
Narrative Writing

Contents

Unit 1: Writing Effective Story Beginnings

- Lesson 1: Identifying Four Techniques
- Lesson 2: Revising an Ineffective Story Beginning
- Lesson 3: Establishing Setting and Plot
- Lesson 4: Revising a Beginning Using an Alternative Technique
- Lesson 5: Writers' Workshop — Revising a Writing Sample

Unit 2: Writing Effective Story Endings

- Lesson 1: Identifying Four Techniques
- Lesson 2: Revising an Ineffective Story Ending
- Lesson 3: Revising an Ending Using an Alternative Technique
- Lesson 4: Writers' Workshop — The "Before and After" Format

Unit 3: Writing Detail and Description

- Lesson 1: Identifying the Components of Effective Descriptive Writing
- Lesson 2: Detail Generating Questions
- Lesson 3: Describing a Character's Emotions, Thoughts, and Feelings
- Lesson 4: Revising a Brief, General Description with Specific Detail
- Lesson 5: Writers' Workshop — Revising a Writing Sample

Unit 4: Writing a Main Event

- Lesson 1: Identifying the Components of a Fully Expanded Main Event
- Lesson 2: Expanding a Story Summary
- Lesson 3: Composing A Fully Expanded Main Event
- Lesson 4: Writers' Workshop — Revising a Writing Sample

Unit 5: Writing to a Prompt

- Writers' Workshop — Completing a Story Within a Timed Format

Unit 6: Short-Term Writing Projects

- Completing a Story Using a Writing Process Approach

Acknowledgement

The Curriculum Services Canada Foundation provided through its Grants and Awards Program for Teachers.

financial support to the writer of this resource

Introduction

The purpose of the narrative writing program is for students to increase their effectiveness as writers. This goal is achieved by applying specific skills or techniques in each of the following four components of a narrative story:

An Effective Story Beginning

A Satisfying Story Ending

Detail and Description

An Expanded Main Event

Process writing can often be frustrating for many students. This program provides instruction in specific techniques so that revisions are reduced and the clarity of students' writing increases. The techniques are based on those used by adult authors of narrative text, presented in a step-by-step format to meet the needs of elementary students.

Units 1 – 4

The units are sequenced in order of difficulty. The beginning and ending of a story are the easiest to write and revise. These units are followed by exercises that focus on generating description and detail. This step is necessary before students can write a fully expanded main event that includes action, dialogue, and description. Lessons in each of these four units progress from identifying the techniques authors use, then revising a given prompt, and finally applying the practised techniques to a piece of the student's own writing. Students compare the original and revised pieces of writing in a "Before and After" format to demonstrate the power of revision.

Units 5 – 6

Unit 5 requires the students to apply the skills from each of the preceding four units to complete a narrative piece in response to a provided prompt. This task provides explicit practice in writing to a prompt within a set timeframe. A planning form and timeline is provided to assist students in completing each component of the story within 45 minutes. By having the whole class write to a common prompt, the teacher is able to assess student progress in each of the skills.

Unit 6 provides a framework and timetable that requires students to complete a narrative story over 6 – 7 days. Each step in the writing process is outlined as a guideline for student writing.

Narrative Structure

When we examine the underlying pattern of narrative stories we find two common types:

1. **Character-Problem-Solution Narrative:** In this type of narrative the emphasis is on a main character who
 - undergoes a problem or struggle
 - brings about a solution
 - grows and changes as a result of the struggle and solution
2. **Personal Experience Narrative:** These narratives are told in the first person and emphasize

-
- an interesting experience rather than a character
 - description and detail

As you complete each unit, provide examples for each of these two types of narratives and have students apply the practised skills to writing and revising each one.

Literature Models and Curriculum Connections

Excerpts from specific novels are cited as examples in each unit. The teacher may choose to use these examples or select excerpts from novels that they have studied with the class. Many exercises suggest that teachers have students apply the new skill to revise a prompt reflecting a current Social Studies or Science topic. To do this, the teacher may adapt the Blackline Masters so that they refer to a narrative that takes place in contexts such as medieval times, an ancient civilization, or during the early settlement of Canada.

Individualizing the Program: Accommodations and Modifications

Each component of the writing skills program presents specific techniques in a scaffolded format, with the teacher first modelling the skill, then guiding the students in practising the skill, and finally providing opportunity for independent application.

The following teaching strategies have been incorporated throughout the program to address the needs of the range of developmental levels in any one classroom and to provide support for students experiencing difficulty with the reading and writing process.

Read-Aloud: The teacher reads the literature selection to the students to model the required technique.

Pre-writing Activities: Each lesson addresses background knowledge and understanding of the specific writing skill during the “Introducing the Skill” and “Modelling the Skill” sections.

Shared and Modelled Writing: The teacher records student input in a shared-writing format and models the composition process, verbalizing each step in a “Think-Aloud” approach.

Co-operative Learning: This format, which provides access to peer support in a small group, may be used for the completion of each written response.

Graphic Organizers: Organizers assist development of a main idea and provide an organizational structure for planning a complete piece of writing.

Focus on Process — a Series of Small Successes: A step-by-step approach provides a series of small successes to encourage the growth of confidence and skills.

Risk-Taking Is Encouraged: Most of the practice activities focus on revising a prompt rather than individual student work, which removes the fear of risk-taking associated with having your own work evaluated. Only when the skill has been thoroughly practised in this manner are students expected to apply one skill at a time to revise their own writing.

References

Gardner, John. *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers*. Vintage Books, 1991.

Hood, Ann. *Creating Character Emotions*. Writers' Digest Books, 1998.

Kress, Nancy. *Beginnings, Middles & Ends*. Writers' Digest Books, 1999.

———. *Description*. Writers' Digest Books, 1999.

———. *Dynamic Characters: How to Create Personalities That Keep Readers Captivated*. Writers' Digest Books, 1998.

Mariconda, Barbara. *The Most Wonderful Writing Lessons Ever*. New York: Scholastic, 1999.

McClanahan, Rebecca. *Word Painting: A Guide to Writing More Descriptively*. Writers' Digest Books, 2000.

Rubie, Peter. *The Elements of Storytelling: How to Write Compelling Fiction*. John Wiley & Sons, 1995.

Unit 1: Writing Effective Story Beginnings

Lesson 1

Purpose

Analyse story beginnings from literature as models for student writing.

Identify four techniques for a compelling beginning: action, dialogue and/or exclamation, thought or question, and sound effect.

Materials

- ✓ Key novel: *The BFG* by Roald Dahl. Other examples include *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen, *Lost in the Barrens* by Farley Mowat, *Amish Adventure* by Barbara Smucker, *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson, *Blue Heron* by Avi, *Poppy* by Avi, *Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden, and *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White.
- ✓ Chart paper and markers
- ✓ Blackline Masters 1 – 8

Teacher Preparation

Review the chapter beginnings in the novels (listed under "Modelling the Skill") and the technique that these passages represent.

Prepare a chart of the four techniques entitled "Effective Story Beginnings."

Introducing the Skill

Building Background Knowledge and Experience

Discuss the importance of making a good impression when you first meet someone. Brainstorm and list the types of behaviour that leave an unfavourable impression, such as avoidance of eye contact, talking only about yourself ("I... I..."), boring small talk that never seems to get to the point, and overly factual conversations. Relate these behaviours to the importance of establishing a rapport with the audience when writing a narrative. Discuss why it is important for a story beginning to be entertaining (so that the reader is motivated to continue reading).

If possible, present pieces of student writing as examples of ineffective beginnings. You may wish to use examples from previous years or keep writing samples anonymous. Invite student observations and constructive criticism. Allow students to identify the characteristics of ineffective beginnings and suggest possible solutions that would capture the interest of the reader.

A good beginning should grab readers' attention, invite them in, raise questions, and arouse curiosity. In short, it should compel readers to want to read further. Relate the beginning of a narrative to the role played by an opening act for a popular performing artist.

Modelling the Skill

Model Four Effective Techniques Using Literature

Provide a selection of books with snappy beginnings. Read the first sentence(s) of a book or chapter.

Discuss how the author grabs the readers' attention. Ask students to identify the technique the author used.

Point out each of the following four techniques on the chart entitled "Effective Story Beginnings":

- 1. An Action** Put the main character in the setting doing something interesting.
Literature models: "The Snatch" and "Dreams" in *The BFG*, Chapter 10 in

Poppy by Avi

- 2. Dialogue** Have the main character say something that expresses a or feeling, creates worry, or raises the reader's interest or Exclamation curiosity.
Literature models: *Dialogue:* "A Trogglehumper for the Fleshlumpeater," "The Great Plan"; *Exclamation and Dialogue:* "The Palace" in *The BFG*, *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White, Chapter One
- 3. A Thought** Show what the main character is thinking or worrying about or Question
Literature models: *Thoughts:* "The BFG" and "Who" in *The BFG*, Chapter 3 in *Hatchet*; *Questions:* "Snozzcumbers" in *The BFG*
- 4. A Sound** A relevant sound effect is a great attention-getting technique. Use an interesting or unusual noise to capture the reader's attention. What might you hear if you were the character?
Literature models: "The Bloodbottler" in *The BFG*, Chapter 1 in *Bridge to Terabithia* (used in exercise), Chapter 2 in *The Cricket in Times Square*

Literature Examples

An Action

Under the blanket Sophie waited. After a minute or so, she lifted a corner of the blanket and peeped out. For the second time that night her blood froze to ice and she wanted to scream, but no sound came out.

