

Sevensteps

**New and
improved**

Early Years
Writing Manual

Beginner Writers Manual



Beginner Writers Manual

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Seven Steps to Writing Success

Welcome to the Seven Steps!

Monday morning, your writing class.

Picture the scene: students are working together to generate story ideas. Some students are drawing their ideas, others are sharing them verbally and some are writing them down. It's a hive of activity; students are excited, engaged and on task.

This is what a **Seven Steps** classroom looks like.



What makes the Seven Steps approach so simple?

By breaking writing down into seven key techniques, your students can learn the huge task of creating a story one step at a time.

The chunking concept is modelled on the way we learn new skills in areas such as sport. Take tennis, for instance. First we learn the individual skills – forehand, backhand, serve, volley and smash. Then we put the skills together to play a game.

Yet in schools we often ask students to 'write a story' – in other words, play the whole tennis match. Hence they struggle.

Chunking makes writing easier to teach and much more fun to learn. Best of all, most writing activities can be done in just 15 minutes a day!

Then, once students are ready to write a whole story, the process of 'putting it all together' will be easier and more enjoyable!

Seven Steps to Writing Success

What Are the Seven Steps?

Step 1: Plan for Success

Most stories follow a similar structure – they start with something interesting, slowly build up the tension and then end on a real high point. Brainstorm ideas and then use this simple structure to create a plan before you start writing.

Step 2: Sizzling Starts

Start your story with something interesting: a tomato hurled across the room in a food fight, or the moment you walk onto the stage at the school concert. Don't start at the beginning of the day when nothing is happening – cut straight to the action.

Step 3: Tightening Tension

To build tension, you must make the reader believe the main character is in serious trouble and may fail. Slowly build up problems for your character – throw pebbles at them, then rocks, and finally drop a boulder on their head.

Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue

Dialogue makes scenes dynamic and brings characters to life. Let your characters talk – that's how we get to know them.

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell

If I tell you I am scared of dogs, do you believe me? Maybe not. But if I run yelling and screaming from a dog, now do you believe me? Actions really do speak louder than words.

Step 6: Ban the Boring

Writing is not real life. Books and movies leave out the boring bits and focus on the action. Ever see a superhero go to the bathroom? Ban all the boring things, like mornings (I got up and ...), travel (We got on the bus and ...) and even food (We stopped for lunch and ...).

Step 7: Exciting Endings

A great ending is planned right from the beginning. If you want to write a strong story, make sure you know where you are heading right from the start.

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Seven Steps for Beginner Writers

The Beginner Writers Manual has been designed to help teachers implement the Seven Steps with children aged four to seven. In this manual, we lay the foundations for understanding the Seven Steps concepts with a focus on brainstorming, verbal activities and creativity.

For beginner writers (including EAL/D and LD students), it is best to keep the mechanics of writing and the secretarial skills (forming letters, spelling, etc.) separate from the goal of creating and communicating ideas. The more visual and verbal the activities, the more creative your students can be.

This means that by the time writing is established, students will be ready to put these concepts into practice.

Narrative focus

Research has shown that as humans we are 'hard wired' for story – and for young students, this is the best way to introduce them to the joys of reading and writing. The activities and examples in this manual are therefore predominantly narrative, but many of the activities can be adapted for persuasive and informative writing.



Seven Steps to Writing Success

How It Works

Literacy research suggests that when children are encouraged to share their ideas through drawing, talking, acting and writing, they become more confident and involved writers. Each chapter has been divided into three parts, with different Action Activities to scaffold students through each Step.

These are:

1. What it looks like

This stage is designed to introduce students to the concept of each Step. Here, focus on showing students the techniques in action and get them to identify parts of a text by reading, watching and looking at different types of media. Once they know what it looks like, then they can talk about it!

2. Tell me about it

This stage is all about getting the creative juices flowing by sharing ideas and working collaboratively. Introduce students to brainstorming by encouraging them to work as a class and in groups, to talk, laugh and share ideas. Remember, students need to be able to think creatively before they can write creatively.

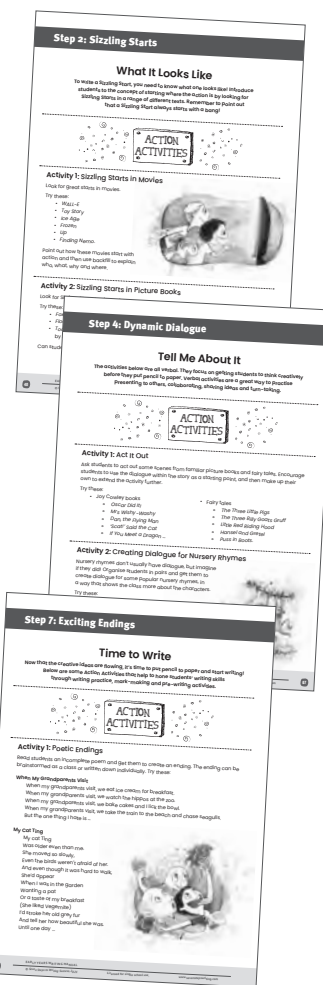
3. Time to write

Now that the ideas are flowing, it's time to start writing them down. For younger students this stage can be challenging, so we have included a range of Action Activities for different ages and writing abilities. Remember to focus on getting their creative ideas down on paper rather than correcting spelling and grammar – this should be a separate lesson.

Putting it all together

Don't rush into writing a whole story. It's best if students don't tackle this large task until they have learnt the core structural Steps (Steps 1, 2, 3 and 7). When students are ready, review the 'Putting It All Together' chapter on pages 111–57. The units of work in this chapter are designed to guide students through the process of writing a complete text.

There is also a marking rubric on pages 154–5 that you can use to assess how students are progressing and to assist with reporting.



Remember, with beginner writers focus on introducing each Step and concept, not necessarily mastering it.

Seven Steps to Writing Success

The Five Secrets

What makes the Seven Steps so successful in classrooms so quickly? The Seven Steps are not just writing techniques. The program is based on best-practice pedagogy supported by years of educational research. We call these principles the Five Secrets.

1. Chunk large tasks

Break down writing into small, manageable parts. The chunking concept is modelled on the way we learn new skills in sport.

2. Repetition builds muscle memory

Repetition is important, especially for beginner writers, to cement concepts.

3. Think first, write second

You need to have an idea before you can write a story.

4. Verbal is vital

Develop confident learners by encouraging students to share and talk about their ideas. Writing doesn't need to be a silent, solo activity!

5. Consistency creates change

Practise every day until students are confident with their skills. Change can't happen in a day, but it can in a term.

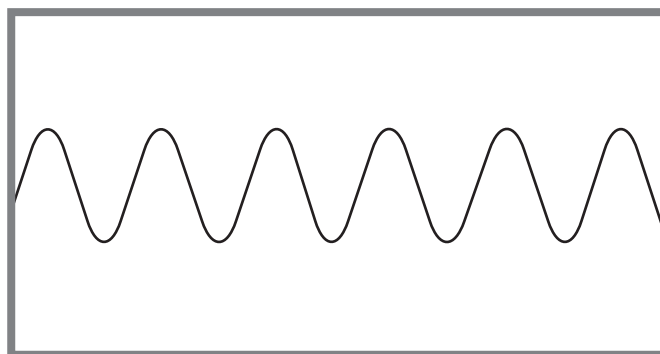


Seven Steps to Writing Success

Alpha and Beta Brain Waves

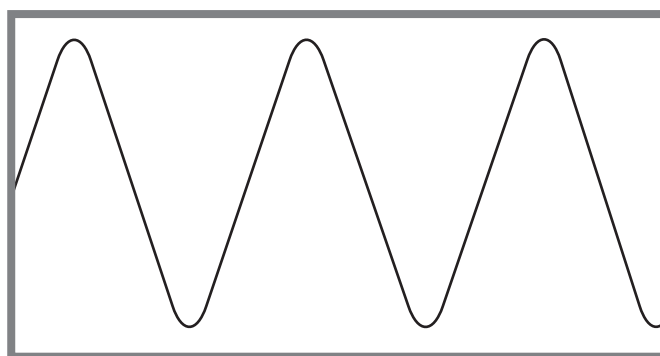
Research shows that 'linear' activities, such as learning how to spell or punctuate, use Beta brain waves generated by the more logical parts of the brain. For example, if you are asked to spell an unfamiliar word, that engages the Beta side of your brain.

Beta brain waves



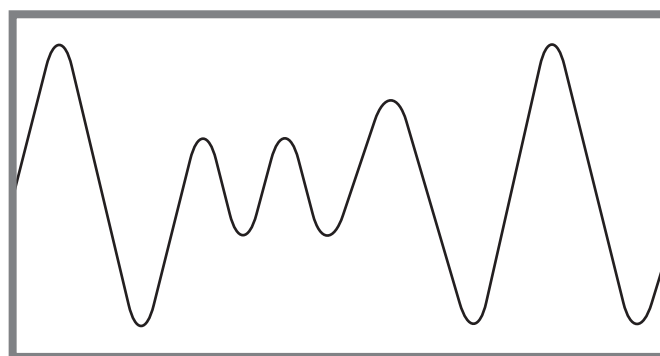
However, when we want students to write creatively, to use original ideas, to plan, persuade or engage an audience, then that requires Alpha brain waves. Alpha brain waves are linked to the creative subconscious. This is often called 'creative flow'.

Alpha brain waves



What happens when we overload students and ask them to write creatively at the same time as thinking about spelling? Creativity becomes blocked. Students get into creative flow but the instant they think about how to spell a word, they are forced back into Beta brain.

Alpha and Beta brain waves



Therefore, it is best to teach the secretarial side of writing (spelling and punctuation) in a separate lesson to the higher level, creative side of writing. It's also important to allow students to write freely first and correct spelling and punctuation afterwards. Make it clear to students that it's okay to make mistakes – this is all part of the creative process.

Seven Steps to Writing Success

ACARA and NAPLAN

In F-2 you are laying the foundations for what's to come; the stronger those foundations are, the better equipped students will be for NAPLAN and the curriculum requirements in later years.

Creativity is key

The Australian Curriculum strongly endorses originality and creativity in writing. One of the main goals is:

“ To ensure that students appreciate, enjoy and use the English language in all its variations and develop a sense of its richness and power to evoke feelings, convey information, form ideas, facilitate interaction with others, entertain, persuade and argue.

(ACARA, 2009 to present)

The NAPLAN writing test values creativity in students' work. Student responses are assessed based on the following criteria:

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Audience | Cohesion |
| Text Structure | Paragraphing |
| Ideas | Sentence Structure |
| Character and Setting | Punctuation |
| Vocabulary | Spelling |

As you can see, for a piece of writing to be effective, it must be more than just spelt and punctuated correctly. NAPLAN markers are also looking for:

- Original ideas
- The ability to engage the audience
- A varied vocabulary – often achieved by brainstorming before writing
- Strong planning (Text Structure, Cohesion, Sentence Structure, Paragraphing).

Verbal Is Vital

A much undervalued finding is the importance of the verbal side of exploring language to empower students to write well. According to the Rose Review:

“ Listening and speaking are the roots of reading and writing ... schools need to do more to boost listening and speaking skills across the curriculum.

(Rose, 2006)

The Seven Steps promotes verbal activities as the starting point for great writing; many of our activities enhance creativity without writing a word. That makes learning to write creatively a lot more accessible for all ability levels, and a lot more fun!

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Curriculum Matrix

The Curriculum Matrix lists the Australian Curriculum content descriptions covered by each Step and directs you to the relevant pages in the manual.

Foundation

| Language | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | PIAT |
|--|----------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|--------------|
| <i>Language for interaction</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Understand that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes and dislikes (ACELA1429) | | | | pp 70–5 | | | | |
| <i>Text structure and organisation</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Understand that texts can take many forms, can be very short (for example an exit sign) or quite long (for example an information book or a film) and that stories and informative texts have different purposes (ACELA1430) | | | | | | pp 94–6 | | |
| Understand concepts about print and screen, including how books, film and simple digital texts work, and know some features of print, for example directionality (ACELA1433) | | | | | | | pp 102–5 | |
| <i>Expressing and developing ideas</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Recognise that texts are made up of words and groups of words that make meaning (ACELA1434) | | | | pp 70–5 | | | | pp pp 114–52 |
| Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts (ACELA1786) | | pp 44–51 | | | pp 80–7 | pp 94–6 | | |
| Understand the use of vocabulary in familiar contexts related to everyday experiences, personal interests and topics taught at school (ACELA1437) | | pp 44–51 | | pp 70–5 | | pp 94–6 | | pp 114–52 |
| Literature | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | PIAT |
| <i>Responding to literature</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Respond to texts, identifying favourite stories, authors and illustrators (ACELT1577) | | pp 41–3 | | | | | pp 106–8 | pp 125–43 |
| Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (ACELT1783) | | | pp 60–3 | pp 70–5 | pp 78–9 | p 90 | | pp 114–52 |
| <i>Examining literature</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text (ACELT1578) | pp 17–37 | | pp 60–3 | | pp 78–9 | | pp 102–5 | pp 125–43 |
| Recognise some different types of literary texts and identify some characteristic features of literary texts, for example beginnings and endings of traditional texts and rhyme in poetry (ACELT1785) | pp 17–28 | p 40 | pp 54–9 | p 66 | pp 78–9 | pp 91–3 | pp 100–8 | pp 125–43 |
| Replicate the rhythms and sound patterns in stories, rhymes, songs and poems from a range of cultures (ACELT1579) | | | pp 60–3 | | | | | |
| <i>Creating literature</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images (ACELT1580) | | | pp 56–9 | pp 67–9 | | | pp 106–8 | pp 125–43 |

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Foundation (cont'd)

| Literacy | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | PIAT |
|---|----------|----------|---------|--------|---------|---------|----------|-----------|
| <i>Interacting with others</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Listen to and respond orally to texts and to the communication of others in informal and structured classroom situations (ACELY1646) | pp 29–37 | | pp 56–9 | | pp 80–7 | pp 91–3 | pp 102–5 | pp 114–52 |
| Use interaction skills including listening while others speak, using appropriate voice levels, articulation and body language, gestures and eye contact (ACELY1784) | pp 29–37 | | pp 56–9 | | pp 80–7 | pp 91–3 | pp 102–5 | pp 114–52 |
| Deliver short oral presentations to peers (ACELY1647) | pp 29–37 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Interpreting, analysing, evaluating</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Use comprehension strategies to understand and discuss texts listened to, viewed or read independently (ACELY1650) | | | | | | pp 91–3 | | |
| <i>Creating texts</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Create short texts to explore, record and report ideas and events using familiar words and beginning writing knowledge (ACELY1651) | | pp 44–51 | pp 60–3 | | | pp 94–6 | pp 106–8 | pp 114–52 |
| Participate in shared editing of students' own texts for meaning, spelling, capital letters and full stops (ACELY1652) | | | | | | pp 91–3 | | pp 114–52 |

Year 1

| Language | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | PIAT |
|---|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|-----------|
| <i>Language for interaction</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Understand that language is used in combination with other means of communication, for example facial expressions and gestures to interact with others (ACELA1444) | | | | | pp 80–5 | | | |
| Explore different ways of expressing emotions, including verbal, visual, body language and facial expressions (ACELA1787) | | | | | pp 80–5 | | | |
| <i>Expressing and developing ideas</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Compare different kinds of images in narrative and informative texts and discuss how they contribute to meaning (ACELA1453) | | | pp 56–9 | | | | | |
| Literature | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Literature and context</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Discuss how authors create characters using language and images (ACELT1581) | | | pp 60–3 | pp 70–5 | pp 86–7 | | | |
| <i>Responding to literature</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences (ACELT1582) | | | pp 56–9 | | pp 78–9 | pp 90–3 | | pp 125–43 |
| Express preferences for specific texts and authors and listen to the opinions of others (ACELT1583) | | pp 41–3 | | | | pp 91–3 | pp 106–8 | |

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Year 1 (cont'd)

| Literature (cont'd) | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | PIAT |
|---|----------|----------|----------|-------------|---------|---------|----------|-----------|
| <i>Examining literature</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts (ACELT1584) | pp 17–28 | p 40 | pp 54–63 | pp 66, 70–5 | pp 86–7 | | pp 100–8 | pp 125–52 |
| Listen to, recite and perform poems, chants, rhymes and songs, imitating and inventing sound patterns including alliteration and rhyme (ACELT1585) | | | pp 60–3 | | | | | |
| <i>Creating literature</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication (ACELT1586) | | | pp 60–3 | pp 67–9 | | pp 94–6 | | pp 125–43 |
| Literacy | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | PIAT |
| <i>Interacting with others</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours, showing interest, and contributing ideas, information and questions (ACELY1656) | pp 29–37 | pp 44–51 | pp 60–3 | pp 70–5 | pp 80–7 | pp 91–3 | pp 102–5 | pp 114–52 |
| Use interaction skills including turn-taking, recognising the contributions of others, speaking clearly and using appropriate volume and pace (ACELY1788) | pp 29–37 | pp 44–51 | pp 56–9 | | pp 86–7 | pp 91–3 | pp 102–5 | pp 114–52 |
| Make short presentations using some introduced text structures and language, for example opening statements (ACELY1657) | pp 29–37 | | | | pp 80–5 | | | |
| <i>Creating texts</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Create short imaginative and informative texts that show emerging use of appropriate text structure, sentence-level grammar, word choice, spelling, punctuation and appropriate multimodal elements, for example illustrations and diagrams (ACELY1661) | | pp 44–51 | | | | pp 94–6 | pp 106–8 | pp 114–52 |
| Re-read students' own texts and discuss possible changes to improve meaning, spelling and punctuation (ACELY1662) | | | | pp 70–5 | | pp 91–3 | | pp 114–52 |

Year 2

| Language | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | PIAT |
|---|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-----------|
| <i>Language for interaction</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Identify language that can be used for appreciating texts and the qualities of people and things (ACELA1462) | | pp 41–3 | pp 56–9 | | | | | |
| <i>Text structure and organisation</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Understand that different types of texts have identifiable text structures and language features that help the text serve its purpose (ACELA1463) | pp 17–28 | | | pp 67–9 | pp 80–7 | | | |
| <i>Expressing and developing ideas</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Understand the use of vocabulary about familiar and new topics and experiment with and begin to make conscious choices of vocabulary to suit audience and purpose (ACELA1470) | | | pp 56–9 | | pp 80–7 | | | pp 114–52 |

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Year 2 (cont'd)

| Literature | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | PIAT |
|--|----------|----------|---------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|-----------|
| <i>Responding to literature</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts (ACELT1589) | | pp 41–3 | | | | p 90 | | pp 125–52 |
| Identify aspects of different types of literary texts that entertain, and give reasons for personal preferences (ACELT1590) | pp 17–28 | pp 40–3 | pp 54–5 | p 66 | pp 78–9 | | pp 100–5 | |
| <i>Examining literature</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways (ACELT1591) | | | pp 56–9 | pp 66, 70–5 | pp 78–87 | pp 90, 94–6 | | |
| Identify, reproduce and experiment with rhythmic, sound and word patterns in poems, chants, rhymes and songs (ACELT1592) | | | pp 60–3 | | | | pp 106–8 | |
| <i>Creating literature</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Create events and characters using different media that develop key events and characters from literary texts (ACELT1593) | pp 29–37 | | pp 60–3 | pp 67–9 | | | | pp 114–52 |
| Innovate on familiar texts by experimenting with character, setting or plot (ACELT1833) | | | pp 60–3 | | | | pp 102–8 | pp 125–43 |
| Literacy | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | PIAT |
| <i>Interacting with others</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Listen for specific purposes and information, including instructions, and extend students' own and others' ideas in discussions (ACELY1666) | pp 29–37 | pp 41–3 | | | | | | pp 114–52 |
| Use interaction skills including initiating topics, making positive statements and voicing disagreement in an appropriate manner, speaking clearly and varying tone, volume and pace appropriately (ACELY1789) | pp 29–37 | pp 41–3 | | | | | | pp 114–52 |
| Rehearse and deliver short presentations on familiar and new topics (ACELY1667) | pp 29–37 | | | pp 67–9 | | | | |
| <i>Creating texts</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Create short imaginative, informative and persuasive texts using growing knowledge of text structures and language features for familiar and some less familiar audiences, selecting print and multimodal elements appropriate to the audience and purpose (ACELY1671) | | pp 44–51 | | | | pp 94–6 | pp 106–8 | pp 114–52 |
| Re-read and edit text for spelling, sentence-boundary punctuation and text structure (ACELY1672) | | | | pp 70–5 | | pp 91–3 | | pp 114–52 |

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Implementation Q&As

Teachers usually have questions about how best to implement the Seven Steps in their classrooms. Here are the answers to some frequently asked questions.

Is Seven Steps compatible with other writing programs?

Absolutely. We focus on the creative, authorial side of writing. Many other writing programs focus on the secretarial aspects of writing, such as spelling, phonetics and punctuation, which all complement the Seven Steps program.

How often should we do the Seven Steps?

Start by introducing short, sharp, fun writing sessions focusing on one Step at a time.

Depending on the level you are teaching and the ability of your students, we recommend:

- 20–40 minutes per day
- 4–5 days a week
- 2–10 weeks per Step.

Repetition builds muscle memory, which makes writing achievable and enjoyable for students. Revisit and revise each Step throughout the year to consolidate and extend students' knowledge of the techniques.



Do I have to teach the Steps in order?

No, you don't have to do the Seven Steps in order from 1 to 7. The key techniques of writing are separated into discrete Steps, and therefore each Step works in isolation. We recommend teaching the Steps in the following order:

- The structural Steps – Step 2: Sizzling Starts, Step 3: Tightening Tension, Step 7: Exciting Endings and Step 1: Plan for Success (see the 'Beginner Writers Starter Plan' on page 14).
- The expression Steps – Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue and Step 5: Show, Don't Tell. These can be covered at any time as the need arises.
- Step 6: Ban the Boring is best saved until last, because in this Step students will use all of the Seven Steps techniques to edit and improve their writing.

Seven Steps to Writing Success

How do I introduce these concepts to beginner writers?

Although students will be learning to write from their first day of school, writing creatively takes time. Younger students are great storytellers, but they may lack the skills to get their ideas down on paper. Focus on modelling what each Step looks like by using the Seven Steps terminology when reading, watching, telling and scribing stories. Then get students to verbalise, draw and act out their ideas. Once students understand the concepts, it's a natural transition to use the techniques when writing is established.

Can the concepts be applied to all text types?

Absolutely. The activities and examples in this manual are predominantly narrative-based, but they can be easily adapted for persuasive and informative writing. Narrative, persuasive and informative writing activities for beginner writers are also available on *Teacher Hub*, the members section of our website.

When should students be able to create a whole text?

Asking students to come up with an entire story is like asking a new tennis player to play the whole match up-front – it's setting them up to fail! Don't ask your students to create a whole text until they have practised the component skills (or at least the structural Steps: 1, 2, 3 and 7) and built up their confidence. You can still help them to edit and publish their work, but do this on a sentence or paragraph level instead.

When students are comfortable with the techniques, use the units of work in the 'Putting It All Together' chapter (pages 111–57) to guide them through the process of writing a full text.



Seven Steps to Writing Success

Beginner Writers Starter Plan

How do you start applying the Seven Steps techniques with beginner writers? Here is a sample plan to help you implement the core structural Steps (Steps 1, 2, 3 and 7).

Please note, this is only an example; you can change it as you see fit to suit the needs of your students.

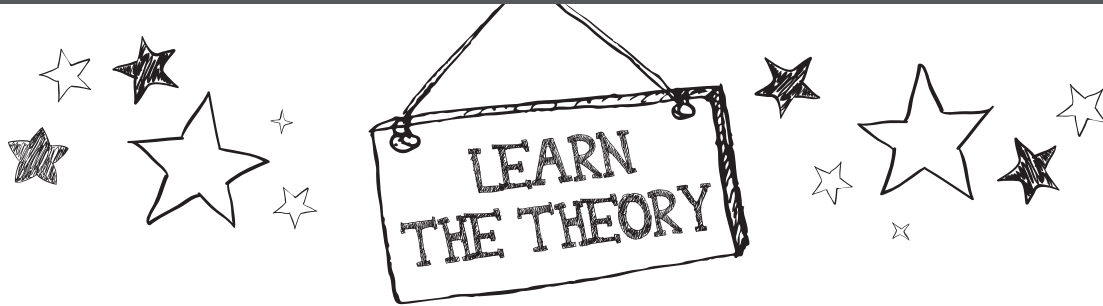
| Topic | Key point | What to review | Activities |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Introduction | Chunk large tasks – the tennis analogy | Review the Introduction and 'The Five Secrets' with teachers | |
| Step 2: Sizzling Starts | Sizzling Starts grab the reader's attention | Learn the Theory, p 39 | What It Looks Like, p 40 Tell Me About It, pp 41–3 |
| | Start with action then add backfill | Top Techniques, p 39 Example, p 39 | Time to Write, pp 44–51 Student Checklist, p 52 |
| Step 3: Tightening Tension | Build tension gradually using the 'Pebble, Rock, Boulder' technique | Learn the Theory, p 53 Top Technique 1, p 53 | What It Looks Like, pp 54–5 |
| | Use the Five + 1 Senses to add lots of detail | Top Technique 2, p 53 Example, p 53 | Tell Me About It, pp 56–9 |
| | Make the reader believe the hero will fail | Top Technique 3, p 53 Example, p 53 | Time to Write, pp 60–3 Student Checklist, p 64 |
| Step 7: Exciting Endings | Plan your ending before you start writing to avoid the 'quick fix' endings | Learn the Theory, p 99 Top Techniques 1 and 2, p 99 Example, p 99 | What It Looks Like, pp 100–1 |
| | Great narrative endings have an action climax and an emotional resolution | Top Technique 3, p 99 Example, p 99 | Tell Me About It, pp 102–5 Time to Write, pp 106–8 Student Checklist, p 109 |
| Step 1: Plan for Success | Identify parts of a narrative | Learn the Theory, p 15 Top Technique 1, p 15 | What It Looks Like, pp 17–28 |
| | Brainstorm lots of ideas to get one great idea | Top Technique 2, p 15 Example, pp 15–16 | Tell Me About It, pp 29–37 |
| | Use the Story Graph as a planning tool | Top Technique 3, p 15 Example, pp 15–16 | Tell Me About It, pp 29–37 Student Checklist, p 38 |

For more resources for beginner writers to supplement the material in this manual, go to *Teacher Hub* on the Seven Steps website.

Step 1: Plan for Success



Step 1: Plan for Success



Planning is the most important part of writing – and the most ignored.

Teaching students to think first, write second will improve the structure and quality of their writing. For beginner writers, separating idea generation and planning from the writing itself will also reduce any confusion between these competing requirements.

For Step 1, the focus for beginner writers is to be able brainstorm ideas and plan their own stories. Here's how ...

Top Techniques

1. **Brainstorm lots of ideas** – The first idea we think of is rarely our best one, so teach students to brainstorm lots of ideas to get one great idea.
2. **Introduce the story graph** – Use the Story Graph to demonstrate that most narratives follow a similar structure: they open with a Sizzling Start, build up the tension and end with an action climax followed by a quieter emotional resolution.
3. **Use the Story Graph** – Practise using the Story Graph as a planning tool to break down story ideas into small, achievable parts.

Example

Brainstorm 10 ideas and then pick the best one.

