



LUKE TEMPLE'S
STORY WRITING
MASTERCLASS

FOR WROCKWARDINE
WOOD JUNIOR

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7INwizFabTw>

Throughout this masterclass there are lots of videos. Click on the images to watch them on YouTube. Here's the first one, in which I introduce this masterclass:



I recommend working in groups of five to do this masterclass. This makes writing a story at the end really exciting. However, you can complete the masterclass in groups of any size or in pairs. **Please get into your group or pair now.**

A WARM UP

Before playing a game of football or netball you usually do a warm up to get your body ready. You can do the same thing with writing: a warm up for your brain!

In my school visits I play a game called Three-Headed Storyteller. Here's a video of me playing it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9cIJzSyryU>



At its simplest, all a story needs to work is a character (e.g. Charlie) and a problem that happens to that character (e.g. her house falls into a world ruled by potatoes).

Warm up activity:

This game can be played with any number of people. A group of five can make a five-headed storyteller; a pair can make a two-headed storyteller.

1. In your group or pair, quickly make up the name of a character and a simple problem that happens to them. (Nothing rude, please, and it doesn't need to be detailed!)
2. Now swap characters and problems with another group or pair.
3. Read out the character and problem you've been given. Then, without thinking about it, start making up the story together, one word at a time, just like I do in the video. Give yourselves no more than three minutes to do it.

Well done! You've already created a whole story and this was only the warm up!

Now on to the **MAIN MASTERCLASS!**

Time to forget about the warm up stories. Now you're going to create a new story, but in much more detail.

In this masterclass, I'll take you through what I do when I'm planning my stories. I'll also give you two different examples for each activity. These are:

EXAMPLE 1:

In the videos, I will do exactly what I'm asking you to do: you'll see me invent a character called Eric and create ideas for a brand-new story about him.

EXAMPLE 2:

I will also write about how I came up with the characters and ideas for my most popular book, *Felix Dashwood and the Mutating Mansion*.

(You don't need to read *Mutating Mansion* to complete this masterclass. However, I have given your teacher a free digital copy of chapters 1-5.)



So what are we waiting for?

**LET'S GET
GOING!**

Get to know your **CHARACTERS**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNlqZilJegQ>



It's helpful to know your main characters before you create a story for them. Then you'll know how they might react to problems. When I'm creating my characters, I pretend to interview them. You can see me doing this with Eric in the video. Below is the interview I conducted with the main character of *Mutating Mansion*, Felix.

<i>What is your name?</i>	Felix Dashwood
<i>How old are you?</i>	I'm 11
<i>What are your favourite clothes to wear?</i>	I don't really care. I mainly wear jeans and a t-shirt from out of my washing basket.
<i>If you were an animal, what animal would you be?</i>	A cat. They're really curious and like sneaking into places they're not meant to go.
<i>What makes you happy?</i>	Having fun with my friends and doing things I didn't think I'd be doing when I woke up in the morning.
<i>What scares you?</i>	Lots of things scare me, but I like being scared!
<i>If you saw a ghost, what would you do?</i>	I'd walk up to it and say hi.
<i>What's the most embarrassing thing you've ever done?</i>	Drift once dared me to do a handstand on his fishing boat. I jumped up and went to put my hands on the bottom of the boat. My left hand landed in a bucket of fish we'd just caught. I slipped and fell overboard into the water. The bucket of fish landed on my head.
<i>Would you rather be in a fight with a pirate or read about a fight with a pirate? Why?</i>	Definitely being in a fight! Hopefully I'd get lots of treasure if I won.
<i>Have you ever been in a fight?</i>	Yeah! Last week, a girl at school upset my best friend, Caspar, so I got really angry with her and we ended up rolling around in a puddle.



Activity 1:

As a group, decide on a name for your main character. For the story you are going to create, one main character will work fine, but you can have two if you like.

- Pick one of you to become the character.
- The rest of the group should interview them by asking the questions below.
- The person acting as the character shouldn't think too much about what they say – just pretend they're the character and make up answers.
- Write down their answers.

Bonus activity: Will there be a baddy in your story? If so, interview them as well!

