

Thank you

FOR YOUR
INTEREST IN
CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from Text Structures From Picture Books [Grades 2-8].

[LEARN MORE](#) about this title!

Introduction

Our picture book journey began in Shenzhen, China, where we, Kayla and Stephen, read picture books to our infant daughter, Zinnia. Kayla would check out picture books from our school library, and we'd take turns reading them, doing all the voices, while fighting that new-parent fatigue. *Piggie* and *Elephant* were Zinnia's favorites even when she was a baby.



When Zinnia was old enough to grab a load of books, waddle over to the couch, and command, "Read," we fell even more deeply in love with picture books. If both of your parents are English teachers, you're bound to catch the book bug, and Zinnia was no exception. We read each book to her, the three of us cuddling and being whisked away to far off lands and laughing at silly characters. This is a practice we still enjoy to this day, years later.

Fast forward to my eighth-grade classroom. Students were in need of a reteach on how to infer, and instead of turning to a short story or novel excerpt, I reached for Chris Van Allsburg's picture book, *The Stranger*.

"No one has read to us like this since second grade."

"I can't remember the last time I read a picture book!"

"Is this going to be a new thing, story time with Mr. B?"

I read *The Stranger* to them, pausing when necessary, and it was just like reading to Zinnia. The class was calm, settled, and, miracle of miracles, paying attention. The idea of inferencing clicked—and it only took reading a picture book for about 10 minutes.



Good teachers know that we should read to our students. Even better teachers know that the magic of picture books can enchant any age group. And the best teachers know that picture books can unlock the door to empathy in safe ways that readers of all ages can explore.

The quality of picture books being published today is unprecedented. Some authors and librarians say we are in a new golden age of picture books, with topics ranging from the silly to the serious, the boisterously fun to the quietly poetic. They are rife with teaching opportunities across grade levels and language abilities: analysis, reading and writing response, theme, craft, and so much more—and all in compact, 32-page bundles. They act as a scaffold to all kinds of deeper thinking for the upper grades. They are rich in language, cover a wide range of subjects and experiences, vary in their structures, and are accessible in practically every school and library.

This brings us to a problem as old as teaching itself: “What is a good story for my students to read and discuss?” There are tried and true stories out there, but what worked for one class may not work for the next. Already strapped for time, teachers don’t want to comb through websites and lists and textbooks only to find something that doesn’t match their learning focus. The hunt can be so exhausting.

We’re here to help.

In this book we’ve curated for you lessons using fifty top-notch picture books. Some of these books are classics that you’ll be familiar with; others are new treasures. We’ve crafted lessons for you, to save you some time and energy in the short term, to mentor you through some of the magical ways picture books can launch the learning of key ELAR skills, and to help you feel confident in selecting books and crafting lessons on your own—because we all know there are millions of excellent picture books just waiting for our students.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

For any grade level, you can start with reading a story or with writing. Either way is fine, as one leads to the other.

Let’s say you want to begin with writing:

Begin with a quick write. Show students the quick write prompt and let them write for about 3 minutes. Or use it as a discussion starter or a topic for your morning meeting. Put aside the quick writes and launch into reading and discussing the story.

OR

Begin with a kernel essay. Show students the quick write prompt and the text structure and have them write a kernel essay (demonstrated on the next pages). Put aside the kernel essay and launch into reading and discussing the story. Bonus—they could even look for the parts of the structure as you read.

OR

Begin with the big idea. Show the students a few of the big ideas listed in each lesson and ask them to write what they know about a particular big idea or a memory that they associate with it. Put aside the writing and launch into reading and discussing the story.

Let’s say you want to begin with reading:

Read the story aloud as a whole group, stopping to discuss noticings, make predictions and inferences, and highlight skills or a craft you’ve taught in class.

To move to writing, read the quick write prompt on the lesson page. Invite students to use the text structure to write kernel essays (either to retell the story or craft their own stories). Move on to some of the “Lessons for Going Deeper” in order to highlight author’s craft, analysis (using big ideas and truisms), and even reading response (using the reading response question stems and text structures in the appendix).

