

# CREATIVE WRITING

IN A WEEK



# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Creative Writing in a Week.

In this pack, you'll spend seven days trying out different kinds of creative writing styles. It's a short introduction to each one, and will help you with the basics you need to get started. Each section will give you info on the topic, new words to learn, and give you many opportunities to get working on your own pieces.

All you'll need is paper and a pen. You don't need experience of creative writing, you don't need great spelling or grammar, you don't even need to know what you want to write about yet. This is an opportunity to practise, to let your mind wander and try things out that you might not have tried before.

Most of all – enjoy it! Writing should be fun. If it's starting to feel too much like hard work, take a break and come back to it later (no one's going to mind if completing this takes longer than a week).

There's paper provided at the back for you to write on – just ask if you need some more.

Best of luck, and happy writing.

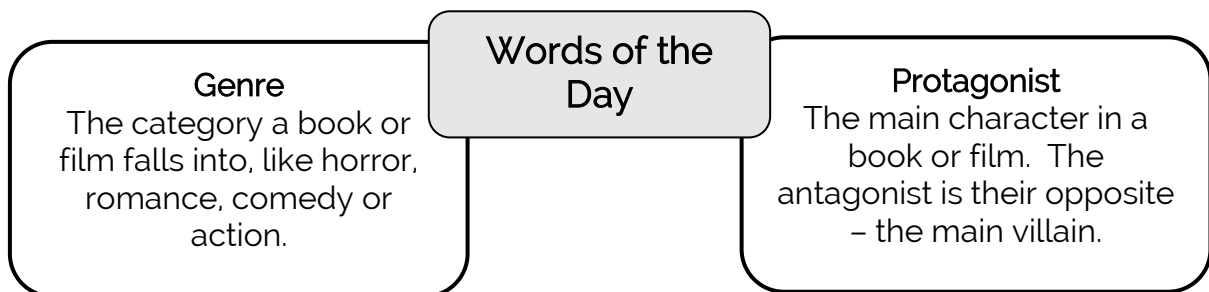
# Day 1

## The Short Story

Definition: A fully developed story that is much shorter than a novel

A shorty story is a great way to kickstart your imagination and start getting things down on a page. All you need? Something to write about.

You can write about whatever you want. If you need some ideas, think about your favourite books, films and TV shows – write down a list. What do they all have in common? Are they the same genre? Do they have the same plot, or similar characters? If you enjoy reading or watching something like this, you might like writing it too.



### Quick Write Challenge

Spend a couple of minutes freewriting. This is a simple exercise to get some ideas down. All you need to do is start writing, and don't stop until your couple of minutes are over. It doesn't matter what you write, even if it's 'I don't know what to write' over and over. If you find an interesting idea, follow it. If it leads you somewhere else, go there. It doesn't have to make sense. When you're done, read through and see if you've got any topics for a story.

### Give these short stories a read

- *The Tell-Tale Heart* (Edgar Allan Poe, 1843)
- *The Lottery* (Shirley Jackson, 1948)
- *Lamb to the Slaughter* (Roald Dahl, 1953)

Once you've got your idea, two important things to think about are your plot, and your characters.

Your plot is what happens and what order it happens in. Where does it start, and how do you introduce it? Add some mystery – hint at what might happen but don't give it away. Your main action goes in the middle, and you wrap things up at the end. Try writing out a quick list with the main events in order, so you know where you're going.

Now think about your characters. A great main character can help make your story interesting. Think about them like a real person – what is their personality like? Do you know a person like this? How did they become involved in the events of your story? Make a list of basic information about your character – even if it doesn't go in your story, it will help them feel real to you, and more real to the reader.

