

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A GOOD BOOK

BY HILTON AYREY



Notes on Story Structure

Characters

Setting

Problem

Feelings

Action

Outcome

Themes

Every year Paul and his mum and dad went to stay with his grandmother and aunty for the first two weeks of their holiday. Because they lived a long way away, and didn't see each other very often, his mother spent all her time talking to Grandma and drinking cups of tea. Paul's father was very tired and spent most of the time sleeping.

Paul was a very active boy with a vivid imagination and this dreary adult lifestyle didn't suit him well. And then there was Aunty Ena. She had fallen off a horse when she was little, injured her back and had spent a lifetime in a wheelchair. Now she spent all day following Paul around nagging him with "Be careful! Be careful!" in her shrill, aunty voice if he tried to do anything that was slightly adventurous.

It was the middle of the fly season and Paul used up a morning by contracting out his services to Grandma to hunt down flies with a fly swot. But after 127 kills, there were too many stains on the wallpaper and Aunty Ena was having a nervous breakdown.

Early one morning, while everyone was still sleeping, Paul tackled the challenge of 'rock climbing' his way around the living room without touching the carpet. This was a difficult assignment as Grandma had lots of fussy little ornaments perched on the mantelpiece and on her china cabinets, all of which had to be carefully negotiated by the intrepid explorer. He had almost completed the traverse when a poor choice of foothold sent a china baby Jesus to its doom on the fireplace hearth. The whirl of Aunty Ena's wheelchair in the hallway prompted a quick decision to call it quits and head outside to see if he could find something else to do far away from the prying eyes of the safety police.

It was then that he noticed Priscilla, the neighbour's cat, asleep in the sun. Now Paul was not a boy who was normally unkind to animals, but his circumstances were pushing him to the limit and Priscilla was such a wimp. Her owner treated her like a baby. She had a nice soft blanket to lie on out in the sun, the very best gourmet cat food every day, and hours were spent grooming her long fluffy hair.

Paul planned his attack. He could have gone for total annihilation but settled for shock and stun. There was a spray gun attached to the hose, so he turned the tap on full and very carefully wriggled over to the hedge that separated Grandma's house from the neighbours. He checked that no one was watching, then opened fire.

The effect was instantaneous and beyond his wildest dreams. Priscilla was transformed instantly from an inert fluffy ball into a bedraggled projectile of wild spitting fury that hurtled itself headlong at her attacker. Paul felt the full force of her unsheathed claws on his face and back as Priscilla 'ran him over', then she hurtled across Grandma's backyard, up the wheelchair ramp, across the deck, and disappeared down the driveway.

Unfortunately, Aunty Ena was just emerging from the back door. She swerved to miss the flying cat, lost control of her wheelchair on the ramp, and ended up face down in the rose bushes.

Paul spent the next few days in his room, having suddenly discovered a previously unheard of interest in a pile of books his mother had borrowed from the library.

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ACTIVITIES Short Stories 1:5

REMEMBERING - What are the facts

1. Make a list of all the characters in the story and all the facts you can find out about them. Choose a main character and show the information you have found on a **CHARACTER WEB**. Put the character's name and a drawing of them at the centre of the web.

UNDERSTANDING - Reading between the lines

2. Why did Aunty Ena follow Paul around all day? What tells you that Paul was bored? For each answer include a quote from the story to support your ideas. Write your own question that requires the person answering to read between the lines.

APPLYING - Using what you know from the story

3. **NEWSFLASH:** Write a news item for TV about the incident at Grandma's house and the problem of children being bored in the holidays. Include at least 2 short interviews with Paul, Aunty Ena, or other characters in the story. Remember to write a strong wrap-up to end your news story.
4. **POETRY:** Use the descriptions in this story to write a poem or a rap song about Aunty Ena or the neighbour's cat Priscilla.

ANALYSING - Breaking down the story to show how it works

5. **STORY MAP:** Draw a story map of the setting using the information in the story. Use labels to show the places mentioned and the events that took place. Be prepared to explain your story map to others.
6. Create a **STORY WEB**. You may have started this or talked about it when you read the story. Include ... CHARACTERS → SETTING → PROBLEM → FEELINGS → ACTION → OUTCOME

CREATING - Coming up with new ideas

7. **WHAT IF:** "... prompted a quick decision to call it quits and head outside to see if he could find something else to do ..."

