

Creative (writing) responses to issues of conflict: the case of Literature

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Creative Writing

- It can be used to allow:
 - The enjoyment of Literature
 - The possibility to express ourselves
 - The possibility to reflect on a topic indirectly or directly
 - The possibility to solve internal conflicts

What can help us in writing?

- Our own experiences
- Our imagination
- The story we have read
 - Reader's Response Theory
 - Every instance in the story can act as a prompt awaiting our creative response or the narrative closure unlocking the textual power
 - Text against Text (Robert Scholes, 2005, 45) from: *Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English*
- The language of the story: Not simply **what** the author says but **how** they say it

Conflict Resolution through Conflict and Resolution

- Plot Development
 - Conflict (Mary wants a car but/ doesn't have any money)
 - Resolution (Mary inherits the money/ wins the lottery/ works for it, decides she doesn't need a car)
- Sometimes Conflict is an Actual Conflict between
 - A Character and another Character
 - A Character and their Self
 - A character and Nature
 - A Character and Society

Our topic

- The Zax
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZmZzGxGpSs>
(0:41 – 2:20)
- **Discuss**
 - The conflict
 - The characters
 - The setting
- What could they do????

http://www.intime.uni.edu/citizenship/themes/single_themes/conflict_resolution/conflict_resolution_wheel.htm



The Plot

Climax (middle)

Rising action

Falling action

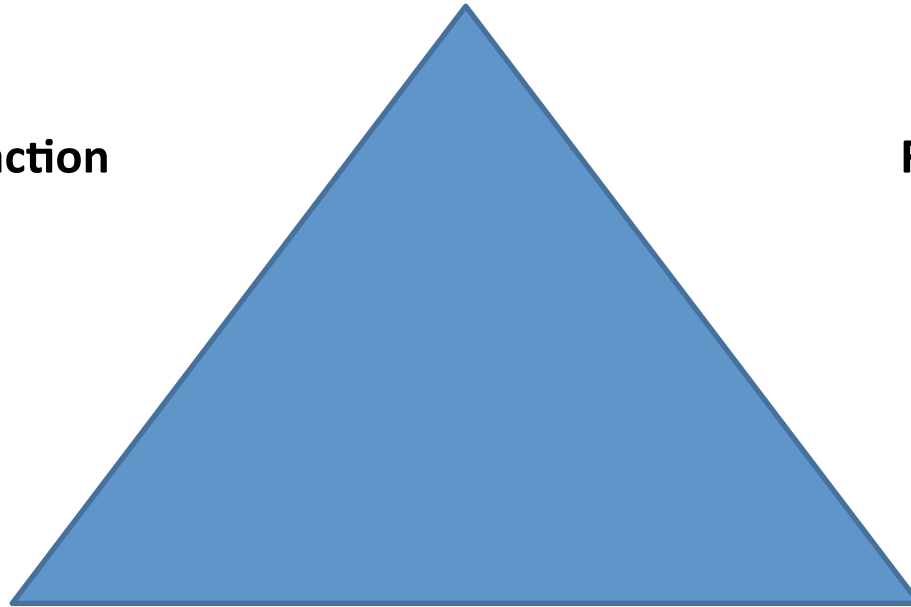
Beginning

Resolution

Exposition

(characters, setting, initial conflict, narrative hook)

Freytag's Pyramid



Read the rest of the poem

- What does the author use to show the conflict?
 - Words that describe the **characters** (pride)
 - Their words
 - Rhyming
 - Repetition
 - Humor
 - Point of view (locating it, new character, a given character from a different time-perspective)
 - The plot development
 - The setting

Point of View (Genre)



Point of View (New Character)

