

# The Chronicles of Harris Burdick Writing Unit

Year 5/6

HIAS English Team  
Spring 2020  
Final version

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# Using the Home Learning Materials

## The materials

- Each writing booklet contains a sequence of 5 lessons.
- You should set aside time to complete each of the lessons in order.
- Each lesson will take no more than 30 mins to complete.

## How to use

- Read the instructions carefully before you start a task.
- Each lesson has a simple explanation and examples to get you started.

## How can parents, carers and siblings help?

- Read the extracts aloud with your child
- Collect interesting words and phrases on paper / post-its as they read
- Talk to your children about their ideas before they write
- Adapt any of the resources and materials as you feel necessary to support your child's needs

## 5 day writing sequence

This sequence is developed around the two texts: The Mysteries of Harris Burdick by Chris Van Allsburg and an extract from The Chronicles of Harris Burdick. Both texts are available online and can be found using the following links:

[https://mrsgraveswebsite.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/6/8/12686140/the\\_mysteries\\_of\\_harris\\_burdick.pdf](https://mrsgraveswebsite.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/6/8/12686140/the_mysteries_of_harris_burdick.pdf)

[http://onlinereadfreenovel.com/chris-van-allsburg/36746-the\\_chronicles\\_of\\_harris\\_burdick\\_14\\_amazing\\_authors\\_tell\\_the\\_tales.html](http://onlinereadfreenovel.com/chris-van-allsburg/36746-the_chronicles_of_harris_burdick_14_amazing_authors_tell_the_tales.html)

### Teaching sequence:

- 1) Response to Reading
- 2) Vocabulary
- 3) Exploring the Writing
- 4) Grammar Practice and Play
- 5) Writing Challenges

# Lesson 1 – Response to Reading

**Explore the Mystery of Harris Burdick. Websites and PPTs are available at:**

[https://mrsgraveswebsite.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/6/8/12686140/the\\_mysteries\\_of\\_harris\\_burdick.pdf](https://mrsgraveswebsite.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/6/8/12686140/the_mysteries_of_harris_burdick.pdf)

<http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/harrisburdick/>

**Read the introduction letter** (available for printing on page 11)

**As you read make notes:**

- Is there any vocabulary you don't understand?
- Do you have any questions?
- How does it make you feel?

**Answer the following questions:**

Who was Harris Burdick?

How many stories did he say he had written?

How does the introduction letter affect the way we read the book?

## Lesson 2 – Vocabulary

***Proverb: a short, well-known saying, stating a general truth or piece of advice***

In ‘Under the Rug’, the author uses lots of proverbs to express the advice Grandma continually gives. Can you match the proverb to its definition?

Let sleeping dogs lie.
All that glitters is not gold.
Don't count your chickens before they hatch.
Never sweep a problem under the carpet.

The beauty on the surface does not always reflect what is hidden inside.
Don't be too confident that all will be well.
Avoid interfering in a situation that is currently peaceful as it won't be once you interfere.
Don't ignore a problem or difficulty in the hope that it will be forgotten.

# Lesson 3- Exploring the Writing

Read the extract from ‘Under the Rug’  
by Jon Scieszka (available for printing  
on page 12)

The purpose of the writing is to  
entertain.

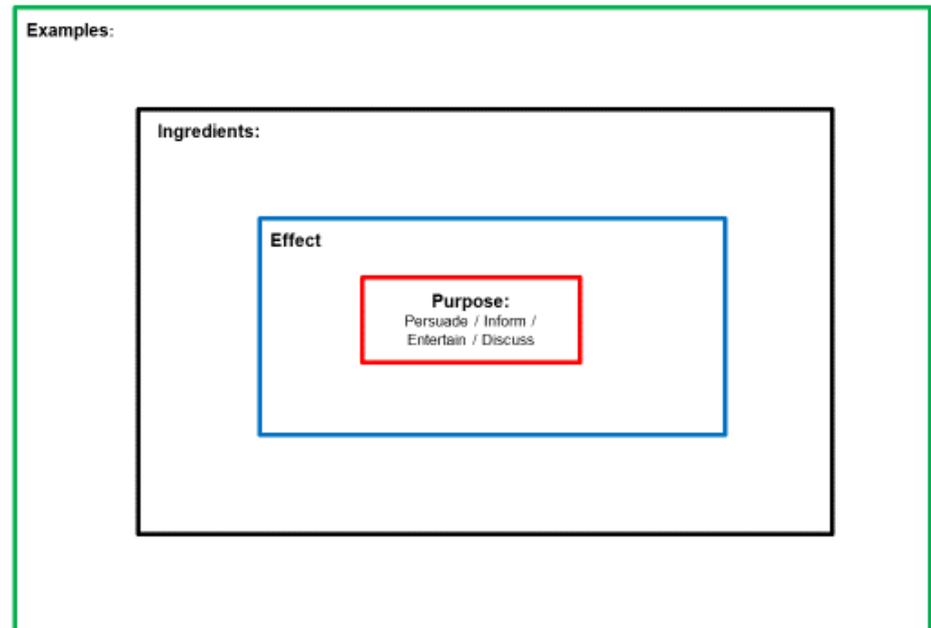
What is the effect the writer creates?

