



Featured Teacher: Elizabeth Rivas

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Cast of Characters

Fourth-grade students in Houston, TX.

Background and Setting

Rivas has been a teacher for over 13 years and teaches fourth grade.

Memorable Learning

"They knew that the book would be published and wanted to do their best."



"Creating this classbook helped my students in ELA tremendously."

A Journey Through the Wonders of the World

Rivas' fourth-grade classroom embarked on a unique and creative journey, combining their love of reading with a writing activity about the seven wonders of the world.

"We read about the seven wonders of the world, and by March, the students were drafting, revising and editing their stories," Rivas explained. "The result was a collection of narrative nonfiction stories written from the perspective of animals or creatures that inhabit these wonders."

Engaging Students in Creative Writing

What made the activity even more special was the level of creativity and enthusiasm her students brought to their writing. The students chose their own topics, drawing inspiration from what they had learned in reading class. One student, filled with excitement, came up with the idea to tell the story of a Yeti living on Mount Everest. Another student came up with the title for the classbook, and others had fun pretending to be animals, from fish to birds.

"The students had so much fun writing their stories," Rivas said. "This really was the highlight of the year, as it is for me."

Illustrations That Brought Stories to Life

The most exciting part of the activity for Rivas' students was the illustrations.

"The students had so much fun drawing and coloring," she said. "It was a little hard for some of them, but those illustrations came up amazing."

One student, in particular, took on the responsibility of illustrating the book's cover and proudly announced to everyone at the book reveal party that he had designed it.

Building Writing Confidence and ELA Skills

A classbook helped Rivas' students build their ELA skills and boost their writing confidence.

"Creating this classbook helped my students in ELA tremendously. They knew that the book would be published and wanted to do their best. We follow writing



strategies such as the writing process and R.A.C.E.R, which is what my district uses. I used this book to build their confidence in their writing," she explained.

The impact was big for students with learning challenges.

"I had a student who couldn't finish a sentence to now writing a paragraph with the support they needed. This student has dyslexia, and writing this book helped him realize that he can write," Rivas explained. "Another student improved her writing by rereading and making grammatical changes when needed."

She also mentioned how other students with dyslexia thrived with support, both from Rivas and their classmates.

"Four of the students in my classroom have dyslexia and were able to write their stories with lots of support, not only from me but from their peers," Rivas said.

Published and Proud

When the final books arrived, Rivas and her students couldn't wait to celebrate their hard work.

"They were super happy. I had a book reveal party, and the theme was 'Travel to the Wonders.' They colored their published authors hats and masks until the reveal," Rivas said. "I had the student with the greatest growth in reading open the box and we all cheered and celebrated. They were really happy and proud."

Advice for Teachers: A Rewarding Experience

Rivas' advice for other teachers considering a classbook activity is simple: give ownership to the students.

"Tell them to use their imagination and create something unique," Rivas said. "Enjoy and cherish every step of the process because the end product is worth the work they do. Do it every year because the students will always keep that memory."



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