

TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 8+; years 4 to 7

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	2
2.	About the author	2
3.	About the illustrator	2
4.	Author's inspiration	3
5.	Illustrator's inspiration	3
6.	Activities on each story	4
7.	Worksheets	13
8.	Tristan Bancks's Tips on Writing	16
9.	More fun with Tristan and Tom	23

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Subjects: English
- General capabilities: Literacy; Critical and creative thinking

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Studying the short story form
- Studying comedy
- Exploring creative writing and imagination
- Tips on writing stories

THEMES

- Imagination
- School life
- Home life
- Humour

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia and Tristan Bancks

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Tom Weekly 3: My Life and Other Massive Mistakes 9780143790105 (paperback) 9780857985309 (eBook)

Tom Weekly 4: My Life and Other Exploding Chickens 9780143790112 (paperback) 9780857985323 (eBook)

Tom Weekly 5: My Life and Other Weaponised Muffins 9780143790129 (paperback) 9780143781059 (eBook)

Tom Weekly 6: My Life and Other Failed Experiments 9780143781615 (paperback) 9780143781622 (eBook) (Book 6 available July 2018)



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INTRODUCTION

The books in the Tom Weekly series are collections of weird-funny-gross short stories about the life of a boy called Tom Weekly, written by Australian children's author Tristan Bancks and illustrated by Gus Gordon. Many of the stories are based on experiences from Tristan's life, while some are pure fiction.

Tristan often brainstorms ideas for the stories with children at schools and literature festivals around Australia. He supplies a scenario and together Tristan and students collaborate to come up with dozens of ideas for what could happen. This process helps to spark children's imaginations and gives them an opportunity to see their own ideas in a published book with acknowledgement for their contribution.

The activities in these teaching notes are mainly creative writing exercises to encourage students to tell their own stories and mash them with fiction – just like Tom Weekly does in the book.

> The activities in these notes focus on the first book in the series, *My Life and Other Stuff I Made Up*, but you can easily transfer the ideas and skills to study and be inspired by later books in the series too!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tristan Bancks is a children's and teen author with a background in acting and filmmaking. His books include the Tom Weekly series, Mac Slater series and crime-mystery novels *Two Wolves* (*On the Run* in the US) and *The Fall*. *Two Wolves* won Honour Book in the 2015 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards and was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards. It also won the YABBA and KOALA Children's Choice Awards. Tristan is a writerambassador for the literacy charity Room to Read. He is excited by the future of storytelling and inspiring others to create. Visit his website for lots of information and resources, including trailers and writing tips: tristanbancks.com

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Gus Gordon has written and illustrated over 70 books for children. He writes books about motorbike-riding stunt chickens, dogs that live in trees, and singing on rooftops in New York. Gus loves speaking to kids about illustration, character design and the desire to control a wiggly line. Visit Gus at: <u>gusgordon.com</u>



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AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Tristan Bancks says:

All stories are part fact and part fiction. Even history is part fact and part fiction. Many of the stories in *My Life and Other Stuff I Made Up* and the Tom Weekly series sprang from things that have happened to me. I have then embellished those stories to make for a series of (hopefully) funny and surprising tales.

I grew up reading Paul Jennings books like Unreal, Unbelieveable and Quirky Tails. I loved these books. Nobody else, at the time, was writing surprising, funny, odd tales for children quite like these. I have used my love of those stories to motivate the writing of my own stories.

As a kid I always jotted my ideas down in exercise books and notebooks. I didn't know what I would do with them but I just had to get them down. I encourage all kids to get their ideas down – ideas for stories, movies, inventions, video games, jokes, cartoon characters and just general thoughts on life. You never know when they might come in handy.

These books look and feel a bit like one of my notepads as a kid, with pictures and weird, funny, gross stories and things that would make me laugh. A notepad or book like this is a space for a child to make their own, to come back to, and to feel safe to explore. I encourage children and young people, as soon as they can write, to have a book like this where they can be bold and adventurous without needing to be 'right' or hee having to prove anything to anybody.

