

# Revising & Editing Strategies



# Snapshots

An elaboration strategy from Barry Lane  
After the End



When photographers want to take a close-up of something, they use zoom lenses. This lens allows them to capture close, physical detail.

Writers have special lenses too. When they want to describe a subject and write intricate details, they can elaborate by using **Snapshots**. Using snapshots, writers can recreate a scene, character or experience through physical descriptions and sensations.

## A Writer's Lenses

**figurative language** – similes, personification, metaphors, onomatopoeia

**adjectives** – descriptive words

**sensory images** – see, hear, feel, taste, smell

## An Example

Jerry Spinelli makes a dilapidated house come alive with this snapshot in Maniac Magee:

*Maniac had seen some amazing things in his lifetime, but nothing as amazing as that house. From the smell of it, he knew this wasn't the first time an animal had relieved itself on the rugless floor. In fact, in another corner he spotted a form of relief that could not be soaked up by newspapers.*

*Cans and bottles lay all over, along with crusts, peelings, cores, scraps, rinds, wrappers—everything you would normally find in a garbage can. And everywhere there were raisins.*

*As he walked through the dining room, something hit him. He looked up into the laughing faces of Russell and Piper. The hole in the ceiling was so big they both could have jumped through it at once.*

*He ran a hand along one wall. The peeling paint came off like cornflakes.*

*Nothing could be worse than the living and dining rooms, yet the kitchen was. A jar of peanut butter had crashed to the floor; someone had got a running start, jumped into it, and skied a brown, one-footed track to the stove. On the table were what appeared to be the remains of an autopsy performed upon a large bird, possibly a crow. The refrigerator contained two food groups: mustard and beer. The raisins here were even more abundant. He spotted several of them moving. They weren't raisins; they were roaches. (pp. 131-132)*

Use visualization or literally sketch the scene in the margin to help you see the descriptive details and sensations that you had omitted from the writing.

# Exploding the Moment



## *Barry Lane suggests:*

"If you were a movie director making a film of your life, where would you use slow motion? Think of happy moments, sad moments, joyful moments. Talk with friends and trigger each other's ideas.

There are many ways to explode moments over a page. You can write long descriptive snapshots or delve deeply into a character's thoughts or write a dialogue mixed with snapshots and thoughtshots, or combine all three strategies. The trick is to use what works best for the particular moment you are describing."

When you are ready, fill a piece of paper with that one moment. Don't go to the next day or later that same day. Take one moment in time and stretch it out for three or four sentences or more. Stick inside that moment:

- Use your binoculars: zoom in with sights, sounds, smells, tastes.
- Read your last sentence. If it's a snapshot, try switching to thoughtshots, or if it's all thoughtshots, try switching gears and adding snapshots.
- If you finish half-way down the page, go back and insert (^) a snapshot or a thoughtshot.
- Close your eyes and imagine yourself there. Wait for words to come.

Below are some quick suggestions of moments to explode. Make a list of your own while talking to classmates.

- a time you got lost
- a time you lost someone or something
- something painful happened
- something happy happened
- the big moment in the game
- the time a skill paid off
- a time you almost forgot
- a moment funny now, not then
- a moment involving a pet
- a moment involving a sister, brother, or friend

# Baby Steps

Baby Steps are used to describe an action step by step. For example: *“He walked through the doorway.”* could be written:

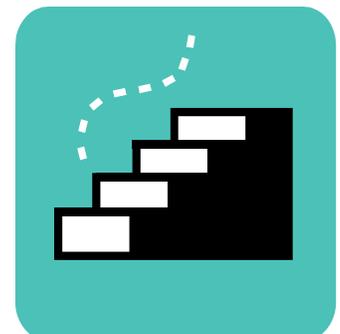
*“He grasped the cold doorknob and turned it slowly to the right. He pushed the door inward. The hinges squeaked and cold air rushed past the open door. The room was dark. He darted his eyes to the right. Nothing. He pushed the door open a little farther, and slowly moved his right foot into the room. His shoe creaked a bit as it hit the polished wood floor.”*

Exploding the Moment or Baby Steps give the reader meaningful details. It's when a moment is slowed way down – like the movies.

