

1,000 Word Creative Writing Curriculum

Leyla Beban Young Authors Foundation

Developed by David Susman and Karen Tiegel

Featuring stories and excerpts from *Bluefire*,
an anthology of 1,000-word stories by students in grade six through twelve

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Created by teacher

Lesson One: Descriptive Language

Leyla Beban Young Authors Foundation Summer Camp 2014

Overview

Descriptive language is central to the development of a powerful story; readers are instantly engaged by creative word choice and by ideas and questions that come about through the use of descriptive language. The activities in this lesson are designed to encourage students to notice words, phrases, and sentences that jump out at them as they read. Students will explore word choice and practice writing descriptive language that inspires the reader to reflect on the words themselves.

Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- listen to and reflect on sentences that effectively use descriptive language
- practice writing their own descriptive sentences and paragraphs
- read "Among the Stars," from *Bluefire* and discuss the story through the lens of descriptive language
- begin to develop a creative writing piece from a series of prompts
- share pieces of their own writing, receive feedback on their work, and offer advice and suggestions to other writers.

Materials

Handout #1, *Descriptive Lines from Bluefire*, 15 copies

Teacher Resource #1, *Two Powerful Excerpts*

Teacher Resource #2, "Among the Stars" (read aloud to class)

Notebook or laptops for writing

Pens or pencils for writing

Optional: highlighters

Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a camp size of 15 students. Adjust accordingly for different camp sizes.

Time

One three-hour camp session or three one-hour class periods.

Procedures

1. Distribute writing notebooks and pens or pencils or laptops to students, if you haven't already. Then, distribute Handout #1, *Descriptive Lines from Bluefire*, to each student. Ask the students to take turns reading one line out loud. Go around the room until all the lines have been read aloud. Ask each student to underline, highlight, or star her favorite sentence.
2. After everyone has read and marked their favorite lines, discuss briefly what caught the reader's attention and why each chose that specific sentence.
3. Read aloud the two sentences from Teacher Resource #1, *Two Powerful Excerpts*. Discuss with the class what makes these sentences powerful using the guiding questions on Teacher Resource #1.
4. Instruct the student to record their favorite lines from Handout #1, *Descriptive Lines from Bluefire*, in their notebooks or on their laptops. Then, give students ten minutes to use that lines as a first line in a new story-- have the students free write, creating several sentences or paragraphs from that inspiring first line.
5. Read Teacher Resource #2, "Among the Stars," aloud to the class. Ask the students to record in their notebooks phrases or words that stand out to them during the reading. Discuss the story using the discussion questions that follow the story.
6. Instruct the students to begin work on their own creative writing pieces, giving them 60-80 minutes to work independently. Students may create their own pieces, work on a previous story that they've been working on, or building on the free-write from earlier in the day. Walk the room, checking in with students, conferencing with them and encouraging them as needed.
7. End the class by bringing everyone into an authors' circle for thirty minutes and encouraging each student to share a small part of what she has written. Ask each student to share at least one sentence so that all voices are heard. Model asking clarifying questions, compliments, and constructive critique. Encourage students to both listen carefully to feedback and to offer suggestions and help to others.

Handout #1, Descriptive Lines from Bluefire

- “The sky looks like an artist’s palette; layers and layers of colors swirled together into one harmonious, living mural. It is the most beautiful sunset multiplied a hundred times, the cheerful bright lights that dot a Christmas tree, the deep purple magenta of a plum, the cozy faded pink of my grandmother’s sweater, and the luminescent green of those glow-sticks we played with around the campfire, all twisted and bent into one seamless flowing body.” – *Arrival*
- “Twenty years later, and age spins its spider webs into my hair.” – *Entanglement*
- “Two women in colorful saris stand under a red bulb, fanning themselves in stagnating air, and talk about how one of their boys won the kite-flying contest recently.” – *Entanglement*
- “Resting my head on the window pane, I observed the sky. It was an indigo dome, dotted with stars. The last slivers of sunlight vanished. For once in my life, I was swimming in the sea of tranquility and I imagined myself in flight, dwelling in space among the stars of old.” – *Among the Stars*
- “And then, very slightly, almost imperceptibly, there was something. Just a point, a dot on a nonexistent canvas. The dot was all that was, and was all that will ever be.” – *The End*
- “Just for one moment, I keep my eyes closed, trying to hold on to the last faint tendrils of the dream I was just having, but they slip away from my grasping hands like silk.” – *Waking Up*
- “He’s short for eleven, but not overly. Made in the medium of medium, the boy’s features are easily forgettable. His eyes are the blue-grey of faded bed sheets.” – *THBH*
- “The town is strikingly normal, but at the same time, raw. Its rows of streets, each endearingly messy with scads of crooked pastel houses, meander across pretty, sun-soaked hills. From above, the rooftops appear like scales on a snake.” – *THBH*
- “The infusion of moonlight into every window turns an invisible dial in the night, like the rolling of knuckles under skin, and the town becomes... perfect.” – *THBH*
- “When the rain fell it was cold and bitter and black, like sorrow. The sky was dark and the air was sour-tasting. Puddles rain up against the sides of the alleyway, gleaming liquid jewels glittering with rainbows of oil. Delicate cobweb cracks wove through the ground, miniature canals running with silver. You see, there is beauty in these cold, dark places. The only trick is finding it.” – *Beauty*
- “The first thing he notices is the smell. It is a golden smell and good.” – *Beauty*
- “I love the sound of running. The tick-tick-tock of feet against the rough dirt of the track, a metronome of my life. The echo of heavy breathing, ragged as the bed sheets ripped by my tossing and turning. The swishing of loose clothing, a broom sweeping up my sins.” – *The Sound of Running*

- “The wind was picking up as Kate watched the sun rise. Beautiful hues of yellow, orange, and pink mixed in the sky, God’s painting, as her mother put it.” – *FlavorMorph*
- “He spent hours after class reading papers and teaching himself the math. The more ridiculous and less feasible it seemed, the more fascinated he became. He would show his professors the strange, circular equations he wrote during late nights of blurred vision and bitter coffee. They scrunched up their eyebrows and bit their lips, and said that while he certainly seemed to be proving something, they weren’t sure exactly what it was.” – *He and He*
- “I found myself standing in front of the source, my fingers cradling the shears that would cut the ribbon of my imprisonment.” – *Alteration*
- “He stepped forward, his eyes outshining the blinking lights of the aeromobiles.” – *Two Men on a Sidewalk*
- “The night air whipped around me, thrashing at the paper in my hands. A noise unlike any other rang through the world, like the groans of a thousand dying men. Electricity sparked through the sky, and I screamed. I tried to find a falling street, a tumbling sidewalk, even a burning satellite, but nothing more seemed to want to disturb the air. Nothing but the moisture.” – *Two Men on a Sidewalk*
- “A waning crimson sunset illuminated the dense fluff of nimbus clouds looming over the Santa Cruz mountains like a frozen tidal wave, its collapse halted by the eerie stillness of the late-afternoon sky. As the sky kept still in its wondrous awe, the far off hum of the highway and its continuous, shuffling drones merged with the rustling autumn leaves rustling underfoot.” - *Strata*
- “Look at it all, man. Look at the vastness of it all. Trees beyond trees, sky beyond sky, mountains beyond mountains. Past all those trees and hills and skies there’s a whole other everything out there. Planets, stars, galaxies, everything. And it just goes on and on. Expands; gets bigger.” - *Strata*
- “Look, man. I don’t know. Mary doesn’t know. Paul doesn’t know. Mr. Adams doesn’t know and hell, the great green Wizard of Oz doesn’t know. You don’t need an answer to everything. The trees *are* green, the sky *is* blue, you *like* Mary. A lot, evidently.” - *Strata*

