Improving Writing with Mentor Texts Project

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Fiction Mentor Text

Boelts, M., & Jones, N. (2016). *A bike like Sergio's*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

Publisher's summary: Ruben feels like he is the only kid without a bike. His friend Sergio reminds him that his birthday is coming, but Ruben knows that the kinds of birthday gifts he and Sergio receive are not the same. After all, when Ruben's mom sends him to Sonny's corner store for groceries, sometimes she doesn't have enough money for everything on the list. So when Ruben sees a dollar bill fall out of someone's purse, he picks it up and puts it in his pocket. But when he gets home, he discovers it's not one dollar or even five or ten—it's a hundred-dollar bill, more than enough for a new bike just like Sergio's! But what about the crossed-off groceries? And what about the woman who lost her money?

Power Craft Move #1: Lead

Name of the craft: Meeting the Characters

Why authors do it: Writers bring readers into the world of the story by introducing the main and secondary characters immediately through thoughts, actions, or dialogue.

How to do this: Boelts uses thoughts, actions, and dialogue to introduce the characters in the story, *A Bike Like Sergio's.* Share with students the following examples of how Boelts introduces the characters in a variety of ways. Explore how the words and illustrations work together to

introduce the characters in the story. As you read the introductions ask students to be thinking about: What do the words tell us about the characters? What do the actions tell us about the characters? What does the dialogue tell us about the characters? What do the illustrations tell us about the characters?

- Reread pages 1-7 of *A bike like Sergio's:*
    - Point out that main characters are introduced early in the story (pages 1-5)
    - Point out that the words on page 2 introduce the main character by sharing his internal thoughts, "Every kid has a bike but me." (Notice that the author does not reveal the name of the main character yet). The illustration on page 1 gives the reader the first indication of who the story is going to be about.
    - On page 3 "Sergio" is introduced. The author introduces Sergio through actions. "Sergio rides his new one while I run alongside, out of breath." These actions reveal details about the relationship between the characters Ruben and Sergio.
    - On page 5 "...waiting behind the lady in the blue coat who we see all the time." introduces us to another important character in the story - the lady in the blue coat. We don't know much about her except that she goes to Sonny's grocery store often according to Ruben. This detail must also mean that Ruben goes to Sonny's often too.
- Reread pages 7-12 of *A bike like Sergio's*.
    - Point out that secondary characters are introduced later in the story (pages 7-12). Beginning on page 5 we are introduced to other secondary characters in the story:

Ruben's sibling (page 7) dad (page 10) and Ruben's teacher Mr. Grady (page 12). These characters are all introduced through brief actions in the story.

    - Remind students that the introductions to each character were not lengthy or overly descriptive. Some were done through dialogue, some through thought and some through actions. Some introductions were done almost entirely through illustrations, his siblings for example.

- Invite students to experiment with introducing the main character in their writing immediately. Encourage writers to "open the front door" with a compelling thought, action or dialogue that introduces the main character in their writing. (Heard, 2014, p.56)

Power Craft Move #2: Punctuation to Create Voice

Name of the craft: Dashes

Why authors do it: Writers use dashes to emphasize, interrupt, or change a thought in the middle of a sentence. Dashes can be used to set off part of the text so as to draw attention to it. Sometimes dashes are used to create longer or more dramatic pauses before a page turn.

How to do this: Explore how author Maribeth Boelts utilizes a dash in the text *A Bike Like Sergio's* to cause the reader to linger a little longer. Consider how the use of the dash interrupts the reader and causes the reader to pause and reflect on the events in the story or the actions of the main character:

- Here are five examples to choose from:

- Page 6 Ruben retrieves the dropped currency. It is unknown how large the bill is at this point in the story, but just before we are ready to turn the page we read, “She's out the door, but I don't chase her - it’s just a dollar.
- Page 9 Ruben is learning for the first time how large the bill is. The page begins, “Later, when I'm alone in my room, I fish out the crumpled bill - and stare.”
- Page 23 Ruben is about to be reunited with the hundred-dollar bill he thought he lost. Before we turn the page we read, “With everyone crowding in a hurry. I spot something. The smallest zipper inside - still closed.”
- Page 25 Ruben is back at the Sonny’s grocery store where the money was found. “Someone bumps me, apologizes in a soft voice - I turn.”
- Page 26 The author begins the page with, “And like a hot blast, I remember how it was for me when that money that was hers - then mine - was gone.”

