Horoscopic Narrative Writing
The News & Observer
Section: Comics
CCSS: R1, R2, R4, R7, RL4, W3, W4, W5, W6

I don't believe in astrology; I'm a Sagittarius and we're skeptical. - Arthur C. Clarke

About astrology and palmistry: they are good because they make people vivid and full of possibilities. They are communism at its best. Everybody has a birthday and almost everybody has a palm. - Kurt Vonnegut

We are born at a given moment, in a given place and, like vintage years of wine, we have the qualities of the year and of the season of which we are born. Astrology does not lay claim to anything more. - Carl Jung

Introduction
Narrative writing provides an opportunity for students to use their imaginations and practice using the elements of a story including plot (the series of events), chronology (sequence of events), character (people in a story), setting (time and place), point of view (position from which the story is told), and dialogue (character conversations).

The first exercise is a practice in narrative writing. Students will find their horoscope in the newspaper and use it as inspiration. This is a good addition to a Writer’s Journal. The second exercise develops skills for concise writing and demonstrates the importance of good word selection. Prior to the lesson, students should have a background understanding of what the elements of a story are and how to use the e-edition.

Materials
- Computer or device with Internet connection
- Access to the N&O e-edition
- “Baby Shoes” by Ernest Hemingway
- Paper and pencils/pens or computer for word processing

Related Links
- Baby Shoes page on Snopes.com (http://www.snopes.com/language/literary/babyshoes.asp)
- Six Word Stories (http://www.sixwordstories.net/about/)
- What is my Sign (http://whatismysign.net/)

Exercise 1: Envisioning the Possible Future

Teacher Notes
- At the beginning of the lesson go over what students will be learning and your expectations.
- Introduce what a horoscope is and help students find their astrological sign.

Procedure
1. Login to The News & Observer e-edition and locate your horoscope.
2. Read your horoscope. Pretend that what it says is really going to happen.
3. Look at the weather section and see today’s prediction.
4. Using the steps of the writing process, write a narrative, with a title, about what might happen today, with today’s weather, based on your horoscope.
Exercise 2: Tweetable Flash Fiction

Teacher Notes
- Before the second exercise, introduce Ernest Hemingway and the literary legend of “Baby Shoes”. Use information and text from snopes.com (see related links). Discuss the importance of concise and precise writing.
- Include a short intro to Twitter if necessary.
- Student tweets can be written on strips of paper and “posted” on posterboard, or you can even create a Twitter account for your class depending on your schools social media policies.

Background
The most memorable writing is concise and precise. In concise writing all unnecessary words should be eliminated. The words you choose directly influence your message. When you choose words for their proper meaning, you will be able to evoke the appropriate, desired response. Pick words that are concrete and specific.

Here are a few tricks to help cut down on wordy writing:
1. Eliminate introductions such as, “it is”.
2. Avoid using the phrase, “the fact that...” (ex. It is a face that...).
3. Convert verb phrases with a form of “to be” and an adjective into one word.
4. Remove all unnecessary adverbs including, “rather”, “actually”, and “very”.
5. Eliminate “who is” and “which were” (ex. The cats, which were jumping around... vs.The jumping cats ....).

Procedure
1. Exchange your narrative writing with a partner.
2. Read your partner’s narrative and then rewrite the whole story in the form of a tweet. Only 140 characters may be used. Focus on the central message of the story. Use precise words.
3. Share and display your story tweet.