Do they manage to:

- develop a sequence of events?
- build tension and suspense?
- hint at the relationship between the characters?

How has the writer achieved this?

Collect examples that demonstrate  
how this has been achieved effectively  
in the text.



## Lesson 4 – Grammar Practice and Play

I dropped the rug in a panic.

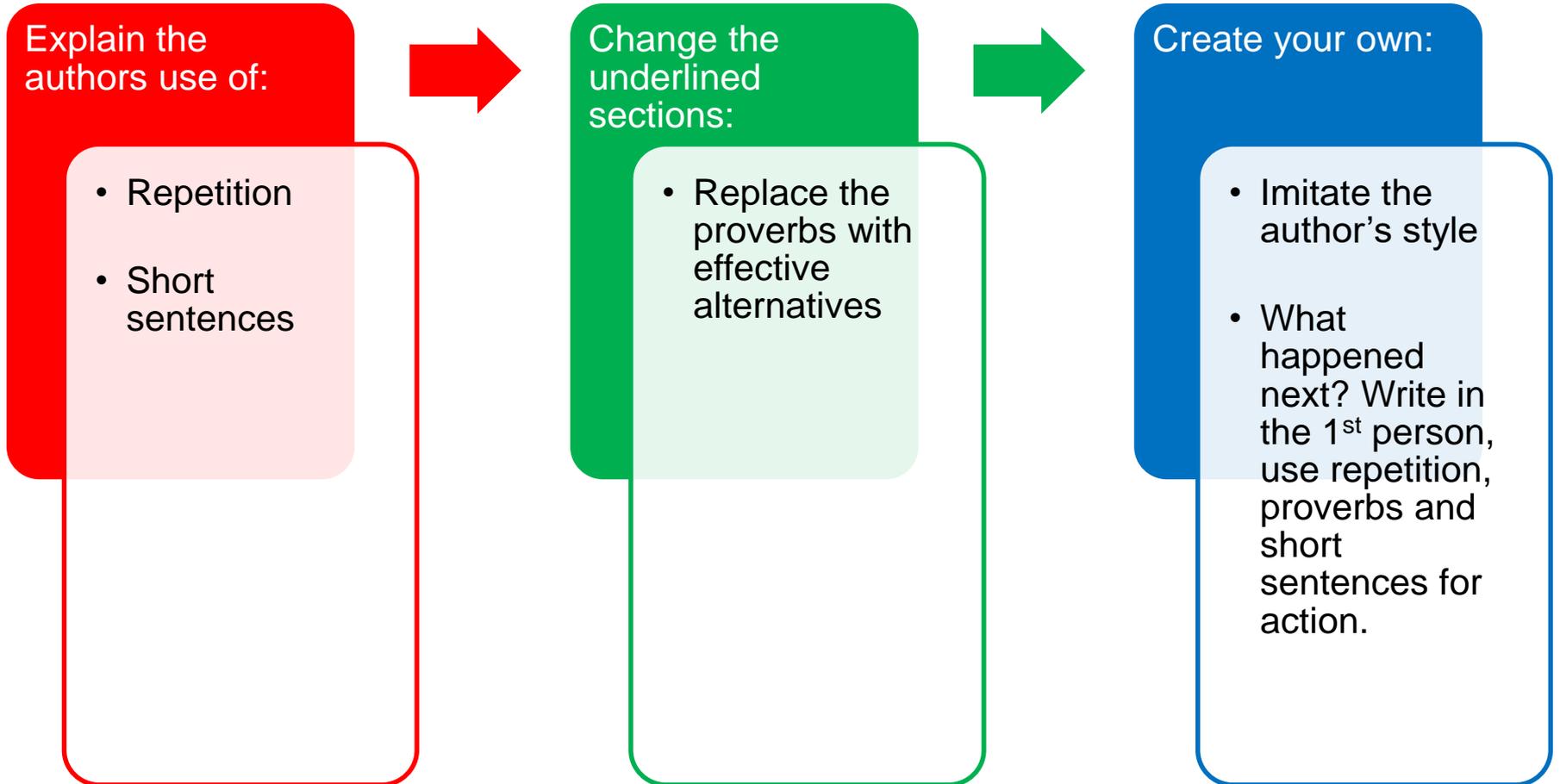
**The lump** I had swept under the rug heaved. **The lump** growled.

