

Let Me Help You

# Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:  
*24 Ways to Write  
Stories for Kids*

*Lesson 3*

**CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE  
TALES RETOLD**

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*Let's Write a*

# Chronological Narrative

Every family has its “Remember the time Aunt Leilani...” tales.

These held everyone spellbound on first hearing. Those who knew what was coming relived the story, just barely controlling their mirth.

That’s what chronological narrative does. It tells a past-time story so that it sounds like the present. It’s happening

## Now!

Not only is chronological narrative happening now, good writers inject the sense that it’s occurring for the first time—now.

The chronological narrative tells life as it is—or was. But it’s not contrived. We don’t condense it. We don’t force the beginning to be as close in time to the ending as we can get it as you would in frame and flashback.

Our hero or heroine begins his day calmly enough, only to be surprised by a crisis. His calm or his reserve or his livelihood is about to be knocked *kattywumpus*.

It may even be more serious. His family may be in danger. His life may

be threatened by the menace he faces. We take him to the danger and through the danger to a happy-ever-after ending.

A kitten may be lost. We don’t want him out all night. Some big animal (threat) might get him. We search everywhere. No one has seen him. What will we do?

Chronological narrative allows us to relive all the anguish of the hero. If that hero is the cat, we feel its loss. If the hero is the child, we share his anxiety. We long for success, but we must wait until the story gets there and finds the cat stuck in a tree or under a porch nursing a litter full of kittens.

Naturally in the beginning we will set and people the scene. We indicate the age of the hero and commit ourselves to a viewpoint.

Whose story is it?

We will see no more than the hero sees.

Or we will be omniscient, knowing everything.

We'll give the background needed to understand the complication of the story, but we'll work it in without flashing back.

We hook the reader with the threat or with the need for a solution—suggesting that the story is being told for a reason so the reader will feel there's some point to all of this that is going to make me laugh or cry or empathize or it will satisfy me in some way.

The middle develops the complication and leads us to the climax. At that point the reader despairs, because he cannot figure out how the story can bring us happily ever after to a solution that is satisfactory and believable.

In my story that follows, I develop action along a set line.

The narrative begins as we set the scene.

We show that all is well.

Then we suggest a threat to the heroine.

That threat intensifies and leads to the first confrontation when the antagonist (the villain) attacks.

The heroine counterattacks to no avail.

When all seems hopeless, she

makes one final thrust and wins.

**ZZZZZZZZZZZ**

by Dick Bohrer

Set the scene:

**“ZZZZZZZZZZ. Snuffle. Snuffle. Snuff Snuff. ZZZZZZZZZZ. Snuffle. Snuffle.”**

**Pinkie was snoring so she didn't hear the fly.**

**The sun was warm and the sand so nice and silky-soft. She had just been born that morning and hadn't yet shaken out her kinks. She'd had her bath and her breakfast of wonderful warm milk and now she was having her first, her very first nap.**

**“ZZZZZZZZZZ. Snuffle snuffle.”**

Begin the threat:

**The “snuffle” and the “snuff” were Pinkie's noises.**

**The “ZZZZZZZZZZ” wasn't.**

**Pinkie didn't know anything about the world yet. She didn't know about lions or snakes or hyenas or men. She didn't even know about flies. Her mama hadn't had time to tell her about anything.**

**Once her little tummy was full, Pinkie had folded her legs and made her cheek all comfy in a little clump of grass. And she'd gone right off to sleep.**

**She thought she was safe. Wasn't her mama nearby? She thought she was safe, but she wasn't.**

**Oh, she was safe from lions. They were looking for giraffes standing up. They couldn't see Pinkie lying down. And she was safe from men.**

Why, she was the same color the sand was.

Intensify the threat:

But she wasn't safe from—flies.

**ZZZZZZZZZZZ** was a fly, a giraffe-loving fly. He loved giraffes because they were so soft.

He loved to snuggle and wiggle and quiggle and giggle all around the lovely soft skin on the back of their knees. And he knew all about Pinkie. He'd been watching when she was born.

He tried to get close to her when she was having her breakfast, but she batted him with her ears and slapped him with her tail.

Now, as Pinkie lay dozing in the warm sun, **ZZZZZZZZZZZ** flew close to her. He knew he made a **ZZZZZZZZZZZ** sound. That's how he got his name. And he knew he couldn't move without going "**ZZZZZZZZZZZ**." There was something inside him that said that when he moved.

So he waited until Pinkie snored. Whenever she went "Snuffle snuffle snuff," he would make his move.

"**ZZZZZZZZZZZ** snuffle snuffle snuff-snuff. **ZZZZZ** snuff-snuff."

**ZZZZZZZZZZZ** moved closer.

Once, he "**ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ**" a little longer than Pinkie "Snuffled."

Her ear wiggled.

Had she heard him?

If only he could land right on the baby-pink part of her left back hind knee, he might get her to get up and run. He loved to make little giraffes

run. And while they were running, he'd sing in "**ZZZZZZZZZZZ**" words:

*I—love a giraffe!*

*I ride a giraffe*

*To get a big laugh.*

*I ride a giraffe.*

*I love a giraffe—*

*This here is a calf,*

*A perky young calf,*

*Gives me half of a laugh.*

*I love a giraffe!*

Pinkie snored again.

**ZZZZZZZZZZZ** zzzzzled closer.

Attack:

And then—**ZZZZZOweeee!**

**ZZZZZZZZZZZ** lit. He'd made it and he loved it. He snuggled and he smuggled. He circled and he zirceled.

And Pinkie felt it. She was up and running like a streak, faster than any zzzzebra in any zzzzzoo. And she was laughing all the way because **ZZZZZZZZZZZ** tickled!

Pinkie felt it and she didn't like it. She hated the circling and the smirking. She hated the sniggling and the giggling. She wanted **ZZZZZZZZZZZ** off.

He tickled.

Oh, how he t-i-c-k-l-e-d.

Counterattacks (16):

She snapped her legs as she ran (1), but he still tickled.

Running wasn't getting him off. She stopped running, but she couldn't stop laughing.



Unexpected result:

“What’s happened?” she asked. She felt so lightheaded. She was up in the air higher than she’d ever been before. She had stretched all the birthday kinks out of her neck, too.

“How lovely,” she said.

And then a wicked gleam came into her eye. “Maybe I can get that *Zzzzzbug* now.”

Counterattack:

She put her head down, but this time she used another way. She went around her front right leg and over to come around her left back leg. But she couldn’t reach. She pulled and stretched, but she couldn’t do it.

She pulled her head out and tried another way. She went wide around her left front leg, hoping to come around her right back leg. She reached and stretched and pulled. **And Pulled!**

Failure:

And then, with all her laughing and crying and stretching and reaching, Pinkie got the hiccups.

“I can’t do it—hic,” she cried. “I can’t. I’m a fail—hic—a failure.”

“*Zzzzzzzzzzz* laughed *Zzzzzzzzzzz*. “You’re a failure. Tickle, tickle, tickle.”

Half-hearted final effort:

Oh, how mad he made Pinkie. She pushed her head down between her front legs and looked him in the eye from as far as she could reach.

