

Lesson Plan: Practice writing dialog for a narrative assignment

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Lesson: Practice and review of punctuation and paragraphing dialog in narrative prose

Timeframe: 45 minutes

Target Audience: Students preparing to write a creative story of fantasy or science fiction

Materials needed: markers, whiteboards (chalk & blackboard), index-cards and ink pen

Objectives: After this lesson, students will be able to

- Punctuate identification tags and quotations correctly
- Indent new paragraphs when dialog changes speaker
- Compose dialog with a dramatic arc of rising and falling action.

Introduction to Lesson: 5 minutes

The key difference between story and an essay is that a story shows while an essay tells. Showing the setting and characters of your story is easy enough with descriptions, but showing the action of the plot and the theme of the story may be difficult without explanations. The best way to explain what and why something is happening in a story is through dialog. With dialog, not only can you narrate the action, but you can also reveal character and hint at theme through word choices your characters employ.

For the next thirty minutes you will divide into teams between five and seven . Each team will be responsible for developing a dialog that has a dramatic arc of rising and falling action. Use the words you select as part of the dialog. Quote each part of the dialog with quotation marks and identify speaker with an identification tag. Indent a new paragraph when your dialog changes speaker.

Procedure Plan: 30 minutes

Students form groups of five, six, or seven. Each student selects an index card with a term written on one side and the page number in the course text where the word can be found. (5 minutes)

Students brainstorm ideas. (10 minutes)

All groups write their dialogs on the board simultaneously, editing as they go. The teacher should monitor each group's work to be sure students understand where quotation marks and commas go and when to indent new paragraphs. (20 minutes)

Closure and Evaluation: 10 minutes

The remaining time is spent as a class reviewing the work each group accomplished. Here any errors in quoting can be corrected with the class's help. All work should be praised to one degree or another, either for correctness, imagination, or suitability. Questions will arise as to the nature of the writing assignment for which this exercise prepares, usually by the few who have finally begun to pay attention. These questions are basic, whose answers everyone already knows, so they can be answered quickly and definitely. End class by encouraging students to use dialog to help them develop their narratives.

Lesson Analysis:

Narrative is a basic form of composition that is used to develop longer, more complicated writing assignments than a story. Narratives are used in reports, analyses, and persuasive arguments to name a few. Writing an effective narrative requires editing skills to limit setting and character in order to develop a coherent plot. Too often students resort to summarizing action limiting the effectiveness of their stories. The dialog exercise demonstrates through their own collaborative writing efficient ways of developing narratives. Using terms from assigned texts is useful review as well as a means of prompting students with ideas for their own ghost chapters, which are narratives that develop an additional episode from a story studied in class. (The ghost chapter assignment is included at the end of this lesson.)

What follows is a list of 55 terms for the Fall Semester class of English 22 with its enrollment of 54 students. These terms were written on one side of index cards with page numbers written on the other side. One group chose at random cards 1., 2. 3., 27., 30., 33. Here is their dialog with the selected terms underlined.

"How long must we hike through these rank sedges?" asked Warfield. "I'm getting tired."

"The trip will be worth it once we reach the Temple of the Flame," said Cummings.

"I see a mystic vapor. Is that it up ahead?" asked Warfield.

"It won't be long now," said Cummings.

"I can't wait to share the phantasmagoric armorial trophies in the temple," said Warfield.

Drawing his ray gun, Cummings answered, "Who said anything about sharing?"

"What?" cried Warfield, just before the atomic blast.

Terms from Course Text with page numbers in parentheses

1. Rank sedges (17)
2. Mystic vapor (18)
3. Phantasmagoric armorial trophies (19)
4. Walpurgisnacht (87)
5. Chaparral (83)
6. The Damned Thing (81)
7. Actinic rays (86)
8. Chromatic scale (86)
9. Alchemist (9)
10. Celestial potion (12)
11. Trance-like inebriation (12)
12. Elixir of Immortality (12)
13. Boston to Liverpool Pneumatic Tubes Company (371)
14. Utopia (371)
15. Eighteen-hundred kilometers an (371)
16. Neptune (373)
17. Planetary collision (374)
18. Photographic apparatus (374)
19. Spectroscope (374)
20. Pigmy moon (375)
21. Zenithward (375)
22. Centrifugal (375)
23. Centripetal (375)
24. Martian astronomers (380)
25. Apaches (394)
26. Moss-like vegetation (399)
27. Crackling noise of cicadas (233)
28. The Inner Dimension (243)
29. Cyclopean (233)
30. The Temple of the Flame (241)
31. The Outer Cosmos (254)
32. Auxiliary rocket (557)
33. Atomic blast (558)
34. The Federation (516)
35. Automaton (545)
36. Cataclysmic symphony (545)

37. Terrestrial Fleet (546)

38. Moon Base (710)

39. Mare Crisium (746)

40. Sentinel (751)

41. The psycho police (837)

42. Body burdens (922)

43. Technicians (924)

44. Rekal, Incorporated (881)

45. Interplan police (888)

46. Beau Nash snuff (880)

47. Aquatic resort (881)

48. Flock of perts (890)

49. Drift glass (895)

50. Amphimen (902)

51. United Nations (141)

52. Lie detector (141)

53. Objects d'mer (321)

54. Oil slick (177)

55. Sterile eggs (1035)

GHOST CHAPTER: OUT-OF-CLASS ESSAY

Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate their reading and understanding of an assigned story of fantasy or science fiction by writing a ghost chapter to add to the story's narrative.

Directions: Find a gap in your favorite story this semester, and in 1000 words develop your own chapter with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

- Include in the beginning a developed description of the setting.
- Develop characters and plot that are consistent with the story and that clearly coincide with one of its episodes.
- Avoid exposition: *show* what happens rather than *tell* what happens
- Remember the importance of dialog.
- Indicate the theme of your ghost chapter by the conclusion.
- Provide word count.

