



# 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

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## VOLUME 5.5

### Science Fiction Writing Unit for *The City of Ember*

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## Welcome to the 5.5 Science Fiction Writing Unit for *The City of Ember*!

If this is your first time using this guide, you will want to read through this introduction carefully, as it provides information that you will find critical to your establishment of a successful language arts block!

This science fiction writing unit is meant to be taught in conjunction with the *Read Side by Side Reading Program*, Unit 5.5, *The City of Ember*. The book *The City of Ember* will be used as a mentor text to build students' background knowledge and expose students to the craft of writing.

This unit takes approximately 15 days to complete, from brainstorming and planning to sharing the published piece! Lessons in this unit give students explicit instruction in the steps of the writing process and the structure of narrative writing. Some craft and grammar lessons will be incorporated as students revise and edit their writing. You may want to supplement with additional craft, grammar, and spelling lessons between writing units.

Prior to starting the unit, you will want to consider how students will publish and share their writing. Here are a few suggestions:

- illustrated book,
- chapter book,
- handwritten book;
- audio book.

Students might read their story to their own classmates, visit another classroom, or make their writing available for others to read in the classroom, library or other public location.

After students have had the opportunity to publish their writing, assess their work using the checklist for grading a narrative story provided at the end of the unit.

### ***Schedule***

To complete this unit, you will need to set aside 30-minutes for writing, 2-4 times a week.

**Instructional days** begin with a whole-class lesson. Lessons will be 10-15 minutes in length, allowing a short time after the lesson for students to work on the assignment. While working, students will access the help of a writing partner as needed. It may be helpful to seat partners next to each other during the work time. The teacher then confers with partnerships as needed.

**Working days** allow students to get started right away on writing projects. During the work time, students will continue to access a partner or the teacher for help as needed. If it is challenging to find time every day for writing, teachers might assign these work-projects as homework.

*Narrative schedule:*

<b>1. Brainstorm &amp; Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make a list of story ideas.</li><li>• Select a strong idea from the list.</li><li>• Complete a <i>Narrative Writing Map</i>.</li><li>• Write a blurb.</li><li>• Design a cover.</li></ul>	Day 1-4
<b>2. Draft</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write a draft using the 4-quadrant method.</li></ul>	Days 5-8
<b>3. Revise &amp; Edit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use dialogue to show a character's thoughts and emotions.</li><li>• Use the rules for punctuating dialogue.</li><li>• Use dialogue tags to show who is speaking.</li><li>• Add suspense.</li></ul>	Days 9-10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Edit and revise using a checklist.</li></ul>	Day 11
<b>4. Publish &amp; Share</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete a final product that is handwritten, typed, or other.</li><li>• Share with a real audience.</li></ul>	Days 12-15

## Day 1: Brainstorm Ideas & Plan

**Lesson Goals:** Brainstorm several ideas for writing and select one to write about. Begin to plan a piece of writing using the *Narrative Writing Map 1*.

### Materials:

*Narrative Writing Map 1*

### Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* A science fiction story tells about a future world. It is a fictional story with fictional characters. The story is believable based on the events and/or problems of today. Science fiction is typically written in the first or third person.
2. The book *The City of Ember* tells a fictional story using fictional characters. The story is told in the third person; from the perspective of an outsider looking in. The following pronouns are used: *he, she, it, and they*. The events of the story are fictitious but believable and are inspired by the time-period and events of the Cold War (1947-1989).
3. *Introduce the writing prompt:*  
**Write a story about the future in which one event or advancement has significantly altered our way of life.**  
You will tell the story from an outsider looking in. You will write in the third person, using the pronouns *he, she, it, and they*.
4. *Brainstorm:* Model brainstorming 2-3 ideas for your own piece of writing. Examples might include:  
*Events:*
  - Climate change has led to food and water shortages,
  - Another global pandemic has occurred,
  - The Woolly Mammoth has been brought back to life,  
*Inventions:*
  - A time travel machine has been invented,
  - A space station is open to tourists,
  - 3-D printed food is now available.
5. *Select:* Model selecting one story idea from your list. Share tips for selecting a strong idea for a story:
  - The story should be believable.
  - The story should have a series of problems and important events.
  - The events should create a change in the main character or teach a lesson.
  - The story should be something that you would enjoy writing about.

