

The miraculous journey of Edward Tulane

During 10 weeks from January-April 2011, 4th-graders at Älvboda friskola in Skutskär, Sweden and 2nd-graders at Hudson Elementary School in Hudson, Wisconsin in the USA shared a literature-based Storyline using the book "The miraculous journey of Edward Tulane" of Kate DiCamillo.

History

Julie Zamzow, teacher at Hudson Elementary school and Maria Haglöf, teacher at Älvboda friskola got in contact first time in April 2009 through www.e-pals.com.

2009-2010 our classes started to correspond by regular mail. Next year (2010-2011) we proceeded in the same way but we started to talk about expanding our cooperation and decided to make some sort of project. Since Maria was familiar with and had performed some Storylines before she suggested that method to Julie. Shortly after we found out that a book-based Storyline should be a good choice to implement the curriculums for both of us.

Before the Storyline work

We started with creating a common folder in Dropbox for easy sharing of our documents. Then we created an outline with key-questions, activities and how to organize the work. We checked to our curriculums and decided how long every part of the reading and the activities could take. Before we started up, we met on Skype to discuss and confirm some details. We also created a shared blog: www.et4penpals.wordpress.com where all our work were supposed to be published.

During the Storyline work

The setting (frieze): As the story went on the students created the settings and the characters on a big circle of felt. We published photos of it on the blog every week and wrote comments to each other.

The book (Swedish and English language):

Except from the reading experience we used the book to make exercises in our home language like reading comprehension, word knowledge, making predictions, comparisons, grammar and spelling.

Activities:

We followed the red thread in the book and made different projects from it and shared between us. It has been lots of discussions in the classes and comparing between them.

The students have:

- shown and told about their cuddly toys in video-clips
- discussed fears and made comparing through diagrams
- written and told about happiness and wishes in classrooms and on the blog
- written poems in a common Powerpoint-presentation
- learned about homelessness and poorness
- got visits from people/organizations from outside school. Älvboda decided to do charity and collected money in different ways to donate to one of the visitors' organization: Children in





Focus (an orphanage in Nairobi, Kenya). Hudson was already involved in several charity projects and decided to continue with them.

- interacted to and learned more about each other via Skype

The teachers have had:

- regular planning and evaluation meetings
- peer coaching around technical solutions
- exchanging of thoughts and ideas via e-mail and Skype

Skills

This literature-based Storyline method has challenged several skills of our students.

Besides the regular reading and writing skills we already have mentioned we will pick up following:

- Verbal skills – to speak in front of the class and to people you never met before
- Listening skills – to someone’s reading, in discussions, to presentations and visitors
- Technical skills – to handle a blog, take photos and record
- Empathetic skills – to learn about feelings and living conditions
- And for the Swedish students – of course – second language skills: they have learned a lot of English and made a great progress both vocal and in writing during the work.

After the Storyline work

Completion

Both classes celebrated after finishing the project. They summarized the story with help from the frieze and record it on video. They also was dressed up and had some snacks.

Future plans

In November Maria and her husband Michael (who has cooperate with Mary Boutton in a similar project)) will visit the Hudson Elementary school in Wisconsin and make further plans with Julie and hopefully get more classes involved in future partnership.

Julie and Maria – together with Michael Haglöf and Mary Boutton will be submitting a proposal to present their work on this project at the next International Conference in Iceland for sharing and inspiration and hope to help bring together other classes that may want to try a similar project.

