

OLDHAM
Coliseum
THEATRE

Creative Writing

For beginners

Writers Warm-Up

Written by Hana

Let's start:

You are going to start this booklet with a free-writing session. A 'free-write' is where you write anything, absolutely anything. Whatever comes into your mind, just let it flow and don't overthink. If you are not sure what to write, that's what you write! You can write about anything at all, and don't worry about spelling and grammar or if you are even making sense. This is a way to get your pen on the paper and start writing.

If you need some help have a look around the room, what can you see? Does it give you any ideas or thoughts? Write about it! Spend 5-10 minutes on this and get lost in your words. Go..!

A large rectangular box with a black border, containing eight horizontal lines for writing. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across most of the width of the box.

Creative Writing for Beginners

Written by Holly-Robyn Harrison

Sometimes it's hard to know where to start when you feel like you feel like you have a story within you that you would like to tell.

These pointers, tools and techniques are all useful instruments that can help those words start to flow!

Firstly, think about the **shape** of your story. Most stories have three clear parts: the beginning, the middle, and the end. Some stories use different timelines, but for the purposes of the beginner, we will be looking at the traditional three-act structure. Each part of the story has a role to fill and jobs to do, like this:

Beginning

- Set the scene
- Introduce characters
- Paint picture of the world
- Shows 'normality'
- Pique reader interest

Middle

- Introduce challenges
- Maintain reader's attention
- Challenge the 'normality of this new world'
- Bulk of action
- Climax of the story

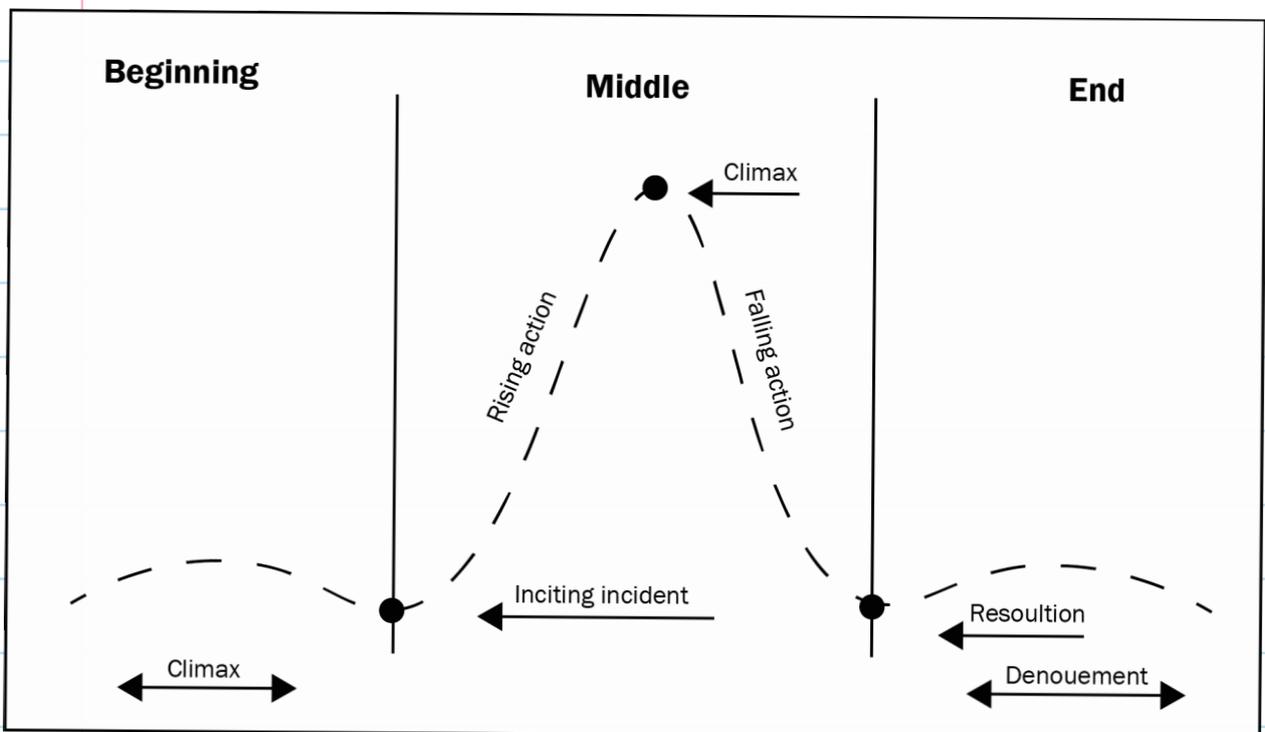
End

- Wraps up the story
- Ties up loose ends
- Resolution for subplots
- State your reader



