

I Am Somebody

José R. Prieto F.
Memorial Elementary School

INTRODUCTION

Life is a play. All of us have come to this world in the same way but with many unique traits. These traits make us become characters that have an undetermined number of roles to play in a life-long drama. For children and for adults, sometimes these roles are not recognized. They are just part of our lives. We are not actors on a stage. We are not aware of it. We are human beings in a society. All societies have rules. Rules are made, sometimes, in a discriminatory way. In any case, they have to be followed. The rules are written either with a purpose or with a lack of knowledge. Legislators do not necessarily have complete knowledge or experience in the matter. In any case, a vertical system is created, and whatever the person on top says goes. Usually these orders spread direct actions or consequences over the followers or people at the bottom.

Being a fourth-grade bilingual teacher has given me the opportunity to play many roles. My main role, though, is to teach. In this marvelous career my character as a teacher is interacting in a constant emotional rollercoaster with another group of characters called students. Through the development of any everyday situation in which both groups of characters are present, a series of scenes take place. It is vital that at the end of the scene, we find a successful conclusion. The same conflict is presented to almost every teacher. Now, can we really come up with a successful conclusion? Can we live happily ever after?

One of the main goals of this unit is to teach playwriting as part of the language arts curriculum for fourth grade. It is important to mention the fact that playwriting may cover a broad spectrum of subjects in the Language Arts content area as well as in the other content areas of the curriculum, which allow us to develop a multi-objective, multi-task thematic unit.

School Mission

I work at Memorial Elementary School in Houston, Texas. Memorial is an inner city campus with the following distribution of population: 6% White, 4% African American, 1% Asian, and 89% Hispanic. Ninety-one percent of our students received free lunches due to their family's low-income situation. Furthermore, our student population has a 54% labeled LEP, Limited English Proficiency, while the at-risk student's percentage is up to 71%. The mission statement of our school praises the following:

The mission of Memorial Elementary School and community is to develop lifelong learners. Each student will emerge with a positive self-image to achieve global success and will contribute positively to our society.

As is established in the mission statement, our main goal is to form our students, in a positive way, for the rest of their lives. First, we need to teach them strong principles at an early age, which will allow us to make them good citizens as part of society. During this process, we also need to teach the student his role in this society, starting with his own family and going up to a large scale called a community. How important is it for him and everybody to play and complete each other's respective role, in order to achieve beneficial goals and progress at any level? The first level in the scale is the individual. In order for the scale to progress, the individual (student)

must grow as a person. Low self-esteem is a synonym for frustration in an individual. An individual with high self-esteem believes in himself.

Through this unit, students will discover themselves individually. Students and teachers will work toward the goal of increasing their own self-esteem. Students will discover how important the role they are playing in the development of the community is.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the unit, although not specified in any curriculum, consists of development and achievement of high levels of self-esteem in our students. Our main stage or scenario to obtain this goal is our school community. Of course, we have a curriculum to follow, and based on the curriculum unit, we will be focusing on the achievement of these objectives. Project CLEAR, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) curriculum, presents four major strands in the Language Arts content area: Listening/Speaking, Viewing/Representing, Reading, and Writing. The curriculum presents a vertical and a horizontal alignment. The vertical alignment compares similar objectives in different grade levels and its correlation as the student progresses through the years. The horizontal alignment can be used as a planning guide for a particular objective and its development at a grade level, taking into consideration time allocation, assessment connections, instructional considerations, instructional strategies, and resources.

The Public Education Goal 1 of the Texas Education Code, §4.002, states, “The students in the public education system will demonstrate exemplary performance in the reading and writing of the English language.” The following is an explicit list of the objectives to be covered in the unit. These objectives are taken directly from HISD-Project CLEAR curriculum and from the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) objectives from the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Project CLEAR and/or TEKS Objectives

Listening and Speaking Goal 3: The student communicates clearly, appropriately, and effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences. TEKS 4.1

ELA.R.4.02.f. 03. Identify, define and explain with relevant examples the terms listed below related to drama: Title-Play-Author/Playwright -Setting-Characters-Dialogue-Stage directions-Stage-Props-Costumes-Scene-Act. TEKS 4.12.I

ELA.4.1.07 . Choose and adapt spoken (word choice, diction, usage, pitch, tone) and non-verbal (sweeping eye movements, relaxed demeanor) language appropriate to audience and purpose. TEKS 4.2

ELA.4.1.08 . Prepare, organize, and deliver a variety of individual and/or group oral presentations (i.e., book reviews, poetry readings, plays, informational reports) with visuals/props.

