

Introduction

Stories existed long before books. We use stories to connect, to learn, to persuade, and to teach. Storytelling is an essential human skill that most people understand on a superficial level. Some turn it into an art form, but others struggle with its application. Educators know the power of stories and use them often, not only in language arts but in science, history, mathematics, and sports. Educators do not always understand the deep structure of stories, though, nor the full potential of their application.

Story Frames provides a dynamic, engaging framework for educators to use to inspire students of all ages to engage in the storytelling process, by both analyzing the stories of published authors and creating their own original tales. These may range from basic oral narratives to complex written plots. They might focus on history or fantasy or may even explore personal experiences. *Story Frames* uses the same 12-element plot structure to discuss a variety of genres, including narrative nonfiction picture books, chapter books, and novels. It is geared toward students in Grades 1–8, though it can be adapted for both younger and older students, and it may be used to explore the structure of any story.

Today’s educators often must address the needs of various learners in the same classroom—from students who are still struggling with fundamental skills to gifted students who crave more significant challenges. Resources that provide opportunities for implementing universal design for learning are crucial for the modern-day classroom filled with students with a wide span of ability levels. *Story Frames* fills that void by providing strategies for teaching narrative structure to students across a variety of age ranges and skill sets, all while using the same story. As students truly engage with stories, some for the very first time, teachers and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) develop a better understanding of how to inspire and support both struggling and advanced learners.

One of the primary objectives of *Story Frames* is to take traditional story grammar analysis (Duchan, 2004; Stein & Glenn, 1979) to the next level by teaching students to think about stories the way authors do. What makes *Story Frames* unique is that this analysis incorporates the methods and strategies used by professional authors and screenwriters (Marks, 2007; McKee, 1997; Snyder, 2005; Vogler, 2007; Wiesner, 2005). It is also the underlying structure found in the myths and fairy tales of cultures around the world, as described by Joseph Campbell (1949) in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*.

Most of the professional plotting strategies discussed in *Story Frames* focus on screenwriting methods, but the applications have been used by many novelists as well. In fact, every November, thousands of writers—professionals, amateurs, and students alike—take part in National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) with the objective of completing the first draft of a novel by the end of the month. The program offers support throughout the year for adults as well as young writers under age 18 and their educators. Their web site (www.nanowrimo.org), recommends plotting resources like *Save the Cat! The Last Book On Screenwriting You’ll Ever Need* (2005) by Blake Snyder (discussed in Chapter 2), which contain plot elements similar to those found in *Story Frames*. You can find a NaNoWriMo version of the *Save the Cat!* Beat Sheet (a tool for identifying the important beats or key elements of a story) at <http://nanowrimo.org/nano-prep-101>. Many of these resources focus on the structure of screenplays since scripts must follow a more highly structured format

“Tell me the facts
and I’ll learn. Tell
me the truth and
I’ll believe. But tell
me a story and it
will live in my heart
forever.”

—Native American
Proverb

than novels to meet the constraints of a 90- to 120-minute film. The three-act, beginning, middle, end architecture found in most (but not all) scripts is also present in three-act plays as well as many longer stories.

The term *frames* refers to the freeze-frame or still shot that appears when you pause a movie or video. When you hold an old-fashioned reel of a film up to the light, each frame is visible. These are the “frames” explored in *Story Frames*, the moments in a story where we get a glimpse of its deeper structure. When these frames play on a screen, they create a seamless whole, but we can stop at any point along the way, pause, and explore each one more deeply.

The 12-element structure in the *Story Frames* approach may seem complicated at first, but it is not difficult to understand. With some variations, most stories follow a structure that includes these elements: 1) Ordinary World, 2) Call and Response, 3) Mentors, Guides, and Gifts, 4) Crossing, 5) New World, 6) Problems, Prizes, and Plans, 7) Midpoint Attempt, 8) Downtime Response, 9) Chase and Escape, 10) Death and Transformation, 11) Climax: The Final Test, and 12) Final Reward.

Young children can grasp these concepts with ease. They are not within the child’s conscious awareness at first, but once students understand the terminology and concepts, there is immediate understanding. They quickly draw associations and reorganize old information into the story schema. There is a sense of “Yes, I understand. These are things I have somehow always known.” These concepts are not new. The process is merely about awakening an ancient understanding that we have not always had the words to describe.

