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Pass out story "A Good Little Feature"

by M.C. Blackman

He was a shabby old man. He looked like a country worker. You could see that he had never been in a police station before.

"Do you want to make bond?" the desk sergeant said.

"I dunno," he said. It was plain he didn't understand what a bond was.

"You can put up \$100 cash to make sure you will appear in court tomorrow," the sergeant explained.

"That's a heap of money," the man said.

"You can telephone someone to come down and make your bond."

"Don't know nobody."

"I'll have to lock you up then." The sergeant turned to a patrolman. "Search him and take him downstairs."

The prisoner did not like the idea of being searched. When the officer found a cotton bag pinned beneath his shirt, he became angry.

"Gimme back that, now. You ain't no right to take it. You're a-robbin' me, and I won't stand fer it."

The desk sergeant looked up from the pile of money he had taken out of the cotton bag. "Say, old man, don't you know it's dangerous to carry all that money with you?"

At these words, a young man sitting in a corner put down his newspaper and walked up to the desk.

"How much dough has he got, Sergeant?"

"There must be at least \$5,000 here," the sergeant said.

"It's \$5,500," the prisoner said. "Silas Jones paid me that for my farm when me and Ma decided to move to town. Silas can tell you the same, and I'll thank you to give it back to me."

The police reporter for the Evening Star was interested. He read from the docket: "'Henry Tucker, 906 Tenth Street, petty larceny.' What did he steal, Sergeant?"

"About 70 cents' worth of food from that store at the corner of Tenth and Cherry."

"With all that money in his pockets?" the reporter said.

"It ain't so!" the prisoner cried. "I warn't tryin' to get away, like they said. I was lookin' fer the feller in charge of that store. I never stole nothing' in my life."

The reporter laughed. "He's probably telling the truth."

"Listen, old man," the sergeant said. "You don't have to stay in jail when you have money to make bond." Carefully he explained how bond works. Finally the prisoner understood that his \$100 would be given back to him after his case had been heard in court.

"Do I get the rest of my money back now?" the prisoner said.

"Yes, but you better take it to a bank before somebody robs you."

"I been aimin' to, but me and Ma just got here. I ain't had time to pick out a bank."

The old man pinned his money under his shirt again and left. The reporter looked at the clock.

"Almost time for the edition," he said. "Guess I'll drag back to the office."

"Wait a minute, Charlie," the sergeant said. "I wouldn't print anything about this if I were you."

"Why not? It's a good little feature."



"If you publish that story, the old man will be robbed of his life savings before morning."

The reporter paused. "Guess you're right, Sergeant, but I hate to lay off. I could have made a good, funny story out of him. However, I don't want to get the old man robbed."

But the final edition of the Evening Star carried the story on the front page. And, as the reporter had said, it was a good little feature. He had made the most of his material, treating it with humor and sympathy.

"Well, how did you like the story, Sergeant?" the reporter asked the next morning. "Wasn't it a good one?"

"Yes," the officer said in a tired voice. "But you promised me you wouldn't use it."

This procedure is composed of four stages. Attention must be paid to all stages if the process is to be an effective learning experience for students. The stages are:

Planning Stage

This is for the teacher to use in preparation of the lesson. Analyze the reading selection for the most significant concepts or for terms that may need extra emphasis. Basal selections as well as other literature can be used.

The words, categories and story frames can be presented on the boards, on an overhead projector or on handouts. The categories and corresponding story frames can be changed to fit the type of story to be read.

Prereading Stage

Having the students repeat the list of key terms provides practice when some words may not be in the student's reading vocabularies.

It is important that the students know they can add background information, as long as they can justify its use in their version. When this is used for the first time with an entire class/group, the teacher may need to help

The reporter laughed. "Well, I haven't read the morning sheet, but I'll bet a buck our country friend wasn't robbed last night."

"No. He wasn't robbed."

"I thought not." The reporter was pleased with himself. "You see, I followed the old man out of here, took him to a bank, and I saw him deposit his \$5,400. After that..." something in the officer's face stopped him.

"Why, what's wrong, Sergeant?"

"You should have mentioned the bank deposit in your story," the sergeant said. "Henry Tucker was murdered in front of his home last night. We found his bankbook in the gutter."

them reduce lengthy responses. (If the intent is to encourage writing, as the students become more proficient, the story frame provides merely the structure for more elaborative writing.)

Reading Stage

The students read or listen to the story. Be prepared for groans or laughs as they compare their story to the one the author composed.

Post Reading Stage

After the students are familiar with this strategy, students can work in pairs or in small groups to write their passages. By reading these aloud, other students hear more possible alternatives.

This procedure may take two or three class periods, depending on the length of the story and the age of the group.

Students will enjoy the strategy and the teacher can feel secure that vocabulary, comprehension and writing have all been emphasized in one lesson.

Probable Passages provides a structured framework for making predictions about a story to be read, it familiarizes students with the elements of story grammar, and it allows students to work together in writing a passage.