

Embracing Social Media to Engage Students and Teach Narrative Writing

Integrating technology in the classroom allows teachers to connect with 21st century learners to create authentic and entertaining language-learning opportunities.

Linking popular social media platforms to the academic writing process minimizes learner anxiety and maximizes enthusiastic participation as students discover how their daily online interactions are building blocks for successful literacy skills.

During this session, participants will:

- gain insight into how incorporating Facebook and similar platforms in the classroom makes narrative writing authentic, attainable, and enjoyable for students
- develop the necessary skills to implement these engaging writing activities in their own classrooms or to share them with colleagues



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



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Jennifer has spent most of the past 20 years working in language education in the United States and abroad.

She has worked on language and culture projects and teacher training initiatives in Morocco, Vietnam, and France.

In the United States, Jennifer works primarily with refugee-background students.

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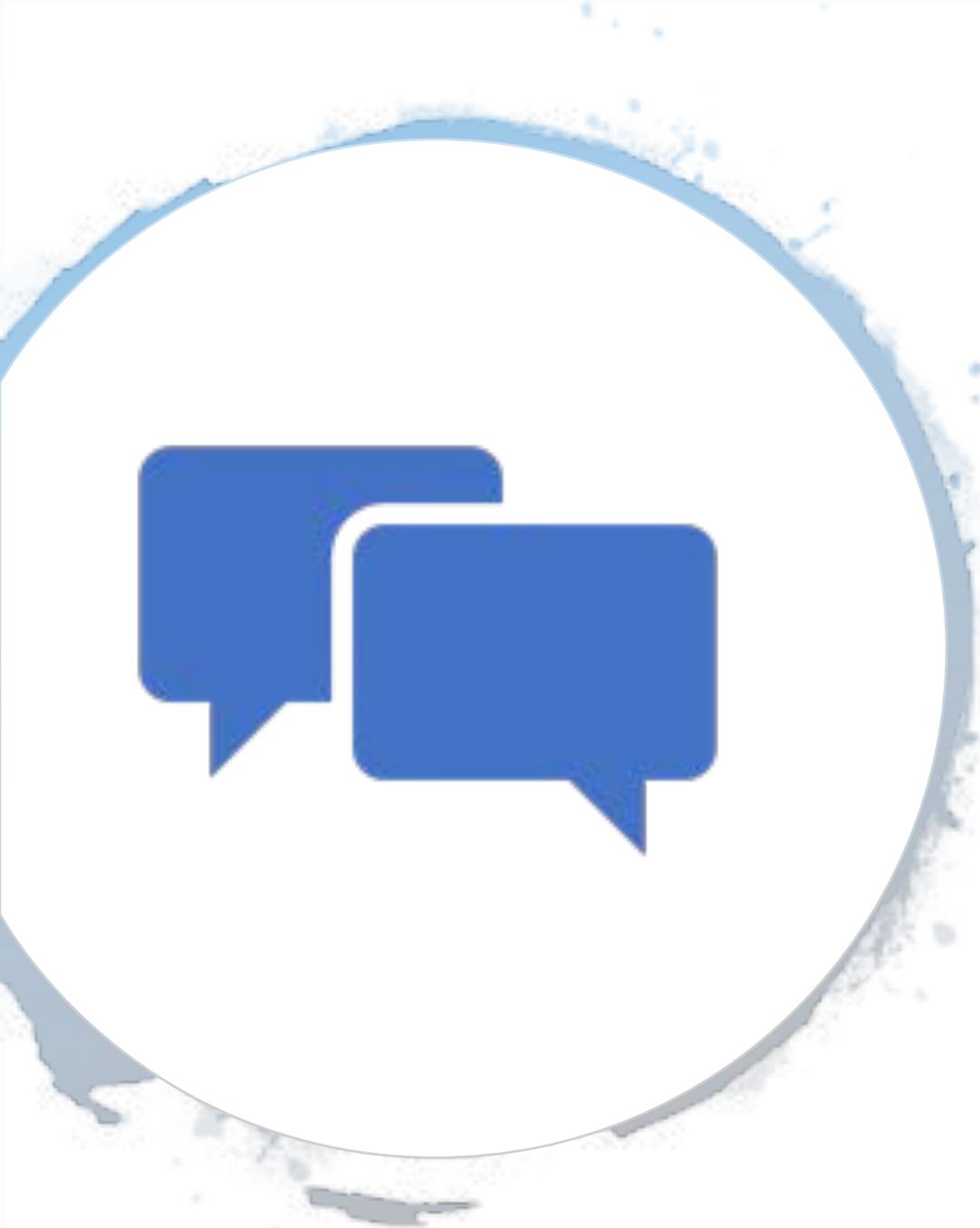




