

Mini-lesson: A Kernel Essay...Jeff Kinney Style



Objective: Good writers use a kernel essay to organize their thoughts when planning a story.

Materials:

- Computer with projector, connected to Internet
- Memory Text Structure Cards (1 set per teacher)
- Memory Kernel Essay Graphic Organizer (1 per student)
- Notebook paper and pencils (1 per student)

Connection

- connect today's work with our ongoing work
- explicitly state my teaching point

Briefly describe a time when you faced a personal fear (e.g., speaking in public, standing up to a bully, etc.) and/or a difficult writing task. Invite students to reflect on times when they faced a fear or a tough challenge. Explain that writing can be difficult, even for published authors. Tell students that Jeff Kinney, author of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series, has experienced difficulties in his work as a writer. Play the video clip featuring an interview with Jeff Kinney: <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/26184891/vp/28691810#28691810>. Tell students that today, they will learn how the kernel essay helps writers organize their thoughts when planning a story.

Teach

- restate my teaching point
- tell a personal or class story connected to the teaching point
- demonstrate by thinking aloud and point out things students should have noticed

Explain to students that sometimes just getting started can be one of the most difficult tasks for a writer. One strategy that writers can use is the kernel essay. A kernel essay is similar to a kernel of corn. A kernel essay is a simplified text structure that allows writers to arrange their thoughts in an orderly manner. Like a kernel of corn, the kernel essay can be expanded and grown into a longer story. Display the *Memory Text Structure Cards* on the board, facing backwards. Read aloud the writing prompt to students.

Looking down from a high dive... apologizing to a friend... reading your composition in front of the class... or spotting a spider on the ceiling above your bed... Everybody has had one of those moments where they had to make a choice. Did you muster your courage and face your situation head-on, or did you say, "No way, man!" and take the wimpy way out? Think about a time in your life that you had to make the decision to be wimpy or brave. How did you get yourself in that situation? What was going through your mind when you had to decide what to do? What happened as a result of your decision? Write a composition about a time when you made the decision to be wimpy or brave.

Inform students that prior to composing a draft, good writers organize the big events of their memories to make their story flow smoothly from one event to another and to ensure that no important parts are left out. Ask students to think about a time when they faced a situation where they had to choose to be wimpy or brave. Explain that today students will create a "comical" graphic organizer to arrange their thoughts in order about that time they were brave (or maybe a little wimpy).

Active Engagement

- ask students to be actively involved by turning and talking
- listen, observe, &/or coach their active involvement
- share an example of what you heard/observed

Tell students to number their notebook paper 1 through 5 and direct them to think about the moment that they chose. Inform students that you will ask them to reflect upon and answer 5 different questions about that moment. Ask each question and turn over each card of the *Memory Text Structure Cards* as students record their answers.

1. Where were you and what were you doing?
2. What was the first thing that happened?
3. What was the second thing that happened?
4. What was the last thing that happened?
5. What did you think about just then?

Ask students to remove the numbers. Explain that they have just written a kernel essay. It's like a kernel of corn, tiny, but packed with powerful ideas. Have students read their kernel essay to a partner and provide one another with feedback.

Link

- restate the teaching point and tell students how what you taught can be used in the future

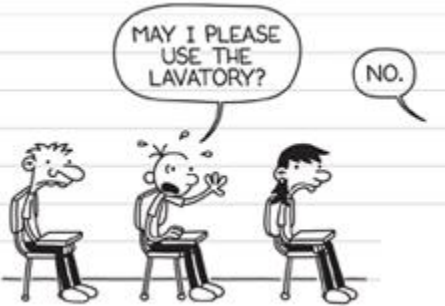
Explain that students will use the kernel essay they created to design a comic strip based upon the events listed on their notebook paper. Students will record the 5 kernel essay sentences, in order, in the bottom 5 squares of the comic strip on the *Memory Kernel Essay* graphic organizer. After students record their sentences, they will illustrate their own comic strip, matching each illustration to the event below it. Remind students that they can use a kernel essay to help them organize their thoughts and craft a powerful composition that makes readers stop and think.

Possible Conference Questions

- Tell me about the time you had to face a fear or tough challenge. Were you brave or wimpy?
- How did making the kernel essay help you organize your story events?
- What details will you need to add to this event (choose one) when you write the complete story?

Name: _____

Date: _____



DIARY of a Wimpy Kid

or Brave

Where You Were

Moment it Began

Next Moment

Final Moment

What You Thought

Where

you were

Moment

it started

Next
moment

Final
moment

What you

thought