

# Introduction

*Writing Skills: Fiction* is one of two books designed to help your students write. The nine story outlines in this book give the students a basic organization—a place to start. In each activity the students add their own details, filling in blanks, drawing pictures, and answering questions to create a finished piece that is complete and satisfying. The story outlines motivate intermediate students to fantasize about a variety of situations. Leaving lots of room for individuality and creative thinking, each story outline encourages students to visualize scenes and to write clear descriptions with plenty of specific detail.

## Organization of This Book

The activities are organized into three sections of increasing difficulty. The first section, “Story Structures,” includes two sequences of four pages and one longer sequence of six pages. In these stories, many sentences are started for the students, and there are specific requests for details.

Activities in the second section, “Story Brainstorming,” are more open-ended. Students are required to be more inventive in details and description and are generally required to write more prose.

In the third section, “Story Organizing,” the students are given instructions and guidelines for writing entire paragraphs. The first story outline in this section is sequenced for the students. In the second, paragraphs must be reorganized into a logical order after they are written. The last activity in the book guides the students step by step through writing a story from scratch. This major project requires independent decisions about subject matter, theme, setting, characters, and plot. Here the students create the entire story outline themselves.

## How to Use the Activities

The activities in this book were originally developed for upper primary school students. They can be presented as a four- to six-week unit in story writing, that begins with stories selected from the first two sections and ends with the last exercise, “Starting from Scratch.”

The story outlines can also be presented singly. They are constructive activities that can be used as needed to fill periods of unplanned time. They make good independent seatwork for the gifted or accelerated student.

Although there is no required sequence, the activities are most effective when the students progress through the levels of difficulty by doing at least one activity from each section as preparation for the final assignment, their own story.

## Getting the Students Started

Before beginning the activities, talk about the story outline as a structure that needs detail before it is complete. Like people who have identical human skeletons but look different with details of hair, eyes, muscle, and skin, identical story structures can be written into a variety of tales. What makes the difference is the details. Students must select their details purposefully to set the tone they want in their finished stories.

Each activity is best preceded by a brief discussion of the topic of the story. For example, before presenting “Neat Treat” you might talk about a variety of snack products, discuss the importance of advertising, and ask students to recall jingles, catchy sayings, or packaging gimmicks for products they know.

## **How Much Time to Allow**

Each activity should be considered a three- to five-day assignment. Allow 30 to 45 minutes per work period. As long-term projects, these activities help students learn to budget their time and meet deadlines. You can assist less independent students by setting due dates for short sections within a single activity.

Advise the students that they won't have time to complete any activity in a single work period. They will need time to think as well as to write and review their work. Point out to students the value of rereading their work after a break; at that time they may change any details that no longer seem right before they proceed with the writing.

"Starting from Scratch," the last activity, is a two-week (or more) project. It is important to check each student's planning sheets before the writing finally begins. It can also be helpful to establish a checkpoint after each chapter. Continued feedback helps sustain the momentum. Give the students all the support and encouragement they need to finish this long project.

## **Doing the Activities**

Students should work in pencil, which makes it easier for them to change details as they go along and to correct errors during a later editing stage. Consider pairing students to read and edit each other's work for spelling mistakes and incomplete sentences. Emphasize that a story is not complete until it has been corrected. Your final edit and approval will provide closure.

## **Follow-up Discussion**

Students write better when they know they have an audience. It is important that students be the audience for each other's work. When an activity is completed, gather the students into large or small groups for reading and discussion. One approach is to collect all the stories and read them aloud without identifying the authors. Alternatively, students can volunteer or be chosen to read their own work. With either approach, have students discuss the variation in mood and in effectiveness that results from different choices of detail in the stories read. When the author is known, all feedback should be addressed directly to that student.

There are many benefits to this type of follow-up discussion. Hearing alternative versions of the same story clearly shows students the impact of details in their writing. Also, hearing each other's work acquaints them with other's opinions, gives them confidence in their own ideas, and creates an atmosphere of respect for an author's work. This process helps students learn to give and receive helpful criticism. The entire activity—writing and discussion—demonstrates to students that they can communicate in writing, through stories that others will read and listen to.

Books in this series: **Writing Skills: Fiction**  
**Writing Skills: Nonfiction**

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# SCARY BUSINESS

A story structure in 4 pages

Down the road there is a scary old house that no one has lived in for over a year. You have heard lots of rumors about the things people hear and see in this house. No one knows exactly what is true.

Because you are so brave and fearless, your friends dared you to spend a night in this weird place. Not wanting to be called chicken, you said yes.

Here is the story as you lived it. Begin by setting the scene. Explain how the house looked. Tell how the air smelled. Describe the sounds you heard. Use the most bloodcurdling words you can think of.



\_\_\_\_\_

(story title)

These were the very first things I noticed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

And worst of all, I heard sounds that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This place was weird, but I was determined to face the challenge.

The dare had three requirements:

1. I had to stay alone.
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**SCARY BUSINESS** page 2

I took along some things for protection and to keep me comfortable:

Things for protection

Things for comfort

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

I was really glad I had the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ because three frightening things happened the first hour.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I tried to sleep. Just as I began to doze off, my friends played a trick on me. They

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

But I wasn't fooled. This is what I did:

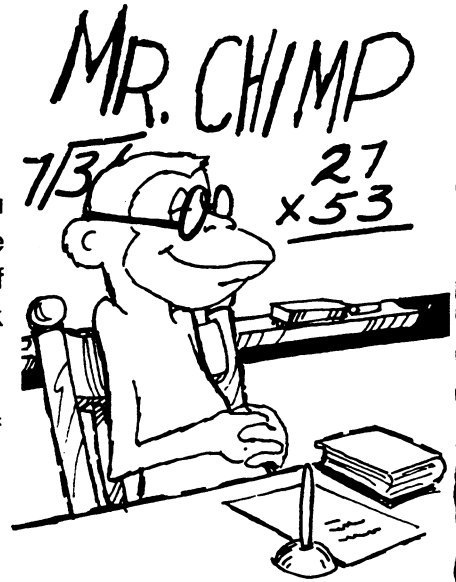
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# TEACHER FOR A DAY

A story structure in 4 pages

What if you could swap places with any teacher you ever had? The teacher would have to be one of the students, and you would be the teacher. Think of the possibilities of all that power! How would it work for you?

Suppose this really happened. Here is the story of your day as THE TEACHER.



\_\_\_\_\_ (story title)

I chose to swap with \_\_\_\_\_ because

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I was very strict about discipline. I made four main rules:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

The punishments for breaking my rules were:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_