HOW STORY FRAMES EVOLVED

The use of story grammar to improve comprehension has a long history. In 1979, Stein and Glenn introduced a story schema they created based on their study of children’s stories and fables. They described their work as a “. . . first approximation in the attempt to delineate the distinctions people naturally use” (Stein & Glenn, 1979, p. 58) and admitted that their definitions might need modification over time. Indeed, several authors have expanded upon the story grammar first outlined by Stein and Glenn or have created new schemas for stories (Graves & Montague, 1991; Montgomery & Kahn, 2005). Maryellen Rooney Moreau, M.Ed., CCC-SLP, uses a set of icons organized sequentially on a Story Grammar Marker along with a doll called Braidy to teach narrative structure that is used by SLPs in many school districts. Students place three-dimensional objects representing the icons on the doll’s braids as they retell a story. Find out more about her program at the MindWing Concepts web site (<https://www.mindwingconcepts.com>). English teachers often implement a somewhat different approach to story structure. They use Freitag’s Pyramid (Noden, 1999, p. 143) to represent the rising action of the story.

Film analyst Christopher Vogler (2007) speaks about having sensed a foundational structure for stories that he did not fully understand until he learned of the Hero’s Journey. He speaks of the universal nature of Campbell’s (1949) work when he states, “In his study of world hero myths Campbell discovered that they are all basically the same story, retold endlessly in infinite variation” (Vogler, 1992, p. 14).

Table I.1 compares the story elements found in *Story Frames* to those outlined by Christopher Vogler. See his book for a more in-depth discussion of the elements of professional storytelling.

Several other professional story analysts have influenced the creation of the *Story Frames* approach (Marks, 2007; McKee, 1997; Snyder, 2005; Wiesner, 2005). As I incorporated their insights as well as the contributions of professionals in education and speech-language pathology, a story analysis emerged that young children could easily understand in the general education setting, as well as older students and those with severe learning

Table I.1. Comparison of *Story Frames* and *The Writer's Journey*

Story Frames	The Writer's Journey
Ordinary World	The Ordinary World
Call and Response	The Call to Adventure Refusal of the Call
Mentors, Guides, and Gifts	Meeting with the Mentor
Crossing	Crossing the First Threshold
New World	Tests, Allies and Enemies
Problems, Prizes, and Plans	Approach to the Innermost Cave
Midpoint Attempt	The Ordeal
Downtime Response	Reward
Chase and Escape	The Road Back
Death and Transformation	
Climax: The Final Test	The Resurrection
Final Reward	Return with the Elixir

Elements for *The Writer's Journey* from Vogler, C. (2007). *The writer's journey: Mythic structure for writers* (3rd ed.). Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, www.mwp.com; reprinted by permission.

disabilities and developmental concerns. Thus, *Story Frames* was born. What makes this method unique is that while accessible to students of all ages and ability levels, it still presents a challenging framework for older students and even adult professional writers to use in plotting more complicated endeavors. Using the method in *Story Frames*, readers and writers discuss and analyze stories by highlighting the following elements:

1. **Beginning:** Ordinary World; Call and Response; Mentors, Guides, and Gifts; Crossing
2. **Middle:** New World; Problems, Prizes, and Plans; Midpoint Challenge; Downtime Response
3. **End:** Chase and Escape; Death and Transformation; Climax: The Final Test; Final Reward

Different Approaches for Teaching Story Grammar

Though experts agree that understanding story structure is essential to student success, different types of professionals have traditionally taken different approaches for teaching story grammar.

Stein and Glenn (1979) summarize the SLP's view of story grammar as including *setting, initiating events, internal responses, internal plans, attempts, direct consequences, and reactions*. In *Image Grammar: Using Grammatical Structures to Teach Writing* (1999, pp. 142–143), Henry R. Noden noted that many reading teachers observe a six-element structure to define the elements of a story: *initiating event, internal response, attempts, outcomes, resolution, and reaction*. German writer and critic Gustav Freytag (1816–1895) observed a five-act structure in most of the plays of his time, which he described as *exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement*. Many educators as well as story analysts have expounded on Freytag's Pyramid; Figure I.1 shows a modification of it. Noden (1999, p. 143) uses slightly different terms for the pyramid to discuss the way English teachers typically approach story structure with their students: *setting, setup (initiating event), rising action (internal response, conflict, attempts), climax (outcome), falling action, and resolution (reactions)*.

