

# Workshop 2: What's the Story?

## Description

In this workshop video, participants explore the question, “What’s the story?” During the workshop, you’ll develop your own definition of “story” and explore the importance of story to another cultural group as well as what makes a good story—for a reader, for a generation, for all time. At the end of Workshop 2, you should be able to form your own answer to the question, and you will write a lesson plan that allows students to explore the elements of story. You’ll also take another step toward telling your own story.

# Workshop 2 Timeline

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## Getting Ready

30 minutes

In pairs or groups of three, share your personal story from your homework—the kernel of what could become your novel.

In pairs or groups of three, share the lesson plan that you created as homework after the previous workshop. Distribute copies to site participants.

### If There's Time:

Discuss the homework exercise on the opening lines from the story. How do they establish the story and hook the reader?

Discuss the homework readings. What surprised you? With what do you agree or disagree? What is relevant to your teaching?

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## Watch the Workshop Video

60 minutes

### During the Video

First 15-second break. Question on screen: In what way could you enhance students' experiences of a story within the classroom?

Five-minute break. ✍ Write a paragraph describing a character (real or imaginary) who might be the basis for a novel. (*Facilitator: Please alert participants when the break is nearly over.*)

Second 15-second break. Question on screen: In what way does a novel embody the whole story in the first paragraph?

# Workshop 2 Timeline

## Going Further

30 minutes

If a field trip is not convenient or appropriate, how else could you help students experience a story's setting within the classroom? With specific novels in mind, what could you bring into class?

What do these famous first sentences reveal about the work as a whole? (Address novels with which you are familiar.)

- In the days when the spinning wheels hummed busily in the farmhouses—and even great ladies, clothed in silk and thread lace, had their toy spinning wheels of polished oak—there might be seen, in districts far away among the lanes, or deep in the bosom of the hills, certain pallid undersized men who, by the side of the brawny country folk, looked like the remnants of a disinherited race. (George Eliot, *Silas Marner*)
- It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. (Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*)
- He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish. (Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*)
- The Nellie, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. (Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*)
- 1801—I have just returned from a visit to my landlord—the solitary neighbor that I shall be troubled with. (Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*)
- The boy with the fair hair lowered himself down the last few feet of rock and began to pick his way toward the lagoon. (William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*)
- A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods, and other bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes. (Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*)

# For Next Time

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## Homework Assignment

1. Design a lesson plan—or modify a lesson plan that was a part of this workshop—focusing on how setting reveals character. Bring copies to distribute at the next workshop.
2. ✎ Using your kernel idea for a novel, write an opening paragraph that highlights character, theme, setting, or plot. Underline key words or phrases.

### SUPPLEMENTAL

3. Go to the “Teachers and Lesson Plans” section of the *In Search of the Novel* Web site, [www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel). Read Donna Denizé’s lesson plan for teaching *Great Expectations*.
4. In a paragraph or so, discuss how important first sentences and paragraphs are to the entire story.
5. Watch the movie version of a novel you have taught or are teaching or plan to teach. In a page or two, compare and contrast one scene of the movie to the novel in terms of setting, character, plot, and theme.

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## Reading Assignment

1. Please refer to the “What’s the Story?” section of Appendix B, and read the text by E. M. Forster and Amy Tan.
2. Go to the “What’s the Story?” page on the *In Search of the Novel* Web site, [www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel). Read the “Participants’ Comments and Observations” section.