

Lesson 8 Parts of a Story

A good story has these ingredients:

- A story tells about made-up people or animals. They are the **characters** in the story.
- A story has a **setting** where the action takes place.
- A story's action is the **plot**. The plot is usually a series of events that includes a **conflict**, or problem, which needs to be solved.
- A story uses **dialogue**, or conversation among the characters, to move the action of the story along.
- An interesting **beginning**, **middle**, and **end** make a story fun to read.
- **Describing words** tell about the characters, setting, and events.

Read the first part of a science fiction story below. Then, answer the questions that follow.

The Colony

Even after 472 days, I hadn't gotten used to the quietness of this place. I was walking on hard ground, yet my footfalls hardly made a sound. In the distance, I could see the colony's generator. I knew it was churning and making noise, but I couldn't hear it at all. On Earth, I would have said that quietness was peaceful. Up here, though, the quiet just seemed empty.

An hour passed, and I was pleased at my progress. My distance meter showed that I was more than halfway. No one from the colony had walked as far as Monroe Flats before, and I wasn't exactly sure of what I would find along the way. I liked walking, but I hoped I wouldn't have to detour around any craters. I had plenty to do. As the colony's Environment Manager, I made daily tests on soil and atmosphere. They were vital to the colony's success.

With my head down, I worked my way up a slope when I saw something in the gray, dusty sand. I staggered backward, like a person who shies away from a snake. There was a track on the dusty hillside. I felt a sudden plunge in my stomach. *No one's been out here!* I thought. I looked to the left. The track continued about 40 meters, then wound around the curve of the slope. To the right, it went downward, to the base of the slope, and out of sight.

The track was just a sort of a swishy trail, as if someone had walked along dragging a heavy sack right behind, so that his or her footprints were covered. *Why would someone from the colony have been dragging something out here?* My mind was racing. *Surely I would have known.* Anyway, most people used transport modules when they were away from the colony. I kept looking left and right, as if I were checking for traffic. I jumped when my Telewave beeped.

"Morgan? Are you there?"

I spoke into the device on my wrist. "Yes, Chairman." The Chairman would know who else was out here.

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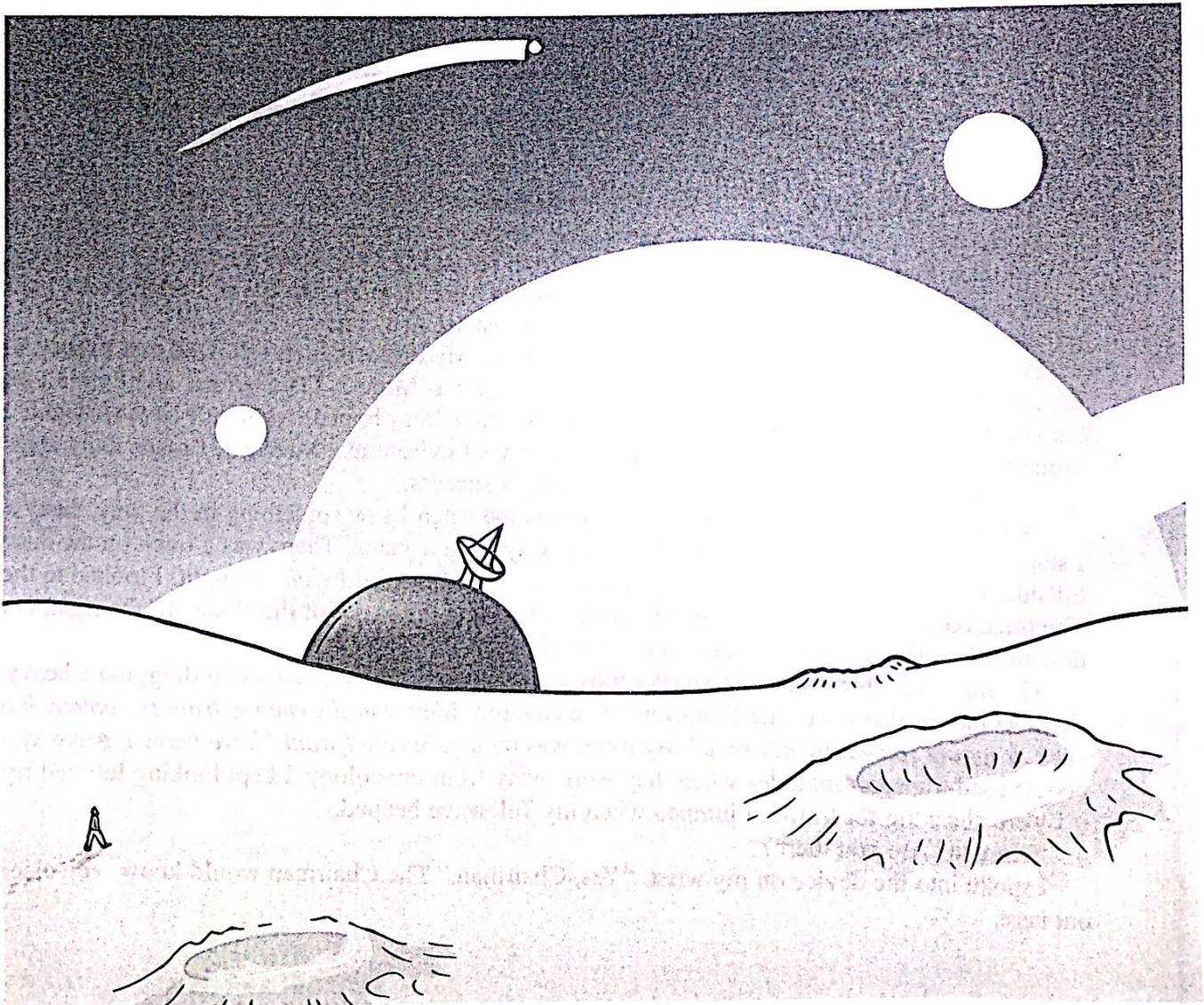
"Those supplies you ordered just arrived," the Chairman's voice said in its usual smooth tones.

