WEEKDAY WONDERS

Content developed by the Tennessee Aquarium Education Department

TENNESSEE AQUARIUM

Nature on a Page: Day 5

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; define characters, settings, and events; and develop 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

How do you end a story?

Daily Nature Journal

Ask your young scientists to go outside to make a daily nature journal entry. Use the Guide to Nature Journaling to support them with journaling each day.

The End

Pick a few of your young scientist's favorite story books (even if they are past the age of reading story books). Write the first sentence of each book on separate pieces of paper. Also write the last sentence of each book on pieces of paper.

Ask your young scientist to try matching the first sentences with the last sentences. Once he or she has matched the endings to the beginnings, have your scientist read both sentences for each book.

Have your scientist consider how the two are related. Even if your scientist had never read the book, what clues could he or she have used to know the two sentences were from the same book?

A Great Ending

Your scientist has been thinking about a story with each of the activities this week. Now ask him or her to think about how the story ends. Share the following prompts to help your scientist think about the ending.

- What happened to all the characters?
- Was there an important lesson the characters learned?
- Is there a question the characters might ask, such as, "Should we do it again?"
- Does something happen that surprises the characters—and maybe starts them on their next adventure?

Have your scientist brainstorm ideas on what will happen at the end of the story. S/he should write ideas down on paper or in the nature journal.

Once your young scientist has a list, ask him or her to pick a favorite idea. From there, see if your scientist can write a couple of sentences that would go at the end of the book.

Putting It All Together

Each activity in this week's Weekday Wonders has helped your young scientist come up with ideas and parts of a story. It is time to put it all together.

Give your young scientist several pieces of paper. Have your scientist write the whole story, with no more than 2-3 sentences per piece of paper. The story should include the character your scientist developed, a setting, the parts of the story, a climax, and an ending. If you have a very young scientist, ask him or her to tell you the story while you write it down.

Once your scientist has written the story, have him or her draw, color, or paint illustrations. Remind your young scientist of their work to think about how to show actions and emotions. For the youngest scientists, they can draw their illustrations, have you draw pictures that they color, or cut pictures from magazines for the story.

Show Your Stuff

You may have noticed that sometimes it is easier to tell if sentences are written well by reading them aloud. In this activity, your young scientist will try this.

Have your young scientist read the story while acting it out. Alternately, you could read the story while your young scientist acts.

This method can help your young scientist hear sentences that could use more description, are not in the best order, or have gaps in the action. It can also show your young scientist where s/he needs transitions,

such as a place in the story where the characters were at a house and suddenly are at a park without the description saying they went there.

Once your scientist has acted out the story, allow him or her a chance to revise any part of the story that s/he feels could be improved. If your scientist makes changes, he or she may wish to repeat this activity and try acting it out again.

Bookbinding

Once your young scientist has written and illustrated a story, it is time to put it together in a book. Have your scientist gather the pages of the story together in order. Then ask him or her to make a cover. To do this,

1. Cut two pieces of cardboard slightly larger than the pages the story is written on. This could be from a shipping box or from a cereal-type box.
2. Decorate the cover with an illustration and the title of the story. Your scientist may want to draw on a large piece of butcher paper then cover the cardboard with it or simply draw directly on the cardboard.
3. Place the pages between the covers and make sure they are all aligned. Then punch two holes along the side opposite where your scientist would like the book to open. While most books are bound on the left side, some are bound at the top.
4. Take a rubber band or loop of yarn and thread the ends through both holes from back to front of the book. This will give your scientist two small loops sticking up on the front side of the book.
5. Find a stick and insert it through the two small loops on the front of the book. This will give your scientist a creatively bound book.

Once your scientist has finished his or her book, share it with friends and family. You might even have your scientist do a reading for others to show off!