

What It Looks Like – Story

Part 1: Brainstorming and Selecting an Idea

Brainstorming lots of ways to approach a topic helps students come up with more creative and original ideas. Start by doing this as a class to generate more ideas, as shown in the example below, then get students to try it in small groups and eventually alone.

Then get students to review the list of ideas and select the best one. In this example, the teacher held a silent vote and put a star next to several ideas to identify a class favourite.

There is a blank brainstorming template on page 59.

TOPIC: *Run*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>run from a thief*</i> - <i>from a vicious dog</i> - <i>from your homework*</i> - <i>from a chicken**</i> - <i>from an annoying brother</i> • <i>run for your life from a tsunami*</i> - <i>earthquake</i> - <i>meteorite</i> - <i>volcano</i> - <i>dinosaur</i> - <i>angry Mum**</i> - <i>Godzilla</i> - <i>Mt Everest avalanche</i> - <i>bushfire</i> • <i>hare and tortoise race</i> • <i>marathon</i> • <i>run from fans (you are a celebrity)****</i> • <i>running out of water</i> - <i>Africa</i> - <i>you are a plant</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>timeline into another dimension***</i> • <i>jail breakout/run for police</i> • <i>cricket score – sport</i> • <i>run and slip on a banana</i> • <i>factory line – machines need oil to run</i> • <i>horse race*</i> • <i>long distance</i> • <i>running from Vic to SA when borders close</i> • <i>running out of words – speechless!**</i> • <i>timed race against the clock</i> • <i>running out of fuel*</i> • <i>laser tag*</i> • <i>running away from home</i> • <i>running late</i> • <i>water running – tap – flooding bathroom**</i> |
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Notice how some of the ideas also imply a character or include a setting? Several of the ideas have sparked a 'chain' of related ideas, which often happens in group brainstorming sessions as individual ideas are validated and the group's thinking becomes more creative.

What It Looks Like – Story
(cont'd)

Part 2: Developing and Ordering Ideas

Once students have selected an idea for their story, they develop it by brainstorming problems or events, characters and settings. Again, this can be done as a whole class, in small groups or individually. There is a blank template on pages 60–1.

Selected idea: *Run from fans (you are a celebrity)*

Brainstorm 3–10 problems or events that could happen in your story.

- *No privacy*
- *Always having to be dressed up and on best behaviour*
- *People interrupting your conversations*
- *Teachers suddenly expecting you to set an 'example'*
- *Radicals wanting you to join them*
- *Social media exploding and hounding you daily*
- *Parents confused and family life changed*
- *Friends – but fake friends too*
- *Nasty media reporting*

Brainstorm 5–10 characters who could be in your story.

- *Student as narrator*
- *Movie star – really young or burnt out*
- *Football or sports star*
- *Fans – in person, social media, email*
- *YouTube sensation*
- *Parents and teachers*
- *Paparazzi or journalists wanting interviews*
- *TV crews*

Brainstorm 5–10 places where your story could be set.

- *Streets and fans chasing*
- *The set of a movie*
- *Sports field – as a track star*
- *Hollywood bus tour*
- *TV set for interview*
- *At computer all night – social media fans constantly posting*
- *School – sudden celeb fame*
- *Home and drones overhead*

What It Looks Like – Story
(cont'd)

Get students to circle their best ideas to use in a sensational story that will engage the reader. What problems are the strongest? How should they be ordered? What characters would work well? Which settings would be interesting?

Students create their plan by plotting their best ideas on the story graph, then adding the 'top and tail', i.e. a Sizzling Start and an Exciting Ending.

How does it start and how will it end?

Brainstorm ideas for a Sizzling Start and an Exciting Ending.

Sizzling Start:

• *Start with dialogue: 'Matilda. Matilda! MATILDA!' Even in my oldest jeans and battered hat they somehow recognised me. All because my one YouTube clip had gone viral.*

• *Start with action: I was running and they were cheering and chasing me. Fans. In the streets, the school, I wasn't even safe in the toilets. Fame is a pain.*

• *Start with a question: Who knew a school assignment about city lights left on in buildings at night could ruin your life?*

Exciting Ending (include an action climax and an emotional resolution):

• *End with forward inspiration: 'Ask the cleaners to turn off the lights.' That's how it happened, the stumbling frightened words that came out of my mouth as all the pressure and exhaustion of being an environmental guru with no training at all came undone. #askthecleaners is now the hashtag for change in over 52 countries. And one by one, in cities all over the world, buildings at night are turning off their lights.*

