

LESSON ON ENDINGS

Learning goals:

At the end of this lesson we will...

- understand how authors use endings to make their writing more powerful .
- be able to write a strong ending for our own writing.
 - use important actions
 - use dialogue
 - use images
 - use whole story reminders that make a lasting impression

Materials:

- Learning goals posted
- Smart Board or projection screen for viewing the Dean Jacobs website
- Copies and an overhead of the article by Dean Jacobs entitled: *My New Journey is to Explore my Own Backyard, Dodge County*
- Writer's Notebooks or other writing paper
- Pencils
- Highlighters

Lesson sequence:

1. Present the learning goals, including the different types of endings.
2. Discuss how authors craft not only beginnings, but also endings that have an effect on the reader. Authors work just as hard, if not harder, on their endings. Emphasize that one way we can improve our writing is by studying the work of authors and applying their techniques to our own writing. Today we will look at the work of Dean Jacobs to see how he combined these different types of endings to make his writing more powerful.
3. Project the deanjacobs.org website onto the board. Go to the Newspaper Columns section, Click on "A Walk Across Dodge County", and open the article titled: "*My New Journey is to Explore...*"
4. Pass out copies of this article to students and project it on the overhead screen.
5. Read the article to students as they follow along. Then go back and highlight just the lead on the overhead while students highlight it on their papers. (See article below for highlighted)
6. Read just the lead again and discuss how Dean uses dialogue and description of the setting to pull us into the article and set up the main idea of the article, which is a curiosity to learn more about his home county of Dodge, Nebraska.
7. Highlight the ending of the story on the overhead while students highlight on their copy. It starts with the sentence: *As the plane landed in Colorado...*
8. Remind students that we will be analyzing the ending of this published author to learn ways we can make our own endings more powerful.

9. Read the ending out loud while students follow along. Then read through the ending line by line, making notes in the margins about which element of an ending Dean was using. Have students join in and assist in determining which elements of an ending Dean uses. (See highlighted copy below)
10. Have students reflect on which elements Dean used, noting that whole story reminders was used the most. Remind them that we study endings of authors like Dean so we can use their ideas in our own writing.
11. Tell students that authors make plans for their endings and so can we. Have them read through their piece of writing and mark places that have important action, dialogue, and images they could use in their endings as whole story reminders.
12. When students are finished have them share with a partner the things they marked in their stories and rehearse how they can use these ideas in their endings OR have a few students share some things they marked as an example for the rest of the class.
13. Have students write one or more drafts of an ending for their writing.

Do this if time or use as a follow-up during the next lesson:

14. Share: Have one or two students share their writing while the rest of the class identifies which elements of an ending they included OR have students share their ending with a partner and have their partner identify which element of an ending they used. Students can also give compliments or suggestions for improving the ending!

My New Journey is to Explore my Own Backyard, Dodge County

By: Dean Jacobs

“Tray tables up, seats in the upright position,” said the voice over the intercom.

Normally when I fly, my seat is positioned on the aisle. It’s a challenge sitting still at times, and this gives me easy access to get up and move. But this day all the aisle seats were booked, so the next best option was to plop down next to the window. The flight to Denver from Omaha was short, so it wasn’t a big deal. Outside my window the sky was a springtime blue, clear and clean, that period of time before farmers till the earth and humidity creates a haze of dust.

As the plane ascended and arched westward, I was unable to motivate myself to read the book I brought, so instead I plastered my face against the plastic window and searched for familiar landmarks.

The same feeling of curiosity filled me like it had as I rode down empty roads in foreign countries far from home.

Questions occupied my mind: What’s happening out there, who’s out there and where are these people going?

After a few moments, I noticed a road that looked familiar. It was U.S. Highway 77 heading straight north. I knew that because I could see the new highway bypass around Hooper. Directly

below me must have been Fremont; I couldn't see it because the plane was just a tad bit too far to the north.

The flight route drifted a little south and suddenly below me was the Platte River, its shallow channels weaving around tan sand bars and brown leafless trees.

Highway 30 served as a compass as it cut west through North Bend. Heading straight north from North Bend was Nebraska Highway 79; on the horizon I could see Snyder and Scribner. I thought to myself, "Wow, I can see almost all of Dodge County."

For whatever reason, the flight to Denver remained low and followed the Platte River for a large stretch of the journey. Below I noticed Columbus, the Loup Canal and River, Grand Island, North Platte, and I even think I spotted Burwell where I had my first visit just a couple of weeks earlier.

The Nebraska Sandhills had a dusting of white snow from winter's last snowstorm of the season. Squares transformed into center pivot circles from high in the sky. It brought back memories of the Nasca Lines in Peru, where ancient figures of animals can only be seen from the air.

As the plane landed in Colorado, I thought back to that moment over North Bend, and the feeling of being able to see almost all of Dodge County. (*whole story reminder, image*)

A question of curiosity filled me, "How well do I know my own backyard?" (*dialogue, whole story reminder*)

I have traveled around the world twice, maybe it's time to explore my home. Besides, traveling has changed me; I've been exposed to new and different ideas about life and seen so many poor places that practiced kindness, maybe its time to see the home turf with my new set of eyes. (*important action, WSR*)

So this is the start. For the next several weeks, I will spend a day walking across each town in Dodge County and share with you the local adventure ... "A Walk Across Dodge County." (*whole story reminder*)

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