Creative Storytelling

A creative storytelling activity resource pack

North Ayrshire Council

SLIC Scottish Library & Information Council

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Background

The Project

Ardrossan Academy is due to merge with Winton Primary in a new campus in 2026 and to aid transition, funding was sought for a project across both schools.

Let Me Tell You a Story is the resulting SLIC funded project (using SLIF) which aims to provide a platform for pupils in the Academy to learn how to write short stories for children on a theme of their choosing, and then read their stories to classes in the primary, and also share their experiences of working with an author.

The project began as a series of six creative storytelling workshops, organised by Learning Community Librarian, Linda Vaughan, for S1 and S2 pupils at Ardrossan Academy, run by author Victoria Williamson. The activities and resource ideas have been collected here to support secondary school teachers in North Ayrshire and beyond and to support the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence literacy curriculum in a fun and engaging way to help enhance pupils' creative storytelling skills.

The Author

Victoria Williamson is an award-winning children's author, former teacher and creative writing tutor from north Glasgow who divides her time between writing, running workshops, and visiting schools and literary festivals to engage children with books and reading. Her published novels include *The Fox Girl and the White Gazelle*, *The Boy with the Butterfly Mind*, and *War of the Wind.* If your school has produced any work linked to these creative storytelling resources that you would like displayed on her author website, please get in touch via the contact page on her website here:

https://www.strangelymagical.com/contact

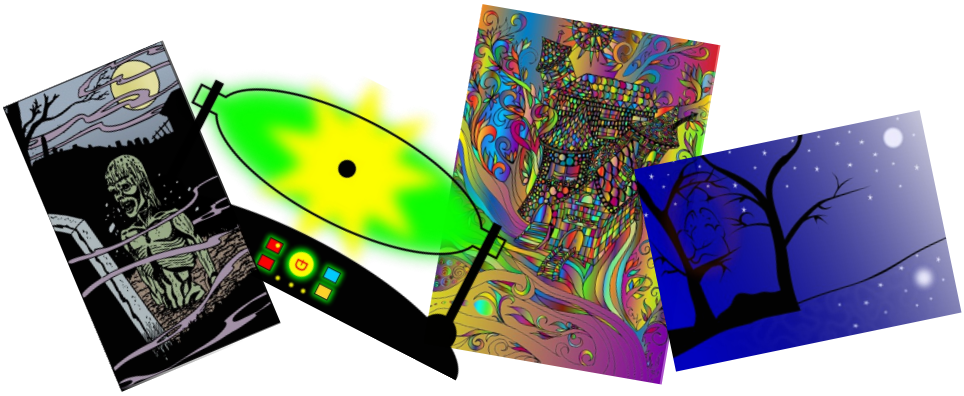
Story Sparks

Where do ideas for stories come from? Here are some activities to help pupils generate initial ideas for stories:

Activity 1 - Ideas from pictures

Visual prompts are a great way to help pupils come up with a story idea. First look up some interesting pictures, download and print these, and hand them out to pupils to discuss the prompts in groups of two to four. Pupils can also look for picture prompts online themselves, but it's very easy for them to get lost down a search-engine rabbit hole and become overwhelmed by the sheer volume of online content rather than discussing story ideas, so this activity works best if images are preselected for discussion. Search-engine prompts could include:

- spooky pictures
- strange pictures
- cute pictures
- science fiction pictures
- fantasy pictures
- dystopian pictures
- nature pictures



Task

⇒ Ask pupils to look at the pictures and decide which type of picture they like best. Are they drawn more to pictures of spooky haunted houses and zombies, or to scenes of nature and cute animal pictures? This will help them to narrow down the genre of the story they'd like to write.

⇒ Now ask them to discuss their chosen pictures with their group. Does their favourite picture suggest a particular story idea? Can they come up with a plot in which the pictures would feature? Who would be in the story? Can they come up with some ideas for the characters and the setting based on the pictures?

⇒ Ask pupils to jot down some ideas which will form the basis of their story.

Story Sparks

Activity 2 - Ideas from music

Music is very evocative, and can help pupils to pinpoint a story genre that captures their interest, or to imagine a scene from a story. As with activity 1, it helps to pre-select the music to play for this activity, as it's better to avoid songs with lyrics. Lyrics tell listeners what the song is about and don't leave much room for the imagination, and the point of this exercise is to let pupils' imaginations run free!

Here are some suggestions for a range of pieces of music - fast, slow, happy, sad, dramatic - which could be used for this activity. These can all be found on Youtube:

- 'Victory' - Two Steps from Hell
- 'Euphonic Sounds' - Scott Joplin
- 'Dawa -The Cradlesong' - Sacred Spirits
- 'Classical Gas' - Mason Williamson
- 'Cello Suite No.1 in B major' - Bach
- 'Ensaa' - Rouwaida Attieh
- 'Popcorn' - M&H Band version
- 'River Flows in You' - Yiruma
- 'Dance of Life' - Sergey Ivanov
- 'Magnetic Fields Part 2' - Jean Michelle Jarre

Task

⇒ Ask pupils to close their eyes as a piece of music is played, and to let their imaginations roam as they listen. Then they should jot down what popped into their heads as they listened - either in writing or by doodling pictures - and discuss the images they thought of with their group or the rest of the class. Did they find any pieces of music particularly appealing? Did any evoke strong images or suggest an idea for a story?

Activity 3 - Ideas from real-life experiences

Pupils' real-life experiences can also be used as subject matter for stories. Some pupils might be able to think of an interesting experience or event straight away, but many might struggle to pinpoint anything they might consider worthy of a story, and may need some help and encouragement to realise that everyday experiences that are meaningful to the storyteller are also important. Drawing maps of real-life places which pupils are familiar with is a good starting point for thinking about events - both mundane and out-of-the- ordinary - which are connected to those places. Pupils can sketch maps of:

- Their school building, e.g. a floor plan
- Their house
- The walk home from school, including anything they see along the way
- Their local area, including shops, roads, parks or landmarks
- Somewhere they've been on holiday
- A library, shop, community centre, place of worship or other building they are familiar with

Task

⇒ After sketching a map of their chosen place, pupils should spend some time thinking about things that have happened there. They can start by describing the usual routine which takes place in that area, and move on to discussing other incidents which may have taken place there. Did they witness or take part in an argument in a particular place? Did they see someone do something kind or unusual in that place? Do they have a favourite spot in the place of their choice where they feel happy? Have they ever taken part in a traditional celebration in that place? Does their chosen place have a particular feature - e.g. a tree, a sign, a piece of architecture, an object - that's special in some way?

⇒ After jotting down or doodling ideas, pupils can use these as a springboard for coming coming up with a story based on a particular place and an event which happened there.

Activity 4 - Ideas from news and current affairs

There might be a particular event happening in the world or a particular societal issue which has captured pupils' interest which they'd like to use as the basis of a story - this could begin as a whole class discussion on a topic such as:

- Climate change
- AI
- Pandemics
- War
- Advances in science and technology
- Regional news
- Local myths or urban legends

Task

⇒ Pupils should then jot down or sketch some story ideas based on class/group discussions and their own particular interest areas.

Alternatively, news stories on some of the above topics and others could be pre- selected for pupils to discuss. These can be found online, in papers or in magazines.

Activity 5 - Ideas from dreams

Everyone has had at least one interesting dream. Sometimes it might be a story that seems almost cinematic, and sometimes it's just a striking image or a particular feeling that sticks in the dreamer's head long after waking.

Task

Encourage pupils to share, discuss or sketch a dream, and to see if they can expand any interesting imagery or strong emotions connected to the dream into a story idea.

Story Sparks

Activity 6 – Fan Fiction

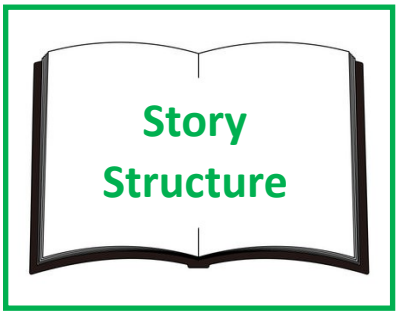
Pupils are often discouraged from using characters or plots they've seen in TV shows, films and computer games or read about in books, in their own stories, as this is considered plagiarism. While it's very important that pupils understand why they can't use these characters and scenarios in exam work or in anything they are claiming as their own 'original' work – e.g. for publishers – fan fiction is a really useful tool for getting pupils excited about storytelling. Fan fiction can tap into a subject area that pupils are really interested in and kickstart a story they might otherwise struggle with starting.

