time is running out, because she has taken on a monumental task and will not devote herself to it if she feels that time constraints will prevent her from reaching her goal. If she will be in our school for years, then she has years in which to continue to work with us. If a change in schools is coming up, she must know that her reading program will continue, and that we will be making contact there to ensure that it does.

Keeping objectives realistic

Obviously Sarah, because of her intellectual deficits, will have built-in limitations on her reading ability. She may be stopped ultimately by her inability to deal with certain kinds of abstract reasoning. As texts go to higher levels, they demand a kind of intellectual processing that she may be unable to accomplish.

Where such limitations manifest themselves will depend, of course, on each individual. But suffice it to say two things. First, as long as she is moving forward, then (by definition) she has not reached her limit yet, and so more work must be done. Second, if her limit is, say, a Grade 3 level in her reading (not uncommon), this is not a defeat for her. To come from no reading, or little reading, to Grade 3 is to have become functional in many reading contexts—and it feels great. As she matures and continues to practice, her vocabulary will continue to expand, however slowly.

Methodology

Every reading teacher has his or her own ways of making reading work, and I would not presume to offer instruction. But I will offer a few of the principles of my own methodology that have been successful. Almost every student that I have worked with—some beginning with virtually no reading ability at all—have ultimately tested at level 3, and some have gone higher. It has typically required 3 years or more to accomplish this.

I find that my best results are achieved by providing a little instruction every day, rather than lengthy periods with days between sessions. Children are withdrawn from their regular classes for 15 or 20 minutes at the same time each day. Each child comes to my classroom at the appointed time and works on an individualized program. I will typically have up to six students in the room at once, and I move from child to child using a guided reading approach. Each child has his or her own set of materials specific to the child's level and learning style, including work to be done directly with me and work to be done independently while I am with others. It is a complex and highly organized system in which I am in constant motion, ensuring that each student gets sufficient and appropriate attention. The groupings mix higher and lower level readers so that some students can do independent reading while I work with each of the others.

I have found 20 minutes to be an optimum time; as we must remember, reading for these children is extremely difficult and tiring, both intellectually and emotionally (and, therefore, physically). Ideally, of course, I would work with each child alone for the entire time. But I work in a school with a very large number of students who fit the profile that we've looked at here, and groupings are necessary if all of them are to get what they need. Experiments with individual work every second or third day for longer periods have been far less successful than sessions every day for shorter periods. (I do see the total nonreaders individually, but often they require somewhat less than 20 minutes each day to get what they need.) Students come eagerly to my room, and some even get angry if I am forced to cancel a session.

Back to fundamental principles

And so, with our help, Sarah moves from being a nonreader to being a reader. Her view of the world and of herself is changed forever. But no matter who we're dealing with, or what sort of disabilities are present, or what programming design we may wish to use, certain fundamental principles play an essential role. Teaching seriously disabled preadolescent nonreaders how to read begins with crucial attention to how they feel. We must accurately assess strengths and weaknesses, abilities and disabilities; we must define the continuum with which we will work, and we must find starting points that will guarantee initial success. We must be very clear about time constraints, and we must identify and use appropriate materials, remembering that it is our implementation of these resources, and not the resources themselves, that will determine our success. We must have no illusions about our role; we must do it right, because for each child, learning to read is not just important—it's everything.

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The Story Face: An adaptation of story mapping that incorporates visualization and discovery learning to enhance reading and writing

