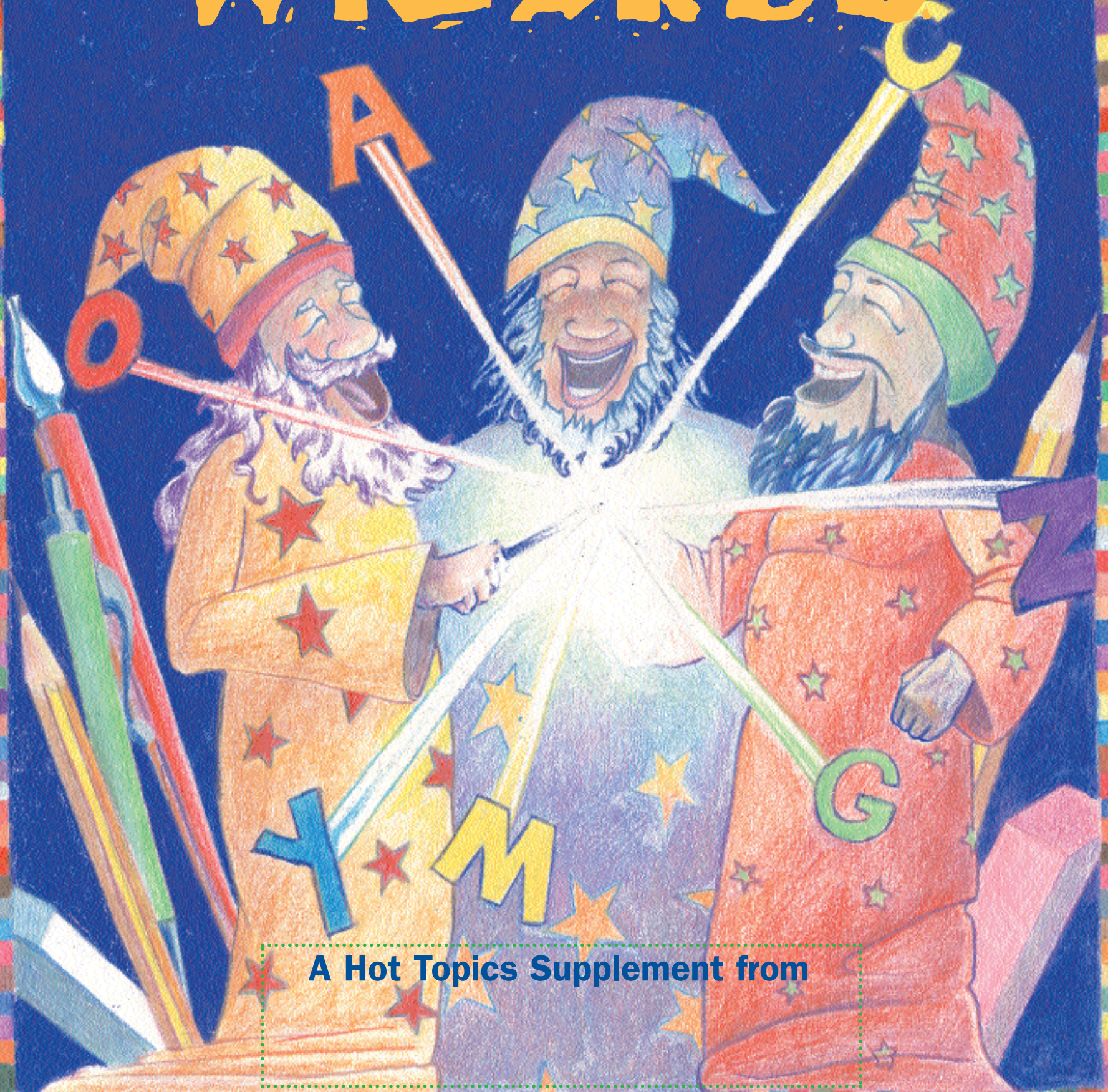
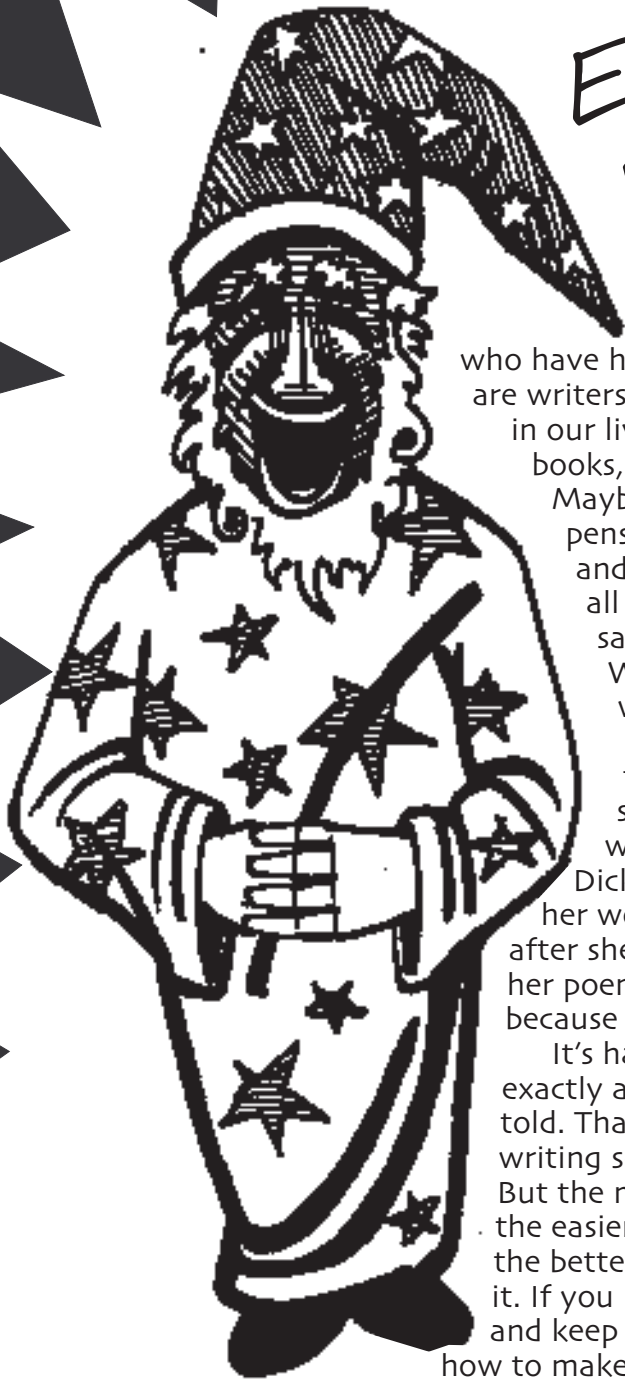


WRITING WIZARDS



A Hot Topics Supplement from



Everyone is a Writing Wizard

Some people think that all writers are people who have had books published. The truth is that almost all of us are writers. We all tell each other stories about what happens in our lives or how we feel about things. Some people write books, but maybe you like to write poems or stories.

