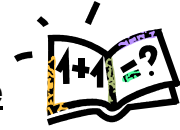


## Narrative Structure: Story Grammar for The Westing Game



### PURPOSE

Story mapping is a helpful planning tool that can be used by teachers before teaching a story. The structure of a story has been described as *story grammar*. A narrative is focused on the three basic elements of *setting*, *plot*, and *theme*. Underlying these elements is an intricate chain of events: the *initiating event*, an *internal response*, an *attempt*, an *outcome*, a *resolution*, and a *reaction*. Each event leads to the next, forming a causal chain. When a teacher analyzes the structure of a story, informed decisions can be made about what, when and how to teach. The story grammar allows students to identify the framework of a story. This identification leads to a deeper comprehension of the text as they explore explicit and implicit story elements.

### DIRECTIONS

#### STEP 1

(After students read The Westing Game) Ask students to think of the characters and actions that occur in the story. Allow students to share incidents and characters with the class.

#### STEP 2

Show students a sample story grammar on an overhead. Discuss the terms, clarifying the difficult concepts.

<i>The Initiating Event:</i>	An idea of an action that sets further events in motion.
<i>An Internal Response:</i>	The protagonist's inner reaction to the initiating event, in which the protagonist sets a goal or attempts to solve a problem.
<i>An Attempt:</i>	The protagonist's efforts to achieve the goal or alleviate the problem. Several attempts, some failed, may be evident in an episode.
<i>An Outcome:</i>	The success or failure of the protagonist's attempts.
<i>A Resolution:</i>	An action or state of affairs that evolves from the protagonist's success or failure to achieve the goal or alleviate the problem.
<i>A Reaction:</i>	An idea, an emotion, or a further event that expresses the protagonist's feelings about the success or failure of goal attainment/problem resolution or that relates the events in the story to some broader set of concerns

From: Vacca & Vacca text, p. 257

#### STEP 3

Distribute the story grammar handout to each student. Allow students about 20 minutes to fill out the sheet including specific details. When students complete the activity, have them discuss their answers in pairs or discuss as a class.

### ASSESSMENT

Story Grammar allows the teacher to assess his/her own understanding of The Westing Game, to prepare to teach the text in a more meaningful way, and also to discover how much students understand about the story. It encourages broader thinking about questioning about motives and intentions of the main characters as well as examination of underlying themes and conflicts within the text.