

Reading Traditional Literature Guides Story Writing
Timothy G. Weih, Ph.D.
University of Northern Iowa, USA
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Abstract

This article describes a research study that implemented literacy methods for the purpose of promoting reading comprehension with links to student writing through the practice of integrating reader response before, during, and following teacher read-alouds, and then extending the reader response into the composing process of student-created stories about Native Americans. The main question that guided the study was: How will the integration of direct instruction in story structure together with reader response to traditional literature influence children's composition of self-created stories? Findings and classroom implications are discussed.

Keywords

Traditional Literature; Folktales; Primary Grade Students; Writing; Reader Response; Elementary Education; Language Arts; Writing Composition; Picture Books; Reading Comprehension; Classroom Read Alouds; Native American Folktales; Early Childhood Education; Culture and Literacy; Writing Processes; Narrative Stories; Narrative Writing; Narrative Composition

Introduction

It is a cold, frosty morning in February. The early sun's light streams through windows that make up one entire wall in Lynne's second grade classroom. Her students are coming in the door and stopping by the coat rack area to remove their winter garments. Their faces are bright with eyes shining, excited from the cold, snowy weather outside. They only glance at me as they pass by on their way to sit in a corner of the classroom bordered on two sides by low bookshelves filled with books and adorned on the top with picture books displaying an Arctic theme-*an appropriate study for this time of year*, I thought. The students gather on the floor sitting comfortably and chatting together. When all are present, Lynne takes her seat in a large, maple rocking chair facing the semi-circle of students and introduces me as the university teacher who will be doing research in their classroom for the next 6 weeks. She tells them that I will be coming twice a week during their language arts time and videotaping them as they read, discuss, and write stories related to Native Americans from the past. The students introduce themselves to me and ask questions about the video camera. I demonstrate to them how it works to satisfy their curiosity.

After introductions, Lynne holds up the picture book *Coyote: A Trickster Tale From the American Southwest* (McDermott, 1994), and explains to her students that they will listen to four Native American folktales during the coming weeks, discuss each one, and come up with their own, individual ideas for writing a story about Native Americans. Next, she asks the students what they think this first book will be about. Jacob (all children's names are pseudonyms) said

he thought it will be about coyotes because of the title and illustration on the front of the book. Sarah asks what a trickster is. Lynne explains that the story they are about to hear is a Native American folktale and that they sometimes have tricksters in them that try to fool other characters. She also explains that many Native American folktales include stories about how things of today have come to be, and that sometimes animals in the folktales are almost like humans. She explains further that the folktales are related to fiction stories and asks the students what they remember about fiction stories. Most of the students explain the narrative elements of main characters, settings, problems, events, and solutions. They are unfamiliar with the ideas of stories having a theme. Lynne explains theme as being the message, lesson, or moral of the story and that many Native American folktales have this element. She continues by drawing student attention to the illustrations, the illustrator, and author of the book she is about to read.

While Lynne reads the story aloud, several students spontaneously verbalize responses to the story similar to a play-by-play commentary. By the intense, dreamlike look on their faces, together with the content of their verbal responses, it is clear that many of the students are actively engaged with the story:

Cole: *Look out!*
Joe: *Oh no! There's going to be trouble.*

All the students seem to be involved with the story. They scoot closer and closer to Lynne and watch and listen intently. They seem to forget that I am even in the room with my video camera running silently. Lynne did not stop reading to ask questions, instead, she continues with a smooth flow, adding voice inflection that gives vibrant life to the characters and a thrill of excitement to the plot. Students make spontaneous predictions during the story that indicate they were making sense of the story and following the unfolding plot:

Natalie: *He [the coyote] is going to fall!*
Matt: *The crows are tricking him.*

The Classroom Context

The previous vignette reveals the context of this present study that took place in Lynne's second grade classroom. Lynne teaches at a university laboratory school located in a medium-sized, Midwestern community. She participates in a looping strand, that is, she teaches first grade and then moves to second grade and then loops back to first grade. During the study, Lynne had moved to second grade with her first grade students and was enjoying her second year with them.

Students in Lynne's class are seated at tables in small groups of three or four. She has 8 boys and 5 girls. The students are from families representing several ethnic groups including: 6 Caucasian, 5 African American, 1 Hispanic, and 1 Indian.

