

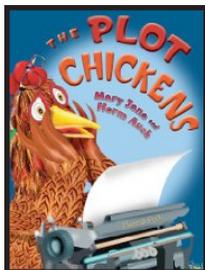


# CRUCHLEY'S COLLECTION

Diana Cruchley is an award-winning educator and author, who has taught at elementary and secondary levels. Her workshops are practical, include detailed handouts, and are always enthusiastically received.

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## THE PLOT CHICKENS



Mary Jane and Herm Auch, Holiday House, ©2009, ISBN 13:978-0-8234-2087-2

Henrietta, the chicken, loves to read and decides to write a book for herself. Having trouble getting it published, she self-publishes, but is sad after a bad review in the “*Corn Book*”. She is depressed until she discovers that children love her book.

## PERSONAL WRITING

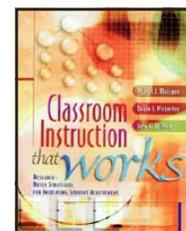
Although this book is a “*miracle book*” in the sense that it models something that is part of our curriculum, it can still be great to have some topics for personal response writing:

- the funniest thing that has happened to me.
- a time when I felt rejected.
- books I love(d) to read again, or have read again, or to read after seeing the movie, or the other way around.
- experiences in the public or school library.
- a “*project*” my friends and I did in our neighbourhood (build a fort, snowman, put on a play, made a movie, etc.)

## EIGHT RULES TO A GREAT STORY

This story provides a wonderful model for story writing. Read the story a second time and have them take notes on the *8 Rules For Great Writing*. In *Classroom Instruction That Works*, Marzano says that notemaking is one of the top two strategies that can be directly linked to student achievement.

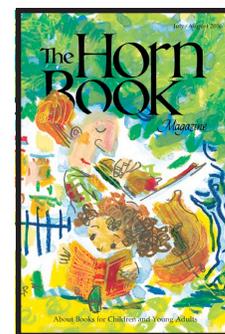
Have students use the pattern of the book to write their own story.



## INTERESTING VOCABULARY

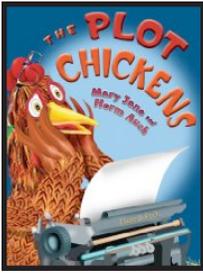
Give the students a list of the following words from the story and ask them to listen for their meaning and be prepared to write a definition of their own. Ask students to divide the page in half and write their definition of each word in the first half. Then, working in groups, gather ideas to write one good group definition - you might want to give them a model of a few good definitions before they start - and write it in the second column. If you have time and think it is important enough, discuss the group definitions of a few of the words as a class to construct a class definition.

- odoriferous
- cyberspace
- bile
- gizzard
- devastated
- exhilarating
- publisher
- dramatic



## EGG AND CHICKEN HUMOUR

One of the clever things about this book is the number of chicken and egg jokes, puns, and hidden references located in the book. Read the story another time and have students make note of any they hear. They could encounter: *eggcitedly*, *eggghilering*, *eggstacy*, *the Corn Book* (instead of *Horn Book*, which regularly reviews children’s literature), *one dozen pages* (instead of 36 as is standard in a picture book), the typewriter’s maker is *Hunt and Peck*, the books she reads: *The Easter Egg Farm*, *Little Grunt and the Big Egg*, *I was a Third Grade Bodyguard* (chicken plot).



# THE PLOT CHICKENS, CONT.

## MAKE YOUR OWN BOOK

Along with the picture book *The Library Mouse*, this is a terrific book to introduce the concept of book publishing to students and how it works. The culminating activity should be the publication of their own books.

## HOW COLOUR WORKS

When the chickens are creating their own book there are 4 colours referred to: cyan, magenta, black, and yellow. It even shows what happens in the various stages as each colour is added. A colour inkjet printer also uses these exact 4 colours to produce “full colour” pictures. (If you ask nicely at a local newspaper they may be able to provide colour overlays for you to hold up for students to see another example of how the colour process works.)