- Invite students to identify an area in their writing where they wish to have their audience linger or pause as Boelts does for her readers. Ask students to rewrite a selected sentence from their writer's notebook with a dash and share the revised sentence with a partner or group for feedback. Remind students that when sharing their work with a peer they must: 1. Explain the purpose of a dash. 2. Reveal why they chose the sentence to add a dash. 3. Identify how the dash improved the sentence.

Power Craft Move #3: Specific Details

Name of the craft: Character Details

Why authors do it: Writers know it's important to include information about what character are doing in order to make them seem like real people.

How to do this: Author Maribeth Boelts purposefully makes her characters relatable to her audience through their actions and experiences. Study the main character Ruben at different points in the story *A bike like Sergio's* to identify ways the character, Ruben, might be like the reader or like someone the reader knows, perhaps a friend.

- The following examples may be used to demonstrates how the author developed her characters with relatable actions or experiences:
    - On page 3 reread the following sentence: "Sergio forgets, there's a difference between his birthday and mine." In one sentence the author is showing the reader that Ruben has an awareness of his family's financial situation and reveals it is different than Sergio's. This is often the case in friendships. A friend might have more or less in terms of financial means or material possessions than their friend.
    - Page 12 we see Ruben at school and he appears distracted. "Me on my bike is all I can think about." Any student with something on their mind can relate to how Ruben might be feeling. It's difficult to concentrate when you have something on your mind.
    - Page 16 "When she mentions Sonny's, I feel the sweat." We see that Ruben is feeling pretty anxious and nervous about a chance encounter with the lady in the blue coat. It appears he may be feeling guilty about not returning the money. Students may relate to this scene if they've ever faced a moral dilemma.

    - Page 20 we see Ruben sitting on the steps with his head down crying. “Rain and tears feel the same.” Ruben feels sadness over the lost money. This may be a relatable experience for children who have ever lost something.
- Invite students to develop a story with a character that seems real through relatable actions and experiences. Ask students to draw a large heart in their writer's notebook. Inside the heart, students will map out the actions and experiences their characters will have in the story through brief statements. Provide an example on large chart paper for students to look at so that they may see how to formulate a brief statement in a heart map. The heart maps could remain in their writer's notebook and be used to complete their written story at a later time.

Power Craft Move #4: Turning Point

Name of the craft: Pivot Point

Why authors do it: Pivot points are those defining moments when something of great significance happens to the main character, when they have an epiphany, or when the main character changes in a significant way.

How to do this: Words tell the story while illustrations support the story by showing the reader what is happening. We can use words and pictures together to gain a deeper understanding of the story and see how the characters are changing in a significant way.

- Study the events leading up to the turning point in *A Bike like Sergio’s*

- Reread and study the illustration on page 14 that shows a happy and care-free Ruben sitting on his dream bicycle. Ask students to describe the mood of the main character at this point in the story.
- Reread and study the illustration on pages 16 that shows an anxious Ruben when his mom asks him to go to Sonny's grocery store and Ruben realizes he may see the lady in the blue coat. Ask students how this scene is different than the one we looked at on page 14. What does this tell us about Ruben?
- Reread and study the illustrations on pages 17, 19 and 20. Ruben realizes he has lost the money. Point out on page 20, "Rain and tears feel the same." What does this tell us about how Ruben is feeling? Is this different from how he felt earlier in the story?