Rules you are invited to break:


1. Use every aspect of the lesson.
No way! These lessons are full of great things for you to try, so pick and choose what works for you. Make it yours!
2. Stick to the quick writes and text structure offered on the page.
You don’t have to. Choice is essential for good writing. Some situations require freewriting, without a structure at all.
3. Use all the picture books or read them all in order.
Who cares? Use the ones you want, when you want!
4. Don’t change the words in the text structure boxes.
Keep it real. Change anything about them you need to (verb tense, point of view, their order, anything).

Ideas to embrace (our soap box moments):

1. Writing should be social, and sharing is the main course, not the dessert, in the process.
Don’t skip the sharing.
2. Good teachers write with their students. It is incredibly powerful, as it acts as a model, a community builder, a heart-stitcher. It builds empathy. As teacher and author Rebekah O’Dell tweeted, “Modeling and writing alongside our kids keeps us engaged and curious.”
Write with your kids.
3. Students want to learn and improve, not just repeat exercises. Give them the gift of great stories and wonderful craft. The lessons for going deeper (“Want to Go Deeper?”) and the appendix are full of tools to help with this.
Variety is both refreshing and necessary.
4. Writers should have as much choice as we can figure out how to give them: to choose their topics, their beliefs, their structures, their craft. If all of the essays seem alike, we need to reexamine what we’re asking.
Let writers make choices.
5. Picture books can be paired with any other genre. Feel free to pair any of these books with nonfiction texts, class novels, articles, poems, student writing, or even other picture books.
Don’t put yourself in a box.

A →

1 **The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend**
by Dan Santat



Summary: Beekle lives in the land of imaginary friends. But when he's not picked to become an imaginary friend, he embarks on a journey to the real world to find that special friend.

Why We Love It: Dan Santat is an artist and a storyteller of extraordinary caliber, and Beekle's story is a home run because of its imaginative premise; it is a story full of heart coupled with eye-popping illustrations.

Big Ideas: friendship, waiting, imagination, patience, belonging, fitting in, finding your place, longing, loneliness, journey, going after what you want, dreams, courage, long-awaited friendships

1 → **1 QUICK WRITE.**

- Think of a time you felt really alone and wished for a friend. Write about this for 3 minutes and then set it aside.

2 ← **2 READ.**

Read the picture book *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend* and discuss the story. Discuss parts of the story that stick out to you or that you connect with. What writer's craft moves do you notice the author using? Notice the parts of the story.

3 → **3 CRAFT MOVES TO NOTICE.**

- An echo ending ("... he did the unimaginable.")
- A pitchforked description ("The real world was a strange place. **No kids were** eating cake. **No one stopped** to hear the music. And **everyone needed** naptime.")
- Pitchforks

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE LESSONS

What follows is a snapshot of a lesson—at least one way to do it. Keep in mind all the options detailed previously.

A **Choose your book.** Browse the list in the front of this book for a text structure you'd like to use, a big idea, a craft move, or even a title or author you love. (See page XX.)

1 **Do a quick write.** Use the quick write prompt to get students writing or talking about the topic and/or big idea found in the book. Write for 3 minutes. If the prompt we have provided doesn't quite work for your students, feel free to change it to suit your needs.

2 **Read.** and discuss the story using the questions provided.

3 **Identify and discuss craft moves.** After you read, point out the craft moves the author used. These can be explored and utilized in students' writing later in the "Want to Go Deeper?" section.

4 **Share with students the text structure (harvested from the picture book).** Use the text structure to have students retell the story (orally or in writing) or have them use it to create their own written pieces. They can use it to write a kernel essay or to guide their longer writing.

The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend
by Dan Santat

1

4 → **4 SHARE THE STRUCTURE.**
Show the students the structure found in the picture book. Reread the story, looking for chunks together and watching for how the author moves from one part to the other.

