

50 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

# Stone Soup Creative Writing Project

## kids inspiring kids

### PROJECT FOR WRITERS

#### DRAMATIC DECISIONS: MAKING CHARACTERS NAVIGATE DIFFICULT CHOICES

##### MENTOR TEXT:

“The Mother’s Day Gift” by Mathew Thompson (age 12)

*Pitch—THUNK—catch it. Pitch—THUNK—catch it. Then, bouncing the ball, I threw it extra hard against the water tower. What a mistake! The ball bounced back off the water tower, almost hitting me, and then flew through the window of the water pump station. CRASH!!!*

TURN THE PAGE to read THE FULL PIECE.

##### WRITING TIP:

One of the main uses of fiction is to explore difficult choices. As an author, your challenge is how to make your character’s decision feel real. One way to do that is by building detail around your character’s choice. In this story, the decision to tell the truth is made more difficult by the fact that Adam adds peer pressure to lie. The more drama you can build around your character’s choice, the more real it will feel.

### ACTIVITY

#### WRITE A STORY ABOUT TRUST AND LYING

##### STEP ONE: BRAINSTORM STORY IDEAS

Brainstorm situations where your character faces a test of trust. Your character might, for example, borrow something and either lose it or break it. Will they tell the truth about what happened? Or what if your character is tempted to steal something, actually does steal it, and then lies about stealing it? Or maybe your character has made a promise to a friend, but then circumstances change, making it difficult to keep that promise. Once you’ve listed a few ideas, choose a scenario that you would like to write about.

##### STEP TWO: DRAFT YOUR STORY

As you draft, think about the beginning, middle, and end of your story. The problem you are creating for your character is the point where your story turns. You build up to the point where your character makes his or her choice, and then the story winds down to its end.

For this type of story, drama is key. Your character needs to feel pressure in order for the reader to believe in the choice made—whether it is a “good” choice, like being honest, or a “bad” choice, like telling a lie or betraying a friend.

##### STEP THREE: REVISE YOUR STORY

Share your story with a fellow writer to get feedback. Ask them when they feel most worried about your character. Together, look at that part of the story. Does it last long enough? In a test of trust, tense moments are important. If your story needs more drama, you can stretch out the tense moment by slowing it down. A classic way to do that is by adding details about the place, the way your character feels, and/or by giving them a sentence or two of dialogue where they share their thoughts with another character.

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MENTOR TEXT

### The Mother's Day Gift

by Mathew Thompson (age 11)

IT WAS MOTHER'S DAY, 1993. My friend Adam had come over to spend the night on Saturday. We watched old movies until about eleven p.m. and then camped out on the living room floor. Sunday morning Adam and I got up early and made pancakes. After breakfast we went outside to play cops and robbers and ride bikes.

Dad came home from work for lunch at noon and we ate with him. After Dad left, Adam and I decided to go out and play ball. We live on top of a hill, and the only field nearby is behind a big metal water tower. The city uses a little building beside that for a pump station, so everyone up here will have good water pressure. We pitched the ball back and forth to each other and took turns batting. Beginning to tire of this, Adam went in the house to get my Super Soaker Fifty squirt guns and I stayed outside, bouncing the ball off the water tower to practice my pitching.

Pitch—THUNK—catch it. Pitch—THUNK—catch it. Then, bouncing the ball, I threw it extra hard against the water tower. What a mistake! The ball bounced back off the water tower, almost hitting me, then flew through the window of the water pump station. CRASH!!! Did I mention that the window was not open? Well, it was now!

My stomach immediately pole-vaulted into my throat! Just then Adam came around the corner. Seeing my pale stare he said, "Close

your mouth or you will catch bugs. Hey, what's wrong?"

My stomach in a knot, I blurted out, "I accidentally broke the window." I pointed to the water shed. The ball had made a perfect round hole through the glass, with rays shattered around it.

"Uh-oh," Adam said. "Just walk away and nobody will ever notice. You're gonna get in trouble if you tell!"

I pushed Adam aside and walked to the front yard where Mom was working. I could feel my body beginning to sweat and I felt sick. Swallowing hard, I told Mom about the window. Mom said, "Let's go take a look." I felt like a doomed man walking back toward that building. Mom looked at the window. Nothing magic had happened—that window still had a big hole in it. "Well," asked Mom, "have you learned anything from this?" We talked about angles and glass strength and throwing things against the water tower. (My mom can make a math lesson out of almost anything!) I could feel my eyes beginning to burn, and two big tears snuck out and dripped down my cheeks. I'm telling you, I felt just awful! I leaned my head against Mom's shoulder and she put her arms around me.

"Son," she said, "everyone has accidents, but it is how you deal with those accidents that makes the difference between honesty and dishonesty. I know that telling me about

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### The Mother's Day Gift

(continued)

this wasn't easy, especially when your friend said he thought you shouldn't, so that makes me very proud of you." She gave me a big hug and Adam reached out and touched my arm. "The only time you'd be in trouble with me over something like this is if you didn't tell me, or if you lied to me about it. And besides that, if you lie or try to hide these things, you get black, ugly-feeling places inside because you still know what really happened. You cannot cover up the truth of your actions from yourself.

I sniffed and tried to clear my throat. "I will pay for the window," I said, even though a picture of the tent I had been saving for floated through my mind. . . .

On Monday morning, before school, I went down to the city shops and told the water people about my accident. I told them I wanted to pay for my mistake. I said to fix the window and send me the bill. They did. It cost me forty-eight dollars and sixty-two cents. It certainly wasn't a very fun way to spend my money! So my pockets are empty, but my conscience is clear. The funny thing is that my mom says telling her was the best Mother's Day present I could have ever given her.