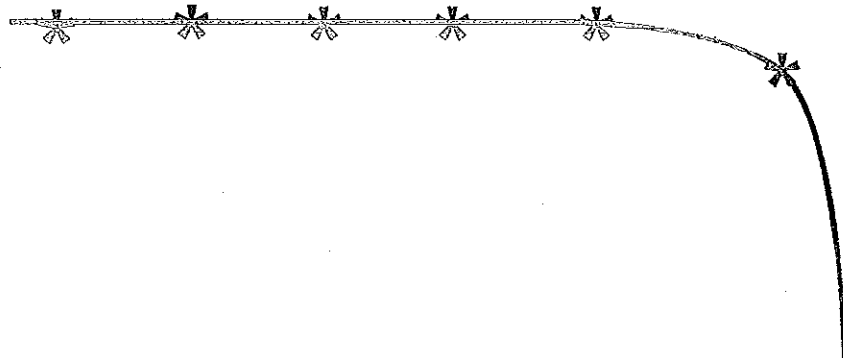

Trouble in Jamaica

We went to Jamaica on vacation. On the first morning we went to the straw market. My mom and sister each bought purses. Dad bought a straw hat that looked ridiculous. I didn't buy anything. My brother Ricky found a pretty cool rasta hat but Dad wouldn't let him get it. Then we went to a farmer's market. A guy there split open some coconuts and gave us some milk to drink. After that we went to a restaurant. They had curried goat on the menu! "There's no way I'm eating any goat," I said, and got a hamburger instead. The restaurant was cool. They had a reggae band there and we had a front seat. I asked about the steel drum, and they let me try it. When we finished lunch the day was hot. We took a taxi back to our hotel room. We changed into our bathing suits and went to the pool to swim. Everybody jumped in, but I realized I had left my goggles in the hotel room, so I had to run back upstairs to get them. At first I couldn't find them. When I looked under Ricky's bed, I found two rasta hats and about fifteen necklaces. As soon as I saw them, I knew my brother had stolen them.

Waterfall Story chart



Write a Waterfall Lead

D-22

THINKING

You can use a visual chart to encourage kids to think about the reader and begin closer to the main action of the story.

TEACHING

When you write a story, think of your reader as a new kid you have invited to a party. Since this kid is new in school, she doesn't know many people. She rings the doorbell feeling nervous and shy. You should smile and take her coat. Show her the snacks and food. Introduce her to other kids. You've got to take her by the hand, so to speak, and make her feel welcome.

The same thing is true when you begin a story. The readers are new kids. When they ring your doorbell and step inside, you've got to take them by the hand and show them around. Otherwise they may get confused and disoriented.

I'm going to read you a story.

● Read "Trouble in Jamaica."

In some ways, a story like this is a like a river going over a waterfall. Let's map out the story on this chart.

● Show students the Waterfall Story chart.

We'll start with the part of the river that's upstream. What happens first?

Invite kids to mention parts of the story, and mark or label them on the chart. You don't need to mark every detail—just enough so they get a sense of what you're trying to do.

The top of the waterfall represents the main action or "hot spot" of the story. In "Trouble in Jamaica," the waterfall is probably when the narrator looks under his brother's bed and discovers the stuff that's been stolen. That's when the story really gets interesting.

Often we begin our stories too far upstream. The reader may not care about all those events and details. It may work better to start your story closer to the waterfall; if not right there, then start close enough that you can hear the roar.

If you start closer to the waterfall, you may have to develop the end, or bottom, of the waterfall. In this story, for example, we'd want to know what happened after the narrator discovered the goods his brother had stolen.

FOLLOW UP

It's tempting to ask students to map out their own stories on this "Waterfall Story Chart." Beware of overdoing prewriting activities like this. At this point it's probably time for the kids to go back to their own writing.

Conference Questions:

When you think of your story, have you started too far upstream?

Would it work better if you wrote a lead closer to the main action or the waterfall of the story?

PREP

● "Trouble in Jamaica," and Waterfall Story chart