AUTHOR IN RESIDENCE

By Carol Vaage

Abstract

Because of my published children's book, Bibi and the Bull, I was asked to work with grades 4-6 one afternoon a week. The intent of this program was to inspire children to become better writers with fluency, content, imagination. This was a definite challenge for me without a curricular map to follow. Each class would be new to me, so there would be no initial rapport or relationship to support a collaboration of ideas.

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Contents

Author in Residence Project

What makes a story a story?

This was a question I had asked myself before the project began. Right away I thought of a plot and a complication then a resolution, but something struck me. If I was planning to write a story with children, the first thing I should do would be to ask the children what makes a story into a story.

Student Interest and Needs:

My default teaching style of project-based inquiry led me to ask questions of them, to find out their needs, interests, and goals. I soon began to realize that they were all struggling with combining characters, settings, plots, genres, and editing. I decided to brainstorm with them on different genres to generate a multitude of combinations that they could use for a foundation for their story writing.

Most importantly, we worked on the writing process. We problem solved about how to think up an idea for a story, how to fix up a story (editing), and how to find time to write.

Interest in Publication

Lastly, we talked about the process of getting published. Students who wished to send some of their personal writing to magazines or publishers were supported to do so.

Website

We created a website to share what we learned. There were samples of student writing; dialogue about writing; author in residence section; bibliography of links and text materials; publishing successes; and genre brainstorming.

The teacher and students were working in the various genres and writing for the intent of publication on the web site.

Home room teachers

 Home room teachers were involved in several ways:

- documenting writing process within the classroom with samples of work (e.g., working on beginnings –before and after examples; or brainstorming, rough draft, editing, final copy)
- capturing students dialogue as they think and work with the process of writing
- having students prepare "writing" guidelines to coach other students
- collecting strategies that students find helpful and have them show how and why they work

Here is the creative work that went onto the website. The students compiled what they had learned to share it with other classes. These are **their** words – my role was to facilitate student learning and to compile the ideas.

Character Development

To develop a realistic character, a person needs to take personal knowledge about any type of person and change it so that it can become a fictional character that can belong to a "Story World" - and not part of your own personal real world. Characters need to be based on real people, but not be actual people. You can borrow their traits, but not use their names.

For example, one's own personal Grandma is most likely a "nice" Grandma: giving, loving, takes you places, joyful, kind, wise, friendly, old, bakes, good cook, funny, sweet, religious, tells stories, gentle, wrinkly, grey hair, smells good, generous, interested in you, knows a lot, gives advice, valuable, quiet, calm, peaceful, not lazy, talks slowly, smart, jokes with you, tired, has cool stuff, naps and maybe plays Bingo.

If you were to use one's own Grandma as a character, you might hesitate to put her into various settings and story problems, because you are sensitive to her as a person. However, one can take what you know about your own real Grandma to create Story World Grandma that you can put into any setting and problem scenario. In other words, you need to create a Grandma character for your stories. Following are a few examples of a "Grandma" character.

Personal Knowledge About Grandmas:

Our Grandma attributes:

They spoil us, bake, are old-fashioned, have antiques, kind, immigrated, knows history, open heart, respectful, outgoing, old, wrinkly, grey hair, wisdom, glasses, slows down, loss of hearing, forgetful, canes, walkers, responsible, tired, needs to rest, watches TV, careful, curly perms, tells stories, overly protective, religious, set in their ways, careless, volunteers, hair net, dentures, helpful, knits, sews, gardens, reads, talks to you, smaller home, takes you places, bird watching, clean, supportive, understanding, gentle, generous, enjoyable.

