

A Multidisciplinary Genre Study of Mystery Writing

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Overview

Writing is hard work and teaching children how to write well can be somewhat of a mystery. Clue 1: Life's a journey, not a destination. If this philosophy suits you, then you have already unlocked one of the clues to the mystery of teaching writing. This also serves as an insight for living a fulfilling life. When teaching writing, the focus should be on the process of writing rather than the final product. Giving students choices and supporting their individual interests allows them to gain ownership of their writing. Students should enjoy the entire process of writing rather than just being satisfied with finishing an assignment. Once children learn to write, they can use writing to empower themselves in all aspects of their lives. It's an exciting journey for both teacher and student. Solving the mystery is rewarding. Keep your eyes and mind open to discover more clues along the way.

This multidisciplinary unit is geared for 1st grade students. In this unit, concepts of mystery writing are fused into the Writer's Workshop model as well as the existing Language Arts, Mathematics and Social Studies curriculums of Pittsburgh Public Schools. Clue 2: Don't mess with success. Having success with the implementation of the current curriculums led me to develop extension activities that compliment the lessons that I'm required to teach. It wasn't broke; so I didn't need to fix it, only enhance it. The purpose of this unit is to further advance students' insight into writing through the introduction of the mystery genre. Connecting reading and writing will improve overall literacy skills, which will in turn, aid in the development of a well-rounded individual.

Rationale

Every student loves to solve puzzles. Every student is a bit mischievous. These ideas merge when dealing with the genre of mystery and explain its appeal to young readers and writers. The specific format of a mystery lends itself to student appreciation. Familiar elements give them comfort and techniques challenge their knowledge of skills and strategies for sorting out clues and predicting possible endings. Whether by listening

to a read-aloud, self-selecting a story from the classroom library or writing in the genre, students of all ages find activities surrounding mystery to be enjoyable. These activities are embraced as an awaited change from daily drills and readings from the curriculum. Even struggling students find interest and can be motivated by this genre.

Reading and writing go hand in hand. Critical reading skills are needed to understand and enjoy mysteries. Skills such as making predictions and inferences, understanding cause and effect relationships and analyzing and sequencing events are instrumental in solving a mystery. Elements of good writing are also evident in mysteries; interesting leads, descriptive settings, characters that come alive, organized plots and problems and solutions to name a few. In the development of written language, oral communication will flourish and vice versa. These components of reading and writing are skills that are needed to successfully function in everyday life. Habits of good writers can carry over into habits of good citizens. Clue 3: Communication is the key to success. If students can develop these skills through reading and writing, then as adults they will achieve greater success in personal relationships and negotiations.

This section of the unit provides the background knowledge necessary to understand the elements of a mystery. The general details apply to adult readers and writers however specific reference to young readers and writers will be made. The nature of the mystery content needs to be made suitable to young students, involving age appropriate stories, lessons and activities at the grade level you are teaching. The following sections describe the components of a story, specifically a mystery. The last section provides an overview of the Writer's Workshop model and how it's techniques relate to writing mysteries.

Mystery Elements for Writers

Setting

The setting is the time and place in which the story occurs. The setting of a story can be as important as the characters and the plot. It can become a character itself along with helping to determine the plot of a story or just merely be in the background. Elements of setting can range from the landscape of an area to the typical weather elements. In her essay *Background, Location, and Setting*, Julie Smith says, "If the weather, the land, the milieu are to play an important part in your book, you may want to say so up front." (49) You can choose to discuss the historical and cultural aspects of a region, expressing opinions along the way. Whichever elements you choose, become familiar with the setting that you write about. Clue 4: Show don't tell. Your information should guide the reader to get a sense of the atmosphere with descriptions that set the mood. If you select a setting that you haven't been to, talk to people who have, read about it and look at photographs of the location.

When young children write, they tend to use simple settings such as their house or outside. The goal is to get them to become more sophisticated in naming their settings. Have them start with naming specific locations outside, such as the park or zoo, or what part of the house, such as a bedroom or kitchen. These ideas can be drawn from personal

experience or borrowed from stories. When they learn a range of settings their range of stories will develop. Using their senses will lead to more descriptive settings, which gives stronger imagery to the reader. With practice, they should become successful with the show don't tell philosophy.

In the Macmillan/McGraw-Hill language arts curriculum, they find clues from the text and make inferences. In Writer's Workshop, they distinguish between general and specific details. Learning about various types of geography in Social Studies and telling time and discussing weather in Math assists them in using elements of setting. *One Stormy Night* by Joy Cowley gives an example of a scary setting that becomes a character in the story. Young writers are mainly using the setting as a backdrop to tell the reader where the story takes place. As their writing progresses, they can begin to make the setting an integral part of the story.

