



“The Creepy Weepy Dollhouse” Teacher Guide



SEASON 4 EPISODE 4

The Creepy Weepy Dollhouse

by an 8 year-old from North Carolina named Emery

Overview

In “The Creepy Weepy Dollhouse” by a kid from North Carolina named Emery, a girl named Sally keeps getting told, “Don’t go into the Creepy Weepy Dollhouse!” Then, later in the story, just when you least expect it, Sally finally---well, we won’t spoil it for you because we want to keep you in suspense. This lesson examines techniques for creating suspense in a story and shows students how to implement them in their own writing. First, students will use their inferencing skills to predict what different examples of suspense might mean for the plot of a story. Then, students will learn three techniques to effectively create suspense in a story to make their readers want to keep reading. Finally, students will be given examples of suspenseful foreshadowing as prompts for their own writing!

Age Group

Best for 3rd through 5th grade readers and writers

storypiratescreatorclub.com

Common Core Standards

For simplicity, here are relevant 4th grade standards; similar standards for 3rd and 5th apply.

1. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1](#) Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
2. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3](#) Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
3. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.a](#) Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
4. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.d](#) Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
5. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.e](#) Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
6. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9](#) Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the feeling of suspense in a story
- Infer what suspenseful details in a story might indicate, and make predictions about what will happen next
- Use suspenseful techniques in writing to make a reader want to read more

Materials

1. Story Pirates Podcast: Season 4 Episode 4 (story at approximately 26:27-34:05)
2. Suspense Starters sheet
3. Writer's Notebook or other place to write down ideas

Activity Steps

1. Intro:

Introduce the lesson to your students with a short discussion.

- **Do Now/Writer's Notebook:** Give the following to students as a prompt:
 - *"The television was making strange noises, even though it did not seem to be turned on. I reached for the remote control, and then..."*
 - How do you feel when you read these sentences? Write down what you predict might happen next!
- **Share:** Ask for a few students to share their feelings, and predictions of what might happen next.

- **Connect:** Explain to students that the prompt was an example of suspense. There was something strange going on, and the audience did not know why! We knew there were “strange noises,” and that made us a little nervous and excited because we wanted to know what was going on. Suspense is a writing technique that is used in lots of stories like mysteries, ghost stories, and thrillers to make the reader want to read to the end.

2. Play the Story:

“The Creepy Weepy Dollhouse” by a kid from North Carolina named Emery

The story is at around the 26:27 mark on the episode

- **Introduce the story to students:** Let’s listen to a story from the Story Pirates Podcast called “The Creepy Weepy Dollhouse” by a kid from North Carolina named Emery. This story uses suspense throughout, and don’t worry—it’s not too scary! As we listen, we will pause the story a few times to talk about what we think might happen next.
- **Pause 1:** Play the story, and pause after Sally talks to her mom and says, “Guess I’ll go to the kitchen and tell Dad where I’m going...” Ask students what they predict might happen next. You might steer your students toward the idea that her Dad will also warn her not to go into the Creepy Weepy Dollhouse because her brother and Mom have both said it. You might get some other wilder predictions!
- **Pause 2:** Continue playing the story, and then pause after Sally and Jackson are in the house and hear crying that is coming from “behind the chilly silly bookshelf.” Ask them what details they’ve noticed about the house (it has doll-sized furniture, the door was wet, everything seems to rhyme...) Ask students who they think is making the noise, and what they predict might happen next.
- **Pause 3:** Continue playing the story, and then pause after Boo says that it’s a “bumpy lumpy trampoline...” Ask students what they predict might happen next.

3. Check for Understanding:

After listening, you might ask your students some questions.

- What were some parts of the story that made you want to find out what happens next?
 - *When the parents warned Sally not to go in the house*
 - *The description of the house Sally and Jackson were first looking at it*
 - *The description of the furniture and sounds inside of the house*

4. MiniLesson: The Art of Suspense

- **Introduce the concept of suspense:** Suspense is the feeling of tension or anxiety that an audience has when they can’t wait to find out what happens next! Authors create this feeling to keep their audiences interested. Ask your students about times they may have felt suspense in a story—it could be a book, TV show or movie:
 - Students might mention the idea of cliffhangers at the end of chapters of books, spooky details in mystery series, or prophecies and predictions in fantasy stories

- **Techniques for suspense:** As writers, we can include details that will make our readers hungry for more! There are lots of ways to do this, but here are three we can try together:
 - *Warnings:* A warning is when a character is told not to do something, but it usually means that the character WILL do it! In “The Creepy Weepy Dollhouse” Sally is warned three times not to go there, so it makes it pretty clear that she will go there by the end of the story.
 - *Unusual Details:* Including out-of-place details also creates suspense. In “The Creepy Weepy Dollhouse” the front door is wet and the house is full of small furniture. These details are so strange that it makes the reader want to know why they are true.
 - *Unexplained Characters or sounds:* Including unexplained characters or sounds can also create suspense. In “The Creepy Weepy Dollhouse,” Jackson and Sally hear someone crying behind a bookcase, which makes them (and the audience) want to find out who is crying and why!
 - Feel free to make connections to examples in any books you have read with your class!
- Suspense makes your reader want to keep reading because it makes them wonder what is happening and what will happen next. When using suspense, authors include details that raise questions, and then authors answer those questions!

