

GENRE

A genre is a category, or type, of story. Some popular genres include: sci-fi, fantasy, comedy, action, romance, mystery, and horror. **What's your favorite genre?**



The 5th Wave is sci-fi, but I tried very hard to ground the story in very human terms... What, exactly, does it mean to be human? What remains after everything we trust, everything we believe in and rely upon, has been stripped away?

RICK YANCEY

author of *The 5th Wave*

WHAT'S YOUR GENRE?

FINDING THE "KIND" OF STORY YOU WANT TO TELL

Before we start writing, let's talk about **genre**. "Genre" means "category" or "type." In other words: What *kind* of story do you want to write? Here are ten popular genres. Look them over, then we'll do some activities to find *your* favorite genres.



SCIENCE FICTION

Examples: Ender's Game, The Giver, The 5th Wave, A Wrinkle in Time.



DRAMA (REAL LIFE)

Examples: Hatchet, Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret, Wonder, Echo.



FANTASY

Examples: Harry Potter, The Lightning Thief, The Hobbit, Charlotte's Web, The Witches.



ROMANCE

Examples: Stargirl, Shug, Romeo and Juliet, The Princess Diaries.



ACTION & ADVENTURE

Examples: Maximum Ride, I Am Number Four, Treasure Island, The Maze Runner.



MYSTERY

Examples: Three Times Lucky, Holes, Sherlock Holmes, The Mysterious Benedict Society.



COMEDY

Examples: Flora & Ulysses, Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Hoot, Judy Moody, Freaky Friday.



HISTORY

Examples: Island of the Blue Dolphins, Fever 1793, Number the Stars, Chains.



HORROR

Examples: Goosebumps, The Graveyard Book, Dracula, Coraline, Frankenstein.



BIOGRAPHY

Examples: I Am Malala, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Marley & Me.

WHAT'S YOUR GENRE?

ACTIVITY 1. TALK ABOUT GENRE

Talk about your favorite books and movies. What did you like about them? Which of the ten genres does each book or movie fit best? List *two* of your favorites books or movies below, and write the genre under each title.

Title: _____

Genre: _____

Title: _____

Genre: _____

ACTIVITY 2. CIRCLE YOUR FAVORITE GENRES

Now that you've explored some of your favorite stories, look over the ten genres again. Circle your *two* favorites.

Science Fiction

Drama (Real Life)

Fantasy

Romance

Action & Adventure

Mystery

Comedy

History

Horror

Biography

WHAT'S YOUR GENRE?

ACTIVITY 3. MIXING GENRES

Mixing genres is a great way to add a little something extra to your story. On the left, circle your *two* favorite genres again. Now draw a line to connect each genre on the left to a *different* genre on the right. Circle those genres too.

Science Fiction

Fantasy

Action & Adventure

Comedy

Horror

Drama (Real Life)

Romance

Mystery

History

Biography

Science Fiction

Fantasy

Action & Adventure

Comedy

Horror

Drama (Real Life)

Romance

Mystery

History

Biography

ACTIVITY 4. YOUR GENRES

Write your mixed genres below. For example, if you connected science fiction and comedy, write “Science Fiction Comedy.”

My Mixed Genre 1: _____

My Mixed Genre 2: _____

WHAT'S YOUR GENRE?

ACTIVITY 5. GENRE BLOB

Have you ever noticed that bookstores and libraries organize books by genre? Genres are a great way to find the kinds of stories you love. Genres also bring readers together. There are conventions, book clubs, and web sites where people go just to meet readers who love the same genres. Let's try it now!

CLASS ACTIVITY

Pick *one* of the genres you circled on page 3. Now we're going to find people who like the same genre. We call this game, "Genre Blob." Here's how you play:

In a quiet voice, repeat your genre over and over as you walk around the room. When you meet someone with the same genre, link arms and keep going. Form a genre blob! When everyone is in a blob, look around. It's interesting to see which genres your friends like.