Story Frames takes the basic story elements already used by SLPs, reading teachers, and English teachers and expands them, making them more concrete and visual for students. It goes beyond story grammar to make stories come alive.

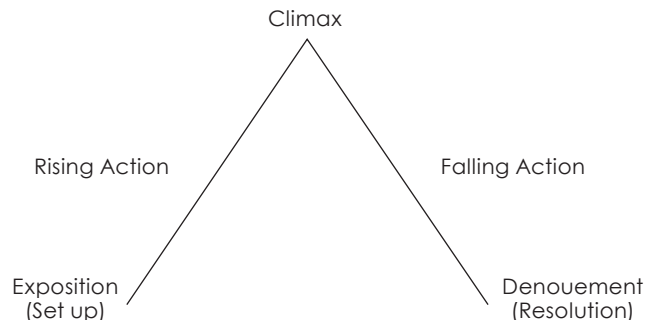


Figure I.1. Adaptation of Freytag's Pyramid. (Source: Noden, 1999.)

Story Frames and Literacy Skills

Since its inception, *Story Frames* has been used with students of all ages and ability levels as well as for teaching adult writing workshops for those aspiring to write professionally. The material has been presented to educators from a variety of disciplines, including general education teachers, special education teachers, SLPs, and librarians. Many have reported using the techniques with great success. I have personally used *Story Frames* with students in Grades K–12 in a variety of settings as well as to plot fiction novels written for teens. Paula Moraine, author of the chapter on executive functions as well as a book on the topic, has used *Story Frames* in one-to-one and small group settings to support the executive functions and comprehension of her students in Grades 4–12. At the university level, Jennifer Cervantes, children's literature instructor and best-selling author of the *Storm Runner* series, used *Story Frames* to teach her college students the structure of story. The wide range of disciplines impacted as well as the diverse population of students who benefit from this program make it a valuable tool for collaboration and differentiated instruction.

Narratives have become invaluable in the evaluation and treatment of students with language learning disabilities. Hoffman (2009) lists several reasons for using narratives in language intervention. Retelling stories provides an opportunity for a discourse-level analysis of spoken language and shows how well a student can organize ideas. Stories provide a meaningful context for addressing a wide range of language skills, and they provide a structure for communication.

SLPs are being called on more and more to help create and carry out reading interventions in response to intervention (RTI) programs (Justice, 2006). An increased understanding of story structure helps equip ancillary staff to support educators in this endeavor.

Skills that teachers, SLPs, or other professionals can address and improve using *Story Frames* include expressive and receptive vocabulary, oral language, storytelling, making story predictions, analyzing stories, sequencing, problem solving (e.g., making inferences), using pragmatic language (e.g., taking another's perspective), and written language.

WHO CAN USE THIS BOOK

Target users for the *Story Frames* approach include educators and specialists who work with students in Grades 1–12. This particular resource emphasizes Grades 1–8. The strategies may be facilitated one to one, in small group settings, in inclusion classes, and in general education classes. In addition, many strategies can be implemented during lessons or therapy sessions conducted virtually; see the Tips for Online Learning and Teletherapy sections included in many of the instructional chapters. Activities presented in this book include methods for differentiating instruction for both emerging and advanced readers

and writers. The story analysis explored may be implemented by teachers, librarians, and SLPs, either in collaboration with other educators or when working alone.

HELPING STUDENTS GROW AS READERS AND WRITERS

Figure I.2 shows the 12 elements of *Story Frames* with pictures for younger students. These images represent the icons used with students of all ages. Figure I.3 shows the 12 elements with more elaborate illustrations that may be used when introducing the concepts to older students.

The 12 elements, when organized into rows designating the beginning, middle, and end of a story, provide a structure that is easy for students to understand and remember. When giving a summary, many students struggle with knowing what is essential to include. Using these categories provides a useful organizational framework. Students and teachers may not always agree on what should go where, and not all elements will always appear, but the process of applying these elements helps the student organize something complicated, like a story, into manageable and memorable parts.

As students grow in their ability to understand and analyze stories, the next step is to encourage them to write stories of their own. Writing requires the synthesis and integration of multiple skills and makes students more engaged in the learning process. Whereas reading can be a more passive process, writing is always active. A student must first make meaning out of ideas, information, and experiences and then create a written product reflecting that understanding (Santa, 1988).

