1 Reading

Tell me a story. That simple request is made by children at bedtime, passengers on a long journey, and visitors to the theater. Stories can take us around the globe or into magical worlds created by authors such as Dr. Seuss, Maurice Sendak, and J. K. Rowling.

Students make connections when they read narrative texts (stories) and expository or informational texts. They form deeper associations by making text-to-self, text-to-world, and text-to-text connections (Tompkins, 2010).

Text-to-self connections occur when students link events in their lives with the texts they are reading. For example, when students read books such as Barbara Park's *Junie B. Jones, First Grader (at last!),* they remember their first days in a new school or grade. They make text-to-world connections when they relate passages in a text to events occurring in the world around them. This could happen when students read texts such as John Feinstein's *Last Shot,* a novel about the annual NCAA basketball tournament, and compare the fictional events in the book with the results of actual games. Students make text-to-text connections when they associate one text with another. Avid readers, for example, often make text-to-text connections when they discuss themes that occur in several books.

When we make connections, reading becomes an empowering communication tool that leads to self-awareness, bonds us with the community, and gives us an appreciation for literature. Connections enable us to enjoy texts that celebrate history, expand cultural awareness, and build social and academic skills.

Teachers can help students make connections by doing the following:

- Providing access to a wide range of reading material
- Allocating time for students to respond to their reading by writing, speaking, or creating a visual representation

- Implementing lessons that pair nonfiction with related fiction texts
- Providing graphic organizers as an aid for comprehension
- Asking challenging questions that require higher-level thinking

The lesson plans presented in the "Reading" section of this text will encourage students to become active readers who make connections and employ strategies that increase their enjoyment of narrative and informational texts.

Several of the lesson plans in this section refer to the instructional activities of the language experience approach, literature circles, and readers theater.

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

The language experience approach helps emergent readers and English language learners (ELL) build their reading sight vocabulary and understand concepts about print (Ashton-Warner, 1965). When using the language experience approach, teachers ask students to dictate sentences about a topic such as a field trip, hobby, or pets. The teacher writes their sentences on large paper, a chalkboard, or on a computer screen as the students watch. The students then read back the sentences. This activity helps the students understand that spoken language can be transcribed and provides an introduction to writing instruction.

LITERATURE CIRCLES

Literature circles provide opportunities for students to discuss books with peers (Daniels, 2001). When implementing literature circles, a teacher selects a few books (usually three to five) and gives the class a brief oral presentation on each book. Each child then selects a book and forms a group with classmates who have chosen the same title. The groups determine the timeline for reading the book and completing related projects. Literature circles empower students by enabling them to select their own reading material and engage in deep conversations about books and their authors.

READERS THEATER

Readers theater is a technique in which students read and perform a script for an audience. Unlike a typical school play, the students are not expected to memorize their lines and they do not usually use props or costumes.

They give a performance by reading from their scripts. Rehearsing for a performance gives students an authentic reason to reread familiar texts and helps them to become confident, fluent readers (Tompkins, 2010).

HOMETOWN HISTORY

Many students can recite the story of the founding of Jamestown, Virginia, or the pioneer's homesteading journey to the West. How many, however, are familiar with the history of the town in which they live? Do the children in your town know who started the annual summer fair or why Santa Claus enters their town by train every December? Your town has stories that can enrich the lives of all of its residents.

(Teachers who work with students who move frequently and have not established ties with the community should refer to the suggested adaptation at the end of this lesson.)

Objectives:

1. The students will gather facts about their hometown by consulting print and electronic references as well as by interviewing residents.
2. The students will write a report about an interesting local building.
3. The students will write a work of historic fiction set in the local area.

IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts: 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12

McREL Standards: 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8

Suggested Related Literature:

The House in the Mail by Rosemary and Tom Wells

Part I: Expository Texts

Procedure:

1. Read *The House in the Mail* by Rosemary and Tom Wells to open a discussion about the importance of hometown memories and intriguing houses in our neighborhoods. If this text is not available, take pictures of interesting buildings in your town and bring the pictures to class. Invite the students to share special memories and stories they may have about these buildings. You may also be able to find the pictures you need on a town calendar or Web site.

2. Tell the class that they will be learning more about unique buildings in their town.

3. Ask your students to think about special locations in their town. What is each student's favorite place (e.g., a library, theater, roller skating rink)? As the students raise their hands and respond, write the names of the special buildings they identify on the board.

4. Invite students to brainstorm ways in which they could learn more about these buildings. Tell them that they will have an opportunity to select a local building and investigate its role in the town's history.

