

# THAT'S GOOD/ THAT'S BAD

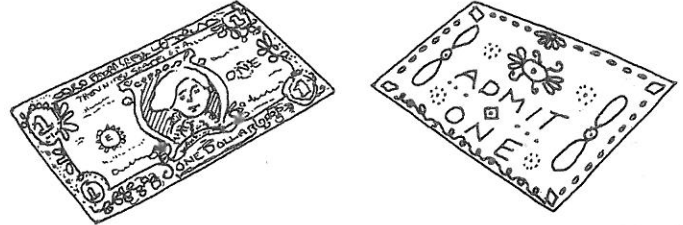
## GRADES

second and third

## MATERIALS

paper  
pencil  
oaktag or posterboard  
paper fastener  
scissors

I went to the zoo yesterday. That's good. I forgot to bring any money and couldn't get in. That's bad. I found a dollar bill on the sidewalk and used it for the admission fee. That's good. I wanted to see the monkeys, but the monkey house was closed. That's bad. The guard let me in anyway. That's good. The biggest monkey threw a banana at me. That's bad. I caught it in my right hand. That's good. The banana was mushy and it got all over my hand. That's bad.

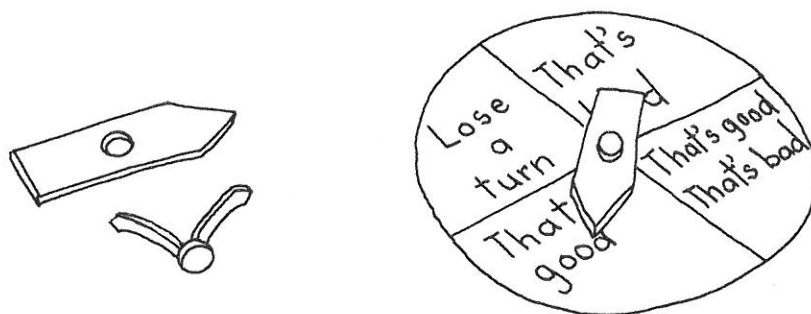


Such is the beginning of a good/bad story. In a good/bad tale, luck is followed by misfortune and misfortune leads back to luck. You can find good/bad books in libraries and bookstores, but I suggest you and your child consider writing your own. How? By playing a competitive writing game called, appropriately enough, THAT'S GOOD/THAT'S BAD. Your child will never have to write more than two sentences at a time while playing. That's not stressful. And yet the two of you together will create a delightfully silly story.

To play this game you will need a spinner. It's easy to make one. Begin by cutting a piece of oaktag or cardboard into a circle. Divide the circle into four sections, and label the sections as in this illustration.



Cut an arrow out of oaktag, too, and use a paper fastener to attach the arrow to the circle. Play with the arrow until it spins freely.

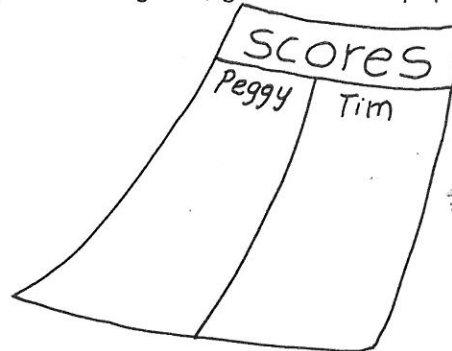


When you are ready to play, you and your child take turns writing lines to a good/bad story, except with this variation. The story will not progress in a perfect good/bad rotation. In this game, sadly enough, bad news may follow bad news and lead to even more bad news. If the characters are lucky, though, the story may move from one good news moment to another. In this game, bad luck and good luck are a matter of chance. This is because the spinner determines what type of line you have to write. If the arrow lands on *"That's good,"* you write a sentence about good news, and you add the all-important words: *"That's good."* If the arrow lands on *"That's bad,"* you write a sentence about bad news, followed by the words, *"That's bad."* If you land on *"That's good/That's bad,"* you must write a bit of good news followed by *"That's good,"* and then a bit of bad news followed by *"That's bad."* You might prefer to reverse the order and begin with bad news, which is okay to do. If, however, the spinner lands on *"Lose a turn,"* the news is so bad that you don't get to write anything at all, and the other player gets to spin the spinner.