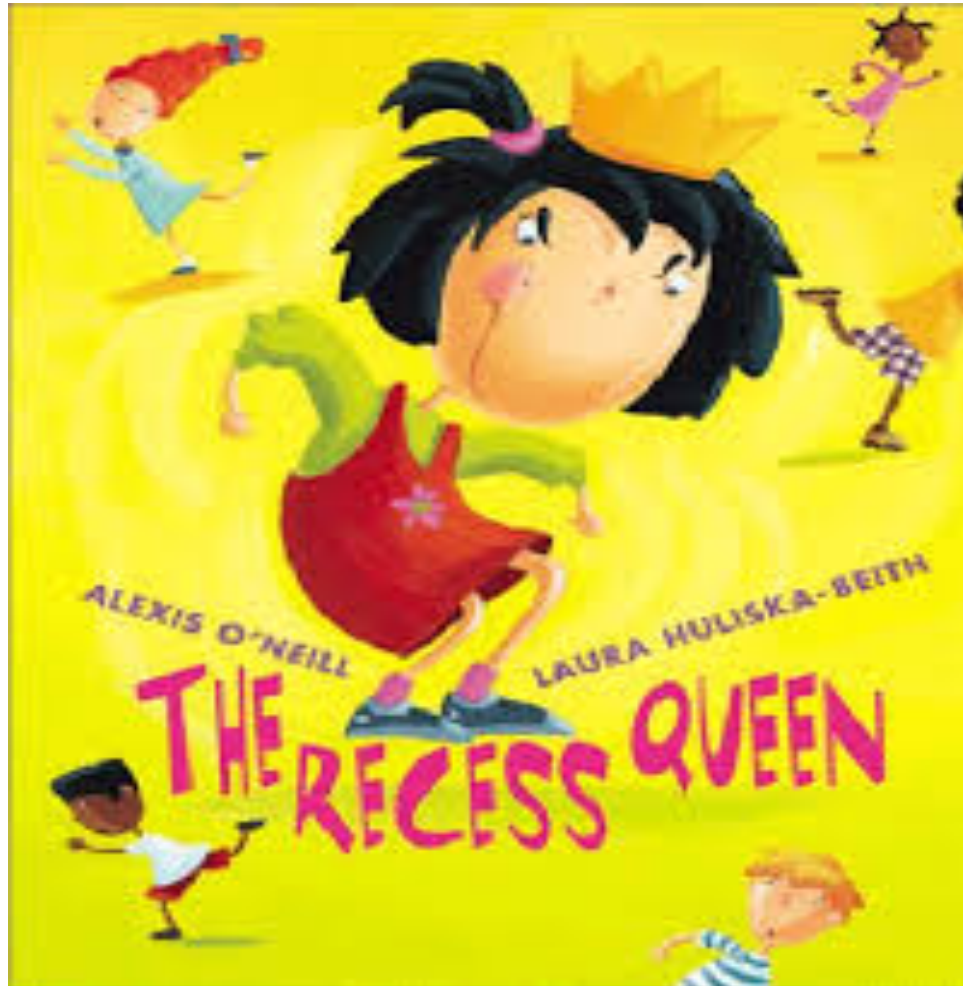


The Character in the Spotlight

- Name
- Personality
- Appearance
- Interests
- Wishes
- Book Covers (your character)

Mean Jean was the Recess Queen

Alexis O' Neill & Laura Huliska-Beith

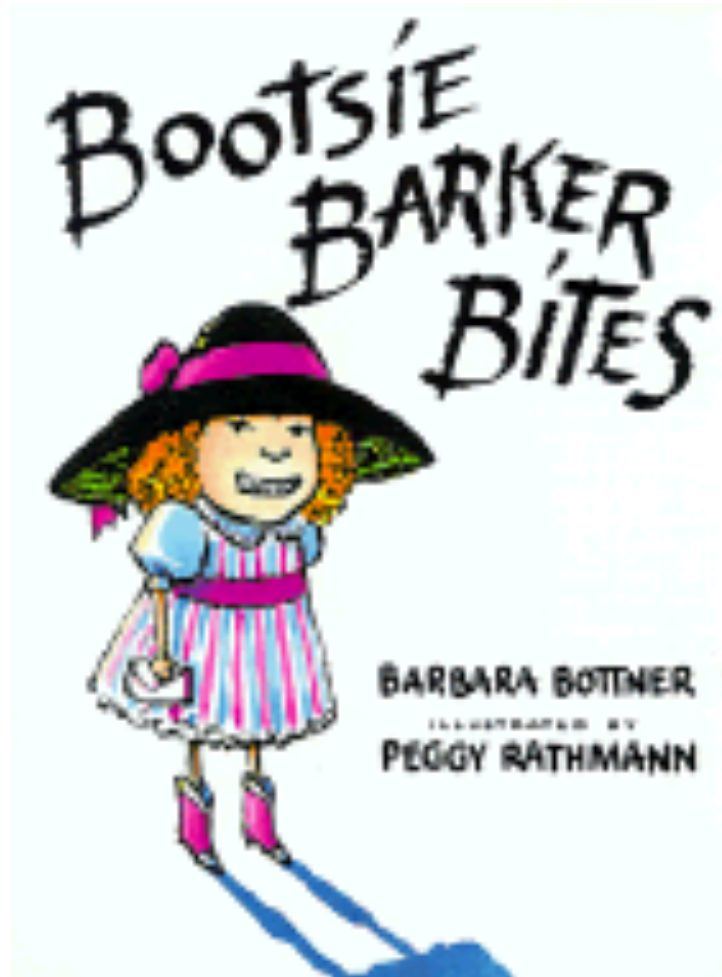


Mean Jean was Recess Queen
and nobody said and different.
Nobody swung until Mean Jean swung.
Nobody kicked until Mean Jean kicked.
Nobody bounced until Mean Jean bounced.