5. Post sign-up sheets and allow the children to select a building in their town that they would like to research. Children who have selected the same building should form a group (optimal group size is three to six students).

6. Provide time for each group to conduct research to learn more about the buildings that interest them. Possible research methods and materials include the following:

- Internet research. Often students can enter the name of their town and a special building in a search engine to find interesting facts. Your town may also have a Web site with community information.
- Reference books. Teachers may be able to find reference books with their town's history in the local library.
- School yearbooks. The local public high school may have a collection of yearbooks that contain pictures and stories about the town.

7. After the students have conducted their preliminary research, tell them you will invite members of the community to visit the classroom to share their stories of local history. To prepare for the visits, each group of students should determine relevant questions to ask the residents. (A sample interview sheet is included with this lesson.) Note: Before inviting guests, teachers must consult their school's policies on classroom visitors. Such policies may require teachers to seek administrative approval and visitors to obtain a pass and sign a registry in the school office before going to classrooms.

8. When working with elementary students, it is helpful to model interviewing techniques before visitors arrive. A few days before the visits, model and guide the students as they role-play interview situations.

9. Determine the best interview method for your classroom. Some teachers invite one visitor to speak to the entire class. Other teachers divide the students into small groups to complete the interviews.

A sample interview guide follows.

INTERVIEW SHEET FOR RESIDENTS

1. How long have you lived in _____ (town)?
2. We would like to ask you some questions about _____ building. What is the official name for that building?
3. Has that always been the building's name or has it been called by other names?
4. When was it built?
5. Why was it built?
6. What groups have used this building? How has the building been used?
7. Do you have any special stories about this building that you would like to share with us?

Provide time for the students to interview community residents who visit the classroom. As they interview the residents, students can take notes by using an interview sheet similar to the model provided, or they can record the interviews and then write facts gleaned on a graphic organizer.

After the visitors have left the classroom, provide time for each group to meet and discuss the facts they gathered during the interviews. Ask each group to share their written report with the entire class.

Adaptation:

Some students live in the same community from their entrance to kindergarten to their high school graduation. Others, however, move frequently and do not establish neighborhood bonds. Teachers who work in transient situations can adapt the hometown-history activities by encouraging students to select and investigate a local building. These students could then be helped to make connections between the local buildings and similar structures they have seen in other towns. The following questions could be used to guide students as they write reports:

- Why did you select this building?
- What features did you find interesting?
- Have you ever been in a similar building? Where was it?
- Have you ever read any books that were set in interesting buildings? Does this local building remind you of the setting of a book that you read?

Part II: Narrative Texts

Writers use their knowledge of settings to craft credible stories. Your students have learned a great deal about interesting buildings in their town. Encourage them to use their knowledge of those settings to create a work of historical fiction set in your town.

Procedure:

1. Ask your students to meet again in their research groups. Challenge each group to use the building they investigated as the setting for a work of historical fiction.

2. Provide time for the groups to brainstorm ideas and develop a plot for their work of historical fiction.

3. Encourage each group to write a collaborative story.

4. Provide time for the groups to engage in the writing process.

5. Invite each group to read their original work of historical fiction to the entire class.

6. As a class, determine the most effective way to share the students' research and works of historical fiction with the community. The students may wish to prepare written reports and stories to send to the local newspaper, or they could display their work in the community library, municipal building, or recreation building. They might also prepare a book that could be duplicated and placed in school and community libraries.

Grade Level Adaptations

Grades K–2	The youngest students may not be ready for independent Internet research, but they will have many questions about unique local buildings. Bring photographs of local buildings to the classroom. Using a language experience approach, help the children compose sentences about buildings that interest them.
Grades 3–4	Students in third and fourth grade will benefit by interviewing community members, but they will need guidance to prepare. Model interview techniques and provide time for role-playing before inviting guests to the classroom.
Grades 5–8	Students in the middle grades are developing social skills and often benefit by working in teams. Monitor the work of each team while encouraging the students to work cooperatively and respect the talents of each member.

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Students who are English Language Learners (ELL)	Use a language experience approach to help students who are learning English compose sentences about interesting local buildings. Encourage them to make connections between local buildings and those in their native areas.
Related Crafts	Refer to Part II of this text, "The Arts and Crafts of Literacy," to find instructions for using fabric crayons to create the following: • banners celebrating your hometown • T-shirts for students to wear to community day celebrations • quilt squares depicting special places in the community

Hometown-History Assessment for Teacher and Student Reflections

Did we accomplish our objectives?