"Oh," I waited, expecting more information. When it didn't come, I added, "Thank you, sir."

"Alright. See you tonight, Morgan."

"Yes, sir...Sir?" There was no response. The buzzing on my Telewave told me that there would be no further communication. Atmospheric disturbances often interrupted off-site transmissions.

I stood there feeling stupid because I couldn't decide what to do. I studied the track again to see if I could determine in which direction the person had been traveling. I noticed a pattern in the sand that seemed to indicate that the person had come from the bottom of the slope up to this point. I squinted up to the left. Nothing. Without really even deciding, I went in that direction.



Lesson 8 Parts of a Story

Answer these questions about "The Colony." Look back at the story on pages 37 and 38 if you need to.

Who is the main character in the story? _____

List three details about the main character.

What other character appears in the story? _____

What do you know about this character?

Where does the action take place? _____

What details does the writer reveal about the place? List some here.

What main problem occurs? _____

How does the main character deal with the problem at this point?

Review the dialogue. Notice what the characters say and how they say it. What do you learn about the characters from the dialogue?

Main character: _____

Other character: _____

Record some of the story's sensory details. Remember to look for sights, sounds, smells, textures, and tastes.

Lesson 9 Setting

Every story has to take place somewhere. The **setting** of a story is when and where the action takes place. The setting of a story may be in a real place or in a completely imagined place. The time during which a story takes place may be in the past, the present, or the future.

In some stories, readers learn details of the setting almost by accident. Perhaps a character complains about the "rotten weather," so you can assume it is cold or rainy. Maybe you learn from a character's thoughts that he is tired of sitting in the doctor's waiting room. In other stories, the narrator describes the setting. Here is an example from "A Mystery of Heroism," by Stephen Crane.

Sometimes they of the infantry looked down at a fair little meadow which spread at their feet. Its long, green grass was rippling gently in a breeze. Beyond it was the grey form of a house half torn to pieces by shells and by the busy axes of soldiers who had pursued firewood. The line of an old fence was now dimly marked by long weeds and by an occasional post. A shell had blown the well-house to fragments. Little lines of grey smoke ribboning upward from some embers indicated the place where had stood the barn.

Look at all the information in that paragraph:

The characters—"they of the infantry"—are on a hill, because they "looked down" at the meadow. It is spring or summer; the grass is long and green. In contrast to the pleasant meadow are the remains of a battle. A house in the distance is standing in ruins, and a well-house and a barn are destroyed.

