

Lesson Plan for Baseball in April

Instructional setting:

Grade: 6th or 7th

Subject: Language Arts

Time: Two to three weeks

Lesson Topic: Memoirs

Materials: Copies of the text, cubing handout, camera, recording devices.

Goals:

The goal of this lesson is to identify, describe, and summarize important ideas from the text, *Baseball in April*, and to apply those ideas to their own personal memoirs.

Description of text(s) used:

The text used for this assignment is *Baseball in April*, by Gary Soto. This book is a collection of short stories that depicts the every day events of life. It deals with themes such as, love and friendship, youth and growing up, success and failure. Soto calls on his own past experiences; growing up in California's Central Valley. Soto brings the joys and pains of young people everywhere to the forefront. The kids in these stories are smart, tough, yet vulnerable Latino kids; but the dreams and desires they have belong to us all. It is something that all cultures can relate to.

Anticipatory Set:

Students will write from journal prompts. It will be done as cooperative grouping. Each student will be given a number in their group from one to five. (There will be five tables of five.) As a group, each table will answer the questions given and together write a response to turn in. After giving them time to answer the questions the teacher will randomly call a number and the person with that number will have to answer for their group. By doing this, it will not only introduce the text you are going to read, but get the students involved and interested in the story. Below are some ideas on questions you might ask your students.

- What are some things teens and pre-teens worry about most?
- Read the back cover to the class. What do you think this book might be about?
- What would an ideal brother or sister be like? Could you count on them when you are in trouble?
- Do most families argue? How do they resolve their arguments?
- What do you do with your friends? Do you feel they would help you when you need something?
- How do you get onto a sports team? Are all of the teammates your friend?

These questions hit on some of the themes that are included in the text and allow them to get a frame of reference before reading the text.

Procedure:

Students will work in groups, 'expert' groups, with just one short story from the text. Have each group answer the cubing questions. This activity will require guided help from the teacher. You should walk from table to table, asking guided questions to get the groups on the right track to answer their cubing questions.

1. Describe it: How would you describe the characters?
2. Compare it: To what would you compare these characters?

3. Associate it: What does this story make you think of?
4. Analyze it: How would you analyze these characters?
5. Apply it: Apply this story, or characters, to your own life.
6. Argue for/against it: Do you like, or dislike, this story?

This will help them pinpoint the relationships and problems the characters experience and relate it to their own lives. It can be a sort of prewriting strategy. Students will then write their own memoirs.



They will begin with storyboarding and present to class for peer editing. After this step they will begin to put their story in text format. They will turn them in to the teacher and the teacher will compile them, and print a copy for each student, in book format.

Closure:

Each group will develop a skit based on the short story they read. They can adapt it to be more current and in their style, but should maintain the theme, conflict, and point of the story. They will then present their skit to the class. The teacher will record all of the skits. This will be the last assignment for this lesson. The point of the skit is to see if they can summarize their story into a shorter version, keeping the most important elements. It will assess their overall comprehension of the story they read.

Accommodations and Modifications:

Anticipatory set: This format will give the ESL students a chance to interact with their peers whose primary language is English. It may not require them to be the writer, but it will require them to participate and speak their thoughts.

Reading the story: For your ESL and visually impaired students, or even slow readers, have a recorded version of the text that they can listen to while they follow along with the text. It could be the teacher reading the text, or if available, a professional book on tape. This will help them with their comprehension instead of having to struggle through the language; they can focus on the themes and relationships. You should make the tapes available for these students to take home.

Writing a memoir: You might adapt the lesson for your ESL students and for those that have trouble writing to have them orally record their memoir and then have adult speakers or peers with more advanced language abilities assist in the translation of the oral memoir into the instructional language.

References

- Soto, Gary. (1990). *Baseball in April*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc.
- Essley, Roger. "The odd fish story." Voices from the Middle v12 n4 May 2005.