Lynne's reading program consists of several approaches, one of which is small groups meeting in reader's workshop to read and discuss books together. She also has multiple copies of trade books for students to read which go along with her literature themes. Reading skills and strategies are taught with basal texts, whole language charts, small reading groups, and literature groups. Students work in large and small groups and go to the library once a week for free choice book selection. Lynne reads aloud daily to her students from a trade book related to the theme being studied.

Lynne's writing instruction includes students having free choice writing where they create their own stories. She teaches a writing process that includes: prewriting, composing a rough draft, revision, editing, publishing, and reading student-created stories to the class.

Background

In this article, I describe the strategies that promote reading comprehension with links to student writing through the practice of implementing reader response before, during, and following read-alouds and extending the reader response into the composing process of student-created stories about Native Americans. The main question that guided the study was: How will the integration of direct instruction in story structure together with reader response to traditional literature influence children's composition of self-created stories?

Research has demonstrated the relationship between children's reading ability and writing ability (Loban, 1963, 1976; Pearce, 1984; Stotsky, 1983; Templeton, 1986). The writing that children do many times resembles the text that they are reading. The two hold a relationship, which conveys a sense of story, those children, who have a strong background in literature, come by naturally. Many young children who have been read to as an infant start school with a sense of what constitutes a story and have demonstrated emergent writing as well (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Traditional literature has vivid characters and easy to understand plots with clear moral messages that are not complicated for young children to grasp. Some of the first stories that children hear can be categorized into this genre, so it seems quite natural to choose this genre for helping students compose similar stories. In addition, Native American folktales were chosen because Native Americans are often a topic of study in elementary classrooms. Combined with becoming familiar with the form, style, and content of traditional literature, students were immersed in a study of the rich, historical culture that influenced the creation of Native American folklore.

Using Genre to Teach Writing

There has been a recent trend in literacy education to place an emphasis on incorporating a variety of genres into instructional practice. Literature should be an important part of any classroom reading program. Zecker (1999) explored children's abilities to vary the forms of emergent writing as they wrote about different kinds of texts. She argued that as children learn to write, they experience facets of written language. Children first explore with visual or graphic aspects of writing. This can be seen in their scribble and creation of pseudo-letters. Within this process, children work with a growing awareness about directionality, letter forms, common letter patterns in their language, and spacing between words. Next, young children come to understand the symbolic nature of writing through the awareness of the relationships between oral language and written language including the difference between writing and other forms of graphic representation such as drawing. Children exploring within this phase of developmental writing begin to write what "it sounds like" with invented spellings and random strings of letters as they attempt to compose text. Children experiment with a third aspect of written language that takes the form of writing that is representative of certain kinds of text styles or genres.

Reader Response Prompts

For the current study, reader response discussion prompts (Figure 1) played a crucial role in helping the student participants to make deep, rich connections to Native American folktales, therefore making it more likely that the students had the opportunity to more fully appreciate and comprehend the text through the social context of sharing. The social context was seen as an essential component of the study and was facilitated through open-ended response prompts. Farrel and Squire (1990) hold that research on response to literature suggests that teachers can enhance the quality of students' responses by the following practices:

- Employing informal oral or writing that encourages a tentative, exploratory stance.
- Eliciting engagement responses.
- Helping students relate prior texts to current texts.
- Relating students' attitudes to their reading.
- Recognizing students' "story-driven" orientations.
- Encouraging sharing of responses to build a sense of community.

Figure 1. Reader Response Discussion Prompts

1. What do you think this book will be about?
 2. What did you think about while listening to book?
 3. What feelings did you experience while listening to the book?
 4. What was your favorite part of the book?
 5. What did this book remind you of in your own life?
 6. What do you think is the special meaning or message of this book?
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The Children's Books

Four Native American folktale picture books were chosen to read aloud to the second graders. These books were chosen because they had well defined events, demonstrated character development, clearly described settings, and had quality illustrations that enhanced understanding of the text, and helped to build an understanding of not only the genre, but also some historical aspects of the Native American culture. Native American folktales were also chosen because the study of Native Americans is frequently a theme in schools and students would be able to enrich and build upon prior knowledge if they had previously studied Native Americans, or extend knowledge gained from the study to future learning. The four books that matched these criteria are presented below:

- *Coyote: A Trickster Tale from the American Southwest* (McDermott, 1994) was chosen for the first lesson. This book is an adaptation of a Zuni folktale. It is an amusing, uncomplicated read aloud, with brilliantly colored, full-page illustrations that add high interest. Coyote, the main character, decides he wants to fly with the crows. They humor him, give him feathers, and tolerate his off-key singing and out-of-step dancing, until he begins to boast and order them about. Then, as coyote struggles in midair, they take back their feathers one-by-one, and he plummets to the earth. His tail catches fire, and he roles in the dirt. To this day he is the color of dust, and his tail has a burnt, black tip.