Laura A. Staal

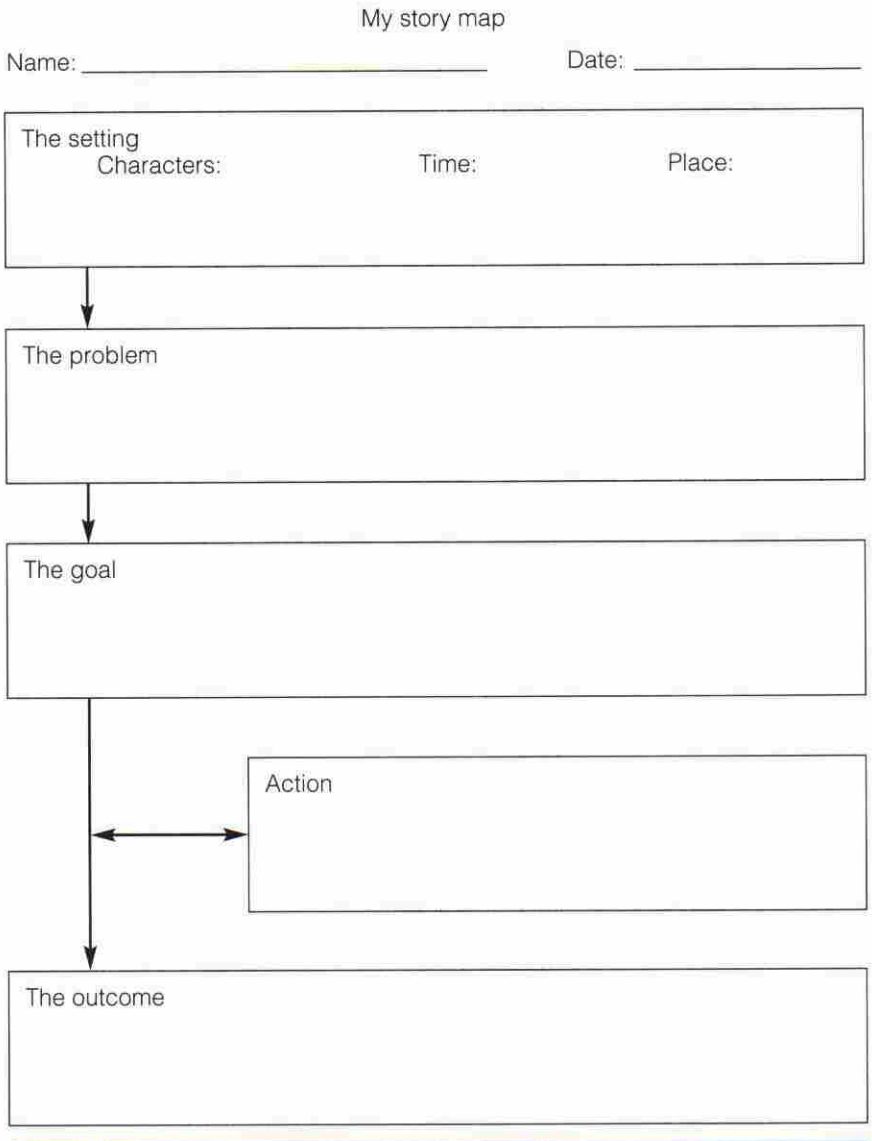
Reading comprehension tasks are not only among the most difficult tasks that students with deficits in reading struggle with but are also among the most important life skills that all children need to develop in order to function successfully in society (Boyle, 1996). Consequently, many teachers use whatever strategies they can to help students comprehend what they read. Research suggests that successful implementation of the following learning strategies may result in positive overall gains in reading comprehension for the struggling reader: (a) cognitive mapping (Boyle, 1996; Darch & Eaves, 1986), (b) critical thinking maps (Idol, 1987a), (c) semantic feature analysis (Bos, Anders, Filip, & Jaffe, 1989), (d) semantic mapping (Englert & Mariage, 1991; Sinatra, Berg, & Dunn, 1985; Sinatra, Stahl-Gemake, & Berg, 1984),

(e) story mapping (Idol, 1987b; Idol & Croll, 1987), and (f) visual imagery (Carnine & Kinder, 1985; Chan, Cole, & Morris, 1990; Clark, Deshler, Schumaker, Alley, & Warner, 1984).

All of these strategies use some form of visualization to help the reader remember. For example, with the visual imagery strategy students form pictures in their minds, and the story map strategy provides readers with a graphic representation of story elements. This article focuses on a visual learning strategy that I developed called the Story Face. The Story Face is an original adaptation of the popular story mapping strategy that also uses a visual framework for understanding, identifying, and remembering elements in narrative text.