ILLUSTRATOR'S INSPIRATION

Gus Gordon says:

Tom Weekly reminded me very much of my 12-yearold self. It wasn't too difficult a task to channel the random thoughts of that younger, fantastically naive, enthusiastic, imaginative boy as it is pretty much how I am today. I still, like Tom, daydream about incredible situations and still have the propensity to think in a random, fractured manner, jumping from thought to thought with no real seque as if I am picking my thoughts out of a hat. Drawing for me was the most efficient way of communicating these unorganised ideas. Off-kilter illustrations and pointless list writing were a speciality of mine. I drew in every class, in every margin on everything and anything I had in front of me. This kind of fervour – the need to express myself through drawing - was how I approached the illustrations, or more specifically, how I saw Tom drawing them - a natural extension of his rambling imagination.

The subjects (awkward encounters, gross bodily functions, eating, girls) were also all too familiar to me. Whether it was a panicked list about an operation, escaping false teeth or a drawing of a floating poo, it all felt disturbingly normal. Obviously it was the same for Tom!



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The Dog Kisser

the end I just couldn't do it

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Tristan Bancks says:

I used to run into a dog kisser whenever I walked my dog to the beach. I was totally grossed out at the thought of having a dog lick me. I wrote this story thinking that others would relate to this and understand.

They don't.

My research in the field suggests that at least 65% of any given group of people are dog kissers. Unlike Tom Weekly, I have not crossed the line. I am still firmly in the un-Dog Kisser camp. How about you?

ACTIVITY

a) Spend five minutes freewriting a list of memories from your childhood. They can be significant or mundane events. The goal is to write as many memories as possible in five minutes rather than just come up with your 'best' · 2 memory. Use the Worksheet: Freewriting Exercise to get started.

Once you have a list, some students should read out their work.



to be a picture of the Dog of the Dog dog to the dog tot the memories from the freewriting exercise and, in a five-minute freewrite, tell that story in greater detail. But, this time, Kisser' snogging my dog, but in add one detail that isn't true. Tell us the true story but just add something false. When the work is read out, see if other students can pick which of the details you made up. drew

This exercise encourages students to use their own instea \mathbf{D} · experience in their stories but to not be afraid to meld those experiences with fiction. First-hand experience gives detail and authenticity to a fictionalised story.

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Hot Dog Eat

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY a hot Dog e Ating MACHINE

Tristan Bancks says:

I heard about the annual Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Competition held at Coney Island, New York, and I was fascinated by the concept of 'professional eating'.

I am an enormous fan of Stephen King's fantastic story The Body, made into the film Stand By Me. In that story there is an unforgettable 'pie-eat' scene. This is my homage to it.



ACTIVITY

What is your favourite or least favourite food? Tell a story about it. The story can celebrate the beauty of food or, like Hot Dog Eat, it can be a little bit gross. See Worksheet: Food, Glorious Food attached.

Resources

Google 'Nathan's Hot Dog Eat' and click on a video of the famous Dog Eat that inspired the story.



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Teleporter

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Tristan Bancks says:

This story seemed to almost write itself. It came very easily to me. I spent a lot of time with my cousins as a child playing make-believe and I remember a time between primary and high school when I realised that it no longer seemed okay to pretend like this anymore. I was devastated, so I continued to play by pursuing acting and filmmaking and writing throughout high school and into adult life. I am still playing.

I also have strong memories of indoor ball games at home that often required superglue at some point.

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ACTIVITY

If you could invent an amazing machine like a teleporter, what would it be?

Draw your machine.

Now see if you can tell a story about your machine.

If you could choose anyone in your class to play the characters in your story, who would you choose? Can you put together a short skit based on your story, using items around the classroom for props?

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My Nan's Tougher

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Tristan Bancks says:

I have no idea where this story sprang from. One of those ideas that struck me while walking down the street or when I was trying to sleep, I imagine. I threw the scenario at a group of kids during a school visit and we had lots of fun brainstorming it and I went away and wrote the

story.



I subsequently had fun brainstorming the story with lots of other school groups and their ideas helped shape the story and make it much funnier.

Ack's nan

ACTIVITY

Brainstorm!

As a class, see if you can brainstorm items that two grandmothers might use if they were involved in a back-alley brawl. Write all of the ideas up on the board. Now, can you write your own *My Nan's Tougher* story, using the items that have been written on the board?



Toe

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Tristan Bancks says:

I remember my sister telling me that I had to eat Vegemite off her toe or she would tell my mother about something bad that I had done. She denies it but I'm sure that it happened. I like to think that I refused. This story is my way of working through the long-term scarring inflicted by this dark episode in my childhood.

By the way, I didn't really bite her toe off. And the dog didn't eat it.

ACTIVITY

Has anything funny ever happened between you and your brothers or sisters? If you don't have any, perhaps you could choose something that happened with a friend or a cousin. Write that story down. Just take five minutes and, remember, don't stop writing. Just get it down.

When you're finished, the class can read out some of the stories.



Now, can you look at the funny story and see how you could make it even funnier? How could the funny thing that happened be even more hilarious, crazy or ridiculous? Now rewrite the story with your new, crazy ideas, pushing the story as far as it can go. Which version of the story do you like best?

> your really your nails I could've got a nAsty cut on my tongue.



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THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Tristan Bancks says:

I really did have my appendix removed in order to avoid detention with a member of staff at my primary school. I pretended to be sick and was sent to hospital with acute appendicitis and they removed my appendix. I can wholeheartedly recommend that all children attend detention if requested in order to avoid having a body part removed.

ACTIVITY

Stories based on your own life are a powerful 'way in' to storytelling and a great place to look for inspiration. The best way to be inspired and nurtured as a young writer is to write in a book or journal every single day, even if it is just for five minutes.

The only rule should be that your pen or pencil does not stop moving across the page for the entire five minutes.

You will discover your own unique voice and overcome any fear of putting words onto the page. There is no right or wrong in this kind of book and ideas are more important than neat writing and perfect spelling. All students should have a safe place to share their stories, just like Tom Weekly. Start today!





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THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Tristan Bancks says:

All Australians understand magpie fear. I wrote this story a few years ago to vent my frustration with the magpies living near my house. When I came to write the book I searched for the story but could not find it. So I rewrote the story from memory. I set myself the simple challenge of getting Tom to the bus stop without being swooped or humiliated. Then I threw everything I could at him to stop him getting there.

ACTIVITY

Picture search: One of the tools that Tristan uses in his writing is to gather pictures that feel like the story he is creating. Can you use magazines, newspapers and sites like Google Images and Flickr to gather pictures that feel like the story Swoop?

> Or can you write your own story about a dangerous animal and gather together pictures for inspiration that might help you to write that story?





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Tooth Job



Tristan Bancks says:

Tooth Job was inspired by a story told to me by an old friend when we were discussing the worst jobs that we had ever had.

ACTIVITY

What do you think would be the worst job in the whole world? Is it grubby or embarrassing or dangerous?

As a class you could brainstorm a big list of 'Worst Jobs' and then everyone could choose one of the jobs and write 'A day in the life of a . . .'

In the TV series *Dirty Jobs* they feature a worm dung farmer, a snake wrangler and an owl vomit collector.

Resources

A list of episodes from the TV series *Dirty Jobs*: <u>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Dirty_Jobs_episodes</u>









Hover Everything

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Tristan Bancks says:

I once woke to find everything in my house hovering. No, I didn't really. This story springs from the many school visits that I have done as an author. When brainstorming invention ideas with students for a new book in my Tom Weekly series, at least one third of all invention ideas were hover-somethings. I began to wonder what it might be like to wake and find that *everything* hovered. Would it be as cool as it sounds? Or might that dream become a nightmare? I was also inspired by the book, Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs, which I was reading to my children at the time.