QUESTIONS:

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What are your favourite clothes to wear?
4. If you were an animal, what animal would you be?
5. What makes you happy?
6. What scares you?
7. If you saw a ghost, what would you do?
8. What's the most embarrassing thing you've ever done?
9. Which would you choose: being in a fight with a pirate or reading about a fight with a pirate? Why?
10. Have you ever been in a fight?



Get to know your **SETTING**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lqZRgbNp1I

Knowing about your setting (where the story takes place) helps you come up with problems for your character to tackle in that setting.

I like to imagine the main character is standing in the setting and I interview them about it. This helps me see it through their eyes.



You can see Eric describing his setting in the video. Below I've interviewed Felix about the entrance hall in Murkhill Mansion, the setting she encounters in chapter one of *Mutating Mansion*.

What is the setting called?	The entrance hall of Murkhill Mansion	
How big is it?	I can't really tell because it's dark. But it seems huge!	
What can you see around you?	A big marble staircase, with two stone eagles standing either side of it. I thought they were monsters coming to attack me! There's lots of doors too. One of them has really interesting patterns carved into it.	
What can you hear?	I don't think there's anyone else here. It's really quiet. When I talk, though, my voice echoes around a lot.	
What can you smell?	It smells really rotten, like old cabbage and school dinners.	
	Can you taste anything?	Seriously? Do you want me to lick the walls? Haha! Actually, I can kind of taste dust when I breath in.
	What in the setting do you most want to touch?	That door with the patterns carved into it. I want to open it to find out what sort of room is behind it.
	How do you feel being in the setting?	The smell isn't great, but it's kind of a creepy place. Caspar doesn't want to be here, but me and Drift think it's fun. There are lots of doors and anything could be behind them. I'm excited!

Activity 2:

Often in stories there is more than one setting. However, for the story you are going to create, let's keep it simple and only use one setting.

- Decide what your setting is going to be.
- Choose one of your characters to ask the questions below.
- Take it in turns to be the character and answer the questions.
- Don't think too much about the answers, just say what comes into your head.
- Write down what the character tells you.

QUESTIONS:



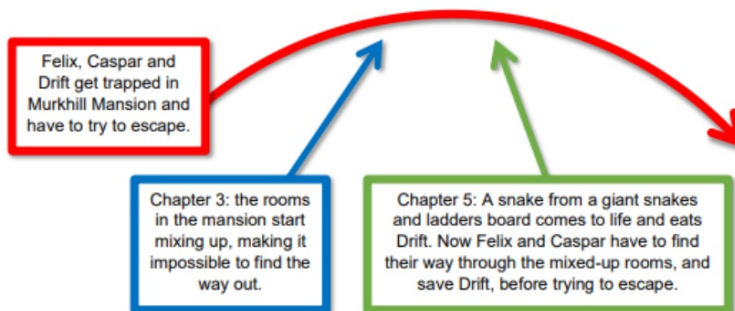
1. What is the setting called?
2. How big is it?
3. What can you see around you?
4. What can you hear?
5. What can you smell?
6. Can you taste anything?
7. What do you most want to touch?
8. How do you feel being in the setting?

Create PROBLEMS

At its simplest, a story involves your characters having to solve a problem. When I'm coming up with story ideas, I first think of a big problem that will run through the whole story. Then I come up with several smaller problems that can make the big problem even worse. You can see how that works for Eric in the video.



Let's think about *Mutating Mansion*. The big problem in the book is represented by the **RED** line below. Two small problems are represented by the **BLUE** and **GREEN** lines.



Activity 3:

As a group, decide what your **big problem** is going to be.

Think of **two small problems** that can happen to make your big problem even harder for your main character(s) to solve.

Hints:

- Use your knowledge of your setting and characters to help you create the problems.
- It works well to have your main characters accidentally causing the problems themselves. For example, in *Mutating Mansion*, the rooms start mixing up when Felix pulls a diary off a bookshelf. The snake comes to life when Drift starts playing snakes and ladders. They didn't mean to create these problems, but accidentally did!

Think of SOLUTIONS

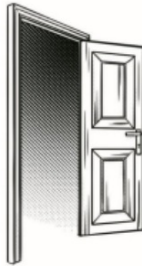
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6y9d6D14w2k>



The way your characters try to solve their problems depends on the type of personality they have. In the video you'll see how I think Eric might try to solve his problems.

