

Let Me Help You

# Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write  
Stories for Kids*

*Lesson 9*

**COME-TO-REALIZE  
FACTUAL**

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*Let's Write a*

# Come-to-Realize Story

Sometimes it takes an “Aha! I see it all now!” kind of awakening to solve a problem that is otherwise

## NOT SOLVABLE!

Remember this poem?

*The gum-chewing girl  
And the cud-chewing cow  
Look somewhat alike  
But different somehow.  
Ah, yes! I see it all now.  
It's the thoughtful look  
On the face of the cow.*

The “come-to-realize” story is the “Ah, yes! I see it all now!” kind of story so popular these days. It's the 27<sup>th</sup> minute on the radio or TV half-hour show when all the elements of the mysterious plot fall into place and we turn away muttering, “Of course! Why couldn't I have figured that one out myself?”

Now, there are two kinds of “come-to-realize” stories. In one, the reader or the listener has the “Aha” experience. In the other, the character has it.

Suddenly, the curtain of fog is lifted and he sees things as they really are. Either the many diverse elements have fallen into place or a similarity is noticed that gives relevance to two previously dissimilar elements.

Admittedly, other stories may well have come-to-realize conclusions. It's a good ending to a problem and solution type, although here again—most readers prefer the deliberate action ending. It may be part of the salvation in “Sunk and Saved.” It may well figure in “Frame and Flashback.”

It may be the hero's discovery about himself—why he has always been a coward or why he has let “her” lead him a merry chase or why he hasn't accepted his Savior until now.

Your come-to-realize element may be the hero's discovery about another character. It may be a discovery or a crime or a disaster that has troubled him throughout the story, a final solution that comes suddenly to light or falls suddenly into place.

The UGLY DUCKLING is a come-to-realize story where the awkward ugliness of adolescence contrasts to the grandeur of maturity as these two previously dissimilar elements come to light.

Beauty comes to realize at the end of **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** that she

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE COME-TO-REALIZE STORY

loves the beast and will marry him. Her beauty and the beast's ugliness were the two previously dissimilar elements that give relevance to the story.

The emperor in **THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES** has an "Aha!" experience when the little child exclaims, "Oh, but he has nothing on." His gullibility and the child's honesty, dissimilar elements, merge to give the story some practical sense.

**Come-to-realize** is more a kind of ending than a structure of story, but it will figure significantly in the conclusion as all the elements of the story fall into place. And it will govern how the story takes shape from the beginning.

**THE GINGERBREAD DOLL** by Susan Tews and illustrated by Megan Lloyd.

Every year before Christmas, Great-Grandma Rebecca tells the ladies in her family on cookie-baking day the story of the dolls she got for Christmas as a child.

Her parents, desperately poor, could not afford a store-bought doll.

Her mother made her one of gingerbread.

She called it "Button Marie."

Oh, how she loved the doll.

But one day it fell and broke.

The next year Rebecca received a corn-husk doll; the next, a store-bought cloth doll; at last, one Christmas a porcelain doll.

Now years later, Great-Grandma

looking back says Button Marie was her best doll because of the love that went into making it and enjoying it. It was a love that would endure forever.

**YOUR TURN:** Did you ever receive a gift made from love? Tell about it. End it with a thoughtful phrase of wonder and pleasure like "that's a doll I'll remember forever." A farming child, a beggar boy on the mission field, a bear, a rabbit, an asthmatic little girl, a page at court, a stable hand—you can go anywhere with this kind of story.

In **THE 329<sup>TH</sup> FRIEND** by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat (New York: Four Winds Press, 1979), Emery Raccoon wakes up to a bad day and invites 328 guests to a big outdoor dinner to turn things around.

When his animal and insect guests sit down to eat, they ignore Emery.

Frustrated, he goes inside because no one will pass him the ketchup. He finds he quite enjoys eating alone.

When his friends leave, he finds he must clean everything up by himself.

But he has come to realize something he never knew before: Today, Emery Raccoon found Emery Raccoon. And when he finished his work, he sat down to tea with his 329<sup>th</sup> friend (himself) and thought he had never had a better friend.

**YOUR TURN:** This is a reverse the wrong way. We teach our children "Jesus and others and you! What a wonderful way to spell JOY . . . Put yourself last and spell JOY." Emory is thinking only of himself. Stories like this for Christian kids should make that plain.

In **THE SIMPLE PRINCE** by Jane Yalen (New York: Parents Magazine Press, 1978), a prince yearns for the simple life.

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE COME-TO-REALIZE STORY

He leaves the castle to live among the common folk only to find that every need is met—with work.

He must saw, haul, churn, knead, and pound.

“Enough!” he cries. “I can live no more of the simple life. It is much too hard for me!”

He comes to realize that the simple life is not simple at all. In contrast are his lofty ideas vs. reality.

**YOUR TURN:** Here is another back-door approach. It reverses of our values. We preach the virtues of hard work. The prince gives up. Work is too much for him. Hopefully, the young reader won't want to take the prince's point of view. You could do a contemporary rendition of this and find universal interest among kids, I'm afraid. In this story lofty dreams are burst by reality. Your hero goes from “If only I could . . .” to “Ouch!”

Meredith and Fitzgerald in **THE PROFESSIONAL SHORT STORY WRITER AND HIS ART** say that “a moment of truth occurs in the (come to realize) story when the protagonist (hero) must face up to the truth about himself and see himself for what he really is. The moment of truth always results from the complication the protagonist faces, for the complication tests the character of the protagonist and in so doing exposes his weaknesses.”

The sample I'm including illustrates just this. It's a chapter I wrote that would have been the climax of my first novel, **THEY CALLED HIM SHIFTA** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), but the editors thought it was too melodramatic.

All the way through the book (a story for older children), my protagonist, a 14-year-old boy conspires to manipulate people into doing what he wants.

**He wants** to go home to the states. He's living with his school administrator father in northern Ethiopia. Unwittingly, he links up with a communist front that also wants all foreigners to leave.

When the murders occur, he realizes essentially he is the murderer.

In this sample, he fights for the life of a baby. His mortal enemy is about to kill the child.

In the aftermath, Teddy comes to his senses and has a spiritual come-to-realize experience. He finally “sees himself as he really is.”

And isn't this a genuine part of the conversion experience we all have when we come to Christ? He by His Spirit shows us what sinners we really are. He reveals to us that His death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins, a penalty we deserved.

Holy God is now satisfied because our sin is covered, taken away, forgiven. Now we stand in the good of the death of our Substitute, God the Son, our atoning Lamb.

### **MICKEY**

By Dick Bohrer

**I turned my head and my heart stopped. Something moving must have caught the corner of my eye.**

Now a lot of people were moving, but this was the movement of someone who is doing something he wants to hide.

Gerlu was coming out of the hut in the center of the clearing carrying a bundle, and out of the bundle was sticking a little white hand. I knew it wasn't my china doll, Benji; it lay shattered in the dirt. This was Mickey!