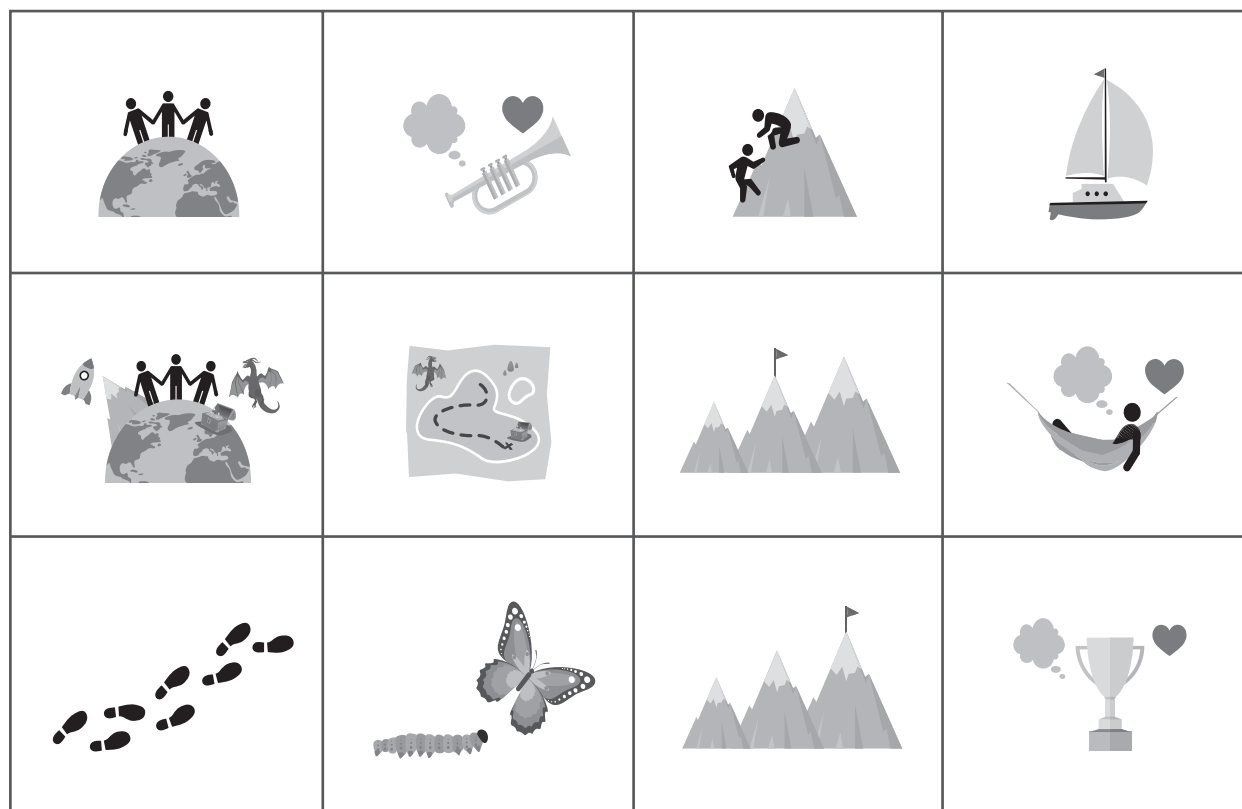


Figure I.2. *Story Frames* icons for the 12 elements, for use with all ages.

