LESSON 2 Every Picture Tells a Story

Activity to support units on narrative writing and character, setting, and plot development

OBJECTIVE

Students will write narratives inspired by photographs taken of objects in the classroom and areas in the school.

TIME

One class period, plus time for the extension activity

MATERIALS

Worksheet: Craft Your Story, camera and film, two containers, pens, paper

STANDARDS-BASED SKILLS

Write narratives about imagined experiences or events

INTRODUCTION

1. Ask students: *What are some of your favorite stories from books, movies, or television? What elements do these stories all have in common?*
2. Explain that stories have five basic—but essential—elements. These five elements allow characters to develop, keep the story interesting and on track, and help the story unfold in a natural and logical way that the reader can follow easily.
3. List the following five important story elements on your whiteboard or chalkboard and discuss the role of each in a narrative as a class: **characters** *(the people in the story)*, **setting** *(where and when the story takes place)*, **plot** *(the order of events that take place in the story, including any background information)*, **conflict** *(a problem faced by the story's characters)*, and **resolution** *(a solution to the conflict)*.

ACTIVITY

1. Picture this: Hand out cameras to groups of students. Explain that they will have 15 minutes to take photos of any items they find interesting around the classroom as well as in locations near the classroom. Supervise students as they take photos.
2. When students are done taking pictures, gather up all the photos into two piles—one containing images of objects and another containing images of places in the school. Place each set of images into a separate container.
3. Have students select two or three images of objects and one setting photo at random from the corresponding containers. Tell students that they will use their selected images as inspiration to write a short story.
4. Distribute copies of **Worksheet: Craft Your Story**. Explain that the worksheet contains a diagram that will help students brainstorm details and organize the structure of their stories. Students will use their photos as a basis for their stories' plots and settings—everything else will be left up to their imaginations.
5. Remind students that their characters should be well-developed fictional characters. Their stories should not be about anyone who may appear in the photos.
6. Tell students to use the outlines from the worksheet to write their stories on separate paper. Provide students with the following tips to help them compose their narratives:
   - Help readers get to know characters through dialogue and details.
   - Establish a clear sequence of events by using transitional words and phrases.
   - Show actions and settings using descriptive words rather than just telling readers about them.
   - Focus on one main conflict or a related set of problems.
   - Write from one point of view—for example, that of a character or a narrator.
7. Have student volunteers share their stories once they are completed.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: OUR SCHOOL NEWS

There are many ways people use photos to tell a story. Newspapers, for example, use images to make visual statements about current events. For a follow-up lesson, have students create their own classroom newspaper to report on school events or topics. Discuss upcoming sports, community, and social events. After the events, have students pair photographs with informative/explanatory articles to create an informed newsletter. Establish a list of events and ask for reporters and photographers to volunteer to act as journalists to report the events.

NAME _____

Craft Your Story

DIRECTIONS: Complete the diagram below to brainstorm ideas for your story. Base the story's main plot and setting on the photographs you selected. Then use the outline to write your story on a separate sheet of paper.

Describe your story's **characters**.

What is your story's **setting**?

BEGINNING: How will your story begin? This should be the first time readers meet the people in your story and learn where the story takes place.

MIDDLE: What **conflict** will your character(s) face? It can be a personal problem, like a tough choice a person has to make. Or it can be an issue with another person or group.

END: What is the story's **resolution**? It should explain how your characters solved their conflict and be a fitting conclusion to your story.

ACTION BUILDS UP

At this point, the conflict reaches its peak and readers learn its outcome.

ACTION WINDS DOWN

List the major events in your story's plot in the order they take place.