

Let Me Help You

Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write
Stories for Kids*

Lesson 2

**THE ABC BOOK
CYCLE**

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Let's Write a
A, B, C Book

Naturally, when one decides to write simple stories for children, one starts with the A-B-Cees.

Ha!

Here's the trap. The iron jaw snaps shut around the ankle of the **UNWARY**

After all, what could be simpler than an A, B, C book?

- **Oh, Einstein's theory of relativity for one.**
- **Eight volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica for another.**
- **How about striking a match on a cake of soap for a third?**

For one thing, it seems almost every kind of A, B, C book has already been written. Those that haven't for a very good reason. The author couldn't think what to do with J, K, Q, V, X, and Z.

You want to capitalize on a child's love for toys to make his ABC's go down easily? Try it. What do you do with the six unsolvables?

Kids love animals.

You say you'll do an animal ABC?

What'll you do with X?

You'll do birds? What about Z?

You'll do four-wheeled vehicles? You might get a "velocipede" through, but you're still going to have rough sledding with Q, X, and Z.

There's no EASY kid's book in the sense that you push a magic button and there it is. Each one comes via hard work and hours of head-scratching—especially if you are going to write for Christian kids. We have sanctified imaginations and His sky is the limit—even though our alphabet has those six formidables—j, k, q, v, x and z.

But you might have just the kind of mind that can cut butter with a hot knife. You may hit a line of **Z-Y-X-and-W-V** that sings like a calliope.

Which reminds me. A number of

writers use rhyme to evade the rigors of finding an object to fit every letter. Or they will try games or use pictures to get around the toughies. One writer used a picture of footprints, as two animals crossed one another's tracks, to help her get an X. We do this sort of thing only when all else fails.

Anne Alexander in her book, **A B C OF CARS AND TRUCKS** (New York: Doubleday, 1956) gave each letter of the alphabet a rhyming couplet and handled the fearsome six like this: J stood for jeep; K for knife grinder's truck; Q for queen's float; V, van; X, x-ray truck; and Z, a zone truck that paints the white lines at street crossings.

Her rhyme is strong, authentic and sprightly.

YOUR TURN: See what you can do with an ABC of cars and trucks—anything with wheels. See if you can do it in rhyme. Or try an ABC of things found in church.

Wanda Gag in **THE A B C BUNNY** (New York: Coward, McCann, 1933) wrote rhyming couplets uniting every two letters: I and J were for insects and Joy.

Her K was for Kitten, crazy over catnip. Her L was for a lazy lizard. Q was for quail, V for view and valley, X for eXit and Z for zero.

Delightful! Her nouns and adjectives still bring freshness to the surprising catalog of items after nearly 70 years. Notice, not every item is about bunnies.

YOUR TURN: Do an ABC about your room at home or about your house or you neighborhood. Try to make every two lines rhyme.

ON MARKET STREET by Arnold Lobel and illustrated by Anita Lobel. (New York: Green-willow Books, 1981).

The book opens and closes with eight-line poems that tell what the merchants do as they sell their wares on Market Street.

Since A is routinely for Apple, the illustrator shows this merchant as a person made all of apples.

On we go through the alphabet with each page picturing a person made up of the chosen item. Our famous six letters are Jewels, Kites, Quilts, Vegetables, Xmas trees and Zippers. The author and illustrator charm children with the unique pictures and good rhyme.

We learn on the last page that the narrator spent all his money on presents—a nice, demure way to end a caprice.

YOUR TURN: This can be like that old time game, "I Packed My Grandmother's trunk and in it I Put..." using that idea, do an ABC of things that will go in the trunk. With each one, draw a picture of grandmother wearing it or using it.

Celestino Piatti in **ANIMAL ABC** (New York: Atheneum, 1966) also uses colorful rhyming couplets—sheer genius:

The J is for the jaguar that creeps across the page, leaving its tracks.

The K is for the kangaroo who gives rides to her little one that resemble high jumps.

The Q is for the quetzal bird of Guatemala.

The V is pictured by a Vicuna.

For the X, the author puts an “Xo” in front of his Piatti last name and creates an animal-fish-bird that satisfies the challenge of the letter X.

The Z is pictured with a Zebra.

The author is a master wordsmith who can unite rollicking rime with surprising imagery like the high jumps. This is a book well worth owning.

YOUR TURN: Try an ABC for animals and see if you can work your name and your friends' names into the story.

A IS FOR AMOS by Deborah Chandra with pictures by Keiko Narahashi. (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999.)

Summary: The rider sitting on the horse Amos goes around the farm identifying the letters of the alphabet before heading back to the barn.

Loosely rhymed and loosely rhymed, the book combines cycle with ABC. Told in first person, we exchange our hobby horse for a real pony and trot around the farm.

The letters pick up nouns (D is for dust), adjectives (e is for each thump), contractions (I is for I'm), infinitives (to jump), participles (kicking), exclamations (ow!), verbs (gallop), prepositions (up), gerunds (for whirling) or they bury themselves in a word (eXtra, laZy).

YOUR TURN: This is an easy ABC because you can use any kind of word to get your alphabet. Send your dog around your neighborhood or

child around the house or a tottering elder couple around a mall marveling at the things God has inspired mankind to make.

THE ABC MYSTERY by Doug Cushman (story and pictures). (U.S.A.: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993).

Library of Congress Summary: A work of art is stolen. We call on Inspector McGroom to find it. He uses an alphabetical list of people, objects and clues A to Z to lead him to the treasure.

Told in rhyming iambic pentameter (10 syllables per line), the inspector follows the trail when Art is stolen by the Butler who leaves a Clue for the Detective, etc.

This is another original idea—made all the more captivating by his use of classical iambic pentameter: dee doo / dee doo / dee doo / dee doo.

YOUR TURN: Finish this story, using the ABCD above. If you can do it in rhyme, so much the better; but a story will do.

Doubleday printed the **A B C BOOK** by C. B. Falls in 1923. This was an animal and bird book, illustrated on linoleum blocks. At that time, linoleum art lent an added charm.

The author handled the troublesome letters this way: J stood for jaguar, K for kangaroo, Q for quail, V for vulture, X for xiphius (a fish), and Z for zebra.

YOUR TURN: Can you do an ABC using the

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: ABC BOOK

names of birds or insects or kinds of fish or towns in your state or nations of the world?

Dale Fife in **ADAM'S A B C** (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1971) wrote about boys who live in the same apartment building. His technique started a new kind of ABC book. Instead of having his letters match words beginning with them, he has his J letter be for lunch because a boy whose name begins with the A letter eats a sandwich with a filling that begins with J.

His K referred to a kitten that wandered onto the playground. He got around Q by writing that Adam's world at dusk was silent and very Q_____.

His V came in when he referred to his heroine's getting ready for a party by wearing a black dress made of material beginning with V.

