

**Time Needed:** 90 minutes

**Supplies:**

- Duke TIP Videos (3)
- Index cards (optional)

*See the end of this lesson for Common Core correlation.*

**Content Objectives: Students will know:**

- Information about key characters in this unit: Scheherazade and Keita, fictional storytellers
- Contextual definitions of *obstacle*, *conflict*, and *motivation*

**Skill Objectives: Students will be able:**

- To listen carefully to material delivered via video and identify key facts of plot and character
- To identify *obstacle*, *conflict*, and *motivation* within a story

**Essential Understandings: Students will understand:**

- Everyone is a storyteller.
- Storytellers are good observers and listeners.
- Storytellers build a story around *obstacle*, *conflict*, and *motivation*.

**Essential Question: Students will explore:**

- What is the *obstacle*, *conflict*, and *motivation* in this story?

## Activities

### *Prework:*

Students should watch the three Duke TIP videos for homework and jot notes in answer to the questions that will be the class focus of discussion. Let them know that you will expect them to cite specifics they observed in the video.

- Meet Scheherazade and Keita (3:03)
- Meet the Characters (3:23)
- Conflicts, Problems, and Obstacles (4:16)

### *Modeling. (5 minutes)*

- Introduce the lesson with the line, “We’re all born storytellers. We were born with the desire for action and adventure fueled by daunting obstacles we must overcome. We were born with a taste to follow fascinating characters driven by compelling needs. I’m trying to get better at storytelling so I’m going to model one. Here’s my rough draft. Be listening for motivation, obstacle, and conflict.”
- Tell a story for students by relating a brief tale from your life (or fictional, but starring you) that has a motivation, obstacle, and a conflict. (Example: “A funny thing happened to me on the way to school...”)
- Do not point out the literary elements, but instead focus on making these elements somewhat memorable by finding an intriguing motivation, a meaningful obstacle, and a compelling conflict.
- For a story model, see the end of this lesson.) Then introduce the formal purpose and goals of today’s lesson.

*Analyze Two Famous Storytellers. (10)* Remind students of the three videos they watched for homework. Tell them to look Scheherazade and Keita, two fictional storytellers. Discuss their answers to the Meet Scheherazade and Keita video. Ask students to answer the questions you previewed, emphasizing observational evidence from the video—images, quotations—to back up their claims.

- *What is the most interesting part of Scheherazade's history? Why?*
- *How do you think her history, or backstory, might affect how she narrates the stories you're about to see?*
- *What qualities does Scheherazade seem to have? How do you know? How might her personality affect the stories she's about to tell you?*
- *What do you learn about Keita's background and personality during this scene as he interacts with Scheherazade?*
- *How might his personality and background affect the way he tells a story?*

*Define Literary Terms.* (5) Ask students to define these elements, and if they have trouble, provide these definitions:

- **motivations**—the desires and needs that characters have, and their attempts to pursue them throughout a story.
- **obstacles**—people, places, events, and other things that prevent characters from getting what they want;
- **conflicts**—the problems that arise from two different people or things in opposition, and the reasons these differences arise

*Analyze Character Problems and Obstacles.* (10) Discuss their answers to the Conflicts, Problems, and Obstacles video. Ask students to answer the questions you previewed, emphasizing observational evidence from the video—images, quotations—to back up their claims.

1. The **obstacle** confronting these characters are the rules of the world they find themselves in—the rules the Storytelling Gods have created. What rules must these characters follow in order to return home?
2. What **motivation** does each character have to return home? *Note:* only one character does not express a clear motivation.
3. Who has **conflicts** with whom, and why? *Note:* not all characters have conflicts with each other.
4. **Challenge Question:** if a character appears not to have clear motivations or defined conflicts with other characters, what role does he or she appear to play within the scene?

### Answer Key

*Thinking & Jotting Time.* (15) Tell students they are about to generate a story from their lives—or make one up on the fly (whatever they prefer) that has three key elements: a Motivation, an Obstacle, and a Conflict.

