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First Fun With Files



by Shannon Dempich and Donna Kelley

First graders are not too young for databases. For example, they can be involved in creating an ever-growing record of the books in the classroom or school library, using a format as in Figures 1 and 2. At first, the teacher can model in a group setting the process of entering responses. Each day after story hour, the teacher has the

listeners recall information and evaluate the story and pictures. Their responses are then typed while they watch. Later on, predictions can be entered before reading the story and then evaluated and edited afterwards. As the year progresses, students can enter their own information about their independent reading.

Figure 1. A database record for a favorite first grade story.

NAME OF BOOK: Horton Hatches the Egg
AUTHOR: Dr. Seuss
REAL OR MAKE BELIEVE: make believe
CHARACTER TYPE: animal
MAIN CHARACTER: Horton
OTHER CHARACTER 1: Mayzie Bird
OTHER CHARACTER 2: Hunters
STORY: Horton the elephant babysits an egg and hatches it.
STORY EVALUATION: excellent
PICTURE EVALUATION: excellent

Figure 2. Another database record dictated by first graders.

NAME OF BOOK: The Story of Babar
AUTHOR: Jean De Brunhoff
REAL OR MAKE BELIEVE: make believe
CHARACTER TYPE: animal
MAIN CHARACTER: Babar
OTHER CHARACTER 1: Celeste
OTHER CHARACTER 2: Arthur
STORY: Babar the little elephant grows up to be a king.
STORY EVALUATION: good
PICTURE EVALUATION: okay

Through adding to the database, youngsters engage in such processes as: reading and following directions, locating, organizing and categorizing information, using books as references, finding data on title pages, comparing and contrasting stories, and summarizing. The students learn to identify story types, compare writing styles of authors, determine character types, and make judgments about the appeal of books to different readers.

To reach these objectives and to extend the experience beyond simply entering information, other activities can be integrated within the classroom program. The database can be searched to create lists of books by a favorite author or of particular story types and character types. Using these lists, children can consider such questions as: What types of stories does your favorite author write? Are make-believe stories usually about animals? Which animals are found most in the stories we have read? Have we read more stories about girls or about boys? Note that the last two questions might lead to a variation of the original database to include fields for types of animals and gender of the main character.

Other types of extensions are possible as well. Children can search for a book they haven't read, read the story line summary, and then write or tell their versions to friends. They might then read the book and see how their versions compare to the author's. Another search might be conducted for books that didn't get very good picture evaluations and the children could explain ways in which the illustrations might be made more appealing to them. Books with positive story evaluations can be listed and the children can evaluate the characteristics of these stories that make them likable.

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The Word Processor: A Flexible Tool

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BEcause of the money or WORRY about me BEING SO FAR away from hom. I was ANGRY that i couldn't go but I got over it.

Wh-t n-xt? The cloze procedure and rewording process are suggestions for developing vocabulary in --- ways with a word processor. What other meaningful vocabulary building lessons can you ---?

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