Objectives	*Student Comments*	*Teacher Comments*
1. The students will gather facts about their hometown by consulting print and electronic references as well as by interviewing residents.		
2. The students will write a report about an interesting local building.		
3. The students will write a work of historic fiction set in the local area.		

Hometown-History Assessment

	6	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
Interview Skills	While interviewing a resident, the student asked questions that showed	The student asked insightful questions while interviewing a	The student interviewed a community resident and asked appropriate questions.	The student asked inappropriate questions while interviewing a	The student required adult assistance to interview a community	The student did not interview a resident of the community.

	6	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
	research and knowledge of the community. The student asked many very insightful questions.	community resident.		community resident.	resident and/or asked inappropriate questions.	
Reference Skills	The student used print and Internet resources efficiently.	The student made satisfactory use of print and Internet resources.	The student made minimal use of references. More facts were needed in the expository text.	The expository text contained one to two inaccuracies.	The expository text contained three or more inaccuracies.	The student required a great deal of adult assistance to use reference materials.
Content	The writing reflected extensive research and interpretation of facts. A great deal of information was given.	The writing contained an above-average amount of information.	The writing contained a satisfactory amount of information.	More facts were needed.	The writing contained only superficial information.	The content was not related to the assigned topic.
Organization	Exemplary organization was shown. The ideas flowed logically and transitions were used effectively.	Ideas were organized well. Transitions were used appropriately.	Ideas were organized.	The writing showed some organization, but a few statements appeared out of sequence.	The writer attempted to present ideas in an organized manner but was not able to sustain the organization.	Ideas were not presented in an appropriate sequence.

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	6	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
Style	The writing showed exceptional use of vocabulary and interesting sentences.	The writer used descriptive words and interesting sentences.	The writing met grade level expectations for sentence structure and vocabulary.	The writer should revise this work by adding descriptive words and phrases.	There was little variation in sentence structure and/or limited use of vocabulary.	The writing showed poor sentence structure and limited use of vocabulary.
Conventions	The writing exceeded grade level expectations for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence formation.	The writing met grade level expectations for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence formation.	The work had a few errors but showed progress toward meeting grade level expectations in writing conventions.	The writing showed only limited control of writing conventions.	The writing had several errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and usage that the student was capable of correcting.	The writing was significantly below grade level expectations for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence formation.

SAVORING THE SETTING

Students connect the content areas with literacy instruction when they enliven their writing with facts gleaned from informational texts. Knowledge of geography, history, and science provides the foundation for narrative writing and enriches tales with authentic names and places.

Objective: The students will use a variety of print and electronic sources to create a story that describes a setting accurately.

IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts: 2, 7, 8, 11, 12

McREL Standards: 1, 3, 4, 5

Materials Needed:

- Travel brochures
- Computers with Internet access
- Encyclopedia
- Atlas

Additional Helpful Materials:

Texts from the Magic Tree House series by Mary Pope Osborne such as the following:

Thanksgiving on Thursday

High Tide in Hawaii

Afternoon on the Amazon

Ghost Town at Sundown

Texts from the Carole Marsh Mystery Series such as the following:

The Mystery of the Alamo Ghost

The Ghost of the Grand Canyon

The Mystery at Disney World

The Mystery in Chocolate Town: Hershey, Pennsylvania

Preparation:

Curiosity about exotic locations and time periods can motivate students to explore print and Internet resources. Establish research stations in the classroom by doing the following:

- Designating computers for Internet research. Bookmark the computers with Web sites such as Discovery School, History Channel, Weather Channel, and Google Earth
- Placing reference materials such as an atlas, almanac, encyclopedia, and travel brochures on work tables

Procedure:

Session I

1. Open the session by presenting a book with which the entire class is familiar. Discuss the setting. Emphasize the ways in which the location and time period influence the story.

2. Tell the students that many writers research a setting before putting pen to paper. They investigate topics such as the climate and natural resources of an area to make their writing authentic.

3. Announce that the students will have an opportunity to create a story in an intriguing setting. Ask them to select a geographical area that interests them. Perhaps they have always wanted to visit Hawaii. Maybe they have read novels such as Carl Hiaasen's *Hoot,* set in the Florida Everglades, or Gail Carson Levine's *Dave at Night,* set in New York City, and have become interested in those areas.

4. You may wish to use the Carole Marsh mysteries as examples or mentor texts. Carole Marsh has written a series of mysteries set in popular vacation destinations including Disney World and the Grand Canyon. Bring several of these books to class and visit the Carole Marsh Web site at http://www.carolemarshmysteries.com to show the students the ways in which this author enhances her stories with facts about a setting.

