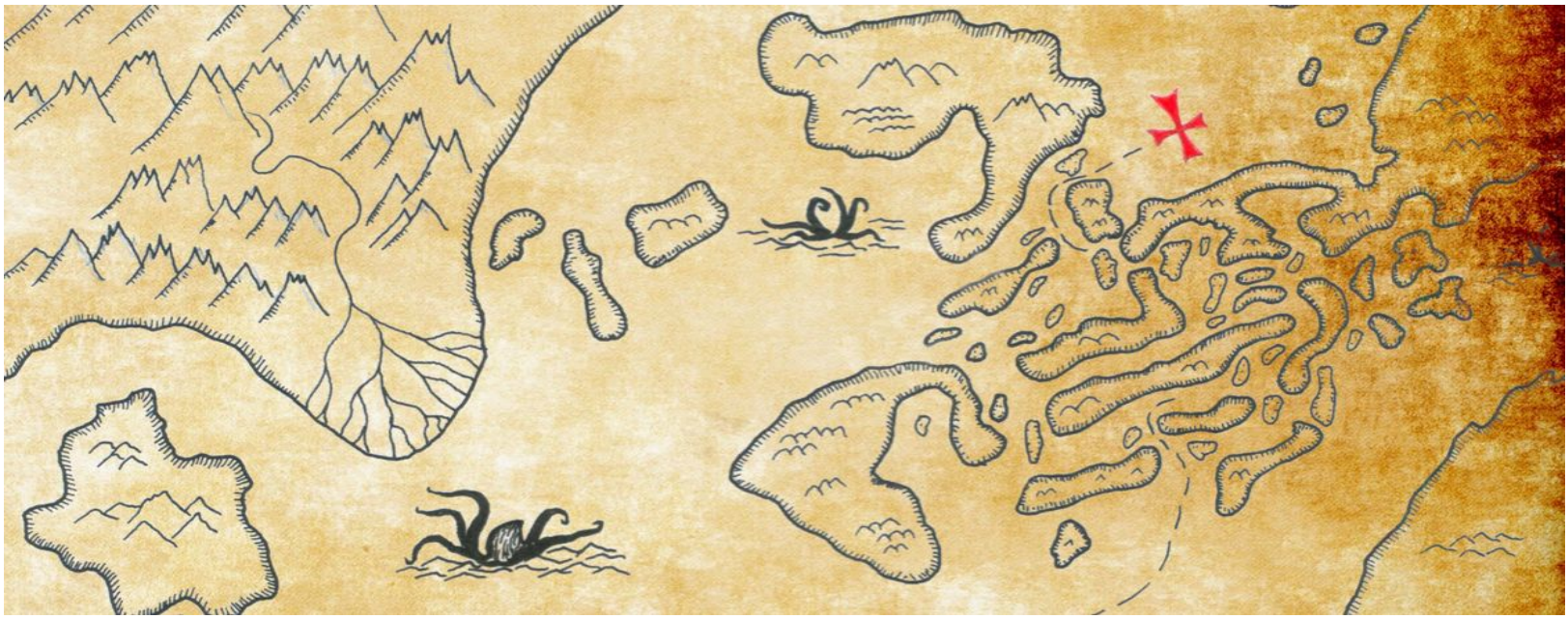
A Pirate's Guide
t' th' Grammar of Story

:: the guide to the guide ::

TEACHER'S GUIDE



Treasure is here for those who seek it.

A Guide to Using the Guide

A Pirate's Guide Teacher's Guide

Where's the Teacher's Guide?

As your student begins the workbook, you'll notice right away that there is NO teacher's guide. None is needed, as all the teaching is done by First Mate Manfred within each exercise. There is a short teaching portion (sometimes just a few sentences and a definition), and then the learning really takes places as your student follows the examples and works through the incremental steps of the exercises. Seriously, when Chris sat down to teach this complex thing called storytelling, he broke it down into the smallest possible steps, so there would be no gap in learning, no moment when a student would just throw up their hands to say "how did they get to that?"

That said, some sections are harder than others. Some concepts (like Values, or Light and Dark) are just more complex than others (like Setting or Plot). You might need help knowing how to assess your students work. Or how to use the different sections. And some parents want a teacher's guide. So, here you are!

Table of Contents:
We'll start with an overview of the various things they'll encounter in *A Pirate's Guide*.
Read through the Specific Elements which go through, exercise by exercise, a bit more on each element. As much as possible, in each:

- I'll explain each element in greater detail.
- I'll give examples both from real life and in the story world.
- "In Real Life" :: I'll offer suggestions for how to challenge your student to dig deeper into the element (in life and in story).
- "Finding it in the Story" :: when possible, I'll give specific examples for your student to find within the story chapters.

There are two things I'd like to highlight. First, if you and your student want to dig deeper, every one of these concepts can be found "In Real Life." Finding examples of it in the "story" of our daily lives, in the story that Grandpa tells, in the story that we watch in a movie is the best way to really understand and own these concepts. When that happens, you and your student will begin to realize that story is everywhere, and story is important in many places that are not traditionally "story" settings. For example, my daughter was in a Mock Trial recently. The team that won? Well, according to the judge (and I quote him): "Story vs argument is a no brainer -

Wondertale Press © 2020

the story will win. So when you are thinking through your opening statement and your closing argument, you've got to be thinking about what story you want to tell." But to tell a *compelling* story requires understanding what makes a story compelling - the elements. These very same story elements are also part of our own daily lives - we operate very much like characters in our own story, and understanding what makes a story character tick is often a clue to what makes us tick as well.

Second, once your student has read through the story and the teaching, and done the exercises, they will be able to define and identify story elements. Putting them directly into a story is the next step. To get there, have your student go through the *Pirate's Guide* story itself (I would suggest after each exercise or two, and again perhaps at the very end), and identify the elements they've been learning. To help guide *you* as *they* find these (on their own), I created "Finding it in the Story," a master list of each element and a few of the places (though by no means all. If your child really wants a challenge, have them write up what they find that I "miss" and send them to me - I'll add them to the page!) where they can find those elements in the chapters preceding it. I've added a few from other parts of the story, as well, in the hopes that they will start to be on the lookout for these things! Of course they will have already read it, but in reading it again, with this new understanding of setting, or mystery, or hero, they will be able to see it in context and that will help bridge the gap between definition/identification, and putting it into practice. I'll post these "Finding it in the Story" helps at the end of each element, and here in a master list.

As always, if these resources don't answer your question, don't hesitate to write and ask! We love to hear from parents and students, and could talk about story all day.

Getting Started

Welcome to the pirate ship! It's time to get started! The first steps are simple!

Parent, please start by pre-reading the Letter from Yogger LeFossa (pg. 6-7) and the corresponding Note from the Publisher (pg. 322-3), as these will give you a sense of the workbook and our hopes for your time in it. Hopefully you will laugh a bit!

We recommend then sharing the book with your student, going over the Table of Contents and format for the book. Generally, they will enjoy a portion of a pirate story, then do an exercise, and then more pirate story as a prize (or carrot for beginning the next day). Take note - the "teaching section" of each exercise (that brief portion before they begin putting pencil to paper) is told from the point of view of the Monkey First Mate. Scurvy Spat is your student (some kids love this, some would like a new name!). And the story, whether it is its own chapter or integrated into the exercise, is always italicized.

Wondertale Press © 2020

Plan for your student to spend some time in the workbook each school day - we generally recommend starting at around 20 minutes a day, and slowly increasing the time until it fits both your schedule and your students energy/ability. If that's the wrong amount of time, scale up or down to meet your students' needs. Each lesson moves in small incremental steps, building slowly into more creativity and expressive thoughts. It's okay if an entire lesson isn't completed in a single sitting - just pick up where you left off each day. Some exercises are longer than others, some are harder, so there is no right or wrong in how much to complete. You are the best gauge for your student's effort and energy.

Every now and then there are sections where they can choose to dive deeper (Heave Ho), review (Scratch yer noggin'), or write their own story (Set Sail) - do these only as they work well for your student - they are entirely extra. Click the links for more specific information on each of those sections. Always remember, there is no right or wrong in these creative exercises!

The first week, I recommend looking at the Table of Contents, the Glossary, and the general format. Spend a few minutes reading the first chapters of the story, and do exercise one - it is the perfect, simple introduction to mindstorming (our pirate's word for brainstorming), and will give you both an idea of what to expect in the coming days. Check out the first Raise the Anchor and Set Sail, and then take a break. Get ready to start fresh the next day, and set sail for some creative writing adventure!

Please feel free to contact us at any time if you have questions, concerns, or just to share how it's going!

Raise the Anchor and Set Sail

Throughout *A Pirate's Guide*, you'll find 8 sections called "Raise the Anchor and Set Sail."

This means it's time for your student to write a story of their own! In the first of these, we walk your student through it from start to finish, even providing an example of a short story that we created based on the work we did in the previous exercises. So we encourage your student to go back to their mindstorming work from the previous exercises, asking themselves some easy questions - does anything stand out? Is something interesting? What are the things you liked? They should flip back through their exercises (as far back as they want to go), and could even highlight or circle those things that interested them most. Then they should start to put those together. Encourage their curiosity. As the workbook demonstrates in our example, our curiosity can take a simple mindstorming exercise and take it to a brand new place, like this:

Wondertale Press © 2020

In the exercise, I did a mindstorm about "things monkeys throw." I said: bananas, bean bags, water balloons, bagels, barbecues, Bunsen burners, bowling balls, and broccoli. Then I asked myself the question, "I wonder who they are throwing these things at?" The first thing that came to mind "other monkeys in a parade." Then I thought of a character, Monkey Mary. Then I wondered what she wanted. ...

As you can see, WONDERing is a big part of storytelling. I wonder who's doing this? I wonder why? I wonder who else is there? I wonder what would happen if? Encourage your student to wonder about some of the things they mindstormed. You can model this for them as they are getting started, but let them make it their own.

Now, if they are feeling hesitant to write, that's perfectly normal. As we encourage them in the exercise, there is no right or wrong way to tell their story, especially not at this stage. They shouldn't worry about whether or not it is good or bad (whoever thought sticking "good" and "bad" stickers on stories ought to be eaten by a kraken, so be careful that you as a parent/teacher don't do this!). They should simply write whatever comes out of them, as it happens. They are learning and growing and trying things out. Encourage them to give a good effort, without judgement or grading. If you must assess the work, focus on their attitude and willingness, and respond with interest and encouragement, not praise.

That's all there is to it. As the workbook progresses, they will have more and more material to draw from, and their openness to telling their stories will hopefully grow and flourish.

Heave Ho!

Ready for a challenge?

Thirteen times throughout the workbook, your student will come across a section called Heave Ho! Whenever we yell "Heave Ho!" they should be prepared to do some more difficult exercises. These exercises were designed to challenge your student by taking what they've just learned, and going a bit deeper and farther. They can be difficult, and your student might be discouraged.

If this happens, take a deep breath, and help them to relax. These are not required lessons. If the Heave Ho! is hard for them to understand, spend some time with them, listening to what they know, paying attention to what part they are struggling with. Depending on their age and understanding, you may decide to have them skip a specific Heave Ho! Or you may choose to go back, read through the previous exercises so you understand, and then gently walk them through the material.

Wondertale Press © 2020

Whatever you choose, remember that being creative is a vulnerable thing. Our goal is for this workbook to help your child open up and enjoy the process of being creative. The Heave Ho! sections should stretch them but not break them, or your relationship. Only you can assess your student's difficulty with a section, so use discernment to encourage and support them.