The following is an example of an exploded moment written by a 5th grader.

*It was 4:00 a.m. of a cold Saturday morning in January. We were going to see my cousin take off to Massachusetts and the to Saudi Arabia. We were at the air base in Burlington, VT. When my mom got in the door she started to cry. I could feel the urge to cry but I held it in. All my relatives were there. Finally we went into the big cold room where we would see them go. Everyone was crying but I held it in. I felt like a walking teddy bear because I would walk over to someone and they would give me a hug, then to another person and the same thing would happen. It was now 6:30 and I was now the official helmet holder—not for very long because that thing weighed a ton. We had brought flags. One for my cousin Todd and one for us to wave at him. When it was finally time to go we all went outside and waved as they drove in their big, big truck. I felt my heart drop and get heavy when they went away and I remember this like it was yesterday.*

(From Barry Lane's [Reviser's Toolbox](#))



# Thoughtshots



Thoughtshots are the reflections, thoughts, feeling, and opinions of the author. Thoughtshots are another way to include detail in your writing. A thoughtshot allows the writer to pause and reflect on a particular event or a detail.



For example, you could write, "My mother always sat down in front of the television after dinner." But a thoughtshot would be far more interesting to read. Here is an example:

*I don't know why my mother always sat down in front of the television after dinner. Perhaps it was the only time she really had for herself. My sister and I always had to do the dishes. My step-father usually went out to the garage to work on the old Buick that he always thought he could get up and running someday. Maybe Mom just liked being alone with her game show. She always watched Jeopardy with Alex Trebeck. I think she thought Alex was handsome and smart. Maybe she dreamed that Alex would come into our living room one day and swoop her off to game show land. Mom knew a lot of the answers on Jeopardy, and she'd call them out to the television as if those contestants could hear her. "Where is China!" she'd yell. I always thought it was sort of dumb, and I remember one time my best friend Angela was over at my house. She heard my mother and looked at me like I was weird.*

Try It:

1. Gather some Post-its®
2. Reread your piece of writing and look for a place where you might do some thinking. Ask yourself, "What was I thinking then?" or "What do I think now?"
3. Insert your Post-it® at the spot and write what you are thinking.

Thoughtshots give the reader insight into your thinking process as it relates to the way you see the world, your place in the world, and how you interact with the world around you.

(From Barry Lane's After the End)



# Thoughtshots – continued

## *Revealing Your Character through Internal Dialogue (Thoughtshots) – Example Lesson*

- Barry Lane says, “Thoughtshots are another way to include detail in your writing. A thoughtshot allows the writer to pause and reflect on a particular event or a detail.” To prepare for this lesson, find a piece of a familiar text that illustrates the use of a character’s internal dialogue or thought-shots. Some suggestions: Hatchet by Gary Paulsen, Journey by Patricia MacLachlan, Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key by Jack Gantos.
- Enlarge the selected piece of text.
- In a shared setting, read-aloud the piece of text and stop when a character’s internal thoughts are described. Color-code the text so that the thought-shots can be easily seen.
- Ask students: *What do you notice is happening around the thoughtshots? When did this author add thoughtshots to their story? Why do you think the author decided to use thoughtshots? How does it help the reader?*
- Refer to Lucy Calkins Session IX, on pg. 115 of MAWW prior to teaching this lesson, the idea of a character’s internal storyline is discussed.
- **Model** for students how you would add thoughtshots to a piece of writing. Be sure to model adding at least 2 thoughtshots.
- EXAMPLE:

Piece **without** thoughtshots:

*I wasn't sure I could do it, but for some reason I decided I would try rollerblading with my daughters, Caris and Leah. "You can do it Mom!" they both cried that hot summer day in July. So, there I was at the end of our driveway filled with uncertainty.*

Piece **with** thoughtshots:

*I wasn't sure I could do it, but for some reason I decided I would try rollerblading with my daughters, Caris and Leah. "You can do it Mom!" they both cried that hot summer day in July. **"I hope you're right," I thought as I tried to stand on my new rollerblades.** So, there I was at the end of our driveway filled with uncertainty.*

