

Letters from Ted E. Bear

&

Buddy, Worma Jean
(Grades K - 2)

Kathryn Robinson

Real-World
Writing
that
students
understand

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Where Writing 'Counts'

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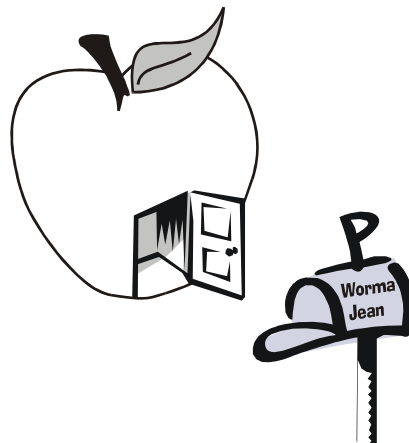
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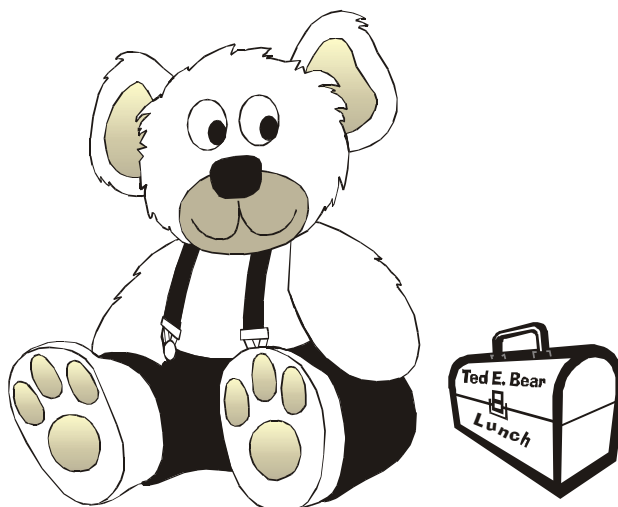
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Ted E. Bear has been an integral member of my classroom for years. He can be, and has been, a three-year-old, a kindergartener, a first grader, as well as second grader writing to fellow students about important matters in their lives. I developed *Letters from Ted E. Bear* to motivate young students to begin writing. Children enjoy activities that involve puppets, stuffed animals, and a wide assortment of toys that stimulate their imagination. These inanimate characters allow young learners to express their thoughts and reflections on a variety of subjects.

Ted elicits information regarding aspects of a curious young student's life. Ted asks the students questions about health, nutrition, behavior, interaction with friends, or life in general. By responding daily to Ted's questions young students became more proficient and accomplished writers.

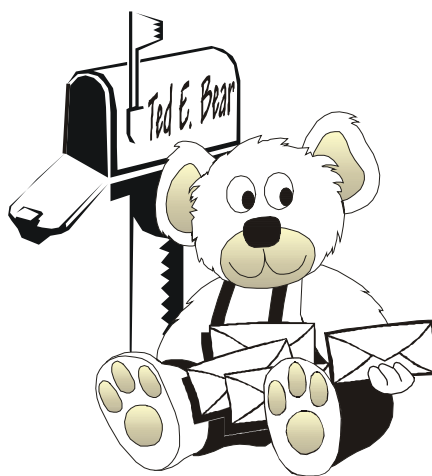
At the beginning of each school year, Ted joined the class and introduced himself to the children by way of a letter. Every day a student collected Ted's letter from his mailbox. I read the letter to the class. As students became more proficient readers, they would help with the reading of the letter. The bottom of each letter had pictures that assisted non-readers with the content of the letter. The letter was then placed in a writing center. Later at a specified Center Time, students rotated to the writing center and responded, in letter-format, to Ted's questions. Writers then placed their responses in Ted's mailbox.

Ted went home with one student every weekend. He traveled in a teddy-decorated cloth bag that contained a teddy bear storybook, a blanket, two treats (*one for Ted and one for the student*) and a few toys for the student to share with Teddy. In the bag, parents found a letter explaining all about Ted. The student usually took Ted everywhere over the weekend. Parents, brothers, sisters, and friends were encouraged

