

American Stories

**“The Blue Hotel,” Part One, by Stephen Crane**

Lesson Plan

This lesson plan is to accompany Part One of the American Stories series episode “The Blue Hotel” by Stephen Crane.

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

American Stories lesson plans are based on the CALLA approach. See the end of each lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach.

CALLA has five lesson elements:

**Prepare:** Engage students in the topic and identify objectives for the lesson. Find out what students already know about it and motivate them to learn more. Teach new vocabulary.

**Present:** Present new information. Explain the target learning strategy for the lesson. Model what the students are asked to do. Discuss connections to students’ prior knowledge.

**Practice:** Give students an authentic, active task that they can do in a small group or in pairs. Remind students to use the target learning strategy.

**Self-Evaluate:** Question students so they will reflect on their own learning. Ask students to evaluate their own learning rather than wait for the teacher to assess them. Find out if using the learning strategy helped students’ understanding.

**Expand:** Guide students on how to apply what they learned to their own

lives. Point out other contexts where the learning strategy may help. Make connections between content and language or to the student's first language. When appropriate, request that parents contribute to learning.

Prior to the lesson:

Determine whether you can provide colored drawing utensils for your students. Today's learning strategy will involve illustrating the mental images we get when we read or listen.

And now for today's lesson:

### **Prepare**

Introduce the story: "Today, we will read Part One of 'The Blue Hotel' by Stephen Crane. It is a story about three travelers who arrive at a hotel in a small town in the American state of Nebraska. The author gives a visually rich description of the town and its surroundings. When you have a friend or family that travels and then tells you about their trip, do you make a mental image of the place they visited?" Allow students the chance to answer. Then say, "When someone tells us a story about a place, we naturally have a picture in our minds about what it looks like."

Ask students to take out a piece of paper, a drawing utensil (preferably a pencil with an eraser) and something to rest their drawing on, such as a notebook or book. In the next part, students will work in pairs.

Then, say, "Think about the last new place you visited – it could be a different country, city, or maybe even an event at a special location in [the current city]. For the next three minutes, I'd like you to describe something or someone you saw during that trip to your partner. For example, maybe it was a building or a park or a castle or an interesting person. Describe exactly the way you remember things looking with as many details as you can. As you describe it, your partner will draw it. But, they will not show you their drawing until the three minutes are up."

Use a timer to start the activity and then stop it at three minutes. Then, ask students to show their drawings to their partner and give students time to discuss the drawing. Ask them to discuss what was different and similar about the story and the drawing.

Now, do the same again so that the other student in each pair can tell their story.

Continue: "Class, did you notice how different your mental images are from how other people envision them when you describe them? When we read or listen to a story, even when there are many, many details, our minds make a mental picture of details we have. Our minds also do something we call 'filling in the blanks' – they also make a mental picture of the details *we do not have*. Today, we will learn to use a strategy called *Create A Mental Image*. When we imagine what characters or places in a story look like, our brains connect our mental pictures with words to build stronger memories and a better understanding of what we are reading or hearing. Let's begin by learning the new vocabulary."

Teach the vocabulary for the lesson, which appears on the page after the story transcript.

## **Present**

Hand out the transcript of the story.

Introduce the task to students: "As we hear the story today, we will practice the strategy *Create a Mental Image* to help us understand the details we are reading. By focusing on the images that arise in our minds as we read, we can examine the ways we are understanding the details of the story. We can also make stronger connections to the events in the story, and remember them better."

Continue, "As we listen to the first part of the story, think about how the narrator describes what is happening. Try to visualize these details and keep

the visual images in your mind."

(If you like, you can ask students to close their eyes as the story is played/read so that they can better visualize what they are hearing.)

Play the first paragraph of the story.

Model the strategy: "In the first paragraph, the writer uses a lot of imagery to help us imagine the color of the hotel. He compares the color to the legs of a bird, although he does not tell us what kind of bird. He says the color is so bright that it even stands out in winter in Nebraska, a state which gets lots of white snow during that season. I am going to draw what my mind imagined as I read the paragraph."

