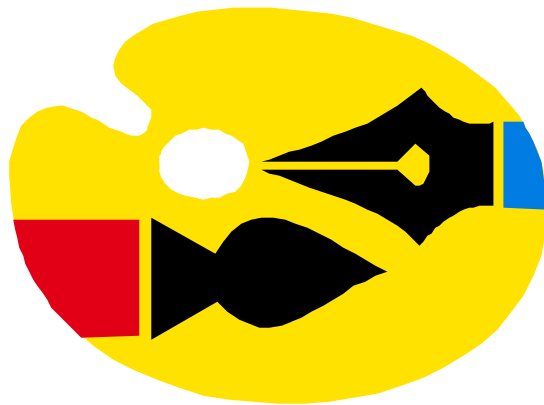


# Picture This

I deas for Writing Workshops  
for young people



Rosanne Hawke

[www.rosannehawke.com](http://www.rosannehawke.com)

## Characters make your story



1. Draw a mind map of your character:  
eg name, personality, likes and dislikes, favourite things, friends, family, name, cultural background, pets, mannerisms, sayings, age, sport, music, clothes, jewelry.  
What book are they reading?
2. What special attribute makes your character different?
3. What is your character frightened of?
4. What does he/she want the most?

### Mind mapping

Engages the right side of the brain, where colour and creativity reign.

It works by association.

Use an image in the middle.

[www.buzan.com.au](http://www.buzan.com.au)

Tony Buzan, 1993, *The Mind Map Book*, BBC Books, UK.

Tony Buzan, 2005, *Mind Mapping for Kids*

# Storytelling



Character	Setting	Event
Wizard	Beach	Party
Knight	King's garden	escape
Ugly princess	Walnut shell	kidnapping
Poor sailor	A tank	A child is lost
Bear	forest	Bushfire
Sheep dog	On a ship	Storm
Trapeze boy	Lighthouse	Theft
Girl tree cutter	Island	bonfire
elf	cave	A thing is found

Choose a word or phrase from each column.

Tell a story using all three.

Now write a creative piece.



## Old Gallery

1 Take some old photographs to the workshop.

Students choose one each.

Write a story or poem from the point of view of that character.

Share ideas and writing.

Photocopy the photograph and typed text and publish on the wall.

2 The photos can be used to write about an emotion (without mentioning it, and without disclosing which photo used) and other members of the group have to guess which photo was used when the writers read theirs out.



## The Bottle

Take the bottle I dug up in garden.

First, ask students for examples of bottles and uses thereof.

Show the bottle.

Ask students to discuss why it was in the ground in the first place.

What it could have been used for?

Who buried it?

Did it have a part to play in someone's life, or death?

Think of the characters involved.

The setting.

Write notes or start a story or poem.

Workshop ideas or read paragraphs from work.

Read Robert Westall's short story, 'The Bottle' from 'Voices in the Wind'.



## Seasonal Senses

Take calendar pictures or photos of nature to the group.  
Each student chooses one.

They must write about the picture using the five senses:

Taste

Smell

Touch

Hearing

Sight

This exercise can also be done by going outside and finding a tree or plant to write about.

First, write phrases, using similes or metaphors.

Then write a poem or piece of prose.



## Emotion cards

Make cards with a different emotion written on each.

Students choose one and write a paragraph showing a character with this emotion without telling the reader which emotion it is.

The paragraph may be dialogue, action or descriptive prose.

Writers read out their paragraph and readers guess which emotion is in the writer's mind.



## Showing not telling

Cut up a calendar of abstract or nature pictures. Students choose one that appeals to them, but leave it on the table with the others.

Write a paragraph about the feelings it causes or use images in such a way that they show, not tell the reader which picture is chosen.

Read out the paragraph; other members of the group decide which picture the writer must have been looking at to write such a piece.





## Stories from Pictures

Collect pictures of characters doing something.

Each student chooses one.

Think about the character/s.

Decide what could happen ie plot.

Decide on a theme.

Choose a setting for the story.

Write notes about the story and character/s.

Write a possible beginning for this story.

What could happen at the end?

Share ideas and read beginnings.



## **It all started when they lifted the lid.\***

Talk about different types of boxes.

Is it a gift or an old box?

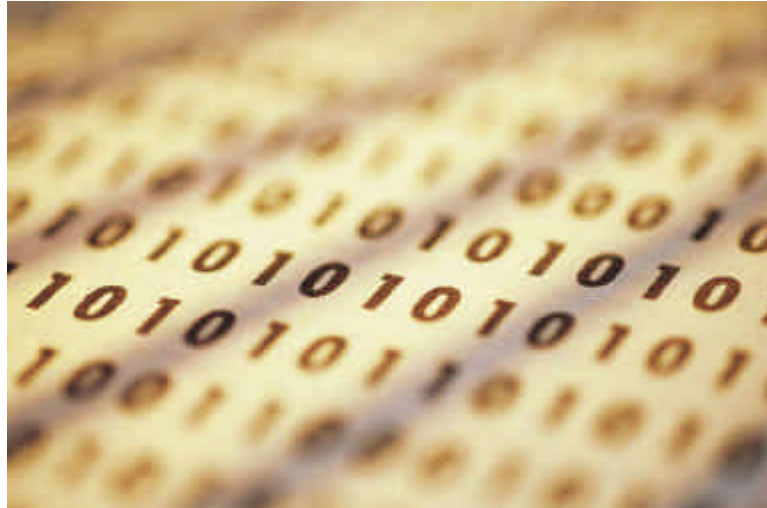
Where could they be kept?

Who finds them?

What is inside?

Write a story or poem about something that was found in a box.

\* Title idea from Starfish Magazine.



## Crack the code

What are secret codes used for?

Do you know some?

Can you crack these?

Hint: they are kissing codes.

SWALK

YTHFO

BOLTOP

CYLBMT

Can you make up a different kind of code?

Write a story where a code is important to the story line.

Or write a story where you (or the character) finds a note in some sort of code. Do you crack it? And find out what is going on?



## List Making

You are at a beach.

Make a list of all the things you experience there eg what you see, hear, touch, smell, and taste.

Making choices:

In first person, write about being at that beach waiting for someone.

Now re-write it in 3rd person.

Which did you prefer? Why?



## The key to the mystery

Take a box of old keys to the workshop.  
Have each person choose one.  
And hold it. Trace it if they wish.

Whose key might it have been?  
What did it open?  
What was inside?  
What happened?

Write.



## **Objects with Attitude**

Choose an object in the room.

Make it talk.

Show how it is feeling.

Try not to give away which object it is.

Read them out and guess which object was chosen.



## Hidden Secrets

This is a mysterious box in the shape of a house.

It has obviously been crafted to hide something important, for it has a trick opening.

Describe the trick opening. Is a key involved? If so, where is it?

How big is the box?

Whose was it?

When was it made?

Who finds it and opens it?

What is inside?

What happens next?

Write.



## Antique Portraits

I imagine you find an old photo of a person in an antique shop.  
You take it home and put it in your room.

Who was the person?

What was she/he like?

Did he/she do something special?

Write a paragraph that shows what he/she is like without  
telling it in an obvious way.

Does this character suggest a story to you?





## Emotions - A Variation

Choose an emotion card from the pack. (Make a pack of emotion cards by writing a different emotion on 20 or so business type cards)

This time, think of the character who stars in the story you are writing now and describe him or her doing something while they are feeling this emotion, eg a happy character cleaning teeth may find the toothbrush sails over the froth, but an angry character may break the toothbrush.

be careful not to mention what the emotion is, just show the character feeling it.

Read them out and guess which emotion was written on each one's card.



## Postcards:

I imagine you find two old post cards in your great grandmother's belongings.

One is a photograph of her. Another is a postcard of a fashionable lady of the time, maybe a singer or actress, and she looks like your great grandmother!

Are they the same person?

Could your great grandmother have had a double life? Two names? Two identities?

Why?

Write what her secret was.

Read *Zenna Dare* by Rosanne Hawke to find how postcards start a mystery.



## Mysterious settings

You find a miniature painting of an old tavern in your grandfather's papers. You decide it must have some special significance.

Why did he keep it?

What happened there?

Who did he meet?

Write a story about it.

Change it to a different time zone if you like.

Picture This



## Cemeteries:

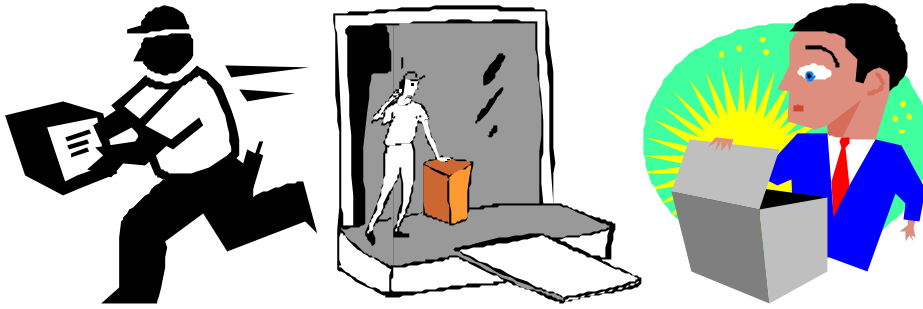
You find an inscription on a gravestone that says:

What did it say?

What could have happened?

Write the person's story.

Picture This



## Boxes

Choose one of the boxes.

What's in it?

Who is it for?

How will it change his/her life?

Write.

Alternatively, take a box or boxes for students to choose from.



## Smell

Give each workshop member an unmarked bottle with a smell inside.

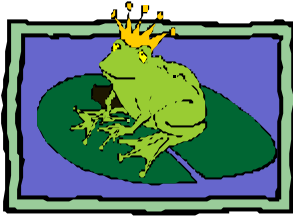
Write what the smell makes you think of.

Try not to mention it directly and when reading the piece out, see if the other members of the group can recognise what smell each person had.

Extension:

Now try to put your smell in a sentence as a metaphor or as part of a description.

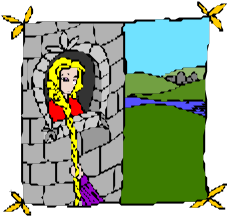




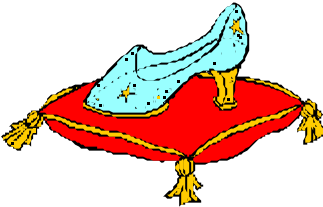
## Whose view?



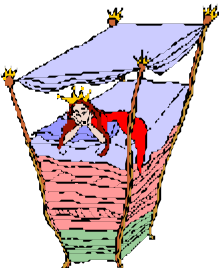
Choose a fairy tale and write



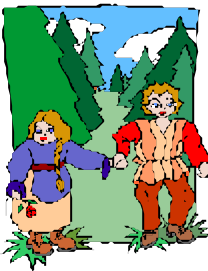
it in third person. Read out.



Now choose a character from



the tale and re-write it



from that person's point of view.



## Are you tense?



Choose a picture and write a short piece showing the character doing the action in the past tense. Read.

Now re-write the same piece in the present tense. Read.  
Which tense did you feel suited your piece the best?

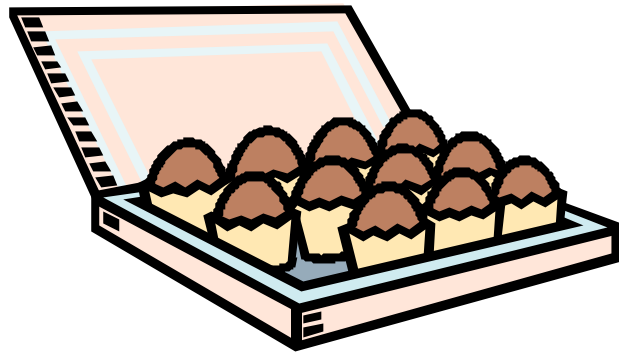
Try writing your story in first one tense, then another to see which sound best.



# Adverbs -

write how the actions are being done **without** using an adverb.





## The chocolate box

Take a box of chocolates to the workshop.

Pass the box around. Everyone should observe how each person handles the box and who finally decides to take one etc.

What can you tell about each person's character by the way they handled the box?

Write a character piece about how the box was opened and what members did. Try and include the senses in this piece, especially taste.

Then write a piece about someone receiving chocolates. Why? Who gave them? What happened?

Try and include the different senses and colour as well.

