

Leap into the
Common Core Writing Standards

with

**No Ordinary
Lizard**



3rd Grade

When a children's author and a writing lizard team up, this is what happens....

Leaping into the Common Core Writing Standards with No Ordinary Lizard

This guide addresses all 10 writing standards in the Common Core State Standards by combining examples and activities generated from the middle-grade novel [No Ordinary Lizard](#) with the instruction and opportunities provided by the writing website [All Write with Me](#). Diane Owens, author of the novel and developer of the website, created the guide in collaboration with certified classroom teachers Nancy Barth and Alyce McConaghy.

Inside the Guide

The first section, *Applying the Standards*, provides the official standard followed by an explanation of how the guide addresses it and how to ensure your students fulfill it.

The rest of the guide corresponds with the chapters in the middle-grade novel *No Ordinary Lizard*. Each chapter-specific section contains:

- thought-provoking questions to facilitate opinion writing
- research topics to generate informative writing
- examples from the book to foster narrative writing
- a list of the standards addressed by each activity

Note: It is not our intention to have your students complete every writing assignment within these pages. Please be selective when choosing writing projects.

About the Book

No Ordinary Lizard is a humorous, light fantasy for ages 8 to 12. With a Lexile score of 770L and a Flesch Reading Ease score of 92.5, the book is easy to read yet still provides a variety of narrative techniques to emulate. The story events naturally lead to research topics in science, biology, mythology, history, oceanography, space and more. The characters' relationships and growth, along with the novel's core themes, provide ample opportunities for students to analyze their beliefs and express their opinions.



If you had a secret pet who was smart enough to write you messages, how far would you go to protect him? This is the question 11-year-old Ruth Patterson faces every day. To keep her secret, Ruth must take the blame for all the trouble he causes. To keep him safe, she'll have to solve the mystery of a glowing rock, decipher a Hawaiian legend and unravel a string of lies - all before the lizard's dangerous enemy catches up with them.

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ASIN: B009XLKL4W - Kindle edition

Instruction

To provide students with writing instruction as well as writing assignments, the guide works in concert with the author's educational website, [All Write with Me](http://AllWriteWithMe.com) (allwritewithme.com). This award-winning online writing community encourages and motivates grade school students in a safe and fully monitored environment while providing strategies and techniques used by acclaimed authors. The instruction found on this site not only fulfills the Common Core State Standards but also adheres to the 6+1 Trait Writing Model.

This guide takes that instruction one step further by linking standards to the most relevant instructional pages on the site. You can share these pages with your students by projecting them from your computer or printing them off and distributing them as hand-outs.

Online Writing Community

The writing standards aren't just about writing. Standards W.3.5 and W.3.6 also address the importance of peer support and publication. Specifically, W.3.6 requires students to "...use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as interact and collaborate with others..."

The [All Write with Me](http://AllWriteWithMe.com) website provides a safe and highly monitored environment for fulfilling these requirements. As long as the material is deemed appropriate and inoffensive, students may publish any type of original writing to the site. After receiving some instruction on constructive criticism, students are encouraged to comment on each other's work, share their opinions, and offer constructive advice. This back-and-forth exchange gives students an ongoing opportunity to connect with and learn from their peers, while also allowing them to see how their writing affects others with diverse backgrounds.

Posting to the site is a straightforward process - no personal information, sign-up or registration required. However, all submissions, including comments, are carefully reviewed before appearing on the site.

Advice for Motivating Reluctant Writers

- Most reluctance comes from a stifling fear of "doing it wrong." Convince your students that all writing is worthy and accepted. To say it isn't could be devastating. After all, writing is an expression of self.
- Tell your students that writing is a great way to blow off steam or chase away a boring day by creating their own exciting worlds.
- Let students choose any words in any order they want. Emerging writers must please themselves before pleasing others. Once students firmly believe in their right to express themselves in whatever way comes naturally, they will relax and enjoy themselves.
- Whenever your students write, write something of your own. This allows you to experience the joys and frustrations together.

- Let students know you're proud of what they've written. Encourage them to be proud of it as well.
- Students who truly see the value of what they've written will be more eager and willing to share their words with others, making them more eager and willing to revise.
- Nudge your students toward deeper, more effective self-expression by suggesting they shouldn't be afraid to play with what they've written, i.e., make different versions of their work for different purposes or audiences.
- If they love what they've created and want to share it with others, tell them they may need to put in some extra work to make sure others understand and enjoy it as much as they do. It's a natural part of the process. Even best-selling authors have to revise before their writing is ready for others to fully appreciate.
- Make sure they're motivated to improve not from feelings of inadequacy but out of respect for what they've already produced.
- Tell them that writing anything meant to be shared and enjoyed by others is almost always a three-step process. First, you write for yourself, to capture your feelings. Then you revise for your readers, to build a connection and make sure they feel and understand. And then you edit, to remove and fix anything that may keep your readers from experiencing and feeling what you want them to feel and experience.

About the Common Core State Standards Initiative

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers are the sole owners and developers of the Common Core State Standards. Copyright 2010. All rights reserved. See the [official website](#) for more information.

The CCSS developers provide examples of student writing in [Appendix C](#) of the CCSS. Third grade writing samples begin on page 18.

Table of Contents

select the title to go to the section

[Applying the Standards](#)

[Rock, Blisters, Lizard](#)

[Crickets, Legends](#)

[Bubbles, Easter Egg, Worries, Play Dough](#)

[Snickers, Howard](#)

[Grandma, Stick People, Secrets](#)

[Ocean Adventures, Fishing, Decisions](#)

[Fears, Plastic Toys](#)

[Lies, Dolphins, Dirty Backpack](#)

[Ketchup, Beans, Big Bird](#)

[Tears, Messages](#)

[Favors, CNN, Flaky Skin](#)

[Summer, Water, Silver](#)

[Strangers, Hope](#)

[Waves, Lights, Lullaby](#)

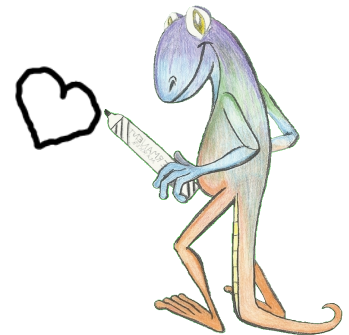
[Cat Food, Warning, Dust](#)

[Fake Headache, Hunting, Secret Place](#)

[Waterfall, Cement, Regrets, Answers](#)

[Snot, Hopoe](#)

[Moa Waterfowl](#)



Applying the Standards

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

This guide provides chapter-specific questions to stimulate students' opinions of the novel's characters and events.

Instruction and advice on writing effective opinion pieces is available on the [All Write with Me](#) website at [Writing Opinions & Arguments](#). Share this information with your students by projecting the page from your computer or printing it off and distributing it as a hand-out.

To fulfill all requirements of this standard, instruct your students to include the following in their opinion pieces:

- *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1a: Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons.*
- *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1b: Provide reasons that support the opinion.*
- *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1c: Use linking words and phrases (e.g., because, therefore, since, for example) to connect opinion and reasons.*
- *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1d: Provide a concluding statement or section.*

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Each chapter-specific section includes a list of related topics for your students to research. To allow students freedom to explore their personal interests, these topics are, in most cases, extremely general. Instruct your students to narrow these topics and research the specific aspects that interest them the most. For more on how to narrow a topic, as well as specific advice on writing informative/explanatory pieces, go to [Informative Writing](#). This link will take you to a specific instructional page located on the [All Write with Me](#) website. To share this information with your students, project the page from your computer or print it off and distribute as a hand-out.

To fulfill the requirements of this standard, instruct your students to adhere to the following when planning and writing their research papers:

- *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2a: Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.*
 - *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2b: Develop the topic with facts, definitions, and details.*
 - *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2c: Use linking words and phrases (e.g., also, another, and, more, but) to connect ideas within categories of information.*
 - *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2d: Provide a concluding statement or section.*
-

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Each chapter-specific section includes excerpts from *No Ordinary Lizard* that exemplify the narrative standards (W.3.3a through W.3.3d) listed below. After reading the example to your students, discuss how it fulfills the standard by referring to the bulleted list directly below the excerpt.

The more complex examples include a *Note* of explanation to aid students' understanding of the concept.

Students can practice what they learn by completing the related writing assignments that follow the bulleted lists. Some writing assignments include two options: *General* - ideas to get them started and *Specific* - scenarios for those students who seek additional guidance. Students can find additional prompts at the [All Write with Me](#) website on the [Story Prompts](#) page. They may also be inspired by the student writing they'll find posted on the site.

The links under the standards listed below lead to related instructional pages on the [All Write with Me](#) website. You can project these pages from your computer or print and distribute them as hand-outs.

- *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a: Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.*
 - ➔ [Plot](#)
 - ➔ [Beginning](#)
 - ➔ [Characters](#)
 - ➔ [More About Characters](#)
 - ➔ [Who's Telling the Story](#)
 - ➔ [Middle](#)
 - ➔ [Before the Story Started](#)
 - ➔ [Show the Action, Share the Response](#)

- *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b: Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.*
 - ➔ [How to Make Them Talk](#)
 - ➔ [How Your Story Feels](#)
 - ➔ [More About Characters](#)
- *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c: Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.*
 - ➔ [Middle](#)
- *CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d: Provide a sense of closure.*
 - ➔ [Ending](#)
 - ➔ [Theme](#)

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.4: With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

Select the links below to access the [All Write with Me](#) instructional pages that will assist your students in fulfilling this standard for each type of writing.

- opinion - [Writing Opinions & Arguments](#) and [Revise & Edit Opinions & Arguments](#)
- informative - [Informative Writing](#) and [Revise & Edit Informative Writing](#)
- narrative - go to [CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3, a - d](#) for links to instructional pages

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.5: With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 3.)

Specific instruction on planning, revising, and editing opinion-based writing is available on the [All Write with Me](#) site at [Writing Opinions & Arguments](#) and [Revise & Edit Opinions & Arguments](#).

Instruction for informative text is available on the [All Write with Me](#) site at [Informative Writing](#) and [Revise & Edit Informative Writing](#).

For instruction on planning narratives, direct students to the Tips section of the [All Write with Me](#) site. Links to the specific pages are provided below.

- ➔ [How to Hook Your Readers](#)
- ➔ [Before You Write](#)
- ➔ [Characters](#)

- ➔ [Plot](#)
- ➔ [Beginning](#)
- ➔ [Middle](#)
- ➔ [Ending](#)
- ➔ [Theme](#)

For explanation and instruction on revising and editing narratives, share the following pages, found under the Revise & Edit section of the site:

- ➔ [Revise and Make It Shine](#)
- ➔ [Check Your Plot](#)
- ➔ [Polish Your Words](#)

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.6: With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

All original writing will be published to the site, as long as the submission is deemed suitable and inoffensive. Students can access specific instruction on how to submit their writing by selecting the [Share Your Writing](#) tab at the top of the site.

Opportunities for peer review, critique, discussion and collaboration are provided through the [All Write with Me](#) website. Students can review and discuss writing already on the site; post their writing and receive suggestions from each other or from other users and visitors; work together on new projects they create or add to ongoing projects started by others. Instruction on how to review and comment on others' writing is included under the [Share Your Writing](#) tab.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.7: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Each chapter-specific section of this guide provides related topics for students to research. For more information on the research projects provided, refer to the description under [CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2](#).

For instruction on how to conduct research projects, go to [Informative Writing](#). This link will take you to the instructional page on the [All Write with Me](#) site.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.8: Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

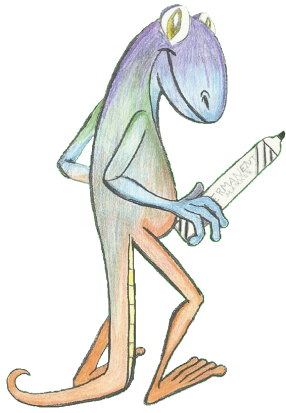
Detailed advice on how to fulfill this standard is included on the [All Write with Me](#) instructional page [Informative Writing](#).

(CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.9 begins in grade 4)

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Clear language and easy navigation make [All Write with Me](#) an ideal place for students to visit and use on their own. Each instructional page links to a related activity page which allows students to practice the techniques then post their efforts to the site for peer review. Students may also post any type and length of written material they create, as long as it's original, appropriate and inoffensive. The site's layout allows students to spend a few minutes on the site then easily pick up where they left off or stay for extended periods of time.

The site adheres to COPPA's privacy standards and all comments and posts are reviewed before appearing on the site.



Rock, Blisters, Lizard

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill the standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Do you think Jared will help Ruth figure out what's going on with the rock? Why or why not?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill the standard.

Research Topics

- parallel circuits
- cryptobiosis
- suspended animation
- sea-monkeys (brine shrimp)

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a

Introducing character: Jared

(p. 8: paragraphs 1-8)

Jared Jonesburg had always been part of my life whether I wanted him there or not - kind of like a brother, except he's actually Claire Jonesburg's cousin. Claire was my best friend. For some reason, she liked hanging out with him. I don't know why. He was way too serious to be any fun. Usually, I just wished he'd leave us alone. But that morning I couldn't wait to see him. He had unnatural intelligence and I needed someone who could explain what was going on with my rock.