Yearning for a Friend

Why I felt alone	What I decided to do about it	How that didn't help	How I finally found a friend	What we did together
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5 → **5 INVITATION TO WRITE.**
Here are several ways you can get students to write.

- Have students use the text structure to write a kernel essay summary of the story. (Give them between 5 and 10 minutes to do this.)
- Have the students use the text structure to write their own piece in a kernel essay. (Give them between 5 and 10 minutes to do this.)
- See what students come up with. (Give them around 10 minutes.) Here are some possibilities:
 - A page of thoughts in their quick write
 - Examples of the author's craft moves
 - A text structure

Whatever they choose to write, let them know that they can change anything they need to and make it their own.

6 ← **6 SHARE.**
Invite students to try their writing on someone else's ears. This is a crucial step! The sharing is just as important as the writing.

Lesson 1 • The Adventures of Beekle 41

5 Give students time to write. There are several ways you can get students to write. Let students choose one of these:

Summary: Have your students use the text structure to write a kernel essay summarizing the story. (Give them between 5 and 10 minutes to do this.)

OR

Kernel essay: Have your students use the text structure to write their own piece in a kernel essay. (Give them between 5 and 10 minutes to do this.)

OR

Free choice: See what students come up with. (Give them around 10 minutes.) Here are some possibilities:

- A page of thoughts in their quick write
- Examples of the author's craft moves
- A text structure

Reading response: Have your students respond to questions provided using the reading response text structures found in the appendix.

Whatever they choose to write, let students know that they can change anything they need to and make it their own.

6 Let students share what they wrote. Remember, don't skip this step!

1 **Want to Go Deeper?**
Try These Options.

B **OPTION 1: CRAFT CHALLENGE**

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.

OPTION 2: ANALYZE

1. Start with a big idea.

- If you want students to find the big ideas themselves, try asking, *What big ideas do you see in this story that tell you what it's really about?*
- If students need a nudge, try using some of the big ideas from the list in this lesson's introduction and have students provide evidence from the story to support their answers. **Ask:** *How is this story about (big idea)? How does the author explore the big idea of _____? Where in the story do you see that?*

2. Turn the big idea into a truism (thematic statement).

- Once you have identified the big ideas, use one of them to create truisms for this story. Here are some examples from this story:
 - "Sometimes the best friends lie just beyond our imagination."
 - A good friend is worth searching for.
 - Sometimes your best friend isn't who you expected.
 - Sometimes you need to write your own story.
 - Have students write and share their own truisms.

Ask them to prove their truisms by providing evidence from the text. They might imagine a listener saying, "Oh yeah? How do you know? How is that true in the story?"

G **OPTION 3: READING RESPONSE**

Students can compose short or extended responses to demonstrate understanding by answering any of these questions. Look in the appendix to find a list entitled "Basic Reading Response Text Structures" and a list of additional question stems.

Questions for Reading Response

- What is this story really about?
- Why does Beekle decide to leave and start his journey?
- How are Beekle and the girl alike?
- How do Beekle and the girl benefit each other?
- What are the main reasons the author included these sentences? "The real world was a strange place. No kids were eating cake. No one stopped to hear the music. And everyone needed naptime."

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BUT WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

B Try one or all of the options labeled "Want to Go Deeper?"

These lessons will help students to take the writing further. Choose from a writer's craft lesson or an analysis lesson, using big ideas and truisms.

Check out "What Can I Do With Truisms?"—a main section of the online companion—for even MORE ideas about analyzing using truisms.

G Option 3: Reading Response

Students can compose short or extended responses to demonstrate understanding by answering any of these questions.

WHAT IF I WANT TO SHAKE UP THE LESSON ORDER?

