

<i>School</i>	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University - Blacksburg, VA
<i>Subject Area & Grade</i>	Vocabulary Instruction – Writing, whole group, 4 th grade
<i>Date</i>	04, November 2013
<i>Time</i>	30 minutes
<i>Grade</i>	4
<i>Lead Teacher</i>	Mrs. Broome

Objectives

- The student will be able to brainstorm ideas for a possible writing prompt and start within a timeframe of 5 minutes

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Vocabulary

4.7 The student will write cohesively for a variety of purposes

c) Use a variety of pre-writing strategies

A.C.E.1 Standards

2.1. Reading, Writing, and Oral Language.

This lesson is evidence that I am proficient in the use and explanation of homophones that occur in the English language. The lesson plan is based on concepts of reading, language and child development and helps students to successfully apply their developing skills to many different situations, materials and ideas.

3.1 Integrating and applying knowledge for instruction

This lesson plan is based on knowledge of students, learning theory and curricular goals.

3.5 Communication to foster collaboration

Candidates use their knowledge and understanding of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the elementary classroom.

Pre-Assessment

In the week prior to this lesson the students worked on their first longer writing assignment. To measure the student response time to writing prompts the idea was to set a timer and note down how long it would take individual students to get started. The problem that arose was that students had not been given any new writing prompts and were only editing an essay they had already crafted. It is also the week of Halloween and students were eager to finish their essay. The essay topic was relat-

ed to Halloween and as a reward they were allowed to draw a character that went with their chosen essay topic. Even though I did observe students and monitored their response time I decided that this was not a suitable pre-assessment. It was also not possible to give students a spontaneous writing prompt to assess them, because this would have interfered too much with the lesson planning. Although it is unusual to teach a lesson without a pre-assessment, in this case an exception can be made. This is because the lesson is the start to a writing programme that students will be taught throughout the rest of the school year. The writing programme is set by the school and comes with pre-written lesson plans that do not include assessments at all.

Materials

- Scans of the pictures from the picture book
- A bottle with a coloured fluid that represents a 'magic potion'

Introduction (5 minutes)

Introduce the *Being a Writer* program:

"This year you will be members of a classroom writing community. In the community, you will write about things that interest you. You will share and talk about your writing, learn about what professional authors do, and become stronger writers.

What are some things you have written?

When do you write in school?

Outside of school?

What are some reasons you write, in or out of school?

Writers constantly read examples of good writing to help them get ideas for their own writing. It gives them a sense of the way good writing looks and sounds.

This year you will have many opportunities to hear, read, and discuss good writing.

Instruction (5 Minutes)

"I will read you a story but before I start I want to explain some vocabulary, so you can later enjoy the story."

Preview the following vocabulary:

page 1: laboratory – a place to do science experiments

vigorously – with great force and energy

page 2: ravished – filled with pleasure and joy

page 3: sauntered – to walk along in a slow and relaxed manner

page 6: slumbering - dozing

"Let me start reading now. I want you to sit, relax and enjoy the story. "

Turn off the lights and start display the pictures from the book. Read students an excerpt from "Gorky Rises" page 1 – 6.

Stop reading at page 6 and start a classroom discussion.

"I mixed up my own magic potion. Here it is! (Show bottle). Let me think what my magic potion could do....maybe it could let me grow really tall, taller even than Mrs. F. Or I could become small like a mouse. Then I could climb into someones schoolbag and travel home with that student to see what how the student lives like.

Ha, I also have another idea. I like to fly! My magic potion could cause me to grow wings on my back. Like an angel and then I could just set off and fly. Wouldn't that be great? Then I could just fly home to Germany for the weekend!"

"If you were going to write a story about a magic potion, what would that potion do?"
Collect some of the ideas on the whiteboard.

Extension (15 minutes)

"This year you will do all your drafting in notebooks. They are here! (Show a notebook.) You will also keep lists of writing ideas on a paper in the back of your writing binder. "

Hand out a paper for the writing binder. Use the whiteboard to model the activity.

