

## TIP SHEET #1

### YOUR FIRST WORKSHOP

- Relax. There's no need to be nervous. It will be fun. We don't expect everyone to be a trained English teacher (although we do love our teachers too). Your job is mostly about listening to the students, offering thoughts and helping them develop ideas.
- There should be blank name tags and a sign-in sheet (for students and tutors) on one of the tables. Find them, write yourself a name tag and sign in.
- Pick an empty table and take a seat. Say hello to the kids as they arrive. Offer them a chair at your table. Sometimes they'll sit right down, sometimes they'll want to hang out with friends or a tutor they already know. Don't worry if you're sitting on your own for a little while, students and volunteers will be evenly distributed before the workshop starts.
- Introduce yourself to the students at your table, ask them how they are, how their day has been etc. It's just like meeting a new colleague... except that they're 9.
- Remember everybody is different. Being in an unfamiliar place with new people can be daunting. Some kids are naturally quiet and some are more outgoing.
- When the workshop activities begin, make sure your students understand the workshop leader's instructions. If they do, let them get started. If they're unsure about the task, try explaining things in a different way.
- Remember that you're here to help them with their writing. Asking questions when they're stuck can be helpful but try to let them get their ideas out before you offer too much advice. The goal is to encourage the kids to have confidence in their own creativity.
- Don't worry too much about spelling and grammar. In some workshops this will be fixed up during the editing stage. But it's more important to help the kids get their ideas down on paper.
- Just put your hand up and ask the workshop leader for help if you or the students have any questions. The workshop leader will deal with any serious problems or behavioural issues.
- We love feedback. We'd love for you to stick around for ten minutes after the workshop to have a quick chat about how the workshop went for you and any thoughts you might have on it. If you have any comments or suggestions after leaving, please let us know via email at another time.

## TIP SHEET #2

### HOW TO HELP YOUR STUDENT/S BE MORE CREATIVE

- Encourage the student by pointing out how creative they've already been, and how they've got you hooked and you want more. "This Sea Witch sounds amazing - but I have no idea what she looks like..." "You mentioned that the main character was sad, but you didn't really talk more about her feelings". You can suggest they include the detail of their answers in their story.
- Find out about a student's interests or favourite things. Getting to know each other a bit will help everyone relax. It can also give you ideas for questions. "You know how you said that stuff about surfboards earlier, what type of surfboard do you think this character would own?"
- If students have finished their bare bones plot early, you can ask them to be more descriptive. Get them to think about their five senses - what does this location/scenario/character look like, sound like, smell like, taste like or feel like.
- It might even help to suggest they put their pen down, close their eyes and visualise the character or the scene. Where are they? What can they see? How do they feel? What can they hear? What do they want? Are they hungry? Bored? Scared? Excited?
- Suggest outlandish twists, characters, or details "What if the main character just suddenly turned into a frog?" to show them that the possibilities are endless. Give them permission to head off on crazy tangents.
- Try asking them to put themselves in the protagonist's place. Would they be scared/excited/overjoyed? Does their protagonist feel the same way, or do they have different motives/emotions?
- Chat to the student about their thinking. Bouncing around ideas with someone can be what reluctant writers need to ease their way into a story. Don't worry if there seems to be more talking than writing at the beginning of a workshop.
- Experiment with different forms of creativity to get them thinking. If they want to draw instead of write let them: they can always make up captions.
- Asking the student to read their story aloud or reading it aloud for them (with optional funny character voices) can sometimes spark new ideas.
- If the student is doing good writing (any writing can be good writing) don't let the prescribed task get in the way.