5. Provide time for the students to meet with a partner or in small groups to brainstorm story ideas. Make travel brochures and informational travel books available for the students to browse.

Session II

1. The students have had time to consider story ideas. At the start of the second class session, allot time for them to meet with partners or in small groups to discuss their ideas.

2. Ask the students to complete the savoring-the-setting worksheet to guide their writing.

3. Provide time for the students to begin the writing process.

Session III

1. By Session III, the students will be at various stages in their work. Many will wish to quietly write while others will need to visit research stations to answer questions.

2. Encourage students to read drafts of their stories to classmates. They can make revisions and edit based on the feedback they receive.

When your students have completed their stories, you can consider many publishing options. You may wish to help each student make a personalized book, or you could compile the stories into a class book.

SAVORING THE SETTING

Name _____ Date _____

1. Setting for my story: _____
   (Give location and time period)
2. Language usually spoken in this setting: _____
3. Average temperature: _____

What will you need to know to write an authentic story with this setting? Write three questions that you have about this setting.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Main character in my story: _____

Main character's Age: _____ Occupation: _____ Native Language: _____

Every story needs a compelling plot, a central course of action. Write your story's plot in four to five sentences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Student Sample

Imani, a fifth-grade student, decided to write a story about Atlantic City, New Jersey, because she had recently traveled there for a vacation.

SAVORING THE SETTING

Name: *Imani* Date: *September 24*

1. Setting for my story: *Atlantic City, New Jersey, in the present day*

2. Language usually spoken in this setting*: English*
3. Average temperature: *70 degrees Fahrenheit in September*

What will you need to know to write an authentic story with this setting? Write three questions that you have about this setting.

1. *What kinds of stores and restaurants are on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City?*
2. *Are there carnival games on the Boardwalk?*
3. *What kinds of prizes can you win on the Boardwalk?*

Main character in my story: *Nicole*

Main character's Age: *10* Occupation: *student* Native Language: *English*

Every story needs a compelling plot, a central course of action. Write your story's plot in four to five sentences.

My story would be about a little girl, Nicole, who goes to Atlantic City to walk on the Boardwalk, play games for prizes, and have fun. Nicole would try very hard to win a stuffed animal. When Nicole would finally win a big blue teddy bear, her mother would tell her that they can't take it home because it won't fit in a suitcase.

Grade Level Adaptations

Grades K–2	Display a large map of the United States or the world in the classroom. Whenever you read a text aloud to the class, point to the setting on the map to help the children gain an understanding of geography. Encourage them to write stories about the areas they are studying in their social studies classes.
Grades 3–4	When the students study a new geographical area or time period in their social studies classes, encourage them to read related fiction. For example, if the students are studying life on the American Prairie, they could discuss the setting of the novel *Sarah, Plain and Tall,* by Patricia MacLachlan.
Grades 5–8	Make curriculum connections by encouraging students to research a setting for original narrative writing. At this level, the students should be expected to conduct research independently to verify statements they make in their narrative writing. For example, if the student's

Grades 5–8	story takes place during the spring in Nebraska, the weather conditions described in the story should be accurate.
Students who are English Language Learners (ELL)	This activity could enable students who are learning English to shine as they discuss their homelands. Encourage them to share facts and use their homelands as the setting for fictional writing.
Related Crafts	Encourage the students to decorate three-ring binders or spiral notebooks to showcase their writing.

Savoring-the-Setting Assessment for Teacher and Student Reflections

Did we accomplish our objective?

Objective	*Student Comments*	*Teacher Comments*
The students will use a variety of print and electronic sources to create a story that describes a setting accurately.		

Savoring-the-Setting Assessment

	6	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
Reference Skills	The student used print and Internet resources efficiently and independently. Pertinent facts were located and skillfully woven into the writing.	The student made good use of print and Internet resources to describe the setting. The student independently found appropriate facts to weave into the writing.	The student worked independently and made satisfactory use of reference materials.	The student was able to use reference materials with minimal adult assistance.	The student required a great deal of adult assistance to use reference materials.	The student did not use reference materials.