Scratch Yer Noggin'

Time for a review. Creativity is hard work. Learning grammar is hard work. And though we've done our best to have this be as fun and easy as possible, we also want to make sure that our students don't forget what they have been learning as each new element and exercise comes along. So we created the Scratch Yer Noggin' sections to test their memory of past sections.

There are ten of these review pages throughout the workbook. Each one includes some defining, some brainstorming, and some demonstrating that the material is also being understood. While we don't provide an answer key for these (definitions can be checked against the glossary terms on page 1), this is the one place in the workbook where you could, if you need or want to, grade their work. It's your choice if you have your student spend some time reviewing in preparation, or do the Scratch Yer Noggin' as an open book review.

The final Scratch Yer Noggin' (page 311) is a comprehensive review of the entire book. We encourage your student to see how much they know - they might review before hand, take the "final" without looking back to see how far they've come, and then go back and find the answers to any material they may have forgotten.

Grading and Assessment

This brings up a big parent question - how do I grade something without an answer key? This is creative writing. Creativity is the key and it is not something you can grade in a traditional way. There are few right and wrong answers when you are brainstorming - imagine us trying to tell you the "right answers" to the exercise that asks them to "list 5 awful ice cream flavors"? This is why we don't provide a way to grade these exercises. But that doesn't mean you as a parent can't assess their progress.

Assessment is about less objective things, and you'll want to focus on how willing or engaged your student is. Are they writing the first thing that comes to their mind and plowing through to just get it done, or are they thinking about it, letting their ideas come to the surface? If they are prone to plowing through, are they slowly growing more inventive and more thoughtful? Certain things aren't about the end product, but about the attitude of what you are doing. The questions you ask and the way you assess is meant to validate their openness to the process of developing their creativity and moving towards their strengths as a writer.

Wondertale Press © 2020

We have provided challenge exercises (we call them "Heave Ho!") for those who are ready to dig in deeper. And we have another set of review work called "Scratch Yer Noggin." These pages test your memory of past sections. I recommend using these pages (you can require your student to review and study before filling them out, or allow them to flip back as an open book review) to assess how much your student is grasping, and they certainly could be graded if you require graded work. Better still, let the do these sections in fun, and base your assessment more on their willingness and ability to put into practice the "In Real Life" suggestions, and their ability to "Find it in the Story" as they go along through each exercise. These sections can be found, exercise by exercise in the Teacher's Guide.

The goal of our workbook is to help your student open up and allow this muscle of creativity to grow and develop through the learning of basic story elements. Your encouragement and interest is all that you both need to have a successful class!

In the Midst

Hopefully you've gotten a good taste of how *A Pirate's Guide* works, and the seas are calm and your student is having fun. But what if you hit some rough waters?

This happens. It happens in real life, and it happens in stories. It's what makes for rising tension and dramatic moments. So don't be surprised, and don't threaten to walk the plank. If your student hits a difficult patch (and it is likely to be a unique place and reason for each student), take a deep breath, look over the material with them, and walk slowly through it. Plan to take more time, and plan to be more present than you may have been.

When I've hit a mental block during my own time working through *A Pirate's Guide*, I try to assess what's going on - am I hungry? Do I need to eat or drink? Am I tired? Do I need to take a break for the day? And I just being willful, and need encouragement to push through? Or have I hit a concept that feels beyond me (for me it was values, for another of my kids, it was the Light and Dark section)? When this happens, I will take a break. I'll go back and re-read the story chapter before the exercise that I struggle with, and see if I can find examples of what they are teaching me in the text itself. At that point, I have to decide (for myself - or for my student) - is this a section to breeze through, and come back to at a later date, or is it one we will work through very slowly until the understanding forms? Only you and your student can assess that. Once you decide, stand tall, work on, and then enjoy a breather before heading back into the waters again.

You can do it, be gentle with your self, gentle with your student, and keep growing together as you build these creative muscles.

Wondertale Press © 2020

Now, let's dive into the exercises!

Exercise 1 :: Mindstorming :: an important first step

Brainstorming (or *mindstorming*, as our pirates call it) is one of the most important things story-tellers need to do. Because of this, we have a whole exercise devoted to walking the students through it, step by step. A blank page can be a scary thing for a storyteller, even seasoned professionals. *Mindstorming* is a key way to move past the fear of the blank page, the fear of getting it right, or the trap of going with our first idea (when it is often idea #5 or#55 that is much better). *Mindstorming*, as we'll be doing throughout *A Pirate's Guide* will build their creative muscles, slowly and gently, and at the end, provide them with a resource that can act as a sourcebook for future stories.

In Real Life :: at the start of this, I said that *mindstorming* is one of the most important things story-tellers need to do. Yes, NEED to do.
And it is HARD. So how can you help kickstart the brainstorming session? The first thing is to turn off the internal critic. There is NO stupid idea in brainstorming! This is not only true for your child, as they brainstorm, but for you as you listen to them brainstorming. Turn of the critic, and be open to just seeing what pops up. (It's amazing how our children sense our inner thoughts. So turn off your internal critic - of yourself and them - and watch them create).

Finding it in the Story :: not in a specific chapter, this "element" is less part of the grammar of story, and more a skill you'll need in developing the other elements!

Exercise 2 :: Being Specific :: Communicating Clearly with Specifics

One of the greatest skills, in general, that *A Pirate's Guide* teaches - something useful across the board of their education and life - is *being specific*. It's so important, in fact, that is the second exercise in the book, and actually lays a foundation for all the remaining exercises. Why is this? And how do we help our children become more specific?

To illustrate, let's imagine a character together. Let's say that the character is a boy. If you asked a group of 10 people to draw a picture of that character, you'd get 10 totally different boys. Some might be 3, others 10. Some might be tall, others short. Some might be... you get the idea. So let's be more specific. Let's say the character is a 10 year old boy, 5 feet tall, with brown hair and blue eyes. If we ask everyone to draw him again, the pictures will be closer, but we'll still have 10 different versions of that boy.

Wondertale Press © 2020

But I want my reader to be thinking of the same boy that I am - seeing the same boy that I see in my mind. So I need to become very *specific* indeed. I need to describe his clothing, his hair style, how he smiles, which backpack he wears (and how he wears it), etc. If there was a room full of 10 year old boys, 5 feet tall, how can I describe MY boy so that you can pick him out of the crowd? That's specificity. It's helping the reader to see what's in the author's mind.

Being specific is a way of setting limits and creating a focus. Being specific communicates an idea more clearly to the reader. And clear communication is a worth goal not only in story-telling, but in life. The more specific the writer is about ANY aspect of their story, the more the reader will understand what the writer means.

In Real Life :: Being specific in real life is just as important as in story. Actually, it's more important. If I write a vague character and you imagine it differently that I anticipated, it's not great, but oh well. But if I ask you to grab the spice from the cabinet, and I'm not specific, my cinnamon pancakes might taste like pepper! So much frustration in life comes about because our communication lacks specificity. Take a moment today, and have your child pay attention for a time when being specific helped them get what they wanted, or conversely, when being vague resulted in something they didn't want at all.

Finding it in the Story :: again, not an "element" of story per se, this is another skill you'll need to have to be a great communicator! (But you can easily find examples of being specific throughout the entire story. You'll find specific examples in the story portions that are embedded in the exercise itself.)

Exercise 3 :: Setting :: Where to begin?

Simply put, *setting* is a location where a group of characters live and act and where their stories take place. It includes both time and place - though in some stories, each aspect may be more or less important. A story about space cowboys is generally set in space, and likely in the future - both time and place matter to the focus of the story. But another story might be more thematic - about love, for example, and it could be set in any time or place and still have, essentially, the same story line.

One way to help you student think about setting is to ask them to name a favorite story (one they know very well). Ask - what are some of the physical places in this story? Then - in what time does this story take place? Their answers should not only help them understand what setting means, but how/when it is important to the story. For example, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* takes place in England, in the Professor's house, in the wardrobe, in Narnia... and it takes place during two time periods - WWII, and during the rather timeless

Wondertale Press © 2020

time of Narnia (where time is passing, but doesn't seem to have a direct relationship with our time). These are important details. Having talking animals in the professor's house wouldn't make sense - the setting of that part of the story needs to be somewhere like Narnia, where that is normal (this is an aspect of story you'll learn about in *rules*). You can ask them what would happen if they moved the story from England to Africa? Would the story change? How? Why? What if instead of during war time it took place during a peaceful summer? Would the story change? As they grapple with these thoughts, they will begin to see how changes, big and small, make a difference to the story.

Once time and place, and how they are used in a story, are understood, then your student can brainstorm what time/places will give their story meaning. Based on their story, it might be just a context for the greater story, or it might be central to the understanding and meaning of the story. Asking open questions can help them think through these larger issues and will strengthen their story overall - but remember, thinking through these things is hard work, and won't necessarily come easily or be "fun." They may want to keep the first place that comes to their head, and that's okay. Keep it light, make suggestions, and then step back and allow them to be creative in their own way.

In Real Life :: while there are some important real life applications for many of the story elements, *setting* isn't a very big one. It is an easy one to start with, though, as you can simply help your student be aware of how time, location, and events affect their daily lives. They can rely upon groceries to the in the grocery store, and animals to be in cages at the zoo. They likely expect cake at a birthday party, but not at the dentist. And if their dentist were at the birthday party, they might be very confused! All of these are simple ways to help them see the value and importance of establishing setting in stories.

Finding it in the Story :: check out the first chapters again - there are lots of obvious examples of location. (The ocean, the pirate ship itself, the bunks). Note that there are not many general time examples (we don't know "when" this is happening), but you'll find the descriptions of night to be the most obvious example. As for events, this isn't happening in a specific event, but challenge your student to pay attention in coming chapters, as there will be many "events" that occur to ground the story in a specific time/event.

Exercise 4 :: Values :: So, What's Valuable to Your Student?

When your student writes a story, there are all kinds of hidden elements that lurk beneath the surface. Part of the purpose of *A Pirate's Guide* is to bring those out into the light so they can be developed and strengthen the story. Here's an example of something that, at first glance, might not seem like an essential story element. ***Values***. Such a little word for a rather simple concept that can be a real challenge to explain and work through with your student. *Values* are

Wondertale Press © 2020

things that are valuable. Stories are full of things that have perceived value - are believed to be important, worthwhile, or useful. Though it might seem tangential, it is critical to the story. Stories come out of values - that is, stories rise up out of the things that are deemed valuable in the story world.

Values come in many shapes and forms - they are often things that are not necessarily tangible or touchable. Patriotism, love, strong work ethic, science, etc., are all different kinds of values. And these intangible values often have tangible representations of them - like the flag, hearts, muscles, text books. There can even be "values" that we don't consider valuable in the positive sense (like cheating), but which might be valuable to a character (like a card shark). There are also tangible things that can be useful for the value - like the Constitution, flowers, tools, beakers.

Help your storytellers see that these intangible things that give a story some basis can be demonstrated in the story through very concrete things.

A more detailed explanation and the exercise that digs into the idea of *Values* is in exercise #4 in *A Pirate's Guide*. Remember, as you go through this exercise, if you are struggling, go back to the story chapter before it, and see if you and your student can find some examples of values in that story itself. Then go through the exercise just one step at a time. If it is taxing, scale back a bit, or do half the brainstorming, and come back another time to finish. And there are no right or wrong answers, we are looking for good effort and a willingness to work hard to both understand and to create these values!

