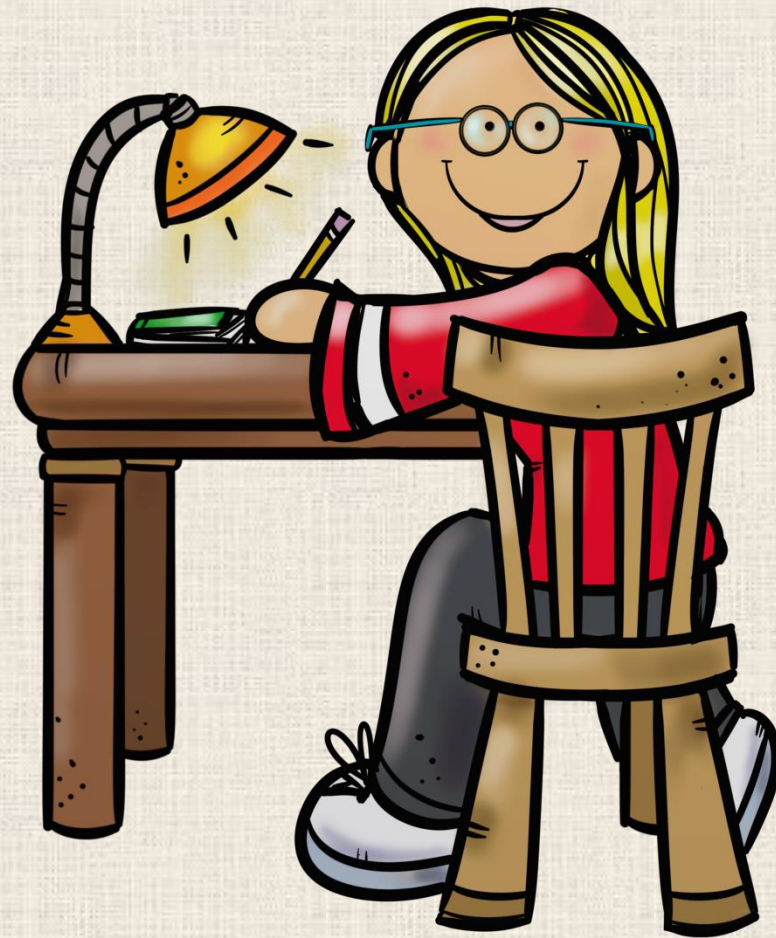


10 Things to Remember When Writing a Narrative



Narrative Writing

1. Hook my reader.

- dialogue
- question
- vivid description
- interesting fact
- sound effects

2. Write in paragraphs.

3. Use correct capitalization and punctuation marks.

4. Use interesting verbs.

5. Use wow words.

6. Show, don't tell.

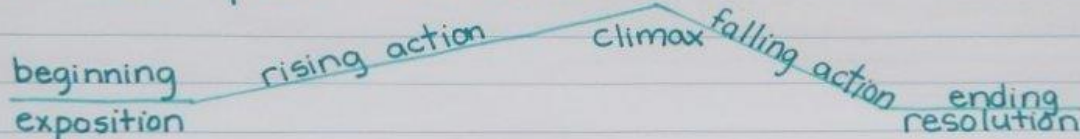
7. Use conversation.

8. Vary sentence beginnings.

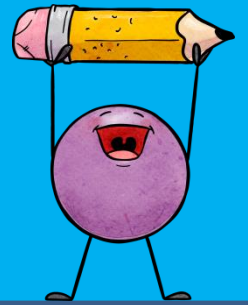
9. Use figurative language.

- similes
- metaphors
- alliteration
- onomatopoeia
- personification

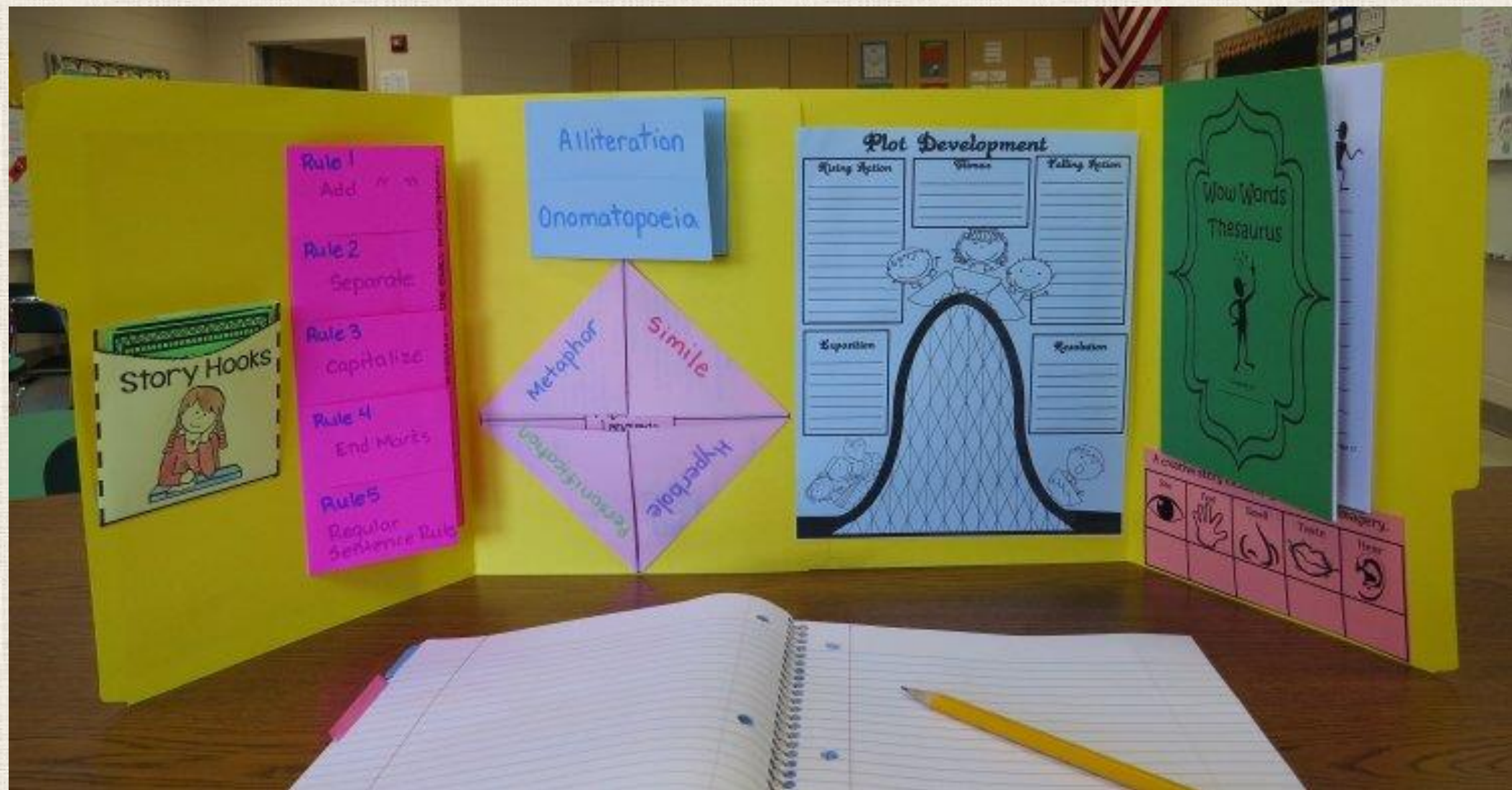
10. Use plot structure.



In this updated handout, the order of the tips has been changed to better align with the writing process.



1. Follow Plot Structure
2. Hook the Reader from the Start
3. Break Up the Story into Paragraphs
4. Use Proper Dialogue Formatting
5. Use Descriptive Verbs
6. Add "Wow" Words to Improve Vocabulary
7. Show, Don't Just Tell
8. Add Figurative Language for Flair
9. Vary Sentence Beginnings
10. Capitalization & Punctuation Matter

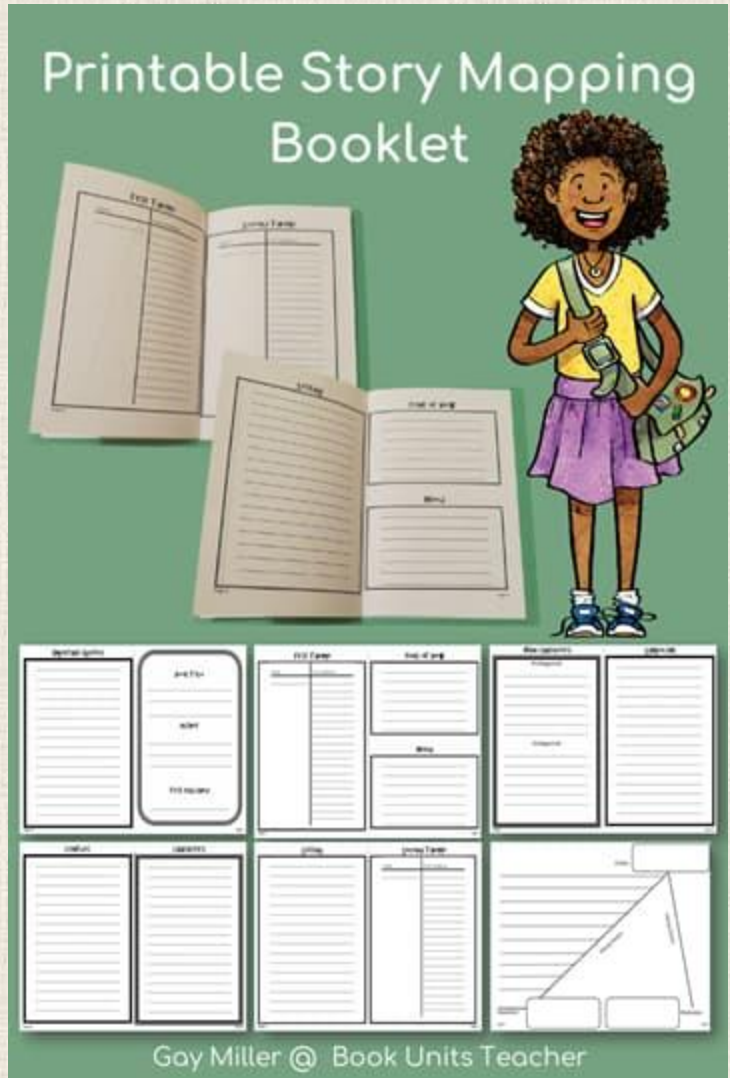


Teaching Study Carrel

Have you ever wondered what it would be like for students to have dozens of resources at their fingertips? Here is what we did. Two file folders were glued together. When these stand up, they make a perfect study carrel. Students created foldable organizers and doodle notes to paste on both sides of the carrel. So when a student couldn't remember a rule for how to write quotations or needed a wow word for a narrative, it was right there.

This post outlines 10 essential strategies for narrative writing, organized in a way that mirrors the writing process: plan → draft → revise → edit. Each tip includes a printable resource that students can collect and store in a study carrel, interactive notebook, or writing folder. These tools help students internalize key skills and build confidence as storytellers.

Tip #1: Follow Plot Structure



Strong narratives follow a clear structure: beginning, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Story mapping helps students plan and revise their writing with purpose.

✦ Try This

Before drafting, have students complete a plot diagram and story map to outline their story's key elements. After writing, they can revisit the map to check for missing or underdeveloped parts.

Collect This Resource

Use the Story Mapping Mini-Booklet to track characters, setting, theme, conflict, and more. Pair it with the Roller Coaster Plot Diagram to help students visualize their story's structure. Add both to the study carrel or notebook for easy reference during planning and revision.

[Learn about the Plot Development Roller Coaster here.](#)
[Learn more about Story Mapping here.](#)

Story Mapping Link to Resources

[Story Mapping using Google Slides](#)

Story Mapping using Google Slides

Gay Miller © Book Units Teacher

You must save the Google Slides to your Google Drive to make them editable.



