SPECULATIVE FICTION & THE MORAL IMAGINATION

WEEK 01 / PUBLIC SAMPLE LESSON

The Mission of the Mutt

An unlikely squire. A first mission. A very bad day.



ILLUSTRATION FROM THE ETERNOSWORD SAGA

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

Students encounter an exciting adventure, follow connections into language and chivalric history, defend a character with evidence, and create a miniature scene using their first camera and editing techniques.

READ

Prologue + Chapters 1–2

Meet Mick as his first mission goes awry.

EXPLORE

Word, faith, and history

Follow logos and the work of a squire.

CREATE

Film or storyboard

Stage dialogue, a twist, and a payoff.

AGES: 12–15 • FORMAT: Home, co-op, or hybrid classroom • PATHS: Film or draw

READ

Enter the Adventure

Bring your book. The most persuasive interpretation begins with something the novel actually says.

THE THREE READING STOPS

PROLOGUE	A glimpse of danger outside Godstream.
CHAPTER 1	Mick's family, the festival, and the first mission.
CHAPTER 2	Taken into custody, meeting Slayer Knights, and finding the thief.

LOOK CLOSER / 1

The Under"dog"

In Chapter 1, Mick describes himself as an "annoying rag stuck to their boot. No, even worse... Rags don't lose weapons." How does this acute sense of failure influence his decision to accept the SSM Sack mission from his father? Is he motivated by filial obedience, by a desire to prove he is more than a "mutt," or by something deeper?

Use a passage to support your interpretation.

LOOK CLOSER / 2

Hubris vs. Humility

Analyze the brothers' interaction with their father on the dock. Lionel sneers, "A Slayer Knight needs quality steel, otherwise he's just a... look, the little mutt shouldn't even be here!" How does this introduce the action-adventure (shōnen) trope of the highly gifted yet arrogant sibling? Contrast the twins' athletic perfection with their dependence on Mick's behind-the-scenes labor.

What does the contrast reveal about pride, service, and real ability?

EXPLORE

Follow the Threads

Ancient words, real historical duties, and Catholic thought enrich the story. Research with care: an intriguing guess is not the same as a fact.

INVESTIGATION 01 / WORD DETECTIVE

Choose two words. Infer each meaning from context, then check a trustworthy dictionary. Record the clue that helped you.

CONVULSIVE	Prologue	Context clue / meaning: _____
PROPHECY	Chapter 1	Context clue / meaning: _____
MERCURIAL	Chapter 2	Context clue / meaning: _____

INVESTIGATION 02 / THE LOGOS BOYS

A nickname with a mystery behind it

Lionel and Jonesy are called the Logos Boys, but the novel has not yet revealed why. Research the Greek word logos and read John 1:1. What might the name suggest? Offer two reasonable hypotheses supported by evidence—without presenting either as the known answer.

Hypothesis 1 and supporting clue:

Hypothesis 2 and supporting clue:

INVESTIGATION 03 / THE SQUIRE'S WORK

Research two historical responsibilities of medieval squires. Which resembles something Mick does? How could faithful service prepare somebody for leadership?

SPEAK

Defend the Underdog

This is an imagined hearing: not an event claimed to have occurred in the novel. Your job is to persuade with a fair reading of the story.

SPEAK & DEFEND / 2-MINUTE ORAL DEFENSE

Act as a legal advocate for Mick Calibourne before the Olympic Security Committee. Defend his conduct using three Aristotelian appeals. Speak for about two minutes; a short note card is permitted.

THREE PERSUASIVE TOOLS

LOGOS — Evidence & reasoning

Reconstruct what happened with the stolen coin bag. Use the actual timeline.

PATHOS — Appeal to compassion

Explain Mick's asthma emergency without exaggerating or inventing facts.

ETHOS — Character & credibility

Point to Mick's selfless assistance to the trapped street performer.

