



5TH GRADE

VOLUME 5.1

Realistic Fiction Writing Unit for *Earthquake Terror*

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Welcome to the 5.1 Realistic Fiction Writing Unit for *Earthquake Terror!*

If this is your first time using this guide, you will want to read through this introduction carefully, as it provides information that you will find critical to your establishment of a successful language arts block!

This realistic fiction writing unit is meant to be taught in conjunction with the *Read Side by Side Reading Program*, Unit 5.1, *Earthquake Terror*. The book *Earthquake Terror* will be used as a mentor text to build students' background knowledge and expose students to the craft of writing.

This unit takes approximately 15 days to complete, from brainstorming and planning to sharing the published piece! Lessons in this unit give students explicit instruction in the steps of the writing process and the structure of narrative writing. Some craft and grammar lessons will be incorporated as students revise and edit their writing. You may want to supplement with additional craft, grammar, and spelling lessons between writing units.

Prior to starting the unit, you will want to consider how students will publish and share their writing. Here are a few suggestions:

- illustrated book,
- chapter book,
- handwritten book;
- audio book.

Students might read their story to their own classmates, visit another classroom, or make their writing available for others to read in the classroom, library or other public location.

After students have had the opportunity to publish their writing, assess their work using the checklist for grading a narrative story provided at the end of the unit.

Schedule

To complete this unit, you will need to set aside 30-minutes for writing, 2-4 times a week.

Instructional days begin with a whole-class lesson. Lessons will be 10-15 minutes in length, allowing a short time after the lesson for students to work on the assignment. While working, students will access the help of a writing partner as needed. It may be helpful to seat partners next to each other during the work time. The teacher then confers with partnerships as needed.

Working days allow students to get started right away on writing projects. During the work time, students will continue to access a partner or the teacher for help as needed. If it is challenging to find time every day for writing, teachers might assign these work-projects as homework.

Narrative schedule:

1. Brainstorm & Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a list of story ideas.• Select a strong idea from the list.• Complete a <i>Narrative Writing Map</i>.• Write a blurb.• Design a cover.	Day 1-4
2. Draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a draft using the 4-quadrant method.	Days 5-8
3. Revise & Edit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use dialogue to show a character's thoughts and emotions.• Use the rules for punctuating dialogue.• Use dialogue tags to show who is speaking.• Use personification.	Days 9-10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Edit and revise using a checklist.	Day 11
4. Publish & Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete a final product that is handwritten, typed, or other.• Share with a real audience.	Days 12-15

Day 1: Brainstorm Ideas & Plan

Lesson Goals: Brainstorm several ideas for writing and select one to write about. Begin to plan a piece of writing using the *Narrative Writing Map 1*.

Materials:

Narrative Writing Map 1

Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* A realistic fiction story tells a fictional story with fictional characters. The story is believable; often times realistic fiction stories are inspired by real people or events. Realistic fiction is typically written in the first or third person.
2. The book *Earthquake Terror* tells a fictional story using fictional characters. The story is told in the third person; from the perspective of an outsider looking in. The following pronouns are used: *he, she, it, and they*. The events of the story are fictitious but believable and are inspired by a real-life earthquake that took place in Loma Prieta, California in 1986, during the World Series game.
3. *Introduce the writing prompt:*
Write about surviving and earthquake or other natural disaster.
You will tell the story from an outsider looking in. You will write in the third person, using the pronouns *he, she, it, and they*. *If students write about a disaster other than an earthquake, it should be a disaster they are familiar with from personal experience or reading.
4. *Brainstorm:* Model brainstorming 2-3 ideas for your own piece of writing. Examples might include:
 - earthquake (or other disaster) while on vacation,
 - earthquake (or other disaster) while hiking; and
 - earthquake (or other disaster) while home alone.
5. *Select:* Model selecting one story idea from your list. Share tips for selecting a strong idea for a story:
 - The story should be believable.
 - The story should have a series of problems and important events.
 - The events should create a change in the main character or teach a lesson.
 - The story should be something that you would enjoy writing about.
6. *Plan:* Model filling out *Narrative Writing Map 1* for the story you will be writing, saving the last section (question/prediction) for Day 3. Demonstrate how to think about and jot notes about the:
 - main character,
 - secondary characters,
 - setting (time, place, and circumstance); and
 - problem/conflict.