6. *Plan*: Model filling out *Narrative Writing Map 1* for the story you will be writing, saving the last section (question/prediction) for Day 3. Demonstrate how to think about and jot notes about the:
- main character,
  - secondary characters,
  - setting (time, place, and circumstance); and
  - problem/conflict.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time brainstorm ideas, select an idea, and fill-out *Narrative Writing Map 1*. Then, give time for partners to share their writing plan and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my story idea?
- What might I do to improve my story idea?

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(Title)

<p><b>Main Character</b></p>			
<p><b>Secondary Character(s)</b></p>			
<p><b>Setting</b></p>	<p><u>Time</u></p>	<p><u>Place</u></p>	<p><u>Circumstance</u></p>
<p><b>Problem/ Conflict</b></p>			
<p><b>Question / Prediction</b></p>			

## Day 2: Plan

**Lesson Goals:** Continue to plan a piece of writing using the *Narrative Writing Map 2*.

**Materials:**

*Narrative Writing Map 2*

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will now be planning for the events of their story. They will write their story in four-quadrants.
2. *Plan:* Model planning quadrant 1 of your story using *Narrative Writing Map 2*.
  - How does the problem start?
3. *Plan:* Model planning quadrant 2 of your story using *Narrative Writing Map 2*.
  - How does the problem continue?
  - How does the main character feel?
4. *Plan:* Model planning quadrant 3 of your story using *Narrative Writing Map 2*.
  - What causes the main character to change? How does the main character change?
5. *Plan:* Model planning quadrant 4 of your story using *Narrative Writing Map 2*.
  - How is the problem resolved?
  - What does the main character learn?

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to fill-out *Narrative Writing Map 2* for their own story. Then, give time for partners to share their writing plan and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my story?
- What might I do to improve my story?

NARRATIVE WRITING MAP 2

<b>Q1</b>	<i>How does the problem start?</i> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>Q2</b>	<i>How does the problem continue? How does the main character feel?</i> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>Q3</b>	<i>What causes the main character to change? How does the main character change?</i> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>Q4</b>	<i>How is the problem resolved? What does the main character learn?</i> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

## Day 3: Plan

**Lesson Goals:** Continue to plan a piece of writing by writing a blurb.

**Materials:**

*Narrative Writing Map 1*

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will be writing a blurb for their story. Remind them that the blurb does not give away how the story will end. The blurb usually ends with a question so that the person reading the blurb will want to read the story. For example, the blurb for *The City of Ember* might end with the question, “What will happen if the lights go out forever?”
2. *Plan:* Model writing a question to use in the blurb of your own story.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to finish filling-out *Narrative Writing Map 1* and then write the blurb for their own story about conflict. Then, give time for partners to share their blurb and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my blurb?
- What might I do to improve my blurb?

## Day 4: Plan

**Lesson Goals:** Continue to plan a piece of writing by making a cover.

**Materials:**

*Blank paper and art materials for designing a cover or illustration software.*

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will be designing the cover of their book. Every book cover begins with a great title. Share tips for writing a good title:
  - It should provide a clue about the conflict in the story.
  - It should be relatively short.
  - It should get the reader interested.
  - It should put a picture in the reader's mind.
2. *Plan:* Model writing a title for your own story.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to create a cover for their book. Then, give time for partners to share their covers and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my cover?
- What might I do to improve my cover?

## Day 5: Draft, Quadrant 1

**Lesson Goals:** Begin drafting a piece of writing.

### **Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will now be drafting quadrant 1 of their story.
2. *Draft:* Model writing quadrant 1 of your story. Demonstrate how to include details about the:
  - Characters
  - Setting
  - Conflict

Model using descriptive language and details to help the reader picture the characters and the setting in their mind.

**TIP:** Share with students that an appropriate length for quadrant 1 is about 1.5 pages, handwritten. (Each quadrant should be about the same length so that the full story is about 6 pages.) To help keep students organized, it may work best to have students use a new sheet of paper for each quadrant, even using different colors of lined paper if available.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to draft quadrant 1 of their book. Then, give time for partners to share writing and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my story?
- What might I do to improve my story?

