

KIT GRINDSTAFF: OUTLINE of WORKSHOPS for 4th – 8th GRADERS

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*All workshops are 1 hour long, extendable to 1.5 hours upon request. (Fees will change accordingly.)
Handouts given with each workshop.*

For booking, please email me at kit@kitgrindstaff.com. Thank you!



1: BUILD A STORY

Goal: To examine story structure in a simple, playful way, and to use games and exercises to take the fear out of writing (especially for reluctant writers) and make it FUN!

Structure: Discussion, and work/games in groups as well as solo.

Grades: 4 – 7

Overview:

- **The elements of story:** Discussion about the 5 'W's of plot building (who, what, where, when and why) and how they relate to the story's beginning, middle and end.
- **Consequences!** Students team up in groups of 5 or 6 for a few rounds of this fun writing game in which they'll create several rudimentary stories together (templates provided as a handout), often with hilarious results!
- **Quick round:** Fortunately/unfortunately – A fun game to prime the idea of conflict.
- **Stories from a hat:** Lastly, students draw different story elements from a hat – character, setting, what the character wants, the situation, etc – and use them to construct a scene. Drawing elements randomly in this way, students learn how the most unlikely things can be combined, and that anything goes!

2. CHARACTER AS A STARTING POINT FOR STORY

Goal: To use character development techniques to create a compelling main character and story beginning.

Structure: 4-part writing exercises, with discussion between each, and Q&A at the end.

Grades: 5 – 8

Overview:

- **Who is my character?** Students answer a questionnaire to begin an in-depth exploration of their character and his/her traits.

- **How does my character view the world?** Students choose from a number of prompts to place their character in a particular situation, explore how they see it, and how they react.

- **What does my character want?** Discussion about how plot is born out of conflict. Students write down various kinds of desires, from immediate ones (like wanting an ice cream), to longer-term, more plot-worthy goals (like wanting to go to the moon).

- **How will my character go about achieving this desire? What – or who – is in his/her way?** Character strategies, and how antagonists are essential to story.

The workshop will end with sharing, reading aloud, and discussion as to how the ideas written can be expanded on in the students' own time.

With thanks to Kristen Kittscher, middle grade author of the fun spy mystery THE WIG IN THE WINDOW, for providing the basis of this workshop.



3. SHOW, DON'T TELL

Goal: To examine the uses of the “Show don’t tell” rule of writing

Structure: Discussion, followed by an in-depth analysis of a scene from *The Flame in the Mist*, to see the way “show don’t tell” is used in the text. **Please note:** Prior reading of *The Flame in the Mist*, or any other texts used for reference, is not required. I will bring printouts.

Grades: 5 – 8

Overview:

- **Discussion** of “Show, don’t tell”: when it’s appropriate to use, and when not, and why it’s important.

- **“Hot seat” exercise:** A fun exercise where one student opts to be in the “hot seat” to enact different emotions which his/her classmates call out. By describing what they see, students practice *showing* how happiness, for example, can be portrayed through gestures, body language and action, rather than *telling*, as in the phrase “he/she felt happy”.

- **In-depth analysis** of a scene from *The Flame in the Mist*, to see the ways in which “show don’t tell” is used in the text. Discussion.

- **Writing exercise:** The last 15 minutes will be spent with students writing their own scene – either a new one that they make up, or based on the one from the book – paying particular attention to “showing.”

*With thanks to my friend, year 6 teacher Johanna Gates, for the basis for this workshop – and for being the first in the UK to use **The Flame in the Mist** in the classroom!*



4. YOUR IDEAS!

Do you have other ideas for a workshop with me that you’d like to discuss? Please feel free to [email me](#)! I look forward to hearing from you.

Please note: these ideas/outlines are the property of Kit Grindstaff or Kristen Kittscher or Johanna Gates. Other than for classroom use, please do not distribute, either electronically or printed out, without permission. Thank you!

Kit Grindstaff is the author of **THE FLAME IN THE MIST**, a dark, magical fantasy for middle grade readers ages 9 – 90. (Delacorte Press/Random House Children’s Books)

"Richly atmospheric" ~ **Booklist**

"Fast, creepy fun" ~ **Stefan Bachmann**, author of international bestseller *The Peculiar*