

Write a Story with Rocket

Rocket's Word Tree

duck



Sun



pencil



at

log



of

dog



snail



rock



ant



butterfly



owl



for

bug



book



hill



bee



under

crab



tail



swing



Rocket Writes a Story • by Tad Hills

Rocket Writes a Story

EDUCATOR GUIDE

About the Book

Once Rocket learned to read, it was no surprise that he wanted to write a story. Students will be delighted to watch Rocket as he follows the steps in the writing process, just as they do. First Rocket sniffs out new words for his word tree and finds an inspiring topic for his story. He writes—and rewrites—every day and even draws pictures to go with his story. Along the way, his teacher offers encouragement and asks questions to help Rocket add details to his writing. And best of all, when he is finished, Rocket shares his writing with a new friend, the owl.

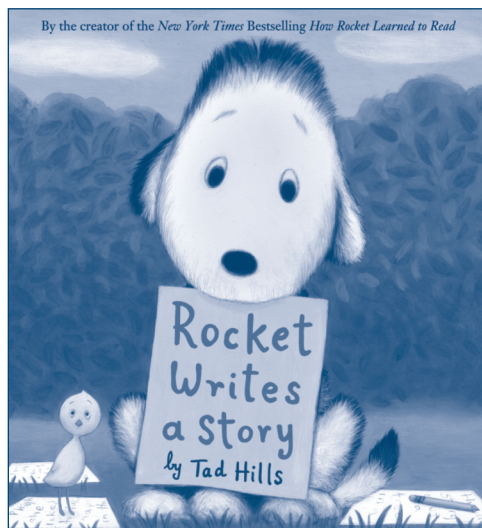
A Note to Teachers

Rocket knows words, but like many beginning readers and writers, he doesn't always know how to spell them correctly. The little yellow bird makes a word tree for Rocket, just as many teachers make word walls with sight words and vocabulary words in their classrooms. Children can refer to word walls (or their personal word trees), as Rocket does, to help them spell tricky words in their writing.

But of course, it is impossible (and impractical!) to include every word a student may need on a word wall. As a result, children often attempt to spell words using the sounds they hear, which may result in “invented” spelling. It is important to allow students to use invented spelling so they can get their ideas down on paper and develop a love of writing. If they can only use words they know how to spell perfectly, then their writing will be very limited. Correct spelling will come with continued exposure to words in print and some specific spelling instruction.

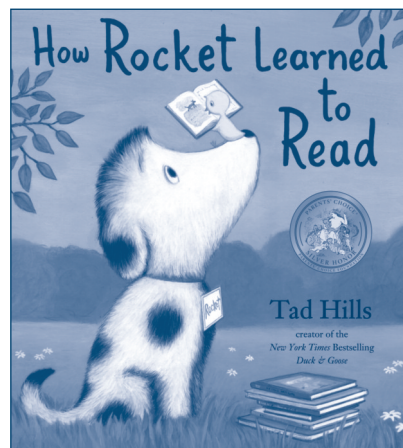
Pre-Reading Discussion

Reread *How Rocket Learned to Read* as an introduction to the new book. Ask the class what else they do with words besides read them. When one pipes up with spell and/or write, it is time to read *Rocket Writes a Story!* Before reading, ask students where they have found words they use in their writing. In the book, Rocket finds new words by exploring the world around him. Children, too, write about what they see and hear in their own lives.

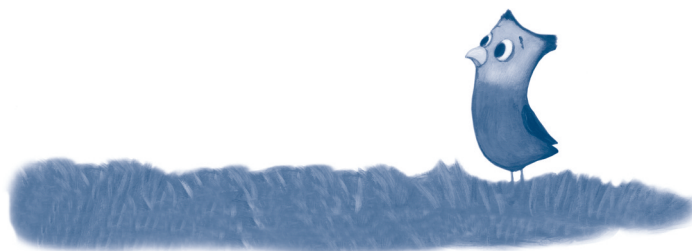


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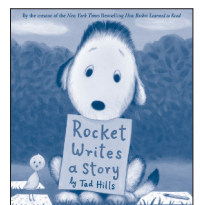


My Story



Write and illustrate your own story about Rocket.
You can use words from Rocket's word tree or your own.

