

STORYTELLING & PERSONAL NARRATIVE

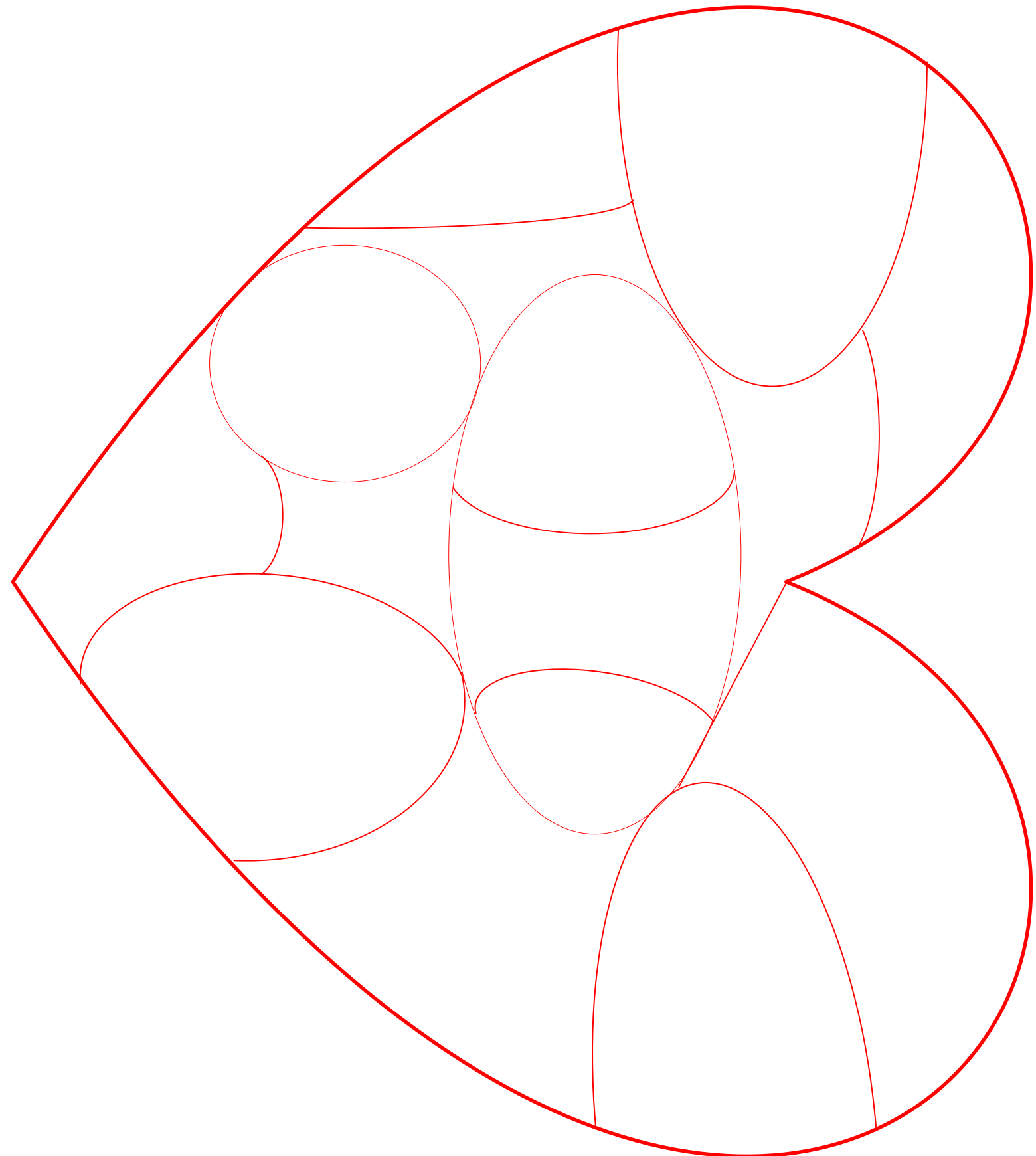
Explain to students that they will be writing a personal narrative to use as a script for storytelling. Ensure students understand:

1. A personal narrative is **your** story
2. It should focus on a small moment from your life
3. Who is the audience? (Who will students be sharing their stories with? The class? Their parents?)

STEP ONE | Generate Ideas: The ideas gathered from the activities in 'Create a Story' can all be useful starting points to the writing process.

You may also like to use **the Heart of My Writing Worksheet** (see next page) as a way in which to help students generate ideas. Students can fill in this graphic organiser with the things that matter most to them (for example, family members, special events, hobbies and so on). This is a good reference to take students back to when they say they have 'nothing to write about'.

Heart of My Writing



STEP TWO | The Starting Point

All stories, whether we are reading or listening to them, need a great first sentence. Explain to students that the hook is a way to capture the reader and / or listener's attention.