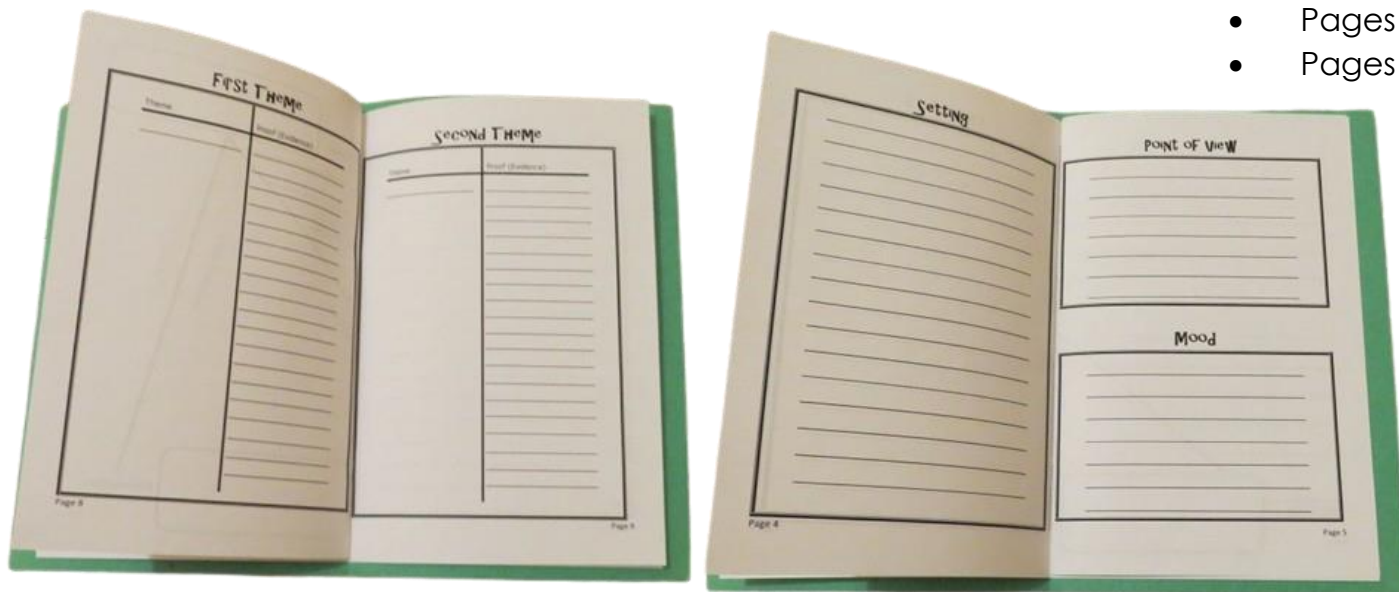
Story Elements Book

This story map booklet may be used to summarize any book.



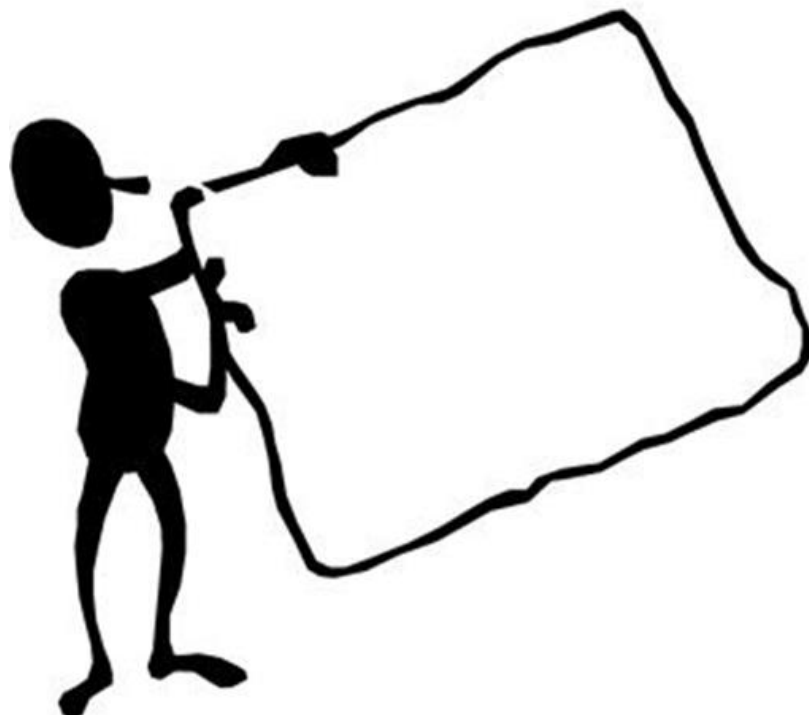
I recommend that you duplicate the cover onto construction paper or card stock. Standard construction paper is 9 by 12 inches which makes the cover a bit larger than the pages inside.

Your pages must be duplicated on the front and the back. I ran my pages front and back directly from the printer. This is a simple process with only three pages. Simply place the page that has been printed on one side back into the printer for the reverse side to be printed.



- Pages 12 & 1 front with Pages 2 & 11 back
- Pages 10 & 3 front with Pages 4 & 9 on back
- Pages 8 & 5 front with Pages 6 & 7 on back

Once you have printed your pages, fold all pages in half vertically (hamburger fold). Staple the pages together in the center to form the book



Story Map Created by

Main Characters

Protagonist

Antagonist

SYMBOLISM

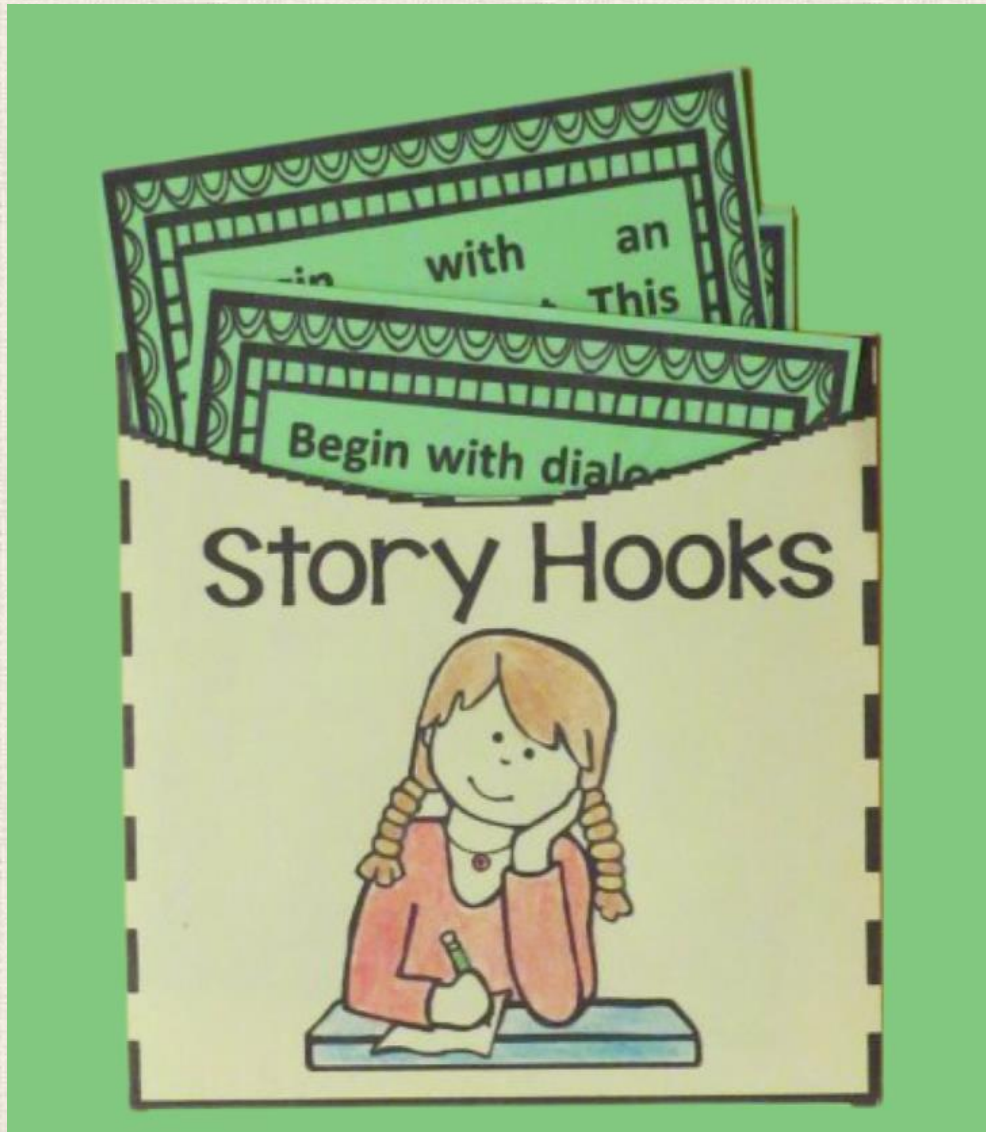
CONFLICT

A large rectangular box with a thick black border and horizontal lines, intended for writing about conflict.

CHARACTERS

A large rectangular box with a thick black border and horizontal lines, intended for writing about characters.

Tip #2: Hook the Reader from the Start



Strong story openings grab the reader's attention and set the tone for what's to come. Students can experiment with five types of narrative hooks:

- dialogue
- a vivid setting description
- a question
- an interesting fact
- sound effects

★ Try This

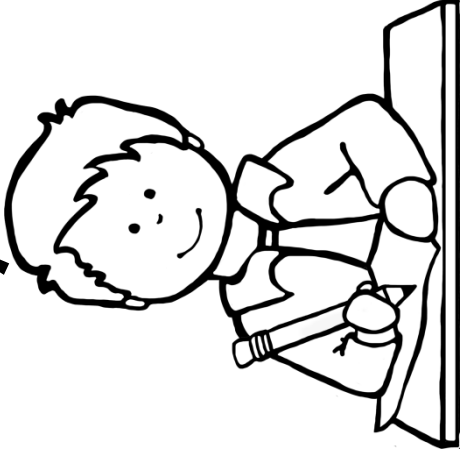
Have students rewrite a dull opening using one of the five hook types. Then, challenge them to identify which type they used and explain why it works.

Collect This Resource

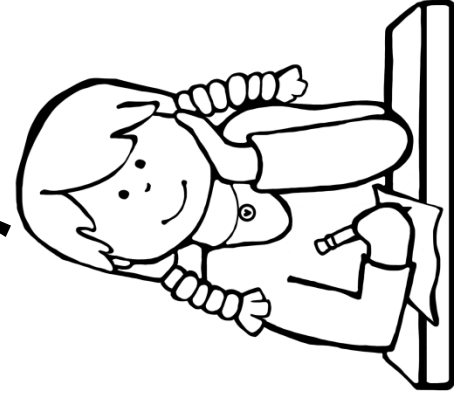
Cut out the five narrative hook cards and store them in the labeled pocket. Each card includes a definition and example. Use them as a reference when writing or revising story beginnings.

