

LearnUp

Uplift. Upskill. Upgrade.

SPARK

Composition Framework

The follow-up to BLAST

From a single BLAST paragraph to a full narrative — a five-part scaffold for AEIS, PSLE and O-Level composition. Study the question. Plan the arc. Pick the emotion for each beat. Then draw on the BLAST paragraphs you already know to write a story that lands.



How to use this booklet

The idea

BLAST taught you how to write one polished emotion paragraph. SPARK teaches you how to chain those paragraphs into a complete narrative composition.

Every narrative composition you'll be asked to write — at AEIS, at PSLE, at O-Level — follows the same five-part architecture. SPARK names those five parts so you can plan instead of guess. The first four parts each carry one emotion (drawn from the 20 you memorised in BLAST). The fifth part — the conclusion — is a reflection. No single emotion. Looking back. Lesson learnt.

The five parts

- **S — SETUP.** The introduction. Ground the reader in the scene. Establish the character, the place, the goal. Emotion: usually calm, anticipating, or already mildly tense.
- **P — PROBLEM.** Something goes wrong. The complication arrives. Emotion: usually one of the Q1 or Q2 BLAST quadrants — anxiety, disappointment, suspicion, frustration.
- **A — APEX.** The climax. The worst moment. The point of no return. Emotion: peak intensity — pure terror, rage, grief, or overwhelming desperation.
- **R — RESOLUTION.** The problem is solved (or accepted). Emotion: relief, triumph, gratitude, or quiet acceptance — usually drawn from Q3 or Q4.
- **K — KEY TAKEAWAY.** The reflection. What did the experience teach the narrator? Tense usually shifts to a looking-back register. No single BLAST emotion — instead, a measured, slightly older voice.

The process

Before you write a single sentence, you do three things in order:

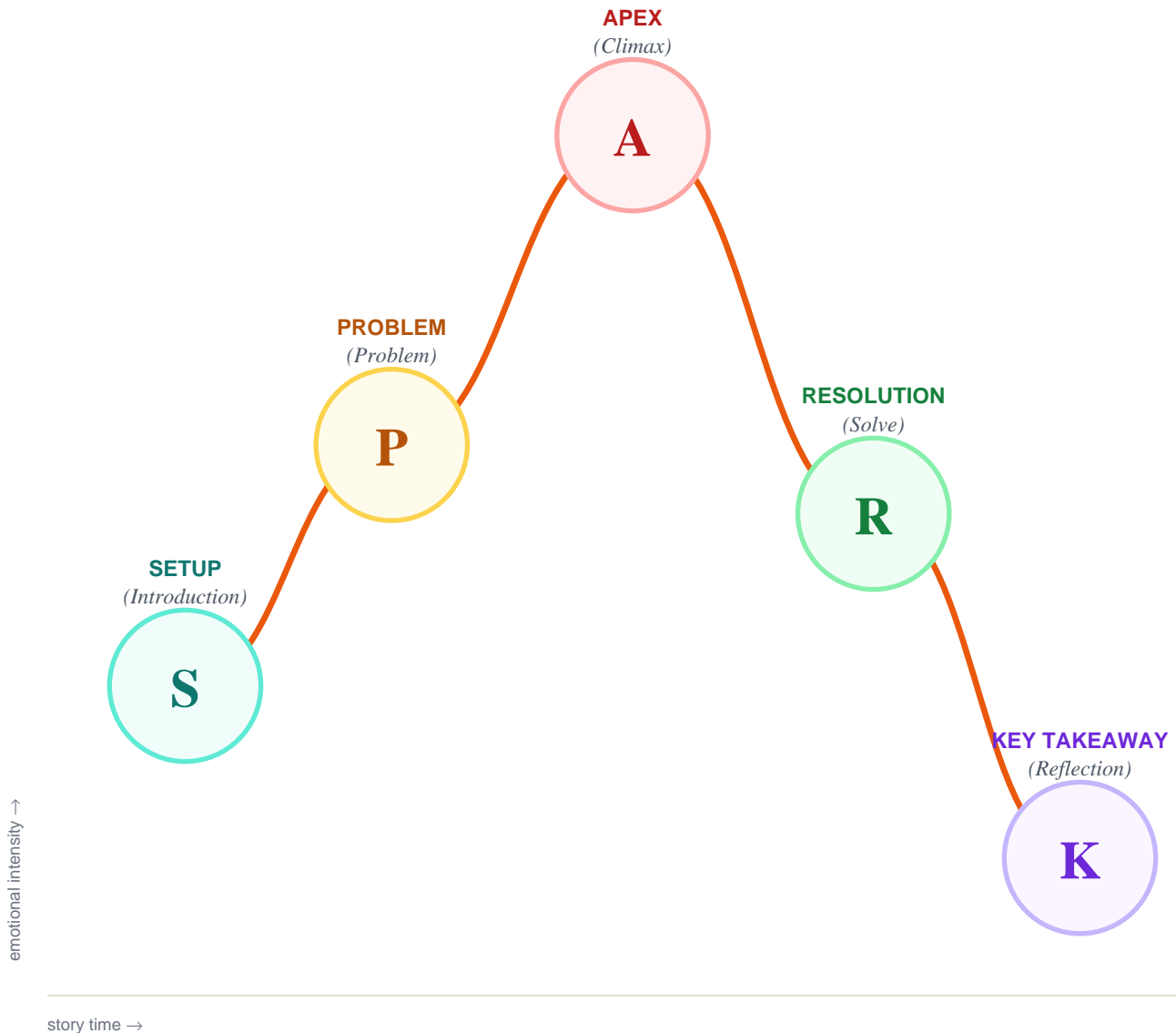
- **STUDY.** Read the question slowly, twice. Underline the must-includes. Identify the genre (narrative, recount, descriptive), the audience, the word count, and any prompt sentence you must use.
- **PLAN.** Fill in the SPARK planning sheet (see page 12). One line per part. Choose your emotion per part. Pick the scene anchors.
- **WRITE.** Now and only now, write the composition. For each of the first four paragraphs, deploy the BLAST framework — Body Language, Action, Speech, Thought — to render the emotion you planned. For the conclusion, drop the BLAST scaffold and write reflectively.