Gerlu stood by the door, watching the people working over Uncle Mike. If he ever looked sour before, Gerlu really looked sour now. He hated him.

(Note: In this particular draft of the novel and there were at least six complete drafts, the communists had kidnapped Mike's child Mickey. Mike was a Christian teacher in Dad's school. They had also stolen a large china doll Ted had had since childhood.)

At a crucial moment in the drama of the climax, Gerlu had swung what everyone believed was the child and had dashed its head against a rock. It turned out to be the doll.

The communists then tried to hang Mike, but the people had rescued him. He was being untied and released when this event occurred.)

I wanted to yell and shout and go running after Gerlu but I couldn't move. He had our Mickey. I was frozen to the ground.

What was he going to do? I knew he'd never give the little kid up. He

would either run after his dwarf father and old mother and keep on hiding our baby or he might try some dirty work to get even.

He must have known that the police wouldn't be able to help hide him any more, and he wouldn't be able to go far with a kidnapped white child.

He started to walk, always looking over his shoulder at Mike. He walked around the far side of the clearing in a big half-circle that would end up right in front of—me! He was coming right at me with our Mickey, only he didn't know I was here.

What would he want here? I couldn't figure it out. The only thing here was the—cliff!

*Oh, God, I prayed, help me.*

I had to do something.

I eased around the side of the rock. I was going to keep as hidden as possible because I didn't want him to see me until the last second. He was creeping, bent down so he wouldn't be seen by the people who were helping Mike.

He knew if they discovered what he was going to do they would stop him. From his look, I could tell he was going to try to get even with Mike for taking the people away from him and his pa.

I had the feeling I was standing in the middle of the street and a truck was heading right for me and would run me down.

He was coming closer!

I stood when he was almost on top of me, and I blocked the path with my body.

“*Arruh!*” he said as he saw me. His eyes grew big and I could see the whites all around, only they were red. He was drunk.

“Get out of my way, stupid idiot dog.” He spat the words at me.

“Give me Mickey,” I demanded.

“*Yellum*. No. Get out of my way.”

“You get back, you murderer. You killed Mulah and it was you who killed that woman.”

“Move.”

“It was you that beat Mrs. Wahlstad!” I had to keep throwing these accusations at him so that there would be time for help to come. They had to find me before it was too late.

“I said to move.”

“It was you who kidnapped Mickey.” The only thing—he wasn’t denying any of this. Had he been the one who had done all these things?

“Move now or I will kill you, too.”

“I won’t let you kill that little boy,” Mickey looked as if he’d been drugged. He lay like a sack of flour in Gerlu’s arms. He was dirty and he smelled.

“I told you to move,” Gerlu said, making a lunge at me. He swung his fist and it caught me right in the stomach. I doubled over; but as he brushed past, I reached out with one hand and caught hold of Mickey’s

foot. I held on. *Oh, God, don’t let him kill Mickey.*

“Let go,” he shouted.

“No! Let me have him.”

“I said let go!” He tried to wrench him out of my hands.

Oh, how I prayed.

Gerlu reached back with his fist and hit me again and again. I had ducked my head down so his punches were landing on my shoulders and they didn’t hurt as much. I had to hold on.

“Mickey! Mickey!” I shouted. Was it loud enough for anybody to hear me?

And then in an awful instant he snatched Mickey’s foot out of my hands and turned for the ledge. He was going to throw Mickey over.

I ran after him and caught him by the coat. I dragged my feet and tried to pull him down. If I could only keep him from going out on the ledge. If I could only get him down.

“Get away, you Alleluja!” he screamed, and he punched at me again.

His fist caught me on the side of the head and I fell back a step. He twisted out of my hands and quickly moved out of the bushes onto the ledge.

He lifted Mickey above his head with both hands just as I caught up behind him.

“*God!*” I reached for Mickey.

He flopped down toward me at the height of Gerlu’s swing and I caught

him. I guess Gerlu had loosened his grip at just that second because, as he pulled his hands forward in a great thrust that would have thrown my baby out into the air two hundred feet above those rocks, I snatched him out of his hands.

I stood there, frozen, holding Mickey high as a surprised Gerlu turned at the edge to see what had happened. In turning, he began to wave his arms. He was losing his balance.

He tried to straighten, but he had leaned too far. He felt himself going and he tried to reach back for me.

I saw his hand coming at me, his fingers stretched wide.

They closed only inches away from the front of my shirt. I hadn't moved.

And then he fell, turning over and over in the air, screaming all the way down. The sound never stopped. It kept ringing in my ears as I pulled Mickey down to my heart and sat there in the grass back of the ledge.

And I started to cry.

(Come to realize)

My heart had been so hard. All of this was my fault. I was the sinner who had made all this mischief happen. Right through the whole thing, I had been thinking only of myself.

I had wanted to ruin Dad's work so he would have to take me home. The poison of sin was all through my blood and it had reached my heart.

I was the one who deserved to die.

I was as bad as Gerlu. He was a rebel and a thief and a murderer. And I had done the same kind of things, pretending all these years to be a Christian, pretending to be the nice little boy who would never do anything wrong.

But there, right there, when I was holding that little guy in my arms, God pulled the curtains away from my eyes and showed me what a real rebel I was. A rebel—against Him.

And right then, I knew that the Lord Jesus had died for—me—just like I would have died for Mickey. Because He loved—me.

I'd known it in my head for years. Why had it taken so long for it to get down into my heart?

Now I knew what faith was. I took the Lord Jesus right then as—my—Savior.

I guess they'd been looking for me.

Suddenly, Dad was there and Mike had his little boy back in his arms.

Did you ever see grown men weep?

And me? I was too big to be picked up. I kept telling Dad to put me down. I could walk. But everybody was SO happy.

We walked around the big rock and out into the clearing. That whole crowd of people was waiting for us to come and, oh, did they put up a shout when they saw Mickey was safe.

And, as we all began leaving the hilltop to go home, they sang the song that Mike had sung just before

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**the soldiers had tried to hang us.**

**“But what to those who find? Ah,  
this—**

**Nor tongue nor pen can show  
The love of Jesus, what it is.  
None but His loved ones know.”**

###

It’s attention to detail. It’s action in small increments. It’s narrative flow that makes something like this work.

It took the editor six months to decide he couldn’t publish that book because this was too melodramatic. I sat right down and rewrote the last half of the book and sent it in again.

It took him another six months to tell me the book was too long and, besides, “no one is interested in Africa anyway.”

Eventually, Moody changed editors and I had another chance. This time the book was accepted and printed.

Many books and magazines have come-to-realize stories. Among them are—

**MAXIE** by Mildren Kantrowitz (New York: Parents Magazine Press, 1970).

An elderly lady, Maxie goes to bed forlorn, feeling her life is futile. At precisely the same time every day for many years, she has lived her life by the clock in dull routine.

This time she stays in bed and the neighborhood goes to pieces. They’d been setting their clocks by her.