Listening and Speaking Goal 5: The student listens and speaks to gain and share knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of culture. TEKS 4.3

Reading Goal 4: The student interprets the nuances of text to develop effective communication skills and to appreciate the use of language. TEKS 4.12

ELA.4.2.10. Identify and examine how authors use literary elements, figurative language, and word choice authors to create meaning and unique style/voice (e.g., dialogue, description of setting/characters, simile, metaphor, and imagery).

Reading Goal 7: The student reads culturally diverse texts to develop skill in reflection and communication. TEKS 4.8, TEKS 4.11

ELA.4.2.19 Identify distinctive and common cultural characteristics (i.e., clothing, food, artifacts, activities, housing) using multicultural texts. TEKS 4.3

Writing Goal 2: The student writes for a variety of purposes, and in a variety of forms. TEKS 4.15

ELA.4.3.02. Write in personal (memoir, friendly letters), creative (scripts, poetry, fairy tales), and academic (literary response, descriptive, reflective essay, and research reports) forms to address specific audiences and purposes using standard organizational structures. TEKS 4.22

Writing Goal 7: The student interacts with writers inside and outside the classroom in ways that reflect the practical uses of writing.

ELA.4.3.19. Collaborate with other writers to compose, revise, and edit/proofread a variety of products.

RATIONALE

In the state of Texas, fourth graders take a writing test. In my particular case, many of my students come to me with a very low English proficiency level. This lack of vocabulary in the new language becomes a barrier in any type of communication for them, creating in them very low self-esteem. They become frustrated and don't want to be embarrassed, so they don't write. In his book *Writing Your First Play*, Stephen Sossaman mentions, "People in life are already characters. We understand real people based on what they say and do, the same way we understand characters in a play or film"(21). The title of my unit will be "I Am Somebody." Already we are somebody; we all are. I want my students to recognize the importance of being somebody, of just being themselves and the roles they are playing in life. They are here for a reason. Every situation that they could be involved in happens for a reason. How important is that reason? This is what I want them to be aware of and find out. I want them to treat themselves as the main characters of any situation that is presented to them because they are a part of a plot in every stage of life. I want my students to write about these situations. Therefore, as a character in a scene, their roles are necessary for life to continue. In this particular writing process, their characters, as Lajos Egri proposes, must be tri-dimensional. Characters must present physiological, sociological, and psychological make-ups, which need to be palpable in the story. The appendix for lesson one is a three-dimensional character sketch according to Lajos Egri.

Minorities

Very few students take the writing test in Spanish. As I mentioned before, the majority of my students who take the writing test take it in English. This is very hard work for them, almost impossible for some, which causes a great level of frustration. They are afraid to speak the new language! They are embarrassed to stand up in the front of the class because of a lack of communication skills. Also, remember the fact that society calls them "minorities," which, to many, functions as a derogative word. In their research study about identity and language in the classroom, Stephen Wright and Donald Taylor concluded that an unusual context was presented. Wright and Taylor state, "The linguistic minority is in reality the numerical majority in the community and the school... the majority of students are members of an ethnic or linguistic minority, whereas the school is dominated by the English language, White teachers, and White mainstream culture" (250-251). They feel the pressure of a society that does not always welcome them. Their self-esteem is very low because of these external pressures. They see how their families work harder and for less money than some other families in the melting pot called "America." Fear becomes part of their lives, and I need to tell them that this is not true. I need them to know that as human beings they have the same value as anybody else, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, and all the other creeds.

Self-Experiences

I need to write a unit based on the students' everyday situations. Every place is a stage. Every instant in their lives is a scene in which they are characters, sometimes the main character, and sometimes a secondary one. In any situation or scene, their roles are always important. In my unit, I will ask my students to write about day-to-day activities like having dinner with their family, playing outside, or visiting relatives. I would like definitely to keep the cultural context of the family or community for identity purposes. I want my students to identify themselves as main or secondary characters, according to the role they played in a given situation or scene. For example, was the conversation during dinnertime about them and their schoolwork? In this case, the student will be the main character. If the student is part of a conversation about a family member or event, then, he or she may be considered a secondary character. I want the students to recognize the importance of any ordinary situation as a part of life, even when this situation does not seem important at all. They need to recognize, also, the importance of their role during any particular situation (scene) in which they are participants, and perhaps imagine the resolution of the scene without themselves in it. I want them to think even about what they or any other character said at any particular moment. I want them to think about the tone of voice and the expressions used during that particular instance. Would they think that the scene would have the same development and resolution without them there? What difference does it make? At this point the students will understand and recognize how important or not their role was.

