

*Zany Zoo Adventures  
in  
Writing*

Jan May

*New Millennium Girl Books*



*Zany Zoo Adventures in Writing–Homeschool Edition* © 2015 by Jan  
May

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Education and Language Arts

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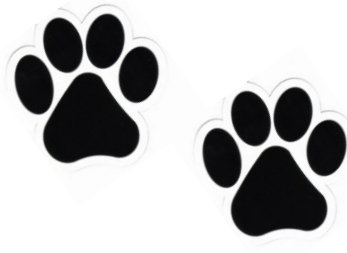
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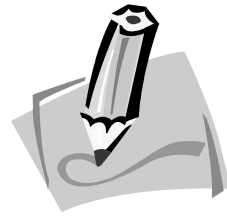
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## Introduction-Teacher's Notes



### How to Get the Most from these Lessons

**I have taught creative writing for over fifteen years** and have found that given the right tools, any child can write and love it. I always stress creativity over grammar, and I praise every small effort made. I encourage parent-child brainstorming and fun activities for each lesson, thus creating a "writing adventure" instead of a dull writing lesson. I have discovered that keeping these things in mind, even the most reluctant writer will dive into the writing pool!

**There are twelve easy lessons with a handout and activity for each lesson**, where the individual student or family creates a zoo full of fanciful characters that can talk after the zoo keeper goes home each night. Each child picks a zoo animal character to become and writes from that point of view. Instruct students to personalize the animals by drawing clothing on them, adding sunglasses and accessories, mustaches or eyelashes. Each student will create a **character profile**, where they develop a personality and choose an occupation for their animal in the zoo community such as: mayor, cup-cake baker, athlete, ballerina, military captain, etc.

**Give the students a special folder** to keep their story pages and illustrations in. Zoo stickers are a lot of fun to decorate the notebook with and can be found at a local teacher's' or dollar store.

**Creative writing time can also be enhanced by** geography, history, reading or art. This is a great time to study scientific classification with zoo animals, incorporate animal art projects, or write simple reports.

**Encourage the students** to find fun facts to share with the family or co-op and have a contest to see who can find the most interesting ones.

**Brainstorming** with the students for story ideas and plots creates a community spirit, and you will find the children begging for writing time. Kids have terrific ideas of what they are interested in.

**Seasonal holiday themes** always makes good story starters:

- Snow Day fun, sledding, snowmen
- Valentine's Day party
- St. Patrick's Day parade -illustrate a float
- Easter preparations, egg hunts
- School's out for summer, picnics, hiking, camping, vacations
- Fall fun, bonfires, football games, soccer
- Christmas stories of giving, animals' Christmas party

**Stick with a theme for several weeks**, then switch to another one. By the end of that time, the students will have several short stories they have written. Have the students illustrate their stories and read parts out loud along the way. Encourage them to include other students' characters in their stories in the family or class. This enhances story ideas and community. Each student can put it all together in a three-hole essay folder with a plastic cover.

**Play "Story Beach Ball"** at any point during the lessons so the children can share what they are writing. Write questions about the elements of a story in different colors on each section of the beach ball with a magic marker. Have the students bat the ball to each other. When you say "stop," the child who holds the ball will answer the question that his right thumb is on. The questions are:

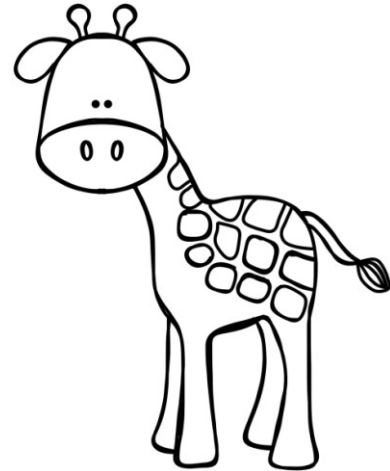
- Who are the main characters in your story?
- What is the setting of your story?
- What is the story problem?
- Are you **SHOWING** and **NOT TELLING**?
- What is your story's solution?

**End the unit with a Flashlight Theatre celebration.** The children can bring flashlights, turn out the lights, and shine them on the reader (and bring snacks!). Each child can read their stories. It's a highlight of every semester in my classes. Invite friends, grandparents, or neighbors.