Maybe you keep a journal in which you write what happens during your day. You probably exchange e-mails and instant messages with friends and others. Those are all different ways of writing. We all have something to say, so we all need to write as well as we possibly can. Writing wizards are people who make magic with the words they write.

Sometimes you write for other people and sometimes you write just for yourself. Either way, you're still a writer. The important thing is that you say what you want to say the best way you can. Emily Dickinson was one of the great poets of all time because her words expressed feeling. All of her work was published after she died, but even if no one had ever read even one of her poems, they would have still been wonderful poems because she had something to say.

It's hard to tell your story exactly as you want it to be told. That's what makes writing so challenging. But the more you write, the easier it will be and the better you'll be at it. If you keep writing and keep learning

how to make your writing better, you can get really good at telling people what you think and feel.

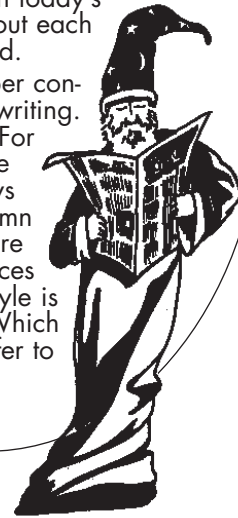
The Writing Process

Writing properly is best approached with a step-by-step method. The writing process has five steps – prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing. This special newspaper section will explain each step and will show you how to make writing magic work for you. Once you understand those steps, you'll be on your way to becoming a wizard with words.

NEWS WIZ

Learning standards: Uses strategies (e.g., adapts focus, point of view, organization, form) to write for a variety of purposes (e.g., to inform, entertain, explain, describe, record ideas)

1. We write to inform, persuade, and entertain. Can you find an example of each kind of writing in today's newspaper? Write about each one that you found.
2. Each day's newspaper contains different styles of writing. Compare two of them. For example, compare the writing style in a news story to that in a column or editorial. What are some of the differences you see? Which style is easier to read? Which would you prefer to write?



Prewriting: Preparing Your Potion

Wizards don't just make magic quickly. They begin making potions by thinking about what they want their spell to do. Writing wizards work the same way. The first step, prewriting, helps them focus on exactly what they want to say.

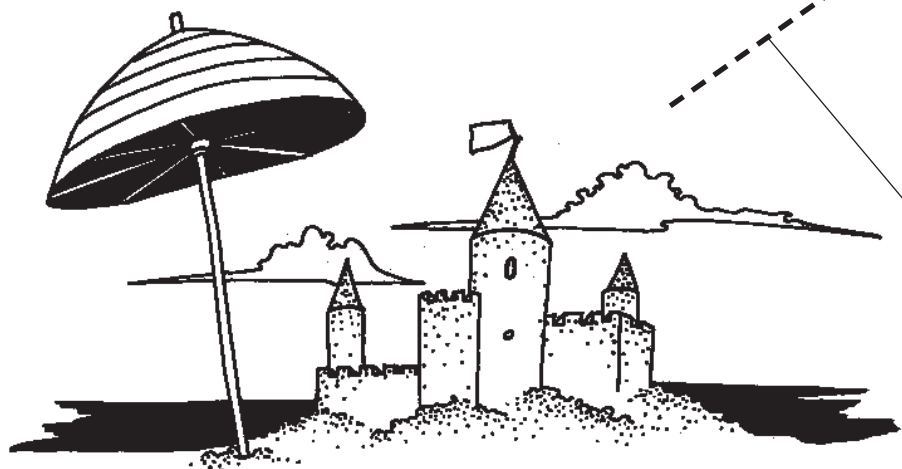
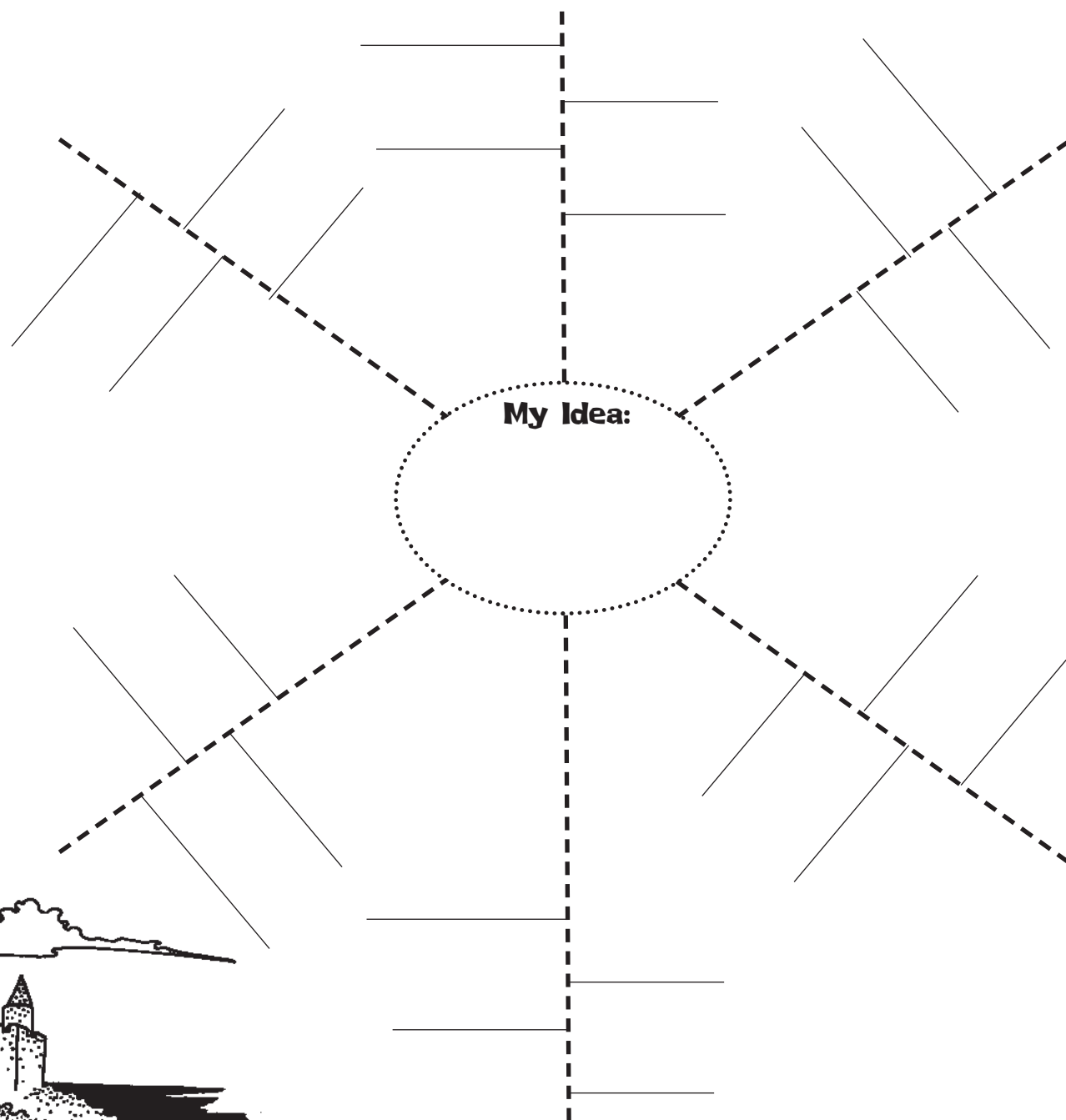
Your teachers may have told you to brainstorm before you start writing. When you brainstorm, you write a quick list of thoughts on a topic. Brainstorming is one way to think about what you want to say, but it is not the only way. Graphic organizers can also help you. One example is a web, something that looks like what a spider would weave. Start with one idea, and write it in the middle of a piece of paper. Let's say you decide you want to write a story about a vacation you took to a beach. The middle of the web would read, "Vacation at the beach." Then you would think of other