On the board or a shared screen, draw a picture of the hotel. It can be as simple or detailed as your mental image was. If you have access to colorful drawing tools (erasable markers, chalk, or a computer drawing tool), add color to the hotel. Try to represent the exaggerated bright blue in the author's description in some way. For example, you can draw lines coming from the hotel, as if they are light streaks. And, maybe you'd like to draw a bird, or the legs of the bird, somewhere on the picture. Explain to students that the bird is not really part of the scenery but that, when the story mentioned the bird's legs, it gave you a mental image of the bird. Now, draw the surrounding Nebraska scenery. Include some trees in the scenery. But, make sure the scenery looks gray or drab compared to the hotel.

Tell students, "When you read a description of person, thing, place or event, the pictures you imagine are *your own* mental image. Each person's mental image will be different. Notice that, in my drawing, I added trees, even though the author does not directly mention trees. That is because my mind 'filled in the blanks' – my mind imagined this scene would include trees."

## Practice

Place students with a new partner. Make sure they have drawing paper and anything else they will need to draw pictures, such as colored drawing utensils, if available. They should bring a notebook or book to rest their paper on so that their partner cannot see their drawings until they are finished.

Say, "Now it's your turn. Let's hear some more of the story. We will close our eyes and listen carefully to the author's descriptions of the scenes, events, and characters. Then, we will try to draw these things as we imagine them."

Play or read aloud to, "He was giving out great favors" (end of paragraph 7)

Now, ask students to write down notes about one person, thing, or scene that gave them the most vivid mental image. They should not share their notes with their partner. Tell them that they will listen to this part of the story a second time so that they can catch more details about their selected thing.

Now, again, play or read aloud to, "He was giving out great favors."

Ask each student to draw the thing they chose. Remind students not to share their drawings with their partner until they are complete.

Give students a set time to draw their mental pictures so that everyone finishes at the same time. As they work, remind them that it's ok if their drawing does not look exactly like their mental image. The most important thing is that they *understand* the details they are reading.

Have students then share their drawings with their partner and point to the paragraphs from this section of the transcript where their chosen character, thing, or place descriptions are located. For example, if they drew Pat Scully, there are several places in this section of the transcript that describe him.

If students do not have colored drawing utensils, as they show their partner their drawings, they can simply tell them the colors they imagined.

After the pairs have had a chance to share, ask a few volunteers to share their drawings with the whole class and mention the parts of this section of the transcript where they found these details. You can also take a survey of who drew what. For instance, you can ask, "How many people drew the train station? Would a few people like to share and talk about these drawings?"

For the next practice activity, you can either keep students in pairs or put two pairs together to make four students per group. Ask students to close their eyes and listen.

Play or read aloud to, "They say they don't know what I mean,' he remarked bitterly to the Easterner'" (end of paragraph 20)

*Do the rest of this activity exactly the same way you did this most recent one (i.e. give students time to take notes; then play audio again, et cetera)*

Then, play or read aloud to the end of the story.

*Do this activity the same exact way you did the previous one.*

### **Self-Evaluate**

Explain, "Creating a mental image enables us to make sense of the details we read about characters and scenes in stories. If we can create an accurate mental image, we know we have understand the story. When we connect words with mental pictures, we remember the details of a story better and are more engaged and excited about what we are reading."

Ask students, "What do you think about the learning strategy *Create a Mental Image* – did it help you to understand and remember the details of the story better?"

Give the students time to discuss this in their pairs or groups.

Ask, "Did you learn anything about how similar or different our mental images are from those of other people? Write a few sentences on your paper to turn in about how making associations helped you today."

### **Expand**

Ask students, "Are there other times when you can create a mental image about things based on what you know?" Listen to students' responses. Continue, "This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. For example, when you listen to a teacher, or even a friend, telling you a story, you can remember the details from the story better when you have a mental image. The strategy can also be useful in academic subjects like history and science. For example, when you read about a historic event, you can imagine the scenes and actions. This can help you remember important details and the order of the events. In science, visualizing a series of scientific processes, such as the water cycle, can help you fully understand them, and recall them later. This strategy is even useful in non-academic subjects, like music. When you make a mental image of song lyrics, for example, you can remember the words easier and can appreciate the story that the musician is trying to tell. Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class, or even when you listen to music. Let me know how it goes!"

