

PRELITERATE LITERATURE: Dictating

Objective: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the issues and qualities used in creating an interesting story by dictating to the teacher (or an older student) an original story and then decorating the border of the page with illustrations or designs.

Materials: Computer with word processing or a good old-fashioned typewriter. Examples of interesting short stories. Paper, pens, pencils, or paint to decorate the border of the story page.

Process: After sharing a variety of short stories with different literary perspectives and from different genres (or you may want to focus on one type of literary device) with the students and discussing what makes a story successful and interesting (list a few of these ideas on the board for reference), have students think about an interesting story until they can see it in their imagination.

For the very young, list and discuss some sources for interesting stories like: storybooks, movies, tape recordings and CD's, family histories, personal experiences, dreams, total imagination, and variations by combining these ideas. Try having your students create a story with a moral (a lesson to learn), or funny stories, scary stories, real stories, or made-up stories (fiction and non-fiction). Even the telling of short jokes is a literary form. When students think they have their ideas down, have them start drawing a picture of the story they want to tell. If you want the students to practice telling their stories, it is a good idea to have them spend a "show and tell" day reciting their story. If the teacher writes down the idea of the story, the students will find it easier to remember what they want to say.



A. D. Shaw, *Twice Told Tales*

While the rest of the class is drawing their pictures have one student at a time dictate to you what they want the story to be. Let the student tell the story in their own words. Ask questions for clarification, but don't give the student your words. The children know immediately if this is your story or theirs. Use your discretion in how much structure and grammar you need to alter. Usually the student's idea can be expressed in even a primitive kind of abbreviated structure. This is a great time to spend one on one with the student modeling specific processes and strategies for creating "the compelling story" and the necessary mechanics for making their idea "readable" and communicated. This is a good time to model that the

meaning of a story can be improved on and enhanced by using good grammar and syntax. Or in other words, there is more purpose to learning technical structure than in assignments. The real reason, the forgotten reason, for teaching technique in literacy is to improve: 1) the substance of the story; 2) the communication and readability of the story. Substance should be the first step in literacy. We don't want to teach our students perfect grammar and vocabulary and perfect spelling and have them not be able to come up with an idea worth saying. Substance and content existed in culture before literacy and so it is with each individual. Make sure the tail does not wag the dog.

If you have a computer in your room, use it to write the story as it is narrated to you. Let students choose font and color and title dressing. Try to keep the story the property of the creator– the student– and not the property of the technology and the teacher. This seems to be a problem with people who don't think they can own their own thoughts because the process of writing the thoughts down steals them away. It is a matter of perception.

Examples:

Dangerous Fire,
dictated by Morgan, age 5

One time my uncle Ken lit a match by his behind and he tooted. It caught on fire real bad. It burned all his hairs off his behind. I think it hurt real bad. He was already a grown up. I thought he was smarter but I guess not. This story teaches me to never light a match by my behind or anybody else's.



"The Dangerous Fire," by Morgan, age 5

The Orphan
dictated by Connor, age 6

This is a made up story. It did not really happen.

My name is Ryan. I am an orphan. One day when we were playing it got dark. I wandered off. I didn't remember the way back. I was cold and I wanted to get back. I asked some people for a map but they didn't have one. I looked all over and got lost even more. All I had was my baseball, my baseball cap and my baseball bat. I went to some strangers' house and asked for a sleeping bag. They gave me a room to sleep in and some dinner. Then I figured out that I was going to be their son. I heard them talking and they were talking about me being their son.

I went to sleep and dreamed that they were nice to me and gave me a lot of food and one or two candies. Then it was the next morning and I went down to breakfast and my dream was all true. Now I wasn't an orphan but I had a good family who wanted me.

The End.



"The Orphan," by Connor, age 6

Evaluation and Exhibition: The best place to exhibit this work is in the classroom. Read the story to the class. One or two stories will generate a lot of interest and a lot of ideas. This work can also be exhibited on paper. Let the students choose the font, the color and size of the font. Include borders or other decoration as the student desires. This will help the student own his own work. It can be matted and displayed in the hall.

Related Projects: Another way to get students thinking about interesting stories is to start them out with a generalized idea like, "When I was a baby...", "The last time I saw my Grandma...", "We went on a vacation to...", "If I could be anywhere..."

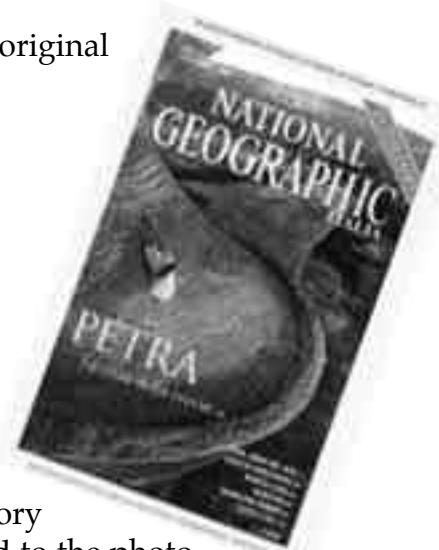
These stories can also be illustrated and exhibited with the pictures.

