The Comprehensive Narrative Writing Guide

- Character/Problem/Solution
- Personal Experience
- Imaginative
- Creative Narratives

All the Skills you Need to Teach Good Writing

by Barbara Mariconda & Dea Paoletta Auray

Empowering Writers

Second Edition

Teacher Friendly · Data Driven · Proven Results
SECTION 3: Elaborative Detail

Introduction to Elaborative Detail

Elaborative detail is what brings life to the narrative. It allows the reader to experience the story world through the five senses of the main character and adds richness and substance to the writing. Specific, sensory description is what elaborative detail is all about. Once students learn how to generate elaborative detail their writing improves dramatically.

Concepts Students Need

There are a number of distinct concepts and awarenesses students need in order to generate elaborative detail successfully. These include:

1.) Being able to identify story critical characters, settings, and objects in their stories that beg for elaborative detail. In this way students can avoid adding indiscriminate adjectives that add nothing to the overall strength and power of the piece. Instead, they focus the description on characters, settings, and objects that are important to the story.

2.) They also must recognize the power of specific rather than general details. (Showing rather than telling.) Words such as: nice, fun, awesome, terrific, great, interesting, big, pretty, etc., carry very little specific meaning and create only very general impressions.

3.) Additionally, they must see, through the modeling process, the effectiveness of using specific, productive detail generating questions. Through the modeling process they will hear, practice, and learn the kind of internal questioning an author undertakes in order to generate powerful detail. Students will also begin to recognize common weakness - listing details (a grocery list) and redundant sentence structure (a broken record) and master techniques to address these common pitfalls.

4.) Finally, students will learn how to elaborate on what feelings look like - again, showing rather than telling. This technique of showing how a character feels as opposed to telling how they feel is a powerful character development tool.

All of these skills are addressed in a variety of lessons for students with a wide range of age and experience. See the lesson plan pages for specific information on each of these skill areas. The lesson plan pages include the objectives, procedures, and creative connections you need to teach these skill successfully.
Lesson Plans –

How to Generate Elaborative Detail

• Note the sentence variety in the elaborative segment describing the wheel barrow. It was not a “grocery list”—“It was big, old, gray, peeling, in good shape.” Nor was it a “broken record”—“It was big. It was old. It was gray. It was peeling. It was, it was, it was…” Instead, each sentence began in a slightly different way. The elaborative segment allows the reader to see the wheel barrow through the five senses of the main character. The vivid word choice and specific detail not only make for an interesting paragraph, but become powerful tools for building student vocabulary.

Below, you will find a generic list of detail generating sentences that you may apply when creating elaborative segments of story critical characters, settings, objects:

MENU OF DETAIL GENERATING QUESTIONS AND SENTENCE STARTERS

QUESTIONS ABOUT A STORY CRITICAL CHARACTER -
• How tall/big was this character? • What color hair/eyes? • How old was the character? • What kind of eyes/nose/mouth/ears did he/she have? • What kind/color of hair did he/she have? (long, short, curly, straight, etc.) • What kind of marks, scars, or distinguishing characteristics did he/she have? • What was he/she wearing? • What kind of expression was on his/her face? • How did this character make you feel? • Who or what did this character remind you of?

QUESTIONS ABOUT A STORY CRITICAL SETTING -
• What was the temperature/weather like? • What kinds of trees/plants grew there? • How did the air feel? • What kinds of animals were there? • What kinds of buildings were there? • What kind of objects were around? • What kinds of sounds did you hear? • How did you feel about being there? • What did you smell?

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT A STORY CRITICAL OBJECT -
• What color was it? • What did it feel like? • What was its shape? • What size was it? • How old was it? • What was it made of? • What did it smell like? • What kind of sound did it make? • How heavy was it? • Who did it belong to? • Where did it come from? • What did it remind you of?