The Snatch" in *The BFG*

Dialogue and/or Exclamation

"We've absolutely got to stop them!" Sophie cried. "Put me back in your pocket quick and we'll chase after them and warn everyone in England they're coming."

"The Great Plan" in *The BFG* by Roald Dahl

A Thought or Question

Life was going along okay when my mother and father dropped the news. Bam! Just like that. "We have something wonderful to tell you, Peter," Mom said before dinner. She was slicing carrots into the salad bowl. I grabbed one. "What is it?" I asked.

Guess What Peter?" in *Superfudge* by Judy Blume

A Sound

Mario heard the sound too. He stood up and listened intently. The noise of the shuttle rattled off into silence. From the streets above came the quiet murmur of the late traffic. There was a noise of rustling nothingness in the station. Still Mario listened, straining to catch the mysterious sound ... And there it came again.

"Mario" in *The Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden

Combining Techniques: Read aloud the literature models, drawing students' attention to the use of single and multiple techniques, such as a combination of Action and Thought (e.g., the chapter called "The BFG" in *The BFG*), or Action and Dialogue (e.g., "The Marvellous Ears" in *The BFG*).

Discriminating Between Two Techniques: Invite the class to respond to the literature examples you read. Ask students to respond in the following ways:

- **Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down:** Have students discriminate between two techniques by showing thumbs up or thumbs down. For example, thumbs up for Action and thumbs down for Dialogue.
- **Ready, Set, Show:** Ask students to write the names of the four techniques on four slips of paper or index cards. Read the beginning of a story or chapter aloud, and ask students to hold up the card with the name of the technique the author used.

Guided Practice

Writing Story Beginnings — Identify the Author's Technique: Ask students to read the story beginnings, record the technique or techniques the author used to grab their attention, and write down what this beginning makes them wonder about. Have them complete BLMs 1 – 6 in daily 20-minute writing sessions.

Read as an Author: Provide a selection of novels for students to examine. Ask them to identify and record the title of the book, the author, and the technique used in the beginning of the novel or chapter. Have students complete BLMs 7 and 8. You may wish to create a list of the best openings found in the "classroom library" you have provided. After examining the elements that make the beginnings effective, incorporate these elements into a guideline for writing entertaining story beginnings. Display this guideline in the classroom so that students may use it as a visual aid.

Name: _____

BLM 1

Writing Story Beginnings: Identify the Author's Technique

Read the chapter opener provided below. Think about what you know about story beginnings.

Which of the following techniques does the author use to grab your attention?

- ◆ An Action
- ◆ Dialogue or Exclamation
- ◆ A Thought or Question
- ◆ A Sound

What does this opening make you wonder about? Record your response in the space provided below.

“Why, it’s absolutely brilliant!” cried the old Green-Grasshopper when James had explained his plan. “The boy’s a genius!” the Centipede announced. “Now I can keep my boots on after all.”

James and the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl

Author's Technique(s): _____

Your response: _____

Name: _____

BLM 7

Writing Story Beginnings: Read Like an Author

Find a good story or chapter beginning for each of the following techniques.

An Action

Title of book or chapter: _____

Author: _____

First Sentences: _____

Dialogue or Exclamation

Title of book or chapter: _____

Author: _____

First Sentences: _____

Name: _____

BLM 8

Writing Story Beginnings: Read Like an Author

Find a good story or chapter beginning for each of the following techniques.

A Thought or Question

Title of book or chapter: _____

Author: _____

First Sentences: _____

A Sound Effect

Title of book or chapter: _____

Author: _____

First Sentences: _____

Unit 1: Writing Effective Story Beginnings

Lesson 2

Purpose

Revise an ineffective story beginning using the four techniques.

Materials

- ✓ Blackline Masters 9 – 12
- ✓ Chart of the four techniques

Teacher Preparation

Create a chart or blackboard copies of the revision examples in this lesson.

Introducing the Skill

List the four techniques introduced in Lesson 1 on the board. Review these techniques with the class.

Review the literature examples that students located in the previous lesson and ask them to identify the technique the author used.

Read an example of a boring beginning.

Brainstorm with students ways in which this beginning could be revised using one or more of the techniques. Record student suggestions in a shared writing format.

Combine techniques, such as Sound and Thoughts or Dialogue and Action, using literature models as examples.

Modelling the Skill

Read and discuss the story beginnings below. Ask students what the story is probably about and why the beginning is boring.

Model revising the beginning with each technique using the examples provided. Use two or three sentences for an effective beginning.

Examine how each example establishes the **setting** and **topic** of the story.

This is the story about what happened when my science experiment went wrong. It was during Science class last week.

Instead of this beginning, try one of the four techniques introduced in Lesson 1

An Action: I spun around and stared as the machine came to life. This was not what I had expected.

Dialogue: “Here goes nothing,” I said as I reached for the controls.

A Thought or Question: Something had gone very wrong. Maybe this wasn't such a great idea after all.

A Sound: Kaboom! Zing! Woosh! Sparks and smoke filled the laboratory.

One sunny day I decided to go to the lake. It was a Saturday and I didn't have much else to

do. Maybe I would go for a swim.

Instead of this beginning, try combining two techniques

An Action and a Question: I dove into the cool water and floated there for a while. But what was that? Something strange caught my eye.

Dialogue, Exclamation, and an Action: "What a great day to be at the lake!" I yelled as I jumped off the dock.

A Sound and a Thought: "Ah-woo! Ah-woo!" A strange sound filled the air. If only I could swim all the way to the island, I could find out what was making that noise.

Guided Practice

Revising a Boring Beginning

Distribute BLMs 9 – 12.

Explain to students that they will use one of the four techniques to revise a boring story beginning. Their beginning should draw the reader in, hint at what is to come, and raise compelling questions.

Emphasize that students are to revise only the beginning — they are not to re-write the entire story.

Remind students that their beginning should be entertaining and interesting and that the story should begin as **close to the main event as possible**. If the characters are going to go on a trip, the story should not start two weeks earlier or by describing every detail of their breakfast that day and how they packed their suitcases.

Stress the importance of stating a **purpose for the story action** and not assuming that the reader knows what it is about. For example, if the characters are going on a camping adventure, the author should tell the reader that they are going camping.

Remind students that it is always preferable to write more than one sentence, perhaps **combining more than one technique**, such as Dialogue and Action. You may have students choose whichever technique or techniques they prefer, assign a specific technique to the whole class, assign the same or different techniques to groups of students, or have everyone revise the beginning using each of the four techniques.

Before and After Format

Have students complete revisions on their worksheets or in a "Before and After" book format, with the original beginning inside the frame copied or pasted on one page and the student's revision written on the opposite page. These revisions are quick writes and should take 20 minutes or less.

As students work on their revisions, offer assistance and read their efforts out loud as examples.

To sum up, read the boring original and follow it up with the revised student version. It makes a strong statement about the power of revision!

Display the "Before and After" versions for students to read and compare. This kind of revision does not imply that they did a less satisfactory job the first time around. Instead, it builds confidence in a non-critical way. These assignments can also be completed for individual practice or as homework.

Example:

Before	After
On the day we left to go camping I got up early, had breakfast, and got my	Action and Thought I heaved my backpack over my shoulder and started on the path into the woods.

things packed, ready to leave for the woods.	This was going to be the best camping trip ever, I decided.
--	---

Name: _____

Revising a Story Beginning — The Bear Chase

Story Summary: This story is about being chased by a bear in the woods during a camping trip.

Read this story beginning. It is boring!

Last summer I got chased by a bear when we went camping at Algonquin Provincial Park. I was really frightened.

Revise this story beginning to make it more interesting for the reader. Put the main character in **the setting** (in the woods) and use a beginning that **grabs the reader's attention** and creates a mood of excitement and worry. Use one or more of these techniques:

- ◆ An Action
- ◆ Dialogue or Exclamation
- ◆ A Thought or Question
- ◆ A Sound

Name: _____

BLM 10

Revising a Story Beginning — Survival Story

Story Summary: This story is about how I survived after a plane crash in the Rocky Mountains.

Read this story beginning. It is boring!

Hi, my name is Jim. I will tell you all about my adventure in the Rocky Mountains. When we flew over the Rockies, the plane suddenly started to dive. It looked like we were going to crash.

Revise this story beginning to make it interesting! Put the main character in **the setting** (over the Rocky Mountains) and use a beginning that **grabs the reader's attention** and creates a mood of excitement and worry. Use one or more of these techniques:

- ◆ An Action
- ◆ Dialogue or Exclamation
- ◆ A Thought or Question
- ◆ A Sound

Unit 1: Writing Effective Story Beginnings

Lesson 3

Purpose

Analyse and revise irrelevant, rambling story beginnings.

