

30 Story & Essay Idea Generators

Who / What / Problem / Change grids to beat
"I don't know what to write"

Educational Writing Resource

Professional Teaching Materials

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How to Use This in 3 Minutes

Before any timed writing:

Pick ONE grid (from Story or Essay section).

In each grid you'll see 4 boxes:

- **WHO** – the main person/group
- **WHAT** – the situation/topic
- **PROBLEM** – the tension/issue
- **CHANGE** – what shifts by the end / your position

In 3 minutes, use that grid to sketch 3 different angles:

- **Angle 1** = fill or choose one option in each box
- **Angle 2** = change the WHO or PROBLEM
- **Angle 3** = change the CHANGE (different outcome or position)

Then choose the angle you like most and start your plan/writing from there.

The grid doesn't write the story or essay for you.

It just removes the "blank" part so your brain can start.

Part A - 15 Story (Narrative) Idea Generators

Each grid gives you a theme + 4 building blocks you can mix and match.

Story Generator 1 - School Announcement

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• quiet student• school captain• new principal
WHAT (situation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• surprise announcement in assembly• sudden rule change• school merging with another school
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• your character loses something important because of the change• friends strongly disagree about the news• a promise might be broken
CHANGE (by the end)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• character learns to speak up• school community finds a compromise

- character realises change can be positive

Story Generator 2 - The Test

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "always top" student • student who usually fails • student who doesn't care about marks
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a high-stakes exam day • practice test that secretly counts • test result that decides a scholarship
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • something goes wrong before/during the test • someone else cheats or is accused • character realises they studied the wrong thing
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learns what matters more than marks • admits the truth / takes responsibility • gains quiet confidence, even if result isn't perfect

Story Generator 3 - New Student

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new student from another country • student repeating the year • student from a selective school joining a local school
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first week at school • group assignment • seating plan reshuffle
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • classmates judge them before knowing them • language or culture barrier causes a misunderstanding • someone has to choose between old and new friends
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character gains an unexpected ally • class learns to include instead of exclude • main character changes their view about "different" people

Story Generator 4 - After School

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• student who has to pick up a sibling• student with a strict training schedule• student who always stays back to avoid going home
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• late afternoon at school• forgotten item that must be found• a storm / power cut after school
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• locked in / stuck somewhere• important practice or event might be missed• secret about home life is almost revealed
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• character admits they need help• friendship grows from a shared problem• family situation starts to improve


Story Generator 5 - Online Message

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• class group chat admin• student who hates social media• student with a new phone
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• late-night message in group chat• anonymous post about a student

PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rumour spreading online
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • someone is being targeted or embarrassed • screenshot goes further than expected • character must decide whether to delete or report
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character chooses to protect someone else • group sets new rules for online behaviour • character realises silence can hurt too

Story Generator 6 - Sports Trial

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talented athlete • student who loves sport but isn't picked often • injured player trying to return
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • selection for school team • final training before the big game • surprise trial in front of scouts
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mistake at the worst moment • teammate lets the team down • pressure from parent/coach is overwhelming
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character redefines success (effort vs result) • team learns to support each other

- 
- character stands up to unfair pressure

Story Generator 7 - Unexpected Teacher

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• strict teacher• relief teacher• quiet teacher everyone underestimates
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sudden classroom change• important assignment given• detention or lunchtime session
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• teacher's decision seems unfair• student discovers teacher's secret talent/struggle• class pushes boundaries too far
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• mutual respect forms between teacher and student• student changes behaviour after seeing teacher differently• teacher changes approach after understanding student

Story Generator 8 - The Lost Item

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• careless student• prefect / responsible student• student often blamed for everything
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WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • important item goes missing (exam paper, key, trophy) • found item with no owner • something "small" with big value
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character is accused of losing/stealing it • deadline to find it before consequences • must choose whether to confess a mistake
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • truth comes out, but not how expected • character takes blame to protect someone... or refuses to • trust is rebuilt or broken

Story Generator 9 - The Dare

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leader of friend group • follower who wants to fit in • outsider who watches from edge
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • risky dare at school or nearby • online challenge • "double dare" no one wants to refuse
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • someone could be hurt or humiliated • dare breaks school or family rules • dare reveals true character of friends

