

Harriet the Spy Lesson Plan | Scholastic.com

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Subject Area: Language Arts

Reading Level: 3.5

Book Summary The classic story of a spirited young girl who prepares for a life of espionage by literally spying on her friends and neighbors. However, Harriet's life turns upside down when her friends find her spy notebook, which includes some blunt observations about them. All is well in the end when Harriet figures out a way to apologize to her friends...and learns some important life lessons too!

Objective

Students will become familiar with diary writing as a literary form.

Standard: *Students will practice using writing and other methods (e.g. drawing pictures, using letters or phonetically spelled words, telling, dictating, making lists) to describe familiar persons, places, objects, or experiences.*

Before Reading

Powers of Observation

Give your students a chance to practice describing what they know.

1. Ask each student to pick a familiar person, place, object, or experience and write about it as descriptively as possible. Students should avoid actually naming the person, place, object, or experience in their written description.
2. Once each has finished, invite them to read their descriptions aloud to the class. Ask the other students to guess what person, place, object, or experience is being described. Have fun!
3. Talk about why some descriptions were easier to identify than others. What words were especially helpful? Why is it important to be observant?
4. Have each student draw a picture of his or her chosen person, place, object, or experience. Post the artwork, along with the description, on a classroom bulletin board.

Teaching Plan

Activities

My Spy Diary

Harriet's spy observations strengthened her writing abilities. Help your students do the same!

1. If possible distribute individual diaries to your students. (Students can also create their own diaries by stapling folded sheets of paper together.) Explain that these will be Spy Diaries.
2. Ask students to imagine that they, like Harriet, are preparing for a life as a "spy." Have them record their observations for a set period of time. You choose the length — from one class period to one day to one week. Remind them that a spy's life may depend on his or her powers of observation. Have students be as detailed as possible.
3. Choose one common experience for each student to record — whether it is gym class, lunch period, or another shared time.

4. At the conclusion of the allotted time, remind students that their observations should be factual and not insulting to classmates. Remember the troubles Harriet got into! Invite students to share their "common experiences" aloud to the class.
5. Talk about each student's entry. How are they alike? How are they different? Who came up with the most detail? Who was most creative in his or her descriptions?

From the Other Side

How might an experience appear from the other side of the diary?

1. *Harriet the Spy* is full of Harriet's observations about the people and events around her. What might someone else's perspective be like?
2. Have each student choose one favorite diary entry from the book. Ask them to think about the person or event about which Harriet is writing. Now imagine retelling the diary entry from someone else's point of view. For instance, how would Harriet's observations differ from those of Ole Golly? the Cook? Sport?
3. Ask each student to write an alternative diary entry, this time from another person's point of view.
4. Have each student read the original entry, along with his or her revised version, aloud to the class.
5. Post "new" diary entries on a classroom bulletin board.

Other Books in Diary Format

Sarah, Plain and Tall

by *Patricia MacLachlan*

Anna and Caleb live on the prairie frontier with their widowed father. Things begin to change when Sarah arrives from Maine. The change isn't always easy, but Anna records every experience in her diary.

Amelia's Notebook

by *Marissa Moss*

Feisty and spirited, Amelia records everything in her notebook — from moving to a new school to losing some friends and making others.

The Dear America Series

Life at various points in American history is recorded in the diary entries of girls living during those periods.

Other Books by Louise Fitzhugh

The Long Secret

Sport

Nobody's Family Is Going to Change

Bang, Bang You're Dead! Suzuki Beane

Lesson Plan Written by Rebecca Gomez

- Subjects:

Curriculum Development, Literature, Literature Appreciation, Descriptive Essay, Narrative Writing, Arts and Creativity, Observation, Friends and Friendship, Educational Standards

- Skills:

Point of View, Descriptive Writing, Narrative Writing

