Getting Started- Writing Warm-ups to Unleash Ideas

Many find the most difficult part of writing is the agony of getting started. How do you help your students get their pens flowing across the paper? Employing writing warm-up activities is a great way to unleash ideas and kickstart the creative process. Below are a number of these instant writing activities that you can use to help your students get their writing started.

Speed writing—_This activity forces students to put pen to paper and start writing, great for pushing them past writer's block._

- Make sure that every student has a pen/pencil and paper
- Tell the students the rules:
    - They will write for a set amount of time (3-5 minutes seems to work best).
    - They must always be writing. Even if they can think of nothing to put down, they must continue to write—they could write "_I don't know what to write. I don't know what to write. I don't know..._" until they come up with something else to continue their thoughts.
    - If they cannot think of a word in English, they can write it down in their native tongue.
    - They cannot stop writing until the teacher tells them that the time is up.
- Give the students a topic to write about—this could be anything from what they did over the weekend to their favorite color to their dream vacation—set your timer/stopwatch, and tell them to start writing.
- If you see students not writing, go up to them and make a writing motion with your hand until they start writing (it is best to keep quiet as additional noise can distract the other students).
- When the time is up, tell the students to finish the sentence they are in the middle of, and then put their pens/pencils down.
- It may take a couple of attempts to get students to follow the rules, but after a few tries they will likely get it.
    - **Variations**
    - Have students read over what they have written, circle their favorite sentence, and share it with a partner.
    - Have the students read over waht they have written, and find one section that they would like to expand on.

Themed writing to music—_Music can stir up emotions and creative juices, and can help many people get into the writing flow (and does not work as well for othere). It is good to experiment with different types of music to see what works best for your students. As a general rule instrumental music works best for writing, as vocals tend to confuse and distract from one's own writing._

- Choose 1-3 topics that you would like your students to write about. These could be ideas/themes, or sentence starters that will focus their writing.
- Choose music that will be evocative of the topics. For example, if one topic is to write about a wonderful day, you could choose some light and happy music.
- Tell the students that you will give them a topic, that once the music begins they start writing, and that they must contniue writing until the music stops.
- Tell the students the topic (or write it on the board). Give them a minute to think about it.
- Start the music and have them write

Film score writing—*Film scores can be extremely evocative, and are useful for helping students channel a sense of place, action, and emotion.*

- Find a track from a film score (youtube is a great place to start looking)
- Tell your students that you will play them a film score, and they must write about the scene that they think the composer is trying to create. You can shoose whether you want them to just write about setting, or to also describe characters and action.
- Play the score, and have them write what they "see".
- After they have written, have them share what they have written, listening to other's writing for similarities to their own.
- After they have shared, you can tell them about the scene in the movie that the score accompanied, and they can discuss how well the composer evoked the atmosphere and action.

Picture response/backstory—*Pictures may or may not be worth a thousand words, but they can help your students produce them. A picture can serve as a great springboard to writing, providing ideas to get the words flowing.*

- Choose an evocative picture, preferably one with interesting details, action, or unknowns.
- Show the piture to your students and have them write on one of the following:
  Description— Have them describe what they think is happening in the photo. After they have written, they can compare their ideas with their classmates and look for similarities and differences.
  Inside the mind—Have them choose a person or object in the picture and describe the scene from that person's point of view. They can then read their piece aloud and their classmates must guess from whose/what's point of view they have written.
  Backstory—Have them write a backstory to the scene where they must come up with the chain of events that have led up to the point shown in the picture.
    Variations
    o Provide students with a number of different pictures that share qualities but have differences as well (these could be people, places, objects, etc.). Have the students individually write a description of one of the pictures, and then have them take turns reading their descriptions while their classmates try and guess which picture they are describing.

Unleashing Ideas and Collaborative Writing

Writing needn't be a solitary activity. Working with others can be an effective and engaging way to generate ideas and motivate the lonely writer within. We'll look at activities that you can employ with learners of all ages to help them work together to write more and rediscover the fun in writing.

Brainstorm race—*Brainstorming can work well as a solitary or a collaborative activity to explore ideas or unleash a set of words that can be used in later writing; yet, like writing itself, it can be difficult to get started. One fun and motivating way to encourage students to brainstorm is to add a competitive element to the process.*

- Put students in teams of 2-4 (this activity can also be done alone, but is not nearly as fun).
- Have each group choose a scribe—it will be this student's responsibility to write down all of the group's ideas.
- Give the class a theme, and tell them that the object of the activity is for their team to get the greatest number of words within that theme within a limited amount of time (1-2 minutes works best).
- Set a timer/stopwatch, and let them start.
- When the time is up, have the scrides put their pens down.
- Have the teams tally their words—the team with the most words is the winner.
    - **Variations**
    - Have the teams take turns going around the class saying the words that they have. Teams only get points for words that other teams have not written down.
    - Write the words (or have the students write the words) on the board—the words are then available to all students for writing activities that follow.
    - Instead of words within a theme, the focus of the brainstorming could be on synonyms or antonyms of the word—this is particularly useful for helping students to enrich descriptions). Also useful for improving description is to have them brainstorm words that evoke the word (for example, if the word were *cold*, they could come up with *icicle, shiver, frosty, etc.*).

