Planning and Writing Stories

Story Elements

Although there are different types of fiction stories they all have the same elements.

- **Characters**
- **Setting**
- **A plot**

Using a 'Writer's Toolkit' and a 'Language Toolkit' for each element may help you develop ideas

Let's have a look at what each one should contain and other suggestions that may help you.

Characters

When you are thinking about a character you could use the following ideas.

- **Try thinking of interesting or unusual people.**
- **Use pictures (from books, magazines, the internet or other places) to give you ideas.**

Once you have an idea you should build on it by…

- **Deciding on a name.**
- **Think of a few details to describe your character (clothing, hairstyle, expression, etc.).**
- **Decide how your character is feeling.**

Let's look at the 'Character Writer's Toolkit'.

Character Writer's Toolkit

To develop your characters, ask questions about them:

- **How old are they?**
- **What are they interested in?**
- **Do they have anything they really dislike?**
- **Have they a special talent?**
- **Do they have a secret?**
- **What are they afraid of?**
- **What is their biggest wish?**

Now we'll look at the 'Character Language Toolkit'.

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Character Language Toolkit

What do your characters look like?

- Use **details** to suggest what a character is like, *e.g. He paused and stared at his reflection. Everyone said that he looked like his mother's side of the family.* (This suggests that his mother is important to him; that he misses her)

- Describe them by using a **list,** *e.g. The librarian had curly brown hair, little round glasses and a turned up nose.*

- Use well chosen **adjectives** and **similes,** *e.g. They looked like crows picking at the sand, caught in the wind's teeth.*

- Mention a **distinctive feature,** *e.g. She wore a gold ring above her left eyebrow.*

Character Language Toolkit

Show how they feel through what they say.

- Reflect their **personality/feelings,** *e.g. "Leave me alone!"*

- Use **expressions,** powerful **verbs** and **adverbs** *e.g. "There! Now you look like a real pirate," she laughed, as she gave him the earrings.*

- Add in a **supporting action** *e.g. "We'll need an axe," said John Cabot, clapping his old friend on the shoulder.*

- Avoid a string of dialogue.

Character Language Toolkit

Show how they feel by what they do.

- Reflect the character's **feelings,** *e.g. In the cold dark of the cave he whispered 'goodnight' and crept back under his tarpaulin.*

- Make sure different characters behave in different ways.

- Use powerful **verbs** and **adverbs,** especially for **movement** *(amble, shuffle, dash)* and looking *(peer, glance, stare, glare).*

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Setting

When you are thinking about a setting you need to remember that it must match the type of story you are going to write. It might be helpful to make a list of possible settings and then make the best choice.

Once you have an idea you should try to…

- Picture it :use labelled photos and pictures to help you.

- Draw it: Draw a landscape or map of your story setting

- Sense it: Close your eyes and imagine the setting. What can you hear, smell, see and feel?

- Film it: Imagine you are looking through a camera from different angles at your setting

- Now you should write it!

Let's look at your
'Setting Writer's Toolkit'.

Setting Writer's Toolkit

- **Choose an interesting name for your setting.**

- **Think about details like the time of day and the weather.**

- **Show the setting through the main character's eyes** *e.g. Zak could see a bright speck in the sky which grew bigger and bigger. What could it be?*

- **Use unexpected detail as a 'hook'** *e.g. It was then he noticed it. Something had been crawling in the fine, red dust beneath the largest tower. Zak stooped down and looked at the marks. They were unlike anything he had seen before.*

- **Change the setting to create atmosphere** *e.g. the path grew darker......*

Now we'll look at the 'Setting Language Toolkit'.

Setting Language Toolkit

Have you used…

- **Powerful verbs and adjectives**

  e.g. stars __speckled__ in the __night__ sky

- **Similes**

  e.g. __like a huge, orange balloon,__ the moon
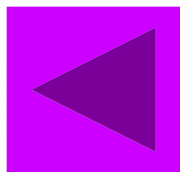
- **Metaphors**.

  e.g. the __wall's backbone__ stretched across the land

- **Personification**

  e.g. __the wind moaned__

- **Lists?**

  e.g. he stared at the __dusty__ chairs, broken machines and old boxes.

