Writing Focused Fiction

Subject Areas: English/Language Arts and Social Studies

Grade Level: 6 – 12 (ages 11-18)

Time: At least three 45-minute class periods; time outside of class as necessary

Lesson Objective:
Students will be better able to write focused, compelling and well-developed fiction.

Common Core State Standards¹:
Writing Standards for Grades 6-12 in English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects
   Standard 3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.
   Standard 5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
   Standard 6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Overview:
Students who spend time planning the key elements of their stories develop more focused, compelling and detailed fiction. Use the Writing Fiction template (Webspiration Classroom™ Starter>Starter Docs>English Language Arts>Writing Fiction) with your students to help them organize their ideas and break the complex task of creating a fiction story into manageable steps. The collaboration tools in Webspiration Classroom™ will enable students to give each other valuable feedback throughout the creative process.
Preparation:
• This lesson requires Internet access and the Webspiration Classroom software application published by Inspiration® Software, Inc. It can be accessed by visiting <http://www.webspirationclassroom.com>.

Lesson:
1. Tell students that creative writing is a process involving many steps. Open the Writing Process template (Webspiration Classroom Starter>Starter Docs>English Language Arts> Writing Process) and discuss the steps with students in detail: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.

2. Explain that Webspiration™ offers many tools and templates to help with the creative writing process, including the Writing Fiction template which they will be using today. Open it and explain the areas of the template to the students. Emphasize that the best fiction is based on a clear conflict and is rich in specific details and dialogue. Be sure to point out the note on the “Conflict” symbol that lists different types of conflicts which the students may use as a basis for their stories. They should also understand the need for escalating conflict throughout the story.

3. Open the Writing Fiction Example (Webspiration Classroom Starter>Examples>English Language Arts>Writing Fiction Example) so students have an idea of a finished diagram. Referencing the examples given, review the different elements that are essential to a compelling work of fiction: developed characters, detailed setting, clear conflict and specific scenes of interaction with opponents and allies.
4. Prewriting: Have students first brainstorm a conflict to write about in the blank area to the side of the diagram using the RapidFire® tool. By giving their main characters goals or motives which support the central conflict, students will be prepared to write more highly focused action scenes in their stories.

5. Once students have selected a conflict and an appropriately motivated character around which to center their stories, they should record this information in the space provided and develop the rest of the diagram. Remind them to type in a working title for their fiction, even though they may revise this title once they finish writing the story.

6. Explain that throughout the prewriting and writing process students should obtain feedback from the teacher and their peers using the collaboration tools. Documents can be shared with others using the Collaborate Tab. The Comment Tab can be used to comment on the document, or the Chat Tab can be used, if it is turned on at your school, to discuss ideas in real time. Encourage students to give suggestions, but also to ask one another questions to elicit further detail or clarification where it is needed. This is an essential process in creative writing.

7. Students can complete the diagrams and go to Outline View to finish planning their stories and work on the revision process.

8. After students have organized their writing in outline form, they can download their project to Inspiration® or a word processor, or transfer it to a Google Doc to complete their stories (editing and publishing).

Adaptations / Extensions:
- This lesson can be used in any content area that requires students to write fiction.
- To effectively encourage student collaboration, you might require students to give specific feedback to a certain number of their classmates.
- As a revision technique, have students change one key element of their works, such as the setting, to see how this alters the narratives.

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