Spider gram/mind map—*Brainstorming comes in many shapes and sizes...*

- Whereas most brainstorms are written down in lists on a piece of paper, not all student's brains conceptualize ideas in this way. Another method is to mind map, placing the central idea in the middle of a piece of paper, and then adding other ideas around it while drawing lines to show the connections between ideas. This can be particularly helpful in showing the connections between characters or events in a story, or for looking a different and connected elements of an idea.
- Mind maps/Spider grams can be written down on paper, alone or in small groups, but they can also be created by a whole class. The teacher can be the scribe, and as the children call out ideas, the teacher writes down the ideas, and draws in potential connections between the ideas.

Ideas in a hat—*Sometimes it is best to first brainstorm alone to avoid groupthink, then bring the ideas together, and then let each individual choose what works best for him or her.*

- Cut out small slips of paper, at least 2 per student.
- Give the students a story topic, and have them write down one potential part of the story on each of their slips of paper. For example, if the topic were about a dream vacation, the students would have to write one activity that they would do on a dream vacation on each of their slips of paper; if the topic were to describe an explorers adventure through the jungle, they would have to write down one thing that happened on the adventure on each slip of paper. It is best to set a time limit for the writing, and to have extra slips of paper for fast finishers to write down more ideas.
- Put the students into groups of 4-6, and have them put the slips of paper in the middle of their desk/table.
- Have the students take out one slip at a time, and construct a story.
- Once they have constructed a story using all of the slips of paper, have individual students write their own stories using their choice of elements from the group story. Encourage them to keep, remove, or add as much as they want.

Chain story—*Collaborative writing can relieve a lot of the pressure that students feel when asked to be creative. By sharing the writing load, the responsibility of the task is also shared, and the results can be hilarious.*

- Hand out a blank piece of paper to each student.
- Model, and have them follow along, as you fold it into 8 sections.
- Place the students in groups of 8. (They do not have to necessarily move their seats, but will later have to pass their papers in a circular fashion).
- Give them half of a sentence to start a story. For example: *A dog was walking down the street when...*
- Have the students complete this sentence in the top section of the paper.
- Have them then fold the top section over, and continue the story by writing the first half of the next sentence in the second section. If the first line had been "*A dog was walking down the street when it saw a beautiful fire hydrant.*" then the second line could start with "*When he saw the fire hydrant, he...*" or "*The sight of the hydrant made him...*"
- After they have written the first half of the second sentence, they pass their paper to the next student. This student cannot read what was on the top section, but must complete the second sentence, start a third sentence in the third section, fold over the second section, and pass again.
- In this way, the students continue to write, fold, and pass the papers such that they can only see the part of the story that immediately precedes what they will write.
- When the paper gets to the last student, he/she should complete the final sentence (in the 8th section).
- The students can then unfold the papers and read them.
  - **Variations**
    - For a shorter activity, have the students fold the paper into six sections.
    - For more continuity in the story (for example, if you want them to create a story with a complete story arc), allow the students to read all of what was written before, and do not have them fold over the papers.
    - You can have each section align with an aspect of a story arc (the first section would be the introduction, the second setting up the problem, etc.)
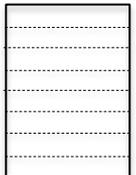
Board writing games—*Who says that writing should be done on paper while sitting at a desk? This activity allows students to move around while working together to write a sory on the board.*