Plot

Get ideas for creating story plots. You might get ideas from…

- **Stories you have read or heard**
- **Changing/retelling traditional tales, nursery rhymes or poems**
- **Things that have happened to you or your family**
- **Anecdotes that you have been told**

Your story is like a recipe that must be blended together. Let's look at the ingredients!
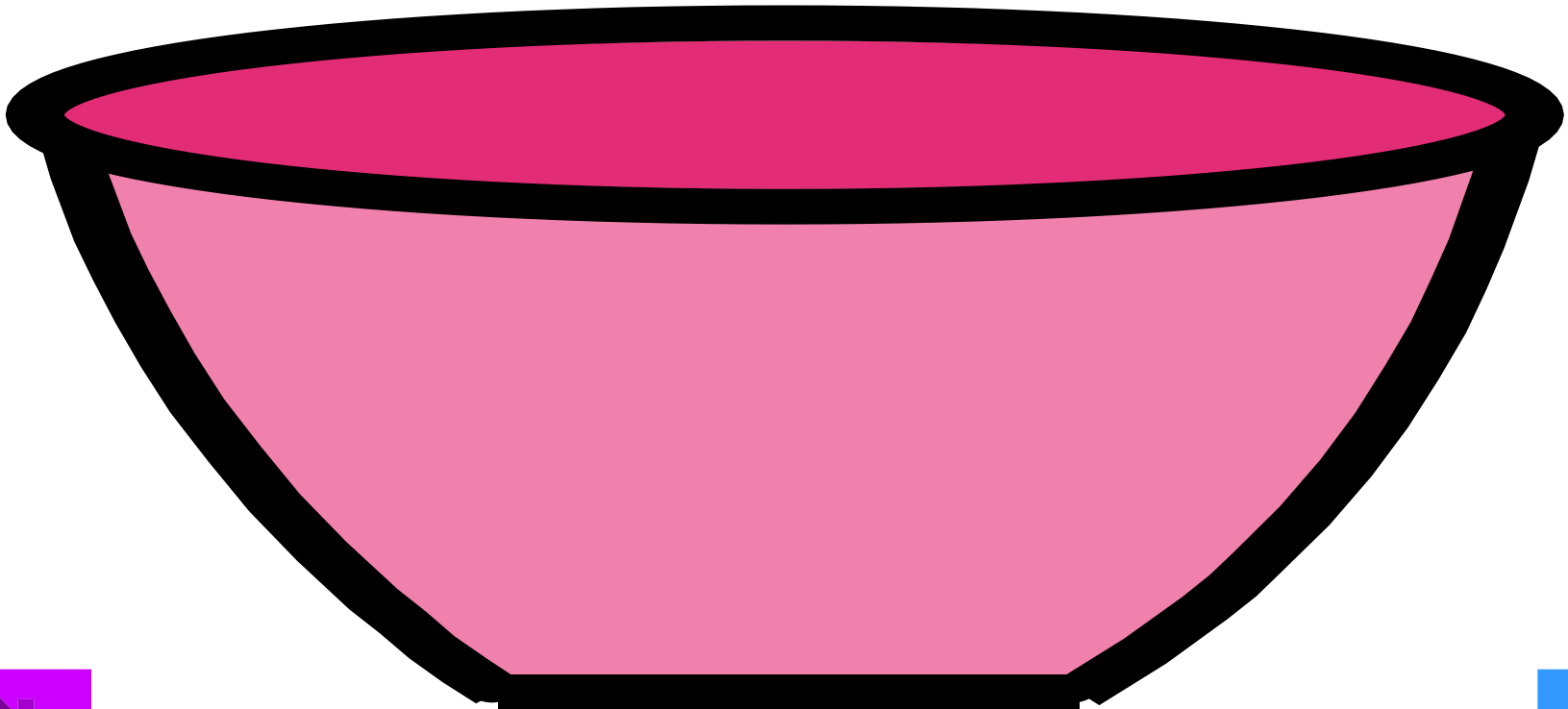
Story Ingredients

How wi... ...nd?

