

Maria Chatzi



The magical Mr.
Tumblebuddy Flipet
writes stories
Creative writing for children



Maria Chatzi has graduated from the department of English Language and Literature of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and has worked as a teacher of English. She is also a self-taught artist; she designs crafts (for kids and adults), jewelry and other home decor items. She's been a creativity enthusiast for over fifteen years now. She writes articles and activities on Creative Writing, as well as Craft Projects.

She spends a great deal of her time volunteering for public libraries in Thessaloniki, where she offers creative courses, mainly creative writing and crafts for kids. She also teaches jewelry making and various techniques for crafting with recycled materials.

Both her contribution to public libraries and the publication of this mini ebook, with a Creative Commons License, are an offer of free services for the common good in the local community and an effort to promote Creativity.

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CONTENTS

To Parents and Educators	8
Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet and the Creation of the Adventure Story Structure	11
How Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet Tumbles and Flips -	14
How to use Mr. Tumblebuddy for Creative Writing Activities.....	19
Ideas for Creative Writing Activities	20
Make your own Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet -	25
Some Additional Ideas and Tips.....	28
Words and Phrases that denote Plot Twists in the Adventure Story.....	30
THE LOTTERY.....	31
After School Creative Writing Exercises and Activities	33

To Parents and Educators

Dear parents and fellow educators (primary school teachers, SL teachers and FL teachers),

Would you like to help children learn to write stories and fairytales which hold the reader's interest up to the end? If yes, you'll have to teach them how to write a short and simple adventure story - because what makes even the simplest tales unforgettable, and what makes children desire to read a book again and again, are mainly three things:

A) the tension created by the obstacles, difficulties and dangers the hero is confronted with during his "journey",

B) the chance the young reader has to identify with the story's hero - the bigger, the better,

C) the hero's quest for successful ways of solving his problems and his achievements.

On the hero's journey, some of the problems are solved by themselves (as if taken care of by a mechanical God or compassionate Lady Fortune), while for other problems it is entirely the hero's responsibility to solve them, through the choices he makes. But let us not forget that the hero himself, as well as the obstacles, difficulties and dangers he has to overcome on his "journey" are all created by the writer.

What is the best way to start a story or fairytale, what makes a good beginning, such that would capture the reader's attention and create curiosity, so that the reader proceeds to reading the whole story? How does a writer decide when is the best moment for an obstacle or danger to show up in the hero's life? How does the writer know it's the right time in the story-line for the hero to overcome the obstacle or danger? How is the writer to judge if one problem for his hero is enough, or if more need to be added, so that the interest of the story or fairytale rises? If the writer puts too many problems on the hero's shoulders, without allowing him to find solutions, what would happen to the story? How does the writer decide or know his story is coming to an end? All these are justified questions that any child would have.

Finally, how would we, teachers and parents, be able to help a primary-school-age child understand all the above and use this knowledge to write an interesting adventure story or a beautiful fairytale?

This mini ebook gives the answers to the above questions in a simple, fun and direct way (as is appropriate for children of this particular age), that is with the help of the magical Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet.

The answer to the last question, which refers to us, adults, is also simple:

a) It is a basic prerequisite that we accept that any child is capable of writing a good story. It goes without saying that our demands would be respective to the age-specific skills that have been developed (through various learning experiences at home and at school).

b) It is our job and duty to offer the child the means, the required knowledge, the exercises and, of course, and any type of tools (props included) that would help the child with this deed – because every attempt the child makes at this delicate age is a deed. Whatever gained from this achievement, the outcome of the effort, may support him/her and lead to greatness later in life or drown his/her self-esteem.

Of course, I take A, mentioned above, for granted – we will not be too demanding of a child of this age. So we are left with B, the need to make sure the child is offered the knowledge (methods and techniques), as well as the tools to learn creative writing and to hone his/her newly acquired skills. Such a teaching prop (an alternative puppet) but also a helpful tool in the hands of the child itself, is Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet, presented in this ebook.

I conceived and crafted Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet for the needs of a creative writing workshop (on November 9, 2012) which I named “Adventure Tumbles and Flips” and which I undertook to teach, as part of my voluntary work at a local library, to children 8-9 years old. My main goal was to teach children an easy technique to create plot twists and build tension when writing an adventure story. My intention was to help them understand how they could guide the hero to experience a transition from his peace and quiet to trouble, from safety to danger, from being happy to being desperate, from a pleasant encounter in his journey to an unpleasant one. Of course, I was aware that if the children had understood the lesson well, when writing their story, they would be able to create the opposite transition as well, from the “misfortunate” to the “fortunate”, leading their hero to the solution of his problems and, eventually, crafting a happy ending for the story.

