



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2011 Volume I: Writing with Words and Images

The Trait Mate: Visual Symbols for Narrative Writing

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Introduction

Look around. Today symbols are everywhere, communicating their messages with speed and accuracy; logos, computer icons, advertisements, Facebook, Twitter, phone apps. Our students take to symbols like fish to water. Since, according to researchers at IBM, these images are processed 60, 000 times more quickly than words, ¹ it is no wonder they have become the communication of choice in our fast paced, diverse, global system. It only makes sense that education jump into the twenty - first century as we begin to use these effective tools in our classrooms.

A symbol, by its very nature, communicates an idea. When this idea is universal, connecting to a deeply familiar concept, it can be understood by a vast populace as it is translated into the language of the viewer. Its meaning transcends social, cultural, political, language and academic barriers, communicating quickly, clearly, and effectively. The ability of an idea to communicate so well to such a diverse population is particularly significant since our nation's schools are filled with richly diverse student bodies. The importance of our communication as teachers is paramount, as it is the factor that defines the effectiveness of our instruction. A symbol can also be used to explain complex ideas when words cannot and inspire us to write needed words by the idea it conveys. This theory inspired the Trait Mate, a symbol I developed to communicate concepts for writing. The Trait Mate is a concrete visual explanation of abstract ideas to help students think about narrative structure and elaboration. It is a symbol that communicates concepts in a way students will understand and therefore enjoy. As students use versions of this symbol to write, they will develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between the symbols and narrative writing, ultimately using the Trait Mate with automaticity as a framework for structure and elaboration in their stories. Using symbols as a method to teach writing is fun and engaging. Because the Trait Mate symbols communicate ideas so well, writing concepts are easily taught and quickly learned, making them powerfully effective tools for teaching.



I teach second grade at John S. Martinez Elementary School in New Haven, Connecticut. The New Haven School District uses the Mondo reading and oral language curriculum and has recently added the Mondo writing curriculum. These programs connect oral language, reading, and writing instruction. In my opinion, there couldn't be a better relationship. These three skills are directly and fundamentally related, woven together as a family, each unique and interrelated, necessary for the individual growth of one another. A student's development in one of these three skill areas closely parallels and reflects the relationships of the other skill areas. For example, a student's oral language score reflects the complexity of the language structure a student uses in spoken language. A similar level of complexity is often demonstrated in the student's writing. Finally, this level of complexity and structure is what a student is able to understand when reading and is represented in his or her DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) score. Simply put, according to the Mondo program, what you can think, you can say; what you can say, you can write; and what you can write, you can read, in that order! ² Teaching students to think with clarity and structure about writing provides a foundation that will help them to grow as writers reinforcing and supporting their reading skills as well. This is exactly what the Trait Mate does.

Students come to second grade with limited writing experience. Developmentally, my students are in the early emergent and emergent stages of writing. By the end of second grade, they are expected to be able to write a well-developed narrative that shows a clear sequence of events. Each event needs to be sequenced with transitional words and elaborated with specific details. In addition, each story needs to be well organized and fluent. This is a challenge for any teacher.

The Trait Mate symbols are concrete guides that can also be used as mental images to help students to sharpen thoughts about the elaboration and structure of their writing. Since our thoughts guide what we write and since how we think about our writing ultimately moves our thoughts to the words that are written, thinking about writing more strategically is an important skill for students to learn. The multifaceted symbol of the Trait Mate can help students learn to write strategically because it visually demonstrates the need to describe the character's thoughts, feelings, actions, dialogue and other characters' reactions through the

easily understood language of symbols. The Trait Mate symbolizes narrative structure when he holds the problem and solution symbols and is labeled with transitional words on the action symbols (hands and feet) to illustrate a sequence of events. Using the Trait Mate as a writing friend that creates a framework of mental images will help students to write more effectively because it visually explains narrative structure and elaboration in a way that students can easily remember. It provides concrete support for students' thinking that will reduce anxiety as they approach their writing, especially when they are asked to write to a prompt . The high anxiety students experience when writing to prompts can quickly scramble thoughts like a high-speed blender. This unit also discusses how the Trait Mate symbols, as partners to writing, can be applied to reading in a way that supports the elements of writing that students need to understand and include in their own pieces. Students learn by studying the works of published authors. By examining these published works, students see how various authors structure their story sequence and elaborate the characters. In addition, students can examine specific details of elaboration, identifying and labeling stated or inferred elements with the appropriate symbols, reinforcing each symbol's use and purpose. In addition to serving as concrete guides and a mental framework for students in their reading and writing, the Trait Mate symbols can be used as a visual language for the teacher and students to communicate with each other about revisions.

I teach reading and writing closely in a way that supports their reciprocal relationship through shared, guided, and modeled lessons. Reading comprehension strategies are taught explicitly as well as the study of genres and text structures through the construction and deconstruction of text. The more closely these skills are taught, the more effective instruction can be. During this instruction, the components of narrative structure are taught (character, setting, problem, sequence of events, and solution). Students begin to develop an understanding of structural elements in a variety of genres with their unique characteristics. Ideally those features and concepts would be transferred to writing as students become authors and describe each narrative component in their stories. However, this is not typically the case. When students sit down to write independently, they struggle to structure their thoughts, organize their writing, and access ideas.

