Leadership & Communications

Write Here! Write Now!

Writing Project

4-H CANADA

Saskatchewan

4-H MOTTO

Learn to do by doing.

4-H PLEDGE

I pledge my HEAD to clearer thinking,

My HEART to greater loyalty,

My HANDS to larger service,

My HEALTH to better living,

For my club, my community and my country.

4-H GRACE

(Tune of Auld Lang Syne)

We thank thee Lord, for blessings great

On this our own fair land.

Teach us to serve thee joyfully,

With head, heart, health and hand.

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AGRICULTURE COUNCIL OF SASKATCHEWAN INC.

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Introduction

Objectives

On successful completion of this project members should be able to:

- Understand the basic components of several different writing forms such as the news story, feature, haiku, short story, blog post, memoir, etc. and be able to distinguish one from the other.
- Write a news story, feature, haiku, short story, blog post etc.
- Understand the principles of copyright and what it means to write with integrity.
- Understand that a writer has never learned all there is to learn about the art and craft of writing.

Requirements

Access to writing materials; a computer is necessary for some, but not all of the activities.

Getting the most from this project

- Be prepared to have fun reading. Reading is fun in and of itself and it's also great training for a writer.
- Read and study the Reference Book thoroughly.
- Find magazines such as *The Writer* and *Writers' Digest*. Go to their websites and sign up for free content from the magazines.
- Borrow books on writing from the library.
- Google "teen writing sites" or just "writing sites" and see what's out there.
- Learn to look and listen like a writer. Pay attention to the world around you. Write it down.
- Practice. Practice. Practice. Learn to do by doing, and keep on learning.

Achievement requirements for this project

- Completed record book.
- Three pieces of writing completed this year for 4-H which you feel are your best work and a written explanation as to why you chose these pieces.
- A news story clipped from any newspaper with the 5 Ws and H underlined or highlighted.
- A feature story clipped from any magazine with the title, lead, nut paragraph, body and conclusion highlighted in different colours.
- A printout list of three online writing sites that you feel have helped you to learn more about the craft of writing and provide a written explanation as to why you have chosen these sites.
- A short memoir of 500-800 words from your life or a short story of 500-800 words.

Basics

Staying safe online

The Internet has changed the lives of many people, perhaps none more so than writers. Not all research, but much of it, can now be done online. Whether you're looking for facts for a non-fiction story or writing a fiction story set in another place and you want to do some background research, chances are you can find what you want online.

It's true that the Internet can also be a dangerous place. People aren't always who they say they are, or what they say they are, but by following a few simple precautions we can stay safe.

- If you use Facebook or other social media sites, set your online profile to private.
- Don't give your passwords to anyone but your parents or guardian.
- **NEVER** agree to meet, in person, anyone that you met online.
- Always go directly to your parents or guardian if anything happens online that makes you feel uncomfortable or frightened.

* Try this experiment the next time you're watching TV. Shut your eyes and try to visualize, just by listening to the voices, how old the people are who are reading the news, acting in a sitcom, taking part in a reality show. (If you already know their ages, pretend you don't.)

Does what they're saying affect how you judge their age? If someone is talking about music that teens listen to or movies they like, if they're using expressions used by young people are you more likely to think they're a teen? But they might easily be 25 or 43.

Equipment you'll need

Writers living a few thousand years ago didn't have to spend much on writing materials. One rock kind of shaped like a hammer and another kind of shaped like a chisel and another that was kind of flat and they were good to go. They had something to write with and something to write on.

Sure, it was probably slow going, chiseling out one letter at a time, and correcting mistakes must have been a challenge, but hey, it was economical.

Paper and pens cost less than computers and are just as effective. And, if you want to print or email your final draft you can probably use a computer at school or at the public library. To save paper (and trees) you can write/print on both sides of the paper.

What is plagiarism and why should you care?

Plagiarism and copyright are two words writers need to know.

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas and letting people think they are our own. That's not to say we can't use information from others, but when we do, we must make it clear where the information came from.

