



## Bulgarian Creative Writing Competition 2014 Supplement Activity Packet

### INTRODUCTION:

#### Creativity and the Bulgarian Creative Writing Competition

Picture this scenario, perhaps similar to one that you have seen yourself:

*You are in class with a group of young students. “Today, students,” you say, “we are going to draw pictures. You can draw anything you want, anything you imagine.” You then hand out the materials, and tell the students that they have until the end of the class period to draw their picture.*

*Almost immediately after you say this, a student raises his hand and asks, “But what should we draw?” The rest of the class also looks to you eagerly for the answer.*

*“Anything you want,” you repeat. You search for an example, something that conveys the endless possibilities. “You can draw, say...a flying horse, or a purple tree. Absolutely anything.” Comprehension dawns on the students’ faces, and they eagerly pick up their pencils.*

*As you walk around the room, monitoring their progress, you realize that everyone is drawing either horses (most of them flying) or trees (most of them purple). The students who dislike their own horses or trees have asked their more artistic peers to draw theirs for them. The point of the exercise—for each student to create something completely unique—has been missed completely.*

Does this sound familiar?

If it does, you’re not alone. All too often, education is becoming geared towards test taking, or rote memorization of concepts, with little value placed on imagination. As a result, many students struggle with the concept of thinking “outside the box”.

This is one of the reasons for the establishment of the Bulgarian Creative Writing Competition. In 2003, Peace Corps volunteers in Georgia noticed many of the issues mentioned above in their schools. As a result, they founded the first Peace Corps-led writing competition as a way to encourage creativity in students, and give them an outlet to express themselves. Over the years the competition grew to include Peace Corps countries all over the world, including Bulgaria (2011, 2012, 2013). With the departure of Peace Corps from Bulgaria in summer 2013, we have made it a priority to continue with the competition in a new format, and with the partnership of the NGO CorPLUS.

## Why creative writing?

Creative writing is useful not only with regard to using one's imagination, but its study also provides the chance to broaden one's understanding of the writing craft as a whole. Young people who write are introduced to new grammar, vocabulary, and techniques which can help them enhance their understanding of their native tongue and/or improve their use of a foreign language. Creative writing also allows students to develop skills that are useful in other aspects of their future academic and professional lives. The process of planning, editing, and sharing one's writing with an audience is a valuable experience.

What's more, creative writing is an outlet for students who may not excel at traditional tests or school essays to express themselves, and to build confidence in their own skill set.

## PART II:

### Incorporating Creative Thinking and Writing into your Classes

While it's all very good to talk about creativity, it is, as the example above shows, hard to explain to some kids. You cannot simply expect kids to immediately break from the model that they've been taught to follow for most of their education. This is why it helps to have activities that spark their interest, and that prompt them to explore their own imaginations. Once they've been helped to discover their own capabilities, many students take to such exercises with much more enthusiasm and initiative. That is, you can then expect to see a lot fewer horses and trees!

In this packet, you will find a variety of such activities that you can use in your classroom as supplements or as individual lessons. These can be utilized with different age groups and levels of English comprehension. (They can also be done in Bulgarian!) Depending on your class' needs and abilities, several adaptations are suggested for each exercise.

While these activities are all intended to help prepare students for participation in the Bulgarian Creative Writing Competition, this need not be their only purpose. You can incorporate these into everyday English lessons, clubs, or other activities. Hopefully they will inspire you to think up some of your own!

There are two kinds of activities listed below. In **Part A**, you will find creative writing exercises that are also fun, which cultivate language and writing skills while also encouraging students to think differently. In **Part B**, you will find simple outlines of lessons that deal with the more traditional aspects of writing, such as the structural parts of a text.

## ACTIVITIES:

### PART A

#### 1. PLOT LESSON PLAN

##### Time:

Brainstorm, introduction to terms, and coming up with examples – 15-20 minutes

Group work and presentations – 10-15 minutes

Jumbled plot picture activity – up to 20 minutes (depending what comic/story you use)

Conflict introduction and brainstorming/discussion – 15 minutes

Class writing – up to 1 hour (can also be done as homework)

**Materials:** Whiteboard, markers, photocopies of story excerpts (included at the end of this lesson plan), and several photocopied versions of all the pages from the same picture book (or long comic strip), *from which you have removed all the writing/print/dialog*. You want all the pictures from the story to be out of order, so intentionally jumbled them up. You will need one set of jumbled story pictures for each small group (2-6 people). **Note:** No matter what level your students are, choose a picture book—this is a plot activity, not a reading activity—remember, you will be erasing or covering up the text in the story anyway, so you can use a book in Bulgarian, too. Here are some recommendations for picture books to use:

- The Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munsch
- There's An Alligator Under My Bed by Mercer Mayer
- Corduroy by Don Freeman

**Focus:** Students will:

(1) Learn to identify the four basic elements of plot: *exposition, complication, climax, and resolution*

(2) Organize the plot of a comic strip/picture book working together in groups and classify the actions accordingly

(3) Learn (or review) the basic types of plot conflict: *man vs. man, man vs. nature/supernatural force, man vs. self*

(4) Write their own short stories using a predetermined conflict, paying attention to plot structure throughout

**Product(s):** Story/plot of comic/picture book put in order; short story about a conflict

##### Procedure:

1. Write the word “plot” on the board. Ask someone to define the word. After some discussion, give them this official definition: *PLOT is the events happening in the story—that is, what happens in order to give us insight into the character’s life.*

2. Draw four bubbles attached to the word “plot”. Write in the words **Exposition, Complication, Climax, and Resolution**. Go through and define the words as follows:

- Exposition – information needed to understand the story: setting, characters, events before the main plot
- Complication – catalyst that begins the major conflict
- Climax – turning point in the story, when characters try to resolve the conflict
- Resolution – set of events that brings story to a close

(Encourage students to explore the idea that the order in which one finds these elements of plot is not always set. For example, in a mystery story we may not get the exposition until later in the course of events.)

3. Ask the students for a well-known film (movie) that they've all seen (like *Titanic* or *The Hunger Games*). Go through and have them give examples from the plot of the film that match up with each of the parts above. For example, in *Titanic*, the scene where the characters all board the ship, or the fancy dinner that Jack attends with Rose, are scenes in which we get a sense of characters' social status and personalities. This is part of the exposition. The climax would be when the ship hits the iceberg and the ensuing deaths and rescues that happen.

4. Divide students into 4 groups. Explain that each group will be given an excerpt from a story, and that they will need to identify which part of the plot their story contains (exposition, complication, climax, and resolution) and what parts of the text helped them to do so. Then give each group their respective story excerpt—*The Fun They Had* (exposition), *The Emperor's New Clothes* (complication), *The Cask of the Amontillado* (climax), and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (resolution). They should read the selections out loud, discuss together what part of the plot it is, as well as consult the teacher or reference materials for unknown vocabulary words. They should also look for a few examples to support why they think their section illustrates a specific part of the plot (i.e., a major dramatic action shows climax, "and they lived happily ever after" is a clue for resolution, describing the location sets up the exposition, etc.).

**(Note:** Depending on your students' level of English, you can always choose different story excerpts. To make the concept a little easier to grasp, one option is to give them excerpts from stories you've already read in class.)

5. Have students present their findings to the class—they need not read their excerpts out loud, just explain their reasoning with brief examples.

6. Divide students into new groups, and give them all the same jumbled (out of order) copies of a picture book or comic without text/dialog. Have each group work together to put the scenes in order (they should **not** write any dialog or text). The idea is that there is no one "right" order, but that they must work to make the elements of plot sensible. When they're done have them present their group's order to the class, and compare any differences between groups. If you like, at the end you can reveal to them the order in the original book/story, although this is not required.

7. Return the class to the idea of **conflict**. Work together as a class to identify basic types of conflict (man vs. man, man vs. nature/supernatural force, man vs. self). Give a few examples:

- **Man vs. man** – boring teacher vs. clever student; family members fighting over the will of a deceased loved one
- **Man vs. nature/supernatural** – family on vacation vs. hurricane; Frodo vs. the evil will of the Ring
- **Man vs. self** – woman trying to convince herself to move away from her safe but dull hometown; serial killer fighting the urge to kill another victim

8. Briefly, have students give their own examples of books, films, etc. and the types of conflicts in them. Discuss what type of conflicts appeal to them most as readers or audience members, and which ones they like to write about.

9. For class writing time (or homework), give the students three specific conflicts to choose from, and have them write a short story using the one they choose. When they are done writing, ask them to divide and **label** the four parts of the story: exposition, complication, climax, and resolution.

The conflict writing prompts they have to choose from are:

- Character absolutely must venture outside to complete a task even though a terrible storm is coming
- Character wants something that belongs to his/her best friend, and will do anything to get this thing in spite of various obstacles standing in the way
- Character is tempted to eat or drink something specific even though (s)he has a very good reason to not consume this food or beverage

***Additional sites with short story texts and plot basics:***

<http://www.americanliterature.com/short-stories>

<http://www.americanliterature.com/twenty-great-american-short-stories>

<http://www.americanliterature.com/100-great-short-stories>

<http://www.creative-writing-now.com/what-is-plot.html>

<http://www.learner.org/interactives/literature/read/plot1.html>

### ***Plot Lesson Story Excerpts***

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Margie even wrote about it that night in her diary. On the page headed May 17, 2157, she wrote, "Today, Tommy found a real book!"

It was a very old book. Margie's grandfather once said that when he was a little boy his grandfather told him that there was a time when all stories were printed on paper.

