

Narrative Writing Minilesson:

Adding in Dialogue

Shannon, First Grade

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Alright writers, you know last week we had started a new genre of writing. What kind did we start? Do you remember what it’s called?”

Whole class speaking:

“Realistic fiction.”

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Realistic fiction, that’s right. And we decided and discovered that realistic fiction is basically just like a small moment that you write about yourself, except you are putting characters into this small moment which makes it realistic fiction. Ok? And one thing that I wanted to teach you today is that when we are reading over our piece about how our characters are getting started in their moment, we realized, ‘Wait a minute, I bet these character have things to say to each other.’ It’s just like the books that we read. Like when we read The Hungry Giant’s Shoe, what were the characters doing with each other?”

Whole class speaking:

“Talking.”

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“They were talking. They had things to say to each other. The hungry giant had things to say to the people and the people had things to say back to him. That’s called dialogue. That’s just a fancy word for saying they were having conversations, they had things to say back and forth to each other. We always notice that in books that we read when people are talking. Does anyone remember what those are called?”

Student speaking:

“Quotation marks.”

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Yes. Quotation marks. Kiss your brain. Those quotation marks are around the words that are coming out of their mouth, what they are saying. And I’m going to show you how to use it in your realistic fiction piece because it really gives the reader a good idea of not only what’s happening in the story, but the reader can also to get to know the character a little bit more. Ok? So I need your help, I want you to watch me. I am going to read over my piece. There it is. Ok. That I started, remember, I started this one with Mary and Molly. And as I reread, I’m going to think to

myself, 'What could they be saying to each other?'. Because I really want you as the reader to understand what is happening and get to know them as a character. Let me reread and think, 'One sunny day, Mary and Molly were on the playground at school. Mary saw Molly standing alone.' Oh, you know what, too, on my planning sheet I did say that Mary was a considerate character, that I wanted her to be a considerate character. I chose that character trait, so I'm thinking I need to pay attention to that. If I planned that into my character, I think I'm going to use that. Let me reread it, 'One sunny day, Mary and Molly were playing on the playground at school. Mary saw Molly standing alone.' I think I'm going to have her say something to show how considerate she is, what could she...?"

Students speaking:

"Do you want to play with me?"

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"Great minds think alike. That is exactly what I was thinking. Did ya'll hear Caleb? He said she could say, 'Molly do you want to come over and play with me?' Does that show her to be a considerate character?"

Whole class speaking:

"Yes"

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"Now look what I'm going to say: 'Mary said', now these are the words that are coming out of her mouth, so I'm going to use those quotation marks at the beginning of what she said, 'Do you want to come over here to play with me?' and that's the end of what she said. So I'm going to put those little quotation marks there. So I put them at the beginning of what she said and at the end of what she said. could Molly even say something back?"

Students speaking:

"She could say, 'Sure, I would love to play with you'."

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"Well, when I look back at my planning page. It says Molly is really glum. I say glum, you say sad. So would she say something kind of sad?"

Whole class speaking:

"Yes."

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"'Molly said', could I even let the reader know how she said it? 'Molly said...'"

Whole class speaking:

“Sadly.”

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Oh, what a great tag to let the reader know how she said it. ‘Molly said sadly, ‘I guess’.’ Would that fit?”

Student speaking:

“You just grabbed me.”

Teacher speaking to whole class and individual student:

“I grabbed you? I’m so glad.”

[Student speaking inaudible]

Teacher speaking to whole class and individual student:

“Then, I’m doing my job if I grabbed your attention. Awesome, yay. So writers did you see what I did there? I first reread what I had written and then I thought to myself, ‘What could I make my characters say back and forth to each other that goes along with my story, too?’. Ok? About what’s happening and I really did try to take into consideration if I have given my character a character trait, what they say and what they do should show that character trait. Ok? If they’re considerate, I’m going to have them say and do considerate things. If they’re kind of on the glum side, then I’m going to have them say something in a glum way. So think of your character trait that you’ve given your character too when you’re thinking of this. Now I’m going to get you to try it. You’re going to turn and talk, get out your piece that you’ve been working on, and kind of read over to your partner and see if you could find something that you think your characters could say back and forth.”

Teacher speaking to individual students:

“Daniel, right there baby. Well, go back and let’s reread. Stuart, knee to knee. Ok, I’m just listening in to see what you all are coming up with.”

[Student speaking inaudible, reading written sentences]

“Oh, right there you even said, ‘One day, Bob and Sam were playing at the park talking.’ What a perfect opportunity to add a little bit of dialogue. What would you have them say to each other? Because what is happening here?”

[Student speaking inaudible]

Teacher speaking to individual students:

“What would you have your character - you’re the creator of this, you can have them talking about anything.”

[Student speaking inaudible, talking about dialogue related to football games]

“Ok, so let’s think – let’s dig deeper into that. ‘One day, Bob and Sam were playing at the park and talking about football’. Ok, what would you have Bob say to Sam?”

[Student speaking inaudible, talking about dialogue related to football games]

Teacher speaking to individual student:

“Bob asked, ‘Did you watch the football game last night?’ And how would Sam reply? ‘Sam said...’ Ok? But that’s dialogue, that’s adding more details to your story and kind of letting us – already Christian, now I have a better idea of what these two boys are like. They’re definitely interested in football and in sports. That helps me get to know you’re character better. Ok, ya’ll keep talking. Did you find a part that maybe you could add some dialogue? Let’s go back to that first page and see, ok? ‘One sunny day, my mom played on the swing by herself.’ Do you think she said anything? What would you have her say if she’s sitting on the swing all by herself?”

[Student speaking inaudible, describing dialogue]

Teacher speaking to individual student:

“She might say, ‘Mom said, ‘I want someone to play with’.’ I think that’s great, ok? Very good.”

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Ok writers, can we turn back for a second and let me tell you some of the things that I observed listening to your conversations? Christian and I were talking about his piece. His piece started like this: ‘One day Bob and Sam were at the park playing and talking.’ I said, ‘What a great opportunity right there, you even said they were talking.’ So, then he decided to add a little bit more, talking about?”

Student speaking:

“Football.”

Teacher speaking to whole class and individual student:

“Football. You decide they were playing about football. That lets the reader know a little bit more. So then he decided to add some dialogue where Bob said or asked, ‘Did you watch the football game last night?’ and Sam said, ‘Yes.’ So even though simple little conversation, simple little dialogue still lets me as the reader into that character a little bit and into understanding because already now I know they like football a little bit more. It’s just a good detail to add to your piece. Kenny started her piece by saying, ‘One day, my mom was playing on the swing set by herself.’ and I said, ‘Well, what is something that you think she would say?’

[Student speaking inaudible, describing added dialogue]

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“‘Mom said, ‘I wish I had somebody to play with’.’ Because that’s what her piece is about, this Mom who was out there playing by herself and finally got someone to play with.”

Student speaking:

“Can I read my piece?”

Teacher speaking to whole class and individual student:

“Yes.”

[Student speaking inaudible, reading written sentences]

Teacher speaking to whole class and individual student:

“Ok, did you decide on something to maybe add to that? What are you going to have them say?”

[Student speaking inaudible, adding dialogue]

“That would make sense.”

[Student speaking inaudible, adding dialogue]

Teacher speaking to whole class and individual student:

“I think that sounds like great dialogue going on. Ok, I know you all have lots of things to share, but what I want you to do though, is I want us to go get these ideas down on paper, Caleb, before we lose them. So writers, I want you to quietly go over to your seat, read over again as you go, and think where maybe I could add a little bit of dialogue.”