Encourage students to consider different ways in which they can hook their reader / listener using the following leads:

- **Action** Lead: gets the reader / listener quickly involved in the story by starting with an exciting event or some kind of action.
- **Snapshot** Lead: Paint a picture for the reader / listener. Help your audience see the character or setting with a colourful description.
- **Sound Effect** Lead: Begin with a specific sound to grab attention.
- **Question** Lead: Start your story with an interesting or intriguing question.
- **Flashback** Lead: Take your audience back to a specific event in the past that relates to the topic.
- **Talking** Lead: Begin the story with dialogue between two characters ("Stop!" shouted the police officer. "Never," I laughed) or an internal monologue ("I can't believe I am going to win this race!")

Boring and Better Story Starters Worksheet (see next page) might be useful to help students practice these ideas.

Boring and Better Story Starters

ACTION LEAD ... start your story with an exciting event or some kind of action.

Boring: The rollercoaster ride was exciting.

Better: Rewrite as an action lead –



SNAPSHOT LEAD ... paint a picture with your words.

Boring: Football is my favourite sport.

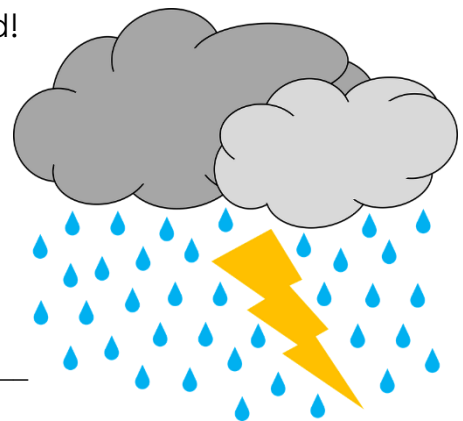
Better: Rewrite as a snapshot lead –



SOUND EFFECT LEAD ... grab attention with a sound!

Boring: Last night, there was a thunderstorm.

Better: Rewrite as a sound effect lead –



QUESTION LEAD ... start with an interesting or intriguing question.

Boring: In this story I am going to tell you about the time I got lost in the supermarket.

Better: Rewrite as a question lead –



FLASHBACK LEAD ... go back to a specific moment from the past that relates to your topic.

Boring: I remember my first day of school.

Better: Rewrite as a flashback lead -



TALKING LEAD ... start with dialogue.

Boring: Last year, a possum got into our house.

Better: Rewrite as a talking lead -



STEP THREE | Writing a Personal Narrative

An effective storyteller will create an engaging story for their audience (reader or listener) using **descriptive language, characters and structure**.

The following activities will assist in developing these skills in writers and performers.

ACTIVITY | Using Descriptive Language - Words Paint Pictures

Discuss with students how the storyteller's words are like a painter's colours. Changing just one word in a sentence can alter the picture or detail that a listener is imagining.

Write this sentence on the board for student: A man walked down the road.

Point out that this sentence does not have any adjectives. What does it tell you? What can you see? Now, ask students to rewrite that sentence using adjectives / descriptive words / colour. Consider how the picture we see in our mind changes with the words we use.

For example:

A tattered old man walked down the hot dusty road.

A young man walked down a crowded city road.

ACTIVITY | Characters – Show Don't Tell

Explain to students that the central character in the personal narrative will be you, the storyteller (and author). However, characters are a vital part to the story – the other people who were there with you during this small moment. Characters will bring the story to life.

Character Details – Show don't tell: Describe the characters in **details**. Make them interesting. Show the audience, don't tell them.

Work through the idea of showing, not telling by giving students the following sentences (tell):

- Fred was tired.
- Joanne was the team captain.
- Frances was a bully.

Ask students to rewrite this sentence, so we still get the same information (i.e. Fred was tired) but you don't have to actually tell us he was tired.

Perhaps it goes something like; *Fred pushed away his dinner plate and rested his head on the table and closed his eyes.*

We know that Fred is tired without telling the audience he is tired. That sentence gives us a better sense of where Fred is and how is feeling ...

Ask students to share their alternative sentences and discuss the differences.

Dialogue – Give your characters a voice. Discuss with students that the storyteller is the narrator of the story, but for variation and to keep listeners' attention, it is interesting to use dialogue.

When telling the story, the storyteller will pretend to be different characters (see 'What Makes a Great Storyteller') and express the plot / story through dialogue.

Work through this idea with students by giving them the example line:

- They had a loud argument.

Ask students to write some dialogue which presents the characters and the argument in an interesting way.

Ask them to consider using phrases such as "he shouted," or "Jeff cried," help to identify which character is speaking.

Ask student to share their argument dialogue with the class, ensuring they use the verbal skills of a storyteller as they read.

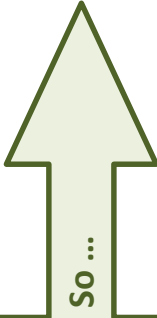
Discuss the differences between the two versions – the first being simple “they had a loud argument”, and the second is their version **with actual dialogue**.

ACTIVITY | Structure: Unpack the structure of stories

Use the **Story Planning**, **'Story Plot Mountain'**, **'A Moment'** and **Personal Narrative Worksheets** (see following pages) to assist students in planning and structuring their writing and ideas.

STORY PLANNING

It all started when ...



What happened?



