

Literacy Tips



Tips for middle school educators on various topics such as grammar, writing, reading, spelling, vocabulary, cooperative learning and more.

Contact: Amy Goodman
Middle School Literacy Support
907-267-0221
goodman_amy@asdk12.org
www.asdk12.org/MiddleLink/LA/

Tip #73: Story Patterns

Having students learn about the different modes of writing is an ongoing process in the language arts classroom. Expository, narrative, descriptive, and persuasive modes are the big four. But where does creative writing fit in? Should it be considered a separate mode of writing or is it a subset of narrative? No matter how it gets categorized, writing short stories is an excellent way to reinforce the elements of fiction.

The student writes for a variety of purposes and audiences by...

(7) 3.2.1 Writing a narrative using setting and character to advance the plot.

(8) 3.2.1 Writing a narrative using elements of fiction (e.g. setting, character, conflict, resolution, dialogue, sensory details) to advance the plot.

Ping-Pong Storytelling

Oral language is a prewriting activity we often neglect. We are always so ready to find the perfect graphic organizer to help students plan out their writing. We need to remember how much fun it is to talk out ideas, too. Telling a story before actually doing the writing will help students with sequencing and elaboration. There is nothing more satisfying than getting someone to lean in just a bit closer because he/she wants to know how your story is going to unfold.

Be brave and try this improvisational storytelling technique to warm up your class. (This is a great activity to do when your lesson ends early and you need a few minutes to fill.) Invite a student to tell a story with you. The rules are simple. Each of you can only say one word at a time, and you must alternate turns. Imagine a ping-pong game with words! You will find yourself relying on traditional story patterns and will be surprised by the unexpected turns your partner makes you take. No one really has control over the plot, which makes them so much fun to explore. Here's how one might sound...

Teacher: Once
Student: upon
Teacher: a
Student: time
Teacher: there
Student: lived
Teacher: a
Student: big
Teacher: bad
Student: monster.
Teacher: Usually...

Step Up to Writing

Step Up to Writing, pp. 6-1 through 6-16, has a complete section devoted to what is called "Narratives and Creative Writing." It encourages the use of drawing as a prewriting activity. Students use a storyboard concept to plan out the parts of their story. [Attached are](#)



[some reproducibles](#) that you may not have in your building. (If you are interested in ordering these, please go to <http://stepuptowriting.com>).

Also in this section are ideas for leads, pp. 6-5 through 6-6. *Step Up to Writing* calls this "get the story rolling." Included are examples of starting stories such as:

- provide a where
- provide a when
- provide an action verb
- introduce a character
- make a simple but interesting comment
- start with dialogue

Finally, *Step Up to Writing* gives advice for "coming to a smooth stop" on p. 6-9. Ending a story is always so difficult for students. You probably have seen many papers with **The End** (in 36 size font and bold-faced!) or *It was all a dream*. Included in the binder are examples for ending stories such as:

- Feel a feeling
- Remember a character
- Get your point
- Think about the story

Write Source 2000

Not to be forgotten is the *Write Source 2000*. It has a nice mini-unit on writing short stories that you can find on pp.183-192. It includes a sample story called "The Magic Coin" and uses it to illustrate the following elements of fiction: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. *Write Source 2000* provides a story map as a prewriting organizer. [Attached is a blank one](#) that you can use. [Also attached are a couple of evaluations](#) I have used in the past that can serve as templates. They are somewhat dated. (In the past, we scored using a 5-point scale and we now use only a 6-point scale.)

Write Source (the new 2005 copyright)

In the newest copyright, the authors list five [common story patterns for grades 6, 7, and 8](#). Have students use the story patterns at their grade level to analyze the books they are currently reading. Challenge them to find a published example for each type. Then have them select one story pattern to use as a seed for an original short story.



Name _____ Date _____

Planning a Short Story



Step 1

Title _____

Quick Sketch



Step 2

Quick Sketch your plan for your story.

Beginning

Middle

Middle

Middle

Middle

End



Step 3

Quick Notes

Jot ideas, descriptions, and plans for your story.



Name _____ Date _____

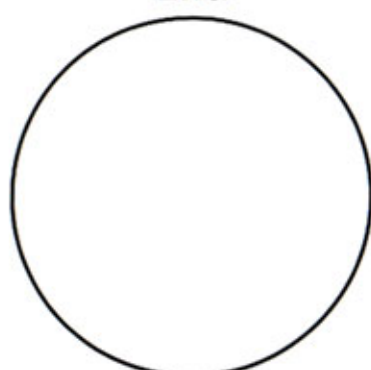
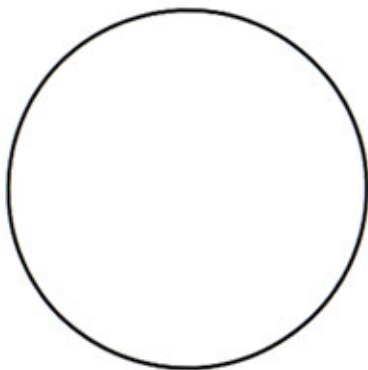
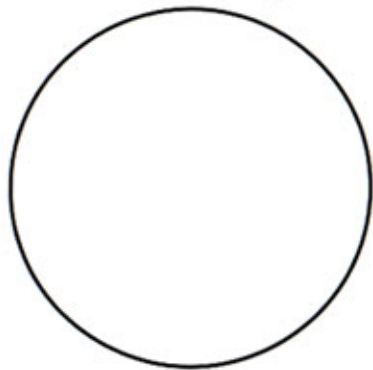


Title _____

Beginning

Middle

End



Quick Sketch your plan for your story.



