Creative writing: creating your urban legend

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I. Abstract 100-200

The lesson plan is aimed to develop students' narrative and descriptive skills through the topic entitled Urban legend. With the focus on narrative writing, students will be guided step by step to create their own urban legends and naturally get familiar with the format of the narrative writing. Meanwhile, the instruction of descriptive skills is also included in the lesson as to help students create a more vivid image of the story. Regarding the language focus, ways of depicting actions, sounds, characters and feelings are implemented via interesting games and activities, which can be further utilized by teachers in their future writing class. As this creative writing lesson had been carried out successfully by the writer and modified based on students' comments, the interesting topic and teaching material are expected to be of great use by writing teachers in high school.

II. Objectives

In an attempt to develop students' ability to narrate an event, , the lesson provides instructions toward skills of depicting actions, sounds, setting and characters necessary in narrative writing. In addition, as the material is centered on the theme "Urban legend", students will be seized by this particular form of story and thus gain



inspiration toward writing their own "urban legend" by making good use of the skills learned in the writing lesson.

Students will be able to write a narrative writing.

Students will be familiar with organization of narrative writing.

Students will be able to utilize descriptive skills in their writings.

III. Grade level

The lesson plan is suitable for students at intermediate proficiency level or high-intermediate level. Students already know how to use transitional words and past participle. Besides, as creative writing takes more mature skills in writing and a higher level of grammatical command, the lesson will work the best for second-year and third-year high-school students.

Intermediate level High-intermediate level

IV. Time required

Three periods of class are required to accomplish the lesson; based on the sequence of difficulty, each period has a different learning focus. For the final class, it's recommended for teachers to review the vital points of narrative writing and demonstrate wonderful student writings for students to learn from.

Time	Teaching focus	Activity
The first period	• What is "Urban legend"?	• Finding the elements in urban
	• Descriptive skills: characters and	legend
	feelings	Vocabulary game
		Logical test
		• Homework: Making up the story
The second period	Listening activity	Jigsaw picture
	• Setting and organization of narrative	Sound-out clip
	writing	Story relay race
	• Descriptive skills: sounds and actions	
The third period	• Introduction of ideas and useful	• Writing activity: Creating your
	patterns	own urban legend
		• Peer-to-peer sharing session
		Homework: A special night

V. Materials

- 1. PowerPoint slides
- 2. Handouts (See Appendix 1-3)
- 3. Several sets of pictures and notes
- 4. YouTube clips

№ Before the lesson

Students are already familiar with the use of present and past participle and have a command of writing basic language patterns. In the whole class activity, students are divided into a group of five.



VI. Teaching procedure

Teaching procedure	Content
I. Have you heard of any "Urban legend?"	 Introduce urban legends via PowerPoint where vivid pictures and the trailer of the movie Urban legend are incorporated. The logic behind the story (man's fear toward the unknown) and how the story is conveyed (from person to person) are introduced. Ask students to pay attention to the specific elements exist in typical urban legends. As the clip is just movie trailer, it excludes inappropriate scenes and only provides clues about classical stories. Classical stories include "The killer in the backseat", and "The babysitter and the man upstairs" Clip: Urban Legend 1998 Trailer http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ReNsIWZA89k
II. Activity: Finding the elements in urban lend	 After playing the clip, each group discusses and brainstorms a particular element in urban legend based on the clip and their background knowledge. Every group picks a different element. Elements include the characteristics of characters, typical settings, and the development of scary moments. Ask students to share their answers group by group and show teacher's prepared answers as supplement. Students are encouraged to have different answers. * Possible answers: (a) Character: Having a mysterious look, e.g. wearing a mask or black trench coat. Having abnormal characteristics : lame, having obvious scar Disguised as a clown or in the representation of a puppet (b) Setting: inside the car, isolated mansion, or forest (c) Scary moments: scary things hiding somewhere unknown (one's back or under the bed) suddenly pop up

