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A handbook for literature-based writing lessons

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A HANDBOOK FOR LITERATURE-BASED
WRITING LESSONS

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

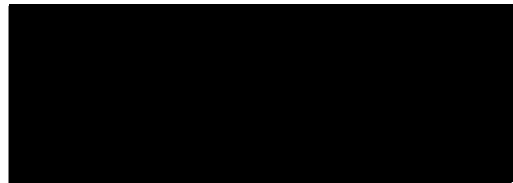
by

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Dayton, Ohio

July, 1995

Approved by:



Official Advisor

Dedicated to my mother, Barbara.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The often used Achievement tests evaluate students' writing on the ability to write complete sentences, use correct punctuation, support main ideas with supporting details, and spell words correctly (California Achievement Test, 1994). At times the subject of writing may be oversimplified by reliance on the mastery of spelling, grammar, and punctuation lessons to turn children into writers. Writing is an art that requires such specialized knowledge that cannot possibly be acquired through lectures, textbooks, drill, trial and error, or even from the exercise of writing itself (Smith, 1983). "Students need to value listening to good literature, and owning good literature before they are asked to have a good lead or to use surprising details" (Harwayne, 1992, p. 3).

Literature can be used to help build supportive communities for readers and writers, to help students view reading and writing as lifetime pleasures, and to nurture their own images of good writing. Literature can also be used to help students discover the important issues in their own lives (Harwayne, 1992).

Although authors give a variety of (sometimes conflicting)

advice to aspiring writers, they all agree on one important thing: To be a writer, one must first be a reader. Nobody but a reader ever became a writer (Gallo, 1994). Although this advice comes from authors themselves, many teachers do not seem to be listening. English classes everywhere are not using literature in conjunction with writing classes. Authors also recommend that writing be done on a regular basis (Gallo, 1994).

As teachers recognize the potential for writing instruction held in literature, many more will follow the trend. As Nancie Atwell describes her conversion, she says her writing classes used to center around story starters and book reports. But her own desire to write "like in a book" forced her to look more closely at the craft of a writer. "Literature became my textbook: fine writing held lesson I wanted to learn" (Atwell, 1989, p. 54).

The purpose of this handbook is to show the bond between reading and writing in such a way as to get teachers excited to teach writing. It will also provide teachers with already prepared writing lessons using their favorite literature. After teachers have read this and tried some of the lessons, they will possibly take that first leap into a literature-based writing program. What better way to teach but by example and experience.

Significance of the Problem

Many times people are trained for a job by watching someone else perform a similar job. He can observe, participate, and eventually be familiar enough with it to be on his own. This

happens with teachers during their student teaching, plumbers' apprenticing, and law clerks doing research for other attorneys before passing the bar and being assigned to their own cases. Wouldn't it make sense, then, for children who are trying to learn to write, to study the work of authors? There is a great deal writers can learn from closely studying the works of professional authors. Teachers could also be inspired to practice the craft of writing along with their students through the study of literature. Teachers who are writers will experience some of the same difficulties as their pupils and will thus have a better understanding of the problems they face. Common sense tells us that to help our students write more effectively, we should guide them to examine their own creative processes.

Writing is involved in a large majority of tasks one will have to participate in during life. Writing can be found in many forms: letters, reports, memoranda, journals, term papers, and perhaps occasional poems or pieces of fiction. Much more is required to become a competent and adaptable author than just the knowledge of putting words together. Where can all these examples be found when they are not available in the lectures, textbooks, and exercises to which children are exposed in classrooms? The only possible answer seems as obvious to me as it should to every educator - they must be found in what other people have written, in existing texts. "To learn how to write for newspapers, one must read newspapers; textbooks about newspapers will not suffice. For magazines, browse through magazines rather than through correspondence courses on

magazine writing. To write poetry, read it" (Smith, 1983, p. 20). This handbook is significant to all writing teachers who are not feeling enthusiastic about teaching writing.

Hypothesis

The lessons provided in this handbook will aid teachers of any grade to teach writing in a creative and effective way. The attitudes found by surveying teachers evaluating the handbook will be consistent with the attitudes expressed by teachers in the review of the literature. The teachers will find the lesson topics important, the lessons easy to use, and the chosen literature appropriate.

Definitions

MODEL LITERATURE - A book or books that could be used to model the specific objective being taught. Tips for reading aloud the storybooks could be given under this heading.

LESSON DESCRIPTION - An outline of the lesson provided for teacher's use. Lessons can be modified to meet grade level standards.

LANGUAGE SEARCH - An activity that invites students to find their own examples in other books, in movies and on TV.

STORY WRITING - A presentation of quick exercises that encourage students to apply what they have learned. These practices can lead to full blown stories.

Limitations and Assumptions

The number of participants, practicing teachers, was not as great as it could have been. With more teachers pulled, results could differ. Only when the number of participants approaching at least thirty can the group be assumed to approximate a normal distribution. Even then, there may be circumstances (eg. hiring patterns, age, gender, or teacher training institution attended) which impact on the distribution's placement along a continuum.

CHAPTER II.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

When something catches a person's attention, that spark of consciousness - an idea - may stimulate the person to think up a story. When a reader is captivated with a story and wants to read on till the end, what was in there that caught that reader? What brings on awareness of literary greatness? In order for children to ever have that connection with a piece of literature, they must become aware of the many possibilities found in writing. A teacher's role is to point out the various techniques an author has employed to make his story unique and successful. To study an author, one could refer to it as- "illuminating the craft of the writer"(Atwell, 1989, p. 54). This is how Jack McGarvey referred to teachers connecting students with literature and students taking note and beginning to craft their own words. Many teachers have had great success hooking literature with writing lessons. What better way to judge a method but by "kid-testing" it?

