

# Seven Blind Mice

**Lower Elementary School (Grades 1–3), Language Arts, Critical Thinking**

## **Objectives**

- Students will develop their abilities to draw conclusions, identify missing information, and recognize fallacies.
- Students will synthesize information to bring new insights and ideas to existing texts.

## **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

This lesson helps students to develop their abilities to draw conclusions by studying the way that conclusions are drawn in a fable.

## **Resources**

- Multiple versions of the fable, *The Blind Men and the Elephant* including print and electronic versions.
- *Seven Blind Mice* by Ed Young (Philomel Books, 1992)

**Guidance:** Drawing conclusions is using written or visual cues to figure out something that is not directly stated. By locating the written and visual cues, students are able to determine what the author meant. There are times when missing information hinders the reader's ability to put together the whole picture and therefore leads to errors in judgment also known as fallacies. In this lesson students develop an understanding that they need multiple pieces of data in order to draw accurate conclusions.

To illustrate these points, students will read and explore an old Indian fable of blind men discovering different parts of an elephant and trying to determine what it is. In this story, *Seven Blind Mice* by Ed Young (Philomel Books, 1992) the blind men are mice, and the only one that investigates the entire object is the seventh mouse, who comes to an understanding of the whole. Caldecott winner Ed Young has created masterful illustrations to enhance the text.

There are various versions of the story of the blind men and the elephant. The blind men and the elephant is a legend that appears in different cultures—notably China, Africa, and India—and the tale dates back thousands of years. Some versions of the story feature three blind men, others five or six, but the message is always the same. Here’s a story of the six blind men and the elephant printed from <https://thestorytellers.com/the-blind-men-and-the-elephant/>.

Six blind men were discussing exactly what they believed an elephant to be, since each had heard how strange the creature was, yet none had ever seen one before. So the blind men agreed to find an elephant and discover what the animal was really like.

*It didn’t take the blind men long to find an elephant at a nearby market. The first blind man approached the beast and felt the animal’s firm flat side. “It seems to me that the elephant is just like a wall,” he said to his friends.*

*The second blind man reached out and touched one of the elephant’s tusks. “No, this is round and smooth and sharp—the elephant is like a spear.”*

*Intrigued, the third blind man stepped up to the elephant and touched its trunk. “Well, I can’t agree with either of you; I feel a squirming writhing thing—surely the elephant is just like a snake.”*

*The fourth blind man was of course by now quite puzzled. So he reached out, and felt the elephant’s leg. “You are all talking complete nonsense,” he said, “because clearly the elephant is just like a tree.”*

*Utterly confused, the fifth blind man stepped forward and grabbed one of the elephant’s ears. “You must all be mad—an elephant is exactly like a fan.”*

*Duly, the sixth man approached, and, holding the beast’s tail, disagreed again. “It’s nothing like any of your descriptions—the elephant is just like a rope.”*

*And all six blind men continued to argue, based on their own particular experiences, as to what they thought an elephant was like. It was an argument that they were never able to resolve. Each of them was concerned only with their own idea. None of them had the full picture, and none could see any of the other's point of view. Each man saw the elephant as something quite different, and while in part each blind man was right, none was wholly correct.*

An online version of the story, *The Blind Men and the Elephant* may be found at:

<https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/blind-men-and-elephant/story-blind-men-and-elephant/>

There is never just one way to look at something—there are always different perspectives, meanings, and perceptions, depending on who is looking. This story concludes with a moral. Read other fables and have students explain the meaning of the moral of each story.

Make a comparison chart of mice and elephants, listing their similarities and differences. Ask the students if they have ever drawn a conclusion with a few pieces of information and then found out that the conclusion was inaccurate.

**Practice:** Read the story *Seven Blind Mice* by Ed Young to a group of students. Ask the students to think about the information that each of the mice used to determine what the elephant was. Discuss why each mouse relied on one piece of information and how there are times when you need more than one piece of information to create a whole picture.

Have students complete the Student Activity Sheet and then discuss the following questions.

- What information was each mouse missing?
- How did that information affect his conclusion?
- How would the story be different if the mice could see?

To extend this activity, choose a book and read part of the story to each of four groups and ask students to summarize the story using only the part of the book they heard. Discuss the results and the missing information that would have changed their conclusions.

**Challenge:**

- Write a story about another animal or object in which the mice draw different conclusions about what it is.
- Add another mouse to the story; what part of the elephant does he focus on to draw his conclusions?

## *Seven Blind Mice*

### STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

After reading and listening to a version to *Seven Blind Mice* by Ed Young, think about each of the different mice and the parts of the elephant they focused on to draw their own conclusion about who or what the elephant might be.

<b>Mouse</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>

# Six Things I Know

**Lower Elementary School (Grades 1–3), Language Arts, Critical Thinking**

## **Objectives**

- To identify a topic of interest and six non-refutable facts about the topic.
- To determine relevant information.

## **Materials**

- Access to the school or classroom library with encyclopedias, nonfiction books, and magazines
- Access to the Internet (optional)
- Student Activity Sheet (Top Six Facts)
- Craft materials (pens, pencils, construction paper, writing paper, glue, magazines, and books that can be cut up, etc.)

## **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

Students are often interested in different areas of study. This lesson provides students with a chance to delve into the facts in one of their areas of interest. In this lesson students will apply their critical thinking skills to research a topic and identify six facts about that topic. These facts will be the basis for books that students will write about their area of study.

**Guidance:** After reading aloud to the class a chosen text about a topic such as life at the zoo, ask students to recall as many facts as possible from the reading. Record the responses on a list, no matter how inconsequential the responses may seem. Ask students if all the information is informative or interesting and have them determine which of the listed facts provide the most information about the topic. Inform students that they will now identify six relevant and interesting facts about the topic, which they would be able to use to write a report or story.

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Inform the students that to identify relevant facts, it is important to identify and list many different facts about a topic first. Students select the most important facts by making decisions about the relevance and interest value of each fact. Inform students that it is important to take time in recording facts initially and providing details about each fact (e.g., the fact that ‘a giraffe is tall’ is not as descriptive [or interesting] as the fact that ‘a giraffe is the tallest animal in the world’). More precisely written facts will lead to better decision-making regarding the relevance and interest value of the facts. Ask students to think about what someone else might want to know about that topic.

Tell students that they will have the opportunity to learn about any topic of their choice. They may research an animal, a place, a hobby, or any other topic that interests them. Using print and electronic resources, students should then record/list many facts about their topic. Encourage students to list all the facts that they discover and be descriptive when recording these facts. Ask students to choose the best six facts and record these facts on the Student Activity Sheet (Top Six Facts). Have students share their facts with a partner, small group, or whole class and justify why they choose the six facts that they did.

**Practice:** Have students establish a matrix that will help them make decisions about the relevance and interest value of facts. Students should then re-examine the facts they chose to see if they conform to the criteria in the matrix.

**Challenge:** After students have chosen the most important, relevant, and interesting facts, ask students to create an illustrated book about their topic using the six facts. You can allow students the freedom to develop their own format for the book, or you can have students write each fact on a separate piece of paper and include an illustration (either drawn or cut out of a magazine or book). Students can then glue these pages to larger pieces of construction paper. Punch several holes along one side of the construction paper and tie the pages together with a piece of yam. Students can then leave these books in the library so that other students can learn about the topics.

SIX THINGS I KNOW  
STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

The Top Six Facts

TOPIC:

My 6 Relevant and Interesting Facts

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.



# In the Group

**Lower Elementary School (Grades K–2), Language Arts, Critical Thinking**

## **Objectives**

- To identify characteristics and categorize words.
- To use a graphic organizer to cluster groups of words together.

## **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

To introduce this activity, find pictures of nine different objects and place these pictures in front of the class. Ask them to sort the items into three groups of three. After they have sorted the items, ask the students to give a name to each group of items.

**Guidance:** Present a few unusual objects to the class and ask students to share a word that describes each item. List the words on the board and ask students if they can group any of the words together. Have them explain why they grouped the items together.

**Practice:** Have the students re-sort the items into different groups. This process will help them focus on the characteristics of the items and look for similarities and differences.

**Challenge:** You can increase the challenge of this activity in several ways:

- Have students find pictures of items and sort them into different groups.
- Provide a list of new vocabulary words for the students to sort into categories such as I Can ... Drink It, Wear It, Ride It, Plant It, Read It, Play It, etc.

# As Many as You Can

**Lower Elementary School (Grades K–2), Language Arts, Creative Thinking**

## **Objectives**

- To develop fluency and flexibility.
- To connect words and letters.
- To build on student responses to generate new responses.
- To develop the skill of elaboration.

## **Materials**

- A sheet of paper with each letter of the alphabet on a separate line
- Alphabet books

## **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

Brainstorming is the act of generating ideas. This activity introduces brainstorming to students and is designed to help students develop fluency and flexibility. It encourage students to generate a list of as many words as possible that begin with a given letter. Before beginning the activity, talk about what it means to let your brain spill out ideas. The goal is to come up with as many ideas as possible. Go over the general rules for brainstorming:

1. Criticism is ruled out.
2. All ideas are accepted, no matter how wild.
3. The more ideas you have, the better.
4. It is all right to spin an idea off someone else's idea.

**Guidance:** Bring the class together and tell them that they will be doing an activity to see how many words they know. Tell the students that their ideas will not be judged. Ask the students to think of as many different colors as possible. List all the words on the board, even if they are not colors. Then ask the students to look at the list of colors and see if they any of the colors help

them think of additional colors. This process helps students recognize that sometimes new ideas spring from other people's ideas.

**Practice:** The goal of the activity is to generate as many words as possible for each letter in the alphabet. (Ideally, students will know all the letters in the alphabet, but you may want to give each student a sheet with all the letters of the alphabet on it.) You may want to have students work in small groups, with one student in the group recording all the words. Have students choose a letter and brainstorm as many words as possible that begin with that letter.

**Challenge:** There are a number of ways to extend this activity:

- Have students draw a picture of an original object for each consonant.
- Have students draw pictures of a word using the letters that spell out that word.
- Have students group words together and come up with a single word that describes all the words. For example, zebra, tiger, bear, and elephant are all ANIMALS.
- If students are ready to put sentences together, ask them to create sentences that have certain letter patterns. For example, the sentence pattern could be four words long, with the first word in all the sentences beginning with the letter A and the third word in every sentence beginning with the letter T. Students should try to make the sentences as different as possible.
- Some students may want to write complete sentences in an image that helps illustrate the meaning of the sentence. For example, students might write “An idea is when a light goes off in your mind” in the shape of a light bulb.
- Have students brainstorm lists of things that meet certain criteria:
  - Things with wheels
  - Things that you can fit in your pocket
  - Things that you can wear
  - Things that you can eat
- Students who seem to have strong understanding of the alphabet might want to make up sentences in which all (or almost all) the words begin with the same letter. For example, “My Name is Albert and I am an Ape who lives in Alberta and I like to eat apples.”

# Compare It!

## Lower Elementary School (Grades 1–3), Language Arts, Creative Thinking

### Objectives

- To create visual images using similes.

### Materials

- Children’s books that feature similes (optional)
  - *Just Enough Carrots* (Mathstart, Level 1) by Stuart J. Murphy
  - *The Biggest Pest: Comparison* (Frimble Family First Learning Adventures) by Monica Weiss
  - *A Whale Is Not a Fish and Other Animal Mix-Ups* by Melvin Berger
  - *As: A Surfeit of Similes* by Norton Jester
  - *As Silly as Bees Knees, as Busy as Bees: An Astounding Assortment of Similes* by Norton Jester
- Craft materials (pens, pencils, paper, magazines, and books that can be cut up, glue)

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

The ability to create mental images is important. One way that we create these images is by comparing things to what we know. In this activity students will use their creative thinking abilities to help create visual images for adjectives. Students can draw pictures or develop collages if they do not like to draw.

**Guidance:** Introduce the concept of a simile to the class by reading poems or short stories that contain similes that are used in everyday language. Inform students that similes are a “figure of speech in which two different things are compared” and ask them to identify similes that they recall from the reading. Often it is useful to draw a picture of a simile to understand the associated meaning. Share the “As sly as a fox” picture that follows with students and ask them to identify why the fox is considered sly.



Brainstorm a list of common similes with the whole class (e.g., as busy as a bee, like a bull at a gate, as blind as a bat, etc.) The Internet may provide another source of information for common similes (e.g. <http://www.saidwhat.co.uk/spoon/similes.php>).

Consider the simile, “As busy as a bee.” Ask students “What would the busy bee be doing?” and “Where would the busy bee be working?” Using the students’ responses, create a visual image for the “busy as a bee” simile.

**Practice:** Pass out the Student Activity Sheet. Have students work individually to complete the similes on the Activity Sheet and then work in groups to create a visual image for a given simile. Provide each group with the same simile and then compare the images when everyone is done. Ask the class to look for similarities and differences between the images.

Instruct students to choose their own simile from the brainstormed list and independently create a visual images for this simile. Students should then share their product with a partner, group, or the class when everyone is done.

**Challenge:** Invite students to create their own illustrated book of similes. Encourage students to choose unusual or uncommon similes that would prompt discussion with an audience (their peers, parents, another class, reading group, etc.).

# COMPARE IT!

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

1. As tall as \_\_\_\_\_
2. As strong as \_\_\_\_\_
3. As quiet as \_\_\_\_\_
4. As purple as \_\_\_\_\_
5. As quick as \_\_\_\_\_
6. As small as \_\_\_\_\_
7. As happy as \_\_\_\_\_
8. As beautiful as \_\_\_\_\_
9. As hard as \_\_\_\_\_
10. As soft as \_\_\_\_\_
11. As bright as \_\_\_\_\_
12. As slow as \_\_\_\_\_
13. As loud as \_\_\_\_\_
14. As \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_
15. As \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_
16. As \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_

# A Different Ending

## Lower Elementary School (Grades 1–3), Language Arts, Problem Solving

### Objectives

- To creative problem solving (CPS) skills to generate a list of ways to solve problems in fairy tales.

### Materials

- Various versions of fairy tales. Some fairy tales that you might want to have available include:
  - *Cinderella*
  - *Hansel and Gretel*
  - *Jack and the Beanstalk*
  - *Little Red Riding Hood*
  - *Rapunzel*
  - *Sleeping Beauty*
  - *Snow White*
  - *1,001 Arabian Nights*
  - *Beauty and the Beast*
  - *The Snow Queen*
  - *The Wicked Prince*
  - A complete list of the fairy tales by Hans Christian Anderson is available at <http://hca.gilead.org.il/#list>
- Materials on Creative Problem Solving

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

Creative Problem Solving (CPS) is a method that individuals or groups can use to deal successfully with opportunities and challenges that are open-ended, ambiguous, and important. CPS is not merely “problem solving;” it provides the structure to look at new challenges and deal

with unknown and ambiguous situations. This lesson is based on the work of Isaksen & Treffinger, [Isaksen, S., & Treffinger, D. (1985), *Creative problem solving: The basic course*. Buffalo, NY: Bearly Limited]. For further information on Creative Problem Solving see the list of articles and books at <https://www.creativelearning.com>. In addition, a summary of CPS is included in Davis. G. (1999). *Creativity is forever*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

This lesson will use fairy tales as a vehicle for students to explore and develop their creative problem solving abilities. (To review general background information on fairy tales, visit the following website: <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/reading-resources/writing-writers-fairy-tales.html>.) In most fairy tales, something bad happens. In this activity students will read a fairy tale and then use their problem solving techniques to create alternative endings to the fairy tales.

