

First Grade
Sentence
STARTERS

Mark Linley



Dedicated to all teachers
and to the children in their care

A special thanks to all of the wonderful artists on Etsy who contributed to this publication:

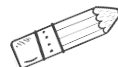
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How to Use this Book



Purpose

The intention of *First Grade Sentence Starters* is to invite students to think, to reflect upon their lives and the world around them, and to express these reflections in writing and illustration. *First Grade Sentence Starters* are designed to help teachers teach their students to create meaningful writing.

Flexibility

There are many ways in which *First Grade Sentence Starters* may be used - in whole group and in small group, integrated into thematic units and as stand-alone writing prompts, and for use in class and as homework.

Teachers collect, even curate many materials over time to assist in the planning and teaching of curricula. They integrate these materials into their practice in myriad ways. Certainly, a teacher may use *First Grade Sentence Starters* in conjunction with other curricular content. A *First Grade Sentence Starter* may be used as follow-up to a read-aloud on a particular topic - fear, for example, in *There's Something in My Attic*, by Mercer Mayer. A prompt about love or duty or belief could fit nicely into a thematic unit on family, to give another example.

A teacher may also use *First Grade Sentence Starters* as stand-alone, straight out of the box, independent writing lessons irrespective of other curricular goals. *First Grade Sentence Starters* can also be sent as homework, where they serve to engage families in deep powerful discussions. My experience has been that parents appreciate thoughtful homework assignments. Your students will be proud of the work they produce.

Instruction

A teacher may begin to teach writing by having students dictate what they want to write. A student dictates to the teacher what he or she wants to write and the teacher writes it down for the child to copy. This takes surprisingly little time, actually. At first, because students are unfamiliar with the process, it may take a couple of minutes per student, some less, some more; but once students come to know what is expected of them, the time is reduced dramatically, to ten seconds for some children. Of course, more time can always be spent talking with a student about the his or her writing, leading the child to a better expression of what he or she intends.

Sometimes I will spend extended periods of time conversing with students about their writing, talking them through their thoughts and language, transcribing what they say onto the pages they write. Peer-sharing is especially useful for getting students to know what to write before they begin to write and before they conference with the teacher. Meanwhile, teachers show students during discussion periods how to speak in complete sentences and how to judge the quality of their sentences based on the use of details, the vocabulary employed, the story content, the ideas expressed, the images portrayed, the originality, etc.

Alternatively, a teacher may ask the entire class to copy a sentence from the board. Advanced and enthusiastic students can begin to write a second sentence on their own as other students finish copying the first

sentence. (All *First Grade Sentence Starters* have enough space for several sentences). Many students will spend significant time working on their illustrations. The teacher and other adults in the room move from student to student correcting spelling, making comments, asking questions, and taking dictation from individual students and writing it down for students to copy as second sentences.

Sometimes it will take two or more writing sessions for students to complete a single piece of writing. It is important to allow students to complete their writing, even if it takes longer than expected. It is better to have one complete piece of writing than to have two incomplete pieces of writing. Forego giving a second writing assignment to slower writers in the interest of allowing such students the extra time they need to complete the first writing assignment. Faster students can move on as slower students continue to work. The same *First Grade Sentence Starter* can be given to students more than once. Completed writing can be collected over time and stapled together into little books and sent home to read with families and to keep.

Invented Spelling and Phonemic Awareness

First Grade children begin to write when they understand that words are made of sounds and that these sounds can be represented with letters. Once children begin to orally segment words into their individual sounds they then want to write the words down. At the beginning, the words they write down may consist of only the first letter, or perhaps the first and last letters only. As students become more and more phonemically aware, they are able to capture more and more sounds in the words they write. These writings will be misspelled according to convention but will function well to convey meaning. This is what is called inventive spelling.

