

Meat Your Match: Dialogue Techniques with a Twist

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Grade Level	12th Grade	**Time Frame**	180
Subject	English/Language Arts		
Course	A.P. Literature and Composition, Creative Writing		

Essential Question

How does dialogue impact the plot of a narrative?

Summary

In this lesson, students will read “They’re Made Out of Meat” by Terry Bisson and analyze its dialogue structure. They will focus on the significance of punctuation marks such as quotation marks, commas, and ellipses in conveying tone and meaning within a conversation. Through guided analysis and group discussions, students will explore how these punctuation marks shape the reader’s understanding of the characters and plot through dialogue. They will then practice writing their own dialogues using the techniques discussed. The lesson concludes with a reflection on how understanding punctuation can enhance writing and interpretation skills.

Snapshot

Engage

Students participate in a Commit and Toss activity to engage with their favorite fictional character quotes.

Explore

Students identify parts of dialogue with a Sentence Scramble card sort.

Explain

Students read the short story “They’re Made Out of Meat” by Terry Bisson and begin to analyze examples of dialogue.

Extend

Students practice creating their own dialogue with a partner through a Google Doc digital conversation.

Evaluate

Students craft their own short story where dialogue drives the plot and use a 3-2-1 to reflect on the lesson.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 12)

12.3.W.1: Compose narratives reflecting real or imagined experiences that:
- include engaging plots involving well-developed, complex characters resolving conflicts
- establish narrator(s) that enhance(s) the narrative
- are intentionally sequenced in a way to achieve a specific effect (e.g., create suspense, establish mood, reflect theme)
- provide clear descriptions, using precise language, sensory details, and dialogue
- include varied syntax to enhance readability
- emulate literary elements and/or literary devices from mentor texts

Attachments

- Lesson Slides—Meat Your Match.pptx
- Meat of the Conversation—Meat Your Match.docx
- Meat of the Conversation—Meat Your Match.pdf
- Scrambled Quotes—Meat Your Match.docx
- Scrambled Quotes—Meat Your Match.pdf
- Short Story Rubric—Meat Your Match.docx
- Short Story Rubric—Meat Your Match.pdf
- They're Made Out of Meat—Meat Your Match.docx
- They're Made Out of Meat—Meat Your Match.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Scrambled Quotes cards (attached; one set per pair)
- Meat of the Conversation handout (attached; one per student)
- Short Story Rubric handout (attached; one per student)
- They’re Made out of Meat handout (attached; one per student)
- Paper
- Pen/Pencil
- Electronic device
- Dry Erase sentence strips (optional; one strip per student)
- Dry Erase markers (optional; one per student)

15 minutes

Engage

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to facilitate the following lesson. Begin the lesson by showing **slides 2-4**, which introduce the title of the lesson, the essential questions, and the learning objectives. Emphasize that the essential questions will be addressed throughout the lesson.

Display **slide 5** and introduce students to the Commit and Toss instructional strategy. Distribute small strips of paper and ask them to jot down their favorite quote from a fictional character. Once they are done writing, ask students to crumple up their responses and toss them across the room or into an empty box.

Teacher's Note: Sample Quotes

If you are noticing that students are struggling with coming up with their favorite quote to write, consider unhiding **slide 6** and give them time to choose from our curated list or create your own.

Continue to **slide 7**. Have students choose one crumpled up piece of paper and read it aloud. As responses are read aloud, ask students what makes these quotes memorable. Write some of their responses on the board or a poster to refer back to. Have students attach their quote to the board next to the student responses you wrote down from the earlier class discussion. Organize these thoughts in a way that makes sense for you and your class to create an inspiration board.

Teacher's Note: Using Sentence Strips

Instead of having students attach their crumpled papers on the board, have students write their favorite quotes on Sentence Strips and attach these to your board. Sentence Strips can either be magnetized or use velcro. They are reusable and make for a more organized way to showcase student work.

25 minutes

Explore

Teacher's Note: Preparing the Sentence Scramble

With the attached Sentence Scramble cards print and cut out each card. Note that each page is one whole set and that each group/pair of students needs just one set each. We suggest laminating the cards for multiple uses and gathering each set in either a sandwich bag or paper clipped together. Note: For sentences 2 and 8 the period card is extra.