They turned the pages, which were yellow and crinkly, and it was awfully funny to read words that stood still instead of moving the way they were supposed to--on a screen, you know. And then, when they turned back to the page before, it had the same words on it that it had had when they read it the first time.

"Gee," said Tommy, "what a waste. When you're through with the book, you just throw it away, I guess. Our television screen must have had a million books on it and it's good for plenty more. I wouldn't throw it away."

"Same with mine," said Margie. She was eleven and hadn't seen as many telebooks as Tommy had. He was thirteen. She said, "Where did you find it?"

"In my house." He pointed without looking, because he was busy reading. "In the attic."

"What's it about?"

(From *The Fun They Had* by Isaac Asimov)

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The brook was searched, but the body of the schoolmaster was not to be discovered. Hans Van Ripper as executor of his estate, examined the bundle which contained all his worldly effects. They consisted of two shirts and a half; two stocks for the neck; a pair or two of worsted stockings; an old pair of corduroy small-clothes; a rusty razor; a book of psalm tunes full of dog's-ears; and a broken pitch-pipe. As to the books and furniture of the schoolhouse, they belonged to the community, excepting Cotton Mather's History of Witchcraft, a New England Almanac, and book of dreams and fortune-telling; in which last was a sheet of foolscap much scribbled and blotted in several fruitless attempts to make a copy of verses in honor of the heiress of Van Tassel. These magic books and the poetic scrawl were forthwith consigned to the flames by Hans Van Ripper; who, from that time forward, determined to send his children no more to school; observing that he never knew any good come of this same reading and writing. Whatever money the schoolmaster possessed, and he had received his quarter's pay but a day or two before, he must have had about his person at the time of his disappearance.

The mysterious event caused much speculation at the church on the following Sunday. Knots of gazers and gossips were collected in the churchyard, at the bridge, and at the spot where the hat and pumpkin had been found. The stories of Brouwer, of ones, and a whole budget of others were called to mind; and when they had diligently considered them all, and compared them with the symptoms of the present case, they shook their heads, and came to the conclusion that Ichabod had been carried off by the Galloping Hessian. As he was a bachelor, and in nobody's debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him; the school was removed to a different quarter of the Hollow, and another pedagogue reigned in his stead.

(From *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving)

"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In niche, and finding an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was not the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied....

(From *The Cask of the Amontillado* by Edgar Allen Poe)

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Time passed merrily in the large town which was his capital; strangers arrived every day at the court. One day, two rogues, calling themselves weavers, made their appearance. They gave out that they knew how to weave stuffs of the most beautiful colors and elaborate patterns, the clothes manufactured from which should have the wonderful property of remaining invisible to everyone who was unfit for the office he held, or who was extraordinarily simple in character.

"These must, indeed, be splendid clothes!" thought the Emperor. "Had I such a suit, I might at once find out what men in my realms are unfit for their office, and also be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish! This stuff must be woven for me immediately." And he caused large sums of money to be given to both the weavers in order that they might begin their work directly.

So the two pretended weavers set up two looms, and affected to work very busily, though in reality they did nothing at all. They asked for the most delicate silk and the purest gold thread; put both into their own knapsacks; and then continued their pretended work at the empty looms until late at night.

(From *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Hans Christian Andersen)

## 2. CHARACTER LESSON PLAN

**Time:** Writing a quick personal introduction/sharing – 5-10 min.; brainstorm – 5 min.; “Creating Well-Developed Characters” worksheet – 15 min.; discussion – 5-10 min.; assessing their story’s character/creating Facebook page – 15 min.; re-writing their self-introductions from another character’s perspective/reading aloud – 10-20 min.

**Materials:** Whiteboard, markers, “Creating Well-Developed Characters” worksheet (p. 10-11 of [http://ywp.nanowrimo.org/files/ywp/High\\_School\\_Workbook\\_Customizable\\_V2.pdf](http://ywp.nanowrimo.org/files/ywp/High_School_Workbook_Customizable_V2.pdf)), character Facebook page worksheet (included at end of this lesson plan), interesting photo of a person

**Focus:** Students will:

- (1) Review the types of characters in creative writing—antagonist, protagonist, supporting characters.
- (2) Create a character profile (Facebook page) for the protagonist in the story they wrote for homework.
- (3) Write and then rewrite their self-introductions from a new character’s perspective.
- (4) Write a short story about a character they are shown in a photograph.

**Products:**

- (1) Character Facebook page to go with their prior homework
- (2) Two versions of self-introductions
- (3) A story

**Procedure:**

1. Have students take 5 minutes to write a paragraph introduction about themselves—who are they, in their own words? Don’t give them too much information, just let them write. After 5 minutes have passed, you can have a few people read theirs out loud for the class. Then ask them to set the introductions aside until later.

1. Start by asking the class what some of their all-time favorite characters are. Cleopatra? That guy from “The Vampire Diaries”? Sherlock Holmes, as written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle? Have them associate a trait that causes them to be interested in or to like this character. Keep track on the board.

2. Hand out copies of the “Creating Well-Developed Characters” worksheet. As a class, read through the descriptions of each type of character on the worksheet, having students take turns reading aloud. After a student reads a character description, ask students to name examples of that character type from books the class has read, including those already on the board.

3. Take time with the physical vs. abstract antagonist section. Read examples together as a class and then have everyone write down and share two more examples of a physical vs. abstract antagonist. Give students a couple of minutes to do this, then ask them to share what they wrote.

4. Lead students in a brief discussion of the characters they named from the books they've read and what each one's words and actions show about them. Ask, "What clues let you know which characters are antagonists? Protagonists? Supporting characters?" Tell students to keep this "cast of characters"—and the genius tricks their authors use to portray them—in their heads as they write their own works. Remember, it's as much about *showing* and it is about *telling*. Give them a few examples:

*TELL: Sarah was a polite girl, but she was excitable.*

*SHOW: Sarah did her best to remain outwardly calm and composed, even as her heart raced. She hoped the nervous sweat dripping down her neck wasn't visible to those around her.*

*TELL: I think pickles are gross.*

*SHOW: I ordered a slice of pizza, carefully removing the pickles from on top of the cheese, and placing them in a napkin, which I set far away from the rest of my meal.*

5. Ask the students to take out their homework from the night before (the PLOT writing assignment) or another story you've had them write. Ask the students to look at their stories and zone in on their protagonist. Ask them how well they feel they know this character, first as a writer, then as a reader. What are the key traits conveyed in the story? Is the character easy to get to know or relate to?

6. Hand out the character Facebook page handout. Tell them that, as writers, they should be familiar with everything about their characters—even those things that they never explicitly say in their writing. Still, they can express tastes, fears, worries, and experiences via dialog, actions, reactions, and other subtle tools in their writing. Have them complete the FB pages in class. Ask a few students to share both their stories and their FB pages out loud. Let the class provide feedback—was the character's profile reasonably matched to his actions and thoughts in the story? How else might you show such things?

7. Have students take out their self-introductions from the beginning of class. While keeping the goal and content basically the same, have them take about 10 minutes to rewrite the intro from another character's point of view:

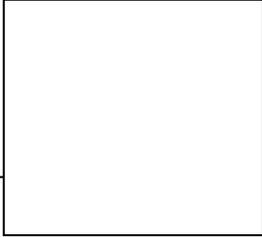
- you mother
- your dog
- your nosy neighbor
- a hungry cannibal
- your roommate

Again, give students the chance to read their rewritten intros out loud and provide input.

8. For home-/class work, put a photo with a close-up of an interesting-looking character on the projector. (Try: <http://photography.nationalgeographic.com/photography/photo-of-the-day/people-culture/> for some excellent photos to use.) Have students write a story about this character for homework, with a focus on showing, not telling, who this person really is. Have them still keep the plot lesson from day one in mind.

**Character development Facebook page**

**Create a Facebook profile for your character. Leave out no details!**

(Cover photo)	
 (Profile photo)	
<b>General information:</b>	
Name (full): _____	
Name (nickname or alias): _____	
Birthday: _____	
Gender: _____	
Familial status (married/single/etc.): _____	
Language(s): _____	
Hometown: _____	
Current location: _____	
<b>Education and work:</b>	
Works as: _____ at _____ since _____	
Prior job(s): _____ (for _____ years/months)	
Primary school: _____	
High school: _____	
University/college: _____	
<b>Likes:</b>	
Hobbies: _____	
Favorite music styles: _____	
Favorite music groups: _____	
Favorite books: _____	
Favorite authors: _____	
Favorite television shows: _____	
Favorite films: _____	
Favorite quotations: _____	
About me: _____	
<b>Contact information:</b>	
Address: _____	
E-mail: _____	
Home phone: _____	
Mobile phone: _____	
Website: _____	

**Further character development:**

What is the character's relationship with his/her family?

Has the character ever been in love? If so, with whom? How did it end?

How does your character access local and world news? (TV? Word of mouth? The newspaper?)

When was the last time your character cried?

If your character could go anywhere in the world, where would (s)he go, and why?

What is your character's current ambition?

What is something your character is ashamed of?

What is something your character likes about his/her appearance?

What is something your character would change about his/her appearance?

How does your character prefer to travel?

How does your character feel about birthdays?

What was the last lie that your character told someone?

Who is someone your character is jealous of?

What is your character's favorite season?

What's your character's favorite food?

What is something that your character would never do?

What are your character's vices? (i.e., cigarettes, alcohol, lying....)

What is your character's favorite color?

