



Humpty Dumpty – a story in five sittings

This lesson sequence, based on a familiar nursery rhyme, gives children an opportunity to think and write creatively using a basic narrative structure.

It presupposes that children have knowledge of basic sentence structure and some experience writing stories of their own.

Each session requires students to ask questions, share and discuss suggestions, and write.

A suggested time allocation for each lesson is approximately 45 minutes, with a minimum of 30 and maximum of 60 minutes required.

More time will be required for illustration if desired.

Prior to each of sessions 1 – 4, prepare a chart on which to record children’s questions and suggestions e.g.

Our questions	Our suggestions

Session topics:

Session 1: Introduction: The wall

Session 2: Complication: The fall

Session 3: Attempted resolution: The repair

Session 4: The end

Session 5: Reread, edit, share.

Session 1: Introduction: The wall

1. Read

Display and read the nursery rhyme “Humpty Dumpty”.

Explain to the students that they will be writing a story about Humpty Dumpty, but before they do, they need more information. The nursery rhyme doesn’t provide the background information which is required to give the story more meaning and interest.

Cover all the text except for the first line:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.

2. Generate and record questions

Reread the sentence to the children.

Ask them to consider the sentence: What questions could they ask about the sentence? What else do they need to know? For example:

- Where was the wall?
- What kind of wall was it?
- What sort of walls can you sit it?
- What was it made of?
- Why was Humpty sitting on it?
- How did he get on the wall?
- Was he sitting there alone?
- What else could he have sat on?

Record all the questions on the chart. At this stage do not invite answers or criticisms. Accept all questions relevant to the first line of the rhyme and record them.

3. Generate and record ideas and responses

Read through the questions individually and generate responses to each. Record all responses without evaluation or criticism. The purpose is to generate as many ideas as possible.

4. Pre-writing discussion

Explain to students that they are to use those ideas, or others they think of, to write the introduction and the setting, the orientation, to their story. They should think about, and include:

- When and where the story takes place and how it will begin; for example once upon a time, one day, long ago and far away . . .
- What Humpty was doing and how he came to sit on the wall
- Other details; for example: where the wall was, what type of wall (if that’s important to the story), whether Humpty was alone or with someone, how he got onto the wall and why

5. Write

Give the students time to write the beginnings of their stories. Explain that they are to write only the beginning telling about Humpty sitting on the wall; they will write the rest of the story later in the week.

While the children are writing support those who need extra help to get started and conference with others about their story beginnings.

6. Share

Invite some children to share, in small groups or with the whole class, what they have written.

Session 2: Complication: The fall

1. Read

Display the nursery rhyme “Humpty Dumpty”.

Cover all the text except the second line:

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

Explain to the students that in this session they will write the next part of their story which will tell about Humpty Dumpty’s fall.

2. Generate and record questions

Reread the sentence with the children.

Ask them to consider the sentence: What questions could they ask about the sentence? What else do they need to know? For example:

- What made him fall?
- How did he fall?
- What did he hurt?

Record all the questions on the chart.

3. Generate and record ideas and responses

Read through the questions individually and generate responses to each. Record all responses without evaluation or criticism.

4. Pre-writing discussion

Explain to students that they are to use those ideas, or others, to write the next part of their story.

Remind them that what they write must be consistent and make sense with what they wrote in the beginning of their stories.

Tell students to re-read their story beginnings and think about Humpty’s situation before writing about his fall.

Note: Some students may wish to make changes to their beginnings to accommodate new ideas.

5. Write

Give the students time to write. Explain that they are to write only about Humpty’s fall. They will write the rest of the story later in the week.

While the children are writing support those who need extra help to get started and conference with others about their developing stories.

6. Share

Invite some children to share, in small groups or with the whole class, what they have written.

Session 3: Attempted resolution: The repair

1. Read

Display the nursery rhyme “Humpty Dumpty”.

Cover all the text except the third and fourth lines:

All the king’s horses and all the king’s men

Couldn’t put Humpty together again.

Explain to the students that in this session they will write the next part of their story which will tell what happened after Humpty fell.

2. Generate and record questions

The purpose of this session is to generate some alternative resolutions to the problem.

Reread the sentence with the children.

