

Stop Signs, McDonald's, and Cheerios: Writing With Environmental Print

Author

Jennifer Prior
Gilbert, Arizona

Maureen Gerard
Phoenix, Arizona

Grade Band

K-2

Estimated Lesson Time

Three 45-minutes sessions

Overview

One of the earliest stages of literacy development is reading and writing print from the world around us. Street signs, cereal boxes, and billboards all provide opportunities for emerging readers to interact with words. In this lesson, students read words found on everyday objects and use them to identify individual letters. They then create captions for an electronic book with preselected logos and illustrations. Finally, they create an original little book choosing their own logos and images.

From Theory to Practice

Prior, J. and Gerard, M.R. (2004). *Environmental print in the classroom: Meaningful connections for learning to read*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

- High-impact environmental print symbols are the first exposure young children have to the code system of written symbols.
- Research indicates that children must construct a "cognitive anchor" for mapping sounds onto written code symbols. Environmental print can be this anchor.
- Adult instruction is the key element to effectively using environmental print to teach beginning reading skills. When an adult draws attention to the letters and sounds in environmental print words, children are more likely to transfer this knowledge to decontextualized print (text without graphics).

Student Objectives

Students will

- Develop word recognition and fluency by identifying and discussing familiar print in the environment, by taking note of individual letters in the words, and by segmenting the sounds of these letters
- Practice writing skills by creating captions to accompany familiar environmental symbols that have been selected for them and those that they choose themselves
- Practice early reading success by reading their own writing aloud

Resources

- Computers with Internet access

- [Google Image Search](#)
- [Stapleless Book](#)
- Environmental print materials
- Glue
- Overhead projector
- Scissors

Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. You may choose to teach this lesson as part of a unit along with "[I Know That Word! Teaching Reading With Environmental Print.](#)" If you have already completed this lesson, you can use the environmental print materials you assembled for it and can skip Session 1 of this lesson, which is the same.
2. You will be using examples of signs, labels, and logos with your students and should have a collection available both to share with them during Session 1 and for them to use to create their books in Session 3. These can come from product packaging (i.e., cereal boxes, soda cans), fast food containers, store bags, or magazines. At least six of these images should come specifically from your immediate community (i.e., the sign in front of your school or street signs from main streets in town). You might consider taking photos of local signs with a digital camera or scanning in pictures that you cut out of local magazines or brochures. You should both print these local images and save them on your computer.
3. You can also use the Internet to capture images of signs, logos, and product labels as follows:
 - a. Go to [Google Image Search](#) and type in the name of a sign, company, or product you would like to use with students (for example, type in the words *stop sign*).
 - b. On the page that opens with images, click on the image that is simplest and will copy most clearly; then click on the link that says *See full-size image*.
 - c. When this image opens, right click on the image. A drop-down menu will appear. Click on the word *Copy*.
 - d. Using Microsoft Word or another word-processing program, open up a blank document and paste the image in. Right click on the image to get the Picture menu, which will give you the tools to shrink or enlarge it as necessary.
 - e. Print copies of the images to share with students during Session 1 and additional copies for students to use when creating their books during Session 3.
4. Visit and familiarize yourself with the [Stapleless Book](#). Use the tool to create a blank little book that you title "My Little Book." For each page, choose either of the templates from the second row (with the image above or below the text). You want to leave most of the text area blank, including only page numbers. After you print the book, paste or tape the six local images you have chosen (see Step 1) onto the pages and make a transparency. Make one copy for each student in your class. Read the folding directions so that you can help students assemble their books at the end of Sessions 2 and 3.
5. If you do not have classroom computers, reserve one session in your school's computer lab (see Session 3). Save the [Stapleless Book](#) in the Favorites list on the computers your students will be

using.