His X came when Adam wrote a kiss on a letter he was sending to his grandmother.

His Z was Zzzzzzzz because Adam was now sound asleep.

YOUR TURN: Write a story like this about boys or girls who live in your neighborhood or apartment. Just don't use any of the alphabet words in this story.

Mary Elting and Michael Folsom have done a very clever ABC book called **Q IS FOR DUCK** (New York: Houghton, Mifflin/Clarion Books, 1980). It's a twist on alphabet books. With each letter it makes a foolish statement and then asks the question, "Why?" The answer contains the letter we want.

Their A is for a word beginning with Z. Why? Because creatures whose kind begins with A live in a building beginning with Z.

Their J is for kangaroo because that animal J____s. The K is for mule because that animal K____s. Their Q is for ducks because ducks Q____. Chameleons V____ish. Dinosaurs are X_____.

And, finally, when they work their way down to Z it is for the A_____ creatures. Why? Because those creatures live in a building that begins with Z.

This book is instant cleverness. It's a very unique approach.

YOUR TURN: This one will be fun. Do a twist like this using boys and girls you know or people in the Bible. Or see if it works in a school or kitchen or garage.

The twenty-six letters swoop and sing as Barbara Wersba in **TWENTY-SIX STARLINGS WILL FLY THROUGH YOUR MIND** (New York: Harper and Row, 1980) dazzles the young reader with imagery and style. She makes each letter a living creature who is the next one to come along in the parade of letters to show off or whisper words beginning with that letter. It's a wonderful book, heralding the variety of lovely words that begin with that particular letter.

YOUR TURN: In this one, describe the letters like "Here comes pointy-headed A jumping on two feet" and then include words you like that begin with the letter. Try to get unusual words, lovely sounding words.

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Ed Emberly in **ED EMBERLY'S ABC** (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978) has written a picture book ABC that uses the routine A is for ant, B is for bear.

But he illustrates each letter in four frames, showing how the letter is written. The representative animal appears, but it may not be creating the letter.

J—a jaguar juggles balls that fall and land to form the letter J.

K—a koala and kangaroo watch as a toy truck, a plane and a train disembark kiwi birds that form the letter K.

Q—a quail papa cuts out patterns for a quilt while mama sews pieces together to form a Q. When it's finished, the family pops into bed.

V—a vole (mouse) using wooden blocks creates a village.

X—a fox in a picture containing a box and an axe lights candles, the wax from which falls to the floor in droplets to form an X.

Z—a zebra, in a zeppelin, strings Christmas lights in the shape of a Z.

YOUR TURN: Design a book like this. Divide your page in four squares as he did where each letter's animal or bird or insect or person is using or holding something that begins with that same letter. But it takes four squares to picture the action taking place.

Barry Miller in **ALPHABET WORLD** (New York: Macmillan, 1971) uses black and white photography of sights in a city to show how letters occur everywhere—as sections

of pipes or buildings or furnishings. An overlay on which the particular letter is drawn registers with the photo underneath on the next page where we see the pipe or cup handle or fence used to form the letter.

YOUR TURN: Look around your room or your house or your school, your town, a market, a mall—one or all—and see if you can find letters hidden there to make an ALPHABET WORLD of your own.

THE JUNGLE ABC by Michael Roberts. (New York: Hyperion Books, 1998).

Summary: Collage illustrations present words related to Africa from “antelope” to “orchid” to “yams.”

The ABC sequence is presented only in elaborate picture form made from cut-outs of colored paper. His J is for jungle, K is Kraai (huts), Q is for queen, v is vases, x is xylophones and z is, what else, zebras.

YOUR TURN: Select a foreign country and do an ABC of items that would appear there. Call it by the country you choose, “An Ethiopian ABC.”

ABC POP by Rachel Isadora. (New York: Viking, 1999).

Summary: An ordinary sequence of ordinary things from A to Z is made modern by pop art with its “zoom! Va-room!” kinds of color and illustration.

YOUR TURN: Do an ABC of fast foods or ice cream flavors or story books or parts of a car. Or if you are older, use words from your generation like “a 1930's ABC Boop.”

MISS HINDY'S CATS by Helena Clare Pittman (Carlrhoda Books Inc.: Minneapolis, 1990) (32 pp.) is illustrated by the author in watercolor. In

the story, Miss Hindy gathers cats everywhere she goes, naming each one (Agnes, Bella, Chanticleer) with a successive letter of the alphabet. At eight cats and at 15, she moves to a larger house. At 24, she is alarmed by a knock on the door and fears it might be another cat that will need a name beginning with Y.

She stands in the hall, pondering what name she will call this cat. We're all surprised along with Miss Hindy when the new visitor is a dog. She greets him with the first word that comes into her mind: Anton. We know (although the author-illustrator doesn't tell us) that we're going to start a new dynasty of 26 dogs.

A book becomes the more charming when the reader catches a torch the author has not actually thrown but has only hinted at.

YOUR TURN: Beginning with Arthur, do a story like this of a man who adopts the dogs that come to his door. After the Z dog, bring in a cat. Or maybe have your old lady or third grader collect dolls or miniatures of baseball cards. End with a surprise that will begin a new collection.

I SPY, devised and selected by Lucy Micklethwait (Greenwillow books: New York, 1991) begins each entry with that old game we played in the car on long trips: "I spy with my little eye something beginning with—" The answer is an object beginning with that letter that appears in a famous art masterpiece from museums and galleries.

The selector chose pictures of Van Eyck, Picasso, Botticelli, Vermeer, Goya, Matisse, Renoir among others.

Her famous six letters spy a Jug, Key, Quills, Violin, Ox and Zigzag.

YOUR TURN: Using "I spy with my little eye something beginning with—" use the comics for your pictures and choose items that appear in them for your alphabet objects. Or use items you would find in a pawn shop or hardware store or signs along a highway. Use objects that appear in the Bible.

Finally, the classic of our times is the infamous **A B Z BOOK** of Shel Silverstein's. Clearly it is the most original ABC book in a century. Written for adults who dislike kids and who want to wreak vengeance on them by contorting their alphabet, this one takes the prize for sadism and hilarity. It's worth owning yourself. I have mine.

His D is for Daddy who is sleeping on the couch. Poor Daddy.

Poor, poor Daddy. He can't afford a haircut. Who will give him a haircut. See the scissors. The child is asked if he/she will give Daddy a haircut.

His P is for the pony that lives in the gas tank of Daddy's car. He encourages the child to go feed him a cup of sugar. He doesn't tell that sugar gums up and ruins engines.

His E is for Elmer who lives in the dining room ceiling. He urges the child to go get an egg and throw it up to Elmer, while calling out to Elmer to drop his hand down and catch the egg.

It's the kind of book parents wouldn't let within a mile of their child.