- Place the students into teams (3-4 depending on how wide your board is and how much space you have in your classroom).
- Divide the board into as many columns as there are teams.
- Have the teams line up in front of their columns, and give the first student in each line a board marker.
- Write down a short prompt at the top of each column (for example: *When the man…*).
- Have the first student go up to the board, and write the next 3 words of the story. After writing, he/she must hand the marker to the next student in line (who writes the next 3 words), and go to the back of the line.
- The objective is, of course, to collaboratively write an interesting story and pay attention to what the others are writing. To add some speed and motivation, you can tell the students that the winner is the first team to have everyone write twice, or the first team to fill up their section, or the team that writes the most words in 3 minutes.
  - **Variations**
  - o Instead of a limited amount of words, say that each student can only write for 10 seconds, and call out when the students have to switch.
  - o Have the students read each other's stories, and vote on their favorites.
  - o Have students continue the stories individually on paper.
  - o Have all of the students work on the same story, but each team gets a different color marker, and takes turns in writing.
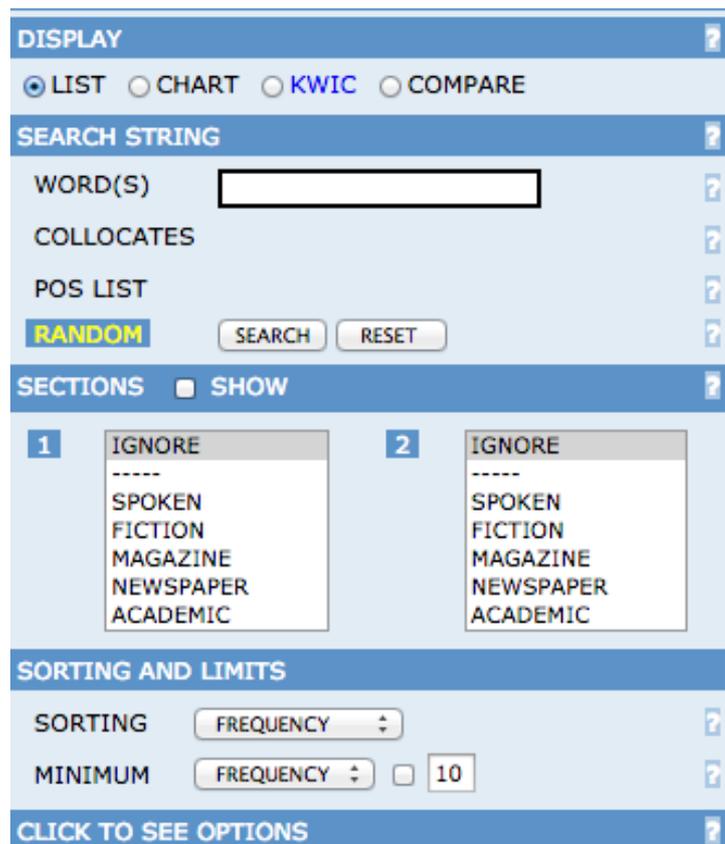
Using Literary Devices in Creative Writing

Using free online software, you can use real-world texts or import you own text samples to look at language patterns.

How to: COCA – *COCA is one of the world's largest collections of English texts. It's fun to play around with! You can use it to isolate word or sentence patterns and show real-world examples. In this tutorial, I will show you how to find real-world examples of synonyms.*

Synonyms
- Go to http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/ and press "enter"
- On the left side of the screen, you should see this:

- You will want to make sure that "LIST" is choosen, as it is in the picture.
- Under "SECTIONS", you have the option to search specific genres of text under number 1. If you wish to only look in fiction texts, academic texts, or both, you can choose them. If you wish to search the entire corpus (which I recommend for the purpose of finding of synonyms), you can just leave the settings as "IGNORE".
- After choosing you word you want to plug into COCA to find synonyms for, such as "cold", you will want to use the "SEARCH STRING" area.
- COCA uses specific codes for searching, so it knows what data to show you. In this case, the code you need is as follows:

[=cold].[j*]

- Once you enter this into the search box, you can press "search". (Sometimes, COCA is buggy, you may have to re-enter the search to get results or press "search" twice if it doesn't load correctly.)

- You should have something like this on the right side of your screen, now:

		CONTEXT	FREQ	
1	☐	COLD [S]	55313	
2	☐	COOL [S]	33615	
3	☐	FORMAL [S]	20275	
4	☐	DISTANT [S]	16035	
5	☐	REMOTE [S]	14502	
6	☐	BITTER [S]	10492	
7	☐	FROZEN [S]	10374	
8	☐	ARCTIC [S]	5046	
9	☐	FREEZING [S]	4448	
10	☐	ICY [S]	4372	

- These results show you possible synonyms and how frequently within the COCA body of texts each word is used.
- From here, you can click on any of the words to get in-text examples of their usage. If I click on word number 7, "FROZEN", the bottom half of the screen should show me examples:

CLICK FOR MORE CONTEXT	☐ [?] SAVE LIST CHOOSE LIST ———— ⇕ CREATE NEW LIST [?]			
1	2015	NEWS	WashPost	A B C company's store-branded products were most nutritious. The label was placed on fresh and **frozen** vegetables; unflavored, low-fat or nonfat milk; and yogurt and
2	2015	NEWS	NYTimes	A B C dark shade of green, and there is frequent fog. Winds that scoured the **frozen** emptiness now push the water into rolling waves. There is little on the surface
3	2015	NEWS	NYTimes	A B C transactions, were intensified. There is also the prospect of around $100 billion in **frozen** funds returning to the country. " Still, I hope the government will be
4	2015	NEWS	NYTimes	A B C the deck of an icebreaker that ferries Chinese scientists from this last stop before the **frozen** continent, Mr. Xi pledged that China would continue to expand in one
5	2015	NEWS	Atlanta	A B C (of 3 cups total) 1 percent milk, 1 (16-ounce) package **frozen** mixed vegetables (thawed and drained), 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme, 1/2 teaspoon
6	2015	NEWS	Atlanta	A B C 8 ounces ziti pasta according to directions and then prepare 1 (10-ounce) package **frozen** peas and carrots according to directions. Meanwhile, heat 2 tablespoons
7	2015	NEWS	Atlanta	A B C 1 (6-ounce) container low-fat yogurt, 1 cup fresh strawberry halves (or **frozen** unsweetened whole strawberries), 3/4 cup 1 percent milk and 2 tablespoons Fiber (
8	2015	NEWS	Atlanta	A B C I couldn't stand it. It was so dangerous and loud. I sold **frozen** meat door to door. I never felt like I was a natural sales person
9	2015	NEWS	Atlanta	A B C me and they would talk to me, let me into their home and buy **frozen** meat from me. But how passionate can you get about frozen meat? He
10	2015	NEWS	Atlanta	A B C home and buy frozen meat from me. But how passionate can you get about **frozen** meat? He eventually branched into technology and ended up working for a pay

- This synonyms list can be used to enhance writing, show examples, give a broader perspective on the connotations or meanings of word, etc.
- NOTE: This list of synonyms is not always accurate and some examples need to be weeded out or considered for their relevancy to what you are trying to describe.
- For more ways to use COCA, you can check out the BYU Copora channel on YouTube here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCy84tTzeJ0s8JLjf_wEiWUQ

How to: AntConc – *AntConc is a free program that you can download to your desk top that allows you to search your own bodies of text for patterns in vocabulary or even grammar or collocations. This tutorial will just focus on similes in texts.*

Simile
- You can download AntConc by following this link and following the instructions: http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/
- Once you have AntConc, you then need to have your bodies of text chosen. For AntConc to work, your texts need to be in .txt format (.doc will not work). To convert any document into a .txt file, you can visit this website: http://document.online-convert.com/convert-to-txt
- Upload you file, then press "convert file". It should download immediately.
- Now that you have your .txt file, you can open AntConc and go to "File", then "Open File(s)". You can choose your .txt files and they should appear under "Corpus Files" in Antconc:
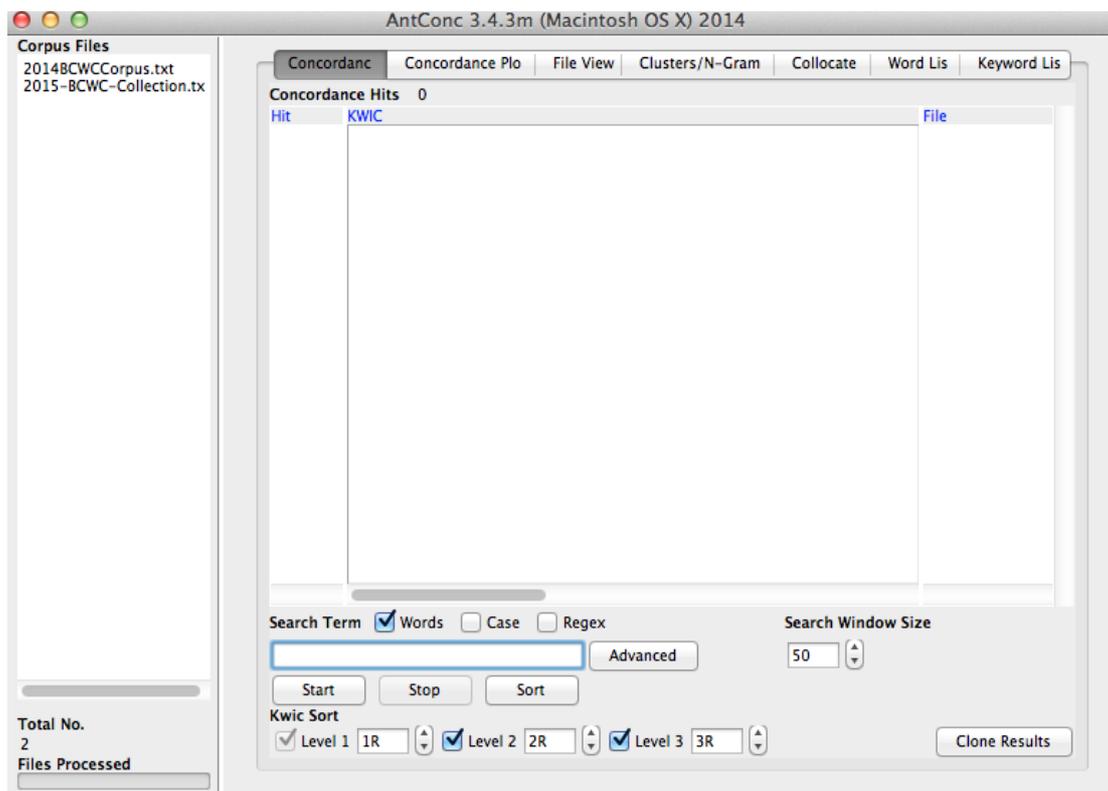