## Day 6-8: Draft, Quadrants 2-4

**Lesson Goals:** Continue drafting a piece of writing.

### **Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be drafting quadrants 2-4 of their story.
2. *Draft:* Model writing quadrant 2 of your story. Demonstrate how to include details about the:
  - Conflict
  - The main character's actions, words and feelings

Model using descriptive language and details to help the reader feel how the main character is feeling.

3. *Draft:* Model writing quadrant 3 of your story about conflict. Demonstrate how to include details about the:
  - Conflict
  - Change in the main character

Model using descriptive language and details to help the reader understand that the main character is changing.

4. *Draft:* Model writing quadrant 4 of your story about conflict. Demonstrate how to include details about the:
  - Resolution
  - Author's message

Model using descriptive language and details to help the reader understand how the story ends and a lesson is learned.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to continue drafting their own stories. Then, give time for partners to share their writing and receive feedback.

- What do you like about my story?
- What might I do to improve my story?

## Day 9: Revise & Edit, Dialogue

**Lesson Goals:** Reread a piece of writing and make revisions and edits.

**Materials:**

*Dialogue Sheet 1*

*Dialogue Sheet 2*

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be revising and editing their stories to make them easy to read and enjoy.
2. *Revise:* Narrative stories use dialogue to reveal the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Dialogue is between two or more characters.

Read the example at the top of *Dialogue Sheet 1*.

**“Did we ever find it?”**  
**“Find what, Granny?”**  
**“The thing that was lost,”** Granny said. **“The old thing that my Grandfather lost...”**  
**“Yes,”** said Lina. **“Don’t worry, Granny, we found it, it is safe now.”**  
**“Oh, good.”** Granny sank back onto her pillows and smiled at the ceiling. **“What a relief,”** she said.

Discuss: *How does this dialogue reveal each character’s thoughts and feelings?*

Model searching for a place in your writing where two or more characters are talking. Model revising the dialogue to reveal the feelings, thoughts and emotions of the characters.

3. *Edit:* When authors use dialogue in their stories they follow rules for punctuation.

*Discuss:* the dialogue rules listed on *Dialogue Sheet 1*.

Model editing the dialogue in your story to match the dialogue rules.

4. *Revise:* Authors use dialogue tags to tell who in the story is talking.

The most common dialogue tags are:

- *said* – used when the character makes a statement.
- *asked* – used when the character asks a question.
- *exclaimed* – used when the character says something in surprise, anger, or pain.

When used repeatedly in our stories, these dialogue tags can make the story feel flat.

*Discuss: Dialogue Sheet 2* which provides some other ideas for dialogue tags. Encourage students to add some of their own ideas to each list.

*Revise:* Model revising dialogue tags in your own writing, choosing alternatives to *says*, *asks*, and *exclaims*.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to revise and edit dialogue in their own stories. If a student does not have dialogue, encourage them to add it. Then, give time for partners to share their dialogue and receive feedback.

- What do you like about the way I used dialogue in my story?
- What might I do to improve it?

Narrative stories use dialogue to reveal the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Dialogue is between two or more characters.

Example from page 134 of *The City of Ember*:

**“Did we ever find it?”**

**“Find what, Granny?”**

**“The thing that was lost,”** Granny said. **“The old thing that my Grandfather lost...”**

**“Yes,”** said Lina. **“Don’t worry, Granny, we found it, it is safe now.”**

**“Oh, good.”** Granny sank back onto her pillows and smiled at the ceiling. **“What a relief,”** she said.

**Dialogue rules:**

1. Put quotation marks around words that are being spoken. **“Did we ever find it?”**
2. Punctuation goes inside the quotation marks. **“Did we ever find it?”**
3. Use dialogue tags to show who is speaking. **“The thing that was lost,”** said Granny.
4. Typically, the dialogue tag comes *after* the dialogue. Put a comma inside the quotation marks and a period after the dialogue tag.  
**“The thing that was lost,”** said Granny.
5. Capitalize the first word of what is being said. **“The thing that was lost,”**
6. Use commas to separate spoken language from the rest of the sentence.  
**“Yes,”** said Lina. **“Don’t worry, Granny, we found it, it is safe now.”**
7. Start a new paragraph each time a new person speaks.