I knew I had to take the bull by the horns. I had to strike while the iron was hot. I had to make hay while the sun was shining.

I dragged the bookcase over and dropped it on the bulge in the rug.

**Something** squeaked. **Something** groaned. Then it was quiet. The bookcase leaned against the wall a bit crooked, but **everything was fine**. **Everything was fine**.

# Lesson 4 – Grammar Practice and Play



## Lesson 5 – Writing

Continue the story using the image and opening line provided by Harris Burdick.



### UNDER THE RUG

Two weeks passed and it  
happened again.

## Introduction

I first saw the drawings in this book a year ago, in the house of a man named Peter Wenders. Though Mr. Wenders is retired now, he once worked for a children's book publisher, choosing the stories and pictures that would be turned into books.

Thirty years ago a man called at Peter Wenders' office, introducing himself as Harris Burdick. Mr. Burdick explained that he had written fourteen stories and had drawn many pictures for each one. He'd brought with him just one drawing from each story, to see if Wenders liked his work.

Peter Wenders was fascinated by the drawings. He told Burdick he would like to read the stories that went with them as soon as possible. The artist agreed to bring the stories the next morning. He left the fourteen drawings with Wenders. But he did not return the next day. Or the day after that. Harris Burdick was never heard from again. Over the years, Wenders tried to find out who Burdick was and what had happened to him, but he discovered nothing. To this day, Harris Burdick remains a complete mystery.

His disappearance is not the only mystery left behind. What were the stories that went with these drawings? There are some clues. Burdick had written a title and caption for each picture. When I told Peter Wenders how difficult it was to look at the drawings and their captions without imagining a story, he smiled and left the room. He returned with a dust-covered cardboard box. Inside were dozens of stories, all inspired by the Burdick drawings. They'd been written years ago by Wenders' children and their friends.

I spent the rest of my visit reading these stories. They were remarkable, some bizarre, some funny, some downright scary. In the hope that other children will be inspired by them, the Burdick drawings have been reproduced here for the first time. *Chris Van Allsburg*

You should always listen to your grandma. It might save a life. Grandmas say a lot of crazy things.

Things like . . . *Look before you leap. If the shoe fits, wear it. Sit up straight.*

So you never know what is really good advice and what is just crazy-talk. But grandmas know a lot. You should listen to them. I should have listened to my grandma.

It started on Wednesday, five Wednesdays ago. I know it was Wednesday because Wednesday is sweeping day. Every Wednesday we sweep the house. Grandma sweeps the kitchen. I sweep the living room.

At breakfast that morning, five Wednesdays ago, Grandma told me:

*Hunger is the best sauce. Let sleeping dogs lie. That sweater and bow tie make you look like an old man.*

I was sweeping and thinking that I like my sweater, I like my bow tie.

Which is probably why I forgot the other thing Grandma always says: *Never sweep a problem under the rug.*

I finished sweeping the living room. I put away the dustpan. I was just walking into the kitchen... when I saw the dust bunny under the couch.

I swept the dust bunny under the rug. And I didn't give it another thought until the next Wednesday.

That morning Grandma said: *Never say never. Don't count your chickens before they hatch. What happened to that cake that was on the table?*

In the living room, I swept up a trail of cake crumbs that disappeared under the rug. I lifted up the rug. The trail led straight to a clump of hair and crumbs and dust and two glowing red eyes that looked very angry.

The dust bunny had grown into a Dust Tiger!

I dropped the rug.

I couldn't tell Grandma, so I put the end table over the lump in the rug.

That worked sort of okay for about a week. Then the cat food started to disappear. Something got into the garbage under the sink.

I tiptoed into the living room. I peeked under the rug.

I saw a huge twisted knot of hair, dirt, liver-flavoured Kibbles 'n Bits and pieces, coffee grounds, orange peels, two chicken bone horns... and those angry red eyes staring hungrily at me. The Dust Tiger had grown into a Dust Devil!

## HIAS English team

The HIAS English team offer a wide range of high-quality services to support schools in improving outcomes for learners, including courses, bespoke consultancy and in-house training.

**During the current school closures, we are still offering school support in a variety of ways such as video conferencing, phone calls and bespoke creation of resources remotely. Coming soon will be teacher training via virtual classrooms. We would be happy to discuss your needs.**

For further details referring to English, please contact:  
Emma Tarrant : [emma.tarrant@hants.gov.uk](mailto:emma.tarrant@hants.gov.uk)

For further details on the full range of services available please contact us using the following details:

Tel: 01962 874820 or email: [hias.enquiries@hants.gov.uk](mailto:hias.enquiries@hants.gov.uk)

