

Where and when:

Date: 11:00 on Wednesday 24 September 2025

Duration: 30 minutes

Location: bbc.co.uk/livelessons

This programme is available to view from home or school, and no sign-up is required.

Simply visit the website on the day and follow the instructions on the page to watch.



Curriculum links for 7-11 year olds:

National Curriculum, England - Key Stage 2 – English

National Curriculum, Northern Ireland - Key Stage 1 and 2 – Language and Literacy

Curriculum for Excellence, Scotland - 1st and 2nd Level – Literacy and English

Curriculum for Wales - Progression steps 2 and 3 – Languages, Literacy and Communication

Key learning objectives:

- Enjoy using their imagination, developing ideas and creating text in their own style.
- Plan their writing by discussing, developing and recording ideas.
- Improve their writing by experimenting with rich and varied vocabulary, in particular 'vivid verbs' which change and enhance meaning.

Setup:

This Live Lesson from BBC Bitesize can be watched on Wednesday 24 September 2025 live at 11:00 on [the Live Lessons website](https://bbc.co.uk/livelessons) and on CBBC/BBC iPlayer. It will remain online afterwards to be used as a teaching resource whenever you need it. We will be running a live commentary page for teachers, parents and carers during the live broadcast to share contributions from children watching from home and school.

New resources for 2025/2026

- **Mission Pack:** A collection of challenges children can do during each lesson. The pack can be printed easily and folded into booklet form. Digital versions are also provided, or children can use their own paper/notebooks.
- **Mission Poster:** During each lesson, to engage visual learners, an illustrator will capture the main learning points in a poster. This will be available to download from the Bitesize for Teachers website after the lesson.
- **Live Lessons Song:** This lesson will include a catchy song called 'vivid verbs'.

Lesson content

500 Words is an annual story-writing competition for children aged 5 to 11. This lesson inspires children to join in, by writing their own original stories, in 500 words or fewer.

This programme follows a mission to collect 3 key ingredients for a great original story:

- original worlds
- original characters
- imaginative words.

By completing 3 challenges, pupils collect these ingredients, ready to start work on their own 500 Words entry.

During the show, Sir Lenny Henry and Naomi Wilkinson will build their own story by collecting the same ingredients. A live illustrator will capture their progress in a downloadable poster, available within 24 hours.

Following the lesson, as a final challenge, children are encouraged to turn the story ingredients they have collected into their own drawing. The act of drawing can help reluctant writers explore ideas and develop the confidence to write their 500 Words story.

500 Words 2025/26 will be open for entries from 8am on Tuesday 23 September to 9pm on Friday 7 November. For more details visit the [500 Words website](#).

Challenge 1: Create an original world

Key learning objective: Pupils should explore how to create settings in narratives, plus enjoy using their imagination and developing ideas in their own style.

This section explores one method which pupils can use to develop an original setting for their story. Pupils are encouraged to take inspiration from their own world, which helps their stories feel authentic and unique. We then explore how you can transform an ordinary space into an extraordinary setting by changing just one aspect of that world.

- For challenge 1, in their mission pack pupils are presented with an illustration of an ordinary room. They must transform this space into an extraordinary world by adding one drawn element (for instance, a slimy tentacle emerging from behind a cushion).
- Alternatively, they can start with a blank page, drawing a space they know well (perhaps the room they are in) and transforming it by changing just one thing.

Challenge 2: Question your original character

Key learning objective: Pupils should explore how to create character and plot in narratives, plus plan their writing by discussing, developing and recording ideas.

This section explores the importance of getting to know your characters inside out. One method is to interrogate your character and imagine their answers, which can prompt ideas for characterisation as well as plot. We demonstrate this process by putting Sir Lenny Henry in the “hot seat”.

- To complete challenge 2, pupils must come up with interesting questions to interrogate their character. To scaffold the activity pupils are provided with prompts to start their question (who, what, where etc).
- Following the Live Lesson pupils can use these questions to interrogate their characters. This can either be done alone, or by hot seating their peers in the role of a character.

Challenge 3: Explore the power of vivid verbs

Key learning objective: Pupils should improve their writing by experimenting with rich and varied vocabulary, in particular ‘vivid verbs’ which change and enhance meaning.

This section explores how imaginative and descriptive language can paint a picture in the reader’s mind, with a focus on vivid verbs. Compared to unremarkable, over-used, everyday verbs, vivid verbs are more specific, descriptive and lively. We demonstrate the power of vivid verbs through a song, where each verse first uses everyday verbs and is then transformed using vivid verbs.

- Pupils are encouraged to make note of vivid verbs they like during the song. Every verb sung will be displayed in writing on screen.
- To complete challenge 3 pupils must then transform simple sentences by filling in the blanks using vivid verbs (either from the song or of their own choice)
- As an extension activity, they can construct a sentence using a vivid verb for inclusion in their 500 Words story.

Final Challenge: Draw your 500 Words story

To be completed after the lesson. Children take the story ingredients they have collected in challenge 1-3 and explore them further by transforming them into a drawing.

Mission Pack

Download the Mission Pack in preparation for the Live Lesson. There are 3 versions available. Choose the option which best suits your needs.

- **Digital pack**

Designed to be opened and edited using a tablet. Pupils will be able to type in text boxes and use the pen tool to draw.

- **Printable booklet**

To be printed double-sided on 2 sheets of A4 paper. Fold in half to create A5 booklet. Pages are numbered and should run from 1 to 8 when one sheet is placed inside the other. Designed to support black-and-white printing.

- **Printable A4 sheets**

Best option if no double-sided printing capacity. Designed to support black-and-white printing.

Note, pupils are still able to participate without access to the Mission Packs. All instructions will be on screen. We recommend that pupils have a notebook and pen or pencil to hand.

Pre-lesson activity:

- Practise hot seating characters from stories children know and love. Ask the character questions to explore their wants, needs, secrets and fears. This helps children understand the concept of hot seating in preparation for interrogating their own characters during the Live Lesson.

Follow-up activity ideas:

Pupils can create a drawing exploring their ideas for a 500 Words story.

- The drawing shows what can be seen. But what could be heard, tasted, touched or smelled in this story world? Challenge children to come up with a story title (5 words maximum) using one of those other sense impressions (e.g. The Sticky Sofa of Slime).
- Children could swap drawings and then tell each other what they think happens next in the story world they can see. This is a great way of generating new story ideas.
- Pupils could take turns describing their drawing to a classmate who cannot see the original sketch but must try and draw it from the words alone. This helps children rehearse their descriptive language.
- Pupils could extend their drawing into a series, for a comic strip showing the beginning, middle and end of their story. This helps them plan their story structure.
- They could add speech and thought bubbles to their drawings. This helps them develop characterisation.