**Story Structure with a Costume Design Twist**

By Giselle Gremmert

**Objective:** Students will understand basic story structure by performing a small reader’s theatre and drawing a basic plot structure for a story.

**Materials Needed:**

- 40 newspapers

- 5-10 rolls of masking tape

- More Than a Match story (attached)

**Hook: (15 minutes)**

Immediately after taking roll, put students into 10 groups of 3-4 students. Give each group a number 1-10. From this point forward until the game starts, students have to be completely silent. Draw a story structure line on the board.

Rules of the game: Students raise their hands, and if called on, can yell out what this line represents, or label any portion of the line. The first student to answer gets their groups number written down first. If students run out of answers, the rest of the groups get their numbers written down in a random order (or whoever is sitting the quietest).

Looking for answers like story structure, exposition/back story, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement (bonus point for this word).

Discussion about the story structure plot isn’t needed at this point in the lesson.

Once the different group numbers are written on the board, tell them that today we are going to be performing a little show. There are 10 characters in the show, and there are 10 groups. In each group, one student will be the performer, and the others have a different task that I will explain in a minute. But first, groups need to pick their character. Based off of who answered first, they get to pick the character their group would like to work with.

The characters are:

Wise One Giant (onstage the most)

King Queen

First Councilor Master of Clubs

Second Councilor Master of Swords

Third Councilor Master of Fire

\*\*Each of the councilors is buddies with the Master of \_\_\_\_ directly to their right on the list. First councilor is friends with Master of Clubs, etc. This will be important in a minute.

Once each group has a character, each group needs to select a performer.

**Instruction: (5 minutes)**

Before we can begin our play, we need to distinguish our actors and their characters a bit more. So, we’re going to be making them costumes… out of newspaper and masking tape. Each group will be given 4 newspapers and a roll of masking tape. (You might need to share between groups). So, people who are not performers, if you haven’t figured it out yet, you are costume designers. Performers, your job right now is to do what they say and hold still.

Spread out around the room. You only have 10 minutes to complete your costumes.

**Practice: (10 minutes)**

Students have 10 minutes to complete the costume for their character. This is where the councilor groups may be interested to know their connection to the different masters. The purpose of the costumes is not to help the students with plot structure, but to help them become more engaged in the story so they can understand all the elements of plot structure later. Don’t get too wrapped up in making the costumes perfect.

**Clean-up: (5 minutes)**

We cannot begin the performance until every scrap of newspaper is picked up off the floor and thrown in the trash. Any unused newspaper needs to stacked neatly in a pile, and every roll of tape needs to be handed back to me.

Set up the room according to the best way to perform for the space. The king and queen can stay on stage the whole time in their thrones off to the side or enter and exit like everyone else.

**Performance: (20 minutes)**

Read the entire story out loud to the class. The majority of the time, the story lends itself to telling students when it is time to enter and exit, but there may be a few spots that need prompting.

A group picture and bows are a fun way to end the performance.

**Clean-up: (3 minutes)**

Have students take off their costumes and throw away the newspaper. Everyone else should rearrange the classroom back to facing the board.

**Instruction: (10 minutes)**

Up at the board, ask students what different things happened in the story—write them down as students say them, not in order. With every story, there is a structure to how it is written. Most stories follow the basic plot structure you may have seen in your English classes at one point or another.

Draw the plot structure and explain the following concepts:

Exposition

Inciting Incident

Rising Action

Climax

Denouement

Ask students for examples of where in our story they think these different things happened. Write them all down on the board.

What do you think is the hardest moment for new writers to pinpoint in their story?
Believe it or not, it’s the climax. A lot of times we don’t realize what the real climax is in our own stories, even though it seems really obvious in other people’s stories. To help us with that, we have what’s called a Major Dramatic Question.

The Major Dramatic Question, or MDQ, is the question that is surrounding the whole story. Once this question is answered, the rising action of the story stops and we find out the resolution.

**Group Practice: (10 minutes)**

If we were doing *Beauty and the Beast,* the inciting incident is when the witch comes and turns the prince into the beast. What would be our MDQ?

Will the prince every meet his true love to turn human again?

So, if that’s our MDQ, the climax is whenever the MDQ is answered. What happens in Beauty and the Beast that answers the question?

Belle says she loves the Beast—he transforms back into a man.

In our story, what is the MDQ?

(Will people be able to get from Here to There?) REMEMBER—the question is not, Will they defeat the giant—why would they want to defeat the giant? Because they need to get from Here to There. That’s the bigger picture.

What happens in the story to answer the MDQ?

(The Wise One tricks the Giant into helping people across the bridge—now they can travel from Here to There.)

**Small Group Practice/Assessment: (10 minutes)**

In groups of three, students are going to pick a story they all know well and create the plot structure for the story including the MDQ. It will be turned in at the end of class.

**More Than a Match**

*By Aaron Shepard*

**Characters**

Wise One Giant

King Queen

First Councilor Master of Clubs

Second Councilor Master of Swords

Third Councilor Master of Fire

There was once a man so wise that no one could say just how wise he was. He was also so old that no one remembered his name—and he’d forgotten it himself. So they called him simply the Wise One.

Now, the Wise One lived close to the kingdom’s capital, which was called the city of Here. Just a day’s ride away lay another city, which was called the city of There. And the single road between them carried many travelers by horse, cart, and carriage.

One day, when a merchant from Here had ridden his horse halfway to There, he came upon a huge man standing in the middle of the road. The man was half again taller than the merchant, and dressed like a merchant himself.

The giant shouted,

“None shall pass without a fight.
Choose your weapon, dark or light.
I’ll more than match you, wrong or right!”

“Never mind!” squeaked the merchant. And he fled back to the city, warning everyone he met on the way.