Does your character have, or has (s)he ever had, any pets? If so, what kind? Name(s)?

In school, what was your character's favorite subject(s)?

What are your character's pet peeves (that is, what little things bother them—such as: having wrinkled clothes, being late, having other people step in front of you on the sidewalk...)?



### 3. BLACKOUT POETRY LESSON PLAN

**Time:** Introduction – 10 minutes; watching clips and reading sample poems – 15 minutes; creating poems together – 10 minutes; creating their own initial poems – 20 minutes; sharing poems and discussing – 15 minutes; independent work with a variety of sources – 20 minutes

**Materials:** Internet connection, projector, links to videos (below), projection of today's front page of the New York Times (go to <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/todayspaper/index.html> and click on "Today's Front Pages"), old English-language magazines or newspapers (or photocopies of pages of books, etc.), black markers

#### Focus:

(1) Students will be exposed to a new type of thinking and writing, learning the concept and method of making "blackout poetry".

(2) Students will learn to be intentional in their use of vocabulary and language, not just learning to "make do" with a limited selection of words, but to take possession of the language available.

**Product:** In the end, each student will have at least one blackout poem of their own, which they will share with the class.

#### Procedure:

1. Write the word "poetry" on the board. Ask students to tell you their "gut reaction" to the word. As they say the first thing that comes to mind, write it on the board around the word. (Students will usually say things like, "boring", "rhymes", "old-fashioned", "hard", etc.) Have them explain why they feel this way; find out if they find poetry challenging because they have to come up with words to fit a pattern or model.

2. Tell students that today you are going to learn to create a type of poetry without rhyming, and without the verse that they might be used to. Instead of taking words from their brains and putting them on paper, they'll be choosing words from the page and *selecting them* with their brains. It's called **blackout poetry**.

3. Watch first clip about Austin Kleon's blackout poetry book ([http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/july-dec10/kleon\\_09-14.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/july-dec10/kleon_09-14.html).) Ask a couple comprehension questions like, "Why did Kleon start writing blackout poetry? What inspired him?" and get their reaction to the poems Kleon shares—do they think they're real poetry? Why or why not?

4. Project overhead and read aloud a couple blackout poems, taken from the Internet. (Use the ones at the end of this lesson plan.) Talk about their range of length, tone, use of language, etc. Some are funny, some are touching—it depends on how the author chooses to use the original text. Note that sometimes the authors improvise or divide words to create things of their choice, taking a constraint and working it to their own ends.

5. Watch time-lapse clip of Kleon making a blackout poem (<http://vimeo.com/4037584>). Discuss his process.

6. Put up part of a newspaper text (go to <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/todayspaper/index.html> and click on "Today's Front Pages") on the projector so that it projects on the whiteboard. Then make a blackout poem together with the class. **First, POINT OUT THAT YOU DO NOT NEED TO READ THE ARTICLE! Just "skim" it for useful language.** Zoom in close on the article and try using just a small section of the paper, and use the whiteboard marker to "black out" the words (it can be a little sloppy). Help guide the class' word choices, reminding them that they'll still need to use

subjects/verbs/etc. in a way that makes sense grammatically! (This may take a few tries!) It helps to first go through and circle the most “potent” words the students find—that is, the ones they like the best—and then eliminate other parts and find a way to string their chosen parts together.

7. Put the example poems you already read aloud on the projector again as examples. Give students a newspaper page (the first time I did this lesson, I used old copies of *World View* and *Peace Corps Times*—you can also use photocopies of magazine pages, or copies of the articles included at the end of this lesson—again, the students DON’T NEED TO READ THE ARTICLES!) to work with, and let them create their own poem. (**Note:** You can give students all the same page, or each different ones.) Walk around the room monitoring, encouraging, helping with vocabulary, etc.

8. When all students are ready, allow those who wish to read their poems aloud to the class to do so. Have the class give feedback—what did they like about the poem? What words were the strongest? Did the writer capture a style of their own using someone else’s words? Did the newspaper’s content and style constrain your vocabulary?

9. Independent class work/homework: create 2-3 more blackout poems using different sources. Provide a variety of other photocopied sources for them to try (books, magazines, etc.), or have students choose their own outside of class. Do they find that the text source influences the poem’s content?

(Also: [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/video/module\\_byid.html?s=news01n42cbqf22](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/video/module_byid.html?s=news01n42cbqf22))

## Sample articles for blackout poetry

### The New York Times

#### Loving the Midwest

By CURTIS SITTENFELD

AFTER we moved to St. Louis in 2007, my husband joked that we were self-hating Midwesterners. He grew up in Indiana, I grew up in Ohio, we met in Washington, D.C., and we landed in St. Louis — for my husband’s job — by way of Philadelphia. If our friends from the coasts disparaged the heartland, we were quick to defend it. Privately, however, we were critical.

At coffee houses, my husband was annoyed by how long it took baristas to fill his order, and on the highway, he was mystified by drivers, all of whom seemed to crowd into the right lane. At trivia nights, which are common in St. Louis as informal fund-raisers, you could buy mulligans for questions you didn’t know the answer to, which offended my husband’s sense of competitive integrity. We thought that pizza made with the beloved local cheese — Provel — tasted as if it had been cooked with cellophane. And if we went out on a weeknight, we’d be the only patrons in the restaurant by 9 o’clock and would get the impression that the staff members wanted us to hurry up so they could go home. We’d ask each other, “Where is everyone?”

There was a particular car I soon came to think of as distinctly St. Louis-ish: a gigantic white S.U.V. with a W. bumper sticker on it for George W. Bush. In Philadelphia, I had socialized with only one conservative, a woman I actually thought of as “Donna the Republican” because her politics were so singular to me.

But the ultimate affront in St. Louis wasn’t politics or food; it was that my husband and I struggled to make friends. I am not exaggerating when I say that in 2008, we held a Super Bowl “party” to which zero guests showed up.

It was around March 2009, when our first daughter was born, that our lives began to shift. One of St. Louis’s oft-touted claims — that it’s a good place to raise children — happens to be true. Admission to the zoo is free. There are lots of great parks, including the one that surrounds the Arch — a monument that, in its elegantly mathematical beauty, genuinely lives up to its hype. St. Louis is also home to a kind of kids’ paradise called the [Magic House](#), which features, among other attractions, a miniature Oval Office and a three-story climbable beanstalk. The city’s enthusiasm for its sports teams crosses age, race and gender in an appealing, wholesome way.

In fact, we got an early clue as to what kind of place St. Louis is during our first summer here, at a Cardinals-Cubs game. Sitting behind us in the stadium was a guy who looked to be about 20 and drunk. As people walked by, he’d yell out mocking observations about their appearances. Finally, I turned and said, “You know, everyone else here just wants to enjoy the game like you do.” Having moved only weeks before from Philadelphia, where Santa Claus himself was famously booed during an Eagles game, I half expected the guy to slug me. Instead, looking taken aback, he said, “I hadn’t thought of it like that. I’m sorry.” I was stunned into silence.

The much vaunted Midwestern friendliness is, in my experience, more evident not among people you know, but among those you don’t. It may take a year and a half to be invited to a dinner party, but the checkout clerk at the grocery store greets you as warmly as your grandmother. Eventually,

my husband and I made friends with people who are mostly transplants like us, or in some cases a half transplant-half local couple in which one spouse lured the other back — because St. Louis is, you know, such a great place to raise kids.

Six years after we arrived, we have two daughters, ages 4 and 2, which gives me the authority to answer, definitively, the question of where people in St. Louis are when they're not in a restaurant at 9 o'clock on a weeknight: we usually eat dinner about 5:15, and by 9 o'clock I'm getting ready for bed. But somewhere along the line, I started to really like living here. In fact, I would be happy to stay in St. Louis forever.

For one thing, it's so easy. If I complain that I had a hard time parking, what I mean is that there was no space waiting for me directly in front of my destination and I had to drive another 50 feet to find one. If I say a restaurant is hard to get into, I mean that when I called on Thursday, they had no reservation open for Saturday night at 7:30. I work from home, but my husband's commute is 20 minutes in "bad" traffic and 10 minutes otherwise.

WHAT I like best of all is that the size of St. Louis means we now run into people we know at the playground and the post office and the farmers' market. In several instances, we've developed friendships after we bumped into the same people in more than one setting — the mother and son duo my daughter and I took a baby music class with, then saw again two years later when the children were in the same preschool, or the couple we met through my college classmate before we all happened to move onto the same street.

Now I consider myself a St. Louis local. I know not everyone would agree — I'll never satisfactorily answer the question natives here ask one another on meeting, which is where they went to high school — but I believe my transition occurred last spring.

It was strangely instantaneous, as when people switch bodies in movies. My husband and I were, naturally, at a trivia fund-raiser, at a table for eight. St. Louis's professional ice hockey team, the Blues, was in the playoffs, and as an M.C. asked the trivia questions, a large screen showed the game. When a Blues player scored late in the game, the room — a school gym — erupted in cheers. And just as meeting the same people in two settings has propelled forward our friendships, I felt how the intersection of these two disparate but quintessentially local phenomena, trivia and the Blues, forged my new identity. It was involuntary but not unwelcome; in a noisy gym, I became a St. Louisan.

## When 'G' Movies Are For Kids, Do Kids Avoid 'G' Movies?

by Bob Mondello

If you're a parent with small children, summer is traditionally a time when there's lots for them to see at the multiplex. That's not *untrue* this summer. But if you're specifically looking for a film with a G rating, you may just be out of luck.