- Study the moment the epiphany happens for Ruben.
  - Reread page 26 "And like a hot blast, I remember how it was for me when that money that was hers - then mine - was gone." Ruben knows exactly how the lady in the blue coat felt when she lost the money because he felt it too when he thought the money was lost. This experience has changed him. He is no longer selfishly thinking about himself riding a new bike. He decides to do the right thing and return the money.
- Ask students to turn and talk to a partner about a time when they decided to do the right thing. Remind them to share the events leading up to the decision to do the right thing. When the partner share is complete select a few willing students to share their story with the class. Ask the class to identify the pivot points of the stories shared. Then, invite

students to draft a story with a pivot point in three brief illustrations, one for the beginning, one for the middle, and one for the end of the story. The story could be true or imagined, but the main character must change in a significant way. Remind them of the stories shared by peers. If they can't think of a story to illustrate, they might consider using one of the shared stories for inspiration. These illustrations could remain in their writer's notebook for drafting a written story at a later time.

Power Craft Move #5: Structure

Name of the craft: Movement of Time

Why authors do it: One of the important jobs of a writer is to keep the story moving along in a way that helps the readers understand time is passing. Writers craft sentences that move their readers from scene to scene in their writing.

How to do this:

- Study movement through time at various points in the story, *a Bike Like Sergio's.* Author, Maribeth Boelts, utilizes scene changes, clues and transition words to help move readers through time. Many examples of this craft are seen throughout the book.
- Here are two examples from the beginning of the story:
    - Page 7, we transition from the grocery store to the main character's home. Boelts move the reader forward in time by leading with, "At home, Mom's feeding the baby." The reader knows we have moved through time because we are no longer

at the store. The details of how we got from the store to Ruben's home are not revealed, but we know time has passed in order for this new event to occur.

    - Page 10 "Dad gets home from work late and tucks in my brothers." The word "late" tells the reader that it is bedtime. It also tells the reader that we will transition to a new day soon. The author is using scene change, clues and transition words to help move the story forward in time.

- Here are two examples from the middle of the story:
    - Page 11, we know it is a new day because the text picks up with, "In the morning…" In just a few words the author has moved the story forward in time.
    - Page 16, we learn that Mom asks Ruben, "On your way home tomorrow, can you pick up orange juice at Sonny's?" This small clue lets the reader know that a trip to Sonny's will be in the near future (tomorrow) and will show the reader how much time has passed when we arrive at that scene.
- Here are a few examples at the end of the story:
    - Page 21, "I walk hunched and draggy to school the next day, while Sergio rides circles." The reader now knows it is the next day and Ruben is on his way to school.
    - Page 22, "The day stretches out…" tells us Ruben is still at school and we can assume not much time has passed.
    - Page 31, "At home, everyone is waiting, and the lost and found story is mine to tell." We know Ruben has arrived at home. The details of his walk home are not

revealed, but we know that time has passed if he is at home and no longer following the lady in the blue coat.

- After exploring the many ways Boelts uses a combination of scenery changes, clues, and transition words to move the reader through time in narrative writing, invite students to have "a yard sale for extra words" (Heard, 2014, p. 97) in their writing. Ask students to circle one area in their narrative writing where they might condense the details they wrote down to one or two well-developed sentences that will show a scenery change and transition that effectively moves the reader through time in a concise way. Once students have identified the area of their writing to explore this strategy, ask students to revise their selection to demonstrate how they might show the passing of time in a concise way.

Power Craft Move #6: Dialogue

Name of the craft: Dialogue Advances the Story

Why authors do it: Dialogues is one way writers add details to the plot and expand the relationships between characters while also moving the story forward. Some writers craft dialogue that is not conversational, but serves the same purpose.

How to do this: Dialogue is used for a reason. "Most of the time it is used to build a scene or show a character" (Heard, 2014. p.111) Boelts uses dialogue in a unique way. Often spoken dialogue is shared by one character in the scene and followed by an unspoken response or

internal thought shared by the main character. The dialogue and unspoken internal thought moves the story forward and provides details about how the main character is feeling or thinking.

