

Simple Stories . . . In a New York Minute!

Based on an Idea by Karen Erickson

Stories by Musselwhite Workshop participants

Writeup by Musselwhite (2005)

WHAT ARE SIMPLE STORIES AND WHY DO WE NEED THEM?

For older students who are very beginning readers, limited reading materials are available, and those that are available are often:

- childish (re: text, topic, graphics)
- boring (students would be unlikely to want to read them multiple times)
- not on topics that interest older students

Musselwhite suggests a number of strategies for creating or adapting materials for older students (WHAT'S TO READ? Locating, Analyzing, and Adapting Appropriate Literacy Materials for Older Students Who Are Emergent Readers: a workshop). But here is a strategy that you can do TODAY so that your students have appropriate . . . and inviting . . . materials to read TOMORROW!

Karen Erickson at the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies has suggested that one approach to creating reading materials is to write stories using the Noun / Verb / Adjective / Preposition approach. These stories can be quite simple, and can support students in having a wide range of stories that are appropriate to read.

HOW – TO: WRITING TIPS FOR QUICK STORIES

- 1) Write on **topics** that interest YOUR students. For purposes of literacy, do not limit students to stories with a social purpose - students should have a wide range of stories to read, including stories that are just fun!
- 2) **Illustrate** stories using:
 - digital photos of YOUR students
 - photographs from the internet (see the Sept, 2005 Tip for sites)
 - magazines or calendars that interest your students (wrestling, Pop Stars)
 - websites of interest to your students (ex: Harry Potter, Star Wars)

3) Use a variety of writing styles and approaches to provide support for student learning and make sure that your stories don't all sound the same. Note: you will NOT want to use all of these features in every story!

Samples include:

- a) Add a **repetitive line** to provide support and hold the story together
- b) Using words that **rhyme** (greasy / cheesy) or **alliterate** (soggy / salty) to support students in developing phonemic awareness. Words that rhyme will help students focus on 'rimes' (word endings), while words that alliterate will help students focus on 'onsets' (word beginnings - everything up to the first vowel)
- c) Use **carrier phases** such as 'Jake saw a _____.' This will add predictability to the story.
- d) Incorporate **rhythm** into the story (ex., a 'raps' style rhythm) to aid memory and make the story more enjoyable
- e) **K.I.S.S.** - Keep it simple, silly! Keep story lines short - in general, these stories should have six or less words per page.

4) Consider an **ending** that adds 'zip' or humor, so that students will want to read the story multiple times. Rereading is an excellent support for fluency!

5) Consider **editing tips** such as:

- a) Use Comic Sans print, at least size 36
- b) Insert 2 spaces between words
- c) Try to have only 1 line per page; if you need more lines, be sure to double space!

Samples: See samples of these 'Easy Stories' on the *RAPS Suite CD*, co-authored by:

Dr. Caroline Ramsey Musselwhite

www.aacintervention.com

Byron Wilkes & Ann Brundige

www.learningmagicinc.com

Stories in a New York Minute

Following are sample stories written at Musselwhite's workshops in District 75, New York City, and at Closing the Gap preconference sessions in Minneapolis.

District 75 – NYC Workshops

Winter / Holiday Themes

Cold, Cold Winter (Adjective Story)

By Natalie, Vidalina, & Ellen

Icy winter.

Slippery snow.

Slushy, gushy winter.

Freezing, frigid.

Hard hitting hail.

Bare branches.

White knee-deep snow.

Cloudy, windy weather.

I love winter! Whew!

Features: poetic structure, using alliteration (freezing / frigid) and rhyming (slushy / gushy)

Pizza! (Adjective Story)

Greasy (rub fingers together)

Spicy (wave at mouth to show 'hot')

Yummy (rub tummy)

Cheesy (sign 'cheese')

Soggy (squish hands)

Easy (click fingers)

Queasy (show sick face)

Features: augment with facial expression and gestures

In the Winter (Preposition Story)

In the winter

Put on coat

Put on hat

Put on boots

Take off coat

Take off hat

Take off boots.

Home is warm.

Too cold out!

Features: carrier phrases "Put on _____ / Take off _____"); repetitive order of clothing items (coat / hat / boots each time)

Christmas is Coming (Noun Story)

Christmas is coming!

I see stars at night.

I see candy canes.

I see snowflakes.

I see snowmen.

I see reindeer.

I see gifts.

AND . . .

I see myself with Santa on the sleigh!

Features: Carrier phrase "I see _____"; velcro dot to add each student's photo unto the last page.

Holidays (Verb Story)

By Maritza, Liliane, Michele, & Barbara

Holidays are about preparing.

Holidays are about sharing.

Holidays are about decorating.

Holidays are about travellinging.

Holidays are about cooking.

Holidays are about eating.

Holidays are about singing.

Holidays are about dancing.

Holidays are about giving.

Holidays are EXHAUSTING!

Features: carrier phrase: "Holidays are _____"

Trip the Tree (Preposition Story)

By Inether, Jeri, Jennifer, & Amarilis

Chop down tree.

Put in car.

Stand tree up.

String lights around.

Place ornaments on.

Star on top.

Gifts under.

Lights . . . ON!

Closing the Gap 04: Music Theme

Let's Make Music (Noun Story)

Let's make music!

Sax

Keyboard

Trumpet

Drums

Guitar

Give It UP!!!

Features: highly pictureable, very simple

Move to the Music (Verb Story)

Let's move to music!

Sing

Dance

Play

Listen

Jam

Write

Blow
Strum
Rap
Download
Busted!

Features: Very simple (single words); very humorous ending

Let's Dance! (Verb Story)

Let's dance!

Swing it.

Sway it.

Wiggle it.

Jiggle it.

Twist it.

Shout it.

Shake it.

Bend it.

Sing it.

Rock it.

Roll it.

Tap it.

Snap it.

Clap it.

Slap it.

Hop it.

Bop it.

Slow it down.

Sit it down.

Whew!!! Dancing done.

Features: alliteration (rock it / roll it; shake it / shout it); rhyme (wiggle / jiggle; tap / snap / clap / slap)

Play It! (Adjectives)

Play it.

Play it slow.

Play it fast.

Play it classical.

Play it Hip Hop.

Play it soft.

Play it loud.

Oops! Gives mom a headache!!!

Features: carrier phrase, 'Play it _____'