Brainstorm some other directions this story could go in from this point on. Use flow charts. Choose your best idea and rewrite the last part of the story

OR Draw it as a comic strip with speech and thought bubbles

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graph LR
    A(( )) --> B[ ]
    A --> C[ ]
    B --> D[ ]
    C --> D
    D --> E[ ]
    D --> F[ ]
    E --> G[ ]
    F --> G
  
```

8. **DESIGN BRIEF:** Design an early warning alarm system that would help Paul to avoid the attentions of Aunty Ena. Label your drawings or write descriptions to explain your interesting ideas.

EVALUATING - Exploring ideas and rating stories

9. **SEEING BOTH SIDES**
 "Parents should make sure their children have plenty to do on holiday"
 Make a chart and list your reasons for agreeing and disagreeing with this statement.

I agree with this statement because ...	I disagree with this statement because ...

 Share your ideas with other people in your group. Ask if you can present a short debate.
10. **HOW GOOD IS THIS STORY?**
 Give this story a rating out of 5 for each of these criteria (1=Not well developed, 5=Well developed)
 - ◆ **CHARACTERS** - Has the author created interesting characters? How?
 - ◆ **STORY STRUCTURE** - Does the story have an interesting problem and a satisfying ending?
 - ◆ **LANGUAGE FEATURES** - Has the author used words in an interesting way to tell the story?
 - ◆ **THEME** - Does this story have something important to say about how people think and behave?
 Write a short review of this story based on the ratings you have given it.

LESSON PLAN

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A GOOD BOOK

Short Stories 1:5 RA 11-12 years

by Hilton Ayrey

STORY SUMMARY

Paul is on holiday with his mum and dad. Mum is preoccupied with Grandma, Dad sleeps all the time and Paul is being hounded by his overprotective aunty in her wheelchair. Desperate for some action, Paul turns his attention to the neighbour's cat with some surprising results.

LEARNING OUTCOMES - choose from the list on page 62 according to the needs of your students

BEFORE READING DISCUSSION: Accessing prior knowledge and personal experiences

Discuss students' experiences visiting or staying with grandparents.

What are their houses like? Are there different rules than at your place? Is there much to do?

Discuss title "There's nothing like a good book" - are there any clues about the story?

GUIDED SILENT READING PROCESS - follow this three step process for each chunk of text (more details page 5)

Step One: SET A PURPOSE and READ *What to look for when you read this passage.*

Step Two: DETAILED RETELLING *Making sure we have got the message right.*

Step Three: ADD to STORY WEB *Discuss new information about characters, setting, problem, feelings, action, outcome.*

Bold Italics = strong language features, vocabulary or concepts that provide interest and may present roadblocks to comprehension.

Setting a Purpose: READ - look for the CHARACTERS, SETTING and the PROBLEM.

Fast Finishers - Use the margin to make notes for your story web

LANGUAGE FEATURES Every year Paul and his mum and dad went to stay with his grandmother and aunty for the first two weeks of their holiday. Because they lived a long way away, and didn't see each other very often, his mother spent all her time talking to Grandma and drinking cups of tea. Paul's father was very tired and spent most of the time sleeping.

understatement Paul was a very active boy with a **vivid imagination** and this **dreary adult lifestyle didn't suit him well**. And then there was Aunty Ena. She had fallen off a horse when she was little, injured her back and had spent a lifetime in a wheelchair. Now she spent all day following Paul around nagging him with "Be careful! Be careful!" in her shrill, aunty voice if he tried to do anything that was slightly adventurous.

STORY STRUCTURE

Characters

Paul - very active
vivid imagination
adult lifestyle doesn't suit
Mum - spends all her time with Grandma
Dad - tired, sleeps a lot
Aunty Ena - a cripple
- nervous about others having accidents

Problem

Grandma's place isn't set up for an active boy
Aunty Ena is stalking him

Setting a Purpose: What would you do in a situation like this?

What do you think Paul will do given what we know about him?

READ - look for Paul's FEELINGS about the problem and the ACTION he takes.

Fast Finishers - Use the margin to make notes for your story web

hyperbole It was the middle of the fly season and Paul used up a morning by **contracting out his services** to Grandma to hunt down flies with a fly swot. But after 127 kills, there were too many stains on the wallpaper and Aunty Ena was **having a nervous breakdown**.

