

Staying on Topic: What Is Your Book About?

(from Katie Wood Ray & Matt Glover's *Sit Down and Teach Up* ebook) – Form 7

Sometimes beginning writers don't realize each page of a book should be about the same thing or tell the same story. You will see quite a range of understandings like the ones described below related to this important composition dimension:

- a) The child does not state the topic (e.g., Teacher: "What is your book about?" Child: "I don't know.")
- b) The child's book is on topic, but she doesn't state the topic. For example, a child's book is all about animals, but when asked what the book is about, she doesn't say or realize it's about animals. The writer may simply not be familiar with the question, "What is your book about?"
- c) The child states a topic, but the book isn't on that topic. For example, the child says his book is about snakes, but there are no snakes in the book.
- d) The child uses the first page as the topic. The child states the topic by telling about the first page, but the rest of the book isn't about that. For example, the child says his book is about snakes, but only the first page is about snakes. The rest of the book is about other animals or other things.
- e) The child makes on-the-spot connections. The child's book isn't on a topic, but when she reads the book to the class she creates a story or makes a list book by connecting unrelated objects or events from the pictures.
- f) The child states the topic by telling about each page. For example, the child says, "This book is about dogs and my mom and the park and rainbows."
- g) The child uses a very general topic to summarize across pages. For example, when asked what a book is about, the child thinks for a bit and says, "Everything." This shows the child understands the book should be focused on one idea, even if he has written his book with no specific topic in mind.
- h) The child is somewhat on topic. The child states the topic for the book, and some of the pages are on that topic, but some are not.
- i) The child is on topic. Child states the topic of the book and each of the pages are connected to the topic.