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Writing Stories

Developing language skills through story making

... gave out and totally collapsed on
trap door surprised them! Oh only
fore were they so scared of this
... working. Where could it be? Not
... a terrible fate for such a
... it stepped out into the black
... it ran ever faster towards the
... and thing to do though, yet
... of those dreadful

2.1

Oral creation of a character

Focus: Creating a character with the whole class is an enjoyable and extremely efficient way of helping each student to appreciate the need for particularisation of the created person's character.

Language: The language of describing people's characters. See *Creating people*, *Creating people: details* and *Creating people: behaviour*, Appendix pages 134–137.

Time: 30–40 minutes

Preparation:

1. Choose a picture of a person that is large enough for everyone to see.
2. Think of some questions you feel are most relevant to your class in creating a character; for ideas, see *Creating people*, Appendix page 135. Write your questions on a poster.
3. Prepare enough (smaller) pictures of people for pairs of students to have a person each.
4. Prepare three pictures of scenes for display (see Step 6 below).

in class

1. Whole class: display the large picture so everyone can see it.
2. Ask your questions, to establish the character of the person. Let the class see your questions on the large poster; this will also guide them when they do their own profile.
3. Pairs: the students select one of the pictures of a person, one per pair.
4. The students create a character for their person. Help them do this by asking your questions one by one to the students, who, in their pairs, discuss and agree on a response, writing down their answers for their person as you do so; in this way you can control the profiles and get everyone to finish at the same time.
5. Groups of four: the students describe their person to another pair. The pairs comment on whether they think the other pair's description is a good one for the person in the picture
6. Whole class: show three scenes and ask the students to tell their neighbours how that scene might relate to their person. You can ask what their person might see, hear, think, feel, remember, etc.

2.1

Oral creation of a character

Extension

The students imagine their person in one of the situations below. They write one paragraph which includes why their person is there, and what they think, feel, say and do.

- A forest in the late evening.
- A café in a town.

Comment

The teacher-as-questioner is a vital role in storymaking, as indeed it is in all teaching, and is an integral part of most of the activities in this book

3.7

Starting with experiences from your life

Focus: Students using their own experiences as a story

Time: 45 minutes

Preparation: Select some of the key times in people's lives below, according to what would be most suitable for the class you are teaching; for example:

- One of the happiest, funniest, saddest, most frightening, most worrying, most challenging events in your life.
- One of the times when there were big changes in your life.
- A time when you had to make a big choice about what to do.
- Who has been the kindest and most helpful person in your life?
- Who has been one of the most important people in your life?
- Examples of good friendship, and times which proved that there was not good friendship
- A time when you felt very lonely and in new surroundings.
- A time when you really tried to achieve something and either did or didn't.

Photocopy them or put them onto a poster which everybody can see. Be ready to tell one or two stories about key moments in your own life based on one or two of these topics in a maximum of two minutes.

Bring a sheet of A3 paper to the class for each student. For Step 9 see Bubble flowchart, Appendix page 153.

in class

1. Whole class: display the poster and explain that you want the students to write about a key moment in their own lives. Tell one or two stories from your own life. Firmly point out that they must describe particular moments, not a general time of happiness or distress.
2. Pairs: ask the students to work with a partner, and discuss their first reactions to the topics and which experience they might choose.
3. Individuals: on a sheet of paper, students brainstorm one of the topics.
4. Pairs: ask them to explain their brainstorming to another student.
5. Individuals: ask the students to write two possible storylines based on their brainstorming.
6. Pairs: ask them to read their storylines to another student, who chooses the more interesting of the two.

3.7

Starting with experiences from your life

7. Individuals: ask them to write two alternative first paragraphs.
8. Pairs: ask the students to read their two paragraphs to a partner, who chooses the most interesting one.
9. Individuals: ask them to make a flowchart of the whole story. See Bubble flowchart, Appendix page 153, for how to do this.
10. Ask them to read their flowchart to another student, then modify it if it is not clear enough. They should then show to you to get approval. Due to pressures of time you might have to be selective in the ones you check.
11. When you have checked that the flowcharts are good, ask the students to write their first draft.