Character

Characters are the important people in a story, possibly the most important part of the story. In his essay *Characterization*, Michael Connelly agrees when he states, "A good plot is empty unless filled with the blood of character." (58) The characters of a story need to be developed and believable to the reader. When developing characters, you need to familiarize yourself with their characteristics. Describe their wants and needs, habits and conflicts and reasoning and philosophies with the world. Clue 4: Less is more. As with the setting, less is more in your description of characters, show don't tell in your description. Using dialogue is a great way to do this. Clue 5: Quality not quantity. Do not hide your characters with too many details. Use a few telling details rather than pages of description. In a mystery, characters help us to examine the dark side of human nature.

Making decisions about what types of voice the story will be in is necessary. In his essay *The Rules and How to Bend Them*, Jeremiah Healy suggests, "If you need to have more than two characters populating a scene, then be sure each has a distinctive "voice" so that you don't confuse the reader by not providing express signals." (11) While writing your story you may discover things about your characters that were not evident in the inception and even develop new attributes for them. Whether the protagonist, antagonist or the secondary characters, they need to be convincing to the reader. Detectives and villains are common characters in a mystery.

For young students, popular choices for characters are friends, family, animals and themselves. They are able to identify with the characters of the books that they read because they become them. However, making the characters come alive in their own stories can be a bit of a challenge. Young writers tend to merely name the characters and do not develop them fully. They need to make the characters likable, having faults that they can sympathize with such as being annoyed by a younger sibling or losing their homework. The behaviors of the character should be enticing to the reader, making them want to emulate them. Using older characters attracts young writers because it makes them feel older. A single viewpoint works best with young readers and writers. When

they are competent and confident in developing their own characters, they become better judges of literary character too. *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak gives examples of characters that come alive.

Plot

Plot is the carefully thought out events the author uses to tell the story. In a mystery, the reader will most likely not discover critical plot elements until the end of the story. Clue 6: If you don't know where you're going any road will take you there. A writer can begin by jotting down ideas, questions, maybes or even small scenes. In *Clues, Red Herrings, and Other Plot Devices*, P.M. Carlson refers to this outline as a "rough sketch of the true direction to be tracked." (161) Within the plot, the main character has a problem with other people or something in nature. The author uses the fears of the characters to develop conflict in the story. The reader follows a trail of clues. Along the way are powerful distractions, false clues and multiple plots. Events follow until a climax is reached and then the solution arises. The fast paced thriller is popular among the mystery sub-genres.

For young writers one plot should be sufficient. *Hattie and the Fox* by Mem Fox has an easy to follow plot that exemplifies the mystery format. The story is plot driven and begins to escalate with an ongoing conflict. Clues are given before a resolution presents itself at the end. As taught in Writer's Workshop, students will identify a moment in time and set the characters in motion. In a mystery, one places likeable characters in tough situations. They can be in the form of whodunits, quests or puzzle plots. Surprise endings, whether funny or scary are enjoyable to readers and writers.

Levels of Toxicity, Types and Motives

In every mystery there is conflict. You need to determine what level of conflict or toxicity you want your story to have. For low levels, an accident occurs. With a medium level there is some intention, however little harm occurs. Stories with high levels involve serious harm.

Stories of young students will undoubtedly involve elements of low toxicity such as an accident or mix-up. Something goes missing, vanishes or becomes invisible. *Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McClosky is a nice introduction to suspense for young readers. *Corduroy* and *A Pocket for Corduroy* by Don Freeman tells of a toy bear getting involved in scenarios that would be frightening for a young child.

Different types of mysteries can involve: missing objects, unintentional or intentional accidents, spies, intruders, pranks or supernatural phenomena. Motives can include: greed, love, hate, money, envy, jealousy, revenge, and power. For obvious reasons the levels of toxicity, types and motives of mystery that are shared with young students will be of a less adult theme or nature.

Research

While conducting research for your mystery, you should be having fun. Clue 7: Life is what you make it. There are many venues to choose from when answering a research query. You might call an expert, ask a librarian or search the Internet. If you don't get the answer you're looking for leave the information out, never make it up. Keep your eyes open to the possibility of finding answers or ideas anywhere: keep a notebook. From the magazines in the doctor's office to the crime shows on television, there is an abundance of information out there. Don't forget to pull from your own life experiences as well. Once the data is collected, one must not include too much technical information into the prose. The writing must flow and have a feeling of authenticity. These details should become a part of your life and they will add flavor to your story. As Faye and Jonathan Kellerman suggest in their essay *Expertise and Research*, "Live with the data until your confidence level rises. Try to think and feel like an expert." (39) Young writers will use personal experience as their main source of research along with their imagination.