Even though we made it to school before the second bell rang, I didn't see Jared anywhere. I figured he was already inside, straightening his desk or practicing his times tables or whatever it was he did before school actually started.

I couldn't talk to him during school because of all the teachers. Even back then I knew they shouldn't be involved with whatever was going on with my rock. So, after suffering through a whole day of school with the worst cold of my life, I wasn't in the best mood to hear Jared go on and on about the stupid science fair.

"What's wrong with those judges anyway?" he asked, jamming papers and books into his backpack.

I would have told him but he didn't give me a chance. He just asked another question.

"How could they pick a parallel circuit over cryptobiosis?"

I would have answered that too, except I wasn't sure about parallel circuits and had no idea what cryptobiosis was. It didn't matter though. He didn't wait for an answer to that question, either. His head disappeared inside his desk as he shuffled through more books and papers.

I figured he was too busy having his tantrum to think about my rock.

Text includes:

- Ruth's history/experience with Jared
- Ruth's opinion of Jared
- what Ruth assumes Jared is doing
- Jared's dialogue
- Jared's actions
- Jared's response to Ruth
- sets up Jared's role/purpose in the story

Writing Assignment

Introduce someone you know or a character you make up by writing about the experiences you've had (or imagine having) with that person. Include your opinions of the person or character.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using dialogue - to establish the relationship between Ruth and Jared

(p. 13: paragraphs 3 - 10)

"It doesn't feel hot." He ran his fingers over the smooth surface. "It's a great rock though. Where'd you get it?"

"It *was* hot. It burned me last night. Look." I held out my hand to show him my blistered fingers.

"Seriously? You burned your hand on a rock?" He sounded like the principal did when he'd asked if it was really possible to forget my lunch four days in a row.

"It almost burned my shirt this morning." I showed him the singe marks.

"Well, it's not hot now," Jared said, like it didn't matter anymore. "Sure is strange though. It looks like the colors are all jumbled up inside it."

"The colors swirl around in there too, like a lava lamp. Plus it was glowing turquoise before."

"Glowing?" That unbelieving tone was back in his voice again as he squinted up at me.

"And swirling." I grabbed for the rock. If he couldn't take me seriously, he didn't deserve to see it anymore.

Text includes:

- Jared's repeated questioning - shows he doesn't trust or respect Ruth
- an easily imagined situation (how a principal would likely sound if a student continued to forget her lunch) - helps readers imagine Jared's tone
- Ruth's and Jared's actions and body language (squinting, grabbing) - shows their impatience with each other

Writing Assignment

Write a conversation between two people that shows how they feel about each other. See if others can guess whether or not they like each other by what they say (or don't say).

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 11: paragraphs 2-3)

"Absolutely!" I agreed with a nod. That seemed to satisfy him. I sneezed four times in a row then followed him out of the empty room.

As soon as we were away from the school, I stripped off my backpack and set it on the ground.

Transitions used:

- *then* - shows one action following another
- *as soon as* - gets from one scene to the next without reporting everything that happened in between

Note:

It's okay to skip over details that don't affect the story or its characters. Readers are good at filling in the blanks. Besides, reporting every single thing will bore your readers. Getting from one important part of your story to the next important part is a great use of transitions.

Writing Assignment

Write about what happened to you yesterday. Use *then* and *as soon as* to get to the important or exciting points in your day. Other transitions you can use include: *after*, *before*, *later*, *next*, *finally*, *at last*. You can also use specific times, such as *at 1:30* or *by 6:00*.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of scene

(p. 6: paragraph 3)

Now that the rock was no longer buried, dancing turquoise lights splashed across every inch of my walls. Still, I was so sick that none of it mattered. All I wanted to do – all I could do – was crawl into bed. I fell back asleep before my head hit the pillow.

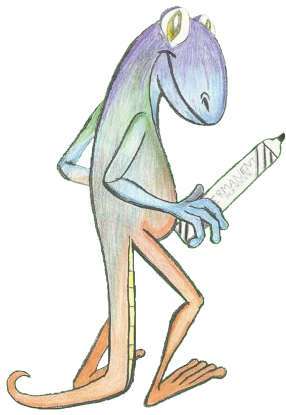
Text includes:

- *dancing turquoise lights* - gives readers something unusual and unexplained to wonder and worry about
- Ruth falls asleep - provides a natural leaving-off place since readers assume she'll be sleeping for awhile

Writing Assignment

General - Show a character in trouble then make something happen that keeps your character from getting out of the trouble he or she is in.

Specific - Show your character running for the school bus when he or she suddenly remembers the gate in the back yard isn't latched. Let readers know the family's dog is in the back yard and the school bus is about to leave. Show how your character feels about this, what your character does, and why.



Cricket's, Legends

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

How do you think Ruth feels about the various members of her family - her mom, her dad, Grandma Rose, Aunt Myk and Matt?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- what lizards eat
- Kauai, Hawaii
- Hawaiian legends/myths
- Pele, the Volcano Goddess
- Legend of the Dancing Stone

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Introducing character: Aunt Myk

(p. 15: paragraphs 1-3)

Aunt Myk moved in with us right after Uncle Richie kicked her out. Dad said the marriage was bound to fail because she got married too young. Mom said my aunt rushed into things without thinking them through.

I figured Aunt Myk was just too cool to be married. She'd been living with us for two years and she was awesome every single day. Unlike the rest of my family, she knew how to have fun.

Unfortunately, she also knew whenever I was up to something. Sneaking a real, live lizard into the house without her noticing would have been impossible.

Text includes:

- some of Aunt Myk's past
- Dad's excuses for Aunt Myk's failed marriage
- Mom's opinion of why Aunt Myk's marriage failed
- Ruth's feelings about Aunt Myk

Writing Assignment

Introduce someone by comparing how you and several other people feel about this person.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b](#)

Using dialogue - to show differences in Ruth's and Aunt Myk's responses and reactions

(p. 19: paragraph 10 - p. 20: paragraph 5)

"I met someone very special when I was in Hawaii. His name is Howard." That dreamy look washed over her face again, only this time it made a shiver creep up my back.

"Who's Howard?"

"Howard is the sweetest man I've ever met." She grabbed my hands and bounced them in her lap. "He's gentle and kind and he has a smooth, whispery voice. He lives on the island of Kauai. He paints houses but he quit early every day so he could show me around. He's so smart, Ruth, and so much fun. I spent every day with him. I've never been so happy."

I pulled my hands away from hers. My tongue felt like a wooden block, hard and too big for my mouth. I asked the question anyway.

"I bet you really miss him, huh?"

Text includes:

- Myk's dialogue - shows how she feels about Howard

- Ruth's actions and reactions - shows her concern about Myk's feelings
- Myk's positive feelings and Ruth's negative reactions - sets up possible conflict

Writing Assignment

General - Show two people arguing. Use the characters' responses to show their feelings.

Specific - Show two characters talking about what they could do together after school. One wants to play basketball. The other wants to go to the mall. Use their responses to show them getting more upset with each other.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 19: paragraph 1)

When Dad said Grandma Rose was coming for supper, what he really meant was our house wasn't clean enough and he expected me to do something about it. I was straightening couch pillows when Aunt Myk got home.

Transitions used:

- *was straightening* - tells what Ruth's been doing for some time
- *when* - introduces Myk's return which interrupts Ruth's cleaning

Writing Assignment

Write a sentence that shows someone interrupting someone else's actions. Use a verb ending in *-ing* to show ongoing action and *when* to signal the interruption.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of scene

(p. 18: paragraphs 8 - 10)

"Ruth?" Dad's voice shouted up the stairs. "Are you home?"

I gathered up the lizard and stuffed him back in my sock. Not knowing what else to do with the bologna, I stuffed that in there, too. Then I shoved the whole thing into my closet and shut the door.

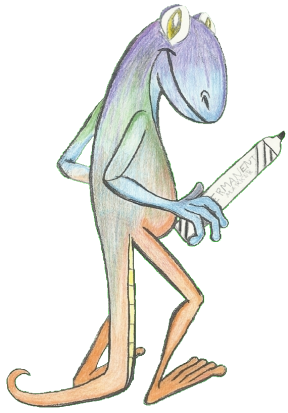
The sound of Benson's grumbling stomach followed me all the way down the stairs.

Text includes:

- an event that forces Ruth to move on to the next scene

Writing Assignment

Use a request from another character to move your main character into a new situation.



Bubbles, Easter Egg, Worries, Play Dough

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Jared worries that Ruth isn't taking proper care of Benson. Do you think he's right to be concerned? Why or why not?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- how to take care of a lizard - basic requirements
- cold-blooded animals
- warm-blooded animals
- mangoes
- CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation)
- limbic system

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a situation - something's wrong with Benson

(p. 27: paragraphs 3 - 4)

I struggled to hang on to the lizard as he scampered around on top of my shirt. A weird "huh huh huh" noise erupted from deep inside his throat. It sounded like laughter until it ended with a horrible hiccup. His front legs clutched his stomach and before I knew it, he was falling backwards, toppling toward the ground. I lunged for his tail and scooped him up with my other hand. His eyes were spinning and a stream of conditioner was leaking from his mouth.

~ ~ ~

I whisked Benson into my room, slammed the door and set him on my bed. He clutched his stomach again and curled into a ball. I think he may have moaned a bit but I couldn't be sure. His stomach was growling so loud it was hard to hear anything else.

Text includes:

- Benson's actions - allows readers to determine something's wrong without specifically telling them
- Benson's appearance - allows readers to determine something's wrong without specifically telling them

Note:

Describing a situation is more effective than telling readers exactly what's going on because this makes readers think. If readers have to think about the story in order to figure out what's going on, they become actively involved. Their involvement makes them more affected by the story. Being affected by a story is the number one reason readers can't stop reading!

Writing Assignment

General - Make readers realize something's wrong by describing a situation. Describe what your character sees or how your character acts, but don't tell readers what's going on.

Specific - Your character is excited about performing the lead role in the school play. But when he or she steps onto the stage, stage fright sets in. Without telling your readers it's stage fright, describe what your character is going through, starting out with general uneasiness and working up to symptoms severe enough to make him or her run off the stage.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using dialogue - to show Jared's concern leading Ruth to worry

(p. 30: paragraphs 2-9)

"How many crickets did he eat? Did you feed him again this morning before you left?"

By this point, I was a little tired of Jared, so I walked faster toward my room.

"He doesn't like crickets."

"Are you sure? Almost all lizards like crickets. Especially small ones like yours." Jared stopped to scratch his head and readjust his honkin' big glasses. I kept going.

He pulled on my arm. "So what'd you feed him?"

I spun around. "He wouldn't eat the crickets, okay? I know he's supposed to but he doesn't like them. All he wanted was my shampoo and conditioner. And salt. He likes that."

"What? You can't feed him that stuff. You could have killed him!"

"I didn't feed it to him. He did it all by himself." Well, except for the salt. But I wasn't about to tell Jared that. I didn't feel quite so proud of it anymore.

Text includes:

- Jared's continuous questions, body language and actions - shows his growing concern
- Ruth's attempt to leave - shows her wish to ignore his concern
- Ruth's inner thoughts - shows her sinking feeling that maybe he's right

Writing Assignment

General - Use dialogue and body language to show one person's concern making another person become worried.

Specific - One character tells another character there's something wrong with the pool's diving board and begins listing reasons why he or she thinks so. The second character has been trying to work up enough nerve to jump off the board all summer long. Finally feeling brave enough, this second character doesn't want to believe there's anything wrong with the board but starts to worry that the first character may be right.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 28: paragraphs 8-10)

I grinned as I watched him settle into sleep. Google hadn't said a thing about salt. I'd figured it out all on my own. And I felt proud.

Of course, Jared ruined it the very next morning.

~ ~ ~

"You were supposed to call me last night," Jared said as soon as he pushed through all the kids surrounding the school doors.

Transitions used:

- *the very next morning* - establishes the time of the new scene
- *last night* - establishes the time of the previous scene, linking the two scenes together
- *as soon as* - what Jared is doing right now
- *surrounding the school doors* - shows school hasn't started yet

Writing Assignment

Link two different events together by telling when each event occurred or by telling how much time occurred in between.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d](#)

Conclusion of scene

(p. 30: paragraphs 10 - 11)

Afraid I might yell or cry or do something else stupid, I was relieved to hear the second bell. Jared rushed down the hall toward his room as I dragged myself into class.

I spent the rest of the day worrying about Benson.

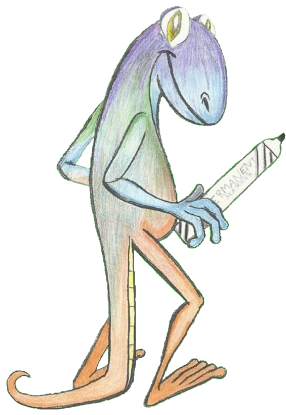
Text includes:

- one sentence that covers hours - Ruth doesn't share what happened during the rest of the school day because nothing matters to her now except getting home

Writing Assignment

General - Write about a situation or event then end it by sharing how the event makes your character feel.