The second part of the unit will be to write a dramatic scene for a particular situation that the students have experienced. It is recommended that the particular scene refer to a situation in which the student has to stand up for himself or for somebody else in what he considers an unfair situation. I would model to them some guidelines to write the story following Sossaman's scheme: Character-Desire-Obstacle-Resolution. I will present an example of my own experience to them. I will also read and act to them, with their participation, of course, the dramatic scene created for the unit "I Am Somebody." I will make particular emphasis in Miguel's role or intervention in the mentioned scene, acting as the main character, and the outcome of the situation (resolution). I will ask the same questions: Would the scene have the same development and outcome if Miguel had not been there? What difference does it make? How important was Miguel's presence there at that moment? How did Miguel mean whatever he said? Is there any other character or characters in the scene responsible for the resolution? How important was their participation in the scene?

The last part of the unit will be for the students to write about an instance or scene recently lived or experienced by them. The students will provide details about the characters, dialogues, and resolutions of the situation. The students will learn first the basic concepts of role-playing as a learning strategy, especially to achieve and improve comprehension. Later the students will represent the written and described scene in the classroom. Each student will play his or her own role in the scene, and with the help of other students, we will represent the whole scene or situation. Now, the scene needs to represent a situation in which the student or main character's presence was vital. After the play ends, a series of questions and discussions will take place. We are going to answer the questions mentioned before and discuss similar situations depending on the characters' developments throughout the scene.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Similar Stories

The book by Alma Flor Ada, *My Name is María Isabel*, presents the struggle of the young girl who just arrived in the United States with her parents. Maria Isabel has to survive in an unknown environment. Her main concern is, of course, the new language. Her teacher cannot even pronounce her name correctly. She feels that she is losing her identity. Because of this, she

fails to become part of the Christmas Pageant, and she feels frustrated and down. Nevertheless, what she really wishes at the end is for everybody to call her by her name, Maria Isabel Salazar Lopez. This is her birth name, and she is so proud because it represents the names of both of her grandmothers. As an extension of lesson 3, an adaptation from the book can be presented.

Francisco Jimenez presented a similar history in the book *La Mariposa*, the struggle of a young immigrant boy and his family. The language is the main barrier in school and for the whole family. His self-esteem is very low. He does not have the courage to stand up in front of the room or answer any question from the teacher. Whenever he says anything in Spanish, the teacher corrects him and asks him to speak more English. Francisco feels frustrated in the classroom because of his lack of communications skills. His low self-esteem finds ease in his own imagination, while contemplating a cocoon that becomes a butterfly.

Both of the examples can be read in published books. Readers think that the books are products of the authors' imagination, but more likely, they are autobiographical stories presented in a realistic-fiction manner, images or scenes from the authors' own early lives. Another well-known example of an autobiography is Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory*. Rodriguez grew up in California, the son of working-class Mexican immigrant parents. He spoke mostly Spanish until he entered a classroom. Two decades later, he was an honor student completing a Ph.D. in English Renaissance literature. Although his success is obvious, he criticized bilingual education because as he grew older it caused a complete separation from his Spanish background. The sometimes-called total integration of the ELL student into the mainstream academic program causes a too early exit from the bilingual program. Usually, a separation from the mother tongue/culture also occurs. Jim Cummins says that "by the time the children become adolescents, the linguistic gap between parents and children has become an emotional chasm." Autobiographical stories along the same lines are found in the works of Ernesto Galarza's *Barrio Boy*, Esmeralda Santiago's *When I Was a Puerto Rican*, and most recently in Sandra Cisneros's *House on Mango Street*. The common denominator of these publications is the conflicts presented to the authors at an early age, in their struggle to adapt to new languages and societies. In each one of these books there is a reflection of low self-esteem in the characters. Now, how many more stories do we need to read before we find a successful conclusion? How many stories like these happen every day in our schools? Moreover, the most important question, what can we do to stop or avoid any more of these situations?

Cesar Chavez

Cesar Chavez, an American farm worker, labor leader, and civil rights activist who co-founded the National Farm Workers Association, argues, "Our language is the reflection of ourselves. A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers" ("Quotes by Cesar Chavez"). Cesar Chavez was born in Arizona in 1927. Chavez did not like school as a child, probably because he spoke only Spanish at home, and Spanish was forbidden in school. Jim Cummins states, if the message, implicit or explicit, communicated to children in the school is to "leave your language and culture at the school's door, children also leave a central part of who they are – their identities – at the school's door." When the students feel this rejection, they are much less likely to participate actively and confidently in classroom instruction (Cummins). Chavez remembered being punished with a ruler to his knuckles for speaking Spanish. Some schools were segregated, and he frequently encountered racist remarks. He and his brother Richard attended thirty-seven schools.