Embrace Social Media to Engage Students and Teach Narrative Writing

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Session Goals:

- Consider the benefits of social media integration in the classroom
- Make specific connections between social media experiences and the narrative writing process
- Explore strategies to teach narrative writing through Facebook and brainstorm extension activities



Social Media in the Classroom:

Opening a can of worms or a world of possibility?

- Which apps work?
- Benefits
- Challenges
- Finding your comfort zone

Benefits of Bringing Social Media into the Classroom



- Motivation
- Relaxation
- Familiarity
- Audience Awareness
- Exchange
- Efficiency

Connecting Social Media to Learning Objectives

1. **Recognize similarities** between what students publish on social media platforms and your academic objectives.
2. Clearly **demonstrate** those similarities to students to engage them in your lesson and build their confidence in trying new skills in familiar settings.
3. Strategically **incorporate** social media into your language learning activity.





Is all the effort to
include social media
really worthwhile?

Planning: Narrative Writing with Social Media

- **Know your audience.** Are you talking to students or teachers?
- **Review your academic content.** What do participants need to know or to remember in order to be successful in this task?
- Think specifically about **your learning objectives** and your **technology needs**.
- **Plan** for visual support.



Setting the Scene for Your Audience

1. Establish a model text
2. Review story-telling vocabulary
3. Review plotline of a story
4. Identify a PURPOSE and create enthusiasm.



**“Those who tell the
stories rule the world.”**

-Native American Proverb

Establish a Model Text

The goal is for students to begin the discussion with the same level of background knowledge.



Story Telling Vocabulary

Characters: Who?

Setting: When & Where?

Plot: What's happening?

Theme: Message

Point of view: Perspective

Storytelling Vocabulary: Cinderella

Characters: Cinderella, Prince, Evil Stepsisters, Fairy Godmother



Setting: Cabin and Castle



Plot: Poor girl marries rich prince thanks to help from her fairy godmother.