Extension

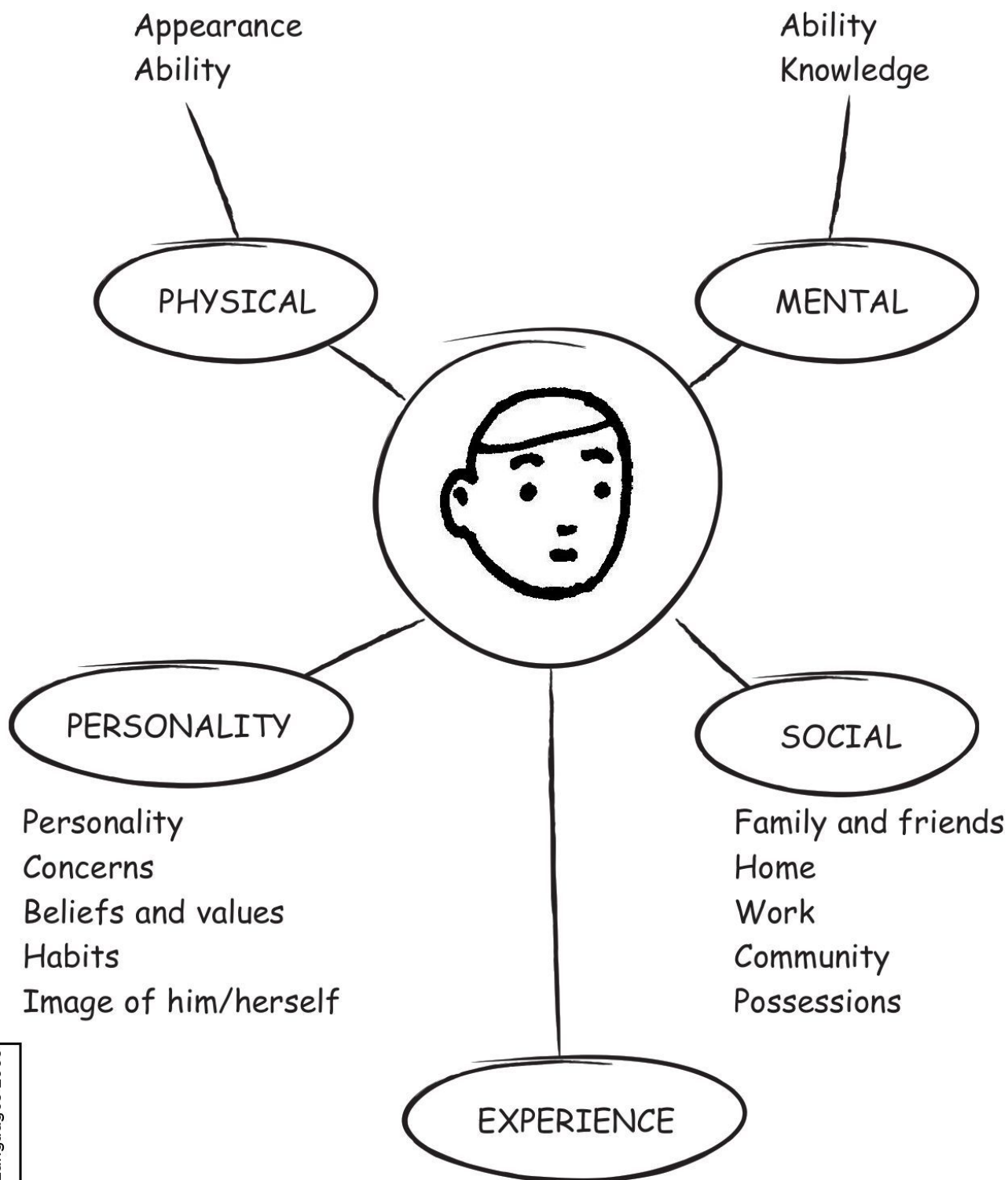
12. Pairs: ask the students to read their first draft to other students for comment.
13. Individuals: ask them to modify their first draft as necessary and write the final text.
14. Whole class: publish the stories in an appropriate book or on a website.

Comment

Being able to tell our stories and to reflect on them is a good way to be able to have a strong sense of our identity. Furthermore, sharing our stories is a key way of getting on with the people around us. We cannot overestimate the importance of helping people to reflect on and tell their life stories.

1.1

Creating people



2.1

Creating people: details

Here are examples of the details you might like to use to create a person for your story.

Physical

Appearance:

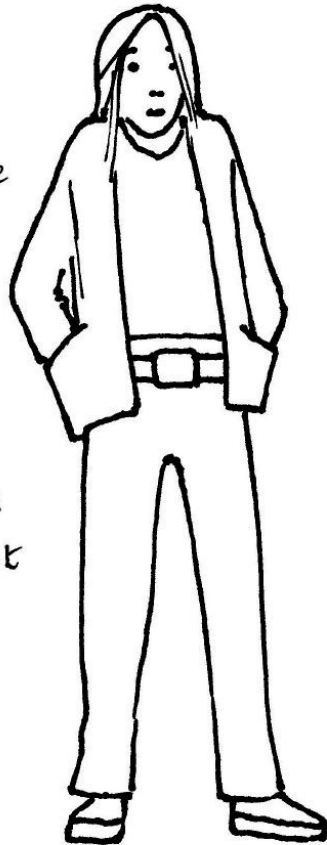
He/she is ... tall, short, thin, fat, strong, weak, beautiful, ugly, pretty, handsome, plain, athletic, unfit ...

