

Author Study

**Tomie dePaola**

Block 1

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## RATIONALE

We have chosen Tomie dePaola for our author study because neither one of us was familiar with his work and we liked the idea that he was not only the author but also the illustrator of his books. We feel it's an advantage to illustrate a book you wrote because you have more insight to the characters and storyline and are able to transform richer feelings into the illustrations. Of the books we will be using in our author study, two have received awards: *Strega Nona* received the Caldecott Honor and *26 Fairmount Avenue* received the Newberry Honor award.

After examining several of Tomie dePaola's books, *Strega Nona*, *Stagestruck*, *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*, *26 Fairmount Avenue*, *Tomie dePaola's Book of Poems*, and *Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka*, we chose 4th grade for our author study.

Each book consists of twenty-five to thirty pages and the print could still be considered enlarged. There are more words to a page and sentences are longer with more detail. High frequency words are abundant as well as new vocabulary words are introduced. The illustrations provide support to the concept of the story and are very colorful and at times humorous. Many of the stories are autobiographical and each strives to teach a moral. Considering this criteria, we have classified *Stagestruck*, *26 Fairmount Avenue*, and *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs* as level 7 because the new words introduced are multisyllable, the sentences are longer and the picture cues provide moderate to high support to the text. We have classified *Strega Nona* and *Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka* as level 8 because there are more unique words introduced (ex. Calabria in *Strega Nona*, Pooka in *Jamie O'Rourke*), there are more words per page with

more detail in print, sequence of events is evident, and a single event continues over several pages.

According to the Standards, expectations for reading at any grade level are that students will read widely. Tomie dePaola's books not only offer students the opportunity to read different genres but they also offer the opportunity for learning different reading and writing strategies while encouraging students to become active participants in their own learning.

Tomie dePaola's illustrations accentuate the storyline so precisely that picture walks help the students in making predictions as to what they think will happen in the story. An example would be from the story *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*, when Nana Upstairs dies. dePaola successfully meet the following New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standard (NJCCCS) **Standard 3.1 Reading**, 3.1.4 A Concepts about Print/Text (#3) Identify and locate features that support text meaning (e.g., maps, charts, illustrations) when he portrays the scene after Nana Upstairs dies. Little Tomie asks his mother what "died" means, which the text explained very nicely but to see the illustration of the empty bed that Nana Upstairs used to lay in gave a visual image to support the text. Having the readers experience the story through text and illustrations enables students to gain a better understanding of what they are reading which meets **Standard 3.5 Viewing and Media Literacy**, 3.5.4 A – Constructing Meaning (#2) Respond to and evaluate the use of illustrations to support text.

According to the NJCCCS **Standard 3.1 Reading**, 3.1.4 C - Decoding and Word Recognition (#3) children in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade should be able to recognize compound words,

contractions and common abbreviations. Several of Tomie dePaola's book titles consist of compound words, *Stagestruck* and *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs* while his texts include compound words (townspeople, someday, cottontail, grandmother) and contractions (wasn't, I'll). Having phonetic knowledge of the way words are combined will help children lay the foundation for explicit attention to syllables and reinforce their knowledge of the spelling of many high-frequency words ultimately leading to more fluent readers.

Tomie dePaola's books meet the NJCCCS **Standard 3.1 Reading** 3.1.4 A – Concepts about Print/Text (#2) Students should recognize purposes and uses for print conventions such as paragraphs, end-sentence punctuation, and bold print and 3.1.4 D – Fluency (#1) Use appropriate rhythm, flow, meter, and pronunciation in demonstrating understanding of punctuation marks and **STANDARD 3.3 Speaking** 3.3.4 D - Oral Presentation (#5) Participate in a dramatization or role-play across the curriculum and (#6) Read aloud with fluency. Tomie dePaola's stories include indented paragraphs, quotations for dialogue between characters, exclamation points to denote expression, question marks for inquiries and punctuation at the end of each sentence. We have chosen to do a Readers Theatre from his book *Stagestruck*. Dialogue reading provides students the opportunity to improve upon their fluency because they practice the same lines over and over again as well as it engages them to read their lines with expression. That is why we have also included Tomie dePaola's *Book of Poems* in our author study. The poems are short, they flow, are written with expression, and can be read several times for fluency.