Now, think of a story or book that you have read. What do you remember about the setting? Remember to think about the time (such as the year), the weather, the time of day, and the physical location in all of its details. Write what you remember.

Title: _____

Setting: _____

Lesson 9 Setting

Here is another example. The setting is described by the main character, who is also the narrator. This passage is from "The Colony," the science fiction story you read on pages 37 and 38.

Even after 472 days, I hadn't gotten used to the quietness of this place. I was walking on hard ground, yet my footfalls hardly made a sound. In the distance, I could see the colony's generator. I knew it was churning and making noise, but I couldn't hear it at all. On Earth, I would have said that quietness was peaceful. Up here, though, the quiet just seemed empty.

What information do you get about the setting from this passage?

What mood, or feeling, do you get from the passage?

What words or details convey that mood?

Writers use details in their settings that match the mood of what is happening in the story. First, think about details that a writer might include in a story that is humorous or light-hearted.

What might the weather be like?

What time of day might it be?

Now, think about setting details that a writer might include in a scary part of a story, or in a part where something bad is going to happen to a character.

What might the weather be like?

What time of day might it be?

Look over the details you recorded for "light-hearted" settings and "scary" or "bad" settings. Are you starting to imagine a great story? Choose one of the settings you've already begun to visualize and develop it further on a separate sheet of paper.

Lesson 10 Characters

Now, think about a character you would like to create. Rather than thinking about what happens to the character, think about what kind of person the character is. Answer these questions.

Is the character human? _____ If not, what is the character? _____

Is the character male or female? _____

What two words best describe your character?

What does your character look like? Is he or she carrying something?

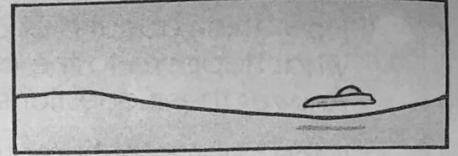
What might your character say? How might your character say it? Write a line of dialogue that your character might speak.

What might other characters say about this character? Either write some dialogue or describe what others would say.

Now, introduce your character. Write a paragraph about him or her.

Lesson 11 Dialogue

Dialogue is the conversation among characters in a story. Good dialogue helps readers get to know the characters. It also keeps the action of the story moving. Here is what dialogue looks like.



The Chairman looked thoughtfully out the window. "Morgan seemed a little distracted," he said. "I hope he's alright."

Smiling, Kip replied, "Oh, I'm sure he is, sir."

"How far did he say he was going?" asked the Chairman.

Kip checked a chart. "To Monroe Flats, sir."

"Monroe Flats!" burst the Chairman. "He's walking?"

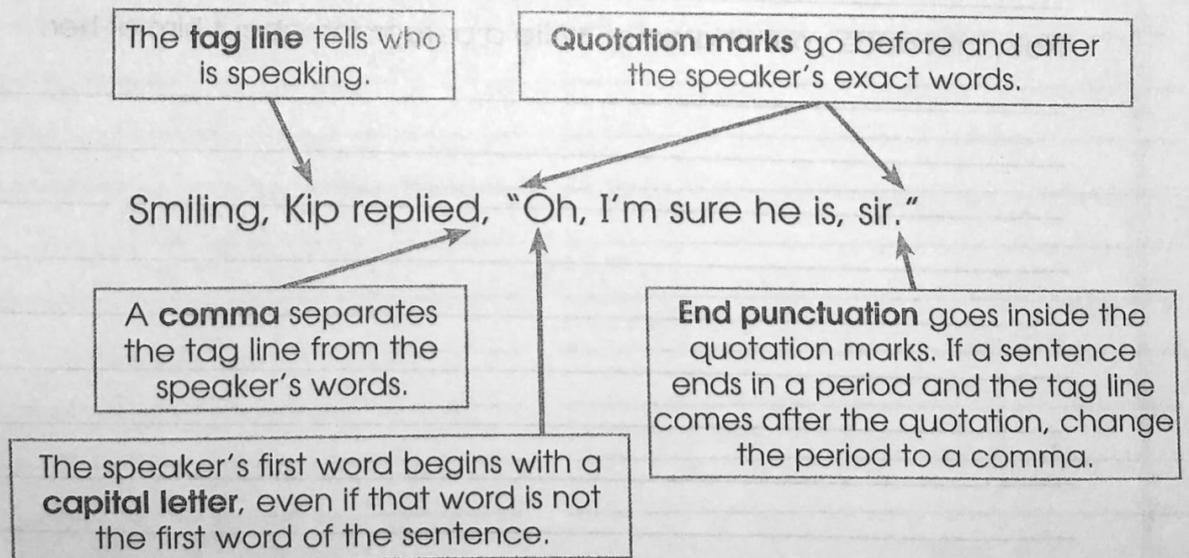
"Yes, sir," said Kip, a little surprised at the Chairman's outburst. "He likes to walk," Kip added, thinking it might calm his boss. It didn't.