ILLUSTRATION

Objective: Students will demonstrate an understanding of imaginative fiction and the use of illustration by creating an original story which illustrates a photographic image chosen by the student.

Materials: A variety of good photo format periodicals like National Geographic, Photodisc, Graphics Illustrated, Smithsonian or Photoplay. They can be any magazines that carry a variety of well- printed photographic prints. Scissors, writing materials and, if available, word processing on a computer with a printer.

Process: Students will choose a photograph from a magazine which inspires them to think of an original story. The story can be either long or short but needs to be specifically related to the photo illustration they have chosen. Some students may choose an interesting photo that does not stimulate a story. Get them to think of the story as they choose the illustration rather than pick an interesting photo and then try to come up with a story. Either approach will work but having students create story scenarios while they are choosing rather than after should open their minds to many possibilities.



Most public education is about choosing the right answer or the wrong solution which generally means, "Do you agree with the teacher or are you wrong?" In this project there is no correct or incorrect, there is only making the best choice one can think of and that usually implies discriminating between the qualities of choices rather than the rightness or wrongness of a choice.

After students have chosen their illustration, they should write a short story which is inspired by the picture. Have a brief discussion on short stories and some of their very basic elements. Perhaps a short children's story can be read to young students followed by a short discussion of how the illustration relates to the story. Please point out that a brief, to the point, sentence or two is all that is necessary to create an interesting story if the sentences are compelling— rather than just short.

Very young students may not have the necessary skill to actually write the story. The first step in writing is having something to say. The image and idea should drive the story instead of technical writing skills driving the creative idea. To help young students understand that the most important part of a story is the idea behind it, have students tell their story orally. In fact, all of the processes of writing, such as topic sentences, thematic and character development, proof reading and checking if the right word is being used, can be done orally or verbally. This is good practice and focuses on content rather than technique and structure. Have young students “dictate” to the teacher or an older or more skilled student.

To help young students develop the structure of a short story, point out that this kind of literature has been somewhat formalized and that there are parts or sections in short stories that need to be there so that it will make sense and be interesting to the reader. Writing is for the reader not just the writer. The complicated and somewhat evasive nature of “short story” can be condensed into workable components such as Introduction, Body and Conclusion. The Introduction should include introducing the character or characters, setting (place and time) and setting up the plot or story line. The Body should include character development, story scenario and description of the conflict or problem to be addressed. The Conclusion might include conflict resolution and finale or the “big wrap up”, or a moral. The conclusion may be simply asking the question, “So What?”

Even very young students can understand this construction if it is outlined simply and specifically and the parts are introduced with examples and a list is left on the board for them to study and refer to. A quiz on the parts of a short story can be an excellent learning window.

Examples:

Colored pencil illustration, by Cole



Magazine Photo, Cole

"Going Hiking", written and then dictated by Cole, age 6

My name is John. I am a big man. I like to hike out doors. I like to hike over mountains. I like to sleep outside at night and go camping.

Once when it was night I went outside. It was dark. I heard the owls. They said "Who, whoo." It sounded a lot like people saying, "who?" I was scared and I started to shake. Then I heard crickets in the grass. They sounded like horses walking on the dirt. It wasn't so scary. Then I heard a cat scraping a tree. it sounded like a snake making hissing sounds. It was O.K. because I like snakes. But, it was very dark.

I ran back into my camping tent. I couldn't hear the sounds anymore so I went back to sleep. In the morning the sun was shining, the birds were going, "tweet tweet". It was a nice day. Things always look better in the day time because you can see them.

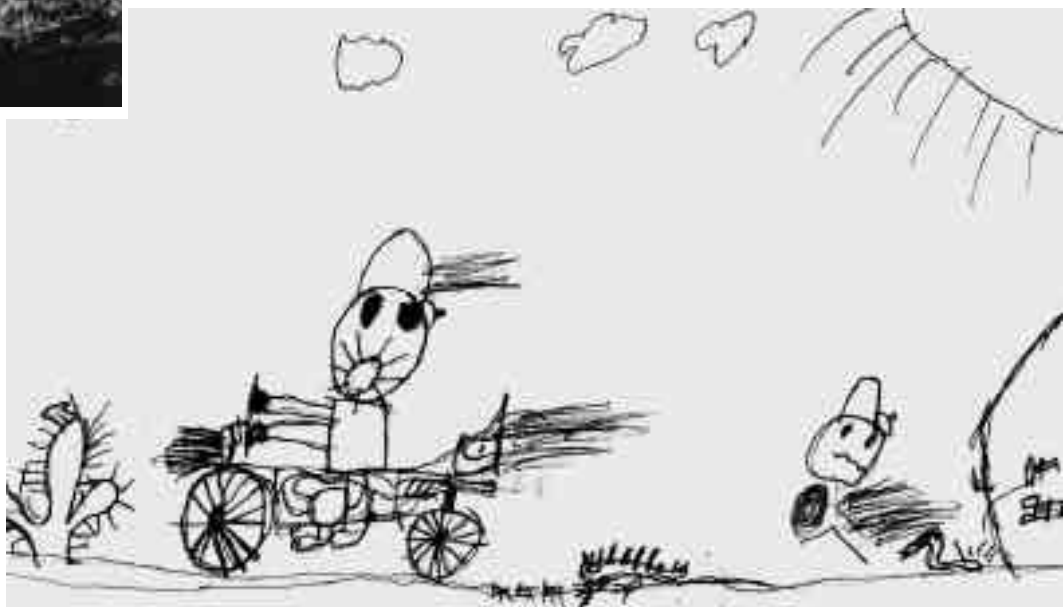


Christian's Photo

The Wild Motorcycle Boy, written and dictated by Christian, age 6

Ben is a wild boy. He lives in the desert. He lives with his family. He is 6 years old. He loves to ride the motorcycle with his Dad.

