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Writing Power



Story Strips

Story Strips

An approach similar to Story Strips is Book Making, developed by educational consultant and author Matt Glover. Stephanie Yorath, Grade 1 teacher at Croften House School in Vancouver, uses this approach in her writing workshop. Her students are given a blank book to write their story in, rather than a blank page to write on. Each new story is written in a new book, instilling the notion of real writers writing real books for real readers.

Walking Story Strips can also be used for nonfiction writing. Wendy Hugal's Grade 1 students at

Beginning writers need support in keeping their ideas organized and learning the two narrative structures. Providing primary writers with blank story strips has proven successful for helping students develop their sense of story and distinguish between the walking and climbing writing forms.

The Climbing Story Strip (see page 41) is used to teach emergent writers the elements of a story (characters, setting, problem, solution) and to introduce the idea of a plot line. The Walking Story Strips (page 40) are used when students are writing a descriptive piece: each frame contains a different aspect of the description or piece of information, but nothing really happens in terms of a significant problem.

On page 40, the first Walking Story Strip has spaces for four pictures, while the second Walking Story Strip has space for only one large image. Depending on the topic, teachers can use one or the other. A piece about fall might have a description of four aspects of the season—the weather, special celebrations, things I like to do, sounds and smells of fall—which correspond with four different pictures. A piece, for example, about My Dragon might require only one large picture.

Lesson: Introducing Walking and Climbing Stories

- Begin the lesson:

Even though every story we read is different, stories usually follow the same pathway. We call the path of a story the story structure. Some stories stay on a flat path.

(Draw a horizontal line on the board)

We call these “walking stories.” Walking stories are usually stories that describe a person, a place, or a thing. The writer includes lots of details about the topic and there is often anchor line, or repeating phrase, holding the writing steady.

The other kind of story is called a “climbing story.” These are the stories that start out on a straight path for a while—but then, all of a sudden something happens!

(Draw a flat line and then angle the line up like the side of a mountain)

The straight part of the path at the beginning is usually where the writer introduces us to a character, then the story starts to climb up when something

Story strips can also be used with older students to help them plan and organize their ideas. Each box or section of the story strip represents a new paragraph in the story and can be expanded by adding details and examples.

Teacher Model

happens. You might notice a story beginning to climb up when a writer says “One day...” or “Suddenly...” Now, a writer knows that they can’t just leave a reader stranded up here at the top of the mountain, not knowing what happens. So the writer has to explain how the problem gets solved, to bring the reader back down the path again. Once the path reaches the bottom, the story is over. When you write a climbing story, you need to follow this pathway: step-step-up-up-down.

- Model a walking story.

Teacher Model

Walking Story: *Snow*

Snow is sparkly and cold. Snow falls silently and covers my yard with a white blanket. Snow gives birds a chance to make footprints. Snow is the magic of winter.

Explain that this is a walking story because the writer talks about one thing (snow) and gives a lot of details and descriptions about the snow; however, nothing really happens, so we stay on a straight line.

- Model a climbing story:

Climbing Story: *George Gets Lost*

George the monkey lived in the jungle with his mother and his brother. George loved to swing from the trees with his tail and pick ticks from his little brothers fur.

Explain that this is the flat part of the story: the character is introduced with some examples and details.

One day, George got lost in the jungle.

Now, something happens and the story is starting to climb up.

He looked everywhere for his mother and his brother but he could not find them.

George climbed a tree and started to cry.

We can’t stop the story here or our reader will get mad and say, “But then what happened to George?” So we need to solve the problem and end the story.

Suddenly, he saw his mother and brother down below.

Now the story is starting to come down.

George scrambled down the tree and gave his mother a big hug. The end.

Now the problem is solved and the story is back down where we started.

- Explain that you will be giving students time to practice writing both walking stories and climbing stories. Relate writing with reading that you do in class:

We will also be noticing these different kinds of stories when we read.

Walking Story Strips

Name: _____

Title: _____

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Name: _____

Title: _____

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Climbing Story Strip

Name: _____

Title: _____
