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RADIO

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500  
WORDS  
— 2018 —

# Activity Pack



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# Calling all young writers

## The BBC Radio 2 Chris Evans Breakfast Show's 500 Words Competition is open for 2018!

500 WORDS is an open invitation to the wide world of imagination – that means it's a competition for all kids, of all abilities. It's a chance to dust off those creative cobwebs, or perhaps pick up a pen or get typing for the first time, and set off on a storytelling adventure. Plus it provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to have a story read live on the radio by a superstar narrator like Julie Walters, Tom Hiddleston or David Walliams!

Each year we're blown away by the breadth of our entrants' brilliant ideas, from heart-warming stories of hope, punchy political satire, to truly bonkers tales that give our judges the giggles. We've received over three quarters of a million entries over the 7 years of the competition, and 500 WORDS 2018 is set to be bigger than ever!

This year we'll be heading to the home of Henry VIII, Hampton Court Palace, for a fabulous 500 WORDS Final with special performances from pitch-perfect pop stars. If that's not exciting enough, our winners will be treated to a ride in THE Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, down to the river for tea on the Thames.

### Calling all parents

In 2017 131,798 children entered the competition. That must mean that 500 WORDS is a whole lot of fun, so get your young writers to join in. This pack contains some **FUN IDEAS** for use at **HOME**, to break through that writer's block and get kids writing. We've included exercises centred on each **MARKING CRITERIA** of the competition, to give your kids the best possible chance of bringing home a gold medal.

That's it from me. Thanks for getting involved with 500 WORDS. Remember, it's an open invitation to the wide world of imagination, so get your kids to give you their entries to **SUBMIT ONLINE** before **7pm on Thursday 22nd February!**



Chris Evans



# Contents

## Learning Resource Pack

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Originality..... | 2  |
| Character.....   | 4  |
| Plot.....        | 6  |
| Language.....    | 8  |
| Enjoyment.....   | 10 |
| Editing.....     | 12 |

★ Easy, quick ideas, especially for younger writers

★★ More ideas, especially for older writers

# Originality

Some people say that every story has already been told... but our 500 WORDS writers know that's not true! Every year, they come up with wonderfully inventive and original stories that wow our judges. Use some of these activities with your class and tell them to let their imaginations run free and take us on an adventure.

## Inspirational objects ★

Unusual objects can be a great source of story inspiration. Raid the store cupboard or get your class to bring in intriguing items from home. Anything from an old hat to a telescope will do the trick. Ask questions about the object to inspire different story ideas. What could it be used for? Who might be looking for it? What secret could it hold? Suggest different genres or types of story such as mystery or science fiction and discuss how the item might be used in this kind of story.

## Facts into fiction ★ ★

Fun facts from different school subjects can inspire astounding stories. Did you know a jumping flea can accelerate faster than a space rocket taking off into orbit? You could use this science fact to spark a story about an astronaut flea saving Tim Peake from bug-eyed alien invaders. See who can think up the craziest story idea inspired by the facts they find.

## Headlines ★ ★

Real-life events can often spark great story ideas. Bring in a selection of newspaper reports and headlines. Ask your writers to read through these to find interesting details that could inspire an imaginative story. Why not take details from different reports to create a fresh and original story?

## Idea generator ★ ★

Sometimes it's the mix of ingredients that can give you a story idea that stands out from the crowd. Get your writer to choose different characters, settings and genres from the next page and mix them together. What kind of mystery would Sherlock Holmes solve on his visit to Hogwarts?



For more story sparks, take a look at **How to Write Your Best Story Ever.**

### Did you know?

...in 2017 the word 'trump' featured in over 800 stories and over 100 invented words like Trumpalumpus, Trumpwinningtastic and Trumpsickle.



**Frank Cottrell Boyce says...**

*"What could be more fresh and original than you? You are unique and amazing. So the more of you you put in, the more original your story will be."*



**Malorie Blackman says...**

*"Unusual settings and scenarios help spark story ideas but so do unusual characters in everyday settings."*

Calling all young **writers**

## Story idea generator

Pick a type or genre of story, character and setting and put them together to think up a story idea. You can pick and mix from every category or even throw your own ideas into the mix.

### Genre

- Mystery
- Romance
- Science fiction
- Horror
- Comedy
- Fantasy
- Historical
- Adventure
- Spy
- Animal

### Character

- Superhero
- King Henry VIII
- Hedgehog
- Vlogger
- Rapper
- Wizard
- Dinosaur
- Robot
- Secret agent
- Archaeologist

### Setting

- Haunted house
- Planet X
- School
- Department store
- Zoo
- Desert island
- Mountain
- Castle
- Enchanted forest
- City

### Genre

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### Character

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### Setting

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# Character

Every story needs a star. From famous footballers to pet hamsters and fictional superheroes, unforgettable characters make stories come to life. Use some of these activities with your class to help them to dream up some page-turning protagonists.