Display **slide 8** and introduce students to the instructional strategy Sentence Scramble. Explain that students will receive a set of cards that have either phrases or punctuation marks on them and it's their task to arrange them to make a grammatically correct sentence. Pass out one set per group of the attached **Scrambled Quotes Cards** cards. Arrange students in pairs or groups of three, then ask students to arrange the cards in what they believe to be the correct order. Allow five minutes for this activity. Once completed, ask a few students to share-out their sentences and encourage feedback from other students. They should notice that if they put the dialogue tag after questions, there is a leftover comma in their set of cards. Give students the opportunity to change their sorted sentence cards at this time. Ask students to explain what they changed and why. Transition through **slides 9** and **10** to review the answers in as much detail as you feel necessary.

40 minutes

Explain

Move to **slide 11** and pass out the attached **They're Made Out of Meat** handout to every student. Explain that this short story by Terry Bisson is made completely out of dialogue from two characters. Read the story as a class.

After the class has read the story, move to **slide 12** and ask students what they noticed about the structure of the short story.

Teacher's Note: Sample Student Responses

They should notice that every time the speaker changes, there is a new line. They should also notice the end punctuation is inside the quotation marks.

Ask students what they think would have been lost or gained if the author included narrative writing as well as the dialogue. Consider the following discussion questions: *Would we have been distracted from the conversation? Would it have taken away from the mystery?*

Teacher's Note: Sample Student Responses

The students should mention that with dialogue tags or exposition, the twist ending may have been ruined. They may also mention that the story would have moved more slowly or felt more choppy.

Pass out the attached **Meat of the Conversation** handout, then transition to **slide 13** and display the list of definitions related to dialogue. As you use the slide to explain the different features of dialogue, tell students to write a reflection on what they've observed about each aspect of dialogue and how it is represented in the story.

Continue to **slide 14** which displays examples of correctly punctuated dialogue. Ask students what they notice about the structure of these examples. Discuss how the punctuation changes based on the location of the dialogue tag and whether the sentence would normally end in a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

Teacher's Note: Optional Student Engagement

As an optional activity, ask two students to read the story aloud, each student acting as a different character in the story.

40 minutes

Extend

Display **slide 15** and group students into pairs. Have one student open up a Google Doc and share the doc with their partner, ensuring their partner has editing access. Once each pair has access to one Google Doc each, explain the digital conversation activity. Transition to **slide 16** and ask students to have a digital conversation in their Google Doc about one or more of the questions on the slide: *If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?, What did you do this summer?, What's the most interesting place you've ever visited or want to visit?, What's a book, movie, or show that you think everyone should experience?, What's the best piece of advice you've ever received or given?* (or feel free to choose your own prompt). Show the example on **slide 17** and explain that students should go back and forth writing about what they did and asking questions all on the shared document versus saying anything aloud. Then move to **slide 18** and explain that this digital conversation should take up about one single spaced page. Start the timer on the slide and give students about 10 minutes to complete the activity. You may consider toggling between slides 16-18 depending on the needs of your class. After the time has passed, ask students to add correct punctuation and dialogue tags to their Google Doc and discuss with their partner why they made the changes/additions they did. Use **slide 19** as a guide if needed.

Once students have completed their chain conversation, continue to **slide 20**. Ask students "How does dialogue impact the plot of a narrative?" Ask students to compare their answers to their previous observations about their favorite quotes during the Engage portion of the lesson.

Teacher's Note: Modification

If you and/or your students do not have access to Google Docs this activity can be done with paper and pencil.

60 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 21**. Pass out the attached **Short Story Rubric** handout. Instruct students to compose a 500-word short story that heavily relies on dialogue to propel the plot using the rubric as a guide. Explain that their short stories can be based on true events or entirely imagined. Inform students that short stories will be evaluated based on the rubric and they should use it to shape their short story.

Once all students have completed their short stories, move to **slide 22** and have them complete a 3-2-1 reflection over the assignment. Ask students to respond to the following prompts regarding the essential question: What are 3 things you learned, 2 ways your writing was impacted, and 1 lingering question you have about dialogue? These reflections can either be written at the bottom of their short story or on a sticky note.

Teacher's Note: Optional Share-Out

If you have students who want to share their stories consider using our Gallery Walk strategy to showcase your student's work.

Resources

- Bisson, T. (1990). They're Made out of Meat. CommonLit. https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/they-re-made-out-of-meat
- K20 Center. (n.d.). 3-2-1. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/117
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Commit and toss. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/119
- K20 Center. (n.d.). CommonLit. Tech Tool. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/2170
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Gallery walk/carousel. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/118
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Google Docs. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/2327
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Sentence Scramble. Strategies.https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/4073
- OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT (GPT-4) [Large language model]. Used for title inspiration. https://chat.openai.com/