The main difference between a traditional story map and the Story Face is that the latter not only provides a series of shapes with labels, but it also presents the overall image of a face that gives readers a meaningful context for understanding. Examples of a commonly cited story map and of the Story Face strategy may be found in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. In my teaching experiences, I have noted several strengths of the Story Face strategy when used with students in first through fifth grades. These strengths are discussed below.

Figure 1
The story map strategy



From "Group story mapping: A Comprehension Strategy for Both Skilled and Unskilled Readers." L. Idol, (1987). *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *20* (4), 196–205. Copyright 1987, by PRO-ED, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

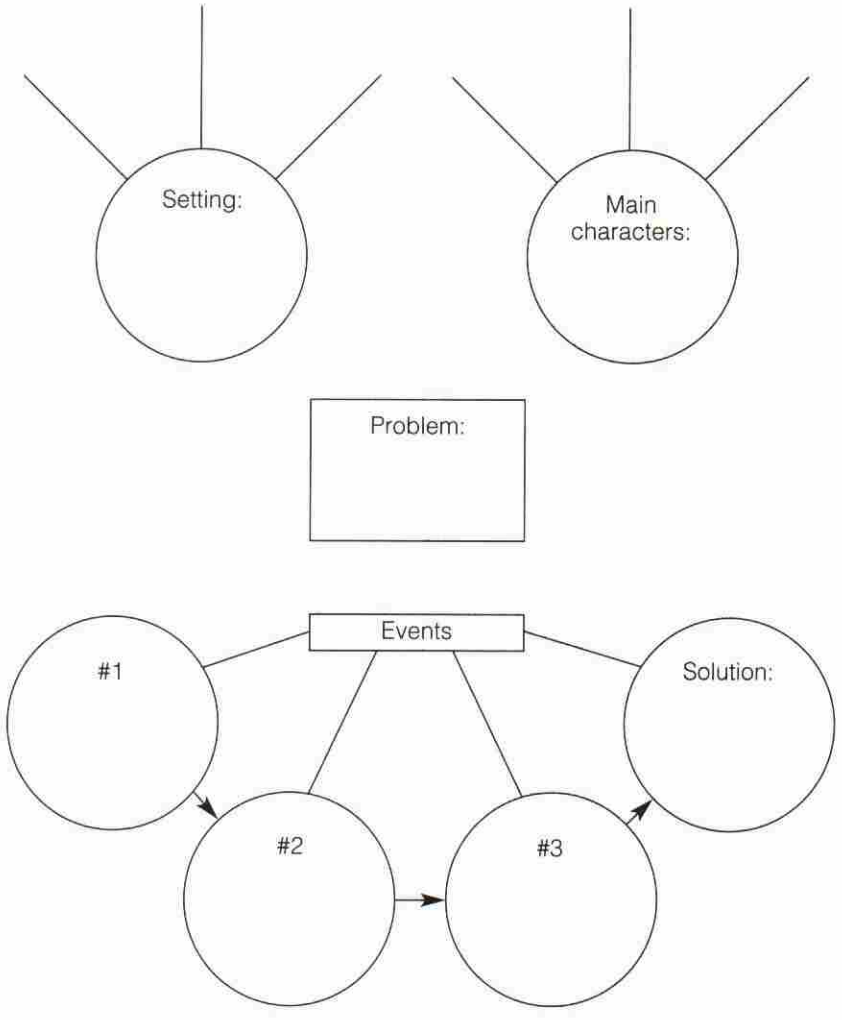
The Story Face is easy to construct

Faces are not only among the first objects children recognize (Simion, Valenza, & Umilta, 1998) but are also among the first objects children learn to draw (Pontius, 1983). Instead of the complex series of boxes with labels in a traditional story map, the Story Face provides a recognizable object upon which to outline a story. The eyes are two circles that represent the setting and main characters with eyelashes for adding specific descriptors and secondary characters. The nose corresponds to the problem, and the mouth comprises a series of circles representing the main events that lead to the solution.