- I have choosen the Bulgarian Creative Writing Competition winning pieces from 2014 and 2015 to upload, you can see.
- Now, I want to isolate the usage of similes in both works. Because I know that similes use two grammatical structures (as ___ as and like), I will be searching for both in the search bar at the bottom of the screen. However, for this tutorial, I will only focus on as ____ as.
- In the search bar, I will type in this code:

as * as

- It's important that you include spaces and the asterisk. The asterisk tells the program that you want words there, but you aren't sure which words. This allows for the program to search this structure. Now press "Start".

- You should get results that look something like this:
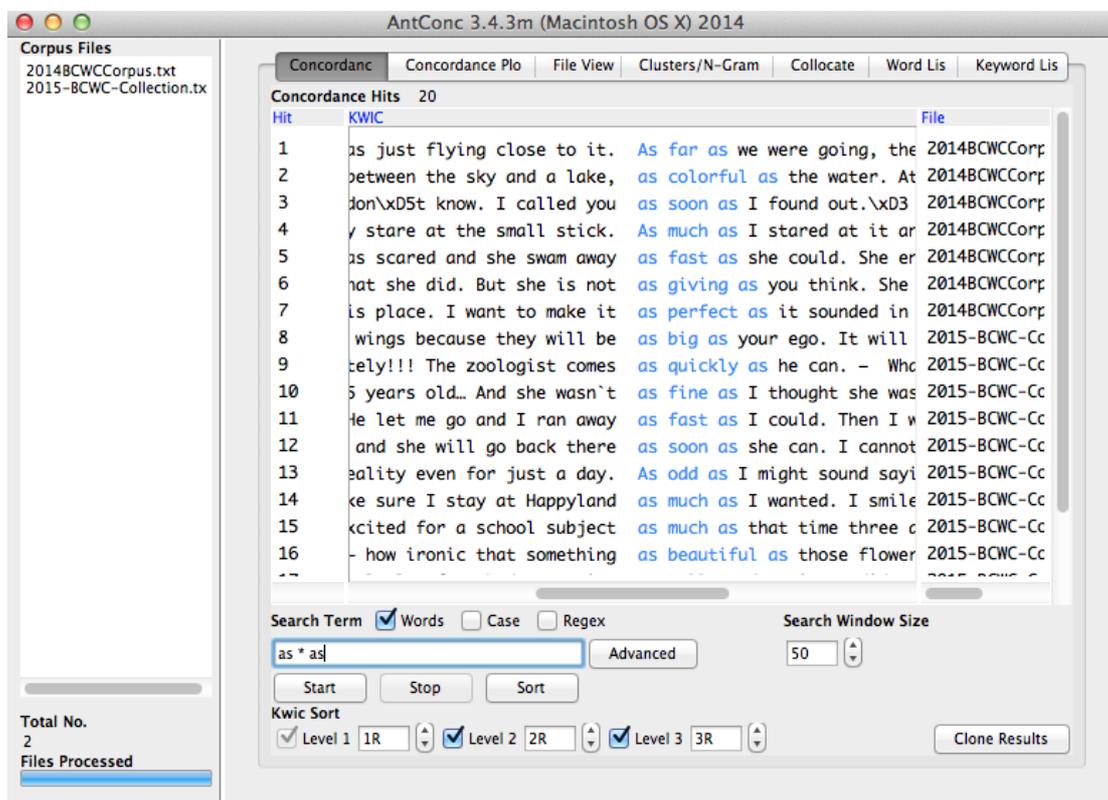
- As you can see, many examples have been shown, but only some are true similes. Here you have to manually read through the sentences to pull adequate and useful examples.
- This can be used to show students correct structures of similes, original examples, or to see if simile patterns have been used that might be beneficial for students or might be ones that students should avoid if they are repeated too frequently.

Crafting Description

Add some color to your craft. Vivid, gripping descriptions are within the reach of anyone that has the tools to cobble them together. In this session we'll analyze effective descriptions and try out activities to help build captivating pictures in the reader's mind.

