The Door in the Tree

Grade 3 writing · creative writing prompt

Name _____ **Date** _____



Look closely before you write. The details you notice are the ones that make a story feel real.

Deep in the woods there is a door in the bottom of an old tree. Today it is **open**, and there is a light on inside.

Who lives there? Why is the door open today, when it has always been shut? What happens to the first person who walks up the step?

Part A — look first. Write what you can actually see in the picture.

1. Name three things beside the door.

2. What is hanging on the tree?

3. What can you see *through* the doorway?

4. What time of day do you think it is? How can you tell?

Part B — plan your story. Fill every box before you start writing. Notes, not sentences.

Who lives behind the door?	
Who finds the door?	
Why is the door open today?	
What goes wrong?	
How does it end?	

Part C — write your story. Use your plan. Start with the moment someone sees the open door.

Part D — check your work. Tick each one when you have checked it.

1. My story has a beginning, a middle and an end.
2. Something goes **wrong** in the middle.
3. I used at least three details from the picture.
4. Every sentence starts with a capital and ends with a mark.

The Door in the Tree — Answer Key

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Part A — what is actually in the picture

1. Beside the door: **ferns, moss, white flowers, mushrooms, a stone step, tree roots, ivy.** Any three.
2. Hanging on the tree: **a lantern**, on an iron bracket.
3. Through the doorway: **a lit room — a shelf of books, a wooden chair, a warm yellow glow.**
4. Time of day: **answers vary, but the reason matters.** Daylight on the ferns says afternoon; the lit lantern says evening is coming. Accept either with a reason drawn from the picture.

Part B and C

There is no right story. Mark the **plan against the draft**: a student who planned a problem and then wrote a story without one has not used the plan, and that is the single most useful thing to point out at this level.

What to look for in a Grade 3 story. A beginning that puts someone somewhere, a middle where something goes wrong, and an ending that settles it. Most first drafts at this age are a list of things that happened with no problem anywhere — if that is what you get, ask one question: “what went wrong?” and let them add it.

Do not mark spelling on the draft. This sheet is assessing story structure and use of detail. Correcting spelling in a first draft teaches children to write short sentences using only words they are sure of, which is the opposite of what a creative writing prompt is for.