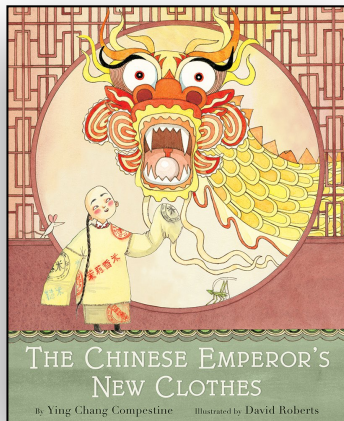




# Cruchley's Collection

Diana Cruchley is an award-winning educator and author, who has taught at elementary and secondary levels. Her ideas are practical, with a range of opportunities for classroom use.

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## THE CHINESE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

YING CHANG COMPESTINE ©2017, ABRAMS BOOKS, 978-1-4187-2542-5

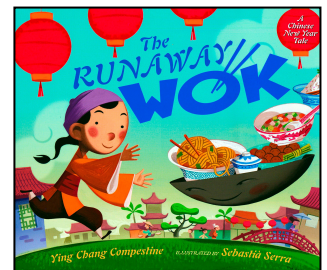
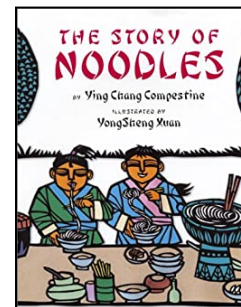
Emperor Ming Da is only nine years old, but he knows his minsters are corrupt. To obtain the money to help his people he convinces his ministers that burlap bags are really magic New Year's clothes. Honest people will see splendour and the dishonest will see burlap sacks. Fooled, they claim to see the perfection of the clothes, until in the New Year's parade a boy calls out that they are wearing burlap sacks.

## TEACHING IDEAS

### The Author

Compestine has had a diverse career including being a food advisor for Martha Stewart. She has also written many children's books including: *The Story of Chopsticks*, *The Story of Kites*, *The Story of Noodles*, *The Runaway Wok*, *The Runaway Rice Cake*, and many more.

There is a terrific link on her website, [yingc.com](http://yingc.com/wordpress/) <http://yingc.com/wordpress/> in which she tells her fascinating life story. [Keynote Lecture- Rising #8A9F86](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUbtwkMN8HU)



### Book Trailer

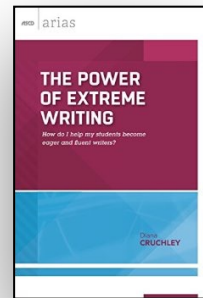
The trailer for the book is a clever one students might enjoy. I always think it would be fun to have students do a quick powerpoint trailer for an upcoming school event. Imagine you are doing a class debate soon, or a Christmas concert, or a field trip. They could prepare a powerpoint trailer for that. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUbtwkMN8HU>

Change it to a mini-slide show and you could include it on your school or class's website.

## Extreme Writing Topics

There should always be three prompts for an Extreme Writing inspiration. Otherwise students waste time making a decision. (See my book **The Power of Extreme Writing**) for a complete description of the process – or [extreme-writing.com](http://extreme-writing.com).

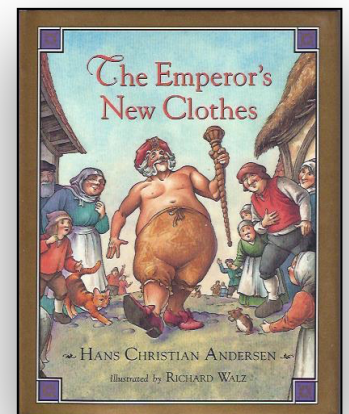
1. Tell about the typical traditions of your family around a holiday - Easter, Canada Day, etc.
2. Tell about tricks and lies in your life - or a story about April Fool's Day
3. Write about your new and/or favourite clothes, or embarrassing clothes you have had to wear.



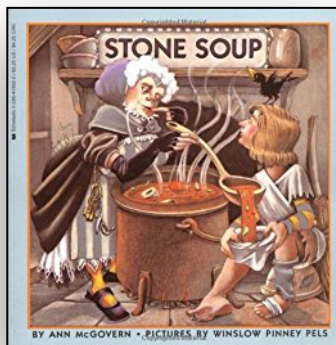
## Comparison

The story is an obvious variation on *The Emperor's New Clothes* as written by Hans Christian Andersen. Read that story to the class, asking them to note as many similarities as they can think of to *The Chinese Emperor's New Clothes*. Tell them you are going to introduce them to the SECRET for writing a “good enough” comparison every time.

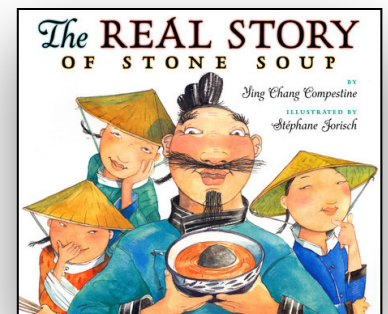
- Step 1: List 3-5 ways they are similar.
- Step 2: List 3 ways they are different?
- Step 3: Start with a basic introduction: *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Hans Christian Andersen and *The Chinese Emperor's New Clothes* by Compestine are variations on the same story.
- Step 4: Write your 3- 5 ways they are the same. Start with your best example, end with your second best example, put the others between.
- Step 5: Start with *However, the two stories have quite a few differences*. Then explain your 3 differences, starting with the strongest, ending with your second strongest, with the other(s) in between.
- Step 6: Write a conclusion - perhaps your opinion of which is the better version and why.
- Step 7: Re-write your first sentence to be more interesting. *Without Hans Christian Andersen's original Emperor's New Clothes there would have been no version set in China.*



## Stone Soup vs The Real Story of Stone Soup



The original *Stone Soup* is a Russian/Ukrainian story. Read it to the class and talk about the moral of the tale - there are several possibilities. Then read the *The Real Story of Stone Soup*, also by Ying Chang Compestine. In her version, the clever nephews working for the lazy uncle on his fishing boat are the ones that persuade him that the soup is made only from stones - by distracting him with chores such as making chopsticks or a bowl while they sneak the real ingredients into the soup. These two stories present a second possibility of for using the simplified model above to write a comparison.