Identify a technique that is relevant to the story plot.

Materials

✓ Blackline Master 13

Introducing the Skill

Literature Models: Read and review effective story beginnings with literature models. Examine how they establish the setting and topic for the story and set the stage for the main event. A good beginning includes a character with a problem doing something interesting that has a clear goal or purpose for the story action.

When and Where Do I Begin?: Discuss the importance of writing a beginning that is related to the story itself — when and where a story needs to start. Begin where the action has already started, not with all the insignificant details and events beforehand.

Set the Stage: Use a beginning that sets the stage for this particular storyline or type of narrative. If the story begins like a fairy tale (e.g., with "Once there was ...") then the reader has certain expectations about what will follow. If the setting in the beginning of the story is dark and mysterious, then a scary, mystery story should follow, not an amusing tale (*Mariconda*, 1999). A first person narrative and character-problem-solution narrative each begins from a different perspective.

Modelling the Skill

Read and discuss the story beginning about a white water rafting trip. Ask students to read the story summary and discuss why the technique is or is not relevant to the story plot.

- Does the beginning place the main character in the setting?
- Does the story begin close to the main event?
- Is the noise of the birds singing a relevant detail? Will they play a part in the story?
- Does the use of this sound effect distract from the plot or purpose of the story?
- Is there another sound effect that would be more effective?
- What other techniques could be used to begin this story?

Model how to revise this technique with a sound effect that relates to the story plot.

Example:

Instead of:

Chirp! Chirp! I could hear the birds singing as I got up that morning. We were going on a white water rafting trip to the Ottawa valley. This was going to be a lot of fun.

Try:

Woosh! Swish! The water flowed faster and faster as we approached the rapids. Will our boat survive this? I wondered.

Complete a whole-group revision using an alternative technique, such as Action or Dialogue, or instruct groups of students to revise the prompt using an assigned technique or a technique of their own choosing.

Guided Practice

Using a Relevant Technique

Distribute the "Before and After" revision exercise (BLM 13) to students.

Discuss and identify the technique used in the story beginning. Ask students to decide if the technique fits the story or if they feel another technique would be more suitable. Then, invite students to re-write the opening using a different technique. Remind students that they need to relate the technique to the plot of the story.

Have individuals revise the story beginning using a technique that you have assigned or one of their own choosing.

Review the importance of establishing **setting** and **topic** in the beginning of the story. Students may cut and paste the story beginning into their exercise books using the "Before and After" format.

To reinforce that there are many ways to successfully begin a story, have students use an alternative technique, or each of the four techniques, to revise the story beginning.

Curriculum Connections

To extend these exercises, you may wish to create beginnings that relate to a Social Studies topic (for example, a first person narrative of an individual living in a particular historical setting, such as during medieval times, in an ancient civilization, during the time of early European explorers, or in an early Aboriginal village). Students may choose a particular role, such as castle or pyramid builder, maid to a powerful lady, craftsperson, doctor, Aboriginal guide, voyageur, trapper for the Hudson's Bay Company, etc. A future role as a space explorer may also be included. Try to provide roles that both male and female students will relate to.

Name: _____

BLM 13

Story Beginnings: Choosing the Best Technique

Story Summary: This is a story about how I went on a white water rafting trip.

Read this story beginning:

Bik bok! Bik bok! My mother's shoes sounded on the kitchen floor. What should I do today? I wondered. The summer holidays had just begun and I had already run out of things to do.

In this passage, the author uses a sound effect. Do you think it was the best technique for this story beginning? Does the sound relate to a white water rafting trip? Why or why not?

Choose another technique for this story beginning. Put the main character in **the setting** and use a technique that **grabs the reader's attention**.

Unit 1: Writing Effective Story Beginnings

Lesson 4

Purpose

Revise an author's story beginning using an alternative technique.

Materials

✓ Blackline Masters 14 – 17

Introducing the Skill

Have students share story or chapter beginnings they have found in their own reading materials. Discuss the techniques the author used. Were they effective?

Modelling the Skill

Record a story or chapter beginning on the blackboard or overhead.

Read the opening sentence(s). Ask students to identify and discuss the author's technique and what this opening makes them wonder about.

Have them choose another technique and re-write the story beginning. Ask students to compare the beginnings and decide which is more attention grabbing.

Guided Practice

Distribute BLM 14, 15, 16, and 17. Instruct students to revise the author's story beginning using a different technique. Assign one prompt to revise each day.

Read student revisions out loud and compare to the original. Display the original and revised versions on a bulletin board as examples of the power of revision.

Name: _____

Story Beginnings: Using an Alternative Technique

Think about some of the techniques that authors use to grab the reader's attention and encourage him or her to read on:

An Action — Put the main character in the setting doing something.

Dialogue/Exclamation — Have your main character say something.

A Sound — Use an interesting sound or unusual noise to capture the reader's attention.

A Thought/Question — Use a question to make the reader curious or express the main character's thoughts, worries or feelings.

Read this entertaining chapter beginning.

Which of these techniques did the author use?

There wasn't much danger from slave catchers on the high mountain paths at night. But even without them, this wild place was terrifying and strange for Julilly and Liza. High-pitched animal cries that they had never heard before echoed in and out of the tall black mountain peaks.

Underground to Canada by Barbara Smucker, Chapter Fourteen

Now it is your turn! Re-write this beginning using a **different technique!**

Name: _____

Story Beginnings: Using an Alternative Technique

Think about some of the techniques that authors use to grab the reader's attention and encourage him or her to read on.

An Action — Put the main character in the setting doing something.

Dialogue/Exclamation — Have your main character say something.

A Sound — Use an interesting sound or unusual noise to capture the reader's attention.

A Thought/Question — Use a question to make the reader curious or express the main character's thoughts, worries, or feelings.

Read this entertaining chapter beginning.

Which of these techniques did the author use?

The next morning Awasin went for water shortly after dawn, but he was back in a few moments without the water. Just outside he had found the tracks of a wolverine, and when he investigated he discovered that the robber had destroyed the twenty pounds of deer meat stored on top of the cabin roof.

Lost in the Barrens by Farley Mowat, Chapter Eighteen

Now it is your turn! Re-write this story beginning using a **different technique!**

Unit 1: Writing Effective Story Beginnings

Lesson 5

Purpose

Apply one of the techniques to the beginning of a piece of personal writing.

Writers' Workshop

Remind students that the purpose of the previous practice exercises was to gain the necessary skills to revise their own writing.

Invite students to choose a piece of writing they have completed or are currently working on.

Instruct students to use one of the techniques they have practised to revise the beginnings of their stories. Explain that they do not need to re-write the whole story, and ask them to attach the revised beginning to the original.

As a class, share and compare the "Before and After" versions. Where possible, display examples on the overhead for whole-group discussion. Discuss the specific strengths and weaknesses of each piece. You may wish to keep student writing samples anonymous, or you might have each student trade papers with a classmate.

Ask: "What could the writer have done to make this beginning more effective?" Provide an opportunity for the writer to make further revisions. Students may wish to revise their writing using each of the four different techniques, and then decide on the one that is the most effective. This activity may be completed as a group or in pairs.

Unit 2: Writing an Effective Story Ending

Lesson 1

Purpose

Analyse examples of story endings from literature to use as models for student writing.

Identify four techniques for a compelling ending: memory, feeling, decision or defining action, and wish or hope.

Materials

- ✓ *Days of Terror* and *Amish Adventure* by Barbara Smucker, *Blue Heron* by Avi, *Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden, *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White, and *Ralph S. Mouse* by Beverly Cleary
- ✓ Chart paper and markers
- ✓ Overhead copy of story endings
- ✓ Blackline Masters 18 – 21

Teacher Preparation

Review the chapter beginnings in the novels (listed under "Modelling the Skill") and the technique that each represents.

In the empty box on BLM 18, insert the last sentences of a novel or short story you have read with the class. Provide each student with a copy of this worksheet.

Insert a story ending on BLM 19 if you wish to have students complete the extension plot summary exercise.

Photocopy BLMs 20 and 21 for the class exercise.

Prepare a chart of the four techniques entitled "Satisfying Story Endings."

Introducing the Skill

Building Background Knowledge and Experience

Discuss the importance of concluding a story with a satisfying ending. Explain that an abrupt ending is not satisfying to the reader. Neither is a story that rambles on past the conclusion because the author is uncertain how to bring closure to the narrative.

Discuss character and plot development in narrative stories: the main character usually has experienced something significant — he or she has solved a problem, had an adventure, or shared in a meaningful experience of some kind. As a result, the main character changes in some way. He or she might

- learn a lesson
- make a decision
- form an opinion
- hope for something similar or something different to happen to them in the future

Emphasize that authors need to think about how their main characters have grown or changed as a result of the main event of the story. How is the main character better, wiser, or smarter? Explain that the last few sentences of a story should sum up what the character has learned or how the character has changed.

Read samples of student writing that have unsatisfying story endings. Provide a brief summary of the story plot before beginning. After reading the ending, invite observations and allow students to identify the characteristics of ineffective beginnings and possible solutions that would satisfy the reader. What is missing?

