

## 2. Telling stories in a clear and interesting way: Variants:

2<sup>nd</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade

20 minutes



- The instructor provides the students with the following “recipe” for writing in a clear and interesting manner: “put yourselves into the shoes of the main character(s) in the story. Close your eyes and think about how they feel and think, their worries and hopes, etc. Now describe this in your text!” The students then practice the „recipe” orally before writing, using different, suitable topics. Examples: “a discussion around our dinner table”, “an experience in my parents’ native country”, “my grandmother’s tales of her youth”.
- Another “recipe” that follows the same pattern is to practice with the following instructions: “close your eyes before you begin to write. Think about your story and imagine it as a film in your mind. Now write everything down in as much detail as possible.”
- A tip which often leads to more clarity is to use direct speech: “use direct speech, let the characters talk to each other!” This, too, should first be done orally and then written down.
- Texts are sometimes more “alive” and interesting when they are narrated in the first, rather than in the third person. If students follow this and the above suggestions, they should become successful.
- Picture stories provide an ideal opportunity for practicing vivid and lively writing. In this way, the students are relieved from searching for ideas and can concentrate on writing an appealing text. It is important that the written texts are then compared and discussed among the students.
- Re-narrating stories is also a valuable and effective opportunity to practice a clear and interesting writing style, as described below (18.3 and 21).

## 3. Exact re-telling and summarizing; Variants

3<sup>rd</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade

30 minutes



Materials:  
Story as a template  
for the re-narration  
(see right).

Re-telling stories occur regularly both in school and life in general. This can be seen in many different forms, from reports about a television show or a dream, to the summary of a phone message, from paraphrasing to the most detailed reconstruction possible, whereby the stylistic aspects should also be captured. The advantage of re-telling, in terms of writing style, is that the students are freed from having to construct their own story (which has already been provided) and thus can concentrate entirely on the language aspects of writing. Examples and possibilities:

- Lead-in discussion: explore where and why re-telling of stories and summarizing texts is necessary, both in school as well as in everyday life. The students should be aware of how relevant these types of text are for everyday life (also for jokes and gossip). Then, collect examples of actual real-life re-telling of stories and summarizing of texts (from the last couple of days): who (re)told what to whom?
- The instructor reads a short (or longer) story to the class 2–3 times. The students then re-narrate the story as accurately as possible, but hide 1–2 inaccuracies. The stories are then read and the question is asked: can you find the mistakes? (see also #7.4)
- Re-narration with a change of perspective: the students read a story (e. g. a fairy tale, a legend or an episode from one’s own literature). Instead of simply re-telling the story, the students put themselves into the role of a specific character from the story and re-narrate it from their perspective. For example, the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” could be narrated from the perspective of the wolf.
- The same story can be re-told in different types of text formats: see also 17.4.
- Re-telling information and summarizing in very short forms is commonly practiced with phone messages, which is something students sometimes do for their parents. This can be practiced in a playful way where the

teacher and students role play a phone conversation and then write down a short message.

- A related, special benefit derived from summarizing and understanding notes is test-taking. This should be discussed and practiced in class with specific examples, e. g., the students could write down the most important points from their last lesson and then compare and critically discuss their lecture notes. Variant: the instructor presents a lecture or shows an educational film and the students then have to summarize the most salient aspects in 10–15 points.

## 4. Interesting story telling; Variants:

4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade

35 minutes



Materials:

Possibly a picture story of handouts with themes/titles (see right).

- Oral preparation: discussing the terms “interesting” and “boring”. What do these categories actually mean; what is the implication for our own writing? Consolidation activity: the teacher reads (or gives in writing) to the class a (short) interesting story and also a boring text. What makes the one interesting and the other boring? Experiment: how could the boring text be made more interesting? Try to implement changes to make the text more interesting, then compare your work..
- The students receive the following “recipe” for interesting writing (as a handout):
  - Begin your text with a sentence that captures the readers’ attention (e. g. “Everything went wrong that day.”, “The frightening dog came close and closer to me.”).
  - Do not reveal everything at once. Give the readers initially just some clues that generate their interest! (“What I have experienced today, I won’t soon forget. It has something to do with more than a dangerous animal”.)
  - Describe the person’s feelings, fears and hopes in your text. (“Trembling with fear, she thought: [is there any hope of rescue for me?]”)
  - Interrupt your text with questions addressed directly to the readers. (Example: “What would you have done in this frightening situation?”)
  - Build up to the high point and most exciting part or outcome until close to the end of the story.
  - Think of an exciting title for your text that intrigues the reader, such as (“A tragedy in Turkey”, or “Is the tiger going to devour me?”).

The students are now provided with one or more outlines for stories for which they must write interesting texts, following this “recipe”. Example: An appropriate picture story; a topic like “A horrifying experience” or “Then I was really scared”.

After writing the texts, the students read and compare them and discuss how well the “recipe” was implemented.

- The students create a collection of interesting topics, titles and/or sentence starters (1–3 sentences). They write the accompanying texts in class or as a homework assignment. These collected texts can be stapled or bound to create a book (“Our horror stories”, “Exciting stories” etc.).