Encourage pupils to discuss which characters and plots they've found interesting in:

- TV shows
- Films
- Computer games
- Books and graphic novels
- Cartoons
- Real life characters such as celebrities, actors, singers and online influencers

Task

⇒ Ask pupils to describe or sketch a storyline of an existing TV/book/computer game, etc., they particularly enjoy. Can they think of things they would have added if they had written the original? Any characters they think should have been included? Any extra scenes they would add? Would they change the ending? This could form the basis of a short story which uses existing characters and scenarios, but which helps pupils use their imaginations to expand the worlds which interest them and gives them practice of world-building in storytelling.



Activity 1 - Story Sequencing

Beginning discussions of story structure with a hands-on activity which gets pupils arranging story pictures in a logical sequence is a great way to help pupils think about the way that plot unfolds in a coherent way. While most free downloadable resources for story sequencing are aimed at pupils in the early years, cutting out and laminating the picture squares of short cartoons in comics and from newspapers is a cheap and easy alternative to subscriptions to online education websites which provide these resources. Once you have a selection of cut-up cartoon strips, the activity can run as follows:

Task

⇒ Give each group of three-four pupils a set of pictures from one cartoon strip. Ask them to sequence the cards in a way that tells a story which makes sense. After they've done this, ask them to describe the story. What happens at the beginning to start the story off? What happens in the middle to make the story interesting or move the plot forward? And what happens at the end - is a happy, sad, satisfying or cliffhanger ending?

⇒ Ask pupils if they can sequence the cards in any other way that would tell a different story that would also make sense. If so, why do they think this is? Is it because there's not much dialogue, so the story can be interpreted in a different way? Or if not, is it because there's a lot of dialogue which wouldn't make sense if spoken out of order?

Activity 2 - Beginning, Middle and End

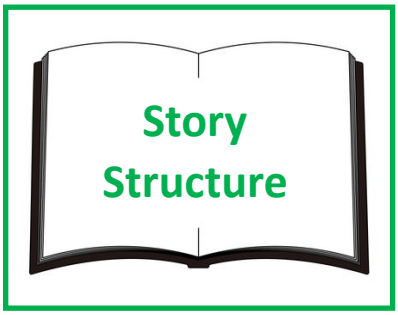
Basic stories just need a beginning, middle and end.

Task

⇒ Ask pupils to think about and discuss the story idea they came up with in the initial story spark activities. Then ask pupils to fill in the 'story hamburger' template in **Appendix 1**. Pupils should then swap their story templates with others in their group and discuss if the stories flow in a logical sequence. Are there any events which don't seem to fit the sequence? Rewrite any of these parts as necessary. At this stage there doesn't need to be much detail - one or two sentences for each part of the story will suffice.

Story template adapted from the free resource here:

https://www.edrawsoft.com/template-hamburger-writing-model-storyboard.html



Activity 3 - Simple Story Arc

Most stories - whether they are short stories, novels, cartoons, TV shows, or films - follow the same six-part structure:

Introduction: At the start of the story, the main characters are introduced, and the reader or viewer finds out where and when the story is set.

Conflict/Problem: Something then happens which sparks the rest of the story. It could be a conflict such as an argument or a moral dilemma, or it could be a problem the main character has to find a solution to. It could be something as big as an alien invasion, or as small as a character noticing something on the way home from school that they haven't seen before.

Rising Action: This is an incident, or in a more detailed story, a series of incidents, which move the action forward towards the main action scene or the most dramatic part of the story.

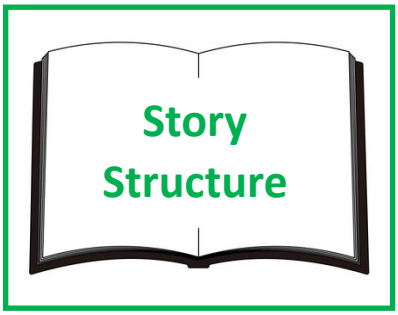
Climax: This is the most dramatic part of the story. It could be a chase scene, a battle, a scary moment meeting a ghost in a haunted house, or something more everyday such as a pupil confronting a school bully.

Falling Action: An incident or two which starts to wrap the story up, tying up any loose ends and answering any questions which the reader or viewer might still have about the story and the characters.

Resolution: The end of the story. It could be a happy, sad, scary, unexpected or cliffhanger ending, but it should fit with the rest of the plot and leave the reader or viewer feeling satisfied that the story is complete.

Task

⇒ Discuss the basic story arc shown in **Appendix 2** with the pupils, then either read the short story 'Just Another School Day' in **Appendix 3** or ask pupils to read it themselves. Discuss if it follows the story arc steps in the same order, or if the introduction and problem/conflict steps are switched around or merged. Does this detract from the story, or make it more interesting?



Activity 4 - Detailed Story

More detailed stories have more parts to the rising action and falling action.

This can be demonstrated by a story such the abridged version of 'The Necklace' by Guy de Maupassant in **Appendix 5.**

Task

⇒ Read this story to pupils, or photocopy it and ask the pupils to read it themselves. Then discuss how the story sections can be categorised into the six parts of the story previously outlined, with more happening in the rising action and falling action sections.

⇒ Now ask pupils to take the 'hamburger template' of their story and flesh it out by jotting down a few bullet points about what happens in their story using the detailed story arc template in **Appendix 7**.

Activity 5 - Story Boards

Story boards can be a very useful way of representing the parts of a story, especially for pupils who are more visually-inclined, or who don't enjoy writing. The same six parts of the story can be represented on these, but with a picture - and a short description if possible - of what happens in each part of the story.

Task

⇒ Give each pupils a copy of the story board in **Appendix 8**, and ask them to come up with one picture - and if possible, a line or two - about what happens in each of the six parts of their story - the introduction, the problem/conflict, the rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution. Remind them that sometimes stories begin with a problem/conflict or a flashback, with the introduction to the characters and setting coming after that, which can make for a gripping beginning to a story.

Activity 1 - Storytelling through writing

There are a number of ways written stories can be presented. This can be in the traditional short story format, but stories can also be told through diary entries, letters, scripts (for plays or TV shows), blog posts and poetry. Pupils can experiment with these individually or as a class.

Task

⇒ For a class project, pupils can be split into groups and assigned a type of writing (e.g. a short story, a letter or series of letters, diary entries, etc). Each group should be given the same scenario from **Appendix 9** and asked to produce a written story in their assigned style.

⇒ Once these are completed, each group could read or display their story, and the different styles and ways of presenting the stories compared and contrasted. Does the method of written storytelling change the way a story unfolds? What are the benefits and limitations of each style? Do pupils find they have a particular preference for one style over another? Why do they think this is?

Activity 2 - Storytelling through drawing

Some pupils will have a strong preference for presenting their stories visually. This can either be through a single image, in a comic strip/graphic novel format with some dialogue, or through a series of sequenced images without dialogue. Encourage pupils to experiment with different box sizes, sound effect balloons and perspectives to create more nuanced visual stories. There are a number of free online resources which teachers can use to support visual storytelling through comics and pictures. These include:

- Comic strip box templates from Teaching Ideas:
  https://www.teachingideas.co.uk/art/comic-strip-templates/
- Online comic creator from the National Council of Teachers of English:
  https://dev-rwt-interactive-v2.azurewebsites.net/comic-creator
- A great set of resources, lesson plans and information for teachers on using graphic novels, comics and comic strips in the classroom which is available from the National Children's Book and Literary Alliance here:
  https://thencbla.org/graphic- novels-and-comic-book-resources/

Activity 3 - Storytelling through photographs

For pupils who enjoy photography, these images can be another great way of visually representing a story. These can either be individual pictures which viewers have to examine in order to work out the story for themselves, or a sequence of images which tell a story through action or interaction. Free teaching resources on using photographs in the classroom for storytelling include:

- 'Powerful Storytelling Through Photography' blogpost by photographer Mark Brion: https://markbrion.com/powerful-storytelling-through-photography/
- Lesson plan on storytelling through photography by the Pulitzer Center: https://pulitzercenter.org/builder/lesson/telling-stories-photographs
- Lesson plan on storytelling through photography by Scholastic and Fujifilm: https://www.scholastic.com/INSTAXInstantPhotoFun/index.html

  https://www.scholastic.com/INSTAXInstantPhotoFun/pdfs/Fujifilm_68_Every_Picture_Tells_A_Story.pdf
- 'Writing Photo-Stories' from The Writers' Guide: https://www.thewritersguide.co.uk/writing-photo-stories
- 'What Photo Stories Taught Me About Fiction' from The People's Friend: https://www.thepeoplesfriend.co.uk/2022/05/03/fiction-eds-blog-what-photo-stories-taught-me-about-fiction/

Activity 4 - Storytelling through making models

Stories can be told through 'claymation', an animation technique using movable clay characters and either stop-motion recording or individual photographs. Pupils will be familiar with these types of stories through the 'Wallace and Gromit' films.