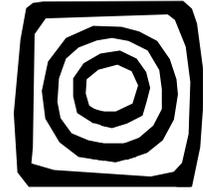
LINKS for more on thought-shots:

<http://www.npatterson.net/memoir/writing.html>

*When writing, it is important to create experiences where the writer pulls back and reflects on thoughts, feelings, or opinions. It can be defined as a snapshot that takes place in a character's head. From:*

<http://www.wku.edu/3kinds/rjpsrevis.html>

# Depth Charge



## Modeling:

- Begin by modeling this process with a draft you (the teacher) have written.
- Find a “telling” sentence in your draft. This is a sentence that needs to be further developed.

**Example:** *Once I won a Toni doll.* (telling sentence)

- Write that sentence at the top of a transparency.
- Now circle the most interesting word in the telling sentence.

**Example:** *Once I won a (Toni) doll.*

- Now write another sentence expanding, developing, clarifying that word.

**Example:** *Dolls were never my thing; I preferred reading or active games like hopscotch.*

- Now circle the most interesting word in the new sentence.

**Example:** *Dolls were never my thing; I preferred (reading) or active games like hopscotch.*

- Write another sentence expanding, developing, clarifying that word.

**Example:** *Reading activated my mind, but games like hopscotch, jacks, and ball blocks kept me moving.*

- Optional (Repeat the process one more time).

**Example:** *With dolls you dressed them and mostly sat around with them.*

- Insert the 2-3 “new” sentences between your telling sentence and the sentence that followed it in the draft. Read the results.

**Example:** *Once I won a Toni doll. Dolls were never my thing; I preferred reading or active games like hopscotch. Reading activated my mind, but games like hopscotch, jacks and ball blocks kept me moving. So what was I going to do with a Toni doll.*

## **STUDENT APPLICATION:**

- Ask the students to find a telling sentence in their draft and repeat the modeled process in their own draft.
- You may want to use student drafts to use whole class for 2-3 more examples before you ask students to work independently.
- The writer should see a definite building of connected thought with much richer development of ideas.

# More Suggestions For Development of Ideas from Barry Lane

## Super Sentences:

- 1) Begin by showing students a simple but complete sentence. Example: "I went for a walk."
- 2) Ask students to verbalize the questions a sentence like this hopefully brings to their minds--Where did you go? Were you alone? Why did you go on this walk? What did you see or do on this walk? When did you go? Did you come back?
- 3) Using these ideas, students will then add some life to the sentence--details, description, etc.--to help it become a "super sentence."  
Example: "Last night, my dog Rufus and I took a long walk through the dark woods."
- 4) These super sentences should be shared aloud before being displayed (a Super Sentences bulletin board) under the original sentence to emphasize the changes that were made.

## Show, Don't Tell

Model with your own paper. Draw a line down the middle of a clean sheet of paper. On the left side write what you told the reader and on the right side write so that you "show" the reader. Example: Tell: *It was a very old rug.* Show: *The rug was torn around the edges with big splotches of white paint.* Tell: *Birthday parties are fun.* Show: *Licking the pink frosting off the candles...*

- Don't over explain.
- Don't tell us anything we already know.
- Don't put in details what might not be important to the scene you're trying to create.
- Don't over describe a character's physical qualities (let a character be known through action and tone).

**Development of character:** Read aloud a book that exemplifies character. Then have your students discuss different ways to create characters in writing. Have students take a sheet of paper and divide it into four sections. Model each of the following steps before expecting students to do on their own. In the first box have students write about what their character(s) look like. In the second box, write about the characters through their actions or gestures. In the third box, write about what the character is thinking or feeling. In the fourth box, write about the character from another person's point of view. Have students read what they wrote and have them incorporate ideas into their stories to create characters with more depth.

## Specificity of Words

**Verbs Are The Engines of Sentences:** The more specific the verb, the more energy and specificity the sentence will have. For example, instead of writing "A bird *flies* in the sky." we could write, "A bird *soars* in the sky," or "A bird *flutters* in the sky."