## **"The Blue Hotel," Part One**

By Stephen Crane

The Palace Hotel at Fort Romper was painted a light blue, a color of blue found on the legs of a certain bird that makes it bright in any surroundings. The Palace Hotel, then, looked always loud and screaming in a way that made the bright winter scenes of Nebraska seem only a dull gray. It stood alone, and when the snow was falling, the town two hundred yards away could not be seen.

When a traveler came from the railroad station, he was obliged to pass the Palace Hotel before he came to the group of low houses which was Fort Romper. It was believed that no traveler could pass the Palace Hotel without looking at it. Pat Scully, the hotel owner, had proved himself a master at choosing paints. It is true that on clear days, when the long lines of trains swept through Fort Romper, passengers were surprised at the sight. Those that knew the brown-reds, and the dark greens of the eastern part of the country laughingly expressed shame, pity, shock. But to the citizens of this western town and to the people who stopped there, Pat Scully had performed a wonder.

As if the displayed delights of such a blue hotel were not sufficiently inviting, Scully went every morning and evening to meet the trains that stopped at Romper. He would express greetings and welcome to anyone he might see hesitating.

One morning when a snow-covered engine dragged its long string of cars to the station, Scully performed the marvelous trick of catching three men. One was a shaky and quick-eyed Swede, with a great, shining, cheap bag; one was a tall, sun-browned cowboy, who was on his way to a job near the Dakota border; one was a little silent man from the east coast, who didn't look like it and didn't announce it.

Scully practically made them prisoners. He was so quick and merry and kindly that each probably thought it would be cruel to try to escape. So they followed the eager little man. He wore a heavy fur cap pulled tightly down on his head. It caused his two red ears to stand out stiffly, as if they were made of tin.

At last, Scully grandly conducted them through the door of the blue hotel. The room which they entered was small. It was occupied mostly by a huge stove in the center, which was burning with great force. At various points on its surface the iron had become shiny and glowed yellow from the



heat. Beside the stove, Scully's son, Johnnie, was playing a game of cards with a farmer. They were quarreling.

With loud words Scully stopped their play, and hurried his son upstairs with the bags of the new guests. He himself led them to three bowls of icy water. The cowboy and the Easterner washed themselves in this water until they were as red as fire. The Swede, however, merely placed his fingers in the bowl. It was noticeable throughout these proceedings that the three travelers were made to feel that Scully was very kind indeed. He was giving out great favors.

Afterward they returned to the first room. There, sitting about the stove, they listened to Scully shouting at his daughters, who were preparing the noon meal. They employed the silence of experienced men who move carefully among new people. The Swede was especially silent. He seemed to be occupied in making secret judgments of each man in the room. One might have thought that he had the sense of foolish fear which accompanies guilt. He looked like a badly frightened man.

Later, at dinner, he spoke a little, directing his conversation entirely to Scully. He said that he had come from New York, where he had worked for ten years as a suit maker. These facts seemed to interest Scully, and afterward he told that he had lived at Romper for fourteen years. The Swede asked about the crops and the price of labor. He seemed hardly to listen to Scully's lengthy replies. His eyes continued to wander from man to man.

Finally, with a laugh, he said that some of these western towns were very dangerous; and after this declaration he straightened his legs under the table, nodded his head, and laughed again, loudly. It was plain that this had no meaning to the others. They looked at him, wondering and in silence.

After dinner, it was decided to play a game of cards. The cowboy offered to play with Johnnie, and they all turned to ask the Swede to play with the little Easterner. The Swede asked some questions about the game. Learning that it wore many names, and that he had played it under another name, he accepted the invitation.