Notice that none of these are yes/no questions! Detail generating questions must be specific and must ask for particulars—not true/false/positive/negative! These are just some suggestions. Not all of them are applicable all the time, nor are these the only questions you can ask - students will likely think of other effective questions to add to this list.
WHAT FEELINGS LOOK LIKE

What do you look like when you’re angry? How do you look when you’re sad, or happy, tired, or cold? Look at the list of feelings below. Pantomime each feeling with a group of friends. Use facial expressions and body language. See if you can guess the feeling they are trying to show.

- HAPPY  - SAD  - HOT  - TIRED  - ANGRY
- SHOCKED  - COLD  - SHY  - FRIGHTENED

Now, use a line to connect each feeling with what that feeling looks like:

Tired
- smile on face  - heart leaps  - jump up and down
- hands clasped together  - eyes open wide

Cold
- eyes well up  - lips quiver  - heart drops  - wring hands

Hot
- brow furrowed  - frown  - fists clenched  - heart pounds
- stamp feet  - teeth clenched

Angry
- mouth drops open  - eyes open wide  - heart pounds
- cover mouth with your hand  - jump back  - gasp

Happy
- slump  - yawn  - eyes droop  - legs feel heavy

Sad
- sweat beads on forehead  - face gets red  - wipe your brow
- move slowly  - fan yourself

Shocked
- shiver  - teeth chatter  - hug yourself  - blow into your hands
- rub hands together

Frightened
- heart pounds  - eyes wide open  - start to sweat  - knees feel weak
- butterflies in stomach  - mouth drops open
SHOWING RATHER THAN TELLING HOW CHARACTERS FEEL

Showing how a story character feels allows the reader to get to know that character better and to empathize with and relate to the character. Sometimes authors will simply tell how the character feels. This is not as entertaining or as powerful as "showing" those feelings. Read each pair of story segments below. Circle the example that SHOWS rather than TELLS.

1.) Philip felt furious.

or....

Philip stood with his arms crossed. He was breathing heavily, trying to stay calm. His teeth were clenched and he could feel his face turning red. He thought his heart might pound right out of his chest.

2.) Ann’s face felt hot. She looked down, hoping no one would see her. The other kids’ eyes seemed to bore into her. She turned around and walked quickly in the other direction. Every second that they stared at her felt like an hour.

or...

Ann was embarrassed.

3.) Maria was shocked.

or...

Maria was speechless. She gasped and her mouth hung open. Her eyes nearly popped out of her head.

BONUS: Revise the following segment. First, identify what feeling the character would be experiencing. Then write an elaborative segment in which the main character SHOWS rather than TELLS how she feels.

Julie was scared when she saw the huge snarling dog running toward her.
Before and After Revision Activities -
Skill: Elaborative Detail

Read this description of how the character is feeling. It tells rather than shows. It is BORING!

Everyone could see that Louisa was really, really mad!

Revise this by SHOWING rather than TELLING. Be sure to describe her facial expression, body language, and even any sounds she made!
SECTION 4: Suspense

Introduction to Suspense

A sense of suspense and anticipation is what hooks the reader and moves the story into the main event. Suspense building raises questions in the reader’s mind. If the main character is wondering or worrying, so is the reader! The reader is so eager, anxious or involved that they feel compelled to read on to relieve the worry, fulfill the wonder, and answer the questions. Suspense, contrary to what people often think, does not have to be scary. It certainly can be, as readers love to be frightened (a powerful entertainment tool). But, another way to look at suspense is as story tension or a sense of anticipation.

There are several ways to build suspense or anticipation:

- **Story Questions**

  Story questions can be raised directly or indirectly. The simplest way (directly) is to have your main character raise a question - to wonder or worry. In turn, the reader wonders and worries as well. The indirect approach involves telling the reader only part of what is going on - just a hint. This raises questions in the readers’ mind and compels them to read on.

  ex. Catherine couldn’t believe her eyes. What in the world did Grandma have in that huge wrapped package? (Catherine and the reader wonder what’s inside - and, if it is a gift for Catherine.)