Modelling the Skill

Model Four Effective Techniques Using Literature

Provide students with a selection of books with effective endings (see examples listed below and in the "Materials" section above). Read the last sentence(s) of the books.

Discuss how the author was able to sum up the story and show how the main character has grown or changed.

Ask students to identify the technique the author used. The main character's feeling or decision may not be actually stated in the ending, but the character's actions show that he or she has made a decision. For example, a character may demonstrate that he or she has overcome a fear of the woods (developed as a result of a bad camping experience) by setting out on another camping trip.

Point out each of these four techniques on the chart entitled "Satisfying Story Endings." Explain that an ending may include a strong visual image, a challenge for the reader, or a twist that comes as a surprise.

Satisfying Story Endings

- 1. A Memory** Show how the main character remembers the main event.
Literature models: *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White, *Days of Terror* by Barbara Smucker
- 2. A Feeling** Show how the main character felt about what happened in the story.
Literature models: *Blue Heron* by Avi, *Stuart Little* by E.B. White, *White Mist* by Barbara Smucker
- 3. A Decision or Defining Action** Include a decision made by the main character as a result of the main event or story problem.
Literature models: *Ralph S. Mouse* by Beverly Cleary, *Amish Adventure* by Barbara Smucker.
- 4. A Wish or Hope** Use an interesting or unusual noise to capture the reader's attention. What might you hear if you were the character? A relevant sound effect is a great attention-getting technique.
Literature models: *The Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden, *Old Yeller* by Fred Gipson

Literature Examples

A Memory:

As the train sped away until it disappeared into the endless land, they walked arm in arm to the Dyck's farm wagon with the flared sides. It was just like the wagon that had carried them to the train in Lichtenau, South Russia, when the cherries were ripe in the orchards of Tiegen.

Days of Terror by Barbara Smucker

A Feeling (and a Decision):

Stuart rose from the ditch, climbed into his car, and started up the road that led toward the north. The sun was just coming over the hills on his right. As he peered ahead into the great land that stretched before him, the way seemed long. But the sky was bright, and he

somehow felt he was headed in the right direction.

Stuart Little by E.B. White

A Decision:

It was getting late and the lamp began to flicker, for the kerosene was almost gone. Ian ran his fingers through his rumpled red hair and pounded his fist ever so lightly on the window sill. "I'm going to learn everything about being a farmer before I leave for Inuvik in the spring," he said to himself.

Amish Adventure by Barbara Smucker

A Wish or Hope:

Tucker Mouse changed his position. "Yes?" said Harry Cat. "Maybe next summer we could go to the country." "Maybe we can." "I mean — the country in Connecticut," said Tucker. "I know what you mean," said Harry Cat.

The Cricket in Times Square by George Selden

Combining Techniques: When reading further literature models aloud, draw students' attention to the use of single and multiple techniques, such as a combination of memory and wish or feeling and decision.

Discriminating Between Two Techniques: Invite students to respond to the literature examples in the following ways.

- **Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down:** Have students discriminate between two techniques by showing thumbs up or thumbs down. For example, thumbs up for memory and thumbs down for decision.
- **Ready, Set, Show:** Have students write the names of the four techniques on four slips of paper or index cards. Read the endings aloud and ask students to hold up the card with the name of the technique the author used.

Guided Practice

Writing Story Endings — Identify the Author's Technique: Ask students to read the story ending you have written on the BLM 18 and record the technique(s) the author used to bring the story to a satisfying conclusion. The ending should summarize the outcome of the main event. Invite students to think about how the main character grew as a result of the events described in the story, and identify any decisions, feelings, or memories demonstrated by the character. Have students explain in writing how the author made them feel at the end of the story: Were they satisfied with the ending? Why or why not? You may wish to prepare several copies of BLM 18, each with a different familiar story ending.

Follow Up: Make an overhead copy of the example endings provided. Ask students to identify the techniques used in these passages, underlining each technique in a different colour.

Read as an Author: Provide a selection of novels for students to examine. Ask them to identify and record the title of the book, the author, and the technique the author used to write the ending of the novel. Have students complete BLMs 20 and 21. Record the best endings found in classroom reading materials and display these on a class bulletin board as a model for writing satisfying story endings.

Extensions

Plot Summary: Read and discuss a sample ending with the class. Then, have students write their own summary of the story plot on BLM 19, using the information in the ending. As a class, share these summaries and compare their similarities and differences. Invite students to consider what the reasons for these similarities and differences might be.

Extended Story Ending: Have students summarize a familiar story that you have read to them or a novel you have studied and write an extended story ending from the main character's point of view.

Name: _____

BLM 18

Writing Story Endings: Identify the Author's Technique

Read the story ending below.

Which of the following techniques did the author use to write a satisfying story ending?

- ◆ The character's memory of the main event
- ◆ A feeling the character has about the main event in the story
- ◆ A decision or an action that shows the character made a decision
- ◆ The main character's wish or hope for the future

Describe how you feel about this ending. Did it leave you with a good feeling? Was it effective? Is there anything missing? What else would you like to know?

Author's Technique(s): _____

Your response: _____

Name: _____

BLM 19

Writing Story Endings: Identify the Author's Technique

Read the story ending below.

Which of the following techniques did the author use to write a satisfying story ending?

- ◆ The character's memory of the main event
- ◆ A feeling the character has about the main event in the story
- ◆ A decision or an action that shows the character made a decision
- ◆ The main character's wish or hope for the future

After reading the ending, write down what you think the story was about.

Author's Technique(s): _____

Story summary: _____

Name: _____

BLM 20

Writing Story Endings: Read as an Author

Find a good story or chapter beginning for each of the following techniques.

A Memory

Title of book or chapter: _____

Author: _____

Last Sentences: _____

A Decision

Title of book or chapter: _____

Author: _____

Last Sentences: _____

Name: _____

BLM 21

Writing Story Endings: Read as an Author

Find a good story or chapter beginning for each of the following techniques.

A Feeling

Title of book or chapter: _____

Author: _____

Last Sentences: _____

A Hope or Wish

Title of book or chapter: _____

Author: _____

Last Sentences: _____

Unit 2: Writing Effective Story Endings

Lesson 2

Purpose

Revise an ineffective story ending using the four techniques.

Materials

- ✓ Blackline Masters 22 and 23
- ✓ List of the four techniques from Lesson 1

Teacher Preparation

Create a chart or blackboard copies of the revision examples in this lesson.

Introducing the Skill

List the techniques on the board and review them with the class.

Read endings to familiar stories. Discuss how the author incorporated the different techniques effectively to bring closure to the story.

Modelling the Skill

Read and discuss the story ending below. Ask students what the story is probably about and why the ending is less than satisfying for the reader.

Model revising an ending using the example provide below.

Re-write the suggested ending using student input. Try one or more different techniques.

Remind students that a conclusion should not preach to the reader (e.g., "Now you know why you should").

Example:

Instead of:

So finally Jim made it to shore. He got out of the rubber raft and put away all the gear. When everyone was ready they got in the car and headed for home.

Try:

Jim sat down on a nearby rock and heaved a sigh of relief. That was a close call! He could still hear the sound of water swishing in his ears and the shouts of his friends around him. If he ever went white water rafting again, he would check out the river first!

Guided Practice

Revising a Prompt: Have students revise the unsatisfying story endings on BLMs 22 and 23, using one or more of the four techniques. These revisions are quick writes and should take 20 minutes or less. Remind students to include at least three sentences in their extended story ending. Have students choose a technique, assign a specific technique to the whole class, assign the same or different techniques to groups of students, or have everyone revise the ending using each of the four techniques.

Before and After Format: Ask students to complete their revisions on their worksheets or in a "Before and After" book format, with the original beginning copied or pasted on one page and the student's revision written on the opposite page.

Before and After Display: Copying an unedited ending in the middle of a display and label the ending as "Before." Have students re-write this ending on strips of paper and then glue their revisions around the original passage. Label the revisions as "After."

Curriculum Connections

The main character in the story ending may take on a particular role from a historical period or geographic location that students have previously studied (or are currently studying).

Name: _____

Revising a Story Ending: Space Explorer

Story Summary: This story is about a space explorer who lands on a planet that is home to an alien life form. The alien life form has many scientific discoveries for the explorer to learn about. Before returning to the space station, he makes a map of the planet and its resources.

Read this story ending. It is too short.

When all the facts had been recorded, the astronaut returned to the space station. This information could make a real difference to life on Earth.

Revise this story ending to make it more satisfying for the reader. Use one or more of these techniques:

The character's memory of the main event

A feeling the character has about the main event in the story

A decision or an action that shows the character made a decision

The main character's wish or hope for the future

Unit 2: Writing Effective Story Endings

Lesson 3

Purpose

Revise an author's story ending using an alternative technique.

Materials

✓ Blackline Masters 24 – 26

Introducing the Skill

Review the story endings from the classroom books studied in Lesson 1. Identify the techniques the author used.

Modelling the Skill

Select one story or chapter ending from the examples studied in Lesson 1. Use student input to re-write the passage using an alternative technique.

