

These four awesome seventh graders used “90th Street’s advice” to create well-developed paragraphs that might launch larger stories. Read over the four writers’ descriptions, focusing on their idea development and their word choice.

Which story do you want to read more of, and why? Talk this over with a neighbor and be prepared to share with the class.



The Creature

by Thomas, seventh grade writer

Person/Character: a sailor

Place/Setting: a boat

Thing: a monster

Captain MacLeod had been sailing the oceans ever since he was a wee lad. This night was different; it was darker and deeper than ever before. Captain MacLeod was standing on the bow of the boat in his yellow rain suit. He had no use for it tonight, but he just loved wearing it. The black waves silently hit the side of the slippery hull, making the boat rock back and forth, back and froth. The sea spray scorched his eyes, but he didn’t care. The waves started to grow larger, rocking the boat violently. Then, a huge black mass arose out of the water. It had red eyes and smelled of rotten flesh. Suddenly, something crashed into the side of the boat. Captain MacLeod reached for his rifle. He aimed at the creature’s eye. “What if?” he thought. “What if I miss?”



Pencil and Paint

by Kora, seventh grade writer

Person/Character: an artist

Place/Setting: a street

Thing: a pencil

She sat impatiently on the fading white scratched-up curb, hitting her pencil against the sketchpad impatiently. She sighed, almost growled, and I laughed. My best friend pressed her pencil onto the paper for a second as if to draw. I waited. She scowled a little, turned her pencil around in her hands, and erased the small mark she made. We’d been sitting here forever, me talking and trying to help, while she drew. Or really, tried to draw. Her pencil was dull, but the page was still as white and clean as fresh fallen snow. I looked down at the clock on my iPod – about an hour and a half had passed. I slid my hand along the curb. It was chipping. I pulled a falling piece of dried white paint off and threw it at her. The paint landed on the middle of the page. She smiled, and traced it.

“There,” she said, showing me a haphazard square. And all of a sudden we couldn’t stop laughing.



The E.R.

by Alexa, seventh grade writer

Person/Character: a veterinarian

Place/Setting: an operating room

Thing: a needle

Dr. Jones is under a lot of pressure. As usual, he's wearing a full suit of blue for surgery, but today is different; today he must perform a life or death surgery. He shuffles into the ER, verifying that everything will go swiftly. The environment is eerie with everyone silent. The never-before used needle glimmers in the light as Dr. Jones picks it up. Shaking, he carefully inserts the needle into the motionless animal. A lone light flickers on and off, daring to burn out. Time passes and the walls seem to ooze. Over three hours have passed. The needle is back on the table. It suddenly falls down to the floor, like a boulder off a mountain. The surgery is finally over. Now all Dr. Jones can do is wait.



The Locksmith

by Kevin, seventh grade writer

Person/Character: a locksmith

Place/Setting: a house

Thing: some glass

Ever since he was a young boy of eight, he had displayed an interest in locks. He would spend all of his free time experimenting with them, and he was about twelve years old when he decided to pursue a career as a locksmith. It was days like this--the bright sun illuminating the world, a gentle breeze blowing throughout the Earth--when he would think back to his childhood and remember when and why he decided to become a locksmith. He proceeded slowly towards a dark blue door that shimmered in the sun. The mysterious portal into the tall house loomed above him, completely absorbing everyone's wandering gaze as they glanced at the glamorous house. He kindly greeted the woman standing beside the door, and then went straight to work. He looked long and laboriously at the lock, wondering if it would take patience to pick. He had dealt with various locks like this: four pin-and-tumblers constraining a horizontal golden pillar that latched the door shut. When the correct key was inserted, all of the pin-and-tumblers would push up to a certain point, allowing the cylinder to turn and unlock the door. Possessing this knowledge, he was able to manipulate the lock to simulate the proper key. Then as he was about to insert his tension wrench, all of a sudden and without warning, one of the windows high above him shattered, and a razor sharp piece of glass directly dug into his hand. Would his wound inhibit his ability to pick locks? Would he be forced to forfeit his profession while he healed?