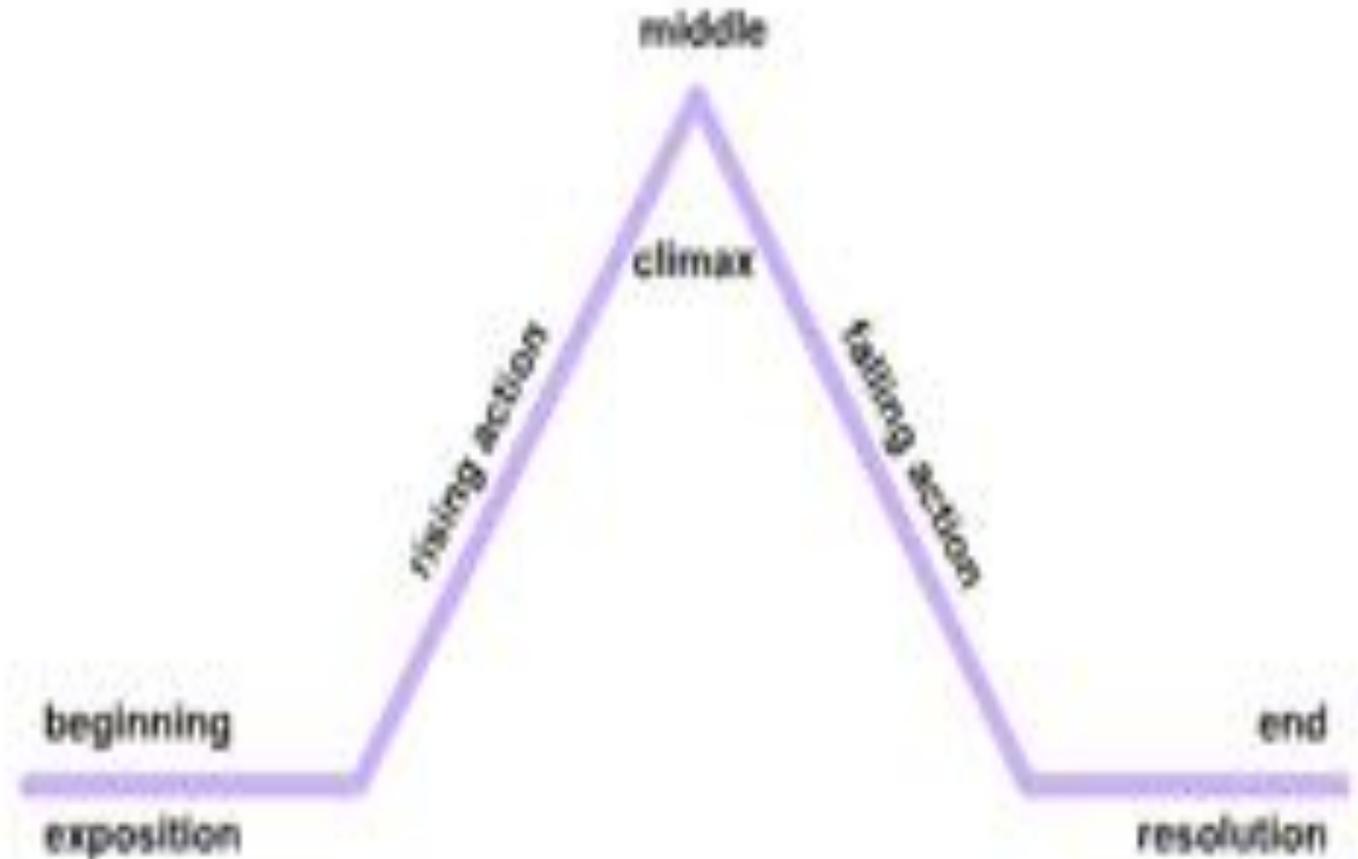


Theme: Never stop dreaming.



Point of view: Third person omniscient

Plot Diagram



Plot Diagram: Vocabulary

- **Exposition:** The beginning of the story. This is where we meet the characters and the scene is set.
- **Rising Action:** Action or events in the early part of the story that move the story toward the conflict or climax.
- **Climax:** The conflict or problem in the story which needs to be resolved.
- **Falling Action:** Action or events in the story that move the story toward the ending.
- **Resolution:** The ending of the story which reveals how the conflict was resolved.

Cinderella's Plot Diagram

Beginning

Cinderella lives a miserable life with evil stepsisters.

Rising Action
Cinderella goes to the ball with the help of her fairy godmother.

Climax: Cinderella loses her shoe as she leaves the ball.

Falling Action:

- 1) The prince searches all over for the beautiful woman who lost her shoe.
- 2) The prince finds Cinderella, and the shoe fits her foot. He has found his love.

End

Cinderella and the Prince get married and live happily ever after.

Making Connections: Social Media Users are Narrative Writers

Activity 1: Creating a Personal Status Update

1. Display status update template.
2. Display sample status update, pointing out tools to enhance post.
3. Have students quickly create a personal status update.
4. Have students share their updates and explain how they have used each of the tools to enhance their posts.
5. Reflect and connect. Discuss how status updates mirror the essential elements of narrative writing.

Step 1: Status Update Template



Step 2: Sample Status Update

What's on your mind?

Photo/Video



Steps 3 and 4: Students Create and Share



Step 5: Status Update Related to Components of Narrative Writing

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook status update creation interface. The text of the status is "What's on your mind, Jennifer?". The profile picture of the user is circled in red. Below the text is a row of colorful stickers. At the bottom, there is a grid of options: List (with a 'NEW' badge), Photo/Video, Tag Friends, Feeling/Activity, Sticker, Check in, GIF, Ask for Recommendations, Poll, Tag Event, Support Nonprofit, and Answer a Question.

Annotations include:

- A blue arrow labeled "Point of View" pointing to the profile picture.
- A blue arrow labeled "Audience or Characters" pointing to the "Tag Friends" option.
- A blue arrow labeled "Plot" pointing to the status text.
- A blue arrow labeled "Setting" pointing to the "Check in" option.
- A blue arrow labeled "Character Development" pointing to the "Tag Friends" option.
- A blue arrow labeled "Setting" pointing to the "Check in" option.