ACTIVITY

Filmmakers use storyboards to plot out scenes. Create a storyboard or comic strip for *Hover Everything*, showing everything that happens in the story.

See Worksheet: Storyboard attached.

You can also use this Worksheet to make up a storyboard for your own story!



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Worksheet: Freewriting Exercise

Spend five minutes freewriting a list of memories from your childhood. They can be significant or mundane events. The goal is to write as many memories as possible in five minutes rather than just come up with your 'best' memory.

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	2	7·	
	3		
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	(a) an	9	
ANA	5	10	Ha =
K			ha ha ha ha
		There's so much more at penguin	.com.au/teachers 13



Worksheet: Food, Glorious Food

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What is your favourite or least favourite food?

Write a story about it. The story can celebrate the beauty of food or, like *Hot Dog Eat*, it can be a little bit gross.

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Worksheet: Storyboard

Filmmakers use storyboards to plot out scenes. Create a storyboard or comic strip for the story *Hover Everything*, showing what happens in the story, or use this Worksheet to storyboard your own story idea.







Tristan Bancks's Tips on Writing HOW TO BECOME A BETTER WRITER

1. Write a lot. Read a lot. Live a lot. Everything you write, read and experience will help you become a better storyteller.

What are the best books you've ever read?

3. Stay inspired. Stay loose. Feed on the world and let it flow into your writing. Don't make your writing perfect at first. Just get it down.

What three things inspire you most?



2. Develop a writing practice. That means writing every day. Even five minutes or three pages a day will make you a better writer.

Make a writing pledge!

I, _____, promise to write – even if it's just a little bit – every day.

Signature: _____

4. Writing is rewriting. Be prepared to rewrite and rewrite and rewrite.







Tristan Bancks's Tips on Writing FOUR GOLDEN RULES OF SHORT STORY WRITING

1. Keep it simple. Tell one story.

Think of a short story idea. You might want to do some freewriting on notepaper or look back through your notebook and highlight the best ideas. Now, write your idea in a few sentences.

Read back over your idea. Is there anything you've

written down that isn't really necessary to get the story across? Try to make your idea even more simple, and

3. Establish characters quickly. Contain it in space and time.

Who is your main character? What trait that's important to the story makes them stand out?

4. Get in late and out early. (Don't waste time on long intros and leave the reader satisfied but wanting more.)

Where does your story begin?

Where does your story end?

2. Show, don't tell.

write it again.







Tristan Bancks's Tips on Writing THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD STORIES

1. The main character wants something.

2. Someone gets in the way of them getting what they want.

3. The stakes are high. The main character stands to lose something valuable to them if they don't get what they want.

Who is your main character? What do they want?

What will your character lose if they don't get what they want? Why will this loss matter to them?



What is stopping your main character from getting what they want?







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Tristan Bancks's Tips on Writing WHERE TO FIND CREATIVE INSPIRATION (PART ONE)

1. Life. Get out in the world, speak to people, try new things, travel. As a writer, you constantly need to jolt your reality and see the world with fresh eyes. Always carry a notepad and jot down interesting things.

2. Freewriting. Your unconscious mind is the greatest source for story ideas. Write every day. Set yourself a daily writing goal. 5 minutes. 1 page. 3 pages. You decide. But do it every day at the same time. And remember, at first: *Don't think, just write*. Keep your pen moving.

3. **Music.** Try creating a playlist of music that feels like the story you're writing and listen to that soundtrack whenever you're working on that project. Music defines the story's mood. 4. **Pictures.** Cut pictures out of mags, get them from Google Images, draw them yourself and stick them up around your workspace. They help make the 'world' of your story feel more real and they give you character and setting details.

