

# Preparing for the Grade 3 PAT

(Provincial Achievement Story Writing Test)

## Taking the Plunge:

### Introducing Sentence Structure and the Stuck Story Pattern to Third Graders

Jolene Milson, a third grade teacher, has kindly agreed to share part of her writing journey with you. (She has also agreed to be contacted via email with any questions you may have.) Together, we hope that her journey will encourage all teachers who are helping children become successful writers. We also hope by sharing this story that the PAT exams will become less stressful for both students and teachers.

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Ask JoAnne  
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On 16-Apr-08, at 4:19 AM, Jolene Milson wrote:

Hi there! I attended two of your amazing workshops put on by the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium. They were fantastic! I completely changed my approach to writing the following Monday. The students are responding with enthusiasm and great writing. So far I have focused on sentence writing. We have completed your Sentence Structure unit. This week, we have started to put up to 5 sentences together, varying our starting strategy. It is going well. Achievement tests are in less than a month and I haven't touched the circle story format yet. I am overwhelmed with all of the lessons that I want to teach and the lack of time I have to teach them. Where should I go from here? What do you think that I should focus on? I am working with a low group of students who need a lot of guidance but I am running out of time. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for everything that you have done to impact my teaching and my students writing confidence.

Take care.

Jolene Milson

On 17-Apr-08, at 8:19 AM, JoAnne Moore wrote:

Hi Jolene,

I am thrilled things are going so well for you! For the PAT (provincial achievement test) story writing exam teach your students the following pattern which will work for any picture prompt:

### **Stuck Story Pattern**

**1. Choose your character. What is he doing or where is he going when he gets stuck?**

**2. What caused the character/object to get stuck?**

**Choose:**

\*trick \*act of god (weather, magic)

\*disaster \*use of force (physical only)

**3. Character's Motive:**

He wants to get himself/another character or an object that is stuck free.

**4. Describe first unsuccessful attempt at freeing the character/object.**

Show strong emotion.

**5. Describe second unsuccessful attempt at freeing the character/object.**

Show strong emotion.

**6. Show how the character/object is freed. Choose:**

\*trick

\*luck

\*character making you stuck changes their mind to free you

\*someone helps

\*hard work

\*act of god (weather, magic, miracle)

\*use of force (physical or political)

**Show strong emotion of happiness or relief when the problem is solved.**

**Literature:**

**Read Andrew's Loose Tooth by Robert Munsch or**

**Uncle Farley's False Teeth by Alice Walsh**

**Story Plan for PAT test:**

1. Look at the picture prompt.
2. Decide what the character will do or where he will go.
3. Decide if a character or an object will get stuck.
4. Where will it get stuck?
5. Will a trick, disaster, act of god, use of force cause it to get stuck?
6. Find two ways to attempt freeing the character/object that fail. Show strong emotion.
7. Find a third strategy which succeeds and character/object is free. Show strong emotion.

**Vocabulary for Stuck Story:**

1. **Teach stuck synonyms:** clogged, jammed, twisted, caught, hooked etc.
2. **Teach pull synonyms:** yanked, grabbed, shook, jiggled, wiggled, etc.
3. **Teach character emotion:** upset  
**tears** - welled, poured, dripped, rained, trickled etc.  
**face turned** - red, pink, purple  
**body-** twisted, turned, thrashed, wiggled,

**Teach five interesting way for an encounter (meeting between characters):**

**Heard:**

**\*footsteps** stomping, padding, marching,

**\*whistling**

**\*coughing**

**Saw:**

**\*two eyes:** glowing, gleaming, peering, peeking

**\*shadow:** stretching, covering, licking, growing

**Hope this helps! JoAnne Moore**

On 18-Apr-08, at 3:50 PM, Jolene Milson wrote:

My eyes bulged while my jaw dropped. Throwing my head back I gasped, "I can't believe JoAnne Moore responded to my email so quickly!" ... can you tell which lesson I taught today?

Seriously, thank you so much for your response. I am going to hit the books right now and plan for tomorrow.

Thanks again! Take care.

Jolene Milson

Hi Jolene,

You have me curious now. Have you taught your kids stuck stories? If so, do you think they understand?

Thanks,

JoAnne

**Thu 01/05/2008 5:30 PM**

Hi JoAnne,

I did introduce the stuck story. We have read a stuck story everyday for the last two weeks and take it apart into the story components. We are keeping a running list on the wall - showing the different ways to get stuck and including the title to spark the student's memory.

We have together planned numerous stories- either out loud as a group, with the chart, or on paper using the chart. We planned a story together about a giraffe in a zoo. The students decided that he was really thirsty one frosty morning, but his water bowl was empty. He went over to a frosty, snowy pole and licked it and got his tongue stuck to the pole. They used a lion and zebra as the other two characters that participated in trying to help him get unstuck. We broke the story into pieces.

Day 1- We focused on the setting. Brainstormed nouns and verbs. Wrote 3-4 sentences introducing the setting at the beginning of the story.

Day 2- We focused on introducing the giraffe, his motive and how he became stuck.

Day 3- We brainstormed attempts that the lion would make to free the giraffe. Students chose one and wrote that portion of their story.

Day 4- Repeated day 3 with the zebra.

