

Literature/Writing Connection: *The Boy Who Looked like Lincoln* Grade 1

TRAIT FOCUS: CONVENTIONS

Lesson Objective

Students correctly use periods at the ends of simple sentences.

Early Writers' First End Mark

One fundamental goal of early writing instruction is defining what a sentence is: a group of organized words put together to communicate a complete thought. As early readers and writers come to understand this concept and begin mastering the decoding of letter-sounds on their own, they also begin to realize how sentences function as a unit individual from other sentences. One punctuation for isolating sentences from each other is, of course, the period.

Periods are one of the first end marks early writers are expected to learn. The period is the English language's stop sign. It sets the stage for a solid comprehension of reading and writing—that words construct sentences and that punctuation marks govern how those sentences are read.

The book *The Boy Who Looked like Lincoln* by Mike Reiss is an excellent mentor text for illustrating the period-stop-sign concept to early learners. Integrate the following Literature/Writing Connection lesson into your curriculum on the grammar convention of correct period usage at the end of a simple sentence.

Story Overview

Reiss, Emmy-winning writer of *The Simpsons*, tells the amusing tell of a boy who stands out in a most unfortunate way. Benjy looks like Abraham Lincoln. With that comes the usual childhood turmoil, such as teasing and...being cast as Lincoln in every school play.

But when Benjy is sent to “Camp What-cha-ma-call-it: The Camp for Kids Who Look like Things,” he comes to appreciate his individuality—especially since it gets him elected class president every year.

Stop, Reader, Stop!

1. Begin your discussion of the period by holding up a picture, drawing, or actual stop sign. Ask your students what the sign is. Most should recognize it on sight. What does the sign mean? What do you do at a stop sign?
2. Delve further into what the stop sign looks like. It is red, circular. The word *stop* is written inside. Tell how this stop sign shape helps people get around. They recognize it on sight and know what they are supposed to do—stop. Go on to explain that sentences have their own stop signs that help the reader get around.
3. Draw a big dot on the board or overhead, explaining that this is a period. The period tells you when you come to the end of a sentence. You stop before going on to the next sentence.
4. Now connect the two symbols. Both are circular. Both tell you when to stop. Both help you get around.
5. Tell your students that they are going to see the period in action. Read the book to your class. Show them the pictures and have fun with the discussion. Remind students that you stopped at the end of each sentence because the periods told you to.
6. Write a few lines of text from the book on the board or overhead, omitting all periods. You may run the sentences together as a paragraph or place each on its own line to help your students clearly see where they start and stop.
7. Read the text without the punctuation, jamming each thought together. Did that sound right? No. Everything was jumbled together. What the sentences needed were periods.
8. Have your students help you put the periods back in. Read the text again and have them tell you what word the period should follow. Then read the text one last time with the correct punctuation to reinforce how periods tell the reader when to stop.