

WordCraft Creative Writing Course: Taster Class



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Introduction

Welcome to this short introductory writing class, which is designed to give you a taste of the kinds of topics and exercises covered in the full course. In this class I invite you to try out some different techniques, do some spontaneous writing, and overall have FUN and enjoy seeing where your creativity might take you.

Perhaps you are completely new to writing? Or you have always wanted to write but don't know where to start? Maybe you write already but want to explore new ideas and techniques? Or perhaps you are already an established writer but looking for some inspiration? Whatever level you are at, the WordCraft course will help you to develop the three pillars of successful writing: Creativity, Confidence, and Craft.



Exercise One – Story Generator

Where do story ideas come from? How do we begin to tap into our imagination and discover what it is we want to write about? How do we learn about our own distinctive themes and styles?

Welcome to Story Generator, a spontaneous writing game that helps you bypass the 'What should I write about?' stumbling block and get some words on the page!

To begin, think of three random objects. They can be anything at all – a conker, an aardvark, a steam engine – anything that comes to mind. Try not to overthink this. If you are stuck then here are some suggestions from a recent group session:

Piano clementine terracotta flowerpot passport
Home-made mousetrap wheelbarrow Birkenstocks candlestick
Suitcase monkey 18th century print of an elephant caravan

Next, think of three random places and jot them down. They can be very specific, for eg Buckingham Palace, or more generic, like Alpine Meadow. Here are some ideas:

The North Pole Iron Age Hillfort a dark forest
Windmill Ben Nevis an echoing cave the Malvern Hills
Paddock The Australian Outback hospital ward Berlin
Garden shed desert Richmond Park jacuzzi

Now, choose ONE object and ONE place from your list (or from the suggestions). Again, try not to hesitate, just pick one of each that appeals.

Set a timer for five minutes and write a very short piece about what this object is doing in this place. It does not have to be written in perfect prose – you can make notes or just do bullet points if that comes easier to you.

This is a fundamental aspect of story-creation, which is to interrogate your material.

Ask yourself:

- HOW did this object get here?
- WHO put it there, and WHY?
- WHAT is it doing there?
- Who might be finding this object in this place? What are they doing there?
- Did they expect to find it, or is it a surprise?

Just let your imagination run with this for five minutes and see where it takes you!



Exercise Two – Introduction to Timed Writing Practice

The idea of a Timed Writing Practice is simply that: to practice your writing skills and develop a regular writing habit. It can be very daunting when faced with a blank page, so think of Timed Writing Practice as a ‘warm-up’ for your creative muscles! This is a free-

writing exercise: you are not trying to create any particular narrative or structure and you do not have to keep this material or show it to anyone.

Although this technique can also be used to generate material for use in other work – whether it be fiction, memoir, or poetry – the real joy of Writing Practice is to simply let go and write with no agenda. Giving yourself permission to write whatever comes into your mind can allow new and interesting ideas to surface, and knowing you are free either to discard them or develop them later can take your writing into previously unexplored directions.

To begin, set a timer for ten minutes and use the prompt as a starting point. Don't feel that you must adhere to any topic suggested by the prompt but simply follow whatever direction your thoughts take you in. If you come to a standstill simply return to the prompt, write it down again, and go from there.

You may prefer to write for five minutes, or for twenty - experiment and see what works best for you. This is **your** practice and you will soon discover your own preferences.

I strongly recommend writing by hand for this practice if you are able to. There is something special about the connection between 'mind-hand-pen' that allows language to flow organically and give words to our thoughts in a different way those involving screens.

The following guidelines have been adapted from Natalie Goldberg's highly recommended books, *Writing Down the Bones* and *Wild Mind*, and there is no better advice than hers on the subject:

"Sit down with the least expectation of yourself; say 'I am free to write the worst junk in the world'. You have to give yourself the space to write a lot without destination" (*Goldberg, 1986*)

Above all, have fun with this; allow yourself to PLAY and enjoy simply writing for the sake of it!

Guide-lines for Timed Writing Practice (adapted from Goldberg, above)

1. Keep writing for the entire time; don't stop to re-read what you have just written
2. Don't edit as you write – no crossing out or erasing
3. Forget about spelling, punctuation, or grammar
4. Don't censor yourself: write exactly what comes into your head and be bold!
5. Don't over-think things or try to impose 'logic' or 'structure'
6. Be Specific – give us the names of things and the details. Don't say 'flower' say 'geranium'!

There are many books, websites, and writers' resources that can provide you with writing prompts. You may wish to come up with your own and keep a note of these; you can use a random line from a book or poem, or simply write about what is in front of you in this moment.

Here are some suggestions for prompts, taken from my forthcoming book *Creative Writing Prompts* (New Dawn Books, 2025):

When I look up at the stars....

On my mother's kitchen table...

Walking through autumn leaves...

Now: Choose a prompt. Write it at the top of your page. Set your timer for 10 minutes and allow yourself to write freely.



Exercise Three – The Power of Authentic Detail

When we write prose, we want our readers to SEE and FEEL the 'story-world' we are creating – unlike the mediums of film, television, or theatre, we don't have any visual devices, music, or sound effects at our disposal, only our use of language. We want to make our writing vivid and engaging and one of the most powerful tools at our disposal is how we use **DETAIL**.

Often it is the inclusion of small but powerful details that make a place, character, or event seem real, and gives our work that 'ring of truth' that makes it feel authentic and credible, whether we are writing 'real' life or a fiction.

How do we create these vivid authentic details? – Sometimes by writing what is around us, which we cover in more depth on the full course. But there is another infinitely rich resource you can tap into in order to find this kind of material, and that is **YOUR MEMORY**

Being Seven

For this exercise, first of all I want you to remember back to when you were 7 years old (or thereabouts!) and to jot down something for each of the following:

The **taste** of being seven is...

The **smell** of being seven is...

The **sound** of being seven is...

The **touch** of being seven is...

The **sight** of being seven is...

Try to recall concrete images and objects from this time, and use your senses to bring these to life.

How did you find this? What you don't remember, what's difficult to recall, what's easy? (Sometimes what you *don't* remember can be just as interesting as what you do!)

Now: using this material, go on a 'mental journey' and write a short piece either as if you are seven, or are older and looking back on being seven, or perhaps following the 'life' of one of the objects themselves that you noted down.

Not only is this a great way to find inspiration for stories, but it's also a great practice for putting yourself 'into character' and making whatever your character is experiencing feel more real to your reader.



Conclusion

I hope you've enjoyed this very brief introduction to the kind of material I cover in my course and that it's whetted your appetite for more!

Whether or not you decide to undertake the full WordCraft course, I'd like to encourage you to just KEEP WRITING and keep exploring your creative ideas. The world needs stories and story-tellers; every one of them is unique and every one of them matters.

Above all: enjoy the process!

Happy writing,

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