The Story Face is easy to remember

Much attention has been given to reading comprehension strategies that capitalize on schema theory. This theory emphasizes reading comprehension as an active process that bridges the gap between new information and the reader's prior knowledge or schemata (Pearson & Johnson, 1978). According to this theory, schemata are activated before, during, and after reading so that new information can be understood (Weisberg, 1988). This process can be easy for competent readers who actively construct meaning while reading by integrating new information with existing knowledge structures (Flood & Lapp, 1991). Less competent readers, on the other hand, may struggle to activate and apply prior knowledge or to notice the relationship between their prior knowledge and new information (Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert, & Goetz, 1977; Baker & Brown, 1984). According to Spiro (1980) and Flood and Lapp (1991), instruction in specific reading comprehension strategies targeting the understanding and usage of text structure can improve these skills. The

Figure 2
The Story Face strategy



Graphic by Paula Clifford and Doug Ritsema

Story Face strategy achieves this improvement by establishing a framework of information organization, storage, and retrieval in the familiar shape of a face. Not only does it provide a holistic and meaningful context for learning, but it is also easy to remember.

The Story Face simply consists of two eyes, a nose, and a mouth. It promotes active questioning by raising before, during, and after reading questions in students' minds such as these: I wonder what the setting and main characters will be, and how many eyelashes will I add? What part of the face do I need to look for next? Do I have all the parts of the face filled in?

I like to extend the analogy of the face and its component parts by telling students of connections that help me to remember. For example, when you go to a new place you use your *eyes* to see what it looks like (setting) and to see what important people are there (main characters). I also tell my students that when I catch a cold, it is my *nose* that first signals trouble when I sneeze (problem). Similarly, I tell students that the shape of a *mouth* can tell you a lot about how people feel because of specific events that have happened in their lives. Are they smiling? Or are they frowning? Just like the mouth can communicate many ideas and emotions, so can storybooks (events that lead up to the solution). Sharing what helps me to remember will, I hope, lead students to create their own mnemonics for improving memory.

The Story Face can guide retelling

The Story Face can also be used as a guide for retelling because it helps students understand and remember narrative text structure. Story retelling is a technique to develop the oral or written recounting of a story. Students are simply asked to reconstruct the story's important parts (main characters, setting, problem, events, and solution) after it has been read (Walker, 1992). When students use the Story Face they can accurately recount story elements by cross-checking information included or excluded in their retelling against the corresponding parts of the Story Face. According to Cambourne and Brown (1990), the retelling procedure not only promotes the understanding and remembering of narrative text structures but also promotes learning in the areas of text conventions, vocabulary, reading flexibility, and self-confidence.

The Story Face is collaboratively learned through discovery

I have found it useful to introduce students to the traditional story map first. Once students become familiar with the concept, I map out a story with them using the Story Face without mentioning that I'm introducing a new strategy. Collaboratively we map out the setting, main characters, and problem on the chalkboard or overhead projector according to the framework. At this point or soon thereafter, a student will inevitably call out, "Hey, it looks like you're drawing a face!" I respond, "What do you mean? Can you come up to the board and explain what you see to the whole class?" The student then proceeds to show us what she or he perceives. Thus, the strategy is discovered. Together, we map out the rest of the story, discussing how the remaining elements fit within the context of a face. Instead of telling students I'm introducing a new strategy, I provide the context for them to figure it out on their own.

The learning benefits of teachers working collaboratively with students were first recognized by John Dewey (1921) and have come up again in literature exploring the implications of cultural theory (Cole, 1990; Vygotsky, 1997). This theory recommends that teachers provide students with meaningful contexts to actively engage them in the learning process. Instead of the traditional teacher-directed approach to instruction, teachers and students are seen as partners who learn and discover together.