She realizes she’s needed and is

pleased.

**YOUR TURN:** This is a “fortifying” story that lifts the reader and lets him realize what he had thought was something nobody noticed turns out to be something everybody was watching. All children who know and love the Savior are a testimony of Him every day all day long. Your story can help them realize this.

**OFFICER BUCKLE AND GLORIA** by Peggy Rathman (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1995)

Summary: The children at Napville Elementary School always ignore Officer Buckle’s safety tips until a police dog named Gloria accompanies him when he gives his safety speeches.

First sentence: Officer Buckle knew more safety tips than anyone else in Napville.

No one listened to his tips until his new dog, standing behind Officer Buckle’s back, begins to act out his tips.

The students love it. They send Officer Buckle a ton of thank-you’s. Schools everywhere want man and dog to come. Not until he sees himself on TV does Buckle realize what’s going on behind his back. Embarrassed, he stays home.

A major accident at one school, when an avalanche of kids sliding on a puddle of banana pudding knocks the principal over, makes him realize he’s needed.

**YOUR TURN:** People love to feel needed. Part of the charm here is in Officer Buckle’s name. Another part is the action going on behind his back. We love it when one clown doesn’t know what another is doing behind his back. What could you do with a challenged child who from his/her wheelchair does cute things behind the nurse’s back that amuse the other children in the ward.

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE COME-TO-REALIZE STORY

**THE BIGGEST NOSE**, story and pictures by Kathy Caple (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), 32 pp.

Summary: Eleanor the elephant is self-conscious about her large nose after she is teased by Betty the hippopotamus, but she overcomes her sensitivity when she realizes Betty has the biggest mouth.

First Sentence: “One, two, three, four, five,” counted Eleanor softly to herself.

When Eleanor Elephant sneezes, the class laughs; and Betty Hippopotamus accuses Eleanor of having the biggest nose in school. She threatens Eleanor with a “you’ll be sorry” if she doesn’t find out if Eleanor or her sister Hilda has the longer nose.

Finding that typing a knot in her nose does not make it shorter, Eleanor realizes that everyone has something out of the ordinary.

In school, she points out that Betty has the biggest mouth, Harold the Rabbit the biggest feet, and Lizard the biggest tail. No one can say anything.

Eleanor goes to her seat ready to have a good day.

**YOUR TURN:** Everyone gets teased for something whether a tooth that sticks out or ears or a nose or feet larger than others. Some of us were skinny, some fat. Some had names that could be twisted, some ancestry. Those who suffer need assurance. Christian kids can know that the Lord made them that way and/or put them in that family for a reason. They can be assured He cares. So can rabbits and squirrels.

**MARY VERONICA’S EGG**, by Mary Nethery, pictures by Paul Ya-

lowitz. New York: Orchard Books, 1999.

Library of Congress summary: Mary Veronica learns an important lesson about love while she cares for an egg that is getting ready to hatch.

First sentence: On Wednesday, Mary Veronica found an egg sitting all alone by the pond.

Thinking it may be a special egg—maybe an alligator—she keeps it warm under her arm and enters it in a pet fair in the Most Unusual Pet category.

Her great expectations crash when a common duck hatches.

It wins her heart. She realizes she had something special in her egg after all.

**YOUR TURN:** Competition brings our hopes out of the closet and pits them against others who also want to win. Many children go home crestfallen when their entry fails to get a prize. This structure of story gives them hope that their effort was worthwhile. Pet shows, hobby shows, athletic events, spelling bees all offer kids a chance to win. Write about someone who yearns for a prize but fails to win one every time.

**ALBERIC THE WISE** by Norton Juster, written in 1965 and illustrated by Leonard Baskin in 1992 (Saxonville, MA: Picture Book Studio, Ltd., 1992).

Bucolic Alberic, wakened to the wonders of the world by a passing vagabond, leaves his farm home to seek his fortune.

He studies glasscutting, stonecutting, goldsmithing, and trade after trade, seeking one thing in which he could excel. He is astonished when, having failed at each, he finds he has accumu-

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE COME-TO-REALIZE STORY

lated vast knowledge.

He forsakes the adulation of his world when he realizes “it is much better to look for what I may never find than to find what I do not really want.”

**YOUR TURN:** This is the worldling’s view of life. How much better for the Christian child who is told to seek and find, to knock and walk through the doors that open. If our Alberic were to learn all those trades, think what a help he could be to missionaries on the field or to the elderly at church. He would have something to talk about with all the people to whom he witnessed.

Is there a danger that we will be writ-

ing milk if we write this way? Will we be accused of being “Goody Two Shoes,” that century-old little girl for whom everything was nice-nice-nice? Probably.

But looking deeper, we realize that living for others is more difficult than living for ourselves.

We have an opportunity to instill good practical virtues in our children.

Let us rise to the occasion!

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE FACTUAL STORY

**Come-To-Realize Research**

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

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

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Structure: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

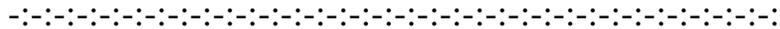
First Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Come-to-Realize Element \_\_\_\_\_

Its Use In Conclusion \_\_\_\_\_

Storyline \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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

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

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Structure: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Come-to-Realize Element \_\_\_\_\_

Its Use In Conclusion \_\_\_\_\_

Storyline \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



*Let's Write a*  
**Factual Story**

This is the chronological news story, less fiction than fact but still fiction with fact.

Make it as real as if  
it happened to  
**YOU.**

**John Steinbeck uses the factual story in an early chapter in his epic, THE GRAPES OF WRATH to show the relentless urge of migratory workers to push westward.**

**His hero in that chapter is a turtle that makes its way up an embankment and across a highway.** The creature lumbers, totters, lurches on with desperate effort, bits of chaff caught between its wrinkles and its shell.

The narration is 100% fact, told without emotion. It reports what happens as coldly as any objective newspaper story.

You can write the “How They Do It” story using this structure to tell how birds build nests, how bees colonize their hives, how eagles spot breakfast—how the many, many elements of God’s great creation go about their daily tasks.

**Thoreau used this technique to describe ants battling near Walden Pond.** Great writers of history have used it to depict the massing of opposing armies, the destruction of large cities, the sinking of great ships.

In fact, you may well wish to take a newspaper story and rewrite it in your own fashion as a factual story. You will pay great attention to detail. You are the observer, watching closely. Not a crumb falls, but you have seen it. Not a twitch, but you are there.

**Here is the Bible story retold again.** Here is the event in history relived. Here is a holocaust; there, a sick baby. Any event in human experience is grist for the factual story.

The writer will pay less deliberate attention to building character and plot plausibility, less to heightening tension or coloring mood.

His attention is on recreating the experience so vitally that the reader knows he himself has been here. He’s

heard it, seen it, held it, smelled it. He knows what happened so vividly because the story has stopped time. He has attended a past event as an eyewitness.