Christian's Drawing



One day Ben was sitting on his Dad's motorcycle. He was pretending to ride the motorcycle all by

himself. He accidentally made the motorcycle start up. He didn't know how to turn it off.

He was a little bit scared. He tried to turn it off but he pushed a switch that let the brake go. The motorcycle started to go. It started off slow and started to get faster. He already knew how to ride a two wheeler, so he just held on and kept his balance.

Ben's Dad saw him going down the hill. Ben's Dad started to chase the motorcycle because he was a little bit scared that Ben would get hurt. Then the motorcycle started to go faster and so Ben's Dad had to run faster. Then the motorcycle went even faster and Ben's Dad got a rope and roped the motorcycle. Ben's Dad stood still and the motorcycle went in circles around him just like a wild horse. The circle got smaller and smaller until Ben's Dad could jump on the motorcycle with him.

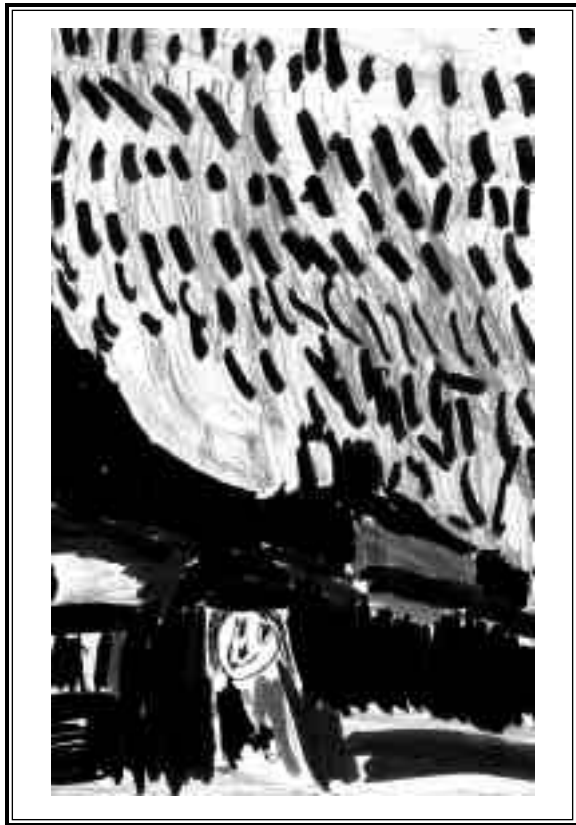
Ben's Dad was real good on the motorcycle so they went riding off until sunset. Then they came home and ate a good dinner. It was a fun time for wild Ben and his Dad.

Exhibition and Evaluation: This work can be exhibited in the classroom or hall by having the story printed in best handwriting or by printing on a computer and exhibiting next to the mounted, cutout photo. Make sure that each work has enough space to be seen on its own rather than as simply a part of something bigger or more important than the individual students and their original work.

Related Projects: An interesting way to exhibit and distribute this project is to have students make handmade books in which several of the stories and illustrations from the class are mounted and bound into a simple book of illustrations and short stories. With the aid of a computer and a scanner or a photocopier the stories and the photo illustrations can be reproduced and exchanged like baseball trading cards so that each book is different. Five short stories and illustrations make a nice 10 page book if the story is one page and the illustration is another.

Another variation on this project is to have students choose from several illustrations and then write their own story and then compare with all of the students who chose the same illustration. It is interesting to see how many different unrelated stories can be drawn from the same illustration. These can also be bound together in simple handmade book projects.

For Kindergarten, teach the students a song. Preferably, make one up together as a class. Have each student illustrate the song after they have learned it.



Rainy by Allison, age 5



Lightening Sparks, by Mckenna, age 5



Rain Drops, by Brady, age 5

The Kindergarten Song for 2002

Little rain drops, falling from the sky
Making little muddy puddles
Splashing in my eye.

Little rain drops, falling all around
Just like tears from heaven
Splashing on the ground.

Chorus:

When the sky is turning dark
Clouds bump heads and cry
Thunder roars and lightening sparks and
Sunshine says goodbye.

Vocabulary: illustration, scenario, introduction, body and conclusion, setting, character, conflict and conflict resolution.

Expository Writing

Objective: Students will demonstrate an understanding of “Expository Writing” by writing an original instruction manual on any of the media or processes found in the art curriculum.

Materials: Paper and pencil, camera or art-specific clip art, desk-top computer publishing if possible, but not necessary. For most students, you will need an “Arts Program” at your school. If you don’t have one, then invent one by volunteering to be the arts coordinator for your school. See how easy that was?

