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# Introduction

Stories have existed for as long as mankind. They have been passed on for generations and have benefited us all not only as entertainment but as life's lessons as well. Stories contribute to language acquisition, cultural heritage, relationships, and even brain development. Children have a natural affinity for stories. They love to hear them and tell them. If they can also love to write them, they will experience the academic advantages and pleasures of a lifelong association with literature.

This book will introduce your students to the process of writing and enjoying stories. The first few pages contain the basics to assist you with beginning writers. From there, the book progresses into the specifics, beginning with some early story-structure experiences in the section titled 'Story Structure' beginning on page 10.

Next you will find a section titled 'Thinking Creatively' on page 16. You may use this section as an introduction, or you may use it at any time for the creative exercises.

'Plot,' beginning on page 23, is a section that gives students some visual references for creating a plot with a conflict.

The 'Essentials' section, page 28, covers the important elements of characterisation, setting, the senses, and dialogue in stories.

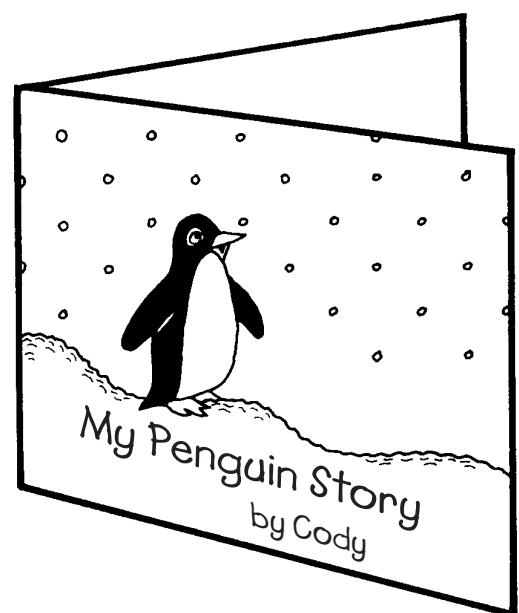
More advanced essentials can be found in the 'Tools' section beginning on page 36. This section discusses showing (as opposed to telling) point of view, metaphors and similes.

In the 'Time to Write' section beginning on page 41, students are guided in the writing process from the first draft to the writer's workshop to revision. There are some story starters to inspire students and information about publishing stories.

An answer key is included on page 48.

Though this book is designed to proceed in the order of the writing process, feel free to draw upon it whenever you wish. The activities are designed to also stand alone. Most of the activities include suggestions for modifying to fit the needs of younger students or to challenge more advanced students. You may wish to use some pages for class discussions by using an overhead or by passing out copies to students who can follow along.

This book is intentionally open-ended to allow you to incorporate the ideas as you see fit to meet particular students' needs. With the ideas in this book and your own ideas, your students will soon be enriched by the experience of writing their own stories, thereby gaining a greater appreciation for all literature.





# What Is a Story?

A **story** is a tale. It can be told or it can be written. A story can be short, or it can be long. A story that is very long is called a novel. A story can be true (nonfiction) or made up (fiction).

**Real or true stories** (nonfiction) can be found in magazines or books, and they can be in the form of biographies (stories about people) or true adventures.

**Realistic stories** (fiction) are stories that tell about someone or something, and they seem real. They can be found in historical and adventure novels.

**Fantasy stories** (fiction) are stories about characters and places that are not like anyone or any place you have ever known. These would include tall tales, fairy tales, science fiction, and, of course, stories about talking animals who do amazing things!

A story is a work of art that has been carefully planned by the author. You know when you read a good story. It makes you think, learn, laugh, cry, feel glad, feel sad, feel afraid, or just feel really good.

You have probably already written and told many stories. A story usually has the following parts:

- a beginning, a middle and an ending
- two or three characters, but sometimes more
- descriptions of the characters and the setting
- use of the five senses
- expressions of feelings
- dialogue
- a problem
- a solution for the problem

Now it's time to think of all the stories you have read and those you have written. On the back of this page, write all the titles you can think of. Include the titles of stories that you or your friends have written. Here are some to get you started: *The Three Little Pigs*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Goodnight Moon* and *Cinderella*. You will probably be surprised at how many you can think of.

