

Heroes and Shadows

Introduction

Language can be immensely powerful, even deadly when in the wrong hands. Words have the ability to destroy, elevate, control, inspire and all the rest of it. But they are *just words*, a collection of letters, syllables, shapes on a page. The images and emotions they evoke in those who read them, however, is where their true power lies.

These lesson plans explore the power of story-telling by playing around with character. Story-telling is a natural ability we all possess. It's almost genetic. How do versions of the 'rags to riches' Cinderella story exist within every culture on Earth? This story was created before we had means of instant international communication.

Story-telling is as much a part of being human as eating, drinking and using the lav. You don't have to be published to be a great writer. All you need is a burning desire to change the world by influencing and inspiring the minds of those who choose to read your work. Easy! Let's get started.

Joe Standerline

Lesson 1

This session is designed to be used with a text you're already familiar with. It requires group discussion and list making in preparation for creative writing activities in the following session. **If I'm able to visit your school, it would be great if you could at least do the first 3 sections from this plan before we meet.**

Aims: To provide an introduction to character archetypes and classic story structure
Objectives: Exploring a familiar text to identify the main plot points
Identifying different character types and their functions within a chosen text

Resources: Character sheet

1. Choose a book or play to work with.
2. List the main characters in your story. (5 minutes)
3. Who is the story about? (15 minutes)

Sometimes this isn't as obvious as it first appears. Most stories have a 'Hero' See the 'Character Sheet' for help. Who is the Hero of your story? Apply these questions to the main characters to work it out:

Do they go to an unfamiliar place?
Do they make a decision that puts them in danger?

Is there something they really want?
Do they change throughout the story?

3. Go through the story and pick out the main events. (20 minutes)

These events are called Plot Points. Main plot points almost always relate to the Hero of the story. Use the following questions to help find them.

Does it move the story along?
Does it change anything?
Does it make things worse for the Hero?
Does it create more tension?

4. Character types (20 minutes)

Characters are like us. They have our strengths, weaknesses & quirks. Sometimes we feel like heroes, other times we feel like villains. It depends on the situations we're faced with.

Using your list of characters and my *Character Sheet*. Work out what type of characters they are. They might not all be there.

Types to choose from

Hero
Herald
Mentor
Ally
Shapeshifter
Shadow
Trickster
Threshold Guardian

(Character types based on those defined in *The Writer's Journey* by Christopher Vogler ISBN 0-330-37591-1)

5. Additional activities

- a) Prepare questions for all the characters. Students choose a character to play and take a hot seat at the front of the class to respond to the questions, in role. (Useful for exploring character motivation)
- b) Create a character C.V. Imagine one of the characters is applying for a job. How would they sell themselves on paper?

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