While this sequence provides a solid experience weaving writing and reading together, there are plenty of variations that could also prove useful. Here are some things you might try:

1. Quick write
2. Look at the text structure
3. Create an original piece of writing using the text structure
4. Share the picture book
5. Identify some writer's craft (using one of the options for going deeper) and try that same craft in writing

OR

Use the text structure to write a poem, a letter, a skit, an essay, or a speech.

OR

Use the text structure to write a response to the book.

OR

Read the picture book and write a one-sentence summary of each box in the text structure, as a way to summarize or kernelize the story.

OR

Use the question stems and text structures in the appendix to do some reading responses, writing, discussing, and even preparing for a standardized test.

Questions and Text Structures for Constructed Reading Responses

Questions and Answers About Understanding the Reading

GENERIC QUESTION STEMS	TEXT STRUCTURES TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS																						
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What happens in the story? (Retell the story) 2. What is the story mostly about right now? 3. How do you think ____ feels at the beginning and/or end of the story? 4. What is the conflict or problem of the story so far? 5. Who is more ____ (helpful, nicer), ____ (a character) or ____ (another character)? 6. How does ____ change during the story? 7. Why does ____ do/think/say/believe/ want? 8. What's one word you would use to describe ____ (character)? 9. What lesson does ____ learn in the story? 10. What is the moral of the story? 11. In sentence ____, what does the word or phrase ____ suggest? 12. How are ____ and ____ alike/different? 13. Why does ____ become ____ (upset, happy) when ____? 14. What does ____ (character) mean when he/she says ____? 15. What can the reader tell (conclude) from the action in sentence(s) ____? 16. What does ____'s reaction when she/he learns ____ show about her/his character? 	<p>QA12345</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Question</td> <td>Answer</td> <td>How do you know?</td> <td>What does that mean?</td> <td>How else do you know?</td> <td>So ... your answer is ... what?</td> </tr> </table> <p>RACE</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Restate the question</td> <td>Answer</td> <td>Cite evidence from the text</td> <td>Explain what the evidence means</td> </tr> </table> <p>BA-DA-BINGING THE EVIDENCE</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Answer to the question</td> <td>What the character does, says, and/or thinks that proves my answer</td> <td>What that shows</td> </tr> </table> <p>FIGURING OUT THE READING</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>I read the words "____."</td> <td>Which told me ____</td> <td>Then I read "____"</td> <td>Which told me ____</td> <td>And then I knew ____</td> </tr> </table> <p>EXPLAINING A CHANGE</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>How ____ changes in the story</td> <td>At the beginning, ... (with evidence)</td> <td>At the end, ... (with evidence)</td> <td>Another way to describe the change</td> </tr> </table>	Question	Answer	How do you know?	What does that mean?	How else do you know?	So ... your answer is ... what?	Restate the question	Answer	Cite evidence from the text	Explain what the evidence means	Answer to the question	What the character does, says, and/or thinks that proves my answer	What that shows	I read the words "____."	Which told me ____	Then I read "____"	Which told me ____	And then I knew ____	How ____ changes in the story	At the beginning, ... (with evidence)	At the end, ... (with evidence)	Another way to describe the change
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GENERIC QUESTION STEMS	TEXT STRUCTURES TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. How do the actions of ____ and/or ____ support the theme or moral? 18. What causes ____ to realize ____? 19. Why does ____ agree to ____? 20. What is ____'s attitude about ____? 21. What argument does ____ (a character) make to support ____'s (that character's) behavior/opinion? 22. What challenge(s) does ____ face? 23. What does ____ represent in the story? 	