Ask students to decide which is the most effective — the original or the re-write? How else could it have been revised?

Guided Practice

Using an Alternative Technique: Distribute BLMs 24, 25, and 26. Instruct students to revise the author's story ending using a different technique. Review the story plot before beginning each exercise. What should the author be trying to convey to the reader? A synopsis of each novel is outlined below.

Superfudge by Judy Blume: Peter learns that his mom is going to have another baby and the whole family is moving to Princeton for a year. He will have to start sixth grade in a strange place and go to the same school as his brother Fudge. Peter wonders how he will ever survive if the new baby is anything like his crazy brother Fudge.

Old Yeller by Fred Gipson: Travis, the main character, lives in the 1860s in a cabin in Texas hill country. One day an ugly yellow dog shows up and steals a side of pork. Travis hates him at first, but finds that he can't get along without him as he takes care of the farm and his family while his father is away. Old Yeller saves Travis from danger twice. In the end the dog is bitten by a mad wolf who has rabies and Travis has to shoot him.

Runaway Ralph by Beverly Cleary: Ralph makes up his mind to run away because he is tired of being bossed around by his mother and uncle. He is fed up with his pesky brothers and sisters. Ralph wants to grow up to be more than a crumb-hunting mouse in the Mountain View Inn. He decides to live a life of speed, danger, and excitement with his mouse-sized motorcycle. During his adventures he meets a new friend who rescues him from danger.

Write – Share – Compare: Have students work in small groups or independently to revise a given ending using one of the techniques. Each group may apply the same technique or a different one. Invite students to share and compare the revised endings to evaluate their effectiveness.

Name: _____

BLM 26

Story Endings: Using an Alternative Technique

Think about some of the techniques that authors use to grab the reader's attention and encourage him or her to read on:

The character's memory of the main event

A feeling the character has about the main event in the story

A decision or an action that shows the character made a decision

The main character's wish or hope for the future

Read this satisfying story ending.

Which of these techniques did the author use?

After all the excitement of the morning, Ralph was ready for a nap. But first he popped his head out of Garf's pocket. "Thanks, friend," he said. "And by the way, don't roll over on me during rest time." "Don't worry," whispered Garf. "I'll get you back to the Inn in one piece. And your motorcycle too."

Runaway Ralph by Beverly Cleary

Now it is your turn! Re-write this story beginning using a **different technique!**

Unit 2: Writing Effective Story Endings

Lesson 4

Purpose

Revise the ending in a piece of student writing using one of the four techniques.

Writers' Workshop

Read examples of story endings that use the four techniques to reinforce student learning.

Provide photocopies or make a chart or overhead of an effective story ending. (Use one of the literature models or a student's revision.)

Read the example aloud and discuss the ending with the class. Ask students to identify which ingredients the author used: memories, feelings, decisions, or hopes or wishes.

On the overhead, highlight each of the techniques in a different colour:

- Memories — blue
- Feelings — red
- Decisions — black
- Hopes and Wishes — green

Discuss how the ending sums up the story. Have students summarize the plot: Who is the story about? What was the problem or challenge? How was it resolved?

Provide guided practice and share student responses.

Have students take a completed story from their own writing and examine the ending. Tape a tail to the edge of the paper and have them revise their own endings using a memory, feeling, hope, wish, or decision.

Invite students to share and compare the "Before and After" versions.

Students may wish to revise their writing piece using each of the four different techniques, and then decide on the one that is the most effective.

Unit 3: Writing Detail and Description

Lesson 1

Purpose

Identify the subject and characteristics of an effective descriptive passage.

Materials

- ✓ Key novel: *The BFG* by Roald Dahl. Other novels include *Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden, *The Prince of the Pond* by Donna Jo Napoli, *Poppy* by Avi, *Hatchet* and *Dogsong* by Gary Paulsen, *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl, and *Underground to Canada* by Barbara Smucker
- ✓ Blackboard or class copies of the literature examples
- ✓ Chart of the five senses: look, hear, feel, smell, and taste

Introducing the Skill

Demonstrate the Importance of Specific Detail: Focus on general and specific adjectives. Read catalogue and magazine advertisements with general descriptive phrases, such as "a delicious meal," or "a fabulous window treatment." Ask students to draw a picture of the image this description creates for them and then compare their artwork. Pose the following questions to the class: Why was the image difficult to draw? Why do the pictures vary greatly? What does the advertisement need to include so that readers gain a "snapshot" of the object in their minds?

Modelling the Skill

Determining What to Describe and Extend: Explain to students that, when adding description and detail, they need to focus on the main and supporting characters, objects that have an important role in the plot, and settings where major events occur.

Literature Examples: Read and display literature examples that illustrate how different authors describe a character, object, or setting. Examine how the author enables readers to experience the scene as if they were the character, with descriptions based on the five senses. You may choose from the literature examples listed below or take a descriptive passage from a novel the class has studied. Ask students to examine each description for the information it contains and then answer the following questions:

- What does the passage tell you about the character, object, or setting?
- Was this description important to the plot? (Provide a summary if the story is unfamiliar.)
- Which of the five senses did the author include? What does the character see, feel, hear, taste, or smell?
- Does this description create a vivid picture in your mind?

Literature Examples

Character:

In the moonlight, Sophie caught a glimpse of an enormous long pale wrinkly face with the most enormous ears. The nose was sharp as a knife, and above the nose there were two bright flashing eyes, and the eyes were staring straight at Sophie. There was a fierce and devilish look about them.

The BFG by Roald Dahl, page15

Object:

“Take a look, my dear,” he said, opening the bag and tilting it towards James. Inside it, James could see a mass of tiny green things that looked like little stones or crystals, each one about the size of a grain of rice. They were extraordinarily beautiful, and there was a strange brightness about them, a sort of luminous quality that made them glow and sparkle in the most wonderful way.

James and Giant Peach by Roald Dahl, page 10

Setting:

A thin crescent moon, high in the sky, shed faint light over Dimwood Forest. Stars glowed. Breezes full of ripe summer fragrance floated over nearby meadow and hill. Dimwood itself, veiled in darkness, lay utterly still.

Poppy by Avi, page 1

Further Literature Models

Character: *The BFG* by Roald Dahl, pages 15, 34, 57; *The Prince of the Pond* by Donna Jo Napoli, pages 3, 105, 138; *Poppy* by Avi, pages 10, 128; *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl, page 6; *Underground to Canada* by Barbara Smucker, page 19

Object: *The BFG* by Roald Dahl, page 49; *The Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden, pages 78, 79; *The Prince of the Pond* by Donna Jo Napoli, page 2; *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl, page 10

Setting: *The BFG*, pages 22, 80; *The Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden, pages 2, 32, 46; *The Prince of the Pond* by Donna Jo Napoli, page 125; *Poppy* by Avi, pages 1, 83, 107, 120, 122; *Dogsong* by Gary Paulsen, pages 31, 51, 109 – 110; *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen, page 119; *Underground to Canada* by Barbara Smucker, pages 34, 95

A Picture Tells a Thousand Words: Display a photograph or picture to the class. This image may be related to a current topic of study or a novel, for example, an early Canadian explorer, a pyramid, or a fossil dig site. Using student input, compose a description of the person, object, or place using the photograph or picture as a reference.

The Five Senses: Prompt students to include descriptions related to the five senses and model the process of incorporating these into sentences.

Revise: Revise the piece of shared writing for sentence order and clarity.

Guided Practice

Now You See It ...: Have a student orally describe a photo to the class (without showing the photo to the class). Invite the other students to write a description of what they think the photo looks like using one or more of the five senses. Discuss the increased importance of detailed description when a picture is not available to the reader. Review the need for clarity.

Examine Student Writing for the Five Senses: Examine how each student addressed description and incorporated one or more of the five senses. Prepare an overhead copy of several samples for this purpose.

Visualize: Have individual students read their descriptive passages aloud and invite their classmates to write or draw what they visualize in response to this description. Share and compare these responses as a class.

Unit 3: Writing Detail and Description

Lesson 2

Purpose

Generate and respond to questions readers ask about a character, object, or setting in a narrative story.

Materials

- ✓ Copies of Blackline Masters 27, 28, and 29
- ✓ Chart of the five senses
- ✓ Question Categories chart (see “Modelling the Skill”)

Introducing the Skill

Explain that effective descriptions include details about the character, object, or setting. To illustrate the unanswered questions that remain when the description is brief and general, present the following statement on the blackboard (it’s advisable not to use one of your students’ names).

Shannon’s room was very messy.

Discuss how this description leaves out details that readers need to picture themselves in the room.

Brainstorm and record the questions that students have about Shannon’s room using the five senses as a guide.

Example:

- What was in Shannon’s room that made it so messy?
- What might you see, smell, or feel in this messy room?
- How did you feel about what you saw?

Modelling the Skill

Use the student questions (above) as a guide to revising the statement in a shared-writing format. Model the need to ask specific questions so that the details have a focus. In addition to the chart of the five senses, the following categories may serve as a reference for focusing both questions and answers.

Question Categories:

Colour	Size	Material	Age
Texture	Condition	Shape	Weight
Sound	Emotions	Facial Expression	

Brainstorm and record answers to each question with the class.

