

The book Sequence Stories was the result of a challenge I was facing with my grade one students. Developing written fluency in young children is difficult. First graders have limited life experience, short attention spans, and are at the beginning of developing spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation. Their short term memory capacity is maxed. Therefore, also asking them to think about ideas for a story, resulted in the children writing stories consisting of two sentences with THE END at the bottom. Secondly, it was impossible to instruct the children as a class when they were all working on something different. Even if there was a theme to write about, their progress was limited at best. There were of course one or two natural born writers who took to writing like a fish to water.

One day while I was grappling with this challenge, I happened to be photocopying a reproducible book for early readers. It was illustrated with cartoons and text to create short stories to send home for parents to read with their children. Suddenly, I was struck with the idea of removing the text from the reproducible story and using the pictures as a story base for the children to write from. My next thought was that this would remove all creativity from the process. However, since my students were not progressing in written fluency, I decided to give it a try, with the thought that I could throw the stories out if it didn't work.

The story was about getting a new pet—something I knew the children could relate to. I cut away the text and drew lines to write on beneath the pictures. Armed with my first story, I sat down on the carpet with the children gathered around to see what would happen. Showing them the story pictures was an amazing success! We didn't even get to writing on the first lesson. The pictures of acquiring a new pet resulted in the children sharing all their pet stories—pets they had or wanted. I soon discovered that the story acted like a springboard. Some of the children were disappointed in the pet

the story featured. Some wanted the character to get a different pet. This resulted in the children adapting the story to suit their own interests or in other words allowed them to make creative decisions. The structure did not impeded their creativity, but rather released it.

After school, I accommodated their ideas, by writing down the children's pet choices and cutting out graphics which they could glue on the last picture of the story to make it their own.

The next day when we finally began writing, the first lesson was a resounding success. The children were enthusiastic, filled to the brim with ideas and engaged. We wrote one page of the story and stopped. The number of pictures determined the number of writing lessons. This broke it into manageable chunks. For each sentence, I brainstormed (using rebus pictures) a basic noun/verb vocabulary which the children used to form sentences. We wrote one sentence at a time. This gave opportunity for the children to read the sentence to a friend, make corrections, and add capital letters and periods. Eventually, the children could read well enough that we would brainstorm the vocabulary for the entire page at one time and they would write the whole page independently. Written fluency was a direct result of using sequenced pictures to tell a story.

The final products were beyond any hopes I had started out with. This experience convinced me that picture structure is essential in developing a child's ability to write and sequence. Three picture stories proved to be the optimum length and could be adapted either from the beginning, middle, or end. Those children with a greater understanding of story began to change the pictures early on, while others were content to use them as they were. It never ceased to surprise me at the varied perspectives children brought to the identical illustrations. Sequencing is a critical skill necessary for comprehension and for developing written ideas.

Based on these teaching experiences, I hired an illustrator and had a number of sequence stories drawn and published in the book called Sequence Stories.

JoAnne Moore

TED WANTS A PET



October 12

- Bill and Jan -
- Bill had his
- Purple and Jan -
- had - his cat -
- but - Ted would



- a pet - too -
- Bill was - plan -
- with his dog -
- and Ted would
- a pet - too -



- a splash a flop -
- Ted had - his -
- - Men - down -
- his chee - hee -
- would - find a pet



-Bee-fur-hee--

-could-jro-p--a---

-nithr-tr--a--

-turtle--popt--

--Wot-from-bee-
hinda the

Mrs. Moore,

Thank you so much for your letter! I would be happy for you to use my story. My family and I had a good laugh over that one! I will always remember grade one and how fun you made it! My friends and I still like to remember the puppet shows and other memories. You can be sure that what I learned in grade one helped my bad spelling later on! I am now into the second half of grade 11 and look forward to finishing high school.

It was awesome to hear from you! Thanks so much again for thinking of me.