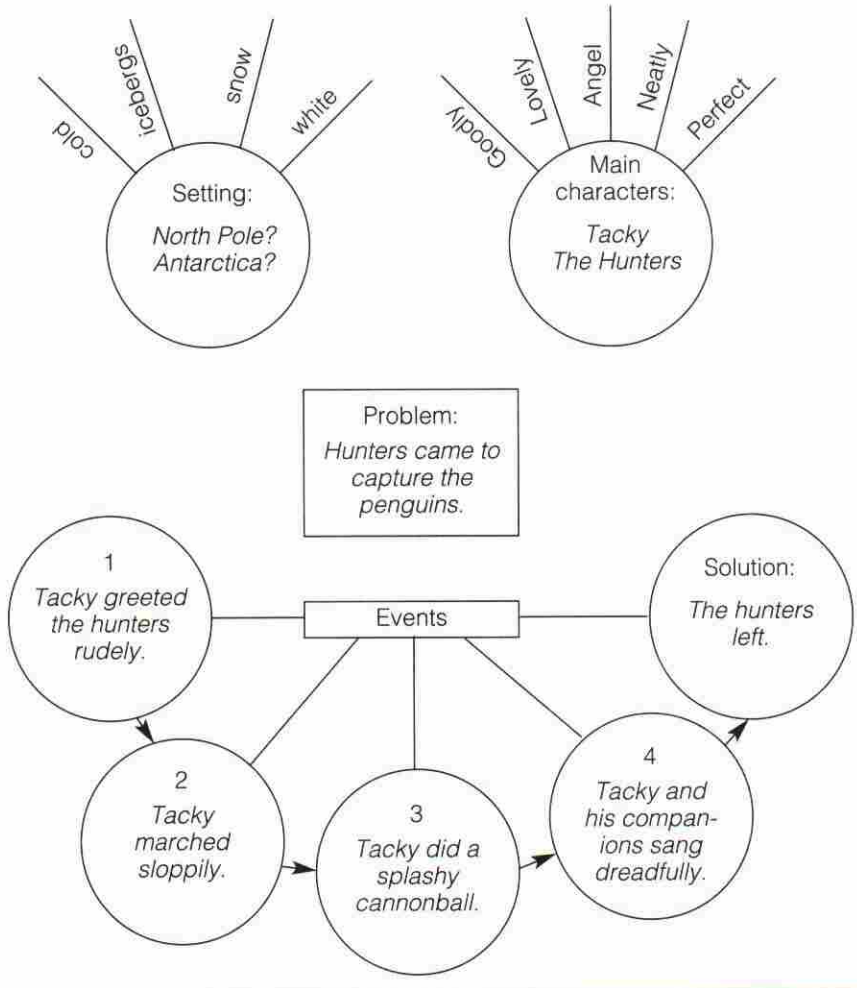
The Story Face is flexible

The flexibility of the Story Face is illustrated in the treatment of story resolution, in the number of story events, in the construction of the face, and in the range of ages and abilities of students with which it can be used. Let me explain.

Story resolution. I chose two narrative texts with opposite resolutions to illustrate the flexibility of the Story Face. *Tacky the Penguin* by Helen Lester (Houghton Mifflin, 1988) has a very happy resolution. Tacky, an odd penguin with many unusual qualities, saves himself and his companions from hunters who want to capture and sell them for money. *Sebgugugu the Glutton* by Verna Aardema (Eerdmans, 1993), on the other hand, is a retold African tale in which Sebgugugu, a very gluttonous man, never listens to the advice given to him by the god of Rwanda or his wife. He eventually ends up forfeiting his life and the lives of his family members. The ending of this story is a sobering one that delivers a powerful message on greed. Most students are shocked at the resolution. Thus, how the mouth of the Story Face is drawn (smiling or frowning) depends upon the nature of the story's resolution and upon how individual students perceive the resolution (happy or sad). Figures 3 and 4 illustrate this point.

Number of story events. These two stories were also chosen as examples based on the number of events in each that lead to the resolution. Once again, these examples illustrate the flexibility of the Story Face to accommodate stories with a different number of events. So often students get caught up in the magical number of three—that every story has and must have three events.