He came toward the men nervously, as though he expected to be attacked. Finally, seated, he looked from face to face and laughed sharply. This laugh was so strange that the Easterner looked up quickly, the cowboy sat with his mouth open, and Johnnie paused, holding the cards with still fingers.

Afterward there was a short silence. Then Johnnie said, "Well, let's begin. Come on now!" They pulled their chairs forward until their knees touched under the table. They began to play, and their interest in the game caused the others to forget the strange ways of the Swede.

Suddenly the Swede spoke to Johnnie: "I suppose there have been a good many men killed in this room." The mouths of the others dropped open and they looked at him.

"What are you talking about?" said Johnnie. The Swede laughed again his loud laugh, full of a kind of false courage. "Oh, you know what I mean all right," he answered.

"I don't!" Johnnie protested. The card game stopped, and the men stared at the Swede. Johnnie evidently felt that as the son of the hotel owner he should make a direct inquiry. "Now, what are you trying to say?" he asked.

The Swede's fingers shook on the edge of the table. "Oh, maybe you think I haven't been anywhere. Maybe you think I don't have any experience?"

"I don't know anything about you," answered Johnnie "and I don't care where you've been. I just don't know what you're trying to say. Nobody has ever been killed in this room."

The cowboy, who had been steadily gazing at the Swede, then spoke: "What's wrong with you, fellow?"

Apparently it seemed to the Swede that he was powerfully threatened. He trembled, and turned pale near the corners of his mouth. He sent an appealing glance in the direction of the little Easterner. "They say they don't know what I mean," he remarked bitterly to the Easterner.

The latter answered after long and careful thought. "I don't understand you," he said calmly.

The Swede made a movement then which announced that he thought he had met attack from the only place where he had expected sympathy, if not help. "I see that you are all against me. I see—"

The cowboy felt as though he had lost his senses. "Say," he cried, as he threw the cards fiercely down upon the table, "say, what are you trying to do?"

The Swede jumped up. "I don't want to fight!" he shouted. "I don't want to fight!"

The cowboy stretched his long legs slowly and carefully. His hands were in his pockets. "Well, who thought you did?" he inquired.

The Swede moved rapidly back toward a corner of the room. His hands were out protectingly in front of his chest, but he was making an apparent struggle to control his fright. "Gentlemen," he almost whispered, "I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house! I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house!"

A door opened, and Scully himself entered. He paused in surprise as he noted the terror-filled eyes of the Swede. Then he said, "What's the matter here?"

The Swede answered him quickly and eagerly: "These men are going to kill me."

"Kill you!" shouted Scully. "Kill you! What are you talking about?"

The Swede put out his hands helplessly.

Scully turned upon his son. "What is this, Johnnie?"

The lad had become ill-tempered. "I don't know," he answered. "It doesn't make any sense to me." He began to pick up the cards, gathering them together angrily. "He says a good many men have been killed in this room, or something like that. And he says he's going to be killed here, too. I don't know what's wrong with him. He's probably crazy."

Scully then looked for explanation to the cowboy, but the cowboy simply shook his head.

"Kill you?" said Scully again to the Swede. "Kill you? Man, you're crazy."

"Oh, I know," burst out the Swede. "I know what will happen. Yes, I'm crazy—yes. Yes, of course, I'm crazy—yes. But I know one thing—" There was suffering and terror upon his face. "I know I won't get out of here alive."

Scully turned suddenly and faced his son. "You've been troubling this man!"

Johnnie's voice was loud with its burden of undeserved blame. "Why, good God, I haven't done anything to him!"

The Swede broke in. "Gentlemen, do not trouble yourselves. I will leave this house. I will go away, because—" he blamed them with his glance—"because I do not want to be killed." "You will not go away," said Scully.

"You will not go away until I hear the reason of this business. If anybody has troubled you, I will take care of him. This is my house. You are under my roof, and I will not allow any peaceful man to be troubled here." He looked threateningly at Johnnie, the cowboy, and the Easterner.

"Don't, Mr. Scully, don't. I will go away. I do not want to be killed." The Swede moved toward the door which opened to the stairs. It was evidently his intention to go at once for his bag.

