



SESSION 17 - TEACHING NOTES - Skyship Adventure 1
Thursday 4th March 2020 9.30 – 10.30 am

It would be great for these narrative sessions if you could be reading Vashti Hardy's book Brightstorm to the class or Cogheart by Peter Bunzl.... or the sequels of either.

Creative Game

As usual, the show begins with a game for children to play. **Make sure that they have their notebooks and pencils ready and listen carefully. The game does NOT involve using the padlet. Children at home either play with a sibling or parent or write ideas rapidly in their notebooks.**

Today's Game – setting the scene

This session leads us into the final four sessions, which are all built around creating a story in which the children are crew members on a skyship. We will be writing an extended story with a new section added each session. Our previous work on dragons and unicorns may well come in handy!

The challenge in the initial game is to set the scene with some foreshadowing – which doesn't give the game away but where the author sets up the notion that things might be going to happen that will be dangerous. We will use a simple format by playing the 'but' game.

Partner A: You've probably been on an airship when... the skies are blue and the breeze just enough to give the engines a helping hand.

Partner B: But you should also try a trip when ... the winter winds are as sharp as knives, with the clouds darkening, for that is another matter.

The Objective – to rehearse contrasting sentences that might be used as a prelude, foreshadowing danger in a story.

Children's Audio – encourage children to listen carefully to the reading as it was chosen because it was well written but also because it was read aloud effectively. Later on, get the class to discuss why they think the reading was chosen.

The Objective – to listen attentively, enjoy and reflect on what makes effective writing and performance.

Gallery Challenge – *Draw a storyworld map for a skyship adventure*

This week the challenge is to draw a storyworld map for the adventure. You will need a landing place for the skyship somewhere on the map.

One of my favourite things about reading children's books is the inclusion of a map right at the beginning of the book, showing the landscape of the story. I thought it would be a great idea for the children to design and draw their own map showing the journey of the skyship and where it lands. The best approach is to check out on the internet to see how Kieran Larwood, author of *Podkin One-Ear*, draws maps of his story worlds: <https://www.kmlarwood.com/resources/> This is quite a brief clip but will set everybody off in the right direction. It's also worth googling 'storymaps' to pick up other ideas.



Padlet – the challenge is to try using the most common types of opening lines on the grid below, or any others that the children know, to hook the reader – the grid could be displayed or available in the children’s books – there is a larger version at the end of the notes:

Opening line	Type
1. Brad stared at the skyship in disgust.	Name
2. No one ever travelled to the Moravia because rumour had it that dragons lived there.	Place
3. To Mariana's surprise, the winged horse swooped down onto the skyship's deck.	To her surprise, horror, etc
4. To Ty's surprise, the cabin door opened and a rather chilly dragon stepped out.	To his surprise, horror, etc
5. Snow fell onto the skyship as she sailed on.	Weather
6. An African Grey parrot tapped on the porthole.	Animal
7. "Jump!" the Captain yelled.	Speech
8. Gemma had never believed in goblins.	Dismissing Fear
9. Usually, Faza enjoyed travelling by air.	Adverb

The Objective – to write a variety of opening sentences that capture a reader's attention or set the scene.

Jotcast activity – This activity prepares the children for writing an opening for their blog post. **The children's challenge is to introduce exciting action into Pie's story opening below which should be displayed or in children's books:**

Ty gripped the railings, his knuckles whitening. He gulped as the clouds engulfed the airship. He glanced at his twin sister Mariana who seemed to be enjoying it as the airship lurched from side to side. They had left the city behind about a week ago and should have been passing over the lowlands but this storm had blown them off course.

*At that moment,
Suddenly,
Without warning,
Abruptly,
Out of the blue,*

Objective – experiment with injecting action and dilemma early on into a story to create tension and hook the reader.

Blogging Activity – Write the opening for your skyship adventure.

Pie will read through and talk about the opening to his story start for Stargrazer. The challenge is to use some of the techniques to write a story opening for a skyship adventure.

Ideally, the children should have a copy of Pie's story so that they can see the way in which he structured his opening that foreshadows the events in the story. The text is below.

Objective – write an opening to a story, hooking the reader. Type of Writing – narrative openings.

Audio Challenge – If children want to record their own blog ensure that they have read it aloud a number of times. They should read it slowly and clearly with expression. This could be worked on in pairs or threes so that children can develop their performance.

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Stargrazer

You've probably been on an airship when the skies are blue and the breeze just enough to give the engines a helping hand. **Remember how** it feels to have the wind blowing through your hair, to see the fields and towns far below and to feel totally free of everyday life.

