



‘ReadQuest’

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 6 chapter books from the ReadQuest cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: story-based learning, where the characters embody the ideas being taught, with a trauma-informed, emotionally-safe approach.

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This is Volume 1 of 2 of the *ReadQuest — Meet the Cast* series; each volume is a complete standalone book you can read on its own.

For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The ReadQuest cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 6 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Crest

*MAIN IDEA — the *peak* of the passage; the central message; the *one thing* the passage is most fundamentally about. Identifying the main idea is the foundation of reading comprehension.*



Crest grew up on a mountain. It was called Mount Comprehension. This was a real mountain. It stood in the kingdom's word-woods region. The word-woods were thick and green. They smelled like pine needles and damp earth. Mount Comprehension was the tallest peak in its small range. The famous ReadQuest academy sat nearby.



The mountain had a clear, sharp peak. It looked like a giant pointy hat. You could see it for miles in every direction. Travelers used the peak to find their way. If you were lost, you just looked up. The peak was the most important part of the land. Other mountains were taller in some spots. But Mount Comprehension's peak was known by everyone. Map-makers always drew it first on their scrolls. Everything else went around it.



Crest grew up in a village. It sat right at the mountain's foot. The village was named Footpath. Footpath was on the mountain's sunny southern side. Little houses with red roofs huddled together. Smoke curled from chimneys. Crest and her friends spent their childhood looking up. The peak was always there. It was like a silent, watchful friend.



It was the first thing they saw each morning. Sunlight hit the very top early. The valley below was still dark and sleepy. The peak would glow bright gold. It was the last thing they saw at night. The peak still glowed pink and purple. The village was already tucked into shadows. The stars would start to twinkle around it. And every time Crest looked up, something in her went quiet and calm. No matter how mixed-up her day had been, the peak was still there, steady and sure. Knowing where the top was made her feel safe, like she could never really get lost.

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Hunch

*INFERENCE — reading between the lines; understanding what the text *implies* without stating directly. The text gives *signals*; the reader assembles them into *implied meaning.**



- prompt: "Hunch loved the quiet thrill of noticing something no one said out loud. Have you ever felt that little buzz of excitement when you figured out what someone really meant?"
 - prompt: "When you sense a feeling underneath someone's words — something they didn't quite say — how does noticing that feel in you?"



Hunch grew up in a *small village*. It was near the academy's word-woods. His family were all hounds. They were the village trackers. They found lost sheep. They found missing children. They found stolen things. Hunch was the youngest of seven hound-children. He was supposed to be a tracker too. But Hunch loved books more. He liked them more than tracking things. He would read in the family workshop. His older brothers and sisters practiced tracking. Books were the only things. They gave his sensitive nose a real workout. Tracking lost sheep was too easy for Hunch. The sheep-trails were *obvious*. Books were different. They were *full of small implied things*. The words didn't say them outright. Hunch's nose was secretly excited by these hints.

At fourteen, he knew it. *His nose was perfect for finding inference*. Following scent trails was one kind of work. But finding *implied facts in text*? That was the kind he loved.



The passage had been:

"Sara walked into the kitchen at 6:00 a.m. The coffee was already brewed. Her mother's car was gone."

Hunch read the passage. His nose twitched. His tail wagged slowly. He said: *"This passage implies many things. First, Sara's mother woke up before 6 a.m. Second, she had time to make coffee. She also left before Sara woke up. Third, Sara's mother left in a car. That tells us how the family gets around. Fourth, the mother left without waking Sara. This means she wanted to leave quietly. Maybe Sara was sleeping soundly. Or maybe her mother had a secret reason to leave. Fifth, coffee was brewed. So the mother probably drinks coffee. That's a small family fact. The text doesn't say any of this directly. You have to *infer* them. From what the text *did* say."*



Hunch has been the academy's *inference*-teacher for thirteen years.