The corner stone of the use of the Mondo program in our school is the interrelated instruction in language, reading, and writing. As a result, I embed oral language exercises into many of my lessons as a way for students to expand language structures and organize their thoughts. Students often turn and talk with a partner to practice saying what they think, a kind of thinking "rough draft." I call it a "thought draft." Listening to these oral drafts can be an excellent assessment tool. A student's oral language reveals the structure that the student thinks in. The way in which a student speaks closely reflects the level of complexity in sentence structures and very often parallels raw writing structure. In addition, the way in which a student tells a story will also reflect the kinds of organization and elaboration of a writing prompt. It was through this very assessment that I discovered that there was still a gap between my students' oral and written stories. After listening to what students were saying, I realized that they were having difficulty talking about the same kinds of things that they were struggling with in their writing: organizing their thoughts, structuring the events and describing the character through thoughts, actions, dialogue, feelings, and traits. It finally dawned on me that my students could not write it because they did not know how to think it. The purpose of this unit is to show students how to think about their writing by using visual symbols as tools. The mental pictures of the Trait Mate could be considered thinking guides as students write their stories. The language of these visual symbols is meant to evoke specific thoughts that a student responds to in writing. They are used as a visual bridge from thinking to writing. These symbols give support for what students are asked to write as they describe a character's trait through his or her thoughts, dialogue, actions, feelings, and others' reactions. They are tools that are easy to use, fun and engaging for students. The symbols are familiar and easily understood, leading the student gently forward to discover themselves as authors.

Rationale

The idea of a language of symbols is not new. Cave drawings and Ice-Age wall drawings from 27,000 years ago were considered to be the first attempts at primitive language. ³ This language used visual symbols to convey ideas. Much later, in the 17th-century philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz was the first to imagine a full writing system in which images could be used to describe all human communication. Gottfried envisioned a writing system that did not need to be translated and was understood by a global community. The idea of a universal language that was likened to mathematics and music was original indeed. ⁴ The thought of communicating with images in order to access a vast audience was clearly developing. Later in the early 1920s, Otto Neurath, a forward-thinking Viennese philosopher, wanted to create an exhibition of public information that was visually appealing and easily understood by the multicultural Austrian community, so he began working on a pictorial system that could be used to communicate and be understood by a widely diverse population. Needless to say, the exhibition was a huge success. His work evolved to become an International Picture Language, publishing a book in 1936 called the *International System of Typographic Picture Education*, which reflected the international philosophy of this new system. ⁵ The images of this pictorial system were named isotype. So valuable was their work that Otto and his wife Marie Neurath founded the Isotype Institute in 1941 in Oxford, England. The Neuraths' commitment to international communication was reflected in their goals for the institute, which were the promotion of a visual education for children and underdeveloped countries. ⁶ The Neuraths' idea of a visual education system crossing political, social, cultural, and language boundaries was visionary, and they clearly understood that images communicate ideas and thoughts when words could not. They were pioneers, indeed, realizing the significance of the development of this visual method that would communicate ideas quickly, easily, and clearly to so many. The Neuraths' groundbreaking ideas are continuing to develop today and were addressed recently in an article "Think Visual" by Clive Thompson in which he emphasized the importance of thinking and communicating visually. He suggested that a picture language is precisely what we need to solve the world's biggest challenges like global warming and economic reform. These innovative thinkers--Leibniz, the Neuraths and Thompson--understood that visual explanations can communicate multifaceted concepts and problems clearly and effectively to a diverse population so that everyone can have the same mental image of a concept /problem ⁷ and thus begin solve it.

More recent brain research has proved that the characteristics of the left and right side of the brain and the way each side processes information, both separately and together, are particularly significant in their support for the use of visual symbols to communicate ideas. The right and left sides of the brain work both independently and together. ⁸ The left side of the brain has been characterized as being verbal, analytical, male, dominant and scientific, by David Crow ⁹ and logical, mathematical, symbolic, pattern-using, and dominating the right brain by Robert H. Williams. ¹⁰ The right side of the brain is characterized as visual, female, non-verbal by David Crow, and creative, pattern-seeking, visual-pictorial, and pattern-creating by Williams. In an attempt to learn more about each side of the brain, doctors devised ways to test brain split patients, whose surgery to reduce seizures cut the links between the left and right brains. When working independently, the split-brain patient, "allowed to see a picture with only the left-brain visual field," could tell the researcher, "This is a picture of a cow." But if the patient saw the same picture with only the right brain visual field, he could not speak about it at all. Yet he could point to a similar picture of a cow showing that he had recognized the image. ¹¹ This research supports a conception of the unique abilities of each side of the brain. It would also suggest that the visual symbol would be read by the left side of the brain in a logical way

to direct thinking, but that it would also be viewed creatively by the right side of the brain, opening a pathway to the possibilities and ideas the image might evoke. Both sides of the brain working together could produce the best processing of information.

More recently, Dr. Glen Johnson, a neuropsychologist, asserts in his research described in his book, *Traumatic Brain Injury Survival Guide 2010*, that the brain compares to an orchestra, not one big computer as was previously accepted, but really like a million little computers all working together. The left hemisphere and right hemisphere each have separate and unique jobs; two sides of the brain, two different jobs. When we see, each hemisphere processes half the visual information. Visual information that we see on the left gets processed by the right hemisphere. Information on the right gets processed by the left hemisphere. Remember, wires that bring in information to the brain are 'crossed'--visual information from the left goes to the right brain." ¹² Thus, visual images engage both sides of the brain. For example, when a thought bubble is viewed, the right side of the brain, the creative, pattern maker, will process the image and recognize it--"that's a thought bubble"--and then send it to be processed by the left side, the analytical, logical, language, pattern seeker to make sense and meaning of the world, to fill the thought bubble with language, words that make meaning of the image within the given context given. When both sides of the brain are fully engaged in processing information, they are uniting the sum of their unique interpretations of information, communicating by unleashing their individual potential. I suggest that this synergy is the power of the visual image. As teachers, what better way can we engage our students than to promote their ability to access their thinking fully, using both sides of their brains? ¹³ Brain sparks begin to fly, as both the right and left hemispheres are fully engaged in the conversation of creation, as the words inspired by symbols begin painting a visual image of their own.