"On top of the paper write the title *Ideas for Magic Potions*.

I will write one here on the whiteboard. Let's look at the magic potion I brought with me again". Present the bottle to the students again.

"What ingredients might you include in the potion? Let's look at the bottle here again. What could be in here?"

Tonic, a crushed bird's feather, sparkling water, peach syrup,

These are the ingredients I could have put in my potion!

Let's collect some ideas together before you start writing down your own."

Collect more ideas and write them down on the whiteboard.

"Now you will write down your own ideas for a magic potion and what your magic potion will do!

You can copy the ideas from the whiteboard that you like and then add your own.

And discuss with the students who sit near you."

Closure (5 minutes)

"Before you put your papers in the binder I would like to collect them to see if the story helped your imagination."

Let the students pass their papers from the back row to the front row to collect them.

Accommodation & Differentiation

This is a relatively homogenous class that requires little accommodation and

differentiation and it is relatively easy in this group to conduct lecture style classes. There are three students who struggle with focusing their attention and they will require to be monitored during reading and whole class instruction.

There are students who struggle a bit with writing and spelling and to accommodate them they will get a worksheet with a picture of a bottle on it. Instead of writing they will be encourage to draw the ingredients of their magic potion into the bottle and label them as far as they can. This kind of accommodation will also be suitable for students who struggle to keep focused in their writing, as it can often be helpful to them to work with drawings.

For manage the classroom discussion and avoid students yelling out, I will use a softball that will be thrown to students that may answer questions or give their input. This will also help to keep students focused because in my experience in the past it also helped to keep the students engaged who usually cannot focus very well. There are also a number of students who tend to keep quiet during classroom discussions and they will get be called upon to encourage their engagement.

Assessment

The brainstorming activity will be used as an assessment. I will measure the time it takes students to start their writing and evaluate how much they wrote down.

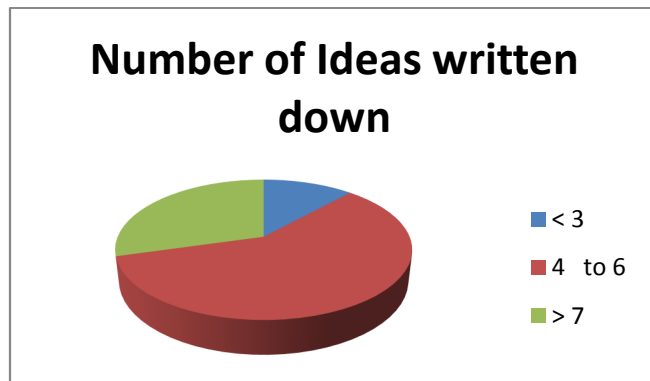
Evaluation

This lesson is the beginning of a writing program that the teachers at the school are required to use. The program is called *Being a writer* and it comes with pre-written lesson plans. This lesson plan was adapted from this writing program. In principle the idea of using an engaging story to stimulate student's prewriting strategies is a good one. The challenge of this lesson however will be the assessment. The writing program does not include any assessments at all. The goal of this first lesson seems to be to increase the student response time for prewriting strategies. For this lesson the homeroom teacher will be present and I will ask her to help with measuring the time it takes students to get started with their brainstorming process. Nevertheless the question remains how to arrange such an assessment when a teacher is by herself in the classroom and does not have enough time to do that by herself. There are students who will need assistance and I wouldn't want to deny them any help in order to monitor student's response time.

Post-Lesson Evaluation

Learning Evidence

- The student will be able to brainstorm ideas for a possible writing prompt and start within a timeframe of 5 minutes



Of the 17 students ten wrote down a list that contained 4 – 6 ideas for a magic potion. Two students wrote down less than 3 items, one of them had written nothing at all. Five students had created longer lists that contained 7 and more items. One of these students had created a very detailed list that also contained amounts.

