

# English Lesson

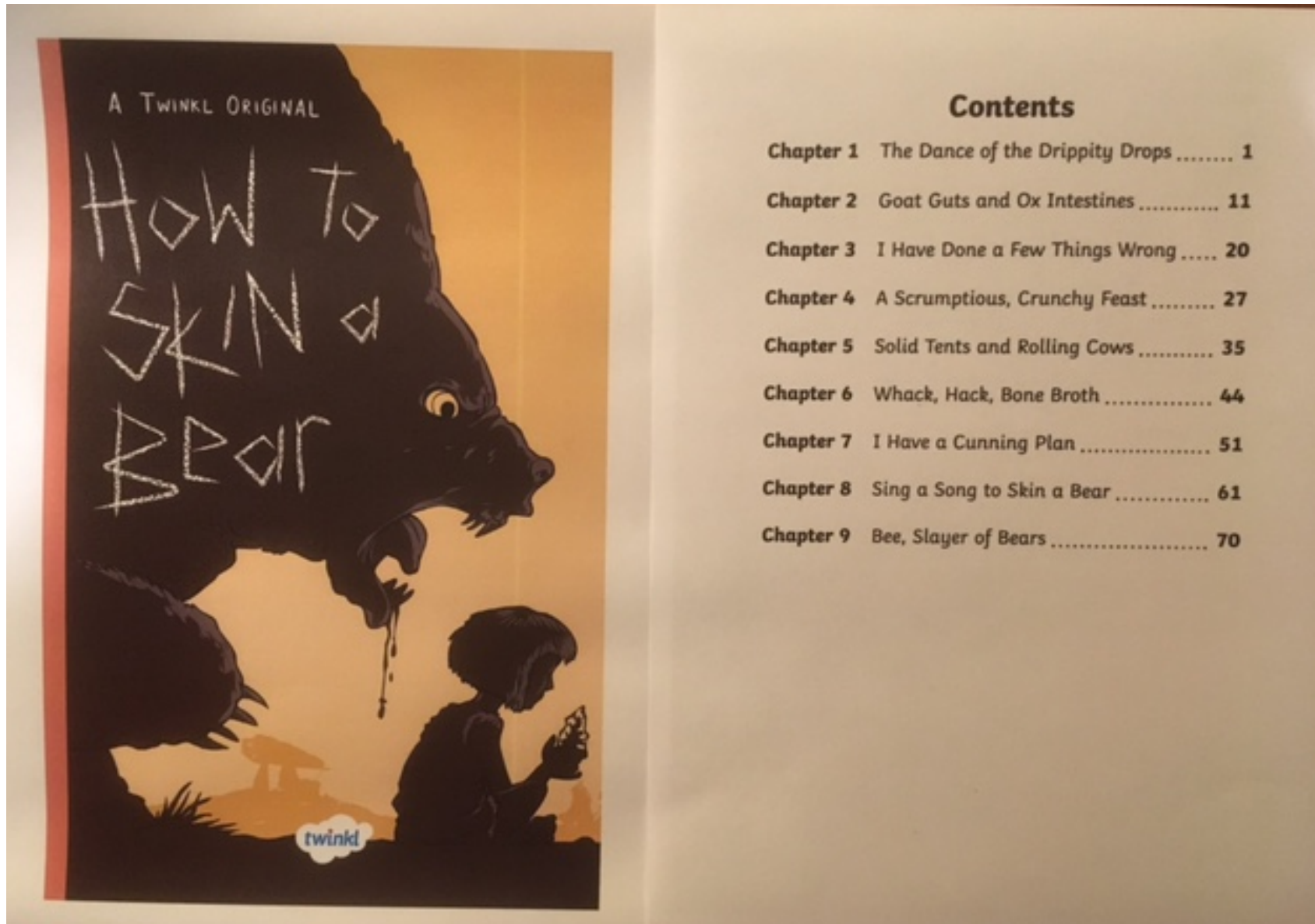
## Year 3

Write your date and title in  
your exercise book.

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January

Can I describe a story character?

Today we are going to read the first part of a story called, How to Skin a Bear.



This story is set in the **Stone Age**.

It is about a Stone Age girl called Bee and her Dog.

They have a very exciting adventure!

Read chapter 1 on the next 5 slides.