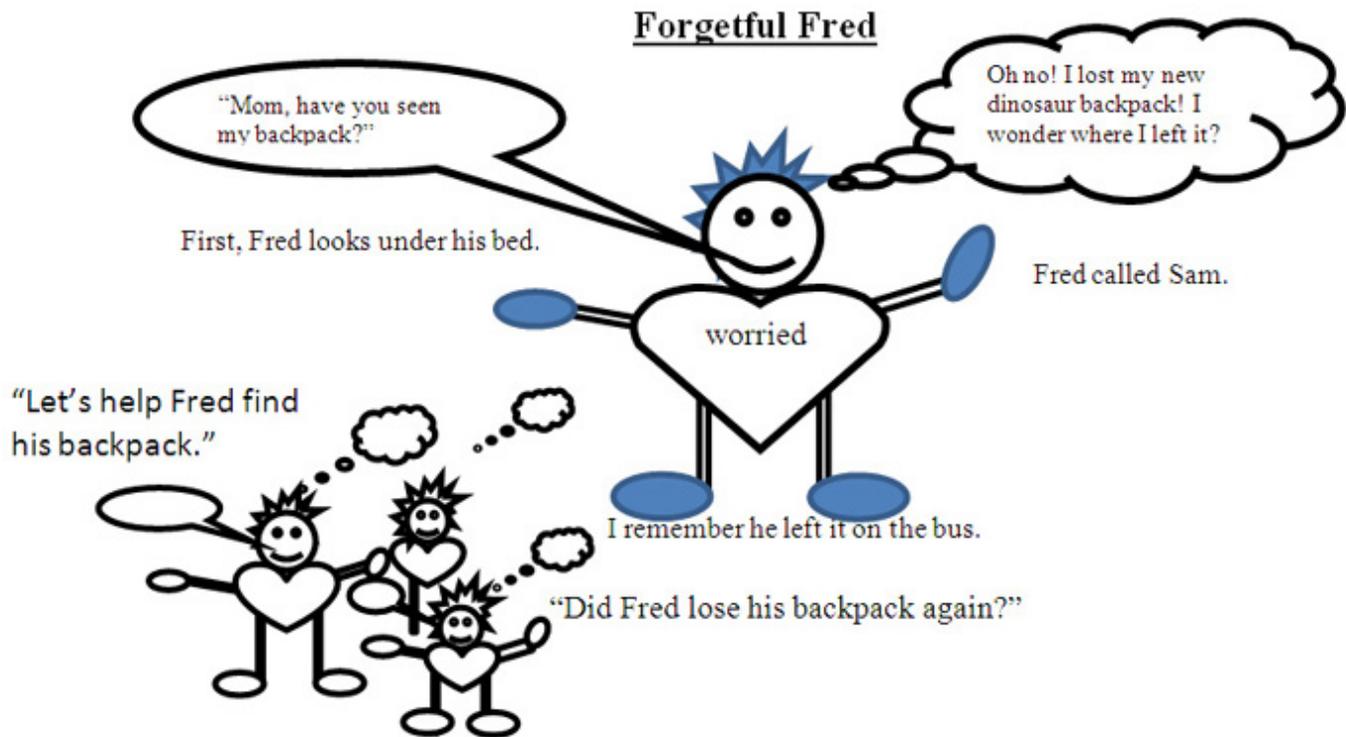
Based upon the research that indicates that visual images engage both the left and right hemispheres, it would seem apparent that symbols are excellent teaching tools. When a visual image promotes thinking, particularly when the image encourages one to think about and apply written language. Robert Marzano, in his writing *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research Based Strategies*, states that the more we use both systems of representation, linguistic and non-linguistic, the better we are able we are to think about and recall knowledge. "It has been shown that explicitly engaging students in the creation of non-linguistic representations stimulates and increases activity in the brain." ¹⁴ Marzano's findings support those of Williams and Dr. Johnson's findings regarding brain activity associated with reading images and symbols. As Marzano emphasizes, the most underused instructional strategy is creating non-linguistic representations to help students understand content in a whole new way." ¹⁵ When we use visual images to think about and promote writing, we are using non-linguistic representations to create linguistic representations, engaging both sides of the brain and creating a way for students to use their full thinking potential.

Finally, in *Visual Explanations*, Edward Tufte discusses the extraordinary ways in which visual images can be used to describe and explain complex ideas, and he provides examples of brilliantly creative ways that images can be used to represent information clearly and effectively. He describes how visual explanations can be used as a method to describe, illustrate and construct knowledge, comparing clarity and excellence in thinking to clarity and excellence in representation, an act of insight. ¹⁶ Imagine the implication for the use of visual images in the classroom, as these symbols explain complex information, constructing knowledge and insight, and thus crossing barriers of communication when words cannot. The use of symbols and images that explain complex ideas would be far reaching, indeed. Thus the Trait Mate can explain characterization and story elements by providing clarity for students as they use the image to think.

