

Lesson Unit:

Book Swap

by Corrie Fisher



Grade: 4 and up

Time Required: Four, 20-30 minute sessions (plus additional time for homework)

Overview

Kids experience publishing first hand by playing the role of author and illustrator. The twist is that they will not be illustrating their own stories.

Learning Objectives

- To write a creative composition based on a memory.
- To illustrate a composition by an unknown author.
- To experience book publishing from an author's and illustrator's perspective.
- To share feelings about having a composition illustrated.

Session One: Memories

Materials

- Conversation starters written on the board
- Scrap paper and pens

Directions

1. Make a list of at least five questions or prompts to start kids thinking about their childhood experiences, such as:

- Tell us about your favorite birthday.
- What is the scariest moment you have ever experienced?
- Describe a time when you were telling the truth but no one believed you.

2. Put kids into small groups, give them the questions, and let them discuss their childhood experiences.

- Have students refer to the questions merely as a guide. They are there to generate ideas if the conversation lags.
- Encourage students to follow the natural flow of storytelling as one person's story leads to another.
- Tell students to listen actively, but also to pay attention to ideas that come to their minds (especially those students less inclined to speak out.)
- As kids think of stories they would like to share with the group they should jot down a sentence or two on their scrap paper to remind them of that story later.

- Have students share their memories with their groups for 10-20 minutes, or as long as kids are actively engaged.
- Have students return to their individual seats.

3. Instruct students to select either a story they just shared or one they remembered, and write a story or an exposition based on it. Allow time in class for writing or assign it for homework.

Session Two: Author

Materials

- Personal narratives
- Books about writing children's books: *What Do Authors Do?* by Eileen Christelow; *Author: A True Story* by Helen Lester; *A Writer's Story: From Life to Fiction* by Marion Dane Bauer; *In Your Own Words: A Beginner's Guide to Writing* by Sylvia Cassedy
- Several examples of narrative children's books: *Grandfather's Journey* by Allen Say; *Fanny's Dream* by Caralyn Buehner; *Uncommon Traveler* by Don Brown; *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst; etc.
- Flipchart paper and markers
- Slips of paper

Directions

1. Set out the books so that students have ample opportunity to browse them. On the flipchart paper write: What makes a children's book different than any other book?
 - As students look at the books, encourage them to answer the question either by telling you what they think or by adding it to the page themselves.
 - Students should use the books as a guide to the answers. (All answers are valuable, but you can offer *simple vocabulary* or *rhythm* as examples to get them started.)
 - After you have an extensive list, re-read it and ask for clarification, if necessary.
 - Have students choose the three most important elements of a children's book and write their top three from the list onto the slips.
 - Tally up the slips and circle the top three "most important elements."
2. Now students should take out the personal narratives they wrote earlier. Ask them to rewrite it as a children's book. Children should:
 - Make sure their names do not appear anywhere in the story or on the pages.
 - Change all of the character names and omit anything they would feel uncomfortable having publicized. (They may also choose to change human characters to animals or objects if they choose.)
 - Incorporate all three of the "most important elements" of children's literature.
 - Focus on making the words in the story stand alone without pictures.
 - Allow students ample time to complete their children's stories either in class or for homework.

Session Three: Illustrator

Materials

- Re-worked Personal Children's Story (from Session Two)
- Books about illustration: *Side by Side: Five Favorite Picture-Book Teams Go to Work* by Leonard S. Marcus; *What Do Illustrators Do?* by Eileen Christelow; *From Pictures to Words: A Book About Making a Book* by Janet Stevens
- Examples of illustrated children's books of varying artistic styles for inspiration
- Art materials: paper, markers, paints, glue, etc.

Directions

1. Read aloud one of the books about illustration. Explain that sometimes an author illustrates his own book, or a team works on both the writing and the illustrations. Often, however, authors have very little input into how their book's design and illustrations.
2. Collect the re-worked narratives and give each student a composition he/she did not write.
 - Allow time for them to read the story and ask them to select a section they would like to illustrate.
 - Have them decide on a style of illustration. Students can study the children's books to find an appealing style. [I deleted this because it sounds really condescending.]
 - Instruct students to make sure the illustration support the selected text.
 - Ask children to write or type the text on the page.
 - Have students present a sketch for your approval before they start to ensure illustrations are appropriate for children.
 - Artwork can be done in class or as homework.

Session Four: Role Play Reflection

Materials

- Illustrated stories from Session Three
- Paper and pens

Directions

1. Return the illustrated pages to the author of the text. Students are bound to have some pretty strong reactions because of the stories' personal nature.
 - Ask students to reflect on their experience and their expectations for the illustration.
 - Prompt children to share with the questions below.
2. As the illustrator:
 - Why did you choose to illustrate this passage?
 - Are you pleased with the outcome?

- Was it difficult to envision what drawing would compliment the words? What would have made it easier?

3. As the author:

- Do you like the illustrations? Why or why not?
- Did the illustrator accurately depict the action/tone/characters in the story?
- What assumptions did the illustrator make? (Students should revisit their writing and see if their words clearly describe the events.)
- Do you think your story would make a good children's book?
- Which role did you prefer, author or illustrator? Why?

Resources

Books

Bauer, Marion Dane. *Writer's Story: From Life to Fiction*. Clarion Books, c1995.

Brown, Don. *Uncommon Traveler*. Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

Buehner, Caralyn. *Fanny's Dream*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 1996.

Cassedy, Sylvia. *In Your Own Words: A Beginner's Guide to Writing*. Thomas Y. Crowell, c1990.

Christelow, Eileen. *What Do Illustrators Do?* Clarion Books, c1999.

Marcus, Leonard S. *Side by Side: Five Favorite Picture-Book Teams Go to Work*. Walker & Company, 2001.

Say, Allen. *Grandfather's Journey*. Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Stevens, Janet. *From Pictures to Words: A Book About Making a Book*. Holiday House, c1995.

Viorst, Judith. *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. Atheneum, 1972.