Topic: Night noises

1. *People snoring*
2. *The sound of the TV in another room*
3. *Footsteps coming up the stairs*
4. *An owl hooting*
5. *Dogs barking*
6. *A bump on the roof*
7. *The rain on the roof*
8. *A branch scratching the window*
9. *A possum hissing*
10. *The house creaking.*

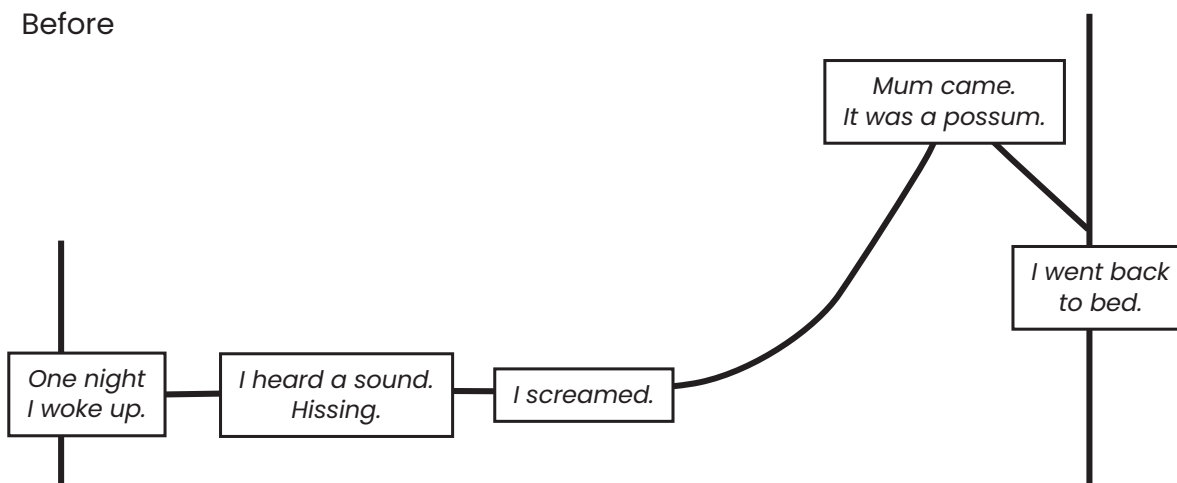


Step 1: Plan for Success

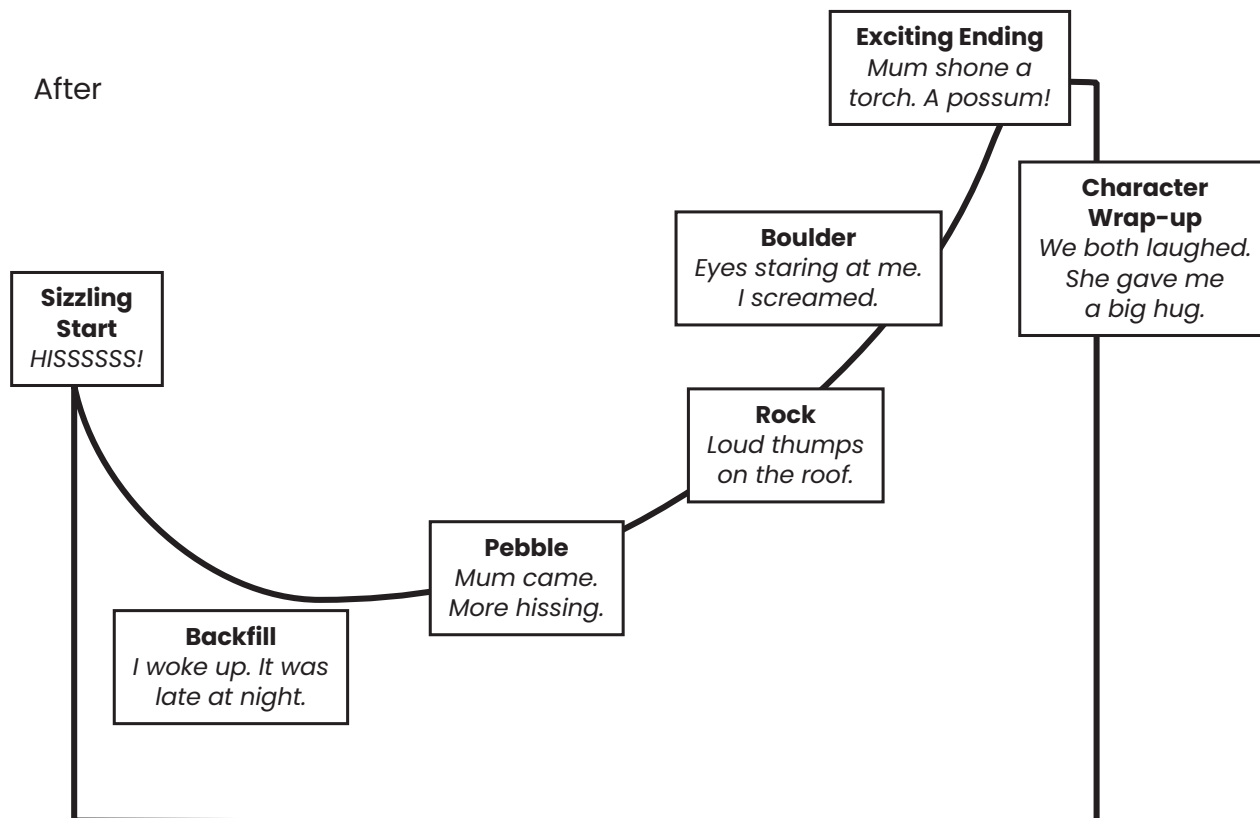
Example (cont'd)

Plotting the outline of the text on the Story Graph helps students to visualise how the whole text will be structured and identify any missing bits.

Before



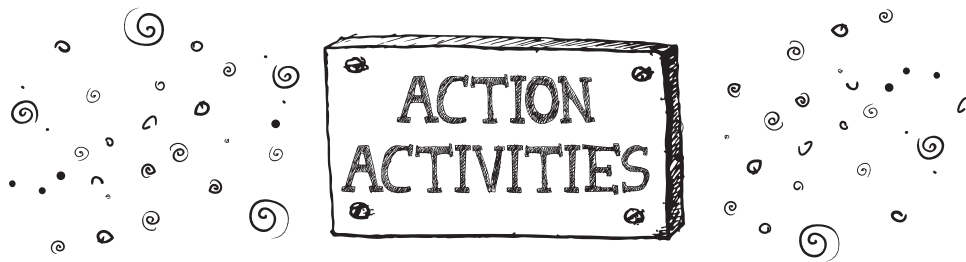
After



Step 1: Plan for Success

What It Looks Like

Any successful writing needs planning! First the focus is for students to be able to identify different parts of a narrative. The writing part comes later.

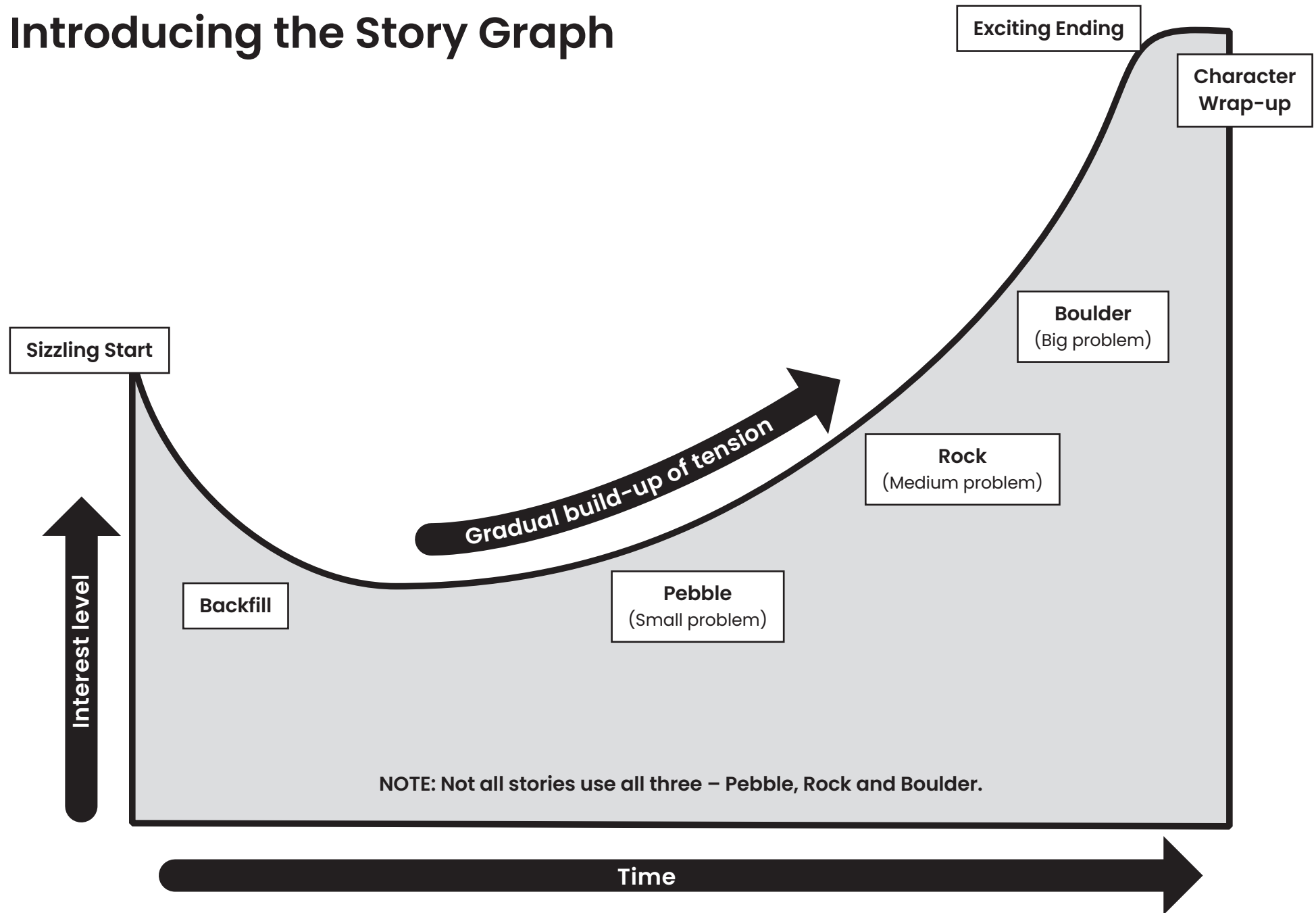


Activity 1: Introducing the Story Graph

Introduce students to the Story Graph as a way of understanding and planning for a narrative. Use the Story Graph on the next page to demonstrate that a narrative can be broken down into small, manageable steps.



Introducing the Story Graph



Step 1: Plan for Success



Activity 2: Identifying Parts of a Narrative

Introduce students to a range of stories in different mediums so they can learn to recognise a narrative. Use the example Story Graphs on pages 23–8 to demonstrate that each narrative follows a similar structure. Ask students to identify different parts of the narrative and track them on the Story Graph as they listen to different stories.

Try these:

- Picture books
- Fairy tales
- Short films
- Advertisements
- Movies
- Poetry.

Activity 3: Plotting Picture Books on the Story Graph

Ask students to plot picture books on the Story Graph.

Try these, or other examples from pages 21–2:

- *Diary of a Wombat* by Jackie French and illustrated by Bruce Whatley
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak
- *The Great Bear* by Libby Gleeson and illustrated by Armin Greder.

Activity 4: Plotting Fairy Tales on the Story Graph

Ask students to plot fairy tales on the Story Graph.

Try these:

- *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*
- *Jack and the Beanstalk*
- *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
- *Little Red Riding Hood*.



Step 1: Plan for Success



Activity 5: Plotting Short Films on the Story Graph

Ask students to plot short films on the Story Graph.

Try these:

- *Partly Cloudy*
- *La Luna*
- *Snack Attack*
- *Hair Love*.

Activity 6: Plotting Advertisements on the Story Graph

Ask students to plot advertisements that tell a story on the Story Graph.

Try these:

- RSPCA
- AAMI
- Allianz
- WorkSafe.

Activity 7: Plotting Movies on the Story Graph

Ask students to plot movies on the Story Graph.

Try these:

- *Despicable Me*
- *Toy Story*
- *Finding Nemo*
- *Shaun the Sheep*.

Activity 8: Plotting Poetry on the Story Graph

Ask students to plot poems or rhymes on the Story Graph.

Try these:

- *Hickory Dickory Dock*
- *Growing Up* by CJ Dennis
- *There Was an Old Man with a Beard* by Edward Lear
- Roald Dahl poems.

For more examples of narrative texts and videos on the Story Graph, go to *Teacher Hub*.

Picture Books That Follow the Story Graph

Focus on these parts of a narrative first, then introduce students to backfill and character wrap-up once they have mastered the concepts.

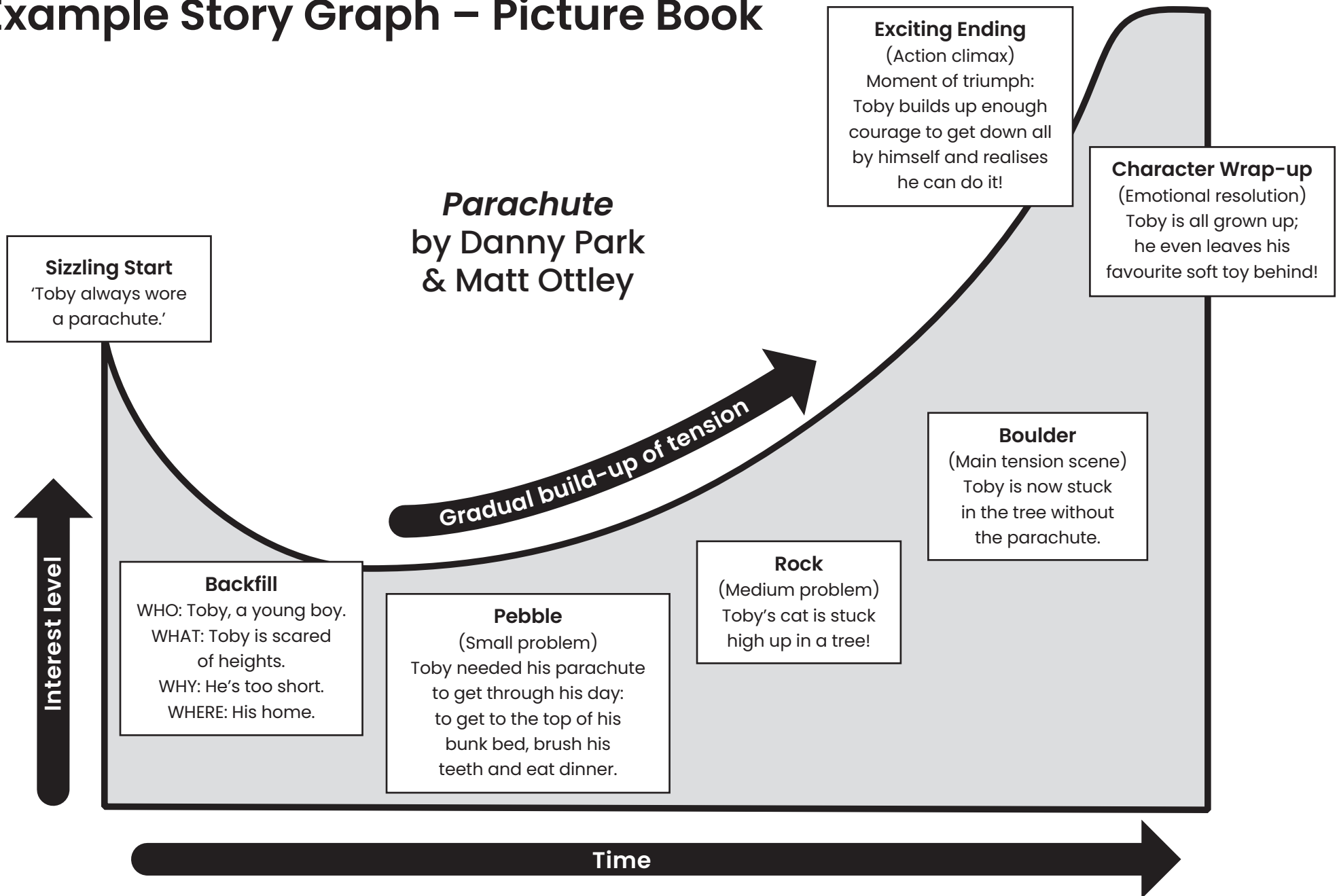
| | Sizzling Start | Pebble | Rock | Boulder | Exciting Ending |
|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| <i>Flood</i> by Jackie French & Bruce Whatley | The rain starts to fall. | It rains and rains and rains. The rain turns savage and floods the land. | The river breaks its banks and wreaks havoc. | A little tugboat pushes the wreckage out to sea. | Friends and strangers band together to help people clean up their homes. |
| <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i> by Eric Carle | A little egg lies on a leaf in the moonlight. The egg turns into a caterpillar. | The caterpillar eats and eats and eats. | The caterpillar eats so much that he grows very fat. | The caterpillar builds a cocoon and stays inside for two weeks. | After two weeks the caterpillar nibbles its way out of the cocoon and emerges as a beautiful butterfly. |
| <i>Shoes from Grandpa</i> by Mem Fox & Patricia Mullins | Jessie's father invites all the family over for a big summer barbeque. Jessie's grandfather says he'll buy her some new shoes. | Jessie's family members all buy her some clothes to go with the shoes that Grandpa buys her. | Jessie's family buys her more clothes but Jessie doesn't seem very happy. | All Jessie wants is a pair of jeans! | Jessie puts on her new jeans and hops on her skateboard. |
| <i>Amy & Louis</i> by Libby Gleeson & Freya Blackwood | Amy and Louis build towers and dig holes. They imagine they see magical creatures in the clouds. They say 'Coo-ee Lou-ee' and 'Coo-ee Am-ee' when they want to play. | One day Amy and her family move far away, to the other side of the world. Amy and Louis are both very sad. | Louis tries to 'Coo-ee Am-ee' by shouting very loudly. | Louis' 'Coo-ee' travels across the yard, across the street, past the edge of the town and over the sea. | Across the sea, Amy wakes up from a dream of Louis calling her. |

Picture Books That Follow the Story Graph

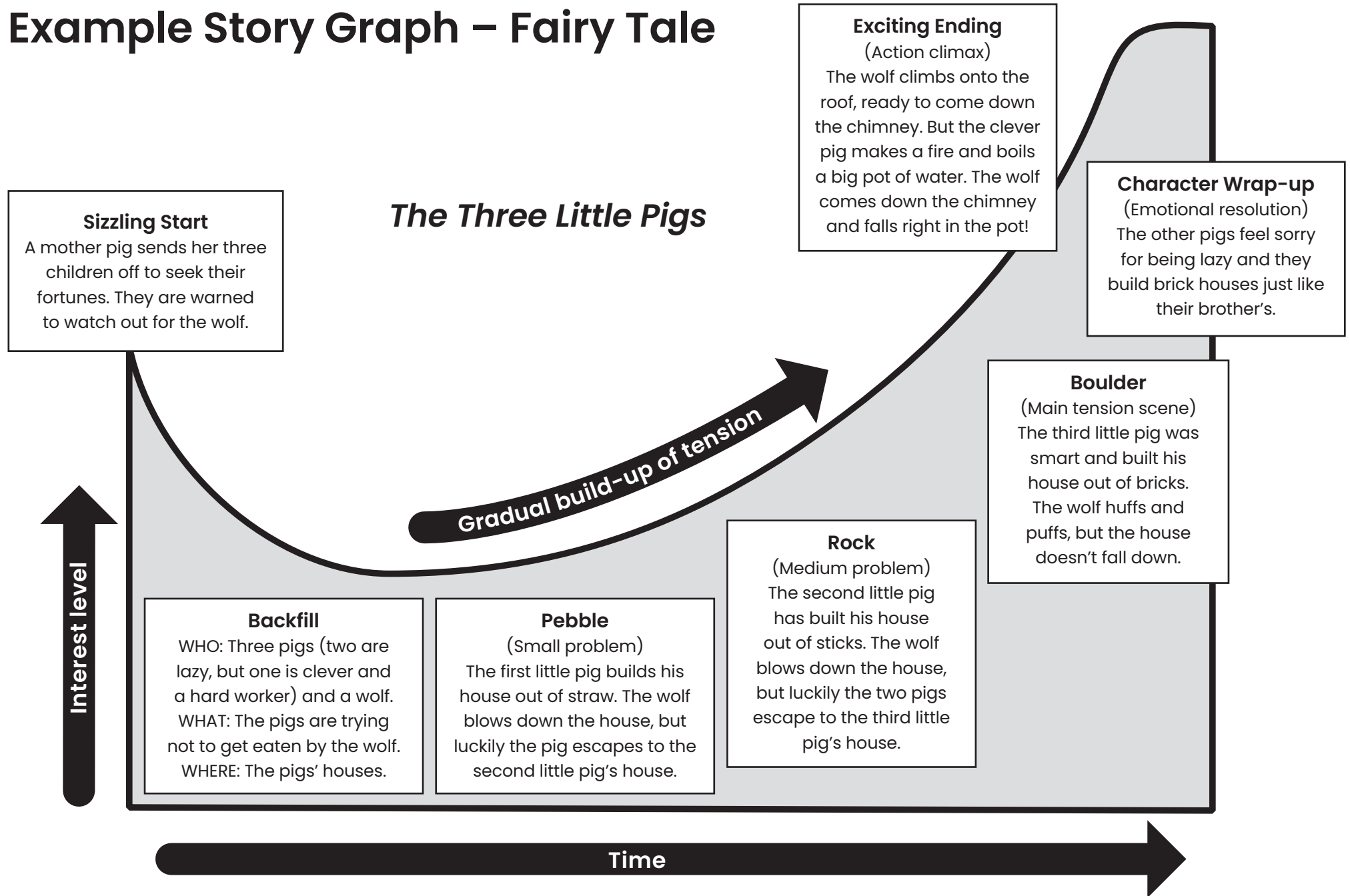
| | Sizzling Start | Pebble | Rock | Boulder | Exciting Ending |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| <i>A Little Princess Story – I Want to Win</i> by Tony Ross | The little princess likes to win. | The little princess loves winning. She tries and tries to win but someone else always wins the trophy. | All the big trophies have been won. | But ... there is one little trophy left. | The little princess wins the trophy for trying the hardest! |
| <i>Too Many Elephants in This House</i> by Ursula Dubosarsky & Andrew Joyner | There are too many elephants in Eric's house. | Eric's mum says the elephants need to go! | Eric doesn't know where to take the elephants. There are so many places elephants can't go! | Eric decides to build the elephants their own house. | Now Eric can visit and play with the elephants whenever he wants. |
| <i>Art & Max</i> by David Wiesner | A lizard is painting a frog. Max wants to paint as well. | Max decides to paint Arthur. He puts paint all over him! | Arthur feels sick from being covered in paint. He turns invisible! | Max draws Arthur so he is visible again! He makes him speckled and colourful! | Max and Arthur paint beautiful, bright paintings together. The frog gets covered in paint ... |
| <i>Diary of a Wombat</i> by Jackie French | Mothball the wombat sleeps, eats grass and scratches. All day, every day. | Mothball grows bored with her routine and sets out in search of more exciting things to eat and better things to scratch herself with. | Mothball demands carrots. She finds a new place to sleep, a hole that she digs in the garden bed. | Mothball demands more carrots and oats. She digs another hole in the garden bed. | Mothball decides the humans are good pets. She digs a hole under their house to be closer to them. |

Tip: Illustrations can also be used to track the picture books on the Story Graph.