In his classroom, Hunch starts every first lesson the same way. He sits on a small cushion. It's at the front of the room. He has a *small book* on his lap. He says: "*I am Hunch. My nose smells what the text hints at. But it doesn't say it. Watch closely.*"

He reads a short passage aloud. It's usually the Sara-and-coffee story. His nose twitches. His tail wags. He says: *"*My nose found these *inferences*: The mother woke before 6. She brewed coffee. She left in a car. She didn't want to wake Sara. The text *didn't say* any of this. It only told us the time. And about the coffee. And the missing car. The hints came from those facts.*"*



He always warns them: *Inferences* need to be backed up. By the text itself. Don't infer things the text doesn't hint at. For example, "Sara's mother was happy" is *not* a good *inference*. The story doesn't tell us how she felt. But "Sara's mother left before Sara woke" IS a good *inference*. The car was gone. Sara just walked in. Those facts tell us.

(Anchor — you'll meet her later — often helps Hunch teach this. *Inferences* need anchors. Like a boat needs one. Hunch and Anchor often show this together. Hunch finds the *inference*. Anchor points to the words that prove it.)

When students ask Hunch if *inference* is hard, he always says the same thing:

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<https://spark-and-anvil.org/cast/readquest/hunch>

Hunch and Anchor

evidence-based inference — a good reader guesses what the text implies (the leap) AND points to the specific words that support the guess (the anchor). An inference you can't tie to evidence is just a guess; evidence you never reason from is just a quote. The reading move is the two done together.



In the reading-room of the readquest, two friends sat on either side of one open book, so big it took both their laps to hold. Hunch leaned in close, eyes darting across the page, practically buzzing. Anchor sat back, one finger resting patiently on the paper, ready.

"Oh!" said Hunch suddenly, sitting up. "The girl in the story is scared. Really scared."

Anchor didn't argue. Anchor never argued. Instead they asked the only question they ever asked, in their calm, unhurried way: "Where does it say that?"

Hunch blinked. "It doesn't say it. That's the whole point! It's between the lines. You just... feel it."

"Then show me the lines you felt it between," said Anchor, and slid the book a little closer. "Not to catch you out. To make your idea *strong*. A hunch is a lovely thing. But a hunch nobody can find in the text — that's just a wish."

Hunch grumbled, but leaned back over the page. And there it was, three words down: *her hands shook*. Hunch pointed, triumphant. "There! 'Her hands shook.' The book never says 'scared,' but hands shake when you're scared!"

"Now," said Anchor warmly, "that's a reading. That's not a guess anymore. That's a guess with a *rope* tied to it."



Anchor liked to explain, when Hunch would let them, why the rope mattered so much.

"When I was new to this," Anchor said, "I read a story about a boy who 'left his lunch untouched and stared out the window all through recess.' And a reader next to me announced, very sure of themselves: 'He's grounded! His parents took away his weekend!'" Anchor shook their head slowly. "And I asked — where does it say that? And they couldn't find it. Anywhere. They'd made the whole thing up. A brand-new story on top of the real one."

Hunch winced. "Okay, that's... a lot of guessing."

"It was a *fine* hunch," Anchor said, fair as always. "Something was wrong with the boy — the untouched lunch, the staring, that's real evidence. But 'grounded for the weekend'? The rope didn't reach that far. All the words could hold up was *he's sad or worried about something*. No more." Anchor tapped the page. "The evidence tells you how far your hunch is allowed to go. Not one step further."

"So a hunch can be too big for its rope," Hunch said slowly.

"And a hunch can also be too *small*," Anchor smiled. "Some readers only ever quote. They point at 'her hands shook' and stop. They never leap at all. That's where I need *you*."



Their trickiest job came that afternoon: a passage with no feelings named anywhere, not one.

Dad set two plates on the table. He looked at the empty chair for a long moment, then quietly put one plate back in the cupboard.

"Well," said Anchor, "the words are all plain. Two plates. An empty chair. One plate away. Nothing hard to read."

But Hunch had gone very still. "No," Hunch said softly. "Something *big* is here. Somebody's missing. Somebody who used to sit in that chair. Dad set two plates out of habit — because for a long time there *were* two — and then he remembered." Hunch's voice dropped. "It's about loss. It's sad in a way the words never once say."

Anchor looked at Hunch — really looked. "That's a huge leap," they said. Not doubting. Just measuring. "Can we anchor it?"

Together they bent over the four small sentences. *Two plates* — habit. *The empty chair* — someone belongs there. *A long moment* — remembering, feeling. *Put one plate back* — the habit corrected, the person truly gone. Every piece of the leap had a word holding it down.