Nancie Atwell worked with a third-grade teacher who read to the class Trumpet of the Swan (1970) by E.B. White. She encouraged the children to notice White's vivid descriptions. The teacher interviewed some kids afterward to find out if they did anything differently in their writing because of White. "Peter said, 'I write stronger language, put in more detail and tell more about the

thing I am writing about.' Adam commented, 'Reading this book helped me to learn to expand my characters.' And Elyssa offered, 'I make different descriptions, I love his beautiful language'" (Atwell, 1989, p. 54). Because this teacher read the book and pointed out some of White's craft to them, it added another asset to reading. Not only did the children get pleasure from the reading of the story, but they also were learning about writing.

Children's appreciation of the writing of others increases as they listen to many fine stories, read widely themselves, and have many opportunities to create their own stories and poems. While real possibilities for writing are all around us in the classroom, it is literature that gives children a sense of how the written word sounds and looks. Frank Smith suggests that the role of literature in the writing program is central.

"Reading seems to me to be the essential fundamental source of knowledge about writing, from the conventions of transition to the subtle differences of register and discourse structures in various genres" (Huck, 1993, p. 732). Experts from everywhere are beginning to recognize the importance of using literature in classrooms. It is now time for all teachers to take note of the results of writing lessons when books, stories, and other real written works are used.

Children involved in a literature-based program are taught writing through the use of quality literature. A way to judge the success of this method is to evaluate the students' attitude who are involved. Regie Routman provided such an evaluation in her

book, Transitions (1988). A first grade class were immersed in a literature-based reading and writing program for a year. The children's oral responses on the last day of school in first grade in 1984 were reassuring about the kind of teaching that was going on. When asked "What is reading?" the first response was "Reading is writing." The second response to the question, "What is writing?" was "Writing is reading." Students recognized the relationship between the two subjects and had positive attitudes towards both. "What is reading?" and "What is writing?" are listed in the order given on the last day of school in first grade. The responses to the two questions found in Routman's study are as follows:

What is reading?

Reading is writing.
Reading is words put together that mean something.
Reading is reading books.
Reading is when you read a book and you read it over again and you practice it, and then you can read it well.
Reading is something very special. There are lots of words.
Reading is thinking.
Reading is reading real hard books like "Stone Fox."
Reading is learning.
Reading is sitting in a quiet place with a book.
Reading is when you decide what you're going to write in a book.
You need silence for reading.
Reading can get you moving into the grades.
Reading is fun.
Reading is enjoyment.

What is writing?

Writing is words.
Writing is reading.
Writing is words that you think of in your mind, and then you write them down.
Writing is something like writing a book.
Writing is looking into the future and telling about your life.
Writing is important.
Writing is fun because if you don't have a book you can write a book.

Writing is writing sentences.
Writing is letters.
Writing is when you write a book.
Writing is writing about your life and your friends in you writing journal. Writing is publishing books.
Writing is kind of hard.
If you keep trying to write, you'll get better and better.
Writing is thinking about your life or a story and writing it down.
Writing is publishing a book after you have worked hard.
(Routman, 1988, p. 214)

The largest source of writing ideas for children - as well as for adults -is found in their own lives. People are experts on themselves. Since there is a plethora of children's books written about everyday events that could happen to anybody, using these stories to generate thought seems only natural. Sharing books with children and relating the stories to their own lives will give the children a personal stake in the story. Teachers in the past have searched through their bags of tricks to motivate their students into writing a story. Lucy McCormick Calkins describes going as far as bringing a hornet's nest to school and telling her children to write about it. But "motivating writing" is very different from helping young people become deeply and personally involved in writing. To show literature about an author's memories, ideas, feelings, and concerns will show children the importance of simply living.

Many accomplished writers readily and graciously acknowledge how they too have been influenced by their love of literature. Robert MacNeil titled his memoirs, Wordstruck, (1989) because of his conviction on the importance of listening to language (Harwayne, 1992). Mem Fox also contributes her love of language to

having been read to aloud. "In her powerful memoir Dear Mem Fox, she explains how she relies on her rich storehouse of language to improve the quality of her writing." (Calkins, 1991, p. 168) To hear the written word is to judge it. Just as one reads aloud another's work, an author judges his own words in this way. As Don Murray advises: "Read aloud, for your ear is a better editor than your eye, and if you listen to how the piece reads, it will tell you when it needs a definition woven in, some description, more evidence, a change of pace. A writer who listens well to the evolving text will find out that the text is teaching the writer how it should be written." (Harwayne, 1992, p. 116) Listening to the written word is key in learning to write it.

Teachers have two critically important functions in guiding children toward literacy. They must demonstrate uses for writing, and they must help children use writing themselves. Teachers must help children to write, not teach them about writing. Most importantly, teachers must help children to perceive themselves as readers and writers before the children are able to read and write for themselves. There is no way of helping children to see themselves as writers if they are not interested. Teachers must believe that writing is interesting, possible, satisfying, and worthwhile in order for their students to believe it. A writing class is a journey that the students and teacher make together.

"The reason that many of us care so much about the teaching of reading and writing is that we, too, have found that when we give the children of the world the words they need, we are giving them

life and growth and refreshment." (Calkins,pg. 24, 1991)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The procedures presented in this handbook were made to be user friendly for writing teachers. Each lesson is based around a particular literary objective with student writing encouraged as a concluding activity. The literary topics to be used are: Memories, Beautiful Language, Leads, Endings, Dialogue, Characterization, Show not Tell, Real Events, and Voice.

The first topic in the writing lessons is memories. Memories are an important tool when motivating students to write. An important source for topic ideas are found through memories of one's life. Daily writings of personal experiences or reactions to books, events, or movies can be encouraged by devoting a few minutes of class time on a regular basis.

The beautiful language of an author can make a book unforgettable. The language of literature, with its imagery and phrasing, serves as a wonderful model for budding writers. This writing topic can be explored with pleasure by young and old.

Leads are a crucial part of any piece of writing. Learning to write a good lead may be helped by the examination of leads that have been successful for others. Just as every story has a lead, every story has an ending. Lessons revolving around great endings

can make students aware of the importance of choosing a good one.

Dialogue, another chosen writing skill, can play an important role in literature. Some of the most memorable writing in stories is dialogue. Dialogue can also be the key to developing characters.

