BRAINSTORM!

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INTRODUCTION

In *Brainstorm!*, Rebecca Gardyn Levington delves inside the mind of her main character as she encounters one of the most important parts of the writing process. After struggling slightly at the onset of the story, the character positively experiences the brainstorming process until she arrives at the end of the story, ready to write. The story opens endless possibilities for writing instruction as the author weaves in parts of speech and story concepts in the telling of the tale. The following activities include discussion questions for reading the story aloud, utilizing resources found at the end of *Brainstorm!*, using graphic organizers to record brainstorming results, and additional ideas to prompt students' thinking about writing.

ACTIVITIES

1) Read Aloud Discussion Questions

Review the questions provided before, while, and after reading the story aloud with students. You may want to write the questions on sticky notes ahead of time to place on and in the book, so they are readily available as you read. You may also want to have a large piece of paper or a whiteboard handy for recording students' ideas for the processes they use when they begin to write.

2) Storming Clouds

The author thoughtfully includes a number of writing prompts in the "Cloudy with a Chance of Ideas!" section at the end of the book. In this activity, students experience a way to organize their ideas when they brainstorm. Graphic organizers are often helpful to gather ideas at the start of the writing process. Provide students with the Storming Clouds activity sheet and a copy of the prompts. Students choose one of the author's writing prompts or think of a topic about which they would like to write. They write this in the "TOPIC" cloud. Students brainstorm about the topic and write words or short phrases in the surrounding clouds. Reassure students that not all clouds need to be filled or offer an extra sheet if they run out of clouds. After completing the activity, their organizer may be used for further writing or to share with a classmate to explain their thinking.

3) Good Writers Read!

In *Brainstorm!*, the main character references story elements in her process of brainstorming. Good authors (writers) not only write, but they also read a lot. In this activity, students practice the habits of good writers by selecting a picture book to read, and using the Good Writers Read Story Map activity sheet to

ACTIVITIES

CONTINUED

analyze it for the key story elements. This part of the activity may be repeated with several picture books. Students then use the Good Writers Read Brainstorming Story Map to brainstorm a story of their own. Extension: Students write a story using their Good Writers Read Brainstorming Story Map.

4) Grammar Grab

Brainstorm! provides a teachable moment about parts of speech and sentence construction. Review/teach the different parts of speech addressed and share the examples from the "A Tornado of Terminology" in the back of the book. Using the Grammar Grab activity sheet, students choose parts of speech to construct their own sentences and identify the parts they used.

5) Picture Prompt

The "Cloudy with a Chance of Ideas!" section in the back of *Brainstorm!* includes two writing prompts based on photographs. Using this activity with those prompts or other images affords an opportunity for visual learners to shine. The excitement generated by observing and thinking about images naturally fuels both small research projects and creative writing efforts.

Preparation

- Choose a digital photograph, map, or old document, preferably related to your curriculum, or invite students to bring any of these items to share. A good source of digital images is the "Library of Congress Classroom Materials" page **(https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/classroom-materials/)**. The primary source set "Children's Lives at the Turn of the Twentieth Century" includes photographs that prove to be of high interest to children when modeling this activity (**https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/childrens-lives-at-the-turn-of-the-twentieth-century/**).
- Model the process with the whole group before having students work individually, or in pairs or small groups with additional images. Prompting questions are available to guide students through the process based on the subject of the image chosen (**https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/guides/**).
- Provide copies of the images or, if you have access to iPads or laptops, share the images electronically, along with a copy of the *See-Think-Wonder* activity sheet.

ACTIVITIES

CONTINUED

See-Think-Wonder Process

- Students examine the image for 2 to 3 minutes without writing or talking.
- Under the "See" column, they write a description of the image based on their observations.
- The tie to brainstorming takes place under the "Think" and "Wonder" columns. In the "Think" column, students reflect on observations they recorded under "See," using details from the image and any prior knowledge they have to support their thinking.
- For the "Wonder" column, encourage students to think about what more they want to learn, whether the image is a photograph, a map, or a document. Encourage them to record their wonders as questions that prompt further investigation.

