

Something Ridiculous Happens Next

K-2 with adult support | 15-25 minutes | Prep: 1 minute

What children practice

Children create a short story with a character, a want or problem, and an ending connected to what came before.

Gather and set up

One chosen prompt, pencils or crayons and the story sheet or plain paper. An adult or peer can write down a child's dictated words. Offer two or three prompts rather than all twelve at once. Cards 1-6 are fall-only; cards 7-12 add gentle Halloween make-believe. Children may choose a familiar object instead of a seasonal character.

0-3 min • Pick a problem

Read two prompts aloud. Children choose one, combine ideas or invent a different character. Ask 'What does your character want?'

3-7 min • Tell it first

Partners tell a possible beginning and one thing that gets in the way. Model an attempt that does not quite work before the ending.

7-17 min • Make it

Children draw, dictate, write or arrange pictures. Use 'First... Then... At last...' if helpful. Focus on the story connection before spelling or neatness.

17-22 min • Try an audience

A partner points to or listens to the story. Ask 'What was the problem? How did it end?' The storyteller can add a missing detail.

22-25 min • Give it a title

Choose a title that makes someone curious. Invite a quiet gallery or an optional read-aloud. Save unfinished stories for another day.

Free 30-minute introductory workshop

Live on Zoom: the whole book + voices + a turn directing C. J.

Adults: cjmcguirebooks.com/visit

Subject to availability. School/library groups; a teacher or librarian hosts.

(C) 2026 C. J. McGuire. Free classroom, library and home copying.



Keep the thinking going

'Your character can do something impossible. Help your reader understand what they wanted and what happened.'

What a response might sound like

Prompt: a leaf refuses to fall. One possible story: 'Leaf wanted one more look at the sky. It held on while the other leaves drifted away. A breeze offered a flying tour. Leaf let go.' This is one example, not an ending to copy or a required answer.

Make the first step smaller

Kindergarten: a drawing plus a dictated beginning and ending is enough. First grade when ready: one sentence per event with oral rehearsal. Accept invented spelling and provide a small word bank only when it helps the child's chosen idea.

Add a challenge when ready

Second grade when ready: add dialogue, a second attempt or a surprising but connected ending. Ask which picture deserves a close-up and what extra detail it would show.

A quick check for understanding

Can the child identify what their character wants and explain how the ending connects? Ask a partner to retell it; use any confusion as a reason to add one useful detail.

No printer? No problem.

Fold one sheet into three spaces, use a shared board or record the story through adult scribing. Speaking, signing and arranging existing pictures count as composing.

Print only what you need

Pages 1-2: adult reference. Page 3: one set of cards per group, or read aloud without cutting. Page 4: optional child response. US Letter: actual size. A4: Fit. Student pages use black lines and white backgrounds.

Developed for C. J. McGuire Books with AI assistance. Suggested activities for educator review, not an independently evaluated curriculum. Feedback: hello@cjm McGuire Books.

Pick a problem. Surprise us.



A grown-up can read these. Point, tell, sign or use your usual communication supports.

1 • FALL

A leaf refuses to fall. What is it waiting for?

2 • FALL

A squirrel opens a lost-and-found for acorns.

3 • FALL

A rain boot wants a dry-day adventure.

4 • FALL

A scarecrow asks for a lunch break.

5 • FALL

The wind delivers a letter to the wrong tree.

6 • FALL

A puddle would like to see the sky up close.

7 • HALLOWEEN

A pumpkin wants pockets. What will it carry?

8 • HALLOWEEN

A friendly ghost is very bad at hide-and-seek.

9 • HALLOWEEN

A costume hat chooses a different job.

10 • HALLOWEEN

A tiny monster's loudest roar sounds like a hiccup.

11 • HALLOWEEN

A pretend witch's broom wants to sweep, not fly.

12 • HALLOWEEN

A skeleton starts a band but keeps losing a drumstick.

My wonderfully peculiar story



Draw, tell, dictate or write. An adult can put your words on the page.

Draw your character in the most important moment.

My character wants... But...

At last...