**Guidance:** Ask students to list some of their favorite fairy tales. Have them name and discuss elements that many of the stories share. You might find it helpful to web their responses or use a Venn diagram to illustrate similarities and differences. Some common elements are:

- “Once upon a time” beginnings
- Good vs. evil
- beautiful princess/handsome prince
- magic
- talking animals
- “happily ever after” endings

Ask students, “What is the bad thing that happens in the fairy tale? How might you help the main characters to address this problem?”

Have students use the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) Process to help identify the problem and develop a list of potential solutions. The CPS steps are:

1. Mess-Finding: Students find a general topic or mess to which they apply the rest of the processes



2. Fact-Finding: Students take an inventory of what they know, need to know, or would like to know about the topic
3. Problem-Finding: Students identify the many possible ways they might address their identified problem
4. Idea-Finding: Students identify the many possible ways they might address their identified problem.
5. Solution-Finding: Students identify a set of criteria to evaluate their solutions and identify a single solution to their chosen problem.
6. Acceptance-Finding: Students generate a plan of action designed to implement their solution.

**Practice:** Ask students to choose and read a fairy tale. Have them use the CPS strategies to identify a problem and generate a list of potential solutions. They may use the Student Activity Sheet to guide their thought process.

In the fact-finding portion of CPS, students may want to ask themselves the following questions.

- Who is or should be involved?
- What is or is not happening?
- When does this or should this happen?
- Where does or doesn't this occur?
- Why does it or doesn't it happen?
- How does it or doesn't it occur?

In the problem-finding stage, students may want to ask:

- In what ways might we ...?

In looking at the solution-finding portion of the model, students may want to address the following questions:

- Will it work?
- Are the materials available?
- Is the solution acceptable?

**Challenge:** Tell students that they will “fracture” a fairy tale tales. A fractured fairy tale is designed to be humorous by changing the story in an unexpected way (e.g., by altering a character, or adding modern language and events). Ask for suggestions on ways to fracture “Cinderella.” List ideas on the board. These may include:

- Cinderella is homely and has beautiful stepsisters.
- The prince can’t dance.
- She likes to cook and clean.
- The magic wand is broken and can’t get the spell quite right.
- She doesn’t want to get married anyway.
- She didn’t want a carriage; she wanted a Camel.

Students should then pick a tale to “fracture” and rewrite it. Instruct students that other than the fractured elements, the fairy tales should be true to the classic form. Invite them to work alone or with a partner. The class might compile the stories into a book to leave in the school library.

# A DIFFERENT ENDING

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

Fairy Tale Title \_\_\_\_\_

Mess-Finding: What is the problem?

Fact-Finding: What do I know about the problem?

Problem-Finding: In what ways might we ...?

Idea-Finding: Let your mind spin ideas.

Solution-Finding: Are there any ideas that set themselves apart from the others?

Acceptance-Finding: How will your best idea get into action?

# All the Air Knocked Out

**Lower Elementary School (Grades 1–3), Language Arts, Problem Solving**

## **Objectives**

- To investigate problem-solving strategies by looking at a problem that a character faces in a story and applying it to a new character.

## **Materials**

- *Flat Stanley* by Jeff Brown (1964)

## **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

Problem solving is a skill used to analyze, strategize, and resolve a perplexing or difficult question or situation. For students you may want to define it as finding a solution to a problem. Teaching problem solving provides students with systematic frameworks for analyzing their own thinking in non-routine problem-solving situations.

In *Flat Stanley*, a book by Jeff Brown (1964), a boy is accidentally squished “as flat as a pancake” when a bulletin board falls on him. Stanley is very, very flat but otherwise fine. The story goes on to tell how Stanley discovers advantages to being flat. He can slide under doors, go down into sidewalk grates, and even fold himself up small enough to fit into an envelope and be mailed to California for an exciting vacation.

**Guidance:** Read *Flat Stanley* by Jeff Brown (HarperCollins, 1964). Have students make a list of the problems that Stanley faces when he is flat. Then have students make a list of solutions using the strategies on the Problem-Solving Strategies Wheel (see the student activity sheet).

**Practice:** Have students develop a character that has something happen to him or her that has changed his or her body shape. Students should then develop a list of the advantages and

disadvantages of the body shape. Finally, ask students to develop a list of ways to help their characters bounce back into shape.

**Challenge:** Challenge students to create a cartoon strip in which their character in their transformed state encounters a problem and solves it.

# All the Air Knocked Out

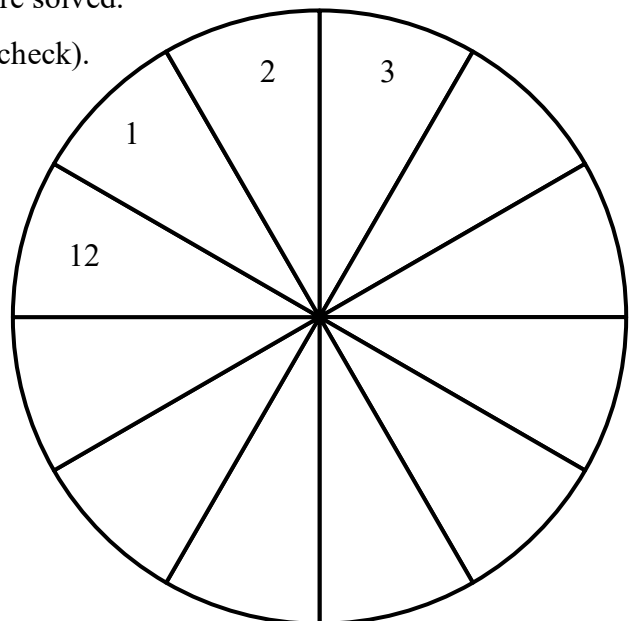
## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

### Problem Solving Strategies Wheel

Source: Mctighe, J., & Lyman, F. (2001). Clueing thinking in the classroom. The promise of theory-imbedded tools. In Arthur L. Costa (Ed) *Developing minds: A Resource book for teaching thinking*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 384–392.

### Problem Solving Wheel

1. Be flexible. Try different approaches.
2. Match your solution with the original goals. Does it make sense: Is it accurate?
3. Read the problem carefully. Reread it, if necessary.
4. Determine the meaning of the key words or special terms.
5. State the goals in your own words.
6. List the important information.
7. Draw a picture or diagram of the problem.
8. Look for patterns.
9. Break the problem into smaller pieces.
10. Recall similar problems and how they were solved.
11. Use systematic trial and error (guess and check).
12. Work backwards from the final result.



# Bigger and Stronger than Life

## Lower Elementary School (Grades K–2), Language Arts, Problem Solving

### Objectives

- To practice identifying problems.
- To generate suggestions for how to solve a problem.
- To use creative writing skills to create a character with a problem and a strategy to solve that problem.

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

In many stories, characters face challenges and problems to solve. This activity will help students identify problems that characters face. Find and share a tall tale related to your country or community. Explain that a tall tale is a kind of folktale in which characters with exaggerated qualities and abilities perform fantastic feats—feats that couldn't happen in the real world. Mention that a tall tale might have some real-life elements and that it might be presented as though it were true. Also note that tall tales are usually humorous. You may want to read aloud an example of a tall tale. Alternatively, you could give students a few examples of characters with amazing talents such as:

- an elephant that can stretch its trunk to reach the moon
- a child who can speak and understand any language ever spoken
- a zebra that can run faster than a car

**Guidance:** Tell students that you would like each of them to write and illustrate a tall tale about a character who has an unbelievable talent. Encourage them to use their imagination to create character traits and talents, settings, funny situations, and events. Suggest that they first create drafts of their tall tales. Later, when they present their tales in final form, they can add a title and illustrations.

**Practice:** Ask students if there are any talents or skills that they might want. How would they use these talents? How would those talents help them solve problems? For example, short students might say that they have difficulty watching movies when someone sits in front of them at the theater. What might they do to solve that problem?

**Challenge:** You can extend this activity in several ways:

- Ask students to explore the development of tall tales as a way to explain a problem or illustrate a character trait.
- Ask students to take a character from a story that they have read and give that character a special talent. How would that character be different and how might they use that talent? For example, what would happen if Pinocchio were able to fly?



# My Thumbprint Story

**Lower Elementary School (Grades K–3), Language Arts, Problem Solving**

## Objectives

- Students will develop a comic strip using thumbprints that tell a story about themselves.
- Students will explore the elements of a good story.
- Students will use their decision-making skills to identify a good story and choose the elements of the story that they want to include in their comic strip.
- Students will practice the skill of elaboration as they decorate their thumbprints.

## Materials

- Washable Inkpads, tempera paints
- Blank paper
- Markers, crayons, and other drawing tools
- Ruler
- Comic Strip Template—a number of templates are available at:  
<https://www.dadsworksheets.com/charts/comic-strip-template.html>

## Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

In this activity students will select a story about themselves to share with their class in a thumbprint comic strip. A thumbprint is the unique image that your thumb makes when you put it in ink and use that to make an impression. This is a good way to help students to get to know each other at the beginning of the year. This lesson provides an opportunity for students to develop decision-making skills to determine what story might be able to be translated into a thumbprint comic strip and how might that story be told with images built around thumbprints.

This activity helps students identify the elements of a good story as well as have them develop a storyline using their own life.

**Guidance:** This activity provides students with the chance to develop and practice their decision-making skills. Decision-making is the ability to decide or form a fixed intention. Using a systematic approach, alternatives are examined and students are asked to solve a problem or to reach a goal.

When teachers teach the decision-making process, students should learn how to make choices based on examination of alternatives in terms of defined criteria. Decision-making is an important skill that is a part of many life activities.

The basic steps in decision-making include the following:

1. State the problem or goals.
2. List alternatives to the situation.
3. Establish criteria by which to examine the alternatives.
4. Rank alternatives according to criteria.
5. Choose the best alternative.
6. Evaluate choice: Defend your decision by giving several reasons for your choice.

To use decision-making in this activity, students should:

Step 1 Make a list of important or humorous event that have happened to you.

Step 2 Select the events that have good story telling potential. You may have to think about what makes a good story such as an interesting setting, person, problem, or solution.

Step 3 Review the events based on the criteria.

1. What events will make a good story?
2. Will you be able to tell the story in a framed sequence?

Three empty rectangular boxes are arranged horizontally, intended for students to write their answers to the questions in the previous step.

3. How might you use the thumbprints in the story?

Teachers should talk to students about a special event and ask them to make a list of the interesting things that have happened to them. After generating a list of these things, teachers can

discuss which event might make a good story to share with the class. Tell students that a thumbprint is an image of the rings on your thumb. Since each thumbprint is unique to each student, the thumbprint stories will be a good way to help students get to know each other. You can help students to make several thumbprints on a page. Students can be encouraged to transform the thumbprints into animals, people, or plants by drawing arms and legs, stems, or other details to show the students how they might elaborate on the thumbprints.

**Practice:** Tell the students that they are going to tell a story about their lives by making a thumbprint comic strip. Ask the students to think about things that have happened to them that might make a good story to tell in a thumbprint comic strip. They may want to focus on stories that show their interests or what they like. For example, a student who is a soccer player, might create a thumbprint story comic strip about a particular soccer game or practice.

In this activity, students are asked to use their decision-making skills to determine which story might make a good thumbprint comic strip. After students have selected a story that they want to translate into a thumbprint story, they may begin to work on their comic strip. Student should be encouraged to practice making their thumbprints images and adding details to the thumbprints. Teachers should ask students to use captions, conversation bubbles, and text to tell a complete story.

**Challenge:**

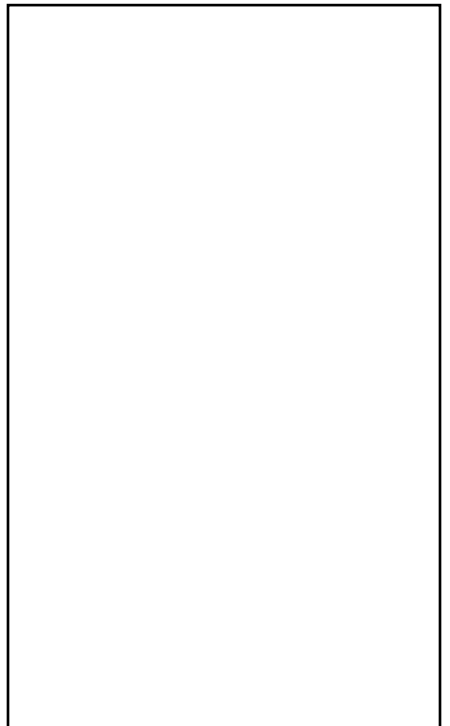
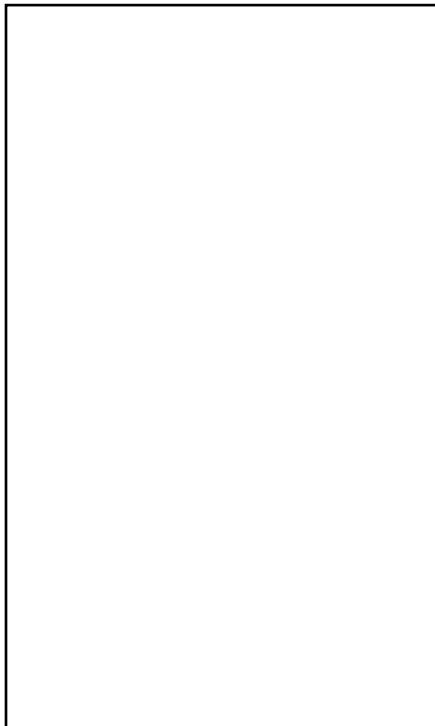
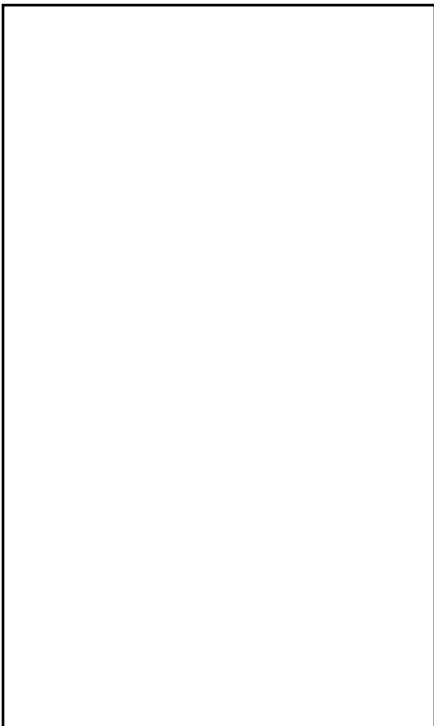
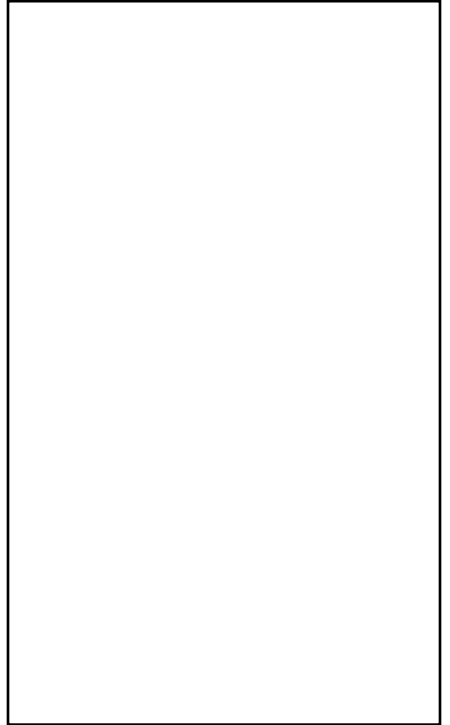
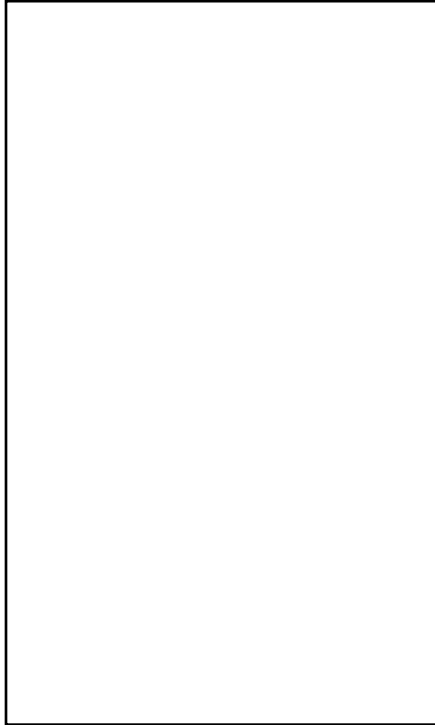
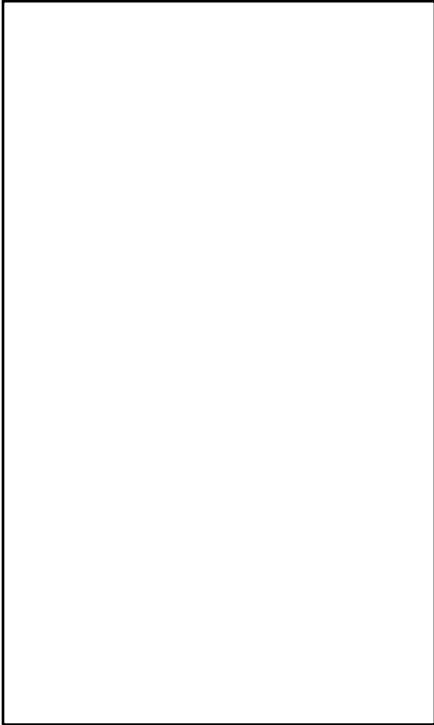
- Apply the decision-making skills to expand the comic strip to write a short biography of a series of important events.
- Caldecott Award winning children’s book illustrator Ed Emberley has created many children’s books using thumbprints such as *Ed Emberley’s Great Thumbprint Book* (Little Brown, 1994) and other titles.
- Students might want to retell their favorite story with thumbprints.
- Students can tell an adventure story involving thumbprint characters.
- Students can create a thumbprint ABC book.