- **Word Referents**

  Tease the reader by not immediately revealing what “it” is. Describe a story critical character or object without naming it. Use word referents instead.

  ex. Instead of writing: *I saw a dragon in the cave. Use word referents. The creature was huge and dark as night. It made a soft rumbling sound. I could feel the mythical beast’s hot breath on my face. (What is it? The reader is dying to know!)*

  Again, this doesn’t need to be scary - read this example which provides a sense of anticipation:

  *Staring into the large box I felt my mouth curl into a smile. My heart began to race at the amazing gift inside. I covered my mouth, stifling the laugh I felt ready to erupt. I couldn’t believe my good luck!*

- **The Magic of 3** This technique involves the convention in which a series of three sensory hints (involving any of the senses) are provided in a way that builds tension - the third hint leading directly to a revelation. *(see example next page)*
The Magic of Three


2. You see a fleeting shadow. Again, you try to determine what it could be, but don’t notice anything unusual. You start to worry.

3. You feel something brush past you. You turn. There it is! (revelation)

When building suspense, and particularly when using the Magic of Three, authors use **red flag words and phrases** to grab the readers’ attention, to alert the reader to the fact that something significant is about to happen. Below is a list of red flag words and phrases. Certainly, you will come up with even more - feel free to add them to the list. You can even challenge students to find examples in literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RED FLAG WORDS AND PHRASES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suddenly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A moment later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The next thing I knew</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These red flag words or phrases may be used effectively to introduce each hint in the Magic of Three sequence.

**Ex. Just then** I heard a peculiar rustling sound in the underbrush. I slowed down and glanced into the bushes. The sound stopped and I didn’t notice anything out of the ordinary. I shrugged and walked on.

**A moment later** I caught a glimpse of something moving off behind the trees. I froze and peered into the darkness. Again, I didn’t see a thing. Feeling uneasy, I turned back to the path and began to walk more quickly.

**Without warning** the ground began to tremble. I spun around and gasped. I found myself facing what could only have been Big Foot himself!

Red flag words and phrases can also be used effectively along with story questions and word referents. These transitional phrases help to move the action forward in a suspenseful way.

On page 219 you will find a template for guiding young students through the Magic of Three sequence. All of the important elements (the hints, reactions, and ultimately, the revelation) are marked as reminders for students. Also, the red flag word/phrase list will appear on the next page so that the entire page may be reproduced as a student reference sheet. Keep it in their writing folders for reference throughout the lessons on suspense.
In order to teach suspense, the same methodology is used: whole class instruction for the purpose of presenting examples from LITERATURE, MODELING, GUIDED PRACTICE, and eventually, APPLICATION.

Here are several excellent examples of suspense in literature for use in introducing the skill to your class. The first examples are useful at any grade level, the last two examples, because of the nature of the content, are better suited to students in middle school and beyond.

"Suddenly she froze. There was something coming up the street on the opposite side. It was something black... Something tall and black... Something very tall and very black and very thin." – the use of word referents from Roald Dahl's "The BFG"

"I put my hand in the jar very carefully. Then Harry did. Slowly we opened the folded pieces of paper. Harry flashed his white teeth. I could tell he was happy about the name he drew." – the use of story questions to build a sense of anticipation from Suzy Kline's, "Horrible Harry and the Green Slime"

"Abel posed this question to himself: Other than by swimming or on boats, how do rivers get crossed? By tunnels and bridges, of course. Could he tunnel under that river with his paws, his penknife, and a homemade wooden shovel perhaps; no pickax, no crowbar, no wheelbarrow or wagon, not even a pail to carry out the earth and rocks? – from "Abel's Island" by William Steig (describing Abel the mouse's worry)"

"Coming up the road by the Wabash tracks was a fearful figure. A lumbering, humped shape bent into the swirling snow. Its head was swathed in something. Strapped to its back was a long wicker basket. Its boots left black footprints behind. I hugged my skimpy coat tight and felt the empty house around me. The figure was at our fence line when it looked up at my window, and me." – the use of word referents from "A Year Down Yonder" by Richard Peck

"Hagrid greeted them, looking flushed and excited. It's nearly out." He ushered them inside. The egg was lying on the table. There were deep cracks in it. Something was moving inside; a funny clicking noise was coming from it. They all drew their chairs up to the table and watched with bated breath. All at once there was a scraping noise and the egg split open." – story questions and word referents - from "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" by J.K. Rowling

(These next examples are intended for middle school students.)