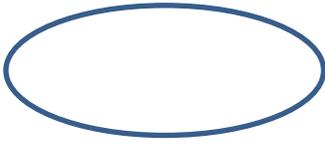
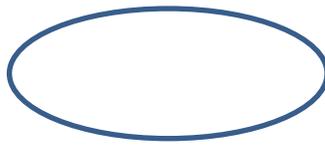
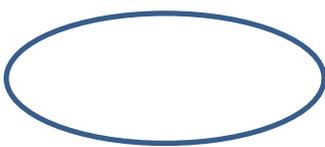
If they like, students can choose from a list you have on the board or on index cards, and create a story, or students can try to remember a time when they personally experienced one of the motivations and build a story from there, or dealt with an obstacle like one of those featured, and build a story from there. Starting with one key word should be enough to generate something, but those who like playing with multiple elements should act as if they are picking two cards and go from there.

Here are some options for the first two categories. If selecting from your list, let students know they can pick from any row in any column. The conflict they must generate themselves.

Ideas for Motivations and Obstacles:

MOTIVATION	OBSTACLE
loyalty	a tree
jealousy	a so-called friend
fear	a parent
compassion	a teacher
curiosity	a cat
pride	a crossing guard
worry	a store owner
obsession	a robot
safety	a computer hacker
power	a wall
freedom	a parrot
greed	a boot
rage	a banana

Ask students to prepare to journal by drawing three circles on their paper and captioning each circle in the following manner:

		
<b>MOTIVATION</b>	<b>OBSTACLE</b>	<b>CONFLICT</b>

Students should write for five minutes without stopping, letting ideas, however goofy or weird, flow.

*Turn to Your Partner and...* (10)

Ask students to share in pairs or triads by listening for and naming the a) main character's motivation b) the obstacle and c) the conflict. Tell students not to worry if any of these things end up missing, as there was only a short time to write.

Circulate to listen in on student abilities, making observational notes. Who in your class is your most effective oral storyteller, knowing how to emphasize and accelerate obstacle and conflict, building the story naturally to a climax? Who is talented at setting up a character's motivation?

*Reporting In (10)*

Ask a few students to share elements of their partner's story with the whole class and highlight a particularly interesting motivation, obstacle, or conflict. These shares should be celebratory and positive, not critiques, as students are in a generative phase and this is not yet a place for formative or summative feedback.

*Advanced Analysis.* (10) Ask students to share their initial thoughts on effective motivations, obstacles, and conflicts by answering these questions, using their classmates' brainstorming as evidence:

- An effective character motivation is one that drives the action of a character and moves the story forward. Where did you hear a character motivation that was already doing this? How do you know it's working?
- An effective plot obstacle is one that creates a true stumbling block for one or more characters. Where did you hear a plot obstacle that that was already doing this? How do you know it's working?
- What conflict was already intriguing to you? Why?

*Homework. (20-45)*

Write a rough draft of your story. You are welcome to change your mind and start over with brand-new topics. Write for 20 minutes minimum, 45 minutes maximum.

*Assessment.*

Because this is a formative assessment, you are looking for these elements that tell you more about students' creative writing and storytelling abilities:

- Is there a clear motivation for the main character?
- Is there a clear obstacle?
- Is there a clear and compelling conflict?
- Is the story intriguing, emotive, or in some other way engaging?

Do an internal ranking of student work in three or four groups by these beginning standards.

This creative writing unit is guided by a master [Story Rubric](#). Elements in the Plot section are pre-assessed in this lesson. What varying levels of student readiness do you see when it comes to crafting plot? How will that impact the design of your future creative writing lessons?

Want more? Head to the Creative Writing curriculum in the TIP Curriculum Archive to explore several more activities in this 10-lesson curriculum. This includes an electronic pretest of basic course content knowledge (terms and definitions).

## **Do you have ideas that worked for teaching creative writing? Share with us at Teachers Workshop!**

### **Common Core Standards Correlation:**

#### **Grade 5**

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.4c](#) Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.8](#) Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.10](#) Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

#### **Grade 6**

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3](#) Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

#### **Grade 7**

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.3](#) Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how motivation shapes the plot).

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.9](#) Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.