Note: If the students are responding to the photograph prompts from *Brainstorm!*, you may want to copy only the first page of *See-Think-Wonder*, and after students complete that, move on to the prompts.

Research and Writing

- Using questions generated in the "Wonder" column paves the way for students to research and record notes in the "Research" section. They write any questions still unanswered after research under "Questions I still have…" for further investigation at another time.
- Extend the activity with students using their research to write what they learned.

READ ALOUD DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before Reading

If you have established turn-and-talk partners, have the students sit next to their partners or quickly pair students before beginning to read the story or pose the questions to the whole group.

Activate prior knowledge with the following questions.

> ***Imagine I have given you a topic for a writing assignment about which you are unsure. What do you do next? How does it make you feel? Why? Take a minute or so to think and then turn and talk over your answers with your partner.***

Show the cover of the book and/or illustrations and read the title aloud, inviting students to make predictions.

> ***What do you think this story is about? What makes you think that?***

Evidence may include characters' facial expressions, body language, the title, illustrations on the jacket, etc.

While Reading

After p. 4 (But then…)

> ***What do we learn about the main character?***
>
> ***What is her problem?***
>
> ***How do the illustrations help us understand her feelings?***
>
> ***What do you think might happen next?***

After p. 16 ("AT LAST!"):

> ***Why does the main character smile, spread her arms, and exclaim, "AT LAST!"?***

After p. 28 (I WRITE.):

> ***How did the main character solve her problem?***
>
> ***Compare the facial expressions of the main character from the beginning of the story to the end. What do you notice?***

READ ALOUD DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CONTINUED

After Reading

Have students gather in a circle to discuss the following questions about the story.

How is the main character's experience with starting to write about a topic the same for you? How is it different?

At the beginning and end of the story, the main character is seated at her desk. Where is the rest of the story taking place? What makes you think that?

Why are the illustrations important to this story?

Do you think brainstorming is an important part of the writing process? Why or why not?

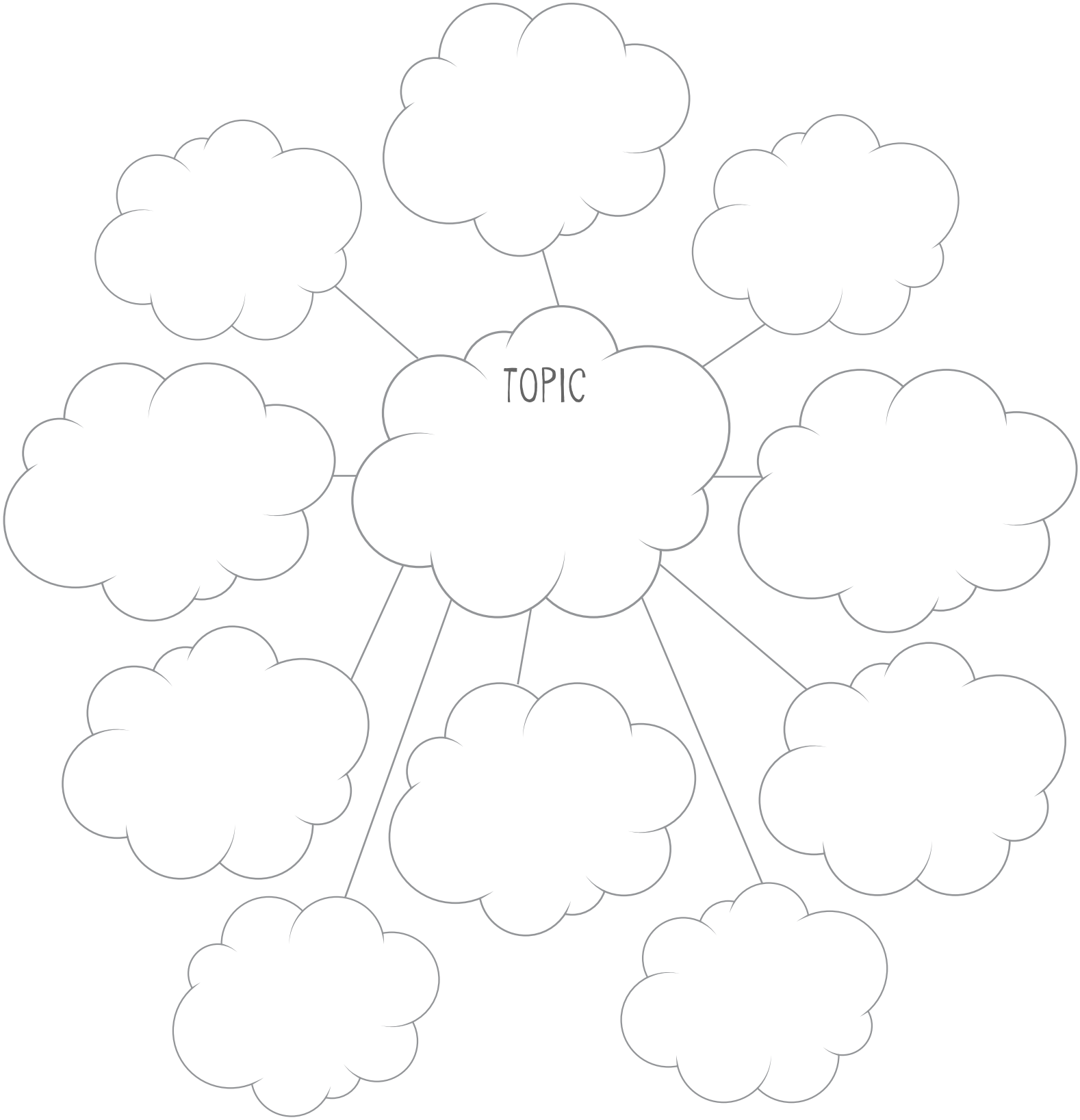
Wrap up and transition with the following question. Record students' ideas as they share them.