EDUCATORS: Reproduce this activity sheet for your students.



Classroom Activities

Going on a Word Hunt

Each student should carry a zip-lock sandwich bag with six 2" x 2" blank word cards and a small pencil. If six word cards are too much for your little ones, use just three or four. Go on a walk around the school, neighborhood, or classroom to have students collect words. This technique can be used throughout the year on class trips. For example, if you are going to a pumpkin patch on an autumn field trip, have the class collect words for the things they see there. This strategy will remind students that they can write about their experiences.

Growing a Word Tree

Each student should have a word tree! While it would be effective to use a huge word tree as a word wall in your classroom to remind the class of words they are working on together, each student will find different words inspiring, so a personal word tree is ideal.



- Have the class glue one side of their word tree into their writing journal so that when they lift the sheet, the word tree is revealed.
- Go on a word hunt and let the class choose words they want to include in their writing. Students should write the word as best they can on the blank side of the card. Remember, their spelling won't be correct, but they will likely capture the most obvious sounds.
- Once students have a word, they can bring the card to you. Write the word correctly on the other side of the card. Encourage them by noting that capturing all the important sounds was great work. Then show them how the word will look when they see it in books.
- Return from the word hunt with zip-lock bags full of wonderful, glorious words!
- Have students illustrate their words on the side of the card with the correct spelling.
- Have students paste their words on to their very own word tree. By using these words in their own stories, the words will become familiar to them.

Putting Pencil to Paper

Once the class has their word trees finished, they are ready to write a story. Let them look over their words and decide what they want to write about. Rocket had many words to choose from, but he decided that writing about the owl was what interested him most. In Rocket's story, Owl wanted to meet Rocket, but she was too timid. So she waited until she trusted him and then went down to meet him. Children can write a similar story with their teacher's help and support. First they should identify what they want to write about from their word tree. Then they can come up with a story by loosely following the strategy below.

Everyone has a story to tell. What's yours?

Story parts	Explanation	How it worked in Rocket's story
Somebody	Who are you writing about?	Owl
Wanted	What did he or she want to do?	She wanted to meet Rocket.
But	There is always a problem in a story. What will your character's problem be?	She was too shy.
So	What did your character do to solve the problem?	She began to trust Rocket and went down to meet him.

Make the connection for the students between Rocket's story and what they are going to write. To reinforce the strategy you can write a simple story using the Somebody-Wanted-But-So structure on an interactive whiteboard or a chalkboard. Sometimes a structure like this will provide the support a child needs to write. Consider pairing students up to write a story together. Don't expect amazing short stories from the class if this is the first time they have been introduced to the elements of a story. In time, they will write more and will feel more comfortable with the task.

Vocabulary Growth

Vocabulary growth occurs for young children in the most playful of ways. For example, when they find something they want to record on a card, they might not know the word for it. They might never have heard an acorn called by that name. They might not know that a certain flower is called a daisy. By using another word for it, their vocabularies grow by leaps and bounds. Let them decide which word ("flower" or "daisy") they want to use in their story. Even if they choose to use "flower" (it is their story, after all!), they have been exposed to another word, and that is always a good thing!

Special Rocket Words

In *Rocket Writes a Story*, the little yellow bird gives Rocket a word she thinks he will find useful. Tell the class that you will give each of them a special word from the book for their word tree, just like the little yellow bird did for Rocket. Choose words from the book that will tickle them, like:

inspire	feathers	splendid	enjoy
breeze	announce	adventure	beautiful
rustle	collection	brand-new	story
chirp	present	poke	listen
smell	morning	friendly	pictures
meadow	growled	beak	perfect
buttercup	daytime	edge	blink
brave	ground	yellow	tricky

