

ART FORM

Creative Writing

LEARNING AREA

Language and Literacy

SUBJECT

English

TARGET GROUP

Key Stage 1 + 2

MATERIALS

Pen/pencil and paper for everyone
Large sheets of paper (flipchart size)
An everyday object
e.g. a pair of scissors

SPACE

Classroom.

DURATION

You can use the range of exercises as a menu for a one-off session or a long-term project.

ARTIST'S INTRODUCTION

All of these exercises I have used with the Key Stage 2 age group. I have also used them in very different contexts; with senior groups, with individual playwrights, with community groups. My philosophy is that any constituency can take on board the most sophisticated tasks, if they are presented in an appropriate way.

With all of the exercises included here, my guiding lights (in terms of the age group) have been to (a) take on board the language-experience of the group, and (b) the life-experience of the group. Adapt the exercises to the needs/experience of the class. I have been constantly amazed at the way in which primary students can grasp the basic principles of 'what makes a story work'.

My advice to the teacher is to try the work out on yourself first. This might seem a bit of an arduous task, but it will bear gold.

NB Creating a Story is the fourth stage in the five part series of workshops and follows naturally from Creating a Character. You may also wish to begin this session with a warm-up exercise from Warm-ups.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Communication Skills – discuss, list, classify and shape words. Perform original poetry. Interview other pupils.
- Creative Skills – develop rhythms for words, build soundscapes, invent characters and write poetry and stories.
- Decision Making and Thinking Skills – make judgements and draw conclusions, select and organise appropriate information, and represent words in appropriate forms.
- Managing Information – work with a focus and follow directions in relation to a task.

INSTRUCTIONS**Everyday stories (Allow 24 hours)**

1. Keep a note book with you for 24 hours.
2. Jot down all the ways in which you hear (or tell) stories, or snatches of stories, over that period. Don't include stories from the television, radio or the papers, just those you hear live, at home, work, school, on the bus, in the shop etc.

Instant stories (Allow 30 seconds each)

1. Write down these three things: daffodil, cat, kitchen.
2. Write a sentence that links all three things into a very short story, keeping them in the same order. Make the story *active*. Begin with the word "Yesterday". [Example 1] Try these:
 - a) Banana, football, telephone
 - b) tree, pen, river
 - c) television, chicken, bed
 - d) computer, crocodile, toast.
 - e) book, shoe, penguin.
3. Try different openings: "Today I would like to...", "I don't understand why...", "The world would be a better place if..." [Example 2]

Example 1:

Yesterday I picked a daffodil, but the cat ate it and was sick in the kitchen.

Example 2:

Today I would like to put a banana-skin under the football-captain's shoe, then telephone the papers to say I've taken his place. The world would be a better place if we could look at a tree and write a poem about it with a pen, instead of chopping it down and sending it to the sawmill down the river.

Outcome

Writing creates meaning. By putting known words together in new ways, we create new

meanings, images and expressions. What do computers, crocodiles and toast have to do with each other? This exercise has shown how, by linking together things that do not seem to belong together, we can create narratives that have not been heard before.

The shape of the story (Allow 30 minutes plus)

All narratives have a shape. Here is an exercise that explores one shape (a circular story). It may be used as a model for a group, or an individual, to create a succession of small, linked stories.

1. Sit in a circle. If you are working on your own, draw a large circle.
2. Around the circle are a number of characters in a story. We don't know anything about them.
3. Select an everyday object that has a number of uses. Make it an object that can be easily held in the hand. Discuss what the object can be used for (Its primary use and secondary uses). [Example 1]
4. Write a list of all the different ways that an object may change hands. [Example 2]
5. The object is going to travel clockwise around the circle, until it returns to the starting point. Each time the object changes hands, describe or write down (a) what it is being used for and /or (b) how it comes to change hands.[Example 3]
6. You now have completed the 'journey of the object'. You have also discovered-through the things that happened around the object-the beginning of some dramatic situations. Explore a few of those in brief note form. What strong dramatic episodes can you suggest? [Example 4]
7. Discuss or make notes on how each episode of the story could be extended into a short scene.

Example 1: A pair of scissors

- Cutting things: hair, paper, cloth, string, pastry vegetables etc
- Getting tops of bottles, piercing tin cans etc.
- Emergency uses; as a screwdriver, as a hole punch etc
- Making marks; carving a name on a tree, scratching a message on a door etc
- Injuring and killing. [The rule here is that the scissors can only be used once for this purpose, and this may happen in the very final exchange]

Example 2:

Stolen, lost, given as a gift (birthday, wedding etc), sold, bartered, thrown away, confiscated, exchanged, pawned etc.

Example 3:

- Character A is cutting character B's hair. When character B leaves the premises, she sneaks the scissors into her handbag.
- Character B is at the airport. The scissors are in her hand luggage. At security, character C confiscates the scissors and pockets them for himself.
- Character C realises he has forgotten character D's birthday. He hurriedly wraps them, then gives them to character D.

Example 4:

We see character B having her hair cut in the salon by Character A. Character A is not paying much attention to the job and is boasting about his recent holiday. Character B is clearly unhappy with the results, but Character A insists that he has done a good job. Character B pays up, reluctantly, then puts the scissors in her handbag while Character A is at the till.

Outcome

The process of writing is one of setting problems and attempting to solve them. We make narratives by asking questions. The deeper the questions, the more complex and satisfying the story will be for the audience.

LINKS TO OTHER LEARNING AREAS

- The Arts – using music, art and design and drama to develop aspects of the spoken and written word.
- Personal Development – explore aspects of feelings and build confidence in working with others independently.
- Information Technology – compose and edit text on-screen to communicate and develop ideas.
- The World Around Us – Use history, geography and the environment as stimulus material and research sources for character and strong ideas.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

You are now ready to move on to Dialogue.

Don't forget to send feedback to toolbox@youngart.co.uk

www.youngart.co.uk/toolbox