

# LESSON 2. WRITING FICTION FOR READERS

“We don’t have time for fiction-writing in our curriculum. We have to do test prep.”

We hear this too often.

There’s clearly one fast and reliable way to show students how a writer moves a story along, reveals characters or theme, or evokes a response in a reader, and that is to let the students put on the hat of a writer, write something, and watch what happens when other people hear or read it. They play with adding dialogue to see what the reader understands better or switching point of view and discovering that now their story is funny or heartbreaking.

Being the writer and wielding the writer’s tools is the very best kind of preparation for exploring why a writer would do *x*, *y*, or *z* and to gauge what kind of effect that might have on a reader. Besides that, it’s fun.

If test prep is the only sellable justification for writing fiction, then we have a practical reason for writing. For other more natural, complex, and fundamentally healthy reasons, read Thomas Newkirk’s *Writing Unbound*.

## Step 1. Read a fable.

- Read or listen to a fable.
  - You could read more than one fable grouped in the same theme.
  - You could read or listen to a partner read a fable.
- These fables are short; reread it again and again to pick up hidden details.
- You may want to consider acting out the fable to internalize the story.

## Step 2. Read the moral.

- What is the moral of the fable?
- Do you agree with the moral? Why or why not?
- Do you believe something else?
- Could there be another moral or lesson to be learned?

**Step 3. Write your own version.** Pick your approach. Write your own fable based on the fable you read, choosing any of the following:

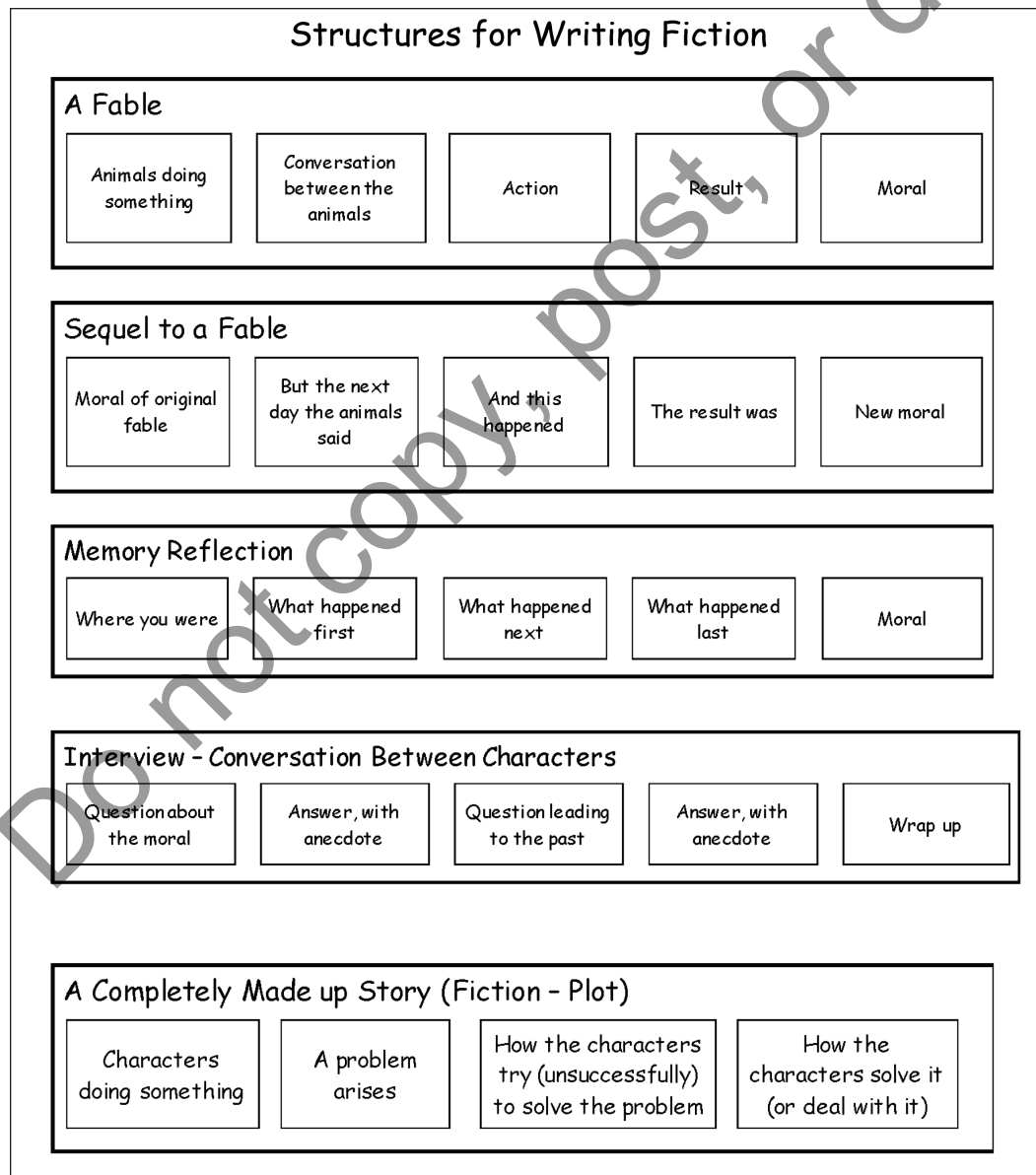
- Write a sequel to the fable.
- Retell the story as one of the characters (with attitude).
- Rewrite the fable and change the setting (the time, the place).
- Retell this fable in another genre (such as in letter form or as a poem or a journal entry from a character’s point of view).
- Change the ending.