Birth of the Trait Mate

In an effort to provide support for my students as they tried to think about their writing more strategically, with the necessary structure, character description, elaboration, and organization, I began a search. I searched the Internet. I searched libraries, and I searched professional resources for tools or graphic organizers that would help my students to write with the needed structure and elaboration that were asked. Since these writing elements are fundamental to stories in both reading and writing, I thought the task would be easy. However, this was not the case. What I found were organizers that were sterile, flat, and boring. I found organizers with lines--lines in different directions, lines in boxes, lines in boxes with headings, and lines in different shaped boxes. Surprised and disappointed, I knew these kinds of thinking tools would neither promote nor direct thinking about writing or inspire one to do either. I was looking for was a tool that was interesting, inspiring, and engaging while directing and supporting students to think systematically about their writing. I was unable to find anything that provided this specific structure and elaboration. I was looking for a tool that would lead their thinking to create more fully developed characters and events in a narrative. How could I help my students to remember that they needed to describe a character fully in each of the story event? How could I help my students to describe a character specifically through his/her thoughts, actions, feelings, dialogue, character traits, and how others in the story responded to him/her? That was my frustration as well as my challenge!

I began talking with my students to explain how I wanted them to describe a character in a story. I was explaining the importance and value of this kind of description when writing a story, for yet another time! When I saw their blank stares, I began to draw. I drew visual images. They immediately perked up. I had captivated their attention and interest! My students were able to connect more easily and clearly to the idea that these images were conveying than with what I had been trying to explain in words on many occasions. So, I continued to draw. I drew a "BIG" heart to symbolize the importance of describing the character's feelings. Then I drew a circle with a face on the top of the heart; it was the symbol I had assigned to character traits. It was beginning to come alive! Next, I drew a thought bubble to symbolize the importance of including thoughts and a speech bubble to symbolize the need for the character's dialogue. Finally, I drew little people to symbolize the importance of showing how other characters respond to the main character. Thus was born what I call the "Trait Mate." This friendly little guy embodies the elements my students needed to use as they described their characters. One symbol communicated all this information. A picture can speak a thousand words and sometimes far better than I!



Strategies

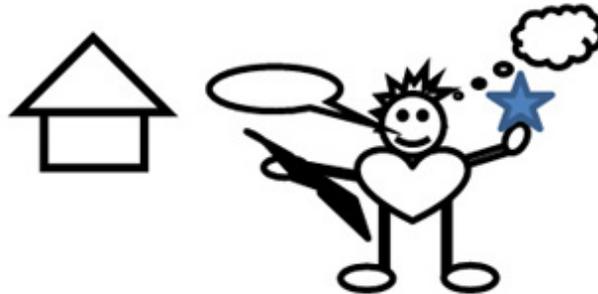
Initially I developed the Trait Mate as a symbol for characterization, but as I have used it in my teaching, its versatility and application have proved to be extensive. The Trait Mate can be used as a whole symbol or in its separate parts. I will focus here on its use for characterization, narrative structure, elaboration of events, revisions, and reading.

Trait Mate Symbols for Characterization

Alone the Trait Mate embodies the needed elements for characterization, as the parts work together cohesively to describe a character trait as seen above in Forgetful Fred. The symbol can be used as a visual tool to remember ways of describing a character, illustrating the character's thoughts (thought bubble), dialogue (speech bubble), actions (hands and feet), feelings (heart), and other character's reaction (little trait mates). Students will also learn that they can use the symbols to identify the parts of a story separately in their reading as an author describes a character by "showing" evidence of a character trait; then students can apply that skill to "show" or describe a character in their writing. As a whole unit, students can use the Trait Mate as a guide and fill in the parts with evidence in their text that describes a character's traits. The Trait Mate can be used to develop vocabulary and reinforce how the parts work together cohesively to describe a character. My students loved the activity of drawing the Trait Mate on chart paper and then describing the characteristics of each as we filled in each part of the characters Mean Mike, Forgetful Fred, Generous Gina,

and Creative Carlos, which we then hung around the room. The Trait Mate can also be used for character building. Character traits can be sorted by their positive and negative qualities. How the other characters react in these instances shows the consequences of a character's actions.

