

WRITING – 2 Weeks commencing 29.6.20

This week we're going to extend our knowledge of character writing and explore how to write characters for stories.

I have been inspired by a podcast I heard with children's writer [Sam Copeland](#), who writes incredibly funny stories with absolutely super characters. His most famous character is Charlie McGuffin – you may have read some of his Charlie books. If you haven't I can definitely recommend them!



Whilst creating believable characters can be difficult, it is the key to successful story writing. Filling a story with flawed heroes or baddies that the reader can relate to helps to bring the story to life and it can be a valuable way of driving the plot forward...not to mention the fact that it can be a lot of fun!

Over the next few days you are going to create some characters for a story that I would like you to write.

DAY 1 – Creating a hero

If you can, listen to Sam's podcast about character writing. <http://bit.ly/AIYCSamCopeland>
As well as being hugely entertaining and funny, Sam shares some excellent writing tips.

1. If you can, listen again to the part of the podcast that starts at **13.02**, up to **15.38** where Sam Copeland talks about writing characters he likes that he'd like to be friends with.
2. Using **Slide 2 (CHARLIE RESOURCES)**, make a list of character traits that you might look for in a friend. Then use PowerPoint **Slide 3** to think about the qualities that might make a good hero. Are there any qualities that could appear on both lists?
3. Next, think about some flaws that their character might have. Flaws are character traits that are not desirable – you could think of them as 'weaknesses'. All people have flaws (even you!). Use **Slide 4** to get started.
4. To create a realistic character, you might want to include both types of traits in your story - plenty of characteristics that make your character likeable as a hero, but also perhaps one or two negative ones that balance out some of the positive – and therefore help make your character seem 'real'. Use **Planning Sheet 1** to jot down your ideas.

Day 2: Show not tell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4RthqSOcR0>

Watch the short video which explains how to use a very special writing technique: **show don't tell!**

To engage a reader, it's much better to **SHOW** your character's traits rather than tell them what they are. So rather than say 'He was kind' (which is boring for a reader) say, 'he looked at her kindly and gave her the bag of sweets'. Thinking about a character's face, body and voice is one way to help you to do this. Or focusing on what they **do** and **say** is another.

Use **Planning Sheet 2** to record ideas you have for **showing not telling** your reader about your character. There is an example on the sheet.

Day 3: Creating a villain

If you can, listen again to the section of the podcast from **15.38** (start at the part where Helen says 'And actually it is kind of fun...' until the part where Helen says '...I was quite fond of Dylan by the end), up to **18.32**.

Here, Sam talks about the idea of there *being a reason* for a villain's behaviour. Think about some villains you know from books and movies. Apart from their evil wrong-doings, what do you know about why they behave the way they do? Usually the writer has given you this background information at some point in the story. This is how villains feel 'believable'.

1. Look at **Slide 5 (CHARLIE RESOURCES)**. In your story you can choose a 'redeeming feature' or reason for your villain's bad behaviour to help you make them understandable and believable.
2. Next, use **Planning Sheet 3** to create your villain.

Day 4: Planning your story

Use PowerPoint **Slide 6 (CHARLIE RESOURCES)** to plan a story using your characters. You can use **Planning Sheet 4** to record your ideas. Think about your hero and villain and how their character traits, strengths and weaknesses might drive the story.

- *How might your hero's good qualities lead to action in the story? (If she is very brave, perhaps she will end up in a dangerous situation? If he is very honourable, perhaps he'll have to keep a difficult promise or put himself in danger?)*
- *How might their less-positive qualities drive the story? (Perhaps your character is very greedy and that leads them into a trap? Or perhaps they are forgetful and they don't remember a warning until it is too late?)*
- *How might your villain help drive the plot? (Perhaps they do something unexpectedly kind? Perhaps they learn a lesson at the end of the story?)*

Day 5 – Creating Tension

If you can, replay the section of the podcast again that starts at **09:50**, up to **12:06**. What did you feel as the crocodile moved towards Dylan?

Before you start writing your story, I want you to think about how Sam Copeland creates tension and excitement in his writing.

Look at the extract on **Slides 7 and 8**. How does Sam Copeland make this part of the story exciting? Partly this is due to the plot of the story itself (a crocodile is about to eat someone!), but this is in itself not enough. The **language** that Sam uses also plays a big part. Look at the text carefully and write down or underline any words or phrases that you think build a sense of excitement and tension.

Think about:

- The use of **different sentence lengths**- long sentences for description, balanced with short dramatic sentences (*Chomp him; Snap!*)
- The use of **powerful verbs** (*great jaws slammed shut; whimpered with dread*)
- The **repetition of adverbs** (*closer and closer*).
- The **inner thoughts of the characters** (*No, Charlie thought. I can't do this!*)
- The **detailed description** (*the cold black slit in the green orb; hot foul breath; vast jaws*)

These are some of the techniques you should try to use in your story for the big action scenes!