Ask students to make a list of all the possible verbs that could fit into the blanks:

The light\_\_\_in the window. (streams, pours, gushes, spills, flows, surges)

The boat\_\_\_in the water. (glides, skims, sails, flows, slides)

Ask them to visualize and discuss changes each verb makes to the image and the sound of the writing. Then ask them to select a piece of writing they've written and underline or highlight verbs. Ask them to brainstorm or look in the thesaurus for alternative verbs for as many underlined verbs as they can and see if they can make the "engine" of their writing more powerful.

**Thought:** "The nouns make the pictures clear and the verbs (none passive) make those pictures move." Have students see if they can substitute stronger, more precise verbs for any humdrum ones they may have used (may use thesaurus).

**Nouns Are The Wheels of Sentences:** Nouns need to be sturdy, solid, and specific. Using vague nouns like *stuff* or *thing* will flatten any sentence. Sometimes it's easier to try to revise some else's writing – it's less personal and easier to see what needs to be revised. As a class, or in small groups (after modeling), ask students to replace these vague nouns with specific and concrete nouns:

Example:

The *thing* broke down. (original)

The *air conditioner* broke down. (specific noun)

She packed a lot of *stuff* in her bag.

I hear *something* on the train track.

She bought some *things* at the store.

## Collect Word to Create Your Own Thesaurus

For example: for beautiful...*handsome, lovely, graceful, elegant, exquisite, delicate, beaming, radiant, charming*

Lesson: Ask students to read through their notebooks or folders of writing and highlight words (other than *it, and, the*, etc. that they use repeatedly in their writing; worn or tired words. Then have them make a list of these words on a piece of paper. Have students first think of alternative words and then look up in a thesaurus. This will help students get into the habit of reaching in their own minds for other words.

## Narrow The Topic

If student's topics are too broad, demonstrate how to narrow down a large topic. For example, from My Family, ask "Who is a special person in my family?" Then from My Grandfather, ask "What is one special memory I have about Grandpa?"

Above Ideas from The Revision Toolbox, by Georgia Heard

## The Writing VCR

Think of your writing as a VCR with four buttons, one to play, one to fast forward, one to pause and one to rewind:

**Play:** Tell your story exactly as you hear it in your head. Write fast and try to get from the beginning to the end. Keep writing sentences that push the story ahead.

**Fast Forward:** Jump ahead in time using phrases like "later that day," or "the next day," or "the next year," or "after twenty years." Another method is to shrink a period of time into a paragraph or two, giving examples to help the reader feel the time passing.

**Pause:** Find an important part in the story to pause the action and have your character think, or maybe zoom in with snapshots (show, don't tell) or thoughtshots (tell, don't show) of a character or a place. Freeze the frame so your readers can really see or hear or touch or smell what you want them to.

**Rewind:** Flash back in time, maybe even way before the start of your story. Reveal something about your character by diving into her memory. Flashbacks often begin with characters smelling something or hearing a song or something else in the present that triggers a memory.

## Tips For Choosing Details

- *Writing specifically does not mean writing exactly.* When you are bored with your writing, try using metaphors or similes and delete the boring bits.
- *It's easier to describe gestures, body movements or actions than it is to describe faces.* Describe what the character is doing, not how his/her face looks.
- *When describing places, choose details that show your character's mood.* If characters are in a great mood they might notice the light streaming in through the window, but if they are in a sad mood they may only see the dust trapped in the sunlight. Try showing what your characters are feeling by showing how they see the world.
- *If you are bored, so is your reader.* Find ways to vary your details. Move from physical description to dialogue, from dialogue to the thought of a character. Mix it up and don't be afraid to go back and cross out the boring bits that don't move your story forward.

**To vary sentence structures:** Demonstrate how to avoid monotony by varying the regular subject-verb order. Suggestion: Begin with a prepositional phrase, "In the morning..."

Begin with a simile, "Like a steam roller, ..." Begin with an adjective, or several adjectives, "Wet, tired, and hungry, I stood..." Begin with an appositive, "Charlie Ruiz, the fastest runner in the race..." and so on.

