

Once Upon a Sh*tty Draft...

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Rationale: The rationale for this assignment was to instruct students on the drafting process, as well as encourage them to look at how stories—even when they start the same—become mutable and changed based on varied experiences (with the Collective Literacy Narrative Analysis in mind). We assigned Anne Lamott’s essay “Shitty First Drafts” as a precursor to this assignment and to inform students about the expected imperfections of drafting.

Instructions:

- Everyone has been placed into groups of four or five, so please sit with your groupmates once they have been revealed.
- We are going to do an activity that allows you all to be creative, as well as giving you practice with drafting and revising with a group.
- Each group will receive a prompt and fifteen minutes to write the introduction to a fairy tale responding to said prompt.
- You will then split up and be given an individual plot twist which you will use when finishing your story on your own.
- Finally, you will come back together with your group and analyze how each of you changed the story based on your unique plot element.

(Hixson spun a wheel, allowing whoever it landed on each time to choose their prompt. We only allowed one prompt per group.)

The Prompts:

- 1) A child finds a genie's lamp buried in their backyard
- 2) A person steals a magic potion at the market
- 3) A dragon loses its ability to breathe fire
- 4) A witch puts a curse on the village because of the action of a certain villager
- 5) A young child runs away into the forest

PART ONE:

- Now that you have your prompt, go ahead and take the first few minutes to brainstorm and have someone in your group take notes on your ideas. Your prompt is an inciting event for the middle and end of the story, NOT how your story begins. In other words,

you need to contextualize the events that lead up to your prompting event. (i.e., if you have prompt 1, tell us about how and why the child is digging in their backyard and end the introduction with them finding the lamp).

- Brainstorm characters, settings, and style.
- Then, as a group, decide on someone to write out the introduction (2-3 short paragraphs) and share it with your whole group, as a Word doc or Google doc.
- Now, take 15 minutes to create said introduction.

PART TWO:

- Sh*tty Plot Elements:
 - 1) Character/s loses the ability to speak
 - 2) Character/s gets a magic weapon
 - 3) Character/s transforms into something or someone else
 - 4) Character/s loses all memories of something or someone
 - 5) Character/s gets scared
 - 6) Character/s gets attached to something and can't let go
 - 7) Character/s gets trapped
- Now that each of you has the introduction to your fairy tale, I have assigned a random plot element to each of you. Everyone will then finish the original group fairy tale on their own.
- You can't change anything that was set up in the introduction that your group created. You can add, but you cannot take away.
- With your new plot point, however, do not be afraid to change the direction of the story and do what you want to do. Don't be afraid to end it the way you want.
- Take 10-15 minutes to individually finish the story with your new plot element (depending on time).

PART THREE:

- Get back into your groups and take the first few minutes to share what your plot element was and how your stories ended.
- Then compare why your stories went the direction they did. Did you do similar things with your characters, settings, and style? Why? Or did you change them completely? Why?
- What happened?

RECAP AND CONCLUSION:

- How to introduce essential material into a piece of writing
 - Revision, collaboration, context, managing expectations, flexibility
- How writing changes based on differing experiences
 - Everyone's lives have different plot elements
 - Everything changes even when we start from the same place
- Appreciate how those differences create unique meaning