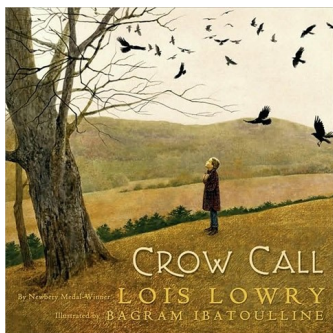


# Writing Trait: **Sentence Fluency**

S.D. #71

Lesson Objective: help students gain awareness of sentence length variety through assessments, then try to use this skill in when writing.



## **Before Reading:**

After looking at the illustration on the front cover, have students turn to a partner and discuss connections they might have to this scene. Have students share these. Again, in a turn and talk fashion, have students discuss descriptive words and phrases that could be used to describe this setting.

## **During Reading:**

As the book is read aloud, listen for the words the author uses to tell her story and the rhythmic flow of sentences.

## **After Reading:**

To establish a baseline of variety in sentence length, and to show off the before and after wow factor of this lesson, have students do a quick write. Keep the topics open, but offer suggestions such as, "You may want to write about a favorite place or spending time with a favorite person. If those topics don't work for you, write about spaghetti or anything at all!" The topic does not matter. Give students a heads-up that for this activity, we will be doing something with sentences, so make sure you add periods and capitals. When students have finished, ask them to count the number of words in each sentence.

Once words are counted, provide them the following rubric and have them do a self assessment. Remind students that this is the starting point and not to worry if this first assessment is on the weak side.

	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Extending</b>
<b>Sentence Fluency</b>	All my sentences are basically the same length.	Most of my sentences are the same length. One or two are different.	I have a mixture of short, medium and long sentences.	My short, medium and long sentences sound great when read aloud!

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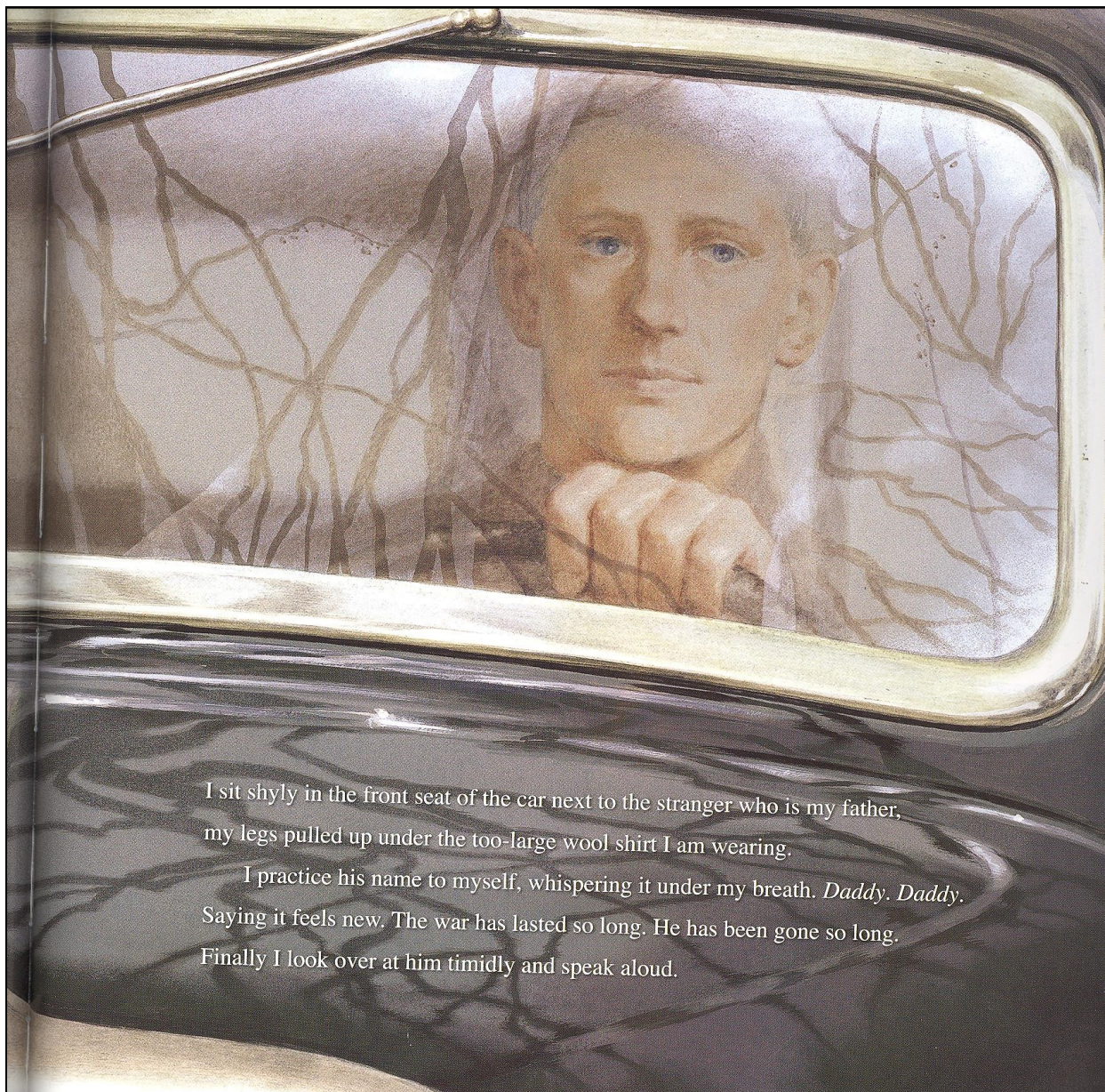
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Once quick writes are assessed, return to Lowry's book. One of the reasons it's such a pleasure to read her book aloud is her artful variety of sentence lengths. On the first page alone, there is tremendous variety of sentence lengths. For example:

First Sentence	<b>31 words</b>
Second	<b>11 words</b>
Third and fourth	have only <b>one word</b> each—a rule breaker, but I'm a huge fan of one word sentences. They add dramatic punch and voice to any piece of writing.
Fifth	<b>4 words</b>
Sixth and seventh	have <b>6 words</b> each

Project or copy the following pages and ask students to count the number of words in each of Lowry's sentences.