Questions About Author's Choices

GENERIC QUESTION STEMS	TEXT STRUCTURES TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS																			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why is ____ (an event or character) important? 2. Why does the author ____? 3. How does the author show that ____ (character) is ____ (characteristic)? 4. Why did the author write this story? 5. What does the author show us by including a description of ____? 6. How did the author help visualize ____? 7. What is the main reason the author included the sentence(s) ____? 8. Why does the author choose this setting for the story? 9. In sentence ____, the author uses the word(s)/phrase(s) ____ to suggest what? 10. What does the sensory language in the sentence ____ illustrate? 11. How does the description in the sentence(s) ____ affect the reader's understanding of the setting/character? 12. The author includes the information in the sentence(s) ____ to help the reader do what? 13. What is the author's purpose in writing this story? 14. How does the author's description of ____ help the reader understand ____? 15. What effect does the word/phrase ____ have in the sentence ____? 16. How does ____ contribute to the development of the author's ideas? 17. ____ is important in the story because it shows what? 18. How does the setting influence the plot of the story? 19. What is the effect of the author's use of ____? 	<p>RACE</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Restate the question</td> <td>Answer</td> <td>Cite evidence from the text</td> <td>Explain what the evidence means</td> </tr> </table> <p>NOTICING THE AUTHOR'S MOVES</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>I read the words "____."</td> <td>Which told me ____</td> <td>Then I read "____"</td> <td>Which told me ____</td> <td>And then I knew the author did ____ to create ____</td> </tr> </table> <p>THE EFFECT ON A READER</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>When I read "____."</td> <td>It made me feel/ picture/ think ____</td> <td>Which created ____</td> <td>If the author had used a different word/ phrase, such as ____</td> <td>It would have had this effect ____</td> <td>So I think the author was trying to create ____</td> </tr> </table> <p>THE EFFECT OF AN AUTHOR'S CHOICE</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>The author uses (pick one) <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory images <input type="checkbox"/> Figurative language <input type="checkbox"/> Device: ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Something else</td> <td>An example</td> <td>Another example</td> <td>This creates (pick one) <input type="checkbox"/> A mood of ____ <input type="checkbox"/> A feeling of ____ <input type="checkbox"/> A ____ tone <input type="checkbox"/> A character who ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Interest in ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding in ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Something else</td> </tr> </table>	Restate the question	Answer	Cite evidence from the text	Explain what the evidence means	I read the words "____."	Which told me ____	Then I read "____"	Which told me ____	And then I knew the author did ____ to create ____	When I read "____."	It made me feel/ picture/ think ____	Which created ____	If the author had used a different word/ phrase, such as ____	It would have had this effect ____	So I think the author was trying to create ____	The author uses (pick one) <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory images <input type="checkbox"/> Figurative language <input type="checkbox"/> Device: ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Something else	An example	Another example	This creates (pick one) <input type="checkbox"/> A mood of ____ <input type="checkbox"/> A feeling of ____ <input type="checkbox"/> A ____ tone <input type="checkbox"/> A character who ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Interest in ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding in ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Something else
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Basic Reading Response Text Structures

STORY OF MY THINKING			
I used to think ...	But this happened	So now I know ...	
CHARACTER FEELINGS			
____ felt ____	I know because they did ____	I also know because they said ____	What this shows
MAKING A CONNECTION			
When I read ____	I made a connection to (self, text, world)	Because ____	
SUMMARY			
Somebody wanted ____	But ____	So ____	Then ____
THE EFFECT OF AN AUTHOR'S CHOICE			
The author uses (pick one) <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory images <input type="checkbox"/> Figurative language <input type="checkbox"/> Device: ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Something else	An example	Another example	This creates (pick one) <input type="checkbox"/> A mood of ____ <input type="checkbox"/> A feeling of ____ <input type="checkbox"/> A ____ tone <input type="checkbox"/> A character who ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Interest in ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Something else

Timing the Lesson

With students we've worked with, the whole lesson (steps 1-5) takes 40-55 minutes.*

- 3-5 minutes to introduce the prompt and allow students to quick write
- 5-10 minutes to read the story
- 5 minutes to talk about the story
- 5-10 minutes to model the writing
- 10-15 minutes to "go deeper" (truisms, writer's craft, reading response)
- 5-10 minutes to share (in partners and whole class) and wrap up

*The timing depends on the length of the picture book, the age (and needs) of the students, and what activities you choose to do.