—> **“Did we ever find it?”**

—> **“Find what, Granny?”**

—> **“The thing that was lost,”** Granny said. **“The old thing that my Grandfather lost...”**

—> **“Yes,”** said Lina. **“Don’t worry, Granny, we found it, it is safe now.”**

—> **“Oh, good.”** Granny sank back onto her pillows and smiled at the ceiling. **“What a relief,”** she said.

DIALOGUE SHEET 2

STATEMENT	QUESTION	EXCLAMATION
said	asked	exclaimed
uttered declared announced mentioned shared blabbered blurted proclaimed commented whispered murmured remarked answered replied responded	questioned quizzed begged demanded pressed	blurted uttered cried hollered shouted chirped bellowed thundered hailed shrieked announced

## Day 10: Revise, Suspense

**Lesson Goals:** Reread a piece of writing and add suspense.

### Instructional Procedures:

1. *Introduction:* Tell students that they will now be revising and editing their stories to make them easy to read and enjoy.
2. *Revise:* Today we are going to add suspense to our stories.

Authors create suspense in their books by exposing the main character to danger. The main character's reaction to this danger makes the plot even more dramatic. He/ she responds to danger with hesitation, indecision, and doubt. Often the main character becomes anxious, nervous, or worried.

3. In the book *The City of Ember*, Jeanne DuPrau creates suspense when she describes how the characters are feeling afraid, worried, and anxious.
  - “Lina slept restlessly that night. She had frightening dreams in which something dangerous was lurking in the darkness,” (p. 132).
  - “I’m worried and afraid at the same time, but I am also excited...and all these feelings are whirling around in my head which makes it hard to sleep,” (p. 176).

Another example of suspense is when Jeanne DuPrau's characters respond to danger with hesitation, indecision, and doubt.

- “[Doon] looked at his drawings for a long time...Should he take this with him?...He might never see such things again. But no, he'd leave it behind,” (p. 197).
  - “Doon was so stunned that he stood still as a stone for a long minute,” (p. 200).
  - “[Lina] should be hurrying to join him—but a sadness held her back, like a heavy stone in her chest,” (p. 222).
4. *Revise:* Model revising your own writing to include suspense by having your characters responds to danger with hesitation, indecision, and doubt. Show how your character is feeling anxious, nervous, or worried.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to revise their own stories by adding suspense. Then, give time for partners to share.

- What do you like about the way I used suspense in my story?
- What might I do to improve it?

## Day 11: Edit & Revise

**Lesson Goals:** Reread a piece of writing and make revisions and edits.

**Materials:**

*Editing and Revision Checklist*

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will now be revising and editing their stories to make them easy to read and enjoy.
2. *Edit:* Model editing your own writing using the editing checklist.
3. *Revise:* Model revising your own writing using the revision checklist:

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to revise and edit their own stories. Then, give time for partners to share their stories and receive feedback.

- How did I use proper punctuation, grammar, and spelling in my story?
- What might I do to improve it?

## Editing Checklist:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Sentences start with a capital letter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I used capital letters for proper nouns.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have punctuation at the end of each sentence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I checked my words for spelling.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I indented paragraphs.

## Revision Checklist:

- \_\_\_\_\_ I started with an introduction that is clear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I ended with a conclusion that is clear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I used transition words at the beginning of paragraphs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I used language to show how one event may have caused another event.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sentences make sense.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sentences stay focused on the topic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I added details and elaboration that are important to the topic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I used key vocabulary.

## Day 12-15: Publish & Share

**Lesson Goals:** Publish a piece of writing.

### **Instructional Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Tell students they will now be preparing their piece of writing for others to read. This is called publishing.
2. *Discuss:* how stories will be published—handwritten, typed, or other. Let them know when and how their stories will be shared with the class.

**Work Time & Collaboration:** Give students time to publish their writing and share their writing with an audience.

Ideas for publishing:

- illustrated book,
- chapter book,
- handwritten book; and
- audio book.

Ideas for sharing:

- read stories aloud to classmates,
- read stories aloud to another class,
- make stories available for others to read (in the classroom, library, or other); and
- take stories home to share with family.

An **author's chair** is a fun classroom tradition. It is a decorated chair in which an author sits to share his/her writing. Teachers can paint a wooden chair or have each new class decorate a pillowcase to go over the back of a chair. This quickly transform a standard classroom chair into something special for young authors.

