Day 1

FAVORITE BOOK SHARING: This beginning lesson sets the tone that reading is and will continue to be very important to the class.

“We are going to learn a lot about ourselves as readers. By sharing the books we already love, we'll get to know each other a little bit better.”

This is a great way to start off the year. See the sample “back-to-school” letter encouraging students to bring their favorite book on the very first day of school.

Dear [Student’s Name],

Hello, hello, hello! I’m very excited to be your third-grade teacher this year. I know that we will have exciting adventures together.

I hope that you have had a great summer. But now, it’s time for me (and you) to start thinking about school again. I hope that you can come to visit me in your new classroom during James River’s Open House on Friday, August 31st from 1:00–3:00. You’ll get to write me a letter and tell me what you’ve been up to, pick out your cubby, and maybe even meet some new classmates!

But here’s the most important reason for this letter: your homework. Yup! It’s that time again. I am so looking forward to starting our reading journey together that I want us to start that very first day of school by sharing a favorite book. So, when you get your backpack ready with all of your new supplies for the first day of school, be sure to include your favorite book. It could be a book you have read or a book someone has read to you. I can’t wait to see what kinds of books you bring to share. Can you guess what mine will be? Here’s a hint: it’s about a little boy at the bottom of a well.

Enjoy the rest of the summer! I’ll see you soon.

Love,

[Teacher’s Name]

Day 2

WHAT GOOD LISTENERS DO: All students must be able to listen thoughtfully to conversations about literature.

“Every day before I begin the mini-lesson, I will need to see your body language telling me, ‘I am ready!’ We won’t get started until everyone looks and acts ready.”

The use of classroom charts with rules for listening is very appropriate here. It’s also helpful to create a chart entitled, “What a good listener looks like and sounds like.”

Good literature makes it even easier for students to practice good listening skills.
Day 3
**Our Reading Workshop: An Introduction:** Give students a “big picture” of what their Workshop will be like. Explain how it might be different from what they are used to. Build excitement!

“We will be working together this year to become excellent readers and thinkers. We’ll do this in our Reading Workshop. Let’s look at what our schedule will look like once we’ve got all the pieces together. Remember though, it will take some time to get the Workshop working the way we want it.”

Refer to a copy (or poster) of your Reading Workshop schedule.

Day 4
**Introduction to Quiet Reading and Book Nooks:** Most students have had some experience with silent reading time. However, you need to make clear that the Reading Workshop’s quiet reading time is a bit different. For instance, you’ll be around to conference with students about their individual reading.

“One of the best things you’ll get to do in our Reading Workshop is pick out your own books for reading time. You may read by yourself or maybe with a partner. And, you may find a place other than your desk to do your reading. When I read, I sure do get pretty comfortable! While you’re reading I might be around to conference with you about the reading work that you are doing. That’s how we’ll work together to help you become a strong, thinking reader.”

Define and discuss book nooks at this point. Give the students time to “mosey” around the room and select a possible place for their book nook. Have students “practice” reading in their book nooks. Point out the acceptable behaviors: “I love the way Sarah’s eyes are in her book...I can tel’s she’s being a reader.” Reconvene as a class to create another reference chart entitled, “Book Nook Dos and Don’ts.”

Day 5
**Reading Workshop Rules:** Oh, what a perfect world it would be if everyone did what they were supposed to do! Here’s your chance to be totally explicit about your expectations. Students need to know that precious reading minutes are at stake.

“We have rules in our classroom in order to keep everyone safe and to make our classroom a friendly place to learn. Rules at reading time will be no different. It is absolutely necessary that you do not waste any of your reading time. Why would you want to?”

If you are using a behavior component in your Workshop, this is a good time to discuss it. It’s also a good idea to have copies of the rules for students to keep with their reading materials.

Day 6
**Caring for Books and the Classroom Library:** While it is true that books do fall apart after a while, every person in the Workshop needs to make sure this doesn’t happen often. This lesson often takes more than one day; you’ll probably refer to its main points all year long.

