

# 1,000 Word Creative Writing Workbook

Summer 2015



Developed by David Susman and Karen Tiegel

Featuring stories and excerpts from *Bluefire*, an anthology of 1,000-word stories by students in grades six through twelve.

**Instructor Edition**

## Acknowledgments

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# Lesson One: Descriptive Language

## Overview

Descriptive language is central to the development of a powerful story; readers are instantly engaged by creative word choice and by ideas and questions that come about through the use of descriptive language. The activities in this lesson are designed to encourage students to notice words, phrases, and sentences that jump out as they read. Students will explore word choice and practice writing descriptive language that inspires the reader to reflect on the words themselves.

## Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- listen to and reflect on sentences that effectively use descriptive language
- practice writing their own descriptive sentences and paragraphs
- read "Among the Stars," from *Bluefire 2014* and discuss the story through the lens of descriptive language
- begin to develop a creative writing piece from a series of prompts
- share pieces of their own writing, receive feedback on their work, and offer advice and suggestions to other writers.

## Materials

Student Workbook, page 5, *Descriptive Lines from Bluefire*  
Teacher Resource #1, *Two Powerful Excerpts*  
Teacher Resource #2, "Among the Stars" (read aloud to class)  
Notebook or laptops for writing  
Pens or pencils for writing  
Optional: highlighters

## Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a camp size of 15 students. Adjust accordingly for different camp sizes.

## Time

One three-hour camp session or three one-hour class periods.

## Procedures

1. Distribute workbooks and pens or pencils or laptops to students, if you haven't already. Then, refer the students to *Descriptive Lines from Bluefire*, and ask the students to take turns reading one line out loud. Go around the room until all the lines have been read aloud. Ask the students to underline, highlight, or star her favorite sentence.
2. After everyone has read and marked their favorite lines, discuss briefly what caught the reader's attention and why each chose that specific sentence.
3. Read aloud the two sentences from Teacher Resource #1, *Two Powerful Excerpts*. Discuss with the class what makes these sentences powerful using the guiding questions on Teacher Resource #1.
4. Instruct the student to record their favorite lines from *Descriptive Lines from Bluefire*, in their notebooks or on their laptops. Then, give students ten minutes to use just one of those lines as a first line in a new story-- have the students free write, creating several sentences or paragraphs from that inspiring first line.
5. Read Bluefire Excerpt #1, "Among the Stars," aloud to the class. Ask the students to record in their notebooks phrases or words that stand out to them during the reading. Discuss the story using the discussion questions that follow the story.
6. Instruct the students to begin work on their own creative writing pieces, giving them 60-80 minutes to work independently. Students may create their own pieces, work on a previous story that they've been working on at school or on their own, or building on the free-write from earlier in the day. Walk the room, checking in with students, conferencing with them and encouraging them as needed.
7. End the class by bringing everyone into an authors' circle for thirty minutes and encouraging each student to share a small part of what she has written. Ask each student to share at least one sentence so that all voices are heard. Model asking clarifying questions, compliments, and constructive critique. Encourage students to both listen carefully to feedback and to offer suggestions and help to others.

## Descriptive Lines from Bluefire

“The sky looks like an artist’s palette; layers and layers of colors swirled together into one harmonious, living mural. It is the most beautiful sunset multiplied a hundred times, the cheerful bright lights that dot a Christmas tree, the deep purple magenta of a plum, the cozy faded pink of my grandmother’s sweater, and the luminescent green of those glow-sticks we played with around the campfire, all twisted and bent into one seamless flowing body.” - Arrival

“Twenty years later, and age spins its spider webs into my hair.” - Entanglement

“Two women in colorful saris stand under a red bulb, fanning themselves in stagnating air, and talk about how one of their boys won the kite-flying contest recently.” - Entanglement

“Resting my head on the window pane, I observed the sky. It was an indigo dome, dotted with stars. The last slivers of sunlight vanished. For once in my life, I was swimming in the sea of tranquility and I imagined myself in flight, dwelling in space among the stars of old.” - Among the Stars

“And then, very slightly, almost imperceptibly, there was something. Just a point, a dot on a nonexistent canvas. The dot was all that was, and was all that will ever be.” - The End

“Just for one moment, I keep my eyes closed, trying to hold on to the last faint tendrils of the dream I was just having, but they slip away from my grasping hands like silk.” - Waking Up

“He’s short for eleven, but not overly. Made in the medium of medium, the boy’s features are easily forgettable. His eyes are the blue-grey of faded bed sheets.” - THBH

“The town is strikingly normal, but at the same time, raw. Its rows of streets, each endearingly messy with scads of crooked pastel houses, meander across pretty, sun-soaked hills. From above, the rooftops appear like scales on a snake.” - THBH

“The infusion of moonlight into every window turns an invisible dial in the night, like the rolling of knuckles under skin, and the town becomes... perfect.” - THBH

“When the rain fell it was cold and bitter and black, like sorrow. The sky was dark and the air was sour-tasting. Puddles rain up against the sides of the alleyway, gleaming liquid jewels glittering with rainbows of oil. Delicate cobweb cracks wove through the ground, miniature canals running with silver. You see, there is beauty in these cold, dark places. The only trick is finding it.” - Beauty

“The first thing he notices is the smell. It is a golden smell and good.” - Beauty



“I love the sound of running. The tick-tick-tock of feet against the rough dirt of the track, a metronome of my life. The echo of heavy breathing, ragged as the bed sheets ripped by my tossing and turning. The swishing of loose clothing, a broom sweeping up my sins.” - The Sound of Running

“The wind was picking up as Kate watched the sun rise. Beautiful hues of yellow, orange, and pink mixed in the sky, God’s painting, as her mother put it.” - FlavorMorph

“He spent hours after class reading papers and teaching himself the math. The more ridiculous and less feasible it seemed, the more fascinated he became. He would show his professors the strange, circular equations he wrote during late nights of blurred vision and bitter coffee. They scrunched up their eyebrows and bit their lips, and said that while he certainly seemed to be proving something, they weren’t sure exactly what it was.” - He and He

“I found myself standing in front of the source, my fingers cradling the shears that would cut the ribbon of my imprisonment.” - Alteration

“He stepped forward, his eyes outshining the blinking lights of the aeromobiles.” - Two Men on a Sidewalk

“The night air whipped around me, thrashing at the paper in my hands. A noise unlike any other rang through the world, like the groans of a thousand dying men. Electricity sparked through the sky, and I screamed. I tried to find a falling street, a tumbling sidewalk, even a burning satellite, but nothing more seemed to want to disturb the air. Nothing but the moisture.” - Two Men on a Sidewalk

“A waning crimson sunset illuminated the dense fluff of nimbus clouds looming over the Santa Cruz mountains like a frozen tidal wave, its collapse halted by the eerie stillness of the late-afternoon sky. As the sky kept still in its wondrous awe, the far off hum of the highway and its continuous, shuffling drones merged with the rustling autumn leaves rustling underfoot.” - Strata

“Look at it all, man. Look at the vastness of it all. Trees beyond trees, sky beyond sky, mountains beyond mountains. Past all those trees and hills and skies there’s a whole other everything out there. Planets, stars, galaxies, everything. And it just goes on and on. Expands; gets bigger.” - Strata

“Look, man. I don’t know. Mary doesn’t know. Paul doesn’t know. Mr. Adams doesn’t know and hell, the great green Wizard of Oz doesn’t know. You don’t need an answer to everything. The trees are green, the sky is blue, you like Mary. A lot, evidently.” - Strata

## Teacher Resource #1: Two Powerful Excerpts

- “The sky looks like an artist’s palette; layers and layers of colors swirled together into one harmonious, living mural. It is the most beautiful sunset multiplied a hundred times, the cheerful bright lights that dot a Christmas tree, the deep purple magenta of a plum, the cozy faded pink of my grandmother’s sweater, and the luminescent green of those glow-sticks we played with around the campfire, all twisted and bent into one seamless flowing body.” - *Arrival*
- The infusion of moonlight into every window turns an invisible dial in the night, like the rolling of knuckles under skin, and the town becomes... perfect.” --*THBH*

### Discussion Questions

What about each description feels real to you? What about each description feels unreal or imaginary? Which do you find more powerful, real or unreal? Or both?

