# Pre-Writing Techniques: Gretchen Courtney Room Activity

**Basic Information:**

**Name:** Jennifer Scinto

**Grade Level:** 7th Grade

**Class**: Language Arts

**Title of Lesson:** Gretchen Courtney Room Activity

**OVERVIEW:**

Students will create a picture of a part of their house, such as their bedroom or a favorite part of their house, like a basement. As students are creating their picture, students will be thinking about memories they have in that room. Through drawing and illustrating their room, students will be able to share their thoughts and feelings about the memory. Furthermore, the process of illustrating the setting of their memory will help students describe in great detail the events that led up to the memory, or the events that follow.

**General Purpose of Lesson:**

Students often have a difficult time putting their thoughts into written words on paper, and when they do write their thoughts on paper, their writing often lacks the detail needed to make readers stay engaged in their writing. This activity allows for students to create a visual to assist with generating more specific details about setting, character description, motivation, thoughts, feelings, emotions, and most importantly, why this memory is so important. Creating an illustration is another method of pre-writing that students can use to aide in the writing process.

**UNIT STANDARDS:**

**Common Core Standards:**

* CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
  + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2.A: introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
  + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2.B: Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
  + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2.D: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
  + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2.E: Establish and maintain formal style.
  + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2.F: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
* CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences
  + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.A: Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
  + [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.B](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/7/3/b/): Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
  + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D: Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

**After this pre-writing lesson, students will be able to:**

* Formulate a written narrative story using one of their three memory paragraphs.
* Describe an experience or memory that they can write about using details provided in their picture.
* Trace the events and details of their memory in chronological order to help aide students to write an entire narrative essay based on their memory.

**MATERIALS:**

* Coloring supplies (colored pencils, markers, and/or crayons)
* White computer paper
* Pen/pencil
* Dry Erase Board
* Dry Erase Markers
* Promethean Board
* Document camera
* Computer
* Language Arts spiral notebook and/or a piece of lined paper

**MADELINE HUNTER 8 STEP LESSON PLAN:**

**Anticipatory set (focus):**

As students walk into my room, I will greet each student and give them a worksheet to start on as they take their seat. Students will take their seat and glance at the Promethean Board to see today’s assignments and instructions on what they should be doing with the first few minutes of class. On this particular day, students are starting a new unit. To assess their knowledge on what a narrative is, their bell work will ask them to list everything they know about narrative writing. After one minute of individually working, students will have a minute and a half to discuss with a partner next to them. Then, we will come together as a class to discuss what a narrative is, and how we will go about starting this unit.

**Purpose (objectives):**

**After this pre-writing lesson, students will be able to:**

* Formulate a written narrative story using one of their three memory paragraphs.
* Describe an experience or memory that they can write about using details provided in their picture.
* Trace the events and details of their memory in chronological order to help aide students to write an entire narrative essay based on their memory.

**“I Can…” statements posted on the student agenda board:**

I can…

* Formulate a story based on my pre-writing strategy (the picture you drew)
* Describe, through writing, a memory from the place in my picture
* Explain to the class what happened in my story

**Input**:

In order for students to successfully master the lesson, they will need to understand the definition of what a narrative is so they can completely master the skill of writing their own story. I will use the Gretchen Courtney definition of what narrative writing is. I will have this definition posted on the Promethean Board.

The definition of narrative writing is: “Narrative writing conveys an experience, either real or imaginary, and uses time as its deep structure. It can be used for many purposes, as to inform, instruct, persuade, or entertain.”

Students will also need to know that there are several steps to the narrative writing process. I will explain that today we are doing a prewriting strategy. Prewriting strategies are important because they allow the writer to think about an experience and plan the details before the writer actually begins writing their story. We will add today’s lesson and strategy (drawing the setting) to our list of prewriting strategies to use. I want students to know and understand that these prewriting strategies can be applied to any type writing, not just a narrative.

**Modeling:**

Because this is the very first day of the unit and because my students have never used this pre-writing technique before, modeling the technique the students will be partaking in will be a very important step in this writing process. Using the document camera, I will draw a picture of my childhood basement/playroom. I will explain as I am drawing a few of my childhood experiences and memories that I remember. Once I finish drawing and coloring my picture, I will show 5 different paragraphs that I prepared to show the class. These paragraphs will describe a childhood memory from the room in my drawing. I will explain that one of these 5 memories will turn into my narrative writing. Before students begin drawing and coloring their own picture, I will outline my expectations for this assignment. Students’ drawings must be of ONE room or part of their house and it must be colored. The reason it must be colored is because this will help students add detail in their writing once they start their first drafts. Students may include characters in their drawings, or people who were there in their memory, if they wish. After they finish their drawing, they must write 4-5 paragraphs explaining their memory.

**Guided Practice:**

As guided practice, the class and I will work together to define narrative writing. In addition, I will be walking around the room checking student work and showing examples of excellent student work.

**Check Understanding:**

Before students start drawing their picture, I will ask for a few students to come to the dry erase board to write my expectations on the board. Students want to know the answers to the following questions, and this task allows me to check student understanding:

* What are we doing? **A prewriting strategy for narrative writing.**
* Why are we doing this? **Drawing a picture helps us formulate a topic to write on. Coloring the picture helps us remember details.**
* How do we do this/What are the steps to this task? **Using a blank sheet of paper, we will draw one picture of our room and then color it. Once we have finished coloring our picture, we will write 4-5 paragraphs, each describing a different memory from that room.**
* When is this due? **Tomorrow.**
* Where is this unit going? **We will choose one memory to write a narrative essay on.**

With the last 6 minutes left of class, students will stop working, turn to a neighbor, and verbally explain one memory that they are planning on writing a paragraph about. I will ask 3 random students to share to the whole class.

**Independent Practice:**

Students will finish their picture and writing their 4-5 paragraphs for homework. This will be due on Wednesday, September 24th.

**Closure:**

With the last 6 minutes left of class, students will stop working, turn to a neighbor, and verbally explain one memory that they are planning on writing a paragraph about. I will ask 3 random students to share to the whole class.

Before students leave, they will write down one thing they learned today on a piece of scratch paper; this is the student’s exit slip. When the bell rings, students will place this piece of paper in a bin.

**ASSESSMENT PLAN:**

**I will know whether all have accomplished the goals set out for this lesson by:**

* Student participation in whole-class discussion, small group activities, and individual work.
* Evaluating student responses on their exit slips.
* Assessing their first, second, and final drafts of their narrative essay.

**Differentiating Instruction/Plan B:**

If students seem to be uninterested in drawing a picture, I will have index cards with different places, such as “elementary school”, “family party”, “Simmons Middle School”, and “holiday”. The desks will be arranged in quads or stations. Each station will have an index card on it, and the students will have to discuss with their peers at their station a memory that they have as it relates to the given index card. Students will rotate stations. By the end of the period, students should have verbally shared 5-6 different memories. For homework, students will write 4-5 paragraphs based on the memories they shared to their peers. The final objective will still be choosing one of their memories to write a narrative paper.