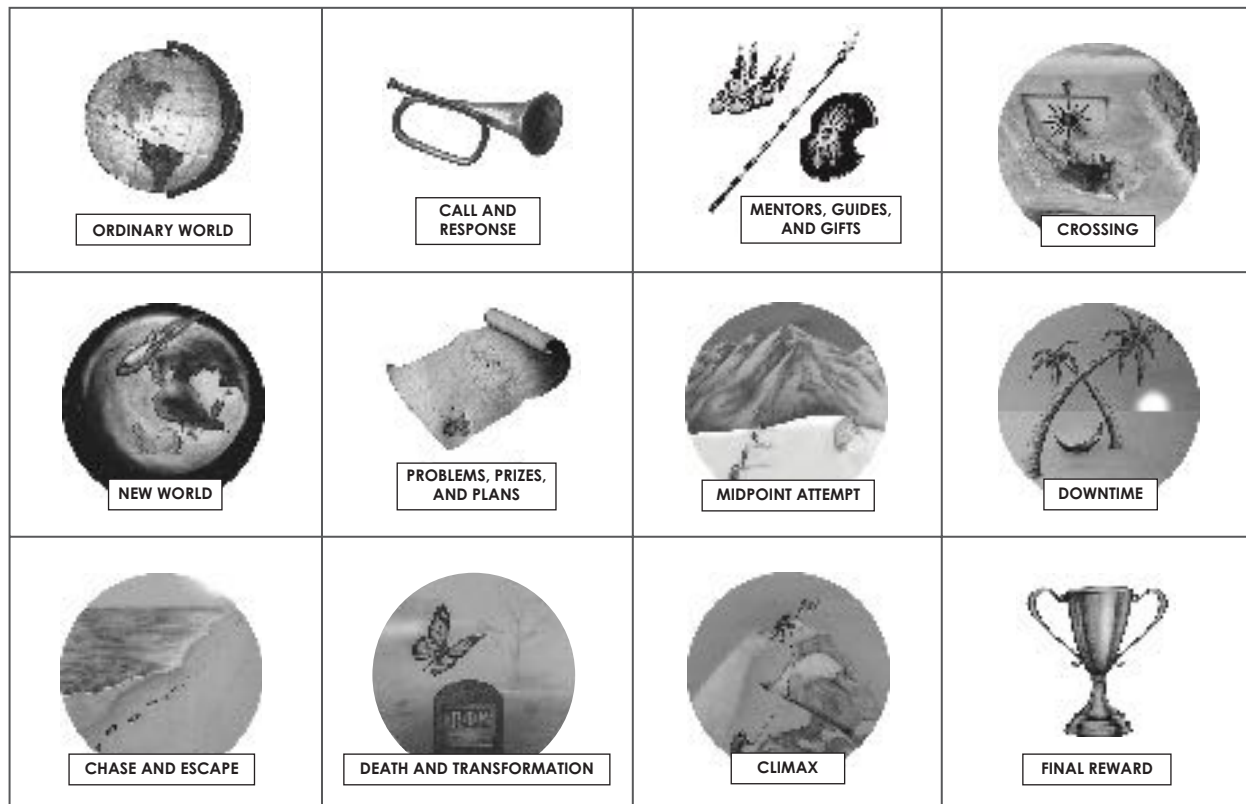


Figure 1.3. *Story Frames* illustrations for the 12 elements, for use with older students.

Story Frames can be used to help students create written or oral narratives. Some well-known authors and poets, such as William Butler Yeats, have struggled with the mechanics of writing (Miner & Siegel, 1992). Yet even though a student struggles with the foundational skills required for writing, he or she may still have many creative ideas to express verbally. Students blossom with simple modifications such as dictation or speech-to-text tools provided as a bridge between their oral and written narratives.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

There are two approaches for handling the material presented in Section I of *Story Frames*. Those who want to jump into story analysis with their students or who may have little preparation time may use Chapter 1 to acquaint themselves with the approach, tools, and techniques, including use of storyboards and pictography, and then skip ahead to Chapter 3 (“Getting Started With Story Frames”). This chapter provides two options for introductory lessons, including sample scripts for each element. Chapter 2 explores the 12 story elements in depth and may be studied as time permits. The other option is to read the first three chapters in order, develop a deeper understanding of each of the story elements, and then use Chapter 3 to teach them to students.

Section II focuses on using *Story Frames* to build key skills. Chapter 4 explores how young children develop an understanding of narrative as oral language is emerging and discusses expectations for each stage of narrative development. Chapter 5 discusses how oral story retells can help students develop vocabulary, sequencing skills, and an understanding of grammar. Chapter 6 examines the use of stories and strategies to help students

make the leap to writing sentences and paragraphs, summarizing stories, and ultimately to writing their own stories; this chapter includes the Common Core writing expectations for each grade. Though many states have created their own standards, the Common Core is still a useful tool for identifying skills for teaching and intervention that may be applied to other states' standards. Chapter 7 discusses how narrative can also be used to teach expository writing skills. Chapter 8 discusses building key skills in another area, reading comprehension, through the use of Wh-questions.

