

The Architecture of a Minilesson

~~Connection~~ WARM UP

The teacher talks about how this topic fits with the work the children have been doing together and about how it fits with our students' lives as readers and writers. Give an overview of what is to come.

<p>We don't begin like this:</p> <p>What did we talk about yesterday? Who knows what good readers do when they ... (get oriented to a new story, etc.)</p>	<p>We tend to begin like this:</p> <p>Yesterday we talked about... When good readers begin reading a story, we already know that in the opening pages, we'll learn a few key things. It helps to remember to be on the lookout for answers to questions. Yesterday, we said readers are asking, "Who?" Today we'll think about another question readers are asking.</p>
<p>Yesterday we talked about what? No, not the story's ending. No, not the donuts. It begins with a /k/ sound. We talked about what? Yes, characters! And today we're going to talk about setting. When we read a book, there is such a thing as setting. Who knows what setting is?</p>	<p>We've been thinking in this class about how the traditional elements of story can help us read, and specifically about how, when we read books, it helps to think about the characters in the book, to be sure we know their names and can describe their traits. Today we're going to focus on a second element in traditional stories—the setting. Thinking about the setting of a story will help us remember and retell stories and understand them too. I'm going to show you how to pay attention to setting and why this will help.</p>

Teach

Next the teacher teaches students something they'd like them to try. Teachers usually do this by demonstrating or telling them about a technique or retelling and reenacting something others have done. Sometimes a child helps the teacher do the teaching part of a minilesson.

<p>Instead of doing this:</p> <p>Teacher: "When we read stories there is such a thing as a setting. Has anyone ever heard of that word before?" Holly: Where it takes place? Anna: You get a picture from where it is? Teacher: (Calls on Carl.) Carl: I don't know. Teacher: Open your book, Carl. See how it says, we went to the river? That's what class? Children: Setting? Teacher: Yes, the setting is a farm in Alabama. What do you know about Alabama?</p>	<p>We tend to do this:</p> <p>Teacher: The setting of a story is the <i>when</i> and <i>where</i>. Sometimes a reader can skip past the setting, and all of a sudden a lot of things don't make sense. So pretend I am reading a book and it is set in Colonial America in 1790, but I don't notice that. And then I read (pretends to be reading a text) "We were going to the store. I'd never been on such a trip before and I couldn't sleep I was so excited." I might think, "Whaaaaat? Why had she never been to the store until now?" "Buy of course, if I remember this is Colonial America then I am thinking.... You need to notice the setting of a story and to carry it with you always, in your reader's backpack, and it'll explain a lot of other things that happen.</p>
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~~Active Involvement~~ TRY

Then the teacher gives all the children an opportunity to "try it" or "have a go." Although this *active involvement* phase may involve children working alone, they often turn to their partners to try something out orally, practice a strategy for a moment, or plan what they might do later.

<p>Instead of doing this:</p> <p>"So it is important to know the <i>setting</i> of a book. What was the setting from <i>The Homecoming</i> John?" "Sarah, tell us the setting for <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i>?"</p>	<p>We tend to do this:</p> <p>Would you get with your partner? I'm going to continue reading. As you listen carry with you an awareness of the setting—Colonial America in 1790, perhaps in a Massachusetts colony. When I pause, talk to your partner about how your knowledge of the setting informs your understanding: "At the store, Pa bought me a piece of penny candy. I wrapped it in my handkerchief, planning to eat it on Christmas Day. We stayed overnight in the town and prepared for the long journey home."</p>
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