

This classroom activity introduces students to the context of the performance task. This ensures that students are not disadvantaged in completing the skills the task intends to assess. Contextual elements include understanding the situation of the task, potentially unfamiliar concepts associated with the situation or setting, and key terms or vocabulary students will need to understand in order to engage with the performance task. This classroom activity is also intended to interest the students in the task they are to complete. This activity should be easy to implement and contains clear instructions.

Please read through the entire classroom activity before beginning the activity with students. This will ensure that all classroom preparation is completed before the activity begins.

**Resources Needed:**

- Chart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard
- Markers or chalk
- Pencils or pens
- Blank paper

**Learning Goals:**

- Students will understand what a short story is
- Students will be able to identify the characteristics of a short story
- Students will understand the key terms:
  - **Narrative:** a story that tells a written account of events that are connected
  - **Short story:** a narrative that is shorter than a full book or novel
  - **Setting:** a place where the events in a story happen
  - **Fiction:** a story that is made up and that is about imaginary people and events

Definitions are provided here for the convenience of facilitators. Students are expected to understand these key terms as they arise in the context of the task, not to be able to recite the definitions.

[**Purpose:** The facilitator's goal is to give students an introduction to what a fictional short story is and what its characteristics are.]

[Note: The following classroom activity can be modified to accommodate various teacher-student interaction types such as a teacher-led discussion with the entire class, teacher-student discussion for remote locations with a single student, or small groups.]

[Divide students into small groups of 3-4. Hand out a piece of paper to each group.]

**Facilitator says:** "Today, we will get ready for a short story performance task. You will gain an understanding of what a short story is. What do you think of when you think of a short story?"

[Allow students to give their answers.]

**Facilitator says:** "A short story is a type of literature. It can be fiction, which means that it involves stories and characters that are imaginary. Short stories can be about anything, which is why they can be fun to read and write. Do you have a favorite short story?"

[Allow students to give their answers.]

**Facilitator says:** "Some good short stories seem believable, even if they are fictional. This is because of the details the authors include. Many times, authors will research a topic to fully understand it before they write a fictional story about it. For example, if you are writing about traveling to outer space, you can research what space might be like so that you can make your fictional story sound real."

**Facilitator says:** "Your group has received one piece of paper. On your paper, write the name of a story that you are all familiar with. Then, make a list of the things that make it a story."

[After 3-5 minutes, have the students meet as a class to share their list of ideas.]

**Facilitator asks:** "Now, what are some examples of short stories?"

[Allow students to give their answers.]

**Facilitator asks:** "What makes these short stories? I will call on some of you to share what you wrote."

[Allow students to give their answers and list each response on the board.]

**Possible student responses (*unscripted*):**

- settings
- characters
- problems
- solutions

**Facilitator says:** "These are all traits that are common in short stories. Now, can anyone think of reasons why short stories might be appealing to readers?"

[Allow students to answer.]

**Facilitator says:** "Short stories are also very fun to write. Before you write a short story, what should you do to prepare?"

[Allow students to answer.]

**Facilitator says:** "It is important to make sure you have a good knowledge of the field that your story will be exploring. If you want the story to be realistic, you must think of something that might happen one day, and if you are writing a fantasy, you might want it to be fun and magical."

**Facilitator says:** "In your performance task, you will be learning more about a subject so that you will have the knowledge to write your own fictional story. The work you did today should help you prepare for the research and writing you will be doing in the performance task."

[Collect all notes from students and remind them they cannot be used during the performance task.]