Process: The hardest part of this project is to choose an art project that is interesting enough to deserve a written exposition but simple enough to break down into fail safe manageable steps. We are going to write up a how-to description of a hands-on-art project. After deciding on the project, the student should try to visualize the process in simple, describable steps. Help the students decide if each step is a separate idea or if some of the steps are actually just parts of the same step. Don’t be too aggressive about the right steps because not all artists go through the exact same process. However, young students tend to rush process for the sake of product, so make sure that no important steps are completely left out.

Start by writing down a list of the steps. Then flesh out the steps with clear, concise description of each step. Keep it as brief as possible, but clearly explained. Look at the list and decide if any illustrations are necessary. Some people can visualize without the illustration and some people need a picture to fully understand the written instructions. The illustrations and instructional diagrams can be drawn in any medium including computer generated or photographed, but they need to be illustrations of specifics rather than generalities. Watch to make sure that the student is drawing or photographing the actual process described in the writing. Many students think that close is good enough, but specificity is very necessary for expository writing. Most good instructions leave room for personal interpretation, so don’t over instruct or try to get everyone to make the same exact thing. The space left for the personal and novel is where creativity is to be found.

EXAMPLE:

How to make a pinch pot bowl, by Frank age 11

- Step 1. First you have to get an idea. You get an idea by thinking. When you have thought a long time and a picture comes into your mind it is not a thought any more. It is an idea. An idea is a thought that you can see in your mind.
- Step 2. After you get a good idea for a pinch pot bowl draw a picture of it. This will be your plan. If you really want a good one then get four ideas and draw them all then choose the one you like the best. That is how you get your BEST ideas out.

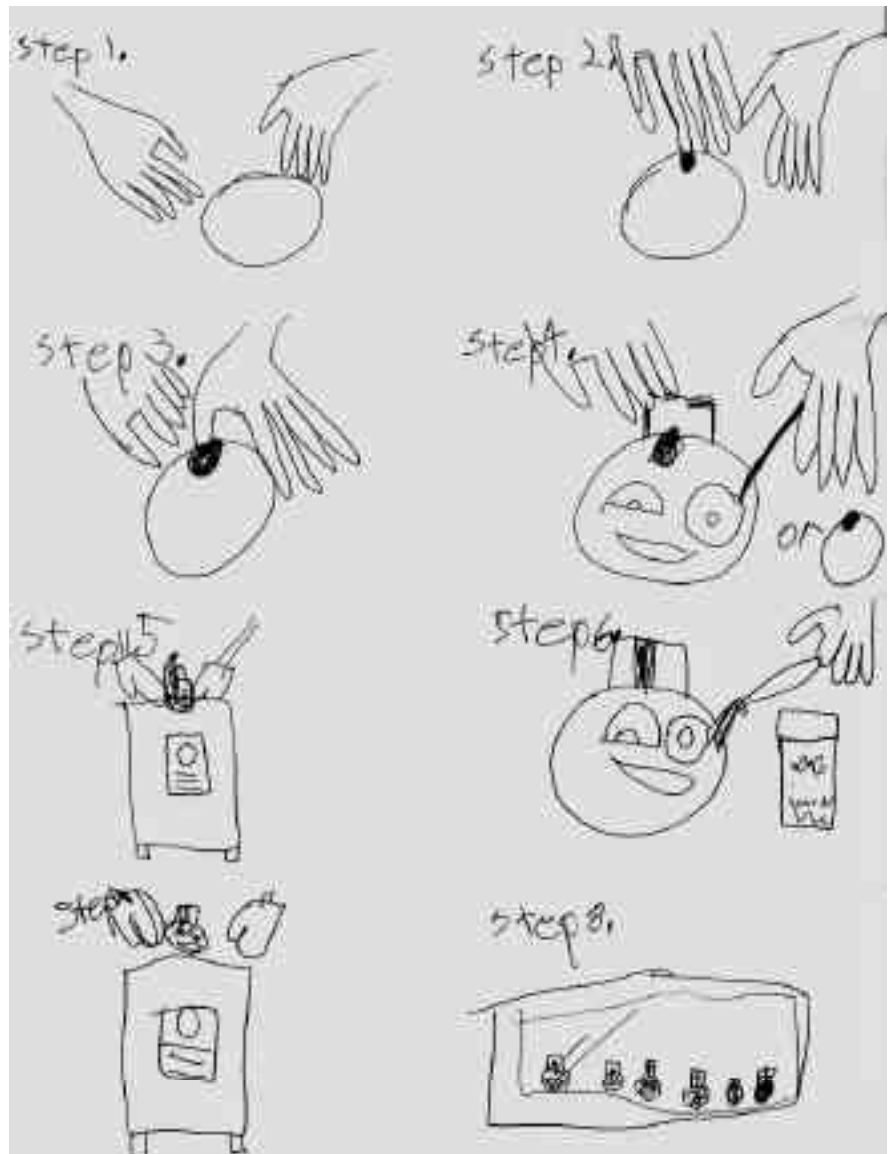
- Step 3. Now you have some good ideas and you chose the best one. It is time to make your idea in clay. Make a ball of clay about the size of you fist or a tennis ball. Make it round and smooth by squeezing it in your hand.
- WARNING! Clay will dry really fast in your hand. You have to make your clay ball in less than two minutes.
- Step 4. Now hold the ball in one hand with the thumb on top and the fingers under neath. Slowly turn the ball around with your other hand so that the thumb stays in the same spot.
- Step 5. Keep pressing your thumb down on the top until the dent is big.
- Step 6. Put you two thumbs together in the dent and keep making the ball go around and around while you press with your thumbs to make a kind of bowl shape.
- Step 7. What you want by now is a thick bowl shape of clay about as thick as you thumb and smooth on the out side.
- WARNING! Don't take to long to get here because when the clay dries it starts to crack. If your clay starts to crack you can try to smooth it down but don't use water and it is easier to tell the teacher that you like the crack and they look like dried up mud puddles.
- Step 8. Put some designs on the outside of the clay. You can draw with a tool. Not the needle. Or you can use something to stamp a shape in the outside of the clay.
- Step 9. When all the designs are done put your pointy finger inside the bowl and slowly stretch out the shape to make the bowl thinner and bigger all at the same time. Keep the inside of the bowl smooth. Take small strokes with your finger. No grooves.
- Step 10. When you are finished with the bowl it should be as thick as you pinky finger. That is about one quarter of an inch thick. Now it is time to put the foot on. The foot is skinny little worm of clay that is about 2 or 3 inches long then you flatten it out a little and stick the ends together to make a ring or a circle.
- WARNING! To get two pieces of clay together you have to use milk shake but it is really called slip. It is just liquid clay and you use it like glue.
- Step 11. When the foot rim is stuck on with the milk shake you are done working with the clay and your bowl is ready to dry, be fired and then glazed and then fired again.