hyperbole Early one morning, while everyone was still sleeping, Paul tackled the challenge of **'rock climbing' his way around the living room** without touching the carpet. This was a difficult assignment as Grandma had lots of fussy little ornaments perched on the **mantelpiece** and on her **china cabinets**, all of which had to be carefully negotiated by the **intrepid explorer**. He had almost completed the **traverse** when a poor choice of foothold sent a **china baby Jesus to its doom** on the **fireplace hearth**.

metaphor The whir of Aunty Ena's wheelchair in the hallway prompted a quick decision to call it quits and head outside to see if he could find something else to do far away from the prying eyes of the **safety police**.

Action

Finds interesting things to do (he has a vivid imagination)
- He hunts flies
- He rock climbs the living room

Feelings

Paul was desperate to get away from Aunty Ena

Action

He goes outside to get away from Aunty Ena

Setting a Purpose: What might Paul find to do outside?

READ - look for further ACTION and any new CHARACTERS.

Fast Finishers - Use the margin to make notes for your story web

metaphor It was then that he noticed Priscilla, the neighbour's cat, asleep in the sun. Now Paul was not a boy who was normally unkind to animals, but his circumstances were **pushing him to the limit** and Priscilla was such a **wimp**. Her owner treated her like a baby. She had a nice soft blanket to lie on out in the sun, the very best **gourmet cat food** every day, and hours were spent grooming her long fluffy hair.

New Character

Priscilla - neighbour's cat
- a wimp
- indulged by owner

Setting a Purpose: Paul is being 'pushed to the limit'.

What do you think he might do?

How far will he go?

READ - look for the further ACTION and the OUTCOME.

Fast Finishers - Use the margin to make notes for your story web

strong nouns alliteration Paul planned his attack. He could have gone for **total annihilation but settled for shock and stun**. There was a spray gun attached to the hose, so he turned the tap on full and very carefully wriggled over to the hedge that separated Grandma's house from the neighbours. He checked that no one was watching, then opened fire.

vivid description metaphor The effect was instantaneous and beyond his wildest dreams. Priscilla was transformed instantly from an **inert fluffy ball into a bedraggled projectile of wild spitting fury** that hurtled itself headlong at her attacker. Paul felt the full force of her **unsheathed claws** on his face and back as Priscilla **'ran him over'**, then she hurtled across Grandma's backyard, up the wheelchair ramp, across the deck, and disappeared down the driveway.

overstatement

Unfortunately, Aunty Ena was just emerging from the back door. She swerved to miss the flying cat, lost control of her wheelchair on the ramp, and ended up face down in the rose bushes.

Action

Paul attacks the neighbour's cat

Outcome

Paul gets clawed

Aunty Ena ends up in the rose bushes

Setting a Purpose: How will this end? Brainstorm possibilities.

READ - look for the OUTCOME.

Paul spent the next few days in his room, having suddenly discovered a previously unheard of interest in a pile of books his mother had borrowed from the library.

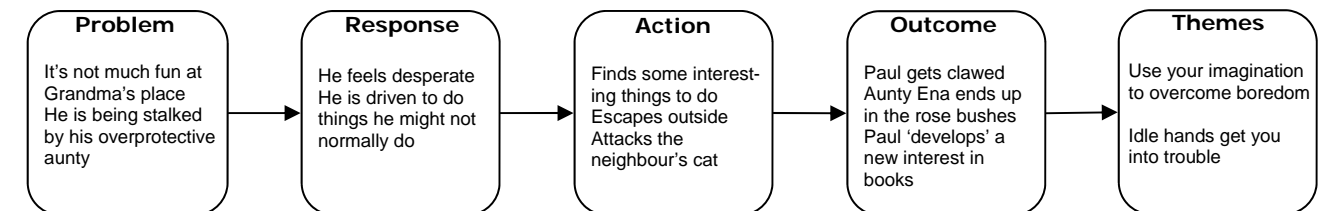
Further Outcome

Paul finds something quieter to do to stay out of trouble and/or to escape Aunty Ena

AFTER READING DISCUSSION

1. Story Structure : Review the story web now that the whole story has been read

- Summarise the main problem and how the characters deal with it (see suggestions below)
- What was the story about? Is there a message? Is there something we can learn from this? (theme)



2. Story Evaluation : What has the author done to try and make this a good story?

This is aimed at developing the language and the ability to critique the short story genre relating directly to Follow-up Activity 10.

Use "How Good is this Story?" on page 69 as a basis for this discussion.

The following are the sort of comments which the teacher should be looking for.

Setting: Important because it is the reason for the story problem.

Characters: A good insight into what makes Paul tick.

Story Structure: Conflict between an active boy and a overprotective aunty works well. Episodes build up logically to the finale.

Theme: Not a strong theme. Dealing with boredom on holiday.

Language Features: Some colourful descriptions - "rock climbing" and the cat attack.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES - Using Bloom's Taxonomy

- Go through the ACTIVITIES sheet with your students
- Brainstorm and discuss ideas, model activities where necessary
- Assign activities or allow choice depending on time constraints and / or the needs of your students