## Instant impressions



Writers can use adjectives to create an instant picture in a reader's mind. Create a list of different adjectives such as 'flashy', 'tattered' and 'chinless' and challenge your writers to choose three from your list to describe the lead character in their story. Alternatively, ask the class to create their own different lists of adjectives for heroes and villains. Remind your students not to scatter adjectives everywhere in their story but to use fun adjectives appropriately.

## Get the profile



Asking questions about the characters in a story can give writers the answers they need to bring them to life. Challenge your writers to think about what a character is like and why they act the way they do. This can often help with plot ideas too! Get writers to ask each other questions about their character using the character profile on the next page.

## The game of the name



Unforgettable characters need a memorable name. Suggest famous character names from fiction and ask the class to decide what type of story they are from. For example, would you expect to find a character called Eowyn Broadsword in a love story or a fantasy tale? Is this the kind of name you would give to a heroine or villain? Ask your writers to think about the type of story they are writing to make sure the character names they choose fit the bill.



**Charlie Higson says...**

*"Try to make your characters real; try to make them come alive on the page; try to make them people we'd like to know more about. Let us know what makes them tick."*

## Did you know?

...the word superhero was used 3000 times in the stories in 2017. Hygge Woman and Magic Tree Boy are two original superheroes brought to life by the young writers of the 500 WORDS stories.

Does your character have a favourite band?

Does your villain love ice cream?

Does your hero have a secret fear of spiders?



How To Be A Young #Writer offers tips to help add depth to characters.

Calling all young writers

## Character profile

Complete this character profile to collect ideas about the lead character in your story. Try to answer every question to find out what makes your character tick.

My character's name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Can you describe what your character looks like?

My character looks like: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your character speak or make any sounds?

My character sounds like: \_\_\_\_\_

What interests or pet hates does your character have?

My character likes/dislikes: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your character have a hobby? What do they do?

My character: \_\_\_\_\_

Where does your character live?

My character lives: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your character have a family?

My character has: \_\_\_\_\_

# Plot

Great stories have page-turning plots that keep readers glued to their seats to find out what happens next. Use some of these activities with your class to help them to turn their brilliant ideas into a fantastic story with a beginning, middle and end, and maybe a twist or two along the way as well!

## Story starters



Get your writers to think about the event that will kick-start the plot of their story. Throwing the reader into the middle of the action straight away is a great way to grab their attention. Ask your writers to pick the opening scenes of a favourite book or film and give it a twist to create a new plot and storyboard their own story. For example, what if Bilbo Baggins hadn't met Gandalf at the beginning of *The Hobbit* but Smaug the Dragon instead...

## Obstacle race



Action drives the plot of a story forward. Pick a fictional character and give them a story starter such as Spiderman discovering a radioactive banana in his lunchbox. Pass the problem around the class, challenging one person to suggest how the fictional character would tackle the obstacle and then asking the next to invent a new obstacle to put in the character's path. See how quickly the action escalates!

## Story mountain



Creating a plot is like climbing a mountain – each event in the story should build on the one before. Get your writers to complete the story mountain worksheet on the next page to help them to plan their plots. Encourage them to think about the problems and challenges their protagonists will face.

## The perfect ending



The last lines of a story should pack a punch. List different story genres and discuss the different emotions each might evoke, for example, a reader of a horror story might feel nervous or uneasy if the story ends on a spooky scene. Ask your writers what emotions they want a reader to feel at the end of their story and challenge them to craft a final line that creates that feeling.



Writers can build their own story in the **Write Your Best Story Ever! Notebook**.

## Did you know?

...the word portal was used over 9000 times in 2017 to build stories around worlds of fantasy, from time travel and fairy tale mash-ups to outer space and the land of aliens and zombies.



**Malorie Blackman says...**

*"Starting on a moment of change or conflict for your main character is a good way to get us straight into the story."*