What was the problem?

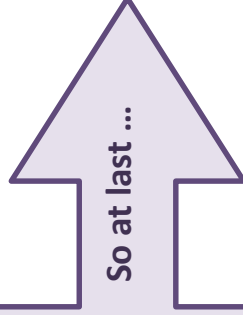
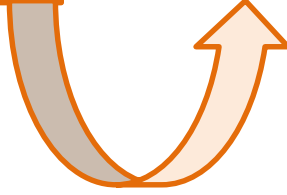


What did you do?

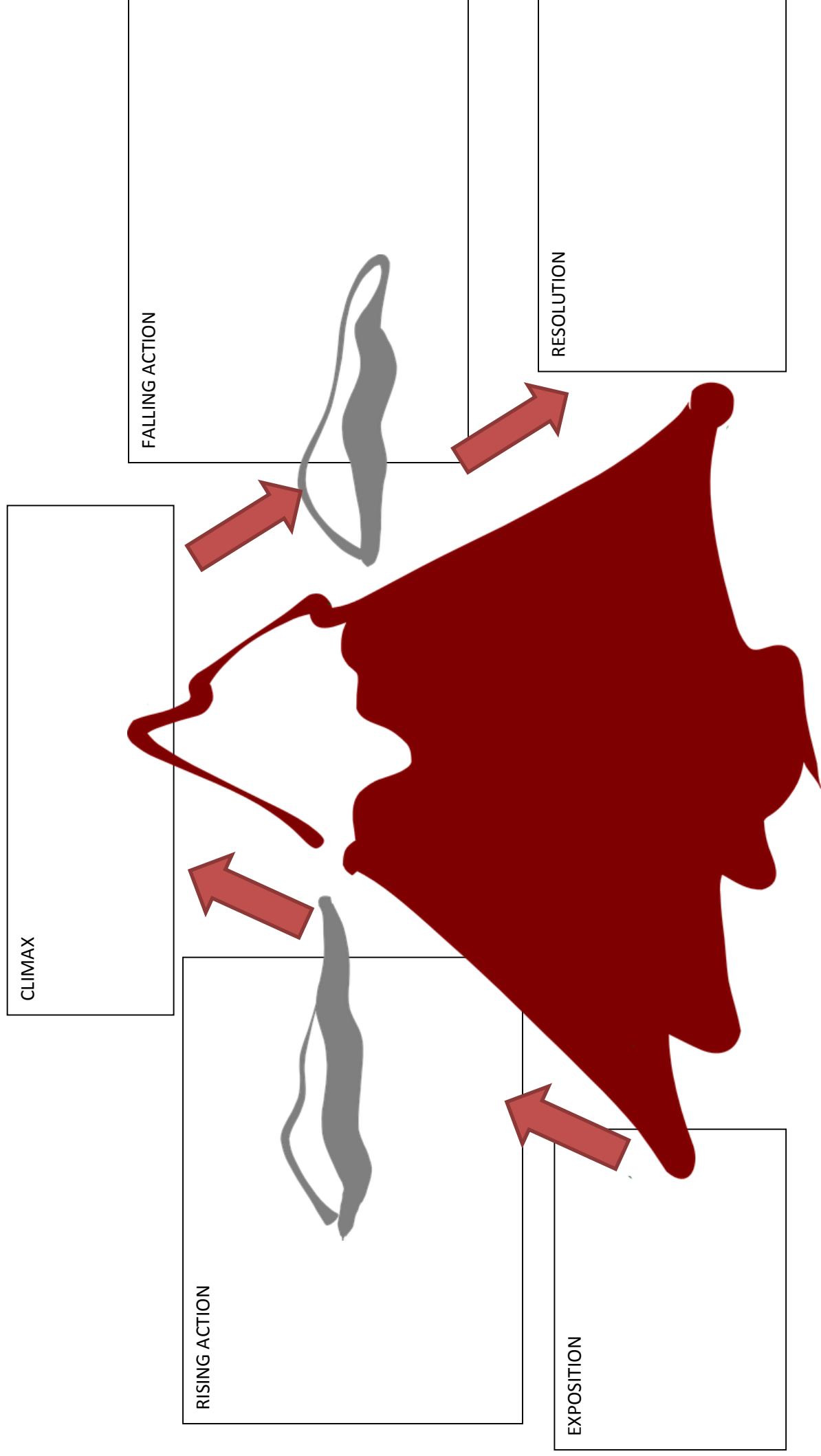
The problem was solved when ...

So at last ...

Conclusion ...



STORY PLOT MOUNTAIN



A MOMENT

Give a very brief description of your moment:

SET THE SCENE

Who was in the story with you?

When / where does it take place?

THE HOOK

Catch your reader's attention with your first sentence ...

THE STORY

BEGINNING

DETAIL

DETAIL

DETAIL

CONCLUSION

PERSONAL NARRATIVE

TITLE

TOPIC

GRAB YOUR READER'S ATTENTION WITH A CATCHY FIRST SENTENCE:

FIRST,

NEXT,

LAST,

CONCLUSION