

Lesson Plan: Stories Unfurl!: Creative Writing Inspiration from *Please, Louise*

- Overview

In the book *Please, Louise* by Toni and Slade Morrison, illustrated by Shadra Strickland, a little girl with an active imagination lets books inspire her as she visits the library. In this lesson, teachers will use the library's nonfiction section as a starting point to help children imagine, write, and illustrate stories of their own.

- Resources & Preparation

- Materials and Technology

- The book, *Please, Louise*
- Art supplies (pencils, paper, crayons or markers)
- Shadra Strickland's "My working process" video on YouTube, <https://youtu.be/rA0h-24M9eA>

- Advanced prep

- Check out a selection of nonfiction books for your students to browse. Select high interest topics such as pirates, castles, dinosaurs, outer space, ancient civilizations, foreign customs and cultures, and favorite animals. Students will be flipping through the books rather than reading them, so choose titles with lots of pictures.
- If your students are older, consider reserving a day at the library for them to choose their own books instead. Collaborate with your librarian to include instructions on using the library catalog or on Dewey Decimal Classification.

- Instructional Plan

- Student Objectives:

- Think critically about a new or favorite nonfiction topic.
- Brainstorm questions inspired by the pictures they see.
- Write a one page story or descriptive passage starring themselves as the main character
- Create illustrations to accompany their stories

1. This lesson should take place after you read *Please, Louis*.
2. After reading the story, point out the pages with the "haunted" house, the junkyard, and the mysterious eagle. Ask students for examples of times they let their imaginations run away with them.
3. Explain how real authors use such imaginative moments as the springboards for their stories.
4. Show students a picture from a nonfiction book or web article. Tell them briefly about the topic, then, as a class, brainstorm 3-5 questions inspired by the picture. ("What is that used for?" "Why would they do it like that?" "What if..." "Where does that come from?" "How did that start?")

5. As a class, come up with a brief story that answers one of your questions.
6. After doing the example together, ask students (alone or in groups) to choose a nonfiction book (or topic) and to find a picture in it that interests them. Have them write 3-5 questions inspired by the picture. Literally no questions are off limits!
 - a. What if students time traveled to a historical place/period, or used time travel to bring a historical figure to the school?
 - b. What if they had magic back then?
 - c. What would happen if they had their favorite wild, exotic animal as a pet?
 - d. What would it be like to be a mermaid in that marine biology book?
7. Have students write a short story or descriptive passage starring themselves as the main character where they explore their questions. Let their imaginations fly.
8. As a class, watch Shadra Strickland's "My working process" video for illustration inspiration. Allow students to illustrate their story. Consider picking up some "How to Draw" books when you make your library visit. You can have students add themselves to a copy of their original picture or create a new picture altogether.