He/she has ... long black hair ... thin, pale hands ...

Ability:

He/she is good at ... /poor at ... /not very good at ... running, swimming ...

- tall
- likes people but always worried about herself, she thinks her legs are too long...



- athletic, a good runner but not competitive

- anxious about exams
- she is good at mathematics
- she believes in horoscopes
- a student and doesn't have much money and can't buy nice clothes
- lives at home with her mother who is divorced and her younger brother

Mental

Ability:

He/she is good at .../poor at ... /not very good at ... /bad at ... talented/untalented, at/in ... mathematics, sorting out problems, getting on with people ...

He/she is ... intelligent, silly, clever, creative, analytical, conventional, lazy ...

Knowledge:

He/she knows a lot about ... football, mushrooms, classical music ...

2.1

Creating people: details

Personality and concerns

Personality:

He/she is ... extrovert, introvert, generous, mean, selfish, warm, cold, boastful, arrogant, modest, thoughtful, thoughtless, funny, interesting, boring, depressed, romantic, sensual, excitable, nervous, changeable, self-reliant, hardworking, lazy, aggressive, peaceful ...
He/she likes/doesn't like ... watching TV, being with friends, hip-hop music ...

Concerns:

He/she is anxious about ... / frightened of ... / obsessed by/ worried about ... new experiences, being alone, being wrong, losing her friend

He/she wants to have/do/be ... would like to ... needs ... desperately wants ... success, a new car, a companion ...

Beliefs and values:

He/she believes that/in ... superstition, mystical explanations, religion, socialism, truth is more important than pain, it is important to do a good and honest job ...

Image of him/herself:

He/she thinks he/she is a ...
tough/sweet/nice/funny/person/honest/sensible ...

Social

Family:

He/she is ... married, unmarried, divorced, single, separated ...
He/she lives ... alone/with a partner, parents ...

Home:

He/she lives in a ... house/flat/caravan ...
He/she is ... homeless/always on the move ...

Work:

He/she is a ... student, cook, teacher, engineer, driver, company director, unemployed ...

Community:

He/she likes ... to be at home and never goes out.
He/she likes to go out to ... clubs, cinema ...

Possessions:

He/she has got ... car/big house/an old bicycle/nothing ...

Experience:

He/she has been ... working at ... studying ...
He/she has experienced many difficulties, for example ...
He/she has had an easy life, for example ...
He/she has travelled and lived in many countries and done all kinds of things ...

2.1

Creating people: behaviour

Authors don't usually tell the reader what a person is like, but describe how the person behaves:

He marched into the room, smiling and waving to all the people he knew or thought he might know. 'Hi! How are you?' he called to someone on the other side of the room and a moment later he blew a kiss to someone in quite a different place. (So we can see he is an extrovert)

'Here you are!' she said. 'You can have one of my sandwiches. I've got too many anyway.' (So she is kind)

She hesitated, then opened the door slowly. The room was empty but she knew he was there. 'Talk to me. Talk to me,' she whispered. (So she believes in ghosts)

Once you have created your person, you must begin to think of how he or she might behave: how they walk; how they use their voice, what they choose to do every day etc.

On this page you will find some more examples of ideas for deciding how your person behaves:

Daily habits

Every morning/day/week he/she ...

- reads the newspaper at breakfast time and doesn't talk to anybody
- takes his dog for a walk at exactly the same time
- talks on the internet to her friends every evening.

He/she always/never ...

- goes to work the same way.

Physical behaviour

He/she always/often/sometimes ...

- coughs and pulls up his shirt collar before he speaks
- wears his hat, even in the house
- begins to shake and can't speak when there are problems with other people
- smiles even when there is nothing to smile about.

Mental behaviour

He/she ...

- is so worried about making a mistake that she says it is never her fault
- analyses everything you say and do and is absolutely sure that he is right
- thinks that horoscopes explain everything.

Social behaviour

He/she ...

- laughs and nods his head, smiles and tries to agree with everyone but everyone turns away
- tries to tell everybody else what to do
- boasts about his talents and what he has been doing
- doesn't listen to most of what other people say.