“We are so lucky to have so many wonderful books to read and share with one another. However, having these books comes with a responsibility. We must take good care of each
We want our library to grow with new titles, not with replacements of titles we've already had but ruined.”

Depending on the grade level, you may need to go in depth, perhaps do some role-playing if necessary. With older students, this would be the appropriate time to discuss how they will check out and return books from the library. Also, if possible, meet near your classroom library. Discuss how it’s organized and what each class member can do to be sure it stays that way.

### Day 7

**Appropriate Workshop Voices:** A Reading Workshop room feels different. All students are not engaged in the same activity, yet they are all engaged. Some students will need to concentrate on their own independent reading; some students will need to work with a partner; and some will be in a small group, with or without the teacher. While the room is not absolutely silent, the noise level should be conducive to all of these activities.

“I love to hear you guys outside on the playground. Your excited voices tell me you’re having a blast. But how do you think I might feel if I heard those same loud voices in our Reading Workshop? It’s very important for us to remember that there are twenty other readers in the room. Even if you are in a group, or with a partner, there is still someone else who needs quiet to concentrate. We need to work hard to make sure everyone has the quiet they deserve in order to help us all grow as readers. Let’s practice using those quiet, reading voices now…”

An excellent way to introduce this concept is to take a “field trip” to your school’s cafeteria and library. Ask students to notice what they observed about the sounds in those places. Lead them to see the rationale behind a quiet work environment.

### Day 8

**Choosing a Just Right Book:** Independent reading is only effective to the extent that students are actively engaged in reading a book at their independent level. When the book is too hard, the student is probably doing too much “reading work” to make sense of the whole. When the book is too easy, not enough reading work is being done to stretch the reader’s abilities.

“One of the things we will talk a lot about this year is ‘just right’ books. We are all at different places in our reading. And that’s just fine, because we are all very different people. What works for Jonathan may not work for Terry. That’s just the way it is. Your job in Reading Workshop is to choose a book that is not too hard and not too easy. You need to pick a book that is just right! That’s what will help you to be a better reader, reading just right books.”

A weight-lifting analogy works great here. Tell students that you are trying to build up your muscles. Will you go into a gym and pick up the teeniest, tiniest weight there is? Will you just try and lift the heaviest weight there? No, in order to build your muscles, you’ll
pick a weight that's not too light and not too heavy. It's exactly the same with reading muscles. It's important to share your own reading with students. Show them what is just right for you and what is too difficult for you to read all the time...a physics book from the library perhaps!

**Day 9**

**Mapping Out Book Nooks:** Book nooks work best if everyone has a set spot in the room that he or she goes to every day. It adds to the predictability of the Workshop. A map of the classroom helps students remember their place and see the importance of the routine.

“We've talked together about what book nooks are, and you've even tried out a few of them for yourself. Today we're going to find one special place that you can call your very own book nook for some time. Let's all go now and find a place that feels right. I have a map here of our classroom. If I agree that you have selected a good book nook, I'll chart it on our map so that we'll be able to refer to it later.”

Be sure to emphasize that the map can, and will, be changed if needed—and that being in a book nook is a privilege, not a right.

**Day 10**

**Strategies for Choosing Books:**
Students will need a bag of tricks to rely on when faced with the shelves of the library. At this point, they already know that they need to be reading just right books. Now they can learn how to choose one!

“Let's talk about specific ways you can tell if a book is just right for you or not. Have you ever heard of the five-finger test? Let me describe it to you. (See Teacher to Teacher tip box at right.) So, when you are searching for a just right book, be sure to refer to the chart hanging in the library. Remember, it's the just right books that will exercise your reading muscles and make them grow!”