Two years ago, out of the more than 600 films submitted to the Motion Picture Association of America, 16 got rated G — the most in a decade. Last year, even if you counted re-releases, only 10 films got rated G. And this year, of the 250 films that have opened so far, not a single one has been rated G. Not one. Which is not to suggest there haven't been family-friendly films this year; they're just rated PG.

For instance, in *Oz the Great and Powerful*, based on L. Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz* books, all it takes is a bit of digital violence, and a womanizing leading man, for Oz to become a place where parental guidance is suggested.

What's happened to the G rating? Well, let's start with what it is. In the words of the Motion Picture Association, G is for General Audiences — all ages admitted, meaning there is nothing in theme, language, nudity, sex, violence or other matters that the ratings board thinks would offend parents whose younger children view the picture.

There was a time, before the ratings system started in the 1960s, when virtually *all* Hollywood movies would have qualified for a G. Back then, to avoid government censorship, the film studios subscribed to the "don'ts and be-carefuls" of the Hays Code, which was drawn up in 1930.

Among its requirements: that no picture should ever "lower the moral standards of those who see it." The code banned nudity, sex and violence, as well as the mocking of religion, illegal drug use, and one thing that would be fine in a G-rated film today: interracial romance. Also banned: revenge plots, lustful kissing, the showing of a crime method in enough detail that it might be imitated, and of course, rough language. This last is why *Gone With the Wind* — the most popular picture ever made — stirred up controversy when Rhett Butler turned suddenly salty in his reply to Scarlett's plaintive, "Where shall I go, what shall I do?"

His "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn" was startling stuff in 1939, though by the time the film was finally assigned a rating in the 1970s, community standards had loosened up enough that it still got a G. That was also true of *Ben-Hur* when it was re-released, despite the whippings and chariot races. And it was even true of Liz Taylor's sultry *Cleopatra* and a lot of pictures aimed at adults — at first. But when the ratings got better established, G films went from being marks of films for general audiences to being marks of films for children. And once children got wind of that, they didn't want to see them.

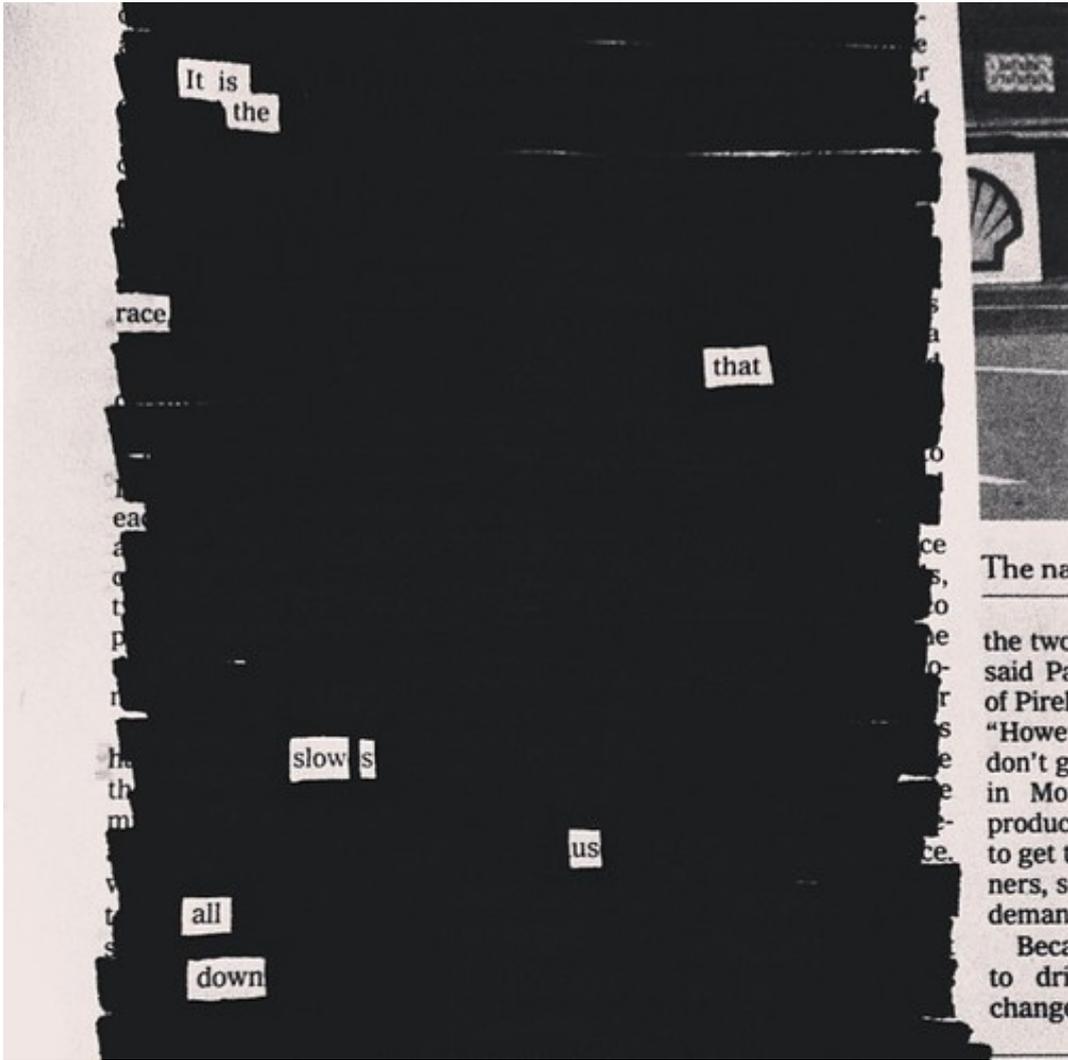
Film studios quickly discovered that for films aimed at more than tiny tots, it was wise to spice up that uncool G with a little suspense or language to get the PG that was more attractive to hip 11-year-olds.

These days, with virtually all live-action blockbusters rated PG or PG-13, the G represents a ghetto largely made up of nature films and animation. Not all animation, though. *Shrek*, Hollywood's biggest animated franchise and a film that makes being gross a point of style, is rated PG.

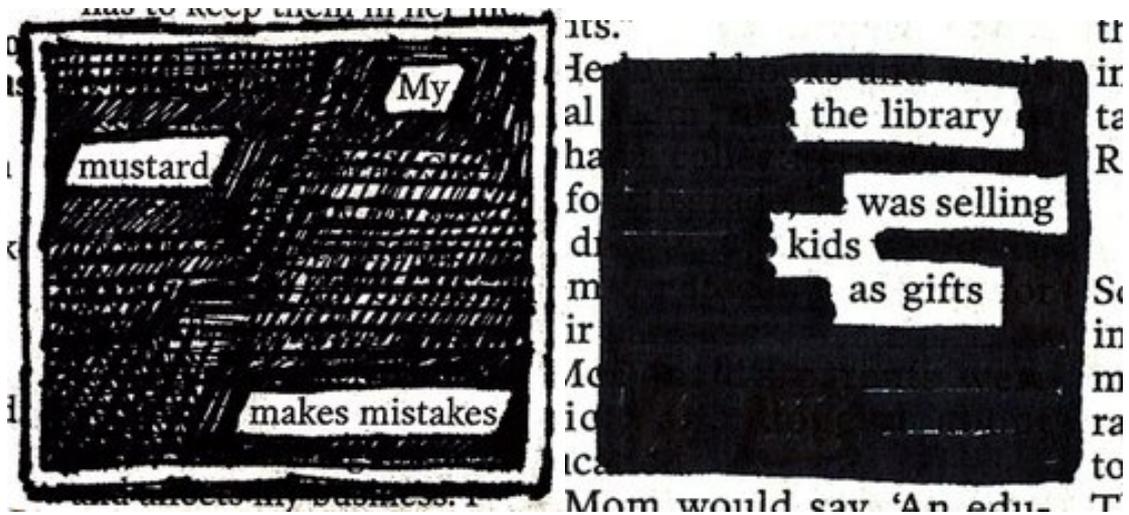
It's not that a G rating gets in the way of making money. Pixar-Disney has figured out the formula. They've had the top-ranked G-rated film every year but one in the past decade — from *Ratatouille* and *Wall-E* to *The Princess and the Frog* and *Tangled*.

But other studios aiming at kids' audiences have done just as well, if not better, without the G. Every one of the big animated franchises not made by Pixar-Disney is rated PG — including *Despicable Me*, *Ice Age*, *Kung Fu Panda* and *Madagascar*. And Pixar goes there, too — with the likes of *The Incredibles*, *Brave* and *Up*.