Figure 3
"Happy" Story Face example



Graphic by Paula Clifford and Doug Ritsema

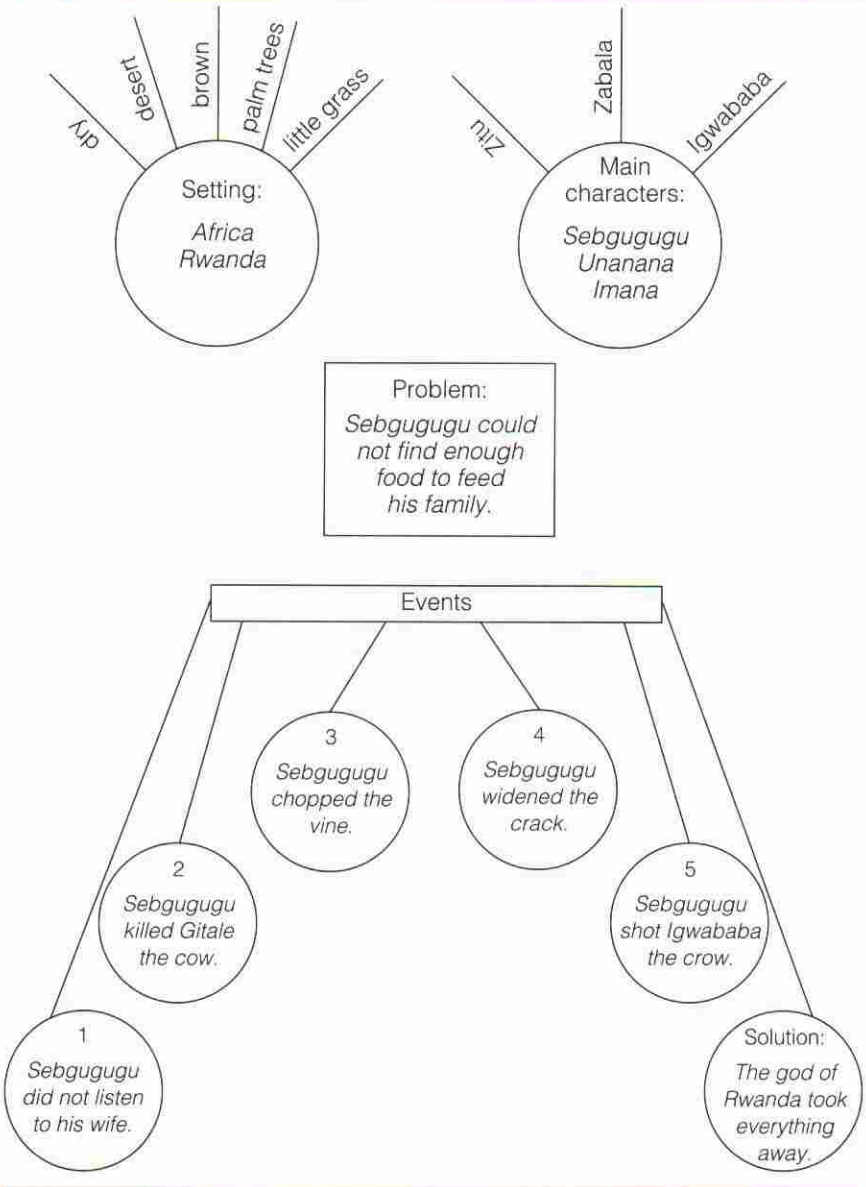
Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the point that this is not always the case.

Strategy construction. The Story Face has flexible construction. In one fourth-grade class a student asked, "What about the ears? How come there aren't any ears?" I responded, "Would you like to put in some ears? What would we use them for?" The student suggested that the ears could be for writing down the names of other classes, friends, or family members who might enjoy listening to the story. This student came up with a creative idea that addressed the element of audience in reading and writing.