- Begin by asking students a prompting question: Can we have dialogue in a story if only one person is speaking? Then, study the following six examples in *A Bike like Sergio's* where Boelts crafts spoken dialogue with internal dialogue at the beginning, middle and end of the story. Point out how the dialogue (both spoken and unspoken or internal thought) moves the story forward while also giving details about how the main character is feeling or thinking.
    - Examples of spoken dialogue and unspoken internal thought at the beginning of the story
        - Page 3 (spoken dialogue) "Ask your parents again, Sergio says. "Your birthday's coming." (unspoken response or internal thought expressed by the main character) Sergio forgets there is a difference between his birthday and mine.
        - Page 4 - (spoken dialogue) "I wish." I say, (unspoken response or internal thought expressed by the main character) but I know that wishes won't make money appear.
    - Examples of spoken dialogue and unspoken internal thought in the middle of the story:
        - Page 13 (spoken dialogue) "Man, you look good on it," Sergio says, (unspoken response or internal thought expressed by the main character) and it's true.

        - Page 15 - (spoken dialogue) “Maybe next week,” she says. (unspoken response or internal thought expressed by the main character) Me with the hundred in my backpack. Her, crossing things off.
        - Page 16 (spoken dialogue)“On your way home tomorrow, could you pick up orange juice at Sonny’s?” (unspoken response or internal thought expressed by the main character) What if the lady with the blue coat is there?
    - An example of spoken dialogue and unspoken internal thought at the end of the story:
        - Page 30 (spoken dialogue) “Thank you, Ruben,” she says “You have blessed me.” (unspoken response or internal thought expressed by the main character) I am happy and mixed up, full and empty, with what’s right and what’s gone.
- Invite students to experiment with a combination of spoken dialogue and internal dialogue in their own writing. Provide students with a scenario to do a quick write of a conversation between two people. Ask students to include at least one line of internal or unspoken dialogue in their written conversation. Remind students that internal dialogue is what the character is thinking and saying inside his or her head.

Power Craft Move #7: Show Don’t Tell

Name of the craft: Draw an Image in the Reader's Mind

Why authors do it: One way writers help readers make a movie in their minds is by showing their readers what's happening. They do this by using precise language to make their writing more vivid for the reader.

How to do this: Explain to students that author Maribeth Boelts carefully chose the words in her story *A bike like Sergio's* to help readers draw a picture or see a movie in their mind. Ask students to close their eyes as you read the following examples that show the precise language that helps the reader see a movie in their minds. After reading each example ask students: What kind of images are these words creating in your mind?

- Examples:
    - Page 5 “A dollar floats to the floor. No one sees.” Point out the phrase “floats to the floor”
    - Page 9 “Later, when I'm alone in my room, I fish out the crumpled bill - and stare.” Point out the phrase “fish out the crumpled bill”
    - Page 12 “She walks her fingers through the cash in her wallet. Then she crosses things off.” Point out the phrase “walks her fingers”
    - Page 26 “I breathe fast, and the words bust loose like they’ve been waiting.” Point out the phrase “words bust loose”
- Invite students to experiment with using precise language in their writing that helps the reader make a movie in their minds. Begin small by simply crafting two sentences with

precise language that makes a movie in the reader's mind. Allow students to share their crafted sentences with a partner.

Power Craft Move #8: Ending

Name of the craft: Lesson Learned

Why authors do it: Characters change or grow in stories. One way writers can illustrate their characters' changes is by having them learn a lesson.

How to do this: Explain to students that some plots contain an experience that leads to a character learning a valuable lesson. Author Maribeth Boelts crafted her story *A bike like Sergio's* to include a valuable lesson for the main character Ruben. When Ruben faced a moral dilemma, he learned a valuable lesson. He had to choose whether to keep the money the lady in the blue coat dropped and use it to buy his dream bike, or return it to its rightful owner. Let's explore how the main character Ruben came to his decision:

- Reread page 7 "I nod and act busy. That dollar in my pocket stays a secret." Ask students, Do you think Ruben wants to tell his mom about the money? "That dollar in my pocket stays a secret." Why do you think the author used the word secret?
- Reread page 15 "But I know if I ride home on a bike like that, I'll have to tell my parents where I got the money." Ask students, Why can't Ruben just buy the bike?

