Brainstorm Ideas from Your Misadventures

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn a strategy for brainstorming ideas for a personal narrative by role-playing misadventures from their past.
• Work with a partner to share ideas for a personal narrative.
• Contribute to a class list of topic ideas.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Chart paper and markers
• Writer’s notebooks
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

1. Focus

Explain the Brainstorming Process

Say: When we brainstorm ideas for writing a personal narrative, we can often come up with great ideas by thinking about funny misadventures we’ve experienced. Sometimes we can act out something that happened to us in the past. This helps us remember what happened and how it made us feel. Let me show you how I use my misadventures when I brainstorm.

Model Brainstorming Misadventures

Use the sample think-aloud below to help you construct your own ideas to share with students. As you talk, use physical actions to role-play the memory you are sharing. Demonstrate how to record ideas on chart paper as you brainstorm.

Sample think-aloud. Say: I can remember something that happened several Thanksgivings ago. I was cooking a really big turkey for dinner. I had the turkey in a big roasting pan. I had a hard time carrying it to the oven because it was so heavy, but I finally got it inside and shut the oven door. Then I started doing other things that had to be done before our guests arrived. I set the table and added the extra chairs that we would need. I worked for about two hours to finish up all the things that still needed to be cooked. After a while, the doorbell began to ring and people arrived. Then someone mentioned that she couldn’t smell the turkey cooking. “Oh, no!” I screamed. “I forgot to turn on the oven!” All my family and friends just laughed. Thank goodness for my brother! He went to the grocery store and bought a turkey that was already cooked. I’ll never forget how embarrassed I felt. But you know what? That Thanksgiving is the one that I’ll always remember! I’m going to write it on my brainstorming list.

Continue discussing ideas to include on your brainstorming list.

Ideas for a Personal Narrative

the Thanksgiving I forgot to turn on the oven
the day I got lost at the zoo
when my puppy ran away
when I lost my friend’s MP3 player
when I went to my friend’s party on the wrong day

Sample Brainstorming List
2. Rehearse

Practice Brainstorming Misadventures

Encourage students to work with a partner to role-play a memory of a past misadventure that could inspire a personal narrative. Students can ask each other questions such as:
- What happened to you?
- Why is it important?
- How did you feel?
- What did you do?

If your class includes English learners or other students who need more support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring the class together and invite individuals to share an idea for a personal narrative that their role-playing inspired. As students contribute ideas, record them on the list of personal narrative ideas you started earlier. Read the chart together and point out the variety of ideas from the class. Remind students that writers get ideas from everywhere, including from each other.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that role-playing can help us brainstorm ideas for a personal narrative. We’ve all had things happen to us that were sad or funny or embarrassing. When we role-play those events, we can remember what happened and how we felt. As you brainstorm ideas for writing, use role-playing to help you remember past events that could become good topics for writing a personal narrative.

Encourage students to practice role-playing when they brainstorm during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share an example of a misadventure they have on their brainstorming lists. Discuss how role-playing misadventures helped them brainstorm ideas for personal narratives.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to role-play a personal misadventure. Encourage them to talk about what happened and how they felt using words and gestures.

Intermediate and Advanced

Provide sentence frames to help ELs talk to their partners about their ideas for writing a personal narrative. For example:

- I remember when ______.
- I thought ______.
- I felt ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: memory/la memoria.