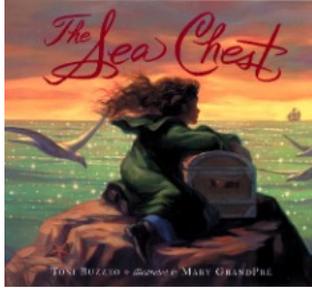


## SIX TRAIT WRITING GUIDE



### The Sea Chest

by Toni Buzzeo; illustrated by Mary GrandPré  
Dial Books for Young Readers, 2002

#### IDEAS: Family Stories

On her web site, Toni Buzzeo explains that this story came from a Maine legend, but also drew upon her own experiences as a child with a foster sister. Ask students to think about family stories they have heard about their grandparents or other long ago relatives. Invite them to write or tell the story from that relative's point of view, looking back on it.

#### IDEAS: Details that Sing

Details are very important to the writing of historical fiction. Because the reader did not live at the time of the story, the author must paint a picture of the place and time using carefully chosen details. Ask students to create two lists: one for the details that Toni Buzzeo chose for this story to bring the time period to life and one for the details that she chose to bring the place to life.

#### ORGANIZATION: A Tale Well Told

Ask students to notice how the story is organized, with an overarching story that provides a frame for the inner story that Great Auntie Maita tells. This organization is called a frame story. Each portion of the story has its own first-person narrator. Invite students to imagine that the book was not written using a frame, but rather that the grand niece told the whole story. How would it be different? How would the inner story be told?

#### VOICE: Who is Telling the Tale?

The voice for the long, interior story is a quiet, reflective voice that matches the character of Auntie Maita as she looks back on her life. Following on the Organization activity above, ask students to practice, in pairs, rewriting a scene from the inner story using the voice of the grand niece rather than Auntie Maita's voice.

#### SENTENCE FLUENCY: Poetry as Prose

Reread a few passages of the story aloud and invite students to think about the lyrical or poetic copy of the text. Ask them how the sentences might have changed if the text were more straight forward and less poetic. As a group, practice transforming the text to more mundane phrasing and ask students to notice how the effect of the story is changed.

#### WORD CHOICE: Searching for Gems

Invite students to listen to the story a second time in order to search for words that are unexpected or unfamiliar to them. Flag those words with a post-it note or a sticky flag. As you read, if you encounter an exceptional word that children don't identify, flag it as well. When the reading is complete, create a list of these words, look them up in a paper or online dictionary, and choose three of them to include in a short story or descriptive paragraph they write.

#### CONVENTIONS:

Ask students to look closely at the text for the frame story and note how it is rendered on the page. Why did the author and publisher decide that the frame story text should be written in italics? How is it helpful to the reader?