

Creative Writing Challenge: The Antarctica Machine

Materials Needed

- Notebook paper or word processor
- Pencil, pen, or keyboard
- Spelling word list
- Optional: Dictionary or thesaurus (digital or physical)
- Optional: Timer

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Write a coherent and creative short story (at least three paragraphs) that logically incorporates 12 specific spelling words.
- Demonstrate correct spelling of all target words in context.
- Apply basic story structure (a clear beginning, middle, and end) to a narrative.
- Prepare a final, polished paragraph for use as copy work.

Relevant Standards (Example ELA Common Core for 6th-7th Grade)

- **W.6.3 / W.7.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
- **L.6.2 / L.7.2:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Lesson Activities (Approx. 60-75 minutes)

1. Warm-up: Word Association Brainstorm (10 minutes)

The goal of this activity is to warm up creative thinking and see how seemingly random words can connect.

1. Write the 12 spelling words on a piece of paper, leaving space around each one. The words are: **school, danger, tomorrow, forehead, September, guess, machine, Antarctica, special, paragraph, exercise, neighbor, religion, stomach.**
2. Let's play a quick connection game. I'll give you two words from the list, and your job is to create a single sentence that contains both and makes sense. For example, for "school" and "danger," you might say, "Our science teacher warned us about the **danger** of mixing the wrong chemicals during our **school** experiment."
3. Let's try a few pairs:
 - machine / Antarctica
 - neighbor / forehead
 - stomach / tomorrow
4. Discuss how even the strangest words can be linked with a little imagination. This is the core

challenge of our lesson today!

2. Mini-Lesson: The "Story Seed" (5 minutes)

Today, you're not just writing a story; you're solving a puzzle. Your spelling words are clues that will help you build your world. A great story often starts with a "What if...?" question.

Look at the list. What big ideas jump out? We have **Antarctica**, a **machine**, and **danger**. This sounds like a great "story seed" for an adventure or science fiction story.

Your task is to build a story around that seed. Who is the main character? What is the machine for? Why is there danger? Where do words like **neighbor**, **school**, and **religion** fit in?

3. Brainstorming and Planning (15 minutes)

Before you start writing, let's create a quick map for your story. This will help you organize your thoughts and make sure you include all the words. Answer these questions:

- **Main Character:** Who is your hero? (Maybe a student who lives next to a mysterious inventor?)
- **Setting:** Where does the story begin? (Perhaps in a normal house in **September**, not **Antarctica**.)
- **The Goal:** What does your character want? (To find out what the strange **machine** in the **neighbor's** garage does?)
- **The Problem:** What is the **danger**? (Maybe the machine is unstable, or it teleports them somewhere unexpected!)
- **Word Placement:** Think about where some of the trickier words could fit.
 - **Forehead:** Could the character wipe sweat from their forehead?
 - **Stomach:** Does their stomach flip with fear or excitement?
 - **Paragraph:** Maybe they find a warning note that is a single, cryptic **paragraph**.
 - **Exercise:** Perhaps escaping the danger requires a lot of physical **exercise**.

Jot down a few notes for the beginning, middle, and end of your story. This doesn't need to be detailed, just a quick guide.

4. Independent Work: Write the Story! (25 minutes)

Now it's time to write. Your goal is a short story of at least three paragraphs. As you write, check off the spelling words from your list to make sure you use every single one.

Tips for Success:

- **Don't force it.** Let the words flow naturally into your story based on your plan.
- **Show, don't tell.** Instead of saying "he was scared," describe his racing heart or his stomach doing flips.
- **Have fun!** This is your world and your story. Make it as exciting, funny, or mysterious as you want.

5. Closure: Author's Chair and Copy Work Selection (10 minutes)

Let's share your work!

1. Read your completed story aloud. This is a great way to catch errors and hear how the story flows.
2. Let's review the story together, checking that all 12 words are included and spelled correctly. We

can make any edits needed.

3. Finally, choose your favorite **paragraph** from the story. This will be your text for copy work. Write it out neatly on a clean sheet of paper, paying close attention to spelling, punctuation, and handwriting. This reinforces the spelling and grammar in a meaningful context.

Assessment

The student's learning will be assessed through:

- **Formative (During the lesson):** Observing the student's participation and ideas during the brainstorming and planning stages.
- **Summative (End of lesson):**
 - **Story Checklist:** A review of the final story to ensure it meets the following criteria:
 - Includes all 12 spelling words.
 - Spells all 12 words correctly.
 - Is at least three paragraphs long.
 - Forms a coherent and logical narrative.
 - **Copy Work Sample:** The final, polished paragraph is assessed for neatness, spelling, and punctuation accuracy.

Differentiation and Extension

- **For Extra Support:**
 - Provide sentence starters to help begin paragraphs (e.g., "It all started last **September** when my **neighbor**...").
 - Co-write the first paragraph together to build momentum.
 - Reduce the number of required spelling words, focusing on the most challenging ones first.
- **For an Extra Challenge (Extension):**
 - Increase the required length to 500 words.
 - Challenge the student to write in a specific genre (e.g., comedy, mystery, historical fiction).
 - Add a "secret constraint," such as requiring one of the spelling words to be the very last word of the story.
 - Ask the student to illustrate a key scene from their story.