**Reference:**

The basic skills for decision-making were adapted from Reid, L. (1990). *Thinking skills resource book*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.

# My Thumbprint Story

STUDENT ACTIVITY PAGE



# Clothes for the Job

Upper Elementary School (Grades 4–6), Language Arts, Critical Thinking

## Objectives

- To use clues in clothing to determine a person’s vocation.

## Materials

- Photographs of people from different occupations in their work clothes. [You can collect pictures from the Internet using the Google Images search engine by typing in different professional roles (e.g. mechanic, doctor, gardener, etc.).]

## Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

In this activity students will examine various “uniforms” to determine what a person’s job is. Students will develop analytical and creative thinking skills.

**Guidance:** Ask students how they identify what people do for a living? What are the things that they look at to determine what job someone does? After students have agreed on several criteria, show them stimulus pictures of people in their work apparel and ask them to guess what the pictured person’s profession is. Encourage students to justify their responses using evidence from the picture.

Ask students why clothing is different for various professions? Why would a surgeon not wear the same clothing as a mechanic? Inform students that clothing for different professions is designed to meet different needs.

**Practice:** Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a profession (e.g., road worker, chef, nurse, flight attendant, lifeguard, doctor, scientist, etc.). Ask students to consider the special features of the clothing these professionals wear and what these features are for. Students may need to be given stimulus pictures to provide a prompt for discussion (e.g., a road

work needs clothes that provide sun protection and are brightly colored so oncoming traffic can see them). Have each group complete the Student Activity Sheet.

**Challenge:**

1. Trendy designers are now designing apparel to meet the needs of different professionals (e.g., flight attendant uniforms, clothing for chefs). To successfully design efficient, practical, and attractive uniforms for a variety of professions, designers must consider a range of factors. Ask students to think about a particular profession and design a new uniform or outfit for that profession. For example, veterinarians often wear white lab coats, but what might be a more practical outfit for veterinarians who specialize in large animals?

As students are working, have them consider the following questions:

- What are the general criteria that designers should consider when designing attire for different professionals?
  - What do the people in the field do?
  - How do they move?
  - What do they need to carry?
  - What tools do they use?
2. Clothing has changed enormously throughout history. Inventions such as the button, zipper, Velcro, toggles, and buckles are only a few of things that have changed the way we dress today. Have students brainstorm a list of clothing inventions and then design clothing for a particular purpose that could not take advantage of any of these inventions.

# Clothes for the Job

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

### Clothing Features That May Be Helpful

Below is a diagram for clothing for a person who \_\_\_\_\_



Some of the particularly useful features of the outfit are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



# Riddle Me This

**Upper Elementary School (Grades 4–5), Language Arts, Critical Thinking**

## Objectives

- To research an animal and determine the important information about that animal.

## Materials

- Non-fiction books, videos, and websites about animals
- Computer and printer
- Riddle Books
- Access to the Internet (optional)

Helpful resources:

The Smithsonian National Zoo: <https://nationalzoo.si.edu>

This site has pictures, information, and live film clips of animals at The Smithsonian National Zoo.

Monterey Bay Aquarium: <https://www.montereybayaquarium.org>

The Monterey Bay Aquarium site provides live and recorded Web camera shots of many of the animal exhibits.

## Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

Riddles are problems and the best riddles make the reader or listener work to solve the riddle. This lesson asks students to conduct research on an animal of their choice and then use the information to write a well-developed riddle that shares their knowledge about the animal. Students will use analytical thinking to determine the important information about an animal and then use inductive thinking skills to construct the riddle.



**Guidance:** Ask students to name a favorite animal. Have students research their chosen animal. They should find out information such as where the animal lives, what the animal eats, if the animal has any predators, etc. Then ask students to determine if anything they have learned applies to more than one animal and if anything is specific to their animal. They should record the information on Student Activity Sheet A.

**Practice:** Explain to the class that they will use the information they learned about their animal to write a riddle. A good riddle is one that leads the reader in more than one direction. The first information in the riddle should be general and apply to more than one animal. Each successive clue should offer more specific information. For example, for a riddle about a tiger, the first clue might be about a roaming animal and one of the last clues might be about a ferocious cat.

Example of an animal riddle

My tail is long, my coat is brown.  
I like the country, I like the town.  
I can live in a house or live in a shed.  
And I come out to play when you are in bed.

What am I?

Source: Beisner, M. (1983). *Monika Beisner's Book of Riddles*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.

Students will need to list all lines or phrases that they want to use in their riddle and then organize the information so that the first line of the riddle leads the reader in a general direction and each successive line leads the reader to a more specific conclusion. Student Activity Sheet B provides a visual organizer to help students move from general to the specific.

After all students have written their riddles, invite students to share their riddles with the class.

**Challenge:** Have students research a famous person and write a Bio-Riddle (a riddle about someone's life). The activity requires students to do thorough research, develop a set of questions

prior to research and take notes coordinated to those questions, keep a bibliography, create a timeline, isolate relevant quotes, and compose a Bio-Riddle.

# Riddle Me This

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET A

Animal: \_\_\_\_\_

What does it eat?

What is its habitat?

Where does it build its homes?

What are its prey?

What are its predators?

How does it move?



# Riddle Me This

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET B

Organize your clues from general to specific.

### GENERAL

(more than one animal  
has this feature)



1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_

### SPECIFIC

(only your animal has this  
feature)

8) \_\_\_\_\_

# Who's Telling This Story?

Upper Elementary School (Grades 3–5), Language Arts, Critical Thinking

## Objectives

- To read *The Three Little Pigs* (or they may choose another fairy tale) and rewrite it from a different point of view.
- To develop their creative writing skills.
- To learn the differences that may exist in points of view.

## Materials

Some book suggestions include *The Three Pigs* by David Wiesner (Clarion, 2001), *The Three Little Pigs* by James Marshall (Scholastic, 1989), *The Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf* by Glen Rounds (Holiday House, 1992), *The Three Little Pigs* by Steven Kellogg (William Morrow, 1997), *The Three Little Pigs* by Barry Moser (Little, Brown, 2001), or any other version of the three little pigs. Different versions of The Three Little Pigs from around the world may be found at <https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/type0124.html>.

One version of the Three Little Pigs that tells the story from the point of view of the Wolf is *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka (Viking Press, 1989).

## Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

In this activity students explore how point of view influences stories. Most of the versions of the three little pigs present the pigs as good and the wolf as bad. What would happen if the wolf were good and the pigs were bad? How might the story change? How might the reader react to the story differently?

Read to students the story *The Real Story of the Three Little Pigs* or write your own version of a fairy tale in which the “bad guy” actually was a victim of circumstances instead of a villain.

Example: The wolf really didn't go to the pigs' houses to eat them. He just wanted to borrow some sugar for his mother's birthday cake and he sneezed and their houses' fell. And of course he couldn't let a good pig dinner go to waste.

Example: The wolf didn't really want to eat the pigs. What actually happened was that he had a horrible cold. He only went to the pigs' houses to ask to borrow some cough medicine, but the pigs wouldn't listen to him and just assumed that he wanted to eat them.

Have the students write their own version of the stories and use a word processing program to type their stories. Some students may want to illustrate their stories.

**Guidance:** Ask students if they have ever heard the same story from two different people. Help students notice that the two versions are usually different in some way. Help your students better understand what perspectives are by brainstorming real-life examples in which two people may show different perspectives on a situation.

Make sure students understand that identifying the point of view will give them insight into the story. Various individuals or groups may have differing sets of observations or priorities that influence their perspective on a given situation.

It is important to recognize that for many students, the first step in understanding perspective is to acknowledge that there may be more than one perspective.

Have the students read one or more versions of "The Three Little Pigs" and complete the chart, "A Different Perspective: The Wolf Tells His Story" on the student activity sheet.

**Practice:** Have students rewrite the story from the wolf's perspective. When students have finished writing their stories, have them exchange them with a classmate for editorial comments. Students should then revise their stories and present a final copy for a class book on the wolf's version of The Three Little Pigs. You may want to place this book in the library to share with all students in the school.

## Challenge:

1. Invite students to choose another story such as “Little Red Riding Hood” or “Cinderella” and tell it from a different point of view. For example, how might the wolf tell the story of Little Red Riding Hood? How would Cinderella’s stepsisters tell her famous story? What would it be like to have Rumpelstiltskin and his daughter change roles?

A list of fractured fairytales may be found at <https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/fractured-fairy-tales> and at <https://bookroo.com/explore/books/genres/fractured-fairy-tales>

2. Apply SCAMPER (substitute, combine, adapt, modify or minify, put to new use, eliminate, reverse, rearrange) to The Three Little Pigs.

- What would happen if \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- What would you do to \_\_\_\_\_ if \_\_\_\_\_ happened?
- In what other situation could \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- Let’s pretend that \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- Suppose \_\_\_\_\_. What would the consequences be?
- What if \_\_\_\_\_ were \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- How would \_\_\_\_\_ have been different if it were smaller? Larger? Stronger? Heavier? Sideways? Upside down? A different color?
- How might things have changed if \_\_\_\_\_ was reversed? Rearranged? Taken apart? More intense? Or minor consequence?
- How would \_\_\_\_\_ have been different if it had sound? Lights? Motion and odor?
- What would happen if we put \_\_\_\_\_ to other uses?
- What would happen if we took something away from \_\_\_\_\_ and replaced it with \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- What would \_\_\_\_\_ be liked if the environment were changed to \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- How would \_\_\_\_\_ react if \_\_\_\_\_ existed in a different period?



Have each student choose a fairy tale with a “bad guy” and rewrite it, telling the story from the “bad guy’s” point of view. Develop a new ending for the story.

# Who's Telling This Story?

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

### A Different Perspective: The Wolf Tells His Story

After reading one or more versions of *The Three Little Pigs*, complete the following chart to identify the different perspectives in the story.

The Story of the *The Three Little Pigs* as told by \_\_\_\_\_ (author)  
in the version called \_\_\_\_\_ (title) published in \_\_\_\_\_  
(year) by \_\_\_\_\_ (publisher).

	Wolf's Perspective	Pigs' Version
Why did the wolf go to the pig's house?		
Why did the wolf huff and puff?		
How did the first and second pig lose their houses?		
Who had the right to the houses?		
Who was good and who was evil?		
What happened to the wolf when he went to the third pig's house?		

# Create ~ a ~ Character

**Upper Elementary School (Grades 3–5), Language Arts, Creative Thinking**

## **Objectives**

- Students will identify the different elements that contribute to character development.
- Students will use their creative thinking skills to develop an imaginary character.

## **Materials**

- Art supplies including pens, pencils, crayons, magazines, glue, scissors, paper, etc.
- Electronic and Internet resources

## **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

This activity provides students with an opportunity to use their creative thinking skills to develop a complete imaginary character with a personality and a history.

**Guidance:** Discuss what a character is and how authors develop characters for their stories. Read a few children’s books and list the characters and their characteristics. What makes the character complete? How do you learn about the characters? What about that character gives you information to predict how that character may act in a particular situation? If there are no pictures of the character, can you create a mental image of the character?

**Practice:** No matter what sort of fiction you’re writing, you are going to have to populate your story with characters and many of those characters are created from scratch. Think about a character that you want to create. Your character may be based on a character that you discovered in a book you have read, a movie you’ve seen or you may want to create your own character. Think about your character from all perspectives—what does he/she look like, how does he/she walk, what does he/she like, etc. Give your character something that makes him or her different—a problem, a dramatic need, a compulsion.

In order to make your character come together, complete the character description sheet and make a scrapbook of your character.

**Challenge:**

- Identify a story, add your character to the story and describe how the story changes as a result of the inclusion of your character.
- Create your own island with its own geography, climate, people, housing, language, culture, animals, society, transportation modes, economy, where your character might be the happiest, etc.
- Create a character that is your alter-ego—someone you would like to be.

# Create a Character

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

Here is a list of possible items that you may want to consider as you develop your character. You may have other

Character's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Current Age \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Addresses \_\_\_\_\_

Hair Color \_\_\_\_\_

Eye Color \_\_\_\_\_

Glasses/Contacts? \_\_\_\_\_

Height \_\_\_\_\_

Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality(ies) \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Employment \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Sayings \_\_\_\_\_

Habits \_\_\_\_\_

Greatest Flaw \_\_\_\_\_

Once my character ... \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Movie(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Sport \_\_\_\_\_

Musical Instrument \_\_\_\_\_

My character would like to \_\_\_\_\_

Words that describe my character


## Scrapbook of Character

In this activity you will create a scrapbook for your character. A scrapbook is an album or books where you combine photos, memorabilia, and stories to capture a time, place, or event. Some people make elaborate scrapbooks with many different art supplies while other people make books that are much like photo album. You may make your scrapbook with art materials or you may make it electronically. This scrapbook will be a reflection of your character.

