

Unit: Fiction Writing for Intermediate to Advanced Middle-Grade ESL Students

(For more information about the unit and class, see the student need analysis at the end)





Unit Overview

Fiction Unit	
Day 1	Introduction to fiction writing: introduce plot structure, key fiction vocabulary, and fill in a plot mountain using Pixar shorts
Day 2	Genre detectives day 1: Teacher read aloud <i>Chato and the Party Animals</i> , students and teachers work together to create an anchor chart of genre moves. Students work in groups to read two of the following books and use a graphic organizer to find the moves from each book: <i>The Hula-Hoopin' Queen</i> , <i>Malaika's Costume</i> , <i>The Arabic Quilt: An immigrant story</i> , <i>Malaika's Winter Carnival</i>
Day 3	Genre detectives day 2: Teacher read aloud <i>Chato's Kitchen</i> , students and teachers work together to add to genre moves/characteristics anchor chart. Students work in groups to read the remaining of the following books and use a graphic organizer to find the moves from each book: <i>The Hula-Hoopin' Queen</i> , <i>Malaika's Costume</i> , <i>The Arabic Quilt: An immigrant story</i> , <i>Malaika's Winter Carnival</i>
Day 4	Pre-writing: Students and teacher use genre moves anchor chart to generate a rubric for fiction writing assignment. Students brainstorm ideas for their story.
Day 5	Writing workshop day 1: Students use plot graphic organizer to plan their story.
Day 6	Writing workshop day 2: Students draft their story
Day 7	Writing workshop day 3: Students continue drafting
Day 8	Writing workshop day 4: Peer review
Day 9	Writing workshop day 5: Editing and publishing (homework is to add illustrations)
Day 10	Celebration: Read stories to a younger ESL class, then they fill out the "student comment" section of their rubric to evaluate their own work. Can include sentence stems and word bank.

Assignment

The assignment is for students to write their own fiction picture book that blends English with their home language. The students will have several days to go through the writing process with peer and teacher guidance. The students and teacher will work together using data from the designated mentor texts to create "success criteria" for the different genre characteristics. Once the criteria have

been set, they will be displayed. It can be displayed on an anchor chart in the classroom, projected on the board, made into physical handouts, or shared digitally in whichever Learning Management System the school uses (OneNote Classroom, Blackboard, ItsLearning, Google Classroom, etc). When the student has finished their story, they will then write notes in the “student comment” section sharing where they think they “glow” and where they think they can “grow,” essentially what are they proud of and what do they still want to work on? Then the teacher will provide “glow” and “grow” feedback as well.

Assignment: Write a short picture book in English that includes elements of your home language. Then in the “student comment” section reflect on what you did well (where I glow) and what you can do better (I can grow). Include at least three instances where you glow and at least two where you can grow.				
Student comments		Criteria	Teacher comments	
Where I glow 	I can grow 		Where you glow 	You can grow 
Ex: My plot is fun and has a surprise ending!		Student-generated success criteria for plot		
	Ex: The side characters were boring	Student-generated success criteria for characters		
		Student-generated success criteria for theme/lesson		
		Student-generated success criteria for peer feedback		
		Student-generated success criteria for language		

Sample Lessons

<p>Lesson: Genre Detectives Day 1</p> <p>Materials: <i>Chato and the Party Animals</i>, <i>The Hula-Hoopin' Queen</i>, <i>Malaika's Costume</i>, <i>The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story</i>, <i>Malaika's Winter Carnival</i>, anchor chart materials, copies of graphic organizers for students</p> <p>Time: 50 minutes</p>		
Terminal objectives: BTEOC SWBAT complete a graphic organizer analyzing the moves of two picture books.		
Time	Activity	Notes
15 min	Teacher read aloud <i>Chato and the Party Animals</i> and works with students to make a plot mountain	Stop and jot to ask guiding questions for filling in plot mountain
15 min	Whole group: Students and teachers work together to create an anchor chart of genre moves/ characteristics using <i>Chato and the Party Animals</i> as a model text. Target moves/characteristics: plot, language, characters	Plot structure was talked about in previous lesson Ask leading questions like "what do you notice about the language in the story?" "What do you learn about the characters in the story?"
15	Students work in groups to read two of the following books and use a graphic organizer to find the moves from each book: <i>The Hula-Hoopin' Queen</i> , <i>Malaika's Costume</i> , <i>The Arabic Quilt: An immigrant story</i> , <i>Malaika's Winter Carnival</i>	Teacher floats between groups to provide aid, word banks and sentence stems can be used as additional language supports
5	Closing add student generated moves/genre characteristics from group activity to genre moves anchor chart	