Each of Tomie dePaolo's book offers the opportunity for discussion before, during and after reading. Teachers can take the opportunity before reading to draw on the students prior knowledge by discussing the book title and cover illustration. Unfamiliar vocabulary words can be introduced and defined and students can make a predication as to what they think the story will be about. There are definite sections during the reading where the students can be interrupted to check their understanding, to confirm predication, to make a different prediction if necessary, and to ask questions. After reading is the time for the students to discuss and identify different elements of the story and summarize their understanding of what they read. All of these comprehension strategies will help students meet the NJCCCS **Standard 3.1 Reading**, 3.1.4 E – Reading Strategies (before, during and after reading) (#2) Identify specific words or passages causing comprehension difficulties and seek clarification and 3.1.4 G Comprehension Skills and Response to Text (#9) Recognize literary elements and literacy devices used in stories, including setting, characters, plot, mood, and personification.

Reading *26 Fairmount Avenue* should meet the NJCCCS **Standard 3.4 Listening** 3.4.4 A - Active Listening (#1) Listen actively for a variety of purposes such as enjoyment and obtaining information. This book is being used to introduce the author to the students. The book will be read aloud while the students actively listen for information about Tomie dePaola that they will require to recite when the book is done. NJCCS Standard 3.4.4 B – Listening Comprehension (#2) Develop listening strategies (e.g. asking questions and taking notes) to understand what is heard. *Strega Nona* is a story whose plot is written in sequence order enabling the students to follow along with

ease. It also makes it easier for them to identify the part of the story they may be having trouble comprehending so that they may ask questions for clarification.

Finally, because many of Tomie dePaola's books are autobiographical they can be used to meet the following NJCCCS for writing. **Standard 3.2 Writing**, 3.2.4 A – Writing as a Process (#1) Generate possible ideas for writing through talking, recalling experiences, hearing stories, reading, discussing models of writing, asking questions, brainstorming. *Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka* will be used as an example on how to write using imagery, which the students will be required to write about their own mythical creature using imagery to help other students visualize their creature.

To introduce Tomie dePaola for the author study we will use his book *26 Fairmont Avenue*. The teacher will begin by writing on the board the six different types of context clues that can be utilized. This includes: helping words of punctuation, opposite or same meaning, your own experience, sentences before or after, definition provided, and examples given. Each of the six types of context clues will be given an example to connect with. (See *26 Fairmont Avenue* Mini-Lesson). There will be ten words from the story marked already for the class in the books (See *26 Fairmont Avenue* Mini-Lesson). The group's job is to identify the appropriate context clue that will help them to define the vocabulary word.

After introducing Tomie dePaola the students will be familiar with his background. The next activity in the author study will be on his birthday, September 17. The students will create a book mark with fun facts about Tomie dePaola and a small picture. The students will be shown an example of what the bookmark might look like, helping them to create their own (See Attached). The students will be able to use this

book mark while reading his books in the author study and as a quick way to review what they know about this author. They can also use the book mark to note the titles of the stories they read written by this author.

The mini-lesson for *Strega Nona* will include identifying the five elements of a “plot” {introduction/exposition – rising action – climax – falling action – resolution}. The lesson will begin with defining each element and identifying their purpose in a story. The students will practice putting to use their new knowledge by identifying the elements in a short story on a transparency. *Strega Nona* will be read aloud and the students will work in groups to complete a Plot Structure Chart with the information from the story.

The mini-lesson next in the author study will be based on Tomie dePaola’s book, *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*. We will first do a picture walk with the students and ask them if they can predict any events that will occur in the story. Next, we will teach the class about biographies and autobiographies. We will go over the importance of writing down one’s feelings and how to express them by discussing certain elements that need to be included in an autobiography and the style of writing to use, such as point-of-view. The students will be given a chance to create their own autobiography story from an event in their life that they believe they will always remember.

*Tommy dePaola's Book of Poems* will be used in the author study to teach the literary device “personification”. We will select poems from his book to read to the students that provides examples of personification as well as examples of personification sentences will be on a transparency for review (attached). The students will be instructed to write their own short poem using at least two personification sentences. These poems will be displayed on a "Poet-tree" on the classroom bulletin board. The poems will be

placed on leaves of a large tree. The class will be encouraged to share using expression which they have seen in *Tommy dePaola's Book of Poems*.