Fictious Grandma's for Characters:

Athletic Grandma

curling	dancing	autographs	sneakers
jogging	walks	photographs	ribbons
boxing	rock climbing	jerseys	plaques
volleyball	horseback riding roller	interesting	certificates
keeps fit	blades	rarely sits	drinks lots of water
biking	basketball	open spaces	helmets
Olympics	hockey	trophies/awards	contracts
skiing	motor bikes	likes the outdoors	sports glasses
snowboarding	sports gear	protein drinks	tai chi
camping	sports bags	nutritious	yoga
water skiing	your best fan	vitamins	record holder
tubing	sports magazines	hyper	exercises
croquet	TSN	at the gym	bear hugs
any outdoor games			

Travelling Grandma

active	vitamins	books/magazines	exotic clothes
travel agents	passport	maps/globes/atlas	sketches
souvenirs/artifacts	Visa	away a lot	adventures
money	flexible	collects coins	no pets
prepared	travel insurance	footloose	learner
know how to pack	luggage	motor home	travel tickets
personal hygiene kit	bottled water	journals/diaries	tours
proper clothes	lots of photos	brave	hotels
knows about food	knows languages	friends around the	
brings presents	does research	world	
knows first aide	tour guide	pen pals	
medication	ear plugs	postcards	

Gardening Grandma

vegetables	seeds	sore back	compost
beet soup	flower pictures	gardening tools	busy
gets you to help weed	herbs	gardening shed	dirty fingernails
protective of plants	homemade pickles	pond	smells good
prize winning garden	homemade jam and	big yard	landscaper
decorating with plants	jelly	doesn't like winter	loves countryside
works with plants	canning	plants/pots/seeds	no outside job
planting	freezing	botanical knowledge	shovel
cleaning vegetables	preserving	natural healing	nature CD's
harvesting	fresh juices	organic food	solarium
never gives up on a	salsa	unique plants	naturalist
plant	collects flowers	outdoors	flower painting
patience	berries	exotic garden	
green house	gardening	untiring	
plants everywhere	books/magazines	environmentalist	

Creative Grandma

decorates	embroidery	craft show table	thimble
chef	crochet	craft club	callused
draws	quilting	workshop	quilter
sews	games	takes courses	ornaments
designs	stitchery	always has something	pens/pencils
knits	scraps of materials	in her hands	papers
pottery	wood	arthritis	scrap-booker
writes stories, poems	yarn	teaches courses	fabric designs
sends letters	string	bead work	fashion designs
paints	artistic home	pottery/clay	decorator
carves	cluttered	blisters	latch hook
thinks	decorated	carver - ice/wood	embroidery
lots of ideas	treadle sewing	stain glass	macramé
cross stitch	machine	potter wheel	storyteller
computer	knows shortcuts	paint easel	paper maché
humor	tips on crafting	origami	patterns and kits

Strict Grandma

might yell grumpy knows a second language	gets you to do chores might pull your ear makes you do things wants foot rubs	firm discipline wooden spoon handy bossy	goes to bed early crotchety won't let you do things

Rich Grandma

arrogant mansion charity really spoils you proper selfish has maids chooses how to spend time pool manages money	investment portfolios board of directors huge wardrobe broker elegant jewelry/ gems designer clothes knows important people expensive furniture	furs diamonds gets good seats at shows spends lots plastic surgery expensive cars bodyguards chauffeur cosmetics well-mannered	up to date looks good chef fun vacation homes greedy pampered too much perfume huge mirrors

Dreamer Grandma

fly - hand gliding, pilot, invent wings, flying carpet, Jet Pack, experiments believes in other life - mythical creatures, aliens, supernatural, horoscope, astrology	superstar inventor nontraditional role psychic believes anything possible achiever lives to the max	reads role playing loner daydreamer independent child-like lifelong learner shunned by others	dialogues visions can see beyond hallucinate imagine... goal setters hypothetical questions

Sick Grandma

Kleenex	infections	depressed	anxious
medicine/pills	cup of water	crippled	prepared
hearing aids	medic alert bracelet	confused	accepting
puffer	IV bags	toxins	weak
oxygen	get well cards	lonely	paralyzed
coughing, sneezing	flower	pale	wheelchairs
cough drops	sweats/fever	bedridden	infectious
pajamas	thermometer	geriatric ward	impoverished
nurse/hospital	virus	diabetic	soft spoken
nursing home	steam	handicapped	frail
heart attack	fireplace	worried	arthritic joints
stroke	cancer	fatalism	trembling

Funky Grandma

skateboard	tattoos	disco	sports car
spiked hair	shocking makeup	young at heart	energetic
dramatic hair	flashy	shades	dangerous friends
dyed hair	teenage friends	rock music	bully
radical	dramatic clothes	electric guitar	tough
Mohawk	motorcycle	stands out	embarrasses you
extra jewelry	gold teeth	concerts	
piercing	Gothic	daredevil	