I sit shyly in the front seat of the car next to the stranger who is my father,  
my legs pulled up under the too-large wool shirt I am wearing.

I practice his name to myself, whispering it under my breath. *Daddy. Daddy.*  
Saying it feels new. The war has lasted so long. He has been gone so long.  
Finally I look over at him timidly and speak aloud.

I sit shyly in the front seat of the car next to the stranger who is my father, my  
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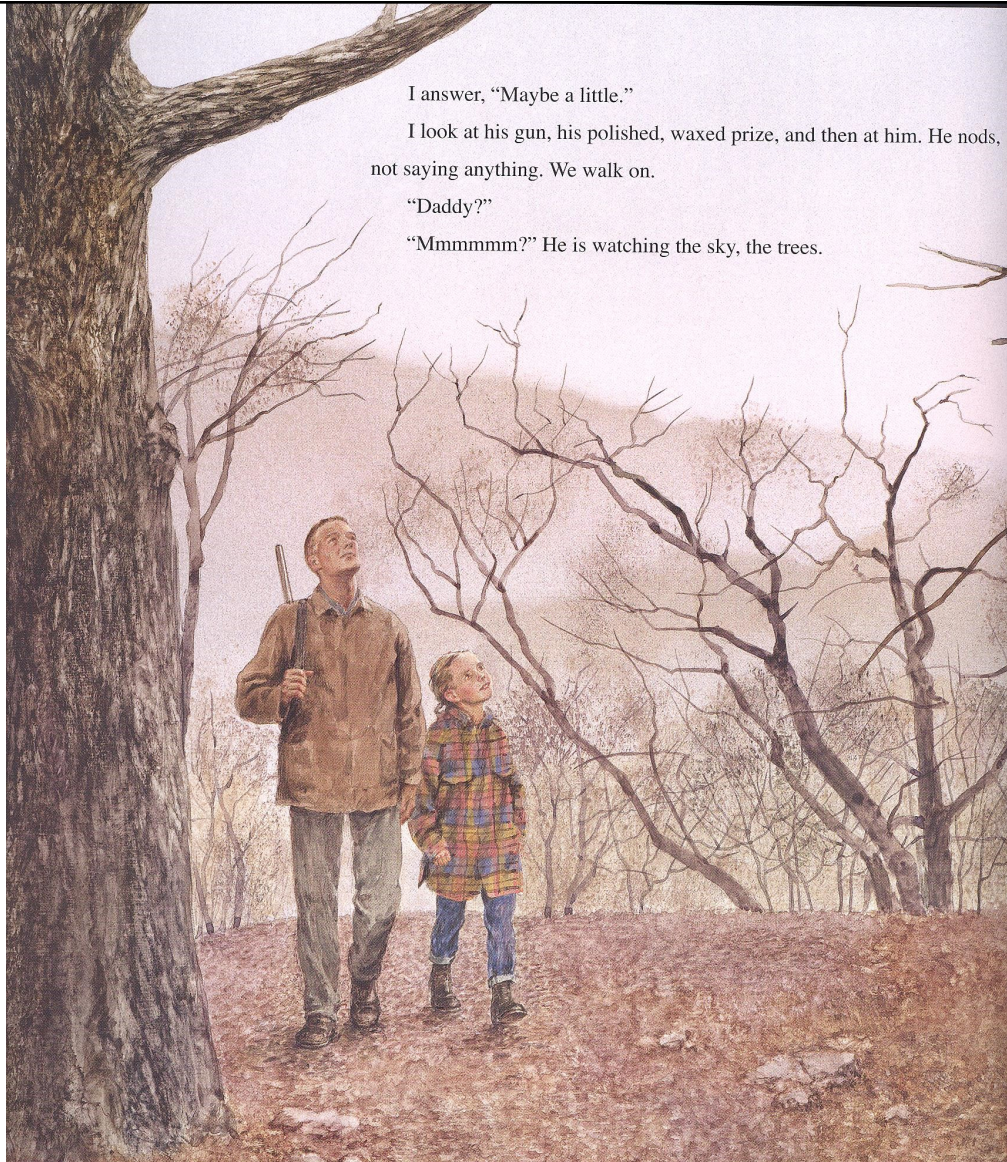




I stamp my feet hard against the ground now and then as my father does. I want to scamper ahead of him like a puppy, kicking the dead leaves and reaching the unknown places first, but there is an uneasy feeling along the edge of my back at the thought of walking in front of someone who is a hunter. The word makes me uneasy. Carefully I stay by his side.

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I answer, "Maybe a little."

I look at his gun, his polished, waxed prize, and then at him. He nods, not saying anything. We walk on.

"Daddy?"

"Mmmmmmm?" He is watching the sky, the trees.

I answer, "Maybe a little."

I look at his gun, his polished, waxed prize, and then at him. He nods, not saying anything. We walk on.

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Having counted the number of words in each of Lowy's sentences and assessed their variation, challenge students to another quick write. When finished, students will be using the same rubric to assess themselves again. Can they create greater variety of sentence lengths with one simple lesson?