Sentence analysis—Simple sentences can be embellished by adding different elements to give them a more colorful feel.

Take for example the following sentence:

You are a beggar, and I am a man walking by.

This is a stripped down version of the original, much more descriptive sentence written by Dave Eggers in his book <u>A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius</u>:

"*You are a panhandler, begging for anything, and I am the man walking briskly by, tossing a quarter or so into your paper cup.*"

Or how about the following sentence:

She was the third. Not the first one, nor the second, but the third.

Though this sentence might get your mind wondering, it looks as drab as a disused chalkboard next to Toni Morrison's original from her heart-wrenching <u>Song of Solomon</u>:

"*She was the third beer. Not the first one, which the throat receives with almost tearful gratitude; nor the second, that confirms and extends the pleasure of the first. But the third, the one you drink because it's there, because it can't hurt, and because what difference does it make?*"

In these examples from Morrison and Eggers we can see a number of elements that they emply in their writing to provide enhanced descriptions. Among the most useful are:

- Adjectives
- Adverbs
- Subjunctive clauses
- Prepositional phrases
- Sentence length

Expansion game—*This is a great activity to help your students expand a simple sentence, and turn it into a descriptive playground.*

- Prepare a number of small blank squares of paper—at least 5 per student plus some extras
- For each group (groups should be no greater than 6 students) write out a basic sentence, minus punctuation or capitalization on some of the extra squares of paper. A simple starter sentence (requiring only 3 squares of paper) could be: the woman ran
- Give each group their starter sentence cards and a stack of the blank paper cards.
- The students go around in a circle, and take turns expanding the sentence by adding in elements (adjectives, adverbs, prepositional phrases, etc,) to enhance the description.
- Either have a time limit, or make it a race to see which group can use all of their cards first.
- At the end of the activity, either have the groups read their sentences aloud, with the other groups listening for similarities and differences, or have the students walk around the class to read and compare.

  Variations
  o Instead of playing as individuals, you can divide the students in each group into two teams that take turns adding elements into the sentence
  o Allow the students to add punctuation, change sentence length, and create additional sentences.
  o Have the students look at this big, bulky sentence, and choose each write down their own version, choosing to keep, eliminate, or add elements, as well as to break it into different sized sentences. Students can then go on to compare their individual versions.

Showing versus Telling—Another way to craft description is to provide a striking image to represent something that would otherwise be described.

Take the following sentence for example:

The car was brand new

Okay, the reader will understand that it is a new car, but see how much more informative the following sentence is while evoking the same idea, though not explicitly saying that the car is new:

Fresh vinyl hit my nose as I opened the door, and was suddenly a little nervous to touch my feet to the floor lest I soil the virgin carpet.

Or see how Margaret Atwood makes use of showing (and a little telling at the beginning) to create a whole history in a few lines of her short story Unpopular Gals:

"I was always just *the ugly sister;* put the stress on *ugly*.
The one the other mothers looked at, then looked away from and shook their heads gently.
Their voices lowered or ceased altogether when I came into the room, in my pretty dresses, my face leaden and scowling.
They tried to think of something to say that would redeem the situation—*Well, she's certainly strong*—but they knew it was useless. So did I."

Developing Characters and Setting

How can you convince the reader to care about the plight of your protagonist? In this session we will explore activities and techniques to help provide characters with added depth and dimensionality to compel readers to invest in your story.

Character buildup—*It is important for writers to know their characters. The more a writer knows about the characters, the more lifelike and believeable their representations will become in the reader's mind.*

The following is a list of traits and characteristics that can serve as a starting point for exploring and breathing life into a character. Though not necessary to explicitly write into a story, having a clearer idea of the characters will help the writer understand how the characters will act and react and develop in a story. This is just the beginning, and the more one adds to this list, the more the characters will come alive:

Physical
- Height
- Weight
- Eyes
- Hair
- Face
- Build
- Skin tone
- Unique features
- Clothes

Bio/Family
- Age/DOB
- Parent's names, professions, etc.
- Siblings, children
- Marital status
- Pets
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Work
- Living arrangement

Favorites
- Book
- Movie/TV show
- Food
- Drink
- Band
- Song
- Season

Interests
- Political
- Religious
- Causes
- Love
- Hobbies

Defining moments
- Major childhood experience
- Proudest moment
- Most embarrassing moment
- Aspirations/ambitions
- How character would describe self

Questions and situations to get a better sense of character—*Another way to help develop characters is to imagine them in situations that will demonstrate how they react to the world around them, or conversely to ask questions about how the characters express emotion to help determine what situations will best show the characters to the reader.*

Writing some brief sketches to answer the following questions, adapted from Deb Gallardo's website (www.debgallardo.com/virtuoso/1012/creative-writing-exercises-character-sketches/), can be a good place to start:

- What is your character afraid of?
- What gives your character joy?
- How does your character show love?
- What makes your character angry?
- What does your character think about during his/her downtime?