Day 5- Brainstormed how he got unstuck in a variety of ways (Act of God- sun beams melted the ice, working together, etc).

The students are really excited about the quality of their work. I think that they are finally seeing that if they take their time and pay attention from the beginning, they won't have as much to fix. Everyone is buzzing about it at school and I am talking it up like crazy. It is going so much better than I expected... even my weakest students are succeeding.

I was actually going to email you tonight to ask permission to blow the "sentence starter prompts with question words" pdf up as a 24 X 36 poster that I can leave on the wall for PATs. Have you ever thought about selling posters like this? My mom works at a printing company, and "the family rate" would be about \$20 each. I mentioned the idea in the staffroom and 11 out of 17 teachers are interested. Would it be ok for me to do this?

Thank you for your continued support. I would love to have the time to type out a few of the giraffe stories for you... but I am packing up the family for the weekend and we are heading down to Calgary to ride on Thomas the Tank Engine at Heritage Park!

I will try to email you next week!

Thanks again!

Take care.

Jolene

Hi Jolene,

You are welcome to print the sentence starter sheet as a poster. Please just copyright it J. Moore on the bottom. Thanks!

JoAnne

Mon 26/05/2008 11:22 PM

Hey there!

My students did amazing on the PAT! Out of the three classes, they got the highest marks!!! I would love to send you a few samples to read!

Thank you.

Jolene

#### A Few Notes:

1. Jolene attended the following two workshops:

**Writing with Results**

**Story Writing Mini-Lessons**

2. With her students she completed the **free** PDF units found on this web site:

**Teaching Sentence Structure Part One**

**Teaching Sentence Structure Part Two**

**Story Writing Mini-Lessons**

3. The sentence starter poster she made is found free on this web site:

**Varied Sentence Starters** (PDF file)

4. The five sentence paragraph she worked on with her students to teach sentence structure and sentence starters is found on pages 13-14 of the document Teaching Sentence Structure Part One. Student examples of these five sentence paragraphs can be found under the **PARAGRAPH** button on this web site.

5. Jolene used the teaching process found on the web site in the PDF **Teacher Modelling**. This process is found on the next page.

## Teacher Modelling

1. Read story models of what you wish students to imitate.

Literature: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Collect any useful nouns and verbs from the text.

3. Web story language

(sensory imagery, showing, dialogue) required for the section of the story you are going to work on.

4. Teacher Models

how to use the web to write a story section.

5. Students Write

between one and five sentences of their story using the **noun/verb** vocabulary web.

6. Students Share

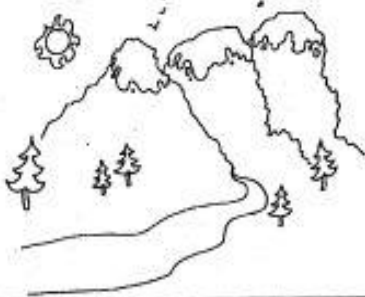
with each other and/or the class what they have written.

7. Students Edit

this small section of writing.

8. Process begins again starting at next section of the story.

### Setting: Forest



**Heard:**

woodpecker: tapped, knocked, hammered  
 owl: hooted, shrieked, screeched  
 coyote: howled, yipped, yowled  
 cricket: chirped, sang, clicked



**Saw:**

(evergreen, poplar, aspen, birch) trees: swayed, stretched, towered, rose, reached  
 mountains: loomed, towered, rose, stretched  
 path: twisted, turned, forked, disappeared  
 river: splashed, rushed, wound



**Felt:**

wind: tickled, ruffled, rustled, nipped, stung,  
 danced, cooled, whispered  
 sun: beamed, shone, warmed

### Setting: Forest

Authors use the tool of sensory imagery (what is heard, seen, felt, and smelled) combined with action words to build their settings. Circle (or add) the words from the web you would like to use in writing your own forest setting below. Next, write your own forest setting using the words you circled (or added) from the word web.



Looming, the mountains towered over Snowflake's little bunny. Woodpeckers tapped on an evergreen nearby as crickets chirped on a hollow log. Rushing, the river splashed over rocks. The wind whispered through the tall grass as the sun beamed down on Snowflake.

## Rationale

### **1. Webbing story language as the story is written:**

- \*broadens noun/verb vocabulary and provides concrete word choices
- \*enables students to immediately apply what has been learned into their stories
- \*taps into the strongest students' vocabulary and makes it available to the weakest writers
- \*provides a base of nouns and verbs to create sentences from or a springboard for strong writers to start from

### **2. Modelling for students in small sections:**

- \*illustrates how sentence starters can be varied with plural nouns or "ing" words (participles) just by choosing words from the web
- \*directly illustrates how great verbs are critical to creating interesting stories
- \*provides excellent writing models and guidance in every part of the story by dividing it into small sections
- \*keeps students on track in their writing by making teacher expectations clear

### **3. Students who write in small sections:**

- \*no longer have the pressure of trying to finish an entire story in one sitting
- \*are on task
- \*incorporate story language as they write, rather than adding it during editing

### **4. Students who share their writing by reading aloud in small sections:**

- \*are an inspiration to classmates
- \*often find their own mistakes and fix them in the moment of sharing

### **5. Students who edit in small sections:**

- \*are less overwhelmed by the task size and more willingly and easily locate their own mistakes.