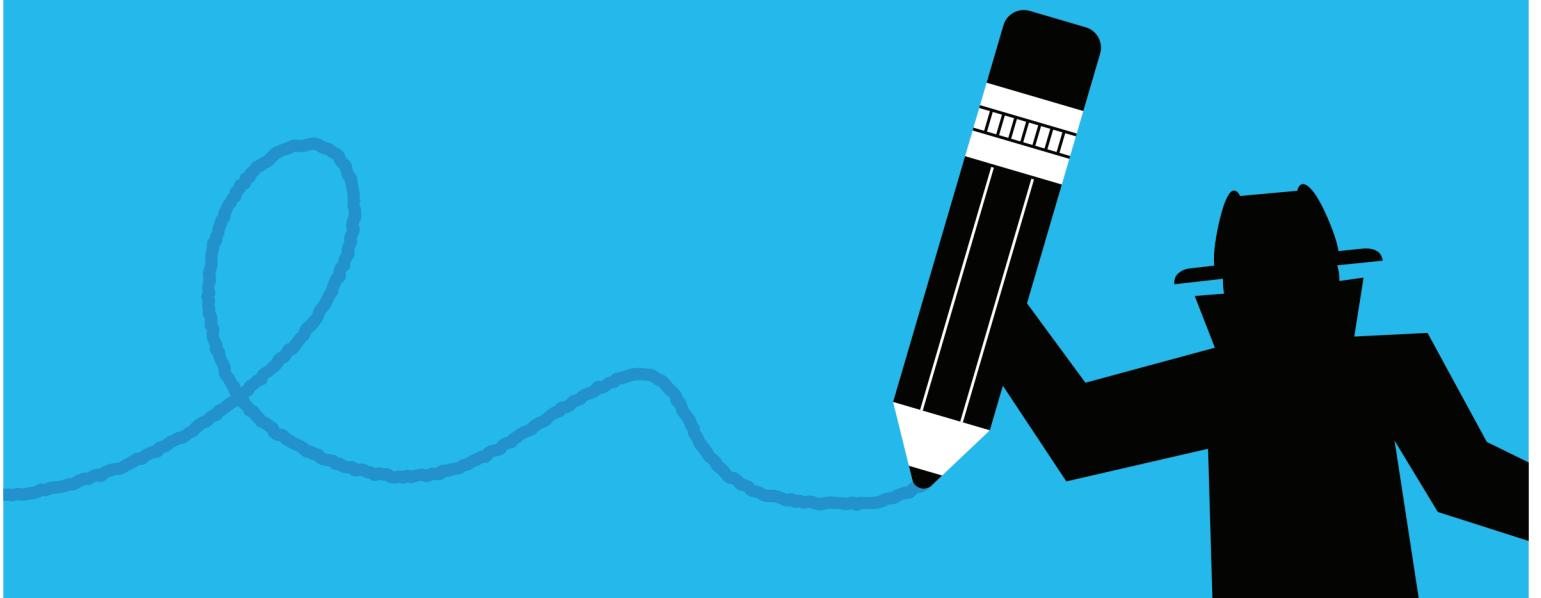


# STUART GIBBS

## MISSION: Write

### Lesson Plans and Activities



TOP  
SECRET

## Dear Educators,

If you work with middle grade readers, you probably know the works of author Stuart Gibbs. Between the FunJungle series, the Spy School series, Moon Base Alpha series, *Charlie Thorne* books and *Once Upon a Tim*, Stuart's books are beloved by all readers! Besides being kid favorites, his novels also regularly appear on state reading lists selected by teachers and librarians across the country.

Stuart loves connecting with his young readers and getting them excited about reading AND writing is at the heart of Stuart's work. With this mission in mind, we developed Stuart Gibbs: Mission Write. The goal is to help students see themselves as writers and build genuine excitement for the writing process. In addition to these lesson plans, we have created FUN and instructional videos that can be used as a classroom tool with a class activation attached to each unit. The content can be used as a whole unit of study or for just a single lesson.

We recognize that teaching and engaging in writing with young people requires a layered approach. These videos and the corresponding activities can serve as either an introductory lesson or they can be imbedded into your larger unit. No matter how you use them, we hope you and your students will find them useful, engaging, and downright fun.

