

## Lesson for *Once Upon McDonald's Farm*, by Stephen Gammell

This lesson was done with a first grade class, but it could be used at other levels.

I like to use books by Minnesota authors when I can, and at the time I purchased it, we were reading stories from our series about farm animals. Our end of the year writing assessment in first grade is a letter, so I am always looking for good ways to incorporate letter writing.

I also have been learning about Six Traits and how helpful it can be for assessment. It is geared more for end of second grade and up, but I keep trying to adjust it to first grade.

I read the book to the class. They loved it. We discussed what animals are usually found on a farm. We discussed chores that farmers do. We talked about how this farmer might need help. We decided he needed some advice, so we wrote letters of advice to Farmer MacDonald.

They all turned out well. In assessing the letters I looked for letter format, content, and voice. Voice is the one area that teachers often seem to have a hard time explaining, and yet it shows when it is there.

I have included six examples that I enjoyed. They are the ones you want to run to a colleague and share. You can hear the child in the letter. The one that is hard to read is from a child who doesn't always enjoy writing, but you can hear what he wants to get across. Many of the others gave explicit advice to MacDonald, but were lacking voice. One student chose to inform MacDonald where the other animals went- to the jungle, of course!

*Once on MacDonald's Farm*, by Stephen Gammell from Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers. Revised format edition, 2000.

Susan Gulstrand  
Chaska Schools/District 112  
Bluff Creek Elementary  
952-556-664

Jan 24, 2002

Dear Mr. Mc Donald.

I want you to get it right with  
all the animals. Plow with the horse  
and get the eggs from the chicken  
and get the milk from the cow.

Love Ryan



Jan 9<sup>th</sup> 2002

Dear Mr. McDonald

You need some help farming! You don't use  
a baboon, lion, and elephant. You use a horse,  
cow, and a chicken. The horse is for plowing, the  
cow is for milking, and the chicken is for gathering  
eggs.

Your friend,

Melanie



Jan 9 2002

Dear Mr. Mc Donald

I think you can't have a farm  
because you don't know how to  
be a farmer.

Love

Jonathan



Jan. P. 20:  
Dear Mr. Mc Donald

What do I think

Who do you think? I think

Cibin Kenplo WSR Welkenud o  
you got 6 animals

From

Tyler



Jan 11 2002  
Dear Mr. McDonald

I think you need some help on your farm.  
You do not have an elephant or  
a lion or a baboon. The horse  
is to plow, the chicken lays the eggs,  
and the cow gets the milk. I think you  
need to fix that farm of yours.  
And if you're a late sleeper  
don't get a rooster!

Love,

Collie



Jan 10 2002  
Dear Mr. McDonald

I really don't know if you have a wife?  
But I think you could use one to help with  
the chore.

Sincerely,

Jack