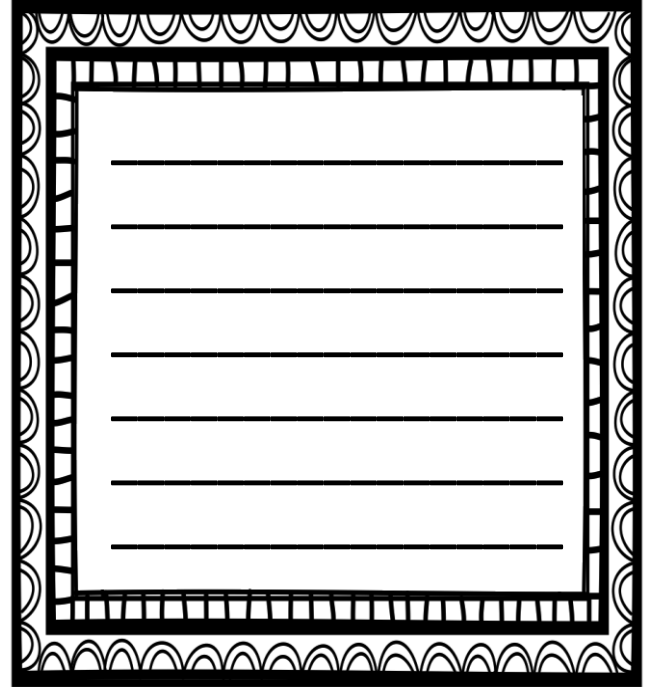
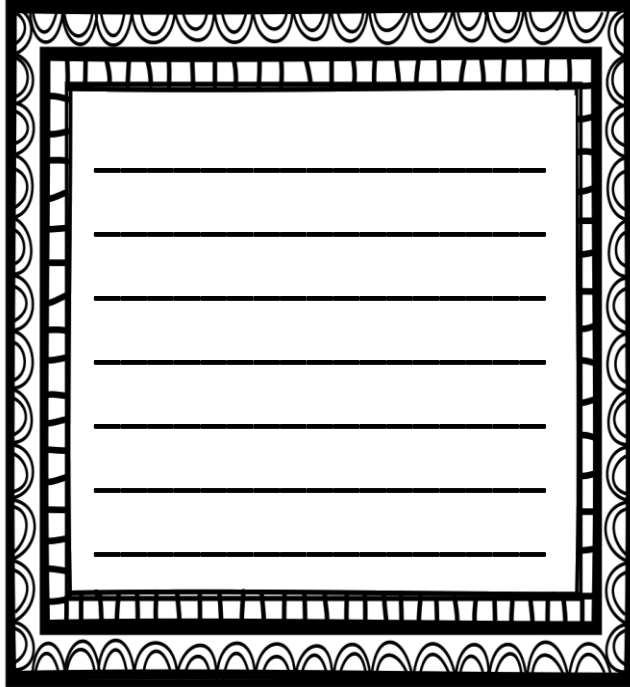
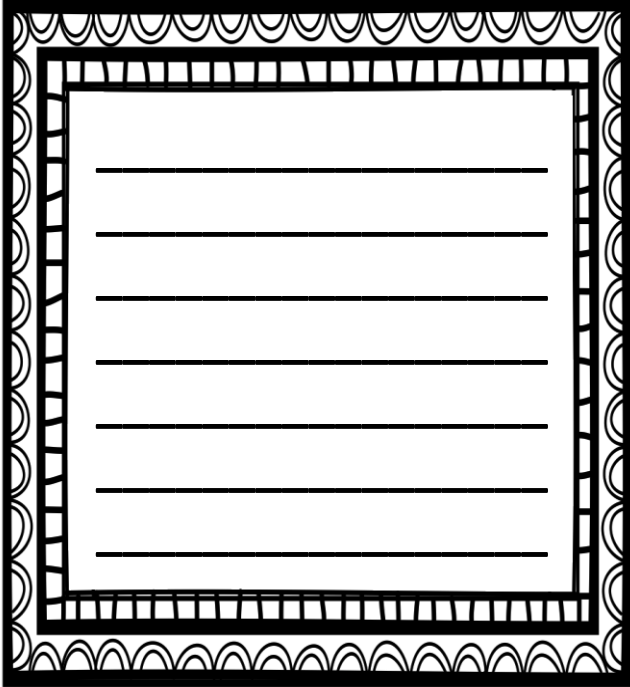
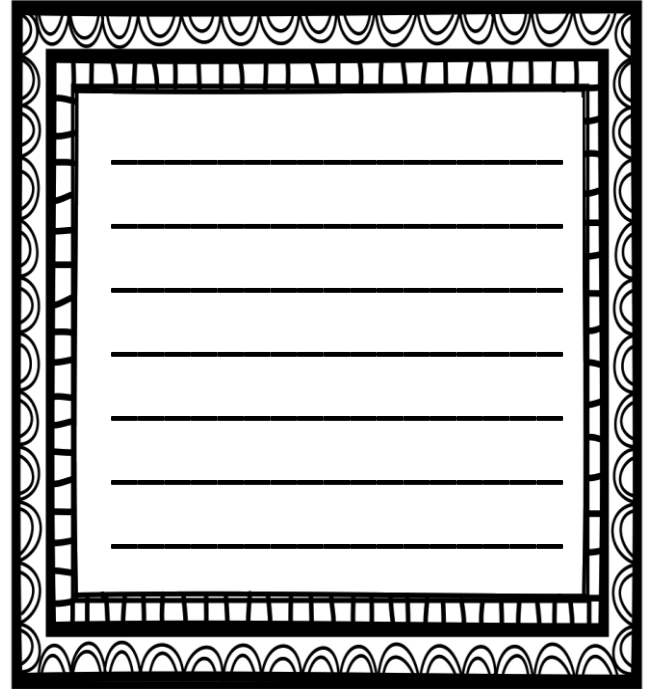
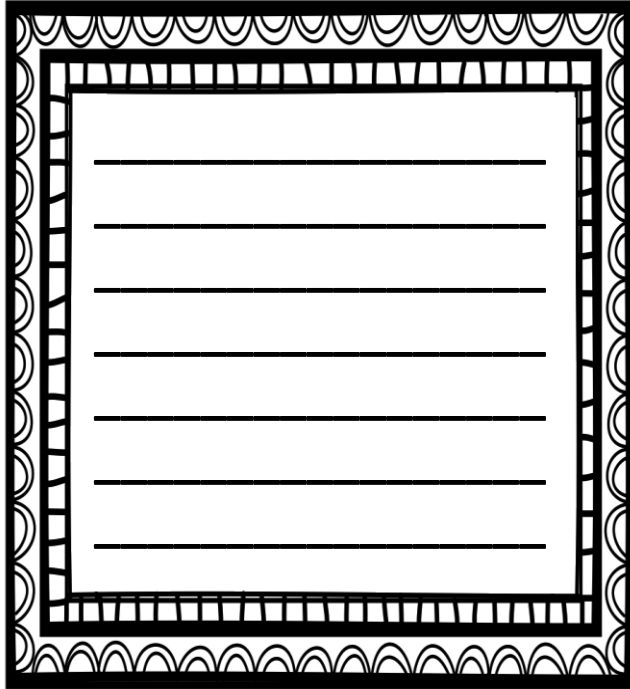
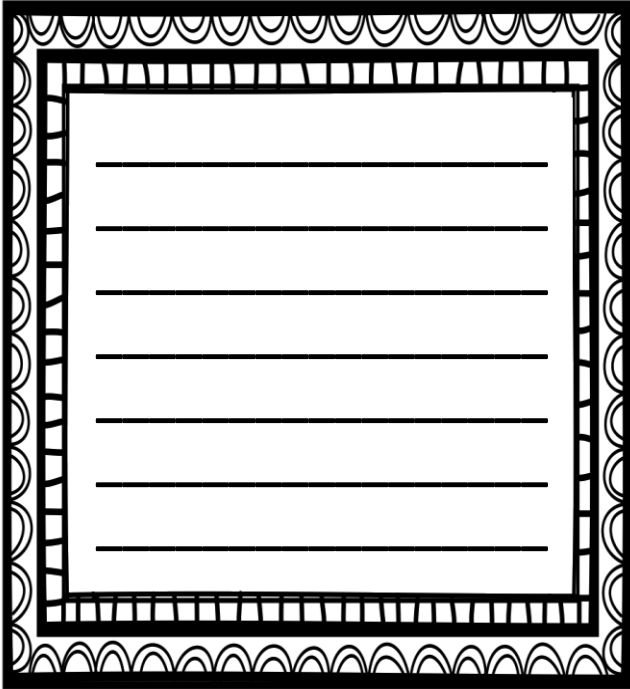
[Check out the post Teaching Students to Write Narrative Hooks and to learn more and get additional practice resources.](#)

Story Hooks



Story Hooks





Begin with dialogue. Use quotations either between two characters or have the narrator talk directly to the reader.

Begin by asking a question to get the reader thinking.

Begin with a vivid description. Be sure to use specific details that paint a picture.

Begin with an interesting fact. This can be a shocking statement.

**Begin with a sound that is associated with the action that is taking place in the first scene of the story.
[Onomatopoeia]**

Tip #3: Break Up the Story into Paragraphs

Organizer with Rules

When To Start a New Paragraph in a Story

Rule 1
If the Topic Changes

Rule 2
When the Setting Changes

Rule 3
When a New Character Speaks

Rule 4
To Break up Long Narratives

Rule 5
For Effect

Rule 1 - TOPIC CHANGE - Just as in writing nonfiction, begin a new paragraph when a new _____ takes place. If the author describes the _____ and moves on to describing the _____ thoughts or _____ to the setting, create a _____ paragraph.

Rule 2 - SETTING CHANGE-SKIPPING TO A NEW TIME OR A NEW PLACE - Remember that setting includes both _____ and _____. If the story shifts from one place to _____ or one time to _____, begin a _____ paragraph. Scenes generally take place in one location. When the location changes, this means a new _____ is about to take place.

Rule 3 - IN DIALOGUE WHEN A NEW CHARACTER SPEAKS - Each time a _____ character speaks, create a new _____. Note that this is also true with thoughts. If the narrator is describing the _____ of one character and a different _____ character speaks, start a _____ paragraph.

Rule 4 - TO BREAK UP LONG NARRATIVES - If a character gives a long speech, it is easier for the reader if the dialogue is _____ up. Break up long bits of narration with _____. For example, if a flashback is taking place, have the character come back to the _____, describe what is taking place, and then go back to the _____.

Rule 5 - FOR EFFECT - Use a paragraph break to _____ an important point, for a laugh, to drive a message, or gain some advantage.

Practice
Write the rule number at the beginning of each paragraph change.

Excerpt from The Tale of Despereaux:
And then, listener, as he stood before the king, a wonderful, amazing thought occurred to the mouse. What if the suit of armor had been empty for a reason? What if it had been empty because it was waiting? _____ For him. "You know me," that was what the knight in his dream had said. "Yes," said Despereaux out loud in wonder. "I do know you." "I can't hear you," sang the king. "I'll have to do it myself," said the mouse. "I will be the knight in shining armor. There is no other way. It has to be me." Despereaux turned. He left the weeping king. He went to find the threadmaster.

When To Start a New Paragraph in a Story

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Paragraphs guide the reader through the story. Teach students to start a new paragraph when:

- the topic changes
- the setting changes (time or place)
- a new character speaks
- a long narrative needs a visual break
- emphasis is needed for dramatic effect

✦ Try This

Have students color-code a sample paragraph to identify where each rule applies. Then, challenge them to apply the same strategy to their own writing.

Collect This Resource

Glue in the "5 Rules for Paragraph Breaks" organizer. It includes definitions, and examples. Add it to the study carrel or interactive notebook for easy access during writing time.

Learn more at this post.
[When to Start a New Paragraph in a Story](#)

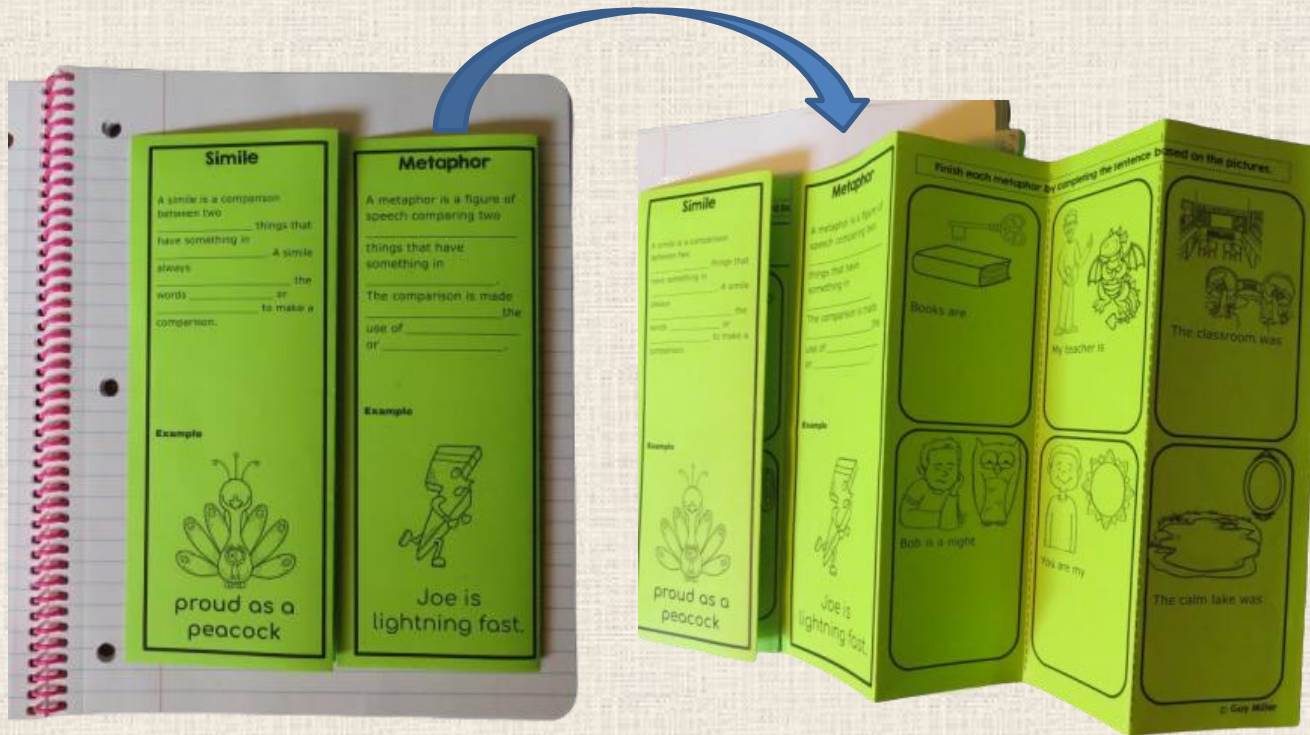
Fold the Organizer.

