

Telling Stories

Materials: Send home "telling homework" letter (page 2).

CONNECTION

I ask students if they ever got so interested in a story or a television show that they leaned in to make sure they heard everything. Then, I connect that idea of "leaning in" to story telling.

TEACH

I say something like, I will tell a story for the fun of it from my topic list. I'd like you to see if there is a *lean-in moment* in my story. After the story, draw the students' attention to that moment. Ask them what made that an interesting spot in your story. *(If I didn't tell a story with an interesting moment, I can model asking students what they wanted to know that you left out. Then, I can retell the story with the new details. So, not to worry. If my story flops, I just model how to make it better... which is what they're going to do.)*
(However, I'm REAL worried, I could choose a short narrative to share – one that has great action sequence in the middle.)

Ask the kids to help you make a list of what made that moment special. Lead them to understand that good stories have these characteristics is common (usually):

1. Short beginning.
2. Lots of action.
3. Drawn out action.
4. Clues along the way.
5. Ending that finishes off the story in a satisfying way.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Ask students who can't wait to tell a story to raise their hands. Choose 4 or 5. Assign the storytellers to a corner or space in the room. Send 3 or 4 other students along with the storytellers to be listeners.

Ask the storytellers to watch how people react to their stories. The student tells his/her story to her small group. The teacher sits with one group (but watches others). The teacher takes notes on what happens in the group she's with. *(I have found that I don't need to be with all groups. I need to watch one closely and then use what I observe in the closure discussion at the end. If no one has anything to say in closure then I can say, well, let me tell you what I saw.)*

CLOSURE

Bring the students back to the gathering space to discuss:

- If anyone heard a lean-in moment.
- If any one changed (revised) his/her story because of the way someone reacted to the story.
- I share what I observed.

Help students see that writers have that same sense of audience. Even though they're writing they should pretend they are "telling."

Homework

Ask the students to tell stories for homework. Ask them to watch how people react to their stories. Ask students to revise their stories and tell them again. Send home a letter explaining story-telling homework (see next page for sample).

Dear Parents,

Sometimes children need practice telling stories. For homework this week, we are concentrating on telling stories. As you listen to your child tell you a story, think of questions that you might ask that will help them make the story better.

Ask questions like...

1. And how did it end?
2. Exactly how did she... (get hurt, fall of the bicycle, make the pie, etc.)
3. I'm not clear about what happened when... Tell me that part again.
4. What happened between... and...?
5. How did he look when...?
6. Did ... happen before or after...?

Talk through the parts you don't understand and then encourage your child to tell the story again without the missing parts this time.

To get writing homework credit, simply sign your child's notebook. He/she also needs to record the date and the title of the story.

Thank you!

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Thank you!

How to Tell a Story; How to Help the Storyteller

PARTNER SHARE: Today I'd like you to tell a story to your partner that you've been working on OR tell you partner what you experienced last night as you tried to tell others a story.

CONNECTION--- Whenever you are stuck for something to write about, you can turn to your Topic Page at the back of your WN and write about a story idea you listed there when it happened! You should take the story idea you wrote there and tell the story to 3 different people to see if it is interesting, to see if you left anything out, to see if you can embellish it in any way.

TEACHING POINT

I say: Today we are going to continue to work on telling stories as a way of thinking of our own stories. We will also learn to be even better responders!

TEACHING

(MODEL how to tell a story and how to help the storyteller. I like to gather students on the rug.)

1. I tell the class that after a storyteller tells the story, the students will take turns complimenting the speaker **BY USING THE WORDS THE STORYTELLER USED**.
2. I share these examples the students may have told the teacher. NOTICE there are 2 parts. (1) The words the speaker used and (2) the compliment – why the listener liked the words. (The teacher could even write these out on the board so students can see both parts.)
 - I love when you said *he sailed out into the air*. I got a picture in my head when you said that.
 - I noticed that you told me the floor was cement and I was already worried that something bad was going to happen. That was smart.
 - You made me laugh when you said that Tom was in a heap on the floor and he said, "Get mom."
 - I didn't expect my teacher to say, go ahead fool, to her brother. I like surprises in stories.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

3. I ask one child to tell a story to the class. (If no one volunteers, have a story ready to tell.)
Remind the storyteller to watch the audience to see if there is a "lean-in moment."
4. When the storyteller is done, I ask the class to compliment the speaker with specific praise, **USING THE WORDS THE STORYTELLER USED AND TRYING TO THINK ABOUT WHY THOSE WORDS WERE EFFECTIVE**.
(If they can't tell you why they liked what they did, then you can say something like, "Oh I liked that, too. I like surprises in stories. Do you think that's why you like that part? Try to help them name why they liked what they did.")

