Writing differentiated plans: An elementary writing example

Here is an example of an elementary writing lesson plan, followed by possible accommodations to meet student needs. Many of the accommodations would work in any writing lesson.

G.L.C.E.’s Addressed:

W.GN.04.01 Write a narrative piece (e.g., myth/legend, fantasy, adventure) creating relationships among setting, characters, theme, and plot.

W.PR.04.02 Apply a variety of drafting strategies for both narrative and informational text (e.g., graphic organizers, such as story maps, webs, Venn diagrams) in order to generate, sequence, and structure ideas (e.g., plot, connecting time, setting, conflicts, resolutions, definition/description, chronological sequence).

Assignment
During a genre study of fantasy, students are asked to write a fantasy of their own. Students are provided an assignment grid to help them organize and understand the requirements of the task. To help students structure their work and self-monitor completion of the requirements they are provided a checklist. This checklist can be used not just for self-evaluation, but also for use in peer editing. Both of these are in addition to providing the rubric that will be used in evaluation and requiring students to self-grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FANTASY REQUIREMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SETTING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHARACTERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLOT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| FANTASY               | There are at least two elements of fantasy in this story. Remember, fantasy means it is something that could not possibly
The fantasy has a solid setting. It is clear **where** and **when** this fantasy takes place.

The setting is vivid. You can picture **where** and **when** the fantasy takes place. (It gives you a clear mental picture.)

There are three characters in this fantasy.

All three characters are bold, vivid characters. You can picture them in your mind and easily describe them.

The fantasy has a beginning, middle, and end. It flows and is not confusing.

This fantasy has a clear conflict.

This fantasy has a clear resolution.

There are at least two elements of fantasy in this story.

---

**FANTASY CHECKLIST**

*Remember, your assignment is not complete unless you can check “yes” for each question.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The fantasy has a solid setting. It is clear <strong>where</strong> and <strong>when</strong> this fantasy takes place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The setting is vivid. You can picture <strong>where</strong> and <strong>when</strong> the fantasy takes place. (It gives you a clear mental picture.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are three characters in this fantasy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All three characters are bold, vivid characters. You can picture them in your mind and easily describe them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fantasy has a beginning, middle, and end. It flows and is not confusing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This fantasy has a clear conflict.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This fantasy has a clear resolution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are at least two elements of fantasy in this story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**the following questions about the fantasy.**

**What is the setting for this fantasy? Where and when does this story take place?**
Who are the three characters in this fantasy? Write the name of the character on the first line and then a brief description of the character on the lines that follow.

____________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Briefly describe the conflict in this fantasy.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Briefly describe the resolution in this fantasy.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What are two elements of fantasy in this story?

1.  ____________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

2.  ____________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
Accommodations and Modifications for At Risk students

The following is a list of possible accommodations and modifications to the lesson allowing for differentiation for At Risk students. Teacher evaluation of student needs should be used to inform instruction.

- **Partner/Group Write**- Allowing students to collaborate on the writing assignment. Students mutually share their thoughts and ideas for the assignment. Heterogeneous grouping is very beneficial in this instance. When doing a group write it is often beneficial to assign each student a role in the group. Partner or group writing is often helpful with students who experience difficulties placing thoughts on paper or organizing their ideas into writing.

- **Provide sentence or paragraph starters**- This strategy is also helpful with students who struggle with the organization of their writing.

- **Provide a variety of graphic organizers** (i.e. character maps, plot maps, conflict/resolution charts, flow charts, etc.)- Samples of these can be found on programs such as Kidspiration®, also on the website [www.writedesignonline.com/organizers](http://www.writedesignonline.com/organizers). Extensive modeling and practice should be given with all graphic organizers starting at the beginning of the year so all students feel comfortable selecting and utilizing graphic organizers of their choice.

- **Allow use of a computer or provide an opportunity for student to dictate their assignment**- This is helpful for those students who struggle with fine motor skills and become frustrated writing. This helps their focus remain on their thoughts and ideas and not on physically placing words on paper.

- **Provide picture dictionaries and high frequency word dictionaries**- This allows students who struggle with spelling or become distracted by the technical aspects of writing to immediately access words for their writing.

- **Reduce the length expectation or amount of requirements**- For some students it may be helpful to reduce the amount of material they need to cover. In this assignment, for example, you might ask students to focus on making sure they have one element of fantasy in their story and a detailed setting.
• **Allow student to write a rebus story** - A rebus story is a story written through pictures. Students draw the events in the story. Once students have completed this step, in some cases you may want them to write the story once they have the picture representation complete. This option often helps students better organize their thoughts and ideas. It is another great strategy for students who struggle putting thoughts and words on paper.

• **Mini-lessons** - Mini-lessons are very helpful for targeting specific weaknesses that need to be addressed. Mini-lessons are generally no more than thirty minutes long and focus on one specific skill. These lessons may be taught whole-class or to small groups who need further work or reinforcement with a skill.

• **Break the large assignment into a series of smaller assignments** - With this strategy you might assign a writing piece one paragraph at a time. They might write the introduction or first paragraph for their first assignment.

• **Guided writing** - This is especially helpful to develop specific areas of a writing piece. For example, if you wanted students to more fully develop their setting, you would do a guided writing focusing on that area. In guided writing, students are given a series of verbal prompts and compose a paragraph one or two sentences at a time. The teacher might say, “Close your eyes and picture yourself in the setting of your story. Look around you, describe what you see using vivid adjectives”.

• **Peer Editing** - Peer editing can be very valuable. Often, it is the students in the classroom who are the best teachers! Students are placed in partners or groups of three if necessary. They use the rubric with which they will be graded as well as the checklist provided to give support to their peers in their writing. This is very beneficial to those At Risk students who are social learners. It is important that rules and procedures are established so all students feel comfortable working together, sharing their writing, and reading the writing of their peers.