Good luck and may the force be with you. Live long and prosper!

The following page contains a second grade example with didactic illustrations

How to make a pinch pot
by Daniel age 7

- Step 1. Make a ball of clay.
- Step 2. Poke a hole in it with your finger.
- Step 3. Pinch it with your fingers until it is hollow and makes a bowl.
- Step 4. Put whatever designs you want or no designs if you want.
- Step 5. Fire it in the kiln.
- Step 6. Glaze it.
- Step 7. Fire it in the kiln again.
- Step 8. Put it in the glass show case and show it to everyone.
- Step 9. Give it to Grandma for Christmas



Evaluation and Exhibition: After the first tentative writing is done by the student have the class critique the steps and see if it is clear enough. Have students pretend that they have never done this project and see if the instructions are clear enough to actually create the project. Use class input to model a polite and non-adversarial way to evaluate and critique the students own work and the work of the other classmates. The idea of criticism is not necessarily to find fault but to help both the artist and the viewer to better understand and execute the project and materialize the idea that the whole thing was based on.

A wonderful way to exhibit this instructional project is to exhibit the instructions with the finished work so the viewer will have a better idea as to how the work was accomplished.

This expository, how-to writing can also be bound in handmade book form accompanied by illustrations and bound together in a nice little package that becomes an art form in itself. (see bookmaking directions included in this packet)

Related Projects: Try the expository writing without illustrations or diagrams. It is a different approach when the author can't show but has to tell all of the steps. Try to write an instructional process without using any words, only diagrams and pictures of how to do it. Notice that this is even more difficult.

Vocabulary: Expository, instructional, illustration, diagram, critique, exhibition.

An Expository Song "assembled" by the Second Grade:

First you have to think to get a picture in your head.
Then you have to know your shades if you want a deep dark red.
Then you have to make a plan if you want to get it right.
Then you have to know your tints if you want to make it light.

Art's a kind of thinking, You do it with your mind.
Pictures in my head are my favorite kind.

FLAG DESIGNING, the description of symbols

Objective: Students will demonstrate an understanding of descriptive writing by creating an original flag drawing and writing all of the symbolic meanings of the lines, shapes, colors and symbols used in the flag.

Materials: Good drawing paper or watercolor paper, a variety of two-dimensional media like pens, marker pens, pencils, color pencils, watercolor, glue, magazines and scissors.

Process: Students should first choose a place or a cause that they want to design a flag or pennant for. Some background in flags and pennants and banners should be discussed. The history and tradition in flags is huge and terribly interesting. Share with the students the nature of the American flag and the symbolism of red white and blue and of the stars and stripes. Look at some other countries like Canada for symbols. There are many kinds of flags besides countries and states. Families and clans frequently have a flag or banner. Ethnic groups, clubs, sports teams, political parties and so on, have pennants and flags.

After looking at some kinds of flags and discussing their symbolic meaning and visual art devices used to communicate their symbolism, have students choose a source for their flag. For most students it is better to limit the thinking possibilities. Have students choose

between several idea options such as; your local community, your county, your school or your family.

Spend some time discussing the symbolic and evocative nature of colors and shapes and lines and textures. Talk about symbols like the bee hive, or the American Bald Eagle or what kind of tree or flower represents your family or town. The older the students the more they will understand about symbolism and less they are willing to discuss their ideas because they think that everyone has the same ideas they have. Younger children will spend a lot of time repeating the same idea over and over because they perceive all of their thoughts to be novel and personal, and of course, at a young age they are.