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	6	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
Content	The content reflected extensive research and interpretation of facts. Facts about the setting were skillfully woven into the story.	The writing contained a satisfactory amount of facts about the setting.	The writing contained minimal and/or superficial information about the setting.	The student's writing contained one to two inaccuracies related to the setting.	The student's writing contained three or more inaccuracies related to the setting.	The content was not related to the assigned topic. The student did not include facts about the setting.
Organization	Exemplary organization was shown. The ideas flowed logically and transitions were used effectively.	Ideas were organized well. Transitions were used appropriately.	Ideas were organized.	The writing showed some organization, but a few statements were presented out of sequence.	The writer attempted to present ideas in an organized manner but was not able to sustain the organization.	Ideas were not presented in an appropriate sequence.
Style	The writer used exceptional vocabulary and interesting sentences.	The writer used descriptive words and interesting sentences.	The writing met grade level expectations for sentence structure and vocabulary.	The writer should revise this work by adding descriptive words and phrases.	Little variation was shown in sentence structure and/or there was limited use of vocabulary.	The writing showed poor sentence structure and limited use of vocabulary.
Conventions	The writing exceeded grade level expectations for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.	The writing met grade level expectations for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.	The work had a few errors but showed progress toward meeting grade level expectations in writing conventions.	The writing showed only limited control of writing conventions.	The writing had several errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and usage that the student was capable of correcting.	The writing was significantly below grade level expectations for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence formation.

DIARIES AT DAYBREAK

The most memorable and personal stories are found in diaries. Hidden under pillows, tucked in nightstands, or locked in desk drawers, diaries enable students of every age to develop their writing skills as they safely voice their ambitions and fears. Renowned mystery writer Mary Higgins Clark stressed the importance of diaries when she stated, "From the time I was seven, I also kept diaries. I can read them now and look back at what I was like at different ages. I still keep diaries; they are a great help to my novels" (Clark, 2001).

Help your students discover a personal form of expression by encouraging them to keep a diary and to read a variety of true and simulated diaries.

Objectives:

1. The students will read and discuss a variety of true and simulated diaries.
2. The students will keep a diary for a period of one week.

IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts: 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 12

McREL Standards: 1, 3, 5, 6

Materials Needed:

- Notebooks or journals for the students to use as diaries

To gain an appreciation for diaries, students should examine samples of true diaries such as Anne Frank's classic *The Diary of a Young Girl* and Zlata Filipović's *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo,* as well as simulated diaries, fictionalized accounts in which an author takes the role of a character and develops a diary from that character's point of view. Scholastic Books has published simulated diaries in which readers can experience the lives of boys and girls who lived in various periods throughout history. Their Dear America series offers historical simulated diaries featuring female protagonists while their My Name Is America series offers boys' viewpoints on life during various periods. Humorous simulated diaries such as selections from the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series by Jeff Kinney fly off library shelves and are devoured by students in Grades 3 to 5. Students from kindergarten to Grade 2 will enjoy the mix of science and humor found in the simulated diaries written by Doreen Cronin such as *Diary of a Fly, Diary of a Spider,* and *Diary of a Worm.*

Suggested Diaries

	Authentic Diaries	*Simulated Diaries*	*Humorous Simulated Diaries*
Grades K–2	*I Am a Skater* by Jane Feldman	*Spunky's Diary* by Janette Oke	*Diary of a Fly, Diary of a Spider,* and *Diary of a Worm* by Doreen Cronin
Grades 3–5	*Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo* by Zlata Filipović	Dear America and My Name Is America series published by Scholastic Books	Diary of a Wimpy Kid series by Jeff Kinney
Grades 6–8	*The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank	Dear America and My Name Is America series published by Scholastic Books *Dear Mr. Henshaw* by Beverly Cleary	Dear Dumb Diary series by Jim Benton

Procedure:

1. Bring a blank journal or diary to the classroom and ask a volunteer to define the word *diary.* Ask if any of the students have kept or currently keep a diary.

2. Engage the students in a discussion of the benefits of keeping a diary.

3. Tell the class that they will have an opportunity to participate in a literature circle and to read a well-known diary.

4. Allow the students to select a diary to read in a literature circle.

5. Provide time for the students to read and discuss the diaries in literature circles.

6. As a class, discuss the ways in which diaries preserve memories.

   How did the writer use a diary to tell a story?

   How did the diary contribute to history?

   How can diaries impact our lives?

7. Ask each student to keep a diary for one week. Advise the students that they will be reading and sharing their diaries with the class.

8. At the end of the week, provide time for the students to discuss their experiences in keeping a diary. Use the following discussion questions:

   Did you find that by making daily diary entries you were able to remember and reflect upon the day's events?

   How can keeping a diary help you to become a better writer?

   Will you continue to keep a diary?

Extension Activity

A group diary can help all members of a community remember special events. Place a three-ring binder and loose-leaf paper in the writing corner of your classroom and ask students to take turns making daily entries. Share your classroom diary with families when they visit the school for an event such as an open house or parent-teacher conference night and encourage them to keep a similar family diary at home.

