

Lesson Plan

The School Story by Andrew Clements



Book Summary

Twelve-year-old Natalie Nelson is a gifted writer who's just written a powerful novel. Her mom is a children's book editor, but Natalie doesn't want special favors. Zoe Reisman, Natalie's best friend, is determined to get her friend's book published. She's smart and aggressive – perfect agent material. With lots of secrecy, great daring, and much humor, the girls find a way for everyone to come out a winner.

Objective

Students will be introduced to the writing, editing, and publishing process.

Standard: *Students will become familiar with editing and publishing strategies for written work (e.g. proofreading using a dictionary and other resources, editing for grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling at developmentally appropriate levels).*

Before Reading

My Favorite Book

Get students thinking about why a favorite book is a favorite.

1. Ask each student to come up with a (short) list of his or her favorite books.
2. Have each include one or two reasons why the particular books were chosen.
3. One at a time, have each student share his or her list, including reasons, with the class. Does one (or more) book appear on several students' lists?
4. Hold a classroom discussion about what makes a good read.
5. In *The School Story*, Natalie learns a lot about character development, plot progression, action, and motivation. Talk about these elements with your class, introducing them with appropriate language.

Teaching Plan

Activities

Something's Wrong Here!

Here's a creative way to train attentive editors!

1. Choose a passage from a children's book and try to find an excerpt that your class is most likely not familiar with. Several paragraphs, or even a whole chapter, will work best.
2. Retype the selected passage with the goal of introducing errors.
3. Include grammatical errors, punctuation errors, spelling errors, and – if possible – plot errors. (These may be achieved by simply deleting crucial sentences.)
4. Make copies of your "revised" passage and distribute the papers to your students, along with pencils (with erasers!).
5. Ask students to read through the passage and correct any errors they may find and to write a note or question in the margin for other suggestions or questions they have. Encourage them to pay attention to details both small and large.
6. Have each student compare his or her marked-up copy with your answer key.
7. Talk about any non-tangible (less concrete) changes students may have suggested. These may include action, motivation, or plot issues.

Writer to Editor

What does it feel like to be a writer? an editor?

- Announce to your students that they will each be writing a short story. Depending on the abilities of your class, you may wish to assign a topic (or even characters and plot).
- Allot a certain amount of class time to the writing of these stories.
- At the end of the allotted time, ask each student to pass his or her story to the person to his or her right.
- This student will act as an editor. He or she should conduct a careful reading of the story, making any corrections or suggestions necessary.
- After a set period of time (or the next day, if more feasible), ask the "editor" to return the story to the "writer."
- Hold a classroom discussion about what it felt like to be a writer, to be an editor, and to be an edited writer.

Other School Stories

Dear Mr. Henshaw

by Beverly Cleary

Leigh begins writing to an author as part of a school assignment. He never dreams that he'll still be corresponding with Mr. Henshaw years later...or the impact that correspondence will have on his life.

Jake Drake: Teacher's Pet

by Andrew Clements

Jake is a hard-working third-grader, but he doesn't like being the teacher's pet. He sets out to change the class opinion of himself with humorous results.

Sideways Stories from Wayside School

by Louis Sachar

Sachar's beloved Wayside School is the setting for these outlandish stories about peculiar students.

Other Books by Andrew Clements

Big Al

Frindle

The Laundry News

The Janitor's Boy

Teaching Plan by Rebecca Gomez