

## WORKSHOP 1

### *Writing is in all of us*

*"Nourishment must be provided before new life meets the eyes of the world; in creative work, gestation takes place behind the mind's curtain as we cogitate, dream, daydream, and read."* Ziegler (2008: p. 8).

#### Objectives:

1. Encourage students to the art of creative writing through short writing exercises and stories.
2. Explore reactions and feedback to each other's work and workshop dynamic.

#### Materials:

1. 4 audio recorders.
2. 1 video camera
3. Researcher's diary
4. Workshop diary
5. Flip chart paper
6. Notebook/Block per student
7. Pens and pencils per student
8. Markers for flipchart
9. Post-its
10. Feelings chart
11. Copies of short story (*Not the End*, Ch. 1 by Odin Dupeyron, 2001).

#### Notes:

- Given the school's schedule distribution, this workshop had to be parted in two one-hour sessions, rather than one two-hour session. The workshop guide reflects this.

#### Workshop guide:

##### Day 1.

#### 1. Before the workshop:

- a. Have four tables with chairs around them.
- b. Each group has an audio recorder.
- c. Have 4 notebooks per table, pencils/pens, post-its, and copies of the first story.
- d. Have questions and ground rules done in the previous encounter on the walls where everyone can see it.

#### 2. Introduction to the workshop: (5 min)

- a. Explain the objectives of the workshop, and divide the group in 4 (taking into account I have 16 students sign up).
- b. Remind students about the general rules we set on session 1. Everyone in the room is an author, therefore, everything written and shared is a creation that deserves attention and to be responded to with outmost respect.
- c. Explain how we are all storytellers: when we speak to our friends about the weekend when we need advice, when we talk to our families, or when we give an explanation, just to name a few. We all have the ability and the reasons to tell and create stories, and today and tomorrow, we will develop some short writing exercises to get us going.

#### 3. Writing Exercise 1: *What if...?* (Based on Langston-George, 2016: p. 6) (35 min)

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- a. In your notebook, take 5 minutes to write notes about a short event that happened between last night and you getting to school this morning. It can be a routine, a conversation, something you witnessed, for example. Or make a list of activities you usually do between getting out of school and coming back in the morning, like packing your bag, walking home, changing your uniform, tying your shoes, and so on. **(5 minutes) Emphasize – this isn't proper, formal writing, this is just jottings.**
  - b. 'Now ask a simple question like *What if...?* Ask yourself, *What if... (choose event/activity) would have taken a strange turn?* For example, what if when you were brushing your teeth this morning, a never-ending foam started to form in your mouth? What if when you got to school this morning, you realise two of the dogs on campus can actually talk? **Jot down as many *What if...?* Questions as you can for the next 5 minutes. (5 minutes)**  
**Suggestion: if the idea of 'Unlikely stories' is not quite working for the whole group (I expect it will, but just in case) you could also have some serious options in reserve – what if someone stole your bag? What if one of the dogs was hurt, or gave birth to puppies?**
  - c. Share your questions with your group, ask them to help you pick one to write about. You will help others choose their question. Why did you recommend it? Funny? Many possibilities? Fantastic? Impossibility? Shock? Dramatic? Sad? Too weird? **(10 minutes)**
  - d. Once you have chosen your question, you will have 15 minutes to create this story. Think about characters, emotions, places, words/dialogue, overcoming difficulties... **(15 minutes)**
4. **Sharing:** After 20 minutes have passed. Ask students in their groups to share what they wrote. Each person will have **2 minutes** to read to the group, and the group will have **1 minute** to give feedback. If the group finishes early, then they can work on improving their piece by taking into account the feedback given.  
**Feedback:** Those listening should write down something they really enjoyed and was really good about the story, or caught their attention, as well as a question for the author. Using these notes, they will give feedback to the author reading their piece.  
**Listening to feedback:** The author should listen carefully to the feedback and write it down so the person has 3 good points about his or her writing, and 3 questions to think about. **(15 minutes)**
5. **Closing:** Tomorrow we will continue to work with unlikely stories and short writing. Before you leave, please take two post its, write in one how you feel right now, and in the other, a thought about today. Post them on the flipchart. **(5 minutes) Lovely idea for giving feedback.**

**Day 2.**

1. **Before the workshop:**
  - a. Have four tables with chairs around them.
  - b. Each group has an audio recorder.
  - c. Have 4 notebooks per table, pencils/pens, post-its, and copies of the first story.
  - d. Have questions and ground rules done in the previous encounter on the walls where everyone can see it.
2. **Writing Exercise 2 – warm-up –: *The fantastic pairing* (Based on Rodari, 1976: p. 21) (10 min)**

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- a. We will do a 5 minute write to join 2 words together. Have two draw a noun from the noun bag. Write the nouns on the flipchart. Ask them to join those two words in a very short story; help them think of prepositions that might join them: with, from, on, in, of...
- b. After 5 minutes, ask one of each group to share their fantastic story.
3. **Reading and Writing: *What if...?* (Based on Rodari, 1976: p. 31) (35 min)**
  - a. We read out loud the first part of the short story *Not the End* chapter 1 (Dupeyron, 2001). Ask to the group: **(10 minutes)**
    - i. *What do you think so far about the story?*
    - ii. *Do you feel identified with any character, or the complete opposite? Why?*
    - iii. *What does it make you feel? Why?*
    - iv. *How could this story surprise you?*
  - b. Ask the students to think about yesterday's exercise, how could we make this story different? *What if...? What would be an unlikely pairing?* And ask them to change an element of the story and write how it would go. **(15 minutes)**
  - c. Ask one of each group (that have not read yet) to share what they wrote, and have other 4 students give a reaction to them. **(10 minutes)**
4. **Reading:** Finish reading the chapter out loud. Ask them to reflect on: **(10 minutes)**
  - a. *Have your initial thoughts, reactions and feelings about the story changed or remained the same? Explain.*
  - b. *Thinking of the stories you just wrote and the short story we read today, read the questions around the wall (already in place), and share one thought about writing, put it on a post it, and stick it under one of the questions.*
5. **Closing:** Next we will work on writing collaboratively and explore the differences of writing on your own. Before you leave, please write a post it about how you feel right now and post it on the flipchart. **(5 minutes)**

#### References:

- Dupeyron, O. (2001) *Not the End: Life Isn't Over Until It's Over: Chapter 1*. Available online (English) in <https://www.amazon.com/Not-End-Life-Isnt-Until-ebook/dp/B00SCHT6I0>. Accessed on 5 Mar 2018.
- Langston-George, R. (2016) *Telling Tales: Writing Captivating Short Stories*. Minnesota: Capstone Press.
- Rodari, G. (1976) *Gramática de la fantasía: Introducción al arte de inventar historias*<sup>1</sup>. Barcelona: Reforma de la Escuela.
- Ziegler, A. (2008) *The Writing Workshop Notebook*. London: Souvenir Press.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated as *The Grammar of Fantasy: An Introduction to the Art of Creating Stories*.