A BRIEF STRUCTURE YOU CAN FOLLOW

Opening (15 sec): Your claim about Mick. Case (75–90 sec): Evidence, human stakes, and character. Conclusion (15–30 sec): What should the committee decide—and why?

TWO ART FORMS / ONE STORYTELLING LANGUAGE

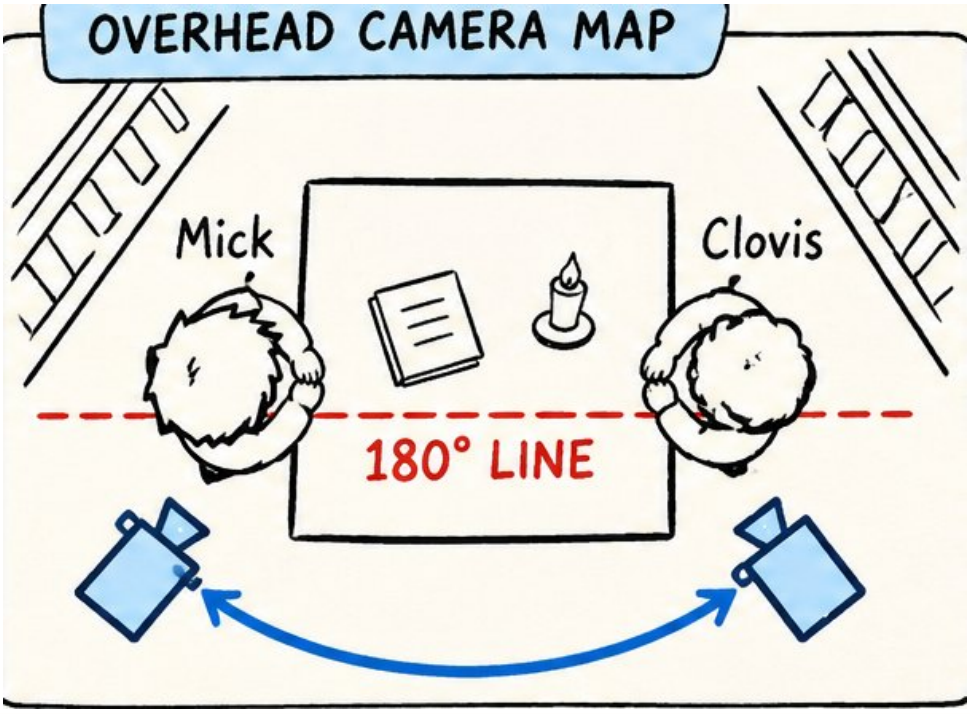
TOY-CINEMA: Film and edit a miniature scene with spoken dialogue.
STORYBOARD: Draw the same shots, camera positions, and dialogue in sequential frames.

FILM LANGUAGE

When Shots Speak to Each Other

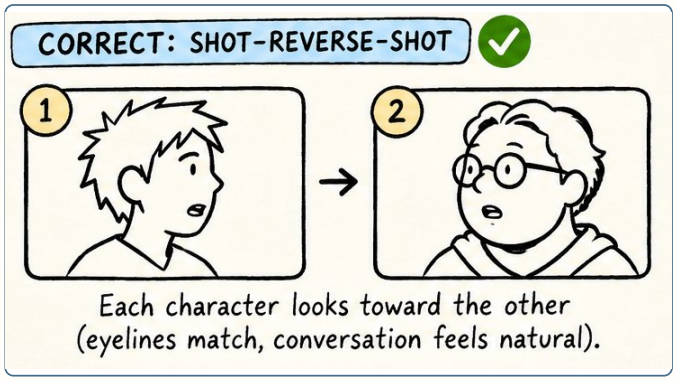
Two characters can look as though they are talking—even when you film them one at a time. The key is consistent eyelines.