ideas to go along with that vacation. For example, you might come up with three key activities you want to share about your vacation – going to the beach, going to the boardwalk, and flying kites. So you would draw three lines from the central thought and write one of those ideas next to each line. Then you could think of three details that help describe each of your three activities. At that point, you'll have a pretty full web.

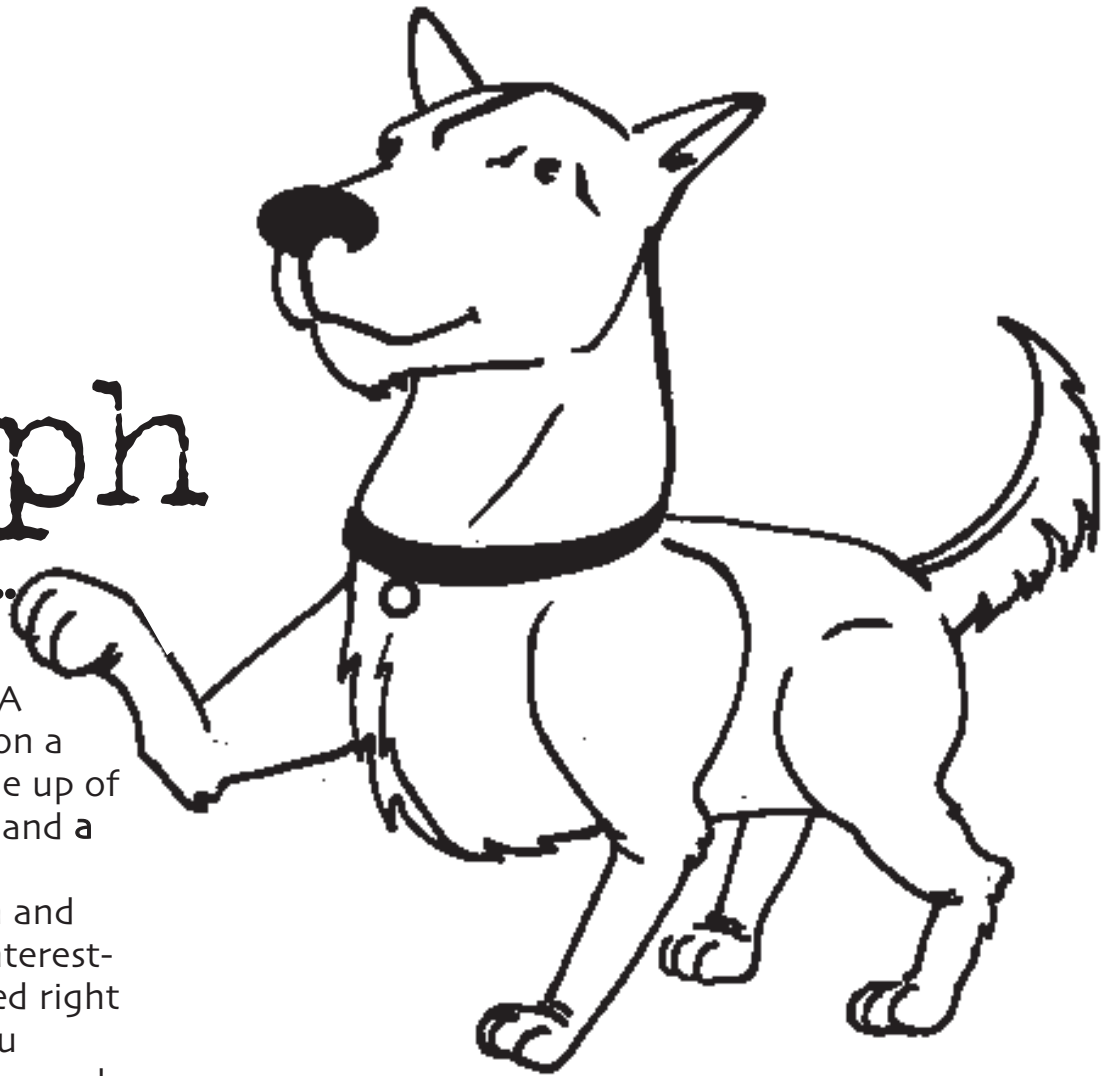
You'll be able to consult that web as you write and remember exactly what you wanted to say about each subject. You can always add to your web as you think of more ideas – or subtract from it if you decide that a particular detail isn't worth including. The web helps you get organized.

Sometimes, it's hard to choose a subject to write about. How do you decide? It's easiest to write about something you know – or about something that interests you that you want to know more about. For example, if you are very interested in poetry, you might start writing poems and putting together your own volume. Do you like pictures? If you do, it might be fun to put together a scrapbook with writing and pictures on the pages. If you don't know what to write about, here are some topics that might inspire you. Choose one idea and use the blank web to get started.

- Music
- Movies
- Newspaper articles
- Your friends
- Your family
- Something that happened at lunch
- Books or short stories



One Good Paragraph



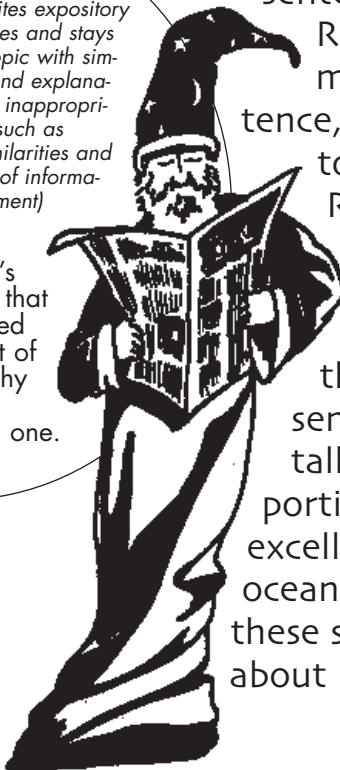
How do you start learning to be a good writer? Start with the idea of the paragraph. A paragraph is a group of sentences that focus on a single idea or topic. Most paragraphs are made up of a **topic sentence**, some **supporting sentences**, and a **concluding sentence**.