"Is he mad?" ranted the Chairman. "No one knows what's out there. Send a patrol in a transport module to get him. Right away."

What do you learn about the Chairman from this dialogue?

What do you learn about Kip?

Take a closer look at a line of dialogue and its punctuation.



Lesson 12 Point of View

When a writer writes a story, he or she chooses a narrator to tell the story. In some stories, the narrator is one of the characters in the story. Words such as *I*, *me*, and *my* let readers know that this is happening. This is called **first-person point of view**. Here is another piece of "The Colony," the story begun on pages 37 and 38.

As I followed the track, I realized that I was tight all over. My toes, fingers, and even my teeth were clenched. I jogged a few steps and shook my arms out. In training, they had always told you to stay relaxed. If you were tense, you couldn't respond as quickly. *Respond to what?* I thought. *Who in the world could be out here?*

I suppose the jogging and unclenching distracted me. It wasn't until I was fully at the top of the hill that I saw the crater and what was in it. I automatically held my Telewave up to my mouth.

"Jasper Colony, this is Morgan. Get me the Chairman," I said. A crackle assured me that my call was being transmitted. Then, the abrupt bark of the Chairman's voice made me jump.

"Morgan, what are you doing out there?" the Chairman asked.

Here is the same scene, but it is written in **third-person point of view**. Readers see words such as *he*, *she*, *him*, *her*, *his*, *they*, and *them* in stories that are written in third person. The narrator is not a character in the story. The main character is the same, but the **omniscient**, or all-knowing, narrator "reports" to readers what the character says, thinks, and does.

As he followed the track, Morgan realized that he was tight all over. His toes, fingers, and even his teeth were clenched. He jogged a few steps and shook his arms out. In training, they had always told him to stay relaxed. If he were tense, he couldn't respond as quickly. *Respond to what?* he thought. *Who in the world could be out here?*

He supposed the jogging and the unclenching distracted him. It wasn't until he was fully at the top of the hill that he saw the crater and what was in it. He automatically held his Telewave up to his mouth.

"Jasper Colony, this is Morgan. Get me the Chairman," he said. A crackle assured him that his call was being transmitted. Then, the abrupt bark of the Chairman's voice made him jump.

"Morgan, what are you doing out there?" the Chairman asked. He felt that things were beginning to get out of hand.

Lesson 13 Story Ideas

Many stories that you read are realistic. They include characters who are more or less normal. Realistic stories set in the past are called *historical fiction*. Whether the setting is in the past or the present, though, the characters could be real, and the events could happen, even though the details come from a writer's imagination.

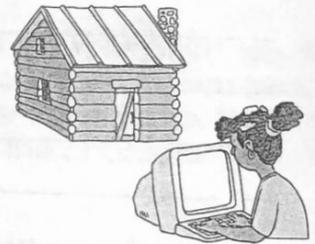
List some stories or books you have read that have realistic settings. Briefly describe the settings.

Title

Setting

Title	Setting
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What kind of realistic story would you like to write? Will it be about an adventure that a kid had while he lived on the frontier in a log cabin? Will it be about a modern-day kid who is a computer genius? Realistic stories require just as much imagination as unrealistic, or fantasy, stories do. Write down some realistic story ideas.