The first period

III. Descriptive	1. Show Ss two YouTube clips and ask Ss to brainstorm words to describe	
skills on characters	the commercial characters inside.	
and feelings:	X Source of the clips:	
instruction and	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6OkTyI5vQA	
practice	http://gcaptain.com/maritime/blog/our-favorite-youtube-video-the-german-coast-guard/	
	* Brief description of the clip:	
	<u>Clip One: Jing-du herbal candy</u>	
	The concubine enjoys taking a bath. Most important if all, the herbal	
	candy makes her feel like royalty.	
	<u>Clip Two: The German Coast Guard</u>	
	Is speaking English important to the German coast guard? The answer is	
	positive for the guard here misinterpreted the SOS call "We are sinking" as	
	"We are thinking ."	
	Q: Which of the following words could describe the characters? in an uniform (2) with a bun(1) with a tie (2) is willing to share (1) is open-minded (1) is on his first day (2)	
	3. Write Ss' answers on the board and introduce various vocabularies on	
	description.	
	X Vocabulary	
	Describing character	
	The man <u>in</u> a dark cloak the man <u>in</u> a mask	
	The woman <u>with</u> long hair The woman <u>with</u> shiny necklace	
	The man stood with his arms crossed (Past participle)	
	Describing feelings	
	%Pattern: When someone V.ed, someone felt	
	Expressions and slangs useful in describing feelings are introduced as	
	follows.	
	Scared: be chilled to the bone, sit on the edge, be chicken out	
	Excited: be thrilled, be carried away	
	Angry: be like a wet hen, be pissed off, one's face turns red Suspicious: smell a rat, something is fishy	

	 4. Vocabulary game For each word or phrase, the teacher reads an example sentence but muffles the word. S who can first name the word / phrase is the winner. "OK, students, are you ready? The first one, when I saw the movie Final Destination, I was Ding Ding to the bone and couldn't sleep. That's right. Adam. I was what? Yes, chilled to the bone. Good job." Sentence: (a) When my mom found that I scattered my jacket and books all over on the bed, her face suddenly turned Ba Bu and asked me to clean up in one minute. Answer: red (b) When the graceful-looking lady showed up Dong a dark dress, everyone on the spot welcomed her Dong a big smile. Answers: in; with 	
IV. Activity: Logical test	 Give each group four notes, ask Ss to write down four sentences which include the description of characters or feelings. Two sentences must be correct or logical while the rest of the two must be incorrect or illogical. After 5 minutes, the teacher collects the notes and mixes the notes with teachers' prepared notes in a bag. Explain the rules (a) Pull ten chairs and make two rows in the front of the classroom. Two rows face each other with a garbage can set between the rows. Garbage can 	
	 (b) For each round, ask 10 Ss to volunteer to play the game. The first S on each row holds a paper ball. (c) Teacher randomly picks a note and reads the sentence. If the sentence is grammatically correct or logical, the S holding the ball passes the ball to the next student. If the sentence is ungrammatical or illogical, the S throws the ball to the garbage can. The faster one is the winner and gets a point. 	

	Garbage Can
	(d) If necessary, ask the S who successfully gets the point why. *Examples:
	(0)When John heard a woman sobbing at night, he felt curious and was ready to search the source.
	 (x) As legend has it, the woman in long hair and big red eyes knocks on a stranger's door every night.
	4. When the game is finished, go over the descriptive skills with the Ss.
V. Writing	1. Ask Ss to make up a story from one of the following scenarios.
homework:	
Making up the	(a) Basic: Babysitter and the phone call
Story	When the babysitter was home alone with the baby, she got a phone call
	and in the end she shouted, "What did you say?!"
Ę.	Please make up a story and include the dialogue on the phone, the caller,
	what the babysitter heard, and why she responded that way.
	(b) Advanced: The mystery in the North Pole
	In an inspection station in the North Pole, the police found
	the bodies of two inspectors, who were the only inspectors in
	that station. Mysteriously, one of them, Tom, died a month
	earlier than the other man named John, who died a couple of
	days ago. After doctor's diagnosis, the police concluded that Tom died of
	heart attack and John died by suicide. Besides, there was mud all over
	Tom's body. Everyone was confused. All the police knew was that an SOS
	call was sent a month ago. What happened?
	X Note: The advanced one is a typical urban legend. It takes logical
	thinking to figure out the plot so that teachers could decide to include it into
	the practice or not. However, some students find themselves enjoy the
	process of thinking. One possibility of this urban legend is that John

suffered from the doubt that he might have buried Tom alive after his
sudden death. Though John sent an SOS call, it took a long time for anyone
to reach them. Then, without any help, he kept digging Tom's body out to
make sure and buried him again the next day. As the cycle continued for
one month, he couldn't stand the suspicion so that the story ended in
tragedy. For this one, it's up to teachers to include or not based on
individual difference of students.
2. Ask Ss to capitalize on what has learned in the lesson to complete the
homework.