## Checklist for Assessing a Narrative Story (Science Fiction)

<p><b>Cover</b> _____/6</p>	<p>____ Has a title that is short. ____ The title puts a picture in the reader's mind.</p> <p>____ Includes a blurb talks briefly about the story. ____ The blurb entices the reader to read the book.</p> <p>____ The cover gives the reader a clue about the story. ____ The cover gets the reader interested.</p>
<p><b>Exposition</b> ____/6</p>	<p><b>Characters</b> ____ Introduces more than one character. ____ Gives important details about each character. ____ Written in the first or third person.</p> <p><b>Setting</b> ____ Establishes a future setting: time and place. ____ Gives important details about the setting.</p> <p><b>Problem</b> ____ Introduces a problem/conflict.</p>
<p><b>Rising Action</b> ____/8</p>	<p><b>Text Structure</b> ____ Presents a logical series of events that result from the conflict. ____ Events build toward a climax. ____ The events reveal the author's central message or theme.</p> <p><b>Craft</b> ____ Includes the development of a main character. ____ Includes dialogue and/or interior monologue. ____ Uses language to show the passage of time. ____ Uses descriptive language. ____ Includes suspense.</p>
<p><b>Falling Action &amp; Resolution</b> ____/3</p>	<p>____ The problem is resolved. ____ The character has changed or learned something. ____ The ending is satisfying to the reader.</p>
<p><b>Revision and Editing</b> ____/5</p>	<p>____ Writing is edited for spelling. ____ Writing is edited for grammar. ____ Writing is edited for punctuation. ____ Writing shows evidence of revision. ____ Published writing is polished.</p>
<p><b>Collaboration &amp; Effort</b> ____/4</p>	<p>____ Worked well with a partner. ____ Respectfully gave feedback to a partner. ____ Respectfully received feedback from a partner. ____ Showed good effort and persistence.</p>
<p><b>Total:</b> ____/32</p>	<p><b>Comments:</b></p>

## The Last Ember of the Mammoth

**Blurb:** Tessa has helped bring an extinct mammoth back to life. But when danger strikes, she must be brave and use her foresight to protect the creature and the miracle of its return.

The Arctic research station glowed eerily under the green shimmer of the aurora. Its light cast strange shadows across the frozen landscape outside. The land stretched for miles, uninhabited, silent, and deadly. Inside, fifteen-year-old Tessa Kane shivered, not from the cold but from anticipation and nervous energy.

She adjusted the controls on the RevivaPod, her fingers trembling slightly. The tiny ember of life pulsed inside, glowing faintly in the dim laboratory.

Her heart pounded as she whispered, “Are you sure this is safe?”

Her mentor, Dr. Elias Roan, placed a steady hand on her shoulder. His eyes, calm but serious, met hers. “Nothing worth doing is completely safe,” he said. “Remember, Tessa, you must use foresight to think carefully about what could happen and what you will do if danger comes.”

Tessa nodded, swallowing hard. She had dreamed of this moment her entire life—the chance to see a living woolly mammoth—but her excitement was also tangled up with fear. What if the pod malfunctioned? What if the calf panicked? What if they were discovered? What if...?

Finally, it was time. The pod doors hissed open slowly, releasing a faint cloud of warm mist. A massive, woolly calf blinked out at her, its enormous eyes curious and trusting. Tessa’s breath caught in her throat.

“It’s real,” she whispered, stepping closer. “It’s really real.”

The mammoth stepped hesitantly, its tiny hooves scraping the metal floor. Its small, helpless movements reminded Tessa how fragile this miracle was, and how easily it could be lost.

A sudden crash made the ground shake. Sparks flew from the far wall as an alarm blared. Poachers, people who would kill the mammoth for profit, had found them. Tessa’s stomach dropped. Cold dread spread through her chest.

“They’re here!” she shouted, panic in her voice.

Dr. Roan grabbed her arm, steadying her. “Stay calm,” he said, his tone firm. “Follow the plan.”

Tessa nodded, but doubt gnawed at her. She had prepared, but could she act fast enough? Her hands shook as she tried to stay calm, guiding the mammoth toward the emergency chamber.

Outside, the sound of shattering glass made her jump. The poachers had smashed a window. The mammoth trumpeted, trembling in terror, and Tessa felt a stab of guilt and fear. For a brief moment, she hesitated, her mind frozen.

