



SPINE-CHILLERS

WHAT LURKS IN YOUR STUDENTS' IMAGINATIONS?

HOW TO WRITE A MINI SAGA USING TENSION, SUSPENSE & ATMOSPHERE

PREPARATION

- Download the presentation which complements this lesson plan from: www.youngwriters.co.uk/writing-resources
- Bookmark the introductory video: https://youtu.be/_CuR6yW4sQ
- Ensure each student has an entry form. You can download these from the web link above.
- Slide 5 has been left blank so you can add your own learning outcomes & success criteria

INTRODUCTION

- Explain to students that today they will write a mini saga, using the techniques of tension, suspense and atmosphere to creating a spine-chilling tale. These three writing devices play a huge part in setting the scene, creating imagery and drawing the reader in. (Slide 3)
- Show your students the video which introduces the activity. (Slide 4)

MAIN TEACHING ACTIVITY

Activity	Slides	Activity Details
<i>What is a mini saga?</i>	6-7	<p>Explain to students that a mini saga is a story written in up to 100 words. Go through the 3 golden rules of mini saga writing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Be original! Work can be inspired by other stories, but must be students' own work.2. Keep to the 100-word limit – make every word count!3. Remember that mini sagas must have a beginning, middle and end.
<i>Exploring creative writing techniques</i>	8-11	<p>Explain to students that to write a spooky or thrilling tale they need tension, suspense and atmosphere. Blood, guts and gore can shock a reader, but can bore them, and they don't make for an original, compelling story. Creating a story that is creepy, sends a chill down your spine or has a surprise humorous ending is so much more enjoyable to write and to read!</p> <p>Ask students if they can explain what tension, suspense and atmosphere are. If they can't that's fine, as we've provided an explanation and an example of each:</p> <p>Tension: Mental or emotional strain; intense suppressed suspense, anxiety or excitement. E.g. As I walked past the abandoned house, I felt like I was being watched...</p> <p>Suspense: A state of uncertainty or excitement, such as waiting for a decision, action or outcome with fear or anxiety. An element of risk is usually involved. E.g. I reached for the door, my hand shaking, unsure what was on the other side...</p> <p>Atmosphere: The mood or emotional tone. E.g. The old, ivy-clad barn disappeared as the thick fog rolled in, silencing nature.</p> <p>Ensure your students understand the techniques before you move on to the next short activity.</p>

Activity	Slides	Activity Details
Practising creative writing techniques	12-13	<p>Give students these 3 settings: an abandoned house, a church, a forest. Ask them to pick one and write a sentence or two describing it on a bright, sunny day. Once they've done this, repeat the activity using awful weather at dusk or night-time. How do they compare?</p> <p>The scene for their mini saga can be set using location and weather, time of day or time of year. Darkness, inclement weather, isolated property, ruins, graveyards etc automatically give the reader a sense of something sinister. One or two short sentences can set the scene, leaving the remainder of the mini saga to develop the plot.</p>
Generating Ideas	14-15	<p>Split your students into 4 groups and provide each group with a large sheet of paper to write their ideas on.</p> <p>Group 1 need to write ideas for settings on their paper – where can they think of that a scary or thrilling story would be set?</p> <p>Group 2 need to write down ideas of creepy characters on their paper – who could appear in their tale?</p> <p>Group 3 need to write down what could happen in the story – a chase, a discovery, searching for something etc.</p> <p>Group 4 need to write down ideas of ways the story could end on their paper – what happens to end the story? A cliffhanger ending? Something funny? Was it a dream etc.</p> <p>Give each group 1 minute to write down as many ideas as they can. Once the minute is up, each group passes their paper on to the next group. Give students another minute to add to ideas from the other group and so on until all 4 groups have contributed their ideas to all 4 sheets of paper. Suggest each group aims for a minimum of 3 ideas on each sheet (feel free to adapt this based on age and ability).</p> <p>This should take around 5 minutes to do. Use the remaining 10 minutes to read through the ideas as a class, highlighting any particularly good ideas, answering any questions and letting pupils briefly discuss ideas, so you're generating a buzz around the forthcoming writing activity!</p>
Example Mini Sagas	16-17	There are two example mini sagas you can read through with your class to give them an idea of what they're aiming for.
Planning A Mini Saga	18-19	<p>Ask students to consider the following points before writing their mini saga:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be a ghost/apparition or will they just suggest that through the power of words? • Will the events be in the character's mind or real? • Will the ending have a twist, cliffhanger or be funny? • Will they use description, dialogue or action to tell their mini saga? • Will they plunge their reader straight into the action or use a sentence or two to set the scene beforehand? <p>Students can use the planning sheet on their entry form to write down their ideas for their story's character, setting and plot.</p>
Writing A Mini Saga	20-21	<p>Remind students of the 3 golden rules of mini saga writing, and go through the tips for getting their story down to 100 words.</p> <p>Remind them it can be under 100 words, just not over!</p> <p>It's time to write!</p>

PLENARY (Slide 22)

- Ask students to work in pairs to read their mini sagas to one another. Their partner is to provide feedback: something they liked and something that could be improved. The partner can help edit the work down if it exceeds the 100-word limit. Provide your students with a few minutes to make any changes to their work.

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