<p>Lesson: Pre-Writing</p> <p>Materials: Mentor texts from earlier in the week, anchor chart, student notebooks</p> <p>Time: 50 minutes</p>		
Terminal objectives: BTEOC SWBAT generate lists to brainstorm their draft		
Time	Activity	Notes
17	Teacher introduces writing assignment of writing stories using non-standard English that they will share with younger students Students and teacher use genre moves anchor chart to generate a rubric for fiction writing assignment.	Rubric should be written in clear, student-friendly language so all students understand the expectations they generated
15	Students brainstorm ideas for their story by making lists of lessons, character ideas, and plot hook ideas	Teacher models how to make brainstorm lists
10	With a writing partner: students choose one topic from their list and "talk long" about the topic, each student talks for 4 minutes (two minutes for transitions)	For example: student has a plot hook idea "surprise birthday party," student would spend 4 minutes talking about their surprise birthday party story

		idea, then the other student may have a character idea for a boy who plays baseball, they then spend four minutes describing this character they are thinking of
8	Students finish their brainstorming lists	

Lesson: Writing Workshop Day 1 Materials: Writing notebooks, lists from previous day Time: 50 minutes		
Terminal objectives: BTEOC SW use a graphic organizer to plan their story.		
Time	Activity	Notes
10	Teacher models using graphic organizer and brainstorming lists from previous lesson to plan story	Teacher models by thinking aloud as they fill in graphic organizer
15	Students fill out graphic organizer to plan their story	These two sections can be combined if the teacher chooses. Teacher models writing background, students write background, teacher models writing first obstacle, students write first obstacle, etc
5	Mid workshop teaching point- teacher gives quick vocabulary or verb tense review based on observed student needs	
5	Students share their work so far with a writing partner	
15	Students finish filling out graphic organizer to plan their story	

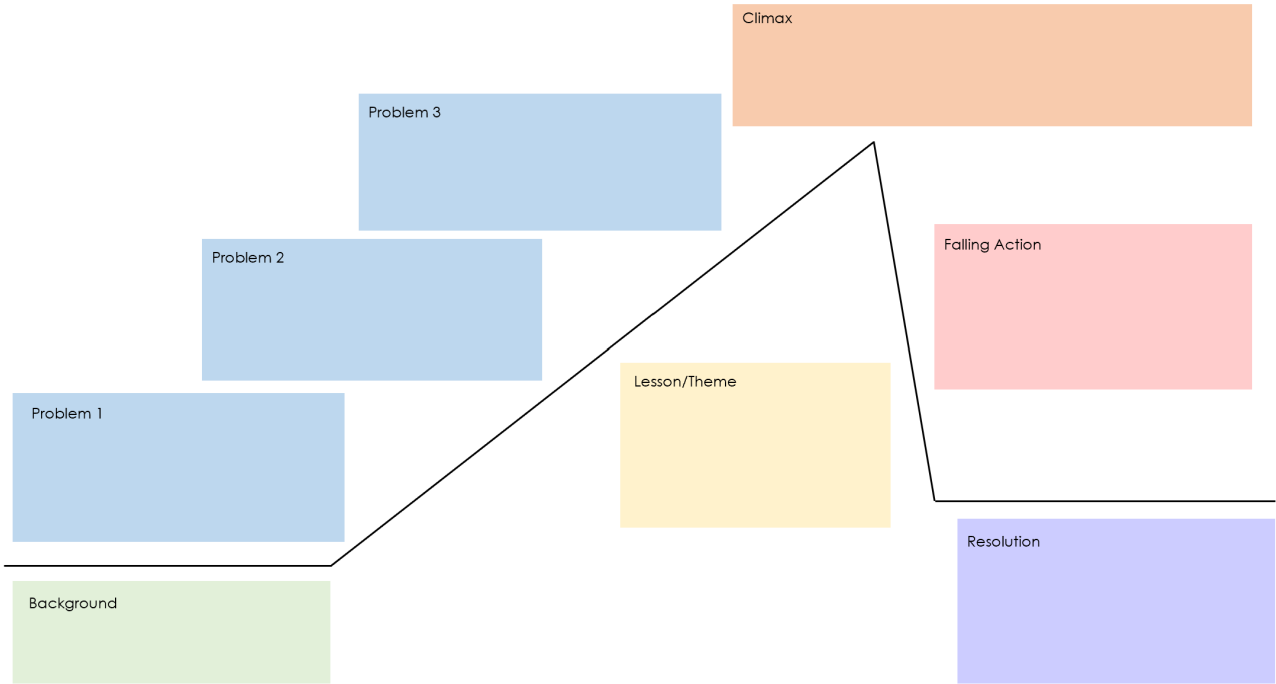
Lesson: Writing Workshop Day 4 Materials: Writing notebooks Time: 50 minutes		
Terminal objectives: BTEOC SW revise their own work for intentional language use and work with a partner for peer review		
Time	Activity	Notes
15	Teacher breaks students into pairs or small groups and gives each group one of the mentor texts Teacher asks students to find moments where the text uses non-standard English. Creates an anchor chart to show quote of non-standard English and why we think it was used	Ex: quote: "barrio" why: "community word" quote: "Mais look at dat!" why: dialogue
10	Teacher hands out mini graphic organizer that mimics the language use anchor chart. Students look at their own drafts and find at least three instances on non-standard English, use their graphic organizer to write the quote and their reason for using it	