## Lesson One Teacher's Notes

### Create a Character

Have each student choose one zoo animal to become and write from that animal's point of view. They can page through the Animal Information Station sheets in the back of this book to learn about each animal and decide. Use catchy alliterations for names by using the same first letter sound such as Jimmy the Giant Giraffe, Larry the Lazy Lion, or Kelly the Crazy Kangaroo.



A good story helps the characters grow. They should have a few weaknesses to be realistic. If the characters start out selfish, give them opportunities to learn how to give. If they are fearful, give them a situation where they learn to face their fears and gain courage. Have the student fill out the Character Trail on page 10.

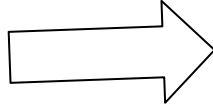
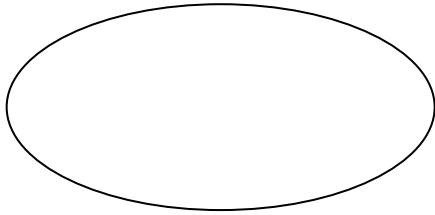
**NOTE**-Lessons one to five are for prewriting and priming the pump of creativity. They are necessary parts of the writing process. Most students will become very excited during these lessons. It is important for you, the teacher, to lead the students in brainstorming ideas for the characters and create a buzz about what is happening daily in your newly formed Zoo City. It becomes a community adventure that all the children will enjoy. Even the reluctant writer will dive in!

#### **Activity-Zoo Animal Report**

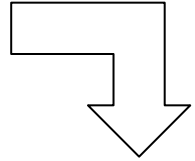
All professional writers do research. Have the students research their zoo animal and write a short science report. Have them include **zoo related words** that they find to use in their stories. Start a contest on who can find the most zoo related words. Use the **My Zoo Report** on the next page.

**Notes** \_\_\_\_\_  
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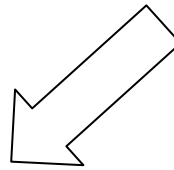
Follow the character trail. First write the name of your character in the circle. Then follow the arrows and write the answer to the questions in the boxes.



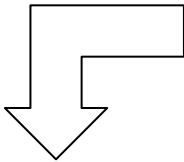
How old is your character?



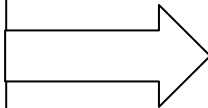
Are they a girl or a boy?



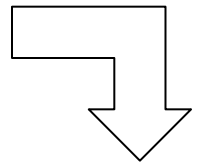
Describe your character's appearance:



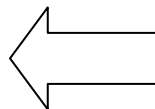
Does your character have any hobbies? Art, hockey, car racing, cupcake baking etc?



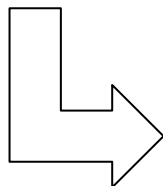
Who is in your character's family? Make a list:



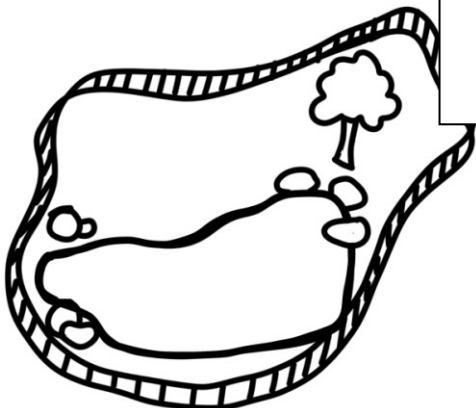
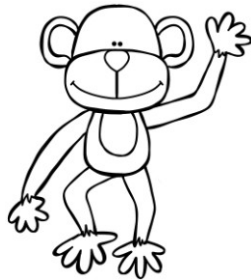
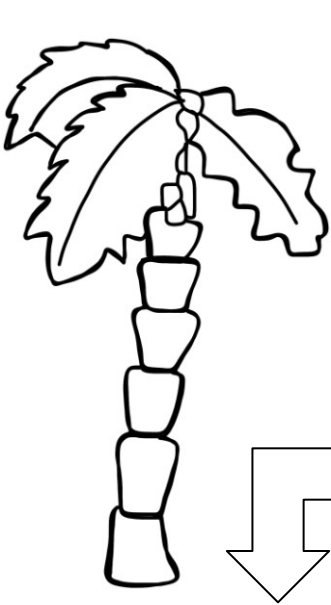
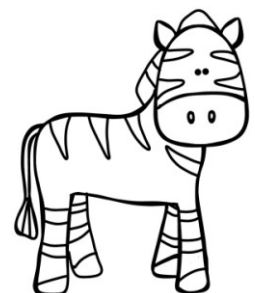
Name your character's greatest strengths.



