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Eng 509 (Internet)

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Lesson: Narrative Essay

Level: Introductory Writing Course

Objective: To introduce students to the narrative essay by providing reading samples of a narrative, opportunities to write a narrative essay both inside and outside the classroom and creating a workshop environment so that students will obtain student (peer) and teacher feedback. At the end of this lesson, students will be able to draft a narrative essay.

Time Required: Based on a semester calendar, approximately 1 _ weeks or 5 – 6 class days for a 50 minute class.

Materials:

Axelrod, Rise B. and Charles R. Cooper. Reading Critically, Writing Well: A Reader and Guide, 3rd ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Conlin, Mary Lou. Patterns: A Short Prose Reader, 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994.

Peer Review Worksheet (2 copies for each student—copied front and back) located at the end of this lesson plan.

Overview-Theoretical Perspective:

This lesson plan follows the Stage-Model Theory developed during the “New Education” movement which held the position that “Education should teach the process of discovering how

and why” (Connors 102). Students will be guided at each of the phases of the Stage-Model Process (prewriting, writing, and rewriting). The workshop method used throughout this unit is based on Roger Garrison’s concept of the workshop and includes several opportunities for students to receive feedback from the instructor and fellow students and provides several opportunities for student assessment, both graded and ungraded.

According to Garrison’s article “One to One”, “The term ‘workshop’ ...is where students come regularly to work at their writing, to get editorial advice from you, and sometimes to share their ideas with other students” (Connors 339). This is also emphasized in “Teaching Composition: A Position Statement” written by the NCTE Commission on Composition which states, “Students should be encouraged to comment on each other’s writing, as well as receiving frequent prompt, individualized attention from the teacher.” Further, the NCTE statement notes, “Students should be guided through the process; encouraged to write for themselves and for other students, as well as for the teacher...frequent writing assignments and frequent individual attention from the teacher are essential to the writing classroom” (Lindemann 249-250).

Specific to this lesson is the type of essay to be studied. The narrative essay stems from one of Cicero’s seven rhetorical treatises, *narratio*, which is now a traditional mode of discourse called the narrative (Lindemann 44). Narrative also seems to follow the best example of teaching students how to move from writer-based prose to reader-based prose. According to Linda Flower, one characteristic of writer-based prose is the list. “It allows the writer the freedom to generate a breadth of information and a variety of alternative relationships before locking himself or herself into a premature formulation” (296). This writer-based prose list would be exemplified in the prewriting assignment for small groups on day 1 when students

brainstorm for a directed assignment. Flower's research suggests that the movement from writer-based prose to reader-based prose is to consider "the readers purpose in the reading".

Purpose-Course Competencies/Goals:

This lesson addresses all five of Midway College's English Department and Composition

Program course competencies for English 101:

1. Students should have critical thinking skills. They should be able to accurately analyze ideas and draw logical inferences and conclusions.
2. Students should have invention skills. They should be able to employ various ways to derive topics for writing, and they should be able to freely generate and explore their own ideas.
3. Students should have drafting skills. They should be able to create restricted and coherent persuasive thesis statements; supply effective and specific supporting details; organize unified, coherent persuasive thesis statements; supply effective and specific supporting details; organize unified, coherent, 500-700 word arguments; develop two-level outlines and have knowledge of three-level outline form; accurately quote, paraphrase, and summarize; and suitably acknowledge the use of source material in their writing.
4. Students should have revision skills. They should be able to conceive and execute substantive changes in writing content; appropriately adjust diction for their writing purpose; and identify and correct mechanical, grammatical, and syntactical errors.
5. Students should be able to meet various academic and career expectations. They should be able to make use of library resources and retrieval systems, read and analyze texts of varying complexity, respond to sentence answer and essay test questions, handle spontaneous writing situations, present their academic writing in a professional manner, and regularly read their Midway e-mail and send messages and attachments as necessary.

