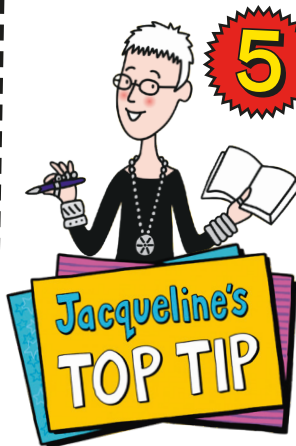


## Lesson 5: The End - finishing the story



### 5 How to end your story

**That's the best bit. You've written and written, and now you've nearly finished the story. You can't wait to write THE END after the last line.** It's a terrible temptation to hurry things along, because if you're anything like me you just want to be finished with the whole thing. I used to find I wrote the last few pages of my stories too quickly, in a hasty scrappy sort of way, and then an editor (they're a bit like your teacher, and even more picky) would suggest I rewrite part and expand it and think it all through carefully.

Now I try to give the last chapter even more time and attention than the first. I try to round everything off in a satisfying way. That doesn't mean I always spell everything out. Sometimes I deliberately leave my readers to work out what's going to happen next, though I always give a heavy hint. (Lots of you want to know if Lily gets reunited with her family in *Lily Alone* – or does Destiny make it as a famous singer in *Little Darlings* – or will Hetty ever get together with Jem?) I wanted to keep all the options open – but if you find my endings disconcerting you're always free to write your own versions.

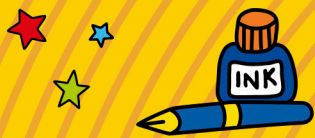
I always try to write reasonably happy endings – but occasionally characters play tricks on me and won't do as I tell them. I think my saddest book is *My Sister Jodie*. I had no intention of making it end like that – but somehow my hand wrote the story in a very unexpected dramatic way.

So, let's say you've taken your time over your ending and are pleased with your story. I'm afraid you've still got a little work to do, especially if it's a story for school, for a special project, for a competition. Read it through. See if there are parts that don't seem very important, or they're maybe simply a bit boring. How can you improve them? Could you pop something new in that will make your story seem more interesting?

Have you checked all your spellings and remembered all your punctuation? I know, these are the boring parts. I hate fussing over everything too – but it's truly worth it. It's often only when I've got to this stage that a sudden really good idea occurs to me. I don't like rewriting – but it's generally vitally necessary. You want your story to be as good as possible, don't you?

The best part of ending my book for me is sending it to my friend the illustrator Nick Sharratt. He'll read my story very carefully, often several times, and then send me a few illustrations of the characters. He always gets them exactly how I imagined them – it's uncanny.





## SMALL GROUP WARM-UP: FILM TRAILERS

Jacqueline Wilson talks about deliberately leaving readers to work out what's going to happen next in her stories, so it's time to challenge pupils to create their very own nail-biting cliff-hangers! First of all, ask them to get into small groups (of four or five).

In their groups, they need to choose their favourite storyboard created in **Top Tip 4: Creative Activity 2**. Their task is to create a film trailer (or book trailer!) for that storyboard – making sure not to give anything away about how the story ends, but leaving plenty of hints for the audience!

Watch a few examples of film trailers to get pupils into the zone, asking them to make a note of the success criteria for a good trailer. How can they set the appropriate mood and tone? How can they incorporate the story's characters? Will they use freeze-frames? Will they use lots of different scenes? Can they think of ways to incorporate sound effects and musical instruments?

Ask pupils to perform their book trailers to the class and give feedback on their favourite trailers. Which has the best cliffhanger? Why?

## CREATIVE ACTIVITY 1: CREATING A PLOT GRAPH

Jacqueline explains how she always tries to write reasonably happy endings – but occasionally characters play tricks on her and won't do as she tells them! She uses the example of her story, ***My Sister Jodie*** – in which she wrote the ending in a very unexpected, dramatic way. It's time for you to have a go at plotting the drama in your own stories!

**Using your storyboard, plot your story using the graph below.**

**Consider the following things:**

- ★ What is the problem at the beginning of your story
- ★ How does the problem create 'rising action'?
- ★ What is the most important event or 'climax' in the story?
- ★ How does the action fall after the climax?
- ★ What is the resolution or ending of your story?

Share your plot graphs with your classmates. What do they think of your story? What do they think of the ending or resolution? Have you included a cliffhanger?

★ Use the plot graph template at the back of the pack to help you ★