Trait Mate Symbols for Narrative Structure



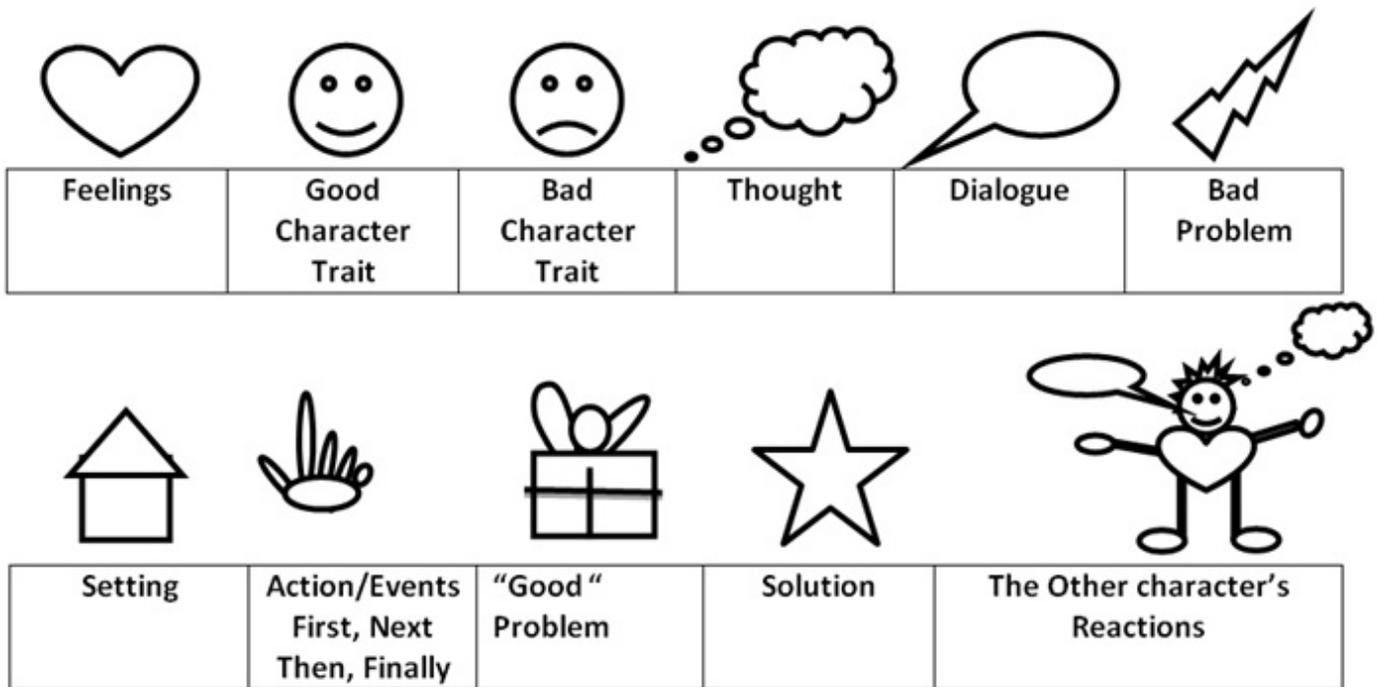
The Trait Mate can also symbolize the structural components of a narrative--the character, setting, problem, events--when the hands and feet are labeled with " First", "Next", " Then", " Finally", showing the elaboration of events, and the star symbolizing the solution to a problem. (I was not able to write the words in the hand and feet for this drawing, but you can.) This visual summary can help students remember what to include when writing a story as well as the elements needed when summarizing a story for reading. However, for a summary, remove the dialogue symbol. As students use this symbol to think about narrative structure, the concept will be internalized and, they will ultimately include structural elements with automaticity in their writing.

Trait Mate Symbols for Elaboration



Since students are expected to show elaboration of a character's thoughts, feelings, traits, dialogue and sensory detail in events of a story, the Trait Mate can be a visual thinking map for the elaboration of the character in each event of the story. The symbol can be used to easily differentiate elaboration by adding or removing parts of the Trait Mate for the specific needs of your students. Examples are above. The hands and feet are labeled with transitional words to show a sequence of events. Stress the use of these words to begin each event followed by an action. As students grow in their writing skill, developing events with specific detail, they will begin to use more complex transition language ("early one morning", "later that day", "as the sun set") to sequence each event. These phrases can be written in the Trait Mate in place of "first", "next", "then" and "finally." To visually express separate events, I ask students to skip a line between each event.

Trait Mate Symbols for Revision



The Trait Mate symbols can be used separately as an excellent way to communicate needed revisions, directing students to elaborate specific ideas in their writing. Speaking in symbols is easy and clear. A thought bubble and a question mark would ask a student to think about what and why the character is thinking and then write it. The heart with a question mark would symbolize the need to think about how the character is feeling and why and then write it.

Trait Mate Symbols for Reading

The Trait Mate symbols can also be used to reinforce the partnership of reading and writing by helping students study how other authors apply the elements in their stories. This provides an opportunity for students to explicitly study how authors describe characters and elaborate events with character traits, actions, thoughts, feelings, and dialogue. Students can also see the variety of transitional words used in others writing. The Trait Mate symbols can be used separately to reinforce and identify narrative structure. Symbols for the character, setting, problem, solution, and transitional words ("First", "Next", "Then", "Finally") can be drawn on a sticky note then placed at each location of those times in the book. The symbols can reinforce reading comprehension skills as students identify stated or inferred thoughts, feelings, and character traits with symbols on sticky notes in the text. Have students bring their books to guided reading groups. This is an excellent form of assessment as what students write in these symbols will reflect their comprehension levels. This can be easy differentiated. One student can label a feeling with a heart, another may write the name of the feeling in the heart and another student could write the feeling with an explanation.



I designed the Trait Mate to be engaging and fun for students to use while supporting their thinking in a purposeful way. This visual language for writing expands and directs thinking, promotes creativity, stimulates ideas, and brings a creative structure and order to the whirlwind of thoughts when students are writing. With the use of the Trait Mate, I have seen how my students have grown as writers. They are more confident and move through the writing process more independently. Most importantly, they love to write!

Objectives

- *Students will be able to use the Trait Mate symbol to describe a character.
- *Students will be able to use the Trait Mate symbol to describe a specific character trait.
- *Students will be able to use the Trait Mate symbols separately to identify narrative structure in leveled text.
- *Students will be able to use the Trait Mate symbol as a visual representation of narrative structure when writing.
- *Students will be able to use the Trait Mate symbol to reflect on their writing as a guide for elaboration of each event in a story.
- *Students will be able to use the Trait Mate symbol as a guide for revisions.
- *Students will be able to use the Trait Mate symbols separately to show evidence of a specific character trait in their reading.
- *Students will be able to use the Trait Mate symbols separately to identify stated and inferred thoughts, feeling and character traits in their guided reading books.
- *Students will be able to evaluate their writing using a "Good Story Rubric" that they develop with the teacher based on the Trait Mate.

Lesson One: Introduce the Trait Mate

Objective: Students will understand that the Trait Mate is a symbol that explains needed elaboration of the character in a story and can be used to remember this.

