



New Ways in Teaching with Creative Writing

Patrick T. Randolph and Joseph Ruppert, Editors



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This book has a
companion website. Go to
www.tesol.org/creativewriting
for additional resources.





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Cheating Death

Deniz Şallı-Çopur

Levels	Intermediate to advanced
Aims	Engage in creative thinking Understand and develop the components of a short story Learn new vocabulary
Class Time	1 hour
Preparation Time	10–15 minutes
Resources	Any video clip or short story with the theme of “cheating death”



Short stories are wonderful learning tools because they can be easily used to construct different kinds of skill-based lessons. Through this writing-focused activity, students elaborate on ideas concerning story plot and also develop the idea of suspense in a unique way.

PROCEDURE

1. Before class, study and learn the selected story “Appointment in Samarra” (available at www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english320/Maugham-AS.htm) to tell to students (though any story that deals with the theme of cheating death will work; see References and Further Reading). In class, introduce the two characters of the story, the merchant and his servant, using visuals. Try to add some details to those characters, such as age or physical features; for example, “the merchant was middle-aged, he was rich and had dark hair, and his servant boy was young and shy.” Teach or simplify the words your students may have difficulty with.
2. After you introduce the characters, tell the story, but keep the last sentence a secret. Do not give away how it ends. Use your body language, gestures, and voice to help students feel the story atmosphere and the characters’ feelings while telling the story, and show an image that represents the third character, Death, when he appears.
3. After you tell the story (except the last sentence), ask students to list as many details as possible about the characters and the setting. Use *wh-* questions to elicit information. After that, ask students to predict the missing last sentence of the story. Then, share the last sentence and talk about the message of the story.
4. Give them the whole story and a list of needed vocabulary definitions.
5. After that, have students pair up and write a dialogue between the servant boy and Death in Samarra. Tell them that Death is very busy, so the dialogue should be a short piece of six exchanges (three turns for the servant and three for Death). In the dialogue, the servant boy should try to convince Death not to take his life. Ask them to emphasize the servant boy’s feelings.

6. Ask students to come to the front of the class and act out their dialogue. As a class, check to see if they have followed the six-exchange rule and if they have included the servant's feelings. Students listen to each other's dialogue. (You may ask them to choose the funniest or the most convincing reason the servant has given not to die.)

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. Have students write a Facebook entry about the story including a Twitter hashtag to post it on their profile.
2. Other stories about cheating death will work just as well. "One for the Angels - Death Selects an Alternative" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=onHAflpDw0g) is a scene from *The Twilight Zone* that you can show students.

SAMPLE WORK

Servant Boy: How did you find me?

Death: Are you really asking this question? I'm Death! I have good connections.

Servant Boy: Look! I don't want to die. Don't you see I'm already dying because of fear? I'm only 12. Tell me what you want? I'll do anything!

Death: Nothing! Do you think I enjoy ending lives? Do you think I like being feared by the world? This isn't what I wanted, but nobody asked me. I'm all alone. I don't have any friends. Talk about fear!

Servant Boy: I can be your friend if you stop scaring and threatening me.

Death: I don't make friends with people. Thanks for the offer. But you know . . . I think I'll let you live. No one has offered friendship before.

—Deniz Şallı-Çopur