

Lesson Plan¹

Creative Writing

by

Jay Powell



Picture from:

Symonds Picture Story Test, Percival M. Symonds, New York:
Teachers College Press, 1948.

Objective:

We designed this lesson to provide students with an opportunity to create a simple short story from a picture.

Procedure:

1. Study the picture for a few minutes.

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2 Reprinted by permission of the Publisher. From Percival M. Symonds, *Symonds Picture-Story Test*, New York: Teachers College Press Copyright © 1948 by Teachers College Press. All rights reserved.

2. Using the contents of the picture as a guide, write a brief two or three sentence describe what happened before the event shown in the picture took place.
3. In two or three sentences, describe what is happening in the picture.
4. Using a similar few sentences describe what will happen next.
5. After completing your story, figure out how difficult to read by completing the information following the space for your story and use the chart below to do your calculations.
6. As time permits, share your stories with the other members of your working group.

Discuss the ideas that your group has used to write your stories.

After a few minutes, the teacher will read to you another version of this picture. At this point, the whole class may want to discuss the new story and compare it to what you wrote.

Write your story:

Work space:

Past:

Present:

Future:

Now do the data gathering for your Readability index:

Collect the data needed:

1. Count the total number of words you wrote in all three parts:
Total words (W): _____.
2. Count the number of sentences in all three parts:
Total number of Sentences (Sn): _____.
3. Count the number of syllables in all three parts:
Total number of syllables (Sy) _____.

Do the calculations:

1. The average number of sentences per 100 words is:

$$A = (S_n/W) * 100 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

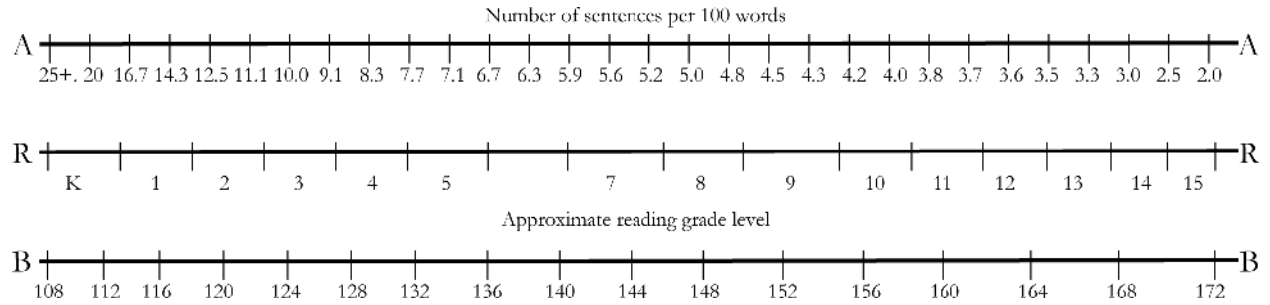
2. The average number of syllables per 100 words is:

$$B = (Sy/W)*100 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}.$$

3. The readability level of your story (from the chart below) is:

$$R = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}.$$

Using the chart:



To use this chart, locate the values you have just found on the “A” and “B” scales and join these two points with a straight line. Where this line intersects with the “R” scale is your readability level. The formula used is the Fry procedure See: Wikipedia; Readability Indices (The example in the Wikipedia article gives a differently shaped chart. I prefer the linear version. Both provide the same information. Use the one you prefer, both are free for educational purposes.)

Teacher's Guide²

Plan Classification: [2.2 Visual Decoding](#); [3.6 Explaining](#); [4.2 Discovering](#)

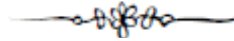
The purpose of this lesson plan is to provide a surprise in the lesson that will give students insights into creative writing and effective writing for different audiences.

It also provides an example of the use of mathematics for assessing one aspect of writing quality.

The Story you are to read to the class after they have exchange their stories is:

A Sample Short Story ...

Based upon a picture from the *Symonds Picture-Story Test*
Symonds, P. M. (1948): New York, Teachers College Columbia



PAST

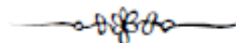
!NGTAK slithers into his case. He closes the lid and turns on his air supply. His mind orders Fletcher ROBOT to carry him away from the spaceship. Once outside, Fletcher presses the “invisible” button and the spaceship vanishes.

PRESENT

Here they are in the big city. “Find us a place to live first !NGTAK!” orders. Fletcher looks up at the tall buildings. !NGTAK likes the gracefulness of this ROBOT, but thinks it has too much a mind of its own.