In other words, the magical Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet is a theatrical figure, outside the context of the story, whose role is to structure the

adventure story or fairytale. This is the role we desire the child to assume for himself, the role of the “story writer” – it is where the child identifies completely with Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet. At the same time, Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet is not only the writer but also the child’s guide, his counselor, his partner, his friend. The child-writer goes to him for advice on the writing craft. The fact that he has a double role to play in teaching creative story writing is what makes him especially effective.

His double role became obvious to all in my creative writing workshop, and accepted, from the very first time the magical Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet showed up. He proved to be an exceptionally powerful interactive teaching prop, when used as intended.

On pages 25-27 you will find a craft project, with instructions to make your own magical Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet (of a smaller size). I’ve created and I use two different designs for my creative writing workshops - one was designed for the teacher to use, and an alternative one was designed for the children to use. It is possible to use only one design instead, to simplify things, but in that case you need to craft it in two different sizes (the teacher’s prop has to be bigger, so everyone in the classroom can see it acting out the story plan, as it tumbles and flips).

After you understand the role Mr. Tumblebuddy plays in structuring a story, you will realize how useful this tool is in aiding your teaching other concepts to children, and the relationships existing between such concepts as well, e.g. relationship between cause and effect, opposites etc.

And, now...

Ladies and gentlemen,

I present you ... **The magical Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet!**

Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet and the Creation of the Adventure Story Structure

The magical Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet is a writer. He writes various stories and fairy tales. He enjoys weaving pictures, facts and imagination together with words. Most of all, he's keen on writing adventure stories. Do you know how he writes them? But, of course, through tumbling and flipping!

Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet has got two faces; one of them on the front, as everyone, and the other one on his back side. One of his faces is a happy and smiling face – that's "Lucky Leo" (= "Luckily - Oh!"). His other face is a sad-looking face – that's "Unlucky Leo" (= "Unluckily - Oh!").

Unlucky Leo always talks about the bad things that happen in the story that Mr. Tumblebuddy's writing, and literally creates them: bad circumstances, inconvenient situations and misfortune, roadblocks and difficulties, dangers, trouble and problems that come up.

Lucky Leo is the one who talks about all the good things in the story and offers a helping hand for them to happen: good luck for the hero, ways to overcome roadblocks and difficulties, ways to keep the hero away from danger and trouble, solutions to the hero's problems.

When Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet decides to write an adventure story, he prefers to allow Lucky Leo to craft the beginning. However, there are times when Unlucky Leo catches up with him and crafts his own sad and unlucky beginning – that's why some stories for adults start with a misfortunate event. Usually, Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet allows Lucky Leo to pick the ending of the adventure story too – it is his responsibility, so it could be pleasant for the readers. That's because Mr. Tumblebuddy knows that people prefer stories with a happy ending. But Unlucky Leo, who is a troublemaker and enjoys fights, would sometimes, more rarely though, give the story an unhappy ending. Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet has to act as a guard when the story reaches its end, to keep Unlucky Leo from being naughty.

As you understand, as the two faces of Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet, Lucky Leo and Unlucky Leo, never agree on anything their fight is endless. These two faces take turns in coming forth to build the story; first, it's Unlucky Leo who tells us what bad fortune the hero has had and then it's Lucky Leo who tells us how the hero's bad fortune was turned into good fortune.

One competes with and talks back to the other. All this disagreement and fighting between them makes Mr. Tumblebuddy flip and/or tumble lots of times, in order to write his adventure story and/or fairy tale.

It is this tumbling and flipping that brings about changes in the story's plot. This is how action and tension are created. Change, action and tension make the story interesting and push the plot forward. The more disagreements and fights take place between Unlucky Leo and Lucky Leo, and the more flipping from good to bad circumstances or tough situations (and vice versa), the more challenging the hero's quest and his adventure becomes.

For the sake of his peace and quiet, Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet had them agree that it is fair to take turns on deciding what's to happen next in the story. However, Unlucky Leo and Lucky Leo don't always stick to their agreement, they are sometimes naughty monkeys and cheat. That's why, in some of the adventure stories that Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet writes, when Unlucky Leo would hold on to the story plot stubbornly, not allowing Lucky Leo to take over, the reader is presented with two or three bad events, difficulties or problems, occurring one after the other in the hero's journey. This rises tension, of course, but a lot of misfortune and unhappiness often results in a "heavy stuff" read. Creating a feeling of frustration may discourage the reader from reading the rest of the story, as it unfolds without any joy and hope for the hero. On the other hand, when Lucky Leo is the one who would hold on to the story plot stubbornly, not allowing Unlucky Leo to take over, the reader loses all interest in the story - it is all good luck with no challenges and it becomes boring. Bottom line: If there are only good and pleasant things or only bad and unpleasant things happening in a story, it is meaningless to tell that story.

Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet writes stories that become a great success (best sellers) when Unlucky Leo and Lucky Leo follow their agreement, stick to the rules and don't do any cheating. However, a story cannot go on for ever. Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet knows this. That is why when Unlucky Leo decides to throw the biggest problem, obstacle or danger on the hero's path, to block his journey to success and happiness, Mr. Tumblebuddy flips and tumbles once more, for the big "finale", to help Lucky Leo come forth and remain forth. Lucky Leo is the one who chooses the hero's final victory. That is where the story ends. And that is also the end of all the fighting and the disagreement between Mr. Tumblebuddy's two faces, who have built the adventure story.

Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet is an admirer of the ancient Greeks, who believed that the story needs to end with "the solution of the drama",

meaning a happy ending, so that the young reader is left peaceful, satisfied and joyful after all the tension and suffering he was put under while reading the adventure story. The magical Mr. Tumblebuddy writes his stories according to Aristotle's prototype plot structure. The 3 parts of a well-written ancient tragedy are: the "prologue" (the setup), the "episode" (the confrontation) and the "exit or choral" (the resolution). Respectively, in a modern story these 3 parts are: The beginning, the middle and the end.

Have you realized why I call Mr. Tumblebuddy "magical"?

It's for the following reasons:

- a) Because he writes his stories by tumbling and flipping
- b) Because he's got two faces and
- c) Because he could change into different forms (or appearances), depending on how we choose to craft him each time (see pages 17-18).

Note for Educators and Parents

It would be a good idea to give kids, aged 8-11, notes or photocopies from pages 11-13 so they would remember how Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet creates the plot structure of his adventure stories and use these notes (as guiding reference) whenever they are asked to write a story of their own.

What I am introducing here is the use of a new tool, for all your "Fortunately - Unfortunately" (Remy Charlip) type of stories. The focus is on the fun and easy to handle way this simple teaching prop interacts with the technique, the process, and the writers (the children), to produce amazing results. For it is the tool that goes deeper and reaches farther, thus stretching the technique. And this is what makes my proposed approach to creative writing a fresh one.

A lot of the activities presented in this book are created by me but there are also some adaptations from old, well-known activities.

How Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet Tumbles and Flips -

Step by Step instructions

These are pictures of the first Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet I've designed and used for a creative writing workshop, with primary school age children. You can see his two faces, "Lucky Leo" and "Unlucky Leo".

You could copy my design, if you like, or make a design of your own, according to your preferences.



Picture 1a, Lucky Leo



Picture 1b, Unlucky Leo

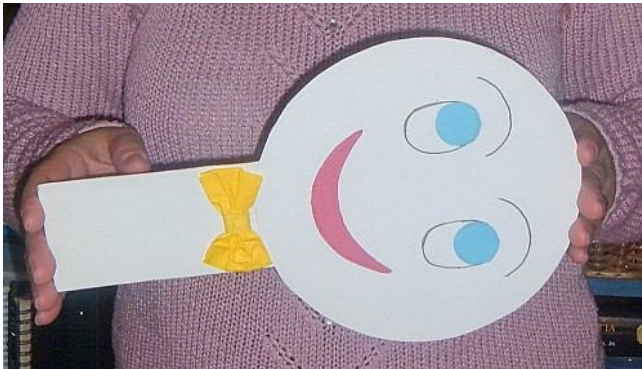
Following are instructions of how I make him tumble and flip

I hold Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet in front of me, at the height of my chest, with Lucky Leo facing the children - his neck standing up straight in my right hand palm. My left hand palm is on his head, as shown in picture 1a, to help the figure keep balance. Holding the figure in such a way will make tumbling and flipping him easier.



Picture 2a, How to hold lucky Leo

I, then, rotate him on his head, to the direction of my left hand, always holding the figure with both my hands (see picture 2b).



Picture 2b, Rotating Lucky Leo

I complete a rotation of 180° . After the rotation has been completed, Lucky Leo is standing upside down, as shown in picture 2c.



Picture 2c

To continue, still using both my hands, I lower Mr. Tumblebuddy's neck forward. This reveals Unlucky Leo's face, while Lucky Leo's face has disappeared (Lucky Leo is now on the back side of the figure, which the kids do not see any more) (see picture 2d).



Picture 2d, Revealing Unlucky Leo

Immediately after Unlucky Leo appears, I hold him straight up so all the kids can see his face.



Picture 2e, Showing Unlucky Leo

So, that is how Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet tumbles and flips. It takes a little practice at home, on the part of the teacher or the parent, but it is not difficult.

If you prefer something easier to tumble and flip, follow the instructions given below (it's a craft project for kids), to make your own Mr. Tumblebuddy Flipet using a toilet paper tube. You could also craft him out of a small shoe box, which is ideal for having him stand on a table or a teacher's desk, where all the kids could see him, even if they are sitting at a distance from the table or desk. If the children's group you're doing the creative writing workshop with is not a large one (which means you could all gather around a table), you could craft him out of a small medicine box, like cough syrup (see picture 3).



Picture 3

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