In *Mutating Mansion*, Felix and Caspar have very different personalities. Felix rushes in without thinking, while Caspar stands back and thinks things through. This means that they try to solve problems very differently.

I can't tell you how they solve all the problems in *Mutating Mansion* – that would spoil the story! You'll have to read the book to find out. However, here's a hint of how they try to solve the 'rooms mixing up' problem:



- Felix and Caspar run from door to door, trying to find a way out. However, every time they open one a different room is behind it. There's no way they can escape.
- Felix decides to climb up the chimneys to get between rooms instead. She immediately tries this without thinking.
- Caspar reads a diary and thinks about how it connects to what is happening to them. This helps him to figure out what caused the rooms to move about in the first place.
- It is only by combining their ideas that Felix and Caspar are able to solve the problem of the rooms mixing up.



Activity 4:

Think about the personality of your character(s) and how they might try to solve problems. Come up with possible solutions for your small and big problems.

Hints:

- In some stories, the characters try, but fail to solve the big problem and so the story doesn't have a happy ending.
- Think about whether you want your story to end happily (the characters solve the problems), to end unhappily (they fail) or to end with a twist (they solve the problems but this leads to more problems in the future).

Create your **PLOT**

There are different ways to create a plot. Some writers prefer to have less or more parts, but I like to break my ideas into five parts. Below, I've described what I try to include in each part.



PART 1: Introductions and the big problem

I introduce the main character(s) and the setting, and **start the action**.

Just introducing everything would be a bit boring. I start the action right from the beginning by introducing the big problem in part 1!

PART 2: Rising action and conflict

Things get worse for the characters. The first small problem kicks in. The characters panic and the tension increases. The second problem can kick in here or in part 3.

PART 3: Climax

The problems all work together to make the characters' lives very difficult. This is the part with the most drama and tension. The characters battle against the problems, which seem impossible to solve.

PART 4: Solving problems

The characters try to solve the problems. How do they do this? Do they succeed or fail?

PART 5: Ending (or is it?)

What happens to the characters once they have solved the problems (or not)? Do they return to their normal life, or have they changed forever? Is there a twist at the end of the story that might lead to more problems in the future?

If I told you what happens in each part of the plot of *Mutating Mansion*, it would spoil the whole story.

Instead, have a look at the video below to see how I have divided my ideas about Eric up into the five parts of the plot.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNkJdBCiHcc

This is how I wrote Eric's plot down:

PART 1	(Introductions and the big problem)	Eric is trapped in the nursery. Red writing on the wall tells him he must find a golden key to escape.
PART 2	(Rising action and conflict)	The baby appears and starts to attack. The light smashes.
PART 3	(Climax)	Eric tries to hide. The baby finds him and ties him to the cot. It goes to bite him.
PART 4	(Solving problems)	Eric sings nursery rhymes to get the baby to sleep. He uses his phone torch to search around the room. He finds the key.
PART 5	(Ending ... or is it?)	Eric escapes. He turns around to take one last look at the sleeping baby, but it's not there anymore. Eric runs away and tries to forget about his experience, but a year later he sees the zombie baby again.

Activity 5:

Work as a group to divide your ideas up into the five parts of the plot. Use the guide on page 10 above to help you.

You don't need to go into much detail here – you're not actually writing the story yet. Just make some quick notes about what is going to happen in each part.

Write your **STORY**

Now you've divided your ideas into the five parts of the plot, it's time to write the story!

Activity 6:

If you are working in a group of five

Take one part of the story each. Give yourselves about 30 minutes to write your part. Don't worry about making it perfect – just have fun writing.

If you are working in a group of a different size

Divide the parts up between you, or work together to write them. Give yourselves about 30 minutes to write each part.

