

Activities to support short story writing as part of the Enfield Learns Together short story competition

For teachers and parents



What's in a picture?



What do you see?



What do you feel?



What do you think the characters are thinking?



What has just happened?



What might they say or do next?



What is the relationship between these characters?



Is there anything that puzzles you about this picture





Activity 1: Write a paragraph to open a story suggested by the previous picture.

What genre/kind of story would be appropriate?

Where will the story start- at the beginning of the plot line or part way through?

What will be your opening line?

How will you draw the reader in?



Activity 2: What makes a good story?

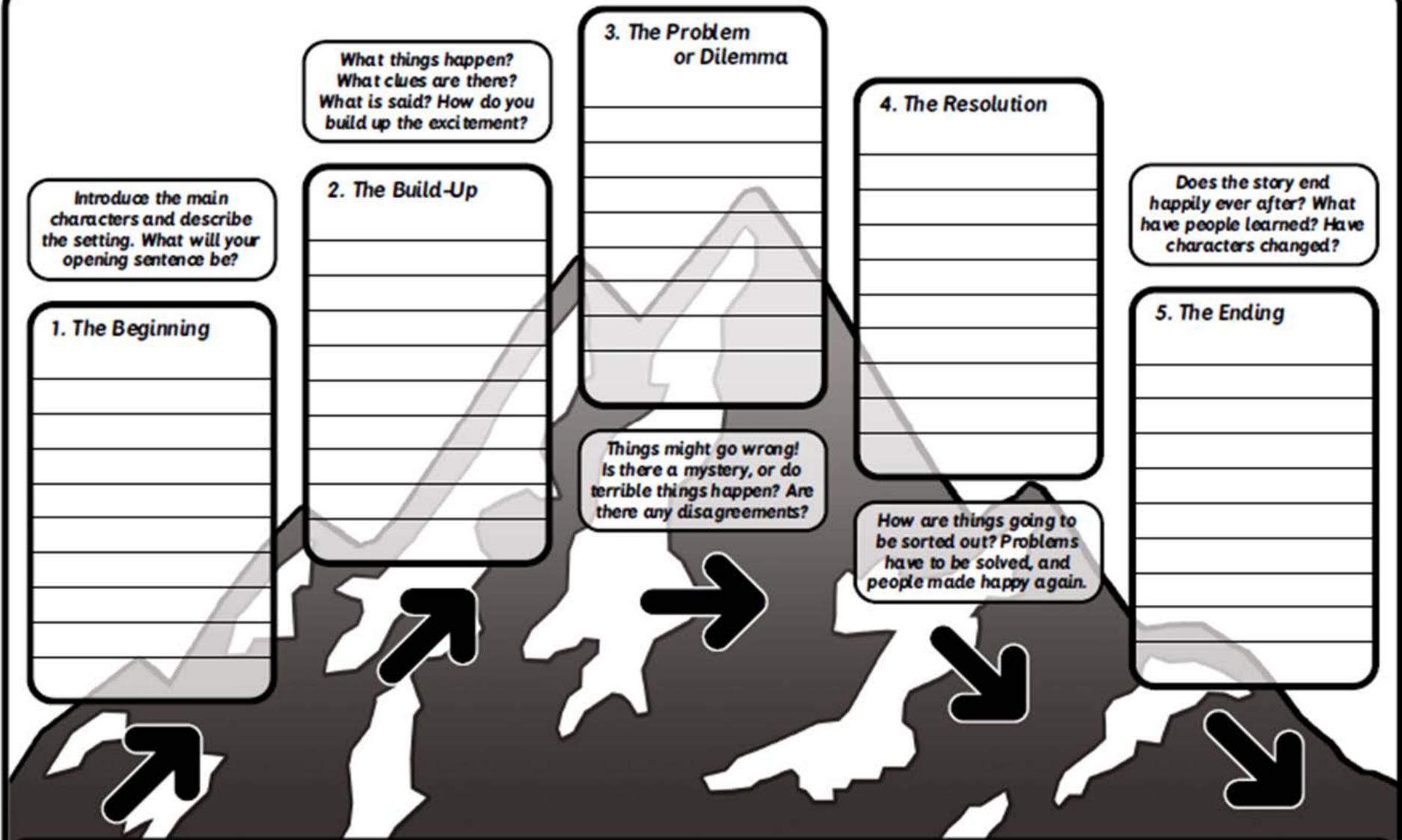
What makes a good story?

Order the 9 pieces of advice into your order of priority.