First of all, let's talk about non-fiction – news stories, features, columns, etc. By their nature, these forms of writing often use the opinions and thoughts of others. Writers must give credit for those thoughts and opinions and not let it look as if they are their own.

For example, if I'm writing a feature on sheep farming, I might interview a sheep farmer and ask him or her what he/she feeds the sheep, what vet care they need, when they give birth, etc.

When I write the story I would paraphrase what the farmer had to say and also use direct quotes. I would make sure the reader understands where the information is coming from.

> Example: Sally Munson, who has a herd of 150 Suffolk sheep near Anytown, Nova Scotia, says that lambing begins in mid-May on her farm and runs till the end of June. "The lambs are all born outside and they seem to do well with very low disease rates. And the ewes thrive on that fresh, new grass."

If another writer was to lift the story that I wrote, change a word or two and submit it for publication with her name on it, that would be plagiarism. Writers must find their own sources, do their own interviews and write their own stories.

In 2012, Canadian columnist, Margaret Wente, "was accused of plagiarism by Carol Wainio, a professor at the University of Ottawa, for lifting quotes and rewording passages from published sources without credit to their original author."

The accusations stemmed from a series of columns and articles published from 2009 to 2012, which plagiarize sources including the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *New York Times* and *Foreign Affairs*. On 21 September 2012, the *Globe and Mail*'s public editor addressed the allegations, conceding that "there appears to be some truth to the accusations but not on every charge."

Ms. Wente was suspended from writing her column for about a month, after which time she apologized and was allowed to come back to the job. She was also suspended from her position as a biweekly media panelist on the CBC program, *Q*, "due to her not meeting the CBC's journalistic standards."(as reported in Wikipedia at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Wente)

This incident shows how important it is for writers to be very sure they do not copy the words of another writer and, to always make it clear if they are quoting a source that the words and ideas expressed by the source are those of the source and not the writer. That is what is meant by giving proper citation. When writing a term paper or essay, sources must also be footnoted and listed at the end of the paper or essay.

Using essays or papers that can be found online and claiming they are our own work is another example of plagiarism. Plagiarism is theft.

Canadian copyright law protects written material from theft. It also protects photographs, designs, computer software, audiovisual materials, music, maps, illustrations, and even email messages from theft.

When a story, photograph, etc. is created, it automatically comes under copyright protection, which means that the person who created it is the only person who has the right to reproduce, publish or sell the work.

The Copyright Act does not protect ideas, concepts or themes, only the language and words used to express such ideas, concepts and themes.

For example, two writers could each write a news story about a Saskatchewan Roughriders and Calgary Stampeders football game that took place in Calgary. They would be about the same event, written from the same idea, but they would be different stories, and unless one copied the work of the other neither writer would be in violation of copyright.

Another example: two or more writers could write fictional mystery stories about a theft that took place at a football game. As long as the stories were different stories, not word-for-word repeats, neither would be in violation of copyright.

Unless, there's an obvious copying of wording, it can be difficult to prove plagiarism has taken place. Nevertheless, there are many examples of incidents of plagiarism that have been proven. Here is one:

Phantoms is a book by well-known sci-fi writer, Dean Koontz. In 1992 Koontz sued authors, Pauline Dunn and Susan Hartzell, claiming that their two books, *Crawling*

Dark and *Demonic Color*, both published under the name Pauline Dunn, plagiarized *Phantoms*, using plot points and, in some cases, entire passages from that book. Koontz won the suit. The publisher withdrew the book and the two women were obliged to take out a half-page ad in *Publisher's Weekly* apologizing (from Dean Koontz's website at: http://koontz.iwarp.com/phantoms.html).

For more information on plagiarism, particularly applying to school or university papers, watch this tutorial from Acadia University in Nova Scotia: http://library.acadiau.ca/tutorials/plagiarism/

Why and How We Write

Why words matter: understanding the power of the written word, and the responsibility of the writer

> *"I read in a book once that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but I've never been able to believe it. I don't believe a rose WOULD be as nice if it was called a thistle or a skunk cabbage."*
>
> – L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

About 5,000 years ago human beings began using the written word, devising a system of symbols for their language, but it wasn't until 1450 when Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press that books, magazines, newspapers and other forms of the written word became widely available to many people. Before that books were painstakingly copied with pen and ink. It was a tedious and time-consuming job. Books were rare and very expensive.

