

The Cat-in-the-Hat Story Type

Eshu Bumpus - Classroom Creative Writing Exercises

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Notes for the Cat-in-the-Hat Story type

I try to add challenges and support in each of the writing exercises in this sequence. Please maintain two very important rules: Stories are non-violent (We don't use weapons or violence to solve problems) and original (We don't use copyrighted characters). As we write each page, I have the students help brainstorm certain words that will help in our descriptions of the places and events in the story. We read these lists aloud before we use them so that we practice reading with emotion. So, for example, when I have them read the title of each page with me, I say, "Say it like you mean it!" and we all shout, "Hey cut that out!" or "I'll get rid of you!"

INTRODUCTION:

As you read to students have them notice the different alternatives to, "Once upon a time." What is significant is that it is an imaginary time, not a real time. So however we say it, we don't use numbers, only words. Once we use numbers, (500 years ago, or back in 1,000 BC) we are talking about a real time.

We name the characters. Because I want to make the notion of "Main Character" very clear in their minds, I always have the students name the Main Characters after themselves. The other character is the Friend who lives with the Main Character. When the time comes to tell where the characters lived, I usually put a chart up on the board.

Size: big, large, huge, enormous, gigantic, humungous, small, tiny, itsy bitsy, teeny weeny, little	Color: Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, brown, black, white, pink, periwinkle, magenta, tan, beige
Type: <i>(Here I only use types of houses that have windows and door to fit the problem of the story later, no tipi or cave.)</i> House, cabin, mansion, castle, palace, lodge, hut, shack	Near: mountain, river, valley, waterfall, lake ocean, hill, pond, swamp, forest, jungle,

I have students read aloud with me from each list and then pick in order, one word from each list to form the sentence telling where they lived, e.g. "They lived in a big, yellow shack near the ocean."

HOME ALONE:

Here the Friend is about to go far away on errand. The more detail the better. Where does the Friend have to go? Why? I ask them to make it sound important and far away. Next, they tell why the Main Character was left at home. Was there a reason the Main Character was not supposed to go? Was there a reason the Main Character didn't want to go? Or was there are reason the Main Character had to stay home that day?

CRASH:

Here I explain what it means when someone asks you to find something “Constructive” to do. (This was a very common term when I was young but not heard so much anymore.) I find I have to explain that it doesn’t mean to go and “Build Something.” It means finding something helpful, useful or responsible to do. Soon they are able to give lots of good examples, like washing the dishes, cleaning his room, feeding the fish, etc. I do this because, after the Friend has left, it is important that the Main Character finds something constructive to do in contrast to what is about to happen in the story. Once we establish what the Main Character was doing, the trouble happens. They must think of a word that signifies a loud noise, like boom, bang, or kapow! The Trouble Maker enters. Again, it is good to use adjectives here, so I ask them to pick a creature and tell if it is big or small. Often for fun, I have them think about something that is usually big but is small in this case or vice versa, like a Giant Mouse or a Little Dinosaur. I make a list on the board of the different parts of the house the Trouble Maker might break through. (Ceiling, wall, floor, front door, back door, roof, chimney, window,)

HEY CUT THAT OUT!

The students will have a lot of fun with this page. I have them think of a room of the house and then think of what kind of trouble the Trouble Maker did in that room. What did he break, crush, eat, swallow, destroy, squash, rip, tear, flatten, or squish? (Again this is a list I would put on the board. Students may help brainstorm the list.) You may have to remind them to be appropriate for school since the bathroom will come up as an option.

I’LL GET RID OF YOU!

Here it is important that they think of a non-violent way to get rid of the Trouble Maker. They want to somehow pacify, frighten or trick the Trouble Maker. They must either get him to calm down, behave better, go to sleep, run away or go after something outside. Whatever the Main Character thinks of has to work so that we can get on to the end of the story.

WHAT A MESS!

Here, they have to decide whether the Main Character tries to clean up the mess single handedly or ask for help. So the last sentence on this page might be, “_____ had to call his friend Mary the Giraffe to come and help.” Or “_____ had to start by picking up all the _____.”

FINALLY PEACE AND QUIET

When the Friend gets home, they will have a conversation. At first, the Friend might not believe the Main Character’s story about what happened. It can be fun to think of ways the Main Character can prove that the story was true. For example, there might be tracks outside, or the hole in the side of the house might be shaped exactly like the Trouble Maker. This is one of the reasons it helps to write a group version first so that each class has a model that they helped to create. That way, they have already experiences trying to think of solutions for each of the decisions they must make and have heard examples that work.

Two Happy Friends

Once there was a _____
named _____
_____ lived with a _____
named _____
They lived in a _____



Left Home All Alone

One day, _____ had
to go _____

_____ stayed home because



Crash!!!

After _____ left,
started to _____
Suddenly, _____ ! A _____
_____ came right
through the _____



Hey Cut That Out!!

That _____ started
causing trouble all over the house!

First, _____

And then, _____



I'll Get Rid Of You!!

Thinking quickly, _____
started to _____

Soon, _____



What a Mess!!

_____ got rid of the
_____ but there
was a terrible mess to clean up
before _____ got home.
_____ had to call

First,

Next,

Finally,



Finally Peace and Quiet!!

That night, when _____ got home, the house looked _____