The book *Stagestruck* will be introduced by reading the story to the class, emphasizing the different character's dialogue through expression and tone of voice. After reading the story, we will list the different characters and the roles they play in the story (Miss Bird, Tommy, Jeannie, Miss Burke, Mom, and Miss Mulligan). A mini-lesson will then be taught on fluency by defining what fluency is and how students can work on improving their fluency. This will include repeat reading of short phrases which we will use the dialogue from the story (See *Stagestruck* Mini Lesson). The class will be broken into three groups of six and some groups will have seven. The students will assume a character role from story and read to their group the phrase on the sentence strip spoken by their character. They will read it several times until they feel they can read it fluently and with expression. Each group will then read their sentence in rotation to the class. This activity is getting the students prepared for performing a Readers Theatre taken from the story *Stagestruck*.

*Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka* will be read on the second to last day of the author study. This mini-lesson will begin with a description of fiction and non-fiction. We will then read the story, *Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka*. On the next day, the last day of the author study the students will create their own mythological creature using examples they are given. They will be free to use their creativity and art and make posters for the classroom.

The books we chose for the Tomie dePaola author study had meaning and purpose. Each of his books teaches lessons and allows the reader to discover new places and adventures. Here are the rationales for each specific book:

*26 Fairmount Avenue* will be used to introduce Tomie dePaola on the first day of the author study. This book describes where Tomie dePaola grew up and is a perfect lead-in to a brief background of his life. The students will be able to use context clues to decode ten vocabulary words throughout the book.

*Strega Nona* teaches about responsibility through a sequence of events used to identify the plot. This book will be used to introduce the five elements of a “plot” in order to help students better comprehend the story. Learning about the different elements of writing will be transferable to studies of other literary genres; in addition, these skills will be used in other part of student’s lives.

*Jamie O’Rourke and the Pooka* will teach the students about fairy tales and myths. The teacher can use the example of the “pooka” in the story to introduce mythological creatures. The “pooka” is a made up creature that comes in the night to clean up after Jamie O’Rourke. The students can then create their own creatures by combining what they learn about a few particular mythological creatures in the mini-lesson.

Tommy dePaola's book, *Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs*, will be used to discuss biographies and autobiographies. We will do a picture walk with this book to practice making predictions. This book will give us a lead-in into how important it is to write down your feelings and also how to express them in an appropriate way. The students will be able to demonstrate this in an assignment which asks them to write a

short autobiography. They will be asked to think of an event in their life that they will always remember. We will go over certain parts that need to be included in an autobiography and the style of writing they should go about using.

*Tomie dePaola's Book of Poems* will be used in order to introduce the students to a new genre of writing as well as start writing their own short poems. Tomie dePaola has many examples in this book that includes the literary device "personification" which the students will become familiar with the concept in order to write their own poems. The students will learn about fluency and reading with expression through this book.

*Stagestruck* will be used to teach the students how to read with expression and also to complete a Reader's Theatre. The story is about a young boy who loves being in the spotlight on stage. The student's can take advice from the main character while participating in their own acting experience.

## **26 FAIRMONT AVENUE** (Literacy Concept: Using Context Clues)

**Summary:** 1938 was a special year for 5-year old Tomie, because his parents decided to move into a brand-new house being built at 26 Fairmount Avenue. It's exciting to watch his new house being built, but there are all sorts of setbacks, like a flood, a fire, and even a hurricane. The hurricane stands out in Tomie's childhood because of the damage it does to his community. He also finds himself eating chocolate with his Nana Upstairs, only to find out the hard way, that they have eaten chocolate laxatives. He tries to skip kindergarten when he finds out he won't learn to read until first grade. While Tomie waits and waits for his house to be completed, he begins kindergarten, goes to see Disney's "Snow White" when it is brand-new, and spends lots of time with his fun family.

Finally the new house is ready, and Tomie must leave his old neighborhood, and get ready for all of the new adventures at 26 Fairmount Avenue.

**Rationale:** 26 Fairmount Avenue will support the literacy concept of “using context clues” with the extensive list of vocabulary words in the book that will be decoded using this strategy. Some of these vocabulary words include: pestered, foundation, and announcer. By using the context clues that surround these vocabulary words, they can be determined and ultimately help with comprehension of the book itself.

**Objective:** The students will be able to utilize context clues from 26 Fairmount Avenue to decode eleven vocabulary words in the story.

**Procedure:** The teacher will begin by writing on the board the six different types of context clues that can be utilized. This includes: helping words of punctuation, opposite or same meaning, your own experience, sentences before or after, definition provided, and examples given. Each of the six types of context clues will be given an example to connect with. (see attached). Next, the teacher will read an example from 26 Fairmount Avenue which demonstrates a vocabulary word the students may not be familiar with. “Later, men called “plasterers” would come and smear wet plaster over the plasterboard.” The teacher will explain that the sentence explains what the plasterers do when saying “smear wet plaster over the plasterboard” You can use the context clue strategy of the definition being provided. After the teacher models this example from the book it will be clear to the students how to use context clues while reading. Prior to the teacher reading 26 Fairmount Avenue, the students will be given a purpose for listening for context clues as they will be required to complete an activity following the story.

