

MONSTERS! INK!

LESSON EIGHT

LIKE A GOOD STEW... THE PLOT THICKENS

So now we've got our characters, we've got our setting, and we've got our vivid words, we've got a few options for intriguing starter sentences. Aah, such great ingredients to stew over!

But wait...what about our plot? What happens to our characters? Where do they go? What do they do? What happens next? And who is our main character/narrator? We've gotten some practice with the dice, we've got some vivid words to choose from, and now it's time to put the action into action! (And remember, if you're ever at crisis point in the creative process of a story, you can always use the story cubes to stimulate your imagination.)

Tip: For students who struggle having a place to begin, have them look at and read the background story that comes with the monsters from *Papertoy Monsters* (each comes with background story and plenty of other information) to use as a starting point for their monster stories.)

There are so many monsters and creatures galore, let your imagination be your guide. The possibilities are endless. *Hmm, does your teacher or your dad turn into a dragon when you fail a test?* And remember if you don't have a clue, maybe the dice will give one to you as we go through the following process.



STAGE 1: IDEATION/CONCEPT

- This is the starting point of plot development. To create a great story you need to first start with a great idea. We know you've got those! Take a look at your characters and your setting and see what you come up with!

STAGE 2: PLOT DEVELOPMENT

- Think of this as the planning stage for how the story unfolds.

- The basic concept for the story is expanded [by the writer-you] into a workable story outline and then the plot.
- You can more than imagine the story playing out in your mind, take your characters and use them in your setting...what ideas begin to form? All of the story elements are arranged with consideration for pacing and character development.

GET THE PICTURE?

Teaching Plot Structure with Picture Books

Sometimes when having students retell we take an approach that isn't always the most effective at getting students to understand the sweep of a story's plot and how the elements work together. Such as always

having students identify elements as individual pieces: Character, Setting, Problem, Solution. We might add in: Character, Setting, Problem, Events, Solution. However, this still doesn't always make sense for kids. Kids can identify (most of the time) the pieces in isolation. But often the connection is never made in their minds that those "Events" consist of the character "Trying" to solve the problem and "Failing" along the way.

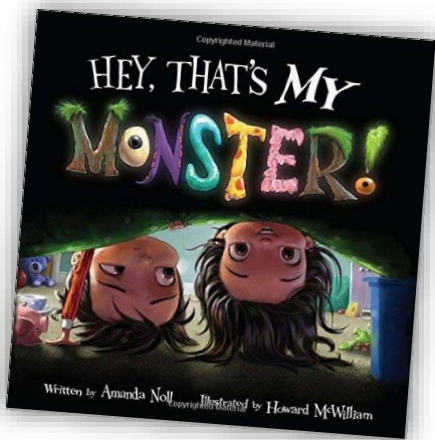
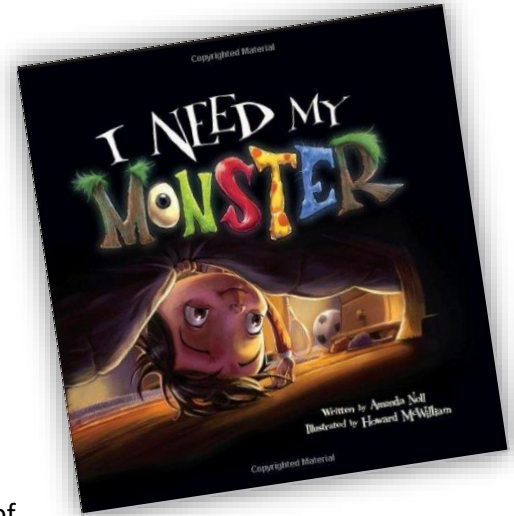
So instead, it's helpful to use a retelling format using the classic picture book structure*. And it makes it easier when attempting to write our own fictional stories.

Referencing and going back through the books (and optional animated short film version of) *I Need My Monster* and *Hey, That's My Monster!* by Amanda Noll (among others) may be helpful in illustrating the following concepts.

TEACHER TIP: It's always helpful to read a story more than once with students! For your second reading, you may want to try to get another adult to read the story so your students get to hear the book read a different way. A great option for this is to use a video. Here's a fabulous one of Rita Moreno reading the story *I Need My Monster* from [Storyline Online](#) (presented by the Screen Actors Guild).



And here's a [video](#) of amazing Lily Tomlin reading *Hey, That's My Monster!* for Storyline Online.



READ THROUGH THE BOOKS WITH STUDENTS AND EACH TIME GO BACK THROUGH, USING THE FOLLOWING TEMPLATE, AND SEE HOW MANY ELEMENTS YOU AND THEY CAN IDENTIFY.

