



Our latest book, [Stories Without End by Taylor Sapp](#), came out last week. In case you missed it, or the subtitle "24 open-ended stories to engage students in reading, discussion, and creative writing," wasn't clear, the *Stories Without End* is a collection of 24 short stories that end on a cliffhanger. Students read short stories, discuss them, and then write their own endings. The stories themselves are pretty intriguing and creative themselves, so they generate a lot of discussion. Some have a science-fiction flavor and ask

what life would be like if we could teleport or what if we could control the weather? Others raise issues relevant to everyday life like how can you tell if someone likes you or how should we arrange our families? Some are just fun, like "T-Rex Window" which tells the tale of a boy who may have a dinosaur outside of his window or he may have lost his mind!

Since Taylor's idea for this book is such an innovative and original one, we wanted to share some suggestions for how to use the book in class with your students, a sort of teacher's guide. Feel free to share in the comments anything that has worked for you as you use any of these stories in class. You can also ask any questions there too on how to implement these unfinished stories for students.



Before You Read

Stories Without End • Part I: Short Takes

**JOE AND HIS BEANS**



**Before You Read**

1. What is a fairy tale? Can you think of any examples?
2. Do you know the story of Jack and the Beanstalk? What do you know about it or what can you guess from the image above?

**Vocabulary**

Write the letter of the definition next to the matching word

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>beans</i> (n.) ____</li> <li>2. <i>plow</i> (v.) ____</li> <li>3. <i>dough</i> (n.) ____</li> <li>4. <i>slink</i> (v.) ____</li> <li>5. <i>urge</i> (v.) ____</li> <li>6. <i>gag</i> (v.) ____</li> <li>7. <i>ain't</i> (v.) ____</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. to encourage someone to do something</li> <li>b. (here) to move quickly across something</li> <li>c. a slang term for money</li> <li>d. to be unable to breathe because something is in your mouth</li> <li>e. to move slowly and carefully from fear or shame</li> <li>f. casual slang for "am not"</li> <li>g. a seed from certain plants that is eaten as a vegetable</li> </ol>
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**Before You Read Questions**

The first page of every story contains a picture that relates to the story. It might set the mood for the story, illustrate an important element of the plot, or even



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introduce the theme. There are also a set of Before You Read questions in the left margin. The questions may refer directly to the image or not. The questions and any work with the image can be done as a class, individually, or in small groups.

For the story "Joe and His Beans", you can ask students to look at the picture and guess what fairy tale it comes from. They can describe what they think is going on in the picture. This is a good chance to make sure they know what a bean and a beanstalk is.

The Before You Read questions are usually straightforward and help introduce the theme of the story. For "Joe and His Beans" the questions ask students to think about fairy tales and specifically "Jack and the Beanstalk".

You can extend this by asking what connection there might be between the story they are about to read and the fairy tale. Do they have any expectations of what might happen in this story? What does the title tell you? Does it sound like the title of a traditional fairy tale?

### **Vocabulary**

Each story is accompanied by an activity to pre-teach key vocabulary. These words have been chosen as the most difficult, unusual and/or important for understanding the story. It's impossible to predict every word that every student in every class will know or not know, however. You may want to scan the story yourself and pick out any other words your class may need help on. After all, you know your own students best.

The vocabulary activity focuses on giving them a quick definition or gloss so that they can comprehend the reading. Parts of speech are noted because that affects meaning and how the word can be used grammatically. You may chose to expand on this with deeper vocab work after reading the story. For example, you can encourage students to use the words in their creative projects.



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There are also Photocopiable Supplements (which we'll discuss in more detail in a future blog post) in the back of the book focused on vocabulary work that you can follow up with. Supplement 6.1 is a template for a vocabulary journal that encourages students to record words including part of speech, definition, and an example sentence. Supplement 6.2 is a template for a parts of speech journal where students record vocab words by parts of speech. This is the first step to learning to use the word grammatically. The last supplement is another innovative variation on a vocabulary journal, a Verb Tense Journal. English verb tenses can be hard, so this worksheet gets students to focus on the use of different verb tenses and why they are being used.

You should decide whether you are going to allow students to use dictionaries, including their phones, to look up unknown words as they read. If you do allow them to look up words, make sure they focus on grasping the relevant meaning of the word only well enough to follow the story. This is a key skill for fluent reading. And it doesn't mean they can't go back and study the word in more depth.



## The Story

### JOE AND HIS BEANS

469 WORDS

Joe was walking home from the store one day, a long walk, when the *beans* his mother had sent him to buy slipped from his hand and into the road he was *plowing* through.

"Smart move," he was able to say aloud sarcastically, "I guess I'd better find them." One problem though—he couldn't. He thought for a second about what to do, and realizing his only option, he headed back for the store to buy some more beans.

But just as he started, he spotted an old man on the side of the road with a small stand and a sign that read "Delicious Beans for Sale."

The sight of the old man made Joe think, "Why haven't I seen this man before?" But even more, why hadn't he noticed a man selling just beans a lot closer to home than the usual store, a 7-Eleven that had great prices and delicious burritos as well.

Even though he was surprised by this mystery bean seller, Joe wasn't stupid. So he walked up to the old man and asked for some beans.

"I need five beans," Joe said, "I'll give you seventy-five cents for them." Now all he needed was burritos. The old man signaled yes, and he swapped the beans for the *dough*.

But he said something that surprised Joe, "These are no bad beans, but they *ain't* no good ones either." The old man talked funny with a weird accent. "Just remember, NEVER put them in hot water, okay?"

