

{ } LESSON

#TeamWolf: Writing Fairytale for Twitter

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GRADES 7–8

TYPE
NARRATIVE
VISUAL, PERFORMING,
AND MEDIA ARTS

COMMITMENT
1 SESSION, 90
MINUTES

Twitter plays an important part in our collective culture. It connects people across the world in real-time. It showcases diverse perspectives, authentic voices, and gives us access to new worlds of information, ideas, and opinions previously unknown to us.

Here are some essential questions that will come up in this lesson:

- If I only had a certain number of words to say what I wanted to say, how could I get across the most meaning?
- Are the words I'm using getting across my actual meaning or is there a better way to say this?
- If the Big Bad Wolf had a Twitter account, what would he tweet about?

SESSION:

Students apply the features of Twitter to construct a profile for the persona of a Fairytale character.

YOU WILL NEED

- Optional: access to a Character Counter such as Charcounter.com
- Physical and/or online copies of several popular fairy tales. It's important to choose fairy tales from around the world, such as:
 - The Thunder and The Lightning (Nigeria)
 - Urashima Taro (Japan)
 - Little Red Riding Hood (France)
 - Vasilisa The Fair (Russia)
 - Hansel and Gretel (Germany)
 - The Rabbit and The Coyote (Brazil)
- Copies of the "Anatomy of a Tweet 101" handout
- Copies of the "Fairy Tale Characters in 700 Characters" handout
- Copies of the "#TeamWolf Synonym Game" handout

HOW TO BEGIN (5 MINUTES)

Start off by asking for a show of hands: "Who knows what Twitter is? Who has a Twitter? Who has Tweeted in the last week?"

Hand each student a copy of the "Anatomy of a Tweet 101" handout. Explain to your students that Twitter is a social networking site which allows users to share short updates about what they are doing, thinking, reading or watching. It's important to note that Twitter messages are only 140 characters (or about 30-35 words).

Next, open a discussion on the significance of Twitter. Why is Twitter important?

Here are some talking points for your discussion:

- Twitter is far-reaching
- Many people use it
- People of all ages use it
- It connects people across the world instantaneously
- It showcases diverse perspectives and opinions

STEP 1 (10 MINUTES)

Next, split your students into small groups (3-4) and give them 5 minutes to think, talk, and write at least two sentences about how Twitter has changed the world.

Below are some discussion questions and talking points to help students get thinking about Twitter's impact. You can either display these questions on the board or print them off in a worksheet for the groups to work on together.

Ask your students:

- How might faster information flow be useful in an emergency?
- What might happen if we know more about people from other cultures? For example, it may increase our empathy or open us up to differing world views
- How might twitter help us make new friends we wouldn't have known before?

Next, open these questions up for a class discussion. Have each group share their sentences as to how Twitter changed the world.

STEP 2 (3 MINUTES)

Transition

On the board, write down a few of the shared sentences to create a single “Tweet” about how Twitter has changed the world. But... it’s too long! Remember: Tweets are only 140 characters (or about 30-35 words).

Explain to your students that you need to work together to make this tweet shorter. How can we do that? That’s right, by taking out some words. What’s that called? Editing!

Note: Be sure to save these shared thoughts, as they will be useful later on in the lesson.

STEP 3 (5 MINUTES)

Introduction to Editing Tools

Start by opening a discussion on editing. Ask your students, “who can describe editing?”

Define editing for your students: “Editing is the process of condensing and changing what we’ve already written, either to make it better or more clear, or to make it fit into certain guidelines.”

Explain that one great tool for editing and thought-condensing is using synonyms. Ask your students: “Who knows what a synonym is?”

Define synonyms for your students: “A synonym is a word that means the same thing (or almost the same thing) as another word.”

To build an understanding, start by writing JAR on the board and ask your students: “Who knows a

synonym for the word JAR?” Some possible answers could be can, vase, bottle, pot, crock, or vat.

Next, ask your students: “What about a word like EXCEPTIONAL?” Some possible answers could be odd, rare, strange, unusual, or unique.

Explain to your students that finding synonyms for words can help us make our sentences and our meanings more clear, and they can definitely help us reach the 140 character limit on Twitter.

STEP 4 (10 MINUTES)

Assign each student (and volunteer if needed) a different word, using the “Synonym Game” handout. On the handout, these words are paired off so that every student will have a synonym match for their word. There are also blank spaces included so that you can create your own synonym matches, if you so desire.

Ask each student to affix their synonym to their forehead without looking at it. Next, ask your students to talk to each other, and without looking at their own word, or saying the words on anyone else’s forehead, to try to find their synonym partner. Possible questions or prompts for students are: “What does your word mean? Describe your word to me.”