6. Ask your students to bring in their own examples of packaging, labels, and logos to share during Session 1.

Instruction and Activities

Session 1: Discussion of Print in the Environment

1. Display the items you have assembled to share and those that your students have brought in (see Preparation, Steps 2 and 6). Ask students to identify each of them. Ask how they know the name of the item and have student volunteers point to the words on the packaging.
2. Use the words on the items you have brought in to draw students' attentions to the letters and sounds. For example:
 - How do you know this box says BAND-AID?
 - What letter do you see at the beginning?
 - What sounds does the letter *b* make?
 - Is that the sound you hear at the beginning of BAND-AID?
 - What is another word that begins with the same sound?
3. Slowly segment the sounds made by each environmental print word and have students call out the letter for each sound. Draw students' attentions to the different sounds that the same letter can make. For example:
 - What other letters do you see in the word BAND-AID?
 - What are the sounds that you hear in BAND-AID?
 - Do you see the letter *a* here in BAND-AID says /ă/, but the letter *a* here says its name /ā/.
4. Proceed in this manner with each of the items. Draw students' attentions to the fact that often a letter appears in different ways. For example, sometimes a letter might be written in cursive. Sometimes the same letter is big and red. The same letter can look different when it appears in different words.

Session 2: Writing a Book Using Local Images

1. Display the transparency of the [Stapleless Book](#) (see Preparation, Step 4). Distribute the copies you made to your students.
2. Review each of the images, asking students to say the environmental print word or words. Ask them how they know the word. What letter do they see at the beginning of the word? What sound does that letter make? As you work through the pages, you should turn the transparency so that students are looking at the image the right way up.
3. Next, explain to students that they should add captions or write sentences to go with each image.
4. Using the transparency and a marker, model completing this task with the first image. Be sure to include the environmental print word or words in your caption. For example, if the image is of your school's sign, you might write, "I am a teacher at Westside Elementary School." Ask students to help you compose the caption for the other three images, writing on the transparency as you go. Again, make sure you turn the transparency so that the image you are working on is facing the right direction.

5. Students should fill in their own Stapleless Book sheets. Circulate and assist them as needed. When they are finished, show them how to fold and cut the book.
6. Ask students to read their completed books out loud.

Session 3: Creating an Original Little Book With Environmental Print Words

1. Have students choose six images from the collection you have assembled (see Preparation, Steps 1 and 2).
2. Students should then access the [Stapleless Book](#). They should title their books "My Little Book." Help them create the pages using the same templates you did when you made yours. Explain that they will glue one of the logos they have chosen onto each page and should write captions or sentences to accompany the logos as they did during Session 2. They should use the words that appear in the images in each caption and should number each page. You may choose to have them write the page numbers on the back of the images they have chosen, to help them match up the pages and the images correctly. Make sure students print their books when they are done.
3. When the books are printed, students should glue the signs or logos onto the proper pages and should fold and cut them as they did during Session 2.
4. Have students pair up to read their books to each other.

Extensions

- For further development of word recognition and fluency, invite students to read their completed books to students in another class.
- Have students take their completed books home to read to family members as homework.
- Extend what students have learned by playing Environmental Print Bingo with students. "[Bingo! Using Environmental Print to Teach Reading](#)" has students make Bingo cards using the logos from this lesson.
- The lesson plan "[From Stop Signs to the Golden Arches: Environmental Print](#)" provides students with additional practice reading environmental print. After collecting examples and sorting them into categories, students make a class book.

Student Assessment/Reflections

- Observe students' participation during the group activities, especially to their ability to read logo words and identify letters and sounds. Pay close attention to how easily students segment and hear the sounds of the letters in each environmental print word.
- During Session 2, observe as students make attempts to write decontextualized words. Make note of any difficulty they experience with particular letters.
- Review both books each student creates. Check for length of captions or sentences. In the second one, make sure they have pasted the correct images to accompany their text. Observe temporary spellings in the book to assess the stage of writing development for each student. When necessary, assist the student in clarifying his or her understanding.
- On a class list, note which letters are recognized readily by which students. In addition, note what types of text are added to students' books. Make note of your assessment of the stage of writing development.

IRA/NCTE Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).



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