


WHODUNNIT SHORT STORY TEACHER'S GUIDE

A three- to five-day narrative writing lesson for students in grades 2–8, or a 60–90 minute creative writing prompt for high school English/Language Arts classes.

Uses the *Neighborhood Hide & Seek*  game.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to write a fictional short story narrative using the elements of fiction, including:
 - Setting
 - Characters
 - Conflict
 - Climax
 - Resolution
- Students will be able to sequence the events of a story in a chronological order.
- Students will be able to build a story arc including a rising action, climax, and falling action to provide a sense of closure.

ABOUT THIS LESSON

For this lesson, students play *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* following the normal rules, with one slight change. Instead of simply finding the hide-and-seek winner, the puzzle solutions will represent clues to solve a mystery “whodunnit” style short story. This allows *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* to be played as a creative writing prompt with a built-in mechanism to employ the elements of narrative fiction, including a satisfying story arc. The role of the teacher in this lesson is really to provide examples and guidance during the process, without the need to front-load much instruction.

ELA COMMON CORE STANDARDS CORRELATIONS

2nd Grade

W.2.3: Write narratives in which students recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events; include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order; and provide a sense of closure.

3rd Grade

W.3.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.
- Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.
- Provide a sense of closure.

4th Grade

W.4.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

Standards correlations continue at the end of the document.

This lesson utilizes an “easter egg” built into the *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* game to hook students and keep them engaged. *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* contains four sets of 12 puzzles each, which all take place in the same location. By laying out the 12 puzzles in a 3×4 grid (as shown in the map below), the location becomes more apparent. The locations are:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Puzzle Numbers</u>	<u>Difficulty</u>
Mountain Cabin	1–12	1 Star
Hospital	13–24	2 Stars
Old West	25–36	3 Stars
Tropical Beach Resort	37–48	4 Stars

The difficulty of gameplay for each location gets progressively more challenging, so it is recommended that students use the easier locations unless they are up for quite a challenge. Feel free to provide the solutions (located in the rulebook) or hints to students that get stuck on a puzzle.

PROCEDURE

1. Hook

Begin the lesson by introducing the *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* game to students. Explain the rules and allow them to solve one of the 1 star difficulty puzzles. If time allows, let them try another puzzle of a higher difficulty rating, according to the ability of your students. Some of the puzzles are quite challenging, so feel free to provide the solution if students get stuck. The practice of solving these puzzles in this part will help them throughout the rest of the lesson.

2. Instruction

Review with students the elements of a good story by asking them to brainstorm what all stories have in common. While there are many, this lesson focuses primarily on the elements of Character, Setting, Problem (or conflict), Events (or rising action), Solution (or climax), and Conclusion (or falling action/resolution).

3. Activity Introduction

Explain to students that there are mysteries hidden in the *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* game, and the solutions to the puzzles are clues to help solve the mystery. Their task will be to write a story explaining the mystery in the game, including what game character is behind it all.

4. Student Activity

Guide students through the first two pages of the student handout. Give examples as needed.

➤ **Character** - Allow students to pick names for each of the characters. For higher grades, have students write down more information about the characters, such as what the character likes or their relationships to other characters.

➤ **Setting** - Help students arrange puzzles 1–12 or 13–24 in a grid (see the map below) to show that the puzzles can be laid out to create a larger background environment. Guide students to write a description of the setting.

➤ **Problem** - Some example problems have been provided on the student handout. Students should pick one of these or create their own, but either way they should create a few extra details.

➤ **Events** - Allow students to solve the first puzzle in the set, or use the solution they found during the hook. Guide them through inventing details for the key questions in the “Events” section of the student handout: which character was found, what were they doing, what was the clue, and how that clue links to the problem, giving examples as needed.

After students have the details from the first puzzle, have them solve the other puzzles in the set, answering the same questions for each one and writing the details in the boxes. (For the first one, they will just restate the work they did above in this one-box format.) Doing all of the puzzles is not necessary, but encouraged. Each of the clues will add to the overall story.

➤ **Solution** - Guide students through answering the questions which lead to the big reveal, the answer to the overall “Whodunnit” narrative. Emphasize the importance of linking the clues to the main problem. Again, give examples as needed.

➤ **Conclusion** - Instruct students to resolve the story by coming up with a way for the revealed character to fix the problem.