Once the idea has been established, have students first lightly draw the idea of their flag in a loose and light manner so they can rearrange the elements and change their minds as they work. The finished work should be done in any medium the teacher chooses. Don't overlook mixed medium and letting the students choose their own medium.

Have students do the writing by listing colors, shapes, textures and symbols and what they mean. The teacher can introduce a format or let the students invent the format they think will communicate most clearly. Students should write this in their best handwriting and a clear and concise way. Part of this project is to give the flag a name like we have done with "Old Glory" or "The Stars and Stripes".

It is true that this is not an exhaustive writing project and that the writing seems secondary to the visual image. In real human life much of our writing is not formal, it is brief and intended to convey simple and specific messages that explain specific phenomena. The goal of this project is to see the relationship between the visual symbol and the written symbol. The letters used to write the descriptive and symbolic words are also symbols, except that each individual does not get to invent the alphabet while they do get to invent meaning in this project.



Evaluation and Exhibition: An in-class critique is helpful. Frequently new ideas or twists on existing ideas crop up that will impact the students thinking and even the finished project. Teach students how to be constructive but honest and forthright.

For exhibition purposes, have students hang their explanations as didactics along with the flags. An interesting game to play with this project is to read the description and have students guess which flag is being described.

Related Projects: An obvious alternative to this lesson is to do it backwards. That is, have students write down in complete sentences with accurate grammar and spelling, the colors, shapes and symbols and where on the flag they will be located and why and meaning. This is a great descriptive writing project. Then, have students make the flag they have described. Later, compare the writing with the visual project. Discuss the differences.

Heraldry is a natural for this kind of project. Students can design a family shield of symbols or a coat of arms and the writing assignment is to explain and discuss it until it makes some sense.

Another project is to have students draw and color a "Spirit Mask." A "Spirit Mask," is a mask which symbolizes the intangible qualities and quantities of something or the essence of a thing such as a feeling, a holiday, a place, a season, weather, an animal or a sport. The writing project is the same: list the visual elements and describe what they mean.

Obviously, these projects can be done with other visual art creations such as: a ceramic clay "Spirit Mask," a ceramic clay "Spirit Box," a "Personal Symbol" or any work of art for that matter.

Some variations on the writing part of this project might be to change the format. It can be done in outline form, traditional paragraph form or in an abbreviated sentence form.

Vocabulary: Symbol, spirit, essence, content, outline, paragraph and sentence.



MESOPOTAMIAN CYLINDER SEAL WRITING

Objective: Student will demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of written language by engaging in the oldest written language form that we know about, Cuneiform, and producing a ceramic clay pictographic cylinder roller in the manner of the ancient Sumerians.

Materials: Ceramic clay, modeling tools, kiln, examples of cuneiform cylinders and cuneiform writing.

Process: After discussing the nature and history of cuneiform writing and the Sumerian Cylinder Seal, have students brainstorm on some interesting topics that can be written about with the idea of translating it into a pictographic cylinder roll in the Mesopotamian style. Not all interesting topics can be rendered in a three to five inch long strip of clay. Keep it simple. Here is very short history of Mesopotamia and cuneiform writing and pictographic cylinder seals:

Mesopotamia: Scholars call Mesopotamia “the cradle of civilization” because that is where the first cities were established and grew into great civilizations. Mesopotamia is the name that historians give the land and cultures that developed between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This is in modern day Iraq.

There were three major cultures which developed in this area. They were Sumerian, 3500-2600 B.C.; Babylonian, 1792-539 B.C.; Assyrian, 1115-612 B.C. The Sumerians were an agricultural people who developed irrigation, writing, math, calendars and walled city-states. It is said that “history begins at Sumer” because history is the written record of events, and around 3000 B.C. the Sumerians invented writing. The earliest writing kept track of business and tax records.

The Sumerian system of writing was called Cuneiform. Since they had few trees to make paper and the Egyptians had not invented papyrus yet, the Sumerians wrote with double ended stick on soft ceramic clay tablets. The very first author that we know by name was a girl. Her name was Enheduanna and she was the daughter of the Sumerian king, Sargon the Great. We have found 43 hymns and a cycle of poetry to the moon goddess that was written by Enheduanna.



Along with the cuneiform writing the Sumerians made pictures carved into stone or clay cylinders and rollers. These cylinders had pictures of parades (processions), religious events, battles, and other important happenings. Frequently, these pictures were accompanied by cuneiform writing which explained in detail what was in the picture and what it means.

What we want to do here is have students create a short written idea that can be translated into a small narrative pictorial, relief in clay by building a cylinder roller stamp in the ancient style. We will use ceramic clay and fire it so it will be hard like the stone which most of the cylinders were made of.



Cylinder construction: Use any kind of ceramic clay. Stoneware is probably best because it won't dry out as fast and holds its shape better. Earthenware will work. Roll the clay into a cylinder shape. It can either be a short squat cylinder about 1.5 to 2 inches tall and about 5 to 6 inches in diameter or a tall thin one about 3 or 4 inches tall and about 1 to 1.5 inches in diameter. These cylinders will use about the same amount of clay but one will make tall but narrow print while the other will print short from top to bottom but will a longer format. This is an important

decision that needs to be made before the students start carving the image into the cylinder face.