Teaching procedure	Content	
	 7. Play the recording and ask Ss to pay attention to the organization of the story. With the headings "setting" "characters" "climax" and "ending" provided on the handout, Ss need to jot down more detailed information. * The handout (see Appendix 1) Urban legend: the organization of the story. 1. Setting: 2. Characters: 3. Climax: 4. The end: 	

The second period

	8. Play the recording again, pause at each key point, explain and check Ss'
	answers on the handout.
	9. Wrap up and relate this listening material to the format of narrative
	writing.
	Describing sounds
III. Descriptive	1. Play the sounds, ask students to name the sound and survey which
skills on sounds and	sounds they consider the last thing they want to hear. Sounds can be
actions: instruction	legally downloaded from <u>www.soundlibrary.com</u> and Office Microsoft
and practice	Clipart <u>http://office.microsoft.com/zh-tw/clipart/default.aspx</u>
	X Sounds
	• The sound of someone scraping one's fingernail
	• The sound of someone starting the engine
	• The sound of someone knocking on the door
	• The sound of footsteps
	• The sound of runny water
	The sound of rain drops
	• Sighs
	2. Introduce ways to describe the sounds centered on a different focus.
	※ Focus: A sense of quietness
	It was nothing. Only the Purr sounds made by a cat could be heard.
	The campus was as quiet as a tomb.
	※ Focus: fear
	The continuous sound of footsteps bothered him, disrupting his nice
	dream. Most important of all, his wild imagination made him quiver in
	bed.
	3. Ask Ss to brainstorm sounds that could be incorporated in creating
	different images.
	Describing actions
	1. Introduce the following verbs.
	(a) go upstairs/downstairs 上樓/下樓
	(b) start the engine 開動引擎
	(c) turn one's back 轉身
	(d) rush to 急趕去
	(e) press the button 按按鈕
	(f) bump into 撞上了
	(g) tiptoe quietly
	(2) alone Amon's the share a set of the set

	Practice: Sound-out clip
	1. Play the clip once for Ss to gain an overview.
	2. Play the clip again without sound and ask Ss to describe the actions in
	the clip.
	X Clip: The killer in the back seat
	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeNdrIEKypc
	※ The clip contains just selected scenes. With
	scary scenes left out, it's safe for Ss to watch.
	3. After the practice, review key verbs with the Ss.
IV. Activity:	1. Each group picks pictures which represent character, location, object,
Story relay race	time, action, feelings like "taking a shower" "scared", etc.
	 ** Pictures and words are as follows. (a) Character: The babysitter, the man with a hook, the man with an ax, the woman with long black hair (b) Location: the chamber, school, forest, car, gas station (c) Object: telephone, rain, black cloak, a bloody cap (d) Action: drive a car, take a shower, watch TV, do homework online (e) Feeling: scared, with his eyes opened wide Total Content of Scare Provided (a) State of Scare Provided Total Content of Scare Provided Total Conten
	 2. Give students a few pieces of papers for them to take notes. 3. Explain the rules (a) As a group, students make up a story based on the pictures they pick, utilize the descriptive skills and include "characters, climax and ending" in the story. (b) As the activity is entitled relay race, each member will be in charge of a part of the story in the reporting phase.