Specific - Someone has just scored the winning point in the game. Describe how this point was scored then end the scene by describing how the character felt the rest of the night.



Snickers, Howard

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Do you think it would be fun or scary to have Benson hidden in your room? Why?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- Is there anything in cat food that might harm a lizard?
- Is there anything poisonous to a lizard in salt, hair conditioner, shampoo, play dough or sun tan lotion?
- natural habitats of lizards
- native people of Hawaii

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a

Introducing character: Howard

(p. 37: paragraph 10 - p. 39: paragraph 2)

"Hello, Ruth. I'm so happy to meet you." Howard leaned in toward my face and whispered, "Aikane means good friend. It's Hawaiian." He held out his hand but I didn't take it. He looked at Myk like he didn't quite know what to do next. I guess he couldn't think of anything good because he pointed at my cap and grinned like an idiot. "Bad hair day?"

I lifted my chin and crossed my arms. "There's nothing wrong with my hair. Is there something wrong with your cheeks?" They'd turned as red as a bottle of ketchup.

Aunt Myk broke in, sounding just as bright and breezy as ever. "We wouldn't even recognize Ruth without her baseball caps. They're very special to her and part of what makes her special to us."

Apparently being around Howard made my aunt sound like an obnoxiously sweet preschool teacher. I felt like I was four years old.

It was time to take control. "So," I said, aiming a smile at Howard, "when will you be leaving?"

"Ruth!" Aunt Myk's right hand swung around to slug my arm while her left hand reached out to grab Howard's wrist.

"Oh, I'm sorry," I said, even though I wasn't. "I bet that sounded rude, didn't it? I was just, well, I just..." I blinked at Aunt Myk, pretending to hold back a few gallons of tears. "You said we'd go rollerskating, remember? I thought you meant this weekend and I was really looking forward to it, but well, now I guess we can't, can we?"

"Rollerskating!" Howard said, like I'd just offered to fly him to the moon. "I haven't been rollerskating in years." He grinned at Myk. "Used to be pretty good, too."

"Real men don't rollerskate," I told him, because Uncle Richie had made that perfectly clear, years ago.

"Ruth – " Aunt Myk started but Howard cut her off.

"This real man does," he said. "How about we all go?"

Text includes:

- Howard's dialogue
- Howard's actions
- Howard's treatment of Ruth
- Aunt Myk's response to Howard
- Ruth's reaction to Aunt Myk's response
- Ruth's treatment of Howard
- Howard's response to the way Ruth treats him

Writing Assignment

Write a conversation that shows one character hating another character for no good reason.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using description - to show Benson's response to the sand

(p. 35: paragraph 7)

"He's doing it." I pointed at Benson as he rolled in the sand, spurring out more giggles. He landed back on all four legs, grabbed some sand and threw it over his head. Stretching his mouth wide open, he unfurled his tongue and caught the sand in his mouth, like a kid caught in a snowstorm. He continued to giggle.

Text includes:

- Compares Benson's actions in the sand with a happily playing kid - helps readers figure out the unknown (how Benson feels about sand) by comparing it to something known (how a kid feels about playing in the snow)

Note:

Because readers would be unsure of a lizard's feelings, Ruth compares his reaction to a kid in a snowstorm. Since this is something most of us have done (or at least seen others do on TV), readers can easily assume how Benson feels without being told. A highly relatable comparison may even trigger a memory in readers, making them feel the same thing the character is feeling. That's another reason why showing is more effective than telling.

Writing Assignment

Describe a character's reaction by comparing the character to something others will be familiar with and may have strong memories about.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 34: paragraph 9)

By the time Jared came back, I **had done** some major work. Normally I kept most of my junk in two cardboard boxes at the bottom of my closet, but **I'd moved** everything into one box. Because it was heaping full, I **had shoved** it to the back and thrown some old clothes over the top, hoping Mom wouldn't notice. **I'd slid** my bed further down the wall and turned the other cardboard box upside down, on the far side of my bed, right next to the wall. Then **I'd covered** the box with a pink and purple baby blanket Mom **had made** before I was born. I knew it'd probably get her attention, but sometimes the best way to hide something is to draw attention to it. Less suspicious that way. Besides, it looked nice. By the time I moved the light off my desk and put it on the cardboard box, along with the library book I was supposed to be reading for a book report, it looked a lot like a bed-side table. We could slip the aquarium under the empty box and no one would ever know it was there.

Transitions used:

- *by the time* - establishes time has passed since the last scene. Sharing everything Ruth has done within that time gives readers some idea of how much time has gone by.

Note:

The things Ruth did while waiting for Jared are reported as if she did them before the next active scene (when Jared returns). Think of this as the past before the current, active past in the story, or more simply, the past-past. For events that occur outside of the actual story, or events that are reported after they've happened (as if the reader wasn't there to experience them moment-by-moment), or events that occurred before the story starts, writers use the past perfect, or past participle, verb form (highlighted in the above example). A more detailed explanation of using the past participle, as well as a list of irregular past participles, can be found on the [All Write with Me](#) website at [Before the Story Started](#).

Writing Assignment

Use *by the time* to share what a character has already done. To show these things happened in the past-past, use past participles for your verbs.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d](#)

Conclusion of chapter

(p. 40: paragraphs 3 - 5)

"All right," Myk said. "Here's what we're going to do. I'm going to take Howard for a walk around the neighborhood. When we get back, we'll do this again. And then, my favorite, fun niece will act like my favorite, fun niece. We'll see you when we get back."

I slumped against the wall as I watched them go.

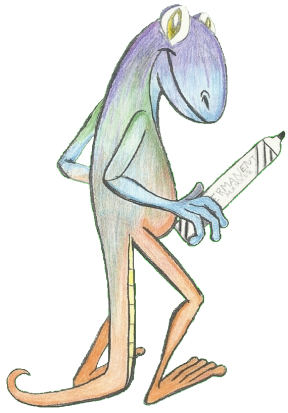
Getting rid of Howard was going to be a lot harder than I'd thought.

Text includes:

- Aunt Myk and Howard leave - ending the current scene before the problem (getting rid of Howard) is solved
- Ruth's thought - shows Ruth isn't giving up, inviting readers to turn the page and find out how she's going to fix the problem

Writing Assignment

Show characters leaving then have someone mention an unresolved problem.



Grandma, Stick People, Secrets

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

What do you think Jared sees when he enters the house at the end of the chapter?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- aliens
- secret government agents
- famous government cover-ups
- moon walk
- E.T., the movie
- famous drawing chimps - Congo, Nanni, Baltimore Betsy, Kokomo, Cheeta
 - Just for fun:
 - [youtube of a chimp using a pen and making marks](#)
 - [article on famous drawing chimps](#)

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Introducing character: Grandma

(p. 41: paragraph 2 - p. 42: paragraph 6)

Before I got there, I heard Grandma Rose say, "Channel 47, if you don't mind." And just like that, the theme from *Alien Avenger* came barreling out of the living room.

"Ahh, you can't be serious!" Howard said, sounding disgusted. "This show is a load of garbage."

It was such a perfectly horrible thing for him to say that I couldn't resist seeing Grandma's reaction. I strolled into the room.

Grandma was giving Howard her Look. Grandma's Look brought most people to their knees. I'd seen it happen to everyone in my family. I had nightmares about it myself.

Howard didn't survive it, either. He nearly fell out of his chair.

"And what, may I ask," Grandma said through her puckered up lips, "do you find so appalling about *Alien Avenger*?"

The alien avenger, Secret Government Agent Colin Swinner, solved crimes no one else even knew about. All his cases involved alien life forms and the aliens were always angry, ugly, and deadly. Grandma Rose was a huge fan. She never missed an episode.

"I didn't say it was appalling," Howard said, repositioning himself into the chair. "I'm sure a lot of people find it very entertaining. It's just that some people have trouble separating reality from entertainment. And shows like this make some of them distrust our government."

I fought so hard to keep from cracking up that I swallowed my gum. If anyone had asked me what I hoped Howard would say, I couldn't have come up with anything better. Or worse, depending on whose side you were on.

Grandma's eyes settled on Howard as she leaned back against the couch. "So you believe we can trust our government."

"Of course," Howard said then squinted at her. "Please don't tell me you're one of those crazy types who believe in government cover-ups and secret agencies."

I had to bite my knuckle to keep quiet after that. Because Grandma was definitely one of those crazy types. In fact, she had spent a lot of time protesting against the government when she was younger. And she was very proud of it, too.

"You think our government tells us everything we need to know." Grandma's mouth pulled into something like a smile, but I knew she didn't really mean it. "No hidden secrets, no classified information that would scare normal people half to death if only they knew all the things our government is involved in."

Text includes:

- what upsets Grandma
- the power of Grandma's Look
- what Grandma likes
- Grandma's response to Howard
- some of Grandma's past
- Grandma's dialogue

Writing Assignment

Introduce a family member by describing what he or she is involved in and cares about

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using description - to show Benson's response to Ruth's frustration

(p. 45: paragraphs 4-7)

"What are you doing!" I didn't mean to yell but I couldn't help it. He'd made a dark blue slash across one of the palest yellow squares in my quilt. I doubted it would ever come out. Mom was going to be furious, especially since she'd just warned me about working on my bed.

Benson ducked his head and turned the color of chocolate ice cream.

"Okay, okay. I shouldn't have yelled like that. Here." I put a sheet of paper next to him and pointed. "Do it here."

Benson cocked his head. He wasn't quite so brown anymore.

Text includes:

- The position of Benson's head and his darkening color - shows he's upset
- These same things also show when he's feeling better

Writing Assignment

Describe two things about a character that show the character's mood. Describe a change in these two things to show when and how your character's mood changes.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p 46: paragraph 10 to p. 47: paragraph 2)

Since that's about all I can draw, I switched to numbers and then letters and then names. Benson drew them all, humming and grinning and pushing the paper forward with his nose until I drew more.

Forty-five minutes later, I started seeing double and my eyelids were so heavy it hurt to pull them back up. I had to put Benson back in his aquarium but I scratched his chin until my finger grew too tired to follow my brain's directions.

Transitions used:

- *then* - repeated use gives the impression of many drawn items over a period of time
- *forty-five minutes later* - provides exactly how much time Ruth has spent drawing with Benson
- *until* - lets readers know she scratched his chin for a long time

Writing Assignment

Give the impression of an activity lasting a long time by repeating words and providing lists of nouns and actions.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of scene

(p. 47: paragraph 3)

That's when I realized my map still wasn't done. As I drifted off to sleep, I wondered what Mrs. Henson would say if I told her I hadn't finished because I was teaching my lizard how to write his name.

Text includes:

- Abandoning first goal (finishing homework) in favor of completing new, unexpected goal (teaching Benson how to write his name)

Conclusion of chapter

(p. 50: paragraphs 2 - 3)

"What did you *do*?" he asked in a tone filled with wonder. Since he hadn't even entered the house yet, I figured he was being sarcastic. I shoved him out of the way and headed in.

My heart dropped down to my tennis shoes.

Text includes:

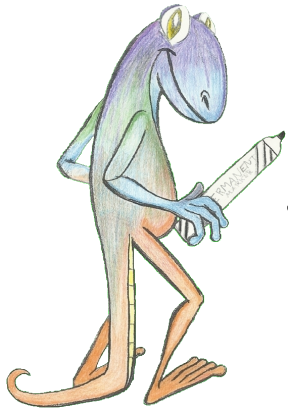
- Ruth's last reaction - creates curiosity and concern, inviting readers to turn the page to see what caused it

Writing Assignment

Show a character giving up one goal to complete another one

or

Set up a surprising, unexpected reaction to an unknown event



Ocean Adventures, Fishing, Decisions

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Do you think Ruth should tell anyone else about Benson? Why or why not? If so, whom should she tell? Support your choice with what you've learned about your chosen character so far.

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- baseball
- Jacques Cousteau
- oceanographers
- fishing
- moods and colors

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a situation - what's been going on and Ruth's growing frustration

(p. 54: paragraph 11 - p. 55: paragraph 11)

"You know what the worst part was? Explaining why I drew all over the walls and furniture when most three-year-olds have more sense than that." I jiggled the fishing line lying next to me then tossed a flat stone into the lake. It skipped five times. A few weeks ago I would have felt proud. Now all I could do was sigh.

Jared tossed in a rock, too. It only skipped twice. "What'd you tell them?"

"I told them I was cracking under the pressure of fifth-grade homework."

"Did they believe you?"

"I don't know." I pulled in my line to try a different lure. "I think in a weird way they wanted to believe it. Mom said she was glad I was finally taking school more seriously."

Jared shook his head. Mine had begun to itch so I gave it a slight tap and yanked my cap down tighter.

"Did you just hit yourself in the head?" Jared squinted at me. "Are you sure you're okay?"

"I've got Benson in there."

"Under your cap?"

