

Creating Children's Literature

THEME:	LEISURE (LITERATURE)					
LANGUAGE:	ANY					
STANDARDS:	COMMUNICATION		CONNECTIONS		COMMUNITIES	
	1.2	1.3	3.1	3.2	5.1	5.2

Time Frame:

Five 55-minute periods

Materials Needed:

- Dozens of children's books from the target culture or pages of stories selected from a variety of sources (see recommended children's literature listed in references)
- Sample handout with questions about the literature (provided)

Description of Task:

Pre-task:

The teacher and students brainstorm basic vocabulary for parts of a book (cover, spine, title page, etc.) and basic terminology for roles necessary for book publishing (author, illustrator, editor, etc.). The teacher then invites students to participate in the process of creating a piece of children's literature in the target language. To do so, cooperative groups of 4-5 students will be formed. Brainstorming activities and group work may be done in the target language or in English depending on the students' language proficiency. The teacher may want to group individuals with the other students who have different strengths and talents so that the cooperative group will work productively and efficiently.

After cooperative groups have been formed, students brainstorm the skills necessary for the various roles involved in creating children's literature. They then choose a role that best matches their unique skills. Each group needs at least one editor-in-chief, one main author, one co-author, and one main illustrator.

Level:

Intermediate-Low/Mid

Purpose:

To develop cooperative group skills; to write a story and share it with an audience

Communicative Function(s):

Imaginative: Creating stories

Language Structure(s):

Will vary depending on literature selected

Cultural Aspects:

Examining the different characters, styles and themes presented in children's literature

Modalities:

Reading

Writing

NOTES

Next, the teacher introduces the class to a variety of examples of children's literature from the target culture, supplementing with examples in English if necessary to introduce a particular theme, author, or style. The teacher reviews parts-of-a-book vocabulary and very briefly provides a brief sketch of a few books for the students. Students are then encouraged to explore these examples of children's literature focusing on finding a possible stylistic model for their group's story creation. Each group of students needs to read and analyze at least three different model texts and answer a set of questions (see sample handout provided).

Each cooperative group needs to reach a consensus about the theme, the style, and the intended message. Students will be encouraged to refer to the model texts during the writing process. Students are told that they will be sharing their books with children in other schools (immersion schools, FLES programs; the teacher should make arrangements with the schools for the sharing of the books).

Students need to determine who will be responsible for the group roles:

Editor-in-chief role: Materials manager. Monitors and encourages cooperative involvement of each member of their group. Affirms ideas. Edits written text.

Main author: Notetaker. Records and organizes ideas of the group.

Co-author: Divergent thinker. Challenges ideas with a new perspective. Assists author and illustrator in story sequencing and text creation.

Main illustrator: Time-keeper. Remains sensitive to needs of target audience. Artistically interprets written text in a visual medium intended for the book.

Writing task:

Groups work cooperatively to develop chosen theme and style. The final product will include:

- title page
- illustrated cover
- author/illustrator biography page
- written text with creative illustrations

Post-task:

Groups present and read their books to the whole class. Each group may decide independently how they want to prepare this presentation. Student listeners list the strengths of each book. They will also attempt to identify the style of text the group chose to model, the theme, and the intended message. Student listeners provide feedback to the group so that they may improve their presentation before sharing the book with the target audience (children in immersion or FLES settings). Finally, students present/read their books to the target audience, and copies are provided for the children's classroom. (If a visit to the children's school is not possible, presentations can be videotaped.)

Assessment:

An informal assessment of students' cooperative group skills occurs by noting the amount of effort and cooperation during this process.

A formal assessment of the final piece of children's literature will involve collecting the books and assigning points for the final product and group participation. A multitrait rubric is recommended with the following possible categories: Group Cooperation and Participation, Illustrations, Word Choice and Grammatical Accuracy, Style, and Message. The rubric will vary depending upon the level of the students. Sample rubrics are available throughout the *Handbook*.

Oral presentation skills can be assessed holistically with points given for clarity and ability to share the work effectively.