What does this tell us about how Ruben is feeling? Why wouldn't he want to tell his parents about the money he found and didn't return?

- Reread page 17 “The zipper that was closed is open, just enough. And the money that was there is gone.” Ask students, What do you think Ruben is feeling right now?
- Reread page 23 “And like a hot blast, I remember how it was for me when that money that was hers - then mine - was gone.” Ask students: Is this the same Ruben we saw sitting on his dream bike and high-fiving his friend Sergio? What's different about him now? What happened that made his feel so differently about keeping the money?

- Invite students to brainstorm a story plot with a moral dilemma in their writer's notebook. Remind students that characters experience a series of events before the lesson becomes clear to the main character. In their brainstorm, they should identify the events that will lead to the ‘lesson learned’ conclusion. If students need inspiration for their writing, remind them that they can always borrow ideas from their own life experiences or the life experiences of others. They can also use the story *A bike like Sergio's* as a mentor text for inspiration.

Nonfiction Mentor Text

Davies, N. (2014). *Tiny creatures: The world of microbes*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

Publisher's summary: Find out how the smallest things on the planet do some of the biggest jobs in this intriguing introduction to the world of microbes. All around the world — in the sea, in the soil, in the air, and in your body — there are living things so tiny that millions could fit on an ant's antenna. They're busy doing all sorts of things, from giving you a cold and making yogurt to eroding mountains and helping to make the air we breathe. If you could see them with your eye, you'd find that they all look different, and that they're really good at changing things into something else and at making many more microbes like themselves! From Nicola Davies comes a first exploration for young readers of the world's tiniest living organisms.

Power Craft Move #1: Lead

Name of the craft: Asking a Question

Why authors do it: Nonfiction writers may choose to open their writing with a compelling question in order to make their lead interesting and engaging. Many will pose a question that draws the reader in and inspires them to continue reading.

How to do this: Explain to students that author, Nicola Davies, wrote an effective lead that makes her readers "feel compelled to stay and linger" (Heard, 2014, p. 56) by asking her readers an interesting question.

- Reread pages 2-3 with your students. "You know about big animals, and you know about small animals...but do you know that there are creatures so tiny that millions could fit on this ant's antenna?"
    - Point out how Davies starts by telling the reader what they already know about the different sizes of animals on page 2 and then asks a unique, specific, and thought-provoking question on page 3. You can discuss that in this mentor text, Davies uses a yes or no question. This question is effective in creating a conversational tone by speaking directly to the reader. It is also helping to prepare the reader for the main idea of the text by getting the reader to start to consider the tiny, minute or microscopic part of their world.
- The first question is then followed up with a second clarifying question, on page 4, in which Davies uses a description that will support the readers in visualizing just how small the tiny creatures or microbes really are, "So tiny, we'd have to make the ant's antenna as big as a whale to show them to you?" The visual of having her readers think of an ant's antennae being as big as a whale in order to see the microbes is an effective way of demonstrating the infinitesimal size of microbes. Now that the reader knows such tiny creatures exist, one is compelled to read on to learn more about these mysterious microbes.

- Invite students to craft a lead with a compelling question. When crafting a question lead you'll want students to make sure the question is something a reader would want to read on to find out the answer to, it needs to be intriguing. Brainstorm interesting facts and/or usual details and use those in a question format to grab the reader's attention.

<u>Power Craft Move #2:</u> Teaching Tone

Name of the craft: Clear Explanations

Why authors do it: Writers connect with their reader by using a consistent tone in their writing. One way writers do this is by providing clear explanations and descriptions of the person, object, or animal featured in their writing

How to do this: The ability to use "precise details and words is essential in informative and explanatory writing" (Heard, 2014, p. 82). Study two or more places in the text where Davies crafts sentences that help the readers understand the information being provided in a clear way.

