



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

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## **The Trait Mate: Visual Symbols for Narrative Writing**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 11.01.03  
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A symbol, by its very nature, communicates an idea. When this idea is universal, connecting to a deeply familiar concept, it can be widely understood as it is translated into the language of the viewer. Its meaning transcends social, cultural, political, language and academic barriers, communicating its meaning quickly, clearly, and effectively. A symbol can also be used to explain complex ideas when words cannot and can inspire us to create the words we need by the idea it conveys. The importance of our communication as teachers is paramount, as it helps define the effectiveness of our instruction across diverse classroom settings. Therefore, I have developed a symbol to communicate concepts for writing. The Trait Mate is a concrete explanation of abstract ideas to help students think about narrative structure and elaboration when writing. It is a symbol that communicates concepts in a way students will easily understand and quickly learn, making it a powerfully effective tool for teaching writing.

(Recommended for English Language Arts, grades 1-4)

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