

Read Like a Writer  
from Katie Wood Ray's *Wondrous Words*, 1999.

Notice something about the craft of the text.

Noticing *writerly* things means noticing things that are close to the words, close to the text. Examples: repetition, word choice, structure of the text. This is different than responding to *readerly* things such as "It flows" or "It has great description."

Talk about it and *make a theory* about why a writer might use this craft.

Discussing WHY a writer might choose to write something in a certain way helps students to understand the writing technique. This will, in turn, help them to "untie" the technique from the text studied and try it in their own writing. It's fine if the theory doesn't match the particular author's intentions. The point is to examine the possibilities as to why a writer *might* craft a piece in a particular way. This gives a strong sense of "I might write my piece like this, or I could write it like this, or I could try this other thing in my writing."

Give the craft a *name*.

The purpose of naming a technique is to give students a common language with which they can discuss the craft of writing. If we have a name for something, we're more likely to remember it and to use it with our own work. If students notice a craft that has a name - such as alliteration, metaphor, etc. - use that. If not, then the class can invent a name. The class will know what it means and can add it to the class pot of "things we can try."

Think of *other texts* you know. Have you seen this craft before?

The same wonderful ways to craft writing can be found in many books. As students are on the "lookout" for crafting techniques, they will notice this. Such ways of writing are not owned by particular authors, but are the domain of all writers. This helps students to understand that it's not "copying" to use writing strategies, that writers learn from each other. To seek out books that are crafted like books they already know helps students to make connections between authors and to read for voice and style as well as story.

*Envision* this crafting in your own writing.

The most important step. Students with their own drafts, about their own topics, think about, imagine, how this particular crafting strategy might work in their own draft. They "try them on" for size, talking out how a crafting technique might work with their draft. We can help them by making statements such as, "So if I'm writing and I want to \_\_\_\_\_, then I can use this technique." This helps students to make sense of WHY writers might choose certain techniques, why certain techniques make sense for certain types of writing. With envisioning, it makes sense to help students by "writing in the air" / "writing out loud" for them, so that they can hear the sound of the crafting technique in their own draft. This step will ideally give students the feeling of so many possibilities for their draft.