Spy Grandma

quiet	undercover	technology	careful
suspicious	away a lot	people	knows where they're
mischievous	disappears	risk taker	going
private	changes topic	gadgets	rank - inspector
secretive	snooping	moving	focused
hiding/secret places	deceiving	good senses	detached
asks questions	well informed	prepared	law
good memory	geography	confidence	transportation
intelligent	current events	acting	protective
sneaky	history	good control	international
disguises	solves mysteries		

My reflections:

If you're like me, you're amazed at the Grandma attributes that were generated by the students. The first few suggestions offered were traditional qualities, but as I kept asking them to push their brains and tell me more, wonderful creative suggestions came. As with any social constructivism, the fire that started for ideas grew in momentum, as one spark or suggestion led to another idea and so on. The classes were amazed at just how many ideas they came up with, and understood that they could transpose this brainstorming idea to any 'Grandma' character they wished – Super Grandma, homeless Grandma, etc. The basic idea of the Grandma that they cherish becomes the base from which they can build a fictious Grandma character.

Animal Characters

Likewise, for any animal character, a person would begin from their background knowledge about that animal. The animal character would need to be based on that knowledge for it to seem real. Then it is possible to create the fictious animal character. Below are some examples of <u>Wolf Characters</u>.

Wolf Characters		
<u>Mother Wolf</u>	<u>Wolf Pups</u>	<u>Alpha Male</u>
watchful	hide	protects pack
healthy	afraid	lead to food
caring	playful	lead to shelter
feeding	wrestle, chase	defends
love/respect	fight	hunts
support	pounce	demands respect
responsible	yap	bites, nips
teach them to hunt	tug of war with sticks, meat,	orders the pack
teach them to respect	bones	disciplines the pack
warm	nip	leads
protect	yelp	brave
run	chase tail	first one to respond

imitate	wander	full tail, up
nip at them	curious	teeth bared
pounce	explore	snarl
play	annoying	alert
bark	bark	head - up
growl	whining	ears pricked up
howl	moaning	bold
keep them close	crying	searching
powerful	whimpering	

Genres

The next step was to place our characters into a story with a setting and with problems to solve. This became our 'genre' work.

The first example is our Family Story Genre. The ~ character suggests that it could be 'any' person.

Family Genre - Characters

~ by marriage	~ cousins	~ removed	~ to be	adopted ~
ancestor	aunts	baby	birth ~	boyfriend
brothers	children	Dad	daughters	descendants
divorced	divorced ~	elders	estranged ~	estranged ~
ex ~	fiancé (é)	foster ~	girlfriend	godparents
grandchildren	grandparents	great ~	guardian	half ~
husband	infant	in-laws	junior	kids
long, lost ~	Mom	multiples	nephew	niece
orphan	parents	pet	preteens	quadruplets
relative	senior	separated	siblings	single parent
sisters	sons	spouse	step~	teenager
toddler	triplets	twins	uncles	wife

Family Genre – Settings

~ camp	~ city	~ concert	~ country	~ fort
~ office	~ park	~ province	~ rink	~ room
~ shelter	~ stadium	~ station	~ store	~ theatre
~ trail	~'s house	~ vehicle	acreage	airport
amusement park	animal shelter	apartment	aquarium	arcade
arena	attic	auditorium	back in time	backyard
bank	basement	beach	beach	beauty salon
birthdays	bowling alley	bus stop	cabin	camping
castle	cemetery	church	circus	clubs
condo	cottage	day care	dentist	desert
doctor	dorm	dump	earth	eating out
factory	farm	fast food ~	festival	forest
forward in time	foster home	front yard	funeral	garage
garden	golf course	greenhouse	gym	home
hospital	hot air balloon	hot dog stand	hot tub	hotel
house	houseboat	imaginary place	IMAX	island
jungle	Klondike Days	lab	lake	landfill
lessons	library	lighthouse	mall	mansion
market	medical facility	motel	motor home	mountains
movies	museum	neighborhood	neighborhood streets	nursery
nursing home	ocean	on a walk	opera	orphanage
outer space	parade	park	parking lot	party
pharmacy	picnic	playground	pound	prairie
ranch	ravine	recreational site	rental	restaurant

