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## 1) Workshop on "Creative Writing and Storytelling": Notes

### Types of Creative Writing

- 1) A Poem. Any observation or statement could be a poem. A poem could also be words about -- or words thought or spoken by -- remembered or imagined characters.
- B) A Story. A story is a series of events relating to remembered or imagined characters.
- C) A Play. A play is one or more scenes in which a remembered or imagined character appears and speaks to him/herself or to other characters.

### Twelve Elements of Story

- 1) The **Title** of the story.
- 2) **Characters** (their histories, thoughts, decisions, actions, etc).
- 3) Characters' **Ways of speaking**.
- 4) Characters' **Ways of moving**.
- 5) **Place**.
- 6) **Time** (continuous, or jumps, flashbacks?).
- 7) The **Storyline** (also known as, plot) -- in one or two sentences.
- 8) **Objects** in the story.
- 9) **Sensory Elements** in the story: Smells, Flavours, Colours, Textures, etc.
- 10) **Emotions** in the story (for the characters, the teller, and the listeners).
- 11) **Who is the Narrator?** What is his/her Point of View, Tone of Voice, and Style?
- 12) **Point** (Theme, Meaning, Moral, Message, Lesson, Take-away).

All stories are about **situations**. Story readers and listeners can **Project** themselves into, and **Imagine** themselves in these situations. They may **Empathise** and **identify** with -- and even possibly **Imitate** -- the characters. Considering if they might do things the same as, or differently from, how the characters do things gives the listeners *practice for living*.

Identify a story's **Turning Points** (also known as Defining Moments, Dramatic Moments, Moments of Decision, Moments of Truth, Pivotal Points, Crucial Scenes, and Key Scenes).

### When discussing a Story

Ask "**Open Questions**" (questions with no right or wrong answers), such as,

- 1) What is one specific thing -- an image, an action by a character, etc -- you liked about the story, or about the way the story was written or told.
- 2) Might you have any suggestions for improvement regarding the story, or about the way it was written or told? Might you like to add to the story, or change it in any other way?
- 3) Might the story remind you of any personal experience, or of some other story?
- 4) Does the story seem to teach any lessons?

## **Creative Writing Methods**

- 1) Daydream. Write about whatever comes to mind (for 10 minutes). This could be about "big" issues like your ideas and feelings about society and/or your personal identity, or "small" issues like something that happened in school the other day.
- 2) Go over what you have written, and underline or highlight the words and sentences of what you have written that seem to you to be the most interesting.
- 3) Write about the highlighted words and sentences (for 10 minutes).
- 4) Create imaginary characters and place them in the highlighted situations. Let your imagination play -- the situations could develop in your writing differently than the way the situations occurred in real life.

ROQI -- Remember, Observe, Question, Imagine.

Personify things, ideas, ideals, behaviours, animals, etc. That is, represent them as characters who have human-type consciousness and language ability.

Write about, or as, Alter Ego characters. These are aspects of oneself, personified as characters.

### Working with one's Life Story

- 1) Write your Life Story -- from when and where you were born, to today. You might focus on your unique interests, talents, and abilities. In other words: What are you good at, and what do you know a lot about? When and how did you discover these unique interests? How do you plan to develop and apply these interests through education and work?
- 2) Identify turning points, outstanding story elements (motifs), and themes in this story.
- 3) Write the story as if it had happened to a character external to your self.
- 4) Change the story in any other way. Create a metaphorical (fantasy) version of the story, or of any part of it.

## **Story-writing Prompts**

Write about

- your favourite \_\_\_\_\_.
- something you have done well.
- a place only you know about.
- some aspects of society you tend to think about.
- some environmental issues you tend to think about.
- professions you are considering joining.

### **If You Could ...**

If you could do anything -- What would you do?

If you could go anywhere -- Where would you go?

If you could be anyone -- Who would you be?

If you could meet anyone -- Who would you meet? (How might the conversation go?)

### **Problems and Solutions**

Make a list of problems -- big and small, personal and social. For each problem, write about numerous possible solutions.

### **Why Does He/She Feel That Way?**

If a character might be happy, he/she might feel this way because \_\_\_\_.

If a character might be sad, he/she might feel this way because \_\_\_\_.

If a character might be in a rush, he/she might feel this way because \_\_\_\_.

If a character might be confused, he/she might feel this way because \_\_\_\_.

If a character might have a feeling of achievement, he/she might feel this way because \_\_\_\_.

Etc.

## 2) Some Possible Reasons to Engage in Creative Writing

Discover, explore, and express one's thoughts and feelings.

Experience feelings of accomplishment and achievement by externalising and shaping one's thoughts and feelings. Experience the joy of being a creator.

Structure and organise one's thoughts. Develop one's communication skills (one's ability to use words to paint pictures in readers' minds). Become a more articulate communicator.

Story-making and story-presenting can be a powerful form of persuasion -- showing positive examples of behaviour (for readers to follow), and negative examples (for readers to avoid).

Practice problem-solving.

Practice looking at situations from different angles (from the perspectives of each character). This might increase one's senses of awareness of others' feelings, situations, and points of view, and one's compassion for others. It might also help one improve one's ways of handling, and working with, other people.