Teacher Resource #1: Two Powerful Excerpts

- “The sky looks like an artist’s palette; layers and layers of colors swirled together into one harmonious, living mural. It is the most beautiful sunset multiplied a hundred times, the cheerful bright lights that dot a Christmas tree, the deep purple magenta of a plum, the cozy faded pink of my grandmother’s sweater, and the luminescent green of those glow-sticks we played with around the campfire, all twisted and bent into one seamless flowing body.” – *Arrival*
- The infusion of moonlight into every window turns an invisible dial in the night, like the rolling of knuckles under skin, and the town becomes... perfect.” --*THBH*

Discussion Questions:

1. What about each description feels real to you? What about each description feels unreal or imaginary? Which do you find more powerful, real or unreal? Or both?" (for instance: "invisible dial in the night" strikes the reader as abstract and unreal, while "like the rolling of knuckles under skin" is pretty real)

-- Answers from the students will vary.

2. What are some images that come to mind when you read each sentence?

-- Answers from the students will vary.

3. How does the author use color, simile and metaphor to create imagery for the reader in the sentence from *Arrival*?

-- Similes: sky is like an artist's palette,

--Metaphors: cheerful bright lights that dot a Christmas tree; compares sky to a body ("bent into one seamless flowing body")

-- colors: deep purple magenta of a plum, cozy faded pink of my grandmother's sweater, luminescent green of those glow-sticks we played with around the campfire

4. How does the author use personification in the sentence from *THBH*?

-- The author personifies the infusion of moonlight-- it seems to turn an invisible dial; compares the turning to the rolling of knuckles under skin

Teacher Resource #2: "Among the Stars", by Nolan Bangs

I would come home from school each day and Dad would tell Sis and me about his nasty work up in the city. Revolting work. When you pass by his “office”, you unwillingly inhale the stench. It’s a sewage treatment plant. The workers like Dad cook the boatloads coming from the pipes until every last cell of bacteria has been grilled like shrimp in the sizzler and the purified water is flushed into the welcoming San Francisco Bay. That’s what he told us when we were little, immature scrubs and we would nag out of a cursing, burning, yet natural curiosity. Dad would also warn us about the dangers in nature and of its vile diseases that turn humans to rotting corpses. He knew it all too well after Mom’s defeat in her battle against liver cancer. I was too young to understand back then, being age six. Now, I’m thirteen.

“Well, Raymond, you put in a lot of effort in your schoolwork. It’s visible on your exam. See here, fifty out of fifty. Don’t you feel rewarded?” He was rattling the paper in his bony hand. *Yeah. I remember how easy it was, too,* I thought guiltily.

“Yup.” At least he’s pleased about something. Dad takes another drawn-out sip of green tea. The ghostly wisps of steam illuminate his face and he’s staring at me. More specifically, at my plate of cheese casserole and then my bulging gut. He peers purposefully at Sis too.

“You two could use a walk. Let’s go down by Redwood Shores,” Dad concluded. Sis whimpered.

“Daddy! I have a book to read!” she pouted in the chair next to mine. Her puffy face showed no yield to my dad’s command.

“Sweets, I’m not asking.” I might’ve complained too, out of desire to play computer games on my desktop back in the back, but no one whines to Dad. Video games mattered more to me though, and Dad knew that. He was tolerant of my possibly excessive computer use, even

when Mom was around. I maintained an abolitionist attitude towards drugs, alcohol, and smoking, yet I secretly considered my computer screen an anti-depressant. Each night after my homework, I would meld myself with my plush leather desk chair, gaze into my game, fiddling thoughtlessly with my keyboard and mouse, and allow myself become dead to the world.

“Raymond. Shoes on. Now,” my dad called curtly from the dining room, still sipping his tea. In the moment with peaceful gloom I winced at the excessively bright, artificial light of the fridge when I opened it and fumbled my long arms around for the filtered water pitcher. Gingerly gripping it, I extracted it from the hulk of an appliance and let the pristine water flow into a cup I already got out, then guzzled it. I let it seep and trickle down my throat, freeze the senses, and lounge in the pit of my stomach like the gastric acid that’s already there. It was a refreshing routine I resorted to before exercise.

“Raymond?!?!”

“Yeah Dad, I’ve got my socks. Gimme a minute and my sneakers are tied.”

“But Daddy... I don’t wanna go! It’s gonna be cold out there, Daddy!” Sis always had a particular distaste for the unpredictable fluctuation in Bay Area temperatures during the springtime. I’d just become too old to care.

Minutes later we were in the beat-up compact car Dad owns, cruising through the vacant streets of suburban Redwood City. Resting my head on the window pane, I observed the sky. It was an indigo dome, dotted with stars. The last slivers of sunlight vanished. For once in my life, I was swimming in the sea of tranquility and I imagined myself in flight, dwelling in space among the stars of old. The the faint hum of car tires on concrete was not audible enough to halt my train of thought, but the inquisitive voice of my dad was.

“Hey Raymond, did you read the news today? Turns out a new scientific study shows that

humans will sometimes feel a surge of attraction towards nature. It's not true, son. These studies are proven to be faulty for multiple reasons."

"Yeah... okay, Dad." *There he is again, yakking on about the horrible truths of nature.*

We pulled up in the dark parking lot of Arbor Bay Learning Center, right by the shoreline. Here, thriving reeds and brush push their way out of the ground, sprawl their harmless green arms, and open up to the dim moonlight. Birds talk among themselves in the midst of low-tide areas.

"Get on out, kids." Sis pouts again but opens the door anyway. I do likewise, stepping out into the open world. Dad beckoned us to the dirt path on the other side of the lot, trodden on by tourist feet and bike tires. Sis and I stepped in line with Dad. He'd been staring down at the path. I absorbed the sights, the sounds, and the scents of the partial wilderness.

Then I hear the harsh, raspy squawk of a bird. It was not far off, maybe twenty feet at most, but it was hidden from sight. I parted the reeds with both hands. I saw, in horror, a Canadian goose, nearly asphyxiated by a reel of old fishing wire. Other sorts of trash were scattered nearby. *This bird needs help!*

"Leave the bird, Raymond. It's probably infested and is surely good as dead." I bounded through the reeds, trudged through the muddy flats, and came within a foot of the bird, where it cried out, fishing line crossing its neck and its belly. I desperately reached around for the hook end on the bird's body.

"RAYMOND!" The bird's screeching continued, but became more hoarse. I pinched the hook with one hand and rapidly unraveled the reel with the other. Then the line sagged off of the bird. Free to move, the great goose arched its wings and soared into the sky among the sea of endless stars.

Discussion Questions for "Among the Stars":

1. How does the author use descriptive language to describe elements of the setting (when, where the story takes place)?

Examples:

"When you pass by his 'office', you unwillingly inhale the stench. It's a sewage treatment plant."

"...water is flushed into the welcoming San Francisco Bay."

