Three Pictures, One Story

Teacher		**Class**	Grade 5
Subject	ELA	**Topic**	Creative writing: narratives
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United States

Students learn to order real or imagined events and add vivid details. They plan and write a three-part narrative in clear sequence.

Curriculum links

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Learning objectives

- Students will write a real or imagined narrative in clear beginning-middle-end order.
- Students will use sensory details and action to show feelings and events.

Success criteria

- I can order my story events from start to big moment to end.
- I can add one sense detail and show a feeling by action.

What students already know

Ask: What three parts does most every story have? Listen for beginning, middle and end. Show thumbs up if you can name a real memory you could turn into a story.

Key words

narrative	a story that tells connected events in order to share meaning [10][11]
sequence	the order in which events happen, one after another [11]
climax	the most exciting or important part of the story [11]
resolution	the end part where the problem is solved and change is shown [11]
sensory detail	words that tell what can be seen, heard, smelled, or felt [5]
technique	a smart trick a writer uses to make the story clear and lively [5]

Materials

- Slides 2-5, 7-9, 11-12 projected
- Video clip 4 "show, don't tell technique" (0:00-4:40)
- Folded paper with three boxes, one per student
- Pencils and crayons
- Worksheet Task C prompt for planning talk

Before the lesson

- Fold or print paper with three boxes labeled Start, Big Moment, End for each student
- Test Slides 2-5, 7-9, 11-12 and Video clip 4 (0:00-4:40) with sound
- Set out pencils, crayons, and Worksheet Task C prompt where groups can see it

Lesson outline

0–5 min **Starter** 5 min · Whole class

Hook interest and recall that stories need a beginning, a middle and an end.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 2 and read aloud: A student found muddy shoes by the door and smiled. Why?
2. Say the hook and point to three blank boxes on the board.
3. Ask partners to whisper one guess about what happened before and after the shoes.
4. Link guesses to lesson goal: today we plan and write a short real or imagined story in clear order.

STUDENTS DO

1. Look at Slide 2 and whisper a guess to a neighbor.
2. Share one or two guesses with the class.

Say: You get only three pictures to tell a whole adventure. What will you keep and what will you cut? A small detail can start a big story. Today you will pick one moment and tell it from start to big moment to end.

Ask: What three parts do most stories have? (A beginning, a middle and an end [10].) · Could the muddy shoes story be real or imagined? (Either; a narrative can be real or imagined events.)

Check understanding: Hands up: who can name the three boxes in order? If unsure, point to Start, Big Moment, End on board and repeat together.

Support: Let students answer with a drawing or one word for what came before or after the shoes. **Stretch:** Ask: what one small change would turn your real guess into something imagined?

Use: Slide 2

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5–17 min **Teaching: Build the Story Path** 12 min · Whole class

Teach how to order events from introduction to climax to resolution.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 3: Lights buzzed. One backpack sat alone by the lockers. What happened here? Ask who and where.
2. Show Slide 4 and walk through the five steps: show who and where, add a small problem, grow to climax, calm down, show change.
3. Model putting three events in order on the three-box path, thinking aloud about time words.
4. Show Slide 5 and vote quickly on which opening makes you want to keep reading.

STUDENTS DO

1. Vote on Slide 5 openings and say why one pulls you in.
2. Retell the backpack order to a neighbor using first, then, at the end.

Say: Writers do not list random happenings. A narrative reports connected events in a sequence of words [11]. We start with people and place, grow a problem to the most exciting part, then calm down and show how things changed.

Worked example: Backpack story in order. Start: A student stayed late after gym and saw one backpack alone by the lockers. Big Moment: The zipper buzzed open and a wet map slid out, and footsteps came closer down the hall. End: The student left a note on the map, and the owner found it the next morning. I check: introduction first, climax is most exciting part [11], then calm down and resolution where conflict is solved [11]. Time words first, then, suddenly keep it in order.

Ask: Where does the most exciting part belong? (In the middle-big moment, the climax, the most exciting or important part of the story [11].) · How do we know the end is a resolution? (The problem is solved and we see how things changed.) · Which opening from Slide 5 gives who and where fastest? (My hands shook as the gym doors swung open - shows feeling, place, and action starting.)

Check understanding: Mini whiteboards: write 1, 2, 3 for Start, Big Moment, End beside three jumbled sentences. Reteach with the path if order is mixed.

Support: Give a half-drawn path with Start and End filled so students only place the middle problem and big moment. **Stretch:** Ask: what happens to tension if you move the big moment to the very start?

Use: Slides 3-5

17–30 min **Teaching: Make It Feel Real** 13 min · Whole class

Model adding sensory details and showing feelings by action.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 7 and explain technique as a smart trick writers use.
2. Play Video clip 4 (0:00-4:40) and tell students to steal one detail that shows feeling.
3. Model upgrading a flat sentence with a sense and an action that shows feeling.
4. Show Slide 8 and ask students to name the action that shows the feeling.

STUDENTS DO

1. Watch the video and whisper one stolen detail to a partner.
2. Help upgrade a second sentence: The classroom was quiet.

Say: Do not just tell the feeling. Show feelings with actions, not only words. Add what you see, hear, or smell using comparisons like similes and imagery [5]. That elaboration and detail keeps tension till the end [9].

