

## Ten Ways to Spark Creative Writing in Children By Melissa M. Williams

As a children's author, I have the privileged of spending hundreds of hours with many creative kiddos. Give a child a creative inch, and they will go a mile. One of the main exercises I share with these inspiring minds includes character development tips and tricks. It's hard to start a story from scratch, so I encourage the kids to develop their characters first. These simple techniques can be further used to move from a student's stuck attitude of, "I don't know what to write about" to "I have so many things to write about, I don't know what to choose."

Here are some popular tips for children who love to write or just need a creative inch:

1. Get into the creative zone by watching Disney movies. Disney has inspired me for years!!! Find the different characters with in the story:
  - a. **Hero:** The Main Character, identifies with audience, protagonist, and changes throughout the story (Simba)
  - b. **Villain:** Antagonist and one who challenges the hero (Ursula)
  - c. **Mentor:** Voice of reason, conscience, also challenges the hero (Rafiki)
  - d. **Shapeshifter:** Symbol of change, female or male opposite the hero (Princess Jasmine)
  - e. **Sidekicks:** Comic relief (Timon and Pumbaa)  
*Concepts derived from works of Christopher Vogler*
  
2. Create a Unique Character: List the following ... just follow my lead. List the first thing that comes to mind.
  - a. Type of Character (Chihuahua Puppy)
  - b. Name and Gender (Bitsy, Female)
  - c. Hometown (Verona, Italy)
  - d. Where does she live now? (Paris, Texas)
  - e. What is her favorite food, drink, activity? (Pastries, Sparkling Water, Tennis and planting tomatoes)
  - f. What is her least favorite thing to do? (Brushing her teeth)
  - g. Define her personality (Prissy but shy in a crowd or in front of other dogs)
  - h. What does she look like (Dark Black with tan tipped ears)
  
3. Give your character a problem to overcome (Conflict)
  - a. MAYBE BITSY CAN'T FIND SPARKLING WATER IN PARIS, TEXAS SO SHE RESORTS TO CARBONATED DRINKS, YET SHE NEVER BRUSHES HER TEETH AND ONE DAY SHE LOOKS IN THE MIRROR WHILE PUTTING IN HER EAR BOWS TO SEE THAT HER PEARLY WHITES ARE NOW A MUDDY BROWN COLOR!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
  - b. Maybe they moved to a place with no internet access
  - c. Maybe your character is a fashion queen and she now has to go to a private school with uniforms.

4. Make sure your main character has a strength and a weakness ... this makes them more relatable and likable to your readers.
5. Use your own every day experiences and give them to an animal. Throw in some good animal humor.
6. Add another character to your story ... but don't forget to develop them first. Are they a sidekick like Timon and Pumba for comic relief? Are they a shapeshifter like Princess Jasmine in *Aladdin*? Or are they a mentor like Rafiki in the *Lion King*? Be sure to answer all of the questions in number 2!
7. Turn your story into a skit with lines and act it out with a friend.
8. When you have a story written, have someone else read it out loud to you. You will be able to hear where things need to be changed, taken out, or added if someone else is reading and not you. Be sure to take notes on your own paper while your helper is reading to you.
9. Show Don't Tell: Be sure you are writing in a way that the reader can see the story in their head. Visual words, description, compound and complex sentences, and word variety can help you start. The "Show don't Tell" technique should be used after you have written your first draft.
10. AND TIP NUMBER TEN! Take off your perfection hat and put on your creative hat. The first task in writing a story is getting it out of your head and on paper. Everyone ... let me repeat EVERYONE has to go back to fix, clean up, and beautify their story. EVERYONE.

If you would like information on my creative writing workshops for kids, please email me at [Melissa@LongTale Publishing.com](mailto:Melissa@LongTalePublishing.com). My next workshop will be held at the Tomball Harris County Library on Saturday January 30<sup>th</sup> for 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Be sure to look out for my spring schedule this March 2010!

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