**Application:** After the story is over the students will be split into four groups of five. There will be ten words from the story marked already for the class in the books. (see attached) The group's job is to identify the appropriate context clue that will help them to define the vocabulary word. When completed, the class will write the vocabulary words and the appropriate context clue in an author study journal that they will be updating weekly with facts, responses, and assignments related to this author study. This mini-lesson is a group collaboration. Each group will be given several copies of 26 Fairmont Avenue in order to use the literacy concept of using context clues.

**Effectiveness of the Lesson:** Once the students identify all the vocabulary words and their appropriate context clue and all questions are answered, it will be known that the students have learned and applied the literacy concept and furthered their knowledge of Tomie dePaola.

## **Lesson 1: 26 Fairmont Avenue**

**Context Clues** from 26 Fairmont Avenue:

### **1. Helping words or punctuation:**

“Right before the hurricane, the water was so high and \*murky\* that I was hardly allowed to look at it, much less go near it.”

## **2. Opposite or same meaning**

“I pestered Nana Upstairs about getting cookies, but then I asked nicely.”

## **3. Your own experience**

“Nothing would do except for my mom to get the bottle of \*Holy Water\* she’d gotten from Saint Joseph’s Church...”

## **4. Sentence before or after**

“Some of those trees stayed there for a very long time, and after we moved into 26 Fairmont Avenue and I felt \*brave\*. One tree lay across a little stream, and if you have good balance you could walk across it.”

## **5. Definition provided**

“Then they used these things called \*studs,\* which were pieces of wood called “two-by-fours” because they are two inches thick by four inches wide.

## **Vocabulary Words:**

Plasterers  
Announcer  
Noisemakers  
Authentic  
Harmonica  
Guardian  
Contraption  
Burlap  
Superintendent  
Symphony

## **JAMIE O’ROURKE AND THE POOKA** (Writing Concept: Using Imagery)

**Summary:** Jamie O’Rourke’s wife has left him alone for a week. All Jamie has to do is clean the dishes and sweep the house. Of course, Jamie's the messiest man in all of Ireland as well as the laziest, but when a magical Pooka comes to do all the housework, he figures he's also the luckiest. But Jamie's luck runs out when he gives the Pooka a warm overcoat as thanks, breaking the house-cleaning spell cast on the Pooka. The Pooka runs off, leaving Jamie with a very messy house indeed. Jamie has yet to learn his lesson by the end of this book.

**Rationale:** This book will be applied to the writing of imagery with its great detail and description that it portrays. Jamie O’Rourke and the Pooka has several examples of how using detailed vocabulary can develop the characters and setting. These two items are elements of plot which were discussed in the lesson previous to this one through Strega Nona. There is creative detail used in Jamie O’Rourke and the Pooka to describe the “pooka” and the setting of the story itself. The book makes it easy to visualize what a creature such as a “pooka” looks like without having any idea what it is in the beginning.

**Objective:** Using the story Jamie O’Rourke and the Pooka, the students will be able to write a short story about a mythological creature using imagery. They will use examples from Jamie O’Rourke and the Pooka to refer to imagery and giving their creature its own character.

**Procedure:** The teacher will begin by asking the students to close their eyes and visualize a picture from the words being said. The teacher will describe a unicorn without using the name. “A horse-like creature. White and silky. One swirled horn on its

forehead. A long white tail.” The teacher will say that he/she was describing a unicorn and the chosen words were used in order to make all the students picture the same thing. The teacher will then list a few words: shiny, dull, bright, scruffy, boiling, lovely, delicious, crisp and smoky. The teacher will introduce the word imagery and describe how it means to get the feeling that you are using your senses to get the feeling of what the words are describing. The teacher will then read the story, Jamie O’Rourke and the Pooka. After reading the book the teacher will make a chart with the characteristics of a “Pooka.” The teacher will explain that a “pooka” is a fictional character. Then the teacher will teach the difference between fiction and non fiction (see attached). Next, the students will be shown examples of other mythological creatures. (see attached)

**Application:** On the next day of the author study the students will be asked to use what they learned about the importance of imagery in describing a creature or mythological character to create their own original creature. The students will be asked to complete a one page writing assignment describing their own mythological creature and read the final product to the class. They will be given a list of words to use while utilizing imagery. (see attached ) The students will individually complete the writing concept task by creating and writing about their own mythological creature. The writing process will be independent and the students will have to present their work to the class on their own.