The vocational hazard here is that the writer must be a real student of the time period he is covering. You can't build on the past—the far past—with 20<sup>th</sup> century blocks. **You can't write of far-away places with authority unless you've been there or unless you've done your job of research well.**

You can take your own experience and put it into the life of a boy, as I've done in the story that follows. I've been on that island in Lake Tana in north-central Ethiopia. I've seen the monks who live there, and I've been in their church.

The story is told factually, just as it might have happened.

This was another chapter in my novel, SHIFTA, a chapter that was deleted in a later draft because it gave too many answers too early, solving too many mysteries before they got mysterious enough.

I include it, not because it is great—it isn't!—but only because it tells its story factually and fairly simply.

The father and the viewpoint boy are searching for clues regarding the whereabouts of a kidnapped child, Mickey, son of one of the teachers in the government school of which the father is principal. Revolution is in the air. Communists are stirring up opposi-

tion to the monarchy. Treachery hides behind every tree.

## **The Island**

By Dick Bohrer

**We got into our launch and set off for an island in the lower section of the lake. On the top of it was a church where they said were kept the bones of the old kings of Ethiopia.**

**Dad said it was a place where the priests had great power and influence. He didn't think he had any friends there, but he did think he could get some clue as to Mickey's whereabouts from these men.**

**It took us two hours of steady going to come to the rocky slope of the island. It looked like the hanging gardens of Babylon for all the trees and vines and bushes that covered its sides.**

**No women were allowed there. That explained why the place was such a jungle, I bet.**

**Dad and I got out of the boat and began our climb to the top. We were challenged half-way up and Dad identified us and was told to proceed.**

**Up at the top we were greeted by priests with turbans and cloaks. They invited us in to their large mud hut and offered us bread and drink.**

**Dad talked to them about the outside world and tried to get what they knew out of them.**

**I said I had to go to the bathroom**

and asked to be excused.

They laughed and pointed me down the path.

I was so tired of sitting in that boat that I had to walk around. I remembered that the bones were in the church, and I wanted to see them. So I went down the path toward the building with a cross on top.

The path was rough, and it was while I was picking my way around the rocks that I first heard it.

It sounded like the voice of a child.

Mickey!

My heart leaped up to my throat. I looked all around me, but no one was in sight. All I saw was the leafy branches of trees with the soft blue back-drop of the lake and the sky behind it.

Ahead of me was the church, and I figured that the sound must have come to me from there.

So, carefully, trying not to make a sound, I walked slowly up to the church door and slipped through the entrance.

Inside was a circular corridor going all around the building. Its floor was covered with straw to keep down the dampness on cold nights and mornings when the priests came in to worship. In the center of the church was a small square room where this church's copy of the Ark of the Covenant was kept. No one was ever allowed there but the priests.

Back in history, the supposed son

of the queen of Sheba and King Solomon was said to have stolen the real Ark of the Covenant from the temple in Jerusalem. Each church in Ethiopia now has a replica of it in its holy place.

I listened. There was no sound.

But then, as I walked slowly through the straw, I heard it again. It was the kind of babble a little kid would do.

I turned suddenly to look behind me, and, as I did so, I lost my balance and fell against the wall of that little inner room. I guess I proved that this was an old church because I fell against the wall and broke through the soft, worm-eaten wood. I know this sounds fishy and contrived, but that's just what happened.

I lay there a bit. I'd hit the back of my head and it hurt.

I heard the sound again and turned my head. I hadn't fallen into the inner room but onto some kind of small wooden platform between the walls of the little room and the corridor. Sunlight through the door of the church showed me some kind of stairway leading down around the edge of a great hole.

Honest!

"Oh, Mickey," I thought. "They've got you hidden down there."

I had to go get him, but I couldn't tell if the stairs went straight down like a ladder or if they slanted or spiraled. Maybe they stopped half-

way and dangled over the mouth of the volcano that had originally formed this island.

Well, I should have thought it out before I did anything; but all I wanted to do was find Mickey. So I carefully slipped off the little platform and edged down the stairs.

Each step was so soft that my shoes made an impression on the wood. I knew it would be foolish to put all my weight on the center of each stair. I'm not that dumb.

So I put my feet as close to the wall as I could. I knew that the stairs would be the strongest where the beams went into the thick walls.

My eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, but it was still hard to keep my balance.

I thought I was falling at one point and waved my arms all around, trying to keep standing; and, as I did that, my fingers flicked the wall on the other side of the stairs. The passage had narrowed as it went deeper and deeper into the volcano.

I went down, lower and lower. I felt my way through the night, putting my toes down first to find the next step, easing my weight from one foot to the other, moving my hands along the walls on each side of me for support, and then slowly bringing my other foot down.

I kicked myself in the mind halfway down. I'd forgotten to count the steps.

I turned and looked over my

shoulder to see how far I'd come. I blinked my eyes and looked hard. I knew I should have been able to see the light from the sanctuary above, knifing through the hole I'd made in the wall.

But behind me it was night.

For some reason, I got scared. I knew I should never have come alone.

And then I got the feeling I was being followed. What else could block out that patch of light on the stairway than a person following me close behind?

I listened.

I strained to listen.

There was no sound—not even the sound of quiet breathing behind me.

And then I realized—dumb idiot—that the passageway had been turning slowly and, of course, I couldn't see light at the top of the stairs.

And then I made my big mistake.

I'd gotten so taken up in the fact that I hadn't noticed that the passage curved that I put both feet together on the same step.

There was the whine or the groan of splitting wood. I don't really remember whether rotten wood whines or groans. I lost my balance as the stair collapsed, and I plunged downward.

When I came to, I felt that same thudding ache in my head I'd had before. I pushed my fingers through my hair and found an even bigger goose-egg bump—and blood. And

the throb in my head was matched by the tick-tick of dropping water.

I was lying on gravel in the bottom of the pit and the arrowheads were digging into my back.

I didn't know how far I'd fallen, And, looking around, I found I couldn't see anything more now than I did before.

Sighing at how dumb I was, I raised up and felt for the wall. Where my hand touched the rock, I felt the moisture of water seeping through. It occurred to me to soak my handkerchief in it and put it on my head.

It felt so good that I did this two or three times.

And then I got on my knees and started to feel around. Maybe I could find the stairway and go back up.

But, suddenly, goose-flesh to match the bump on my head stood out all over me. My muscles tightened as I drew back.

My hair literally stood on end and blue fear chilled me to the bone.

I had touched warm human flesh—and it wasn't Mickey.

I froze to the spot.

I wanted to run—to get out of there fast. But how could I?

This time I could hear breathing—a slow, quiet breathing that would start and then stop.

“*Man nowh?*” I asked in Amharic. “Who is it? Mickey?”

“*Astamarrie,*” came a whispered

answer. “*Astamarrie*” meant teacher. I relaxed and began to breathe again. A century of time had passed. Here I was in the bottom of a pit with another human being—and a teacher at that.