FUTURE

The traffic rushed in all directions. People scurry along the sidewalk. “ROOMS,” the sign flashes. Fletcher steps into the street. A squeal of brakes. The truck knocks the case out of Fletcher’s hand. The trucks huge wheels crush the case. “Free at last,” Fletcher thinks.



If you are going to show this story through a projector when you read it, you will need to make this 12 pt type into at least 20 pt. so that it can be read easily from the back of a classroom.

The name the alien is pronounced like “intact” except that the “t” is a click (place your tongue against your upper gums and then drop it) and the “NG” is like the “ng” ending of “swing.”

The trick in this story, of course, is that I reversed the animate and the mechanical objects in the picture. This is a typical story-telling trick of experienced authors.

Having taught this lesson more than a dozen times over as many years to a wide variety of audiences, it always leads a lively discussion and an important insight into effective writing.

These groups have ranged from middle school English to adults in a creative writing class. The math part is more problematic because many people are uncomfortable with math. It illustrates the relationship between sentence length (number of words) and word complexity (number of syllables) in making writing easy or difficult to understand in a hands-on way.

The formula makes a handy tool for teachers to determine the readability of textbooks as compared to the reading skills of their classes. City center and non-English speaking children may have difficulty understanding the textbooks for courses other than reading because the language use is often not as carefully controlled. This part of the lesson should be manageable for average level students from the seventh grade onward. A skilful teacher may be able to use it successfully younger age levels. Such applications of mathematics, when well explained make mathematics less abstract and mysterious.

Please try out this lesson and tell me how well it worked for you. Once I have enough comments, I will rate it like a restaurant or a book from Amazon.com. The five stars at the top are blank because I am the only person who has used this lesson. We will update this rating from user feedback at this sight. Improvements are welcome. You are encouraged to submit your favorite lesson plans. Our hope is to publish, with acknowledgement to the contributor, as many lesson plans that we can get that fit our classification system and that clearly lead to insightful learning. Please consult our [Guidelines for Lesson Plan Submission](#) elsewhere in this site.

Collect the data needed: (Worked example from sample short story.)

1. Count the total number of words you wrote in all three parts:
Total words (W): 128.
2. Count the number of sentences in all three parts:

Total number of Sentences (Sn): 13.

3. Count the number of syllables in all three parts:

Total number of syllables (Sy) 165.

Do the calculations:

1. The average number of sentences per 100 words is:

$$A = (S_n/W) * 100 = \underline{10.16}$$

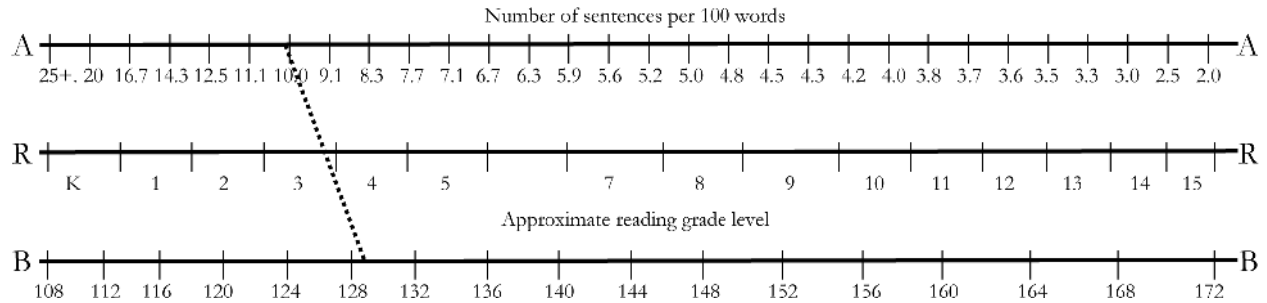
2. The average number of syllables per 100 words is:

$$B = (S_y/W) * 100 = \underline{128.9}$$

3. The readability level of your story (from the chart below) is:

$$R = \underline{3.5}$$

Using the chart:



To use this chart, locate the values you have just found on the “A” and “B” scales and join these two points with a straight line. Where this line intersects with the “R” scale is your readability level. The formula used is the Fry procedure. See: Wikipedia; Readability Indices (The example in the Wikipedia article gives a differently shaped chart. I prefer the linear version. Both provide the same information. Use the one you prefer, both are free for educational purposes.)