

Lesson Plan – *Reading with a Writer’s Eye* - Laura Weakland, December 2, 2009

Subject: *Writing*

Grade: 5th

Unit: *Raising the Quality of Narrative Writing*

Mini-lesson: *Reading with a Writer’s Eye*

Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations:

W.PR.05.01 set a purpose, consider audience, and replicate authors’ styles and patterns when writing a narrative or informational piece.

Objectives - *Students will:*

- Study mentor texts and how they affect readers
- Develop strategies and goals to affect the reader in their writing

Purpose

Students identify the craft and structure an author uses to create meaning in a way to strengthen their own writing.

Lesson Overview

This lesson is the first lesson in the 2nd unit of Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study for Grade 3-5, “*Raising the Quality of Narrative Writing.*” This lesson also embraces the philosophy of Katie Wood Ray as outlined in her book, *Wondrous Words*. I chose this lesson because it too embraces a central theme of my own philosophy of writing. We indeed need to learn to write from writers!

Whole Group Gathering

The lesson plan follows a workshop model with an estimated 60 minutes available for the workshop. The first 5 minutes is devoted to gathering and anticipatory set. The anticipatory set in this lesson is a question posed to students to stop and jot about a quote posed. This quote belongs to Kate DiCamillo and should engage the students in thinking about using books as guides for writing. (*When you write, you use other writers and their books as guides in the wilderness. – Kate DiCamillo*)

Mini-Lesson

The lesson continues with a whole-group mini-lesson that would last 15-20 minutes. The architecture of this mini-lesson follows the following format: connection, teach, active engagement, and link. Students connect to the previous unit by discussing how important writing personal narratives is and how this time we are going to concentrate on raising the quality of our writing by looking to the work of authors as a “guide in the wilderness” of writing. The teacher will then teach and model how to read, notice, name, and theorize about writer’s craft using two pieces – “Ma Shanklin” by Henrietta Huffman and “Reading is Dangerous” by Tedd Arnold. Students will then continue to name, notice, and theorize with the “Reading is Dangerous” piece as the active engagement. They will do this on their own, as well as sharing with a partner. Students are then provided with a link to continue doing this process on their own in writer’s workshop with a collection of selected authentic personal narratives by popular children’s authors.

Independent Writing Time

Subsequent to the mini-lesson, the teacher will send students off for independent writing time for approximately 30 minutes. This is a time for students to immerse themselves in the ideas learned during the mini-lesson. Students will continue to review mentor texts (noticing, naming and theorizing about their observations), and brainstorm strategies (minimum of 3) for incorporating some of what they learned into their own writing. The mentor texts chosen for this lesson are “Hairs” by Sandra Cisneros (*The House on Mango Street*), “The Buffalo” by Ralph Fletcher (from *How to Write Your Life Story*), “1943” by Lois Lowry (*Looking Back: A Book of Memories*, pp.63-64), and “Never the Monkey” by Jerry Spinelli (*Knots in My Yo-yo String*). These texts were chosen because they are all written by authors of children’s books and they are all personal narratives involving the childhood lives of the authors. If students are having difficulty with what to look for and how to get started, hand out the “*What to Look for*” sheet to scaffold their observations. The teacher will confer individually with students during this time.

Share

The lesson wraps up with a 5 minute whole group share of student observations of the texts they reviewed, as well as some of their strategies/goals for incorporating some of what they learned into their writing.

Assessment

Students will be assessed through informal anecdotal observations and during conferencing. The teacher should collect the “notice, name, and theorize” observations. Students’ observations will reveal what they know about good writing.

Resources

Raising the Quality of Narrative Writing - Lucy Calkins (Units of Study 3-5),
Study Driven and *Wondrous Words* by Katie Wood Ray
MLPP Training (Writer’s Workshop – Facilitator Sherri Masson; handouts by Linda Denstaedt)
Personal Narratives of Henrietta Huffman
Guys Write for Guys Read (“Reading is Dangerous”) edited by Jon Scieszka
How to Write Your Life Story (“The Buffalo”) by Ralph Fletcher
Looking Back: A Book of Memories (“1943,” pp.63-64) by Lois Lowry
Knots in My Yo-yo String (“Never the Monkey”) by Jerry Spinelli
The House on Mango Street (“Hairs”) by Sandra Cisneros

“What have you read that is like what you’re trying to write?” (Katie Wood Ray)

For more details and for mentor texts and supplemental handouts for this lesson plan, please see the attached.