The goals of the journal assignments and the small group assignment on day 1 are to encourage critical reading and writing while providing students an opportunity to have a "spontaneous writing situation". Thus, the journal entry meets both the first and fifth competencies while opening a dialogue between teacher and student. Because students will have the freedom to respond to the topic without fear of the conventional grading assessments, students can explore their opinions and ideas which encourages the completion of the second competency, also.

The comic strip journal entry also encourages critical thinking because students must decide if the focus of their essay is correct and what they should sketch to represent their narrative essay. Another assignment that would promote critical and creative thinking is the listing project on day one. The brainstorming for a list of events that have not been experienced by the student promotes objectives one and two. Also, students are given the choice for the topic of their narrative essay which further meets the second of Midway's objectives. In addition to meeting this competency, Roger Garrison also emphasizes the importance of students choosing the topic. "The most important rule of thumb is that every piece of writing the student attempts should relate as directly as possible to this immediate experience and his genuine interests. These may be career interests, person enthusiasms, current preoccupations with social issues, or whatever" (Connors 342).

The emphasis in the narrative will be on supporting details and events to meet the overall goal or thesis of the narrative essay. Continual review from peers and the instructor followed by thoughtful revision will provide the feedback students will need to begin understanding the audience point of view on whether they have a well structured essay, whose points strengthen and support the thesis statement. These exercises would meet the third and fourth competencies.

The combination of discussion, seatwork, and work group/workshop should provide opportunities for students to be guided and assessed throughout the process. Students should realize the importance of the process of writing. Second they will learn that writing is not just an end product, nor is it mysterious in its creation.

NOTE: Prior to Day 1 students should be assigned the following reading assignment: Chapter 2 “Narration” pages 11-15 from Patterns: A Short Prose Reader and the short narrative by Audre Lorde entitled “That Summer I Left Childhood Was White” from Chapter 2 “Autobiography” pages 27-30 from Reading Critically, Writing Well: A Reader and a Guide.

Rationale: In order to orient students to the topic of narration, students will read the chapter from Patterns which defines narrative and its essential parts, including what types of writing are in a nonfiction narrative and a fiction narrative. The story “That Summer I Left Childhood Was White” is a short example of a narrative.

Day 1

Class Business: Pass around student sign up sheet for one-on-one student-teacher conference (see class days 4 & 5).

Journal/Reading Response (10 minutes): As soon as class begins, ask students to spend ten minutes writing a response to the following question, “From your reading of the chapter on narration, do you feel “That Summer I Left Childhood Was White” was an effective narrative? Explain by citing specific incidents or events from the story.” Pick up journal pages from students.

Narrative Overview (15 minutes): Move desks into a circle in order to begin discussion. Ask students if they have any questions about the reading assignment “Narrative” or if anyone would like to respond Lorde’s narrative. Reiterate the journal response question to guide students toward a discussion over essential characteristics of a narrative essay. Conclude by asking:

- What is a narrative essay? (A narrative is a story that is frequently used to tell about personal experiences. It describes an experience that has unusual meaning or significance for the writer or the reader. It is usually has something new or something never before realized.)
- What is the general order? (Answers should include thesis statement, incidents/events, and significance of the events).
- What are the essential parts? (Answers should include a narrator's point of view, thesis statement, specific details that support the thesis, a chronological sequence, and use of action verbs to enable the reader to become part of the story.)

Prewriting Small Group Work (15 minutes): Divide class into groups of three. Ask each group to pick someone to be the recorder/scribe. Explain that the recorder or scribe will keep a written record of the work completed by the small group. Write a narrative topic on the board, such as “What I learned when I became stranded on a deserted planet in an asteroid field”. The sample topic is one which invites student creativity and insures that no one will have an advantage of having experienced being stranded on another planet. Groups will brainstorm on the given topic to develop a list of experiences or events necessary for a written narrative. As groups work on their lists, meet with each group informally to determine if anyone has questions regarding how to create these lists.

Whole Group (15 minutes): Ask recorders/scribes to state all the ideas discovered for the topic. As a group, cluster the ideas to show how similar ideas can be grouped together during prewriting. Remind students of other prewriting techniques such as the spider web, trees or charts to separate the information into groups.

