

Radical Revision!

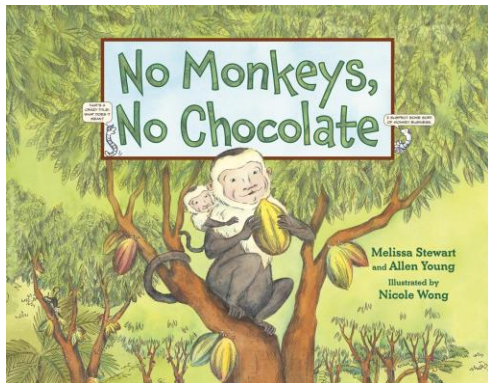


During school visits, I tell students that one of the most important steps of my writing process is called Let It Chill Out. This means that after I finish a rough draft, I take a break for as long as possible—two days, two weeks, two months.

I'm no different from young writers. I'm relieved when I finish a rough draft, and most of the time, I think it's pretty good just the way it is. In fact, maybe it doesn't need revision at all. In my mind, I'm thinking "It's good enough. It's good enough. It's good enough."

If I try to dive right into revision, I just won't be able to see what needs to be improved. But if I step away from the manuscript, and come back later with a more open mind, it will much easier to identify ways that I can make the piece better.

That's why I recommend that students let their writing chill out during lunch and recess or over the weekend or even during a school break.



Recently, as teachers at Kennedy Elementary School in Billerica, MA listened to me describe the 10-year process of revising *No Monkeys, No Chocolate*, they hatched a plan for a project I love.

This year, they're asking first graders to write a piece of nonfiction. Next year, when the students are in second grade, teachers will share the *No Monkeys, No Chocolate* Revision Timeline on my website and ask the children to revise the piece they wrote in first grade.

Good idea, right? But it gets even better. Both drafts will be placed in a folder, and the students will revise the piece again in third, fourth, and fifth grade.

Imagine how different the final piece will be from the original. It will allow children to see tangible evidence of their growth as writers and give them a true sense of how long it can take to write a book.