### Daily Challenge

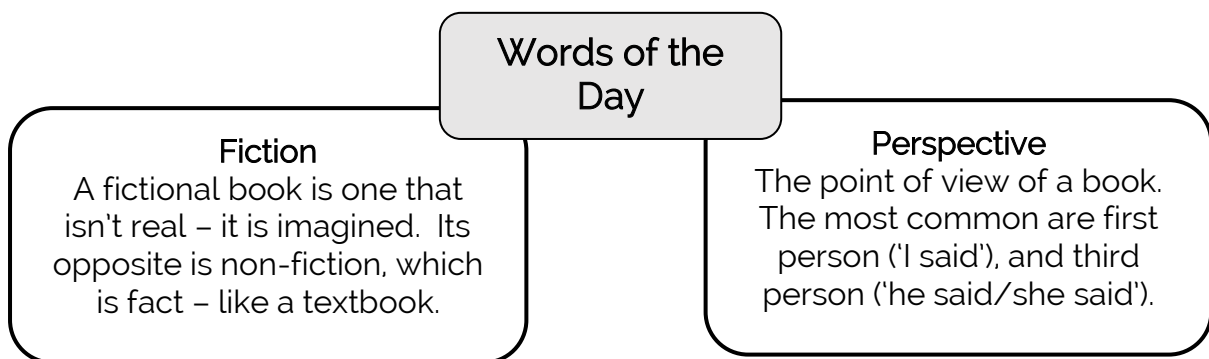
Write a short story about whatever you want. There are no limitations here – this is you, writing what you want to write. If you've got an idea already, great – if not, look for inspiration. Freewriting, a dream you had, looking out of the window, listening to a conversation. You can find it anywhere.

# Day 2

## The Diary

Definition: a book in which you keep a daily record of events and experiences

Diaries are a great form of writing to start out with, because you already know everything that's happened. It doesn't require much planning: you know the characters, and it's all based on your own experience. They're also a great way to process thoughts and feelings, by making it clear on a page.



Diaries don't have to be true, though. You can make one up, either about your own life, or from someone else's point of view. A lot of authors write novels as a diary, because it gives a very personal view of the main character.

### Quick Write Challenge

Write a quick diary entry of your own, about one day this week. Don't worry about explaining details – no one else has to understand it. This is just getting you used to writing in the diary style.

### Some famous diaries

- *The Diary of a Young Girl* (Anne Frank, 1947)
- *Journals: Captain Scott's Last Expedition* (Robert Falcon Scott, 1913)
- *The Diary of a Nobody* (George and Weedon Grossmith, 1892) (this one is fiction)

Whether you're writing your own diary, or you're writing a made up one, the important thing to remember is that the character can only tell you what they know. Unlike a short story, you can't write about what other people think, because your character wouldn't know that (unless you're writing a diary about someone who can read minds).

The way you write dialogue will also be different. It won't be, 'he said this, I said that, then he said this, then I said that,' because you probably wouldn't remember a conversation in perfect detail. It'll be more of a summary.

That might sound like a restriction, but really it's just another way of writing. Try it how you feel comes naturally to you – if that's how you would write your own diary, then that's the right way to do it.

### Daily Challenge

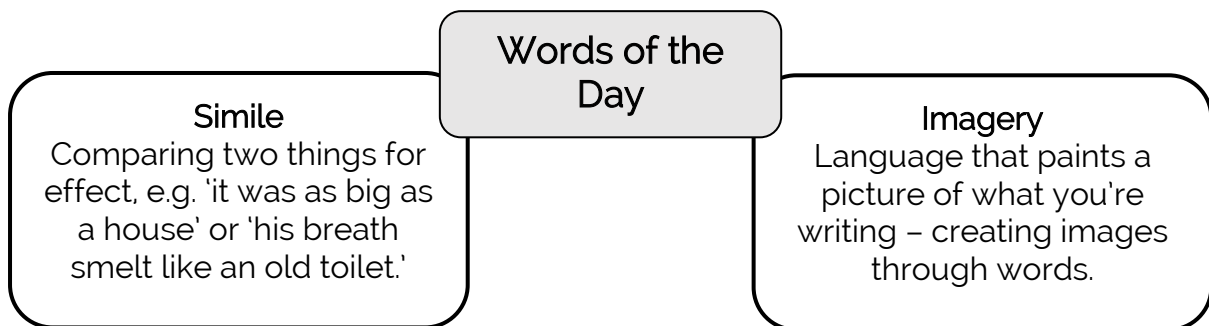
Write a diary entry, from the perspective of someone who isn't you. They can be a real person, or they can be made up. They can live in any time in history, in any place. There are no restrictions here, you can write what you like.