Now repeat the game using the *second* genre you circled on page 3.



BIG IDEA! HOW GENRES HELP YOU WRITE

Readers expect certain things from the genres they love. Understanding what your readers expect can help you in two big ways:

- 1) You know what you have to do.** For example, if you're writing in the *action* genre, you know readers expect a fast-paced story with lots of danger.
- 2) When you know what your readers expect, it's easier to surprise them.** For example, if you're writing a science fiction story about aliens, your readers may expect the aliens to invade the earth. Maybe you can surprise your readers with aliens who are on a vacation, or who got lost and need help getting home.

WHAT'S YOUR GENRE?

ACTIVITY 5. SHARE YOUR MIXED GENRES!

Go around the group and read your genres. Notice how some people mix the exact same genres that you mixed, while other people mixed different genres.

Great work! Genres are a lot of fun. Plus, knowing your genre can help you come up with ideas for your story. But we'll save all that for our next lesson, "Building Ideas."



BACK TO THE QUOTE! ALL GENRES ARE ABOUT CHARACTER

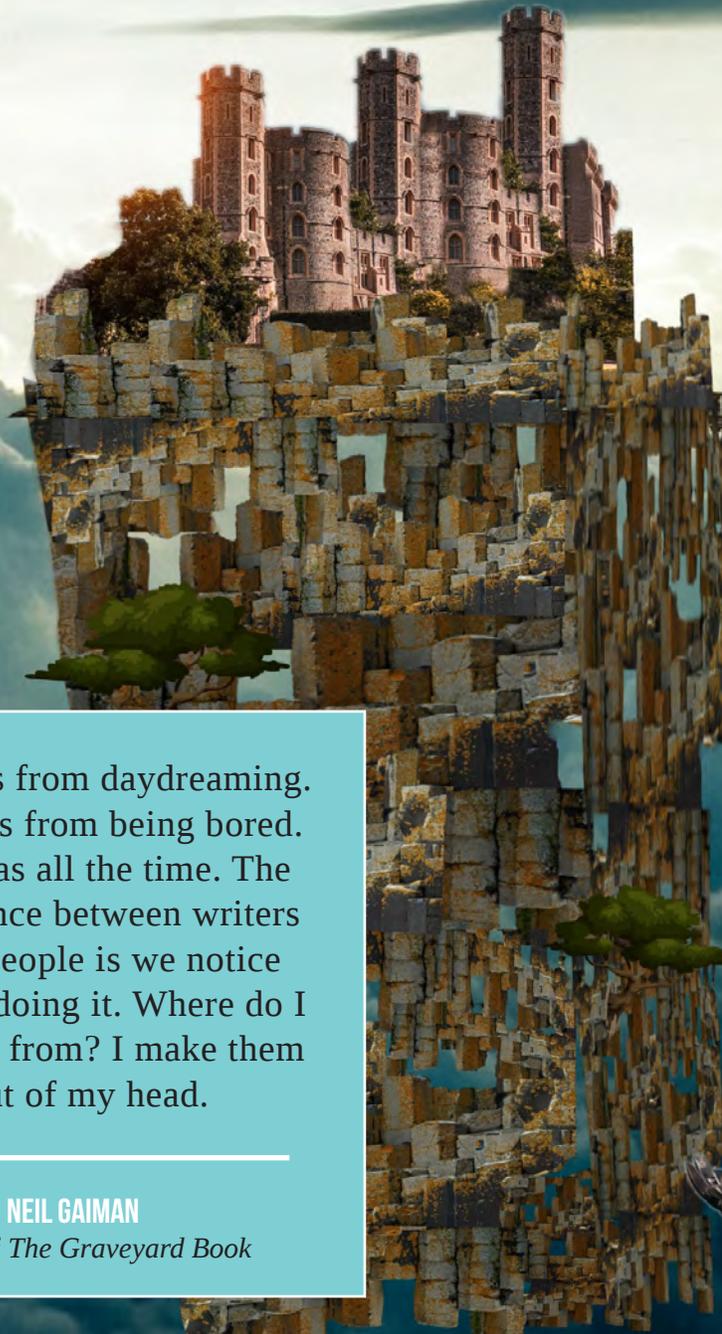
Take another look at the space ship poster on page 1. The quote is from author Rick Yancey. His YA novel about alien invasion became a mega-bestseller because readers cared about the characters *and* the genre. "*The 5th Wave* is sci-fi," he said, "but I tried very hard to ground the story in very human terms." In other words, he wants you to *relate* to the story. To *feel* the story. And the best way to do that is through the characters.