Work Time & Collaboration: Give students time brainstorm ideas, select an idea, and fill-out *Narrative Writing Map 1*. Then, give time for partners to share their writing plan and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my story idea?
- What might I do to improve my story idea?

(Title)

Main Character			
Secondary Character(s)			
Setting	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Circumstance</u>
Problem/ Conflict			
Question / Prediction			

Day 2: Plan

Lesson Goals: Continue to plan a piece of writing using the *Narrative Writing Map 2*.

Materials:

Narrative Writing Map 2

Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will now be planning for the events of their story. They will write their story in four-quadrants.
2. *Plan:* Model planning quadrant 1 of your story using *Narrative Writing Map 2*.
 - How does the problem start?
3. *Plan:* Model planning quadrant 2 of your story using *Narrative Writing Map 2*.
 - How does the problem continue?
 - How does the main character feel?
4. *Plan:* Model planning quadrant 3 of your story using *Narrative Writing Map 2*.
 - What causes the main character to change? How does the main character change?
5. *Plan:* Model planning quadrant 4 of your story using *Narrative Writing Map 2*.
 - How is the problem resolved?
 - What does the main character learn?

Work Time & Collaboration: Give students time to fill-out *Narrative Writing Map 2* for their own story. Then, give time for partners to share their writing plan and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my story?
- What might I do to improve my story?

NARRATIVE WRITING MAP 2

Q1	How does the problem start? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Q2	How does the problem continue? How does the main character feel? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Q3	What causes the main character to change? How does the main character change? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Q4	How is the problem resolved? What does the main character learn? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Day 3: Plan

Lesson Goals: Continue to plan a piece of writing by writing a blurb.

Materials:

Narrative Writing Map 1

Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will be writing a blurb for their story. Remind them that the blurb does not give away how the story will end. The blurb usually ends with a question so that the person reading the blurb will want to read the story. For example, the blurb for *Earthquake Terror* asks the question, “Can Jonathan and Abby keep calm and save themselves?”
2. *Plan:* Model writing a question to use in the blurb of your own story.

Work Time & Collaboration: Give students time to finish filling-out *Narrative Writing Map 1* and then write the blurb for their own story about conflict. Then, give time for partners to share their blurb and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my blurb?
- What might I do to improve my blurb?

Day 4: Plan

Lesson Goals: Continue to plan a piece of writing by making a cover.

Materials:

Blank paper and art materials for designing a cover or illustration software.

Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will be designing the cover of their book. Every book cover begins with a great title. Share tips for writing a good title:
 - It should provide a clue about the conflict in the story.
 - It should be relatively short.
 - It should get the reader interested.
 - It should put a picture in the reader's mind.
2. *Plan:* Model writing a title for your own story.

Work Time & Collaboration: Give students time to create a cover for their book. Then, give time for partners to share their covers and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my cover?
- What might I do to improve my cover?

Day 5: Draft, Quadrant 1

Lesson Goals: Begin drafting a piece of writing.

Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will now be drafting quadrant 1 of their story.
2. *Draft:* Model writing quadrant 1 of your story. Demonstrate how to include details about the:
 - Characters
 - Setting
 - Conflict

Model using descriptive language and details to help the reader picture the characters and the setting in their mind.

TIP: Share with students that an appropriate length for quadrant 1 is about 1.5 pages, handwritten. (Each quadrant should be about the same length so that the full story is about 6 pages.) To help keep students organized, it may work best to have students use a new sheet of paper for each quadrant, even using different colors of lined paper if available.

Work Time & Collaboration: Give students time to draft quadrant 1 of their book. Then, give time for partners to share writing and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my story?
- What might I do to improve my story?

Day 6-8: Draft, Quadrants 2-4

Lesson Goals: Continue drafting a piece of writing.

Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be drafting quadrants 2-4 of their story.
2. *Draft:* Model writing quadrant 2 of your story. Demonstrate how to include details about the:
 - Conflict
 - The main character's actions, words and feelingsModel using descriptive language and details to help the reader feel how the main character is feeling.
3. *Draft:* Model writing quadrant 3 of your story about conflict. Demonstrate how to include details about the:
 - Conflict
 - Change in the main characterModel using descriptive language and details to help the reader understand that the main character is changing.
4. *Draft:* Model writing quadrant 4 of your story about conflict. Demonstrate how to include details about the:
 - Resolution
 - Author's messageModel using descriptive language and details to help the reader understand how the story ends and a lesson is learned.

