

HOLIDAY OR HIDING

A Creative Writing Lesson

This lesson is about telling stories. Once you have completed the tasks in this lesson, you will know a lot more about how to make your stories dramatic.

Part One – Packing for a Holiday

- One When you go on holiday, what do you take with you? Make a list of five important things to pack for a vacation.
- Two Write down an interesting or exciting or frightening event to do with each of these five objects.
- Three Try to link the five events together in a sequence to make a story.

Part One – Example answer

- One I packed a toothbrush, a music player, a swimming costume, five books and a Swiss army knife.
- Two My brother took my toothbrush and said it was his; I forgot batteries for the music player; my swimming costume was too small because I hadn't worn it for ages; I had to leave the books at the airport because my bag was too heavy; the security guards took away my Swiss army knife.
- Three The events in box two are mixed up and have to be reorganised and told in the order in which they happened ... Perhaps the story is called 'My worst Holiday'. Or maybe you can think of something to give it a happy ending.

Part Two – In Hiding

This is much more serious. In this task you have to try and imagine going into hiding because you are IN DANGER! What would you take with you? How would those things be useful to you? Then what would happen when those things break or run out of power?

- One Make a list of useful things to help you survive.
- Two Imagine how you would use your carefully chosen things. Think of at least two ways of using each one. Then imagine your useful things breaking down or being stolen or used up.
For example, perhaps you took a radio and listened to emergency broadcasts and weather forecasts. Then the broadcasts stopped.
- Three Try to link the stories of your useful things into a sequence of exciting events. As each one fails, the tension and drama will increase.
At the end of the story, you have to decide if you do survive. If you escape, how do you manage it? If you don't get away, what is the climax of the story?

FIVE STEPS TO A STORY

A Creative Writing Lesson

This lesson is about combining the people in your story – your characters – with a particular time and place – your location.

Part One – The Five Steps to a Story

- One Think of a place you know well. What makes it special? What is important about it?
Imagine what time of day it is. What is the weather like?
- Two Someone is there. Who are they? Woman? Boy? Even an animal ...
- Three Someone else is there too – but they haven't seen one another. Who is the second person?
- Four The two characters meet. What happens?
- Five The two characters separate and each goes their own way.

Part One – Example answer

- One It is a cold dark night on a World War I battlefield.
- Two A sniper lies on the ice-hard ground, aiming his rifle.
- Three In the enemy trenches, a soldier lights a cigarette.
- Four The sniper sees the flame and fires a single shot.
- Five The sniper packs up his gear and creeps away; the other man lies dead in the trench.

Part Two – Different Styles

- One The story in the example is a war story. The cold and the ice and the dark are all a part of the mood. Try to write your version of the example story, making it as vivid and moody as you can.
- Two Imagine how the story would be different if you saw it from the point of view of the man in the trench and not the sniper. Could you write a version where he hears a sound and ducks just in time, so the sniper's bullet misses him?
- Three Could you use the same pattern of five steps to write a romantic story with a happy ending?
- Four What about a busy town centre and a worried parent looking for a lost child?
- Five Use the structure of five steps to write something entirely from your imagination.

PICKED ON

A Creative Writing Lesson

This lesson is about imagining a character in detail – but also adding drama to their life.

Before you start writing, you need to think about all the different reasons why people get picked on. Perhaps they have a different accent. Perhaps they wear different clothes. Perhaps they support a different football team from everyone else. Perhaps they are clever. Perhaps they are religious.

Now forget all that for a moment and work out who your main character is.

Part One – Who is it?

- One Choose some basic details – how old; boy or girl; brothers or sisters; parents or grandparents or other carers.
- Two Where do they live? Imagine their house or flat or caravan or bed-and-breakfast room. Imagine their bedroom and their things.
- Three Now you know something about your character, try to BE YOUR CHARACTER. Imagine that they have to write a pen-friend letter. Write it for them, telling someone they have never met before about their life.

Part Two – Picked on ...

- One Remember, you must BE YOUR CHARACTER.
Imagine that two weeks have gone by. You have to write a new pen-friend letter. You must build on your first letter, mentioning the same people and places, but adding something new about each.
- Two Now remember the discussion at the beginning of the lesson.
Towards the end of the letter, tell the pen-friend about being picked on. Describe the people involved and what you did about it. Then finish the letter and say good bye.

Part Three – Who is the pen-friend?

- One Just like you did for your first character, you need to choose some basic details about the pen-friend – how old; boy or girl; brothers or sisters; parents or grandparents or other carers. Where do they live? Imagine their home. Imagine their bedroom and their things.
Make them different from your first character ...
- Two Now you have to BE THE PEN-FRIEND.
Imagine that they have received the first letter. Write their reply.
- Three Now try to write a reply to the second letter, the one about being picked on.
What do you think the pen-friend is like? Uncaring? Do they ignore the unhappy part of the letter and just pretend nothing has happened? Sympathetic? Do they have similar experiences?

Because your story is made up of letters, it is called an epistolary story.