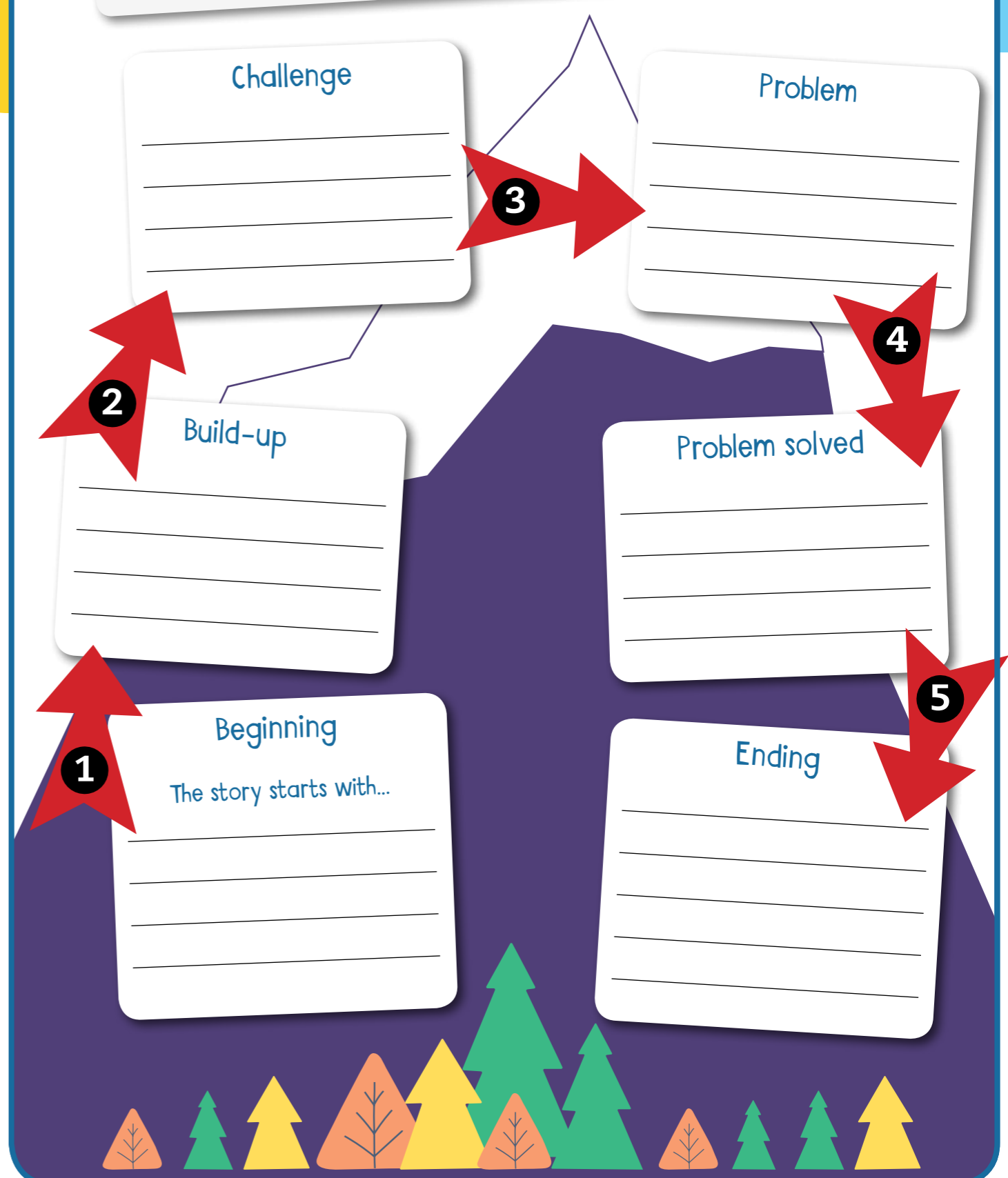
*A Griffin! I never could've imagined the day I saw one!*

(New World, 2017)

Calling all young **writers**

## Story mountain

Complete the story mountain to plan out the plot of your story. Start at the bottom with a dramatic opening and then work out the different twists and turns your plot will take until you reach the end!



# Language

Every writer wants to find the perfect words to tell their story. Since the writer can only use 500 of them for this competition, it's important for them to make the best use of every one. Use some of these activities with your class to help them to choose words that will make their 500 WORDS stories sparkle in the reader's mind.

## Striking similes



Share some of these similes from 500 WORDS stories and discuss the pictures they paint:

'as tall as a dozen giraffes standing on top of each other',

'each step I took crackled like bacon cooking in a pan full of oil',

'my mouth hung open like the gates of Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory'.

Challenge your class to create their own striking similes using the worksheet on the next page.

## Word inventors



Blending different words together to create new compound words can add interesting ideas and characters to a story. For example, blending 'man' and 'suffragettes' creates 'manffragettes', while if you add 'water' to a 'yeti' you end up with a 'weti'! Challenge your writers to blend different words to create their own compound characters.

## Synonym



Don't let your writers settle for the first word that pops into their head. Flick through a thesaurus to find better alternatives for overused words like 'big' and 'nice'. Pass this challenge round the classroom with each person having to find a synonym that's even better than the last, for example, 'big', 'enormous', 'gigantic', 'dinosaurian'...

