

# Creative Writing Lesson

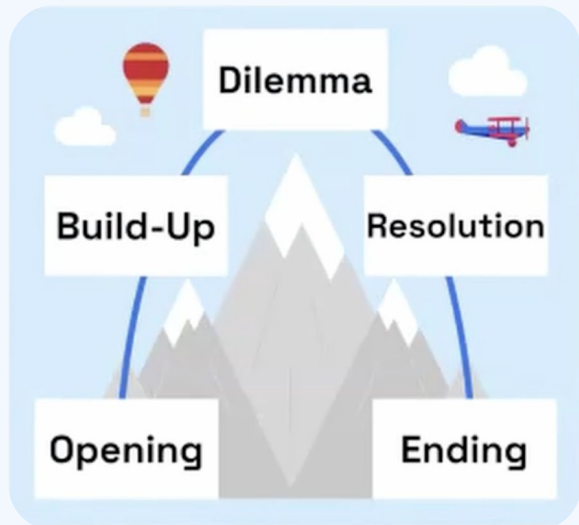
Outstanding openings



# What is creative writing?

Creative writing is using your imagination to create something new. It could be a story, a poem about your pet, or a letter to your future self.

There are five key elements to writing a creative story, which are shown on this **story mountain**:



Story mountain

1. **Opening:** an introduction to the character(s) and the setting.
2. **Build-up:** a build up to the dilemma or climax of the story.
3. **Dilemma:** an exciting or dramatic event at the middle of the story.
4. **Resolution:** shows how the character deals with the dilemma.
5. **End:** wraps up the story. The ending should provide your reader with a conclusion to the story.

# How to create an outstanding opening?

In today's lesson we will focus on what to include in the **opening** of a creative story.

The opening is your chance to hook your reader in and make them want to keep reading.

In today's lesson, you will learn:

1. How to create a compelling **character** by "showing" rather than "telling".
2. How to describe a **setting** using the five senses.

## FIVE SENSES



HEARING



SMELL



TASTE



TOUCH



VISION

# How to introduce your character and setting?

You can introduce your character and setting in a number of different ways...



Description



Speech



Action

1.

## A description of your protagonist and setting



A **description of your protagonist** might focus on their appearance, their mood or describing their personality.

A **description of the setting** will help to build up an image of the world the story is set in for the reader.

E.g. Lena stood at the edge of the cliff, her cloak blowing in the sea breeze. Her wild, curly hair danced around her face as she stared out at the distant island. Everyone in the village said it was cursed, but Lena had never been one to follow the rules.

## 2.

## Speech



Speech can be used in the opening of your story.

1. A **conversation** could take place between the protagonist in your story and another important character:

E.g. Lena stood on the cliff, the wind blowing her cloak. "Are you sure about this?" Max asked, glancing nervously at the waves crashing below. Lena nodded, gripping her satchel. "The map says the treasure is on that island. We have to try."

2. You could start your story as an **internal monologue**, when a character's thoughts are expressed as an ongoing narration.

E.g. Lena stepped closer to the edge of the cliff, the sea spray brushing her face. *What if I'm making a mistake?* she thought.

# 3.

## Action



Your story could start right in the **middle of an action**, causing the reader to wonder how the characters came to be in the described situation and how they will get out of it.

E.g. Lena and Max skidded to a halt at the cliff's edge, their hearts pounding and breath short. Behind them, the sound of footsteps grew louder, the guards were still chasing them.



# Creating your characters

Before you begin writing your story it is important to have a clear understanding about who your characters are.

Task one: Take 10 mins to build a clear picture of your protagonist

1. My protagonist likes \_\_\_\_ because... \_\_\_\_
2. My protagonist dislikes \_\_\_\_ because... \_\_\_\_
3. My protagonist is going on an adventure because... \_\_\_\_

Please fill in the blanks here to build a better understanding about who your protagonist is.





# Who are the other characters in your story?

## Is there an antagonist in your story?

An **antagonist** is someone who works against your protagonist and makes it harder for your protagonist to achieve their aim.

Whilst antagonists are a great addition to a story, the reader needs to be able to understand the antagonist's perspective:

- Why are they against the protagonist in the story?
- What are their reasons?

## Who are the secondary characters in your story?

**Secondary characters** are the people in a story who are not the main character, but still play an important role. They help to move the story forward, support the main character, or sometimes create challenges for them.

