

Ms. Stockton's Little Advice Book
for Writing Children's Stories



Fiction is something that you make up from your own imagination.

Famous writers will tell you to "write about the things that you know!" Think about something that happened to you that relates to the environment in some way. Can you write a story about it?

Often writers take a memory and build a story around it. You can do that, too. Here are some story suggestions for you.

Have you ever thought about an enchanted place and magical things? Imagine a kingdom of your own. Write about it.

Were you ever scared of someone or something? (What if you were a native plant and were being invaded by a non-native species?) Imagine a mystery story using that person or place. Write about it.

Have you ever read about outer space? Imagine that you discover a new planet. Write about it.

Did you ever fly on a plane, ride on a train, or paddle your own canoe? Imagine a trip around the world where you benefit each place. (Consider the legend of Johnny Apple seed) Write about it.

Have you ever been lost? What were your feelings? Imagine yourself lost in the woods. Write about it.

Sometimes authors want to make their stories more exciting. They ask the magic question "what if?"

This question turns everyday things upside down. It helps authors see ordinary things in an unusual way.

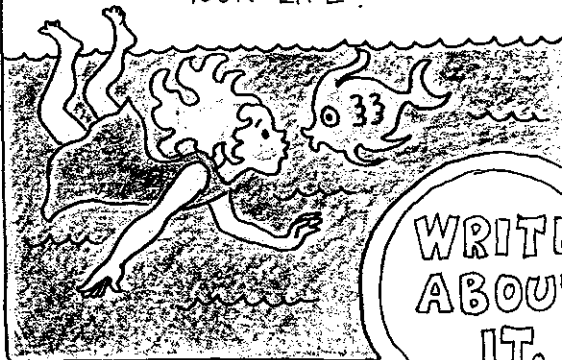
1 WHAT IF YOUR DOG COULD TALK? WHAT WOULD HE SAY?



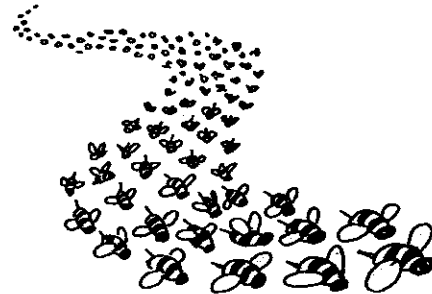
2 WHAT IF YOUR AUNT ANNIE LIVED IN THE NORTH POLE AND HER BEST FRIEND WAS A POLAR BEAR WHO LIKED HOT WEATHER?



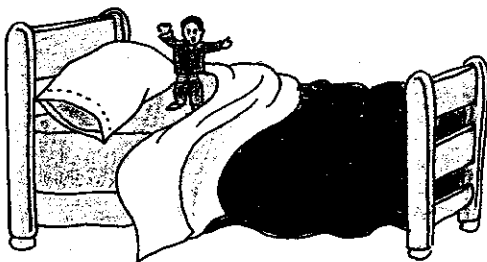
3 WHAT IF YOU COULD BREATHE UNDER WATER? HOW WOULD THAT CHANGE YOUR LIFE?