Realistic story idea #1

Character(s): _____

Setting: _____

Plot: _____

Realistic story idea #2

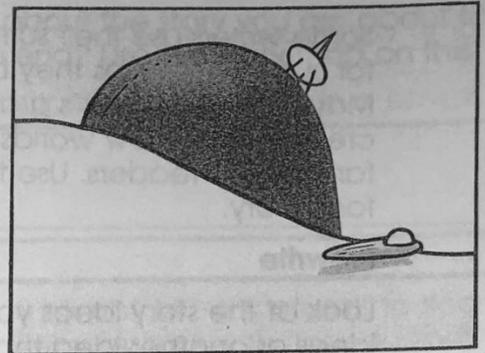
Character(s): _____

Setting: _____

Plot: _____

Lesson 13 Story Ideas

Fiction that is set in the future is usually called *science fiction*. The setting may be on Earth or in another world of some sort. Characters may be human or some other life form. Details often involve advanced, or futuristic, technology that the author imagines.



What science fiction stories have you read? Try to recall some of the details. For example, were the characters human? Where did the characters live? Did the author reveal the year? Record a few details that you remember.

What kind of science fiction would you like to write? Who will be your main characters? Where will they live? Why are they there? What year is it? Open up your imagination and jot down a couple of science fiction ideas here.

Science fiction idea #1

Character(s): _____

Setting: _____

Plot: _____

Science fiction idea #2

Character(s): _____

Setting: _____

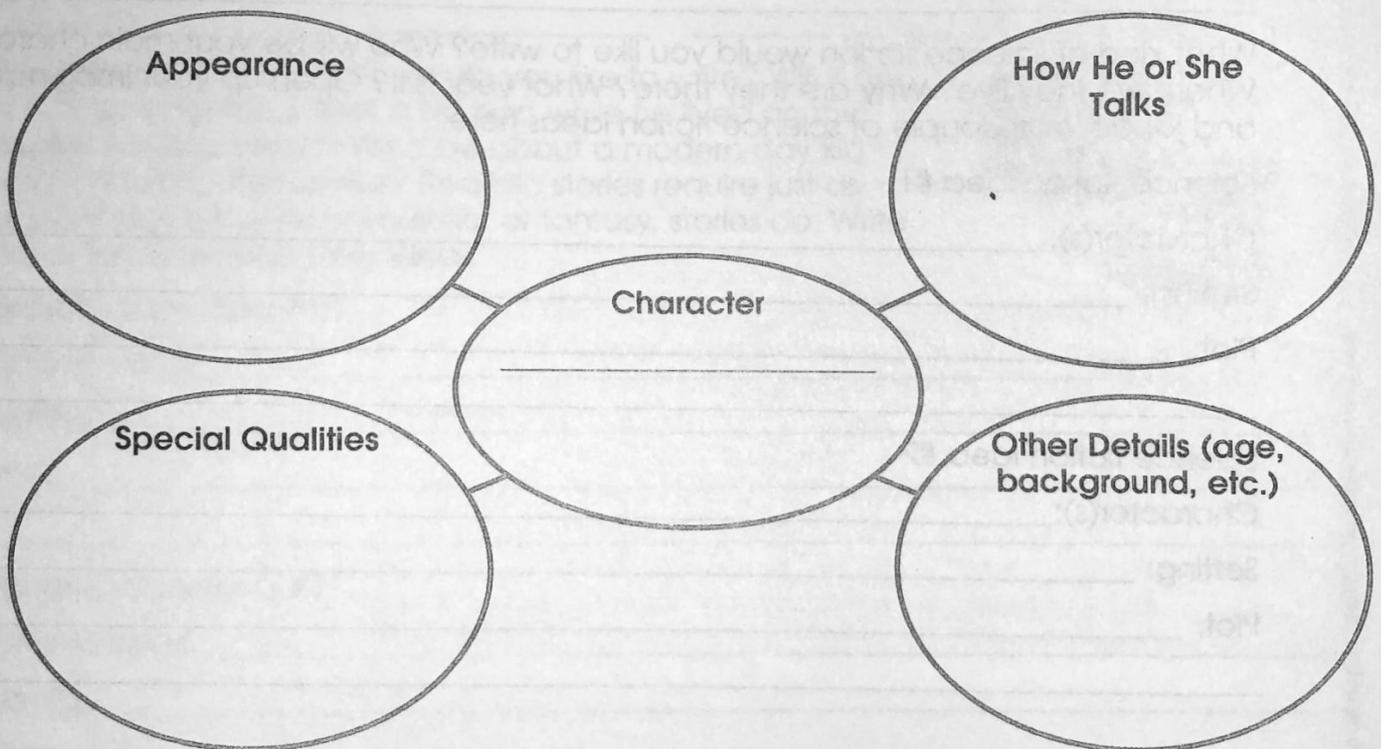
Plot: _____

Lesson 14 The Writing Process: Story

Some writers use their surroundings to help them create a character, setting, or plot for a story. Perhaps they base a character's home on a house they used to live in. Maybe a character's grandfather is much like the writer's grandfather. Other writers create whole new worlds. They imagine life in the future in ways that seem completely fantastic to readers. Use the writing process and see what kind of world you can create for a story.