Ask them to consider the sentence: What questions could they ask about the sentence? What else do they need to know? For example:

- What injuries did Humpty have?
- Why were the king’s horses and king’s men there?
- How did they try to put him together?
- Why couldn’t they put him together?
- What else could they have tried?
- What would you have tried?
- Would anyone else be able to help? Who?
- Who would you ask to help if you fell off a wall?

Record all the questions on the chart.

3. Generate and record ideas and responses

Read through the questions individually and generate responses to each. Record all responses without evaluation or criticism.

4. Pre-writing discussion

Explain to students that they are to use those ideas, or others, to write the next part of their story. Remind them that what they write must be consistent and make sense with what they wrote previously.

Tell students to re-read what they have written so far and think about what might have happened after Humpty fell. What they write does not have to involve the King’s men and horses, or bear any resemblance to the rhyme.

Explain that this is not the end of the story; it is just what happened next. They will write the end of their story in the next session.

Note: Some students may wish to make changes to their stories to accommodate new ideas.

5. Write

Give the students time to write. While the children are writing support those who need extra help to get started and conference with others about their developing stories.

6. Share

Invite some children to share, in small groups or with the whole class, what they have written.

Session 4: The end

1. Read

Display and re-read the nursery rhyme “Humpty Dumpty” in full.

Explain to the students that in this session they will write the end of their story.

2. Generate ideas for alternative endings

Write the question, *“What happened to Humpty Dumpty at the end of the story?”* on the chart.

Most children will agree that “that was the end of Humpty Dumpty” or that he died.

Explain to students that Humpty doesn’t have to die in their stories, and ask them to indicate whether Humpty will live or die in their story.

Write the question, *“What happened to Humpty after that?”* on the chart.

Ask children to suggest other questions that could be asked. For example:

- How did Humpty’s friends feel?
- Did Humpty go home?
- How long did Humpty stay in hospital?
- How long was it before Humpty was well?
- Where was Humpty’s funeral?

Record all the questions on the chart.

3. Generate and record ideas and responses

Read through the questions individually and generate responses to each. Record all responses without evaluation or criticism.

Discuss the responses and decide which endings are happy, which sad, and which funny.

4. Pre-writing discussion

Ask students to consider the best ending for their story. Tell them to re-read what they have written and think about what happened to Humpty, whether he lived or died and what happened next. They are to decide whether they want a happy, sad or funny ending for Humpty.

5. Write

Give the students time to write. While the children are writing support those who need extra help to get started and conference with others about their developing stories.

6. Share

Invite some children to share, in small groups or with the whole class, what they have written.

Session 5: Reread, edit and share

Explain to student that in this session they are to re-read their story to make sure that it makes sense and that they have given all the information the reader needs.

A suggested sequence

1. Meaning

Tell students to read their stories to themselves to make sure that the events make sense and are in order. They should cross out parts that are repeated or don't make sense, and add any information required or additional ideas they had for their story.

When students are happy with their story, ask them to read it to a partner who listens attentively to make sure the story makes sense and has all the information needed.

Students should give feedback to each other, always beginning with a positive, for example:

- I like the part when ...
- I think your ending is funny because ...
- Why did Humpty ...
- You said that part before ...
- I don't understand ...
- It doesn't seem to make sense ...

Students may need to make changes to their story in light of the discussion

2. Sentences

Tell students to read through their story and put in the full stops at the end of sentences and capital letters at the beginning of sentences. (Adjust this to the development of your writers. Some may need support for this. Some may be able to separate into paragraphs or pages.)

3. The words

Tell students to re-read their stories to make sure that there are no missing or repeated words. They should circle words they were unsure of how to spell and have a go at trying them again or finding them in the classroom or in books, according to your usual class practice.

4. Teacher conference

Discussions with students about their writing should be ongoing throughout the series of lessons. The detail of the discussion will depend on the ability and needs of each student as well as on what will be done with the stories, for example if the stories will be published in a class magazine, on the class online blackboard or school website, printed on paper and displayed in the classroom or foyer, made into picture books, transcribed into PowerPoint, or simply read and shared.

5. Publish

Providing an audience for students' work makes the process of writing even more rewarding and purposeful.

There are many publishing options for sharing students' writing such as those listed above. There are also other online avenues for giving students an even larger audience for their writing. As new products are continually being created, an online search of "publishing student work online" is the best way of finding out what is currently available.

6. Share

Note: *"The Accident — Humpty Dumpty's Fall"* was written as an example of writing following this process.