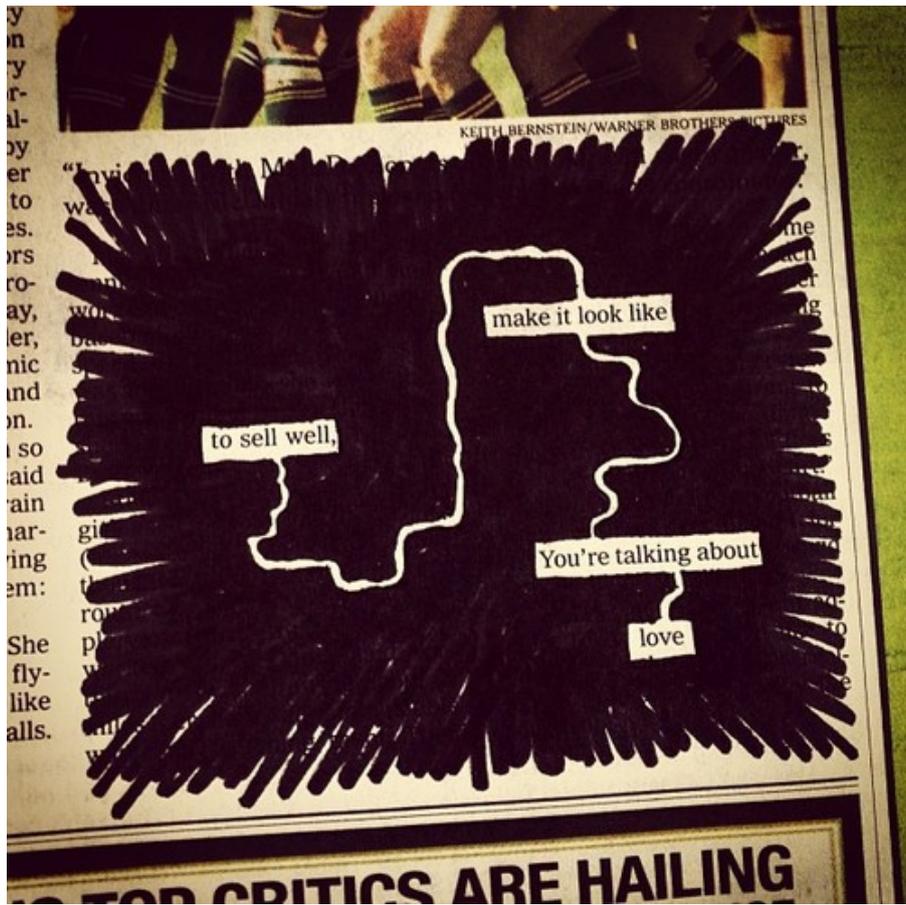
G may still mean suitable for general audiences, but parents seem to have decided it means suitable for babies. And that means even animation is trending away from the G.



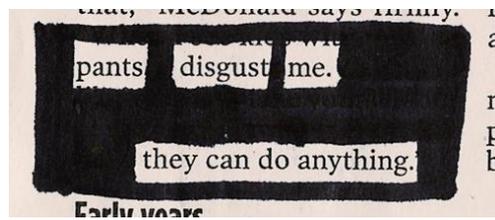
by Austin Kleon



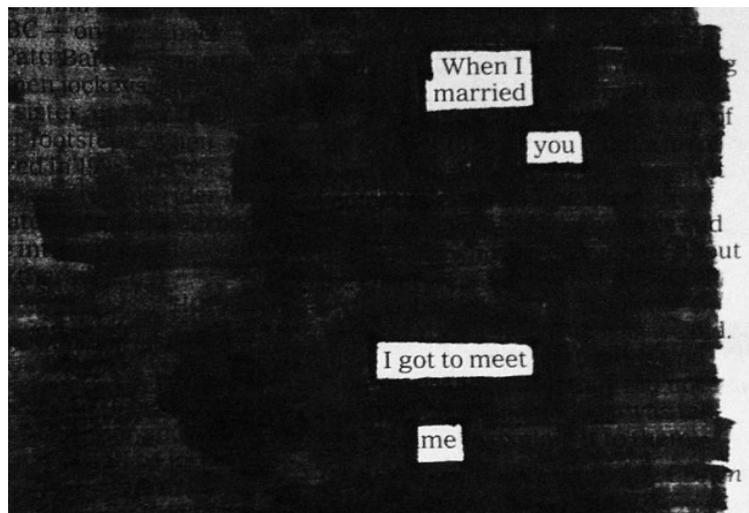
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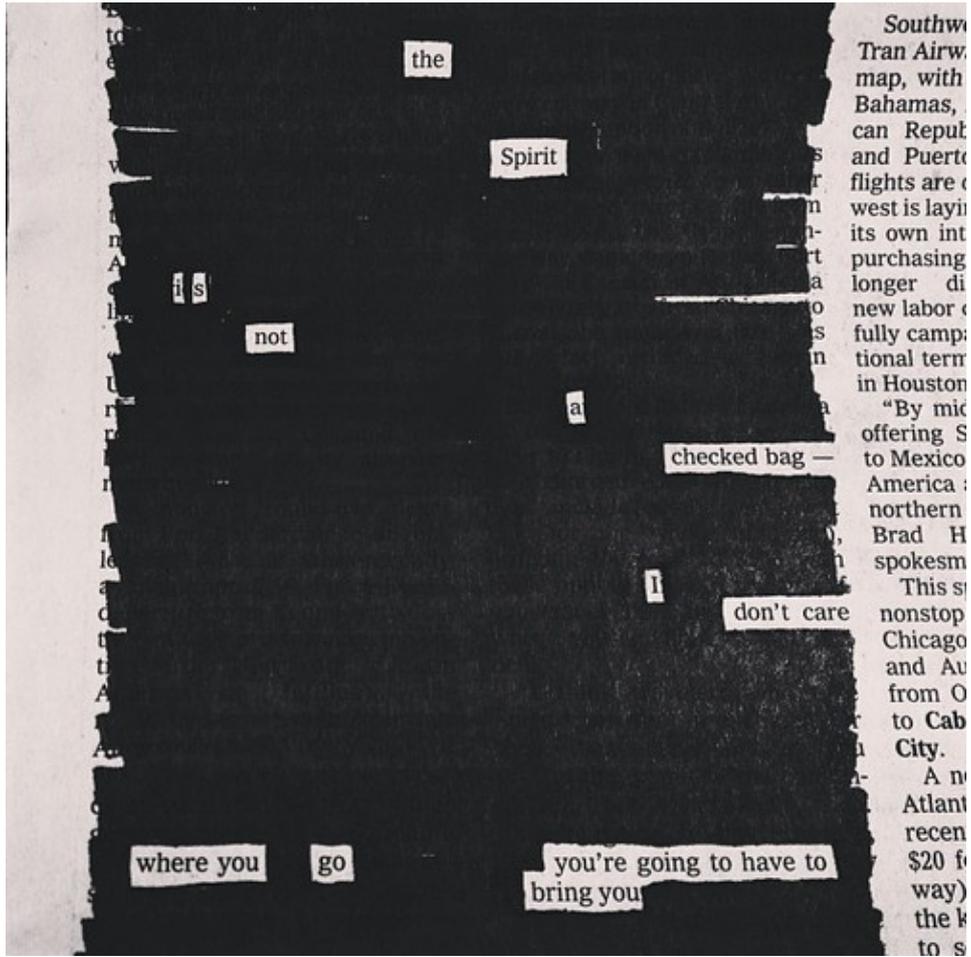
by Austin Kleon



by Aaron Zenz



by Austin Kleon



by Austin Kleon

#### 4. DIALOG (DIALOGUE) LESSON PLAN

**Time:** Chat discussion – 5-10 min.; defining dialog/basic punctuation – 5-10 min.; “Writing Really Good Dialog” worksheet – 10-15 minutes; adding descriptive verbs – 5-10 min.; comics dialog – 5-10 min.; writing assignment – 20 min. (or HW)

**Materials:** Chat dialogs (included at end of lesson), “Writing Really Good Dialog” worksheet (online at: [http://ywp.nanowrimo.org/files/ywp/ywp\\_10\\_hs\\_dialogue.pdf](http://ywp.nanowrimo.org/files/ywp/ywp_10_hs_dialogue.pdf)), comic strips for dialog (included at end of lesson plan)

**Focus:** Students will:

- (1) Learn/review the basics of writing realistic-sounding dialog
- (2) Write dialog appropriate for (a) real life and (b) creative writing using a short comic strip
- (3) Write a story consisting of at least 85% dialog, practicing how to make a story dialog-driven and not completely dependent on action
- (4) Transcribe (copy down) a complete dialog between fellow campers in an informal situation

**Product:** Short story consisting of mostly dialog; transcription of actual dialog between people

Procedure:

1. Project the first instant message chat (IM chat dialog found at the end of this lesson plan) overhead, and have students read it aloud. Ask them: “Is this how people usually talk or chat on IM? What do we know about these two? Do we care about them at all? What if this was a ten page conversation—would you keep reading?”
2. Now uncover the second version of that conversation and read it to the class or have students do so. Ask the same questions you asked about the first IM conversation again. Encourage students to explain their reasoning and to identify specific words and phrases that made this conversation more (or less) engaging or realistic. Point out that in creative writing dialog, a few well-chosen words and phrases can make all the difference in keeping readers hooked.
3. Make sure everyone knows what dialogue means. Create a definition as a class, then reveal another definition in case the class version is too wordy and you think students need something easy to remember.

*Definition: Dialogue is a conversation between two or more characters. (The exact words they speak are put between quotation marks.)*

4. Write the following sentences on the board. Have students raise their hand to vote on which one they think is how quotations are written in American English. Identify the correct one and point out where the quotes fall in relation to the commas and periods.

- (A) ‘Hey, John,’ said Fred.
- (B) –Hey John, said Fred.
- (C) “Hey, John,” said Fred. (Correct answer)**
- (D) „Hey John,” said Fred.

5. Point out the difference between the following:

“I want to move to China,” said Ming.  
Ming said, “I want to move to China.”

Note that the sentence ALWAYS ends in a period when the thought is complete, no matter whether it is inside or outside the quotation marks.

