



Writing Workshop Mini-Lesson

Plot Development

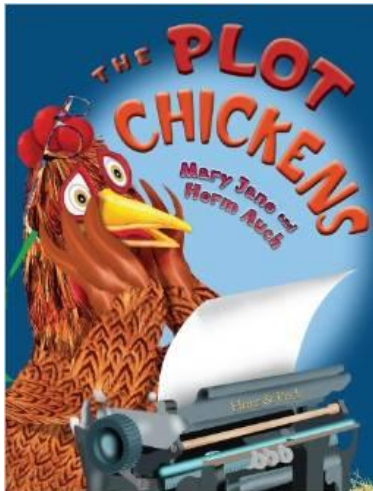
The Plot Chickens' Rules for Writing

This is now our third year using a Homeschool Writing Workshop. It works extremely well for our family. We meet together daily to write (yes, including me!!). You can read more about how and why we set up a Writing Workshop by following some of the links below.

This was a quick Mini-Lesson that we did at the beginning of one of Writing Workshops last week to review the elements of a good plot. (Most mini-lessons take 5-10 minutes.)

Pre-Reading Activity: Before we read the book together, we brainstormed what makes a good plot. We wrote a list together. I threw out the titles of some of the books the kids know and love and asked what the plot was and how this transformed the story from something "boring" into a story that they know and love.

We read the book [The Plot Chickens](#) (*affiliate link*)



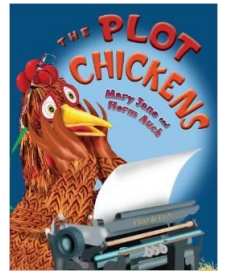
After we read the book, I pulled out this worksheet I made for the kids. (Images were purchased from canstockphoto). I gave them a few minutes to try to fill in the blanks below, then I re-read the book and the kids filled in the blanks.

Wrapping it up: I asked if the plot chickens left anything out or if we had anything on our list that was not mentioned in the storybook. (We talked about the roller coaster imagery of plot, etc.)

Be sure to visit our blog homeschoolden.com for many more writing workshop ideas.



The Plot Chickens' Rules for Writing



Rule One: You need a _____

Rule Two: You need to hatch a _____



Rule Three: Give your _____ a _____

Rule Four: Develop your _____ by asking



Rule Five: Write what you _____

Rule Six: Build _____.



Rule Seven: Make your story _____ by using all

Rule Eight: The main _____ must _____ her (or

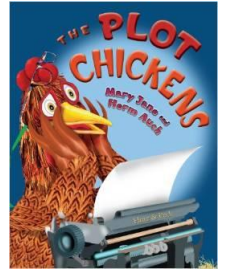
his) own _____.

Did you like the "Peril's of Maxine"? Explain.





The Plot Chickens' Rules for Writing



Rule One: You need a main character.

Rule Two: You need to hatch a plot.



Rule Three: Give your main character a problem.

Rule Four: Develop your plot by asking "What if?"



Rule Five: Write what you know.



Rule Six: Build suspense.

Rule Seven: Make your story come alive by using all 5 senses.

Rule Eight: The main character must solve her (or his) own problems.

Did you like the "Peril's of Maxine"? Explain.



This is what I wrote about this lesson over at the blog:

As many of you know, we use a Homeschool Writing Workshop. The kids were excited to get back to writing regularly again! (Hooray for that!). Our Writing Workshop generally consists of three parts

1) **Mini-Lesson of the Day** (about 10 mins)

2) **15 minutes of reading:** The kids really* like their new literature books! ED (Gr.2) is using ... DD and LD both really like the selections in their Lit textbooks. So, we'll definitely be keeping those in our schedule.

3) **Writing time:** (about 20 mins.) Even Mom sits down with a journal and spends time focused just on writing. I strong discourage anyone from talking & try not to allow anyone to ask how to spell something.

Today I want to share some of the mini-lessons that went really well for us the past couple of weeks.

Mini-Lesson: Plot Chickens' Rules for writing

The Plot Chicken was a fun way to start off the year. We talked about the writing rules that the chicken received. We tied that into what we have learned about story structure.

We talked about the story diagram, the one that looks like a roller coaster. We talked about how the kinds of novels the kids are reading now don't fit as neatly into that gradual rising action. Instead, books are often more like real roller coasters with a problem/challenge that gets solved... only for another bigger problem or challenge to crop up.

