Tell It "Write"!

The Tiger

Went to the store

in the Alps

won the Nobel Prize

This is a sample activity from our series of more than 80 Thinking With Standards instructional activities. To learn more about these activities, visit www.creativelearning.com and click the link on our home page

Tell it "WRITE"!
Teacher Page

Grades 3-5
Thinking Tool: MORPHOLOGICAL MATRIX: a generating tool

Sample Standards:
Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
Topic: Literary/Narrative writing; Benchmark: Writes narrative accounts, such as poems and stories (e.g., establishes a context that enables the reader to imagine the event or experience; develops characters, setting, and plot; creates an organizing structure; uses transitions to sequence events; uses concrete sensory details; uses strategies such as dialogue, tension, and suspense; uses an identifiable voice)

Materials, Resources, and Preparation

Provide a copy of the Student Page for each student. Make a larger copy of the Student Page to hang as a teaching poster for reference.

Getting Started

Let the students know that they will use the Morphological Matrix tool to generate ideas for their next narrative writing assignment. Explain that the tool will help them put together LOTS (even thousands!) of combinations of context, setting, plot and characters -- some interesting, some practical, some unpredictable -- that will excite, comfort, and challenge them as writers.

Procedure

1. Hand out the Student Page to each student.

2. The first parameter (column heading) of the Morphological Matrix is CONTEXT. Review with students what CONTEXT means. Ask for some examples. Then, tell the students to think on their own of 10 different contexts and write them, one in each box, down the column on their own Student Page. Encourage students to include some novel, unusual, or really interesting choices in their list.

3. Repeat step 2 for each of the remaining three parameters.

4. Tell the students to fill in each column separately. Do not try to make the words "fit together" from one column to another. (If you notice students having a difficult time doing this, provide them with a cover sheets that allow only one column at a time to be seen.)

5. Let students select combinations by choosing one word from each column by randomly naming four numbers, 0-9. Students may want to use their birthdate (month and day) or (year), or use the last four digits of their home phone number. Feel free to create other ways of randomly putting four numbers together. Request the students to generate at least 6 combinations, writing out the words that correspond to the numbers (so the combination reads like e.g., television commercial, Mr. Roberto, in a canoe, planting a garden).

Closure

From their generated list of combinations, ask each student to select one combination to use in their narrative writing assignment. Conclude with any other instructions for the assignment.

Ask the students about their reaction to using the Morphological Matrix to provide these elements to their assignment. Which of their random combinations were ones that he/she would not have usually put together? What parameter idea and/or random combination did they think was their most unusual? How might they use Morphological Matrix for other assignments?

Variations and Follow-Up

1. Instead of each student generating ideas for their own Morphological Matrix, have students generate ideas for each parameter as a class, with you facilitating the using of the tool.

2. Allow students to generate ideas with another student, or in small groups of three, each recording the ideas on their own Student Page. Encourage pairs or groups to allow everyone in their group to have input in offering ideas for each parameter and in generating the pool of random combinations. Ask that each student choose a different combination from each other's for their individual narrative writing assignments.

3. It may be helpful to use a specific Focusing tool, such as the Paired Comparson Analysis tool, to complete the assignment.

Tell it "WRITE"!
Student Page

	Context	Characters	Setting	Plot
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
0				