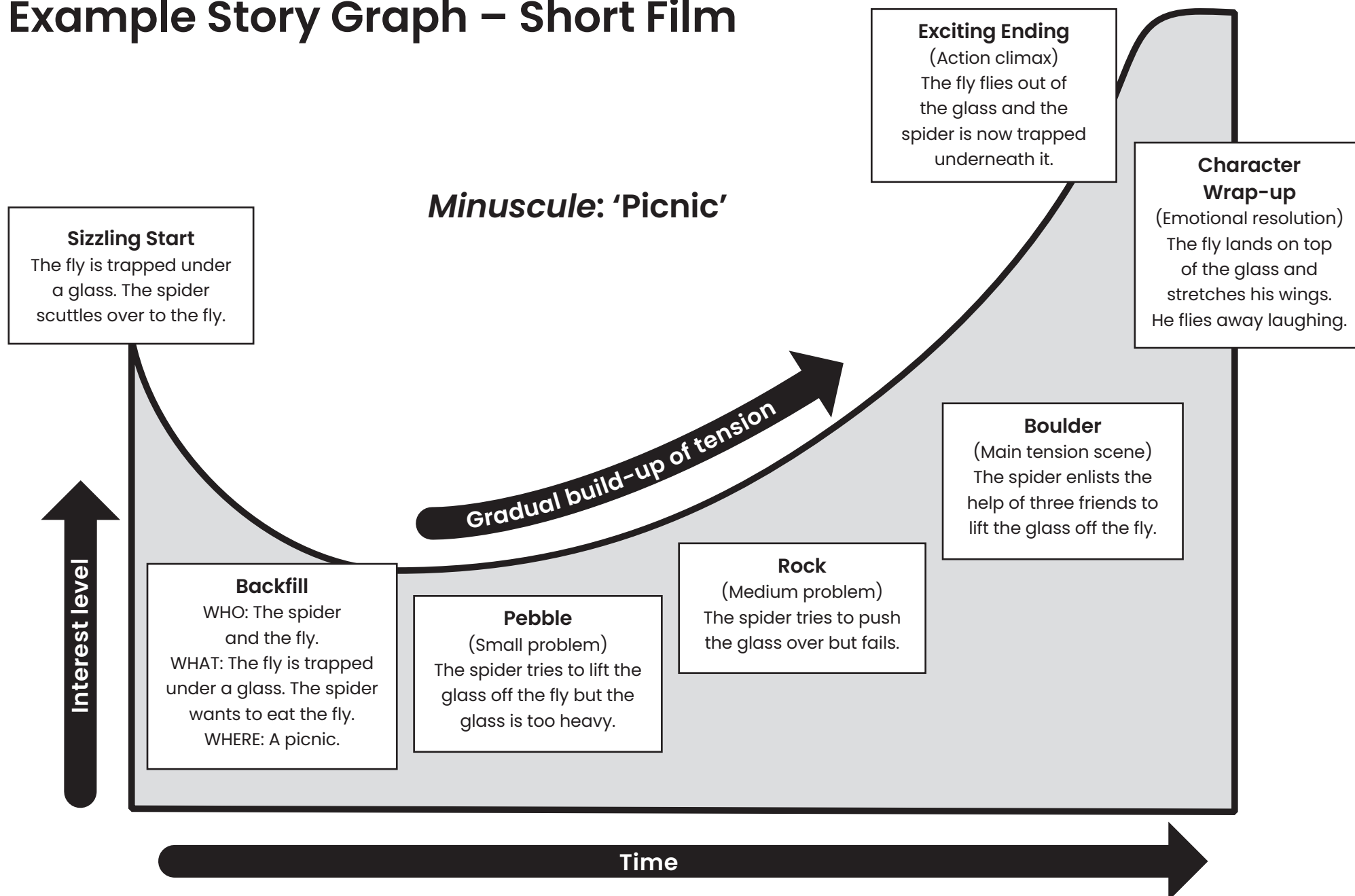
Example Story Graph – Picture Book



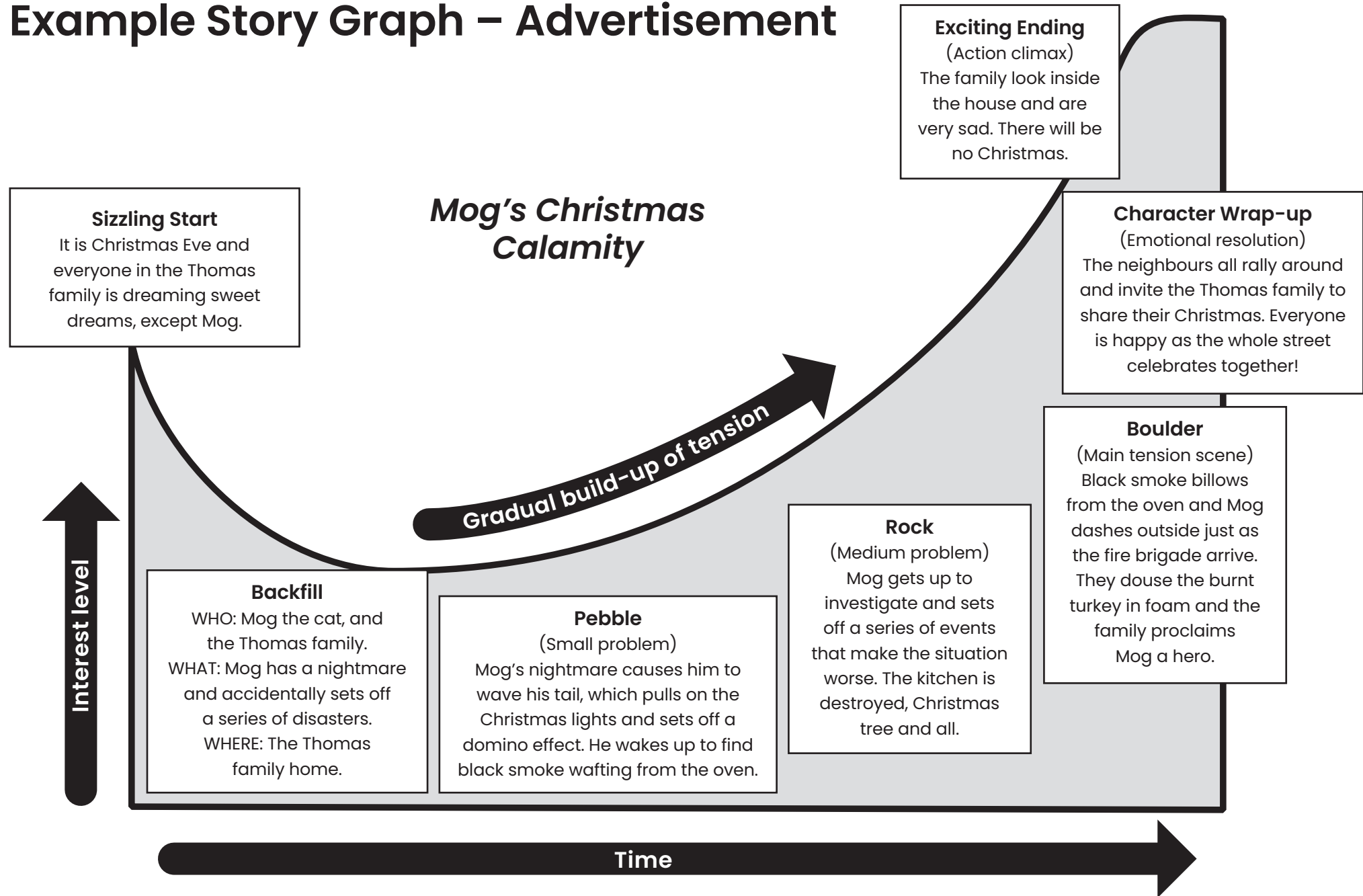
Example Story Graph – Fairy Tale



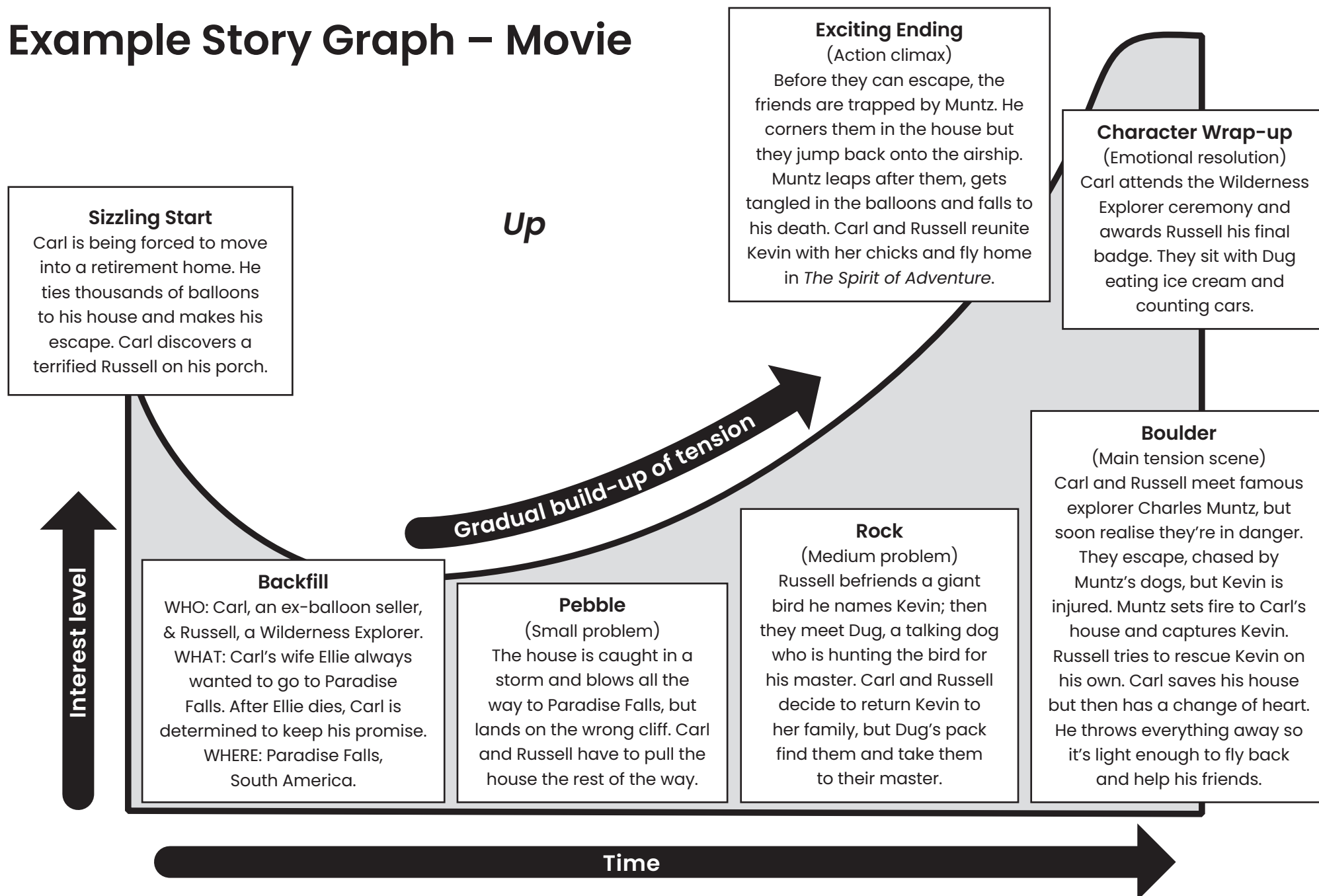
Example Story Graph – Short Film



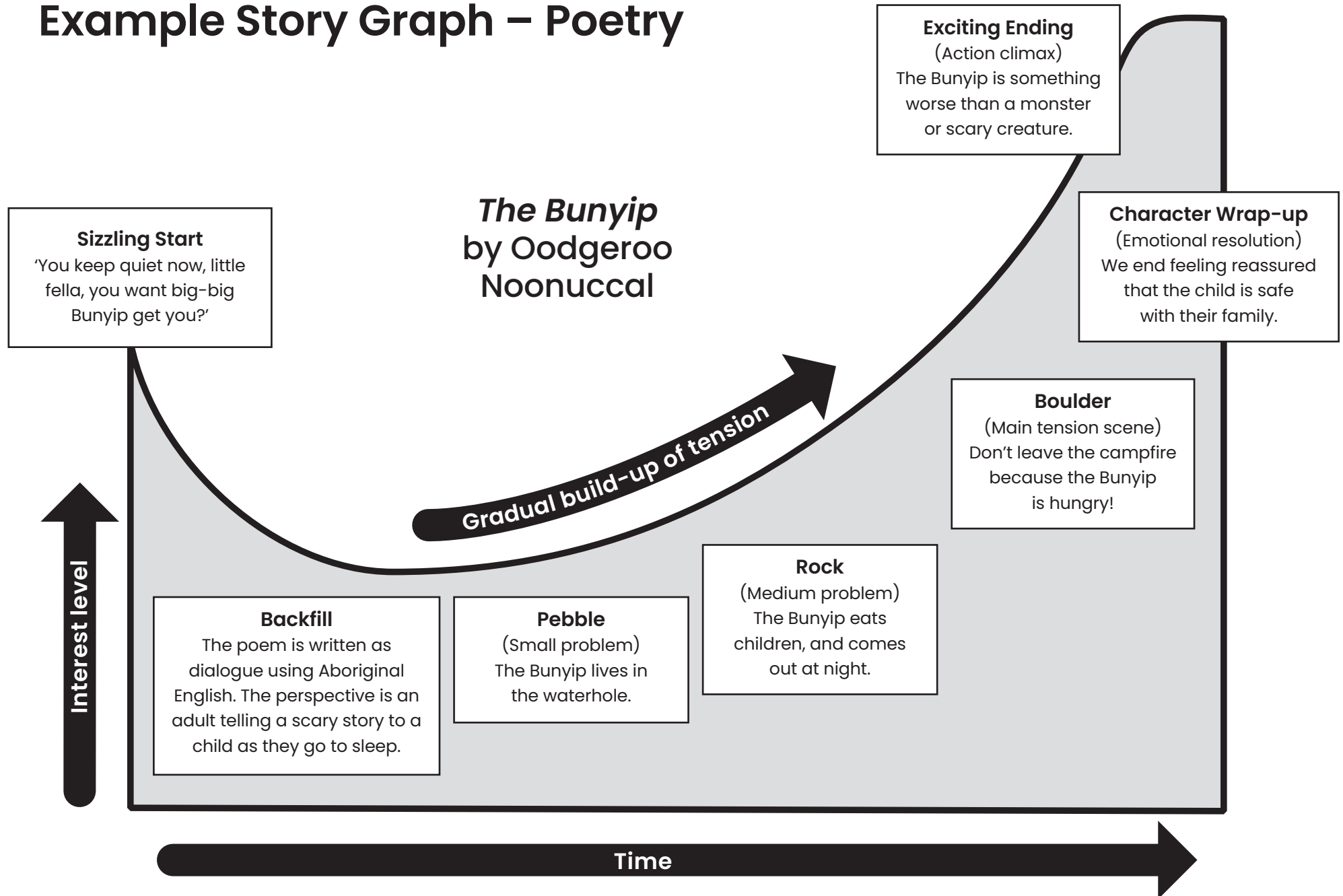
Example Story Graph – Advertisement



Example Story Graph – Movie



Example Story Graph – Poetry



Step 1: Plan for Success

Tell Me About It

The activities below are all verbal. They focus on getting students to verbalise their planning before they put pencil to paper. Verbal activities are a great way to practise presenting to others, collaborating, sharing ideas and turn-taking.



Activity 1: Brainstorming Story Ideas

Train students to generate lots of story ideas. Brainstorm at least 10 ideas and then choose the best one!

Put one of the story topics from the next page on the board, then brainstorm story ideas as a whole class. Use images, videos, story cubes or writing stones to help students come up with ideas that they can write about.

Time students to see how long it takes for them to come up with 10 different ideas. Record the time as a personal best (PB) for the class, and write it on the board. Try and beat your PB with new topics each day (duration: two weeks).

Get students to team up and try this activity in small groups.



Activity 2: Creating Characters

Ask students to pick out an item of clothing and a prop from a dress-up box and use this as the basis for creating a character. Get students to talk about their character with a friend: What are they like? What makes them interesting? What things do they do?

STORY TOPICS

RUN

SWIM

CRASH

JUMP

TWIRL

SHH

LOST

FLY

BOIL

Step 1: Plan for Success



Activity 3: What's the Problem?

Brainstorm a list of problems as a class. Pick one problem and brainstorm how you could make the problem bigger. For example, the dog runs off with your homework (pebble) and buries it in the neighbour's garden (rock); when you dig it up, the sprinklers come on, soaking you and the homework (boulder).

Activity 4: Problem Solving

Develop students' problem-solving skills. Write a hero, a villain, and a problem on the board, for example:

- Hero – a plucky kid
- Villain – a monster
- Problem – The kid wants an ice cream but there's a monster in the freezer.

Get students to brainstorm solutions to the problem.

Tip: Use a mind-mapping app such as Popplet to document the solutions.

Activity 5: Plotting Recounts on the Story Graph

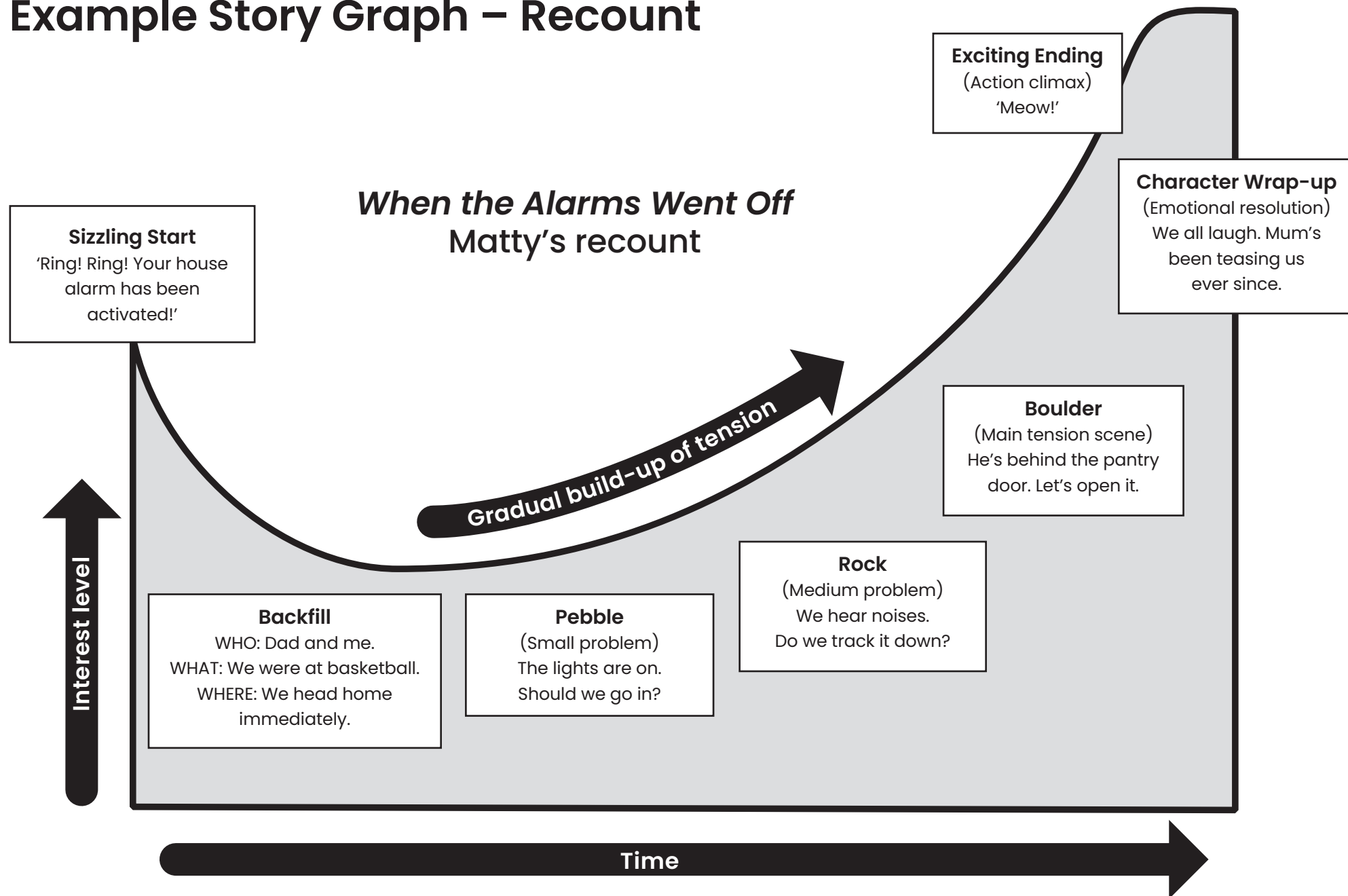
Use every opportunity to practise story graphing. Display the example Story Graph on the next page and talk students through it. Then ask students to plot their own recounts on the Story Graph.

Try these:

- Weekend recounts
- Holidays
- Special events
- Show and Tell.



Example Story Graph – Recount



Step 1: Plan for Success

Activity 6: Tell Me a Story

Give students a story or scenario. Then ask them to tell you the story and track it using the Story Graph. Students can take turns using a ruler to point to the relevant part of the Story Graph.

Try these:

- Best birthday party ever
- What my annoying sibling did to me!
- I promise I'll never do that again
- An animal that made me laugh
- The best thing Santa gave me
- I wish ...

Activity 7: Time to Act!

Display the Story Graph on the board or print it out. Create a verbal story or read an existing one, such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. Get a group of students to act out the story. Afterwards, plot it on the Story Graph together.



For more narrative, persuasive and informative writing activities for beginner writers, go to *Teacher Hub*.

PLANNING TEMPLATE

Title: _____

Sizzling Start

Backfill

Pebble (Small problem)

Rock (Medium problem)

Boulder (Big problem/Main tension scene)

Exciting Ending

Character Wrap-up

NARRATIVE STORY GRAPH – BEGINNER

Title: _____

Sizzling Start

Problem
(Sticky situation)

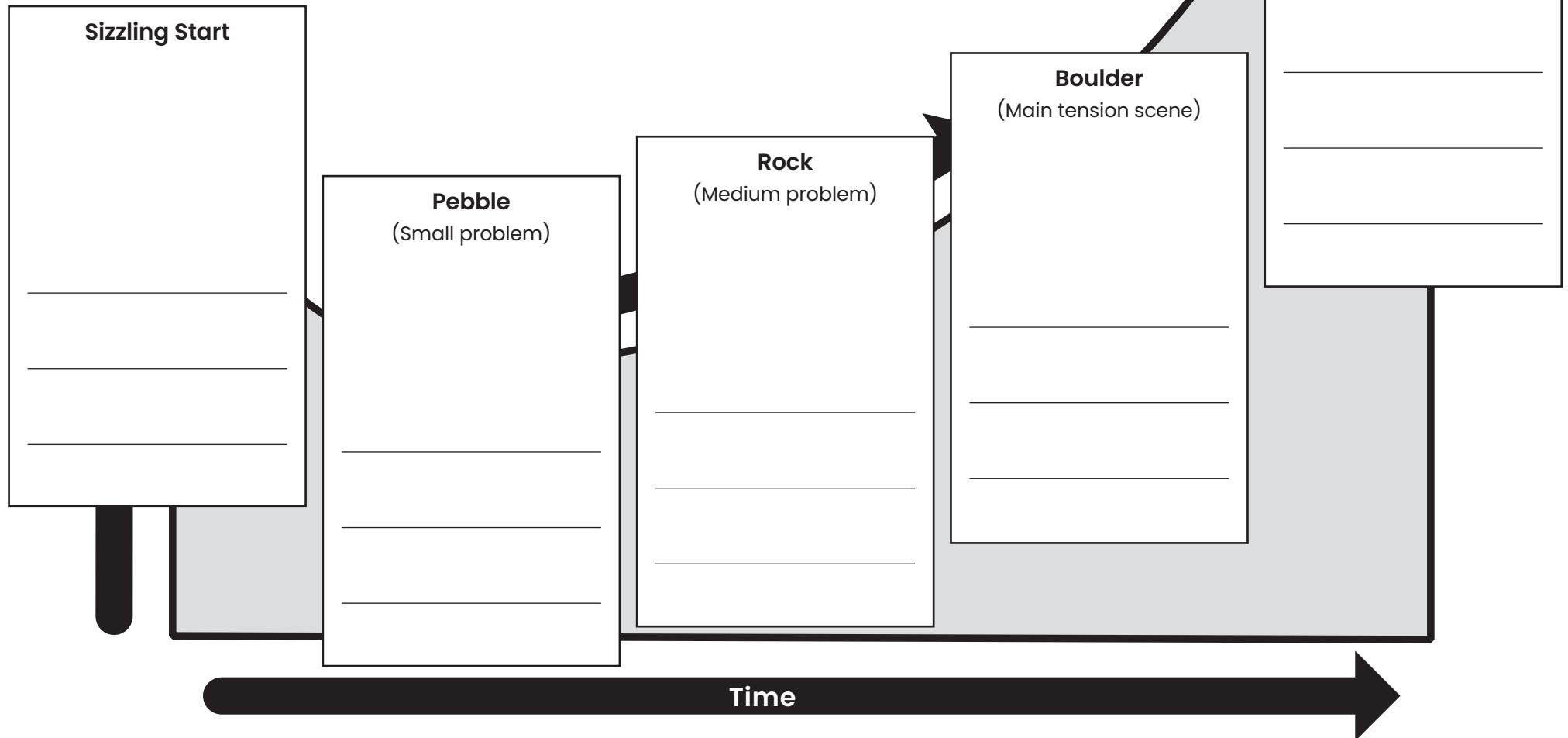
Exciting Ending
(Action climax)

Time

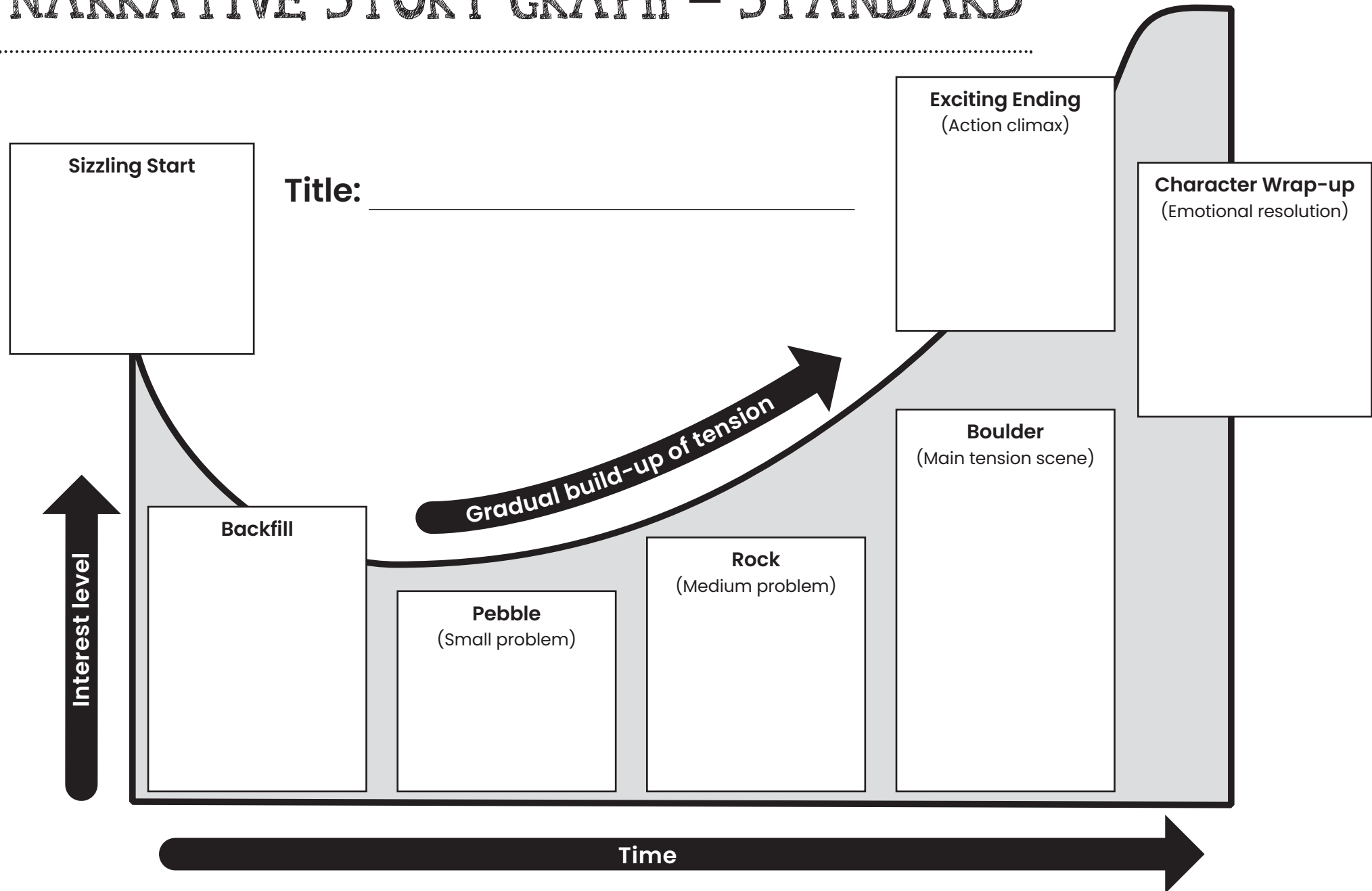


NARRATIVE STORY GRAPH – INTERMEDIATE

Title: _____



NARRATIVE STORY GRAPH – STANDARD



STUDENT CHECKLIST

This checklist can be given to students to remind them what's involved in planning a story. Cut them out and attach them to students' work.

Step 1: Plan for Success Checklist



- ☐ Brainstorm 10 story ideas and pick the best one.
- ☐ Brainstorm different characters, settings, starts, problems and endings.
- ☐ Plot your ideas on the Story Graph.

Step 1: Plan for Success Checklist

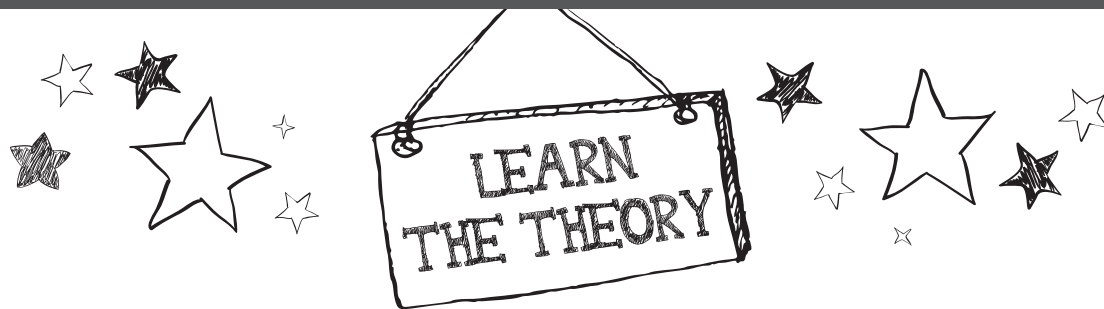


- ☐ Brainstorm 10 story ideas and pick the best one.
- ☐ Brainstorm different characters, settings, starts, problems and endings.
- ☐ Plot your ideas on the Story Graph.

Step 2: Sizzling Starts



Step 2: Sizzling Starts



Start with a sizzle, not a fizzle! The start of a story needs to grab the reader's attention and make them curious.

'The first sentence is the most exciting moment in the story, because I'm opening a door to the Unknown.' – John Marsden

You only have about three sentences to achieve this, so make those first words count.

Top Techniques

1. **Start with action** – Don't start a story at the beginning of the day when nothing is happening. Begin when the volcano starts exploding, or as you walk in the door to find your mum and sister having a huge fight!
2. **Add backfill** – Then, as the story unfolds, you can add any important details about your characters and explain what's happening. Alternatively, this can be done in a separate scene after the Sizzling Start.

Example

This 'before and after' writing sample demonstrates how to **start with action** and then **add backfill** as the action unfolds. Use this to model what you expect from your students.

Before

I got up really early and got dressed and Dad and I cooked pancakes for breakfast. They were delicious. Then we walked to the train station. We were going to the football match. We went to the football every week. On the train ...

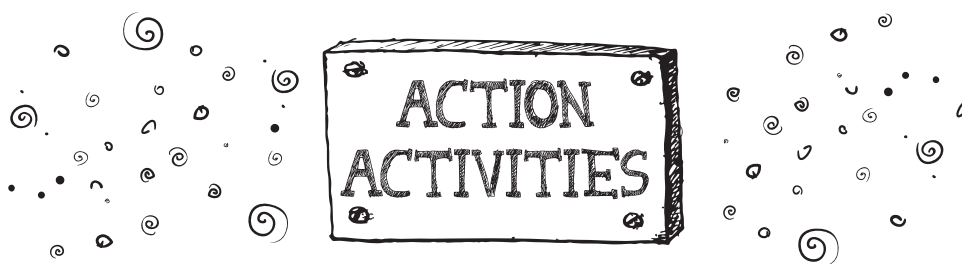
After

'Goal!' The crowd cheered loudly. Dad and I went to the football every week, but our team usually lost. Today they were winning, and I was cheering louder than anyone.

Step 2: Sizzling Starts

What It Looks Like

To write a Sizzling Start, you need to know what one looks like! Introduce students to the concept of starting where the action is by looking for Sizzling Starts in a range of different texts. Remember to point out that a Sizzling Start always starts with a bang!



Activity 1: Sizzling Starts in Movies

Look for great starts in movies.

Try these:

- *WALL-E*
- *Toy Story*
- *Ice Age*
- *Frozen*
- *Up*
- *Finding Nemo*.

Point out how these movies start with action and then use backfill to explain who, what, why and where.



Activity 2: Sizzling Starts in Picture Books

Look for Sizzling Starts in picture books.

Try these:

- *Fox* by Margaret Wild and illustrated by Ron Brooks
- *Flood* by Jackie French and illustrated by Bruce Whatley
- *Too Many Elephants in This House* by Ursula Dubosarsky and illustrated by Andrew Joyner.

Can students spot the action start and the backfill?

Step 2: Sizzling Starts

Tell Me About It

The activities below are all verbal. They focus on getting students to think creatively before they put pencil to paper. Verbal activities are a great way to practise presenting to others, collaborating, sharing ideas and turn-taking.

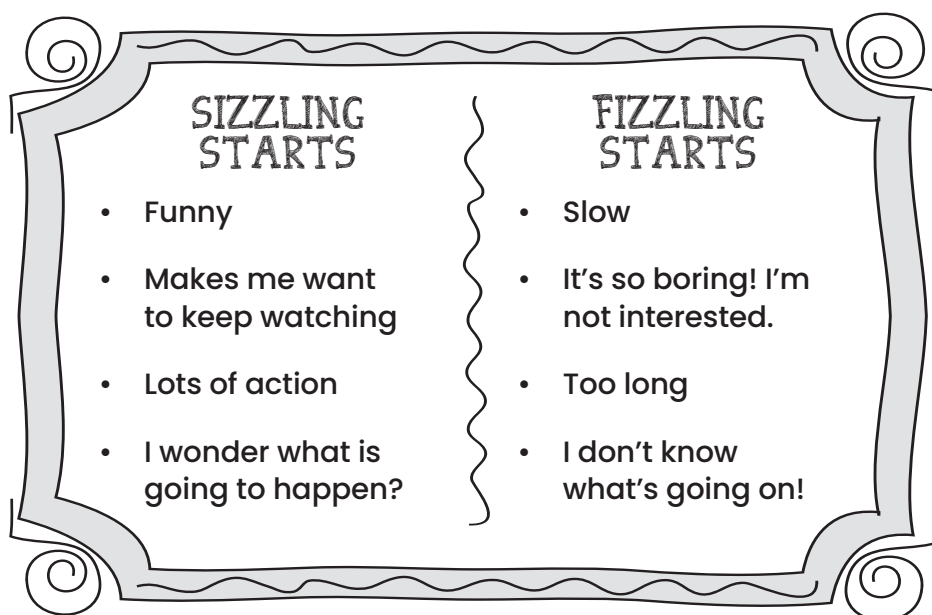


Activity 1: Examining Sizzling Starts in Movies

After watching some Sizzling Starts in movies, ask students to describe their reaction. Create a poster with the headings 'Sizzling Starts' and 'Fizzling Starts' to document your discussions.

