Build a Story Mountain That Readers Climb

Teacher		**Class**	Grade 7
Subject	ELA	**Topic**	Creative writing: narratives
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United States

Students learn hooks, showing details, and clear event order. They plan and draft a short real or imagined narrative.

Curriculum links

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Learning objectives

- Students will order five events so a problem grows to a climax and resolves.
- Students will use hooks, dialogue and pacing as technique to develop experiences.
- Students will add relevant sensory details that show people, place and feelings.

Success criteria

- I can order my story in five parts that lead to a turning point.
- I can start with a hook and add one line of real-sounding dialogue.
- I can show feelings and place with two strong sensory details.

What students already know

Ask: What has to happen in a story for you to keep reading? Take 3 quick hands and listen for problem, details, order.

Key words

narrative	a story about real or made-up events told in order [7]
sequence	the order in which events happen, where each causes the next [7]
climax	the biggest turning moment or choice at the top of the mountain [7]
dialogue	the words people in a story say out loud to each other [3]
sensory detail	words that show what can be seen, heard, felt, smelled or tasted [3]
hook	a mysterious opening that makes readers ask what happens next

Materials

- long paper strips, markers, tape
- Slides 1-7, 9-12
- Worksheet Tasks A, E-F (one copy per student)
- whiteboard, timer, notebooks or paper, pencils

Before the lesson

- Print Worksheet Tasks A, E-F for each student
- Test Video clip 3 (0:00-4:30) and Slides 1-12 on projector
- Cut five long paper strips per group and set out markers and tape
- Arrange desks for groups of 3-4 with floor space to tape mountains

Lesson outline

0–5 min **Starter** 5 min · Whole class

Activate story experience and launch the mountain goal for clear sequencing.

YOU DO

1. Welcome class and say the hook line with energy.
2. Show Slide 1 title and Slide 2 Think, pair, share question.
3. Give 30 seconds think, 60 seconds pair talk, then take 3 shares.
4. Link answers to today: we will build stories readers cannot put down.

STUDENTS DO

1. Think quietly about a story that felt real.
2. Share reason with a partner, then share with class if picked.

Say: If your story is flat, nobody keeps reading. Let's build it like a mountain that climbers can't ignore. Think about when a book, movie, or game felt totally real to you, and tell your partner why it felt real.

Ask: When did a story feel totally real to you? Why? (Because something was at stake, details made me picture it, events happened in clear order.) · What happens when events are out of order? (Readers get confused and stop caring what happens next.)

Check understanding: Thumbs up if you can name one thing that makes a story feel real; if many thumbs down, take one more example before moving on.

Support: Let students answer about a movie or game instead of a book. **Stretch:** Ask students to name the problem the character faced in that real-feeling story.

Use: Slides 1–2

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5–15 min **Teaching** 10 min · Whole class

Explain technique, details, and sequence tools strong writers use.

YOU DO

1. Show Slides 3-4 and name the 3 tools: technique, details, sequence.
2. Explain a narrative tells real or imagined events as a connected story centered on a problem that grows, using narrator, characters, setting and clear order.
3. Show Slide 5 mystery and read it aloud, then show Slide 7 big idea.
4. Model how the hook plus order plus showing makes readers curious.

STUDENTS DO

1. Listen, track the 3 tools on fingers.
2. Turn and tell partner which tool the backpack lines use most.

Say: Strong writers use technique like dialogue and pacing to keep readers curious, details to show what people see and feel, and sequence so each event causes the next. Both made-up stories and true stories count as creative writing [7]. A hook starts it fast with action, talk, or mystery.

Worked example: Slide 5 mystery model: The backpack was still warm. The hall was empty. The bell had not rung. What happened? Step 1: Notice hook - mystery questions. Step 2: Notice technique - short sentences for pacing. Step 3: Notice missing showing - we still need senses to picture the hall. So: Big idea = Show the moment, order the events, make us feel it.

Ask: What is a narrative? (Real or imagined events told as a connected story about a problem that grows.) · Why start with a hook? (A mysterious opening makes readers ask what happens next and keep reading.) · What is the difference between fiction and creative nonfiction? (Both are creative writing [7], but nonfiction must always stick to facts while fiction invites shared imagination [4].)

Check understanding: Cold-call 2 students to name the 3 tools; reteach any missing tool with Slide 3 cards before moving on.

Support: Keep Slide 4 bullets up and point to narrator, characters, setting as you talk. **Stretch:** Ask students to label which line is action, talk, or mystery in two sample hooks.

Use: Slides 3–5, 7

15–30 min **Guided practice** 15 min · Pairs

Practice replacing telling with showing details together.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 6 and play Video clip 3 (0:00–4:30) about Show, Don't Tell Technique.
2. Model one rewrite: Telling: The hallway was loud. Showing: Locker doors slammed and sneakers squeaked past me at noon.
3. Hand out Worksheet Task A and give pairs 5 minutes to place sentences from weak to strong.
4. Take feedback and underline senses that show without naming the feeling [6].

STUDENTS DO

1. Watch video and list one sense to steal for a draft.
2. With partner, complete Worksheet Task A ranking details weak to strong.

Say: She was scared. Yawn. Can you make me feel scared without using the word scared? We do not name feelings. We show them with what a camera would see plus sounds and actions. Creative writing puts the focus on craft and literary tools instead of flat summary [6].

