

# Ready to take the first step?

Let' make sure you have everything you need.

Get organized. It's fun to see your pages grow as you prepare for your story. Include dividers for plotting, settings, and characters.

1  
Scrapbook  
or Binder

2  
Small  
Notebook

Ideas come at the strangest times—at the car wash, a soccer game, or on the way to church. Lots of places. Many writers keep a notebook handy at all times to jot down ideas. Who knows when you're going to sit across from some kid who would make a perfect character in your story? Get a notebook and start taking notes today!

**YOUR TURN:** Punch holes in plain white copy paper and insert it into a 3-ring binder. Label 3 dividers. **Plot Ideas**, **Characters**, & **Settings**. Collect photos and magazine or Internet pictures for future stories and glue them into the binder. Purchase a small notebook to keep with you as often as possible. That's what REAL authors do!

Now, let's figure out how to

# PLOT YOUR STORY!



## Why should I plot (plan)?

Why can't I just start writing?

Every Author Has Two Sides

artist

editor



This part of you just lets the story happen as you write. You dream up wild characters and situations. You can almost see a picture of your story in your mind.

This part of you worries about whether your story has life-like characters and an interesting setting. You plan lots of suspense to keep your story exciting. You learn to cut out any parts that don't really belong in your story.



The KEY to writing a GREAT story is to use BOTH your artist and your editor!



**YOUR TURN:** Make two nametags from index cards. Fold each one lengthwise. Label them **Artist** and **Editor**. Under **Artist**, write: *Time to Dream & Pretend*. Under **Editor**, write: *Time to Check My Work*. Illustrate both labels and use them as you write to remind yourself which job you are doing.

SO . . . THERE ARE BASICALLY ONLY THREE PARTS TO A STORY!

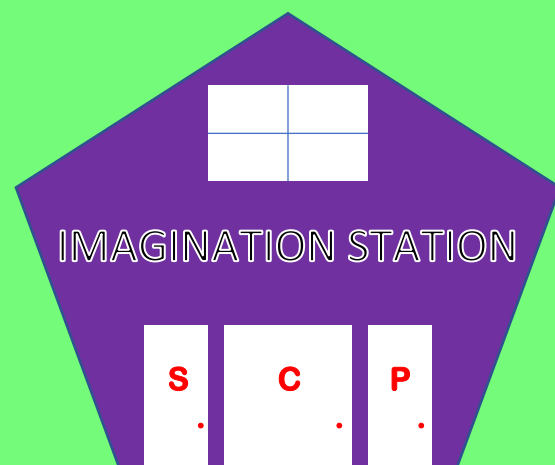
Develop characters who seem as real as your best friend or your worst enemy.

Create a setting for your story that can change everything that happens.

Plot your story and *write tight*. That means you learn to eliminate parts of your writing that will bore your reader.

So how do I know **WHERE** to begin?

Grab Your  
Notebook  
and Follow  
me . . .




It's time for a **FIELD TRIP!**

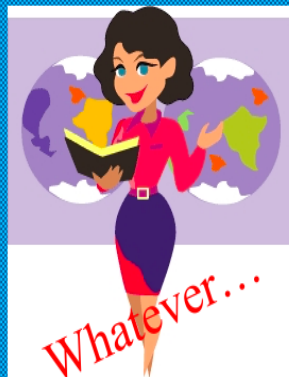


# Welcome to the IMAGINATION STATION

It's just an ordinary day . . .

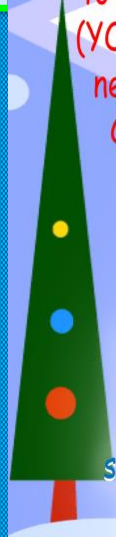


You're in your classroom. It's the middle of December, and your teacher decides she needs a break. NOW!



(Probably just wants to text her latest boyfriend ... or grade papers ... or write a killer test.)

Anyway, now she has come up with this ridiculous idea to have her students (YOU) silently kill the next hour writing a Christmas story.




Duh!

Like you haven't written about this every year since you learned to hold that stubby pencil and print that pesky alphabet.

Like-where do you start?

Does your teacher think you can just pull an idea out of your sleeve or something?

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz



Write a 2-page story about Christmas. Remember to use complete sentences and to check your spelling and punctuation.


Unfortunately, your teacher can sometimes be a problem too.

Either she has never written a story in her life and tells you, "Go sit down and use your imagination." OR

she loves stories and squeals like a pinched balloon about how ALL THAT your story is going to be.





So ... what's a **normal**,  
do-just-enough-to-get-by,  
**is-it-time-for-recess-yet?**  
kind of kid to do?



**if you really want to know**

I mean, if you secretly like to write stories & maybe even want to be an author some day . . .

**HELP**  
IS ON THE WAY ©

**BUCKLE**  
your  
sleigh-belt

'Cause you're about to find out how YOU can turn this crazy Christmas story idea into a lot of fun!



**Seriously!**

We'll start by playing a brand new game!

Let's work with the Christmas story your teacher just told you to write.

**What If...**

- List as many things as you can think of when you hear the word Christmas.  
presents, parties, family, shopping, birth of Christ, candy canes, tree, ornaments, Santa Claus, stockings
- Write a sentence using at least three of these words.  
One Christmas we were wrapping presents and decorating our tree with candy canes when the strangest thing happened.
- Now, the "What If?" game begins.



Take the **sentence** you wrote in step two and ask, "What if ...?"

One Christmas we were wrapping presents and decorating our tree with candy canes when the strangest thing happened.

Let me show you a few examples:

What if you were wrapping Christmas presents and found a five hundred dollar bill inside the book you bought for your dad?

What if you were decorating the Christmas tree when a space ship full of aliens crashed through the ceiling?

What if the red stripe around a candy cane fell to the ground and turned into a snake?

What if you were shaking a present and you heard something inside groan or crash or squeak?

What if you were decorating the tree when your parents announced that they decided to pay for a new roof for your neighbor's house instead of buying you presents?



Okay, but What if your teacher **DOESN'T** tell you what to write about? THEN where are you supposed to find an idea?

### YOUR TURN: Try the "What If" Game

Choose one of the following topics:

**Vacation\*Dream\*Friends\*Pets\*Aliens\*School\*Favorite Things\*Bugs\*Special Places**

List as many words as you can think of about this topic. Write a sentence using at least three of these words. Now take that sentence and ask, "What If?" Think of at least 5 questions. Now write a story using one of your *What If* questions. Have fun!