

Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum

Unit Plan using excerpts from

“Taming the Bicycle” “A Medieval Romance” “A True Story” “A Private History of a Campaign that Failed” and “Great Dark” all by Mark Twain

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Hannibal, Missouri

“Improving Introductions and Conclusions in Narrative Writing Using Mark Twain Short Stories as Mentor Texts”

UNIT PLAN using “Taming the Bicycle” “A Medieval Romance” “A True Story” “A Private History of a Campaign that Failed” and “Great Dark”	
Concept or Topic: Narrative Writing -improving introductions -improving conclusions	Suggested Grade Level(s)/Course: 8th grade English Language Arts
Subject: Narrative Writing	Suggested Time Frame: 3 days of 50-minute lessons
Objective(s): 8 th grade students will write personal examples of three types of introductions that relate to their narrative story labeled correctly with at least 12 out of 15 points (80% accuracy). 8 th grade students will write personal examples of three types of conclusions that relate to their narrative story labeled correctly with at least 12 out of 15 points (80% accuracy). 8 th grade students will select an introduction to use with their narrative story and write the introduction in final copy form scoring at least 9 out of 10 points (90% accuracy). 8 th grade students will select a conclusion to use with their narrative story and write the conclusion in final copy form scoring at least 9 out of 10 points (90% accuracy).	
Standards: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-12.3. Text Types and Purposes. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-12.3.a Text Types and Purposes. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-12.3.e Text Types and Purposes. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences and events. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-12.4 Production and Distribution of Writing. Produce clean and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate	

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to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-12.5 Production and Distribution of Writing. 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, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Assessments:

Student examples of at least 3 of the introductory techniques labeled correctly
Student examples of at least 3 of the conclusion techniques labeled correctly
Final copy of students’ narrative writing introduction and conclusion.

Vocabulary:

“Medieval Romance”: reigned, feudal, glimmered, stern, meditating
“True Story”: stature, unabated, chaffed, peal, throes, welt
“Great Dark”: curs, fetch up
“Private History”: militia

Subject Area Integration: Civil War era in American History (as needed to understand historical context of stories)

Background Information Required for Lesson:

Characteristics of Narrative Writing; before these lessons students will have written a rough draft narrative story. These stories will be used and students will improve their introductions and conclusions.
Basic information about the purpose and placement of introductions and conclusions

Materials:

“Taming the Bicycle” www.americanliterature.com
“A True Story Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It” www.americanliterature.com
“A Private History of a Campaign that Failed” www.americanliterature.com
“A Medieval Romance” www.americanliterature.com
“The Great Dark” www.jstor.org. or [The Best Short Stories of Mark Twain](#) by Lawrence I. Berkove
Students’ writing journals

Technology:

Only needed to access copy of Twain’s stories

Lesson Sequence:

Day 1: (50 minutes)

Hook/Intro:

Read students an example of a very boring introduction (see teacher notes and info below). Have them discuss what they think will happen in the story.

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Read students an example of a strong, exciting introduction (see teacher notes and info. below). Have them discuss what they think will happen in the story. In journals, have students discuss which introduction appealed to them more and why?

Teaching of the Concept(s):

1. Read introduction at the beginning of “Taming the Bicycle” and discuss technique used (i.e., just jump right into story with no background given). Students will take notes in their journals (see notes in teacher notes and info. section below).
2. Read introduction to “A Medieval Romance” and discuss technique used (i.e., start with setting). Students will take notes (see notes in teacher notes and info. section below).
3. Read introduction to “A True Story” and discuss technique used (i.e., start with characters). Take notes (see notes in teacher notes and info section below).
4. Read introduction to “A Private History...” and discuss technique used (i.e., start with question). Students will take notes (see notes in teacher notes and info. section below).
5. Read introduction to “Great Dark” and discuss technique used (i.e., start with shocking statement) Students will take notes (see notes in teacher notes and info section below).

Suggested Questions:

- 1-What special characteristics do you notice about each type of introduction?
- 2-Which introduction appealed to you most? Why?
- 3-Which introduction appealed to you least? Why?
- 4-Are there certain types of stories that a particular type of introduction would work best for?

Learning Activity:

Using your previously written rough draft narrative, pick three of the types of introductions and write an example of each that would fit your essay. Be sure to label correctly. (15 points, 5 points for each)

Review/Closure:

In journals, have students write about the purpose and importance of a strong introduction.

Day 2: (50 minutes)

Hook/Intro:

Tell students a story that has a really boring ending (see notes in teacher notes and info. section below). Have them write at least 3 ways you could have improved the ending in their journals. Once journals are completed, have them discuss their ideas with a partner and then discuss as a class.

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Teaching of the Concept(s):

1. Read conclusion of “Taming the Bicycle” and discuss technique used (i.e., advice to the reader). Students will take notes (see teacher notes and info. section below).
2. Read conclusion of “A Medieval Romance” and discuss technique (i.e., no ending). Students will take notes (see teacher notes and info. section below).
3. Read conclusion of “A True Story” and discuss technique (i.e., surprise ending). Students will take notes (see teacher notes and info. section below).
4. Read conclusion of “Private History...” and discuss technique (i.e., explain why the story is important to tell). Students will take notes (see teacher notes and info. section below).
5. Read conclusion of “Great Dark” and discuss technique (i.e., end with dialogue). Students will take notes (see teacher notes and info. section below).

