



Time Machines!
by Ash Friend and Amber Bailey
Elementary School Writers-In-Residence

Grade Level: 3rd – 6th

Time Frame: 1 hour

Learning Objectives: Encouraging students to closely observe objects, encouraging poetic, “outside the box” thinking, encouraging innovation, writing about setting, using descriptive details in writing.

Prior Skills: None required

Required Resources: Excerpt, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* by Mark Twain

Required Materials: An assortment of odds and ends that are not easily identified: parts of clocks, wind up toys, appliance parts, string lights, music boxes, etc.

Arizona Language Arts State Standards Addressed:

Writing

Strand 1: Writing Process

Concept 1, PO 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Concept 5, PO 2

Prewriting: Students will generate ideas through hands on brainstorm, discussion, and writing (Concept 1, PO 1). Students will begin with both a purpose (to communicate about their “time machines”) and an audience (each other) in mind (Concept 1, PO 2-3). Students will maintain written records of their writing ideas (Concept 1, PO 5) and will be given a set amount of time in which to write (Concept 1, PO 6).

Publishing: Students will share their work with the class (Concept 5, PO 2).

Strand 2: Writing Elements

Concept 1, PO 1, 2, 3

Concept 2, PO 1, 2, 3, 5

Concept 4, PO 1, 2, 3

Ideas and Content: Writing Assignment is structured so that students must express ideas clearly related to the topic (time traveling to a different era) (Concept 1, PO 1), and must generate content and include specific details about setting and how the place and time period is different to the world we know (Concept 1, PO 2-3).

Organization: Students will organize their thoughts into a story that has a beginning, middle and end, with supporting details, transitional phrases and using paragraph structure that groups sentences around the topic of time travel (Concept 2, PO 1, 2, 3, 5).

Word Choice: Students will use a variety of specific and accurate words to describe the place to which they have traveled (Concept 4, PO 1-2). New vocabulary is introduced during the lesson, which students may use, as well as vocabulary appropriate to historical settings and time travel (Concept 4, PO 3).

Strand 3: Writing Applications

Concept 1, PO 1

Expressive:

Students will write a narrative based on imaginative events that include setting, plot, sensory detail, clear language and a logical (though imaginative) sequence of events (Concept 1, PO 1).

Sequence of Activities:

I. Opening Prompt/Activity (20 min)

Place an assembly of items on the students' desks. Every two or three students should get two or three items—these should be items that are not easily identified. Parts of tools or kitchen appliances, clock parts, the workings of old toys and so forth are ideal.

Let the students in their small groups of two or three, observe and discuss the items. Tell the students that you want them to think of all the different uses the items could have and what they might have come from.

After giving the students five minutes or so to observe and discuss their items, allow volunteers to report to the class what they think their items are, and what they are for.

After the volunteers have had their chance to describe what they think their items are and what they think is their purpose, announce that for today, we're going to say the items on the tables are all components of a time machine. Have the students individually write about how they would

use the items to make a time machine, and where they would like to go if they could travel anywhere in time. Give the students five to seven minutes to write.

Activity Break: 3-5 Min: Give the students a chance to get up and stretch.

II. Literary Model (10 min)

Have the students read along while you read the edited section of [A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court](#) (if the class contains strong readers, they can take turns reading passages aloud themselves, otherwise, read it to them, since you want them to focus on Twain's prose). Tell the students to underline any unfamiliar words, and also, anything that the passage describes that covers the setting of the story. After reading, discuss any vocabulary words the students found unfamiliar, and write them on the board. Ask them what they noticed about the setting and the way the people of Camelot looked and spoke, compared to the way the Yankee looked and spoke.

****Note:** This literary model and the lesson in general, may be modified to account for any time period the class is currently studying. For example, if the class is studying Ancient Rome, then a literary model dealing with life in Rome, or a Roman myth or excerpt from the writings of Pliny or Aurelius may be used.

