Experimenting with Narrative Leads

Connection: Today is the start of the 2nd bend in the unit and your writing work is going to change. Today, instead of generating NEW personal narratives, you will need to look over your collection of ideas/stories and focus on one.

Writers often call that a...

Seed idea...

meaning you will nourish and grow that seed idea into a published piece of writing.

There is just something about this story!

This story idea has the potential to become a really important piece of writing. At this point, it might just be an idea that you think you can develop into a powerful and meaningful story, or you may have already experimented in writing it.

Turn & share which story idea/story is your Seed idea.

● Mark your seed idea with a post-it note in your Writer’s Notebook.
Most writers don’t just pick a story idea and then write it; they get ready to write by rehearsing.

**Partner 1:**
Tell the story that is your seed idea (DO NOT READ) I want to hear you using the same dramatic storytelling voice you use when telling your family what happened at school, or when you’re talking to a friend in the hallway; when something unbelievable has just happened to you and you bump into your best friend and tell them alllll about it.

**Partner 2:**
Lean in and listen!

As you tell your stories, you’ll start to figure out what you want to show about your characters and how you want to make your partner react to certain parts of the story...... That is exactly why we story-tell our story before we put it on paper.
Today I want to teach you that writers also rehearse for writing by trying out several different leads.

Do you know how much the first sentences or paragraphs of a story—what writers call the lead—matter?

Therefore, authors try out different leads, looking for the one that will set them up to write a great story.

We already noticed that Katie started her story with a **dialogue lead**. Look at our mentor author, Jim Howe, and see what he did at the start of ‘Everything Will Be Okay’ that makes his lead so powerful. What is he doing at the start of this story that I can try?

**Everything Will Be Okay**

**Goal:** to bring all that you can learn from your mentor text into your own personal narrative writing.
The 1st thing I’m noticing is that he is right in the moment of his story, recalling and **zooming in on those tiny details** that must have actually caught his attention at the time: the missing fur, the leaky eyes, the stick-skinny body. How must he have really replayed the scene in his mind bit by bit, to remember what he saw and felt at that time, for those details to ring so true?

I also notice that, in his head, Howe has the narrator talking to the kitten in his mind, telling him how lucky he is and how he feels about the neighborhood kids. This **inner thinking**, right at the start of the story, certainly pulls me into his world and makes me curious about him. It makes me want to keep reading! This is a **REACTION LEAD**.

I think what is really powerful about his inner thinking at the start of the story is the way it allows him to drop some hints about what his story might really be about. What do we learn about David & Claude? What about the narrator?
**Leads** can pull us right into the story by including very precise details from the moment. It looks like leads can also include the main character thinking in a way that touches on the heart of the story.

Remember, today I wanted to teach you that writers also rehearse for writing by trying out several different leads.

**Active Engagement:** Write today, try a few different leads:

**Narrative Leads:**

★ Begin with a STRONG lead

1. Action lead - precise character actions
2. Dialogue lead - we are put in the middle of a conversation
3. Reaction lead - inner thinking
4. Other techniques we discussed

⇒ Try to include the smallest details of the moment
Example Notebook Page of Leads

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Lead #1: Talking Lead

"Yes!" I heard people whispering. I knew that it was going to be the most fun place it was going to go. I was so excited to do anything, but sit there and listen more.

Lead #2: Action Lead

I felt as if there was an earthquake. I turn to see a pack of cows heading my way. "Run!" I heard someone start to yell out. And with out hesitation, I ran for my life.

Lead #3: Flash back Lead

I felt a sweat of fear. Rolling down my forehead. I felt as if an earthquake was coming. And someone gave me a sigh, a boost to start running for my life. It descended on it.

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FIG. 7-1 Arlene has tried out three different leads in her notebook.
**Homework:**

Craft at least *3 different narrative leads* that you think would be best for setting you up to tell your story really, really well. Think about incorporating some of the techniques we discussed to see what other types of things you might try for starting a story.
Share: Partners read your best lead in your best storytelling voice. Listen for how the writer grabs you and makes you want to hear the rest of the story.