

Activity**TEENY TINY TALES**

Write a very short story to read to one of your toys, a character from a favourite book, film or video game, or even your pet. Design and make a miniature book to present your teeny tiny tale. Read it aloud! (You might like to go on to create a whole library of titles!)

What should I do?Research your tale: 'grow' your idea

It is very important to consider your audience carefully – who will be reading your writing, or will have it read to them? Choose one of your favourite toys, a book, film or game character, or you might like to write something especially for a pet (even goldfish have the right to enjoy wonderful books too...!). What sorts of stories might they enjoy? Do you want yours to involve something they like doing, e.g. finding the perfect squeaky toy, or hunting for lost treasure in spooky tombs? Would they want to hear about characters similar to those they spend time with, e.g. a threadbare teddy bear, an adventurous wizard? How do you want them to feel when they are told your tale: reassured, or excitedly nervous about what might happen next? Jot down a few notes or just three or four words to summarise what you are hoping to achieve.

Draft your story

You don't have many pages to fill so your story will need to be very short (or your handwriting tiny!). Decide on a simple plot, e.g. someone wants something for a reason so does something to try and get it; they meet a particular difficulty; they deal with this difficulty and end up either with what they wanted, or not but having learned an important lesson. (You can find some basic plot ideas by looking at narrative blueprints. There is a link to download these in the 'Things that could help me' section below.)

Jot down some vocabulary that will be useful in describing the characters (it's probably best to stick to a maximum of two), settings and action (think about your verb choices and how to 'show not tell').

Write a first draft of your story.

Edit your story

Remind yourself of the notes you made at the beginning to summarise how you want your particular reader to feel. Choose 3 nouns/noun phrases to look at again: are the words you've chosen to build them clear enough and helpful enough for the reader to imagine what you're describing fully? Select a few verbs to think about: do they, and any adverbials, properly describe the action you'd intended while also hinting at how the reader should feel about this, e.g. think about the difference between 'snarled' and 'growled' – which is crueller, fiercer, more menacing? Edit your writing, making the necessary improvements.

Is your writing accurate? Without correct punctuation, spelling, and sentences that make complete sense, it will be very difficult (and frustrating) for someone to read. Proofread and correct what you need to.

Make your miniature book

Follow the instructions on the British Library's *Discovering Children's Books* site to make your own miniature book: <https://www.bl.uk/childrens-books/activities/make-a-miniature-book#>.

Present your story

Before you start to write up your teeny tiny tale, think carefully about how you will split up the story so it will fit on the limited number of pages you have. You can always make a few more pages if you need to as long as you re-secure them with the elastic band.

Neatly write the story into your miniature book and illustrate it if you wish and have enough space.

Share your work

Settle yourself down somewhere comfortable with your favourite toy, obedient dog, or whoever else you've written for. Enjoy reading your teeny tiny masterpiece aloud to them!

How might you share your work with your friends and your teacher(s)? Can you film yourself reading your book, or take photographs, then email or upload to a shared area? Could you create a duplicate copy of your book to post?

You can tweet what you've been up to using the Twitter handle @BabcockLDPEng and the hashtag #BabcockEnglishAtHome.

IMPORTANT: Just remember everything you have been taught about staying safe online, and do talk to the person who looks after you about this before making a decision.

Things that
could help me

You can read more about the Infant's Library here: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-infants-library#> (there is also a link to this from the book-making activity's main page).

Download a copy of the narrative blueprints here: <https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/improving-schools-settings/english/reading/narrative-blueprints>. These may help you with creating the plot for your story (look at the 'Simplified features of plot' column).

Change it up!
...Go further!

- A) Think about the interests and opinions of a *different* toy/character/pet. Edit your story to create a second version tailored especially for them. You will need to think about the vocabulary you choose to use – should it be easier for a younger or less confident reader, harder, more descriptive, more comforting and positive for toys that get easily scared or more chilling for braver ones, for example? What about your sentences? Should they be longer or shorter, written so it takes more time before the action is revealed in order to keep this new reader in suspense (e.g. with a fronted adverbial and then the verb later on or with use of the passive form, if you've learnt about that in school, to hide the person doing the action at first, etc.)
- B) Create a sequel or prequel... or whole trilogy!
- C) Write and make another book that the same toy/character/pet might be interested in having read to them. Try a non-fiction text this time, for example. What might they enjoy finding out more about?

Notes for
parents and
teachers

Get your child to explain the plot to their story before they start writing. Do this several times, with you asking questions starting with 'Tell me more about...'. This should help them to develop their idea more clearly so when they write, they can concentrate more on the grammar and vocabulary choices that will best engage the reader and don't have to worry about making up what happens next.