Narrative Elements:

- Characters
- Setting
- Plot
- Theme
- Point of View

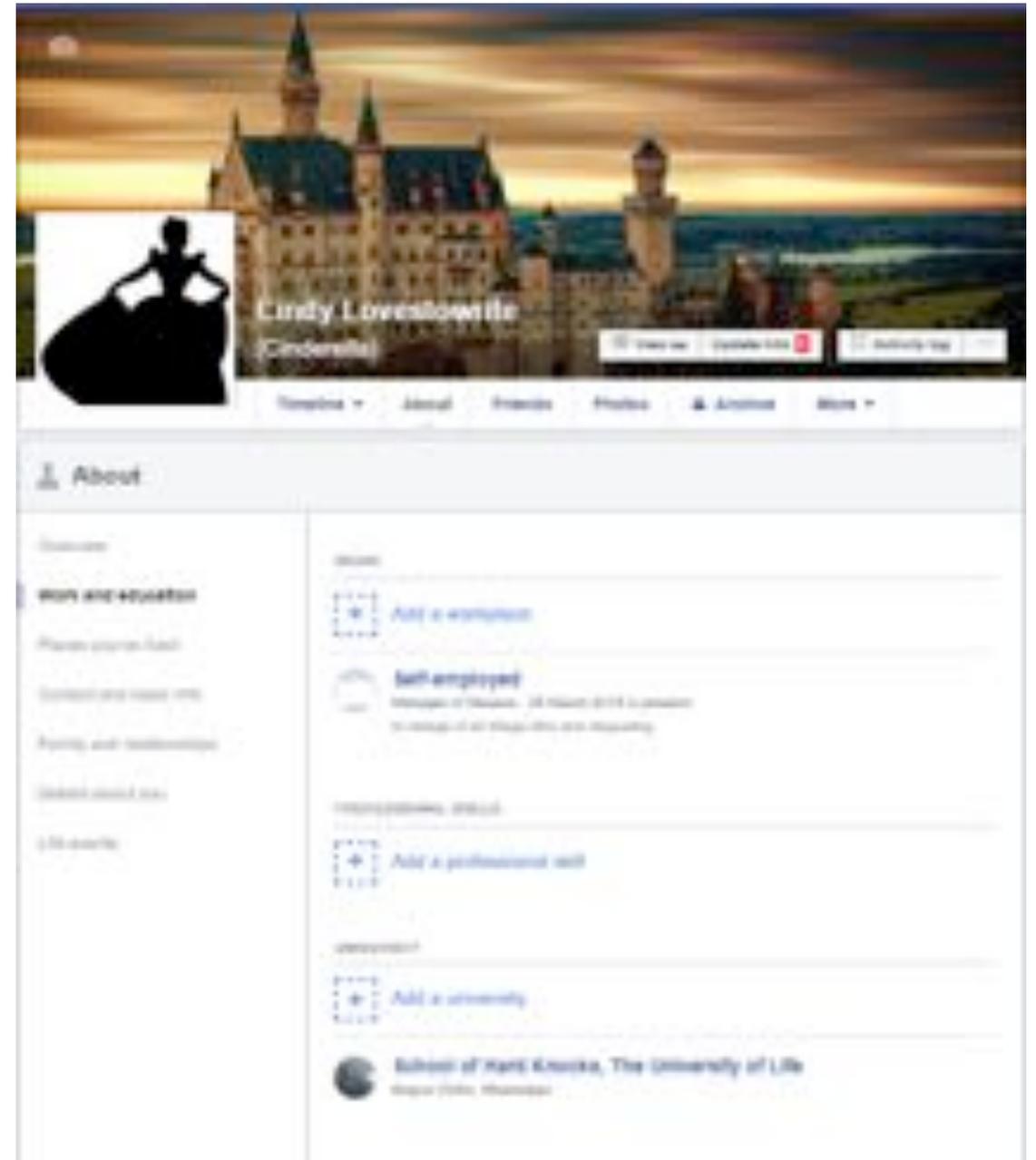
Building Characters through Social Media Profiles

Activity 2: Character Analysis through Profiles

1. Assign characters from the model text to pairs or small groups of students/teachers.
2. Display a profile template.
3. Groups create profile posters for their assigned characters.
4. Students share their profile posters with the class.
5. Students reflect on the activity and consider character development strategies.