In Real Life :: As a parent, you can get a peek into what your child values by keeping your eyes open in what they are mind storming about, and what goes into their own stories. The values that are important to them will naturally come up in the story. Recognizing them as valuable things, you can subtly ask them more questions, show interest, and hopefully get to know your child better. And they can then add elements that draw that out and give the story depth. Recognizing *values* (and the things that represent them) In Real Life also help us to understand the people in our life. Imagine Grandma has a very special vase that she uses on special occasions. This is a *significant object*, and when you ask her about it, she'll tell you that it was brought to the United States by her mother when she fled Russia. Her mother had to hide it and keep it from breaking, and it is one of the only things your Grandma has from the old country. Knowing this, you can recognize one of her *values* - having a tie to her heritage.

Finding it in the Story :: pg 33 :: we can find several values (a tight ship, being on time, no fighting, and being fit, to name a few) that have distinct actions/things that demonstrate them (getting up for routine, doing exercises, etc).

Wondertale Press © 2020

Exercise 5 :: Significance :: Attention! Attention! This is important

In any story, there are ordinary things that have extraordinary meaning. In *Lord of the Rings*, the ring - a pretty ordinary object in our world - has incredible significance. It means something very specific, very important. The wardrobe - an ordinary piece of furniture - in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* has great significance and importance too. Names are important too - not just any paper, but the Declaration of Independence. Places, as we learned about in *settings*, can ground your story and give context for who your character are and how they talk and what they do. Even the things that populate your story - wizards, monkeys, or aliens - will help narrow down what you write about. All of these different details are *significant* in the telling of the story.

Being able to identify and recognize significant things, and give them the attention they deserve in the story, will make it stronger.

When writing about significant things, details matter. *A Pirate's Guide* is big on details - because they make all the difference between compelling writing (of any kind) and blah. So, for example, we aren't just talking about a ring, but one that lights up with elvish words when exposed to heat, and turns the wearer invisible, and has been lost for a long time. Those details take it from ordinary to significant, and make it a valuable part of the story. The details can be about the thing, or in the name, or in the place, or in what *A Pirate's Guide* calls *worldlings*. My computer gets upset with the spelling of that, but it's correct - world-lings. These are types of characters that populate the story world. In most stories, the worldlings are humans. But there are other stories that have talking animals, or wizards, or living stuffed animals. Sometimes a story is populated by particular types of humans, like pirates, or children, or dancers. Being able to identify these will give your child some boundaries in the telling of their story. Because having boundaries helps us to tell the best stories, each significant thing in a story, with its details and meaning, helps the storyteller make decisions about all the other details that make up the story.

In Real Life :: In diving more deeply into this, you can ask your child to think of their favorite story, and there is bound to be some ordinary object that has extraordinary meaning in that particular story. Try finding significant objects in the stories your family tells, real family stories (like Grandpa telling about the huge fish he caught, or Aunt Rose telling the story of how she and Uncle Frank met) - there are bound to be certain things that are important to their story that might be insignificant elsewhere. As we shared in the *values* section, significant objects often reflect the *values* the story teller (or someone in the story) has, and this, in turn, helps us to understand them better.

Wondertale Press © 2020

Finding it in the Story :: you'll quickly realize there is not a story right before this exercise, so encourage your student to think back through the story that they've read so far - some significant items would include significant objects :: jelly beans, bananas, treasure map, story grammar; significant names :: 'scurvy spat' and each of the monkey names (particularly Norman Nopants, whose name does not fit the pattern), not to mention the silly names for places (Canmerica is one example - this is also an example of rules, which is the next chapter); and significant worldlings :: talking monkeys, pirates, and kraken. As the story continues, you'll find even more examples of each of these.

Exercise 6 :: Rules :: The Dos and Don'ts in a Story World

"Take your shoes off in the house." "No shoes, no shirts, no service." "Walk, don't run." "Shhh. This is a library." "Remember your manners." (In a whisper) "don't do that, you know it'll upset mom."

Rules. They are everywhere. Whether they are spoken, posted, or simply understood, rules govern the way that we as people interact with each other and our world. *Rules* define what is allowed and what isn't allowed. In a story world, it governs what can and cannot happen. Some rules are explicit - they are regulations that tell us how to behave. Other rules might be more of a cultural norm - something that you just pick up when you are in a certain culture (we moved to Canada for a few years, and even though nothing really changed - signs were in English, people looked just like the people on the other side of the border, stores were even the same - there was a discernible difference, and we quickly picked up on the cultural "rules" that made us realize we were in a different place).

Our definition of rules - "rules govern behavior within the story world" - contains an important word - governs. Rules provide the framework and boundaries of behavior. So, for example, if you set a story in space, there should be certain things that govern behavior - lack of gravity will "govern" how objects are handled and people move around. If your story is set in the wild west, there are definitely other rules that will govern behavior. If your story has a fantasy element, like the CS Lewis stories about Narnia, then there are very specific rules - the animals that are in Narnia can talk. Time is different in Narnia than in England. If you eat enchanted Turkish delight in Narnia, certain things will happen. Each of these rules must be followed (if one of the animals in England started talking, it would pull the reader out of the story and no longer feel like a real story) or the story world isn't as complete or whole. If the rule isn't followed (I recall some animals in Narnia who *couldn't* talk), it should prompt the reader to ask why and look for the meaning behind that. Ask your student to think of their favorite story (book, movie, even video game). Ask a few questions about the story world - what is allowed and what isn't? What about its setting (location/time/event) or values dictates that certain things can or can't happen? What behaviors that happen in this world cannot happen in ours?

Wondertale Press © 2020

So, why are rules so important to story? They keep it real and unified. Think of a young child. In your home, they are not allowed to jump on the beds. But they go to a friend's house, and everyone is jumping on the bed and they feel uncomfortable - "rules" are being broken. There is discord for them. When this happens in story, for example someone in a story about the gold rush era pulls out a cell phone to make a call, there is discord, and the story is broken for the reader. Creating and abiding by the rules of a story world is particularly important in fantasy, where anything could happen, but not everything should happen! More on this in another article. For now, help your child see rules in their own world, and help them to define the rules when they create their own story world.

In Real Life :: I encourage you to ask these kinds of questions throughout your week. When you are at the grocery store, what "*rules*" are there that you as a family follow? When you are watching a movie, what rules can you detect, and how do they affect the actions of the characters? When your kids are playing together, what rules do they naturally develop between them? When they run too quickly in the hallway and slip and fall, what rules have they broken? Don't be afraid to point these things out to your child, and help them see that rules are everywhere, even when they are not explicitly rules.

Finding it in the Story :: One boring one is that the story is always italicized, while the exercises are not. This "rule" allows the student to know when they are in the story and when they are, technically, learning. (In a fiction book, this might look like the characters thoughts being italicized, while what's spoken or understood by all to be regular type). Another obvious one is that you don't disobey the Captain. But here's one that's more subtle, and can help them see how rules govern the story world - Captain LeFossa has TWO wooden legs. How can he walk? The book doesn't ever address this (though Scurvy Spat mentions his wonder about it on page 66), but it is a "rule" in this story that the Captain can walk, jump, run, and defeat kraken with two wooden legs. It's a silly rule, but allows the story to function and governs how the Captain can behave. Another subtle "rule" to the story is that all the locations are weird variations of normal places (Gran Brintian instead of Great Britain).

Exercise 7 :: Symbols :: What's that supposed to mean?

The exercise on *symbols* should be a fun and hopefully easy one for your child. Symbols are everywhere - they can be words, physical objects, a visual sign. Looking at the world for *symbols* can be interesting, because we take so many things for granted that are actually very powerful symbols. A stop sign, for example, isn't something we think about - we simply stop when we see one. But without its power, there would be car accidents all over the place.

Wondertale Press © 2020

In Real Life :: We talked earlier about *significance*, and the role it plays in story. Many significant objects in a story are actually symbols of something else (often values, or other characters, or memories). I have a friend who has 5 children. When they were younger, she developed the *symbol* of 2 fingers in the air. They knew, when they saw that, that it was time to go, and they should clean up and get ready. It was subtle, and effective, without drawing a whole lot of attention to them. Carol Burnett, on her TV show years ago, used to tug her ear at the end of the show - a little *symbol* to her Nanny that she loved her. What symbols occur in your every day world? Help your student to see them, or create them. Sometimes, they need help understanding that, when you bring them a cup of water before they even ask for it, it's because you love them. It's a symbol. A red star on their homework means they did a good job. Dad's thumbs up when they cleared the dishes without being asked mean "I'm proud of you." Look for them, or create some, decide what they mean, and use them to share something special together.

Finding it in the Story :: clearly, the flags are symbolic of places, as well as intent (the jolly roger shows the intention of the pirates to pirate-y behavior). The white flag symbolizes surrender. Other very subtle *symbols* that will show up in coming chapters include the jelly beans (which symbolize the Captain's desire to have good breath and be accepted by others), the bananas (which symbolize our desire to have something we want, even when it's bad for us), and even the kraken (which symbolizes those things in life that we have to battle and win over, or have a good captain who will battle and win for us).

Exercise 8 :: Backstory :: Let me tell you about Why or When ...

How often does something happen to your student, and they get upset, and the way you help diffuse the situation is to explain what happened *before* that helps give a reason for what is happening now. *I know that this feels like a surprise, but when you didn't get your work done earlier, it meant that we couldn't go to the movies tonight.* Or you use what is happening right now to explain why something good is going to happen in the future. *Because you are doing a good job getting your work done right now, we are going to be able to go to the movies tonight.*

These are instances of the power of backstory. Backstory is the string of events that happened *before,* that lead to what is happening *now*, either in a character or in the story world itself. Everything has a reason *why* it is the way it is, and backstory provides that reason. FYI, it is closely related to *plot* (which is still 15 exercises away, so you'll want to refer back to this), in that it is a series of actions. These are just actions that happen before the thing that is currently happening. It might happen before the story takes place, or it might just have happened before the part of the story the reader is currently in. It's a fun game to see the string of events that led to this moment. Knowing a backstory can help us understand why what is happening now is

Wondertale Press © 2020

happening. As an author, backstory gives our characters and the story world depth and meaning. It can explain why our character is doing what they are doing, behaving the way they are behaving.

In Real Life :: This is a powerful tool in the writers tool belt, and In Real Life as well. Just as it explains a characters behavior, we can help our children understand why a real someone behaves the way they do by explaining their backstory. It can give us a context for giving grace, or understanding how and why something extraordinary happened. Next time your child is hurt by something, once they are calm and recovered, encourage them to ask "what happened before that happened?" (It's not a bad parenting technique too. I remember reading an article once that encouraged mother to ask, when her two kids came yelling about how one hit the other, "and what happened right before he hit you?" This was not to excuse hitting, but to help both sides understand what motivated the behavior on both parts.) When they get a bad grade, they can look to the backstory to understand why, and hopefully not repeat those actions. Conversely, when they do something very well, they can look back to see what steps led to a positive outcome, and seek to repeat that. Backstory, In Real Life, is full of life lessons!

Finding it in the story :: First Mate does a good job of demonstrating a *backstory* on pg 81, but you can also find backstories throughout the chapter on pg 76 - for the monkey slaves, and even for the captain. Norman Nopants' story will be coming up soon!

Exercise 9 :: Connections :: My mother's brother's uncle's dog's previous owner

The whole idea of "six degrees of separation" is grounded in the idea of *connections*. We are only six people away from anyone, it says. Well, that may or may not be true, but the story world is FULL of connections. There are *connections* between people (relationships), to objects, to places, to activities or hobbies.

Why is this important? Because in a well written story, everything has a connection in some way. Or, as we define it, *connections* are all the ways different parts of the story come together. And this is important because all the parts of the story need to connect, relate, and come together. There shouldn't be characters who don't have a connection or function to play (needless to say, there are always background characters, but no main character, or identifiable character, should be superfluous). Anything that is not actually connected to the story should be eliminated, as it will be a distraction from the story.

In Real Life :: *connections* help us link things together, different relationships between characters, actions, objects, and places. We, ourselves, are connected to millions of things, in so many different ways. Understanding these connections is valuable because, like a well-written story, we want to live lives that are whole, cohesive, and meaningful. Knowing what our

Wondertale Press © 2020

connections are gives us boundaries and can help us make decisions. If my connection with my friend is love of British literature, then I will not expect to go to a soccer game with her. That could be forcing a connection that might "break" the story. When we do something with someone, it creates a connection, even if we don't intent it to. And if there are consequences to that, we have to abide by that. We choose things to be in our lives because we have (or want to have) a connection to them, and can eliminate those things that have no connection, or bad connections. We can use this idea to help our children make choices too.

Finding it in the Story :: in this chapter, you'll see not only *connections* between characters (Monkey Mo Mo, Mini Mate, and their sister, Monkey Maya), but also connections (and backstory) as to why/how the monkeys relate to Scurvy Spat. In the previous backstory of First Mate, pg 81, you saw the connection between First Mate Manfred and the Captain. A subtle connection was made between Scurvy Spat and the monkeys when they disobeyed the Captain on pg 56. An even more subtle connection (subtle in that your student might not think of this as a connection, yet it is), would be the connection between their actions and the consequences. Challenge your student to keep a sharp eye out for connections and how they bring the story world together, causing characters to relate or things to happen.

Exercise 10 :: Problems and the Act of Villainy

Now, you have probably heard of setting, and rules, and even significant objects. But the phrase "Act of Villainy" is unique in the story world, and you probably haven't heard of it before. (For those who like to know word origins, this originally came from a Russian story genius named Propp, but we've never seen it used outside his works, until now). We abbreviate this *AoV*. This element in story is VITAL. Without it, a story cannot exist.

The *Act of Villainy* is a problem that causes one or more characters to respond to try to solve it. The story starts with the AoV, and ends when it is resolved. This AoV can be huge (an asteroid is going to hit the earth) or it can be very small (my cat is stuck in a tree). It can be a tangible, real event, or it can be something emotional or intangible. A person might cause it (usually the *villain*). An accident might cause it, nature might cause it, you might cause it. I think all of this is fairly accessible, and your student won't have any problem with this idea. A problem = start of story.

But, there is a catch. Anything that causes one or more characters to respond to try to solve it can be labeled a "problem." We think of problems as negative or unpleasant, but something good can be a problem of AoV, according to our definition. Something that we want to happen, even if it causes us to have to work to solve it, isn't bad, but can be a good problem. Getting a brand new puppy for your birthday is a *good* thing, but it creates a "problem" that you will

Wondertale Press © 2020

have to solve for a long time to come (raising, walking, feeding, picking up after, basically caring for it). But because you want a dog, it's a "good problem."

Another seemingly contradictory idea is that of embracing problems. Many of us want to run away from problems. But there is a whole class of people who want to head straight into them - who see going after and solving a problem as a great thing. These are the *heroes*. Like a doctor looks forward to a broken leg, not because he's glad it's broken, but because he has the ability to fix it, and that's what he loves to do. Or a teacher who loves to teach, and therefore solve the "problem" of ignorance.

Finally, there is one more important aspect to an AoV. There are some problems that no one cares about. No one is bothered by it, no one is trying to solve it. When this is the case, there is no AoV. It is only an Act of Villainy when a character(s) responds to try to solve it. So, the problem of there being no telegram system on Antarctica isn't an AoV. It might be a problem, but there is (best as I can tell) no one trying to solve this problem, and so it is not an AoV. There is no story coming out of it.

In Real Life :: our lives are full of problems, both good and bad. Some of these are AoV's, and we (or others) actively seek to solve them. Everyone being hungry for dinner is a problem that people want solved, and often mom is the hero who solves it. But a sock fell behind the washer might be a problem that no one even recognizes! A key part of life is learning to identify the problems, and their solutions, and whether or not we are the one who is meant to solve them, whether we need to ask for help in solving them, or whether we are simply to let them go, because they are, in fact, someone else's problem. Helping our students to see this can free them to be heroes, or to get the help they need, or simply to stay focused on the problems that are theirs, instead of taking on problems they can't or shouldn't solve. I encourage you to read the story portion on page 112. Captain Yogger entering the room in such a manner that Scurvy Spat is scared creates a problem for Spat. When the Captain leaves, the problem is over. But without thinking about it, there were other things that *seemed* like they could have been the problem. Sometimes we don't know what the problem is, and so we don't know what we need to solve. Spending time with your child identifying real problems and their real solutions (this is almost always easier done in hindsight) can help them mature and grow and become more adept at being a hero, in the "story" of their own lives, and in the lives of others.

Finding it in the Story :: reread the story section on pages 111-112. This is the best (most straightforward) example of an AoV in the entire book - but it is *not* what the AoV for the entire story is. Can your student find it as they read? Several smaller AoV's are :: Scurvy Spat wakes up in the ocean and onto a pirate ship; Yogger has such bad breath; the monkeys have been taken as slaves. Have your student think back to the story they've already read, and find as many "problems" that the story then solves as they can. And as they continue reading, figure

Wondertale Press © 2020

out what new problems arise. But when they get to the last page - then you can ask them what the AoV for the entire story is. They'll know!

Exercise 11 & 12 :: Characterizations :: Show, don't tell

Characterizations describe things. These descriptions give details that define who or what a character is.

Your student has already learned how to describe things, in detail, in the being specific, setting, and significance exercises (among others). They should be getting stronger at being descriptive when they are telling about something. We are simply taking those skills and muscles and applying them to the characters in the story. As always, the exercises are designed to slowly build towards the student having lots of different aspects of a character with which to identify them - physical traits, details, activities they like, their personality, skills and experiences they've had, relationships, clothing style, even voice.

One way that you can help your child in this section is to make sure they understand the concept of "show, don't tell." On page 131, we *tell* them that a character "loves school." Then we list 7 characterizations that *show* by description that they love school. This is such an important concept that we give them lots of opportunities to practice as the exercise finishes. Take a moment to glance over their shoulders and make sure they understand. (Remember, these don't have to be realistic characterizations - if your student wants to be silly or bizarre, that's okay - but they should be specific descriptions that demonstrate the given characteristic. For example, if one of the characterizations that we "tell" is *dances* - showing it might include "hops up on a bus and does the Macarena" - that's nuts, but it does, in fact *show* the thing we want to show. Even if we don't recommend actually trying this at home.)

In Real Life :: This one is fun to do around the dinner table or when you are driving in the car. We all, when we are talking, do a lot of "telling." So try to catch each other "telling" and then rework it to "show" what you want to say. For example, say your son says, "sister was in a bad mood today." Oh - caught you - show me! "Sister slammed the door today every time I yelled down to the kitchen today. She also took my socks and threw them at me because she said they stunk up the hallway." Doing this, even just a few times, really helps them solidify what they are learning. It also can help teach us to read the clues that people/situations are giving us. Try to find subtle examples of this. One way is to look for the "shows" and then do a "tell," like this: you are at a fast food restaurant, and it is crazy busy. The manager is clearly at the front counter, asking how the order is going of a customer, patting the back of the employee, and telling the guy making the burgers that they are doing a good job. That's the show. The tell? "Boy, that manager really cares about his people." While we don't want to be

Wondertale Press © 2020

reading into things all the time, the ability to see how actions are characterizations of a person helps us to get to know others (and maybe see something about ourselves too).

Finding it in the Story :: pg 121 :: there are numerous descriptions of each individual monkey - how they look, how they act, and how they interact. (You can easily see more in the section about Yogger in the opening chapters, and in the sections that describe Mini Mate, Monkey Mo Mo, and Norman Nopants, to name a few). Each of these very specific descriptions about the monkeys are a result of careful Character Design.

Exercise 13 :: Character Values :: What ye be Valuin'?

You might think that this is very similar to Exercise #4 on *values*, and you'd be right. *Character values* are things that are valuable to characters, things a particular character believes to be important, worthwhile, or useful. If your student went through the *values* exercise without trouble, or if the persevered and got it in the end, then this chapter will be no problem. If they struggled, consider going back, now, and reviewing it again, as it does form the basis for this chapter. A key point is that there are not right or wrong values - *character values* are simply the things a particular character does indeed value. They might value honesty, or money, or even cheating, depending on who they are, what they want, and how they go about getting it.

Values are another aspect of story where it is best to show, and not tell. Saying, "Bilbo valued food" is rather boring, and actually doesn't tell us much, but showing his expansive pantry and the feasts he holds tells the reader in a way that demonstrates the value vividly. Another way to show a *character value* is to have the character make choices, because those choices will reveal their values. These choices are the actions that a character takes. Because the story hinges on there being a *plot* (the series of events and actions that occur during the story), you can help your student see that values are important because they prompt the characters to take actions, which move the story forward.

When there are opposing values in a story, this creates conflict. You can easily see this in your family. When one child values quiet for study, while another values studying to loud rock music, there is conflict. Since conflict is essential for story, having characters with opposing values provides for the problems and actions that are the essence of story. In general, a story is more interesting when there are characters who are different from one another, and one way to do this is to have differences on a single value. The interactions and conflicts that occur when our characters have unique and strong values make for great storytelling.

In Real Life :: This is one of those important concepts that has real value In Real Life. Understanding this concept of values - not only that each person has them, but that we can

Wondertale Press © 2020

have them in different degrees and in different ways, can help each of us, but especially children, realize why there is conflict (or peace), why someone behaves or reacts they way that they do. In the instance above, I mentioned two students who both value studying, but one values studying in quiet, and the other studying with loud music. This will, of course, create conflict. Understanding that they are each trying to study, each one wants to get their work done in the way that best helps them do that, can encourage them to find a solution together - both might need to wear headphones, or choose different rooms to study in. As with so many different elements of story, identifying what they are and how they operate in the "story" of life can bring so much understanding to each of us. So have your student spend some time this week looking at the choices people are making, and see if they can discern the values that underlie those choices. Of course, this is best when we apply it to ourselves, and can see more clearly what we really value (which is, sometimes, different from what we say we value). As Captain Yogger asks, "What ye be valuin', Spat?" so we can help our children begin to answer that question for themselves.

Finding it in the Story :: This is another chapter where Yogger makes the concept of Character Values obvious - they value bananas over the captain, bananas over the treasure. A more subtle value is shown by Mini Mate, who adds wooden planks to his legs to walk more like Yogger. It can't be comfortable or fun, but he values the Captain so much that he wants to be like him and takes actions to do so (albeit somewhat foolish actions). Similarly, the chapter where the monkeys eat Yogger's jelly bean and are so stinky, but don't care how that affects the other monkeys, is a demonstration of their own values being in conflict with others.

Exercise 14 :: The Line Between Light and Dark :: Things aren't always what they seem

Just as the characters in a story can have different takes on a specific *value*, each one responding in a different way, they will also all have different responses to the Act of Villainy. For all characters, the AoV becomes a dividing line that separates them into two different sides. We call this the *Line between Light and Dark*. On the *Light* side are the group of characters who consider the AoV as a problem to be liquidated (resolved). On the *Dark* side are the group of characters who consider the AoV to be a good thing, something they will support and promote (maybe even cause).

One thing to help your student understand is that while many times it is the "good" characters that are on the side of Light, and "bad" characters who are on the side of Dark, the real way to determine whether they are on the light or dark side is what their perspective is on the the AoV. A good example of this is Shrek - he is an ogre (traditionally a "bad" character) who is against the AoV (Farquad's putting all the fairytale characters into his swamp) (disclaimer: that was just one simple AoV in this story - there are bigger and more significant ones, but that one

Wondertale Press © 2020

made my point). Another good example of this "confusion" of a bad character being on the side of *light* is Professor Snape in the Harry Potter series. Throughout the series, he appears to be a bad character with evil intent. It is only in hindsight that he is revealed to have been on the side of Light, seeking to actively liquidate the AoV. Here's a generic example: the AoV is that someone stole a huge and costly diamond ring. The detectives want to find it (they are clearly good, clearly on the side of *light*). There is also a petty thief (a "bad" character) who swears and drinks and is known to steal whenever he can. But he hears that there is a reward for whoever returns the ring. So he manages to find it and steal lit back, and bring it to the detectives, and collects his reward. Though he was a "bad" character, and acting purely out of selfish motives, he is on the side of *light* because he wanted to resolve the AoV.

Of course, he's the perfect example of how a character isn't just pure *light* or *dark*, but can be in the shadows. This petty thief if really in the light shadows, close to the diving line, but he is on the side of light. The one who stole the diamond in the first place would be pure dark. Make sure you student recognizes these distinctions, because a good story has characters that fall in different places on the line, bringing balance and interest to the story.

In Real Life :: this is so very true in our real lives, in our real selves. Sometimes, we want and actively pursue liquidating the AoVs in our life and the lives of those around us. Sometimes we *cause* the AoV, and are on the side of dark. Most often, we are somewhere in the shadows. Being able to understand and recognize this gives us eyes to see ourselves and others more clearly - and sometimes, it's the impetus to both seeking to change and to giving grace.

Finding it in the Story :: Where last chapter the element was pretty obvious, in this one, it is more subtle, until you get to page 158. But think about the Gran Brintish vs the Captain - how does each side view monkey slavery? Or think about how the different monkeys view eating bananas vs going after the treasure. Or obeying the captain vs doing what they want (this was in the chapter about swabbing the deck). Challenge your student to look back and then to pay attention moving forward, and keep looking for areas of *light* and *dark*. Also pay close attention to the variations of light and dark - how most monkeys are not pure dark or pure light. Ask your student how Scurvy Spat (both as the written character and as themselves) feels about certain things that happen in the story - they will be on the scale between light, light shadows, the dark shadows, and dark.

Exercise 15 :: Mystery :: A Whodunnit isn't the only Mystery

We all know that when we read a Sherlock Holmes, Agatha Christy, and PD James novel, the question will be: Whodunnit? These novels are mysteries from the moment we pick up the cover. But did you know that *mystery* is a valuable element of any story? It is not an essential

Wondertale Press © 2020

component; you can write a very compelling story without *mystery*, but it will make any story more gripping by capturing our attention and keeping us engaged.

As your child continues to learn about the different elements of story, there are some that are essential (you must have an Act of Villainy, for example), while others are purely optional. *Mystery* is one of these non-essentials. And mystery doesn't have to mean that the aim of the plot it to answer whodunnit? Mystery is that intangible (hence, mysterious) something that starts the author wondering and thinking, and then keeps the reader reading on and on, until everything is made clear.

Anything in a story - any of the elements we have learned - can be a source of mystery. Think unexpected. As your student works through this section of the workbook, be especially open to the unexplainable, unexpected, unbelievable ideas with which they come up. This is to be expected, and let them find the crazy mysteries that are inside them as they mindstorm their way through the exercise. Encourage them to think outside the box. It's okay if they "know" that it wouldn't work within a real story. They might be right AND they can do that here. This is a space for trying out the mysterious and seeing what sticks and what doesn't. Give them space, and help them give themselves space to be unexpected here.

Finally, the end of the exercise focuses on revealing the answers and foreshadowing. These are key elements to mystery. Note that in the story chapter prior to this exercise, none of the answers are revealed, but you might sense some foreshadowing. Have your student go back and note what might be foreshadowing (they could even take a stab at guessing *what* if foreshadows). Then come back in a few chapters and see if they were right.

In Real Life :: These key elements are also valuable in other areas of storytelling and life, where you might least expect it. My daughter was in a Mock Trial this year, and the ability to take something mysterious (did she do it? Is the witness trustworthy? How did it happen?), find the answers, and present them in a way that is most compelling to the jury (by careful foreshadowing in the opening statement and through questions and the dramatic reveal during questioning, and closing argument) was THE key to the team who won the trial. Story is marvelous this way, something that isn't just for "creative writing" class or writers, but for many different career paths!

Finding it in the Story :: This is another obvious one in the chapter - who is this mysterious Monkey M? Where are they from? Why are they there? But there are other, slighter mysteries - why does Yogger allow him aboard? Why does he take him on as a Monkey Mate as he does? Is it a good decision?

Exercise 16 :: Character Contradictions :: I want it! No I don't!

Wondertale Press © 2020

My daughter has a friend in her class who LOVES basketball. He watches it on TV, plays pick up games with his dad and brothers at the local park, and plays for the local rec league. This friend is also the shortest person in her class by a good half foot. He isn't likely to ever play basketball on a high school team, much less professionally. But he loves basketball. THIS, parents, is a *character contradiction*. Many of us have things about us that suggest one thing, but we feel another. We may write pages and pages of stories, but never show them to anyone. Or love ice cream but be allergic to dairy. Or be a strong teenage boy who cries at kleenex commercials. Or your super sweet art teacher who likes to drive race cars on the weekend.

Contradictions are part of what make characters interesting. You'll note that this comes right after the story element of *mystery*, and that's no surprise. It's a little mysterious to think about how certain *character contradictions* can exist, or where they came from. We might need to learn more about a character's backstory to understand how certain contradictions came to be. Contradictions may come about because we value two different things at the same time. Which side of me comes out will depend on what I want most at any given time, and this is true of my characters in a story, too. So this element of *character contradictions* will lead right into *character desires* (what do we want?), which in turn leads into the *story engine* as you will quickly see.

In Real Life :: To make this section come alive, have your student not only go through the previous chapters of the story and search for areas where a single character displays contradictions (in behavior, in desires, in actions - you can check out the "Finding it in the Story" section for more details). But even better is to spend a day or two looking for this reality in ourselves and the people around us, or the stories around us. Take your favorite movie, and look for these character contradictions (think of Bilbo Baggins - he was a ground dwelling hobbit who also wanted to go on an adventure - which desire won out?). It's a marvelous thing - much of what is "taught" in a creative subject is just growing our awareness muscles, and then putting what we see to use. Knowing these contradictions exist can help each of us, but especially middle schoolers become aware and understand the internal conflicts they feel and wrestle with. This, in turn, can help them make decisions about how to respond to those feelings and wrestlings, which is a very good thing.

Finding it in the Story :: pg 178 :: the biggest contradiction in this section is the naughty monkeys' desire for the jelly bean versus their desire to be on LeFossa's crew. They also desire to sleep in the room, but do not want to risk First Mate's (or Yogger's) punishment. Earlier in the book we witnessed Monkey Maya who feared Scurvy Spat but desired the food (pg 86-7).

Exercise 17 :: Character Desire :: What do we really want?

Wondertale Press © 2020

Desires should be simple. What do we want? But have you ever asked a child what they want to eat at a restaurant? Or spent an hour with a group of friends trying to decide which movie to rent? What do we want? Really want? *Desires* are simple as a concept, but more complex as you dive in.

When a baby is little, the mother has to continually use clues to understand what the baby wants - are they hungry? Wet? Tired? Needing a snuggle? As the baby grows and becomes more communicative, the mothers still has to use her knowledge of her child to know what they really want. They may be saying "I want to stay up later," but their yawns or meltdowns tell differently. Or they may say, "I want to learn to ride a bike," but their unwillingness to go outside and get the bike out of the garage shows that to be a weak desire. Or they may say, "I'm not hungry" and then eat the entire pizza ...

Desires are important in story, and in life. There are often things about us - our *characterizations* - that lead to desires. Being an only child might lead to the desire to have time with friends. That same reality might lead another character to desire to live alone in a lighthouse. Based on these desires, the two characters will DO drastically different things. This takes us to another key characteristic of *desires* - they lead to actions. Real desires lead to real actions. Expressed desires do not necessarily lead to real actions. Does that make sense?

Taking an example from my own life - a few months ago I said that I want to get better at drawing. This led me to buy a "how to draw" book. My *desire* led to an *action*, but not the actual fulfillment of my desire. And here we are, months later, and I have only done 2 lessons. How can this be? How can desire that leads to action still not fulfill the desire? Take a peek back at *character contradictions* - I had opposing desires. One was to get better at drawing, and I did want this enough to get the book. But when my time was at stake, other things became more pressing/important, and those pushed out my actions towards fulfilling the desire to draw. I have to look honestly at those other things, and determine if I want them to be stronger desires (even if they are hidden), and if not, to set them aside and return to my drawing book.

In Real Life :: Why do I share all this? Because just like story characters, we all struggle with this In Real Life, particularly middle schoolers. There are all kinds of *desires* they have, and each one pushes and shoves to have its way. Knowing this, seeing it in action in stories and in life, can help us make choices that expose our truest desires and give us the courage to either change them or walk more boldly toward them. This is true for our story characters. Bilbo Baggins desired both the comforts of his little hobbit home AND to go on an adventure. In the end, his desire for adventure was stronger and that produced the action of *The Hobbit*. This is true for our personal stories too. I desired to be better at drawing AND to read a book at the end of the day when I was tired from work. In the end, my desire to read a book won out. Being

Wondertale Press © 2020

able to see that, I can now assess if that was the choice I really want, or if I will prioritize my desires differently, and get back to drawing. Who knows? That's the next part of my own story, and it's still being written.

As a parent, you are in a unique position to see all these different desires in your children, and help them to make choices and move forward in action. And their actions will help you see what their real desires are, and that will help you know and parent your children better. Story is a powerful thing!

Finding it in the Story :: pg 191 :: the monkeys' desires are seen through the golden telescope (a good example of a *significant object*), and then the following story chapter continues to demonstrate (pg 211-13) what they are willing to DO because of that desire.

Exercise 17 :: Dramatic Desires :: Specific Character Desires

Partway through the section on *character desires* we come to a very, very important concept in *A Pirate's Guide*. We have already seen how characters (people!) all have desires. These desires lead us to actions. I shared how I had a desire to get better at drawing, and so I purchased a how to draw book. The next action would be to do the lessons and get better at drawing. But how would I know when I had "gotten better" at drawing? When would I have achieved the object of my desire? At the end of the lessons? At the end of several books? After filling a sketchpad? When my dad said I was an artist? When I sold a sketch? How will I know when I've done it?

Enter *dramatic desires*. These are desires that are specific, very specific. A *dramatic desire* is a desire that can be achieved because it has a fixed finish line. You know when a dramatic desire has been accomplished.

So in my example, I need to know what my *dramatic desire* is. My general desire is to get better at drawing. But that has no end, one can always improve. I cannot accomplish that. But if I become very specific, my dramatic desire is to get better at drawing until I can hang a sketch at the local art gallery, I know that I am not done until my sketch is on the wall. Or if my dramatic desire is a bit easier (dramatic doesn't mean hard, it just means specific and completable), and it is to finish the how to draw book, then I know that I have accomplished my desire the day I finish the last lesson. Knowing what the specific, *dramatic desire* is allows me to know when I've crossed the finish line, because I have defined the finish line.

In story, this means giving characters desires that are specific, and the reader will know when they've been achieved. It gives the writer (your student) an understanding of what will need to happen (the actions, or plot) for the desire to be fulfilled. Desires give the characters

Wondertale Press © 2020

motivation to act in ways that "drive" the story, much like the engine in a car enables the car to move. As you will soon see, these *character desires* are part of what we call the *story engine* - what drives the story forward.