Sometimes it helps to see the shape of the story as a rollercoaster. Inspired by Gustav Freytag (a German novelist and playwright) and his creation of 'Freytag's Pyramid' in the 1860's, this rollercoaster can assist with ensuring your action is occurring in the right places and the story remains interesting.

Look at the image below:



As you can see, we have 7 main components:

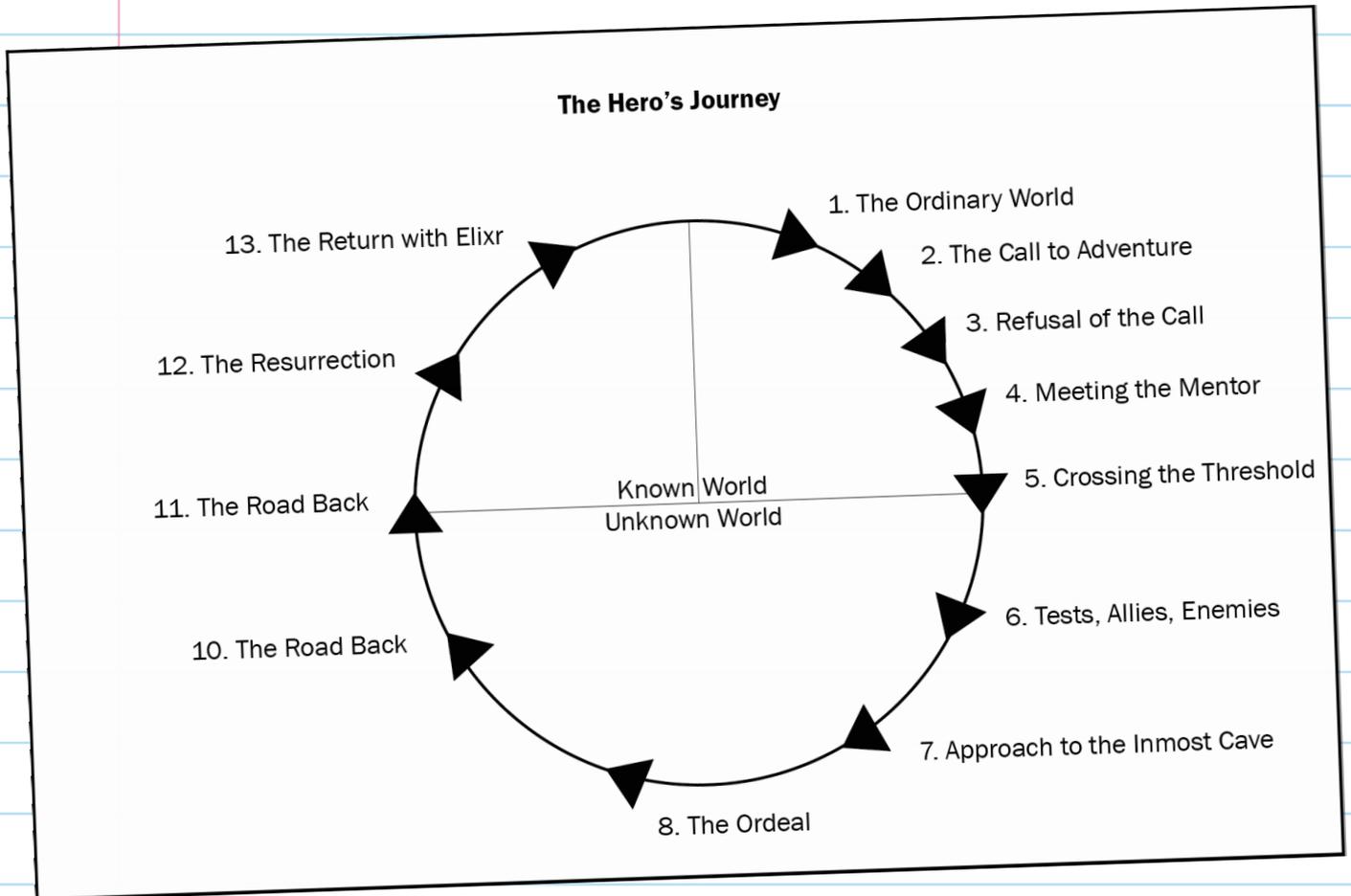
1. Exposition - Exposing the reader to the new world
2. Inciting Incident - The event that kicks off all of the action
3. Rising Action - The building of the excitement or tension.
4. The Climax - The pinnacle of the story
5. Falling Action - Winding down the tension
6. Resolution - What happens to resolve the challenges?
7. Denouement - Wrapping up the story