"Well, I couldn't leave him home alone, could I?" I picked up a stick and dug into the sand. "Anyway, I'm grounded until I finish repainting the living room and kitchen. Plus I had to buy the paint with my allowance." I felt Benson's foot scoot out from under my cap. I pulled the cap down further.

"You really ought to take him out of there. He's going to get all tangled up in your hair."

By this point, I didn't really care what happened to him. But I took off my cap and turned Benson loose on the ground. He hummed while he rolled around, kicking up sand with all four legs. He buried himself in less than twenty seconds.

Text includes:

- Ruth's conversation with Jared - establishes what Ruth's been doing
- Ruth's responses to Benson's actions - shows her growing impatience and frustration with him
- Benson's and Jared's responses to Ruth - shows their total disregard of her situation

Writing Assignment

General - Use a character's actions to establish the character's mood

Specific - Your character didn't get any of the birthday presents he or she asked for. Instead, these gifts were given to his or her twin. Show how your character responds to this through his or her actions after the presents are opened.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using description - to show Benson's mood

(p. 53: paragraphs 6-8)

Anyway, the TV was on and Benson kept pressing on the remote until Cousteau's voice was loud enough to shatter glass. A school of sharks surrounded some guy in a wetsuit (probably Jim). Benson turned lemon-drop yellow and sprang through the air. Landing on the screen and clinging to the glass, he pressed his nose against the belly of a shark.

"What's he doing? How come he's yellow?" Jared yelled.

I grabbed the remote and turned down the volume. "I think he's yellow because he likes it."

Text includes:

- Benson's changing color - shows his mood

Writing Assignment

Use colors to show or develop moods

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 53: paragraph 3)

I checked each room as I ran by. I didn't see any more drawings but I did find the markers on my bed. They were all capped and lying in a nice straight line, from darkest to brightest. My lamp was tipped over and the baby blanket was crumpled around it.

Transitions used:

- *as I ran by* - gives impression of continuous action while allowing Ruth to report what she sees as she's running

Writing Assignment

Use *as* to show your character doing something while describing what he or she sees

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of scene

(p. 54: paragraphs 6 - 10)

"You've got to help me," I told Jared. "I'll take care of Snickers but we've both got to scrub."

Jared rubbed at his eyes and then he nodded. I guess there wasn't any fight left in him, either. "I'll go put Benson back," he said. "But we've only got an hour now. You know there's no way we're going to get everything cleaned up, don't you?"

"I know."

"I'm never going to find a lizard like Benson on the internet, am I?"

I yanked another fork from Snickers' fur. "If you do, I wouldn't recommend getting one. They make lousy pets."

Text includes:

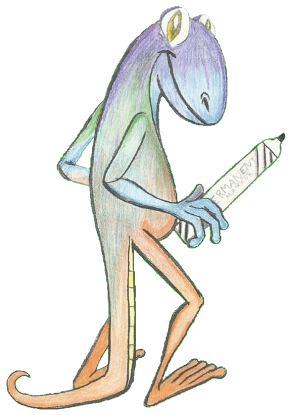
- Jared's dialogue - lets readers know Jared and Ruth will run out of time and that Ruth isn't going to get away with this
- Ruth's statement of the obvious - she wouldn't recommend owning a lizard like Benson

Note:

Once you've clearly shown or established the trouble in your story, downplaying it can actually give the situation more weight. It can also make your readers laugh. Having your characters poke fun at the trouble surrounding them can be an effective way to ease some tension and end a scene.

Writing Assignment

Write a conversation between two characters poking fun at some trouble they're in.



Fears, Plastic Toys

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Which character from the story most closely matches how you feel about Howard? Compare and contrast how this character feels and reacts to Howard with the way you feel and would react to Howard if you met him.

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- sports injuries
- hyenas
- fear of heights
- phobias
- chameleons
- lava

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a character - learning more about Howard

(p. 65: paragraphs 2 - 8)

"I didn't know you had an alien collection," Howard said. "I thought I was the only one."

"You collect aliens?" asked Matt, all wide-eyed, stupid-looking.

"Ever since I was about your age. I loved those little guys. I got most of them from my grandma."

"Me too!" Matt said, practically jumping out of his chair. "How many do you have?"

"Thirty-three."

"Thirty-three! That's a ton!"

"I wanted every kind there was," Howard said. "I thought if I had one that looked just right, real aliens would come to my house and rescue it. I used to line them up in my window, stay up late and wait for them to come."

Text includes:

- Howard's boyhood memories - tells readers a little more about him

Writing Assignment

Make up a childhood memory for an adult in your life.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b](#)

Using dialogue and description - to show several characters' emotions in one scene

(p. 65: paragraphs 9-15)

"Oh my gosh!" Matt said. "I do that, too! Grandma, did you hear that? Howard's just like me!"

Grandma nodded at Matt then smiled at Howard. Aunt Myk reached for Howard's hand.

Every one of them was making me sick.

"If you can't find your collection," Howard said, "I'll give you mine."

Mom and Dad shared a smile. Matt's face stretched into a hideously large grin.

"Goodness, Howard," Grandma said, "that's very kind of you."

"Isn't it!" Aunt Myk agreed. She sounded like Howard had just offered Matt one of his kidneys.

Text includes:

- Matt's dialogue - shows his excitement and connection with Howard
- Grandma's response and reaction - shows her positive feelings toward Howard
- Aunt Myk's reaction - shows her positive feelings toward Howard
- Howard's response - shows his generosity
- Mom's and Dad's response to Howard's offer - shows their positive feelings toward Howard
- Ruth's thoughts regarding Aunt Myk's response - establishes how much she disagrees with everyone's positive response

Writing Assignment

Assign different emotions to a group of characters then show them talking and responding to each other. See if others can guess the emotion of each of your characters.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 60: paragraphs 1 - 5)

"Would you please just stay put?" I readjusted my cap with my paint-smeared hand while lizard feet clawed into my skull.

Stupid lizard. I had to keep him with me constantly now. Storing him under my cap was the only place I could think of to hide him.

I still had no idea how he kept getting out of the aquarium. The lid clipped down on the outside. He shouldn't be able to remove it from the inside.

Then again, he shouldn't be able to attach silverware to an angry cat's fur with dental floss, either. This was no ordinary lizard. No ordinary aquarium would keep him from doing what he wanted.

I dabbed more paint on my brush and attacked another wall. If life was fair, I'd have been at Matt's baseball game. Instead, I was stuck here, repainting almost the whole house by myself. Aunt Myk usually helped when my parents weren't around. But not this time. She had to get ready for Howard.

Transitions used:

- *while* - shows two actions occurring at the same time
- *constantly.... storing* - shows ongoing action while also hinting that it's been going on for some time before this scene takes place
- *usually* - hints at the current activity having taken place many times before

Note:

This scene shows Ruth actively painting but since this is a task with little excitement, it gives Ruth time to think about (and tell readers) what's been going on since the last active scene. Writers use transitional scenes like this to cover the time between active moments. It keeps readers aware of what's going on without boring them with unexciting or unnecessary details.

Writing Assignment

Show a character actively doing some routine task while thinking about a past event.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of chapter

(p. 69: paragraphs 2 - 5)

"Anyway," Aunt Myk continued, "When Howard goes home tomorrow, I'm... I'm going with him."

What? What? How could she, why would she –

"We're getting married."

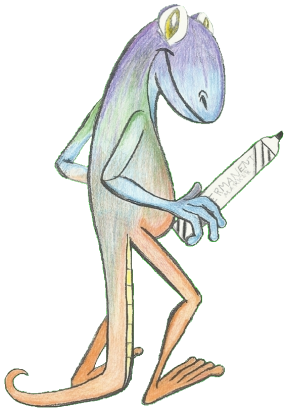
WHAT??

Text includes:

- Aunt Myk's unexpected announcement - takes the story in a new direction
- Ruth's reaction - shows how troubling this news is to Ruth

Writing Assignment

Think of a shocking announcement. Have one character deliver the announcement then show another character reacting to the news.



Lies, Dolphins, Dirty Backpack

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Do you think Ruth has a right to be upset about Aunt Myk leaving? Why or why not?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- marriage
- dolphins
- seagulls
- pelicans

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a character - learning more about Benson

(p. 74: paragraph 7)

He'd been there, though. He'd been busy, too. There was a smashed-up tube of suntan lotion, a couple pieces of dried-up, orange play dough and the cover of a Jacques Cousteau DVD. There was also a pile of broken seashells he'd gotten from the basket downstairs and the postcard Aunt Myk had sent from Hawaii. He'd piled strings of dental floss, three of my blue socks, and five large dice against the back wall. Over in the other corner several members of Matt's alien collection were lying on a couple of bologna slices. The rest of the aliens were lined up, biggest to smallest, around an empty bottle of dishwashing soap.

Text includes:

- Benson's collection - shows Benson's interests

Writing Assignment

Show what a character is like by describing things in the character's room or backpack.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b](#)

Using description - to create a quiet mood and show Benson's response to Ruth's feelings

(p 75: paragraphs 2-3)

Without saying a word, I sat next to Benson. I tucked my legs up close and pulled my nightgown over my knees. Benson greeted me with a soft hum then climbed onto my lap. We watched the dolphins and the seagulls and the pelicans as Jacques' voice droned quietly on. Benson wrapped his front claws around my thumb and leaned against my chest as the blues and greens from the ocean lit up his face. When he started humming again, I knew he thought it was beautiful, too.

"But it's so far away." A tear splashed down my chin. We continued to watch the ocean waves while Benson's tongue licked away my tears.

Text includes:

- *without saying a word... close... nightgown... soft hum... lap... droned* - creates a quiet mood
- Benson holding Ruth's thumb and leaning against her - shows their closeness
- Ruth crying as she looks at the ocean - shows the DVD reminds her how far away Aunt Myk will be
- Benson licking away her tears - shows he's trying to make her feel better

Writing Assignment

Show two characters caring about each other. They can be friends, family members or animals.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 70: paragraphs 3 - 6)

"Of course I like Howard," Grandma sputtered. "I liked Richie, too. But you didn't know him well enough to marry him! And now you're about to do it again. Didn't you learn anything from your first marriage? What is wrong with you? Why don't you think before you rush into things?"

That's right, I thought. Let her have it, Grandma Rose.

Then I remembered Mom yelling the very same thing at me.

I was only eight at the time. I'd been climbing the huge old willow tree in our backyard when Mom rushed out the door. I'll never forget the way her face twisted when she yelled up, "What is wrong with you? Why don't you think before you rush into things?" But I hadn't rushed; I'd been very careful, testing every step. I'd wanted to reach the top but I hadn't wanted to fall. I wasn't stupid.

Transitions used:

- *at the time* - establishes this event happened before the story started

Writing Assignment

Use *at the time* to describe something that happened when you were younger.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of scene

(p. 73: paragraphs 6 - 7)

Grandma shifted her feet closer to me and squeezed my forearm with cold, iron claws. "She doesn't have to go if she doesn't want to. She'll stay here with me."

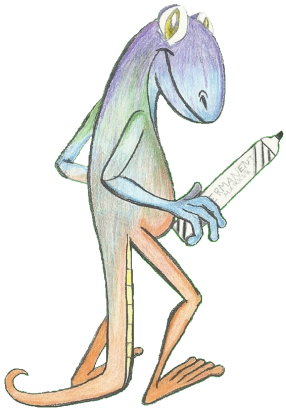
No one in my family argued with Grandma. I would not be going to Hawaii. Even if a part of me wanted to go.

Text includes:

- Ruth isn't going to Hawaii - tells readers the result of the scene
- Ruth's feelings about it - shows the result isn't positive

Writing Assignment

Rewrite the end of this scene showing Ruth changing her mind and arguing with Grandma about it. Include how this new ending makes Ruth feel.



Ketchup, Beans, Big Bird

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Is Ruth better off taking Benson to school or leaving him home alone?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- horseshoes
- bullying
- Why do beans cause gas?
- bowling
- Sesame Street
- Zoom
- PBS
- cameras

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a situation - Ruth's past experiences with Megan explain her present temptation

(p. 82: paragraph 2 - p. 83: paragraph 2)

Megan Harte moved to Iowa City in the middle of second grade. She came to school that first day with pink and purple ribbons woven through her French braids and a silver charm bracelet that tinkled up and down her arm whenever she waved it. And she waved it a lot. She also smiled a lot and giggled a lot and whispered a lot. By the end of the day everyone loved her. And she seemed to love everyone. Except me.

I don't know why she had it in for me. Maybe she just loved to tell short jokes. She knew a ton of them. Or maybe she didn't think girls should wear baseball caps. She told me that often enough. Or maybe she just wanted Claire to be her best friend. She certainly tried to make Claire like her best.

She almost succeeded, too. Within two days Claire was swept away by Megan's constant smile. Every time I asked Claire to come over, she already had plans with Megan. She sat next to Megan at lunch and they giggled together at recess. For almost two months. It was awful.

Then one day after school Colin Stingley pushed Jared. Jared's glasses flew off his head and skidded across the pavement. Wearing a big, evil grin, Colin marched right over to where the glasses landed and stomped them into tiny bits with his big ugly snow boot.

While Megan giggled behind her purple mitten, I ran over to Colin and smashed my blue glove right into his face.

