Story Cut-Up

Contributed by Michael Misner

Level	*Young learners who can read simple texts and write a few sentences*
Aims	*Help students organize summaries by dividing them into manageable, recognizable, and organized parts*
Class Time	*30–40 minutes*
Preparation Time	*15 minutes*
Resources	*A storybook or graded reader*
	Student notebooks and paper
	Story cut-up worksheet

Summarizing the main points of a story in order can be a challenge for any learner, but it is especially problematic for young learners who may focus on unimportant details or tell the story out of order. Breaking up the story into four ordered and manageable parts helps readers to organize before they summarize.

PROCEDURE

1. Read the storybook to the class.

2. Show the students a good quality poster-size *story cut-up* that you made for the book that was just read.

3. Ask the students about the parts of the poster, including where the pictures are and how the poster is organized.

4. Make four columns on the board, labeled *people and animals*, *where and when*, *problems*, *end*. These columns will be the same as the columns on the Story Cut-Up Worksheet.

5. Have the students shout out the names of the story characters, personalities, and relationships to one another.

6. Write the students' suggestions on the board in the correct column. Also, add important words that the students did not offer or forgot to suggest.

7. Do the same for the other three columns.

8. Choose a main character and personality and write a sentence for the students (e.g., *Jason is brave and smart.*)

9. As a class, have the students suggest the next sentence, which you write on the board (correcting any errors in the students' suggestions.)

10. When you have at least one sentence in each column, and you feel that the students understand what to do, have them copy the sentences from the board and finish the story by writing sentences in their notebooks.

11. Give each student a copy of the Story Cut-up Worksheet (see example in the Appendix below). Have the students fold the worksheet in half lengthwise and cut only the front half of the flap along the three column lines (do not cut the whole worksheet into separate pieces).

12. Have the students transfer their sentences from their notebooks to the inside of the worksheet. (Remind them to write the correct sentences in the correct columns.)

13. At home, the students should draw pictures on the outside front flaps of the worksheet.

14. Have students bring their completed story cut-ups to share in the next class.

15. After the students have had practice with this activity, students have all read different stories.

16. Students make the story cut-ups at home and bring to class.

17. In class, they exchange story cut-ups and tell their own story, while their partner looks at the story cut-up.

18. Partners switch roles.

19. Students find new partners and explain the story two more times. Repetition of the activity improves students' organization, fluency, and lexical and syntactic complexity. (The benefits of repeated practice activities cannot be overstated.) When students hear about their friends' stories, they will want to read those stories next, because they were introduced to those stories through this activity.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

Many shapes can be cut into four pieces to make more beautiful story cut-ups. If the students are reading Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar,* make the cut-up look like a caterpillar with four body parts. A train has four cars. A flower has four big petals. A butterfly has four wings; and a pizza, cake, or pie has four big

slices. A house has four big windows. A pyramid, box, or crown has four sides. (These are especially enjoyable because they can be 3-D.) The more creative you and your students are, the more interesting your Story Cut-Ups will become.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Carle, E. (1969). *The very hungry caterpillar.* New York, NY: Putnam/Philomel.

APPENDIX: *Story Cut-Up Worksheet*

Worksheet: Folded in half lengthwise

People and Animals	Where and When	Problems	End
	◄— *Cut front flap* —► *on lines*	◄— *Cut front flap* —► *on line*	
Place picture here	Place picture here	Place picture here	Place picture here

Worksheet: With one flap unfolded

Unfold each flap and place story here			
Place story here too	**Where and When**	**Problems**	**End**
	◄— *Cut front flap* —► *on lines*	◄— *Cut front flap* —► *on line*	
	Place picture here	Place picture here	Place picture here