This is a useful tool to help ensure your story remains clear, on target and interesting to the reader. As your confidence in writing builds, you can explore other story arcs - a good place to start is to look up Kurt Vonnegut and his lecture on the shapes of stories, or to read stories with non-linear structures such as *Wuthering Heights* (Emily Bronte) or *Trainspotting* (Irvine Welsh) and see how you could create your own time-shifting story.

If your story is character driven (meaning we follow someone on their journey of self-discovery or adventure), it may be helpful to use the Hero's Journey template. This is a traditional template for stories with a central hero, originally inspired by Carl Jung's psychological studies, and is often found in fantasy or adventure stories such as the *'Harry Potter'* series, or *Lord of the Rings* books by J. R.R. Tolkien. In his book *'The Hero With a Thousand Faces'* (1949), Joseph Campbell discovered that 'A Hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won. The hero comes back from this adventure with the power to bestow boons upon his fellow man'. His concept was further developed in the 80's, 90's and 00's respectively, by other filmmakers and academics.

The most modern version written by Christopher Vogler (author of *'The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers'*, story contributor for Disney's *The Lion King*, and Hollywood development executive)

has 12 steps and looks like this:



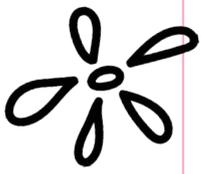
As you can see, each step is part of the journey undertaken by the 'hero' of the story, from beginning to end.

1. The ordinary world - The unaffected life of our hero.
2. The Call to Adventure - the introduction of fantasy.
3. The Refusal of The Call - the reason(s) why our hero must or or would prefer to reside in his own world without change.
4. Meeting The Mentor - Introduction of a character that can change the views of the hero.
5. Crossing the Threshold - the very first steps of their adventure.

6. Tests, Allies, Enemies - The introduction of danger in the new world.
7. Approach to the inmost cave - Journey to the most dangerous part of this world.
8. The ordeal - Danger that the hero must endure, defeat or experience
9. The Seizing of the Sword - After the defeat of the enemy, the hero becomes a new, better version of themselves.
10. The Road Back - A reverse of the call to adventure, this is the hero being called home or back to where they feel they belong.
11. Résurrection - The final climax where the hero must have their closest brush with danger, death, or an enemy.
12. Return with the Elixir - Our hero returns to their ordinary world a changed person.

The vertical line you can see in the 'known world' section signifies the difference and change in the Hero, who will have been substantially affected by their experiences (be that by having a change of view, a new knowledge, an experience of love or loss, etc... - the exact details are up to the writer) and will therefore have a slightly different outlook than he, she or they had before undertaking their journey.

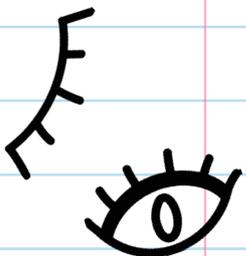
There is also a clear split in between the 'known' and 'unknown' worlds of this character (as signified by the horizontal line), which can help develop characterisation differences throughout their journey, creating a more thoughtful and well-rounded story. The hero will naturally be more cautious, curious and/or explorative in the unknown world, because in contrast the known world is, to them, more monotonous



and mundane and gives less cause for excitement. However, upon their return, the normalcy and monotony of that known world is affected by their experiences (be that by having a change of view, welcome and better appreciated as a result of their journey.