In Real Life :: In Real Life, *dramatic desires* are vital for helping us achieve our goals. If your student is stuck, they may need help defining their desires (dreams, wishes, hopes) more specifically, and then seeing the steps that it will take to cross the finish line. Having a very concrete desire ("I want to run a 10K at the end of the summer") gives very clear direction to the steps and timing it will take to get there. "I want to be more physically fit" is vague enough that, day by day, you can put it off and by the end of summer, wonder why you didn't get anywhere. To make this real to your student, ask them to set a goal for this week (any goal, though if that is too big for them, ask them to set a goal about cleaning their room, or getting some exercise, relating to friends, or working on *A Pirate's Guide*). Then ask them how they will know that it has been accomplished - work with them to create a *dramatic desire* and establish what defines its completion. Of course, depending on your child, they may then need help setting specific steps to get there, or need to be gently reminded, or incentivized to see it through. Encourage your children (and take courage yourself!) to set dramatic desires, and then take the steps to cross that finish line! (Hint: you might need some *stakes* or a *ticking clock* to help you get there, because you are human ... and so are story characters. Read on.)

Finding it in the Story :: Look for *dramatic desires*. Sometimes they are hard to know until the story is complete, but one would be Yogger's desire to find the magical jelly bean grove (that's a clear desire with an obvious finishing point). The stinky monkeys have a *dramatic desire* to be allowed to sleep inside again.

Exercise 17 :: Stakes in a story :: Do I have to?

Your student is writing their story - or living their life - and they've identified a dramatic desire. They want to run a 10K by the end of summer. That gives them a *dramatic desire* and a finish line (see what I did there? Total accident, but it works). But to write this story, or live this out In Real Life, we need to know what the *stakes* are for the character. What happens if they fail? What will happen if they don't run a 10K by the end of summer?

The *stakes* are what is at risk if the character doesn't achieve their desire. In the 10K example, they are probably not big stakes, though they could be. Maybe not running the 10K by the end of summer just means they will be lazier and not as fit. Maybe it means they will miss running a race with their friends. Maybe they put a $100 bet with a friend that they would, and they'd lose out on $100. Or maybe they have been contacted by a talking beast, and if they don't run the race, the talking beasts will take over the world. Different stakes, different stories.

Wondertale Press © 2020

Knowing the *stakes* in the story will direct how the story is told, what the story is about.

In Real Life :: As an aside, as a parent, knowing the *stakes* that are motivating your child will help you know how best to help them. If they made a $100 bet, you might need to have a conversation about betting, or wasting money. If their stake was "my older brother ran a 10K at my age and won the race, and if I don't at least run the race, I will be made fun of or feel terrible," then you might have some emotional work to do to help them be their own person, or deal with sibling rivalry. If their stake is "I want to do this because I am planning on joining cross country and it's a lot of work and this will get me in shape" then you know how to encourage and support them. Knowing the *stakes* in reality and in our children's minds helps us to love and care for them the best ways we can.

Finding it in the Story :: the stakes are not immediately apparent in the chapter right before this - if the monkeys don't see it the island, it means they don't want it and potentially won't reach the island/treasure. But you can see the stakes in other sections of the story - for Yogger, the stakes are that he won't find the beans and his breath will continue to be bad (or so it would seem). If the monkeys don't want to do the work Yogger has for them, they will have to leave the ship (and not learn story). Encourage your student to keep their eyes peeled for more evidence of "stakes" in the coming chapters (and when they find them, they can send them in to me!).

Exercise 17 :: Ticking Clock :: Why isn't my story moving forward?

You are in your story world, telling your story, (or reading your child's story ideas) when suddenly, you are starting to feel a bit bored by it. Or it feels like it's taking forever to get on with it. What's going on? Why isn't the story moving forward? Your student's story has characters, those characters have *desires* (hopefully *dramatic desires*), and the plot is moving forward. Slowly. And not really getting there. Why?

It sounds like the story might be missing a valuable element - the *ticking clock*. Take a moment, and sit still, and listen. Can you hear a clock ticking? Not so much anymore (though I do have a really loud clicking decorative clock in my library, which I either find comforting, tick-tock-tick-tock, or totally annoying, Tick-TOck-TICk-TOCK!), but when you do, a sense of timeliness pervades. A happy ticking clock is the countdown to New Year's, or a scary one could be a ticking countdown on a bomb. Whatever it is, knowing that the time is short and when it's up, it's UP, develops a sense of movement and the need to press on.

In a story, a *ticking clock* is very specifically the pressure that is on a character to accomplish their desire before time runs out. This means that the character NEEDS to act before the time runs out. This pressure gives the character motivation to act and generally drives a story

Wondertale Press © 2020

forward. Sometimes, as your student is working on a story, they might need a bit of help seeing the need for a ticking clock, and finding what it is that gives their character motivation to move forward. Of course, this is where you'd want to help them make sure that their characters have a *dramatic* desire (exercise #17 in *A Pirate's Guide*), and once they do, that there is some kind of ticking clock to help them achieve it.

In Real Life :: And, to be honest, we all need a little ticking clock in our lives. "You can't eat your ice cream until your dinner is done" is one simple example. "I can't check my social media until the kids are in bed" is another. "I want to run a 10K at the end of the summer" gives you a time frame for doing that couch to 10K routine. So what motivates you? Your student? Maybe a little ticking clock can help everyone move forward!

Finding it in the Story :: the clock in this chapter is simply that they need to see it before they get to the island.

Exercise 18 :: Story Engine :: What makes this story go?

This exercise, to me, is kind of a sum up of the previous few. In a nutshell, the *story engine*, like a car engine, is the thing that makes the story go. We define the *story engine* as the characters: character are the engine of every story. And we have seen this in the previous exercises and story chapters. Without the characters, nothing will happen. Without a character, there is no *Act of Villainy*, because the AoV requires someone to see it as such. And characters have *character desires*, and those desires lead the characters to act, and those actions create the *plot*, which allows the characters to solve the AoV and finish the story. Without the characters, the story doesn't go anywhere. The choices a character makes (based on who they are and what they want and what they do) provide fuel for the *story engine*.

I won't spend long on this. First Mate Manfred will lead your student through various mindstorming exercises to drive home the point - what a character wants leads them to act; a character's actions reveal their desires; conflicting desires (within or among characters) leads to conflict; and conflict is a great fuel for the story engine.

Look back at the previous chapter. Certain monkeys haven't seen the island through the golden telescope, and they don't care (there is no AoV for them), and they just carry on. Others are straining to see the island, because that is their desire. Others have seen the island, desire to get there, and so are down in the hold, rowing to get there faster. Each of these characters is moving the story forward in a different way - without these characters, there is no movement (no engine) for the story.

Wondertale Press © 2020

Because characters (and their choices) are the *story engine*, knowing more about the different characters and the roles they play, the functions they fill, is the next thing.

In Real Life :: consider the *story engine* In Real Life to be the accumulation of our own characterizations, desires, choices, and actions. Its what is in us that makes us act and move forward in our own stories. Without *us*, our story doesn't happen. Using these different elements of us, and how they are revealed in our actions, allows us to see what story we are really telling, and make choices as to where the story will go next.

Finding it in the Story :: view this less in terms of the previous chapter (though your student can point to the monkeys who can see the island, and how that prompts them to certain responses, versus those who cannot), and more in terms of life and story in general. What are the choices that characters in the story are making (to obey the captain, to swab the deck, to eat the banana) that cause the story to move forward in some way?

Exercise 19-22 :: Character Functions

Very briefly, since there are no exercises with this, and it's pretty self-explanatory, *character functions* describe the role (or function) a character plays in a story. It is determined by who they are (their *characterizations*), what they want (their *desires*), the choices they make (*story engine*), and the actions they take (*plot*). A character's function may change throughout the story, but an author needs to understand the role they play either in the story as a whole, or in a specific part of a story.

There are 8 main character roles in any given story. Not every story will have all of them, stories may have several characters that fill a certain function, and characters may fill more than one function within the story, or at different parts of the story. Here are the different roles :: Villain, Princess, Hero, Dispatcher, Donor, Magical Agent, Helper, and King. Encourage your student to keep an open mind as they learn about each role - a princess isn't necessarily a "princess," and a hero isn't necessarily just the main character. These are new terms with very specific definitions, so have them read on, and really gain an understanding of their function, their purpose in the story, as it will help them develop characters that are rich not only because they have done a good job giving them characteristics and desires that are specific, but also because they fulfill something essential in the story.

In Real Life :: we fill these same functions in life, so, as you learn about each function, think about times when you have operated in that role, and help your student to find examples of this In Real Life. It can be in simple things, like making dinner (if the AoV is "everyone is hungry and its past dinnertime," think of all the "characters" in your family story, and how they

Wondertale Press © 2020

responded.) Their actions will determine which functions they took. This will make much more sense as you learn the functions and put them into practice.

Finding it in the Story :: read on into the next exercises!

Exercise 19 :: Villain :: Who's the bad guy?

Devious music, a long handled mustache, a black cape. All these are classic symbols of a story villain. But in *A Pirate's Guide*, princesses, heroes, and villains aren't simply the pretty girl, the young strong knight, and the evil step-mother. They have specific functions in the story - which means that the handsome knight who is coming to rescue the princess, only to sell her to the evil step-mother *looks* like a hero (until the end), but is actually a villain. Going through the exercises and teaching will quickly help your student see how these different roles work.

The *villain* is the character (or thing) that is on the side of the Act of Villainy. Remember, the AoV is what starts the story, and solving the AoV ends the story. The villain may (or may not) be the cause of the AoV. If the AoV is the stealing of the princess, the villain may be the one who stole her, or he may simply be another character that is on the side of her being stolen.

The *villain* sees the AoV as a good thing. This is often a matter of perspective. And here we run into how these concepts can apply In Real Life. The student is asked to identify the villain in the exercise. Here is one example: "Because we didn't have the proper permits to camp in the national park, the police officer forced my family to leave." Who is the villain? Is it the police officer, who forced my family to leave? Is it the family, who, by not having a permit, forced the police officer to force them to leave? Is it the parent who neglected to get the permit? Is it the park service for creating a park that required permits? Your perspective will determine who you perceive the villain to be.

Remember, the key is that the *villain* is the one who supports the AoV. They either made it happen, or want it to continue. They are NOT trying to solve the problem, or resolve the story. (True in story, true in life).

In Real Life :: When you require your children to finish their homework before going out to play, who is the villain? The problem is that the homework isn't done, and it must be done before play. (AoV = unfinished homework). To you, the student may be the villain, since they aren't finishing their homework as required. To the student, they may see you as the villain, the one who has a requirement they don't want to meet. Or they may see the homework as the villain. Or the teacher that assigned it. Understanding their perspective, and helping them to understand yours, will help determine what actions you both take, and this in turn will determine how this story ends. I find this somewhat of a convicting function, because you don't

Wondertale Press © 2020

have to be a "bad guy" to be a villain. You can, in one sense, simply not choose to do something about an AoV that you see - this plays into the "dark shadows" portion of *light and dark*. Or you might be perpetuating a problem because you aren't aware it is a problem for someone, and inadvertently you become a villain in their story. Being aware of these functions, and what your response is, can make you more aware of who you are in the story of life around you.

Finding it in the Story :: pg 225 :: the villain is the kraken. You might ask your student to think back to some other parts of the story and makes some guesses as to who else has acted, even in just one short scene, as a villain. As they come to understand the other characters more, they will be able to see if they were right or not.

Exercise 19 :: Princess :: Does the Princess have to wear a tiara?