Extensions:***Suggestions for adapting the task for various levels:***

For beginning levels: Choose examples of children's literature written for very beginning readers, for example, alphabet or counting books, books that use repetition, etc.

For advanced levels: Students choose their favorite book from those presented and write a summary explaining why they chose this particular book.

Other extensions:

Students can view the children's literature with a critical eye (i.e., to examine, for example, the way gender roles are represented) and rewrite stories in ways that attend to issues of diversity. (See *Rethinking Our Classrooms* articles listed under resources below for further ideas and explanation.)

Cultural extensions:

Students compare children's books that come from other cultures with those that come from the U.S. and discuss the cultural differences and similarities that emerge.

References and Resources:

Christensen, L. (1994). Unlearning the myths that bind us: Critiquing fairy tales and films. In B. Bigelow, L. Christensen, S. Karp, B. Miner, & B. Peterson (Eds.), *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice* (pp. 8-13). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.

Day, R. R. (1993). *New ways in teaching reading*. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

The Council on Interracial Books for Children. (1994). 10 quick ways to analyze children's books. In B. Bigelow, L. Christensen, S. Karp, B. Miner, & B. Peterson (Eds.), *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice* (pp. 14-15). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.

Wolpert, E. (1994). Rethinking 'The Three Little Pigs.' (1994). In B. Bigelow, L. Christensen, S. Karp, B. Miner, & B. Peterson (Eds.), *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice* (p. 11). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.

Recommended Children's Literature:

To find the following materials in the target language, look in the Teacher Resources section of this manual or visit <http://amazon.com> for Spanish books, <http://amazon.fr> for French books, or <http://amazon.de> for German books.

French:

Corentin, P. *Papa!* Paris: L'école des loisirs. (L'école des loisirs, 11 rue de Sèvres, Paris 6e)

Corentin, P. *Plouf!* Paris: L'école des loisirs.

De Pennart, G. *Le Loup Est Revenu.* Paris: L'école des loisirs.

Ponti, C. *Le Jour du Mange-Poussin.* Paris: L'école des loisirs.

Ponti, C. *Parci et Parla.* Paris: L'école des loisirs.

German:

Janosch. *Komm, wir finden einen Schatz.*

Janosch. *Oh, wie schön ist Panama.*

Janosch. *Schnuddelbuddel sagt Gutnacht.*

Mitgutsch, A. *Warum macht Herr Kringel nicht mit?*

Nöstlinger, C. *Der kleine Jo.*

Nöstlinger, C. *Liebe Oma, deine Susi.*

Pressler, M. *Jessi - drei Dackel bringen Glück.*

Pressler, M. *Sieben und eine Hex.*

Spanish:

Arnold, S. *Hijo del sol.* Leyenda cubana.

Belpré, P. *Perez y Martina.* Cuento folklórico puertorriqueño.

Castañeda, O. S. *El tapíz de abuela.*

Gonzalez, L. *El gallo de bodas.* Cuento folklórico cubano.

Levy, J. *El espíritu de tío Fernando*

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Lippert, M. H. *La hija de la serpiente Marina*. Leyenda brasileña.

Mike, J. *Juan Bobo y el caballo de siete colores*. Leyenda puertorriqueña.

Mike, J. *La zarigüeya y el gran creador de fuego*. Leyenda mexicana.

Reflections:

Handout to Accompany Task

1. Who is the author of this piece of children's literature?
2. Who illustrated this book?
3. By reading the title and looking at the cover, what can you say about the book's content?
4. Who is the publisher? Where was this book published? When?
5. What appeals to you about this particular book? Why?
6. Can you identify the theme(s) and the target audience for this text? What clues from the text helped you identify these?
7. What writing style does this author employ (repetition, invented language, fable/myth, rhyme, etc.)?
8. What might the author's intended message be? Why do you think so?

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Originally published in Tedick, D.J. (Ed.). (2002). Proficiency-oriented language instruction and assessment: A curriculum handbook for teachers. CARLA Working Paper Series. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.