-- *Answers from the students will vary.*

What are some images that come to mind when you read each sentence?

-- *Answers from the students will vary.*

How does the author use color, simile and metaphor to create imagery for the reader in the sentence from *Arrival*?

-- *Similes: sky is like an artist's palette,*

--*Metaphors: cheerful bright lights that dot a Christmas tree; compares sky to a body ("bent into one seamless flowing body")*

-- *colors: deep purple magenta of a plum, cozy faded pink of my grandmother's sweater, luminescent green of those glow-sticks we played with around the campfire*

How does the author use personification in the sentence from *THBH*?

-- *The author personifies the infusion of moonlight-- it seems to turn an invisible dial; compares the turning to the rolling of knuckles under skin*

## Bluefire Excerpt #1: "Among the Stars", by Nolan Bangs

I would come home from school each day and Dad would tell Sis and me about his nasty work up in the city. Revolting work. When you pass by his “office”, you unwillingly inhale the stench. It’s a sewage treatment plant. The workers like Dad cook the boatloads coming from the pipes until every last cell of bacteria has been grilled like shrimp in the sizzler and the purified water is flushed into the welcoming San Francisco Bay. That’s what he told us when we were little, immature scrubs and we would nag out of a cursing, burning, yet natural curiosity. Dad would also warn us about the dangers in nature and of its vile diseases that turn humans to rotting corpses. He knew it all too well after Mom’s defeat in her battle against liver cancer. I was too young to understand back then, being age six. Now, I’m thirteen.

“Well, Raymond, you put in a lot of effort in your schoolwork. It’s visible on your exam. See here, fifty out of fifty. Don’t you feel rewarded?” He was rattling the paper in his bony hand. *Yeah. I remember how easy it was, too*, I thought guiltily.

“Yup.” At least he’s pleased about something. Dad takes another drawn-out sip of green tea. The ghostly wisps of steam illuminate his face and he’s staring at me. More specifically, at my plate of cheese casserole and then my bulging gut. He peers purposefully at Sis too.

“You two could use a walk. Let’s go down by Redwood Shores,” Dad concluded. Sis whimpered.

“Daddy! I have a book to read!” she pouted in the chair next to mine. Her puffy face showed no yield to my dad’s command.

“Sweets, I’m not asking.” I might’ve complained too, out of desire to play computer games on my desktop back in the back, but no one whines to Dad. Video games mattered more to me though, and Dad knew that. He was tolerant of my possibly excessive computer use, even when Mom was around. I maintained an abolitionist attitude towards drugs, alcohol, and smoking, yet I secretly considered my computer screen an anti-depressant. Each night after my homework, I would meld myself with my plush leather desk chair, gaze into my game, fiddling thoughtlessly with my keyboard and mouse, and allow myself become dead to the world.

“Raymond. Shoes on. Now,” my dad called curtly from the dining room, still sipping his tea. In the moment with peaceful gloom I winced at the excessively bright, artificial light of the fridge when I opened it and fumbled my long arms around for the filtered water pitcher. Gingerly gripping it, I extracted it from the hulk of an appliance and let the pristine water flow into a cup I already got out, then guzzled it. I let it seep and trickle down my throat, freeze the senses, and lounge in the pit of my stomach like the gastric acid that’s already there. It was a refreshing routine I resorted to before exercise.

“Raymond?!?!”

“Yeah Dad, I’ve got my socks. Gimme a minute and my sneakers are tied.”

“But Daddy... I don’t wanna go! It’s gonna be cold out there, Daddy!” Sis always had a particular distaste for the unpredictable fluctuation in Bay Area temperatures during the springtime. I’d just become too old to care.

Minutes later we were in the beat-up compact car Dad owns, cruising through the vacant streets of suburban Redwood City. Resting my head on the window pane, I observed the sky. It was an indigo dome, dotted with stars. The last slivers of sunlight vanished. For once in my life, I was swimming in the sea of tranquility and I imagined myself in flight, dwelling in space among the stars of old. The faint hum of car tires on concrete was not audible enough to halt my train of thought, but the inquisitive voice of my dad was.

“Hey Raymond, did you read the news today? Turns out a new scientific study shows that humans will sometimes feel a surge of attraction towards nature. It’s not true, son. These studies are proven to be faulty for multiple reasons.”

“Yeah... okay, Dad.” *There he is again, yakking on about the horrible truths of nature.*

We pulled up in the dark parking lot of Arbor Bay Learning Center, right by the shoreline. Here, thriving reeds and brush push their way out of the ground, sprawl their harmless green arms, and open up to the dim moonlight. Birds talk among themselves in the midst of low-tide areas.

“Get on out, kids.” Sis pouts again but opens the door anyway. I do likewise, stepping out into the open world. Dad beckoned us to the dirt path on the other side of the lot, trodden on by tourist feet and bike tires. Sis and I stepped in line with Dad. He’d been staring down at the path. I absorbed the sights, the sounds, and the scents of the partial wilderness.

Then I hear the harsh, raspy squawk of a bird. It was not far off, maybe twenty feet at most, but it was hidden from sight. I parted the reeds with both hands. I saw, in horror, a Canadian goose, nearly asphyxiated by a reel of old fishing wire. Other sorts of trash were scattered nearby. *This bird needs help!*

“Leave the bird, Raymond. It’s probably infested and is surely good as dead.” I bounded through the reeds, trudged through the muddy flats, and came within a foot of the bird, where it cried out, fishing line crossing its neck and its belly. I desperately reached around for the hook end on the bird’s body.

“RAYMOND!” The bird’s screeching continued, but became more hoarse. I pinched the hook with one hand and rapidly unraveled the reel with the other. Then the line sagged off of the bird. Free to move, the great goose arched its wings and soared into the sky among the sea of endless stars.

## Discussion Questions for "Among the Stars"

How does the author use descriptive language to describe elements of the setting (when, where the story takes place)?

*Examples:*

*"When you pass by his 'office', you unwillingly inhale the stench. It's a sewage treatment plant."*

*"...water is flushed into the welcoming San Francisco Bay."*

*"...cruising through the vacant streets of suburban Redwood City."*

*"Here, thriving reeds and brush push their way out of the ground, sprawl their harmless green arms, and open up to the moonlight."*

*"Birds talk among themselves in the midst of low-tide areas."*

How does the author create tension or reveal conflict with descriptive language?

*Examples:*

*"I maintained an abolitionist attitude towards drugs, alcohol, and smoking, yet I secretly considered my computer screen an anti-depressant."*

*"...and fumbled my long arms around for the filtered water pitcher."*

*"I pinched the hook with one hand and rapidly unraveled the reel with the other."*

*"...the harsh, raspy squawk of a bird."*

*"The bird's screeching continued, but became more hoarse."*

*"Her puffy face showed no yield to my dad's command."*

Is the voice in this story the same all the way through? Or does it change as you read through? Why do you think the author chose to use the voice the way he does?

*There are parts, such as when the bird takes off at the end, that are more descriptive/ornate, and other parts, like the dialogue, that are more blunt and to the point.*

# Lesson Two: Story Arc & Plot Structure

## Overview

Effective stories take the reader on a journey, whether that journey is actual or metaphysical. Creating a plot structure that follows an arc helps give the story shape and allows a writer to pace the story in a way that draws the reader along. The activities in this lesson encourage students to consider the arc or direction of their stories and encourage them to consider how to build tension and emotion effectively. They will create several plotlines from a combination of characters and settings.

## Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- write short fiction pieces of exactly 55 words to reflect on the interaction of character, setting, conflict, and resolution
- read "Alteration," from *Bluefire 2014* and discuss the story through the lens of story arc
- begin to develop a creative writing piece from a series of prompts about characters and setting
- share pieces of their own writing, receive feedback on their work, and offer advice and suggestions to other writers.

## Materials

Student Workbook, page 13, *Sample 55 Fiction*  
Student Workbook, page 14, *Character/Setting Set-ups*  
Bluefire Excerpt #2, "Alteration" (read aloud to class)  
Notebook or laptops for writing  
Pens or pencils for writing  
Optional: highlighters

## Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a camp size of 15 students. Adjust accordingly for different camp sizes.

## Time

One three-hour camp session or three one-hour class periods.

## Procedures

1. Read *Sample 55 Fiction* aloud to the class. Ask the students to identify the characters, setting, conflict, and resolution in each story.
2. Give the students 30-45 minutes to create their own 55-word fiction stories, noting that each story should include at least one character, a setting, a conflict, and a resolution to that conflict. The pieces must be exactly 55 words, not including the title. The title can be no more than seven words long.
3. Optionally, students may share their stories before moving on to reading "Alteration."
4. Read *Bluefire Excerpt #2, "Alteration,"* aloud to the class. Ask the students to record the characters, settings, key conflict, and resolution in their notebooks. Discuss the story using the discussion questions that follow the story.
5. Refer the students to *Character/ Setting Set-ups*. Instruct the students to pick one of the set-ups and create a plot outline using that character and setting. Students may opt to create their own characters or settings as well. Once a student has created a plot outline for the set-up, give her 60-80 minutes to work independently. Walk the room, checking in with students, conferencing with them and encouraging them as needed.
6. End the class by bringing everyone into an authors' circle for thirty minutes and encouraging each student to share a small part of what she has written. Ask each student to share at least one sentence so that all voices are heard. Model asking clarifying questions, compliments, and constructive critique. Encourage students to both listen carefully to feedback and to offer suggestions and help to others.

## Sample 55 Fiction

### Got Talent

The rumped old lady stood on the stage. The audience giggled under its breath.

The judges shifted smugly in their seats. *This would be an easy one.*

The music started. The lady closed her eyes and opened her misshapen mouth. The audience, booing already, was startled into silence.

Out came the voice of an angel.

### The Hunter

The mysterious dark fellow suavely wove between the tuxedoed waiters to slip into the seat across from Willis.

“I hear you’ve been hunting,” Willis muttered. These were the keywords he had been told to say.

“Indeed I have,” said the man.

“Who?” Willis had been warned not to ask, but his curiosity won out.

“You.”

### Radio

It took him a while to realize the radio was picking up the past, the moon landing and Ella Fitzgerald.

The night of his 87<sup>th</sup> birthday, fiddling in the attic, he heard the voice of his high school crush calling into a talk show.

“I don’t know if he likes me; he likes his radios...”



## Character/Setting Set-ups

A futuristic metropolis; a visitor arriving there for the first time.

A circus or carnival held right at the edge of the sea; a family that's arrived to see them perform (focus on one member of the family more than the others).

A large house at the corner of two streets; the woman who used to live there.

A breathtaking natural setting early in the morning; a man who can see the future.

A tiny, noisy apartment in not the best part of town; a character with a dream.

The only house for miles and miles and miles; a young person knocking eagerly at the door.

A desert caravan setting up for the night out under the stars; a newcomer who has joined the caravan just today.

A vast mansion at the edge of an even vaster forest; an old woman sitting inside.

A city on the other side of the world, full of exotic tastes, smells, sounds; someone your age.

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## Bluefire Excerpt #2: "Alteration", by Darya Behroozi

Along the course of my life, I was repeatedly told that the mere scratch of ink on a parcel of paper was a sin. This, of course, was only applied to those of the female gender, and, judging from my bodice, I was a constituent to such injustices. Unfortunately, the need to rebel against authority was a crippling disposition of mine. My fingers itched for the release of my thoughts onto paper. I often found myself looking longingly at my twin brother, splayed across his side of our shared bedroom with papers surrounding him.

"You are the lucky one, my dear sister," he would say when he caught me staring at him. "I would give anything to be in your position. Sewing clothes is much less taxing than writing such an abundant amount of rubbish."

I gave him a small smile at his attempt to lighten my mood, though I could see the lie hidden beneath his laughing eyes. I would not condemn even my worst enemy to life as a seamstress.

Some nights, when I finished my work early, I would join my mother in her room during her praying sessions.

"Why don't we share our prayers aloud tonight?" my mother suggested one night as I quietly entered her small bedroom. I gave her a curt nod as I acquainted myself on the blanketed floor.

"I pray for my children's well-being and for my husband's safe return home," she murmured with her eyes closed. After a moment's silence, she turned to me and raised her eyebrows expectantly.

I closed my eyes and whispered in the smallest voice possible, "I pray to someday be able to write such as the boys do."

I opened my eyes to see my mother's glowing, sunbaked face suddenly pale. Her nimble hands furiously combed into her mane of black hair as she nervously looked around the room, as if to see if anyone had been spying on our conversation.

"A lady must never say such things," she whispered harshly, her unblemished face contorting with fear.

"Why do the boys receive more liberties than us? Why must all women be condemned to the house?" I pressed as a single tear streaked along my face.

"The devil punishes the wayward matron," my mother replied robotically. I tried to gauge her expression, but all I saw was the hollow body of a strained mother.

"Who are the demons, Mother? Are they the men who walk around with weapons as arms? The ones who punished dear Jala when they found a journal in her basket? My friends whisper rumors of how she can no longer come near school grounds because of the scar she

now bears on her face.” All I received as answer was a weary look from my mother. More tears escaped my eyes as she made a quick prayer and solemnly exited the room.

After a few minutes of silence, I re-collected myself and got up from my crouched position. I made my way across the room, coming to a stop before my mother’s full-length mirror. A pair of bloodshot eyes stared back at me. Ignoring the large crack in the middle of the mirror, I imagined a different reflection staring back at me. My shaking, prick-ridden hands were now holding a notepad and pen and my pouting lips were spread into a wide grin.

“I pray for the strength to fight my demons,” I whispered to my reflection.

The morning following the confrontation, I decided to join my brother on his trek to school. I looked up at the approaching building with awe. My brother often complained of the school grounds resembling that of a prison, but I viewed it as a kingdom and I the lost princess. I watched my brother’s retreating figure as he hurried into his classroom. Someday I would join him, I promised myself.

I couldn’t help but jump in fright as a warm hand clapped on the back of my perspiring neck. I looked up to see a large man step in front of the radiating morning sun.

“You should move quickly, little girl,” the man said, giving me a terrifying smile. My eyes widened at my close proximity to the weapon slung across his shoulder. “I should assume you know where you belong.” I clasped my hands as to not show their incessant trembling, muttering an apology as I rushed away from the looming demon.

When I returned back to my work at home, the needles were unforgiving. I fell prey to their sharp ends ruthlessly pricking my shaking hands until I finally set them down in defeat. I found myself walking to my mother’s room and once again standing in front of the cracked mirror. Two vacant, brown orbs stared back at me, drained of hope and full of fear. I was the hollow body of a girl, filled to the brim with broken dreams. I tore my gaze away from the foreign figure standing before me, settling my eyes on my small, worn out hands.

I gently touched the mirror, its cold surface cooling my fidgeting fingers. I ran my hands through my long mane of tangled hair. I clenched my jaw and furrowed my eyebrows deep in thought.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the glint of an object reflected off the mirror. My eyes immediately widened as realization set in. I found myself standing in front of the source, my fingers cradling the shears that would cut the ribbon of my imprisonment. I walked over to the mirror, my hands gingerly holding the thick scissors. In one swift motion, I snapped the shards, a single tear of hope streaking across my cheek and falling, falling along with my raven-black hair. I looked up into the mirror and no longer saw the eyes of an imprisoned seamstress. I saw a round, feminine face, hidden by choppy, boyish hair, and in her eyes I saw ink in the form of a free soul.