Student Samples

Because I was reluctant to ask my students if I could publish their diary entries, I revisited the diaries I kept as a child and share them now.

Helen, Grade 2, Diary Entries
June 7

Tomorrow I am going to the train station to watch a special train go through Ridley Park. Robert Kennedy wanted to be president of the United States, but he died. The train is going to take him to his funeral.

June 8

I went to the train station with Judy to see Robert Kennedy's train. Lots of people came. We sat on the grass for a long, long time until the train came. People on the train waved to us.

Grade Level Adaptations

Grades K–2	Gather the class as a whole and use a language experience approach to create a group diary. A large spiral chart placed on an easel or chalkboard ledge will enable all students to follow the text as you write the sentences they dictate.
Grades 3–4	Remind the students to refer to their diaries when they need an idea for writing a short story or poem. True-life events can be the basis for dramatic or humorous fiction.
Grades 5–8	Encourage students to use diaries as a means of reflecting upon their accomplishments. Help them go beyond merely recording the day's events to thinking deeply about the consequences of their actions.
Students who are English Language Learners (ELL)	Use a language experience approach to help English learners keep a diary. This experience will help students build their vocabulary and learn to read basic words in English.
Related Crafts	Refer to Part II of this text, "The Arts and Crafts of Literacy," for directions on making journals.

Diaries-at-Daybreak Assessment for Teacher and Student Reflections

Did we accomplish our objectives?

Objectives	*Student Comments*	*Teacher Comments*
1. The students will read and discuss a variety of true and simulated diaries.		
2. The students will keep a diary for a period of one week.		

Diaries-at-Daybreak Assessment

	6	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
Literature Circle Discussion of True and/or Simulated Diaries	The student made many significant contributions to the group discussion and showed respect and concern for group members.	The student examined a diary with the group, made many contributions to the discussion, and respected the contributions of group members.	The student examined a diary with the group, made some contributions to the discussion, and respected the contributions of group members.	The student made only minimal contributions to the discussion and/or did not respect group members.	The student examined a diary with the group but did not participate in the discussion and/or did not respect group members.	The student did not join the group to discuss a diary.
Diary Entries	The student independently made detailed, reflective diary entries every day for one week.	The student independently made satisfactory diary entries every day for one week.	With adult assistance, the student made satisfactory diary entries every day for one week.	The student made four to six diary entries.	The student made one to three diary entries.	The student did not make any diary entries.

A STORY IN A POEM

From the classical works of Homer and Walt Whitman to the modern-day nonsense of Jack Prelutsky, Shel Silverstein, and Dr. Seuss, storytellers have used narrative poems to entertain and convey messages. With its descriptive language, inspiring characters, and engaging plots, narrative poetry can enthrall an audience and inspire listeners to join in the verse.

Introduce your students to narrative poetry by encouraging them to read and perform poems for their classmates. You may wish to begin by linking narrative poems such as "Paul Revere's Ride" or "Barbara Frietchie" to a social studies unit. Sports fans may enjoy the well-known tale of "Casey at the Bat." Young children can read and interpret "The Gingerbread Man" or "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly." There are narrative poems to fit every occasion, and teachers and students will delight in finding and interpreting poems to please their listeners.

Objective: The students will read, interpret, and perform narrative poems.

IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts: 4, 6, 12

McREL Standards: 5, 6, 8

Materials Needed:

- Hats, scarves, aprons, and other accessories to use as costumes and props (for suggestions, refer to the second part of this text, "The Arts and Crafts of Literacy: Projects to Enhance Literacy Experiences.")
- Copies of narrative poems (see table of suggested poems)

Suggested Narrative Poems to Perform:

Poems for Kindergarten and Grade 1

"The Gingerbread Man"	Rowena Bennett
"Teddy Bear's Picnic"	Jimmy Kennedy
"Three Ponies"	Arthur Guiterman
"The Little Turtle"	Vachel Lindsay
"Adventures of Isabel"	Ogden Nash
"The Turkey Shot Out of the Oven"	Jack Prelutsky
"Pierre"	Maurice Sendak
"A Visit From Saint Nicholas"	Clement Clarke Moore
"Bed in Summer"	Robert Louis Stevenson
"I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly"	Traditional Folk Song

Poems for Grades 2 to 4

"The Ice-Cream Man"	Rachel Lyman Field
"The Pasture"	Robert Frost
"First Thanksgiving of All"	Nancy Byrd Turner
"Bartholomew Blue"	Emma Walton Hamilton
"Afternoon on a Hill"	Edna St. Vincent Millay
"The King's Breakfast"	A. A. Milne
"Daddy Fell Into the Pond"	Alfred Noyes
"Sick"	Shel Silverstein
"The City Mouse and the Garden Mouse"	Christina Georgina Rossetti
"Since Hannah Moved Away"	Judith Viorst