Creating characters for a story is very important. Characters are who readers remember the most in a story. It is the storyteller's job to bring the characters to life. Lessons emphasizing unforgettable characters can remind writers of the impact they can make.

Description in a story brings the story to life for the reader. An author "showing" the reader an action or a character will make the reader feel they are a part of the story. Good writers show, rather than tell. Instead of describing an apple with adjectives, show the apple: "When I sank my teeth into the apple, it's juice hit me square in the eyes." With strong verbs and nouns the apple was shown to the reader, instead of just told about it.

Another topic which aids in choosing a writing topic is the use of real events in writing. Fiction often begins with everyday matter, such as doing chores, coping with illness, and building friendships. These real events can vary greatly. Reality-based stories can exaggerate the everyday and they can help people cope with situations they are facing.

The final topic chosen for this handbook deals with picking the type voice a story will be in. There are three main types of voice in writing: first person, second person, and third person.

Choosing the appropriate one for a story can be aided by reviewing various examples of each in storybooks.

Each of these skills has an introduction defining the skill. One might read this material aloud or paraphrase it to suit the comprehension level of a class. The lessons also feature one or a few storybooks that can be used to introduce and reinforce the concept. Activities are included with each lesson that will have the students actively participating in learning. The lessons were made specifically for upper elementary students, but could be modified for younger or older students.

A sample of teachers will be asked to evaluate the lessons. Teachers from primary grades, intermediate, and secondary grades will be chosen for the sample. The teachers will be from various school districts and have varying years of experience. Teachers' attitudes towards the literature based methodology will be noted. The teachers will judge upon the importance of the lessons to writing, the usability of lessons without prior training, and the grade level appropriateness. The teachers will also be asked to rank the lesson topics they find to be most to least important to writing. Development of the survey will aid in evaluation of the hypothesis.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This handbook was written to provide writing teachers with a user friendly plethora of important writing skill lessons. A survey was created to determine if attitudes were receptive to the literature-based style used in the lessons. The survey also sought to evaluate the usability of the lessons without prior training, the ability to adapt the lessons to various grade levels, and to rank the importance of the writing topics chosen.

The surveys revealed that although 93 percent of the teachers claimed to use at least some literature-based techniques, only 47 percent of the teachers were familiar with Nancie Atwell, an author and teacher whose works are studied in most whole language circles. Another related statistic presents that 80 percent of the teachers surveyed with over seven years experience have never heard of Nancie Atwell, while 100 percent of teachers with less than six years experience are familiar with her. The teachers with less experience have had more recent schooling and may be more up to date on the literature-based ideas for today's classrooms.

Interestingly, the survey indicates that familiarity with Nancie Atwell may also depend on the grade level taught. A score of one indicates being familiar with Nancie Atwell and a score of

two indicates not familiar. As shown in figure 1, the level one or primary teachers (n=5) answer closer to a score of one than any other grade level. The intermediate grade teachers (n=5) know Atwell the least and about 50 percent of the secondary teachers (n=5) are familiar with her.

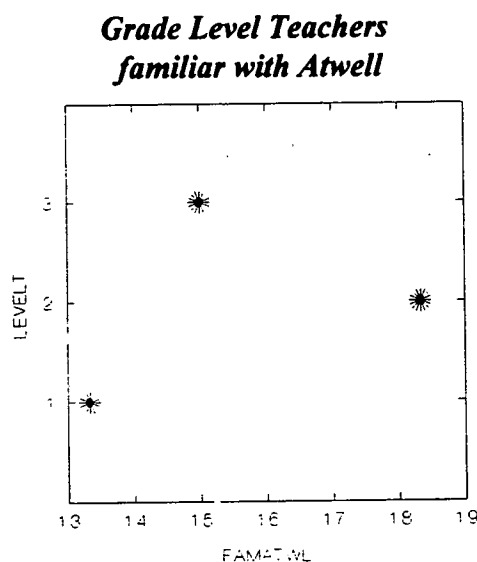


Figure 1

The calculations for the next areas are on a six point scale with six being the most favorable. The user friendliness of the handbook scores a mean score of 5.9. This indicates that the usability of the handbook does not rely on whether the user is an experienced or a beginning teacher, nor does it rely on the amount of literature-based background they possess.

A mean score of 5.7 is calculated for the adaptibility of the lessons to various grade levels. Although teachers find some skills not as appropriate to their grade level as other skills, the

overall ability to adapt the lessons is relatively high.

The importance of the lessons was clearly stated by those surveyed. Seventy-three percent of the teachers chose "characterization" to be one of their top three choices for importance. "Beautiful language," "memories," and "show not tell" had 66 percent of the teachers surveyed choosing them as being one of the top three important writing topics in the handbook. The other five writing topics scored considerably lower in the rankings for importance. The results of the rankings are shown in Figure 2. The lower a numerical score is, the more important the skill topic. Ranking, however, awards a position according to the pool of other ranked items. In other words, all lessons could have been viewed as being strong. The teachers, however, favored certain lessons over others.

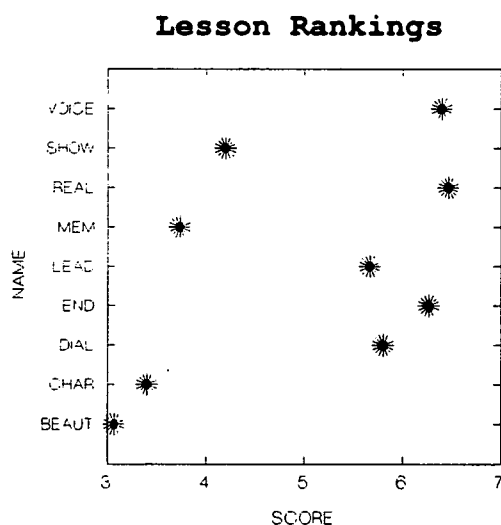


Figure 2

The results found by the surveys will aid in the development

of further lessons. The findings also indicate positive attitudes towards the literature-based style of teaching today. Although not all are as educated about these new methods, all those surveyed are willing to attempt the transition into literary integration.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This handbook was designed to provide writing teachers with literature based writing lessons that are important, easy to use, and age adaptable. A survey was given to a sample of teachers in order to evaluate these objectives. The survey results produce mean scores evaluating the usability of the handbook and the adaptability to various grades. The scores are based on a six point scale, with six being the most positive. The handbook's usability score is a 5.9 and the grade level adaptability score is a 5.7. The importance of the lessons were ranked from the most important in a writing class to the least important. The four writing topics scoring in the top three most important places are: "characterization", "beautiful language", "memories", and "show not tell." The survey also indicated a link between a teacher being familiar with Nancie Atwell to years experience and the grade level taught.

