

9-10-2009

# Ideas Trait: The Foundations of Writing [3rd grade]

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## Repository Citation

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# UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

## Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: Ideas Trait: The Foundations of Writing

Grade Level: 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Subject/Topic Area(s): Writing/Language Arts

Designed By: Carolys Gordillo

Time Frame: First Four Weeks of School (12 days – 3 days per week)

School District: Private School

School: Rolling Hills Academy

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### **Brief Summary of Unit** (Including curricular context and unit goals):

Based on the 6+1 traits of Writing, the Idea Trait is the first element that students explore to brainstorm unique ideas to write about and improve details in writing. This 4 week unit focuses on ideas and content, the first trait which helps students develop their writing skills. Students will write a personal narrative about an ordinary activity that occurred during their summer vacation with a fun twist. The picture book Ted will be shared and will be discussed to get students thinking of how their ordinary activities during summer could become extraordinary if they had an imaginary friend. Over the course of the unit, students will use a variety of tools that will help them write a descriptive and original story.

**Unit: Six Traits of Writing: Ideas**

**Grade: 3<sup>rd</sup> grade**

**Stage 1: Desired Results**

**Understandings**

*Students will understand that...*

- Writers convert ordinary ideas into extraordinary ideas to write a commemorative text
- Writers generate ideas from personal experiences to write narratives
- Writers use a main idea and supportive details in order to convey a clear message

**Essential Questions**

- What can I write about?
- How do I choose what to write about?
- How do I know if I have a good idea and how can I expand it into a story?

**Knowledge**

*Students will know...*

- How to select an idea and narrow it.
- How topic sentences can be expanded using supportive details.
- How to identify an audience.
- Write with audience in mind.

**Skills**

*Students will be able to...*

- Think creatively about what they would like to write before they start writing.
- Narrow the topic to something specific.
- Be aware of audience and purpose.
- Stay in control of the topic.

**Standards and Benchmarks**

Standard 1: Students will listen and view attentively and critically, as well as speak purposefully and articulately in situations that serve different purpose and involve a variety of audiences.

- 1.1 Maintain sustained attention
- 1.2 Exhibit good listening skills
- 1.6 Tell stories that have beginning, middle, and ending
- 1.8 Make relevant contributions in class and group discussions

Standard 4: Students can demonstrate competence in the general skills and strategies of composition and the writing process

- 4.1 Write simple paragraphs, including expository and descriptive
- 4.4 Demonstrate proficiency in creative writing
- 4.6 Write with purpose and writing in mind
- 4.7 Write stories and narratives
- 4.8 Write using sequence of events
- 4.9 Understanding the writing process

**Stage 2: Assessment Evidence**

**Performance Task:**

Summer Activity with my Imaginary Friend – Students will write a personal narrative story about one ordinary activity that occurred during their summer vacation with a fun twist. The picture book Ted will be shared with students in two different instances: at the beginning of the unit and before they start writing their first draft. The book will be discussed to get students thinking of how their ordinary activities during summer could become extraordinary if they had an imaginary friend. Over the course of 4 weeks, students will produce graphic organizers, a drawing of their imaginary friend, a descriptive paragraph about it, and a narrative skeleton map (beginning, middle, and end). These tools will be used to go through the writing process and write a personal narrative story.

Assignment: During the summer you had time to do some interesting activities, but you also had to deal with some plain and ordinary activities. Think about the dull activities you experienced over the summer. Now, imagine how one activity could have been funnier with an imaginary friend like Ted who could be blamed for your silly and crazy ideas. Write about your own unique adventure, but don't forget to show and not just tell about your experience. Use your writing tools to be the best writer that you could be!

### **Other evidence:**

*(quizzes, tests, academic prompts, self-assessments, etc. note – these are usually included where appropriate in Stage 3 as well)*

Graphic organizer – *Students fill out a web chart to brainstorm possible ideas for story.*

Drawing of imaginary friend – *Students visualize their imaginary friend and draw a picture of it.*

Descriptive paragraph of imaginary friend- *Students are able to describe their imaginary friend using their drawing.*

Building Blocks Handout – *Students use this handout to come up with creative and detailed sentences.*

Narrative Skeleton Map- *Students fill out a narrative map that will help them identify the introduction, plot, and resolution of the story.*

## **Stage 3: Learning Activities**

*(Steps taken to get students to answer Stage 1 questions and complete performance task)*

Day 1. (Block Scheduling – 35 minutes) Present the **essential questions** on chart paper and tell students what we will be learning during this unit. Emphasize the point that we all have interesting ideas and that it is up to each one of us to unlock our ordinary experiences and transform them into fascinating events. Also point out that imagination and creativity will help us give a fun and exciting spin to our everyday issues. Then, students are invited to write their understanding on the chart paper for each specific question. Allow enough time for every student to write at least one idea. Finish the lesson by reading aloud some ideas and restating that we will begin a journey where we will use our personal experiences to change the ordinary into extraordinary. Before concluding the lesson, show them the picture book Ted and tell them that you will read the book next time we meet to learn more about the ideas trait.