**Effectiveness of the Lesson:** The students will show that they gained a writing concept by using imagery in their writing assignment. The evaluation will be done by the classes’ response to their work. If the mini-lesson on imagery was applied, the writing concept will be reached for each student.

### **Lesson Plan 3: Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka**

**Fiction** - Books that are made up by the author, or are not true are fiction.

**Nonfiction** - is the opposite of fiction. Books that are nonfiction, or true, are about real things, people, events, and places.

Here's another way to remember it:

You can only say no once.

Fiction = not true

Nonfiction = true.

### **Lesson Plan 3: Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka**

**Unicorn:** an imaginary animal generally represented with the body and head of a horse and a single horn in the middle of the forehead

**Mermaid:** an imaginary sea creature usually represented with a woman's body and a fish's tail

**Wizard:** a person skilled in magic, a very clever or skillful person

**Witch:** a person believed to have magic powers, a mean or ugly old woman

**Fairy:** an imaginary being usually having a small human form and magic powers

### **Lesson Plan 3: Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka**

popping loud fierce fuming frizzy knitted stiff clear shiny  
humorous clever loyal firm gentle solid smooth rough dull  
Old sweet delicate sensitive polite hard sparkly slimy wool

### **NANA UPSTAIRS & NANA DOWNSTAIRS** (Literacy: Descriptive Words)

**Summary:** This is a memoir about Tomie dePaola's love for his grandmother and great-grandmother. Tomie would identify with his grandmother downstairs as always standing by a big black stove and his great-grandmother upstairs always being in bed. At a very young age Tomie named them Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs to help distinguish between the two. Every Sunday Tomie and his family would visit the grandmothers and Tomie would spend most of his time upstairs with his great-grandmother. They would talk, share mints, and Nana Downstairs would come to check on them regularly helping Nana Upstairs into her chair, brush her hair, get her and Tomie ready for their naps and bring supper. Nana Upstairs eventually died forcing Tomie to struggle with saying good-bye to someone he loves. A falling star brought comfort to

Tomie when it was seen as a kiss from Nana Upstairs and later in life when Nana Downstairs passed away; Tomie again saw a falling star and now referred to both grandmothers as Nana Upstairs!

**Rationale:** Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs includes descriptive words allowing the reader to form mental pictures in his/her mind of the objects, people and settings being described from Tomie's visits to his grandmothers. Visual images help students to make connections to their own lives; ultimately helping them with comprehension.

**Objective:** The students will be able to identify and begin using descriptive words by writing descriptive sentences about specific objects.

**Procedure:** The teacher will review what the students learned from their last lesson about using imagery from the story *James O'Rourke and the Pooka*. The teacher will discuss how descriptive words help with imagery by giving details about a person, place or object being discussed. Before reading the story Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs the teacher will instruct the students to think about the words being read that enables them to form a visual picture. When the story is finished the teacher will discuss the images she was able to draw from the reading and list on the board the descriptive words she felt helped her to form the images. (examples attached)

**Application:** The students will work individually for this assignment. The teacher will choose a picture from the story Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs (copy attached) walking around the room showing the picture and instructing the students to look at the picture, choose a person or object, and write a sentence using descriptive words to describe that person or object. Each student will read their sentence aloud for

the rest of the class to identify the descriptive words used to describe that student's person or object. The students will then secretly pick an object from the classroom and write it on a piece of paper along with their name. They will write 3 descriptive words down to describe their object and hand their paper to the teacher.

**Effectiveness of the Lesson:** The teacher will randomly read their descriptive words to the class to see if the object can be identified.

## **STAGESTRUCK** ( Literary Concept: Reading with expression and Fluency)

**Summary:** Tommy is excited because his first grade class is putting on a play of Peter Rabbit and he's sure to get the starring role. But in his enthusiasm, Tommy talks too much in class, and so his teacher decides that he should play Mopsy instead-and Mopsy doesn't have many lines. Tommy is disappointed, but he decides to use what he has learned about "stage presence" in Miss Leah's tap dance class. By reacting to everything Peter does, Tommy ends up stealing the show. He starts to feel bad for stealing the show from the star so he apologizes to his teacher and Johnny, who played Peter Rabbit. At the end of the book it's clear to everyone that Tommy's stagestruck.

