



## **LEAP Lesson Plan (120 Minutes)**

### **Intermediate: 6th-12th Grade**

Written by Storytime Village Program Coordinator John Darr

*Additional Context: LEAP Kansas Young Author's Contest*

Storytime Village has designed this lesson to get students writing and illustrating their own stories after a single class period. In order to further motivate and engage students, the lesson ties into our story-writing contest. Students at each level – elementary school, middle school and high school – will have the opportunity to win a monetary prize, sponsorship for their book to be published, and a featured book signing at the Kansas Literacy Festival in September 2021. Storytime Village hopes that this external motivation will not only enrich the lesson, but also help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real world application.

After completing lessons in class, students can finish their stories on their own! Simply direct students and / or parents to the contest submission page on the website. We hope this lesson and contest opportunity function as a spark for students' love of reading and writing, and we look forward to seeing the wonderful work they will do!

### **Educational Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Match plot points to elements of plot structure as outlined in Freytag's Pyramid.
- Create their own story – fact or fictional – and outline that story using Freytag's Pyramid.
- Describe characters and settings in order to create a rich reading experience.
- Draft a story using an established plot outline.
- Revise a story to improve style and fix grammatical and spelling errors.

## Opening Activity: Five Core Words. (25 minutes)

*Group discussion* (5 minutes). Divide class into groups. Pose the following question for inter-group discussion: What is one of your favorite stories? Why do you like that story? During this discussion, students should write down as many aspects as they can think of in their packet.

*Mini-Lecture* (5 minutes): Have students guess what each word stands for, then write down their responses in their packet. Answers:

- **Somebody:** Main character
- **Wanted:** Motivation for the main character
- **But:** Obstacles in the way of the character getting what they want
- **So:** Process by which the character overcomes the obstacles
- **Then:** The ending that the story leaves us with.

*Follow-Up Activity* (5 Minutes):      *Diagramming a Favorite Activity* (15 Minutes).

Have students think back to the stories they discussed earlier. Have them turn to the second page of their packet and fill in the story's Somebody, Wanted, But, So, and Then.

Students will then take the outline and fill in the rest of the spaces. Guide them through this process by moving object by object on the diagram and asking the following questions:

- **Somebody:**
  - What are the core parts of the character's personality?
  - Why would the reader/viewer care about them?
  - Look at your responses to the first two questions. Is the main character interesting, relatable, both, or neither?
- **Wanted:** What did the main character want?
  - Is your main character's want:
    - Important to the characters' life.
    - Somewhat difficult to obtain (your character should spend most of the story struggling to achieve the want).
    - Something relatable to the audience in some way.
  - Look at your responses to the questions. Is the main character's "want" interesting, relatable, both, or neither?
- **But:** What was the problem?
  - Is it obvious how the problem will be solved?
  - Is there an argument for why the main character *shouldn't* overcome the obstacle? In other words, do the bad guys have a good point, or is the main character's desire to solve the problem possibly misguided?
  - Look at your responses to the questions. Is the problem the main character faces interesting, relatable, both, or neither?
- **So:** How was the problem solved?
  - Is there a moment in the story where the problem appears to be solved, but isn't? In other words, is there a twist?

- Are we on the edge of our seat, or is the story predictable?
- Look at your responses to the questions. Is the process by which the character solves their problem interesting, relatable, both, or neither?
- Then: How does the story end?
  - Was the ending fulfilling or not? Were there things you wanted from the story that it didn't give you?
  - Was the ending all happy, all sad, or a mix of both?
  - Do you want to head the story continued after it ended? Why or why not?
  - Look at your responses to the questions. Is the end of the story interesting, satisfying, both, or neither?

### **Brainstorming: Crafting a story. (10 minutes)**

*Brainstorming Activity* (5 minutes) Have students refer their packet. Give them the following two prompts. Students may choose either prompt to start their story.

What events have shaped you most as a person? Would any of those make a good story?

What's your favorite genre of story? If you could write a story in that genre, what would it be like?

*Five Secret Words Connection* (5 minutes) Have students take the story they've come up with and determine what the Somebody, Wanted, But, So, and Then parts of their stories are.

### **Character Building & First Drawing (20 minutes)**

*Mini-Lecture* (5 minutes): We already know our main characters pretty well. If we look at our Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then sheets, we see who our character is, what they want, and what is going to challenge them. However, that's just the beginning.