“So there!” she said, and she stuck her tongue out at him.

Unexpected result:

And when she pulled it back into her mouth, *Zzzzzzzzzzz* was gone. She had picked him off with her tongue and swallowed him!

“I got him! I got him!” she laughed and cried. She pulled her head out from between her legs, and she pulled her tongue way down into its place. And then she stretched out to all her highness.

Success:

“Look at me, world,” she called to everyone. “I’m a big girl now.”

And laughing still—because *Zzzzzzzzzzz* tickled in her tummy—she ran happily across the sand dunes, singing:

*I love a good fly.  
I’ll eat a good fly,  
I’ll tell him goodbye.  
I love a good fly.*

*I love a good fly!*

###

So there you have a chronological narrative with a beginning, middle and end.

It seems that three-fourths of the stories in our children’s libraries are chronological narratives. The variety is immense—like:

**THE MAGGIE B.** by Irene Haas (New York: Athenium, 1975). Her Margaret Barnstable wishes on a star before bed one night that the star of the sea will bring her a little boat with

her name on it on which she can sail for a day with just a friend along for companionship.

She wakes aboard the “Maggie B.” in company with her baby brother James. She spends the day making things ship-shape. Driven below deck by a storm, she makes supper for them both, tucks her brother in bed, looks out at the storm, and hops into bed herself. She blows out her lamp, curls up inside her nest of blankets, and falls asleep. The day on the “Maggie B.” is over.

**Our reader** has gone on an adventure and has learned about life aboard ship. The threat of storm adds excitement, but everything ends nice-and-cozy and happily-ever-after which just does seem to be the natural, the desired element of most chronological narratives.

**Your Turn:** Have your little girl ask for something in prayer and find that the Lord hears and answers and she gets what she wishes. Make a nice-and-cozy, happily-ever-after narrative that seems natural and normal.

Most of the history in the Bible is in chronological narrative style. The endings of some stories, as you know, are happy. Others are tragic. This is why Bible reading can be so interesting to our youngsters. I owe my command of Old Testament narrative to the years I spent pouring over my Bible story books back when my childhood asthma kept me home in bed.

**The writer** of chronological narratives could do himself/herself no

greater favor than to steep in the historical Scriptures in both the Old and the New Testaments. Not only will you get narrative truth (do notice structural details), but you’ll feed your soul.

Most adventure stories are chronological narratives. Here are some examples you may find in your local library. Some are Caldecott winners. Some seem like “relative” books, published because the author was some editor’s relative.

**The range** is wide. Be sure to notice the first sentences. Many are simple and matter of fact with no thought of hooking the reader with a whopping starter. But most stories end on a winsome note—a “come-to-realize” discovery or observation that warms the cockles of the reader’s heart.

And that’s the secret no one ever tells about writing stories for children. **THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR** by Eric Carle (New York: Philomel Books, 1987).

Summary: The story follows along as a little caterpillar eats his way through a large quantity of food until, full at last, he wraps a cocoon around himself and goes to sleep.

The first sentence chronicles the metamorphosis of an egg on a leaf.

The story traces the development from egg to butterfly of a caterpillar who eats through one apple his first day and two pears, three plums, four strawberries, five—, ten—on successive days. Full and fat, he spins a cocoon and two weeks later emerges

with wings.

**Your turn:** Think of all God's mysteries you can turn into stories in this way. Birds, animals, fish—all are different in marvelous ways.

**GRANDPA'S FACE** by Eloise Greenfield with illustrations by Floyd Cooper (New York: Philomel Books, 1985).

**Summary:** When the granddaughter of an actor sees him make a mean face as he practices his part in a play, she fears some day she'll lose his love and he'll make the same kind of face at her.

The first sentence identifies her by name, tells that she loves her grandfather and his quiet manner, but is surprised whenever he laughs because his laugh is loud.

Tamika, at book's beginning, takes walk-talks with her grandfather, sharing memories of things they have seen and felt. We learn Grandpa is an actor with many faces. Tamika sees one she fears. She is upset until Grandpa on a walk-talk assures her of his enduring love.

**YOUR TURN:** She fears a facial expression she saw on his face one day. A child of your creating may fear a word, a sharp look, abuse of an unkind nature that needs to be charmed with assurances of enduring love. Retell the story of the little maid who told the leprous general about the prophet in Israel who can cure leprosy. On his return, he will assure her of his enduring love. Or choose an experience of your own.

**CHICAGO AND THE CAT** by Robin Michal Koontz (New York: Cobblehill Books, Dutton).

Chicago Rabbit sounds an alarm in the first sentence as a cat pushes its way into Chicago's house.

Three short chapters show what

happens during the cat's invasion of Chicago's home. The rabbit in chapter one wants to turn the cat out but decides to wait till the next day.

In chapter two the cat cooks carrot pancakes, lettuce juice, zucchini bread and tells the rabbit he is going to like having a friend like him.

**Rabbit**, in chapter three, plants a vegetable garden with fish fertilizer that the cat eats out of it.

In chapter four, they adopt a stuffed dog—for protection. The cat reminds the rabbit that he already has him for a friend.

**YOUR TURN:** An intruder makes itself at home and then becomes a provider and a protector and a friend. Interestingly, the Lord Jesus has intruded Himself into our lives and become our Provider, Protector and Friend. How grateful I was in grade school when an older boy protected me from the boys who wanted to beat me up. You create a small child or creature with a need for protection. Suggest a gospel application.

**VERONICA'S FIRST YEAR** BY Jean Sasso Rheingrover and illustrated by Kay Life (Morton Grove, Ill.: Albert Whitman and Company, 1996).

**Summary:** Although his baby sister has Down's Syndrome, nine-year-old Nathan looks forward to the time when she'll be able to ride his tricycle.

The first sentence tells that the young boy has been waiting and waiting for his little sister to come.

The story chronicles Nathan's wait, then the baby's arrival and coming home. Through her first year, her pictures—bathing, smiling, eating,

crawling—are added to the family album.

**YOUR TURN:** Many wonderful things have happened in families where a child with a physical challenge has come to live. These stories need telling. Write about the first year of such a child or creature who has been waited for and enjoyed.

**MA DEAR'S APRONS** by Patricia C. McKissack and illustrated by Floyd Cooper (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers (Simon and Schuster, 1997).

**Summary:** Because his mother, Ma Dear, changes aprons every day, her young son always knows what day of the week it is. The first sentence restates that fact.

Dividing the book into the days of the week, the author tells what Ma Dear does each day in her home laundry business.

Monday's apron is blue for washing. Ma Dear adds peach leaves to the last rinse—her secret of her bright white sheets.

**Tuesday's** apron is yellow for ironing.

Wednesday's is green for delivery day.

Thursday's is pink as Ma Dear visits the sick and shut-in.

Friday's is brown for house cleaning in the next town.

Saturday's is flowered for baking pies to sell at the train station as well as bath night for David Earl.

On Sunday, she wears no apron. It's the day for church and a picnic.

