

BREAKING GROUND: **TEACHERS RELATE READING** **AND WRITING** **ELEMENTARY** **IN THE** **SCHOOL**

Edited by: Jane Hansen/Thomas Newkirk

Donald Graves

BREAKING GROUND:

TEACHERS RELATE READING AND WRITING IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Edited by: Jane Hansen/Thomas Newkirk/Donald Graves

HEINEMANN
PORTSMOUTH

Heinemann
A division of Reed Elsevier Inc.
361 Hanover Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801
Offices and agents throughout the world

Chapter 1 © 1985 by Ellen Blackburn; chapter 2 © 1985 by Carol Avery; chapter 3 © 1985 by Janet von Reyn; chapter 4 © 1985 by Alfreda Furnas; chapter 5 © 1985 by Winnifred Braun; chapter 6 © 1985 by Heather Hemming; chapter 7 © 1985 by Kathy Matthews; chapter 8 © 1985 by Susan Sowers; chapter 9 © 1985 by Susan Benedict; chapter 10 © 1985 by Cora Five and Martha Rosen; chapter 11 © 1985 by Curtis W. Hayes and Robert Bahruth; chapter 12 © 1985 by Thomas Newkirk; chapter 13 © 1985 by Jack Wilde; chapter 14 © 1985 by Linda Rief; chapter 15 © 1985 by Nancie Atwell; chapter 16 © 1985 by Charles Chew; chapter 17 © 1985 by Ruth Hubbard; chapter 18 © 1985 by Jane Hansen; chapter 19 © 1985 by Donald Graves; chapter 20 © 1985 by Donald M. Murray.

First edition

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

ISBN 0-435-08219-1

Designed by Wladislaw Finne

Printed in the United States of America

First printed 1985.

Reprinted 1985, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1992

Printed on-demand 1997

Contributors

and their present
professional positions
and locations

Nancie Atwell

Grade Eight English Teacher
Boothbay Region Elementary
School
Boothbay Harbor, Maine

Carol S. Avery

Grade One Teacher
William Nitrauer School
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Robert Bahruth

PhD Student
University of Texas,
Austin, Texas

Susan Benedict

Grade Two Teacher
Crocker Farm School
Amherst, Massachusetts

Ellen Blackburn

Grade One Teacher
Edward Devotion School
Brookline, Massachusetts

Winnifred Braun

Grade Two Teacher
Cecil Swanson School
Calgary, Alberta

Charles Chew

Chief, Bureau of English and
Reading Education
State of New York
Albany, New York

Cora Five

Grade Five Teacher
Edgewood Elementary School
Scarsdale, New York

Alfreda Furnas

Kindergarten Teacher
York Elementary School
York, Maine

Donald H. Graves

Department of Education
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

Jane Hansen

Department of Education
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

Curtis W. Hayes

Division of Bicultural-Bilingual
Studies
The University of Texas
San Antonio, Texas

Heather Hemming

Resource Teacher
Conrich Elementary School
Conrich, Alberta

Ruth Hubbard

Researcher
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

Kathy Matthews

Supervisor of Interns
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

Donald M. Murray

Department of English
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

Thomas Newkirk

Department of English
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

Linda Rief

Grade Seven-Eight English
Teacher
Oyster River Middle School
Durham, New Hampshire

Martha Rosen

Librarian
Edgewood Elementary School
Scarsdale, New York

Susan Sowers

Writing Instructor
Hampden-Sydney College
Hampden-Sydney, Virginia

Janet von Reyn

Chapter I Follow Through
Coordinator
Hopkinton, New Hampshire

Jack Wilde

Grade Five Teacher
Bernice Ray School
Hanover, New Hampshire

Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the support given to research in reading and writing by the University of New Hampshire's Elliott Trust Fund. An earlier grant by the National Institute of Education was critical in initiating research in children's writing, and a teacher training grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities helped to establish a network of elementary school teachers, many of whom are represented in this volume.

In preparing the manuscript, we were helped greatly by Dori Stratton, the secretary in the Writing Process Laboratory, who worked her way through our idiosyncratic correction symbols. Linda Howe did a very careful copy-editing of the manuscript. And of course, Philippa Stratton and Tom Seavey gave us the encouragement to keep this project on track.