Ah, the fairy tale princess. Now, before your student gags quietly in the corner over this stereotype, this is NOT what we are talking about. The princess may be, but often isn't, an actual princess. She doesn't have to be female. And she might not even be a character. Really?

Really. The *princess* is the character or thing that is being fought over. It is something that is desired - it performs the *function* of being the thing in the story that is desired or needs to be saved. It could be magic jelly beans. It could be sea turtles. It could be a monkey slave. It could be the shire or Middle Earth. It could be the Ark of the Covenant. It might be a princess. Truly, the *princess* can be anything that someone in the story wants, or needs saving in some way. This opens it wide up!

How does this character or thing become the princess? They might be stolen or lost, or under threat of harm. This might be from the *villain*, or it may have happened before the story even starts. Whenever the danger occurs to the princess, it causes other characters to *desire* to take actions to rescue or protect her.

In Real Life :: Sometimes in a story, as in life, something happens. A virus strikes the world. When this *act of villainy* occurs, any number of people might become the *princess* :: the elderly, the immune-compromised, small businesses, first responders, friendships, political position, airlines. All of these are possible princesses, and the author's job is to make the choices necessary to move the story forward. Each of those potential princesses would have different characters who would desire to protect or save her.

Throughout these exercises on character, your student will be asked to identify who different characters might be, based on how they view what AoV is presented. It is a marvelous lesson in perspective, and I encourage you to help your student see this very aspect of it. Because as

Wondertale Press © 2020

valuable as it is to be able to identify the *villain* or the *princess*, being able to see the same AoV from different perspectives, to understand *why* one character reacts they way that they do, is of incredible value in life. So take some time and investigate the problems, big and small, that you see around you. Talk through how one person might see it as a problem, and another might not, and why. Ask who or what needs saving. Ask who might want to solve the problem and how they might go about doing it, and you are on your way to creating a storyteller who lives a compassionate life.

Finding it in the Story :: pg 225 :: the princess is the Kanadien ship and all the people on it. (The really astute student might even recognize that Meataloaf becomes the princess when the kraken swallows him - at that moment, there is a new AoV, and Meataloaf needs rescuing).

Exercise 20 :: Hero :: To the Rescue!

The *hero*! Bold and true, ready to rescue the princess! But, as with the *princess*, the *hero* isn't necessarily the stereotype that we imagine, though they certainly might be. The *hero* is a character/thing that liquidates the Act of Villainy. Think of liquidating as solving, removing, fixing ... whatever it takes to take resolve the AoV. In most stories, this will be the main character, and the story itself is all about the main character being the hero who eliminates the AoV. But, and this is important, the hero is whichever character, big or small, likely or not, who fulfills the function of liquidating the AoV.

There are several types of heroes. The *Seeker Hero* is one who resolves the AoV for someone else. The *Victim Hero* resolves the AoV that affects themselves. And the *False Hero* is the one who appears to be the hero - through the story we think that they are going to solve the problem, and they may act like a hero, and they may desire and try to resolve the AoV - but if they are not the one who liquidates the AoV, then they aren't actually the hero, even if they are the main character. (Just a reminder, these terms all refer to the actual function a character has in a story, not the stereotypical view we have of these character in fairytales).

Help your student understand these various types of heroes by thinking through their favorite stories (books, tv shows, movies, songs, video games) or any problem that they already know how it was solved, and asking first what the problem (AoV) was, and then who solved it, and, based on whether it was for themselves or another, they were a *seeker* or *victim hero*. And spend some time searching for the *false hero*. These can be harder to find (let them read through the next chapter of the story to see on their own that we've already introduced them to a false hero).

In Real Life :: This concept of what a true hero does, and the difference between someone who wants to help but fails, wants to help others, or wants to help themselves, is important in

Wondertale Press © 2020

life as well as in story. This will help a student look at those around them, those who claim to be a hero in some way, and assess, are they actually a hero? Who are they rescuing? What problem are they solving? Are they actually solving a problem? These are important questions to ask about others, and also about ourselves. So often the things we do have the appearance of being for others (seeker hero), but actually are there to solve a problem for ourselves. Or we think we are solving the problem but aren't able to (take courage! We may be a *helper* and not realize it). These aren't necessarily bad things, but it is a good thing to be aware and understand what really is.

Finding it In Real Life :: pg 225 :: the hero appears to be Meataloaf. Then on pg. 232, we see that it appears that the Captain is about to become the *hero* - he desires to rescue the *princess* of the ship. Ask your student, which characters are a seeker or victim hero, and which is a false hero? (Yogger is a seeker hero, Meataloaf ends up being a false hero).

Exercise 20 :: Dispatcher :: Let the Hero know

The *dispatcher* is the character/thing that informs the *hero* that there is a problem to be solved. I think this is very straightforward, and the exercise leads the student through the concept very nicely.

In Real Life :: If you are reading this, you are by definition a parent or teacher or a parent-teacher, and that means that you have the desire to be the *hero* for someone. You want to help your student overcome the obstacles to learning, and prepare and educate them. But what happens if you don't know there is a problem? When I was homeschooling 3 at once, it was fairly common for kiddo number one to come running in to where I was with number two, to tell me that the third was struggling with math. Without them telling me, I might have just gone on reading to #2, and #3 might have gotten more and more in the weeds with arithmetic. Not a super exciting AoV, but a real one to that #3, who was, in this case, the *princess* who needed a *hero* to rescue them from the (in their eyes) *villain* of math (or perhaps, ironically, me for assigning it). Child #1 played the very important role of *dispatcher*.

Who acts as the *dispatcher* in your child's story or life? Have them think of a specific problem they have, and who helped solve it. How did that person know to help solve it? The *dispatcher* could be many different people, and could even be the hero themselves (say, a friend who saw they were sad and themselves did something about it). But often it is a third person or thing that sees or finds out about an AoV, and lets someone know who then decides to solve the problem, and becomes the *hero*. Help them also see the moments when they were a *dispatcher* (and feel free to dispel any sense that tattling is, in fact dispatching, which it is, in fact, not). This is a valuable role in a story, a valuable role for those who are in need of a hero, and for those who want to be a hero, but don't know where the problem is.

Wondertale Press © 2020

Finding it in the Story :: pg 232 :: this is an easy one. Scurvy Spat acts as the *dispatcher* in alerting the Captain, soon to be the *hero* of the *princess* of the Kanadien ship. Again, keep checking throughout the story for these kinds of mini-stories, and you'll find lots of these character function/roles being played out (and help your student note that individual characters might have different functions in different mini-stories).

Exercise 21 :: Donor and Magical Agent :: What the World Needs Now

This is one of my favorite sections, because there is so much creativity that can happen here! Simply put, the *donor* is the character/thing that connects the *hero* to the *magical agent*. The *magical agent* is the character/thing that is needed to liquidate (resolve) the *Act of Villainy*. So the AoV happens in the story, causing a problem, involving a *princess*. The *villain* either caused the problem and/or wants to keep it that way. The *dispatcher* alerts the *hero* to the AoV, and the *hero* decides to do something about it. But how? He needs a *donor* to provide him with the *magical agent* which is the very thing he needs to defeat the *villain* and/or solve the *AoV*. Simple enough, right? The *magical agent* is something the hero must have in order to stop the villain/AoV. If they try without it, they will lose. The *donor* is the character or thing that connects the *hero* and the *magical agent*.

The exercises do not dwell long on this section, because it tends to be something that happens pretty naturally in a story. Make sure your student is aware that these functions - *donor* and *magical agent* - may be embedded in characters or things already in their story. Or it may be something totally unexpected, such as the donor being "three pizzas" that give the hero "fire in her belly" (pg 245) which she uses to burp and defeat the knight. The hero might have some knowledge they need, given to them by a donor long ago in school. This book is a *donor*, of sorts, giving your student the *magical agent* of storytelling grammar, which they may hopefully use to defeat some villain someday.

In Real Life :: Again, help them think outside the box, and help them spend some time talking about these functions in their favorite stories or in their real life. Truly, this is one of the best ways to really get to know and identify and utilize these story elements!

Finding it in the Story :: pg 247 :: the exercise itself leads the student through this one. The *donor* is the volume that First Mate Manfred reads from, and the *magical agent* is the knowledge in the volume that tells LeFossa which kind of kraken it is, and how to defeat it.

Exercise 22 :: Helper and King :: A little Help from my Friends/All Hail the King

Wondertale Press © 2020

The *helper* is a simple function that appears often in stories. This is the character/thing that contributes to the liquidation of the Act of Villainy - their function is to *help* the other characters defeat the *villain* and liquidate the *AoV*. There are often many helpers in any given story. And these helpers might be mini-*heroes*, someone who defeats a mini-*AoV* within the story itself.

I imagine this role it pretty easy to understand. Many times the *false hero* is, in fact, a *helper*. They are on the side of *light*, they want to resolve the AoV, but they are not the *hero*. Stories are filled with *helpers*. *The Fellowship of the Ring*, for example, the actual fellowship (the 8 who accompany our *hero* on his quest), is made up of *helpers*. Each one has scenes in the larger story where they are a *hero*, but none is the *hero* of the whole story, yet without them, the real hero wouldn't succeed.

Now here is a tough one. From the start I'll say - it's tough. Encourage your child that they aren't expected to find this simple or easy to do, and they may find it nearly impossible. Have them give it their best shot, and then move on!

The *king* in a story is the sovereign over the thing being fought over (the *princess*). A king, In Real Life, has power and authority over their subjects. A teacher in a classroom is something of a king over her students. The fireman is a king over the fire hose and fire. Parents are kinglike over their children. Anything or anyone that has power or authority over something else is, in this sense, *king* over it. In a story, the *king* is father to the *princess*.

Now, just as few stories have actual princesses that are fulfilling the function of *princess*, few stories have an actual king or father. They are, as First Mate Manfred assures your child on page 252, often hidden, and difficult to find. It is NOT necessary that your student can find or create them to tell a good story. Just make sure they understand the idea of sovereignty, and something having authority over something else. It can often be a motivating factor in a character's life. Love may rule them, like a king, and cause them to act in certain ways. They may have some special power, or have a person in their lives that influences them.

Because this is difficult, and often not talked about much in storytelling, we've merely introduced it here. Your student can be reassured that they are not going to have to identify kings in their exercises beyond this one, but that this introduction is just that, an introduction. They can say hello to it, do their best during this one exercise, and then move on!

In Real Life :: our lives are filled with *helpers*, and we ourselves are often helpers. Again, take a look at some problems that were solved in your students day, and have them identify who the helpers were. Have them search out a time when they were a helper (did they set the table at dinner, and help you be the hero who provided a meal?). As a little extra, one thing that

Wondertale Press © 2020

discerning these different roles people play in our lives can do is create a sense of gratitude, thankfulness that someone was a helper, or alerted someone that we needed help, or came along side and helped us. As you and your student identify these people and their functions in your life, take a moment to let them know you are thankful. You might find that you are being a helper or hero in their story!

Finding it in the Story :: pg 248 :: First Mate Manfred is the *helper*. The *king* is the Kanadien captain, who is the "father" or "sovereign" of the *princess*, the Kanadien ship/crew/cargo.

Exercise 23 :: Plot :: There's Something Happening Here

And now the heart of the story: *plot*. This is the series of events that occur one after another and make up all the actions of the story.

This is a pretty straightforward element. Throughout the exercises, the students have been working through different aspects of plot. In *backstory*, they were, essentially, telling the *plot* of what happens outside of this story (the plot of a different, previous story, as it were). Even the exercises on *character desire*, where your student learned about how desires lead to actions, and more actions ... each of those actions are steps in the plot.