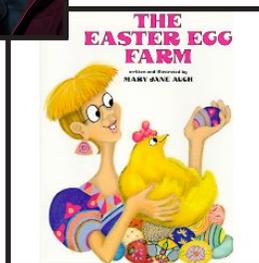
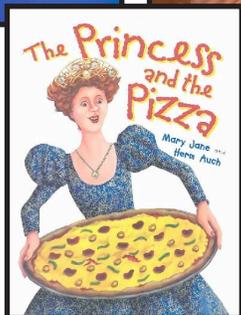
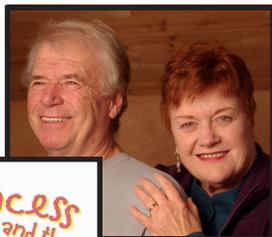
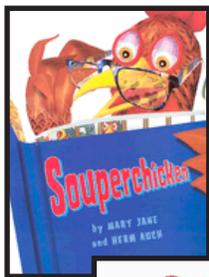
## PRINT AND PAPER VOCABULARY

The typewriter is made by Hunt and Peck. Ask students if they know that “*hunt and peck*” is the opposite of typing while not looking. We tend to say keyboarding now, rather than typing. A lot of the language of printing has crossed over from old printing presses. Now might be a good time to make a quick study of the evolution of printing and its vocabulary.

Attached is an activity for building vocabulary to describe types of papers as well.

## THE AUTHORS: MARY JANE AND HERM AUCH

Mary Jane and Herm are a husband and wife team of author/illustrator. Mary Jane (called MJ) published 9 middle-grade novels before teaming with her illustrator husband to create picture books. Their last name is pronounced Owk - like “owl”. They live on a small farm in upstate New York with their 2 dogs, Sophie and Zeke.



## CREATE YOUR OWN JOKE

It is startlingly easy to write a joke. Your students will really enjoy writing with the pattern. Demonstrate to the students using the word “*exam*”:

- In the dictionary, find a word that begins with *ex* such as *exam*
- Replace *ex* with *egg...eggsam*.
- Think of a human activity that leads to the word. ie. *What does a person get at the end of a course? An exam.*
- Create your chicken joke. *What did the chicken get at the end of his course? An eggsam.*

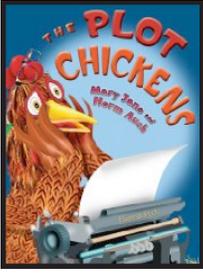
Ask students to start with any *ex* word (that they know) in the dictionary and create their own jokes. Or, give them a list of words - a different one for each group of four and ask them to create the joke right there and then say the question to the class and then give the answer. Wait for the groans.

## BOOKS REFERRED TO

If the students are amused, you can find the other books that are referred to in this book and design writing ideas to go with those books:

- *The Easter Egg Farm*, Mary Jane Auch
- *Little Grunt and the Big Egg*, Tomie de Paolo
- *I Was a Third Grade Bodyguard*, Mary Jane Auch
- *Ghosts in Fourth Grade*, Constance Hiser





# THE PLOT CHICKENS, CONT.

## IDENTIFYING PAPERS

When Henrietta publishes her own book, she has to consider what kind of paper to use. Most picture books are in a heavy weight paper with a shiny coating. There are many different kinds of papers. The following are the names of 11 different kinds of papers. Some you will know already, and some will be new to you. Your group has a sample of all 11 papers. Complete the list below with the correct number of the sample.

- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Bond paper (20 lb)** (sometimes called writing paper)
- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Bristol** (a heavier weight paper often used for posters)
- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Cardstock** (used in 3X5 cards in one of its smaller sizes)
- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Newsprint** (for newspapers)
- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Parchment** (for certificates, has a pattern like “skin”)
- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Onion skin** (to trace through)
- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Kraft paper** (wrapping meat?)
- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Carbon paper** (carbon, to make a copy of something)
- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Foil** (shiny, for Christmas)
- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Tissue** (to stuff into Christmas bags)
- \_\_\_\_\_ • **Construction paper** (colourful school craft paper)

**Teacher:** Create 8 sets of these 11 types of papers. Number each group the same, but in a random order. Ask students to examine the papers to identify what kind of paper they are, and to check against the key you will keep when they think they have them all. As each team completes, take away their forms and ask them to take their set of papers, and name them **WITHOUT** the list of names you have given them.