Try questions such as:

- Does it make you want to watch more? Why? Why not?
- Was it interesting? Why? Why not?
- Was it a Sizzling Start?
- Have the filmmakers gained your attention? If so, how?



Step 2: Sizzling Starts



Activity 2: Act It Out

Ask students to collaborate and act out the opening scene from their favourite movie. Encourage them to make their starts sizzle! You can add drama by using props, costumes, puppets or even musical instruments.

Activity 3: Sizzle Sticks

Create Sizzle Sticks as a class by using the template on the next page, plus pop sticks, paper and coloured pencils. These can be used as voting paddles in a range of activities for students to express if a start is 'Sizzling' or 'Needs more work'.



Activity 4: Examining Sizzling Starts in Picture Books

Using some favourite picture books, read the first page or the first few lines out loud and have students vote with their Sizzle Sticks on whether the start is 'Sizzling' or 'Needs more work'. Then sort the books and discuss what the stories with Sizzling Starts had in common. Make a list on the whiteboard or on a poster.

Try these:

- *Shoes from Grandpa* by Mem Fox and illustrated by Patricia Mullins
- *Amy & Louis* by Libby Gleeson and illustrated by Freya Blackwood
- *A Little Princess Story – I Want to Win* by Tony Ross
- *Art & Max* by David Wiesner.

Activity 5: Sizzling Starts in Show and Tell

Discuss the previous lessons and the different ways that you can make a start 'Sizzling'. Ask students to present their Show and Tell or weekend recount in an interesting way by using a Sizzling Start. The students can vote on whether the presentations are 'Sizzling' or 'Need more work' using their Sizzle Sticks.



SIZZLE STICKS

Copy and cut out the template below. Get students to personalise their own Sizzle Sticks, and then paste the templates on either side of a pop stick. Sizzle Sticks can be reinforced by first pasting the template to either side of a piece of cardboard.



Step 2: Sizzling Starts

Time to Write

Now that the creative ideas are flowing, it's time to put pencil to paper and start writing!

Below are some Action Activities that help to hone students' writing skills through writing practice, mark-making and pre-writing activities.



Activity 1: Illustrating Sizzling Starts

Now that students are familiar with a range of different Sizzling Starts, get them to work on their visual literacy and mark-making abilities by illustrating their favourite Sizzling Start from a book or movie.

Activity 2: Fill In the Blanks

Scaffold students to write their own Sizzling Starts by providing them with a half-finished Sizzling Start. Leave blank boxes in the place of nouns and ask students to draw or write to fill in the blanks. Develop one Sizzling Start as a class to get started. A template is provided on the next page.

Activity 3: Extraordinary Windows

As a class, brainstorm different types of windows, e.g. submarine, aeroplane or castle windows. Ask students to pick a type of window and imagine some extraordinary things you might see out of it. Now get them to illustrate their ideas. To extend this activity further, ask students to write or label what they see under their illustration.

Activity 4: Through the Window

Using the 'Through the Window' template on page 46, get students to imagine that they're looking out of a window and see something strange or out of the ordinary. Students draw this and write a Sizzling Start based on their illustration. If students need some extra scaffolding, try some of these prompts:

- I can see ...
- I couldn't believe my eyes ...
- Crash! Oh no ...
- Oh no, not again.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Fill in the blanks to create Sizzling Starts.

I was shocked to see a

in my

last night!

I will never eat another

after what

happened at school today!

I have discovered a new use for my

and

my mum is not impressed.

Quick! Run!

The

is getting closer to the

!

Oh no!

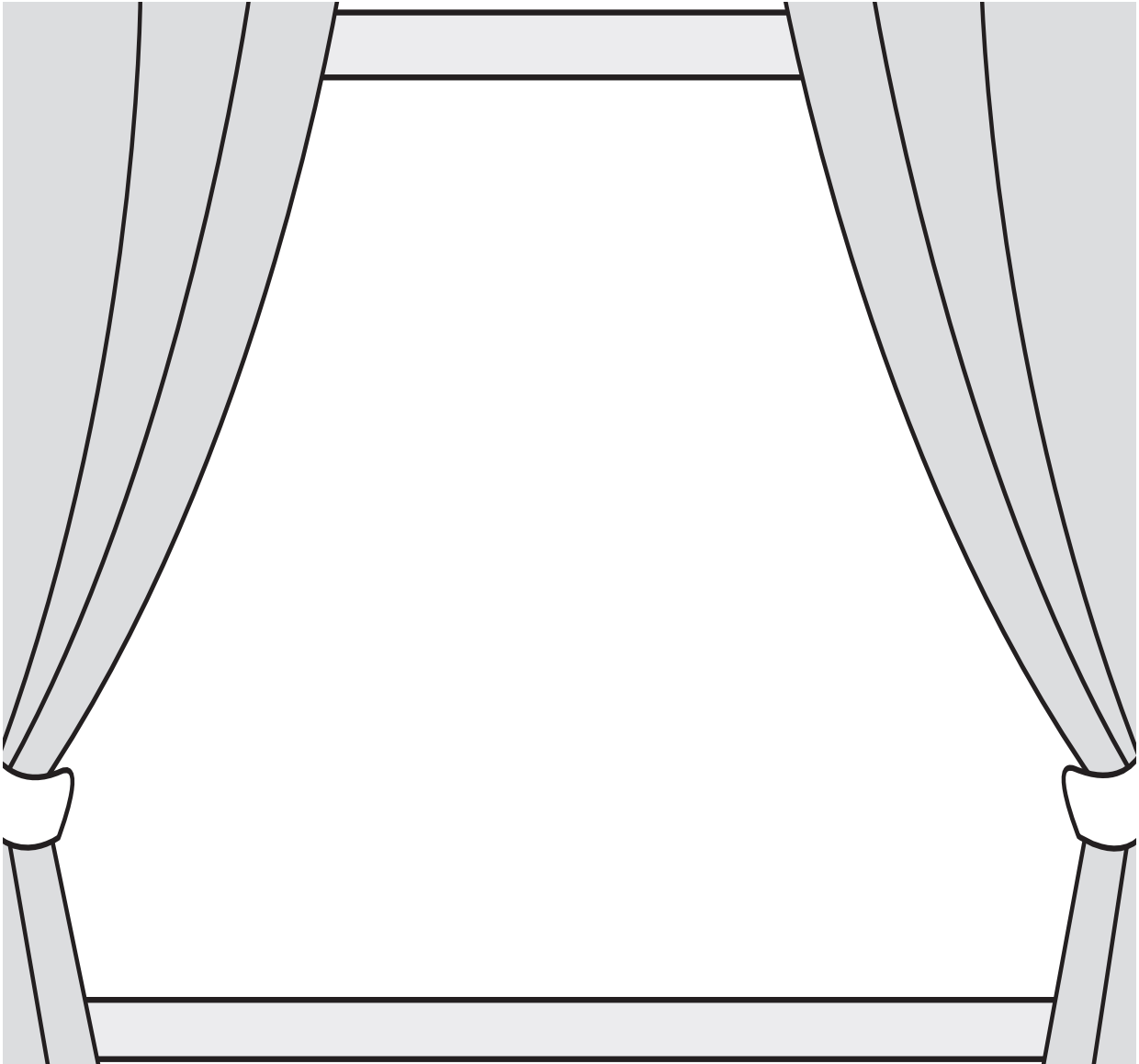
The

escaped from the

again!

THROUGH THE WINDOW

Imagine you are looking out of the window and can see something strange. Draw what you see and write about it below.



Step 2: Sizzling Starts



Activity 5: If You Were a Superhero

Ask students to imagine themselves as a superhero and to draw what they think they'd look like in the template on the next page. To take this further, ask students to think about what special abilities they would have as a superhero. Then ask them to write a Sizzling Start about themselves as that superhero.

Activity 6: Start with a Sound

Starting a story with a sound can take the reader right to where the action is. Students can use the examples on page 49, or come up with their own by brainstorming different sounds they might hear in a day. You may want to separate the students into groups or take them to different settings.

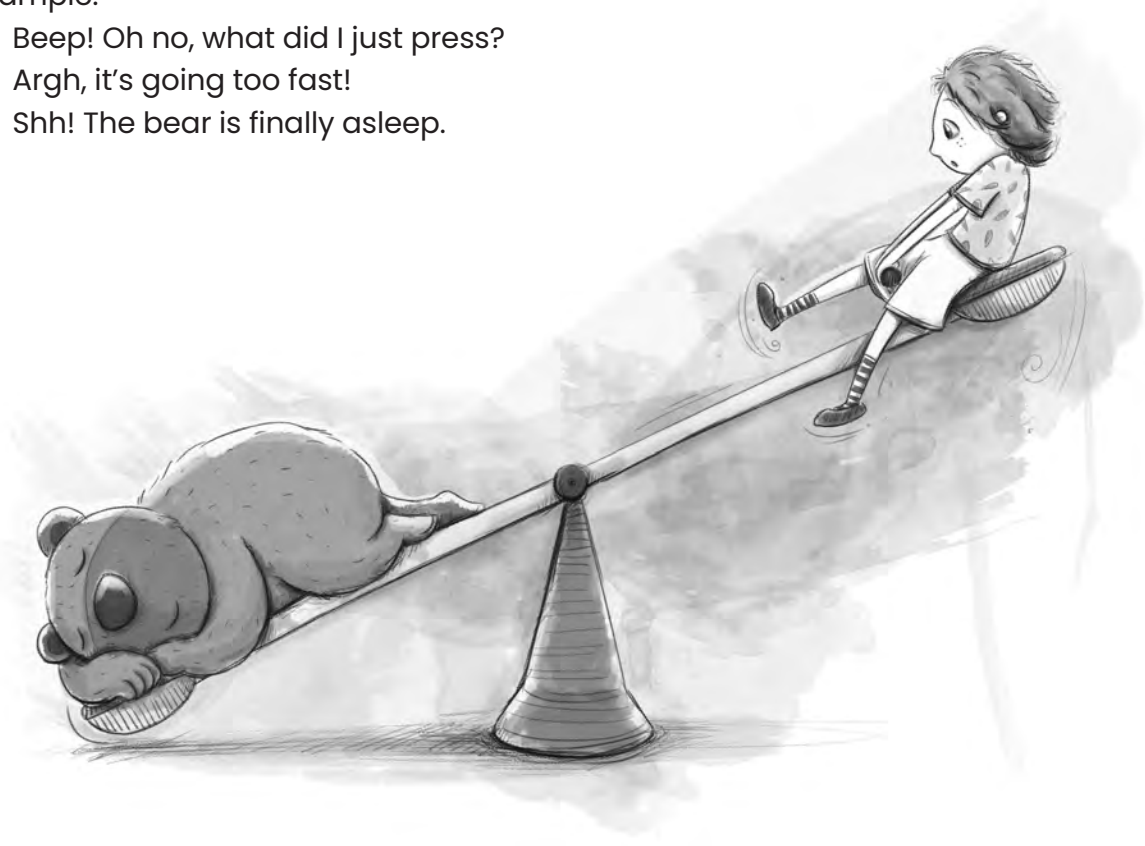
Try these:

- Kitchen
- Dog's house
- Beach
- Playground
- Carnival.

Next, ask students to pick one of the sounds and write a Sizzling Start using it.

For example:

- Beep! Oh no, what did I just press?
- Argh, it's going too fast!
- Shh! The bear is finally asleep.

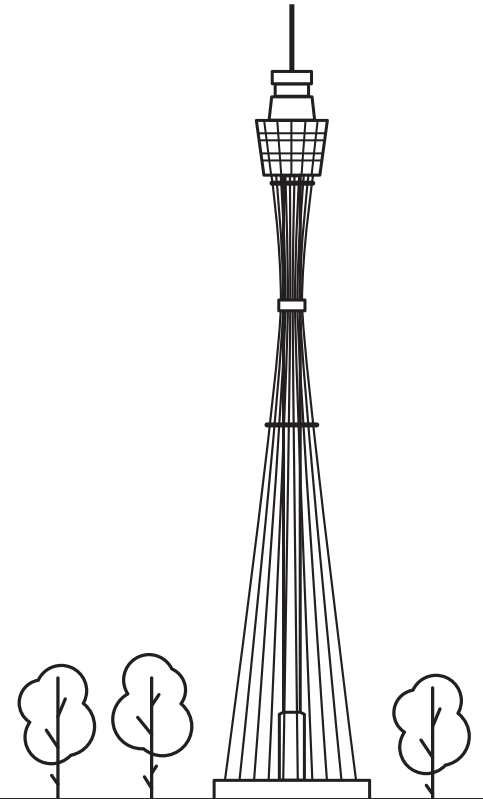


SUPERHEROES

Imagine you're a superhero. What would you look like? What special powers would you have? Draw yourself as this superhero, then write a Sizzling Start.

WOW!

INTRODUCING THE WORLD'S NEWEST SUPERHERO



START WITH A SOUND

These cards can be used in a variety of different ways. Cut them out and use them as cue cards for acting out or practising Sizzling Starts. The sheet can also be photocopied and used as a bingo sheet.

| | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| BANG | WOOF | BUZZ |
| SHH | FIZZ | THUMP |
| ZOOM | POW | ZIP |
| ARGH | CRASH | POP |
| BAM | OH | MEOW |

Step 2: Sizzling Starts



Activity 7: What's in the Bag?

Place an assortment of interesting photographs and pictures in a bag and ask a volunteer to pick one out. Then ask students to write a Sizzling Start inspired by the picture.

You could also try:

- Putting up a picture on the board
- Creating your own picture for the students to write about
- Getting students to draw pictures for each other to write about
- Showing students some interesting artwork
- Using a visual writing prompt from *Teacher Hub*.

Activity 8: One Word Challenge

Give students a random word such as 'car', 'jump', 'racing', etc. and use it as a story prompt. Have them draw and write a Sizzling Start using the word.

For example:

- **Car:** I slammed the car door. 'Ouch!' it said. Who knew a car had feelings?



Step 2: Sizzling Starts



Activity 9: Boring Beginnings

Pick one of the boring starts below. Ask students to brainstorm how to turn it into a Sizzling Start. Remind them to start with action before adding backfill. Write students' suggestions on the board.

Try these:

- I woke up, had a shower, then got dressed.
- On Tuesday afternoons I have soccer practice.
- I woke up really early. Today was first day of the holidays.

Activity 10: Shaking Up the Recount

Get students to write their recounts like a Sizzling Start. Remind them to start where the action is and then add backfill to explain who, what, why and where.

Try these:

- Making jelly
- Holiday writing
- Excursions
- Blowing bubbles
- Sports activities.



For more narrative, persuasive and informative writing activities for beginner writers, go to *Teacher Hub*.

STUDENT CHECKLIST

This checklist can be given to students to remind them what you are looking for in a Sizzling Start. Cut them out and attach them to students' work.

Step 2: Sizzling Starts Checklist



- ☐ Start with action.
- ☐ Add backfill as the story unfolds or in a separate scene.
- ☐ Get back to the live action.

Step 2: Sizzling Starts Checklist

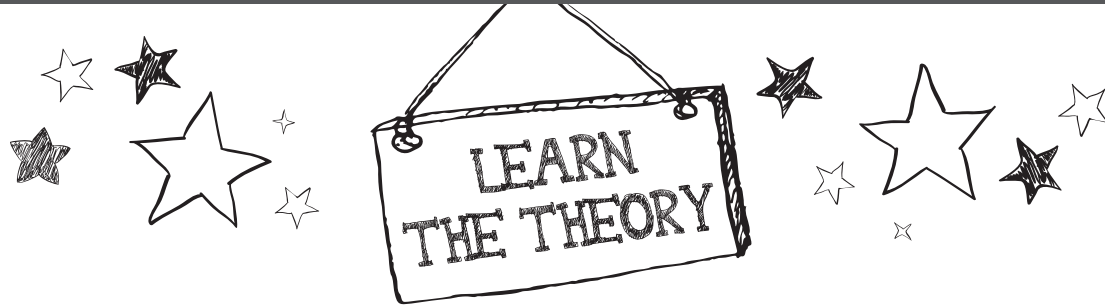


- ☐ Start with action.
- ☐ Add backfill as the story unfolds or in a separate scene.
- ☐ Get back to the live action.

Step 3: Tightening Tension



Step 3: Tightening Tension



Tension builds up slowly in a narrative – don't rush it!

Creating nail-biting tension is easy when you know how. The key is to make sure that students don't run out of steam when they should be reaching the high point of the story. Here's how ...

Top Techniques

1. **Pebble, rock, boulder** – Create a series of escalating problems: the pebble, rock and boulder. (Note, some stories use a series of revelations or events rather than problems.)
2. **Tension scenes are long and strong** – Use the Five + 1 Senses to add detail and make the reader feel like they are right there with the characters. What do they see, hear, touch, taste, smell and feel? (See also Step 5: Show, Don't Tell.)
3. **The main character must almost fail** – Without the possibility of failure, there can be no tension. Your reader must believe that the tornado is too strong, the mountain is too high, the villain is too evil.

Example

This 'before and after' writing sample demonstrates how to make a **tension scene longer and stronger** and make the reader believe that **the main character might fail** to build tension. Use this to model what you expect from your students.

Before

The basketball match was really close. I ran up and shot the goal. We won!

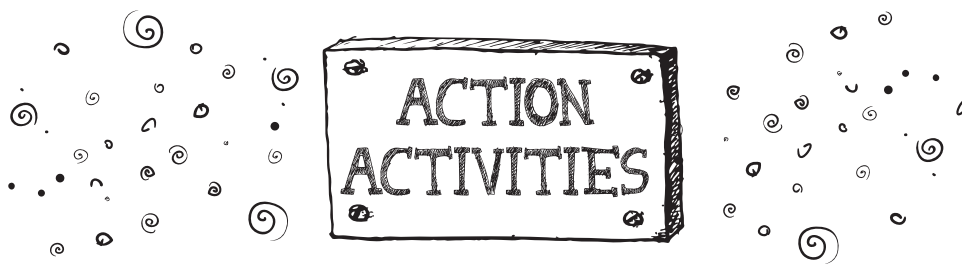
After

I was scared and sweating and we only had one minute left in the game. The scores were even. We had to get this goal. I ran down the court. Mark passed the ball to me. I lined up the shot, but there were too many players around me. What if I missed? My heart was pounding. 'Shoot!' yelled Mark. I aimed and took the shot. The ball hit the ring, rolled around the edge – and dropped in. We'd done it! We were into the finals!

Step 3: Tightening Tension

What It Looks Like

Introduce students to the concept of a tension scene by looking at different narratives. Discuss how tension is built up slowly, how the main character almost fails, and how the Five + 1 Senses are used to describe that excited and anxious feeling.



Activity 1: Tension in Picture Books

Look at how tension is created in picture books.

Try these:

- *Rose Meets Mr Wintergarten* by Bob Graham
- *One Runaway Rabbit* by David Metzenthen and illustrated by Mairead Murphy
- *The Great Bear* by Libby Gleeson and illustrated by Armin Greder
- *Tanglewood* by Margaret Wild and illustrated by Vivienne Goodman.

Activity 2: Tension in Fairy Tales

Look at how tension is created in fairy tales.

Try these:

- *Hansel and Gretel*
- *Little Red Riding Hood*
- *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
- *Cinderella*.

Activity 3: Tension in Short Films

Look at how tension is created in well-known animated shorts. This is also a great way of incorporating multimedia resources into your writing lessons.

Try these:

- *Ormie*
- *For the Birds*
- *Soar*.

Step 3: Tightening Tension



Activity 4: Tension in Movies

Look at how tension is created in popular movies.

Try these:

- The opening scene of *Monsters, Inc*
- The bathroom escape scene in *Toy Story 3*
- Edna's unveiling of the family suits in *The Incredibles*.

Activity 5: Tension in Advertisements

Look at how tension is created in well-known advertisements.

Try these:

- AAMI
- WorkSafe
- 'I Bought a Jeep'
- Volkswagen – 'The Force'.

Activity 6: Tension in Poetry, Action Rhymes and Music

Look at how tension is created in poetry, action rhymes and music.

Try these:

- *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr Seuss
- Classical music
- Movie soundtracks.



Step 3: Tightening Tension

Tell Me About It

The activities below are all verbal. They focus on getting students to think creatively before they put pencil to paper. Verbal activities are a great way to practise presenting to others, collaborating, sharing ideas and turn-taking.



Activity 1: The Five + 1 Senses

Help students to develop their descriptive language skills by using the Five + 1 Senses to create a detailed picture. Show students a tension picture on the board and ask them to brainstorm using the Five + 1 Senses. Write students' responses on the board.

For example:

- I see ...
- I hear ...
- I smell ...
- I taste ...
- I touch ...
- I feel ...



Step 3: Tightening Tension



Activity 2: Tension in Real-Life Experiences

Use an image of a real-life experience as a visual prompt and then ask students to brainstorm using the Five + 1 Senses.

Example: The night before Christmas

I see snow falling outside my window.

I hear the dull thud of hooves on the roof.

I smell the fresh, cold air.

I feel excited and anxious.

Try these:

- Getting lost in a shopping centre
- Being late for school
- Running into the school bully
- Presenting at assembly
- Sleeping over at a friend's place.



Activity 3: Acting Out Tension

Divide students into groups of three. Give each group a scenario and ask them to act out how they would feel if they were in that scenario. Remind students to think about the Five + 1 Senses.

For example:

You're alone in a dark forest and it starts to rain.

To extend this activity further, get one student to do the sound effects. For example, the whoosh of the wind in the trees or the pitter-patter of the rain.

Activity 4: Magic Tricks

Search YouTube for different magic tricks. Watch different clips of magic with the students and then discuss how the magicians create tension. Break students into pairs and encourage them to come up with their own magic tricks or recreate one of the tricks they have seen. You could also try the library for books on magic tricks for beginners.

Step 3: Tightening Tension



Action Activity 5: Escalating Tension

Give students a small problem, e.g. the toilet won't flush. Get students to suggest ways that this problem could get bigger. Divide students into groups and get them pick their favourite ideas and create a freeze frame of the pebble, rock and boulder.

Activity 6: Picture Story Cards

Use picture story cards or make your own by cutting up an old book. In small groups or as a whole class, work together to sequence the picture story cards. Can students identify the pebble, the rock and the boulder?

Activity 7: Tension in Music

Have you ever noticed how some music creates tension by getting louder and louder in a crescendo? Listen to some classical music and show students where the tension starts to build (a great example is 'In the Hall of the Mountain King' by Edvard Grieg). You could also listen to tension-building music from wordless cartoons like *Tom and Jerry*, *Road Runner* or *The Pink Panther*.

Then sit students in a circle. Start tapping your legs to a slow beat and get students to follow you. Start increasing the beat to slowly get louder and faster until the beat is really fast. Students can then take turns setting the beat. This will help to build students' understanding of how tension slowly builds up over time and then explodes!

Activity 8: Suspenseful Sentences

Sit in a circle as a whole class. Read out one of the tension scenarios on the next page then work your way around the circle, asking each student to add a sentence to build the tension.



TENSION SCENARIOS

Cut out the tension scenes below and use them as prompts to discuss and act out the next part of the scene.

It's the day of Billy's birthday party. You arrive at Billy's house all dressed up. You have the present ready and Dad's picking you up at two o'clock. There's only one problem ...

It's the first night without your night-light and you've always been scared of the dark. You're lying in bed when you hear ...

Your sister is awful at cooking. Everything she makes is terrible. But this year she's decided to bake your birthday cake ...

All the kids are at school, but there are no teachers anywhere to be seen!

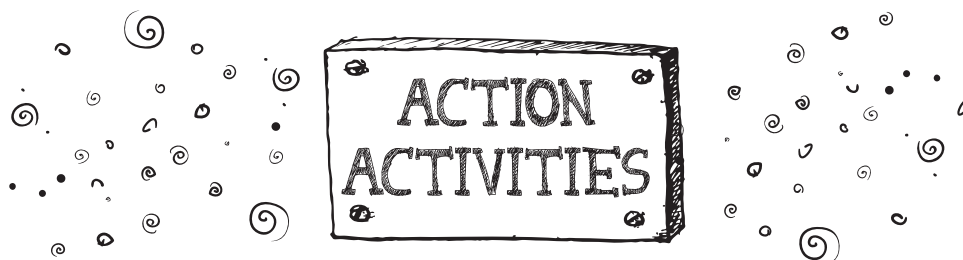
It's the day of the big swimming carnival and you've forgotten to bring your bathers.

You've just remembered today is your big brother's birthday and you forgot to get him a present!
But wait, you have a great idea ...

Step 3: Tightening Tension

Time to Write

Now that the creative ideas are flowing, it's time to put pencil to paper and start writing! Below are some Action Activities that help to hone students' writing skills through writing practice, mark-making and pre-writing activities.



Activity 1: Five + 1 Senses Brainstorming

Give students a situation or topic and use the Five + 1 Senses to verbally brainstorm ideas. Use the interactive whiteboard, an app or make a poster to keep track of students' ideas. Then ask students to draw a character or scene based on their descriptions.

Try these:

- You're alone in a haunted house
- You're just about to dive off the highest diving board at the pool
- You just heard a sound coming from under your bed
- The birthday party that went wrong
- The day you got really, really sunburnt.

Activity 2: What Might Happen?

Read out one of the tension scenarios on the previous page, and discuss as a whole class what might happen next. Ask students to draw or write the next part of the scene.

Can students build tension by:

- Making the problem bigger
- Using lots of detail
- Making the character almost fail?

Step 3: Tightening Tension



Activity 3: Descriptive Language

Read the book *Wombat Stew* by Marcia K Vaughan. Focus on how descriptive language and suspense is used to build tension.

Ask students to choose another animal and write a descriptive sentence about that animal in a stew. Focus on creativity over rhyming. You could also do this activity with illustrations.

For example:

Giraffe stew,
Giraffe stew,
Tall and stringy,
Tough and meaty,
Giraffe stew.



Activity 4: Wanted Posters

Ask students to think of the most terrible character they can imagine, and use the Five + 1 Senses to write about how the character looks, sounds, smells, feels and tastes.

Once students have planned their character, they can use the template on the next page to make a WANTED poster.

For example:

Looks: Green, with big sharp teeth and long, hairy ears.

Sounds: You can hear its feet squelch as it walks.

Smells: Like dirty football socks.

Feels: Its skin feels slimy and wet.

Tastes: There's no way I'm tasting it!

Activity 5: Comic Strip

Watch *Soar* by Alyce Tzue as a whole class. Discuss how the animation makes you believe that the character is going to fail. Ask students to think about a time when they have had to attempt something several times before succeeding. Get them to create a comic strip showing their attempts.

WANTED POSTER

Create a wanted poster for your terrible, horrible character.

| |
|--|
| <p>WANTED</p> <p>★ DEAD OR ALIVE ★</p> <div></div> <p>REWARD \$1,000,000</p> |
|--|

Step 3: Tightening Tension



Activity 6: Paint Me a Picture

Read or tell students a scene or scenario and encourage them to use their imagination to draw it.

For example:

- You're the last one to be picked up from school. It's just started to rain and no one's come to get you!
- 'On your marks, get set, GO!' screamed the coach.
- I climbed and climbed and climbed. When I got to the top of the tree, I could see ...
- Yummy! Grandma's going to love the cake I baked her! I just hope she doesn't find out what's inside it ...



For more narrative, persuasive and informative writing activities for beginner writers, go to *Teacher Hub*.



STUDENT CHECKLIST

This checklist can be given to students to remind them what you are looking for in a tension scene. Cut them out and attach them to students' work.

Step 3: Tightening Tension Checklist



- ☐ Use the pebble, rock, boulder technique to build tension.
- ☐ Use the Five + 1 Senses to add detail.
- ☐ The main character must almost fail.

Step 3: Tightening Tension Checklist

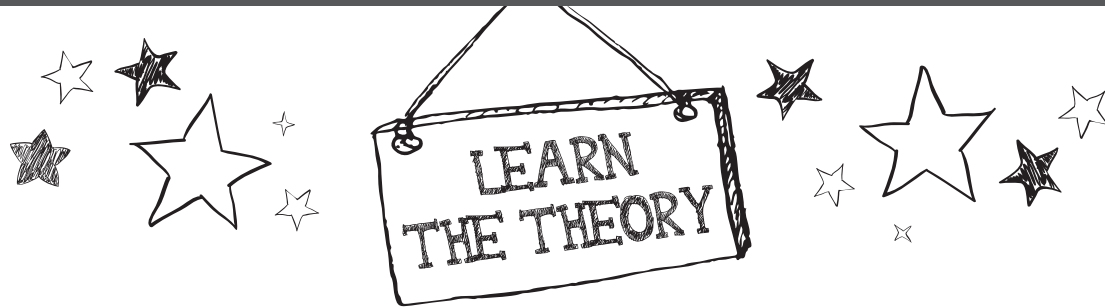


- ☐ Use the pebble, rock, boulder technique to build tension.
- ☐ Use the Five + 1 Senses to add detail.
- ☐ The main character must almost fail.

Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue



Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue



Dialogue should be short and to the point.

Real conversations have lots of boring bits, but writing dialogue isn't like talking in real life. Think of dialogue as a mini play within the story – every word is important.

Use plenty of role play to introduce the skill of dialogue and demonstrate how dialogue can bring a story to life.

Top Techniques

Dialogue does three things:

1. **Moves the plot forward** – It's much more interesting to let the characters reveal what's happening rather than telling the reader yourself.
2. **Makes scenes more dynamic** – A scene from a story really comes alive when dialogue is added.
3. **Brings characters to life** – Letting characters talk helps the reader to get to know them.

Examples

These 'before and after' writing samples demonstrate how dialogue can be used to **move the plot forward**, **make scenes more dynamic** and **bring characters to life**.

Use them to model what you expect from your students.

Before

Courtney was really mean.

After

'So what if your dog died,' said Courtney. 'Get over it.'

Before

Matt waited impatiently for his uncle to take him fishing.

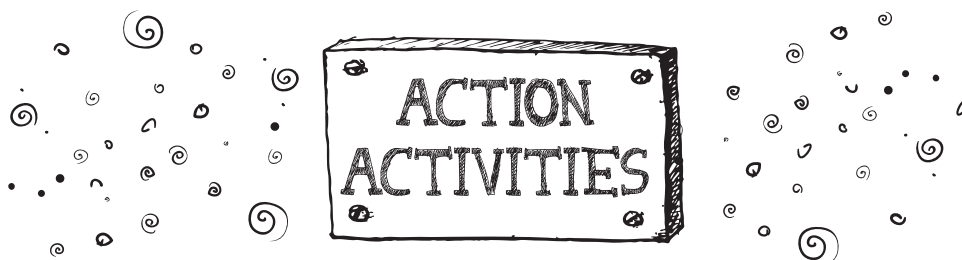
After

'What time's Uncle Joe getting here?' asked Matt. 'Pop says that morning's when you get the best fish, and I want to catch the biggest one!'

Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue

What It Looks Like

Familiarise students with what dialogue looks like by pointing out dialogue in short movie clips, cartoons and lines from familiar books. Discuss how we can learn more about a character from their dialogue.



Activity 1: Dynamic Dialogue in Movies

Listen to the dialogue in popular movies.

Try these:

- *Frozen*
- *Toy Story*
- *Cars*
- *Up*.

Activity 2: Dynamic Dialogue in Cartoons

Listen to the dialogue in cartoons.

Try these:

- *Arthur*
- *Hey Arnold!*
- *Bluey*
- *Peppa Pig*.

Activity 3: Dynamic Dialogue in Stories

Read the dialogue in some familiar stories.

Try these:

- *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*
- *The Hare and the Tortoise*
- *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
- *Rapunzel*
- *Who Sank the Boat?* by Pamela Allen
- *Wombat Stew* by Marcia K Vaughan and illustrated by Pamela Lofts.

Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue

Tell Me About It

The activities below are all verbal. They focus on getting students to think creatively before they put pencil to paper. Verbal activities are a great way to practise presenting to others, collaborating, sharing ideas and turn-taking.



Activity 1: Act It Out

Ask students to act out some scenes from familiar picture books and fairy tales. Encourage students to use the dialogue within the story as a starting point, and then make up their own to extend the activity further.

Try these:

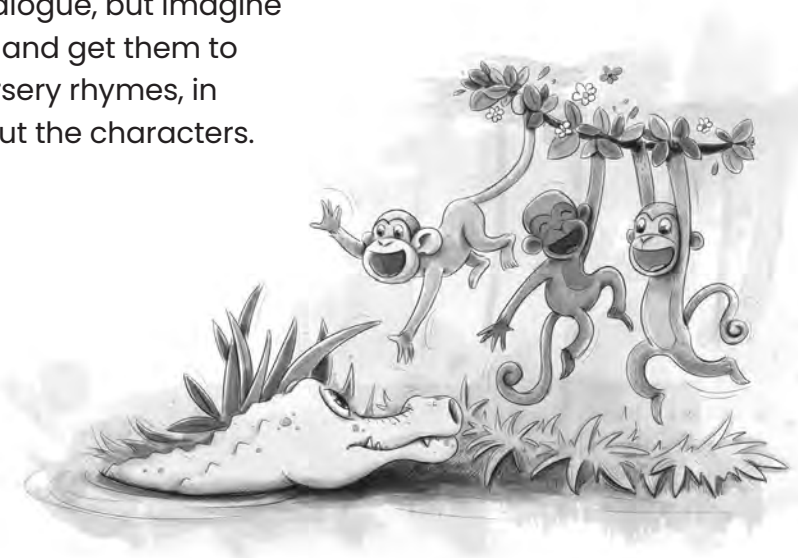
- Joy Cowley books
 - *Oscar Did It!*
 - *Mrs Wishy-Washy*
 - *Dan, the Flying Man*
 - *'Scat!' Said the Cat*
 - *If You Meet a Dragon ...*
- Fairy tales
 - *The Three Little Pigs*
 - *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*
 - *Little Red Riding Hood*
 - *Hansel and Gretel*
 - *Puss in Boots.*

Activity 2: Creating Dialogue for Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes don't usually have dialogue, but imagine if they did! Organise students in pairs and get them to create dialogue for some popular nursery rhymes, in a way that shows the class more about the characters.

Try these:

- *Humpty Dumpty*
- *Jack and Jill*
- *Hickory Dickory Dock*
- *Five Little Ducks.*



Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue



Activity 3: Creating Dialogue for Images

Show students an interesting image and then create a line of dialogue for the image. Next pick a student and ask them to continue the next line of dialogue. The student then picks another student to create the next line of dialogue, and so on.

Try these:



'Where's my teddy!?'



'It's dinner time, bird!'

Activity 4: Expanding Dialogue

Give students a line of dialogue and encourage them to expand on the dialogue to create a story. You can use famous lines of dialogue or create your own. You could also use props such as puppets, dress-ups and other objects that relate to the story.

Try these:

- 'Who's been sitting on my chair?' – *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
- 'I'll huff and I'll puff ...' – *The Three Little Pigs*
- 'Watch out!'
- 'This is so scary ...'
- 'Oh no ...'
- 'This is the best day of my life.'
- 'Today was the worst day ever, I ...'
- 'That's mine! I want it!'



Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue



Activity 5: Acting with Dialogue

Divide students into pairs. Give each pair a different scenario and ask them to act it out using dialogue. Use props if available.

For example:

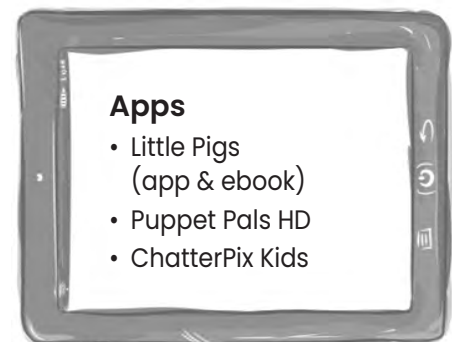
- Birthday party: Someone forgot the cake
- Birthday party: The present that nobody wanted
- Fight with parents: One plays the parent and one plays the child
- Confrontation with the worst teacher ever
- The grandma who gives you too many kisses
- You just discovered your pet can talk.

Activity 6: Tricky Situations

Give two students a problem to solve. Then ask the students to use dialogue to communicate and solve the problem. This activity could also be done using puppets.

For example:

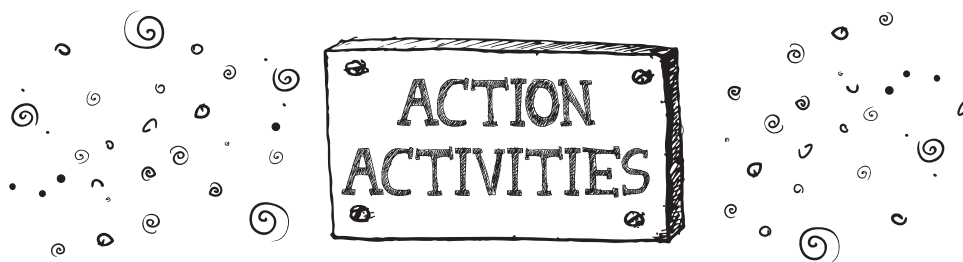
- One biscuit, two people
- Missing the bus on an excursion
- You're late for school
- You're at the beach and it starts to rain
- You forgot to pack your lunch
- It's 4 pm and you still haven't been picked up from school.



Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue

Time to Write

Now that the creative ideas are flowing, it's time to put pencil to paper and start writing! Below are some Action Activities that help to hone students' writing skills through writing practice, mark-making and pre-writing activities.



Activity 1: Speech Bubbles for Photographs

Use class photographs or get students to bring in personal photographs. Ask students to write a speech bubble of dialogue that corresponds to the photograph.

Try these:

- At the zoo
- A friend's birthday party
- Dress-up day / Book Week
- First day of school
- Picture of you and a friend.

Activity 2: Character Speech Bubbles

Ask students to write speech bubbles for the illustrations on the following pages. Early finishers can extend this activity further by drawing their own character and writing a corresponding speech bubble.

Activity 3: Adding Dialogue

Watch an episode of *Shaun the Sheep*. Pick a scene and discuss what Shaun and the other characters might be saying. Ask students to act out the scene in small groups and add dialogue.

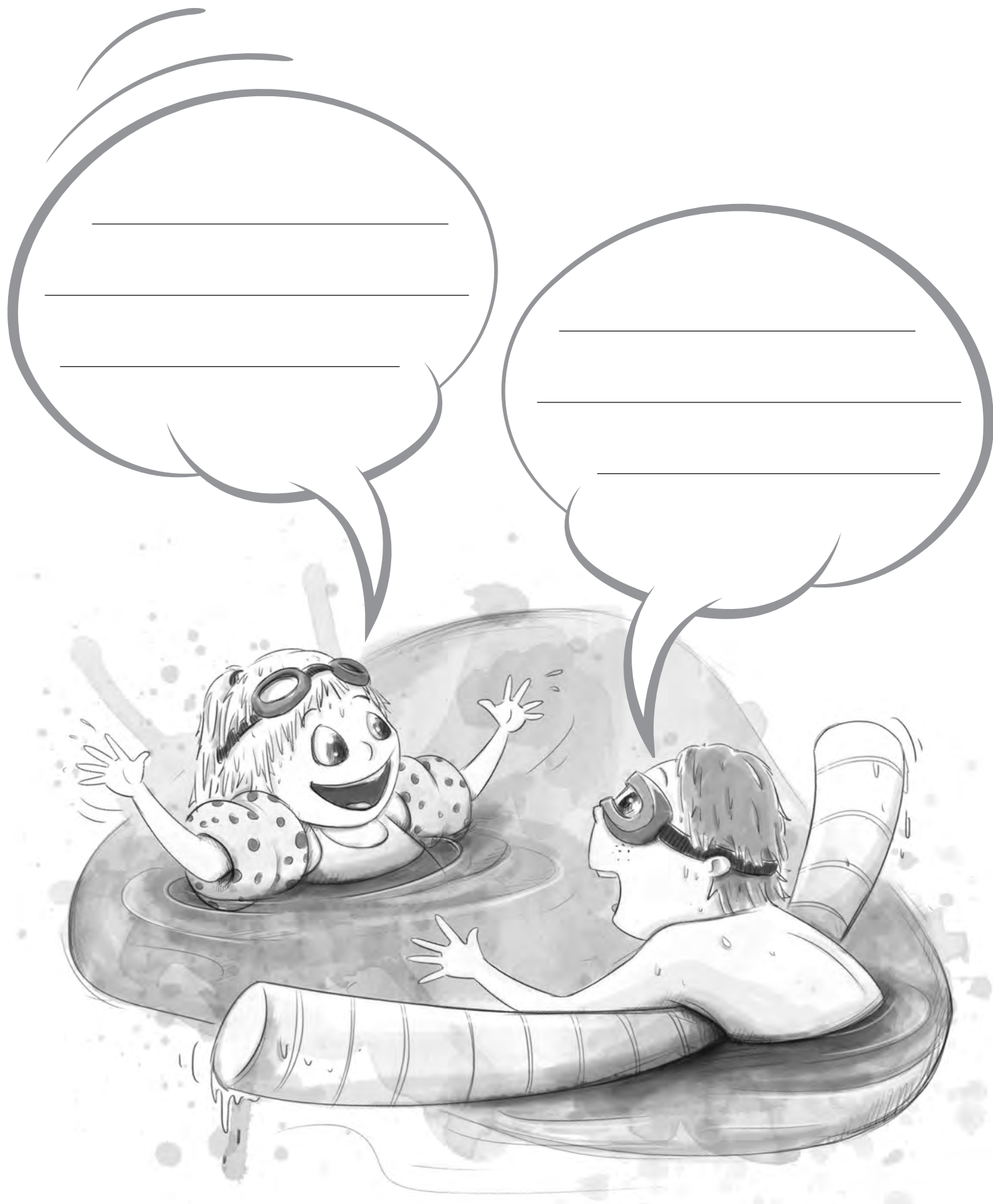
CREATE DIALOGUE

Create dialogue for the character below.



CREATE DIALOGUE

Create dialogue for the characters below.



Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue



Activity 4a: Dialogue in Comic Books

Look at different comic books and discuss how they use dialogue and images to tell a story.

Try these:

- *Garfield*
- *Batman*
- *The Phantom*
- *Spiderman*
- *Snoopy*.

Activity 4b: Comic Book Speech Bubbles

Write the speech bubbles for the comic strip on the next page.

Activity 4c: Creating Comics

Ask students to illustrate and write the dialogue for their own two-scene comic strip. They can use the blank template on page 75 to illustrate the comic and fill in dialogue. You can enlarge the template to A3 size to give students plenty of room.



For more narrative, persuasive and informative writing activities for beginner writers, go to *Teacher Hub*.

CREATE DIALOGUE

Create dialogue for
the comic strip below.



CREATE YOUR OWN COMIC STRIP

A comic strip template consisting of two panels. The left panel is filled with a pattern of small dots, and the right panel is filled with a pattern of small squares. There are five speech bubbles in total, each containing three horizontal lines for writing. The speech bubbles are arranged as follows: one in the top left of the left panel, one in the middle of the left panel, one in the top right of the right panel, one in the middle of the right panel, and one in the bottom right of the right panel. The speech bubbles are connected by lines, suggesting a sequence of dialogue.

STUDENT CHECKLIST

This checklist can be given to students to remind them what you are looking for when they write dialogue. Cut them out and attach them to students' work.

Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue Checklist



- ☐ Use dialogue to bring a scene to life.
- ☐ Use dialogue to reveal something about a character.
- ☐ Use dialogue to show what's happening in the story.

Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue Checklist

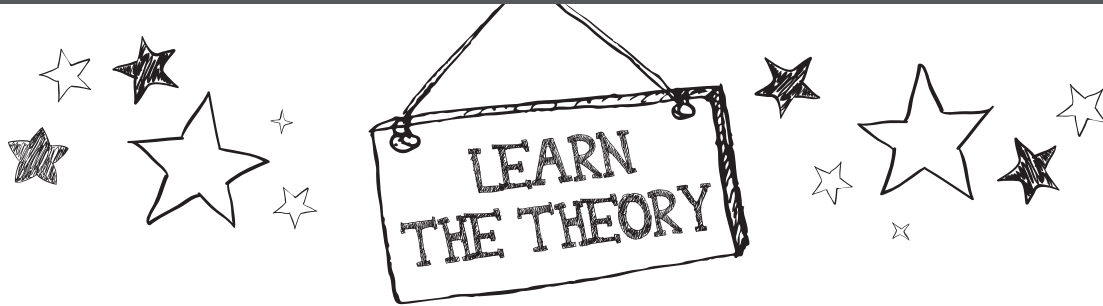


- ☐ Use dialogue to bring a scene to life.
- ☐ Use dialogue to reveal something about a character.
- ☐ Use dialogue to show what's happening in the story.

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell



Step 5: Show, Don't Tell



When you write, it is important to 'show', rather than 'tell', the reader. Show how your friend helped you. Show how much fun you have with your sister. Show why you love art.

To demonstrate this concept to beginner writers, encourage them to draw their ideas first, then act them out and finally describe them.

Top Techniques

1. **Paint a word picture** – Add lots of detail using the Five + 1 Senses, to paint pictures in the reader's mind (see also Step 3: Tightening Tension).
2. **Character Care Factor** – Make the reader care about your characters by showing what they are like and how they are feeling.

Example

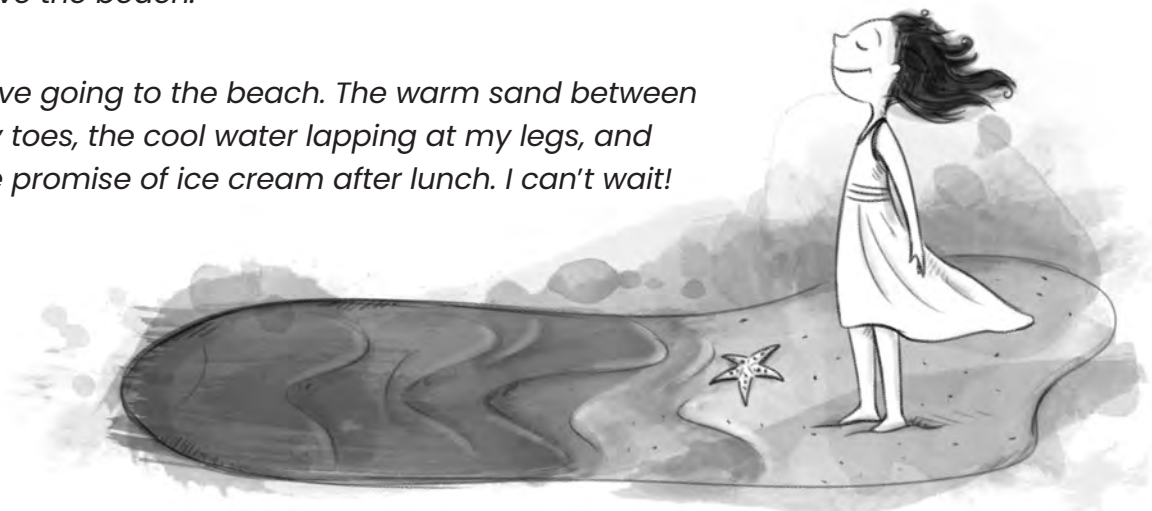
This 'before and after' writing sample demonstrates how to show rather than tell the reader why you like the beach, by **painting a word picture**. Use this to model what you expect from your students.

Before

I love the beach.

After

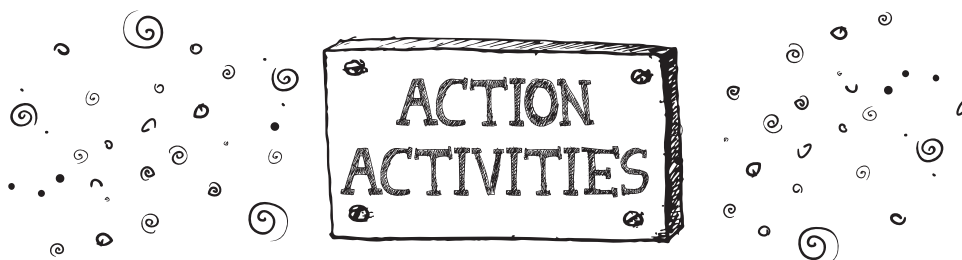
I love going to the beach. The warm sand between my toes, the cool water lapping at my legs, and the promise of ice cream after lunch. I can't wait!



Step 5: Show, Don't Tell

What It Looks Like

For many people, seeing is believing! Introduce the concept of 'showing' as opposed to 'telling' a story, by getting students to focus on the Five + 1 Senses (what they can see, hear, touch, smell, taste and feel).



Activity 1: The Five + 1 Senses in Charity Advertisements

Look at different charity advertisements and get students to focus on how they convey emotion. Use the Five + 1 Senses to discuss and imagine what the advertisements make us see, hear, touch, smell, taste and feel (emotions).

Try these:

- The Salvation Army
- Australian Red Cross
- World Vision.

For example:



- See:** The soft, fluffy snow
Hear: The wind rustling through the trees
Touch: The cold, hard bench rubbing against my skin
Smell: The smell of wood smoke coming from fires in cozy, warm homes
Taste: The sharp bitterness of the cold air
Feel: Lost, lonely and afraid.

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell



Activity 2: YouTube Clips That 'Show'

Search YouTube for clips that show a story, rather than telling it. How do they show what the characters are like and what they are feeling?

Try these:

- Le Trèfle – 'Emma' (A world without paper)
- Volkswagen – 'The Force'
- Wordless animated short films:
 - *Hair Love*
 - *Snack Attack*
 - *La Luna*
 - *For the Birds*.

Activity 3: Wordless Picture Books

Look at wordless picture books and examine how they tell a story without using any words.

Try these:

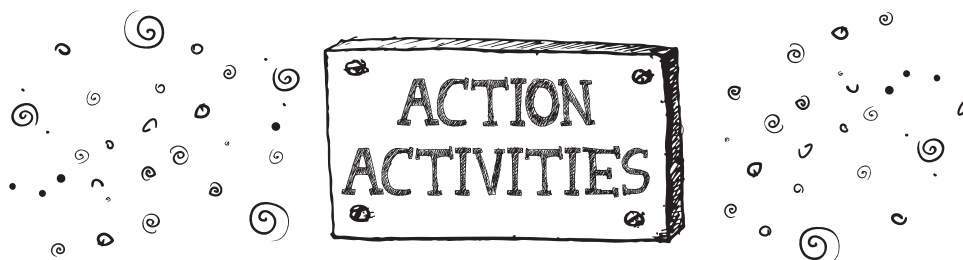
- *Window or Mirror* by Jeannie Baker
- *Tuesday or Flotsam* by David Wiesner
- *The Snowman* by Raymond Briggs
- *The Lion and the Mouse* by Jerry Pinkney.



Step 5: Show, Don't Tell

Tell Me About It

The activities below are all verbal. They focus on getting students to think creatively before they put pencil to paper. Verbal activities are a great way to practise presenting to others, collaborating, sharing ideas and turn-taking.



Activity 1: Guess What I Have

Give one student an object – you can create drama by hiding it in a bag or box. Then ask the student to describe the object to the class using their senses. What does it feel like? Smell like? Look like? The class must try to guess what the object is.

If the class needs extra clues, the student could describe where you can find the object or what it's used for. Reduce the number of clues once students get better at the game.

For example:

- A pine cone
 - It **feels** spikey, hard and rough.
 - It **smells** woody, fresh and earthy.
 - You could find it in a forest, outside or near a tree.

This activity could also be used during your Show and Tell sessions.



Step 5: Show, Don't Tell



Activity 2: The Five Senses in Photographs

Show students an image and ask them to describe what they can see, hear, touch, smell and taste. Write the students' responses on a poster under the photograph.

Example: Under the bed in a messy kid's room

I see mountains of dust and sticky lollies.

I hear the scuttle of creepy, crawly insects.

I touch a mushy banana.

I smell old dirty socks and rotten fruit.

Other locations:

- A cubby house
- A lolly shop
- A classroom
- A dark forest.



Activity 3: Acting Out Emotions

Pick an emotion (happy, sad, angry, exhausted, etc.) and get a student to act it out. The others then try to guess what the emotion is. Create drama by asking the student to leave the room and then come back displaying that emotion.

Activity 4: Acting Out Scenarios

Give a student a scenario. For example:

- The character is angry because her brother broke her toy.
- The character is excited because he is visiting his grandparents after school.

Ask the student to act out the scenario. Get the other students to discuss what they think the student is feeling and why.

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell



Activity 5a: How Colours Convey Emotions

Hold up different pieces of coloured paper and ask students to tell you how each colour makes them feel. Extend students' vocabulary by offering additional suggestions.

For example:

- **Red:** angry, warm, excited, intense and shy
- **Blue:** sad, calm, relaxed, depressed and cold
- **Yellow:** happy, warm, positive, confident and friendly.

Activity 5b: Drawing Emotions

Ask students to pick a colour and draw a picture in the template on the next page showing how that colour makes them feel. To extend the activity further, ask students to write how the colour makes them feel below their picture.

Activity 5c: Colour Poems

Read a colour poem, then ask students to write their own poems using colours to convey emotion. Remember to focus on using the Five + 1 Senses.

Try these:

- *Hailstones and Halibut Bones* by Mary O'Neill
- *Out of the Blue: Stories and Poems about Colour* by Hiawyn Oram
- *Color* by Christina Rossetti.

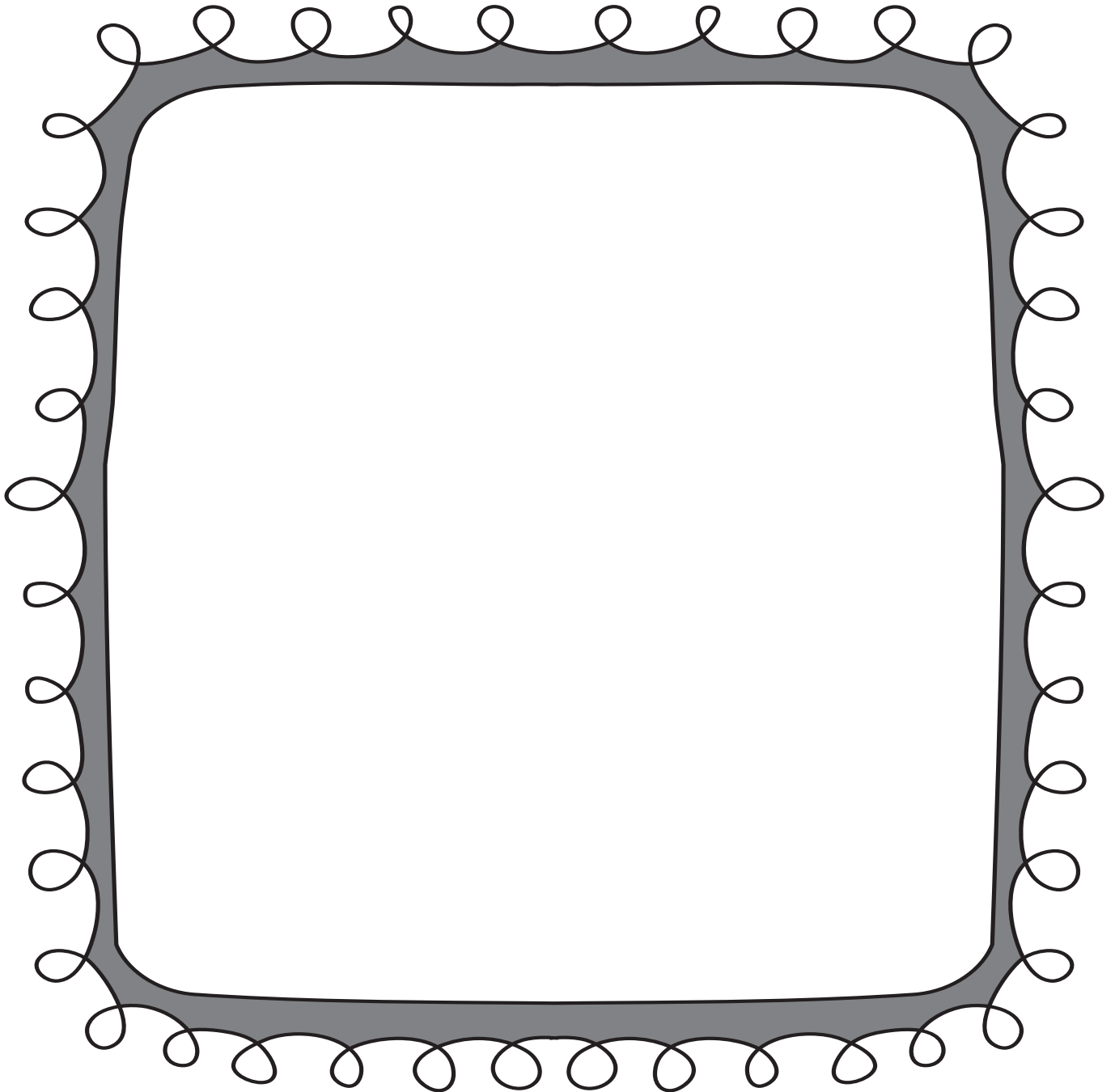
For example:

- Black **looks** like a dark, mysterious cave.
- Black **feels** like emptiness.
- Black **tastes** like burnt toast.
- Black **smells** like burning coals.
- Black **sounds** like the crackling of a bushfire.



HOW COLOURS MAKE YOU FEEL

Pick one colour and draw a picture about how it makes you feel.
Then write about it below.