YOUR TURN: Do a mischief book like this of tricks and pranks a child might pull on his parents. Or do a list of ABCs you would never want

to see your Grampa doing and end with him doing one. or write an ABC of ways your little brother/sister/friend could get into a LOT of trouble.

My friend, Tammy Lewis, pointed out these ABC books to me: **AARDVARKS DISEMBARK** by Ann Jonas out of Greenwillow books, 1990. The scene is Noah's ark and he sees many unusual animals had not left yet. His j, k, q, v, x, z include jabiruses, jerboas, klipspringers, kudus, kiangs, quetzals, vervets, xeruses and zebuses. Tammy says there is a section in the book that describes some of these rare animals. They are real. "A lot of research went into this book," she says.

ALPHABET CITY by Stephen T. Johnson out of Viking, 1995. This one won a Caldecott award. It has no words. The alphabet is found in structures around the city.

Now, can an ABC book be part of the "service of the sanctuary"?

God's Word in Colossians 3:23-24 has the answer: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."

A wonderful ABC book can get little ones directed in eternal paths. BUT random thoughts won't! Just because we have 26 letters to work with doesn't mean you can sift through the Scriptures and gather a miscellany of

words beginning with A's and B's and C's and call this a wonderful work for God. You **MUST** be artful.

No editor will buy from you something his ten-year-old daughter could do with her eyes shut.

Now, I admit that some books in print may look like a mish-mash—totally trivial, silly, infantile. You wonder how they ever made it when something far more brilliant (yours?) hasn't. Well, it's possible that these are "relative" books. Some relative of the editor pressured him into publishing it and he yielded. Just because a book is in print doesn't mean it's literature!

So, with your ABC book, as well as with all the stories that follow:

- Be selective.
- Weed out the flat statements, the ordinary ideas, and all that's trite.
- Create what has universal appeal. Create something significant. Just because your own youngsters like something doesn't make it good. They may like it because they like the cuddling in your lap that goes along with the reading.
- Take an editorial stance and judge your book as if you were a disinterested editor who is looking for original material that is Artful, Beguiling, and Creative. Now there's an ABC to strive for!
- But don't be too hard on yourself. YOU are not an editor. Only an editor knows how good and how marketable your material is. You don't!
- **Notice that many of the "Your**

Turn” entries are not all biblical or spiritual in focus. You can have fun with ABC as with the other structures that follow. Not every story you ever write has to be spiritual, and many of the “Your Turn” suggestions are not. They are not because it is important for each writer to develop his contriving skills and his imagination. We want writing to be fun. If it can have spiritual significance, how much more wonderful!

ABC books are for the primary child with developing spiritual apprehensions. He conceives that God is strong and reliable, loving, holy, caring, forgiving. He’s One who listens when we pray. He perceives that the Lord Jesus is Christ and God—one Person.

He is old enough to receive the Lord as His own Savior (actually, children far younger are old enough); but primaries know they need to make a decision for themselves to receive the Lord as their Savior. And they know they can trust Him for help in daily living.

The Bible has authority in their lives because it has answers for their needs, and it is God’s Book.

They are fully capable of a vigorous memory program.

Church is a family where children can have responsibilities—responsibilities to be quiet, respectful,

worshipful. In daily life they can understand that God will help them with their problems.

They can perceive the significance of God’s will and Word. They can experience sorrow for sin. They are salvation conscious because they are sin conscious.

Physically, primaries’ growth rate is slower than it has been. Their small hand muscles are not completely coordinated at this age so they write in big letters and like using crayons. They’re active—sometimes it seems to an extreme.

They have lots of energy, but they can’t keep up forever. They love to explore.

Their senses are keen. They’ll dislike liver and shrimp, but love peanut butter.

I know from my own experience teaching third, fourth, fifth and sixth grades that they enjoy radio and TV, comics, true stories, nature stories, folklore, songs and rhythm. Their minds are beginning to grasp the abstract. They are very literal and will often misunderstand idiomatic expressions. Their attention span is lengthening. They are learning to reason. Their memory, although not reliable, is improving and they are becoming interested in the past as well as the present.

They will love school and their teacher. They’ll enjoy seeing her out of school. I remember sitting on the

back fence of the house where my Sunday school teacher lived. I wanted to see her more than just on Sundays, and it was exciting to find her in the market.

Primaries are shy with strangers but they'll talk your ear off when they know you. They'll ask question after question because they genuinely want to learn. Their world is growing, and they want to know all there is to know.

And they love stories! They readily identify with the hero and will believe him to be real. That's why it is so important to read Bible stories to this age because they ARE real.

Just because primaries are highly sensitive (a look can fell them) and their sympathy is easily aroused, it's important now to avoid scary and gory stories.

If the characters in your stories can apply the Bible to daily life, these youngsters will understand. Such stories can help them to make adequate decisions. Primaries are concerned for right and wrong and respond to characters who are diligent to expose error and stand for the right and true.

They are fascinated by God, heaven, and the supernatural (miracles) and rely on the Lord Jesus as their Friend and Confidante. We need to teach spiritual truth in the reality of their own experience. They are a marvelous age!

Now, go to your library and do your research. Make notes on the next page

and be sure to get all your bibliographic data. Who knows? You may hit a perfect twenty-six and want to find a publisher who puts these little horrors (horrors for the writer to write) into print. This way, you'll find a publisher in your notes.

Then do the exercise described. When I did that exercise, I turned my story into rhyme (which see). You may wish to do that as well.

Okay! Up and at 'em. No war ever started without a bloodbath, and it's about time you learned from experience that writing ABC books—one step away from war—just ain't easy.

Know-it-all me put my ABC into a little poem. You might want to do something like this yourself.

A KIDDY-LIT A-B-C

By Dick Bohrer

**I never know when I sit down
What I will write about.
It doesn't help to stare outside
Or moan or groan or pout.**

**I need a list of topics that
Will first point out the way,
So when I've time and energy,
I'll have something to say.**

**I need a list of A-B-C's
To give me inspiration,
So I'll know what to write about
For kids across the nation.**

**Will Animals? Bible tales?
Cowboy stories do?
Discoveries? Experiences?**

Fairies? Gothics too?

How-to-do-its? I-can-do-its?

Jokes and Kings and Loot?

Mysteries? And Nursery rimes?

And Olden times to boot?

Puzzles? Quizzes? Races? Spooks?

And Tales retold to tell?

Us, Verses, Whys? X-marks-the-spot?

You-are-there? Zoos, as well?

I did it! I made up a list

Of topics. I'll start shouting!

If it doesn't work, I'll let you know

And I'll go back to pouting.

Let me see if I can't trigger
your inspiration with ideas for a
kind of ABC story you could do.