A free guide to the process from start to finish can be found on the Tech4Learning website: https://tech4learning.com/files/Making_Claymation_in_the_Classroom.pdf

Activity 5 - Oral storytelling

Some pupils will be more comfortable telling their stories using the spoken word. This can be done either informally - recording their words using a smartphone or audio editing program such as Audacity - or more formally, as a live performance. Pupils can tell a story based on an idea they've come up with using story sparks and plotted out using the six-part story structure or story boards, or they can try their hand at creating a podcast or dramatised radio show. Some free resources for lessons based on oral storytelling include:

- 'A Mini Crash-Course on Oral Storytelling' on the Two Writing Teachers' blog: https://twowritingteachers.org/2014/04/06/a-mini-crash-course-on-oral-storytelling/
- Storytelling Activities and Lesson Ideas on the Story Arts Website: https:// www.storyarts.org/lessonplans/lessonideas/
- Lesson plans on audio broadcasts and podcasts on the National Council of Teachers of English website: https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/ audio-broadcasts-podcasts-oral

Activity 6 - Dramatisation and Puppetry

Performing stories can be a fun way of storytelling. Pupils can either come up with a play as a whole class (with the teacher transcribing the dialogue if pupils struggle with writing), in groups (with groups either coming up with their own short plays or taking responsibility for one scene in a larger class play), or as a puppet show, if they prefer not to act themselves.

Useful free resources for creating plays include:

- 'The Student Guide to Playwriting' by Bush Theatre: https://www.bushtheatre.co.uk/bushgreen/student-guide-to-playwriting-getting-started/
- 'Teaching Playwriting in Schools by Mountain Brook Schools: https://www.mtnbrook.k12.al.us/cms/lib/AL01901445/Centricity/Domain/676/PlaywrightsHandbook.pdf

Activity 1 - Character Backstory

'Characterisation' in storytelling is what a character looks and acts like, including their distinctive features and traits. Creating a backstory for a protagonist helps storytellers to develop richer characters who act in coherent ways, and who are less likely to confuse the reader, viewer or listener by suddenly doing something 'out of character' halfway through a story. Character backstory can be explored in the following ways:

Task

⇒ Prepare a set of four to eight 'character bags' for the class to look at in groups. Each bag should contain a set of objects which a character might have in a drawer, handbag, schoolbag or pocket. Items might include: cinema, theatre or concert tickets which might give clues about the type of entertainment the character enjoys; photographs which might give clues about what a character or their friends and family look like or where they live or have travelled to; items related to hobbies such as paint brushes, sewing kits, video game boxes, books and crafts; restaurant menus or (made up) supermarket receipts which give clues about what kind of food a character likes or can afford; social media screenshots (either real or made up) which give clues about their identity, jobs and hobbies; items related to jobs such as a screwdriver, a computer mouse, a uniform or a (made up) payslip; or if the character is a child or teenager, items related to school such as (made up) report cards, homework sheets and subject timetables.

⇒ Pupils should discuss their group's character bag and jot down as many bullet points as they can about the character's physical traits, age, job or schooling, hobbies, social life, friends and family, and any other information they can glean from the objects. Groups should swap the bags, and then compare notes. Did they all come up with a similar description for the kind of person they thought the character was based on the objects in that bag? If not, why do they think there were differences?

⇒ Pupils can then come up with a short backstory for one of the characters, either in groups groups or as a class, based on the objects in that character's bag.

⇒ Now pupils are ready to start thinking about the main protagonist in their own story. What's their backstory? What objects would they carry around with them or keep in a drawer? What would these objects tell us about them?

Activity 2 - Character Description

Finding out what a character in a story looks like can be a little boring if their physical traits are described in a dry list. Character descriptions can be made more interesting by adding detail and descriptive language, and using metaphors and similes.

Task

⇒ Pupils should discuss the character descriptions from well-known stories in **Appendix 10**, picking out which words and phrases create the clearest and most interesting mental images of a character and why they like some descriptions better than others. Then, using the character bullet points they jotted down from the character bags, they should try to flesh out one of these characters by writing their own character description using interesting words, phrases, similes and metaphors.

⇒ Pupils can then try this for one or more characters in their own story, first by creating bullet points about their character's physical traits, and then writing a more detailed paragraph to describe each of the main characters.

Activity 3 - Character Voice

Stories can be told in the first person (using 'I' and 'me') or in the third person (using 'he', 'she', 'they' or 'it'). If they're told in the third person, the narrator knows and sees everything that is happening and what all the characters are thinking and feeling. The narrator can either tell the story in an old-fashioned way, in a very modern way, in a humorous way, or a serious way, etc. The 'voice' of the first-person narrator will depend on how old they are, what type of person they are, where they come from and even what type of job they do if they're an adult. For example: a scientist might use different words and describe things differently than an artist; a ten-year-old schoolboy will describe things differently than a fifty-year-old teacher; and someone from Glasgow will use different slang words than someone from London, New York or elsewhere.

Task

⇒ Pupils should discuss the character voices in **Appendix 11**, thinking about whether the excerpts are narrated in the first or third person, and how this changes the style of narration and how a character sounds. Pupils can then write or record short sentences and paragraphs for their own story, experimenting with narrator and character voice.

Activity 4 - Showing Versus Telling

Aspiring writers are often given the advice to 'show' rather than 'tell'. 'Telling' is a very straight forward description of the facts. It can be dry if overused, but it can sometimes be very useful for describing a number of events or characters quickly if the plot needs to move forward fast and the writer or narrator doesn't want to focus attention on these too much. It often omits dialogue and can be used to describe an event that happened in the past. 'Showing' is a way of narrating which is more dramatic and can help readers or listeners imagine a scene as though it was a film playing out in their head in real time. It can be a very effective way of immersing readers or listeners in a story, but again, if overused, it can slow down the plot and can focus the reader or listener's attention on too many extra details which aren't important to the story.

Task

⇒ Read and discuss the two examples of 'showing and telling' in **Appendix 12**. Which do they prefer? Which would be more useful when setting a scene in the introduction, or when moving action forward towards the climax of a story? Can they rewrite or retell the two 'Telling' examples with a 'Showing' example of their own, this time including dialogue with another character in the scene?

⇒ Pupils can then take one of the scenes from their story hamburger or story board and try to write or record a telling and a showing version for the scene. Which do they think will be a more effective narration technique for that particular part of the story?

Activity 5 - Setting the Scene: Atmosphere

Descriptive language is very important to creating mood in a story (happy, sad, scary, serious, etc), indicating the genre of the story (horror, science fiction, romance), and helping readers or listeners to imagine the scene where the action is taking place.

Task

⇒ Ask pupils to discuss the scenes described in **Appendix 13**. What kind of atmosphere is created in each excerpt, and which words or phrases create the mood of the story? Now ask them to try this for one scene from their own story boards. Can they think of descriptive words or phrases which create an atmosphere that will fit the genre of their story and help the reader or listener to imagine the scene as though it's a film in their head?

Enhancing a Story

Activity 6 - Description using the five senses

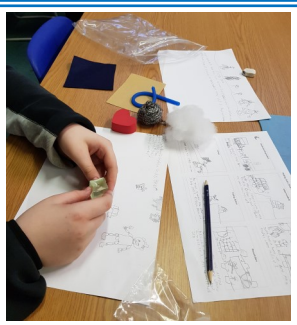
Description in stories can be made richer using the five senses. What sights, sounds and smells can be experienced in a scene? What can your characters taste and touch? The following activity can help pupils focus on the senses and use sensory descriptions in their work.

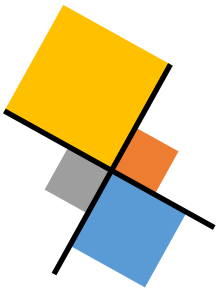
Task

⇒ Prepare a set of 'sensory' kits for each group. Each set could contain items such as the following:

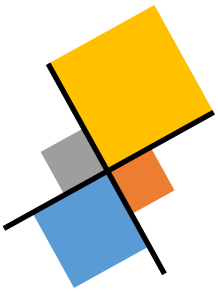
- **Sight:** vibrant pictures, grey pictures, kaleidoscopes, sunglasses, glitter pots, fibre optic lights;
- **Sound:** bells of various sizes, small musical instruments, 'rain' sticks', small drums or cymbals, pop tubes, bubble wrap;
- **Smell:** cotton balls which have been dipped in essential oils with smells such as jasmine, pine, cinnamon, peppermint, vanilla and coconut;
- **Taste:** small plastic droppers containing samples of various kitchen items such as coffee, lemon, sugar water (or something sweet like cola), soy sauce, tomato ketchup, vinegar, vanilla and mint;
- **Touch:** hard and smooth pebbles, squishy cubes and bendy fidget toys, pompoms, fabric squares with different textures such a velvet and tweed, pot scourers.

⇒ Ask pupils to explore each of the sensory kits and record descriptive words for each object. Now compare results - does everyone agree on how they experience sensory input? Why might there be disagreements? What might these differences tell us about everyone's experiences of the world? How might these descriptions and also differences be incorporated into a character's backstory and into a story scene?