This organizer requires no cutting or coloring. I recommend telling students that they can color the blackline drawings at home if they wish to, but it is not necessary.

The organizer folds like a fan. Make sure the first fold is under, so the definitions are on top and will be visible when flipping through the interactive notebook.

Gluing the Organizer:

Flip the organizer over with the text box containing the definition face down. Have students place a single line of white school glue down the back right-hand side of the organizer. Glue the organizers two to a page (four to an open notebook).



[Get the digital version here.](#)

When To Start a New Paragraph in a Story

Rule 1
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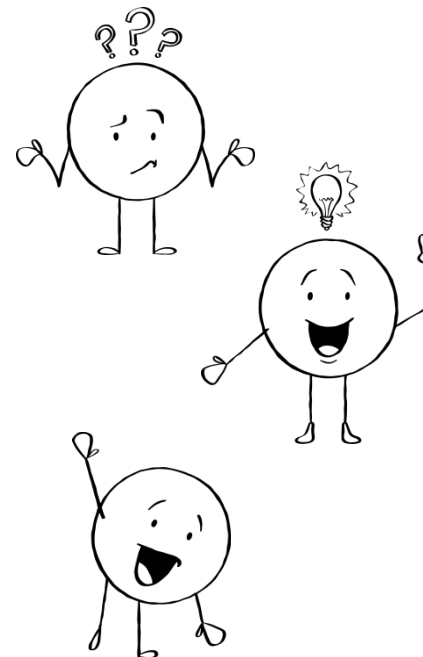
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Rule 5 – FOR EFFECT – Use a paragraph break to _____ an important point, for a laugh, to drive a message, or gain some advantage.



Practice

Write the rule number at the beginning of each paragraph change.

Excerpt from The Tale of Despereaux

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____ For him.

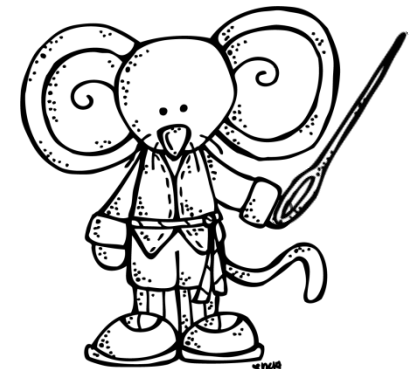
____ “You know me,” that was what the knight in his dream had said.

____ “Yes,” said Despereaux out loud in wonder. “I do know you.”

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Answer Key

When To Start a New Paragraph in a Story

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If the Topic Changes

Rule 2
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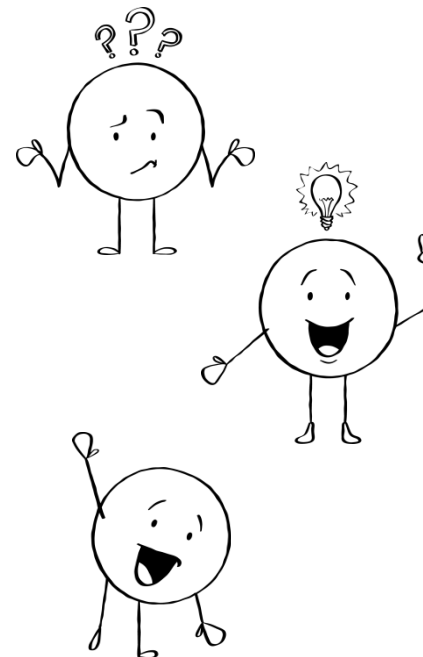
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Rule 5 – FOR EFFECT – Use a paragraph break to emphasize an important point, for a laugh, to drive a message, or gain some advantage.



Practice

Write the rule number at the beginning of each paragraph change.

Excerpt from
The Tale of Despereaux

And then, listener, as he stood before the king, a wonderful, amazing thought occurred to the mouse. What if the suit of armor had been empty for a reason? What if it had been empty because it was waiting?

5 For him.

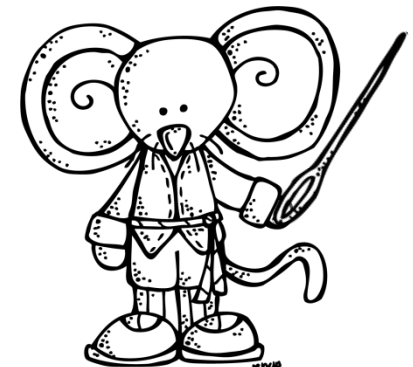
3 "You know me," that was what the knight in his dream had said.

3 "Yes," said Despereaux out loud in wonder. "I do know you."

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3 "I'll have to do it myself," said the mouse. "I will be the knight in shining armor. There is no other way. It has to be me."

2 Despereaux turned. He left the weeping king. He went to find the threadmaster.



Tip #4: Use Proper Dialogue Formatting

Dialogue brings characters to life—but only if it's formatted correctly. Students should follow these five key rules:

- 1) Find the direct quotation and place quotation marks around it.
- 2) Separate the source phrase from the quote with a comma (unless using ? or !).
- 3) Capitalize the first word of the direct quotation.
- 4) Place the correct punctuation before the closing quotation mark.
- 5) Follow all other capitalization and punctuation rules.

✦ Try This

Give students a short conversation with all punctuation removed. Have them rewrite it using the five rules of dialogue formatting.

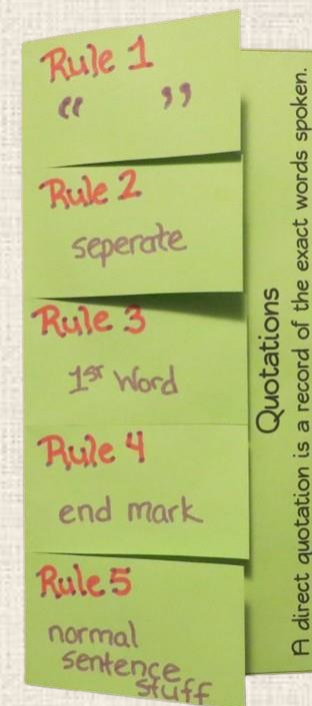
Collect This Resource

Use the Dialogue Rules Flap Organizer. Each flap explains one rule and includes space for students to write examples. Add it to the study carrel or notebook for easy reference during drafting and editing.

Three versions of the organizer are offered: one with blanks for students to write the rule; one with the rule provided but with blank spaces for students to write in key words; and one with the answers provided. The third copy of the organizer may be used as an answer key, for differentiated instruction, for students who were absent during instruction, or if you wish for the students to have cards already completed.

Five Flap Flip

- 1) Print the organizer onto colored paper.
- 2) Students will fill in the missing information in the blank spaces.
- 3) Trim around the four edges on the lines indicated.
- 4) Fold the page in half vertically so that the title "Quotations" will show.
- 5) Cut on the lines indicated on the inside of the organizer, up to the fold so that the organizer opens with five flaps.



Four solid horizontal lines are positioned on the left side of the page. Each line extends from the left edge to a vertical dashed line that runs down the center of the page. This layout is designed to separate a left-hand column from a right-hand column.A series of 20 horizontal lines are positioned on the right side of the page. These lines extend from the vertical dashed line to the right edge of the page, providing a ruled area for writing.

Quotations

A direct quotation is a record of the exact words spoken.

Find the direct quotation. Place _____ around the quote.

Separate the source phrase from the direct quotation. A _____, rather than a period, is placed immediately after the last word spoken, except when a _____ or an _____ is needed.

_____ the first word of the direct quotation.

Place a _____, _____, or and _____ at the end of the sentence _____ the ending quotation mark.

Remember _____ all _____ other _____ and _____ rules.

Quotations

A direct quotation is a record of the exact words spoken.

Quotations

A direct quotation is a record of the exact words spoken.

Find the direct quotation. Place quotation marks around (" ") the quote.

Separate the source phrase from the direct quotation. A comma, rather than a period, is placed immediately after the last word spoken, except when a question mark or an exclamation mark is needed.

Capitalize the first word of the direct quotation.

Place a period (.), question mark (?), or and exclamation mark (!) at the end of the sentence **before** the ending quotation mark.

Remember all other capitalization and punctuation rules.

Tip #5: Use Descriptive Verbs

Strong verbs bring stories to life. Instead of saying a character “went,” try “hurried,” “marched,” or “tiptoed.” Encourage students to replace vague or overused verbs with more specific, expressive ones.

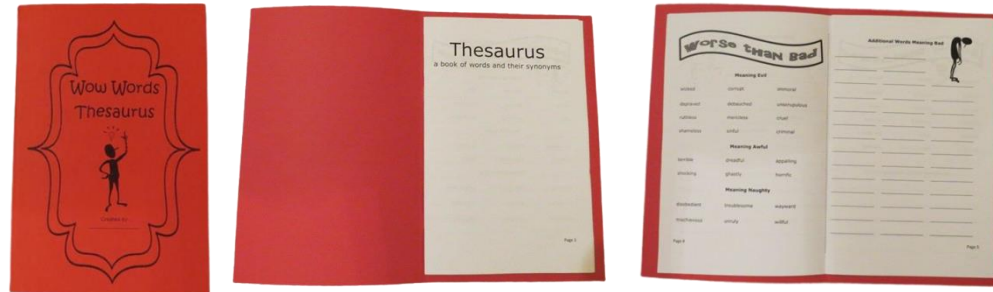
✦ Try This

Have students highlight three verbs in their draft and replace them with stronger choices from the Mini Thesaurus.

Collect This Resource

Print and assemble the Mini Thesaurus booklet. Each page includes a themed word list (like “Better than Good” or “Worse than Bad”) and space for students to add their own synonyms. Store it in the study carrel or notebook for easy reference during writing and editing.

I recommend that you duplicate the cover onto construction paper or card stock. Standard construction paper is 9 by 12 inches which makes the cover a bit larger than the pages in side.



Your pages must be duplicated on the front and the back. I ran my pages front and back directly from the printer. This is a simple process with only four pages. Simply place the page that has been printed on one side back into the printer for the reverse side to be printed.