Items that you may want to include but are not limited to:

- Baby picture
- Family tree
- Brochure from latest vacation
- Sample titles from the books on his/her bookshelf
- Copy of report card
- Page from diary
- Pictures of friends
- Picture of special possession
- Outfit that he/she wears for special occasions
- Advertisement for a movie you would see
- School graduation picture (if applicable)
- Driver's license (if applicable)
- Passport stamps

# With a Creative Twist ...

Upper Elementary School (Grades 3–5), Language Arts, Creative Thinking

## Objectives

- To identify the major characteristics of fairy tales.
- To use familiar characters, plots, and settings from traditional fairy tales to develop a “fractured fairy tale.”

## Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

Note: This lesson draws on information from *The Magical World of Russian Fairy Tales* at <https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/magical-world-russian-fairy-tales> and From the *Land of Enchantment: Creative Teaching with Fairy Tales* by Jerry Flack (1997) published by Teacher Idea Press.

In this activity students read at least three (3) traditional fairy tales and compare and contrast the elements of the fairy tales to make a list of the key elements of a fairy tale.

**Guidance:** To begin the activity read a fairy tale of your choice to students and ask them to think about what makes it a fairy tale. For example, fairy tales are stories that are passed from one generation to another and often include magical elements such as elves or fairies. Ask students to name elements of a fairy tale and write them on the board. When students have finished naming elements, have them organize the list into categories. Keep this list up while students work on transforming their fairy tale (in the Practice portion of the activity).

The common elements of a fairy tale are:

1. A fairy tale begins with “Once upon a time.”
2. Fairy tales happen in long ago.
3. Fairy tales have fantasy and make-believe in them.
4. Fairy tales have clearly defined good characters versus evil characters.



5. Magic, giants, elves, talking animals, witches, and/or fairies are commonly found in fairy tales.
6. There is always a problem to solve.
7. It might take three tries at solving the problem (as in Jack and the Beanstalk and The Three Little Pigs).
8. A happy ending wraps up the story.
9. Most fairy tales have a theme or teach a lesson.

#### *Typical fairy tale characters*

Typical fairy tale characters often include the following: princess, peasant, youngest sister, cruel older sisters, simpleton, cruel stepmother, giant, witch, talking animals, and magical helpers.

#### *Typical fairy tale settings*

Castles, cottages, mountains, rivers, forests, and gardens are among the settings of fairy tales.

#### *Common fairy tale plots*

- Hero (or heroine) has bad luck
- Hero (or heroine) must perform impossible tasks
- Hero (or heroine) must fight a villain
- Hero (or heroine) meets magical helpers
- Hero (or heroine) is treated badly
- Hero (or heroine) is in danger
- Magic spells
- Transformations—animals turn into humans or humans turn into animals or objects such as trees or buildings
- Villain is punished
- Hero (or heroine) is rewarded with wealth
- Hero (or heroine) is rewarded with a happy marriage
- Things happen in threes (three battles, three tasks)

**Practice:** After reading several fairy tales. Ask students choose one fairy tale and rewrite it. They may want to begin by changing one of the story elements such as the setting, change the roles of the characters, giving one character a special power, or adding something to the story that would change the plot. When students have finished rewriting their stories, collect the stories into a book for the class and make it available for students to read in their free time.

**Challenge:** Fairy tales and their elements lend themselves to other forms of writing. Challenge students to one of the following:

- Students rewrite a fairy tale in a poetic interpretation. For example, students might write a Japanese Haiku about Cinderella.
- Take a classic fairytale and rewrite it in a modern setting.
- Rewrite the fairy tale as a play.
- Take a fairy tale with an ethical issue such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* and write a newspaper editorial as if Goldilocks were guilty of a crime. Support your position.
- Write a sequel to the fairy tale.
- Take the magical or mythical element out of the fairy tale and rewrite the story as a fairy tale set in reality.
- Write a summary of the fairy tale as an acrostic. To write a fairy tale acrostic write the name of the fairy tale vertically one letter at a time and then write descriptions of the tale that begin with the corresponding letter.

For example:

Three little pigs are building their homes.

How will they make themselves safe from the cold?

Reasoning straw would work well indeed

Enter pig one, who gathered some reeds.

Enter pig two; he preferred sticks.

Lively pig three, he went with the bricks.

Into our tale strolls a somewhat bad wolf.

Tasty pig pie is what he dreams of—  
“Too bad these three pigs are as snug as three bugs!  
Let’s think up a way to ruin their huts.”  
Enter a huff and a puff and a blow your house down:

Pig one and pig two—gulped down without sound.  
If a moral is needed for this sad piggy tale:  
Go with the bricks:  
So your walls will not fail.

# Uncovering the Characteristics of Fairy Tales Table

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Fairy Tale:</i> _____	<i>Fairy Tale:</i> _____	<i>Fairy Tale:</i> _____
“Once upon a time.”			
Long ago			
Fantasy and make-believe			
Good characters			
Evil characters			
Royalty			
Magic, giants, elves, talking animals, witches, and/or fairies			
Problem			
Three attempts			
Happy Ending			
Lesson Learned/Theme			

# What Happened to the 4th Little Pig?

## Upper Elementary School (Grades 3–5), Language Arts, Problem Solving

This activity was adapted from the work of Duling, G. (1986). *CPS for the 4th Little Pig*. East Aurora, NY: D.O.K. Publishing. The model for this work comes from The Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem Solving (CPS) Process developed by Alex Osborn and Sidney Parnes.

### Objectives

- To compare and contrast several versions of *The Three Little Pigs*.
- To use Creative Problem Solving (CPS) to identify the problem in the story and add a 4th little pig to the story.

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

Creative Problem Solving (CPS) was originally developed by Alex Osborn and is highly effective model to use to help students develop problem solving strategies. The model has six steps.

The six steps are: mess finding (also known as objective finding), fact-finding, problem-solving, idea-finding, solution-finding, and acceptance-finding. Some people like to use the following acronym for the CPS.

Objective Finding

Fact Finding

Problem Finding

Idea Finding

Solution Finding

Acceptance Finding

In each of the steps, people repeated the brainstorm and select process, focusing on divergent thinking, then convergent thinking, with each step forming the creative foundation for the next.

### ***Mess Finding (Objective Finding)***

Discuss the problem with the class and together brainstorm a list of objectives or goals which you might have for your creative effort. Come to consensus on one or more objectives the class is willing to attempt.

### ***Fact Finding***

Brainstorm all the facts that might even remotely be related to the objective. Make sure that each perspective and participant is represented on the listing. Take some time for the participants to point out which facts they feel are most relevant to the objective and its eventual solution.

- Who is involved?
- What is happening?
- When is it happening?
- Where is it happening?
- Why is it happening?
- How is it happening?
- What is missing?

### ***Problem Finding***

One of the most powerful aspects of creativity is rephrasing the problem definition to one that is both closer to the real problem and that makes more solutions apparent. One technique is to brainstorm different ways to state the problem. Most people recommend that the problem statement be written as, “In What Ways Might We ...” Pay particular attention to changing the verbs and the nouns in the problem statement. Asking “Why?” and “How?” will also result in some interesting problem statements.

### ***Idea-Finding***

In this step, have students brainstorm possible solutions to the problem statement. This step is a very important brainstorming step. Every effort should be made to write down every idea, no

matter how irrelevant it may seem. Often a silly statement or idea will actually trigger a great idea which eventually becomes the solution.

### ***Solution Finding***

In this step, students evaluate the ideas with the greatest potential and select an idea or set of ideas to take action on. One of the most effective methods for this step is to brainstorm the criteria for analyzing possible solutions and selecting the most useful criteria. Students can plug these into a matrix in which every idea is evaluated on every criteria and the judgments combined to select the idea most worth putting into action.

### ***Acceptance Finding***

In this phase, students consider the real world issues of their solution. Are their aspects that make it acceptable or easy to implement? Are there any problems they might run into? The ideas developed in this step are then integrated into the plan, increasing its likeliness of success. Students determine the best strategies for implementing a solution by thinking of the variables and possible ways of addressing them.

### ***Plan of Action***

This step asks students to develop a detailed plan for solving their problem.

**Guidance:** In this activity students will apply CPS to *The Three Little Pigs*. Some book suggestions include *The Three Pigs* by David Wiesner (Clarion, 2001) and *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka (Viking Press, 1989) or any other version of “The Three Little Pigs.” Here is one version of the Three Little Pigs:

There once was an old sow with four little pigs who she sent off to find their fortune. However, what the pigs did not know was that there was a wolf who wanted all of their fortune and he would do anything to get it. The first three pigs each built a house to protect themselves and their fortune. The first little pig built a house of straw and the wolf was able to blow the house down. The second pig built his house out of twigs and the wolf was able to blow the house down. The third little pig build his house of bricks which was the strongest of the houses but this time the

wolf was able to use a bulldozer to flatten this house. What the wolf did not know was that there was a 4th little pig who knew how to stop the wolf from destroying his house and taking his fortune.

What no one knew was that there was a 4th little pig. What did the 4th little pig do?

Using the student activity sheet, have students apply The Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem Solving Process to the story above. When students have finished, have a class discussion about the problems they analyzed and the solutions they developed.

**Practice:** Have the students get into small groups and read another fairy tale such as *Red Riding Hood* or *The Gingerbread Man*. Then ask the students to use CPS to look at the story, select a problem to solve and develop a solution.

**Challenge:** Invite students to apply Creative Problem Solving to a real situation they might face such as going to a new school.



# What Happened to the 4th Little Pig?

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

### Fact Finding

Who is involved?

What is happening?

When is it happening?

Where is it happening?

Why is it happening?

How is it happening?

What is missing?

### **Problem Finding**

State the problem.

### **Idea Finding**

Brainstorm possible solutions.

My ideas to solve this problem are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Solution Finding

First develop a list of criteria by which you can analyze your possible solutions. Then fill in the grid below.

List your ideas and rate them according to the criteria

Idea Criterion	Criterion	Criterion	Criterion	Conclusion

## **Acceptance Finding**

My best idea is

To implement the idea, I need

With this idea, I need to be careful of

## **Plan of Action**

Now take your idea and translate it into a step-by-step set of actions. Be as specific as possible.

# It's All in the Code

## Middle School (Grades 6–8), Language Arts, Critical Thinking

### Objectives

- To use their critical thinking skills to develop a communication code.

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

Codes are a form of puzzle and there are lots of different types of codes. The oldest means of sending secret messages is to simply conceal them by one trick or another. Cryptograms are kinds of codes where texts, sayings, quotations, proverbs, etc., have been coded by substituting each letter with a different letter. For instance, if T=A, H=B, and E=C, then the word “the” would appear as “abc” throughout the puzzle.

Introduce this activity by telling students that secret codes are the stuff of spies and secret agents. There is something fascinating about sending and receiving messages in a code that others can't read. Ask students, “Do you and your friends have your own codes for IM or passing notes in class?” “Are you fascinated with code talking?”

There are secret codes and non-secret codes. For example, spies use secret codes that people will not easily understand. Secret codes may be one part or two part. In one-part code, the plaintext, or the words that you want to keep and their code equivalents are in alphabetical (by letter) or sequential (by number) order. As a result, you only need one codebook to send or receive a message because all the code and plaintext words are in order and easy to find.

In a two-part code, you actually have two separate codebooks. In the encoding codebook, the plaintext words are in alphabetical order but the codes listed to them are random.

An example of a non-secret code is the ISBN (International Standard Book Number). The ISBN is like a fingerprint for a book. Each publisher has their own prefix and that prefix tells you who

published that book. The numbers that follow the prefix are the individual numbers for that book. If you want to order a book, the easiest way for a bookstore or library to get the book is with the ISBN.

For example the ISBN for *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak (HarperCollins, 1963) is 0060254920. If you gave that number to a bookstore, you would tell them what to order by using the number.

A cipher is a system where every letter of your message is replaced by another letter or symbol.

**Guidance:** Divide the class into small groups and have each students research a particular codes or ciphers to find out different methods of developing codes and why people use codes. Each group should present their findings to the class.

The following websites offer information on codes and codebreaking and are a good place for students to start:

- **Introduction to Codes, Ciphers, and Code Breaking:**

[https://vc.airvectors.net/ttcode\\_01.html](https://vc.airvectors.net/ttcode_01.html)

- **Codes and Ciphers:** <http://www.otr.com/ciphers.html>

- **Cryptogram Czar:** <https://www.icryptograms.com>

- **Morse Code Translator:** <https://dnschecker.org/morse-code-translator.php>

This site lets you type in your message and translates it into Morse Code. You can even play an audioclip of the message.

- **Your Name in Hieroglyphics:** <https://www.penn.museum/cgi/hieroglyphsreal.php>

Type in your name and see it in Hieroglyphics.

- **Cyberchase: Crack the Code:** [http://r53-vip-soup.pbskids.org/cyberchase/webisode\\_2/game0.html](http://r53-vip-soup.pbskids.org/cyberchase/webisode_2/game0.html)

A companion to the PBS series, Cyberchase, this site contains multiple interactivities, downloadable video clips, and background information on the characters. Watch Digit in his own webisode, and then try to crack his code in order to save the cyber citizens of Valussa.

After the presentations, have a class discussion about the importance of codes and what kind of information they would want to encode.

**Practice:** After having studied various code systems, have each student develop a systematic code to send messages. Ask each student to write a message in code and pass it to a classmate to decode it.

**Challenge:** Computer languages are actually codes. Research computer technology to find out why programmers have developed different codes.

### **Reference**

Janeczko, J. (2004). *Top secret: A Handbook of codes, ciphers, and secret writing*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. ISBN 9780763629724

# **This Is Your Life:**

## **Creating an Autobiography**

### **Lesson 1**

**Middle School (Grades 6–8), Language Arts, Critical Thinking**

#### **Objectives**

- To use the critical thinking skills of ranking, prioritizing, and sequencing to determine what qualifies as a significant event.

#### **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

This lesson is the first in a series of 3 lessons that guides students through the process of creating an autobiography. These lessons help students acquire and practice critical thinking, problem solving, and creative thinking skills as they rank, prioritize, and sequence events of their lives. Students will generate a list of important people, events, and activities in their lives, decide whether or not to include them in an autobiography, and place them in chronological order.

**Guidance:** Begin the lesson by discussing with the class what an autobiography is: that in an auto-biography the author tells the story—the important people, places, and events—of his or her life, usually in chronological order. You may want to share examples of autobiographies and biographies with students and discuss elements that are important to the genre. In addition, you might guide students to the following websites:

**Biography Maker:** <http://www.fno.org/bio/QUEST.HTM>

Students move through the process of collecting information to write a biography of a person of their choice.



**My Hero:** <https://myhero.com>

This site honors heroes from all walks of life, including teachers, peacemakers, scientists, artists, and many others. Users can submit information about their own heroes.

**Biography:** <https://www.biography.com>

Users can search over 25,000 biographies.

**Practice:** Pass out the student activity sheet, This is Your Life: Lesson 1. Using the chart on the activity sheet to help them organize their ideas, students should create a list of the significant events, people, and activities in their life. They should note the name of the person, event, or activity, whether or not it was significant, and why. After they have generated the list, they should go back through the chart and mark the items that they want to include in their autobiography. When they are assessing which events to include, they should think about the criteria they want to use to determine what items to include.