* See bibliography page 387 for publisher's information.
Red Flag Words and Phrases - 1

Authors use red flag words and phrases to build suspense. They use them to grab the reader's attention and to tell the reader "Look out! Something important is about to happen!" Look at the list of red flag words and phrases below. Read the suspenseful segment. Place a red flag word or phrase in each blank.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>RED FLAG WORDS AND PHRASES</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The next thing she knew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Add your own)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kelly bent to pick a flower in the garden.

____________________ she heard the sound of quiet footsteps. She looked around but didn’t see anyone. Must be a neighbor passing by, she thought. She shrugged and picked another flower.

____________________ Kelly saw the leaves of the flowers swaying.

Could it be a little squirrel nibbling on the tulips, she thought. She walked toward the tulips, but there was nothing there. Kelly frowned and thought and thought. She took a few steps forward and stopped.

____________________, there was a giggling sound just up ahead.

Kelly pushed the flowers aside and jumped back. Standing there between the daisies was an elf!

THINK ABOUT IT: What senses did the author use to hint that Kelly was not alone? Underline the sensory clues. How was Kelly feeling? Circle phrases that show her feelings.
Read this sentence. It gives away an exciting part of the story way too soon! There is no *suspense* to catch the reader's attention! It is BORING!

The strange egg hatched and out came a baby dragon.

**Revise** this by writing 4 - 5 *suspenseful* sentences! Do not give it away too soon! Make the reader dying to find out. Tease the reader! You may use story questions, word referents, or the magic of three.
SECTION 5: Main Event

Introduction to Main Event

The Main Event - Introduction

A successful short narrative story opens with an entertaining beginning that immediately draws the main character into the action and the setting. The author might spend a bit of time establishing/describing the setting and introducing the character and the purpose for the action. All of this should build up to a single, meaningful main event or scene. (A novel consists of many scenes that lead to one peak climactic event—a short story focuses on a single significant main event.) In narrative stories - both the personal experience narrative and the character/problem solution narrative - all of the story action should lead, cause and effect style, building tension, conflict, or at least a sense of anticipation to this main event. **In short, the main event is basically what the story is all about. The main event consists of the adventure, problem, or experience that changes or affects the main character in some way.**

Because of the importance of the main event, this portion of the story should take up more space relative to the other story elements. It will be much longer than the beginning, than the description of the setting, than the solution, or the ending.

In the personal experience narrative, (which inherently lacks the story tension of the character/problem/solution narrative) crafting an effective main event involves adding a lot of elaborative detail and stretching out the significant event to highlight its importance. For example, if the author was writing about baking cookies with Grandma, crafting an effective main event would involve lots of sensory information about the cozy kitchen, the scents and aromas of the ingredients, the warmth of the oven, the texture of the batter, the kindness in Grandma’s smile and the gentleness in her hands. This is the kind of elaboration that will bring the main event to life - to make the ordinary extraordinary.

In a character/problem/solution narrative, the author stretches out the challenges presented, and has the main character react to these challenges - the tension is built-in.

In both subgenres (personal experience and char/prob/solution) the author accomplishes this through a combination of: action, description, the main character’s thoughts and feelings, and dialogue/exclamations. In other words, action, description, thoughts/feelings, dialogue/exclamation are the tools an author uses to fully elaborate a main event. **The activities in this section will present the productive questioning techniques necessary to generate these “tools.”**

Student Challenges

Many times children rush through this all important section in one of two ways -
1.) by summarizing the main event with a general sentence or two—ex: Jane got
chased by the ferocious wolf but she got away. That’s telling rather than showing, it’s a summary, not a scene! Or 2.) by listing numerous events - all action, linked with “and thens....” ex. Jane ran and then she got away, and then she went to her house. After that she had another adventure in the woods with a bear. And then she had to get away from the bear... Here, the author needs to focus on a single significant event and fully elaborate that, rather than simply listing a number of events. Compare these weak examples to the following fully elaborated, single significant main event:

Jane could hear the beast gaining on her. Its paws padded across the forest floor like a drum roll and she could hear its rhythmic panting. Despite the throbbing pain in her tired muscles, she pushed herself on, her heart pounding in her chest, her blood pumping in her temples. How could she ever get away, she wondered. It was nearly hopeless, but something deep inside her pushed her on. She chanced a single glance over her shoulder, but all she could see were his white glinting teeth and lolling tongue. “Help,” she whispered, in desperation, although she knew that her survival depended on no one but herself. As she ran it occurred to her that she could never beat this beast by strength or power. It had to be by brains. That’s when the idea came to her. Of course, she thought. The ravine! She used her last ounce of strength to dash ahead toward the cliff. At the last possible moment she stopped and faced the beast. As he stretched out his muscular legs in a lunge, Jane stepped to the side. She closed her eyes and heard its pitiful cries echo as it tumbled down the rocky cliff and out of sight.

Notice the blend of action, description, the main character’s thoughts and words. A fully elaborated main event involves a balance of: ACTION, DESCRIPTION (elaborative detail), THOUGHTS/FEELINGS, and DIALOGUE. This stretching out of the main event draws the reader in and enables the reader to experience the event right along with the main character.

Detail Generating Questions to Craft Main Events

Again, modeling the use of specific, productive questioning techniques will generate these elements. Here are the questions that you will model during main event lessons, and that your students will eventually internalize:

To generate ACTION ask: “What did you do?”

(In slow motion, play by play, fashion.)

To generate DESCRIPTION ask: “What did you see, hear, feel, smell?”

To generate DIALOGUE/EXCLAMATION ask: “What did you say?”

To generate THOUGHTS/FEELINGS ask: “What did you think or feel, wonder or worry?”

(Cont.)→
Students may also add a SOUND EFFECT in their main events, just for fun and entertainment value. Another way to explain main event to students is to tell them that this is the section of the story in which the author “shows off” a little bit, combining so many of the skills they’ve learned. It is interesting to note that the productive questioning (above) involves many of the same questions they’ve used to generate entertaining beginnings, except that during main event they apply all of the questions, and often times, apply them more than once.

The exercises in this section encourage this kind of elaboration to extend the main event in a story. The student is provided with a summary of a main event which they are required to fully elaborate.

The Main Event in Personal Experience Narratives

You will see that some of the “personal experience” main events involve activities and experiences that might, at first glance, seem rather ordinary. This is because, generally, when students are asked to write about an experience they’ve had, their tendency is to choose something realistic. The key, then, is to creatively make the ordinary extraordinary - this is done by looking at it closely, stretching it out, and adding the thoughts/feelings (reflections) of the main character, all of which add significance to the event. Also, remember - a personal experience narrative involves the experience of the main character, not necessarily the author! Therefore, even when using first person (“I”), the author does not need to be limited to an autobiographical account of a real experience in their lives. As all authors do, children can embellish their own literal experiences with what they’ve read, heard, or seen on television. They mix their experience (which may be limited) with entertaining elements to make for better story. We need to empower children to do this - remember - the purpose of a narrative is to entertain. If our purpose is to simply record and reflect on a real event, then a journal entry may be the genre we want.

The Main Event in Character/Problem/Solution Narratives

A great question to ask in order to generate a character/problem/solution narrative story plan is: What could possibly go wrong? However, children sometimes struggle to generate character/problem/solution narratives (which can be realistic or fantasy). This is because in real life, it is generally the adults who solve children’s problems. In the character/problem/solution narrative, the main character must solve his/her own problem. This is why an “adventure” story, particularly one written as fantasy, gives the student author more leeway in coming up with a solution.