HOMEWORK: Determine the topic of the narrative essay. After choosing a topic, begin working on a list of ideas like in class that day.

Day 2

Class Business: Pass around student sign up sheet for the one-on-one student-teacher conference to students who have not yet scheduled a meeting time.

Prewriting/Individual Conferences (50 minutes): Ask students to begin working on creating the clusters from their lists. While clustering, they should begin developing main ideas or incidents/events for the narrative essay. While the whole class works on clustering of lists, meet with students individually to discuss their lists and clustering of ideas. Return journal responses during meeting with students.

Homework: Complete work begun in class and begin drafting the essay by developing clusters of incidents into paragraphs.

Day 3

In-Class Writing (45 minutes): Ask students to use preplanning to begin writing their narrative essays. They can use their textbook, writing style guide, dictionary, and thesaurus as reference books. Begin meeting with students individually to see how they are progressing. Determine if they need additional assistance.

Journaling (5-10 minutes): Sketch out four to five pictures that represent the narrative essay. Reflect on the essay to determine what pictures best represent the narrative. Students should not concentrate on the art work. Instead this exercise is geared toward finding the most important points for their essay. Ask them to respond to the following questions: does my draft contain

the essential elements/events/ideas I wish to convey in my narrative? And would another reader be able to place the pictures in the appropriate spots in the narrative?

Class Business: If necessary, pass around student sign up sheet for the student-teacher conference for those students who have not yet scheduled a meeting time.

Homework: Finish journal sketch and questions. Complete first draft of narrative.

Days 4 & 5

One-on-One Student – Teacher Conferences: The conference appointments would be scheduled during official class and adjacent office hours of the instructor. Students would meet with the instructor in his/her office for 10-15 minutes to discuss the first draft of their essays and their journal sketch comments. The instructor and student would review the narrative together, and the instructor would give the student immediate feedback and guidance.

Day 6

Small Group-Peer Review Partners (45 minutes): Move class into small groups of three (same groups from Day 1). Provide each student with two blank peer review forms. Students will need to let both peer partners review their essay. Ask students to assess the essays using the peer review sheet. Allow students 15 minutes per essay for a total of 30 minutes. Once students have returned the peer review sheets, give students 15 minutes to read through peer comments and reread their essays. For the last 15 minutes of class, students can ask questions about the peer assessment or to discuss strategies on improving each other's papers.

Questions to Instructor (5 minutes): Allow the last few minutes of class for students to ask the instructor questions regarding the essay. Students can at this time schedule to meet the instructor for an additional consultation, if necessary, prior to the assignment's due date, which is at the beginning of the next class date.

Peer Review - Edit Sheet

Peer Name: _____

Narrative Essay Title: _____

Author's Name: _____

1. Title & Introduction: Does the opening paragraph capture your interest? How? How else might the writer begin?

2. Paraphrase the thesis (author's main point) and write supporting statements from the essay that supports the author's thesis. If you feel the essay does not support the thesis statement, write the statements from the essay that supports your belief that the essay conflicts with the thesis statement.

3. Does the author capture the interest and appeal to the audience?

4. List the main points as they appear in the essay. Do you feel this is the best order? Should any points be eliminated? Should any be further developed?

5. Find at least five action verbs or sensory images from the essay. Why are these words effective?

6. Write at least three sentences that are clear or interesting and explain why you feel this is so.

7. Is any information missing? How is the essay organized—spatial, chronological, logical? Would it read better if it were organized differently? Defend your answer.

8. What is the overall tone of the essay? Is it consistent?

9. What do you see as the main strengths and weaknesses of this essay?

10. Mark/Circle all spelling errors, run-on sentences, fragments, and any other grammatical errors. Be sure to check yourself prior to marking your peer's essay.

11. Give the author at least 2 suggestions on how to improve the essay. Be specific and refer to the essay content. Suggestions can not include hints on grammar, punctuation, or spelling. It must refer to structure or content.

Works Cited

Axelrod, Rise B. and Charles R. Cooper. Reading Critically, Writing Well: A Reader and Guide, 3rd ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

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