Your topic sentence begins your paragraph and should convey its main idea. But it must be interesting, too. You want your reader to be interested right away. For example, you might decide that you would like to write a paragraph about your dog and about how he is the greatest dog ever. Instead of writing, "I am going to write about my dog Rover and why he is the greatest dog in the world," you might write, "My dog Rover is the greatest dog in the world because he is so talented." The second sentence is better because it is more interesting. In the second sentence, you have stated your main idea – that Rover is the world's greatest dog. But you also stated why – because Rover has many talents. The reader doesn't know yet exactly what those talents are, but he's probably curious enough to keep reading so he'll find out.

NEWS WIZ

Learning standards: Writes expository compositions (e.g., identifies and stays on the topic; develops the topic with simple facts, details, examples, and explanations; excludes extraneous and inappropriate information; uses structures such as cause-and-effect, chronology, similarities and differences; uses several sources of information; provides a concluding statement)

Find an example of one good paragraph in today's newspaper. Look for one that has all the parts discussed here. On another sheet of paper, write about why the paragraph you chose is a good one.



The next part of your paragraph should support your topic sentence. Feel free to spend several sentences accomplishing that goal. Your paragraph about Rover, for example, might continue with this sentence: "One of the good things about Rover is that he is really fast and outruns me every time we race." With that sentence, you've supported what you wrote in the topic sentence because you still talk about Rover and his many talents. So you might continue with a sentence that reads, "Another great thing about Rover is that he never barks loudly in the middle of the night and wakes us up." Again, this sentence supports your topic sentence by talking about Rover's talents. A final supporting sentence might say, "Rover is also an excellent swimmer and loves to splash in the ocean whenever we go to the beach." Each of these sentences supports the topic sentence about Rover.



Writing: Get Ready to Make the Magic Happen

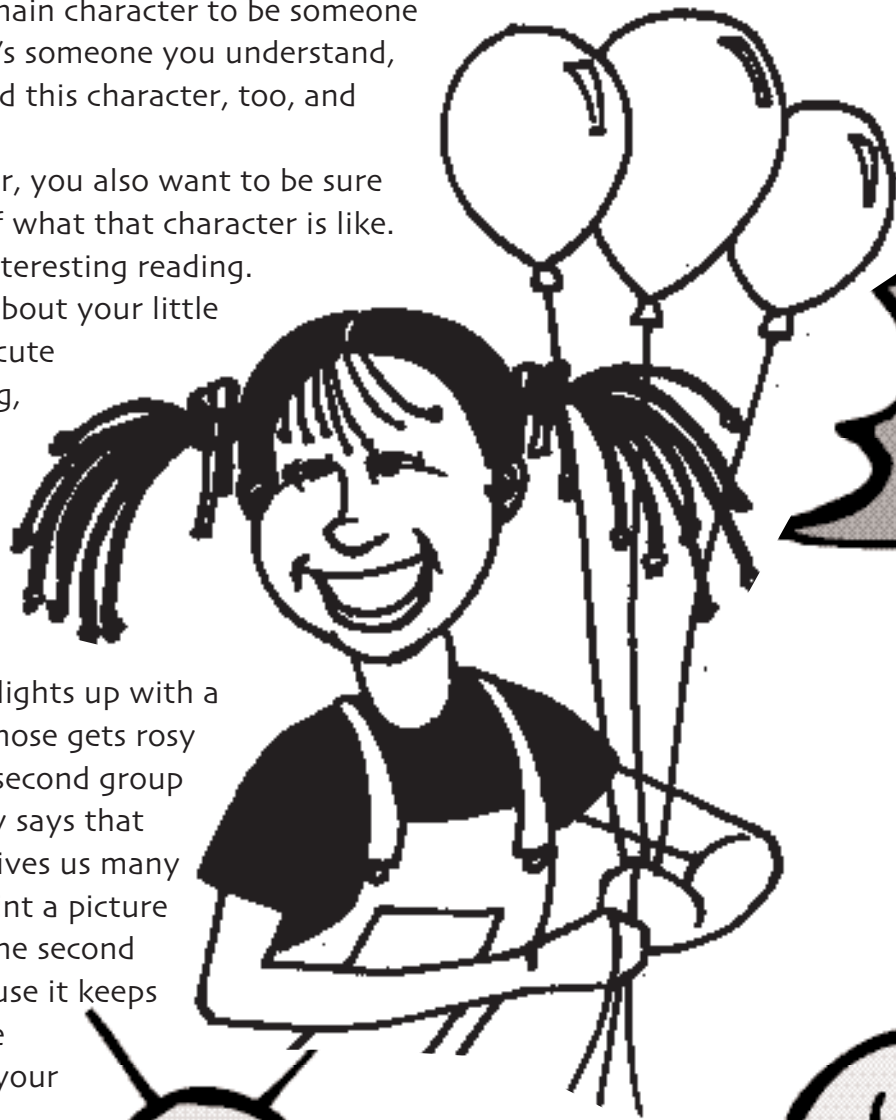
The wizard has now decided what the spell will do. Next, the magic words need to be written. After prewriting, you can begin writing. This is a good time to think about a few other things when you begin writing – **characters, setting, and plot**. "Characters" refers to the people you are writing about. "Setting" is where your story is happening. "Plot" means the events and the action that take place in your writing. These three ideas will help you create a framework for your writing.

The characters in your writing are very important. You want to create believable and interesting characters. You don't want to write about someone who sits on the couch all day. This type of person isn't doing much and would be dull to read about. You especially want your main character to be someone you relate to or understand. If it's someone you understand, readers will probably understand this character, too, and will want to read about her.

When you create a character, you also want to be sure you give a good description of what that character is like. Interesting details make for interesting reading.

Let's say you decide to write about your little sister because she does many cute things at home. Instead of writing, "My little sister is cute," you could write, "My little sister has soft brown hair that she wears in pigtails with light pink ribbons and matching pink

overalls. Her face lights up with a smile and her small button nose gets rosy whenever she giggles." The second group of sentences never actually says that your sister is cute, but it gives us many supporting details that paint a picture of a cute little girl. Also, the second example is more interesting because it keeps the reader reading so that he understands exactly what your sister looks like.



Show and Tell

Putting details like these in your story is called "showing." The first sentence, the one in which you stated that your sister was cute, is an example of "telling." It's always better to "show" more than you "tell" because it keeps the reader interested and forces the reader to keep reading to find out more.

Next is "setting." Pick an interesting place that you think people want to read about. Or, pick a regular place but make sure that many interesting events will happen there. When creating a setting, remember that the reader can't be inside your head and know exactly what you see. Your goal is to create a picture that will give readers a good idea of what you are thinking.

Imagine that your story takes place on an island. You might write, "She lived on the island of Davo, which had white, hot sand; tall, leafy, green palm trees; and the salty blue Pacific Ocean around it on all sides." Davo is a place you made up, but the descriptions give some idea of what it looks like. You would probably continue to describe it a little more. Sometimes describing the setting of the place where the main character lives, or is going, is a good way to begin a story if you use good supporting details.