Day 2

Story Glove Activity

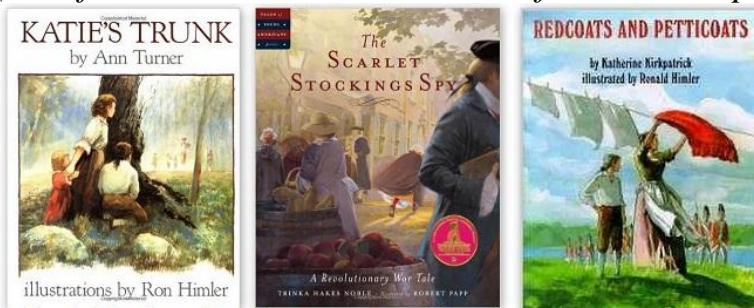
Another day we did another mini-lesson on the story writing process. This time we used a different analogy about how stories unfold. This one was laid out Melissa Forney in [Razzle Dazzle Writing](#) (*affiliate link*) and is called the "story glove." I had the kids trace their own hands and fill in the glove as we talked about it and I explained our discussion in more detail below.



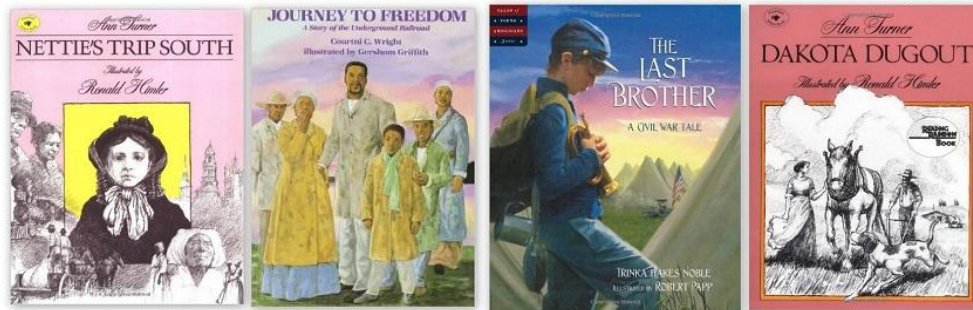
Over the course of the next few days, we read a number of children's books and looked at how the story fit (or didn't fit) the story glove. Last year, we started off with children's books that highlight different values (like friendship, courage, honor). This year, our back-to-school theme was/is historical fiction. Some of the books we've read and discussed in our writing workshop included (these are all *affiliate links*):

- [Katie's Trunk](#) (*Set in the Revolutionary War*)
- [The Scarlet Stockings Spy](#) (*Set in 1777 about a girl who becomes a spy in Philadelphia*)
- [Redcoats and Petticoats](#) (*Also set in the Revolutionary war about a Patriot family. We haven't read this one in our WW yet, but I can't wait to compare this to the Scarlet Stocking Spy!*)
- [Nettie's Trip South](#) (*Set just prior to the Civil War about a girls who meets slaves and the dehumanizing aspects of slavery for the first time; based on someone's diary*)

- [*Journey to Freedom: A Story of the Underground Railroad*](#) (Set just prior to the Civil War after the Fugitive Slave Law was passed)
- [*The Last Brother: A Civil War Tale*](#) (Set at Gettysburg in the Civil War about a young 11-year-old bugler who learns how complicated war is.)
- [*Dakota Dugout*](#) (Set after the Civil War and shows life out on the prairie)