_____ makes me feel _____.

MY COLOUR POEM

Pick a colour and write a colour poem.

_____ looks like _____.

_____ sounds like _____.

_____ feels like _____.

_____ smells like _____.

_____ tastes like _____.

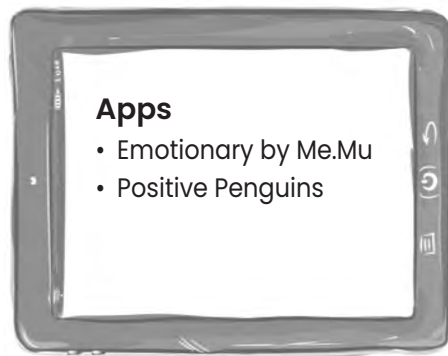
_____ makes me feel _____.

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell



Activity 6: Creating Advertisements

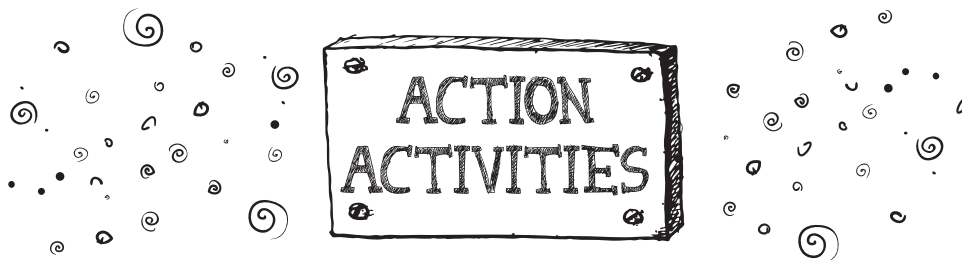
Show students a variety of magazine advertisements or holiday brochures. Discuss how different images can convey different feelings. Using an iPad or camera, get students to take photographs of their favourite part of the school. Use these photographs to create an advertisement for the school.



Step 5: Show, Don't Tell

Time to Write

Now that the creative ideas are flowing, it's time to put pencil to paper and start writing! Below are some Action Activities that help to hone students' writing skills through writing practice, mark-making and pre-writing activities.



Activity 1: Set the Scene

Encourage development of visual literacy by giving students an exciting sentence, scene or scenario, then ask them to draw a picture that shows it. (Fine-line pens allow for extra detail when students use drawing as an expressive language.)

For example:

- It was dark and scary on the beach.
- Everyone knew my secret. I was sure of it.
- Maybe the web was magic.
- She was the meanest person I'd ever met.

Extension: Get students to label the different parts of their pictures. Encourage them to use descriptive language.

Activity 2: Five + 1 Senses Brainstorming

Do a whole class experience such as making play dough, making goop or blowing bubbles. Then brainstorm together using the Five + 1 Senses to describe how the experience felt, sounded, looked, etc.

For example:

- The play dough **felt** very sticky.
- It **smelt** like burnt popcorn.
- I wanted to **taste** it but the teacher said I couldn't.

Then ask students to write their own sentence to 'show' the experience. Remind them to use the Five + 1 Senses.

For example: The play dough **felt** sticky, like cold porridge.

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell



Activity 3: Imaginary Words

Challenge students to create an imaginary word and write a sentence that describes it. If they have 'shown' it correctly, the reader should be able to visualise what the thing is.

For example:

- The scaznah scuttled down the school hallway.
- I got a rooboola for my birthday and was never hungry again.
- The cat spat out the nimun and it zoomed out the window.
- The plancet floated along the path to show us the way.

Extension: Ask students to draw a picture to match the imaginary word.

Activity 4: Describing Characters

Give students a character and a problem, e.g. a shy student at the school disco. Ask students to close their eyes and imagine how the character looks and what they are feeling. Get students to draw a picture and write a sentence to describe the character.



Apps

- Lifecards – Postcards
- Imagistory

For more narrative, persuasive and informative writing activities for beginner writers, go to *Teacher Hub*.

STUDENT CHECKLIST

This checklist can be given to students to remind them what you are looking for when you ask them to show rather than tell. Cut them out and attach them to students' work.

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell Checklist



- ☐ Use sensory details to paint a word picture.
- ☐ Make the reader care about the characters.

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell Checklist

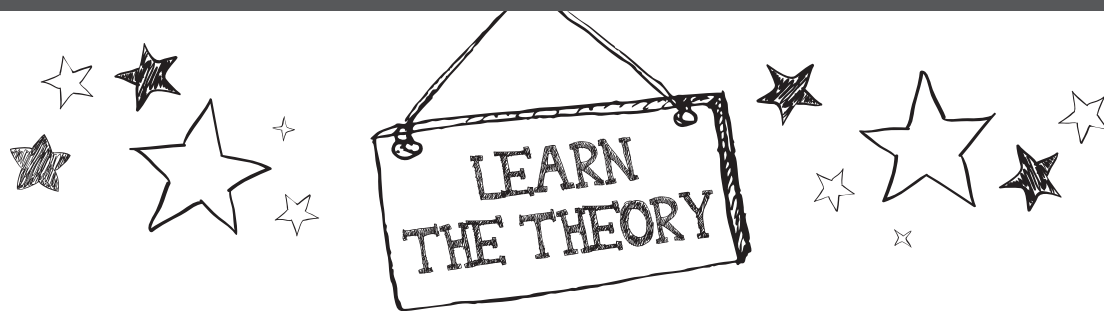


- ☐ Use sensory details to paint a word picture.
- ☐ Make the reader care about the characters.

Step 6: Ban the Boring



Step 6: Ban the Boring



Writing is NOT real life – so ban the boring bits!

Writing about all the stuff you do every day is safe and easy, but very dull. Skip the warm-up writing and cut straight to the most interesting part of the story.

Top Techniques

1. **Leave out the boring bits** – Don't write about the ordinary things you do every day.

For example:

- Mornings – getting dressed, going to the bathroom and brushing your teeth
- Travel – bus tours, train journeys and car trips
- Food – eating meals, snacks and treats.

2. **Focus on the interesting part** – Write about the important things that happened.

For example:

- The most exciting part of the story
- The best part of your weekend
- The most embarrassing moment on school camp.

Example

This 'before and after' writing sample demonstrates how to **leave out the boring bits** and **focus on the interesting part** – the snow! Use this to model what you expect from your students.

Before

We all got on the bus and Jackie and Sam and I sat together. We were going to the snow. We ate lots of chocolate and chips. It was a long drive so we all fell asleep ...

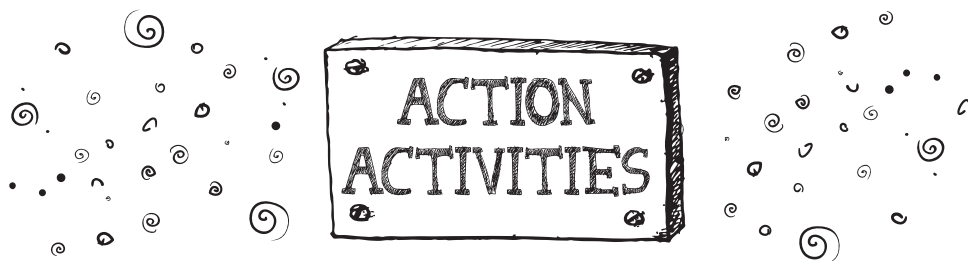
After

The first time I saw snow, I thought it was ice cream. I soon found out it wasn't. Yuck!

Step 6: Ban the Boring

What It Looks Like

Introduce students to the editing process by discussing the fact that not everything has to be included in a story. Some things are too ordinary and boring!



Activity 1: Deleted Movie Scenes

Search YouTube for deleted movie scenes and watch them in class. Get students to point out the 'boring' parts of the scene and discuss why you think these scenes were deleted.

Try these:

- *Frozen*
- *Finding Dory*
- *Coco*
- *Cars 3*.



Step 6: Ban the Boring

Tell Me About It

The activities below are all verbal. They focus on getting students to think creatively before they put pencil to paper. Verbal activities are a great way to practise presenting to others, collaborating, sharing ideas and turn-taking.



Activity 1: Troublesome Turns

Give students a scenario and get them to brainstorm all the ways it could go wrong. List them on the board. This will encourage students to focus on the exciting parts of the story and Ban the Boring!

Try these:

- Mum baking a birthday cake
- The new teacher's first day of school
- Your first day at a new school
- The day of the footy finals
- Friday family dinner.

For example:

Mum is baking a birthday cake.

- She used salt instead of sugar.
- The oven was too hot.
- She ran out of milk.
- She set the tea towel on fire.
- The cake was burnt on the outside and raw in the middle.



Activity 2: Take It to the Polls

Give students different sentences or short paragraphs – some exciting ones and some boring ones. Ask a student to read out the sentence and have other students vote on whether it is 'Sizzling' or 'Needs more work' by using their Sizzle Sticks from Step 2.

SIZZLE OR FIZZLE?

Cut out the pieces of text below. Ask a volunteer to read one out to the class. The rest of the class votes on whether they think the text is 'Sizzling' or 'Needs more work'. Use the Sizzle Sticks from Step 2 to vote.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>'Hey! Stop squeezing me so hard!' Huh? That sounded like it came from my teddy bear. That can't be right. Teddy bears can't talk – can they?</p> | <p>I love sleeping with my teddy bear. He's so soft, cuddly and warm. I cuddle him every night.</p> |
| <p>The game was down to the final seconds and it was all up to me to score the winning goal.</p> | <p>On Monday afternoons I have footy practice.</p> |
| <p>We watched with mouths wide open as the baby snails hatched out of their eggs, right in the palm of our teacher's hand.</p> | <p>Our class has pet snails.</p> |
| <p>Ergh! No milk again! Oh well, I'll just have orange juice in my cereal.</p> | <p>We ran out of milk for breakfast so I had to have toast.</p> |
| <p>I put on my raincoat, gumboots and hat. There's no way this rain is going to stop me today!</p> | <p>I don't want to stay inside again. I'm sick of this rain!</p> |
| <p>I opened the door to the dance. Lights flashed as people spun around and around in a whirl of colours.</p> | <p>I hope we win the dance competition.</p> |

Step 6: Ban the Boring



Activity 3: Boring Beginnings

Model a boring beginning to the class, then ask students to brainstorm ways to make it more exciting.

For example:

Before

I woke up that morning feeling really nervous. Today was my first day at a new school.

After

I opened the classroom door and all eyes turned towards me. I stared at the floor. Then a friendly voice came from the back of the room – ‘Come and sit next to me!’ I looked up and smiled. Maybe my first day would be good after all.



Activity 4: Filling the Gaps

Watch short films by Pixar or Minuscule and ask students to brainstorm things that weren't shown in the movie, such as going to the toilet or cleaning up the mess after an explosion.

Activity 5: Magic Bubbles

Teach literacy outside of the classroom using bubbles as a stimulus. Blow bubbles in front of the students and each time the bubble bursts, ask students to tell you something magical that might happen. Get students to take turns blowing the bubbles.

Activity 6: Banning the Boring Bits

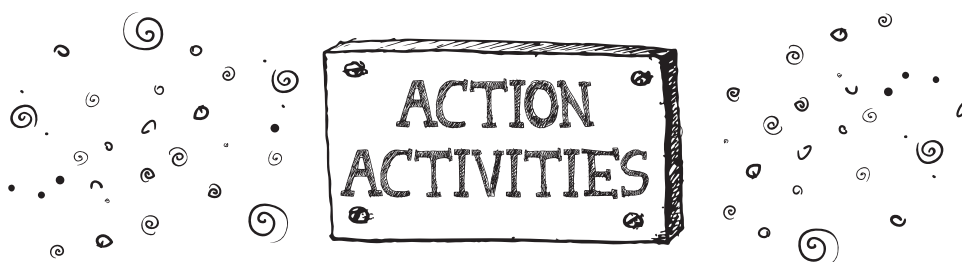
Get students to read out a piece of their own writing to a friend or a small group. Can they spot any boring bits in each other's work that could be removed or replaced?

Step 6: Ban the Boring

Time to Write

Now that the creative ideas are flowing, it's time to put pencil to paper and start writing!

Below are some Action Activities that help to hone students' writing skills through writing practice, mark-making and pre-writing activities.



Activity 1: Student Biographies

A biography can be really tough to write. Break it down into easy steps – ask students to edit and write their biographies using the prompts below. Early finishers can illustrate their biographies.

Try these:

- The three most exciting events
- The most embarrassing thing that happened
- Best times with siblings or friends
- Best times in art class
- Three times that you were really scared.

Activity 2: Meet Me

On the board write 'Meet me ...' followed by a boring location. Then ask students to write more exciting places to meet.

For example:

Before

*Meet me ...
at the gate after school.*

After

*Meet me ...
at the end of the rainbow.*



Step 6: Ban the Boring



Activity 3a: Postcards

Collect postcards and show students how little writing they have. Point out that postcards only use the most exciting words or images to tell a story. Using a postcard as a stimulus, brainstorm different things that could happen in the picture. Get students to write one exciting sentence.

Activity 3b: Making Postcards

Give students a theme or title and get them to make their own postcards. For example, students could draw a picture of a family member on the postcard and then write a sentence on the back about why this person is amazing.

Activity 4: Crazy Combinations

Give students a crazy word combination like 'pink elephant' or 'electric shoes' and ask them to create a sentence using words from a 100-word list.

Activity 5: Ban Boring Words

Read *Ordinary Albert* by Nancy Antle and Pamela Allen and discuss what the word 'ordinary' means. After students have an understanding of the word, get them to change the objects that were described as 'ordinary' in the book.

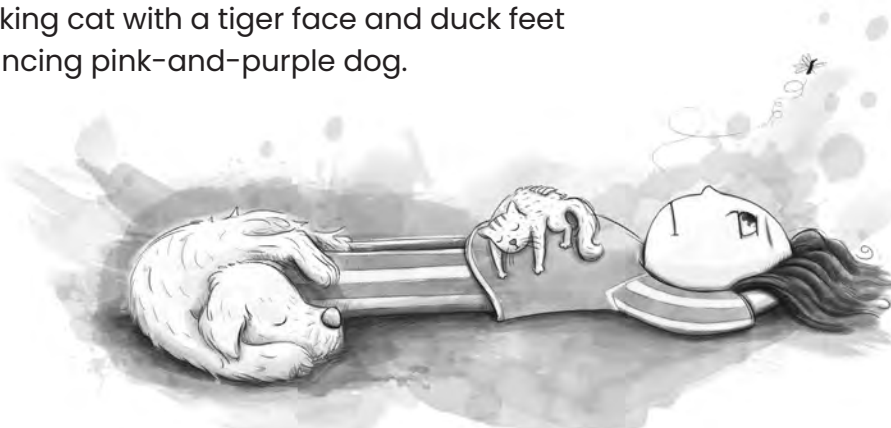
For example:

'He lived in an ordinary house with an ordinary cat and an ordinary dog' could be changed to:

- He lived in ...
 - a house made of candy
 - a scary haunted house
 - a house where everything was upside down and back-to-front.

The ordinary cat and ordinary dog could be changed to:

- A talking cat with a tiger face and duck feet
- A dancing pink-and-purple dog.



Step 6: Ban the Boring



Activity 6: Boring Board

Create a Ban the Boring display board. Get students to start collecting boring beginnings or boring words. Each time they find a boring beginning or phrase in a story, get them to add it to the Boring Board.

Activity 7: Authors on Editing

Ask students to share their favourite authors. Then do an online search for the authors' names plus the words 'boring', 'edit' and 'delete'. Authors' websites are a rich source of information on editing and deleting the boring bits.

Activity 8: Author Chair

Ask a volunteer to share their work with the class. Get the other students to spot one thing the writer has done well and one thing that they could improve. Challenge the writer to edit their work based on the suggestions.



For more narrative, persuasive and informative writing activities for beginner writers, go to *Teacher Hub*.

STUDENT CHECKLIST

This checklist can be given to students to remind them what you are looking for when you ask them to edit their work. Cut them out and attach them to students' work.

Step 6: Ban the Boring Checklist



- ☐ Leave out the boring every day things.
- ☐ Focus on the interesting part – cut straight to the action.

Step 6: Ban the Boring Checklist

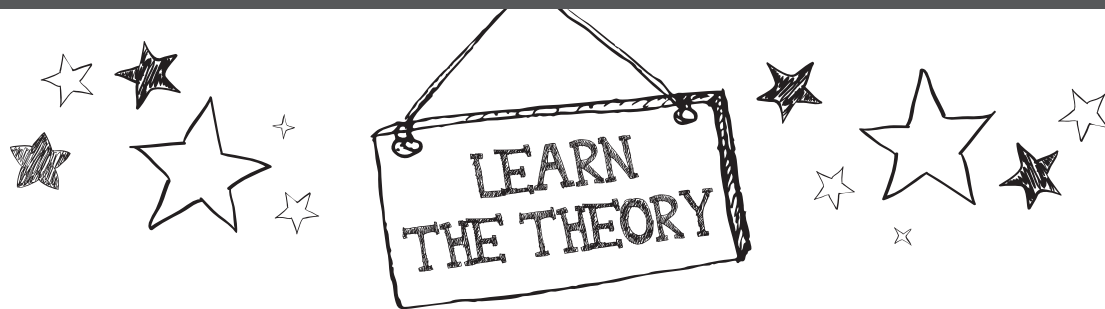


- ☐ Leave out the boring every day things.
- ☐ Focus on the interesting part – cut straight to the action.

Step 7: Exciting Endings



Step 7: Exciting Endings



Don't start writing until you know your ending.

A great ending is embedded in the very heart and fabric of the story. Everything should be leading towards that final moment that wraps up the story and satisfies the reader.

Top Techniques

1. **Plan your ending before you start** – An ending is not 'discovered' when you reach the end of your story; it's set up in the planning stages before you start writing.
2. **Ban the 'quick fix' endings** – These endings are an easy way out for the writer, but very annoying for the reader. For example:
 - And then I woke up – it was all a dream.
 - BOOM! They all died.
 - They all lived happily ever after.
 - To be continued ...
3. **Endings have two parts** – Great narrative endings include an action climax, where the characters get themselves out of the sticky situation, and an emotional resolution where the characters end up feeling safe and happy.

Example

This 'before and after' writing sample demonstrates the difference between a **'quick fix' ending** and an Exciting Ending with an **action climax** and **emotional resolution**. Use this to model what you expect from your students.

Before

The river had burst its banks and the water rushed towards us. It was a flood! Luckily a helicopter came down and saved us.

After

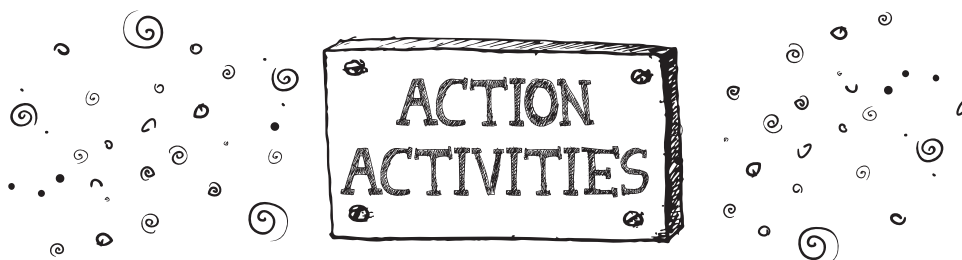
*The river had burst its banks and the water rushed towards us.
'Quick,' said Mum. 'Climb that tree!'
We scrambled up into the branches. Huddled together, we watched the flood rage past. We were safe at last.*

(The characters get themselves out of the sticky situation and are safe.)

Step 7: Exciting Endings

What It Looks Like

Show students a range of Exciting Endings from different types of narrative texts. Introduce the concept of knowing your ending before you start and help students to distinguish an Exciting Ending from a boring one.



Activity 1: Exciting Endings in Picture Books

Look for Exciting Endings in picture books.

Try these:

- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- *Diary of a Wombat* by Jackie French and illustrated by Bruce Whatley
- *When Billy Was a Dog* by Kirsty Murray and illustrated by Karen Blair
- *Miss Hunnicutt's Hat* by Jeff Brumbeau and illustrated by Gail de Marcken.

Activity 2: Exciting Endings in Advertisements

Look for Exciting Endings in advertisements.

Try these:

- RSPCA
- WorkSafe
- AAMI
- Volkswagen – 'The Force'.
- Allianz

Activity 3: Exciting Endings in Short Films

Look for Exciting Endings in short films.

Try these:

- Pixar short films
- *Minuscule* episodes
- Oscar-winning animated shorts
- The Literacy Shed.



EXCITING ENDINGS: MATCH UP!

Match the last line of the picture book to its title.

The Dream of the Thylacine
by Margaret Wild
and Ron Brooks

The river shone under the
blue sky, a friend again.

*There's a Hippopotamus
on Our Roof Eating Cake*
by Hazel Edwards and
Deborah Niland

'We're not going on
a bear hunt again!'

Flood
by Jackie French
and Bruce Whatley

Dreaming am I.

We're Going on a Bear Hunt
by Michael Rosen
and Helen Oxenbury

There's a hippopotamus
on our roof eating cake.

Diary of a Wombat
by Jackie French
and Bruce Whatley

Then he nibbled a hole
in the cocoon, pushed his
way out and ... he was
a beautiful butterfly!

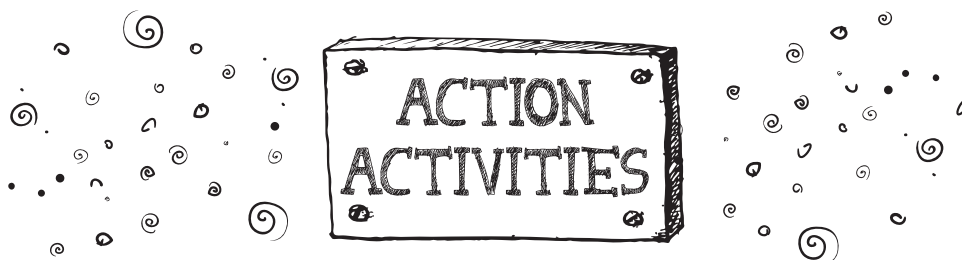
The Very Hungry Caterpillar
by Eric Carle

Slept.

Step 7: Exciting Endings

Tell Me About It

The activities below are all verbal. They focus on getting students to think creatively before they put pencil to paper. Verbal activities are a great way to practise presenting to others, collaborating, sharing ideas and turn-taking.



Activity 1: Exploring Picture Book Endings

Look at a range of different picture books and discuss the endings. Point out the different parts of an ending – the action climax followed by the quieter emotional resolution.

Ask students to identify these two parts of an ending in these picture books using the template on the next page:

- *Room on the Broom* by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler
- *Bat vs Poss* by Alexa Moses and illustrated by Anil Tortop
- *Dave* by Sue Hendra and illustrated by Liz Pichon
- *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen and illustrated by Helen Oxenbury
- *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler.

Activity 2: Exploring Advertisement Endings

Look at a range of different advertisements and discuss the endings. Point out that advertisements might end with a call to action rather than an action climax and emotional resolution.

Ask students to identify the call to action in advertisements by:

- The Smith Family
- WorkSafe
- Tourism Australia.

EXCITING ENDINGS

Use this template to identify the different parts of an ending.

Title:

How did it end?

- **Action Climax**

- **Emotional Resolution**

Step 7: Exciting Endings



Activity 3: How Does It End?

Play the class a short video, such as a *Pink Panther* cartoon, an episode of *Minuscule*, or a short film by Pixar. Stop it just before the end and ask students to brainstorm a list of possible endings.

Activity 4: Alternative Endings

Show the class some movie trailers, then ask students to pick one and brainstorm three possible endings.

Try these:

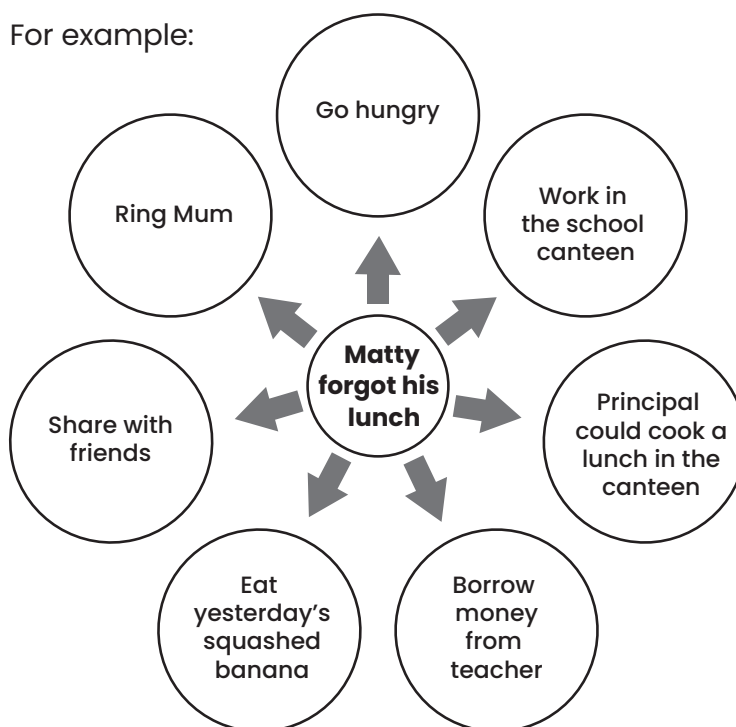
- | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| • <i>Frozen</i> | • <i>The Lion King</i> | • <i>Toy Story</i> | • <i>Happy Feet</i> |
| • <i>Cars</i> | • <i>Madagascar</i> | • <i>Minions</i> | • <i>Monsters, Inc.</i> |

Activity 5: Using 'Sticky Situations'

Display the sticky situations on the next page and ask students to brainstorm possible solutions to them. This can be done as a whole class or in small groups.



For example:



STICKY SITUATIONS

**Late for
school**

**Footy
stuck in
the tree**

**Shoelace
broke**

**Forgot
your
bathers**

**Missed
the bus on
excursion**

**Raining
at lunch
time**

Step 7: Exciting Endings

Time to Write

Now that the creative ideas are flowing, it's time to put pencil to paper and start writing!
Below are some Action Activities that help to hone students' writing skills
through writing practice, mark-making and pre-writing activities.



Activity 1: Poetic Endings

Read students an incomplete poem and get them to create an ending. The ending can be brainstormed as a class or written down individually. Try these:

When My Grandparents Visit

When my grandparents visit, we eat ice cream for breakfast.
When my grandparents visit, we watch the hippos at the zoo.
When my grandparents visit, we bake cakes and I lick the bowl.
When my grandparents visit, we take the train to the beach and chase seagulls.
But the one thing I hate is ...

My Cat Ting

My cat Ting
Was older even than me.
She moved so slowly,
Even the birds weren't afraid of her.
And even though it was hard to walk,
She'd appear
When I was in the garden
Wanting a pat
Or a taste of my breakfast
(She liked Vegemite)
I'd stroke her old grey fur
And tell her how beautiful she was.
Until one day ...



Step 7: Exciting Endings



Activity 2: Fractured Fairy Tales

Ask students to come up with alternative endings for their favourite fairy tales.

For example:

- *Little Red Riding Hood* – Red Riding Hood knows karate
- *Jack and the Beanstalk* – the giant makes it down the beanstalk
- *The Three Little Pigs* – the wolf blows down the house made of bricks.

Activity 3: There Was an Old Lady

Read students the picture book *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* by Pam Adams. Point out the use of rhyme and the Exciting Ending. Then ask students to come up with another animal the lady might have swallowed and ask them what would happen if she swallowed that animal. You can extend this activity further by getting students to draw an accompanying picture.

For example:

There was an old lady
who swallowed a bug.
She turned into a mug when
she swallowed the bug.

For younger students, start off the poem and then ask them to brainstorm or write down possible things that the old lady could turn into. Ask them to illustrate their ideas.

For example:

There was an old lady
who swallowed a dog.
She turned into a _____ when she swallowed the dog.



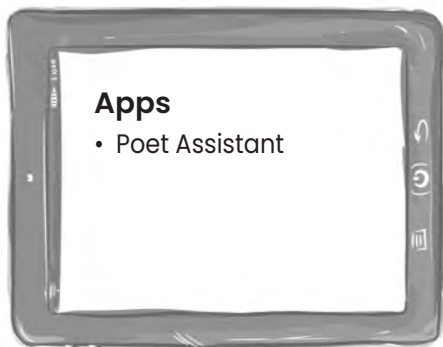
Step 7: Exciting Endings



Activity 4: Illustrating Exciting Endings

Revisit some of the Exciting Endings you have found in picture books.

Ask students to illustrate their favourite Exciting Ending.



For more narrative, persuasive and informative writing activities for beginner writers, go to *Teacher Hub*.



STUDENT CHECKLIST

This checklist can be given to students to remind them what you are looking for in an Exciting Ending. Cut them out and attach them to students' work.

Step 7: Exciting Endings Checklist



- ☐ Plan your ending before you start writing.
- ☐ Avoid 'quick fix' endings.
- ☐ Make sure that the problems are resolved.

