



# **TEACHER GUIDE NARRATIVE UNIT:**

**Grade 7 or 8 – The War of the Wall**

# Teacher Guide

## Narrative Unit:

### The War of the Wall

Developed by  
The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Office of Literacy and Mathematics, Office of Educational Accountability, and the  
Greater Madison Writing Project



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# Overview

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This lesson sequence provides students the opportunity to practice narrative writing while reading and studying “The War of the Wall” a short story by Toni Cade Bambara. Students will focus on first impressions of people they have met, understanding how community is important in their world, and focus on how family and community are essential. Cognitive strategies will be embedded into the reading and students will also be stopped during the reading to write short, one-paragraph narratives into their Writer’s Notebook. The handout with the cognitive strategies is from the [Pathway Project](#) from the National Writing Project.

The focus of this unit is routine, low-stakes narrative writing as follow-up to previous in-depth units/lessons on narrative stories and structures, therefore there are multiple writing opportunities but limited instruction on narrative techniques. Please see this [7th/8th Narrative Unit: Point of View](#) if more instruction on narrative writing is needed.

The [full text of “The War of the Wall”](#) is available for free at [Common Lit](#), and an [audio recording of “The War of the Wall”](#) from LeVar Burton Reads can be found on [tapesearch](#) and various podcast platforms.

## **This unit focuses on Wisconsin standards:**

- W.7.2.c Write narratives that develop real or imagined experiences or events using relevant descriptive details and well-structured event sequences that organize an event sequence logically. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introduces a narrator or characters, using techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and characters.
- W.8.2.c Write narratives that develop real or imagined experiences or events using relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences that organize an event sequence logically. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introduces a narrator or characters, using techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and characters.

## **Lesson Sequence Overview**

- **Lesson One: First Impressions**  
Goal: Tapping into prior knowledge of students about first impressions. (Day with stand-alone writing prompt.)

- **Lesson Two: War of the Wall (part 1)**  
Goal: Writing about a first impression & reading a narrative. (Day with text-based writing prompt.)
- **Lesson Three: War of the Wall (part 2)**  
Goal: Writing short a narrative in response to mentor text. (Day with stand-alone writing prompt.)
- **Lesson Four: War of the Wall (parts 3-4)**  
Goal: Writing a narrative to explore perspectives. (Day with stand-alone writing prompt.)
- **Lesson Five: Revisiting First Impressions**  
Goal: Revising and extending first impression narratives. (Day with text-based writing prompt.)

# Lesson One: First Impressions

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## Lesson Focus:

Narrative writing and understanding. Low-stakes/un-graded narrative writing.

## Learning Intention:

Students will learn the word “impression” and apply prior knowledge about first impressions.

## Materials:

- YouTube video [Rapunzel Meets Flynn Rider for the First Time | Tangled](#)
- Writer’s Notebook
- [7th/8th Narrative Unit: The War of the Wall](#) slide deck

## Activities:

- First Impressions Discussion
- Video
- Turn and talk
- Whole group discussion
- Respond to the prompt

## Lesson:

1. Teacher asks students if they know what the term “first impressions” means. Ask students to turn and talk, then share. Teachers can explain, then model with another teacher or a student what it is like to meet someone for the first time. Teachers may want to set up a humorous first meeting with another teacher ahead of time. The two teachers describe what it was like meeting someone for the first time and what their first impressions might have been.
2. Teacher will make sure every student understands first impressions. Teacher will show the video from YouTube “Rapunzel meets Flynn Rider for the First Time.” Have students jot down what they think Flynn Rider or Rapunzel’s first impressions might be.
3. Students can turn and talk with a partner or a small group about what they feel the first impressions are based on the video. As students are speaking with each other,



the teacher listens to what the students infer about the first impressions to informally assess if the students are understanding the concept.

After students discuss with a partner/smaller group, bring it back to a whole group discussion. Ask students to share commonalities or differences they noticed with their partner or group.

4. Students will write a one-paragraph narrative based on the prompt (slide 2):

Write a one paragraph story about the first impressions Rapunzel has of Flynn or the first impressions Flynn has of Rapunzel. Be sure to use descriptive words and details to describe the characters and their initial thoughts of each other.

Note: Students should already have been instructed on what a narrative is and what the elements are. This is a low-stakes writing piece, so it does not need to be graded.

## Lesson Two: War of the Wall (part 1)

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### Lesson Focus:

Using cognitive strategies to read and comprehend a narrative.  
Writing short narratives in response to reading.

### Learning Intentions:

Students will write a short narrative in response to the story.