What is your character's job in the zoo community?



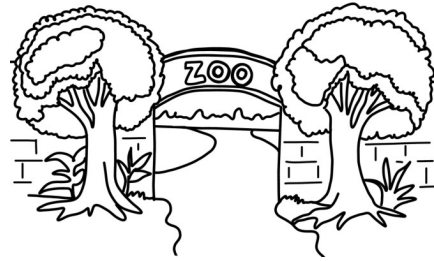
Name some weaknesses.





## Lesson Two Teacher's Notes

### Create a Setting



A setting is the time in history and the place where a story takes place. For this curriculum the setting is a zoo. It could be in a large city zoo with exotic animals, a small country zoo, or even a zoo on the planet Mars! It's important to describe the setting with vivid colors, sights, and sounds. **Encourage the students to use all five of their senses.** If there is more than one student, it's time to vote on the name of the zoo community where the characters live such as Animal Planet, Zany Zooville, etc.

**Activity-Draw and Color a Map of the Zoo Community** Using the map on page 17, ask the students to draw a map of the zoo community. Draw pictures of their character and their habitat (along with other characters if you are using this with more than one student). Include the animal character's work places such as the bakery, city hall, sports complex etc.

### Notes

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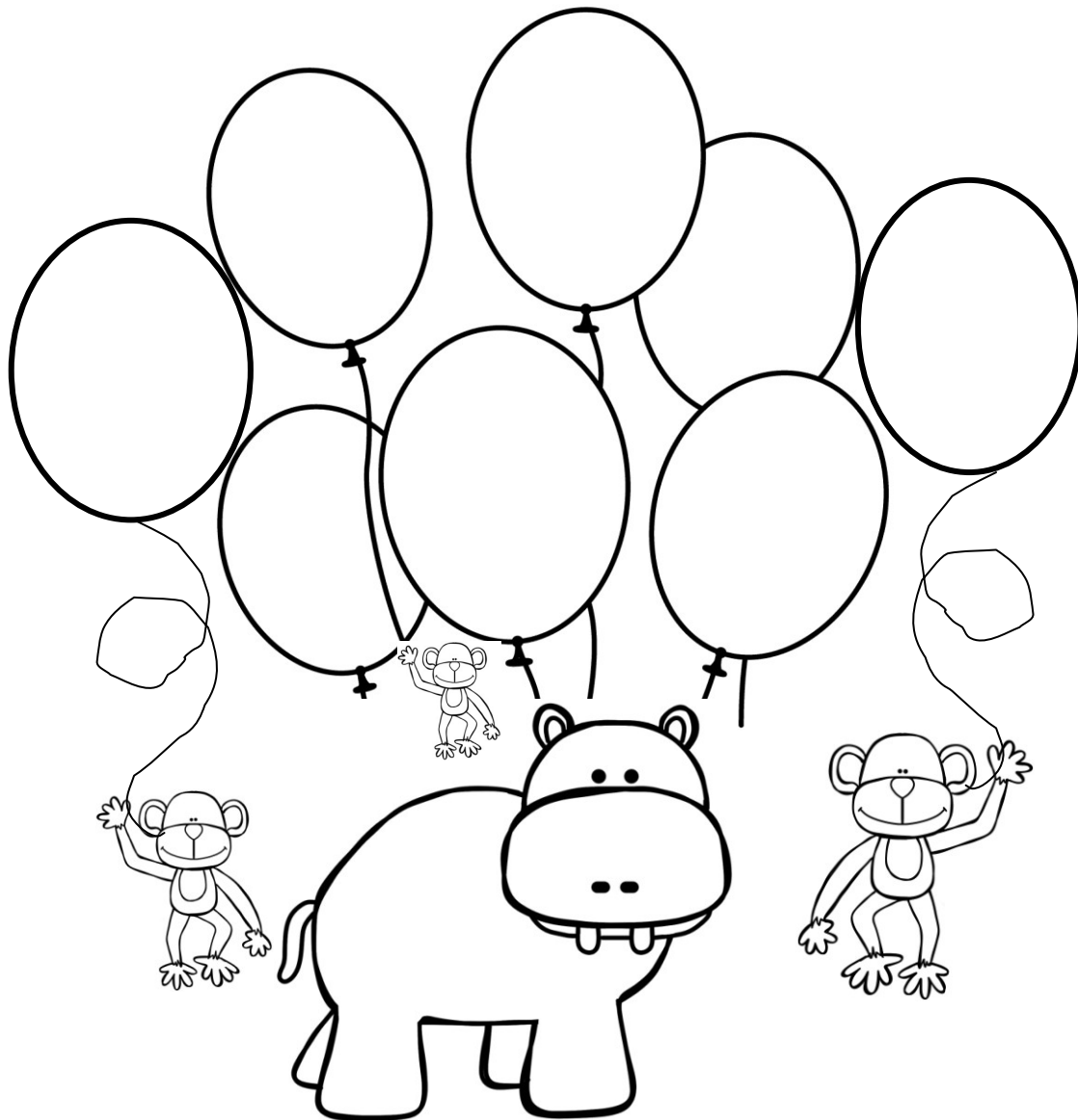
## Lesson Two Handout