Step 2: Display Profile Template

- Overview
- Work and education
- Places you've lived
- Contact and basic info
- Family and relationships
- Details about you
- Life Events



Step 3:
Create and
Share a
Social Media
Profile

 Intro

Cinderella, Cinders or Cindy? Whatever. My beautiful spirit will defy this ugly life one day!

 Self-employed

 Studied at School of Hard Knocks, The University of Life

 Went to School of Hard Knocks, The University of Life

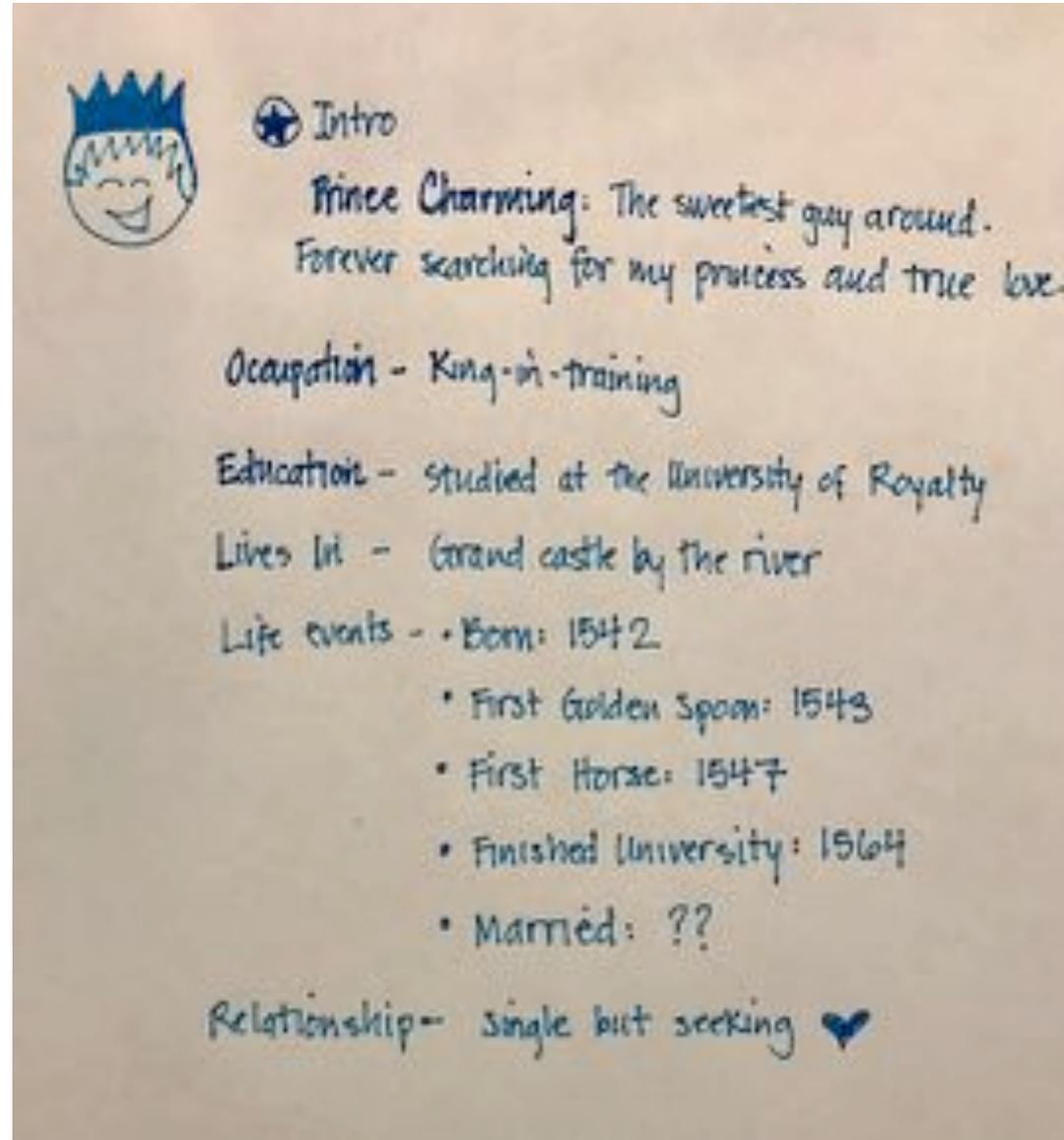
 Lives in Orlando, Florida

 It's complicated



[+ Add Instagram, Websites, Other Links](#)

