

Focus Lesson 4: Waking Up Our Stories

Purpose

This lesson teaches students how to look for writing topics within their lives and how to know when they have found a topic.

Materials

Blank books

Chart paper

Markers

Teacher's written narrative story about how you get ready for school (on chart paper)

Intended Learning Statement

"As writers, our heads are full of stories. Sometimes they jump up and down, wanting to be told. Other times, the stories are asleep, but a good book or conversation wakes them up, then they want to be told. I know how writers wake them up, and I want you know, too. Today we are going to wake up some of those sleeping stories."

Connecting to Background Knowledge/Previous Lesson

"I am going to ring our bell for Writing Workshop. I know all the writers will come to the group meeting place." When most of the students have come, begin the chant.

"Listen again to the words in our chant. 'I have stories, I have pictures, and they're sleeping in my head.' Do you feel like your head is full of stories?"

Modeling/Active Involvement

Hand out one M&M to each child.

Ask them to put it in their mouth and chew it up. Tell them, *"When I was little, I loved M&Ms. I liked the _____ colored ones best because..."*

Look at the group and ask, *"How about you?"*

Let students talk. Then ask, *"Did you notice how the stories just started waking up and saying tell about the time you..."* Use an example or two from the class.

"So one way stories wake up is when we do something. Stories from another time want to be told."

"One other way we can learn about today is how another story wakes up our own story. Here is the story of how I wake up and come to school. Listen to it and let stories about your morning wake up." Read your story. "Did they wake up? See, stories wake up other stories."

Work Period

“For work time today, write down one of your stories that wants to be told. It can be one that woke up from eating the M&M, or one that woke up from hearing my story, or one that was awake and wanting to be told.”

Share Time

“Today we learned where stories come from and how to wake them up. Writers wake up their stories in their own heads. Why do you think writers do that?” (so they have things to write) “Let’s hear a couple of stories and share what gets woken up.”

Have three students share. After each student speaks, ask how many students felt a story wake up. Ask one to share.

Note

Inexperienced writers often think they have nothing to write about because they do not know where to look. Topic lists wake up stories for experienced writers, but confuse young writers with the notion that ideas come from somewhere else or someone else. Helping develop the awareness of the internal narratives they carry is essential.