(c) Tell Ss the activity is for them to utilize the skills they've learned in the class so that they are encouraged to use as many skills as they can.(d) Remind Ss to use past tense and make connections in the story.
Example 1. Group A, which got "a babysitter" "car" "listening to broadcasting" "excited "
One day, a babysitter worked overtime because the parents didn't return by 11 o' clock. She felt sacred about staying alone with the baby in the
house, so she decided to take the baby to her place and call the parents the next day. It was really late at the time, almost midnight. As she got in her car, the baby was extremely quiet and asleep by no reason. Somehow she felt excited about it. Maybe it's because she's such a good babysitter. While driving and dreaming about getting a raise from doing a good job, she turned on the radio, listening to broadcasting. To her surprise, she heard a strange sound coming from the backseat. Suddenly, as the radio stopped functioning, she was able to hear very clearly what the sound was like. It was someone scraping his fingernail from the backseat. For some reasons, she knew it's not the baby. Now she was reluctant to turn back
 Introduce the writing practice Ss will do in the next class. Give a brief description about the beginning of the story, write down the key words and ask Ss to create an image of the setting.
* The brief description about the beginning of the story "Alright, class. Next time we will write our own urban legends. Excuse me? It's too difficult for you? No, it's not because I will give you the beginning of the story. All you have to do is to use your imagination and work on the rest of the story. Does it sound better? Wonderful! The main character is called John. He temporarily stayed in his uncle's house, which is an isolated house surrounded by a forest. One day, when he was watching TV, something went wrongIs it scary?!! OK, that's enough for the details. Next time you will get to see the handout and for this time, I want you to draw the setting, use a color to describe it, and write a few words about it. Creating an image is very important for your success in writing next time."

*	Creating the image of the setting
(8	a) Draw the setting
(ł	b) If you can use a word/ color/ adjective to describe the setting,
((that will be c) Write a few words about the setting
Ì	
•ו	The handout will be distributed in the next class
*	The handout will be distributed in the next class.
*	The handout will be distributed in the next class. A scary night.
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*	A scary night ی One quiet night, John stayed in his uncle's place while his parents went on a trip together. Since he had nothing to do, he sat on the
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The third period

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Teaching procedure	Content
I. Warm-up:	1. Distribute the handout to Ss. (See Appendix2)
Getting ready to	2. Introduce ideas and useful patterns in writing narrative and transitional
write	words for Ss for reference.
	※ Ideas
	(1) 這種文體當考嗎? (2) 要把細節都寫進去嗎? (3) 可以加入對話或心中的聲音嗎? (4) 如何寫會比較生動有趣? ※ Useful patterns <u>訪明當時發生的事.</u> 1. As:soon:as <u>S+V.;S+V.·</u> 當,就2. Justas <u>S+V.;·S+V.·</u> 當,就3. To:my+·N.; 今我的是. 時間片語和轉承誦. 1

II.	1. Distribute the worksheet to Ss. (See Appendix3)						
Create your own	2. Go through the beginning of the story and brainstorm the plots with Ss.						
urban legend: a	X Possible directions:						
scary night	an anonymous phone call, TV program, the isolated						
	house, the mysterious uncle, the cat.						
	3. While Ss are writing, go around and check if they have						
	any difficulty in vocabulary or ideas.						
	4. Encourage Ss to incorporate typical elements of urban						
	legend and use their imagination to create their own writing pieces.						
	X For students' work, see Appendix 4						
III. Peer-to-peer	1. Ask Ss to form in a group of four and sit in a circle.						
sharing session	2. Ss take turns to summarize their story to the rest of the group, and get						
	oral response from their peers.						
	3. After 10 minutes, ask Ss to volunteer their comments toward this						
	writing activity.						
IV. Homework:	1. Announce homework: ask Ss to relate the skills to their personal lives						
writing a special	and write a special night. Ss who hand in this homework can get extra						
night	credits.						
	X Ss can choose the following topic						
	• The night before/ A scary night						
	A sleepless night focus: actions and feelings						
	• A night when typhoon came focus: sounds and things happened						

VII. Assessment

Students will be assessed on their participation on group projects, their homework and their production of creating their own urban legends.



VIII. Suggestions

As the lesson consists of three class periods, teachers could utilize the activities or ideas in the lesson and modify based on individual needs and available time. Though the lesson is centered on the topic "Urban legend," with a careful selection of stories and clips, the lesson could be motivating without getting students scared.

