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p. = Tompkins
P. = Gunning
**Sensory Sentence-Starter Chart**

*Writer's Tip:* To create a vivid description, writers use the five senses. They also vary their sentence structure so that their writing flows and does not sound repetitive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you see</th>
<th>What you hear</th>
<th>What you feel</th>
<th>What you smell</th>
<th>What you taste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I gazed...</td>
<td>Standing quietly, I noticed...</td>
<td>I felt...</td>
<td>Breathing deeply, I noticed...</td>
<td>My mouth watered as...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking carefully, I noticed...</td>
<td>I could make out the sound of...</td>
<td>When I ran my hand along it, I...</td>
<td>I sniffed at...</td>
<td>I smacked my lips as...</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was surprised to see...</td>
<td>I listened closely to...</td>
<td>I enjoyed the feel of the...</td>
<td>The aroma of...</td>
<td>My stomach growled as...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I peered at...</td>
<td>I strained to hear...</td>
<td>When I touched...</td>
<td>I inhaled the scent of...</td>
<td>I tasted...</td>
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<td>I couldn't help but notice...</td>
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<td>What I ...</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>Saw:</td>
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Highlight your favorite images. Use them to create a setting poem based on *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen.
Plot Patterns

Various types of plot patterns contain these story elements (Lukens, 1995). Here are the basic types of plot structures found in children’s literature, along with examples of specific books that use them:

1. Action builds and peaks with a final climax.

*The Borrowers* (Norton, 1953)—The family of little people who live in the baseboard of an old house must escape the dangers of ratcatchers and fumigators; it’s unclear what happens to them at the end, however.

2. Action develops evenly through a series of related, interesting events.

*Little House in the Big Woods* (Wilder, 1961)—The Wilder family’s experiences are described from day to day, without major conflict or climax.

3. Action rises to a climax and then clearly concludes.

*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1976)—In the rural South in the 1930s, the child of an African American family is nearly run down by a busload of white students; events continue to build tension in the story before coming to a resolution.

4. Action builds logically and ends with an unexpected twist.

*The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* (Van Allsburg, 1979)—The reader is tricked at the end. (I hate to give it away.)

5. Action ends where it begins, after a series of events.

*Hey, Al* (Yorinks, 1986)—Al is unhappy at home. A large bird takes him to another world, and although he’s happy at first, paradise goes sour and Al is happy to return home.

6. Action follows a repetitive, predictable pattern.

*The Fat Cat: A Danish Folktale* (Kent, 1971)—A hungry cat eats everyone he meets until he becomes very fat.

Dialogue

This is how E.B. White draws the reader into his classic novel, *Charlotte’s Web*:

> “Where’s Papa going with that ax?” said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast. “Out to the hoghouse,” replied Mrs. Arable. “Some pigs were born last night.”

The author began with **dialogue** between the main character and her mother. Their brief conversation grabs your attention and raises **story questions**: Why in the world does Papa need an ax? What will he do to those newborn pigs? The reader just has to read on to find out for sure!

Action

Here’s how Sid Fleischman began a chapter in his middle-grade novel, *The Whipping Boy*:

> Hold-Your-Nose-Billy popped a clove of garlic into his mouth, ground it between his yellow teeth and helped himself to a veal pie.

Fleischman’s chapter begins with a character doing something memorable. The author uses **action** as the hook. The action also reveals what the character is like.

Question

Another great opening is the use of a **question**. Here’s how award-winning author Avi uses this technique in his novel *Blue Heron*:

> What—Margaret Lavanek asked herself—was magic really for?

Again, in the space of a sentence, the author introduces a character and raises a question.

Thoughts

In *Something Upstairs*, Avi uses the main character’s **thoughts** to draw us immediately into the head and heart of the main character:

> As far as Kenny Huldof was concerned, Los Angeles, California, was perfect.

Thoughts and feelings

Suzy Kline also draws the reader in through the use of **thoughts and feelings**. This example is from her chapter book, *Herbie Jones and the Class Gift*:

> Herbie Jones hated indoor recess. Especially in June.

What reader wouldn’t identify with those sentiments?

Sound Effects

And finally, the technique that student writers seem to enjoy emulating most often—the **sound effect**. In her Newbery-winning middle-grade novel, *Bridge to Terabithia*, Katherine Paterson opens with:

> Ba-room, ba-room, baroom, baripity, baripity, barapity, barapity—

> Good. His dad had the pickup going. He could get up now.

Paterson could have said, “He heard the noisy truck;” instead, she has the reader get inside the main character’s head and listen along.
Peer Response Groups

Peer Response Groups allow students to test their writing out on an audience and to learn what goes on in a person’s mind when their story is heard. Frequent response from peers allows the writer to fine tune their writing and be sure the audience is hearing and “seeing” what the writer wants. To begin peer response groups in your classroom follow these steps:

1. Build a classroom community that is willing to share ideas with others and to accept ideas from others. Students need to understand that what they share will be accepted and that they will not feel intimidated by others’ writing. Ice-breaker games and activities that allow students to discover the similarities and differences among themselves work great.