The final three chapters of Section II examine the use of narrative to develop a broader range of skills for literacy and learning: grammar and syntax (Chapter 9); connections to poetry and rhyme, alliteration, and phonological awareness (Chapter 10); and finally executive function skills (Chapter 11).

Section III explores writing several varieties of personal stories, including personal narratives (Chapter 12), memoir (Chapter 13), the creation of superheroes (Chapter 14), the family story (Chapter 15), and multicultural stories (Chapter 16). Specific strategies are outlined for teaching students, especially students with disabilities, how to create personal narratives as a means of self-reflection and self-empowerment.

The downloadable materials for this book, available online through the Brookes Publishing Download Hub, include a wealth of resources to help teachers and other educational professionals get started using *Story Frames* with students. Many are easily adaptable for online learning. These resources include two brief guides to using *Story Frames* with popular books, *Using Story Frames With Picture Books* and *Using Story Frames With Chapter Books and Novels*. Accompanying these guides are story analyses for 32 books. These books include the following:

- A wide range of popular nonfiction narrative picture books for Grades 1–5; the guide *Using Story Frames With Picture Books* includes suggestions for using picture books with middle school students.
- Fiction picture books, including fairy tales from various cultures as well as twists and retellings of familiar fairy tales.
- An assortment of books for Grades 3–8, ranging from chapter books to middle-grade and young adult novels to novels in verse.

The tables provided at the end of this Introduction provide a quick overview of the story analyses available with this book.

Also included with the downloadable resources are reproducible worksheets and graphic organizers for student use as well as PowerPoint activities to facilitate online learning. Overall, *Story Frames* includes more than three dozen lesson plans adaptable to almost any story that are found throughout the book.

As teachers become excited about the magic and power of stories, so will students. By using *Story Frames*, young people grow in their appreciation of stories so that they may find a voice to tell their own intriguing tales.

Get ready for an exciting adventure!

FOR MORE, go to <https://bpub.fyi/StoryFrames>
“Provides insight into how to teach narrative structure in a straightforward manner, making story elements concrete for students. This is the instructional support all teachers have been waiting for!”

—Darcy Dycha, M.Ed., Senior Project Manager, Children’s Learning Institute

“*Story Frames* offers students a concrete and fun way to create stories. Using visual supports and the basic building blocks of stories, it makes it possible for all children to create stories others will enjoy reading.”

—Steve Graham, Ed.D., Regents and Warner Professor of Educational Leadership and Innovation, Arizona State University

Mastering the art of storytelling isn’t just a goal for professional writers. Analyzing and creating stories can boost critical literacy skills for *all* learners—and this comprehensive resource will show teachers and SLPs how.

Aligned with the science of reading, this innovative guidebook reveals how to unlock literacy and learning skills by captivating K–12 students with the power of stories: how they’re structured, how they reflect and change lives, and how students can create their own original narratives. Using dozens of diverse fiction and nonfiction books as vivid examples, you’ll discover how to teach 12 key story elements (*Story Frames*) in dynamic, fun, and highly visual ways, including Quick Draws, storyboards, and icons that make narrative structure easy to grasp. Then you’ll get in-depth guidance on how to use knowledge of story structure to build core literacy skills and empower students to write their own personal stories in a variety of genres. An accessible pathway to structured literacy, *Story Frames* is an approach you’ll use year after year to instill a lifelong love of reading and writing in every learner.

INCLUDES A FULL PACKAGE OF DOWNLOADABLE MATERIALS, including sample storyboards and templates, 40+ handouts and worksheets, game cards, slide decks to use in instruction, 30+ sample story analyses of books for children and young adults, and brief literature guides for applying *Story Frames* to picture books and to chapter books and novels.

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**STORY FRAMES
WILL HELP YOU**

- ✓ Get started with structured literacy in a fun and engaging way
- ✓ Build core literacy skills, including phonological awareness, reading comprehension, oral language, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, narrative development, and expository writing
- ✓ Strengthen your existing curriculum with adaptable lesson plans and activities aligned with the science of reading
- ✓ Effectively teach narrative structure to both struggling and advanced learners
- ✓ Teach students in any setting, with practical tips for teletherapy and virtual instruction
- ✓ Boost executive function skills by making the writing process comprehensible, meaningful, and manageable
- ✓ Empower students with and without disabilities by giving them the tools to tell their own stories



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