## Discussion Questions for "Alteration"

How does the author set up the conflict in this story?

- *setting up the "mere scratch of ink on parcel" as a sin-- this immediately tells the reader that the world in the story is a binding, limiting society, especially for women and girls*
- *this is juxtaposed with the experience and expectations for the brother in the story*
- *the conversation between daughter and mother deepens the conflict, explains the background of the society and the rules that the protagonist must follow*

How does the author resolve the conflict?

- *the protagonist cuts her hair, and becomes a boy*

What do you think will happen next? Will the protagonist truly be free? Will she be able to pass as a boy?

- answers will vary, but students might talk about connections between this protagonist and other women in history, like Deborah Sampson, who dressed as a boy to fight in the Revolutionary War.*

Which sentences in the story are the most important as far as the plot is concerned?

- answers will vary, but students might choose the opening sentences, the last sentences of the story, or the moment in which the protagonist decides to go around the laws of the land.*

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# Lesson Three: Character & Dialogue

## Overview

Creating voices for characters in a story helps readers connect with the characters on a more personal level and to engage with the characters more deeply. Dialogue allows the readers to "hear" the characters' voices and to understand characters' motivations and behaviors. In this lesson, students will develop voices for characters and consider their character's background and motivation. They will write pieces that create characters at two levels: their physical descriptions and their interior lives, dreams, and motivations.

## Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- develop characters based on limited information/ glimpses into the lives of others
- read "A Rain-Soaked Puppy" from *Bluefire 2015* and discuss the story through the lens of character development
- begin to develop written character "sketches" that give the reader a sense of the physical aspects of the characters as well as the background and motivations of that character
- share pieces of their own writing, receive feedback on their work, and offer advice and suggestions to other writers.

## Materials

Student Workbook, page 19, *Character Warm-ups*

Student Workbook, page 20, *Character Prompts*

Bluefire Excerpt #3, "A Rain-Soaked Puppy" (read aloud to class)

Notebook or laptops for writing

Pens or pencils for writing

Optional: highlighters

## Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a camp size of 15 students. Adjust accordingly for different camp sizes.

## Time

One three-hour camp session or three one-hour class periods.

## Procedures

1. Refer the students to *Character Warm-ups* , and read the information aloud. Ask the students to choose one of the prompts to develop further.
2. Give students 30-45 minutes to create a character. Students should create the character on two levels: exterior (the physical description of the character), and interior (the motivations, dreams, hopes, struggles, and sense of the future for the character). Students may want to sketch a drawing of the character or create a dialogue that reveals elements of this character for the reader.
3. Optionally, students could share their character pieces before moving on to reading "A Rain-Soaked Puppy".
4. Read "A Rain-Soaked Puppy," aloud to the class. As the students to note the ways that the main character describes herself. What does she like about herself and what does she struggle with?
5. Refer the students to *Character Prompts*, and ask them to choose a prompt to work on. Give the students 60-80 minutes to work independently. Walk the room, checking in with students, conferencing with them and encouraging them as needed.
6. End the class by bringing everyone into an authors' circle for thirty minutes and encouraging each student to share a small part of what she has written. Ask each student to share at least one sentence so that all voices are heard. Model asking clarifying questions, compliments, and constructive critique. Encourage students to both listen carefully to feedback and to offer suggestions and help to others.

## Character Warm-ups

Make a list of 5-10 moments from a character's life. They don't have to be big moments, but they should all have meaning. Pick three. Then write a vivid paragraph to bring each of those three moments to life.

Make a list of four or five ages. Something like this: 4, 14, 29, 83, 50. Then write one vivid paragraph showing your character at each age on your list.

Write the day your main character leaves on a grand journey.

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## Character Prompts

Pick a character that's facing a major decision. In one paragraph, show what happens if he/she makes one choice. In the next paragraph, show what happens if he/she makes another choice. Then let your character choose.

Show your character having a dream—for no longer than one paragraph. Then have your character wake up. And gradually let one world turn into another.

Out of all the meals in your character's life, there's one that means the most to your character. It might not be the largest or the most elaborate meal, but it's definitely the most meaningful. Write about this. Be super descriptive about each taste you mention.

Start by describing the day of a character's birth. See it from a distance. Describe the weather and what else is happening in the world or the city on that same day. Spend no longer than one paragraph on the birth. Then move forward in time. Let your story arise from this first day.

Make a list of 10 people who know your main character. Some know your character extremely well; some only know your character from a distance. Then pick 3-4 of the people on this list. Let each one of these people speak about your main character for a paragraph (but no longer).

Think about the places where your character keeps things. Like a bookshelf, or a desk drawer, or a backpack, or his/her pockets. Or somewhere else. Pick one. Then describe the things your character keeps in this place. Show your character through a collection of his/her things.

Your main character really, really wants something but ends up getting another. Skip ahead to two years after this happens. Write about what happened now that your character has some perspective on it.

There's one activity your character enjoys most in this world. It might be something really simple. Describe your character in the midst of this activity. Write it so vividly that the reader can truly feel what it's like. Let this be the opening of your story.

First, write about an adult character with some favorite object of his/hers. Do this in one paragraph. Then, in your next paragraph, write about a child placing that same object in a time capsule and burying it somewhere. Take your story from there.

First, write a scene of dialogue between your main character and his/her grandparent. Then, in your second paragraph, move far ahead in time and write a scene of dialogue between your main character and his/her grandchild.

One night, your character wakes up late, late at night with an incredible urge to write. He/she finds a journal, opens his/her heart, and begins writing everything he/she has wanted to say for some time. Show what your character writes on this one night.

Show childhood friends doing something or another. Make this scene detailed as you can. Then pick one of those two characters. Grow up with that character. Don't show everything, but do show a few moments that matter. Right before the very end, bring that other friend back into the story.

Your character makes a wish. He/she writes it down on something and stores it somewhere. Describe. Then show what happens.

Pick a really small physical detail related to your character. Like a piece of jewelry, or a freckle, or a tooth, a scar, a birthmark, even a shoelace. Describe it. Then show your character's story. Let this one detail play some kind of a role.

Think of the moment your character is the farthest away from home he/she has ever been. This might a real, literal distance, or it might just be a feeling. Show that moment and tell your story from there.

Let your character have a triumph, a great victory of some kind. But no one really knows—only your character knows what he/she has accomplished.

Flash to a moment 50 years after your character's death. There's one day where your character's life has a meaningful impact on people living in that future. Show that day.

Pick a gesture and show your character making that gesture. Like flying a kite. Or tying shoes. Or swimming across a river. Or something else. Show this as descriptively as you can. Then tell your story from there. Make sure, at some point in your story, to show this same gesture a second time.

Write a story where you don't mention the main character's name until halfway through. Then give your character a name that has another meaning—like Hope, or Joy, or Freedom, or Knowledge. Then tell the second half of your story using this name.

Write a story from the perspective of an observer. The main events of the story happen to other people; the narrator just observes. If the narrator is involved, it's only in a very minor way.

### Bluefire Excerpt #3: "A Rain-Soaked Puppy", by Janece Williams

When someone asks me, *do you have a boyfriend*, I always refer back to the many reasons why I in fact, do not.

Reason 1: When I was in eighth grade, there was this boy I liked. For the purposes of this story, his name will be Giraffe. So to tell the truth, I didn't have the best hairstyle in eighth grade. In fact, it was quite appalling. I used to dream about having the kind of hair you see on Head and Shoulders commercials- lush, long and voluminous. Instead my hair was short, coiled up, and by society's definition, kinky.