Finally, "plot" happens. Every story contains some action; if nothing was going to happen, there would be no reason to read the story. You need to decide what is going to happen to the characters in your story. Are they going to solve a mystery and save the day? Or will they be the ones who create a problem and then have to fix it? Maybe they go on a journey. If they do travel, what kinds of people or animals will they encounter?

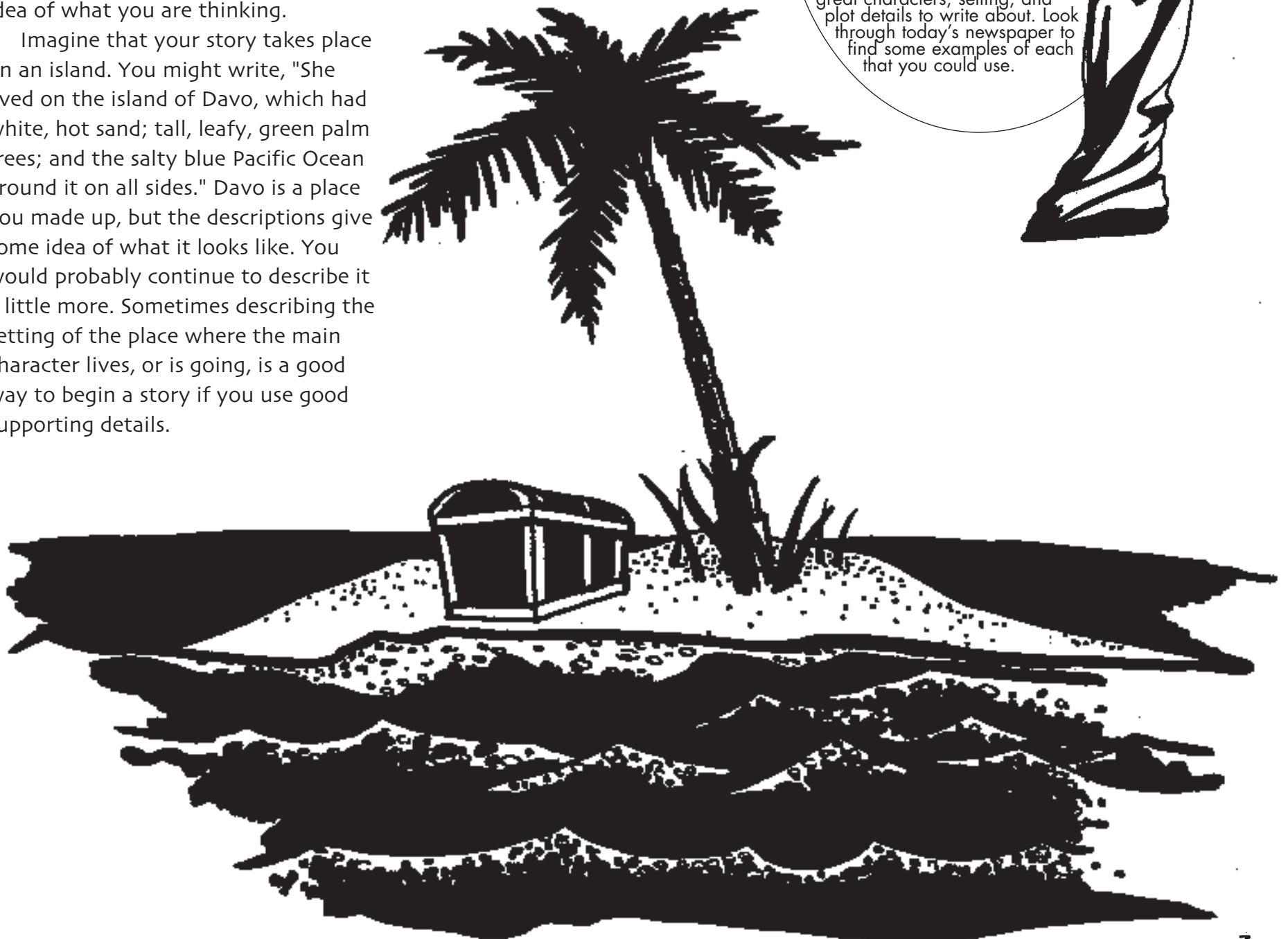
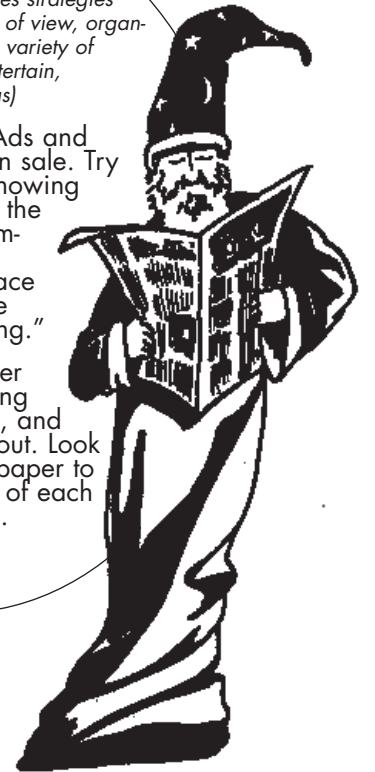
Maybe your main character will have a problem or conflict with another character and they'll have to work it out. You decide what you think is going to happen in your story. Remember the web

you prepared before you started writing? It's okay to change that web after you start writing so that you have a better idea where the story is going. That is part of the revising process, which we will discuss later.

NEWS WIZ

Learning standards: Uses strategies (e.g., adapts focus, point of view, organization, form) to write for a variety of purposes (e.g., to inform, entertain, explain, describe, record ideas)

1. Turn to the Classified Ads and look for objects that are on sale. Try to describe an object by showing instead of telling. Check in the Travel section, too, for examples of places all over the world. Try to describe a place with great detail to practice "showing" instead of "telling."
2. Stories in the newspaper can be a source for finding great characters, setting, and plot details to write about. Look through today's newspaper to find some examples of each that you could use.



