

HOW TO BUILD A **STORY**

LIBRARIAN'S TIPSHEET

How to Start a Creative Writing Group in Your Library

Enthusiastic young writers can get a lot out of meeting regularly with one another and sharing their stories and poems. Not only do they learn how to give and receive feedback on their work, they also see their interest in writing and their identities as writers mirrored in kids their own age.

Here are some steps to getting started:

Decide on your role in the group.

Are you the facilitator, sitting in at every meeting, keeping the kids on task? Or is your role simply to welcome the writers to the room and occasionally check in? Either way, plan on spending the first meeting or two modeling how a writing group works.

Decide on the group parameters.

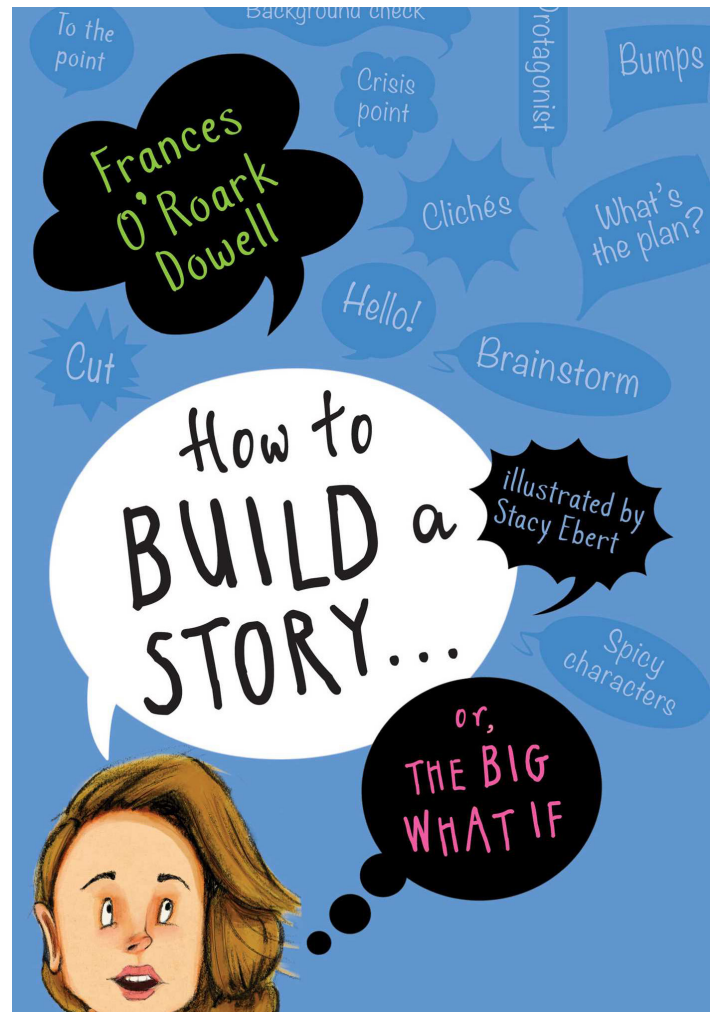
How many students? If you're a media specialist in an elementary school, determine a grade range for the group, or, if there's enough interest, establish separate groups, say, one for 3rd and 4th graders and another for 5th and 6th graders.

Determine a meeting place and time.

When's the best time for students to participate in extra-curricular activities? If there's enough interest, and you have the bandwidth for it, could this be an afterschool group?

Put out a call for writers.

You probably know a few students who would love to be in a writing group; query teachers for their suggestions for other enthusiastic writers. Beyond that, post informational fliers and make an announcement via email. Emphasize in your communications that this is a creative writing group and that participants will share their writing.



The first meeting.

As mentioned above, whatever your role in the group, you'll need to provide your young writers with guidelines for how the group will work and how to give feedback on one another's writing. If the members of the group aren't friends, you might begin with a fun getting-to-know-you writing exercise ("Three Things You'd Never Guess About Me," "Two Truths and a Lie") before going over how the writing group will work.

written by **Frances O'Roark Dowell**

For more tips, including sheets to help students learn to give useful, constructive feedback to peers, visit:

HowToBuildAStory.com/resources/