# Day 3

## The Poem

Definition: a work expressing feelings and ideas, often using distinct style or rhyme

Poetry provides endless possibilities – there are so many different styles to write in. It can be as short or as long as you want, it can rhyme (but it doesn't have to), it can be written to form a shape on the page, or it can be written to be read – or sang – out loud.



The main thing poetry does is create images – the words paint a picture. Use tricks like similes to liven up your writing and show the reader what you mean in creative, unusual ways. Try putting some of your own similes together.

Poetry is often a very personal thing. Popular topics are love, loss, friendship, war, memories, change, milestones. It doesn't *have* to be personal, but if we went through every option we'd be here for years. In this pack, we'll focus on the personal side of it. With that in mind, take a look at the challenge below.

### Quick Write Challenge

On the next page, there's a list of questions. Make a list of some possible answers – try to get at least three for each one. Choose what's important to you.

- What do you find frustrating? – e.g. feeling tired, being misunderstood
- Important 'firsts' – e.g. the first thing you remember, the first time you said I love you
- What makes you happy? – e.g. a memory, a hobby, a person

### Give these poems a try

- *Spring Offensive* (Wilfred Owen, 1917)
- *Warning* (Jenny Joseph, 1961)
- *Chocolate Cake* (Michael Rosen, 1985)

Do you want your poem to rhyme? This might be easier if this is new to you – it helps you keep a rhythm going and makes it flow nicely. Keep reading it out loud to see how it sounds.

If you want your poem to tell a story, think about what you did with your short story, and how you made a plot – do something similar with this. If it doesn't tell a story, what does it do? Is it meant to make the reader feel a particular emotion? Maybe it's meant to be sad – what words do you use to make it sad? For example, in *Last Meeting*, the poet Siegfried Sassoon writes about a friend he's lost. Instead of simply saying that he's dead, he says, 'I know that he is lost among the stars.' In the context of the poem, the meaning is clear, but it's a creative way of saying it that makes a picture of the stars in the sky, and what might be lost in them.

### Daily Challenge

Write a poem to somebody or something that starts with 'Dear -.' No limits here – 'Dear friend, Dear Kurt Russell, Dear Bolton Wanderers, Dear ham sandwich, Dear spider that lives under the bed.' It can be funny, it can be sad – it can be anything.

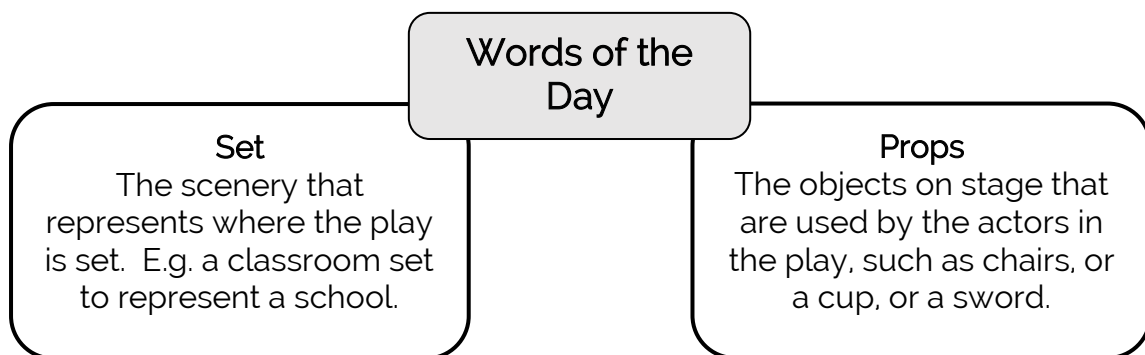


# Day 4

## The Play

Definition: a dramatic work to be performed on stage or broadcast on TV, radio, etc.

Plays are usually performed on stage, which means you're limited by space: you can only use items that you can fit on a stage, and you won't want too many actors. So you have to use your imagination to make a story out of what you've got, that's fun to watch, and to listen to. The benefit is that it's very up close and personal – things can be more shocking on stage than they would be on a cinema screen.



The main focus in a play is the dialogue, the talking between characters. You can't describe things like you do in a story, so you have to show most things through talking. Try the below exercise to get a bit of practise writing dialogue.