FIGURE 1.1 / CAMERA PLAN: THE 180-DEGREE RULE

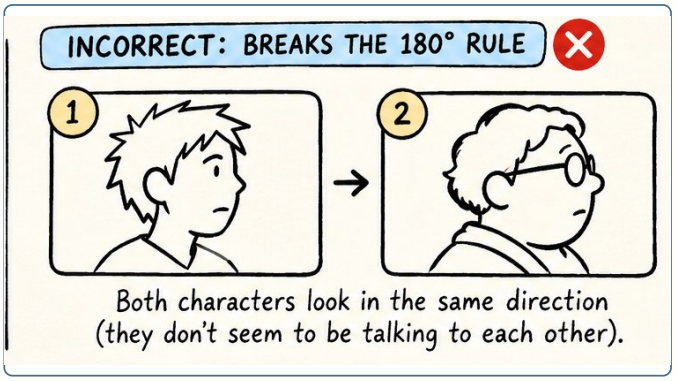


Place two figures facing each other across a tabletop. Take one over-the-shoulder photo of each, with both camera positions on the same side of the imaginary connecting line. One face should look right on screen, the other left.

CORRECT / OPPOSING LOOKS



INCORRECT / BOTH LOOK RIGHT



Quick test: Take two still photos before recording. Do the figures appear to look toward one another? If not, reposition the phone—not the actors. We revisit this rule in depth in Week 3.

CREATE

Your First Edited Scene

A tiny story with an opening, a surprise, and a payoff—made using only toys, a phone, and a simple editing app.

THE MISSION / ONE COMPLETE CREATION

Film a 20–45-second, 4–6-shot scene. Include a two-angle dialogue exchange, one visual surprise, and a clear closing reaction. Your eyeline photo test is the rehearsal for the same project, not an extra movie.

A / THE WETCAR HATCH TOSS / GUIDED ROUTE

Use the Chapter 1 mission. A father trusts his son; Mick is caught off guard; a bag comes flying—and the catch reveals what Dad already believes about him.

01	WIDE	Show Dad at the raised hatch and Mick on the dock.
02	SINGLE A	Dad gives his instruction or an encouraging line.
03	SINGLE B	Mick replies; his eyeline faces the opposite way.
04	MEDIUM	Dad suddenly sends the bag toward Mick.
05	CLOSE-UP	Mick catches it; finish on a reaction or quip.

Dialogue: Write two brief, plausible lines, or adapt lines from the book. If invented, do not present them as exact quotations.

B / THE PLAZA PURSUIT / CHALLENGE ROUTE

Prefer action? Recreate Mick's Chapter 2 chase, collision, and comic aftermath in 5–6 shots. Work in a short two-angle exchange if it naturally fits your version. The same framing and editing checks apply.

YOUR FIRST EDIT / IMOVIE, CAPCUT, OR KINEMASTER

1. Film each shot as a separate clip, with one voice line per camera angle.
2. Import the clips into your editor. Place them in story order.
3. Trim the beginnings and ends; cut between the two dialogue singles.
4. Play the scene. Can a viewer follow it without explanation?

Safety: use lightweight props, LED lamps, and stable tabletop sets. No real throws, running, weapons, or stunts.

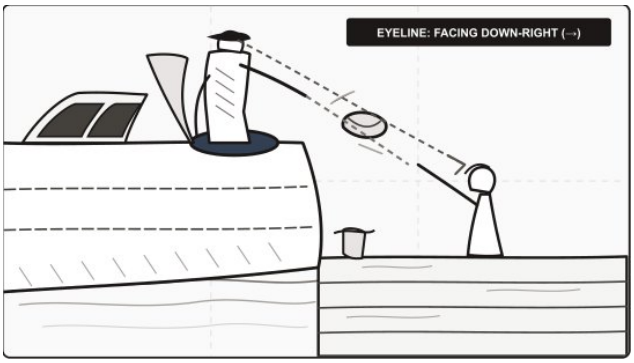
STORYBOARD MODEL

See It Before You Make It

Your own drawings may be crude. The important thing is to communicate where the camera looks and when the action changes.

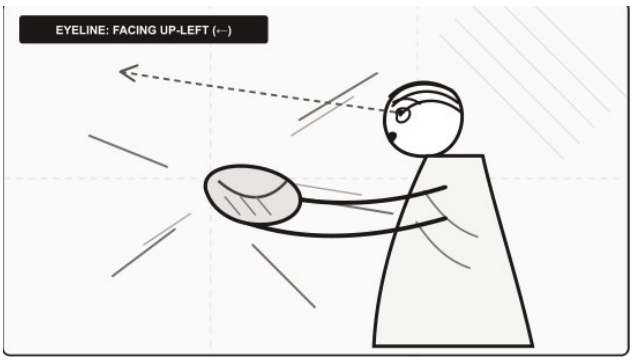
EXAMPLE / THE WETCAR HATCH TOSS FROM APPENDIX A

These two sample frames come from the original storyboard appendix. Use them to see how a wide frame establishes the setting and a close-up reveals the catch. Your own plan should add dialogue singles between those moments.



01 / WIDE

Dad above; Mick below on the dock.



05 / CLOSE

A bag arrives unexpectedly; Mick catches it.

ADD THE TWO TALKING-HEADS ANGLES

Between the establishing shot and the catch, draw Dad's single and Mick's reverse single. Keep their eyelines opposed. Use little camera arrows to show the direction; mark each line of dialogue below its picture.

STORYBOARDING PATH

Choose either the wetcar or the plaza scene. Draw five or six widescreen frames and note shot size, action, and short dialogue or sound cues. Storyboard students show the same visual reasoning as filming students, without needing an editing app.

Check: Can you identify the opening, turn, and ending? Does every change in viewpoint have a purpose?

Original artwork: Appendix A — Sequential Storyboard Template & Model, supplied by the author.

STUDENT WORKSHEET

Sketch Your Five-Shot Scene

Use five rough 16:9 thumbnails; add a sixth if the action needs another angle. Stick figures and arrows are welcome.

Student: _____ Scene: _____

01 / SETUP / WIDE

Where are we?

02 / FIRST SINGLE

Who speaks first?

03 / REVERSE SINGLE

Which direction is the listener looking?

04 / SURPRISE / MEDIUM

What changes suddenly?

05 / PAYOFF / CLOSE

How does the moment land?

06 / OPTIONAL CUT

Another view, sound, or reaction?

Before exporting or turning in: Confirm opposed eyelines, a real surprise, and a clear ending.

FOR PARENTS & CO-OP LEADERS

Teaching Week 1

A practical outline for guiding literary interpretation, humanities exploration, speaking, and first-time media production.

GOALS / STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO...

- [ ] Explain Mick's self-doubt using his internal monologue; contrast the brothers' pride with the parents' encouragement.
- [ ] Investigate logos and the historical squire while distinguishing a plausible hypothesis from confirmed information.
- [ ] Deliver a fair two-minute defense using logos, pathos, and ethos.
- [ ] Stage opposed eyelines, record two dialogue singles, and join clips in a basic editor—or draw equivalent storyboard frames.

A FLEXIBLE 60-MINUTE CO-OP MEETING

00–10	READ	The "mutt" monologue and the twins' dependence on Mick.
10–22	EXPLORE	Greek logos, John 1:1, duties of a historical squire.
22–36	SPEAK	Plan and rehearse the 2-minute advocacy defense in pairs.
36–49	DEMONSTRATE	Show the two singles, eyelines, and one simple editor cut.
49–60	PLAN	Draw five shots, assign props, and choose a scene route.

CHECK THE WORK / FOUR SIMPLE CRITERIA

STORY	Opening, meaningful turn, and clear payoff.
CONTINUITY	Opposed eyelines in the pair of singles.
EDIT / LAYOUT	Clips trimmed and sequenced; or storyboard panels clear.
REASONING	Student explains a filmed choice and supports a claim.

Home adaptation: Read and research before the meeting; complete filming/editing over several shorter sessions. Approx. 30–60 minutes of making time is reasonable for a beginner.