

MORE CRAFT CHALLENGES: PITCHFORK & BA-DA-BING VARIATIONS

Pitchforks

The Use of the Rule of Three (Pitchforks)

This author, like many picture book authors, uses the rule of three all over this book. It's like a pitchfork and many picture book authors use it. Here are some examples from the book:

"Nigel flips...and he flips...and he flips..."

"A doctor!" An engineer like my dad!" "A veterinarian!"

"One day, I'll land on the moon."

"Dance ballet."

"And wear my cape with honor."

Try using the rule of three, or a pitchfork, in your story. It can be a set of three words, three sentences, three things that happen, three descriptions, three characters, three problems, etc. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *Nigel and the Moon*

The Use of Pitchforks of Description with Prepositional Phrases

In this story, the author uses a descriptive pitchfork and each "prong" of the pitchfork ends with a prepositional phrase:

*"He sang of parched land quenched **by cooling rains**, long journeys **on tired feet**, and the love **of a family more precious than gold**."*

Look through your piece and see where you can add a sentence using this unique pattern. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *Seven Golden Rings: A Tale of Music and Math*

Using a Lyrical Pitchfork:

A lyrical sentence delivers powerful images with an emotional impact. This author uses what we call a lyrical pitchfork, which is made up of two concrete details and one abstract detail, which takes the description to new depths.

*"From the depths of the trunk, they unearth **a brown paper bag, rusty scissors, and a longing for China**."*

Look through your writing and find at least one place that you can use a lyrical pitchfork.

Found in *Watercress*

Pitchforking Verbs

A pitchfork is when you take one thing and branch it into a few more things. In this story, the author pitchforks some of his verbs.

Here is an example from the story:

Instead of saying that the archduke had some people steal her box, he said:

*"So that night the archduke **hired** three robbers to break into Annabelle's house, and they **stole** the box and **took** it to the archduke, who **set** off across the snow, and **sailed** over the sea, back to his castle."*

Look through your piece and see where you can add a few, pitchforked verbs of your own. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *Extra Yarn*

Anaphorks

(Anaphora + Pitchforks)

This author uses the rhetorical device anaphora (the repeating of a word or phrase at the beginning of a sentence). My students named this an "anaphork." Authors and speakers do this to create rhythm, to stir emotion, and/or to emphasize or bring focus on something.

Here is an example from the story:

*"**He tried** breath mints. **He tried** handing out roses. **He tried** being funny."*

Look through your piece and see where you can use an anaphork. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *Zombie in Love*

Neighboring Pitchforks

In this story, the author uses a double pitchfork pattern:

*"But Swashby wished to be left alone, so he **grumbled and mumbled and hurried** inside. He didn't need tea. He didn't want tea. Tea was **civilized, friendly, neighborly**."*

The author starts with pitchforking verbs (grumbled, mumbled, hurried). Then ends with pitchforking adjectives (civilized, friendly, neighborly).

Look through your piece and see where you can add a double pitchfork. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *Swashby and the Sea*

The Use of a Proof Pitchfork

In this story, the author uses a proof pitchfork, which provides proof in the “prongs” of the pitchfork:

*“Every day we whispered about Maya, **laughing at her clothes, her shoes, the strange food she brought to lunch.**”*

It’s almost like the author said, “Everyday we whispered about Maya,” and then a listener said, “No, you didn’t. Prove it!” The author then proved it by saying what they did: laughed at her clothes, laughed at her shoes, and laughed at the strange food she brought to lunch.

Look through your piece and see where you can try a proof pitchfork. Imagine you have a listener on your shoulder asking you, “Like what?” or saying, “No way. That didn’t happen. Prove it!”

Try it out on someone’s ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *Each Kindness*

Location Pitchfork

“In the classroom, down the hall, out the front door—her birthmark leads the way.”

Found in *Fly*

Pitchforked Adjectives

*“**Itchy** ones. **Spiky** and **prickly** ones. **Foul smelling** ones.”*

Found in *The Rough Patch*

Pitchforked Nouns

*“But then he considered its prickly **stems**, fuzzy **leaves**, and spidery, twisty **tendrils**.”*

Found in *The Rough Patch*

Pitchfork with Unusual Punctuation

“Becca dribbles, she shoots, she scores...She makes the team!

Found in *Just Like Grandma*

Epistrophe

(ending a series of sentences with the exact same word or phrase)

*"Itchy **ones**. Spiky and prickly **ones**. Foul smelling **ones**."*

Found in *The Rough Patch*

The Use of a Pitchfork Pattern: I + Verb

In a few parts of this story, this author uses a pitchfork pattern that starts with I and is followed by a verb. Here's an example from the story:

"I wanted.... I wished....I wanted....but...."

