



Narrative Writing

The Perfect Line of Dialogue

Grades 3-5

Rationale

- In order to create strong narrative writing, students should use dialogue. One of the biggest hurdles for younger students is mastering dialogue's proper punctuation. During this lesson, students will be introduced to the correct structure and punctuation of a line of dialogue.

Goal

- To instruct students in the proper structure and punctuation of dialogue

Standards

- W.3.4b Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.
- W.4.4b Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- W.5.4b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

Objectives

- Students will learn the proper structure of dialogue, with particular attention to punctuating it correctly.
- Students will practice creating a perfect line of dialogue to use in their narrative writing.

Materials

- The Rules for Writing Dialogue* handout
- Previously written narrative prompt and responses
- Paper

Procedures

- “There are many different things an author can do to make his or her story more interesting. Choosing strong descriptive words can make a story come alive for the reader. Another thing that makes a story seem real is dialogue. What is dialogue?”
- Work with students to come up with a definition of dialogue: the words spoken by characters in a book, movie, or play.
- “When you are writing a story, adding dialogue can make it seem more real to the reader. Some students are intimidated by dialogue because they are worried that there are too many rules to learn, but that is not the case. With practice, dialogue is easy to write. So today, we are going to learn the rules for writing dialogue so that your story will come alive for your readers.”

- ✚ Distribute and review the *Rules for Writing Dialogue* handout.
- ✚ Distribute the Narrative Writing Prompt and responses from an earlier lesson, making sure to give each student an additional piece of paper.
- ✚ “Now you are going to practice writing a line of dialogue for the story that you wrote for this Narrative Prompt. Remember to follow all of the rules for writing dialogue that we just discussed.”
- ✚ As students practice writing dialogue, circulate looking for errors in structure or punctuation.
- ✚ Remind students that their line of dialogue should include some strong descriptive words. “Make your character *have character!*”
- ✚ If there is time, have students write their line of dialogue on the board in order to expose students to properly written dialogue.

Assessment

- ✚ Students’ ability to construct properly punctuated lines of dialogue demonstrates understanding of concepts taught.

Follow-up

- ✚ Try having students create a generic line of dialogue that can be used in any story. Add it to their “bag of tricks” for narrative writing!
- ✚ Include the study of dialogue structure and punctuation in stories you read with your class to improve familiarity with the rules learned here.

Rules for Writing Dialogue

- Rule #1** Use quotation marks to indicate words which are spoken by characters.
- Rule #2** Use speaker tags to make sure the reader knows who is speaking.
- Rule #3** Use proper capitalizations. The first letter of a character's statement is capitalized.
- Rule #4** Use proper punctuation.
- If a sentence begins with a speaker tag, put a comma after the speaker tag. Next add beginning quotation marks. When the character finishes his statement, use the proper end punctuation for the character's statement. Then add end quotation marks.
EX) Mark said, "I love this place!"
 - If the speaker tag follows the quotation, begin with quotation marks, and write the character's statement. If the character's sentence ends with an exclamation point or a question mark, place it and then add the end quotation mark. If it ends with a period, use a comma instead and then add the end quotation marks. Next add the speaker tag with a period.
EX) "I will write a great story!" I exclaimed.
"Is this the right place?" she asked.
"She is the smartest girl in the class," Michael said.
 - If the speaker tag comes in the middle of the character's statement, begin with quotation marks, and write the first part of the character's statement. Add a comma and another set of quotation marks after the last word before the break. Next add the speaker tag, using a lowercase letter for the first word of the tag unless it is the character's name. Place a comma after the speaker tag and then add quotation marks to continue the character's statement. The rest of the character's statement is then written with its proper end punctuation. Finally, add the end quotation marks.
EX) "On Friday," said Joan, "my mom will take me to the park."
- Rule #5** If the speaker changes, indent for a new paragraph.