I got blood on my glove, a two-day suspension from school, and grounded for three weeks. I also got Claire's friendship back. Claire said she couldn't be friends with someone who stood there and laughed while her cousin got picked on.

After that, Megan gave up on Claire but hated me even more. She laughed at my clothes if she didn't like them (nearly every day) and announced whenever I got an answer wrong (nearly every class) and told anyone who would listen when I got in trouble (more often than I care to admit). And she'd been doing all of that almost every day since second grade.

Text includes:

- description of Megan - helps readers visualize the type of person she is
- how Megan treats Ruth - sets her up as an enemy
- history between Megan and Ruth's best friend, Claire - confirms Megan as an enemy
- why Claire chose Ruth over Megan - shows the difference between Ruth and Megan
- how often and for how long Megan's been mean to Ruth - explains why Ruth is tempted to put Benson on Megan's tray

Writing Assignment

Make up something that happened between two people that would explain why they feel the way they do about each other.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using description - to show Ruth's mood through the rhythm of her actions

(p. 87: paragraph 4)

Two words floated through my head as I tossed some soapslimed books onto the shelf. *Give up.* I gathered more slippery books off the bed. Piled them on top of the others. Threw the empty suntan lotion bottle into my garbage can. Covered it up with some old homework papers. Put the leaking soap dispenser on my desk. Winced at how light it felt. Grabbed some more books which smelled like coconut and reminded me of swimming pools. And then my heart dropped down to my toes and clunked across the floor.

Text includes:

- Ruth's thoughts - shows she's had enough
- a list of things Ruth does to fix the mess Benson has made - shows she's numb to the situation and just going through the motions with not much feeling
- Ruth's sudden reaction to something unknown - takes the story in a new direction

Note:

The middle of this paragraph repeats, starting each sentence with an action verb. This simple structure reflects the dull way Ruth takes care of the problem. It's designed to help readers see Ruth plodding along. This sameness gives more weight to the last sentence, when Ruth finally responds to something.

Writing Assignment

Show a character feeling bad by describing his or her dull, lifeless actions.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 82: paragraph 4)

She almost succeeded, too. Within two days Claire was swept away by Megan's constant smile. Every time I asked Claire to come over, she already had plans with Megan. She sat next to Megan at lunch and they giggled together at recess. For almost two months. It was awful.

Transitions used:

- *within two days* - shows length of time
- *every time* - shows repeating action
- *for almost two months* - shows how long this situation went on

Writing Assignment

Describe a past event, using each of the transitions above to move through time.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of scene

(p. 81: paragraphs 7 - 8)

All in all, it wasn't the worst punishment I'd ever received from Mr. Jefferson. I didn't think I'd miss recess that much. When you're in fifth grade there isn't a whole lot to do during recess anyway but stand around and talk about the other kids. Besides, not having to take Benson outside seemed like more of a relief than a punishment.

Nope, not a bad punishment at all. Until I had to serve lunch to Megan Harte.

Text includes:

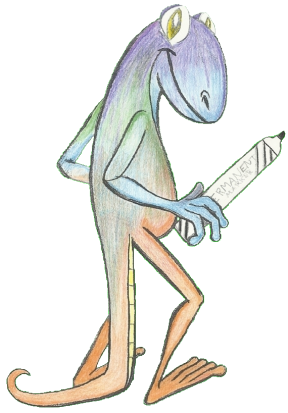
- how Ruth feels about her punishment and why
- a new situation - serving lunch to Megan
- *until* - hints that this situation will change Ruth's feelings about her punishment

Note:

Ending a scene with a new, unexpected twist makes readers curious about what's going to happen next. Making them curious is a great way to get them to keep reading.

Writing Assignment

Describe how a character feels about summer vacation then use *until* to announce an unexpected situation or event that would change how your character feels.



Tears, Messages

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

How would you convince Benson that he needs to stay in the aquarium when Ruth's not around?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- communicating with animals
- dormancy; dormant
- space travel
- Could a dormant egg travel through space?
- meteors

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a

Establishing a character - why Ruth has kept taking care of Benson

(p. 89: paragraphs 1-2)

The words, *give up*, banged against the sides of my skull. I should just let Jared have this rotten reptile and be done with it.

I thought I could handle taking care of a pet. I thought it might prove something to someone, although I didn't know who. Jared, maybe, though I didn't care what he thought. Mom, possibly, but she didn't even know I had a pet. Myself, probably, but this went way beyond anything I should ever expect of myself. This was, quite possibly, a life-time commitment to a varmint. Why did it even matter?

Text includes:

- Ruth's desire to give up
- why Ruth wanted to prove she could care for Benson

Writing Assignment

General - Write the thoughts of a character who wishes he or she could do something that he or she isn't able to do.

Specific - Think about a time when you were disappointed. Write down everything you were feeling at that time.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using description and dialogue - to show Ruth's and Jared's responses to each other's news

(p. 94: paragraphs 3-7)

I leaned against my wall and yelled back at him. "You won't believe what Benson can do!"

Jared laughed so loud I had to hold the phone away or risk a broken ear drum. "Oh, yes I will. I'll believe anything you tell me. I just watched a report on CNN about some Polynesian guy. His hut got crushed by a meteorite. They said a bunch of meteors have been falling into the Pacific Ocean. The guy said - "

"I can't stay on the phone. I'm grounded, remember? Matthew will be home any minute, so you've got to shut up and listen. It's about Benson - "

"So is this! They showed the meteorite that crushed his hut. It looks exactly like your rock."

"My rock?" I slid down the wall until my butt hit the floor. It was 4:33.

Text includes:

- what Ruth yells at Jared - shows her excitement
- Jared's response - shows his excitement
- Jared's description of what he saw on TV - builds the importance of his announcement
- Ruth's response - shows her shock

Writing Assignment

Show two characters trying to tell each other something when neither one is listening.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 91: paragraphs 3-6)

I glanced at the clock. It was 4:10. Matt would be home in 30 minutes, maybe less.

"Okay, Benson. We don't have much time. When Matthew gets home you'll have to go back in your aquarium, so let's try to do this fast. First of all, what kind of lizard are you?"

Benson jammed the pen into the paper and started weaving it back and forth. I watched the letters form under his toes: *What is akwaireum?*

I grabbed the green Mouse cap off my bedpost and cranked it down on my head. This was going to take awhile. I wasn't sure I had the patience.

(p. 93: paragraph 3)

I glanced at the clock. 4:18. I wracked my brain, trying to remember *Charlotte's Web*. I wasn't good under pressure. It'd been over a year since I read that book, but Benson must have read it today. Could I use that story to help Benson understand? 4:19 and still not sure, but it was all I had.

(p. 93: paragraph 8)

I was still clapping when the phone rang. I ran to my parents' room and checked the Caller ID on their phone. Jared. It was 4:31. Matt would be here soon. He was probably on his way. But I really wanted to talk to Jared.

(p. 94: paragraph 7)

"My rock?" I slid down the wall until my butt hit the floor. It was 4:33.

(p. 95: paragraph 10)

A door banged. My eyes flew to the clock. Matthew.

Transitions used

- exact time - builds concern, worry and stress

Note:

Most readers know how stressful it can be to run out of time. That's why putting your character under a tight deadline makes readers worry. It's called a "ticking time bomb" and it's a great way to keep your readers on the edge of their seats. Being worried about a character is another reason readers keep reading. If they care enough about your characters, they won't be able to leave them in a bad situation.

Writing Assignment

General - Think of something your character has to do in a certain amount of time. Keep mentioning how much time has passed as your character works to achieve the goal.

Specific - Your character had a fight with a friend. The friend is leaving for a two-week vacation right after school and your character wants to apologize before the friend leaves. The only time your character will see the friend is at recess but the teacher has said your character must finish an assignment first.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of scene

(p. 90: paragraphs 5 - 7)

He shook a piece of notebook paper in front of my face before laying it carefully on my lap. My eyes were so clogged with tears the paper was nothing but a white rectangle with blurry edges. Trying to gain some control, I dragged my hand across my face and looked at the paper.

The words, *Why cry* were scrawled across it in blue ink.

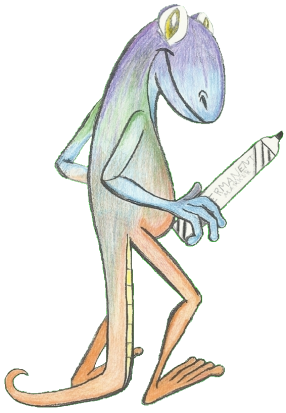
And Benson held the pen between his toes.

Text includes:

- surprising information at the very end without further explanation

Writing Assignment

Write about a normal, everyday event then end with something unexpected and surprising.



Favors, CMN, Flaky Skin

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Why do you think Benson feels scallier? What do you think is growing under his legs?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- mean lizards
- witches
- rattle snakes
- Polynesian
- outer space
- lizard eggs
- webbed feet
- Why do lizards shed their skin?

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a situation - new concerns about Benson

(p. 105: paragraphs 2-6)

After awhile I realized Benson's skin felt scallier than it had the day before. Even his toes, which had been smooth and shiny, were now flaky and dull. A sick feeling settled in my stomach as I examined the rest of his body. Skin that I knew hadn't been there before dangled down from the top part of all four of his legs. As I carefully stretched out his front leg, the skin fanned apart, reminding me of duck feet. Where had it come from and what did it mean?

I didn't want to ask because I didn't know how much more I could stand, but the question floated out with a mind of its own.

"Benson, are you feeling okay?"

Benson rubbed his head against my fingers and hummed. I hoped what was happening to his skin was natural, like a snake getting ready to shed. Maybe lizards shed, too. I thought I'd ask Jared but then I remembered. Benson wasn't a lizard.

Not knowing what else to do, I carried Benson into the bathroom, set him on the counter, and squirted some Jergen's hand lotion into my palm. I figured if his skin was dry, Jergen's might help. He hummed as I worked the lotion into his scales but when I finished, he didn't look any better.

Text includes:

- details of the change in Benson's appearance - shows reason for concern
- Ruth's response - shows her concern and how she tries to fix the problem

Writing Assignment

Describe some other way Benson could have changed. Describe Ruth's reaction to it.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b](#)

Using dialogue - to show Matt's changing impression of Benson

(p. 98: paragraphs 7-9)

"Wow." Matt had apparently accepted my dumb story. He tapped the glass again. "So we get to keep him for awhile, huh? Jared will be sick for at least a week, don't ya think? This is gonna be so great." He stuck his fingers through the hole Benson had made in the lid. "Let's take him out. Do you think he'd try to run away? Let's take him out and see what he does."

"No!" I grabbed Matt's wrist and yanked it out of the hole. "We can't take him out."

"Why not? He won't go anywhere. We can shut your door. Hey, I know. Let's feed him something. What's he eat? Did Jared give you any food or should I grab a cricket from the -"

Text includes:

- Matt's dialogue - short sentences and frequent questions show his excitement
- Matt refers to Benson as "he" - people tend to use "he/she" for pets when they feel more of a connection to the animal

(p. 99: paragraph 5)

Matt sprang off my bed. His fingers twitched as he backed out of my room. "Geez, Rat, no wonder Jared chose you to watch it. You two are perfect for each other. Whatever. Have fun, brats."

Text includes:

- Matt's dialogue - longer sentences show he's no longer excited
- Matt refers to Benson as "it" - people tend to use "it" for pets when they don't feel much of a connection to the animal

Writing Assignment

General - Write dialogue for someone who's excited then write the same dialogue in an unexcited way. See if others can guess which is which.

Specific - Your character just got selected to go to the state spelling bee and is telling a friend about it. Write the conversation like your character is excited by the opportunity then write the conversation like your character isn't excited about the opportunity.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 105: paragraphs 1-2)

I prayed I hadn't destroyed his family. But whether I had or not, Benson was alone. He didn't have anyone but me. And all I could do was pet him and rock him and pet him some more.

After awhile I realized Benson's skin felt scallier than it had the day before.

Transitions used:

- *pet him and rock him and pet him some more* - repeated sentence structure and the words *some more* create feeling of lots of time spent doing these things
- *after awhile* - gives Ruth time to think things through

Writing Assignment

Show a character doing a series of activities while thinking about something else.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of chapter

(p. 106: paragraphs 2 - 4)

Benson jumped off the counter and I followed him back to my room. The extra skin dangled beneath him as he crawled toward the paper he'd left on my floor. I winced. The skin stretched like a flap of leather as he handed me his note. *By looking*. He pointed at my bookshelf then pointed at my TV.

"You taught yourself?"

Benson grinned. I tried to smile back but felt a tear slide down my face instead. He was smart; smart enough to learn my language. But I didn't think he was smart enough to take care of himself. What if I couldn't figure out what was wrong with him? What if... but I couldn't finish that question, not even in my head.