Well, you can bet that we became well-acquainted fast. It turned out that he was one of the Christian teachers in Bahar Dar, and he had been lured out to this island and tricked.

The priests had said they wanted him to teach them the Bible, and then they had put him down in this hole. It was the sound of his calling for help that I had thought was Mickey.

He told me that my old friend Abba Abraham was really getting the people all aroused against the evangelicals and that's why he had been caught and thrown down here.

And then, suddenly, we heard the sound of an argument coming to us down the passageway. High at the top of the stairs in the corridor of the church some priests were having at it.

They were blaming one another because Dad and I were on the island, and they were angry because they couldn't find me.

I guess they didn't notice where I'd fallen through the wall, because they didn't come down.

And then their voices quieted as if they were moving away.

I asked Ato Dagnew, that was his

name, the “ato” stood for “Mister,” whether he had been brought into this hole the way I’d come down and he said no.

He said there was an entrance that led out to the side of the island.

He said he’d been so scared when I came down from the ceiling that he hadn’t said a word. He didn’t know what I was—a goat or a ghost or an angel.

“Do you think they have a guard outside that door in case you might escape?” I asked him.

“Ow,” he said. That was “yes.”

So I sat and thought.

We had to get out of there and the best way was the way I came, because probably the priests themselves had forgotten all about the little stairway I’d found.

I reached out my hand again and, feeling along the wall, touched a soft, rotted stair. I reached higher and found another one.

I told Dagnew that we would have to go back out the way I’d come in, but he shrank back.

I couldn’t see him do it, but I could feel him. He was afraid the priests would kill him if he tried to escape.

But I told him that as long as he stayed beside me, the priests wouldn’t do anything because they don’t want Dad to think that there is any *chick-a-chick*—any fuss—going on against the Gospel in this lake country.

And, besides, they were afraid of

Dad and his friends in the government.

Well, I guess I convinced him, because he agreed to boost me back up onto the stairs and he said he would follow.

I told him about where he should put his feet, and together we worked our way up out of that hole. It was slow going. We had to go carefully, but eventually we saw the light up ahead and soon the going was easier.

I paused as we came out at the top and looked cautiously out the hole in the wall.

No one was in sight.

I slipped out and turned and pulled Dagnew through. He stood there rubbing his eyes. Even that subdued light was too bright for him.

Then I told him to give me his hand and to follow me. We would go right back to the hut where I’d left Dad and he was to stay with me. If he got scared and tried to run for it, I wouldn’t be able to help him because he’d get lost on the island and we would have to leave without him.

He promised me he would stay with me no matter what happened.

We left the church and walked out into the sunlight. It was blinding.

We stood there a moment while our eyes cleared, and then we went back along the rocky path to the big hut.

“Dad,” I called out. “Dad?” I wanted him to appear before the

priests did because I could see them coming up behind us and overpowering Dagnew and hauling him away. If Dad could get to us first, they'd never dare.

"Dad," I called again.

I guess the sound of his kid's voice cuts right through walls to a father's ears faster than the speed of light, because he was out of that hut and down the path toward us before any Ethiopian priest showed his head.

"Where have you been?" he asked. He was alarmed. "We've been searching for you everywhere." And then he saw Dagnew holding my hand. "Who's this?"

"He's one of our Christian teachers from Bahar Dar, and the priests tricked him into thinking they wanted him to teach them the Bible. They've been holding him prisoner. I rescued him out of that church and told him if he stuck close to us, we'd be able to get him off the island. Do you think we can pull it off?"

Dad got the picture fast. "We'll try, son."

And at this point, eighteen priests bustled up to us and began to make a scene. Where had I been? What had I been doing?

And then they noticed Dagnew and oh, what a ruckus they set up. He was their friend. They were going to have him teach them the Holy Scriptures.

Dad told them that he was going to take Dagnew with us back to the mainland.

Oh, no, he couldn't do that. They needed Dagnew to teach them. He just had to stay to help them understand the Word of God. Oh, he just couldn't go.

But Dad remained firm. He could see right through these buzzards.

We tipped our hats in a friendly goodbye and shook hands with the main priests as we began walking slowly down the path to our boat.

We turned frequently and bowed to them to show how polite we were. But we could tell they were upset—really upset. And they didn't know what to do because they were afraid of Dad.

They followed us right down the hill and stood near the edge of the water as we waded out and got on our boat. I got the feeling that they wanted to reach out and snatch Dagnew right out of our hands. Our driver got the engine going and headed out fast.

When I turned and looked at Dagnew, I saw beads of sweat all over his face. He had been terrified they'd trick us into leaving him.

And he was so grateful! He kissed Dad's hands and he kissed me on both cheeks. And he would have kissed the driver if he hadn't rocked the boat. Dad had to tell him to sit down.

He'd been afraid the priests were going to kill him—or leave him to starve in that pit.

He said he had no family, so there

was no need for us to go back to Bahar Dar to get anyone.

Dad decided to make tracks then and there for Gondar because this man knew that Abba Abraham was moving into his final plans to get rid of all the Christian teachers.

He said that all the country people knew about it. He said the police were in on the revolution and so were all the administrators in City Hall. He said they were going to use Mickey to bargain with the Christian teachers to leave.

Dad realized he had a gold mine in this man. He wasn't going to let him out of his sight. He'd fly him to Addis Ababa if necessary to protect him.

Dagnew didn't know who had kidnapped our baby, but he did assure us that nothing would happen to him. The Ethiopians thought he was the Baby Jesus, he said.

Well, we made tracks for Gondar. Dad had some people he had to see and some deep thinking he had to do.

Me too.

The story reads factually because the narrative is told in chronological order and details are given by someone who has been on that island—me. Several of us foreign teachers took a trip around Lake Tana when we were teaching in Gondar, Ethiopia schools. I wrote that from memory, putting the youngster who was with us, Teddy Speedy, into an adventure that did not occur.

In this factual story, we see everything from the viewpoint character's (Teddy's) eyes.

There are some coincidences we made up—the fact that he fell through the wall in the exact place the stairs went down, the fact that Dagnew was that certain prisoner who could tell Dad what was going on everywhere.

And probably, if the stairs were so old that the priests who lived there had forgotten them, they would have been rotten all the way through. **But in a story like this, you can suspend some logical facts as you tell the rest.**

**The same method can be used for non-fiction stories.** You tell a compelling chronology step by step with immense attention to details. You keep threat uppermost in your mind. Much is at stake. The goal must be met, found, achieved, reached.

The Lord Jesus told stories like this.

William R. White in **SPEAKING IN STORIES** (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982) says,

**“For Jesus, method and message are one. His gospel can no more be conveyed with abstract language than can good wine be stored in paper cartons.**

**“Love is an action, not an idea. Forgiveness is an event, not a concept.**

**“The gospel Jesus proclaimed was not a new teaching, nor even a new experience; it was a history, a story. Story is the speech form of the gospel.”**

**And it is true story, told by the One who is Truth.**

Few of us can imagine the people sitting in rows as the Lord Jesus paces back and forth lecturing on the differences between wheat and tares, good ground and bad.