TEACHING

5. I tell the class, now it's time to learn how to ask effective questions. Share these questions students might have asked about the story I told:
 1. I wasn't clear whether your brother was younger than you or older than you.
 2. Did your brother always dare you to do things or was this the first time?

MATERIALS:

1. Have a story ready to tell.
2. Compliments for Mrs. Haag's story written on the board or chart paper. (Optional)

SUMMARY OF STEPS

1. Tell the class they will practice complimenting a storyteller today.
2. Share examples of compliments from Mrs. Haag's story.
3. Ask for a volunteer.
4. Practice complimenting. Help students turn their comments into appropriate compliments.
5. Learn how to ask questions by sharing examples from Mrs. Haag's story.
6. Explain ineffective questions.
7. Practice asking questions on the volunteer's story.
8. Explain that the answers to the questions could be worked into the next telling of the story.
9. Repeat process.

3. How did you brother hit the wall at the bottom? Where were the stairs and where was the wall?
6. I tell the class, questions that improve the story like, "What color were the scarves in the story?" and "Did your brother see the doctor again?" and "How did you get the idea for this story?" ARE QUESTIONS but they don't help the reader make a better story. They are off the writer's topic: her daring brother dares his sister to do things but pays for it in the end.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

7. Asking questions is a difficult responsibility and the students will get better with practice. So have them practice asking questions and praise them when their questions are good or explain why their questions are ineffective. (You may have to ask the storyteller to tell the story again in order to ask good questions.) ALSO --- my students used to write their compliments and questions in their notebooks while listening so they could remember what to say. This may be the day to share that or you might want to add that another day.
8. Explain that the answers to the questions the listeners ask might be worked into the telling of the story the second time if the author sees the value in adding the information.
9. Ask for another volunteer and repeat the steps, if time --- maybe this time with their WN.

LINK --- Return to seats to record important ideas from today's lesson. Make connection to how what was learned today could be used in PARTNER SHARE.

- (1) Compliment by repeating the writer's words and telling WHY you like them.
- (2) Ask questions that will help the writer improve the story.

HOMEWORK

Either tell a story or write a story.

Continue to build your topic list at the back of your notebook. As you notice things, write a reminder note on the topic page!

Freewrite to Generate Topics

CONNECTION

Writers need ideas to write about. Let's remember what strategies we have for thinking of story ideas or topics when you have time to write by making a list of Strategies to Come Up With Story Ideas:

1. Think/List/Sketch/Write about people, objects or places
2. Looking around you and writing about what you see and hear.
3. Listening to stories others tell and retelling them. (Ideas can come from books, movies, shows as well.)
4. Keeping a story list --- when you're watching TV, reading a book, playing --- whenever an idea strikes you.
5. Continuing stories from days before.

TEACHING POINT

Another idea that I am going to teach you today is Freewriting. Freewriting never fails. Let's add that to our list as (6).

Tell the class that freewriting is like going up in the attic and seeing what boxes are up there, opening the boxes, looking through everything and making a list. Instead, they are going to walk up into their minds and find out what's on their minds today and write it down. What are they thinking about?

TEACHING

1. I am going to model freewriting for you and then you will get a chance to try it on your own. Remember, I'm trying to FIND a topic I want to write about.
2. I find the next clean page in my WN.
3. I get a sharpened pencil or a pen that won't stop writing in the middle of this exercise.
4. I need someone to time me because I am going to write for 3 minutes without stopping.
5. I will not pick up my pencil from the paper. I will force myself to write the whole time, writing down everything that comes to me even if it seems dumb. It's like walking up into your brain with a broom and sweeping out what's up there. I want to see what's on my mind today.
6. Sometimes when I can't think of something to say I will write the word, "write or fight the white" until something comes to me. But I don't need to use that very much.
7. Model at the overhead. (See sample next page so that you can write your own in front of the class.)
8. Now, the point is to go back and circle everything that might become a topic because I want to write about small moments, not huge ideas. Small moments make better stories. Circle all the possible stories in your freewriting.
9. OPTIONAL: Now, I write the story ideas I like on my topic page.