"Every part of it," Anchor breathed. "You leapt all the way to loss, and the rope held the whole way."



The apprentice who'd been listening finally spoke up. "But how do you *know* how far to leap? Hunch just... knew. Anchor just... checked. How do I do both?"

Hunch and Anchor answered at the same time, and then laughed, because their answers were two halves of one sentence.

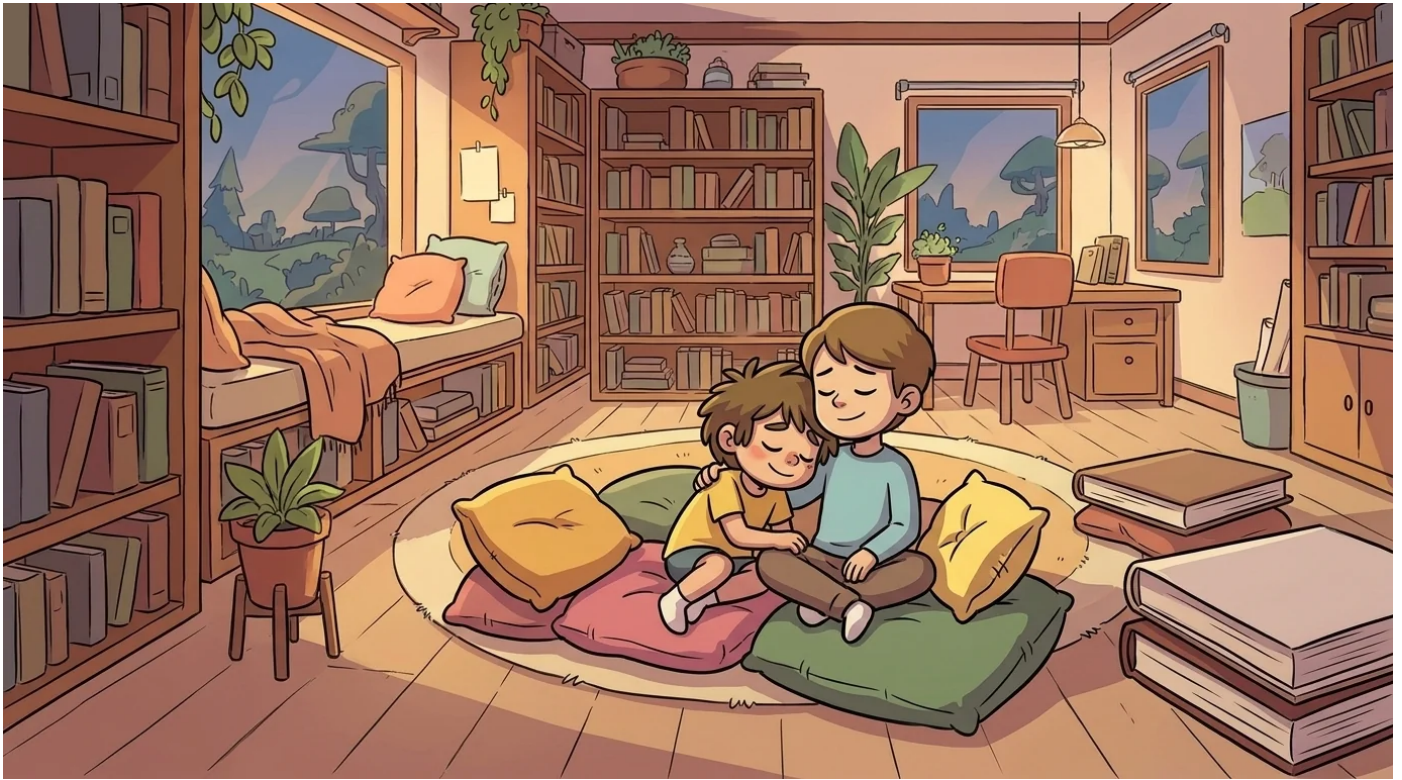
"You leap first," said Hunch. "Don't be afraid of the guess. The text is *asking* you to fill in what it left out — that's how stories work. So go ahead: what does this make you think?"

"And then you check," said Anchor. "Go back to the exact words. Point at them. Ask: do these hold up my idea? If they do — how far? Keep the part of your leap the words can carry, and let go of the part they can't."