Ranking is a form of sequencing. Ranking involves sequencing items or actions by quantity and/or by quality. Ranking may be based on a specific criteria or it can be based on combining multiple criteria. Prioritizing is a form of ranking in which the highest ranked item is the most important.

Students must decide the purpose for ranking. Once the purpose has been determined, the criteria for ranking, must be established. This criteria determines the guidelines which the students use to rank the items. Students list the items in the organizer in the appropriate position, lowest to highest, according to the criteria. Ranking often involves individual values and judgments about the relative importance of the criteria used in determining the rank of specific items. Therefore, it is important for students to give reasons for the rank orders they have selected. Verbalizing their rankings helps students think about their thinking and clarify their choices.

Ranking helps students prioritize items based on specific criteria, provides students opportunities to use evaluative thinking skills, and helps students develop the relationships between items being ranked.

To help students determine what to include in their autobiography, you may want to ask the following questions or post them on the board:

- What are your earliest childhood memories?
- What are some of the funniest things that ever happened to you? What are some of the most memorable things that ever happened to you?
- What are some of your memories of pets?
- Who are some of the people who have played a significant role in your life?
- What are interesting or important events that happened in school?
- What are interesting or important events that happened to your family? Friends?
- What are some of your happiest memories?

After determining the significant elements of their lives, students will then need to put them in chronological order. Students can create their own timeline or use the sequencing chart on the activity sheet.

**Challenge:** Invite students to read a biography or autobiography about someone who interests them and make a time line of the significant events in that person's life.

# This Is Your Life: Creating Your Autobiography

## LESSON 1

### STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

In an autobiography, the author tells the story of his or her life. Most autobiographies are told in chronological order, and they usually includes people, animals, places, or events that were important to the author. Using the chart below, create a list of the significant events, people, and activities in your life. Note the name of the person, event, or activity, whether or not it was significant, and why. After you have generated your list, go back through it and determine which events, people, and activities you would like to include in your autobiography.

Events	People	Activities	Significant (yes or no)	Why was it significant?	Include in autobiography? (yes or no)



# Concrete Poems

## Middle School (Grades 6–8), Language Arts, Creative Thinking

### Objectives

- To explore their creative thinking skills of elaboration and modification to create concrete poems.
- To explore the relationship between the structure and meaning of a poem.

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

A concrete poem is a poem that forms a picture of the topic or follows the contours of a shape that is suggested by the topic. In other words, it is a collage of words, letters, or symbols that creates meaning both by what it says and by how it looks.

Concrete poems are different from regular poems because they are about both the words and the shape of the poem. Concrete poems may be a single word that becomes a poem because of the way it is presented on the page or it may be a selection of words that is arranged in a particular shape.

A concrete poem can be based on an abstract concept as well as a material object. As early as the 17th century, poets experimented with concrete poems. George Herbert, an English poet, wrote *Easter Wings*, for instance, which looks like a pair of wings on the page.

*Easter Wings* by George Herbert

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,  
Though foolishly he lost the same,  
Decaying more and more  
Till he became

Most poor:  
With thee  
O let me rise,  
As larks, harmoniously,  
And sing this day thy victories:  
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did begin  
And still with sicknesses and shame  
Thou didst so punish sin  
That I became  
Most thin.  
With thee  
Let me combine,  
And feel this day thy victory;  
For, if I imp my wing on thine,  
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

(Source: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44361/easter-wings>)

**Guidance:** Ask students what they know about poetry and the forms that it comes in. Have students use the Internet or another reference source to look up Haiku, Tanka, Sonnet, Villanelle, Sestina, Limerick, Ballad, Blank Verse, and Free Verse. Each of these will give you examples of a well-established form. Form may refer only to the form of print on the page as in concrete poetry or rhyme pattern as in a couplet or sonnet.

Tell them that there are many different forms for poems and that while some poems depend on words alone, other poems combine words and images. Explain to students that they are going to have the opportunity to explore ideas that lend themselves to a type of poem called a concrete poem. This opportunity provides a chance for students to explore their communication in both words and images. Unlike other forms of poems, concrete poems need to be seen and not just read aloud. Therefore, this type of poetry must be pleasing to the ear and the eye.

Use the first fifteen minutes of class to review the definition of concrete poetry and share some examples of concrete poem. Students should address the question, “How does the poet’s use of shape and image enhance meaning?” Some questions students may want to consider are:

- Will the topic that I chose lend itself to words and shapes?
- How might I use the shape to add emphasis?
- What are the goals for the poem? What do I want to share?

In order to help the students understand the form, have them take someone else’s poem and turn it into a concrete poem. For example, have the students turn *A Weak Poem* by Roger McCough (or another of your choosing) into a concrete poem.

**Practice:** Ask students to write concrete poems based on a visual experience. Some suggestions might be the rising sun, a cat hopping across a fence, or a pirouetting ballerina. Invite students to use a word processing program to experiment easily with the position and lengths of words within their chosen forms. If students choose, they can use a drawing application to create outlines of their poems’ shapes and words can then be fitted to that form. Remind students that they can copy, cut and paste the poem several times throughout the document if they want to experiment with different wording or shape.

You may then want to ask students to compose a concrete poem with one of the following concepts as its subject: justice, fear, beauty, elation, or evil. After they have completed the exercise, question students about why they chose a particular shape, sentence, or phrase structure to express their concept.

**Challenge:** Invite students to take a topic that they are studying and create a concrete poem to illustrate their understanding of the topic. This works well with mathematics, science, and social studies topics as well. For example, students might take a piece of text that they have read and identify the big idea in the text and create a concrete poem to illustrate the big idea. Remind students that they want to take advantage of the shape and images of the poem as well as the words.

## Resources

*A Poke in the I: A Collection of Concrete Poems* selected by Paul Janeczko, illustrated by Chris Raschka (Candlewick Press, 2001) is a picture book that features a variety of concrete poems. *Technically, It's Not My Fault* by John Grandits (Clarion, 2004) is a new collection of concrete poems.

Examples of concrete poems may be found at

<http://oneteachersadventures.blogspot.com/2017/06/concrete-poetry-where-poetry-meets-art.html>

More information on Concrete Poems may be found at:

- <https://gmsela7poetry.weebly.com/concrete-poems.html>
- <http://www.baymoon.com/~ariadne/form/concrete.htm>



# Concrete Poems

## EXAMPLE

### Swan and Shadow

by John Hollander

Dusk  
Above the  
water hang the  
loud  
flies  
Here  
O so  
gray  
then  
What      A pale signal will appear  
When      Soon before its shadow fades  
Where      Here in this pool of opened eye  
In us      No Upon us As at the very edges  
of where we take shape in the dark air  
this object bares its image awakening  
ripples of recognition that will  
brush darkness up into light  
even after this bird this hour both drift by atop the perfect sad instant now  
already passing out of sight  
toward yet-untroubled reflection  
this image bears its object darkening  
into memorial shades Scattered bits of  
light      No of water Or something across  
water      Breaking up No Being regathered  
soon      Yet by then a swan will have  
gone      Yes out of mind into what  
vast  
pale  
hush  
of a  
place  
past  
sudden dark as  
if a swan  
sang

Source: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=30477>

## *A Weak Poem*

Roger McCough

Oh dear, this poem is very weak.  
It can hardly stand up straight.  
Which comes from eating junk food  
And going to bed too late.

Transform this poem into a concrete poem using the words and adding shape.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write a concrete poem based on the provided text.

# Step in the Picture

## Middle School (Grades 6–8), Language Arts, Creative Thinking

### Objectives

- Students will develop creative thinking abilities by putting themselves into a famous work of art.

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

In this lesson students will choose a work of art by a well-known artist and they will write a creative story as if they stepped into the picture. How do paintings tell stories? Visual artists, like authors, make art to communicate. While authors use words to tell a story, visual artists use a wide variety of materials (or media). In this activity students learn to “read” the story in a painting and use their language to tell it.

**Guidance:** For example in James Jacques Joseph Tissot’s Hide and Seek (1877) that may be viewed at <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.56669.html>, a girl shouts, “Ready or not, here I come.” She is inviting you to wonder what she is doing and where she is going. If you were to enter this picture what would your role be? Would you be a character in hiding or would you be a seeker? What adventures could you have with this character?

**Practice:** Have students look at art images in books or on Internet and choose one image that they think they would like to step into. They may need a few days to look at different pieces of art. After students have chosen a piece of art that they would like to step into, they need to:

Describe it: What do they see? Who is in the picture? Where is it set?

Compare it: What is it similar to?

Associate it: What does it remind you of?

Analyze it: Tell how it was made (Use artistic terms).

Apply it: Think about how it reflects life? For example, in the Tissot painting, how could hide and seek be played in other environments.

**Challenge:** Have students study an artist such as Vincent Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo, Jean Dubuffet, Mary Cassatt, Georgia O’Keefem, etc., and choose two-three pieces of art and create a story that takes a character from one piece of art through an adventure that is set in all the pieces of art.

Examine a work of art for an artist’s style, intent, and background. Research and write the history of the piece of art. Write a creative story prompted by a painting. Orally present an artist and painting in an interactive format. Create their own “storytelling” painting in their chosen artist’s style.

### *Websites for Exploring Works of Art*

Metropolitan Museum of Art	<a href="https://www.metmuseum.org">https://www.metmuseum.org</a>
Philadelphia Museum of Art	<a href="https://www.philamuseum.org">https://www.philamuseum.org</a>
Museum of Modern Art	<a href="https://www.moma.org">https://www.moma.org</a>
National Gallery	<a href="https://www.nga.gov">https://www.nga.gov</a>
Denver Museum of Art	<a href="https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en">https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en</a>
Cleveland Art Museum	<a href="https://www.clevelandart.org">https://www.clevelandart.org</a>
Los Angeles County Museum of Art	<a href="https://www.lacma.org">https://www.lacma.org</a>
Louvre	<a href="https://www.louvre.fr/louvre.htm">https://www.louvre.fr/louvre.htm</a>
Getty	<a href="https://www.getty.edu">https://www.getty.edu</a>
St. Louis Art Museum	<a href="https://www.slam.org">https://www.slam.org</a>
Seattle Art Museum	<a href="https://www.seattleartmuseum.org">https://www.seattleartmuseum.org</a>
Nelson Atkins Museum	<a href="https://www.nelson-atkins.org">https://www.nelson-atkins.org</a>
For information on artists visit:	<a href="https://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/">https://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/</a>

### *Books*

In addition to any art book or art exhibit book, these two titles have reproductions of art:

*Art Fraud Detective* by Anna Nilsen (Kingfisher, 2000)

*The Great Art Scandal: Solve the Crime and Save the Show* by Anna Nilsen (Kingfisher, 2003)

*Katie and the Mona Lisa* by James Mayhew (Orchard Books, 1999)

*Katie and the Sunflower* by James Mayhew (Orchard Books, 2001)

*Katie Meets the Impressionists* by James Mayhew (Orchard Books, 1999)

# Tackling Writer's Block

## Middle School (Grades 6–8), Language Arts, Creative Thinking

### Objectives

- Help writers develop a set of strategies that will encourage and stimulate ideas. In this lesson students are using a form of brainstorming and applying those ideas to write a creative story.

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

Writers often have methods that have helped them to find inspiration, develop self-discipline, and hone their writing. This lesson will address strategies to overcome writer's block during the writing process. Some of these strategies may also provide inspiration for writing.

While some people instinctively have ideas and know how to put them on paper, other writers may experience some form of writer's block when they write. Writer's block is when you are having trouble putting your ideas on paper.

When you find that writing becomes a challenge, it may be because you want the writing to be perfect, it may be a result of you feeling that you do not have all the information you need, or it may be that you do not know how to organize the information.

**Guidance:** While there are a number of strategies to overcome writer's block, some are considered to be more effective than others.

Four less effective strategies to help students tackle writer's block are:

#### 1. Trial and error

Since our short-term memory is limited, trying to juggle in your head all the possible ways to phrase something usually means we repeat the same rejected phrases over and over. One way to avoid this is to make a quick list of alternative phrases.

## 2. Insisting on a perfect draft

When you expect the perfect words, the level of judgment may shut you down.

## 3. Waiting for inspiration

There are times when inspiration just happens and other times when it never occurs spontaneously.

## 4. Words looking for an idea

This strategy is when you start a sentence in hope that you will be able to finish it. But these sentence starters may back you into a position that does not help you.

Examples include:

- On the other hand ...
- In order to ...
- As a result of ....

(Read further from <https://www.uis.edu/learning-hub/writing-resources/handouts/learning-hub/writers-block>)

Here are seven generally effective tips to help students overcome writer's block:

### 1. Begin in the Middle

Start writing at whatever point you like. If you want to begin in the middle, fine. Leave the introduction or first section until later. The reader will never know that you wrote the paper "backwards." Besides, some writers routinely save the introduction until later when they have a clearer idea of what the main idea and purpose will be.

### 2. Freewriting/Brainstorming

When you're not just blocked, when you're stonewalled, try freewriting. Sit down for ten minutes and write down everything you can think of about your topic. The object is to write without stopping for the whole ten minutes. If you can't think of anything to say, write "blah,

blah, blah” over and over. If other things occur to you as you write, go ahead and record them, even if they are not directly related to your topic. These distractions may be part of what is keeping you blocked.

Freewriting helps you to nudge “inspiration.” However, the main goal for freewriting is to get you started. Most of what you write in those ten minutes will go in the recycling bin, but you’ll be warmed up and your serious writing should go more smoothly.

Brainstorming resembles freewriting but it is more goal-directed. In brainstorming you have the chance to put on paper everything you know about the topic. Then allow yourself to jot down ideas for a set amount of time without censoring any possibilities and without striving for perfect prose. When the “storm” has passed you can rearrange ideas, put thoughts into complete sentences, edit and polish.

The objectives and rules for brainstorming are:

1. Set a specific amount of time and focus on generating as many ideas as you can.
2. Don’t judge the ideas—just list them.
3. Encourage wild and exaggerated ideas
4. Go for quantity, the more ideas the better
5. Build on and extend some of the ideas that you generate (one idea may lead to another).

You may want to visit the Brainstorming Toolbox to check out the brainstorming software (<https://www.brainstorming.co.uk/toolbox/brainstormingtoolbox.html>)

### 3. Talk the Paper

“Talk” the paper to someone—your teacher, a friend, a roommate, a tutor in the Writing Lab. Just pick someone who’s willing to give you fifteen to thirty minutes to talk about the topic and whose main aim is to help you start writing. Have the person take notes while you talk or tape your conversation. Talking will be helpful because you’ll probably be more natural and spontaneous in speech than in writing. Your listener can ask questions and guide you as you

speak, and you'll feel more as though you're telling someone about something than completing an assignment.

#### 4. Make an Audio Recording of the Paper

Talk into a tape recorder or a speaker on a computer that has audio recording capacity. It is often less scary to tell a story than to type it out. After recording the story, transcribe it.

#### 5. Change the Audience

Pretend that you're writing to a child, a close friend, a parent, a person who sharply disagrees with you, or someone who's new to the subject and needs to have you explain your paper's topic slowly and clearly. Changing the audience can clarify your purpose. (Who am I writing to when I explain how to change the oil in a car? That guy down the hall who's always asking everyone for help.) This step may also make the writing less daunting.

#### 6. What I Really Mean Is (WIRMI)

When you're stuck in a quagmire trying to find the perfect phrase, switch to What I Really Mean Is and just say it the way you think it. Once you know what you mean, it is easier to refine the phrasing.