Idea from Professor Tom Shapcott



## Monster Man.

I imagine you visited someone's place and went swimming in their dam or swimming pool.

When you came out you looked like this.

How did it happen?

What will you do?

Do you have special powers?

Does everyone fear you?

Is it reversible? How?

Write a creative piece.



## Fragments

Take pieces of old broken china to the workshop.  
Each member takes a piece.

Decide who may have used it.  
What sort of people were they? where did they come from?  
Why did it get broken?

Write a short piece showing the family circumstances when  
this china was being used.



## The Ink well

You find an old ink well in your garden.  
When was it used?  
Who used it?  
What happened to him or her?

Write a short piece about this person writing at one interesting point in his/her life. Don't forget to use some words appropriate to the age i.e. no modern slang or contractions.

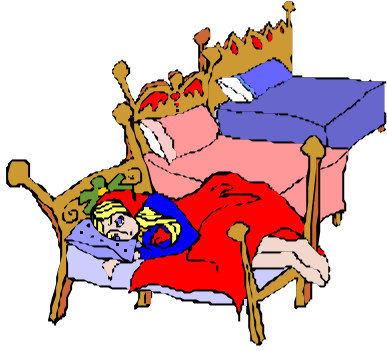
### Ideas:

Write as a child in a schoolroom of the time.

Write as a teen answering an invitation to a party or ball.

Write as an adult writing a difficult letter telling someone bad news.

Now write it in the present day as you would write it now.  
How is it different?

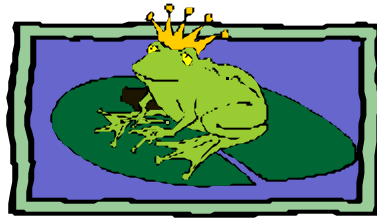


## Tone

Write a fairy story in 3<sup>rd</sup> person being careful to keep it in a happy tone.

Now re-write it in a grim or scary tone.  
Try an angry tone.

What would make an author write in a certain type of tone?



1. Choose a well-known story. Write it, and change the ending to surprise the reader.
2. Or write a story that muddles up lots of favourite stories.
3. Write a story based on an old known story or legend but set it in the present day with modern technology and terminology.



## The Masterpiece

You are with your friends, playing in an old shed.

The man who owned it is dead now.

You find an old painting.

What is it a painting of? A portrait?

Is it valuable?

Is there any signature on it? Who painted it?

Why? Who was it for?

What's special about it?

What is its story?

Write a creative piece telling the painting's story.

## Sci-fi



I imagine your character lives in the future.  
What will be different?  
Clothes? Food? Customs? Words?

Write notes creating a new world.

Write a piece showing your character doing her/his favourite thing in this world.



Picture This



## The button

Collect a box of buttons.

Choose one.

Whose button was it?

A person's, a teddy bear's?

How did they lose it?

Where?

Were they looking for it?

Who found it?

Write a creative piece about 'the button'.



From a box of character pictures, choose two.

What do you know about these two people?

Do they have anything in common? Or both go somewhere?

Have them meet at this place and write a dialogue between them. Decide what they'll talk about - the news? Sport? At first make it a friendly conversation.

Now write an angry dialogue between them.

Write about one of them telling a friend about it the next day.



How many different sorts of masks can you think of?

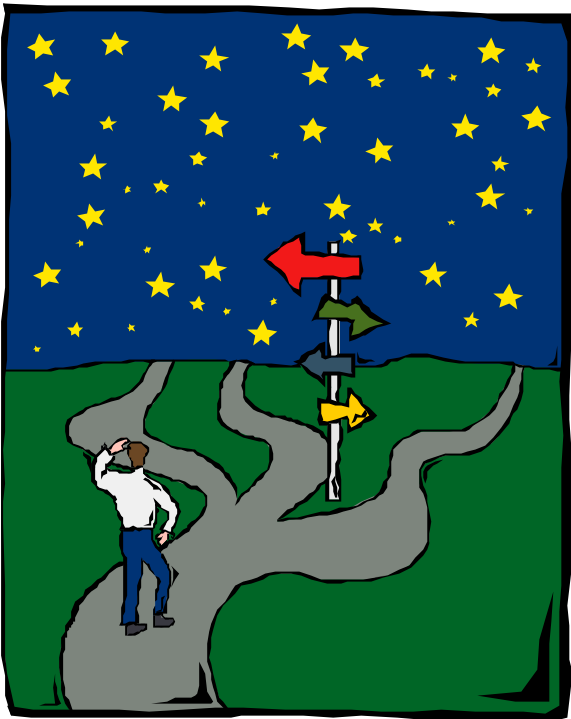
You've put on a mask.

