

# Building a Story is Like Building a Sandcastle

A Parent/Teacher Guide for using *When a Dragon Moves In* to introduce the components of a story.

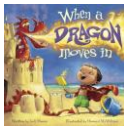
***Building a story is just like building a sandcastle:*** each has a BEGINNING, a MIDDLE, and an END.

## THE BEGINNING

### 1. ORGANIZE YOUR TOOLS.



What tools are needed to build a sandcastle?  
(Possible answers: shovel, pail, various scoops, shapers, molds.)



What tools are needed to write a story?  
(Possible answers: pencil, pen, paper, computer, imagination, ideas, knowledge.)

### 2. DIG.



For the sandcastle, dig up sand and make a big pile where you want your castle to be.



For the story, dig for ideas! What are your interests? You can write about what you know, or what you would like to know. Where do writers get their ideas? (Possible answers: books, real life, imagination, research) Now, make a list of ideas for your story.

### 3. CREATE A FIRM BASE. Sandcastles and stories both need strong bases.



For a sandcastle, you have to add the proper amount of water to the sand so the castle will stand strong and firm. Too little water, and the castle will crumble; too much, and it will be a muddy mess. The process of adding water is called a build-up – just like a story needs a build-up! Add lots and lots of water to your pile. Mix it with the sand. Keep piling it up to build the base. Repeat the process until your pile is as tall as you want.

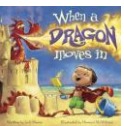


For the story, you need a strong foundation or idea to support everything you want to put in it. Then you have to choose the proper words. Too few, and the story may lack details, confuse the reader, and crumble. Too many, and it may be boring to the reader, also becoming a muddy mess. Start turning your list of ideas into written paragraphs, using well-chosen words.

## THE MIDDLE



Sandcastles can have walls, towers, turrets, battlements, moats and more. They can be added by hand (called “hand-stacking”) or sculpted from the pile.



A story needs to have characters, setting, action, plot, and tension or conflict. Let's use *When a Dragon Moves In* to identify these parts of a story:

1. Characters: Who are the main characters in *When a Dragon Moves In*? Who are the characters in your story?
2. Setting: Where does *Dragon* take place? What time of day is it? What is the weather like? Now answer these questions about your story.
3. Action: What happens in the *Dragon* story? What will happen in your story? Make a list of some good action words to go with your ideas from earlier.
4. Plot: How and why are the actions linked together? Write two related action sentences to go with one of your story ideas and then link them together with “because”. For example:

*Mickey couldn't wait to play with his new basketball.  
Mrs. Walker found her new vase smashed on the floor.*

When you link the two sentences together with “because,” they turn into the plot of a story!

*Mrs. Walker found her new vase smashed on the floor **because** Mickey couldn't wait to play with his new basketball.*

5. Tension or Conflict: Every story needs an interesting problem. Who and what is causing the tension in *When a Dragon Moves In*? Would the story be as exciting if the family could see the dragon? The point where the tension is the strongest is called the climax. What is the climax in *When a Dragon Moves In*? What causes the tension in your story? What will happen at the climax?

## THE END



Toward the end of building your sandcastle, you may need to smooth the sides. Then you may want to add some shells or stones for decoration, or a twig or straw flag at the top.



At the end of your story, you need a satisfying conclusion – an ending that will make the reader smile or think or want to read the story again. What is the conclusion in *Dragon*? What will the conclusion be in your story?

But are you really finished? No. Now is the time to re-read and REVISE! (This is like smoothing the sides of the sandcastle!) Find and correct all spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. Then, look for weak words and replace them with exciting words. For example, instead of writing “went,” use “ran” or “traveled” or “sped” or “trudged” – depending on your story.

## WHEN YOU ARE FINISHED:



Show your sandcastle to your friends and family. Maybe take a photo. Invite a dragon to move in.



Show your story to your friends and family. If you wrote it with a pencil and paper, you can type it on a computer and then print copies for everyone to read. If your class has a bulletin board, ask the teacher if you can hang the story there. If your school has a newspaper, see if they'd like to print your story for the whole school to read.