5. Group Practice: “We Do”: Suspenseful paragraph

- Pick one of the prompts from the Suspense Starters sheet.
- **Read** the prompt to students, and ask them what questions the prompt raises in them as readers.
 - For example: *“Don’t open the closet!” warned the old man, casting a backwards glance as he led the family up the creaking stairs towards their room. “There is a clothing rack for anything you want to hang up. You’re better off leaving that closet closed.”*
- **Question:** Ask students what questions the prompt raises in them as readers.
 - For example: *What is in the closet? Why does the old man not want them to open it? Where exactly are they? Who is in the family? Are they on a trip? What will happen if they open the closet? Is there a key or something else they need to open the closet?*
- **Write:** Now, add to the prompt in a way that will answer some of the questions students had, but maybe raise more!
 - For example: *As they went up the worn stairs of the Naragunsent Inn, the Georgeson twins looked at each other in a silent dare: “We will get that closet open!” they said to each other without words. Following old Mr. Jimenez, they entered their suite and saw the closet immediately. It was impossible to miss! It was an oak door with an elaborate carving of a gate on it which was covered in thorny roses that looked like they would be more dangerous than fragrant. Why would a gate be carved on a door? And there, in the keyhole of the gate that was also the keyhole of the door there was a large brass key. The Twins looked at each other again with a silent acknowledgment: “This will be easy!” But then, the old man crept towards the closet door, and with a knowing wink, turned the key in the lock and yanked the key out of the keyhole. “Just in case,” he chuckled as he pocketed the key.*

- In your written response to the prompt, see if you can include “answers” to questions and also add more suspenseful details that will make the reader want to keep reading! You can mix the various suspense techniques to create a piece of writing that is full of weird details to keep the reader guessing.

6. Independent Practice: “You Do”

- **Read and Question:** Have students follow the same process as above. Have them pick one of the Suspense Starters, read it, then write down what kinds of things they wonder about it in a notebook. They can write down 2-5 questions they have that are raised by the prompt.
- **Write:** Then, in groups or individually, have students respond to the prompt, writing 3-5 sentences that begin to answer some of the questions raised by the suspenseful prompt.
 - You can also have students work on this in groups. It can be fun to have student groups trade prompts as well. Once students have asked questions about a prompt, allow them to switch prompts and have a new group of students answer the questions the other students raised.
 - Sometimes the responses to the prompts will be suspenseful and will raise even more questions—that’s great! The point is not to answer every last question conclusively, but instead to have fun practicing inference and suspense.
 - If your students are really having fun with this they can even trade stories and continue each other’s writing. You may end up with a chain of increasingly weird and unusual events, and your students will be masters of suspense.

7. Sharing:

Students can share their suspenseful paragraphs with the class, or expand them into suspenseful stories!

Want to learn even more about thrillers, mysteries, and suspense? Check out the Story Pirates book *Digging Up Danger* for more writing tips!

Suspense Starters:

This lesson provides students with an opportunity to delve further into creation myths through a compare and contrast assignment. They can research two creation myths about the same subject, and write about the similarities and differences between them. There are many different myths about rainbows, fire, the seasons, and the sun, so once they have read/listened to the myths in this lesson, they can easily find others to compare them to.

Warnings:

A warning is when a character is told not to do something, but it usually means that the character WILL do it, and the audience will get to see what happens!

- *“Don’t open the closet!” warned the old man, casting a backwards glance as he led the family up the creaking stairs towards their room. “There is a clothing rack for anything you want to hang up. You’re better off leaving that closet closed.”*
- *The golden cube snapped shut, leaving its treasure unseen. He flipped the cube over in his hands, examining each face for clues on how to open it again. Suddenly, his eye rested on a large ruby embedded in one face: “Don’t Push” was written in golden script around the ruby.*

Unusual Details:

Add strange details that might not make sense at first—it’s a lot of fun to try to make them make sense later!

- *As they walked into the cave, their headlamps flickered, and then went out. Immediately, the air became warm and humid, and the peculiar smell of brownies right out of the oven invaded their nostrils.*
- *She had heard that her new teacher, Mrs. Gunderson was “unusual,” but wasn’t prepared for what she saw when she entered the classroom. All of the books in the classroom library seemed to be blank, as though their covers had been completely erased.*

Unexplained Characters/Sounds:

Introduce unexpected sounds or characters, but don’t explain them yet!

- *The path suddenly split in two. They glanced to the right. They heard a dull buzzing noise, as though a beehive was buried several feet below the ground. To the left, they saw a blue pulsing light retreating over the horizon.*
- *The restaurant seemed completely empty, which made sense since all of the overhead lights were burnt out. Suddenly, a flash of light illuminated the back right corner as a hand holding a match lit an old oil lamp. “Welcome to my office,” a voice proclaimed.*