Strategy: Developing Ideas (Small Moment Stories)

**Book Title:** *The Squiggle*

**Author:** Carole Lexa Schaefer

**Grade Level:** 1-3

**Standards:**

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.5 With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

**Summary:** A young girl’s imagination is filled with the possibilities of a simple piece of string while the rest of her class walks by paying no attention. Last in line, she picks up the string and sees a waterfall, dragon, fireworks, and other images; things her classmates would never imagine. The story shows the power of imagination in a simple item and a small moment in time.

**Goals:**

The students will identify the difference between a “small moment” story and a “big picture” story.

- I can tell how “small moment” and “big picture” stories are different.

The students will select one image from a sketch to develop a “small moments” story.

- I can write a “small moments” story using one image from my sketch.

**Anticipatory Set:**

Call students together and show students two photographs. The first photograph should be scenic shot with several different elements (i.e. a cityscape with buildings, cars, people, etc.). The second photograph should be a close up shot of one of the images in the scenic shot that will promote discussion with students (i.e. taxi, person, etc.). Begin a discussion with students about the similarities and differences between the photographs. Explain that students will learn a strategy to write “small moments” stories. Tell students that “small moments” stories are like close up photographs. The author focuses in on one aspect of a scene to explore the details of that small thing or event.

**Input:**

Task Analysis:

- Explain that the Carol Lexa Schaefer, the author of *The Squiggle*, focuses in on one small item that many people would not notice.
• Ask students to pay attention to how the author focuses in one item.
• Read The Squiggle aloud to students.
• Ask students to think of all of the things they see as they walk down the hallway in their school. Ask students to think about why the author chose to make one small object, a piece of yarn, come to life despite all of the objects that the little girl might have seen.
• Explain that The Squiggle is like the close-up photograph. Whereas authors sometimes want to share a whole day or the entire setting, focusing in on one thing or one “small moment” helps the author bring the story to life.
• Tell students that they will practice creating “small moment” stories.
• Tell students that “small moments” stories come from larger events.
• Show students a list of topics you brainstormed that you are thinking about for a “small moments” story. List: birthday party, summer vacation, plane ride, being in 3rd grade, trip to a museum, walk through the woods (See sample brainstorming list)
• Cross out “summer vacation” and “being in 3rd grade.” Explain that these topics are very broad (a lot of things happened) and it will be very difficult to pick ONE moment to talk about.
• Ask students to think of at least three topics they might want to write about. Tell students that topics like “being in 3rd grade” are too broad. Ask students to try to pick one event to write about. Students may also work with a partner to brainstorm a list of topics.
• Call students back together. Explain that you could write about your birthday party or your trip to the museum, but there are many things that happened and you can’t think of just ONE really important thing.
• Circle going on a “walk through the woods” because you remember many small moments from your adventure.
• Ask students to circle one topic they would like to try with the strategy. Remind students that they should be able to think of some small moments from the event.
• Give each student one blank piece of paper.
• Show students how to fold the paper in half.
• Demonstrate sketching a picture of the topic on one side of the paper (i.e. Topic: Going on a nature walk with my brother; Sketch: trees, birds, pond, frog, etc.). Remind students that a sketch is quick drawing. (See example)
• Give students 3-4 minutes to draw a sketch of their topic.
• Remind students that they will be focusing in on one small part of the story.
• Show students how to select ONE image in the drawing and write the topic on the top of the other half of the paper (i.e. discovering a frog under a log). “I am looking at all of the images in my picture. I see the chirping birds in the trees, the murky pond with turtles, and log where we found a frog! This is a “small moments” story so I am going to choose ONE image. I really remember finding the frog because we were so surprised! I am going to circle the frog in the picture.” (See example)
• Give students a few minutes to select an image from their sketch.
• Model brainstorming words and phrases about the selected image underneath the title on the second half of the paper (i.e. damp soil, spotted frog, rotting log, tripping over a log). (See example)
• Model using the words and phrases to begin writing a story.
  
  It was a warm, sunny afternoon as my brother and I walked quietly among the pine trees. Suddenly, I tripped over a rotting log and ruined the silence. It wasn’t only my yelp of pain that echoed through the air, but also the “ribbit” of a small spotted frog that hopped out from under the log.

• Ask students to try the “Small Moments” strategy by using the words and phrases they brainstormed about their topics to write their stories.
• Dismiss students to finish brainstorming and to begin writing.
• Allow students to share their writing at the end of the writing workshop.

Materials:
• For each student: Pencil, writer’s notebook, blank paper
• For teacher: Two photographs (one scene, one close up of image in scene), whiteboard or chart paper, marker, blank paper for modeling

Modeling:
• Demonstrate instructions for creating a sketch and brainstorming details.
• Model selecting an image from a quick sketch to expand into a “small moments” story.
• Model using details to develop a “small moments” story.

Guided Practice:
The teacher will work with students to select a topic, create a sketch, choose an image, and develop details in preparation to write a “small moments” story. Students will work with the teacher to practice narrowing the focus of their topics to develop their ideas.

Independent Practice:
Students will develop details about their topics independently using their sketches after instruction. Students will then use their brainstorming worksheets to begin writing “small moments” stories.

Assessment:
The teacher will review students’ brainstorming worksheets and their “small moments” writing to check for understanding. The teacher will also work with students during writing conferences.

Text Information:

Alternative Text:

**References:**