One of the final things you need to create a great story structure is a good, strong **ending**. There are many ways to end your story, depending on the style and genre of your writing. Here are a few examples you might like to use:

- ① Full Circle - We finish where we started
- ② Tie-Back - We link back to an underplayed or unknown element of the story
- ③ Reward - A payoff, solution, a satisfying end with justice for our hero
- ④ Epilogue - The story ends but we are shown how life can continue
- ⑤ Cliffhanger - We are left with questions and know there is more to come
- ⑥ Unexpected - A twist we could have never seen coming occurs
- ⑦ Ambiguous - Different readers could come to different conclusions



Top tips

1. Don't feel pressured to complete your first few stories within a timeframe - when you come to a natural stopping point don't be afraid to leave the writing to 'settle' for a few days, weeks, or even months. Giving your writing time and space to breathe can give you new inspiration when you re-read and wish to continue!
2. Start small and simple - write something short and complete to show yourself that you can do it.
3. Take a notebook everywhere - you never know when inspiration might hit! Perhaps you see a beautiful coat in a shop window that inspires a character, or you may overhear someone's phone call on the tram that might inspire a storyline. Jot down ideas as they come and you'll never lose them - even if you don't want or need to use them later on, you'll be glad to have the option!
4. Write every day - even if it's just what you had for tea or what you enjoyed most about your day, get into the habit of transferring your thoughts to paper or a keyboard.
5. Freewriting - if you are struggling for inspiration just let the words flow! They don't have to make sense, just enjoy the release of creativity that's been pent up inside you. Give yourself a time limit.

6. **Read** - stories, novels, biographies, comics, anything! Getting to know what kind of world you enjoy getting lost in can help you to find what kind of world you might like to create.

7. **Have fun!** - These are the first steps into your writing journey so enjoy them! There is no right or wrong way to write or begin a story, so do what feels natural and beneficial to you.

Struggling for inspiration? Don't worry! You can find it anywhere.
Try some of the following:

① **Personify an object** - How does it feel about the life it lives? What would it prefer to do or be? Giving a voice to the voiceless is a great way to get creative!

② **Find your alter ego** - if you had your dream life, where would you be and what would you be doing?

③ **Flip it** - Take a situation, story or circumstance that is universally recognised and subvert it.

④ **Go for a walk** - Write about something you see. It can be anything!

⑤ **Stimulus Books** - These are a great way to find inspiration if you're struggling. You're given a scenario or starting point, and then you can scribble away! *'The Very Short Story Starter'* by John Gillard or *'The Five Minute Writer'* by Margaret Geraghty are especially useful for beginners!

Character Development

Written by Em Katherine

When you are creating a character you need to think about creating a person who, like you, has lots of different elements to their personality.

once you have created the character, their personality is tested against the plot. Remember, each and every character will have a different way of thinking about and reacting to the same situation.