- Pages 16 & 1 front with Pages 2 & 15 back
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- Pages 10 & 7 front with Pages 8 & 9 on back

Once you have printed your pages, fold all pages in half vertically (hamburger fold). Staple the pages together in the center to form the book,

*Wow Words
Thesaurus*

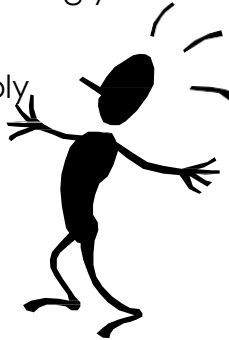


Created by

Words that Mean Very

extremely	greatly	incredibly
considerably	awfully	exceptionally
exceedingly	especially	dreadfully
extraordinarily	enormously	fantastically
vastly	remarkably	outstandingly
specially	unusually	superbly

Additional Words Meaning Very



_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Thesaurus

a book of words and their synonyms

ScariE than Scared

frightened	afraid	fearful
terrified	nervous	startled
alarmed	anxious	upset
petrified	panicked	worried
shocked	jolted	horrified
aghast	horror-struck	stunned

Additional Words Meaning Scared

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Happier than Happy

joyial	cheery	ecstatic
exultant	blissful	euphoric
elated	thrilled	jubilant
joyous	rapturous	overjoyed

Additional Words Meaning Happy



_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Tip #6: Add “Wow” Words to Improve Vocabulary

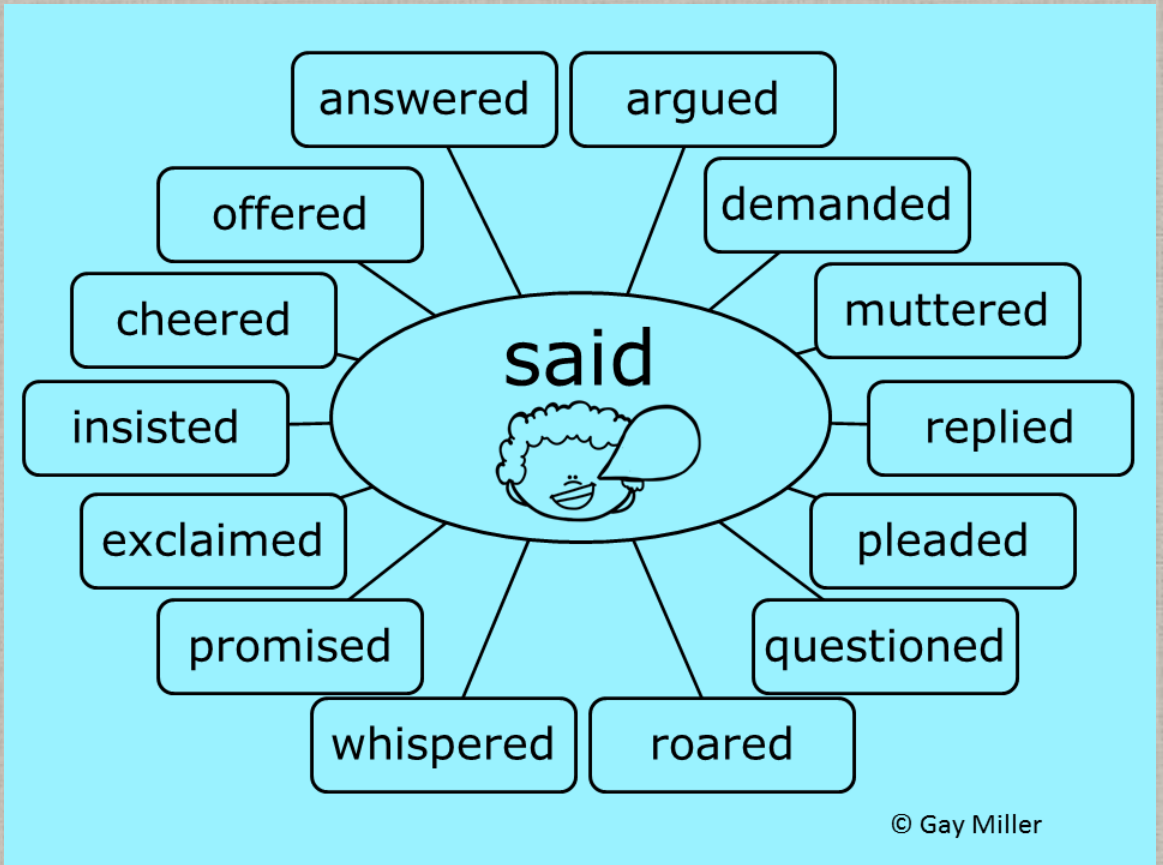
Strong vocabulary helps stories feel fresh and expressive. Encourage students to replace overused words like “said,” “good,” or “nice” with more vivid synonyms.

★ Try This

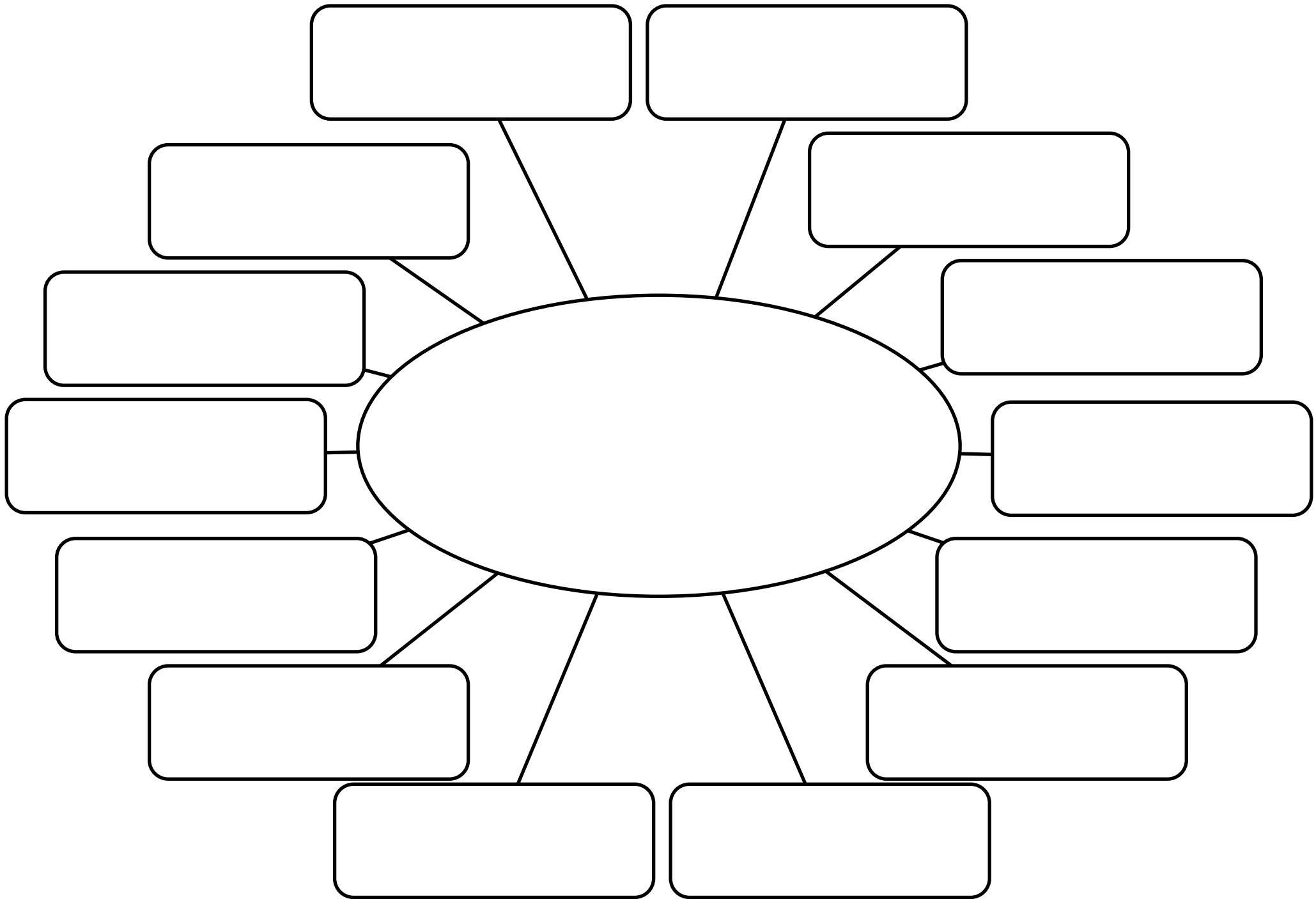
Challenge students to find two words in their draft they can upgrade. Use a word web to brainstorm alternatives.