What is it about the best piece of advice that is so important? Can you think of a story where this advice was used?

Advice from authors

Advice from authors	Rank order 1-9
A. Heather Vogel Frederick (author of the Spy Mice books) Number one most important thing: READ. Read as much as and as widely as you can. Soak up the language, the tempo of the best stories. Like a musician listening to the best music, reading wonderful books will influence the way you play your instrument – or in a writer’s case, the way you write.	
B. Philip Caveney (author of the Sebastian Darke books) Keep asking yourself “what if” – and make sure we see the events through the eyes of your characters.	
C. Andy Stanton (author of the Mr Gum stories) Edit! Go back and edit your stories to improve them. But not immediately – put your story away for a couple of weeks or a month. Don’t think about your story. After that time, take out your story and have another look, and because you haven’t been worrying about it for all that time, you’ll be able to see with much clearer eye what needs to be done to improve it.	
D. Malorie Blackman (the eighth Children’s Laureate and author of Noughts and Crosses) Write from the heart; write what you care about; write your own style and in your own voice (don’t copy someone else’s style but make it your own). And most importantly, don’t give up!	
E. Andrew Lane (author of the Young Sherlock Holmes books) Firstly, write a lot. Write every day. Write lots of different stuff. Write a diary. It’s all good practice. Secondly, ..., you need to realise that stories about things happening are much less interesting than stories about why things are happening.	
F. Alex Scarrow (author of the TimeRiders series) Make sure you have an ending in mind before you start. That way your story has a direction of travel to help you pull through.	
G . Philip Reeve (author of Mortal Engines) When you finish the story that you are writing, go back to the beginning and write it again, better!	
H. Kieran Larwood (author of Freaks) Don’t be afraid of re-writing. Put your work away for a couple of months and then come back to it with fresh eyes – keep the good bits and rework the rest. And the most important thing: read as much as possible.	
I. William Nicholson (author of the Wind Singer) Your characters matter more than your plot. Think hard about them – what they want, what their odd habits are, how they talk. If necessary, copy someone you know. If your characters have life, your story will live.	



Activity 3: Planning your story – use the story planner to map your story

Types of story ending: Here are some different types of story endings – you might have seen or used them

Never again – ‘and then he was gone’, ‘s/he was never seen again’, ‘and from that day to this, he has never been found’

A question – ‘and what do you suppose happened then?’, ‘But was he really dead’, ‘could she really have run away?’

An exclamation – ‘It can’t be!’, ‘Oh no!’, ‘She lives!’

A moral – ‘And that is why you should always be kind.’, ‘So remember, if ever you...’, ‘

Looking to the future – ‘And tomorrow is another day’, ‘and they lived happily ever after.’, ‘now I can get on with the rest of my life’

Flash forward – ‘but all that was 20 years ago...’, ‘it seems like only yesterday, but now I am grown up’, ‘when I remember back to that time’

Dialogue – a final conversation or last word from the narrator/main character

A dream – ‘and then I woke up’, ‘it had all been a terrible/magical/wonderful dream’

Time for bed – ‘and so I must get some sleep’, ‘and now it is time for bed’, ‘I’m tired now and need to sleep’

A comment from the author – ‘and she would always remember that day’, ‘perhaps he had learned his lesson’, ‘I suspect we will see her again’

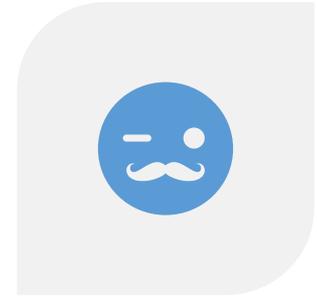
Activity 4: Famous last words



Read through the last few sentences of different stories (last words)



Which ones do you think are effective/work? Why?



What types of story endings are they?