4 WHAT IF KILLER BEES ATTACKED YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?



5 WHAT IF YOU WOKE UP ONE MORNING AND FOUND YOURSELF AS SMALL AS A MOUSE?



6 WHAT IF YOU LIVED IN A WORLD WHERE ANIMALS WERE IN CHARGE AND PEOPLE WERE THEIR PETS?



CHARACTERS

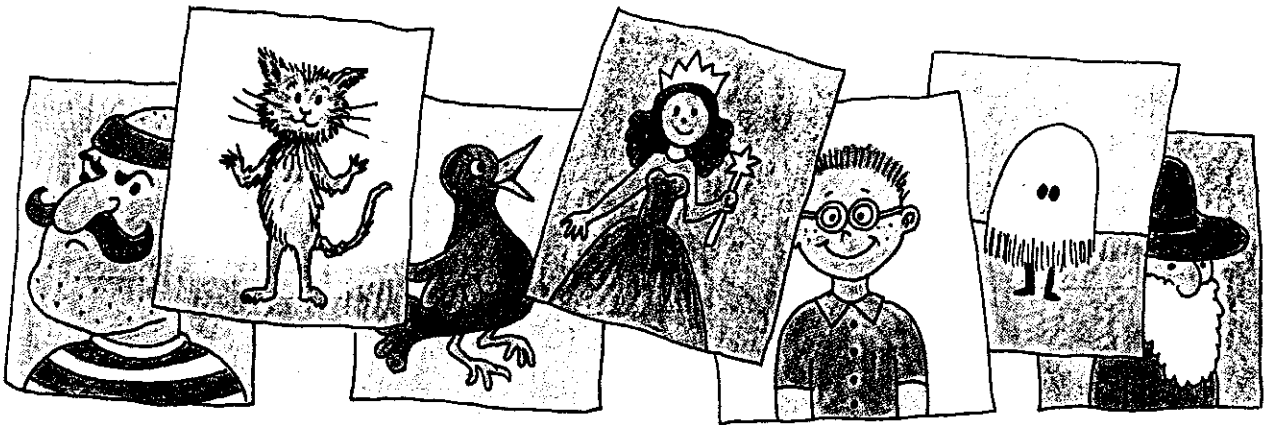


A character is a person, animal, or thing in your story.

All good stories have interesting characters.

In a good story the main character has a problem. When you write your story you will show how the main character solves the problem.

Choose your characters carefully. You will be writing all about them and their adventures. It is important that you know and describe them well. Keep in mind that we thought that animal characters with interesting names and unique personality traits were most enjoyable.



Write your character's names inside the circles on the story map. Write at least five words describing each character in the space next to that character's circle.

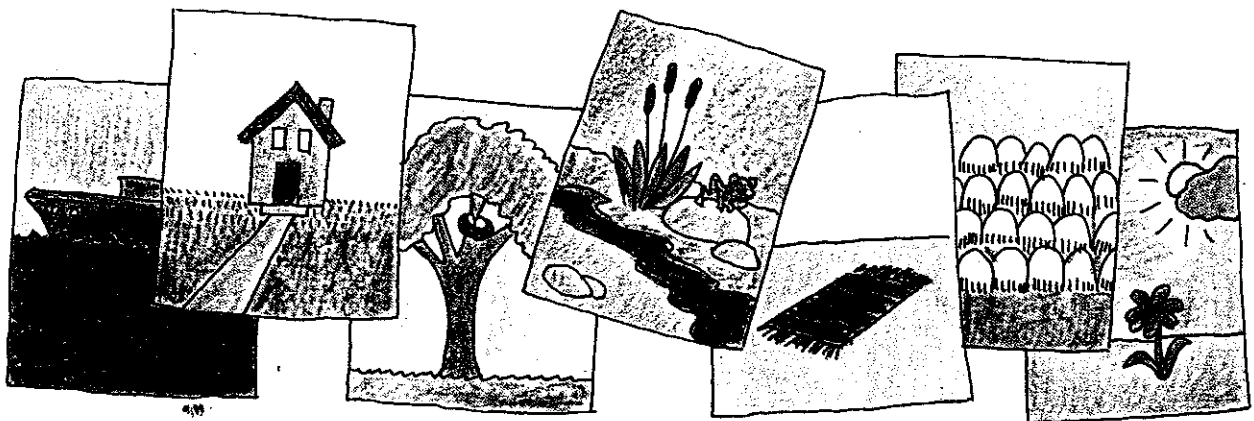
SETTINGS



A setting tells the reader where and when a story is taking place.

A setting could be in Africa, in outer space, or Dr. Suess' imaginary world of the Lorax. The reader must know when the story takes place as well. Did the story happen yesterday? Today? Tomorrow?

Just think how refreshing it would be to have a story begin "Just yesterday afternoon" instead of "Once upon a time..."



Write at least ten words describing the setting of your story in the appropriate boxes on your story map.

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph describing the setting that could be used to begin your story. The paragraph must be at least 50 and no more than 100 words! Due tomorrow at the beginning of class in final draft form.



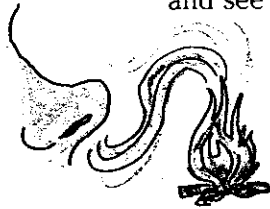
Be sure to use your five senses to show the reader more about the setting of your story.

If your story is set in Africa . . .