Tips for writing your part

- Use everything you have done in the previous activities to help you.
- Whichever part you are writing, try to make it really exciting to read.
- Think about all the writing tools you can use to help you, like:
 - Adjectives, alliteration, similes, personification and metaphors
 - Short sentences to create tension
 - Your characters' senses: what they see / hear / smell / taste / touch
 - Writing about your characters' emotions. Instead of *telling* readers how a character feels (e.g. Eric was scared), try to *show* how they feel through their actions and speech (e.g. 'Oh n-no!' Eric stuttered, stumbling backwards.)
- You need to make sure that all the parts fit together, so keep checking in with the people who are writing the part before you and after you.

Read all the parts to see if they fit together to make a complete story.

I have written my own version of each part of the story about Eric in the nursery. Like I have asked you to do, I've only given myself 30 minutes to write each part, so my writing isn't perfect or polished. You can read Eric's story on the following pages.

ERIC'S STORY

Here is a video of me reading the five parts of Eric's story, followed by each part written down.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiSJ_wfHEIk
PART 1: Introductions and the big problem

Eric was standing in the room of his worst nightmares. A nursery! A baby's bedroom! His eyes were firmly shut, but he felt sick. The smell of dirty, stinky nappies filled the air. It was like a thousand rotten eggs were being shoved up his nose. Eric slowly opened his eyes and saw a white cot in front of him. Above the cot, on the bright, yellow wall, words were scrawled in red. Eric hoped it was just crayon. They read:

The only way to escape is to find the golden key,
You'd better be quick, or you'll meet the zombie baby!

Eric's eyes widened. He whipped round, fumbled for the door handle and pushed down. It didn't open. Eric was trapped. He scratched his curly wig and looked slowly around the room at all the animals painted on the walls. They suddenly looked like scary monsters about to attack him. Where was the golden key?

PART 2: Rising action and conflict

Eric crept towards the cot and peered down into it. It was empty. No baby but also no key. He had to find it quickly before the zombie baby appeared!

He bent down and stared into the darkness under the cot. Could the key be there? Eric's hand shook as he reached into the darkness. His fingers felt around and landed on something soft and squishy. He ripped his hand away. Stuck to his thumb was a nappy, filled with yellowy, greeny goo! Eric gritted his teeth. He darted to the window, so he could throw the nappy out. The window! Of course – he could climb out of that!

Eric yanked at the window handle but that was locked too. He looked back at the red writing. It had changed.

The only way to escape is to find the golden key,
Uh oh! Here comes the zombie baby!

'Goooo goooo! Gaaaah gaaaah!'

Eric's heart thumped as he slowly turned round. There it was. The zombie baby, sitting on the floor by the door. The baby grinned up at Eric and two giant teeth flashed in its mouth like shining daggers. Its eyes were bright red lasers that burned into him.

'Oh n-no!' Eric stuttered, stumbling backwards. 'Help!'

The baby scuttled towards Eric like a crab, its mouth open ready to bite. Eric dived behind a large soft toy elephant and peered out. The baby wasn't there anymore.

'Goooo goooo! Gaaaah gaaaah!'

Eric stared up. The baby was upside down on the ceiling! SMASH! The light at the centre of the ceiling shattered into a thousand pieces. The room plunged into darkness.

PART 3: Climax

'H-hello?' said Eric. 'Hello?'

The nursery was silent.

'GOOOO GOOOO!'

'AHHH!' Eric jumped.

'GAAAAH GAAAAH!' The baby's babble thundered through his ears.

Claw-like fingers scraped down his face. Suddenly the zombie's red laser eyes filled his vision, now even brighter in the pitch-black room. He felt around him. *Tsbring! Tsbring!* His hand landed on a rattle. Eric picked it up and lobbed it across the room.

The laser eyes followed it and Eric heard the baby scuttling away. Eric breathed in and out fast. On all fours he scrambled in the opposite direction like a panicking spider.

'OWW!' He hit his head hard on something. He reached out a hand and felt the thin bars of the cot. Eric leapt up and dived into the cot. He pulled a sheet over the top of him and tried to lay as still as a statue. It was no good. His legs wobbled like jelly and he was sure the sound of his thudding heart could be heard a mile away.

'GOOOO GOOOO!'

'NOOOO!' Eric cried. The baby was there next to him, under the sheet!

Rjp! Rjp! Eric heard the sheet being torn to pieces.

He tried to move his arms, but they were pinned down.