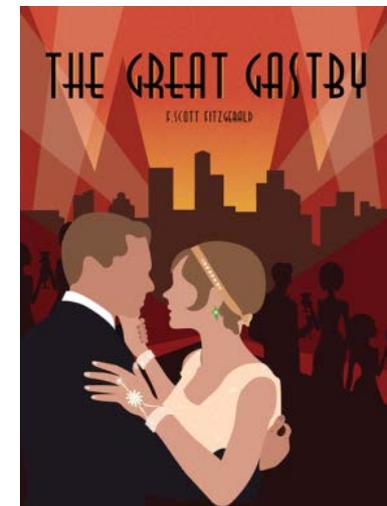
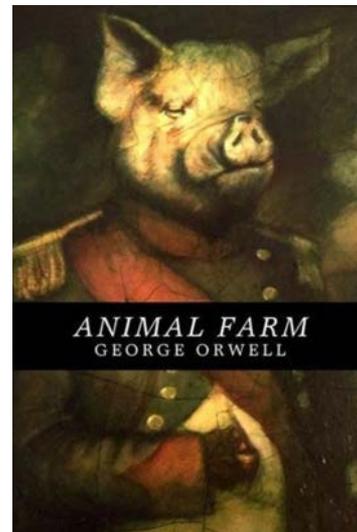
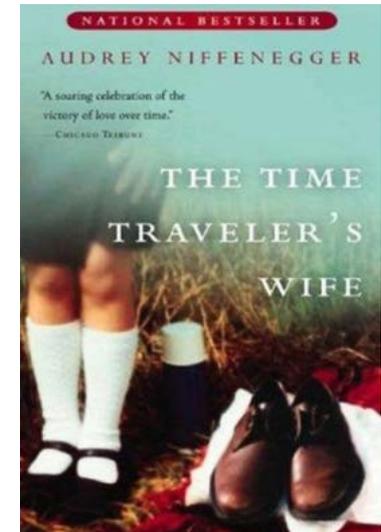
Why do these endings work?

“After all, tomorrow is another day.” *Gone with the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell

"The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which." *Animal Farm*, George Orwell

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." *The Great Gatsby*, F.Scott Fitzgerald