When the cylinder shape is determined and made, they can use a dowel or a large paint brush to bore a hole through the cylinder from top to bottom. The hole serves two functions; a space to slip an axle to help in the printing and a place for moisture and air to escape from the clay, which should only be about a quarter of an inch thick to prevent exploding in the kiln.

There are a lot of tools to use in drawing and carving the impression on the surface of the cylinder. There are loop tools for carving, needles for drawing, and knives for cutting. The most accessible tools for this project are barbecue skewers. The little wooden sticks for shishkabobs. Pick up sticks work well also or even tooth picks, so do hairpins, but some variety in tools will help students fulfill their expectation.

Have students first draw the image on a piece of paper and then lightly draw in on the clay cylinder. A pencil works well, but make sure students clean pencils off well before putting them into a pencil sharpener. Students need to draw lightly at first, so they can erase with

Make inexpensive loop tools by tying hairpins (not bobby pins, use the skinny kind), to a pencil, piece of dowel, or even to a reasonably straight stick. Use waxed dental floss to tie the hairpin to the pencil. Use pliers and make some of the hairpins more pointed.



their thumbs. Erasing is easy as long as the clay is still soft. As the clay dries and hardens (there is probably only a couple of hours of working time before the clay is too dry to work), more detail can be carved into the surface. The carved out lines and impressions should not

be more than a 1/4 inch deep. Remind students to take care to keep the bottom of the grooves and shapes from being too rough because they will be the surface of the print. Hint: even though the Sumerians did not do it, the ends of the cylinders make a great place to carve a round stamp. Have students sign the end of the cylinder and set aside to dry for several days.

When the cylinders are completely dry, they are ready to be fired. They will need to be canded slowly overnight before firing to make sure all of the water is out. Most students tend to make the cylinders as large as possible with only a small hole through the middle. Any clay over 1/4 inch in thickness is in danger of a steam explosion in the kiln. This is not terribly dangerous except that the cylinder will be reduced to gravel.

After the cylinders are fired, have students roll out a slab of damp clay about 1/4 to 3/8 of an inch thick. The fired cylinders can then be rolled into the clay slab. Students should try to apply even pressure to the cylinder as it rolls over the clay. They must push hard enough to get a good print. The next step is to cut out the printed part of the slab, leaving a little bit of border around the printed part. Trial and error will teach the students all they need to know about this process. Students can put a couple of holes in the end of the printed slab as a hanging device.

You have repeated the Sumerian style of Cylinder Seal printing. If you would like to take the lesson a little further, have students write a narrative in clear, concise and brief terms, about the depiction on the cylinder print. This is usually a kind of narrative writing, which explains the picture.

Example:

Cylinder Seal by
Anthony, age 10





Ceramic Relief Print
by Anthony, age 10

THE WIND SISTERS

"She is running like the wind. The wind is blowing in her hair. She is beautiful when she runs. She is running with her sisters. They are not running in the wind they are the wind. Run Wind Sisters, run away!" by Anthony age 10

Evaluation and Exhibition: An interesting way to process and evaluate this project is to have students study the print of the cylinder and try to figure out what the story might be. This can also be done by trying to match the stories with their appropriate cylinder print.

For exhibition, mount the clay slabs with the writing as a didactic explanation near it. To make a more interesting exhibition take a couple of photographs of the process and mount them along with the work.

Related Projects: The cylinder seal can also be carved from plaster. And then printed on clay. Be careful not to get any plaster into the clay. It will blow up.

If the clay print is flat enough it can be used for a printing template. Lay it face down on a piece of thin paper. Masking tape it into to place so it won't move. Be careful not to use too much tape as it will print also. Use a dark crayon with the paper removed and so a rubbing on the face of the paper. Black crayon works well and can then be toned with some slight color.

If you would like to make a slab of clay that somewhat resembles an actual cuneiform tablet, make a stylus with a wedge shaped dash at one end and a dot at the other. Even if you can't read it-it makes an interesting textural design.

Example:

A damp clay tablet was used as paper by a Sumerian clerk and it still holds the impression of the marking tool he pressed into it around 2100 B.C. A local doctor, recording some of his favorite medicines, dictated this pleasant sounding prescription to be written in cuneiform characters on clay: "Pulverize the seed of the 'carpenter plant,' the gum-resin of the markasi-plant, and thyme; dissolve it in beer; let the man drink."



Another variation on this project is to use the Southwest Native American culture rock art as a model instead of Sumerian Cylinder Seals. The Native Americans never did develop a writing system that we know of. Their use of symbol in story tell is much different and less narrative and more cosmological. Try to draw or paint a story using rock like images. The translate it into well written English.

Vocabulary: Mesopotamia, Sumer, cylinder seal, cuneiform, relief sculpture, pictograph, ceramic, kiln.