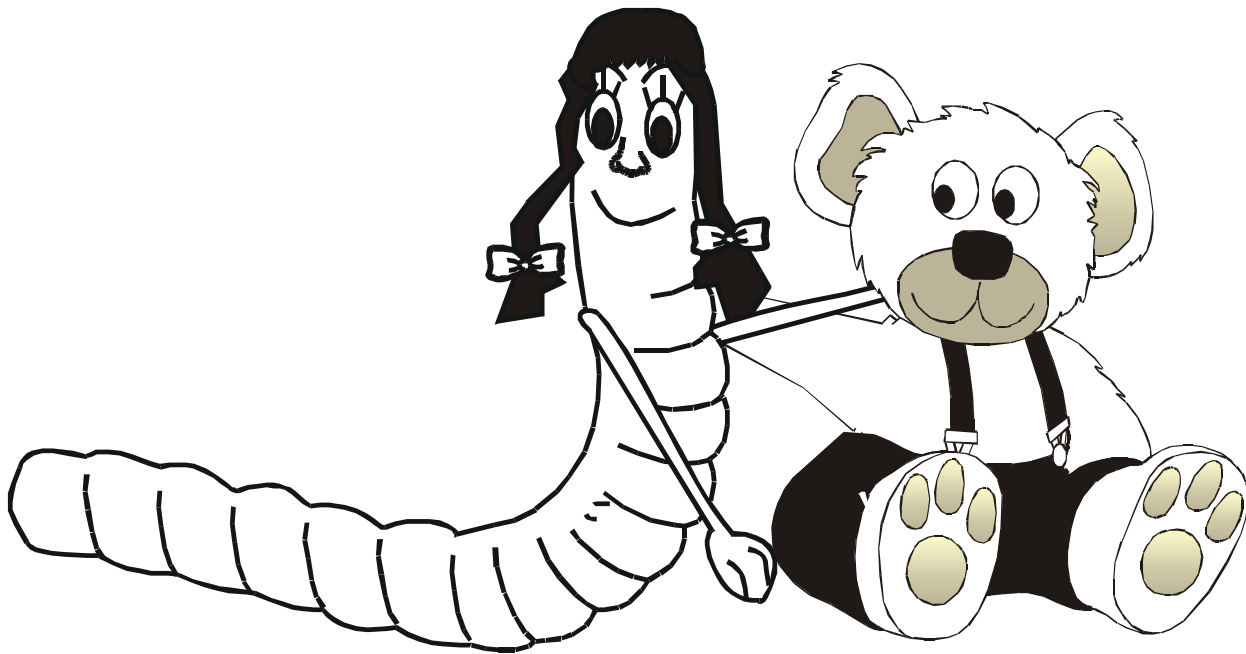
to write in Ted's journal detailing their adventures with Ted. Upon returning to the class, the student and I read the journal entries to the class.

This weekend sharing continued throughout the school year and over holiday periods. During the first year that I sent Ted home, an unexpected situation occurred. One Monday, I read a letter from Ted to the children about seeing hail at the University of South Florida over the weekend. The student that had carried Ted everywhere over the weekend cried out, "Mrs. Robinson, I had Ted this weekend and we didn't go anywhere near USF! - So that's not true!" Even though every student knew that Ted was not real, they enjoyed him so much that he seemed to be a part of their lives. Since I never could predict what Ted would do or see in each child's home over the weekend, one of our classroom puppets, Worma Jean, became a pen pal for the students on Mondays. Worma Jean's letters were read to the students every Monday in lieu of a letter from Ted. ***

During one year that Ted E. Bear joined our first grade classroom, I saved some of the students' letters to chart their growth. The letters demonstrated writing gains over the course of one school year. Through this daily letter writing activity, great gains were noted not only in the area of phonetic development but also in letter-writing format: addressing the correspondence, salutation, and the closing of a friendly letter. During this particular year, Ted was *Q-Bear* because Q-Bear was a character education bear already in the classroom. In the following letters, the students refer to Ted as *Q-Bear*. There were many students that began the year with only illustrations to get their point across. As the year progressed, letters spaced apart into words, words into sentences, and by the end of the year, many of the students wrote so freely that voice was evident in their writing. Yet, the most exciting aspect of the letters is that the young writers were not hesitant to express their thoughts utilizing above grade-level vocabulary in attempts to educate Ted (*alias Q-Bear*) and Worma Jean. Three sets of children's letters are provided as examples.



Ted and Worma ignite a contagious excitement within young writers that is both enjoyable and rewarding to experience. I hope that your students will enjoy these two characters as much as thirteen years worth of young writers from my past have.



Disclaimer:

Every attempt was made to present letters that are grammatically correct yet you will notice that some sentences end with a preposition. These sentences were stated in such a manner in order to be comprehended by the age-level of the intended readers.

The Magic Cave Our School

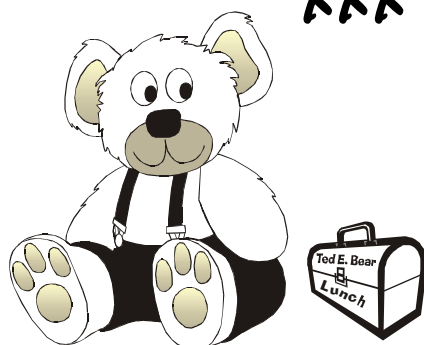
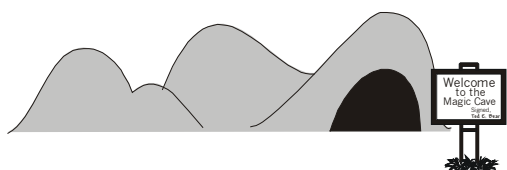
Dear Children,

My name is Ted. I live in the Magic Cave. I love to visit your classroom. I have been watching you every day. You are all smart and such clever writers that I thought that maybe you would write to me. Please write to me and tell me about yourself.