T

## The Dance of the Drippity Drops

"I *hate* feathers," I say, as Dad throws the limp, dead duck at me. It flip-flops through the air, until – *snap!* My dog, Dog, leaps up and snatches it in his pointy teeth. I grab the duck's scaly feet and yank firmly, but Dog won't let go.

"I *especially* hate feathers covered in dog slime," I snarl through gritted teeth.

"Well, plucking feathers is your job, Bee," says Dad,

chuckling. "As you get older, you will learn new skills, but for now, get plucking!"

My dad is the sort of dad whose goatskin tunic doesn't go all the way round his belly. He is also one of the tribe elders. That means that he gets to do fun jobs like hunting. It's so unfair. I could be a mighty hunter too, if only I had the chance.

After the elders come back from their hunt, Dad makes new bows from the animal guts and furry clothes from their skins.

"Rargh," I say, finally jerking the duck from Dog's slavering jaws. Dog huffs and shakes his tufty head, trying to spit the feathers from his teeth. I got a feather stuck in my teeth once. It was fluffy and sharp at the same time.

Ignoring my groaning, Dad sings as he mixes up the deer brains. He massages the brain goo into the deerskin that he's tanning.

*"Rubbing in the gloopy brain,*

*Gloopy brain, gloopy brain,*



*Rub the leather soft again,*

*Rubbing in the brain!"*

Glumly, I pull out hunk after hunk of feathers and throw them onto the ground. I'm tired and I'm grumpy. The tribe has been on the move for at least five suns now, trekking and tramping to our summer hunting ground at the Rock of the Long Sun. Travelling is boring. We walk all day, carrying everything we own on our backs, then we set up camp, and soon enough, we pack everything up and set off again. My feet are sore and my back is full of aches. Travelling is especially boring when you're the youngest in the tribe and your job is plucking duck feathers.

"I. Hate. Feathers," I growl, for probably the fifth time. "I hate ducks, too." Dog jumps up and down. Dog is my dog. I trained him from a puppy. He gets excited whenever I shout. He's still got feathers wedged between his teeth.

"Well, I don't hate ducks, Bee," says Dad, glancing towards me. "Duck skin makes lovely, soft leather. Your underpants are made of duck skin. *Rubbing in the brain...*" he continues to sing happily.


Fuming, I glare around at the tribe as they go about their fun, featherless tasks.

Knotted Mane is my dad's sister. Her job is to gather berries. She sneakily eats them as she's going along, so her lips are always juice-purple. I could learn to gather berries...

Breath of the Vulture is my dad's sister's man. He gets to make the drums and flutes for the ceremonies. I could learn to make an instrument...

Tumbling Pebble is Vulture's brother. He weaves the sticks and furs to make our shelter. I could learn to construct a shelter...

Bent Tree is the tribe's chief. She starts the fire with a stick and a clump of moss. Then, she sits by it all day long with her eyes closed. I could learn to build the fire...

Even Snore of the Rat is learning how to navigate, and he's only  2 summers older than me. I could learn to navigate, and I could do it a lot better than Rat!

Rat is pacing nearby. He's yammering to Bent Tree in that voice of his that sounds like a strangled goose. "I

This is how the character records the number 2.



believe that it is a trek  $\pi\pi$  suns long from the Wolf Claw Mountain until we reach Moaning Woman Tree," he says, "then the land will lead us to the Pig Lick River." He nearly steps on me so I whack him with the plucked duck.

"Oh, sorry, Bee, I didn't see you there. Still plucking feathers?" Rat smirks. "What a useless thing to do." Bent Tree ought to hit him with her walking staff, but instead she just lets him get away with it. I hate being the youngest in the tribe.

Moments later, Breath of the Vulture runs over. Vulture is a big man. Not big like my dad, but bulging with muscles. He's got a bent nose and bristling eyebrows and chest hair as thick as fur. His weathered face is stretched wide and panicky. He looks scared. I've never seen him scared before.

"Achoo, have you seen the sun?" he pants. Achoo is my dad. His real name is Sneeze of the Aurochs, but no one calls him that. He's nearly as big as an aurochs, but he's not as fierce-looking. He doesn't have horns, either.

"No, I haven't, Vulture," says Dad. "You shouldn't look at the sun, you know. It'll make your eyes hurt."

