**Lesson Plan: Sub-plotting**

Supports Common Core Standards for English Language Arts:

* **Grade 6**: Writing: 4 Produce writing in which the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience; 10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
* **Grade 7**: Writing: 4 Produce writing in which the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience; 10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
* **Grade 8**: Writing: 4 Produce writing in which the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience; 10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

**Objective**

By the end of the lesson, SWBAT:

1. Continue the extended-writing phase of their noveling projects by establishing and developing multiple subplots to their novels.
2. Develop and add complex, minor, or supporting characters to their novels.

**Materials Needed**

* Copies of the ["Sub-plotting" worksheet](http://ywp.nanowrimo.org/files/ywp/ywp_10_ms_subplotting.pdf); one for each student. This can also be found on page 72 of the Young Novelist Workbook.
* An episode of a 30-minute TV sitcom that your students may not be familiar with. Perhaps one “from before their time” like *The Cosby Show*, *Full House*, *Saved by the Bell*, or *The Wonder Years*. You also want to make sure it is an episode with *at least one* obvious subplot.
* Something to play the episode on such as a TV/DVD player.

**Lesson Plan 13: Sub-plotting**

**Step One: Supporting Characters are People Too**

*5 minutes*

Write on the board:

1. What does your most important supporting character want more than anything in the world?
2. What is he or she most afraid of?
3. What is his or her greatest weakness?

Give your students 5 minutes to answer these three questions about their most important supporting character.

**Step Two: Introduce Sub-plotting**

*10 minutes*

1. Ask your students to tell you what a subplot is. Eventually, write a definition you come up with as a class on the board. You want to make sure your students understand that a subplot follows a supporting character on their own journey to get what he or she wants. Subplots may interweave with the main plot, but they do not need to have much to do with the main character's journey.

2. Ask your students to name some supporting characters and their subplots from books that you have read as a class.

**Step Three: Watching TV**

*40 minutes*

1. Give your students the good news: You’re going to watch some TV! Then tell them the not-so-great news: They’re not watching a reality TV show *and* they have to take *really* good notes while they’re watching.

2. Hand out the "Sub-plotting" worksheet and, as a class, read over the five questions that your students must answer as they watch the show.

The questions on the handout include:

1. Who is the protagonist?
2. How many supporting characters are there? Who are they? How are they related to the protagonist?
3. What are the subplots? These are the plots that involve the supporting characters. They may include the main character, but sometimes the protagonist has little to no connection to the subplots.
4. Do the supporting characters have their own antagonists? Or are they battling the same antagonist as the protagonist?
5. In what ways do these subplots make the show more exciting to watch?

3. Watch the show!

4. After you are done watching, take 10 minutes to discuss the answers to the five questions as a class.

**Step Four: Noveling**

*5 minutes*

Close the class by encouraging students to refer to the questions that they answered about their supporting characters at the beginning of class as they continue writing their novels. Explain that they can add subplots to their novels for as many supporting characters as they like by answering those three questions for each additional character. Remind them that whenever they feel like their main plot is slowing down, they can explore a subplot. For specific examples of how supporting characters and sub-plotting can be used in novels, have students refer back to the “model novels” they chose in Lesson 2.

**Homework**

Write, write, write!