Writer's Workshop (WW)

WW is at the foundation of language arts education. It is an interdisciplinary writing tool that has a main focus of helping students find good reasons to write. The model was devised after researchers interviewed numerous professional writers to see how they approached their work. Lucy McCormick Calkins is at the forefront of this research. In WW, genre studies and steps of the writing process are used, however students raise their level of writing by being given the freedom to explore their own interests. Students write with purpose and eventually become better writers. Calkins believes that, "When writing begins with something that had not yet found its significance, it is more apt to become a process of growing meaning." WW is a tool that empowers young writers. Teachers are encouraged to instruct students with what works with the professionals.

Various elements of WW can be used when teaching the mystery genre. The following section provides a brief overview of the WW model and touches upon components used within this unit. The WW model begins with a mini lesson. This is a 5-10 minute whole class activity where the teacher presents a mini lesson, such as retelling the parts of a story or conventions of print. This is followed by the work period, a 30-40 minute period when students are writing independently. Teacher conferences and peer response groups take place during this time. Finally, the closing, is a 10-minute period where students share their work in the Author's Chair. After implementing the first 30 days and consistently reinforcing the rituals and routines these components will become automatic to your students.

Objectives

Writing objectives include student participation in written responses to literature, shared writing, identifying parts of a mystery, generating lists of possible characters, settings and plots and using graphic organizers to develop ideas. Students will participate in writing

activities that require research and inquiry. In their writing, they will use descriptions that utilize sensory words and have coherent ideas that follow a logical order. Students will write using robust vocabulary.

In Language Arts, students will use phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency to develop an understanding of the mystery genre. They will listen to rhymes, learn and use mystery vocabulary and participate in oral responses to mystery literature.

Math objectives include a review of routines for recording the daily weather as well as the inclusion of descriptive weather words. They will practice telling and solving number stories with an added mystery element.

In Social Studies, students will discuss families, where they live, and how they celebrate and change. These discussions will lead to ideas for writing: characters, setting and plots. Through discussions of types of land, weather and natural resources students descriptions become richer. Through discussions of governments or leaders of culture and being a good citizen at school students can develop plots for their mysteries.

All objectives aim to promote the interconnectedness of subject areas. These lessons meet the national, state and local standards that all Pittsburgh Public School curricula must meet. The state has developed 62 content standards within 10 Core Curriculum frameworks. In this unit I will focus on the Communications, Math, and Citizenship Standards. Depending on which extension activities are utilized, other standards can be met as well.

Strategies

An interdisciplinary approach will be taken to make connections between subject areas. All of the elements of the curriculum will fuse with the general curriculum so there can be a smooth transition to extension activities. Due to the pacing guidelines we are required to follow, I've found that incorporating units into the existing curriculum leads to successful implementation of the unit. Therefore, elements of this unit will be taught throughout the entire year.

Many aspects of this curriculum can be taught using hands-on activities. This will ensure that students learn through their own experiences. In doing this they will gain an increased understanding of mystery writing. Since students learn in a variety of ways there are activities for all types of learners. Some examples are: Visual- pictures, auditory-music and books on tape, tactile-making games and kinesthetic-dance. Differentiated instruction will be used when appropriate. The books selected are at a variety of reading levels. The activities and lessons can be made accessible to the struggling learning and more complex for the purpose of enrichment.

The focus in teaching Writer's Workshop is the writers. One becomes increasingly aware of each student's levels of understanding of the writing process. Through this unit,

components of the mystery genre are incorporated into WW. Student prose will benefit from the creation of additional content for mini lessons. The mini lessons will be tailored to the needs of my students and will help students focus on the craft of writing by demonstrating mystery and suspense used by good writers. These elements will then be incorporated into the work period and closing. These ideas will aid in addressing the standards and the development of rubrics.

Classroom Activities

The following lessons and classroom activities support the ideas in the curriculum unit. All subjects will extend the existing curriculum to encompass ideas of the mystery genre. Since every classroom differs, teachers can adapt the lessons to meet their students' individual needs. When reference is made to generating lists, these should be posted in the classroom and/or accessible to students for reference at all times.