If kids ever crossed her,
she'd push 'em and smoosh 'em,
lollapaloosh' em,
Hammer 'em, slammer 'em,
Kitz and kajammer 'em.

Bootsie Barker Bites

Barbara Bottner & Peggy Rathmann



First, we have a tea party.

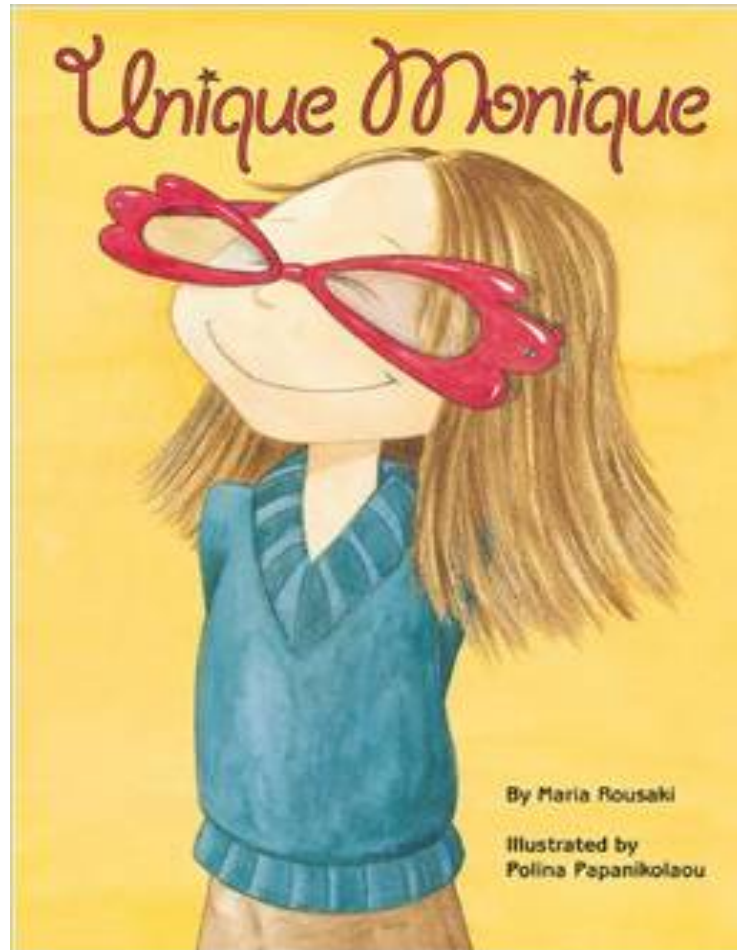
Then my mother tells Bootsie and me to play in my room. I try to get Bootsie interested in my book about turtles but Bootsie hates turtles.

“You are a turtle ” says Bootsie and “I am a turtle eating dinosaur”. My mother calls: “Play nice girls”. Bootsie says: “We are”.

I can't say anything.

Unique Monique

Maria Rousaki & Polina Papanikolaou



The Character

- Cards
- Animals
- **Words**
- Play with the
 - Name
 - Characteristic
 - personality trait
 - situation

Exercise 1

- Write the name of a hero/heroine of a book using
 - alliteration
 - showing in the title the basic premise (characteristic/difference) of the story
 - prepare to explain the type of conflict the hero/heroine will face
 - Use names: Dina, Mina, Mary, Bo, Tony, Susy, Fern, Lena...
 - Use verbs: do/es, go/es, is, tell, fear, learn...
 - Use nouns: lies, truth, toy, everything...
- The hero/heroine might be:
 - a person
 - an animal
 - Anything
- Explain in two lines who is this person and what problem they will face. (narrative hook)

Why?

Katie Wood Ray (1999): "the inquiry structures in writing workshops do simply this-they slow down and make more deliberate the reading like writers that happens vicariously when any writer reads. Slowing down lets writers apprentice themselves very deliberately to other writers" (16).

Ray, Katie Wood. 1999. *Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Exercise 2

- Read the Abstract
- Make a diagram of the main character
 - **In the inside write at least four of their characteristics/ personality traits**
 - **Outside write how (techniques like adjectives, dialogue, thoughts, other people's comments) the writer manages to show these characteristics**
 - Choose the most important ones
 - Check if these remain truthful for the rest of the book

- Change the point of view
- Decide on the plot development
- Describe a conflict you experienced and:
- Write from your own perspective/ future self/
the other person
- Write a diary entry
- Write a scene
- Write an episode
- Depending on the type of experience turn it into
a comedy, adventure, mystery etc...