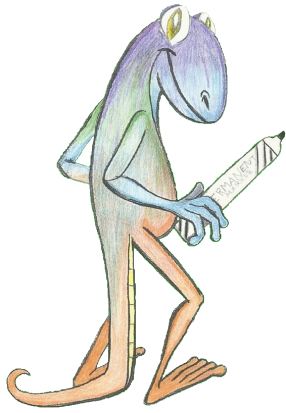
Text includes:

- answers to earlier questions
- new questions that are potentially worse

Writing Assignment

General - Describe a situation then end it by asking an unanswered question.

Specific - Your character now knows who took his or her backpack. What else could your character be worrying about? Try to make it relate to the stolen backpack if you can.



Summer, Water, Silver

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Do you think Ruth should have told her dad about Benson? Why or why not?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- water balloons
- cats
- dogs
- signs of dehydration
- Why isn't salt good for you when you're dehydrated?
- planets
- ingredients of play dough, dish detergent, suntan lotion, shampoo

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a situation - Ruth's worry due to past events

(p. 111: paragraph 8)

Jared pedaled faster than I'd ever seen him pedal before. I watched the road spin out below my bike's tires as I fought back the image of Benson's drowning body. I knew exactly what he'd look like. I'd seen him nearly drown in my bath tub. A bath tub was nothing compared to a lake. We'd be lucky to even find him. Lucky? I nearly wiped out on a loose rock as I crossed the entrance to Coralville Lake.

Text includes:

- Ruth's memory of Benson in her bath tub - reminds readers of why a lake is a dangerous place for Benson

Writing Assignment

Have your character share a memory that explains why he or she is worried now.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b](#)

Using description - to show Ruth's and Jared's fears about Benson

(p. 110: paragraphs 2-5)

I picked a piece of grass and started chewing. I didn't want to tell him we might have more to worry about, but the truth was too big to keep to myself.

"I think there might be something wrong with him."

I could tell by Jared's open mouth and half-crazed eyes he wasn't quite ready to respond to that. I kept talking. "He looks different. He's scier and more wrinkled up. At first I thought he was going to shed his skin. I was going to ask you about that. But..." I'd been afraid he'd tell me Benson was probably sick. I didn't know how to fix a sick alien and I didn't think I could take him to a vet. "But it's not just his skin anymore. His eyes look different, too. They're all stretched out and tight. And his tongue is sort of ...flatter."

"Geez, Mouse." Jared yanked a fist full of grass out of the ground. "How long were you going to wait before you told me?" He began ripping the grass to shreds. "Lizards shed but that doesn't mean Benson's going to. It sounds like he might be dehydrated. You've been letting him soak in the bath tub, right?"

Text includes:

- what Ruth and Jared do with the grass - shows how they're feeling

Writing Assignment

General - Show how two characters are feeling by describing what they do with an object. See if others can guess their feelings.

Specific - What would someone who's nervous do with an orange? What would someone who's happy do with an orange? Describe their actions then see if others can guess which one's nervous and which one's happy.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 107: paragraphs 1-2)

I always looked forward to the last day of school, but this year was different. Without Claire, without Aunt Myk, there was nothing to do but worry about Benson. Already nervous about his floppy skin, I'd also been afraid he wouldn't stay hidden. Because my parents' summer break started a week before mine, Benson had been home all day with them and without me. I'd spent six hours every day wondering if he'd stay in his aquarium. Now I realized the start of summer wouldn't change anything. I'd still have to worry about Benson and keep an eye on him – probably for the rest of my life.

Because life was unfair, I growled at Matthew when he plowed into me. He had a load of water balloons and I knew he was headed to the park to celebrate the end of school. It was a tradition and I should have been right behind him. But I had an alien to think about.

Transitions used:

- *always... but this year was different* - brings up the past and shows that things have changed
- *already... I'd also been afraid* - past participle verb indicates it's a situation that's been going on for awhile in the past-past (before the current story time)
- *now* - brings the story up to the current story time
- *I'd still have to worry* - looking into the future

Writing Assignment

General - Lead readers through a situation by writing about how things have always been, how things have changed now and what you expect things will be like in the future.

Specific - Tell readers what school was like for you last year, how things are different this year and what you expect things will be like next year.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of scene

(p. 111: paragraphs 5 - 7)

"We've got to find him first. I just don't know where to look. He's never been anywhere except our school."

Except that wasn't quite true. I could tell by Jared's wide, shimmering eyes he remembered, too.

"Coralville Lake!" we shouted at the same time.

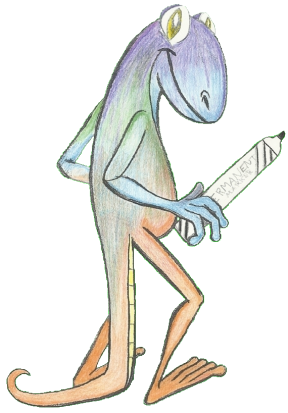
Text includes:

- they have to find Benson but have no idea where to start looking - description of the problem
- there's reason to believe he's at Coralville Lake - possible solution

Writing Assignment

General - Have your characters discuss a problem. Show them coming up with a possible solution.

Specific - Your character grabs a coat from the classroom closet. It looks like your character's coat but it's not. A friend thinks someone else grabbed your character's coat by mistake. There's a cell phone in the coat pocket so the friend calls the phone and they follow the ringing noise.



Strangers, Hope

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Jared is extremely worried about the strangers but Ruth isn't worried at all. Who do you think is reacting the right way? Why?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- Afghanistan
- vampires
- Transylvania
- British Columbia
- Count Dracula

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a

Establishing a situation - Benson's discovered by strangers

(p. 115: paragraph 9 - p. 116: paragraph 2)

I expected to be greeted with cheers but Jared only scowled from behind his big, honkin' glasses. Geez, what was wrong with him? What did it take to make that boy happy? We'd found Benson, I'd brought him back safely, he looked healthier than he ever had, and oh. Crud.

Jared wasn't alone. A man, woman and two little girls stood next to him. The woman's mouth hung open and the little girls danced up and down. The man's hand was wrapped around one of the girl's shoulders. It looked like he was holding her back. If only I'd noticed them a little sooner.

Text includes:

- Jared's reaction - shows he's upset about something
- ... *and oh. Crud* - shows Ruth reacting to what upset Jared
- strangers' reactions to Benson - shows why Jared is upset

Writing Assignment

General - Describe one character's reaction then use another character to describe why the first character has responded that way.

Specific - Show one character acting upset. Use a second character to describe the mouse running across the floor.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using dialog and description - to show Jared believes he'd take better care of Benson than Ruth does

(p. 119: paragraphs 2-5)

He let go of his handlebars and reached out his hand, like he expected me to give him Benson, right then and there. It took every ounce of self-control I had not to spit in Jared's palm.

"Forget it," I said. "Why don't you just go home?" I put one foot on my bike pedal and tried to push off with the other. But Jared held onto my seat with an iron grip.

"Be reasonable, Mouse. Please?" Jared's eyes shone, big and bright behind his glasses. It looked like he was seconds away from crying. "Unless Benson's family is hiding some place, he's the only alien on the whole planet. Don't you realize how huge this is? He needs someone to watch over him. Someone who's constantly looking out for him. Someone who understands the dangers. Someone who thinks things through."

"And I'm not good enough, is that it?" I squinted at him, fighting back the tears. "Let me go. Now!" I pushed with every muscle I had and ripped Jared's fingers right off my seat. Practically blinded by anger and tears, I almost ran into a mailbox on the side of the road. I silently screamed at Jared the rest of the way home.

Text includes:

- Jared reaches out his hand - shows he expects Ruth to give him Benson
- Ruth's response - shows she has no intention of giving Benson to Jared
- Jared's response - shows he's concerned and believes she's endangering Benson
- Ruth's response - shows she's insulted and angered by his concern

Writing Assignment

Write a conversation between two characters that upsets both of them.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 117: paragraph 4)

Still grasping my wrist in his iron-like grip, Jared pulled me toward our bikes. I stumbled along beside him, trying to keep up. Until then I didn't know Jared could walk that fast. After he'd dragged me several yards, I couldn't keep quiet any longer.

Transitions used:

- *still grasping... pulled* - shows two actions occurring at the same time
- *stumbled... trying* - shows two actions occurring at the same time

Note:

Grasping and *trying* are special verb forms called present participles. You can spot them because they end in "ing." Using this form of the verb shows the action is still going on. You can use present participles when you need to show two or more actions happening at the same time.

Writing Assignment

Use present participles to show someone doing more than one thing at the same time.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of chapter

(p. 122: paragraphs 2 - 3)

What if I hadn't washed away every single speck? What if a few stragglers still clung to it, just waiting for a bit of water to wake them up or make them hatch or whatever they had to do to grow big like Benson? If I could get my hands on that rock, maybe I could give Benson a family.

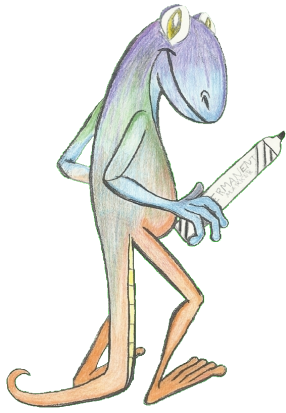
I grinned for the first time since I'd carried him out of the lake. "Benson, my friend," I announced, "we're going to Hawaii."

Text includes:

- Ruth's questioning thoughts - shows she's reconsidering a past decision
- Ruth grins - shows she's happy with her new decision
- Ruth's dialogue - establishes her new decision

Writing Assignment

Show your character thinking about a past decision then changing his or her mind.



Waves, Lights, Lullaby

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Should Ruth trust Howard? Why or why not?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- Why is there salt in the ocean?
- blisters
- babies
- coral

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a

Introducing a character: Coral

(p. 130: paragraphs 2-4)

"It's your brother. Or maybe your sister." I lowered my hand inside the drawer and tilted him off. "Go on, say hello. But be careful. The rock's hot."

Just like I did the first time, just like Jared did after I warned him, Benson reached for the rock anyway. His toes hovered over the lump, then rested against it. The heat didn't seem to bother him a bit. He ran his toes down the full length of the lump. Then, rocking back and forth on his hind legs, he hummed "Rock a Bye, Baby" slightly out of tune. Tears filled the corners of my eyes. I didn't even bother wiping them away.

When he reached the end of the song, the lump quivered all over then raised its head for the very first time. Large, oval lids flickered open. Deeply lit eyes, with all the blues and greens of the ocean, blinked at Benson – once, twice – before chubby cheeks crinkled up to form a smile on the newly born face. Colors shimmered and sparkled across the baby's back. Pale yellow gave way to light orange which shifted to sky-blue. Through it all, a ruby red dot remained between the baby's eyes. Benson pressed his nose against the dot and sighed.

Text includes:

- Benson's response to the new alien
- Ruth's reaction to Benson's response
- The new alien's response to Benson

Note:

If your readers like and care about the characters in your story, you can make them like and care about new characters by showing how much the new character means to your old characters.

Writing Assignment

Show the importance of a character through the reaction/response of another character.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using description - to show Benson's and Ruth's reaction to the ocean

(p. 124: paragraphs 2-5)

He laughed the laugh that sounded like mine as his toes clamped around my fingers and his tail jolted back and forth against my hair. I pulled him from my head to see his reaction. When his eyes widened, I grinned. I felt him sigh against my hand and I sighed, too. We stared at the ocean, awed by the exploding white surf, the shimmering emerald shallow water and the deep shimmering blue further out.

After awhile, he leaped onto my arm and scampered up my shoulder. Bouncing up and down, he pointed at something off to our right. I squinted. The sun glistened on the deepest blue of the water. It was beautiful, like nothing else I'd ever seen but it wasn't what he'd wanted me to see. He pushed against the side of my head until I faced the silver, triangular fin cutting through the rolling waves.

"A dolphin!" We'd spent so many hours watching dolphins on the Cousteau DVDs it seemed like they were movie stars. Seeing one in real life gave me such a thrill, I bounced, too. I had to stop, though, when Benson nearly toppled off my shoulder.

I grabbed for his tail and held on with both hands. His excitement, his joy pulsed through my fingers and filled me with a happy freedom. I watched the dolphins – at least four fins now – play in the sun-filled sea.

Text includes:

- What Benson does when he sees the ocean - shows his excitement
- Ruth's reaction - shows she wants to see his response and is happy about it
- Description of what they see - helps readers feel the power of the ocean
- Benson pointing out the dolphin - shows how much it means to him and he wants to share it with Ruth
- Watching the Cousteau DVDs - reminds readers why the dolphins mean so much

Writing Assignment

Think of something that made you happy or thrilled. Describe what it was, what you probably looked like at the time and how you felt.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 128: paragraphs 1-2)

I raced down the hallway, slammed the door and threw myself onto the bed that wasn't mine. Blinded by tears, I soaked the pillow as the sharp edges of Aunt Myk's rock tore into my hand.

I don't know how many hours passed before Benson woke me for the midnight stroll I'd promised him, but my hand felt like someone had held it down on top of a lit stove. It hurt clear to the soles of my feet when I uncurled my blistered fingers. But it was worth it. As soon as I opened my hand, the rock lit the room with dancing turquoise lights.