## TIP SHEET #3

### HOW TO HELP YOUR STUDENT EDIT

- Take a positive tone when suggesting edits--they are things that will make the piece even better. "The rest of your language is so powerful; can we think of a better word here?" "I love this section about \_\_\_\_\_. What about expanding it a bit?"
- Wait until the student has finished their story before you start editing. This includes going back over the story and fleshing out detail, adding descriptions etc.
- Ask the student to go through their writing and circle any words they are not sure of the spelling. Let them know it's fine if they've made mistakes - everyone does on their first draft. Then you can go back through and help them with spelling, and spot any other words yourself.
- Get the student to read it aloud to you, or you can read it to them. The purpose is to hear any sentences that might not make sense, and change them accordingly.
- Help the student with punctuation as they (or you) rewrite their story out with the edits you've made. Again, let the student know that it's okay if they're unsure about what punctuation works best in different places. We all know it can be tricky.
- Sometimes students resist the editing process. They can find it daunting or just be keen to move onto something new and different. It can help to remind them that all types of writers edit their work. Some students respond well to gentle reminders that their work is going to be published – on actual paper, for other people to read.
- Work with them on editing one sentence so that they can see it's not so difficult and it really can make a difference to their story.
- You can make editing fun by doing things like cutting up a printed piece and playing with putting the lines or sections in a different order--emphasise that it's just for fun, and they can always keep their story the way it was.
- Don't be afraid to allow the students to piece together a story in a very fragmented way. Sometimes it's the tutor's job to help the student figure out what their pieces of writing are and to discover the story they're trying to tell.

## **TIP SHEET #4**

### **HOW TO DEAL WITH BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES**

- StoryBoard isn't a school and it can get rowdier than your average classroom. That's okay. We don't expect students to sit quietly at their tables all the time.
- If it is a simple issue, you can ask them politely to quieten down or stop distracting other students. A soft, 'Hey, give someone else a go', or a shush can work well.
- Reminding students that other people are trying to work and they need to respect each other, workshop leader and the volunteers is usually enough.
- If the student is very restless, they may need to go for a wander around or grab a drink/snack before getting back to work. Or they may just want to have a chat, unrelated to the task at hand. Taking a break might help focus them back on their story.
- Sometimes a combination of students sitting at a table can be tricky. If your group is proving difficult to handle, tell the workshop leader and s/he will shift the students around.
- If the student is bullying other students or is being purposely and repeatedly disruptive, ask the workshop leader for assistance. You don't have to be the one to lay down the law.

## TIP SHEET #5

### STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING DISENGAGED STUDENTS

- Sometimes students just don't know where to start. Most workshops will begin with a few brainstorming activities which will hopefully give them some ingredients to include in their story. If not, you could ask your student some questions to get them started. "Do you know what ingredients you need for a magazine article/adventure story etc.?"
- Try asking students what they are interested in, if it's not the topic/genre of the workshop. They may be turned off by writing a spooky story or a newspaper article, and instead want to write about their favourite movie or sports team. Talk to them about ways their ideas might fit into the workshop project - maybe the sports team is haunted??
- Most students will respond to enthusiasm and positive feedback. If they get the sense you're paying attention to their stories and genuinely enjoying working with them, they're more likely to stay engaged.
- Asking the students at your table to share their ideas with each other can sometimes help everyone get started, or get over a hurdle. "Let's see what 'x' has written, if they'll share, it might help with prompting ideas".
- A student might be better at drawing things, or telling you their story. There's no problem with writing things down for students, but it's better to encourage them to do it first. If your student is too excited with their story and wants to tell you, take notes that they can flesh out later.
- Some students do struggle with making their handwriting legible and that can detract from the fun of writing. Try to encourage them to do their own writing, without making it feel like homework.
- If you and the student are really stuck for inspiration, you can try things like choosing a book from the shelf, opening it at random, picking a line and taking the story from there. Best to change the character names!
- Try not to take it personally when it feels difficult to make a connection with a student. Every kid is different – sometimes they've just had a long/busy/exciting day and just won't be in the mood to write very much.
- If none of the things you've tried seem to be working, don't worry and don't be afraid to ask for some help from the workshop leader.