**Rationale:** This book supports the literacy concept of reading with expression and fluency. The book includes dialogue which can be easily applied to the concept of reading with expression. Stagestruck also gives examples of different punctuation that would serve in using expression such as exclamation points and question marks. The book also introduces the use of italics. Stagestruck gives several opportunities to practice with fluency in the dialogue as well. While this book supports these concepts the concepts

of fluency and reading with expression, it also draws upon the personification from the previous lesson on Tomie dePaola's Book of Poems. This works through the idea that the poems are also supposed to be read with expression. In personification you need to know what is being personified in order to add expression to the reading.

**Objective:** The students will be able to use the literacy concepts of reading with expression and fluency to perform in a Reader's Theatre of Stagestruck.

**Procedure:** The teacher will begin by explaining how reading with expression involves using different volumes, tones, rhythms, and pitches according to the way the sentence is written. The teacher will then read the four examples (see attached) to the students using the four parts of reading with expression. Just by reading these examples, fluency will be introduced to the students. The fluency will more or less be practiced in the application than taught. The book Stagestruck will be introduced by reading the story to the class, emphasizing the different character's dialogue through expression and tone of voice.

**Application:** After reading the story, we will list the different characters and the roles they play in the story as a class (Miss Bird, Tommy, Jeannie, Mom, and Miss Mulligan). They will hopefully establish that Tommy has an excited tone, Miss Bird has a strict tone, Jeannie is thankful and respectful, Mom has a disappointed tone, and Miss Mulligan has a complimentary tone. The fluency practice will be found while doing repeat reading of short phrases which we will use the dialogue from the story (see attached). The class will be broken into three groups of six and some groups will have seven. The students will assume a character role from story and read to their group the phrase on the sentence strip spoken by their character (see attached). They will practice

repeat reading with their group members until they feel they can read it fluently and with expression. Each group will then read their sentence in rotation to the class. The next step of the Reader's Theatre will be to give each member of a group a role with all the lines of the story. The students will embody their character and perform the short play for the rest of the class. The students will independently rehearse their lines for the Reader's Theatre using the mini-lessons information of reading with expression and fluency. Each student will be given the chance to practice using one line from their script and evaluate each other on their performance in order for them to have some feedback from students to practice their lines with.

**Effectiveness of the Lesson:** In order to illustrate that the lesson was successful each student will need to perform the lines of the character with both expression and fluency. The student's will use their oral and public speaking skills plus the information gained in the mini-lesson to complete this task appropriately.

## **Lesson 6: Stagestruck**

### Reading with Expression!

1. After I threw my bowl on the floor my mother said, “Bobby. Go to your room!”
2. I loved Christmas carols, so I sang along too. “ Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.”
3. Gloria knew we shouldn’t be talking in class so she whispered in my ear, “Meet me at the swings after school.”
4. The car ran over four of my toes and I screamed, “OUCH!!”

## **Lesson 6: Stagestruck**

### **Miss Bird:**

“Girls and boys, I have some wonderful news. Our kindergarten class is going to put on the spring play for the whole school. We are going to do Peter Rabbit”

“Tommy, please no talking.”

“Tommy, I asked you to get your book. You really must pay attention.”

“Put your chairs in a circle, everyone. I am going to give out the parts for Peter Rabbit.”

“Tommy you are talking again. Since you cannot pay attention, you will not play Peter Rabbit. You will be Mopsy.”

**Tommy:**

Tommy whispered loudly to his best friend, “I hope I get to play the part of Peter.”

“Jeannie you could be the mouse with peas in her mouth.” All he heard her say is, “Mumble, mumble, mumble,” because her mouth is full of peas. “Ill show you how to do it.”

“Jeannie, you make a great mouse!”

Tommy whispered loudly, “Now, when Miss Bird asks who would like to play the mouse...”

“But Mopsy is a girl rabbit!”

**Miss Leah:**

“Tommy you have a wonderful stage presence!”

Jeannie:

“I could never remember all the words. I’d be too nervous.”

“That’s really funny, Tommy.”

**Miss Mulligan:**

“Well, Tommy, you’re quite a ham.”

