

EXPLORING THE WORLD  
THROUGH STORY

SAMPLE

**WRITING  
SKILLS**

**for Older  
Beginners**

Ages  
**11+**

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Drew Campbell, PhD, has worked in education since the 1980s and holds degrees in German literature and language from Bennington College and Washington University, St Louis. Dr. Campbell is the author of *Exploring the World through Story*, *Living Memory*, and *I Speak Latin*, and co-author of *How to Homeschool the Kids You Have: Advice from the Kitchen Table*. A former homeschooling parent, classroom teacher, and school administrator, they now work as an independent curriculum developer at Stone Soup Press. For more information about EWS and other titles from Stone Soup Press, visit [stonesouppress.com](https://stonesouppress.com) or join the [EWS Facebook group](#).

# Exploring the World through Story

## Writing Skills for Older Beginners

### Overview

- for students ages 11+ (grade 6) with little or no previous writing instruction
- introduces fundamental writing skills
- 24 lessons taught over 6 weeks
- includes dictation and memory work
- prepares students to learn essay writing
- Required text: *Best-Loved Folktales of the World* by Joanna Cole

## Lesson 3

**Text:** *Best-Loved Folktales of the World*, ed. Joanna Cole

### Checklist

*On Your Own:*

- Read the Study Notes for this lesson.
- Read “Why the Sea Is Salt” on pages 354-357.
- Record any new vocabulary words with their pronunciations and definitions.
- Complete the writing assignment.
- Create new memory work flashcard(s).

*With Your Instructor:*

- Do the dictation.
- Review previous memory work.

### Study Notes

Today’s story is an example of a *pourquoi* (/por-KWAH/) tale. A **pourquoi tale** explains the origin of a thing or phenomenon. In other words, they are creative explanations of why things are the way they are, or how they came to be that way. *Pourquoi* is the French word for “why,” and these tales are sometimes called “how and why tales.” They are related to other kinds of origin stories such as creation myths and are sometimes found embedded in longer stories.

As the title suggests, this story is a fanciful explanation for the existence of salt water. The version we’re reading today comes from Norway, but variations on the idea of a magic salt mill exist in other cultures as well. There’s a famous one from Korea, for example.

### Vocabulary

There are some old-fashioned words in today’s story, but you can find them all at [merriam-webster.com](http://merriam-webster.com).

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## Writing Assignment

### *Written Narration*

Now that you know how to narrate orally, we're going to work on written narrations. Just as you did with your oral narrations, you're going to be retelling today's story in your own words, but you'll write your retelling down.

Because today's story is much longer than the fables you narrated in the last two lessons, you're only going to narrate select parts of it.

Before you do that, I want to share another way to think about stories. We've talked about the idea that stories usually have three acts, which correspond to the beginning, middle, and end. That way of thinking about stories focuses on the plot: what happens. We can also think about stories from the point of view of the characters, specifically the main character.

We can analyze the plot of a story with the following sentence stem:

**Somebody wanted... but...so...then....**

Let's apply this to the first part of our story.

**Once upon a time, there were two brothers, one rich and one poor.**

<b>Somebody</b>	The poor brother
<b>wanted</b>	food for Christmas dinner
<b>but</b>	his brother would only give him a side of bacon if he went to Hell
<b>so</b>	The poor brother went to Hell and traded the bacon for a magic mill.
<b>Then</b>	he used the mill to grind all the food he wanted.

Written out with proper punctuation, we get the following summary of Act I:

**A poor brother wanted food for Christmas dinner, but his rich brother would only give him a side of bacon if he went to Hell, so the poor brother went to Hell and traded the bacon for a magic mill. Then he used the mill to grind all the food he wanted.**

How about the second act, when the formerly poor brother lends the mill to his greedy brother? Complete the sentence stems to continue the narration.

<b>Somebody</b>	The greedy rich brother
<b>wanted</b>	to borrow the mill
<b>but</b>	his brother would only lend it if _____ _____ and he didn't _____ _____.
<b>so</b>	when the rich brother tried to use the mill _____ _____ _____.
<b>Then</b>	his brother agreed to take the mill back if _____ _____ _____.

Great! Now you can tell the end of the story on your own. Complete the graphic organizer on the next page.

<b>Somebody</b>	A sea captain
<b>wanted</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>but</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>so</b>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>Then</b>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

**And that is why the sea is salt!**

**Dictation**

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## Memory Work

Remember to read the question and answer aloud three times after you make your flashcards.

**Q: What is a sentence fragment?**

*A: A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence.*



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*On Your Own:*

- Read the Study Notes for this lesson.
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- Record any new vocabulary words with their pronunciations and definitions.<sup>1</sup>
- Complete the writing assignment.
- Create new memory work flashcard(s).

*With Your Instructor:*

- Do the dictation.
- Review previous memory work.

### Writing Assignment

*Written Narration*

(Student work appears in italics.)

<b>Somebody</b>	The greedy rich brother
<b>wanted</b>	To borrow the mill
<b>but</b>	His brother would only lend it if <i>the rich brother paid him three hundred dollars</i> and he didn't <i>tell his brother how to stop the mill.</i>
<b>so</b>	When the rich brother tried to use the mill <i>he didn't know how to stop it and flooded his house and the whole area with food.</i>
<b>Then</b>	His brother agreed to take the mill back if <i>his brother paid him another three hundred dollars.</i>

<sup>1</sup> Today's story includes a number of archaic words that most students will need to look up. All are listed at merriam-webster.com. Check your student's vocabulary list for the following terms: flitch, chaffered, brose, lading.

<b>Somebody</b>	A sea captain
<b>wanted</b>	<i>to buy the mill</i>
<b>but</b>	<i>he didn't wait long enough to find out how to use it</i>
<b>so</b>	<i>when he made it grind salt it wouldn't stop and sank his ship</i>
<b>Then</b>	<i>the mill kept grinding salt at the bottom of the sea</i>

## Dictation

**“If it grinds only one hour more, the whole parish will be swallowed up by herrings and broth.” But his brother wouldn't hear of taking it back till the other paid him down three hundred dollars more.**

## Memory Work

Review yesterday's memory work with your student and check that they have created a card for today's item and filed it correctly.

**Q: What is a sentence fragment?**

*A: A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence.*