Work Time & Collaboration: Give students time to continue drafting their own stories. Then, give time for partners to share their writing and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my story?
- What might I do to improve my story?

Day 9: Revise & Edit, Dialogue

Lesson Goals: Reread a piece of writing and make revisions and edits.

Materials:

Dialogue Sheet 1

Dialogue Sheet 2

Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be revising and editing their stories to make them easy to read and enjoy.
2. *Revise:* Narrative stories use dialogue to reveal the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Dialogue is between two or more characters.

Read the example at the top of *Dialogue Sheet 1*.

“Are you okay, Mom?” Jonathan asked. He held one hand out to help her up, but she didn’t take it.

“My foot just went out from under me,” she said.

Mr. Palmer reached them.

“Jack,” Mrs. Palmer said softly. “I think I broke my ankle.”

“Don’t try to stand on it,” Mr. Palmer said. “Jonathan, get on the other side of her.”

“What happened?” Abby cried. “What’s wrong with Mommy?”

Discuss: *How does this dialogue reveal each character’s thoughts and feelings?*

Model searching for a place in your writing where two or more characters are talking. Model revising the dialogue to reveal the feelings, thoughts and emotions of the characters.

3. *Edit:* When author’s use dialogue in their stories they follow rules for punctuation.

Discuss: the dialogue rules listed on *Dialogue Sheet 1*.

Model editing the dialogue in your story to match the dialogue rules.

4. *Revise:* Authors use dialogue tags to tell who in the story is talking.

The most common dialogue tags are:

- *said* – used when the character makes a statement.
- *asked* – used when the character asks a question.
- *exclaimed* – used when the character says something in surprise, anger, or pain.

When used repeatedly in our stories, these dialogue tags can make the story feel flat.

Discuss: *Dialogue Sheet 2* which provides some other ideas for dialogue tags. Encourage students to add some of their own ideas to each list.

Revise: Model revising dialogue tags in your own writing, choosing alternatives to *says*, *asks*, and *exclaims*.

Work Time & Collaboration: Give students time to revise and edit dialogue in their own stories. If a student does not have dialogue, encourage them to add it. Then, give time for partners to share their dialogue and receive feedback.

- What do you like about the way I used dialogue in my story?
- What might I do to improve it?

DIALOGUE SHEET 1

Narrative stories use dialogue to reveal the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Dialogue is between two or more characters.

Example from page 6-7 of *Earthquake Terror*:

“Are you okay, Mom?” Jonathan asked. He held one hand out to help her up, but she didn’t take it.

“My foot just went out from under me,” she said.

Mr. Palmer reached them.

“Jack,” Mrs. Palmer said softly. “I think I broke my ankle.”

“Don’t try to stand on it,” Mr. Palmer said. “Jonathan, get on the other side of her.”

“What happened?” Abby cried. “What’s wrong with Mommy?”

Dialogue rules:

1. Put quotation marks around words that are being spoken. **“Are you okay, Mom?”**
2. Punctuation goes inside the quotation marks. **“Are you okay, Mom?”**
3. Use dialogue tags to show who is speaking. **“Are you okay, Mom?” Jonathan asked.**
4. Typically, the dialogue tag comes *after* the dialogue. Put a comma inside the quotation marks and a period after the dialogue tag.
“My foot just went out from under me,” she said.
5. Capitalize the first word of what is being said. **“Don’t try to stand on it,”**
6. Use commas to separate spoken language from the rest of the sentence.
“Jack,” Mrs. Palmer said softly. “I think I broke my ankle.”
7. Start a new paragraph each time a new person speaks.
——> **“Are you okay, Mom?” Jonathan asked. He held one hand out to help her up, but she didn’t take it.**
——> **“My foot just went out from under me,” she said.**
——> **Mr. Palmer reached them.**
——> **“Jack,” Mrs. Palmer said softly. “I think I broke my ankle.”**

DIALOGUE SHEET 2

STATEMENT	QUESTION	EXCLAMATION
said	asked	exclaimed
uttered declared announced mentioned shared blabbered blurted proclaimed commented whispered murmured remarked answered replied responded	questioned quizzed begged demanded pressed	blurted uttered cried hollered shouted chirped bellowed thundered hailed shrieked announced

Day 10: Revise, Personification

Lesson Goals: Reread a piece of writing and add personification.

Instructional Procedures:

5. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be revising and editing their stories to make them easy to read and enjoy.
6. *Revise:* Today we are going to add personification to our stories. Personification is when an author gives a personal attribute or human characteristic to something nonhuman.