Jot ideas, descriptions, and plans for your story.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| - | - | - |
| - | - | - |
| - | - | - |
| - | - | - |
| - | - | - |
| - | - | - |
| - | - | - |

Planning a Short Story

Seven Steps for Writing a Quick Sketch Story

Write Title

Make a
Quick Sketch

Use a Jot Outline
or Quick Notes

Get the Story Rolling

Move the Story
Along Using
Transitions

Come to a
Smooth Stop

Check for Errors, Make Changes,
Write the Final Copy

Story Map

Title:

Main character:

Other characters:

Conflict:

Setting:

Rising Action:

Event #1:

Event #2:

Event #3:

Climax:

Resolution:



Short Story Evaluation



(Your name)

1. Did you enjoy working on the emate this week? Why or why not? _____

2. Explain how your draft changed over the week. _____

3. Was your revision process different for you this time since you were working on a computer during class time? Why or why not? _____

4. The following is a list of mini-lessons that you learned throughout the week. Please let me know how well you understand each one. Use a scale of 1 (low) - 4 (high).

_____ writing effective leads
_____ writing effective closings
_____ punctuating dialogue

_____ varying speaker tags
_____ knowing when to indent paragraphs
_____ slowing down the "hot spots"

5. I asked you to showcase your short story in a unique and creative way. Please indicate how well you accomplished this task. (You may use + and - if you are inbetween.)

SHUTTER BOOKLET ART WORK

___ exemplary
___ satisfactory
___ needs improvement

6. Please evaluate your writing using the MOVIES traits.

| Mechanics | Organization | Voice | Ideas & Content | Effective Word Choice | Sentence Fluency |
|-----------|--------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| | | | | | |

FINAL GRADE

(Teacher decision)

□

KEY: A = (27 -30) B = (21 - 26) C = (15 - 20) D = (9 - 14)

Story Patterns Grade 6

| | | |
|---------------------|--|---|
| The Discovery | In a discovery story, the main character follows a trail of clues to discover a secret. Mystery and suspense novels use this pattern. | <i>A young man discovers a mountain hideaway.</i> |
| The Quest | In a quest, the main character goes on a journey into the unknown, overcomes a number of obstacles, and returns either victorious or wiser. Many ancient myths follow this pattern, but so do many modern stories. | <i>A young woman overcomes a severe leg injury so she can walk again.</i> |
| The Choice | The choice pattern involves the main character making a difficult decision. Suspense builds as the decision draws near. | <i>A middle school student must decide between trying out for softball and helping her grandmother.</i> |
| The Rite of Passage | In the rite of passage, a difficult experience changes the main character in a major and lasting way. These stories are also called “coming of age” stories. | <i>A young soldier learns about courage while on the battlefield.</i> |
| The Reversal | The reversal pattern is one in which the main character follows one course of action until something causes him or her to think or act in a different way. | <i>A young man lives for football until his best friend is seriously injured during the game.</i> |

Story Patterns Grade 7

| | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| The Initiation | In an initiation story, a young person has to overcome a test of his or her abilities or beliefs. The way the person deals with the test will influence the rest of his or her life. | <i>Sarah struggles to adjust to a new school.</i> |
| The Surprise | In a surprise story, the main character and the reader misunderstand what is happening around them. The high point reveals a surprise that explains everything. | <i>Jack thinks his friends are gossiping about him, but really they are planning a party for him.</i> |
| The Union | The union pattern features two main characters who are attracted to each other. Usually, they have to overcome obstacles to be together. | <i>Haleh meets a handsome young runner from a rival school's track team.</i> |
| The Quest | In the quest pattern, the main character goes on a journey into the unknown, often to search for an object or reach a goal. The person usually gains the prize – or learns something in the process of losing it. | <i>Drew journeys into the rain forests to find his father, who has been lost there for three weeks.</i> |
| The Mystery | In a mystery story, the main character must follow a series of tantalizing clues to discover a secret. | <i>Jessica stays up one night to discover who is leaving flowers on her front steps.</i> |

Story Patterns Grade 8

| | | |
|--------------|--|--|
| The Rescue | In a rescue story, the main character is either in need of rescue or must rescue someone else. Adventure stories often follow this pattern. | <i>Jori must somehow get her little brother out of a ravine.</i> |
| The Union | In a union story, two characters must overcome one or more obstacles to be together. Many stories about friendship, family, and love use the union pattern. | <i>Amee and Sondra are sisters adopted by different families. They must work out a way to be together.</i> |
| The Underdog | In the underdog plot, someone overcomes adversity to achieve a goal. Main characters who are underdogs often appeal to readers. | <i>Zhora overcomes her blindness to become a concert pianist.</i> |
| The Decision | In a decision story, the main character is faced with a decision that will test him or her. Tension builds in the story as the decision approaches. | <i>Anapat must choose between going on a class trip or staying with his hospitalized grandfather.</i> |
| Rivalry | In a rivalry story, the main character must face a challenger. In this pattern, the main character is the <i>protagonist</i> , and the challenger is the <i>antagonist</i> . | <i>Bo's team must face the team that defeated them for the state championship last year.</i> |