Learning Narratives in English

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Why Narratives?

- An easy entry point
- An important necessary skill: ability to tell a story
- Strategies learned readily extendible to other genres
Seven Strategies

1. Preview the topic
2. Read the story through for main points without dictionary
3. Identify the organization
4. Use context clues to guess at new words
5. Use context clues to understand the characters
6. Reflect on author’s implications
7. Connect to self
Common Problems

- Strategies taught as discrete items
- Gap between knowing about the strategies and using them
- Gap between the trivial and the natural and meaningful
- Teachers do most of the talking
- Students have little opportunity for the practice they need
A Possible Solution

- First model the strategies on a story
- Then require teams of students to design similar exercises and questions for different stories
- Each team then teaches its story to the rest of the class
The Easiest Strategy

- Besides the “first reading” strategy, the post-reading strategy of relating to oneself turns out to be the easiest.
- A sample episode from the “Voices of ESL” podcast
Next Steps

- Try modeling the strategies on a story
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Thank you!