

The Three Pigs re-write

A classroom writing project by Leslie

(Note: Don't tell the class it's a re-write project. Focus on collecting the vocabulary first.)

I have had great success doing this writing project with fourth graders (see two samples attached). I volunteer on Tuesdays which means I'm with them just once a week. Because of my schedule, I've made it a three-week project.

WEEK 1

We have a classroom discussion about "figurative speech." I ask them to identify expressions, words and phrases that are current, examples might be: Cool! Yo! Way cool, way hip, awesome, totally rad, tight. These words are pretty easy to identify especially when they recognize words that are no longer in use, "nobody says THAT any more." Ask them to spend the week collecting a word list. Be sure they include nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

WEEK 2

We discuss the basic, unchangeable, elements of *The Three Little Pigs*. I remind them that we are NOT doing parody (example, the *Big Bad Pig and the Three Little Wolves*), we're simply telling the same story but changing the language. We looked at several published, traditional stories. We make a list of the basic elements of the story that must remain static:

1. Three pigs who have a phrase they repeat (not by the hair . . . etc.)
2. Wolf who has a phrase he repeats (I'll huff and I'll puff . . .etc.)
3. Three houses; first two-destructible, the third, indestructible.

The assignment: rewrite the story.

WEEK 3

They share their stories with each other, reading them out loud to the class. When they have read their stories and had a good laugh, I make the following point:

THE PUNCHLINE!

At this point they can identify language that has a temporary lifespan. I tell them that if they ever want to write a story that is timeless, one that someone might read in one-hundred years, they **MUST NEVER, EVER, USE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE!** They get it! Best of all, they learn something really valuable and have fun at the same time.