No matter what genre you choose, you're still writing about characters who have problems and dreams, hopes and fears. What's it like to be the new girl at school? What's it like to be a frightened soldier? What's it like to be a dragon who can't fly? What's it like to be an alien who crash-landed on earth?

As you work on your story, remember Rick Yancey's advice.

IDEAS

Where do story ideas come from? Believe it or not, they come from you! They come from you asking, “What if...?” and daydreaming, “I wonder...”



You get ideas from daydreaming.
You get ideas from being bored.
You get ideas all the time. The
only difference between writers
and other people is we notice
when we're doing it. Where do I
get my ideas from? I make them
up. Out of my head.

NEIL GAIMAN
author of *The Graveyard Book*



BUILDING YOUR IDEA

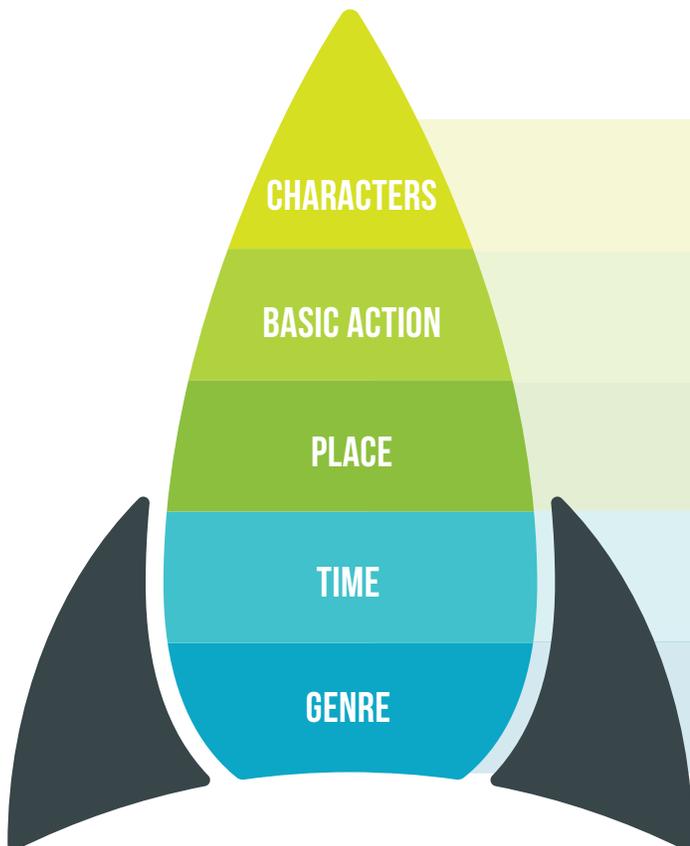
IDEAS ARE LIKE ROCKET SHIPS

You know what else changes a lot? Ideas! Ideas are like living things. So as you start working on ideas for your story, watch how they change and grow. Ideas are a lot of fun—let’s get started!

ROCKET SHIP IDEAS

Have you ever tried to read a story you don’t like? Well, it’s even harder to *write* a story you don’t love. Your story should excite you!

There are a lot of different ways to come up with story ideas. Here’s one of our favorites. We call these ideas **Rocket Ship Ideas** because you build each idea like a rocket ship. Here are the 5 parts that make a Rocket Ship Idea fly:



BLAST OFF!

