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Lesson Plan – DOE/GPB video project

May 12, 2015

Teacher: Tori Sinco, 5th Grade

Principal: Dr. Pam Smith

Objective: Students learn how to study published texts to get ideas for ways to structure their own texts. Pam will observe the work of the teacher and students, then briefly meet with the teacher at various points to provide feedback and opportunities for reflection about the work students are doing.

Standards: ELAGSEW.5.2, ELAGSEW.5.3, ELAGSERL.5.1, ELAGSERL.5.2, ELAGSERL.5.3, ELAGSERL.5.5, ELAGSESL.5.1, ELAGSESL.5.2, **ELAGSEL.5.1, ELAGSEL.5.2,** ELAGSEL.5.3 (bold font represents primary emphasis/focus)

Guiding Questions:

- How does Tori benefit from Pam's feedback?
- From her conversations with students, what does Pam learn about the teaching that's taken place prior to this lesson?

Memoir: Studying and Planning Structures

Connection

Discuss the saying 'Today is the first day of the rest of your life'. In many ways, today is a turning point in your writing lives. Today you will begin thinking about how the structural choices an author makes can highlight the author's meaning.

Discuss what we have learned (how narratives tend to go, how texts can be structured as reports and articles, and how informational texts tend to go). We've also learned that writers can structure their texts as essays.

Teaching Point:

Today, I want to let you in on a secret. Writers structure their texts in lots of different ways. And one way you learn to structure your texts is by reading texts other authors have written and by studying the structures they have used.

Teaching:

Discuss how finding patterns in writing is much like looking out from an airplane - seeing patterns in the land below.

Flying in an airplane - ever looked out the window? You think you would see less, but the truth is...even though you see less detail, you also see more. You see patterns. You see the way different sections fit together. You may see that a city or farmland is organized into a grid. You may see smaller plots of land near a river and see that they increase in size as they get farther away from the river.

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Demonstrate with a memoir organized like a list (Paul Auster's memoir, *Invention of Solitude*) We read texts as if we are flying above them, looking down at them. - remind them of this as you start to read. We won't be reading to pay attention to the specific details Auster uses or his word choice. Instead, I'll closely look at large chunks of the text, to see how he has organized his memoir and how the chunks in his text fit together into a larger structure. **Read until ".....clicking together in the morning that would wake him up"**

I am noticing that this memoir is organized sort of like a list. Every two or three lines, Auster shifts to another memory, and the sequence (order) seems to be random. He links these different memories together with the repeating refrain of 'He remembers....'

Discuss the length of each memory - are they all the same? Point out that we are noticing that some of the memories have been elaborated upon more than others. Some are given two sentences, some just one.

"Do you notice the way I went back to the text again and again? I didn't say, 'It's a list,' and then move on. Instead, I tried to discover as much as I could about the way Auster makes his lists. In the end, I was able to notice quite a bit about what he does and doesn't do.

Active Engagement:

"Let's try reading texts that other authors have written as if we're in an airplane, looking down at the lay of the land - at the map of their structure, okay? I've copied a memoir you know onto chart paper. Please read it quickly, in almost a skimming like way. You'll probably want to look for two or three major chunks in the text. Then look at each of the chunks and ask, 'What kind of text is this section?'

Jot your observations about the text's structure in your notebooks. **House on Mango Street on Chart Paper**
(Laughter to..... That's what I was thinking exactly.)

Turn and talk. Discuss how this text is a combination of an essay and a narrative **Ways to Structure a Memoir Chart**

Link

"Today writers, you need to remember that each one of you is the author of your writing life."

Plan the work that you are doing.

May want to.....

Spend some time reading and rereading memoir - to consider alternate ways to structure the draft you'll start

(left a folder of memoir on your tables - you can write on these, boxing out the component sections, labeling what the author is doing)

Gather a bit more material before you can draft - if you know the theme you'll advance in your memoir.

"Either way, all of you will spend some time thinking about how you will structure your memoir. What might work best for your idea. Some of you will write essays, with a claim, a thesis, then with parts of the essay showing reasons or examples. Some of you may decide to collect tiny scenes like Cynthia Rylant does in *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. If so, start collecting. It is possible you'll write one story as Cisneros did in 'Eleven' and then write a little essay about it too. Once you have decided what your work will be today, you can head off to write.

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Small Group – Meeting with a group of students that need assistance with bringing out the theme in their stories. Students will analyze a text to determine how the author brought out the meaning of the story. The teaching point will focus on including both the external and internal story when writing about a small moment for a memoir.

Mid-Workshop Teaching

Discuss how we looked at two texts from an aerial view, noticing their structure. Students will look at the memoir 'Quietly Struggling' at their tables – annotating and marking its parts. Students will share their observations. I will then reveal the third way to structure a memoir had been added to our anchor chart (essay)

Share

Assessing yourself against a checklist

"old pros" at using checklists. Discuss our uses of the Narrative Writing Checklist to assess personal narrative writing, Informational Writing Checklist to set goals on your Westward Expansion pieces, and the Opinion Writing Checklist to create strong arguments.

"If this unit were like any other, I'd hand you a checklist and say, 'Here. This is what teachers the world-over agree fifth graders should be doing.' But as we've come to realize, memoir is a complicated genre. In some ways it is a narrative unit: you write stories about your life and dig to uncover why those memories are important. In other ways, it is like an essay unit: you develop ideas and theories about your life and then write to explore and defend those ideas. We've come to find out that memoir is a hybrid, or mixed unit."

Explain that today they will make their own Memoir Writing Checklist. **Give them a checklist that has Narrative & Opinion/Argument in first two columns. Blank space for Memoir**

Let's try one category together before we go off to work. **Have the Overall category on chart paper.** They read, discuss, then we come back to share.

Lead them to something like...."I wrote an idea about my life and wrote the story of one or more times to show how that idea is true"

Work time with small groups

Come back together - create the rest of the Memoir checklist together