Class Discussion: How can we describe people? (offer / lead towards following answers: How they look, how they act, and what their backstory is.)

What's a backstory? (It's what a character has done / what their life is like before our story begins.)

*Describing our characters* (5 minutes): Take your main character and describe them using the ways we just talked about. Make sure you tell us what they look like, how they act, and what their backstory is. If you finish with your main character, think about other characters in your story and describe them the same way!

*Intro Drawing activity* (10 minutes): Now that we have a thorough description of our character, let's take out a piece of paper and give drawing a whirl. Start drawing your character. If you get stuck, look back at what you've written! Here's where you get to be creative and add whatever pizzazz you'd like to bring your characters to life.

## Setting (20 minutes)

Answer the following question on a piece of paper: Where does your story take place?

*Mini-class discussion (5 minutes):* Now, think deeper about your setting. Close your eyes. Imagine you are there. Look around. What does your setting look like? How does it feel to live or be there?

*Now, I want you to write about your setting (10 minutes).* Make sure you hit everything in this checklist:

1. How it looks.
2. How it feels (think weather or emotions!)
3. How it sounds (what might you hear in this setting?)
4. How it smells (what smells might you smell in this setting?)

*Illustration Number Two (5 minutes):* Draw a map of the setting.

## Understanding and Building Plot (20 minutes)

*Lecture (10 minutes):* Explain the parts of the pyramid.

Every story has motion! Meaning, we keep listening because things keep happening, and everything that happens makes us want to know what happens next. If a story starts and we don't care about what happens next, that story is already over. We're not going to listen to it! And if a story ends and we no longer care about what happened before it, we're probably not going to really remember or even like the story. So how do I avoid this? With good story structure!

One thing that will really help us structure a story is called Freytag's Pyramid. So what is Freytag's pyramid? Well, I'll give you a hint - it looks like a pyramid!

Freytag's pyramid is formed by a line that goes up as excitement increases and goes down as it decreases. Basically, at the peak of the pyramid, the story is the most exciting, and at either end, most of the people in the story are living their day to day lives because either the big conflict of the story hasn't started or because it just ended. Let's go through the parts of Freytag's pyramid bit by bit.

First, we have the exposition. The exposition is basically a big old meet and greet - the author shows us the characters, the place where the story is going to happen, and any other information we'll need to know. They might hint at a conflict, but that conflict isn't that big yet. The problem of the story is just coming into play.

Then, we have rising action. During the rising action, the characters have been confronted with a problem, and they're just setting out to solve it. They're not yet facing down their main enemy or overcoming the hardest thing they'll have to face, but they're trying to get there in some way or another. For example, a character might have to journey to reach the

thing they're trying to get, build up strength to accomplish a task, or assemble a team to take on an enemy. The rising action is usually the longest part of a story by far.

The climax is the biggest moment of any story. It's where our main character has their toughest moment - where they fight their biggest enemy or make their hardest decision. The audience should be on the edge of their seats during the climax, and you should reward them with a scene that's truly exciting! The climax can make or break a story, so make sure it's great!

The falling action is usually quite a short part of the story. It's where you tie up any loose ends, meaning anything the audience is still wondering about should be worked out.

The resolution is the end of the story. It should provide the audience with a definitive idea of what these characters will be doing in the future. You don't have to necessarily tell the audience everything that will happen to every character for their rest of their lives, you just have to establish how important characters are feeling and how they've changed after going through all the events of the story before.

*Plot Outlining* (10 minutes): Have students map their own stories on Freytag's Pyramid using the brainstorming resources they've already written down. Students will probably need the most help at this stage, so giving time for monitoring this process will be useful.

### **Drafting & Editing (30 minutes / homework)**

Students now have all the resources they need to get started on their story. To make sure they can transfer the planning and skills they've learned to an actual product, launch into the first step of writing a story: page one. Whether for homework or in class as a guided process, have students write and illustrate their first page of the story. Students should make sure to begin by writing and use the following checklist:

- Introduce the main character.
- Introduce the setting.
- Use three descriptive words to describe either the character or the setting.

They should then use the following guideline to illustrate:

- Draw the main character as described on the first page.
- Draw the setting around them as described on the first page.

### **Wrap-Up (2 minutes)**

Ask whether students are excited to write their own story and give them the remaining time to talk to nearby students about what they're going to write about. Make sure every student collects the work they've done before they leave.