

Awesome Authors

English Language Arts

Primary Grades PreK–2

Purpose

Students will:

- ▶ Use spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences
- ▶ Use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information, and create and communicate knowledge
- ▶ Read a wide range of print and nonprint materials to build an understanding of texts and acquire new information
- ▶ Apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts
- ▶ Use a wide range of writing strategies and use different writing process elements to communicate with different audiences for various purposes
- ▶ Apply knowledge of language conventions and media critiques to discuss print and nonprint materials

Description

To young students, an author of a book or story often does not seem like a real person. In this activity, students learn about an author, read stories by the author, and later communicate with the author. They work in small groups to learn about plot development (beginning, middle, and end), character development, story structure, and creating parallel stories. Students are introduced to illustrations and associated copyright issues. They then write and illustrate their own stories, incorporating a character from one of the author's stories, or generate a parallel story. Students edit, revise, and publish their stories electronically. Parents and other students are encouraged to read and respond to students' published stories. Students are introduced to interviewing and questioning techniques. They work with a partner, read the partner's story, and generate questions to ask the author. Videotaped author interviews are conducted with students questioning their peer authors.

Activities

PREPARATION

- ▶ Meet with the school library media specialist to identify an author to be studied.
- ▶ Identify available resources on or about the author (e.g., video, Web sites, print, CD-ROMs, software, audiotapes, laserdiscs).
- ▶ Locate and highlight the author's Web site (if available).
- ▶ Assemble a list or a collection of the author's books to use as an introduction.
- ▶ Prepare lessons on plot and character development or a lesson on story structure for students who will write parallel stories (same plot, different characters, setting, and so on).
- ▶ Prepare a minilesson sequence on techniques for interviewing, assembling questions, and reporting information from an interview.
- ▶ Plan an electronic meeting with the author (e.g., through e-mail, CU-SeeMe, a Web site, Internet chat, Scholastic Network).
- ▶ Ask in advance if the author is willing to record a story in his or her own voice.

- ▶ Prepare a minilesson on characters and plot.
- ▶ Discuss copyright and its importance when considering illustrations.
- ▶ Discuss illustrators and illustrations. Identify style, composition, color, and media used by the author or illustrator.
- ▶ Set aside time to confer with individual students about their stories.
- ▶ Prepare a minilesson on electronic-publishing software.
- ▶ Alert the school Webmaster that student projects are intended for posting on the school Web site. Share the project timeline with the Webmaster.
- ▶ Introduce students to the video camcorder and the fundamentals of recording.

	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS	NETS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS GRADES PREK–2
PROCEDURE		
1 Introduce the class to the selected author. In the library, find books and other media about the selected author. Let students select their own books to read, but encourage them to select one by the author.	ELA 1, 3	2, 4
2 Help students read about the author and become familiar with the author's life and writing.	ELA 1, 3	2, 4
3 Read and view a variety of stories by the selected author. Work in small groups to identify story plots and character features.	ELA 1, 3, 6, 11	2, 4, 5
4 Work in small groups to create a dramatization or develop a reader's theater presentation based on a story by the author. Use a video camcorder to record student presentations for viewing by the whole class.	ELA 3, 4, 5, 11, 12	1, 9
5 Facilitate a brainstorming session for students to describe what they have learned about the author and what they still need to learn. Record what students have learned about the author and his or her work. Categorize and classify information students shared using concept-mapping software. If possible, share students' perceptions with the author.	ELA 3, 6, 7, 11, 12	1, 2, 4, 10
6 Plan a video or online conference with the author. Use a word processor to record questions to ask the author during the electronic conference or e-mail interview.	ELA 4, 5	1, 9
7 Participate in an online conference with the selected author.	ELA 8, 11, 12	6, 10
8 Have students select a character from one of the stories they have read and include the character in a short story of their own. Students use electronic-publishing software to write and illustrate a story that parallels the author's story structure. Have students or adult helpers print copies of the stories for friends, family, and the library.	ELA 4, 5, 6, 11, 12	1, 2, 8, 9
9 Divide students into teams of three to develop questions and make plans to interview a peer author. Create a situation where students assume the role of a famous author. Set the scene such as a talk show or book signing. Students take turns trying on the following roles: author being interviewed about a story, interviewer, and cameraperson who is making sure that the camera angles are correct and that the interview is properly recorded on video. (Ask for assistance from another adult or from an older student.) Compile all videos onto a single tape for distribution to parents and families.	ELA 8, 11	1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9

Tools and Resources

SOFTWARE:

- ▶ Concept-mapping (e.g., Expression, Inspiration®), multimedia-authoring and presentation (e.g., HyperStudio, Kid Pix Studio), desktop-publishing (e.g., Easy Book, Kid Works Deluxe)

HARDWARE:

- ▶ Video camcorder, TV, VCR

WEB SITES:

- ▶ Teacher Resources

Go Places with Suse MacDonald (children's book author and illustrator):
<http://create4kids.com/>

Celebrating Cultures with Tomie de Paola:
www.memphis-schools.k12.tn.us/admin/tlapages/cultures.html

Children's Literature (reviews):
www.childrenslit.com/home.htm

Carol Hurst's Literature Site (reviews):
www.carolhurst.com/

Authors and Illustrators on the Web (guide):
www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/authors.html

Aaron Shepard's RT Page (reader's theater):
www.aaronshep.com/rt/

Index to Internet Sites—Children's and Young Adults' Authors and Illustrators:
<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/biochildhome.htm>

Scholastic Network:
www.scholasticnetwork.com/

Children's Book Council:
www.cbcbooks.org/html/aboutauthors.html

Internet Public Library:
www.ipl.org/youth/AskAuthor/

New York Public Library:
www.nypl.org/branch/kids/authorchat.html

Read In!:
www.readin.org/

- ▶ Author Sites

Jan Brett: www.janbrett.com/

Marc Brown's Arthur site: www.pbs.org/wgbh/arthur/

Eric Carle: www.eric-carle.com/

Janet Stevens: www.janetstevens.com/

Dr. Seuss: <http://randomhouse.com/seussville/>

Leo and Diane Dillon: www.best.com/~libros/dillon/

Robert Quackenbush: www.rquackenbush.com/

Mike Artell: <http://members.aol.com/mikeartell/page/index.htm>

Judy Blume: <http://judyblume.com/>

OTHER:

- ▶ Library reference materials, both print and nonprint (books, videos, CD-ROMs)

Assessment

Assess students on (1) their ability to work cooperatively in small groups and (2) their participation and contribution to the online author conference.

Develop a rubric to assess individual student stories. The rubric should cover mechanics, content, voice, grammar, spelling, characterization, plot, and the effective use of writing and multimedia-authoring software. Review the rubric with students before beginning the project. (Tie the levels and content of the rubric to state and local standards for writing, as well as to expectations for students.)

With students, develop a rubric to evaluate their performance during the preparation and production of peer author interviews. The rubric should address preparation, quality, appropriateness of interview questions, and basic video camcorder usage and technique.

Credits

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Comments

For a long time, not much information seemed to be available on Dr. Seuss. Through the Web site, my students were able to find more biographical information. They wanted to interview him, but Geisel had recently died. With further research, they were surprised to learn just how much his foundation supports kids and reading. The class went into such a frenzy reading his books and talking about where all the money goes from buying the books that they asked the librarian to have a picture of the Cat and the Hat painted on the wall outside the library—which she did! Now those same kids are in fourth grade and I hear them pass the library chatting about Theodore Geisel and the reading programs supported by his legacy. It has been a great way to learn about stewardship as well as the notion that good writers can support themselves and some professional athletes!

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