Alternative Method: If students are having a hard time coming up with answers for the essential questions, ask students, “What’s in your mind? What are you feeling right now?” Tell students to write down in paper in the next following minute everything that comes to their mind. This activity will provide a chance for students to understand that everyday issues and personal experiences help writers to generate ideas.

Day 2: Read aloud the story Ted. This book is all about ordinary activities that are transformed into unique experiences thanks to the help of imaginary friend, Ted. After reading the book, discuss with your students about all the fun and exciting adventures that Ted creates for the boy. Explain to students that **writers use personal experiences to generate ideas and that eventually, these ideas will help the writer come up with an interesting story**. Now, ask students if they have any similar experiences like the boy in the book (allow students to share their story with a partner close to them). Finally, have your students think about the everyday activities that occurred during their summer vacations. While their thinking about the things they did during summer, pass out web charts. Explain to students that they will be using a tool called “**Web Chart**,” which is a graphic organizer that allows good writers like them, brainstorm ideas about the ordinary things they did over the summer. Tell them to write the title “ordinary events” at the center of the chart. Then, they will brainstorm 5-7 everyday activities and write them on the chart. Now, tell your students to think about the activities and how they could have been funnier with an imaginary friend like Ted who could be blamed for their silly and crazy ideas. **Model how to use properly a web chart and how it helps us brainstorm ideas about the possible things we would like to write about**. Close the lesson by inviting students to transform into writers because they will write a personal narrative story full of imagination and excitement in the next couple of weeks.

Day 3: Tell your students that today they will **choose one good idea to write about**. Ask them “What is a good strategy to narrow down big ideas into something specific?” Then, point out that a good place to start is by thinking about their audience: who are they writing this story for (teacher?, classmates?). Explain that focusing on the audience will provide each one of us with a good starting point to narrow down our ideas. (Have students know who their audience is). Next, tell students to review their web chart and circle their favorite idea keeping in mind the following questions: Who is my audience?, Is my idea too large/broad/general for me to stay on topic?, Do I know enough about my idea to expand it and tell someone else about it?, What is the point of my story? Finally, tell students that today they will make a picture of their imaginary friend and that it is due at the end of the period. The drawing should only include the imaginary friend and it should be the size of the whole page (big drawing).

If students do not finish their picture, have them finish it for homework. Make sure you have all the drawings before you begin your next lesson.

Day 4: Today students will use their picture to begin writing a **descriptive paragraph**. The activity they will work on is an adaptation of “Picture this” from the resource book *6+1 Traits of Writing* by Ruth Culham page 59. Each child’s picture will be covered with four precut pieces of construction paper, which together would cover the entire picture. Each covered corner will be used for students to write their description of “what they see.” Model the activity using 1-2 samples to demonstrate the desired outcome. First, ask students to carefully uncover one fourth of their drawing. Now, ask students to look closely at what they see and describe it. Students take 2-3 minutes to write down detailed observations. (It is suggested to hand out a list of descriptive words for each student). Continue uncovering only one piece of the paper so that students get a chance to describe all four parts of the picture. Now, uncover the complete picture and ask them to begin writing a descriptive paragraph using the information they already have. Some questions that could help students begin writing their paragraphs are: Where is your character from? What does s/he like/dislike? What is s/he feeling? What is s/he thinking? **Remind students that a paragraph begins with a topic sentence and the supportive details will help them expand the main idea.** Using a prompt will help students find their main idea and it will be easier to develop four sentences as the supportive details. (A main idea is the first sentence that tells the reader what most of the sentences of the paragraph will be about. The other sentences of the paragraph are details that describe or explain the main idea).

Day 5 and 6: Begin your lesson by asking your students: **“How do I know if I have a good idea and how can I expand it into a story?”** Emphasize that a good idea is one that allows the writer to answer the following questions: Will my audience like this? Is my idea too large/broad/general for me to stay on topic? Do I know enough about my idea to expand it and tell someone else about it? What is the point of my story? Next, tell students that before they can begin writing their narrative story, they need to think of the important things they would like to use for their story. Today’s activity will help students uncover interesting and detailed sentences that will help them develop their story. The activity students will work on is an adaptation on “Building Blocks” on page 64 from the resource book *6+1 Traits of Writing* by Ruth Culham. Tell students you are going to provide them with a set of “building blocks” that they can use to construct more interesting and detailed sentences. Write the building blocks in paper and provide a handout for each student: “When”, “Who”, “Size, Color, Feelings, Emotions”, “Place”, and “Name.” Provide the following example on the board:

General Idea “Going to the park”

When: Last Monday

Who: Last Monday, my friend danced

Size, Color, Feelings, Emotions: Last Monday, my friend danced joyfully

Place: Last Monday, my friend danced joyfully at the park

Name: Last Monday, Lola danced joyfully at the park.

