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Come in...and be captivated...

Writers' Craft Box

What this section is intended to do:
Give writers suggested hints,
resources, and advice.

How to use: Pick and choose what you
feel is most helpful and derive
inspiration from it- most importantly,
HAVE FUN!

What a Writers' Craft Box is: Say
you're doing an art project and you
want to spice it up a bit. You reach
into a seemingly bottomless box full
of colorful art/craft supplies and
choose only the things that speak to
you. You take only what you need to
feel that you've fully expressed
yourself. Then, you go about doing
you're individual project adding just
the right amount of everything you've
chosen until you reach a product that
suits you completely. So, this is on
that concept. Reach in. find the



"Arts and Crafts" N.M.B Copyright2008

things that inspire you, use the tools that get your writing going and see it as fulfilling your self-expression as opposed to following rules.

Writing is art and art is supposed to be fun, relaxing, healing and nurturing. It's all work and it's all play at the same time. A Writers' Craft Box is whatever your imagination needs it to be- a lifeboat, the spark of an idea, a strike of metaphorical lightning, a reminder, or simply the recommendation of a good book. Feel free to sit back and break out the crayons. Coloring outside the lines is heartily encouraged.

Alana Cash studied English literature at UCLA. She worked as a "reader" for a major literary agency before she began teaching at the University of Texas Informal Classes program. After two years of teaching, she was invited to participate in the PBS series on expository writing. She is an award-winning and published short story author and internationally published journalist.

EXERCISE TO BREAK THROUGH WRITER'S FREEZE



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Sometimes you just can't get words onto paper. You may get a word or two or even a sentence, but you can't tap into the flow or get a groove on. Writer's freeze is like insomnia, but instead of thinking you'll never sleep again, you think "that's it – I've used up my talent and I'll never write again."

The best action to take with thoughts like those is to make writing a game. Find an exercise that isn't about being a good writer, but having fun or at least getting a different perspective.

Here is an exercise that I call Radical Grammar:

List 10 examples of each word below:

Noun

Pronoun

Adjective

Verb

Adverb

Preposition

Conjunction

ARTICLES: a, an, the

Now, (this is great for a party setting and it shakes things up so the spontaneous quality of your story is genuine) choose a partner- you will switch nouns and verbs with them, keeping the rest of your list the same; then using only the words you have in these lists, write a story that is at least three paragraphs long. You may pluralize the nouns and change verb tense, but you may not use any words other than those listed.

When you have finished the exercise in radical

grammar, answer the following questions. Take your time and free write your answers without stopping:

1. How did it feel to write within the limitation of the words you had chosen?
2. Did you follow the directions given in the exercise or did you change the rules? Why? How did that feel?
3. As you wrote your story, how did you feel about the words you were using? What choices do you wish you could have made?



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Roots in the Undergrowth

By Nicole M. Bouchard

Amidst winter's icy majesty, it is a great time to reflect. While reading is terribly important to a writer's life, here I discuss the importance of going back to our "reading roots" and revisiting the books we loved as children. There are many examples of children's literature that contain unfettered whimsy, clear flowing prose, and meticulous attention to description. Often the descriptions in books targeted at intermediate young audiences, stretch our minds to envision most explicitly things that we once yearned to understand. Many writers can trace their profession back to a profound love of reading in their youth. Break out the old

books, visit a library, and chart your progression as a creative individual. Two books which I heartily recommend are *The Children of Green Knowe*, by L.M. Boston- a haunting tale with sparkling imagery, and *Peter Pan*, by J.M. Barrie- an adventure of conversational prose and artful storytelling. Please feel free to write into us editorialstaff@thewriteplaceatthewritetime.org to share your favorite childhood books and treasured reading experiences.

Keeping it Short and Sweet

The short story is a writers' art form that is both powerful and complex in its intricacies. To be able to convey a taste of a different world to a reader within a short space is no small feat. Some authorities on this argue that the short story is more difficult to master than the novel which leaves time for characters and plot to emerge gracefully. To call upon a clear example, I would recommend, "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin. She takes us easily up and over the story's arch, leaving us to think what we will of the end, of the protagonist, and of the truth surrounding the central characters' marriage. Her author's prowess makes us consider an entire fictional life, from the extreme to the mundane.

Hemingway was once asked to write a short story using as few words as possible. He wrote the following: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." Two

short sentences and we see a tragedy unfold, deducing pain and even possibly something of the character's motivations and reactions to the tragedy because the shoes are being sold; not thrown away, not given away.

Mark Twain once wrote, "It probably costs you nothing to write a short story, but I find that it costs me as many false starts--and therefore failures--as does a long one."

The overall message is to give a clear snapshot of a story that hits hard and makes the reader think after reading it.

Recommended Reading: *Portable MFA in Creative Writing (New York Writers Workshop)*

This book not only gives a sterling breakdown of the short story, but I would heartily recommend it for all types of writing- long and short fiction, non-fiction, etc... It gives unbiased views while being interactive enough to keep interest with exercises illustrating the lessons of each chapter.

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