- Reread page 5. There's a clear explanation about how small microbes are when Davies explains that "A single drop of seawater can hold twenty million microbes. That's about the same as the number of people in New York State." By using references (a drop of seawater and number of people in New York State) that most children will understand, it helps to clarify something they can not actually see. "Using a concrete example is one way writers help readers understand a complex idea," (Shubitz, 2016, p. 194).

- Reread page 10. Davies provides a clear explanation of how many microbes are living on the reader's skin, “there are more microbes living on your skin than there are people on Earth, and there are ten or even a hundred times as many as that in your stomach.” The explanation allows the reader to visualize the vast number of microbes that exist in reference to the reader’s own body.
- Reread page 13-14. Davies provides her readers with a variety of ways microbes might look; “Some microbes are round. Some are skinny. Some have wiggling tails. Some look like daisies. Some look like shells. Some are squishy. Some look like spaceships. Some look like necklaces.” These clear descriptions, paired with the illustrations, clearly show the reader that microbes might look, feel and/or behave in any number of different ways.
- Reread page 30. Davies gives a clear explanation of what microbes do to help the environment, “They recycle everything that dies to make soil so that new life can sprout, and they help to make our air good to breathe.” This straightforward description ensures readers will walk away knowing the role microbes play in keeping our environment and us healthy.

- Invite students to use a teaching tone in their writing by providing a clear explanation of how things work for their readers. Encourage students to explain complex information to their reader by using concrete examples, compare and contrast, providing details using more than one sense. Consider using illustrations or other text features to support readers and remember that being direct and using precise language is very effective.

<u>Power Craft Move #3:</u> Precise Words

Name of the craft: Vivid Verbs

Why authors do it: Selecting the right words is as important when writing nonfiction as when writing fictional narratives. Interesting words are one of the marks of strong informational writing. By using vivid verbs, the writer is able to show the reader exactly what is happening.

How to do this: Explain to students that Davies uses vivid verbs in this book in order to show the reader how microbes behave or interact with their environment. It is by using vivid verbs that readers are able to visualize a more detailed and/or specific picture in their head about what microbes do in our world.

- Reread page 15. "They're too small to have mouths, so they just <u>soak</u> up what they need through their skin." The words *soak up* helps readers visualize how microbes absorb their food through their skin as opposed to chewing it. By using an active verb, it helps describe this process more precisely.
- Reread page 17. "That's why the things microbes eat don't disappear in bites. They <u>change</u>, slowly, into something else . . ." The word *change* is essential in getting readers to understand the transformation matter or objects go through when microbes are involved - that they don't disappear but change into something else completely.
- Reread page 23. "Then, inside you, where they are warm and well fed, they <u>split</u> and <u>split</u> and <u>split</u> until just a few germs have turned into thousands, then millions. The image the repeated word *split* is helpful in getting readers to visualize how microbes

divide and reproduce easily and rapidly under the right circumstances. The reader can picture this splitting happening over and over again even without the illustrations.

- Reread page 28. "They can wear down mountains and build up cliffs." The vivid verb *wear down* clearly describes what is happening to the mountains, and then the opposite, *build up* in reference to cliffs is powerful and it paints a picture with words.
- Invite students to use vivid verbs to describe what their object or subject is doing in their writing. This will help their readers create mental images in their minds to give them a more accurate representation of what is happening. Ask students to reread their work and highlight several verbs in their writing, verbs that are in reference to important details in their writing. Get them to brainstorm several other words that might be more specific. "The more specific the verb, the more energy and impact the sentence will have" (Heard, 2014, p.84).

Power Craft Move #4: Text Features

Name of the craft: Types of Print

Why authors do it: When writing an informational book, it's important to think about how to present information to readers. Writers and illustrators sometimes change the print or font (color, size, italics, bold, all capitals, underline) in order to alert the reader to important information. Writers use different types of print as "red flags that signal *This is important. Read carefully.* (Harvey, 1998, p.77).

How to do this: Examine pages in *Tiny creatures: The world of microbes* where there's a different size of font. Explain that Davies uses print purposefully to draw the reader's attention to the most important ideas in her writing. Rader will often slow down when they notice a change in print. This is a strategy that some writers use to get the reader to pay close attention to what is being said.

