure students understand that they are only focusing on the first line of the books.
- 4 Place the transparency on the overhead projector. Point to and explain each section on the grid. Tell students that they'll have a copy of the grid to complete with their group members.
- 5 Share a beginning line from a preselected book and fill in the transparency together. Tell students that you'll be leaving the *Strategy Author Used* section blank for now, but they should think of a way to describe how the authors began their books.
- 6 Divide the class into groups of three or four. Select books from your collection, four for each group, that each group will read and review, and give each group a copy of the blackline master. Once they are finished, each group can share its findings.
- 7 As students read their favorite beginning lines, start compiling descriptions for each author's strategy. For example, if the story begins "Once upon a time, there lived a wicked queen," the author is beginning with a description of the main character. Here are other strategies:
 

begins with a question	begins with suspense
begins with dialogue	begins with an extraordinary fact
- 8 Once all groups have shared, revisit the *Strategy Author Used* section on the transparency and discuss the correct strategy to include.

## To Extend the Lesson

- \* Students can practice writing powerful leads for their own stories. Let each student pick his or her own strategy, write a story, and then share it with the class. The class must then guess which strategy was used.

### \* Purpose \*

The purpose of this lesson is to help students identify and appreciate the many different strategies writers use to create effective and powerful beginnings in their writing.

### \* Suggested Books \*

#### Picture Books

*Chicken Sunday*, by Patricia Polacco

*Never Ride Your Elephant to School*, by Doug Johnson

*Owl Moon*, by Jane Yolen

#### Chapter Books

*Danger at the Fair*, by Peg Kehret

*Tornado*, by Betsy Byars

*Where the Red Fern Grows*, by Wilson Rawls