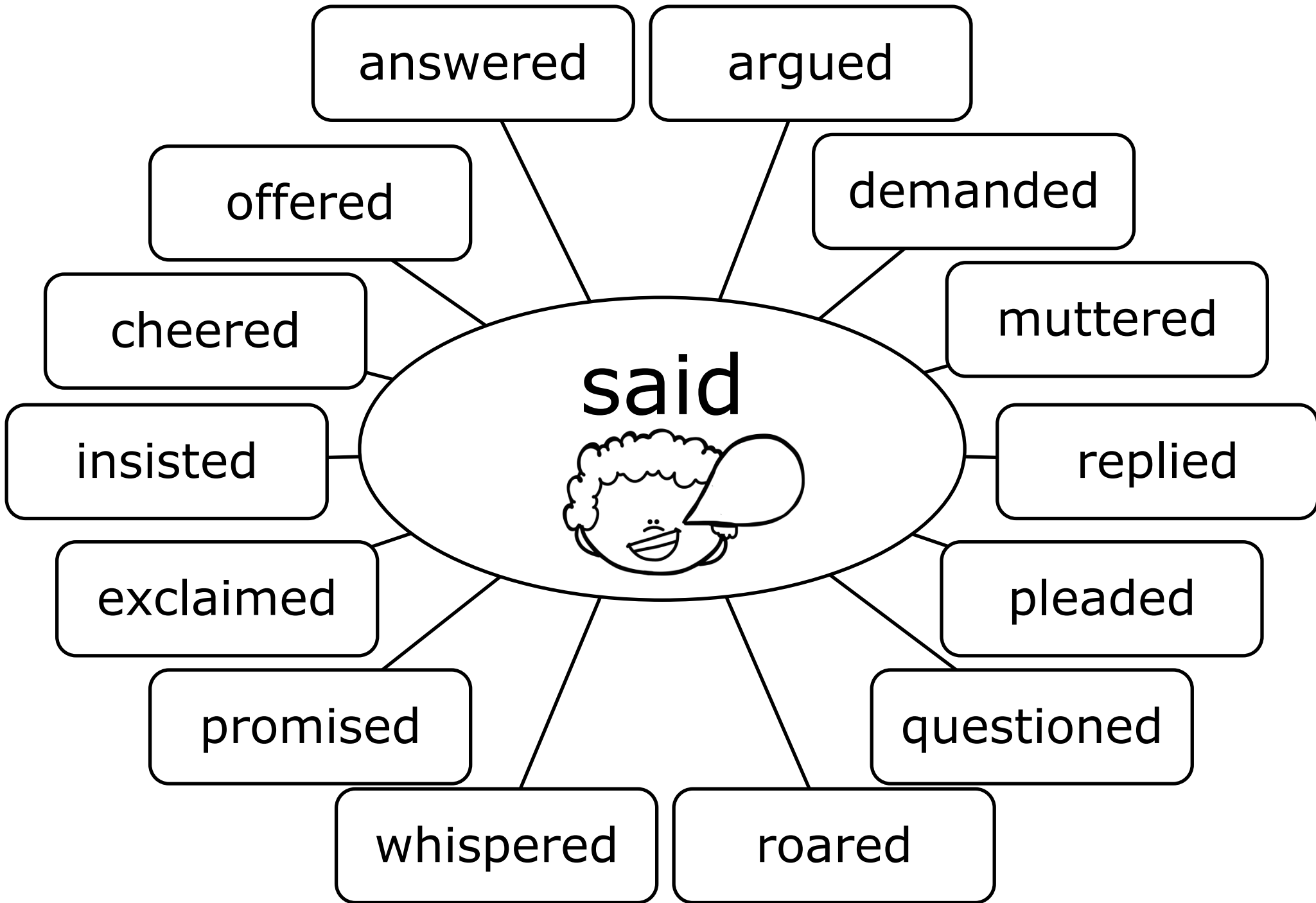
Collect This Resource

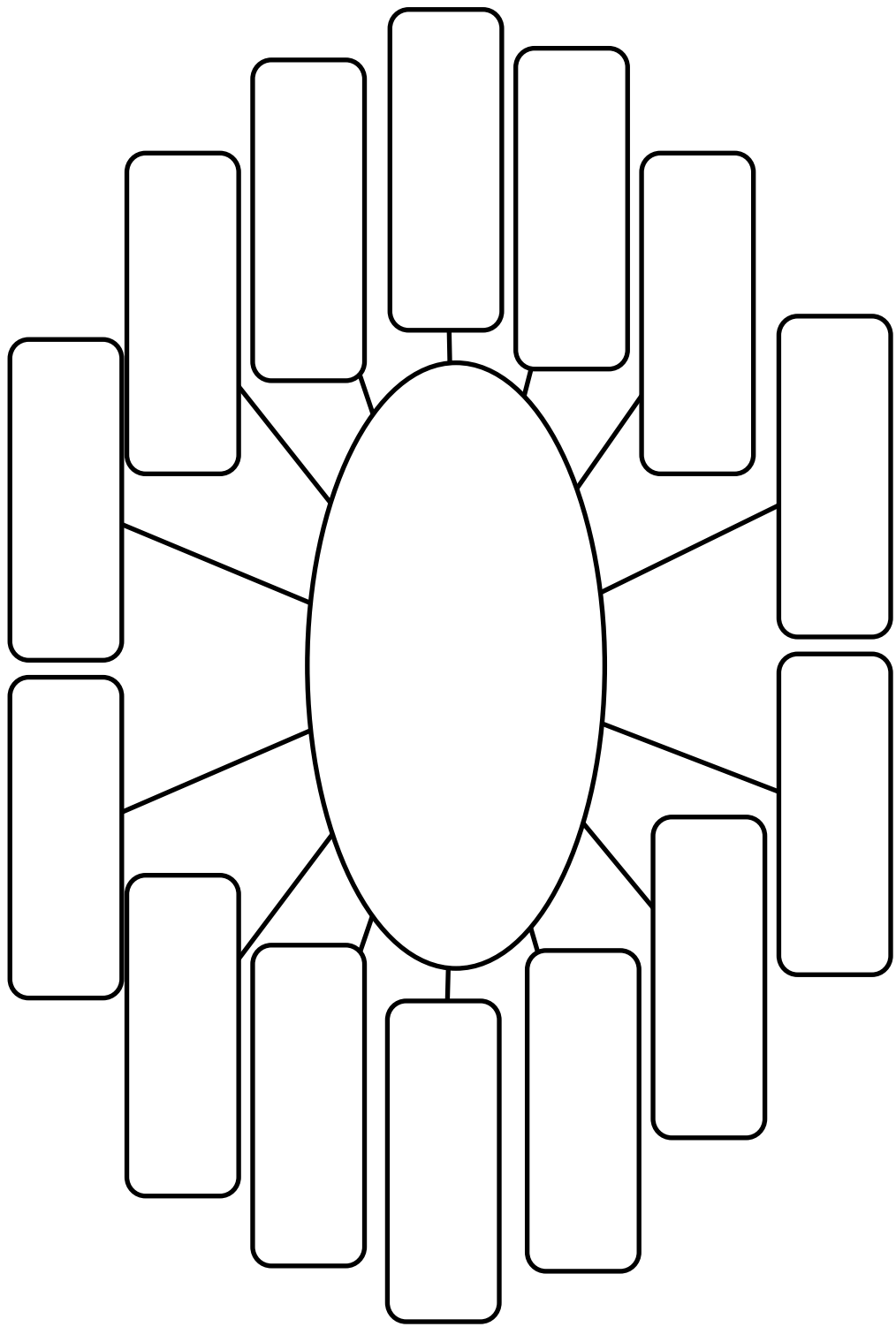
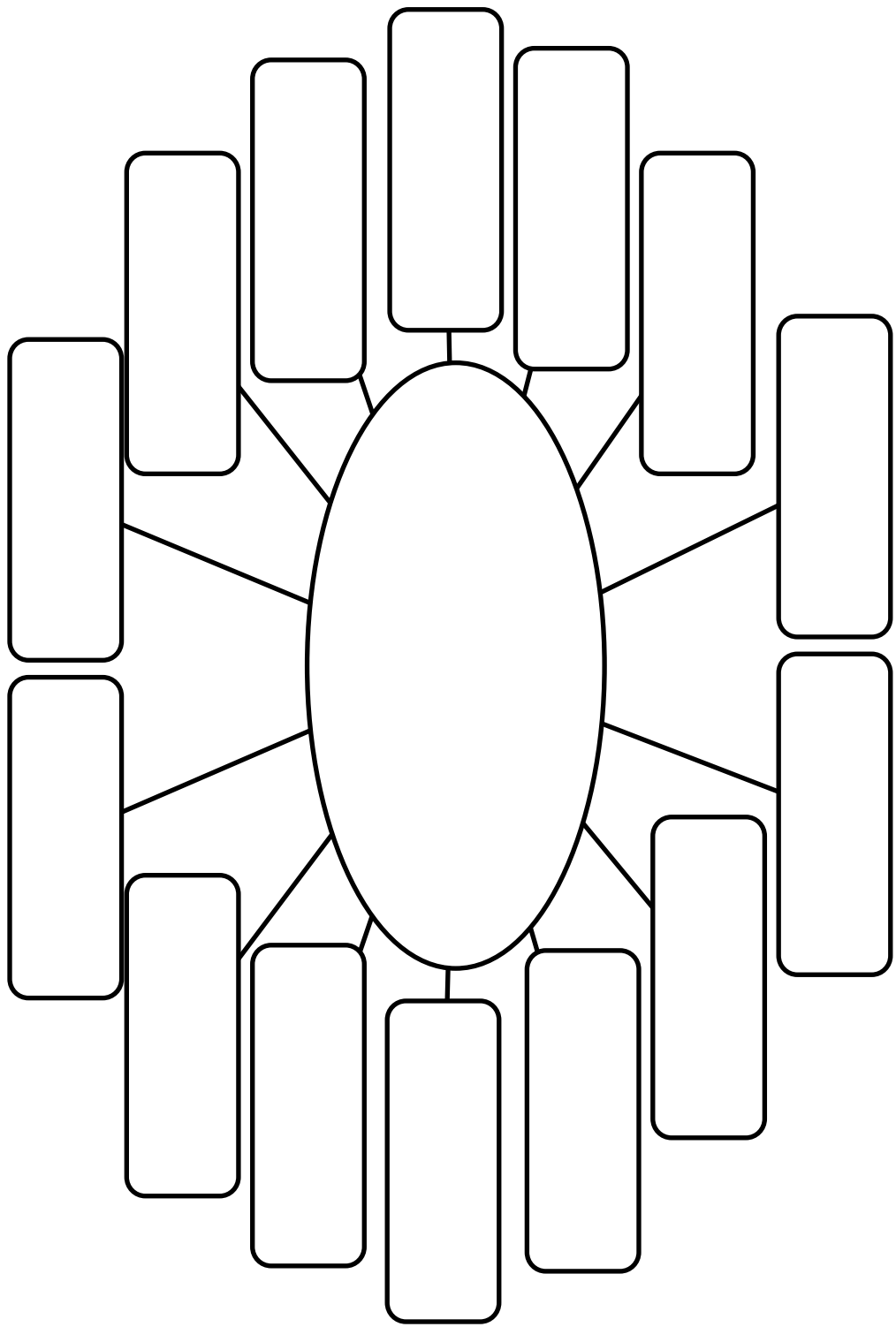
Use the “Said Synonyms” Word Web. Students can refer to the example or create their own webs for other common words. Store it in the study carrel or notebook for quick vocabulary boosts during revision.



© Gay Miller







Tip #7: Show, Don't Just Tell

Writers create vivid scenes by showing what a character feels or experiences through actions, thoughts, and sensory details—not just by stating it.

✦ Try This

Give students a list of “telling” sentences and have them rewrite each one using the Show, Don't Tell method. Encourage them to include body language, setting clues, and internal thoughts.

Collect This Resource

Use the “Show, Don't Tell” Flipbook. Each flap features a different emotion (like nervous, excited, or angry) and includes space for students to brainstorm how to show that feeling through description. Add it to the study carrel or notebook for quick reference during writing.

Show, Don't Tell” Flipbook

Brainstorm how to “show” the emotion using:

- body language
- internal thoughts
- dialogue
- sensory details

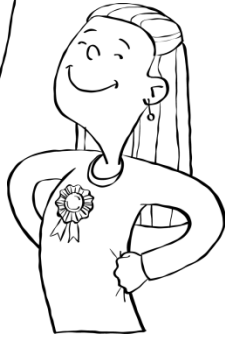
Instructions for Completing the Organizer

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- 2) Cut out rectangles.
- 3) Begin with the bottom page in the stack. Turn the page on its back and place a thin line of glue across the top of the page only. Glue it towards the bottom of the organizer notebook or lap book.
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- 5) Glue this page directly onto the organizer page moving it up approximately one-fourth of an inch higher than the first page.
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- 7) The pages should lift up so that students can read the information.

[Check out this post that goes over how to use Show, Don't Tell.](#)



Emotions



Nervous






Angry

Scared






Proud

Sad






A creative story includes good use of imagery.

See	Feel	Smell	Taste	Hear
				

A creative story includes good use of imagery.

See	Feel	Smell	Taste	Hear
				

A creative story includes good use of imagery.

See 	Feel 	Smell 	Taste 	Hear 

Tip #8: Add Figurative Language for Flair

Figurative language makes writing more vivid and expressive. Encourage students to use:

- similes (He ran like the wind.)
- metaphors (Her voice was music.)
- personification (The wind whispered.)
- hyperbole (I waited a million years.)
- onomatopoeia (Boom! Crash!)
- alliteration (Silly snakes slithered silently.)

✦ Try This

Challenge students to revise a paragraph by adding at least two types of figurative language. Or give them a list of plain sentences and ask them to rewrite each one using a different device.

Collect This Resource

Use the Figurative Language Organizer to review the “core four” with examples and space for student-created sentences. Add the Sound Devices Flip Organizer for onomatopoeia and alliteration. Store both in the study carrel or notebook for easy reference.

Instructions for Completing the Organizer

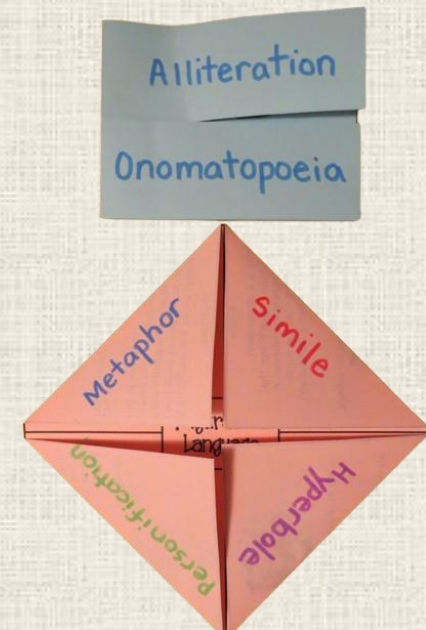
- 1) Print the organizer onto colored paper.
- 2) Trim the edges.
- 3) Fold on the dotted line.
- 4) Cut on the solid lines between flaps up to the dotted fold line.
- 5) Have students fill in missing information.

Three versions of this organizer are provided. The first is blank for students to write their own definitions and examples. The second contains example sentences that need to be corrected. It may be used for differentiated instruction or for an answer key.

The graphic organizers will fit into an interactive notebook after the edges are trimmed.

[Check out this post on sound devices – alliteration, rhyme, and onomatopoeia.](#)

[Check out this post on proverbs and adages.](#)



Alliteration is _____

Alliterate your name.

Onomatopoeia is _____

Draw a picture to illustrate onomatopoeia.

Alliteration is _____

Alliterate your name.

Onomatopoeia is _____

Draw a picture to illustrate onomatopoeia.

Define Alliteration

Alliteration is when _____ in a row begin with the _____.

Alliteration is often used in _____ because it can _____ the way a passage of _____.

Alliterate your name.

Define Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the _____ of _____ in word form.

Draw a picture to illustrate onomatopoeia.

Define Alliteration

Alliteration is when _____ in a row begin with the _____.

Alliteration is often used in _____ because it can _____ the way a passage of _____.

Alliterate your name.

Define Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the _____ of _____ in word form.

Draw a picture to illustrate onomatopoeia.

Alliteration is when several words in a row begin with the same sound.

Alliteration is often used in poetry because it can help improve the way a passage of writing sounds.

Alliterate your name.

Mrs. Miller might melt marshmallows.



Onomatopoeia is the imitation of natural sounds in word form.

Draw a picture to illustrate onomatopoeia.



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<p>Metaphor</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Example</p> <hr/> <hr/> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>	<p>Simile</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Example</p> <hr/> <hr/> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Figurative Language</h2> </div>	
<p>Personification</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Example</p> <hr/> <hr/> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>	<p>Hyperbole</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Example</p> <hr/> <hr/> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>

This organizer helps you review four important types of figurative language: simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole. You'll define each one and create your own examples to show you understand how they work in writing.

Step-by-Step Instructions

Fold the organizer diagonally along the light gray lines in each quadrant. When folded, the four corners will meet in the center to form a diamond shape.

