



Muse Machine 2019 Summer Institute-Inspired Lesson Plan

A Flowing River with Evidence

Developed by Nicole Askew

City Day Community School

Dayton, OH

Lesson Plan Summary:

Most middle school-age children struggle with issues around identity. They want peer recognition and approval and are watching their own bodies and emotions evolve. Caring adults who work with these young people try to provide tools to aid in this transformation to adulthood. Nicole Askew, teacher at City Day Community School, created an imaginative lesson to address this issue, while incorporating Ohio standards for language arts. Nicole skillfully interlaces character traits from the novel "The Outsiders" by S.E. Hinton into a group activity that she learned during 2019 Muse Machine Summer Institute. Using the device called "river stories," presented by Ping Chong + Company artists, Nicole helps students portray the novel's character traits in a group activity that is enjoyable and insightful. This is a lesson that is both creative and relevant for use by any middle school teacher.



Title: A Flowing River with Evidence

Inspiration:

During Muse Machine’s Summer Institute 2019, Ping Chong + Company presented the topic of “Understanding and Self.” They taught us a writing/storytelling method called “River Stories” to help students understand this topic.

OVERVIEW

Summary: In this lesson, students will collaborate with their peers to answer questions about a passage by citing textual evidence. They will then refer to the novel “The Outsiders” to write textual evidence of some of the characters on a “stone” and place it on the paper river. Students will also explain the reasoning behind their choice. They will then take that evidence and, as a class, create a River Story.

Standards:

7.RL.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn.

7.RL.3 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot.)

Objectives/Outcomes:

- Students will be able to analyze a text.
- Students will cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of literary text as well as support for inferences.
- Students will be able to identify and analyze character traits.

Teaching Approach: Whole group & small group instruction

Assessment:

- Oral (Student responses of text evidence)
- Written (river stones of evidence)
- Character sketch based on evidence (river story)

LESSON PREPARATION

Teacher Needs:

- "The Outsiders" by S.E. Hinton – Students should have the first four or five chapters read prior to this lesson.
- 3 sheets of chart paper – Draw a river on each one and label one heading: Ponyboy, another one: Johnny and the third one: Dally
- Teacher-created small pieces of paper shaped like stones – provide each student with 3 stones
- [Selections from “Who Is Tom?”](#)
- “My Shadow” poem by Robert Louis Stevenson – <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43196/my-shadow>



- [Character Sketch](#) – the adjectives list may help students create better character descriptions

Helpful Hints: Showing students samples and creating a few “stones” together helps to make the directions clearer. The teacher should also be aware of information about students’ backgrounds and a sensitivity to their need for privacy in certain situations.

Student Needs:

Prior Knowledge: Students will have been previously introduced to identifying main ideas and supporting details that will assist with providing textual evidence. Students will also be familiar with most of the characters in the novel prior to this lesson. Students have written stories before; however, this is an introduction to River Stories.

Student Voice: Students can work with peers of their own choosing.

Vocabulary: Main idea, details, textual evidence, character traits, character sketch, analyze

EVIDENCE/ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES

Students will create a brief character sketch (one to two paragraphs) about one of the three characters mentioned in this lesson based on the evidence they provided on the river stones.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

Students will understand that citing specific textual evidence adds necessary information and credibility to the analysis of a text.

LEARNING PLAN

Prompt: I will ask students the following question: How can you tell that I am a reading teacher? (They may respond by pointing out some of the items they see around the room, posters, books, things we’ve done in class, etc.)

Hook: Teacher will display and read aloud the first stanza of “My Shadow” by Robert Louis Stevenson to the class (dramatically or in some other voice).

Essential Questions: How do you define evidence? What do you think of when you think about evidence? How do the traumatic events in one’s life shape behaviors?

Teacher and Student Performance Tasks:

Warm-Up: Project/display “My Shadow” by Robert Louis Stevenson and refer to the first stanza. Ask students to cite evidence that Stevenson is talking about his shadow (very, very like me, jumps before me when I jump into my bed).