Children typically learn how to spell most words gradually, with a combination of sight memory and phonemic reasoning. For example, a child might learn how to spell a word such as *playground* like this:

pagd - plagd - playgrd - playgrond - playgrowund - playground

Some children may be able to memorize a word right away or with few errors. Other children will only gradually accumulate the bits and pieces of a word's conventional spelling, eventually learning how to spell it after reading it many times and after attempting to spell it inventively on many occasions over time.

Many of the pages of *First Grade Sentence Starters* feature words that may be difficult to sound-out for first graders; others contain CVC words and high frequency words only. Writing should always be taught in tandem with reading instruction. The role of *First Grade Sentence Starters* is not to teach word decoding, but rather to teach the essential writing practice of producing meaningful writing. Invented spelling is an essential part of this process and phonemic awareness is its prerequisite.

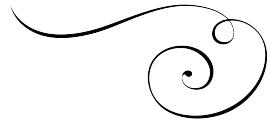
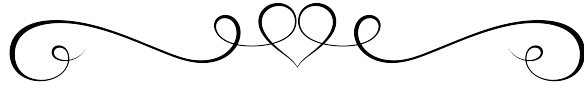
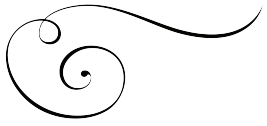
Results

With consistent phonemic awareness instruction and regular writing practice your students will become progressively better at using these truly deep, open-ended writing prompts to express themselves. By the end of the year following a fairly rigorous early literacy reading and writing program where students are taught the fundamentals of decoding, inventive spelling, and phonemic awareness, you will find that most of your students will be writing freely and well on their way to academic success.



DIRECTIONS: Complete the sentence. Write more sentences. Illustrate your writing.

