

Writer's Craft Packet**Saturday and Teacakes**

By Lester Laminack

When I was nine or ten years old I couldn't wait for Saturdays.

Every Saturday, I got up early, dressed, and rolled my bicycle out of the garage.

Ever Saturday I coasted down our long steep drive, slowing only enough to make the turn onto Thompson Street, then left onto Bells Mill Road.

Pedal, pedal, pedal, past Mrs. Cofield's house.

Pedal, pedal, pedal, around the horse pasture and up the hill past the cemetery where my grandfather was buried.

Pedal, pedal, pedal, past Mrs. Grace Owens's house and up to Chandler's Phillips 66.

Every Saturday I coasted over the black hose by the gas pump just to make the bells ring. Then I dropped my kickstand and checked the air in my tires.

I stopped at Chandler's for another reason too. That's where I crossed the highway that ran right through the center of our town.

My mother always said, *You stop and look both ways when you get to Chandler's. I don't care if the light is green. I'll hear about it if you don't.*

And I know she would too. In our little town everyone knew everybody . . . and told everything to anyone who would listen. So I always looked both ways.

Pedal, pedal, pedal, across Ross Street. Then left for a slow coast down behind the Bank of Heflin, where I turned right onto Bedwell and *whoosh!* I zoomed downhill as fast I dared.

Pedal . . . pedal . . . p-e-d-a-a-l-l-l – up the next hill and left onto Almon Street. It was a long stretch to Mr. White's. I always stopped there to catch my breath in the shade of the old oak tree.

One more small hill, pedal, pedal, pedal, and then a right onto Gaither Street. Now I could see my grandmother's drive.

One . . .

two . . .

three . . .

four driveways and one last turn to the left. This was where my tires gave up their humming on pavement and began the crunching of gravel. Just before reaching Mammaw's back porch, I slammed on my brakes, sending a shower of tiny pebbles into her flowers.

Every Saturday Mammaw was there, sitting on her old metal glider – *criiick-craaack-criiick-craaack* – sipping a cup of Red Diamond Coffee and waiting. She was waiting for me. No one else. Just me.

Every Saturday Mammaw called out, *Come on into this house. Let's have us a bite to eat.*

In Mammaw's big kitchen, sunlight poured through windows like a waterfall and spilled over the countertop, pooling up on the checkered floor.

Every Saturday she had hot biscuits, sweet butter, and Golden Eagle Syrup waiting on the kitchen table. Every Saturday she poured a little coffee in my cup and filled the rest with milk and two spoonfuls of sugar.

Then before long Mammaw said, *We best clear these dishes away and get at that yard before it gets too hot.*

I followed her out to the back porch. *Let me put a little water on these ferns,* she said. *You go on ahead to the car house.* (That's what Mammaw called the garage.) *I'll be out directly.*

By the time I pulled the old lawn mower from the garage, Mammaw was already in the garden picking plump, ripe tomatoes for our lunch.

Every Saturday I pulled the starter rope again and again while the mower sputtered and spit. Finally, that old mower started and I struggled to push it through the dew-wet grass, leaving row after row of fresh stripes on the lawn.

From time to time the mower choked on mouthfuls of wet grass that clung to the blades and to my bare legs. But by early afternoon the dew-pearls were gone, the grass was mowed and dry, and I was soaked with sweat.

Every Saturday I pushed the mower back into the garage, trudged back to the porch, and flopped onto that old glider – *criiick-craaack-criiick-craaack.*

Mammaw soon appeared with a tall glass of sweet iced tea.

You just cool off and rest a spell. I'm gonna make us a bite to eat.

Before long she came back with two big tomato sandwiches on hamburger buns. Every Saturday I gobbled mine down like a hungry dog, but she nibbled at hers like a bird.

Now them's some good tomatoes, she said. *I know how you like a good tomato sandwich. Don't they taste a whole heap better when you've picked 'em?*

We sat there a while listening to the calls of blue jays and the rhythm of that old glider.

Then Mammaw looked at me sort of sideways and said, *I reckon I know a boy who'd like something sweet to eat.*

And I grinned.

Yes ma'am, I reckon you do.

Come on then, Mammaw said, heading toward the door. *Let's get in this kitchen and see if we can't make us a mess.*

Every Saturday she spread a cloth over the red countertop and scattered a fistful of flour across it, sending a cloud into the air. Then she set out a big bowl.

Mammaw dipped a china teacup into the canister of flour, scooped out a cupful, and skimmed over the top with her finger. Then she dumped the flour into the bowl and added sugar from her black cookie jar. She let the mixture drift through her hand like a sifted sand at the beach.

When it felt right Mammaw said, *Look in the Frigidaire* (that's what she called her refrigerator) *and find me two sticks of Blue Bonnet.*

I pulled open the refrigerator and got out the margarine. I unwrapped the sticks and dropped them into the bowl. I mixed and mashed and mixed and mashed until the ingredients disappeared into a paste. It was smooth and pale yellow and smelled like fresh cotton candy at the county fair.

