

Family Readathon



Give So Kids Can Have Books To Read At Home

 **bookspring** & **The Library Foundation**

READING CHALLENGE WORKSHOP #3: WRITING A LETTER TO AN AUTHOR

Workshop Notes: *The following lesson outline was created for workshops hosted virtually by The Library Foundation. This lesson was created to be adapted for a variety of grade levels, specifically 3rd-8th grade. Instructors are encouraged to modify this outline based on your background, teaching style, and, of course, the grade level of students that you'll be teaching. Parents are encouraged to attend and help their students navigate Bookopolis.*

Workshop Goals:

- Students will leave the workshop with a completed challenge meant to creatively engage them with books.
- Students will end with a letter to a writer, which they can share with Bookspring, The Library Foundation, and their school or team.

Welcome

- Fun warm-up/welcome/ice breaker for everyone to get comfortable and say hello
 - o Suggested: "Emoji of the Day": Ask students to think of a book they recently read and then several emojis that described how they felt reading it.
- Since we have small groups, feel free to spend time doing individual introductions. (This can obviously transition into the Reading Talk part of the lesson, below!)

Reading Talk

- Group discussion about any exciting reading adventures since you last met
- Did you read anything new/exciting this week? Did you discover a new book that you want to read?

Challenge: Writing a Letter to an Author

- Ask students to gather the following materials: a few pieces of paper, a pencil or pen. Let them know that whatever they have at home/in front of them is perfect material.
- Ask them to think of a time they received a letter, and how it made them feel.
- Show them a few examples of letters written by children to authors (below):

[Celebrating Children's Books With Letters to Authors | Feature Stories | *emissourian.com*](#)

Dear Jeff Kinney,

I love your “Diary of a Wimpy Kid” books! They are super detailed, and I’m pretty sure every kid could relate to them.

They are also really funny and even when I’m upset they can make me laugh.

I know that some kids might not like to read, but I do, and I have the best time reading these. I also love how you draw the characters. They are really funny looking sometimes, and even though they are just stick people, you make them so interesting looking and funny.

I also feel like everything in these books is really realistic. If you don’t know what I mean, they remind me of things kids would be thinking and doing.

You have an amazing talent because you’re an adult, and you’re making diaries of a kid, and that’s probably super hard to do as an adult.

Another thing that these books helped me with was actually getting into reading. I used to hate reading and anytime my grandma or anyone else brought up the fact that I had to read, I would get really mad, until I found the “Diary of a Wimpy Kid” series. Not only are they funny, but they’re relatable too. This was perfect for me!

After that, I started reading more and found that I loved it. I also started to improve in my schoolwork after that.

These books also gave me ideas for my writings. I’ve always loved to write stories, and I’ve always thought it was so fun to sit down and write about things that I want. I can be creative, and it’s also something peaceful to do.

Your stories gave me ideas for my writing, because I thought they were so cool. I started writing diaries and then after that, I started writing even more stories.

In conclusion, your “Diary of a Wimpy Kid” stories not only helped me get into reading, but they also helped me with writing my own stories, helped me in school, and they gave me something fun and enjoyable to read every day after school.

I really love your books, and I hope that you see this. You’re amazing, and I want to tell you to keep up the good work, because you’re doing amazing, and believe in yourself!

Sincerely,

Shyla, fifth grade

Dear Mr. Andrew Peterson,

Thank you.

Thank you for leading me to the edge of the “Dark Sea of Darkness.” Thank you for piloting me on an adventure I’ll never forget. Thank you for introducing me to lifelong friends who enraptured my heart with the richness of childhood.

You’ve spun magic. You’ve made Glipwood and Skree and the Igiby cottage and Books and Crannies and Anklejelly Manor and every other fantastical place in the fantastical kingdom of Anniera seem like home. And I didn’t want to leave.

Thank you for surprising me, not only with plot kinks, but with every startlingly unique detail. I wish I had counted the number of times I grinned at your absurd footnotes. Peet the Sock Man’s utter silliness delighted me. Podo’s disgust for the pesky “thwaps” amused me. Leeli’s lilting voice and vibrancy made me long to be a child again.

And yet your book was a sober reminder that I am very much grown up. I shared in the sufferings of your protagonist, Janner, because we are too alike. We are standing on adulthood’s verge and yearning to plunge ahead. But are we truly ready to leave

childhood behind? The world isn't all magic and singing dragons. There is loss and fear and death and, in Janner's case, the poisonous Fangs of Dang.

In all its whimsical beauty, "The Dark Sea of Darkness" is wildly dark. Arwiar is plagued. And these allegorical places remind me of my own world.

Leafing across the pages, soaking up each word, your book stirred something inside me. It coaxed life into my heart's embers. It roused my hunger for another world — a world far past the Stony Mountains and the Ice Prairies. A world even warmer and richer than Glipwood. A world delightfully void of Fangs and Black Carriages and toothy cows. A world I can truly call home.

"I don't know if I've ever been so sad to finish a book," I told my friend when I reached the Appendices of "On the Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness." I folded it closed and wanted to start all over. I wanted to visit Skree again. I wanted to dive back into Glipwood. But more than that, I wanted to bask in the warmth of another, greater, more glorious world.

And someday I will. But until then, thanks for giving me a taste. Thank you for a sliver of hope and a ray of glory to illuminate my own Dark Sea of Darkness.

I can't wait to return.

Sincerely,

Bethany

- Spend time noticing what the children included in their letters:
 - “Dear _____”
 - “My name is _____ and I recently read your book, _____”
 - Compliments to the writer
 - Questions about what happened or what the reader wants to know more about

- Ask students to consider an author they would like to write a letter to. They might have a book in mind already, or maybe they can choose from a few authors here:
 - Katherine Applegate, writer of *The One and Only Ivan* and *Willodeen*
 - Kwame Mbalia, writer of *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky*
 - Erin Entrada Kelly, writer of *Hello, Universe*

- Ask the students to take out a piece of paper and begin a letter to an author.
 - Participants might want to shout out ideas, and this discussion can help along other students.
 - Once they have clear ideas, put on music and allow the kids to draw for about 10 minutes (or whatever time allows.)
 - For younger students, you might project this template to help them along:

Date: _____

Dear _____

My name is _____, I am _____ years old. I like to read
about _____

Thank you for writing the book _____

My favorite character is _____

My favorite part is when _____

It made me feel _____ because _____

One question I would like to ask you is _____

In your next book I hope _____

Thank you for your great work!

Sincerely,

S. Wilson, 2015. Quest: www.funwriting.com

- Have the kids share their in-progress pieces, and encourage them to finish and share on social media using the hashtag #FamilyReadathon

- If you have extra time, here are a few extra activities to choose from:
 - Talk with students about where they find new books to read. Emphasize that they can find books for free at the library! Walk them through how to search for books on the APL website: <https://library.austintexas.gov/> . Curbside pick-up is available at all locations. And e-books are available through APL too!
 - Ask students to share their favorite places to read! Classroom? Library? Bedroom? Living Room? Closet?! Encourage to share other positive reading strategies. Do they read with a bookmark? Listening to music? What tips do they have for each other?
 - For older students, introduce the idea of annotating as a way of staying engaged (& in dialogue) with what they're reading. When you annotate while you read, your writing counts toward your reading minutes! [Great annotating tips here!](#)