Then, a shadow loomed in the doorway. One intruder raised a heavy metal pole. Tessa's heart thudded so hard she thought it would break out of her chest. She ducked instinctively, then scrambled toward the emergency override. Her hands shook uncontrollably as she pressed the button. Sparks and smoke filled the chamber.

The poachers, caught off guard, coughed and stumbled backward, the light blinding them. Tessa sank to the floor, trembling, the mammoth calf huddled close to her side. Relief and exhaustion washed over her, and tears stung her eyes.

"We did it," she whispered, brushing the calf's forehead. Her chest heaved. "We really did it."

Dr. Roan knelt beside her, placing a comforting hand on her shoulder. "You were brave, Tessa," he said softly. "And wise. Today, you showed that caring for life is just as important as creating it."

Tessa nodded slowly, still catching her breath. Hope stirred inside her. For the first time in what felt like forever, she believed the world could change.

Even as her body relaxed, her mind remained alert. The poachers might come back. Danger was never fully gone. But Tessa felt something new inside her: determination. She vowed she would always protect and care for life.

## Seeds of Tomorrow

**Blurb:** Mira helped create a machine that could end world hunger. But when danger comes, she must use courage and quick thinking to protect her invention and the hope it brings.

The city of New Gaia towered like a glittering crown against the sunset. From above, it looked perfect. But down below, the streets told a different story. Hunger still affected too many families. People scavenged what little they could find. The gap between the city's rich and poor was obvious, almost painful to watch.

Seventeen-year-old Mira Lin walked briskly toward the government research building, clutching her lab bag tightly. Her heart pounded, echoing in her chest. Today, she would finally see the NourishSphere in action. It was a machine that could end hunger forever.

"This is it," she whispered under her breath as she entered the lab.

The machine sat in the center of the room, glowing like a tiny ember. Mira felt her hands tremble. The moment she had dreamed of for years had finally arrived.

Dr. Solara entered the room, her expression serious.

"Remember, Mira," she said quietly, almost like a warning, "people might try to take this. This invention is too powerful to fall into the wrong hands."

Mira nodded, swallowing hard. "I won't be naive."

Her mind raced as she thought about all the foresight she had used to make sure the NourishSphere was secure. And yet, her stomach felt like it was in a knot. Could she really handle danger if it came?

Taking a deep breath, Mira stepped forward and flipped the switch. First, a warm, golden light spilled from the machine. Then, tiny pellets of food appeared. Mira's eyes widened. "It's working! People won't go hungry anymore!"

For a moment, she allowed herself to smile. The room smelled faintly sweet, like toasted grain.

But then, a clanging alarm shattered the calm. Red lights flashed across the room. A shadow moved near the entrance.

Two masked intruders stormed in shouting, "Get out of our way! Give us the device!"

Mira froze. Her heart raced faster than ever. She felt fear prickling down her spine. Her mind scrambled. She froze in her place for a second.

Then she ducked quickly behind a desk. Mira's hands shook violently as she grabbed one of the heavy instruments. She flung it at the intruders. It didn't hurt them, but it startled them and bought her a few seconds.

"Dr. Solara!" Mira's voice trembled as she called for help.

The scientist appeared from behind another desk, her face calm but her eyes sharp. "Now, Mira—use the override!"

Mira's fingers hovered over the emergency button. For a moment, she almost froze again, imagining the consequences of pressing the wrong button. Then, she pressed it.

A thick, glowing mist poured from the NourishSphere, swirling around the intruders. They coughed, stumbling backward. Mira's hands were still shaking as she watched them retreat.

Moments later, Mira sank to the floor in relief. Dr. Solara knelt beside her, placing a reassuring hand on Mira's shoulder. "You were brave," she said softly. "And wise. Courage matters just as much as science. This invention can save millions, but only if we protect it carefully."

Mira nodded, taking a deep, shuddering breath. She looked at the glowing food pellets. For the first time in years, Mira's hope shined brighter than her fear.

Mira rose slowly, brushing herself off. Her legs were shaky and she knew the fight wasn't over. There would always be people who wanted to use power for the wrong reasons. She understood now more than ever how important it is to protect what is important.

The NourishSphere hummed quietly. She knew she was ready to help the people in her city, no matter what danger came next.