

A WANDERER'S POINT OF VIEW

Students use point of view in a Mississippi River story.

TEACHER NOTES FOR DISCUSSION

This creative activity allows students the opportunity to write and illustrate their own stories. You will need to discuss point of view, character, setting, and plot. Tell the students to think about what point of view they will use in their story. When they start drafting their stories, have them discuss how illustrations can make a story come alive.

In order to get students imagining what life along the Mississippi River is like, have them pretend they are there. Use the scenario provided or create your own.

Imagination Scenario

waking up on the banks of the Mississippi River

1. Close your eyes and keep them closed during the entire exercise.
2. Don't open your eyes, but imagine that you are just waking up.
3. When you look around, you realize you are on the ground and hear water.
4. You get up and walk toward the water. It is a river and it is so wide that you know it must be the Mississippi River.
5. How did you get here?
6. Describe your surroundings. What is the weather? Do you hear a noise?
7. Who are you? Are you a student? Someone or something completely different?
8. Are you alone?
9. You start walking.
10. What do you encounter?
11. Where are you going?

Have students jot down their responses to this exercise.

This gives students a good springboard from which to create a story. They can stay on this track or take it to a completely different place. Depending on the level of familiarity your students have with towns along the Mississippi River, have students do some research to familiarize themselves with the areas. They need to know enough that they can write rich, full descriptions.

Illustrations for the stories may be drawn or cut from magazines. Pair or group students together to workshop stories and pictures. Instructor feedback about language use and narrative style will be helpful. (Does it make sense? Is it in a good order? Is the point of view clear?)

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students should be able to:

- write an imaginative story.
- use point of view.
- illustrate written material.

Time Considerations

Instructor preparation:
50 minutes

Student activity:
three classes

RELATED STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS

Language Arts

Standard 1. Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process

- prewriting: uses a variety of prewriting strategies
- drafting and revising: uses a variety of strategies to draft and revise written work
- editing and publishing: uses a variety of strategies to edit and publish written work evaluates own and others' writing (e.g., applies criteria generated by self and others, uses self-assessment to set and achieve goals as a writer, participates in peer response groups)
- writes narrative accounts

Standard 2. Demonstrates competence in the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing

Standard 3. Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions

Mississippi
River
language arts

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UNDERSTAND YOUR MISSION

In this activity you will write and illustrate a short story based on the experiences of a Mississippi River wanderer.

LEARN THE LINGO

point of view	who is telling the story; first, second, or third person
first person	a character in the story acts as narrator and refers to him/herself; the story is told from that character's own perspective; occasionally a story is told by a narrator who cannot be trusted to tell the truth—this is called an unreliable narrator
second person	the narrator addresses the reader directly; this point of view is similar to the experience of reading a letter, though the <i>you</i> being addressed is not necessarily <i>you</i> the reader
third person	the narrator does not appear in the story as a character; there are three types of third person narrators: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. omniscient or non-participating narrator who sees into the mind of all other characters, moving from one to another when necessary 2. limited omniscient non-participating narrator who sees the events of the story through the eyes of a single character 3. objective—a non-participating narrator who merely describes the events as they occur.

Gather Your Supplies

- colored pencils, markers, or paints
- construction paper
- research material
- old magazines
- writing paper

BACKGROUND

The river varies greatly from one end to the other. Deep in the north woods of Minnesota, a person can barely see the sky because of the many tall pine trees. In Iowa, high rocky bluffs surround the river. Around Cairo, Illinois, the Mississippi River meets the Ohio River—wide expanses of water and a lot of shipping traffic prevail. Traveling south, the river becomes darker and murkier. Where the river becomes the delta, there are marshes and tea-colored swamps. All these areas have their own birds, animals, and insects. Think about everything you know about the Mississippi River valley. This activity will give you the chance to use your own experiences and imagination or you can research areas of interest to you. Use your research and what you already know to make your story more interesting.

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CHART A COURSE FOR EXPLORATION

Pre-write

Complete the Imagination Scenario with your teacher.

On a piece of paper, think about the scenario questions again and answer them.

- How did you get here?
- Describe your surroundings.
- Who are you? Are you a student or someone completely different?
- Are you alone?
- What do you encounter?
- Where are you going?
- What are your experiences?

Research

Choose a real place along the Mississippi River as the location for your story.

What is the place really like? If you need to, do some research and take notes.

Decide who the main character of the story is. Is it you or someone or something you have created? Take some notes on who your main character is and what he/she/it is like.

Is the story from the point of view of the main character? First Person

Is there a narrator that is aware of and address the audience? Second person

Is the narrator someone detached from the story? Third person

Workshop

- You should now have notes from the Imagination Scenario (presented by your teacher), information about setting, character, and point of view. Use this information to write a 3-5 page story. Make sure it has a beginning, middle, and end.
- Share your rough draft with your classmates. Talk to them about your story—ask them questions:
 - Can you tell what's going on?
 - What do you know about the main character?
 - Did you find any G.U.M. (grammar, usage, mechanics) problems?
 - How can I improve the story? (one or two suggestions)
 - What were a few of the things you liked?
 - Make any necessary changes to your story and hand it in to your teacher for feedback.

Put it Together

- Illustrate the pages—create your own illustrations (use drawings, magazine cutouts, or construction paper).
- The front cover must include title and author. Illustrate your cover.
- The back cover should interest people in your book; use one or two brief sentence description or a descriptive picture. If you are not sure what you should do for this back page, look at other books for samples.
- After you put the whole book together, exchange books with classmates and enjoy each other's stories.

Go Beyond

Create a play based on the stories written by classmates. Create a video and share it with the senior citizen community.

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	EXPERT	PROFICIENT	NOVICE
STORY REQUIREMENTS	<input type="checkbox"/> completed and turned in pre-write, research, workshop, and final drafts	<input type="checkbox"/> lacks 1-2 elements	<input type="checkbox"/> incomplete
ILLUSTRATION	<input type="checkbox"/> all pages and cover are illustrated <input type="checkbox"/> story and pictures go well together	<input type="checkbox"/> needs more pictures that illustrate the story	<input type="checkbox"/> lacks illustrations that match writing
GRAMMAR, USAGE, MECHANICS	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 errors with good sentence structure	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 errors <input type="checkbox"/> go through sentences; fix the ones that sound awkward	<input type="checkbox"/> many errors, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments
POINT OF VIEW	<input type="checkbox"/> used correctly and effectively	<input type="checkbox"/> needs a stronger direction <input type="checkbox"/> make the point of view obvious	<input type="checkbox"/> story would work better from a different point of view
UNITY	<input type="checkbox"/> well chosen sentences and details	<input type="checkbox"/> omits relevant details and sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> add telling details	<input type="checkbox"/> difficult to comprehend <input type="checkbox"/> go through and clarify points with telling details
NARRATIVE	<input type="checkbox"/> imaginative story that captures reader's attention and depicts a place on the Mississippi River	<input type="checkbox"/> understandable, but needs to be more relevant to the Mississippi River	<input type="checkbox"/> story needs a beginning, middle, and end
RESEARCH	<input type="checkbox"/> research of town combined well with story	<input type="checkbox"/> needs to relate more to a city or town	<input type="checkbox"/> needs research of city or town to complement story

REFERENCES

Kendall, John S. and Robert J. Marzano. *Content Knowledge: The McREL Standards Database*. <<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>>, April 4, 2000.