The story was simple and easy to follow, and provided a strong model for guiding students' writing. It had animals as main characters taking on human characteristics, something common in many Native American folktales, and children frequently enjoy stories about animals. It also involved the crows as tricksters, another universal genre element.

- The second book chosen for the study was *The Legend of the Bluebonnet: An Old Tale of Texas* (dePaola, 1983). This book is a retelling of an old Comanche folktale that explains how the bluebonnet, the state flower of Texas came to be in existence. It relates the story of She-Who-Is-Alone, an orphaned Indian girl raised by her tribe during a time of drought and famine. This young girl is the sole remaining member of her family. The other members all died in the famine. The tribe calls upon the Shaman to commune with the Great Spirits to divine what it is the People must do to regain harmony with nature. The Shaman states that a "great sacrifice" needs to be made. She-Who-Is-Alone sacrifices her most valued possession, her warrior doll, made by her mother. Because of her act, the Great Spirits bring rain and the drought and famine are ended.

In addition to possessing the qualities that would help to build comprehension of the genre, this book holds the potential to provoke deep, insightful, and emotional responses from children. The main character demonstrates unusual sensitivity to the well being of others through an incredible selfless act.

- The third book selected for the study was *The First Strawberries: A Cherokee Story* (Bruchac, 1993). A simple, uncomplicated Cherokee folktale about the Sun's healing of marital discord by a gift of ripe strawberries that magically grow at the feet of an angry woman as she flees her husband's harsh words, thus halting her departure long enough for him to catch up and make amends. The book has full-page, beautiful illustrations that enhance the meaning from the text and helps to build an understanding of historic Native American culture by depicting homes, dress, utensils, and activities. The message of friendship, kindness, and forgiveness holds a valuable life message for young children.

This book was also selected because of the simple story line that makes it easy to relate to and remember. It deals with issues that children of all ages can understand and appreciate.

- The fourth and last book chosen for the study was *Crazy Horse's Vision* (Bruchac, 2000). This is a biography of Crazy Horse's boyhood, and also holds many of the literary elements found in traditional Native American literature, therefore, was chosen to use with the study. As a youth, Crazy Horse (then known as Curly) witnesses U.S. Army soldiers attack his people. Troubled, he embarks on a vision quest and sees a figure on horseback riding untouched through a storm of lightning, hail, and bullets. His father interprets the vision, telling him that the man on the horse is the man he will become and that he is destined to defend his people. His father also tells him that if he keeps nothing for himself, no arrow or bullet will hurt him. Because of his vision, Curly received the name of his father, *Tashunka Witco*, which in English is *Crazy Horse*.

This book was selected because of its historical significance and relationship it holds to Native American studies in elementary curriculum. Children will appreciate Curly's (Crazy Horse's) acts of bravery, leadership, and selflessness as a young boy. The story line is simple and

uncomplicated and the full-page illustrations help to build an understanding of the genre through depicting historical Native American life.

Findings: Reading Events

Work with the students took place for one hour, two times per week for 6 weeks in Lynne's classroom. Lynne read aloud from each book chosen for the study and guided the students in discussion before reading and after reading. Students responded spontaneously during the reading on their own. After each book was read and discussed, Lynne asked students to talk about what ideas they had for their own, self-created story related to Native Americans. Students shared their ideas together in a discussion circle and then recorded their thoughts in a story map form that was provided for them. When all the stories were read and discussed and the students had completed four story map ideas for their own stories, the students selected one of their maps to develop into a complete story. All the maps they created were given back to them for their selection, and served as a graphic organizer to frame their completed stories. Data excerpts are highlighted below surrounding the third folktale read to the students for the purpose of illuminating the interactions between Lynne, her students, and the literature. Lynne and her students engaged in the following discourse during the reading of *The First Strawberries: A Cherokee Story*:

- Lynne: *Look at the cover of this book and predict what the book will be about.*
Brandie: *It will be about a Native American girl.*
Sarah: *It will be about strawberries.*
Tom: *It will be about a Native American because of the people on the cover.*