### Quick Write Challenge

Imagine you're writing a play with two characters. Pick one of the starting lines on the next page, and write a short conversation. You can have props if you need them.

- 'What have you done with the glass?'
- 'I've been kicked out of better places than this.'
- 'Guess what I've got up my sleeve.'
- 'So, where did you end up?'
- 'I don't think that's right.'

### Try out these plays

- *Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell* (Keith Waterhouse, 1989)
- *The Busie Body* (Susanna Centlivre, 1709)
- *Journey's End* (RC Sherriff, 1928)

You can use 'stage directions' wherever you need, to describe what's happening on stage so the actors know what to do. They don't need to be interesting, just clear. See below for an example – this is more stage directions than you'll really need, but it gives you an idea of what kind of thing you might want to use them for.

HENRY: Gimme a crutch. (*points at it*) Come on. I'll use it to smash the window in.

IRWIN: (*shaking his head*) You're not smashing it in.

*Henry goes for a crutch. Irwin attempts to wrestle him off.*

IRWIN: Get off! I need it to walk!

### Daily Challenge

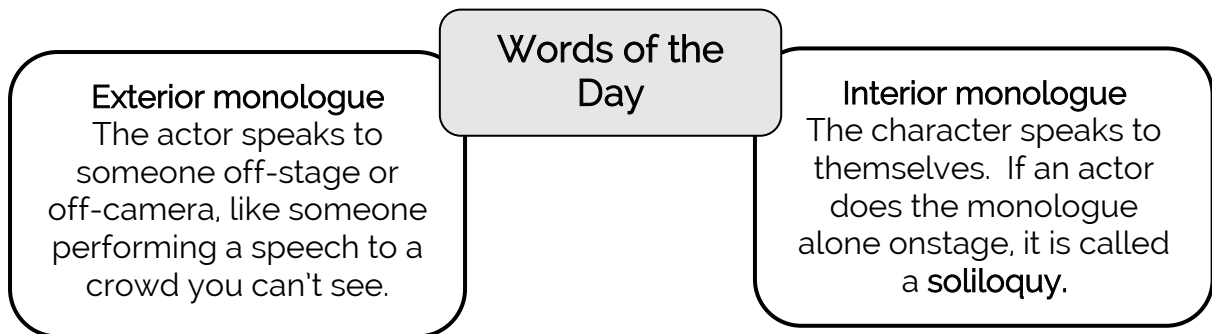
Write a play as if it were to be performed on stage. Think about the set. The play can have two or three characters, and be about whatever you like, but there's a catch. The only props you can use are one chair, and one telephone. You don't have to use them if you don't want to, but you can't use anything else.

# Day 5

## The Monologue

Definition: a speech by just one character in a play or a film.

Something a bit different today. Monologues aren't usually found by themselves – they usually form part of a longer play or film. Here, the character can express their thoughts and feelings, uninterrupted. They might be 'thinking out loud,' or talking to the audience, or making a speech.



But monologues can form a story in their own right, and it's becoming quite popular for theatres to have an evening of lots of different monologues. They're exciting because you hear things from one character, the way they want to tell you – they're not going to list facts like an encyclopaedia, because that's not how people talk. So you don't always get all the facts – maybe there's lies, maybe there's mystery because they don't quite say everything they need to. They can have a unique voice, an accent, use slang and phrases that fit who they are and where they're from.

### Quick Write Challenge

Write down your 'inner monologue.' What are you thinking right now? What do you feel? Focus on the details that you notice in your head, but might not say out loud. Write it as it comes into your head and try not to let your hand stop moving until you feel like you're done.

### Have you heard these monologues?

- Samuel L Jackson's 'Ezekiel 25:17' (*Pulp Fiction*, 1994)
- Robert Duvall's 'I love the smell of napalm in the morning' (*Apocalypse Now*, 1979)
- Charlie Chaplin's 'I don't want to be an emperor' (*The Great Dictator*, 1940)

Monologues can be funny, sad, strange, scary – anything you like. But it needs to be interesting to hold people's attention, because just one person talking could easily get boring.