Next Steps



There are lots of things of things pupils can do with a completed story, whether it's a one- off story they've written themselves, a story as part of a collection of class stories, or a whole-class project. Here are some suggestions:

- Depending on the way a story or a collection of stories has been told, it could be turned into a printed booklet for the school, as a story or series of stories in a school newsletter, or presented as a podcast, play or art display for the rest of the school or in a celebration event for pupils and parents.

- If pupils want feedback from their work outwith the school environment, then entering writing competitions is a great way to get feedback on written work, build up pupils' confidence, and give them the motivation to keep writing by giving them a goal to aim for.

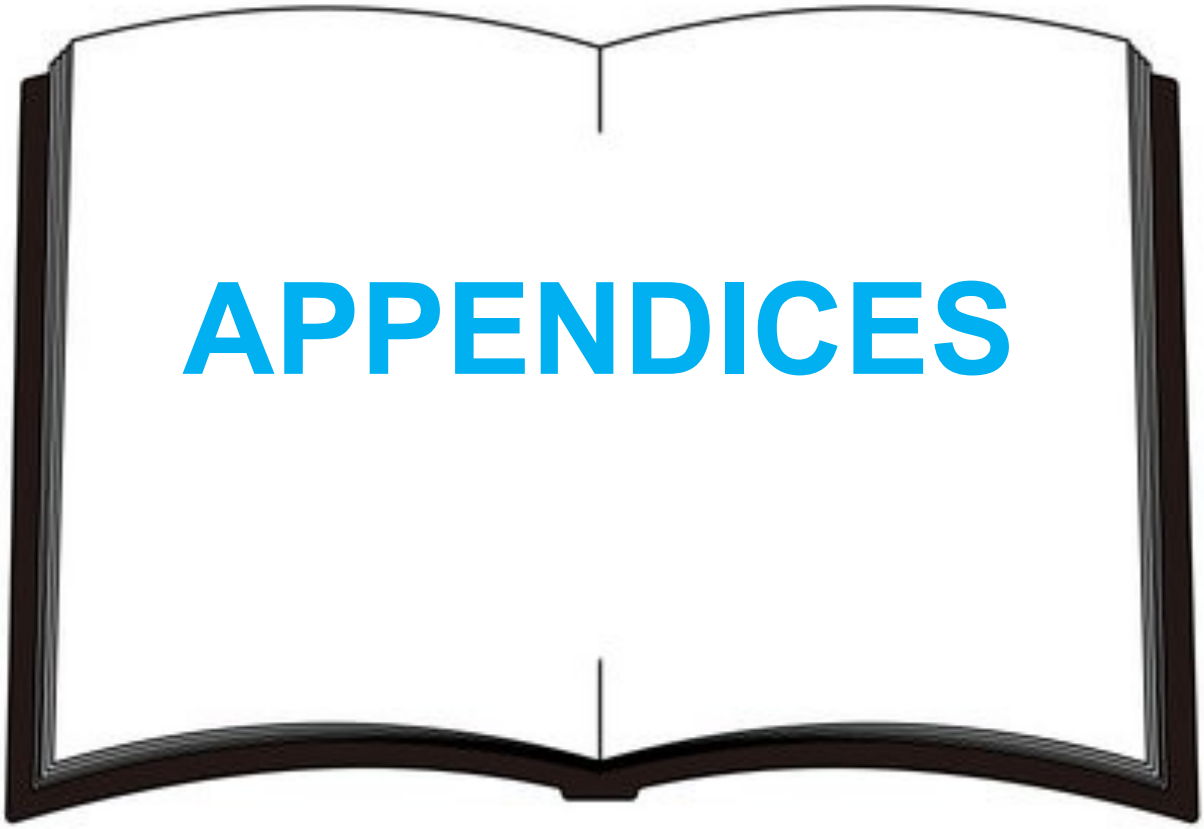
Competitions are listed in places such as the School Reading List Website here:
https://schoolreadinglist.co.uk/competitions-for-children/childrens-writing-competitions/

The Scottish Book Trust features opportunities and information on its website here:
https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/writing-and-authors/opportunities-for-young-writers

Schools and pupils can sign up to the Scottish Book Trust newsletter to find out about other opportunities and competitions running throughout the year. Getting involved in these and speaking to other writers is a great way to stay engaged and to get encouragement and feedback on written work.

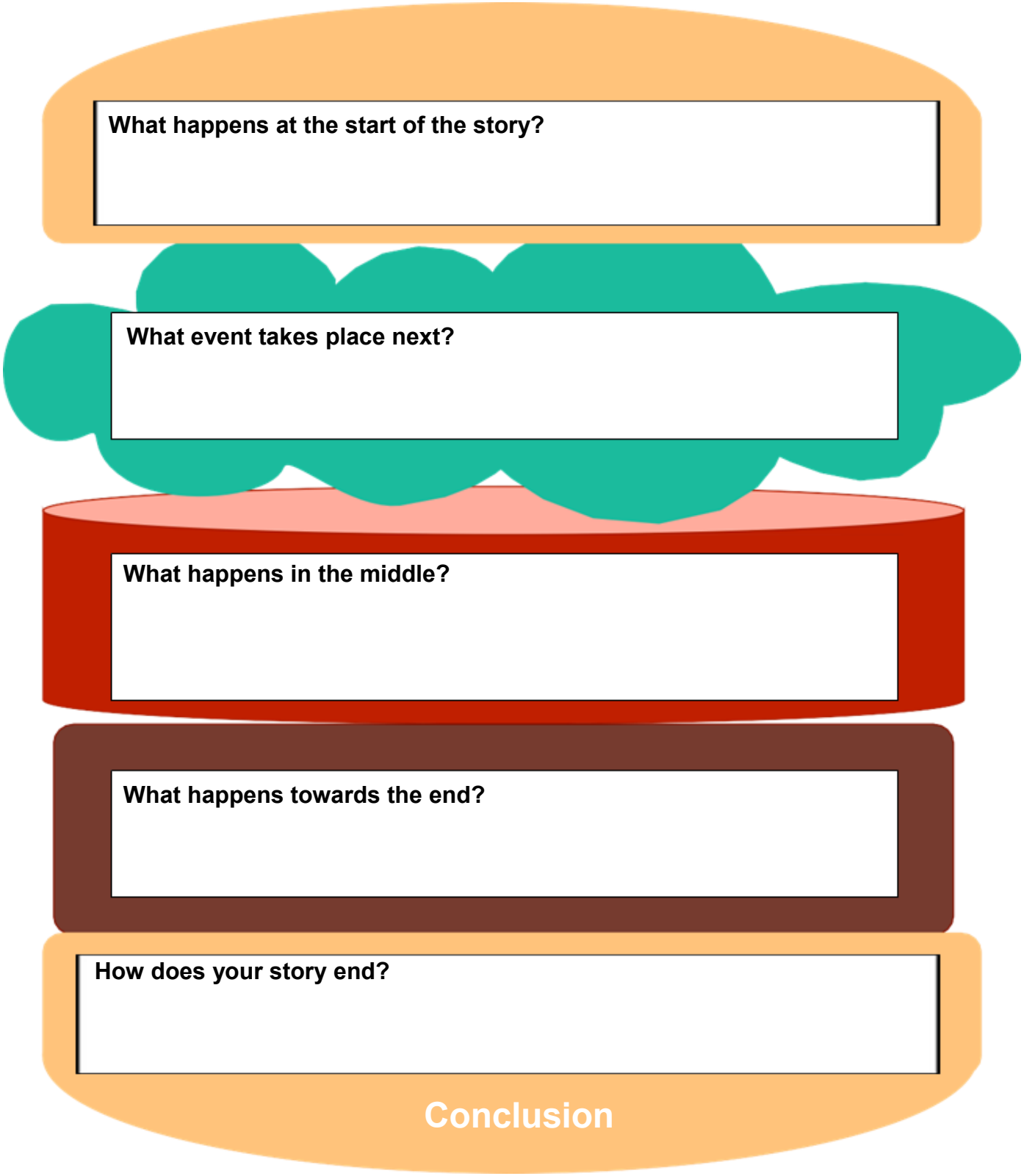
- If pupils have a completed novel they'd like to send to a publisher, the best way to do this is to start by finding an agent. Most publishers don't accept submissions directly from writers, and ask authors to submit through an agent. Agents and publishers are listed in *The Children's Writers' and Artists' Yearbook* - copies of this can be borrowed for free from local libraries, or ordered from them for free if they don't have a copy in stock. This book is a good resource as it also has articles giving advice to writers about how to craft a submission letter to an agent, how to decide what genre and age group a book is for, and what the appropriate length should be.