In the book *Earthquake Terror*, Peg Kehret gives nature (the ground, the earthquake) human characteristics (heaved, pitched, tore, jolted) when she writes:

- “The ground heaved, pitching Jonathan into the air.” P. 19
- The earthquake tore the redwood tree from the ground. p. 40
- The earthquake jolted the earth. p. 50

More examples of personification:

- The lightning danced across the sky.
- The wind howled in the night.
- The avalanche devoured everything in its way.
- The moon played hide-and-seek with the clouds.

7. *Revise:* Model revising your own writing to include personification.

Work Time & Collaboration: Give students time to revise their own stories by adding personification. Then, give time for partners to share this example figurative language.

- What do you like about the way I used personification in my story?
- What might I do to improve it?

Day 11: Edit & Revise

Lesson Goals: Reread a piece of writing and make revisions and edits.

Materials:

Editing and Revision Checklist

Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will now be revising and editing their stories to make them easy to read and enjoy.
2. *Edit:* Model editing your own writing using the editing checklist.
3. *Revise:* Model revising your own writing using the revision checklist:

Work Time & Collaboration: Give students time to revise and edit their own stories. Then, give time for partners to share their stories and receive feedback.

- How did I use proper punctuation, grammar, and spelling in my story?
- What might I do to improve it?

Editing Checklist:

- _____ Sentences start with a capital letter.
- _____ I used capital letters for proper nouns.
- _____ I have punctuation at the end of each sentence.
- _____ I checked my words for spelling.
- _____ I indented paragraphs.

Revision Checklist:

- _____ I started with an introduction that is clear.
- _____ I ended with a conclusion that is clear.
- _____ I used transition words at the beginning of paragraphs.
- _____ I used language to show how one event may have caused another event.
- _____ Sentences make sense.
- _____ Sentences stay focused on the topic.
- _____ I added details and elaboration that are important to the topic.
- _____ I used key vocabulary.

Day 12-15: Publish & Share

Lesson Goals: Publish a piece of writing.

Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will now be preparing their piece of writing for others to read. This is called publishing.
2. *Discuss:* how stories will be published—handwritten, typed, or other. Let them know when and how their stories will be shared with the class.

Work Time & Collaboration: Give students time to publish their writing and share their writing with an audience.

Ideas for publishing:

- illustrated book,
- chapter book,
- handwritten book; and
- audio book.

Ideas for sharing:

- read stories aloud to classmates,
- read stories aloud to another class,
- make stories available for others to read (in the classroom, library, or other); and
- take stories home to share with family.

An **author's chair** is a fun classroom tradition. It is a decorated chair in which an author sits to share his/her writing. Teachers can paint a wooden chair or have each new class decorate a pillowcase to go over the back of a chair. This quickly transform a standard classroom chair into something special for young authors.

Checklist for Assessing a Narrative Story

<p>Cover _____/6</p>	<p>____ Has a title that is short. ____ The title puts a picture in the reader's mind.</p> <p>____ Includes a blurb that talks briefly about the story. ____ The blurb entices the reader to read the book.</p> <p>____ The cover gives the reader a clue about the story. ____ The cover gets the reader interested.</p>
<p>Exposition ____/6</p>	<p>Characters ____ Introduces more than one character. ____ Gives important details about each character. ____ Is written in the first or third person.</p> <p>Setting ____ Establishes a setting: time and place. ____ Gives important details about the setting.</p> <p>Problem ____ Introduces a problem/conflict.</p>
<p>Rising Action ____/8</p>	<p>Text Structure ____ Presents a logical series of events that result from the conflict. ____ Events build toward a climax. ____ The events reveal the author's central message or theme.</p> <p>Craft ____ Includes the development of a main character. ____ Includes dialogue and/or interior monologue. ____ Uses language to show the passage of time. ____ Uses descriptive language. ____ Includes humor and/or figurative language.</p>
<p>Falling Action & Resolution ____/3</p>	<p>____ The problem is resolved. ____ The character has changed or learned something. ____ The ending is satisfying to the reader.</p>
<p>Revision and Editing ____/5</p>	<p>____ Writing is edited for spelling. ____ Writing is edited for grammar. ____ Writing is edited for punctuation. ____ Writing shows evidence of revision. ____ Published writing is polished.</p>
<p>Collaboration & Effort ____/4</p>	<p>____ Worked well with a partner. ____ Respectfully gave feedback to a partner. ____ Respectfully received feedback from a partner. ____ Showed good effort and persistence.</p>
<p>Total: ____/32</p>	<p>Comments:</p>

When the Ground Wouldn't Stay Still

Blurb: A powerful earthquake strikes without warning and twelve-year-old Daniel must think quickly to protect himself and his little sister. As the world around him shakes and crumbles, Daniel discovers that courage is about not letting your fears take control.