## Get gongoozling!



From 'squeegees' to 'widdershins', 'mulligrubs' to a 'gongoozler', get the class hitting the dictionaries to find out the meanings of some of these funny-sounding words! Challenge your writers to find their own funny words to weave into their stories. Could they fit a 'flibbertigibbet' into their story or find space for a 'jackanapes'?



## Francesca Simon says...

*"Do have fun with language. Play around with it until you find the right word."*

*Howling wind and lashing rain attacked her from all directions. The icy cold stuck to her like a magnet.*

(Park Run?, 2017)

**Did you know?**  
...there were over 3 million adjectives in the 2017 stories. Discombobulating, pulchritudinous and delusory are a few of the wide range of descriptive words used.



The **Oxford School Thesaurus** can help broaden vocabulary and discover interesting alternatives to more common words.

## Striking similes

A simile is a way of describing something by comparing it with something else, using 'like' or 'as'. Using similes can help you to describe the scenes of your story in interesting and unusual ways. Complete the examples below to create your own striking similes. Try to choose unexpected words that will create an original picture in the reader's mind. Then create your own similes from scratch!

Calling all young **writers**

soar like a \_\_\_\_\_

as cunning as a \_\_\_\_\_

as \_\_\_\_\_

like \_\_\_\_\_

as dark as \_\_\_\_\_

as easy as \_\_\_\_\_

as sharp as a \_\_\_\_\_

as tall as \_\_\_\_\_

as \_\_\_\_\_

eat like a \_\_\_\_\_

like \_\_\_\_\_

like a \_\_\_\_\_

in a china shop

as \_\_\_\_\_

as a feather

as fast as \_\_\_\_\_

as \_\_\_\_\_

as \_\_\_\_\_

as red as \_\_\_\_\_

as loud as \_\_\_\_\_

like \_\_\_\_\_



# Enjoyment

The world is made of stories. Exciting stories, scary stories, thrilling stories, stories that make you cry and ones that leave you giggling so hard that your face hurts. The magic ingredient in all these types of stories is enjoyment. Use some of these activities to help your class create stories that will wow the judges.

## Who's who?



Get your class to think about who's telling their story. Invent a character and send them on a tour of the school. Challenge your class to describe the character's journey, sharing their thoughts and feelings about what they see. At key moments shout out a change of character and see how the story changes. You could switch from a fairy-tale princess to a secret agent or even an escaped dinosaur!

## Twisty tales



Take some traditional story openings and give them a twist. How about starting a 'Once upon a time' story about a bogey that lives up a nose? Or change Little Red Riding Hood to Little Red Hiding Hoodie and make her the villain of the story? Perhaps you could give Rapunzel a smartphone or let Cinderella meet Luke Skywalker... Have fun twisting traditional fairy tales into stories that will surprise the reader.

## Action and emotion



Can you show how you're feeling without saying a word? Challenge your writers to think about how a character's actions can reveal their emotions. Ask your class to pick an emotion from the worksheet on the next page and then mime an action that shows this emotion. Can the rest of the class guess how they are feeling?

## Extreme writing



Escape from the classroom and try writing in different locations to get some fresh inspiration! From the playground to the sports hall, the local park to the library, see how a change of scene can inspire some fun stories. You could even cover the walls of the classroom with photos of different locations from Mount Everest to Mars for maximum inspiration.



Francesca Simon says...

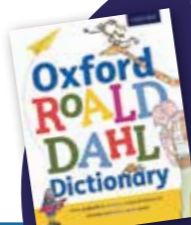
"We love funny stories, silly stories, mystery stories, sad stories – most of all we love stories which only you could write."

Then the bin rapidly evolved into a boy like bin CALLED **BIN BOY!**

(Bin Boy, 2017)

## Did you know?

...Roald Dahl's BFG inspired a variety of new giants in the stories of 2017. With names like the Big Friendly Rabbit to the Big Friendly Yeti, writers also used BFG-style invented words like Squashwobbles and Bobswinkles.



To help you discover your inner Roald Dahl, explore the fun and creative use of language in the **Oxford Roald Dahl Dictionary**.

Calling all young **writers**

## Action and emotion

Can you show how you're feeling without saying a word? Pick an emotion from the list below and then mime an action that shows how you're feeling. Can the rest of the class guess the right feeling?

eager excited **SINISTER**  
**DULL**  
moody **SCARED** foolish **bold**  
**SECRETIVE** embarrassed **happy**  
**SAD** cautious **brave** annoyed  
resentful kind  
**GRUMPY** **Silly** gentle romantic  
**ANGRY** smug **JOLLY**  
**CHEERFUL**  
irritated

Try to think of at least five other emotions. Write them down here and then act them out.

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# Enjoy 500 WORDS!

**Don't forget to press  
the button and  
submit before 7pm  
on 22nd February 2018!**