Once each student has found their synonym match, they should work together in pairs to come up with at least five other words or phrases for their synonyms.

STEP 5 (5 MINUTES)

Editing Tools Discussion

Synonyms

Next, have a quick wrap-up discussion on synonyms. Synonyms are a great tool to help us with editing and word choice.

Ask your students: “Why would the words we choose be important? Could we just select any two pairs of words from our Synonym game and use those words interchangeably?”

A great example of this is the use of “hard” vs. “difficult”. They are certainly synonyms, but if someone is talking about a piece of wood [knock on a desk], would you say “This desk is really difficult?”

So why is word choice important? For the purpose of clarity. Having the right words is important for us to be able to get across our intended meaning in the best way possible.

Repetition

Another very useful editing tool is looking for and removing repetition in our writing. This can help writers combine two or more thoughts into one, in order to save space and make their writing more concise.

Together as a class, work on the following example. What words or ideas are repeated in the following?

“The mayor of Pink Chair City escaped on a stolen unicorn. Meanwhile, the citizens of Pink Chair City rejoiced.”

Work together to edit the above down to this:

“The citizens of Pink Chair City rejoiced as the Mayor escaped on a stolen unicorn.”

Great job! But, looking for and removing repetition in writing isn't always that obvious and easy. Below are some less obvious examples to work on together as a class.

“The naughty puppies jumped into the swimming pool. They thought the swimming pool would be a great way to cool off after running around the yard. The naughty puppies were digging holes in the flower beds while running around.”

Working together, edit the above down to:

“The naughty puppies jumped into the swimming pool to cool off after running around and digging holes in the flower beds.”

Here's another challenge:

“Mary really loves cupcakes. She loves them so much, she eats cupcakes for breakfast, lunch and dinner.”

Working together, edit the above down to:

“Mary loves cupcakes so much she eats them for breakfast, lunch and dinner.”

STEP 6 (3 MINUTES)

Editing our thoughts about Twitter

Next, return to your class' shared thoughts from Step 2. How has Twitter changed the world? Work together to edit these down into a single tweet (140 characters).

This is a great way to test your students' newfound skills in using synonyms and eliminating repetition.

At this point, throw a wrench into the works! Tell the class they have to write a tweet using this hashtag: #TeamWolf.

STEP 7 (5 MINUTES)

Discussion: How do people use hashtags?

Next, launch into a discussion of hashtags: "What is a hashtag?" You can define for your students that a hashtag is a phrase, which acts as a category that Tweets are then sorted by.

How do people use hashtags? There are a few reasons a Twitter user may add a hashtag to their tweets, for example:

- To declare themselves as part of a group, for example #TeamJacob, #ChiefKeefFans, #Beliebers
- To narrow the large conversation of Twitter into one topic that is either general or specific to one conference, event, TV show, or sporting event. For example, #CleanWaterInternational, #glee, #DWTS, #superbowl, #NCAA
- To add your own thoughts on a trend, or large-group discussion, for example #WhyBelnARelationship, #YouKnowYoureFromEarthWhen, #ProudToBeAFanOf

Students should use a hashtag in the tweets they're about to write, so they can find them later, and anyone who wants to connect with and/or follow the class can do so easily.

STEP 8 (5 MINUTES)

Retelling Fairy Tales

For the remainder of this lesson, students will be asked to take fairy tales from around the world and, using the editing and word choice tools that they've just learned, craft tweets retelling these tales from

the perspective of a character living in the story.

As an example, work together to write tweets from Little Red Riding Hood's Perspective.

- TWITTER ID: @LittleRedHood
- Ask someone to briefly retell the story. What should the first tweet be? What happens next?
- Make sure each tweet is only 140 Characters (or about 30/35 words) long.
- Make sure to create and use a #Hashtag in each tweet of the story.

STEP 9 (25 MINUTES)

Work Session

Make sure each student has at least one copy of the "Fairy Tale Characters in 700 Characters" handout, as well as and copies of available fairytales to choose from.

Have them choose their favorite fairy tale and select one standout character from it. They will then be tasked with creating a Twitter handle, Twitter bio, and five tweets from the perspective of their character. Remind your students that they must create one hashtag and use it in every tweet that they create.

If students finish early, have them select another character and complete the task from second, different perspective.

STEP 10 (15 MINUTES)

Conclusion

Wrap up the session by sharing as a group. Ask for student volunteers who would like to share their tweets with the class.

A fun variation would be to ask students to write each tweet on a separate 3" x 5" note card and set up a display of student twitter feeds in the persona of these characters.