

Story Jar

Overview:

Coming up with interesting writing topics can be difficult for students. This activity ensures that your students will have an unlimited source of inspiration.

Procedure:

- 1) Get three jars or other containers and fill each with writing prompts written on index cards. Include a variety of interesting prompts.
 - a) The first jar is labeled “WHO” and filled with prompts (*examples: my mom, the principal, George Washington, an alligator, Donald Duck, two firefighters, a baby*).
 - b) The second jar is labeled “WHERE” and filled with prompts (*examples: Texas, the cafeteria, Mars, a secret tunnel, Disney World, the zoo, library, haunted house*).
 - c) The third jar is labeled “WHAT” and filled with prompts (*examples: a wedding, the big game, a mystery, the worst day ever, a huge storm, the day of the big test*).
- 2) Model for students by selecting one prompt from each jar. Use a think aloud strategy while writing a short story based on the three prompts.
- 3) Ask students to select prompts from the three jars and write a story. This can be done individually or in small groups.
- 4) Encourage students to read their stories to the class.
**For an extra fun twist, fill the “WHO” jar with the names of the students in the class.*

ASOLs Covered in this Activity:

5E--WE 1b: The student will produce all letters.

5E--WE 1c: The student will capitalize the first letter of a familiar place.

5E--WE 3a: The student will demonstrate capitalization by capitalizing the first word of a sentence when writing.

5E--WE 3b: The student will use end punctuation, and correct spelling when writing.

8E--WE 2a: The student will use standard English rules when writing by using ending punctuation when writing a sentence or question.

8E--WE 3a: The student will use standard English rules when writing by using ending punctuation and capitalization when writing a sentence or question.

HSE--WE 1a: The student will use standard English rules by using correct punctuation when writing.

Extension Idea: Rather than using worksheets to teach students about capitalization and punctuation, use this activity as a learning opportunity. Students will get natural opportunities to practice new skills while writing meaningful and creative stories.

5E--WP 1c: The student will add more information to own drawing, dictating, or writing to strengthen the message.

5E--WP 3d: The student will revise own writing by adding more information.

8E--WP 1c: The student will plan by brainstorming and revise own writing by adding more information.

HSE--WP 1e: The student will develop writing by planning and revising own writing by adding more information.

Extension Idea: Once a student has written a story, challenge him/her to draw another name from the “WHO” jar and add this character to the story. The student could also pull from one or both of the other jars.

Materials Needed:

- writing surface such as paper, chart paper, whiteboard, interactive whiteboard, etc.
- 3 jars or containers
- writing prompts printed on index cards

Instructional Setting:

Classroom

Community Connections and/or Peer Interaction:

- Pair students up as co-authors.
- Fill the “WHO” jar with names of community helpers, the “WHERE” jar with popular locations in your community, and the “WHAT” jar with actual events that take place in your town.

Functional Activity/Routine:

-If working in pairs or small groups, students will get plenty of practice using their communication and interpersonal skills.

Strategies to Collect Evidence:

- Include stories as student products.
- Anecdotal evidence is also suggested.

Specific Options for Differentiating this Activity:

- Allow students to use their preferred “pencil” to complete this activity. This may include a writing utensil, keyboard, alternative pencil, or dictating to a scribe.
- A student in any of the developmental stages of writing can complete this activity.
 - *If your student is a scribbler, be sure to reinforce his/her product as authentic writing, and if necessary, help assign meaning.
- Some students may not be physically able to draw index cards from a jar. You might use another method of randomization such as an adapted cube or All-Turn-It Spinner with a single switch.