The same situation is part of our history at this moment. Even when we do not punish the students physically, we cause serious moral consequences in their lives. Cummins adds, "While students may not be physically punished for speaking their mother language in the school (as they previously were in many countries), a strong message is communicated to them that if they want

to be accepted by the teacher and the society, they have to renounce any allegiance to their home language and culture.” Now, if this is the situation, can you picture for a minute the student’s self-esteem level? We can teach the students a way to express themselves. With playwriting, we may help them raise those levels of self-esteem.

The bilingual program in many, many cases is leaving children behind. The lack of vocabulary or any communication skills in the new language frustrate them. Their academic progress and achievement is almost non-existent. Their self-esteem takes a downward highway into an endless spiral. The final act is that they drop out of school. We need to approach the teaching of the bilingual students in a different manner. “Institutions need to recognize the legitimate demands of minority groups to have a voice in the curriculum, teaching methods, and materials used to educate their children,” argues Mary McGroarty (7). She adds that the use of native language in academic instruction demonstrates the legitimacy of the language, acknowledges the power of the community whose language is used, and gives students heightened self-esteem, besides improving chances of academic success. Perhaps if we allow the students to express themselves in their own language their self-esteem and academic progress goes up.

One of the goals of the unit will be to make the students understand their importance as a human being. The way they are and their beliefs are important in any setting. The students need to believe in themselves. We could feed our students with enough confidence to increase their self-esteem, making them write about any situation. They can start by presenting a conflict and a resolution in their writing. It is a simple cause and effect relationship, a basic definition for plot according to Marsh Cassidy. Similarly, “A person’s life consists of continual action and reaction, response and change,” says Sam Smiley in his book *Playwriting* (73).

We need to explore and explode every student potential. Students also need to understand that though they cannot yet communicate in a new language, the doors of success can open for them. Playwriting will give the students the opportunity to bloom on their own. Once they overcome the fear created by the new language, they will start knocking on the doors of knowledge and emotional well-being. The doors will open for them before they even realize it. We, as teachers, need to present an already broken ice to them. Playwriting, of course, could be a way to realize this goal. We need to open the huge doors and invite them into a world of accomplishments always with the firm purpose of making the students better human beings. Freeman and Freeman conclude, in their book *ESL/EFL Teaching: Principles of Success*, that when teachers center their curriculum on their learners’ experiences and interests, they build students’ self-esteem and expand the potential of English language learners in a natural way. We need to teach them how to get there. We need to teach them that it needs to start with them.

Adaptations

Isabel Compoy and Alma Flor Ada have written a series of adaptations from short well-known stories into plays. The purpose of these adaptations is to present the students with a well-known story or fairy tale. Because the stories are well-known, the students familiarize with them faster and easier, once the children recognize the story. The student will feel comfortable with the story, instead of feeling fear of the unknown. This allows the ELL students to participate in a classroom presentation, even with a new language, again, without fear. This without a doubt is a good strategy for language learning. The main reason for this is that the parts and lines of the story are not very long, which makes the students feel comfortable. This is, without a doubt, a boost for their confidence and self-esteem. Once this goal is accomplished, the students’ confidence increases and their own creations begin to take shape as a story.

In one of the lessons for the unit, the adaptation of a well-known story could be presented to the students as a play. The students will play the roles of the characters. The main goal of giving

them this experience is to open the door for students to participate in a very active role. The rest of the lessons will be taught following the appropriate curriculum and, of course, covering the objectives mentioned before. My personal recommendation is to start the unit after the first three months into the new school year. During this time, the teacher will have the opportunity to measure the previous knowledge of the students in this matter. In the first three months of the school year, the teacher will learn to recognize and understand students' different levels of language acquisition skills, which will allow him/her to make a better adaptation of the unit according to his/her particular group.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1: Character's Traits--Character's Feelings

Objectives

ELA.L.4.01.d. 02. Offer ideas, information, and opinions.

ELA.L.4.01.d. 03 Respond to the contributions of others. The fourth grade student should be able to provide positive, encouraging remarks and use body language to show appreciation and interest.

ELA.R.4.02.d. 04 Analyze the elements listed below orally and in writing (i.e., response to literature assignments):

Main Characters

- traits (physical and emotional attributes)
- motivation (why they behave the way they behave)
- conflicts
- feelings (beliefs, attitudes, values)
- point of view (first or third person)
- relationships with other characters, and changes in the above-mentioned based on the plot (unfolding events in the story)

Setting - time, place, weather, mood, atmosphere

- Conflict (problem in the story) - person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. nature, person vs. fate

Plot - action/events in the story

Outcome/Solution/Resolution (ending where problems are solved)

Theme (message or subject of the story)

Key Terms

Literary devices

Character traits and feelings

Prediction

Note taking

Key Vocabulary

purposes for listening	appreciation	style
author	genre	entertainment
dialogue	setting	fantasy
title	character traits	characterization
character feelings	conflict	conclusions

active voice	reading response	prewriting
discussion	purpose	word choice
conferencing	revision	realism
editing	entertainment	plot
personification	interpretation	two-column notes
drafting	peer conference	characters writing process

Introduction

Define and explain to the students the differences between character's traits and character's feelings. Explain to them how both concepts help the reader understand and have a better picture of their story's characters.