5	Turn and talk with a partner to share your quotes and your reasons	
15	Peer Review: students trade papers with their writing partners. Students use student-generated success criteria to see if their partner has included all necessary elements	Students should have small checklist of the student-generated success criteria
5	Closing: share something you liked from your partner's paper with the class	

Genre Detectives 🔍

Genre Characteristic	What we notice 🔍

Plot Mountain Anchor chart/ Story Plan Graphic Organizer



Language Use anchor chart/graphic organizer

Language Use

Peer Review checklist example

Student generated success criteria	✓	Notes
Student generated success criteria 1		
Student generated success criteria 2		
Student generated success criteria 3		
Student generated success criteria 4		

Student Needs Analysis

The unit is designed for a middle grade (5th-6th grade) ESL pull-out class for intermediate to advanced English Language Learners (ELLs). The students would meet a few times a week for language lessons with the school ESL specialist. Ideally this would supplement the fiction writing unit in their ELA class but could stand on its own as meaningful language practice. The goal of the course is to help students increase their reading, speaking, listening, and writing abilities in English so they can meet the necessary English Language Proficiency Standards and graduate out of the ESL program and join mainstream ELA classes full-time. The goal of the unit is to have students produce a fiction story written in English with elements of their home language and through this translanguaging help increase student ownership of English.

In this type of course, students would have a lot of existing knowledge to help them write Vernacular English children's fiction picture books. Coming from a multi-lingual background, students will have a unique use of English that they incorporate into their stories. ELLs who are intermediate writers, "express themselves meaningfully in self-generated, connected written text in English when their writing is limited to short sentences featuring simple, concrete English used frequently in class," and "frequently exhibit features of their primary language when writing in English" (Educator Guide, 2019, p.26). Advanced ELL writers, "have an emerging ability to express themselves in self-generated, connected written text in English in a grade-appropriate manner," and "occasionally exhibit second language acquisition errors when writing in English" (Educator Guide, 2019, p.26). The students, then, are likely used to seeing features of their L1 as writing mistakes, but this genre can help them see the value of their multilingualism and the validity of their language. Since these students already use L1 features in their writing, they will just need some support to intentionally incorporate their L1, as is done in *The Arabic Quilt* and *Chato and the Party Animals*. They also have a cultural background that can inform interesting stories, like the ones in *The Legend of Papa Noel* and *Malaika's Carnival*. What

students will likely need instruction on are the creative writing aspects and story-specific vocabulary. For example, generating plots, developing characters, and intentionally using non-standard English to serve their stories in a way that is still understandable to the reader.

If a school does not have pull-out ESL classes, the curriculum can be used in an ELA class designed for ESL students without major changes, except to add additional language supports for the beginner and low writers. With slightly more modification this curriculum would also work for a mainstream ESL class with a mixed ESL and monolingual student population. Such modifications could include using at least one Standard English mentor text and helping monolingual students find where their natural dialect differs from Standard English (for example, including “gonna” and “wanna” when those are not traditionally used in writing). The genre still serves a valuable purpose for monolingual English speakers because it can show them that there are many valuable Englishes in the world and that there is no hierarchy of language, and a monolingual classes can still be multidialectal.

Genre Sample

Penny Possum sighed with contentment as she emptied her last box and finished moving into her new stump. It had taken her all morning, but now everything was perfect and exactly where she wanted it. All that was left was to meet her new neighbors. Penny looked around at her big new kitchen and her cozy couches and chairs and decided the best way to get to know her new neighbors was to have a dinner party.

Walking out of her stump, Penny saw a racoon working in the garden in front of a hollowed out log next door.

"Howdy neighbor!" Penny said, walking up to the garden, "I'm Penny Possum and I just moved in next door!"

"Well, hey there Penny! I'm Remy Racoon. It's nice to meet you! Welcome to the neighborhood." Said the friendly racoon.