KINDS-OF-STORY A-B-C

A is for Adventure and Adult world

B is for Believe it or not, Ballads

C is for Cumulative, Cycle, Come-to-realize, Chronology

Collections, Comedy, Child-life,
Character stories

D is for Disasters averted and Dark-to-Day

E is for Exceptions to the rule

F is for Flashbacks, Fact stories,
Frames, Flaws are healed

G is for Mother Goose

H is for Histories, How-to, How
things got the way they are

I is for inverted pyramids and I-get-
what-I-ain't-gots and I-am-what-I-
ain't

J is for Jelly-rolls (two stories rolled
in one)

K is for Kisses (stories of praise)

L is for Lands across the sea

M is for Make-believe and Myths

N is for Never-Never-land

O is for Other people, Other places,
Other times

P is for Picture stories, Plant-and-
Pick-up, Problem-and-solution

Q is for Question and Answer

R is for Repetitive Statement

S is for Sunk-and Saved, Surprise
ending, Show-and-tell, Slice of life

T is for Theme, Today in the life of...

U is for the Unusual

V is for Vocations

W is for Whimsy

X is for X-rays (very close looks at
one thing)

Y is for Yesterdays

Z is for Zombies!

Now, if the book summaries already
given are not enough for you (perhaps if
you are a teacher and want an assign-
ment for each child in class), you may
wish to go to the library to look up more
books. On the following sheets are re-
search tables you can use for your notes
as you find books you want to include.
After each chapter in these lessons, one
page of such tables will be included.

As stated earlier, having such a re-
source enables you to send your
manuscript to the publisher that prints
the kind of book you've written as-

suming your new book resembles what he likes. Just make sure yours is different enough so he does not recognize it as something he has already done.

You may want to make copies of the following page before you begin to write on it.

Then on your own paper, draw 28 horizontal lines about an inch apart and put a letter of the alphabet in each one.

As you work on your own ABC book, learn not to erase. Only cross out and that, lightly, often you judge and obliterate a word that later you wish you could recall.

Probably you'll find a title when you're all through. Don't waste a lot of time trying to think one up before you begin. Some writers write the title

and the first sentence last.

Some writers can't begin until they have a title.

Others will wait for the first sentence... and wait... and wait. One student of mine waited four hours for a sentence that never came. He handed in a blank paper for homework.

You do it any way you want—just don't waste a lot of time getting started.

But don't you sit and stare at the blank page, yearning for an inspiration. Start with "Dear Mom" if you have to. Sometimes that gets the literary juices running.

However, if your pen is really dry, go do something else. Eventually, the ink will come—surely.

Let's Write a Cycle Story

With baseball, everything starts and ends at home plate.

The same is true in writing the story with a cycle structure. We end where we begin. This is the way a child's day goes. He gets out of bed in the morning, goes through his day, and then returns to his bed in the evening. Although he may put up a fuss at having to leave everybody in the living room, he loves going back to where he came from. And, for this reason I'm sure, many children love their pillow and their "noy-noy" blanket.

The cycle story starts with a problem, searches for a solution, and returns "home" with an answer. It may set sail, have adventures, and come home in triumph. Or it may have to return home to find the solution. But there is always a going out and a coming back in.

In Anthony **Abraham's Polonius Penguin Learns to Swim** (New York: Franklin Watts, 1963), Polonius is the only penguin who can't swim. He stows away on a ship that has visited his South Pole home.

His trip takes him to England where a youngster with water wings teaches him to swim in a bath tub. He returns home in triumph to tell his family and friends about his exciting adventures.

Your Turn: Choose a creature who can't do

what it was made to do. Take him out of his environment to a strange place where someone teaches him the skills he needs. Let him return to his home to show his family what he can do. This is like the story of Jacob in Genesis.

In **Rrra-ah** by Eros Keith (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Bradbury Press, 1969), a young toad is caught. Three children capture him in the clover beside the pond where he was born. They take him home and keep him overnight in a match box. The next morning the children want to play games. The game the toad wants to play is called "escape."

They all crash through the house and capture him again. The next day he escapes again. When he lands in the kitchen in a bowl of icing, Mother says something like "Get that frog out of here!" The children reluctantly take him back to the pond where again he sticks his nose in pink clover, closes his eyes, and takes a deep breath.

Your Turn: Have children take a creature out of its world into theirs. Have the creature try to escape and finally do something Bad that makes the children glad to take him back to his own place in God's world where he is happy once more.

He may have the captain's daughter to marry if he can dance around the world in five years. **Peter Penny's Dance** by Janet Quin-Harkin (New York: Dial Press, 1976) dances Peter out of London, through France, Spain,

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Africa, India, China, Hawaii, the USA, and back again to London.

He arrives home in time to wed the girl.

Your Turn: Someone can have a prize if he sails, balloons, drives, swims, or begs rides around the world. Give your character a challenge in order to get the reward. Take him/her around your town or your county or state or country or another country if not the world. Maybe he visits missionaries on their fields and returns home to tell a big convention.

Free Lunch by J. Otto Seibold and Vivian Walsh. (New York: Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1996.)

Summary: A dog, Mr. Lunch, feeds birds. But when his source for seed dries up, he has to find another way to get food for his feathered friends.

Letting the cut-and-paste-like pictures tell part of the story, the authors personify a dog, Mr. Lunch, who feeds birds with seeds he buys.

When his supplier sends rocks instead of seeds, Mr. Lunch finds a farm supplier.

His original supplier has him jailed under a leash law.

He escapes into a ruby mine and finds the good elephant who was his original supplier.

Mr. Lunch escapes from there and finds the judge (an owl) who sent him to jail.

She deals justice and Mr. Lunch returns to his original job of feeding birds.

Your Turn: Whew! Wasn't that outrageous! The one who tricks you gets to punish you. With an escape and an appeal to the judge who punished you, you get to go back to doing what you were doing in the first place.

Verna Aardema in **Why Mosquitoes Buzz In People's Ears** (New York: Dial Press, 1975) has a mosquito that tells an iguana a whopping lie about a farmer that was digging up yams her size. For some reason, that story triggers a flight of animals that ends when a morning owl refuses to call for the sunrise. The king of beasts calls the animals back one by one in reverse order to find the ultimate culprit.

We end with the mosquito (cycle completed) who learns her lesson. She stops telling lies and turns instead to complaining in peoples' ears.

Your Turn: This uses the cumulative method, too (lesson 5). Start a panic when one creature tells another a big lie that causes a lot of people a lot of trouble. Have someone work back through the lies to find the first liar who learns it is wrong to lie.

Liza Lou and the Yeller Belly Swamp (New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1976) by Mercer Mayer is a book with four cycle stories. In each, Liza Lou leaves home near a bayou and undertakes an errand for her mother. By using her wits, she triumphs over the haunts and trolls living in the swamp. At the end of each adventure, she returns home to her mother. She has faced life's threats and has overcome.

Your Turn: Your hero leaves home on an errand, gets into trouble with those who want something in a neighborhood where threatening kids wait. She uses her wits to escape and returns home safely. This is the story of Samson until he got into more trouble than he could handle.

