Lesson 1: Plan Your Story

UNIT: Amusement Park

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, it's Margaret!

When I was little, I loved writing stories. I used to keep a journal where I wrote a story every day. Here's one of my journals that I wrote for my fourth-grade class. I still have it because it reminds me of how much I loved writing as a kid—and how important writing is to me as an adult.

Now, I write different kinds of stories, like this one, which helps inspire other fiction writers and stories for Disneyland that make visitors feel like they're in an imaginary place like *Star Wars Galaxy's Edge.*

I still write in a journal every day. Writing short stories every day helps me grow my imagination and my writing skills. Whenever I come up with an idea for a story, I write in a notebook.

Sometimes I write about something interesting that happened to me or a place I went. One time, my friend went to an amusement park that had a giant slide, like this. Cool places like this really get my imagination going for stories.

Can you imagine a story that could happen here at this giant slide?

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: What is a short story that could happen at a giant slide?

HOOK 2

Maybe you imagined two sisters who raced down the slide. Or maybe a boy rode his tricycle down the slide. Or maybe the slide's biggest fan is a tiny dog. You probably came up with way more. Any one of these story ideas would make an awesome short story!

To celebrate all the imagination in your classroom, I'm starting a short story festival called StoryFest. And the theme is amusement park stories. In a short story festival, everyone writes a short story that they made up.

I love writing fiction stories because I like using my imagination. You're not going to write your entire story today. You'll do what writers do before they write a story—they plan.

Story plans begin with a setting. The setting for our stories is going to be an amusement park. Let's take a look.

Wow, that looks amazing!

Now that I have a setting, I need a main character. I imagine—who came to the amusement park today? I imagine a boy. I'll call him Eli. Eli isn't a real person I know, but he is similar to some people I know—and that's okay.

Now that I have my character and setting, I can plan how my story will go. Writers plan stories using a story arc like this one. Story arcs begin with something a character wants. I'll imagine what Eli wanted.

I imagine that he was at the amusement park, and he saw that big slide. He thought it looked like a lot of fun. Next, I'll imagine an obstacle or a problem. Something got in the way of Eli going down the slide. What could it be?

DISCUSSION 2

Discuss: What do you think could be a problem that stops Eli from going down the giant slide?

HOOK 3

There are lots of options. Maybe his sister wanted to go on a different ride, and they started to argue. Maybe it started to rain, and the slide got gross with muddy water. Or maybe he was scared of heights.

Hmm... I imagine what it would be like at the top of that giant slide. Yikes! That's super high up. I imagine Eli climbed all the way to the top and then realized it's actually a lot scarier than he thought it was going to be. I'll add this obstacle to my story arc.

Next, I need a solution.

I'll think about what Eli could do to overcome this obstacle and go down the slide. To come up with ideas, sometimes it helps to think about what you would do if you were in that character's situation.

DISCUSSION 3

Discuss: How do you think Eli could solve the problem in the story?

HOOK 4

Maybe he watched other kids go down and realized it's not so scary. Maybe he took three big breaths and pushed off.

You may have come up with other ideas, too.

I imagine Eli sitting up there so scared. Then he heard something from down below—it was his sister. She called up to him, "You can do it, Eli!"

With his sister's support, he took a big breath and slid down.

Phew!

Eli made it past the obstacle to get what he wanted—to ride down the slide. Success!

The last part of my story arc is to decide how to end my story. A great way to end the story is for the main character to realize something or learn a lesson. I could come up with a life lesson that Eli learned—or maybe Eli learned something about himself.

DISCUSSION 4

Discuss: What do you think Eli learned from this experience?

HOOK 5

There are lots of choices. Here are a few I could pick from:

- Eli realized the big slide wasn't so scary after all.

- Eli learned that he is brave.

- Eli learned that family can help you when you feel scared.

Any of these could work. I like that Eli learned that family can help you when you feel scared. I now have a complete story arc. This is the plan for how my story will go.

Writers' plans change all the time, so I might change some parts later on. For now, I have a good idea of what is going to happen in my story.

Today, you'll plan your story for the upcoming short story festival, StoryFest.

You'll fill in all the parts of your story arc just like I did. Yours will probably be really different from mine—that's okay. As fiction writers, we get to imagine stories and be creative.

I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies.

STEP 2

In today's lesson, you'll need someone to share ideas with. This could be a partner or someone you sit near.

When everyone knows who their talk partner is, move on to the next step.

STEP 3

Get your Story Arc worksheet.

Come up with the name and age for your main character and write them here.

Remember, this is a fiction story. So make sure your character is imaginary and not a real person you know.

You can always change your character's name later.

STEP 4

Draw a quick sketch of your character. This can help writers imagine characters by thinking about how they look.

STEP 5

Imagine something at the amusement park that your character wants. It doesn't have to be going on the slide. Your character could want something different.

Maybe your character wants to play this basketball game or win one of these giant prizes playing a ladder game, like this. Maybe your character wants to go on a ride, like a ferris wheel—or something a little more thrilling, like this ride that launches you into the air. Or maybe your character wants to eat a food, like ice cream or this cotton candy taco.

You can use one of these or come up with your own.

Share with your partner: What does your character want?

STEP 6

Write a few words about what your character wants in this box.

You can use one of the ideas you saw, or come up with your own.

You can use your Word Bank to help find ideas, too.

STEP 7

When I came up with an obstacle or problem for Eli, there were lots of choices.

Remember, an obstacle is something that gets in the way of the character getting what they want.

Another person could be the problem—like his sister, who didn't want to go on the slide, so they started to argue. Something unexpected could be a problem, like if it started to

rain. Or the character's feelings could be the problem—how Eli realized he was scared to go down the slide.

When you think of an obstacle that could get in the way of your character getting what they want, you can use one of these ideas or come up with your own.

Decide what the obstacle will be in your story and write your idea in this box.

STEP 8

Share with your partner your ideas for your character, what your character wants, and the obstacle in their way. You can change parts of your plan if you want to.

STEP 9

Imagine what your character could do to get past the problem and get what they want.

Your character could solve the problem themselves, or maybe someone else helps them out.

Share with your partner: How will your character overcome the obstacle and get what they want?

STEP 10

In this box, write a few words describing how your character overcomes the obstacle. This is sometimes called the "solution to a problem."

STEP 11

Your character got what they wanted—awesome!

When Eli overcame his fear and went down the slide, he learned that family can be a big help when you're scared.

Think about what your character realized or learned from their experience.

Here are some ideas to help you get started.

Discuss with your partner: What could your character learn from their experience in your story?

STEP 12

Write what your character learned in this box. Remember, you can change it later if you want.

STEP 13

Take turns with your partner talking through your entire story arc from beginning to end. You can change parts of your story arc if you want.

STEP 14

Great job, writers!

You now have a complete story arc and a plan for how your short story will go.

Before you go, the papers shown on screen are V.I.P.s—Very Important Papers.

Your teacher will tell you where to put them so you will have them for the next lesson.

STEP 15

Your story is going to make a big splash at StoryFest—I can't wait!

In the next lesson, you'll start drafting the beginning of your story.

That's all for now. I'll see you next time!