"...cruising through the vacant streets of suburban Redwood City."

"Here, thriving reeds and brush push their way out of the ground, sprawl their harmless green arms, and open up to the moonlight."

"Birds talk among themselves in the midst of low-tide areas."

2. How does the author create tension or reveal conflict with descriptive language?

Examples:

"I maintained an abolitionist attitude towards drugs, alcohol, and smoking, yet I secretly considered my computer screen an anti-depressant."

"...and fumbled my long arms around for the filtered water pitcher."

"I pinched the hook with one hand and rapidly unraveled the reel with the other."

"...the harsh, raspy squawk of a bird."

"The bird's screeching continued, but became more hoarse."

"Her puffy face showed no yield to my dad's command."

3. Is the voice in this story the same all the way through? Or does it change as you read through? Why do you think the author chose to use the voice the way he does?"

-- There are parts, such as when the bird takes off at the end, that are more descriptive/ornate, and other parts, like the dialogue, that are more blunt and to the point

Lesson Two: Story Arc & Plot Structure

Leyla Beban Young Authors Foundation Summer Camp 2014

Overview

Effective stories take the reader on a journey, whether that journey is actual or metaphysical. Creating a plot structure that follows an arc helps give the story shape and allows a writer to pace the story in a way that draws the reader along. The activities in this lesson encourage writers to consider the arc or direction of their stories and encourage them to consider how to build tension and emotion effectively. Students will create several plotlines from a combination of characters and settings.

Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- write short fiction pieces of exactly 55 words to reflect on the interaction of character, setting, conflict, and resolution
- read "Alteration," from *Bluefire* and discuss the story through the lens of story arc
- begin to develop a creative writing piece from a series of prompts about characters and setting
- share pieces of their own writing, receive feedback on their work, and offer advice and suggestions to other writers.

Materials

Handout #2, *Sample 55 Fiction*, 15 copies

Handout #3, *Character/Setting Set-ups*, 15 copies

Teacher Resource #3, "Alteration" (read aloud to class)

Notebook or laptops for writing

Pens or pencils for writing

Optional: highlighters

Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a camp size of 15 students. Adjust accordingly for different camp sizes.

Time

One three-hour camp session or three one-hour class periods.

Procedures

1. Distribute Handout #2, *Sample 55 Fiction*, and read the samples aloud. Ask the students to identify the characters, setting, conflict, and resolution in each story.
2. Distribute writing notebooks and pens or pencils or laptops to students. Give them 30-45 minutes to create their own 55 Fiction stories, noting that each story should include at least one character, a setting, a conflict, and a resolution to that conflict. The pieces must be exactly 55 words, not including the title. The title can be no more than seven words long.
3. Optionally, students may share their stories before moving on to reading "Alteration."
4. Read Teacher Resource #3, "Alteration," aloud to the class. Ask the students to record the characters, settings, key conflict, and resolution in their notebooks. Discuss the story using the discussion questions that follow the story.
5. Distribute Handout #3, *Character/Setting Set-ups*, to each student. Instruct the students to pick one of the set-ups and create a plot outline using that character and setting. Students may opt to create their own characters or settings as well. Once a student has created a plot outline for the set-up, give her 60-80 minutes to work independently. Walk the room, checking in with students, conferencing with them and encouraging them as needed.
6. End the class by bringing everyone into an authors' circle for thirty minutes and encouraging each student to share a small part of what she has written. Ask each student to share at least one sentence so that all voices are heard. Model asking clarifying questions, compliments, and constructive critique. Encourage students to both listen carefully to feedback and to offer suggestions and help to others.

Handout #2, Sample 55 Fiction

Got Talent

The rumpled old lady stood on the stage. The audience giggled under its breath.

The judges shifted smugly in their seats. *This would be an easy one.*

The music started. The lady closed her eyes and opened her misshapen mouth. The audience, booing already, was startled into silence.

Out came the voice of an angel.

The Hunter

The mysterious dark fellow suavely wove between the tuxedoed waiters to slip into the seat across from Willis.

“I hear you’ve been hunting,” Willis muttered. These were the keywords he had been told to say.

“Indeed I have,” said the man.

“Who?” Willis had been warned not to ask, but his curiosity won out.

“You.”

Radio

It took him a while to realize the radio was picking up the past, the moon landing and Ella Fitzgerald.

The night of his 87th birthday, fiddling in the attic, he heard the voice of his high school crush calling into a talk show.

“I don’t know if he likes me; he likes his radios...”

Handout #3, Character/Setting Set-ups

- A futuristic metropolis; a visitor arriving there for the first time
- A circus or carnival held right at the edge of the sea; a family that's arrived to see them perform (focus on one member of the family more than the others)
- A large house at the corner of two streets; the woman who used to live there
- A breathtaking natural setting early in the morning; a man who can see the future
- A tiny, noisy apartment in not the best part of town; a character with a dream
- The only house for miles and miles and miles; a young person knocking eagerly at the door
- A desert caravan setting up for the night out under the stars; a newcomer who has joined the caravan just today
- A vast mansion at the edge of an even vaster forest; an old woman sitting inside
- A city on the other side of the world, full of exotic tastes, smells, sounds; someone your age

Teacher Resource #3, "Alteration", by Darya Behroozi

Along the course of my life, I was repeatedly told that the mere scratch of ink on a parcel of paper was a sin. This, of course, was only applied to those of the female gender, and, judging from my bodice, I was a constituent to such injustices. Unfortunately, the need to rebel against authority was a crippling disposition of mine. My fingers itched for the release of my thoughts onto paper. I often found myself looking longingly at my twin brother, splayed across his side of our shared bedroom with papers surrounding him.

"You are the lucky one, my dear sister," he would say when he caught me staring at him. "I would give anything to be in your position. Sewing clothes is much less taxing than writing such an abundant amount of rubbish."

I gave him a small smile at his attempt to lighten my mood, though I could see the lie hidden beneath his laughing eyes. I would not condemn even my worst enemy to life as a seamstress.

Some nights, when I finished my work early, I would join my mother in her room during her praying sessions.

"Why don't we share our prayers aloud tonight?" My mother suggested one night as I quietly entered her small bedroom. I gave her a curt nod as I acquainted myself on the blanketed floor.

"I pray for my children's well-being and for my husband's safe return home," she murmured with her eyes closed. After a moment's silence, she turned to me and raised her eyebrows expectantly.

I closed my eyes and whispered in the smallest voice possible, "I pray to someday be able to write such as the boys do."

I opened my eyes to see my mother's glowing, sunbaked face suddenly pale. Her nimble hands furiously combed into her mane of black hair as she nervously looked around the room, as if to see if anyone had been spying on our conversation.

"A lady must never say such things," she whispered harshly, her unblemished face contorting with fear.

"Why do the boys receive more liberties than us? Why must all women be condemned to the house?" I pressed as a single tear streaked along my face.

“The devil punishes the wayward matron,” my mother replied robotically. I tried to gauge her expression, but all I saw was the hollow body of a strained mother.

“Who are the demons, mother? Are they the men who walk around with weapons as arms? The ones who punished dear Jala when they found a journal in her basket? My friends whisper rumors of how she can no longer come near school grounds because of the scar she now bears on her face.” All I received as answer was a weary look from my mother. More tears escaped my eyes as she made a quick prayer and solemnly exited the room.

