

Create a Character: Silly, Sad, Happy or Mad With Suzanne Morgan Williams

Grades 4 – 8

Using photos of people or animals that they are given or choose themselves, and the Create a Character Worksheet, students answer questions about the photo subjects' personality traits, family, likes, dislikes etc. Based on their answers, they will pre-write a simple plot for their fictional narrative. With these tools, they'll be ready to write their unique stories.

Materials:

- a) Photos from samples provided, magazines, or from students' homes.
- b) *Create a Character Worksheet* for each student. (included).
- c) Paper and pen/pencil or computer for writing. Art supplies if desired.

The Lesson:

- a) How professional writers approach character development.
- b) Students choose a photo/picture to inspire their character.
- c) Inspired by photo/picture, students complete the first 2 pages of the **Make a Character** worksheet.
- d) Discuss the **Make a Character** worksheet and how it relates to the beginning, middle and end of a story.
- e) Discuss a story arc.
- f) Write a short plot outline.
- g) Students complete their story using their character and basic plot outline.

Extensions

- Students can generate additional questions to help with plot details. These could be general questions for the whole class or specific to their own characters.
- Each student can create two characters and write dialogue for a scene where they interact – possibly when they are in conflict or discovering something important to the plot.
- Pairs can work together in several ways:
 - a) They can use the same photo and, without consulting each other, complete the character sheets. Then they will compare their answers and discover how the same material can inspire different stories.
 - b) They can create two different characters and then work together to create a plot for the two of them.
 - c) Using two characters, they can write dialogue with each student writing the voice for his/her character.
- Students can illustrate their completed stories.

Connection to the Nevada Academic Content Standards for the Fine Arts

- Creating: Conceiving and developing new artistic work and ideas.

ELA Grade 4, Writing #3 a-e; ELA Grade 5, Writing #3 a-e; Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

ELA Grade 6, Writing #3 a-e; ELA Grade 7, Writing #3 a-e; ELA Grade 8, Writing #3 a-e; "Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences."

Connection to Literacy: Literacy is communication. Writers are the "speakers" and readers are the "listeners." This lesson helps students to become more confident writers through giving them an understanding of specific tools and techniques that professional writers use. The more we can engage students' creativity through effectively structured lessons that still allow them to draw on their own

imaginations and experiences, the more successful and interested in writing they will become. This lesson allows participants to imagine many types of characters, then uses their responses to questions about their character to guide them through a basic story structure. With this prewriting completed, creating a narrative story should be successful and satisfying.

Resources

A letter to student writers from Suzanne. Go to for students at www.Suzannemorganwilliams.com or <https://suzannemorganwilliams.com/assets/files/A%20LETTER%20TO%20WRITERS-for%20students.pdf>

Here's an honest and informative blog from writer and professor, Jane Freidman:

<https://www.janefriedman.com/writing-advice-for-children-and-teens/>

Resources for publishing student writing From the National Council of Teachers of English, 2020.

<https://cdn.ncte.org/nctefiles/about/awards/resources%20for%20publishing%20student%20writing.pdf>

If you need more photos for prompts, try the National Archives:

<https://search.archives.gov/search?query=images&submit=&utf8=&affiliate=national-archives>

You can also search Creative Commons for photos in the public domain (copyright free).

<https://search.creativecommons.org/> Try searching terms like babies, teens, sports etc.

About the Artist

Suzanne Morgan Williams

Suzanne Morgan Williams is the author of the middle grade novel, *Bull Rider* (Margaret K. McElderry Books) and eleven nonfiction children's books with more books on the way. From the time she wrote her first book, *Made in China, Ideas, and Inventions from Ancient China*, (Pacific View Press) to the present, her work has taken her into classrooms to connect with students, to universities and museums to work with experts, and to communities to share experiences.

A former teacher, she is now an author, speaker, and workshop leader. She's worked in all kinds of classrooms from special education to ESL, from pre-K to middle school and high school. She has teaching credentials in Washington and California as well as a Montessori Certificate and an M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education. For information on her speaking and school visits see www.suzannemorganwilliams.com

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Nevada Arts Council Teaching Artist Roster

The Nevada Arts Council Teaching Artist Roster is an online resource for schools, organizations and communities seeking to engage teaching artists. Roster artists are experienced in collaborating with schools and communities to conduct arts learning and cultural experiences in, through and about the arts.

Explore the roster at <https://www.nvartscouncil.org/rosters/teaching-artists/>