# Word Choice Ideas



## Tool: Action Verbs

Replace the word in the sentence with one of these words to see if it matches the context of the sentence. Some of the words will fit the context and some will not. When two words are listed, the first word is the present tense and the second word is the past tense. Add an **ed** to the list of words if you are substituting for the second word

### **ask**

demand  
expect  
inquire  
question  
request  
invite

### **be**

last  
remain  
stay  
am  
exist  
happen  
live  
occur

### **buy/bought**

acquire  
obtain  
purchase  
shop

### **can**

able  
capable

### **come/came**

appear  
approach  
arrive  
near  
happen  
evolve  
occur

### **do/did**

accomplish  
achieve  
act  
execute  
manage  
perform  
satisfy  
behave  
produce  
happen

### **eat/ate**

consume  
devour  
dine  
feast  
nibble  
snack

### **fall/fell**

drop  
plunge  
descend  
tumble  
sink

### **find/found**

discover  
locate  
notice  
learn  
gain  
gather  
decide  
determine  
declare  
disclose

### **get/got**

obtain  
receive  
bring  
retrieve  
acquire  
secure  
persuade  
influence

### **attain**

carry  
collect  
earn  
gain  
gather

### **give/gave**

present  
offer  
donate  
contribute  
grant  
furnish  
provide  
supply  
deliver

### **go/went**

move  
leave  
travel  
pass  
proceed  
advance  
act  
depart  
follow

operate  
pass  
perform  
reach  
shift  
vanish

**has/have**

own  
possess  
hold  
must  
should  
require

**hit**

strike  
blow  
slug  
swat  
sock

**jump**

spring  
leap  
bound  
hurdle

**keep**

maintain  
possess  
preserve

**let**

allow  
permit  
consent  
grant  
admit

**like**

fond  
prefer  
enjoy  
appreciate

**live**

exist  
reside  
occupy  
dwell  
inhabit

**make/made**

build  
form  
shape  
compose  
create  
assemble  
manufacture  
fashion  
construct  
produce  
execute  
cause  
craft  
develop  
earn  
erect  
force  
prepare

**put**

drop  
lay  
locate  
place

position  
set  
stand  
arrange  
deposit

**run/ran**

hasten  
hurry  
speed  
sprint  
bound  
flee  
bolt  
race  
escape  
gallop  
storm  
barrel  
trot  
sped

**say/said**

report  
bellow  
brag  
call  
cry  
deny  
direct  
explain  
express  
howl  
insist  
mumble  
mutter  
state  
reply  
suggest

warn  
yell  
whisper  
speak  
declare  
remark  
assert  
mention  
announce

**see/saw**

look  
notice  
observe  
view  
watch

**stop**

end  
halt  
check  
stay  
cease  
block  
discontinue  
quit  
prevent  
conclude  
terminate  
cancel  
finish  
suspend  
rest

**take/took**

seize  
capture  
receive  
gain

obtain  
acquire  
collect  
steal

**tell**

announce  
confide  
expose  
express  
inform  
mention  
reveal  
share  
state  
convey  
declare  
assert  
relate  
recite  
remark  
comment  
note

**throw/threw**

toss  
cast  
furl  
fling  
pitch  
heave  
sling

**try**

attempt  
tackle  
struggle  
test  
prove

verify  
undertake

**walk**

step  
tread  
pace  
stroll  
hike  
march  
stride  
strut  
amble  
hobble  
waddle  
trudge

**want**

desire  
need  
require

**write/wrote**

record  
inscribe  
mark  
note  
post  
pen  
scribe  
communicate  
compose

# Action Verbs- continued

## Words for Went

bounced	hopped	shuffled
chased	hurried	skated
clambered	jogged	skidded
climbed	journeyed	skipped
crawled	leaped	slid
crept	left town	sped
danced	limped	staggered
darted	marched	stepped
departed	migrated	strayed
disappeared	moved	streaked
drove	plunged	strode
embarked	pranced	strolled
emigrated	rambled	strutted
filed	ran	swarmed
flew	rode	swept
fled	rose	swooped
floated	rushed	traveled
flowed	sailed	trotted
fluttered	sank	walked
galloped	scampered	wandered
glided	scrambled	whizzed
hobbled	scurried	



