

# WEEKDAY WONDERS



Content developed by the  
Tennessee Aquarium  
Education Department



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## *Nature on the Page: Day 3*

This week, your young scientist will get inspired by nature and the world around him or her to write a storybook. Scientists will explore the elements of a good story: defining characters, settings, and events, and developing a plot (and plot twist!) At the end of the week, young scientists will have a chance to put all the parts of the storybook together into a book.

These curated activities are listed in a suggested sequence but may be done in the order that works best for you and your young scientists. Learn more about this series in the [Introduction to Weekday Wonders](#).



### Question of the Day

**What is the plot for a story, and how does one develop?**



### Daily Nature Journal

Ask your young scientists to spend some time outside today completing their daily nature journal. For a better understanding of daily nature journaling, please see the [Guide to Nature Journaling](#).



### Plot Points

If you and your young scientist have completed the Weekday Wonders activities from [Day 1](#) and [Day 2](#) of this week, ask him or her to remember the character and setting s/he developed. If you have not done those activities, ask your scientist to come up with a character and setting to use in this activity.

Gather about 10 slips of paper. Tell your scientist that this activity will help develop the story of what happens to the character. Have your scientist think of different things that could happen to the character in the setting they have chosen.

Prompt him or her with the following questions.

- What is your character doing?
- What does your character see?
- What does your character hear?
- What does your character smell?
- Who does your character meet?

Have your scientist write each idea on a different slip of paper. For the youngest scientists, you may need to write the ideas on the slips. Place these in a container.

Have your scientist draw three slips from the container. Have your scientist put these in any order that s/he likes. If your scientist feels like s/he needs additional ideas to make a good story, s/he can draw one or two more then add them into the order.

Tell your scientist that these ideas are called plot points. When you put them together, they make the plot for the story.

To make sure the story has a good flow and makes sense, have your scientist act out this story, pretending to be the character they chose. You might begin by announcing, “Once up a time...” and giving the character’s name and setting. Then, have your scientist act out each of the plot points in order.

For a more random story (and maybe a few laughs), have another person act as the narrator for your young scientist. Allow the narrator to draw the plot points from the container and read them, then have your young scientist act out each one.



## Twists and Turns

Ask your scientist to think of a time that something unexpected happened in a story. Share the following examples with him or her. You would not expect a character to explore the beach and suddenly come across an alien. It does not have to be that extreme, however. It might be that a character trips and falls off the sidewalk. These unexpected events are called plot twists.

Tell your scientist that you are going to work together to create an adventure story with lots of plot twists. Explain that you will be using two important words for this activity: “fortunately” and “unfortunately.” “Fortunately” will signal a plot twist that is good luck for the character, and “unfortunately” will signal bad luck in the plot twist.

Ask your young scientist to decide on a character and a setting for the next activity. Explain that in this story, whenever something lucky happens to the character, the very next thing that happens will be unlucky.

Begin with a simple statement about the character. This doesn't have to be complicated but should give a place for the story to start. For example, you might say: "David went for a walk in the woods."

Your young scientist should add something else to the story and should start the sentence with "unfortunately." For example, your young scientist might add: "unfortunately, it started to snow."

Another person (you or another young scientist) will continue the story with a sentence beginning with "fortunately." For example, they might add: "Fortunately, David had snowshoes in his backpack."

This pattern continues, with each person adding a "fortunately" or "unfortunately" sentence to the story. If your scientist gets stuck for something to add, encourage them to think about adding a plot twist that is completely unexpected! For example, what is the last thing David would expect to see or do on his walk in the woods? The possibilities are limited only by imagination!

If there are only two people doing this activity, be sure to switch roles and try again so that you both get a chance to do the "fortunately" and the "unfortunately" sides of the story.



## Nature Journal

Tell your young scientist that plot is what happens to a character during a story, but how a character reacts to those events is just as important for a good story! It's important for readers to know what the character is feeling during the story. This can be shown through the words of the story but also through illustrations such as drawings.

Ask your young scientist to list as many emotion words as they can in their journal. Examples to get them started might be happy, sad, scared, and excited. If your scientist has trouble thinking of more emotion words, encourage them to look at some of their favorite books to find more examples.

Have your scientist choose 3 emotion words from their list. Standing in front of a mirror, ask your scientist to pretend that s/he is feeling that emotion. Have him or her hold the pose and study facial expressions and body reactions. For example, if a person is scared, her arms may be very tight and close to her body.

Ask your scientist how they might draw a character to show that emotion. Have your scientist draw each of the three emotions in the nature journal or on a piece of paper and label each picture with the emotion words.