



## USING THE SIX TRAITS TO THINK LIKE A WRITER WITH THE BOOK

### ROBERT SMALLS SAILS TO FREEDOM

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#### IDEAS

Susan Taylor Brown is the author of this story. Let's take a look at her development of IDEAS in this story.

- Is her writing focused on one MAIN idea?
- What is the main idea of this story?
- Is the main idea supported with interesting details?
- List three details you found most interesting in this story.
- What do you especially like about the way this author wrote this story?
- What might you have done differently had YOU written the story?
- Does Susan Taylor Brown seem like an expert about Robert Smalls?
- How can you tell she has done some research?

#### WORD CHOICE

Does Susan Taylor Brown use everyday words well?

- Pick out a sentence that sounds comfortable to you based on the words she chose to use.
- Which words in the story helped create pictures in your mind when you read or heard this story the first time?
- Does the author use a nice variety of words throughout the story?

#### ORGANIZATION

After rereading the first few sentences of the book, what do you notice about the way the author got your attention and kept you reading? Transition words are helpful to keep a story moving forward. Words like then or after that and other transition words make readers feel as though there is an order to the story that makes sense.

- Look at the beginning words of sentences. See if you can identify at least ten different TRANSITION words the author uses in this story.

Writers need to put stories in an order of events that will make sense to a reader. Usually, when writing nonfiction, stories are told in the order the events happened. Does this story follow that pattern?

Writing that feels finished often times leaves us THINKING about important ideas. What important ideas were you left thinking about when you finished reading about Robert Smalls?

## **VOICE**

Authors put voice into nonfiction writing to give their writing life. How would you describe the VOICE in this story? Is it a serious voice? Is it a humorous voice? Do you think the voice the author uses matches the content of the story?

Using VOICE effectively helps the audience feel connected with the story. Did you connect with this story in some way?

On page 37 the author asks a question right in the middle of the story. "Would the soldiers fire at them?" This puts some voice into the story and makes us wonder what was going to happen next. Have you ever tried using a question in your writing to make your audience think ahead while reading your report or story? Tell us what you did that made your audience think ahead.

## **SENTENCE FLUENCY**

Do the sentences in this story start in many different ways?

- Pick a spot somewhere in the middle of the book. Write down the first word from ten consecutive sentences. Are they the same word? Is there a variety of words used? A variety of words shows fluency!
- Do the sentences in this book vary in length? Pick ten consecutive sentences and count how many words are in each sentence.
- Do you see a variety in the number of words that are used? Are some sentences short and sweet while others are longer?
- Is it easy to read this book? Can the reader move from one sentence to next easily without tripping up on the words?
- Read two or three pages of the story out loud. Does the story flow smoothly?

## **CONVENTIONS**

Look at the book from beginning to end. How do you know the book has been edited all the way through?

- Is each word spelled correctly?
- Pick out five words that the author capitalized. Explain WHY she capitalized these words. Try picking words that are capitalized not found at the beginning of a sentence!
- Find one punctuation mark in the book you are not sure about. With a partner try to figure out why the author needed a punctuation mark in this place and what the punctuation mark tells you to do. Are you supposed to stop? Pause? Read the sentence in a special way, like with excitement or in an asking way?