

Here, three sixth graders—inspired by Roni Schotter’s [Nothing Ever Happens on 90<sup>th</sup> Street](#) and a [popular lesson at WritingFix](#)—wrote the following story-starters. As they drafted and revised, they worked especially hard on their **idea development** and **word choice** skills. Read the stories and talk with a partner about where you see each writer excel with idea development and word choice skills.



### The Fire

by Sunny, sixth grade writer

He bravely fought fire all his life, but today was different. He cautiously stepped into the burning apartment building in the middle of New York City. He knew that this building could topple at any moment. But this was his job, to save innocent people, even if it meant risking his own life for another.

As he approached the first door, a gust of heat blew ash into his face and stung his eyes. His crimson-red hat gleamed on top of his dark, oily hair. His huge hands were curled into hard fists, trembling violently...he was terrified. Outside he heard cars honking, breaking the silence of the night. The fire licked dangerously at his face as he made his way through the burning building.

Suddenly, he heard something, or someone! He followed the sound to another hallway. “Is the person I’m looking for behind this door?” he asked himself.

**Person/Character:** a firefighter  
**Place/Setting:** an apartment building  
**Thing:** a fire



### Real or Dream?

by Nikola, sixth grade writer

He arose on a bright luminous morning astounded by where he had awakened. The only thing that he could recall was that his name was Secret Agent Double 08. He reached his filthy, dirty hands deep into his pocket and discovered two things: a note and a pocket knife. The note read,

*Tomorrow morning this island will sink,  
so act fast and don't forget to think!*

So Agent Double 08 immediately got to work on planning his escape. There was only one tree on the entire island and no room for mistakes because this would be the only material he could use to make an escape. He decided to create a boat out of the tree, using his pocket knife, that would withstand the sweep of each treacherous wave surrounding the island.

When done making the boat, he left right away before the island sank and left him to drown. After getting about twenty yards away from shore, Agent Double 08 had realized he failed! His boat had already started to fill up with water, and if he went any further it would sink. He jumped out and swam all the way back to the island and fell into a dark sleep. What if Agent Double 08 drowned in his sleep? Or what if the Secret Agent Double 08 had been dreaming this whole time?

**Person/Character:** a secret agent  
**Place/Setting:** an island  
**Thing:** a pocket knife



### The Magical Orange Shoes

by Elliane, sixth grade writer

Dan was in trouble. AGAIN! His new white scrubs were stained with the red dust of Mars, his fingers numb from the cold. But worst of all, the lime green alien was about to die!

“Are you sure you can save me?” asked the alien lying on the silver gurney.

“Of course. I’m a doctor, after all,” replied Dan with the utmost confidence. But he wasn’t sure. And then it came to him. “Those orange shoes,” he whispered to himself. “The magical, orange shoes!” Faster than an airplane and slicker than silver, they were just the magic he needed. Dan quickly pulled the shoes from his backpack and, as he did, they kicked and fluttered their wings with all their might. But Dan was stronger; he placed the shoes in a stronghold and moved outside. He took a sharp red Mars rock and cut the magical orange shoes into tiny little pieces. He forced the alien to eat the tiny little pieces, hoping they would let him live longer.

The slimy, green alien coughed and chewed and swallowed over and over again. After what seemed like hours--but was really only a matter of minutes--the alien ate the last bite. Nothing seemed to happen. “What if the orange shoes don’t work?” thought Dan.

**Person/Character:** a doctor  
**Place/Setting:** Mars  
**Thing:** orange shoes