Name _____

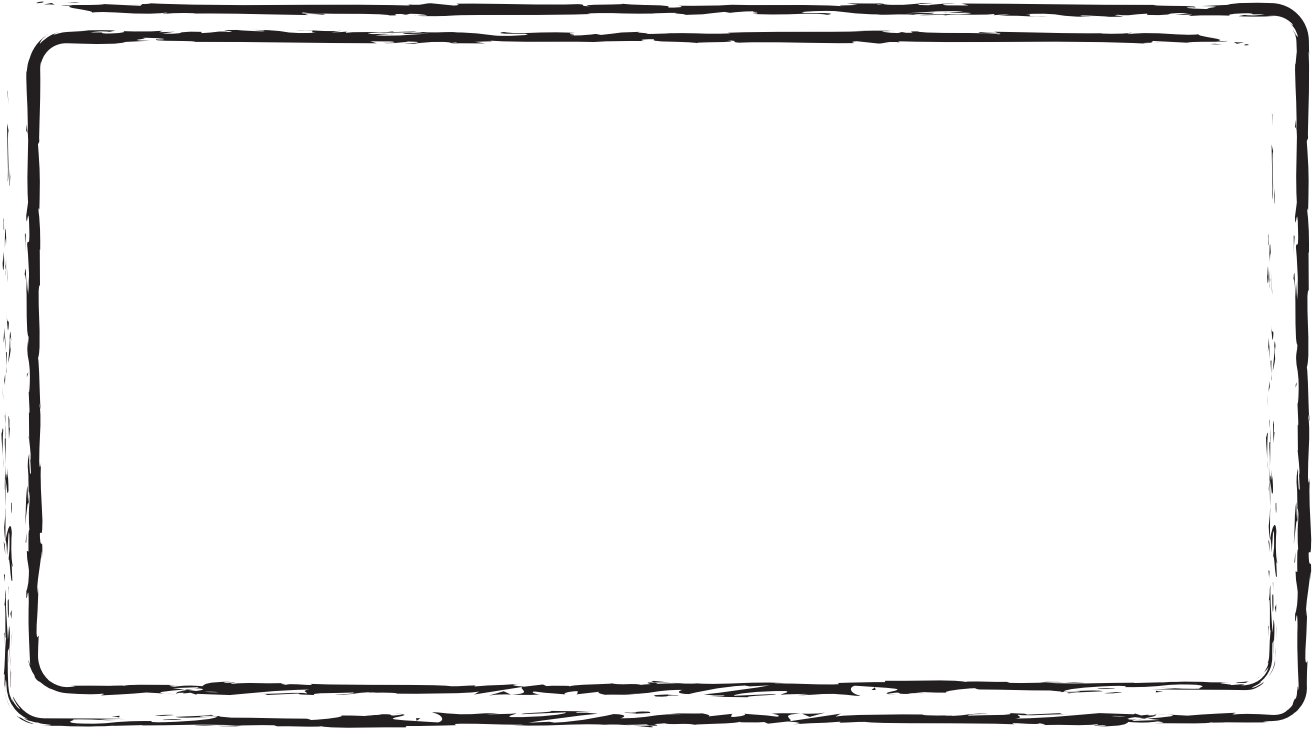


I love _____

Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed midline for letter height guidance.

DIRECTIONS: Complete the sentence. Write more sentences. Illustrate your writing.

Name _____

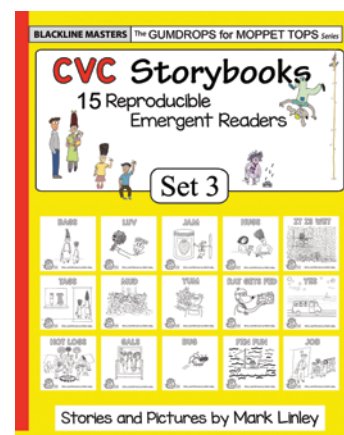
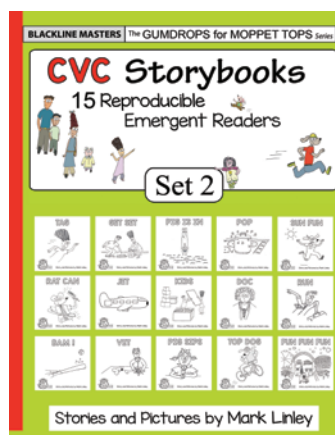
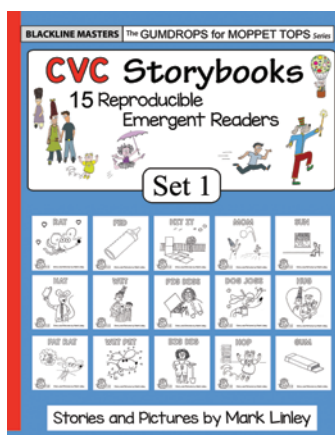
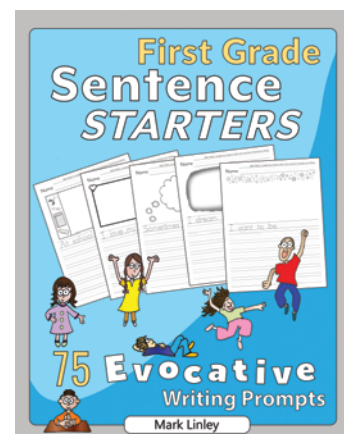
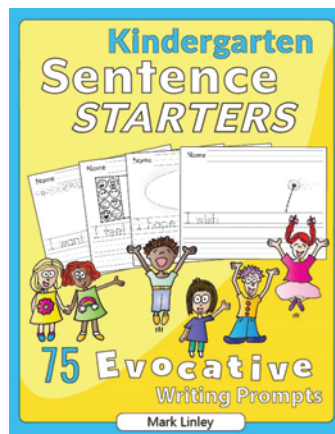


I worry when _____

About the Author

Mark Linley is a public school teacher and curriculum developer with over 20 years of experience teaching full time in the primary grades. He is the author of these and many other high quality learning materials, available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, YouTube, Teachers Pay Teachers, bartlebysbox.com, and other fine online retail establishments.

Books by Mark Linley



bartlebysbox.com