

The Story Builder

How to create a story of your very own

What is the Story Builder?

Developed by Stratford Literary Festival and children's author Hollie Hughes (that's me – hello!), the Story Builder will help you create your own story to share with your friends and your family. Coming up are all the tools you'll need to get started on your very own story right now!

Why should I write a story?

Because it's one of the most creative things that you can do and we all have stories in our heads. It's just finding them that can sometimes be difficult. We promise you that, however hard you think it might be, you'll be a storyteller in no time.

Help! I don't think I can do it!

Don't worry, the Story Builder makes writing a story easy – so easy, in fact, you'll wonder why you ever thought it might be difficult in the first place. If you follow the simple steps we've given you here, we guarantee you a story at the end of it.

We know you can do it, even if you don't yet know it yourself!



1

Once upon a time...

Start with a hero or heroine for your story. Human, animal, magical creature – you choose. Some writers like to put themselves and family in the story – either as themselves, or as a character – but this is up to you.

Like this: *Once upon a time there was a bear called George.*



Stuck for ideas? Help yourself to one of these...

rat, cat, elephant, superhero, witch, dragon, unicorn, vampire, fairy, crocodile - or even yourself!

2

Set the scene...

Location! Location! Location! Give us an idea of what this story world is like – real life or fairy tale, magical universe or scary place, past, present or future.

Like this: *George lived in an ordinary forest, in an extraordinary place, in the magical land of Animalia.*



Stuck for ideas? Help yourself to one of these...

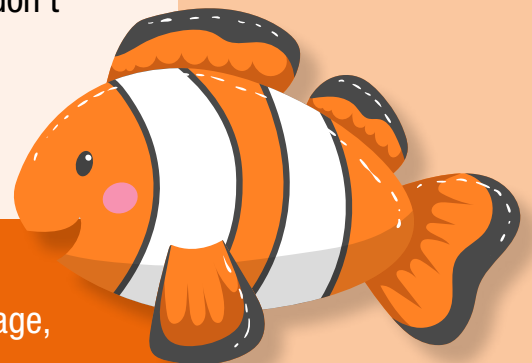
woodland, island, outer space, parallel world, desert, city, underwater, jungle, polar, zoo, Ancient Egypt, dreamscape

3

Go for goal...

What does the main character want, and how far are they willing to go to get it? What will the consequences be if they don't succeed? The higher the stakes, the more interesting the story.

Like this: *What George wanted more than anything else in the world was to be an astronaut.*



Stuck for ideas? Help yourself to one of these...

castle, cake, magical powers, treasure, friend, love, teddy, courage, hot air balloon, lost toy, trophy, pet, job, fun, rain

4

Troublemaker...

Who or what will stand in their way?

Don't make it too easy for them - without some kind of conflict, problem, or difficulty, you don't really have a story.

Like this: *But the only animals allowed at space school were monkeys.*



Stuck for ideas? Help yourself to one of these...

mountain, monster, distance, enemy, fear, time, parents, sea crossing, competition, swamp, mouse, moose, evil spell, snow

5

Work it out...

How will they overcome their difficulties? Characters who work hard to solve problems, and take control of their own destiny, are always more interesting than those that don't.

Like this: *So, George disguised himself as a monkey, aced space school, and became chief astronaut of the universe.*



Stuck for ideas? Help yourself to one of these...

quest, magic, teamwork, cunning plan, battle, humour, acrobatics, grapplehooks, boat, helping hand, trickery, recycling

6

The End

How will it all turn out? Save the cliff hangers for the movies – happily or horribly (or even hoppily!) ever after, your reader will want to know.

Like this: *After many years (and many, many bananas!), George eventually got so sick of pretending to be a monkey that he told everyone his secret, but it turned out no one really minded that much after all. The End.*



Stuck for ideas? Help yourself to one of these...

twist in the tale, grand finale, lesson, punchline, bittersweet, scope for a sequel, poem, quote, sunset

- **So that's the skeleton of your story** – all you need to do now is put the 'meat on the bones'.

Fill it out a bit with some detail and give the story a bit of colour.

Have fun experimenting with rhyme, puns, humour, repeating patterns etc. Be playful!

Use all five senses to bring it alive: sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. How did the character feel? Scared, happy, sad...?

- **Keep it simple**

A well-crafted simple story is better than a muddled complicated one. It's better to spend time making sure your story has all the bits we've talked about above.

- **Put people you know at the centre**

Even if they're not in the story, it's fun to include characters and themes they're interested in.

- **Make it interesting**

The best stories mix interesting characters with exciting plots – get both right, and you can't go wrong.

- **Don't forget to give your story a title and draw some pictures to illustrate it!**



Remember, we are all storytellers at heart – go for it!



Stratford
**Literary
Festival**

stratlitfest.co.uk



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**