CHANGE

- main character refuses and stands up for what's right
- friendship group shifts as loyalties change
- character realises "fitting in" is not worth everything

Story Generator 10 - One Day Only

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• student about to move away• student on scholarship trial day• cousin visiting from overseas
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• one special day together• school open day or fair• city trip / excursion
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• conflict makes them waste time they don't have• a secret is kept too long• unexpected event threatens the day's plan
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• characters repair relationship before time runs out• main character learns to say goodbye properly• memory created that changes future decision

Story Generator 11 - The Rule

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• student who always follows rules• student known for breaking them• school leader who has to enforce them
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• new school rule introduced• old rule challenged

PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rule broken "for a good reason"
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • situation where rule seems unfair • friend gets in trouble because of rule • choice between obeying rule or doing what feels right
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character learns when to question rules • school adjusts rule after student feedback • character accepts consequences but keeps integrity

Story Generator 12 - The Secret Talent

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quiet student with hidden skill • class clown who is good at something unexpected • top student with secret non-academic talent
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talent show • school project • emergency where talent is needed
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • afraid of being judged or laughed at • friend feels jealous or left out • talent might clash with family expectations

CHANGE

- character chooses to share talent anyway
- friendships deepen through honesty
- character starts balancing expectations and passion

Story Generator 13 - The Mistake

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organised student • student under pressure • student who procrastinates
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • major assignment or responsibility • mix-up with dates/times • handing in the wrong work
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mistake could cost opportunity or trust • someone else is blamed at first • character must admit error publicly
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character learns new system for managing tasks • adult response surprises the student • trust is rebuilt through honesty

Story Generator 14 - The Unexpected Friend

WHO

- student from a different background
- "popular" student
- new student always alone

WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group project • stuck together in line / team / detention • paired for competition
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first impressions are negative • peer pressure against mixing groups • secret revealed that changes view of other person
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unlikely friendship forms • main character changes opinion about a group or stereotype • old friendships shift as new one forms

Story Generator 15 - The Phone Call

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student waiting for results • parent/guardian • friend with important news
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phone call in the middle of class/night • call about school, health, or opportunity • missed call with unknown number
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character imagines worst-case scenarios • must decide whether to share

CHANGE

news

- call forces immediate decision

- character faces fear instead of running

- family makes a new plan together
- character's priorities change after the call

Part B - 15 Essay (Persuasive) Idea Generators

Each grid helps generate angles for arguments.
Think: WHO is affected, WHAT is the issue,
PROBLEM (tension), CHANGE (your
position/solution).

Essay Generator 16 - Homework

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• primary students• parents• teachers
WHAT (issue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• amount of homework• type/quality of homework• homework during holidays
PROBLEM (tension)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• stress vs practice• learning vs copying• family time vs extra tasks
CHANGE (position/solution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• limit homework to short, focused review• ban written homework in primary, keep reading• keep homework but

redesign it for thinking,
not repetition

Essay Generator 17 - Phones at School

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• students• teachers• school leadership
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• phone use during school hours• phones in playground only• complete ban vs managed use
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• distraction vs safety/communication• bullying online vs staying connected• confiscation arguments
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• no phones in class; locked in lockers• phone use allowed only after last bell• stricter consequences for misuse, not complete ban

Essay Generator 18 - Exams & Stress

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 5–6 students • high school students • parents
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high-stakes exams (NAPLAN, selective, scholarships) • frequent tests vs fewer big ones
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • motivation vs anxiety • ranking vs real learning • fairness across different backgrounds
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce number of big exams; use more ongoing assessment • keep exams but add wellbeing supports and practice • change how results are reported to reduce pressure

Essay Generator 19 - Sport at School

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sporty students• non-sporty students• PE teachers
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• compulsory sport• competitive vs social sport• time taken from academic subjects
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• health benefits vs embarrassment• skill gaps and inclusion• training time vs homework time
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• keep sport compulsory but offer more options• separate competitive squads from general PE• add choice: physical activities beyond traditional sport