### Materials:

- Writer's Notebook
- [The War of the Wall Worksheet \(Student\)](#)
- [War of the Wall Story with Margin Box](#)
- [7th / 8th Narrative Unit: The War of the Wall](#) slide deck

### Activities

- Respond to the prompt
- Share out
- Elements of plot review
- Reading

### Lesson:

1. Students take out their writer's notebook. Remind them of the video from yesterday and the writing they did about Rapunzel and Flynn. Today, give them the following prompt to write about in their writer's notebook (slide 3:)

Write a one-paragraph story about a moment when you met someone for the first time that includes your first impressions of that person. Be sure to include descriptive words to explain your first impression.

2. Students will share what they wrote as a whole group, with a small group, or a partner. This writing will not be graded. Circulate as students share in small groups or partners or choose 3-4 students to volunteer with the whole group.

3. Students will identify the elements of plot in the stories. Depending upon the stories students wrote and shared, today might be the day to ask students to identify the climax or identify the rising action.
4. Teacher will read aloud War of the Wall Part One to the students (or use the LeVar Burton podcast). Pause at the end of Part One and use the War of the Wall Worksheet to help students understand the story. There will also be stops further along in the story to write narrative responses.

## Lesson Three: War of the Wall (part 2)

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### Lesson Focus:

Using cognitive strategies to read and comprehend a narrative.  
Writing short narratives in response to reading.

### Learning Intention:

Students will write a short narrative in response to the story.

### Materials:

- Writer's Notebook
- [War of the Wall Story with Margin Box](#)
- [The War of the Wall Worksheet \(Student\)](#)
- [7th / 8th Narrative Unit: The War of the Wall](#) slide deck

### Activities:

- Reading
- Respond to the prompt
- Reading and worksheet

### Lesson:

1. Teacher will continue the read aloud or play Part Two of the story. After the section where the Morris girl brings the painter lady some food and the painter lady's reaction to the food is read (bottom of page #2), stop reading.
2. Students will respond to the following prompt in their writing notebook (slide 4):

Write a one paragraph story, real or imagined, about a time you were offered some food that did not look appealing. Include in your story your reaction to the food and what kind of food it was. Be sure to use descriptive words and details about the food and your reaction.

3. Teacher continues to read or play the story. As the story is being read, The War of the Wall Worksheet should be filled in along the way by students. Make sure to stop at the breaks and discuss each question with the students.

Note: Teacher tip - You may want to collect the War of the Wall Worksheet at the end of the reading to use as informal assessment.

## Lesson Four: War of the Wall (parts 3-4)

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### Lesson Focus:

Using cognitive strategies to read and comprehend a narrative.  
Writing short narratives in response to reading.

### Learning Intention:

Students will write a short narrative in response to the story.

### Materials:

- Writer's Notebook
- [War of the Wall Story with Margin Box](#)
- [The War of the Wall Worksheet \(Student\)](#) Cognitive Strategies Handout
- [7th / 8th Narrative Unit: The War of the Wall](#) slide deck

### Activities

- Reading and worksheet
- Respond to the prompt

### Lesson:

1. Teacher will finish reading aloud or playing the story. Make sure to stop at the breaks to use the cognitive strategies and discuss each question with the students. The teacher may want to collect the worksheet at the end of the reading to check for understanding of the story.
2. Students will respond to the following prompt in their writing notebook (slide 5):

Write a one paragraph story describing how the painter lady felt after everyone saw her finished wall of respect. Be sure to include descriptive words and details about the painter lady's feelings.

Note: Teacher tip - If this piece is going to be graded, have students read their paragraphs to another student. The student should receive feedback from the student. Editing and revising needs to take place before the final product is turned in.

# Lesson Five: Revisiting First Impressions

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## Lesson Focus:

Revising and extending initial narratives on first impressions. Understanding perspective and revising initial first impressions paragraph.

## Learning Intention:

Students will revise and/or write an extended narrative about a first impression.

## Materials:

- Writer's Notebook
- [7th / 8th Narrative Unit: The War of the Wall](#) slide deck

## Activities:

- Revise or rewrite day 2 prompt

## Lesson:

1. Students will revisit the idea of first impressions. Have students take out their paragraph about their first impression of someone (from day 2). The students are going to either revise the original first impressions paragraph or write a new one based on the prompt (slide 6):

Write a story, real or imagined, about a first impression you had that changed as you got to know the person. What was your first impression and why? How did your perspective change and why? Be sure to introduce your character and use descriptive words and details throughout the story.

Note: Teacher tip: This could continue to be one paragraph, but it could also be developed into a longer, multi-paragraph narrative that allows the students to more thoroughly describe the experience of their changed perspective.

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