Writers Workshop

Students at Accelerated Learning Academies, use the Writer's Workshop model as their writing curriculum. They are required to write and publish in four genres: personal narrative, narrative account (how-to), response to literature and a report. The mystery genre is an extension of the narrative genre. Teaching the mystery genre gives students more opportunities to develop their writing skills and habits. In these lessons, the mystery genre will be incorporated into the WW model. These lessons should be implemented after teachers have taught the first 30 days and the narrative genre study. The standards and writing monographs can be used for additional support. Touchstone texts, selections of stories that encompass components of the genre, will be used to teach this genre. Some texts were used in prior WW lessons, however many are new. These lessons are to be used as additional resources, content for mini-lessons for the mystery-writing genre.

Lesson 1: Mystery leads, plots and endings

Day 1: Teacher will start a discussion of mystery. Determine if the students have any prior knowledge. If you would like to do a cold write you can gauge what point your students are starting at and how you can prioritize your instruction. Primary students should be given minimal instruction on what a mystery is. You might tell students to write about something strange/weird that happened to them.

Read the touchstone text, *Miss Nelson is Missing*, and discuss events of the story. Make note of comparison to the narrative genre: setting, character, plot, problem and solution. Discuss the addition of clues (the black dress hanging in Miss Nelsons closet) in a mystery. Add mystery to the Things To Write About Chart established in the first 30 days of WW. Start a new artifact (chart) titled Types of Mysteries. Add something is missing and brainstorm other ideas. If the class is having difficulty generating ideas, this will help. The first homework that I give students is called a SNAPSHOT. It is somewhat of a dossier, collecting information about students and is used throughout the

year in various lessons and activities. One of the items is: Sometimes _____ makes me feel afraid. The most popular answers are always scary movies, the dark and spiders. Review the SNAPSHOTS for possible topics of a mystery.

Day 2: Reread *Miss Nelson is Missing* and use a graphic organizer “Witch” Part of the Story (Appendix A) to chart parts of the story as a class. Use the design of a witch’s hat to plot events. On the left brim of the hat moving up you have the beginning or lead. You may prefer to use the term rising action. The problem or climax would be on the top of the hat. At right brim would be the ending or solution. Next model writing your own mystery, discussing the parts as you go along. This can eventually lead to a shared writing and then independent writing during the work period.

As another extension, students may act out events. My students have Fun Friday the last period of every week. I would supply some props and they would do this as choice activity during playtime.

Lesson 2: Mystery Characters that Come Alive: SHOW DON’T TELL

This lesson is an extension of the WW narrative genre study lesson, Making Characters Come Alive. The teacher will read touchstone texts such as *Miss Nelson is Missing* and *Where the Wild things Are*. After reading discuss the characters. Use a character web to chart their characteristics. For example, Miss Nelson is described as sweet and she wears a pretty dress. Miss Swamp is describes as a witch and she is dressed in black. Then discuss and record how this information is learned, through the illustrations and/or writing. This will help students with the concept of showing rather than telling. Max is wearing his wolf suit and the wild things have terrible claws.

Next, model a piece of writing using the show don’t tell strategy. Show the character by a physical description using the senses, body movements and dialogue. The name of the character, their likes and dislikes and age and grade level are some more suggestions. When conferencing with students make sure to ask them to check character descriptions. Us a graphic organizer to help the characters “take shape.” (Appendix C)

Show don’t tell can be done with setting too. Read *Harry and the Terrible Whatzit* by Dick Gackenbach. Discuss the interesting lead of the story to make the reader want to know more. We are made aware that Harry knows there is something terrible in the cellar. The author shows us with his description of the cellar as “dark, damp and it smelled.” The look on Harry’s face also shows us that he is feeling scared. Text as well as illustrations can show us details.

Lesson 3: General vs. Specific detail : I SPY

In this lesson, students will use the mystery element of spying to construct a piece of descriptive writing. A graphic organizer (Appendix D) will be used to organize the information. Model looking around the room with a spy glass or telescope and chose an object to describe. For some students you may have objects pre-chosen and written on

slips of paper. Write the name of the object in the center of the organizer. The outside spaces will contain descriptions of the object relating to the five senses; sight, taste, feel, smell and sound. These will be descriptions that utilize sensory words. All senses may not apply to all objects. Some sense categories may have more than one description. So if the object is an apple, a description could be as follows:

I spy something red and round. It's smooth and fits in your hand. It crunches and squirts.

Language Arts

In the Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Treasures series, students are exposed to a variety of genres such as: fiction, folktales, non-fiction, realistic non-fiction, plays and poems. Through these activities, students will be given opportunities to work with the mystery genre. The following components of the language arts curriculum will be addressed in this unit: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. While teaching these components, connections will be made to the mystery genre.