Step 4: Share Profile Posters





Step 5:
Reflect on the
Activity

1. Was it easy to create a profile for your character?
2. Were you able to make predictions about what your character would have written?
3. Consider how this relates to direct and indirect characterization.
4. Which type of characterization is more interesting?
5. How could you use a social media profile to improve your own narrative writing?

Mapping a Story with Status Updates

Activity 3: Analyzing Plot Development through Status Updates

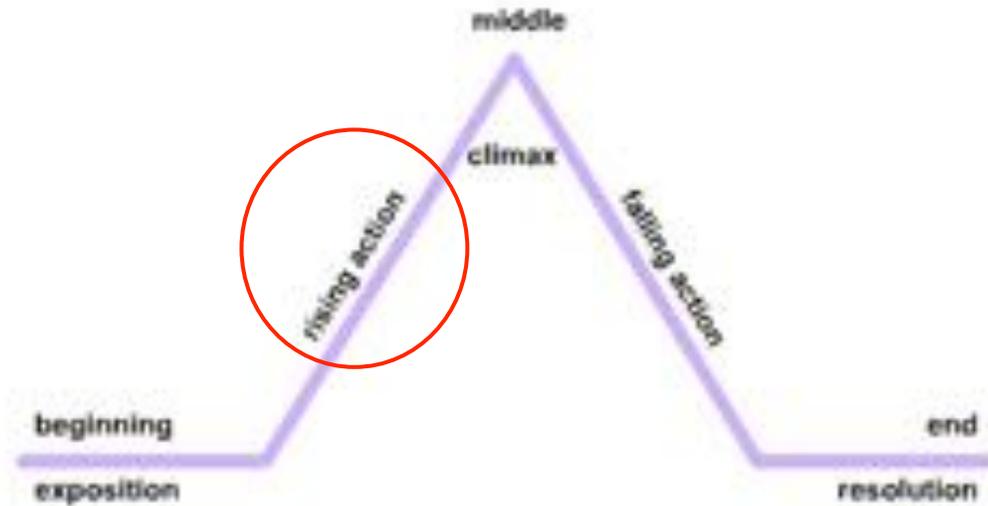
1. Assign characters from the model text to pairs or small groups.
2. Groups retell the story from the model text in six status updates.
3. Display sample plot diagram and status update.
4. Students write updates from the assigned character's point of view.
5. Students share.
6. Students reflect and consider how this process could be useful in their own writing efforts.

Step 2: Students retell the story



In groups, students retell the story from their assigned character's point of view and identify six main events that move the story forward.

Step 3: Display Plot Diagram and Sample Status Update



Cindy Lovestowrite is 😄 feeling excited at Neuschwanstein Castle.