"Leap," said Hunch.

"Anchor," said Anchor.

"Every single time," they said together.



That evening the big book lay closed, and the apprentice had gone home to practice. Hunch sat swinging their feet, quiet for once.

"Do you ever wish you could just leap?" Hunch asked. "Without me always asking you to check?"

Anchor thought about it. "Do you ever wish you could just check?" they asked back. "Without me always nudging you to leap?"

Hunch grinned. "Never. I'd be stuck on the page forever. So boring."

"And I'd be floating off into stories that aren't there," said Anchor. "A little bit lost, honestly. A little bit scared of being wrong and never knowing it." They bumped Hunch's shoulder, gently. "That's the thing nobody tells you. It isn't that one of us is right and one of us is careful. It's that a real reading needs both — the brave part and the honest part — and I feel *safe* doing the brave part, because I know you'll keep me honest, and you feel free being honest, because you know I'll always dare to leap."

Hunch was quiet, and then leaned their head on Anchor's shoulder, and felt something settle in their chest — steady and glad and unafraid — the deep, easy calm of a reader who knows they will never have to guess alone, or check alone, ever again.

Read it? Now hear Hunch and Anchor's audio drama + go play — scan or visit:



<https://spark-and-anvil.org/cast/readquest/hunch-and-anchor>

Anchor

EVIDENCE — supporting any reading-claim with specific evidence from the text. Without textual evidence, a claim is unsupported. The strength of a reading is the strength of its citations.



- prompt: "Anchor says a reading-claim with no evidence is just a guess in a coat. When have you said you thought something about a book, and someone asked you where in the book you saw it?"
 - prompt: "Anchor doesn't argue louder when she's right — she points to the page. When have you settled a disagreement by showing instead of telling?"
 - prompt: "A claim's strength is the strength of its citations. What is a small thing you believe right now that you could trace back to where you first learned it?"

Anchor is a *small, heavy crab kid*. She always carries a *small ship's-anchor*. It's real metal and very heavy. The anchor is her special tool. It helps her teach.



Anchor will not believe what you say about a story unless you can *show proof from the book*. If a student says, "The character is sad," Anchor asks, "Where in the text?" The student must *point to a certain sentence or phrase*. It has to be right there in the story. This sentence must *back up their idea*. Only then will Anchor *lift her small ship's-anchor*. It's a little teaching trick. The anchor stays tied to her body with a short rope. But she can *raise* it a bit when she agrees with a student's proof.

If there's no proof, the anchor *stays down*. Your idea is just floating. It has no tie to the book. The student *must find the proof*.

Anchor grew up in a town by the sea. It was called Bollard. That's a funny name, because bollards are the big posts ships tie up to in a harbor. Her family had been harbor-masters for ages. They were the people who kept the harbor safe. They made sure ships were tied up tight before big storms came. Their family motto was: "Show me the line. Show me where it ties. Then I will trust the anchor."

Anchor's real name was Quill. She learned this lesson deep down, right from when she was a little crab kid. By the time she was ten, she knew it well. Every idea about a ship's safety needed *proof you could see*. Saying "the ship is safe" was not enough. The harbor-master had to *see the rope*. They had to *see the knot*. They had to *see the anchor on the bottom*. Only then could they truly believe the ship was safe.



When she was sixteen, Quill started using this idea for books. She found out the *same rule worked*. An idea about a story — like "the character is sad" or "the author is being funny" or "the place is scary" — wasn't enough. Not without *words from the book* to back it up. The reader needed to *point to the exact words* that proved their idea. If not, the idea was just *floating*. It had no anchor.

Quill walked to the ReadQuest academy when she was twenty. She changed her name to Anchor. That happened when the master gave her the job of finding proof in books. She has been Anchor for twelve years now.

In her classroom, she starts every first day the same way. She sits at the front. Her small ship's-anchor rests on the floor by her feet. She looks at the class.

"I am Anchor," she says. Her voice is deep and steady. "I do not believe ideas about stories without proof from the book. If you say *the character is sad*, I will ask *where in the text?* If you can point to a sentence, the anchor lifts. If you cannot, the anchor stays down. Your idea is unanchored."

She shows them how it works. She reads a short passage from a book:



"Marco sat on the kitchen step. The dog whined at the door. He did not move."

