

Career Girls: Storytelling 101

Lesson Topic:

Identifying the Qualities of a Good Story

Lesson Objective:

Students will be able to identify the qualities of a good story, rank these qualities in order of importance, and provide a justification for their ranking.

Warm-up Activity:

1. Ask students to think of examples of good stories that they are familiar with. Have students discuss at least one example story with a partner and explain why they believe it qualifies as a good story. After allowing two minutes for discussion, call on students to share their ideas.
2. Title a piece of chart paper "Good Story Qualities". Divide the paper into two columns, and list students' ideas about the qualities of a good story in the first column. Label this column "Qualities of a Good Story According to Our Experience".
3. Introduce the **Vocabulary Word List** from the video. Have students circle the terms they are familiar with and look up the definitions of those they are not familiar with. Direct students to record their own definitions for the words they are familiar with and the dictionary definitions for those they are not.
4. For each term, have students work together to generate sentences or draw pictures that demonstrate their understanding of the vocabulary word in context (e.g., "My math homework was *complex* because there were a lot of math problems of many different types to solve," or, "Cooking is *complex* because there are so many steps to follow and new words to learn." For students

that choose to draw pictures, the word *complex* may be represented by many things including a difficult math equation, a maze, or a Rubik's cube.).

5. Use this opportunity to clear up any misconceptions regarding word meanings as they relate to storytelling.

View the Video: "Storytelling 101"

1. Preview the video [2:00] before sharing it with your students.
2. Tell students they will be watching the video titled, "Storytelling 101".
3. Help students understand that good stories share many of the same qualities regardless of genre, medium, or topic. Ensure that students understand that stories can teach us about life, ourselves, and others.
4. Explain that the video presents role models talking about storytelling and the qualities of good stories.
5. View the video together and have students listen for the role models to use the vocabulary words they just reviewed.
6. View the video again; this time, invite students to formulate questions or comments about the concepts discussed in the video and to be prepared to discuss these after viewing the video.

Video Follow-up:

1. Ask students to offer their questions, comments, reactions and responses to the video.
2. Review the students' ideas about the qualities of good stories from the warm-up activity. Now ask students to list new ideas they have based on what they learned in the video. Write these new ideas in the second column of the chart paper. Label this column "Qualities of a Good Story According to the Video".

3. Tell students that the role models discussed many qualities of good storytelling and that they are also familiar with many qualities from their own lives.
4. Divide students into groups of three. Each group should have a single sheet of blank paper and a writing utensil. Tell students that they will be working in these small groups to select four qualities of good stories that they believe are the most important. They should use the list of "Good Story Qualities" as a basis for their group's list. For each quality they select, they must give a justification explaining why they believe it is one of the most important qualities. Give students 5-10 minutes to discuss the qualities of good stories and write their selected qualities and justifications on their group's blank paper.
5. Allow each group to briefly share the qualities that they selected as most important and their justifications. Ensure students understand that there is not a right or wrong answer, and that it is okay to change your opinion about the importance of certain qualities after hearing other groups' ideas.

Extension Activity:

Use the "Related Questions to Explore" as discussion springboards or writing prompts to help students further explore the craft of storytelling and the impact it can have on their lives.

Related Questions to Explore:

- Think of your favorite story. What makes it your favorite story? Try to identify the qualities of a good story that it demonstrates.

- Think of a story you have recently written, filmed, or told aloud. What qualities of a good story does your piece possess? What could you change to improve it based on what you now know about good story qualities?
- One role model said that good stories start with complex characters because people are naturally complex. In what ways are you complex? What does it mean to create a complex character?
- Think of a character from your favorite novel or movie. Is the character complex? What makes him/her into a complex character? Do you believe the author or director made the character complex on purpose? Why?
- Good stories often teach a lesson. What story have you read recently that taught you a lesson? What was the lesson? How did the story teach it?
- How could being a good storyteller help you in your future career? What storytelling qualities are also important in the work environment?
- How do you use storytelling in your life? At home? At school? With your friends?

Vocabulary Word List from "Storytelling 101" Video:

Character

Compelling

Engage

Complex

Authentic

Conflict

Overcome

Achieve

Climax

Audience

Ideas for Future Lessons/Activities Related to Storytelling:

1. What Makes a Good Story Good? Exploring and Understanding Story Qualities
2. Literature-Based Learning: Comparing and Contrasting Stories from Different Time Periods and Their Styles
3. Conducting and Recording Interviews with Real Life Inspiring Women as They Tell Stories About Their Lives
4. Everyone Has Stories: Working Together to Develop Stories About Our Lives
5. Storytelling in Cinema: Comparing the Choices Directors Make and Their Outcome on the Final Product—*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1971 and 2005)
6. Becoming a Good Storyteller: Practicing the Language and Actions of Storytelling
7. How Would You Tell It? Story Snippets for Students to Develop and Perform
8. Storytelling in Action: Roleplaying and Classifying Good and Bad Examples of Storytelling