

OXFORD CHILDREN'S WORD OF THE YEAR 2019

Tips to support your students to write effective and interesting stories.

In the process of crafting a story, children use both their writing and critical thinking skills as they organise their thoughts to create a narrative. Writing stories enables students to develop an understanding of how grammar can be used in their writing and helps them to become better readers. Here are some ways to inspire creativity and get your students writing.

1. ORIGINALITY

CONSIDER A CHARACTER FROM THE CLASS NOVEL OR A BOOK THAT CHILDREN LOVE

Who is the character? What would be some other story ideas that might involve the character?

Have children brainstorm some different situations that they could place the character in. Consider what might happen in this place. Who else might be involved? As a class, develop a range of scenarios.

USE A PERSON FROM HISTORY TO INSPIRE A STORY

Link to the history topic being studied and events surrounding the historical person. Have students imagine some other events and what might happen to lead up to those events. Consider how that person might react to the events. What could happen?

CREATE AN IDEA GENERATOR FOR YOUR STUDENTS TO USE

Build three separate lists:

1. **Genre** (e.g. adventure, thriller, fantasy, quest, etc.)
2. **Main Character** (e.g. hero, spy, time-traveller, animal with human, etc.)
3. **Setting** (e.g. another time, city, home, country, local environment, jungle, ocean, etc.)

2. CHARACTER

DEMONSTRATE THEN BRAINSTORM A RANGE OF EFFECTIVE NOUN GROUPS TO DESCRIBE A CHARACTER

e.g. a forlorn, young boy with ragged clothes, who wished he could go home... Students create some effective noun groups to describe their character.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR MAIN CHARACTER

Do they have any special talents?
How did they come to be in this place?
Which other characters are important to them?

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Give your character a name. Is the name taken from a historical figure or can you think of a name that suits the type of character they are? They might have a real name but be known by a nickname, e.g. Sad Sammie (alliteration can be good).

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3. LANGUAGE

IMAGERY

You want your reader to visualise what is happening in your story (run the movie in their head). Read some interesting extracts from the class novel or other books the students are reading and discuss the various literary devices the author uses to create vivid images of the character, setting and events. These may include effective noun groups, evocative verbs, similes and metaphors, onomatopoeia, and personification.

Construct a Word Wall that includes these features and encourage students to add to it.

Demonstrate how dialogue is used to give insights into the main character and what other characters think or feel about that character.



4. PLOT

REREAD THE OPENING SCENE OF THE CLASS NOVEL OR ASK STUDENTS TO READ THE OPENING SCENE OF A FAVOURITE BOOK.

Ask students how the story might have been different if an important aspect was changed.

For example, what if Charlie (from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl) was born into a wealthy family and didn't need to help his mother and grandparents? How would this have changed the story?

Consider how the story will end. How will the problem faced by the main character be resolved?

Demonstrate that the plot progression of a story can be like climbing a mountain. Have them to draw a mountain on a piece of paper and write the following labels so that they correspond to the shape of the mountain: Beginning – Build-up – Challenge – Problem – Resolution – Ending.

Students should plan their story using this graphic organiser, by adding details to each part.

Once they have planned their narrative they should meet with a partner and provide each other with feedback and suggestions to improve the story.