retirement home	river	rodeo	rooms in house	RV
school	shack	shed	shopping	shrine
site-seeing	skating	ski hill	space station	sports centre
sports events	stable	stampede	storage rooms	store
store top apt.	swimming pool	temple	tower	townhouse
trading post	trailer	TV game shows	vacation	valley
walk-in clinic	war torn ~	water park	waterfall	workplace
zoo				

Family Genre – Problems

~ addiction	abandoned	accident	adoption	amnesia
anger	argument	baby illness	being accused	bragging
breaks	bullying	child abuse	commanded	commitments
consequences	court	crash	curse	dangerous jobs
death	debate	dehydrated	denied ~	disabilities
disappointment	discomfort	disease	disguises	divorce
drowning	drugs	embarrassed	explosion	falling
fears	fighting	fire	fired	forced
forgetting	getting glasses	grounded	handicaps	home destroyed
homework	hospitalized	hurt	illness	in danger
insensitivity	insulted	irritating behaviors	kidnapped	late
locked in	locked out	losing ~	losing a job	loss of ~
lost	lost pet	mean ~	medication	mess
misbehavior	miscarriage	misunderstanding	moving	natural disaster

no choices	no clothing	no food	no home	no water
not doing chores	not listening	only child	orphaned	out of control
pains	pests	pet trouble	poor grades	poor living conditions
poverty	prank calls	puberty	rejection	religious differences
runaway	scared	school problems	separation	shopping
sibling difficulties	sick	sleepwalking	smoking	stranded
stress	stuck in ~	switched at birth	threat	time
too many children	toothaches	trickery	unusual phenomenon	war

Fairy Tale Genre

Fairy Tale Genre: Characters

wolf	queen	any animal	parents
lord	court jester	wizard	friends
lady	ogre	sea serpent	enchanted...
duke	fairy godmother	child	mermaid
midget	woodcutter	miller	gypsy
emperor	leprechaun	fairy	captain
royalty	grandparents	witch	goblin
prince	wooden puppet	beast	miller
princess	hero	giant	servant
king	maid	troll	orphan
guards	elf	sorceress	sorcerer
fortune teller	gryphon	unicorn	

Fairy Tale Genre: Settings

castle underwater house in the woods forest house in the clouds cavern cabin	island tower town bridge cave village	den magical hole enchanted ... secret chamber farm mine school	cottage ship dungeon underground tunnel church over the rainbow

Fairy Tale Genre: Problems

capture trapped locked threatened lost	challenge poverty being different mistreatment disbelief	disobedience jealousy false promise steal loneliness	spell task to be completed hungry time

Fairy Tale Genre: Motifs

spinning wheel statue glass slipper	featherbed frog shiny ball	magic wand boots potion	green pea poison apple

Fairy Tale Genre: Beginning Story Phrases

Once upon a time Once there was a Long, long ago Far, far away In a faraway land One day	Once long ago Once there lived A long, long time ago It was summer (seasons) Deep in the forest

Spooky Genre

The most favorite Genre to brainstorm for the Gr 5's and 6's was the 'Spooky Genre.' Halloween was in their minds and the topic appealed to their need to shock their readers. The classes were electric as the students tried to be their most macabre selves. To witness such passion for such a ghoulish topic was fantastic and I must admit that I encouraged them all with questions demanding more details, more precise vocabulary. The stories that grew from this brainstorm were incredible, but unfortunately no longer available to share.

