

# Teaching tips for writing a story

## Stage One: Preparing to write a story

### Summary

**Objective:** to analyse the story structure, and language needed for story writing.

**Materials:** board, a story text to analyse – see the bottom of this lesson plan for examples from different levels. Select one of the stories provided with this lesson plan:

Pre A1: "Who am I?" (*Storyfun 1*, Cambridge University Press 2017)

A1: "The monster under my bed" (*Storyfun 3*, Cambridge University Press 2017)

A2: "Swan Island" (*Storyfun 6*, Cambridge University Press 2017)

You can also watch animated stories at [cambridge.org/story-competition](https://cambridge.org/story-competition)

### Introducing the topic

- Ask the class: *Do you like stories? What is your favourite story?* Learners give examples of their favourite stories.
- Ask what they like about their favourite story.

**Possible answers:** the characters, the type of story e.g. *it is funny/ scary, it happens in space* etc. Also, children may say they like a story because they read it together with their parents, or they saw a film – there are no wrong answers here.

**For higher level:** You can ask children in advance to bring their favourite book to class and tell the class about it.

**For lower level:** It is fine for children to use their mother tongue or a mix of English and L1. They are likely to have richer experience of stories in their native language than in English – don't be afraid to tap into this experience.

# Presenting the story

- Read/ show the title, cover and some pictures from the story. Ask children to predict what the story is going to be about. Use this as an opportunity to tackle some of the more difficult words from the story.
- Read / watch the story with the class.
- Ask what the children think are the necessary ingredients for a story. Elicit the answers by asking the following questions:

**Who** are the characters? How are they connected? Who is your favourite, or least favourite character? Why?

**Where** are they? Where is the story set?

**When** is it taking place, e.g. *in the future, in the past, in real life* etc.?

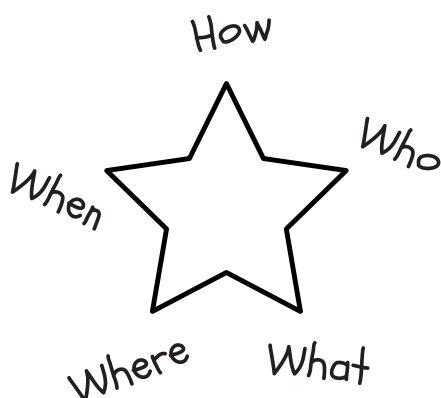
**What** happens in the story? What happens at the start? Can they remember the first sentence? And what happens next? Finally, the end of the story – can they remember the last word of the story?

**How** do you think the characters feel? Are they happy, or sad? Did they do something good or bad? Why do you think they did/feel/say this, etc.

You can explore the students' own personal reactions to the story: *How did the story make you feel? Why?*

- Draw a graphic organizer on the board. Use a technique such as a 5 point star: ask students to help you fill in each star point according to above categories.
- You could also ask learners to point out examples of language that is used in this story to describe the character, place, time etc. Ask them to give more examples from outside the story. Write them on the board adding to the graphic organiser.

**For higher level:** Handout blank graphic organisers for students to do themselves.



# Teaching tips for writing a story

## Stage Two: Writing a story

### Summary

**Objective:** to write a draft of an original story

**Materials:** board, graphic organizer from previous lesson, graphic organizer template, storyboard template

- Revise with children the elements of the story from Stage One. Ask if they remember the story you analysed. Ask if they remember any of the words for describing characters, place, time, beginning and end, linking words like *suddenly*, *and then* etc. Show them the graphic organiser from Stage One to help them remember.
- Give out the storyboard worksheets. Ask children to complete the storyboard with their own ideas for a story e.g. writing the name and a short description of the main character, drawing the story setting etc. – they can draw or write, depending on their language level.

**For higher level:** Learners can design their own storyboard chart and fill it in with writing.

**For lower level:** Use the templates provided (e.g. a five point star). Children can draw elements of a story instead of writing.

In pairs, learners tell their partners the elements of their story.

Then, children write their own stories using the information from the storyboard. At lower level, learners can complete a storyboard with illustrations and short subtitles (or dialogues). At higher level, learners can write a longer text.

# Peer feedback

- Draw student's attention to the five point star graphic organizer. In pairs or groups students examine their stories according to the five questions *Who? Where? When? What? How?*, and take notes, e.g. under *Who?* students write the name of the character(s), under *Where?* they write where the story is taking place e.g. in the jungle, in space, at home.
- Students give feedback on their partner's story, e.g. *"What I like most about Tom's story is...; My favourite thing in this story is...; This story makes me feel happy/ sad/ made me laugh.*
- Students continue to work on their stories in class or at home. They add detail, corrections, illustrations etc.

## Extension projects:

### Drama

- Depending how much time you have, students could retell their partners' stories to the class (this encourages children to read carefully, and engage with the story),
- Students act out the stories.
- You could also set up some drama in groups. Class awards points for the best story/ play.

### Make a book

- And, why not challenge your class to a bigger project by producing a collection of their stories? To produce a bound book the class will need to brainstorm a title for the collection, e.g. *"Our Amazing Book of Stories"*, design a front and back cover, and bind the stories together using a puncher and some string. Proudly display the book in the classroom to celebrate the students' creativity and hard work!

# Assessment

Assessing students' written stories should be more than checking grammar and spelling. It's an opportunity to gain insight into:

- learners' skills in organising their thoughts and ideas,
- imagination,
- creativity.

Reflect with your class on the writing process:

- Did students enjoy it?
- What did they find easy, and what caused them difficulty?
- What was helpful?

*Happy story writing!*

## Enter for a chance to win:

Enter the final stories to the Cambridge Story Competition for a chance to have them published in a beautiful book, and to win some great prizes for the whole class!

Find out more about the competition at  
[cambridge.org/story-competition](https://cambridge.org/story-competition)