**YOUR TURN:** See the unexpected ending—no apron on Sunday as it's the Lord's day. Perhaps

you could tell about a family of children who do different things on different days but always reserve Sunday for the Lord. Some people wear a different cap each day or take a different lunch box to school each day.

**A LION NAMED SHIRLEY WILLIAMSON** by Bernard Waber (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996).

**Summary:** Her unusual name causes confusion and misunderstanding at the zoo, but the zookeeper and the public think she's wonderful.

The first sentence starts the story with a kind of "Once upon a time" to introduce the lion.

Through a misunderstanding, zookeepers think their new lion is named Shirley Williamson. The public is enamored. The zoo keepers change her name to Bongo when the other lions become jealous.

Unhappy Bongo escapes and goes to live with her zookeeper, Seymour, who got fired.

Though she tries to show him she is domesticated, she has to go back to the zoo.

Shirley is given back her name, and Seymour is rehired.

**YOUR TURN:** Give some other animal a person's name and see what happens. Do you think Noah on ship board had pet names for some of the animals? With Shirley, one who befriends her is fired so she tries to befriend him. Use that to spark an idea.

**LITTLE BULL** by Ellen Foley James (New York: Sterling Publishing Inc., 1998).

**The first** sentence is a kind of newspaper lead. It begins with the

when and where of an African morning sky before it tells what's new. What's new is the birth of a baby elephant.

The narrative records the first months of Little Bull's life through a long devastating dry season and until the restoring rains finally fall.

The final sentence returns to the when and where of the first as it tells that eventually the little one will grow up and be on his own under the same bright sky.

**YOUR TURN:** Using this same idea, you can tell the story of the childhood of any animal born in the wild who must one day leave home. But it's our Heavenly Father who watches over the animals. Not a sparrow falls but He watches and knows (Luke 12:6).

**MAKE WAY FOR DUCKLINGS** by Robert McCloskey (New York: Viking Press, 1941 ). CALDECOTT AWARD.

The first sentence simply states that the parents of a duck family were trying to find a safe place for their nest.

Wanting to avoid foxes and turtles, the mallards search the city (Boston) for a suitable place to raise their family-to-come. They find a park but careening bicycles drive them out to a secluded spot on the Charles River.

After eight ducklings hatch, Mr. and Mrs. rendezvous in the Public Garden. To get there, Mrs. must walk her ducklings through traffic which comes to a halt just for them.

**YOUR TURN:** Here is another nature story where creatures (prairie dogs, puppies, kittens, turtles) take care of their own family even if it means they must live in a city. Large families of human immigrants have arrived in New York

and have held their many little ones together with a rope. They stopped traffic, too.

**WHEN AGNES CAWS** by Candace Fleming, illustrated by Giselle Potter (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1999). CALDECOTT AWARD

Summary: Agnes Peregrine, an accomplished bird caller at eight years of age, meets a deadly enemy when she travels with her mother to the Himalayas in search of the elusive pink-headed duck.

The first sentence plays on the theme of the story by identifying Agnes as the daughter of a bird scientist and then by calling her a bird-brain.

From childhood, Agnes imitated birds and sent bird lovers into ecstasy. The World Bird Society sends her to India to find a pink-headed duck. A hunter captures the duck she attracts and threatens Agnes. She calls birds from all corners of the world to come rescue her. They come and they do much—to Agnes's astonishment.

**YOUR TURN:** Here is a gifted girl who is sent on a difficult treasure hunt. An enemy captures her treasure. She uses her gift and skills to effect the rescue. Even she is astonished at the results. You can go anywhere with this. Learn to reduce such stories to their essential plot. That will help you see what professional writers are doing.

**BRIGHT STAR** by Gary Crew and Anne Spudvilas (Brooklyn, NY: Kane/Miller Book Publishers, 1997).

Summary: Alicia realizes, when she attends a lecture on astronomy that she is no longer doomed to a life of

farm work but that her future is as limitless as the stars.

The first sentence emphasizes her longing for another kind of life as she watches the stars at night from the window in her room.

A door out of her dull farmyard life opens when Alicia hears a guest speaker talk about the heavens and the planets and the geometry of space.

Alicia and her mother accept an invitation to his home and observatory to look through his telescope and talk about comets.

She asks if she may return.

He says that it's a choice only she can make.

The next morning when the cows with their mooing woke her from her dreaming, Alicia knew he was right.

**YOUR TURN:** Whether a lecture or a school lesson or a book or a conversation, your character can have an "Aha!" experience that opens the door of opportunity. Adapt an experience you've had and make a story like this.

**BRAVO, ZAN ANGELO** with story and pictures by Niki Daly (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998).

Summary: Angelo gets the part of a rooster in his grandfather's play long ago in Renaissance Venice. Yearning to be as famous a clown as his grandfather, he decides to add a touch of realism to his small part in his grandfather's production during Carnival.

The first sentence tells how bright and sunny some mornings in Venice can be.

Angelo, after much nagging, gets a small part as a rooster in his grandfa-

ther's comedy. He gets a mask, studies a rooster and scores a triumph.

The Comedy gets invited to the palace.

**YOUR TURN:** We love this kind of story where a little nobody who wants to be a somebody gets a small chance. He takes advantage of the opportunity through hard work and imagination and "scores a triumph" and "gets invited to the palace." It's David and Goliath.

**THE GIFT STONE** by Robyn Eversole (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1998).

Summary: Only when Jean, who lives underground in an Australian mining town, finds a large opal does her family have enough money to move her into a proper house with her grandparents.

The first sentence sets the scene, showing that Jean lives in a typical mining community of dirt and rock and digging machines and sky.

She longs to live like normal people in town with her grandparents but they can't afford to keep her with them.

She finds a fine opal and gives it to her grandmother who sells it for money so Jean can come live with them.

**YOUR TURN:** We like this kind of story, too, where a very poor person who wants a better life but can't afford it finds the means to bring it about. He may find a treasure or the Lord or a skill or a job or a friend.

**POCKETS** by Jennifer Armstrong and illustrated by Mary Grand Pre (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc. 1998).

Summary: A lady vagabond arrives at a remote village and transforms the

community by embroidering scenes of far-away places on their pockets.

The first sentence uses a wonderful metaphor to describe the forlorn, barefoot woman who comes to the village from across the eastern plains.

It says she is a slim schooner, “driven by winds and a broken heart.” (A simile would have said she was *like* a schooner.)

**The village** people, seeing she is looking for a home, offer to let her stay if she will be the town tailor and make plain clothes.

Fed up with plain gray, she embroiders scenes of the outside world on their pockets.

The towns people wake to beauty that transforms their lives and their city.

On the last page, the author picks up the strong wind and the sea imagery, picturing the entire village as a happy crew setting sail for home with its crew keeping a sharp eye out for familiar landmarks.

The young woman whose heart has now healed of its miseries turns her own compass toward her old home and moves out into the tide.

(The writer brings the boat image back again for a grand finale that satisfies the reader. We writers love it more.)

**YOUR TURN:** This lady has done what missionaries do, bringing life and light and color of Christ into the dark gray of sinning lives. Perhaps a Christian child who stands firm for God in a ghetto (like Corrie ten Boom) could become your story.