It's hard to imagine life without the written word – life without love letters, movie scripts, instruction manuals, comic books, emails and so much more. Words inform, educate, comfort and encourage.

For a time, it was thought that only men could be writers. Women were much more likely to be illiterate because education was not felt to be necessary for them. That didn't mean that women didn't write, but fewer wrote, and those that did sometimes took a man's name. Mary Ann Evans was a British writer who lived from 1819-80. She wrote seven novels under the name George Eliot. She used a man's name, she said, so that she would be taken seriously. Her novel, *Middlemarch* has been called the greatest novel in the English language.

About a hundred years earlier, Jane Austen (1775-1817) was writing her novels, *Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility, Emma, Persuasion, Mansfield Park* and *Northanger Abbey.* Her books are still popular today, and all have been made into movies but her first novel was published not under her own name, but simply as being "by a lady." You can learn more about Jane at: http://www.janeausten.org/

Today, men and women have equal access to words. Words are very, very powerful. And perhaps the written word is even more powerful than the spoken word.

Example: Rob is 13-years-old. His parents are divorced. He lives with his mom and sees his dad every weekend. In-between visits, he and his dad email back and forth. Rob misses his dad. He says emails are better than phone calls because when a phone call is over it's over but he can keep emails and read them over again.

When words hurt

There is an old children's rhyme which says: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me."

It's not true, is it? Words can hurt a great deal. Earlier, we talked about plagiarism and copyright, stealing the words of someone else and using them as our own. That's a misuse of words. And so is using words that may mislead your readers or that attack someone.

For example, say that a theft took place on a farm near your home. Ten purebred lambs were stolen. Naturally, the neighbourhood is abuzz and everyone has a theory as to who took the sheep. The editor of the local weekly calls you up and says, "I heard you were doing a 4-H project on writing. How about writing me a story on that sheep theft at the Bergen place? I need it by Thursday."

Your first stop is the Bergen house where you talk to Mr. and Mrs. Bergen. They tell you that 10 market weight lambs were stolen from their barn early Tuesday morning, sometime after the heavy snow fall that ended around midnight. "Couldn't make out anything from the boot tracks around the shed," says Mr. Bergen, "but there was a really good set of tire tracks in through the driveway by the bins, over to the barn and then down the main driveway. The Mounties were pretty interested in those."

You next go to the RCMP station in town where you're told that while the tracks were clear, they're from common tires and could have been on a variety of vehicles. So far, no charges have been laid.

That's a bit disappointing, but what about all those theories making the rounds? Some of them sound pretty good. The Bergens had a worker who they fired a few weeks ago. She was real angry when she left and she shouted at Mr. Bergen that he'd be sorry. Lots of people say she probably stole the lambs to get even. Can you write about the worker who was fired and how she probably stole the lambs?

As you've probably figured out – you can't. It might be true. The fired employee might have stolen the lambs. Or, it could have been someone else entirely. Nothing has been proven. A writer who reports information that has not been proven to be true can get into a lot of trouble.

You *can* write the story reporting that there was a theft of 10 lambs at the Bergen farm. You *can* write what the RCMP told you: that there were tire tracks, and it was found that they could be from any number of vehicles and you *can* write that no charges have been laid. If the police say that farmers in the area should keep a close watch on their livestock and watch for any suspicious activity, you *can* include that.

> You *can* write the story reporting that there was a theft of 10 lambs at the Bergen farm. You *can* write what the RCMP told you: that there were tire tracks, and it was found that they could be from any number of vehicles and you *can* write that no charges have been laid. If the police say that farmers in the area should keep a close watch on their livestock and watch for any suspicious activity, you *can* include that. But you *cannot* write theories or your own opinion. You have to stick to the facts.
>
> If in doubt, talk to your editor, or leave it out.

