Create-A-Story
Teacher's Manual

Day One: Introducing Story Elements to Classrooms and Groups

Materials: Story Element Cards. Description of elements in Game directions

Objective: 1) To teach the meaning of the story elements—topic sentence, character, setting, plot, resolution, and lesson. 2) To begin generating ideas for a story based on elements selected in this exercise.

Goal: Students will understand the meaning of each story element and the role each plays in the story. Students will generate and share story ideas with the class.

The teacher:
1) selects a topic sentence card
2) reads the card aloud to the class
3) explains the function of a topic sentence
4) asks students to generate story ideas based on the chosen topic sentence.

Teacher continues this process with each story element. At this stage, the class is not generating a story, they are just discussing elements and generating ideas for each story element.

Day Two: Collect Story Element Cards for a Class Story

Materials: Game board, 1 pawn, 1 die, and story element cards.

Objective: 1) To collect story element cards for a class story using the game board and one pawn. 2) To generate ideas for using each element selected.

Goal: Students will take turns 1) rolling die, 2) moving pawn for the class, and 3) selecting corresponding story element card. As a class, students will generate and share ideas for using each story element in the story.

Teacher begins by picking one topic sentence card that will serve as the basis for the class story. After teacher reads topic sentence aloud, students volunteer their ideas about what might happen in the story.

Next, the class begins to play the board. A student is chosen to come to the game board, roll the die, move the pawn, and select the corresponding card. Teacher reads the card aloud to the class and asks class if and how it could be used in the story. Once class has generated ideas, the card is put aside until later and another student is chosen

to come to the game board. The game proceeds until the class pawn has reached the Write! Space on the board.

*Important note: At this point the class is not deciding which particular cards to use in the story. As they express their ideas about each card they are beginning to generate the flow of the story and analyze which cards will or will not lend themselves to that story.

Day Three: Generate an Outline Based on Story Element Cards Chosen on Day Two

Materials: Story element cards selected on day two and an outline sheet copied onto a transparency for an overhead projector.

Objective: 1) To generate an outline for a class story using the story element cards from day two.   2) To understand how the outline sheet is used to organize a story.

Goal: Students will choose which story element cards will fit in the story and which should be discarded. Students will understand the use of the outline sheet. Students will sequence events from the Plot to the Resolution. Students will generate dialogue for the story.

Teacher begins by writing the topic sentence on the outline sheet. Then the teacher takes the setting cards selected on day two and reads them to the class. With each card, the class votes as to whether it should remain in the story or be discarded. After a card is chosen to remain in the story, the teacher calls on one student to formulate how it should be used in the story. This may entail generating a sentence using the word. The teacher proceeds in the following order: setting, character, plot, resolution, lesson.

*Important note: There may be multiple settings and characters in the story.

Next, the teacher explains the transition words used between the plot and the resolution and how they function to help sequence the events. The class then the sequence of events (what happens in the story). Students should raise their hands and take turns volunteering ideas for events in the story. Teacher may need to guide the events and remind students that they are trying to get from the problem to the resolution and lesson.

After the body of the story has been outlined, the class decides where to use the description cards and generates dialogue for the dialogue cards. The teacher can also challenge students by waiting for day four and having each group independently decide where to use these words.

Day Four: Write Stories in Groups of 4 or 5 Students

Materials: Completed class outline on overhead projector, lined paper and pencils.

Objective: To write a story based on the class outline in a group setting.

Goal: Each group will complete a story based on the class outline.

Groups can choose one person to be the writer. All students in the group should be encouraged to participate in the writing of the story. Using the class outline groups should turn outline into complete, well connected sentences that follow the sequence of the outline.

Teacher should go around to each group to monitor progress and answer questions. Some modeling and guidance may be necessary.

This type of group activity is ideal for students with writing and reading difficulties. Without the burden of writing, such students can participate in the writing process through oral contributions to the story.

Day Five: Editing

Materials: One group story copied on to transparency, overhead projector, and score sheet copied on to transparency.

Objective: 1) To check stories for content. 2) To understand use of score sheet. 3) To foster self-correction and editing skills.

Goal: As a class students will go through the editing process using the score sheet. Students will understand how the score sheet helps them to see where they need to make changes in their story. Students will offer ideas for fixing the story in order to achieve 100 points.