**STREGA NONA** (Literacy Concept: Story Elements - Plot)

**Summary:** Strega Nona is a story about a “Grandma Witch” and her hired hand Big Anthony. As Strega Nona ages she realizes she needs help with her daily chores and Big Anthony applies for the job. He promises to do what is asked of him in return for food, a place to sleep, and money. What Big Anthony did not realize was Strega Nona had magical powers and one evening he overhears her singing over a magical pot and as he peeked through the window he sees the pot making pasta and when she sang again it

stopped. Big Anthony, so sure he could do the same, pulls down the magic pot while Strega Nona is away. Even after being told NOT to touch it, he invites the townspeople over to see him work the magic pot. He sings the song and the magic pot begins to make pasta. After everyone had their fill he sings again but the pot continues to make pasta. What Big Anthony failed to realize was that Strega Nona blew three kisses to the pot to get it to stop making pasta. Strega Nona returned just in time to save the town from being covered with pasta. Big Anthony learned that responsibility is about doing what you are told or there will be consequences.

**Rationale:** The story of Strega Nona offers clear examples of the different plot elements to be taught in today's mini lesson. Strega Nona has a "magic pasta pot" which the plot of the story is based around. Big Anthony wanted to impress the townspeople; here lies the conflict, so he told them about the magic pot. The resolution results in a change in Big Anthony as well as it teaches a valuable lesson that the students will be able to relate to.

**Objective:** Using the story Strega Nona, the students will be able to identify the story elements: plot/problem, events and conclusion by using "*What 1, What 2, and How*" questions and writing their responses under the correct element on a worksheet.

**Procedure:** The teacher will advise the students that today's story will be about Strega Nona. Writing "Strega Nona, which meant "Grandma Witch" the teacher will review with the students that this sentence uses the context clue of "definition" to help them to understand that Strega Nona means, which is one of the many context clues they learned about in the lesson from 26 Fairmount Avenue. The teacher will begin the lesson by reminding students that there are specific elements that all stories contain: {characters,

settings, plot/problem, events and conclusion}. We have previously learned about characters and setting and today we will be learning how to identify a Plot. The teacher will begin the lesson with the definition of **Plot**, which will be written out on an overhead. (see attached) The teacher will then use a transparency to introduce the students to the story elements: Plot/Problem, Events & Conclusion by reading the “*What 1, What 2 & How*” questions they will use to help identify these specific elements in a story (see attached). In order to model how to identify the elements of a plot, the teacher will reintroduce the story of Strega Nona by reading pages 1 - 4. The teacher will begin by identifying the characters of the story (Strega Nona, Big Anthony & the townspeople) and the setting (a small village in Italy). The teacher will then read the first “*what*” question listed under plot/problem, “What is the dilemma in the story?” (Strega Nona realizes she is getting older and needs help with her daily chores) and write the answer on the transparency under the column titled Plot/Problem. The teacher will then read the second “*what*” question, “What happened in the story as a result of the problem?” (Strega Nona began looking for someone to help her with her chores) and write the response under the column titled Events. Finally, the teacher will read the “*how*” question, “How was the dilemma solved?” (Strega Nona hired Big Anthony as her helper) and write the response under the column titled Conclusion. The teacher will conclude the mini lesson by reminding the students that the plot of the story is a sequence of events that shape the action and gives the story a particular focus. All of this collected information can be used to help write a summary of the story.

**Application:** The students will work in five cooperative groups of four students. Each group will have a photo copy of the story and a worksheet for the story elements

discussed today (see attached). Before they begin reading the story, the students will be instructed to write the teacher's example on their worksheet. They will then choose one student in their group to continue reading the story (pages 5-10) until the next problem arises. As a group the students will determine the best answer to the three questions and write their responses in the correct columns. The students will choose a new group member to read the next few pages (11-17), answer the three questions, write their responses in the correct columns and choose a different group member to read the next few pages (18 -24), answer the questions, write their responses in the correct columns and have the final group member read the last pages (25-30), answer the questions and write their responses in the correct columns.

**Effectiveness of the Lesson:** The students understanding of the lesson will be evaluated when each group will be asked to present one of their responses for the three elements.

We will have prepared a sheet of poster paper titled "Style Statement" with a photo of Tomie dePaola in the center and copies of the books we have read during this author study taped and titled on the paper (see attached).

The lesson will begin with a discussion of what is meant by "style statement". Style will be defined as the literary element (a particular identifiable characteristic that represents the elements of storytelling, such as theme, conflict, point-of-view) that illustrates the way the author uses words. Literary devices is the way authors create meaning through language (word choices, sentence structure, sentence arrangement, and figurative language) which is used to describe events, objectives, and ideas all working together to establish the mood, images and meaning in the text. In order to develop an accurate description of an author's style of writing, we need to

consider the author's literary devices and recurring ideas (themes) that run throughout the author's books.

