



LESSON: Story Magic -- Telling Stories from Pictures

Grades: 1-3

Subject Areas: Language Arts

Estimated Time: 60 minutes

I. Summary: "WordGirl" is based on classic elements of the story form: a heroine who must overcome multiple obstacles to reach her final victory. Encourage the storyteller in your students by teaching them the three basic elements of a story: character(s), setting, and plot (obstacles or problems). Using new vocabulary, students will work in small groups to create and tell a story, based on visual clues.

II. Objectives:

- Students will become familiar with the concepts of character, setting and plot (problems)
- Students will identify new vocabulary through picture associations
- Students will know how to use new vocabulary in context
- Students will need to cooperatively work together
- Students will demonstrate creative expression

III. Materials:

- Magician's top hat
- A picture of a character, a picture of a place, a picture that suggests an obstacle (if possible, from WordGirl episodes)
- Magazine images cut out and pasted on color-coded index cards; 3 cards for each group of 4 students, with different images on them
- Copies of new vocabulary and their definitions
- Paper
- Pen/pencil
- Dictionary

IV. Procedure:

1. Before the lesson, without the students seeing, put the three pictures into the top hat, and place it upside-down on a table in front of the class. Tell students that today's lesson will focus on storytelling. Explain to students that creating stories is like making magic; it is up to the storyteller to weave a magical spell for her readers/listeners. Anything is possible, so long as three basic elements are included. Out of the hat pull the picture of a character. Explain to students that all stories need characters who can either be human, superhuman, or animals. Often, there is a main character who is good (hero/heroine), and a more minor character who is bad (villain). Ask students to identify which characters on



WordGirl are heroes/heroine, villains, and which are main and minor characters. Write the word "character" in large letters on the board.

2. Explain that stories can take place in very specific, everyday locations or can magically take the reader far away to exotic places. Pull the picture of an exotic place out of the hat. Explain that these places are called the story's setting. To make the reader feel like she has really been taken to that place, it is important to describe how it looks, sounds, smells and feels. Invite students to identify some of the different settings in WordGirl (for example, the Fancy Schmancy Jewelry Store or Dr. Two-Brains' lab or Becky Botsford's living room). Write the word setting in large letters on the board.

3. Explain that most stories begin with a problem that the main character must solve. It can be any kind of problem – ordinary or, as in WordGirl's case, extraordinary. Take out a picture that suggests an obstacle from the hat. The main part of a story is the character's efforts to solve this problem, and this is called the plot. Usually, it takes several tries before the character succeeds and usually, the story ends at that point. Write the word plot on the board.

4. Explain to students that they will be working in small groups. Together, they will create and tell a story to the class, based on three pictures they receive – of character(s), of setting, and of the suggestion of a problem. They will also receive a list of new vocabulary words and their definitions. The group must choose five new words and use them correctly within their story.

5. Divide the class into groups of four students. For each group, provide three color-coded cards. One has a magazine picture of a person or people (character), one has a picture of a place (setting), and the third has a picture that suggests an obstacle. Additionally, provide each group with a handout that includes vocabulary words and definitions, and a check list for students.

Suggested Vocabulary:

(Note: I'm using definitions that were provided on the show...)

1. Cumbersome – Too big or heavy to hold
2. Colossal – Something really, really big
3. Vegetarian – A person who doesn't eat meat
4. Oafish – A clumsy person
5. Ultimate – The best example of something
6. Vicious – Violent and mean
7. Tempt – To try to convince someone to do something wrong with a promise of reward
8. Distract – To cause someone to stop paying attention to her original focus
9. Confine – To shut or keep in
10. Ignore – To refuse to pay attention to
11. Transportation – a means of moving from place to place (i.e. cars, trains, planes, trucks)



12. Crook – A thief, someone who is not honest
13. Goop – A sticky, wet substance
14. Sidekick – A close friend or partner
15. Heroine – The main female character in a story, noted for her courage
16. Ruckus – A big noisy mess
17. Misunderstanding – When you have the wrong idea about something
18. Harbor – A sheltered area of water where ships can anchor
19. Villain – A wicked or evil person; a character who is fighting the hero in a story
20. Ally – A friend or partner who helps you

6. Explain to students that, as a group, they must create a story based on the three pictures, which they will later tell to the class. Students will need to discuss amongst themselves who the characters are, what the setting is, and what kind of problem or obstacle needs to be overcome. They will also need to review the vocabulary list and choose at least five of the new words to use in their story. When they've chosen which words to use, they should check them off the list. Finally, they will need to decide how to tell the story to the class. For example, do they want a representative from their group to tell the story? Do they want to tell the story in turns? Does some of the group want to provide sound effects?

7. Each group performs their story for the entire class. Discuss the stories. Invite students to identify the three story elements – character(s), setting, obstacle -- in each of the groups' stories.

V. Assessment: Students should be able to define and apply three basic story elements: character, setting, and plot. Students should become familiar with new vocabulary through picture-word association. Students should successfully work together to create and tell a story based on the pictures and new vocabulary.

VI. Extensions in Learning:

- Try collaborative storytelling. Ask one student to begin telling a story and "pass it" around the class. Students may add a sentence or a paragraph when it is their turn to contribute. A variation on collaborative storytelling is collaborative story writing. A student writes the first sentences of a story and then passes it to a classmate to continue, until it has circulated around the class.
- Provide a center with storytelling elements – costumes for characters,



- Using the three story elements (character, setting, plot), ask each student to create a new storyline. Students should write down an idea for a new character, a new setting, and a new obstacle on a slip of paper. Put all the slips into a bowl, and ask students to take a classmate's slip. Now they must write a very short story using those elements.
- To practice character development, invite students to borrow a character from a favorite fairy tale or nursery rhyme. Their challenge is to take that character, and put them in a different setting with a different obstacle. These can be written or orally shared with the class.

Related National Standards (These are established by McREL at URL: <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>.)

- Language Arts
- Drama
- Working with Others