**Challenge:** Have students organise the story titles they write into genres such as tall tales, fairy tales, adventures, etc.

**For Younger Students:** Make this a whole class activity and allow students to name the stories they think of as you write the titles on the board. This will also introduce the class to the concept of brainstorming.



# Definitions

Here is a list of words that are used in this book. These are words that authors use in story writing.

**antagonist**—The *antagonist* in a story is the ‘bad guy’ or villain. An antagonist can also be a thing such as bad weather. An antagonist gets in the way of the hero or heroine in a story.

**autobiography**—An *autobiography* is a true story you write about yourself.

**biography**—A *biography* is a true story you write about someone else.

**brainstorming**—When you are *brainstorming*, you list every thought or idea that comes to you about your topic.

**characters**—The *characters* are the people or animals in a story.

**conclusion**—The *conclusion* occurs at the end of the story when the problem is solved and everyone is ready to live happily ever after.

**conflict**—A *conflict* is a problem in the story that needs to be solved.

**description**—Words and sentences that show what characters and settings look like, smell like, taste like, etc. are called *descriptions*.

**dialogue**—*Dialogue* is the words the characters in a story say to each other.

**draft**—A *draft* is a written version of the story. It may be a ‘rough copy’ or the final draft.

**editing**—When *editing*, you carefully read a draft and make changes in words or grammar so that it sounds better.

**fantasy**—A made-up story is a *fantasy*. Fantasies often have strange settings and unusual characters.

**fiction**—*Fiction* is a made-up story, but it could be based on truth.

**metaphor**—A *metaphor* is created when one thing is compared to another, such as, “You’re a grumpy bear today!”

**narration**—A *narration* tells something about a character or something that has happened in the story.

**nonfiction**—Stories and books that are true are *nonfiction*.



# Writing Well

Your most important job as a writer is to write clearly. Your ideas may be creative and wonderful, but they will be lost if your writing is too complicated or too fancy.

Here are some tips:

- **The most important words are nouns and verbs.** Nouns are people, places or things (your friend, the mountain, and the sandwich in your lunch). Verbs are action words (jump, scream, sleep or eat). You need nouns and verbs to write and speak in complete sentences. It's best to use specific nouns and verbs in order to paint a picture or tell a story. Use specific verbs to describe action.

For example, instead of writing,

***She was really afraid.***

write,

***Lindsay's heart was pounding so hard she was sure the stranger would hear it!***

*Lindsay's* and *pounding* indicate a specific person and a specific action.

- **Write every day.** Set a daily goal of 50 or 100 words. Write in a journal, a diary, or wherever you wish, but write daily. Remember, practice makes perfect.
- **Try learning to type.** The word processor can be a writer's best friend.
- **Keep a dictionary nearby and use it.**
- **Rewrite! Rewrite! Rewrite!** Learn to rewrite to find the clearest way to express your ideas and thoughts.
- **Read your writing aloud.** If you read your work aloud to family, friends, pets, or stuffed animals, it will become more clear to you whether or not you are making sense.
- **Read! Read! Read!** Read anything and everything, but especially read the work of good writers. Reading will strengthen your writing muscles!



# The Writing Process

There are many steps that writers take to get from an idea to a story. You will take many steps, too. Sometimes you may repeat a step or even go backwards for a step or two. Here is a list of the kinds of steps you will go through.

## Prewriting

During this step you will think about what you want to write about. To get ideas you can look at pictures, read books, brainstorm (see page 18), make lists, talk to people, sit and think, draw or just look around. You might also want to do some writing during this step to plan an idea, draw a setting, or describe how a character looks.

## Incubation

During this step you will let your ideas rest and grow. You might want to take a break from your story idea and do something else for a while. While you are doing something else, your brain will continue to work on your idea. When you go back to your story, you will have some more ideas about what to write.

## First Draft

Finally, it's time to write your story. Don't try to write a perfect, finished story now. Just be creative and let the story come out. Don't stop to make corrections.

## Editing

Now that you have had time to be a creative writer, it's time to be an editor. When you are editing your work, check it for spelling, punctuation, and the right words. Make sure you are making sense and saying what it is that you want to say.