This is how the character records the number 3.

"But this is different. Come quickly!" says Vulture, running back towards a thick cluster of trees.

I drop the lifeless duck and run after him. Dog pants at my heels. Dad lopez behind, making the muddy ground thud with every heavy step. We run through the thick trees and ferns to a sloping clearing. Nearly the whole tribe has gathered. Some point and stare, some cover their eyes, some wail and moan. Bent Tree sits with her eyes closed, bathed in fiery light.

The sun is glowing red – really red. Red like a big pimple or those winter berries that gave Knotted Mane a stomach ache. Red like fresh blood.

"It's an omen!" cries Tumbling Pebble.

"The sun is sick!" shouts Snore of the Rat.

"The land will turn to ice!" warns Dad.

"The world is ending!" wails Breath of the Vulture.

I don't say anything. I think the sun looks as angry as a girl who has to pluck duck feathers *again*. But no one cares what I think.



Bent Tree doesn't cry or shout or wail. Slowly, she opens her crinkly eyes.

"The Sky Spirits are testing us," she says. Bent Tree is so old that her voice crackles. "In the stories, ill omens warned of the Long Frost. Our ancestors ignored the omens, and lived through a winter without end. We will not make the same mistakes that our ancestors made." She bangs her staff on the ground so hard that the tribe trembles. "We must perform the Ritual!"

Quickly, the elders put on their best furs and their deer skull masks. Dog runs around, yapping excitedly. Bent Tree's mask is the skull of a snarling cave lion. The lion's teeth hang over her eyes and scrunch up the skin on her face. I can't help but giggle.

"Dad," I tug Dad's goatskin until he pays attention to me. "It looks like Bent Tree's mask is eating her face." Dad doesn't think that it's funny.

"That mask has been passed down in our tribe since the Long Frost," he says, pulling his special deerskin over his shoulders. "In those days, cave lions still roamed this land. They were bigger than bears and fiercer than wolves. Few people were brave enough to fight them, and even fewer survived."

I roll my eyes. "I was only joking."

"That skull belonged to one of the last lions," Dad goes on, as though I'm not even there. "It was killed by Glinting Fang. She was fierce. She was strong. With one swipe of her axe, she brought the beast down and saved her tribe. We still remember her in song:

*"Glinting Fang was fierce and bold,*

*With strength you could rely on.*

*Her axe was sharp, and with one stroke,*

*She bravely killed the lion!"*

"Good for her," I mutter under my breath. Dog licks my hand consolingly.

"Bent Tree wears that mask to remember Glinting Fang, and to honour her courage," says Dad, still lost in his story.

"Hey!" I stumble as someone pushes me from behind. It's Snore of the Rat. He's almost swamped in his best horse pelt and his mask comes down over his eyes. I don't even have any best furs or a skull mask. I'm too



young to join the Ritual.

Rat sneers. "Maybe when you save the tribe from a fierce lion, we'll write a song about you, Bee. Oh no, wait, all of the lions died in the Long Frost. That's too bad!" He minces past me and joins the elders at the fire. "Keep out of the way, Bee. This is too important to be ruined by your buzzing."

All dressed up, the elders gather around the fire. Vulture plays his bird-bone flute and Dad bangs the drums. I slink off into the shadows with Dog.

"The Dance of the Drippity Drops!" cries Bent Tree, and all of the elders raise their fingers and rain them down, their feet tap-tapping.

Off in the shadows, Dog and I dance the Dance of the Stick-Fetching Dog. Dog catches it really quickly, because he's an excellent hunter.

"The Song of the Swishing Stream!" cries Bent Tree, and all of the elders stomp round in a circle, yodelling.

In the shadows, Dog and I sing the Song of the Howling Dog. Dog is better at it than I am.

"The Procession of Shimmering Sunbeams!" cries Bent Tree, and all of the elders snap their fingers and leap up and down. Vulture pipes and Dad bangs.

In the background, Dog and I do the Procession of the Dog Chasing his Tail. We both run round and round in circles as Dog's tail swishes back and forth.

"And *bang, bang, bang*, and *twirl, twirl, twirl*," says Dad, as the elders prance and swirl, "*and jump, and spring, and HUERGH!*"

The elders freeze. Their mouths hang open and their arms are spread as they stare at the sky like fearsome monsters. I stare at the sky too, with my tongue hanging out. Without warning, Dog bounces up and nearly knocks me over, so I have to scratch his chin to calm him down.