She looks at a student. "What is Marco feeling?" she asks.

The student thinks for a moment. "He is sad," they say.

Anchor nods slowly. "Show me where in the text," she says. Her eyes are serious.

The student leans forward. They try to point to a word. But the story doesn't actually say, "Marco is sad." The student looks stuck. Their finger hovers over the page. They frown. Then their eyes light up. They had an idea!



"Wait!" the student says. "The proof is in what he *does*! Or, what he *doesn't* do." They point to the last sentence. "Marco did not move when the dog whined. That is proof of sadness. Or at least, he feels something very strong."

Anchor's small ship's-anchor *lifts slightly*. It makes a soft clinking sound. "The anchor lifts," she says. "Your idea has support. The book does not say *Marco is sad*. That is an idea you made up in your head. (Hunch would help you with that part!) But what Marco *did* — he did not move — that ties your idea down. Your reading is supported."

The students always — *always* — find this amazing. Their eyes get wide. They had often made ideas about books. But they never knew those ideas needed proof. Anchor's real ship's-anchor *shows them the rule*. It makes it easy to see.

Sometimes students ask Anchor if finding proof is hard. Anchor always says the same thing.

"It is not hard," she says. "It is just *showing where your idea ties to the book*. For every idea you have about a story, ask yourself: *what exact sentence proves this?* Point to it. Your idea is now anchored. If you don't show the proof, your idea is floating. Readers cannot trust floating ideas."

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Plume

*AUTHOR'S PURPOSE — what the author is *trying to do* with this passage: inform, persuade, entertain, reflect, warn. TONE — how the author *sounds* while doing it: joyful, somber, ironic, urgent, neutral.*



- prompt: "Plume's feathers change color with whatever feeling a writer is carrying. If your own mood turned into a color right now, what color would you be — and how does that feeling sit in you?"
 - prompt: "Have you ever noticed a writer sounding happy, sad, or sneaky-funny, and felt that same feeling ripple through you as you read?"



His feathers are amazing. They change right before your eyes. Bright cheerful gold means the author is joyful. Cool deep blue means the author is sad or serious. Sharp red means the author is angry or urgent. Muted brown means the author is just giving facts. Soft mauve means the author is thinking deeply. The feathers shift all by themselves. Plume does not make them change. His plumage simply *shows* what the author feels.

Plume grew up in a house full of actors. His mom and dad were *touring actors*. They traveled from town to town. They performed in market squares. They played in big town halls. They even put on shows at tiny village fairs. Plume spent his whole childhood watching people in the crowd. He saw how they reacted to different kinds of plays.



When Plume was fifteen, he thought about books and stories. He figured out that writers had tones too. It wasn't just actors. The tone wasn't only in the words themselves. The same words could feel different at different times. The tone was in the writer's choices. They picked certain words. They made sentences long or short. They showed some things clearly. They hid other things. They put some ideas in. They left some ideas out. You could almost hear the writer's tone. Even without any sound at all.

Plume walked to the ReadQuest academy when he was eighteen. He has taught there for ten years. He teaches about why writers write. He teaches about how they sound.



He picks up a book. He reads a passage aloud. It's from a science textbook. It explains how plants make their own food. His feathers stay *neutral brown*. They don't change at all. "Informational tone," Plume says. "The author is just giving facts. No big feelings. My plumage stays neutral. That tells you the author's purpose: *to inform*." The students nod. They scribble notes.

Then he reads a second passage. This one is a children's story. It's about a tiny puppy's first time playing in the snow. Plume's feathers burst into *bright cheerful gold*. They sparkle like sunshine. "Joyful tone," he says. "The author is happy about the puppy's fun. My plumage brightens. The author's purpose: *to entertain and to share delight*." A few students giggle. They love the golden feathers.

He reads a third passage. It's a news article. It tells about a town after a big flood. Plume's feathers shift to *cool deep blue*. A little bit red shows at the edges. It's like a warning. "Somber tone with urgency," Plume explains. "The author is telling sad news. But also showing how brave people were. My plumage shows both feelings. The author's purpose: *to inform with appropriate emotional weight*." The room grows quiet. The students look at the blue feathers. They understand.