Suggested Questions:

- 1-What special characteristics do you notice about each type of conclusion?
- 2-Which conclusion appealed to you most? Why?
- 3-Which conclusion appealed to you least? Why?
- 4-Are there certain types of stories that particular types of conclusions would work best?

Learning Activity:

Chose three of the types of conclusions and write an example of each that would fit with your previously written narrative essay. Label each type. (15 points, 5 points each)

Review/Closure:

In journal, have students write about the importance and purpose of a strong conclusion.

Day 3 (50 minutes)

Hook/Intro

Review what we have learned about introductions and conclusions. Make sure each student has three examples written for both their introduction and conclusion.

Teaching of the Concepts:

- 1-Have students get with partner.
- 2-Partners will each read their previously written narrative essay aloud to each other using their original introduction and conclusion.
- 3-They will then try out each of the new introductions and new conclusions with their partners' feedback on what works best.
- 4-Students will make final decision on which introduction and which conclusion they will be using on their final copy of their narrative essay and write the introduction and conclusion in final copy form. (10 points for introduction and 10 points for conclusion)

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Homework (for the unit):

3 examples of introductions (if not completed in class)

3 examples of conclusions (if not completed in class)

Final copies of chosen introduction and conclusion (if not completed in class)

Strategies for Exceptional Students (for the unit):

Require additional examples of introduction and conclusion

Create their own introduction or conclusion technique

Suggested Follow-Up Activities (for the unit):

Students will do additional work on essays such as improving descriptive writing, improving the use of dialogue, editing, and proofreading before completing final copies of their narrative essays.

Teacher Notes and Information

Example of boring introduction:

One morning, I got up and Mom said to get ready to go. I did, and we left the house.

Example of an exciting introduction:

I have never gotten ready so fast in my life. I did as little as I could get by with and ran out to the car. I was ready to start my adventurous day!

Example of a story with a boring conclusion:

My dad was a power line contractor. During storms, the workers often had to be gone for weeks at a time. One of his co-workers had a new dog and they were called out to leave town. My mom agreed to go to his house, pick up his dog, and watch him for a week. She got the dog and took really great care of him all week. But she had made a mistake and things did not turn out like she thought they would. (stop here)
(This is true story. If they want the rest of the story, it turned out like this. My mom had picked up the wrong dog and taken care of it all week. When the guys got back home, my mom told the guy she had killed his dog accidentally by running over it and of course, he was very sad. However, when he got home, his dog was waiting for him on his front porch. He called my dad and told him he didn't know whose dog she took care of and then killed, but it wasn't his.)

Notes:

Introductions:

"Taming the Bicycle"

- jumping right into the story
- no background information given
- can cause issues for the reader if you don't know enough background information or the author does not supply information later
- as an author, you must make sure that eventually it all makes sense to the reader
- this technique is good because you interest the reader and they want to know more so they read more

"A Medieval Romance"

- start with setting
- give PET information (place, environment, and time)
- can cause issues if reader is unfamiliar with time period or place
- this helps give the reader a picture of where and when story takes place so details will make more sense
- author should be as specific as possible, especially if it affects the story directly
- this technique is good to help the reader picture the story as it happens

"A True Story"

- start with character description
- a main character is described in detail for the reader
- can cause issues for the reader if they get too many details and can't put them together to get a clear picture
- author should give enough details to create a picture, but not give too many right details away
- this is a good technique so that reader is introduced to and understands the character right away

“A Private History of a Campaign that Failed”

- start with a question
- a question that is related to the story is asked of the reader
- can cause issues if the reader gets too caught up in the question and loses focus
- author should make sure the question is pertinent and makes the reader think and want more information
- this is a good technique because we naturally want to answer questions we are asked and this can help us focus on what we are reading

“Great Dark”

- start with a shocking statement
- a statement that makes the reader stop and take a second look and drives up interest in the story
- can turn some readers off, if it is too shocking
- author should make a statement that makes the reader want to read to see what that statement has to do with that story
- this technique is good because it definitely gets a reader interested and wanting to read more and can encourage reluctant readers to get involved in the story

Conclusions

“Taming the Bicycle”

- advice to reader
- author gives advice related to the story that was learned as a result of the events
- can cause issues if the reader does not agree with advice
- author should make sure that advice relates to story and gives the reader something to consider as far as actions or beliefs
- this is a good technique because readers are often looking for or open to advice and new ideas as they read

“A Medieval Romance”

- no ending
- author gives no ending to the story (may or may not explain why there is no ending)
- this can cause issues if reader becomes frustrated that they read and have no final result from story
- author should make sure that many different endings could be possible, so reader can come to a conclusion that satisfies them
- this technique is good because it does cause the reader to think for a long time after the story has ended

“A True Story”

- surprise ending
- the ending is not at all what the reader expected
- this can cause problems if the ending is not what the reader wanted
- author should try to make the ending plausible, but not what anyone would expect
- this technique is good because people generally like surprises and unexpected events in stories

“A Private History of a Campaign that Failed”

- explain why this story is important
- author helps reader to understand why they wrote this story and what importance it may hold to author or themselves
- this can cause problems if the reader does not agree with the author's feelings about importance
- author should try to make a personal connection with reader in explaining how this story is of importance to their personal life
- this technique is good because we tend to appreciate a story more if we understand why someone wrote it and what they wanted us to get out of it

“Great Dark”

- end with dialogue
- author uses dialogue between characters to end story
- it can cause problems if dialogue does not relate to rest of story or brings up new ideas
- author should make sure that dialogue answers ending questions and wraps up story in a way that makes sense
- this technique is good because people like to hear what others have to say