Phonemic Awareness- Students will listen to songs and rhymes. Discuss alliteration and word choice. Read or sing *Who Stole the Cookies?* by Judith Moffatt. Discuss that stealing is an element of mystery because we do not know who the culprit is until the end, a clue is offered and the problem is solved. This rhyme has elements of humor rather than fear. Students can add other names to the rhyme and record rhyming words. The following is a poem that I wrote. It has scarier elements of mystery. You need to gauge what types of mystery you want to introduce to your students.

Fright Night

Spider webs and bobbing for apple heads
Moans and groans from rattling bones
Witches hats on upside down bats
Full moons and eerie tunes
Howling, growling, dark, apart
Whimper, whisper
Skulls, skin, scrape
Cellar, yell, lock, shock
Out of sight, It's Fright Night

Phonics-To enhance letter sound knowledge you can add mystery sounds or words to your alphabet and word building routines. For example: Add sounds like boo and eek or words like Blob for b and Ghost for g. Check out the Alphabet of monsters on:
www.flickr.com/photos/tags/alphabetofmonsters/show/

Vocabulary- Give students' opportunities to develop robust vocabulary in the mystery genre. Define and use words such as sleuth, culprit and red herring.

Comprehension- Students use prior knowledge to make predictions and connections between what they read and what they know. Oral language participation in shared reading experiences helps students to enjoy and appreciate mystery literature. The following are examples of strategies and skills taught in Unit 1 of the language arts curriculum. These can be taught through mysteries. There are many other strategies and skills that fit into the mystery genre as well.

-Strategies: analyze story structure, text structure

-Skills: analyze character and setting, sequence of events, author's purpose

The Chocolate Fudge Mystery (Cam Jansen) by David Adler and *Junie B., Toothless Wonder* by Barbara Park are good chapter books for read-alouds and eventually independent reading.

Fluency- Have student's re-read words and stories to gain word automaticity. Start at a normal speed and work up to a faster pace. To add the element of suspense, shout out "times up" to surprise them. Once they become aware that you're going to "startle" them, they become increasingly motivated to read faster. Reinforce that the words need to be read correctly to be counted. Increased fluency will enhance their comprehension.

Math

In Mathematics, literature is often overlooked and these lessons are a great way to infuse math with reading and writing. Students will be given the opportunity to connect the subjects by reading and producing number stories that solve a mystery as well as a math problem. They will develop habits that will allow them to make interdisciplinary connections independently.

The following components of the 2007 Everyday Mathematics curriculum will be addressed in this unit: Unit 1: Establishing Routines; Lessons 1.12 Weather and Temperature Routines and 1.13 Number Stories. In Unit 1 students begin to understand that math surrounds them in their everyday lives. The following lessons provide additional structure for daily math routines and extensions that maintain a focus on mystery.

Lesson 1: Math Mystery

In this lesson, math and everyday life are intertwined. Read to students *The Math Curse* by Jon Scieszka. Discuss the math strategies the girl uses to solve problems "mysteries" in everyday life. This story connects math and mystery and sets the tone for adding literature to math instruction. Developing these strategies in math offers empowerment in daily life situations, similar to the empowerment students' gain from writing.

Lesson 2: Weather Words

In Lesson 1.12, students begin the daily routine of recording the day's weather on the Class Weather Chart. Weather symbols of sunny, snowy, cloudy and rainy are used. After this routine becomes familiar students extend this lesson by adding descriptive weather words to a chart alongside the Class Weather Chart. First I will assess prior knowledge by asking for suggestions of words (windy, foggy) , then I will model finding words in stories such as *One Stormy Night*. Also suggest finding words for homework on the news, in the newspaper, asking an adult. These words will enrich the activity by increasing robust vocabulary. They will go on to utilize this language in Writer's Workshop when choosing specific words to enhance the setting of a story. As students compile an ongoing list of weather words, their name will be added to give them ownership and they can be tallied for how many times someone uses them in their oral and written language. This task becomes a job on the job chart; Weather Word Recorder. This is in addition to the Weather book described in the lesson.

Lesson 3: Scary Number Stories

In Lesson 1.13, students act out and solve number stories using and sharing various strategies. They make up and solve their own simple stories. A good readiness activity that is suggested in the EDM lesson guide is to “spy” numbers in books. This fits in with the theme so I would recommend doing it. Along with the suggested enrichment activity, partners use randomly selected numbers to make and solve number stories, introduce students to randomly selected characters (monsters) or plots (missing) for their stories, including elements of a mystery. Read books Missing Mittens and Monster Musical Chairs by Stuart J. Murphy for ideas.