One sunny day the birds
were singing and the bees
were buzzing. The knight
was on the way to find
a dragon his horse was
galloping. he was under some

43

© by J. Moore 1996



twigs his med suite was going
clinging. Suddenly the knight
heard flapping of two giant
wings and saw the dark shadow
of a dragon. Bones were falling
from the sky. then he looked



up and saw the dragon. The dragon swooped down. Then the knight ducked. Then the dragon picked up the knight. The knight had planned for the dragon to pick him up. When

Dear Mrs. Moore,

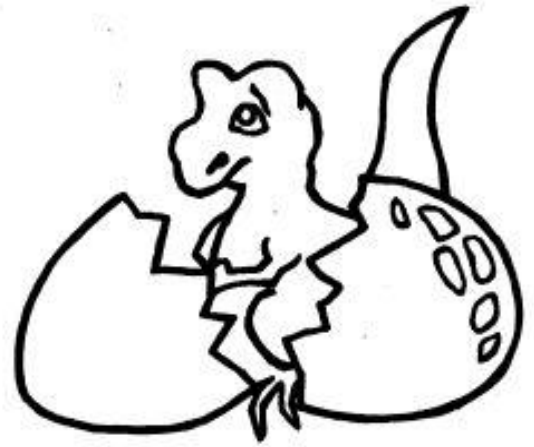
I am so excited to hear from you! I have no reason as to why you cannot use my story so go ahead!

From,

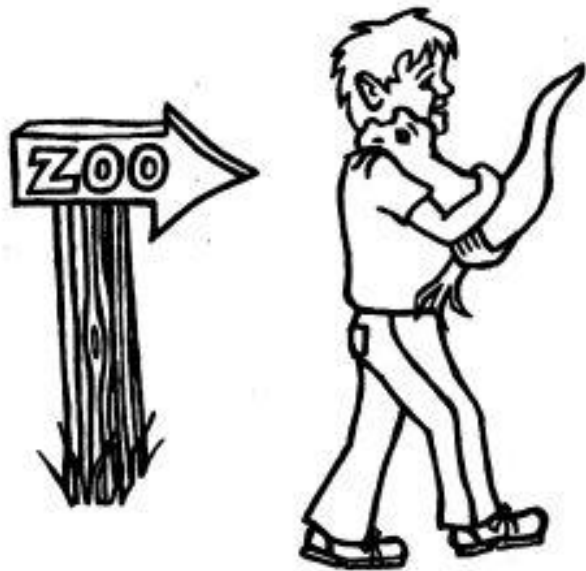
The dragon got to his cave and landed. The knight stabbed the dragon. Then the dragon fell backward so the knight got the gold. Then he got on his horse and raced to the palace and gave the gold to the king. The king thanked the knight and said now for your reward to marry the princess.



One day a littel girl was walking to her shcool when she saw a giant rock she said this would be a very good thing for science show and tell so she took it to



shcool and right that minit when it was her turn the egg hatched and the teacher screemed and all of her class screemed and the teacher said get that creature out of here



so the teacher sent a little
boy to take the little dinosaur
to the zoo

Dear Mrs. Moore,

I would be more than willing to
share my story with anyone who
wants to read it. Also, I was wondering
if you could please send me a copy
of this story, so that I may refresh
my memory. Thank you for the letter
and I wish you all the best in
the near future.



One morning Ashley
felt her tooth. It
wiggled back and
forth but it did not
come out.



Ashley called her dad.
Ashley's dad got a
string and her dad
tied the string on her
tooth and her dad
pulled and suddenly the



tooth poked out of
her mouth and Ashley
put her tooth under
the pillow in the morning
the tooth was gone
and there was a loony

Dear Joanne,

What a surprise to receive your letter!
We are so honored that you would use
story. Thank you for sending a copy
his story to us. We had fun reading it.
Yes, you can share his story!

Our children, still talk
about their wonderful grade one experience
they love + adore you so much! Thank
you so much Joanne for being "the most
kind", as they would always say, teacher
to them!