

# **Teaching Grammar & Mechanics through Writing**

INPEC 2021  
October 5, 2021

# Grammar

- USAGE
- It is the correct USAGE of our language spoken or written
- Verb tense; plurals; sentence formation

# Mechanics

- PUNCTUATION and CAPITALIZATION
- We don't speak using punctuation and capitalization, so this tends to be more difficult for students to learn and apply

# CUPS

- **C**apitalization
- **U**sage
- **P**unctuation
- **S**pelling

Aimee Buckner, 2005

# *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves*

by Lynne Truss



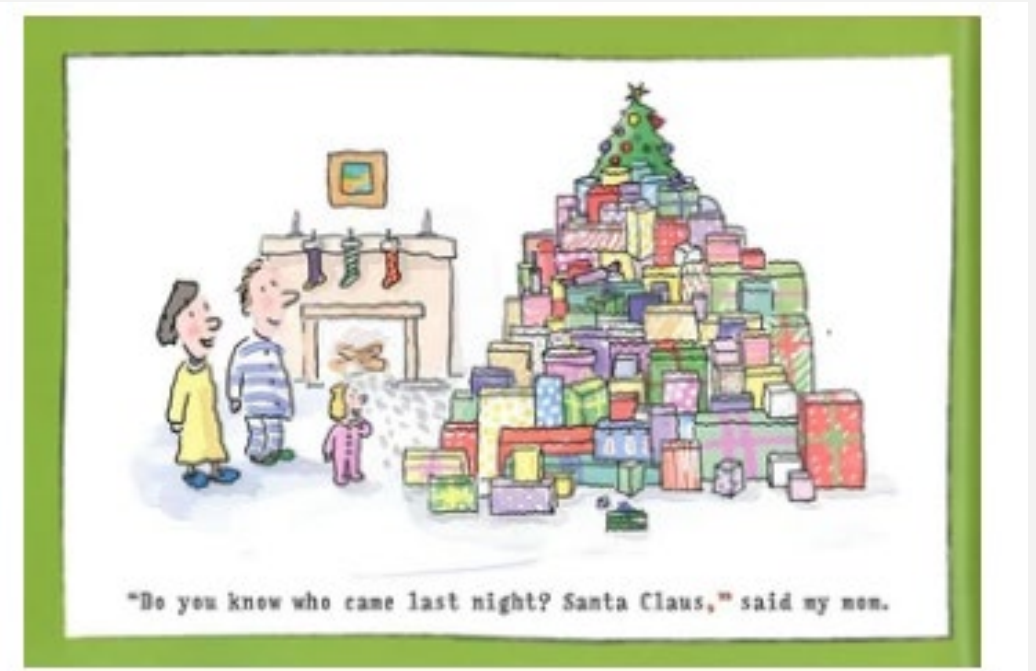
No pushing, please.



No pushing please.

# *Twenty Odd Ducks*

by Lynne Truss



"Do you know who came last night?" Santa Claus said. "My mom."

"Do you know who came last night? Santa Claus," said my mom.



Let's eat grandma!



Let's eat, grandma!

**PUNCTUATION  
SAVES LIVES!**

**We're going to learn  
to cut and paste kids!**

Commas matter.

“In the end, the whole purpose of grammar and convention instruction is to elevate writing.”

Jeff Anderson

# Research

“As far back as 1936, the NCTE has found that the formal teaching of grammar and mechanics had little effect on students’ writing and, in fact, had deleterious effects when it displaced writing time”

Jeff Anderson

“Marking every error does about as much good as yelling down a hole”

Nancy Atwell

“Telling kids about grammar and mechanics translates to student results teacher talk- the equivalent of blah, blah, blah.”

Jeff Anderson

“The conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaced some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing”

Braddock, Lloyd, & Schoer



# What do we do?

- Explicitly teach grammar and mechanics **through writing and in context of writing**
- We make sure students get **PLENTY** of time to write and try out all these skills
- Teach units focused on punctuation or on using grammar appropriately
- Throw out the worksheets. Instead, have students write their own compound sentences; create their own sentences with contractions

# Why should we 'switch'?

- It is a unit where students get to choose topic AND the genre. Students need choice— it provides motivation, interest— it is what helps them get better. Here's a way to teach something they need, and to let them choose topic AND genre.
- Weeks zooming in on a specific skill, with lots of mentor sentences, lots of time for modeling, lots of time for practice and application.
- They are learning grammar and/or mechanics AND they are writing.