DAY 6 – Writing your Story!

Today you are going to start to write your own story, using the characters you have created and your plan. You will write approximately half of your story today and the rest tomorrow.

TOP TIPS:

- Remember to show your **characters different sides**- the good things about them and their negative traits
- Show what your character is like through their actions and speech (**Show not Tell!**)
- Writing in the **third person, past tense** (*Alice was shocked to see... Sam smiled to himself; his evil plan **was** working...*)
- Think carefully about how to make **action scenes exciting** by using the techniques you have learnt

Before you start, have some thinking time. You might want to add to your plan (**Planning Sheet 4**) or create a story mountain. When you are ready, start writing. I would like you to write for 20-30 minutes without stopping if you can. You should aim to have got about half way through your story – aim for the climax / dilemma / top of the mountain before stopping.

Have a good rest!! (and don't forget to shake those hands and fingers!)

Day 7 – Finishing your story

Spend today finishing your story. When you have done this, you need to carefully read it through to check if you have missed anything and that it makes sense. Have you written in

paragraphs? If not, mark your paragraphs with // just like we have practised at school. Remember, you need a new paragraph each time you shift in time, place or idea.

Day 8 – Editing and Publishing your story

As you know, the most important part of writing is **editing** your pieces and this takes time and skill! You now need to spend some time with your thesaurus (online : Thesaurus.com) and a purple pen (or other colour) to make your writing the best it can be – whilst also checking non-negotiables. **Top tips:**

- Check you have used a **range of sentences**: some simple sentences and others that use a range of conjunctions.
- **Start your sentences in different ways** so it doesn't sound clunky. Don't always start with the name of the character or pronoun (I, she, they etc.). Instead of 'Charlie sprinted energetically over the fence'; you could write 'The fence was approaching and Charlie had to summon all his energy to jump over it!'
- Check you have used **powerful verbs** and not boring ones (**slammed** on the breaks, **trudged** up the hill; **screeched** at the top of his voice).
- Check your **tenses are consistent**. We are writing in the **past** tense (telling your audience about something that has happened. There should be lots of **-ed** verbs and '**was**' not 'is').
- Check you have used **exciting descriptive vocabulary** and not lazy language. E.g 'gigantic' instead of 'big', 'ecstatic' instead of happy, 'crimson' instead of 'red'.

Finally, you can now choose how to **present** your finished story. You might want to type it onto a computer, or write it up neatly (practising your best cursive handwriting!). You could even illustrate your story.

After all that hard work, make sure you present your story and show it to other people – you could even email it to a friend or relative (or me!!) – I'm sure they'd love to read it!

DAY 9 & 10 – Write a thank you poem for a key worker!

Now for something different!

Laura Mucha is a children's poet. She has a fantastic idea that certainly inspired me and I hope it will inspire you too!

We have been in lockdown for a long time and I'm sure many of you have been clapping on Thursday evenings for 'key workers'. Laura reminds us in the video that there are lots of different key workers, and they've all been working very hard to keep you safe.

Why not write a 'thank you poem' for a key worker?!

Take a look at Laura's fantastic video which is a step by step guide on writing a poem for a key worker.

https://literacytrust.org.uk/family-zone/5-8/write-thank-you-poem-key-workers/?mc_cid=cf697d947d&mc_eid=a6d6890a43

I would suggest you do this over two days:

Day 9: watch the video up to 7'30''. You can stop and start the video when instructed to give you time to complete the mini-activities.

At around 7'30'' into the video, Laura asked you to stop the video and **write!**

At this stage, it's best not to worry too much about every detail – you just need to get your **main ideas** down, since you be editing your writing tomorrow.

DAY 10: Restart the video at 7'30'' and continue listening, thinking and completing the mini-activities. Stop and start the video as and when you want time to think about the different questions:

- Who are trying to thank in your poem – is it a specific key worker or lots of different ones?
- Have you noticed any patterns or sounds in your writing? Could you play with these sounds and create rhythm or rhyme?
- Are there any 'lazy' (boring) words? Can you up level?
- Do you have emotional language?
- Check that you haven't included words just because they rhyme. In a poem EVERY word matters, so don't include ANY words unless they have a particular job to do!
- Remember, your poem does NOT need to rhyme. Poetry is about stirring emotions and making your reader think and feel. Your word choices matter!

You could also use the slides ([DAY 9 & 10 – LAURA MUCHA](#)) to help organise your planning and writing.

I can't wait to read your poems! I feel another class book coming on.....!