The class will be divided into five groups, each given one of the books we have read during the author study along with a graphic organizer. The teacher will retain "Tomie dePaola's *Book of Poems*" to model on a transparency the instructions that is being dictated to the students (see attached). The students will be asked to place the title of their book in the center of the organizer and the following category titles in the next set of circles: Unique Qualities, Themes, and Literary Devices. Before proceeding, we will define these categories {*unique qualities* – personal characteristics/traits that stand out about the author writing, *themes* – a unifying idea that is a recurrent element in the story, *literary devices* – as discussed above} so that the students have a clear understanding of what they are looking to identify. They will then be instructed to review and discuss their book within their groups and come up with two examples to list under each category. As the students work in their groups the teacher will pass around blank sheets of paper to each group. When all the groups are done, each student will be asked to take a sheet of paper, make three columns and title each column as shown on the transparency example (see attached). They will be instructed to list the examples under each category as we begin listing their examples on the transparency, omitting any duplicates.

Once every group has contributed their examples, the students will be instructed to review the lists and once again work with their group to develop a style statement for Tomie dePaola's writing. After each group presents their statement to the class

the teacher will write them on the poster paper which will be added to our author study display.

Tomie dePaola has a unique way of incorporating humor into each of his stories that children and adults alike would appreciate, whether they are biographies, folktales, memoirs or even poetry. Many of his stories include realistic childhood emotions, such as in *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*, when Tomie has to deal with the loss of his great-grandmother, or *26 Fairmount Ave*, when he has to deal with the disappointment of not being able to move into his new home as planned or realizing kindergarten was not all he thought it would be. He even wrote poems that dealt with the loss of a friend or a wish not coming true among other themes. Several of his stories cover different cultures which he included terminology familiar to those cultures, *Strega Nona* (Italian) and *Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka* (Irish), while other stories dealt with lessons being learned; *Strega Nona* the lesson is about greed and how the punishment will fit the crime and in *Stagestruck* the lesson is about sharing the limelight.

Being author and illustrator, Tomie dePaola is able to capture the essence of his characters through humor and light hearted illustrations that resonate with his audience as well as including childhood issues dealing with emotions and lessons about morals.

During the Tomie dePaola author study the students will have gained insight into not only the author's books but his background as well. To bring the author study to a close the class will complete two activities. First, the students will read a book of choice

from Tomie dePaola to a student in a younger class as a buddy read. The students will also write a letter to the author pointing out the parts of his work that they enjoyed. These two activities will hopefully spread a good word about Tomie dePaola and also introduce him as an author to other students who may not have heard of him.

We will first need to organize a plan with another teacher of a younger grade to meet up and read books with a buddy. The students will read to others in order to practice their reading and comprehension skills as well as help the other students with listening skills. Before doing this activity the students will be instructed on how to introduce a book and read aloud. We will inform the students that it is important to read the title of the book as well as the author's and illustrator's names. A transparency will be shown to address the important parts in reading aloud such as reading with expression and fluency which we have discussed in previous author study mini-lessons (see attached). We will have several books for the students to pick and read ahead of time. These will be books that we have read in the author study and also others that they might not have heard of. The students will travel to a kindergarten or first grade classroom and be assigned a partner. Groups of three can be issued if needed and therefore a partner read would have to take place. The students will then proceed in introducing the book and reading it to the younger students while the teachers walk around to make sure they are being clear with the younger students. The students will get to practice their fluency, reading with expression, and ability to comprehend a book well enough to explain it to a peer by doing this activity.

On the last day of the author study we will read Tomie dePaola's *The Popcorn Book*. We will provide a snack of popcorn for the students to eat while we read the book

aloud. After reading the book we will ask the students to think back to all the books we have read by Tomie dePaola and everything we have learned about his life. We will start a list on the board of the things the class liked about this author and his books. The students will be urged to be specific such as liking the “pooka” in *Jamie O’Rourke and the Pooka*. After a list is compiled we will introduce the idea of writing letters to Tomie dePaola. The students will be shown the proper set up of a friendly letter (see attached) and told what to make sure to include such as what books were favorites, what they think is interesting about Tomie’s life, and something they want to know about him. These letters will be looked over by the teachers and then put in an envelope. The students will learn how to address a letter and will be given stamps to put on themselves. We will send the letters out and hopefully get a response.

These culminating activities will sum up much of what the mini-lessons taught throughout the author study. The students will gain insight on Tomie dePaola’s life while incorporating the joy of his writing