When you are brainstorming, what are some ways you record your thoughts?

Use this last question as a lead-in to the next activity about a method for organizing brainstormed ideas.

STORMING CLOUDS

Write the prompt you chose or a topic of your choice in the "TOPIC" cloud. Let the brainstorming begin! Fill the other clouds with words and phrases from your brainstorming. Use an additional sheet if you run out of space.



GOOD WRITERS READ STORY MAP

Title: _____ **Author:** _____

Setting (time & place):	*Characters:*
Theme or Main Idea (what the story is mostly about):	
Problem:	*Plot (Important Events):* *First* *Next*
Resolution (how the problem was solved):	*Then* *Last*
New words I learned:	
This story taught me:	

GOOD WRITERS READ BRAINSTORMING STORY MAP

Your Story Title _____

Setting (time & place):	*Characters:*
Theme or Main Idea (what the story is mostly about):	
Problem:	*Plot (Important Events):* *First* *Next*
Resolution (how the problem will be solved):	*Then* *Last*
New words I will use in my story:	
This story will teach my audience:	

GRAMMAR GRAB

Using the words or phrases in the box below and any other words you want to add, build 5 sentences. Choose at least 3 words or phrases from below to build each sentence. After you have constructed a sentence, circle what you grabbed from the box and label their parts of speech.

Example: The red fox ran quickly into the forest.

adjective verb adverb

red cat horse asked wet quiet

whistle stinky ran

he over the hill jokingly prickly floppy gently

slowly on the moon

lizards circus shouts shower gleaming

leaping in a shed wander silly she bicycles

butterfly dance

they brave happily

draw colorful quickly fuzzy dolphins bubbles

Sentence 1:	
Parts of Speech	
Sentence 2:	
Parts of Speech	

GRAMMAR GRAB

CONTINUED

Sentence 3:	
Parts of Speech	
Sentence 4:	
Parts of Speech	
Sentence 5:	
Parts of Speech	

SEE-THINK-WONDER p. 1

See	*Think*	*Wonder*
Describe what you see. Be as detailed as possible.	Using what you already know and details of the image, explain what you think about the image.	What do you wonder about the image? Try to write 2 to 3 questions starting with: Who? · What? · When? · Where? · Why? · How?

Based on the Primary Source Analysis Tool from the Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/guides/)

SEE-THINK-WONDER p. 2

Research
Questions I still have...

Based on the Primary Source Analysis Tool from the Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/guides/)