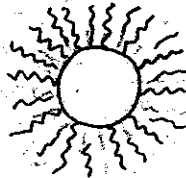
Make your reader hear the roar of a lion and the beat of an African drum.

Make your reader spy the leopard spots and see the jaguar run.



Make your reader smell the campfire smoke and the grass so deep and dry.

Make your reader taste the fresh sweet mango as the animals go walking by.



Make your reader feel the warmth of Africa, the heat of the desert sun.

When your reader senses Africa, then you know your work is done!

PROBLEM



A problem is a person, place, or thing that stands in the way of your main character.

If your character has no problem to solve, there is no story to write about.

If Little Red Riding Hood hadn't met the wolf, she would have gone straight to her grandmother's house. No problem.

But . . . she wandered off the path and met the Big Bad Wolf. Big problem!

See how many problems you can throw in the path of your character. What if the Big Bad Wolf was frightened to death of little girls in red capes?



Fill in the **problem** (also known as the "**conflict**") on your story map. Please note that "**rising action**" is everything that leads up to the **climax**. In the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, the basic problem is that a little girl breaks into the house of a bear family. The **rising action** generally consists of her doing such things as sampling porridge, sitting on chairs, and sleeping in beds. The **climax** comes when the bears return home and either chase her off or eat her, depending on the version. The **falling action** is everything that happens after the climax. This usually consists of tying up loose strings and often reinforcing a moral or message.

SOLUTION

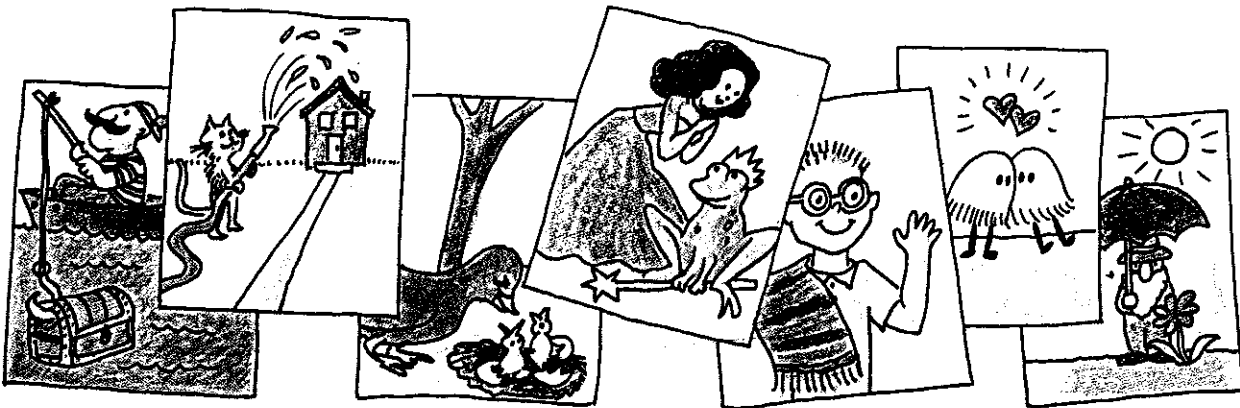


The solution of a story is when your character comes face to face with the problem and solves it.

Throughout the story, you should give your main character ideas or tools that will help him or her solve the problem.

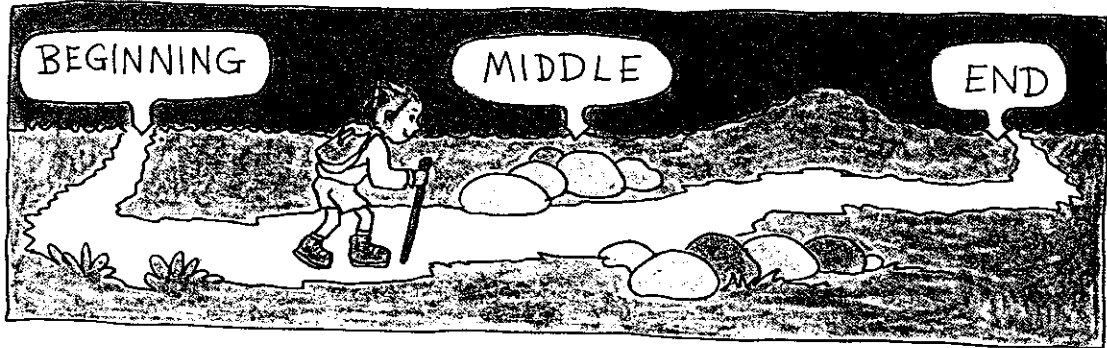
For instance, if your character has to escape from an angry bear, make sure he can run fast!

