



Generating Ideas for Topics

3.1 *Generating Ideas of Topics*

Learning Objective: *students practice getting ideas for topics by looking at the world around them*

Mentor Texts: *a stack of informational texts on topics one might find outdoors [Everybody Needs a Rock, All about Spiders; A Pillbug's Life; Snowflake Bentley; Life in the Sea; Ships in the Harbor; Being A Construction Worker; The Man Who Made Parks; Follow the Water from Brook to Ocean; Tugboats; Hurricanes: Earth's Mightiest Storms; All About Trees; Where do Animals Go in Winter?]*

Connection

We have been reading informational texts and noticing what kinds of topics authors write about. It is time to start thinking about what *you* want to write about.

Teaching

There are many ways writers get ideas of topics to write about. Reading books or magazines, talking to people, and looking at the world around can all help you get ideas of things to write about. Today we will be practicing looking around outdoors to get ideas for topics.

Let's look at topics authors you know have chosen to write about. [*Create an anchor chart using books you've collected, Reading Street, and books students' are reading on their own:* e.g. insects, thunderstorms, bats, birds, city noises, trees, construction equipment, rocks, gardening, hopscotch, boats.]

Some of these authors might have gotten the idea to write about their subject when they were outside looking around.

"Try It"

Take two minutes to look around the classroom for things someone *could* write about. Tell your partner two ideas you have. [How clocks work; how books are made; what kinds of shoes kids wear.]

Instructions to students for Independent Outdoor Writing

Authors sometimes choose to write about a topic because they know a lot about it and sometimes because it was something they wanted to learn more about.

1. Walk around a little and take some time to notice



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what's around you.

2. Write down three things you know something about.
3. Write down three things you would like to learn more about.

Include your questions: "I wonder what worms do in the winter?" Often authors get their best ideas from questions that occur to them one day and just keep nagging them.

Back indoors (or outdoors in good weather)

4. *Give students a chance to write for a few minutes about one of the potential topics they listed.*

Share Out

What you saw might give someone else an idea for a topic they wouldn't have thought of on their own. *As students share out the ideas they came up with make a class list that everyone can look back at over time when they need an idea.*

Applying the Skill

This is a technique you can use to help you get ideas anytime: when you are at home, or on the bus, or out in the schoolyard. Try it. Make a list of the things around you.