Spooky Genre: Characters

~ slayer	1-handed ~	3-Headed ~	4-eyed ~
8-eyed ~	abnormal	Abominable ~	Adam's family
alchemist	alien	Amazon	angel
animated ~	any animal	archaeologist	Atlanteans
banshee	barbarian	barber	baron
barracuda	bat	battle lord	beast
Bell Ringer	Big Foot	biker	black cat
blob	bloody ~	bone collector	Boogie Man
boss	bride	bully	burglar
butcher	butler	Candy Man	cannibal
captain	carpenter	cartoon characters	cashier
caveman	changer	cheerleader	circus folk/carny
clergy	clone	clown	cowboys
creatures from Black Lagoon	crow/raven	crypt keeper	cyborg

Cyclops	daredevil	demon	detective
dinosaur	diseased ~	doctor	doll
salesman	Dracula	dragon	dreadful ~
druid	dummies (puppets)	dust bunny	dwarf ~
Egyptian	Einstein	elf	emperor
enchanted ~	enchantress	evil~	fairy
farmer	faun	FBI	fire breathing ~
fisherman	forensic ~	fortune teller	Frankenstein
gangster	gargoyle	geezer	Genie
germ	ghost	ghoul	gladiator
gnome	goblin	gods (other religions)	Godzilla
gooey ~	Goth	grave digger	grave keeper
grave shift worker	gremlin	Grim Reaper	gruesome
gryphon	guards	guerilla	gypsy
hag	harpy	hawk	headless horseman
hermit	hillbilly	hitchhiker	hobo
hollow~	homeless ~	hooded ~	horned ~
Hun	Hunchback	hypnotist	Ichabod
Igor	immortal ~	imp	imposter
investigator	invisible ~	jackal	Jekyll & Hyde
jester	joker	karate person	King
King Kong	knight	leprechaun	librarian
Lochness monster	mad ~	magician	mascot
mean ~	Medusa	Merlin	mermaid
midget	mime	miner	mobster
monster	mortician	mud ~	mummy

munchkin	musician	mutant	mythology
Ninja	normal people	nun	nurse/doctor
nymph	Ogopogo	ogre	operator
original ~	owl	paleontologist	past ~
persecutor	pet	phantom ~	Pharaoh
Pied Piper	pirate	piranha	pixie
politician	poltergeist	possessed ~	power
prehistoric ~	priest	Prince	Princess
principal	professor	pumpkin	puppets
pygmy	pyromaniac	Queen	rat
raven	red ant	renegade	robber
robot	rogue	rottweiler	sage
samurai	Sandman	Santa	sasquatch
scarecrow	scientist	sea monster	secret agent
security guard	servants	shadow	shape shifter
shark	Shogun	skeleton	sleuth
slime ~	smuggler	snake	snowman
soldier	sorcerer	soul	sphinx
spider	spirit	spy	stepmother
stunt person	superhero	supersonic~	surgeon
swamp monster	swordsman	talking ~	tax collector
taxi driver	teacher	therapist	thief
tiger	titan	tomb raider	transformer
troll	truck driver	TV host	tyrant
undertaker	unicorn	vampire	ventriloquist
villain	voodoo	vulture	war ~

warlock	warrior	werewolf	widow
witch	wizard	wolf	woodcutter
Zorro	zombie		

Spooky Genre: Settings

~ field	~ night	~ pit	~ rubble
~ ship	~ station	~ under construction	abandoned ~
after hours ~	airplane	Alcatraz	alley
amusement park	ancient ruins	Antarctica	any house
arcade	Arctic	arena	asylum
Atlantis	attic	auditorium	back alley
backyard	badlands	ballpark	barn
base	basement	beach	behind ~
bell tower	Bermuda Triangle	black hole	black lagoon
black market	boat	bog	boiler room
bomb shelter	boot camp	bottomless pit	bridge
broken down ~	cabin	cage	camp ~
campground	canyon	car lot	car trunk
carnival	castle	catacombs	cathedral
cauldron	cave	cavern	cellar
cemetery	chair lift	chamber	chapel
church	circus	city dump, landfill	cliff
clock tower	closed~	closet	clubhouse
concert	coffin	construction zone	cornfield

