Lesson 1: Constellation Creation

UNIT: Constellation Stories

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, writers, it's Margaret. When I was a kid, I went to Australia. I had to travel to the other side of the world. It has an amazing outback with tons of rock formations. Australia also has Lake Hillier—it's naturally bright pink. There were also lots of animals like kangaroos and emus. But my favorite part was seeing the night sky—there were more stars than I've ever seen in my life. It made me feel so small standing under it.

When I was in school, I learned about how the stars create pictures in the sky when you connect them. These pictures are called constellations. For centuries, people all over the world have connected these stars to create their own special pictures in the sky. They use their imagination to see animals, heroes, and mythical creatures in the star patterns.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: Look at this constellation. What do you see?

HOOK 2

Maybe you saw a peacock, or maybe you saw a whale, or a jellyfish in the sky. You may have seen something else, and that's great.

These constellations can be seen all over the world. In Greek culture, this constellation has been seen as a scorpion. In Indonesian culture, it's seen as a swan. And in Hawaiian culture, it's seen as the demigod, Maui's fishhook.

When people saw constellations and imagined pictures, they also came up with stories to go with them. Different cultures had different stories to go with the pictures they saw, like the story behind this fishhook: The demigod Maui went fishing with his brothers and tricked them by hooking the ocean floor instead of a fish and then pulled up the land to create the islands of Hawaii. Or this story about a scorpion who challenged a hunter named Orion to a race and won.

Here's another constellation—my imagination is already going with all the pictures and stories I could write that could go with this constellation!

As a writer, you can be the author of your very own constellation story. I already have so many ideas, and you might be thinking of some, too. But before writers start writing a story, they make a plan for how their story will go.

Story plans begin with a special place where a story can happen. Writers call this the setting. A setting for a story is where your character can come to life. The setting for our stories is going to be a place where lots of animals can be found—a forest—let's take a look.

Woah! There was so much to see. I noticed there were tall trees and a rushing river, and the ground was covered in colorful leaves. If I describe these parts of the setting to my reader, it can help them imagine that they're right there in the forest with me.

Now that I have a setting in mind for my story, I need a main character. My main character can come from this constellation. You can make it anything you want. Maybe a horse galloping in the sky or a wolf howling at the moon. Or maybe you see a fox scurrying through the stars.

I think I see a bear. I'll name him Cosmo—Cosmo Nebulapaws. So that will be who my story is about. Right now, Cosmo is just a bear. To make him a character in my story, I need to imagine what he's like. Like, is he a small bear or a big bear? And what color is he? What is his personality like? Is he happy? Cranky? Hungry?

DISCUSSION 2

Discuss.: Use your imagination to think about what Cosmo is like. How would you describe him?

HOOK 3

Here's what I thought of: Cosmo the bear is a big, fuzzy, brown bear who loves to be brave and adventurous.

Describing a character in a story is like introducing a new friend to your readers. By giving your character a description, like brown and fuzzy, you can help your reader picture the character while they read your story. Personality traits like brave and adventurous help your reader connect with your character.

Now it's your turn to imagine your character that you see in this constellation.

Later on, you'll start a story plan so you know how your story will go.

I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies.

STEP 2

In today's lesson, you'll need someone to share ideas with. This could be a partner or someone you sit near. When everyone knows who their talk partner is, move on to the next step.

STEP 3

Now get your Constellation worksheet.

Try connecting the stars.

There are lots of different ways to connect them. Connect the stars in a way that makes sense to you. From this, you can decide what animal you see. If you're not sure how to connect your stars, you can use one of the examples below.

STEP 4

Once you have your animal or creature, write what it is here.

STEP 5

The animal or creature you see will be your character. Now give it a name.

Once you have a name for your main character, write it here. You can always change your character's name later.

STEP 6

Draw a quick sketch of your character. This can help writers imagine characters by thinking about how they look.

STEP 7

What does your character look like? List out some words that would describe them on the lines here. If you need ideas, you can use your Word Bank.