Teacher places a story on overhead projector and reads that story aloud to class. Teacher then takes out score sheet and with the class, checks the story for each element and records the points earned. Teacher should ask the class to decide if the story contained that element and where it is in the story. After points are given, teacher totals the scores to see if the class has arrived at 100 points. If 100 has not been achieved, the teacher asks the class to notice what was missing and offer editing ideas. Teacher then takes an idea, writes it into the story, and changes the score. When all editing is complete, teacher re-tallies the score which should now equal 100 points. The teacher should then inform the class that everyone gets 100 points for the first story.

**The class is now ready for group and individual play. From collecting story element cards to a final draft, the game should take approximately 3 days to complete a story (given a 30-40 minute period).

After introducing the game as a class, it is advised that students work in groups for the next story. Each group collects their own story element cards and then works together to generate the outline and story. The teacher uses the score sheet provide feedback on their first draft. The group completes their final draft by making necessary changes and arriving at 100 points. Group stories can then be shared with the class.

After a few times at group play, students should be ready for individual play. At this point, each student will collect his/her own element cards, generate an outline and complete a story. It may be necessary to stagger the class so that only half the class is working on stories at a time (the quantity of cards in the game may not be sufficient for the whole class to generate individual stories).

The final stage of the game is for students to begin to generate their own settings, characters, plots, etc. based on a topic sentence. By using the outline sheet, students can see what elements they need to generate. By this time too, many students may have already added their own elements to their stories and be eager to write on their own. It is important for students to continue using the outline sheet since this is a normal part of the writing process.

Oral Storytelling

Many students have difficulty with the writing process but would benefit from the structure and creativity generated by this game. When using Create-A-Story for oral storytelling, follow the same steps outlined in the classroom introduction. However, the teacher or aid will record the student's responses and verbally remind the student of his/her story ideas. Finally, when the complete story is ready to be verbalized, record the story on an audiotape. The story can then be transcribed for scoring and editing.

In order to help students anchor their story ideas, prompt students to draw pictures of the settings, character, the plot and the resolution. They can use these drawings to direct their verbalization of the story.

Additional Narrative Writing Activities

The fun and excitement continues! Here are ideas for using the contents of your game to further refine narrative writing skills.

1) What is the Missing Element?
Goal: To have students recognize narrative story elements in written material. The teacher writes a few short narratives and omits 1-3 of the elements (including dialogue and descriptors). The students then identify the missing element(s) and complete the story. The students can refer to the Create-A-Story game card sets or generate their own elements to complete the story. This task can be administered to a class or an individual.

2) Using the Game Contents Independently
Story Elements
Goal: To use the the eight story elements as a resource when summarizing the important elements in a work of fiction. The elements act as "helpers" to extract topic sentences, settings, characters, plots, resolutions, lessons, and dialogue from the story in order to write a summary or book report.

Outline Sheet

Goal: To provide structure and sequence to students writing stories independently. The outline sheet can be used as a checklist. Students who are generating their own elements will use the sheet to outline their stories and ensure that all elements are included and that the story contains descriptive words and transitions.

3) Applying the Game to Social Studies/Literature Assignments

Goal: To provide the overlap of narrative writing skills into content areas.

Use the game format and materials to create a writing assignment which pertains to a subject you are currently studying. For example: Your class is studying mission life in California history and your students are assigned to write a first person narrative on mission life.

1) The teacher and class create the specific subject matter of each story element to fit the assignment. For example mission life characters: Spaniard, Padre, Indian, Californio, Mexicans, children; and settings: the mission, corn fields, the coast, the mountains, on a ship, in the morning, at night, etc.
2) The students record the generated element ideas under the appropriate element headings on a piece of paper.
3) Then students take the outline sheet and element idea paper and either independently or in groups complete the outline.
4) Finally, students write the narrative in a story format and use the score pad to edit the content.
5) To further the assignment, students can turn their stories into plays and act out the assignment.

4) Journaling

The Create-A-Story element card deck can be used as journaling topics.

1) Use the "Topic Sentence" cards as the first sentence in a free-write assignment.
2) Use the "Setting" and "Character" cards to practice brainstorming and listing adjectives (description words). Write the selected card at the top of the journal page and list words or phrases that paint a clear, complete picture of that setting or character. Then using your words or phrases, create sentences to describe the setting or character.

On the Horizon...

Finally, another edition of story element cards should be available in fall of 2000. Create! Press will soon produce a software version of Create-A-Story for independent classroom and home use. As well, look for our expository writing game in the winter of 2000/2001. This game will teach students to write informative, persuasive, operational, cause/effect, and compare/contrast paragraphs and essays in the fun, exciting way that Create-A-Story teaches narrative writing.