- And don't forget, if pupils have a piece of writing they'd like some feedback on, then local authors like me are always happy to read their work and send a reply!

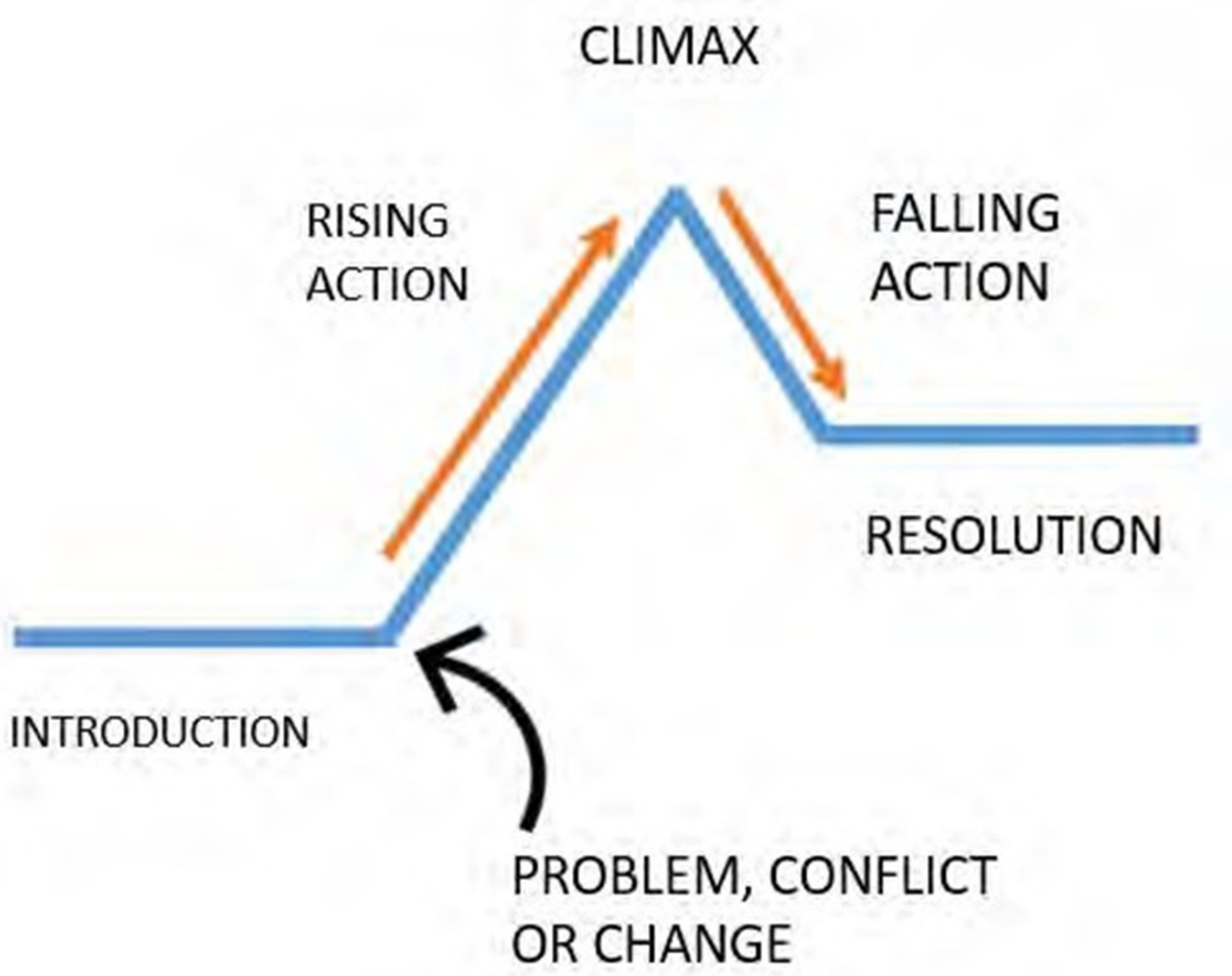


APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Story Hamburger Template



Appendix 2: Story Arc - The Six Parts of a Story



Appendix 3: Victoria Williamson - 'Just Another School Day'

It's my turn to drive the school bus today. I'm not really a morning person, and anyway I'm only eleven, so I fall asleep twice and crash into our school gates, but all the kids are still in one piece when we arrive, so I do a better job than Jenny did yesterday. I get twenty points for effort and only minus five for breaking the road rules.

I'm still trying to reverse out of the mangled gates when the bell goes, so that means I'm last off the bus and have to sprint to our classroom. I knock over a small boy and lose another five points for running right over him, but at least I don't lose fifteen for being late.

Maths and spelling go OK cos our usual teacher takes those, but the art class is a bit of a disaster as Connor's been put in charge. He pours way too much paint into a bucket the size of a paddling pool, and Mia nearly drowns when she trips and falls in. I make a pretty good painting of a tree while they're fishing her out, so I get another ten points for creativity.

I'm on the lunch rota today, but somehow I manage to get the recipe wrong and end up losing ten points for not following instructions when my pasta bake disintegrates into slush. I don't do as badly as Logan, though – he loses fifty points for poisoning three junior kids with his curry, and Eva loses every one of her points for setting the kitchen on fire.

Science in the afternoon starts off fun, cos Jack's taking the class and he likes mixing things up in tests tubes. We investigate how much dynamite we need to blow our classroom door off its hinges, and it's all going brilliantly until I realise Jack's got the numbers wrong and he's used ten times the amount we need. Before I can warn him he lights the fuse, and I can only watch as it sizzles straight towards the giant pile of explosives.

Everything goes black, and I know I'm dead.

It's OK, though, cos it wasn't my fault and I won't lose any points.

'GAME OVER' flashes up on the screen, and I put down my controller and cheer when I see I've finished the school day ten points up.

"Alex, is that you done?" Mum calls up the stairs. "Would you like a snack?"

"Coming, Mum!"

I check my homework log to see what class I'll have to teach tomorrow. Technology – yes! I can show everyone how to build a robot from loo rolls, empty bean tins and the motor from an old toy car. That'll earn me twenty points at least! I race down to the kitchen, grinning from ear to ear.

I thought being in lockdown and having to learn from home would be deadly dull, but this is turning out to be the best school year I've ever had.

Appendix 4: 'Just Another School Day' - Suggested Story Arc

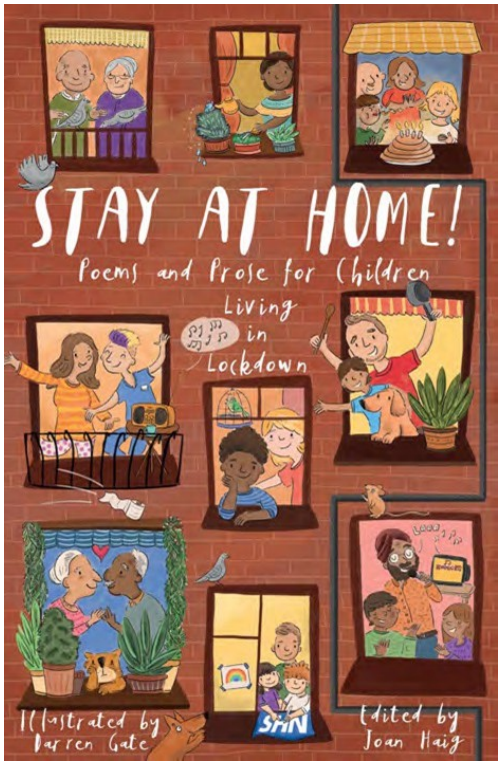
Introduction and Problem/Conflict: This story begins with action, so it could be argued that the introduction and the problem/conflict are actually combined in the first paragraph. The main character (the first-person narrator) introduced themselves as 'eleven' at the same time as introducing the setting - 'I crash into our school gates' (with the bus) which introduces the problem that the children are all doing the jobs of adults in this story.

Rising Action: Paragraphs two, three and four (from 'I'm still trying to reverse' up to 'setting the kitchen on fire') are a series of advances and setbacks which move the story forward to its climax.

Climax: The climax of the story comes in paragraph five onwards when the science class blows up and 'Game Over' flashes up on the screen.

Falling Action: In the falling action, we find out this was just a computer game that was being played, and the narrator is actually safe at home in his bedroom.

Resolution: The story ends on a happy note, with the narrator reflecting that his school year during the (COVID) lockdown is turning out to be more fun than he anticipated.



This story is from *Stay at Home! Poems and Prose for Children in Lockdown,* which is a free, illustrated anthology of poems and stories for children aged 8-12, comprising specially written lockdown-themed contributions by 40 writers based in Scotland.

