



Approach: Team

Focus: Identifying characteristics of a well written story.

Resources: Individual and team answer sheets, 4 blue and 4 red pens, highlighter pen, 4 copies of a story.

Level: Year 4 and year 8

Questions/instructions:

In this activity we are going to think about what makes a well written story.

To start, I want each of you on your own to think of all of the things you can that make a well written story. As you think of each thing, write it on the answer sheet which I will give you now. You can have a couple of minutes to make your list of things you would expect to see in a well written story.

Give each student an answer sheet and blue pen. Allow a couple of minutes.

You've had time on your own to think about what makes a well written story. Now I want each of you to share your ideas with the others in your team. After that I want your team to use everyone's ideas to make one list of all of the things you would expect to see in a well written story. I'll give you a team answer sheet for writing your list of ideas.

Give out the team answer sheet. Allow sufficient time.

You've made a team list of the things you would expect to see in a well written story. Now you are going to have a look at a piece of really good writing.

Hand out one copy of the story to each student. Collect in individual answer sheets.

[Year 4]

I will read this story aloud. As I read it, try to notice all of the things that make this a well written story.

Read story aloud

[Year 8]

Read this story on your own, and as you read it, try to notice all of the things that make this a well written story.

Allow time.

[Year 4 and year 8]

Hand out highlighter pen. Collect back the blue pens.

Your team made a list of things you would expect to see in a well written story. As a team, talk about why this is a well written story, then use the highlighter pen to mark on your list the things that you noticed in this story.

Allow time.

[continued next page]

Dream

by Tihema Nicol

I was sleeping in my bed. Suddenly my mind wandered off into dreamland.

I was swooping, soaring, and weaving my way through the wind like a kite. All of a sudden, the wind stopped, my head dropped, and I was falling, falling, falling.

My vision was a blur. Where was I going?

Crack! I ended up on the branch of a large, prickly tree. I sat alone and cold in the deep, dark night. There was no moonlight or starlight. I was frightened of the rats, the possums, and the owls that were piercing me with their large eyes.

I waited and waited. I thought for five minutes. Aha! A thought entered my head that I should pray. Suddenly, the branch started to give way. Snap! Oh, no! The branch had broken.

I closed my eyes with fear as my stomach began to flutter. I fell rapidly in the wind, twisting and turning through the air.

I fell softly upon my warm, cosy bed. My eyes opened. "It's time to get up," called Mum.

Translated by Ben Ngaia.

Adapted from the story titled, "Dream", Journal of Young People's Writing, Learning Media, NZ.

Really Good Writing: continued

Hand out red pens. Collect back the highlighter pen.

You might have noticed that some of the things that make this a good story weren't written on your list. If there are more things, write them on your list with the red pen.

FEATURES IDENTIFIED

(blue, blue and highlighted, red) –

		% responses	
		y4	y8
Mechanics – overall structure:	appropriate title	34	31
	good beginning and/or ending	31	68
	sections/paragraphs	14	24
Mechanics – sentences:	punctuation	65	60
	grammar	5	16
	spelling	16	20
	words with appropriate meaning	2	8
Content:	rich/effective/descriptive language/vocabulary	59	83
	plot/storyline/structure/flow easy to follow	29	60
	tension/problem/mystery/suspense	11	39
	lots of action	23	32
	rich characterisation and relationships	16	38
	conveys emotions/feelings	14	18
	interesting setting	12	18
Effect on reader:	captures/holds attention	33	54
	entertaining/amusing	18	40
	gets you thinking (originality, message)	14	28
	appropriate to audience	3	10
Total score:	9-18	4	15
	6-8	20	52
	3-5	49	30
	0-2	27	3

Commentary:

The only characteristics chosen by more than 40 percent of the year 4 teams were punctuation and choice of vocabulary. For the year 8 teams, three further characteristics met this criterion: a good beginning or ending, an easy to follow plot or storyline, and the ability of the story to capture or hold the reader's attention. Only half of the year 8 teams and 11 percent of the year 4 teams identified more than one third of the 18 listed characteristics.