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CREATIVE WRITING TOOLKIT
STUDENT WORKSHEETS
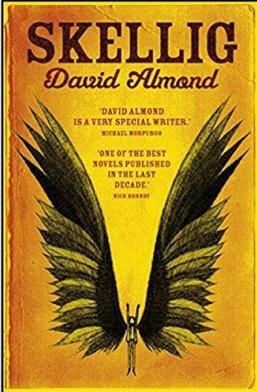
NOVEMBER 2018

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Introduction: In pairs, read the first three paragraphs of **Skellig**, discuss the questions below and make notes in the spaces. Then, change partners and compare your notes.

Point of View Who is telling the story?	**Main Characters** Who are they?	**Setting** Where does it happen?

I found him in the garage on a Sunday afternoon. It was the day after we moved into Falconer Road. The winter was ending. Mum had said we'd be moving just in time for the spring. Nobody else was there. Just me. The others were inside the house with Dr. Death, worrying about the baby.

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Skellig (1998) by David Almond

Image: www.davidalmond.com

Plot What happens?	**Style** What's the language like?	**Theme** What's it about?

Read about the plot, characters and themes at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skellig

Narrative perspective: Who is going to tell the story?

It's an important question**: Is the author (writer) the narrator (storyteller)?**

Here are the opening sentences from three novels. What do they all have in common?

> I found him in the garage on a Sunday afternoon. It was the day after we moved into Falconer Road.
> **Skellig** (1998) by David Almond
>
> When I was four months old, my mother died suddenly and my father was left to look after me all by himself.
> **Danny the Champion of the World** (1975) by Roald Dahl
>
> Call me Ishmael.
> **Moby Dick** (1851) by Herman Melville

Are these examples of stories told in the **first person** or in the **third person**? Underline all the words in the texts that show you who the narrator (storyteller) is.

Now look at the opening sentence from a different novel about a father and his son:

> When he woke in the woods in the dark and the cold of the night he'd reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him.
> **The Road** (2006) by Cormac McCarthy
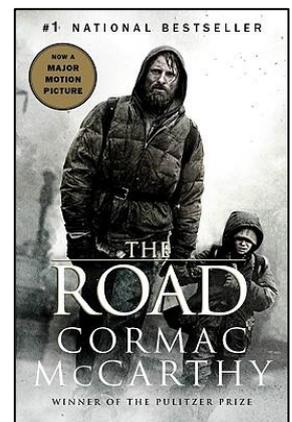
How is **The Road** different from the other three stories?

Image: www.alibris.com/The-Road

Here are some questions to help you think about the importance of point of view (the answers are not always right or wrong):

- Who 'sees' and describes the action in **The Road**?
  Is it the writer or one of his characters?

- Will this make it easier or harder for the writer to describe what happens to the two main characters? Why?

- Will this make it easier or harder for the writer to describe the two main characters, their thoughts and their feelings? Why?

- Will this make the story more or less truthful? Why?

What do you prefer to read – a story written in the first or the third person? Why?

Stories are about characters and the things that happen to them.

Some of the most famous stories of all time are named after the main character: Beowulf, Hamlet, Jane Eyre, Oliver Twist, and Frankenstein are just a few of them.
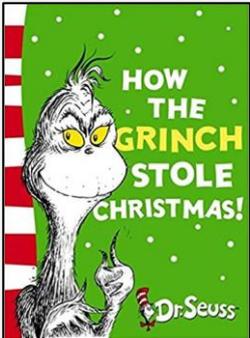
There are four main types of character in literature: **flat**, **static**, **round** and **dynamic**

Match the correct adjective with the correct definition:

	These are three-dimensional characters. We don't just get to know what they look like, but also how they think and feel. They're complex and we see the good and bad in them in them. They feel like real people
	These characters have experiences that change them between the beginning and end of the story. Their psychology is at the heart of the story and we learn a lot about their motives and feelings at different times.
	These characters don't change much between the beginning and the end of the story. As characters they are less important in some ways than what happens to and around them. James Bond is a good example.
	These are two-dimensional characters. We don't know a lot about them and the writer uses them as examples of a type (sometimes a stereotype) of person. We usually only see one side to them - good or bad.

Look at the two extracts below. Which character adjectives best describe the Grinch and Scrooge (you can use two)?

Image: www.amazon.co.uk

The **Grinch** *hated* Christmas!
The whole Christmas season!
It *could* be his head wasn't screwed on just right.
It *could* be, perhaps, that his shoes were too tight.
[*and ….at the end of the story*]
Well …in *Who*-ville they say,
That the Grinch's small heart,
Grew three sizes that day!
How the Grinch Stole Christmas (1957) by Dr Seuss

Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire, secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice.
A Christmas Carol (1843) by Charles Dickens

Now think of some of your favourite characters. What type of character are they?

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Plot is what happens in a story – the sequence of events.

When you start to plan a story, you can use **a storyboard** to map out the different events.

| boy meets girl | ▷ | fall in love | ▷ | live happily ever after |
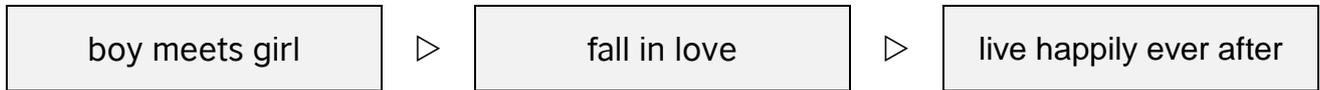
Plots can be very simple or very complicated, but they always take the characters and the reader on **a journey from A to B**. This journey is the **storyline** – another word for plot.