“He is coming, and I am here.” *The Time Traveller’s Wife*, Audrey Niffenegger

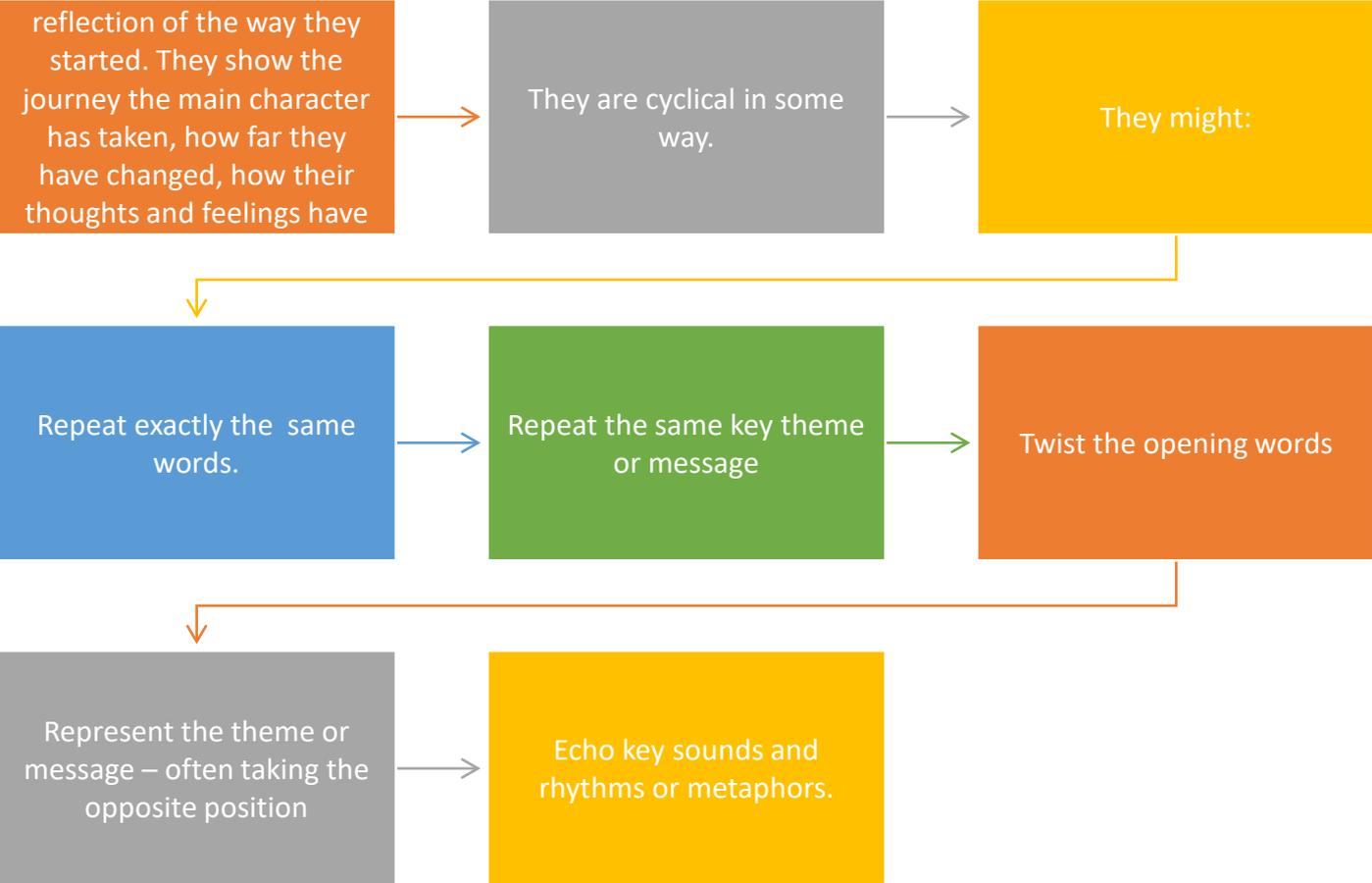


The ending of “Fire” by Lucien Esenbel, Year 5 Winning Story of Enfield Mayor’s Award for Writing 2018

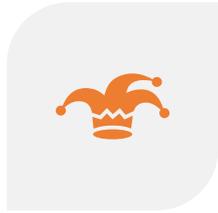
For many years I have flickered and listened to people’s prayers. I held back my tears because if I cried, I would extinguish myself. There I stayed for many years until one day (the exact date I don’t know) I noticed the clumsiest of the priests, called Ben, was praying. There was a fly which was interrupting his praying. He tried to stop it but he didn’t stop praying. The first time he missed it and then he tried again and he hit me! I rolled out the church and I saw the initials, K.I.N.G.S. C.R.O.S.S. S.T.A.T.I.O.N.

I felt myself growing again. Was this my second life...?

Start to Finish



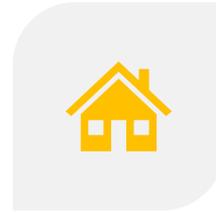
What makes a good story ending?



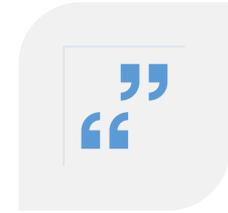
Make it memorable and appropriate to the story



Should draw writing to defined conclusion



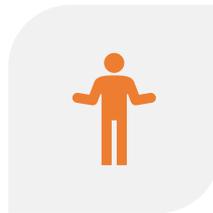
End with a bang, not a whimper e.G not going home afterwards



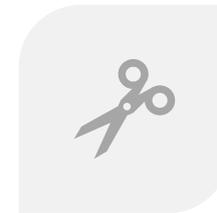
The last sentence of a story is as important as the first



Try out alternatives and consider which sounds best



Avoid over-used endings (e.G. Waking from a dream)



Make sure you haven't left any loose ends!

Preparing to write the final scene



Read aloud ending
from known story



Compare a number
of story endings



What creates the
'aaah' factor in a
good story ending?



Identify features of a
good ending

Activity 5: Upgrading - Making your story better once it is written



Read your story aloud first to yourself and then to someone else. Does it sound right? What changes do you need to make?



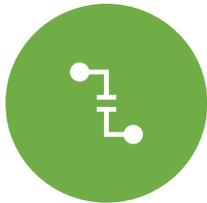
Change the story with the help of someone else. Can someone help you to look at a small part of your story – and suggest how it might be even better?



Using the right words. Are there more appropriate/better words that you could use to improve your story – words that make it more exciting or atmospheric, give more precise detail or show the story more clearly? Ideas of how you might do this is shown in the next slides.



Check for spelling and punctuation mistakes.



Check for logic and structure. Does your story make sense? Can the reader make the right connections?



Words choices

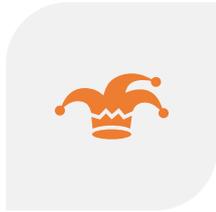


in one minute, think of as many alternative words as you can for...



When might you use each of these words? What individual meaning do they have that makes them different from the other words? You might need to ask someone else to help you with this. You can do this for any word you like and it will help you to consider which words are best for what you are trying to say.

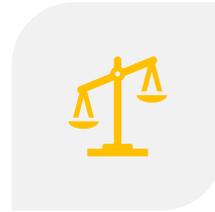
What can go wrong?