Examples of secondary characters could be a best friend or a pet 🐶

# How to write a great character

## 1. Have a clear picture of your character in your head:

- What does your character look like?
- Who are their friends and family?
- What are their interests?

## 2. Use interesting and varied vocabulary:

- You want to engage your readers with exciting adjectives, vivid verbs and amazing adverbs.

Examples:

- **Exciting adjective:**

The **towering** waves crashed against the rocks, spraying saltwater high into the air.

- **Vivid verb:**

The dragon **lurched** forward, smoke curling from its nostrils as it prepared to strike.

- **Amazing adverb:**

She tiptoed **silently** through the hallway, careful not to wake anyone.

# How to write a great character

## 3. Show, don't tell method

Instead of telling the reader the character is experiencing an emotion, you can use descriptive language to **show** this emotion.

This method can describe a character's body language, movement and their voice.

E.g. instead of saying "She was very happy", you could use examples like this to show that your character is happy:

Show	
Her face split into a huge smile.	Body language
She flew high into the air and gave an excited twirl.	Movement
She let out a small squeal and clapped her hands delightedly	Voice

# Where is your story taking place?

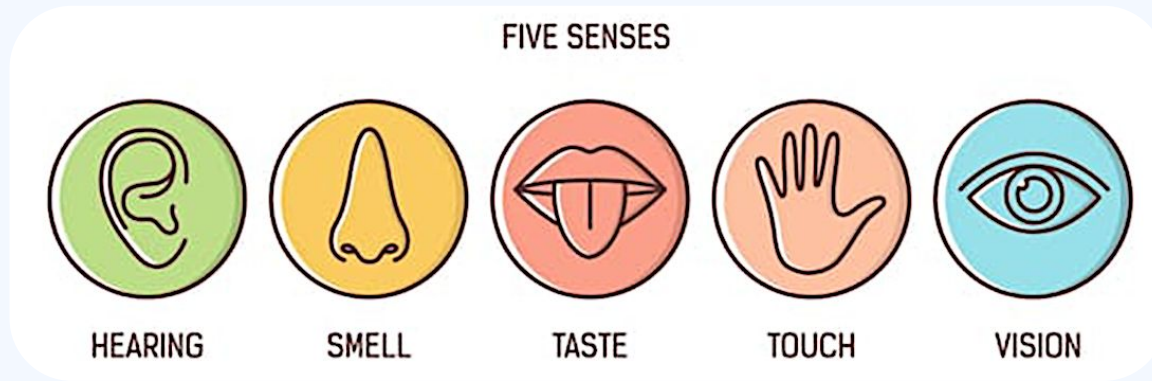
The opening of a story should always make it really clear to the reader where the story is taking place.

Especially when you're creating a new imaginary world, it is important that you provide descriptive details to make this world clear to the reader.



# How to describe the setting of your story?

Use the five senses to provide descriptions!



Your setting descriptions should not only focus on what the setting looks like, e.g. building, furniture and landscapes, but it should also include the smells, sounds and other sensations linked to our five senses.

Examples of using the five senses to describe a busy city setting:



Everywhere Luke looked, there were people



The smell of yesterday's bins still lingered.



Angry shouts competed with blaring horns.



Yet another irritable commuter pushed past him.




# Your go! Try writing the opening for your own story

For the next 25 minutes, please can you write an opening paragraph for a story.

Choose one of the following prompts to begin your story:

1. "It was no ordinary day at school, not when a dragon landed on the playground."
2. "Thunder rumbled in the distance as she stepped into the forest."
3. "Everything changed the moment the lights flickered and the map began to glow."

Or write your own!



# Sharing and feedback

In pairs:

- Swap paragraphs and read each other's.
- Give two stars ★★ (things they did well) and one wish ✨ (suggestion to improve or build on).




# Your creative writing challenge – homework task!

 Write an original story (up to 500 words) using this prompt:

**"It wasn't what I expected..."**

What is the unexpected gift? It might not look like a gift at all. Maybe you could feel it but not hold it. Maybe it came from someone you knew well, or someone you'd barely noticed before. Maybe the person who gave it didn't even know how much it meant. Be as imaginative or adventurous as you like!

 When completed, your story will be entered into Atom Learning's Young Author Award 2026, where you could win:

- A family trip to **Centre Parcs**
- A **custom book cover** made just for your story
- **Book vouchers**, Atom Home subscriptions, and more!

 **Deadline: 13th July 2026**

 Winners announced: 13th July 2026