The *character* (human or non-human) who will “pilot” your story.

The *basic action* written in just a few words, like “Aliens invade earth.”

Where does your story takes place—on earth, on another planet, in a fantasy world?

When does your story take place—in the past, the present, or the future?

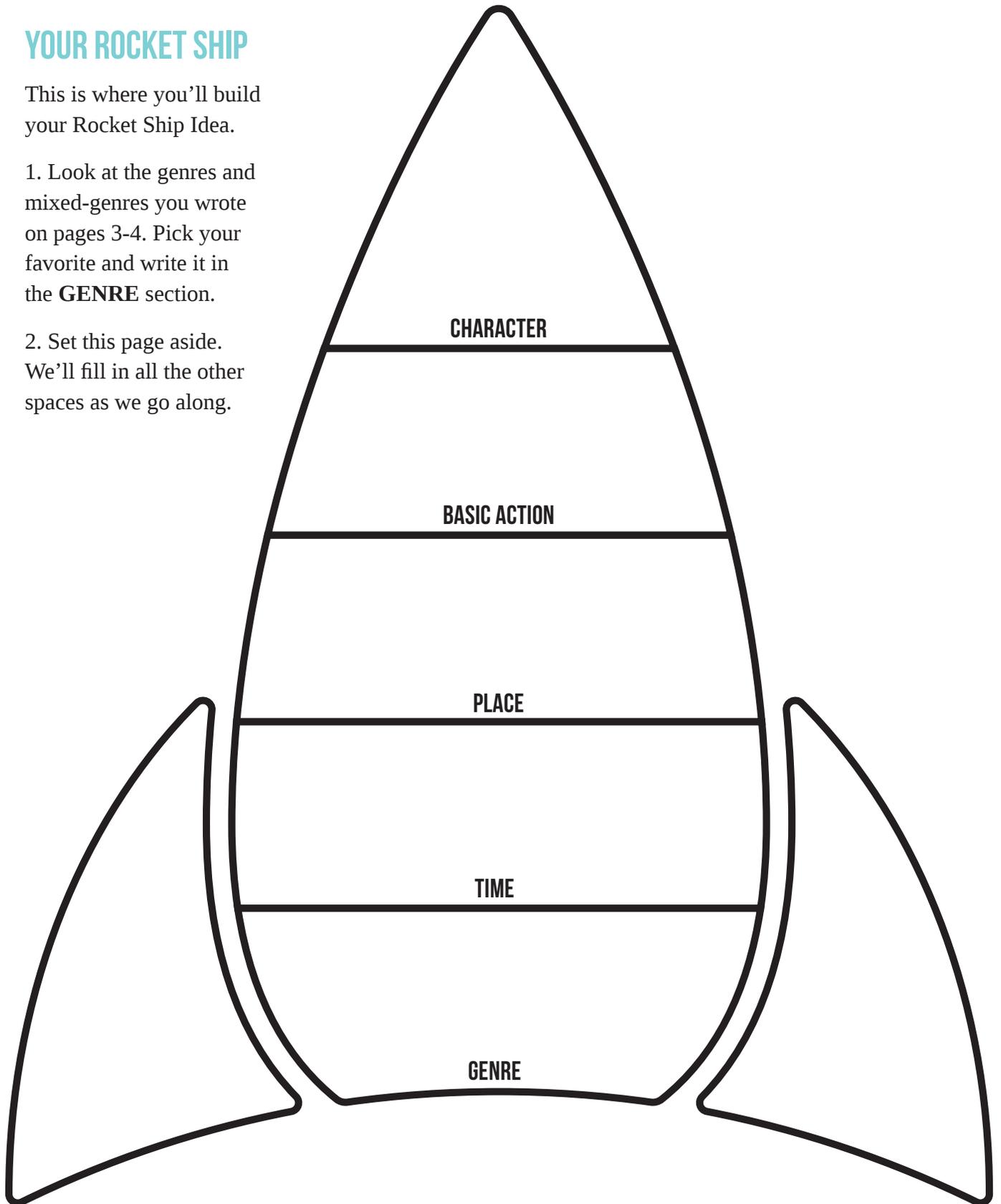
What *genre* or *mixed-genre* is your story (you already wrote these down on pages 3-4).