Late one spring afternoon, Daniel sat at the kitchen table finishing his math homework while his little sister, Mia, built a crooked tower of blocks nearby. Everything felt ordinary.

Then the dog barked. The sharp sound sliced through the quiet. Before Daniel could even glance up, the floor beneath him gave a strange, uneasy shiver. It felt as if a giant had grabbed the house and shaken it like a snow globe.

“What was that?” Mia asked, her voice small.

The walls groaned. Dishes rattled inside the cabinets. A low rumble rose from deep underground, growing louder and louder.

“Earthquake!” Daniel shouted.

The word barely left his mouth before the shaking turned violent. The ceiling fan swung wildly. A picture frame leaped to the floor, its glass shattering.

Daniel’s heart pounded with fear, but he remembered what his teacher had taught them during safety week. Drop. Cover. Hold on.

“Mia, under the table! Now!” he yelled.

She froze for one terrible second, her eyes wide with fear. Daniel grabbed her hand and pulled her beneath the heavy wooden table. He wrapped one arm around her shoulders and gripped the table leg with the other. The floor jolted so hard his teeth clicked together.

“It’s going to be okay,” he said, though he wasn’t sure if that was true.

Books tumbled from shelves. A lamp crashed nearby. The air filled with the sharp smell of dust.

Mia pressed her face into his sleeve. “I’m scared.”

“I know,” Daniel whispered, trying to offer comfort. “Just hold on.”

The shaking stretched on, longer than Daniel thought possible. The house creaked and snapped like it was made of twigs. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the movement slowed and stopped.

For a moment, there was only silence. Daniel listened carefully. Outside, car alarms wailed. Somewhere in the distance, a dog howled.

“It’s over,” he said softly.

But when they crawled out from under the table, Daniel realized it wasn’t truly over. A crack zigzagged across the living room wall like a crooked lightning bolt. The bookshelf had toppled, blocking part of the hallway. The front door was jammed shut.

“Mia, stay close,” Daniel said, trying to sound capable and calm.

He felt older than twelve in that moment.

Another aftershock rippled through the house, smaller but still powerful enough to send dust drifting from the ceiling. Mia whimpered. Daniel swallowed hard. He couldn’t let panic take over.

“Let’s check for Mom,” he said. She had been in the backyard working in the garden.

They carefully stepped around broken glass and fallen objects. The back door was stuck, too. Daniel pushed with all his strength. It wouldn’t budge.

“We’re stuck,” Mia said, her voice trembling.

Then Daniel remembered the emergency kit in the laundry room. Their parents had packed it months ago, just in case. Inside were water bottles, flashlights, and a whistle.

“Wait here,” Daniel said. “On second thought, come with me.”

He wasn’t going to let her feel isolated. They squeezed past the fallen bookshelf and made their way to the laundry room. The cabinet door had swung open, but the bright red emergency backpack was still there. Relief washed over him like cool water.

He handed Mia a flashlight. “You’re in charge of this,” he told her. “That’s an important job.”

She nodded, standing a little taller. Just then, they heard a voice from outside.

“Daniel! Mia!”

It was Mom.

“We’re in here!” Daniel shouted. He grabbed the whistle from the kit and blew three sharp blasts. The piercing sound cut through the noise of distant sirens.

Mom’s voice came again, closer this time. “Are you okay?”

“Yes!” Daniel called back.

With help from a neighbor, she managed to force the back door open from the outside. When the door finally gave way, sunlight poured in.

Daniel led Mia outside carefully. The street looked different—tilted mailboxes, cracked sidewalks, neighbors gathered in small, shaken groups. But they were safe. Mom hugged them tightly. Daniel could feel her hands shaking.

“I’m so proud of you,” she said. “You kept Mia safe.”

Daniel glanced at Mia, who was still clutching the flashlight like a trophy. A strange warmth filled his chest—not just relief, but accomplishment. He had been afraid, but he had not let that fear control him. They would be alright.