



## What is PiBoIdMo?

It's Picture Book Idea Month! PiBoIdMo is an online challenge for picture book writers and illustrators. The object is to jot down one picture book concept daily. By the end of the month writers will have at least 30 bright & shiny new ideas! They then refer to these ideas throughout the year to jumpstart their creativity and write new manuscripts. It all happens at [taralazar.com](http://taralazar.com) every November...but students can do it anytime!

## How Do We Brainstorm Story Ideas?

Writing a story is like the fable "Stone Soup". Once you have a couple of key ingredients, you keep adding to the pot to make a richer, more delicious story.

Anything can be a children's story. Anything. You only need two main ingredients:

- A main character.
- A problem (typically arises from the what the character WANTS).

Everything else—like the setting and emotional theme—will fall into place once you identify those two things.

When brainstorming a children's story, think about all the things that kids like! Need help? Here's a list: [taralazar.com/2007/11/04/199-things-that-kids-like/](http://taralazar.com/2007/11/04/199-things-that-kids-like/)

## Exercises from PiBoIdMo's Past

### Imagine the World Illustrated (Mylisa Larsen, 2014)

- Go outside and imagine the world as if a favorite illustrator had drawn it. What do you see? Then come back inside and pretend a publisher has just called to say, "Mo Willems/Tedd Arnold/Jane O'Connor/Marla Frazee just called. They'd like to illustrate one of your stories." Write that story.

### Have Character Drive the Story (Diana Murray, 2014)

- Pick a unique character trait and a conflicting goal.



## Try the “How To” Structure (Tammi Sauer, 2014)

- Fill in these blanks: How to \_\_\_\_\_. Guide to Being a \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ Handbook. Teach a reader how to do something like “How to Babysit a Grandpa” (Jean Reagan/Lee Wildish) or “So You Want to Be a Rock Star” (Audrey Vernick/Kirstie Edmunds).

## Great Beginnings (Shutta Crum, 2011)

- Tuck your reader into the story with a beginning that answers who, what, where and when but leaves the reader wondering *WHY?* Write an opening sentence that answers the 4 W’s.

## Pump Your Character (Zacharia OHora, 2013)

- Draw a character. (Doesn’t matter if you’re not an artist. Do it anyway.) Keep adding unique accessories—clothing, equipment, furniture, whatever. What do these things say about your character? Need animal ideas? Go to CuteOverload.com. “If done right, your character will reveal its own story.”

## Start with a Title (Tammi Sauer, 2013)

- Tammi’s “Princess in Training” began with just a title. So did Tara’s “The Monstore,” “Little Red Gliding Hood,” and “Normal Norman.” What clever and engaging word play can you invent for a title? Mash-up words to create portmanteaus (“monstore” is a portmanteau), rhyme words that you wouldn’t normally put together, or take a common phrase and change one or two words.

## Relive Your Childhood (Peter Harren & Kayla Skogh, 2012)

- Recall what YOU LOVED as a young child. Really dig into your feelings about that thing/action. “Childhood is all feeling.”

## The Idea Box (Susan Taylor Brown, 2009)

- Be a collector of lost items. Place them in a box you can access regularly. Imagine each item’s backstory.

## Make a Creativity Chart (Steve Barr, 2013)

- Make a chart with three columns: “main character” (dog, rhino, fireman), “setting” (jungle, school, igloo), and “supporting character” (cowboy, baby, dragon). Write at least 20 entries in each column. Then pick one entry from each and create a story situation. Vary your columns, too! Try adding a column for emotion or problem.

MAIN CHARACTER	SETTING	SUPPORTING CHARACTERS
MONSTER	OFFICE	ENGINEER
PRIEST	PLANE	GIRAFFE
ELEPHANT	AIRPORT	GHOST
RACCOON	FOREST	ANGEL
DOCTOR	JUNGLE	RANGER
PIRATE	CITY STREET	COWBOY
THIEF	COURTROOM	COWGIRL
DOG	HIGHWAY	GORILLA
DINOSAUR	RESTAURANT	MAN
RABBIT	CABIN	WOMAN
BOSS	ISLAND	WOLF
DOCTOR	FACTORY	SNAKE
NURSE	CAR	TURTLE
PILOT	TRUCK	FISH
JUDGE	ZOO	GANGSTER
COP	FORT	PROTESTOR
SALESMAN	LIVING ROOM	KID
DRAGON	WAITING ROOM	STUDENT
MOUSE	HOSPITAL	INSTRUCTOR
RAT	LIBRARY	HAMSTER
KITTEN	CRUISE SHIP	RAT
EDITOR	TRAIN	JUDGE
WRITER	GO KARTS	HUNTER

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