### Create a Zoo Setting

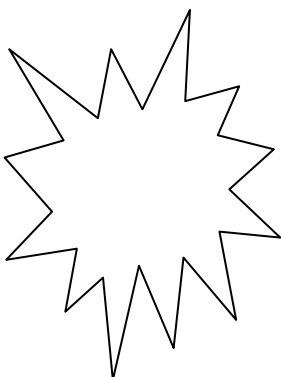
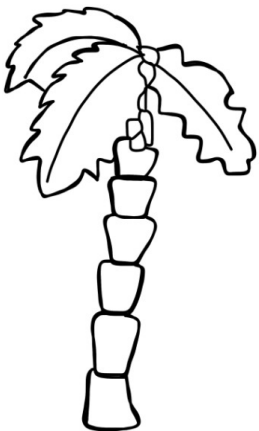
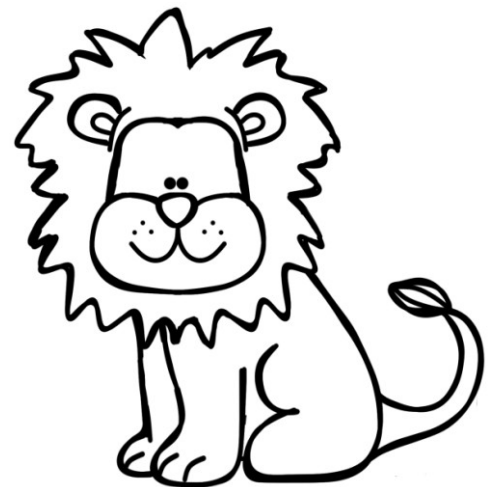
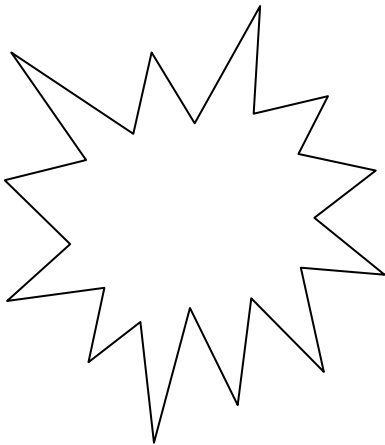
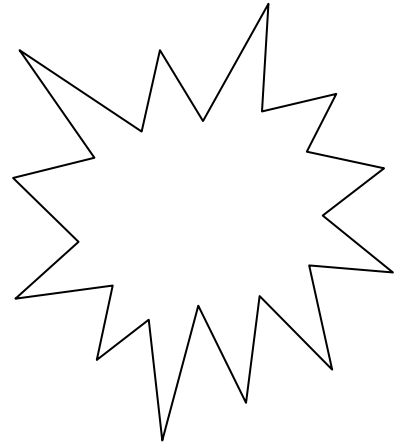
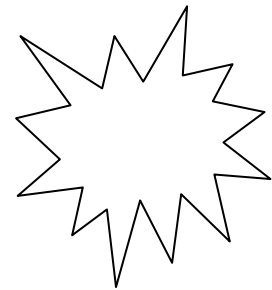
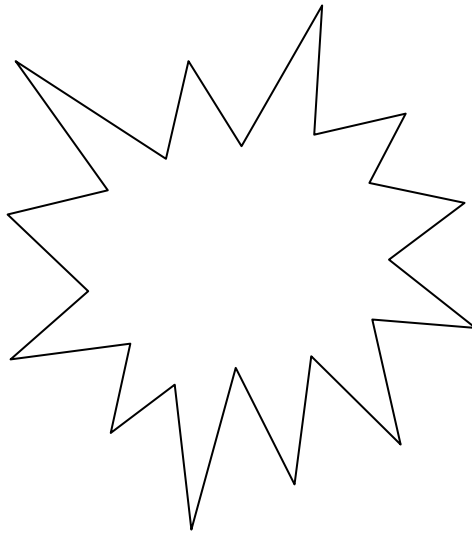
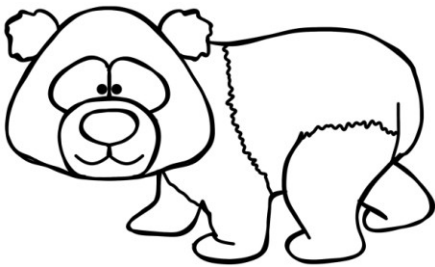
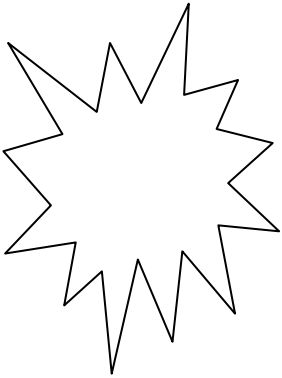
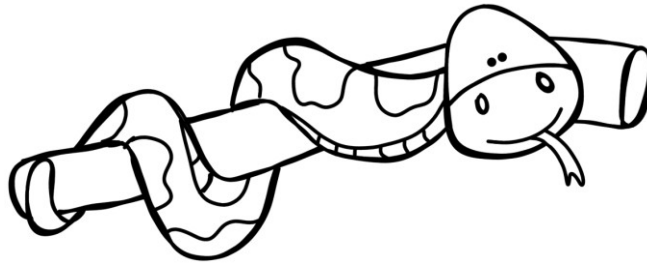
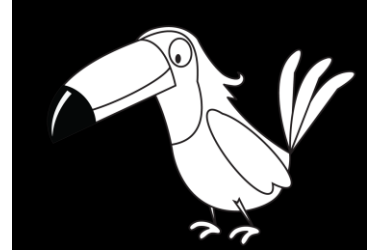
A setting is the place and time in history where a story takes place. It could be in a city zoo, a country zoo, or even a zoo on Mars! It's important to describe the setting using vivid colors, sights, and sounds. Fill out the next several pages using all five of your senses.