I doubt they will need much help in understanding what the *plot* it. There is one aspect that I'll focus on here, and you can share as your child is open and able to take it in. Many times a writer creates a forced plot. They have an outcome in mind, and, working backwards, write the actions that will get to that end in the way that seems best, or easiest, or most interesting. This *is* a plot, but, as you'll know from different stories and movies you've experienced, it can also feel unsatisfying, or cause the audience to discount it. "That was so predictable" is one response, but so is "where did that come from? They just made the character do this so they could get from A to B. It doesn't make sense." Contrived action like this is not satisfying to the reader (or the writer, really). In Real Life, our actions come out of our actual motivations, desires, and choices. While we, as people, do think "how can I get from A to B?" and act accordingly, the desire to get from A to B is born out of something real, and the things we choose in getting from A to B come from who we are, and what we want, or don't want. *Plot* in a story should happen the same way - come out of the way a character would really respond. This takes knowing our characters well, developing who they are and what they want, so we, as the author, can have them respond in realistic ways.

This is hard even for seasoned writers, because our own desire (say, to finish the chapter) can sometimes cause us to choose to take the easy route, rather than the harder but more rewarding route of taking the time and effort to develop full and robust characters. So don't

Wondertale Press © 2020

press this on your child, but help them to recognize, in the stories they read, when a contrived plot has happened, and help them see what would have been more realistic to the actual characters. In time, this will come out in the stories they write!

In Real Life :: every day is part of the *plot* of our lives. Just as in stories, the actions we take come out of the desires we (and those around us) have. And like an author, we can know the characters in our story (including ourselves), and also make choices as to how this story will end. We might have to choose our reactions to the actions of other characters, we may have to set up and be a hero, we may have to admit when we've been a villain. Then we choose our reactions to go towards the resolution we desire most. Be brave and encourage your children to think about living a good story!

Finding it in the Story :: honestly, this one would be so detailed, I would simply make sure your student understands - the plot is that series of actions that moves the story forward. Have them open up to any chapter of this story, and tell you the plot (action) points. Bonus if they can look to which characters actions cause it, and what their motivations are.

Exercise 24 :: Gaps and Expectations :: When you least expect it

The opening line to this exercise says it all. "Things don't always go the way we expect them to." True in life, true in story. Especially true in a good story, one that really grabs your interest and keeps it all the way through.

A *gap* occurs when a character expects things will go one way and then discovers they're going another. Anytime something happens that isn't expected, it is a gap. A good story is full of them, because it keeps the reader on the edge of their seat. A *gap* can be a wonderful surprise or a horrible shock. It can be dramatic, like Harry Potter running straight into the railway station wall, and coming out on Platform 9 3/4. It can be very minor, like when you get to the grocery store to buy toilet paper and somehow, they are out. It can also be subtle, like when you compliment someone and they don't have a reaction. Anytime our expectations aren't met, there is a *gap*.

The exercises will lead your student through the creation of gaps within little mini stories. Encourage them to take a favorite story or scene, and look for the gaps in it. Ask them to share how it makes them, as the reader/viewer, feel when those gaps occur. If they are writing a story, encourage them to see where gaps might take place, surprising the reader (and characters?) and making them want to keep reading.

In Real Life :: For some people, *gaps and expectations* are a big deal, personally. Some are extremely flexible, and can go with the flow, so when they arrive at the ice cream store on a

Wondertale Press © 2020

summer day and the sign reads 'closed,' they shrug their shoulders and decide to go for a pretzel next door. Others come upon a gap, and it throws them for a loop. Knowing this about your child, and helping your child to understand what expectations are, and what a gap is, gives you a vocabulary for talking about what they are experiencing, and why it may be hard for them or others. It might help them to see some of these gaps as something to look forward to, that all gaps are not negative. As always, we at Wondertale Press want these exercises and storytelling elements to be something that enriches the every day lives of you and your student.

Finding it in the Story :: pg 271-274 :: these chapters are full of gaps and expectations that aren't met, including :: first sentence, the physical "gap" that leads out into the sea; they didn't find the island; the island is invisible; some monkeys don't want to look again; Monkey Mackenzie is brave and looks, and sees; Monkey Monica refuses; the first mate has to stay behind; the captain's boat vanishes; Monkey Mo Mo gives up.

Exercise 25 :: Beginning, Middle, and End

Your student is nearing the *end* of their time in our workbook. AND they are just *beginning* their time in storytelling (we hope!). They are in the *middle* of their schooling. Everything in life and in story falls somewhere in the midst of *beginning, middle, and end*. And, as First Mate Manfred makes sure to tell your student, we often don't know what part of the story we are in, until the story is over and we can look back and identify, oh, that was only the beginning! Or the end came sooner than we thought. This is one section that fits nicely with most other writing curricula. Where you'll only find the phrase "Act of Villainy" here (other texts use other terms), most everyone agrees that stories have beginnings, middles, and ends.

In Real Life :: This may seem like such a basic part of storytelling that it doesn't need to be taught or dwelt on. But learning about *beginning, middle, and end* allows you to help your student make decisions, not only about their story, but in life as well. Understanding that each story (book, chapter, season, experience) has these 3 parts, and choosing how long to spend in each part, produces the shape of a story. It can be divided into 3 equal parts, or be heavier in on or another. A typical workday has a shape: get up at 6, work from 8-6, bed at 10. 2 hours, 10 hours, 4 hours. That is the shape of a day. Your child might learn to see things in terms of shape; depending on how much time they want to spend in different parts of their story, they can be efficient or linger longer. If a certain part of the story is more stressful than others, they may want to shorten it. If a certain part is more pleasurable, they may want to linger (and thus shorten another part).

These aspects of *beginning, middle, and end* can also be seen as building blocks, and this, to me, really is helpful in life. If each thing we do, each mini-story we participate in, has these 3 time periods, we'll want to get them in the right order, and if we are eager to get to the end, we

Wondertale Press © 2020

will be willing to go through the beginning and middle. I tend to jump right into the middle of things. I'll be knee deep in a recipe when I realize I'm missing an ingredient. That means I didn't go through the beginning of my baking story well - I didn't assemble all the parts before starting to build. Or if I don't bake the cookies long enough (I try to skip something in the middle), the ending isn't going to work out the way I want. True in story, true in life.

Help your student see *beginning, middle, and end* in the stories they encounter, and throughout their days. When they are "stuck" in a part, remind them that there is another part coming, and to keep working towards it. If they are in the midst of story, help them break it down into its three parts, and make sure all those parts are in place at the right times.

(Helpful in parenting too - we are just in the middle, but now is a good time to look back - did I get all the right parts in the beginning? Are we missing things? It's not too late to go back and make sure the building has a good foundation).

Finding it in the Story :: or this section, have your student think back through the entire story, and simply make a good guess as to what the beginning of the story is, and what the middle is. Make a guess: are you at the end? What makes you think so? Keep doing exercises and reading. If they need more work in this section, go ahead and have them pick any of the chapters that have 'mini-story' in them - the kraken chapters, or the one where Yogger frees the slave monkeys, among them - and separate it out, beginning, middle, and end. Remember that this is not an exact science, but creative work, so there is a great deal of flexibility in what the answers to this will be.

Exercise 26 :: Transformation and Character Arc :: My, how you've Grown!

Oh, the heart of a great story. *Transformation* - everything that changes because of the actions of the characters in the story. So simple, yet it's the reason behind the story. If nothing changes - no princesses are rescued, no character learns to be brave, no dragons are defeated - there really isn't any story. And as the story itself changes because of the actions of the characters, so too the characters themselves are transformed. This *character arc* is one of the key points in story, and in our lives. Encourage your child to look at the characters they love and see how they changed over the course of the story. Think on the joy when the character transforms from a shy, weak boy and into a brave, wise young man. Or the awkward pre-teen girl finds real friends and blossoms. And think of the sadness when a character you want to love grows more wicked, or succumbs to meanness. Seeing these aspects in the characters they care about will help them to begin to see these very same arcs in themselves and those around them.

Wondertale Press © 2020

At one point in the story, the Captain urges them through the archipelago of islands, and Scurvy Spat asks why they don't just sail around them. He replies, "What kind of story would that be?"

In Real Life :: Our lives are a story. Every day involves hundreds of transformations. Every day involves hundreds of choices, when we, as we write our own life story, can decide which of our desires we will sail after. Every day we can stay the same, or be transformed.

Every day we can be the *seeker heroes* in our families and lives, and we can encourage our children to be the same. Learning these different story elements will surely help your child (and you!) become better storytellers. It *will* help in all their writing. Knowing how to craft a compelling story is useful in all walks of life. But it is nowhere so useful as in our own lives. Keep your eyes on your child. See when they are the *princess* you might need to rescue, or when they may need you to be their *dispatcher*, or the *donor* for the *magical agent* they can use to defeat the dragons in their lives. Help them to see that they are in the middle of something that will end, when the end seems so far away. Encourage them to be creative, to express themselves through story (or painting, or dancing, or singing, or playing soccer). Let those inner thoughts and feelings that teens so long to hide away find a voice in your home and heart, listen carefully, and live this adventure with them. Help them see where they have already experienced a *character arc*, and have been *transformed*. And look to yourself, too. We all long to be transformed into the us we imagine ourselves to be. Don't be afraid to tell a few stories, yourself, and definitely don't be afraid to live the best story you can.

Finding it in the Story :: This story is full of them, so you can focus on the last two chapters, or go through the story as a whole. If your student needs some hints, have them look at Norman Nopants and how he changes. Think back to Monkey Mackenzie (pg 271), who becomes brave enough to look through the glass, and see the island (and how, on pg 297, he has developed such faith in the Captain). Note that there are transformations that aren't emotional - like the end of pg 301 - the monkeys don't smell as much. Ask your student to find a negative transformation (the monkeys who steal the beans - they change for the worse).

Conclusion :: Is this the end? Or merely the beginning?

And now that the story is nearly done, one good exercise would be to go back and review the different characters. What function did they play in the story (it might change in different parts)? What was their character arc (could be positive, negative, or neutral)? What changed in the story itself, and what caused (actions) those changes? Remember that Scurvy Spat (your student) is one of the characters; these are questions they can ask of themselves - what role(s) did they play as it was written in the story? What role did they play as they were the actual student, going through the exercises? How have they changed through the process of learning

Wondertale Press © 2020

this Grammar of Story? This is the end of this particular story - but the end of one story is nearly always the beginning of another. What story are they going into now?

You can find a Master Review :: Characters as well as a Super Review of all the grammar elements on the website under Printables.

Conclusion - What's next?

By the time your student has worked their way through the entire workbook, they will have learned all the essential story elements, the Grammar of Story. But more importantly, they will have the tools they need to be able to go out and create stories of their own. The workbook ends with a final Scratch Yer Noggin' review, the last chapter of the pirate story, and an opportunity to write their own story.

And now the workbook is done and you might be wondering, what's next?

Keep creating and telling stories! Their workbook is now so much more than a consumable curriculum for creative writing. What they have created is a truly impressive collection of their creativity and ideas. It can now be a sourcebook for them. As one published author said of PGGS, when she gets stuck in her first drafts, she'll return to the principles and elements taught in this workbook to spark ideas and get her moving. This can be true for your student, too. Encourage them to flip through their mindstorming exercises, find something that interests them, spend some time wondering, and start writing!

As a parent, your role next is crucial. Continue to listen to the creativity - in whatever form it comes - that is giving you a little peek into your child's soul. Be interested. Ask questions. Find out more about them. Encourage their attempts and guide their steps. As always, if you have questions or what specific next steps in terms of curricula or writing, just leave a comment or use the contact form to get in touch with us. We here at Wondertale Press are always glad to correspond with our students and their parents!

Wondertale Press © 2020