It didn't help that I was too lazy to properly take care of it. That, in addition to my chipmunk cheeks, Lane Bryant wardrobe and lack of coherent sentences in front of Giraffe ensured that he would never go for a girl like me. And when I say a girl like me, I mean I'm the only one of my species, of course.

Reason 2: Tenth grade dance. I had the perfect hairstyle, the semi-perfect dress, and the okay shoes. I was good to go. The whole thing was Halloween themed, my favorite kind of event. I was dressed up like a girl version of Mad Hatter with the green top hat and overcoat, along with a cool patched-up purple dress that I invented myself because I would not be subject to the skanky women's costumes in Party City. I had standards, thank you very much.

They started playing the latest dance song, you know the kind where everyone congregates in the center of the dance floor because the whole gym knows the dance, and I went right to the front. Big mistake.

In addition to the awesome overcoat and dress, I had on a pair of crazy polka dotted tights. While I was dancing, or whatever takes place when I move my body, my thighs decided to pop the tights, running a line straight down the middle on both sides. Even worse, it was in the back.

Reason 3: In third grade, I was in the school talent show. I was going to sing something from the Cheetah Girls, because it was “in” at the time. In third grade, I was much skinnier. I didn’t have a muffin top or kinky hair, and I had way more friends.

I was all fixed up and ready to go, but just as I was about to start singing, I heard someone say something. It sounded like fat cow. And I just... froze. I couldn’t sing, I couldn’t move— I was paralyzed. And when everyone started laughing at me while the teachers calmed them down, I caught the eyes of the boy I liked. He looked at me like I was the saddest thing in the world. A rain-soaked puppy left in the cold for everyone to pity.

Reason 4: In tenth grade, I liked an Asian boy. Not that this was a major problem, I mean *hoorah!* for interracial couples and all but, come on. It may seem like something I’m over exaggerating, but breaching the barrier between races is apparently a big deal. I always hear boys saying: *Ooh I really like that girl and she’s so pretty, does she have a boyfriend?*— but they aren’t talking about black girls. It’s always that blonde girl with the skinny legs or that Asian girl that wears makeup at fourteen. Never us.

And if it is a black girl, she’s light-skinned. And has straighter hair. And she’s as thin as a Victoria Secret model. Not that there’s anything wrong with that, but when you don’t look that way, it kind of feels like being thrown in the lowest sales pile.

Reason 5: Senior year, graduation day. It was raining outside, I had on four-inch heels and tights that could rip any second, and the entire graduating class had this feeling of *wow, it’s really over?* I saw people that I had passed in the hallways for four years, some I spoke to, some I didn’t. I knew faces, but I didn’t know all the names. And the strange thing was, that in about a year, it wouldn’t even matter. I would never see these people again.

Some of them, sitting in that crowd, saw me rip my tights at the school dance. Some of them saw me confess to a boy I liked, get rejected, and still hold my head up high. Some of

them might have even saw me on stage, about to sing, frozen on the spot. But in all those years they witnessed my failures and my pain, none of the people sitting in that crowd ever really saw me. They only saw what they thought I was. I never realized that until that day.

Reason 6: First day of college, as I walked into my Intro to Film class, I met the eyes of someone I thought I would never see again. A certain Asian boy that I had a crush on forever. I didn't expect him to recognize me, so I just kept my head down and picked the furthest desk away from him. But, as most of my life went, things didn't go as planned.

I heard him take the seat next to me, and with a discreet whisper so as not to catch the attention of the professor he said, "Hey."

I didn't want to acknowledge him. I didn't want to see anyone from high school, let alone someone I had embarrassed myself in front of. But as I looked over at him I saw something unexpected sparkling in his inky eyes. Not pity or shame or ridicule, but relief. Not only that, but the slightest bit of happiness. And I couldn't even begin to fathom why. But as I looked into his eyes, not to be some lovey-dovey cliché, I saw what I had searched for in countless others. Something I never thought I would receive from anyone, especially not him. Acceptance.

## Discussion Questions for "A Rain-Soaked Puppy"

How does the main character see herself? What does she think might be her strengths?

*The main character, who has no name in the story, tells the reader she is overweight, has dark skin, kinky hair, and a "muffin top." She believes that her classmates can only see her from the outside, so they reject her based on appearance. In addition, although she has taken risks (gone up on stage to sing, created her own Halloween costume, been rejected and still kept her head up), no one knows who she really is.*

*Her strengths include: being a strong student--she is going on to college, and taking film classes; she has faced rejection and kept her head up high; she refuses to accept the big stores' version of what women should wear at Halloween and created her own vision; she took the risk of singing on stage in front of her classmates; she meets the eyes of her old crush.*

How does each of the mini-stories in this piece add to the overall sense of character and build tension towards the end of the story?

*With each of the vignettes (snapshots from the character's life), the reader gets more of a physical description of the character and a stronger sense of her emotional life. She uses first person perspective to tell the story, so the ending is more of a surprise. There is the idea that the character's life has been a series of embarrassing situations, and that no one knows the "real" person inside. And yet, at the end, the boy she has a crush on is accepting--and real.*

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# Lesson Four: Beginnings and Endings

## Overview

Great beginnings draw readers in immediately, and great endings create a sense of satisfaction and offer closure for readers. The most powerful stories leave the reader thinking deeply about the ways the conflicts were resolved or how characters reacted in specific situations. In this lesson, students will read and discuss powerful opening paragraphs and consider how the authors connected the openings and endings effectively. Students will work on their own 1,000 word pieces, keeping in mind the goals of drawing in the reader and leaving the reader with a key idea (or ideas) to think about after the story has ended.

## Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- discuss how opening lines capture the readers' attention using excerpts from *Bluefire*.
- read "Choice" from *Bluefire 2015* and discuss the story through the lens of beginnings and endings
- begin to develop a piece of 1,000 word fiction
- share pieces of their own writing, receive feedback on their work, and offer advice and suggestions to other writers.

## Materials

Student Workbook, page 27, Beginning Prompts  
Bluefire Excerpt #4, "Choice" (read aloud to class)  
Notebook or laptops for writing  
Pens or pencils for writing  
Optional: highlighters

## Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a camp size of 15 students. Adjust accordingly for different camp sizes.

## Time

One three-hour camp session or three one-hour class periods.



## Procedures

1. Read the opening lines from "FlavorMorph" and "Waking Up" aloud, as written below. Ask the students to identify what made these effective openings.

Opening lines from "FlavorMorph":

"Was life really like a FlavorMorph Starburst? Kate tried and tried, but she couldn't figure out what two flavors were in the Starburst without looking at the wrapper. Just like her feelings in life—all muddled up and blended together in a mix of familiar flavors."

Opening lines from "Waking Up":

When we wake up, rising out of that mystical, nonsensical, ever changing land of dreams, there is a moment before we remember who we are. It is in that moment that we belong only to ourselves, with no superfluous obligations or promises we must keep. No places we have to be, or people we have to smile at and be pleasant towards. For that one moment, we can just be.

2. Then, read the closing lines of "Alteration" and "Among the Stars" aloud, as written below. Ask the student to identify what made these effective endings. Discuss techniques that make for effective endings, including making a large or small statement, reinforcing a choice or decisions made by the character, or referencing the biggest moment of the story.

Closing lines of "Alteration":

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the glint of an object reflected off the mirror. My eyes immediately widened as realization set in. I found myself standing in front of the source, my fingers cradling the shears that would cut the ribbon of my imprisonment. I walked over to the mirror, my hands gingerly holding the thick scissors. In one swift motion, I snapped the shards, a single tear of hope streaking across my cheek and falling, falling along with my raven-black hair. I looked up into the mirror and no longer saw the eyes of an imprisoned seamstress. I saw a round, feminine face, hidden by choppy, boyish hair, and in her eyes I saw ink in the form of a free soul.

Closing lines of "Among the Stars":

"RAYMOND!" The bird's screeching continued, but became more hoarse. I pinched the hook with one hand and rapidly unraveled the reel with the other. Then the line sagged off of the bird. Free to move, the great goose arched its wings and soared into the sky among the sea of endless stars.