It was not long before he told the King too. “Dear me, dear *me,*” said the King. “What must I do? What *must* I *do?*”

The Queen leaned over to him. “Darling, why don’t—”

“Not now, my love,” said the King. “I must listen to my Council of Three!”

The First Councillor lifted his finger. “Your Majesty, a king must protect his subjects and uphold their right to travel where they wish. One of your warriors must battle the giant. Send the Master of Clubs!”

“Oh my, oh *my,*” said the King. But he called for the Master of Clubs and gave the order.

The next morning, the Master of Clubs rode out till he came to the giant, who was now dressed up like a Master of Clubs.

The giant bellowed,

“None shall pass without a fight.
Choose your weapon, dark or light.
I’ll more than match you, wrong or right!”

The brawny warrior dropped from his horse and growled, “I choose clubs.”

But as he raised his own club, the giant raised one bigger and heavier. *Whomp! Whomp! Whomp!—*and the Master of Clubs was shorter and wider than before.

The flattened warrior raced back to the King. “Dear me, dear *me,*” said the King, and again asked, “What must I do? What *must* I *do?*”

“Darling,” said the Queen, “why don’t you—”

“Not now, my love,” said the King. “My Councillors will surely know what’s best!”

The Second Councillor pulled his ear. “Your Majesty, this is a great insult to your kingdom and must not go unanswered. Send the Master of Swords!”

“Oh my, oh *my,*” said the King, but he called for the Master of Swords.

The next morning, the Master of Swords rode till he came to the giant, who was now dressed up like a Master of Swords.

The giant roared,

“None shall pass without a fight.
Choose your weapon, dark or light.
I’ll more than match you, wrong or right!”

The lanky warrior sprang from his horse and cried, “I choose swords!”

But just as he drew his own sword, the giant drew one longer and sharper. *Swish! Swish! Swish!—*and the shirt of the Master of Swords hung in shreds.

The tattered warrior raced back to the King. “Dear me, dear *me,*” said the King. “What must I do? What *must* I *do?*”

“Darling,” said the Queen, “why don’t you ask—”

“Not now, my love,” said the King. “At times like this, we must trust in the Councillors!”

The Third Councillor tapped his nose. “Your Majesty, your kingdom now faces the gravest of challenges to its very existence. You have no choice but to use your most powerful warrior. Send the Master of Fire!”

“Oh my, oh *my,*” said the King. But he called for the Master of Fire.

The next morning, the Master of Fire rode till he came to the giant, who was now dressed up like a Master of Fire.

The giant thundered,

“None shall pass without a fight.
Choose your weapon, dark or light.
I’ll more than match you, wrong or right!”

The ruddy warrior leaped from his horse and barked, “I choose fire!”

He swiftly lit his torches and tossed them at the giant, one after the other. But the giant caught them and threw them back faster, burning brighter and hotter than before. *Whizz! Whizz! Whizz!—*and the Master of Fire was singed from head to foot.

The smoldering warrior raced back to the King. “Dear me, dear *me,*” said the King. “What must I do? What *must* I *do?*”

But not one of the Councillors could say.

Then the Queen leaned over once more. “Darling, why don’t you ask the Wise One?”

“My love!” said the King. “A wonderful idea! I’m *so* glad we thought of it.” And he called for the Wise One.

The Wise One arrived next morning and listened carefully to the King’s story. Then he said, “I will go at once.”

With a cart and horse loaned by the King, the Wise One drove out till he came to the giant, who was now dressed up like a Wise One.

The giant shouted,

“None shall pass without a fight.
Choose your weapon, dark or light.
I’ll more than match you, wrong or right!”

“Well!” said the Wise One. “I shall have to think on this!” And so saying, he settled himself to ponder.

The giant stood stone still.

After a while, the Wise One’s stomach grumbled. He reached into his bag for a loaf of brown bread and broke off a piece. He was about to bite into it when he heard a growl from the stomach of the giant.

“Perhaps you too are hungry,” said the Wise One pleasantly. He held out the piece of bread. “Would you care to share my humble repast?”

“So!” cried the giant. “You try to conquer me with kindness! But now I’ll more than match you.”

Almost faster than the Wise One could see, the giant took from his own bag a table and chair and all manner of tasty, wholesome dishes fit for a Wise One—grains, cheeses, vegetables, fruits. Then before the Wise One could look twice, the giant stood there again, solid as rock and blocking the road.

“So *that’s* the way of it,” murmured the Wise One.

He got down from the cart and sat at the table to enjoy the giant’s offering. When he’d eaten enough to satisfy his hunger, and a little more, he leaned back contentedly and gazed thoughtfully at the giant.

“I should like you to know a little about me. I live in a cottage in a forest outside the city of Here. And though I make no such claim for myself, others call me the Wise One.”

The giant bellowed, “Another contest! But you won’t win, because now I’ll tell you even more about *me.* I have no name, for my father is the wind, and my mother is a curved mirror. Like any mirror, I show only what I see, and I have no power or skill but what you choose.”

“I thought as much,” said the Wise One, rising from the table. “But the day is more than half done, and I must reach the city of There before dark.”

He stepped up to the giant and smiled kindly. “May I offer you a ride?”

The giant screamed, “You dare to challenge me again? This time I’ll best you once and for all!”

He picked up the Wise One, then the cart, then the horse, all together. Then he raced down the road, as fast as any wind—all the way to the city of There.

The giant set them down gently at the city gate. “I hope you’ve at last learned your lesson,” he said.

“Oh, I have!” said the Wise One breathlessly. “I thank you for it—and so will the King and all his subjects, I’m sure.”

Then the giant raced back up the road and was out of sight within seconds.

And ever since then—thanks to the Wise One—travelers between Here and There have only to bring themselves half of the way.

And then they get a ride from the giant.