BUILDING YOUR IDEA

YOUR ROCKET SHIP

This is where you'll build your Rocket Ship Idea.

1. Look at the genres and mixed-genres you wrote on pages 3-4. Pick your favorite and write it in the **GENRE** section.
2. Set this page aside. We'll fill in all the other spaces as we go along.



BUILDING YOUR IDEA

“WHEN” DOES YOUR STORY TAKE PLACE?

It’s fun to think about *when* your story takes place. Let’s look at some examples.

THE PAST

With your imagination (and a little research) you can time travel into the past. Give it a try! Think about these 8 time periods. Under each, rank them #1 to #8, with #1 being the time period that’s *most* interesting to you, and #8 the time period that’s *least* interesting to you.



The Time of Dinosaurs
Millions of years, history’s greatest carnivores, and not a human in sight.



The Stone Age
Early humans, stone tools, the first farmers, and woolly mammoths.



Ancient Egypt
Pharaohs and slaves, art and hieroglyphics, pyramids and mummies.



Greeks and Romans
Emperors and war, gods and goddesses, the Coliseum and gladiators.



King & Queens
Knights and jousting, royalty and peasants, romance and Shakespeare.



Revolution
The French Revolution and American Revolution, Napoleon and Washington.



The Civil War
A nation divided, family against family, slavery and freedom.



WWI or WWII
Modern weapons, spies and secrets, the world on the brink of destruction.

BUILDING YOUR IDEA

“WHEN” DOES YOUR STORY TAKE PLACE?

THE FUTURE

Maybe the future is more interesting to you. Rank these futures from #1 to #3, with #1 being the future that’s most interesting to you, and #3 the future that’s least interesting to you.



The Near Future (20 Years from Now): What amazing new inventions will we see? What will the internet be like? Will kids attend school on their tablets? Will we end poverty and war?

#____



The Middle Future (100 Years from Now): Will we live on floating islands because earth is overpopulated? Can you teleport anywhere in seconds? What effect has global warming had?

#____



The Far Future (1000s of Years from Now): Will we live on other planets? Travel at light speed? Will robots be as real as people? Will our technology be built right into our bodies?

#____

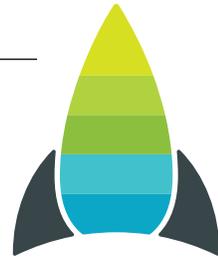
BUILDING YOUR IDEA

COMBINE GENRE AND TIME

We did a lot of work on Time to get your imagination warmed up. Now think of your genre, and put that genre into a time period you find interesting: the *past* (page 10), the *future* (page 11), or sci-fi/fantasy time (page 12). Keep in mind, you can also set your story in the *present* (right now).

Here are a few examples: “Sci-fi comedy (genre) during the dinosaur age (time)” or “Action romance (genre) during the first trip to Mars (time),” or “Drama (genre) on my birthday (time).”

ROCKET SHIP: Write your Time on your rocket ship. You have now completed the Genre and Time stages!



BIG IDEA!

THREE WAYS YOU CAN CHANGE HISTORY

Change Our Past: For example, what if the dinosaurs survived? What if the British won the Revolutionary War? What if you were never born?

Invent Our Future: For example, *The Hunger Games* invents a dark future for our world. *Star Trek* invents a much more positive future for human beings.

Create A Fantasy: The *Harry Potter* books blend the modern world with an old wizarding world. *The Hobbit* invents a new world with its own history.