Likewise, if the class is studying Ancient Greek, an excerpt from The Odyssey may be used, or a Greek myth or selection of Greek poetry. Aztec and Mayan myths could fit with a study Mexican or South American history. Ancient Egypt could be an Egyptian myth or Shelley's "Ozymandias," etc. There is no limit to the ways that the teaching artist may choose to make the literary model fit a time period the students are studying in their social studies class.**

III. Discussion: Setting (10-15 min)

Brainstorm with the students about setting—the sort of details that you would use to define different settings. Talk about the differences between a city and a small town, Tucson in the Wild West days versus Tucson today, a desert and a forest, etc.

Brainstorm how people would be different in a city setting vs the country or a small town; when their parents were kids, when their grandparents were kids, and when their great-grandparents were kids. Brainstorm what people might be like in 20 years. In 50 years. In a hundred years.

IV. Writing Activity (10 min)

Have the students write a scene or short story about using their time machine to travel to another time. Have the students include at least 5 details about the setting (what did they see, hear, smell, what did the people and buildings look like, etc), describing how they traveled back in time, and at least 3 ways that the other time period was different to our modern time.

If students finish quickly and want to write more, have them write about if one of their ancestors traveled forward in time to 2011 and what their reactions would be. What would they like best

about our time period? What would make them confused? Scared? Annoyed? What would they think was funny?

Students can illustrate their stories if they want to, or draw a diagram of their time machines.

V. Sharing (5-10 min)

Choose student volunteers to read their writing. Be sure that the more shy/reluctant readers are having as many turns to read their work as the more outgoing students.

Excerpt, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* by Mark Twain

THE STRANGER'S HISTORY

"CAMELOT -- Camelot," said I to myself. "I don't seem to remember hearing of it before."

It was a soft, reposeful summer landscape, as lovely as a dream, and as lonesome as Sunday. The air was full of the smell of flowers, and the buzzing of insects, and the twittering of birds, and there were no people, no wagons, there was no stir of life, nothing going on. The road was mainly a winding path with hoof-prints in it, and now and then a faint trace of wheels on either side in the grass -- wheels that apparently had a tire as broad as one's hand.

Presently a fair slip of a girl, about ten years old, with a cataract of golden hair streaming down over her shoulders, came along. Around her head she wore a hoop of flame-red poppies. She walked indolently along, with a mind at rest, its peace reflected in her innocent face. The circus man paid no attention to her; didn't even seem to see her. And she -- she was no more startled at his fantastic make-up than if she was used to his like every day of her life. She was going by as indifferently as she might have gone by a couple of cows; but when she happened to notice me, THEN there was a change! Up went her hands, and she was turned to stone; her mouth dropped open, her eyes stared wide and timorously, she was the picture of astonished curiosity touched with fear. And there she stood gazing, in a sort of stupefied fascination, till we turned a corner of the wood and were lost to her view.

As we approached the town, signs of life began to appear. At intervals we passed a wretched cabin, with a thatched roof, and about it small fields and garden patches in an indifferent state of cultivation.

In the town were some substantial windowless houses of stone scattered among a wilderness of thatched cabins; the streets were mere crooked alleys, and unpaved; troops of dogs and children played in the sun and made life and noise; hogs roamed and rooted contentedly about, and one of them lay in a wallow in the middle of the main thoroughfare.

Presently there was a distant blare of military music; it came nearer, still nearer, and soon a noble cavalcade wound into view, glorious with plumed helmets and flashing mail and flaunting banners and rich doublets and horse-cloths and gilded spearheads; and through the muck and swine, and brats, and joyous dogs, and shabby huts, it took its gallant way, and in its wake we followed. Followed through one winding alley and then another, -- and climbing, always

climbing -- till at last we gained the breezy height where the huge castle stood. There was an exchange of bugle blasts; then a parley from the walls, where men-at-arms, in hauberk and morion, marched back and forth with halberd at shoulder under flapping banners with the rude figure of a dragon displayed upon them; and then the great gates were flung open, the drawbridge was lowered, and the head of the cavalcade swept forward under the frowning arches; and we, following, soon found ourselves in a great paved court, with towers and turrets stretching up into the blue air on all the four sides; and all about us. The dismount was going on, and much greeting and ceremony, and running to and fro, and a display of moving and intermingling colors, and an altogether pleasant stir and noise and confusion.