



JUST WRITE!

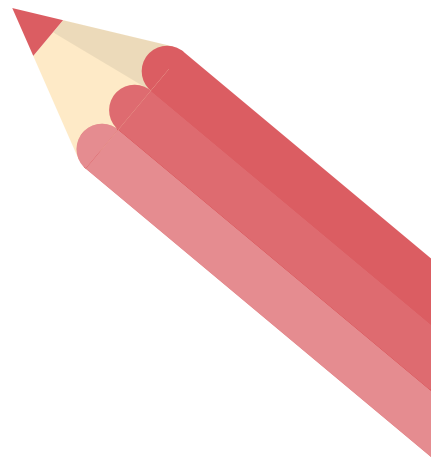
Writing Tips and Tricks

WHAT CAN I WRITE ABOUT?

Coming Up With Ideas for Stories



Rachel Stedman



What

can I write about?

Want to write something, but don't know where to start? Have an assignment due, and you're stuck? Here's some ways to come up with what to write about.

Borrow from famous writers

1 Inspiration:

If you're very lucky, the idea strikes hard. **Suzanne Collins** thought of the *Hunger Games* while swapping between reality TV and the news. As she channel-surfed the two stories started to come together in a disturbing way. You might have a dream. If you remember to scribble it down when you wake, bang, you might have your idea all ready to go. This happened to me once and I can tell you, it sure made writing easy!

2 What ifs:

Tease out some random thoughts you've had (here's some examples):

- What if the world was a computer programme?
- What if my parents moved?
- What if my friend had cancer?
- What if there was a war?

This how **John Green** works, so you're following a good precedent if you do this!

3. People you meet:

Think of someone you met who was just *amazing*. What made them so incredible? How did they talk, who were their friends, what were they doing, what did they look like?

You can make this into a personal story - how this person affected you - or you can grab that person and put them into a fictional world. **Alexander McCall Smith** developed Precious Ramotswe of the Number One Ladies' Detective Agency series after meeting an extraordinary woman.

Be a spy - **listen into other people's conversation**. What are they talking about?

A Story involves CHARACTER and CHANGE

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Why are they talking? Who are they? Where do they live? What are their names?

You don't need to actually know the correct answers to these questions - you can MAKE THEM UP! It's a story.

Think of someone who **really annoys you**. Why are they annoying? For example, are they loud, do they have shiny hair, do they never talk, do they never stop talking? Put that person into a story - irritating characters make strong characters! Plus, this gives you a chance to get revenge.

Think of a **stranger you met today**. Someone like a shop assistant or a waitress - what was their day like? (Sometimes I even ask them!) Be nosy. If you don't want to actually talk to them, IMAGINE their day.

Avenge yourself with your ideas!

4 Family stories:

Think about stories your parents tell. What did you do when you were little? Did your grandfather go to war? Where did your parents meet? Family anecdotes make really powerful story generators, although sometimes tact is required when they're retold.

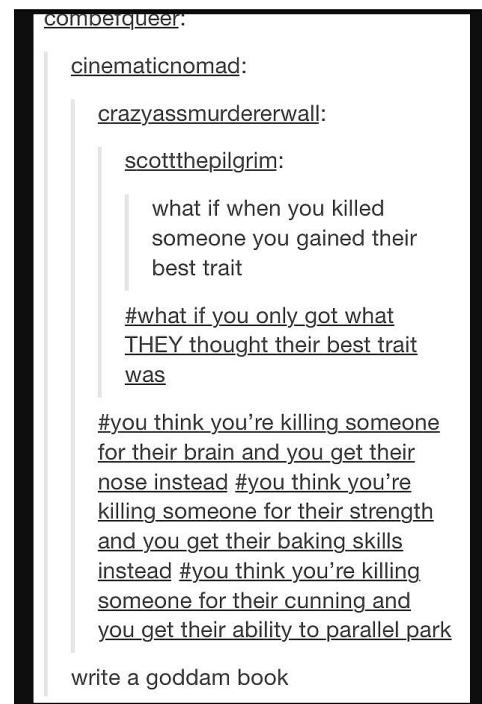
5 Change up an old favourite:

Take a story you really like, and change it up. Change the names of the characters, the settings, the language. Set *Star Wars* in the old West; retell a fairytale. This is probably the oldest, most traditional technique, but is still used a lot today. An example is *Warm Bodies*, by **Isaac Marion**

6 Look online:

Idea generators are available on Tumblr's WriteWorld (<http://writeworld.org>) and you can also put 'Plot Bunnies' into Pinterest.