These six examples show how the

pattern works. For some heroes there was a conflict that moved the story forward. The novelty of a penguin that can't swim and of a toad that cannot escape piques the child's interest. Of course, in each case we have a happy ending.

That's what coming back to home base provides.

Even young readers understand conflict. They've been the littlest one in the church nursery, the one who gets every ball snatched out of his hands, the one whose hair gets pulled by the domineering two-year-old meany who's ready to graduate. They know at every age that the strong rule the world.

As Dwight Swain says in *Techniques of a Selling Writer* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), conflict is "opposition. It is two forces striving to achieve mutually incompatible goals."

The frog wants desperately to escape. The children want desperately to keep him caught. Both toddlers want the same ball and hair. We build our cycle on both conflict and the round trip.

Some cycle stories have no conflict at all.

Jonathan and His Mommy by Irene Smalls-Hector and illustrated by Michael Hays (Boston: Little, Brown and company, 1992) shows the boy and his mother leaving home to take a walk. They do zigzag steps, giant steps, itsy-bitsy steps, bunny steps, running steps, slow-motion steps, bal-

let steps, crazy crisscross steps, reggae steps, backward steps all the way home.

Your Turn: See how easy this is? Do a story with children playing "Mother May I?" in which they ask "Mother" for permission to take six giant steps, four baby steps, two jumps, one skip, one twirly step, etc.

In **The Story of May** by Mordicai Gerstein (New York: Harper/Collins Publishers, 1993) the month of May is awakened by her mother April and told that this day will be a special day in her life.

The month awakes and, after introducing herself to the world and finding what a difference May makes, sets off to meet her father December and return to her place, having met all her relatives and having noted what a difference they make as well.

Your Turn: What can you do with the months of the year? May, here, visits every month in the cycle. What month would you take? What would your months talk about? How could you make your story different from Mordecai Gerstein's? How could you work God's plan into this?

The Story of Horrible Hilda and Henry by Emma Chichester Clark (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1988) begins with a sentence that names the two children in the story, Henry and Hilda, and describes them as really terrible kids.

We learn how they make their parents' lives miserable with total selfishness and disobedience. Their parents give them to the zoo where they torture the animals.

The zookeeper cries out that he's had enough and puts them in a cage

with a lion who terrifies them.

Realizing how awful they'd been, they turn over a new leaf and their parents take them home. The lion comes with them to make sure they stay good.

Hilda privately has her doubts.

Your Turn: Have fun with this one. Where would you put two horrible children who refuse to obey and love disobedience? Even when they are punished, they are horrible. Have them put in a terrible place or have them see themselves as sinners and turn to the Lord? When they come home, they want to be good; but they're not sure. Assure them their salvations is secure because of what Christ did, not because of what they do.

Terry Denton in his **Home Is The Sailor** (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1989) begins with a simple sentence identifying that it is the sea that Claude and Sparky live by.

In his story, a young boy and his penguin friend set sail to find cooler waters. They meet a stranded old sailor (a seal) who is searching for the Land of the Midnight Sea.

The three survive a storm and arrive in northern seas the next day. They reach a seal city where the old seal will retire. He gives Claude his compass which helps the boy steer home through an iceberg maze.

Your Turn: A boy travels with two talking animals to a distant place where one remains but gives the boy something that will help him get home. How can you write this and bring the boy safely home? You could have him meet a postman who takes him to the post office, puts him in a package and mails him home. ☺

Uncle Lester's Hat by Howie Schneider. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1993.)

This first-person narrative explains that Uncle Wilfred never goes out because his back hurts. He just sits and watches TV—until the morning Uncle Lester's hat is discovered in the attic.

Uncle Wilfred takes it out for air and follows it around the world as the wind scoots it off his head and out ahead of him.

The text says he never does the things the illustrations show him doing.

The flying hat is seen on each page.

Uncle Wilfred, returning home, promises the hat to the narrator with the implication that the next time it is his/her turn.

Your Turn: See how satisfying it is to take a character out and to bring him back home? Maybe your text can say he does things the pictures show he never does as a twist on Uncle Wilfred. Always look for a twist that will make your story different from the one I've found for you.

One caution: Don't let your cycle take too long. Some publishers print 64-page books and require writers to limit their whole story to that length. Most stories now, though, seem to be 32 pages in length. Some designers count a front cover, a back cover and the insides of the covers as four of the pages. Others count just the pages inside. But the title page, dedication, Library of Congress data and sometimes a table of contents will take four pages.

That leaves 28 for you and it's a good move especially for beginning writers. It forces you into brevity. It avoids monotony. The action must

move right along to make it around third base and home before the pages run out. And remember that those pages must contain illustrative material. They're not all yours to fill.

Notice, too, that some of these stories are sheer nonsense; and some are the outgrowth, most likely, of events in the writer's life. Most children catch frogs. All children grow without feeling it. We all have haunts and trolls living in our swamp and our fears that someone will reach us in the dark and grab us from behind. Any number of incidents from your past life could become the subject of this kind of story.

One other interesting point to notice about several of these samples is that they utilize a home setting. This simply reinforces the principle that a writer can draw effectively from his own personal resources when writing for young children.

On occasion you will hear that publishers don't want any more talking horses. But we've had a penguin that not only talks but travels by ship. We have a mosquito that complains and a number of animals that talk. So the day of garrulous creatures is still with us.

I'm going to include my own sample at this point. It's one of my more noxious. Editors call this kind sheer "nausea." My reason for including it is to encourage you. Surely, you could never do worse!

I've picked up on a common problem children have—especially lonely

children. The heroine feels unloved. I've written it in 62 pages and have numbered my pages as I've gone along. Some pages have only a few words.

I've also kept in mind that odd-numbered pages come on the right side. I've used even-numbered pages for upbeat statements and the odd-numbered for the downbeats. Cause will come on the left side and the effect on the right.

Having 62 pages means it starts on the inside of the front cover and goes through to the inside of the back cover. This means that page one will have to share space with the bibliographical data.

Do You Like Me?

