

## Activity 1: Setting the Scene

### Activity Description:

#### **Part One:**

**In the first part of the lesson you are providing students the first bit of information about the Klondike gold rush.**

1. Show the class the headline from Seattle PI announcing the discovery of gold in the Klondike. Tell students they will be joining thousands of other Stampeders to seek their fortunes in the Yukon territory. Read the following excerpt from Gold! The Klondike Adventure by Delia Ray:

*The city of Seattle was usually still asleep at day break on weekend mornings, but this Saturday large crowds of people rushed to the downtown waterfront at dawn. They shouted excitedly to one another, pointed across the water, and craned their necks to sea. The Portland was coming!...On board was the most precious cargo ever to enter the Seattle harbor---sixty-eight miners from the Klondike and more than two tons of gold. (p.17)*

2. At this point ask your students what they imagine the people on the pier are thinking and feeling. If they were there themselves, what would be going through their minds? Continue to read:

*To the impatient spectators on the dock, the Portland seems to move in slow motion. "Show us the gold!" yelled the onlookers, and several miners on board lifted the heavy sacks for all to see. A thrilled swept through the crowd as each person imagined the glittering gold dust and nuggets inside the bags. The big ship carefully pulled alongside the wharf and the gangplank was lowered.(p.17)*

*When the first miner stepped into full view the people stared in amazement. He heaved a buckskin bag to his shoulder and steadied the load. His face was lean and weather-beaten, lined with the strain of hard work and long Yukon winters. Behind him two men staggered down the ramp each grasping the end of a sagging blanket. (p.18)*

3. Ask students what they think is in the buckskin or why the blanket is sagging. Continue to read:

*One after another they came, carrying old leather suitcases, pine boxes, and pickle jars---anything that would hold the heavy piles of gold. The commotion on the docks grew as each miner appeared. "Hurray for the Klondike!" the people cried. (p.18)*

#### **Part Two**

**In the second part of this lesson, you will teach kids how to write a lead-in sentence.**

1. At this point put the copy of the picture of the returning stampeders on the overhead. Have the students examine the picture. Ask,

"What do you notice?

What are the expressions on their faces?

Do they look weary, excited, confident, suspicious?

(Encourage students to explain what they see and to justify their thoughts based on what they actually see.)

2. Explain to the students they are to select one person in the picture and imagine they are that person. Tell the students they will be writing a brief paragraph from the perspective of their miner using a strong lead-in sentence. You can define "lead-in sentence" as a sentence early in a piece of writing that makes a reader curious to read more.

The paragraph will reflect the thoughts of the miner at that moment in time. The writing may not necessarily use proper grammar or complete sentences in order to portray the voice of the miner. The objective of the writing is to use a strong lead-in sentence in order to draw in the interest of the reader.

You could say,

"When writing, it is important for the author to grab the reader's attention in the first couple of sentences. With a strong lead-in sentence an author can create excitement and interest on the part of the reader. Then the reader will want to continue reading."

3. Share some examples of writings with strong lead-ins. For example, Charlotte's Web by E. B. White or Caves by Stephen Kramer are both good examples. You could also share examples of the student writing included in this unit (Documents 2 and 3). Or share two different lead-in sentences, both about the same topic. Have one be a strong lead-in and the other bland. Have the students identify which sentence is more engaging, then compare the two in order to articulate what makes the strong lead-in sentence better.

4. Have students share their short paragraphs via a common link or select a few students to read their writing in class. Have the students identify a part of the writing that is interesting from the reader's perspective.

**TEACHER NOTES:** If you want to keep copies of the writing for documentation, you can have the class initially write on paper and select a few students to rewrite on the transparencies, or you can make copies of the transparencies on a copy machine.

**OBJECTIVE:** To create interest and excitement for the journey to the Klondike gold fields; To write lead-in sentences.

**MATERIALS:**

1. [Front page from Seattle Post-Intelligencer July, 17, 1897 \(PDF file\)](#)
2. [Photo of Prospectors on Ship \( PDF file\)](#)
3. Transparency paper
4. Overhead pens

**TIME:** 90 minutes (can be broken into two parts)