Concept Development

Ask one of the students to stand up in front of the class. For this student's character traits, ask the rest of the students to describe what they can actually see in this student. For example, what is he/she wearing? How is his/her hair? What color? How tall is he/she? Explain to them that these are physical characteristics of that particular student. These words of description may be written on the board using a "T" diagram.

For character's feelings, ask the same student to act as if he/she were sad, happy, unhappy, anxious, scared, and calm. See list in Appendix 2. Explain to them that these are character's feelings of that particular student. These description words may be written on the board using a "T" diagram.

Student Practice

Read/act the scene from the unit "I Am Somebody." Ask students to pay special attention to the characters in the scene. Ask the students to describe Miguel and Steve physically and emotionally using a "T" diagram.

Assessment

Ask students to describe a person from the school or from home. Their best friend or a member of their family could be chosen for this activity. Again, using a "T" diagram, ask students to write their character's feeling and character's traits for the person they choose.

Closure

Explain to the students that everybody is a different person. Each one of us has distinctive traits that make us different from each other. Each of us has different ways of thinking and of approaching situations that also make us unique. Emphasize that it is not because we are from a different country or region that we are less or more than anybody else is. Our physical aspect and our personalities allow us to think and act in different ways in the same conflict or situation.

Materials and Equipment

Copy of the scene "I Am Somebody" (See Appendix 1.)

Overhead projector

Supplies/Materials

Post-its

Chart paper

Markers

Transparencies

Character's trait "T" diagram

Tridimensional character sketch (See Appendix 2.)

Modifications

When working on teams please make sure that each group has students with different levels of English. Special Ed. Students could make a shorter list in the "T" diagram.

Lesson Plan 2: Dialogue

Objectives

ELA.R.4.02.d. 04 Analyze the elements listed below orally and in writing (i.e., response to literature assignments):

Main Characters

- traits (physical and emotional attributes)
- motivation (why they behave the way they behave)
- conflicts
- feelings (beliefs, attitudes, values)
- point of view (first or third person)
- relationships with other characters, and changes in the above-mentioned based on The plot (unfolding events in the story)
- Setting - time, place, weather, mood, atmosphere
- Conflict (problem in the story) - person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. nature, person vs. fate
- Plot - action/events in the story
- Outcome/Solution/Resolution (ending where problems are solved)
- Theme (message or subject of the story)

ESL.I.4.1.04 Listen to proficient, fluent models of oral reading (multicultural, classic, contemporary, fiction, non-fiction) and discuss using appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication.

ESL.I.4.1.08 Prepare, organize, and deliver a variety of individual and/or group oral presentations using simple statements (i.e., book reports, poetry readings, plays, informational reports) with appropriate visuals and props, and with teacher support

Key Terms

Characterization

Literary elements of dramatic forms

Comprehension strategies - cueing systems, prediction, and inferencing

Comparison across texts and cultures

Creative writing - scripts

Reader's theater presentation

Peer collaboration and evaluation

Key Vocabulary

Cross cultural

Evaluation

Narrative text structure

Theme

Cause-effect

Higher order thinking

Presentation behaviors

Fables

Message

Semantic feature analysis

Communication

Readers Theater

Literary elements

Moral

Play

Script	Scene	Plagiarism
Dialogue	Collaboration	Precise language
Adverbs – time, place, manner	Positive and superlative forms of adverbs	
Characterization – traits, relationships, motivation, feelings, behavior, attitude, point of view (first and third person), perspective		

Introduction

Ask a student to stand up and establish a simple conversation with him. Make sure the conversation is interesting and fun to capture the class' attention. After a few minutes of questions/answers and comments with the selected student, ask the class what they think about the conversation. Explain to them that you were having a dialogue with the other student.

Concept Development

Explain to the students that a dialogue is a reciprocal conversation between two or more characters in any given moment. Explain to them that the dialogue's main function is to communicate or to express a conversation. Ask them for previous knowledge or to recall an important conversation from a story or any other material, perhaps a dialogue in which they participate the very same day of the lesson. Introduce the concept of how is dialogue used in a narrative, again, to express a conversation between two or more characters in the story. Explain to the students that special punctuation is required when dialogue is used in a written story in order to allow the reader a better understanding of the sequence of conversations.

Student Practice

Group the students with a partner and ask them to have a conversation about any topic, for example, their favorite subject in the school, favorite TV show, favorite type of music, etc. Ask them to write down everything they said in order. Allow them to work for 10 to 15 minutes.