#### 7. Play a Role

Pretend you are someone else writing the paper. For instance, you might be a famous person in history or a character in a story.

**Practice:** Students are asked to:

- Make a list
- Find a need
- Eavesdrop
- Consult the news
- Set realistic goals
- Move to another location
- Change your point of view



- Create a conflict or tension between characters
- Rearrange the ideas that you have already written
- Look at a photograph and describe the story as if the photograph came to life
- Open up the dictionary and choose a word to incorporate into what you are writing
- Combine elements of the story
- Eliminate words
- Zoom in and out of the story
- Create a unique name for a place, character, etc.

List adapted from an idea from Epel, N. (1998). *A tool kit for writers*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

While some students may have ideas for what to write, other students may want to extend from a story starter. For a list of 100 creative writing prompts visit

<https://storywritingacademy.com/creative-writing-prompts-middle-school/>.

Here are three examples of story starters.

- “That will show them,” I thought as I hammered the last nail into place.
- Her eyes were glazed with a fever, making her \_\_\_\_\_.
- It’s hard to know what a computer will do when you plug it in during a thunderstorm ....

A list of 1000 story starters is available at <http://www.timesaversforteachers.com/teacher-ebooks/1000-writing-prompts/>.

**Challenge:** Read authors who talk about writer’s block, and talk to people who write. Here is an example of what one author, Anne Lamott does to overcome writer’s block.

The author Ann Lamott once suggested to overcome the feeling of being overwhelmed by a project that seems unfathomable is to start out by writing just what you can see through a 1” picture frame. She even keeps a 1” frame on her desk to remind her that she doesn’t have to write everything about the character or story all at one time—just what she can see through the frame.

The 1” frame idea is a way of calming your fears about not being up to the task and allowing you to focus yourself on a do-able starting place. For instance, at this moment, you may not be up to creating an entire new planet, complete with history, ecology and a complex alien society, but you might be able to write a paragraph describing one particular alien eating what looks like a lizard kebab on a street corner one particular rainy afternoon.

Find a friend who is also having writer’s block and have him/her give you feedback on the writing that you are having difficulty with and you provide feedback on their writing. Another idea to take the beginning of their work and continue it to see where it leads.

# **This Is Your Life:**

## **Creating an Autobiography**

### **Lesson 2**

**Middle School (Grades 6–8), Language Arts, Problem Solving**

#### **Objectives**

- To use problem solving strategies to make sure that the autobiography includes the elements that make a story interesting.
- To create a storyboard.

#### **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

A good story brings to life a character, a setting, a problem, a climax, and opportunities for the reader to predict what might happen next. This lesson encourages students to look at the list of events, activities, and people that they generated in Lesson 1 and determine whether or not they contribute to a good story. This lesson also introduces students to storyboards, a technique many writers, illustrators, and movie directors use to map out a path for their work.

**Guidance:** Find a good news article on a famous person and read it to the students. Tell the students that the article is very much like a good story and ask them to identify parts of the story.

You can guide the discussion using the following questions:

- Who was the main character?
- What was the setting?
- What was one problem that the character faced?
- What was the most exciting part of the story?
- Where there any things that surprised you?
- What do you predict might happen to this person in future?

**Practice:** Pass out the student activity sheet, This Is Your Life: Part 2. Ask student to review the list of items that they want to include in their autobiography (generated in Lesson 1). Does the list include the elements that would make the story interesting and insightful? Are their elements that are missing or might add to the story? If so, what might that be and how could they honestly incorporate it into the autobiography?

Based on whether they think their original list of events, activities, and people will make a good story, students should make modifications to their sequencing charts or timelines that they created in Lesson 1. Each student should then take the items for their autobiography and map out the progression of the autobiography by noting one event, person, or activity for each quadrant in the storyboard on the student activity sheet. They may not use all of the frames in the storyboard or they may need to add more frames to complete their autobiography.

**Challenge:** Ask students to identify each of the components of a good story in a biography that they read.

# THIS IS YOUR LIFE: CREATING YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY

## LESSON 2 STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

Take the items for your autobiography (refer to the activity sheets for Lesson 1) and map out the progression of your autobiography by sketching one event, person, or activity for each quadrant in the storyboard. You may not need to use all of the frames in the storyboard. If you need to add more frames to complete your autobiography, draw them on the back of this sheet.

1.	2.	3.	4.
5.	6.	7.	8.
9.	10.	11.	12.
13.	14.	15.	16.
17.	18.	19.	20.

# **This Is Your Life:**

## **Creating an Autobiography**

### **Lesson 3**

**Middle School (Grades 6–8), Language Arts, Creative Thinking**

#### **Objectives**

- To use creative thinking skills to translate significant events into images for a visual autobiography.
- To generate alternative ways of presenting information.

#### **Materials**

- Photographs (students will need to bring them from home)
- Art supplies (glue, markers, paint, colored paper, etc.)
- Magazines
- Catalogs
- Computer and software that students can use to create images (optional)
- Printer (optional)
- Internet Access (optional)

#### **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

In this lesson students visually interpret the list of events, people, and activities that have shaped their lives to create their own visual autobiography.

**Guidance:** To begin the lesson, share with the class pictures of famous people and ask them to list all the facts they can determine from looking at the image. Discuss all the information that students can gather from looking at the picture. This process will help students understand that images tell stories. Ask the students to defend what they see in the image.

Talk with students about that fact that pictures tell stories and explain that in this lesson they will use images to create their autobiography. Although students may have photographs of some of the significant events in their lives, they may not have images for all the events, people, or activities and will need to find (on the Internet, in magazines or books, etc.) or make images that tell their own particular story.

**Practice:** Students should use the storyboard that they created in Lesson 2 to guide the progression of their visual autobiography. Looking at each frame of the storyboard, students should decide what kind of image they want to use and where they will find it. Some students may have photographs that they can include, but they may need to supplement the photos with text [**add more information about how students can incorporate text into their autobiographies?**] and additional images to tell the complete story. For example, they may also choose to use a magazine image of a birthday party rather than a photograph from their actual birthday party. Encourage students to be flexible in their choice of visual images; they should consider abstract images as well as realistic ones. Students can also create their own images using any art technique they wish (sketches, collages, pastels, etc.)

Each student should complete his or her own visual autobiography. Rather than being seen as a photo album of separate visual images, the visual autobiography should tell a story complete with emotions and interactions.

**Challenge:** You can invite students to re-create autobiographies in other formats:

- Audio tape, Video, Interactive CD
- Chart of your life
  - Timeline of Events
  - A chart of how your family and friends have connected and affected you
- Biopoem: a poem that tells the important information about you and your life
- Autobiographical Dance: your life story in movement
- Autobiographical Song: music and lyrics that create a picture of your life.

Alternatively, some students may wish to read and compare and contrast two different autobiographies. What are the similarities? What are the differences?



# What is the Problem?

## Middle School (Grades 6–8), Language Arts, Problem Solving

### Objectives

- Students will develop an understanding of plot as problem and learn to identify the different plots as they are presented.

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

Problem solving is the ability to identify a problem, examine many alternatives for a solution, and choose a solution that meets the established criteria to address the problem. All good stories revolve around a problem.

The problem of the story is also called the plot. Many times characters in book or story face conflicts with others, ideas, or situations. There are five major story plots that each center on a problem. They are as follows: Man versus Man, Man versus Society, Man versus Himself, Man versus Nature, and Man versus Fate.

*Man versus Man* is when the characters can have trouble with family, friends, or strangers. With whom do you struggle—your parents, a sibling, a teacher, or perhaps a bully? You’ve probably had personal experience with this type of conflict.

*Man versus Society* is when a character has problems with a whole group of people, or who is an outcast, or who fights prejudice or unfair laws. *When Darren began hanging out with an ex-con, the whole town turned against him.*

*Man versus Himself* is about the internal struggle of making a decision or choice. For example, if your character has a fear of large animals but dreams of being in a rodeo, then the conflict will involve overcoming that fear and chasing the dream.

*Man versus Nature* would be when a character is trying to escape a fire, or cross a desert, or get off an island when their plane crashed.

The story revolves around how the character(s) solves the problem. Some problems are between characters such as Little Red Riding against the Wolf; others are between a character and the environment, character against society, and characters against themselves.

**Guidance:** The steps to problem solve are:

1. State the basic problem.
2. List as many solutions as you can.
3. Look at the possible solutions and rate them in terms of how well they solve the problem without creating additional problems. This is looking at the pros and cons of the potential solution.
4. Determine what you want the solution to do.
5. Choose the solution that solves your problem.

**Practice:** Students will read a text and identify the problem in the text, identify what kind of problem it is, and suggest possible ways to solve the problem.

For example in Cinderella the problem is that Cinderella does not have anything to wear to the ball.

**Challenge:**

- Students will apply problem solving techniques to a piece of non-fiction.

# What's the Problem?

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

Story \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_ Illustrator \_\_\_\_\_

Character(s)
--------------

Problem
---------

Options the character can take

What might happened if this option is chosen?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Choose the best option and describe what will happen next.

# Debating the Facts

**High School (Grades 9–12), Language Arts, Critical Thinking**

## **Objectives**

- To be able to discern fact from opinion.

## **Materials**

- Copies of a news article

## **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

Identifying fact and opinion is the ability to distinguish between statements in an argument that can be proven and those statements that reflect personal beliefs or judgments.

Debates provide an opportunity for students to carefully examine the different viewpoints of an issue. Debate help listeners gather information from two sides of an issue so that he or she may make an informed decision on the debate topic. Debates are also a way for people to express their opinions and try to persuade others to agree with their position.

Before beginning this activity, choose a news article that includes a both fact as well as the author's opinion.

**Guidance:** To help students practice identifying fact from opinion, pass at a copy of the news article you have chosen. Ask students to underline the facts in the article and circle the opinions. After students have finished, have a class discussion about what students have underlined and what they have circled.

**Practice:** As a class, have students generate a list of topics that might make a good debate. In order to generate the list, students may use news sources such as a newspaper, news program, and/or the Internet.

Have students then develop criteria for analyzing what would make a good debate topic for the class such as, “Easily Accessible Information on Topic” and “Strong Interest in Topic.” Students should apply the criteria to the topics to narrow down and choose which topic would be the best topic for a class debate.

Have students choose which of the two sides of the debate topic they will want to be on. Each group should then research the topic, identifying key points they wish to make during the debate. Have students keep a list of which points are fact and which are opinion.

**Challenge:** Hold the class debate. You may wish to invite judges and/or other classes to watch the debate.

This lesson is adapted from:

Parks, S., & Black, H. (1990). *Book II: Organizing thinking*. Pacific Grove, CA: Critical thinking Pres and software, 91–121.

# Facts and Opinions

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

Topic \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of the Scenario

Facts and Sources for that information

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Fact</b>	<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Reasoning</b>

# Diplomatic Dinner: Table Talk and Beyond

**High School (Grades 9–12), Language Arts, Critical Thinking**

## Objectives

- Students will read short biographies or synopsis of people who have been leaders in their fields, made a significant contribution in one or more fields, or who have made a difference.
- Students plan a mock dinner party with 8–12 people whom they have chosen.
- Students use their decision-making and planning abilities to design.

## Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

In this activity students will plan a diplomatic dinner of very important people. Students will study the biographies of famous people for the purpose of putting together a dinner party of great minds. After reviewing the biographies of these people students will choose 8–12 people whom they would like to invite to a dinner party. Students will then use the skills of decision-making and planning to plan a dinner party for the people whom they would like to invite to their diplomatic dinner.

## Resources

- Print and non-print materials (as many as can be obtained): biographies, news items, diaries, photographs, public records, maps, charts, art works, encyclopedia entries, faxes, personal communication, artifacts, memorabilia.
- Samples of dinner invitations, menus, seating charts, and other items that event planners use.

Internet Information Sources: <https://www.biography.com>

Database of 25,000 people—past and present from the A & E archives: <https://amillionlives.com>

Links to thousands of biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, letters, narratives, oral histories and more: <https://gardenofpraise.com>



Biographies of famous leaders: <https://achievement.org>

Biographies of achievers of all fields from around the world.

**Guidance:** Decision-making is the ability to decide or form a fixed intention. Through a systematic process, alternatives are examined in order to select one to solve a problem or reach a goal. Through teaching the decision-making process, students learn how to make choices based on examination of alternatives in terms of defined criteria. Decision-making is a skill students will use throughout life.

The steps for decision-making are:

1. State the problem or goals.
2. List alternatives to the situation.
3. Establish criteria by which to examine the alternatives.
4. Rank alternatives according to criteria.
5. Choose the best alternative.
6. Evaluate choice: Defend your decision by giving several reasons for your choice.

Planning is a method that helps you develop a step by step process to arrive at a solution to a problem, develop a strategy to accomplish a goals, teach someone to complete a task, plan for future events or to improve a situation. In order to plan you need to be able to:

1. Identify the project and provide enough details to explain what is being accomplished.
2. List the necessary materials to carry out the task.
3. List the steps necessary to complete the task. Choose the order in which those tasks need to be completed.
4. Identify any problems or difficulties that might occur.

In this lesson, decision-making and planning are integral to the successful outcome.

**Practice:** Students are to make a list of people whom they want to study. Students will then research each of these people to identify the basic information on each person including (but not limited to):

- Name
- When they lived
- Significance—why they are considered to be very important people
- Accomplishments
- Challenges
- Interests/Hobbies
- Personal habits
- Likes and dislikes

After researching the potential people to invite to the dinner party, students will then plan an evening for their guests.

**Challenge:**

- Plan an event for notable people from another century or from a book that you have read.
- Write a biography of a person whom you admire. Visit <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-biography> for the steps to write a biography.
- Visit <https://myhero.com>, a website where you can submit a story about your own hero.
- In the book *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride: Based on a True Story* Ram Muñoz Ryan (Scholastic Press, 1999) tells a fictional story about Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt that she wrote after reading about their friendship. Choose two of the people at your dinner party and based on the facts create a story about an event that may have happened.

# Diplomatic Dinner Planning List

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

The goal is for you to research 10–20 famous people, (past or present) who you will invite to an imaginary dinner party. In considering whom you will invite you want to plan for an engaging evening complete with enlightening conversation, fabulous food, and entertainment.

1. Who will you invite?
2. What will the invitation look like?
3. What are the considerations that have to be made to accommodate the guests? For example, are there any restrictions on what people can eat or what they can do?
4. How might the philosophies and interests of these people influence what you plan?
5. What will you serve and how will you serve it?
  - a. Types of food?
    - i. Courses?
    - ii. Dessert?
    - iii. Beverages?
  - b. Service-seated meal? Buffet? Picnic?
6. How will people be seated?
  - a. Types of tables? Round, square, rectangle?
  - b. Who will sit next to whom?
7. What will be the entertainment?
  - a. Movie
  - b. Play
  - c. Music
  - d. Party Games
  - e. Other

# News of the Future

## High School (Grades 9–12), Language Arts, Critical Thinking

### Objectives

- To acquire and develop the critical thinking skills of analysis and prediction by investigating current news topics and thinking about the future impact of that news information.

### Materials

- Variety of print and media news sources (newspapers, magazines, television, Internet)

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

Have students look at or read current news from several sources. Discuss why these items are newsworthy. Tell the students that they will analyze the news and determine what its impact on the future might be.