Now, it is time for students to go back to revisit the main idea they chose and use the building blocks to find interesting sentences. Once they are finished answering the questions, they should come up with two more sentences they can use in the personal narrative (provide space in the handout to complete three set of building block questions). After students come up with three interesting sentences for their story it is time to present and explain the rubric that will set high expectations for the student’s narrative and will make it clear for them to understand what is important to have in the story.

*Six Traits Writing Rubric - Ideas Trait*

	<b><i>Emerging</i></b>	<b><i>Developing</i></b>	<b><i>Capable</i></b>	<b><i>Excellent</i></b>
<b><i>Topic</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I'm not sure what my topic is.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have a topic but it is too general.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have a topic that might be too general, but the reader knows where I'm heading to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My reader knows exactly the topic of my story.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Main Idea</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no main idea sentences in my story.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I only wrote one main idea sentence for the entire paper.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One paragraph does not have a main idea sentence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each paragraph has a main idea sentence. This is just what I wanted to say!</li> </ul>
<b><i>Details</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I did not use detail sentences. It is hard to get started!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I need to add some details. I'm working on it!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I used some detail sentences that have descriptive and vivid language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I used fun and exciting detail sentences to make a more interesting story.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Original Ideas</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I'm still looking for ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I used some ideas from some examples.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of the ideas I used in the story are original.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I used my own fresh ideas.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Sequence</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is very confusing to read because there is no beginning, middle, or ending.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can see the beginning, middle, and ending of the story, but there are no connections.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a beginning, middle, and ending.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My writing shows a <b>clear</b> beginning, middle, and ending.</li> </ul>
<b><i>My message</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I'm afraid my reader won't follow this. I need more time to think.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I'm working on my ideas to write a clear message for my reader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My reader will get the general idea. I'm working on it!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It all makes sense. My reader will learn a lot.</li> </ul>

Day 7: Read aloud the story Ted. Today students begin writing their first draft. Before they start their rough draft, tell students to use their building block sentences to identify the setting and the main characters of their story. Once they know who their main characters are and where the story is taking place, tell students to use their imagination to visualize their story and think about things they can hear, smell, touch, taste, or see. Ask them to jot down a few notes about these descriptions. (It should not be longer than 5-8 minutes). Now they are ready to use their personal narrative skeleton map to write their introduction: who, where, when, what, why, how; middle: development, movement, action, elaboration, and details; ending: wrap-up, resolution. This is due today! Remind students that this is quiet time for them to imagine, think, and begin writing their first draft. Tell students to skip lines when writing a draft.

Conference: If any student finishes early, you may want to meet with her/him and use the rubric to provide feedback.

Day 8: Students pair up to revise their drafts. Explain to your students that today they will revise a classmate's story. Tell them that to be a good critic, they should ask themselves the following questions when revising a paper: Is the message clear? Do I know what the topic of the story is? Do I understand everything in the story or do I need to ask for more information to understand the story? Can I identify a beginning, middle, and ending? Students use rubrics to give feedback. (It is better if students choose a marker different to red and black).

Conference: Before meeting with your students, you should be able to identify who need the least and the most help of your students. You may want to start with those students who need orientation just to begin the project. If you notice a student is doing great you can provide quick/short positive feedback and move on to the next student.

Day 9: Students begin writing a second draft. Tell students that good writers produce a couple of drafts before they can publish their final product. Explain that revision is a good tool that helps writers improve their drafts by adding details and/or taking out unnecessary details in order to provide a clear idea to the reader. Remind students that they should skip lines when writing a rough draft. Students use rubric to understand and analyze where they're at.

Conference: Teacher meets with 5-6 students.

Day 10: Today students will be revising ideas, spelling, and grammar. Ask students if they have ever read a book where the writer had too many grammatical mistakes for you to understand the story. Then, explain to your students that revision also helps the writer check spelling and grammatical mistakes. They will use the proofreading checklist (provided by you). Remind students what each symbol stands for and ask for any questions. Students pair up with a different classmate. Students should ask themselves the following questions when revising a paper: Is the message clear? Do I know what the topic of the story is? Do I understand everything in the story or do I need to ask for more information to understand the story? Can I identify a beginning, middle, and ending? Students take turns to give feedback.

Conference: Teacher meets with 5-6 students.

Day 11: Students are ready to publish their papers. Tell your students that publishing a paper should be a happy and exciting thing to do. This is the final step before you can share your story with the entire world! Tell your students to think about the books they like to read and to imagine how they look like: Do you look at the cover? Do you browse the pages before reading it? How does the back cover look like? You can take your students to the computer lab to type in their paper. Then, students can design the front cover and back cover of the book.

Day 12: Sharing your story. Students get in groups and share their final product. You can keep the stories at the classroom library.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Performance Task

During the summer you had time to do some interesting activities, but you also had to deal with some plain and ordinary activities. Think about the dull activities you experienced over the summer. Now, imagine how one activity could have been funnier with an imaginary friend like Ted who could be blamed for your silly and crazy ideas. Write about your own unique adventure, but don't forget to show and not just tell about your experience. Use your writing tools to be the best writer that you could be!

#### Ideas Rubric

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