For best results, be sure to read through the lesson plans for implementing the activities in this section.
Lesson Plan -

Comparing Summaries and Fully Elaborated Main Events

Objective: Students read and compare a story summary, a list of actions, and a fully elaborated main event in order to recognize the power of the fully elaborated main event. They will also analyze the elements of main event (action, description, thoughts/feelings, dialogue/exclamation).

Procedure:
1.) Make a transparency of one of the activities on pp. 260-263 (choose the activity that best meets the developmental needs of your students).

2.) Reproduce the STUDENT REFERENCE PAGE p. 259 for each student, which highlights the key aspects of main event. Distribute these and discuss the characteristics of main event with the class.

**The “Cake Baking” example on page 261 is an excellent example of a fully elaborated main event in the personal experience genre.

3.) Project the transparency of the comparison sheet on the overhead. Read through each example and point out the respective strengths and weaknesses of each.

4.) Use colored nonpermanent overhead thin point markers to color code as follows: ACTION - black, DESCRIPTION - blue, THOUGHTS/FEELINGS - red, DIALOGUE/EXCLAMATION - green, SOUND EFFECT - orange

5.) For closure, discuss the weaknesses of a simple summary statement that cheats the reader out of all the vivid description, and play by play action. Discuss how boring it is to read a “grocery list” of actions separated by “and then.” And point out how interesting the fully elaborating main event is, by comparison.

6.) Read an example of a fully elaborated main event from age appropriate fiction and discuss the various elements - here are some suggestions:

- *The BFG* - Roald Dahl - chapter 13
- *A Trogglehumper for the Fleshlumpeater* - the entire section in which the giants get into a huge fight.
- *Poppy* - Avi - chapter 18
- *The Battle* - the fight between Poppy and Mr. Ocax.
- The first 2 pages of Chapter 12 of *The Wreckers* by Iain Lawrence which describes a fight scene.

* See bibliography page 387 for publisher's information.
MAIN EVENT
Don’t Summarize! Make a Scene!

FULLY ELABORATED MAIN EVENTS are made up of a balance of:

- ACTION
- DESCRIPTION
- THOUGHTS/FEELINGS
- DIALOGUE/EXCLAMATION

And just for fun...
- SOUND EFFECT

Here are the productive questions that help to generate a fully elaborated MAIN EVENT:

ACTION: What did you do?
(Tell it in slow motion, S-T-R-E-T-C-H I-T O-U-T!)

DESCRIPTION: What did you see, hear, feel?

THOUGHTS/FEELINGS: What were you wondering, worrying, feeling?

DIALOGUE/EXCLAMATION: What did you say or exclaim?

SOUND EFFECT: What did you hear?
Before and After Revision Activities -

Skill: Main Events

Read this summary of a main event. It rushes through the most important part of the story way too quickly! It is BORING!

I spent a spring morning walking through the countryside. It was beautiful.

Revise this by writing a fully elaborated main event with a balance of action, description, dialogue, thoughts and feelings - and just for fun, a sound effect.

Be sure to:


• Include an exclamation. Ask: What did I exclaim?

• Show how the main character is feeling. Ask: How did I feel?

• Include a 3-4 sentence description of the setting. Ask: What did I see, hear, feel?
SECTION 6: Endings

Introduction to Endings

In narrative stories the main character (or hero) usually has experienced something significant—has solved a problem, had an adventure, or shared in a meaningful experience of some kind. As a result, the main character changes in some way. They might learn a lesson, make a decision, form an opinion, or hope for something similar or something different to happen to them in the future.

Therefore, when writing a story ending, you need to think about how your main character has grown or changed as a result of the main event in the story. How is the main character better, wiser, or smarter? The last few sentences should sum up what the character learned, or how the character changed.

An ending that is abrupt: “So I went home and went to bed,” is not satisfying for the reader. Neither is a story that rambles on way past the conclusion because the author is uncertain about how to bring closure to it. (The next day...after that...etc.)