STEP 8

What personality traits does your character have?

List out some words that would describe your character's personality traits here. If you need ideas, you can use your Word Bank.

STEP 9

Share with your partner.

Introduce your character. Tell them your character's name, what they look like, and their personality traits. You can start by saying, "I'd like to introduce you to..."

STEP 10

Get your Story Plan worksheet. This is where you'll draft the plan for your story.

Find number 1. Write your character's name here.

STEP 11

Find number 2. This is where you will write the setting for your story.

Since the setting for your story is a forest, you can write "forest" here.

STEP 12

Think about what the forest in your story looks like. I'll give you thirty seconds. If you need help, take a look at some of these pictures.

Discuss with a partner: What does the forest in your story look like?

STEP 13

Draw a quick sketch of your setting. This can help writers imagine the setting by thinking about how it looks.

HOOK 4

Wow! You came up with some unique characters and did a great job describing the forest in your story!

Now that I have my character in my setting, I can plan how my story will go. I need to decide what the character wants. I imagine that Cosmo is hungry, and he wants berries.

When writers decide what their character wants, it makes the story exciting because we get to go on an adventure with them to try and get what they want.

Now, my character can't just get what they want. He needs to encounter a problem. Imagine my story without a problem. Here's how it would sound:

> *There once was a bear who lived in the forest. He wanted some berries. So he got some. And he ate them.*
>
> *The end.*

DISCUSSION 4

Discuss: What did you notice about my story when it's written like this?

HOOK 5

Maybe you said it was too easy for Cosmo to get his berries or that the story was just a little too boring. I'll need to add a problem so that I give my character a chance to solve it and get what he wants.

When we give our characters a problem in our writing, it's like giving them a chance to be a hero in their own story. It makes the reader really root for them and want to see how they overcome the problem.

There are so many options I could use as a problem in this story. Like maybe he encounters a group of berry stealing squirrels. Or maybe a bigger bear saw the berries first. Or maybe the berries are on the other side of a river that can't be crossed because of slippery rocks and fast rapids.

I think the berries on the other side of the river with slippery rocks sounds like a good story for Cosmo. I can add this problem to my plan.

I now have parts of my story plan filled out. These are the parts of the plan for how the beginning and middle of my story will go. Writer's plans change all the time, so I might change some parts later on. For now, I have a good idea of what's going to happen in the beginning and middle of my story.

Now you can plan more of your constellation story. You'll fill in parts of your story plan just like I did. Yours will probably be different from mine, and that's okay.

As writers, we get to be creative in our own way and imagine stories in our own voice.

I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 14

Imagine something in the forest that your character wants—it doesn't have to be berries. They could want something different. Maybe your character wants to make some friends and start a forest band, or maybe your character wants to climb the tallest tree. Or maybe they're on the search for magical gems hidden in the forest.

Look at number 3 on your story plan. Draw a quick sketch of what your character wants here. If you're not sure what to draw, you can use one of these ideas. Don't worry if you don't finish. You'll have more time later.

When you're done drawing, give a silent thumbs up.

STEP 15

Finish the sentence with what your character wants.

STEP 16

When I came up with a problem for Cosmo, there were lots of choices. Remember, a problem is something that gets in the way of the character getting what they want. Another animal could be the problem, like those squirrels stealing the berries. Something unexpected could be a problem, like the rocks being slippery when he tried to cross the river.

Think of a problem that could get in the way of your character getting what they want. You can use one of these ideas or come up with your own.

Once you have your idea, write it on these lines.

STEP 17

Share with your partner. Tell your partner about what your character wants and the problem they encounter.

STEP 18

You probably came up with some awesome ideas for your story. You now have a plan that includes parts for the beginning and middle of your constellation story.

Before you go, the papers shown on the screen are V.I.P.s—very important papers. Your teacher will tell you where to put them so you'll have them for the next lesson.

WRAP UP

In the next lesson, you'll come up with a solution for your character's problem and end your constellation story.

That's all for now. I'll see you next time.