The Zax

by Dr. Seuss

From *The Sneetches and Other Stories*

Copyright 1961 by Theodor S. Geisel and Audrey S. Geisel, renewed 1989.

One day, making tracks
In the prairie of Prax,
Came a North-Going Zax
And a South-Going Zax.

And it happened that both of them came to a place
Where they bumped. There they stood.
Foot to foot. Face to face.

"Look here, now!" the North-Going Zax said, "I say!
You are blocking my path. You are right in my way.
I'm a North-Going Zax and I always go north.
Get out of my way, now, and let me go forth!"

"Who's in whose way?" snapped the South-Going Zax.
"I always go south, making south-going tracks.
So you're in MY way! And I ask you to move
And let me go south in my south-going groove."

Then the North-Going Zax puffed his chest up with pride.
"I never," he said, "take a step to one side.
And I'll prove to you that I won't change my ways
If I have to keep standing here fifty-nine days!"

"And I'll prove to YOU," yelled the South-Going Zax,
"That I can stand here in the prairie of Prax
For fifty-nine years! For I live by a rule
That I learned as a boy back in South-Going School.
Never budge! That's my rule. Never budge in the least!
Not an inch to the west! Not an inch to the east!
I'll stay here, not budging! I can and I will
If it makes you and me and the whole world stand still!"

Well...

Of course the world didn't stand still. The world grew.
In a couple of years, the new highway came through
And they built it right over those two stubborn Zax
And left them there, standing un-budged in their tracks.

Fish in a Tree

by **Lynda Mullaly Hunt**

(to be published on February 5, 2015)

Chapter 1 In Trouble Again

It's always there. Like the ground underneath my feet.

"Well, Ally? Are you going to write or aren't you?" Mrs. Hall asks.

If my teacher were mean it would be easier.

"C'mon," she says. "I know you can do it."

"What if I told you that I was going to climb a tree using only my teeth? Would you say I could do it then?"

Oliver laughs, throwing himself on his desk like it's a fumbled football.

Shay groans. "Ally, why can't you just act normal for once?"

Near her, Albert, a bulky kid who's worn the same thing every day—a dark T-shirt that reads Flint—sits up straight. Like he's waiting for a firecracker to go off.

Mrs. Hall sighs. "C'mon, now. I'm only asking for one page describing yourself."

I can't think of anything worse than having to describe myself. I'd rather write about something more positive. Like throwing up at your own birthday party.

"It's important," she says. "It's so your new teacher can get to know you."

I know that, and it's exactly why I don't want to do it. Teachers are like the machines that take quarters for bouncy balls. You know what you're going to get. Yet, you don't know, too.

"And," she says. "All that doodling of yours, Ally. If you weren't drawing all the time, your work might be done. Please put it away."

Embarrassed, I slide my drawings underneath my blank writing assignment. I've been drawing pictures of myself being shot out of a cannon. It would be easier than school. Less painful.

"C'mon," she says, moving my lined paper toward me. "Just do your best."

Seven schools in seven years and they're all the same. Whenever I do my best, they tell me I don't try hard enough. Too messy. Careless spelling. Annoyed that the same word is spelled different ways on the same page. And the headaches. I always get headaches from looking at the brightness of dark letters on white pages for too long.

Mrs. Hall clears her throat.

The rest of the class is getting tired of me again. Chairs slide. Loud sighs. Maybe they think I can't hear their words: Freak. Dumb. Loser.

I wish she'd just go hang by Albert, the walking Google page who'd get a better grade than me if he just blew his nose into the paper.

The back of my neck heats up.

I don't get it. She always let me slide. It must be because these are for the new teacher and she can't have one missing.

I stare at her big stomach. "So, did you decide what you're going to name the baby?" I ask. Last week we got her talking about baby names for a full half hour of social studies.

"C'mon, Ally. No more stalling."

I don't answer.

"I mean it," she says, and I know she does.

I watch a mind movie of her taking a stick and drawing a line in the dirt between us under a bright blue sky. She's dressed as a sheriff and I'm wearing black and white prisoner stripes. My mind does this all the time—shows me these movies that seem so real that they carry me away inside of them. They are a relief from my real life.

I steel up inside, willing myself to do something I don't really want to do. To escape this teacher who's holding on and won't let go.

I pick up my pencil and her body relaxes, probably relieved that I've given in.

But, instead, knowing she loves clean desks and things just so, I grip my pencil with a hard fist. And scribble all over my desk.

