

Commentary on short story



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

For our AS course work we were given the task of creating a short story for a target audience of our choice. The short story that I have decided to write is aimed at younger children, more specifically children within the region of five to eight years old. Having a younger brother myself, who is in fact eight years old, I have read many short stories to him in the past. I have often been intrigued as to the type of story that has interested my brother.

The stylistic choices, the way the stories had been written and the linguistic and literary devices used, all contributed to making each story unique and determined if it was a success or not in entertaining my younger brother. Therefore, with an idea of what techniques may aid the success of my story, I took this opportunity and attempted a children's story of my own.

When writing this story I was also very conscious of the reader not being able to relate to the plot or theme of the story. Children may be impressionable however if they are not interested by a certain story they would have little patience to carry on with their read. To overcome this problem I decided to pick a theme that would not only interest the reader but appeal to their sense of familiarity. It was the idea of the story taking place on a character's birthday that I thought the child could relate to. Every child experiences a birthday and I believed they would greatly enjoy being reminded of the excitement a birthday can bring.

Before I began writing this story I had to decide what viewpoint I was going to take and consider the effect such a viewpoint would have upon the child reading the story. I believed that by choosing a third person narrative it would allow me to take a neutral voice when telling the story. This I hoped

would build a trust between me and the reader as none of my thoughts and ideas are bias and wouldn't therefore contrast those of a child. Furthermore I hoped that having adopted this viewpoint it could involve the reader and lessen the gap between the narrator and the child, hopefully making the story more realistic and believable.

With the viewpoint established, the sequencing of events was also an issue I needed to address. From the outset of the story, every event takes place in a chronological order, therefore as time passes as does the situation within the story. By constructing my story in this way I hoped to make the plot easier to follow. Taking into account my target audience I believed that the use of flashbacks or a random sequence of events would confuse the reader.

In continuance I also took care when deciding my opening line as I wanted to give the reader enough information of what the story is about but not however, too much so that it confuses them.

' This story is about a boy called Billy.'

This opening line is a compound sentence with two clauses. The main clause states that ' This story is about a boy' and is followed by the subordinate clause ' called Billy'. The main character who features continuously throughout the story is a child called Billy and I believed that by stating this fact from the outset of the story I would clarify exactly what the story is about and immediately introduce the reader to the main character.

Further more I followed this compound sentence with a simple sentence to create a balance regarding the amount of information I enforce upon the

reader. This I hoped would enhance the readers understanding and reduce the chance of them becoming confused.

‘ Billy was the Birthday Boy.’

As this story is targeted at a younger audience I wanted to create a warm and pleasant atmosphere so not to scare or concern the child. I hoped to achieve this using a number of techniques. For instance the graphological features that I have used consist of brightly coloured images presented upon every page, this not only breaks up the text to sustain the reader’s interest but actively presents the reader with the imagery that I wish to convey.

In addition, this relaxed atmosphere does become slightly tenser when the reader realizes that not only have Billy’s presents been stolen but that Billy himself maybe in danger. However, as I had already created such a warm and secure atmosphere for the reader I therefore did not have to deviate from this existing atmosphere too much to change the mood of the story. If I had to deviate significantly the reader may become scared and not wish to carry on reading.

When focusing my attention upon the vocabulary that I was going to use I again had to consider my target audience. The proper nouns that name the three characters within this story are all either mono-syllabic or di-syllabic. In continuance ‘ Susan’, ‘ Mark’ and ‘ Billy’ are all phonetic proper nouns and I attempted to sustain this technique throughout the story creating a phonetic lexis where the words used are spelt like they sound. I therefore tried to avoid difficult words that were not phonetic in the hope this would make the story easier to read and also easier to understand.

As stated previously I wished to arrange the events that occur within the story in a chronological order and I hoped to use the vocabulary to aid me in doing so. By using prepositions to begin my paragraphs I believed it would hopefully sustain a set structure to the order of events.

‘ After all this...’

Additionally, I also took care over choosing what events would take place during the story. In conjunction with the idea of reminding the child of the magic of a birthday I included traditional birthday activities to once again appeal to their sense of familiarity. I also believed that by including such activities like Pass the Parcel, Musical Chairs and even Dressing-Up, I could directly involve the reader as they can easily relate to such games and therefore stimulate their interest.

The function of the vocabulary used is also significant in many cases in stimulating the child’s interest.

‘ Billy was a small child, with blond hair and bright blue eyes.’

The use of pre modifiers in this sentence gives information regarding common and simple characteristics. For example name, height, eye colour, hair colour. It does appeal to the reader’s sense interest in the character but does not confuse them as the information is kept to a basic level.

Furthermore I did introduce dialogue at two separate points in the story, to once again involve the reader. By stating exactly what Billy’s mum says that makes Billy so happy, I hoped to bring the character (Billy’s mum) to life in

the readers head and therefore help the reader to feel Billy's happiness as well.

' Billy, you are allowed to open one of your presents before you and your friends sit down to eat'

Again I used dialogue when revealing who the birthday burglar was. I hoped by using this technique I could make Billy's relief more immediate to the reader and therefore add emphasis to its meaning.

' Happy Birthday Son!'

From the first page I wanted to demand attention from the child to capture their interest immediately. I attempted this by replacing the phonemes that begin the words birthday boy, with capital letters to create Birthday Boy.

' Billy was the Birthday Boy'

This I hoped would lay emphasis upon the alliteration of the letter ' B' and as the alliteration creates a plosive sound I believed that this opening page would demand the attention I desired. I also used ellipsis to link pages to not only emphasize the enormity of Billy's task in finding the Burglar but to create a sense of anxiety and again sustain the readers attention.

In conclusion I wanted to leave the reader reassured regarding the problematic events that lead up to the end of the story. I did this by making the ending very clear, as distress toward Billy would have been felt by the reader if the happy ending did not reassure the child.