In the EDM curriculum there is a game called Monster Squeeze. This connects nicely to the theme of mystery. To extend this game, students choose their type of monster to place on each number. They place the monster upside down on the number s and the other students have to guess the type of monster as well as the mystery number.

For an enrichment activity for advanced learners, have students take turns reading and “solving” King Arthur's problem in *Sir Cumference and the First Round Table: A Math Adventure* by Cynthia Neuschwander.

Social Studies

The following components of the Macmillan//McGraw-Hill Social Studies curriculum will be addressed in this unit: Unit 1: Theme- All About Families - Big Idea- What is a family? Unit 2: Theme-Where We Live- Big Idea- What is Geography? and Unit 3: Theme- Good Citizens- Big Idea- What makes a Good Citizen? The existing Themes and Big Ideas of the Social Studies curriculum make for an easy transition into extension lessons surrounding mystery. These lessons give students the opportunity to connect elements of writing and reading with social studies concepts.

Lesson 1: Characters, Settings and Plots

After learning all about families in Unit 1: Lesson 1: Many Families, students will generate a class list of family members. While developing the list, reinforce that all families are special so students feel comfortable participating. The list should include family members in the home as well as in the extended family. Young writers often choose the same characters when they write. This activity will widen their range of possible characters and further enhance their writing. A list of family members can trigger memories of students, giving them more to write about. When writing mysteries, they will enjoy putting family members in the action.

In Lesson 2 Families Celebrate students will generate a list of celebrations, adding the ones mentioned in the lesson. This will supply more plots for students to write about. In Lesson 3 Where Families Live students will generate a list of homes. This will give them more setting to choose from.

Now that students have a list of characters (family members), settings (where they live) and plots (celebrations) they can begin writing their mysteries. Type the list on your computer and cut out each family member's name, type of house and celebration. Place the ideas in paper bags or hats labeled characters, setting and plot. Have students choose a mystery character, setting or plot from the bag. You can start out with one bag at a time and move to all three.

Lesson 2: More Descriptive Settings

Read Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey. Discuss the setting of the story. Encourage students to be more descriptive with their settings in the text and illustration rather than just stating outside and drawing some grass. In the story, the setting of a hill, Blueberry Hill, is given a specific name. The illustrations have specific details as well, such as the trees on top and . This will allow them to see that visual images can communicate as well as text. The author goes on to talk about the bushes Sal and her mother tramp through. Discuss the element of mystery or suspense in the story. You could also start discussions about other literary elements such as repeated lines and sounds, such as the berries going "kuplink" when they hit the pail

Review the geography vocabulary from Unit 2. Model for students how to use the geography vocabulary as possible settings for their mysteries. For example, city is a vocabulary word. Model writing a story with the setting of the city that you live in. Add more details with weather words that you charted in Math Lesson 2. Also add an element of mystery. The following is a sample story:

One rainy day in Pittsburgh, I drove up the hill to Fort Pitt ALA. When I arrived at school no one was there. The parking lot was empty, there were no children to be seen and the doors of the school were locked. It was spooky being there alone. Then I saw the red umbrella of a neighbor walking by. "What's going on?" I said, "Where is everyone?". I turned my head quickly when a black cat ran past my foot and when I looked back I was alone again. I went back to my car to drive home. When I turned on the radio I heard the announcer say, "Another wet Saturday in the burgh." I couldn't

believe my ears! “There’s no school today, its Saturday!” I yelled. I drove back home and went to bed.

Lesson 3: Plots

Review the list of mystery topics generated in WW Lesson 1 of this curriculum unit. In this lesson students will use their knowledge of governments and/or leaders of culture and being a good citizen at school learned in Unit 3 as possible plots. For example, the king is missing his crown or the class bully vanishes. It can be fun to use a card system to help students organize plots. For enrichment have them start at the end and work backwards. This will reinforce concepts of cause and effect.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Teacher Resources

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Crews, Donald. Shortcut. Harper Trophy, September 20, 1996. A suspenseful tale of a group of children who decide to take a shortcut home rather than their normal route.

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Websites

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<http://personal.chatham.edu/faculty/kayres/> - Website of author Katherine Ayres
Contact her for school visits.

www.mysterynet.com - Online mysteries, games, books and resources for mystery lovers

Appendix A-Standards

PPS Content Standards for Communication

1. All students use effective research and informational management skills including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrative, inform and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes, and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and recognizing the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure and use.
8. All students compose and make academic presentations for each academic area of study, that are designed to inform, persuade or describe.
9. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.