Poems for Grades 5 to 8

"The Day No One Came to the Peanut Picker"	Jimmy Carter
"The New House"	Maya Angelou
"At the Theater"	Rachel Lyman Field
"The Road Not Taken"	Robert Frost
"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"	Robert Frost
"Mother to Son"	Langston Hughes
"Today I'm Going Yesterday"	Jack Prelutsky
"Barbara Frietchie"	John Greenleaf Whittier
"Paul Revere's Ride"	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
"The Lorax"	Dr. Seuss
"The Zax"	Dr. Seuss
"Casey at the Bat"	Ernest Lawrence Thayer
"O Captain! My Captain!"	Walt Whitman

A Story in a Poem

Procedure:

1. Tell the students that many authors write stories in lyrical verse known as narrative poetry. A narrative poem is a poem that tells a story.

2. Read aloud a narrative poem such as "Paul Revere's Ride" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow or "The Zax" by Dr. Seuss. Discuss the poem's meaning with the students.

3. Tell the students that while it is fun to read a narrative poem, it is even more enjoyable to perform the poem for an audience. Ask the students what they could do to dramatize the poem you read aloud. Would they use props and costumes? How many actors would they need to perform that poem?

4. Tell the class that they will have an opportunity to perform a poem. If you are working with students below Grade 2, you may wish to conduct this lesson as a whole-class activity so that you can assist students who have difficulty reading a poem independently. If you are working with students who can read the poems fluently, you can divide the students into groups of four and give each group a selection of four to five narrative

poems. Ask the groups to select one narrative poem that they would like to perform for the class. Provide items such as scarves and aprons for the students to use as costumes and props.

5. Allot time for the groups to read and rehearse their poetry performances.

6. The groups can perform their poems for the entire class and can invite other classes to come to their poetry performances.

7. To improve their skills, students can ask peers to evaluate their performance of a narrative poem. This presents a good opportunity for the students to participate in developing a rubric. Before the students perform their poems, ask them to consider factors that will make their performances more enjoyable for the audience. The students may discuss the importance of speaking clearly, using expression, and establishing eye contact with the audience. Help the students develop the rubric.

8. At the performance, distribute the students' rubric to encourage the audience to give feedback to the performers. (A sample rubric is included for those who do not have time to create their own.)

A-Story-in-a-Poem Performance Rubric

Help us become better performers! We invite you to watch our performance and write comments in the chart below. Your comments and suggestions will help us improve our work.

Our Goals:	*Did we accomplish our goals? Please write your responses next to each goal.*
All members of the group should participate.	
Group members should speak clearly.	
Group members should make eye contact with the audience.	

Grade Level Adaptations

Grades K–2	Short poems with repetitive lines work best for young children. Students will become fluent readers by practicing (rereading) poems that contain high-frequency words.

Grades 3–4	Some students may be reluctant to perform poems for an audience. Shy students could make a video recording instead of giving a live performance.
Grades 5–8	Middle school students may enjoy participating in forensics tournaments, academic competitions in which students showcase their ability to interpret poems and prose, engage in debates, or give impromptu speeches. After they have performed story poems, consider introducing students to additional aspects of forensics.
Students who are English Language Learners (ELL)	Poems such as "Pierre" by Maurice Sendak and "The Gingerbread Man" by Rowena Bennett have repetitive lines that will enable nonnative speakers of English to participate more easily.
Related Crafts	Refer to Part II of this text, "The Arts and Crafts of Literacy," for directions on making costumes. Costumes using bridal runners would be especially easy and appropriate to complement story poem performances.

A-Story-in-a-Poem Assessment for Teacher and Student Reflections

Did we accomplish our objective?

Objective	*Student Comments*	*Teacher Comments*
The students will read, interpret, and perform narrative poems.		

Story-in-a-Poem Assessment

	6	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
Participation	Independently, the student did exemplary work with classmates. There was	The student worked well with classmates. The task was completed	The student did not need adult assistance to complete the task satisfactorily	The student required minimal adult intervention to complete the task	The student required a great deal of adult intervention in order to complete	The student did not join classmates to rehearse and perform a poem.

