

Teaching Live | Season 6 | Sky Falls | Week 5 | Teaching Notes
| Story opening and scene setting | Monday 6th June 2022

Anything in **blue** should be read before the session – I will also put in **red** any grids or sentences or instructions that should ideally be in the children's books. **The children need:**

- **Notebooks/ writing journals and pencils**
- **access to a tablet**
- **be able to see the main screen**

Today's Game – *The Objective – tune into oral retelling of a known story in first person form.* **David and Pie will model the game first which involves inventing a diary entry for a well-known fairytale event.**

Jack and the Beanstalk

Little Red Riding Hood

Cinderella

Rumplestiltskin

Sleeping Beauty

Magic Porridge Pot

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Hansel and Gretel, etc

Today was amazing. I woke up early and noticed that something was covering the window. It was three massive beanstalks!

Mum said that the beans must have been magic as they have grown at such a rate. Would you believe it, they have grown right up to the sky? Without thinking about it and because I like a challenge, I thought I'd climb up and see what was at the top...

Padlet – Objective – to practise various ways to create a story opening.

On the padlet, experiment with 4 types of opening sentence:

- **Use speech to give a warning.**

“Don’t go near that old house,” snapped Mrs Hill.

“Stay away from the end of the garden,” muttered Mr Onto.

- **Use the character’s name and show what they are feeling through what they are doing.**

Betty glared out of the window, tapping her foot impatiently.

Joseph scowled at Mrs Hill, clutching the box that held his gas mask.

Liz slumped in the corner, closing her eyes and beginning to daydream.

- **Use the setting to build an atmosphere.**

Outside, the wind howled and snow blew across the village. **Inside**, the candle flames flickered and Betty huddled to keep warm.

Outside, the sun blazed. **Inside**, Mrs Hill stood in the darkness and watched as Joseph succumbed to sleep.

- **Start with a question to hook the reader.**

“Where are you two going?” hissed Mrs Buckley, beckoning to the children.

“I don’t advise getting too close,” said Mrs Hill, stepping back from the cage.

Jotcast activity - *The Objective* – to experiment with various types of story opening. This activity prepares the children for the opening of the blog post that they will write.

- **something out of the ordinary or unexpected** – *The metal gates swung open and he heard a long, low growl.*
- **mention a monster** – *Bob had always been afraid of lions.*
- **dismiss a monster** – *Simrach had never worried about snakes.*
- **an exclamation** – *“Stop!” she yelled, coiling the chain around her shoulders like a sleeping snake.*
- **something scary in the setting** – *On the other side of the wall was an enormous cage and inside stood a huge shadow.*
- **starting with a negative character** – *The old man glared at Jo.*
- **an unusual characteristic** – *Mrs Jenkins had never wanted to own a gorilla, let alone an elephant.*

Gallery Challenge – Design the opening on a double spread using pictures and patterns.

Blogging Activity – Write the story opening

The focus for this part of the story is to reveal that the person that the evacuee is staying with has something secret that is hidden. The story pattern over 4 sessions is as follows:

MC finds out the secret
MC protects the secret
The secret is discovered
MC saves the day

Objective – write a dramatic story opening to draw in the reader and make them want to read more.

When the Rain Falls

Joseph Braddock had not wanted to leave home. He stared out of the window of the attic bedroom, across miles of snow-covered fields and clenched his fists. He missed the traffic, the bustle of the city and anyway, the room smelled damp. The attic room was where Mrs Hills' son slept but he was in France fighting in the war. She didn't like to be reminded about her son. She welled up and sniffed whenever the war was mentioned. Joseph was no fool and, after one conversation, he had learned not to touch on the matter.

His first day at the school had come and gone. The teacher was a kindly enough man called Mr Steward. He had soon discovered that Joseph could neither read nor write. Sitting at the back of the schoolroom, Joseph worked sulkily with a copy book and scratchy pen. His letters looked like a spider had crawled across the page. Joseph kept his head down all day, put his anger inside a box, and shot out of the door as soon as the school bell rang.

The weeks rumbled by and Joseph began to carve out a routine. His days were spent bored at school, scratching spidery letters, and then helping Mrs Hill. The garden had been dug up and she grew potatoes, carrots, lettuces and various vegetables that Joseph didn't know existed. He locked the chickens in at night, collected eggs in the morning and scratched the back of an enormous pig that Mrs Hill was fattening up. Soon, the winter left the valley and spring arrived with a flourish of green warmth.

Last thing at night, Joseph stood at the attic window, watching nothing happen in the valley as the sun slipped away. Nothing happened, except for one thing. Every night, Mrs Hill took a lantern, left the cottage and made her way down into

Spinney's Acre. This was a large wood on the edge of the village. He watched her from his attic room, leaning out of the window and tracking the gleam of lantern light. What was she doing? Why did she go down to the wood every night?

Joseph did not have to wait all that long to find out. One night, at the start of May, when the trees had come into leaf and the bluebells covered the woods, she asked Joseph to follow her. The lantern bobbed ahead and Joseph trudged sulkily behind. He was not yet ready to show her that he was beginning to enjoy his new life.