Worked example: Flat: The student was scared in the hallway. Improved step by step. Step 1 add sense - hear: Lights buzzed overhead. Step 2 show feeling by action: My hands shook as the gym doors swung open. Step 3 add comparison: My heart thumped like a ball bouncing fast. Now readers can see, hear, and feel it without me writing I was very scared.

Ask: Which shows fear better: I was scared or My hands shook? (My hands shook, because action shows the feeling.) · What sense detail could you add to the empty hallway? (What is seen, heard, or smelled, like buzzing lights, cold air, wet shoes.)

Check understanding: Thumbs up if you can point to the action that shows feeling in the example. If not, highlight shook and thumped and explain again.

Support: Provide a word bank of color, size, sound, and texture words to drop into sentences [5]. **Stretch:** Combine two devices in one sentence, like a simile plus a sound word, and say what picture it gives.

Use: Video clip 4 (0:00–4:40), Slides 7-8

30–50 min **Main activity: Three-Panel Story Sprint** 20 min · On their own

Draft a short real or imagined narrative with clear order and details.

YOU DO

1. Give out folded three-box paper, pencils, and crayons and show Slide 9 task.
2. Direct quick planning talk using Worksheet Task C: tell your start, big moment, end with no writing for 2 minutes.
3. Set writing time: 5 to 7 sentences in clear order, with one sense detail and one feeling shown by action.
4. Stop at 15 minutes for partner check that events connect in order from start to finish.

STUDENTS DO

1. Do Worksheet Task C: talk through plan with a partner, no writing now.
2. Sketch beginning, middle and end [10], then write 5 to 7 sentences with details.
3. Read three parts aloud to a partner who checks that events connect in order.

Say: Pick one moment and plan start, big moment, end. Sketch fast, then write two to three sentences under each panel. Keep events in order and add one sense detail and one feeling shown by action. Planning and revising helps many types of writing [1].

Worked example: My panels. Start sketch: door with muddy shoes. Sentences: After lunch, a student saw muddy shoes by the door and smiled. The hallway smelled like rain and wet socks. Big Moment sketch: map falling out. Sentences: Suddenly the shoes tipped over and a folded map slipped out. Hands trembling, the student opened it and heard footsteps behind. End sketch: note on shoes. Sentences: The student left a note that said Follow the mud. The next day the shoes were gone and a thank-you note was there. Check: characters and setting first, problem and climax in middle, solution at end [11].

Ask: Is your seed real or imagined, and what one change did you make? (Names seed as real or imagined and states one change to setting or problem.) · Where is your climax and how will readers know? (In panel two; it is the most exciting or important part [11] with strong action and detail.)

Check understanding: Partners check: can you retell the story in order? If links break, add next, then, suddenly, or after that to fix sequence.

Support: Provide sentence starters for each box to help plan, revise, and keep ideas in order [1]. **Stretch:** Add one descriptive detail about setting and one about character feelings in each panel.

Use: Slide 9, Worksheet Task C

50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

Share work and check understanding of narrative order and details.

YOU DO

1. Invite two students to read start to end while class listens for order and one vivid detail.
2. Show Slide 10: just listing what happened is not yet a story; it becomes a narrative when events connect to share meaning.
3. Use Slide 11 for think, pair, share: what smart trick made your partner's story easy to picture?
4. Close with Slide 12 true-or-false check on real or imagined and clear sequence.

STUDENTS DO

1. Listen, then think, pair, share one technique a partner used.
2. Vote true or false on Slide 12 statements and explain why.

Say: Strong stories are not lists. They connect events to share meaning. Tell your partner one smart trick you used. Then we will check what makes a narrative work.

Ask: What smart trick made your partner's story easy to picture? (One sense detail or action that showed feeling, like shaking hands or buzzing lights.) · Can a strong narrative jump around with no order? (False; clear sequence helps readers follow connected events [11].) · Can a narrative share real or imagined events? (True; it can tell either kind.)

Check understanding: Exit votes on Slide 12; if many miss order, re-point to the three-box path and restate start, big moment, end.

Support: Let students point to the panel that shows the detail instead of explaining in full sentences. **Stretch:** Ask students to suggest a different resolution that still fits earlier events.

Use: Slides 10-12

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Listing events without connection	Story reads like and then, and then with no problem or change	Link events so they share meaning; it becomes a narrative when events connect to share meaning [10]. Ask: what changed?
Putting the climax first or last with flat ending	Most exciting part at start, then boring rest, or ends with and then they went home	Move most exciting or important part to the middle [11] and add action and detail to resolution where conflict is solved [11].
Telling feelings instead of showing	Only writes I was happy, sad, scared with no senses	Add elaboration, explanation and detail [9] with senses and action, using metaphors, similes, and imagery [5].

Support

- Provide sentence starters for Start, Big Moment, and End to help plan, revise, and keep ideas in order [1]
- Offer a word bank of color, size, sound, and texture words and connecting words like next, then, suddenly

Stretch

- Add one descriptive detail about setting and one about character feelings in each panel
- Explain how changing one detail changes character choices and next events

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Sit near writers who need ordering help; prompt with Start, Big Moment, End cards and sentence starters, and read back their sentences so they can hear order.

Check for understanding

Question	Answer
What three parts must your narrative plan show?	Start, big moment (climax), and end (resolution).
Give one sense detail you used or heard today.	Any see, hear, smell, or feel detail, such as buzzing lights or rain smell.
How did you show a feeling without just naming it?	By an action, such as hands shook to show fear.

Homework

Finish your three panels and add one more sense detail where it fits best.

Sources

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