

6+1 Traits Guide

When Giants Come to Play

by Andrea Beaty

Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes

Abrams Books for Young Readers

ISBN: 0-8109-5759-0

Trait	Author's Notes	Questions & Activities
<p>Ideas</p>	<p>The idea for <i>When Giants Come to Play</i> began when the word "Giants" popped into my head and rattled about. I asked myself, "<i>What if giants came to play?</i>" and started exploring the idea.</p> <p>I believe that "What if" are the two biggest words a writer can own. With them, <i>anything</i> is possible.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Exploring "What ifs"</u></p> <p>Q: What if giants came to your house? What would you do together?</p> <p>Q: What if you visited the Giants at their home? How would their house be different? Their toys? Their pets?</p> <p>Q: What if you had other visitors? Who would you like to play with? Dragons? Gorillas? Astronauts?</p> <p>K-2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore these questions and draw pictures of a fun day playing with the Giants or other visitors. • Start with a small picture of the student. Cut out the student's head or whole body and glue to a tall sheet of paper. Draw the student's body (if needed) and a giant who has come to play. What will they do together? • Class project: Create something giant. Using butcher block paper, create giant candy wrappers or letters to/from the giants. <p>3-6: Small Team Writing workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with a collection of small figurines (not of familiar TV or movie characters) and odd items (e.g., buttons, jewelry, plastic animals). • Each team should pick one or 2 items. These are story starters. • Begin with the item and then ask, "What if..." • Follow up with 3 or 4 "what ifs" to build an idea for a story. • Write and illustrate the story. Stories can be fantastic or based in reality. <p>For example: Items=small duck figurine, pair of glasses. Idea starter: There once was a duck who found a pair of glasses. Questions: What if those glasses had magic powers? What if the duck used the glasses to see into the future? What if the glasses belonged to someone else who wanted them back?</p>

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<p>Word Choice</p>	<p>My desire when writing <i>When Giants Come to Play</i> was to let the illustrations carry the humor and description of the action. I deliberately used very simple words to tell the story and relied on Kevin Hawkes' magic to add the rest.</p>	<p>All ages: Activity can be done individually or in groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick your favorite scenes from <i>When Giants Come to Play</i>. • How would you describe this scene over the phone to someone who could not see the pictures? • Create a list of descriptive words for each scene. Focus on Action, Mood, Characters, Setting and other elements of each scene. • Create a list of descriptive words. Write words on individual slips of paper. For each word drawn, create an illustration that describes the word. • Variation: Create 2 word lists: nouns and adjectives. Select one of each category. Create an illustration with both words.
<p>Sentence Fluency</p>	<p>More than any other single trait, <i>When Giants Come to Play</i> uses sentence fluency to build its lyrical voice.</p> <p>I paid special attention to the pattern of sentence lengths much the way a poet considers the rhythm and count of syllables in a poem.</p> <p>I believe that reading poetry is one of the very best ways to teach kids about sentence fluency (and word choice).</p>	<p>After reading <i>Giants</i> out loud and showing illustrations to the group, discuss how sentence length can change.</p> <p>Re-read <i>Giants</i> without showing the illustrations. Have the group listen for patterns in the sentence lengths: very long sentences in beginning and end, short sentences in pairs, medium-length sentences sprinkled throughout.</p> <p>K-3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robot Game: Robots in movies always use short sentences. They do not use emotion in their language or voices. In pairs or small groups, have students pretend they are robots discussing any topic. Robots who use long or interesting sentences will malfunction and have to go back to the repair shop where they must repeat boring sentences like. "I like mice. Mice are nice." <p>4-6: Improv Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick 2 teams. Assign each team a number from 3 to 6. That is the number of words each team can use in their sentences. • Pick a topic for a discussion (weather, sports, anything...) • One at a time, the members of each team meet and have a discussion. They are "in" as long as they use sentences with their number of words. If they use too many or too few, they are "out" and the next member of their team takes their place. Members who freeze and can't think of anything to say for 5 seconds are "out."

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<p>Organization</p>	<p>When I first wrote <i>When Giants Come to Play</i>, the story was a series of events in first person. "When giants come to play, we shoot marbles in the park."</p> <p>Each event was fun, but the story had no solid structure or organization.</p> <p>I solved this problem by setting all the events in one day. The story begins when Giants arrive in the morning and ends at bed time. This provides a simple and understandable structure to the story.</p>	<p>Q: <i>When Giants Come to Play</i> takes place in one day. What would happen if they giants came to stay for a week? A month? A year?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a "window pane" picture with four panes to show scenes of Giants playing in each season. <p>Q: What are other events that have a structure or schedule? Baseball games? School days? Summer vacations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a short story that takes place in one school day. Begin the story when the bell rings in the morning. Make something happen in Language Arts class, Math class, and at Lunch. End the story when the bell rings and it's time to go home! <p>Game: Make 2 or 3 teams. Create a list of ways to organize your team. (e.g., Alphabetically by first name, last name, middle name, by birthday, birth month, height, shoe size..)</p> <p>Compete against other teams to see who can completely reorganize their team the most ways in 15 minutes.</p>
<p>Voice</p>	<p>I strongly believe that voice in writing can not be taught in the same way punctuation and grammar can be taught. It comes from getting all the other traits right then adding a bit of yourself to the mix.</p> <p>My recipe for voice is equal parts of ideas, organization, word choice, and sentence fluency. Add 1 cup of conventions and stir. Finally, add one pinch of your heart and bake!</p>	<p>It is said that we never truly miss something until it is gone. That is certainly true of our voices. My favorite activity to teach voice is called "Laryngitis."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>When Giants Come to Play</i> out loud with the class. • Discuss places where you feel there is strong voice. • Read <i>Giants</i> again from the beginning. This time, focus on what happens in each picture. What is the simplest way to describe each scene without using interesting word choice or sentence fluency? For instance, the opening scene begins with a long sentence about the sun shining and wind blowing. The action of the story can be summed up as "Giants come to play." • Move through the text of the book letting kids strip out voice of each scene. Write down the new text. • Re-read <i>Giants</i> with the new text. How does it compare?

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