

Pre session polls

What is your favourite type of writing for pleasure?

What would you consider is your main experience of writing for pleasure?

- Beginner (something I would like to do but have never got round to)
- Feeling my way (have done a bit)
- Reasonably confident (have done quite a bit)
- Very confident (have done a lot)
- Expert (have been published)

What is your main reason for coming along this evening?

Session purpose

- **Is for:**
- Give some guidance about writing for pleasure.
- Allow you to ask questions about writing for pleasure and share experiences
- Provide a space to interact with other students
- **Is not for:**
- Providing any module specific advice

A note about polls

- We use polls as a way of interacting. You can scroll around to see all text if they don't show on your screen.
- Polls are anonymous to other users but help us to gauge opinion.
- You can also use the chat pod to add comments / ask questions throughout.
- If you find it distracting looking at the chat pod then feel free to ignore it and focus on the main slide and polling pods.

Writing for pleasure

Creative and otherwise

Introductory video

- Here's one we prepared earlier.

Tonight's session

- There will be a series of activities lead by our guest speaker.
- The chat pod will be available throughout and you are welcome to add your comments, and on microphone if you so wish.
- We'll let you know what to do at each stage in case you are worried 😊

Writing for Pleasure

Fiona Doloughan

Senior Lecturer in English (Literature and
Creative Writing)

Department of English

Sound and (Non-)sense

Rain

The rain is raining all around,
It falls on field and tree,
It rains on the umbrellas here,
And on the ships at sea.

(Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Child's Garden of Verses*).

Activity 1

Start with a different key word, like snow or wind, and compose your own little ditty!
Here's one I did earlier by way of example:

Wind

The wind is winding all around
It blows through trees and dale
It whistles in the morning time
And strikes up quite a gale.

Activity 1 discussion

- How did you find that?
- Was it useful?
- Can you see yourself doing something similar?
- Anything else?

Triggers for Writing

- Music
- Images (e.g. postcard, family photo, poster)
- First lines of novels
-?

Activity 2

Here are some first lines (which I've italicized) from novels chosen more or less at random whose first lines may help to stimulate some writing. Choose one and see how you get on. It's possible that once you're in your stride, a tale or a character or a voice emerges and that you can start with your own first line. Or perhaps part of the line triggers something in you or the idea expressed by the line.

At first he thought it was a scarecrow. [From *Alentejo Blue* by Monica Ali].

It was a wrong number that started it, the telephone ringing three times in the dead of night, and the voice on the other end asking for someone he was not. [From 'City of Glass' by Paul Auster].

Pa used to say that any piece of history might be made into a tale: it was only a question of deciding where the tale began, and where it ended. [From *Affinity* by Sarah Waters].

If the eyes could lie, his troubles might all be over. [From *The Electric Michelangelo* by Sarah Hall].

Activity 2 discussion

- Which one of the examples did you find easiest to use? Why do you think this was?
- Do you have any other comments?
- Did you imagine a genre for the text?
- Did you prefer one genre – what did you see in the lines?
- Were there associations that you made based on the words?

Creating a Sense of Place

One of the pleasures of a good book is that it can transport you to another world, maybe one that isn't so far removed from our own world, after all, but one that for the duration of the novel, for example, is meaningful and which you can picture in your mind's eye. The fact that we can talk of Dickensian London, or refer to Joyce's Dublin and so on, suggests that a representation in words of a place can be as powerful as an actual place. And sometimes when we visit places in actuality that we've encountered first in imagination or revisit places whose image has remained in our visual imagination or in our memory, they can have a powerful effect on us.

The Sea at Aberystwyth (1)

This is the end
of the world. The wild west, but not the frontier.

The old monster is roaring on the beach again –
kids run along the front in shirtsleeves, chasing

his fury, one great dark wave after another.
Oh rain, wash them clean.

The Norwegian tourists bask in a thousand ways
of getting wet. The windows of the Marine Hotel

The Sea at Aberystwyth (2)

are caked with guano. Maybe the rain will do the trick.
The seagulls swerve in the air stream.

The Spice of Bengal dims its lights, its one customer
sated. Time to wander into night. What we want

lies broken on the shore, what we can't have
stays black on the horizon;

the moon of the zebra crossing
flashing for no one.
[Tamar Yoseloff].

Activity 3

Think of a place that you know well from your childhood. Describe it in such a way that someone who has never been there can visualize it. Now think about why this particular place is so special or memorable. What happened here? How does this place make you feel? What kind of memories does it trigger? If you want, you can start with key words and phrases (rather than whole sentences) just to get yourself started.

Activity 3 discussion

- What do you think you have learnt from this activity?
- Did you find this a positive experience or can you see that it could be emotional?
- Any other comments?

Reading to Write

Reading can be a preparation for or stimulus to writing. What you read can give you ideas or motivate you to respond to what you have read. I once used a line from a poem by Wioletta Greg (in English translation by Marek Kazmierski) from the section “Notes from an island” of her 2014 volume *Finite Formulae and Theories of Chance* to spark a poem.

Poll

Have you got any favourite pieces of text that inspires you like this? please say what it is.

On the edge of everything

In a bar off the Tottenham Court Road,
Where it's always someone's national holiday
They meet.

In Brazil, she's an engineer; here's she's
Under the radar.

Back door, back pay, back chat,
Backfire, backlash

And on the edge of everything.

[Fiona J. Doloughan]

More writing for pleasure

Not just creative writing

Polls

What is your favourite type of writing for pleasure?

- Journal
- Diary
- Blog
- Creative / story
- Fan fiction
- Poetry
- Life writing
- Flash/micro fiction
- Haiku
- Sonnets
- Book review
- Film review
- Other

Writing to Reflect and Reflections on Writing

Writing can be a great way of working out what you think by ordering your ideas or finding some structure in an otherwise chaotic jumble of thoughts. Sometimes it's only when you come to write about something that you know or understand what you don't know as well as what you do know. You can take notes on things, for a class for example, or in order to write an essay but it's only once you start to write that you realize that there are gaps in your knowledge and understanding as well as evidence of things you have learnt. Writing can lead to more reading and writing as well as storytelling and writing about (the process of) writing.

Plenary

What have you learnt?

Final polls

What do you feel is the main thing you will take away from this evening?

What are you going to do as a result of this evening's session?

Which of the other writing retreat sessions are you intending to come to?

- Informal writing – 4th July
- Writing for visual purposes – 11th July
- Report writing – 18th July
- Editing part 1 – 25th July
- Editing part 2 – 1st August

Thank you for coming!

Do please join us for the other sessions within our online writing retreat:

Informal writing – 4th July

Writing for visual purposes – 11th July

Report writing – 18th July

Editing part 1 – 25th July

Editing part 2 – 1st August

Past student hub live online sessions [here](#)

Visit us at <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

Send us feedback at studenthub@open.ac.uk

View past (live) recordings on www.youtube.com/thestudenthublive