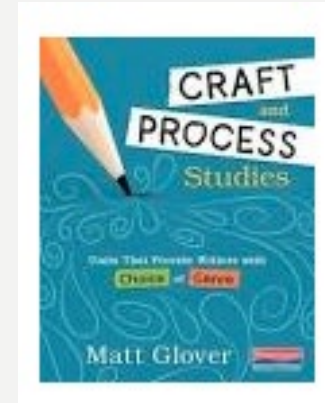
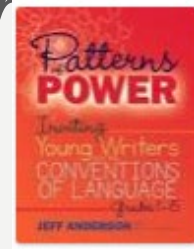
We have to give kids **TIME to use these skills in writing** . They have to practice it how we are expecting them to use it, not in isolation or on a worksheet. Our goal is application in their writing, therefore we have to teach it and practice these skills in their writing.

# NOW WHAT?

1. Let's plan a unit together!
2. Brainstorm different grammar and mechanic unit 'ideas' for your grade level
3. Explore mentor texts to find some for your grade level unit 'ideas'
4. Brainstorm quick grammar and mechanics practice and assessment activities (what can we do instead of traditional DOL?)

# Planning a Unit

- Matt Glover - *Craft and Process Studies*
- Jeff Anderson *Patterns of Power*



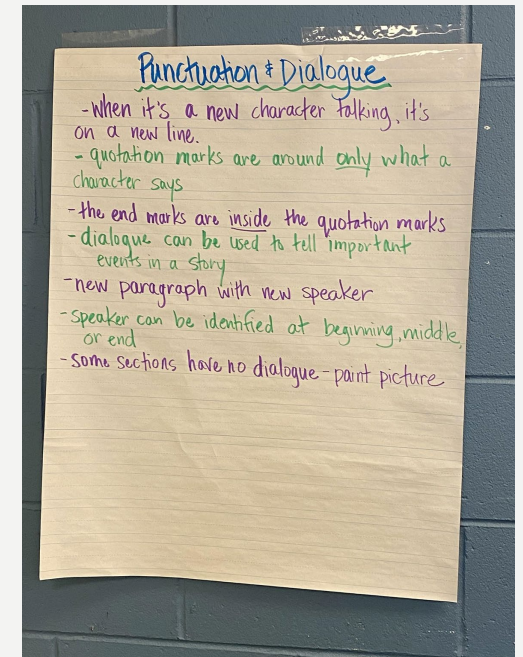
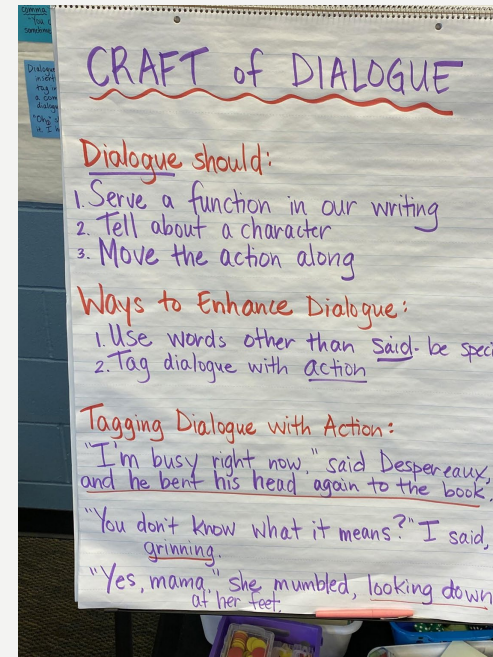
1. What are we teaching?
2. How many lessons are we planning to teach?
3. What specific skills are important for this topic? What order do we want to teach them?
4. What mentor texts/sentences will we use as support?

[Unit Plan](#)

# Ideas for your Grade Level

1. Grammar Ideas? Mechanics Ideas? Brainstorm a few!
  - Remember to check your grade level standards!
2. Explore mentor texts for possibilities!

See the charts for some inspiration!



# Resources

- [Mentor Texts Handout](#)
- Professional teaching books by Jeff Anderson, Matt Glover
- Sample Rubric *(link and handout)*
  - [Dialogue Study \(4th grade\)](#)
  - [Punctuation Study \(2nd grade\)](#)
  - [Sentence Study \(4th grade\)](#)
- Email- [smythb@olmc1.org](mailto:smythb@olmc1.org)

# References

- Anderson, J. (2005). *Mechanically inclined: Building grammar, usage and style into writer's workbooks*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Braddock, R., Lloydones, R., & Schoer, L. (1963). *Research in written composition*. Champaign, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Buckner, A. (2005). *Notebook Know-How: Strategies for the Writer's Notebook*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Calkins, L. M. (1994). *The art of teaching writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Fletcher, R. & Portalupi, J. (2001). *Writing workshop: The essential guide*. Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann.
- Glover, M. (2019). *Craft and Process Studies: Units that Provide Writers with Choice of Genre*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.