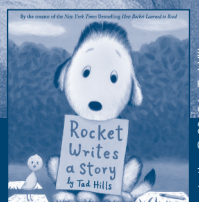
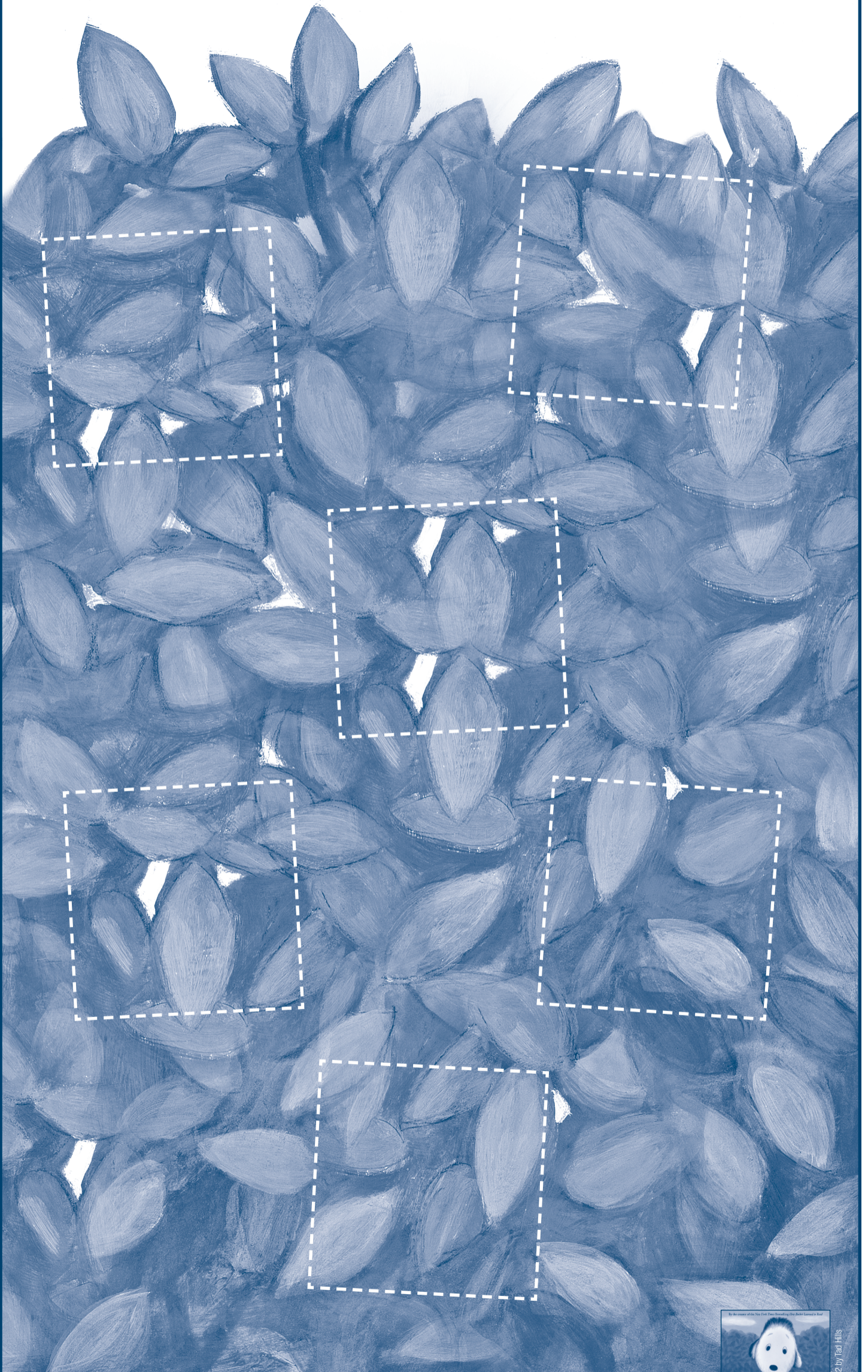
These words are NOT meant for students to memorize or sort. They are vocabulary words that they can use when they write their stories—even if they misspell them initially!

Share Their Work

How nice it would be to have parents in for an author's chair presentation where the children read their stories aloud! The evening can begin with a performance of *Rocket Writes a Story* in a Readers' Theater format, followed by each student reading his or her own story. It is great fluency practice for these beginning readers, parents will love to see their little one in the spotlight, and a lovely home-school connection is made.



Word Tree



Word Hunt

In the squares below, write down the words you learn on your class's word hunt, and draw a picture to show what each new word means. Then, with an adult's help, carefully cut out each square and paste it onto your word tree.



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