Transitions used:

- *I don't know how many hours passed before Benson woke me for the midnight stroll* - gets readers from one point in the story (before Ruth falls asleep) to the next point (after she wakes up)

Writing Assignment

Use a time reference and changes that occur during that time period to cover the time between two events.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of scene and chapter

(p. 128: paragraph 2) - *end of scene*

I don't know how many hours passed before Benson woke me for the midnight stroll I'd promised him, but my hand felt like someone had held it down on top of a lit stove. It hurt clear to the soles of my feet when I uncurled my blistered fingers. But it was worth it. As soon as I opened my hand, the rock lit the room with dancing turquoise lights.

Text includes:

- a description of the rock lighting the room - shows the promise of things to come

(p. 132: paragraphs 5 - 6) - *end of chapter*

As the questions whizzed around in my head, I whispered, "Stay down, stay deep." I buried the bowl deep within the food. Good thing there was so much of it. Quickly, I yanked my fingers out of the can.

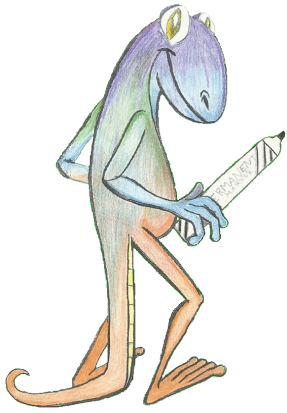
"What are you doing?" Howard's voice slammed through my body. His bare feet were just inches from mine.

Text includes:

- Howard catching Ruth in the cat food - hints at the trouble to come

Writing Assignment

List three things that would make you feel hopeful. List three things that would make you feel scared.



Cat Food, Warning, Dust

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Whom do you think Howard was talking to on the phone and what do you think they were talking about?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- Washington, D.C.
- Iowa City
- ocean waves
- sand
- beaches
- seafood

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a situation - Ruth's scared of Howard

(p. 135: paragraphs 8-9)

The pounding of the surf filled my ears as soon as we stepped outside. A couple seagulls swept over the waves but the rest of the beach was deserted. I suddenly realized how alone I was. Howard still hadn't let go of my arm.

"You don't like me much, do you?" he asked.

Text includes:

- The sound of the surf and the image of the seagulls and the beach - emphasizes no one else is around
- Howard hasn't let go of her arm - increases the feeling of danger
- Howard's dialogue - increases the feeling of danger

Writing Assignment

Use description to make readers feel nervous or scared.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b](#)

Using description - to show how Ruth and Howard change when Aunt Myk enters the scene

(p. 133: paragraph 1 to p. 134: paragraph 5)

I coughed, stood, backed away from the pantry and the hidden aliens. "Well, I – I – Snickers woke me up, meowing. I thought maybe he was hungry so I – "

"You're shaking!" Howard raised his hairy eyebrows then squinted hard. "And Snickers couldn't possibly have awakened you. He's in my bedroom. And the door's shut. So. What's really going on? Why are you talking to cat food?"

My heart clunked across the kitchen floor. I hated him just then. I really did. "I don't know," I said. "Why are you talking to someone in Washington, DC?"

His face reddened. "That's really none of your business, is it? You sure look guilty about something, though. Mind if I take a look?" And he bent down to fish his hand deep inside the can.

I shut my eyes, sending every ounce of wishing power I had to Benson. *Watch out for the hand, Benson. Stay away from the hand.*

The floor board creaked again and I opened my eyes. Aunt Myk stood in the kitchen's doorway, her head tilted to one side as she watched Howard dig.

"I thought I heard someone out here. What are you guys doing up so early?"

Howard cleared his throat but I was faster. I rushed to Aunt Myk's side and managed to pull up a few tears. "He thinks I buried something in the cat food. He's way upset with me, Aunt Myk. And I

didn't do anything wrong!"

"Well, that's just crazy," Aunt Myk said then switched to her sternest voice as she eyed Howard. "Why would you think she buried something in the cat food?"

Howard stood and dusted off his hands as he gave Aunt Myk a lop-sided grin. "I certainly didn't mean to upset her. But she was digging around in there. And when I asked her about it she made up some lame story about Snickers and – "

Text includes:

- dialogue between Ruth and Howard - shows the tension and lack of trust between them
- Howard's red face - shows he's upset
- Ruth shuts her eyes - shows she's scared and wants him to stop
- creaking floorboard - announces Aunt Myk's arrival
- Ruth's reaction - shows she's trying to get Aunt Myk on her side
- Aunt Myk's reaction - shows she's upset by what Ruth said
- Howard's response - shows he's trying to get Aunt Myk on his side

Writing Assignment

Show two characters not getting along. Describe a new character entering the scene then show the first two characters trying to get the new character on their side.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 137: paragraphs 3-5)

I gave Howard a few minutes to enter the house first then crept in the front door. The living room was empty and everything was as quiet as it had been before Howard found me in the kitchen. I longed to go in there now, to make sure Benson and Coral had escaped from the pantry. But I had no idea where Howard was and I just couldn't risk getting caught in the cat food again.

I tiptoed to my borrowed room and locked the door behind me.

"Benson," I whispered and glanced around the room. "Are you here? Please come out. It's okay."

Transitions used:

- *a few minutes* - shows Howard had time alone in the house then describes what things look like to establish he's gone somewhere else
- *had escaped* - past participle verb indicates this action should have occurred before the present story time

Writing Assignment

Describe how an environment has changed while your character was away.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of chapter

(p. 139: paragraphs 4 - 6)

"Oh Benson, it's okay. It's not your fault. Not at all. We'll figure out something. I promise. But first, I have to get the rock."

With Coral still holding tight to his back, Benson twitched across the floor and scooted under the dresser.

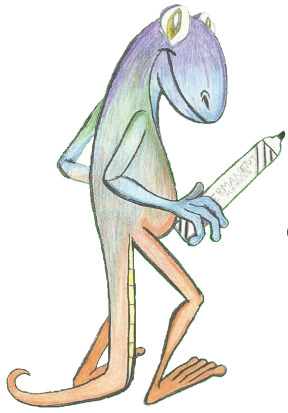
Laughter filled my ears as soon as I opened the door. And it was coming from the kitchen. Everyone was up now. Mom, Dad, Matt, Aunt Myk. Even Howard sat at the table, shoveling in oatmeal like this was just a normal day. I bit my lip and sighed. Digging for the rock would have to wait. I only hoped I got to it before Howard did.

Text includes:

- Description of the kitchen - shows why Ruth's plans will have to wait. Ends the scene by putting the goal temporarily out of reach due to story circumstances

Writing Assignment

Write down a goal then describe a situation that would keep someone from reaching it.



Fake Head- ache, Hunting, Secret Place

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Would you make Benson and Coral hide all the time? Why or why not?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- What causes headaches?
- crabs
- hunting
- roosters
- animals that eat lizards
- butterflies
- Hawaiian flowers
- Hawaiian lizards

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a situation - how Coral reacts to the beach

(p. 141: paragraphs 4 - 6)

"Welcome to the real world, Coral," I said then set the cap on the sand. It took less than three seconds for her to jump out and stand up. Shielding her eyes from the intense sun, she turned slowly around, taking in the surf, the sea, and the miles of white sand. She looked exactly like Benson had that first day on my bed. I grinned. She'd had to wait longer but her first view of the world was much better than his had been.

I sat down next to her, leaned back on my arms, buried my toes in the sand and tilted my face up to the sun. Finally.

Having finished her circle, Coral dropped down on all four legs then rolled in the sand. Benson laughed the laugh that sounded like mine, cupped up some sand in his front toes then rained it down on top of her. She giggled and he laughed again. I wished we could stay like this forever.

Text includes:

- description of what Coral sees - increases the feeling of long-awaited freedom
- Ruth lounges on the beach - shows she's relieved to finally have the chance to give the aliens some freedom
- Coral's and Benson's actions - increases the feeling of relief for readers by letting them see the aliens play

Writing Assignment

Think of a place or an activity that would make you happy. Describe it in a way that would make readers feel happy too.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b](#)

Using description - to show Coral ignoring Ruth's warnings

(p. 143: paragraphs 1-5)

"Stop!" I yelled, "It might eat you!"

Completely ignoring me, she skuddled along, slipping and sliding but making great progress. I scooped Benson into my hand and ran to catch up.

Standing on her hind legs, she was just inches from the bird, calling "uh huh huh" with all her might. The bird didn't seem too impressed though. Its black feet just clawed at the ground, digging for something.

Keeping one eye on the bird, I snatched Coral and brought her up to eye level. "You can't just run off like that. It's dangerous."

Coral swung her tail in circles, trying to wiggle free of my grip. I grasped her tighter and delivered my sternest look.

Text includes:

- Ruth's warning - points out the danger
- Coral's response - shows she doesn't listen to the warning
- Ruth's response - shows her saving Coral
- Coral's response - shows her impatience and lack of fear

Writing Assignment

Show a character completely disregarding or ignoring another character.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 140: paragraph 1 to p. 141: paragraph 1)

Before then, I'd never noticed how often my family ate. There was always someone entering or leaving the kitchen. All day long. I had to wait until everyone settled down for the night before I could look for the rock. And even then I waited for another hour to be sure everyone was asleep. I dug deep into the can, feeling every inch but there was nothing except food. Howard must have found it. Anyone else would have asked who'd left it there.

That was two days ago. I kept waiting for Howard to say something, to call me a liar in front of everyone, but he never did. I couldn't figure out why he didn't question me or why he didn't tell Aunt Myk.

I was worried about something else, too. The day before I had noticed the notebook filled with Benson's messages was turned to a different page. I'd asked Benson if he'd been looking through it but he swore that he and Coral had stayed under the dresser. Either I was remembering wrong or someone else had been looking through it.

Because we couldn't take any more chances, Benson and Coral had to stay hidden all the time. I visited them, behind the locked door, every chance I got but still, I felt horrible for treating them like prisoners. Benson could no longer enjoy the ocean and Coral had never even seen it. I could tell she was just as restless and bored as he was. He kept her as busy as he could, teaching her how to write words and what they meant. But after two solid days, even the lessons had grown old.

Transitions used:

- *before then* - shares a situation that existed before the current story time
- *two days ago* - shows the events described happened before the current story time
- *after two solid days* - reminds readers that all of this occurred before the current story time

Note:

This entire selection is a transition, designed to get readers from one point in the story to the next. Writers use transition scenes to cover extended amounts of time when nothing much changes in the story. Since there isn't much change, transition scenes don't show moment-by-moment action. Instead, they concentrate on one aspect of the character's world (in this case, Ruth's concern about Howard) then use events and feelings that relate to that aspect to get readers to the next point in the story when things change again.

Writing Assignment

Tell readers about one aspect of your summer. (For example, you could pick a certain mood or an ongoing situation.) Even though you probably had lots of moods and lots of things happened, only write about those things that had a direct connection to the mood or situation you've chosen.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of chapter

(p. 147: paragraphs 1 - 3)

... I whipped my head around, certain Howard's face would be right there, grinning at me.

But it wasn't. With eyes that felt wide enough to pop out of my head, I scanned everything around me – the rocks, the trees, the plants, the pond. I didn't see anything out of place. Still, I couldn't shake that creepy feeling. I called the aliens, gathered them into my cap and headed back to Howard's house.

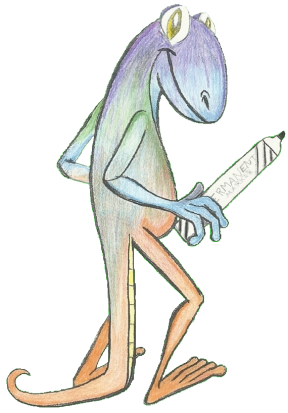
I'd miss Hawaii but I was glad we'd be going home soon. Howard was making me too nervous to enjoy anything.

Text includes:

- Ruth's fear that Howard will find them
- Ruth's feelings about going home - reminds readers that even though all is fine now, there's good reason to worry

Writing Assignment

Use your character's thoughts to make readers worry about something that may happen in the future.



Waterfall, Cement, Regrets, Answers

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Benson thinks they should leave Coral in Hawaii but Ruth thinks that's crazy. Who do you think is right? Why?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- waterfalls
- knots
- Iowa River
- cameras
- volcanoes
- airplanes

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a situation - what Ruth plans to do

(p. 154: paragraphs 2-7)

"We're not leaving her for long, Benson," I whispered as I headed down the path. I hoped he heard me because I didn't dare remove him from my cap. "Howard won't stay. We'll just wait a bit and then go back. She'll be okay." If Howard didn't do anything stupid. If she stayed put. If she didn't jump into the pond as soon as Howard let her go. I tried hard to shrug that thought away. It made my head hot and turned my fingers cold. She'd almost drowned because of me.

"Don't worry. She'll be fine." I'd echoed Howard's final words and it felt like a hand squeezed against my temples. Howard had saved Coral's life. But he'd also made me leave her behind. With him.

When Benson slithered across my head, my cap dropped to the ground. I bent to get it and Benson leaped onto the path. Using his nails, he scratched a message into the sandy dirt. *Leave Korel here.*

I shook my head. "Howard has to leave soon. He's got some kind of painting emergency or something. We've got plenty of time to get her back."