He certainly was a story-telling Man.

We have many story tellers among us, folk who have written factual books that can give us ideas—ideas that have attracted the attention of editors as they have sought to create a market for children’s books.

**THE ICE HORSE** by Candace Christiansen with paintings by Thomas Locker (New York: Dial Books, 1993.)

Library of Congress summary: While harvesting ice on the Hudson River with his uncle one winter, a boy uses quick thinking to save his uncle’s horse.

First sentence: A heavy frost set in by late November the winter I turned twelve.

The viewpoint character narrates how he helped his Uncle Joe harvest blocks of ice from the river that winter. A highlight occurs when he rescues Joe’s horse after it has fallen through the ice.

At story end, he is working in New York City, helping Joe deliver ice.

Last sentence: And I knew I’d be ready to work in the ice harvest when the river froze again the next winter.

**YOUR TURN:** Select a vocation and a youngster who gets involved. Put them together and spell out in detail what goes on. Perhaps he will ma-

ture as he takes a hand to join the men in the work.

**THE SURPRISE FAMILY** by Lynn Reiser (New York: Greenwillow Books, 1994.)

Library of Congress summary: A baby chicken accepts a young boy as her mother and later becomes a surrogate mother for some ducklings she has hatched.

First sentence: First there was an egg. One day it cracked open.

Told in a matter of fact style, a chick believes a boy, the first eyes she sees after hatching, is her mother. She follows him everywhere. Later, she hatches duck eggs the boy has found. The ducklings accept her as their mother and follow her around till they discover water. The boy, hen and ducks play together and, at book’s end, rest together “under the little hen’s wings.” (The birds are pictured nesting on the reclining boy’s stomach.)

**YOUR TURN:** This kind of story can often be found in the feature pages of your daily newspaper. Look for it and then use it. Give the story a kindness. Have the youngster marvel that God has created these birds to do things like this. Or maybe you will find devotion in a puppy. Some dogs become soul-mates they seem so close to their owners.

**MORNING MILKING** by Linda Lowe Morris and illustrated by David DeRan (Saxonville, MA: Picture Book Studio, 1991.)

First sentence: From somewhere deep inside my dream I hear a sound. It’s coming closer, getting louder and louder, but there’s nothing I can do.

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE FACTUAL STORY

The narrator wakes to the sound of his father's alarm clock as a day on the dairy farm begins. He goes through the morning wishing he could stop time so he can keep memories of these days in his heart forever. At the end, he realizes his parents learned to stop time by turning their memories into stories they told over and over.

**YOUR TURN:** You could work this story backward and start with the family telling stories to one another around the fire on Thanksgiving night. The youngster at the end realizes that these stories come from the daily routine of family life.

**OUR TERRARIUMS** by Herbert H. Wong and illustrated by Aldren A. Watson (Reading, Mass.: The Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969).

Children find a toad and then a lizard and build "terrariums" for each.

**YOUR TURN:** The youngsters in your story could find any kind of creature and build a tank for it. In your story you could tell how to build a tank that can hold water.

**JOURNEY TO FREEDOM** by Courtni C. Wright, illustrated by Gershon Griffeth. (New York: Holiday House, 1994.)

Library of Congress summary: Joshua and his family, runaway slaves from a tobacco plantation in Kentucky, follow the Underground Railroad to freedom.

First sentence: The early November nights in the forest are very dark, silent, and cold.

The story tells how Joshua's family learns to follow the secret signals that

indicate where sympathizers live. They work their way from house to house through the states to freedom. This could be called a chronological slice of life.

**YOUR TURN:** This could be any kind of escape. I have heard that more born-again Christians than Jews were murdered in Germany during the Holocaust. Tell the story of a family of them.

**FERRYBOAT** by Betsy and Giulio Maestro (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1986). Watercolor illustrations.

First sentence: If you want to cross the river at Chester, you have to take the ferry.

As the author takes us across the river on the ferry, we learn how a small computer ferry operates.

**YOUR TURN:** You could do this with any kind of equipment. The mechanic's garage, the grocer's back room, the dentist's assistant. Everywhere you look you can find things people do that are fascinating.

**THE FARM SUMMER 1942** by Donald Hall with pictures by Barry Moser (New York: Dial Books, 1994).

Summary: A young boy spends the summer on his grandparents' farm in New Hampshire while his mother works in the war effort in New York and his father serves on a destroyer in the Pacific.

First sentence: Peter lived in San Francisco with his mother while his father was gunnery officer on a destroyer in the United States Navy, fighting in the war faraway in the South Pacific.

The story chronicles Peter's summer as he lives the kind of boyhood his

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE FACTUAL STORY

father lived, farming, haying, riding, playing, going to church. Summer's end he is surprised to find his father waiting for him when he comes home.

**YOUR TURN:** The story is told factually and in chronological order. Take true stories from your own family history and tell them simply like this.

**AS THE CROW FLIES** (a first book of maps) by Gail Hartman and illustrated by Harvey Stevenson. (New York: Bradbury Press, 1991.) 32 pp.

Summary: A look at different geographical areas from the perspectives of an eagle, rabbit, crow, horse, and gull.

Using one sentence each and only a few words on each page, the author shows how each creature moves through its territory and then shows the same things on an illustrated map.

**YOUR TURN:** You could do this, too, with other creatures, having a rabbit, prairie dog, mouse, raccoon and other animals to show how each moves through its territory. You could draw an illustrated map to show where he lives and goes and what enemy he must watch out for.

**TOMORROW ON ROCKY POND** by Lynn Reiser (New York: Greenwillow Books, 1993).

Summary: Vacationing in the country, a child anticipates tomorrow's activities, from fishing in Rocky Pond to walking in the woods and observing animals.

First sentence: Today we drove and drove.

Arriving at their mountain cabin, the children hurry to bed because "tomorrow we are going fishing on Rocky Pond." The story then catalogs

all the things "we" will do tomorrow, mentioning item by item the gear they will take with them and all the activities of the day. The book ends saying it is time now to go to sleep because "tomorrow we are going fishing on Rocky Pond and tomorrow is almost here."

**YOUR TURN:** You could do this with a trip you and your family have taken, whether on vacation or when moving from one house or town or state to another.

**THE DAY I WAS BORN** by Marjorie and Mitchwell Sharmat and illustrated by Diane Dawson (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1980).

Summary: Two brothers recall the day the younger was born.

First sentence: When I was born, great events were happening all over the world.

On the left page, the younger brother boasts of the great things that occurred the day he was born. On the right page, the older brother tells what really happened that day—always something far less dramatic. At the end, the brothers embrace and the older one asks the younger if he likes his present, a garbage truck.

**YOUR TURN:** Use this idea for a book that you will give to a family member at Christmas. How nice to see brothers give each other a hug and presents. Include this kind of thing in your story. It makes it the more human and family-like.