I bet you've enjoyed holiday flights across the bay, journeys to see distant relatives, knowing that once you have landed you will be able to relax for several weeks.

But you should also try a trip when the winter winds are as sharp as knives, with the clouds darkening, for that is another matter. **When the** thunder explodes like canon fire around you and a lightning strike would bring the airship down, **when the** rigging strains and the ship's engines falter, **that's when** an airship ride is not so much fun...

And some say they've seen sky pirates, hiding in the clouds, waiting to strike. **You probably won't believe this but some say** that there are flying beasts with claws that can tear apart even the toughest dragon's skin balloon.

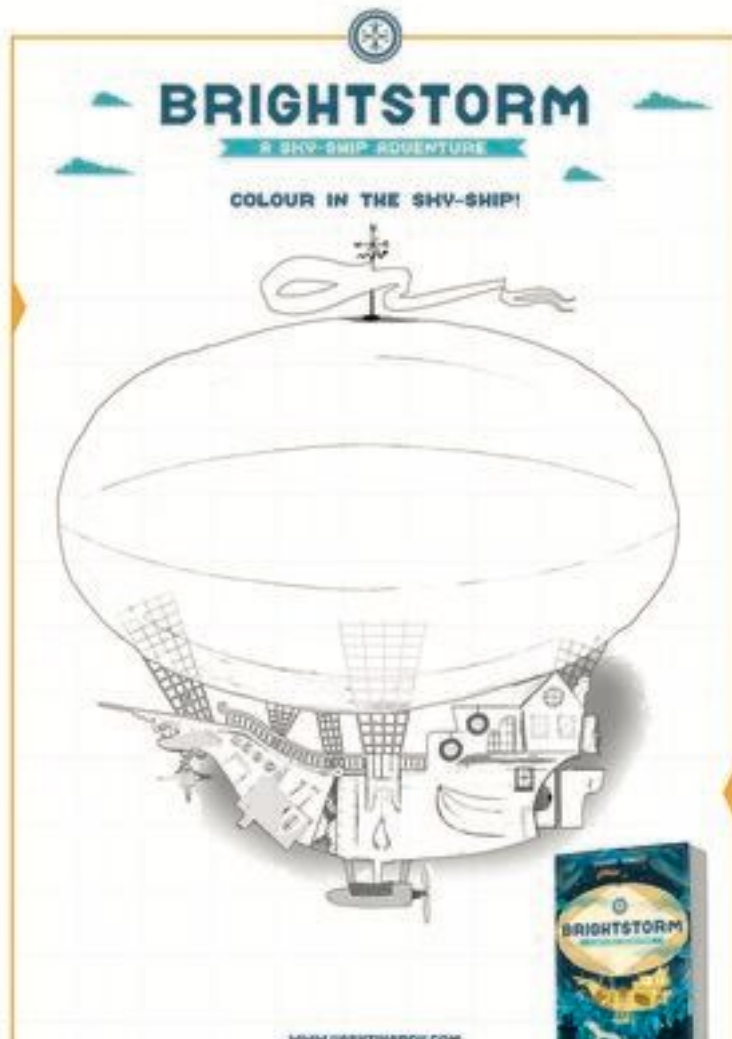
Ty gripped the railings, his knuckles whitening. He gulped as the clouds engulfed the airship. He glanced at his twin sister Mariana who seemed to be enjoying it as the airship lurched from side to side. They had left the city behind about a week ago and should have been passing over the lowlands but this storm had blown them off course.

At that moment, the sky dragons struck. Ty saw three of them streak out of a storm cloud and fire roared towards the Stargrazer. Captain O'Shea tugged the tiller to one side, just averting disaster and in one swift movement drove the engines as hard as she could

For a moment, the dragons disappeared as she steered the airship into a huge storm cloud to hide. Thunder grumbled around them and electricity crackled. Ty glanced at Mariana who was staring into the telescopian but it showed nothing. The clouds blocked its view. "Hold tight! Prepare to land!" Captain O'Shea barked over the megascope.

A moment later, the Stargrazer dipped below the clouds as air seeped out of the balloon and the engines stilled. They drifted down, buffeted from side to side by the storm. Ty and Mariana stared up, searching for the dragons. Had they managed to evade to them?

1. Drawing challenge: draw your skyship.



The image on the right is a handy download from Vashti's website – please download from her site as the image will be stronger. The image on the left is by Phoebe from Cockington Primary.

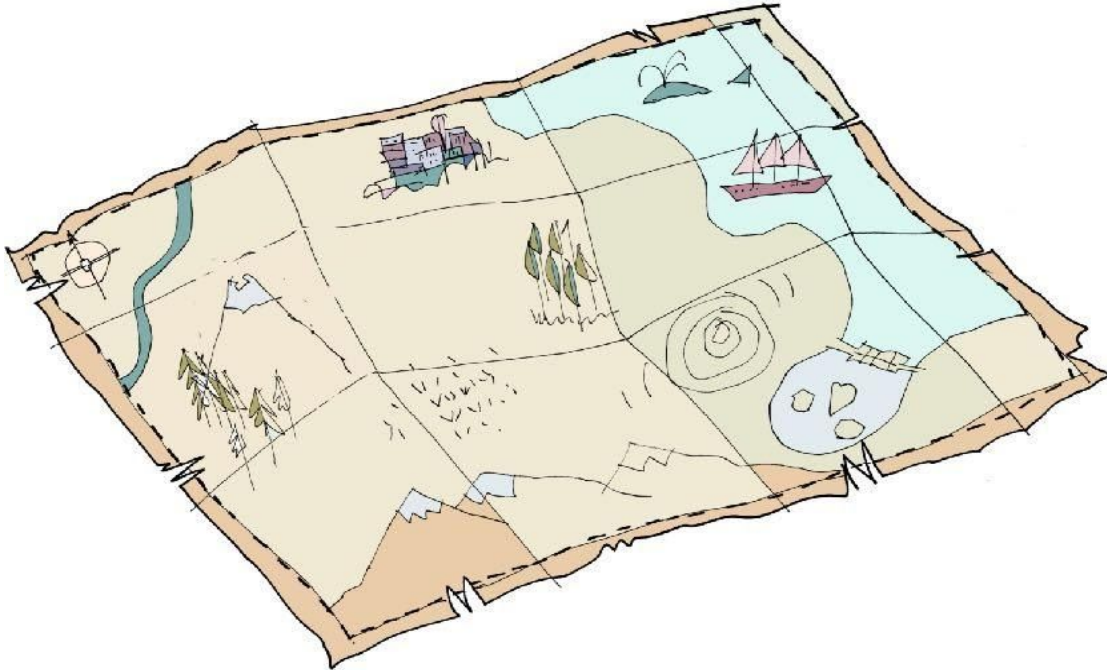
2. Drawing challenge: draw a storyworld map for your skyship adventure. You will need one place where the skyship is forced to land.

One of my favourite things about reading children's books is when you find a map right at the beginning showing the landscape of the story. I thought it would be a great idea for the children to design and draw their own map showing the journey of the skyship and where it lands. Check out on the internet to see how Kieran Larwood, author of *Podkin One-Ear*, draws maps of his story worlds:

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- ★ Step 1: draw the outline of your map , showing where the skyship will travel during its journey and where it lands.
- ★ Step 2: fill in the landmarks: trees, rivers, boulders, mountains, volcano, cities, sea, swamps
- ★ Step 3: make up names for the different areas of your map
- ★ Step 4: stain the map to make it look old by using a used (and cool) tea bag to turn the paper brown. You don't need to get it that wet for it to change colour

★ Step 5: When it is dry, cut or rip the edges of the paper to make it look old and worn.







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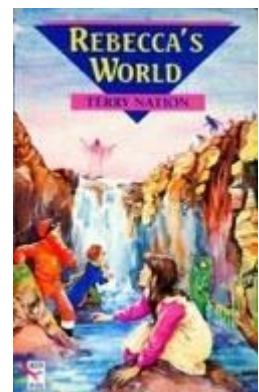


Please find below an article written by Vashti Hardy, author of Brightstorm, about using world building and map drawing to create a magical world for an adventure.

We interviewed Vashti on Radioblogging.net on the 27th March. The interview starts at 18.39 on the counter. She reads from Darkwhispers which starts at 42.59 on the counter:
<https://radioblogging.net/index.php/2020/03/26/friday-27th-march/>

Maps & Storytelling – Vashti Hardy

I've always had a visual imagination. The first longer book read to me by a teacher in school was Rebecca's World by Terry Nation, a book that changed everything for me. I can still see the pink fog as though I was stepping into the story alongside Rebecca as she embarked on an adventure in a strange new world. I realised then that imagination was like having a superpower; through story you can go anywhere and make anything possible – it's a Tardis of infinite possibility. I knew at the point of reading Rebecca's World that one day I wanted to create stories, to build worlds beyond the confines of our own, where I could journey beyond what is, and imagine what could be.



It took me many years to make that dream a realisation, and there were times I felt it wasn't something that someone 'ordinary' like me could do. Surely writers were special beings whose words flowed off their pens in some magical way? It was in my twenties that I read something that Philip Pullman had written that again changed my outlook. It went something along the lines of, *"When people see the finished book, they see the swan gliding gracefully along the surface. What they don't see are the feet kicking furiously beneath the water."* Reading this shifted my thought process. Nobody finds it straightforward to write a book; we all have to work hard at our pursuits, whatever they may be. Pullman's words gave me the extra nudge I needed; it's all right to have a go, for it to be hard – that's completely normal.



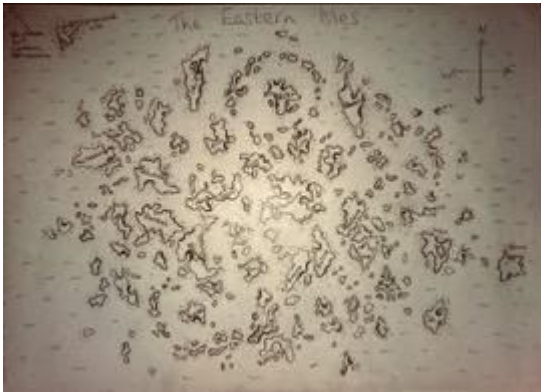
As I've grown as a writer, one of the most interesting things I've discovered is that writing is about so much more than 'writing'. This may sound like a strange thing to say, but what I mean is that writing goes far beyond the physical act of writing. My process is probably split 50/50 between physical writing and another side: the blue sky thought time and other creative inputs. Among other things, these include listening to music, collecting images on Pinterest, and a particular favourite of mine: drawing maps.

Drawing a map of the story world is one of the first things I do when starting a new project. When I read a story, I want to feel transported into the world, I don't want to feel that there are fuzzy edges or blank spaces. I want to be immersed and truly *believe*, in the way that we are all, at some time in our lives, drawn to push the back of the wardrobe on the off chance that it might be today that we finally get into Narnia. That's what good story tellers do for me: they breathe life into the impossible and make it exist. So as part of making my worlds begin to 'exist', I draw a map. It's also a useful way to plot out the story visually. A map gives me a sense of what's possible and what the parameters and time scales could be too.

The most popular workshop I run in schools is fantasy map making. I find the children throw themselves into the activity and adore the opportunity of taking their own ideas and creating their own worlds, driven by their particular interests and passions. It's a great way of engaging the children who might not usually see themselves as 'writers', and showing them that there are different ways into story telling. I support the children with an input and imagery and some map creation tips, and I always find they fly. I adore talking to them about their ideas as they work and they are always keen to share. By including three or more potential hazards or obstacles on their character's journeys, children discover that they have plotted out an entire story arc without writing a word. Seeing the children enthused, teachers often run with this and sometimes shift their upcoming



planning so that the children can go on to write their stories. Freedom and ownership is a powerful thing.



This is something that teachers may like to try themselves. If you've read Brightstorm as a class, you could set an activity where children create their own fantasy maps based on

Brightstorm, imagining that they are drawing a new world for the crew of the Aurora to explore. Ask them to include at least three hazard points on the map, for example, a volcano that erupts with magic spells, a forest of lost memories, the bottomless chasm of doom (that type of thing!). Children decide where home/the starting point is and where/what the goal is (to reach an island no-one has set foot on, to retrieve a lost explorer etc.). There are various levels of challenge according to ability, for example, some children may measure the journey to scale and add this to their map, or consider climate variables and how this effects the type of hazards. They could imaginatively select vocabulary to evoke a sense of time and place, and apply standard geographical map features such as direction and landmarks.

There are many activities that could lead in or follow on from this. Here are some ideas:

- Research and analyse a range of fantasy maps from books.

- Use Brightstorm or Darkwhispers maps to mark on key events in the story (for classes who have read as a class novel).
- Create a class Pinterest board or scrapbook of pictures to inspire possible story events e.g. natural hazards, mythical creatures.
- Research commonly used real world map features.
- Write a hazardous scene from their own fantasy adventure stories based on their maps, or the complete story.
- Create a glossary for your fantasy world.
- Begin their own creative writing journals - unmarked spaces where they can collect images, jot story ideas, draw maps, design cover art, free write etc.
- Create playlists for their stories to aid with writing the scene - e.g. listen to movie soundtracks to evoke certain moods within a story: the call to adventure, danger, sadness, joy, saying goodbye, fun etc. Examples I would recommend are the soundtracks from the Narnia films, How to Train Your Dragon, Harry Potter and so on!

I hope you enjoy trying out some of the activities and that perhaps some of your young writers, who may often find the process tricky, begin to see that writing can be a multi-creative process and a huge amount of fun!

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Story openings

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