



## DAVE COUSINS Author Visit – Before the Event.

First of all, thanks for inviting me to visit – I’m really looking forward to meeting you all.

I put together this sheet in response to requests for resources and ideas for how to make the most of a visit, so that the children get as much as possible from the experience, as well as ways to extend the impact of an event afterwards.

I appreciate that time is limited, but here are a few suggestions for activities that might be of interest, and hopefully support the work that you are doing already.

### 1. QUESTIONS

One of the easiest ways to prepare for the visit is to read the start of one of the books to the class, then see if they can think of some questions they might like to ask me when we meet. Maybe they could write these down, so they don’t forget! I’ll make sure to save some time at the end of the session to answer questions.

Alternatively, show the class one of the videos on my website or YouTube Channel, where I read the first chapter.

<https://www.davecousins.net/robot-babysitter-7/>

<https://www.youtube.com/@DaveCousinsAuthor>

Here’s the start of the second book in the robot series – **IS MY TEACHER A ROBOT?**

<https://youtu.be/agJfM3H5WrE>

### 2. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Read the first chapter of **A ROBOT ATE MY GRANDMA** to the class, or watch the video.

<https://youtu.be/ljKDcdf3iTU>

The chapter ends with a classic *dum-dum-dah!* cliff-hanger moment. Ask the children to write the next chapter, or draw a one-page comic showing what they think will happen next. When I visit I can read them the next chapter, and we can compare and discuss our ideas for where the story might go. (*Thanks to Mrs Freeman at Beanfield Primary for this one.*)

### 3. CLIFF-HANGER

Extend the above exercise by talking about the use of cliff-hangers at the end of a scene to create suspense, so the reader HAS to read on in order to find out what happens.

Discuss what else happens in Chapter One to create suspense – Robin’s secret that he is a robot, for example. Giving characters a secret that must not be revealed, is another great way to create suspense in a story. Can the children write the start of a story where a character is trying to protect a secret that is in danger of being discovered? Be sure to finish the scene on a cliff-hanger!

#### **4. SUSPENSE – *Create suspense to keep your readers reading!***

Explore further ways we can create suspense in a story.

1. Impose a **TIME-LIMIT**. (eg. The ship is sinking; the final whistle is about to blow; Mum and Dad will be home soon and it’s going to take ages to clear up this mess . . .)
2. Have a **SECRET** that must not be revealed. Let the reader know early on what this is, and importantly, what is at stake – ie. how bad things will get if the secret gets out!
3. Show character **FLAWS & FEARS**. (eg. Our hero is clumsy; gets very nervous before a big match; is scared of heights.) Let the reader know the hero’s fears and weaknesses early on, and then make sure these fears and weaknesses are tested as the story progresses. The reader will be in suspense wondering if, and how, the hero will cope!
4. End scenes with a **CLIFF-HANGER** so that the reader HAS to read on to find out what happens.
5. **FORESHADOWING**. Plant ‘seeds’ early in the story that will bloom later. (eg. Our hero is given something, and told “whatever you do, don’t get that wet.” We don’t know what will happen when they inevitably do fail to keep it dry — just that it will be BAD!
6. Use **DRAMATIC IRONY** – which is when the reader knows more than the characters themselves (eg. We know there is a monster hiding under the bed, or that the ladder has a broken rung, or the boat has a hole in it.) Unfortunately, our hero has no idea of the danger they are in!

Can the children find examples of these in books they like?  
Can they use them to write their own suspense filled story?

#### **5. WRITING PROMPTS**

Here are a few different prompts to spark some ideas for writing. These were originally created during lockdown and posted on my blog <https://davecousins.blogspot.com/>

May The Fourth Be With You!

<https://davecousins.blogspot.com/2020/05/writing-prompt-may-fourth-be-with-you.html>

You Can’t Bring THAT In Here!

<https://davecousins.blogspot.com/2020/04/writing-prompt-first-line-series-1.html>

Lost

<https://davecousins.blogspot.com/2020/04/writing-prompt-title-series-3-lost.html>



The Secret Life of Pets

<https://davecousins.blogspot.com/2020/04/writing-prompt-secret-life-of-pets.html>

Random Words Story Generator

<https://davecousins.blogspot.com/2020/04/writing-prompt-random-words-story.html>

Unexpected Item In Bagging Area

<https://davecousins.blogspot.com/2020/04/writing-prompt-title-series-4.html>

Liar!

<https://davecousins.blogspot.com/2020/04/writing-prompt-liar.html>

Or for the full list including a few not included here ...

<https://davecousins.blogspot.com/search/label/writing%20prompts>

I hope you find the above suggestions useful. Please let me know if you have additional ideas. Also, please see the SCHOOLS & EVENTS page on my website for further resources.

I look forward to seeing you all soon.