

I Fooled You

Ten Stories of Tricks, Jokes, and Switcheroos
collected and edited by Johanna Hurwitz

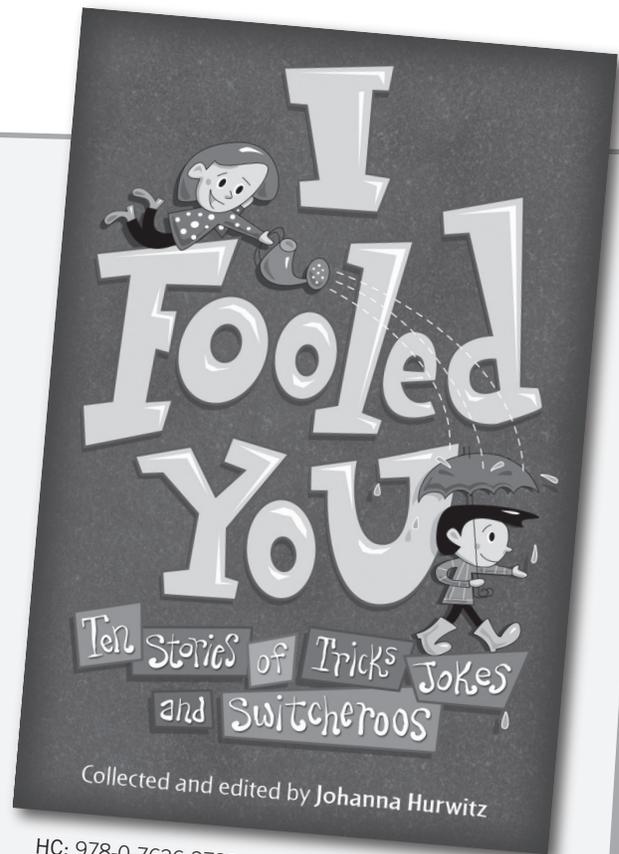
ABOUT THE BOOK

How many different ways can ten leading middle-grade authors tell a story including the line “I fooled you”? Prepare to be surprised!

Ranging from playful to thought-provoking, these stories will inspire students by showing how three simple words can lead in many directions.

READING ALOUD

This book is perfect for reading aloud to your class. The stories are fun and engaging, the premise is sure to appeal to children, and each story and author has unique strengths that can be pointed out to budding writers. As you read aloud, note the specific strengths of the writing in each story (as suggested below). When you’re finished reading, follow up with activities that help your students explore those strengths more closely and use them in their own writing.



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“Tall Tale” BY DOUGLAS FLORIAN

Strength: Strong verbs. Good writers rely on them to bring their sentences to life, especially in poetry.

Activity: Have students list the verbs the author uses to vitalize his outlandish tale.

“Judy Moody, Stink, and the Super-Sneaky Switcheroo” BY MEGAN MCDONALD

Strength: Dialogue. The author knows how to make conversations between family members sound funny but real.

Activity: Reread the section that starts with the words “Where’s Stink?” on page 6 and ends with “This I gotta hear!” on page 8. Divide the class into pairs and have students discuss how the author makes this dialogue sound realistic.

“I’m Not James” BY DAVID A. ADLER

Strength: Character development. A main character in a story (even a short story) must undergo a change in some way.

Activity: Have students list all the details in the story that show how James changes. As a discussion question, ask, “How might you show that a character changes when you write your next story?”

“Big Z, Cammi, and Me” BY CARMELA A. MARTINO

Strength: Details. Good writers use lots of specific details to enhance a story.

Activity: Invite students to reread the first three paragraphs of the story and list all the specific details that the author uses.

“Poetic Justice” BY EVE B. FELDMAN

Strength: Tension. Writers pull readers into a story by posing a question about what will happen to the main character.

Activity: Elicit a class discussion by asking, “What question does ‘Poetic Justice’ ask the reader? What are some other ways that writers build suspense into a story?”

“April Thirty-first” BY JOHANNA HURWITZ

Strength: Creating a realistic and sympathetic character. People aren’t perfect, and a writer’s job is to create characters who may make mistakes but are likeable enough that the reader cares what happens to them.

Activity: Ask students to write about the mistakes that Mimi makes in this story and explain how the author gets us to care about her.

“Sam and Pam” BY MATTHEW HOLM

Strength: Using illustrations to create a narrative.

Activity: Have the class discuss the challenges of telling a wordless story. Ask, “Do you think wordless stories are easier or harder to create than traditional stories, and why?” Invite your students to create their own stories using twenty frames.

“Sweetie Bird” BY BARBARA ANN PORTE

Strength: Evidence. Writers give out small tidbits of information at a time so that the reader is compelled to stay with the story and find out what will happen.

Activity: Have students create a list of the clues that are revealed as the story unfolds.

“The Bridge to Highlandsville” BY MICHELLE KNUDSEN

Strength: Using something familiar in a new way. Some writers love to take an old genre (like a fairy tale) and give it a new spin.

Activity: Ask your students, “What stories or genres would you like to play with?” Invite them to write their own fractured fairy tale or other type of story using a new take on a familiar form.

“The Prince of Humbugs” BY ELLEN KLAGES

Strength: Conclusion. The ending is one of the most important aspects of a story. As the “last bite,” it should leave readers satisfied, yet wishing they could stay inside the story (as this author’s ending does).

Activity: Invite students to use the chart titled “The Prince of Humbugs” to map out their own stories and incorporate a twist at the end.



"THE PRINCE OF HUMBUGS" CHART

DESCRIBE YOUR MAIN CHARACTERS:

WHAT DO THEY WANT? WHY?

IN THE BEGINNING:

IN THE END:



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IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS!

Remind students that good writers try to make their stories seem real. For a great example, reread “Big Z, Cammi, and Me” to the class. Then have students use the graphic organizer to help them brainstorm some details they might use in their own stories. This could be either a pre-writing activity or a revision activity.

CHARACTER DETAILS

SETTING DETAILS

**THINGS YOU
MIGHT SEE**

**THINGS YOU
MIGHT HEAR**

**THINGS YOU
MIGHT SMELL**

**HOW THINGS
FEEL**

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THEMATIC ANTHOLOGY

After students have read *I Fooled You* (or had it read aloud), explain that the class will be creating its own anthology. Brainstorm ideas for a theme with students and write these ideas on the blackboard. (Be sure to accept *all* ideas in the spirit of creative brainstorming.) You can use the following list to spark ideas:

- Holidays • Important days at school • Sports • Birthdays
- Friends • Neighborhood • Play • “I fooled you!”

After a large list covers the board, use the following questions to narrow the list with your students:

Which ideas appeal to both boys and girls?

Which themes might end up with stories that are too much alike?

Narrow the ideas down to a few and allow students to vote on which is their favorite. Now ask each student to write a story inspired by that theme. Both you and the class are likely to be surprised by the variety of stories that emerge. After the stories have been edited and revised, invite parents in for an authors’ celebration. You might want to display the stories in the hallway in time for April Fools’ Day, even if your students did not choose “I Fooled You” as their theme, the book by that title led the way!

READER’S THEATRE

After the class has read *I Fooled You* (or had it read aloud to them), invite children to work in small groups or pairs to create a single-scene reader’s theater script based on one of the book’s stories. (Assign groups and stories at your discretion.) Have students present these short plays to another class.



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