Assessment

Part I (first day)

Ask the different groups to present or act their conversation/dialogues to the rest of the class. Look for emotions, feelings, and expressions during the presentation. Ask to repeat their very same conversation as the first time, taking into consideration their own feelings about the theme. Ask them to express themselves openly.

Part II (second day)

Give students an image from any source in which two or more characters are present. Ask them to bring a picture of their family, if possible. Ask them to write a dialogue that could be taking place with the characters or people in the image.

Closure

Review for the students the concepts of dialogue and/or conversation. Explain to them how dialogue can be used in a narrative, poem, a play, etc. Emphasize the use of correct punctuation in a dialogue in different genres.

Materials

- Supplies/Materials Blank transparencies
- Word wall
- Student notebooks
- Images or pictures from different sources

Lesson Plan 3: *My Name is Maria Isabel*-Prediction

Objectives

ELA.R.4.05.a. 01 Make predictions about text (based on previewing cover, scanning pictures, if any, noting text structure - narrative/expository, scanning titles and subtitles, or chapter titles).

ELA.L.4.2.a. Develop specific vocabulary to suit specific purposes.

ELA.L.4.2.d. Interpret and evaluate the literary elements of language.

ELA.R.4.2.a. Describe and compare the characteristics of a variety of text, forms, and genres.

ELA.R.4.2.d. Analyze narrative text structure and its features.

ELA.R.4.3.a. Develop vocabulary using a variety of strategies.

ELA.W.4.2.b. Select and use voice and style appropriate to audience and purposes.

ELA.W.4.2.d. Write for personal and academic expression and reflection.

ELA.W.4.2.e. Write creative compositions.

Key Terms

Narrative Text Structure – Elements of Fiction, Setting and Organization, Characters

Interpreting Text – Timelines

Responding to Text – Timelines

Focus on Plot Line

Characterization/Comparison

Prediction

Key Vocabulary

genre	paraphrase	editing checklist
purposeful	summarization	writing process
questioning	punctuation	draft
idiom	capitalization	proofreading
realistic fiction	dialogue	voice
main character	introductory words	constructive response
minor character	adjectives	characterization
conflict	complex sentences	irregular verbs
plot	pronouns	peer conference
resolution	prewriting	reader response
self-monitoring	revision	multiple-meaning words

Introduction

Introduce the concept of prediction as “The making of a statement or forming an opinion about what will happen in the future.” Ask the students to predict what could happen during lunch at school or after school when they get home. Give some examples of prediction as the weather on TV.

Concept Development

Read the book *My Name is Maria Isabel*, by Alma Flor Ada. Ask students to pay special attention to Maria Isabel’s feelings throughout the story. While reading, pause in some passages of the

book and ask the students to give a prediction about the particular scene in the story. Keep reading and pause to indicate whether the predictions were assertive or not. Introduce the concept of self-esteem.

Student Practice

After reading the whole book, ask the students to predict what would have happened if Maria Isabel had stood for herself at the beginning of the story? Arrange the students in groups of no more than three students and ask them to change the ending of the story from the book, making a prediction if Maria Isabel was able to speak English at the beginning of the story. How would the ending of the story be different? Or would it be the same?

Assessment

Ask each group to present their new ending of the story to the class. Ask them to explain the reasons why would the story be different from the original. Refer to the concept of self-esteem. Ask them to refer to any similar situation in which they were not able to stand for themselves and what would have happened then if they had.

Closure

Refer to the scene from the unit “I Am Somebody,” and compare Miguel’s self-esteem with Maria Isabel’s self-esteem. How do their behaviors or reactions to the particular situations change the resolution of the conflict?

Materials and Equipment

- Copy of the scene “I Am Somebody” (See Appendix 1.)
- Class set of the book *My Name is Maria Isabel*, by Alma Flor Ada
- Overhead projector
- Supplies/Materials
- Student’s notebooks
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Transparencies

Modifications

When working on teams, please make sure that each group has students with different level of English proficiency.

Lesson Plan 4: Scene from an Image

Objectives:

ELA.W.4.02.b. 03 Define voice.

ELA.W.4.02.b. 04 Use a natural voice in his/her own writing.

ELA.W.4.5.a. Generate ideas and plans for writing.

ELA.W.4.02.e. 01 Produce the forms of written composition listed below:

- Short Story - a story incorporating elements of historical fiction
- Personal Narrative/Memoir
- Script - a scene adapted from a published story such as a folktale, fable, or other piece of fiction.

ELA.W.4.7.a. Collaborate with other writers to produce text.