Benson's wide eyes shimmered with unshed tears. His body had turned a dull and dingy blue. Every part of him shook when he wrote in the dirt again. *Korel belong here. Happy. Here.*

"Well, that's just crazy," I said. "I'm not going to give up and just let her go!" I stuffed him back in my cap and marched angrily away from his words. I knew she wanted to stay but she was too young to know what was best for her. She belonged with Benson. She belonged to me.

Text includes:

- Ruth's dialogue - shows she plans on going back
- Ruth's thoughts - shows she's worried it won't work out like she hopes it will
- Ruth's guilt - increases the worry
- Benson's message - shows he doesn't agree with Ruth's plan
- Ruth's response - shows she misunderstands the reason Benson doesn't agree
- Benson's response - establishes why he wants Ruth to leave Coral in Hawaii
- Ruth's response - shows she doesn't agree with him and doesn't want to hear it

Writing Assignment

Use a conversation to show two characters arguing about something. Make sure readers will understand exactly how your characters feel and why they feel that way.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using description and dialogue - to show how Ruth realizes Howard was lying

(p. 155: paragraphs 7-10)

"There you are, Ruth!" Aunt Myk greeted me with a smile and a quick hug. "Your mom was beginning to worry about you. We're leaving in less than an hour. You didn't happen to see Howard anywhere, did you?"

The sound of his name almost sent me into a crying frenzy. I took a deep breath and forced the tears down my throat. "I saw him. He found me."

"Were you lost?" Aunt Myk laughed like she'd just told the greatest joke ever. I knew I wouldn't see her for a long time so I tried to smile. But I just couldn't get the smile past the lump of awfulness.

"When's he coming back?" she asked.

Text includes:

- Aunt Myk's question about Howard - first hint that something isn't right
- Ruth's response - shows she's too upset to catch the first hint
- Aunt Myk's second question about Howard - makes it harder for Ruth to miss that something isn't right

Writing Assignment

Write a dialogue showing one character too upset to listen to the other character.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 155: paragraphs 1 - 5)

I clomped down the path for another minute or two, stopped, then turned toward the pond. Surely Howard had left by now. All I had to do was go back and get her. But I couldn't seem to lift my foot off the ground.

Coral was even more stubborn and ornery than Benson. And she didn't want to leave here. What if she didn't do what I asked her to do when we got home? What if she refused to stay hidden in my room?

I took one step toward the pond but couldn't go any further. With a heavy sigh, I looked down the path.

I knew she'd probably be safer here. And happier, too. But I didn't want to leave her. I loved her so much.

"I hate this," I said, turning in the direction of Howard's house. "I really, really hate this!"

Transitions used:

- *for another minute or two* - shows ongoing action
- *stopped... surely* - shares Ruth's thoughts, indicating the reason she's stopped is because she's busy thinking
- *took one step... couldn't go... looked... knew* - shows how her thoughts keep getting in the way of her actions

Note:

Even though Ruth is doing something, this scene is more about what she's thinking. Showing the actions she takes while thinking things through establishes that it's taking her awhile to make up her mind. Walking then stopping and looking toward the pond then toward the path makes her actions reflect how her decision keeps changing.

Writing Assignment

Show your character trying to make a decision while performing some routine action. Have the action reflect how your character keeps changing his or her mind.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d](#)

Conclusion of scene

(p. 153: paragraph 9)

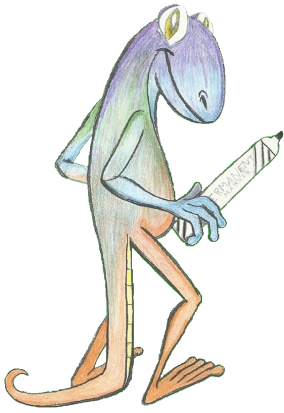
"Okay," I called. "I'm going." I couldn't say any more. A wall of unshed tears closed off my throat. Every step I took felt wrong and heavy, like someone had tied cement blocks to my feet. Howard was such a creep. I hated leaving her with him. It felt like the biggest mistake of my life. But no matter how hard I tried, I could not think of any way to separate them.

Text includes:

- Ruth walking away - shows her leaving the problem without resolving it
- Ruth's thoughts - shows how hard it is for her to leave Coral behind

Writing Assignment

Show someone having to leave a problem without solving it. Include how this makes him or her feel.



Snot, Hopoe

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question for Opinion Paper

Are you surprised Howard works for FEETLE? Why or why not?

Explanatory/informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- evolution
- astrobiology
- astronomy
- snot (or phlegm, mucus)

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a](#)

Establishing a situation - what Ruth plans to do

(p. 162: paragraphs 8, 9)

If we made it back to Howard's house, I figured we'd be safe. He couldn't get the aliens without telling everyone who he really was. And he wouldn't want my aunt to know he'd been lying all this time. Even if he didn't care about that, I figured he'd lose his job and maybe even his life if he exposed FEETLE.

I was a quick runner. Whenever we ran sprints in P.E., I finished in the top three, even though my legs were shorter than everyone else's. But I didn't count on Howard giving up on the camera so quickly. I'd taken less than ten steps before he splashed his way out of the water and yelled at me to stop. His legs were much longer than mine and I knew he was just as motivated. His house was at least a mile away and I had to get through all those vines before I reached the path. We were doomed.

Text includes:

- Ruth's thoughts - establishes what she thinks will happen
- Ruth's ability to run fast - establishes why she thinks her plan will work
- Howard's actions - shows why her plan may not work
- Ruth's thoughts - reminds readers of what she has to do

Writing Assignment

Describe a character's plans for getting out of some type of trouble. Then show events that ruin those plans or make those plans impossible.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b](#)

Using dialogue - to show Howard's excitement about Benson

(p. 160: paragraphs 3-4)

"So this really is an alien?" His hand hovered over the carrier. "An alien! I can't believe it! I mean, I wondered, I've been wondering. I thought I heard you say 'alien' that first day on the beach. And then there was the whole thing with the rock and of course I read all about it in your notebook but, but still, I never really, really believed it! I thought you were messing with me – that you'd planted the notebook in your room just to tease me. But you aren't teasing, are you? You're way too upset." He slammed his hand against the sand then let go with a shout, like I'd just told him he'd won the lottery. He jumped up and started pacing in front of the carrier.

"An alien! An honest-to-goodness real, live alien! We'd all given up, you know. In fact, I was seriously thinking I'd quit FEETLE. It was just so disappointing, examining and testing all those

meteorites and never finding anything. That's why I gave the little piece to Myk. I could hardly stand to look at it anymore. But!" He pointed at the carrier like maybe I'd forgotten about it. "There's an alien in there!"

Text includes:

- Howard's dialogue - the rhythm of his words and the amount of what he says makes it easy to believe he's probably babbling with excitement.
- Howard's actions - shows he probably is babbling because he's jumping and pacing

Writing Assignment

Write dialogue that shows excitement.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 163: paragraph 2)

As I climbed, Howard's yells got louder, closer. When I reached the top and pulled myself over the edge, I turned just in time to see him fall from half-way up.

Transitions used:

- *as* - shows two actions occurring at once
- *when* - shows what Ruth does right before the next action (turning)
- *in time to see* - shows two actions occurring at once (Ruth turning and Howard falling)

Writing Assignment

Use transitional words to show what two characters are doing at the same time.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d

Conclusion of chapter

(p. 165: paragraphs 4 - 5)

I waited, nearly breathless, for his answer. I couldn't think of anything else to say and time was running out, for me and for them. I bit my lip, willing him to understand what I'd just figured out myself.

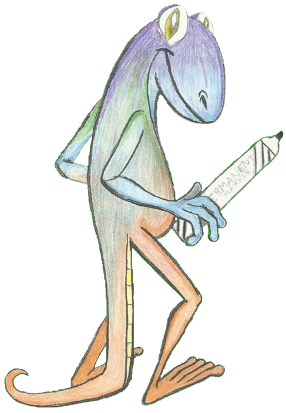
And that's when Coral sprang from my hand and headed right for Howard.

Text includes:

- Ruth's actions and thoughts - shows Ruth's done all she can to help the aliens
- Coral's action - introduces a new, unexpected problem

Writing Assignment

Show one character tackling a problem then show another character messing up the first character's progress.



Moa Waterfowl

Opinion

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.1\(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Question of Opinion Paper

Do you think Ruth should have left the aliens in Hawaii? What could she have done instead?

Explanatory/Informative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.2 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

Research Topics

- moa waterfowl
- freedom
- pets
- animal research

Narrative

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3 \(a through d\)](#), [W.3.4](#), [W.3.5](#), [W.3.6](#), [W.3.10](#)

Select link for specific instructions on how to fulfill standard.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3a

Establishing a situation - how Coral's made things worse

(p. 166: paragraphs 1-4)

"Coral, no!" I stuffed Benson in my cap, jammed it on my head then crawled down after her.

The same rooster-like bird Coral had chased on the beach had swept down from the sky, landing less than five feet from Howard. And Coral was flying down the volcanic wall as fast as her tiny legs could scramble. New tears squeezed out from my eyes.

She was fast, nimble, skating across the surface of the wall without a care in the world. I lumbered behind her, wishing I could fly, hoping I wouldn't fall because that would certainly put an end to everything.

By the time my feet found the ground, she stood right next to the bird, chanting the "uh huh huh" sound at the top of her lungs. A small smile flickered on Howard's face as he crouched down. He was less than a foot away. All he had to do was scoop her into his hand. I sank to the sand. It was over.

Text includes:

- Ruth's response - shows her trying to fix the problem
- description of the bird - shows what made Coral run
- comparison between Ruth's actions and Coral's actions - shows the alien is much quicker than Ruth
- Howard's response - shows how easy it will be for him to take Coral
- Ruth's response - shows her belief that she's lost

Note:

Although Coral running away is unexpected when it happens, what made her run isn't that surprising because we've seen her act this way before. Showing Coral's response to the rooster-like bird in an earlier scene is called foreshadowing. Foreshadowing is a great way to introduce a surprise that isn't too surprising (or unbelievable) when it happens.

Writing Assignment

Describe something a character might do that would cause trouble. Then describe a past event that explains or foreshadows why this character did what he or she did that caused the trouble.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3b

Using dialogue - sometimes what's not said is more important than what is said

(p. 167: paragraphs 1-5)

He didn't move and he didn't answer. He just tilted his head a bit to the right and continued to watch Coral scream at the bird.

Finally, he said, "It's a moa waterfowl." His voice was soft and low. "Did you know you can only find them on this island? They say all domestic roosters can be traced to this bird. Pretty, isn't it? Although the alien doesn't seem to care for it much."

I shook my head. How could he sound so calm? Had he no feelings at all?

"Aren't you going to take her? Now's your chance. You know I can't really stop you. I can't beat you."

He tore his gaze away from Coral and smiled at me instead. "But you did. You already have. You're right. About everything you said. She deserves a happy life. She should go home with you."

Text includes:

- Howard's actions - shows how calm he is now

Note:

Howard's calm, slow, long response shows he's already accepted what Ruth said, even before Ruth (and maybe the readers) realize it. Just like in real life, characters' actions often speak louder than their words.

Writing Assignment

General - Write dialogue that means something different than what the character actually says. Use the character's actions to show what he or she really means.

Specific - your character is telling a friend that he or she is perfectly fine with sharing his or her lunch. Use actions to show that your character doesn't really want to share with the friend.

CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3c

Using temporal words

(p. 169: paragraphs 2 - 5)

Halfway down the path, Howard put his arm around my shoulder. I didn't even wince.

"It's going to be okay," he said. "We did the right thing."

I nodded. I'd never hold Benson or Coral again. But my heart would hold that last image of them, my friends, playing in the waterfall for as long as I lived.

When his house came into view, I saw Aunt Myk waiting for us on the front porch with a bright and breezy smile.

Transitions used:

- *halfway down the path* - shows how far they've gone but also indicates how much time has passed
- *when* - shows that more time has passed while Ruth thinks

Writing Assignment

Show your character thinking then use a transition to get him or her to perform an action.

[CCSS ELA-Literacy W.3.3d](#)

Conclusion of story

(p. 169: paragraph 10)

It's been almost a year since I left Hawaii. And I know I'll never stop missing Coral, or Benson, or my aunt Myk. Every once in a while a heavy kind of emptiness sneaks up on me and takes over my whole heart. But then I remember how happy they looked that last day. And sometimes I'm able to smile through the tears.

Text includes:

- how much time has passed
- how Ruth feels now

Writing Assignment

Write your own ending for this story.

About the Author

Diane Owens is the author of two middle-grade novels, *Swept Up* and *No Ordinary Lizard*. She has been published in children's magazines, writers' newsletters and various places online. She has over 10 years experience writing for international corporations, small businesses and individual clients. She currently works for the grade school and special education department of a public school district.

Diane holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in journalism and psychology from the University of Iowa and is a graduate of the Institute of Children's Literature.

She created the All Write with Me website after realizing how much she enjoyed motivating grade school students to write for the pure pleasure of creating and controlling their own worlds.

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