Many conclusions gathered from the results of this survey can be helpful with further lesson development. There is no indication for a need to change the lesson format in order to simplify. The teachers found the handbook very user friendly. The ability to adapt the lesson to other grade levels also scored high. According

to this survey, any grade writing teacher could benefit from the lessons provided. Several secondary teachers suggested the use of more mature books as being a possible adaption method. The scores that suggest an alteration in the handbook deal with choosing important lessons. The lesson topics that most of the teachers found important could be expanded upon. The other lessons that are scored as not being very important could be modified or even replaced by other writing lessons.

Atwell is an often studied literature-based instruction advocate. Although it appears that most of the teachers surveyed practice at least some literature-based techniques in their classrooms, the most recently schooled teachers are more often familiar with Atwell. Teachers in the survey who are familiar with Nancie Atwell are the teachers with the least amount of experience. These teachers, more than likely, recently graduated from university programs with the current research fresh in their minds. There is also is a link between teachers familiar with Atwell and grade level taught. The primary and secondary teachers surveyed were more familiar with Atwell than the intermediate teachers. There could be several reasons for that. Primary teachers are focused upon when training for literature-based instruction becomes available. Whole language techniques usually begin in the primary grades and the course of study found in the primary curriculum is more receptive to it. Secondary teachers generally do not use reading and writing basal texts. Their use of literature is a must and therefore, the motivation to research the use of literature in

classrooms is more probable. A focus on training intermediate teachers could be another consideration formed from these results. Further research should attempt to address the question of teacher experience related to familiarity with literature-based methods.

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APPENDIX

MEMORIES

Memories are an important tool when trying to excite students to write. One of the biggest dilemmas seems to be picking a worthy topic. If the students keep some kind of notebook where they store their personal experiences, they have a plethora of writing ideas! Many professional writers use their own life experiences for book topics. The details may not stay exactly the same, but the idea is sparked from the real life incident. It would be a great asset for any writing teacher to have their students keep some kind of journal or writer's notebook for this use. Daily writing of personal experiences or reactions to books could be encouraged by devoting class time towards it on a regular basis.

#1 MEMORIES

MODEL LITERATURE

Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Read aloud this book about a little boy who helps an old woman to reawaken memories that she has forgotten. Wilfred gathers his sea shells that remind him of the sea and his football that is precious as gold. She is reminded of her memories by looking at his mementoes. Students are asked to make a memory box of their own at home. In the box they are to include things that remind them of important past times or people. Each day, two or three people could be assigned to share their memory box and tell why they chose the items in it. Listening to others' memories could spark reluctant students to share their own.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Students are to list their favorite books on a chart. Discuss which ones could have been sparked by a real life incident. Have students think and share about related incidents that happened in their lives. Relating their own lives to real life books could cause students to realize the enormous possibilities for their own stories.

STORY WRITING

Students are asked to choose one item from their memory box and write the story behind it. 26

#2 MEMORIES

MODEL LITERATURE

Arctic Memories by Normee Ekoomiak

My Great Aunt Arizona by Gloria Houston

The Best Town in the World by Byrd Baylor

The Chalk Doll by Charlotte Pomerantz

Tales of a Gambling Grandma by Dayal Kaun Khalsa Clarkson

My Grandmother's Stories by Adele Geras

Memories of My Life in a Polish Village by Toby Fluek

My Grandmother's Journey by John Cech

Don't You Know There's a War On? by James Stevenson

Appalachia by Cynthia Rylant

In Coal Country by Judith Hendershot

When I Was Young in the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant

From Me To You by Paul Rogers

When I Was Nine by James Stevenson

Memoirs of a Four Year Old by Jamie Lee Curtis

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Above are some picture books rooted in personal memories. Use any books in lessons dealing with books made from memories. Point out to the students that many of these books were written about a grandparent or relative. Older people are an excellent source for students to go to for writing material. Many older people have had a different lifestyle than the children today. Students could

interview a relative or older person to learn things of interest. Collect many interviews so there are several to choose from.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Students are encouraged to find other books that authors have written about a relative or another elderly person.

STORY WRITING

Students are to choose their favorite interview and create a story out of it. Description is an important part of the story. They might have to go back to their sources to help them with details.

BEAUTIFUL LANGUAGE

The language that an author uses can make a book unforgettable. The language of literature, with its imagery and phrasing, serves as a wonderful model and springboard. Beginning writers listen to the rhythm, notice the words flowing together, and note the musical sounds some books have. In contrast, children exposed only to basal texts only might write a story such as this:

I like school.

I like to play.

I like to run.

I like to jump.

The basals concentrate on the readability of vocabulary, emphasize correct spellings, and zero in on the grammatically correct sentence. These rules, although eventually important, can stifle the beauty of writing. There are many examples of beautiful language in children's books of today.

#1 BEAUTIFUL LANGUAGE

MODEL LITERATURE

Owl Moon

Jane Yolen

LESSON DESCRIPTION

As you read aloud this book, have the students close their eyes and imagine the woods and the sounds of the forest. Ask the class if they were in a quiet forest, what sounds would they hear? Read the book through again, pointing out the similes and metaphors used by the author. What strategies does the author use to make the readers feel they are right there with the characters?