'GAAAAH! GAAAAH!'

He felt something soft being wrapped tightly around his left hand. Pieces of the sheet. The baby was tying him to the cot.

The baby's laser eyes loomed over him.

'Please, no!' Eric tugged his hands and kicked his feet, but it was no good. He was trapped there as the baby's eyes, and its dagger teeth, got closer and closer.

PART 4 Solving problems

Eric had seconds to do something, otherwise he was going to be bitten and turned into a zombie baby. His eyes were filled with red lasers.

‘GOOOO GOOOO!’

The baby’s babble was like a bomb exploding. Eric’s whole body shook.

He opened his mouth to scream, but a strange, sing-song sound came out. ‘Rock-a-bye baby on the tree top...’

A nursery rhyme! Eric hated nursery rhymes. How was that helpful now? He felt something sharp pressing into his neck. A dagger tooth!

Eric shut his eyes tight.

‘Bah bah black sheep, have you any wool?’ he heard himself sing.

‘Coo coo.’

Eric frowned. That was a new sound – calmer and quieter. He opened his eyes and the lasers weren’t in his face anymore. The baby seemed to be sitting at the other end of the cot now.

Eric desperately tried to think of more nursery rhymes and realised he only knew the first lines of them.

‘Twinkle twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.’

‘Coo coo.’

‘Incy wincy spider climbed up the water spout...’

The room was silent again. Eric could no longer see the baby’s eyes. Where had the zombie gone?

Eric remembered his phone. He kept it under his wig. It had a torch on it. With his right hand he whipped the wig off. He grabbed the phone, flicked the torch on and shone it around.

Eric gasped. The zombie baby was at the end of the cot, curled up and snoring. His nursery rhymes had sent it to sleep!

Eric untied his left hand and climbed out of the cot as quietly as a ninja. He used the torch to look around the rest of the room.

‘Coo coo.’

Eric froze. He sang, ‘Three blind mice, three blind mice, see how they run, see how they run.’

It worked. The baby started snoring again.

Eric shone the torch up to the ceiling. Hanging where the smashed light had been was a golden key. It must have been inside the light!

Eric reached up and, with his fingertips, grabbed the end of the key and pulled it down.

PART 5: Ending (or is it?)

Eric stood there, staring at the key. It glinted golden in the light from his phone. A loud, rumbling snore came from the cot and Eric remembered what he had to do. He ran to the door. He tried to fit the key in the lock but his hand was shaking too much. He breathed in deeply and held the key with both hands to keep it steady. It went smoothly into the lock and Eric turned the handle.

The door opened. Eric rubbed sweat from off his forehead and stepped out of the nursery. He was free! He turned around and shone his phone torch back into the room he hoped he would never, ever see again.

‘W-what?’ he stuttered.

Eric squinted. He shone the torch all around. It was gone. The zombie baby had disappeared!

‘W-where is it?’

That’s when Eric saw that the writing on the wall had changed again. Now it read:

*Well done, Eric, you have escaped from my room.
But keep an eye out. I’ll see you again soon!*

‘AAAHHH!’ Eric ran away from the nursery. He stumbled down the stairs, charged out of the abandoned house, leapt over the garden gate and fled down the street.

That night Eric had nightmares filled with zombie babies and red eyes and stinky nappies. He woke the next morning covered in sweat. He had to search around his bedroom three times to make sure the zombie baby wasn’t there.

Eric never forgot about his experience in the nursery, but after a year or so he had managed to put it to the back of his mind.

He was walking down the high street one day and saw a woman pushing a pram towards him. Eric crossed the road, like he always did when he saw anything that might contain a baby.

For some reason – Eric didn’t know why – he turned back to look at the pram on the other side of the road. It looked empty. A bus drove past Eric then, briefly blocking his view of the pram. As the bus continued up the road, Eric let out a loud, piercing scream. Sitting up in the pram was a baby. It had red laser eyes and two gleaming dagger teeth.

‘GOOOO GOOOO! GAAAAH GAAAAH!’

The zombie baby grinned at Eric.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eg6UZK3CqEM>

WELL DONE



FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to find out more about me and my work
you can visit my website...

WWW.LUKETEMPLE.CO