Essay Generator 20 - Technology in the Classroom

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• students• teachers• parents (paying for devices)
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• laptops/tablets in every lesson• using phones as learning tools• online resources vs textbooks

PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distraction vs engagement • equity (who can afford devices?) • screen time vs handwriting practice
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allow devices only for specific tasks • blend tech with handwritten work on purpose • school-supplied devices to reduce inequality

Essay Generator 21 - Social Media & Teenagers

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenagers • parents • social media companies
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age limits • time limits • content moderation
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connection vs addiction • self-expression vs privacy • free speech vs harmful content
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stricter age verification and education programs • daily time limits enforced by apps • teach digital literacy as a core subject

Essay Generator 22 - School Uniforms

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• students• parents• school administrators
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• compulsory uniforms• strictness of rules (hair, shoes, jewellery)• cost of uniforms
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• equality vs self-expression• comfort vs appearance• high cost for families
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• keep uniforms but relax strict appearance rules• allow mix-and-match within school colours• provide financial support or second-hand uniform schemes

Essay Generator 23 - Environmental Responsibility

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students • schools • local government
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rubbish and recycling • energy use at school • transport to and from school
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • convenience vs environment • small actions vs big impact • cost vs sustainability
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce school-wide recycling + "no single-use plastic" days • encourage walking/biking/public transport incentives • student-led environment committee with real power

Essay Generator 24 - Part-Time Work & Study (older students)

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high school students • parents • employers
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having part-time jobs during school term • weekend vs school-night work

PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience vs exhaustion • independence vs focus on study • pay vs exploitation
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommend maximum weekly work hours for students • forbid late-night shifts on school nights • encourage school–employer agreements for exam periods

Essay Generator 25 - Helping Others

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students • schools • charities
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compulsory community service • fundraising at school • peer tutoring or mentoring
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • genuine help vs "box ticking" • time pressure • who benefits most
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require service hours but let students choose cause • link service projects to curriculum learning • reward depth of contribution, not just hours

Essay Generator 26 - Fairness & Punishment

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• students who break rules• bystanders• teachers / principals
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• detentions, suspensions• zero-tolerance policies• restorative justice meetings
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fairness vs consistency• punishment vs learning from mistakes• impact on future opportunities
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• move towards restorative approaches over pure punishment• keep strong consequences for serious risks, but allow second chances• involve student voice in creating behaviour policies

Essay Generator 27 - Competition vs Cooperation

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• students• schools• families
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• academic competitions• sports carnivals• class rankings
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• motivation vs pressure• winners vs those who always lose• teamwork vs individual success
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• redesign competitions to reward improvement and teamwork• limit public rankings, focus on personal bests• balance competitive events with cooperative projects

Essay Generator 28 - Online vs Offline Learning

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• students• teachers• parents

WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remote learning during crises • blended learning (some days online) • tutoring apps and online courses
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flexibility vs distraction • home environment differences • independence vs need for teacher support
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommend blended models for certain tasks only • keep schools physical, use online tools as support • ensure training and resources so online learning is fair

Essay Generator 29 - School Start Times & Sleep

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high school students • parents • school leaders
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early vs later start times • homework load and bedtime
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic rigour vs sleep • transport schedules • after-school activities
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • push start time later for older students • adjust homework policies to

	protect sleep <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educate families on sleep's impact on learning
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Essay Generator 30 - What Makes a "Good" School?

WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students • parents • government / education department
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • test scores and rankings • wellbeing programs • facilities and opportunities
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reputation vs daily reality • pressure vs support • academic results vs character building
CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • redefine school success to include wellbeing and growth • publish broader measures, not just exam results • involve students in evaluating school environment

Quick 3-Minute Brainstorm Routine (for kids)

When you get a topic:

1. **Pick any generator** that roughly matches the theme.
2. In the margin, **quickly fill or circle one option** in WHO / WHAT / PROBLEM / CHANGE.
3. **Do this three times** (three slightly different combinations).
4. **Choose your favourite combination** and turn it into a one-sentence plan.
5. **Start writing.**

If they follow that, "**I can't think of anything**" turns into **three possible angles in three minutes, every time.**