The whole anthology can be downloaded free from the Cranachan Publishing website here:

https://www.cranachanpublishing.co.uk/stay-at- home-2/

Appendix 5: Guy de Maupassant - 'The Necklace'

She was one of those pretty and charming girls born, as if by an error of fate, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of becoming known, understood, loved or wedded by a man of wealth and distinction; and so she let herself be married to a minor official at the Ministry of Education.

She dressed plainly because she had never been able to afford anything better, but she was as unhappy as if she had once been wealthy. She suffered endlessly, feeling she was entitled to all the delicacies and luxuries of life. She suffered because of the poorness of her house as she looked at the dirty walls, the worn-out chairs and the ugly curtains. When she sat down to dinner at a round table covered with a three-day-old cloth opposite her husband who, lifting the lid off the soup, shouted excitedly, "Ah! Beef stew! What could be better," she dreamed of fine dinners, of shining silverware, and of delicious dishes served on wonderful plates.

She had no dresses, no jewels, nothing; and these were the only things she loved. She had a rich friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, whom she no longer wanted to visit because she suffered so much when she came home. For whole days afterwards she would weep with sorrow, regret, despair and misery.

One evening, her husband came home with an air of triumph, holding a large envelope in his hand. "Look," he said, "here's something for you."

She tore open the paper and drew out a card, on which was printed the words: 'The Minister of Education and Mme. Georges Rampouneau request the pleasure of M. and Mme. Loisel's company at the Ministry, on the evening of Monday January 18th.'

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation on the table resentfully, and muttered: "What do you want me to do with that?"

"But, my dear, I thought you would be pleased. You never go out, and it will be such a lovely occasion! I had awful trouble getting it. It is very exclusive, and they're not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole ministry will be there."

She stared at him angrily, and said, impatiently: "And what do you expect me to wear if I go? "

He hadn't thought of that. He stammered: "Why, the dress you go to the theatre in. It seems very nice to me ..." He stopped, stunned, distressed to see his wife crying. He stuttered: "What's the matter? What's the matter? "

With great effort she overcame her grief and replied in a calm voice: "Nothing. Only I have no dress and so I can't go to this party. Give your invitation to a friend whose wife has better clothes than I do. "

He was distraught, but tried again: "Let's see, Mathilde. How much would a suitable dress cost, one which you could use again on other occasions, something very simple?"

She thought for a moment, wondering what amount she could ask for without an immediate refusal from the thrifty clerk. At last she answered hesitantly: "I think I could do it with four hundred francs."

He turned a little pale, however he said: “Very well, I can give you four hundred francs. But try and get a really beautiful dress."

The day of the party drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, restless, anxious. Her dress was ready, however. One evening her husband said to her: "What's the matter? You've been acting strange these last three days."

She replied: "I'm upset that I have no jewels, not a single stone to wear. I will look cheap. I would almost rather not go to the party. There is nothing more humiliating than looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women."

"How stupid you are!" her husband cried. "Go and see your friend Madame Forestier and ask her to lend you some jewels. You know her well enough for that."

She uttered a cry of joy. "Of course. I had not thought of that."

The next day she went to her friend's house and told her of her distress. Madame Forestier went to her mirrored wardrobe, took out a large box and said to Madame Loisel: "Choose, my dear."

She discovered, in a black satin box, a superb diamond necklace, and her heart began to beat with uncontrolled desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it around her neck, over her high-necked dress, and stood lost in ecstasy as she looked at herself. Then she asked anxiously, hesitating: "Would you lend me this, just this!"

"Why, yes, of course."

She threw her arms around her friend's neck, embraced her rapturously, then fled with her treasure.

The day of the party arrived. Madame Loisel was a success. She was prettier than all the other women, elegant, gracious, smiling, and full of joy. All the men stared at her, asked her name, tried to be introduced. All the cabinet officials wanted to waltz with her. The minister noticed her. She left at about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been dozing since midnight in a little deserted anteroom with three other gentlemen whose wives were having a good time.

He threw over her shoulders the clothes he had brought for her to go outside in, the modest clothes of an ordinary life, whose poverty contrasted sharply with the elegance of the ball dress. When they were finally in the street, they could not find a cab, and began to look for one. At last they found on the quay one of those old night cabs that one sees in Paris only after dark, as if they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day.

They were dropped off at their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly walked up the steps to their apartment. It was all over, for her. And he was remembering that he had to be back at his office at ten o'clock. In front of the mirror, she took off the clothes around her shoulders, taking a final look at herself in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She no longer had the necklace round her neck!

"What is the matter?" asked her husband, already half undressed.

She turned towards him, panic-stricken. "I have ... I have ... I no longer have Madame Forestier's necklace."

He stood up, distraught. "What? ... how? ... That's impossible!"

They looked in the folds of her dress, in the folds of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere. But they could not find it.

"Are you sure you still had it on when you left the ball?" he asked. "If you had lost it in the street we would have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes. That's probably it. Did you take his number?"

"No. And you, didn't you notice it?"

"No."

They stared at each other, stunned. At last Loisel put his clothes on again. "I'm going back," he said, "over the whole route we walked, see if I can find it."

He left. She remained in her ball dress all evening, without the strength to go to bed, sitting on a chair, with no fire, her mind blank. Her husband returned at about seven o'clock. He had found nothing. "You must write to your friend," he said, "tell her you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. It will give us time to look some more."

She wrote as he dictated.

At the end of one week they had lost all hope. And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared: "We must consider how to replace the jewel."

The next day they took the box which had held it, and went to the jeweller whose name they found inside. He consulted his books. "It was not I, madame, who sold the necklace; I must simply have supplied the case."

And so they went from jeweller to jeweller, looking for an necklace like the other one, consulting their memories, both sick with grief and anguish. In a shop at the Palais Royal, they found a string of diamonds which seemed to be exactly what they were looking for. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six thousand. So they begged the jeweller not to sell it for three days. Loisel had eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

And he did borrow, asking for a thousand francs from one man, five hundred from another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, made ruinous agreements, dealt with usurers, with every type of money-lender. He compromised the rest of his life, risked signing notes without knowing if he could ever honour them, and, terrified by the anguish still to come, by the prospect of every physical privation and every moral torture he was about to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, and laid down on the jeweller's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel took the necklace back, Forestier said "You should have returned it sooner, I might have needed it." To the relief of her friend, she did not open the case. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Would she have taken her friend for a thief?

From then on, Madame Loisel knew the horrible life of the very poor. But she played her part heroically. The dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their maid; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof. She came to know the drudgery of housework, the odious labours of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, staining her rosy nails on greasy pots and the bottoms of pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and the dishcloths, which she hung to dry on a line; she carried the garbage down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping at each landing to catch her breath. And, dressed like a commoner, she went to the fruiterer's, the grocer's, the butcher's, her basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, fighting over every miserable sou.

Each month they had to pay some notes, renew others, get more time. Her husband worked every evening, doing accounts for a tradesman, and often, late into the night, he sat copying a manuscript at five sous a page. And this life lasted ten years. At the end of ten years they had paid off everything, everything, at usurer's rates and with the accumulations of compound interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become strong, hard and rough like all women of impoverished households. With hair half combed, with skirts awry, and reddened hands, she talked loudly as she washed the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window and thought of that evening at the ball so long ago, when she had been so beautiful and so admired. What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows, who knows? How strange life is, how fickle! How little is needed for one to be ruined or saved!

One Sunday, as she was walking in the Champs Elysees to refresh herself after the week's work, suddenly she saw a woman walking with a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming. Madame Loisel felt emotional. Should she speak to her? Yes, of course. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

She went up to her. "Good morning, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be addressed so familiarly by this common woman, did not recognize her. She stammered: "But - madame - I don't know. You must have made a mistake."

"No, I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry. "Why ... my poor Mathilde, how you've changed! ..."

"Yes, I have had some hard times since I last saw you, and many miseries ... and all because of you! ..."

"Me? How can that be?"

"You remember that diamond necklace that you lent me to wear to the Ministry party?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. It wasn't easy for us, we had very little. But at last it is over, and I am very glad."

Madame Forestier was stunned. "You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes; you didn't notice then? They were very similar." And she smiled with proud and innocent pleasure.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took both her hands. "Ah, my poor Mathilde! Mine was an imitation! It was worth five hundred francs at most! ..."

Appendix 6: 'The Necklace' - Suggested Story Arc

Introduction: The main character - whom we later learn is called 'Madame Loisel' is introduced, along with her situation in life and reasons for her unhappiness. The setting and the time period are hinted at through the narrative style, which is somewhat old fashioned.

Problem/Conflict: Madame Loisel's husband comes home with what he thinks is good news: an invitation to an evening party at the Ministry of Education. Madame Loisel, however, is distraught at the thought of not having anything fine enough to wear at the occasion. At this point, the French setting becomes clear due to the use of 'M.' for Monsieur' and 'Mme.' for 'Madame'. Often stories don't put all of the details of the characters and setting in the introduction, letting these unfold slowly throughout the story to add colour and depth to the descriptions.