This was the third book that the students had listened to and discussed and it was becoming apparent that they were developing an understanding for Native American folktales as evident from their ability to discuss specific story elements. The students really liked this book and asked Lynne to read it again. Some students thought that the book was about real life, not a traditional tale. This may be because the main characters in the folktale are a husband and wife who have a disagreement, and the wife leaves. While this could mirror a real life situation, there are elements in the book that could not happen. For example, the sun in the book talks to the husband. Lynne and her students engaged in the following conversation at the conclusion of the book:

- Lynne: *What did you think about this book?*
Jon: *Read it again! Read it again!*
Logan: *I think this could really happen.*
Matt: *I think this was a true story.*

These responses signaled students' enthusiasm for the book as they demonstrated by wanting the book read again. Many second graders do not separate fiction from reality, which is also revealed in their responses. As Lynne continued asking her students to respond to the book, students connected emotionally with the story, the plot and characters, and also indicated that they comprehended the theme or themes of the story, and did so through their individual

interpretations. Lynne and I both laughed to ourselves as Connor commented about husbands not being able to cook or garden and therefore, are dependent on their wives to supply food. He was clearly making real-life connections through his cultural perspectives.

- Lynne: *What feelings did you experience while listening to the book?*
 Joe: *I felt sad for the girl and her husband.*
 Logan: *I am happy they got back together.*
 Natalie: *I felt sad when the girl went away.*
 Jenna: *I was happy that the girl picked strawberries for the man.*
 Lynne: *What was your favorite part?*
 Sarah: *I liked it when the sun helped them get back together.*
 Jacob: *I liked the part about the strawberries; they made me hungry.*
 Lynne: *What special meaning or message did the story hold for you?*
 Connor: *Be considerate of others.*
 Tom: *Don't fight.*
 Cole: *Respect others, and don't turn your back on your family.*
 Kaitlynn: *Don't argue with others.*
 Connor: *Don't be mean to your wife or she will leave you, and you won't get food, and husbands can't cook or garden. [This comment was from a student who struggles with reading and writing, yet he was able to make personal connections to the folktale and understand the theme.]*

When asked what ideas they had for their own stories, the second graders further demonstrated that they were thinking about the literary elements of the book they had just listened to and discussed. It appeared that they were relating to story elements that make up a traditional tale, specifically, a Native American folktale, and choosing these elements to incorporate into their own writing. Students also remembered elements from the previously read folktales and wanted to incorporate elements from those folktales with elements from the book they heard as evidenced from the following conversation:

- Lynne: *After listening to this Native American folktale, what ideas do you have for your own folktale?*
 Jon: *I want to write about a strawberry and have Indians in my story.*
 Sarah: *In my story, I want to write about a boy and a girl who are poor and they need food.*
 Jenna: *I want to write about a strawberry that makes a wish.*
 Matt: *In my story, I want people that help each other.*
 Cole: *I want to have a trickster in my story, maybe the sun or a coyote that tricks the boy and girl.*

Findings: The Writing Events

Prior to the students writing story maps for their own stories, Lynne reviewed the literary elements that make a good story: characters, setting, problem, plot, and resolution. In addition to these elements, Lynne asked her students to think of what the main theme or special message

their story would hold for the reader. She then sent the students from the reading center to write at tables where they sat in small groups. Students discussed their ideas with each other as they wrote them down on the story map forms. I asked many of the students to tell me about their ideas they had as they were writing. From the responses I listened to, it became evident that the second graders were building relationships across the four Native American folktales they were listening to during the read aloud events, making connections to Native American folktale elements during the discussion events, and blending together these elements into their own writing. Data excerpts from the conversations with students during the writing events provided evidence of the influence that reading and literature discussions were having on their writing. These data excerpts are provided below:

- Tim (author): *Tell me about the main characters in your folktale.*
 Cole: *The sun is a helper in my story.*
 Jenna: *I am writing about a strawberry that makes a wish.*
 Joe: *I am writing about a strawberry that is bad. He also talks.*
 Tim: *What do you think about first when you begin to write?*
 Connor: *I think about the characters for my story.*
 Tim: *What kinds of characters do think about when beginning to write about a Native American folktale?*
 Connor: *I think about people, animals, and spirits can be characters.*
 Jacob: *Spirits are real.*
 Natalie: *I think about the First Native Americans and the first animals.*
 Tim: *Tell me what your folktale is about.*
 Sarah: *I am writing about a boy and a girl who need food.*
 Tom: *I am writing about a strawberry that is bad and he talks.*
 Tim: *What is your theme going to be?*
 Connor: *My message will be to never yell at family members.*
 Brandie: *My message is to not to argue; people get hurt when they argue.*
 Kaitlynn: *My message is to never leave your family.*
 Matt: *My message will be about how something has come to be.*