IX. References

- 1. Jeremy Harmer (2004). How to teach writing. Longman
- 2. Liz Simon (2005). Write as an expert: explicit teaching of genres. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- 3. Rost, Michael (2007). English Firsthand 2. Longman
- 4. Pictures:

http://office.microsoft.com/zh-tw/clipart/default.aspx, http://my.so-net.net.tw/scie/, http://pro.corbis.com/

4. Special thanks to all the trainers in EF teacher training program in Boston. The wonderful ideas and inspiration prompts me to finish the lesson.

Appendix 1. The note-taking form in listening activity

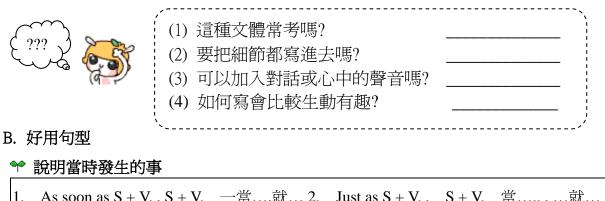
Urban legend: the organization of the story								
Take notes while you listen								
1. Setting:	5. Key words in the recording:							
2. Characters:								
3. Climax:	6.							
4. The end:								

Appendix 2: Handout

Urban legend 敘述文

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A. Reminders for writing narrative writing



3. To my + <u>N.</u> , 令我的是	¢C.	5

🌱 時間片語和轉承詞

1. 起初	at first / in the beginning	2	一會兒過	後	afte	er a while
3. <u>立</u> 刻	immediately / right away / at once	4.	最後	final	ly	/ in the end

Appendix 3: Writing practice: creating your urban legend

敘述文 Narrative writing

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▲ 參考單字與句型

- 1. This is the most <u>adj.</u> moment in his life 這是他人生中最....的一刻
- 2. Out of his..... 出於他的....
 - e.g. Out of his curiosity, he took a peep at his lover's letter. 出於好奇心作祟,他偷看了他愛人的信



A scary night

One quiet night, John stayed in his uncle's place while his parents went on a trip together. Since he had nothing to do, he sat on the couch alone, surfing the channels. "What a boring day! By the way, where is Uncle George?" He mumbled. It seemed like in the house, his only accompany was the black cat kept by Uncle George. Located in the center of the village, the house is surrounded by trees and unknown plants. It was chilly all the time especially in the late night like this. As the wind blew, suddenly, John heard something...

At first, _____

Then,

- 14 -

Appendix 4: Students' work on "Creating your urban legend: a scary night"



One quiet night, John stayed in his uncle's place while his parents went on a trip together. Since he had nothing to do, he sat on the couch alone, surfing the channels. "What a boring day! By the way, where is Uncle George?" He mumbled. Located in the center of the village, the house is surrounded by trees and unknown plants. It was chilly all the time especially in the late night like this. As the wind blew, suddenly, John heard something...

At first, he heard footsteps from upstairs. He wasn't sure it was his uncle or not. Then, in order to listen to the footsteps more carefully, John pressed the mute button on the remote control. As he pressed the button, the TV was suddenly off and the footsteps stopped as well. "What the hell?" John complained. "The hell…"a voice seemed to echo from upstairs. On hearing this, John trembled for a moment. "Uncle, is that you?" he shouted, but there was no answer. He gradually felt afraid while the footsteps started again from upstairs and TV was turned on by nobody. John was determined to find out who was at upstairs. He decided to take a pair of sharp scissors on the desk. As soon as he picked up the scissors with his trembling hands, the lights were all gone… The next day, the police found his body and the weapon—a pair of scissors.



One quiet night, John stayed in his uncle's place while his parents went on a trip together. Since he had nothing to do, he sat on the couch alone, surfing the channels. "What a boring day! By the way, where is Uncle George?" He mumbled. Located in the center of the village, the house is surrounded by trees and unknown plants. It was chilly all the time especially in the late night like this. As the wind blew, suddenly, John heard something...

At first, there was a blackout in the house, and he wanted to find out what caused the condition. Then, when he went downstairs to the basement, he was so astounded. To his astonishment, he saw a vampire in black cloak pop up from the dark side. As soon as he saw John, he began to chase him. As John screamed and fled upstairs, the vampire bumped into a wall and fell into a trash can due to over-speeding. John couldn't help but laugh very hard. Suddenly, he had difficulty breathing. The next day, the police found his body.

Appendix 5: The PowerPoint slides