3. Refer the students to *Beginning Prompts in their workbook*. Ask the students to choose one of the three prompts to work on for 15 to 20 minutes.

4. Read "Choice" aloud to the class. Ask the students to make notes about the weather as they listen to the story. Discuss the story using the discussion questions at the end of the story.

5. Give the students 45 minutes to work independently on the 1,000 word stories that they started the day before or allow the students to begin a new story inspired by today's work. Ask students to choose one paragraph to revise or develop specifically. Walk the room, checking in with students, conferencing with them and encouraging them as needed.

6. Leave 45 minutes at the end of the work period for revision and editing. Ask the students to review their work so far this week and to choose one paragraph or section of their stories to revise and edit. Have students quietly read their paragraph/section to themselves, editing it first for grammar and punctuation. Then, have the students review the paragraph/section for flow, noting which words or ideas are emphasized. Ask the students to examine their word choice - have they chosen powerful words? Is there imagery or tension? Ask students to copy this edited/revised paragraph onto a separate sheet of paper and collect the papers, or have them share the document with their teacher on Google docs.

7. End the class by bringing everyone into an authors' circle for thirty minutes and encouraging each student to share a small part of what she has written. Ask each student to share at least one sentence so that all voices are heard. Model asking clarifying questions, offering compliments, and providing constructive critique. Encourage students to both listen carefully to feedback and to offer suggestions and help to others.

8. Teachers should type up each of the students' pieces after camp has ended for the day, creating a short anthology of work from the week. Make copies of the anthology to be distributed to each student the next day at camp. The anthology can simply be a collection of work-in-progress pieces, with the titles and first names of the students, along with a cover page that reads "Summer Camp Anthology 2015/ Leyla Beban Young Authors Foundation Summer Camp". Please send an electronic copy of the anthology to the Leyla Beban Young Authors Foundation at [info@blue4beban.org](mailto:info@blue4beban.org).

## Beginning Prompts

### Option 1:

Write 3-5 of your own beginning lines... One sentence is just fine, but if you need a couple sentences, that's fine, too.

### Option 2:

“Was life really like a FlavorMorph Starburst? Kate tried and tried, but she couldn't figure out what two flavors were in the Starburst without looking at the wrapper. Just like her feelings in life—all muddled up and blended together in a mix of familiar flavors.”

Step 1: Brainstorm a list of 5-10 things that life could be like. (A Starburst is one example. Think of your own.)

Step 2: Pick one item from your list. Decide that this thing is life. Develop the idea in a full paragraph. Show, as vividly as you can, how life feels like this one thing.

### Option 3:

“When we wake up, rising out of that mystical, nonsensical, everchanging land of dreams, there is a moment before we remember who we are.”

Step 1: Pick a character. It can be a character you've written about before or a new one.

Step 2: Describe that moment between dreams and being awake for this one character. Show it as vividly as you can.

#### Bluefire Excerpt #4: "Choice" by Paco Poler

"Propa!" The word echoes through the fort, propelled along its way by hundreds of voices. I look around frantically for my mask. Upstairs. It's upstairs. I hurriedly stumble down the hallway, abandoning my semi-dismantled pocket watch.

I reach the stairs and make my way up towards my barrack. Half way down the hallway I see the propaganda flooding the fort: a menacing cloud of vapor unfolding itself down the hallway like a giant red carpet. I collapse onto the floor, my quaking legs having lost the incentive to support my body. I'm cut off. More men come running up the stairs, only to freeze when they see the all-enveloping sea of toxins. We exchange hopeless glances, then sit and wait helplessly for the propaganda to engulf us. I watch it slither closer, inch by inch. A minute passes. Two. Finally I can't take it anymore.

I stand up, take a deep breath, and, much to the surprise of the soldiers still sitting by the stairs, sprint straight into the thick fog. I run down the corridor and left at the first fork in the hallway, almost missing the turn due to the opacity of the fog. The tips of my fingers get cold from lack of oxygen and I start to panic. I turn another corner. I'm almost there. I plug my nose with my hand to prevent myself from inhaling. I finally arrive at my barracks and open the door. The propaganda has seeped under the door and saturated the room. I run to my bunk, my lungs screaming for air. I open the drawer next to my bed.

It's not there.

My mask is gone. My stomach does a somersault. I look around desperately but I know it's not here. Some bastard found it first. I finally give in and breathe in the fumes around me. I slouch against my bed, panting like an old dog.

The propaganda is not like the old gas they used in the first World War. It doesn't burn my lungs. I don't even cough. If it weren't for the color I wouldn't even notice I was inhaling it. It'd started transparent actually. It was first developed in China to suppress the rebellions. They'd flood the protesters with it and they didn't even know it was happening. It was designed to activate the orbitofrontal cortex, the part of the brain that controls peer pressure. All the propaganda did was put the OFC into overdrive. Pair that with the latest advances in neurovision, allowing the projection of images of citizens cooperating directly into the brains of the protesters, and their OFCs would enforce that reaction indefinitely. Within a week, the socialist government of China, previously going down in flames, recovered complete control of the country. Of course when a country develops a weapon like that, a weapon capable of turning an entire population to your side, a weapon capable of turning enemy armies to your side... A year later, on the second of June, 2042, a panicking America, threatened by Chinese invasion, decided to strike first. The very next day, Russia declared war on America in retaliation. Within three weeks, the world was at war. And here I was, on the front lines.

After a moment's rest, I begin my walk back to the main hall. I make my way down the stairs, waiting for the neurotoxin to take its effect. I'd heard the images flashed so fast your conscious mind didn't even register them. How will I know when I've been indoctrinated? I get more and more uncomfortable, like a suicide bomber in the seconds between the pulling of a pin and the explosion of a grenade. What will my comrades do when they see me emerge

from the fog without a mask on? The horror of this weapon finally strikes home. Minutes from now, I'll be fighting my friends. *Killing* my friends. And when it wears off? I'll have to live my whole life having killed innocent men. What were we doing sending millions of soldiers to execute each other? How could they send us unprepared into this hell? How could they send us at all? I feel the rage building inside me against the nation that sent me, not only to my doom, but worse: to seal the doom of my comrades. I am done with this war. I will not support this.

I reach the bottom of the stairs. The propaganda had been filtered out of this floor and soldiers returned to their posts. As soon as I appear out of the dense fog, Peter runs to me from his post outside the general's quarters.

"Thank god you're alright," he breathes into my coat, hugging me intensely. I step back and address him sternly, the anger radiating through my voice.

"I'm defecting, Peter." His relieved smile disappears behind a concerned frown. He glances at the stairs, the red sea slowly receding, then back at me.

"You were in the Propa." He says flatly, then cradles his forehead in his arms and paces back and forth a few times muttering worriedly.

"Listen, let's not do anything rash, okay? You were in the Propa, and it's gotten to your head. Why don't you just head over to the infirmary and take it easy?"

"No Peter. If anything, the propaganda has cleared my head. Why should we risk our lives and put everything on hold for this war? We were taught all our lives *not* to wage war and yet here we are, the capital offenders! I'm not the one who's indoctrinated, you are! You're blind to what's really going on!" I am yelling at this point. Peter's hand moves slowly towards his holster, and I notice I've done the same. A few men from down the hallway make their way closer.

“Stand down, Jack.” Peter glares at me. I can’t let him stop me; I have to get my message to everyone. I have to stop this war. I draw my gun.

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## Discussion Questions for "Choice"

What information does the reader have about the setting (time and place) in this story?

- *This story feels futuristic - this isn't the current world that we live in*
- *It's after June 2, 2042, which is the date that the US strikes against a threatening China and a war is triggered*
- *The character is in a fort*
- *Jack, the main character, appears to be a soldier on the front line of the battle*

How is the propa gas used to create a population that can be controlled?