The students always — *always* — find the feather-shifting amazing to look at. They had heard about "author's tone" before. But Plume *shows* them what tone looks like. It's a live signal. Right there. They learn to notice tone. It's like learning to notice if it's sunny or rainy. They watch Plume's feathers. They start to guess the color before it changes.

Plume then teaches the main ways writers use tone. "Inform means neutral," he says. "Persuade means urgent or ironic. Entertain means joyful. Reflect means thoughtful. Warn means somber or urgent." He tells them these are not strict rules. A story can mix feelings. But these pairings are a good way to start thinking.

Sometimes students ask Plume if reading for author's tone is hard. Plume always says the same thing.

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Frame and Plume

*STRUCTURE-PURPOSE PAIR — *Frame names the shape. Plume names the voice. A reader who has both can see the passage whole.**



Frame's workshop was quiet that morning. She was sorting wood shavings into the right baskets. Small shavings in one. Long curls in another. Pine in a third. She liked sorting before she built. It cleared her head.

Then a knock came at the workshop door. Three soft knocks. Frame looked up. Through the window, a flash of color — green that turned blue that turned soft gold.

"Plume," Frame said, smiling.

The door opened. Plume came in. Her plumage that morning was a quiet warm gray with edges of pale yellow. That was her listening color. She wasn't reading anything yet. When Plume came over before reading, her plumage went neutral, because she hadn't picked up a tone to wear yet.

"I brought something," Plume said. She held up an envelope. The envelope was thick. Inside was a single sheet of paper. "A passage came in the mail. From one of our students. They asked us to read it together."

Frame wiped sawdust off her paws. She pulled a tall stool up to her workbench. Plume hopped onto the other stool. Plume's stool was wider, to give her tail-feathers room. Plume slid the passage onto the workbench between them.

The passage was short. About a paragraph long.

Last summer, the neighborhood pond turned green and stinky. Kids couldn't swim. Frogs left. The cause was something called algae bloom. It happens when fertilizer from lawns washes into water. The fix is simple. Plant a strip of tall grass between lawns and the pond. The grass catches the fertilizer before it reaches the water. By the end of summer, the pond was clear again.

Frame read it once. Then again. She tapped the workbench, the way she always did when she was getting the shape of something.

"This one's interesting," she said.

Plume cocked her head. Her plumage shifted from neutral gray to a curious soft green.

"Read it with me," Frame said. "Then we name our two halves."



Frame slid off her stool. She walked over to the wall of frames. She ran a paw along the row of wooden shapes. Parallel-bars. Staircase. Funnel. Broken-fixed. Expanding.

"This passage has a problem," Frame said. "And then a fix. The pond went bad. Then someone fixed it. So the *shape* of this passage is —" she lifted down a broken-fixed frame, "— this one."

The broken-fixed frame was two pieces of wood that had clearly been snapped at some point. Frame had glued the break carefully. You could still see the seam. The wood was whole again, but the history of the break showed.

"Broken-fixed," she said. "Also called *problem-solution*. The first half names the trouble. The second half names the answer." She held the frame next to the paper. The first half of the passage matched the broken side: green pond, kids couldn't swim, frogs left. The second half of the passage matched the fixed side: plant grass, pond clear again.

Plume watched, her plumage shifting from soft green to a brighter, attentive emerald. "That's clear," she said. "Once you hold the frame up, the shape is obvious."

Frame nodded. "Without the frame, the passage just feels like *words*. With the frame, you can see what the writer is doing. They built the passage with a known shape. They wanted you to recognize: *here's a thing that went wrong, and here's how it got better.*"

She set the broken-fixed frame down on the bench, on top of the passage, so the two halves of the wood lined up with the two halves of the paper. "Shape: named. That's my part." She tapped the bench once. "Now you."

Plume hopped down from the stool. Her plumage was already starting to change.



Plume stood beside the workbench. She closed her eyes for a second. She always closed her eyes once before naming a passage's purpose. It was a small habit, like Frame's bench-tap.

"Purpose," Plume said quietly.

Her plumage shifted as she said it. Not all at once. Slowly. Green deepened. Gold edged the tips. A small flush of orange moved through her chest feathers.

"Not informing," Plume said. "Informing is dry. Informing is *neutral*. Informing wears my pale gray." She paused. "This isn't that."