The three of us perused our first attempt at a table of contents in Donald Graves's study on September 27, 1984. Tom had earned the soft brown recliner. Don perched on his composition stool, twisted away from his word processor. Jane tried to think in the straight-backed, wooden, family-heirloom chair. As we scanned the list of contributors to this book, Jane noticed, "It never hit me before how many of these people are first-year teachers: von Reyn, Rief, Furnas. . ."

"Yes, they're breaking new ground," interrupted Don as Jane continued. "Sh-h-h," he admonished. Jane glanced up and Don and Tom's eyes were locked. "We've got a title."

"BREAKING GROUND," exclaimed Tom, relieved after months of agonizing over "Understanding Reading and Writing," "Understanding Writing and Reading," "Relating Reading and Writing," "The Reading/Writing Spiral," etc., suggestions Don Murray would toss aside as labels rather than titles.

Many of these teachers have broken new ground. They teach in environments in which they can take risks and they set up similar environments for their students. They challenge traditional expectations. They believe in what they're doing, but they're nervous. But, more important, they're also excited because their students not only learn to read and write; they like it.

New ground in writing has been broken in other books, but it's time to break new ground in reading. The philosophy behind writing process instruction is incompatible with the philosophy behind reading worksheets, tests, basals, and the fear that any deviation will endanger students' ability to learn to read. Too many students read fifty worksheets for every book they pick up. Their teachers teach what's next in the teachers' guide instead of what the students need next. Too many classrooms revolve around the teacher.

But in writing classrooms, children say, "I wrote it. I do the work." Writing teachers give students choices and listen when the children talk about what they learn. They affirm what the students know and then learn from them. Writing led many of the teachers in this book to reexamine what they did when they taught reading.

These teachers started to ask new questions, questions not typically asked about reading instruction. They were moved to publish because they had started to think more about their teaching. If they feel separated from some of their peers, at the same time, they feel closer to their students than in the past. They are all members of a literate community who write, read, and talk books.

Our book represents a teaching philosophy in which teachers expect their students to work together. Students are not segregated into proficiency groups, which reinforce social class distinctions. They are all part of the same community.

The teachers set up predictable environments in which children do as many things as possible by themselves. Janet von Reyn saw her children blossom during the month she left them alone with their writing. Carol Avery gives us a portrait of a little girl who found self-confidence when Carol assumed she could take the initiative. These teachers expect their students to make decisions, and the children do.

Freddie Furnas wondered where to start with kindergarten children. She not only helped her young students write; they surprised her and learned to read. Older students with a history of learning problems also learn to read when they enter via writing, as Curt Hayes and Robert Bahruth show us with their migrant students in Texas.

But these teachers worry. They worry about themselves, and about parents, other teachers, and administrators. They need support. Charles Chew of the New York State Department of Education encourages teachers to see parallels between reading and writing instruction. Winn Braun, a first-grade teacher, had a supportive principal who helped her convince her students' parents that their young children were learning to read. Building the parallels between reading and writing can become complicated, but Ruth Hubbard explains a framework for it. Heather Hemming elaborates on the importance of spending lots of time on reading and writing so children can talk about their own processes. One of the teachers' main questions is always: "How do I fit skills into all of this?" Jane Hansen describes some skills lessons to show how skills can be taught in the context of children's writing and reading.

Tom Newkirk and Jack Wilde show how fiction can help middle-school students explore thought and character change. Linda Rief continues with middle-school students' growth in understanding and empathy for other generations. When Linda's students presented what they learned during this unit to some teachers in a summer school writing class, they added important information about their teacher. The summer school teachers wanted to know what Rief's major role was in the unit and the students surprised both Rief and the other teachers with their answer: "She wrote, also."

Susan Benedict wrote about American history with her second-grade students as she showed how content-area reading and writing can be a way of life in classrooms. Kathy Matthews brings us into her transition classroom of children who have completed one year of first grade. These young writers use writing in all areas of the curriculum. Susan Sowers then explains the importance to first-grade children of nonnarrative writing. Cora Five and Martha Rosen share a social stud-

ies program in which students explore and write about our forefathers using their own voices.