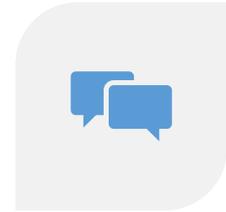
Too many characters



Too much plot



The scale is too big



Too much dialogue



Too predictable –
no tension or twist

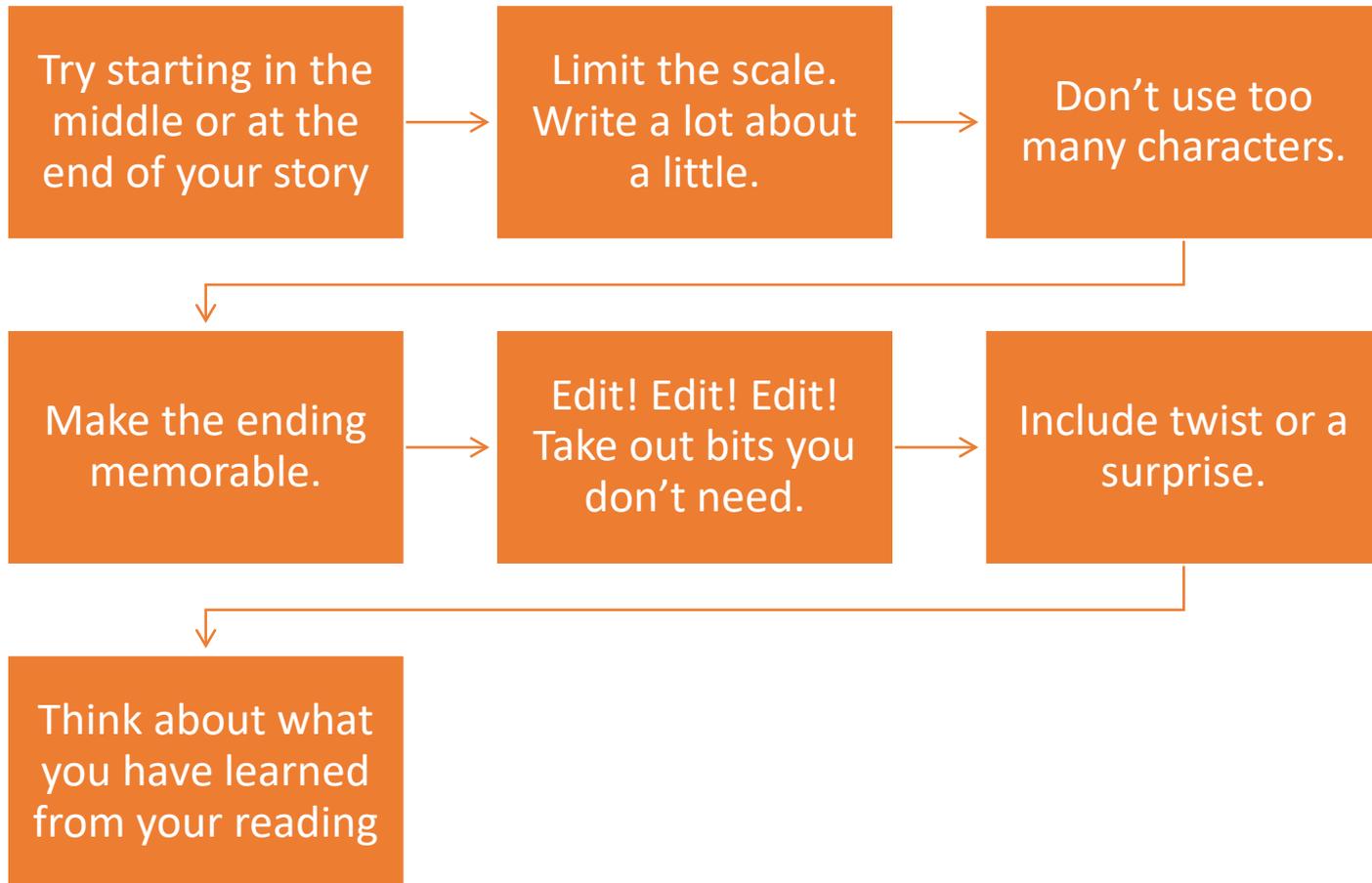


Lacking coherence
and cohesion



Overuse of
adjectives

Some more ideas for short story writing success...





And most of all...



Enjoy writing your story and
sharing it with others.



**We look forward to
reading it!**