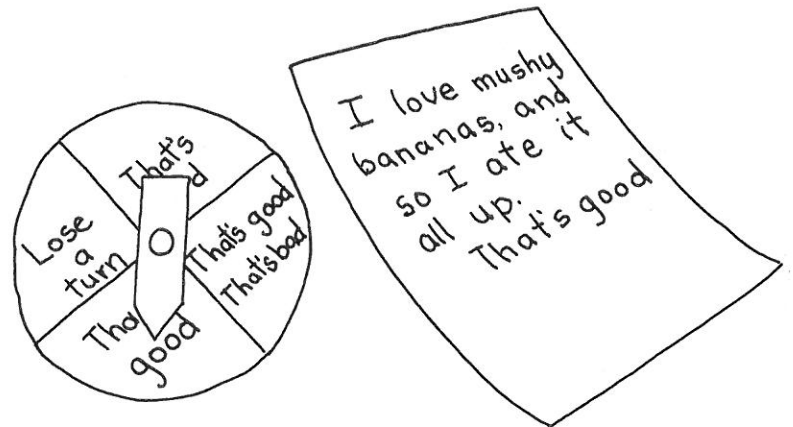
Sometimes, just for a change, you can vary the words *"That's good"* and *"That's bad"* with *"That was good"* and *"That was bad,"* or *"What good luck"* and *"What bad luck,"* or *"Fortunately"* and *"Unfortunately."*

Writing a THAT'S GOOD/THAT'S BAD story is fun by itself, but to keep the child's interest, you might want to keep score, too. Every line of good news gets five points. Every line of bad news gets three points. Good news and bad news written together count as eight points. "Lose a turn," of course, counts as no points at all.

Before you start a game, get a sheet of paper to use as a score card.

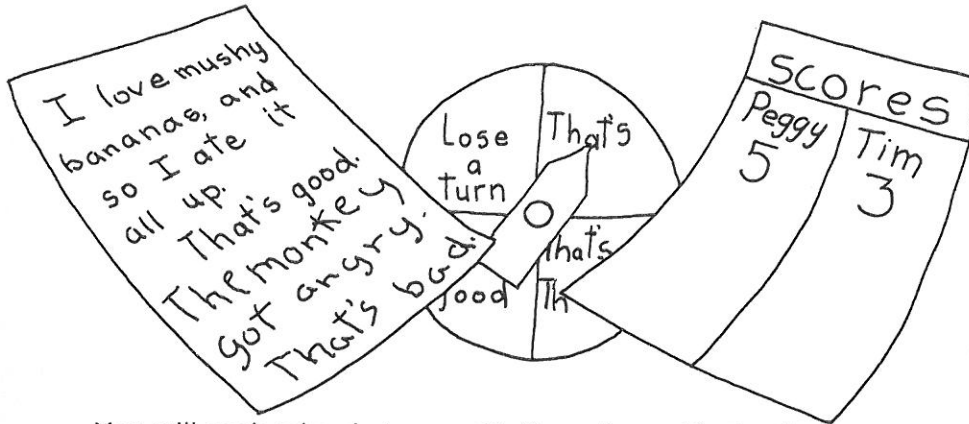


When you are ready to play your first game, go over the workings of a good/bad story with your child. Begin by reading the trip-to-the-zoo adventure that begins this activity. Then tell your child that the two of you will use the spinner to finish the story. Describe the scoring system and explain that each of you will take turns spinning. Then twirl the spinner and do as it tells you to do.



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Record your score and then give the spinner to your child. The child spins, writes, and enters his points on the scorecard.

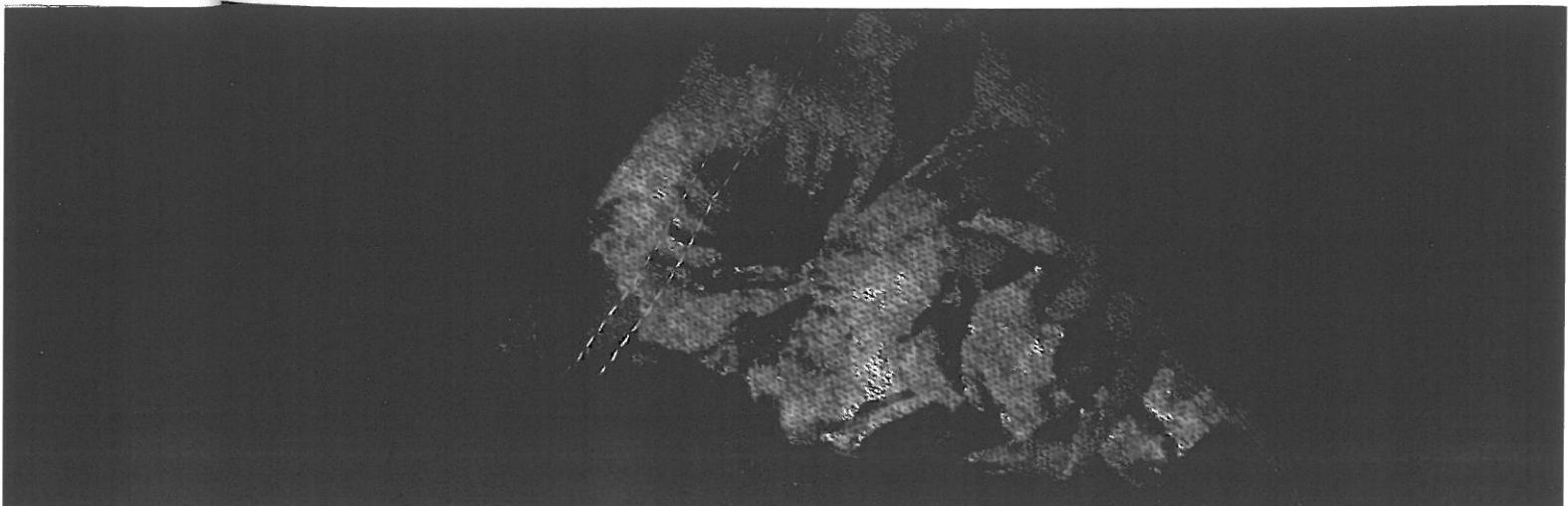
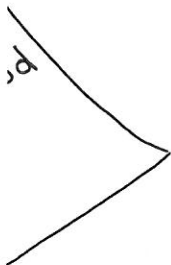