We wait. No one says anything. Dark clouds gather over the red sun. Then a fat drop of rain lands on my tongue.

# Look at this description of one of the characters in the story. What is good about it?

Moments later, Breath of the Vulture runs over. Vulture is a big man. Not big like my dad, but bulging with muscles. He's got a bent nose and bristling eyebrows and chest hair as thick as fur. His weathered face is stretched wide and panicky. He looks scared. I've never seen him scared before.

Describes his size.

Compares him with someone else.

A simile comparing his chest hair to fur.

Describes how he is feeling.

Describes what he is doing.

Describes his nose and eyebrows.



Task: Look carefully at this picture of the main character and her dog in the story.

Write a paragraph to describe her and her dog.  
Put in lots of detail.  
You could describe:

- What she is wearing.
- Her face.
- Her hair.
- Her feet.
- How she is standing.
- Her personality.
- Her dog (fur, eyes, paws, ears etc)

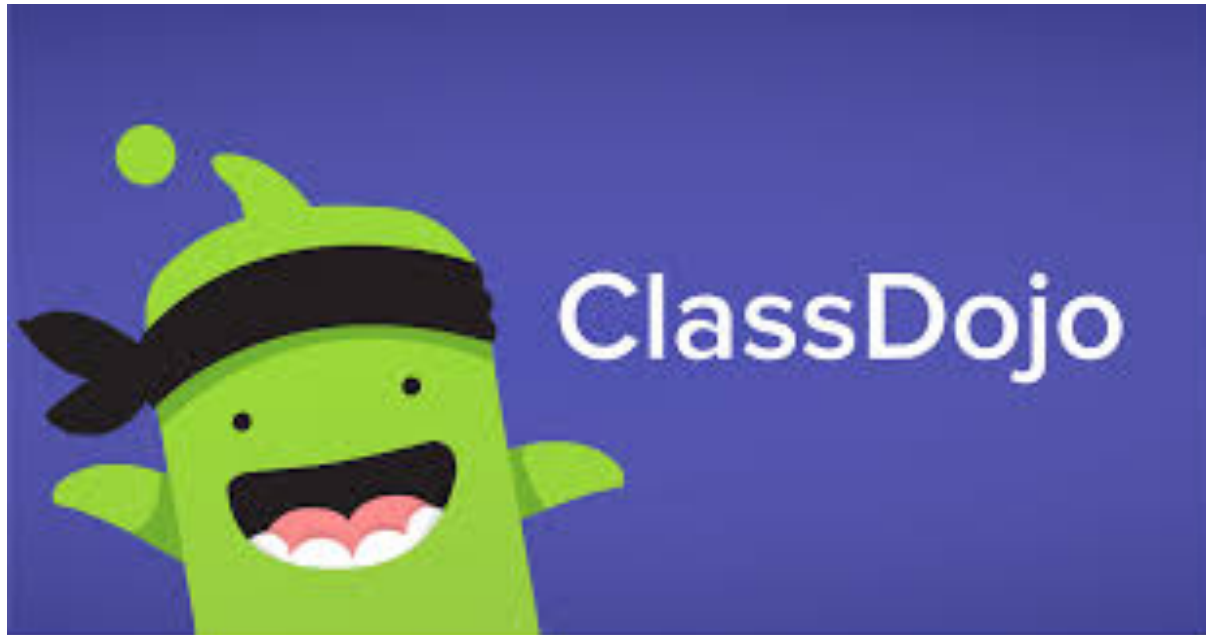


Look at the story for ideas.  
Look at the sentences starter list and the helpful words list for ideas.

Sentence Starters	Helpful Words
The girl is standing...	young
His eyes...	friendly
His paws...	fierce
He walks in a... way.	smiling
Her tunic is...	thick
There are...	furry
On her wrist...	bracelet
She looks...	leg warmers
Around her legs...	twine
	tame
	gentle
	careful
	alert
	nervously
	close
	loyal
	huge
	barefooted
	dazzling
	shimmering

# How did you do?

I can't wait to read what you have written.



Don't forget to put your  
finished work on Class  
Dojo!