Prewrite

Look at the story ideas you sketched out on pages 48 and 49. Choose one of those ideas or another idea that you like and begin to develop it. Whether you write a realistic story or science fiction, you need to pay special attention to your main character. Use this idea web to record details about how he or she looks, acts, speaks, and so on.



Before you continue, consider these questions about your setting and plot.

- What is the setting of your story? Consider place or location, time setting (year), season, time of day, weather, and so on.
- What problem will the character face?
- What does the character do to try to solve the problem? Does it take more than one try? What is the final solution or outcome?

Lesson 14 The Writing Process: Story

Now, put the main events of your story together. Think about the story you are about to tell. What is at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end? Use the story map on this page to plan the important parts of your story.

Character(s)

Setting

Plot: Beginning

Plot: Middle

Plot: End

Lesson 14 The Writing Process: Story

Revise

Every writer must look at his or her work with fresh eyes and figure out how to make the writing better. Even experienced writers do this, and no one considers it an easy job.

Answer the questions below. If you answer "no" to any of these questions, those are the areas you might need to improve. Make marks on your draft so you know what needs attention. Ask a friend to read your draft and answer the questions, too.

- Did you give details about an interesting character and a setting?
- Does your story have a beginning, a middle, and an end?
- Did you include a problem and a solution in your plot?
- Did you tell events in an order that made sense?
- Did you use sensory details?
- Did you use dialogue to help readers learn about characters and to move the story forward?
- Did you use transition and time-order words?
- Did you write a good conclusion?
- Did you use either first person or third person narration throughout the story?

Review the important parts of a story.

- In the **beginning** of a story, readers meet the character or characters and learn a little about the setting and the plot. The first sentence makes readers want to keep on reading.
- In the **middle** of a story, the action takes place. Readers see the character or characters face a problem. The characters probably make one or more attempts to solve the problem.
- In the **end**, the characters solve the problem in a logical way. Keep in mind that it is not satisfying to have a story's central problem just go away by magic or by coincidence. Your characters must deal with or solve their problem.

On your draft, draw brackets next to the beginning, middle, and end of your story. Jot some notes if you decide that you must revise any of those parts to make them more interesting for your readers.

Lesson 14 The Writing Process: Story

Proofread

By now, you have read your story several times. You can probably recite parts from memory. It is still important, though, to proofread carefully. When you are familiar with what you are reading, you are more likely to overlook errors. Also, you must still proofread typewritten text, even if the computer has checked your spelling. If you type *form* instead of *from*, for example, the computer won't catch that error. Use the checklist below as you proofread your revised story. Read for one kind of error at a time. Ask a friend to proofread your story and use the checklist, too.

- ___ Each sentence begins with a capital letter.
- ___ Each sentence ends with the correct punctuation (period, question mark, or exclamation point).
- ___ Dialogue is punctuated correctly.
- ___ Each sentence states a complete thought.
- ___ All words are spelled correctly.

When proofreaders work, they use certain symbols. Using these symbols will make your job easier.

Use these symbols as you proofread your story. Remember to read your writing out loud to yourself. When you read out loud, you may hear mistakes or rough spots that you did not see.

- C Capitalize this letter.
- Add a missing end mark: ○ ? !
- Add a comma, please.
- "Be sure to punctuate your dialogue, ^ushe said.
- Fix incor^rect or misspelled words.
- ~~Delete~~^o this word.
- Lowercase this Letter.

Publish

Write a final copy of your story on separate sheets of paper or make final changes to your computer document. Write or type carefully so there are no mistakes. If you wish, add illustrations and make a title page. With an adult's permission, post your story on a good Web site that publishes young people's writing (do not include your name).