Step 7: Exciting Endings Checklist

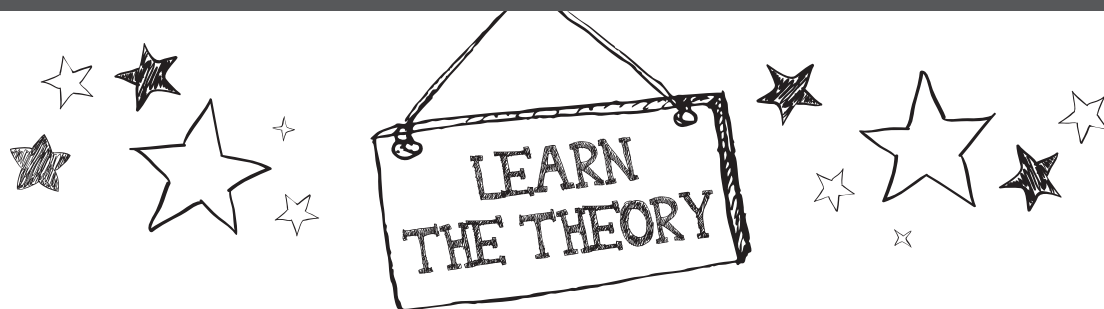


- ☐ Plan your ending before you start writing.
- ☐ Avoid 'quick fix' endings.
- ☐ Make sure that the problems are resolved.

Putting It All Together



Putting It All Together



So, the question is, how and when do you help students progress from practising the individual Steps to creating a full text or story?

Students should be ready to tackle a full text once they have been taught the core structural Steps (see 'Beginner Writers Starter Plan' on page 14):

- Step 1: Plan for Success
- Step 2: Sizzling Starts
- Step 3: Tightening Tension
- Step 7: Exciting Endings

However, we still want to scaffold their learning and break the process into manageable chunks or tasks.

Top Techniques

1. **Plan collaboratively** – When students tackle a full text for the first time, don't ask them to do it alone. Encourage students to brainstorm ideas together as a starting point for their writing.
2. **Write collaboratively** – Get students to write together in groups. Each student writes one part to create a complete text. Collaborative writing allows students to share the task while learning from each other.
3. **Reduce the support** – Start by modelling the strategies as a whole class to build students' collaboration skills. Then get students to work in groups with teacher support. As they gain confidence, reduce the number of students in the group until they can plan and write texts independently. This follows the gradual release model: I do it, we do it, you do it together, you do it alone.



Putting It All Together

Units of Work

The units of work in this chapter are designed to guide younger students through the process of writing a full text. These units include different strategies, templates and topics to put together everything students have learnt in the previous chapters.

Each unit of work is intended to be completed over a series of lessons. As with the individual Steps, model and repeat the strategies in each unit using a variety of topics so that students can consolidate their learning before moving on to the next unit.

Unit 1 – Writing Recounts

In this unit, students plan and write a narrative recount in groups. This allows students to learn from each other and contribute to a complete text rather than writing the whole piece themselves.

Unit 2 – Rewrite a Familiar Story

In this unit, students rewrite a story they know well. The structure of the story is already established, and students can alter the original narrative as much or as little as they like, based on their own abilities.

Unit 3 – Write a Story

Once students are confident, challenge them to use everything they have learnt in the previous units to plan and write their own stories. They have learnt so much, now watch them fly!












The templates in these three units should not be seen as mandatory, but rather as a way to scaffold your students' learning. How you use the templates will vary depending on the age and ability of your students. For example, you could enlarge the templates to A3 size if necessary to allow students to fit their drawings and writing in the space provided. With more able writers, you could reduce or remove the scaffolds to challenge them further.



Putting It All Together

Let's Get Started

This checklist can be used alongside the units of work to help you guide students through the writing process. Some items in this checklist are not relevant when tackling a simpler narrative structure (see Unit 1).

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
|  | Pick a topic | You can use one of the topics provided for each unit or let students pick their own topic. |
|  | Brainstorm lots of ideas | Students brainstorm ideas for their chosen topic as a class or in groups. |
|  | Brainstorm characters | Students brainstorm characters in groups by drawing three or four characters that might be in the story. |
|  | Brainstorm settings | Students brainstorm settings in groups by drawing three or four different locations where the story might take place. |
|  | Brainstorm starts | Students brainstorm their Sizzling Start in groups by drawing three or four ways that their story could begin. |
|  | Brainstorm problems | Students brainstorm story problems in groups by drawing or writing three or four problems that could happen to the characters. |
|  | Brainstorm endings | Students brainstorm their Exciting Ending in groups by drawing three or four ways that their story could end. |
|  | Plan the text | Students draw and/or write their best ideas on the Story Graph. Encourage students to say their story out loud before they write it down. |
|  | Write the story | Students write their story in a group (Unit 1) or individually (Units 2 and 3), based on the plan. Remind students to draw a picture first and then write the story underneath. |
|  | Edit the story | Work with students to review and edit their work. The self-assessment checklist on page 153 can be used for this. |
|  | Publish the story | Students write a final draft and add more detail to their pictures. |

Unit 1 – Writing Recounts

A great way to scaffold students' learning when they first tackle a complete text is to get them to plan and write in groups. This allows students to learn from each other and to contribute to a complete text rather than writing the whole piece themselves.

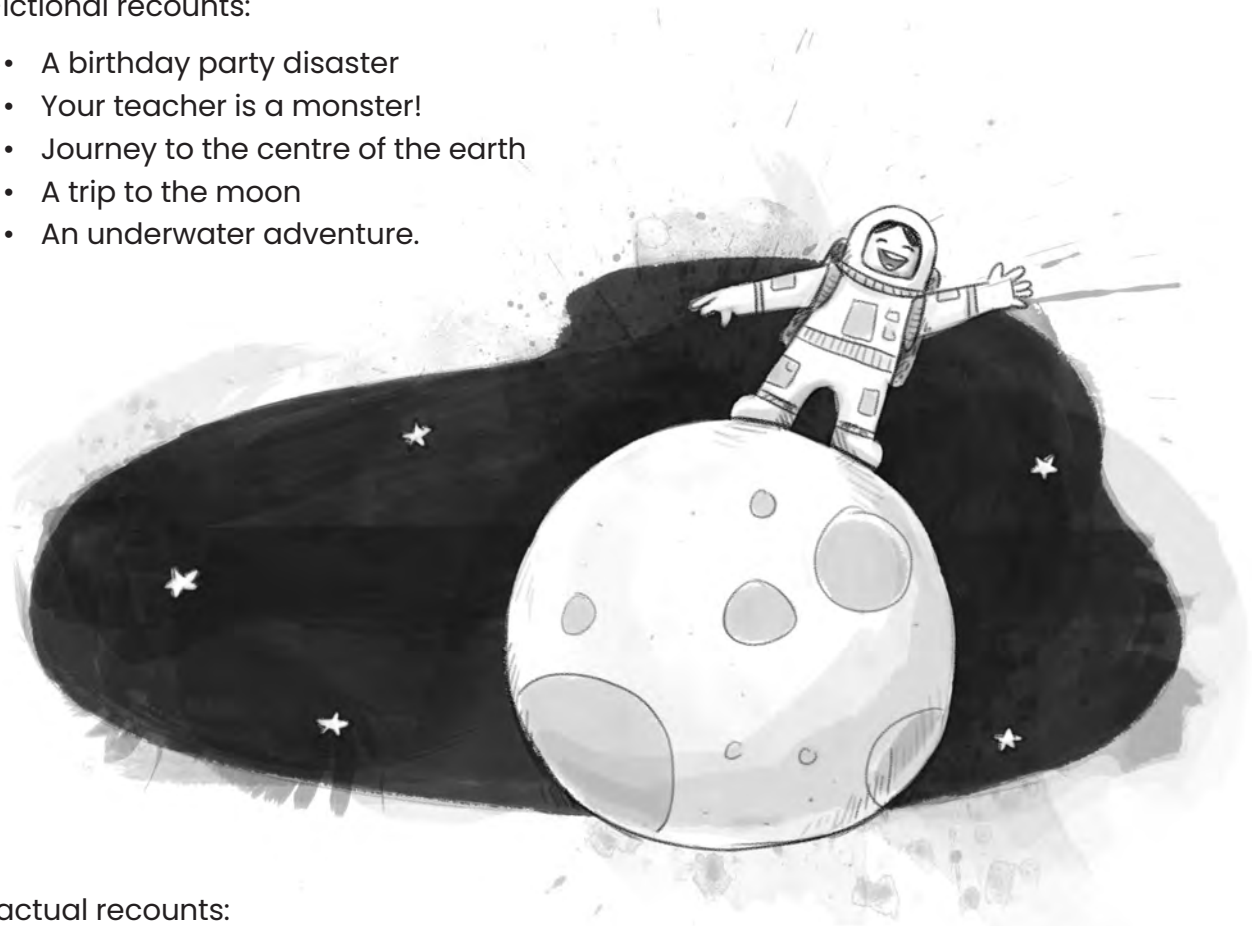
Collaborative writing works particularly well for simpler narrative structures, such as recounts. For more complex story structures it is better to plan collaboratively but write separately (see Units 2 and 3).

How to Teach This Unit

1. Pick a topic from one of the lists below or use your own topic idea.

Fictional recounts:

- A birthday party disaster
- Your teacher is a monster!
- Journey to the centre of the earth
- A trip to the moon
- An underwater adventure.



Factual recounts:

- Sleepover at Grandma's house
- The big move to our new house
- First trip to the snow, bush, beach or city
- A holiday to remember
- Excursion excitement.

Putting It All Together

2. Divide the class into groups of five and get them to brainstorm events for their recount using the 'Group Brainstorm' template on page 116.
3. Groups then select their best ideas and write or draw them on the 'Group Planning' template on page 117. Work with each group to ensure that their text flows well and makes sense.
4. Once students are happy with their plan, get them to cut out each section and stick them on the 'Story Graph' template on page 118.
5. Assign one part of the text to each group member and give them a lanyard with their writing role (see 'Job Lanyard' template on page 119). For example:
 - Person 1 – Event 1
 - Person 2 – Event 2
 - Person 3 – Event 3
 - Person 4 – Sizzling Start
 - Person 5 – Exciting Ending.
6. Give each student the relevant puzzle piece for their role (see pages 120–4) and ask them to draw a picture and write their part of the recount. Work with each group to ensure that students are writing in full sentences.
7. Once each student has finished their part, put the puzzle pieces together so that the students can read their text as a group and check that it makes sense.
8. Work with each group to review and edit their recount using the self-assessment checklist on page 153 before asking students to write a final draft.
9. Repeat this unit with different topics, then gradually reduce the number of students in the group:
 - Try groups of three – each student writes about one event, and then they create the Sizzling Start and Exciting Ending together.
 - Then challenge students to work in pairs.
 - Finally, once they are confident, students can go solo.

Once students feel confident, move on to more complex narrative structures in Units 2 and 3.



GROUP BRAINSTORM

Topic: _____

Brainstorm events for your recount. Draw some different situations that might happen – they can be real or imaginary.

| | |
|--|--|
| Event 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | Event 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Event 3 <input type="checkbox"/> | Event 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Event 5 <input type="checkbox"/> | Event 6 <input type="checkbox"/> |

Talk about each event: What happened? Which events are the most interesting? Which ones are you going to include in your recount?

Tick the box next to the events that you are going to use in your recount.

GROUP PLANNING

As a group, select the three most interesting things that happened and write or draw them on the planning template. Then brainstorm ideas for a Sizzling Start and an Exciting Ending.

Sizzling Start

Event 1

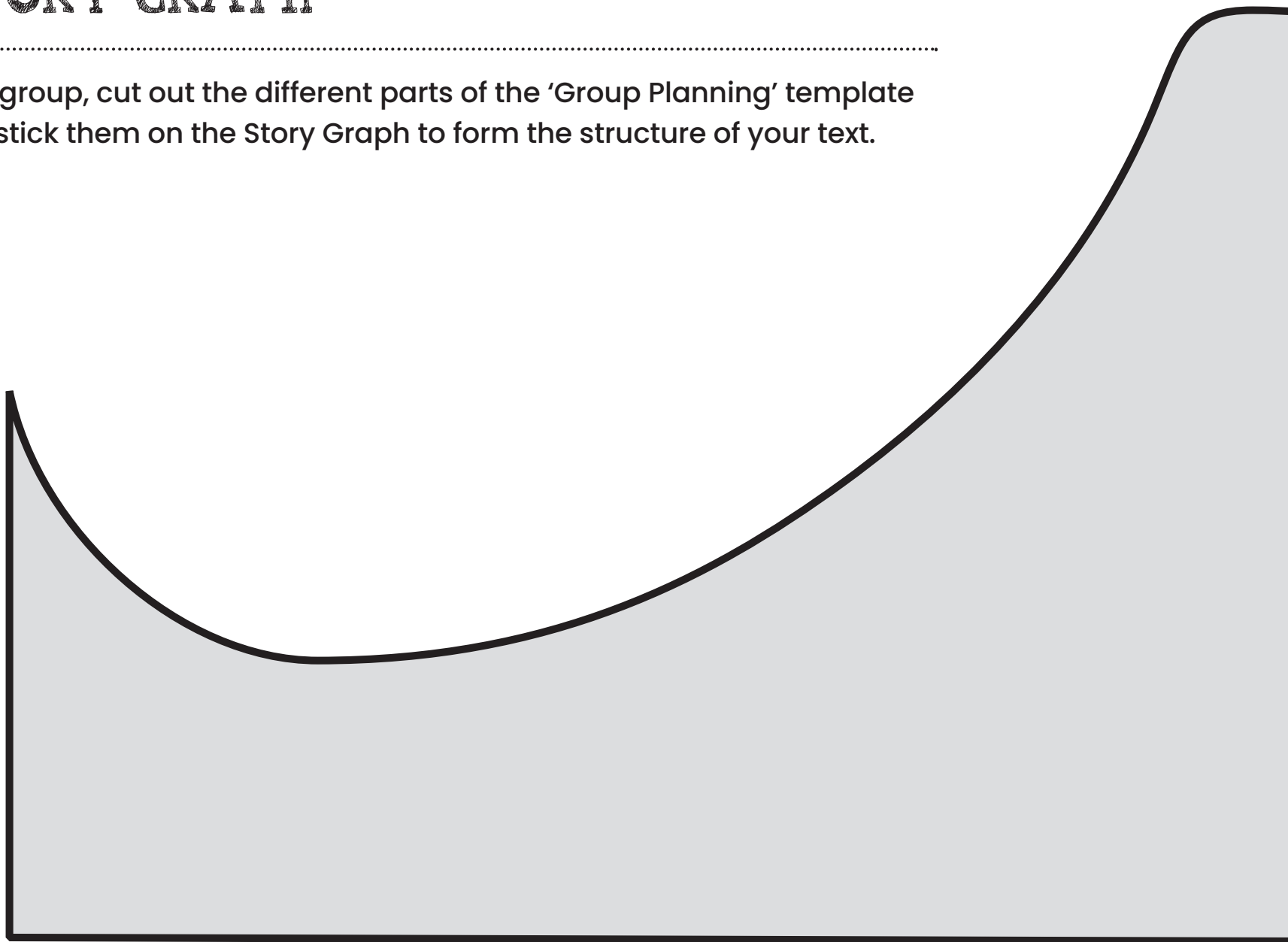
Event 2

Event 3

Exciting Ending

STORY GRAPH

As a group, cut out the different parts of the 'Group Planning' template and stick them on the Story Graph to form the structure of your text.



JOB LANYARDS

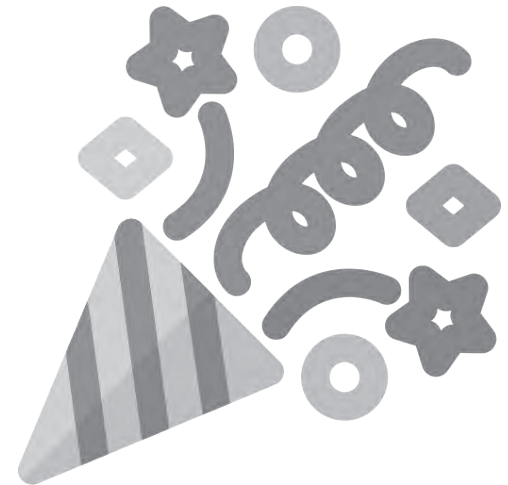
Each person in your group is going to write **one** part of the recount. Cut out the lanyards and assign a role to each person.



**Sizzling Start
Writer**



Event Writer



**Exciting Ending
Writer**

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

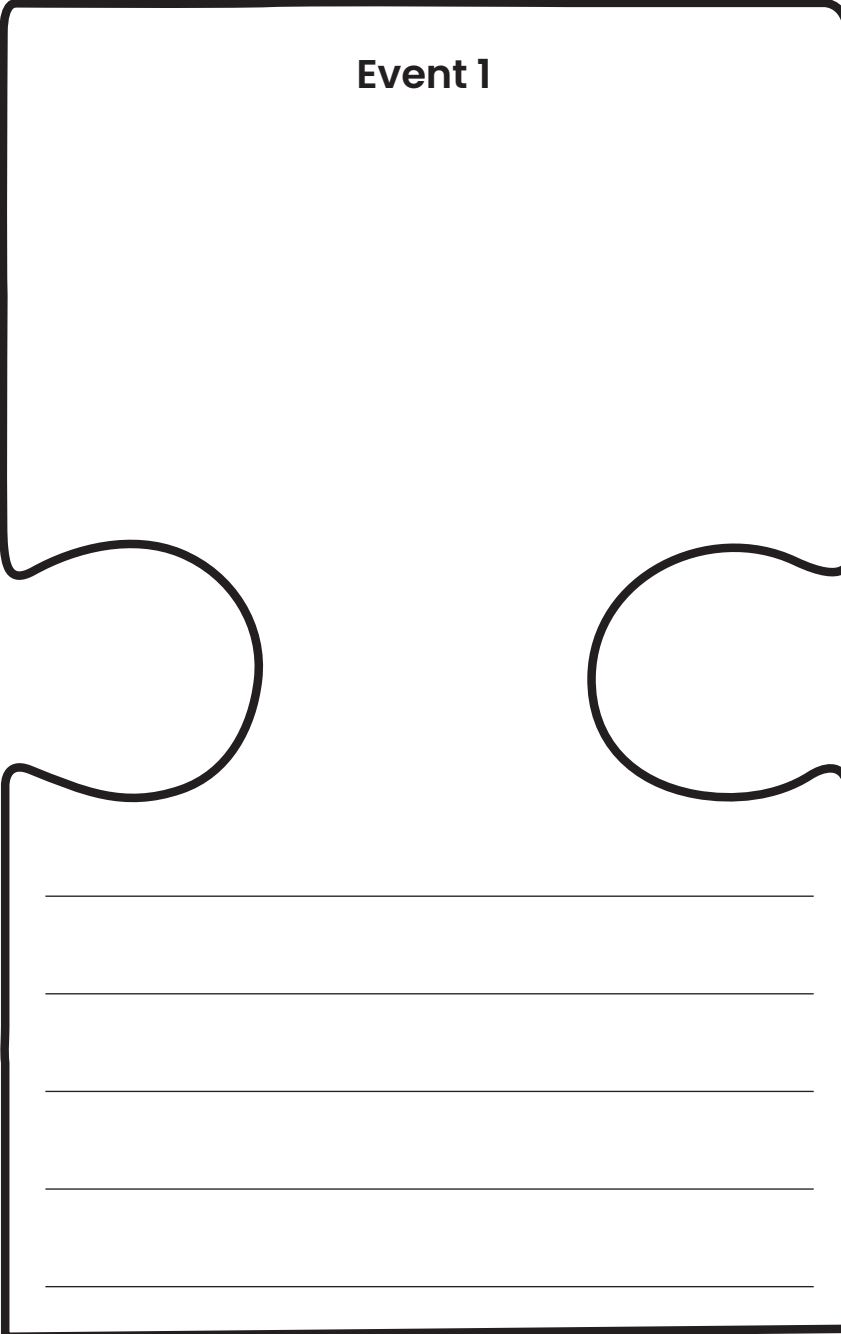
Draw and write your part of the recount on the puzzle piece. Then cut the pieces out and fit them together to create a complete text.

Sizzling Start

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Draw and write your part of the recount on the puzzle piece. Then cut the pieces out and fit them together to create a complete text.

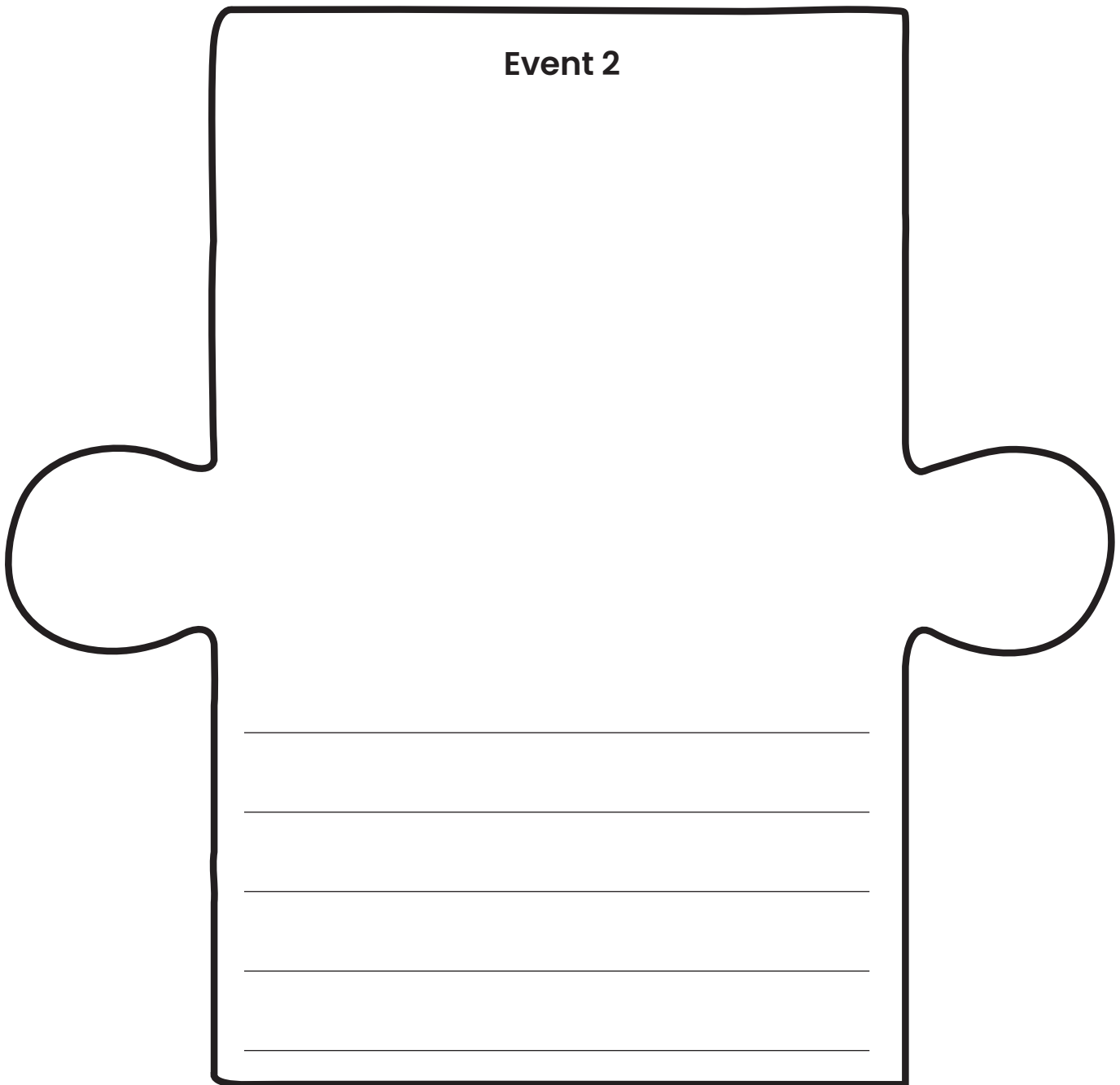
Event 1



Five horizontal lines for writing the recount.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Draw and write your part of the recount on the puzzle piece. Then cut the pieces out and fit them together to create a complete text.

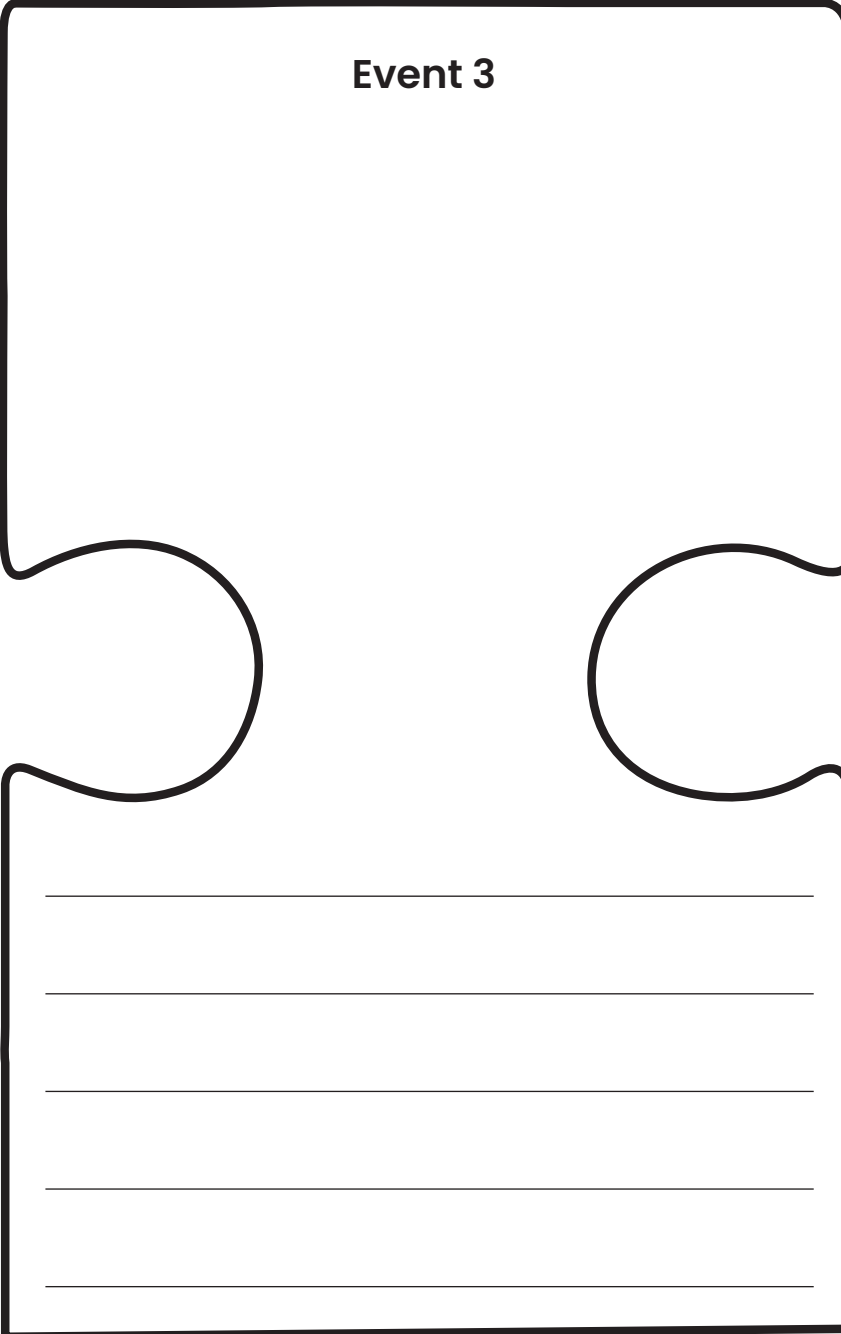


Event 2

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Draw and write your part of the recount on the puzzle piece. Then cut the pieces out and fit them together to create a complete text.