Guided Practice: Ask students what the word *evidence* means (ex. obvious, a thing or things helpful in forming a conclusion or judgment, a sign). Ask students what they think of when they think about *evidence* (ex. evidence submitted in a court to prove a case). Explain that writers include evidence in their stories to help the reader understand the characters and the events happening in the story.

Project/display page 1 of "Who is Tom?" and read the text aloud. Ask students to characterize Tom (ex. he is forgetful). Ask students why he is forgetful. Students may say the text doesn't allow for inference. Then display page 2 of "Who is Tom?" and read the text aloud. Ask students why Tom is forgetful. (ex. Mom was too busy to wake him up in time to get ready for school. Tom may be stressed because of twin babies in the house, dad working long hours, etc.) Point out that the author gives plenty of textual evidence to help the reader understand Tom's problems.

Issue teacher-created small pieces of paper that are shaped like stones. Explain to students that they will write down textual evidence on the stones that answer questions about some of the characters in "The Outsiders" by S.E. Hinton. We will then list at least two character traits for Ponyboy, Johnny and Dally (three separate rivers).

Leading Questions: How can you compare/contrast how Johnny and Ponyboy feel about Dally? What kind of person is Dally? What evidence can you find to support that?

Independent: After all the stones have been placed on the river, students will then choose a river (character) to write a character sketch about. Students will write approximately two paragraphs that describe the character of their choosing based on the river stones.

Final Review:

Closing Activity: Have a few students share their character sketches with the class and have them explain why they included at least one of the pieces of evidence in their sketch.

Exit Pass (optional): Have students write one thing they learned, one thing they liked, and one question they still have on a half sheet of paper.

LESSON REFLECTION

I was unsure how I would incorporate the River Story into a reading lesson. However, I must say that I rather enjoyed the response from my students. They really enjoyed the activity. It helped them to think about how well they knew each character from the novel and if they needed to analyze the characters some more.

Implementing this lesson gave me ideas of other ways that I can possibly use the River Story idea. I am sure that I will teach this lesson again with other classes. In the future, however, I will take a little more time to explain character traits at the start of the lesson. Though my students had previously learned about character traits and had also completed other activities regarding the topic, a few of them seemed to struggle with what to write on their stones about each character. Overall, I think the lesson went well.

(Display Page 1)

Who is Tom?

As Tom ran up the steps, the tardy bell sounded its familiar chastisement. Its shrill sound reminded him of his mother's morning alert.

"Don't forget your spelling book," Mother had called out as Tom frantically looked for his jacket.

The sudden realization that his spelling book was still on the kitchen table slowed his steps to a deliberate stomp that kept time with the tardy bell.

You did it again. You did it again. His feet seemed to say.

(Display page 2)

Who is Tom?

Tom hurried up the steps two at a time as the tardy bell sounded its familiar chastisement. Its shrill sound reminded him of his mother's morning alert.

"Don't forget your spelling book," Mother had called out as Tom frantically looked for his jacket. "It's on the kitchen table."

Mom had been bathing one of the twins that morning instead of waking him up. He couldn't wait until his baby brothers were older. It was bad enough that Dad had to leave for work before anyone woke up. Tom was now expected to act like he was in high school instead of third grade. It wasn't fair.

As the tardy bell continued to sound, the sudden realization that his spelling book was still on the kitchen table slowed his steps to a deliberate stomp that kept time with the bell.

You did it again. You did it again. His feet seemed to say.

Character Sketch

Writers Workshop

by Jim Cornish

What a Character!

A character sketch informs you about the character in a book. When you write a character sketch, you want the reader to have a strong mental image of the person including how the person talks, acts and thinks. This handout is designed to help you write that sketch. It provides a list of words that can be used to describe a person and a list of the types of things you can write about.