After a few minutes of silence, I recollected myself and got up from my crouched position. I made my way across the room, coming to a stop before my mother’s full-length mirror. A pair of bloodshot eyes stared back at me. Ignoring the large crack in the middle of the mirror, I imagined a different reflection staring back at me. My shaking, prick-ridden hands were now holding a notepad and pen and my pouting lips were spread into a wide grin.

“I pray for the strength to fight my demons,” I whispered to my reflection.

The morning following the confrontation, I decided to join my brother on his trek to school. I looked up at the approaching building with awe. My brother often complained of the school grounds resembling that of a prison, but I viewed it as a kingdom and I the lost princess. I watched my brother’s retreating figure as he hurried into his classroom. Someday I would join him, I promised myself.

I couldn’t help but jump in fright as a warm hand clapped on the back of my perspiring neck. I looked up to see a large man step in front of the radiating morning sun.

“You should move quickly, little girl,” the man said, giving me a terrifying smile. My eyes widened at my close proximity to the weapon slung across his shoulder. “I should assume you know where you belong.” I clasped my hands as to not show their incessant trembling, muttering an apology as I rushed away from the looming demon.

When I returned back to my work at home, the needles were unforgiving. I fell prey to their sharp ends ruthlessly pricking my shaking hands until I finally set them down in defeat. I found myself walking to my mother’s room and once again standing in front of the cracked mirror. Two vacant, brown orbs stared back at me, drained of hope and full of fear. I was the hollow body of a girl, filled to the brim with broken dreams. I tore my gaze away from the foreign figure standing before me, settling my eyes on my small, worn out hands.

I gently touched the mirror, its cold surface cooling my fidgeting fingers. I ran my hands through my long mane of tangled hair. I clenched my jaw and furrowed my eyebrows deep in thought.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the glint of an object reflected off the mirror. My eyes immediately widened as realization set in. I found myself standing in front of the source, my fingers cradling the shears that would cut the ribbon of my imprisonment. I walked over to the mirror, my hands gingerly holding the thick scissors. In one swift motion, I snapped the shards, a single tear of hope streaking across my cheek and falling, falling along with my raven-black hair. I looked up into the mirror and no longer saw the eyes of an imprisoned seamstress. I saw a round, feminine face, hidden by choppy, boyish hair, and in her eyes I saw ink in the form of a free soul.

Discussion Questions for "Alteration":

1. How does the author set up the conflict in this story?

-- setting up the "mere scratch of ink on parcel" as a sin-- this immediately tells the reader that the world in the story is a binding, limiting society, especially for women and girls

-- this is juxtaposed with the experience and expectations for the brother in the story

-- the conversation between daughter and mother deepens the conflict, explains the background of the society and the rules that the protagonist must follow

2. How does the author resolve the conflict?

--the protagonist cuts her hair, and becomes a boy

3. What do you think will happen next? Will the protagonist truly be free? Will she be able to pass as a boy?

--answers will vary, but students might talk about connections between this protagonist and other women in history, like Deborah Sampson, who dressed as a boy to fight in the Revolutionary War.

4. Which sentences in the story are the most important as far as the plot is concerned?

--answers will vary, but students might choose the opening sentences, the last sentences of the story, or the moment in which the protagonist decides to go around the laws of the land.

Lesson Three: Character & Dialogue

Leyla Beban Young Authors Foundation Summer Camp 2014

Overview

Creating voices for characters in a story helps readers connect with the characters on a more personal level and to engage with the characters more deeply. Dialogue allows the readers to "hear" the characters' voices and to understand characters' motivations and behaviors. In this lesson, students develop voices for characters and consider their character's background and motivation. They will write pieces that create characters at two levels: their physical descriptions and their interior lives, dreams, and motivations.

Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- develop characters based on limited information/ glimpses into the lives of others
- read "Lola Moon Rising," from *Bluefire* and discuss the story through the lens of character development
- begin to develop written character "sketches" that give the reader a sense of the physical aspects of the characters as well as the background and motivations of that character
- share pieces of their own writing, receive feedback on their work, and offer advice and suggestions to other writers.

Materials

Handout #4, *Character Warm-ups*, 15 copies

Handout #5, *Character Prompts*, 15 copies

Teacher Resource #4, "Lola Moon Rising" (read aloud to class)

Notebook or laptops for writing

Pens or pencils for writing

Optional: highlighters

Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a camp size of 15 students. Adjust accordingly for different camp sizes.

Time

One three-hour camp session or three one-hour class periods.

Procedures

1. Distribute Handout #4, *Character Warm-ups*, and read the information aloud. Ask the students to choose one of the prompts to develop further.
2. Distribute writing notebooks and pens or pencils or laptops to students. Give them 30-45 minutes to create a character. Students should create the character on two levels-- the physical description of the character, and the motivations, dreams, hopes, struggles, and sense of the future for the character. Students may want to sketch a drawing of the character or create a dialogue that reveals elements of this character for the reader.
3. Optionally, students could share their character pieces before moving on to reading "Lola Moon Rising."
4. Read Teacher Resource #4, "Lola Moon Rising," aloud to the class. Ask the students to record the names of the characters in their notebooks (teachers might want to list the characters on the board or verbally for the students ahead of time). Students should then record information about each character as they listen to the story. After reading the story, go over the information for each character as a group.
5. Distribute Handout #5, *Character Prompts*, and ask the students to choose a prompt to work on. Give the students 60-80 minutes to work independently. Walk the room, checking in with students, conferencing with them and encouraging them as needed.
6. End the class by bringing everyone into an authors' circle for thirty minutes and encouraging each student to share a small part of what she has written. Ask each student to share at least one sentence so that all voices are heard. Model asking clarifying questions, compliments, and constructive critique. Encourage students to both listen carefully to feedback and to offer suggestions and help to others.

Handout #4, Character Warm-ups

- Make a list of 5-10 moments from a character's life. They don't have to be big moments, but they should all have meaning. Pick three. Then write a vivid paragraph to bring each of those three moments to life.
- Make a list of four or five ages. Something like this: 4, 14, 29, 83, 50. Then write one vivid paragraph showing your character at each age on your list.
- Write the day your main character leaves on a grand journey.

Handout #5, Character Prompts

- Pick a character that's facing a major decision. In one paragraph, show what happens if he/she makes one choice. In the next paragraph, show what happens if he/she makes another choice. Then let your character choose.
- Show your character having a dream—for no longer than one paragraph. Then have your character wake up. And gradually let one world turn into another.
- Out of all the meals in your character's life, there's one that means the most to your character. It might not be the largest or the most elaborate meal, but it's definitely the most meaningful. Write about this. Be super descriptive about each taste you mention.
- Start by describing the day of a character's birth. See it from a distance. Describe the weather and what else is happening in the world or the city on that same day. Spend no longer than one paragraph on the birth. Then move forward in time. Let your story arise from this first day.
- Make a list of 10 people who know your main character. Some know your character extremely well; some only know your character from a distance. Then pick 3-4 of the people on this list. Let each one of these people speak about your main character for a paragraph (but no longer).
- Think about the places where your character keeps things. Like a bookshelf, or a desk drawer, or a backpack, or his/her pockets. Or somewhere else. Pick one. Then describe the things your character keeps in this place. Show your character through a collection of his/her things.
- Your main character really, really wants something but ends up getting another. Skip ahead to two years after this happens. Write about what happened now that your character has some perspective on it.
- There's one activity your character enjoys most in this world. It might be something really simple. Describe your character in the midst of this activity. Write it so vividly that the reader can truly feel what it's like. Let this be the opening of your story.
- First, write about an adult character with some favorite object of his/hers. Do this in one paragraph. Then, in your next paragraph, write about a child placing that same object in a time capsule and burying it somewhere. Take your story from there.
- First, write a scene of dialogue between your main character and his/her grandparent. Then, in your second paragraph, move far ahead in time and write a scene of dialogue between your main character and his/her grandchild.
- One night, your character wakes up late, late at night with an incredible urge to write. He/she finds a journal, opens his/her heart, and begins writing everything he/she has wanted to say for some time. Show what your character writes on this one night.