Mammaw pinched off a little to taste. *I 'spect we need a bit more sugar in this.* She sprinkled sugar until the dough tasted just the way she thought it ought to. *Now get me three eggs,* she said.

I tapped the first egg too hard, making it spatter onto the counter and down the outside of the bowl.

I reckon we can call that half an egg, Mammaw said. *Here, let me show you how to do it. Just tap 'em easy-like and pull the shell apart over the bowl . . . like this. Now you do the next one.*

It was hard work blending those eggs into the mix with a long wooden spoon.

Mammaw pinched another taste. *My goodness, buddy, we didn't put no vanilla in here. Reach up in that cabinet and get me down the bottle of vanilla flavor.*

When the dough tasted just right, Mammaw rolled it out on the flour-dusted cloth. Then I cut out the teacakes with the rim of an old tin can.

We carefully lifted the circles onto a cookie sheet and put them in the oven to bake – 375 degrees for fifteen minutes.

Those fifteen minutes seemed to last forever.

Are they ready, Mammaw?

Not yet, buddy.

Are they ready now, Mammaw?

Not yet, buddy. Let's give 'em a little bit longer.

Are they ready, Mammaw?

I reckon they might be.

She opened the oven door, and the kitchen filled with a smell sweeter than summer gardenias –the smell of teacakes.

Every Saturday I reached for one still steaming on the baking sheet.

You better wait, buddy. They gonna be mighty hot just yet.

We waited until the teacakes were cool enough to lift from the baking sheet. Then we set them off on a plane.

Every Saturday I ate one, and then another, and I looked at Mammaw.

Is that all you want, buddy? You be sure to eat all you want. We made them teacakes just for you.

When I had eaten all I could, she set a few off on a saucer for herself and put the rest on a big sheet of aluminum foil. She folded the edges into a little handle at the top.

Now you put these out there in your bicycle basket so you won't forget 'em.

Every Saturday as I pedaled over the gravel again and out Mammaw's drive, I glanced back over my shoulder.

Every Saturday Mammaw was there, sitting on her old metal glider and waving. She was waving to me. No one else. Just me.

Don't worry, Mammaw. I won't ever forget.

Lesson 1: Repeated Words

Notice the Craft/Name the Craft

What are some of the things you noticed while listening to the story Lester wrote? One thing you might have noticed as you listened is that Lester uses the words "pedal, pedal, pedal" in several places. Let's call that "**repeating a word.**" Did you hear how he repeats the word pedal three times in each place he used it?

Form a Theory

Why does Lester do this in his story? How does it help us to make sense as we listen? Why would he use the words "pedal, pedal, pedal" over and over again?

- Some writers use a line or phrase that recurs throughout the text. A recurring phrase is like rolling a snowball – it gains power and weight as it gets repeated. Such a line can give cohesion (a bond) to a piece of writing and leave the reader with a sense of closure.
- Three words together help us see the boy moving his legs, helps us create an image in our minds.
- It helps us see/draw attention to all he passed along the way
- Lets us know he had to ride a long way.
- Helps us to know the character – he knows the way to Grandmother's house without help.
- Serves as a transition between the different parts of his trip.

Directions: Find the repeated words in the story and circle it in the text of the story.

Lesson 2: Repetition of a Specific Phrase

Notice the Craft/Name the Craft

As we read story aloud, some of you noticed that Lester uses the words "every Saturday" in several places. Let's call that "**repeating a phrase.**" Did you hear how he repeats the phrase "every Saturday" several times throughout the story?

Form a Theory

Let's think together and make a theory about why Lester does this in his story. How does it help us to make sense as we listen? Why would he use the phrase "every Saturday" over and over again?

- Some writers use a line or phrase that recurs throughout the text. A recurring phrase is like rolling a snowball – it gains power and weight as it gets repeated. Such a line can give cohesion (a bond) to a piece of writing and leave the reader with a sense of closure.
- Shows us he made the trip each week all summer long.

- Helps us realize the events are important events in his life.
- Lets us know he and his grandmother have a routine. They depend on each other. They are making a family tradition.
- Ensures we won't miss the importance of the trip. Shows the importance of the time spent with each other.

Directions: Find the repeated phrase(s) in the story and underline them in the text of the story.

Lesson 3: Proper Names (street names, names of neighbors, etc.) / Using Brand Names

Notice the Craft/Name the Craft

While listening to the story Lester wrote, you noticed that he gave the names of streets, neighbors and stores that he passed along the way. Let's call that "**using proper names to make it real.**" You could listen again and write directions to his house and to his grandmother's house.

As you listen to the story, some of you noticed that Lester included the brand names of the coffee, margarine and syrup that his grandmother used in her kitchen. Let's call that "using brand names." Do you remember the brand names of products used in a story you have told?