6. Now hand out the "Writing Really Good Dialogue" worksheets, and read through the three ways dialogue functions in a story. Assign students to read the dialogue in the examples aloud while you or another student narrates. Ask students how they feel the dialogue in the worksheet either moves the story forward, increases tension, or defines characters and their relationships with one another.

7. Point out how the author could have just described these conversations happening. Ask students to try and summarize the example conversations into one sentence with no dialogue. Ask students which version they like better and why. Record answers on the board, which will hopefully become a list about how dialogue is more interesting than straight narrative because \_\_\_\_\_. If students do not mention that dialog can "show" the events of a story in a way that is more interesting than simple description, point it out. (*Show me, don't tell me!*)

8. Project the IM transparencies again. Ask your students which one accomplished the three purposes of creative writing dialogue and how it accomplished them.

9. Finally, emphasize the importance, absent in the IM chats, of writing outside the dialogue using dialogue tags, indents, quotation marks, and punctuation in the right places. Expand on this by explaining that dialogue tags such as "she said" or "he answered" describe what people are doing while they are speaking, and how they are saying their words. As for other conventions of dialogue formatting, students should be familiar with these already but review that without quotation marks and indented paragraphs for each new speaker, even the most brilliant dialogue would be very hard for readers to follow.

10. Write a few sentences on the board, and have students replace boring old "said" with other speaking verbs (yelled, cried, shrieked, etc.) and change the punctuation to reflect it. For example:

(A) "I swear, I don't know where the money is," said Frankie. "Please don't break my other fingers."  
(B) "I swear, I don't know where the money is!" cried Frankie. "Please don't break my other fingers!"

(A) "Get out of my apartment," said Samantha. "You're never coming back here again."  
"Oh, we'll see about that," said Marco.

(B) "Get out of my apartment!" shrieked Samantha. "You're never coming back here again!"  
"Oh, we'll see about that..." muttered Marco.

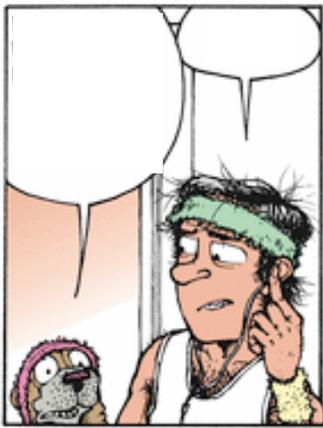
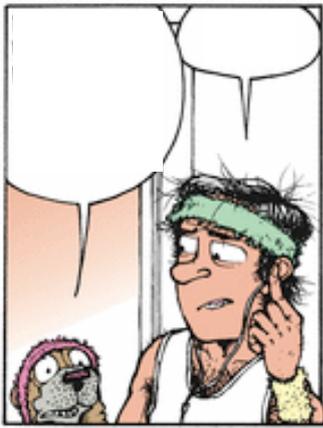
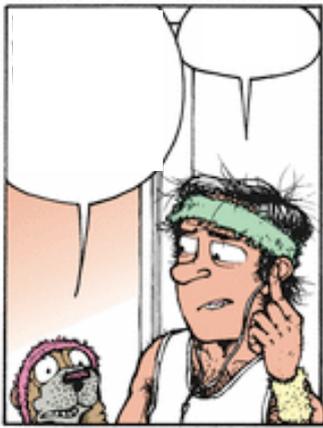
11. Give each student a blank comic strip (only 3 slides), and have them each fill in the dialog, pretending that this is just an excerpt from a longer text. Make sure they note on the back of the strip whether their dialog moves the story forward, shows character relationships, or creates tension.

12. Once they're done, ask them to write a text with the same dialog they just created, only with all the additional tools available to them as writers—using quotation marks, verbs such as "said", "shouted", "whimpered", etc. They can also describe other aspects of the situation or setting. When done, have them trade with a partner and read/discuss the text. Once they've done that, ask a volunteer or two to share their comic and their text out loud. The class should discuss the following points: Are the comic and the text equally rich in tension, character dev., meaning, etc.? Which one compelled them more? Which was more challenging to write, and why?

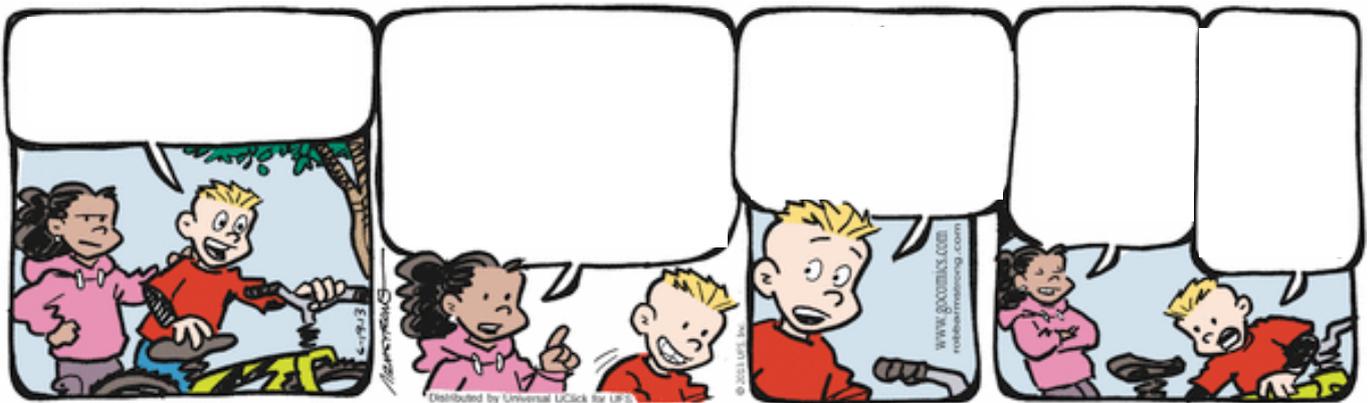
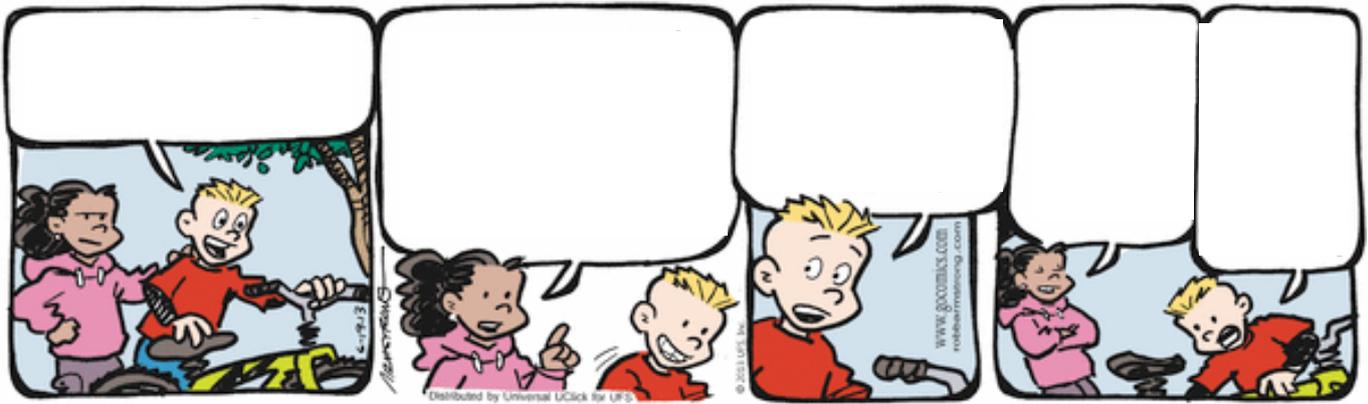
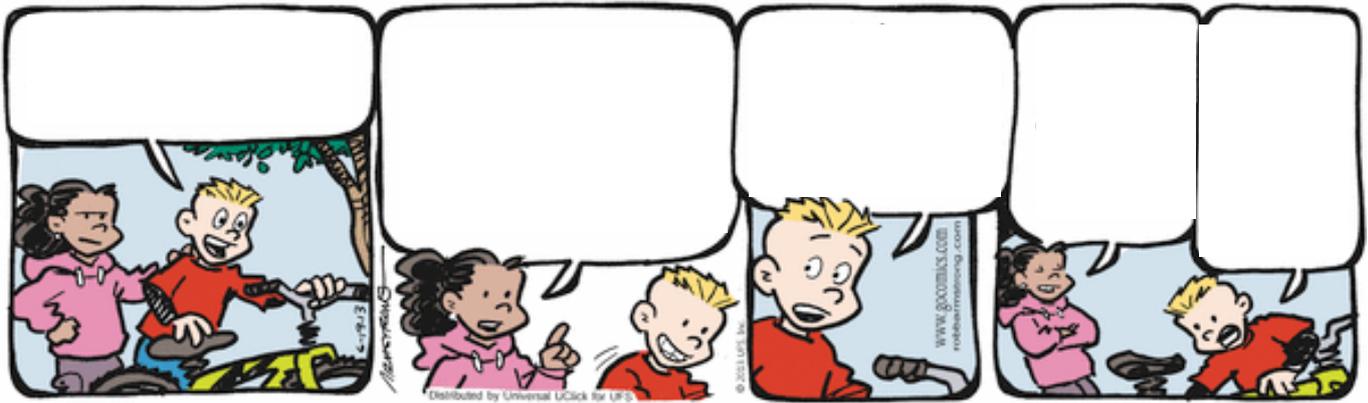
13. For in-class work (or homework), assign students the following dialog-driven task:

Write a story that is at least 4/5 dialog. In order to break the temptation of too much description and extraneous information, the protagonist must be blindfolded (or otherwise prevented from seeing anything) in the story. (S)he should be listening to two (or more) other people converse around him.