PPS Content Standards for Math

1. All students use number, number systems, and equivalent forms (including numbers, words, objects and graphics) to represent theoretical and practical situations.
2. All students compute, measure and estimate to solve theoretical and practical problems, using appropriate tools, including modern technology such as calculators and computers.

3. All students apply the concepts of patterns, functions and relation to solve theoretical and practical problems.
4. All students formulate and solve problems and communicate the mathematical processes used and the meaning for using them.
5. All students use and apply the basic concepts of algebra, geometry, probability and statistics to solve theoretical and practical problems.
6. All students evaluate, infer and draw appropriate conclusions from charts, tables and graphs, showing the relationship between data and real world situations.
7. All students make decisions and predictions based upon the collection, organization, analysis and interpretation of statistical data and the application of probability.

PPS Content Standards for Citizenship

1. All students demonstrate an understanding of major events, cultures, groups and individuals in the historical development of Pennsylvania, the United States, and other nations and describe the patterns of historical development.
2. All students demonstrate an understanding of themes and patterns of geography, know the locations of major bodies of water, land masses, and nations, and describe the relationships between geography and historical, economic, and cultural development.
3. All students describe the development and operation of the economic, political, legal and governmental systems in the United States.
4. All students examine and evaluate problems facing citizens in their communities, state, nation, and world by incorporating concepts and methods of inquiry of the various social sciences.
5. All students develop and defend a position on current issues confronting the United States and other nations by conducting research, analyzing alternatives, organizing evidence and arguments, and making oral presentations.
6. All students explain basic economic concepts and the development and operation of economic systems in the United States and other nations and make informed decisions about economic issues.
7. All students demonstrate their skills of communicating, negotiating, and cooperating with others.
8. All students demonstrate that they can work effectively with others.

9. All students demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of prejudice and relate their knowledge to current issues facing their communities, the United States, and other nations.

10. All students demonstrate an understanding of the various roles they can play as citizens through participation in a community service project.

11. All students demonstrate the ability to resolve conflicts in peaceful ways, including but not limited to peer mediation, anger management, interpersonal skills, and problem solving.

Writing Standards

Writing Standard 1: Habits and Processes

Writing Standard 2: Writing Purposes and Resulting Genres

Writing Standard 3: Language Use and Conventions

Appendix B

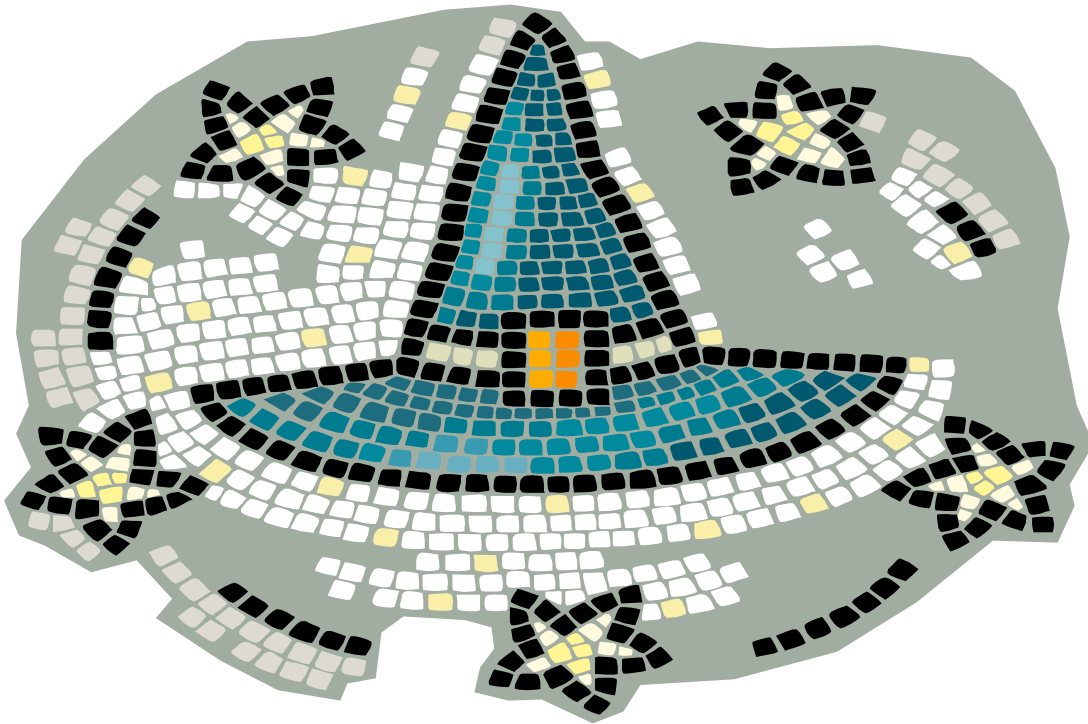
Name _____

Date _____

“Witch” Part of the Story

Write what happens in each part of the story.