Shared Instruction

- * Read the story *Rainbow Fish* .
- * Read an example of the story devoid of elaboration. Compare the two stories. Ask students what they learned about the character and how. Draw the symbols associated with each component that they describe (sensory detail, feelings, thoughts, dialogue, others responses, appearance, character traits).
- * Combine the symbols to make the Trait Mate. Explain that this symbol will help them remember to include these parts in their writing. When one describes a character's trait through the feelings, thoughts, actions, others' reactions, it is called characterization. This is what makes a story more interesting and brings the character to life for the reader.
- * Ask students to turn and talk to their partners about other character traits of *Rainbow Fish* .
- * Have students will name the traits while you list them.
- * Ask students to turn and talk to their partners about some of their own character traits.
- * Have students name some of their own character traits while you list them.
- * Characterization can also be explained mathematically as an addition problem, describing that all the parts work together to elaborate a trait. It is important for and will help students to elaborate and understand characterization.



A character's actions+ feelings + thoughts + dialogue = character's trait

Independent Practice: Character Traits

- *Ask students to draw their portrait as they think about their character traits.
- * Students will list 6-8 of their own personal character traits under their portrait.
- * Mount and display the students' work. These portraits will not only build trait vocabulary but also serve as a beautiful visual display of the students' character traits to begin the unit.

Lesson Two: Applying Symbols to Reading

Objective: Students will be able to identify and label inferred and stated feelings by using symbols in leveled text.

Shared Instruction

Introduce the lesson by asking students how they get to know a friend well. Explain that an author helps us to know a character the same way, by showing and telling the reader a character's feelings. Point out examples of the author "showing" the character's feelings through dialogue, actions, or thoughts and ask the students to infer or guess those feelings. Other times the author states the character's feeling. Show examples of stated feelings. Ask the students which is more interesting and why. Use the symbols to identify these elements as you read the story. Begin the lesson by modeling the application of the symbols as you read. Label stated and inferred feelings by drawing the associated symbol on a sticky note and placing it on the book. For example, draw a heart on a sticky note and write the feeling in the heart. Label it in the text where that feeling is inferred or stated.

Independent Practice

Use the format of the previous lesson for subsequent lessons identifying the character's dialogue, actions, then inferred and stated thoughts, and character traits. Students should label with sticky notes each element modeled in the shared lesson (feelings, actions, dialogue, thoughts and character traits) in their leveled text. The lessons can be easily differentiated. For example: Students can simply label a feeling by drawing the heart symbols or label the feeling by drawing the heart and then writing the feeling inside the heart ("excited") or drawing the heart and writing the feeling with the explanation in the heart: "Rainbow Fish is excited because the other fish want to play with him." Be sure to ask students to bring their books to guided reading group. This is an excellent form of assessment. You will quickly observe the different levels of comprehension by reading what and how students label each element. Their ability to use higher level thinking independently will be quite clear when inferred thoughts, feelings, and character traits are supported and explained with evidence described in the text.

Lesson Three: Using the Trait Mate for Characterization

Objective: Students will be able to use the Trait Mate to describe and "show" a character's trait through the character's feelings, thoughts, actions, dialogue and others' reactions.

Guided Lesson

*Read the beginning part of *Rainbow Fish* . Ask students to notice how the author "shows" that Rainbow Fish is selfish. These are the details from the text that explain and describe the trait. Place the symbols next to each element in the text.

*Draw the Trait Mate and ask students fill in the parts with the way the author shows that the Rainbow Fish is

being selfish. Explain that the parts work together to describe a trait. Continue to do this with some of the other character traits.

*Ask students to turn and talk with their partners about some of their own character traits and how they show it.

* Share some of your own character traits with the students and explain what you might say, do, feel, think, and how others would react to you. Use the Trait Mate on chart paper showing how that trait can be symbolized. A collection of these can be posted around the room.

*Ask students to name some of their character traits and explain them. Elicit a variety of character traits from the students supporting their explanations with examples. Add these traits to your word wall.

Independent Practice

*Students will fill in a Trait Mate with the thoughts, feelings, actions that would describe that character's trait.

* Students will name their characters with a trait, as in; Helpful Henry, Generous Gina, Forgetful Fred, Brave Ben, Creative Carlos, Selfish Sam, and Mean Mike.

* Students will write a paragraph describing their character using the information from their Trait Mates. Students will "show" and then tell the trait in their closing sentence.

Lesson Four: Using the Trait Mate to describe Character and Setting at the Beginning of a Story

Objective: Students will be able to describe the character and setting at the beginning of the story.

Guided Lesson

* Ask students to notice the way the author describes the setting and character in the beginning of the story the read the story *Something Else* .

* Label the setting with its symbol and how it is described with sensory detail symbols. * Ask students how the author describes the character in the beginning of the story. Label the symbols that describe the character's traits. Use the Trait Mate to fill in the symbols with information from the text. Explain that the better one can describe the character in the beginning of the story, the more interesting a story will be.

* Ask the students to turn and describe their characters to their partners, including each element of characterization.

* Model writing the beginning of a story by using the Trait Mate to write about a character and setting.

Modeled then Independent Practice

*Ask students to draw the character in the setting.

*Students will pick a character trait and describe it in the Trait Mate.

*Students will then use their Trait Mates to write single paragraphs describing the character in the setting, using each part of the Trait Mate including other elements, which might be family, likes and dislikes. Explain that after students "show" the character's traits, then they can tell it in the closing sentence of their writing.

Lesson Five: Introduction to Writing Process

Objective: Students will be able to write a draft of a narrative using transitional words to show a sequence of events.

Guided Lesson: Introduce the Trait Mate story planner.

Story Planner

	Describe character and setting.  
	<u>First</u>
	<u>Next</u>
	<u>Then</u>
	<u>Finally</u>

* List the characteristics of a fiction story and draw the corresponding symbols next to each: characters, setting, problem (a good problem symbolized by a present and a bad problem by a lightning bolt), a sequence of events, and an ending.