She walked once around the workbench, slowly. "Not entertaining either. Entertaining is bright. Entertaining is *playful*. Entertaining wears my bright yellow with red flicks. This isn't that either."

Frame watched. She liked the way Plume named things by what they *weren't* first.

"This passage wants something," Plume went on. "It wants the reader to *do* something. It wants the reader to think: *oh — that worked. Maybe we could try it too.*" She tilted her head. "This is *persuasion*. But it's gentle persuasion. The author isn't shouting. The author isn't scaring. The author is showing a small success story and trusting the reader to draw the lesson."

Her plumage settled. Gold-edged green. Warm, steady, hopeful. A color of *yes, this works*.

"Purpose: persuade. Tone: hopeful, calm, factual." Plume opened her eyes. "That's my part."

She nodded at Frame. "But you saw the shape first. The shape *let* me hear the voice."

Frame nodded back. "And your voice *confirms* the shape. A persuasive passage almost always wears a problem-solution frame. The shape and the voice match. They tell you the writer planned both."



The two of them stood at the workbench. The broken-fixed frame lay across the passage. Plume's plumage glowed soft warm gold beside it. The morning sun in the workshop shifted on the floor. A small wind nudged the wood-shaving baskets.

"This is why we work together," Frame said.

Plume agreed. "A reader who only sees shape, without voice, reads a passage as a *diagram*. They know what kind of passage it is. But they don't feel what the writer wanted. They might read this paragraph and shrug. *Yeah, a pond got fixed*. They miss the persuasion."

Frame picked up the broken-fixed frame. She turned it gently. "And a reader who only hears voice, without shape, reads a passage as a *mood*. They feel hopeful. They feel persuaded. But they don't notice the writer chose a problem-solution structure. They might read this paragraph and feel good. But they couldn't tell another reader *why* it works."

"Shape and voice," Plume said.

"Frame and Plume," Frame said.

They had a quiet little tradition. Whenever a passage was fully named, they said both pairs together, in that order. Shape first. Voice second. Frame's name first. Plume's name second.

Frame slid the passage back into the envelope. She tucked the broken-fixed frame back onto its hook on the wall. Plume's plumage gentled back toward neutral gray. The passage had been read. The voice had been named. Plume didn't need to hold the color anymore.

"What should we write back?" Plume asked.

Frame thought. "Tell the student: you read a *problem-solution* passage. The writer wanted to *persuade* you. Gently. With a small success story. Now you can see both halves. The shape that the writer built. And the voice they used. Both of those are choices. The writer made them on purpose. And you can make them too, when you write your own passages."

Plume nodded. She liked that. "Shape and voice."

"Shape and voice," Frame agreed.



The workshop bell rang from the front room. Another envelope had been slipped through the mail slot. Two more passages were coming. The morning was just getting started.

Plume hopped down from the workbench. She walked toward the front room to fetch the new envelope. Her plumage flickered briefly through a fast cycle — gray, pale blue, soft orange, back to gray — as she sampled what the next passage might wear.

Frame stayed at the workbench. She rolled up her sleeves. She pulled down two more frames from the wall, ready. Funnel, in case it was cause-effect. Parallel-bars, in case it was compare-contrast.

The two of them — the carpenter and the peacock-reader, the wood-and-glue and the shifting-feathers, the shape and the voice — got ready for the day.

Whoever had built that pond passage had planned both halves. Frame had the shape. Plume had the voice. Together, they could show any student how the whole passage fit together.

That was the work. Frame named what the writer built. Plume named how the writer sounded. The reader walked away with both. And Frame felt it every time — that quiet, glad warmth of two friends who fit together, each holding half of something whole. Alone, she could name a shape. Beside Plume, she felt the passage come alive. That was the best part of every morning: not the wood, not the feathers, but the two of them, side by side, making a reader feel understood.

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Methodology

This book uses story-based learning — the characters embody the ideas being taught — grounded in the work of Jerome Bruner (on narrative and cognition) and Sebastian Habgood (on weaving learning into the play itself), with a trauma-informed, emotionally-safe approach drawn from SAMHSA's trauma-informed care framework.

Trauma-informed design informed by Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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Cover art, chapter illustrations, and chapter text are reviewed for age-appropriate, trauma-aware content before publication. Audio drama transcripts available at spark-and-anvil.org/cast.

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