We should choose our words carefully when writing for publication but also when writing a personal note, a Facebook post or an email. Words can hurt, and once they're written down, once we hit "send," it can be impossible to take them back.

Why write? To communicate and create

When a writer sits down at a keyboard or with a pen and paper his/her purpose is to communicate or to create. All writing is mostly a communication or a creation, although a piece of writing can have elements of both.

A news story, for example, is the reporting or *communicating* of an event or events that really happened. The goal of the news writer is to tell or communicate what happened, to communicate it in a way that is informative, and at the same time, interesting to the reader.

The *Harry Potter* books are stories *created* by J.K. Rowling. They didn't really happen. They are fiction. The goal of the fiction writer is to create a story that is believable and to communicate it in a way that is interesting and engaging to the reader.

Writing instruction books, recipe books, television documentaries and feature stories are other examples of writing that basically communicate truths but still require skill on the part of the writer to do it in a way that engages the reader, or in the case of TV, the viewer.

So, even though the two forms are different, they are also similar. Skills such as good use of the language, and the ability to engage the reader are necessary for both.

Write what you know. Or not?

"Write what you know," is advice that's often given to writers. It's good advice. But maybe you're thinking, "Hey, what do I know? I'm 13-years-old."

You know plenty. And much of what you don't know, you can learn.

Let's start with what you can learn. If you're writing an essay for a school assignment, you will probably use several books and perhaps magazines and probably websites to research your topic. You will learn about the topic. Then you will write the essay (giving proper credit to your sources). That's writing what you don't know. Non-fiction writers do it all the time. Nobody knows everything. Also, an article or a feature is more believable, if you include the thoughts and opinions of others.

Starting with what you know

Let's say that Samantha decides to write a feature article on Icelandic horses. Now, Samantha has an Icelandic horse and she probably knows more about that breed than most people. That's good – that's writing what she knows – but to make her feature more believable (and more likely to be published), she needs to do some background research and then find several people who are experts on this subject, such as a veterinarian, an Icelandic horse breeder and someone who has written a book about Icelandics, and interview them for her article.

Because she knows a lot about Icelandics already, Samantha will already have an advantage in writing this article, over a writer who would have to start from zero knowledge of this unique breed of horses.

What about fiction?

Fiction writing is usually more effective if you have experienced the emotions you are writing about, if you are writing what you know. But, you don't have to have experienced them in exactly the same situation, or to the same degree as the characters you will write about.

> Example: Canadian author, Gordon Korman, was 12-years-old when he wrote his first book, *This Can't be Happening at McDonald Hall*. He was 14 when it was published by Scholastic. It tells the story of Bruno and Boots, two boys who are roommates at a private school. They get in trouble, are separated and plot to get their old room back. Korman may never have been in exactly that situation but he knew what it was like to be a 12-year-old boy. The story he wrote and the world he created is largely based on stuff a 12-year-old boy would already know – how kids of that age think, what they think about, how they can get into trouble at school, and how much friendships can mean to them.

Gordon Korman now lives in Long Island, New York. He has published more than 75 books, five of which were published before he finished high school. You can find out more about him at the official Gordon Korman website at: http:// gordonkorman.com/

Tips for writing what you know

1. If you're writing non-fiction, don't be afraid of research, but it's good to start with a subject you already know a little about.
2. If you're writing fiction, make your main characters the age you are now or younger.
3. Give your fiction stories settings that you know or can thoroughly research. If you've never lived in a big city it's going to be harder to write a story that takes place in Vancouver or Montreal, and chances are it won't be as good a story as it would have if you'd set it in an area that you know.
4. Expand on what you know. Take time to observe your surroundings and the people around you, including yourself. A journal and a writer's notebook can be helpful in doing this. (See "The Writer's Notebook" and "Why journaling is beneficial, especially to a writer" sections in this book.)

And finally, think about the words of Ernest Hemmingway:

> *"We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master."*

Good readers make good writers: Understanding the necessity of reading

You learn to be a good writer by practicing writing and by studying what other people have written; by reading, reading, reading.