coroner's	corridor	costume shop	countryside
crash site	crate	creepy~	crevice
crop circle	crypt	cyber space	dark street
dead end	desert	deserted ~	dimension
disappearing ~	ditch	docks	dollhouse
downtown	dream	dumpster	dungeons
Earth core	elevator	empty ~	encampment
endless~	eye of a hurricane	factory	farm
farmhouse	fire	foggy ~	forest
fort	fortress	freeway	freezer
funeral home	fun house	furnace room	future
gallows	garage	garbage can	garden
ghetto	ghost ~	ghost town	glacier
gold mine	Gondola	graveyard	Halloween Lane
Halloween~	hangar	haunted house	hayloft
hearse	hidden room	hideout	highway, road
historical site	hive	hole	hospital
hotel	hot springs	house	iceberg
ice fields	imagination	in a ~ video game, TV show, movie	invisible ~
island	isolated ~	jail	jungle
laboratory	labyrinth	lair	lake
library	lighthouse	locker	mall
mansion, manor	matrix	maze	meat factory

middle of ~	military base	mill	mine
minefield	mirage	misty ~	moat
monastery	monument	morgue	mortuary
motel	mountains	movie set	movie theatre
museum	nowhere	nuclear plant	ocean
ocean floor	office ~	oil well	old ~
Opera House	operating room	outer space	outhouse
outskirts	overgrown ~	over the rainbow	parkade
parking lot	past	phone booth	pirate ship
plane	planet	playground	power plant
prairie	prison, jail	pub	pyramid
quicksand	rafters	railroad tracks	ranch
ravine	regular ~	restaurant	retirement home
rink	river	rooftop	rotten ~
sanctuary	sanitarium	scary ~	school
secret passage	sewer	shack	shed
sky	skyscraper	slaughterhouse	sleepy hollow
slough	snake pit	space	SPCA
spider web	spooky~	stadium	stairwell
Stonehenge	storage room	storm cellar	street
submarine	subway	suddenly appearing ~	sunken ~
sunken ship	swamp	tall buildings	temple
theater	through magic mirror	time travel	tomb

tower	town	trail	train
train station	trap	treasury room	tree
tree house	tundra	tunnel	uncharted territory
under ~	underground	underworld	undiscovered ~
universe	valley	vehicle	vent
video game	village	volcano	war
warehouse	water	wax museum	well
woods	wrestling zone	wrong end of town	zoo

Spooky Genre - Problems

a move	a new world	abandoned	abuse
accident	accusation	addiction	all alone
amnesia	amputation	animal attack	animal threats
Armageddon	asteroid	asthma attack	avalanche
bacterial threat	becoming real	behavior	being alone
being anywhere	being chased	being different	being followed
being forced	being watched	blackout	blamed
blizzard	breaking something	breaking the law	break out
broken bones	broken rule	bullying	bungee jumping
cancer	captured	cave-in	challenged
changing size	chased	choking	claustrophobia
climate change	cloning	conviction	criticism
crucifixion	cyclone	deadline	deep water

deforestation	dehydration	deserted	died
dilemma	disability	disease	dock
dream	drought	drowning	dying
earthquakes	electrical	electrocution	endangered species
end of the world	entombed	epidemic	eruption
execution	explosion	failure	falling
falling rock	false accusation	fire	fissure
flood	flying	frightened	gas leak
getting lost	growing too fast	hailstorm	hallucinations
hazardous materials	hazardous spill	hazardous waste	held hostage
hidden attributes	high risk events	home alone	hunger
hurricanes	hurt	hypothermia	illness
imaginary threat	immortality	implosion	imprisoned
in danger	insect attack	interrogation	intruder
invasion	kidnapped	landslide	late
lied to	locked in	locked out	lose something
losing parents	loss of clothing	loss of consciousness	loss of energy
loss of friends	loss of light	loss of limbs	loss of matter
loss of medical ~	loss of memory	loss of money	loss of power
loss of senses	loss of shelter	loss of size	loss of time
mechanical	meteorite	meteor shower	missing ~
mistaken identities	monsoon	moving into danger	mudslide
natural hazards	nearly dying	new situation	nightmare