When you've got your ingredients it's time to plan your story!

Story Planning

Before you plan your story, it can be helpful to have a story pattern for your writing. Here are some suggestions:

- Overcoming a problem
- Quest/Journey
- Conquer the monster
- Warning
- Character flaw
- Lost/found
- Suspense

- Wishing
- Catastrophe
- Magical
- Stories with a moral
- Changing (sad – happy, poor – rich, weak over strong, good over evil
- Traditional Pattern

How to plan

Jotting down ideas can help you plan your story. Your plot should be simple and drive towards the ends Here are some ideas to help with your story planning.

- **Flowchart: for planning a play or a story that has a set number of scenes/paragraphs.**
- **Timelines: good for planning in chronological order.**
- **Storyboards: helps you to visualise each scene.**
- **Story picture maps: good for creating the setting and plot together in a visual way.**
- **Story mountain: Use a story mountain to build excitement and interest into your storyline.**

Let's see how these ideas work.

Flowchart

This method is really helpful when you have a set number of scenes or paragraphs and can really assist you when planning a play. You use a circle for each scene or paragraph, like this:

At home → In the woods → At the haunted house in the woods
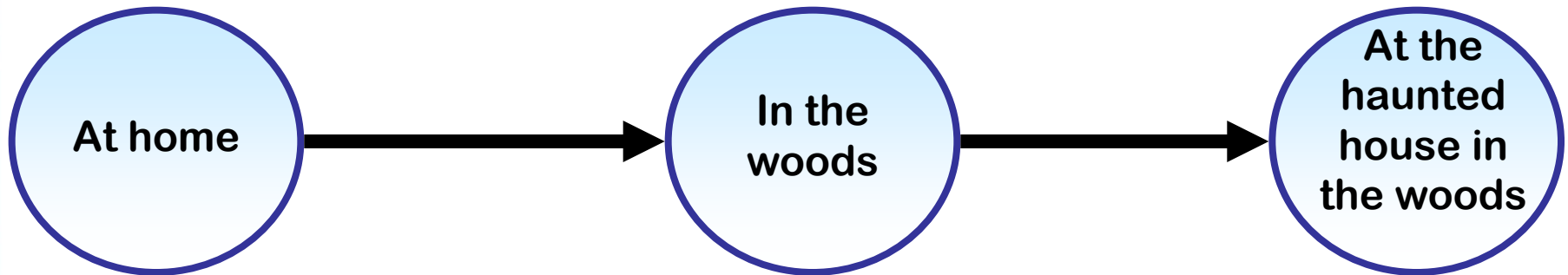
Now we'll look at a Timeline

Timeline

This method is really helpful when you have to plan things in a chronological order. It is particularly good when planning a letter or diary.