2. Share selections from children’s books and/or novels and ask the students to respond. This allows students to understand the language they will use in responding and practice responding*.

3. Working in pairs, students respond to each other’s stories*. The teacher models how the students can mark selected parts of the story. Common markings are to use a yellow marker or highlighter to find the “golden line.” Stars can also be used to mark key sentences. Eventually students can use question marks to show sections that need more characterization.

4. Working in groups of four, students share their stories.
   a. First person reads their story.
   b. Reader pauses for 10 seconds.
   c. First person reads their story again.
   d. Reader pauses for 10 seconds.
   e. Going clockwise around the group starting next to the reader, the students provide comments * and feedback to the student.

* See Response Gambit sheet on following page.

JMS: 1/21/09
Gambits for Responding

Pointing

I like the part when you said …
I liked the words …
… and … stuck in my mind when you finished reading.
I didn’t understand …
I wanted to know more about …
I wondered about …

Summarizing

I think the main point of your writing is …
To me the story says …
If I had to pick one work to describe your writing it would be … because …

Telling

When you said …, it made me think of …
I felt … when you read your story.
I wondered … when you said …
I saw … in my mind when you were reading … part of your story.
This made me think of … because …
I want to know more about …
The role of a Gatekeeper is to make sure everyone is... We need to talk about... Our focus right now is... Let's get back to discussing our whining... Can say things like: You

---

Gatekeeper

---

Taskmaster
The role of a Timekeeper is to keep the time so that the group will finish on time. You can say things like:

- We need to speed things up (or slow down).
- We have about __________ minutes left.

The role of a Monitor is to make sure the author is recording feedback. You can say things like:

- Do you need to repeat that again?
- Did you get those comments written down?
Tools for Revising and Editing

- change to capital letter
- add information
- delete word, phrase, sentence
- put letter in different order
- check spelling
- start new paragraph
- move sentence or paragraph
- cut out and tape to change sequence
- add sentence by taping strip
- cover with white correction tape
focus their ideas. During the Revision stage, imagery can give students input to use in adding to or changing their writing. If a student has asked a question about something in the writing and the writer is unsure how to make any changes, the writer can take a few moments to close his or her eyes and concentrate on the image he or she wants to create.

**Partner Editing**

In Partner Editing, students working in pairs coach each other, while editing their writing for Punctuation, Capitalization and Spelling. This coaching occurs in three rounds:

**Punctuation Round**

The teachers read a student writing sample to the class (one that matches the assignment at hand) without pausing to take breaths. Ask the students what they noticed while you were reading. Usually they will say that you didn't stop or slow down while you were reading. Discuss how students can hear the punctuation needed in a poem or story by listening to it as it is read aloud. When the reader pauses to take a breath, a period is needed. When there is a slight pause, a comma is needed. Read the student writing sample to the class again. Have the students listen for the pauses as you read. If they hear a long pause, they raise their hand (Optional for upper grades — and if they hear a short pause they show thumbs up). As the teacher reads, exaggerate the pauses so the students can respond. Tell the students that they will now do the same thing with their own writing. As partner #1 reads orally, he or she marks the pauses he or she hears with a period or a comma. Partner #2 stops partner #1 when he or she reads too quickly and doesn't hear the pause in the writing. When partner #1 finishes, partner #2 reads orally, while partner #1 acts as a coach.

**Capitalization Round**

Have the class brainstorm where capital letters are needed in the writing assignment being edited. Make a list on the chalkboard. With their partners acting as coaches, the students orally read through their writing, checking for correct capitalization. The students change roles and the other person reads orally to check for correct punctuation, while the first reader acts as a coach.

**Spelling Round**

To check a paper for spelling, it is most efficient to read the paper backwards. Each student reads his or her paper backwards, starting at the last word and touching each word, as they check word for word towards the beginning of the paper. When coming across an unknown word, or a word they are unsure of, the student circles it and continues on. After both partners have checked their papers, they trade papers and read their partner's paper the same way — word for word backwards, starting at the last word and touching each word. After finishing checking for spelling errors, the students use dictionaries, each other, and the teacher to correct and/or verify the spelling of any marked words.

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**Teacher's Note:** Usually after going through this editing procedure, students will catch 80-85% of their errors. It is important to emphasize the fact that they found their own errors and they won't get a paper back full of corrections.

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**Writing Structures**
Teaching a Mini-Lesson Plan

Topic:

Materials:

Teaching the Lesson
Introduce the topic:

Share examples:

Provide information:

Guide practice of the skill:

Assess when students apply the skill in their own writing:

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