## TIP SHEET #6

### GENERAL WRITING TIPS

- The students participating in workshops will be of varying ages and writing levels so tips will need to be adjusted to reflect the needs of the students you're working with.
- The workshops cover all sorts of different formats – poetry, newspaper articles, plays – so not all writing techniques will apply to every project.
- The most important general tip is that the kids will have more fun if they're writing about things that interest them. Helping them get excited about telling stories is the most important thing.
- Don't edit as you go. Help the student get their ideas down on paper first. You can go back through the story later to add more detail and fix any spelling, punctuation or structural problems.
- Try to explain why you're making suggestions or asking questions so the students can apply your tips to other writing projects. "Can you tell me some more about how the flying dog sounded or smelled? Readers love lots of detail so they can really imagine the characters in the story."

### Some general tips:

- Start a new paragraph whenever there is a change in time, idea, place or speaker.
- The first paragraph should generally tell the reader who the main character/s is/are, provide an idea of the setting, and let the reader know the time in which the story is set.
- Encourage the students to make their stories and characters more vivid by describing feelings, colours, shapes, textures and smells.
- Use a variety of action words / verbs. Find alternatives for words like walk, move, run or said.
- Work in sections - e.g. "Let's get the opening paragraph done." "Try for half a page."
- Think about whether the story has a clear beginning, middle and end. Does the structure of the story make sense?
- **Finally, Remember what Bruce Lee says: 'Be like the water'. If the student is doing good writing (any writing can be good writing) don't let a prescribed task get in the way.**

## **TIP SHEET #7**

### **THINGS NOT TO WORRY ABOUT WHEN YOU'RE TUTORING**

- Don't worry about the NOISE!
- Kids (and adults) have good and bad days. Don't worry if it feels as though your students aren't getting enough writing done. Sometimes we will rush the kids to get a project finished but the most important thing is that everyone is having fun.
- At the masterclass workshops, it often takes ten minutes to get going because students are arriving at different times, eating, drinking etc.
- Don't worry about being a little (or a lot) silly. It can be an excellent way to connect with the students. Who doesn't act a little silly when discussing the finer qualities of marshmallow-eating-robot-pirates??
- If you don't normally spend time with kids, don't worry about not knowing the details of their current interests. They will generally take great pleasure in bringing you up to speed on their latest favourite book, computer game or band.
- Don't worry about not being an English teacher or professional writer. Every tutor has something fabulous to offer the students. You don't need to be a punctuation expert to be a wonderful tutor.
- The workshop leader is there to help the students and the volunteers. They will deal with any serious behavioural issues. If you have any questions, just ask.
- It's all okay, so long as nobody is getting hurt.

## **TIP SHEET #8**

### **MAINTAINING CODE OF CONDUCT - NO TOUCHING STUDENTS**

- Physical contact between students and volunteers is forbidden, but we do understand that it can happen accidentally, and without malice intent. Students can be friendly and appreciative of your assistance, and want to express that through physical contact. Similarly, you can become friendly with students and be proud of their efforts, and a pat on the head or a hand on the arm can happen without people realising.
- BUT - we have to be vigilant. Here are some tips to keep you mindful and help you out when situations arise.
- The most important thing is to be aware and conscious of not touching the students in any way. If you can remind yourself before starting a workshop, it will be easier to avoid casual contact.
- Instead of tapping students on the shoulder if you want their attention, try speaking their name a little louder, or tapping the table and saying their name.
- If you're having trouble getting your student to sit down at the table, instead of leading them by the shoulders try talking to them or asking them (either politely or a little more sternly if you think you need to), or simply ask for help from the workshop leader.
- If a student hugs you before you realise what's happening it's okay - you don't want to make a big deal about it and scare the student. But please try to deflect this kind of contact as much as you're able to.
- If a student is trying to hug you, or your instinct is to pat them on the back for a job well done, try turning these gestures into a high-five.
- If a student is trying to touch you - pat your hair, play with your hand, draw on your arm etc - politely move out of the way and just say, "Please don't do that, thanks."