

Your Turn Minilesson #1:
Finding the Point of Your Story
The Other Side

Hook: Read aloud *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson. This book shows the small acts of resistance that everyone can take to lower (and hopefully eventually break down) the fences that divide us. After reading, ask students what topic this book might be about (i.e., friendship, kindness, etc.).

Purpose: Writers, today we are going to think about big ideas we call themes or topics to help us write the inside story -- what you know and can bring to a text, what you care about and want to zoom in on. Even though many books like *The Other Side* may be about friendship, they all tell a different story and have a different message or point.

Brainstorm: As a whole group, direct students to "turn and talk" with a partner to generate as many themes or topics for writing a story as they can think of. Some topics might be pets, family, friends, or places. Some themes might include love, cooperation, self-discovery, loss, or courage. Have students make a list of themes or topics in their writer's notebooks after they have had a chance to discuss with a partner.

Model: With *The Other Side* as a model, determine the message or point and record on chart paper. Examples of points the class might come up with are:

- ❖ Anyone can make a difference in the world.
- ❖ If you look around, you notice that there is still a lot of work to do in the world.
- ❖ Reaching out and being someone's friend can help make the world a more inclusive place.
- ❖ Just because something has "always been that way," doesn't mean it has to continue to be that way forever.
- ❖ "Someday somebody's going to come along and knock this old fence down" (last page of *The Other Side*).
- ❖ Young people can change the world each day through their seemingly simple acts of resistance.

Create a new chart with your own personal experiences (finding a new friend, dealing with the loss of a friend, staying in touch with a faraway friend). Choose one of the points or messages and orally model creating a story. For example, *My story is going*

to be about the time I lost my best friend. Her name was Katie and we had been best friends for many years, even through being at different schools, and it seemed like we would always be best friends. But then one day I made a new friend, who Katie did not like at all. Slowly, Katie began to stop asking me to hang out with her, until we hadn't even talked for a very, very long time. It made me really sad to lose the best friend I had known for so long, but in the end it was okay because we grew as individuals through the experience.

Shared/Guided: Have students go to their notebooks and continue to add points or messages to the ones they created as a class, based on their own experiences. Share with whole group. Ask students to suggest one topic and pick a point that the whole class could write or orally plan a story around.

Independent Writing: Ask students to begin an entry based on one of the suggested topics or themes with a specific point.

Reflection:

- ❖ How did you choose your topic or theme?
- ❖ What did you include in your story to help get your point across to your reader?
- ❖ Why is the point important to the story?

Lesson written by Morgan Payne and Grace K. Schmidt (2020).

Adapted from "Your Turn Lesson 5: Finding the Point of Your Story" from chapter 3 of *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K-6, Second Edition* (2017) by Lynne R. Dorfman and Rose Cappelli.