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What If...

Objective: The student will compose an original story based on a school event.

Standard: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Benchmark: Writes narrative accounts, such as short stories

Skill Development: Improved sentence structure, use of descriptive vocabulary

Organization: Whole-class activity, pairs, independent work

Materials

- chalkboard
- chalk
- chart paper
- markers

Procedure

1. Begin the unit about realistic fiction by explaining to the students that a realistic fiction story is make-believe, but seems like it could be true. As a group, prepare a story on the chalkboard or on chart paper.
2. Ask the students to dictate sentences about a school event such as a field trip or a school assembly. Then ask questions related to the story, such as:
 - What would have happened if the bus driver had gotten lost as he drove the students on their field trip?
 - What would have happened if the bus broke down on the way to the field trip?
 - What would have happened if the bus broke down on the way back from the field trip?
 - What would have happened if some students had missed the bus coming home from the field trip?
 - What would the students do if a cat or dog jumped on the bus?
 - What would have happened if the teacher forgot to bring the necessary tickets for the field trip?
 - What would have happened if the fire alarm had sounded during the school play?
 - What would have happened if the actors in the school play forgot their lines?
 - What would have happened if the audience walked out during the school play?
3. Compose the story as a group.
4. After writing the group story, invite students to turn true accounts of other school events into examples of realistic fiction. Have the students work individually or in pairs to create stories based on actual events.

Reading Log

The reading log is beneficial for students because it helps them to organize their work. It gives them a place to write questions they would like to ask in class. It also requires them to write a main idea to summarize each chapter.

To Use the Reading Log:

Your students will need one reading log for each book they read.

1. Distribute the reading logs on the first day that you assign a book to be read.
2. On the reading log, have each student write his or her name and the title and author of the book being read.
3. You will need to model the use of the reading log. Make a copy of the reading log (page 70) on the chalkboard and fill in the chart as you work with your students.
4. Select a book. Discuss the title with the class and ask them to predict what the book will be about. Read the first chapter aloud to the class.
5. As you are reading aloud, pause periodically to discuss the chapter. Write your questions in the column labeled “Questions and Ideas to Discuss in Class.” At this point, simply pose the questions for the students to consider. Do not spend time discussing the questions. An extended discussion period may detract from the students’ enjoyment of the story.
6. After you have finished reading the first chapter, tell the class that they need to summarize the chapter so they will remember it the next day. Discuss the main characters and events of the chapter with your students. Working together, compose one sentence to state the main idea of the chapter.
7. By reading and discussing the first chapter, you have demonstrated the use of the reading log for your students. You may want to read and discuss chapter 2, in a similar manner, if you think your students need additional practice. If you feel your students are ready to work independently, ask them to read the next chapter and complete that section of the reading log.