Create—and/or share—a chart of Book Choosing Strategies. (See the example on page 61 for strategies on how to choose a just right book.)
### Strategies You Might Use to Choose a Just Right Book...

| Think about your purpose for reading today. Are you reading to find out something or reading for enjoyment? |
| Think about what types of books you enjoy reading. Or think about finding a genre you haven’t read lately. |
| Read the back cover. |
| Read the inside flaps. |
| Read any reviews on the first couple of pages. |
| Talk to a friend who has read it before. |
| Read the first page. Does it hook you? |
| See if it reminds you of another book you have read and enjoyed. |
| Choose a page from the middle and do a five-finger test. |
| Now do a five-finger and a thumb test to see if you can retell a part of the page you read in your own words. |
| Take a picture walk through the book. |
| Read the Table of Contents. |
| Have you read another book in the same series? |
| Did you hear the book read aloud? |

## Day 11

**Reading Conferences:** *For conferences to be most effective, students need to know why you hold conferences and what happens during a conference. Again, this adds to the predictability of the Workshop.*

"I would like you to get a sneak peak into what will happen when I come to sit and read with you. This is called a reading conference. Both of us have important jobs that we need to do in the reading conference. Let’s take a look at what happens in a reading conference together. (Refer to the conferencing chart on page 62.) Remember, my job at this time is to help you grow as a reader. I’ll expect you to listen to the advice I give you in the reading conference."

If possible, teach this mini-lesson with another adult role-playing the part of a student in the conference. Let the class see what you will be doing and what they are expected to do. (See the sample lesson on page 41.)

## Day 12

**Help Me:** *Students should not be bothering you during a reading group or conference. This is sacred time. They need to know what they should do if they need assistance.*

"Readers, I want you to understand that when I am in a reading conference or group with other readers, I do not want to be interrupted. You all deserve that time with me, and I don’t want anything to bother us while we are working together. Let’s work together now to make a plan so we all know what to do if you need something."

Brainstorm together all the things that might happen during independent reading time (bathroom breaks, inability to find a book, stuck on a word, etc.) and the possible ways a student might solve the problem without interrupting you.

## Day 13

**Reading Workshop Office Work:** *Depending on the grade level, students should be responsible for varying degrees of maintaining reading records—main idea sheets, reading logs, journal entries, etc. Students need to learn what to maintain and how best to maintain it.*
### Our Jobs During a Reading Conference...

**The Teacher’s Jobs:**
- Choose a student to conference with and watch the student a bit. Notice his or her body language. Does he or she look like a good reader?
- Sit down next to the student. Quietly read over the student’s shoulder until the student comes to a good place to stop.
- Talk with the student and/or listen to him or her read to you.
- Think of one way you could work together to build a stronger reader and then show the reader your idea.
- Help the student practice and/or write this new idea down.
- Move away for someone else’s conference.

**The Students’ Jobs:**
- Notice when the teacher sits down next to you for a conference. Come to a good stopping point and tell your teacher how your reading is going.
- Talk with and listen to your teacher.
- Learn one new way to make yourself a stronger reader.
- Practice and/or write this idea down with your teacher’s help.
- When your teacher moves away, continue reading and practicing the new idea you just learned about in your conference.

“One of my jobs as teacher is to keep good records. I need to write down my plans, notes about what I do, and fill out lots of paper work for the office. I am responsible for all of these things. You have a similar job as a reader in our Reading Workshop. You have some paperwork—office work—to do as well. Let’s take a look at what you’re responsible for.”

Have available overheads or sample pages of any forms you will require students to maintain. Model and post the correct way this is to be done. Then, take some time and have students practice recording and filing the forms appropriately and accurately.

### Days 14 and 15

**Possible Book Responses and Journal Writing:** Over the year, students will develop a keen sense of literature response. As the Workshop gets off the ground, they need to internalize the concept that books make us think and that we should stop to reflect on those thoughts, sometimes on our own and sometimes with a friend.

“When I finish reading a book I never just slam the book shut and move on to another. I sit for minute and think about the book. I may even call up a friend and recommend the book to him or her. One of the things you’ll be doing with the books that you are reading is responding to them. What do you remember about your reading? What did it make you think of? I want to know the thoughts that are in your head as you read. Our reading journals will become a map of our thoughts, the place where we can record all the adventures on which books have taken us.”