Adjectives to Describe a Person

bright	interesting	tall	friendly	thoughtful
curious	short	mean	strange	compassionate
dark	brave	talkative	shy	devious
entertaining	lazy	caring	plump	responsible
fair	helpful	negative	scruffy	energetic
frightening	busy	stubborn	stern	active
funny	loving	daring	quick-tempered	cool
grumpy	lively	gentle	impatient	calm
quiet	cruel	supportive	irritable	mysterious
reliable	cunning	faithful	wise	prankster
sensible	disorganized	patient	kind	determined
slim	smart	reassuring	stocky	patient
strong	cowardly	trustworthy	fickle	
suspicious	honest	excitable	mischievous	
weak	unsmiling	sly	foolish	
wild	unhappy	deceitful	serious	

Writing a Character Sketch

Consider the following about your character:

- gender, age and name
- appearance
- physical and personal strengths and weaknesses
- likes and dislikes
- feelings and behaviours towards other characters
- feelings of other characters towards the character
- feelings of character towards himself/herself
- personality at the beginning of the novel
- changes in personality as story progresses
- you opinion about the character

It is important to include proof from the story to support what you are writing in the character sketch. If you can't support it with something from the story, then it doesn't belong.

Example of a Character Sketch.

Rowan is a twelve year old boy who lives in the tiny village of Rin. He is small and rather scrawny for his age. His unkempt, curly brown hair looks like a mop on his tiny face and his thinness makes him look like a walking skeleton.

The people in the village poke fun of Rowan. The adults call him a weakling because he never stands up for himself. The children call him a coward because when confronted with a problem, Rowan always runs away.

Rowan is the gentlest of the children in the village. He is the only child that can approach any of the farm animals without scaring them away. They trust his soothing touch and calming voice over the roughness and loudness of the other kids.

Rowan faces the greatest challenge of his life. He possesses a special gift that he must use to save the village from the fierce dragon that lives in the mountain. He starts the journey afraid of what he might face and worried that he will let the village people down. After facing and winning over his first test, he grows more confident and stronger so that by the end of the novel, he has all the strength he needs to face his greatest test, a face-to-face meeting with the dragon.

I think Rowan doesn't deserve to be treated so poorly. It takes all kinds of people to make the world and everyone can teach us something about how to be a better person.



KEY WORDS

1. ...

2. ...

3. ...

4. ...

5. ...

6. ...

7. ...

8. ...

9. ...

10. ...

Types of Writing

Expository

Narrative



NO FOOD
NO GUM
NO CANDY
NO BEVERAGES
NO CELL PHONES!