**Guidance:** Ask students to make a list of current news stories and determine which news stories will affect the future. Students will have to think critically about what makes an important news story (the level of impact) and what the future holds. While there are many news stories every day, some of them may not affect the future as much as others. For example, have students brainstorm a list of news stories that seemed important at the time, but that actually had very little impact on how people lived their lives. You can also ask students to brainstorm a list of news stories that had a strong impact on events that occurred later.

**Practice:** Have students read and/or watch current news stories. Pass out the student activity sheet. Using the chart on the activity sheet, ask students to list the news articles and identify their impact on the present and their prediction for how this news might affect the future in 5 years, 10 years, 25 years? Students should provide support for their answers.

**Challenge:** Invite students to work together as a class to create a full newscast hour or newspaper that includes different types of news stories occurring in 5, 10, or 25 years. Allow students to choose the role they will play in the production of the news program or newspaper (writers, copy editors, production specialists, layout specialists, etc.). Remind students that their interest in a particular topic does not mean that everyone is interested in that same topic. As they are choosing stories to include, they need to consider what makes the topic news worthy and who their audience might be. The news program or newspaper might include segments on current events, people in the news, lifestyle issues, technology, sports, and education.

# NEWS OF THE FUTURE

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

Using the chart below, list news articles and identify their impact on the present and your prediction for how this news might affect the future in 5 years, 10 years, 25 years. You should be able to provide support for your answers.

<b>Article/Event</b>	<b>Current Impact</b>	<b>Prediction of Future Impact</b>	<b>Why?</b>

# Idea Transformation

## High School (Grades 9–12), Language Arts, Creative Thinking

### Objectives

- Students will explore the creative problem solving strategy of SCAMPER to generate a way to come up with new items and ideas.

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

SCAMPER is an acronym that stands for Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify/Minify/Magnify, Put to other uses, Eliminate, Rearrange/Reverse. This is a very useful technique to help students generate new ideas or create new products. This technique can also be used to help students understand the role of literary elements.

**Guidance:** In order to provide students with an understanding of SCAMPER, have them practice using the creative problem solving strategy to transform a common product such as a camera, book bag, television, bicycle, shoe, cardboard box, museum, etc.

Substitute

Combine

Adapt

Modify/Minify/Magnify

Put to other uses

Eliminate

Rearrange/Reverse

### Substitute

Who else can do it?

What can be used instead?

Can you use other ingredients or materials?

Can you use another source of power, another place, another process?  
Can you use another tone of voice?

#### Combine

Can you combine parts or ideas?  
Can you blend things together?

#### Adapt

What else is like it?  
What other ideas does it suggest?  
What could you copy?  
Whom could you imitate?

#### Modify

What new twist can you make?  
Can you change the color, size, shape, motion, sound, form, odor?

#### Minify

Can you make it smaller, shorter, lighter, lower?  
Can you divide it up or omit certain parts?

#### Magnify

What could you add?  
Can you add more time, strength, height, length, thickness, value?  
Can you duplicate or exaggerate it?

#### Put to Other Uses

Can it be put to other uses as is?  
Can it be put to other uses if it is modified?



Eliminate

Can it be eliminated?

What would be the result?

Rearrange/Reverse

Can you interchange parts?

Can you use a different plan, pattern, or sequence?

Can you change the schedule or rearrange cause and effect?

Can you turn it backward or upside down?

Can you reverse roles or do the opposite?

**Practice:** Take a piece of literature that students are reading and ask them to change the story by applying the SCAMPER technique to the plot, setting, character, action, character motivation.

<b>Original Item:</b>	<b>Transformed Item:</b>
Substitute	
Combine	
Adapt	
Modify/Minify/Magnify	
Put to other uses	
Eliminate	
Rearrange/Reverse	

**Challenge:**

- Rewrite a children’s book, *Fairy Tale or Greek Myth* by applying the strategy of SCAMPER to change the details.
- Take a current news item and SCAMPER it from fact to fiction.

# IDEA TRANSFORMATION

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

Original Item: _____	Transformed Item:
Substitute	
Combine	
Adapt	
Modify/Minify/Magnify	
Put to other uses	
Eliminate	
Rearrange/Reverse	

# It's in the Phobia

## Part 1

### High School (Grades 9–12), Language Arts, Problem Solving

#### Objectives

- Students will research phobias by studying their etymologies.
- Students will utilize the skill of analysis and problem solving to develop an understanding of phobias.
- Students will predict the meaning of specific phobias.

#### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

The world of phobias may be used to help students learn and practice the skills of prediction and analysis. Prediction is the ability to use pattern recognition, comparing and contrasting, and identifying relationships to predict something.

In this lesson students will explore the world of phobias by applying the skills of analysis to word parts in order to identify the parts and understand the relationship of the fear and its name.

Analysis is the skill that you use when you break something into its parts, define each part clearly, and understand how the parts relate to each other. For example, bibliophobia consists of two parts, biblio and phobia. Since phobia means fear and biblio means of or relating to books, bibliophobia means fear of books.

A phobia is an intense abnormal or unreasonable fear of a particular class or type of people, places, things, or situations. In this activity students will read and research the phobias to develop an understanding of the word origin of the phobia.

For a comprehensive list of phobias visit <http://www.phobialist.com> and for a list of fears and their phobia names go to <https://www.verywellmind.com/types-of-phobias-4157170>.

**Guidance:** Phobias like ologies (words that are about the study of) such as biology, the study of living organisms, often reflect the Greek or Latin word bases. Locate or make up a story about someone with a particular phobia. For example, my friend Nicole has such arachnophobia that she will not read *Charlotte's Web* or *Miss Spider's Tea Party*. If she were to see a spider, she would immediately get as far away as possible. What do you think it means to have arachnophobia?

Discuss what a phobia is and tell students that they will have an opportunity to learn about phobias, what they are and how their names relate the fear that they describe.

**Practice:** Students will complete the What's With the Phobia Activity Sheet to make predictions about certain phobias and find the origins of the word and its meaning using print or electronic resources. Students will use the skills of analysis to understand each of the phobias and the fears it describes. Students will identify at least four phobias that they think others should know.

**Challenge:**

- Write a story in which you incorporate 3–6 phobias that are essential to the plot.

# What's With the Phobia?

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

Look at the list of phobias below (this is just sample of the world of phobias). After reading the phobia, make a prediction about what you think a person with that phobia fears. Then using print or electronic resources, find the origin of the word and its meaning. Use the four extra spaces for phobias that you find interesting and think that others should know. For example, aulophobia has its root is aulo which is Greek for tune and is a fear of flute.

<b>Phobia</b>	<b>Predication About Meaning</b>	<b>Word Origin</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>Aulophobia</i>	<i>fear of noise</i>	<i>Aulo (Greek)-tube</i>	<i>fear of flutes</i>
<b>acrophobia</b>			
<b>bibliophobia</b>			
<b>chionophobia</b>			
<b>claustrophobia</b>			
<b>entomophobia</b>			
<b>hemophobia</b>			
<b>hydrophobia</b>			
<b>lalophobia</b>			
<b>ophidiophobia</b>			
<b>pyrophobia</b>			
<b>triskaidekaphobia</b>			
<b>xenophobia</b>			
<b>zoophobia</b>			

## Answer Sheet

<b>Phobia</b>	<b>Predication About Meaning</b>	<b>Word Origin</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>Aulophobia</i>	<i>fear of noise</i>	<i>Aulo (Greek)-tube</i>	<i>fear of flutes</i>
<b>acrophobia</b>		<i>aero</i>	<i>fear of heights</i>
<b>bibliophobia</b>		<i>biblio</i>	<i>fear of books</i>
<b>chionophobia</b>		<i>chiono</i>	<i>fear of snow</i>
<b>claustrophobia</b>		<i>clauastro</i>	<i>fear of narrow or closed places</i>
<b>entomophobia</b>		<i>entomo</i>	<i>fear of insects</i>
<b>hemophobia</b>		<i>hemo</i>	<i>fear of blood</i>
<b>hydrophobia</b>		<i>hydro</i>	<i>fear of water</i>
<b>lalophobia</b>		<i>lalo</i>	<i>fear of speech or speaking</i>
<b>ophidiophobia</b>		<i>ophiio</i>	<i>fear of reptiles</i>
<b>pyrophobia</b>		<i>pyro</i>	<i>fear of flames or fire</i>
<b>triskaidekaphobia</b>		<i>triskaideka</i>	<i>fear of the number 13</i>
<b>xenophobia</b>		<i>xeno</i>	<i>fear of foreigner, strangers or the foreign or strange</i>
<b>zoophobia</b>		<i>zoo</i>	<i>fear of animals</i>

# Synectics: Forced Relationships

**High School (Grades 9–12), Language Arts, Creative Thinking**

## Objective

- Students will develop and utilize the creative thinking skills of metaphorical thinking also known as synectics and forced relationships.

## Introduction and Teaching Suggestion

Synectics is a model of teaching that uses metaphors to get students to think in new ways. Also known as metaphorical thinking, synectics helps a person to see relationships between two unlike things, people, animals, objects, events, or concepts. An example of a synectic would explain how ice is like a mirror. The goal is for a student to use the synectic strategy to develop original ideas.

**Guidance:** In the *Thinking Skills Resource Book* Lorene Reid (1990) provides these steps for synectics or metaphorical thinking.

1. Observe. Look for the interesting, unusual, different in each part of the metaphor.
2. Define basic attributes of things being observed.
3. Define basic attributes of each part of the metaphor.
4. Compare. How are these things alike? Different?
5. Complete the following: \_\_\_\_\_ is like \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_

Examples of synectic thinking starters are:

- Life is like a flashlight because \_\_\_\_\_ .
- An iceberg is like a creative idea because \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Which is more secure?                      a) a key                      b) a lock  
Why?
- A dog's bark is like a \_\_\_\_\_ .

- Which is longer?                    a) a lie                    b) a belief  
Why?
- When I am busy, I am as busy as \_\_\_\_\_.
- You are like a flower when \_\_\_\_\_.
- You are like a car when \_\_\_\_\_.
- How are an ice cream cone and a friend alike?
- An owl is like knowledge because \_\_\_\_\_.

**Practice:** Have the students review the skills of association, how to relate two or more items together. Use the activity sheet for students to practice creating synectic relationships. For practice, have students write school in the center box and then put the words—**race**, **hunger**, **storm**, and **brave** in the boxes around the outside. Then ask students to create relationships between school and those words.

Ask students to create their own synectic relationships using the *Four Box Sheet* or by brainstorming lists of words—things, emotions, and actions—and write a metaphor with two potentially unrelated words such as horse and book.

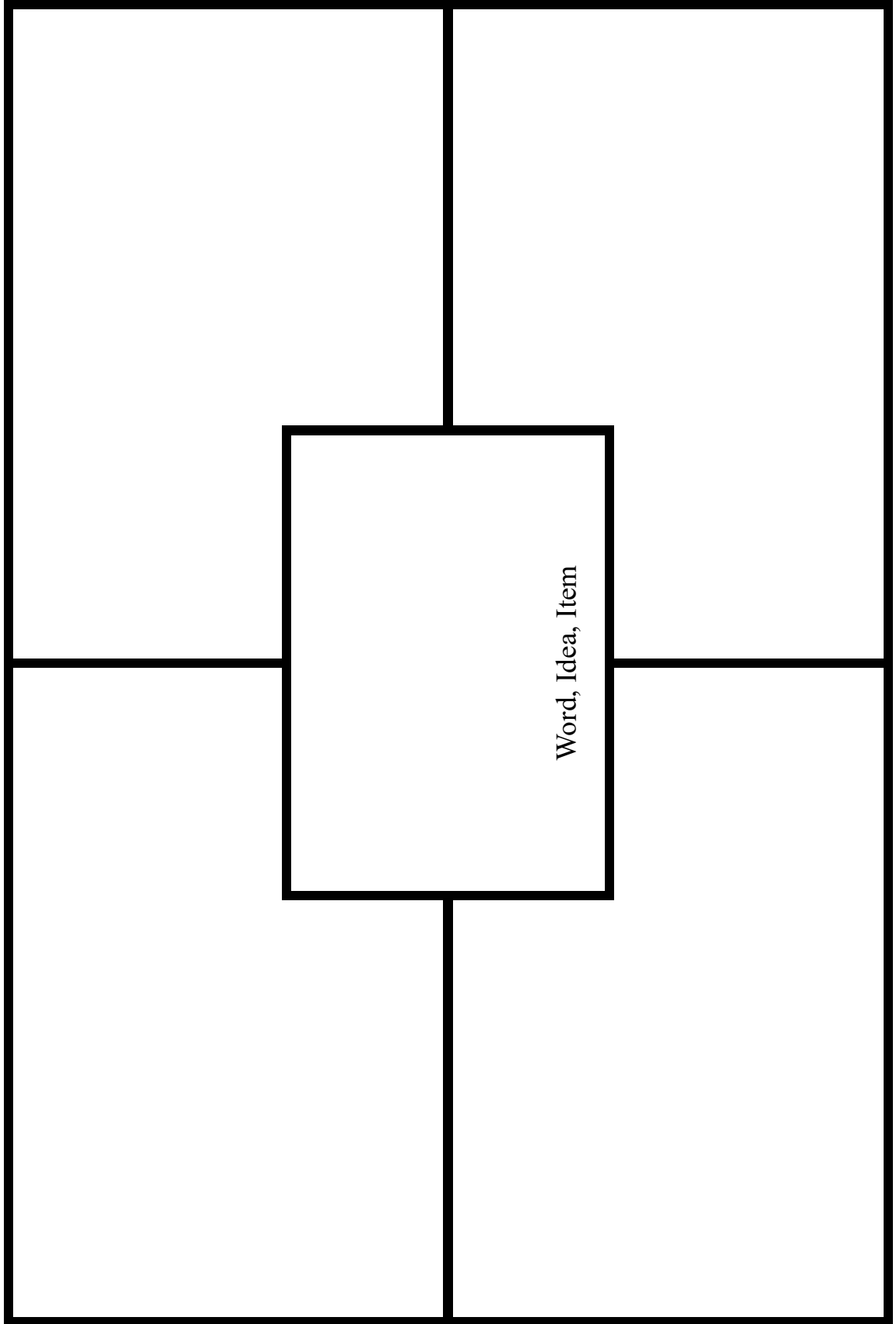
**Challenge:**

- After reading a book, create a synectic to demonstrate your understanding of the book.





# Four Box Synectics



# Visual Biography

**High School (Grades 9–12), Language Arts, Creative Thinking**

## Objectives

- To use creative thinking skills to translate significant events into images for a visual autobiography.
- To generate alternative ways of presenting information.

## Materials

- Photographs (students will need to bring them from home)
- Art supplies (glue, markers, paint, colored paper, etc.)
- Magazines
- Catalogs
- Computer and software that students can use to create images (optional)
- Printer (optional)
- Internet Access (optional)

## Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

In this lesson students visually interpret the list of events, people, and activities that have shaped their lives to create their own visual autobiography.

**Guidance:** To begin the lesson, share with the class pictures of famous people and ask them to list all the facts they can determine from looking at the image. Discuss all the information that students can gather from looking at the picture. This process will help students understand that images tell stories. Ask the students to defend what they see in the image.

Talk with students about that fact that pictures tell stories and explain that in this lesson they will use images to create their autobiography. Although students may have photographs of some of the significant events in their lives, they may not have images for all the events, people, or

activities and will need to find (on the Internet, in magazines or books, etc.) or make images that tell their own particular story.