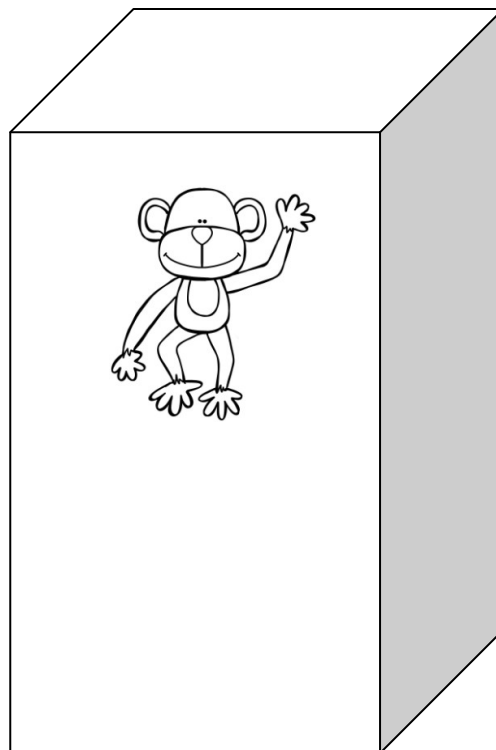
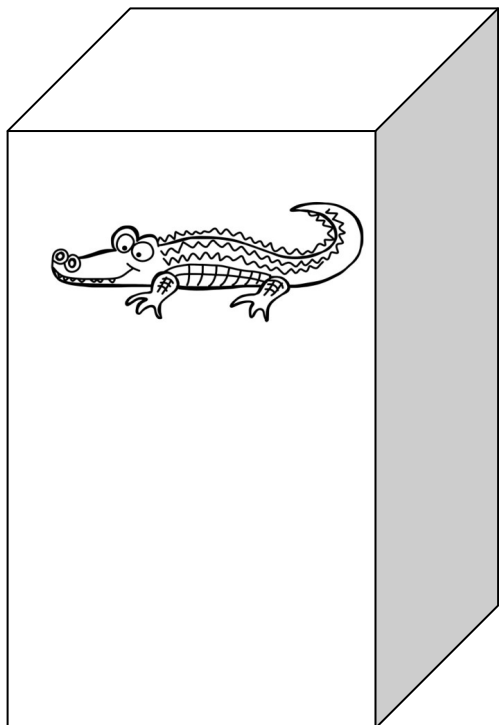
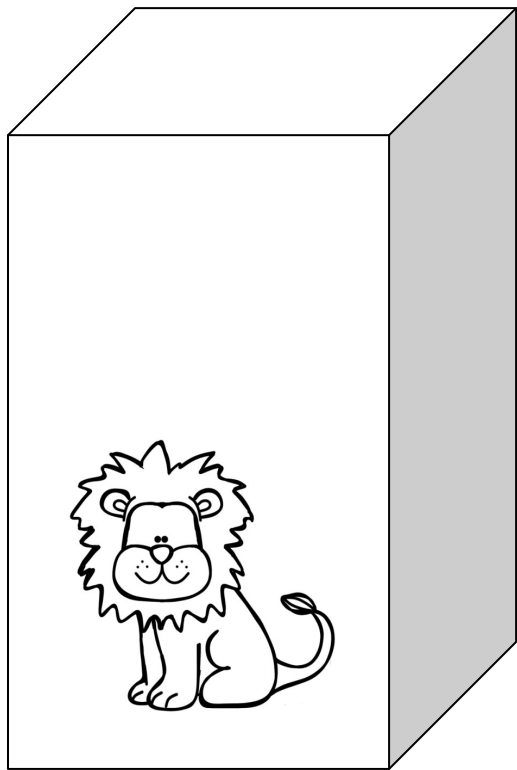
Using your sense of sight, write in each balloon things you would see in a zoo. Include colors.