Many of the second graders had difficulty associating settings in their folktales to the folktales read and discussed in class, although, they appeared to understand the concept of setting when asked by Lynne and myself, and they included locations for their stories on the maps they completed, however, the locations were often places other than were described in the read-alouds. The following data excerpt reveals the students' thinking about the literary element of setting and further substantiates this finding.

- Tim: *Tell me about the setting for your Native American Folktale.*
 Jacob: *It is going to be in a jungle.*
 Sarah: *It is going to be in a park.*
 Jon: *It is going to be by the ocean.*

Figure 2 shows a story map that Kaitlynn completed for her own story after the reading and discussing of *The First Strawberries: A Cherokee Story*. Her map includes a blend of elements, as did most of the students' story maps, from the previously read folktales. The desert was a setting in the first folktale read

the Read Aloud Book The first Strawberry e

Story Map

Title of your story: The decent desert

Characters-Who are your characters? The tiny tree and a boy and a girl

Setting-Where and when does your story take place? The desert 10 years ago

Story Problem (s) or Conflict (s) My characters' problem (s):
the boy and the girl were very poor they had no food and there was a drought

Plot-What happens in my story? it rains on the tiny tree and on the desert the drought stops

Resolution-How my characters overcome their problem (s):
since the rain rained on the tree and on the desert the tree grew and it gave food to the boy and the girl

Theme-What is the special message of my story?
always stay with your parents

Coyote: A Trickster Tale From the American Southwest. The rest of her story map elements are very similar to the folktale, *The Legend of the Bluebonnet: An Old Tale of Texas* that was read before *The First Strawberries*. Her inclusion of the tree as a character that helps the others could be related to the illustrator's inclusion of trees in *The First Strawberries*, which are prominently shown on several full-page illustrations in the book. This particular student's map is included because it is a typical example of the other maps the second graders composed lending evidence in how they blended literary elements from previous texts that they have experienced together with their own ideas for

self-created story development.

Discussion

All of the data yielded from the study, i.e., the researcher's journal, student story maps, student stories, and video taped classroom sessions, were analyzed using the constant comparison method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each unit of information was compared to all other units of information from each data source in order to determine the findings for the study. The books read for the study were analyzed to determine patterns in characters, settings, problems, solutions, and themes. The student stories that were completed were then compared to the books that were read to them, and I looked for recurring themes within the students' stories that were similar to the books read aloud.

Analysis of the completed stories composed by the second graders revealed that many integrated literary elements from the Native American folktales read and discussed into their own writing, and when they did so, they integrated across the texts. The analysis also indicated a progression of integration by the students. Through the literacy events of listening, discussing, and writing, the second graders continued to integrate more of the Native American literature into their writing.

Using the constant comparison method of analysis, the completed folktales were also analyzed to reveal what patterns were evidenced in the literary elements the students were incorporating into their writing. These patterns were then compared to the literary element analysis that was completed for each book. This analysis (Table 1) suggested that many of the second graders had developed a schema for the Native American folktale genre which they implemented into their own, self-created stories.

The findings of the study suggested that providing and guiding the opportunity to discuss their writing with each other helped the students in the study to formulate, evaluate, and revise their writing, leading them closer to a well-written text and a better understanding for a specific genre. When the students shared ideas for writing, they developed clear thinking for their approach. The social interaction provided by literature discussions served to help build connections between the reading and the writing process. Through the literature discussions, the students developed a vocabulary from which they drew from for future discussions and for understanding Native American folktales. The discussions served as an integral component in linking the Native American folktales to the students' writing.

The findings of the study indicated that when the second graders were exposed to writing instruction using the same genre over repeated lessons, their writing became more and more similar to the genre they were being taught. The direct, specific instruction in text analysis helped the students to have a clear approach to analyzing their own writing. Students crafted from the literary elements of the folktales that they had made personal connections to, such as their favorite characters, settings, events, and problems. Through this selection process, along with the opportunity to express their creativity, the second graders developed ownership over their writing by creating self-made stories.