Love,

Ted E. Bear

xxx 000



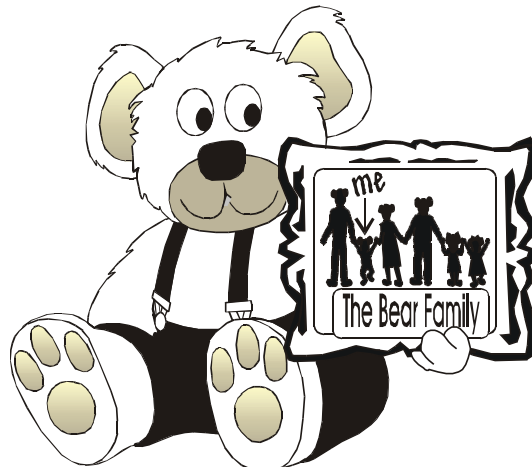
The Magic Cave Our School

Dear Children,

I have one brother and two sisters. Do you have any brothers and sisters? How old are they? Please write back and tell me.



Love,
Ted E. Bear
xxx 000

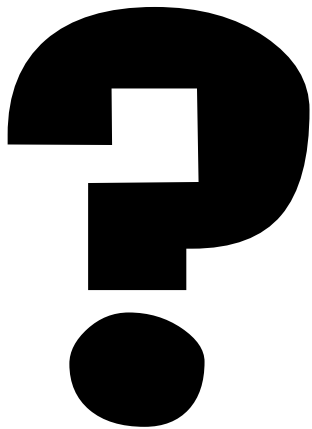


The Magic Cave Our School

Dear Children,

Someone told me that I am not a real person. How am I different from you? I cannot wait to hear from you!

Love,
Ted E. Bear
xxx 000



The Magic Cave Our School

Dear Children,

Last night, I saw a lot of children dressed up in costumes and going from house to house getting candy. Why were they dressed like angels, mummies, and monsters? What were they doing? How often do children do this kind of game? Please write back and tell me about this strange activity.



Love,

Ted E. Bear

xxx 000

The Magic Cave Our School

Dear Children,

It is raining so hard outside.
It has been raining all week and I
am tired of playing video games.
What else can I do inside since I
can not go outside? Please write
back and let me know.

