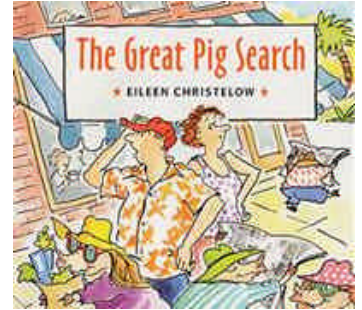
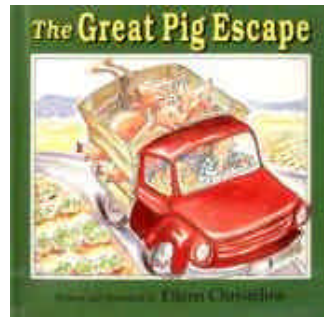
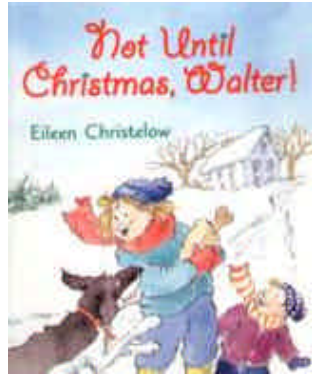
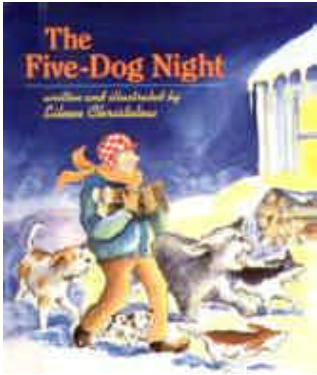


True Stories in the Classroom



Stories are everywhere!

Sometimes I get ideas for books from stories I read in newspapers, or hear on the radio, or am told by family or friends. Then the proverbial light bulb flashes in my brain, "book! book! book!" I have a file folder filled with these stories.

Writing a story is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle

I don't just sit down and write the story exactly the way it happened. It may be a funny story to hear someone tell, but not so great when I try to make picture book about it. Why? Well, maybe the story needs more action, more characters, or different characters. Maybe I need to answer: "And then what happened?" or "Why did that happen?" For instance, you might hear a funny story about your Aunt Ethel; but actually, you would like to change her character to an elephant named Pearl. If it works, do it! Or a friend might tell you about her dog who ate the living room curtains. Then another friend tells you about his dog chewing his favorite shoes. Pretty soon you are writing a story about an unmanageable dog who is driving his owners nuts, using both of your friends' stories. Writing a story is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. Your friend's stories are small pieces that make up a bigger picture.

Collecting 'true stories'

- Most kids can tell funny stories about their pets. Do a bulletin board of classroom pet stories. Can the class invent a character—perhaps a pet—and then combine some of their stories into one big story with a beginning, middle and end?
- Collect family stories about siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, etc.
- Ask students to be on the lookout for funny human interest stories in the newspaper. Make a bulletin board of the stories and ask students to choose one story to generate a story of their own.

Here are a few other classroom projects collected from teachers I've met as I have visited schools:

Projects for The Five-Dog Night:



Weather and *The Five-Dog Night*

Make a large thermometer. After reading the book, decide how cold a one-dog night would be, a two-dog night, etc. Plot the temperatures on the thermometer. (You could do the same with cats!) -from a school in Kentucky

Similes in *The Five-Dog Night*

Betty calls Ezra, "Stubborn as a mule." Ezra calls Betty, "Nosy as a mouse sniffing for cheese." Ask your students to think of other similes.

Friendship and Loyalty

Discuss the friendship between Betty and Ezra. Then discuss what qualities make a good friend.

Projects for *The Great Pig Escape*

Postcards:

Write postcards from the pigs to Bert and Ethel. I had them escape to Florida. But maybe they escaped to some other place! Take out the Atlas, tell students to find a place the pigs might escape to. On the front of the postcard, draw a picture of the place. On the back, write a note that says something about the place. Don't forget to address the postcard! -from an art teacher in Rochester, NY



Wanted Posters:

Make "Wanted" posters for the pigs. Students should describe the pigs and where they were last seen. Hang the posters around the school. -from a school in Illinois

A Pig Hunt:

Find some stuffed pigs. Hide them around the school. Students who find them get small prizes. Do this for a few days or a week, hiding the pig(s) in different places each day. Post a notice of the different hiding places in the front hall or announce them each morning on the PA system. -from a school in Illinois

Projects for *The Great Pig Search*

Look at the end papers in *The Great Pig Search*. The front end papers have a bird's-eye view of a real town, Putney, Vermont -with a few changes. The back end papers are a bird's-eye view of an imaginary town. Ask your students to draw a bird's-eye view of their town or neighborhood, or of an imaginary town. This could be a group project on a large roll of paper. This is a good mapping project. It's also a good chance to talk about scale (i.e. a church is larger than a house.)

Then have each student draw a pig in costume thinking about where they would live in the town, what job they would have, what their lives are like in this strange new place. They can write a story about their pig's life. The kids can cut out their pigs and place them in the town. (Make sure all the pigs don't have the same jobs! This is a community. All the pigs need to pull together to make it work!)

Projects for *Not Until Christmas, Walter!*

Walter, the dog in *Not Until Christmas, Walter!*, has a very good sense of smell. Find out more about a dog's sense of smell. You and your students will be amazed! Students who have dogs might like to see—as I did—if their dogs will unwrap a dog bone biscuit when the package is left unattended. Then see if the dog can still smell the biscuit if it is wrapped in a large box. Have students observe how their dogs use their noses. Have them write down their observations for a week. Then discuss them.