Key Terms

Characterization

Literary elements of dramatic forms

Comprehension strategies - cueing systems, prediction, and inferencing

Comparison across texts and cultures

Creative writing - scripts

Reader's theater presentation

Peer collaboration and evaluation

Key Vocabulary

narrative

genre

fantasy

character

plot

prediction

story map

text structure

writing process

draft

narrative text elements

revise

edit

proofread

focus

organization

reading response

conference

setting

characterization

expression

Introduction

Introduce the concepts of plays, scenes, and dramatic scene. Introduce Sossaman's guidelines for writing dramatic scenes: Character-Desire-Obstacle-Resolution. Explain to the students what each one of these concepts means.

Concept Development

Show an images or images from any source to the students. Make sure, of course, that the images are age appropriate. These images should not present any dialogue at this time. Ask the students to imagine what could be happening in that picture. What kind of dialogue is taking place? What kinds of feelings are presented by the characters in the image? What is the setting? Describe it.

Student Practice

This activity may be done in small groups or only as partners. Give each group an image from any given source. Mention to the students that only the group should see the given image, and not the other groups. The students will first list all descriptive elements that can be found in the image, describe the setting. After the elements are listed, ask the students to write about the characters in the image as accurately as possible. Then the students will create a scene based only in the image itself. Model to the students some guidelines for writing the story following Sossaman's scheme: Character-Desire-Obstacle-Resolution.

Assessment

After the scenes are completed, students will read their stories and present their images at the same time. All works should be exposed in the classroom for all students to appreciate and compare images and description. In each activity, an assessment grade can be given to each student upon its completion. In addition, an overall grade can be given, taking into consideration the written description of the image/scene, as well as the completion following Sossaman's guidelines.

Closure

Explain to the students how a simple image can be developed into a dramatic scene. Life is full of images; therefore, a series of dramatic scenes is created to form a big play called life. Taking into consideration the parts of a play, explain to the students how while writing a narrative or a scene, every single aspect is very important because each allows the reader to have a better visualization of the story.

Materials and Equipment

Images from any basal book or any picture book can be used.

Student's family pictures, magazines and newspaper pictures can also be used.

Overhead projector

Transparencies

Images from magazines or/and newspaper

Paper and pencil

Modifications

When working on teams, please make sure that each group has students with different levels of English proficiency.

APPENDIX 1

I Am Somebody
A Dramatic Scene
by
José Prieto

CAST OF CHARACTERS

STEVE: An 11-year-old fifth grader, STEVE is an average student from a middle class Caucasian family. STEVE is considered a bully in school, always making fun of other students. He is not necessarily a discipline problem, but a difficult case to handle for the teachers. He is always trying to get things done his way.

MIGUEL: A 10-year-old fifth grader from Guerrero, Mexico, MIGUEL arrives with his parents in the United States at the beginning of the school year. MIGUEL does not speak very much English. He is constantly struggling with the new language. He is afraid to stand in front of the class due to his lack of communication skills in English. MIGUEL is trying very hard to learn the new language with the help of the teacher and some classmates.

LAURA: A 10 year-old fifth grade student, LAURA is an honor roll student and a teacher's pet. She is the Spelling Bee champion in the school. LAURA has been a very popular child in the school since Kindergarten.

AT RISE: The whole class is gathering outside the classroom waiting for the teacher. The class' teams are being picked to participate in the spelling bee competition. Only two students, LORAINÉ and MIGUEL, are left to be selected. STEVE and LAURA are the team captains and it is LAURA'S turn to pick. Her selection is LORAINÉ, which immediately causes an almost hysterical reaction in STEVE.

LAURA

I take Loraine.

STEVE

(putting his hands on his head and walking towards the bulletin board) You got to be kidding me, oh man, it is just my luck!

LAURA

What are you talking about?

STEVE

Him! (pointing his finger at MIGUEL who is sitting on his desk) I have no choice but to pick him. Miguel is on my spelling bee team.

LAURA

(spreading her arms) So what?

STEVE

(spreading his arms, mocking LAURA) He can't speak English, that's what!

MIGUEL

(looking surprised) Yes, Yo... I mean, I, will be in your...t (stands up from his desk; his head is down, speaks in a soft voice) I don't speak very good English, but I can try.

STEVE

(walking toward MIGUEL) Trying is not enough, pal, this is an all-English spelling bee.

MIGUEL

(MIGUEL's head is still down) I told you I can try if you give me the chance.

STEVE

(walking toward MIGUEL's seat) Give you a chance? You don't even deserve a chance, dude. But you know what? Ok. I'll give you a chance, right now. Spell refrigerator.

(STEVE turns his head away from MIGUEL and look at his classmates, rolling his eyes.)

MIGUEL

What? Ok. R-e-f-i, wait, wait, please r-e-f-r-i-g-e-r-a-t-a-r.

