

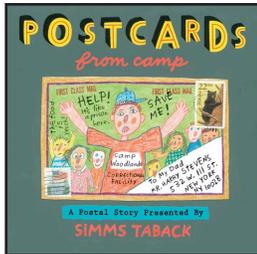


# CRUCHLEY'S COLLECTION

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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## POSTCARDS FROM CAMP



Simms Taback,  
Penguin Young  
Readers, ©2011  
978-0-399-23973-1

Michael hates camp and informs his father in a series of self-designed postcards of the many trials of his life there. His father returns reassuring postcards until Michael finally comes to love camp.

## WRITING A POSTCARD BOOK

This is a simple model for students to follow. It consists of a supply list for the trip, a welcome card from the camp, and a series of 8 postcards to the father, and 7 responses from the father. It does not require a great deal of writing, but to be done effectively requires a sense of humour.

Students could write from camp, from staying with grandma and grandpa, from going on vacation to a friend back at home, from a new home to a friend in the old neighbourhood, etc.

## HULLO MUDDAH! HELLO FADDAH!

Find a copy of *Hello Muddah! Hello Faddah!*, the classic song by Allan Sherman, in which a young camper sends letters begging his parents to let him come home. He reports, similarly to Michael in *Postcards from Camp*, that there is a strange counsellor, alligators in the lake, poison ivy, ptomaine poisoning, rain, etc. Students could learn to sing this delightful song. There is also a picture book version of the song that was written in 2006 and is still available.

Remind students that it shows you can make money from an idea like this...the postcard book, the letters home.

## JOURNAL IDEAS

It's always valuable to use a picture book as a prompt to journal writing. Try to have at least three choices so that students can select the one about which they think they can write the most, or if they run out of steam, can write on a second topic as well. Some possibilities are:

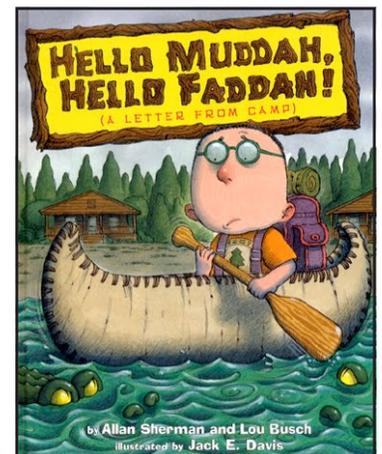
- a camp experience.
- a sleep-over story.
- being scared (in this book by a campfire story, but...).
- finding a new friend that likes to do what you like.

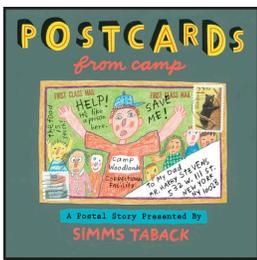
## AN E-MAIL EXCHANGE

Given our times, it might be a great time to ask students to write an e-mail exchange between two characters, or any other. You may want to restrict the use of initials to a list of 4-6 that students generate of those that would convey the idea of the exchange while still writing in conventional English. For example, BFF, OMG, etc. Limit them to a specific number.

## IF IT'S TUESDAY, IT MUST BE PLUTO

Students studying the solar system could easily write a series of postcards as though they were on vacation. Ask them to write 5-8 sentences for each planet they visit (and the demoted planet, Pluto) providing at least 5-8 facts about each planet. Ask them to make it amusing, perhaps complaining, but really factual.





# POSTCARDS FROM CAMP, CONT.

## THE MENNONITE LETTER FOLD

This is a simple and effective way to use a piece of paper as both a letter and its own envelope. This website shows a step by step set of pictures for creating the fold: <http://www.instructables.com/id/Mennonite-Letter-Fold/>

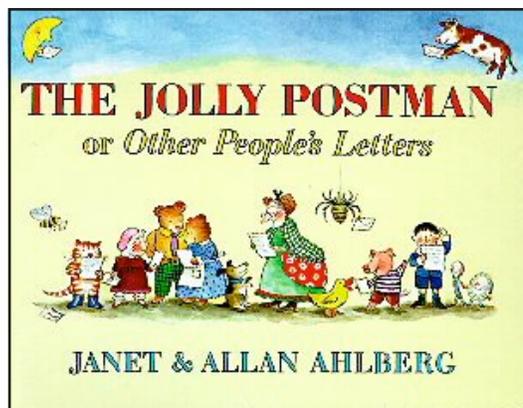
## THE JOLLY POSTMAN

The picture book, *The Jolly Postman*, started a long tradition of using correspondence to tell a story in a picture book. In that case there was an envelope on each page, with a different type of communication in each one: an invitation, a postcard, a thank you letter, an advertisement, a newspaper article, etc.

This also provides an excellent model for student writing as they often have a very good background in fairy tale characters or book characters that can write to each other.

Brainstorm a list of the types of correspondence your characters can have. Decide as a group which 8 are the best for telling a story - then ask them to use at least 5 of them in their book. They can repeat a form but must use at least 5 different ones.

If students bind the book, they can produce something really remarkable.



It's one of those interesting pieces of background information. It gives you a chance to teach that the Mennonites came to Canada and settled in the prairies, in Manitoba, and in the Fraser Valley for the most part. They range from the very modern to the very orthodox who don't use any modern things such as zippers, or cars. The orthodox are often referred to as the "buggy" Mennonites and in the US as the Amish. One of the things they are as a people is very frugal, hence the method of using the letter as its own envelope.

Students could write their own story of "moving to Canada" on one side of a piece of paper, folded in the Mennonite Letter Fold.



## THE SURPRISE ENDING STORY

When Michael mentions that they were telling scary stories around the campfire, his father sends him the story of ghostly voices who are worried about the log rolling over and them drowning. In the end, it turns out the voices came from two ants on a log in the lake.

Read the story aloud to the students and talk about how the surprise comes from the unexpected change in perspective. Ask them to write their own surprise ending story using that perspective.

It helps if they first think of what the "real" situation will be, and then try to think of how they could make their reader think it is something else, before springing the surprise on them.