By Dick Bohrer

1. **"Nobody likes me," TeeHee said.**
2. **"Everybody hates me. I am going out to eat worms."**
3. **TeeHee was crying. She was sad.**
4. **"You can't eat worms, TeeHee," her mother said. "A caterpillar does not eat worms. You are a worm yourself."**
5. **"I am Not a worm," TeeHee said. "I am a lovely, long-haired, sky-blue caterpillar. I am not a worm."**
6. **"Don't talk back to me, young lady," her mother said. "If I say you are a worm, you are a worm."**

7. TeeHee cried.
8. “Nobody likes me,” she said, crying more. “Even my mother says I am a worm.”
9. TeeHee walked sadly off her leaf.
10. She walked sadly down her branch.
11. She walked sadly down, down, down, down, down her tall, tall tree.
12. She walked sadly down the path beside the tree.
13. “Nobody likes me,” she said. “Everybody hates me.”
14. TeeHee saw a bird.
15. “Do you like me?” she said to the bird.
16. “Like you?” the bird said. “No, I don’t like you.”
17. A tear came to TeeHee’s eye. “Why?” she said to the bird.
18. “You are a tickle worm,” he said. “My mother told me not to like tickle worms.”
19. “She did?” TeeHee cried again.
20. “Oh, yes. Mother said not to like tickle worms. They tickle and tickle and tickle. Birds die laughing when they eat tickle worms,” he said.
21. (Illustration only) (A bird dying of laughter.)
22. The bird flew away and left
23. TeeHee all alone on the path.
24. TeeHee walked slowly away.
25. “Nobody likes me,” she said. “Everybody hates me.”
26. TeeHee saw an elephant.
27. “Do you like me?” she said to the elephant.
28. “Like you?” the elephant said. “No, I don’t like you.”
29. A tear came to TeeHee’s eye. “Why?” she said.
30. “You are a tickle worm,” he said. “My mother told me not to like tickle worms.”
31. “She did?” TeeHee cried again.
32. “Yes. Mother said not to let tickle worms come near me. They walk up my nose. They walk up inside my long, long nose. They tickle and tickle and tickle. Elephants sneeze their heads off when they let tickle worms come near them.”
33. (Illustration only) (An elephant sneezing its head off)
34. The elephant ran away and left
35. TeeHee all alone on the path.
36. TeeHee walked slowly away.
37. “Nobody likes me,” she said. “Everybody hates me.”
38. TeeHee saw a rhino.
39. “Do you like me?” she said.

40. "Like you?" the rhino said.
"No, I don't like you."

41. A tear came to TeeHee's eye.
"Why?" she said.

42. "You are a tickle worm," he said. "My mother told me not to like tickle worms."

43. "She did?" TeeHee cried again.

44. "Yes. Mother said not to come near tickle worms. Tickle worms walk up our skin. They tickle and tickle and tickle. Rhinos can't stand it. Mother said rhinos laugh so hard

45. that they jump right out of their skins." (Illustrated)

46. The rhino ran away and left

47. TeeHee all alone on the path.

48. TeeHee walked slowly away.

49. "Nobody likes me," she said.
"Everybody hates me."

50. "I like you," a dog with spots on his nose said. "I am a laughing hyena."

51. TeeHee smiled. "You like me?" she said.

52. "Yes," he said. "I like you. My mother told me that if I ever stopped laughing, I should find a tickle worm and let it come near me. Then it would tickle me and tickle me and tickle me and I would laugh and laugh and laugh."

53. "I feel it coming now," the hyena said as he put TeeHee on his nose.

54. "Tee Hee! Ha! Ha! Hee! Haw! Haw!"

55. "I like you," said a long, long snake.

56. TeeHee smiled. "You like me?"

57. "Yes," he said. "I like you. My mother told me that if I ever had an itch I could not scratch, I should find a tickle worm and let it come near me.

58. "Then it would tickle me and tickle me and tickle me and I would feel better.

59. "I feel you coming now," the snake said. "Ah! Ah! Oh! Oh! Aaaaaah!"

60. "I like you, too," a monkey over near a tall, tall tree said. It was TeeHee's very own tree.

61. TeeHee laughed. "You like me?"

62. "Yes," he said. "I like you most of all. My mother said that if ever I got tired of playing with the other monkeys, I should find a tickle worm and let it come near me. Then it would tickle me and tickle me and tickle me.

63. "She said that one tickle worm is more fun than a whole barrel full of monkeys."

64. The monkey put the tickle worm on his foot and laughed and laughed and laughed.

65. “Tee Hee! Ha! Ha! Hee! Hee! Haw! Haw!”

66. TeeHee laughed and laughed, too.

67. Then she ran up her tall, tall tree as fast as she could go. She ran up her very own branch. She ran on to her very own leaf.

68. “Mother,” she said. “They like me! They like me!”

I know by now that you must have run several times to the sink. I have no delusions about this story. I only want to use it to make a number of salient points, and I’d rather have you laugh at my stories than feel I was poking fun at another writer.

This story would qualify for mention under a category we’ll study shortly—namely, the repetitive statement structure.

Pages 1,8,13,25,37, and 49 are our duplicates.

Page 8 of this story injects adult humor into the narrative and this is a no-no, say the editors. Even though we know the reader will be an adult, a tired, story-weary adult, we write for the kid not the nanny. In a sense, pages 20, 32, and 45 are also adultish. The humor is built on clichés adults understand but which children rarely do.

I suppose, psychologically, this story is very sound. One is disliked by

those to whom he is a threat. As he understands this, he can cope with it. One is liked by those for whom he performs a service they cannot perform for themselves. The writer can hope that after the 38th reading, the child will apply the moral to his own life.

Obviously, there are three who dislike TeeHee and three who like her. This is a matter of taste. I needed three animals so I could get Pages 20, 32, and 45 in. I didn’t need three who liked her, but I let it parallel the first half; and it all seemed to work.

Notice, we went in a cycle. She left her perch in the tree, went for a walk and returned to the same place. She went with a problem and came back with it solved.

Notice also that the tags in all but one case are subject first, verb second: “She said.” “He said.” This sounds normal to the ear. “said she” or “said TeeHee” doesn’t.

For what it is worth, I am going to add here the alphabetical word list for the story to show that more than likely the young reader could read this one to himself.

a: a, again, ah, all, alone, am, an, and, are, as, away.

b: back, barrel, beside, better, bird(s), blue, bottom, branch.

c: can’t, caterpillars, come-came-coming, could, cried-crying.

d: did, die, do-don’t-does, dog, down.

e: eat, elephants, even, ever, everybody, eye.

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f: feel, find, flew, foot, full, fun.
g: going, got.
h: ha, had haired, hard, hates, he, heeds, her, his, hyena.
i: I, if, inside, is, it, itch.
j: jump.
k: - - -
l: lady, laugh-laughed-laughing, leaf, left, let, like(s), long, lovely.
m: me, monkey(s), more, most, mother, my.
n: near, no, nobody, nose, not, now.
o: of, off, on, one, other, our, out, over, own.
p: path, playing, put.
q: - - -
r: ran, rhino(s), right.
s: sad-sadly, said, saw, say(s), scratch, she, should, skin(s), sky, slowly, smiled, snake, sneeze, so, spots, stand, stopped.
t: talk, tall, tear, TeeHee('s), than, that, the, their, them, then, they, tickle, tired, to, too, told, tree.
u: up.
v: very.
w: walk, walked, was, way, when, why, with, worm(s), would.
x: - - -
y: yes, you, yourself, young.
z: - - -

To limit yourself as a writer to a certain word list is to bang your head against concrete. Something has to give and it is usually the writer. Determine to use simple words and to write naturally. Many children love big words and will sound them out with great delight. Let them.