- Show childhood friends doing something or another. Make this scene detailed as you can. Then pick one of those two characters. Grow up with that character. Don't show everything, but do show a few moments that matter. Right before the very end, bring that other friend back into the story.
- Your character makes a wish. He/she writes it down on something and stores it somewhere. Describe. Then show what happens.
- Pick a really small physical detail related to your character. Like a piece of jewelry, or a freckle, or a tooth, a scar, a birthmark, even a shoelace. Describe it. Then show your character's story. Let this one detail play some kind of a role.
- Think of the moment your character is the farthest away from home he/she has ever been. This might a real, literal distance, or it might just be a feeling. Show that moment and tell your story from there.
- Let your character have a triumph, a great victory of some kind. But no one really knows—only your character knows what he/she has accomplished.
- Flash to a moment 50 years after your character's death. There's one day where your character's life has a meaningful impact on people living in that future. Show that day.
- Pick a gesture and show your character making that gesture. Like flying a kite. Or tying shoes. Or swimming across a river. Or something else. Show this as descriptively as you can. Then tell your story from there. Make sure, at some point in your story, to show this same gesture a second time.
- Write a story where you don't mention the main character's name until halfway through. Then give your character a name that has another meaning—like Hope, or Joy, or Freedom, or Knowledge. Then tell the second half of your story using this name.
- Write a story from the perspective of an observer. The main events of the story happen to other people; the narrator just observes. If the narrator is involved, it's only in a very minor way.

Teacher Resource #4, "Lola Moon Rising", by Caroline Bailey

"I'll wait for you," Analee told me. "When the blue moon rises, I'll be there. Don't you worry none about me, Lola."

I've watched the moon rise and set twenty-two times since she's gone. It was half-shaped the day she left, and it's half-shaped now. It musta been blue at least once.

It seems about right, that she chose the blue moon. Beautiful, flawless and one-of-a-kind, just like Analee. I'm the half-moons, the ones that aren't quite done baking, a little lopsided and a little ordinary.

"Lola!" Mama Gringy shouts from down the stairs. "Get your lazy backside down here, this pot roast ain't bakin' itself!"

I scurry down the stairs, quick like a mouse. Analee used to call Mama Gringy our Foster Monster, to make me laugh. Everybody in the world's always trying to put Analee and me up with Foster Monsters, but Analee has none of it. She's always escaping and going on adventures, and then remembering me at home and coming back. I'm always wanting to go with her, but Analee says no. And I understand. Girls like me, we ain't funny enough or pretty enough or sharp enough for the sort of adventures that Analee goes on. Somebody's gotta stay home and make the pot roast.

I get down to the kitchen, and Mama Gringy swears. "Good Lord, you'd think a girl your age could run a little faster. Now get over here, and stir this."

I gotta pull a chair over to reach the stove, and once I do Mama Gringy collapses on her overstuffed armchair and falls right to sleep. Working my way through the kitchen is a battle, because of my height, but I ain't complaining. Mama Gringy's one horrible cook, but I'm an excellent one. Lotta practice, you see. Analee ain't much of a cook either, she ain't got the patience. But I do. Mrs. Lottier, the Foster Monster before Mama Gringy, used to say patience was about my only virtue.

"So," Mama Gringy says over supper, "when's that slut of a sister of yours comin' back?"

“With the next blue moon,” I tell her. Mama Gringy won’t know the blue moon’s already come and gone. “You don’t happen to know when that is, do you?”

She shrugs her fat shoulders. “Do I look like I spend my time stargazin’? Hell, I dunno what a blue moon is. I just hope she ain’t takin’ none of my money when she goes. I ain’t payin’ for none of that girls’ mistakes.”

“Analee don’t make mistakes,” I tell her. “Analee’s out having the time of her life, she told me so.”

Mama Gringy snorts. “Time of her life. Sounds ‘bout right.”

Mama Gringy makes me do the dishes, which ain’t too bad, ‘cause we were just cooking for two. And then I scamper my way back upstairs, out onto the porch, and look up at the sky. But the sun ain’t set, so I’ve got some time to kill.

“Mama Gringy?” I shout. “I’m heading over to Peter’s, okay?”

“Do I look like I care?” she shouts from the living room. Can’t see her to know, so I figure I’m just as well off not answering. I dart down the back porch, open the screen door, and head in the direction of Peter’s. If anyone knows where Analee is, he does.

Peter doesn’t have a Foster Monster like Analee and me, but his daddy ain’t ever home, and I don’t know why. But I know he’ll listen to me, ‘cause Analee always called him a kindred soul. Eighteen, about her age, and all alone in the world. I pointed out that Analee weren’t alone—she had me, didn’t she? All she said was that in this world, we’re all alone. There are some pretty clear flaws to this logic, but I didn’t care to point them out.

I don’t wanna be all alone.

I knock on Peter’s door, and he answers with a grin. “Hey Lola,” he says. “What’s goin’ on?”

“Analee ain’t back yet,” I answer. His grin trips and falls. “And I was just wondering if you’d know where she’d gone.”

“Why don’t you come inside for a bit?” Peter says. “I think just the two of us need to have a talk.”

I shake my head. “No can do, Peter,” I say. “Gotta watch the moon rise, and it’s happening any minute now.”

“Okey dokey. We’ll sit out here and talk.” Peter’s porch ain’t got chairs, but we sit on the steps and it works just fine.

“Look, Lola,” Peter says. “Analee loves you, she really does...but I dunno if she’s ever comin’ back.”

I shake my head. “She said she’d be back. When the blue moon rises. I musta just miscounted.”

“See that’s the thing, Lola. Analee...Analee tends to miscount too. She miscounts what’s important in life. You try to make her see sense, but she just don’t. You understand what I’m sayin’?” I shake my head. Peter sighs. “Ya know, ten of her ain’t worth one of you, Lola.”

“Well you’re wrong about that. Analee’s funny and brave and beautiful and...”

“An’ she ain’t comin’ back.”

“Stop saying that! Of course she’s coming back!”

Peter looks at me long and hard. “Maybe you’re right, Lola. But if she doesn’t...remember that there’s somethin’ to be said for the sorta person who does come back.”

We’re looking out at the horizon, and a moon starts rising up into the sky. A crescent moon, real thin and slender.

“See that?” Peter says. “The blue moon’s come and gone, and there’s a new light in the sky. That’s a Lola moon risin’.” He stands up, brushes himself off. “Go make somethin’ out of yourself, kid.”