**Practice:** Students should use the storyboard that they created in Lesson 2 to guide the progression of their visual autobiography. Looking at each frame of the storyboard, students should decide what kind of image they want to use and where they will find it. Some students may have photographs that they can include, but they may need to supplement the photos with text [**add more information about how students can incorporate text into their autobiographies?**] and additional images to tell the complete story. For example, they may also choose to use a magazine image of a birthday party rather than a photograph from their actual birthday party. Encourage students to be flexible in their choice of visual images; they should consider abstract images as well as realistic ones. Students can also create their own images using any art technique they wish (sketches, collages, pastels, etc.).

Each student should complete his or her own visual autobiography. Rather than being seen as a photo album of separate visual images, the visual autobiography should tell a story complete with emotions and interactions.

**Challenge:** You can invite students to re-create autobiographies in other formats:

- Audio tape, Video, Interactive CD
- Chart of your life
  - Timeline of Events
  - A chart of how your family and friends have connected and affected you
- Biopoem: a poem that tells the important information about you and your life
- Autobiographical Dance: your life story in movement
- Autobiographical Song: music and lyrics that create a picture of your life.

Alternatively, some students may wish to read and compare and contrast two different autobiographies. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

# From Words to Actions

## High School (Grades 9–12), Language Arts, Problem Solving

### Objectives

- To use problem-solving strategies to transform a short story into a play.

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

Playwriting has been an art form for communicating ideas since ancient times. In this activity, students will transform a short story into a play. Before you begin this class, you will need to choose a short story that students will rewrite as a play. Alternatively, you can ask students to suggest stories and have the class vote on which one they would like to work with. You should also make sure students are familiar with the format that playwrights use to convey information to the actors, set designers, and other play production personnel.

**Guidance:** Talk to the students about the fact that some plays are written as plays and others are stories that were translated into plays. Discuss with students the elements that make a good play and the elements that make a good short story. Note the commonalities between the two forms of creative writing and the differences. Ask students to think about how they might overcome the differences as they translate a story into a play.

Discuss the following elements of a play:

- **Characters:** Includes name, age, and other pertinent information. Each character is there for a reason (because they need something, want something, etc.). The way the character behaves during the scene should help the audience understand the character.
- **Setting:** Time and place where the action occurs.
- **Conflict:** What causes tension in a scene (the harder it is for the characters to get what they want the richer the scene will become).

- **Dialogue:** Includes not only what characters say to each other, themselves, or the audience, but the way the characters say their lines. How they say them helps the audience learn more about the characters.
- **Action:** Helps move a story or play along as well as provide insight into characters. They might slam a door, hide an envelope, or cry. The actions can be emotional or physical.
- **Plot:** The overall storyline. It is the main reason the characters are acting the way they are.

**Practice:** Have students break into small groups and give each group a copy of the story. After they have read the selected story, they should use the chart on the student activity sheet to organize the components of the story that they will need to consider as they create the play.

Students should then use the chart to help them write the play. In addition to items on the chart, students will need to determine what information the director, actors, and prop designers will need. For example, students may have to write dialogue to convey the interactions between characters. They may have to research the time period for the setting to determine how it will look on stage, and they may have to make stage notes to convey subtleties in the performance.

**Challenge:** Invite students to vote on the best play developed by one of the small groups to perform for the school. Students should build the sets and determine the sound and lighting needs for the production. Some students may be interested in creating advertising and marketing materials for the performance.

# FROM WORDS TO ACTIONS

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

Using the chart below, organize the components of the story that you will need to consider as you transform a short story into a play. You will then use this chart to help you rewrite the story as a play.

<b>Characters</b>	<b>Conflict</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Plot</b>	<b>Dialogue</b>	<b>Action</b>

# Hat With a View

## High School (Grades 9–12), Language Arts, Problem Solving

### Objectives

This lesson provides students with an opportunity to use the critical thinking skill of identify perspective to look at actions and decisions. It is based on the work of Edward de Bono and specifically his work on the Six Thinking Hats.

Source: de Bono, E. *Six thinking hats*. (1991). Logan, IA: Perfection Learning.

### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

Edward de Bono was a pioneer in the field of teaching thinking. He developed an approach for students to think about a situation from six different perspectives. Each of the six hats represents one kind of thinking and has a color to symbolize its perspective. The six hats are: red (feelings), yellow (logic), black (caution), green (creativity), white (information), and blue (metacognition). Each of the hats are described in more depth below.

### Guidance

#### *Red Hat*

*Emotion.* Intuition, feelings, and hunches. No need to justify the feelings. How do I feel about this right now?

#### *Yellow Hat*

*Benefits.* Why is this worth doing? What are the benefits? Why can it be done? Why will it work?

#### *Black Hat*

*Caution.* Judgment. Assessment. Is this true? Will it work? What are the weaknesses? What is wrong with it?



*Green Hat*

*Creativity.* Different ideas. New ideas. Suggestions and proposals. What are some possible solutions and courses of action? What are the alternatives?

*White Hat*

*Information.* Questions. What information do we have? What information do we need to get?

*Blue Hat*

*Organization of thinking.* Thinking about thinking. How far have we come? What step do we take?

The hats may be used to help students evaluate situations, make decisions, and problem solve.

**Guidance:** Here are four steps to teach about the hats so that students understand that the hats will help problem solving by looking at different perspectives.

1. Begin with a simple illustration, example, or exercise that shows in action the process that is to be taught.
2. Explain what is to be taught.
3. Demonstrate the process.
4. Practice using as many items as possible.
5. Elaborate on how to use the process and connect to other ideas.
6. Summarize the process.

You need to explain the process before you have students use the hats. For example, students might use the Six Hat approach to look at an event in your community. The first step would be to identify the event and then explain how you would use the hats to see the different community perspectives. You might then give examples and then discuss how the different perspectives need to be negotiated in the development of a solution. Think of the hats as a way to help students look at the different aspects of the issue that need to be addressed.

Pick one of the scenarios below or create your own scenario and ask students to look at each of the scenarios as if they were wearing one of the hats.

Scenarios:

- What if you had to decide on your future career by the time you turned 8?
- All students in your school must wear uniforms.
- Your town wants to build a new monument to commemorate a special event. Make a list of the potential events and then develop a proposal to support why one of these events should be remembered.
- You are invited to go to another country and attend school in that country for one year.
- After reading a biography, students will analyze the biography from the perspective of each hat.
- Your town has just built a new library and they decide to dispose of the books and buy all new books.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Practice:** Ask students to choose a person whom they would like to learn about and read a biography on that person. This may be a long or short biography. It may be from a magazine or a book. After reading about the person, reflect on the person from the perspective of each of the hats.

**Challenge:**

- Apply the hats to different curriculum areas of study such as the decisions that were made during World War II or why every house needs to have access the Internet.
- After reading several different pieces of fiction, have students pick one of the characters and put the character on trial to determine whether or not one of his or her actions or decisions was correct.

Potential questions:

- **White Hat** - What are the facts? What happened? What other information might you need?

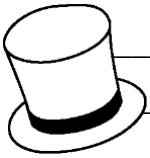
- **Yellow Hat** - What was the positive or good parts of the character's action or decisions?  
What can you use in the character's defense?
- **Black Hat** - What was negative about the character's action or decision? What can be said in the condemnation of the character?
- **Red Hat** - How do you feel about the character's actions or decisions?
- **Green Hat** - What other options did the character have?
- **Blue Hat** - Summarize your thinking about the case and announce your opinion about the character's decision or action.

# Hats Off to Biography

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

For this activity you need to choose a biography of a person whom you want to study and use the Six Hats to evaluate the biography.

**White Hat** - What facts does the writer give? What facts might be missing?



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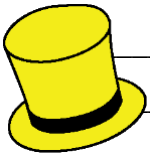
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**Yellow Hat** - What are some good points about the way that the author describes this person and events/incidences in his or her life?



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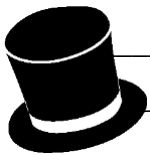
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**Black Hat** - What are some weaknesses or problems with the way the information is presented?



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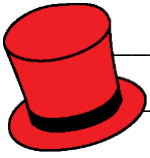
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**Red Hat** - How do you feel about biography? What is your emotional reaction?



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**Green Hat** - What ideas do you have for changing the biography? What should be added?  
Deleted? Rephrased?



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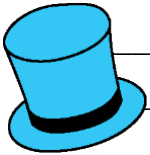
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**Blue Hat** - Summarize the thinking (rationale) behind the biography.



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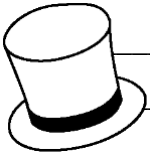
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# Putting on Your Thinking Hat

## STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

Choose a character from a work of fiction and evaluate that character's actions or decision. For example, you choose Macbeth from *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare and look at his decision to kill Duncan.

**White Hat** - What are the facts? What happened? What other information might you need?



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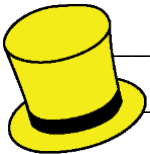
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**Yellow Hat** - What was the positive or good parts of the character's action or decisions? What can you use in the character's defense?



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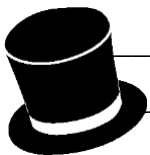
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**Black Hat** - What was negative about the character's action or decision? What can be said in the condemnation of the character?



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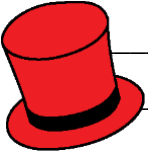
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**Red Hat** - How do you feel about the character's actions or decision?



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**Green Hat** - What other options did the character have?



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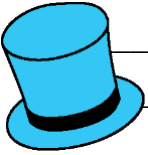
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**Blue Hat** - Summarize your thinking about the case and announce your opinion about the character's decision or action.



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# It's in the Phobia

## Part 2

### High School (Grades 9–12), Language Arts, Creative Thinking

#### Objective

- Students will design their own phobias after studying phobias in *It's in the Phobia (Part 1)*.
- Students will develop and utilize the skills of flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

#### Introduction and Teaching Suggestions

In this activity students will create their own phobia by using the creative thinking skills of flexibility, originality, and elaboration. This lesson will be completed after students have completed *It's in the Phobia (Part 1)*.

A phobia is an intense abnormal or unreasonable fear of a particular class or type of people, places, things, or situations. In this activity students will read and research the phobias to develop an understanding of the word origin of the phobia.

For a comprehensive list of phobias visit <http://www.phobialist.com> and for a list of fears and their phobia names go to <https://www.verywellmind.com/types-of-phobias-4157170>.

**Guidance:** Flexibility is the ability to generate a wide variety of ideas or alternatives to solve a problem. Being flexible means that you can change your direction of thinking and adapt to different situations. For example, the ability to generate a list of words that mean fear. Originality is the ability to think of new or unusual ideas or products that extend beyond the common or obvious. While something original may not be new to everyone, it is new to most people. Elaboration is the process of expanding on an idea by giving it details. For example, what does the phobia look like? Under what circumstances would the phobia be strongest?



**Practice:** In this lesson students will use the creative thinking skills of flexibility, originality, and elaboration to create an original phobia. The first step is for students to generate a list of potential things that people (or animals) might fear. After they generate the lists, they will then think flexibly about the list to put the fears in context. Next they will use their knowledge of etymology to name the fears. They may have to combine a number of word bases.

**Challenge:**

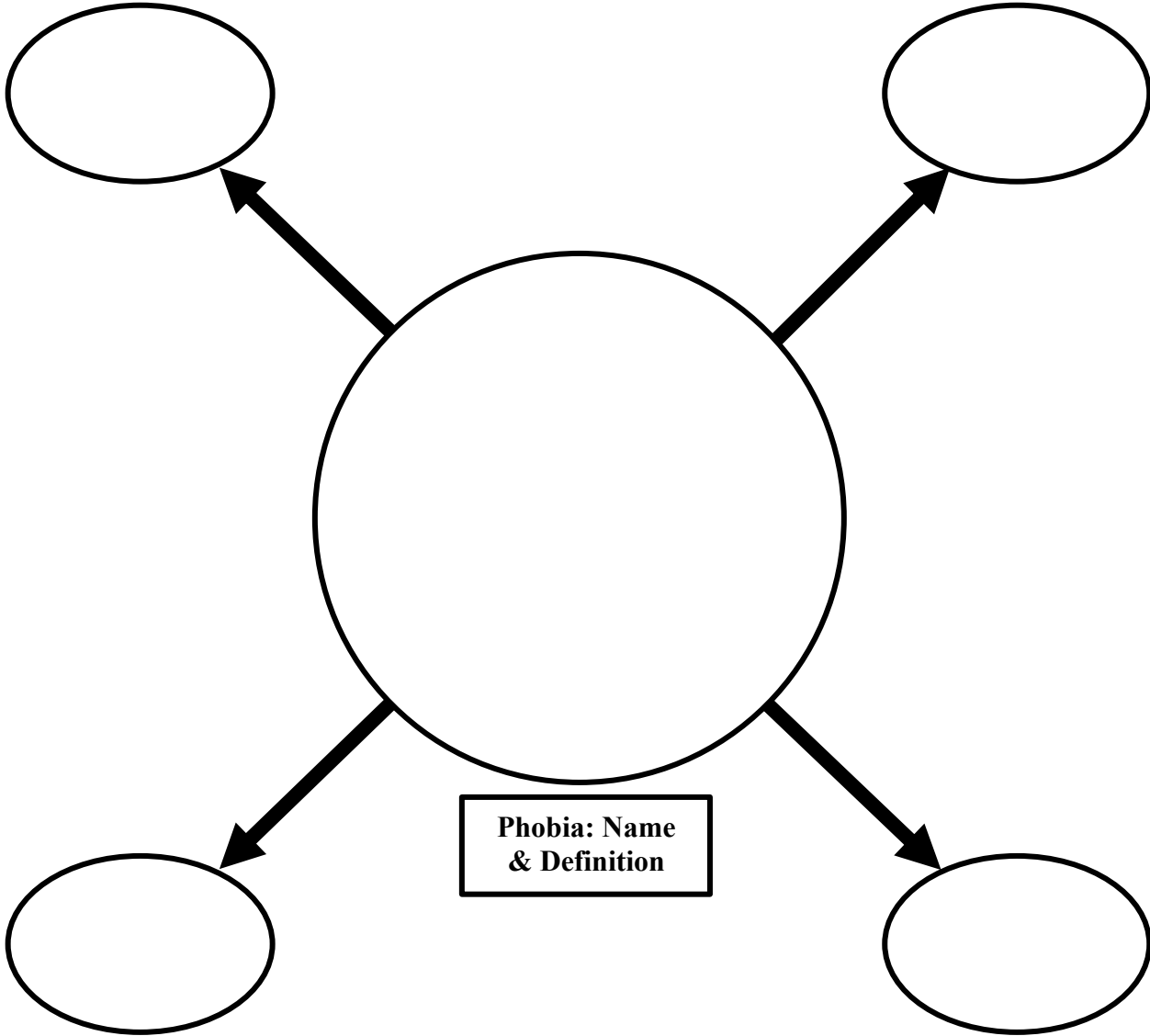
- Generate a list of phobias. Choose a story and give one of those phobias to a central character. Rewrite the story integrating the phobias. Be subtle. Think about how the storyline would have to change.
- Create an illustration of the phobia you invented.
- Develop a cartoon or comic strip that illustrates the phobia you invented.
- Create a game that incorporates the phobias.

# An Original Phobia

STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

How it might affect someone?

Describe a situation in which this phobia might change the outcome.



**Phobia: Name & Definition**

Create a potential storyline to incorporate this phobia.

What are potential related phobias?