**TWISTER** by Darleen Bailey Beard

with pictures by Nancy Carpenter (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999).

Summary: A tornado interrupts the life of two children.

The author begins the story with the sound of the porch swing as it moves back and forth. The child narrator says she doesn’t mind how the swing looks. It’s a wonderful place to sit and pretend. On the day of the tornado they were pretending it was a throne.

**A twister** comes. Mama shoves them into the storm cellar as she goes to look for the next door neighbor. The storm strikes and Mama does not return. They amuse themselves until they hear the storm end. Mama and Mr. Lyle had hidden under the porch.

**YOUR TURN:** We have a calm beginning, then a storm, a safe place to go until it is over, then a happy ending where everyone is safe. It is Noah and the Ark. This same structure has been used repeatedly to tell stories of man and beast.

**LEFT BEHIND** by Carrol Carrick with pictures by Donal Carrick (New York: Clarion Books—Ticknor and Fields: A Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988).

The first sentence shares a young boy’s excitement and adventure when his class goes on a field trip to the city.

**Christopher** goes to an aquarium with his class and gets separated from his partner when the crush of people carries him out of the subway train they are returning on. Then that train moves out of the station.

Another train comes in and he panics. Should he get on?

He tries to find a policeman but doesn't see one.

He sees a man in a uniform who calls a policeman.

A call is placed to each station down the line and ultimately his teacher returns for him and takes him to the bus where the class is waiting.

**YOUR TURN:** Write about an experience when you got lost. Tell the whole story of the day in chronological order until you were found. Tell about how you prayed and the Lord answered the prayer.

**THE PUMPKIN RUNNER** by Marsha Diane Arnold with pictures by Brad Sneed (New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1998).

Summary: An Australian sheep rancher eats pumpkins for energy and enters a race from Melbourne to Sidney no matter that people laugh at his funny ways.

The first sentence tells what all the other sheep ranchers in that community use to ride out to check on their sheep.

But 60-year-old Joshua has run since he was 10.

When he sees an ad for a 900 kilometer race offering a \$10,000 grand prize, he enters needing only a load of pumpkins for energy.

Aunt Millie drives on ahead of him so she'll have pumpkin stew ready when he gets there.

He overcomes obstacles and wins.

**YOUR TURN:** Someone we don't expect to be able to do a marvelous feat not only finds the energy in an unusual way but goes on to win the day. Whether old or young, your character can overcome obstacles and win. Will it be a race? A tennis match? A spelling bee? A Bible memory competition? An essay contest?

**TANO AND BINTI (Two Chimpanzees Return to the Wild)** by Andy (illustrations) and Linda (text) DaVolls (New York: Clarion Books, 1994).

Two young chimps, born in the London Zoo, are returned to their Gambia, Africa, forest home. An older chimp, Amber, helps them adapt.

After an extended absence during which the youngsters practice what she taught them, she returns with a baby and a mate. The five meld into a new family and the forest is now really their home.

**YOUR TURN:** Write about two children who have been in a foster home and are returned to a relative who leaves and brings back a husband and a baby. Show how they meld into a family.

**THE POST OFFICE CAT** by Gail E. Haley (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976).

Country cat Clarence, surrounded by cat upon cat, decides he needs a place to call his own.

He stows away on a delivery cart and travels to Londontown.

He lives well in a park in summer, but as autumn and winter approach he searches for a home without success.

Finally, desperate, he walks into a mouse-infested post office in need of a cat.

He gets the job and becomes H.M.P.O.C.—Her Majesty's Post Office Cat.

**YOUR TURN:** This is another "rags to riches" story where a poor kitty gets the chance of a life time to become something great in this

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE

world. Many older Christian people and kids new to a school are looking for a place where they are needed. Young artists, singers, lawyers, nurses—all sorts of people are looking for such places. Do a book or story showing how this is true.

Other books using the chronological narrative structure are:

**TIM AND GINGER** by Ardizzone

**PETER AND THE WANDERER**  
by Ardizzone

**THE LITTLE WOMAN  
WANTED NOISE** by Teal

**TIM TO THE LIGHTHOUSE** by  
Ardizzone

**THE SEAMSTRESS OF SALZ-  
BURG** by Hermann Lobel

**THE MILLER, HIS SON AND  
THEIR DONKEY** by Divoisin

**THE SMALLEST PIRATE** by  
Trez

**A POCKET FULL OF  
CRICKET** is a charmer.

**Research Sheet**

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

Synopsis \_\_\_\_\_

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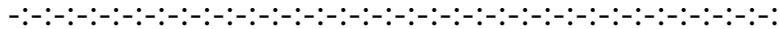
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Library of Congress Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Let's Retell An*  
**Old-Time Story**

Some of the easiest stories to write are the familiar ones you've known all your life—the ones you've grown up with. All you do is put a twist on it and make it

# YOURS

**Think what you could do with seven Snow Whites and one little dwarf or Ugly and the Beast or Sinful the Sailor.**

Howard L Chace got miles of mileage out of tales retold. But every word in each of his stories is a pun.

His book, "Anguish Languish," regales the adventures of "Center Alley," "Guilty Looks Enter Tree Beers," and the marvelous "Ladle Rat Rotten Hut."

Read the following quote quickly:

**Wants pawn term dare worsted ladle gull hoe lift wetter murder inner ladle cordage honor itch offer lodge, dock florist. Disk ladle gull orphan worry putty ladle rat cluck wetter ladle rat hut, an fur disk raisin pimple colder Ladle Rat Rotten Hut.**

Chase ends this tale with a "mural":

**Yonder nor sorghum stenches shut ladle gulls stopper torque wet strainers.**

Sheer genius is required for story telling like this. The author is origi-

nal—and clever. He knows his language, and he has an ear for sound and a love of whimsy.

Jerry Lewis starred in a film called "Cinderfella." Americans have a delight in the humorous retelling of familiar stories.

In meeting the requirements of this assignment you have several options. You can put an old tale in modern dress with up-to-date characters and a downtown setting. You can retell it as it happened, using your own conversational style.

You can put all sorts of twists in the stories by reassembling the character line-up or by making the good people bad and the bad people good. You can make the animals become people and the people become animals.

You can take a modern story out of the newspaper and retell it as an old-time tale—like the destruction of the Berlin wall or a football game or a forest fire and retell it as an old-time tale.

The late Angela Carter, an English writer, did this, using the style of fairy tales and myths and legends to tell her contemporary stories. Our daily newspapers are as full of violence, deceit and betrayal as you find in Bluebeard and Red Riding Hood. She once-upon-a-timed it and had a career.

Think of the power you have. There isn't anything you can't do.

Anything?

Well, we don't want you to bore us. We don't want you to be content with the mediocre. We want you to exercise your cleverness. Oh, not to the extent that Howard Chace went to, certainly; but we would enjoy a demonstration of the genius within you getting to work.

Read my sample.

Surely you can do better than that!

I call it "Tiger on the Stairs" in an attempt to retell the story of "Little Black Sambo." Only this time I am Little Black and my naked two-year-old daughter is the tiger. I had visions of a picture book with this one. The story is entirely conversation. I expected that the pictures would make the action the more vivid. Each speech would be the only speech on the given page. I start with page four because the first three pages go for title page and copyright information.