* Read the story *Buster* as an example of good narrative structure. Label each structural piece. Point out the transitional words and how they clarify the sequence. Label each event that solves the problem with "first," "next," "then," and "finally."

* Draw the Trait Mate. Write the transitional words on the hands and feet. Explain that this symbol can help students remember all the parts of a story.

* Model telling a story of your own pointing to the parts of the Trait Mate as you speak.

*Ask students to turn to their partners and tell about a problem and how they solved it. Give an example of your own.

*Next, ask students to retell their stories using transitional words to sequence events.

*Finally, ask student to retell their stories with their partners being sure to include the description explained by the Trait Mate.

*Offer an opportunity to share stories.

Independent Practice:

* Students will use the story planner to write a draft of a story.

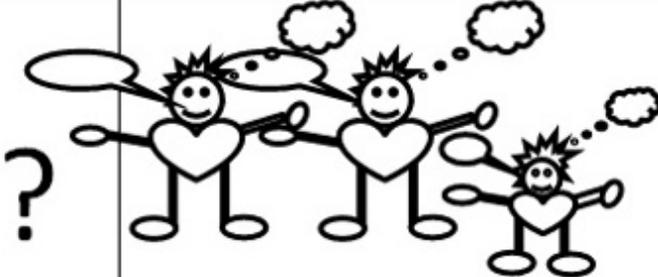
* Have students write stories about their problem using the Trait Mate story planner with transitions words.

* Use the symbols to suggest revision ideas.

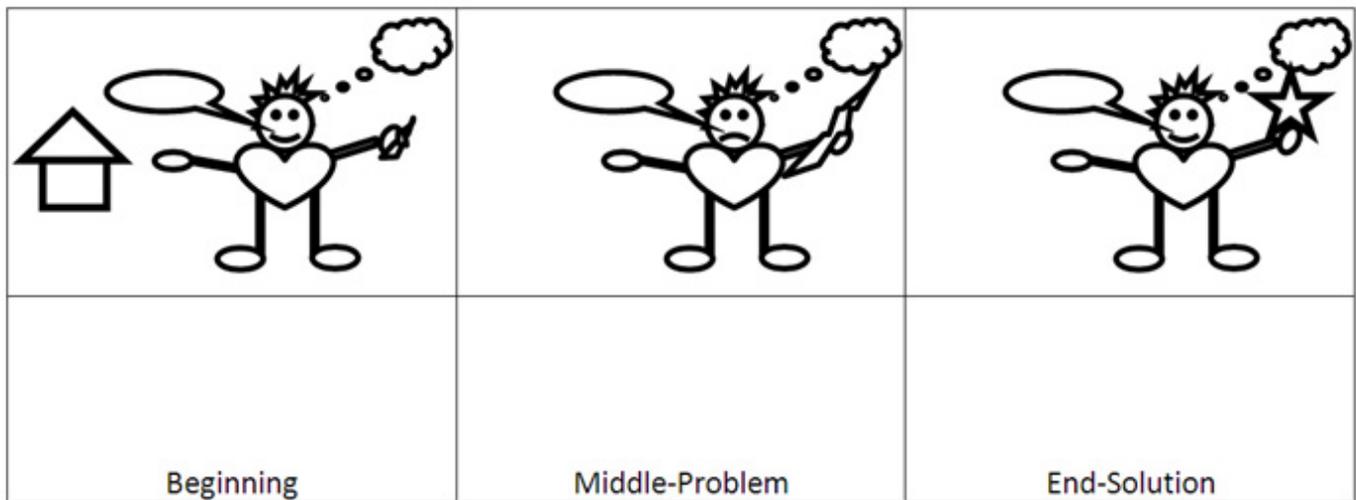
Trait Mate Symbols

					
Feelings	Good Character Trait	Bad Character Trait	Thought	Dialogue	Bad Problem

				
Setting	Action/Events First, Next Then, Finally	Solution	"Good" Problem: Trip or Adventure	The Other Characters' Reactions

				
Likes	Dislikes	Why	The Others	
				
Family	Friends	Fluent	Disconnected	

Story Sequence Planner: Beginning- Middle -End



Bibliography

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Marzano, Robert. *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum

Development, 2003. A comprehensive collection of research supported teaching strategies. Non-linguistic representations- Symbols, as teaching tools, are at the top of the list.

Marzano, Robert, Debra Pickering and Jane Pollock. *Classroom Instruction that Works*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001. A comprehensive resource of research based teaching strategies that are proven to increase student achievement.

McGregor, Tanny. *Comprehension Connections, Bridges to Strategic Reading*, Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2007. An excellent resource for the application of metacognitive reading strategies. The Trait Mate symbols can be applied to many of these reading strategies.

McQuade, Donald and Christine McQuade. *Seeing and Writing 4*. Boston and New York: Bedford St. Martin's, 2010. An eye-opening extensive discussion of the possibilities in the ways one can communicate; a study of the relationship between words and images; the impact of each separately and together, the choices they each offer, including elaborate examples from gifted artists of the word and image. The Trait Mate symbol dances with these theories, inspiring one to write by what one sees.

Schreengost, Maity. *Writing Wizardry*. Gainesville: Maupin House, 2010. An extensive collection of specific writing mini lessons for a wide range of writing skills.

Shelton, Leilen. *Banish Boring Words*. New York: Scholastic, 2009. A must have resource to expand writing vocabulary and bring life to children's stories! If the words are available, students are more likely to use them. Expansive vocabulary for emotions, actions, character traits, sensory detail as well as synonyms for common "boring words". These brilliant words will empower and inspire students to write.