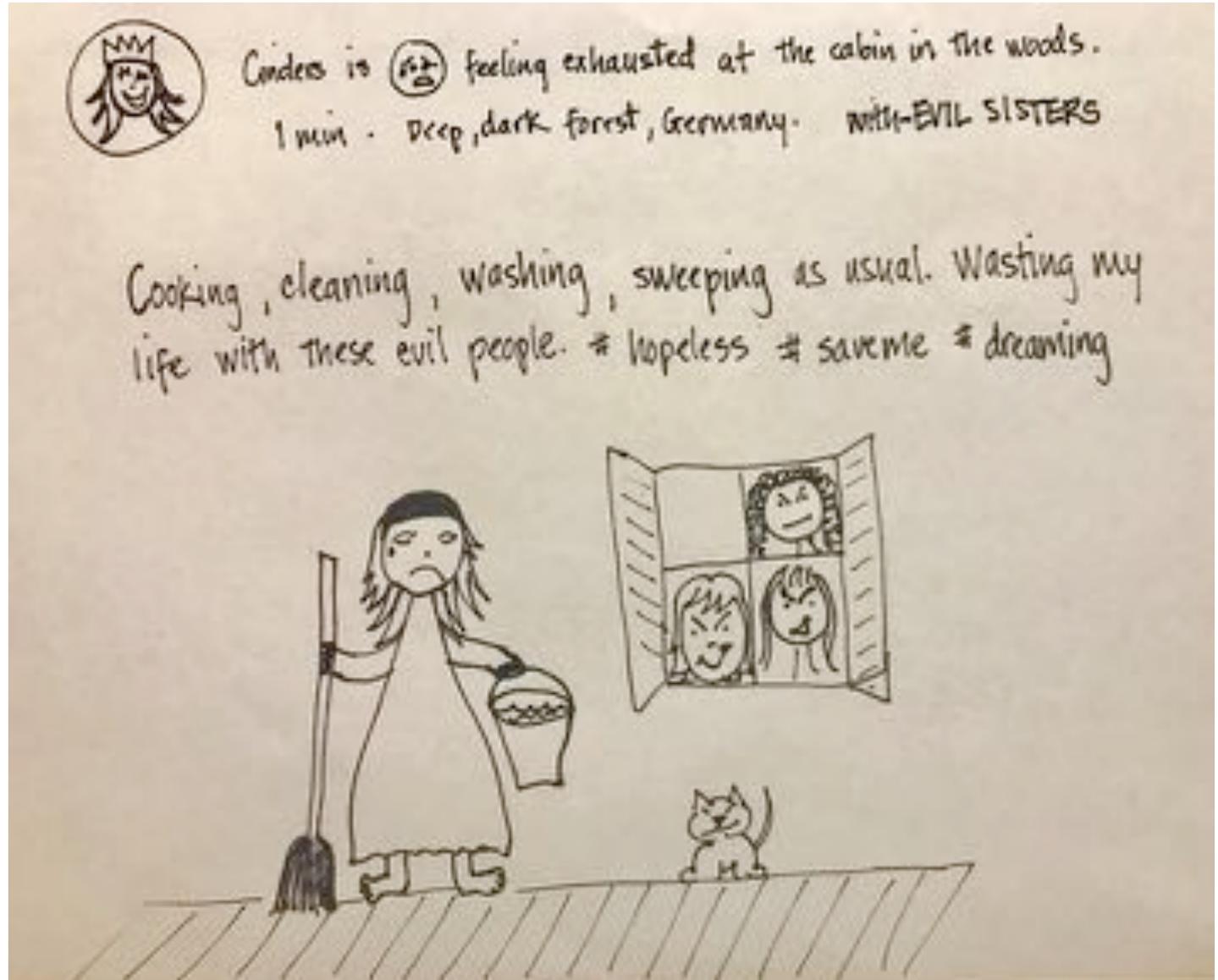
1 min · Hohenschwangau, Germany · 🌐 📍



My carriage awaits! Heading to the ball in style! 🎉 🍷 👠
#fairygodmothersrock #thisishowiroll #sorrystepsisters #karma



Steps 4 and 5:
Students
design and
share profile
posters





Step 6: Reflect on the Activity

1. Did you agree on the essential elements of the story – the events that really moved the story forward?
2. Did the story change depending on which character was narrating it? How did different points of view affect the storyline?
3. What are the connections between this activity and writing a summary of a story?
4. How could you use a similar status update activity to improve your own narrative writing?

Overview

Activity #1:
Connecting Social
Media Posts to
Components of
Narrative Writing

Activity #2: Using
Social Media
Profiles to Develop
and Analyze
Characters

Activity #3: Linking
Social Media Status
Updates to Plot
Development in
Narrative Writing

Extensions

How could you extend this activity to incorporate other language skills or other social media?

- Add video to status updates or in comments.
- Have characters respond to one another in the comments and create a real dialogue.
- Use the Facebook Live feature to have characters broadcast from wherever they are. Cinderella could bring us to the ball.
- Instagram or Snapchat: Create a story for Cinderella's night out.
- Twitter: Tweet about the essential plot events in 140 characters or less.
- What's App: Create a dialogue between the prince and Cinderella to show how he asked her to the ball.



Coming soon...

Look for “Teaching Narrative Writing with Facebook: Embracing Social Media to Engage Students in the English Language Classroom” in the Teaching Techniques section of an upcoming issue of *English Teaching Forum*.



Thank you!

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