



Making Magical Creatures Talk
by Erin Armstrong
Elementary School Writer-In-Residence

Grade Level: 4-5th

Time Frame: 1 hour

Learning Objectives:

- To teach students about dialog and give students a chance to write basic dialog from the perspective of characters they've already created.
- To show how dialog can help move a story forward, through the creations of additional characters, as well as through active speaking.
- To teach students the proper use and placement of dialog tags and quotations
- To teach students how characters can communicate with one another through dialog

Prior Skills: None required

Required Resources: *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams, Chapter 9, pg 84

Sequence of Activities

I. Introduction

- Read the literary model (*Hitchhiker's Guide* excerpt). Go over how to quote, use of dialog tags, indentations, and paragraph formatting.
- Invent a magical friend. If there is time you can do this in class with the students, or come in with a magical friend in mind. The friend should be based off of the magical creature lesson plan. Have students name the friend. Generate a collaborative dialog using this magical friend. Have the friend ask the following questions. Show students how to format responses using appropriate dialog formatting.

Questions for Collaborative Activity:

Where are you from?
What does your house look like?
What are you afraid of?
What is your favorite thing to do?
Who is your best friend?
Are you running away from anything?
What makes you happy?
What languages can you speak?
Do you have a special power?
What can you do with your special power?

II. Activity:

Have students write dialogs using the magical creature they created in a previous lesson plan. Have students come up with a magical friend that they think their creature would talk to. (They can use the friend from the collaborative activity, or create their own.) Use the attached template that says “Magical Friend” at the top. Put the invented name on the line where it says Magical Friend. Once students have established the friend’s name have them respond to the questions. Try and get them to quote and use dialog tags, don’t worry as much about indentations or paragraph formatting. Here are additional questions if students need prompting:

How big is your house?
Who else lives with you?
What planet do you live on?
What kind of vehicle do you drive?
What kind of things do you like to read?
What kind of sports do you play?
What are your favorite kinds of smell?
What is your favorite thing in your house?

III. Closing

- Have students share their work. Try and get two students to come up for each dialog. Have one student be the magical friend and the other the magical creature. Have them take turns asking questions and responding. This should give students a better idea of how dialog sounds.

IV. Extension Activities (Optional):

- Have students draw their magical friend. Get students to write the dialog without the template and begin to incorporate narrative throughout the dialog.

Required Resources:

Magical friend's name: _____

Magical friend: What do you do when you wake up in the morning?

Magical Creature:

Magical Friend: What do you like to eat?

Magical Creature:

Magical Friend: What are your favorite things to do?

Magical Creature:

Magical Friend: What do you think of humans? Do you like them?

Magical Creature:

Magical Friend: What is your special power? What do you do with your powers?

Magical Creature:

Magical Friend: Where do you live? What does it look like?

Magical Creature:

Magical Friend: Who are your friends? What do you do together?

Magical Creature:

Magical Friend: If you could go anywhere where would you go? What would you do?

Magical Creature:

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams
Chapter 9, pg 84

“Ford,” he said, “you’re turning into a penguin. Stop it.”

Again came the voice.

“Two to the power of seventy-five thousand to one against and falling.”

Ford waddled around his pond in a furious circle.

“Hey, who are you?” he quacked. “Where are you? What’s going on and is there any way of stopping it?”

“Please relax,” said the voice pleasantly, like a stewardess in an airliner with only one wing and too engines, one of which is on fire, “you are perfectly safe.”

“But that’s not the point,” raged Ford. “The point is that I am now a perfectly safe penguin, and my colleague here is rapidly running out of limbs.”

It’s all right, I’ve got them back now,” said Arthur.

“Two to the power of fifty thousand to one against and falling,” said the voice.

“Admittedly,” said Arthur, “they’re no longer than I usually like them, but…”

“Isn’t there anything,” squawked Ford in avian fury, “you feel you ought to be telling us?”

The voice cleared its throat. A giant petrel lollapped off into the distance.

“Welcome,” the voice said, “to the Starship Heart of Gold.”