Wake up

Had a shower

Got dressed

Ate breakfast

Went to school
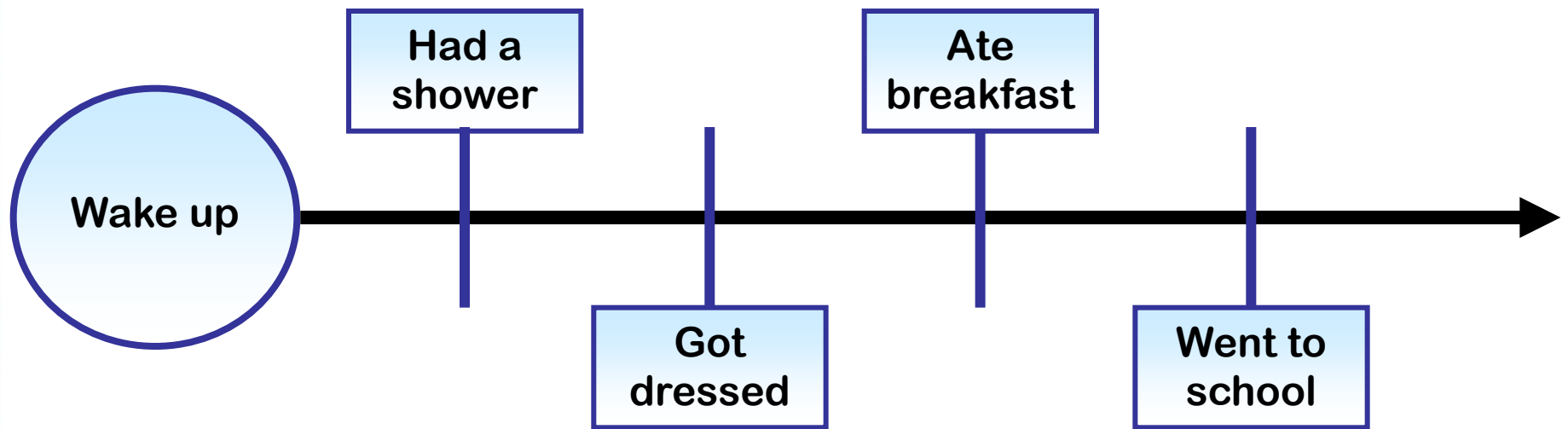
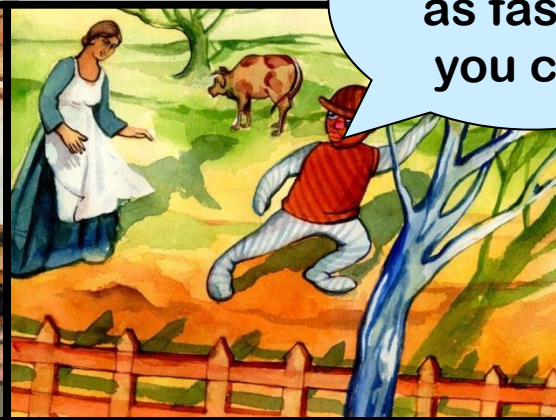**How about looking at a Storyboard?**

Storyboard

Storyboards really help you visualise your story. It allows you to map out your story using words and pictures and is a bit like a cartoon strip. Here is part of a storyboard for a famous story. Can you tell what it is?
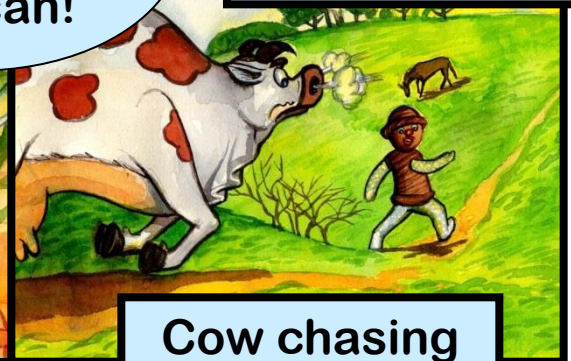
Cottage in the country

Run, run as fast as you can!