no air	no communication	no control over power	no control over sounds
no control over time	no food	no friends	no gravity
no light	no money	no shelter	no transport
no water	noises – dreams	noises – unidentifiable	nuclear
out of gas	ozone	penalties	persecution
phobia	physical injuries	plague	poison
pollution	power outage	pranks	pressurized
pursuit	put-downs	reporting	revenge
rockslide	scary music	seizure	sensing something you can't see
shadows	sinking	skydiving	slavery
snowstorm	someone following	space debris	spied on
spontaneous combustion	sports	squished	stalked
stampede	storm	stranded	strange happenings
stranger	stuck	sudden appearances	sudden change
suffering	suffocating	superstitions	surrounded
suspended	tempted	testing	threatened
thunderstorm	tidal wave	time	too cold
too hot	too much knowledge	tornado	torture
toxic cloud	transformation	trapped	tsunami wave
twister	typhoon	UFO's	undercurrents
unexpected ~	unexplainable ~	unfamiliar place	unknown event

unusual phenomenon	vehicle breaks down	virus	volcanoes
war	waste	waterfall	water leak
waterspout	whirlpool	wild animal attack	wind
witness	wrong choice	wrong group of people	wrongfully accused
yelled at	you've lost ~		

Spooky Genre - Motifs

banging noises	Black Plague	blood	body parts
bones	candy	cauldron	chains rattling
clock	cobwebs	coffin	creaks
curse	dark	dead phone	death ring
dimly lit	eerie music	electric chair	fire
fog	footsteps	full moon	globs
glowing eyes	goose bumps	gravestone	headstone
howling	howling wind	knife	lightening
magic	map	mask	midnight
night	organ	poison	poison ivy
potion	pranks	rain	scream
skull	spells	spider webs	swords
thunder	tombs	trap door	treasure
treasure chest	trick door	wild broom	witches' brew

The students learned to take one character, then place that character into a setting, and finally give the character a problem to solve. With the brainstorming charts from above, it is easy to see that there are literally thousands of permutations and combinations. The Athletic Grandma could be in any one of the settings listed or have any one of the problems. Or the princess could be anywhere and must solve any problem. Or the blob could be anywhere and solve any problem.

The students practiced this, creating a story outline by making choices, then adding the details and linkages to create stories.

They began to identify the characters in books they were reading, and found descriptive settings, and more problems that "REAL" authors were using. They began to see the structure of writing a story, which freed up so much initial writing reluctance. They learned that a fictional story usually has a character in a setting trying to solve a problem.

Editing

When the stories were complete, students practiced editing, for basic corrections, with the students reading another student's story and penciling in what they felt needed fixing.

This led to an entire lesson on punctuating dialogue, something that affected most young writers. We looked at a popular book, written by JK Rowling. Seeing how a successful author used dialogue quotations, and understanding the rules by examining her work, helped.

Dialogue Punctuation

How do you use punctuation when you have dialogue in your story? Let's look at one of our favorite authors, JK Rowling, who wrote the Harry Potter Series. How does she use punctuation?

1. All talking needs to be surrounded by quotation marks (").

"Go to your cupboard - I mean, your bedroom," he wheezed at Harry.

The first (") is used just before the first word that the person says, and the second (") is used just after the last word. The comma must go inside the quotation marks.

2. Instead of using a period at the end of the speech, use a comma, if you are going to tell who is talking.

"Las' time I saw you, you was only a baby," said the giant. "Yeh look a lot like yer dad, but yeh've got yer mum's eyes."

After the word baby, Joanne used a comma because she was letting the readers know it was the giant speaking. But after the word eyes, she could use a period to finish the sentence.

3. If you use a question mark, you don't need to change to a comma.

"What do they think they're doing, keeping a thing like that locked up in a school?" said Ron finally. "If any dog needs exercise, that one does."

After the word school, Joanne used a question mark. Usually, we use a comma before telling the readers who the speaker is - but not with a question. The question mark goes inside the quotation marks.

4. If you use an exclamation mark, you don't need to change to a comma.

"A stone that makes gold and stops you ever dying!" said Harry. "No wonder Snape's after it! *Anyone* would want it.

After the word dying, Joanne used an exclamation mark. Again, it needs to be inside the quotation marks, and there is no need for a comma.

5. If you have interrupted speech, to let the reader know who is speaking, a comma is needed before the break, and after the speaker's name.

"Professor," Harry gasped, "your bird - I couldn't do anything - he just caught fire -"

After the word Professor, Joanne used a comma inside the quotation marks to let the reader know that Harry was speaking. When she wanted to start his talking again, she used a comma after gasped to let the reader know about the change. The second (") just before your let the readers know that talking started again.