Likewise, you can use questions to help create a more vivid and captivating **setting** for your stories. The following questions should provide some initial guidance:

- How would you describe the environment?
- What is the time of day/quality of the light?
- What is the weather/temperature?
- What happened here before?
- What are some unique features/what covers the landscape?
- What are the dominant colors, sounds, smells?
- What objects are there? What do they look like?

As with all description, the more you can show, the more you can bring the scene to life. Consider this sentence that tells the reader about the the weather and light in a scene:

It was hot and the sun was bright

Compared with the following which shows these elements while combining with the narrative:

She squinted, cupped a tired hand over her sweat-beaded brow trying, fruitlessly, to make out the form on the scorched crag.

Writing with Effective Details

Good writing is concrete and specific. Whether in a story, university application essay, business memo, or technical report, vivid, concrete details make writing clear and accessible by creating images, emotions, and sensory details that effectively communicate with the reader. Explore ways to generate and use effective details in writing.

Describing something without saying it

- Choose a color.
- Write a paragraph that starts with that color.
- Suggest that color in as many specific ways as possible, without using the name of the color more than once.
- For example, here is a treatment of the color grey:

  The world had turned grey. Nothing but mud and asphalt surrounded the unpainted house, little more than a box made of concrete blocks. Charlie, dressed in faded work pants, rubber boots, and a thick wool sweater, steadied himself with a hand on the top rail of a weathered cedar fence. Behind him, nothing but ash-colored sky, bare trees, and plumes of smoke belching from the factory in the distance. A lone sparrow rested on a branch, one beady eye watching.

- This activity does not need to be restricted to colors, and can be used to help writers develop concrete descriptive details for a range of adjectives and adverbs.

Generating Ideas from Your Own Life

Writing from real life has benefits! Details and ideas from personal experience can enhance creative writing with powerful images and concrete characters and settings. And research shows that personal writing improves health and wellbeing.

Long-term Benefits of Expressive Writing

- **Health Benefits**
    - Improved immune system functioning
    - Reduced blood pressure
    - Improved lung & liver function
    - Fewer days in hospital
    - Improved mood/affect
    - Feeling of greater psychological well-being
    - Reduced depressive symptoms before examinations
    - Fewer post-traumatic intrusion and avoidance symptoms
- **Social and Behavioral Benefits**
    - Reduced absenteeism from work
    - Quicker re-employment after job loss
    - Improved working memory
    - Improved sporting performance
    - Higher students' grade point average
    - Altered social and linguistic behavior
      --Wilhelm, Kay & Karen A. Baikie, "Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing," Advances in Psychiatric Treatment.
      http://apt.rcpsych.org/content/11/5/338.full

Prose in Many Forms

From the structured story arc to an experimental essay, prose can take many forms. But often it's helpful for students to see how to form a structured story, but also that they can write one various topics and notice themes within their own ideas.

Story Arc/definition of elements

- To get students familiar with the traditional story arc, you can draw a bell shape on the board, such as this:
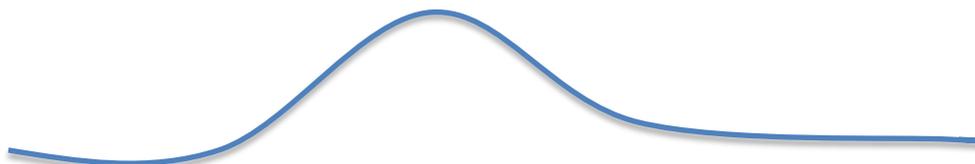
- This shape represents the traditional story arc with a beginning, middle and end.
- You can elicit the parts of the story and fill in introduction, rising action/problem set-up, climax, falling action/resolution and conclusion.

Climax

Rising
Action

Resolution

Introduction

Conclusion
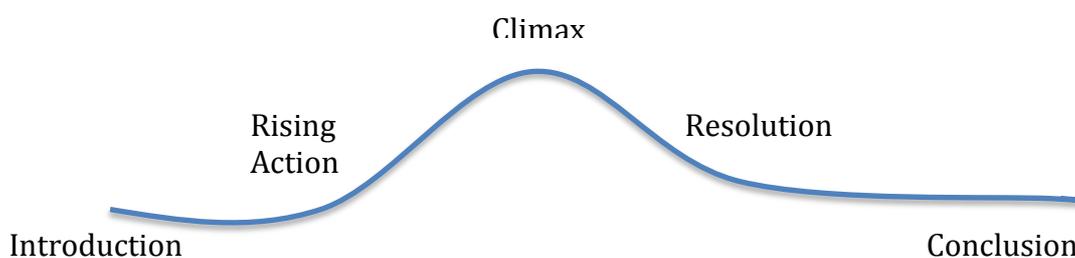
- In groups, students could be asked to provide definitions for each part of the story.
- In addition, once those definitions have been fleshed out, you can take a familiar story, such as "Little Riding Hood" and have the students decide which part of the story fit each part of the story arc.
- This is something students should have in mind when they write to create a cohesive story.