I sit there, staring at the moon rising in the sky. I’m real patient, see, I wait ‘til it’s up high overhead, shining down on the world with light that’s thin and yellow. But I guess a little bit of weak light is better than none at all.

Discussion Questions for "Lola Moon Rising":

1. Make a list of the characters in the story and add characteristics of each character to the list.

Analee: sister to Lola, 18 years old, often leaves for extended periods of time, has been gone for over two years now (22 moons/ 22 months), "beautiful, flawless, one-of-a-kind"

Lola: main character, misses her sister, lives with a foster mother, friends with Peter, "a little lopsided, and a little ordinary", "an excellent" cook, quick: "darts", "scurry down the stairs, quick as a mouse"; views herself as patient

Mama Gringy: yells a lot, makes Lola do the cooking, calls Lola lazy, "fat shoulders", uses rude language to describe Analee, doesn't care about Lola

Peter: friend of Analee and Lola; his father is never home; 18 years old; has a different view of Analee ("she miscounts what's important in life", "I dunno if she's ever coming back"); values Lola ("that's a Lola moon rising; go make something' outta yourself, kid.")

2. How do the characteristics of each character connect to the plot of the story?

--By going through each character, encourage the students to note that creating a good plot often stems from having good characters. Or in other words, the plot comes from having a character's characteristics "play out" through the story. For example, Mama Gringy is a foil to Lola's character, while Peter's confidence in Lola encourages Lola to keep hoping for a better life.

Lesson Four: Beginnings and Endings

Leyla Beban Young Authors Foundation Summer Camp 2014

Overview

Great beginnings draw readers in immediately, and great endings create a sense of satisfaction and offer closure for readers. The most powerful stories leave the reader thinking deeply about the ways the conflicts were resolved or how characters reacted in specific situations. In this lesson, students will read and discuss powerful opening paragraphs and consider how the authors connected the openings and endings effectively. Students will work on their own 1,000 word pieces, keeping in mind the goals of drawing in the reader and leaving the reader with a key idea (or ideas) to think about after the story has ended.

Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- discuss how opening lines capture the readers' attention using excerpts from *Bluefire*.
- read "Two Men on a Sidewalk," from *Bluefire* and discuss the story through the lens of beginnings and endings
- begin to develop a piece of 1,000 word fiction
- share pieces of their own writing, receive feedback on their work, and offer advice and suggestions to other writers.

Materials

Handout #6, *Beginning Prompts*

Teacher Resource #5, "Two Men on a Sidewalk" (read aloud to class)

Notebook or laptops for writing

Pens or pencils for writing

Optional: highlighters

Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a camp size of 15 students. Adjust accordingly for different camp sizes.

Time

One three-hour camp session or three one-hour class periods.

Procedures

1. Read the opening lines from "FlavorMorph" and "Waking Up" aloud, as written below. Ask the students to identify what made these effective openings.

Opening lines from "FlavorMorph":

“Was life really like a FlavorMorph Starburst? Kate tried and tried, but she couldn’t figure out what two flavors were in the Starburst without looking at the wrapper. Just like her feelings in life—all muddled up and blended together in a mix of familiar flavors.”

Opening lines from "Waking Up":

When we wake up, rising out of that mystical, nonsensical, ever changing land of dreams, there is a moment before we remember who we are. It is in that moment that we belong only to ourselves, with no superfluous obligations or promises we must keep. No places we have to be, or people we have to smile at and be pleasant towards. For that one moment, we can just be.

2. Then, read the closing lines of "Alteration" and "Among the Stars" aloud, as written below. Ask the student to identify what made these effective endings. Discuss techniques that make for effective endings, including making a large or small statement, reinforcing a choice or decisions made by the character, or referencing the biggest moment of the story.

Closing lines of "Alteration":

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the glint of an object reflected off the mirror. My eyes immediately widened as realization set in. I found myself standing in front of the source, my fingers cradling the shears that would cut the ribbon of my imprisonment. I walked over to the mirror, my hands gingerly holding the thick scissors. In one swift motion, I snapped the shards, a single tear of hope streaking across my cheek and falling, falling along with my raven-black hair. I looked up into the mirror and no longer saw the eyes of an imprisoned seamstress. I saw a round, feminine face, hidden by choppy, boyish hair, and in her eyes I saw ink in the form of a free soul.

Closing lines of "Among the Stars":

“RAYMOND!” The bird’s screeching continued, but became more hoarse. I pinched the hook with one hand and rapidly unraveled the reel with the other. Then the line sagged off of the bird. Free to move, the great goose arched its wings and soared into the sky among the sea of endless stars.

3. Distribute writing notebooks and pens or pencils or laptops to students, as well as Handout #6, *Beginning Prompts*. Ask the students to choose one of the three prompts to work on for 15 to 20 minutes.

4. Read Teacher Resource #5, "Two Men on a Sidewalk," aloud to the class. Ask the students to make notes about the weather as they listen to the story. Discuss the story using the discussion questions at the end of the story.

5. Give the students 45 minutes to work independently on the 1,000 word stories that they started the day before-- or allow the students to begin a new story inspired by today's work. Ask students to choose one paragraph to revise or develop specifically. Walk the room, checking in with students, conferencing with them and encouraging them as needed.

6. Leave 45 minutes at the end of the work period for revision and editing. Ask the students to review their work so far this week and to choose one paragraph or section of their stories to revise and edit. Ask students to copy this edited/revised paragraph onto a separate sheet of paper and collect the papers.

7. End the class by bringing everyone into an authors' circle for thirty minutes and encouraging each student to share a small part of what she has written. Ask each student to share at least one sentence so that all voices are heard. Model asking clarifying questions, compliments, and constructive critique. Encourage students to both listen carefully to feedback and to offer suggestions and help to others.

8. Teachers should type up each of the students' papers after camp has ended for the day, creating a short anthology of work from the week. Make copies of the anthology to be distributed to each student the next day at camp. The anthology can simply be a collection of work-in-progress pieces, with the titles and first names of the students, along with a cover page that reads "Summer Camp Anthology 2014/ Leyla Beban Young Authors Foundation Summer Camp". Please send an electronic copy of the anthology to the Leyla Beban Young Authors Foundation at **info@blue4beban.org**

Handout #6, Beginning Prompts

- Option 1:

Write 3-5 of your own beginning lines... One sentence is just fine, but if you need a couple sentences, that's fine, too.

- Option 2:

“Was life really like a FlavorMorph Starburst? Kate tried and tried, but she couldn't figure out what two flavors were in the Starburst without looking at the wrapper. Just like her feelings in life—all muddled up and blended together in a mix of familiar flavors.”

Step 1: Brainstorm a list of 5-10 things that life could be like. (A Starburst is one example. Think of your own.)

Step 2: Pick one item from your list. Decide that this thing *is* life. Develop the idea in a full paragraph. Show, as vividly as you can, how life feels like this one thing.

- Option 3:

“When we wake up, rising out of that mystical, nonsensical, everchanging land of dreams, there is a moment before we remember who we are.”

Pick a character. It can be a character you've written about before or a new one.

Then describe that moment between dreams and being awake for this one character. Show it as vividly as you can.

