

Arts and Literacy: The Magic Box

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Grade Range: K-4, 5-8

You will find outlined a process for each step.

Before you begin

Throughout the entire exercise strategic prompts are essential. The overall contexts for writing, which need repetition, are, "All books, stories, plays and movies are people's ideas. The reason we have so many books in the library and in bookstores is that so many people have ideas and they write the ideas down. Getting an idea and writing it down is what we are going to do now."

"EVERYTHING THAT IS FOUND IN THE STUDENT'S MAGIC BOX CAN BE FOUND IN STORIES, BOOKS AND MOVIES."

SEE IT - ASK THE STUDENTS TO IMAGINE A BOX

Visualizing through guided imagery is where we start and is perhaps the most important step in this exercise. It is during this section that you must lead your students in visualizing what they will write.

Preparations before you begin. Have students:

- Clear their desks
- UN-cross arms and legs
- Sit comfortably back in their chairs
- Take several long, slow, deep breaths
- Close their eyes until you ask them to open them
- Ask them to lift their hands in front of them
- And rest their hands as if resting on the lid of a box

Prompts

- "Using you hands to inform you, what shape is your box?"
- "How deep is it?"
- "What is it made of? Is it plastic or wood, leather or cardboard? Maybe it is porcelain or metal. There are no wrong answers and every box is special no matter what it is made of."
- Ask the students to continue running their hands along the surface of their imaginary box until they sense a color, texture, or pattern.
- "Is the color red or black" Maybe you feel velvet or old crinkled paper?"

Notes to the teacher:

Make each choice sound exciting. Watch carefully how students use their arms and hands. This will give

you a great deal of information about their core intelligence. A student who is very precise in the edges of their box and maintains the same size and shape box probably has a good amount of bodily kinesthetic intelligence.

A student's face that changes expressions as they "see" with their eyes closed has visual-spatial intelligence. These children should be called upon first to discuss what they have seen. Their precision will inform the whole group and will act as a model for being specific and detailed.

Good writing has many details, is specific and when described allows others to see what you have seen.

Continue the exercise by asking them to imagine opening their box.

Prompts

- "First, check to see how the box opens?"
- "Do you simply lift the lid?"
- "Does it have hinges or a secret button that flips the top up?"
- "Maybe it can only be opened by a magic key."
- "Decide how it opens then on the count of three with your eyes still closed, open your box."
- "One, two, three. Open it."

Guide the students in visualizing the contents of their box.

Prompts

- "Inside the box is something special just for you. Take it out and use it. If it is a comb, then combs your hair. If it is a letter read it. If it is a living thing hold it or pet it. If it is a ball throw it. With your eyes still closed use your object."

Notes to teacher:

Watch carefully. There maybe laughter as they reach for their objects. Ask them to take a deep breath to focus them. Conclude the guided imagery by asking the students to place the object back into their box and to put their box into an imaginary cupboard where they may retrieve it at any time.

Now they may open their eyes.

SAY IT - DISCUSSION OF WHAT STUDENTS SAW.

Ask, "who wants to share what their box looked like?" Call on someone who was very involved. After they describe their box in detail, and make sure you ask for at least five details, ask if anyone else has (a red plastic heart shaped old battered box). What you are demonstrating is that no two boxes were exactly alike. This is perfect because no two books are exactly alike. Demonstrate with your excitement that you value originality. After several students have share a few boxes now call on different students to discuss contents.

Prompts "What did you find inside your box?"

Notes to teacher:

The basic themes of stories, movies and books fall into four categories.

- Searching for what is lost. What you are after is the ideas being specific and that fall into categories. Some will find a lost object. "I found a ring I lost two years ago". Ask who gave them the ring. They may say a grandmother. With the answer you point out that every story has characters.
- Finding the answer to a mystery. Students may describe an object that they do not understand. "It was just a round ball of light." You say, "Good what does it mean?" the student may say, "I don't know what it means." You say, "Good, that's a mystery."
- Going on a grand adventure.
- Having a wish or dream fulfilled. "I found two tickets to the superbowl."

The more they display strong images the more you authentically praise them.

WRITE IT

Now give students the task that they must write what they saw. Just as you asked questions of some students, they need to ask themselves those same questions and write the answers to these questions.

- What did my box look like?
- What was inside?
- What did I do when I saw the object in my box?
- What does the object mean to me?

But give them only six minutes to write as if it is a game. You will find most students dive into the work. In most cases the children cannot limit themselves to just four sentences. Praise them for writing more if they do. But having only four sentences as your goal let's everyone succeed. Help the students who are overwhelmed pull out a few ideas by side coaching them.

READ IT OUTLOUD

All students read out loud. If they don't read well help them. Make their ideas look good. If the student doesn't spell well have them correct the spelling later. What is important here is that the student experience the relationship between getting an idea in image form, detailing that image, remembering it and discussing it out-loud, writing it and reading it. Tell them that what they have just accomplished is what every writer does. "See It. Say it. Write It. Read It."

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