LANGUAGE SEARCH

The familiar peaceful setting in this book provides a focus for beautiful descriptions. Provide the class with other books with settings that may be unusual, beautiful, or cause some kind of emotion to the readers. Have the students find memorable passages that give them a "feeling" for the setting. Some books with powerful settings are...

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

When Africa Was Home by Karen Lynn Williams

Brother Eagle, Sister Sky by Susan Jeffers

The Seashore Book by Charlotte Zolotow

The Ghost-Eye Tree by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault

STORY WRITING

Students are asked to make "word pictures" in this lesson. Each student translates some or all of the pictures in a storybook into descriptive passages. The goal is to enable readers to "see" what's going on without looking at the illustrations. Older students could be asked to make one or two of their word pictures a metaphor or simile.

Later, suggest that students use newspaper and magazine pictures- of people, places, things, and actions- as starting points for word pictures in their stories. Note: Many professional writers use this technique. Rather than invent images from scratch, they borrow from ready-made pictures.

#2 BEAUTIFUL LANGUAGE

MODEL LITERATURE

Tar Beach by Faith Ringold

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Ask the students to picture in their minds the flight of the girl in this story as it is read aloud. Do not show the pictures yet. Ask them to choose a favorite scene as it is read through again. They will have to draw the scene they have chosen. When the drawings are complete, a comparison can be made between the author's illustrations and the students'.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

The above activity can be done with any illustrated book with beautiful descriptions in it. A list of books with sensory images is as follows:

Stina by Lena Anderson

Very Last First Time by Jan Andrews

The Great Kapok Tree by Lynne Cherry

My Special Best Words by John Steptoe

Grandpa Loved by Josephine Nobisso

When You Were Born by Debra Frasier

I Am the Ocean by Suzanna Marshak

STORY WRITING

Students are asked to think of the activities they do during the day. These could include going to class, eating lunch in the cafeteria, walking to school, activities after school, or weekend activities. Students will be instructed to choose one or more of these places to describe. The descriptions should focus on at least three of their senses(smell, touch, sight, sound, taste). While they are participating in their chosen activity, they are to try to describe it on paper so that the reader knows exactly what it is like to be there. Share these descriptions in class the next day for critique.

THE LEAD

The lead is a crucial part of any piece of writing. The lead is the point where readers decide if they're going to keep on reading. There is no set formula for a good lead. It can start out with a setting description, an action, a dialogue, a reaction, or any other strategy that will keep a reader's attention. Some examples of good leads are:

- * "And how's my little girl?" (Grandpa, John Burningham)
- * "Call me Ishmael." (Moby Dick)
- * One morning a mosquito saw an iguana drinking at a water hole.
(Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears)

The first lead is a quotation from the main character. From the very beginning the reader is getting a sense of Grandpa's personality. This connection with characters can include the reader in the story. The second lead gives the reader the same feeling of connection with the main character of the story. He is speaking directly to the reader and draws him into the story that way. The third lead is an action lead. The words paint a picture of the action, and the reader wonders what happens next.

The next few lessons will display other good leads. The most important thing an aspiring writer should remember about leads is that there is no set formula for a successful lead. An author must grab the readers with whatever he has.

#1 LEADS

MODEL LITERATURE

Tar Beach by Faith Ringold

Shrek by William Steig

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Each of these three books has a different type of lead in them. Three charts with a lead on each can be displayed in front of the class. The children are asked to be the critics for these beginnings. Below each lead the teacher may write down comments the students make about each lead and why they like it or do not like it. A discussion should be led on why the authors chose these leads and what makes a good lead.

Leads Used in Lesson

"I will always remember when the stars fell down around me and lifted me up above the George Washington Bridge." (Tar Beach)

"His mother was ugly and his father was ugly, but Shrek was uglier than the two of them put together." (Shrek!)

"I'm the wolf. Alexander T. Wolf. You can call me Al." (The True Story of the Three Little Pigs)

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Students will take stories out that they are working on and exchange them with a partner in the class. The students will read

each other's leads. If the lead has made the reader want to read on, then the writer has been successful. If the lead lacks creativity, the partner will offer suggestions using the guidelines he learned from the previous discussion on what makes a good lead. The writer should be able to explain to his partner why he wrote the lead. What qualities does it have that would attract a reader?

STORY WRITING

Having discussed their leads with partners and listened to advise, students will work on possible new leads for the stories they are currently writing.

#2 LEADS

MODEL LITERATURE

Corduroy by Don Freeman

The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash by Trinka Nobel

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown

Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears by Verna Aardema

William's Doll by Charlotte Zolotow

LESSON DESCRIPTION

In this lesson various types of leads will be labeled for easier understanding. The types of leads should be displayed for the class. After reading the opening of each model, ask students to identify the kind of lead used. The answers should look like this:

*Action lead - Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears:

"One morning a mosquito saw an iguana drinking at a water hole."

*Character lead - William Doll:

"William wanted a doll."

*Dialogue lead - The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash:

"How did your school trip go today?"

*Setting lead - Goodnight Moon:

"In the great green room there was a telephone..."

*Summary lead - Corduroy:

"Corduroy is a bear who once lived in the toy department of a big store. Day after day he waited with all the other animals and dolls for somebody to come along and take him home."

Because many leads are "mixed" (for example, character plus action), there may be valid disagreements about how to classify a given opening.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Bring in a variety of story books and have students look for different types of leads. Later, they can expand their search by collecting leads found in chapter books, novels, or magazine stories. Make a bulletin board featuring the different types of leads.

STORY WRITING

Challenge students, working in small groups, to think up several new leads for fairy tales, fables, or storybooks. After the groups have written their leads, have a spokesman share their ideas with the class.

(adapted from Suid, 1994)

THE ENDING

Just as there are no set formulas for a perfect lead, the same is true with endings. Authors have chosen several different endings that have proven successful. Great endings could take the reader by surprise. A great ending should make the reader want to know more about the subject, but still feel satisfied that the story is complete. Some common successful endings are:

A Quote

A remark that has a sense of finality or humor

An unexpected detail

When choosing how to end a piece, the author needs to keep his readers in mind. How does the story leave the reader feeling? What emotions does the author want the reader to have? Will the ending leave the reader with these emotions?