## Vocabulary

The characters fall all over themselves saying how gorgeous the robes are using words such as *magnificent*. Ask students to brainstorm what they could say about something that is magnificent – maybe show them an image of something magnificent. Ask them to imagine having created something themselves and rank the words they have generated from what they would most like someone say about them, to least. You would hope to get words such as *amazing, impressive, majestic, awesome, breathtaking, elaborate, awe-inspiring, spectacular, glorious, or striking*.

## Decorating the Classroom for Chinese New Year

Because Chinese families decorate the house for New Year this might be a good time to create classroom decorations using Chinese calligraphy of good wishes.

Each student receives a square piece of red construction paper. They fleck gold spots on it either with toothbrushes and “gold” paint, or make dots with gold felt pens. They then paint the calligraphy symbol in black to fill the square after penciling it in. These are hung around the room from one of the points rather than square. For a few days, ask students to chant what the symbol stands for. It might help them remember if they were to think about making up a “story” for each one as to why it has that shape. For example, *wealth* could be a house, with a telephone pole inside and money growing out of the ground; *family* could be a person under a roof; and *wisdom* could be a person reading two books.

A large, bold black calligraphic character for 'Wealth' (金) on a white background.

WEALTH

A large, bold black calligraphic character for 'Family' (家) on a white background.

FAMILY

A large, bold black calligraphic character for 'Wisdom' (智) on a white background.

WISDOM

## Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year is based on the lunar calendar. It begins around 23 of the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month, and ends on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the new year.

There are many possible classroom activities to celebrate Chinese New Year including making red envelopes (and placing wishes inside) then trading them, making an illuminated lantern, eating Chinese food with chopsticks, eating fortune cookies, playing dominoes (invented by the Chinese), lighting a joss incense stick (don't stink up the classroom), and forming figures with tangrams.

Below is a summary of the elements of Chinese New Year.

- **Honouring ancestors and household deities.** There is a shrine in the home in front of which you light joss sticks and candles and remember family members who are said to be able to help your family be successful, and be protected.
- **Food.** In the North, which is a wheat culture, the food is dumplings. In the South, which is a rice culture, you eat stick rice cakes. There is a giant feast on New Year's Eve, and it is a reunion night for the entire extended family. This is very much like Thanksgiving where family members commute long distances and even fly home to celebrate together. All of China is "on the move" at this most important holiday.
- **Staying up to midnight.** Shou Sui is the custom of staying up until midnight because the mythical beast, "Year", comes at that time to harm people and animals but is afraid of the colour red, fire, and loud sounds, so you light off firecrackers
- **Fresh Start.** The entire house is cleaned in the few days leading up to New Years, and everyone wears new clothes.
- **Decorations.** For New Year's Eve, you decorate in red and gold colours using lanterns, upside down *fu*, door gods, paper cuttings, etc.
- **Red Envelopes.** The children of the family and anybody who is not married, receives a red envelope with lucky money inside. It is supposed to suppress bad behaviours, keep them healthy, and lead to a long life.
- **Lantern Festival.** the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the new year is the last day of the new year festival, and is celebrated with a lantern festival, where people bring illuminated lanterns they have created to a local park.
- **Lion Dancers, Acrobats, and Dragon Dancing** are all held as auspicious street entertainment to celebrate the New Year's season. Red and gold are predominate colours. Drummers and chimes accompany the dancers. Firecrackers are often included



## It's All About the Rule of Three

A surprisingly balanced story can always be created by establishing problem, writing three episodes, and then a conclusion. Have students look at the structure of this book: Three corrupt ministers who each praise the rice sack robes. Then the Minister of Trade has to bring jewels to have more on his rice sack robe; the Minister of War has to bring gold to buy more silk for his robe that is too tight, and the Minister of Agriculture pays in rice to get his robe to be longer. Finally the child calls out that they are wearing rice sacks,

Ask students to imitate the pattern. Choose a main character (something like a frog is fine), give that character a problem (such as having short legs so he can't jump far), then three attempts at a solution two of which fail and one of which succeeds. Voila...a pretty good story from a very easy "formula" for writing.

## **What About an Alphabet Book?**

An alphabet book on a theme can create a quick writing assignment that helps build student vocabulary. In this case we have tailors who are making clothing, so an alphabet of words connected to sewing is easy for student to construct. You create an alphabet powerpoint with the letter and the images for each word. Students sign up for a letter. After really quick online research, students write an explanation of how this item “works” and a little bit about their thoughts (something amusing, something they learned about the history of it, a time they used it, whether they have it in their house, etc.) Fifty words is fine.

This entire assignment should be quickly done so it doesn't drag. From the beginning of researching, through the writing, proofreading, and editing, to the presentation, it should not take more than 2 periods. One to get the writing and editing done (two if your students are very young), and one to present the alphabet. You can have both a writing mark and an oral presentation mark if you like.

Here's a possible list (so you don't have to create one yourself): awl, button, crochet, darts, embroidery, fabric, gather, hook and eye, iron, join, knit, lace, material, notions, overhand stitch, pinking sheers, quilt, rotary cutter, spool, tape measure, upholstery, velcro, yarn, and that Canadian invention, the zipper.