**Step 4. Choose a text structure.** This will help to guide your story and keep it tight.

**Step 5. Ask yourself questions.** For instance, ask yourself, “If I am writing fiction, have I included the important elements of a plot in my own version?”

- Characters
- Conflict
- Rising action
- Climax
- Falling action
- Resolution

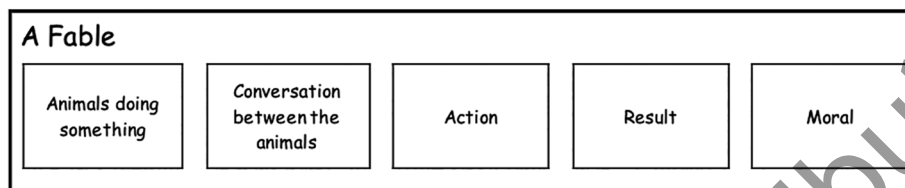
**Step 6. Read your story aloud to a partner or group.** Listen to theirs, too.



# STUDENT SAMPLES

## A fable of “The Lion’s Share”

Cameron Lamkin, Grade 4

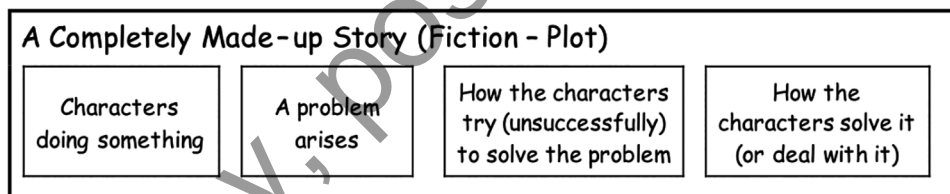


A long time ago, the lion, the fox, the jackal, and I invited each other to go hunting together. I was good with that. Then I ran down a deer, and lion cut it up and gave himself the first piece. (Am I surprised? No.) Just as I was about to claim the next piece, he grabbed the other three. We were all scared to speak.

**Moral:** Don’t hunt with lions.

## A Completely Made-Up Story (Fiction Plot) of “The Fox and the Pheasants”

Joaquin Cristian Flores, Grade 7



As the day turned to night, we began to gather on the “Great Tree,” as we call it. Then into the moonlight slithered a fox. He started to raise himself onto his hind legs and started to . . . dance! I couldn’t take my eyes off of him. I couldn’t tell if I was in fear of losing sight of him or if I was being hypnotized.

As his dance continued, I began to fall into a daze and I saw everyone was gone. I looked down and there they were . . . on the ground.

The fox then picked them up and ate them. One by one, everyone was then gone. I was then all alone. Lost. Maybe. There I was all by myself.

The fox laughed, then disappeared into the darkness.

## Sequel to “The Shipwrecked Impostor”

Arden Allmon, Grade 11

Sequel to a Fable				
Moral of original fable	But the next day the animals said	And this happened	The result was	New moral

The monkey drifted at sea, hoping that another kind soul would be willing to save him from the harsh ocean. He swam and swam trying to find the shore, wishing that he hadn't lied to the kind dolphin who attempted to save him.

Then suddenly, the monkey saw the dolphin again! The dolphin made his way over to the monkey and all the while the monkey apologized for his falsehoods. “I should have never taken advantage of your kindness, and I understand if you don't want to save me again.”

“I will save you, *but only* if you promise not to lie. Especially to those who want to help you.” The monkey happily agreed and was swooped up by the dolphin to be taken to shore.

As the monkey and the dolphin rode to shore, the monkey knew that lying would never make anything better and might actually hurt himself and others in the end; with this thought, he vowed to never lie again.

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