**Page 4: Oh, Mother, there's a naked tiger at the bottom of the stairs.**

**(Picture: I as the Daddy with the underwear and jammies over my arm would be calling to my wife**

**down in the laundry room about the little girl I'd just gotten out of the downstairs bath.)**

**Page 5: Well, get her pajamas on and put her in bed. Right NOW!**

**(Picture: Our harried maternal antagonist has had her fill of little girls who won't go to bed.)**

**Page 6: Please, Missy Tiger, please don't hurt me.**

**(Picture: The daddy cringes on the top stair in fear.)**

**Page 7: GrrrrrOW!**

**(Picture: She's naked and down on all fours looking up at daddy.)**

**Page 8: You wouldn't want to frighten your Little Daddy Sambo, would you?**

**Page 9: GrrrrrrrOW!!**

**(Picture: She circles and looks over her shoulder up at Daddy at the top of the stairs.)**

**Page 10: I'll give you my pretty little shirtee, if you promise not to hurt me, Missy Tiger, please.**

**(Picture: Daddy, sitting on the top step, holds the undershirt out toward the little girl who is coming slowly up the stairs.)**

**Page 11: GrrrrrrOW!**

**(Picture: She's closer to him.)**

**Page 12: Oh, please, Missy Tiger, don't eat me up.**

**(The things some writers do to get a story! ☺)**

**(Picture: She has her hand on his knee.)**

**Page 13: GrrrrrrrOW!**

**(Picture: He puts the undershirt down over her head.)**

**Page 14:** “Oh, Missy Tiger, you scare me so much. I’ll give you these pretty little white panties if you promise not to eat me for your dinner.

(Picture: She has backed into his lap with one foot extended as he holds the garment beyond her open to the leg hole.)

**Page 15:** “Rrrrrrr.”

(She’s not as belligerent now that she’s decent, I guess)

(Picture: She has turned around, dressed in her underwear.)

**Page 16:** Isn’t she in bed YET?!

(A call from the North Pole.)

(Picture: Mama on an ice floe with a mop in her hand and a bucket beside her.)

**Page 17:** Don’t growl, Missy Tiger. I’ll give you my pajama toppie if you promise not to gobble me up.

(Picture: He puts her pajama top on her.)

**Page 18:** Rrrrrrrrowwrrrrrrr.

(Picture: She growls from inside the pajama top.)

**Page 19:** I’ll give you these pajama bottoms, if you’ll be nice to me, Missy Tiger. I really will.

(Picture: He puts the bottoms on her.)

**Page 20:** Rrrrrrrr.

(Picture: She has a foot out in front of her as he pulls the pajama bottoms up her leg.)

**Page 21:** No, Missy Tiger, you won’t eat me now, will you?

(Picture: She pulls the bottoms up tight.)

**Page 22:** Rrrrow

(Picture: She’s dressed. It’s just a little growl.)

**Page 23:** Oh, don’t hurt my nose! Please don’t.

(Picture: She pulls his nose.)

**Page 24:** I’ll give you this pretty pink slipper for your pretty pink toes.

(Picture: He has turned her around and sat her in his lap. He puts the slipper on her foot.)

**Page 25:** ISN’T SHE IN BED YET?!!!!

(Picture: Another call from an ice floe in the North Pole with the maternal figure swinging the mop around her head.)

**Page 26:** Oh, please, Missy Tiger, don’t pull my ear. I’ll give you one more pink slipper if you’ll be sweet.

(Picture: She has her hand in his ear as he puts her other slipper on her.)

**Page 27:** Now will you love me, Missy Tiger?

(Picture: He holds her in front of him on the stair, she fully dressed for bed.)

**Page 28:** GRRRRROOOWWW!

(Picture: She gives him a big hug and kiss.)

**Page 29:** “Father God, bless this little tiger and may she live her life to please You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

(Picture: She is in bed and he is kneeling beside her in prayer.)

**Page 30:** Nighty-night, Missy Tiger. Daddy Sambo loves you, too.

**(Picture: He turns back as he is going out the bedroom door and turning out the light. We see her tucked in bed behind him.)**

Now you can see why it didn't sell. In fact, I was too ashamed to send it out. And I'm glad I didn't because now I am free to use it in these lessons.

Other writers have been more bold and have gotten a number of "tales retold" stories into print. Among them are the following:

Gail E. Haley in **NOAH'S ARK** (New York: Atheneum, 1971) has made a twist on our Bible narrative. Her Noah, concerned that animals would not survive the industrial age, has gathered two of each kind and sailed to sea in his specially adapted ship. Only the ostrich will not come.

Finally, a radio message from land urges him to bring the animals back. Only when he learns the land is fit for animals will he let them disembark. But the ostrich is never seen again on earth.

**YOUR TURN:** You think of a reason why your son Tommy would want to take animals out to sea again. Maybe he will have trouble getting two of all the kinds he wants. Maybe he will have trouble getting them up the gangplank into the boat.

**JIM AND THE BEANSTALK** by Raymond Briggs (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1970) begins with the giant from the top of the beanstalk asking the boy Jim if his name is Jack.

But this boy comes to give, not

take. He brings the nearsighted giant glasses, false teeth and a red wig.

The giant is so delighted he lets Jim escape with the promise he, Jim, will cut down the beanstalk. The giant drops a gold coin down that Jim gives to his mother.

In the distance he hears the roar of the giant laughing.

**YOUR TURN:** See what this writer did? He renamed a character and reversed the stealing from the giant. You could turn Jim into Jane and the giant into a giantess. You can do anything you want with these oldies. Wouldn't it be a surprise if yours became lore like Jack and his stalk? Try it!

**HARRY AND SHELLBURT** by Dorothy O. Van Woerkom (New York: Macmillan, 1977) gives you the hare and the turtle once more.

At lunch (lettuce covered with a sprinkling of flies), Shellburt the tortoise tells Harry Hare how in olden times a tortoise beat a rabbit in a race.

The rabbit sneers as he thinks of his ancestor. But he and Shellburt do stage a new race to a wild cabbage near the forest. But the outcome is just the same. Shellburt even beats Harry back home and has cabbage salad for lunch.

He says he's glad they had that race because he has just found out that flies are also good on cabbage.

**YOUR TURN:** This story ends with a twist the original story didn't give. We have a post-race celebration. This gives the turtle a reason why he's glad he won. Your rabbit could win and torture the turtle with his bragging. Neither could win. Don't turn these contestants into other kinds of animals or into kids. Then you lose the memory of the old-time tale.

**VICTOR AND CRISTABEL** by Petra Mathers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

Summary: A sad young woman in a painting wins the heart of a crocodile guard in an art museum.

**The first** sentence simply identifies the hero and tells that he works in an art museum in an out-of-the-way place.

Victor, a crocodile guard in an art museum, falls in love with the crocodile lady in one of the pictures. He brings her flowers. He wants to bring her hot tea and warm her blue fingers in his.