Develop one's imagination and creativity (one's ability to imagine and to create). Creativity is a useful ability to have in any field, and in life in general.

One may eventually work in fields -- such as Entertainment, Advertising, and Marketing -- in which one may benefit if one has creative writing skills.

### 3) Study Skills: Writing Notes, Preparing for Exams, etc

#### Ways of Managing Academic Material During the School Term

Accumulate class material -- the information, and your thoughts about the information -- layer after layer, over time.

A recommended way to do this is:

- 1) If possible, have a separate ruled blank notebook for each class subject (Math, History, Literature, etc).
- 2) Number the pages of each blank notebook.
- 3) Create a "Contents" page.
- 4) When taking notes during a class -- write the date on the top of the first page of notes one is writing during that class.
- 5) Keep your notebook open to a blank page during every minute of every class period (except for when you are writing exams, of course). Write notes, and your thoughts about what is happening in class.
- 6) After a class, write in the Contents page the date and any other small amount of important identifying info next to the page number. This way, you would record the material and store it in an organized way -- and you would also be able to locate and access the wanted material easily.

#### What to do When One Does Not Understand a Lesson

At times, one may be baffled by an aspect of what one is supposed to be learning -- for example, a math procedure. Even if one has listened to and watched the teacher, one may not understand a new lesson.

Every once in a while, go over your notes, and identify where your understanding is unclear. That is: don't run away from, and try to ignore, your weak areas. Instead, identify these areas, go after them, and try to improve yourself in these areas.

Becoming aware of *what you do not know* is a big first step in catching up, and in clarifying that which was unclear.

Once you have identified a difficulty you are having: Go to your teacher before or after class, and -- as privately as possible -- tell her about your difficulty. Ask her what she might suggest you do to gain clarity regarding the matter.

Many times what is needed is more and clearer examples and illustrations of a procedure or idea. The teacher may be able to give this. If you are baffled about something, it is likely that other students in the class may also be baffled about the same matter. In many cases, if you are polite and sincere as you ask for additional examples and illustrations, you can help a teacher improve her teaching.

Possible additional steps:

You might form study groups with classmates. See if a classmate can explain the unclear matter to you. In a good study group, some students will be able to explain some things, and other students will be able to explain other things, to each other.

One option may be to engage a tutor, at least for a limited time period, at least regarding one aspect of the subject, so one can catch up. It is better to spend some time with a tutor than to 1) have a lot of anxiety leading up to a test, and/or 2) possibly fail the test and have to take it again. If one does fail a test, keep the tutor option in mind.

### Preparing for Exams

- 1) Gather the material --
  - a) the notes you have from class,
  - b) the notes you have from readings, and
  - c) your written thoughts about these notes.
- 2) Divide the material into sections.
- 3) Create a list of topics you need to know about. Organise the topics -- and for each topic, highlights and summaries of your notes -- into an order. You might now have three to six pages of material to study (before a mid-term or final exam).
- 4) Go into "active mode": practice "outputting." For examples:
  - a) In writing -- define terms, and ask and answer sample questions.
  - b) Explain the material to people.

## 4) Research Essay Components and Structure

### Introduction

- 1) One might give an illustrative anecdote (a brief story), to get the reader involved on the human level (on emotional, philosophical, and aesthetic levels).
- 2) Introduce the topic, problem, and/or issue.
- 3) State the research question (or questions). This research question could be supplied by the Instructor. However, for maximum educational value and effectiveness, it is recommended that the student thinks about what he/she is fascinated by and curious about regarding the subject, and under the guidance of the Instructor, formulates the research question him/herself accordingly.
- 4) State one's possible answer (one's hypothetical answer, one's hypothesis) to the research question -- if one does have a possible answer in mind.
- 5) Discuss the history (past), contexts (present), and implications (future) of the research question and possible answers.
- 6) Explain why one's research question(s), and answer(s) (hypotheses), are important.
- 7) Discuss what individuals and communities, and what disciplines of scholarship, have considered these matters.
- 8) State some limitations of the project (state some matters one's essay will not discuss).
- 9) State what one are going to do in the balance of the essay. For example: state what kinds of evidence to support one's hypotheses one would be giving.

### Main Body

- 1) Present the data that one has gathered:  
Cite any evidence that one has found.
- 2) Support one's hypothesis, build one's argument for that hypothesis:
  - a) Use logic, reason.
  - b) Cite common sense.
  - c) Cite personal reflections.
  - d) Cite authorities (famous scholars and other people, and their sayings and writings).
  - e) Cite public opinion, backed up by "opinion polls," and "surveys" (including original ones you may have conducted).
  - f) Cite tradition.
- 3) Discuss other possible answers to the research question. That is: raise and reply to points of view that may be oppositional to one's own.

### Conclusion

- 1) Summarize and review any of the above.
- 2) State what one has done up to this point in the essay), and briefly once again present one's hypotheses (one's answers to the research questions).
- 3) Express solidarity with readers, and appeal to the common good: that is, explain why one's hypotheses, one's answers, are correct and useful, and why it might be beneficial for the reader to agree with these hypotheses and adopt them.
- 4) Suggest future scholarship projects, to follow up on the present one.