Flat storylines are boring because nothing changes. Good stories all have interesting shapes. The writer **Kurt Vonnegut** gave a very funny and very clever talk about the shape of stories. You can watch it here: https://tinyurl.com/l4qy5nq
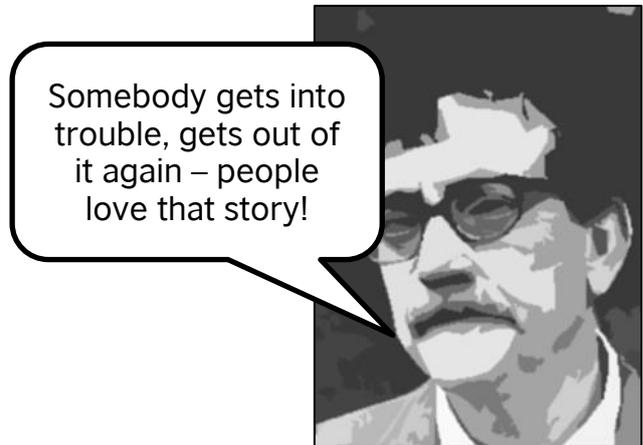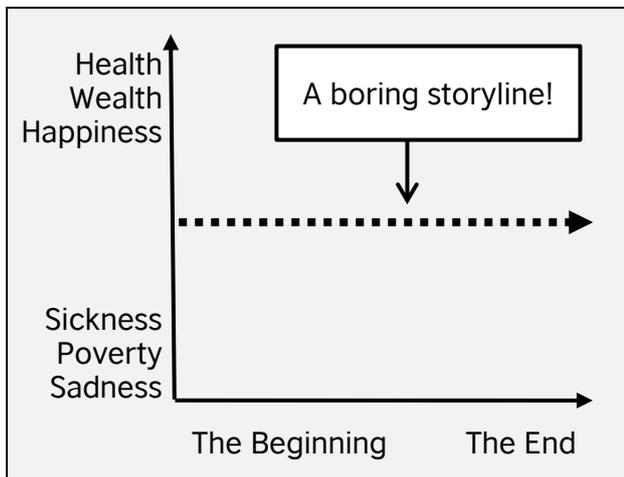

Health
Wealth
Happiness

A boring storyline!

Sickness
Poverty
Sadness

The Beginning   The End

Somebody gets into trouble, gets out of it again – people love that story!

Image: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_Vonnegut

Some people say there are just seven basic plot types.
What happens to the protagonist (the main character) in each story? Match them:

1	Overcoming the monster		They go in search of something important
2	Rags to riches		They start out bad, but become a better person
3	The quest		They have a few problems but it all ends well
4	Voyage and return		They have faults that mean it all ends badly
5	Comedy		They travel to a strange place and home again
6	Tragedy		They find happiness or success
7	Rebirth		They have to defeat their rival or enemy

Think of stories you have read (or seen – films). Do you recognise these plot types?

Style is an important part of any story.

The writer's choice and use of **words**, **sentence structure** and **figurative language** all contribute to the style of their writing – their writer's 'voice'.

A writer's choice of style may be influenced by:

- their audience (readers)
- the type of story they are telling
- the narrative point of view they have chosen (first person/third person)
- their personal preferences and beliefs about style

Look at these examples of very different style and see if you can identify some of the features that make them different.

The sun did not shine.
It was too wet to play.
So we sat in the house
All that cold, cold, wet day.

I sat there with Sally.
We sat there, we two.
And I said, "How I wish
We had something to do!"

The Cat in the Hat (1957) by Doctor Seuss

Images: www.amazon.co.uk
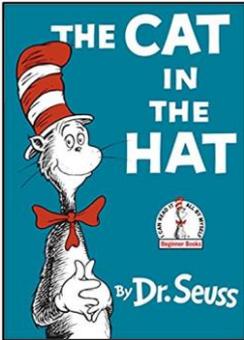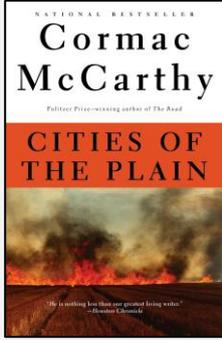
They stood in the doorway and stomped the rain from their boots and swung their hats and wiped the water from their faces. Out in the street the rain slashed through the standing water driving the gaudy red colours of the neon signs to wander and seethe and rain danced on the steel tops of the cars parked along the curb.

Cities of the Plain (1998) by Cormac McCarthy
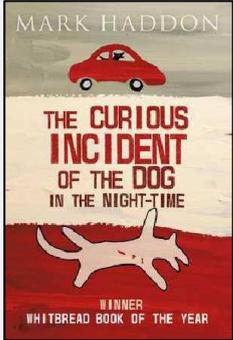
It was 7 minutes after midnight. The dog was lying on the grass in the middle of the lawn in front of Mrs Shears' house. Its eyes were closed. It looked as if it was running on its side, the way dogs run when they think they are chasing a cat in a dream. But the dog was not running or asleep. The dog was dead. There was a garden fork sticking out of the dog.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time (2003) by Mark Haddon

Which of the three styles do you find easiest to read? Why?

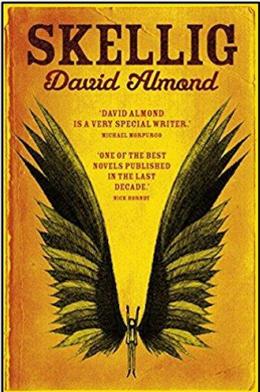**Which one makes you want to read the rest of the story? Why?**

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