



Featured Teacher: Dawn Smith

"I couldn't think of a more special addition to my class than being able to memorialize student writing in a book."

Cast of Characters

Fourth-grade students in Clayton, NJ.

Background and Setting

Smith has been a teacher for 36 years at the same school and currently teaches fourth grade. She has been creating published authors for seven years with Studenttreasures.

Memorable Learning

"It creates a memory they will cherish for the rest of their lives. The book becomes a treasure they will always have and can be shared for generations to come."



"My students feel important, and they are truly satisfied with how their hard work turned out."

A Mother's and Father's Day Surprise

Smith created her first classbook seven years ago just in time for a special event. "It was during spring, close to an annual event I hold for the students' families called 'Pastries for Parents and Guardians.' This event falls between Mother's Day and Father's Day. I have the students write letters to their parents and guardians. When I first discovered Studenttreasures through an email I received, I thought it would be perfect for the letters my class writes. Parents often assume our book is for the poems we write during Poetry Month. Having just listened to their child's handwritten letter, they are thrilled when I pull the books out of the box at the end of our event. Seeing the letter published in a book alongside other letters from all the students in the class is extra special. I also write a letter to the parents, thanking them for all their support and cooperation throughout the school year."

Hesitant at First ...

"Students are very hesitant at the beginning of the year with the writing process. By the time we reach our letter-writing in the spring, they aren't as intimidated anymore. When my class watches the Studenttreasures Publishing

tour video, they grasp the reality of it all, and their creative juices begin to flow. I access the free lesson plans and worksheets to help guide the writing process. Graphic organizers are an effective way to organize thoughts. I also show my classbooks from past years - the students love going through them, reading letters and seeing the illustrations of many of their schoolmates. Most want to create the cover illustration, so I usually make it a contest, and I have someone 'on the outside' judge for the winner."

... But They Excitedly Come Out of Their Shells

Smith is delighted to share how her students blossomed as authors. "Creating a classbook not only helps highlight writing, which my students become more confident in, but also allows them to express their emotions toward their families through their precious letters. They have to stand up in front of everyone at our special breakfast on 'Pastries for Parents and Guardians Day' and read aloud their letters. They are proud to share their best writing along with their love and appreciation for the most important people in their lives. My students feel important, and they are truly satisfied with how their hard work turned out. It adds to the



excitement of our family event! It creates a memory they will cherish for the rest of their lives. The book becomes a treasure they will always have and can be shared for generations to come.”

Sensory Imagery and Figurative Language

“Because they know their letters will truly be on display by reading them aloud at our family event and forever highlighted in a classbook, they approach this writing project with a very positive attitude. They usually focus on sensory imagery in their letters and enjoy coming up with examples of figurative language. It's a great project because it's not about having the neatest or longest letter. EVERYONE is included, and they can't wait to share their letters with the various people in their school lives: me, their classmates, administrators and their families. It makes for a perfect addition to our celebration as we head toward the end of the school year.”

Emotional Moments

Smith reflects on the profound impact this project has had on everyone. “There have been two different school years where I have had two different students lose a parent. I can't express how emotional everyone felt when those letters were read aloud. This became cathartic for those students to write about their parents and illustrate it with their artistic abilities.”

From Sample Books to Lesson Plans

Smith gives tips on how to create a classbook and shares some tools available on the Studenttreasures website. This isn't her first rodeo after all!

“I would say you have to do it! There are no negatives. It's an easy, well-organized process. First of all, it's free and you get a kit with everything you need. You also have the option for students to handwrite or type their story and it can be used in any grade level or subject area. If you need ideas, just visit the 'Teacher's Lounge.' There are so many resources and you can choose what is best for your class. Sample Books and Book Topic Ideas can be viewed here as well. There is flexibility with your publishing date, so it is not a problem to change it. If you need to contact anyone at the company, you will not have to wait long at all for a response. I have had nothing short of an excellent experience with Studenttreasures!”

Never Too Late to Start

“I have been teaching for a long time—most of my life, it seems. I still love it, but it's easy to get set in your ways. Studenttreasures came into my teaching life quite late, but it was so welcomed. Since I have celebrated a parent event in my classroom for over 30 years, I couldn't think of a more special addition to it than being able to memorialize student writing in a book that can become a legacy for my students.”



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