Table 1. Patterns of Literary Elements in Second Graders' Self-Created Stories

Characters	Settings	Problems	Resolutions	Themes
Chiefs	American states	Fighting	The sun as helper	Peace
Warriors	Plains	Danger	The giving of a name	Sharing
American animals	Meadows	War	Animals as helpers	The significance of a name
Native Americans	Forests	Quest for a name	Apologizing	Creation
People		Wanting to be different		To change oneself
Sun		Being killed		Helping others
Stars		Anger		Forgiveness
Moon		Being tricked		Discovery
		Needing food		
		Creation		

Implications for Classroom Literacy Practices

Building from the findings of this present study, implications for classroom practice can be constructed. Studying one genre in depth, helped the second graders understand how authors construct texts, and to be able to examine relationships across texts within a genre. The students in the study were unaccustomed to molding their writing to fit a specific genre. Using a genre they were familiar with such as traditional tales eased the tensions. As writing instruction became specific and routine, students became even more at ease with the writing they were doing. The students also enjoyed the use of picture books as models for their writing. The illustrations in the books helped to build deeper understanding of the genre. Based upon the data gathered and analyzed for the study, the following implications for classroom practice are presented below.

Students benefit from the integration of trade books representing specific genres into their writing instruction. Findings from the study suggested that the second graders' writing was influenced by the Native American folktales that they heard and discussed. The more the students enjoyed the book (as demonstrated by their responses during the teacher read alouds), the more literary elements were transferred into their self-created writing. Student writing indicated that they were able to integrate many of the genre elements into their own stories. Beginning with a literature genre familiar to students will help them feel comfortable in the reading and writing processes. As the second graders listened and discussed more books related to the genre, they were able to examine relationships and see patterns across the texts. This practice will help students develop a better understanding or schema for the genre, which will guide their writing.

Literature discussions become a format for building reading and writing comprehension when teachers carefully integrate literacy strategies into the discussions. Findings from the study indicated that the second graders enjoyed hearing a high-quality book read aloud to them. Teachers can build upon student enjoyment that read alouds provide by facilitating invigorating literature discussions. The open-ended, reader response prompts used for the study were found to be beneficial in helping students form deeper, more meaningful relationships and connections to the books that they heard. Teachers can foster these relationships by knowing when, what, and how to encourage students to respond to a text. When left on their own without guidance or instruction, student discussions fall short of being beneficial for building reading comprehension that can be carried over into quality writing. Once students know how to discuss a text or their writing, they can do so with confidence, and moreover, they will increase their knowledge of reading and writing as they see the connections held between the two. Additionally, when teachers guide open-ended conversation about literature, students will be more accomplished at entering into discussion with knowledge and purpose.

Conclusions

As the findings implicated in this study, when students become more accomplished and comfortable with the writing process when teachers are clear about the expectations, model, and plan for frequent student engagement. It is important for teachers to have their students engaged in the writing processes of pre-write, draft, revise, edit, and publish frequently throughout the school year. If students are only following the process a few times a year, they lose track of the steps and become disengaged. Teachers need to demonstrate for students how to help each other in systematic ways so that all the revising and editing suggestions do not always come from the teacher. Revising and editing practice should become part of daily writing instruction, and students should develop some responsibility and ownership over the writing process.

Writing instruction involving many different genres helps students build knowledge of how text is organized, and in turn, leads to improved writing composition. Writing in a specific genre will help students understand how authors create texts, and will also help students integrate the literary elements into their own writing. Moreover, when students write in a certain genre they can see how their text compares to that of published authors, and through this comparison, become more analytical towards their own writing. As students become accomplished at writing familiar genres, they can move on to more difficult texts, e.g., informational writing.

The findings of the study indicated that using one genre for teaching writing influenced second graders' writing. As the students were exposed to more texts representing Native American folktales, their writing reflected more literary elements associated with the genre. Whole group, teacher facilitated literature discussions on text structure benefited students most with developing an understanding for Native American folktales. Reading a genre followed by discussion, and then leading into related writing of the genre proved to be a sequential flow of literacy instruction that helped the second graders develop direct links from their writing to the texts they were experiencing. The more practice students had with this procedure, the more confident they became. It is important for educators not to move on too fast from one unit of study to the next, but instead, allow students time and space to develop and hone the skills that they are learning, which will ultimately serve to lead them to successful outcomes.

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