

## CAUTION: BRAIN STORM AHEAD

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*“Creative thought can be determined by how effectively the brain can communicate between different regions that usually work separately.”* Rich Haridy in *The Neuroscience of creativity*

Success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century work place is more about being creative, than it is about “fitting in.” The good news? It’s not something you are born with.

“...excellence (in creativity) is determined by:

- Opportunities
- Encouragement
- Training
- Motivation, and most of all,
- Practice.” (see link below)

Narrative writing is an excellent vehicle for the development of creative thinking, which is rapidly becoming one of the most sought after qualities in the business world.

<https://www.creativityatwork.com/2014/02/17/what-is-creativity/>

### MINDLESS MUSINGS

A writing warm-up exercise to get the words flowing. Do this as often as possible to encourage confidence in writing, and stimulate the imagination.

Object: To write continuously for a set amount of time (start with 5 minutes)

Rules:

1. Do NOT quit writing until the time is up.
2. Write using complete sentences (no grocery lists)

You may write about whatever you want and change topic as often as you wish.

Tip: If the student feels “stuck”, she writes “I don’t know what to write,” as many times as it takes until something pops into her head.

### MINDFUL MUSINGS

After the above activity has been mastered, switch it up on occasion and require the brain to generate thoughts and ideas within a prescribed topic or theme.

The rules remain the same. This time, however, the student must continue to write nonstop within a particular topic or theme. Prior to assigning Mindful Musings, have the class brainstorm a list of topics, which can be posted in the classroom, or online for students to access during this activity.

Sentence starters such as, "I remember ..." can also be used.

## *RANDOM THINGS COLLECTION*

Collect an assortment of "odds and ends." My collection includes, party favours, marbles, keys paper clips, hair clips, shells, rocks, puff balls, fuzzy worms, dice, game pieces, hour-glass timers, buttons, coins, etc. You get the idea.

I believe there are as many ways to use this collection for writing as there are items. Below, you will find a few ideas that have worked effectively to motivate students to write.

### **#1 WHAT IF?**

**Display the collection and have each student choose one object to take to his work area.**

When each student has an object, pose the question, *What if someone (from another time, another planet) found this "thing" and did not know what it was?* Students then brainstorm all of the possible uses for the item. The realistic and the ridiculous should all be encouraged.

Tip: Do this activity all together first. I like to use dice for my whole group activity, then have the students repeat the process with their own artefact. This activity serves two purposes:

1. To warm up the imagination and get the ideas flowing
2. Have some ideas from which to choose for the next activity, so a lot of time is not wasted "thinking about what to write."

### **#2. IDEA BLAST**

Create a history for the object. Include the following:

1. Who created the object? (How did it originate?)
2. For what purpose was it created?
3. What affect did it have on life? On death?
4. How did the character gain possession of the object? (Was it handed down through a special family ceremony? Found in a trunk of heirlooms? Dug up in the garden?)

Give an example: At this point I tell the students a story, in which I create a backstory for a paperclip from my collection.

Tip: Always do the activity yourself first before assigning it. That way you will discover the "pitfalls" and better understand the process the activity requires.

### #3. WRITE A STORY

Students now write the backstory or history for their object. Students may take the story you have shared and run with it, or create their own, thus eliminating the complaint, "I don't know what to write."

This may or may not be part of a bigger story as you move on to the next activity.

### #4. MAGICAL POWERS

In this activity, the student will connect a power to the object. Using the Idea Blast from #2, the student could create a back story for the magic, including how it became magical.

Next, show how the character makes use of the magic? Does the character use it for Good? Evil?

OR

Perhaps the person in possession of the magical object receives a super power. What is it? How does the character make use of it?

### #5 WRITE A SCENE

Now, move the object to a new location:

- The forest
- A beach
- A cave
- A castle
- The moon
- A different planet

Students will now write a scene for a story, in which:

- The object becomes lost and ends up in this new location.  
Or
- You (or your character) find the object during some outrageous adventure.  
Or
- You (or your character) stumble upon the object by accident during a normal, every-day event.  
Or
- You (or your character) notice something unusual about the new location, which leads you to the discovery of the object, which leads you to the discovery of something magical.