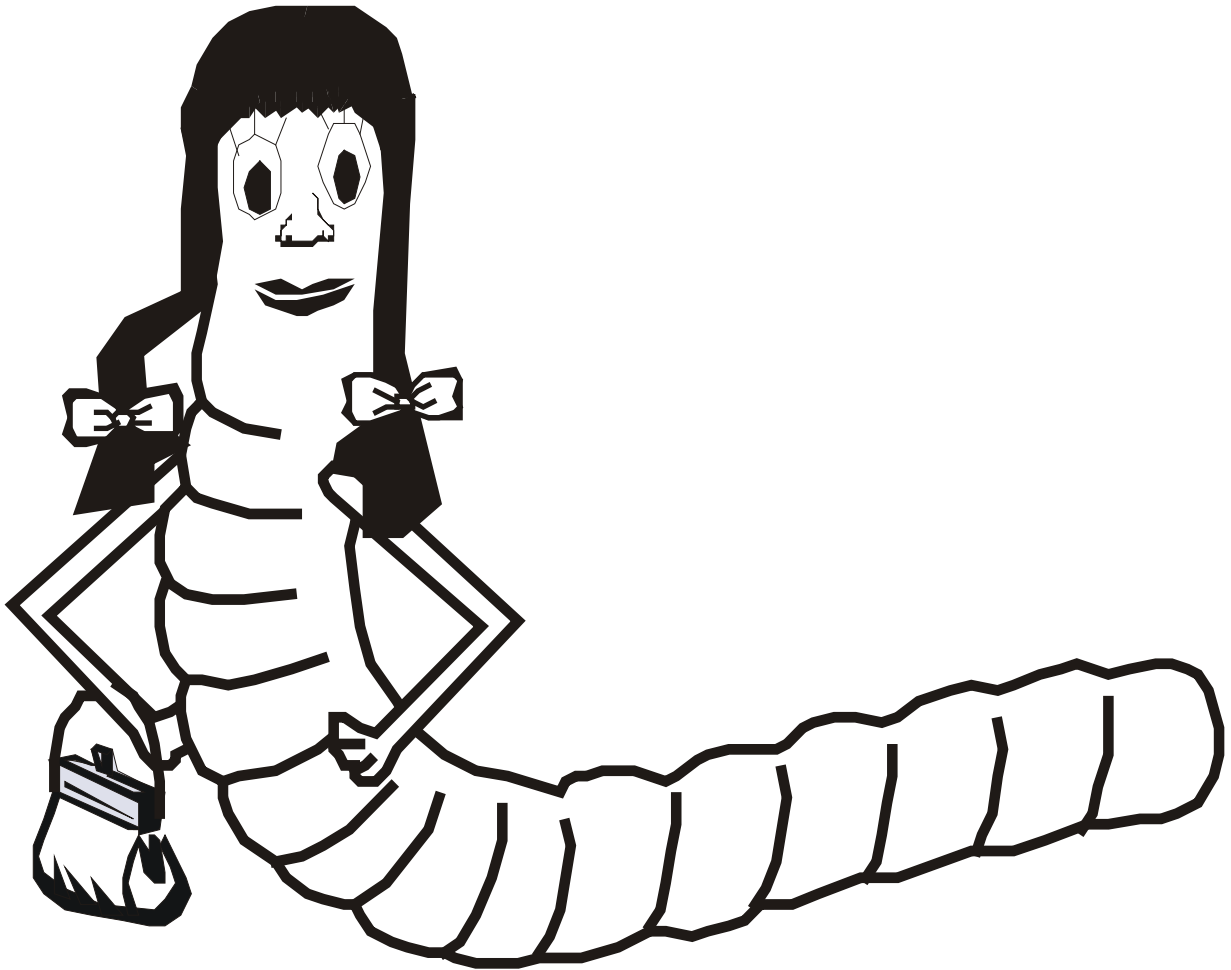


Love,
Ted E. Bear
xxx 000



Introducing:

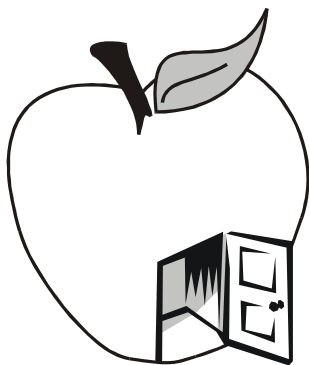
Wormma Jean



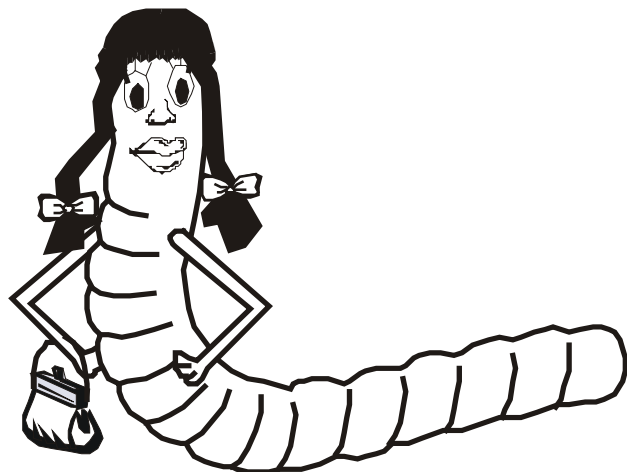
The Magic Apple Our School

Dear Children,

My name is Worma Jean. I live in the Big Apple in your classroom. Ted said that you might let me write to you, too. I love having pen pals. Do you have a pen pal? Do you like writing? I do. I hope that you will write to me today and tell me all about yourselves.



**Love,
Worma Jean
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX**



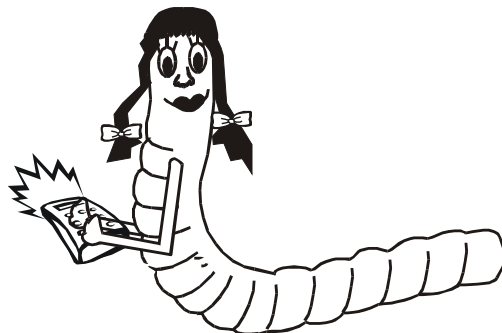
The Magic Apple Our School

Dear Children,

What is the Super Bowl? What happened in the Super Bowl? Who won? What was the score? Did you watch it? Who watched it with you? Please send me a note with your answers.



**Love,
Worma Jean
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX**



The Magic Apple Our School

Dear Children,

I heard that you went on a field trip last week. Where did you go? What did you bring on the field trip? Did any adults come with you besides your teacher? What was your favorite part of the field trip? Please write back and tell me all about your field trip.



**Love,
Worma Jean
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX**