How this booklet is laid out

Pages 3–4 walk you through studying a question. Pages 5–6 walk you through building the plan. Pages 7–11 give one dedicated spread to each SPARK part — what its job is in the story, which BLAST emotions fit, a model paragraph, and the common pitfalls. Page 12 is a worked example. Page 13 is a blank planning sheet you can photocopy. Pages 14–16 are practice prompts to plan and write on your own.

The arc, at a glance

Every well-written narrative composition moves through these five beats in this order.



Read the arc, not the labels. The curve rises through Setup → Problem → Apex (your story's worst moment), then comes down through Resolution. The fifth stop sits lower because the conclusion is reflective, not high-pitched — you've stepped back from the scene to tell the reader what it meant.

1. Study the question

Before you plan, before you write — read the prompt twice and answer these six questions.

GENRE

Narrative? Recount? Descriptive? Argumentative? AEIS and PSLE composition prompts are almost always **narrative** — you're telling a story. But check before you assume.

WORD COUNT

Find the minimum (and any maximum). Plan to land 10–15% above the minimum, never below. For AEIS Sec 2, aim for 300–400 words. For O-Level, 350–500.

PROMPT SENTENCE

Many AEIS questions give you a sentence to *start with* or *include somewhere*. Copy it onto your plan exactly as written — getting one word wrong here is a one-mark loss for nothing.

MUST-INCLUDES

Underline every noun or verb you are required to feature. "Write a story about a time you helped a stranger" requires (a) you, (b) a stranger, (c) helping, (d) past tense. Miss one and the marker is already deducting.

TENSE + PERSON

First-person past tense is the default for AEIS / PSLE narratives. Don't drift into present tense in the climax — common mistake.

THEME (THE THING BEING TESTED)

Behind the prompt is usually a value being tested — courage, honesty, friendship, persistence, gratitude. Identify it. Your conclusion will return to this.

Worked example — studying one question

SAMPLE PROMPT · AEIS-style, Sec 2 entry

"Write a story in which the main character has to make a difficult decision. Your story must include the sentence: I knew, the moment I looked at him, that nothing I said next would change anything. "

GENRE

Narrative — a story about a moment.

TENSE + PERSON

Past tense, first person ("I knew...").

WORD COUNT

Target 300 – 400 words.

PROMPT SENTENCE (MUST INCLUDE)

I knew, the moment I looked at him, that nothing I said next would change anything.

MUST-INCLUDES

(a) main character, (b) difficult decision, (c) at least two people in the scene ("him").

THEME

Hard choices — the moments when knowing the right thing to say doesn't make saying it any easier.

EMOTIONAL ARC TO PLAN

Anxiety (S) → Suspicion or Guilt (P) → Grief or Rage (A) → Resolution / Resignation (R) → Reflection on what was learnt about hard choices (K).

2. Build the plan

One row per part. Two minutes per row. Plan fully before you write a single sentence.

