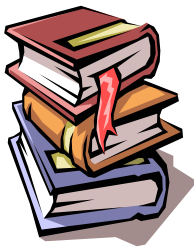


## Using Story Writing to Teach English

Story writing allows students to personalize the language they have learned. It is motivating and interesting because students work on their productive language skills, grammar, spelling and writing in a creative way. In this interactive workshop, we will first review the components of an effective story. Participants will then take part in various story writing activities that can be used with different levels of students.

### 1. Why Use Story Writing?

Why do we want to give students the opportunity to write their own stories?



- Story writing allows students to personalize the language they have learned.
- Students work on their productive language skills, grammar, spelling and writing.
- Students can be creative.
- It is motivating and interesting.
- It allows you, as the teacher, to learn more about your students.

### 2. The Components of a Story<sup>1</sup>

Match the components of a story given on the left with their definitions given on the right.

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 1. Character | a. This is the underlying meaning of a story.   |
| 2. Setting   | b. This is usually the first part of the plot. It is also called the problem. There can be different kinds of problems: between a character and nature; between a character and society; between or among characters; and within a character.   |
| 3. Theme     | c. This is the sequence of events in a story. There are usually four parts to this sequence: a problem or conflict that the characters have to solve; roadblocks that the characters encounter as they try to solve the problem; the high point or climax when the problem is about to be solved; and the solution when the problem is completely solved. |
| 4. Plot      | d. This is the perspective from which the story is told. There are two main perspectives: the first person (the writer tells the story through one character using "I"); and omniscient (the writer sees and knows everything).   |
| 5. Conflict  | e. This is where and when the story takes place. It therefore includes the location, weather, time of day and time period (past, present, future).  |
| 6. Viewpoint | f. These are the people in the story. The writer usually tells us about appearance (what they look like), action (what they do), dialogue (what they say) and monologue (what they think).  |

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<sup>1</sup> Gail E. Tompkins. Etc. 2005. Language Arts: Content and Teaching Strategies. Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall. Page 299-302.

### 3. Story Writing Activities

Try the following story writing activities with your students.

#### *Story Planning Activities*

Put three categories on the board--character, setting, and conflict. As a class, brainstorm ten different characters, ten different settings and ten different conflicts. Have each individual student select several characters, one setting and one conflict from the lists as the starting point for their story.

Put slips of paper in a box or hat. Each slip of paper has a character, setting, and conflict on it. Students pick a slip of paper for their story.

Make a worksheet with three boxes on it. Label one box with each of character, setting, and conflict. Students start by drawing a picture in each box to represent what they will write about. They then write their story based upon their pictures.

#### *Picture-Based Activities*

Students work in groups. They look at a series of pictures and talk about what is in the pictures and what is happening in the pictures. They then work individually to write a story based upon the pictures and their group discussion.

Students get a picture of a character. As a group they talk about what the character looks like, who they think the character is and what kinds of things they think the character would do. They then work individually to write a story about their character, using the group discussion as a starting point.

Present a a series of pictures to the class. Individually, students decide what order the pictures should go in. Students write one sentence for each picture to make the story.

Students bring in a picture of someone in their family. They write a story about their family member.

#### *Beginnings and Endings*

Give students the beginning of a story (either one sentence or, for higher level students one paragraph). Students have to write the ending.

Give students the ending of a story (either one sentence or, for higher level students, one paragraph). Students have to write the beginning.

One student writes the beginning of a story. Students then trade stories with a partner and write the ending for the new story they have received.

Each student has a piece of paper. They write the opening sentence of a story. They pass their paper on to another student and receive a different paper in return. They write the next sentence of the new story they received. They pass the story on to another student and so on.

*Other Activities*

Students learn a set of vocabulary for a particular setting or character. They then work individually to write a story that makes use of the vocabulary.

Show the class several interesting objects ( a coat, a hat, a piece of jewelry, a stuffed animal). Students write a story that incorporates all of the objects.

Give students a simple story written from a clear viewpoint. Have them work individually to rewrite the story from the viewpoint of a different character in the story.

Give students a simple story set in a unique setting. Have them work individually to rewrite the story, putting it in a different setting. For example, a story set in a school may now be set in the workplace. A story set in a big city may now be set in a small town.

Give students a moral, saying or proverb. They must write a short story that illustrates the moral, saying or proverb.

Students write a legend, myth or fairy tale from their own culture, using English.