Or, in the words of horror, suspense, science fiction and fantasy writer, Stephen King, in his book, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft,* "If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot."

And J.K. Rowling, creator of the *Harry Potter* series said, "I always advise children who ask me for tips on being a writer to read as much as they possibly can. Jane Austen gave a young friend the same advice, so I'm in good company there." (March 1999 Salon.com interview)

By the very act of reading you will learn what good writing looks like. When a paragraph or a scene catches your attention, stop for a minute and study it. How does it work? How did the writer do that? When an ending takes you totally by surprise, go back and trace the thread and see if there were clues that you missed. In a well written story there should be. Try to figure out how the author fooled you.

Most writers will tell you that the more you read, the more you will want to write. Reading will also make you a better judge of what works in writing and what doesn't.

Did you like that long, detailed description of each character in book A, or did you prefer the style of writing in book B in which the characters were revealed through their actions? Did you like the ending in book C or did you think that the way all the problems were solved on the last page wasn't quite believable?

The writing you don't like can also teach you something – how you do not want to write. And, it can teach you *what* you don't want to write. After reading a non-fiction book you may decide that you don't want to write non-fiction. Or after reading poetry you may decide that while you like to read poetry, you don't want to write it.

Read everything from best sellers to classics to magazines to graphic novels – the more you read, the more you will want to write and the better writer you will be.

A little secret: You don't have to finish reading each and every book/story that you start. Yes, I know that if you have an English assignment to read a book and write a book report you do need to read the entire book, but we're talking recreational reading here.

It's what you do on your own time and it's supposed to be fun. So, if you start reading a book and you just *can't* finish it, don't. Do give it a fair shot. Do give it a chance to grab your attention and if it doesn't, put it down.

Think a bit about why you didn't like it. Remember, books/stories that you don't like can also teach you something.

The writer's notebook. Don't leave home without it.

Ideas for stories, poems, articles or any piece of writing can come along at any time, often when you least expect them. If a writer isn't ready to catch them, they can easily slip away.

How do you catch them? In the writer's notebook. The writer's notebook can be a pad of paper, an old notebook, a smart phone or an iPad. It just needs to be accessible – easy to carry, easy to fit into a pocket or a backpack – a safe place to write down those ideas that pop up when you're in the middle of doing something else like say, staring out the window of the school bus, skating off the ice at a hockey game or teetering on the edge of falling asleep. A fabulous idea for a story, poem or article can pop into your head at almost any time. "Hey! This is great!" you think as you take a couple of seconds to mull it over before going back to staring, skating or teetering. "I'll remember this." you think.

Uh uh. You probably won't, especially if you're falling asleep. But, if you have that notebook handy you can take a moment to scribble down or key in your idea and there it is, ready and waiting for when you have the time to noodle it into a story, poem, article or….

Just as an artist uses a sketch book to make a quick drawing to expand upon later, a writer's notebook is also useful for jotting down those little snippets that sometimes land like a gift in your hands, just begging to be remembered and maybe used in a piece of writing.

Become a people watcher and use your notebook to jot down descriptions: facial expressions, body language. Listen to how people talk. Notice the sound of their voice as well as what they're saying. To write about people (and animals) it's helpful to watch their actions.

Your notebook can also be used to notice and record other sensory details: sounds, smells, touch.

One writer's notebook includes brief descriptions of:

- Two black and three white horses, standing in a pasture of brown grass, patched with white snow.
- The sound of frozen tires on a frozen road, of a faraway train whistle, the squeal of a rusty hinge on a corral gate in a deserted farmyard, an argument between two three-year-olds over who has the biggest feet.
- The smell of a new book, of rink burgers frying, of freshly cut hay.

You may someday use these bits and pieces or "sketches" in a piece of writing but even if you don't they will have served a valuable purpose. They will have helped to develop a tool in your writer's toolbox – the ability to observe something outside yourself and describe it with words.