For several years, Don Graves has been writing about the importance of “audience” to writers. He now explores the effect of an “audience” on readers. If we share what we read, we read with that other person in mind, and that person’s presence affects what we think when we read. Don Murray, from whom the three of us are learning to think on paper, writes about trusting new information as it surprises us in the midst of our writing. We write to think and we read to think: this book is about thinking.

Ellen Blackburn and Nancie Atwell both show the power of literature. They persuade us that, when we talk about our writing programs, we are at the same time talking about literature. Literature is an integral part of a writing program. Nancie saw her junior-high students grow to love writing and decided to find a way to help them love reading. She found a way: her students read more than an average of twenty books a year in their English class.

In this book you will see students who want to read and write. Even more, they enjoy the challenge of good thinking. We hope you will want to make some of the teaching practices in this book your own. Enjoy the trip.

<i>List of Contributors</i>	v
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Preface</i>	ix

Young Children Write and Read

1. <i>Ellen Blackburn</i> Stories Never End	3
2. <i>Carol Avery</i> Lori "Figures It Out": A Young Writer Learns to Read	15
3. <i>Janet von Reyn</i> Learning Together: A Teacher's First Year Teaching Reading and Writing	29
4. <i>Alfreda Furnas</i> Watch Me	37
5. <i>Winnifred Braun</i> A Teacher Talks to Parents	45
6. <i>Heather Hemming</i> Reading: A Monitor for Writing	53

The Wider Curriculum

7. <i>Kathy Matthews</i> Beyond the Writing Table	63
8. <i>Susan Sowers</i> The Story and the "All About" Book	73
9. <i>Susan Benedict</i> "Emily Dickinson's Room Is as Old as Grandfather Frog": Developing the Basic Skills	83
10. <i>Cora Five and Martha Rosen</i> Children Re-create History in Their Own Voices	91
11. <i>Curtis W. Hayes and Robert Bahruth</i> Querer Es Poder	97

The Age of Reflection

12. <i>Thomas Newkirk</i> "On the Inside Where It Counts"	111
--------------------------------------------------------------	-----

13. <i>Jack Wilde</i>	
Play, Power, and Plausibility: The Growth of Fiction Writers	121
14. <i>Linda Rief</i>	
Why Can't We Live Like the Monarch Butterfly?	133
15. <i>Nancie Atwell</i>	
Writing and Reading from the Inside Out	147

General Principles

16. <i>Charles Chew</i>	
Instruction Can Link Reading and Writing	169
17. <i>Ruth Hubbard</i>	
Drawing Parallels: Real Writing, Real Reading	175
18. <i>Jane Hansen</i>	
Skills	183
19. <i>Donald Graves</i>	
The Reader's Audience	193

Surprise

20. <i>Donald M. Murray</i>	
What Happens When Students Learn to Write	201
<i>Bibliography</i>	203

PART

ONE

**YOUNG
CHILDREN
WRITE
AND READ**

For three days, Shawn worked on his puppets. He drew characters from the *Ed Emberly Drawing Book of Weirdos*, glued them onto tongue depressors, and then I took them downstairs and laminated them. So far, Shawn had a devil, a goblin, a witch, and Frankenstein.

When he wasn't drawing weirdos, Shawn spent a lot of time in the listening area. One of his favorite books was *The Haunted House* by Bill Martin, Jr.

One dark and stormy night, I came upon a haunted house.

I tiptoed into the yard—No one was there.

I tiptoed onto the porch—No one was there.

I tiptoed into the house—No one was there.

In the story the character walks through all the rooms of the house and finally arrives in the attic.

I went into the attic ...

where he is startled by his own reflection in the mirror.

I WAS THERE!

the story ends.

One day at the end of September, Shawn sat in the writing area with his puppets arranged in front of him. As he played with them he began to chant:

I came upon a haunted house.

I oooopened the door.

Picking up his devil Shawn said,

I saw a devil!

"Hey, yeah, I can write my own haunted house book!" He did. He used his puppets as characters.

