

SECTION FOUR:

DISCUSS THE ADVENTURE

I am the wisest man in Athens because I know that I don't know. - Plato

Time as he grows old teaches many lessons. - Aeschylus

Use your mind, but stay close to the light, and it will lengthen its glow, right through your life. - Lao Tzu

As teachers, we understand the importance of reviewing information covered in activities and assignments. After a "Choose your own adventure" is shared with the class, it is wise to have a few discussion questions prepared to solidify the learned material in the student's minds. Review and discussion questions should come from all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Focus on material that is relevant to the current curriculum. If you, as the teacher, are well prepared, the discussion time will be both interesting and rewarding.

Below are some sample review questions for the story, HieroglyphicHorseplay:

KNOWLEDGE 1) What are hieroglyphics?

COMPREHENSION 2) Why were scribe students very careful about their work?

APPLICATION 3) Write your name in hieroglyphics.

ANALYSIS 4) How does the Egyptian idea of the afterlife differ

from some modern points of view on the subject? SYNTHESIS 5) Create a new ending to this story.

EVALUATION 6) Was the life of a scribe the kind of life you would want for yourself? Why or why not?

Sit down and think about what you want the students to know about the information you are covering. Carefully write your stories in order to reflect those objectives.

SECTION FIVE:

OK, So How Do I BEGIN?

All good things which exist are the fruits of originality. - John Stuart Mill

Always do what you are afraid to do. - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Thus, in the beginning the world was so made that certain signs come before certain events. - Cicero

As educators, we simply don't have the time to read through pages and pages of information on how to organize and arrange activities to best meet the needs of our students. In this section you will find the easy to follow, step-by-step, process used when creating your own choose your own adventures.

The Process:

STEP 1: Write down a list of terms, concepts, and skills that you have been discussing in class. Keep the list fairly short, 10 items or less, at first.

Example:

Topic: Egypt

Terms: Hieroglyphics, Deity, New Kingdom, Papyrus, Pharaoh, Scribe

Concepts: Social Pyramid, Afterlife

Skills: Decoding Hieroglyphics

STEP 2: Brainstorm. Think of a situation or a historical setting in which your story could take place. Look through books, magazines, or newspapers for ideas.

Example:

The New Kingdom period in ancient Egypt. (Between 1570 and 1085 B.C.)

STEP 3: Create a main character for your story. The character should fit into the situation, or setting you have created. Don't make your main character an astrophysicist living in the early Stone Age. The character should also be someone that everyone in your classroom can relate to.

Example: a young Egyptian scribe

STEP 4: Think of some everyday people, places, and things that this person would encounter. Brainstorm again. Write ideas down.

Example:

Pyramids, farmers, papyrus reeds, the Nile River, crocodiles, scribe school, scribe teacher, other scribes, boats, ducks, writing, priests, etc.

STEP 5: Now write an introduction to your story. Introduce the main character to the students. (Hint: To make the students feel more involved with the character, refer to the main character as "you".) Describe the setting of the story. Be colorful in your descriptions. This will immerse the students in the story's surroundings. Finally, finish the introduction with a choice that the students need to make in order to continue the story.

Example:

You are a scribe living in the fertile blacklands of Egypt during the New Kingdom period. The year is 1272 B.C. You step out onto the terrace of your magnificent home and breathe in the warm evening air. As you gaze into the setting sun, or Amon as he is known, you feel a sense of pride at the fact that you have graduated from scribe school and that you are now a wealthy servant of pharaoh. "Well, not everyone can claim to work for a god-king. ", you chuckle to yourself. Suddenly, you awaken with a jerk. As you wipe the drool off your writing board, you realize to your disappointment that you are still in scribe school, learning to be a scribe. You look up to see your school master working with another student. A student sitting near you passes you a piece of papyrus with some writing on it.

Do you?

A) Accept the note

B) Ignore it and keep working

STEP 6: Use a flowchart to keep track of the story as you write it. It is easy to get carried away when writing a story like this, so in the beginning, keep it simple! After each section of story you write, give the students a choice to consider. Be careful, a story like this has the potential to become never-ending! Know when to end a story's path.

STEP 7: Create a list of questions at the end of your story to evaluate the success of your story as a tool for learning.

Example:

KNOWLEDGE 1) What are hieroglyphics?