>if you need any help on the technical end of this lesson, like firing or where to purchase supplies, feel free to call joseph germaine, 756-8450 or e-mail at germ242@alpine.k12.ut.us

TWEAKING THE CLICHE'

This is a quick little writing lesson that is fun and teaches the use of paradox and irony.

Objective: Students will demonstrate an understanding of literary paradox and irony by creating their own based on the idea of:

"Everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die."

Materials: Paper and Pen.

Process: Write the truism on the board. Discuss the idea with the students. Have everyone work quietly and privately on their own. Read the students written responses to the class. Now, as a class try to improve on the ideas. Notice that on some occasions the "Group Mind" can be brilliant and greater than the sum of its parts.

Examples:

"Everybody wants to get good grades but nobody wants to study." by Zac, age 7

“Everybody wants to be rich but nobody wants to work hard.” by Lauren, age 7

“Everybody wants to smell good but nobody wants to take a bath.” by Myra, age 8

“Everybody wants lots of friends but nobody wants to be nice.” by Auraleigh, age 7

“Everybody wants to have everything but nobody wants to do anything.” by Jimmy, age 7

Exhibition: This work can be mounted and exhibited with drawn (pen and ink) visual narrations of the joke. Humor is difficult for young students. It doesn't seem to be hard wired in the head but something that is learned by trial and error. This humor might be slightly cynical but funny never the less.

Vocabulary: paradox, irony, truism, group-mind.

DRAMATIC DIALOGUE WRITING

Objective: Students will demonstrate an understanding of dialogue and dramatic play writing by creating as a group (or individually) an original play with emphasis on the dialogue exchange between characters.

Materials: This project can be simply written and then produced in class. The materials depend on if you want to produce the play in costume. It is all right to present this work as a reading. Many plays work equally well as dramatic productions as they do dramatic readings.

Process: To help students understand the nature of dialogue, show them examples from written literature. Read some dialogue and show what it looks like. Harry Potter books are a great source for interactive dialogue. Show the students what a dramatic play or screenplay looks like. Share the structural devices which separate quoted lines from stage directions. Show how to use parenthesis and colons.

To get the big idea across, it might be a good idea to show some video of a film with dialogue. This does not have to be exhaustive, just enough to inspire and motivate. There are a variety of ways to write down dialogue. Show at least two. Running dialogue like that in a novel...She said, “Bla bla bla,” and He said, “...,” and the written play style with colons and each player identified with stage directions.

Writing as a group focuses on the ideas, the jokes and the meanings rather than the structure and grammar. The structure and grammar are ultimately important but structure can not inspire meaningful content. The teacher or a “scribe” should write down the ideas and a democratic system should be developed to make sure you are dealing with class consensus. Write an idea on the board, discuss it, put it aside and look at another idea, put all of the

good (surviving) ideas together and reorganize. Ask, "Does this really belong here or will it work better somewhere else in this play?"

Example:

The Little Girl Has Big Courage!
by Brown group, second grade.

Big Boy: (standing in the hall with his hands in his pockets, reaches out to stop the girl) slightly whispering, "Here, take this. It is drugs. They are free and you will like it."

Little Girl: (walking quickly by) looking a little scared, "No! I don't do that!"

Big Boy: (getting mad), "What's the matter? Are you scared? You must be a big fat chicken!"

Little Girl: (getting tough), "Yes I am a chicken and chickens don't do drugs. I guess that some dumb old chicken birds are just smarter than some humans."

Big Boy: hangs his head down and walks away with his hands back in his pockets.

The stage slowly gets dark.

The End

This dialogue was written by the Brown Group of Second Graders for Red Ribbon Week.

Evaluation and Exhibition: A class reading with critique and rereading and performance is the best way to get constructive feedback and to exhibit this work. If enough students write a play, they can exchange copies with each other and organize them in a book of plays.

Related Projects: This is primarily a writing project but obviously it is also a performance project. Drama can be presented as a "Play" or as a "Reading". Most young students are loaded with interactive ideas. They just don't have the technical skill to codify and present their ideas.

Vocabulary: dialogue, character, drama, play, reading, scribe.

Music

Sing simple songs with your students. Teach them a new song by singing a line to them and having them repeat it back. Don't be afraid to repeat and repeat, and repeat. . .

Write the words to songs on the board and then have students erase sections as they get more familiar with the song. Hint: Erase the easiest parts first such as those that are repeated.

Sing songs that go with artworks you're looking at, such as a cowboy song with Hereford Roundup or "Down in the Valley" with Mountain Solitude.

Sing songs that relate to your social studies curriculum.

Make up your own songs. Then make an artwork to go with the song.

Write a class poem (see the lesson on "For My Cat Jeffery") and make up a tune for it.

A number of folksongs are included in the appendix.

Dance

Dance your class poem and/or song.

Make up a class dance based on a poem or a story. Help the children dance the story, as opposed to miming it, by asking them to find movements that "feel Like" a particular character.

Incorporate rhythm band instruments in the performance.

Find music selections that match the mood of one of the pairings in the Poetry Lesson. Read the poetry aloud, listen to the music, dance to the music and the words to the poem.

Make up a dance based on student-generated sounds. This is probably best done in small groups.

Drama

Make a play from a favorite class story. Make simple hand puppets and take turns performing the play.