826 DIGITAL

LESSONS

Reclaim Your Power

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GRADES 9–11

TYPE

FANTASY/SCIFI NARRATIVE

What if you could change the ending to a memory that left you powerless? In this lesson, students will retell a story with a new ending, reclaiming their power in the process.

SESSION 1 : RECLAIM YOUR POWER

BEFORE YOU START

- This prompt encourages students to reflect on their identity, their power, and their place in the current world. When introducing the prompt, be mindful that students will exhibit a wide range of self-awareness and social awareness. You know your students best—if you sense students are struggling with an activity or prompt, invite them to write about what they feel comfortable sharing and to take risks when they feel ready. All students should feel welcome to participate.
- In this lesson, students will imagine new possibilities in the genre of speculative fiction. We suggest redirecting students away from using weapons and physical violence in their writing and encourage them to explore more creative, whimsical, and fantastic possibilities.

This lesson aligns with the following CASEL Competency:

- Self-Awareness
  - Having a growth mindset
  - Identifying one's emotions

HOW TO BEGIN

To begin, write the word *powerless* on the board and ask students to share their thoughts about this concept:

- What does this word mean to them?
- What does it mean to feel powerless?
- Where does power come from?

2 minutes

On a piece of scrap paper or in their writing journal, ask students to number their paper, 1-7. Ask students to spend two minutes creating a list of times they've felt powerless or not in control of a situation. Let students know that this list is just for them; they won't be asked to share with others. Encourage students to keep their pencils moving for the whole two minutes, even when they can't think of anything to write! If they can't think of something to write, they can write their name, "I don't know," a snippet of their favorite song lyric. . . anything to keep their pencil moving and their mind working.

8 minutes

Ask students to choose one of the experiences from their list and spend the remaining eight minutes freewriting everything they can remember about that moment, including details like how they felt and any specific dialogue they can remember. Students will return to this freewrite in STEP 4.

Next, introduce speculative fiction. Based on what students already know about literary genres, what do they think speculative fiction is?

Speculative fiction thinks outside the box because it answers the question “what if?” It asks readers to imagine (or speculate) a world that’s (X) because of (Y).

- **Speculative fiction: a type of fiction that imagines new worlds and answers the question “what if?”**

Ask students to share any examples of speculative fiction stories they may be aware of, such as the following:

- *The Hunger Games*: What if we lost a great war? What if the punishment was children having to fight to the death?
- *Black Panther*: What if Africa had a secret, technologically advanced kingdom that avoided colonialism?
- *Deadpool*: What if you could force someone to develop superpowers by putting them through great stress?

Next, display the mentor texts on pages 1 and 2 of the Reclaim Your Power— Handout and ask for volunteers to read the two texts out loud:

- “Used to be booty, now I’m good” by Rey, Grade 9, 826 MSP
- “four boys on Ellis [a re-telling]” by Eve L. Ewing, an excerpt from her book *Electric Arches*

Then, ask students to share what they noticed about the endings of both pieces. Did the character(s) regain their power at the end? How so?

Pass out page 3 of the handout and ask students to pull out their freewrite from STEP 1. On the handout, students imagine three new endings to the story they wrote about. This is their chance to retell the ending of the story in a way that gives them back their power. The story can include traditional superhero powers: flight, invisibility, telekinesis . . . nothing is off-limits!

Finally, students combine the first part of their story with a new ending that gives them back their power. Students can either use one of the three endings they drafted in STEP 4 or combine the best elements from all three!

When students are happy with their draft, it's time to revise! We recommend dedicating at least thirty minutes, or an extra day, on revision if possible. Feel free to use whichever structures for revision you may have in place, or students can try one or more of these revision tips:

Revision Tips:

- Help the reader understand the original scenario by filling in any information that you may have abbreviated in your first freewrite. In order for your new ending to work, what does the reader need to know?
- Add dialogue. Did you think of the perfect comeback to the original situation after the fact? Live vicariously through your character and incorporate those lines into your new story.
- Add sensory language. What does the setting look and sound like? How does the character feel before and after the new ending?
- Pass out the Revision Bingo for Narratives and challenge students to choose at least three narrative revision strategies to complete a horizontal, vertical, or diagonal row.
- For more ideas, see 826 Digital's Guide to Revision.