

Minnesota Writing Project

--- Demonstration Lesson Template ---

Title of lesson: I AM WILD: using figurative language

Suggested grade/age: Grade 4, appropriate for 3rd through middle school

Approximate time needed to complete lesson: 45 minutes for figurative language lesson; three or more class periods for research, five class periods for writing, several revision days with peers, parents, teacher; time to word process

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson:

Students are in the process of researching and writing about an animal in its natural environment, taking the point of view of that animal as it goes through a day in its life. By this lesson, the students have completed their research and are ready to begin writing their narrative. They will have had a lesson on simile and metaphor prior to the lesson. Students will:

- use their research to develop ideas
- incorporate figurative language, specifically similes, into their description
- use a first person point of view/voice

This unit was first designed by Caren Stelson, a Minnesota children's author, who donated much time and expertise to the writing program in the Edina elementary schools. I have taught this unit in the fall as a kickoff to writing projects; in January to get through the long, dreary winter; and in the spring as a culminating project. The whole unit involves research, drafting, revising with peers and adults, and publishing. We have a party with animal crackers and milk when parents come to hear their children's stories. Stories are also shared with our 'buddy class' of younger students.

Best practices:

- activating prior knowledge
- modeling writing for students; sharing my thinking process
- student engagement
- conferencing with students as they write
- creating a 'safe' environment that fosters student creativity

State standards:

- Text types and purposes
 - Write informative/explanatory texts....
 - Write narratives and other creative texts...
- Writing process and distribution of writing
 - produce clear and coherent writing...
 - use a writing process to develop and strengthen writing..

Brief summary/outline of lesson:

Today we are going to begin writing our I AM WILD stories. Take out your notes, your writing packet, your pencil, and your book with the photo of your animal. Put your name on top and in big letters, the name of your animal. Mark an X on every other line.

First, we will describe ourselves as our animal. Look over your notes. What are the most important features of your animal? Use similes, metaphors, and descriptive language to describe yourself. (Discuss: what are some words and phrases that work for you?)

Beginnings can be tricky, so I am going to give you the first three words of your story: They call me...

Teacher models think aloud on board: They call me _____, _____. My fur is as thick as _____. My arms can stretch _____. My stubby tail _____. (I have students 'help' me; I make changes and add words, demonstrating my writing process).

Students write as teacher writes. Then I circulate around the room: encouraging, prodding, affirming, as needed. I will share interesting language aloud as I circulate and ask them to extend similies—*my talons are as sharp as a knife*, for example, might become *my talons are as sharp as a steak knife*. About 15 minutes writing time.

Finish your sentence. I read mine aloud. **Read what you have written to your neighbor.** Highlight your favorite sentence.

Come sit in a circle around our campfire in the front. Each child names his/her animal and reads one simile.

Tomorrow we will write paragraph 2: waking up and describing our habitat.

Evaluation: there is a rubric that looks at each paragraph. This is really a can't fail project however, because students are not only responsible for in-class work each day, but each one also meets one-on-one with an adult other than the teacher for a 3-2-1 conference during Writing Lab time (see link).

Modifications: For this demonstration lesson, I gave each of you a picture book about an animal to use as a resource. Students would have taken notes previously, from easy nonfiction to online and print encyclopedias, National Geographic resources, perhaps even YouTube videos. A sample notetaking format is on the wiki. Older students may need less structure.

Students have also had time to read stories written in prior years. I also would have done several read alouds of creative nonfiction about animals.

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs: This project is so well structured that English language learners and students with some cognitive impairment do very well with it.