

Write On!

Once there
was an owl,
or maybe it
was a horse



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

“WRITE” On!

Teacher Page

Grades 3-5

Thinking Tool: PAIRED COMPARISON ANALYSIS (PCA), a focusing tool

Sample Standards:

Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Topic 2: Style, diction, and voice; 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

For this activity, each student will need to have several promising or interesting ideas for a piece of narrative writing; in this activity, they will focus their thinking to pick a specific theme or topic about which to write. [If the students need help in generating possible ideas for their writing, use a Generating tool. See, for example, the Morphological Matrix tool that is used in Sample Activity 1 in this series.]

Duplicate the Student Page (PCA diagram) so each student has a copy. Have a way to display the Student Page in large format, for you to guide the class in filling in their individual Student Pages.

Getting Started

Tell the students that they will be using a focusing tool to help them select a topic for a narrative writing activity, selecting from among a list of several interesting possibilities that they have already generated. Explain that when we have many ideas that are interesting possibilities, using a thinking tool can help them to focus their thinking and to make a good decision or choice.

Procedure

1. Distribute a copy of the Student Page (PCA diagram) to each student. Ask each student to write up to six interesting ideas for his or her writing project, one beside each letter A-F, on the Student Page.

2. Lead the students through their first several comparisons, directing them to choose between A or B (which one they prefer, or like best), circle the letter, and in the box write the number (1-3) that corresponds to how much they like that choice over the other (1 = like it just a little more; 2 = like it more; 3 = like it a lot more!). Continue to direct them through the comparison of several of the next pairs (A-C, A-D, etc.), then when you think they are ready, allow them to finish the pairs' comparisons on their own, circling and filling in each box on the diagram through E/F.
3. Ask the students to add together the scores for each choice. Look through the pairs, and for all the As that are circled, add the numbers in the boxes. Write that total for A on the Total Scores line on the diagram. Do the same for all the Bs that circled, etc., through the Fs. The total scores will identify a ranking of the original combinations from highest to lowest.

Closure

Remind the students that one way the PCA helps them to focus choices is to help them decide (rank or prioritize) among a set of choices. To choose which idea (e.g., combination from those generated on Morphological Matrix) one likes best can be a tough decision, but using PCA tool helps to make that process easier.

Variations and Follow-Up

1. To simplify the use of the tool, have students circle their preference for each pair, but do not ask them to rate their choices (1-3). To total, just count the number of times A is circled, B, etc. and write that number in the Total Scores line. Highest total is the highest ranking choice!
2. Use PCA to help each student choose which type of narrative he or she will write that includes their selected combination. Distribute a copy of the PCA Student Page to each student and ask them to fill in A-F at the top of their page with these options (perhaps you have the diagram with these 6 options filled in, displayed where all the students can see it to copy):

- A: sensory details
- B: suspense
- C: dialogue
- D: blank verse
- E: tension
- F: rhyming verse

Follow the same steps in Procedure listed above to let students complete their individual Student Page. Tell the students to choose in each pair which type of narrative they prefer to write (e.g., comparing A/E: one containing concrete sensory details or one filled with tension).

Using the PCA tool will help each student determine his or her preference of which type will be the emphasis in their narrative writing assignment.

“WRITE” On!

Student Page

Writing Options:

A _____

B _____

C _____

D _____

E _____

F _____

For each pair, choose which option of the two being compared you would prefer. Enter “3” as a score if one is much better than the other, enter a “2” if one seems mostly to be better, and enter a “1” if the choice between the two options was a close call.

A/B _____ A/C _____ A/D _____ A/E _____ A/F _____

B/C _____ B/D _____ B/E _____ B/F _____

C/D _____ C/E _____ C/F _____

D/E _____ D/F _____

E/F _____

Total scores for: A _____ B _____ C _____ D _____ E _____ F _____

Choice 1 was: _____ Statement: _____

Choice 2 was: _____ Statement: _____

Choice 3 was: _____ Statement: _____

Choice 4 was: _____ Statement: _____

Choice 5 was: _____ Statement: _____

Choice 6 was: _____ Statement: _____