"I wanna get to know all of my new neighbors," Penny said, "so I'm gonna host a dinner party at my stump this evening. Wouldja like to come?"

"Well, that's awfully kind of you Penny. Yes, I'd love to come! Can I give you a hand gettin' things ready for the party?" Remy replied.

"Oh no, you don't hafta worry. Just come over 'round sunset!" Penny assured him.

Penny continued on her way until she found a large toad sitting on top of a rock.

"Howdy neighbor! I'm Penny Possum and I just moved here. I'm gonna host a dinner party at my stump this evening at sunset. Wouldja like to come?" Penny asked, cheerfully.

"Howdy Penny! I'm Terry Toad and I'd love to come to your party. Should I bring some food? I can show you were to find all the best mushrooms!" Terry replied.

"Oh no, you don't hafta worry about me. I'm sure I'll find everything I need." Penny assured him.

In the hollow of a tree Penny met Stevie and Sammie Squirrel. They asked if they could help her invite the rest of the neighbors, but Penny told them, "You don't hafta worry about me, I can take care of it. Just come on over 'round sunset!"

She invited Matilda Mouse who offered to help her find all the best nuts, Oliver Owl who said he could bring his banjo, Tommy Turtle who said he could bring the sweet tea, and Darla Duck who offered to bring her famous bread. Penny assured them all they didn't have to worry about anything. She could take care of it all by herself.

By the time she had invited all her neighbors the sun had dropped a bit in the sky.

"Oh no," Penny thought to herself, "I gotta hurry if I'm gonna find all the fixings I need to make dinner!"

In her old neighborhood all the best nuts and berries were by a big oak tree. Penny spotted an oak tree in the distance, ran over to it, and...nothing! No nuts! No berries! Then she decided to go to the stream bed to look for mushrooms. That's where all the best mushrooms were back where she used to live, but all she found were two tiny little mushrooms, not nearly enough to feed a party. Penny put the mushrooms in her pocket and looked at the dropping sun. She needed to hurry.

Penny looked around and tried to decide what to do. She needed to get back soon to start cooking, but she didn't have hardly anything to cook yet! Worried, she started to rush. She ran from bush to tree to pile of leaves until finally she found a pecan tree! She picked up as many pecans as she could and ran home.

She knew these pecans would make an excellent pie, but it was almost sunset. She had spent so much time inviting all the neighbors and searching for food by herself that she was running out of time to cook for her party!

"Oh no, how can I possibly make pecan pie before my guests arrive?" She thought to herself. Then she had a brilliant idea, "I can cook the pie at a higher temperature for less time! That oughta work!"

Penny made pie crust quicker than she ever had. Flour was everywhere! But she turned her oven on real hot and put in her pies. She looked out the window and saw the sun was about to set. She looked around her flour-covered kitchen and started to sweep up the flour. She was halfway through cleaning when she started to smell smoke. She ran to the oven and saw that her pies were burned to a crisp! Penny stood there and stared at her charred pies and her messy kitchen as the sun started to dip below the horizon.

"That's it," Penny said to herself, "I'm gonna have to cancel the party!"

Tears welled up in her eyes. Then a knock sounded at the door. When she opened it, she saw Remy Racoon.

"Hey there Penny, I decided to come a little early and offer again to help you get things set up, but," he paused, noticing her teary eyes, "what's the matter? Is everything alright?"

"No," Penny sniffled, "I have to cancel the party. Everything is ruined!"

"What happened?"

"I took me a long time to invite everyone. Then I couldn't find any of the fixings I needed to make dinner except a couple of mushrooms and some pecans. Then when I tried to make some pecan pies, they burned to a crisp!" Penny cried.

"Oh dear, that sounds like quite a day you've had there," Remy said, "but you don't have to cancel the party. How about me and the rest of the neighborhood just help you out?"

"But I already told everyone they didn't need to help me, that I could do it by myself!"

"But that's what friends and neighbors are for Penny, for helping each other!"

"Really?" Penny asked, wiping her eyes.

"Really." Remy replied.

So, Remy rallied the neighbors to help Penny with her dinner party. Terry Toad brought mushrooms and told her about the old log up stream where the best mushrooms grew. Matilda Mouse brought acorns,

walnuts, and pecans and invited Penny to gather nuts with her the next day. Tommy Turtle brought sweet tea, Oliver Owl played his banjo all night, and Darla Duck brought the most delicious bread Penny had ever tasted. Stevie and Sammie Squirrel had so much fun they offered to host a dinner party for the neighbors the next week. After the party, Penny looked around her new stump and sighed with contentment. She was going to like living here.

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