- *The propa gas, which was invented in China, is used to pacify protesters - when inhaled, it affects the brain and reinforces images of people cooperating and working together, giving the government the power to control the reactions of people around the world.*

How has Jack been affected by the propa gas?

- *After being exposed to the gas, Jack believes that the war is wrong, and that he has been indoctrinated by his government and influenced to fight a war. Instead, he wants to end the war - even if it means killing his comrades. This raises questions about the nature of the propa gas and the war itself: how does one fight a weapon that affects thinking? Is peace under a government that can control its people better than a war? Is the outcome of the war inevitable if one side has an unstoppable weapon?*



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# Lesson Five: Genre

## Overview

Genre often defines characters and settings, as well as some plot structures and conflicts in stories. In this lesson, students will define several genres and discuss how genres develop characters and plot structures. On this final day of camp, they will also work more on their own 1,000 word stories, read the work of their camp-mates, and discuss a fairy tale from *Bluefire 2015*.

## Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- define several writing genres (such as sci-fi, fantasy, and historical fiction)
- read "Awake" from *Bluefire 2015* and discuss the story through the lens of genre
- work more on a piece of 1,000 word fiction
- read and celebrate their work of the camp as shared in the camp's anthology
- share pieces of their own writing, receive feedback on their work, and offer advice and suggestions to other writers.

## Materials

Student Workbook, page 33, *Writing Genres* (as a reference during the discussion on genre)

Bluefire Excerpt #5, "Awake" (read aloud to class)

*Camp Anthology* (typed up and copied by the teacher the evening before)

Notebook or laptops for writing

Pens or pencils for writing

Optional: highlighters

## Teacher Preparation

Instructions and materials are based on a camp size of 15 students. Adjust accordingly for different camp sizes.

## Time

One three-hour camp session or three one-hour class periods.

## Procedures

1. Using *Writing Genres*, discuss writing genres and their attributes. How does each genre define the characters, setting, and conflicts?

2. Read "Awake" aloud to the class. Discuss the story using the discussion questions following the story.
3. Give students 45 minutes to work on their 1,000 word story.
4. Distribute the Camp Anthology. Ask each student to review his or her own story and mark at least a paragraph he or she would like to share. Give the students 15 minutes to practice reading the paragraph, section, or story aloud. Invite each student to come to the front of the classroom and read their selection aloud.
5. End the class by bringing everyone into an authors' circle for 30 minutes. Make a list of the campers' writing goals for the summer and over the next school year. Solicit feedback on how camp went and what might be improved for next summer. Remind students to submit their work for the "\$1,000 for 1,000 Words" contest.

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## Writing Genres

"Genre" refers to a category of writing, and we'll be discussing several fiction writing genres, including:

**Action/Adventure story:** In these stories, characters have adventures, and there is often a conflict between good and evil or humans and nature. Settings might include big cities or the great outdoors. Weapons and gadgets are often key accessories for main characters.

**Historical fiction:** These are stories set in a specific time period, such as World War II or the French Revolution. The main characters are fictional, but may interact with historical figures. Some of the conflict in the story might be directly related to real historical events.

**Mystery:** A crime (such as a murder, theft, or kidnapping) takes place in a mystery, and the main character, usually a detective, must solve the crime using clues that he or she discovers along the way.

**Romance:** In this genre, the plot revolves around the romantic relationship between two characters. Often there is some kind of misunderstanding between the two characters at a key moment in the plot, and their relationship falls apart, only to be rebuilt more strongly after the misunderstanding has been resolved.

**Science fiction:** Most of the stories in this genre take place in the future and use futuristic technology (such as robots, flying cars, etc.) as key elements in the story. Science is integrated into the story, and the science in the story should be based on known scientific facts. There is often a central premise or idea that must be carried out to its logical end.

**Fantasy:** These stories are often set in a vaguely medieval time period, with dragons, elves, dwarves, and wizards playing key roles. Conflicts can be resolved using magic, and the plot often involves some kind of adventure or quest, where the characters must obtain an object or spell to defeat an evil antagonist.

**Folktales:** This genre contains many subgenres, including fairy tales, fables, tall tales, and myths. Generally, folktales are stories that are passed down through generations, and are told verbally, rather than written down. Folktales may have many variations, as storytellers might add unique twists or details each time the story is told. Many folktales have morals or lessons at the end.

## Bluefire Excerpt #5: "Awake" by Jenna Bao

A tiny thorn, glinting with anticipation. Anxiety. A single prick, ripe with hesitation. Fear. A drop of blood, plummeting to the dark earth. Regret. A thick fog of magic, catching me as I lost feeling. Darkness.

A stab of warmth pierced through the thick, cottony layers of repose and content emptiness. A peculiarly apathetic voice murmured, *I guess he's here; the true love's kiss everyone always blathered on about.* The contact persisted; more tendrils of light dragging me into consciousness before I could remember mother's tasks about how unbecoming my sass was, always ensuring the genteelness lived on.

The sensation of tender lips just barely pulling away greeted me as I finally breached the surface with a delicate gasp (wouldn't the fairies be proud, their 'gifts' had stuck well). I briefly considered keeping my eyes closed, inwardly snickering at the image of scaring my 'savior' silly, but that wasn't how the story went, wasn't the *plan*, so my eyelids fluttered open, and a soft exhale of shock and excitement broke the silence, his stereotypically blue eyes locking with mine.

*Guess this is what happily ever after looks like,* that perversely detached voice mused as he leaned forward to wrap his arms around me with practiced fluidity, the action so surely manufactured that I nearly grimaced. It was just like everything else in my life, and for some reason I'd hoped that this moment, this magic, this 'after' would be different.

The hug was a smidge uncomfortable, not only due to the lethargic, immobile state of my limbs keeping me from actually participating, but because I didn't know if I really *wanted* to reciprocate. That wasn't... appropriate. That wasn't the story. I was supposed to flush with gratitude and tear up (daintily, of course), let the magic of our destiny flood my heart with... something. Something special. Throw in a bit about a hero, another about a prince, a beloved for good measure. That was the plan.

Gorgeous baby with rose petal lips and blessings enough to offend any semblance of fairness left in the cosmos? Check. Hidden off in the woods for “protection” in a stifling, half-hearted attempt to prevent the inevitable (really just a formality at this point)? Done. Wander off through the woods on the worst birthday ever, half-searching for a sharp object, lungs constricting with nerves and anticipation and uncertainty? Completed. Staring at the thorn on that ironically blood-red rose, *no-don't-do-it* blaring in my mind even as my shaky hand neared the curse, neared the expectations that I was never bold enough to walk away from? Well, they didn't need to know that I wasn't just another fool in a line of entranced empty vases, that I was a coward instead, so check. Awake to the true love's kiss of a handpicked suitor with a glorified hedge-cutter and come on it's not even fair when he *knows* he has to take down a dragon? Well, I was awake. That meant something. I just didn't know what.

Because the stories never mentioned feeling uncomfortable in his I-can-slay-beasts-in-my-sleep-and-my-ego-needs-you-to-know-that arms. They didn't include trying not to gag on his I-feast-off-of-gold-platters cologne.

*It's not like this is the first time you've questioned this step-by-step guide for your very existence. Not the first time you've wondered whether they were wrong or there was just something wrong with you,* that voice snarled, the I-told-you-so bitterly dripping from each syllable.

I wanted to swat his proffered hand away, tell him that I could walk, thank you very much. I longed to shrug off his grip around my waist, leading me like a dazed and confused damsel in distress. I didn't. Mother probably hadn't been confused like this. Grandmother must've leaned into Grandfather's support, a light blush flashing across her perfect cheeks.

*Why does that matter?*

Flashes of long-repressed memories swam through my mind, the barriers usually keeping my thoughts carefully compartmentalized hazy after so long without use, as we strolled through the dark halls of the deserted palace.