The moon shone down a silver light and stars studded the night sky but inside Spinney's Acre, it was dark. The lantern cast shadows that in Joseph's imagination became goblins that might steal you away. He hurried after Mrs Hill.

She stopped by a thicket of brambles woven together. Joseph peered into the bushes. He could smell something intense, meaty and distinctly animal. Then two green eyes appeared out of the darkness. Something growled, long, low and deep. A throaty snarl like no other. Joseph gasped. He was looking at an enormous cat bigger than any he had ever seen. "Meet Aphrodite," Mrs Hill whispered, "She's a panther. I found her as a cub, lost in the snow."

Aphrodite stared at Joseph and padded forwards towards where Joseph stood, paralysed with fear.



Appendix - Effective Openings and Endings

Pile up books and let children sort out openings to stories that grab them and make them want to read on. Try categorising openings into different types, for example:

- **Warning** – *‘Don’t you go near that old house,’ snapped Mr Korkle ...*
- **Mentioning the monster** – *Timo had never believed in ghosts ...*
- **Using the character’s name and showing what they are feeling through what they are doing** – *Betty glared out of the window, tapping her foot impatiently.*
- **The setting** – *Outside the castle, the wind howled and snow blew across the forest ...*
- **Starting with a question** – *“Where are you two going?” hissed Mrs Buckley ...*

Read openings to favourite books and imitate the same approaches.

Many stories begin with some sort of ‘trigger’ that is designed to hook the reader’s interest. This could be:

- **something dramatic** – *A car screeched round the corner...*
- **something out of the ordinary** – *The Old Bridge was sinking ...*
- **an odd character** – *At the end of the lane, a clown appeared ...*
- **a strange object** – *On the ground was an enormous broomstick*

- **mentioning a monster** – *Baz had always been afraid of trolls ...*
- **dismissing a monster** – *Simrach had never believed in ghosts ...*
- **a warning** – *‘Don’t play by the canal. It’s dangerous!’*
- **a question** – *‘Where are you going?’*
- **an exclamation** – *‘Run for it!’*
- **a magical object** – *The teapot stretched its legs and tiptoed across the table ...*
- **something scary in the setting** – *In the distance a dark storm cloud appeared ... or even scarier* – *She thought that she saw a shadow but it was gone before she could be certain.*
- **starting with a native character** – *The old man glared at Sivo as he walked by ...*
- **an unusual characteristic** – *Mrs Jenkins had once been a wrestler.*

Collect openings from stories and list them – as potential patterns for writing or just because they remind us of stories that we love. Here is one of my favourite openings plus an imitation:

"Where's Papa going with that axe?" said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast. 'Charlotte's Web' (EB White)

"What are you going to do with that dynamite?" said Billi to his Father as they settled down to watch the television. (Me)

It is worth comparing openings and endings. The children will soon realise that the opening draws the reader into the story. Try seeking out the words or ideas that ‘hook’ us in as readers. Make lists of possibilities and ‘magpie’ them for future use. The opening is also setting up the story. We can start with:

- **a character** – who is this person? It can help to start with a problem – hunger, loneliness, poverty, greed. Or focus on what the character really wants. Send them on a mission to get something or go somewhere.

- **a setting** – make this a special place or use it to create atmosphere. Introduce a character or special creature or object. Set the mood by describing the setting and then begin the action.
- **an event** – start with an explosive bang by having something unexpected or dramatic happening. Then introduce the main character who is involved or a bystander. Lure the reader in by making them feel sorry for the character.

The end of a story usually wraps the tale up but also shows the reader how the character’s feelings have changed – *Bill grinned* – or comments on what has been learned – *They knew it had been stupid ...* stories are about ourselves – what happens to us and how we are changed. Try teaching the children to save an extra paragraph at the end of a story, after the story has been resolved, in which they will show the change or comment on what has happened. This could be done by having a character comment (*“I’ll never go down a rabbit hole again!”*) or by the narrator commenting (*The children knew that they would never steal again.*).

Play a game where you provide 5 openings and their endings – muddled up. Can the children match the openings and their partner endings? Provide openings or endings. Discuss what is happening.

Toolkit for Openings – to hook the reader’s interest and set up the story, you can

- Use a ‘hook’ to make the reader want to read on – *Usually, John enjoyed walking to school but ...*
- Start with a character – *Bill stared at the goblin and smiled;* show how your character feels – *Mandy felt sad.*
- Start with a setting – *The forest was cold in winter ...*
- Start with action – *Jo ran.*

- Set up the story and get it going with a 'trigger' – someone wants something, is warned not to do something, has to go somewhere, is threatened, has lost something ...

Toolkit for Endings – to round the story off, you can

- Reread the opening and make a link
- Show how the main character's feelings have changed – *Bill grinned.*
- Let the narrator comment on what has been learned – *They knew it had been stupid ...*
- Let a character comment – *"I'll never run away again," sniffed Barry.*