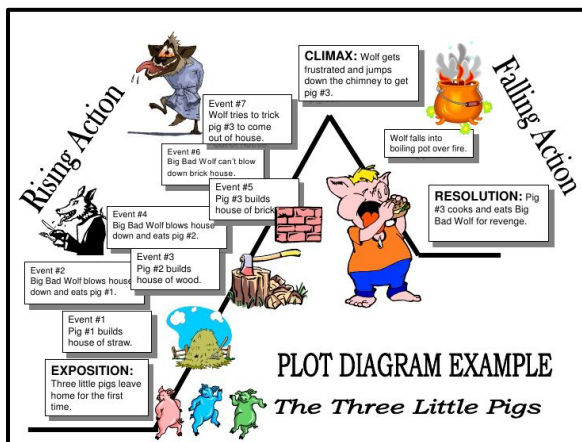


Starting From Scratch - Creation of a Story!

Stories are puzzles in disguise – parts are pieced together to form an idea, a situation, and a picture to either be read or discussed.

Imitation is more than the ‘sincerest form of flattery,’ it opens the door to one’s imagination as it provides a pathway to ‘how’ a story is written. The template for a story is placed on paper and with close attention the outline and details can be revealed.

An approach to getting young people to read and write more is to have them draw from their imagination. The idea of taking a ‘sentence,’ a photograph, a scene in Nature, or a suggestion from their friends, is a great way to start a ‘storyboard’.



Elements of a story build the story structure and keep it progressing as it is being read or told. These elements focus on ideas that intrigue the listener. How does everything come together? End?

Theme & Atmosphere

- Plot – Beginning/Introduction/Characters
- Setting – Where does story take place?
- Rising Action: What events happen?
 - Conflict – Challenge to overcome
 - Plot Moving – Events along the way
- Climax – Pinnacle of Process/Turning Point
- Falling Action:
 - Action story direction takes
 - Attempts made to solve the problem
 - Conflict Resolution of Major Problem
- Resolution – Accepted Solution/Ending

Details Given for a Story Starter: “I Found a Wounded Bird in the Garden!”

- Character(s) – Individual or Team
- Subject – Wounded Bird
- Setting – Garden
- Plot – What to do? Save the bird, let it be, call for help, ... (describe the decision made)
- Description of Feelings –
 - Sad for the bird
 - Anxious to help the bird
 - Frustrated – unable to help
 - Proud – able to help
- Resolution of the situation
 - Put bird in a box and take to someone who can help
 - Pick up the bird and fix what is wrong with it
 - Another approach determined by the Character(s)

Starting From Scratch - Creation of a Story!

For All Ages – Some Ways to Improve Writing Skills: If the goal is to write, then set up a practical and feasible plan to do so and stick to it. ‘Easier said than done!’ But if the enthusiasm is there, it will be done!

Putting thoughts down on paper, in other words writing, is how we communicate the storyline of the topic. Nowadays, for young students it might be easier for them to work on the computer, but it can be very limiting for thought expansion if using the keyboard too soon.

The time to use the computer is after thoughts are generated, possible discussions held, and pencil to paper is enacted. But how to improve the element and depth of writing is the question for teachers and parents when modern media comes into play.

Draw from the experiences of others will become an important part in developing thought and writing skills. Reading books or magazines, listening to story-hour at the library, and listening to the teacher read aloud to the class are some of the ways to generate creation of thought and depth of thinking.

As shown in **‘Let’s Get Started’**, stimulation of subject material through a worksheet assignment helps organize the thoughts behind a story. The presentation of a list of ‘story starters’ is a good way as the setting is defined and part of the situation is as well.

A few examples – given the idea, take it from there to an ending:

- “The fireflies were dancing in the twilight as the sunset.”
- “The night was getting colder, and the wind was blowing in from the west.”
- “The sun was setting on a beautiful summer day.”
- “The dog seemed restless ...”
- “In the middle of a dark forest ...”

Think about these examples and let your imagination open up to possibilities for writing or discussing ideas.