(Continued)

(Continued)

	6	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
	respect for all group members, and the task was completed efficiently in a positive manner.	efficiently and collegially without adult assistance.	with classmates.	with classmates.	the task with classmates.	
Speaking Skills	The student's voice conveyed emotion in a highly effective manner.	The student spoke clearly and used volume and pitch to display some emotion.	The student spoke clearly and varied volume and pitch appropriately.	The student spoke clearly and attempted to use volume and pitch to convey emotion.	The student required reminders to speak clearly and appropriately.	The student could not be understood by the audience.

POSTCARD POSSIBILITIES

When picture postcards arrive in the mail we know that our friends and relatives will soon be returning home with vacation stories. A postcard is a promise that a friend will bring us tales of adventure.

Objective: The students will use picture postcards as prompts for writing stories.

IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts: 1, 3, 4, 9

McREL Standards: 1, 2, 3, 5

Materials Needed:

For this lesson, teachers will need several picture postcards that have been mailed so that the students can examine the postmarks, addresses, and messages on the postcards.

Procedure:

1. Bring a selection of postcards to class. The postcards should already have been mailed and contain messages such as "Having a great time in Chicago" or "Sunny skies every day of our trip."

2. Tell the class that you have gathered this collection of postcards, but you have very little information about the senders or recipients of the postcards. Ask the students to brainstorm ways in which they could learn more about the stories behind the postcards. The students may suggest methods such as examining the postmarks or reading the addresses and messages.

3. Ask the students to form groups of three to five members. Give one postcard to each group.

4. Tell the students to examine the postmarks and read the messages to gather information about the senders and recipients.

5. Tell the students that postcards often serve as prompts for writing stories. Challenge each group to create a story based upon the postcard. Why did the sender take that trip? How long had the sender been away from home?

6. Provide time for the groups to share their stories.

Grade Level Adaptations

Grades K–1	Because young children may not be familiar with postcards, the teacher should show them how to address a postcard and write a message. Draw an outline of a postcard on large chart paper. Show the children how to address the postcard. With the children's assistance, write a message on your model.
Grades 2–4	Invite students to bring postcards to share with the class. Display a map in the classroom and help each child locate the place from which each postcard was sent.
Grades 5–8	Encourage students to visit museums, libraries, and municipal buildings that have collections of vintage postcards. Such postcards often show the ways in which an area has changed over time.
Students who are English Language Learners (ELL)	Review related vocabulary such as *address, postmark,* and *stamp* because students who are English learners may not be familiar with the postal system.
Related Crafts	Help students make postcards by using computer programs.

Postcard-Possibilities Assessment for Teacher and Student Reflections

Did we accomplish our objective?

Objective	*Student Comments*	*Teacher Comments*
The students will use picture postcards as prompts for writing stories.		

Postcard-Possibilities Assessment

	6	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
Participation in Preliminary Discussion	The student made many significant contributions to the group discussion and showed respect and concern for group members.	The student made many contributions to the discussion and respected the contributions of group members.	The student examined postcards with the group, participated in the discussion satisfactorily, and respected the contributions of group members.	The student made only minimal contributions to the discussion and/or did not respect group members.	The student examined postcards with the group but did not participate in the discussion and/or did not respect group members.	The student did not join the group to examine postcards or write a story.
Contributions to the Group Story	The student made many significant contributions to the group story.	The student made many contributions to the group story.	The student made satisfactory contributions to the group story.	The student made only minimal contributions to the group story.	The student did not make appropriate contributions to the group story.	The student did not contribute to the group story.
Content	The writers wrote an exemplary story that was related to the postcard.	The story was written well and was related to the postcard.	The writers made a satisfactory attempt to write a story related to the postcard.	The story was marginally related to the postcard.	The story was not related to the postcard.	The story was not completed.

	6	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
Organization	Exemplary organization was shown. The ideas flowed logically and transitions were used effectively.	Ideas were organized well. Transitions were used appropriately.	Ideas were organized.	The writing showed some organization, but a few statements were presented out of sequence.	The writers attempted to present ideas in an organized manner but were not able to sustain the organization.	Ideas were not presented in an appropriate sequence.
Style	The writing reflected exceptional use of vocabulary and interesting sentences.	The writers used descriptive words and interesting sentences.	The writing met grade level expectations for sentence structure and vocabulary.	The writers should revise this work by adding descriptive words and phrases.	There was little variation in sentence structure or limited use of vocabulary.	The writing showed poor sentence structure and limited use of vocabulary.
Conventions	The writing exceeded grade level expectations for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.	The writing met grade level expectations for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.	The work had a few errors but showed progress toward meeting grade level expectations in writing conventions.	The writing showed only limited control of writing conventions.	The writing had several errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and usage that the students were capable of correcting.	The writing was significantly below grade level expectations for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence formation.