BUILDING YOUR IDEA

“WHERE” IS YOUR STORY SET?

Place and *Time* have to fit together. For example, if you picked “Age of Dinosaurs” for your Time, you can’t pick America for your Place. Why? Because America didn’t exist millions of years ago!

Let’s put your imagination to work again. Think about *when* your story happens. Imagine that time. Pretend you’re actually there. Look around in your imagination. What do you see? Where are you?

EXAMPLES

Here are a few examples to show how you can match Time and Place.

My story happens during the Civil War in America.
(TIME) (PLACE)

My story happens during the age of dinosaurs in a dark forest.
(TIME) (PLACE)

My story happens 300 years from now in a broken space ship.
(TIME) (PLACE)

My story happens during a time of dragons in a fantasy kingdom.
(TIME) (PLACE)

YOUR TURN

Write your Time from page 9 in the (TIME) field. Close your eyes and imagine that time. Really see it! Then write two different places where your story could happen *during that time*.

My story happens _____
(TIME) (PLACE)

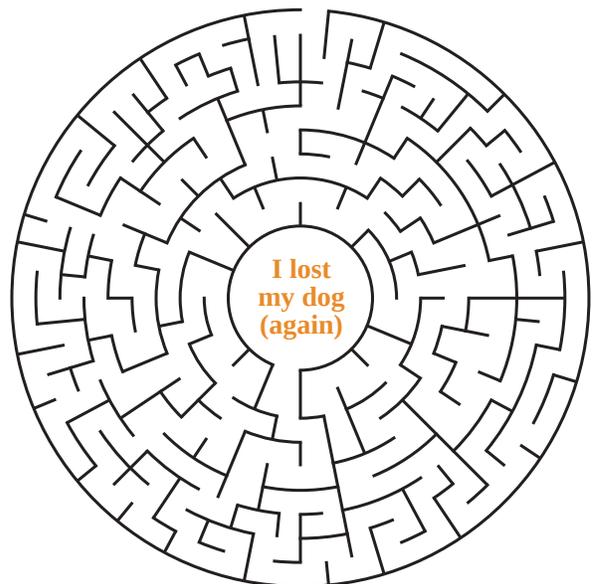
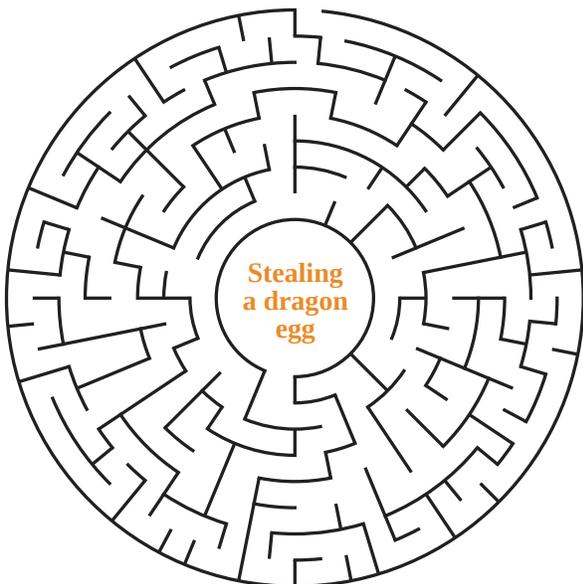
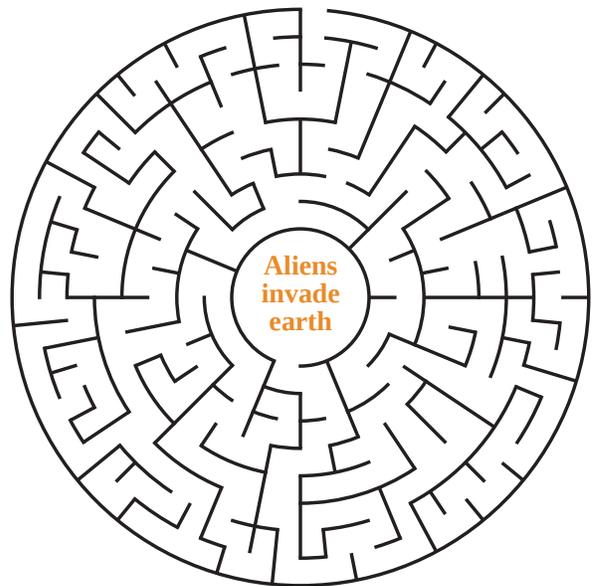
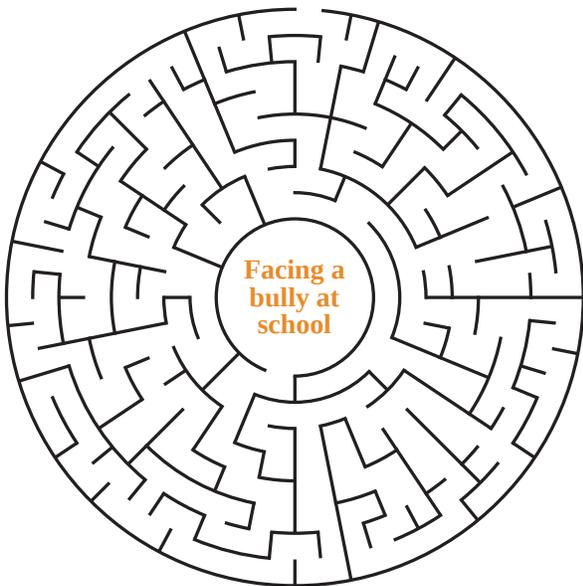
My story happens _____
(TIME) (PLACE)

