

Writers Workshop #4

A Dozen Ways to Free Write (or How to Trick Your Brain into Writing New Stuff)

You may already know the guidelines for free writing: write continuously, don't think, don't stop or cross out or erase. Write whatever comes into your mind.

If your mind is like a building with many corridors and rooms, each filled with different perspectives, voices, settings, ideas, beliefs, and so on, free writing is what helps you gain access to those varied spaces and all that they contain.

In the spirit of starting the year anew, try some of the following to expand, strengthen, and enrich your writing. Whichever exercise you choose, decide ahead of time how long you will write--5 or 10 or 20 or 60 minutes.

1. Put on an outfit that is completely uncharacteristic for you. It could be
2. a costume, clothes belonging to the opposite gender, a ton of make-up. If you tend to dress casually, try dressing formally or in a fancy manner. Put on a strange or silly hat. Once you are dressed or made up, sit and free write.
3. Before you sit down to free write, take a silent walk indoors or outdoors, using all your senses. Notice sounds, smells, textures, tastes, sights.
4. Free write with your left hand.
5. Write to music. Put on a CD or tape and write for a certain number of
6. songs or for the entire album. I prefer instrumental music for this, but try both and see how your writing differs with each.
7. Light a candle and set it in front of you while you write.
8. Combine #4 and #5.
9. Start with one word or question that interests you or that has been appearing frequently in your writing, and free write from there. For instance, maybe the word 'mother' or 'scared' or

'unbelievable' pops up in your writing a lot. Start with that word, or with the question, what do I mean by 'mother'?

10. Start with this phrase: I felt lost when... Free write from there.
11. Start with this phrase: I want to know...
12. Pick an animal. Free write as if you are that animal. Write from the animal's point of view.
13. Free write as if you are an old person at the end of your life, looking back.
14. Free write as if you are leaving your home and taking a journey you've never dared to take before.

Remember: don't think, don't stop, don't erase or cross out. Just. Write.

Enjoy!