Look through your piece and see where you can try using a similar sentence pattern. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *My Monster and Me*

Pitchforked Absolutes

*"I hear kitchen sounds. **Glasses clinking. Water swishing. Forks clattering.**"*

Found in *The Kitchen Dance*

The Use of a Pitchforked Description

In this story, the author uses a pitchforked description to describe the real world:

"The real world was a strange place. No kids were eating cake. No one stopped to hear the music. And everyone needed naptime."

Look through your piece and see where you can try this pitchforked sentence pattern:

My (noun) was (adjective). No (noun + verb phrase). No one (verb phrase). And everyone (verb phrase).

Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend*

The Use of Pitchforked Participles

In this story, the author uses pitchforked participles:

*"The troll would sit in the mud and the rubble and trash, **listening, waiting, hoping** for someone to cross the bridge above his head."*

A participle is a verb that ends with ing or ed, but is serving the function of an adjective (a describing word), such as **toasted** buns or **dripping** with butter (which is actually a participial phrase).

Look through your piece and see where you can try some pitchforked participles. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*

Alliterative Pitchfork

In this story, the author uses an alliterative pitchforks, a pitchfork with three descriptions that also happen to be alliterations:

*"Pinecone was **flabbergasted, flummoxed, floored**."*

Look through your piece and see where you can add an alliterative pitchfork. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *The Princess and the Pony*

A Pitchfork of Purposeful Fragments

In this story, the author uses a pitchfork of purposeful fragments.

*"Lubna told Pebble everything. **About her brothers. About home. About the war.**"*

A pitchfork is taking one thing and branching it into a few more to make something more clear for the reader. It's like asking the author, "Like what?" or "What else?" or "Like how?" Instead of just saying that Lubna told Pebble everything, she was specific about what she told Pebble (brothers, home, and war).

Authors can also use these purposeful fragments to quicken the pace of the story.

Look through your piece and see where you can use this sentence pattern. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *Lubna and Pebble*

Ba-Da-Bings

Interesting Sentence Pattern

Shaka-Laka-Boom:

This author uses a Shaka-Laka-Boom sentence pattern. This kind of sentence tells what you said, what you did, and what immediately happened.

She sang the magic song and blew the three kisses and with a sputter the pot stopped boiling and the pasta came to a halt.

How can you try out this sentence pattern in your story?

Found in *Strega Nona*

Ba-Da-Bing-Ah-Ha

In this story, the author uses this sentence pattern:

"I stood there, holding Ms. Albert's rock in my hand, silent.

It says where the character was (or what the character was doing), what the character was holding, and what the character did or didn't say. Authors use sentences like this to help pull the reader into the moment and experience the story from the character's point of view.

Look through your piece and see where you can try this sentence pattern:

Where the character is/was (or what the character is/was doing) + What the character is/was holding + What the character did or didn't say.

Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Found in *Each Kindness*

The Use of a Ba-Da-Bing Variation

This author uses a variation of a ba-da-bing sentence (which traditionally tells: where your feet were, what you saw, and what you thought). However in this sentence, the character sees something, thinks something, and then has an emotional reaction:

"She looked down at the thin, soft bread, and she thought of her beautiful, smiling mother as she carefully cut Salma's sandwich into two neat halves that morning. Her hurt feelings turned mad."

Look through your piece and see where you can try adding one of these ba-da-bing variations. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Want more examples of ba-da-bings? Watch this [video](#)!

Found in *The Sandwich Swap*

The Use of an Imagined Ba-Da-Bing

A ba-da-bing is a sentence that has three parts: where you were/what you were doing, what you saw, and what you thought. It allows your reader to slip into the mind of the character(s) and experience what they experienced.

In this story, the author uses an imagined ba-da-bing. The character imagines (thinks) about where she would be and what she would see.

*"I squeeze my eyes shut. I **see** it. Clear. I **dip** my toes in it. Cool.*

Look through your piece and see where you can try adding a ba-da-bing to help your reader slip into the story. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.

Want more examples of ba-da-bings? Watch this [video](#)!

Ba-Da-Bing Variation

In this story, the author uses variation of a ba-da-bing sentence, telling us what a character said, saw, and felt:

"The children started to spin more tales about the business meeting, but when they saw ten plates set out lovingly on the dinner table...they broke down."

Look through your piece and see where you can add this variation of a ba-da-bing. Try it out on someone's ears to see how it sounds in your writing.