Mentor Text Lesson Plan for A Book for Escargot by Dashka Slater, illustrated by Sydney Hanson

WRITING SKILLS FOCUS: CHARACTER AND PLOT STORY ELEMENTS

Target Audience: 3rd, 4th, 5th Grade

Utilize a picture book as a mentor text for establishing two of the basic elements of a story–character and plot–while also emphasizing the use of descriptive language.

LESSON:

1. The purpose of this lesson is to use *A Book for Escargot* as a mentor text for writing stories. In the book, the character of Escargot is bored with eating salad and is looking for a new recipe. He comes across a cookbook that includes a recipe for cooking...escargot! Before reading the story, encourage your students to listen for (1) the problem Escargot is trying to solve, (2) obstacles that get in his way, and (3) what he does to overcome those obstacles.

   Additionally, ask students to pay attention to the way Escargot describes what is happening and listen for any new or unusual vocabulary (or "fancy words," as Escargot says).

2. Read the text *A Book for Escargot.* Pause at appropriate points if necessary to ask brief questions about plotting and description to direct student attention.

3. After reading, use a whiteboard or pad to record student responses to the following questions:

   • Who is the main character? (Escargot)

   • What is the main problem that he is trying to solve? (He is bored with eating salad and wants to try something new)
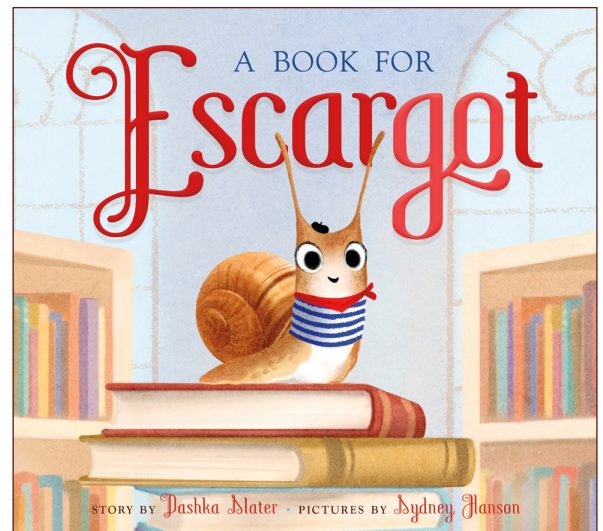
- What obstacles does he face in trying to get what he wants? (The cookbook is out of reach; the cookbook contains a recipe for eating escargot)

- How does he overcome these obstacles and solve his problem? (He eats the cookbook)

4. Now that students have a basic understanding of how a story plot works, brainstorm with the class an outline for a short story on a whiteboard or classroom pad. Have student volunteers suggest a main character (including a description of that character–both physical appearance and personality), a problem that the character wants to solve, one or two obstacles that get in that character's way, descriptive details of the obstacles, and how the character overcomes those obstacles to resolve the problem.

5. Distribute the graphic organizers to students. Explain to students that they will use this organizer to outline their own stories in the same way that the whole class just outlined *A Book for Escargot*. Using the information already up on the board or pad, model how the organizer is used: the character is put in the top section; the descriptive details (either words or phrases) that will be used to describe the character in the second section; the main problem that the character wants to solve in the third section; the two obstacles that the character needs to overcome in the four section; descriptive details (either words or phrases) that will be used to describe the obstacles in the fifth section; and how the character overcomes those obstacles in the sixth section.

7. Have students begin working on their graphic organizers. Circulate to help students fill out each section of their organizers and brainstorm individual story ideas as needed.

8. Students will then use these organizers to write their own stories. Work with the students as needed to write their first drafts, revise and edit those drafts, and produce their final drafts. When the writing process is complete, have students illustrate their stories.

Story Writing
Graphic Organizer

Description of the Main Character

Problem that the Character Wants to Solve

Two Obstacles in the Character's Way

Details of the Obstacles

How the Character Overcomes the Obstacles