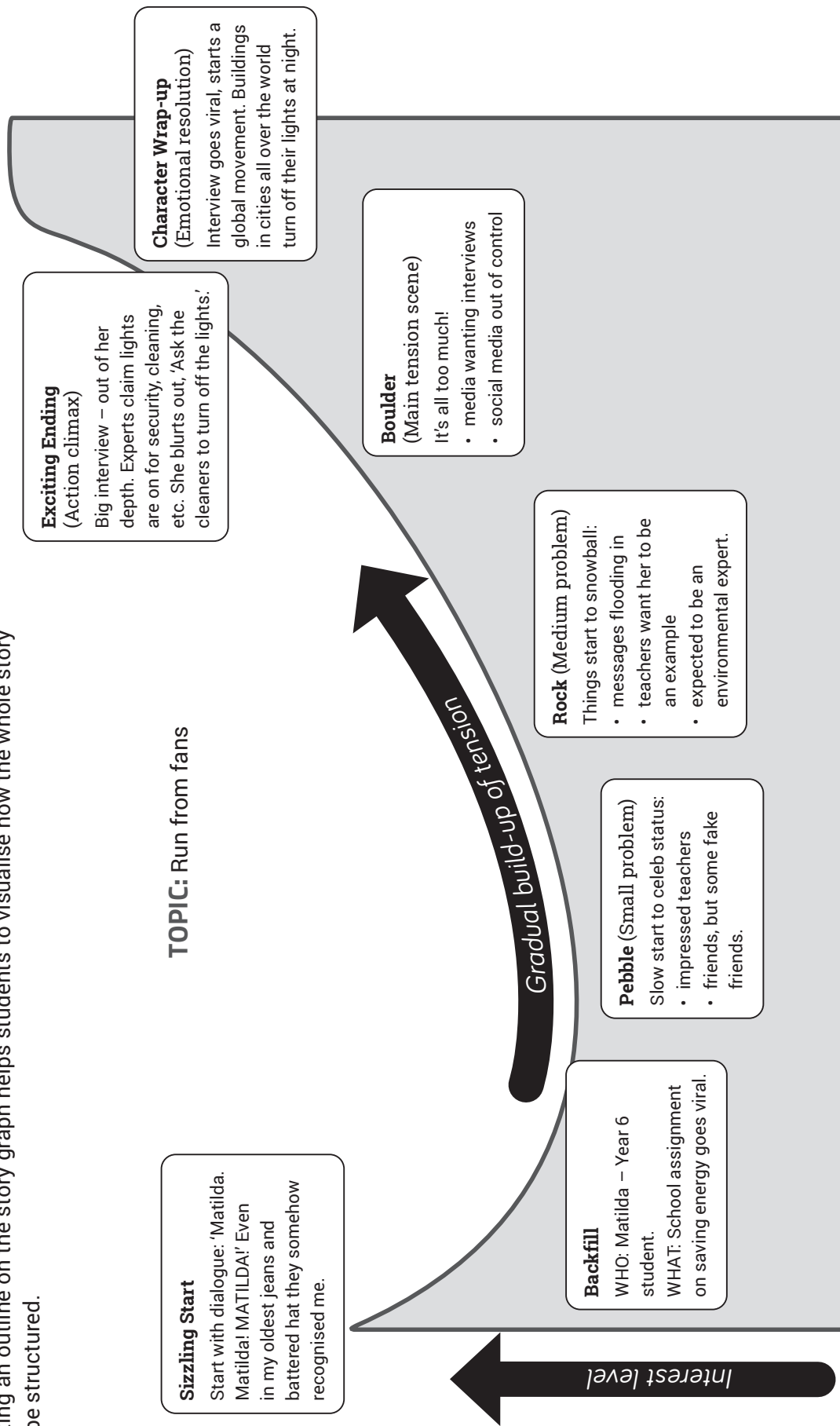
• *Link to the beginning: I've dyed my hair purple and cut it really short. People don't recognise me at all now, it's so much better that way. But the video is still going viral – and cities all over the world are learning to turn off the lights at night.*

• *End with a question: How many lights have you turned out tonight?*

Circle the best start and ending idea and add them to the story graph to complete your plan.

Narrative Story Graph – Story

Plotting an outline on the story graph helps students to visualise how the whole story will be structured.



Planning a Narrative – Story

Part 1: Brainstorming and Selecting an Idea

TOPIC: _____

Brainstorm lots of ways to approach the topic. Go beyond the obvious! Aim for at least 10 ideas to get one great idea.

Example:

Topic: *Run*

- *A run in a baseball game*
- *Running for the bus*
- *Bathtub running over*
- *Running from an avalanche*



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Circle the best idea. Aim for an original idea that's the right size (not a movie-length idea for a 500-word story).

*Planning a Narrative – Story
(cont'd)*

Part 2: Developing and Ordering Ideas

Once you have an idea, develop it further by brainstorming the key elements of your story.

Selected idea: _____

Brainstorm 3–10 problems or events that could happen in your story.

Brainstorm 5–10 characters who could be in your story.

Planning a Narrative – Story
(cont'd)

Brainstorm 5–10 places where your story could be set.

Choose your best ideas

Circle the best ideas to use in a sensational story that will engage your reader. What problems are the strongest? How would you order them? What characters would work well? Which settings would be interesting? Discuss, debate and refine your plot.

Plot your best ideas on the Narrative Story Graph in point form to create your plan. Remember to escalate the problems or events to build tension (pebble, rock, boulder).

How does it start and how will it end?

Brainstorm ideas for a Sizzling Start and an Exciting Ending.

Sizzling Start:

Exciting Ending (action climax & emotional resolution):

Circle the best start and ending idea and add them to the story graph to complete your plan.

Optional – Theme

Brainstorm themes for your story. (Use a phrase or sentence to express your theme.)

Narrative Story Graph

Plot your ideas on the story graph to visualise the structure of your story.

