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Smagorinsky
Writing Project

Personal Narratives

Task Analysis

- Plot, setting, POV
- Organized Structure
- Sensory Details
- Excludes extraneous details and inconsistencies
- Includes an aspect of conflict, tension or doubt
- Develops Characters
 - Direct dialogue
 - Author's word
 - Character's actions
 - Others' comments
 - Internal dialogue

Context

With almost 2,500 students, this middle school is twice the size of my high school. As of last year, 1,255 students were considered economically disadvantaged. There are approximately 892 African American students, 447 Hispanic students, and 913 White students.

For the past two years, the SWD (students with disabilities) group did not meet AYP in the academic performance section. Because the school has failed in identical sections for two consecutive years, they have been deemed a school that "Needs Improvement," and they must offer school choice.

At Richards, 55% of students are eligible for free and reduced meals. 987 are eligible for free meals while 271 students are eligible for reduced meals.

While planning for projects or homework or any type of assignment we have to be aware of the wide range of economic advantages. We have to be able to provide the materials that we expect them to use. Unfortunately, our access to materials dictates our ability to create units that involve creative materials. Basically, our plans boil down to planning around the most economically disadvantaged child.

Our county's final goal is test scores.

Rationale

Task Rationale

Students must be able to write a personal narrative as per the Georgia Performance Standards.

Approach Rationale

We will be using the talk aloud model approach because we are under the assumption that students have never been exposed to writing a personal narrative. Students are new to the process of creating a personal narrative on their own. By modeling this process out loud, students will move from simply recognizing a narrative to being able to generate one themselves.

Students will begin their pre-writing process with the use of a concept map. Creating a concept map allows the visual learners to organize their thoughts before they begin writing.

Using a concept map frees students from the pressures of form and allows them to explore the content of their narrative. Also, using a concept map will allow the teachers to see where the student is going before he or she reaches their final project.

Throughout our unit, we will be varying student time from individual to small groups to whole class discussions. By varying this time, we are allowing the students a chance to interact in the environment in which they feel they work best. Also, students can get different ideas from different students when working in small groups in which they are more comfortable. We are beginning the writing process with a large group discussion because we feel that at that point in the process, our ideas are very broad. As the students' ideas for their narratives become more and more specific, we will create smaller and smaller groups.

Account of Assumptions

We are assuming our students have no prior knowledge about writing personal narratives. We will begin our unit giving them examples of personal narratives.

Lesson Plans

Part I: Prewriting

In a small group, students will read and discuss stories that are examples of personal narratives. Engage students in highlighting or responding to elements of the text that emphasize details in the setting, tension between characters, and private thoughts.

Using a chalk talk, brainstorm scenes/events from students' lives. Ideas may include the birth of siblings, graduation ceremonies first day of school, first day in a new place, a wedding, a divorce, the death of a grandparent, an earthquake, the break-up of a friendship, the beginning of a new friendship, a time the student got into trouble, a time the student won an award or game, etc.

Draw a picture on the overhead of a scene from your own life. Include in your concept map, three-five sensory details about the setting, dialogue bubbles, private thought bubbles, a tunnel to a past memory somehow related to the event or scene, a rope for a tug of war that pits the two sides of the conflict against each other. Emphasize that all scenes contain an element of tension or doubt, even scenes between friends.

Individually, students will draw a similar picture depicting a scene from their own life. Have them label the sensory details, the thought bubble, the tug of war, the dialogue, the tunnel to the past.

Part II: Writing

Next, model writing a narrative based on your overhead concept map. Think aloud as you write, referring back to the elements in your drawing. You may want to start in the middle of the action, in the middle of the dialogue or private thought.

After you model this, have students write their own narrative based on their drawings.

Part III: Revision

When are they finished, refer back to your narrative. Ask them to come up with at least three questions for you to explore further when you revise your narrative.

Write down their questions and think aloud about how you might answer those questions in the revision process.

Have students switch papers, read each other's narrative, and write down five questions to help their peer develop their narratives further.

Students revise their drafts, paying close attention to the questions that were raised, as well as to moments that might be slowed down to heighten the tension.

Rubric

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Sensory Details	Student includes 4-5 sensory details.	Student includes 2-3 sensory details.	Student includes 1 sensory details.	Student includes no sensory details.
Dialogue	Student correctly integrates all dialogue bubbles from concept map.	Student correctly integrates most dialogue bubbles from concept map.	Student correctly integrates few dialogue bubbles from concept map.	Student correctly integrates no dialogue bubbles from concept map.
Private Thought	Student correctly integrates all private thought bubbles from concept map.	Student correctly integrates most private thought bubbles from concept map.	Student correctly integrates few private thought bubbles from concept map.	Student correctly integrates no private thought bubbles from concept map.
Flashback	Students correctly integrate a tunnel to the past with the use of flashback.			Students incorrectly integrate a tunnel to the past with the use of flashback.
Conflict/Tension	Student correctly integrates an aspect of conflict, doubt or tension. Student writes from the first person perspective		Student either correctly integrates an aspect of conflict, doubt or tension or writes from the first person perspective	Student neither correctly integrates an aspect of conflict, doubt or tension nor writes from the first person perspective

	throughout the narrative.		throughout the narrative.	throughout the narrative.
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