- On page 5, show readers how the independent clause, "*They are called microbes,*" is a larger size of print than the other words on the page. Talk about how microbes are the main topic of the text and that by using the larger print, this big idea stands out to the reader. Discuss how the remainder of the text on the page, which is all typed in smaller print, gives specific details about microbes.
- On page 17-18, show readers how Davies highlights one of the most important roles microbes have in our world.

> That's why the things microbes eat
> don't disappear in bites. They change,
> slowly, into something else. . .
> FOOD *INTO* COMPOST
> MILK *INTO* YOGURT
> ROCKS *INTO* SOIL

  - Davies highlights the importance of this idea, not only by increasing the print size, but also by changing the font and writing words in all capital letters. This signals to the reader to stop and take notice. Show students how Davies also uses italics for the word *into*, to draw attention to the transformation or action that occurs. There can also be a conversation

about how the illustrations along with the change in print provide added support for the reader to make meaning.

    - On page 31, show readers how the final independent clause, "*the tiniest lives doing some of the biggest jobs*" is also larger print than the previous of the text. In this case, Davies wants her readers to walk away with the big idea that microbes, regardless of how small they are, have a huge impact on our world. Ultimately, she highlighted the main idea for her readers.

- Invite students to reread their own writing and highlight the most important words or groups of words they might want to draw their reader's attention to as being essential (main topic, cause and effect, problem/solution, main idea) to the text. When they move into the publishing stage of the writing process, they can then decide if changing the size of the print is effective enough in highlighting the information, or if s/he needs to consider using more effects such as; changing the color, font and/or writing in all capital letters.

<u>Power Craft Move #5:</u> Punctuation to Create Voice

Name of the craft: Em Dashes

Why authors do it: Writers use the em dash (—), to draw attention to certain words and/or phrases. Em dashes can take the place of a colon or semicolon in order to add special emphasis to a sentence (Fogarty, 2016).

How to do this: Explain that Davies uses em dashes in *Tiny creatures: The world of microbes* to draw special attention or emphasis to a particular set of words and/or highlight particular details.

- Reread page 9. "Microbes live everywhere—in the sea, on land, in the soil, and in the air. Discuss how this em dash is being used like a colon to create emphasis. A colon can be used to introduce a list. If Davies had wanted to, she could have written the sentence using a colon; "Microbes live everywhere: in the sea, on land, in the soil, and in the air." In order to emphasis microbes are found everywhere in the world she decided to use the em dash to highlight these details.
- Reread the last sentence on page 31, "They are the invisible transformers of our world—the tiniest lives doing some of the biggest jobs." The em dash is being used again to create emphasis, but this time it's replacing a semicolon. Davies is connecting two related, or similar, sentences. If Davies had wanted to, she could have written the sentence using a semicolon; "They are the invisible transformers of our world; the tiniest lives doing some of the biggest jobs." By using the em dash, Davies is highlighting the importance of the last independent clause which states the main idea of the book. One could also show how Davies used two strategies to highlight this important message, by using the em dash as well as increasing the text size (see power craft move #4).
- Invite students to reread their work and note if there is anywhere they used a colon and/or had written details in a list. If so, consider if the list of details is important enough to highlight and draw attention to the reader but changing it to an em dash. Then, have students reread their work to find where they used a semicolon and/or where they might consider joining two ideas together that are essential for the reader to notice and pay

attention to when reading and consider inserting an em dash. Remember to use the em dash sparingly.

Power Craft Move #6: Punctuation to Create Voice

Name of the craft: Ellipses Points

Why authors do it: Authors may use ellipses when they want "to build suspense and to get the reader to read on" (Dorfman & Dougherty, 2014, p. 42). The markings (three spaced points or dots) can be used to indicate a pause in the middle of a sentence, or a thought that trails off at the end of a sentence.