The student who did not write anything is a good student, but one who struggles with creative writing. During the past weeks the students had worked on different creative writing assignments and this student regularly responded with a “I don’t know” or “I can’t think of anything” when confronted with such tasks. Another student who only wrote down two items for the list is one, who is actually very creative. The student writes his own poems and stories outside school, even though he struggles with handwriting and spelling. Given the time constraint that was there for this assessment I think he would have performed much better, had he had more time. This lesson was taught shortly after Halloween and the students had worked on a Halloween themed writing assignment before. Their list of ingredients for a magic potion still showed evidence of the Halloween writing assignment. It indicates that in the future students need to learn how to move from one topic to the next and not take too many ideas from the previous one into the new writing assignment, because then their writing becomes repetitive.

To help all students achieve the learning objective, they should receive more time to compile a list of ideas for their own magic potions. Students who lack imagination or ideas can benefit from hearing their classmates’ ideas. In a follow up lesson, the children can work in small groups and share what they wrote. The students who did not achieve the objective can then be given another chance to compile a list. Another option could be to make themed potions and carry on the Halloween theme a little bit longer or suggest a food based potions that can only contain drinks, or a flower and perfume potion. These would be more guided and help students who need more structure in their guided writing.

Reflection

This lesson was a bit more successful than the ones I had taught in the past. The mandated writing programme "Being a Writer" came with a lesson plan that I had adapted and found very helpful to scale the lesson down to the primary school level. In terms of numbers of objectives and material that had to be taught, the lesson was a bit more adequate for primary school children than the formal lessons taught before. The suggested book that comes with the writing programme is a very engaging one and I was able to make use of that properly. When the book was read to the children, the lights were turned off and they were asked to put their heads on their desks, to relax and just listen. I did not remain in front of the class but positioned myself in the middle of the class, and later moved to the back of the room where children could not see me but only hear. Even though this raised some concerns, whether they would stay quiet and listen, it worked out very well. When the reading stopped right at a cliffhanger, it had the planned effect on them. Namely that I had their attention, and that they also wanted the story to continue. In my opinion this was a good tactic to get them motivated.

In the lesson plan a part was added to model the brainstorming activity for the class. In comparison to the original "Being a Writer" lesson plan this was the part that was adapted to fit with current philosophies in English education that we were taught in the courses at university. Looking at the result of the assessment I would rate this a successful teaching strategy. But before the modelling started the children were presented a real bottle with undefined, coloured liquid in it, topped off with a cork. When this manipulative was presented to the class, it also had the desired effect. This became visible when children did their assessment task and I saw them staring at the bottle, while they were thinking. This had been a spontaneous idea that I had had the night before when I found the vessel by sheer accident in my kitchen, and decided to take it to class the next day. The children however, loved it, even though most quickly guessed that what was in there was just water with some food colouring. Nevertheless is a simply idea does the trick, it is something I would definitely keep in the classroom and use again!

After the modelling, the children were asked to verbally contribute some ideas to the list I had started on the board. A lot of students kept on going on the same theme of ideas and it was a good chance to remind them that there is more than Halloween with its monsters, zombies and vampires. In the assessment it turned out that only a few children had picked up on this and they did write down different items. It was a good learning moment for me as a teacher to realize how quickly children will spin off one idea and then the rest of the class will keep going with the same theme. This is where their thinking has to be redirected and they have to be encouraged to think of something totally different. Next time, I would tell the children in advance that their magic potion cannot have anything to do with Halloween.

The classroom management was not an issue at all during this lesson. First of all it took place in the morning, when the children can still concentrate and aren't tired yet. Second, this is the class that has all the top scoring students, and they are willing to work for anything that is out of the ordinary. They knew that I was going to teach a lesson and several had told me that they were looking forward to it. With this in mind,

I do have the benefit that they find it exciting anyway because I am not the person who teaches them 6 hours a day, five days a week. Last, this group is in general extremely compliant and they hardly ever pose a challenge to classroom management skills of a teacher.

1 liter of soda

1 liter of water

1 liter of ...