Form a Theory

Let's take a minute to think about why Lester does this in his story. How does it help us to make sense as we listen? Why would he include so many proper nouns throughout his memoir? Let's talk about that and make a theory.

Using Proper Names

- The names of people, places, and streets help us to see Lester making his way across town.
- Helps us make a map in our minds; know the story is true; know it is an actual place.
- Lets us know he knew the people he passed.
- Lets us know he is safe in a well-known environment
- Lets us know he takes the same route every week; gives a sense of routine and ritual.

Directions: Find the two proper names used in the story and write them on the line.

Using Brand Names

- Let's remember that this is a memoir, a true story about Lester when he was a boy. With that in mind, he may be using the specific brand names just because those are the products his grandmother used in her kitchen.
- Lets us know about the place, area, town, region in the country.
- Specific details that give a sense of truth to the story.

Directions: Find the two brand names used in the story and write them on the line.

Lesson 4: Changing the Text (Italics, Stretching Out the Print, and Stacking Words)

Notice the Craft/Name the Craft

As we move back through the book taking a closer look at the printed language, one thing we saw was that Lester used italics in several places. Italics are used when his mother and grandmother talk and when a sound effect is used. Let's call that "**using italics to show sound.**" Words that show sound are called **onomatopoeia**.

Form a Theory

Now let's think together and make a theory about why he does this in his story. How does it help us as readers? What does it help us to notice?

- Italics are used when his mother and his grandmother have something to say. Perhaps writers can use italics to show speech.
- We notice no quotation marks are used to show conversation – showing it is more a conversation from a memory.
- Shows sounds in his ears and the sound of the glider. Perhaps they show any remembered sound.

Directions: Find the uses of italics to show sound effects and put a box around them. On the line write five examples of onomatopoeia.

Notice the Craft/Name the Craft

As we moved through the book taking a closer look at the printed language, we saw that Lester stretched out a few words using extra spaces and/or adding in letters. Stretching the words is done in only three places, and each time it makes us read the words differently. Let's call that "**stretching a word to change the sound.**"

Form a Theory

Now let's think together and make a theory about why Lester would stretch words in his story. Does it help us as readers? What does it help us to notice? How does it make us read the language differently?

- Lester includes several sets of "pedal, pedal, pedal," but only one set has extra spaces between the words and stretches the last word, pedal (p-e-d-a-a-l-l-l). That last pedal has dashes between each letter and Lester has added two extra a's and two extra l's so in the book it looks like this: "pedal . . . pedal . . . p-e-d-a-a-l-l-l –" When we read the text around that spot, we notice that he has just zoomed down hill and this is the first place Lester has a big hill to pedal up. Perhaps the spacing between the three words and the added ellipses show he is pedaling more slowly. But the last pedal (p-e-d-a-a-l-l-l) in that set is more as if we are straining to make it up the hill.
- A writer stretches the word to change the way we say it when we read it aloud.
- A writer stretches a word to show emphasis, to help us feel excitement, or give the word stress or emotion.

Directions: Find where the author stretched a word to give it emphasis and mark the location with an asterisk (*).

Notice the Craft/Name the Craft

Taking a closer look at the printed language, we saw that Lester stacked the words vertically like a tower instead of writing them in a horizontal line the way we expect to see written language. Let's call this "**stacking words.**" Lester does this in only one spot in the story.

Form a Theory

Now let's try reading it together and see how it sounds when we read it as Lester wrote it. Then we'll try reading it as if he had written it on a horizontal line, like most sentences.

- There is only one place in the whole story where the words are stacked. Each of the words is followed by ellipsis points. That usually means to slow down and hold the sound at the end of the word and signals that more is coming. Perhaps he does this to make us slow down as we read. So, maybe writers stack words to change the pace of our voice in reading.
- Stacked words are like the driveways he passed.
- Shows us things are spaced apart.
- Creates a visual picture with the words on the page.

Directions: Find where the author stacked words and mark the location with two asterisks (**).

Lesson 5: Figurative Language

Notice the Craft/Name the Craft

Many of us heard Lester use imagery as he gave rich description of his memories from those Saturdays. Let's call that "**using imagery to capture the reader's imagination.**" Lester does this using similes and metaphors, and in one or two places he includes personification. **Personification** is when you give inanimate objects human characteristics.

Form a Theory

Now Let's return to a few of those places and listen again. This time think about why Lester uses imagery in his story. How does it help us to make sense as we listen? Why would he use metaphors and similes and personification in his story?

- Lester uses imagery to compare what is there with something else.
- We pause a moment while reading and think about the image.
- Imagery catches our attention and draws our focus.
- Helps us think of ordinary things in a different way.

Directions: Find an example of a simile, metaphor, and personification and write them on the line.

Simile: _____

Metaphor: _____

Personification: _____