Part	Role in story	Emotion chosen	Key beats (1–3 phrases)
S · Setup	Introduction		
P · Problem	Problem		
A · Apex	Climax		
R · Resolution	Solve		
K · Key takeaway	Reflection (reflect)	—	

A NOTE ON EMOTION CHOICE

Avoid using two emotions from the same BLAST quadrant in consecutive paragraphs — the story flattens. A good arc moves *across* quadrants. Anxiety (Q1) → Disappointment (Q2) → Rage (Q1) → Relief (Q4) is much more dynamic than Anxiety → Suspicion → Rage → Triumph (all high-energy). Mix temperature, not just intensity.

SETUP

S

Setup

(Introduction paragraph)

ROLE IN THE STORY

Ground the reader in your scene. **Who** is the narrator, **where** are they, **when** is this happening, and **what** are they about to do? Don't info-dump — slip in the answers through specific sensory detail. A reader should feel they are inside the scene by sentence three.

BLAST EMOTIONS THAT FIT

Usually a Q1 or Q4 emotion — **anxiety** (before a high-stakes moment), **anticipation**, **curiosity**, or **determination**. The opening doesn't need to be calm — it needs to be specific.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

Don't open with the weather. Don't open with "It was a Monday". Don't introduce more than two characters in the first paragraph — the reader will lose track. Don't over-explain backstory; the rest of the composition will fill the reader in.

MODEL PARAGRAPH · what a successful setup looks like

The corridor outside the staff room was lit by the same fluorescent tubes it had been lit by since I had first started at this school, and yet on that Wednesday afternoon, they seemed to buzz at a frequency my body had decided was personal. I rolled the strap of my bag between my fingers, the buckle ticking against the metal of my watch in a rhythm I could not quite control. *I had asked to speak to him.* By the time the door opened, I had argued myself out of every certainty I had walked in with.

PROBLEM

P

Problem

(*Problem paragraph*)

ROLE IN THE STORY

Introduce the complication. Something goes wrong, or someone reveals something, or the goal turns out to be harder than the narrator thought. The emotional needle moves from *anticipating* to *realising*. The reader should be able to name, in one sentence, what the problem is.

BLAST EMOTIONS THAT FIT

Most often a Q2 emotion — **disappointment, guilt, loneliness, suspicion** — or a low-grade Q1 like **jealousy**. The problem doesn't need to be huge; it needs to be *specific* and to matter to the narrator.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

Don't make the problem too obvious — "I failed the test" as a stand-alone sentence is dead on arrival. Build it: show the moment of realisation, not the headline. Don't introduce a second problem yet; the climax needs to escalate *this* one.

MODEL PARAGRAPH · what a successful problem looks like

He listened with the careful, patient attention you give to a sentence that does not quite parse. "And you're *certain* that's what happened?" he asked, the question landing lighter than the doubt that had produced it. Something in his expression was off — not disbelief outright, but a deliberate, polite postponement of belief. The version of events he was already constructing in his head would not have my name in it.

APEX

A

Apex

(Climax paragraph)

ROLE IN THE STORY

The peak. The worst moment. The point of no return. The emotion that has been building since the Problem now overflows — through body, action, and speech. This is the only paragraph where you can write a sentence that *feels* too much — because the moment demands it.

BLAST EMOTIONS THAT FIT

A high-intensity emotion — **explosive rage**, **pure terror**, **deep grief**, or **overwhelming joy** (for triumphant stories). For most AEIS / PSLE prompts, this will be Q1 or peak Q2.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

Don't shout — earn the moment. Notice that strong rage often sounds quieter, not louder, on the page ("Enough, I said" beats "ENOUGH!! I shouted"). Don't keep the climax going for two paragraphs — the apex is a single peak, then you start to come down.

MODEL PARAGRAPH · what a successful apex looks like

The edges of my vision narrowed into a pulse of white, and the cords in my neck rose against the collar of my shirt before I had decided to let them. I gripped the edge of the chair until my knuckles went the colour of old paper. "I'm not making this up," I said — not a shout, but a sentence said with such finality that the room seemed to rearrange itself around it. I was done being managed, done being talked around.

RESOLUTION

R

Resolution

(Solve paragraph)

ROLE IN THE STORY

The story comes down. The problem is solved — or, more honestly, the narrator *accepts* something. This is also the paragraph where any prompt-sentence you were told to include often slots in most naturally. The emotional temperature drops; the breath returns.

BLAST EMOTIONS THAT FIT

Often Q4 or Q3 — **relief, resignation, quiet triumph, gratitude**. For darker stories, a measured **acceptance** is more honest than a fairy-tale resolution.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

Don't tie everything up with a neat bow if the story doesn't earn it. "And then I realised I was wrong all along" is the most over-used Resolution line in Singapore composition writing. Specificity beats neatness every single time.

MODEL PARAGRAPH · what a successful resolution looks like

And then, almost without warning, the heat went out of me. **I knew, the moment I looked at him, that nothing I said next would change anything.** He had already decided. I let out a breath that I had been holding for what felt like the entire morning, and I gathered my bag. There would be other rooms, on other afternoons, where my version of events would be allowed to be the right one. This one was not going to be it.