Model transforming the answers into descriptive sentences and sequencing the sentences into a descriptive paragraph.

Guided Practice

Questions and Answers: Have students complete BLMs 27, 28, and 29, listing questions about the character, object, or setting. Then, ask them to write an answer to each question in a complete sentence.

Question Guide: Review the five senses and Question Categories charts.

Sentence Starters: Remind students that they need to begin each new sentence in a different way to avoid redundancy (e.g., The _____ was ... There was a _____ ... It was _____ ... It had _____...).

Curriculum Connections

Blackline Masters 27, 28, and 29 have been designed to help teachers support a particular curriculum focus. The character, object, or setting may relate to a novel study or Social Studies or Science topic.

Name: _____

BLM 27

Writing Detail and Description: Characters

Read the name or role of the character.

List four questions you have about this character.

Pretend you are the author. Write a possible answer to each of your questions in a sentence. Begin each sentence in a different way.

Include at least one of the five senses in your answer.

Character: _____

Questions I have about the character:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Possible answers to my questions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Name: _____

BLM 28

Writing Detail and Description: Objects

Read the name of the object.

List four questions you have about this object.

Pretend you are the author. Write a possible answer to each of your questions in a sentence. Begin each sentence in a different way.

Include at least one of the five senses in your answer.

Object: _____

Questions I have about the object:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Possible answers to my questions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Name: _____

Writing Detail and Description: Settings

Read the name of the setting. Where is the story happening?

List four questions you have about the setting.

Pretend you are the author. Write a possible answer to each of your questions in a sentence. Begin each sentence in a different way.

Include at least one of the five senses in your answer.

Setting: _____

Questions I have about the setting:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Possible answers to my questions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Unit 3: Writing Detail and Description

Lesson 3

Purpose

Describe a character's emotions, thoughts, and feelings through descriptive use of vocabulary.

Materials

- ✓ Emotions and Feelings chart (see "Introducing the Skill")
- ✓ Literature examples in "Modelling the Skill" on blackboard, chart, or overhead
- ✓ Blackline Masters 30, 31, and 32

Introducing the Skill

Show, Don't Tell: Discuss what feelings look like. How do we look and act when we are feeling?

Afraid	Hot	Sad	Nervous
Happy	Cold	Shy	Shocked
Tired	Angry	Embarrassed	Excited

Descriptive Guides: On a chart, list and record student descriptions or "clues" for these emotions, thoughts, and feelings.

Example:

Afraid
Hands and knees shaking
Breathing quickly or holding their breath
Heart pounding fast
Eyes wide open
Standing very still, tense
Biting their nails

Modelling the Skill

Literature Models: Read the descriptive passages below to the class and ask the following: How does the author let us know what the character is feeling or the emotions they are experiencing? Prompt students to identify the feeling/emotion by how the character looks and acts. Ask them to locate the sentences that describe these looks and actions.

Feelings (shown by how the character looks):

The queen was still staring at Sophie. Gaping at her would be more accurate. Her mouth was slightly open, her eyes round as two saucers, and the whole of that famous rather lovely face was filled with disbelief.

The BFG by Roald Dahl, page 153

Emotions (shown through action):

Example of stress and exhaustion:

It did not take long before an exhausted Poppy had to stop. Her sides ached. She was hot and cold all at once. Her heart felt as though it would break out through her ribs. Gasping for breath, she crept beneath a leaf, then peered about to see where she had come.

Poppy by Avi, page 83

Example of contentment:

Poppy was so sure she had found the truth that she stood up on her hind legs, leaped into the air, and kicked her heels twice. When she landed, she collapsed into a soft heap and allowed herself a great sigh of contentment. With that, she closed her eyes, and fell into a deep sleep. What a day.

Poppy by Avi, page 135

Revise a statement to show emotion: Illustrate the difference between telling and showing how someone feels with the following example.

Ben was angry. (telling)

vs.

Ben's face turned beet red. His hands were clenched into tight fists. He stiffened his back and glared at them with cold eyes. (showing)

Guided Practice

Revision Exercise: Have students complete Blackline Masters 30, 31, and 32 as a group or as an independent assignment.

No Grocery Lists: Ask students to show how the character is feeling using descriptive language (not simply a list of adjectives). Remind students to refer to Five Senses and Feelings and Emotions charts and to the literature models as guidelines for their writing.

Take a Snapshot: Remind students that they must focus on one scene and not include action that moves the story forward. This scene should be one of the key moments in the story.

Share and Compare Student Revisions: Display (anonymous) student work on the overhead or blackboard and examine its effectiveness. Do these allow us to see the character, object, or setting through the eyes of another character, as if we were actually there? Invite constructive suggestions from the class and revise student work during a modelled writing session.

Extension

Adapt the Blackline Masters to include further emotions and feelings that relate to a current novel study or other literature examples.

Name: _____

Writing Detail and Description: Describe Feeling and Emotion

Read this short statement of how the character feels. This statement is general. It does not include any specific details. Make it come alive!

When James walked into the room he was scared.

Revise this statement by writing 3 – 4 sentences **showing** the reader how the character feels.

What does "scared" look like?

Write the sentences so that the reader can see this scene through your eyes.

Do not start a new part of the story. Focus on this one scene.

Be sure to include the following:

- how the character looked
- how you could tell he was scared
- what the character did
- What the character was feeling

Name: _____

Writing Detail and Description: Describe Feeling and Emotion

Read this short statement of how the character feels. It is general. It does not include any specific details. Make it come alive!

Sam was very excited about taking his first skydiving lesson

Revise this statement by writing 3 – 4 sentences **showing** the reader how the character feels.

What does "excited" look like?

Write the sentences so that the reader can see the scene through your eyes.

Do not start a new part of the story. Focus on this one scene.

Be sure to include the following:

- how the character looked
- how you could tell he was excited
- what the character did
- what the character was feeling

Unit 3: Writing Detail and Description

Lesson 4

Purpose

Revise a brief, general description using specific details.

Materials

- ✓ Five Senses chart (from previous lessons)
- ✓ Samples of student writing from Lessons 2 and 3
- ✓ Blackline Masters 33, 34, and 35, adapted to feature a character, object, or setting related to a current topic of study
- ✓ Revision examples (copied on blackboard or student copies)
- ✓ Chart of sentence starters (see "Modelling the Skill")

Introducing the Skill

Review with the class the descriptive passages written by students in Lesson 3 and the character, object, and setting descriptions in Lesson 2. What were the effective elements of these descriptions? What types of questions did they answer for the reader? How did they enable us to visualize the scene in the story?

Modelling the Skill

State the Subject (Topic) Sentences: Present an example of a sentence that states the subject of the "snapshot." Explain that it is important not to leave the reader to guess what or who is being described. The subject should be stated clearly at the beginning of the description. (Remind students of how they had to guess at what was being described in Lesson 1.)

Illustrate with Revisions: Present the following prompts and revisions as examples of how to include the subject in the first sentence of the descriptive passage.

Character	
Before:	There was a painting of him on the wall.
After:	There on the wall was a painting of the explorer.
Before:	Its body had gold and black stripes.
After:	The tiger's powerful body was circled with gold and black stripes.
Object	
Before:	I could see small fishes swimming in and out of it.
After:	Small fishes darted in and out of the sunken ship.
Setting	
Before:	It was all rotten and crumbling.
After:	The medieval castle was rotted and crumbling.

Paragraph Writing: Provide sentence starters on the blackboard or a chart to encourage variety. Use the following examples to illustrate how to introduce a character, object, or setting. Have students complete some of these examples orally and record others on the blackboard. Sequence several sentences into paragraph form:

It felt like _____

There in/on the _____ was a _____

It must have been at least _____
_____ (character) thought that it was _____
It moved as though _____/As it moved it _____
I couldn't believe how _____
I stared at the _____
It seemed as though _____
I was amazed at _____
_____ looked down/up and noticed/was surprised to see _____
As _____ looked around he/she realized _____
The _____ (setting) was alive with _____
I could feel/hear the _____
_____ (name of character) _____ (action) as she/he _____ (action that shows feeling)
As I looked closely at the face of the _____ I noticed that _____

Guided Practice

Revision Exercises: Fill in BLMs 33, 34, and 35 with the names of characters, objects, and settings that are related to a current Social Studies or Science topic. For example, one character might be a young Iroquois man or woman. Alternatively, you may use general statements for the students to revise and extend.

Example:

On the rock sat a mermaid. The big, hairy, strong gorilla chased me through the jungle. (list) It was very, very dark in the forest. (over-emphasis)
--

Have students complete the revision exercises on Blackline Masters 33, 34, and 35 as cooperative or independent assignments in brief writing periods. Instruct students to write at least 3 – 4 sentences using a variety of sentence starters. These may be completed on the Blackline Masters or as “Before and After” exercises in their notebooks.

Visual Aids: Review the use of the five senses, the need for a topic sentence that states the subject of the description, and the use of a variety of sentence starters.

