

The Field Trip Menu (2013-2014)

PJ DAY

Grades: Second-Semester First Grade

Length of time: 2 hours

Skills taught: General overview of what makes a good story, including characters, setting, plot, conflict/solution, details.

Description: The students come (in their pajamas, if possible) to a workshop where they will write a bedtime story. They work collectively with a storyteller and a typist to create it, going over all the main parts of what makes a good story. Dr. Blotch, our crotchety editor, Skypes in from time to time. He doesn't think children that young can write; students that young can't do ANYTHING--they can't even change their own diapers! When the story is finished, students each get a printed book to illustrate. They also create their own front and back covers.

At the end of the field trip, the story is read to Dr. Blotch, who finds it remarkable in every way. He slowly drifts off to sleep as the class finishes reading it to him, and everyone tiptoes out of 826 while Dr. Blotch snores loudly.

End product: Each student leaves with a bound book containing the group's story and his or her own illustrations.

Storytelling & Bookmaking

Grades: Second (and Third)

Length of time: 2 hours

Skills taught: Overview of what makes a good story, including setting, plot, conflict/problem (what does the character want, what will he or she do to get it), character, solution, dialogue, details/descriptions.

Description: Students arrive on a Wednesday/Friday morning, but everyone at 826 seems to think it's Thursday, and that they are there for the Tax Preparation Seminar. A few moments into this seminar, Dr. Blotch, our crotchety editor, busts in. It's Wednesday/Friday, and the 826 staff owes him a story by noon or they will all be fired. Oh dear! Can the students help the staff write a really fantastic story, one that will

please the un-please-able Dr. Blotch?!

Staff, volunteers, and students work together to write a story to a climax point. The students then write their own endings individually in the 826 writing lab. At the end of the workshop, Dr. Blotch reads each student's ending one by one. Although he has NEVER before approved a story, he is so awed by the genius of each student's ending that he approves them all! But shhh! Don't tell your students -- this is part of the surprise!

End product: Each student leaves with a bound book of the group's story and his or her individual ending.

Do Pass Go; Do Collect 200 Stanzas:

Dr. Blotch's Life-Sized Board Game

Grade: Third (and Fourth)

Length of time: 2 hours

Skills taught: Teamwork and collaborative writing exercises for various types of writing, including haiku, taboo poems, ekphrastic poems, limericks, acrostics, and odes, as well as poetic devices like metaphor, simile, and onomatopoeia.

Description: Students arrive as game testers in Dr. Blotch's Life-Sized Game Testing Laboratory. Students are assigned to teams in order to test the game to make sure it is "fun" (something Blotch knows nothing about but knows that it is something other people enjoy and spend money on). In small teams of 3-5, students work with volunteers (game testing technicians) to build team spirit and to create a team name and chant that they then share with the group.

The EMCEE volunteer and other volunteers help explain the rules of the game, the concept of collaborative writing (teamwork!), and poetic devices that they'll need to play the game to the students. Teams play the game, attempting to write six new poems collaboratively for one hour. Volunteers lead the teams, troubleshoot, and help approve the poems as they are written.

End product: At the end of the hour, teams get the chance to share their favorite poems with the larger group. Volunteers help type the poems and insert them into a chapbook template that 826michigan delivers to students, along with a take-home version of the game, after the field trip.

Strange Mysteries!

Grades: Fourth (and Fifth)

Length of time: 2 hours

Skills taught: Overview of mystery genre, including alibi, conflict/problem (what does the character want, what will he or she do to get it), motive, clues, antagonist/protagonist, writing persuasive argument based on evidence collected during the field trip.

Description: Students arrive for the Storytelling and Bookmaking workshop only to be interrupted by an emergency from the mysterious Dr. Blotch, crotchety editor and head of Blotch Books. Students work with 826 volunteers to uncover a mystery and interrogate suspects. Students collectively write the story of Dr. Blotch's stolen _____, and once the story reaches a climax point, students write individual arguments (in the form of a letter) explaining why they think a certain suspect is guilty. Students share their letters with the group for Dr. Blotch's approval.

End product: Each student leaves with a bound book containing the group's mystery and his or her individual solution.

Choose Your Own Adventure

Grades: Fifth - Seventh

Length of time: 2 hours

Skills taught: Review of what makes a strong narrative, with focus on characters' choices and their consequences. Review of setting, genre, point of view, and tense. Emphasis on brief, vivid descriptions. Overview of the structure of a CYOA-style story and how it relates to other stories.

Description: Students begin writing a 2nd person adventure story together, but when the protagonist must make a decision, the students split in half to continue the story down two separate paths. Each group then splits again at the next crossroads. Each of the four groups has a chance to write an ending, as well as one final choice, which each student then finishes in his or her own personal copy of the story.

End product: Each student leaves the field trip with an original bound book containing

all the threads of the story with space for the four endings yet to be written.