Label each triangular flap with one type of figurative language:

- Simile
- Metaphor
- Personification
- Hyperbole

Open each flap and write the following inside the matching quadrant:

- 1) a short definition in your own words
- 2) one example from a book or class discussion, or an original example you create yourself

Use this organizer as a reference when writing or revising your narrative. Try to include at least one type of figurative language in your story

Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech comparing two unlike things that have something in common. The comparison is made without the use of like or as.

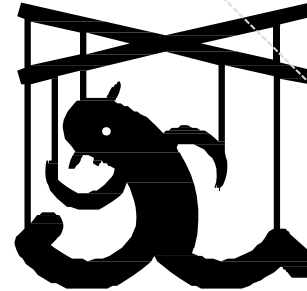
Example
Time is money.



Simile

A simile is a comparison between two unlike things that have something in common. A simile always uses the words like or as to make a comparison.

Example
George is like a puppet on strings.



Figurative Language

Personification

Personification is when an author gives an idea, object, or animal qualities or traits of a person.

Example
The paddle pounded the ball.



Hyperbole

A hyperbole is an exaggeration for emphasis or effect.

Example
Sally has a million things to do.



This organizer helps you review four important types of figurative language: simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole. You'll define each one and create your own examples to show you understand how they work in writing.

Step-by-Step Instructions

Fold the organizer diagonally along the light gray lines in each quadrant. When folded, the four corners will meet in the center to form a diamond shape.

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Use this organizer as a reference when writing or revising your narrative. Try to include at least one type of figurative language in your story

Tip #9: Vary Sentence Beginnings

Using the same sentence structure over and over makes writing feel flat. Teach students to experiment with different ways to begin their sentences—like starting with an adverb, a prepositional phrase, or a sound word.

✦ Try This

Have students highlight the first word of each sentence in their draft. Then, challenge them to revise any repeated patterns using new sentence starters.

Collect This Resource

Use the Sentence Starter Octagon Organizer. Students write a sentence in the center and rewrite it using eight different sentence beginnings. Two versions are included, offering 16 total strategies. Add it to the study carrel or notebook for quick reference during revision.

[Check out this post on varying sentences.](#)

Teacher Instructions: Using the Sentence Starter Octagon Organizers

These two organizer pages are designed to help students experiment with sentence variety by rewriting a single sentence in multiple ways. Each page features an octagon in the center where students write a sentence from their draft. Radiating from the octagon are eight sentence starter prompts (e.g., “Begin with a verb ending in -ing,” “Begin with a prepositional phrase”). Across both pages, students are introduced to 16 different ways to begin a sentence.

💡 How to Use These Organizers in Class

Start with a Mini-Lesson

Have students highlight the first word of every sentence in a short draft or paragraph. If they notice the same word starting more than three sentences, it's a great opportunity to revise for variety.

Introduce the Organizer

Explain that students will choose one sentence from their draft and write it in the center of the octagon. Then, using the prompts around the edges, they'll rewrite that sentence in eight different ways—each with a new structure.

Encourage Flexibility

While students can complete all eight variations for one sentence, they may also choose to use the two pages to revise two different sentences. Alternatively, they can use the organizers as a reference tool during revision rather than filling in every section.

Hands-On Revision Option

For a more tactile approach, try the “cut the sentence away” method:

- 1) Have students write their drafts on only the front side of the paper, so they can cut out repetitive or weak sentences from their draft.
- 2) Paste the remaining draft onto a clean sheet, leaving blank spaces.
- 3) Use the organizer to rewrite the missing sentences with stronger, more varied openings.

Wrap-Up

After completing the organizer, students can choose their favorite revised version to replace the original sentence in their draft. Encourage them to reflect on how the new sentence changes the tone, rhythm, or clarity of their writing.

These organizers are a great fit for writing centers, revision stations, or small-group instruction. They also make a helpful addition to a study carrel or writing notebook for ongoing reference.

Begin with a
verb ending
with -ing.

Begin with a
prepositional phrase.

Begin with a
verb ending
with -ed

Begin
with an
adjective.

Begin
with an
adverb.

Ways to Begin Sentences

Begin with a
phrase that tells
where.

Begin with a
sound word..

Begin with a
phrase that
tells when.

Begin with an interjection.

Begin with a clause.

Begin with a transition word or phrase.

Begin with an appositive.

Ways to Begin Sentences

Begin with Yes or No.

Begin with a coordinating conjunction.

Make a question. Begin with who, what, when, where, how, why.

Begin with an infinitive phrase.

Begin with a verb ending with -ing.

Begin with a prepositional phrase.

Begin with a verb ending with -ed

With his backpack flopping on his back, David ran to catch the bus.

Frightened he would be late for school, David ran to catch the bus.

Gagging for breath, David ran to catch the bus.

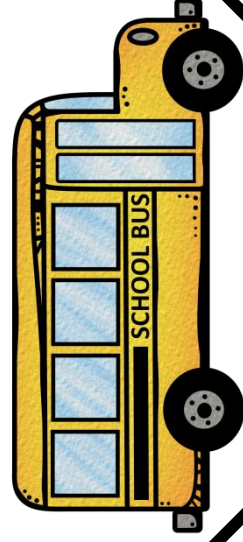
Begin with an adjective.

Begin with an adverb.

Ways to Begin Sentences

Anxious about being late for school, David ran to catch the bus.

Hurriedly, David ran to catch the bus.



Down Main Street, David ran to catch the bus.

Swoosh, David ran to catch the bus.

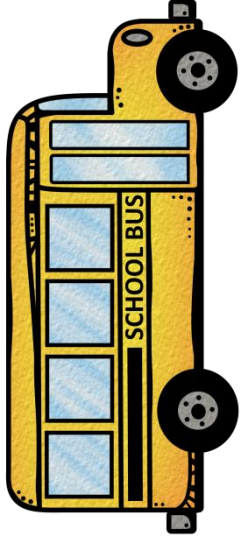
At 7:00 AM, David ran to catch the bus.

Begin with a phrase that tells where.

Begin with a sound word.

Begin with a phrase that tells when.

Ways to Begin Sentences



David ran to catch the bus.

Begin with an interjection.

Stop! Stop! David ran to catch the bus.

Begin with an appositive.

The boy who was late for everything, David had to run to catch the bus.

David left his house late for school. So, David had to run to catch the bus.

Begin with a coordinating conjunction.

Begin with a clause.

While David stopped to tie his shoe, he saw the bus driving away from the stop. David had to run to catch the bus.

Begin with a transition word or phrase.

David left his house late for school. Then, David ran to catch the bus.

Begin with Yes or No.

Yes, David had to run to catch the bus again.

To keep from being late for school, David ran to catch the bus.

Turn the sentence into a question. Begin with who, what, when, where, how, why.

Begin with an infinitive phrase.

Tip #10: Capitalization & Punctuation Matter

Punctuation isn't just about correctness—it shapes how a story sounds and feels.

Teach students to:

- capitalize sentence beginnings and names
- use commas to separate ideas and clarify meaning
- add quotation marks and end punctuation in dialogue

★ Try This

Set up peer editing stations where students highlight punctuation errors in each other's drafts. Or use a "first word check" to spot missing capitals and repeated sentence starters.


Collect This Resource

Create the staggered flip organizer on comma rules. Each flap includes a rule and space for examples. Store it in the study carrel or notebook for easy access during writing and revision.

Instructions for Completing the Organizer

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Comma Rules



After introductory words yes and no and interjections

To set off the name of the person to who you are speaking

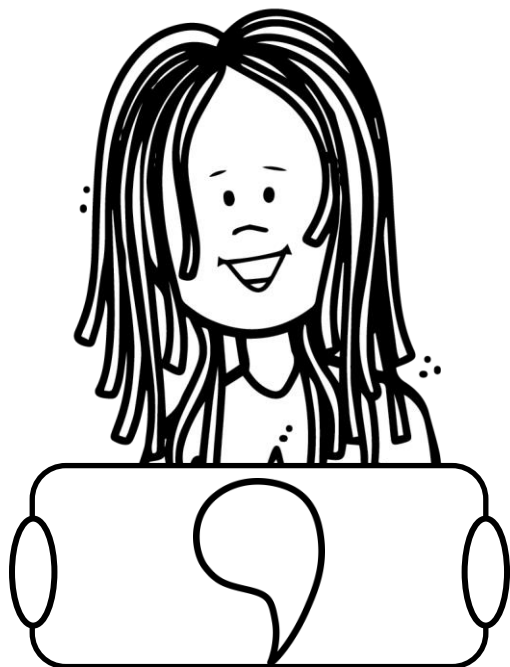
To separate words or groups of words in a series

To set off introductory elements

In tag questions

[Check out this post on Teaching Comma Rules.](#)

Comma Rules



After introductory words yes and no and interjections

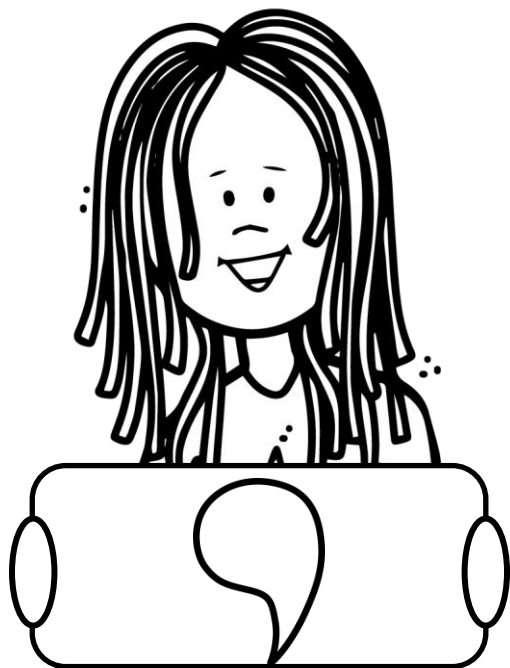
To set off the name of the person to who you are speaking

To separate words or groups of words in a series

To set off introductory elements

In tag questions

Comma Rules



Rule:

Use a comma after words like yes, no, well, or oh at the beginning of a sentence.

Example:

Yes, I finished my homework.
Oh, I didn't see you there!

After introductory words yes and no and interjections

Rule:

Use a comma to separate the name of the person being spoken to from the rest of the sentence.

Example:

Let's eat, Grandma.
I'm not sure, Marcus, if that's the right answer.

To set off the name of the person to who you are speaking

Rule:

Use commas to separate three or more items in a list.

Example:

We packed sandwiches, fruit, chips, and water.
She ran, jumped, and cheered.

To separate words or groups of words in a series

Rule:

Use a comma after an introductory word or phrase that comes before the main part of the sentence.

Examples:

After the long hike through the woods, we finally saw the cabin. (*prepositional phrase*)
Tired and hungry, the campers unpacked their gear. (*introductory phrase*)
However, we forgot the marshmallows. (*transitional word*)

To set off introductory elements

Rule:

Use a comma before a tag question at the end of a sentence.

Example:

You're coming to the party, aren't you?
That was a great movie, wasn't it?

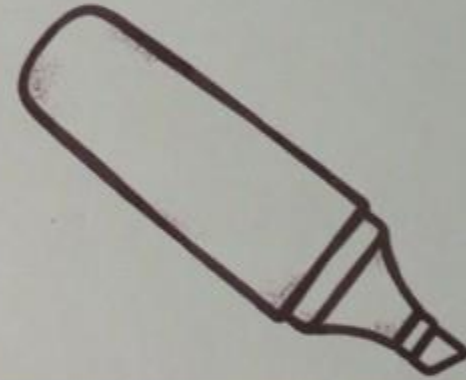
In tag questions

Highlight Proofreading

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Highlight the first word of each sentence and then check for these possible problems.



Varying Sentences

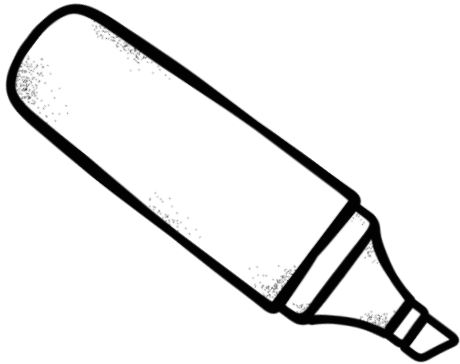
Capitalization

Point of View

End Marks

Run-On Sentences

Highlight the first word of each sentence and then check for these possible problems.



Is each highlighted word capitalized?

Capitalization

Does each highlighted word have a period, question mark, or exclamation mark directly before it?

