The Heist Map: How stories are built

ENG2D, Unit 1: Voice and Story, Lesson 2. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

Most stories follow a shape, like a heist that goes wrong: a setup, a job, complications, a climax and a getaway. Knowing the shape helps us notice what a writer is doing.

What students do: Students learn story structure as a heist map, predict as they listen to Part I of “The Monkey's Paw,” and map the story's setup and inciting incident.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
R 2.1	identify a variety of characteristics of literary, informational, and graphic text forms and explain how they help communicate meaning
R 1.2	select and use appropriate reading comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading to understand texts, including increasingly complex texts
R 1.3	identify the most important ideas and supporting details in texts, including increasingly complex texts
OC 1.2	select and use appropriate active listening strategies when participating in a variety of classroom interactions
OC 1.1	identify the purpose of a variety of listening tasks and set goals for specific tasks
OC 1.3	select and use appropriate listening comprehension strategies before, during, and after listening to understand oral texts, including increasingly complex texts

From The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: English (2007, revised), English Grade 10 Academic (ENG2D). M = Media Studies, OC = Oral Communication, R = Reading and Literature Studies, W = Writing.

Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning the parts of a story's plot and how they build tension. • We are learning to use prediction and questioning while we read or listen.	• I can name and explain the parts of plot structure. • I can find the setup and the inciting incident in a story. • I can make a prediction and support it with clues from the text. • I can listen actively and note important details.

Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** The Heist Map deck.

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- **Handouts:** Heist Map organizer (page 1), Prediction Log (page 2).
- **Text:** “The Monkey's Paw” by W. W. Jacobs (1902) is in the public domain. Free copies are available online, for example on Project Gutenberg (gutenberg.org), in Jacobs' collection The Lady of the Barge.
- **Optional:** A free audio reading from LibriVox (librivox.org) if you prefer not to read aloud.

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–10	**Hook**	Ask: “Think of any heist movie or show. What always happens?” List ideas: a crew, a plan, something goes wrong, a big moment, an escape. Reveal the heist map (slide 4).	Brainstorm.	Students already know story shape from film.
10–25	**The heist map**	Teach the six stages with a well-known story or film the class agrees on. Students fill in the left column of the organizer.	Complete the organizer definitions.	Can students place events from a familiar story?
25–60	**Read Part I**	Read Part I of “The Monkey's Paw” aloud, or play an audio reading. Stop at the three marked points on slide 7 for quick predictions. Students record predictions and the clues behind them.	Listen, predict and record.	Predictions tied to clues (the fakir, the first owner's third wish).
60–70	**Map it**	Pairs fill in the setup and the job (inciting incident) on the heist map.	Map the story so far.	Mr. White's first wish as the inciting incident.
70–75	**Exit prediction**	Each student writes one prediction for Part II on the Prediction Log.	Write a prediction.	

Differentiation

- **Support:** Provide a printed copy so students can follow along while listening. Pre-teach: fakir, talisman, sergeant-major, compensation.
- **Multilingual learners:** Use the slide images and the organizer's icons. Allow predictions in a first language.
- **Challenge:** Students note every moment of foreshadowing and predict how each will pay off.

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Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Prediction Log	Check comprehension and inference during reading
Assessment as learning	Heist Map organizer	Students practise identifying plot structure

Part I at a glance

- **Setup:** A stormy night at the Whites' isolated house. Mr. White and his son Herbert play chess while Mrs. White knits.
- **Visitor:** Sergeant-Major Morris, back from years in India, tells them about a monkey's paw that an old fakir put a spell on to show that fate rules people's lives, and that people who interfere with it are sorry. Three men can each have three wishes.
- **Warning signs:** The first owner's third wish was for death. Morris throws the paw into the fire, and Mr. White rescues it.
- **Inciting incident:** Mr. White wishes for 200 pounds to pay off the house. The paw twists in his hand.

Teacher notes

- Plot structure is a tool, not a rule. Plenty of great stories bend it. Students will see that later with Chopin's very short story.
- Reading aloud with expression models fluency and builds suspense. If you use an audio recording, preview it first.

Coming up

Lesson 3, The Monkey's Paw: three wishes, and the price of each.

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