Changing my mind about asking for books on my birthday- no, hair bows would be more appropriate. They want you to ask for something like hair bows. Needing to ask why no one ever tried to break the curse, the one writing every little girl in the legendary family's life story, all because some great-great-great had been passive aggressive with their guest list. Staring at that darned thorn and wondering why- why I was tossing away my life, desperately wishing I was strong enough to laugh in fate's face and traipse off into freedom.

But no. Instead, I'd watched the skin tear and the scarlet pool. Gave in because freedom was terrifying and the plan was so *sure*. Never asked because they wouldn't, *couldn't*, give me a worthwhile answer; they don't want you to question it, just follow. Squealed with joy at the new jewelry and ribbons because, oh, she looks just like her mother, you must be so proud.

*Look where being like your mother got you.*

"-here, sweetheart, let me help you," he offered confidently, extending a hand to boost me onto his steed. Sweetheart? Did he even know my name, or would he find out right before the priest declared man and wife? Did he care? Something about that tipped me over the edge. Then, I was freefalling.

"Why?" the word tumbled out before I knew what I was doing, what I meant.

His forehead wrinkled in confusion. I had gone off script, forced him to think, grabbed him by his gold-laced collar and dragged him definitively *out of the plan*.

"Darling... I'm your true love." Clinging to that like a lifeline.

I could grab onto that rope, I thought. Be his true love. Be their beautiful little girl. Be chosen for gifts I was granted by magical busybodies and genetics. Or, I could make a choice. A choice that I had shied away from time and time again. I could choose to be me.

“Sorry, *darling*, but you’ve got the wrong girl.”

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## Discussion Questions for "Awake"

What really stood out to you in this story?

*-- Answers will vary, but encourage the students to explore what makes this story so powerful - the unexpected thoughts of a princess whose life had been planned out for her? Or the princess' thought process that brings her to the decision at the very end? The modern-sounding self-talk that helps bring the choices of the princess to the forefront? Or something else?*

How does the author write in the genre of fairytales?

*-- The author uses the reader's knowledge of the story of "Sleeping Beauty" - readers are probably familiar with the story, and know about the fairies, the princess being hidden away in the woods, and her magical sleep after being pricked with the spindle on the spinning wheel. She includes elements of the fairy tale genre-- magic, destiny, true love, good vs. evil, and a fairy-tale land setting. The author then reveals the thoughts of Sleeping Beauty to shift the focus of the fairy tale, instead revealing the conflict that Sleeping Beauty struggles with as she awakens to her true love.*

How does the author create a sense of conflict in the story?

*-- There is little direct conflict in the story - this is more of the internal struggle of a person who is trying to figure out the path of her life, one that has been meticulously planned out by others. Sleeping Beauty's decision to change her destiny will have a wide-ranging impact on those who created her destiny.*

How is the conflict resolved at the end of the story?

*-- When the prince calls Sleeping Beauty "sweetheart," he triggers her rebellion against her destiny, and she then decides that she will go off and risk an independent life.*

Why does Sleeping Beauty choose to change her destiny? What might happen next?

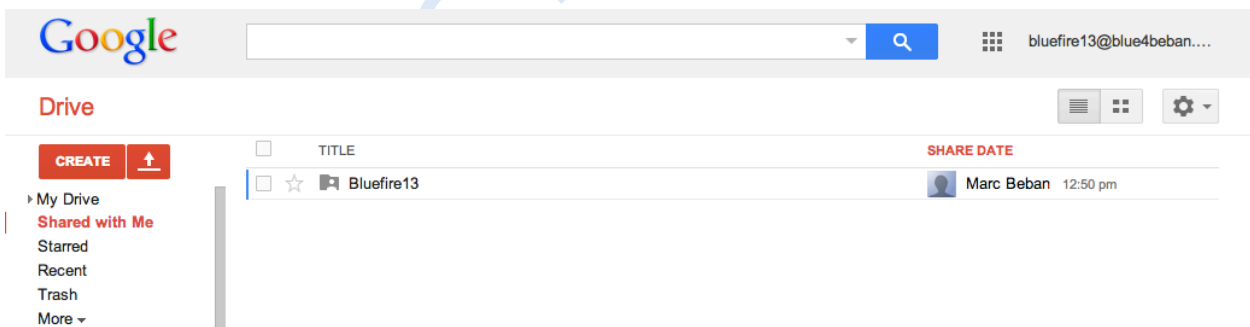
*-- Answers will vary, but students might discuss the impact of her decision: How will she live? Will others accept her decision? Will she be banished? It may be worthwhile to discuss whether a different main character, or a different Sleeping Beauty, would have made a different decision in the end.*

# Appendix: A Quick Guide to Google Drive

We will be using Google Drive to share your writing with the instructors and classmates. You have been set up with a Blue4Beban user account that you will use to create, access, and share your work. You can also send and receive emails on this account to communicate with your instructors and classmates. This is temporary - after the workshop is over, the account will be deleted. This appendix is a brief primer on how to work with Google Drive in case you are not familiar with it.

## Accessing Your Blue4Beban Google Drive Account:

1. You will have received your user account at the start of the first class. It will be something like this: bluefire13@blue4beban.org. (Your two numbers may be something different from '13' - in fact, only one of you will have '13'!) In addition, you were given the password for this account.
2. Log on to your laptop using the username and password you have been provided, navigate to the applications folder, and open your Safari browser.
3. The browser will open to the foundation home page by default. There is a bookmark in the browser called 'My Bluefire Writing Camp Folder'. Select that and you will be taken to your Blue4Beban Google Drive folder. If you are prompted to login at any point, enter your username and password as prompted by Google. (Alternatively, you can enter 'drive.google.com' in the navigation bar, and then login.) It should look something like this:



4. Inside the folder, you will find a Google Doc format version of this workbook ('.gdoc' at the end of the file name). You will be able to edit this document directly in Google Drive. Alternatively, if you want to create your own clean document for your work, see the next section below.
5. Edits to documents will be saved automatically as long as there is an internet connection.

To Create a Document, Folder, etc:



1. Find the red 'Create' button in the top left.
2. Choose either Folder or Document (these are the only two you'll really be needing).

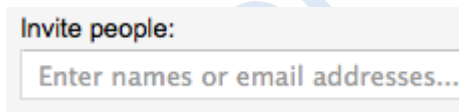
To Add Documents to a Folder:

1. Really very simple - just drag the desired document over the desired folder and drop.

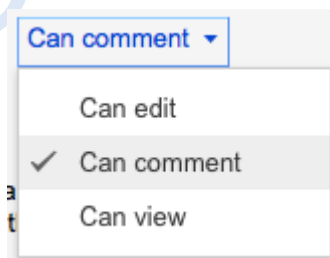
To Share a Document / Folder




1. Open the document you wish to share.
2. Find the blue 'Share' button in the top right corner.
3. Click on that button, and you'll see a pop up on your screen with a box at the bottom that looks like this:



4. Enter the email addresses of those you wish to share with in this box.
5. Before hitting send, find a box that looks like this to the right, and make sure it says



can comment in order to get feedback on your writing.

6. The same works for sharing an entire folder, just look for this button -  instead of the blue share button.

7. Note: Your teachers have already been given access to your folder and you should not need to share anything in that folder with them. If you have a problem, however, follow the instructions above and use [instructor@blue4beban.org](mailto:instructor@blue4beban.org) in the invite box.

#### To View Documents Shared with You:

1. Back in your drive's home page, look along the left side and find the section that says 'Shared with Me'.
  - NOTE: If the document doesn't show up here for some reason, you can always simply search the title in the search bar at the top of the page. This works for locating anything in your drive.

#### To Email Teachers or Classmates:

1. In your browser navigation bar, enter [mail.google.com](mailto:mail.google.com).
2. If you are prompted to login, do so using your Blue4Beban account credentials.
3. Use the Compose button to create an email.

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