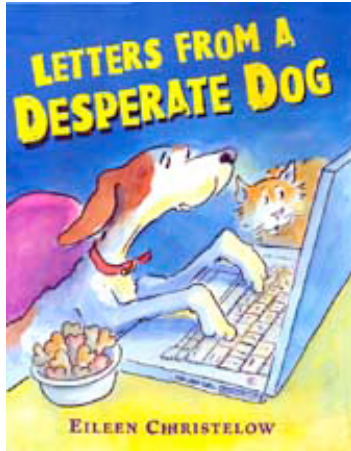


Letters From a Desperate Dog— in the classroom



My dog, Emma, the dog who guides you through this website, finally got her wish: a book about her!

My challenge was to figure out how Emma could tell her story. A journal? A family photo album? What was her story anyhow? After many false starts, I decided to write some letters from Emma's point-of-view. Who was she writing to? It must be a canine 'Dear Abby'! That's when the fun began!

(For more information about the book click the cover.)

Writing letters from a pet's point of view.

When I presented this book to a group of teachers in Kansas, one said, "I know exactly what I'm going to do with this book! A letter writing unit!"

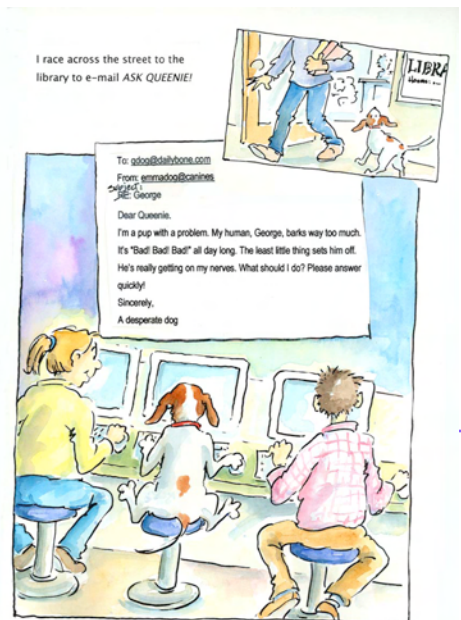
1. Ask your students about their pets. (This always starts a flood of stories.) If someone doesn't have a pet, is there a classroom hamster? goldfish? A friend's pet? An imaginary pet?
2. Discuss the gripes or problem their pet might have. (*They don't brush me enough. I hate my food. I don't like to be left alone. Why can't I sleep on the couch, sit at the table . . .*)
3. Ask them to write a letter (or an e-mail) to 'Dear Queenie', explaining the problem.
4. Then ask them to write Queenie's reply.

OR:

5. Have students exchange their letters with each other.
6. Then have them write replies from Queenie.

Write a story

1. Read some of the letters and replies.
2. Discuss how the pets will use Queenie's advice.
3. Guess what! You've been brainstorming stories.
4. Write the story!



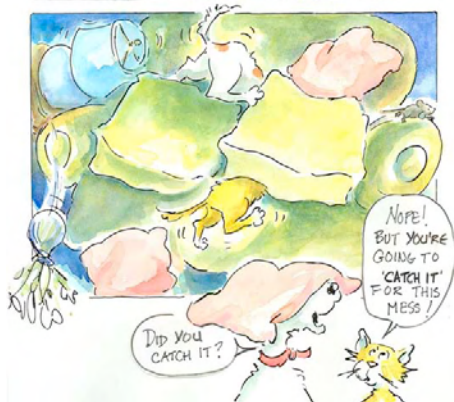
Letters From a Desperate Dog— in the classroom

Talking about book design:

You've probably noticed that I've drawn a lot of comic strips on this website. I wanted to use that **format** in this book. But I also wanted to take advantage of the picture book format. So I call this book a 'comic-picture book'.

Discuss this format with your students. How does it differ from my other books? How is it the same?

Here is an example of where I've used a comic strip technique: (Pages 13–15 *Letters From a Desperate Dog*)



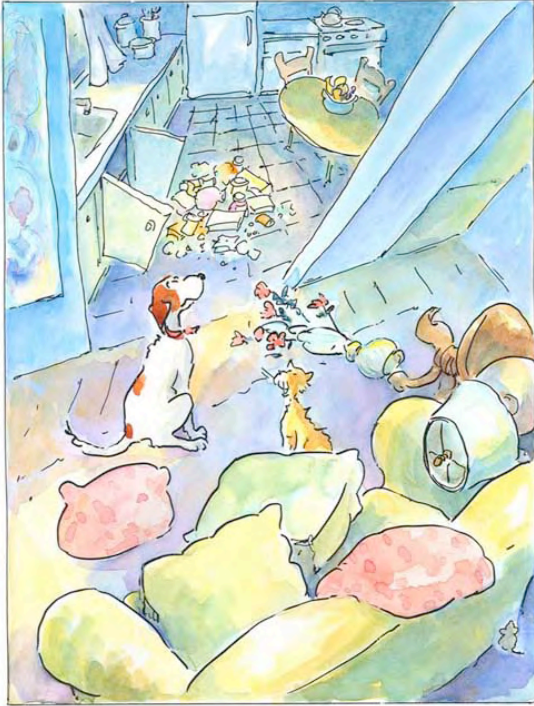
Emma hears a noise in the first panel. The comic strip continues for three pages, following the action.

What is going to happen next? **Turn the page to find out!** This is what I love about picture books—the surprise or resolution comes when the reader turns the page.

Also note when I've used the comic strip format, it's the pictures, instead of words, that describe the action.

Letters From a Desperate Dog— in the classroom

Unfortunately, the cat has a point.



The surprise—a full page illustration.

Writing a story as a comic strip:

In some schools I've visited, I've noticed students are writing their stories as illustrated comic strips or storyboards. I've collected some wonderful examples.

1. Use large sheets of drawing paper—at least 11" x 17", drawing pencils (at least HB to make a strong black line), crayons
2. Divide the sheet into 4 – 6 sections.
3. Draw (and write) the beginning of the story in the first section, what happens next—in the next section, etc.
4. Dialogue can be in speech balloons.

The story below was given to me several years ago by a second(?) grader from a school outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

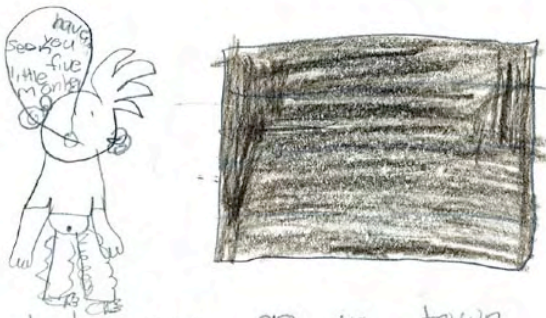
Letters From a Desperate Dog—in the classroom



1. The monkeys can hide from Lulu.



2. Lulu can not find the five little monkeys.



3. Lulu can go in town to look for them.



4. The 2 monkeys can make an disguise.