COMPREHENSION 2) Why were scribe students very careful about their work?

APPLICATION 3) Write your name in hieroglyphics.

ANALYSIS 4) How does the Egyptian idea of the afterlife differ from some modern points of view on the subject?

SYNTHESIS 5) Create a new ending to this story.

EVALUATION 6) Was the life of a scribe the kind of life you would want for yourself? Why or why not?

STEP 8: Read the story to your students. Have them vote on which direction to take the story, by a show of hands. Side with the majority vote. If the story ends sooner than expected, go back and make a different decision. You'll find this to be a rewarding experience for both teachers and students!

STEP 9: Have the students write stories of their own based on the content and curriculum of your class. They can follow the same easy steps that you will use.

VARIATIONS:

A) When you feel comfortable writing this type of story, try adding 3 or 4 choices.

B) Have the students translate or decode something in order to continue the story. For example, the story above contains a hieroglyphic decoder that can be photocopied and distributed to each student. In the story, the character comes across a message written in ancient hieroglyphics. The message can be written on the chalk board, placed on an overhead projector, or scanned onto a computer hard-drive. The students then are asked to complete the translation in order to receive the next set of choices. If you write a story about Paris, the students could be required to translate French street signs in order to continue the adventure.

C) At certain points in your story you could include battle scenes. If the student wishes to engage in battle, flip a coin to determine the outcome. Write a winning scenario for winning the toss, or a losing scenario for losing the toss.

Relax! Have fun. Stories like these will take some time at first, but you will find that they are rewarding for both teacher and student alike, and well worth the effort.

SECTION SIX:

TEACHING YOUR STUDENTS TO WRITE THEIR OWN ADVENTURES

Think not that thy word and thine alone must be right. - Sophocles

The eggs teach the hen how to hatch. - Kweli tribe (Africa)

Time is so forever that life has many instances when you can say "Once upon a time" thousands of times in one life. - J. California Cooper

How many times have we heard the now famous words, "Once upon a time . . . ". Now think back. How many times have we wanted to change the ending to a story that we have read? Our lives are like stories and we are each writing new chapters everyday, making choices that affect outcomes. What an opportunity it would be for a student to have the opportunity to harness that creative energy that we use everyday and put it into writing. Remember that researchers have discovered that children are motivated by having a sense of control over their activities and assignments (Deci & Ryan, 1991). As educators, we are in a position to provide this motivation to our students, challenging them to grow as never before. Teaching your students to write their own "Choose your own adventures" can a fun and exciting challenge. Have your students follow the same steps that used in order to create their own adventures. Keep in mind the options available when teaching students to write stories such as these. You may want to begin with the Student Ending method before progressing to the Individual Student Writing. As with anything, practice makes perfect. Don't give up!

SECTION SEVEN:

WHAT ABOUT A GRADE?

Never give up what you have seen for what you have heard. - Swahili proverb

Our species needs, and deserves, a citizenry with minds wide awake and a basic understanding of how the world works. - Carl Sagan

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted. - Albert Einstein

"What's my grade?" How often do teachers hear those famous words? Probably more often than we would like to. We desperately want our students to work hard for intrinsic reasons, not for rewards. But, as teachers we need to balance our idealistic natures with the reality that faces us daily. We need to be able to evaluate a student's performance on a given task. Many students simply want to know if they are accomplishing what you expect of them. These are very valid concerns, as I'm sure most of us would agree. The question is, how do we evaluate a "Choose your own adventure" story that flows from a student's imagination? One answer springs to mind. Keep it simple! One possible method of evaluation is a rubric, like the one you'll find on the following page. Keep in mind that this is merely one of many possible ways in which to evaluate "Choose your own adventure" stories written by students. Keep an open mind and be creative. Don't be afraid to experiment with the style and patterns of your stories. Above all, this should be an activity that is fun and meaningful for both teachers and students. Good luck!

All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. - Ecclesiastes (KJB)

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CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE RUBRIC

Name:

Period:

Subject:

Circle the number that reflects the students score. 1=Lowest 10=Highest

Did the student focus on the terms and concepts necessary?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Did the student include an adequate number of story choices?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Was the story coherent? Did it flow together?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

* Bonus - additions such as translating languages in order to reveal story clues, coin tosses to determine outcome of decisions, pictures, etc.

1 2 3 4 5

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