

THE WRITING ACADEMY®, LLC
LEARNING LITERATURE



Penny Knows Just Why

*(Answering a prompt's clue word
with strong, true reasons)*

Enjoy the companion song:
"Reasons or Ways"

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Penny had her thesis. Right there at the top of her page it sat, proud as could be: *Recess helps kids learn better*. She even had her dog Champ curled at her feet for good luck. Then Mrs. Ray said, "Now, class, back it up with your **reasons**," and Penny's pencil stopped cold. Her thesis felt suddenly small and alone on the great white page.

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"Reasons?" Penny whispered. "How do I even *know* what to write?" She chewed the end of her pencil. She had said what she thought, so wasn't that enough? Champ thumped his tail, though even Champ did not have the answer.

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Mrs. Ray pulled up a chair. "Penny, the prompt already told you what kind of answer it wants. Do you remember the little **clue word** you circled, the one shaped like a triangle?" Penny looked. There it was, hugging the middle of the prompt: **why**. "I remember," she said. "*Explain **why** recess is important.*"

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"That word is your whole map," said Mrs. Ray. "When a prompt asks **WHY**, it is asking for **REASONS**. If it had asked **HOW**, it would want **WAYS**. Yours says *why*, so your job is to give reasons." Penny sat up. "Why means reasons," she repeated, tasting the words. "So I just have to tell... why."

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"Exactly," Mrs. Ray smiled. "A reason answers one small, mighty question: *Why is that true?* Here's the secret to making your answer truly *sound* like a reason. You do one of two things. Either you use the word **reason** right in your sentence, or you join your ideas with the word **because**. Do one of those, and any reader knows you're answering the *why*." Then she leaned in close. "Whenever your mind goes blank, whisper the little chant from the song: *Hear ye! Hear ye! Reasons are near me!* It reminds you the reasons are already inside you, waiting for you to call them out."

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Penny took a breath and whispered it: "Hear ye! Hear ye! Reasons are near me!" A reason came to her at once. She wrote: "**One reason is that** recess makes kids' bodies stronger, **because** when they run and jump and climb, their hearts grow strong and healthy." There it was, the word *reason* and the word *because*, both in one sentence. Solid as a brick.

"That's one," said Mrs. Ray. "Now hunt for another." Penny whispered her chant again, "Hear ye! Hear ye! Reasons are near me!", and out it came. She wrote: "**Another reason is** that a tired brain needs a rest, **because** after a break, kids come back ready to listen and learn." Two strong reasons stood now, and her thesis had stopped wobbling.

"One more, Penny. A table stands best on three." Penny closed her eyes, pictured the playground, and knew just what to say. She wrote: "**The last reason is** that recess teaches kids to share, take turns, and make new friends." Three reasons stood tall now, each one starting strong, each one answering the question *why*.

Penny read her reasons back, saying each starter out loud: *One reason is that... Another reason is... The last reason is...* Then she grinned. Every single one used the word *reason* or the word *because*, so anyone could tell she was answering the *why*. Her lonely little thesis wasn't lonely anymore. It sat on top like a roof, held up by three sturdy reasons.

Penny hummed the song that had shown her the way:

WHY, WHY, WHY? Give me reasons, tell me why!

HOW, HOW, HOW? Show the ways, tell me how!

Spot the clue! Know what to do!

WHY means REASONS! HOW means WAYS!

Hear ye! Hear ye! Reasons are near me!

Now I know just what to say!

From that day on, Penny read every prompt like a detective. If she spotted **why**, she thought, *reasons!* If she spotted **how**, she thought, *ways!* The little clue word always told her exactly what kind of answer to bring.

Now **you** know the secret too. When a prompt asks **why**, give reasons. Say the word *reason*, or use the word *because*, and start each one strong: *One reason is that... Another reason is... The last reason is...* (Someday Penny would even learn to make these signal phrases fancier using a **Thinking Levels Chart**, but that is a story for another book.)

So the next time a prompt asks you *why*, do not freeze the way Penny did at first. Sit up tall, whisper the words **"Hear ye! Hear ye! Reasons are near me!"** and let your reasons march right out: *One reason is that... Another reason is... The last reason is...* Your very best thinking has been waiting inside you all along.

THE END

♪ *Now sing it together: "Reasons or Ways"*

Book 2 of Penny's Learning Literature. One continuous story: Penny is writing her single recess essay part by part. In Book 1 she built her thesis (*Recess helps kids learn better*); here she backs it up with reasons. Real girl, dog Champ, teacher Mrs. Ray; warm prose with light rhyme plus the song's chorus woven in (Page 10); teaches the exact skill (a prompt's clue word tells you what to give; WHY calls for reasons, HOW calls for ways; a reason answers "why is that true?"). **Rev. 3 (per Randi):** signal-marker starters "One reason is that... / Another reason is... / The last reason is..."; the two ways to answer a WHY prompt (lexical overlap on "reason," or a "because" complex sentence); "Hear ye! Hear ye! Reasons are near me!" as Penny's stuck-cue; a nod that signal phrases can later be raised with a Thinking Levels Chart (future book). Also: all in-sentence dashes removed, no sentence begins with And/But/Because, and a unique closing line. Gold "kids' line" cover.