Make sure that your readers know about your character's abilities, too! If your main character must read an ancient Egyptian map, make sure she can read hieroglyphics.



Fill in the **solution** on your story map. Sometimes the solution come in the climax (in many versions of the three bears). Sometimes it comes later (as in The Lorax, with the passing on of the Truffula seeds).

Be sure that a thread of truth or logic runs throughout your story. If your main character is a little boy who has shrunk to the size of a gerbil, don't have him put an orange in his pocket.

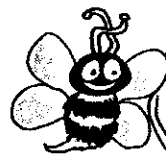


As you travel the road to a good story, you will notice that it has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

In the beginning of your story, we meet the main character and find out what the problem is.

In the middle of the story, your character has a number of adventures trying to solve the problem.

At the end of your story, your character has solved the problem and has changed in some way.



Be sure to tie up all loose ends in your story. Don't leave any characters or problems dangling!





Reading a bad story is like plodding across a flat sandy desert. There are no hills, no bumps, nothing to look forward to. A bad story moves slowly, has no surprises, and lacks excitement. It's boring.



Reading a good story is like taking a hike through the mountains. You never know what's around the bend or over the next hill.

A good story has twists, turns, and surprises. You can't wait to find out what happens next. It's exciting!

**THE MOUNTAIN CLIMBER'S METHOD OF
PLANNING AND WRITING A GOOD STORY**

Think about these questions. When you can answer them all you're ready to set off and write your story.

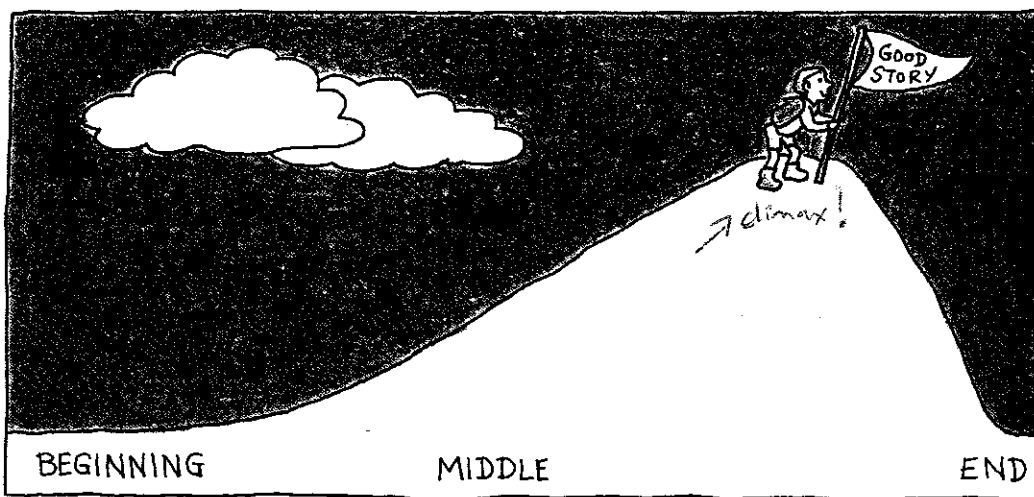
Beginning: When and where does the story take place?
Who are the characters?
What is the main character's problem?

Middle: What does the main character do to solve the problem?
{Rising Action} What adventures happen along the way?

Climax: Does your character solve the problem? This should be the most exciting part of your story.

End: Are all the loose ends tied up?
{Falling Action} Does the main character change in some way?

what problems does the main character encounter?



TEN RULES FOR A GOOD STORY

1. Make your main character both interesting and likable.
2. Show your character's problem right away.
3. Have your character say things that move the story.
4. Don't put too many characters in your story.
5. Keep your story simple.
6. Keep the story moving with lots of action.
7. Keep your story exciting . . . use action words.
8. Choose one style and stick with it.
If your story starts out funny, it should have a funny ending.
9. Try to avoid ending your story this way: "It was all just a dream."
10. End your story on a positive note.