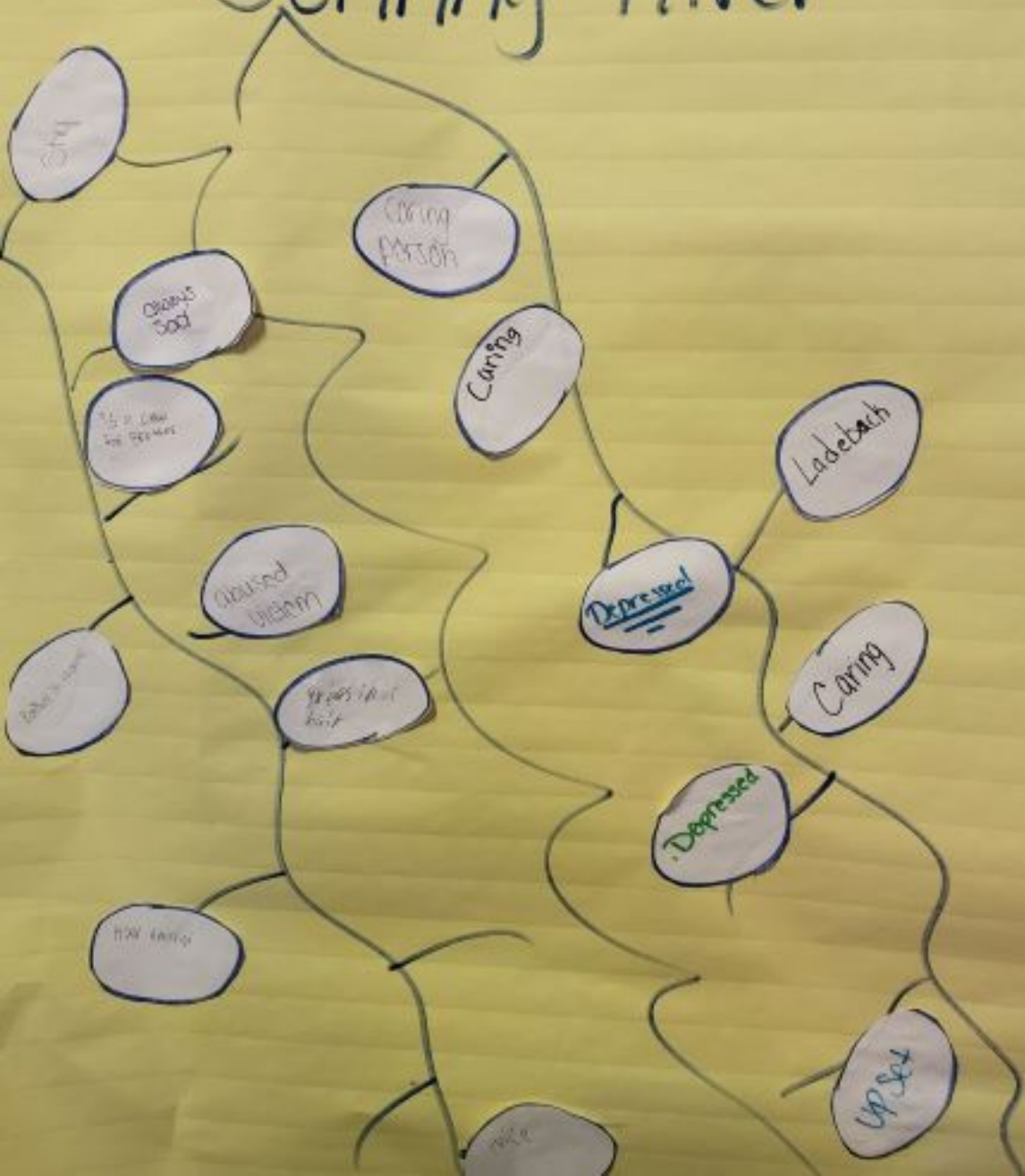
GET ORGANIZED



ATTENTION!
READER'S GUIDE
TO THE BOOK
ordinary...
by R. J. Palacio



Johnny River



Jemima Arnold

12/10/19

17th

Reading The Outsiders

Johnny is a sixteen year old boy who lives in a alley. He is smaller than the others, with a slight build. He had big black eyes in a dark tanned face, his hair was jet-black and heavily greased. He has nervous, suspicious look in his eyes. His special strengths are he knows how to not show his feelings.

He behaviors towards other character are normal and he is very loving towards them. His feelings towards himself are very being. His personality at the beginning was very quiet and shy. Now his personality is kinda of outgoing around people he is comfortable around. My opinion about Johnny is surrounded around people that care for him, and loves him, and I feel like he can get more self-love.

12/8/19

The outsiders

Dault is a male he is 16. His appearance he wear skint jeans and a big shirt. scard to get hit by parents his strength is being mean. He likes girls but don't like when his brother get in trouble in school. He rood his feelings towards other characters was he don't like seeing his brother get in trouble. They felt like he was mean to other people. He felt confident about himself, he was rood and disrespectful. He was still mean but he felt mad when his brother got in trouble. My opinion about the character was he was mean he cared about his brother i didn't like the way he was treating people.