Author Visit Description
By Victoria J. Coe

Hour-long Sessions/Max Three hours per day

My sessions are workshop-style and are best suited to a contained classroom or library setting where I can show a powerpoint presentation. It's fine to combine classes of the same grade into one room.

My hour-long presentation for grades 3-5 or 3-6 is curriculum-based (POV & inference) and totally interactive. We jump right in and do three activities together.

The first is called "Shifting your perspective." I show the students a series of four photos and we dialogue about what each thing is from both a human's POV and a dog's POV. Then they do a quick 1-2 sentence writing activity about one of those things from a dog's POV. At the end I ask for volunteers to share what they wrote.

The second is a guided meditation where I invite the students to use their imaginations as I guide them through a 3-4 minute scene as a dog going for a walk. When they open their eyes I ask them to share their observations with a partner. Then I ask the whole class: What was it like to be a dog?

Then we're ready for the third activity which is ALWAYS a big hit. I put up a list of places on the screen and ask them to choose one place and write a paragraph about that place as if they were a dog visiting that place for the very first time. I give them tips as they get started and I walk around the room to help those who might need it. That takes about five minutes.

Next, I ask for a volunteer to come up and read what they wrote. The rest of us listen for details in the student's writing that will enable us to guess or INFER what the place was. The students always go bananas for this activity. I have done it probably a hundred times and it's always the same! I keep asking for volunteers to come up and read until we've exhausted the list of places on the screen.

If the students have not already read FENWAY AND HATTIE, I read the first three pages, and if they have, I jump right into Q&A. We continue Q&A until the hour is up. I try to allow at least 10 minutes for Q&A but 15 is ideal.

One School, One Book

When the whole school has read one of my books for the All-School Read, or "One School, One Book," I present to every class in the whole school. Even with combining all the classes for each grade, these visits take a minimum of two days.

The hour-long sessions for grades 3-5 or 3-6 are as described above. The main difference is that for OSOB, I also visit grades K-2.

For grades K-2, I offer a 30 minute workshop-style session for each grade, also best suited to a contained classroom or library. These half hour presentations are less rigorous, and I only present to those grades if the whole school has read the book.

First, I talk to the students about dogs and how they view the world differently from humans. I show them a different series of photos and ask how and why a dog might think of them differently from humans. We dialogue about each photo.

Then, I explain that dogs use body language as their primary way of communicating. I show them a series of pictures of dogs and ask what the dog might be trying to communicate and ask why they think that (what evidence do they see).

Next, I explain that dogs read our body language, too. Besides smell, body language is the main way that dogs "listen" to us. I ask for volunteers to come up and demonstrate without using words a feeling or emotion and I ask the class to "read" their body language. We do this a few times.

And if we have time, I show them some sentences from FENWAY AND HATTIE and ask them to INFER what Fenway means. We often don't have time for that.

I always allow time for Q&A. I have found with the younger grades they need a good 15 minutes for questions and answers. They have a LOT of questions!

For OSOB visits, we typically schedule 3 hours on one day and 3 ½ on the second. Even though one day goes longer, the regular full-day fees apply.