# Crafting a Strong Lead

**Barry Lane calls it Opening the Front Door:** (the lead) Demonstrate how different authors effectively use leads (a hook). Collect leads from favorite books, for example: a question, an image, an action, a surprise, dialogue, thoughts, and sound effects. Following are some examples:

- *A question:* "Where's Papa going with the ax?" said Fern—Charlotte's Web, by E. B. White.
- *An image:* An image paints an immediate picture and creates a world that the reader can step into: *On a summer evening I looked up from dinner, through the open window to the back yard.* Fireflies, by Julie Brinckloe
- *An action:* The reader engages in the story because she's stepping right into the middle of the action. An action can be sound, lights, dialogue, etc. "Ba-room, ba-room, ba-room, bari-pity, bari-pty, bari-ptyt, bari-pity—Good. His dad had the pickup going. He could get up now." Bridge to Terabithia, by Katherine Paterson.
- *A surprise:* You may want to surprise your reader when she first opens the door. This is a sure way to capture the reader's attention. "One day last spring, Louis, a butcher, turned into a fish. Silvery scales. Big lips. A tail. A salmon." Louis the Fish, by Arthur Yorinks

## One story – Many leads:

### Typical Lead

It was a day at the end of June. My mom, dad, brother, and I were at our camps on Lake Travis. We had arrived the night before at 10:00, so it was dark when we got there and unpacked. We went straight to bed. The next morning when I was eating breakfast, my dad started yelling for me from down at the dock at the top of his lungs. He said there was a car in the lake.

### Action: A Main Character Doing Something

I gulped my milk, pushed away from the table, and bolted out of the kitchen, slamming the screen door behind me. I ran down to the dock as fast as my legs could carry me. My feet pounded on the old wood, hurrying me toward the sound of my dad's voice. "Scott!" he bellowed again.

"Coming, Dad!" I gasped. I couldn't see him yet – just the sails of the boats that had already put out into the lake for the day.

### Dialogue: A Character or Characters Speaking

"Scott! Get down here on the double!" Dad bellowed. His voice sounded far away. "Dad?" I hollered. "Where are you?" I squinted through the screen door but couldn't see him.

"I'm down on the dock. MOVE IT. You're not going to believe this," he replied.

### Reaction: A Character Thinking

I couldn't imagine why my father was hollering for me at 7:00 in the morning. I thought fast about what I might have done to get him riled. Had he found out about the way I talked to my mother the night before, when we got to camp and she asked me to help unpack the car? Did he find the fishing reel I broke last week? Before I could consider a third possibility, his voice shattered my thoughts.

"Scott! Move it! You're not going to believe this!"

# Leads – continued



## *Inviting Your Readers to Wonder and Read On – Example Lesson*

### ***Crafting a Strong Lead***

- Ralph Fletcher says, “Many student begin with a first sentence that summarizes the entire story, for example: *Last year I got a new puppy for Christmas, and that was the best present I ever got in my whole life.*”
- This type of lead does not encourage your reader to read on – you’ve told them the entire story in the span of 2 lines! It’s not wise to reveal too early the main event of the story.
- We want to write leads that will make our readers wonder about the main character or person in the story and what is going to happen to them.
- Share an example of a beginning that makes readers wonder.  
Suggestion: Wilma Unlimited by Kathleen Krull: *No one expected such a tiny girl to have a first birthday. In Clarksville, Tennessee, in 1940, life for a baby who weighed just over four pounds at birth was sure to be limited.*
- **Model** for students how you would revise a lead that summarizes the whole story into one that makes your readers wonder.
  - EXAMPLE:

