

Author's Workshop

Skills Focus

Writing, Reading Literature, Language

Connection to Habits of Good Readers

Connecting, Visualizing, Clarifying

Overview

Many of the best stories are based on events that have taken place in the lives of authors. Our families have plenty of stories to tell that could be the basis of a great children's book. Creating a book about one of your family's adventures is a great way to creatively preserve memories and pass down these stories from generation to generation.

Guiding Questions and Talking Points

The following questions and talking points might be helpful to spark a discussion with your child and help him/her recount memorable family experiences:

- What family event or adventure do you most remember? What exactly happened? Who was involved? Where did it happen?
- What types of stories do you usually find in children's books?
- What are some stories that have been told over and over in our family?

Intro Activity

Sit together as a family and ask each member to share their favorite family memory.

Before (Background Knowledge and/or Vocabulary)

While children are quite familiar with stories, they may have never considered that all stories have a structure. To help children understand this concept, we should point out that every story we tell usually has a beginning, middle, and end. As your child writes his/her story, have him/her identify which elements belong in each section of the story.

The following terms may be helpful for children as they learn about writing stories:

- **Plot:** the storyline, the plan, scheme, or main story of a literary work.
- **Character:** a person represented in a story.
- **Conflict:** the problem in a story.
- **Climax:** the major turning point in a plot, the highest or most intense point in the development of a story.
- **Resolution:** a solution or settling of a problem.
- **Setting:** when and where a story takes place.
- **Protagonist:** the leading character, hero, or heroine of a literary work.
- **Antagonist:** the adversary, or one who struggles against, the hero or protagonist of a literary work.

During

Think of a favorite trip, experience, or adventure your family has had. Ask each other which of the listed memories would make a good children's book or story.

Write down the events in the order in which they occurred; be sure that you have provided enough details to show a clear beginning, middle, and end. Once all of the basic elements have been listed, brainstorm images and illustrations that could be included to help better tell the story. Finally, begin constructing the pages of your family's children's book.

- **Emergent readers** can concentrate on the conflict of the story. What was the problem or opposition that your family faced? How did you all overcome the obstacle? Have your child describe the moment of conflict using as many of the five senses as possible. Remember that every story must have some sort of conflict or it isn't a story.
- **Proficient readers** can focus on the climax of the story. What was the turning point? Who was involved at that point? What images might you use to successfully depict the moment of climax?
- **Advanced readers** can discuss what the family may have learned from this adventure. How might you all convey this lesson or message in the children's book?

Author's Workshop (cont.)

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After (Extension Activities)

- Create a family timeline. On the timeline, graph and illustrate memories and significant events.
- Interview different family members to see which family memories stick with them. Create a collection of family stories to share with everyone.
- Invite several family members over and read your book to everyone present.
- Design a cover for your children's book.

Web Resources

The following websites provide useful instructions for constructing books:

- www.uazu.net/notes/binding.html
- www.homeschooling-ideas.com/making-books-with-children.html

Suggested Readings

[The Memory String](#), Eve Bunting
[The Relatives Came](#), Cynthia Rylant
[Aunt Flossie's Hat](#), Elizabeth Howard
[Grandfather's Journey](#), Allen Say
[Thunder Cake](#), Patricia Polacco
[The Watsons Go to Birmingham](#), Christopher Paul Curtis