The story flashes back to the lady and to the curse that put her in the picture. The last thing she saw as the curse took effect was a sentence floating in the air saying that a cup of tea would wake her up.

As in *Sleeping Beauty*, the cup of tea Victor sips wakes her up. The spell is broken.

**YOUR TURN:** Wake your *Sleeping Beauty* in an original way like this. You could have hippopotami in a fancy restaurant in New York. You could have sea gulls on an island in the Pacific. You could have aphids on a rose bush. Anything. But one character has to be supine—out of it—and the other wakes him/her by accident.

**A FROG PRINCE**, written and illustrated by Alix Berenzy (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989).

Summary: Hurt that a princess refused his advances after he retrieves her golden ball, a frog sets out to find a mate more to his liking.

The first sentence has a “Once upon a time” beginning and tells that this frog Prince loved a Princess.

The frog retrieves the golden ball but is sent packing by a repulsed princess. He befriends a dove and a turtle in his adventures and they help him. He makes his way to a palace peopled by frogs. He kisses a frog Princess awake, marries her and lives happily ever after.

**YOUR TURN:** Your frog to win the princess could be sent out like Hercules to perform great feats. He could use his wits like the Valiant Little Tailor who bested a giant by throwing a bird into the air the giant thought was a rock. Your frog could throw a fly. ☺

**BORREGUITA AND THE COYOTE**, retold by Verna Aardema and illustrated by Petra Mathers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

Summary: A little ewe lamb uses her clever wiles to distract a coyote that wants to eat her up.

She persuades him to come back when she is fatter. When he does come back, she gets him to chase the moon, hold up a mountain and hold his mouth open wide.

The coyote learns not to trifle with Borreguita, a name that means “little lamb.”

**YOUR TURN:** What excuses can your “little lamb” offer to keep from being eaten? This is the “clever escape” format used widely in books, films, TV, plays. What can you do with this idea?

**TEN IN THE BED** by Penny Dale (Pleasant Hill, Calif: Discovery Toys, 1988).

Built on the doggerel, “There were ten in the bed and the little one said, ‘Roll over, roll over.’ They all rolled over and one fell out. There were nine

in the bed and the little one said . . .” this book empties the bed of all the boy’s toys. When he declares he is lonely, the toys come back and fall asleep with him.

**YOUR TURN:** What will fall out of bed when your story starts like this? You have ten what? Are these puppies? Guinea pigs? Salamanders? Camels in a tent? Philistines in Goliath’s army? How will you get them all back in bed or in the tent so you can start over? Will something dreadful happen at the stroke of midnight?

**THE FROG PRINCESS**, retold by Laura Cecil and illustrated by Emma Chichester Clark (New York: Greenwillow Books, 1994).

Summary: Forced to marry an ugly frog, the youngest son of the queen is astounded to learn that the frog is really a beautiful princess.

The first sentence begins with the familiar “There once was a . . .”

In this case it identifies a queen and her three sons.

To determine which son would inherit the throne, the queen gave her sons an arrow to shoot. Where it landed, each would find his bride.

The youngest son’s arrow landed beside a frog. The queen gave the boys three tasks—to have their prospective bride bake a loaf of bread, weave a cloth and train a dog.

The youngest son’s frog bride outdoes them all and turns back into a princess as the prince takes her to the palace to meet his mother.

**YOUR TURN:** What will your youngest son’s arrow land beside? Maybe all three sons’ arrows will land beside reptiles. Maybe the reptiles won’t turn into anything. Maybe an arrow will land beside a bossy kitchen maid who looks

like a frog and that’s why they call her the “Frog Princess.” Who in the Bible shot an arrow?

**MARIE IN FOURTH POSITION** by Amy Littlesugar and illustrated by Jan Schoenherr (New York: Philomel Books, 1996).

This book retells the story of Dega’s “The Little Dancer.”

Summary: Marie, the model for the artist and sculptor, Edgar Degas, learns to dance like a butterfly, and she becomes known all over the world as “The Little Dancer.”

The first sentence identifies Marie as but a “rat,” the lowest ranked dancer in the Paris Opera.

Marie, a nobody in the chorus line, is transformed by a great artist when she becomes his model. In response to his coaching, she sees herself as a butterfly ballerina and becomes one. The statue Dega sculpts of her becomes a Paris sensation.

**YOUR TURN:** You write a story about a little unknown Christian girl who is pulled out of the audience to hold the music for a great singer. Have her get so excited she forgets herself and begins to sing with the singer. To everyone’s amazement, she has a lovely voice and becomes a singer everyone wants to hear. You can do this with any little unknown anything.

**MOTHER GOOSE AND THE SLY FOX**, retold and with pictures by Chris Conover (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989).

The first sentence merely states that Mother Goose woke up early one morning.

She gets up to go shopping. Tricky Fox dons his red shoes and ginger-

bread gloves and outwits the mouse (she left him in charge) and the seven goslings of the out-shopping Mrs. Goose.

When they open the door, Fox captures all but one. He stops to nap en route home. Mrs. Goose finds him, rescues her kin, and sews rocks in his bag.

He gets a good scare going home when his sack pulls him into a river. M.G. sits in comfort in her home and has a nice holiday.

**YOUR TURN:** Maybe your Mother Goose gets up early to go capture the fox. She's tired of his threats. He's out shopping. She captures his brood and sticks them in a bag. See! A reverse isn't all that preposterous.

**KAT KONG** by Dav Pilkey (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993).

Summary: This story spoofs King Kong. It has cat and mice characters.

The first sentence focuses on three mouse explorers who are sailing at night toward a strange uncharted island.

The mice capture a country cat and take it to the city. It escapes and rumpages Mousopolis. It captures the beautiful Rosie Rodent and carries her to the top of the Romano Inn tower. Only the brave Captain Limburger in his "Spirit of Mousopolis" biplane is able to trick the Kat into falling to his death.

Old puns—the butcher complains that the cat has got his tongue—pepper the plot.

**YOUR TURN:** What will your mice do with the

cat they capture? What about having a kind-hearted cat? Or an old cat that has been declawed and whose teeth have fallen out? What frustration she must feel when she can't hold on to any of the mice scampering through her church!

**CINDERELLA OR THE LITTLE GLASS SLIPPER** translated from the French and illustrated by Marcia Brown (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954) CALDECOTT AWARD.

The first sentence is what we would expect: "Once upon a time there was a . . ." In this case it centers on Cinderella's father who married the most stuck-up woman who ever lived.

The story is a retelling of the old story but with new pictures.

**YOUR TURN:** Maybe you are an illustrator who could take any one of these stories and draw new pictures. Or maybe the Cinderella in your story is a Christian girl who does her best to win her haughty step-mother and a prince to Christ.

**THE FUNNY LITTLE WOMAN**, retold by Arlene Mosel, pictures by Blair Lent (New York: A Puffin Unicorn (Penguin) book, 1972) CALDECOTT AWARD.

The first sentence tells of an old Japanese woman who loved laughing. Then the old woman, a maker of rice dumplings, chases one that rolls off her table down a hole. Captured by monsters and forced to cook rice with a magic paddle, she escapes to freedom and, by using the magic paddle herself, becomes the richest woman in Japan.