Tufte, Edward. *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*. Cheshire, CT: Graphic Press, 1997. A variety of brilliant and creative examples of visual explanations. Tufte discusses the ability and value of complex ideas and information to be represented visually--inspiring for educators as communicators of information!

Williams, Robert, and John Stockmyer. *Unleashing the Right Side of the Brain The LARC Creativity Program, The Systematic Approach for Unlocking Creative Potential*. Lexington, MA.: The Steven Green Press, 1987. In addition to a comprehensive discussion of the left and right brain functions, Williams and Stockmyer describe an innovative look into the undeveloped, undervalued, untapped power of the brain's creative potential and a systematic approach to access creative thinking.

Student Resources

Cannon, Janell. *Stellaluna*. New York: Scholastic, 1993. A beautiful story of a lost baby bat that lands in a bird's nest. Stellaluna strives to fit in, but doesn't. Excellent example of narrative structure, characterization and elaboration of events.

Cave, Kathryn and Riddell, Chris. *Something Else*, New York: Mondo, 1998. This is a beautiful story about friendship, differences and self-reflection as the victimized character realizes he was as critical as the "others."

De Paola, Tomie. *Bill and Pete*. New York, New York: The Putnam and Grosset Group, 1978. This text is an excellent example of story structure, temporal clauses, and inferred character traits through the character's actions, thoughts, feelings, thoughts and others reactions.

_____. *Bill and Pete Go Down the Nile* . New York, New York: The Putnam and Grosset Group, 1978. This is a great story that demonstrate the events of a "good" problem; an adventure.

_____. *Bill and Pete to the Rescue* . New York: Penguin Puffin Books, 1998. This book demonstrates excellent story structure, sequence of events and examples of characterization.

Hoffman, Mary. *Amazing Grace*. New York, New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1991. This is an excellent book to show realistic fiction story structure including "bad" problem to solve, inferred and stated character traits, clear sequence of events and lesson learned.

Krauss, Robert. *Leo the Late Bloomer*. New York, New York: HarperCollins Publisher. 1971. This is an easily connectable story for young readers that demonstrates simple story structure. It describes a character in the beginning, the problem, middle and how the problem is solved in the end. The story illustrates a simple, but clear sequence of events; beginning, middle, and end.

Pfister, Marcus. *Rainbow Fish*. New York, New York: North- South Books Inc., 1992. This is an excellent book to show fictional story structure, a clear sequence including three events that solve the problem. Character traits can be easily identified and inferred through the character's feelings, actions, thoughts, feelings, thoughts and others reactions as well as an easily understood lesson.

_____. *Rainbow Fish and the Big Blue Whale*. New York: North-South Books Inc.,1998. Rainbow Fish and his friends misunderstand the movements of the Big Blue Whale; a clear problem and sequence of events to solve it. A series offers familiarity as student will know Rainbow Fish. Great example of narrative structure and elaboration.

_____. *Rainbow Fish to the Rescue*. New York: North-South Books Inc.,1998. Great example of narrative structure, clear problem and sequence of events to solve it.

Rylant, Cynthia., *The Relatives Came*. Newyork: Live Oak Readalong, 2004. This is an excellent book to show realistic fiction structure with a "good" problem- trip, and clear sequence of events as well as interesting and unique ways to describe time.

Sudduth, Brent. *Buster*. New York : Mondo, 2003. This is an easily relatable story of a late blooming firefly, Buster, whose tail won't light up. Great examples of narrative structure, characterization, sequencing and elaboration of events.

Implementing District Standards

In accordance with the New Haven Public School District Literacy Standards, after completing this unit, the students will be:

Forming a general understanding: Students will identify or infer important characters, settings, problems, events, relationships, and details within a written work. **(CMT obj: A-2)**

Developing an interpretation: Students will identify the author's use of structure and organizational patterns. **(CMT obj: B-1);** Students will use stated evidence from the text to draw and/or support a conclusion. **(CMT obj. B-3)**

End Notes

- 1 http://ascd.org/publication/books/1012226/Getting_the_Picture.aspx
- 2 Vinis Crevola, **Pathway to Writing**, 43.
- 3 David Crow, *Left to Right/ The Cultural Shift from Words to Pictures* , 5.
- 4 David Crow , *Left to Right/ The Cultural Shift from Words to Pictures* , 58.
- 5 David Crow, *Left to Right/ The Cultural Shift from Words to Pictures* , 59.
- 6 David Crow, *Left to Right/ The Cultural Shift from Words to Pictures* , 60.
- 7 Clive Thompson, *Wired* , *Think Visual* , 66.
- 8 Robert Williams and John Stockmyer, *Unleashing the Right Side of the Brain, The LARC Creativity Program*, 17.
- 9 David Crow. *Left to Right/ The Cultural Shift from Words to Pictures* , 4.
- 10 Robert Williams and John Stockmyer, *Unleashing the Right Side of the Brain, The LARC Creativity Program*, 17.
- 11 Robert Williams and John Stockmyer, *Unleashing the Right Side of the Brain, The LARC Creativity Program*, 17.
- 12 Dr. Glen Johnson, *Traumatic Brain Injury Survival Guide*.
- 13 Dr. Robert Williams and John Stockmyer, *Unleashing the Right Side of the Brain, The LARC Creativity Program*, 17.
- 14 Marzano. Robert, Debra Pickering and Jane Pollock, *Classroom Instruction that Works* ,73.
- 15 Marzano. Robert, Debra Pickering and Jane Pollock, *Classroom Instruction that Works*, 83.
- 16 Edward Tufte, *Visual Explanations, Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*, 9 .

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