

## Read Like a Writer

Because we are writers ourselves, we pay close attention to the techniques we discover in the writing we read. I call this “reading like a writer.” When we read like this, there are six things we pay attention to:

**(1) Ideas.** Ideas are the heart of the piece – what the writer is writing about and what the writer chooses to reveal about it. How does the writer reveal the main idea? What types of details does the writer use? How does the writer achieve his or her purpose?

**(2) Organization.** Organization refers to the order of ideas and the way the writer moves from one to the next. What kinds of leads does the writer use and how do they pull us in and make us want to read more? What kinds of endings does the writer use and how do they work to make the writing feel finished and to give us something important to think about? How does the writer handle transitions? How does the writer control pacing?

**(3) Voice.** Voice is the expression of the writer’s individual personality through words. How does the writer demonstrate passion for the topic? How does the writer reveal emotions? How does the writer put personality into the piece?

**(4) Word Choice.** Word Choice refers to writer’s selection of particular words and phrases to express ideas. What techniques (simile, metaphor, strong verbs, etc.) does the writer use to make the word choice more specific, more memorable, and more effective?

**(5) Sentence Fluency.** Sentence Fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language as we read it aloud. What kinds of sentence constructions does the writer use? How does the writer vary the beginnings and lengths of sentences? How does the writer use “sound” effects like alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm?

**(6) Conventions.** Conventions are the ways we agree to use punctuation, spelling, grammar, and other things that make writing consistent and easy to read. How does the writer use conventions to make the writing easy to read and more meaningful? Does the author use conventions in unusual ways that are successful?