Event 3

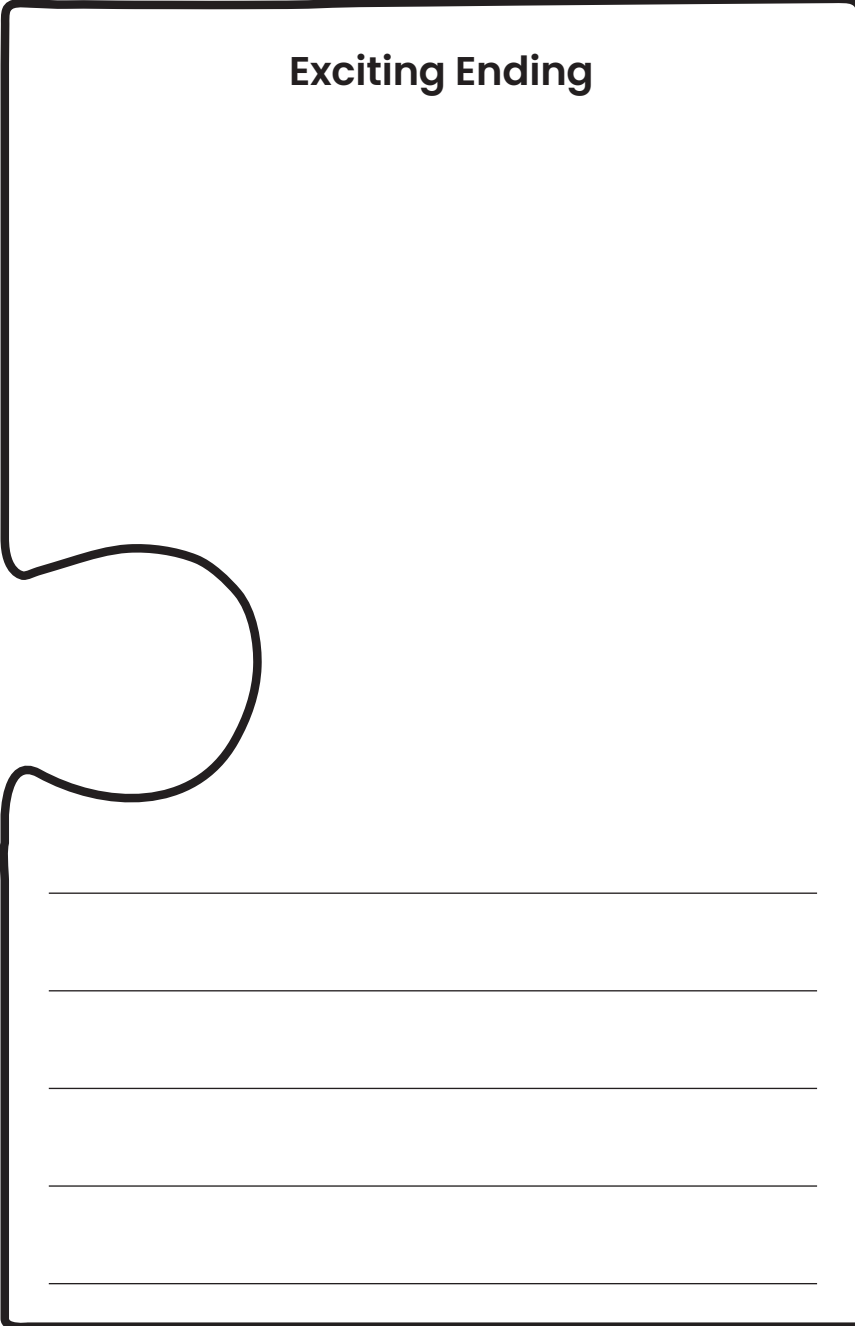


The puzzle piece has a tab on the left side and a blank area with five horizontal lines for writing.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Draw and write your part of the recount on the puzzle piece. Then cut the pieces out and fit them together to create a complete text.

Exciting Ending



Putting It All Together

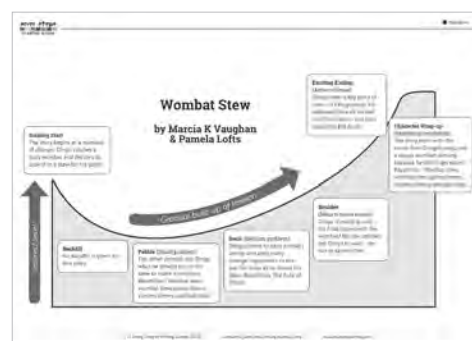
Unit 2 – Rewrite a Familiar Story

Another way to support students with writing a full text is to rewrite a story they know well. This means that the structure of the story is already established, and students can change the original story as much or as little as they like. For example, Foundation students may rewrite the story in their own words, whereas you could challenge Year 2 students to create new characters, change the setting or add a plot twist.

How to Teach This Unit

1. Pick a familiar story from the following list (or use something you have studied in class) and read it aloud:
 - *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*
 - *Cinderella*
 - *Hansel and Gretel*
 - *The Hare and the Tortoise*
 - *Little Red Riding Hood*
 - *Possum Magic*
 - *The Three Little Pigs*
 - *Diary of a Wombat*
 - *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
 - *Wombat Stew*
2. Divide the class into small groups and get them to brainstorm the characters, settings, starts, problems and endings for their story using the 'Group Brainstorm' templates on pages 127–32. With younger students, brainstorm ideas as a whole class first to get them started.
3. Get each group to write or draw their selected ideas on the appropriate 'Group Planning' template on pages 133–4:
 - For younger students, or students who need support, the beginner version with a Sizzling Start, a problem (sticky situation) and an Exciting Ending is a good starting point.
 - Once students gain confidence, use the intermediate version to create a Sizzling Start, a problem that escalates (pebble, rock, boulder) and an Exciting Ending.
4. Once the groups are happy with their plan, get them to plot their ideas on the appropriate 'Narrative Story Graph' template on pages 135–6. Then work with them to ensure that their story flows well and makes sense.

Story Graphs for these examples are available to download from *Teacher Hub*.



Putting It All Together

5. Working individually, students draft their own story in their workbooks based on the planning they've done in their groups. If students are struggling, ask them to tell you the story while you scribe – this really encourages them to get going. The thrill of seeing their words 'published' is often a turning point for early writers.
6. Finally, work with students to review and edit their work using the self-assessment checklist on page 153 before asking them to write a final draft of their story using the writing templates on pages 137–41. Compile the finished story into a book and get students to create a cover and a blurb using the templates on pages 142–3.
7. Repeat this unit with different stories and challenge students to add more variations to their stories each time. Students don't have to edit and publish every story – aim to do this with two or three stories a term.

Once students feel confident, they can move on to creating their own stories in Unit 3.



GROUP BRAINSTORM – CHARACTERS

Brainstorm characters for your story. Draw three or four characters that might be in your story and give each one a name. You could use the characters from the original story or make up your own.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Character 1</p> <p>Name: _____ <input type="checkbox"/></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Character 2</p> <p>Name: _____ <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Character 3</p> <p>Name: _____ <input type="checkbox"/></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Character 4</p> <p>Name: _____ <input type="checkbox"/></p> |

Talk about each character: What are they like? What things do they do? What do they wear? What are their favourite things?

Tick the box next to the characters that you are going to use in your story.

GROUP BRAINSTORM – SETTINGS

Brainstorm different settings for your story. Draw three or four different locations where your story might take place. You could use the same settings as the original story or make up your own.

| | |
|---|---|
| Setting idea 1 <input data-bbox="1070 738 1137 807" type="checkbox"/> | Setting idea 2 <input data-bbox="2033 738 2101 807" type="checkbox"/> |
| Setting idea 3 <input data-bbox="1070 1165 1137 1233" type="checkbox"/> | Setting idea 4 <input data-bbox="2033 1165 2101 1233" type="checkbox"/> |

Talk about each setting: What would it feel like if you could go there? Who would live there? Which ones best suit your chosen characters?

Tick the boxes next to the settings that you are going to use in your story.

GROUP BRAINSTORM – SIZZLING STARTS

Brainstorm three or four different ways that your story might start. You could use the same start as the original story or come up with your own.

| | |
|--|--|
| Sizzling Start idea 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | Sizzling Start idea 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sizzling Start idea 3 <input type="checkbox"/> | Sizzling Start idea 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |

Talk about each start: Will it hook the reader? Does it start with action? Will the reader want to find out more? Which start would be best?

Tick the box next to the start that you are going to use for your story.

GROUP BRAINSTORM – PROBLEMS

Brainstorm three or four problems that could happen to the characters in your story. Draw each problem and write a sentence about it.

You could use the same problems as the original story or make up your own.

Problem 1



Problem 2



Problem 3

☐

Problem 4

☐

Talk about each problem: Which problem would be the most challenging for your characters? How would your characters solve this problem? What would happen if the problem got bigger? (Pebble, rock, boulder)

Tick the box next to the problem or problems that you are going to use in your story.

GROUP BRAINSTORM – EXCITING ENDINGS

Brainstorm three or four different ways that your story might end. You could use the same ending as the original story or come up with your own to add a twist.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Exciting Ending idea 1</p> <input data-bbox="1070 772 1137 842" type="checkbox"/> | <p>Exciting Ending idea 2</p> <input data-bbox="2033 772 2101 842" type="checkbox"/> |
| <p>Exciting Ending idea 3</p> <input data-bbox="1070 1225 1137 1295" type="checkbox"/> | <p>Exciting Ending idea 4</p> <input data-bbox="2033 1225 2101 1295" type="checkbox"/> |

Talk about each ending idea: Does it wrap up the story? Does it resolve the problem? Will the reader be satisfied? Which ending would be the best?

Tick the box next to the ending that you are going to use for your story.

GROUP PLANNING — BEGINNER

As a group, select your best ideas and paste them on the planning template.

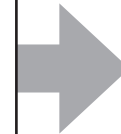
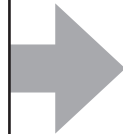
Sizzling Start



Problem
(Sticky situation)




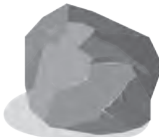



Exciting Ending



GROUP PLANNING – INTERMEDIATE

As a group, select your best ideas and paste them on the planning template.

| Sizzling Start | Problem | | | Exciting Ending |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |

NARRATIVE STORY GRAPH – BEGINNER

As a group, draw and write your selected ideas on the Story Graph.

Title: _____

The graph consists of three rectangular boxes arranged in a descending staircase pattern from left to right. The first box is labeled 'Sizzling Start' and contains three horizontal lines for writing. The second box is labeled 'Problem (Sticky situation)' and also contains three horizontal lines. The third box is labeled 'Exciting Ending (Action climax)' and contains three horizontal lines. A thick black arrow at the bottom points to the right and is labeled 'Time'. A grey shaded area is visible behind the boxes, and a small grey tab is at the top right of the 'Exciting Ending' box.

Sizzling Start

Problem
(Sticky situation)

Exciting Ending
(Action climax)

Time

NARRATIVE STORY GRAPH – INTERMEDIATE

As a group, draw and write your selected ideas on the Story Graph.

Title: _____

Sizzling Start

Pebble
(Small problem)

Rock
(Medium problem)

Boulder
(Main tension scene)

Exciting Ending
(Action climax)

Time →

Sizzling Start

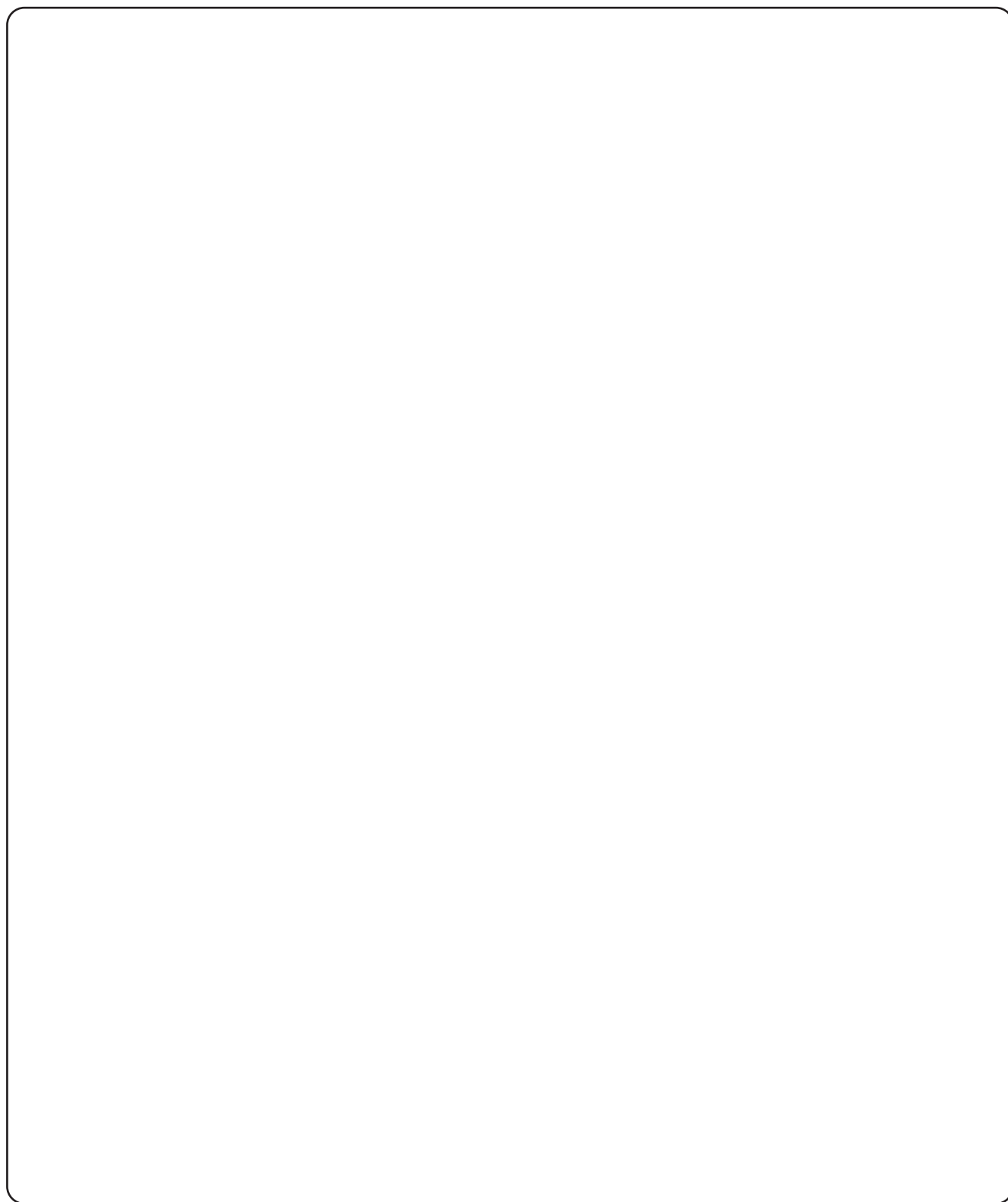
Pebble Problem

Rock Problem

Boulder Problem

Exciting Ending

Title: _____



Author: _____

Blurb

Unit 3 – Write a Story

In this unit, students will use everything they have learnt in the previous units to plan and write their own stories. Ask younger students to come up with one problem but encourage more confident students to come up with a problem that escalates (pebble, rock, boulder).

How to Teach This Unit

1. Pick a topic from the following list or use your own topic idea. There are more topic ideas on page 152.
 - If I had a magic wand, I would ...
 - The jungle that grew under my bed
 - Stuck in a storm
 - The plant that could talk
 - The prank that backfired
 - Stuck in outer space
 - The mystery train
 - Fairies really do exist!
 - The shadow
 - The missing toy.
2. Once you've chosen a topic, brainstorm story ideas as a whole class using the 'Brainstorm – Story Ideas' template on page 146.



Putting It All Together

3. Divide the class into small groups. Get them to pick their favourite story idea and brainstorm characters, settings, starts, problems and endings using the 'Group Brainstorm' templates on pages 147–8.
4. Get students to work together to select the best ideas and write or draw them on the appropriate 'Narrative Story Graph' template from pages 149–51:
 - For students who need support, stick with the beginner version that includes a Sizzling Start, a problem (sticky situation) and an Exciting Ending.
 - Encourage more confident students to use the intermediate version to create a Sizzling Start, a problem that escalates (pebble, rock, boulder) and an Exciting Ending.
 - Challenge more able students to use the standard version, which includes backfill and an emotional resolution, as preparation for later years.
5. Once the groups have plotted their ideas on the graph, work with them to ensure that their story flows well and makes sense.
6. Finally, students draft their story individually in their workbooks based on the planning they've done in their groups. Work with students to review and edit their work using the self-assessment checklist on page 153 before they complete a final draft of their story.
7. Repeat this unit with a range of different topics until students feel confident. Students don't have to edit and publish every story – aim to do this with two or three stories a term.



BRAINSTORM – STORY IDEAS

Topic: _____

Brainstorm story ideas for your chosen topic. Try to come up with 3–6 ideas and then pick the best one.

Story ideas

Talk about your ideas: Which story idea is your favourite? Which one is the most original or interesting?

Circle the best idea that you will use for your story.

GROUP BRAINSTORM – CHARACTERS AND SETTINGS

Story idea: _____

As a group, brainstorm ideas for different characters and settings that you might use in your story.

| Characters | Settings |
|------------|----------|
| | |

Talk about your ideas: Which characters and settings are the most interesting? Which ones suit your story idea the best?

Circle the characters and settings that you are going to use in your story.

GROUP BRAINSTORM – STARTS, PROBLEMS, ENDINGS

As a group, brainstorm ideas for starts, problems and endings that you might use in your story.

| Sizzling Starts | Problems | Exciting Endings |
|-----------------|----------|------------------|
| | | |

Talk about your ideas: Which start would make someone want to read more? Which problem would be the trickiest for your characters? How could you make that problem bigger? How would your characters solve the problem in the end? Does your ending have an action climax and emotional resolution?

Circle the start, problems and ending that you are going to use in your story.

NARRATIVE STORY GRAPH – BEGINNER

As a group, draw and write your chosen ideas on the Story Graph.

Title: _____

The graph consists of three rectangular boxes arranged in a row, each with a title and a description. The first box is labeled 'Sizzling Start' and the second 'Problem (Sticky situation)'. The third box is labeled 'Exciting Ending (Action climax)' and contains three horizontal lines for writing. A large black arrow at the bottom points to the right and is labeled 'Time'.

Sizzling Start

Problem
(Sticky situation)

Exciting Ending
(Action climax)

Time

NARRATIVE STORY GRAPH – INTERMEDIATE

As a group, draw and write your chosen ideas on the Story Graph.

Title: _____

The diagram illustrates the Narrative Story Graph as a rising action curve. It consists of five stages, each represented by a box with a title and a description, and a large arrow at the bottom indicating the progression of Time.

- Sizzling Start**
(Small problem)

- Pebble**
(Small problem)

- Rock**
(Medium problem)

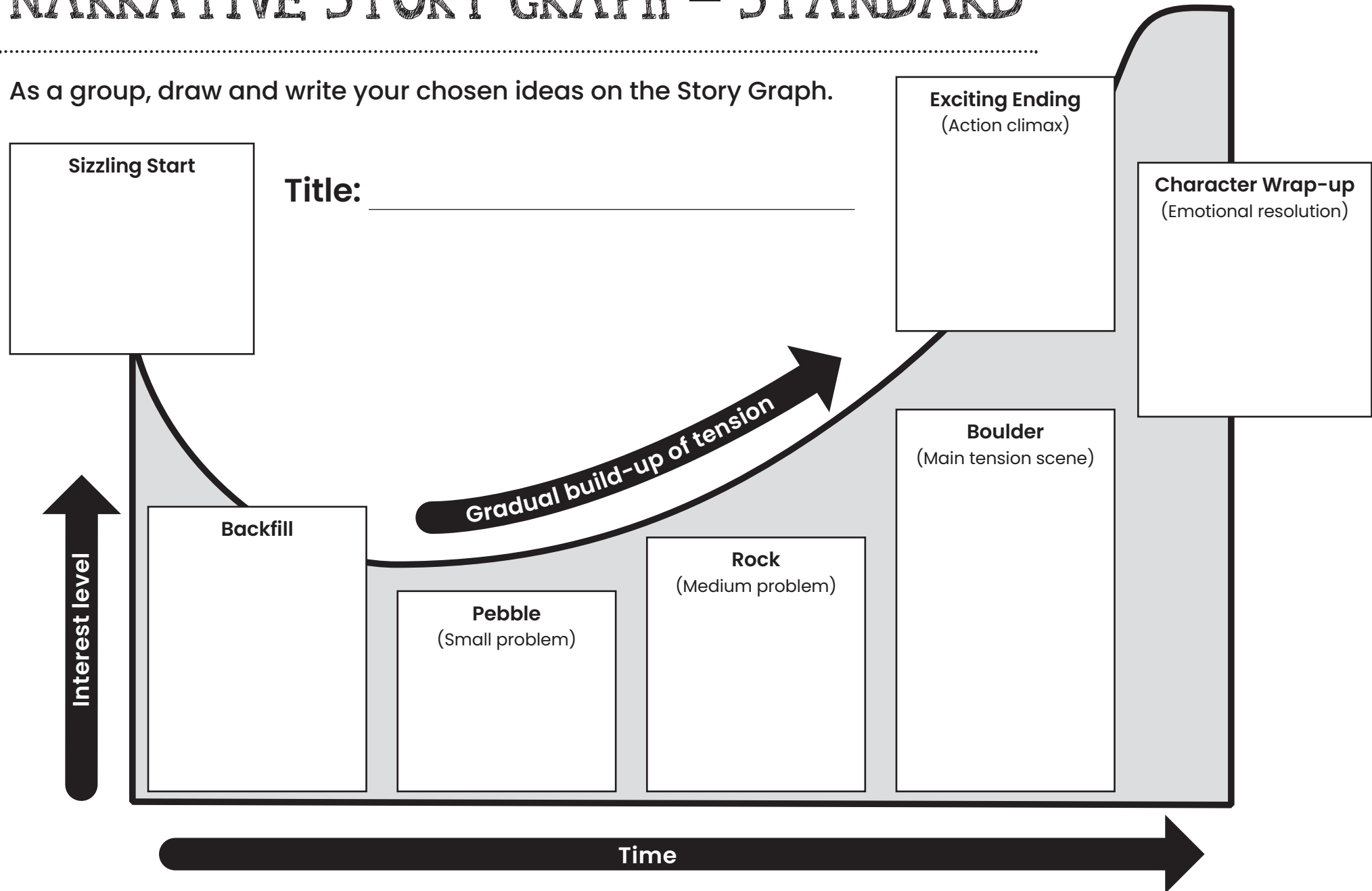
- Boulder**
(Main tension scene)

- Exciting Ending**
(Action climax)

Time →

NARRATIVE STORY GRAPH – STANDARD

As a group, draw and write your chosen ideas on the Story Graph.



WRITING TOPICS

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Magic socks | Hair disaster |
| Super powers | The big move |
| Secret pet | Escape |
| Pizza vs hamburgers | Gold medal |
| <i>Whoosh!</i> | I will never do THAT again! |
| The dentist | The tunnel |
| Why I love rain | Beach |
| Help! | The painting |
| In the garden | Waterfall |
| Fish | Pirates |
| My favourite game | The flying car |
| Things that move | My secret hiding place |
| Don't touch the ... | Chocolate house |
| That's disgusting! | Winter is better than summer |
| Ambulance | Time machine |
| My grandparents' house | Invisible |
| Science experiment | I saw it first! |
| Dinosaurs | Midnight feast |
| Stop, thief! | Racing car |
| The hottest day ever | I can talk to animals |

STUDENT CHECKLIST

These checklists can be given to students to remind them what you are looking for in a complete recount or story. Cut them out and attach them to students' work.

Putting It All Together Checklist: Recounts



- ☐ A great plan (Step 1)
- ☐ A start that grabs the reader (Step 2)
- ☐ A series of interesting events (Step 3)
- ☐ Interesting dialogue (Step 4)
- ☐ A 'show' scene (Step 5)
- ☐ No boring bits (Step 6)
- ☐ An ending that leaves the reader satisfied (Step 7)

Putting It All Together Checklist: Stories



- ☐ A great plan (Step 1)
- ☐ A start that grabs the reader (Step 2)
- ☐ A problem, or a series of problems that get bigger – pebble, rock, boulder (Step 3)
- ☐ Interesting dialogue (Step 4)
- ☐ A 'show' scene (Step 5)
- ☐ No boring bits (Step 6)
- ☐ An action climax and emotional resolution (Step 7)

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Marking Rubric

Once students start writing complete texts, use this marking rubric to assess their progress with the Seven Steps and as the basis for providing explicit feedback.

The 'Master Marking Sheet' on pages 156–7 is a simple template for recording student outcomes in each area for a complete text.

Step 1: Plan for Success

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 0 marks | There is no evidence of planning. |
| 1 mark | The story has a start but no problem, or a middle with no orientation. |
| 2 marks | The story has a start and a problem or event, but the ending lacks strength. |
| 3 marks | The story has a start, a series of problems or events and an ending. |

Step 2: Sizzling Starts

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 0 marks | There is no beginning. |
| 1 mark | The beginning orients but does not engage the reader. |
| 2 marks | The beginning orients and attempts to engage the reader. |
| 3 marks | The beginning orients and engages the reader. |

Step 3: Tightening Tension

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 0 marks | There is no problem or event. |
| 1 mark | There is one problem (a sticky situation) or event. |
| 2 marks | There is more than one problem (pebble, rock, but no boulder) or event. |
| 3 marks | There is a series of problems that escalate (pebble, rock, boulder) or a series of interesting events. |

Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 0 marks | There is no dialogue. |
| 1 mark | Minimal use of dialogue to develop the plot, scenes or characters. |
| 2 marks | Basic use of dialogue to develop the plot, scenes and characters. |
| 3 marks | Good use of dialogue to develop the plot, scenes and characters. |

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 0 marks | The text 'tells' rather than 'shows' the reader. |
| 1 mark | The text attempts to show character and setting, but the descriptions are vague. |
| 2 marks | The text shows character and setting through brief descriptions. |
| 3 marks | The text shows character and setting through brief descriptions, speech and feelings. |

Step 6: Ban the Boring

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 0 marks | No attempt has been made to ban the boring bits. |
| 1 mark | Some attempt has been made to ban the boring bits. |
| 2 marks | The writer has banned the most commonly used boring bits. |
| 3 marks | The writer has improved the pace of the text by identifying and removing all boring bits. |

Step 7: Exciting Endings

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 0 marks | The text has no ending. |
| 1 mark | The text has a 'quick fix' ending. |
| 2 marks | The text has a fitting ending, but it lacks excitement. |
| 3 marks | The text has an Exciting Ending that includes an action climax and emotional resolution. |

Please note, secretarial skills such as punctuation, spelling and grammar are not covered in the Seven Steps and therefore rubrics are not supplied for these elements. You can use your own criteria to give feedback on these.

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Master Marking Sheet

Student name: _____

Topic: _____ Date: _____

Step 1: Plan for Success

| | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| Beginner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Intermediate |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|

Comment: _____

Step 2: Sizzling Starts

| | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| Beginner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Intermediate |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|

Comment: _____

Step 3: Tightening Tension

| | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| Beginner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Intermediate |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|

Comment: _____

Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue

| | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| Beginner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Intermediate |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|

Comment: _____

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Step 5: Show, Don't Tell

| | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| Beginner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Intermediate |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|

Comment: _____

Step 6: Ban the Boring

| | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| Beginner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Intermediate |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|

Comment: _____

Step 7: Exciting Endings

| | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| Beginner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Intermediate |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--------------|

Comment: _____

Writing goals:

Please note, secretarial skills such as spelling, punctuation and grammar have / have not been assessed.

Seven Steps to Writing Success

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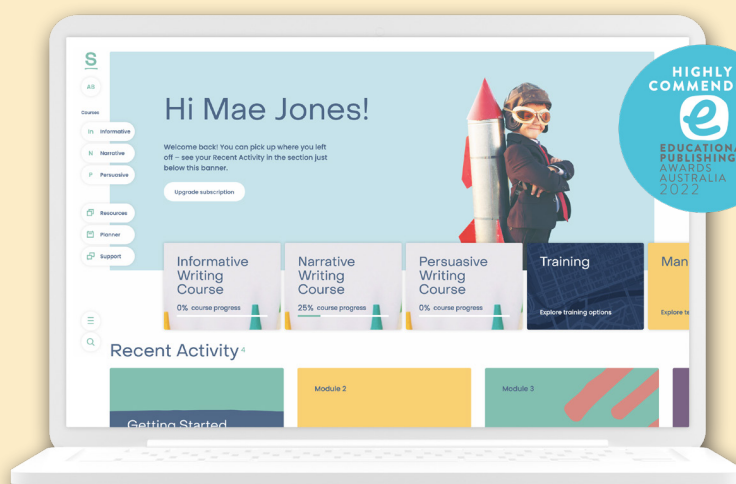
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- brainstorming, planning and writing templates
- planning and assessment resources
- a 'Putting It All Together' chapter.

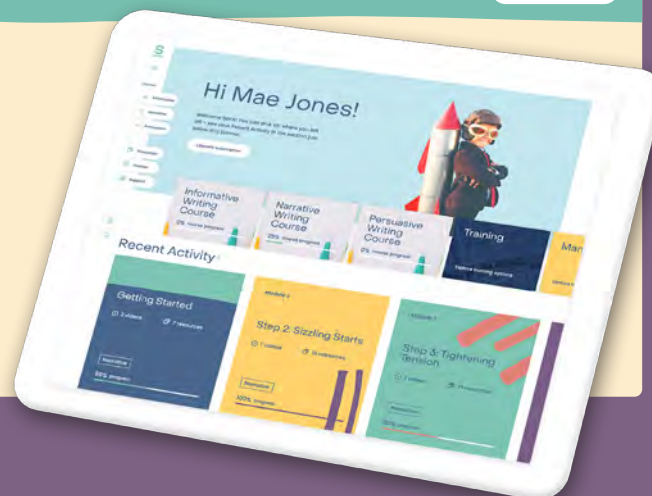
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