SETUP- Tells/shows who the characters are, where they are (setting) and what they do. (ex. *We meet Ethan and Gabe, who are they? Where are they? What do each of them do?*)

INCITING INCIDENT- An incident that happens that causes a problem for the main character. This problem forces them to want to try to solve it. (ex. *Gabe leaves a note saying he won't be there and Ethan is worried he won't be able to sleep without a monster under his bed.*)

EVENTS-where they "Try" to solve it and fail each time. (Picture books typically will have three or more.) (ex. *Ethan decides to interview substitute monsters to see if they can fill in while Gabe is gone. Does it work?*)

TRY. FAIL.

TRY. FAIL.

TRY. FAIL.

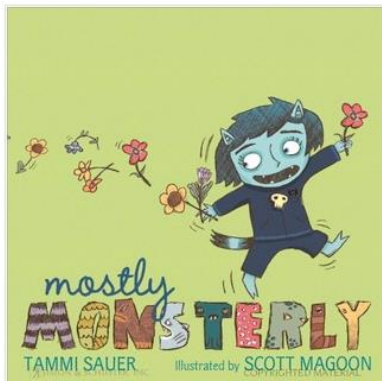
CLIMAX-Dramatic moment of overcoming or solving problem. (But then...something big happens...and the character makes a choice.)

RESULT- Building down, wrapping up loose ends, and showing positive consequences of climax.

RESOLUTION- Happy or hopeful ending

HOW DID YOU/THEY DO?

For Further Practice: Many of Tammi Sauer's books follow the classic plot structure. Therefore, her books are fantastic to use with students for retelling and for using as an example for writing their own fictional stories.



Let's take a look at Tammi's [book trailer](#) for *Mostly Monsterly* and see if we can use the template to analyze the plot. (All won't be revealed because it's a book trailer.) Of course, we can read the book as well!

"NOTE- NOT ALL BOOKS ARE PLOT DRIVEN BOOKS. AND EVEN IF THEY ARE, NOT ALL PLOT DRIVEN STORIES WILL FIT THIS EXACTLY. SOME MAY NOT HAVE AN "INCITING INCIDENT" THAT CAUSES THE PROBLEM. SOME PICTURE BOOKS WILL JUST JUMP RIGHT INTO THE PROBLEM. OFTEN THE CLIMAX, RESULTS, AND RESOLUTION ARE VERY SHORT AND CAN OFTEN BE SQUISHED TOGETHER AT THE END. AND BECAUSE PICTURE BOOKS ARE SO SHORT, SOMETIMES THE RESULTS AND RESOLUTION ARE THE SAME.

TEACHER TIP:

Many picture books fall into the character/problem/solution genre in which a main character struggles with and solves a problem and grows and changes in the process. By retelling these stories in terms of this character/problem/events/solution framework, students begin to see the underlying organizational structure of the genre. This understanding will serve as the foundation to which you can reference while guiding students to create entertaining narratives of their own. This reading/writing connection is a powerful tool in scaffolding learning!

STAGE 3: PLOTTING YOUR PLOT!

- The writer [you!], using the plot outline as a guide, sketches out your ideas for the full action packed character and plot driven story that will be your base for your 3D tale.
- Aside from tweaks and edits, this is the writer's/your primary window for determining the story. The story is the basis for everything that follows.

PLOTTING YOUR PLOT!

SETUP- Show who the characters are, where they are (setting) and what they do.

INCITING INCIDENT- An incident that happens that causes a problem for your main character. This problem forces them to want to try to solve it.

EVENTS-where they “Try” to solve it and fail each time. (Try to come up with three or more.)

1ST TRY.

FAIL.

2ND TRY.

FAIL.

3RD TRY.

FAIL.

CLIMAX-Dramatic moment of overcoming or solving problem. (But then...something big happens...and the character makes a choice.)

RESULT- Building down, wrapping up loose ends, and showing positive consequences of climax.

RESOLUTION- Happy or hopeful ending

SAMPLE SUPPLY LIST LESSON EIGHT

MATERIALS

- *I Need My Monster & Hey, That's My Monster!* by Amanda Noll
- Optional: video version of *I Need My Monster*
- Videos of the books being read out loud
- Printouts
- Pencils
- Completed settings for each co-authorship
- Completed characters for each co-authorship
- List of first line ideas from Lesson Seven for each co-authorship
- Story ideas from the dice sessions
- Story Dice, just in case!

PACING GUIDE:

THIS LESSON HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO TAKE ONE TO TWO 75-MINUTE SESSIONS TO COMPLETE. IT MAY TAKE MORE OR LESS DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF YOUR CLASSROOM AND THE ABILITIES OF YOUR STUDENTS.