Before and After: Share, compare, and display different descriptions of the same character, object or setting in a “Before and After” format. Repeat this process throughout the year with a variety of characters, objects, and settings.

Name: _____

Describe a Character

Read this short statement. It is general. It does not include any specific details about the character.

Character: _____

Write a description of this character in 3 – 5 sentences so we can see him or her through your eyes. Remember to include one or more of the five senses.

Remember to state who the character is in the topic sentence.

Begin each sentence in a different way.

Use these questions to help you write your description

- How big is the character? (not numbers)
- What kind of eyes, nose, ears, mouth, or hair does he/she have?
- What is he/she wearing? (not just colours)
- What does his/her voice sound like?
- What expression does his/her face have?
- How does he/she act? What is he/she doing? How does he/she move?
- What is the character feeling?
- How do you feel when you see him/her?

Name: _____

Describe an Object

Read this short statement. It is general. It does not include any specific details about the object.

Object: _____

Write a description of this object in 3 – 5 sentences so we can see it through your eyes. Remember to include one or more of the five senses.

Remember to state what the object is in the topic sentence.

Begin each sentence in a different way.

Use these questions to help you write your description

- How big is it? (shape, size)
- What colour is it?
- What is it made of? (material)
- How old does it look?
- Is it easy to see?
- What does it feel like? (texture)
- And ... any others you can think of!

Name: _____

Describe a Setting

Read this short statement. It is general. It does not include any specific details about the setting.

Setting: _____

Write a description of this setting in 3 – 5 sentences so we can see it through your eyes. Include one or more of the five senses.

Remember to state what the setting is in the topic sentence.

Begin each sentence in a different way.

Use these questions to help you write your description:

- What can you see?
- Does anything grow there?
- What is the weather like?
- Are there sounds or smells?
- What do you hear?
- Are there any birds or animals?
- How do you feel being there?

Unit 3: Writing Detail and Description

Lesson 5

Purpose

Revise a piece of personal writing with a detailed description of the character, object, or setting.

Materials

- ✓ Samples of student writing from Lesson 4
- ✓ Chart of sentence starters from Lesson 4

Review the Skills

Student Exemplars: Read aloud student descriptions of characters, objects, and settings from Lesson 4.

Ask students to identify the subject in the topic sentence, the different senses that were incorporated, and the variety of sentence starters.

Writers' Workshop

Draw: Have students take a completed story from their own writing and draw a snapshot of one character, object or setting. What do they want the reader to visualize? Compare this process to choosing one photo taken on vacation — Which photo gives the most information about the experience?

Write: After they have drawn their "snapshot," have students write a detailed description using the picture as a guide. Ask students to attach these revisions to their original copy.

Before and After: Share and compare the "Before and After" versions. Have students read the before and after versions to the class. Discuss how this revision has given "meat" to the previous "skeleton."

Unit 4: Writing a Main Event

Lesson 1

Purpose

Identify the components of a fully expanded main event.

Materials

- ✓ Novels: *The BFG* by Roald Dahl, *Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden, *The Prince of the Pond* by Donna Jo Napoli, *Poppy* by Avi
- ✓ Chart of the three components: Action, Description, and Dialogue
- ✓ Photocopies of selected literature examples (choose one or two)
- ✓ 11 x 17 paper

Introducing the Skill

What is the main event?: Discuss the definition of a narrative story's main event: The main event is what the story is really all about. It is the "central problem, conflict, struggle, or adventure that changes the character in some way" (Mariconda, 1999). The main event is the scene in which the main character is forced to grow, learn something, or have a change of heart. It is the most significant event in the story and should be the longest section. This single climactic scene is followed by a resolution.

Video Productions: Compare the presentation of main events in written work with their presentation in video productions. The author of a narrative must stretch out the action in the main scene(s) by describing it/them in a series of frames or video shoots to convey what the character(s) do, see, feel, and say.

The main techniques: List the techniques often used in a fully expanded main scene:

- **Action — what the main character is doing**
- **Description — the character's observations through the five senses**
- **Dialogue — what the main character thinks and says**

Modelling the Skill

Identify the Techniques in Literature Examples: Read and display literature examples that illustrate how different authors include these components in their main event(s). Compare how authors incorporate and combine these components. How do they include the character's actions, thoughts, feelings, observations, and words?

Literature Examples

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| The BFG | Pages 20 – 21, "The Cave"; page 125, "Mixing the Dream"; and page 133, "Journey to London" (the beginning of the resolution) |
| The Cricket in Times Square | Pages 92 – 95 (the fire/problem gets even worse) |
| The Prince of the Pond | Pages 30 – 35 (Pin is stuck on Turtle); 69 – 83 (journey with eggs) |

Poppy

Page 6, paragraph 6 (Ocax killing Ragweed); pages 78 – 81 (Poppy crossing creek)

Guided Practice

Locate Techniques in Context: Distribute photocopies of the literature examples. You may use one of those listed above or an excerpt from a narrative you have shared with the class. Have students locate and underline the three techniques, (action, description, and dialogue) as they occur within the text, using a different colour for each one. This assignment may be completed in a group or independently. Model with an overhead before beginning.

Video Shots: Using the 11 x 17 paper, have students take one of the examples and create a 'frame by frame' scene in cartoon form that includes actions, description and dialogue. The cartoon may be completed in an eight-frame format. Have students orally explain to the class what is happening in each frame, or assign as a written task.

Unit 4: Writing a Main Event

Lesson 2

Purpose

Expand a story summary statement into a main event.

Materials

- ✓ *The BFG* by Roald Dahl
- ✓ Chart of the three components: Action, Description, and Dialogue
- ✓ Photocopies of BLMs 36 and 37
- ✓ Chart paper and marker

Introducing the Skill

Compare and Contrast: As a class, compare a short summary of a main event to the author's fully expanded version. Read the following summary as an example of a main event that is too brief. You may wish to compose a summary statement that is related to a Social Studies or Science topic.

Summary of a Main Event:

After months of digging, Peter finally entered the ruins of the medieval castle (or pyramid or early Canadian settlement). Once he got inside, he made an amazing discovery.

Expand a Statement with Student Questions: Discuss how this summary of the main event does not allow the reader to really understand or picture what is happening in the story. The reader needs a "blow by blow" account to understand the author's purpose or message. Prompt the students to ask questions about what happened in the story. Record these questions on a chart — What would they like to know?

Examples:

- What was Peter feeling? Fear? Excitement? Nervousness?
- What was he thinking to himself?
- Could he see clearly? What could he see?
- How did he feel about being inside the castle?
- What did he find inside?
- Was he surprised by what he saw?

Modelling the Skill

Expand a Summary Statement: Invite the class to brainstorm and record possible answers to these questions. Use the questions and student input to compose a revised, fully expanded main event. Model the composing process and verbalize the inclusion of each technique — action, dialogue, and description. Ask the students to put themselves in the character's shoes. What would they experience? At least 3 – 4 sentences should be descriptive, using the five senses.

Compare the Before and After: Have students compare this expanded version to the original summary. Which is more informative for the reader? Which would they prefer to read?

Guided Practice

Revision Exercise: Ask students to expand the summary of a main event using BLMs 36 and 37 or a "Before and After" book format. Review the need to stretch out this one event by using the three techniques. Emphasize that revisions are to include the character's actions, reactions, thoughts, feelings, observations (description), and words. The main event is the most important part of the story and should be written as if it is in slow motion, with every small detail told. Alternative: You may fill in the revision exercises with summary statements that incorporate current study topics for your grade level, such as a character's actions during an ecological disaster or extreme weather, or a character's experiences in another historical period or culture.

Share and Compare Student Revisions: Read and compare student revisions. Examine anonymous student work on an overhead and examine the use of the different techniques.

Before and After: Create a bulletin board display with the "Before" in the centre and "After" revisions surrounding it to illustrate the difference between a summary and a fully expanded main event.

Unit 4: Writing a Main Event

Lesson 3

Purpose

Compose a fully expanded main event.

Materials

- ✓ Chart of the three components: Action, Description, and Dialogue
- ✓ Chart paper and marker
- ✓ Blackline Masters 38 and 39

Introducing the Skill

Review student work from Lesson 2.

Focus on problem solving and ask students to generate a list of possible problems that might arise in specific situations. For example, what could go wrong when you are rock climbing, acting in a school play, living during a specific historical period or in a particular culture, and so on.

Modelling the Skill

Problem Solving a Main Event: Select one problem (by means of a class vote) and prompt students to dictate a step-by-step solution to this problem in the form of a main event. Remind them to include each of the three techniques by referring to the chart. Tell students that they are to put themselves in the picture and describe the scene as if it were happening now.

Examples of Prompts:

- How does _____?
- How would you _____?
- What do you see, say, think, feel, hear, smell, and taste?
- Describe the scene — were there any other characters present?
- What about plants, animals, buildings, and objects?
- What is the weather like?
- What did you learn from this experience?

Revise Shared Writing: As a class, read and revise the main event, identifying the techniques that you have used and those that could still be incorporated.