"No, no," shouted Scully commandingly; but the pale-faced man slipped by him and disappeared. "Now," Scully angrily to the others, "what does this mean?"

Johnnie and the cowboy cried together: "Why, we didn't do anything to him!"

Scully's eyes were cold. "No," he said, "you didn't?"

Johnnie repeated his words. "Why, this is the wildest madman I ever saw. We didn't do anything at all. We were just sitting here playing cards, and he—"

The father suddenly spoke to the Easterner. "What have these boys been doing?"

The Easterner thought again. "I didn't see anything wrong at all," he said at last, slowly.

Scully began to shout. "But what does it mean?" He stared fiercely at his son. "I ought to beat you for this, my boy."

Johnnie was wild. "Well, what have I done?" he screamed at his father.

## Vocabulary

**oblige** - *v.* to force or require (someone or something) to do something because of a law or rule or because it is necessary

**Easterner** - *n.* a person from the eastern coast of the United States

**pity** - *n.* a strong feeling of sadness or sympathy for someone or something

**tin** - *n.* a soft, shiny, bluish-white metal that has many different uses

**Swede** - *n.* A person from the country of Sweden

**cowboy** - *n.* a man who rides a horse and whose job is to take care of cows or horses, especially in the western U.S.

**stove** - *n.* a flat piece of kitchen equipment for cooking that usually has four devices (called burners) which become hot when they are turned on and that often is attached to an oven

**cards** - *n.* a small piece of stiff paper that is marked with symbols or pictures to show its value, comes in a set, and is used for playing games

**quarrel** - *v.* an angry argument or disagreement

**suit** - *n.* a set of clothes that usually consists of a jacket and a skirt or pair of pants that are made out of the same material

**corner** - *n.* the point or area where two lines, edges, or sides of something meet

**lad** - *n.* a boy or young man

### **About the CALLA Approach**

This lesson is based on the CALLA approach. The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.

CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.

A list of CALLA learning strategies follows. These strategies were researched by J. Michael O'Malley and Anna Uhl Chamot.

See a list of language learning strategies below.

## **METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES**

### **Plan / Organize**

Before beginning a task:

Set goals.

Plan the task or content sequence.

Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies).

Preview a text.

### **Monitor / Identify Problems**

While working on a task:

Check your progress on the task.

Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem?

Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?

### **Evaluate**

After completing a task:

Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task.

Assess how well you have used learning strategies.

Decide how effective the strategies were.

Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.

### **Manage Your Own Learning**

Determine how you learn best.

Arrange conditions that help you learn.

Look for Ways to Practice.

Focus your attention on the task.

## **TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE WHAT YOU KNOW**

### **Use Background Knowledge**

Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task.

Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge.

Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.

### **Make Inferences**

Use context and what you know to figure out meaning.

Read and listen between the lines.

Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.

### **Make Predictions**

Anticipate information to come.

Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text.

Make an estimate (math).

Make a hypothesis (science).

### **Personalize**

Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.

### **Transfer / Use Cognates**

Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language.

Recognize cognates.

### **Substitute / Paraphrase**

Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.

## **TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE YOUR SENSES**

### **Use Images**

Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information.

Use or draw a picture or diagram.

### **Use Sounds**

Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding.

Sound out/vocalize.

Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.

### **Use Your Kinesthetic Sense**

Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language.

Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.

## **TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS**

### **Find/Apply Patterns**

Apply a rule.

Make a rule.



Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules.

Identify patterns in literature (genre).

Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.

### **Classify/Sequence**

Categorize words or ideas according to attributes.

Classify living things; identify natural cycles.

Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies.

Sequence events in history.

### **Take Notes**

Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading.

List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing.

### **Use Graphic Organizers**

Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.

### **Summarize**

Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.

### **Use Selective Attention**

Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.

## **TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES**

### **Access Information Sources**

Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials.

Seek out and use sources of information.

Follow a model

Ask questions

### **Cooperate**

Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.

### **Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)**

Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.