KEY TAKEAWAY

K

Key takeaway

(Reflection paragraph)

ROLE IN THE STORY

Step back from the scene. Tell the reader, as the slightly older narrator looking back, *what the experience taught you*. Tense shifts to a reflective register ("I have thought about that afternoon often, in the months since..."). This is the only paragraph that doesn't need a BLAST emotion — instead, it has a measured, contemplative voice.

BLAST EMOTIONS THAT FIT

None. The reflection paragraph deliberately steps outside the BLAST scaffold. It uses generalising sentences ("I have learnt that..."), present-perfect tense, and gentle aphorism. Save your strongest single line of the whole composition for the last sentence here.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

Don't moralise ("And that is why we should always tell the truth"). Don't bullet the lesson. Don't repeat the title or the prompt back at the reader. The reflection should feel earned, slightly understated, and personal — not didactic.

MODEL PARAGRAPH · what a successful key takeaway looks like

I have thought about that afternoon often, in the months since. Not because I think I should have said more, or louder — but because of the small lesson that has stayed: *truth, told plainly to someone who has already decided otherwise, will not make them change their mind*. That doesn't mean truth is worthless. It means knowing when to spend it, and knowing when to keep it safely, for a room and a listener who will hold it as carefully as you do.

Worked example — a full SPARK composition

Prompt: "Write a story in which the main character has to make a difficult decision. Must include: "I knew, the moment I looked

S — Setup — Anxiety

The corridor outside the staff room was lit by the same fluorescent tubes it had been lit by since I had first started at this school, and yet on that Wednesday afternoon, they seemed to buzz at a frequency my body had decided was personal. I rolled the strap of my bag between my fingers, the buckle ticking against the metal of my watch in a rhythm I could not quite control. *I had asked to speak to him.* I had practised the words on the bus, on the walk in, on every step up to the second-floor landing. By the time the door opened, I had argued myself out of every certainty I had walked in with.

P — Problem — Suspicion

He listened with the careful, patient attention you give to a sentence that does not quite parse. "And you're *certain* that's what happened?" he asked, the question landing lighter than the doubt that had produced it. Something in his expression was off — not disbelief outright, but a deliberate, polite postponement of belief. I could feel my account of the morning shifting three details to the left in his retelling. He was not going to side with me. The version of events he was already constructing in his head would not have my name in it.

A — Apex — Quiet rage

The edges of my vision narrowed into a pulse of white, and the cords in my neck rose against the collar of my shirt before I had decided to let them. I gripped the edge of the chair until my knuckles went the colour of old paper. "I'm not making this up," I said — not a shout, but a sentence said with such finality that the room seemed to rearrange itself around it. How dare he stand there and pretend the past three weeks had not happened. I was done being managed, done being talked around, done being made small inside the only place that should have felt like mine.

R — Resolution — Resignation

And then, almost without warning, the heat went out of me. **I knew, the moment I looked at him, that nothing I said next would change anything.** He had already decided. I could see it in the small movement of his hands toward the diary on his desk — the next appointment was the one that mattered to him now, not me. I let out a breath that I had been holding for what felt like the entire morning, and I gathered my bag. There would be other rooms, on other afternoons, where my version of events would be allowed to be the right one. This one was not going to be it, and I had to learn to be all right with that, at least for today.

K — Key takeaway — Reflection

I have thought about that afternoon often, in the months since. Not because I think I should have said more, or louder — I had said what I had to say — but because of the small lesson that has stayed: *truth, told plainly to someone who has already decided otherwise, will not make them change their mind.* That doesn't mean truth is worthless. It means knowing when to spend it, and knowing when to keep it safely, for a room and a listener who will hold it as carefully as you do. I am still learning to tell the difference.

Blank SPARK planning sheet

Fill this in before every composition. Photocopy as many as you need.

PROMPT (write it out — every word)

WORD COUNT TARGET _____

PROMPT SENTENCE TO INCLUDE _____

Part	Emotion	Key beats / scene anchors
S · Setup		
P · Problem		
A · Apex		
R · Resolution		
K · Key takeaway		

Practice prompts

Three AEIS-style prompts. Plan first using the SPARK sheet — then write.

1. Write about a time when you helped someone, but at a cost to yourself. Your story must include the sentence: *I told myself it was the right thing, even as the words were leaving my mouth.*

2. Write a story about a misunderstanding that was eventually cleared up — but only after a long silence. Word count: 300 – 400 words.

3. Tell the story of a day on which something that had always felt safe stopped feeling safe. The first sentence of your story must be: *It had taken me three years to start noticing the small things.*