#1 THE ENDING

MODEL LITERATURE

The Frog Prince Continued by Jon Scieszka

White Dynamite and Curly Kidd by Bill Martin and John Archambault

LESSON DESCRIPTION

As you read these books aloud, pause before their endings and have students make predictions on how they will end. After the ending of each is read, compare the students' predictions to what really happened. Were they the same? Were the students surprised at the end? How did the endings affect their enjoyment of the book?

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Provide the class with other books with surprise endings. Use these books in small groups. The group together reads the whole book except for the last page. Have the groups make their ending predictions. After making predictions, compare the students' ideas to the endings the authors chose.

Picture books with surprise endings:

Just Like Everyone Else by Karla Kuskin

Flossie and the Fox Patricia C. McKissack

In the Attic by Hiawyn Oram

Super Dooper Jezebel by Tony Ross

Novels or short stories with surprise endings:

"The Two Brothers" by Lloyd Alexander, in The Big Book for Peace

The Gift of Magi by O. Henry

STORY WRITING

Students may take familiar fairy tales and change their endings to surprise the class. The endings should not be so far out that they change the genre of the book into a fantasy. (unless it is a fantasy) This could be done in small groups. The same fairy tale could be used for all the groups, and then endings compared.

#2 THE ENDING

MODEL LITERATURE

The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie by Laura Nemeroff

Two Bad Ants by Chris Van Allsburg

Louis the Fish by Arthur Yorinks

Bob and Shirley by Harriet Ziefert

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Circular endings give the reader a sense of the whole plot repeating itself. A class discussion on this topic could begin with movie endings that lend themselves to a sequel. Whenever a villain is not captured or killed in a movie, you can bet that they'll be back in another movie doing the same things again.

Any of the books above can be used as examples for circular endings. If a book is read aloud, a discussion could follow centering on how the reader knows that the action is going to happen again. Some of these books could be read at a later time for reminders of circular endings.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Have each student look for a sequel on TV (situation comedies, action shows), at the movies, or among a newspaper's comic strips. The language scouts should describe the common elements found in the original and in the sequel.

STORY WRITING

Have students write original stories, which they swap with classmates. The partners then write spinoffs based on each other's story. The stories should be similar but different enough for a reader to want to read both of them.

DIALOGUE

Just as you and I speak, storybook characters also talk. When referring to this type of talking done by characters in a story, the name given to it is "dialogue." Some of the most memorable writing in literature is dialogue:

* "The sky is falling! The sky is falling."

* "This porridge is too hot. And this porridge is too cold.
but..."

* "Oh, Grandma, what big teeth you have!"

Dialogue is often the key to developing a character for the reader. Four popular types of dialogue are: questions, threats, commands, and eye-witness observations.

(adapted from Suid, 1994)

#1 DIALOGUE

MODEL LITERATURE

Caps for Sale by Esphyr Slobodkina

The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash by Steven Kellogg

Is Your Mama a Llama? by Steven Kellogg

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Define "dialogue" as story talk. Then read and compare the use of dialogue in the three books. The first book uses dialogue conventionally, mixing it with description. The second book uses dialogue for the whole text. The third book features questioning dialogue.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

List several types of dialogue on the board and explain each one. Then bring in a variety of storybooks and have students, working independently or in small groups, look for examples of each kind. They can then share their discoveries with the whole class. Some possible categories are:

Questions: "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?"

Threats: "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down."

Commands: "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your long hair."

Observation: "Fe, fi, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman."

STORY WRITING

Have students experiment with synonyms for "said" (asked, complained, hissed, explained, shouted, threatened, whispered, etc.) by writing tags for dialogue in comic strip balloons, or tags for dialogue in a story you read aloud.

Older students might enjoy the challenge of writing an entire story in dialogue.

Note: Overly creative tagging can distract readers. Most experienced writers use "said" in most cases. They use other tag words sparingly, almost as a spice.

(adapted from Suid, 1994)

#2 DIALOGUE

MODEL LITERATURE

The Mother's Day Mice by Eve Bunting

Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Provide several copies of these books to distribute to groups. Assign a character from each book for the students to find their dialogue in the stories. After reading the characters dialogue, ask the students to list some character traits for their character. A class chart with the characters and their traits could be displayed. Explain that often dialogue is used to explain the views and traits of a character.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Provide several pages of comics from the newspaper for the students. Have them go through their comics and come up with some traits and views of a character by reading their dialogue bubbles. They could pick their favorite comic strip and describe the characters in it.

STORY WRITING

Students are asked to write a segment of their favorite comic strip. The segment should include dialogue that gives insight into the kind of character it is. This activity could lend itself to some fun exaggeration of character traits.

CHARACTERIZATION

Creating characters for a story is very important. Characters are who readers remember the most in a story. It is the storyteller's job to bring the characters to life. When choosing a character, a storyteller considers three issues:

- * Will the character be a hero, a villain, a victim, or a fool?
- * What type of character will it be - realistic, exaggerated, fanciful?
- * Development of the character - What actions and speeches will make the character interesting and believable?

#1 CHARACTERIZATION

MODEL LITERATURE

Mr. and Mrs. Pig's Evening Out by Mary Rayner

The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs! by A. Wolf by Jon Scieszka

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Before presenting the books, list the four roles on the board and explain them to the class. Ask students to suggest examples from fairy tales, songs, movies, and other works. The four roles are: hero, villain, victim, and fools. As you read Mr. and Mrs. Pig's Evening Out aloud, have the students note which character can be labeled under each role. Many times characters play more than one role. The fool, Mr. Pig, for example, acts heroically at the end when he disposes of the wolf.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Bring in a variety of storybooks and have students, working individually or in small groups, locate examples of each role. They can share their discoveries orally or in writing. Later, the class might make a bulletin board of real heroes described in newspapers.