Story Wizard

Magic Words

Character



Magic Words

Character



Magic Words

Setting

Magic Words

Setting

Magic Words

Character



Magic Words

Character



Magic Words

Setting

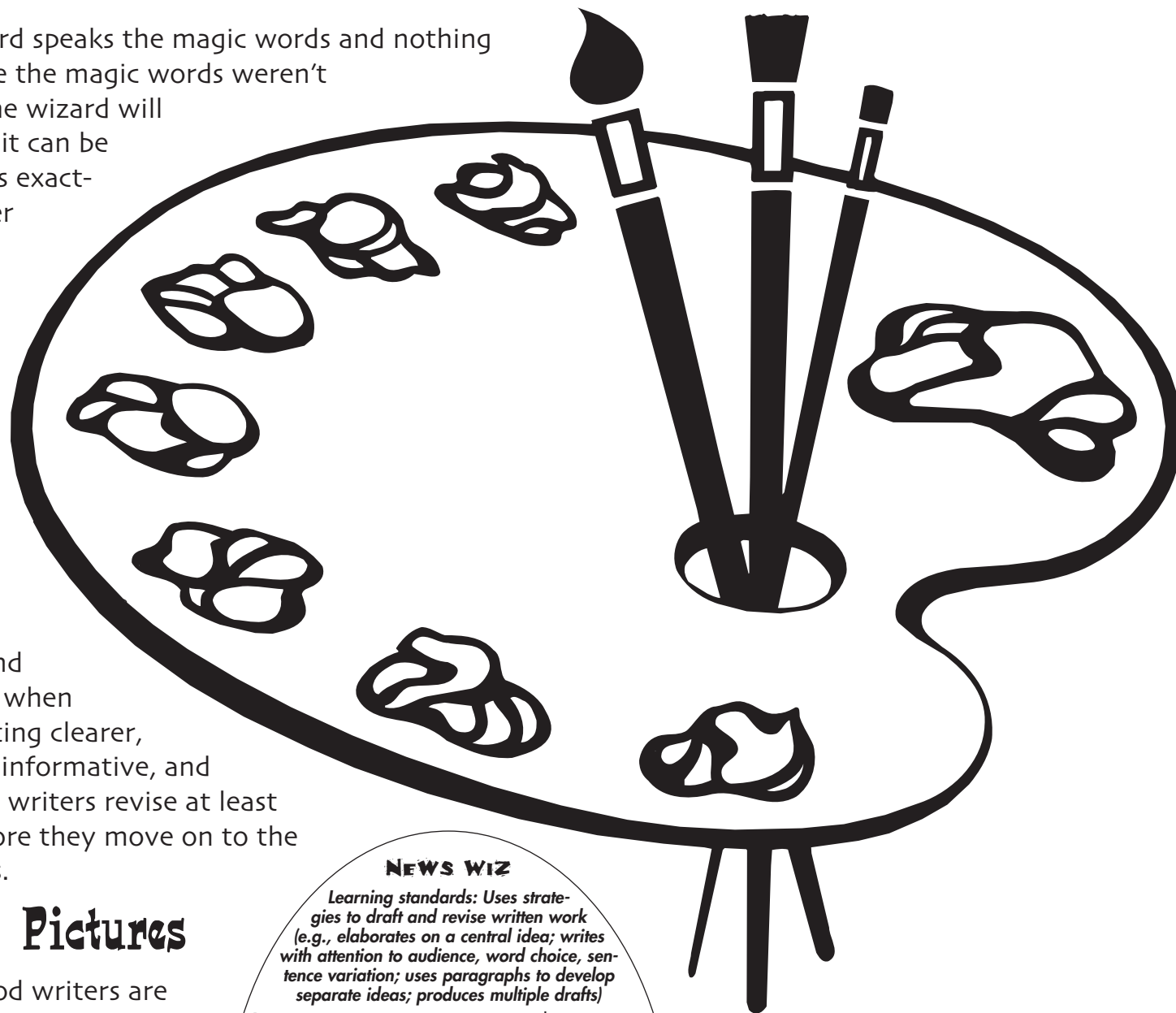


Revising: The Magic Words Again

Suppose the wizard speaks the magic words and nothing happens? Maybe the magic words weren't clear enough. The wizard will look to see how it can be made clearer. And that's exactly what you will do after you finish writing your first draft – see whether some changes will make your words perform more magic. It's called revising. Revising is the step in the writing process when you change things about your writing that you might not have liked that much and wanted to improve. It's when you can make your writing clearer, more interesting, more informative, and more convincing. Many writers revise at least three or four times before they move on to the next part of the process.

Painting Clear Pictures

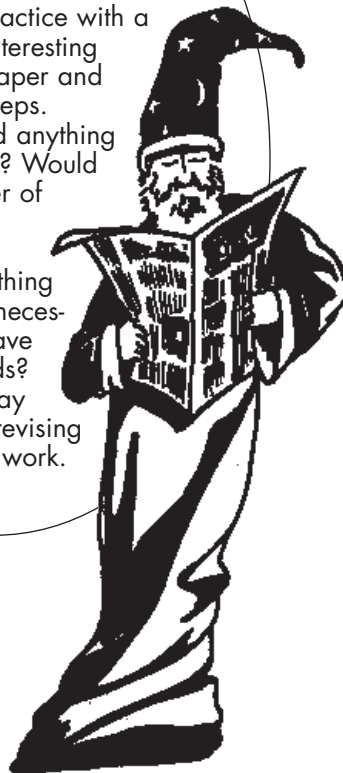
We said before that good writers are clear and paint vivid pictures for their readers. As you revise, ask yourself: "Will people understand what I am trying to say?" This may mean that you will have to go back and rewrite things or add new parts. This seems like a lot of work, but if you've chosen a subject you really care about, this step can be fun.




NEWS WIZ

Learning standards: Uses strategies to draft and revise written work (e.g., elaborates on a central idea; writes with attention to audience, word choice, sentence variation; uses paragraphs to develop separate ideas; produces multiple drafts)

Revising is easy to practice with a newspaper. Pick an interesting article from the newspaper and go through the ARRR steps. Would you want to add anything to the article you chose? Would you rearrange the order of ideas that the author talked about? Did the author talk about anything that you consider unnecessary? Would you have changed any words? This is a good way to think about revising in your own work.





Wizards need the right ingredients to cast the perfect spell, so they use the magic letters “ARRR” to describe the four steps of revising — adding, arranging, removing, and replacing. Let’s look at each of them.

Adding

Maybe you decide to write a play about two characters who are trying to be actors in Hollywood. Let’s say that the play takes place when they are in their 20s and the best acting jobs they can get are for dog food commercials. They have to dress up as dogs! As a good playwright, you know that you have to show why these guys are so desperate for work that they are willing to embarrass themselves in dog costumes. So you add a flashback scene showing one of the characters during childhood in order to show how much they wanted to become actors ever since they were little. Or maybe you decide to add a scene showing how they kept failing audition after audition and just had to take the first offer they got. This is the part of revising that’s called “adding” — when you see that a bit more is needed.

Rearranging

By changing the order of what you’ve written, you can make your story more interesting. Sometimes, a scene or dialogue is well written but doesn’t seem to make sense in the part of the story where you have it. If that happens, take a closer look to see whether you can keep the segment in your story but put it in a different place.

Removing

Sometimes after we finish writing, we see, unfortunately, that some parts of our work don’t really fit in with the rest of our story. Before you just remove something from your work, you should always try to rearrange what you’ve written, but sometimes the work is just better if you cut out certain parts. However, if you do end up cutting something from your work, set it aside and save it. This piece of writing could inspire something else and be a great part of another piece of work.

