Step 3.  
Tightening Tension

The tension scene comes just before the big climax ending. In movies this is the scene of the soccer final, the exciting car chase or the heroine fighting for her life in a raging river.

We all know Little Red Riding Hood's classic tension scene. Red Riding Hood arrives at the cottage and the wolf is in bed in granny's clothes. Red Riding Hood, (who obviously needs glasses) says:

'Oh, grandmother, what big ears you have!'  
'All the better to hear you with.'

'Oh, grandmother, what big eyes you have!'  
'All the better to see you with.'

'Oh, grandmother, what big hands you have!'  
'All the better to hold you with!'  

'Oh, grandmother, what big teeth you have!'  
'All the better to eat you with!'

See how the scene slowly builds up to be more and more dangerous – and thus frightening? We don't start with the teeth, we start with the ears – and the wolf trying to coax Red Riding Hood to come nearer and nearer.

**TOP TIP.**  
Emotion always takes time to build up. So in tension scenes, show kids how to start small and 'escalate' to a powerful climax.

**ACTION ACTIVITY.**  
Read picture books with your kids and look for the tension scenes. Picture books are short, so it's easy to find where the all-important tension builds before the ending.

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Tightening Tension

To tighten tension in a story the author uses the senses: what can the character see, hear, smell, taste, touch and feel (emotions)

I feel extremely scared. I do not know what to do. I feel like I am going to explode. I feel like running home and never coming out. I hear my heart beating. I’m on the roller coaster and I’m going up now. I feel terrified. I feel like vomiting. The air is trying to push me over and my heart is racing. I feel like racing back down.

Tristan 2B

My heart is beating. I walk into the classroom. I’m in fear. I can hear everybody screaming. I gaze at everyone and they all gaze back.

Kingston 2B

I went to the playground and saw a tree gobbling up children! It was horrible. I could hear screaming then silence. Red blood was soaking into the grass. All of a sudden I felt a bumpy hand on me…….

Lee – Ling 1/2A (Year 2)

I smelt salty fish near the sharp rocks. I touched the sharp rocks and they cut me. I felt sad because I missed my family.

Bella 1/2A (Year 1)

The cat was on the hunt to find prey for dinner. As the cat’s tummy rumbled he licked his whiskers waiting for food. The cat was brave enough to creep behind the door like a sneaky cat and “Meow!! “

Jai–Ling 1B