

How to Get Kids Inspired to Write (Part 1)



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Last October I was asked to teach how to write a scary story with second grade students. First, I read a scary story to the children. Then I provided them with writing prompts and strategies on how they might create and write their own scary stories. As a personal example, I dramatized a scary story about how I was bitten by a rattlesnake and was given antibodies from a horse to fight the poison in my body. The students were captivated by my story and suggested that I write a children's book about my experience. They also were eager to learn more about rattlesnake bites. I promised I would return at a later date for students to learn more about this adventure.

After reading the Halloween story about ghosts and witches, students eagerly wrote their own versions of a scary story. They produced stories about monsters,

witches, ghosts, and goblins. Various students loved to create bloody and gruesome details about how their characters survived a scary night of horror and adventures. Their illustrations were filled with intense colors of frightening characters and bloody encounters.

What Students Learned

This creative writing experience was an enormous success. Most students were able to:

Create an introductory sentence that engaged the reader to read more about the story.

Develop a sequence of events with descriptive details in their first, second, and third supporting sentences.

Engage the reader with a summary sentence that included a climax or resolution to their story.

Sample Student Story

Here is an example of a scary story created by Brandon with a teacher's editing support:

"Once upon a time there was a person who wanted to be a teacher. His name was Gerald and he was 21 years old. He graduated from U. C. Berkeley and became a high school science teacher. He invented spy glasses that could help a person do the following:

Fly whenever a person said the word 'fly'.

Become invisible.

Climb walls like Spiderman

Tell the truth

The students in Gerald's class experimented with the spy glasses. The classroom became a wild crazy place. The school's students soon became frightened as Gerald's students became super powered with their spy glasses. Gerald had to stop using the spy glasses at the school so all the students would feel safe again."

What I Learned

This writing activity taught me that students love to be the leaders in how they learn. When they are fully engaged in a learning activity, they are able to respond enthusiastically to an assignment. They typically will ask for more of a specific activity when they love what they are learning. Although they will challenge the teacher to create more intensive writing activities, they can expand their writing skills to a higher level of writing proficiency and success.

As a follow-up writing activity, I created a compelling outline for a story about how I survived a rattlesnake bite. The story outline includes student's writing prompt questions and follow-up research activities that will be featured in my February 28th blog post.