



Creative Writing Lesson

Step 1- Getting a Story Started

Objective

Students will understand the following:

1. How to get a story started using a simple storytelling formula.

Grade Level

Grades 3-7

Standards

Supports common core standards in Language Arts.

1. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. (CCS.ELA.Literacy.W.X.3 - Where “X” is the grade level.)

Materials

1. [Storytelling Formula Poster](#)
2. [Creative Writing Prompts for Kids Worksheet](#)
3. [Writing Ideas Worksheet](#)

Vocabulary

This lesson is based on our Super Easy Storytelling Formula. For a full explanation of the formula, visit our [website](#).

Super Easy Storytelling Formula: **Who + What + Why Not = A Fun Story**

Procedures

1. Explain that every story starts with a main character and a plot.

To start a story, you need a main character—who the story is about. You also need a plot, which is usually about how the main character wants something and the struggles he/she goes through to get it. We break this down into three simple pieces: a WHO, a WHAT, and a WHY NOT. When you put them together, you get a fun story idea.

A WHO wants WHAT but WHY NOT = A fun story.

For example:

1. An Alien (WHO) wants to take a vacation on Earth (WHAT) but his minions just quit (WHY NOT).
2. A wizard (WHO) wants to bake a cake (WHAT) but his magic wand is unpredictable (WHY NOT).

Display the [storytelling formula poster](#) and refer back to it as you break the formula down into steps:

2. Explain what a WHO is.

A WHO is the main character of the story-- it's who the story is about (also called the protagonist.) A WHO can be anything: a person, an animal or insect, a magical creature, an object. Think about animated movies. There have been characters that are cars, tea pots, monsters, blobs of goo, dragons, as well as people like boys, girls, pirates, wizards.

✓Class Activity

Make three columns on a white board. Ask students to provide some WHO ideas. (Refer to the [Creative Writing Prompts for Kids worksheets](#) to spur imagination.) List the WHO ideas in the left-most column.

3. Explain what a WHAT is.

A WHAT is what the main character (the WHO) wants. It could be to do something, to be something, or to overcome an obstacle. What your character wants can be an every day sort of thing (like he wants to make a friend, bake a cake, or become a hip hop dancer), or something outrageous (like he wants to rule the world or overcome a fear of popcorn). (Refer to the [Creative Writing Prompts for Kids worksheets](#) to spur imagination.)

✓Class Activity

Ask students to provide some WHAT ideas. (Refer to the [Creative Writing Prompts for Kids worksheets](#) to spur imagination.) List the WHAT ideas in the middle column.

4. Explain what a WHY NOT is.

A WHY NOT is why the main character (the WHO) of the story can't have what he wants (the WHAT). This is the start of your story plot-- your character wants something but can't get it. The WHY NOT is also typically the antagonist (the person, force or thing that is against the main character).

The Why Not can be another character (a bad guy) an external obstacle (something is in his way) or an internal obstacle (a fear or inability).

✓Class Activity

Ask students to provide some WHY NOT ideas. (Refer to the [Creative Writing Prompts for Kids worksheets](#) to spur imagination.) List the WHY NOT ideas in the right-most column.

5. Put it all together for a quick story starter

Show students how easy it is to come up with fun story ideas by choosing an item from each column (a WHO, a WHAT, and a WHY NOT) and putting them into this formula:

WHO wants WHAT but WHY NOT

Examples:

1. A Viking wants to win a watermelon seed spitting contest but she's allergic to fun.
2. A fairy wants to overcome a fear of flying but the forest just came to life.
3. A Goliath Beetle wants to rule the garden but his nemesis-- Queen Ladybug-- has other plans.

✓Class Activity

Ask students to create story ideas using the items in the WHO, WHAT, WHY NOT columns on the board.

Optional: Have students complete the [Writing Ideas Worksheet](#).

More resources to extend the lesson

- [Main Character Worksheet](#)- Create main character ideas
- [Plot Worksheet](#)- Create plot ideas
- [Creative Writing Step 2: Describe Your Character Lesson Plan](#) – Continue the lesson by turning a story idea into a full story
- [Story Planning Worksheet](#) – skip straight to the story planning worksheet that helps students plan their character and plot.