We know behind every great writer, there is a teacher that helped show them the way. Thanks for sharing stories and guiding the creation of new ones.

Lesson plans and activities were created by Dr. Rose Brock, an associate professor at Sam Houston State University. Dr. Brock holds a PhD. in library science, specializing in children's and young adult literature.

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## Instructions for Teachers:

Author Stuart Gibbs knows how important details are. They help to create the structure of the scene and keep the reader engaged in the story. Talk about the importance of language and focus on the first few lines and the ending paragraphs to show how small things make a big difference.

## Setting up the lesson:

Read an opening to any of your favorite Stuart Gibbs's books (or any of your favorite books.) Once done, remind young writers that a strong opening is essential—it's the reader's introduction to their story, where they will reveal their characters, introduce the setting, and the place where the stories plot will be set forth. All the pieces have to come together for their story to work.

## Activity:

It's time to write! Before drafting their opening scene, have students brainstorm ideas to determine how they want to structure the following:

- The Story:
  - What is the main character's goal in this scene?
  - Who or what is stopping them from achieving their goal?
- More Details:
  - Where is the scene? What are some important details of the setting that stand out? Who else is there?
  - What was the main character doing right before the scene starts?
  - What big things will happen in this scene?
- Where to begin:
  - Some of the best stories start right in the middle of the action. What's the most exciting moment to start this scene?
  - What are some opening dialog ideas? What action could you start on?

After your young writers have a plan, let the scene writing begin! Once students have had a chance to compose their opening scenes, allow volunteers to share their efforts.



## Instructions for Teachers:

Even characters that attend schools for spies, live on the moon, or in an animal focused amusement park should feel real to readers. Stuart Gibbs understands that his books must feature characters that look and sound authentic.

## Setting up the lesson:

Begin by asking students, “Who are your favorite characters from stories and why?”

As a whole class activity, share the following questions as a starting point for them to allow their imaginations to flow as they begin to plan to create their characters. [Note these are examples and should be used to keep students thinking about all facets of their character.]

- What is your character’s name?
- How old are they? When is their birthday?
- Are they fun to be around or are they grumpy?
- What’s the best thing that’s happened to them so far in life?
- What’s the worst thing?
- What is their family like? What do their parents do for work? Do they have siblings?
- Where does your character live?
- Do they have pets?
- What do they like to do in their spare time?
- What are their favorite foods?
- What kinds of things do they like to wear?
- Where do they go to school?
- What are their friends like?
- What are their hobbies?
- What are they most embarrassed by?

After reviewing this list together, distribute the character development chart to allow your young writers to further explore their characters.

## Activity:

Use the following character development chart with students to help your young writers discover their characters, activate their imagination, and begin their own writing process.

After allowing students time to really begin to outline their characters, offer them an opportunity to share their ideas for a character they created with either a class writing buddy or the entire class.

My Story's Working Title

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Possible Character Names

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Main Character

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Secondary/Supporting Characters

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Protagonist/Supporter

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Antagonist/Supporter

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Main Character: Physical appearance (Gender, age, body type, hair, eyes, facial features, dress, posture, movements, mannerisms, speech, first impression)

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Main Character: Background that may influence motivations (Education, religion, family, early childhood experiences, financial situation, profession, marital status, other relationships, habits, surroundings/environment, health)

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Main Character: Personality  
(Distinctive traits, self-image, sense of humor, hopes, fears)

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Other details (What is this character into (hobbies), skills, favorite foods, favorite colors, favorite books, etc.)

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Story relevance

Positive traits (character strengths):

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Negative traits (character flaws):

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How are these characteristics relevant to the story?

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What complications arise from this character?

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Comments/notes:

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## Instructions for Teachers:

No matter how good our writing is, revision is an essential part of storytelling. It is critical in creating engaging characters and authentic adventure. A fresh perspective often provides ways to consider new possibilities and make stories better for readers.

## Setting up the lesson:

Remind your writers that whether it's sending an ordinary kid to live with their parents in an amusement park/zoo or even moving with their parents to the moon, reexamining a story to find places to improve is an essential step in the storytelling process.

Revision is where good stories become great stories. Use the following introductory revision lesson to help young writers practice to evaluate their own writing and that of a partner to determine what their stories still need; this is an essential step in their writing process. This activity may require more than one session of work.