## 5. FINAL LESSON – READING AND WORKSHOP

**Time:** As long as needed, depending on which classic story is read, how long it is discussed, and how much time is needed to workshop student essays.

**Focus:** Students will:

- (1) Read a classic short story and discuss it, especially with regard to the topics touched upon during the week (plot, conflict, dialog, character, etc.)
- (2) Read a selected work of theirs out loud and receive input from classmates
- (3) Edit and rework one of their stories from the week into a final piece.

**Product:** An edited short story that they have written throughout the week

**Procedure:**

1. Have students take out all of their stories, poems, etc. from past lessons and take a brief look at them. Ask them which piece they are most proud of. Why? Which story still needs the most work? What needs to be changed? Etc.
2. Ask students to select one story that they would be comfortable sharing with the class and set it aside for later.
3. Tell students that before workshopping their pieces, the class will read a classic short story out loud. Give them the story (either “A Pair of Silk Stockings” by Kate Chopin—for advanced classes—or “The Fun They Had” by Isaac Asimov—for classes who might not have the strongest vocabulary).
4. As a class, read the story out loud. Then discuss.

“The Fun They Had”

(Written in 1951, this is the most anthologized of Isaac Asimov’s works—why do you think that might be?)

→ Note that computers did indeed exist in 1951, when the story was written, but that they were at that time enormous, room-sized machines that required cards with hole-punched codes to be entered into them in order to perform an operation.

- How does Asimov provide us with key expository information?
- Are there any elements of surprise in the text?
- What is the most engaging part of the story?
- How do we see Margie and Tommy’s characters develop? What does their relationship seem to be?
- Does this story have a typical plot development? Why or why not?
- What is the conflict?
- For what reasons does the reader stay engaged in a story with so little action?
- Who do you think the intended audience is?
- What does the author’s message seem to be?
- What elements make this story timeless? What things make it dated?
- Which of Asimov’s predictions about the future were correct and which were not?

“A Pair of Silk Stockings”

(Written in 1896, the amount of money detailed in the story—15 dollars—is the modern equivalent of about \$407.)

→ Point out that this is the period before ready-made clothing (no \$20 dresses on the racks in the shops—instead, people owned only a few items of clothing that cost considerably more and were not disposable like modern fashion), so Mrs. Sommers would not just be buying complete, brand-new items for her children, but making orders and special additions to higher-quality items. As a result, the equivalent of \$407 modern dollars would not get her very far in clothing her four children in 1896.

- What is the conflict?
- Who do you think the intended audience is?
- What does the author’s message seem to be?
- What is the most engaging part of the story?
- What moves this story forward—character, dialog, action?
- What can we guess about Mrs. Sommers and her personal life? Her past?
- What is the full cast of characters?
- What information does the author withhold? Why do you think she does this?
- What elements make this story timeless? What things make it dated?

5. After the story discussion, have a few students read a previously unread piece of their own out loud (either new homework or something that wasn’t shared before). Have students ask questions, give feedback, etc.

6. Have all student swap pieces with another student and do the same review process, only in pairs.

7. Give students the rest of the class to rewrite and edit their pieces. They may read them aloud again, time allowing.

8. Conclude with a brainstorm on the board—what did we learn this week? Etc.

9. Have students provide verbal feedback.

10. Teacher should check/reread stories and assign marks, if needed.

## ***The Fun They Had***

*Isaac Asimov*

Margie even wrote about it that night in her diary. On the page headed May 17, 2157, she wrote, "Today, Tommy found a real book!"

It was a very old book. Margie's grandfather once said that when he was a little boy his grandfather told him that there was a time when all stories were printed on paper.

They turned the pages, which were yellow and crinkly, and it was awfully funny to read words that stood still instead of moving the way they were supposed to--on a screen, you know. And then, when they turned back to the page before, it had the same words on it that it had had when they read it the first time.

"Gee," said Tommy, "what a waste. When you're through with the book, you just throw it away, I guess. Our television screen must have had a million books on it and it's good for plenty more. I wouldn't throw it away."

"Same with mine," said Margie. She was eleven and hadn't seen as many telebooks as Tommy had. He was thirteen. She said, "Where did you find it?"

"In my house." He pointed without looking, because he was busy reading. "In the attic."

"What's it about?"

"School."

Margie was scornful. "School? What's there to write about school? I hate school." Margie always hated school, but now she hated it more than ever. The mechanical teacher had been giving her test after test in geography and she had been doing worse and worse until her mother had shaken her head sorrowfully and sent for the County Inspector.

He was a round little man with a red face and a whole box of tools with dials and wires. He smiled at Margie and gave her an apple, then took the teacher apart. Margie had hoped he wouldn't know how to put it together again, but he knew how all right, and, after an hour or so, there it was again, large and black and ugly, with a big screen on which all the lessons were shown and the questions were asked. That wasn't so bad. The part Margie hated most was the slot where she had to put homework and test papers. She always had to write them out in a punch code they made her learn when she was six years old, and the mechanical teacher calculated the mark in no time.

The Inspector had smiled after he was finished and patted Margie's head. He said to her mother, "It's not the little girl's fault, Mrs. Jones. I think the geography sector was geared a little too quick. Those things happen sometimes. I've slowed it up to an average ten-year level. Actually, the over-all pattern of her progress is quite satisfactory." And he patted Margie's head again.

Margie was disappointed. She had been hoping they would take the teacher away altogether. They had once taken Tommy's teacher away for nearly a month because the history sector had blanked out completely.

So she said to Tommy, "Why would anyone write about school?" Tommy looked at her with very superior eyes. "Because it's not our kind of school, stupid. This is the old kind of school that they had hundreds and hundreds of years ago." He added loftily, pronouncing the word carefully, "Centuries ago."

Margie was hurt. "Well, I don't know what kind of school they had all that time ago." She read the book over his shoulder for a while, then said, "Anyway, they had a teacher."

"Sure they had a teacher, but it wasn't a regular teacher. It was a man."

"A man? How could a man be a teacher?"

"Well, he just told the boys and girls things and gave them homework and asked them questions."

"A man isn't smart enough."

"Sure he is. My father knows as much as my teacher."

"He can't. A man can't know as much as a teacher."

"He knows almost as much, I betcha."

Margie wasn't prepared to dispute that. She said, "I wouldn't want a strange man in my house to teach me."

Tommy screamed with laughter. "You don't know much, Margie. The teachers didn't live in the house. They had a special building and all the kids went there."

"And all the kids learned the same thing?"

"Sure, if they were the same age."

"But my mother says a teacher has to be adjusted to fit the mind of each boy and girl it teaches and that each kid has to be taught differently."

"Just the same they didn't do it that way then. If you don't like it, you don't have to read the book."

"I didn't say I didn't like it," Margie said quickly. She wanted to read about those funny schools.

They weren't even half-finished when Margie's mother called, "Margie! School!" Margie looked up. "Not yet, Mamma."

"Now!" said Mrs. Jones. "And it's probably time for Tommy, too."

Margie said to Tommy, "Can I read the book some more with you after school?"

"Maybe," he said nonchalantly. He walked away whistling, the dusty old book tucked beneath his arm. Margie went into the schoolroom. It was right next to her bedroom, and the mechanical teacher was on and waiting for her. It was always on at the same time every day except Saturday and Sunday, because her mother said little girls learned better if they learned at regular hours.

The screen was lit up, and it said: "Today's arithmetic lesson is on the addition of proper fractions. Please insert yesterday's homework in the proper slot."

Margie did so with a sigh. She was thinking about the old schools they had when her grandfather's grandfather was a little boy. All the kids from the whole neighborhood came, laughing and shouting in the schoolyard, sitting together in the schoolroom, going home together at the end of the day. They learned the same things, so they could help one another on the homework and talk about it.

And the teachers were people....

The mechanical teacher was flashing on the screen: "When we add the fractions  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{4}$ ..."

Margie was thinking about how the kids must have loved it in the old days. She was thinking about the fun they had.

### ***A Pair of Silk Stockings***

*By Kate Chopin*

Little Mrs. Sommers one day found herself the unexpected possessor of fifteen dollars. It seemed to her a very large amount of money, and the way in which it stuffed and bulged her worn old portemonnaie gave her a feeling of importance such as she had not enjoyed for years.

The question of investment was one that occupied her greatly. For a day or two she walked about apparently in a dreamy state, but really absorbed in speculation and calculation. She did not wish to act hastily, to do anything she might afterward regret. But it was during the still hours of the night when she lay awake revolving plans in her mind that she seemed to see her way clearly toward a proper and judicious use of the money.

A dollar or two should be added to the price usually paid for Janie's shoes, which would insure their lasting an appreciable time longer than they usually did. She would buy so and so many yards of percale for new shirt waists for the boys and Janie and Mag. She had intended to make the old ones do by skilful patching. Mag should have another gown. She had seen some beautiful patterns, veritable bargains in the shop windows. And still there would be left enough for new stockings--two pairs apiece--and what darning that would save for a while! She would get caps for the boys and sailor-hats for the girls. The vision of her little brood looking fresh and dainty and new for once in their lives excited her and made her restless and wakeful with anticipation.

The neighbors sometimes talked of certain "better days" that little Mrs. Sommers had known before she had ever thought of being Mrs. Sommers. She herself indulged in no such morbid retrospection. She had no time--no second of time to devote to the past. The needs of the present absorbed her every faculty. A vision of the future like some dim, gaunt monster sometimes appalled her, but luckily tomorrow never comes.

