Introduction to Creative Writing



Action Mental Health

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# Inspiration and Ideas

When we are young, we have excellent imaginations. Able to pretend we’re pirates on a ship or a dog running around. We had no issues coming up with new games to play.

However, as we get older, our imagination is pushed away and closed off to make room for day to day grown up life.

Yet, we still want to be creative. We want to write and act and create beautiful art. But to do this, we need our imagination.

Try writing down three ideas every day for the next week:

Idea 1:

Idea 2:

Idea 3:

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Word Association Exercise:

Pick a random word to start. For example – ‘tree’.

What word comes straight to mind when you think of the word ‘tree’?

Write this word down. For example, it could be ‘wood’.

Now, what word comes straight to mind when you think of the word ‘wood’?

Repeat for a set amount of time. For example – 2 minutes.

Now, circle any words which link together or spark an idea. Try writing a poem, flash fiction or a short story. It doesn’t have to be good. It’s all about loosening up your imagination!

# Genre and Audience Expectations

Different types of genres:

1. Drama
2. Comedy
3. Sci-fi
4. Fantasy
5. Romance
6. Horror
7. Supernatural
8. Thriller
9. Historical
10. Mystery/crime
11. Action and adventure
12. Non-fiction

Your story can be a mix of several genres, for example: fantasy romance. However, whichever genre you choose your story to be based in you must meet certain audience expectations otherwise you will disappoint your readers.

# Develop your Idea

Character(s):

What is each of your character’s objectives?

Location(s):

Time:

Theme:

Genre(s):

Brief description of your idea:

# A close-up of a questionnaire  Description automatically generatedDeveloping Characters

# A close-up of a questionnaire  Description automatically generated

# Writing Dialogue

Dialogue should flow and sound natural, like someone has just say that exact phrase.

Try writing down an actual conversation you’ve had today; can be between you and a friend, the bus driver, in a shop etc.

You’ll probably find you didn’t exactly say, “Hello, how are you?” to start your conversation.

It probably was more like, “Alright, how bout ye?”

Or, “How you today?”

The average person doesn’t speak with correct grammar or in proper sentences.

However, there is an exception to every rule. If someone is trying to impress, be polite or is nervous they may say, “Hello, how are you?”

Dialogue Grammar

“This is your friendly reminder to use commas instead of periods during the dialogue of your story,” she said with a smile.

 “Unless you are following the dialogue with an action and not a dialogue tag.” He took a deep breath and sat back down after making the clarifying statement.

 “However,” she added, shifting in her seat, “it’s appropriate to use a comma if there’s action in the middle of a sentence.”

 “True.” He glanced at her. “You can also end with a period if you include an action between two separate statements.”

Tips for great conversation

* Cut the filler – leave out stock phrases such as, “fine thanks, and you?”. These don’t add emotion or new information.
* Add conflict – add dialogue where relevant as this will increase intrigue and tension.
* Involve goals, fears and desires – what does the speaker want? What are they trying to do?

# Flash Fiction Writing

We have focused on developing our characters and learning how to write good dialogue. Now let’s practice writing!

Pick a scene in your head from your story. For ten minutes, let’s just sit and write it out.

Now, go through your piece of writing and see if you have ticked off everything on this checklist:

* Describe using all the senses; sight, smell, sound, taste and touch.
* New paragraph for every new idea, change in time or place or when a character begins to speak.
* Ample conflict and tension to make the story engaging and entertaining.
* Leaking information about the story to the reader.
* Any repetitive sentences and words? Does it work or could another word/phrase be used?
* Any awkward sentences that could be rephrased?
* Any misspelt words and incorrect grammar?

# A diagram of a movie  Description automatically generatedStructure

ACT ONE

Beginning – establishes setting, plot and main character roles.

Inciting incident – the catalyst that compels your main character(s) to take action. for example, the main character’s (MC) partner has been murdered.

Climax/plot point one – propels story into act two. For example, MC decides to track down the killer.

ACT TWO

Middle – consists of rising action. for example, the sleuthing of MC. Raise the stakes of the MC journey!

Midpoint – when everything goes wrong. For example, MC gets close to the killer but the killer’s henchmen wounds them and the killer escapes.

Climax/plot point two – propels story into act three. Can be very short, even just a few sentences. Often nicknamed “dark night of the soul” as this plot point is a common point in the story where the MC fails. For example, the MC feels like they can’t carry on with their mission.