ROCKET SHIP: Look at your two places. Choose your favorite and write it on your rocket ship.

BUILDING YOUR IDEA

WHAT'S THE "ACTION" (OR PLOT) OF YOUR STORY?

The *basic action* of your story is like the heart of a maze. You'll still need to add all the details, the twists and turns and surprises. But for now, we just want the basic action written in as few words as possible. Here are some examples. (By the way, these are real mazes. Go ahead and solve them!)



BUILDING YOUR IDEA

WHAT'S THE "ACTION" (OR PLOT) OF YOUR STORY?

It's your turn! Look at your rocket ship. Think about the Genre, the Time, and the Place. Come up with a couple of basic actions that might make fun stories.

Basic Action 1: _____

Basic Action 2: _____

ROCKET SHIP: Look at your two actions. Choose your favorite and write that action on your rocket ship.



BIG INSPIRATION! THE BASIC ACTION FROM 8 GREAT NOVELS

To Kill A Mockingbird: Fighting racism.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone:
An orphan learns he's a wizard.

Wonder: Fitting in when you're different.

The Hunger Games: Teens compete in
a game of life and death.

The Fault in Our Stars: Living with cancer.

The Hobbit: Stealing from a dragon.

Island of the Blue Dolphins: A girl is
abandoned on a wild island.

Tuck Everlasting: Children travel to a
dangerous world to find their dad.

BUILDING YOUR IDEA

WHO IS YOUR STORY ABOUT? (CHARACTER)

Think about the Action of your story. Start building a character who would find that Action very difficult. A big challenge makes an interesting story!

BASICS

Check *any* boxes that apply.

- Male
- Female
- Human
- Alien
- Animal — What kind?

- Fantasy — What kind of creature?

A LITTLE DETAIL

Fill in a few more details.

Age: _____

Name: _____

Personality Traits: _____

ROCKET SHIP: Write your character's name and personality trait on your rocket ship. For example, "Hector, a spoiled teenager," "Rose, a grandma who likes to play practical jokes," or "Chip, a dog that barks all the time."

Your Rocket Ship Idea is almost ready to take off! All it needs is a little work, which we'll get to in, "Your Story Invitation."