If you have a journal you might use it for jots and sketches too, or you might even use a handy piece of paper, or if you're on your computer, and an idea strikes you can put it in an email and send it to yourself.

Where do you write? And when?

> *A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.*
>
> – Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

Old movies show rooms full of reporters, pounding out stories on typewriters. Not much privacy there. Certainly not a room of one's own. Some writers, though, thrive on a noisy workplace. One writer who worked at a school wrote during noon hours at a computer in the library, with students milling around, some reading over her shoulder, making comments. Many take their laptops to a neighbourhood café or coffee shop.

But just as many, probably more, need a quiet, private place where they can be alone with their thoughts. Only then can they begin to write. For them, and Virginia Wolf, writing is a very personal occupation.

A writer's notebook allows you to capture and preserve moments, images, sometimes whole scenes, for a time when you have the time and a place, to write them down, and the words are flowing. On the other hand, many writers will tell you that if you write regularly, whether you feel like it or not, you will get results. In the words of Woody Allen, comedian, writer, director and actor: "Getting to the typewriter every day is what makes for productivity."

Research and Interview Skills

What do writers do? They write.

But before they can write they often need to research and interview. Researching and interviewing are skills that a fiction writer will use. Maybe, you've set your story in the past so you'll need to learn about a different time. What did people wear in 1867? What did kids study in school? What did they do after school? Research will answer those questions.

Although research may be required to write fiction it almost certainly will be required to write news stories and features. To research means to dig deeper, to increase the knowledge that you already have. You can use the Internet as well as books, newspapers and magazines for research purposes.

> For example, say you are writing a feature about barn cats as pest controllers. Maybe you live on a farm and you already know that the cats in the barn catch and kill many rodents. But do you know why they're so good at it?
>
> If you do some research you will find that cats are designed to catch rodents. They can literally see in the dark and their hearing is phenomenal, allowing them to hear sounds inaudible to the human ear and to distinguish between two sounds half a metre apart at a distance of more than 18 metres. And then there are those whiskers which can detect differences in air currents caused by the presence of solid objects. (like maybe hiding mice?) How good are they at catching rodents? One female tabby cat caught 12,480 rats in six years.

Finding and using these facts will make your feature more interesting than if you'd simply wrote something like, "Cats are good hunters and they catch a lot of pests."

**** Remember that not all Internet sources are reliable.***

Some sites may be made up of the opinions of one person. Facts on such a site may not be facts, but simply the opinion of a person.

If you are looking for facts, such as how many farms are there in Newfoundland, type "Newfoundland farms how many" into your search engine, a site that will pop up on the first page will be www.statcan.gc.ca › Home › Highlights and analyses.

It will tell you exactly how many farms there were in Newfoundland in the last census. The letters gc.ca in a website tells you it is a Government of Canada site. Sites with gc.ca in them are very useful and reliable for researching facts and figures pertaining to Canada.

Things to note:

- Who does the site belong to? Could the person or organization it belongs to have a side they favour? For example, a site belonging to barn cats (if a site could belong to cats) might have different information (encouraging owners of barn cats to feed their cats only the most expensive kibble and provide velvet cushions for them to sleep on) than one maintained by, for example, the Calgary Humane Society.
- Is the site selling something? If it is, that could mean that the information on it is not reliable. For example, if the site was selling cat hats, it might tell you that barn cats need to wear hats.
- Does the site provide links to original material? A site such as Wikipedia not only provides information but also links and is generally reliable. However, be careful with Wikipedia sites too. In November 2012, Wikipedia did not have a site for barn cats but they did have one for farm cats. Some of the information was incorrect, but it was noted on the site that the information was not verified.
- Look for a date. If the last date you can find is two years old, perhaps the information is out of date.

Interviews

Interviews with "sources" are another part of research. Sources are people who know something about the subject you're writing about. While information found online and in books is good, finding real people to answer your questions is also important. For the feature on barn cats as pest controllers, now that you've shown how valuable those barn cats are, you might want to include a section on looking after them. You could interview your local veterinarian for that. Ask her/him what health care a barn cat needs.