STORY WRITING

Have students write true stories about times when they played one of the four roles. For example, a child who enticed the family cat

down from a tree might write a piece entitled "How I Became a Hero to My Cat." An alternative is for children to write about heroes (or villains) that they have known.

Older students might rewrite a fairy tale or another familiar story in which they turn the villain into the hero into the villain. As a model, see The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs! by A. Wolf.

(adapted from Suid, 1994)

#2 CHARACTERIZATION

MODEL LITERATURE

The Red Balloon by A. Lamorisse

Strega Nona by Tomie de Paola

The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney by Judith Viorst

There's a Nightmare in My Closet by Mercer Mayer

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Define "character" as someone or something that plays a part in a story. On the board list the five character types and have students find examples in fairy tales, nursery rhymes, movies, and advertisements. The five character types are: real people, fanciful people, real animals, human-like animals, and human-like things.

Using the model literature to present examples of these character types could be done over five different lessons. As you read the models, ask students to identify the types of characters. All the types are represented in these five books. A chart to keep track of all the types of characters covered should be made.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Bring in a variety of storybooks, and have students look for and share examples of each character type. Older students can extend the hunt into comics, movies, and TV commercials. Post examples on

a bulletin board.

STORY WRITING

Have students choose a storybook, and write a new story featuring the same type of character. For example, The Little Engine That Could- whose hero is a human-like thing - could inspire a child to write "The Big Airplane That Did."

(adapted from Suid, 1994)

SHOW NOT TELL

Instead of telling the reader directly about the subject, reveal information gradually, describing the character so as to keep the interest of the reader. Which description captures your attention?

"She was a small furry creature with big green eyes that seemed to penetrate my soul. She moved with grace and carried her tail proudly."

"She was a white cat."

The first description shows the reader how the cat looks, moves, and the attitude it displays. An author "showing" the reader an action or a character will make the reader feel they are a part of the story. Lessons using adjectives and adverbs are helpful, but the use of many adjectives and adverbs in a description does not guarantee readers a full understanding. There are several lessons one could use aid students is developing this skill.

#1 SHOW NOT TELL

MODEL LITERATURE

A quote from Mark Twain is used in lieu of a piece of literature.

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Set out an apple and ask students to use adjectives to describe it. Afterwards present a chart with the Mark Twain quote on it that reads..."Don't say the old lady screamed. Bring her on and let her scream." Go on to explain that adjectives are useful, but a good writer doesn't use many adjectives. Good writers show, rather than tell. They let us see people and ideas in action rather than depending on this kind of description. They give us specifics, little stories we can see and hear. A good writer would take that sentence about the apple and get rid of the adjectives describing it and then create a sentence showing the apple instead. For example, "When I sank my teeth into the apple, it's juice hit me square in the eyes." Now we have strong verbs and nouns and we know something about the apple.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Provide students with quality literature. Some good examples are: Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney, I'll Meet You at the Cucumbers by Lillian Moore, When I Was Young in the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant and Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt. Have them locate passages that paint pictures of the scenes or characters in their head.

Students could draw illustrations depicting the scenes and characters from the passages they find. Share the examples with the class.

STORY WRITING

Students need to practice "showing" before they can use the skill in their own writing. This drill will provide them with some experience with strong verbs and nouns. Tell the students that the author would like to describe a character being hot. Instead of just stating, "He was really hot," show how hot by substituting it with, "Sweat dripped off my glasses." To practice this, split the class into groups and give them descriptions of nouns. Ask each group to come up with sentences showing it's phrase instead of telling. A list of examples one could use are:

- * the dog who was happy and excited to see his owner
- * the man with the scratchy hairy beard
- * the soft, white, and good packing snow
- * a windy day
- * the clean bathroom
- * the juicy and tender steak
- * the big bad wolf
- * walking in the dark and scary forest
- * the boy who was red with embarrassment
- * a lady with fat ripples in her thighs

#2 SHOW NOT TELL

MODEL LITERATURE

Miss Rumphius

Barbara Cooney

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Read Miss Rumphius aloud, point out the phrases that "show" descriptions for the author. This particular phrase should be discussed: "...she stepped inside on a wintry day, the warm moist air wrapped itself around her, and the sweet smell of jasmine filled her nose." Discuss the action of the air, can one see air do this? The answer is no, but one can feel air do this. It is the active description that actually shows the reader what the character is feeling and smelling as she walks in from the cold.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Ask the class to close their eyes while you read examples from other books. The teacher might want to use the phrases that the students wrote from the first "show not tell" lesson. While listening, the students are asked to imagine the scenes in their minds. List on the board some senses the students used to "feel" what the author is trying to get across.

STORY WRITING

Students are to take the senses they felt in the previous activity

and try to apply them in current stories they are writing.

#3 SHOW NOT TELL

MODEL READING

Knots on a Counting Rope

Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault

LESSON DESCRIPTION

As the book is read aloud, stop every couple pages to discuss the active descriptions. Make a chart on chart paper to display the descriptions as the reading continues. The chart may look like this:

Subject	Description
the wind	"...it was whipping up sand as sharp as claws, and crying like a bobcat, 'Boy-eeeeeeee! Boy-eeeeeeee!'
the night	"...and the night became as quiet as soft falling snow..."
the sky	"...sky touches my face...soft like lambs' wool...and I breathe its softness."

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Students will be broken into groups. Each group will have several of the same wordless picture books (such as Free Fall by David Wiesner). After looking through the books to try to understand the stories, the groups will use "showing" descriptions to caption some of the pictures. Afterward, groups will share their captions and compare the similarities and differences in interpretations.

STORY WRITING

Students will take some of the descriptions given in Knots in the Counting Rope and draw illustrations to go with them. This kind of translation encourages careful reading of the text. Assign a different description to each person in the group. When the pictures are completed, put the pictures together in sequence to make wordless picture books for Knots on the Counting Rope. The finished books might be taken to another class to note their interpretations of the books.

