

# Developing Children's Literature

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## Assignment Options

- Original picture book story (text only)
- Original poem for children from birth through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- Illustrate a story (pictures only)
  - Drawings
  - Photographs

## Overview of Picture Books

- Typically 32 pages
  - 12 and 14 spreads for the story
    - **Spread:** Two facing pages
  - Note the spreads when writing a picture book
- Word count from 0 to 1,000 words
  - Usually, picture books have less than 500 words

## Choosing a Story

- Write about what you know
- Strategies for getting ideas for a story:
  1. Think of a subject that catches your imagination (e.g., an object or a place)
    - Make a list of possibilities for the subject
      - You are not writing the story, but allowing ideas to flow that could develop into a story
  2. Think of the central character
    - Write or draw him/her into existence
    - Let the character identify the plot
  3. Remember your experiences as a child, your feelings, childhood memories, worries and pleasures
    - Write a story based on those experiences

## Structure of Story: Beginning, Middle, and End

- Stories usually have beginnings, middles and endings
  - A story is a journey along a winding road – not straight one
  - The end should not be predictable from the beginning
- **Beginning:** The first line should capture the reader's attention
- Basic sequence of events:
  - Arrival of conflict
  - Initial success of the main character
  - Challenge
    - There could be multiple success-challenge cycles
  - Final victory
  - Outcome

## Plot

- The main character is normally involved in a conflict
  - Conflict with:
    - Another character
    - Circumstances
    - Within him- or herself
- Conflict can be a problem the main character must resolve
  - The character oftentimes learns or grows in the process

## Style

- Quality of writing – spelling, punctuation, grammar – is vital
  - Children learn by example. When children are exposed to incorrect grammar and spelling in storybooks, they learn incorrect grammar and spelling
- Write with clarity
  - Children need language that is immediate, clear and easy to follow
- Write with warmth and humor

## Theme

- Good stories have a theme that is meaningful to and appropriate for young children
- The theme should not be explicitly stated – it should emerge from the story
- Keep the theme positive. If writing about a social problem, offer constructive ways for children to deal with it

## Character/Setting

- Character
  - Before writing, know the characters thoroughly
  - The main character should be someone the reader can identify and/or sympathize with
- Setting
  - Set the story in a place and time that will be either interesting or familiar

## Illustrations

- Pictures should help:
  - Tell the story
  - Describe the setting
  - Set the mood
  - Convey information about the characters
- Pictures help the author tell a story in fewer words

## Revisions

- Revise
- Revise
- Re-re-revise
- Read the story to children to assess their attention, interest, and questions
- Revise
- Give the story to adults who frequently interact with children for their feedback
- Revise
- Let the story rest for some time
- Revise