# A Roll of the Dice

## Plot Chart

| Character Types | Settings | Conflicts |
|---|---|---|
| 1.      loner | | |
| 2. | playground | |
| 3. | | a misunderstanding |
| 4. | | |
| 5.      shy | | an accident |
| 6. | a store | |
| 7. | | a fight |
| 8.   class clown | | |
| 9. | | |
| 10. | the beach | |
| 11. | | a car wreck |
| 12.    bully | | |

|  | Plot #1 | Plot #2 | Plot #3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Character: | | | |
| Setting: | | | |
| Conflict: | | | |

.

# A Roll of the Dice

Give a brief movie box summary of your storyline ideas:

Storyline #1:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Storyline #2:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Storyline #3:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

# A Roll of the Dice

Many times when writing fiction, student authors struggle with creating storylines for their work. Often they don't know what type of characters to put in--or maybe they create stories that have no real conflict, which cause their readers to ask "So what?" after reading.

The concept behind "A Roll of the Dice" is based upon the idea of the plot wheel. In the 1930's, serial writers used a plot wheel to help create storylines for their work. By being responsible for frequent tight deadlines for story production, the writers created a sort of board game spinner device to aid them in idea generation. The background of the plot wheel was sectioned into story elements such as "character", "setting", "conflict", etc. and the writers would spin for each element to help them create new and differing plotlines for their series.

Student authors can use "A Roll of the Dice" in much the same way. By filling out the plot chart and rolling the dice for specific story elements, students are able to brainstorm a vast array of topic ideas for their short stories. Even if they choose to mix and match some of the items that they roll, this activity truly does get students thinking about stories, understanding the basic elements of a short story, and it gives them a foundation on which they can begin writing. Rolling the dice especially appeals to kinesthetic learners much more than just the usual "think of a topic for your story" brainstorming session. I have found this activity to be an incredible means for student writers to get excited about generating story lines. It truly sparks their imagination, and gives them enough guidance to get them thinking, but also enough freedom to let their creativity soar.

## Directions:

1. Discuss elements of a short story with students. Talk about the importance of character, setting, and conflict.
2. Distribute "A Roll of the Dice" plot chart.
3. Some examples of character types, settings, and conflicts have been filled in to help students get started. Students may work individually or in groups to add additional story elements until their plot chart is full.
   **Elementary teachers may wish to divide the chart, only using 6 blanks and a single die to modify the chart for younger writers.
4. Once charts have been completed, divide students into groups of three or four.
5. Give each group a pair of dice. (I prefer to use the large, colorful 1" pairs of dice—it makes my dice easily identifiable if one should disappear AND the larger dice are easier for younger students to handle.)
6. Direct students to take turns rolling for story elements. Each student should roll for a character, a setting, and a conflict before passing the dice to the next person.
7. Students should fill in each storyline at the bottom of the plot chart.
8. Students take turns until all three plot ideas have been filled.
9. Once each of the three plot ideas have been filled, students will discuss their storylines with their group members, brainstorming ideas for what they could do with their storyline.
10. Storylines should then be given a brief "movie box" summary on the back of the plot chart.
    ** I allow students to interchange ideas from their chart if they think another story element on their chart would work better than the one that they rolled. My goal is to get them thinking and excited about the stories they could tell, so I do allow them flexibility in manipulating story elements.
11. Once students have completed their plot summaries, they need to share them with their small group. Then we share as a large group, allowing students to tweak their ideas in any way that they think of during our sharing session.
12. Finally, students are ready to choose the story that they want to tell.

**Philbeck 2003**

.