**ALEJANDRO'S GIFT** by Richard E. Albert and illustrated by Sylvia Long (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994).

First sentence: Alejandro's small

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE FACTUAL STORY

adobe house stood beside a lonely desert road.

Living alone in the desert, Alejandro discovers the small animals of the area do not have a water source. He builds a low tank for them to use and finds none of them will come near. He realizes he must make it look natural so he rebuilds it and landscapes it to give the little ones privacy. They come in droves. The book ends with a glossary of animals native to the southwest.

**YOUR TURN:** You could do this with the wild animals that live in the area where you live. This boy provided the animals with something they needed and they came in droves. End your story with a list of animals that are native to your state.

**DAISY ROTHSCHILD** by Betty Leslie-Melville (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1944).

The author and her husband adopt a baby Rothschild giraffe and go through the trauma (the charm of the book) of having it adopt them. They adopt another and then attempt to raise funds in the U.S. to establish a preserve.

**YOUR TURN:** When you read in your newspaper about people doing this kind of thing, not only cut out the article but call them up and ask them more questions. These days the cost is minimal, and they will like it when someone shows an interest in what they do. It's free advertising for them.

**DAY OF DELIGHT** (A Jewish Sabbath in Ethiopia) by Maxine Rose Schur, pictures by Brian Pinkney. (New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, a division of Penguin Books, Inc., USA, 1994).

Library of Congress summary: De-

picts a young Ethiopian Jewish boy and his family, including their typical daily routine followed by preparation for and celebration of the Sabbath.

First sentence: Well before the woodcock calls when morning still looks like night, my mother rises.

The story chronicles family activities the day before the Sabbath and then the Sabbath itself as celebrated by the Felasha Jews of Northern Ethiopia. (Having been there, I can attest to the authenticity of this story—db)

Last sentence: For the Sabbath is the flame, forging us together with the memory and the promise of a Day of Delight.

**YOUR TURN:** Talk to people who have lived in a foreign country and ask them how they celebrated the Lord's day. If they are not Christians, you can include what they do and then contrast it to what the Lord's people do in worshiping Him.

**TIME OF WONDER** by Robert McCloskey. (New York: The Viking Press, 1957, 1985). CALDECOTT AWARD.

First sentence: Out on the islands that poke their rocky shores above the waters of Penobscot Bay, you can watch the time of the world go by, from minute to minute, hour to hour, from day to day, season to season.

In reportorial style, the author tells what "you" can see and experience day by day through a summer spent in a house beside the bay. Children play, neighbors work, a hurricane promises and then comes, great swells of ocean return to the sea. And then, time comes to leave the island for home.

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE FACTUAL STORY

**YOUR TURN:** Whether you spend the summer at home or in the country or at the sea, wherever you are can be the subject of a factual story. I lived four years in Chicago and experienced the immense thunder and lightning storms. Tell what happens where you live and tell it factually.

**THE LITTLE ISLAND** by Golden MacDonald with illustrations by Leonard Weisgard. (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1993.) This book won the coveted CALDECOTT AWARD.

The first sentence simply states that there was a little island in the ocean.

This is a factual story of the flowers and animals one would find on a pleasant island in the sea.

But at one point a kitten, brought to the island by a picnicking family, asks a fish how he knows the island is part of the land.

The fish says it is faith.

“What’s that?”

“To believe what I tell you about what you don’t know.”

**YOUR TURN:** See how you can work your faith into your stories? This was published by Bantam. But how much better is our answer to this question. Faith is believing what God has told us about salvation through the Lord Jesus and His payment for our sins as our Great Substitute.

**SNOWFLAKE BENTLEY** by Jacqueline Briggs Martin, illustrated by Mary Azarian (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998). CALDECOTT AWARD.

Library of Congress summary: A biography of a self-taught scientist who photographed thousands of individual snowflakes in order to study their unique formations.

The first sentence sets the time and place of the story—the days when lanterns lit the night and farmers used oxen and sleds in winter to do their work.

Then we learn that a boy named Bentley loves winter with its snow more than any other time of the year. Sidebars on each page tell the facts of Bentley’s life as the picture book story relives his winter.

**YOUR TURN:** Note the rhythm of the first sentence in the books you read. Editors take special note to see how easily your manuscript reads when you send it in. They and we love biographies of scientists who have uncovered God’s great secrets. A sidebar is a column at the side of the page in which you put related information. Here, the book told the story of a discovery, and the column told the story of the man’s life.

**THE PENNY POT** by Stuart J. Murphy, illustrated by Lynne Cravath (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998).

Library of Congress summary: The face painting booth at the school fair provides plenty of opportunities to count combinations of coins adding up to fifty.

The first sentence again tells the time and place. It was a hot Saturday in June and lots of people had come to the school fair.

Jessie, a girl, wants to get her face painted but she has only 39 cents, eleven cents short. The art teacher promises her she can have the money donated in a penny pot.

Children come with change (always counted out). Left over pennies in the pot eventually provide enough for

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE FACTUAL STORY

Jessie to get her own face painted.

**YOUR TURN:** This factual story has suspense. Jessie wants something she cannot afford. A way to have the money is offered. Will there be enough? Will your rabbit have enough to buy carrots for his starving bunnies?

**THE ART BOOK** by Gail Gibbons. (New York: Holiday House, 1998).

Library of Congress summary: Describes the many different kinds of tools and supplies which artists use to produce their work.

Page by page we learn what artists carry in their art box to draw with, draw on, measure with, erase with, glue with, cut with, paint with and paint on.

**YOUR TURN:** You can do this with any trade—even telling what teachers do, what supplies they need, what they have to bring from home, how many hours they spend correcting papers and planning lessons.

**DIGGERS** by Jean Eick. (Eden Prairie, Minn.: The Child's World, Inc., 1999).

Library of Congress summary: Briefly describes the parts of a digger, or excavator, and the work it does.

This is a book about diggers so the first sentence simply tells where diggers work—on construction sites.

Big pictures and text show large construction machines digging, scooping and dumping as drivers manipulate their “joystick” levers.

**YOUR TURN:** You can do this with any large machine—a fire truck, a police car, a delivery wagon, a lumber truck, an ice cream cart.

**MY MOTHER TALKS TO TREES** by Doris Gove, illustrated by

Marilynn H. Mallory (Atlanta, Georgia: Peachtree Publishers, Ltd. 1999).

Library of Congress summary: Although embarrassed when her mother stops and talks to all the trees on their walk, a girl joins her in admiring their leaves, flowers, needles, and seeds and recognizes them as a source of beauty.

First sentence tells what mother does that embarrasses her family. She, right out loud and right in front of everybody, talks to trees.

The book, narrated by the daughter, tells the names and parts and features of trees she and her mother pass on their walk home from school.

**YOUR TURN:** When I lived near a forest, I would take my clippers and cut the vines creeping up the sides of trees. I knew the vines would kill the trees. I was giving life to the trees. Others do this. Write about us. This could be a story for a gospel tract.

