

## Finding a Narrative

Emotional Engagement	Central Image or Metaphor	Organizing Content into Story Form
<p><i>What is emotionally engaging about the topic? How is it meaningful? Why should it matter to us?</i></p> <p><i>This is a tough part, but there is something deeply meaningful about just about everything. What do you want students to gain from this unit or lesson? Years from now, what do you want them to remember?</i></p> <p><b>What binary concepts best capture the meaning and emotion of the topic? If this were a story, what would the opposing forces be?</b></p> <p><i>We are looking for abstract polarities here such as love/hate, good/evil, rich/poor, friend/enemy, foolish/wise, hardworking/lazy...</i></p>	<p><i>What content most dramatically illustrates the contrast between the binary opposite? Is there a metaphor or image that can do this?</i></p> <p><i>Images are more than just pictures in the mind's eye, images can be made in all sensory modalities: visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory (taste), olfactory (smell) and perhaps even other senses that are not quite as easily described.</i></p> <p><i>Try to think of metaphors or images that capture the binary opposites that are moving the story forward.</i></p>	<p><i>How can we organize the content into a developing story form?</i></p> <p><i>This is the trickiest part, and the part requiring the most imagination.</i></p> <p><i>"If you think of the lesson or unit as more like telling a good story than conveying a body of information, then the need to focus on how to tell the story as crisply as possible comes to the fore rather than the attempt to meet sets of knowledge, skills, and attitude objectives. If the story is told well, such objectives will be met in a more meaningful context." (Egan, <u>The Educated Mind</u>, p.248)</i></p> <p><i>Reflect on the whole unit or lesson and think of it in terms of some overall narrative structure. You want to select and highlight content that will make clear to students that one is not simply relating a sequence of facts or events but that one has a story to tell them and that the set of facts and events have a unity of some kind.</i></p> <p><i>If you have listed a dozen possible binary opposites, pare it down to just one pair that will guide the unit. Decide which elements in the content fit best into the narrative and disregard the rest. Although it is hard to let go, it is crucial to remove unnecessary items that are not within the context of the story.</i></p>

# Developing Cognitive Tools

Images and Metaphor	Rhythm, Rhyme and Patterns	Drama and Roleplay	Teacher-led/structured ↕ Student-led/open-ended
<p><i>What activities help students develop images, metaphors, or other forms of creative depiction?</i></p> <p><i>What activities promote affective engagement with images or metaphors central to the story? How can students develop and experience metaphors such as these for themselves?</i></p> <p><b><i>What jokes or fantastic stories can be found or invented that relate to the topic?</i></b></p> <p><i>Jokes are close cousin to metaphors and are also an excellent way to reach deeper understanding when used wisely.</i></p>	<p><i>What activities help students experience and extend a sense of rhythm, rhyme or predictability?</i></p> <p><i>What type of repetition or rhythm is inherent in the topic?</i></p> <p><i>Look for patterns and rhythms not only in sight and sound, but also in a physical sense or in time and emotion. There is a rhythm in the rising and setting of the sun everyday, and there is also a sense of rhythm in our hopes and fears. It is this sense of emotional rhythm that often drives good stories.</i></p> <p><i>What kind of games, songs, activities, etc. let students have an embodied sense of the content's rhythm?</i></p>	<p><i>How can the students become characters in the story? How can they be encouraged and supported to contribute to or retell the story using their own words, gestures, and actions?</i></p> <p><i>If at all possible, make the students the main characters in the story, or find a way for them to get to know the characters (whether human, animal, mineral or even something more abstract).</i></p> <p><i>An example: A group of students can imagine they are squares, while another group imagines they are circles.</i></p>	

## Looking Forward and Concluding

Towards Further Understanding	Resolution	Assessment
<p><i>How can the unit develop embryonic forms of Romantic, Philosophic, Ironic understanding? What cognitive tools characteristic of literacy, the disciplines, or embodied self-awareness can be introduced here?</i></p> <p><i>Consider questions that one might ask from a Romantic, Philosophic or Ironic point of view. These might be presented to students as “brain candy” throughout the unit or towards its end, or they might become more substantial areas of inquiry. Remember that students do not “graduate” from one layer of understanding and move suddenly into the next. Rather, they will most likely experience a gradual shift in tendency towards or proficiency with particular cultural tools.</i></p> <p><i>(A unit at the Mythic level, however, will consistently emphasize and develop the cognitive tools of oral language even when some later tools are being introduced.)</i></p>	<p><i>How does the story end? How are the opposites mediated or resolved?</i></p> <p><i>Decide what it is that you want the students to gain from the unit and how it relates to the binary opposites. You may or may not choose to reveal this to the children.</i></p> <p><i>Perhaps the villain turns out to be not as bad as once thought, or perhaps there is a realization that a marble, though tiny for us, would be quite large to a flea.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes there is no mediation between the polarities, but a gradual move from one to the other. For example, on a unit on the environment where the binary opposites are despair and hope, you will want to make sure that the story ends on a feeling of hope rather than despair.</i></p>	<p><i>How can one know whether the topic has been understood, its importance grasped and the content learned?</i></p> <p><i>How do you want to gather the information needed to know if you are successful?</i></p> <p><i>Don’t forget about ongoing and mid-lesson or mid-unit assessment so that you can make necessary adaptations to the lesson or unit if needed.</i></p> <p><i>You can use traditional forms of evaluation, portfolios, rubrics, artwork, journal writing or whatever else you think will be useful to gather the information needed to assess how well the students’ imaginations have been engaged by the topic.</i></p>