

Discovering Mood: How a Writer can Control the Readers' Emotions

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Designed for a Sixth Grade Writers' Workshop setting

The Demonstration

This lesson demonstration is meant to support my contentions that:

- Students can be successful and confident writers regardless of ability level.
- Writers can affect the mood of the reader by using evocative language.
- Mentor texts are effective in teaching writing through a study of craft.
- Students become better writers by writing and revising their own pieces with topics of their own choosing.
- Everyone has something they can write about.
- Learning takes place through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic methods.
- Teacher modeling is a must in any writing lesson.
- Use of multi-media examples engage and motivate students.
- Collaboration is a strategy for engagement.
- Students need time to talk and process new learning in small and large groups.
- Rich vocabulary is a critical tool for every writer.
- Students need time to compose in class.
- Student writing should be shared, published, and celebrated publically.

Lesson Considerations:

- This lesson can be modified for lower grades by changing the mentor texts. For example, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst could be substituted as a mentor text.
- Students could be grouped together to come up with their own "mood word" lists as a brainstorming activity before sharing my list with them.
- This lesson can be revisited throughout the year with different text sets.
- For younger students, prepare the word lists ahead of time and distribute them pre-cut and in baggies.
- When presenting the lesson with a series of classes, (over a period of several days), allow for longer reflection and sharing time.

The Step-by-Step Lesson Development:

- Read two examples of holiday texts. Discuss the significance of each.
 - "Twas the Night Before Christmas, Biker Version"
 - The short story "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros
- Give a short writing invitation
 - Memoir piece about a holiday memory, either good or bad
 - Memoir piece about a birthday memory, either good or bad
 - Family memory piece
 - Personal rendition of "Twas the Night Before Christmas"

The Step-by-Step Lesson Development continued:

- Give time to share out
- Teach that every narrative has mood, setting, characters, and plot
- Today we're going to think about mood and define mood as it relates to the overall feeling of a piece of writing
- Discuss the power of language and that language impacts mood and drives the story. Did you know that you have the ability to control your reader's mood?
- Authors are intentional in creating mood. By selecting specific words and phrases an author can give the whole piece a kind of personality, or mood. How does the piece make you feel as you read it?
- Whole Group Activity: Share pieces that show different moods. Discuss the intentional mood the author has created with evidence from the text. Underline words/phrases students suggest might create that mood.
 - Snowmen at Night by Caralyn Buehner
 - Read Chapter 18 *The Abominable Snowman of Pasadena* by R.L. Stine
- Partner activities: Pass out the Mood Word sheets and have the students work with partners to cut the sorts, then move the mood words to sections (positive, neutral, and negative) and then transfer the words into their writing notebooks to use as reference word lists. The purpose of this activity is exposure to rich language. The physical manipulation of words takes the task from simple, thoughtless copying, to word discovery and investigation into meaning.
- Pass out the poem, "Snowman" by Silverstein. Discuss the variety of moods presented in this one poem with your partner. Gather evidence from the poem to support your decision. Can we decide on one mood overall?
- Share movie trailers that were intentionally designed to change the mood of the original movie. Discuss the power the author has in making the reader feel a certain way. Have you ever gone to see a movie because of the way the trailer made you feel, only to be disappointed in the movie because it didn't reflect the feelings you got from the trailer?
 - Use Mary Poppins as a horror film
 - Use Frozen as a dramatic film
- Pairs take the poem "A Prayer in Spring" by Frost and change the mood words in the poems to convey a different mood.
- Share out.
- Independent practice: Individuals go back to first piece of writing and enhance the mood they were trying to convey with some of the rich language they sorted and have written in their notebooks. Share out.

Writing Invitations:

- Write a poem that is meant to convey a specific mood in the style of Shel Silverstein, Robert Frost, or author Caralyn Buehner
- Write a memoir piece that conveys strong mood
- Plan out an iMovie trailer that changes the idea of a movie from one genre to another using music, words, and clips

Writing Invitations continued:

- Go back to a previous piece of writing and revise it using mood words and phrases
- Write about something that you read that greatly affected you on a deep level. Something that made you feel a certain way (happy, sad, angry)

Bibliography

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Possible Lesson Extensions and Adaptations:

- When revising the student work, an activity could be to have students choose a mood word “from a hat” and work with partners to establish that mood in the writing. Each group would be working with a different tone. Compare the pieces.
- Another writing invitation to add could be to create their own edition of “Twas the Night Before Christmas” focused on their own area of interest.
- Deeper explore the different published versions of “Twas the Night Before Christmas.”
- Take the iMovie trailer writing invitation and turn it into a culminating project where students create their own trailer with a specific mood.
- Write blurbs for their own writing, expressing a certain mood.
- Change the mood of a story with a book talk summary.
- Mood writing contest
- Music-based mood writing
- Enhanced word study
- Find photographs or images to best express emotion words
- Personify emotions “Doubt lives under the stairs...” J. Ruth Gendler *The Book of Qualities*
- Illustrate stories
- View artwork and write about the mood
- Create a poster of imagery depicting emotions
- Create a word continuum or rainbow of emotion words

Affect Demonstrated Throughout the Lesson and Described by Your Students:

- You are inviting but not intimidating and we felt comfortable sharing our writing with the class.
- Did you notice all the great mood words we used? Thanks for the awesome list!
- You included your own experiences grappling with the mood of texts you read and write.
- You have a calm, cheerful demeanor and made us feel included. You are super organized!
- Your tone of voice was caring and encouraging throughout the lesson.

Best Practices Modeled in the Lesson:

- You scaffold the texts well, beginning with pieces that had a clear mood and ending with pieces that were more ambiguous.
- You have clear expectations.
- You provides lots of choice; We had a variety of writing invitations throughout the lesson.
- You engaged students in several instances of sharing
- You offered tactile experiences like cutting and sorting.
- You offered many different genres to explore
- You immersed students in numerous texts, which were all thematically organized
- Your lesson was well-paced, with many types of activities
- You used rich vocabulary when speaking with the class
- You took us outside the lesson, mentioning Mrs. Carey, the snowmen decorating the class
- You used multi-media, including the movie trailers.

Common Core State Standards Embedded in the Lesson:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1
Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.10
By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.D
Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

Common Core State Standards Embedded in the Lesson continued:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.5**
With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.10**
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1**
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.