Teacher Resource #5, "Two Men on a Sidewalk"

I was disgruntled when I boarded the sidewalk, having already lost precious minutes to a small mistake at the office. My words were sharp when I gave my address to it, sharper when I told it to just go already. Just as the paving stones purred to life, another man ran on. He was out of breath, red faced. He doffed his well-worn fedora and gave me a large smile.

He spoke his own address and settled into a comfortable stance.

After a moment of silence when it became apparent neither of our destinations were coming soon, he spoke again.

"Lovely weather this evening."

I gave him a look that he did not catch, his eyes locked on some point in the satellite strewn sky visible above the city.

"It always is," I replied.

He threw me an intrigued glance. "What if it wasn't?"

"What do you mean?"

"What if we didn't always have such agreeable weather? What if we didn't have such control over all? What if things were unpredictable again?"

My skin crawled at his implications, and I found myself shuffling towards the edge of the sidewalk furthest from him.

"Again?" I echoed, my voice hollow. He turned to me completely now, his briefcase by his feet and his fedora gripped tightly in his hands.

"Yes, again," he urged. "Did you know there was a time when we couldn't predict the week's weather? Much less control it? Can you imagine?"

I shook my head vehemently. "No, sir, I can't."

He stepped forward, his eyes outshining the blinking lights of the aeromobiles.

"There was a time when there were no aeromobiles, no cities in the sky, not even satellites! We had not the rudimentary technology to even look at ourselves from thousands of miles away! Is that not incredible?"

"It sounds awful!"

He stepped closer again, now spreading his arms to gesticulate wildly.

"It's not awful. It's wonderful! Look at the progress we've made! We live in an age where the planet is as far from us as the sky! Where creatures with no wings are given the means to fly! We spend summers on the moon, and we retire to distant galaxies in our old age! Are we not a wondrous thing?"

"We are what we are! And this is what we are!"

He shook his head, smiling gleefully. "But don't you see!" he persisted, "We are not simply as we are! We built ourselves from the ground up until we had the strength to launch ourselves into the atmosphere! We are not as we are, but as we *were*! And as we were, we did not always have such lovely weather!"

With a fast movement, he took my wrist and backpedaled, pulling me after him. I tore out of his grasp and he lurched after me, although he did not make contact again. He smiled sadly.

"I would not wish you to fall from the sidewalk," he said. I looked behind me and realized that I had stepped to the edge of the sidewalk, and was terrifyingly few inches away from a fall to Earth.

"Thank you," I said curtly.

Turning back to the city, he murmured, "Think nothing of it."

Silence fell between us once more, and it seemed he was readying himself to step off the sidewalk. Indeed, after a few moments, it slowed to a stop in front of a street some three hundred

feet above the ocean. He departed, nearly without a word, but at the last second he turned. With one foot on and one foot off, he said to me, "Sir, do not fear that which is different. If anything, fear that which is constant." The sidewalk spoke its soft warning, "Please step on or off the sidewalk." The man complied, and went on his way down the road.

As the sidewalk came to life once more, I noticed that his briefcase remained lying on its side about two feet from where he had stood. I trotted towards it, my scarf fluttering. I picked it up and yelled, "Sir! Sir, your briefcase!" I lifted it over my head, trying in vain to get someone to see it, but no one noticed. As I shook it, something fell out. It was thin, no thicker than a hair. It was white, with some sort of print on it. It was almost illegible, but oddly familiar. It took me a moment to place it as English, but written in such a way as I had never seen. The shapes were irregular, no particular pattern to their spacing. It seemed impossible that a computer had printed this. After much hardship, I was able to see it was a schematic for some incomprehensible machine. At the foot of the page, written in that same, near unreadable font, it read, "Do not play with the toys of gods."

I looked up at the street over the ocean, dismayed to find I was already too far inland to see it. The night air whipped about me, thrashing at the paper in my hands. A noise unlike any other rang through the world, like the groans of a thousand dying men. Electricity sparked through the sky, and I screamed. I tried to find a falling street, a tumbling sidewalk, even a burning satellite, but nothing more seemed to want to disturb the air. Nothing but the moisture.

A drop of something chilling hit my forehead. Another on my nose. On my cheek. They hit me in faster succession, more and more. The paper began to sag in my hands, and I turned my face up to the heavens. Water, light and icy, was falling from the sky.

The paper, now heavy with moisture, tore in my hands, sliding wetly across the sparking sidewalk. The briefcase rattled in its wake, both threatening to fall off the edge. As they were lost to the destruction of the sky, I imagined I could hear the man saying, "Lovely weather this evening."

Discussion Questions for "Two Men on a Sidewalk":

1. What do you notice about the weather (or lack thereof) at the beginning of the story? And how is the weather tied in at the end?

- it's "agreeable" weather*
- the sky is strewn with satellites*
- lights of aeromobiles shine in the eyes of the man with the briefcase*
- at the end, it begins to rain-- after the sheet of paper reading "Do not play with the toys of the gods" flutters out of the briefcase*
- the protagonist can almost hear the man saying "Lovely weather this evening"*

2. How does the discussion of weather create the sense of conflict for the characters?

- the man with the briefcase compares the control of the weather to what life used to be-- this allows the reader to see the key differences between life then (and our life now) to what life is like for the protagonist.*
- the protagonist is annoyed by a small mistake at the office-- the man on the sidewalk brings that tiny annoyance into sharp relief with his discussion of the ways things used to be*
- this creates discomfort ("My skin crawled at his implications and I found myself shuffling towards the edge of the sidewalk furthest from him.")*

3. What words give the reader a sense of the man on the sidewalk and his personality?

At the beginning:

- "out of breath, red-faced"*
- "doffed his well worn fedora and gave me a big smile"*
- "settled into a comfortable stance"*
- "intrigued glance"*

Then the words shift:

- "he urged"*
- "He stepped forward, his eyes shining in the light of the aeromobiles"*
- "He stepped closer again, now spreading his arms to gesticulate wildly"*
- "... he took my wrist and backpedaled"*

At the end:

- "The man complied"*
- "He departed, nearly without a word."*

Lesson Five: Genre

Leyla Beban Young Authors Foundation Summer Camp 2014

Overview

Genre often defines characters and settings, as well as some plot structures and conflicts in stories. In this lesson, students will define several genres and discuss how genres develop characters and plot structures. On this final day of camp, students will also work more on their own 1,000 word pieces, read the work of their camp-mates, and discuss a sci-fi story from *Bluefire*.

Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- define several writing genres (such as sci-fi, fantasy, and historical fiction)
- read "He and He," from *Bluefire* and discuss the story through the lens of genre
- work more on a piece of 1,000 word fiction
- read and celebrate their work of the camp as shared in the camp's anthology
- share pieces of their own writing, receive feedback on their work, and offer advice and suggestions to other writers.

Materials

Teacher Resource #6, *Writing Genres* (as a reference during the discussion on genre)

Teacher Resource #7, "He and He" (read aloud to class)

Handout #7: *Camp Anthology* (typed up and copied by the teacher the evening before)

Notebook or laptops for writing

Pens or pencils for writing

Optional: highlighters

Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a camp size of 15 students. Adjust accordingly for different camp sizes.

Time

One three-hour camp session or three one-hour class periods.