5. Characters, Want, Conflict, Stakes.

After you've written a draft or two, work out who your protagonist and antagonist are, what your main character wants, what gets in the way of them getting it and what they stand to lose if they don't get what they want. A good story has all of these elements.

6. **Paper!** Don't let the computer strangle your creativity. Print out from time to time and make changes on paper, then type the changes up. Or map your story out on a big piece of butcher's paper. Lots of new ideas are found this way.



Tristan Bancks's Tips on Writing WHERE TO FIND CREATIVE INSPIRATION (PART TWO)



7. **Dream.** Keep a notepad by your bed and jot down any interesting dreams that you have. Even if they don't make sense at the time.

8. **Step outline.** If you're stuck, try writing each major story point on a piece of paper (1/4 of an A4 page), then stick those cards up on the wall. Tell yourself the story over and over. Keep what works. Replace what doesn't. Outline the skeleton of your story and write another draft. And be prepared to adjust the outline **as** you go.

9. Co-write. Bouncing ideas back and forth
 is one way to make writing active and fun. I
 did this on the book *it's yr life*, which I co wrote with Tempany Deckert and we were in
 different countries and timezones.

10. Buy a book on writing. Some of my favourites
are Natalie Goldberg's Writing Down the Bones,
Karen Benke's Rip the Page and Keri Smith's How to
Become an Explorer of the World.







Tristan Bancks's Tips on Writing REWRITING AND REVISION

Writing is rewriting

Everybody's first drafts stink so don't be put off if it's not brilliant the first time. Just ask the following questions of your story and characters.

Four key questions to ask when rewriting

1. Who is your protagonist, your main character?

3. Who is your antagonist, the character who gets in the way of your main character achieving their goal?

4. What does your main character stand to lose if they don't get what they want? In other words, what are the stakes?

2. What does your main character want?

There's so much more at **penguin.com.au/teachers** 21





Tristan Bancks's Tips on Writing STORY TEMPLATE

Now that you've absorbed all of Tristan's tips on writing, it's time to put them all together! Use the story template below to write a synopsis of your story, then you're ready to start writing!

who, after	first turning point		1	
decides to	objective that drives the action			200
		·		Ster.
They are preve	ented from achieving their goal by	main obstacle or ant	agonist	
		We will know that		
has succeeded	or failed when <u>achievement th</u>	at represents success or fa	ailure	
		mething driving the act		



More fun from Tristan and Tom



Book trailer fun – Tristan has made some very funny book trailers for the Tom Weekly books (hint: you can watch Tristan get slimed!): <u>tristanbancks.com/video</u>

Meet Tom Weekly – Tristan talks about creating the character:

tristanbancks.com/2015/01/meet-tom-weekly.html

Who is Tom Weekly? – An interview with our hero: tristanbancks.com/2017/03/who-is-tom-weekly.html

Tom Weekly Mask – Download and print your own Tom Weekly mask!

tristanbancks.com/2017/04/tom-weekly-mask.html

Top 10 Writing Tips for Kids

tristanbancks.com/2015/03/advice-for-young-writers.

Free audio story – Listen to Tristan Bancks reading 'The Dog Kisser' from My Life and Other Stuff I Made Up! <u>soundcloud.com/tristanbancks/the-dog-kisser-audio-story-by</u> **Exploding Chickens** – For book 5, *My Life and Other Exploding Chickens*, Tristan made a video game, and it's one of the most visited pages on his site! Can you beat Tristan's high score? tristanbancks.com/2016/03/my-life-other-exploding-

<u>tristanbancks.com/2016/03/my-life-other-explodin</u> <u>chickens-game.html</u>

Tristan's Website – At Tristan's website you can sign up to Tristan's newsletter, find out more about his books and find links to Instagram, Twitter and more for plenty of inspiration and tips on writing: tristanbancks.com







Order Form



TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
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