"Ally!" She steps forward quick. "Why would you do that?"

The circular scribbles are big on top and small on the bottom. It looks like a tornado and I wonder if I meant to draw a picture of my insides. I look back up at her. "It was there when I sat down."

The laughter starts—but they're not laughing because they think I'm funny.

"I can tell that you're upset, Ally," Mrs. Hall says.

I am not hiding that as well as I need to.

"She's such a freak," Shay says in one of those loud whispers that everyone is meant to hear.

Oliver is drumming on his desk now.

"That's it," Mrs. Hall finally says. "To the office. Now."

I wanted this but now I am having second thoughts.

“Ally.”

“Huh?”

Everyone laughs again. She puts up her hand. “Anyone else who makes a sound gives up their recess.” The room is quiet.

“Ally. I said to the office.”

I can’t go see our principal, Mrs. Silver, again. I go to the office so much, I wonder when they’ll hang up a banner that says, “Welcome, Ally Nickerson!”

“I’m sorry,” I say, actually meaning it. “I’ll do it. I promise.”

She sighs. “Okay, Ally, but if that pencil stops moving, you’re going.”

She moves me to the reading table next to a Thanksgiving bulletin board about being grateful. Meanwhile, she sprays my desk with cleaner. Glancing at me like she’d like to spray me with cleaner. Scrub off the dumb.

I squint a bit, hoping the lights will hurt my head less. And then I try to hold my pencil the way I’m supposed to instead of the weird way my hand wants to.

I write with one hand and shield my paper with the other. I know I better keep the pencil moving, so I write the word “Why?” over and over from the top of the page to the very bottom.

One, because I know how to spell it right and, two, because I’m hoping someone will finally give me an answer.

Retrieved from: <http://www.amazon.com/Fish-Tree-Lynda-Mullaly-Hunt/dp/0399162593>

Charlotte's Web, (1952).

by **E.B. White.**

Chapter 1 Before Breakfast

WHERE'S Papa going with that ax?" said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast.

"Out to the hoghouse," replied Mrs. Arable. "Some pigs were born last night."

"I don't see why he needs an ax," continued Fern, who was only eight.

"Well," said her mother, "one of the pigs is a runt. It's very small and weak, and it will never amount to anything. So your father has decided to do away with it."

"Do away with it?" shrieked Fern. "You mean kill it? Just because it's smaller than the others?"

Mrs. Arable put a pitcher of cream on the table. "Don't yell, Fern!" she said. "Your father is right. The pig would probably die anyway."

Fern pushed a chair out of the way and ran outdoors. The grass was wet and the earth smelled of springtime. Fern's sneakers were sopping by the time she caught up with her father.

"Please don't kill it!" she sobbed. "It's unfair."

Mr. Arable stopped walking.

"Fern," he said gently, "you will have to learn to control yourself."

"Control myself?" yelled Fern. "This is a matter of life and death, and you talk about controlling myself."

Tears ran down her cheeks and she took hold of the ax and tried to pull it out of her father's hand.

"Fern," said Mr. Arable, "I know more about raising a litter of pigs than you do. A weakling makes trouble. Now run along!"

"But it's unfair," cried Fern. "The pig couldn't help being born small, could it? If I had been very small at birth, would you have killed me?"

Mr. Arable smiled. "Certainly not," he said, looking down at his daughter with love. "But this is different.

A little girl is one thing, a little runty pig is another."

"I see no difference," replied Fern, still hanging on to the ax. "This is the most terrible case of injustice I ever heard of."

A queer look came over John Arable's face. He seemed almost ready to cry himself.

"All right," he said. "You go back to the house and I will bring the runt when I come in. I'll let you start it on a bottle, like a baby. Then you'll see what trouble a pig can be."

When Mr. Arable returned to the house half an hour later, he carried a carton under his arm. Fern was upstairs changing her sneakers. The kitchen table was set for breakfast, and the room smelled of coffee, bacon, damp plaster, and wood smoke from the stove.

"Put it on her chair!" said Mrs. Arable. Mr. Arable set the carton down at Fern's place. Then he walked to the sink and washed his hands and dried them on the roller towel.

Fern came slowly down the stairs. Her eyes were red from crying. As she approached her chair, the carton wobbled, and there was a scratching noise. Fern looked at her father. Then she lifted the lid of the carton. There, inside, looking up at her, was the newborn pig. It was a white one. The morning light shone through its ears, turning them pink.

"He's yours," said Mr. Arable. "Saved from an untimely death. And may the good Lord forgive me for this foolishness."

Fern couldn't take her eyes off the tiny pig. "Oh," she whispered. "Oh, look at him! He's absolutely perfect."