Experimental essay—The experimental essay is a great way to get students writing outside the box!

- Think of time in your students' lives that they might be able to reflect on and write about such as childhood, last summer, their first year in high school, etc.
- Give each student a blank piece of paper and have them rip it into 5 equal sized pieces.
- They will use those pieces to write about the given time period by focusing on a sense (hearing, smelling, seeing, touching, tasting).
- Tell them to think back to a smell they remember or associate with that time in their lives. They will have 2 -3 minutes to write for the first sense, such as smelling. They can choose to write in short notes, words or full sentences, it's their choice, whatever they are feeling.
- Move through all the senses.
- Once the pieces are all filled, tell students to reread their slips of paper and choose the order in which they would to put their essay.
- Ask them if they notice any themes or reoccuring imagry in their writing.
- Students should be encouraged to share their masterpieces!

Making Poetry Accessible

From three lines of poetry to three pages, everyone can be a poet; it just takes a little practice! Explore poetry writing in fun and imaginative ways to help get your mind thinking creatively and to break outside the confines of academic writing forms and topics.

Drawing on your head—_This activity is good to get students in a more relaxed, yet creative frame of mind._

- Have students take out a notebook (they need something hard to draw on) and pen or pencil.
- They should put the notebook on their head and get ready to draw on top of their heads.
- You should dictate what students should draw such as a self-portrait, a nature scene, animals…or all three!
- After a few minutes of drawing (NO LOOKING!), have students take down their works of art and see how well they did.

Red Wheelbarrow—_Using a poem from modernist poet William Carlos Williams, students can read "The Red Wheelbarrow" as a model for creating their own modernist poem._

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

- Now, ask students to think of the following:
  1. a noun
  2. an adjective
  3. another adjective
  4. a prepositional phrase
  5. yet another prepositional phrase

- Now, using the following frame, they can plug in their words to create their own modernist poems:

The _____ _____
      #2   #1
so much depends
upon
a _____
   #2

  _____
    #1

  _____
    #3

_____
       #4

_____.
         #5

Haiku—*Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry that typically deals with themes of nature.*

- Using the syllabic pattern of 5, 7, 5 the poem's first line contains 5 syllables, the second 7, and the final line has 5.
- You can show your students the following example:

  In the city fields (5)
  Contemplating cherry-trees... (7)
  Strangers are like friends (5)
  -    Kobayashi Issa

- Have your students choose a nature-theme and then write their own haiku paying attention to syllable count.

Frame poems—*These poems give students a ready-made structure within which they can focus their efforts on creating powerful images and playing with language.*

- Using a given frame, students should also be provided with a theme such as school, an activity, a person, place or thing to complete the frame poem:
  I love _____ because...
  I love _____ because...
  I love _____ because...
  But I hate ____ because...

Acrostic poems—*These are poems where students should take a word or name and create a poem about that word or person.*

- The word/name should be written vertically on the paper.
- Each line of the poem should begin with the letter it corresponds with.
- Lines should not be written to the left of the poem, but only to the right.
- In addition, the word or name the poem is about should not be mentioned in the poem itself.
- Here is an example using the word "cat":

  Crazy claws
  Attacking my Christmas
  Tree

Metaphor poems—_These poems are used to compare two unlike things, though without using "like" or "as"._

- Ask students to think of someone who is important to them.
- You can have them use the following frame:
- You can add, repeat, or reorder any combinations of metaphors that you choose.

  To (person)
  You are a sweet ice cream on a hot summer's day. (food)
  You (weather)
  You (furniture)
  You (transport)
  You (clothing)
  You (part of the house)
  You (color)
  You (animal)
  You (time of year)

- You can add, repeat, or reorder any combinations of metaphors that you choose.

Diamante—_These poems end up in the shape of a diamond and should be about two related, but opposing topics._

- The following is an example of a diamante:

  Cats
  Fluffy, rambunctious
  Meowing, scratching, playing
  I eat your shoelaces, I pee on fire hydrants
  Licking, chewing, bouncing
  Loving, loyal
  Dogs

- The format you can provide your students is:

  Topic 1
  Two adj. about topic 1
  Three verbs/adverbs about topic 1
  A phrase about topic 1, a phrase about topic 2
  Three verbs/adverbs about topic 2
  Two adj. about topic 2
  Topic 2