Guided Practice

Someone – Wants – But – So: Instruct students to write their own main event on an assigned topic or one of their own choosing. The topic may be based on a book they have read or a personal experience. First, have them complete the planning form BLM 38 with the character (someone), goal (wants), problem (but), and resolution (so) to provide a framework for their writing. Alternatively, you may wish to have students complete these frame sentences:

- This story is about _____ (main character).

-
- There is a problem because _____ (describe a problem).
 - The problem is solved when _____ (tell how the main character solves the problem)

Say – Think – Do: Encourage students to include the character's words and thoughts. Have them complete BLM 39 with a short description of the event and what the character said and thought.

Name: _____

BLM 38

Writing a Main Event: Someone – Wants – But – So

Summarize the main event under these headings.

- Someone (character)
- Wants (goal)
- But (problem)
- So (resolution)

Someone	Wants
But	So

Name: _____

BLM 39

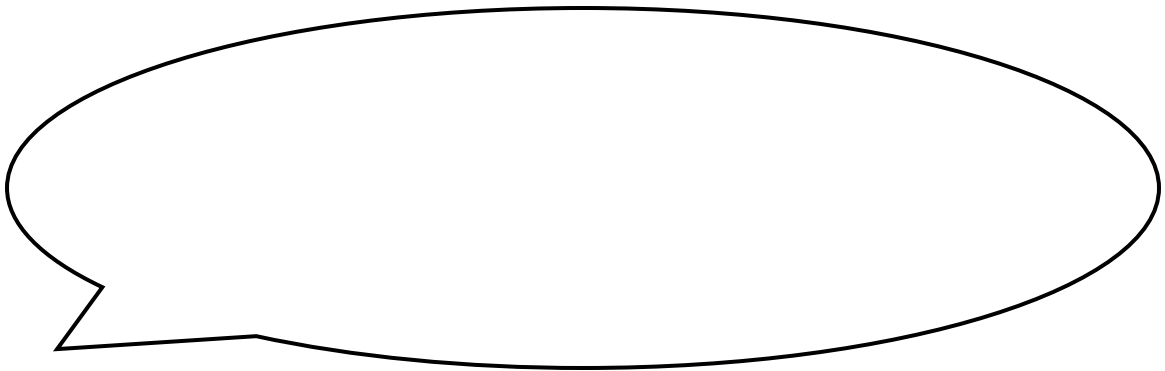
Writing a Main Event: Say – Think – Do

A character's words and thoughts tell us what he or she is feeling and thinking about the event in the story. Describe

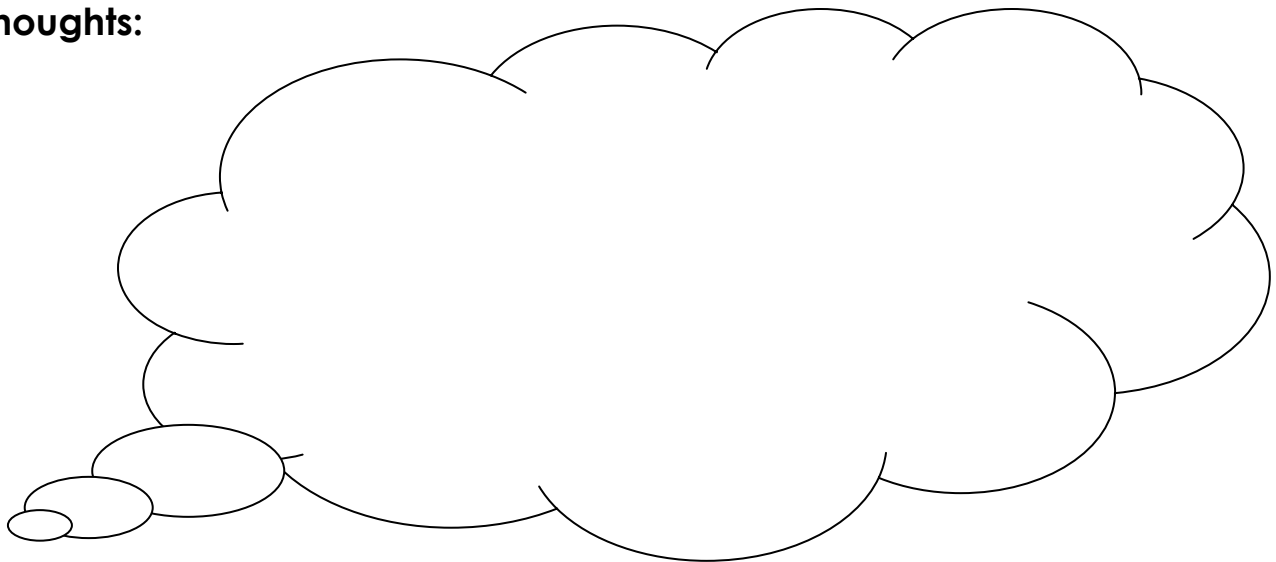
- the character's actions (what is happening in the event)
- what the character says
- What the character may be thinking and feeling

Actions: _____

Words:



Thoughts:



Unit 4: Writing a Main Event

Lesson 4

Purpose

Revise and expand the main event in a piece of personal writing.

Materials

- ✓ Samples of student writing from previous lesson
- ✓ Chart: Action, Description, and Dialogue

Review the Skills

Review with the class the techniques that have been used to tell a main event in full.

Read the summary on the book jacket of a classroom novel to the students and then read the main event of the story. Invite students to compare the two and discuss the differences. How does the author build the action to a climax and then present the resolution?

Writers' Workshop

Revise a piece of writing: Have students choose a piece of writing that they have completed and stretch out the action, description, and dialogue to create a fully expanded main event. You may wish them to use BLM 39 to guide their revisions. It may be helpful to compare the writing process to a performance of a play or a video production, where each action and reaction has to be planned and recorded.

Before and After: Invite students to share and compare the "Before and After" versions. Discuss how the revision is much more entertaining for the reader and enables them to fully understand what the most significant event in the story is, what it means to the main character, and the impact it has upon them.

Unit 5: Writing a Prompt

Lesson 1

Purpose

Write a complete narrative story to a given prompt by applying the practiced techniques.

Materials

- ✓ Charts from Units 1 – 4 listing the writing techniques

Writers' Workshop: Writing a Complete Story Using a Prompt

Advantages of Writing to a Prompt

It enables the teacher to compare the pieces of writing using a set of objective criteria, such as a rubric.

Administering a timed prompt prepares students for provincial assessments (as applicable).

It is one way for teachers to assess the skills students have mastered.

A prompt provides students with practice making quick decisions during the pre-writing stage and developing time-management strategies to maximize what they produce.

Instruction

Story Elements: Present the prompt and have students identify the essential story elements stated in it. These elements include

- the main character
- setting
- purpose of action
- potential problem or adventure
- the variables — unknown elements each writer must decide on.

Record the elements in chart form.

Givens	Variables
Main character	Beginning
Setting	Description and Detail
Plot	Main event
	Ending: Solution or Conclusion

Timed Writing and Prompt Planner: Allow approximately 45 minutes for this activity. You may wish to give the prompt the day before students write their response so that they have time to think about it. They may complete the prompt writing planner at this time (BLM 40).

Time Management: Provide a guideline for time management. You may display a clock with sticky dots indicating the transition times, or stop and remind students what is required in the next section, referring to the charts from each of the four preceding units.

Prompt Writing Timeline	
5 minutes:	Plan

10 minutes:	Effective Story Beginning/Description of the Setting
20 minutes:	Extended Main Event/Solution/Conclusion
5 minutes:	Satisfying Ending
5 minutes:	Reread/Revise
45 minutes:	Total Time for Exercise

Name: _____

BLM 40

Prompt Writing Planner

This story is about _____
(main character and purpose of the story action)

The story takes place mostly in _____
(setting where action takes place)

The problem or adventure is _____
(summarize the MAIN EVENT here)

It ends when _____
(solution/conclusion)

I will include 3 – 4 sentences describing each of the following:

(an unusual interesting character)

(an interesting or important setting)

(an interesting or important object)

***Remember:** Your MAIN EVENT is the longest, most important part of the story.

Unit 6: Short-Term Writing Projects

Purpose

Write a complete narrative story using a process-writing approach.

Writers' Workshop

Procedure

The class works from a prompt-like story starter over 5 – 7 days.

Each day students work on and share one section of the story.

Each session is 40 – 45 minutes. Sessions need not be on consecutive days.

Timetable

Day 1: Read the prompt and have students fill out the story planner on BLM 40 (see Unit 5). Share the summaries as a class.

Day 2: Have students construct effective story beginnings. Review the chart of techniques for writing great beginnings. Remind students that their beginnings should start as close to the main event as possible.

Day 3: Have students write their descriptions of the setting or a critical character or object. Review the questioning techniques for elaborative detail.

Day 4: Ask students to write the main event. Remind them to stick to one significant event and stretch it out with action, dialogue, thought, and description.

Day 5: Review how to write satisfying story endings and have students complete their own endings. Encourage students to go back and revise by adding a paper strip tail to the edge of a story page for the additions.

Days 6 and 7: Invite students to read the stories aloud for peer critiquing and suggestions. Have them complete their final revisions.