5. Narrative Writing

Put the Pieces Together - Now allow students to use the details they invented while doing the activity to write a complete mystery short story. For grades 2–5, consider allowing students to simply cut out what they wrote and compile the blurbs onto a storyboard.

6. Conclusion

Take some time to review with students the importance of the elements of fiction, and discuss what their story would have looked like if it were missing any of the elements.

Assessment

The completed short story that students create during the narrative writing step works as a final deliverable, and the activity itself works as a rubric. Since the goal of this lesson is to teach about the elements of fiction, it is important to reward evidence of the elements, and not focus on other details like style, point of view, tone, connections, or even sentence structure. In fact, an extension activity could be to revise this mystery short story to account for these other details.

Extension Activities

Consider the following extensions to enhance the utility of this lesson. Have students:

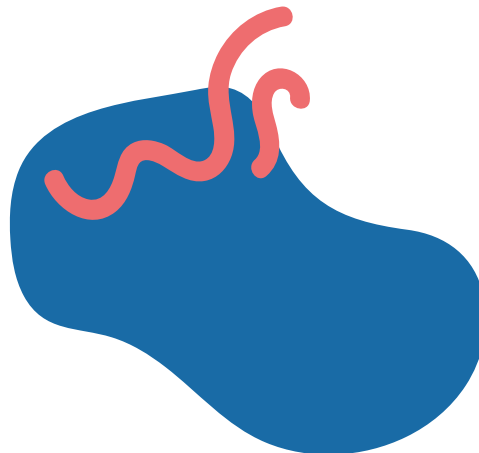
- Repeat the lesson with a second set of puzzles from the *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* game, but with fewer guided prompts. Since students already know the process, they can jump straight into writing their short story.
- Cut out the event blurbs in the student handout and line them up like a storyboard. Then explore re-arranging the order in which they present material for their narrative to see if the story is better or worse in a different order. Then discuss why some movies and books might begin differently from each other: such as with a setting (“A long time ago in a galaxy far, far

away...”), a conflict, some details about a main character, or a scene that seems like it’s from the end of the story.

- Revise the tense or point of view of the short story. For example, switch the story from third person to first person (or vice versa), or from past tense to present tense (or vice versa).

MAP

The layout below shows how the first 12 individual puzzles from *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* can be tiled together to produce the wider Mountain Cabin environment.



WHODUNNIT SHORT STORY

STUDENT HANDOUT

Get ready to step into a world of imagination and mystery! You will craft your own fun story complete with interesting characters, cool places, and exciting mysteries to solve. As you play *Neighborhood Hide & Seek*, you will be able to follow a trail of evidence to crack a mystery case. Then you will share all about the adventure in a narrative short story. Good luck, gumshoe!

CHARACTERS

Each puzzle card from *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* has different peoples' faces on them. These will be the characters in your story! Write the names you want to give them here.



Amelia. She likes running fast and pretending to fly.



Cheffy. His favorite things to do are cook and eat good food.



Doc. Doc is very smart and is good at solving problems.



Roger. Roger likes animals more than people.



Ace. Ace loves sports and tries to eat healthy and exercise a lot.



Timmy. He is a nice guy and gets along with everyone.

SETTING

Lay out the first 12 puzzle cards from *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* in order as shown below to create one big map. The cards show some details of where your story is taking place.



Now look around the background and describe the setting: Where is your story taking place?

The mountain cabin is a very big house surrounded by trees. It has two bedrooms, one bathroom, a big living room and dining room, and a small storage room. The floors are made of tile.



PROBLEM

What is the main problem in your story? What mystery are we trying to solve? What did someone do? You can choose one of the ideas below or make up your own.

- Tracks Evasion - Leaving muddy footprints on the carpet but trying to hide it.
- Resisting a Rest - Skipping nap time to play.
- Kid Napping - Taking a nap when they were supposed to be doing something else.
- Cookie Jar-ceny - Taking too many cookies from the cookie jar.
- Pie-racy - Eating pie that was made for someone else.
- Counterfeit Crayons - Breaking crayons and putting them back in the box.

Someone ate all the cookies from the cookie jar. Now there are none left for snack time!

EVENTS

Let's start your story by finding the first clue. Solve puzzle #1 and find the character that was revealed as the solution of the puzzle. Now you get to use your imagination and get creative!

Who is the character that you found? What are they doing?

Roger. He was outside on the trail by the trees.

What's the clue?

Roger seems to be hiding from everyone.

How does the clue link to the problem you chose?

Roger might have gone outside to eat the cookies where nobody could see.