You're a different person.

What's life like now? Has something changed for the better?

For the worse? What is it?

Write about it.



## Cross Roads

Your character is at a 'cross roads' situation. What will he or she decide to do?

Write a piece showing your character's internal thoughts and emotions.

Now write a scene of dialogue where your character talks to another person about it. Don't forget to put some conflict in the dialogue. Perhaps the other person is trying to convince your character of a plan of action.



## The Letter

A letter was never delivered.  
What was written inside?

Ideas:

- You have won a thousand dollars.
- You have been accepted for the music conservatorium.
- You do not have a family, but a kind family wants to adopt you.
- An offer of marriage from a person you like but don't know if they like you.
- A hate letter from someone you see everyday.
- Your plane flight has been changed.
- Your long lost child is coming home.
- A letter from your doctor saying you have cancer. (or don't have cancer)

Choose one or make up your own and write.

# The Golden Key

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

In the winter time, when deep snow lay on the ground, a poor boy was forced to go out on a sledge to fetch wood. When he had gathered it together, and packed it, he wished, as he was so frozen with cold, not to go home at once, but to light a fire and warm himself a little. So he scraped away the snow, and as he was thus clearing the ground, he found a tiny, gold key. Hereupon he thought that where the key was, the lock must be also, and dug in the ground and found an iron chest. 'If the key does but fit it!' thought he; 'no doubt there are precious things in that little box.' He searched, but no keyhole was there. At last he discovered one, but so small that it was hardly visible. He tried it, and the key fitted it exactly. Then he turned it once round, and now we must wait until he has quite unlocked it and opened the lid, and then we shall learn what wonderful things were lying in that box.

From Grimms Fairy Tales



What was in the box?

Write a creative piece entitled 'The Golden Key'.

## Technical exercises

1. Write a paragraph without an 'e'
2. Write a paragraph of 26 words where each word begins with a letter of the alphabet in order.
3. Write a story in 50 words or less.
4. Give three words - write a piece with all three in it.
5. Choose a letter of the alphabet. Write a sentence with as many of the words starting with this letter as you can (Alliteration).

## Writing Packs

Collect packs of pictures that relate to each other, then use the pack as a writing activity. Think of your own themes for picture packs.

1. **Create a sense of place** – from pictures of settings note some details of the setting that may find their way into your story. What could have happened here? What kind of people live here?
2. **Developing a story** – pictures of a character doing something, usually with a bit of mood in the picture. Questions: What is happening? Who is this character? What is he/she feeling? Will they always feel like this? What might happen next? Who else will they interact with?
3. **Situations** – collect pictures where something has happened. Questions: What could have/is happening here? Who is involved? What will happen next?
4. **Character development** – cut toddler photos from a newspaper. Questions: who is this? What will he/she be like when he/she is older? At what age will he/she be in your story? Write notes on name, family, features, likes & dislikes, personality.
5. **Character motivation** – cut clippings from newspapers of young people at a moment of triumph eg receiving a sports trophy. Questions: what is your character's greatest desire? Will they achieve it? What steps will they take to try to? Write a piece about this character planning and making goals.
6. **Old Gallery** – use old photos for students to choose from and to do a character study on.
7. **Showing atmosphere** – collect calendar pictures of scenery – students choose one and write a short piece on the feelings and senses that the picture evokes in them. They don't tell the others which picture they chose to write about. When reading them out, the others guess which one was chosen from the images and words used.
8. **Creating characters** - collect emotive pictures from magazines, which students can use to create characters from.
9. **Whose bedroom** – collect pictures of bedrooms. Choose one, then decide whose room it is. What sort of person is it who has this room?
10. **Gates** – collect pictures of gates. Choose one. Where does this gate lead to? Write what happens in this place.