The key to success with the cycle

story as with all other stories is originality. TeeHee's story isn't all that fresh because it's built on worn-out clichés. As you do your own research, look for the fresh idea and venerate it. Or hope your editor has a wild artist on leash.

Here are some more books by people who've turned the trick:

Victoria's Adventure by Susan Jeschke. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976).

Cycle: Victoria is in bed in the beginning and in bed again at the end.

Story: Victoria, in bed with fever, takes medicine and dreams she takes a trip in her little toy car. Her teddy bear and doll accompany her. In her escapades she freezes and burns and ultimately returns to her bed where she awakens with her fever broken.

Your Turn: Notice that in her dream she goes through the stages of a breaking fever. Perhaps she doesn't stay in bed in your story but goes outside. Maybe she has a sitter who doesn't care. Somehow, get her back in bed before she gets worse.

Edie Changes Her Mind by Johanna Johnston. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1964).

Cycle: We begin in the bedroom and return to the bedroom.

Story: Edie refuses to go to bed so her parents dismantle it and take it out of her room. They let her stay up all night and learn for herself how wonderful it is to go to bed.

The next day she's exhausted. Her parents reassemble her bed in her room at her request, and she shows

she has learned her lesson. We start in the bedroom and end in the bedroom.

Your Turn: Clever parents! Write a story of what you would do in this situation. Or maybe your Edie will refuse to do something else like refusing to eat her breakfast or refusing to do her chores or turn out the lights or turn down her radio. Her parents make her live with her decision. Teach repentance and recovery at the end.

Hot-Air Henry by Mary Calhoun and illustrated by Erick Ingraham (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981) 40 pp.

Summary: A sassy Siamese cat, named Henry, stows away on a hot-air balloon and ends up taking a fur-raising flight across the mountains.

Cycle: The balloon flies out and returns to the spot from which it rose.

First sentence simply says that Henry wanted to fly.

The cat sneaks aboard a hot-air balloon and accidentally fires the burner. The hot air sends the balloon aloft with only the cat in the basket. By pulling a cord, Henry lets a little air out of the balloon at a time. The balloon and cat return to the folks who inflated it in the first place.

Your Turn: All the time, animals sneak aboard something—cats aboard trucks, dogs into cars, mice onto ships. Somehow they get food and eventually they come home. You try this. The more unusual the vehicle and adventure the more interesting the story.

Big Red Barn by Margaret Wise Brown with pictures by Felicia Bond (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1956, 1989) 32 pp.

Summary: Rhymed text and illustrations introduce the many different

animals that live in the big barn. **Cycle:** The story begins and ends at the big red barn.

First sentence places the barn in a field and tells about a pig that was just learning to oink.

We begin in the morning. All the animals we meet play during the day and return to the barn at night to eat and sleep. The rhymes are not always true rhymes nor is the rhyme scheme regular.

Your Turn: Break your sentences up into poem-like lengths and tell what goes on at recess when kids leave the class and then return or when kids, after dressing for sports, leave the gym and then return. Or children in the wilderness visit all the neighbors and return home.

It Was A Dark And Stormy Night by Janet and Allan Ahlberg (New York/London: Viking, The Penguin Group, 1993). 32 pp.

Cycle: The words of the title appear first and last.

Repeating the title, the first sentence sets the scene with a bored brigand chief telling his eight-year-old captive boy to tell the band a story. He begins his story within the story by repeating the title of the book.

He peoples his stories with the actual band and brings wolves and bears and sharks and pirates, Thingies, and bats and treasure and banquets there into the cave. Antonio, the boy, rouses the blackguards to riot; and they flee the cave, letting Antonio go free. At home, his sisters ask him for a story. Antonio begins again with the words that form the book's title.

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Your Turn: Have a missionary captured by jungle rebels who uses scary stories to get his captors so nervous they run away and he gets to go free. On another note, have a child in "show and tell" at school tell the other children what it's like to get stuck in an elevator and the things that could happen. Have the children panic. At home, he tells his sisters the same story.

Three Bags Full, story by Ragnhild Scamell with pictures by Sally Hobson (New York: Orchard Books, 1993). 24 pp.

Summary: When other animals ask Millie, a kindhearted sheep, for pieces of her wool, she discovers all too quickly that she's let them take it all.

The first sentence simply names her and tells how kind she always was.

Cycle: The sheep begins in "the field" and ends in "the field."

Story: When Bird, Badger, and Rabbit need a little wool for one reason or another, they ask Millie for some of hers. Happy to comply, she learns too late she has no coat left. Cold, she seeks shelter from Bird, Badger, and Rabbit but is turned away. Fox welcomes her, but she wants none of him.

She goes to the Farmer's wife who knits her a warm sweater. Millie returns to the field only to find that Bird, wanting just a little more wool, has begun to unravel the sweater.

Ever wanting to be kind, Millie, we discover, is as generous with this new sweater as she was with her coat.

Your Turn: Sweet Christian Millie lets the family borrow her money till she has none. A kind friend helps her out and her family comes back for more. Will she let them help themselves?

Where Is Mr. Mole? By Ivan

Gantschev and adapted by Andrew Clemets (Saxonville, Mass.: Picture Book Studio, 1989, Neugebauer Press Ltd., London). 24 pp.

Summary: Owl tries to track down his friend Mole who left home in search of friendship; and though he fails to find him, Mole does turn up again with precisely what he needs.

The first sentence says that Mr. Mole had been thinking about taking a trip for quite a long time.

Cycle: From home back to home.

Story: A ragged hole in the bottom outside corner of every page marks the trail dug by Mr. Mole as he goes into the world to make new friends. He says goodbye to his friend Mr. Owl and leaves.

The story follows Mr. Owl's search to make sure that his friend was all right. He asks Rabbit, Cat, Frog, Goose, Fox, Bear, Sheep, Porcupine and ends up at a circus but finds no mole.

He returns home and finds that Mole returns as well, having found the friend (by implication, Mr. Owl) whom he had sought.

Your Turn: This is the TeeHee story all over again where someone looking for friends goes everywhere only to find that the best friends are often at home.

Grandma's Hands by Dolores Hohanson (writer and illustrator. (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1998.)

Summary: During the year that an African-American boy stays with his grandmother on her farm, he learns that every child needs a home where there's love.

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The first sentence explains that the boy's mother sent him to his grandmother's farm to get him out of the city.

He stays there for a year until his mother comes and takes him home. He learns to respect hard work and rough hands.

Your Turn: Because rebels are bombing his town, a Christian child is taken to relatives in the country for safety. Here he learns to work hard and help others. Sweet testimonies are not enough to win unsaved people to Christ.