This dialogue led to another student coming up with the idea of drawing a circle around the entire face and adding hair. The individual hairs could then be used to write down personal responses to the story, like reader response journal entries. The flexibility to add different components to the Story Face is not only a strength of the strategy, but also a feature that I think should be encouraged. Such solicitation and incorporation enhance the collaborative nature of the strategy and lead the student to her or his own process of discovery.

Different ages and abilities. A final aspect of the strategy's flexibility is the opportunity to use the Story Face with different age groups and with children of differing abilities. The strategy is not only effective with older and more capable stu-

Figure 4
"Sad" Story Face example



Graphic by Paula Clifford and Doug Ritsema

dents who are able to manipulate and reproduce it independently, but it is also effective with younger children when used collaboratively on the classroom chalkboard, overhead projector, or chart paper.

The Story Face is a framework for narrative writing

Perhaps the greatest strength of the Story Face is that it provides a framework for narrative writing. Writing is one of the most difficult areas of academic achievement for children because it is considered the highest level of language development. It is a skill that is continuously refined and has an impact throughout life (Smith, Dowdy, Polloway, & Blalock, 1997). Students who struggle with writing have difficulties in organizing and composing their writing as well as in remembering and employing strategies that aid them in this process (Englert & Raphael, 1988). Skilled writers, on the other hand, use a variety of strategies for prewriting, composing, structuring, revising, and editing (Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1998). Therefore, an important goal of writing instruction for all students is that it develop strategies for all stages of the writing process (Graham et al., 1998). Calfee, Chambliss, and Beretz (1991) have suggested that writers may feel more confident in their abilities to compose if they are given a model from which to write. The Story Face, in my opinion, provides such a model for narrative writing composition by giving students an outline in which to put their ideas about the important parts of a story they are thinking of writing.

Tompkins (1994) outlined specific steps on how to teach children to write when following a writing model such as the Story Face. The steps include explaining the model, sharing examples of writing that use the model, reviewing the model, composing collaboratively with the model, and finally having students compose individually using the model. After they have composed individually, encourage students to share their writing with a partner or the rest of the class. Remember that the Story Face is a scaffold, or *framework*, for narrative writing and not a final piece of writing in itself (unless, of course, the learning exercise targets prewriting). In addition to the information included on a completed Story Face, students should be encouraged to include supporting details and rich descriptions in their final drafts.

The Story Face is an original adaptation of story mapping that provides a visual framework for understanding, identifying, and remembering elements in narrative text. It is easy to construct and remember and can be used as a guide for story retellings. The Story Face can be learned through discovery and is flexible in how it accommodates resolutions, events, construction, and varying student ages and abilities. It is an easy-to-use model for narrative writing composition.

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Desks don't move—Students do: In effective classroom environments

Diane Lapp
James Flood
Kelly Goss

The first-grade Writers' Club members were excited about rehearsing for their anxiously awaited "punch party" performances, as they reviewed one another's practice of the oral presentations of their autobiographies. Writers' Club was a part of these first graders' daily classroom routine. They loved to read and write, and they enjoyed doing oral performances because these allowed them to share their authorial voices.

As their concluding school year experience the children and their teachers had planned a performance, which their teachers had suggested calling a high tea. (Kelly Goss was the students' regular first-grade teacher. Diane Lapp's sabbatical was spent team teaching with Goss, and James Flood was a frequent classroom visitor. Lapp continues to team teach mornings in Goss's classroom.) The children decided they liked the name "punch party" much better. The students had been busy for 2 weeks reading and listening to books whose main characters were authors, engaging in lively classroom conversations about these characters, and writing and peer editing many drafts of their autobiographies. With their teachers they decided that the culminating event to celebrate the writing of their life stories should be a punch party where they would read from their autobiographies to an invited audience.

Their teachers were delighted with the rehearsal for the punch party, especially when Angel said, "As soon as everyone leaves the punch party, we'll have more to add to our autobiographies. We'll have to tell about our party."

"Yeah," said Asrelea, "Our biographies are like writing a diary."

"They'll never end," laughed Laron.

As the other 17 children smiled and nodded their heads in agreement, it was obvious that they had begun to recog-