Historical Fiction Books we used in our Writing Workshop



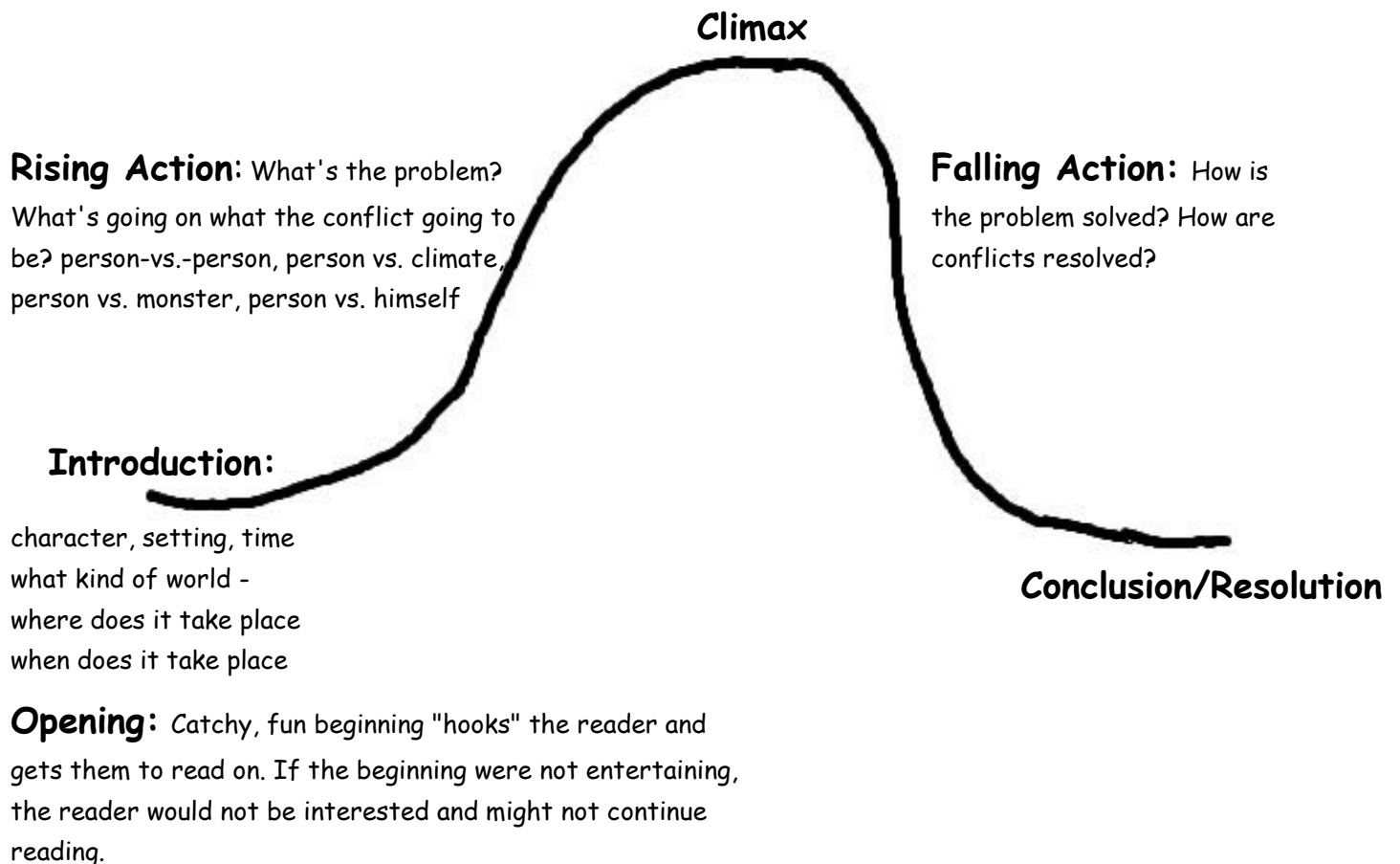
Story Glove



Activity: Draw an outline of your hand with the thumb on the right (flip your left hand upside down to trace it).

Have you heard of a plot diagram? Sometimes it's described as a roller coaster and might look something like this:

Story Diagram




Today we're going to talk about story plots using a different analogy shared by Melissa Forney in [Razzle Dazzle Writing](#) (affiliate link) -- the Story Glove.

Story Glove

The story glove is a different formula you can follow for writing a story:

In the middle is your **topic or story idea**.

Grabber or Hook: When you start your story, you always want to hook your reader. Start with something funny or curious. Start with a question or mystery. Evoke an emotion like anger, sorrow, fear, or wonder. 

Problem or Challenge: Something happens to the main character to propel the story forward.

Action of the story: Add lots of details, build suspense, make the reader connect with your main character. Strengthen your story by including rich description. Think about your five senses and include some of those details when writing your story (or writing about your topic).

Solution: Solve the problem or overcome the challenge.

Takeaway: Share what the main character learns or how his/her life changes.





Attention Grabbing Story Starters



Make a good first impression when you begin your stories! Your goal as a writer is to grab your attention, get you excited and build feelings of anticipation.

Make sure you connect with your reader right from the beginning. Draw your reader in perhaps with an unusual fact, a question, an emotion. You might want to "share a secret" ... Many people know that xxx, but did you know that also yyy? Start with a rhetorical question (a question that everyone will answer yes or no to.) Use some of the facts you've learned to create a scene. Set the scene -- describe the environment, place or time period in detail.

Put the character in the setting doing, saying or feeling something interesting. The character might do or say something memorable. The opening might reveal what the character is like. Your introduction could start with...

Dialogue

Action

Question

Thoughts and Feelings

Sound Effects

Show the character with a problem doing something interesting.

Begin your story as close to the main event as possible.

If you're going to write a story about a volcanic eruption, don't begin the story the moment you were born.

State the purpose of your story. The quicker you make what is happening clear, the more likely you'll be able to draw your reader into your story.

Recommended Books

These are books we used in this portion of our Writing Workshop the first couple of weeks. These are affiliate links:

[The Plot Chickens](#)

[Razzle Dazzle Writing: Achieving Excellence Through 50 Target Skills](#)

[Katie's Trunk](#) (Set in the Revolutionary War)

[The Scarlet Stockings Spy](#) (Set in 1777 about a girl who becomes a spy in Philadelphia)

[Redcoats and Petticoats](#) (Also set in the Revolutionary war about a Patriot family. We haven't read this one in our WW yet, but I can't wait to compare this to the Scarlet Stocking Spy!)

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