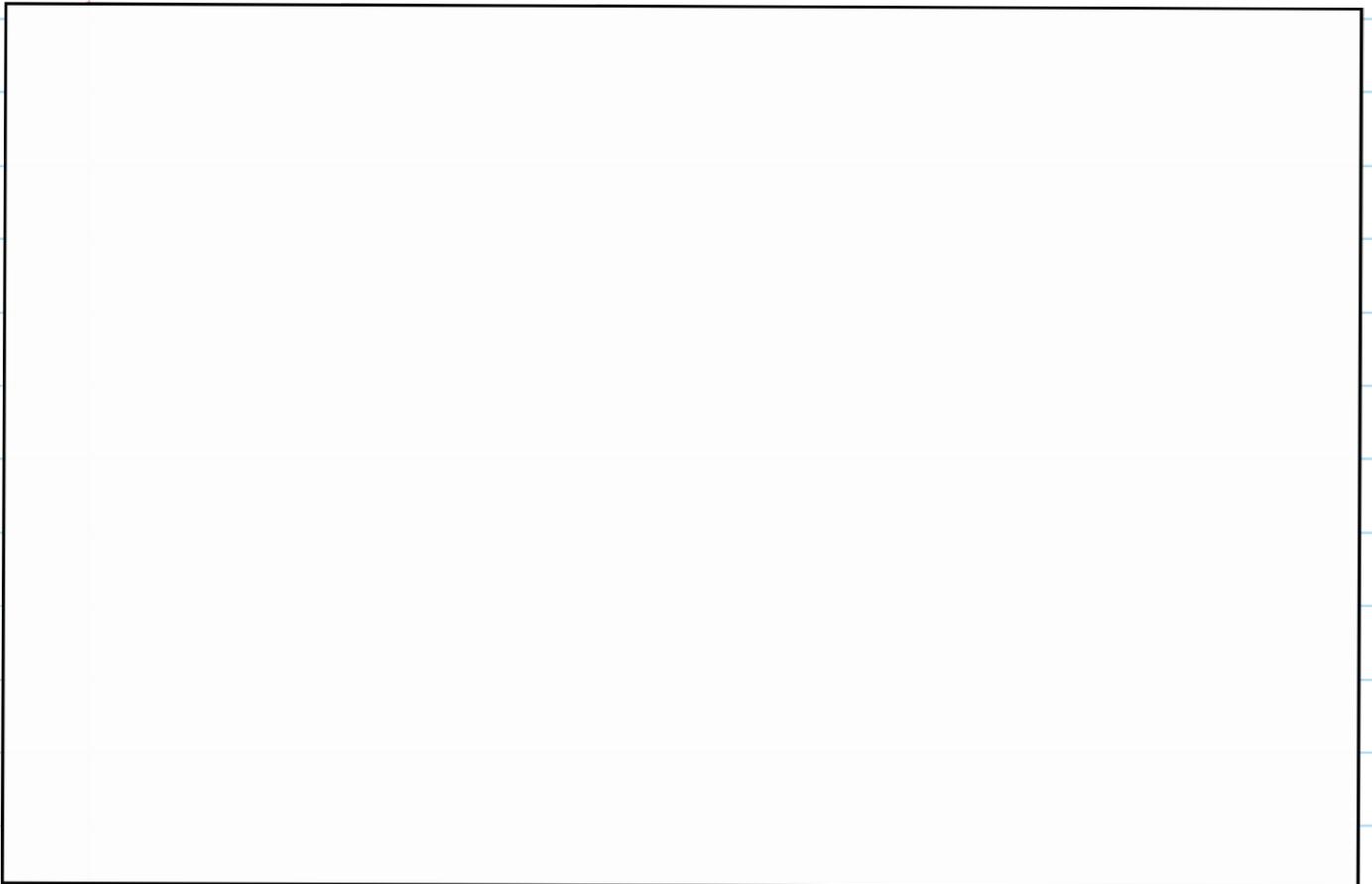
Key Elements to the Character

- ① Create a backstory for the character - Tell the story of how they became the character. For example, what was their childhood like? What situations did they experience in their past, how does this affect their outlook?
- ② Avoid making the perfect character - It is important for the reader to connect with the character. Create different layers and personality traits so there are different dimensions to them. e.g.: avoid making the character permanently good throughout the story.
- ③ Give character strong features - This would be either in personality or/and in their physical appearances.

⑤ Know the character's strengths and weaknesses - Make sure your character has strong points and weak points about their personality e.g., What are they good at? What are they not so good at? The characters will show their personality when dealing with obstacles in the plot.

✍ Give the character a distinct voice - What does your character's voice sound like? This can link to the backstory - where did they grow up? Do they have an accent? What kind of language do they use?

Do they have a catchphrase or a certain way of speaking? it can create a deeper understanding of their life and their background.



Character Development Exercise

Try and develop your own character. Remember when developing your character add attributes such a physical description, attitude, inner thoughts, how they talk and think about their background.

Here are some prompt questions that may help you.

★ What is it that makes them stand out?

★ How do they act?

★ What experiences do they have?

★ What qualities do they have?

★ What is their appearance like?

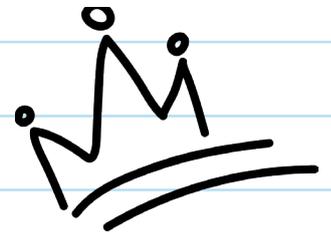
★ What kind of childhood did they have?

★ What are their strengths?

★ What are their weaknesses?

★ What would other people say about them?

★ What moment in their life so far has impacted them the most?



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