Lesson 2: Set the Stage

UNIT: Amusement Park

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, writers. It's Margaret!

This year's StoryFest is going to be incredible!

We'll read about amazing things at amusement parks. There might be stories about trampoline bungee bouncing, or a human claw machine like this one. Or a cotton candy machine gone wrong.

With your imaginations, your stories are going to be awesome!

You already have a plan for how your story will go from the last lesson—you made a story arc.

Don't worry—you can still change parts of it if you want to. But you know where your story will begin and where it will end.

Today, we'll be working on leads for our stories.

Leads are the very first part of a story, and it's how writers bring the reader into the world of the story.

Storytellers who work on movies have to do this, too.

Check out the start of this short film.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: What do you notice about the start of this film?

HOOK 2

There are lots of things the filmmakers did to bring us into the world of the story. Maybe you notice where the story is happening—an electrical wire. Maybe you noticed the characters—the birds. You probably noticed what's happening—the birds were arguing over spots on the wire and chirping at each other.

For now, we can use these ideas to help write the leads of our stories.

I made my story arc in the last lesson. But it's been a while. I might have forgotten some of the parts. Let's review it together.

My character is Eli, and he is at the amusement park. He wants to go on the big slide. When he gets to the top, he gets scared because it's way higher than he thought. Then he hears his sister calling up to him. Hearing her words gives him the encouragement to go down the slide. He learns that family can help you when you feel scared.

I remember all the parts now. I'm ready to start writing my lead.

On the Story Arc, the lead goes here. The lead will help readers picture what's going on right at the start.

Hang on.

The picture is blank. I'll need to write something to start building the picture.

- “It was a beautiful day at the amusement park.”

Amazing!

Now I can add my character.

- “Eli was at the amusement park.”

Cool. I can add what my character wants.

- “Eli wanted to ride on the big slide.”

Wow! Every sentence I write builds a picture in my reader's mind. This is a good start. Right now, I've made a picture, but nothing is happening yet. Writers can bring readers into the world of the story with action.

I'm trying to imagine what Eli could be doing right before he sees the big slide. I could use your help.

DISCUSSION 2

Discuss: What is something Eli could be doing at the amusement park when the story begins?

HOOK 3

There are so many choices. Maybe he just got off a ride, or maybe he finished a Zorb race. Or maybe he's eating this pickle filled with cheese and hot Cheetos.

Let me try rewriting my lead. This time, I'll try a lead where he just got off a ride.

- Eli walked out the exit gate of the Octopus 3000. He felt like his stomach was still spinning after going around and around in the giant octopus ride at the amusement park.

That's fun. My reader can really picture these sentences and there's something happening. But when I imagine what's happening, there's even more going on—there's also sound.

As a writer, one way I like to add sound is by having my characters talk. I'll rewrite my lead again to add some sound.

- "That ride made my tummy feel weird," Eli said as he walked out of the Octopus 3000 ride. The spinning ride at the amusement park was still playing the carnival theme song as Eli pushed open the exit gate. "Maybe no more spinning rides today," said Eli's sister.

Now, my readers can really picture what's going on, just like I imagined it.

Notice all the parts of this lead. I let the reader know who my characters were—Eli and his sister. I included the setting—an amusement park. There's action—Eli is leaving the ride. And there are sounds, dialogue, and a carnival theme song.

Wow! That's a lot of things squished into just a few sentences, but don't worry. You'll plan each part before you start writing.

Today, you'll write a beginning for your story. You'll use action, and sounds, to bring your reader into the world of your story. I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies. You'll need one worksheet from the last lesson and one new worksheet.

If you want, you can also use your word bag to help with spelling.

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 from the last lesson. It may have been a little while since you made your story arc, so let's review.

Take just a few minutes taking turns, telling your partner how your story will go from beginning to end. Introduce your character, then share each box one at a time.

If you want, you can make changes to your story arc.

STEP 4

Leads bring the reader into the world of the story before showing what the character wants.

On your story arc, write in the lead here.

This is the part that you'll write first.

STEP 5

You already have some of your lead plan on your story arc. Your character and setting are here in the center.

Get your Story Beginning worksheet.

Copy the name of your character and the setting onto your Story Beginning worksheet.

If you have more than one character,

you can add those characters as well.

STEP 6

Think about what your character could be doing right before they realize what they want.

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

Write some ideas of what your character could be doing in the "Action" section.

You can write more than one idea.

STEP 7

Listen to the sounds of an amusement park. As you listen, think about what sounds might be happening in your story.

Whoa!

Write some ideas of sounds you could include in your writing here. Remember, you can use these sounds, or characters speaking, to bring your story to life.

STEP 8

Share with your partner the actions and sounds that you want to include in the lead of your story. If you wrote more than one idea, circle the ones you want to include.

STEP 9

Right now, we're just working on the lead. We'll write about what your character wants in the next steps.

Use your ideas from this box to bring your reader into the world of your story. All of them won't fit into one sentence. So you can write a few sentences to include all your characters, actions, sounds, and setting.

Write your leads starting at the arrow.

STEP 10

What's that?

A writer's tip!

Today's writer's tip is about dialogue.

When a character says something, make sure the words that they say are in quotation marks—like this.

Always let your reader know who is speaking by adding a dialogue tag—like this.

A comma goes in between the dialogue and the tag, inside the quotation marks.

If you have dialogue in your lead, check to make sure it has quotation marks, a comma, and a tag.

HOOK 4

Nice job writing a lead that brings your reader into the world of the story.

Watch how I write the next part of my story. Then you'll return to yours to write about what your character wants.

When I wrote about what my character wanted, at first, I wrote: "Eli wanted to go on the big slide."

Hmm... Well, that does tell the reader what he wants. But then I thought, what if I used action and dialogue to show what my character wants? Just like I did in my lead. That way, my reader can picture this part of the story, too.

Hmm... I wonder—what do people do when they see something they really want?

DISCUSSION 4

Watch this video of this boy seeing something he wants.

Discuss: What do you notice this boy does when he sees something he wants?

HOOK 5

People do lots of things when they see something they want. They open their eyes wide or smile. They point or shout or jump up and down—or other things too.

Writers can show that a character wants something by describing what the character does when they notice it.

I imagine Eli when he sees the big slide.

I wrote: Eli saw the giant slide. His mouth fell open. “That slide is huge!” Eli exclaimed, pointing at it. “Do you want to go on the slide?” his sister asked. “Yes! Yes! Yes!” Eli shouted, jumping up and down.

I never had to write, *Eli wanted to go on the slide*. You knew he wanted to because of what he said and what he did when he saw it.

Readers will be able to picture everything that is happening in the story in this version much better than my original version.

Let's write the next part of your story, step by step.

STEP 11

Look at your story arc to remind yourself what your character wants. Copy what your character wants into the gray box on your Story Beginning worksheet.

STEP 12

Discuss with your partner: What will your character do when they notice what they want?

STEP 13

Write what your character will do when they notice what they want here. Here are some ideas you could use, or come up with your own.

STEP 14

Now think of some sounds.

Here are some ideas of sounds you could use.

Write what your character will say, or what sound they will make when they see what they want here.

STEP 15

Next, you'll work on writing the part of your story that shows what your character wants. Don't write about the obstacle yet. We'll do that in the next lesson.

Use the ideas you came up with to write the next part of your story. Begin writing at the arrow.

STEP 16

Amazing job, writers!

You brought your reader into the world of your story using characters, setting, action, and dialogue. Readers will be able to picture your story just like you imagined it.

In the next lesson, we'll keep drafting to include these parts of the story arc. For now, make sure you put your V.I.P.s somewhere safe.

I'll see you next time!