Replacing

Replacing is when you look at some words to see whether you could strengthen your sentence by switching them around with other words. For example, let’s say we have the sentences, “He lived on a hill in a small house. No one lived there but him.” First decide whether those sentences are clear enough for you to understand. If you think they could be clearer, then think about what words you would change. Maybe you would change the whole passage. As the writer, it is your job to decide what words will make your writing sound the clearest and the liveliest. Those two sentences might be clearer if you replaced them with the single sentence, “He lived alone in a tiny house on a hill.”

EDITING

THE FINAL INGREDIENTS

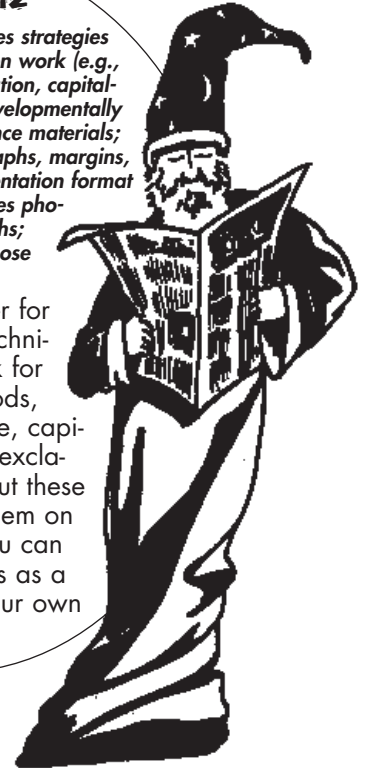
Finally, the wizard puts the magic words together. But the wizard must be certain that the words are in the right order to make the magic come alive. Editing is when you check to make sure that all the technical things about your work are correct – including spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, subject/verb agreement, consistent verb tense, and word usage.

This step can be hard, but it's important to remember that editing puts the final touches on your writing. This is what makes your writing readable. We understand, for example, that a period usually marks the end of a sentence, so we know to stop. We understand that quotation marks show us that a person is talking. Question marks show that a question is being asked, while exclamation points show excitement. These punctuation marks help express your feelings as writers. These markings are another way to show instead of tell. They are very important, so it is important that you as a writer not only include them, but also use them correctly so you can be clear. Correct punctuation actually helps the reader understand what you are saying.

NEWS WIZ

Learning standard: Uses strategies to edit and publish written work (e.g., edits for grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling at a developmentally appropriate level; uses reference materials; considers page format [paragraphs, margins, indentations, titles]; selects presentation format according to purpose; incorporates photos, illustrations, charts, and graphs; uses available technology to compose and publish work)

Look through the newspaper for examples of some of the technical aspects of writing. Look for sentences that end in periods, examples of comma usage, capitalization, the use of the exclamation mark, etc. Cut out these examples and paste them on a piece of paper. You can use these examples as a reference for your own writing.



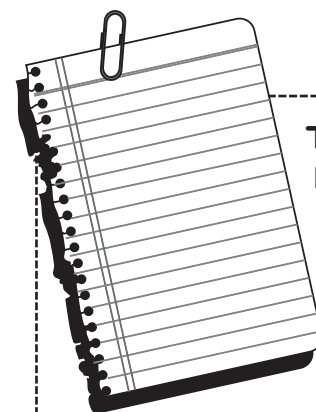
HERE IS A CHECKLIST FOR EDITING

- Be sure every sentence has two parts: subject (who or what the sentence is about) and predicate or verb (what's happening to the subject).
- Use sentence combining words such as, and, but, or, yet, so, who, whom, which, that, whose, because, and although.
- Use capital letters at the beginning and periods at the end of every sentence. Use commas where necessary, but try not to overuse them.
- Do not overuse the exclamation mark!!! Your reader should see the excitement in your words.
- Use a dictionary to check spelling and word use. A computer program's spell checker will tell you only whether a word you used is spelled incorrectly; it won't tell you whether you've used the wrong word. If you mean "their" but you type "there," a spell checker will not catch that mistake.

GET BY WITH SOME HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS

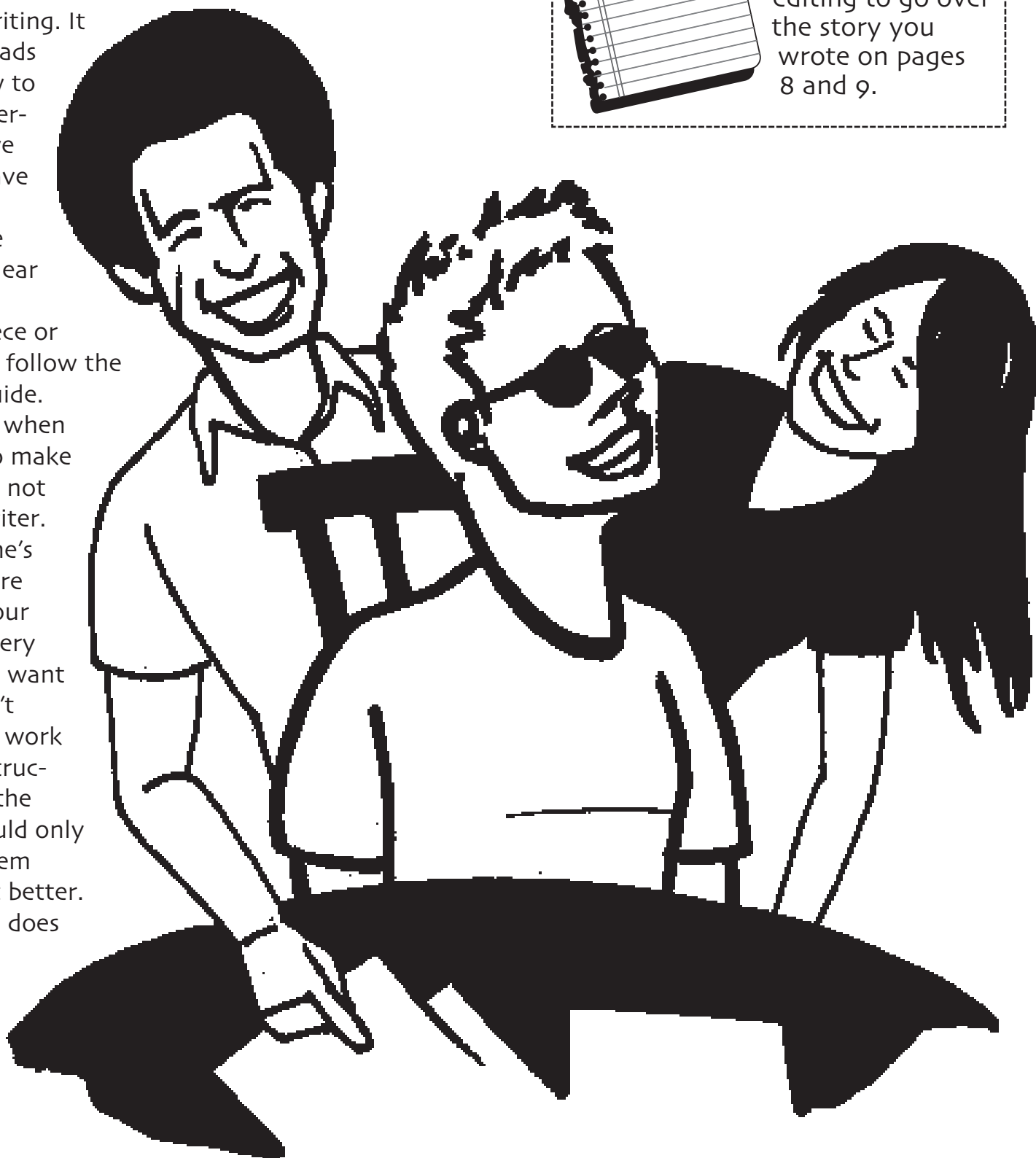
Editing is not something you always have to do alone. Sometimes, when we look at our work over and over, we become so familiar with it that we can't see the mistakes or the lack of clarity in our writing. It can help if someone else reads our work. Because it is new to someone else, that other person can help us see what we have missed because we have been so busy revising. Our peers can also give us some suggestions on what was clear and unclear. When you are editing either your own piece or someone else's, you should follow the checklist on page 12 as a guide.