As you solve each of the puzzles from *Neighborhood Hide & Seek*, each solution will reveal a solution character. For each puzzle, repeat the process you did above: Write down what character you found, record what they were doing, describe a clue to add to the story, and say how it links to the problem. The clues can be whatever you want! Each of the puzzles and clues will become a part of your story, so have fun with it. Start by combining the character, activity, clue, and link to the story for the first puzzle in the first box.

Write down the character, activity, clue, and link for each puzzle.

Puzzle 1

Roger was outside by the trees when everyone else was inside the cabin. Maybe he went outside so he could eat the cookies where nobody could see him.

Puzzle 2

Timmy was hiding behind the bed next to the wall. That is a strange hiding spot. Normally Timmy likes to be around other people. Maybe he was ashamed about something.

Puzzle 3

Amelia was in the kitchen right by the cookie jar. Could it be that she was there because she ate the last one? They say a criminal always returns to the scene.

Puzzle 4

Timmy was seen in the trees on the other side of the house burying something. What could it be? Maybe he tried to hide the evidence that he took the cookies.

Puzzle 5

Doc was by the balcony door and there were some crumbs by him. Maybe he was searching for evidence, or maybe the crumbs were from him eating cookies!

Puzzle 6

Doc walked into the living room where there were some dog tracks. Maybe he let his dog in to eat the cookies.

Puzzle 7

Cheffy was also in the living room. He has chocolate on his sleeve. Maybe the chocolate was from the cookies, or maybe he was cooking something with chocolate today?

Puzzle 8

Amelia was seen right outside the kitchen in the hallway about to leave the cabin out the side door. It looked like she was carrying something. Maybe she was carrying the last cookie.

Puzzle 9

Doc was outside the house by the trees and by some barrels. Barrels would make a good place to hide a stash of cookies.

Puzzle 10

Amelia was in the bathroom washing her hands. Maybe she had cookie crumbs and chocolate on her hands and needed to wash away the evidence.

Puzzle 11

Cheffy walked out the front door when he thought nobody was looking. Maybe he was going to go hide to eat the last cookie.

Puzzle 12

Cheffy went outside all the way to the rocks in front of the house. There was a small hole and he put something inside. Maybe he was hiding the cookies.

SOLUTION

Now that you have collected enough clues, you get to reveal “Whodunnit!” It doesn’t have to be the character with the most clues. It can be whatever character you want as long as the clues are good enough. So think about what clues and which character you will reveal in your story.

What clues do you think are the best, and why?

All the people outside seem suspicious, but one person in particular did something very sneaky. This person also had chocolate on him, and the only way he could have chocolate is if he was cooking or eating chocolate chip cookies.

The big reveal! Which character do the clues point to the most?

All the best clues point to Cheffy. He had chocolate on his sleeve, and even if it was from cooking, maybe he was eating cookies while he cooked. Then he was seen putting cookies in a hole by a big rock outside.

CONCLUSION

Now that we know who caused the problem, we need to wrap up the story. Every story is better with a happily-ever-after, so this is where you get to make things right. In the box below, describe what the revealed character does to fix the problem that they caused.

Cheffy admitted to taking the cookies out of the cookie jar. He apologized and said why he did it. He has a chipmunk friend named Chip who lives under a rock outside, and wanted to share the cookies with Chip.

But he will make it up to everyone by baking twice as many cookies tonight. Timmy and Roger thank Cheffy by giving him some worms they found while digging outside today, so he can give them to Chip.

PUT THE PIECES TOGETHER

Congratulations, now you have your very own mystery short story! All you have to do is put the pieces together into one narrative. When you are ready to write the sequel to your story, *Neighborhood Hide & Seek* has three more sets of puzzles to choose from. Are you up for the challenge?

- B. Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- C. Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
- D. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- E. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

5th Grade

W.5.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- A. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- B. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- C. Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.
- D. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- E. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

6th Grade

W.6.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- A. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
- B. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- C. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
- D. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.
- E. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

7th Grade

W.7.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- A. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
- B. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- C. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
- D. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
- E. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

8th Grade

W.8.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- A. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
- B. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- C. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.
- D. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
- E. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

9–10th Grade

W.9–10.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- A. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation; establishing one or multiple point(s) of view; and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

- B. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- C. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.
- D. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- E. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
- F. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- A. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- B. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- C. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
- D. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- E. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

11–12th Grade

W.11–12.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.



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