### ***Summarizing beginning:***

*Last summer my daughters taught me how to roller-blade.*

### ***Revised beginning:***

*I wasn’t sure I could do it, but for some reason I decided I would try roller-blading with my daughters, Caris and Leah. “You can do it Mom!” they both cried that hot summer day in July. So, there I was at the end of our driveway filled with uncertainty.*

- Ask students: What is the difference between the two beginnings?
- Important Point to Make: The revised beginning answers all of these questions without giving away the ending.
  - Hook – *I wasn’t sure I could do it*
  - Where were you? – *at the end of our driveway*
  - Who were you with? – *with my daughters, Caris and Leah*
  - Why were you there? – *I decided to try rollerblading*
  - How did you feel? – *filled with uncertainty*

# Crafting Endings



**Barry Lane calls it Leaving the House** – He says, When teaching endings: Demonstrate the use of different endings, such as a circular ending, an emotional statement (maybe the main character’s feelings, hopes or wishes), a surprise ending, a memory of the main event, or a decision/defining action.

## Examples of Endings from Mentor Texts suggested by Barry Lane:

**Connecting the Beginning and Ending:** From The Wagon by Tony Johnston

### **Beginning:**

One Carolina morning, I was born. Everything was beautiful that day, Mama said, especially my skin like smooth, dark wood.

But like all my family, birth to grave, my skin made me a slave.

### **Ending:**

In my life, twelve plantings had come and gone.

I was free. I could go where I pleased. I said, “I want to go to the funeral.” So at dawn my family and I set out, creaking down the road toward Washington. Creaking along in a wooden wagon to say goodbye to Mr. Lincoln.

### **Images/Scene:**

From Going Home by Eve Bunting:

I picture them back here, dancing in the streets of La Perla, and I lie there, watching the moon shine on the Christmas star till I fall asleep.

From Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt:

And soon they were rolling on again, leaving Treetop behind, and as they went, the tinkling little melody of a music box drifted out behind them and was lost at last far down the road.

From Keeper of the Swamp by Ann Garrett:

Dark crept over the swamp.

Bats awakened from their roosts among the Spanish moss, skimmed over the water searching for the insects. Crickets chirped; a raccoon chattered along the bank, fishing for his dinner.

The boy – the new keeper of the swamp – poled the boat toward home.

**Dialogue:** From Gleam and Glow by Eve Bunting

“Did you miss me?” Marina asked them. “I missed you.”

I leaned close to the water. “We’re back, Gleam and Glow,” I told the fish. “We’ve come home.”

### **Reflection/Change:**

From Granddad’s Prayer of the Earth by Douglas Wood:

And for the first time in a long time, the world seemed just right.

From No More Dead Dogs by Gordon Korman

“I’ll take that spot any day of the week,” he replied. “It’s exactly where I want to be.” I know the truth when I hear it.

# Endings - continued

## *Leaving your readers with something to think about – Example Lesson*

### **Revising Endings, Learning from the Experts**

- Teacher revisits the idea of a powerful ending.
- Lucy Calkins says: *“Endings are what stay in reader’s minds the longest. Endings can cause readers to sob, to applaud, and even to get up and vow to change themselves or the world. To craft an ending, writers ask themselves, What is my story really, really about? What is it I want to say to my readers about this struggle, this journey?”*
- Teacher shares a powerful ending from a memoir of your choice, noting the important actions, dialogue, images, and whole story reminders that make a lasting impression on the reader. Suggestion: Owl Moon by Jane Yolen
- **Model** for students how you would add a lesson learned to a piece of writing. It is important to recognize the Big Meaning revealed with a strong ending.
- EXAMPLE from a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade AISD student:

*Original Ending **without** a Lesson Learned:*

*Then my grandma opened the jar and out fluttered three little bugs. I finally caught one!*

*Revised Ending **with** a Lesson Learned:*

*Then my grandma opened the jar and out fluttered three little bugs. I finally caught one!*

***“Wow,” I whispered as I realized I was holding a tiny light in my hand.***

***“You should always remember,” my grandma said to me, “special things sometimes come in unusual packages.”***



- Students pair-share and discuss the important message they will try to convey in their ending and the technique they will use.
- Students return to their individual writing with the goal of revising their ending to include a lesson learned.
- Whole group share. Select a few students to share and mark the effective techniques that were used for a strong ending.