Mrs. Sommers was one who knew the value of bargains; who could stand for hours making her way inch by inch toward the desired object that was selling below cost. She could elbow her way if need be; she had learned to clutch a piece of goods and hold it and stick to it with persistence and determination till her turn came to be served, no matter when it came.

But that day she was a little faint and tired. She had swallowed a light luncheon--no! when she came to think of it, between getting the children fed and the place righted, and preparing herself for the shopping bout, she had actually forgotten to eat any luncheon at all!

She sat herself upon a revolving stool before a counter that was comparatively deserted, trying to gather strength and courage to charge through an eager multitude that was besieging breastworks of shirting and figured lawn. An all-gone limp feeling had come over her and she rested her hand aimlessly upon the counter. She wore no gloves. By degrees she grew aware that her hand had encountered something very soothing, very pleasant to touch. She looked down to see that her hand lay upon a pile of silk stockings. A placard nearby announced that they had been reduced in price from two dollars and fifty cents to one dollar and ninety-eight cents; and a young girl who stood behind the counter asked her if she wished to examine their line of silk hosiery. She smiled, just as if she had been asked to inspect a tiara of diamonds with the ultimate view of purchasing it. But she went on feeling the soft, sheeny luxurious things--with both hands now, holding them up to see them glisten, and to feel them glide serpent-like through her fingers.

Two hectic blotches came suddenly into her pale cheeks. She looked up at the girl.

"Do you think there are any eights-and-a-half among these?"

There were any number of eights-and-a-half. In fact, there were more of that size than any other. Here was a light-blue pair; there were some lavender, some all black and various shades of tan and gray. Mrs. Sommers selected a black pair and looked at them very long and closely. She pretended to be examining their texture, which the clerk assured her was excellent.

"A dollar and ninety-eight cents," she mused aloud. "Well, I'll take this pair." She handed the girl a five-dollar bill and waited for her change and for her parcel. What a very small parcel it was! It seemed lost in the depths of her shabby old shopping-bag.

Mrs. Sommers after that did not move in the direction of the bargain counter. She took the elevator, which carried her to an upper floor into the region of the ladies' waiting-rooms. Here, in a retired corner, she exchanged her cotton stockings for the new silk ones which she had just bought. She was not going through any acute mental process or reasoning with herself, nor was she striving to explain to her satisfaction the motive of her action. She was not thinking at all. She seemed for the time to be taking a rest from that laborious and fatiguing function and to have abandoned herself to some mechanical impulse that directed her actions and freed her of responsibility.

How good was the touch of the raw silk to her flesh! She felt like lying back in the cushioned chair and revelling for a while in the luxury of it. She did for a little while. Then she replaced her shoes, rolled the cotton stockings together and thrust them into her bag. After doing this she crossed straight over to the shoe department and took her seat to be fitted.

She was fastidious. The clerk could not make her out; he could not reconcile her shoes with her stockings, and she was not too easily pleased. She held back her skirts and turned her feet one way and her head another way as she glanced down at the polished, pointed-tipped boots. Her foot and ankle looked very pretty. She could not realize that they belonged to her and were a part of herself. She wanted an excellent and stylish fit, she told the young fellow who served her, and she did not mind the difference of a dollar or two more in the price so long as she got what she desired.

It was a long time since Mrs. Sommers had been fitted with gloves. On rare occasions when she had bought a pair they were always "bargains," so cheap that it would have been preposterous and unreasonable to have expected them to be fitted to the hand.

Now she rested her elbow on the cushion of the glove counter, and a pretty, pleasant young creature, delicate and deft of touch, drew a long-wristed "kid" over Mrs. Sommers's hand. She smoothed it down over the wrist and buttoned it neatly, and both lost themselves for a second or two in admiring contemplation of the little symmetrical gloved hand. But there were other places where money might be spent.

There were books and magazines piled up in the window of a stall a few paces down the street. Mrs. Sommers bought two high-priced magazines such as she had been accustomed to read in the days when she had been accustomed to other pleasant things. She carried them without wrapping. As well as she could she lifted her skirts at the crossings. Her stockings and boots and well fitting gloves had worked marvels in her bearing--had given her a feeling of assurance, a sense of belonging to the well-dressed multitude.

She was very hungry. Another time she would have stilled the cravings for food until reaching her own home, where she would have brewed herself a cup of tea and taken a snack of anything that was available. But the impulse that was guiding her would not suffer her to entertain any such thought.

There was a restaurant at the corner. She had never entered its doors; from the outside she had sometimes caught glimpses of spotless damask and shining crystal, and soft-stepping waiters serving people of fashion.

When she entered her appearance created no surprise, no consternation, as she had half feared it might. She seated herself at a small table alone, and an attentive waiter at once approached to take her order. She did not want a profusion; she craved a nice and tasty bite--a half dozen blue-points, a plump chop with cress, a something sweet--a creme-frappee, for instance; a glass of Rhine wine, and after all a small cup of black coffee.

While waiting to be served she removed her gloves very leisurely and laid them beside her. Then she picked up a magazine and glanced through it, cutting the pages with a blunt edge of her knife. It was all very agreeable. The damask was even more spotless than it had seemed through the window, and the crystal more sparkling. There were quiet ladies and gentlemen, who did not notice her, lunching at the small tables like her own. A soft, pleasing strain of music could be heard, and a gentle breeze, was blowing through the window. She tasted a bite, and she read a word or two, and she sipped the amber wine and wiggled her toes in the silk stockings. The price of it made no difference. She counted the money out to the waiter and left an extra coin on his tray, whereupon he bowed before her as before a princess of royal blood.

There was still money in her purse, and her next temptation presented itself in the shape of a matinee poster.

It was a little later when she entered the theatre, the play had begun and the house seemed to her to be packed. But there were vacant seats here and there, and into one of them she was ushered, between brilliantly dressed women who had gone there to kill time and eat candy and display their gaudy attire. There were many others who were there solely for the play and acting. It is safe to say there was no one present who bore quite the attitude which Mrs. Sommers did to her surroundings. She gathered in the whole--stage and players and people in one wide impression, and absorbed it and enjoyed it. She laughed at the comedy and wept--she and the gaudy woman next to her wept over the tragedy. And they talked a little together over it. And the gaudy woman wiped her eyes and sniffled on a tiny square of filmy, perfumed lace and passed little Mrs. Sommers her box of candy.

The play was over, the music ceased, the crowd filed out. It was like a dream ended. People scattered in all directions. Mrs. Sommers went to the corner and waited for the cable car.

A man with keen eyes, who sat opposite to her, seemed to like the study of her small, pale face. It puzzled him to decipher what he saw there. In truth, he saw nothing--unless he were wizard enough to detect a poignant wish, a powerful longing that the cable car would never stop anywhere, but go on and on with her forever.

## PART B

1. **HAIKU** – Ask students if they know what a haiku is. Write their ideas on the board. Then define haiku as a type of traditional Japanese poetry. (Keep it simple at first.)
2. Then project some simple haikus in English for them to read. What common rules do there seem to be in haikus?

(1) After the storm  
A boy wiping the sky  
From the tables

(2) Sipping coffee  
On the veranda  
Sunday's paper

(3) I'm late, running  
Perfume of wisteria -  
Rushing on again

(4) The teacher surveys  
Thick fallen snow  
Thousand test papers

### Classic haikus (translated from Japanese)

An old pond  
a frog jumps in  
Sound of water  
- *Matsuo Basho*  
*over 300 years ago*  
*(The poem that is most often recited in Japan often meets with  
puzzlement by non-Japanese trying to grasp its deeper meaning.)*

The sea at springtime.  
All day it rises and falls,  
yes, rises and falls.  
- *Buson*

Going deeper  
And deeper still  
Green Mountains  
- *Santoka*

3. Now, share with them the basic rules of writing a haiku:

- **3 lines long**
- **Some sort of outdoor/nature/seasonal word or theme** (Have them identify the “nature” word in the example you read—like *storm*, *wisteria*, or even *veranda*—this is a good chance to learn some new vocabulary.)
- **No rhyme or metaphor**
- **17 syllables total: 5 on first line -7 on second line – 5 on third line** (Practice clapping out the number of syllables in words—BUL-GA-RI-A = 4; HAI-KU = 2; YOUR = 1, etc. This might take some practice, as students sometimes have a hard time realizing that multiple vowels together in diphthongs are not separate syllables. For example, CHEESE = 1 syllable, ANNOUNCE = 2 syllables, etc. Also, a few select words do not have clear syllabication: OUR or FIRE can be argued to have 1 OR 2 syllables. Still, most words are very clear; have students check in a dictionary if they get stuck.)  
(<http://www.howmanysyllables.com/howtocountsyllables> )

Point out that in the example haikus, the haikus translated from Japanese do not follow the 5-7-5 syllable pattern because they were *translated*—they had the appropriate number of syllables in Japanese, but the word length and sounds do not necessarily correspond in English!

4. Have students give you a topic and as a class, write 1-2 haikus together on the board. You can make them humorous to keep students’ interest.

5. Provide students with a common topic (i.e., English class, the weekend, etc.) and have them write a haiku on the topic. Remember, they must have at least some sort of nature-related word in the poem! Share and compare.

For other ways to introduce your students to haikus, see: <http://www.cc.matsuyama-u.ac.jp/~shiki/Start-Writing.html>