The Haunted House

by Shawn

September 29, 1983

*I came upon a haunted house.
I opened the door.
I saw a goblin. A-A-A-A-A
I went in the T.V. room.
I saw a devil. A-A-A-A-A
I went in the kitchen.
I saw Daddy Frankenstein. A-A-A-A-A
I went upstairs.
I saw a witch. She went E-E-E-E-E
I thought they were bad,
but they were good.*



When I started building connections between reading and writing in my first-grade classroom, I did not foresee how those connections would occur. I merely tried to narrow the gap between the children's own writing and the writing of the adult authors they read. I encouraged them to guess how professional writers found ideas for topics and how they made decisions about details, beginnings and endings. Together we speculated how a story might be changed or even how two stories could be combined.

"What if . . ." I would say, "What if Hansel and Gretel met up with *The Three Robbers* in Tomi Ungerer's story?"

"Ohhh O, Ahhh!" And off we'd go.

With all of this oral rehearsal, I guess I shouldn't have been surprised when the children started to make connections in their writing. But Shawn was such an unexpected pioneer.

When Shawn had started school, only three weeks earlier, he knew six letter sounds. And, until he wrote *The Haunted House*, his longest piece of writing had thirteen words. *The Haunted House* had fifty-four words. By using Bill Martin's book as a model, Shawn pushed past his own writing limitations. He used literature to improve his writing.

Shawn built his story around the predictable sequence that Martin's book provides. All Shawn has to do is walk from room to room in the haunted house. This simple structure allows the story to move forward without a lot of organizational decision-making.

Shawn also avoids concern about sentence structure because, once again, he relies on a predictable pattern: I went in the _____. I saw a _____. He can fill in the blanks with his own places and characters. With both of these problems solved, Shawn concentrates on the production of text and adds some details of his own. Toward the end

of the story he feels confident enough to deviate from his pattern, and he makes the witch talk back. Even before he had finished the story, Shawn told me: "I'm not going to have the same ending. I'm going to say: I thought they were bad but they were good."

"You don't want your story to have the same ending as Bill Martin's, do you?"

"No, 'cause everybody's heard it and if I put it the same it won't be too 'citing."

Many approaches to writing encourage the use of adult models for children's writing. Usually the model is presented several times to the children and then they are directed to write their own story based on that model. What is different in this case is that Shawn did not try to craft a piece of writing around an adult model. He chose the model because it was appropriate for the piece of writing he was conceiving. The conception of his own story came first; then he selected a model.

Shawn has many opportunities to write, and his writing is not always based on adult models. The structure of Bill Martin's story helped him, but he is not dependent on it. He selects the model which is useful to him. Other children, whose stories are offshoots of Shawn's haunted house book, also selected from their literary field.

Amy was the first child to recognize the potential Shawn's book had for her own writing. She wrote *Halloween Day* after hearing Shawn read the draft of *The Haunted House* to me. Amy doesn't need to borrow much from Shawn—just a line to use for her lead.

Halloween Day

by Amy

October 11, 1983

*I tiptoed into the haunted house.
I saw a ghost. I started to cry.
I cried the whole way. I was scared.
I saw a witch. I cried even worse.
I saw a pumpkin and I felt much better.
I was laughing at him. He was funny.
I was acting like a baby.*

Amy's book is actually a true account of her visit to the haunted house at the Rochester Fair. But Amy saw the relationship between her own true experience and Shawn's fictional piece and borrowed appropriately to improve her own story. Both Shawn and Amy make connections between their own activities and a piece of literature because class discussions focus on these connections.

One day after reading *The Clay Pot Boy*, the children and I made a diagram on chart paper showing all the stories the book reminded us of, (see page 7).

The children recognized four relationships among all the books: Theme, Topic, Author, and Language. At the center of the diagram are books by published adult authors, but gradually the arrows lead out to the children's own writing (set in bold type).

During the discussion the children made connections between books that were already a part of their literary tradition: books they had read, reread, listened to, or written themselves. Eventually, they began to make these connections while they were in the act of composing. This is what Shawn and Amy did. As the *Clay Pot Boy* diagram shows, the stories surrounding Shawn's haunted house book multiplied, (see page 8).