**YOUR TURN:** What will your funny old woman make? Butterscotch? Corn fritters? Fans? Fly

swatters? Who will capture her? Coal miners? Cowboys? Computer geeks? Maybe your little woman loves to sing about the Lord Jesus while she works. She sings her captors to sleep, picks up a piece of coal that turns out to be a diamond and gives her riches to help missionaries get out to the mission field.

**ARROW IN THE SUN**, a Pueblo Indian tale adapted and illustrated by Gerald McDermott (New York: Viking Press, 1974).

Summary: This is an adaptation of an old Pueblo Indian myth which explains how the spirit of the Lord of the Sun was brought into the world of men. This suggests that the truth of God's promises regarding the Son of God reached the Pueblo Indian tribe of long ago.

The first sentence announces what happened a long time ago when the Lord of the Sun sent the spark of life to earth.

Turned into an arrow and sent skyward, the boy who grew from that spark searched for his father back on the sun. His father, the Sun, gave him three trials to prove his sonship and filled him with the power of the sun on his successful return.

Becoming an arrow again, the boy returned to his pueblo and a dancing celebration.

**YOUR TURN:** This could be a missionary story where a boy carries the message of the Gospel (the spark of life) to a native village. The villagers give him three tests to make sure the Gospel story is true. This also suggests that sons of divorced parents or widowed mothers always secretly search for their fathers.

**THE PROG FRINCE** (actual name) by C. Drew Lamm, illustrated by

Barbara McClintock (New York: Orchard Books, 1999).

Summary: Jane, on her way to the bakery to buy a muffin one morning finds in her pocket an enchanted frog wearing her dime for a hat.

The first sentence is another simple declarative sentence saying that when Jane woke up that morning she was thinking of muffins.

Following the frog who stole her dime for muffins, Jane decides to listen to a once-upon-a-time story the frog wants to tell her where a prince falls in love with a stable girl named Jaylee.

The unhappy king, hoping to end the romance, gets an anti-love potion for his son who drinks it and turns into a frog.

Jaylee drinks what's left and loses her imagination.

Later, the frog, much to Jane's sorrow, dances off and disappears down a hole.

Jane missed the frog and the spell was broken. The frog turned into a prince and she into Jaylee. The princess had to kiss the frog. Jane, not a princess, had to miss him.

**YOUR TURN:** This is a story where "kiss" is turned to "miss" to make its point. You could do that. Change "kiss" to "hiss" and get a snake involved. You could do this in other stories, too.

**THE CRANE WIFE**, retold by Odds Bodkin, illustrated by Genuady Spiria (San Diego: Gulliver Books, Hartcourt Brace and Company, 1998).

Summary: A retelling of the traditional Japanese tale about a poor sail

maker who gains a beautiful but mysterious wife skilled at weaving magical sails.

The first sentence tells who he was, that he was lonely and that he lived in Old Japan.

After nursing an injured crane back to flight, Osamie is visited by a beautiful young woman who marries him. To end their poverty, she weaves a magical sail in private on two occasions. He sells them for gold that lasts them six months.

Offered gold to last a lifetime for one more sail, Osamie convinces her to make one more.

He, anxious to see how she does it, invades her privacy and discovers she is a crane using her own feathers. Discovered, she lifts her wings in flight and leaves him.

**YOUR TURN:** This is a lovely variation of "Curiosity killed the cat." Using that same theme, devise a lovely tale like this where someone loses something wonderful by invading privacy. There are some matters of the heart that should be kept private. Castle walls, broken down, often cannot be repaired.

**OUCH** (A tale from Grimm), retold by Natalie Babbitt, illustrated by Fred Marcellino (New York: Michael DiCapua Books, Harper Collins Publishers, 1998).

The first sentence tells about a baby born with a crown-shaped birthmark.

The king, upset by the news of the baby, buys him with gold and throws the box with the baby in it in the river. Rescued by miller folk, the boy grows to manhood. Through trickery not his own, the boy gets to marry the Princess.

The angry king sends the young man to hell to get golden hairs from the devil.

He succeeds and returns with a box of jewels given him.

The king goes for more and never returns.

**YOUR TURN:** This story takes Greed, one of the "Seven Deadly Sins" (p.e.l.w.a.g.s.—pride, envy, lust, wrath, anger, greed, sloth) and shows how it gets its just reward. You could take one of the other deadly sins and write a similar kind of story.

**ZZZNG! ZZZNG! ZZZNG!** (a Yoruba tale retold by Phyllis Gershtator, illustrated by Theresa Smith (New York: Orchard Books, 1998).

Summary: Mosquito retaliates when Leg, Arm and Ear refuse her proposal of marriage.

Mosquito sings a song of proposal three times and a song of anger three times when Ear, Arm and Leg reject her.

Her children today sing her buzz-bite song and we scratch, scratch, scratch.

**YOUR TURN:** See how novel this explanation of mosquito bites turns out? Perhaps you can find a good reason why we swat flies.

**WHY MOSQUITOES BUSS IN PEOPLE'S EARS** (a West African tale), retold by Verna Aardema and illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon (New York: Pied Piper Book, a division of Dial Books for Young Readers, a division of Penguin books).

This is a House-that-Jack-Built kind of tale that tells what happens when a mosquito tells an iguana something it

saw that triggers an avalanche of reaction among the animals (where one tells another who tells another who tells another) and that keeps the sun from rising.

Lion holds court and traces the mystery back to the mosquitoes who to this day get an honest answer when they ask in peoples' ears if they are still angry at them.

SWAT!!

**YOUR TURN:** This is a surprise ending story built on revenge. It is "the soul that sinneth it shall die" theme. We kill flies, ants, bugs, spiders, roaches, beetles—any one of which could be a reason for your story.

**ONCE A MOUSE** by Marcia Brown (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961) CALDECOTT AWARD.

The first sentence tells about a hermit who sits thinking about sizes, little and big.

He changes a frightened mouse into a cat, then into a dog, then to a tiger and back to a mouse when the ungrateful tiger threatens—him!

**YOUR TURN:** This could be a "don't trifle with what God has made" story or "tell a little lie and it will come back to hurt you." We do things that are a little wrong only to find that "the wages of sin is death." Note that stories often have themes that are not stated in words but implied.

**CHANTICLEER AND THE FOX**, adapted from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and illustrated by Barbara Cooney (New York: Harper Trophy, a division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1958). This is a retelling of the "Nun's Tale."

A flattering fox convinces a proud

rooster he should crow with his eyes closed. From the mouth of the fox the rooster suggests the fox should make a speech to the people watching and escapes when he does.

Both learn a lesson.

**YOUR TURN:** This shows what happens when people use flattery to get what they want. Sometimes it has the opposite result than the one wanted. How clever old Chaucer was to devise this tale. Can you use a school room for a setting for your story about flattery? A church? A farmer's cottage? A mud hut?

**GREYLING** by Jane Yolen (Cleveland: the World Publishing Company, 1968).

Fisherfolk of the Scottish islands of Shetland and Orkney tell beautiful tales of seals who take on human form.