Beetle Boy by Lawrence David; illustrated by Delphine Durand. (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.)

Summary: When Gregory Sampson wakes up one morning and discovers he has become a giant beetle, only one person seems to notice.

He goes through the day, goes to bed and wakes the next morning as a boy. Through his day of being a beetle at school, he marvels that only his friend Michael recognizes that he is a bug.

Your Turn: Your Christian child imagines he/she is a bug or mouse or roach and comes home from a day at school to tell about it, thankful God made him/her human.

The Day My Dogs Became Guys by Merrill Markol with pictures by Eric Brace. (New York: Viking, 1999)

Summary: An eclipse of the sun turns Casey's three dogs into people, but instead of behaving like boys they still behave like dogs.

The first sentence tells the time of day when the alarm clock by Carey's bed goes off.

His dogs sleep on top of him at night and act like dogs in the day. Young Carey wishes his pets were human so they would learn to behave. During an eclipse, they do; but instead of behaving like people, they behave like dogs, wolfing down food and screaming at squirrels and making a mess of the house.

Eclipse over, they turn back into dogs (end of cycle) to Carey's relief. He likes them better as dogs.

Your Turn: See the unexpected surprises in this story? Turn your three boys into cats or bats or rats or whatever and see what makes us glad God made them really boys. Or write of pets turning human and their masters liking them better the way God created them.

Psssst! It's Me... The Bogeyman by Barbara Park and illustrated by Stephen Kroninger. (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1998)

Summary: A certain bogeyman (pronounced "boogyman"), the child-scaring creature who lives under beds and grabs ankles, reveals something he soon regrets.

The first sentence repeats the title and adds the fact that the Bogeyman is down under the bed of the child it is haunting.

In jive talk, the Bogeyman identifies himself to the young boy in the bed above him and then dismantles the myths about Bogeymen getting people if they don't watch out. He reveals his hatred of gym socks—he's allergic. A downpour of gym socks sends him to another child's room

where he announces (end of cycle) the same words that formed the title and the first sentence.

Your Turn: This one is so much fun! You could do something similar with the tooth fairy or something more serious—a Bible character.

Ox Cart Man (Caldecott Award) by Donald Hall with pictures by Barbara Cooney. (New York: Puffin Books, 1979.)

Summary: The story follows an early-nineteenth-century New England family season by season through a year.

The beginning describes the family getting ready to go to market by filling its ox-cart with the items made and grown all year long.

The story lists the items taken to market and goes through the list again as they are planted and/or harvested through the year in preparation for the next year's trip to market.

Your Turn: Tell the story of a Christian family living some time in the past—a family of your own ancestors, perhaps. Include their times of worship. Or tell the story of an old time preacher who must get up early, get to church, get it warm and get the meeting started.

Mei-Mei Loves The Morning by Margaret Holloway Tsubakiyama, paintings by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu. (Morton Grove, Ill.: Albert Whitman and Company, 1999).

Summary: A young Chinese girl and her grandfather go riding on grandpa's bicycle to meet friends in the park.

The first sentence repeats the title.

With her grandpa she enjoys breakfast, a bicycle ride to the park to meet friends and dance with them and then return. At home, she tells Grandpa that she loves mornings. He says he loves them, too.

Your Turn: Retell a time when a boy goes with his grampa or a girl with her grandmother to do ordinary things on a Saturday morning. Let the last line be like Mei-Mei's. Or have her go with Grampa to Sunday school, have a good time and return home. "Grampa, I love Sunday School" or "Grampa, I love Jesus." Let there be a sweet tenderness to your story.

John Willy And Freddy McGee by Gikkt Neade, (Tarrytown, N.Y.: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 1998).

Summary: Two escaping guinea pigs find adventure and thrills in the tunnels of the family's pool table.

The first sentence simply introduces the reader to the two creatures named in the title.

We learn they are guinea pigs who escape their cage, scurry through the house to the pool table. Frightened by rolling balls (the cat is batting them above) in the tunnels, they flee to their cage and safety.

Your Turn: Give two animals human names and have them have an adventure and make it safely back home, arriving just a door slam before a dangerous enemy.

Christina Katerina And The Box by Patricia Lee Gauch, illustrated by Doris Burn. (New York: Paper-Star Books, a Putnam and Grosset Group, 1971.)

The first sentence lists the things that Christina Katerina likes to keep—especially boxes (to her mother's dis-

tress). She turns one, a large refrigerator box, into a castle, a club house, a racing car and flattened out into a mansion for dancing. It disintegrates just in time to be replaced by two new boxes from a washer and dryer (to mother's distress).

Your Turn: Grandma and Grampa are saving boxes. They have to move. The children use the empty boxes to make a city in the basement. They can be upset when Grampa comes for one box after another but thankful for the fun they have been getting to have.

Henry, The Sailor Cat by Mary Calhoun and illustrated by Erick Ingraham (New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1994).

Summary: A stowaway cat becomes a life-saving sailor during a storm at sea.

The first sentence has the cat, Henry, watching as his family loads everything on their boat except him.

Henry, a Siamese cat, stows away on the family sailboat and goes out sailing with The Man and The Kid. He helps The Kid rescue The Man who has fallen overboard.

They return to port completing the cycle.

Your Turn: Let an unwanted child go along with everybody somewhere and prove to be the hero of the outing. Perhaps he could pray at the outset that he might get to go and that they would like having him along.

Other books to look up in the library are:

Johnson, **Let's Walk Up a Wall** (Holiday House)

Johnston, **Supposings**

Keeping, **Molly of the Moors**

Skipper, **The Fooling of King Alexander**

Van Anrooy, **The Sea Horse**

When you have finished writing your first cycle story, do go through it and sort the words by first letter. This will isolate the words out of order and show you the level of vocabulary you have used. Count the words of three syllables and do your best to cut them to two. Don't be so rigorous about it that you make your style of writing childish. We don't write down to children. Allow yourself some large words that are easy to read but keep it to a minimum.

Cycle stories are easy to write because you know where you are going and where you are coming back.

In the next lesson we will examine chronological narratives and tales retold.

I trust these lessons are igniting your creative spark to your delight.

Professor Dick

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE CYCLE STORY

Research Sheet

Title: _____

Author: _____

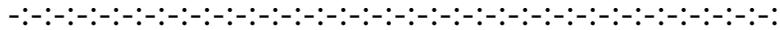
Publisher _____

No. pages: _____

LOFC Summary: _____

First Sentence: _____

Cycle: _____



Title: _____

Author: _____

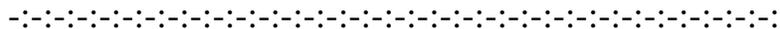
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No. pages: _____

LOFC Summary: _____

First Sentence: _____

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Before you submit, write the periodical and ask for writer's guidelines and a sample copy.

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- \$OUR LITTLE FRIEND, Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353

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