How to do this: Study three places where Davies uses ellipses points:

- Reread the text on pages 2-3. "You know about big animals, and you know about small animals. . . but do you know that there are creatures so tiny that millions could fit on this ant's antenna?" Ask why would Davies want her readers to pause and linger with the idea of how big or small some animals are in the world? Davies may have wanted her readers to linger on her initial statements about the various sizes of animals on page 2 before posing her intriguing question about microbes on page 3 to get them thinking about what they know about big/small animals and then pose the thought-provoking question about how small an animal really could be? By slowly leading the reader to this question, it creates a sense of suspense, intrigue, and importance.

- Reread pages 17-18.

> That's why the things microbes eat
> don't disappear in bites. They change,
> slowly, into something else. . . .
> FOOD *INTO* COMPOST
> MILK *INTO* YOGURT
> ROCKS *INTO* SOIL

  - Ask students to think about why there are four dots on this page. Talk about how Davies is using ellipsis, in this case, to show a thought trailing off. It is the end of a sentence, therefore there are four dots (periods) instead of three. An ellipsis is written as three periods. At the end of a sentence, a fourth period is added to show the end of a sentence (Long, 2012).
  - Talk about how Davies uses the ellipsis to slow the reader down, it controls the pacing, in order to draw importance to the information that will follow. The big idea in this text is that microbes transform or change one substance or object into something else.

- Reread page 19.

> And when microbes are well fed, they are really,
> really good at making more microbes.
> They simply split, so that where there was one,
> twenty minutes later, there are two…
> and then four,
> and then eight,
> and then sixteen.

- Ask students to consider why Davies uses ellipses points at the top of this page. Talk about how it was important to highlight the splitting or multiplying of the microbes. In this case, Davies wanted to highlight that there were two microbes and that when they split the numbers increased quickly and dramatically.

- Remind students that ellipsis help to add variety to sentence structure and the pacing of the text. Invite students to reread their writing and highlight places in their writing that they would like their reader to slow down and consider the importance of what they are reading or about to read.

<u>Power Craft Move #7:</u> Ending

Name of the craft: Circular Ending and The Way We Are Known Ending

Why authors do it: Writers often combine two types of endings in their writing. A circular ending brings the writing back to where it began. In addition, writers often end their writing by focusing on the major accomplishments, qualities or attributes of the subject by finishing with a "the way we are known" ending.

How to do this: Explain to students that Davies combined two types of endings and that by doing so completed her writing with a clear message and with "something worthwhile for the reader to savor" (Heard, 2014, p. 61).

- Reread pages 2-4. Discuss how Davies drew her readers in with her lead by drawing attention to how tiny, minuscule, infinitesimal microbes are in size.

You know about big animals,
And you know about small animals…
But do you know that there are creatures so tiny
that millions could fit on this ant's antenna?
So tiny that we'd have to make the ant's antenna
as big as a whale to show them to you?

- Now reread page 31. Draw attention to how Davies highlights that regardless of how tiny these "invisible transformers" are, that they in fact do some of the biggest jobs (decomposing, recycling, transforming) in our world.

- Reread pages 31 with your students and this time draw attention to how the book ends with a statement about the important role microbes play in our world; the qualities and attributes of microbes. This is an example of a "the way we are known" ending.

All over the earth,
all the time, tiny microbes
are eating and eating,
and splitting and splitting,
changing one thing into another.
They are the invisible
transformers of our world -
the tiniest lives doing some
of the biggest jobs.

- Point out that microbes are found everywhere in the world, that they are constantly eating, splitting and changing one thing into another. Discuss how Davies reminds students that although the microbe is one of the smallest living things in the world (highlighted in the lead, see next bullet) that they do an

incredibly important job. Davies has concluded her writing with a clear message about the importance of microbes.

- Invite students to try writing a circular or "way we are known" ending.
    - For a circular ending, encourage them to reiterate the big idea from their lead and address it again in their ending to highlight what their reader should have learned about the subject.
    - For a "way we are known" ending have students consider what are the most important attributes, features, qualities or accomplishments of their topic or subject. Consider what key ideas they want their reader to remember and practice weaving those highlights into their ending.

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