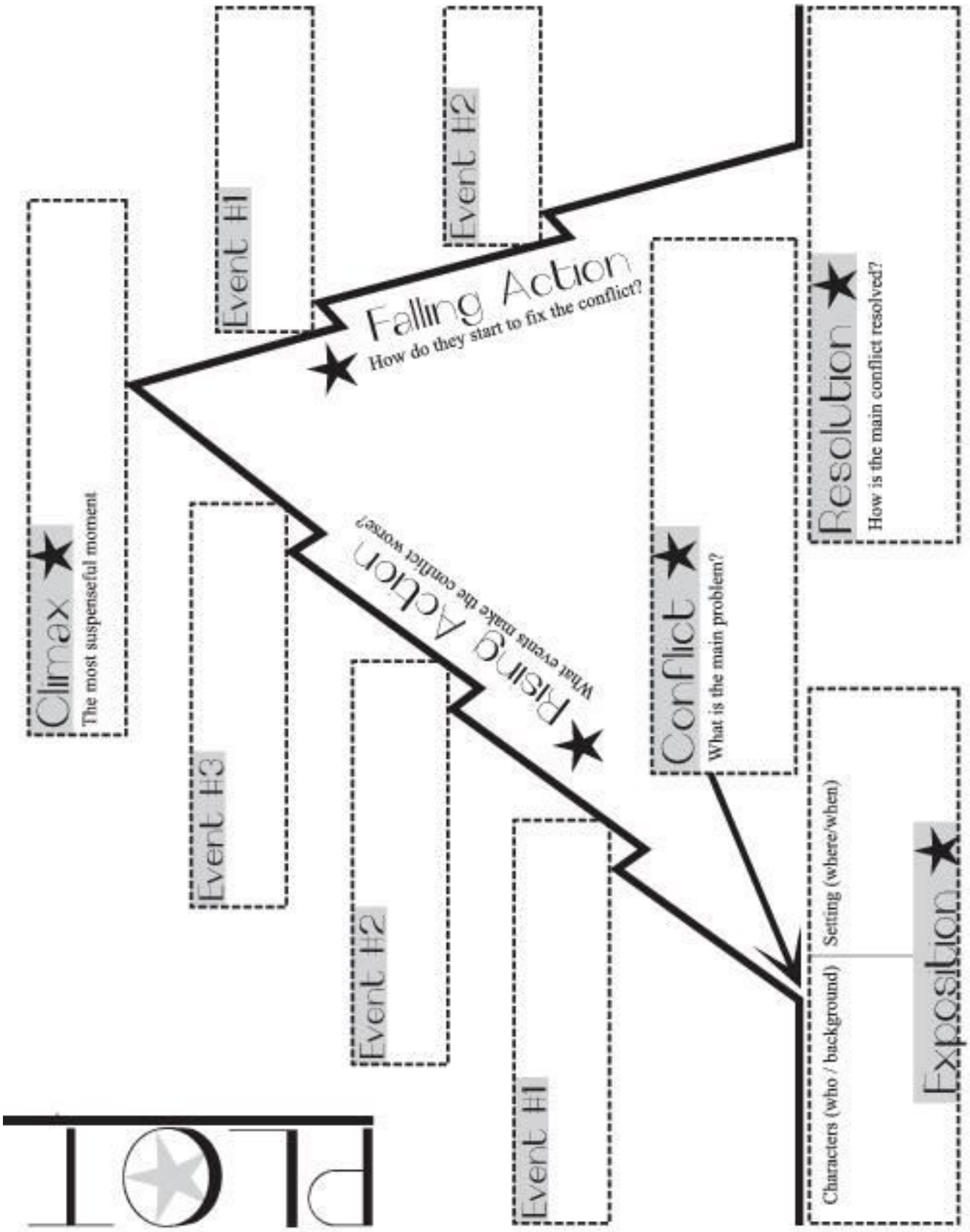
Rising Action: A series of small advances and backwards steps which grow towards the climax. Monsieur Loisel tries to find a solution to his wife's lack of suitable clothes for the party - he offers her four hundred francs which she grudgingly accepts. She then decides not to go after all as the day of the party draws nearer, as she doesn't have any jewellery to wear. Her husband suggests she borrow something from her rich friend, Madame Forestier, which she excitedly agrees to. She goes to see her friend, borrows a beautiful necklace, and has a wonderful time at the party.

Climax: Once they are home, Madame Loisel discovers she is no longer wearing the necklace it has been lost. They search for it to no avail.

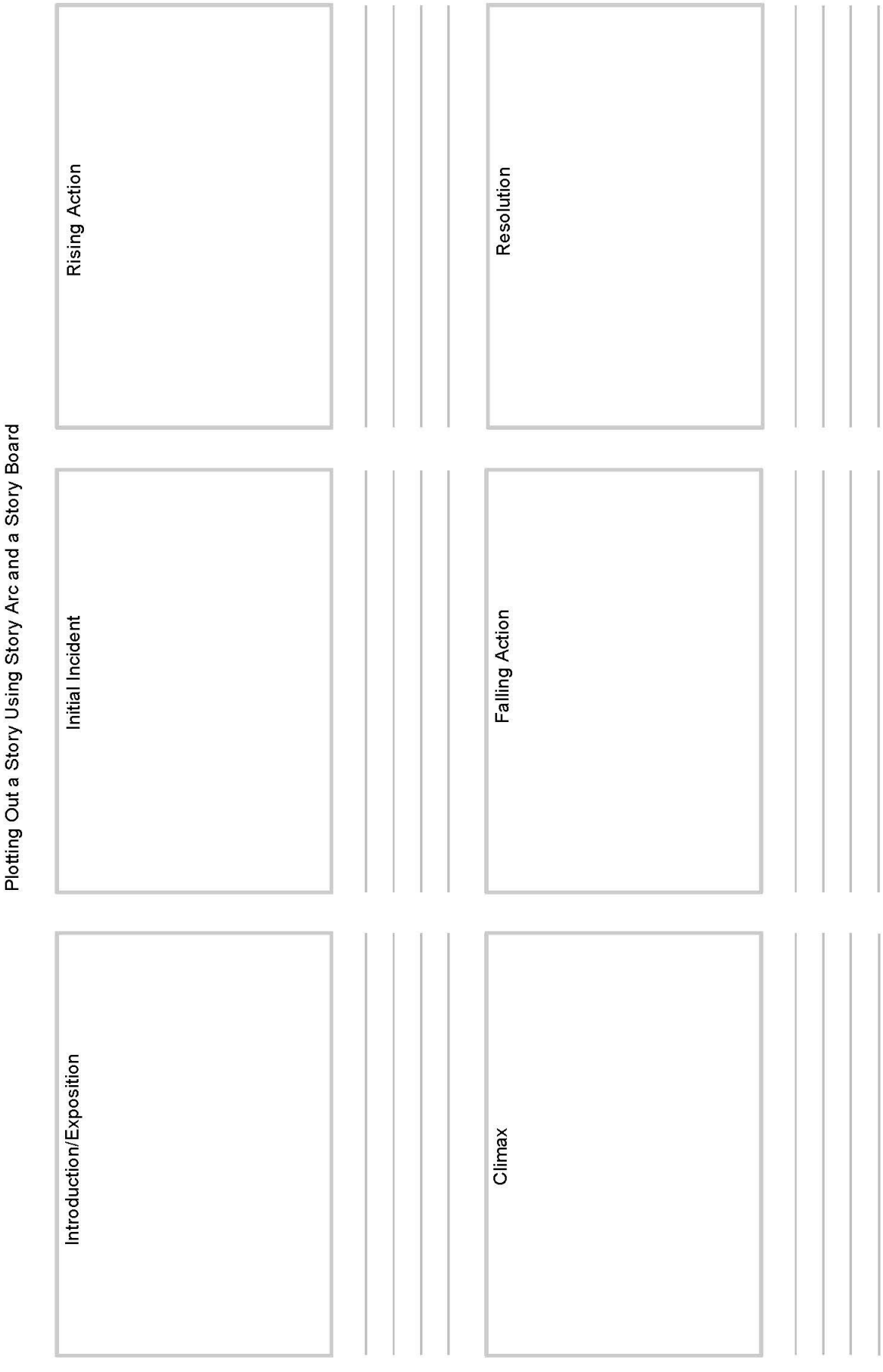
Falling Action: They send a letter to the rich friend with the excuse that they must first fix the necklace's broken clasp before it can be returned. They try to find the original jeweller for a replacement, but end up buying a necklace that looks the same that costs an exorbitant thirty-six thousand francs. The replacement necklace is returned to Madame Forestier, and from then on Madame and Monsieur Loisel live a miserable life of poverty as they try to repay the thirty-six-thousand-franc debt. Madame Loisel loses her good looks over the ten exhausting years it takes to clear the debt. When she meets her old friend in the street one day, Madame Forestier doesn't recognise her due to the toll the physical drudgery has taken on her.