REAL EVENTS

Fiction often begins with everyday matter, such as doing chores, coping with illness, and building friendships. Reality-based stories fall into two groups:

Realistic fiction mirrors the way things really are.

Exaggerated stories begin with ordinary events that get twisted into an entertaining tale. Exaggerating may be done to scare readers or to make them laugh.

Most of the stories based around everyday events are fun to read aloud. Students can keep a record of how their own lives relate to the details in the stories. These records can be kept for future story ideas!

#1 REAL EVENTS

MODEL LITERATURE

The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats

The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash by Steven Kellogg

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Clarify the difference between realistic and exaggerated stories by reading aloud and comparing The Snowy Day (very realistic) and The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash (definitely a "stretcher"). Ask the students which is more believable, and why.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Have students pick out some literature from the classroom that have stories based around real events. Divide into groups of four, with each group having about three books. Each group will make a chart categorizing their books by "subject" and "model" headings.

An example chart could look like this...

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Model</u>
bad days	"Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day"
cities	"The Little House"
families	"Stevie"
fear	"There's a Nightmare in My Closet"

(adapted from Suid, 1994, p.7)

STORY WRITING

Choose a piece of literature which is based upon an everyday event.

Read the piece aloud, have students try to relate the story to similar happenings in their own lives. This type of activity could be done often. Students could store their responses in a notebook for future story ideas.

#2 REAL EVENTS

MODEL LITERATURE

And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street by Dr. Seuss

LESSON DESCRIPTION

The steps involved in stretching the truth are dramatized in this classic. Read it with enthusiasm! Have the students list ways in which they get to school. Ask if any unusual things have ever happened on the way. Remind the students that the boy in this story made up all these adventures about his journey to school. He took an ordinary event done by every student and exaggerated the details.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Have students brainstorm all the stories they have read or have been reading lately. Go through each example and note any plots that are based in reality. Could they happen? How did the author change the events to make them into good stories?

STORY WRITING

Brainstorm commonplace events that occur in the classroom (working on math, writing stories) or outside school (getting a haircut, sleeping over, or losing something.) Choose one such happening and have the whole class collaborate on turning it into an exaggerated story. For example, what if a person getting a haircut had hair

that grew faster then the hair cutter could cut it? Display the class' story and maybe have some illustrations to go with it.

VOICE

When teaching students about voice in writing, lessons on the difference between first, second, and third person will help in learning to write in a consistent voice. To aid students in choosing voice in writing, one could involve them in reading different narrations of the same story and identify how the story changes with a different narrator. The narrator is the person telling the story.

There are three points of view to choose from:

- * First person - the narrator is in the story and telling the story; therefore, he uses the pronouns "I" or "we".

- * Second person - the narrator uses the pronoun you. This makes the reader feel like a character in the story. (This voice is not used very often.)

- * Third person - the narrator talks about the characters, using their names and the pronouns "he," "she," "it," or "they." This puts both the narrator and the reader outside the action. It's as if they are watching a play or movie together. (The third person is the most common point of view.)

(adapted from Suid, 1994, p. 36)

#1 VOICE

MODEL LITERATURE

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

Judith Viorst

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Pretend to pull gum from your hair. Point out that "I" stories don't have to be autobiographical. The narrator, Alexander, is a boy, but the book was written by Judith Viorst, a woman. Read the story aloud. Once students see that "I" stories can be inventions, many creative possibilities open up. For example, students can research and write first-person stories about their parents' experiences when they were children.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Have students look for and share examples of different points of view in other storybooks. Older students might make a collaborative bulletin board of examples found in newspaper or magazine articles and advertisements.

Here is some literature using, hard to find, first and second person:

First Person- The Bicycle Man, The Cat in the Hat, Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing Second Person- If You Give a Mouse a Cookie

STORY WRITING

To clarify the creative use of first person, have each student choose a narrator other than himself or herself. It might be a friend, a relative, an object, or a make-believe person. Students then use these narrators to describe real or invented experiences. Discuss the use of appropriate pronouns in their stories.

(adapted from Suid, 1994, p. 37)

#2 VOICE

MODEL LITERATURE

Red Riding Hood by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers

The Boy Who Cried Wolf by Tony Ross

The Three Little Pigs

Yo, Hungry Wolf! by David Voza

LESSON DESCRIPTION

After assigning the first three books to groups to read, the class discussed and retold the familiar stories. Following the discussion, I read Yo, Hungry Wolf! aloud. The book retells, in rap form, the same stories we had discussed from the wolf's point of view. Following each new version of a story, differences in the original and new versions were noted on the board.

LANGUAGE SEARCH

Provide the class with a plethora of classic fairy tales. Categorize the stories by use of voice. Discuss which stories might make a good story if someone else were telling the story.

STORY WRITING

Students may be asked to pick a character from a favorite fairy tale and rewrite the story from that character's perspective. These stories should eventually be shared with the class to cite changes that occurred in each story because of the new narrators.

Appendix B

EVALUATION SURVEY

Grade level _____ How many years have you taught? _____

Do you use the Basal Reading series supplied by your school or are you using a Literature-based approach? _____

Are you familiar with the works by Nancie Atwell? _____

The next three questions use a ranking system. If you strongly agree with a statement, circle the number "6." If you strongly disagree with a statement, circle the number "1." If you are feel you are somewhere between the two extremes, mark accordingly.

1. These lessons are user friendly. The lessons can be used without a training session.

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. The lessons chosen for writing skills are important skills in my writing class.

1 2 3 4 5 6

3. The lessons presented in this handbook can easily be modified fit my grade level.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Please rank in order of importance the lessons created for this handbook. The grade level that you teach and your past teaching experiences could influence your answers. The most important will be marked with a "1," next important a "2" and so on. If there are topics you find not important at all, you can leave them blank.

_____ Memories

_____ Beautiful Language

_____ The Lead

_____ The Ending

_____ Dialogue

_____ Characterization

_____ Show Not Tell

_____ Real Events

_____ Voice

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