problem or climax



lead or beginning

ending or solution

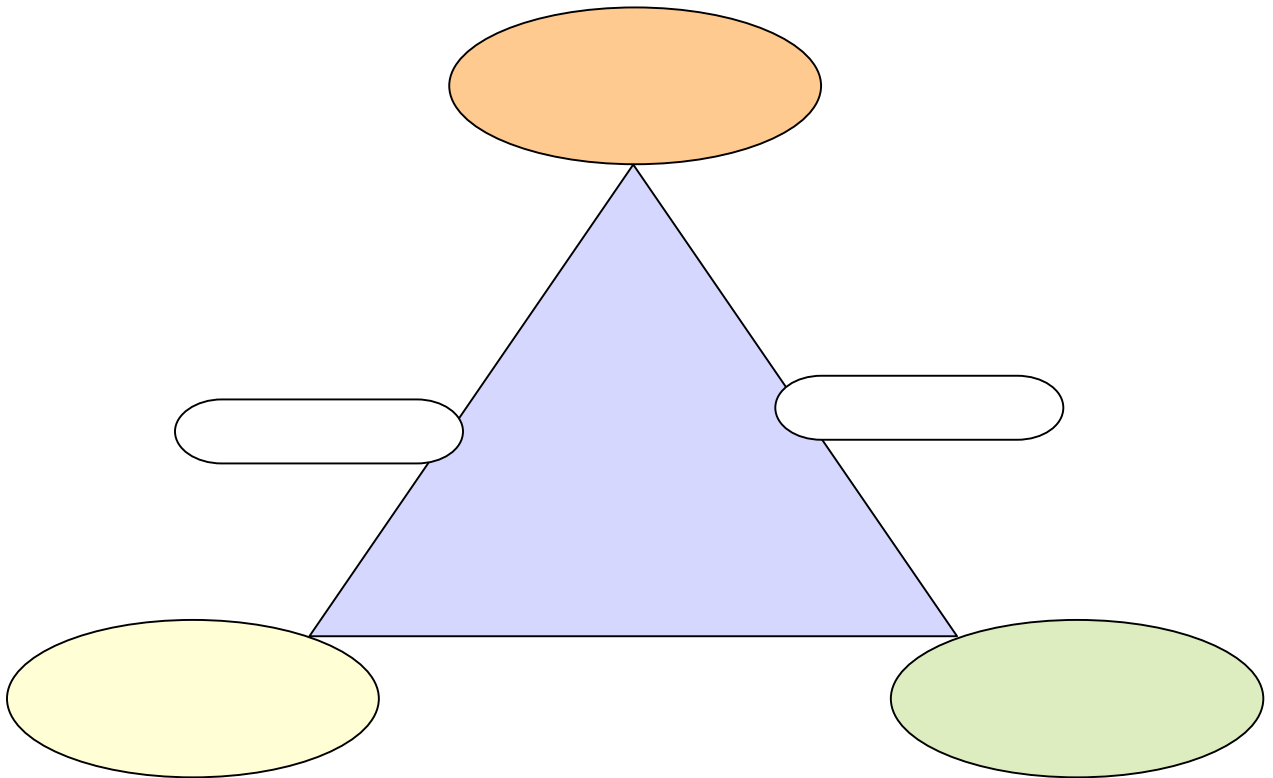
Appendix C

Name _____

Date _____

Characters Take Shape

In the center triangle write the name of your character. In the shapes around the triangle write something you showed the reader about your character. If you do not fill in all shapes then you need to show more about your character to your reader. Use your senses.



Appendix D

Name _____

Date _____

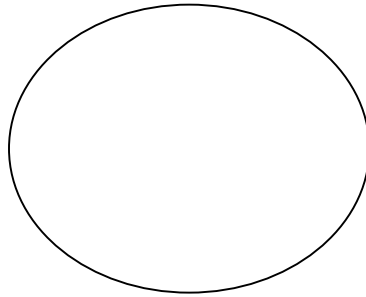
I Spy

Write the object that you are describing in the center. Use your senses to describe the object.

feel



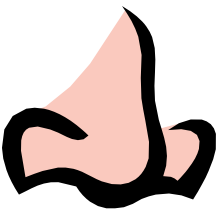
look



taste



sound



smell