Procedures

1. Using Teacher Resource #6, *Writing Genres*, discuss writing genres and their attributes. How does each genre define the characters, setting, and conflicts?
2. Using Teacher Resource #7, read "He and He" aloud to the class. Discuss the story using the discussion questions following the story.
3. Distribute writing notebooks and pens or pencils or laptops to students. Give students 60 minutes to work on their 1,000 word story.
4. Distribute the Camp Anthology and give students 30 minutes to peruse the anthology.
5. End the class by bringing everyone into an authors' circle for 30 minutes. Make a list of the campers' writing goals for the summer and over the next school year. Solicit feedback on how camp went and what might be improved for next summer. Remind students to submit their work for the "\$1,000 for 1,000 Words" contest, and let them know that they can always post their work on the website Blue4Beban.org.

Teacher Resource #6, Writing Genres

"Genres" refers to the categories of writing, and we'll be discussing several fiction writing genres, including:

Action/Adventure story: In these stories, characters have adventures, and there is often a conflict between good and evil or humans and nature. Settings might include big cities or the great outdoors. Weapons and gadgets are often key accessories for main characters.

Historical fiction: These are stories set in a specific time period, such as World War II or the French Revolution. The main characters are fictional, but may interact with historical figures. Some of the conflict in the story might be directly related to real historical events.

Mystery: A crime (such as a murder, theft, or kidnapping) takes place in a mystery, and the main character, usually a detective, must solve the crime using clues that he or she discovers along the way.

Romance: In this genre, the plot revolves around the romantic relationship between two characters. Often there is some kind of misunderstanding between the two characters at a key moment in the plot, and their relationship falls apart, only to be rebuilt more strongly after the misunderstanding has been resolved.

Science fiction: Most of the stories in this genre take place in the future and use futuristic technology (such as robots, flying cars, etc.) as key elements in the story. Science is integrated into the story, and the science in the story should be based on known scientific facts. There is often a central premise or idea that must be carried out to its logical end.

Fantasy: These stories are often set in a vaguely medieval time period, with dragons, elves, dwarves, and wizards playing key roles. Conflicts can be resolved using magic, and the plot often involves some kind of adventure or quest, where the characters must obtain an object or spell to defeat an evil antagonist.

Teacher Resource #7, "He and He"

He had been building the device for some time.

It started as a thought experiment, a what-if, a nihilist's search for - if not solace - then *something* in a random and insensate universe. The device was only the latest incarnation of his quest for meaning and companionship.

By his eighth birthday neither his friends nor his parents understood his deep unease with life and existence, and eventually they lost any understanding of him at all. He could not form relationships that were anything more than transient – not because of any innate flaw, but because no one could identify with his internal struggle.

At age sixteen, he decided that that the study of physics was the only way to impose order on the universe. He had no particular talent for mathematics or love of science, But he devoted every evening to teaching himself all he could, from online colleges and pop-sci books.

Eight years later he found the idea in a journal, and it caught his fancy. He spent hours after class reading papers and teaching himself the math. The more ridiculous and less feasible it seemed, the more fascinated he became. He would show his professors the strange, circular equations he wrote during late nights of blurred vision and bitter coffee. They scrunched up their eyebrows and bit their lips, and said that while he certainly seemed to be proving something, they weren't sure exactly what it was. He would lie and say that it was just something that seemed kind of neat, and that it had "just come to him." He didn't want to seem insane.

He ate nothing but ramen for a month because he spent his entire stipend on electronics. Semiconductors, cooling systems, long spools of copper and gold wires, and strange processing components which not even he understood. The basement of the house he shared with six others became his burrow and his haven. He rose for shrinking amounts of time, only attending his classes and using the restroom. He paid his rent, so his roommates did not comment. But once, when bringing him some cookies that they had baked, one of them saw that the walls were covered in chalked equations and cryptic drawings. Drawings of two identical men, separated by a brick wall, both with their ears pressed against it.

Three weeks before winter break, he stopped attending classes. Aided by substances closer to meth than mountain dew, he got in an unbroken seventy-one hours of work before his parents came to see why he had stopped taking their calls. They found him nearly catatonic, lying nude on the cracked concrete floor of the basement, writing the same six symbols again and again on the wall.

The university was notified. The diagnosis was undetermined. He was checked into rehab. He lay in bed for seven days, eating what was brought to him and sleeping intermittently. He worked, but did not progress. He was stuck in an endless loop, unable to move past those six symbols. His mental circling grew ever slower. At the end of the seventh day, it stopped. He realized that neither his project nor his life was moving anywhere. He decided that since he couldn't do anything more with the former, he might as well fix up the latter.

The doctors were unable to diagnose him. Eventually, they decided that his treatment had been effective and he was released.

When he returned to his house and his classes, he was changed, but no one complained. He spent time with his housemates, joking and laughing. He cooked elaborate meals for them (which they thanked him for), went out drinking on weekends (though never to excess), and took an aerobics class (how nice!). He got rid of all the things in the basement.

One day, nineteen months and eleven days after his breakdown he came back to the house feeling energized after a conversation with a professor about an obscure paradox. Finding that he had the house to himself, he lay down on the couch to think. He noticed idly how similar the paradox he had just seen was to the six symbols he had been stuck on more than a year earlier.

Then it struck him like a bullet. His eyes flew open. He rose unsteadily, and wrote something down on a napkin. He folded the paper with unsteady hands, and put it carefully in his wallet. He drove two hours to the forest, and dug up the box of electronics and papers that he had buried over a year ago.

He worked like he could die at any moment. He wrote sloppily, but every connection that he soldered was completed with the care of a neurosurgeon. By noon he had all the math worked out and quintuple checked. By the time his roommates began to arrive home, he had gutted his car for its battery

and fluids.

By midnight, he was done.

What he had looked less like the Answer and more like a piece of poor modern art. A wire frame forming an elongated hexagon hung from the ceiling. An electromagnet suspended by pure gold wire swung gently in the middle. A small circuit board was connected to the wire frame and his computer. A small black box was attached to the magnet.

He took a deep breath, and turned the system on. The lights dimmed. There were sharp cracks of electricity. The magnet began to shake, then to vibrate, then to whirr. He could feel his keys being tugged out of his pocket. There was a silent but blinding flash of light. When he could see again, he saw that the wire framework had become the outline for a hole. Through the hole, he saw himself staring back. "Hello," he and he said. "Should I or should you?" he and he asked. He pointed to himself, and he pointed to him as well. He took a deep breath. He stepped through the hole, and met his first friend.

Discussion Questions for "He and He":

1. What really stood out to you in this story?

--answers will vary, but encourage the students to explore what makes this story so powerful

2. How does author create a sense of the main character's background in the story?

--the author uses paragraphs and brief summaries of the ages (8, 16, recent past) to create a sense of time passing and to give a background to the character and illuminate his behavior

3. How does the author create a sense of conflict in the story?

--there is little direct conflict in the story-- this is more of an internal struggle of a person who is trying to achieve something personally, with few others involved or impacted

-- the struggle is most apparent when others, who are worried about the protagonist, involve themselves in his life and encourage him to re-engage with the world

4. How is the conflict resolved at the end of the story?

-- the man finds his first friend-- perhaps by opening a portal to a parallel world?

5. What hints about the ending are planted in this story?

-- the idea that no one understands the protagonist's internal struggle

-- the opening-- "He had been building the device for some time."

--the protagonist studies mathematics and physics

-- the roommates see the drawing of the two men on either side of the brick wall

--the protagonist writes six symbols on the wall