ACT THREE

Climax of act three/resolution/pre-climax – climactic confrontation in which the MC faces a point of no return. For example; MC regained the trail of the killer and traced the killer to a safehouse.

Actual climax – the final action and resolution. For example; the MC apprehends the killer and gets their revenge.

Wrap up – the events of the climax wind back down into normal life.

Roughly plan out your story using this structure.

# Outline

Using your plan from last week let’s make it more detailed.

Let’s split it into chapters/sections.

This will be different for each person.

Think about what links each points together or areas that need future development.

The outline should show any parts of your story that there are pacing issues.

**Your outline should be your entire story laid out scene by scene in bullet point form!**

# First Draft Writing

Everyone has a different style and approach to writing but there is one basic rule for first drafts – get words onto the page! Sit and write and don’t look back at it.

Personally, I like to write dialogue down and worry about the “he said, she said” in my second draft. I don’t worry about editing and a second draft until I have finished the entire story.

If you write and go back and edit before moving on it can stifle the flow of the story and you can get stuck on feeling like each scene and chapter must be perfect before moving on. You’ll feel a greater sense of achievement if you finish the entire story (even just a first draft) before beginning editing.

This is an example of a first draft type of writing:

There are about a hundred pupils, parents and staff milling around the reception desk. I push my way through the throng of people until I got to the desk. There sat one, exceptionally calm woman who is clearly use to the chaos Monday mornings must bring.

“Hello?” She says to me.

“Hi, Mia Freeburn. It’s my first day of placement here.”

“Hello, Miss Freeburn.” She mutters as she types something onto the computer.

“Ah!” she says, “From the university of Guildford?”

“That’s the one.”

“I see we have your bridging letter. Just need a copy of your DBS now and we’ll get you started.”

“Ah. See, funny thing is, I’m originally from Northern Ireland. And my DBS, for some reason, got sent over there.”

She stares blankly up at me, “Right. But you have it here with you now, yes?”

I smile, “Nope.”

Her face pulls into a displeasing look, one I’m sure she reserves only for children who arrive late or come to pick up P.E. bags their parents had to drop off for them during the school day.

As you can see, it isn’t very good. It’s not meant to be. It’s words on a page to get the story started and can be edited later. It’s about having fun with the story and getting the idea on the page!

For next week (if you’re willing to participate):

The best thing to do is get beta readers to read your story and give their opinions.

Bring in a typed up (if possible) beginning of your story. Please don’t give your name. I will jumble up the stories and pass them out for others to read. Then as a group we’ll have a positive discussion about people thought about the beginnings; what they liked and how they can be improved.

# Editing

* Ruthless cutting – scenes that don’t develop the story or wooden, useless characters.
* All characters need to develop and have a purpose in each scene! – comedic, give information, reveal an aspect of another’s character’s personality. They must all have wants and needs in each scene and interaction.
* Remember, show don’t tell. What is the most interesting way to describe what the character can see?
* Be selective in your choice of words!
* Interesting beginning (readers are impatient and want something intriguing from the first words!)
* Satisfying ending that makes sense for the story.
* Congratulate yourself on finishing your first draft! That in itself is a massive achievement! Have fun with the editing and know that by the end of it, your story will be even better. It will be something to be proud of.

Practicing editing

Think about what your beta readers thought about your piece.

Re-read the start of your story. Is this the correct point? Does it need to take place earlier or later from the point you have started?

How is your opening paragraph? How is your opening line? Is it engaging?

Have you overused words and phrases?

Did it start engaging but falter off?

An example of an interesting opening line:

Grandma was lying out the plates of food for the funeral party when I remembered I’d left the safe open.

# Self-Publication

You are able to self-publish your work these days without having to pitch to a publisher. The most common and straight forward site to use is Amazon.

You must start with deciding what size of a book you’re going to have. The most common size is 5.5 x 8.5 in:

<https://kdp.amazon.com/cover-calculator> gives you a sizing template to use if you want to make your own cover.

You can write your book in word and copy it over or you can write your book in Reedsy.

Either way, you must have its final formation in Reedsy to be the correct size for your final publication.

Create your free account with Reedsy. Select “Books”, “Create Book” and “Write”.

Once your book is finished, run spell check!

Click “export book” (the symbol is a downwards pointing arrow onto a line). Follow the steps and download your book!

Then create your free account with KDP Amazon. It takes you through a step-by-step guide to self-publishing your book. There is even a basic cover creator built into the system so you don’t have to make your own from scratch.

Now enjoy having your very own paperback book!