6. If someone is thinking about something, but doesn't say it out loud, you can either use quotation marks or not. Either way is acceptable.

Of course, he thought bitterly, Uncle Vernon was talking about the stupid dinner party.

Joanne chose not to use quotations around Harry's thoughts. She could just have easily used them like this...

"Of course," he thought bitterly, "Uncle Vernon was talking about the stupid dinner party."

My reflections

The students found all of the above examples on their own by searching through the Harry Potter books they were reading. My role was to type them up for an easy reference for them. This type of student generated exemplar has much more personal meaning for them than a generic example.

Dialogues About Writing

There were also many discussions in the class sessions about being an author. Following are a few examples.

Questions:

- What do I do with stories that didn't turn out?
- Are you allowed to write poems?
- What do I do when I have trouble getting ideas for my stories?
- What do I do about my editing? Others' ideas?
- Am I allowed to introduce characters close together if I have a purpose?
- What do I do when I want to stick with writing one longer story? Do I have to do the same for the other stories?
- What do I do when I'm finished writing my favorite stories?
- How do I know when to make a new paragraph?
- Have you ever had rejection letters?
- How does it work if you get published?
- Do we always have to start with the title?

My thoughts:

- I find it easier to think of stories when I have the ideas to work with.
- I find an idea and change it a little.
- Some topics didn't appeal to me (personal experiences and interests)
- Time factor
- I decide on a title once the story is written.

- One author speaker said once that a good story will just come and tap you on the shoulder
- Can't force a story – tried some ideas but didn't gel.
- One story takes up all my thinking and I can't seem to leave it to work on others – physical constraints of working with paper and pen. Idea of jotting down key ideas and fleshing out later. Simultaneous creative process versus finishing one then consecutive composition.
- Ideas about creating, working with ideas, moving from personal to audience writing, style and formatting, value, getting control and ownership of own writing rather than writing for an assignment or guidelines, discovering writing techniques from reading

Writing Struggles

Students were struggling with the same issues as professional authors:

- What do you do if ideas do not come?
- How can you make a character seem more real?
- What do you do with the stories that don't work?
- How long does a story need to be to be good?
- What do you do if your ideas are scattered all over the place?
- When should the title go on?

My reflections:

During this project, parents and teachers came to me about stories they had written and wondered about how to get them published. What was the process that had to be followed? These few months of working as an author-in-residence affected many within that school community, not just students.

Curricular Outcomes

Teachers are always accountable for ensuring that the curriculum is being met. This is a list of what we achieved through this author-in-residence project.

English Language Arts:

Express ideas and develop understanding; experiment with language and forms; express preferences, set goals; consider the ideas of others; combine ideas; extend understanding; use strategies and cues: use prior knowledge; use comprehension strategies; use textual cues; use phonics and structural analysis; use references; respond to texts: experience various texts; construct meaning from texts; appreciate the artistry of texts; understand forms, elements and techniques: understand forms and genres; understand techniques and elements; experiment with language; create original text: generate ideas; elaborate on the expression of ideas; structure texts; plan and focus: focus attention; determine information needs; plan to gather information; select and process: use a variety of sources; access information; evaluate sources; organize, record and evaluate: organize information; record information; evaluate information; share and review: share ideas and information; review research process; enhance and improve: appraise own and other's work; revise and edit; enhance legibility; expand knowledge of language; enhance artistry; attend to conventions: attend to grammar and usage; attend to spelling; attend to capitalization and punctuation; present information; enhance presentation; use effective oral and visual communication; demonstrate attentive and viewing; respect others and strengthen community: appreciate diversity; relate texts to culture; celebrate accomplishments and achievements; use language to show respect; cooperate with others; work in groups; evaluate group process

Information and Communication Technology:

ICT: c1, c2, c3, c4, c5, c6, c7, f1, f2, f3, f4, f5, f6, p1, p2, p4, p5, p6

Higher Level Thinking Goals:

reflecting, analyzing, observing, communicating, summarizing, presenting, collaborating, problem solving, constructing, creating, cooperating, connecting, organizing, developing, questioning and interpreting