Joe got a little frightened. He wanted to get away from this man really quick. So he *slinked* away, and hurried home to give the beans to his mother.

Joe said, "Here, Mom, sorry I'm late. You can cook these beans, but don't use hot water, I was warned."

He thought she got the message so he went to his room and read a bit and waited.

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He got a nice surprise at dinner time.

The beans were just sitting in a pot of hot, boiling water. Joe almost fainted in shock! He had no idea what would happen to the beans, and he didn't want to know. His mom *urged* him to try one.

"No," Joe said, "I can't. I was told not to put them in hot water. Who knows what could happen!"

He imagined the beans growing in his stomach, coming out just like in the *Alien* movies. He could also see himself *gagging* and choking and finding out the hard way that these beans and water weren't meant for each other.

But his mother was determined, and much more stubborn, than he was.

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There are many ways to handle reading short stories in class. Choose the one that works best for your classroom and remember that you can use several different strategies at the same time.



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- Have students read the story for homework before class. This has the advantage of taking up less class time, but reading in class allows them to get more support from you and from other students. But you can have them do an initial reading at home and then read it again in class.
  - Have students read individually in class quietly to themselves.
  - Divide the text into sections and ask students to read the first part to themselves. Then call on a student to summarize what happened. Ask a few students to make predictions about what will happen next. Then go on to the next section.
  - Put students in reading groups. Typically reading groups are organized by reading level, with stronger readers together and weaker readers in separate groups. However, you can also engineer groups to include a diverse range of reading skills so you have one student who is good at vocab, another who excels at grasping the big picture, and a third who excels at parsing grammar. That way they all help each other comprehend the story.
  - One variation of reading groups is to have students take turns reading the story and re-telling it to each other.
  - Read to the students out loud as they read along silently. Pause periodically to check comprehension or elicit questions.
  - Have the students read to each other in small groups, taking turns. Generally, having students read out loud to the whole class is not a great strategy because it can be embarrassing to struggling readers (who may comprehend the text well but have trouble reading aloud), it's not a great model for other students, and it's hard to both read and comprehend in a second language.
  - Reader's Theater. Put students in small groups to read and perform the stories out loud. For more information on doing reader's theater, check out [this resource](#).



## After You Read and Projects

Stories Without End • Part I: Short Takes

"I will never eat those beans!" Joe said. His fight lasted five minutes, after which he was force-fed one.

As he touched the tip of his tongue . . .

**THE END?**

### After You Read

1. What will happen to Joe? Do you think the beans are dangerous? Magical? Or just disgusting?

Most fairy tales have a message or moral. What is the message or moral of this story?

2. This story is based on a famous fairy tale called Jack and the Beanstalk. Some famous fairy tales are listed below. How many of these do you know?
3. What other fairy tales do you know? What is your favorite fairy tale?

### Famous Fairy Tales

- Rumpelstiltskin by Brothers Grimm
- The Princess and the Pea by Hans Christian Andersen
- The Little Match-Seller by Hans Christian Andersen
- Hansel and Gretel by Brothers Grimm
- The Little Mermaid by Hans Christian Andersen
- The Emperor's New Suit by Hans Christian Andersen
- Little Red Riding Hood by Charles Perrault
- The Ugly Duckling by Hans Christian Andersen
- Cinderella (traditional)

### Projects

1. Continue the story! Write around a page. Here are some questions to consider as you write:
  - What did the beans taste like?
  - What happened to Joe after he ate them?
  - What happened to his mother?
  - Did anything grow?
2. Choose a fairy tale from the list above, or another that you like and know well. Write a half-page summary about what happens in the story, and the message or moral of the story.
3. Create your own fairy tale. Write about one page. Be sure to include a moral or message to your story.

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## After You Read

Each story is followed by After You Read questions, which take many forms. Some are familiar comprehension questions while others invite students to discuss the



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themes of the story. For this story, you can see students are asked to think about what might happen to Joe after he eats the magic beans. They are then asked to think about the message or moral of this story. Finally, they take a look at some other fairy tales, which sets them up for the creative projects that follow.

Consider whether you want to have students discuss these questions as a whole class, in small groups, or individually. You can also have students look at the questions on their own, then discuss their answers in a group before starting a conversation with the whole class.

### Projects

The first activity in the Projects section is always "Continue the story! Write around a page. Here are some questions to consider as you write." You can ask students to approach this assignment in a variety of ways:

- Write a short outline or summary and share it in pairs or groups before writing a whole story (There are supplements in the back of the book to help with this process).
- Write a page in class quickly without planning or editing, then revise and rewrite the story for homework.
- Brainstorm for ideas as a class (or in groups) and then write individually. Students can fill the board with ideas and details for them to pick and choose when they write.
- Start with a mini-lesson about a relevant writing skill, such as describing people, writing a coherent story, or building tension. Then ask students to practice that skill in their writing.
- Use a graphic organizer or story map (some can be found in the Supplements section in the back of the book) to map out their story.
- As a class, come up with a word bank they can use when writing the story.

## Teacher's Guide to *Stories Without End* by Taylor Sapp



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- For students who need a bit of help, give them 2 or 3 possibilities that they can then fill out in detail.
  - Other projects lead students to do a variety of creative tasks. Of course, you can pick and choose which projects you want them to do. You may want to assign some for class and others for homework or do some at a later date.

You can use any of the writing ideas above for the various other projects. And don't forget to take advantage of the Supplements in the back of the book which include models for writing and other creative projects, as well as even more extension ideas.