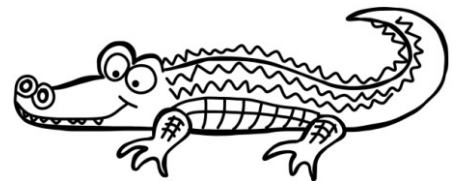
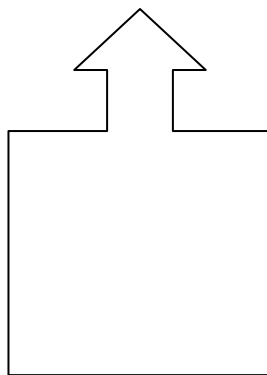
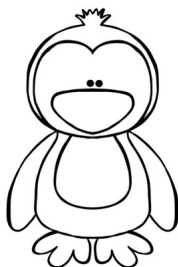
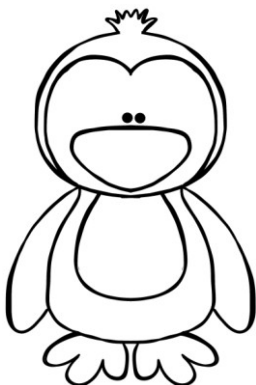
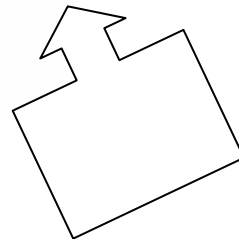
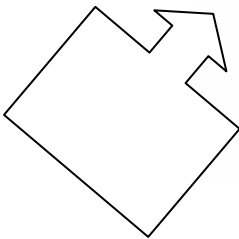
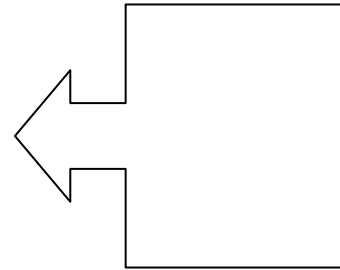
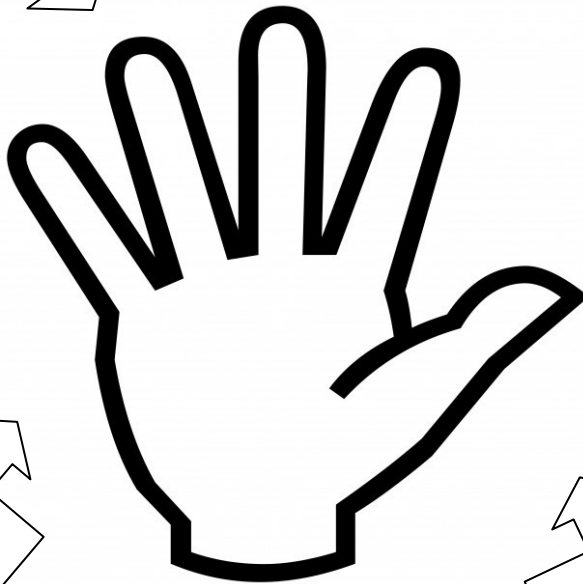
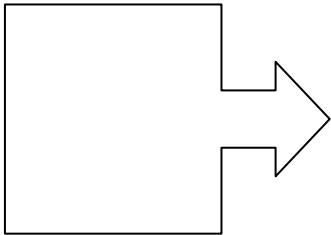
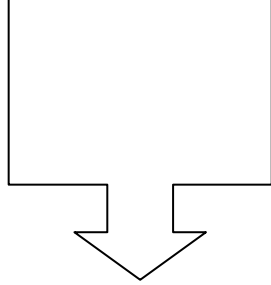
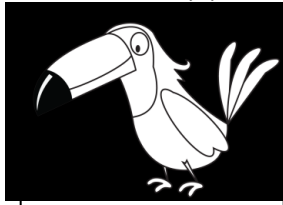
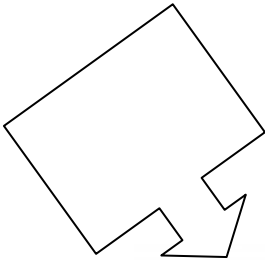
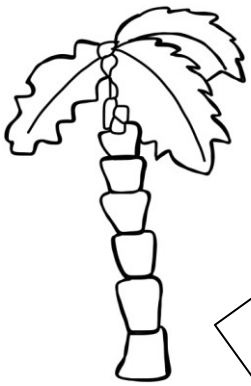
Using your sense of sound, write in each star a sound you might hear in a zoo.



Use your sense of taste to create fun "tasting" cereal for the animals:

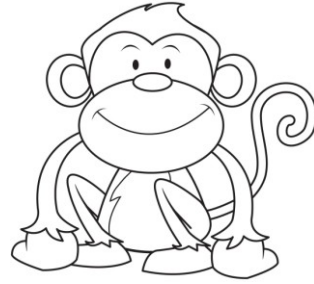


Use your sense of touch! What kinds of textures would you find at a zoo? Soft, hard, furry, smooth, bumpy, etc? Write them in the squares.



## Lesson Five Handout

### Write the Beginning of your Zoo Adventure



Can you begin your story with interesting action?

Write a HOOK for your story.

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Every good story has a problem for the main character to solve. Write several sentences showing the story problem either in your hook or after it:

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A black and white line drawing of a koala. The koala is shown from the chest up, sitting and holding a horizontal branch with its two paws. It has a large, dark, oval-shaped nose, small eyes, and a small, curved line for a mouth. Its ears are large and rounded. The koala's fur is represented by simple outlines, and its paws have visible claws.