Also, remember that when someone suggests a way to make your writing better, it does not mean you're not a good writer. And when you edit someone's work, you need to make sure that you are gentle with your suggestions. People work very hard on their writing. They want it to be good, but they don't want to feel like their hard work was for nothing. Talk constructively to your peers about the work. That means you should only use words that will help them understand how to make it better. Saying, "This part is stupid" does not tell the writer exactly what needs changing. A better criticism would be, "I would understand this part better if you added more details."



TRY PEER EDITING

Try using peer editing to go over the story you wrote on pages 8 and 9.



Publishing: Casting the Spell

The time has finally come to cast your spell! You've worked hard writing and revising magic words. You've consulted other wizards for help finding the right ingredients to cast your spell. Now you are ready to present it. So, how do you best present your spell and prove yourself a writing wizard after all? Well, consider a few things when you cast the spell and present your words. Your work should be neatly presented either in blue or black ink in good handwriting or typed carefully on your computer. It should include margins and the date. Your title page, if you have one, should have the title and it should be centered. In the right-hand corner, you should write your name, the date, and the name of your class. Also, make sure to number the pages of your piece. If your teacher has given instructions about how to head your page, make sure you follow them exactly.

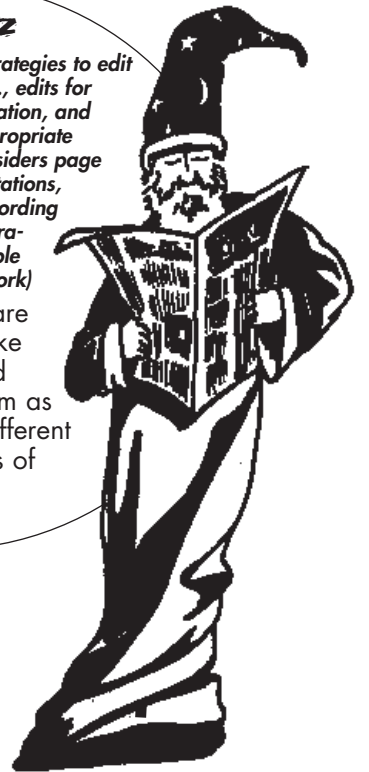
One other thing you may want to include in your writing is an introduction to your work. All good wizards explain their spell and what it does. Your work could include what inspired you to write and why. You could talk about how the writing makes you feel and what you hope it accomplishes for the reader. You might also want to include some illustrations. If

you wanted to add some pictures to your published work, it would be a fantastic touch to a magical piece of writing. Congratulations on becoming a full-fledged word wizard!

NEWS WIZ

Learning standard: Uses strategies to edit and publish written work (e.g., edits for grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling at a developmentally appropriate level; uses reference materials; considers page format [paragraphs, margins, indentations, titles]; selects presentation format according to purpose; incorporates photos, illustrations, charts, and graphs; uses available technology to compose and publish work)

Look at a newspaper. What are some things about it that make you think that it is a finished published work? Brainstorm as a class what makes it different from the rough copies of your writings.



"SPELL" CHECKER

Here is a list of questions writing wizards should ask when checking magic words, stories, or anything they write.

* Does what you wrote make sense if you read it out loud?

* Is there a reason why everything happens in your story? Why did your characters say and do the things they said and did?

* Do the events in the story happen in an order that makes sense? Remember, if you put the ingredients of your spell in the wrong order, the whole thing could blow up in your face.

* Do the characters seem like real people? Would you want to know them in real life?

* Did you use different verbs in your story and try not to use the word "said" too much? A wizard who uses a serpent's tongue all the time will only be able to cast a few spells, but when he or she uses a variety of ingredients, the spells are unlimited.

* Does the beginning of your writing grab the reader's attention?

* Does your ending tie up all the loose ends?

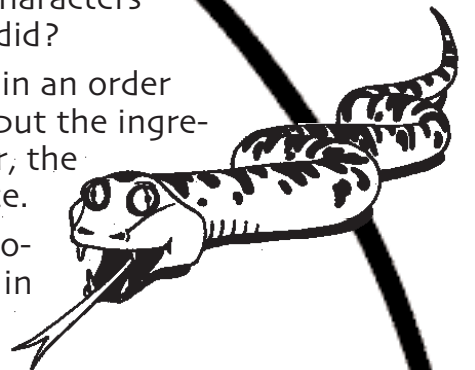
* Do supporting details go hand in hand with the topic sentence of each paragraph?

* Have you checked and rechecked your grammar and spelling?

* Are all the sentences complete? You wouldn't want to leave anything out of your potion.

* Have you created a picture with words to "show" more than "tell"?

* Did you use a thesaurus? Even the best wizards look everything up in order to perfect their spells and give them spice and variety.





WRITING WIZARD FUN

Here's a fun way to practice using some of the steps of the writing process. For prewriting, brainstorm a list of words and thoughts about being the new kid on the first day of school. Then, fill in the blanks with the kind of word shown under the line. After you finish that, write a new paragraph about your first day in school this year and tell what it was like for you. Use each step in the writing process.

NEW KID IN SCHOOL

A.J. felt a bit _____ because it was his first day in the new
(adjective)

school. After _____ off the bus, he wanted to _____
(verb) (verb)

but instead he took slow steps ahead. The building was _____
(adjective)
and _____. He looked up at the windows and they were
(adjective)

all _____. He picked up his _____
(adjective) (noun)

and _____ up the steps. A girl came up to him.
(verb)

She looked _____ and she asked, " _____
(adjective) _____ ?"

That made A.J. feel a lot _____.
(adjective)

The bell rang _____. The first day of school had begun
(adverb)

and A.J. was _____.
(choose any word)

Learning standard: Writes autobiographical compositions (e.g., provides a context within which the incident occurs, uses simple narrative strategies, and provides some insight into why this incident is memorable)