During the read aloud, stop often to emphasize the thinking you are doing. Plant the seeds for response. After (or during, depending on the level), model the response journal you are expecting. Then, take a few minutes to create a list of possible things to say after a day’s reading. Push students to see that you would like to see some details of the book but also
evidence of their own thinking. Plan on modeling appropriate journal responses often
during the next few weeks.

Day 16

SHARE TIME: Share time is an invaluable way for students to get to know each other as
readers. Books, strategies, and enthusiasm spread from child to child at this time.

"Do you recall that I told you yesterday what I do when I finish a book? I call a friend. I
love to share what I've just read. You will have an opportunity to do the same each day.
You'll have a chance to show classmates what you learned, what you thought was funny,
what you think others should read...anything you want to tell us about your reading today.
Share time is when we'll get to find out what everyone's been doing with their time in
book nooks."

Think about how you would like your students to share. Will they sign up to do so? Will
there be a consistent, rotating schedule? Share the procedure with students during this
mini-lesson. Recall the mini-lesson on listening and
again emphasize its importance.

Day 17

GIVING A BOOK TALK: Good books are often
contagious. Students enjoy helping others find a new
book. A strong book talk by a student helps to keep
books off the shelves and in students' hands—right
where they belong!

"When I finish a great book, I often find someone
else who would like to read it. I love the feeling I get
when someone comes back to me and says, 'You were
right, that was a wonderful book!' I'd like to show
you today what to do if you finish a super book that
you think other students in our class might enjoy."

It's helpful to have a pre-determined outline of what you want your students to include in
their book talk. Book talks are more like commercials than book reports. They're short, to
the point, and often end with a cliffhanger to "hook" the audience. Give a few example
book talks and show students how and when they'll be able to share their own book talks.
Allow students to practice giving book talks with books the class has read together.

Day 18

BRINGING ALL THE PIECES TOGETHER/ TROUBLE SHOOTING: It's hard work getting all
of the components of the Reading Workshop together. Students may need a reminder of what
the big picture really is. And they may also need time just to ask questions about what their
jobs are.

"I am so proud of the work we have done together getting our Workshop all set up. Let's
take a few minutes to talk about what you expect to happen every day. Does anyone have
any questions about the Reading Workshop? Let's take some time to look at the schedule
again... Now, let's see if we can run through the whole Workshop together."
Have a “pretend mini-lesson” and dismiss students afterward. Let them go through the motions, praising and coaching them as needed. Let students practice being in the book nooks long enough to make sure there are no more kinks to work out and continue with the run-through. At “pretend share time” you may want to have some sort of mini-celebration. “Yeah! We have a working Workshop.” Perhaps give out new bookmarks or pencils for reading journals. Then, by all means, go back to book nooks for reading time!

Day 19

Reading With a Partner: Students often love to share their reading with a partner. When it’s done correctly, it can be a great learning opportunity for both partners. It is essential to take the time up front to show students how (and where and how often) they will be permitted to read with a partner.

“A few days ago, we talked about how wonderful it is to share what we are reading with other students. Sometimes, it’s even fun to read the same book together with another student. Just as with everything else in Reading Workshop, there’s a right way to do this. Let’s talk about the dos and don’ts of reading with a partner.”

See Chapter 7 for more detailed information about reading with partners.

Day 20

The (Right) Way to Have a Reading Workshop: This lesson is inspired by Byrd Baylor’s book, The Way To Start a Day. We like to ceremonially end the first month by saying, “We are ready for our Reading Workshop in its entirety.”

“Readers, we have come so far with our Workshop. I am so excited about using all of our Workshop time as readers and thinkers. Let’s take one last look at what our jobs are, what you expect and what I expect of our Reading Workshop time.”

After reading the book, we create one final procedural chart entitled, “The Way to Have a Reading Workshop.” Many charts come and go throughout the year, but this one stays, all year long.