Worked example: Telling: The student was nervous before the test. Step 1: Ask what camera sees: hands shook, pencil tapped. Step 2: Add sound: clock ticked. Step 3: Rewrite showing: My hands shook as I tapped my pencil while the clock ticked. No was scared words, but you feel it.

Ask: Which version shows more: was loud or doors slammed and sneakers squeaked? (Doors slammed version, because sights and sounds let me picture it.) · How do you show a feeling without naming it? (Use actions, body movement, and senses that prove the feeling.)

Check understanding: Pairs hold up Task A line and point to strongest detail; if most rank telling as strong, remodel with I saw/heard/felt frame.

Support: Provide senses word bank and frame: I saw/heard/felt ___ which meant ___. **Stretch:** Require two different senses plus one strong verb and no was/were.

Use: Video clip 3 (0:00–4:30), Slide 6, Worksheet Task A

30–50 min **Main activity** 20 min · Groups

Build and draft a five-part narrative mountain with hook, dialogue and showing.

YOU DO

1. Give each group five strips, markers, tape and show Slide 9 task.
2. Model a five-sentence mountain about a student missing the bus, making sure each event causes the next [5].
3. Send groups to write one sentence per part, tape mountain in order, then add one dialogue line and two showing details.
4. Circulate with Slide 10 Story Checklist and prompt cause-and-effect fixes; frequent short writing with quick revision builds skill [1].

STUDENTS DO

1. Plan five-sentence mountain on strips and tape in order from setup to ending.
2. Read sequence aloud for flow, then upgrade with hook, dialogue and two showing details.

Say: Pick a tiny real or imagined moment that matters. Start with a hook, then order 5 events clearly. Add one line of dialogue and two showing details. On your strips, exposition goes low, rising action climbs, climax is the top peak, then falling action and resolution come down.

Worked example: Missing the bus mountain: 1 Exposition: A student woke late at 7:15 a.m. with the bus coming in 10 minutes. 2 Rising action: The student grabbed toast and sprinted 2 blocks as the bus lights flashed. 3 Climax: The driver paused, and the student had to choose: shout or keep running. 4 Falling action: The student shouted, "Wait!" while waving both arms. 5 Resolution: The doors hissed open and the student slid into a seat, breathing hard. Each step causes the next.

Ask: How do you know your order works? (Each event causes the next and the problem grows to the biggest choice or surprise.) · Where does dialogue help most? (At the peak or problem moment to show voice and choice through what is said and done [7].)

Check understanding: Each group reads five sentences aloud; class gives thumbs up if cause-and-effect flows, otherwise group reorders middle strips on the spot.

Support: Give a partially filled mountain with the first two events done so students complete the last three.
Stretch: Add a second small climax twist on a sticky note between falling action and resolution.

Use: Slides 9–10, Worksheet Tasks E–F

50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

Evaluate hooks and check use of technique, details and sequence.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 11 Which Hook Wins? and read the openings for vote.
2. Ask voters to defend choice with one craft reason: action, question, or vivid detail.
3. Show Slide 12 exit ticket and have students write two sentences in notebooks.
4. Collect and preview next lesson on pacing and revision.

STUDENTS DO

1. Vote for strongest hook and defend with craft reason.
2. Write exit ticket and hand in with mountain draft.

Say: I will read openings. You decide which one makes you need page two. Vote, then defend with craft, not just I liked it. Then finish your exit: one strong technique you used today, and one question you still have about your sequence.

Ask: Which opening makes you keep reading and why? (The one with action or mystery or talk that starts the problem and raises a question.) · What did your mountain do for your draft? (It ordered events so the problem grew to a peak and resolved.)

Check understanding: Read 3 exit tickets aloud to check technique naming; if vague, point back to Slide 10 checklist for precise language.

Support: Provide hook starters: a sound, a decision with a deadline, or dialogue that shows a problem.
Stretch: Write two openings for the same blackout event, one in action and one in memory, and compare effects.

Use: Slides 11–12

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Telling feelings instead of showing them (She was scared).	Draft uses was/were plus feeling words with no senses.	Rewrite with actions and senses; craft means showing through detail, not summary [6].
Events listed but not connected by cause and effect.	Mountain sentences could be swapped without changing story.	Add so/because link and check each event causes the next in the structure [7].
Dialogue sounds flat with no beat or tag.	Talking lines stand alone with no movement or voice.	Add one action beat and voice choice to develop character through speech [7].

Support

- Use partially filled mountain with first two events done; students finish last three.
- Provide senses checklist, dialogue beat menu, and I saw/heard/felt frame for drafts.

Stretch

- Add a second small climax twist on a sticky note between falling action and resolution.
- Rewrite same setting for opposite mood using only detail changes, and add subtext to dialogue.

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Sit with target groups during main activity; help order middle three strips, prompt cause words, scribe showing details if needed.

Check for understanding

Question	Answer
Name the five mountain parts in order.	Exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution.
Rewrite telling: The students in the gym were nervous. Show it with one sense.	Hands shook / sneakers squeaked / breaths held - any action or sense that shows without naming.
Give a hook first line for a storm-blackout story.	Starts with action, talk, or mystery that launches the problem, e.g. dialogue or sound.

Homework

Finish your mountain draft adding one dialogue line and two showing details.

Sources

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