

A writing activity from

Grimm & Co

Prologue as a Plot Tool

You will need:

- The ability to watch and listen to the activity instructions (these have been recorded, so you'll need to be able to listen to them through a computer or phone, or through headphones and you'll need a screen to see each step of the process)
- Something to write with (this could be paper and a pen or a laptop/computer/tablet)

What is a prologue?

A prologue appears at the start of a story, almost just before the story begins and it sets the scene for what's to come and prepares the reader - by divulging key information. Prologues can give the whole plot away, or they can just give you some clues.

Step one: You should already have a main character and a motivation/something they care about more than anything. Your character's motivation needs to be in trouble and we're going to decide why.

Step two: Start by watching the prologue to *Romeo & Juliet*. This is on the recording provided and is an example of a prologue that gives everything away.

Step three: Create a list of **five** natural/accidental problems that your main character could experience on their adventure, e.g. they could get stuck in a storm. Now, create a list of **five** orchestrated/intentional problems that your main character could experience on their adventure, e.g. someone could send them the wrong way.

Step four: Pick one from each category and create a short piece of writing (no more than three or four sentences) about what is going to happen to your character in these chosen situations.

Step five: Read back over your writing and right here, right now, without thinking about it too much. DECIDE on your ending. Try and go with your gut and write that down. You have just created your prologue that gives everything away.

Step Six: Now watch the beginning of *Sunset Boulevard*. This is an example of a prologue giving a little bit of information but not everything. This is a famous clip because it actually shows the audience the END of the movie before it's even started.

Step seven: Think about the ending you have just decided in the previous exercise. Could you write a paragraph, ending your story, with the intention of it appearing at the beginning?

Step eight: Watch the beginning of *Up*. This is an example of a prologue setting the scene and explaining what has happened before the story begins.

Step nine: It's time to create a backstory for your character and their motivation. Start by answering these questions:

- When did your character start caring about this particular thing?
- Was there an event that started it all off? Does it have a story that is important to your character?
- Does anyone else - who your character interacts with - care about it also?
- What would your character do to achieve/save their motivation?
- How does your character feel now that your motivation is threatened?

Step ten: Now read your work back and decide which type of prologue you prefer. Will you include a prologue at the start of your adventure story? If not, could you use these ideas as a structure?

Share your writing with us! Do this by taking a photo of your handwriting, typing up your work, or audio or video recording yourself reading it aloud (you could also ask someone else to read it aloud for you).

If you're a member of one of our out-of-school writing groups, you should then upload your work to your Seesaw journal.

If you're accessing this activity independently, or through your school, we'd still love to share in the amazing writing you've created! You can post your work on social media, tagging us @GrimmAndCo, or email your work to grimmapothecary@gmail.com.

Happy writing!