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You will each take six turns with the spinner. By the time you are done, the story will surely have lurched through many goods and bads. But it won't have an ending. That's your next job.

You and your child each take a new sheet of paper, and you each compose an ending to the story. You mustn't write more than three sentences for the ending, and don't show each other your work until you are both finished. It doesn't matter if the ending is awkward, silly, or abrupt. You just need some reasonably viable way to conclude the story. Coming up with any ending at all—no matter how awful from a literary point of view—wins you six bonus points. If you develop a bad case of writer's block and can't think of a concluding thought, you miss out on this bonus. Assuming you both have managed to write an ending, you will have to pick which of the endings you prefer. Write that ending on the bottom of your good/bad tale—there's no additional bonus for the author of the better ending—and compute your scores. The player with the highest score wins.

Did you like the game? Then play again. You can start your second story from scratch, if you want. Or you can take a look on pages 80–81, where you will find six different beginnings to six different good/bad stories. Pick one you like. Read it to your child. Then get four fresh sheets of paper—one for writing the story, one for the scorecard, and two for writing the story endings.



This game may be a big hit in your house. That's good. Then again, your child may hate to play it. That's bad. Your child may enjoy himself anyway if, on adding up the points, you are forced to declare him the winner. That's good. You yourself might not like to lose. That's bad. Yet you might be pleased to see your child write so creatively. That's good. You might enjoy the creative challenge yourself. That's good, too. And if playing the game helps your child feel more at ease while writing, well, that's very good.



## Six Good/Bad Beginnings

### 1. A Magic Ring

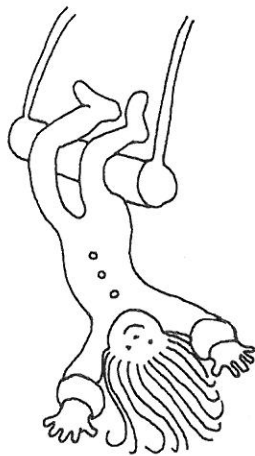
Jane was hungry for breakfast, but her favorite cereal box was empty. That's bad. She found a new box of cereal in her kitchen cabinet. That's good. The cereal didn't look right. That's bad. Jane looked closer and saw a ring in the box. That's good. The ring was ugly. That's bad. Suddenly the ring started to talk and said, "I'm a magic ring." That's good.

### 2. A Trip to the Circus

Tom and Gary went to the circus. That was good. They had to take their bratty little brother. That was bad. They saw the trapeze star. That was good. The bratty brother jumped into the circus ring and ran up to the clowns. That was bad.

### 3. A Treasure Map

Elizabeth found an old map in her grandmother's attic. That's good. The map was so old and dusty that Elizabeth couldn't make out any pictures or words on it. That's bad. She found a feather duster and cleaned the map. That's good. The writing on the map was very hard to read. That's bad. Using a magnifying glass, Elizabeth discovered that it was a pirate's map with directions to the pirate's buried treasure. That's good.





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#### 4. Hunting for Monsters

Clive thought he saw a monster in his bedroom closet. That's bad. He had a special monster-hunting kit under his bed. That's good. He was too frightened to climb out of bed and get the kit. That's bad.



#### 5. Climbing a Mountain

Olivia is the world's greatest mountain climber. That's good. She was planning her biggest climbing trip when she hurt her foot playing soccer. That's bad. She decided to climb the mountain anyway, and she collected her gear. That's good. Halfway up the mountain she discovered that she had left her mountain-climbing rope behind. That's bad.

#### 6. Fighting a Giant Python

Stacy and her twin sister, Tracy, were in the woods having a lovely picnic. That's good. Suddenly, they saw a creepy thing in the grass. That's bad. Stacy was scared, but Tracy said, "Don't worry. It's just a harmless little snake." That's good. Then Tracy got a closer look and saw a giant python beside the picnic basket! That's bad.