End Marks

Do my sentences begin with [character's name] then change to the word "I?"

Point of View

Make a tally of the first words used. Follow the "Three Strikes You're Out Rule." This means if three or more sentences begin with the same word, you will need to rewrite one or more of these sentences.

Varying Sentences

Do the sentences vary in length? Are some short and others long? Does the story contain a whole bunch of short choppy sentences? Does the story have really l-o-n-g sentences? This is often a sign of run-on sentences or failure to add end marks. Check to determine if you have connected a string of independent clauses with coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS).

Run-On Sentences

Narrative Writing – Highlight your story using the following colors.

1. Technique Used for Story Beginning Check one.

Dialogue _____ A Question _____ A Vivid Description _____ An Interesting Fact _____ Sound Effects _____

2. Paragraphs

Did I write in paragraphs? Yes _____ No _____

Did I indent those paragraphs? Yes _____ No _____

3. Correct Capitalization & Punctuation Marks

Do all my sentences end with end marks? Yes _____ No _____

Other Punctuation Marks including commas Yes _____ No _____

Did I capitalize all my sentence beginnings? Yes _____ No _____

Other Capital Letters including Proper Nouns Yes _____ No _____

4. Did I use non-descriptive words? – said, went, go, or put Yes _____ No _____

5. Did I use wow words? Yes _____ No _____

List them.

6. Show, Don't Tell Yes _____ No _____

7. Did I use conversation? Yes _____ No _____

If so, did I use the Five Rules for Writing Direct Quotations Yes _____ No _____

8. Did I vary my sentence beginnings? Yes _____ No _____

9. Did I use figurative language? [similes, metaphors, alliteration, onomatopoeia] Yes _____ No _____

10. Plot Structure Yes _____ No _____

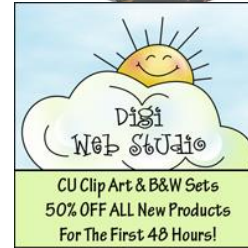
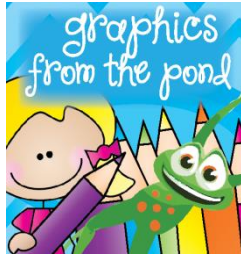
Did my story have a beginning including a setting and characters? Yes _____ No _____

Did my story build to a climax? Yes _____ No _____

Did my story have a resolution (good ending)? Yes _____ No _____

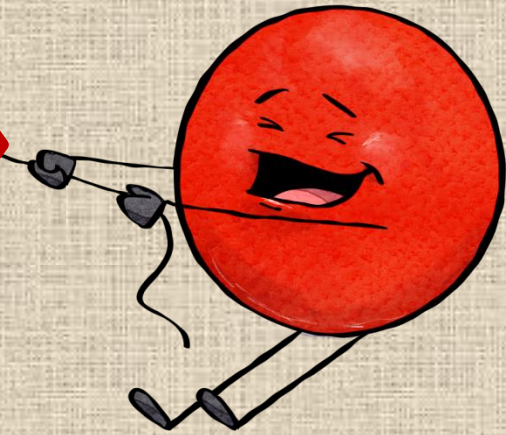


Credits



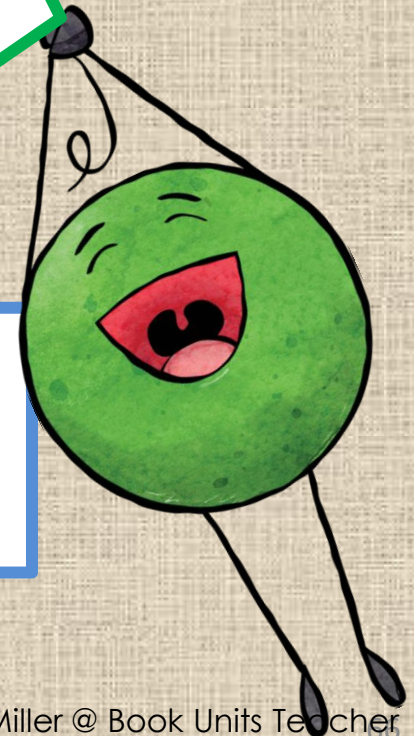
Visit me on

<http://www.pinterest.com/lindagaymiller/>



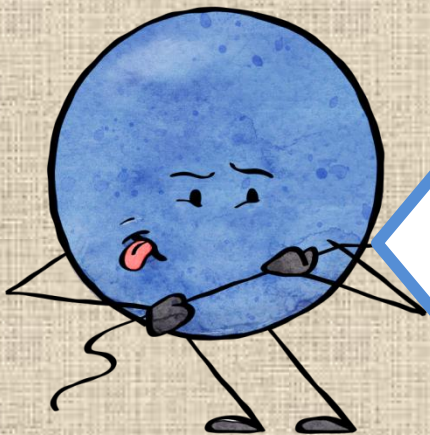
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<http://bookunitsteacher.com/>



Number 1 - Your Story Beginning



Your story needs a strong beginning. You can achieve this using one of the following methods:

- Dialogue (Conversation)
- A Question
- A Vivid Description
- An Interesting Fact
- Sound Effects

A Question

Have you ever had a day when you wished you had stayed in bed? As I rushed to catch the bus on what seemed to be a perfectly normal day, I had no idea what was ahead of me.



Dialogue

"Hurry or you'll be late!" called my mother from the bottom of the stairs. "Today of all days you want to be on time." If I had only known what that day would bring, I would have stayed in bed.



An Interesting Fact

Shock has been known to kill ten year olds. It can cause their brains to explode and their heart to stop dead still. These facts raced through my mind as I stood dumbfounded in front of my fifth grade classmates. I wish I had stayed in bed!



A Vivid Description

The sun was warm on my back as I raced toward the waiting yellow school bus. As I nestled into the worn leather seat, I was greeted by the friendly voices of other excited children. The look on my face was one of confidence and contentment. With a jerk, the bus rumbled down the road, and I was on my way into one of the worst days of my life.



Sound Effects

"Bzzzzzz!" The sound of my alarm clock droned in my ears as I struggled to come awake. With a start, I sat straight up in my bed. This was my big day, and I had to be on time.



Number 2 - Paragraphs



Be sure your story has paragraphs. They tell when you're switching time, place, topic or speaker, and they help break the page up so it is not just a solid block of writing.

How Do I Know When To Start a New Paragraph?

There are a few standard times to make a new paragraph:

- when you start in on a new topic
- when you skip to a new time
- when you skip to a new place
- when a new person begins to speak
- when you want to produce a dramatic effect

Number 3 - Capitalization and Punctuation



Capitalize

- Beginnings of Sentences
- Proper Nouns

Punctuate

- End Marks (question mark, period, exclamation marks)
- Commas when joining two sentences with a conjunction, addressing a person, with quotations, etc.

Number 4 - Use Rich Words.



Remember words such as **said**, **went**, and **put** are not descriptive. Use words that describe the action.

NOT

My dad **went** to work.

BUT

My dad **raced** to work.



NOT

Jane **said** she had a secret.

BUT

Jane **whispered to Meghan** a wonderful secret.



Number 5 - Wow Words



Show your reader that you have a high-quality, first-class, superior, excellent, exceptional, outstanding, brilliant, extraordinary, incomparable vocabulary by using 5th grade vocabulary words.

Don't Use	Use These Instead:
good	acceptable, admirable, commendable, praiseworthy, virtuous, accomplished, skilled
bad	defective, erroneous, inadequate, substandard, corrupt, vile, distressing, severe, offensive, immoral
thing	material object, article, concept, entity, apparatus, device, detail, statement, items
big	considerable, colossal, immense, sizable, vast, eminent, influential, paramount, prime, prominent
small	diminutive, immature, minute, slight, negligible, petty, trivial, limited
important	far-reaching, grave, momentous, significant, substantial, prominent, notable
happy	content, joyous, jubilant, thrilled, advantageous, favorable, fortunate
sad	sorrowful, cheerless, dismal, gloomy, melancholy, mournful, somber, grievous

Number 6 - Show; Don't Tell



The **Show, Don't Tell** method of writing is when the writer is able to create a picture in the reader's mind, to get away from the repetition of such empty words like went, big, or said.

NOT

Susan exercised.

BUT

Sweat poured from Susan's forehead as she continued to do one hundred sit-ups.



Number 7 - Conversation



The Five Rules for Writing Direct Quotations

Rule 1	Rule 2	Rule 3	Rule 4	Rule 5
Add quotation marks.	Separate source phrase from quote.	Capitalize the first word of the direct quotation.	Add end marks.	Add needed capitalization and punctuation.

Remember

You must make a new paragraph every time a different person speaks!!!!

Number 8 - Sentences



Vary your sentences.

- Are some of your sentences long and others short?
- Do you start the beginnings differently?
- Do some sentences start with a part of speech other than a noun or pronoun?

Number 9 - Figurative Language



As easy as pie...

Use a little figurative language to add interest to your story.

- Simile
- Metaphor
- Alliteration
- Onomatopoeia

A **simile** is a comparison between two unlike things that have something in common using like or as

Examples

It's been a hard day's night and I've been working like a dog. - The Beatles

My heart is like an open highway. - Jon Bon Jovi
like two peas in a pod
like Christmas in summer

as hungry as a bear

as nutty as a fruitcake

as quick as lightning

Onomatopoeia is the imitation of natural sounds in word form. These words help us form mental pictures about the things, people, or places that are described

Examples

buzz

hiss

roar

woof

bang

pop

Buzzzzzz

CRUNCH

POP!

BOOM

SWOOSH BOO!

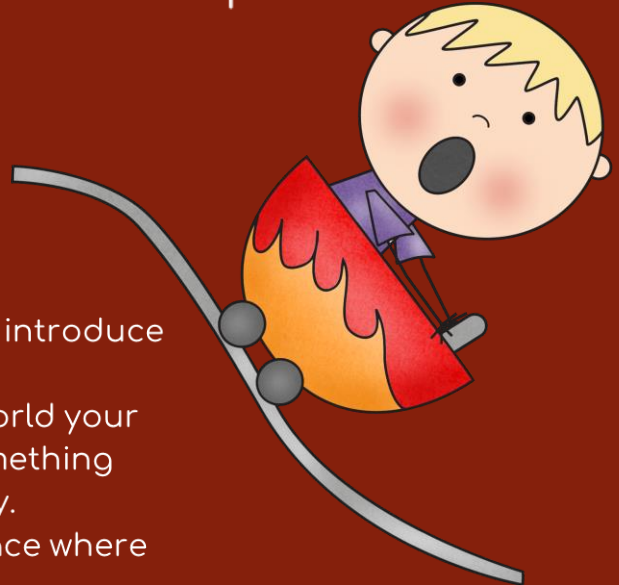
Gay Miller @ Book Units Teacher

Number 10 - Plot Structure

- a plot, including setting and characters
- a climax (This is when the plot is solved.)
- an ending

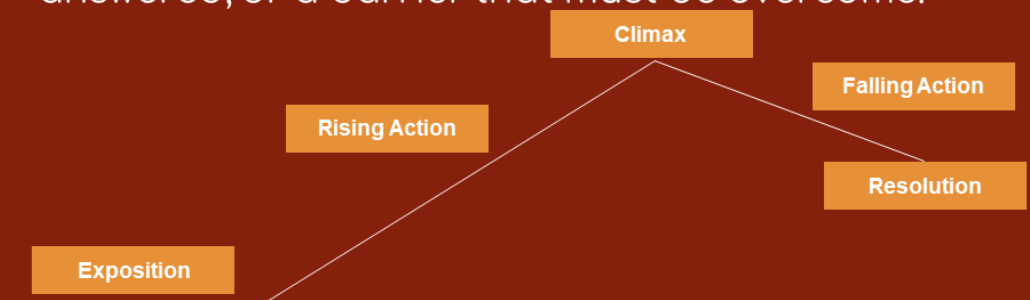
Beginning

- In the beginning of your story, you should introduce your **characters**.
- The reader should also know about the world your characters live in (**the setting**) and the something about each of the characters in your story.
- The beginning of your story is also the place where your **plot** (the problem) **is first introduced**.



Middle

Your story needs to build to something exciting, the climax. Write about a simple conflict, a task that must be completed, a question that must be answered, or a barrier that must be overcome.



Include

- Actions
- Dialogue
- Sensory Details
- Thoughts and Feelings
- Suspense (Remember to build to a climax.)