It can be helpful to read what you've written out loud. Monologues are made to be performed, so read it how you think it should be said. If there's anything that sounds strange, or doesn't roll off the tongue right, you'll know it's something that you might need to change. Is it something you can imagine a real person saying? If it is, and you like reading it, then you've nailed it.

### Daily Challenge

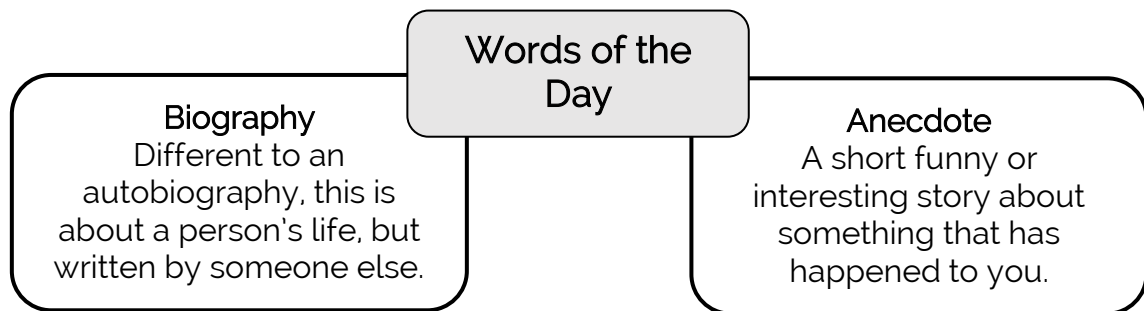
Write a monologue called 'The Shoe.' The character can be anyone, it can be set anywhere, and anything can happen – it just has to involve a shoe.

# Day 6

## The Memoir

Definition: a collection of memories written by the person themselves

A memoir is about you, written by you. It's a bit like an autobiography, but you have more freedom. An autobiography is your whole life, in time order, from your childhood up until the age you are now. A memoir can focus on just one part of your life, or lots of little bits – whatever you want.



Most memoirs are non-fiction and based on real events, but just like the diary, there's nothing to stop you writing a fictional one. Unlike a diary though, memoirs are written knowing that someone else will read them. It will need more detail than a diary, and explain things that other people might not understand.

### Quick Write Challenge

Jot down some events in your life that you would like to write about. If you're writing a fictional memoir, make some up.

If there's one you like best, try to add some extra detail.

### Memoirs you might like

- *Angela's Ashes* (Frank McCourt, 1996)
- *Night* (Elie Wiesel, 1960)
- *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (Maya Angelou, 1969)

Good planning is important before writing a memoir. It's very easy to go off on a tangent and start writing about something else. Adding extra bits in for background is great, but you want to stay on topic.

The topics are up to you though! Try mixing things up – have some that are funny, some that are serious. It makes it exciting for the reader to learn different things, and can keep you inspired with new ideas.

### Daily Challenge

Write the start of your memoir. This is where you would introduce yourself to the reader, and tell them what part of your life you are going to be writing about. Tell an anecdote – an interesting story about yourself, something that would make them want to keep reading to find out more.

# Day 7

## Over to You

If you've made it this far, congratulations – you've tried out six different styles of writing. There's more out there, but these are the main ones you'll come across, and are the best ways to get started if you're interested in creative writing.

So for today, for this last challenge, it's over to you.

Flick through this booklet to see what topics we've covered, and read what you've written so far. Pick out your favourite, the style you enjoyed the most – you're going to write another one. But there's a catch: it's got to be topical – it's got to be about what's going on in the news right now.

The world is a strange place at the moment, and strange places make great writing. Some of the most famous books, plays and poems have been written when the world's been strange. So try it yourself. What you want to focus on and how you do it is up to you – this should inspire you, not restrict you.

Be creative with it, be different – and enjoy it.

Well done on completing the pack – we hope you enjoyed it!

Keep on writing.



# Feedback

If you enjoyed this pack, we'd like to know! Fill this in if you're happy to let us know your thoughts, and send it back to Activities. You don't have to put your name on it, if you don't want to.

Did you enjoy it? What did you like or not like?

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What there anything you'd like to see in here, that wasn't?

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Any other comments?

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Would you like any other packs? If so, what?

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