## Activity:

This activity can work with partners or alone. Use a feedback-log to keep track of answers to the following questions.



**Instructions:** Read the story from beginning to end. After you finish, answer the following questions. Take time to discuss if working with a partner. If working independently, revisit one scene and make changes. Both big and small changes are part of the revision process so don't be afraid to shake things up!

What do you think of the characters?	
Which characters did you like? Are there any that you didn't? Why?	
Do the characters seem real?	
How was the pacing of the story?	
Did you get bored or do you think it dragged in some places?	
Was there any part that felt unbelievable?	
What was the most fun or exciting part?	
What did you think of the action?	
Was there anything you felt like the story was missing?	
What did you like best about this story?	
Any other suggestions to make it better?	

# Revisions



## Instructions for Teachers:

Whether his characters are attending spy school, living on the moon, traveling across the globe in a race to save it from destruction by some really, *really* bad guys, or spending days solving mysteries at the world's first zoo/amusement park, Stuart Gibbs begins his writing with searching for ideas. Ideas are everywhere!

## Setting up the lesson:

Begin by asking students, “Where do you think authors get their ideas?” Lead a whole class discussion allowing them to share their responses.

## Activity:

There is nothing more fun than covering the classroom with sticky notes as a means of brainstorming! For author Stuart Gibbs, figuring out the details of his stories is an essential part of his process. Determining who will star in his story, what his characters need, and what will happen to them are just some of the questions he gets to decide.

Begin by introducing the concept of **SWBST (Somebody/Wanted/But/So/Then)** to the class. While SWBST work can be used to summarize work, it can also be utilized as a brainstorming strategy to build a story shell. Using either an already familiar Stuart Gibbs novel or even a traditional well known fairy tale, work together with students to break down the SWBST of a sample story.

**S (Who is going to be main character/protagonist?)**

**W (What does the character want or what is the character's goal?)**

**B (Was the problem in the story or what is keeping the character from their goal?)**

**S (How might the character try to solve the problem? How do they reach their goal?)**

**T (What's the resolution to the story? How does the story end?)**

Now it's time for students to start the brainstorming process themselves.

- Have students begin with a stack of sticky notes.
- At the top of a sticky, have them write a single letter (S, W, B, S, T) for each letter of SWBST and repeat this multiple times and sort the almost empty sticky notes.
- Next, students begin with their “S” pile and work out some possible “Somebody” for their story (remind them that “somebody” is their story’s protagonist or main character (for Stuart Gibbs’s stories, it’s Charlie, Teddy, Ben, Dash, and Tim).
- After all the “S” sticky notes are completed, have students place them on the classroom walls and return to their desks.
- Next, repeat this process but move on to focus on the concept of “Wanted” (what a character wants). Have students work their way through all of the SWBST letters.
- After the letters have all been posted to the classroom wall, have students do a story stroll and shop, where they work their way around the classroom and select a sticky note idea from each category.

When students return to their desks with their selected sticky notes, remind them that, like the process shared by Stuart Gibbs, brainstorming is where stories begin!



## Instructions for Teachers:

Author Stuart Gibbs isn't yet a spy, sleuth, space traveler, or code cracking genius BUT he does write about all of these. Getting facts right is essential even in fiction and helps to aid in a better and more believable story.

## Setting up the lesson:

Begin by asking students, "Why do you think it's important to learn facts and details before writing about a topic?" Lead a whole class discussion allowing writers to share their responses. Remind young writers that getting facts right is critical even in fictional storytelling. Details make all the difference so inserted facts from well-researched topics help make stories feel authentic and that the writer can be trusted.

As a whole class activity, remind students that they can set their stories wherever they like and let their characters be or do anything they like so long as they do the research to get the details right. Ask your students to select one detail of the story they are writing that needs some fact checking. Next, lead a discussion about where to go to gather information (students may be surprised to learn that Google isn't the only information gig in town). If possible, work with your librarian to expand this lesson and if time allows, plan a visit to the library to look for resources.

## Activity:

Use the "Know, Want, Learned" chart along with library and trusted internet resources to help students complete the chart about one detail from their story.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

KWL Chart

Select a topic you want to research. In the first column, write what you already know about the topic. In the second column, write what you want to know about the topic. After you have completed your research, write what you learned in the third column.

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned