

TIMPANOGOS & STORYTELLING

Lesson 2: Developing Your Story

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you.”

Maya Angelou

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

Information for the teacher: Before attempting this lesson, Teacher has ideally already taught Lesson 1. Whenever possible, students have attended the storytelling concert at their school or have attended the Timpanogos Storytelling Festival.

Note: A portion of this lesson is adapted from Donald Davis’ teaching design for creating stories from *Make It, Tell It, Write It*. A copy of the DVD was given to your school as part of the program and is available if you wish to do further research.

There is suggested dialogue included in this lesson in parentheses. Use these words or you own words, whichever are most comfortable and effective.

Grade Level: 9-12

Instructional Time: Flexible, depending on incorporation of activities.

Materials:

- Corresponding handout.

Resources: See near end of this document

Objectives:

Students will identify conflict (problem) characters (people), setting (place), and basic story structure (progress) within the personal stories they identified in Lesson 1.

STORYTELLING

“Despite [storytelling’s] significant role in our human lives, it seems that storytelling rarely finds its way into classrooms as official curriculum. Yet, as a natural form of communication, storytelling supports the development of oral language—a foundation for all literacy learning—by strengthening the ability to speak from the imagination. Furthermore, it has the potential to more directly support both reading and writing.”

(Coskie, Trudel, and Vohls; “Creating Community through Storytelling,” *Talking Points*, 2010, pg. 2)

CORE CONCEPTS

Help your students recognize that good storytelling requires essential story elements.

TEACHING PROMPTS

PROMPT 1: STORY STRUCTURE

Procedure:

1. Teacher instructs students to pull out the handouts from Lesson 1 and hands out the new Lesson 2 handout. ("Today we are going to think about these Story elements.: 1. People, 2. Places, 3. Problem, and 4. Progress." These aren't the only words we can use to describe a story, we could use character, setting, plot, conflict, rising action, climax, resolution, etc. However, we are going to use these basic elements in order to explore and flesh out the story prompt you started the other day.)
 - [Note: These terms were chosen because students find them less intimidating than more abstract terms are that often used when discussing literature. For example, students often relate to describing people in their lives more than character—which is usually someone they view as only being in a book or Disneyland. Feel free to use the terms that best fit the needs of your class.]
2. Teacher directs students to the Lesson 1 handout, and then explains that today they will explore their own story in more detail on the Lesson 2 handout.
3. Teacher directs students to write the names or draw the people that inhabit their story under the people heading. Teacher instructs students to only include characters that are essential to the story.
 - [Note: One problem students have is trying to tell too much in the limited time they have. Asking them to only include essential characters will allow them to focus on introducing their listener to them, instead of nonessential bystanders that may not be needed to move the story forward.]
4. Teacher directs students to write all the places where the story happens on the left side of the rectangle. Teacher asks many questions to make sure students are being very specific about the locations and the qualities of them. (Under places write the places where your story happened. Where was it? Was it inside or outside? What room was it in? What was the weather or the season? Did it also happen somewhere else?)

SAMPLE STORY LIST

ELEMENTS OF A STORY

PEOPLE

(CHARACTERS—WHO IS ESSENTIAL IN THE STORY?)

PLACE (SETTING—WHERE DOES THE STORY TAKE PLACE?)

PROBLEM

(PLOT—WHAT NEEDS TO BE SOLVED OR WHAT HAPPENS?)

PROGRESS

(RESOLUTION—WHAT DID EVERYONE LEARN?)

CORE CONCEPTS

Help your students recognize that good storytelling requires essential story elements.

TEACHING PROMPTS

PROMPT 2: STRUCTURE CONTINUED

Procedure: (T=Teacher, S=Students)

5. Teacher directs students to write what the main character's problem or trouble is on the handout. ("What is the problem in your story? What needs to be solved or what happens—write words or sentences in that spot to help remember what is important.")
6. Teacher directs students to write on the bottom edge of the handout what progress was made, or what the characters in this story learned. ("What progress or lessons do people learn in your story? Don't worry, it doesn't have to be really deep, it can be as simple as 'and that is when my dad learned never to leave the baby alone' or 'that is when, etc.'")
7. Teacher instructs students to draw a picture of their story in the box in the middle of the page.
 - [Note: Drawing a picture of their student allows the students an opportunity to visualize the experience they are trying to share. It often results in them remembering additional details they want to include.]
8. As students finish, teacher directs students to split up into pairs or small groups to share their stories with each other.
9. Optional Discussion Point: Effective Storytelling Traits
 - Teacher brings students back together.
 - Teacher asks students what performance traits they recognize in the stories that they have heard or saw by professional storytellers. ("What makes their stories so engaging? Why do you think audiences around the country are drawn to their performances? Let's list some of these traits on the board.") [Note: A sample list is available here.]
 - Teacher instructs students to identify one or two of those traits they would like to focus on as they share their story with a partner.
 - Teacher instructs students to choose a new partner and share their story again, this time incorporating their chosen storytelling traits while they tell the story.

EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING TRAITS

BODY LANGUAGE
ENERGY
VOICES (CHARACTERS)
PACING
(NOT TOO FAST OR SLOW)
PAUSING
EYE CONTACT
GESTURES
SOUND EFFECTS

ASSESSMENT

- How many students told deeper richer stories that reflected the story analysis work?
- Check handouts to see if details have been added in the appropriate spaces, and if the mid-section was completed correctly.

WRAP UP

Teacher invites students back to their seats. Teacher invites a few students to tell their stories. Depending on the level of comfortable students have in sharing and how often the same student volunteer to share, Teacher asks if anyone would like to nominate their partner to share with the group. [Note: This is a great way for classmates to learn more about each other. People are usually kinder and more compassionate when they know more about the struggles, history, and even hopes of another person.] At least one student tells their story.

Teacher explains the intended outcome of the exercise. It may be simply to have created the story they shared. Other classes choose to have a storytelling festival in class in which everyone tells their story. Sometimes teachers use the exercise to then have students transfer their stories onto paper and work them into personal narrative writing exercise.

RESOURCES

The school was given a copy of *Make It, Tell It, Write It* as part of the storyteller visit. The DVD has sections with master storyteller Donald Davis performing stories, working with students, and talking with teachers. The story section is an excellent way to model good storytelling.

The *Storytelling in the Classroom* CD given to each teacher during the school visit has a variety of stories from professional storytellers. The Donald Davis (“The Ducktail”) and Kim Weitkamp (“The Old Stained Man”) stories both include a personal narrative component.

As noted in Lesson 1, there are also great examples of professional storytellers using personal experiences as the basis for larger stories online, here are a few examples you can find on YouTube:

“My Father the Whiz: A Cuban Refugee’s Response to Jim Crow” by Carmen Agra Deedy (Click [here](#) for the link.)

“The Orange” by Joel ben Izzy (Click [here](#) for the link.)

“The Lap” by Kim Wietkamp (Click [here](#) for the link.)

Many of these storytellers have presented on the art of storytelling and why storytelling is important, here are a few of those presentations:

“Call of Story” by BYU T.V.—PBS Documentary on Storytelling (Click [here](#) for the streaming link.)

“Once Upon a Time, My Mother...” by Carmen Agra Deedy—TED Talks (Click [here](#) for the streaming link.)

“What’s a Story and Why Teachers Should Care” by Syd Lieberman—TEDx Talks (Click [here](#) for the streaming link.)

“How the Story Transforms the Teller” by Donald Davis—TEDx Talks (Click [here](#) for the streaming link.)