

# Understanding the Purpose of the Read-Aloud in Making Meaning and Being a Writer

By Stacey Abeyta | Categories: Making Meaning, Being a Writer, Implementation

If you currently teach any of our Collaborative Classroom programs, you know that we appreciate the value of a read-aloud to support student learning across all instruction. In particular, the *Making Meaning* and *Being a Writer* programs prominently feature read-alouds as a way to engage the learner and support the learning goals of the day, week, and unit.

Every once in a while, you will encounter the same text in *Making Meaning* and *Being a Writer*. There is a common question that educators ask when they encounter the same text in both programs: Why are the lessons so similar? The answer is: the lessons, while using the same text, are actually not similar at all.

## The Purpose

Knowing the purpose is key!

In *Making Meaning*, the read-aloud text provides the opportunity for students to listen to and discuss texts together, enabling them to build background knowledge and vocabulary, enjoy a common experience, build community, share ideas, and collaborate to construct meaning. Knowing that students' listening comprehension typically exceeds their reading comprehension, we designed whole-class comprehension lessons using read-alouds so that all students can participate in grade-level comprehension work, regardless of their reading level.

*"A week of lessons typically begins with a read-aloud of an engaging text, followed by a class discussion of what the text is about. This same read-aloud text is used on subsequent days to teach the students a comprehension strategy and to give them guided practice with the strategy."* —*Making Meaning Teacher's Manual*, Program Overview

In *Being a Writer*, the read-aloud text provides an opportunity for students to experience something about the writing or writer that will support their own development as a writer. The read-aloud text features an aspect of writing, provides examples of a genre, allows for further investigation into an aspect of writing or the writing process. Don't allow your *Being a Writer* read-aloud lesson become a comprehension lesson!

*"Throughout the program, read-alouds of exemplary writing stimulate the students' imaginations and fuel their motivation to write."* —*Being a Writer Teacher's Manual*, Understanding the Program

When there is a common book across the two programs, you will encounter it in *Making Meaning* first. Rereading a book across the week is a powerful experience. Not only do the students learn something new each time they encounter the text, the familiarity they gain allows them to focus their minds on new learning. By the time the book is used as a mentor text for writing, the students have gained a deep understanding of the book.

### Reflect on the Purpose

When you encounter the same read-aloud text in *Being a Writer* that was used in *Making Meaning*, lay the two programs' lessons side-by-side. As you read them, ask yourself the following questions:

In *Making Meaning*—

1. How is this book used to help develop the reader's ability to visualize text?
2. How does the program support the student reader's comprehension through use of this book?

In *Being a Writer*—

1. How is this book being used to teach the craft of writing?
2. How do the questions in the lesson support the student writer?

Our experience is that students enjoy revisiting texts for different purposes and experiencing a book in new ways across a year. Deep understanding of a book allows them to focus on the craft and mechanics of writing when they meet the book a second time.