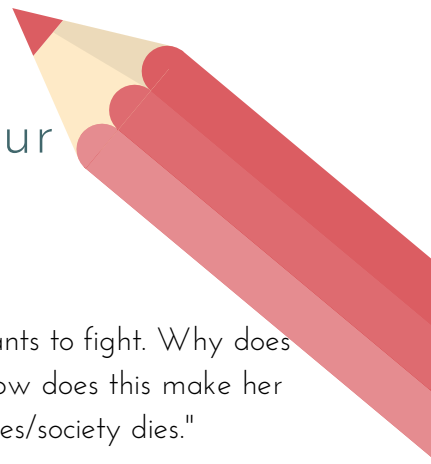
Next Step: **do something with your cool idea!**



from tumblr

Remember - an intriguing idea is only that. You need to *write* about it next.

How To Make the Most of Your [New] Amazing Idea



Keep it snappy!

Say it out loud. If it takes you more than two minutes, it's TOO complicated!

Try summarizing your idea into CHARACTER and CHANGE.

- My idea is about...teenagers killing each other for TV.
- My idea is about...a boy who avenges his parents' murder.
- My idea is about...a boy escaping from a maze.

Add detail

Here's some suggestions (different ways work for different people, so see what works for you).

Draw your idea into a comic



from *Cyanide and Happiness*

Summarize WHO the story is about, WHY they are there, WHAT happens to them and HOW they change.

Note: you don't need to know exactly what will events will happen and in what order - here you're just looking for the vague outlines. Don't get bogged down in details.

Write a blabby paragraph. Here's an example using *The Hunger Games*.

"My idea is about: teenagers killing each other in a competition. The MC's name is Katniss/Kathryn. She fights with swords/guns/knives. She fights on TV/Computer game/movie.

She doesn't want/wants to fight. Why does she have to fight? How does this make her feel? She wins/she dies/society dies."

Ideas build on each other, until before you know it, your story is built...

Expand. Sometimes your idea leads to further ideas. They build on each other until, before you know it you have the entire story worked out. Here's some possibilities for Katniss/Kathryn -

- What sort of society encourages kids to kill each other for entertainment? Who is in charge? How did that happen?
- who does she fight? Are they a good fighter? Did they want to fight? Does my character like them? How does she feel about fighting them?
- how does she fight? How does she learn how to fight? Has she killed anyone before? What happened?

Wow! And now you have enough for a whole story!

Congratulations! You have now thought of what to write!



Write Right!

6 Ways to Find An Idea

Getting the story together

1 **Inspiration**
Idea-jolt/dream

2 **What if?**
Tease out a random thought

3 **People you meet**
Someone you admire/overheard conversation
Someone irritating/encounter with a stranger

4 **Family Stories**
The tales your family tells

5 **Change it up**
Re-tell a classic

6 **Look on-line**
Try plot bunnies on pinterest, or writeworld.org



Write Right!

Make the Most of Your Idea

Now expand it into a story!

1

Make it snappy

Summarise it into a sentence

2

Character and Change

Who is it about & what do they face

3

Add Detail

Draw a cartoon/write a blabby paragraph/
Describe who/why/what/how

4

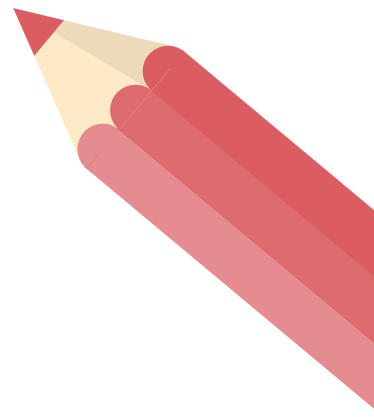
Expand On Your Idea

Describe the story background, the characters, their emotions.

CONGRATULATIONS!

You now have a story ready





Rachel Stedman, writing as RL Stedman, is an award-winning author of children's and young adult fiction.

Find out more about Rachel at:



www.RLStedman.com

