

# Reading Aloud to Spark the Reading-Writing Connection

by Ralph Fletcher

- 1) **Reads books you love.** There's a wonderful chemistry between yourself and any book you love as you read it aloud. Let kids experience that as they hear you read aloud poems or stories that are favorites of yours.
- 2) **If appropriate, talk about the author of the book.** Gary Paulsen's stories aren't a figment of his imagination. Rather, they have roots in his own experiences living in the far north. Talk to your students about how the author's life experiences led them to the place where they could write this particular story.
- 3) **Don't interrupt the reading.** Let students have the fundamental pleasure of the text. Often we make the mistake of fragmenting the reading experience by teaching vocabulary, making prediction, in the middle of the story. A good book or poem has a rhythm to it. As much as possible, stay in that rhythm as you read. You can always go back later to make your teaching points.
- 4) **Leave time for natural response.** We make sense of texts by listening but also by talking. After you read a book, and before teach any craft elements, make time for students to simply react to it by talking. Jerome Harste has written about a "say something" in which student turns to the person next to him or her, and talks about the book. This is particularly important with students who speak English as a second language.