Resolution: The story ends on a shocking note, with Madame Loisel finding out her ten years of misery were unnecessary, as the original necklace was only an imitation, worth only five hundred francs instead of the thirty-six thousand she paid for a replacement. There are morals in this story about vanity, envy, lies, and the value of honesty and telling the truth, which pupils could discuss at this point.

Appendix 7: Detailed Story Arc



Appendix 8: Plotting Out a Story Using Story Arc and a Story Board



Appendix 9: Scenarios for Storytelling

Scenario 1:

Due to your parents' work, you are moving away to another country you've never visited before. You don't speak the language, and everything is very different to what you're used to. What is your new home, school and everyday life like? What's good about it? What's not so good? Is it easy or difficult to make new friends? Do you have any new adventures or do you encounter any difficult situations?

Scenario 2:

You are in school as normal one day, when suddenly there come reports of a world-wide alien invasion. Your class has to escape to safety. Where do you go and what do you do? Does everyone survive? What are the aliens like? Can you find a way to communicate with them, or do you have to fight a war? How are you going to win? Can you negotiate a truce and find a way to share the Earth?

Scenario 3:

Everyone over the age of twelve in the U.K gets the chance to be Prime Minister for the day. The selection is made by a lottery computer. You get selected. What would your day as Prime Minister be like? Where would you go and what would you do? Who would you meet? Would you make any changes to the way the country is run? What would your policies look like?

Scenario 4:

You're on a school camping trip in a forest and you accidentally get left behind when the bus leaves. You have to survive on your own for three days. What is the experience like? What would you do? Is it a beautiful, peaceful forest that has everything you need, or is it a scary place with strange creatures lurking in the trees and rivers? What would you see and hear during the day and night?

Scenario 5:

On the way home from school, you walk past a strange shop you've never noticed be-fore. The windows are dusty and you can't see inside. What do you find inside when you step through the creaking entrance door? Is it something sinister? Ordinary? Magical? Describe the strange shop and the adventure you have in there.

Appendix 10: Detailed Character Descriptions

'Lord Asriel was a tall man with powerful shoulders, a fierce dark face, and eyes that seemed to flash and glitter with savage laughter. It was a face to be dominated by, or to fight: never a face to patronize or pity. All his movements were large and perfectly balanced, like those of a wild animal, and when he appeared in a room like this, he seemed a wild animal held in a cage too small for it.

Philip Pullman, *The Golden Compass*

'A black shadow dropped down into the circle. It was Bagheera the Black Panther, inky black all over, but with the panther markings showing up in certain lights like the pattern of watered silk. Everybody knew Bagheera, and nobody cared to cross his path, for he was as cunning as Tabaqui, as bold as the wild buffalo, and as reckless as the wounded elephant. But he had a voice as soft as wild honey dripping from a tree, and a skin softer than down.'

Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Books*

'He was most fifty, and he looked it. His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines. It was all black, no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl - a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white. As for his clothes - just rags, that was all. He had one ankle resting on t'other knee; the boot on that foot was busted, and two of his toes stuck through, and he worked them now and then. His hat was laying on the floor - an old black slouch with the top caved in, like a lid.'

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

'The face of Elrond was ageless, neither old nor young, though in it was written the memory of many things both glad and sorrowful. His hair was dark as the shadows of twilight, and upon it was set a circlet of silver; his eyes were grey as a clear evening, and in them was a light like the light of the stars.'

J.R.R. Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*

'She has bright, dark eyes and satiny brown skin and stands tilted up on her toes with arms slightly extended to her sides as if ready to take wing at the slightest sound.'

Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*

'A giant of a man was standing in the doorway. His face was almost completely hidden by a long, shaggy mane of hair and a wild, tangled beard, but you could make out his eyes, glinting like black beetles under all the hair.'

J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Appendix 11: Narrative Voice Examples

'I stood in a bare room of dark wood floors and olive-green walls. No furniture. It was daytime. A slender beam of sunlight washed in through a single dust-smeared window. And a boy stood stiffly in front of the window, his face hidden in shadow. I was standing close enough to reach out and touch him. He took a step out of the shadow, and I could see his empty eye sockets. His eyes were missing. Under the deep holes in his face, his mouth twisted in a menacing scowl. I turned away. I couldn't bear to look at him. Wave after wave of panic rolled down my body. I shut my eyes and wished myself out of there. I knew I was dreaming. I struggled to raise myself, to pull myself up from the ugly dream, away from the boy with no eyes. But no. When I turned back, I was still in that narrow room, still standing across from the scowling boy. Trapped in the dream. Unable to escape it. And then the boy stuck his arms straight out, as if reaching for me. He staggered towards me. Closer ... closer...'

R.L. Stine, *The Haunter*

'Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the city of London, even including-which is a bold word-the corporation, aldermen, and livery. Yet it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven-years' dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change - not a knocker, but Marley's face.'

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

"So this is it," said Arthur, "We are going to die."

"Yes," said Ford, "except... no! Wait a minute!" He suddenly lunged across the chamber at something behind Arthur's line of vision. "What's this switch? " he cried.

"What? Where?" cried Arthur, twisting round.

"No, I was only fooling," said Ford, "we are going to die after all."

Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

'Dear Aunt Loretta,

Thank you so much for the awesome pants! How did you know I wanted that for Christmas? I love the way the pants look on my legs!

All my friends will be so jealous that I have my very own pants. Thank you for making this the best Christmas ever!

Sincerely, Greg'

Jeff Kinney, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

Appendix 12: Examples of Showing Versus Telling

Example 1

Telling:

'He was very tall and that made it difficult for him to drive his car.'

Showing:

'His legs were as long as stilts, and he folded himself up like an accordion to squeeze into the driver's seat of his car, trying to find the handbrake in amongst the tangle of his boulder-sized kneecaps and tree-trunk ankles.'

Example 2

Telling:

'When he called her to tell her the news, she was really angry and wouldn't listen.'

Showing:

"WHAT?" She bellowed down the phone, her eyes bulging and her face turning bright red. He started to explain, but she cut him off, throwing the phone against the wall so it shattered in a thousand pieces and storming off down the hall.'

Appendix 13: Atmosphere Examples

'Morning drew on apace. The air became more sharp and piercing, as its first dull hue: the death of night, rather than the birth of day: glimmered faintly in the sky. The objects which had looked dim and terrible in the darkness, grew more and more defined, and gradually resolved into their familiar shapes. The rain came down, thick and fast, and pattered, noisily, among the leafless bushes. But, Oliver felt it not, as it beat against him; for he still lay stretched, helpless and unconscious, on his bed of clay.'

Charles Dickens, *Bentley's Miscellany* (ed. 1838)

'She sat down on one of her grandmother's uncomfortable armchairs, and the cat sprang up into her lap and made itself comfortable. The light that came through the picture window was daylight, real golden late-afternoon daylight, not a white mist light. The sky was a robin's-egg blue, and Coraline could see trees and, beyond the trees, green hills, which faded on the horizon into purples and grays. The sky had never seemed so sky, the world had never seemed so world ... Nothing, she thought, had ever been so interesting.'

Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*

'It was a cold still afternoon with a hard steely sky overhead, when he slipped out of the warm parlour into the open air. The country lay bare and entirely leafless around him, and he thought that he had never seen so far and intimately into the insides of things as on that winter day when Nature was deep in her annual slumber and seemed to have kicked the clothes off. Copses, dells, quarries and all hidden places, which had been mysterious mines for exploration in leafy summer, now exposed themselves and their secrets pathetically, and seemed to ask him to overlook their shabby poverty for a while, til they could riot in rich masquerade as before, and trick and entice him with the old deceptions. It was pitiful in a way, and yet cheering-even exhilarating. He was glad that he liked the country undecorated, hard, and stripped of its finery. He had got down to the bare bones of it, and they were fine and strong and simple. He did not want the warm clover and the play of seeding grasses; the screens of quickset, the billowy drapery of beech and elm seemed best away; and with great cheerfulness of spirit he pushed on towards the Wild Wood, which lay before him low and threatening, like a black reef in some still southern sea.'

Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*

'The television exploded. KABOOM! "WAH!" screamed the girl. "NOW I CAN'T WATCH MY CARTOON" As her parents dashed into the living room, a singed FING plopped out of the television. DUNK! Electricity fizzled all over its fur. "GET THAT FING OUT OF HERE!" ordered Myrtle. To add emphasis to her rage, the girl stamped her feet. With the creature stunned, Mr and Mrs Meek seized their chance. "NOW!" ordered Mother. The pair pounced on it. They rolled FING into the garden. With all their might, they squished it through the shed door, and locked it.'

David Walliams, *Fing*