The author narrates the tale of a childless couple who adopt a baby seal and find it has become a boy. They raise him and keep him from entering the sea, for then he will return to his seal form.

Finally a storm at sea threatens the father and the youngster plunges into the sea to rescue him.

He becomes a seal forever but returns to his human family each year to tell them "tales of the lands that lie far beyond the waters."

**YOUR TURN:** In this story of adoption, the son rescues the father and that opens all sorts of windows to express gratitude, seek favor, reward kindness. While animal incarnation is far-fetched, family adoption is current, especially if the child is challenged physically in some way. A Downs or a child lame from birth might save the family in your story.

**LITTLE RYSTU** (adapted from

Altai folktale) by Mirra Ginsburg with pictures by Tony Chen (New York: Greenwillow Books, a division of William Morrow & Company, Inc.).

Summary: The story retells an Altai tale about little Rystu who refuses to become a slave to the master of the land.

The first sentence identifies the place far away where the story takes place.

Both cycle and problem and solution, Rystu's story tells how he is taken by the Khan from his homeland of the milk lake and meadows to be a slave to Khan's children.

**When Rystu** refuses, he is sent to herd cattle. Sad and hungry, he overhears ants talking about him.

He learns to use magic words to immobilize whom he will and to get them to dance.

He uses these powers to get rid of the Khan and free himself to return to the meadows.

**YOUR TURN:** Retell the story of the slave in the Old Testament (Exodus 21:2-6) who has fulfilled his service and is free to go. He doesn't want to leave. They nail his ear to a door. This has sparked the words to the hymn, "I love, I love my Master. I will not go out free." Tell it as problem and solution.

**IKTOMI AND THE BOULDER**, retold and illustrated by Paul Goble (New York and London: Orchard Books, 1988).

Foolish, proud Iktomi dresses in his regalia to impress the girls at a dance he has to walk all day to reach.

Hot and tired he gives his blanket to a boulder and goes his way. When a

storm comes, he returns and snatches his blanket back.

The boulder chases him and pins him down.

**Iktomi** pleads with all the animals to push the boulder off. They can't.

He uses lies he blames on the rock to infuriate bats into knocking off pieces until nothing is left but chips.

Iktomi goes on his way wondering what he will do next.

In an aside, the author explains this is why bats have flat faces and why rocks are scattered all over the Great Plains.

For charm, the author inserts comments that question the motives of the characters and that suggest the hero didn't really notice what people were saying about him.

**YOUR TURN:** Retell an old time story and insert comments as Paul Goble did here.

**IKTOMI AND THE BERRIES**, retold and illustrated by Paul Goble (New York and London: Orchard Books, 1988).

Iktomi goes hunting so he can give his friends a prairie dog feast.

He laments that just when he wants something he can never find it. The ducks he tries to shoot fly away. The berries he tries to pick out of the water escape him. (He dives in the river because he does not realize they are reflections.)

He ties a rock around his neck to keep him under water and nearly drowns.

When he discovers the berries are in

a bush, he beats them for tricking him.

The story ends with the comment that Iktomi has no desire to remember that particular day.

**YOUR TURN:** You write about a character that lives a day he/she does not wish to remember. Iktomi's mistake was in thinking something was true that was not. Children often have false assumptions that lead them into experiences they do "not wish to remember"—times when they have been disobedient and punished, times when they have been sick or ridiculed or sent home from school or beaten up. I was sent home in fourth grade when classmates noticed my bowels had moved.

**THE SEAL MOTHER** by Mordicai Gerstein (New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1986).

This old Scottish tale tells a story within a story with the narrator turning out to be a member of the family he tells about.

The story: A fisherman watches at a tiny rock island as a seal sheds its skin and becomes a singing lady.

He steals the skin, promising to give it back in seven years if she marries him. She does and they have a son. She returns to the sea in the seventh year.

Every Midsummer's Eve, the family gathers with the seals to dance and laugh and sing together at that tiny rock island.

**YOUR TURN:** You tell a story about someone who discovers a secret and makes the person do something in order to keep the matter quiet (as "marry me" in this story). Bring harmony out of the situation at the end.

**THE EMPEROR AND THE NIGHTINGALE** by Meilo So (New York: Bradbury Press, 1992).

When the emperor learns people

praise the nightingale as the most beautiful thing in his new palace, he searches for it.

Finding it, he too is entranced until someone sends him a mechanical bird.

He prizes it more.

The real bird escapes unnoticed but returns years later when the mechanical bird wears out.

**YOUR TURN:** Use this same idea to show how people forget the real life animal when a stuffed one comes along. Perhaps they forget the church singer when they find they can use tapes or they forget the old Sunday School primary teacher when a new young youth worker comes in. Tell it from the primary's eyes.

**THE BUNYANS** by Audrey Wood and illustrated by David Shannon (New York: The Blue Sky Press, 1996) .

Summary: The story reveals that the formation of Niagara Falls, Bryce Canyon and other natural monuments came about because of the ordinary things Paul Bunyan, his wife and children did.

The first sentences goes to one of the incidents when Paul Bunyan was clearing a road through the forests of Kentucky and the earth began to shake.

**The writer** enhances the legend explaining how Mrs. Bunyan was hollowing out Mammoth Cave searching for a lucky wishbone that fell into the earth.

Mr. Bunyan created Niagara Falls to shower his daughter.

Bryce Canyon, the Great Sand Dunes of Colorado, the Continental Divide, Old Faithful and others form out of the routine of Bunyan family life.

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: TALES RETOLD

**YOUR TURN:** Pick up where this writer left off and tell more wonderful things that happened in nature or in your county or state as a result of "Bunyan family life." Then explain that the Bunyans come out of our imagination and that we know the Creator who made the heavens and the earth.

**HOW THE GUNEA FOWL GOT HER SPOTS**, retold and illustrated by Barbara Knutson (Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, Inc.).

Twice Guinea Fowl saves Cow from Lion.

To show her gratitude, Cow sprinkles milk on Guinea's feathers.

Lion, not recognizing Guinea, asks her where the bird has gone.

She points him to distant hills. Her new camouflage saves her from the lion.

**YOUR TURN:** Can you draw from church or the school yard a story of gratitude? I was routinely beaten up or threatened in third grade and was grateful for the self-appointed defenders the Lord brought my way to rescue me. Use ideas like this out of school or out of a hostile neighborhood.

Some of the following reference books are straight retellings of the old stories and some are variations. Read as many as you can put your hands on and ask your librarian for others.

**The Story of the Three Little Pigs** by Stoble

**Jonah and the Lord** by Macbeth (McGraw Hill)

**Cinderella** by Montessor

**The Hare and the Tortoise** by Galdoni

In our next lesson, we will consider two more techniques to use in writing stories for children: Repetitive Statement and Question and Answer.

Professional writers have used both these methods to write wonderful stories for children.

I hope that you will, too.

Professor Dick

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: TALES RETOLD

**Research Sheet**

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

Synopsis \_\_\_\_\_

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First Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

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Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

Synopsis \_\_\_\_\_

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