

The Story Gets Bigger

A 7-day Robert Munsch author study: repetition, variation, escalation and the ending that changes the pattern.

7 days

6 books

Author craft

Reading through evidence

The idea

Robert Munsch repeatedly gives readers something they can learn: a sentence, a sequence, an argument, a routine. Then he changes one part, makes the consequence larger, or turns the pattern around at the end. This unit teaches students to notice that machinery. The books are not here because they share a topic; they are here because they let a class watch an author build comic stories from repetition and change.

Essential question

How can a writer repeat the same thing without telling the same story?

The arc

Day 1 · Mud Puddle — Use The Same Steps Every Time to separate the fixed sequence from the changing hiding place.

Day 2 · I Have to Go! — Use Andrew Asks the Question to compare the beginning and ending and explain the reversal.

Day 3 · The Fire Station — Use Two Doors, Almost the Same Words to compare repeated scenes and locate the one meaningful difference.

Day 4 · Pigs — Use Opened It Just A Little to test cause and effect across repeated scenes.

Day 5 · Stephanie's Ponytail — Use The Trap At The End to test a prediction against evidence and explain how repetition prepares the ending.

Day 6 · Boy Soup — Use Two Ways to Read Boy Soup to see how the story turns on two possible readings of one phrase.

Day 7 · Across the books — State and test a Munsch craft rule using evidence from at least three books.

Day 1 · Mud Puddle

If the steps stay the same, how does the story move?

Use The Same Steps Every Time.

Teaching sequence

1. Put the repeated sequence in order: clean clothes -> outside -> mud puddle -> bath.
2. Track the hiding place in each round.
3. Compare what stays fixed with the part that moves, and explain how Jule Ann begins changing what she does in response.

Student product

A sequence-and-change chart: fixed steps on one side, hiding places and Jule Ann's response on the other.

Look for

Students can distinguish a repeated structure from the element that changes inside it.

Why this day belongs

This exact skill lesson makes repetition visible without collapsing into retelling: the order stays fixed while one part moves.

Day 2 · I Have to Go!

Who asks the question at the end, and why does that change anything?

Use Andrew Asks the Question.

Teaching sequence

1. Place the opening question and final question side by side.
2. Identify who asks and who answers at the beginning and at the end.
3. Use the closing sentence to explain what changes after Andrew becomes the asker.

Student product

Beginning/end comparison boxes with one explanation of the reversal.

Look for

Students explain that the words repeat but the roles reverse, and connect that reversal to the ending.

Why this day belongs

The exact lesson turns a repeated sentence into an ending comparison: the pattern changes because Andrew takes over the question.

Day 3 · The Fire Station

If two scenes are almost the same, where should we look for the difference?

Use Two Doors, Almost the Same Words.

Teaching sequence

1. Put the two doorstep speeches side by side.
2. Mark the wording the speeches share.
3. Isolate the sentence that appears only in the second speech, then look at the line immediately before it to explain why it was added.

Student product

Two-column comparison with a final box: "What caused the one difference?"

Look for

Students locate a precise textual difference and connect it to the action that caused it.

Why this day belongs

The exact lesson is built around near-identical speeches whose single added sentence is explained by the line directly before it.

Day 4 · Pigs

The door is open and nothing happens. So what actually starts the stampede?

Use Opened It Just A Little.

Teaching sequence

1. Treat the three door scenes as repeated trials.
2. For each scene, record: open a little -> nothing; open farther -> nothing; Megan shouts -> pigs move.
3. Use the repeated evidence to decide which event actually causes the stampede.

Student product

A three-row evidence table and one cause-and-effect statement using because.

Look for

Students distinguish cause from sequence and justify the causal claim with repeated evidence.

Why this day belongs

The exact lesson uses repeated events as evidence: the shout, not the merely open door, is the event that consistently starts the stampede.

Day 5 · Stephanie's Ponytail

Did Stephanie change her mind, or does the ending support another reading?

Use The Trap At The End.

Teaching sequence

1. Before the final pages, predict what Stephanie's hair will look like.
2. Re-read her announcement and then reveal the ending.
3. Use the ponytail she actually has, together with the class's repeated copying, to evaluate the interpretation that she expected them to copy her announcement.
4. State a possible message about copying and support it with evidence.

Student product

A prediction followed by an evidence-based explanation of the ending.

Look for

Students treat the ending as evidence for an interpretation rather than as proof of an unknowable motive.

Why this day belongs

The exact lesson uses the established copying pattern to prepare a prediction, then asks students to test that prediction against the final pages.

Day 6 · Boy Soup

Can the same two words support two different readings?

Use Two Ways to Read Boy Soup.

Teaching sequence

1. Write “boy soup” alone and collect possible meanings without deciding.
2. Set out the two readings from the lesson: soup made out of boys / soup made by boys.
3. Ask what the words themselves establish and what the reader supplies.
4. Connect Kate’s reading to the change in the plot.

Student product

Two meaning boxes with “who reads it this way?” underneath.

Look for

Students state both readings and explain that the phrase alone does not settle the relationship between the two words.

Why this day belongs

The exact lesson is the clearest example in this set of Munsch making a story turn on how language is read rather than on a repeated event.

Day 7 · Across the six books

Can we write a rule for how a Robert Munsch story works?

Unit synthesis - this is the one newly authored cross-book lesson.

Teaching sequence

1. Return to the six completed lesson products.
2. Ask what each book teaches the reader to expect before it changes something.
3. Have groups test this proposed craft rule against at least three books: teach the reader a pattern -> repeat it -> change one thing -> make the consequence bigger, stranger or more revealing -> use the ending to break, reverse or expose the pattern.
4. Allow exceptions and revisions. Boy Soup, for example, makes its crucial change a change in how the same phrase is read.

Student product

A class Munsch craft rule plus individual evidence from at least three books.

Look for

Students make a cross-text claim and support it with specific structural evidence, not merely say that the books are funny or repetitive.

Why this day belongs

Days 1-6 each use one existing audited skill lesson. Day 7 is the unit’s deliberate synthesis: it asks students to turn six separate observations into an author-craft claim and then test that claim.

Unit close	The Munsch rule
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A useful class claim to test - not a formula every book must obey:

Teach the reader a pattern. Repeat it. Change one thing. Make the result bigger, stranger or more revealing. Then use the ending to break, reverse or expose what the reader has learned.

Culminating response

Choose three Robert Munsch books from the unit. For each one, identify what repeats, what changes, and what the ending does with the pattern. Then decide whether the class rule fits all three. A strong response is allowed to revise the rule if one book does not fit it cleanly.

Assessment

- Names a repeated element precisely (a sequence, sentence, scene, argument, trial or phrase).
- Uses evidence from at least three books.
- Explains the change rather than only listing repeated events.
- Explains what the ending does to the established pattern.
- Makes a cross-text author-craft claim that can be tested against the books.

Short version

Teach Days 1, 4, 5 and 7: The Same Steps Every Time for basic repetition and variation; Opened It Just A Little for repeated evidence and cause; The Trap At The End for prediction and reversal; then the cross-book synthesis. Add Two Ways to Read Boy Soup when you want the author study to include wordplay as well as plot structure.