Revisions can take one or more sessions or can go on indefinitely.

The "Want to Go Deeper?" options could be done on a separate day or even as the main lesson. The craft lesson could take 15 to 20 minutes, and the analysis lesson could take 40 to 55 minutes, depending on how far you take it.

What Can You Do With All That Great Writing?

Have students share their work out loud! Cover your walls and bulletin boards with kernel essays, stories, poems, and truisms that students have written. Share them with the author of the picture book, and us, of course!

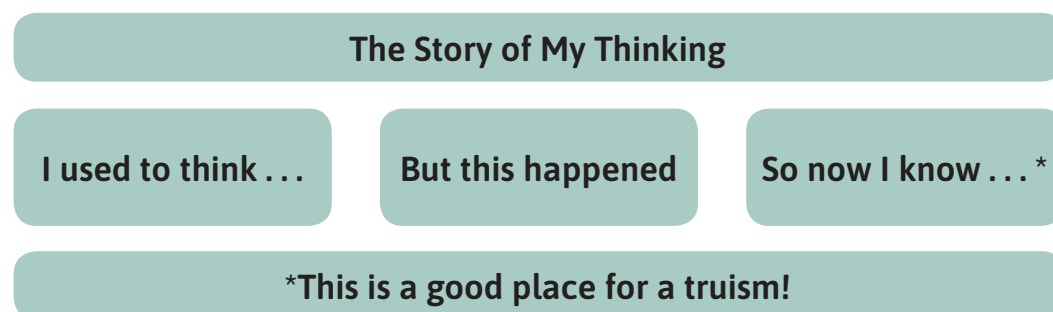
Every lesson includes

- A quick write topic
- Craft moves to notice
- A text structure to use for retelling a story and/or generating new writing
- A craft challenge to try
- Big ideas and truisms for analysis
- Questions for reading response

At a time when the strain and pressures of the world are as intense as ever, everyone needs moments to heal. We hope that you find that these lessons offer hope and spread joy—and inspire every writer in your classroom.

WHAT IS A KERNEL ESSAY?

A writer can write about a topic by using a text structure as a guide, creating one sentence per box. These sentences make a kernel essay. Here's an example using the text structure we call "The Story of My Thinking."



If I (Kayla) wanted to write about a time that my thinking changed, I might write a kernel essay like this:

1. **I used to think** that brussels sprouts were pretty gross.
2. **But then** my husband cooked them with bacon, onions, tomatoes, and a little bit of butter.
3. **So now I know** that brussels sprouts can be absolutely delicious!

Now that the kernel essay is written, the next step is for the writer to read the kernel essay aloud to several listeners to see how that structure worked.

A kernel essay is like a kernel of corn: a small thing packed with possibility. What can you do with a corn kernel? You can *leave* it. You can *pop* it. You can *plant* it. You can *toss* it.

KAYLA
BRISENO

MY TOPIC: BRUSSELS SPROUTS

THE STORY OF MY THINKING

I used
to
think...

But this
happened...

So now
I know...

MY KERNEL ESSAY

1. I used to think that brussels sprouts were pretty gross.
2. But then my husband cooked them with bacon, onions, tomatoes, and a little bit of butter.
3. So now I know that brussels sprouts can be pretty delicious!

I HEARD THIS!

1. Stephen
2. Zinnia B.
3. _____

What can you do with a kernel essay? Writers can treat it just like a kernel of corn. They can leave their essay just like it is; they can “pop” it (i.e., develop it into a full essay by adding details and craft); they can toss it out (if they don’t like the way it sounds); or they can “plant it” to let it grow into something even bigger, like a research project or a book.

The great thing about a kernel essay is that it offers writers a quick way to get thoughts on paper and see if they have something worth developing or if they need to try something else. A student doesn’t have to slog through writing a page or two before knowing whether this writing is on the right track.



Stephen explains what kernel essays are and how to use them



Gretchen walks us through how to write a kernel essay