Reading the published version of Shawn's book gave Timothy the idea for *The Scarey Book*. Timothy's story is fictitious. At first he follows Shawn's model closely, and then his story takes off. Timothy is also using a segment of Mercer Mayer's book, *There's a Nightmare in My Closet*, to explain character change. The little boy in Mayer's book decides to stand up to his nightmare and shoots it with his pop-gun. To his surprise, the nightmare begins to cry. The boy's anger softens and he tucks the nightmare into bed with him. Timothy uses this same strategy to explain how he deals with one of the monsters in his haunted house.

The Scarey Book

by Timothy

October 17, 1983

I came upon a haunted house. I opened the door.

I saw a dragon. A-A-A-A-A.

I ran upstairs. I saw a goblin. A-A-A-A-A.

I jumped in the bathtub. I saw a devil. A-A-A-A-A.

and I saw blood all over him. A-A-A-A-A.

I ran upstairs. I saw Frankenstein. A-A-A-A-A.

I jumped out the window. I landed in the sea.

I saw a sea monster. I kicked him. The monster cried.

I got up. I was soaked and I felt sick.

I went home. I jumped into bed. I went to sleep.

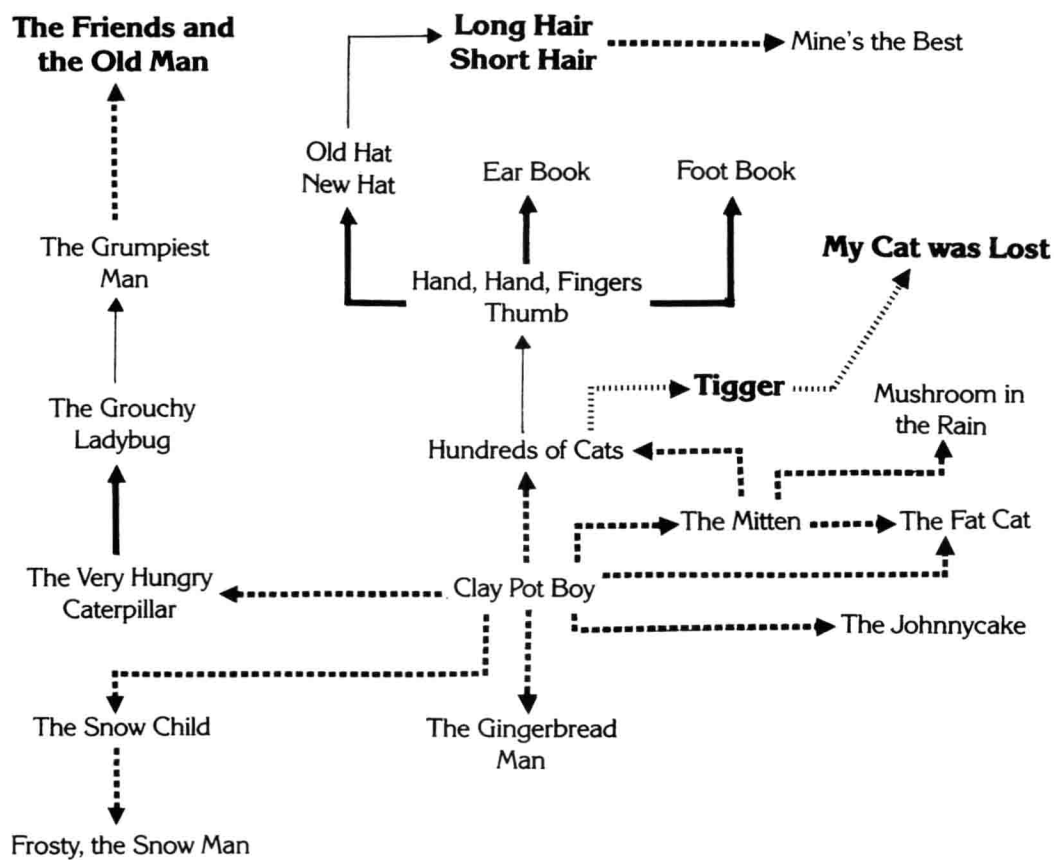
I went back to the haunted house.

I captured the dragon. I went in the T.V. room.

I saw the goblin. I put him in the bag.

I ran upstairs and I saw the devil. I threw a bag over him. I saw

FIGURE 1



KEY

Author _____

Theme

Topic

Language _____

Children's writing – bold type