Modeling the Frame Story/The Christiansen Tales Pilgrimage

Materials Needed:

* Construction paper to create a “frame” for the stories
* Paper and writing utensils for students to write their own stories
* Tape/sticky tack/hot glue to secure student stories within the frame

Techniques:

There are numerous options for how to structure this lesson depending upon your personal preference or classroom needs.

* I did this lesson with 11th grade ELA classes in preparation for the teaching of *The Canterbury Tales* which is why I have a pilgrimage portion of the assignment, but it works with any frame story.
* I teach the concept of a frame story by using examples such as *The Lorax, Princess Bride, Forrest Gump, The Titanic,* and *1001 Nights.*
* I explain that while we function as one class with one story as that class, we each have individual stories that operate under the frame of our class.
* Each student then writes a story about something that happened to him or her. I had the boys write on blue paper and the girls write on pink.
* If I am working on specific writing strategies, I make sure that I have students include those techniques. For example, if I am working on sentence combining, I may require a compound complex and 2 complex sentences. If I am working on using figurative language I may require each student include a metaphor or simile and an example of personification.
* A construct a paper frame (simple rectangle works well) and label it with the course name and hour. When student stories are complete they are posted in the frame and students can read each other’s stories within the frame of our class.
* The stories can be about anything and can be funny or serious, but they must include a lesson that the student learned as a result of the event. I do one as an example. This is often one of the best writing samples produced by students because they love talking about themselves and they are more relaxed about structure so voice really shines.
* Since I do this as an introduction to *The Canterbury Tales* I add an element for fun. I take the class on a “pilgrimage” through the school and we stop at intermittent places for someone (I do volunteers only) to tell his or her tale including the lesson learned. The last stop is our school store where the class votes on the “best” story and that student wins a prize from the store. Last year it was a bagel and cream cheese (I’m not sure what we will have this year because of the dietary law changes). This aspect of the project gives the students who are animated storytellers but not necessarily great writers a chance to shine.