Open fields

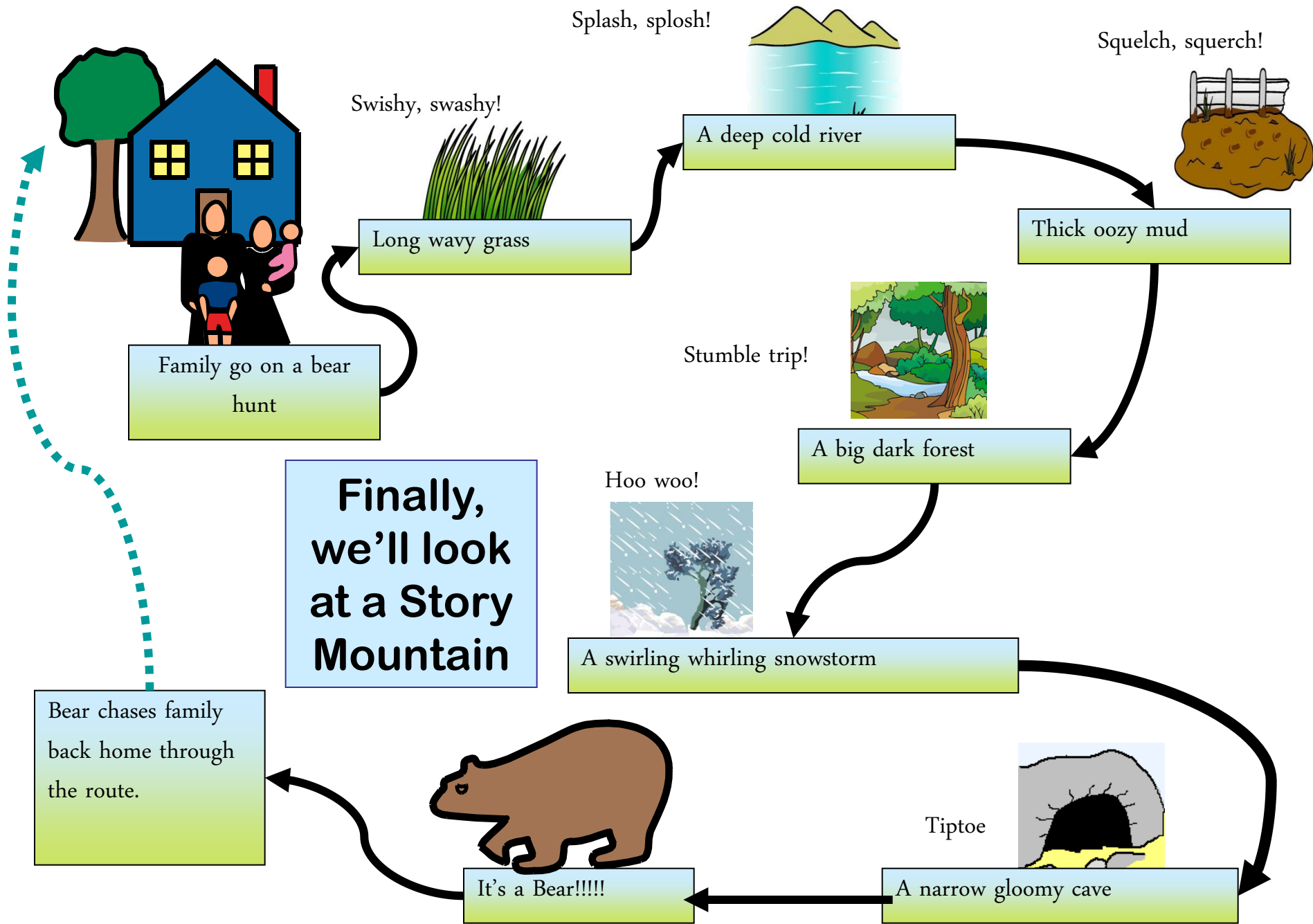**Old woman baking.**

Cow chasing

Let's look at a Story picture map

Story Picture Map

This is another method of visualising your story that some people find helpful. The next slide shows a very famous story for young children as a story picture map. This method can work for all types of stories but is particularly good if you are using an unusual setting; like in a science fiction or fantasy story. They can be drawn on an actual map base or as a pictorial flow chart.

Let's have a look

Splash, splosh!

Squelch, squerch!

Swishy, swashy!

A deep cold river

Long wavy grass

Thick oozy mud

Family go on a bear hunt

Stumble trip!

A big dark forest

Hoo woo!

Finally, we'll look at a Story Mountain

A swirling whirling snowstorm

Bear chases family back home through the route.

It's a Bear!!!!!

