

Tracey Keim, St. Petersburg High School, Pinellas County



“There are no limits to what they write, only that they tell me what is going on, being encouraged to use bigger words, better descriptions and dialogue. I tell them to live in the moment that is right there in front of them.”

Tracey was chosen as the 2015 Grand Prize Winner because of how she uses the *Tampa Bay Times* in her classroom to encourage creativity and help her students improve their reading, writing and critical thinking skills.

One of her favorite lesson plans is called “Every picture tells a story.” Keim collects photos from the *Tampa Bay Times* and removes the captions. Each student chooses a photo and writes about what he or she thinks is happening in the photo. Keim encourages the use of dialogue and imagery. “What do YOU think is going on here?” her students are queried. ‘Tell me and get my attention. It doesn’t have to be the truth.’ The stories are phenomenal. This activity gives students a chance to dream or imagine what is or what could be. There are no limits to what they write.” At the end of the unit, Tracey hangs up the pictures with the original captions so that the students can see what the real story was. This unit encourages creativity and thinking by giving students a chance to dream or imagine what is or what could be.

In another lesson, Tracey used a week's worth of the *Tampa Bay Times* to introduce the word "community" for a problem solving paper. The students worked in groups to identify problems in a community in order to understand the many meanings of the word community. Community goes beyond just neighborhood: it can be your school community, church community, family community, state, country or even the world community. Community can also be a group in which you are a member of the gay community, the St. Pete High community, the choral/band community, etc. Tracey introduced this unit by going through the newspaper and showing different problems here and around the world. Then the class discussed who was affected: children, adults, a neighborhood, a group, etc. From there, each student identified a problem within the community of their choice that was a current event. They then worked on cause and effect papers, ultimately offering a solution. They were assessed by participation and thoughtful writing to a rubric.



Joseph
Seymour
Keyboard: 1
#12

Every Picture Tells a Story

In a meadow so peaceful there stood a photographer calmly capturing pictures of a steady owl. Through the owl's eyes the photographer constantly following him and made sudden flashes of light at every action made. The owl decided to lead the photographer to a stream not too far away from the meadow. As the owl approached the stream he began stalking a group of salmon and landed alongside the bank to prepare for the kill. Right when he was about to make his attack he heard leaves crumble behind and as he rotated his head all was seen was a large brownish bag quickly scooping him off the ground. The owl did all he could to escape even try to claw his way through and managed to pierce the man's thigh. A sharp object quickly struck through the bag and went straight into the owl's left wing and the owl soon began to lose consciousness.

When the owl awoke he was laying in the same meadow when the photographer first came into view. The owl was paired a large but seemingly weightless object strapped on his leg with a red light constantly shining, but he gave no notice after examination and just went on to his nest to rest. Some time passed until the owl saw another human again, long enough to find a mate and have little baby owlets together. But one night while the owl went out for food and left his mate to care for the babies he arrived to the nest just to find it empty so he placed the mice down into the nest and covered them with leaves to be sure they wouldn't lose their dinner. The owl went soaring through the skies and suddenly stumbled upon one of the owlets struggling for survival while trying to evade a group of young boys throwing rocks and waving sticks. The owl quickly clawed his way through the boys and grabbed the owlet and while trying to escape a rock came soaring and bashed the owl on the head. The owl awoke in the morning alone with none of his family in sight with one of his wings shattered on impact with a cracked skull still oozing blood. The owl knew it was no recovering from the injury so the only thing left to do was wait it out.

Wow - such a
brave owl - such a
sad ending.
Excellent imagery

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

BRITTANY EVANS

PERIOD 2

1/13/15

The owl sits cautiously, every move so delicate. One wrong move could very well be his last. As he emerges from the grass, a falcon circles up ahead. The owl is only a few feet from home. Can he make it? He takes the chance. He opens his wings and takes off. The cold, brisk wind blowing through his feathers. The falcon recognizes the movement and prepares for an attack.

He circles the owl, patiently waiting for the right moment to strike. He notices the owl making a flight for home. He needs to act quickly if he is going to get lunch. He begins his decent, taking off after the owl. The owl is seconds away from home. He inches closer and closer, flapping his wings faster, increasing momentum. When finally, swoosh, the owl is taken up in the falcons claws. Never to be seen again.

Excellent imagery.
Consider writing as a career. You're an excellent story teller.
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