# Revising For Organization

Teachers can help students become more aware of different organizational structures by:

- Reading and providing examples of a variety of genres, and identifying and discussing the defining qualities of each genre.
- Pointing out an author's structural and organizational devices.
- Holding discussions on the beginnings and endings, time, chapters, scenes, organizational devices of a piece of writing.

## Revising Suggestions For Organization

If story events are unclear or out of sequence, demonstrate a logical order of big ideas and suggest the use of sequence words.

If stories are in chronological order, you can show students how to "play with time." Have students create a time line of big events and actions, paying attention to elements of time. Demonstrate how to write using a flashback, big sweeps of time, or slow motion.

Demonstrate how to select two or three big ideas about a topic and list details under each idea.

If students' compositions lack meaningful connections from sentence to sentence, read aloud a writing sample to the class, sentence by sentence. Ask students to listen and decide if each sentence has a connection to the sentence before and after.

Help students understand **point of view**, 1<sup>st</sup> person (I, my, me), 2<sup>nd</sup> person (you, your), 3<sup>rd</sup> person (he, she, they). Some points of view fit better with one or the other. Example: 1<sup>st</sup> person is generally intimate and personal. Use your own piece to change points of view and demonstrate how to select the point of view that "fits" your piece.

**Writing subheadings that teach:** One way to grab the reader's attention is by using a subtitle immediately following the title. This also gives the reader a more detailed explanation of what the piece promises to deliver.

If details or events are not in order, model this lesson. In small groups, give students a random list of details, asking students to help put what belongs together, write questions for missing information, and delete information that doesn't belong or contribute to the writing. Groups compare results.

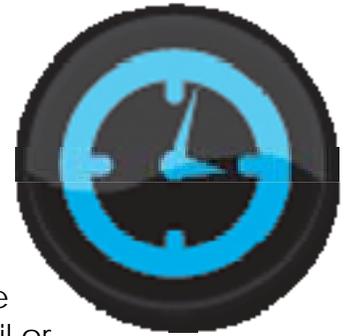
**Rearranging – Cut and Tape:** Ask students to select a piece of writing they want to revise. Make them a copy of their writing. Ask them to chunk the main parts of the writing and then cut each part out with scissors. Next, ask them to rearrange the chunks. Demonstrate how to experiment with reorganizing their text to see the possibilities for revision.

**Adding details:** Ask students to select a piece of writing they want to add more description or details to. Have them mark the place where they want to add more, and then cut the writing there. Have them tape the first part of their writing on a blank paper and leave an opening for new details and then tape the bottom part.

References: [The Revision Toolbox](#), by Georgia Heard  
[Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K-8](#), by Joann Portalupi and Ralph Fletcher

# Editing Activities

**Clockwork Editing:** Place students in two circles – inside facing out and outside facing in. The students are seated so they are directly across from someone. Have students exchange papers with the student directly across from them. The teacher provides a focus, such as, “We are going to look only for capital letters.” The students are given a few minutes to look through the papers (indicating where a capital letter is needed using a pencil or Post-it note). When time is up, the students get their own papers back and make any corrections. Before going on to the next skill, the outside people move clockwise one space. Students switch papers again (this time with a different person). The teacher provides a new focus, “Now, we are going to look for spelling errors.” This can continue with as many conventions as is age/time appropriate.



**The Convention Game:** Group students in teams of three. Have students bring their writing folders and a book they are currently reading. Write a sentence that shows a particular convention and circle it. (Commas in a series, for example) Invite students to find an example of that convention in their writing or in their book. As soon as a group member finds it, he or she says, “I’ve got an example.” Immediately the other team members check the student’s example. The team must now address these questions: What is the convention? How does the convention help the meaning of the sentence? How does it help the reader? When everyone on the team thinks he or she can answer these questions, all three members raise their hands. Give other groups an opportunity to find an example, and then let the first group explain their example to the class. Play this game for 10-15 minutes once every couple of weeks.