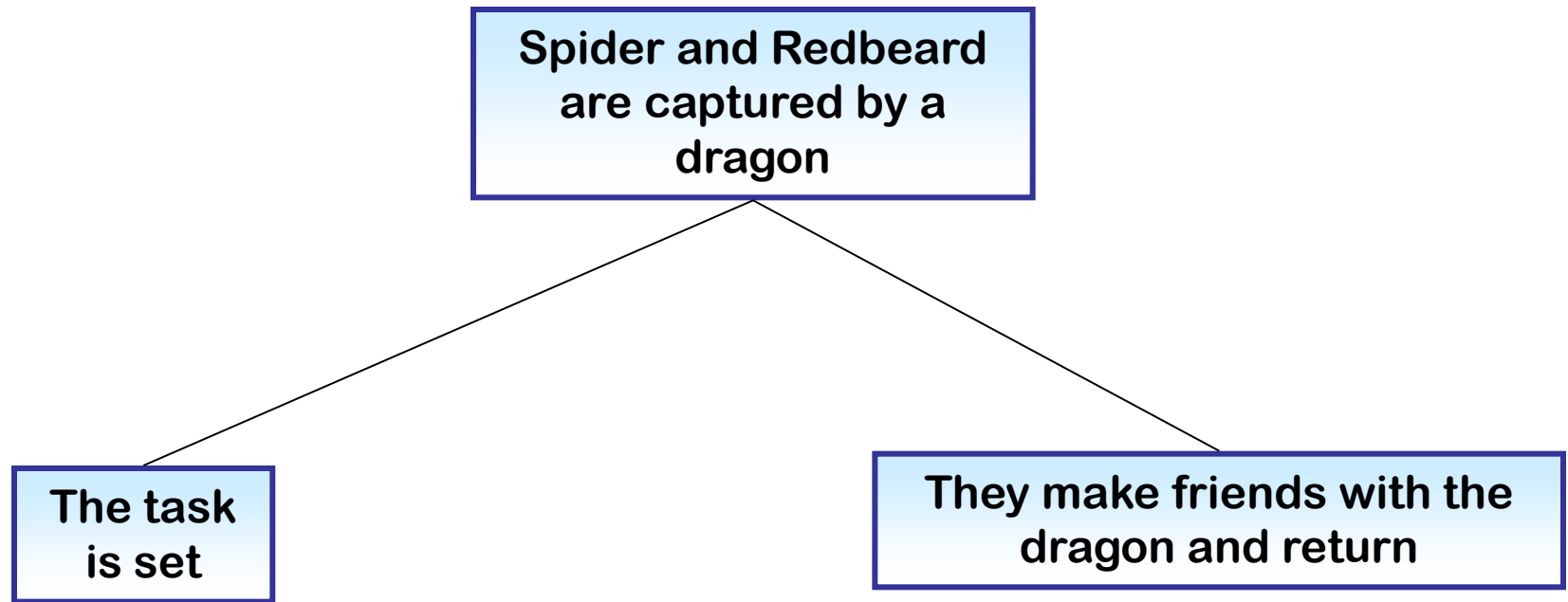Tiptoe

A narrow gloomy cave

Story Mountain

This is a good method if you want to build excitement or interest into your storyline. A good plot should have moments of suspense or crisis and characters should be faced with problems or challenges.