**THE BIG SNOW** by Berta and Elmer Hader (New York: The Macmillan Publishing Company, 1948). CALDECOTT AWARD.

No summary.

Geese are flying south so the first sentence tells where they are going and the noise they make as they fly.

Watching them leave are rabbits, a ground hog, Mrs. Chipmunk, a blue jay, cardinals, sparrows, a blue bird, a wood rat, pheasants, three black crows, red and gray squirrels, a wood mouse, a meadow mouse, deer, skunks, raccoons. They watch and then get ready themselves.

Deep in winter with food scarce, an elderly couple feeds the animals insuring their survival.

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE FACTUAL STORY

**YOUR TURN:** Here you have a factual story of animals preparing for winter. Your story could marvel at how God has put the self-preservation instinct into His little creatures as you tell about these same creatures in this story.

**MARKET** by Ted Lewin. (New York: Lothrop Lee and Shepard books, 1996.)

Library of Congress summary: Describes, in simple text and illustrations, the special characteristics of different types of markets throughout the world, from the Fulton Fish Market in New York to Durbar Square, Patan, where temples rise like pagodas behind the flute sellers.

The first sentence of the chapter on Ecuador talks about the brightly dressed Indians who come to market. They have descended from the old Incas and they bring family names like Salasacas and Chimborazo.

In detailed water color the author/artist pictures markets of the world. The text catalogs what chief items are sold.

**YOUR TURN:** You could do this even going down just one aisle of a food delicacy shop. Some markets have a bakery where the women make fascinating cakes, shaped and colored and garnished like hamburgers and footballs and top hats. Talk to them and see what kind of a factual story you can do.

**SMOKEY NIGHTS** by Eve Bunting with illustrations by David Diaz (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994).

Library of Congress summary: When the Los Angeles riots break out in the streets of their neighborhood, a young boy and his mother learn the value of

getting along with others.

The first sentence places and identifies the characters—Mama and I. They are standing in their upstairs window, watching what is happening below.

The two watch the looting in the street and then go to bed. In the night, a fire alarm sends them to a shelter. The boy, worried about his cat which disappears, is relieved when a fireman appears with two cats—his and a Korean neighbor's, a woman he and his mother have never talked to until now.

**YOUR TURN:** Write a story about an event that brought you (and/or your family or someone you know) into a situation where you talked and made friends with someone new. Tell what it was like before and how it all happened. This could be true of animals as well.

**FLY, BESSIE, FLY** by Lynn Joseph and illustrated by Yvonne Buchanan (New York: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1998).

Library of Congress summary: A brief biography of the woman who, in 1921, became the first African American to earn a pilot's license.

The author begins by telling where and when: Waxahachie, Texas, 1901, a time when fields of cotton seemed to meet the sky on the far horizon.

The book tells the story of Bessie Coleman who moved to Chicago from Texas to build her life. But she can only learn to fly airplanes in France. American flying schools were not admitting black women.

She returns to the USA to open a flying school to teach men and women of any color to fly.

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE FACTUAL STORY

**YOUR TURN:** Tell a story about someone you know who was prevented from doing something he or she REALLY wanted to do and how he was able to finally do it.

**MY DEAR NOEL** by Jane Johnson (New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1999).

Library of Congress summary: A letter from Beatrix Potter to a young friend who is ill marks the origin of her famous tales.

First sentence: "Miss Porter's coming today!" shouted Noel as he tumbled out of bed to tell the others.

Neal Moore's good friend not only visits him and his family when he is well but she sends him a story of Peter Rabbit (the original story) when he is ill.

**YOUR TURN:** Write a story about a gift you (or a friend or relative or animal) received when you were sick in bed.

**THE GLORIOUS FLIGHT** (across the channel with Louis Bleriot) by Alice and Martin Provensen (New York: Puffin Books, 1983). CALDECOTT AWARD.

Library of Congress summary: A biography of the man whose fascination with flying machines produced the Bleriot XI, which in 1909 became the first heavier-than-air machine to fly the English Channel.

First sentence: It all began one morning when Luis, out with his family, saw an airship over his city.

He resolves to build a flying machine that will fly like a swallow.

Many attempts later, he is the first to

fly over the Channel.

**YOUR TURN:** Write a story about yourself wanting to build a machine to wear that will enable anyone to fly like a bird anywhere he wants. Tell how you go about making it and trying it out.

**TURTLE SPRING** by Deborah Turney Zagwyn (Berkeley, Calif.: Tri-cycle Press, 1998).

Library of Congress summary: The changing seasons bring surprises to Clee, including a new baby brother early in the year and a turtle whose life seems to crawl away in the winter.

The first sentence identifies the principal character, Clee, and tells that her summer was full of comings and goings.

Everyone loves the baby and six-year-old Clee feels like a lost moon until a friend of her father's gives her a grown turtle.

In winter, the turtle hibernates in the compost bin. Month by month life goes on until, to Clee's great surprise, the turtle reappears.

A critic for "Kirkus Review" wrote, "This lovely, unusual book elicits interest on many levels. The lyrical text compactly weaves human emotions, the cycle of seasons, and the phenomenon of hibernation into a coherent whole."

**YOUR TURN:** Using this basic lost-and-found method, select a character with a need for a gift or a friend. Supply that need and have that item lost or no longer available. Then express the joy when it reappears. Perhaps you can weave something from science into the story.

**A FIRST PETER RABBIT BOOK**  
(New reproductions of Beatrix Pot-

## SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE FACTUAL STORY

**ter's book illustrations with explanations)** by Frederick Warne (London: Penguin Books, 1996).

Library of Congress summary: From getting dressed in the morning to bedtime at night, learning about the day is fun with Peter Rabbit and his friends.

The publisher has gathered the Potter people and illustrations to introduce Peter Rabbit, his friends, farmyard noises, happy families, animal friends,

animal houses, playtimes, keeping clean, getting dressed, getting about, shopping, cooking, eating and bedtime.

**YOUR TURN:** This one involves going to the library to look up all the books by one author. Your story would tell how someone like Beverly Cleary, who has written 45 books for kids, has handled things like competing, winning, losing, laughing, mourning, buying, trading, fighting, learning, obeying, tattling, telling the truth, eating, sleeping, loving.

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: THE FACTUAL STORY

**Factual Story Research**

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

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

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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

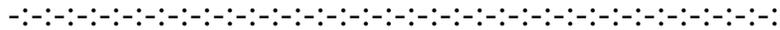
Fiction? \_\_\_\_\_ Nonfiction? \_\_\_\_\_ Fancy? \_\_\_\_\_ Realism? \_\_\_\_\_

Story Structure \_\_\_\_\_

Storyline \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Fiction? \_\_\_\_\_ Nonfiction? \_\_\_\_\_ Fancy? \_\_\_\_\_ Realism? \_\_\_\_\_

Story Structure \_\_\_\_\_

Storyline \_\_\_\_\_

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