Or, sometimes more information is given to provide the initial direction of the story:

- Main Character: The writer
 - Are there others accompanying the Writer on this adventure?
- Setting: The year is 2075
- Plot: The main character(s) have lost all of their belongings and need to find a way home.
 - Where does the writer take the story from here?
 - Location of the mishap
 - Distance from home
 - Weather conditions
 - Based on the facts,
 - How to get food and shelter for the trip?
 - How to handle emotions during the trek?
 - What type of transportation is available?

Starting From Scratch - Creation of a Story!

Imagination Sometimes Leads to Experiences:

When I was a young student in elementary school, during recess on a rainy day, I would look out the window and wonder what it was like dancing through the puddles.

When I got the opportunity that is exactly what I did and I made up stories about the water dancing beneath my feet and the droplets flying through the air – smashing the dirt beneath the water to possibly see a pattern, seeing how far the water would fly and where the droplets fell, and wondering what my Mother would say when I got home all wet. Ah, the memories and the experiences. These thoughts are what imagination generates.

When I took a creative writing class in college, one of the assignments was to find a creation of nature and write about it. One subject I came up with was a spider creating its web. It is amazing to watch and to admire the precision of the design and the purpose behind each linking of thread. The speed at which the spider worked was mesmerizing. Nature at its best.

Another subject was to find morning dew on an object or the grass and to watch it for a moment. Its movement down the blade of grass or just the positioning at the top of the blade. Now that might seem funny or boring ‘like watching paint dry,’ but have you ever watched paint dry. The process is pretty fascinating! Nature has a perfection that is unattainable, that is the secret to write about.

Make Writing Fun: – (Word blockage or too many thoughts all at one time make it difficult to get started.)

- Change the environment helps sometimes. If inside, go outside. Take a walk or a run. Play a game with a friend. There are many ways to get off the ‘writer’s block’ situation. Even playing the ‘whisper game of telephone’ generates a story.
- In theater a fun game is: where the cast forms a circle and one member starts with a word or phrase and the next adds to that; then the next does the same, and finally, by the time the starter receives the dialog, either a story is formed or a mess of thoughts is formed which makes everyone laugh. Again, try something new and unique to stimulate thoughts and ideas.
- Take a walk with a camera and take a lot of pictures. Then, make up a story about the trip using the pictures of the details. The story can be real, or the pictures can be used to generate imaginary events. The ideas will flow and the many possibilities will reveal themselves.

Develop a Routine for Thinking about Writing:

- It might be while brushing your teeth. – Daydreaming while looking into the mirror. Changing hair styles or making faces.
- Walking to school. If you see a stray dog, what do you do? Do you recognize the dog as being friendly or not? Do you cross the street or just keep walking/
- Bicycling to the playground or the park. Enjoy the environment and ask ‘what if’ along the way. What if there was a branch in the roadway that cars and bicycles had to maneuver around? How did the branch get there and how was it going to be moved before an accident occurred or someone got hurt.
- Each of these events and so many more stimulate creativity.

Starting From Scratch - Creation of a Story!

Using Today's Technology:

Yes, using the internet can be fun and exciting, but everything is already written for your review. But, emailing and/or texting can be a source for writing adventures. Maybe create a pen pal situation where a story is started by one and added to by another and back and forth until the storyline is complete.

Start a Journal:

Jot down ideas as they occur and then expand upon them when time allows. But, be sure to set up a time each day in your schedule to expand the idea. Otherwise, they are just ideas on paper.

Many schools organize a foreign exchange student to come live with a family. If your family is so advantaged, start a journal about the new member to your household and ask about life in their country, what their family is like, what their school is like, etc.

A Place to Write:

Find a 'quiet' place at home to set up a desk or a table where the magic takes place. Writing in a comfortable and reliable location erases the burden of finding somewhere comfortable and inspirational to write.

If possible, set up a schedule for writing – early in the morning, when home from school, in the evening. The amount of time spent needn't be defined, just go with the flow of inspiration. If nothing comes to mind to add to a story already started, simply write about the events of the day in a journal. The idea is to keep the habit of writing and to keep the thoughts and ideas flowing.