Other ineffective endings - “Suddenly I woke up. It was just a dream.” This kind of ending is frustrating for the reader because the reader has invested energy in the story, wondered how the main character would solve the problem or conclude the adventure, only to discover that none of it really happened. We call this “pulling the rug out from under the reader.”

So, what techniques can an author use to create satisfying endings? **Read the following story endings. Notice how the endings reveal what the story was about and how the main character has grown or changed:**

1.) Sara looked out the window at her new neighborhood. It still didn’t feel like home, she thought. Yet, there were many new places to visit and things to explore. So, she took a deep breath, pushed the memories of her old home aside, and headed out the door. She knew in her heart that it was up to her to make this new place feel like home.

2.) Sam still hurt all over from his fall off of that horse. Just thinking about it sent a chill down his spine. Somehow though, the thought of never riding again was much worse than the fall he had taken. With that, Sam pulled on his riding boots, grabbed his saddle, and headed out to the barn.

3.) It had certainly been a wonderful day! Jackie held the new kitten close to her. She could feel it purring softly. And at that moment she knew that her tiny kitten would always mean more to her than all the gold and riches in the world.
In these examples you see that it is not necessary to write the words "THE END" after the narrative. The story has a natural feeling of closure. This satisfying feeling of closure comes from a number of techniques:

**TECHNIQUES FOR SATISFYING ENDING**

- **A Memory** - Have the main character remember the main event.
- **A Feeling** - Show how the main character felt about what happened in the story.
- **A Decision** - Include a decision made by the main character as a result of the main event or story problem.
- **A Wish or Hope** - As a result of the main event, the main character thinks ahead and makes a wish or hope for the future.
- **A Defining Action** - As a result of the main event the main character does something that reflects a decision or a feeling. (This is a more sophisticated technique.)

*To generate these kinds of endings, ask the following productive questions:*

- **A Memory** - What do you remember most?
- **A Feeling** - How did you feel after everything that happened?
- **A Decision** - What did you decide to do after everything that happened?
- **A Wish or Hope** - What did you wish or hope for?
- **A Defining Action** - What did you do to show how you felt, or what you decided?

Students can learn to extend their story endings by using these techniques. This is not to say, however, that these are the only effective ways to end a story. The techniques and activities in this section provide students with good skills on which to build, that, once mastered, can be applied in original and creative ways.

Some activities involve actual revision, others provide literary examples for class analysis and discussion, others offer opportunities for students to have fun by revising the endings of traditional tales. See the lesson plans which precede each lesson.

Photocopy and distribute *MENU FOR EXTENDED STORY ENDINGS* p. 307 as a student resource sheet. You may also use the examples on p. 305 (Sara, Sam, and Jackie) as examples of these techniques.
Menu for Extended Endings

• A MEMORY:
  What did you remember most?

• FEELINGS:
  How did you feel about what happened?

• WISH or HOPE:
  What would you wish or hope?

• DECISION:
  What did you decide?

• DEFINING ACTION:
  What did you do?
Analyze this Ending! - 1

Read this story ending.

- Underline the main character's memories of the main event in BLUE.
- Underline the main character's feelings about the main event in RED.
- Underline a decision that the main character made in BLACK.
- Underline the main character's hope or wish in GREEN.

Tim leaned back against the building and heaved a sigh of relief. It had been close, that's for sure. When he shut his eyes he could still see the huge, slobbering dog snarling and snapping at him. He knew that if he ever wanted to explore the junkyard again, he'd check first to see if the dog was there. And he'd come armed with some dog biscuits or a very big bone!

THINK ABOUT IT:
What do you think this story was about? Use this ending to summarize what probably took place in the story!
Before and After Revision Activities –

Skill: Endings

Read this story ending. It is abrupt and does not leave the reader with a sense of satisfaction. It is BORING!

So that is the story of my big soccer victory. THE END

Revise this by writing an extended story ending.

Include at least 3 of the following:

• A memory of the place you visited.
• A hope or wish that resulted from the experience.
• The main character’s feelings about the trip.
• A decision that the main character makes.
• A defining action that shows how the main character feels.