STEVE

(turning around, smiling sarcastically) t-a-r? t-a-r? I told you, you can't speak English. It is t-o-r, dude, Refrigera t-o-r. (STEVE face the class again.) These Hispanic people come to the United States and don't even speak the language. They act like they have the same rights as everybody else. I don't know what you are doing in here.

MIGUEL

(Raising his voice more than usual, MIGUEL surprises his classmates.) At least I am trying, and I practice every day so I can get better with my Ingles (English).

STEVE

Oh yeah? Here we go with the "Spanglish" again. Seems to me that you're not practicing enough, pal.

MIGUEL

It is hard, man. But if you know so much, tell me something in Español (Spanish).

STEVE

(surprised by MIGUEL'S reaction and request) What? Ok. Shakira, Shakira, mi casa e su casa. Buenos días to you, too! Señorita! See I speak Spanish (laughing) ja ja! Amigo!

MIGUEL

Everybody can say that. That's a song on the radio. Speak real Spanish. For example, spell Enchilada! Or Guadalajara!

STEVE

What? Encha what? Gua? Gua? What? That's not even a word! Sounds like Tarzan language to me!

MIGUEL

(mocking STEVE from before and spelling) C-h-a? c-h-a? I told you, you can't speak Spanish. Is c-h-i, duu, En c-h-i lada. (turning around and to face the classmates, who start to laugh)

STEVE

(angry because people are laughing) I don't have to learn Spanish, anyway. First, I live in the United States. Second, English is the official language. Third, I don't have any plans to go to your country this summer, or any other summer for that matter!

MIGUEL

My father says that if you can speak two languages, Español and Inglés, you get a better job, especially here in El Norte. So you don't have to cut the zacate, the grass, all the time. You can work in an office or something. If you don't learn the two languages, it's going to be very hard. Whenever we go to Wal-Mart or any place to eat, I speak for him and my mom.

STEVE

Norte? What's does Norte mean, anyway? See? English and Spanish. English and Spanish again. Well, you know what, Mickey? You should listen to your father and learn English, pal. You are not doing a very good job at it. The way it looks, he is right, you're not getting any good job, other than picking tomatoes and fixing roofs. I don't think it is right anyway that illegal people come here and take the good jobs from the American people, because we don't speak two languages. This is all English America! That's what my father says! Go with your Spanish to some place else.

MIGUEL

He also says that I have to respect the persons, so they can respect me. I have to respect the school also, and especially the country and the laws. Right now, I believe that you are breaking the rule No. 1 from the classroom, S t e v i e.

STEVE

Oh yeah? And what's that? Because for your information, my dear Mexican, I follow my own rules!

MIGUEL

(pointing to the classroom's door) Respect self and others! You are not respecting me.

STEVE

And why should I do that anyway? I don't even respect my mother if I don't want to!

(The whole class becomes completely silent, sensing STEVE'S words were over the line. Almost everybody in the hallway turns toward MIGUEL.)

MIGUEL

(raising his head up and responding firmly) Many reasons, amigo. Because I am in your class, and I respect the school rules. Because I respect your country, like it was mine. Didn't you hear me saying the Pledge of Allegiance every morning? Is that enough respect for you? Because I am respecting you! And more important, because I am a person like you. So I don't think it's fair for you to talk to me like that saying esas cosas about the Mexicans.

LAURA

Did you need any other reason, Steve? (turning her face toward MIGUEL). Miguel, would you like to be in my team?

MIGUEL

(turning toward LAURA) Si, of course, Laura. Gracias!!

STEVE

Whatever, dude. You know what Laura? You can call your team “The United Nations.”

THE END

APPENDIX 2

Tridimensional Character Sketch, based on *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, by Lajos Egri

Characters should be tridimensional. By discovering their physiological, sociological, and psychological makeup, the performer can determine the WHY of the character's goals and actions.

Physiology

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Height and weight
4. Color of hair, eyes, skin
5. Posture
6. Appearance (tidy, unkempt, shape of face, etc.)
7. Defects
8. Heredity

Sociology

1. Class
2. Occupation
3. Education
4. Home life
5. Religion
6. Race, nationality
7. Place in community
8. Hobbies

Psychology

1. Moral standards
2. Personal premise, ambition
3. Frustrations
4. Temperament
5. Attitude toward life
6. Complexes (obsessions, inhibitions...)
7. Extrovert, introvert, ambivert
8. Abilities
9. Qualities (imagination, poise, judgment...)
10. IQ

Other important terms:

Protagonist: pivotal character, driver, moves play forward

Antagonist: opposes pivotal character, matches strength of protagonist

And this important concept:

Conflict grows out of character, and vice versa.

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