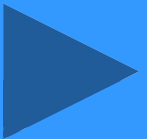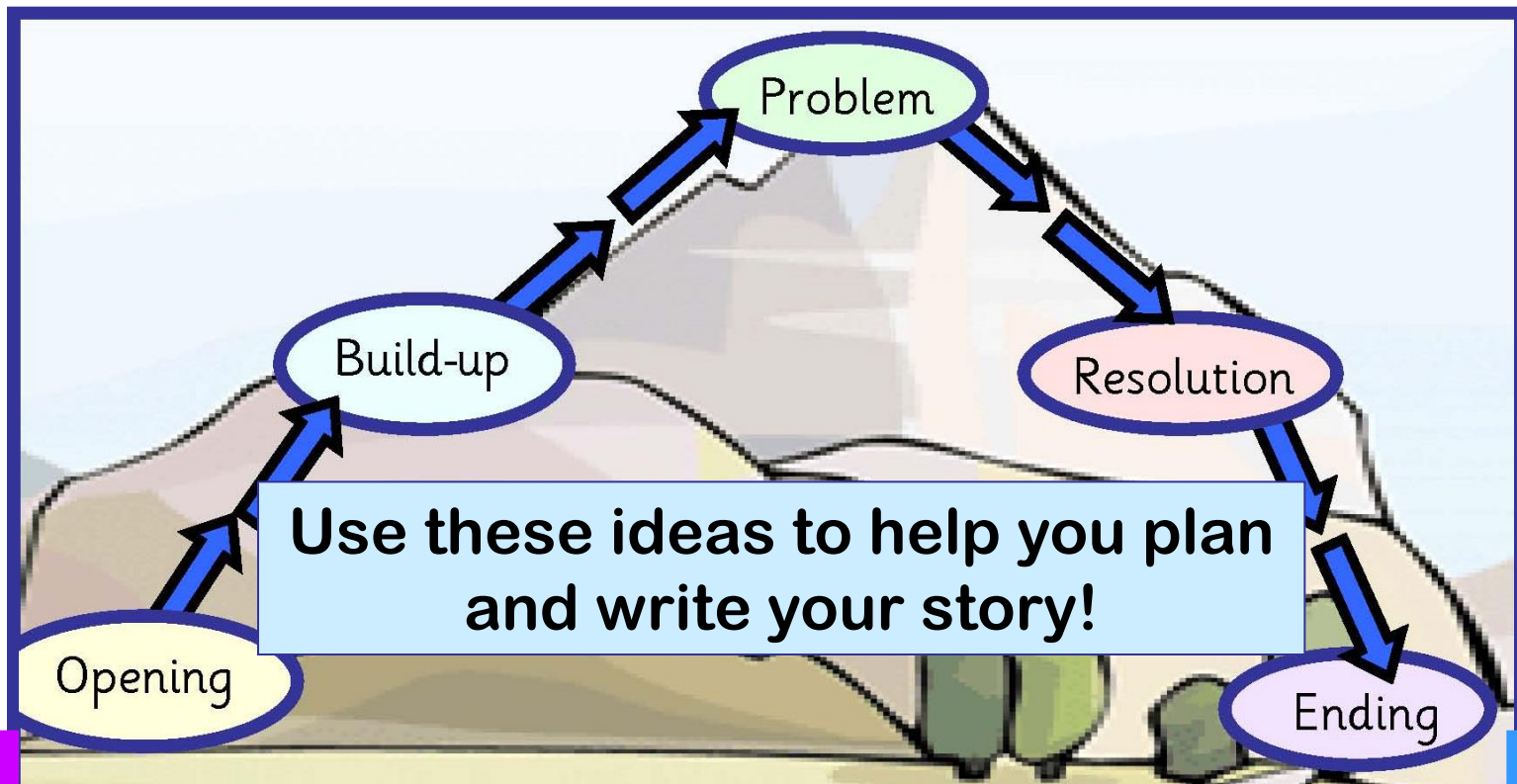Let's have a look at two different types of story mountains

Simple Story Mountain

This is one you could draw on a scrap piece of paper and add to and change as you go on.

Spider and Redbeard are captured by a dragon

The task is set

They make friends with the dragon and return

More Detailed Story Mountain

This story mountain has five elements that you can use as a framework to build onto.

Problem

Build-up

Resolution

Use these ideas to help you plan and write your story!

Opening

Ending

Story Writer's Toolkit

Once you've written your story you can use these lists to check it. Have you……

- **Used your plan to help you write your story?**
- **Made changes to add to your original idea?**
- **Controlled the dialogue (is there too much)?**
- **Balanced the dialogue, action and description?**
- **Made the story well paced (are any parts rushed)?**
- **Used the setting to create different atmospheres?**
- **Shown what the main character is like by what they say and do?**
- **Written an ending that shows how the main character feels or what has been learned?**

Now we'll look at the 'Story Language Toolkit'.

Story LanguageToolkit

Have you……

- Stayed in the same **tense**?

- Stayed in the same **person** *(e.g. I or he/she)?*

- Used connectives to link ideas, sentences and paragraphs

e.g. Once upon a time; One day; Suddenly; so; Eventually; Finally etc.

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I hope you are now a keen story writer, with ideas flying frantically around your head!

Using the features explained, what can you write a story about?....