Use an overhead or DocCam to model your freewriting. Ask a student to watch the time for you or set a timer. Then, write in front of the students. Cross out – don't erase - when you make mistakes; messy is fine.

Here's a freewrite of mine:

Today is writing time again - I'm thinking – about what I did yesterday. It was just an ordinary day. I'm trying to remember. Actually it wasn't come to think of it! Barack Obama was nominated for President yesterday! There was a huge crowd at mile-high stadium in Denver, Colorado. 84,000 people, I think. I'm planning for a trip, too. So I did some shopping at Wal-Mart. I found a rain jacket for \$13. I wonder how they sell it so cheap? I noticed a HUGE chain-link fence in the parking lot on 29. I swear. Every time I go out, I see a new building. I wonder if they're building a new entrance.

Model going back and circling all potential topics that could become stories: *Barack Obama, nominated for President, the crowd, planning for a trip, shopping, selling clothes cheap, new building on Hwy 29, growth in Charlotte*

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Ask the class to see what's in their brains.

1. Ask children to fight the white for 3 minutes as well.
2. Ask them to circle ideas that will make good story ideas.
3. Ask them to copy the ideas into their topic list. (Optional)
4. In a special place on the board, record the number of minutes your class sustained writing time. Praise them!

HOMEWORK

Suggest that they write on one topic they circled tonight for their 10 minutes of choice writing homework.

FREEWRTING SAMPLE

I went out of town this weekend...we went to ____ beach to visit our friends Diane and JohnI remember kayaking to most...I haven't been in a small boat like that since I was in 6th grade. We got up real early and saw lots of birds on the marsh. Diane and John had a BEAUTIFUL new house...we saw that... we also went to Myrtle Beach and camped...lots of changes at the camp this time...haven't camped in a long time either...it was beautiful swimming the first day... went shopping with AnnMarie...fight the white, fight the white, talked so much my face hurt, made plans to go to Colorado, I'm traveling a lot lately...

POSSIBLE STORY IDEAS

I went out of town this weekend...we went to ____ beach to visit our friends Diane and JohnI remember kayaking to most...I haven't been in a small boat like that since I was in 6th grade. We got up real early and saw lots of birds on the marsh. Diane and John had a BEAUTIFUL new house...we saw that... we also went to Myrtle Beach and camped.....lots of changes at the camp this time...haven't camped in a long time either...it was beautiful swimming the first day... went shopping with AnnMarie...fight the white, fight the white, talked so much my face hurt, made plans to go to Colorado, I'm traveling a lot lately...

Possible story ideas

- 1. the beach when I can remember the name**
- 2. how I met John and Diane, their friendship, what they're doing now**
- 3. kayaking this trip**
- 4. kayaking when I was in 6th grade**
- 5. birds at the beach**
- 6. the marsh**
- 7. John and Diane's new house... etc. etc. It always works!**

Sometimes ideas come like this when I freewrite. It just gives me time to write down anything I remember that might make a good story. I am often surprised by what I think about. Sometimes stories come to me and sometimes phrases like in sample 1 come to me. Anything is right!

FREEWITING SAMPLE 2 BY MRS. HAAG

fight the white, fight the white, my dog Elliott, Michael tied to the tree, Paul breaking his wrist on the bike, Paul coming down the hill and plowing into little kid, Paul throwing up on Elliott, Michael getting lost, Michael walking away from church dressed up as Superman, fight the white, fight the white, crashing my car, traveling with Mom and Dad, my dad, cleaning out the old house, Michael works at Starbucks, stand up comedian, Hawaii, buying my new computer, playing in the woods behind my house, buying my new house, first time I saw Star Wars, swimming with Rich in West Virginia