Some pointers for successful interviews

1. Be prepared. Write out the questions you want to ask and go over them until you are completely familiar with them.
2. Set up the interview a few days in advance. Call the person you want to interview. Identify yourself and explain why you're calling, as in: "Hello Dr. Graham. My name is Freddy Fouraitcher, and I'd like to interview you for a story on barn cats as pest controllers for the *Anytown Review*."
3. If you have only a couple of questions and your source has a few minutes, you can probably do the interview right then. If you have more than a few questions and/or they're busy you can arrange to either meet for a longer time at a later date or to do the interview over the phone at a later date.
4. At the interview, arrive on time or a few minutes early. If you are doing a phone interview, call exactly when you said you would call.
5. Consider borrowing or buying a small voice recorder to record the interview or bring a clean pad of paper and two or three pens.
6. Ask your questions and listen, with all your attention, to the responses. If you think of more questions during the interview, jot them down to ask later.
7. Listen without judgement. Some stories are controversial. Some sources might have views that are different from yours.
8. Focus on what you need. Sometimes sources will wander off the subject. Maybe your barn cat source wants to talk about farm dogs – a good subject but it has nothing to do with your story. Keep listening and when he/she pauses, bring him/her gently back to the interview subject. Sometimes sources get a bit carried away talking about a subject that's important to them and they might use words and phrases you don't understand. If that happens, ask politely if they can answer the questions in language a grade five student would understand.

   If the source is speaking in clear, grade five language and you're still not quite clear on what he/she means, try saying something like, "Can you give me an example?"
9. When all of your questions have been asked and answered, ask the source if there is anything else he/she would like to add, if there's anything that you've missed. If there is, get that information too.
10. Thank the source for answering your questions. Tell them where the story will be printed or, if it's for a website, posted. Sometimes a source will ask for a copy of the story. Most editors do not like to let sources see stories before they are published/posted, but are usually happy to supply a copy once the story is published. Get the source's address and make sure to get a copy/link to him/her.

"Confidence has a lot to do with interviewing. That and timing."

– Michael Parkinson, British broadcaster, journalist and author

Forms of Writing

Why journaling is beneficial, especially to a writer

A journal or diary is a personal record of events, experiences and reflections kept on a regular basis over a period of time.

A journal can help you in many ways and it can also make you a better writer. (More about that later.)

You can write a journal on a computer, a smart phone or on any blank piece of paper. You probably want it to be private so it's a good idea to put a password on your file, or if you're using paper, make sure you have a secure place to stash your journal. It's a bit difficult to be completely open in your writing if you're even a little bit concerned that your words might be read by someone else.

Okay, you've got the paper, computer screen, whatever – write down the date and start writing. Include the date so that when you read this over in a week, month or year you'll know when you wrote it. "Wow! Did I really do that? I guess I am pretty smart," you'll say to yourself, or "Wow! I can't believe I thought *that* was so important, last week/month/year."

What to write? Hey, it's your journal. That means you get to write whatever you want. If you're blanking out, you might try chatting to yourself/your journal about what you did during the day, or perhaps something you learned lately. As you write you might find that other thoughts are triggered and you want to write those down too.

Journaling is rather like thinking on paper. Don't be surprised if you find that as you write about say, a problem you're having at school that possible solutions come to mind, or that the problem doesn't seem quite as big as you thought it was. Or maybe, it still seems pretty big but just writing it down somehow makes you feel a bit better.

Many writers are also journalers. Recently one writer said, "I don't know what I think until I write it down."

Imagine being faced with a situation that is totally new to you. Someone says, "Well, what do you think?" Writing out your feelings, maybe listing the facts you know, writing pros and cons of a situation, all can help you to figure out what you think.

Not only can journaling help you figure out stuff, it can also be a good place to write down your goals. It helps you to remember and stay focused and it can be a place to record your progress.

Don't worry about using the correct grammar and punctuation, and don't worry about what other people think. This is your journal and no one else ever has to see it.

Feel free to incorporate different styles of writing. Maybe you can fiddle around with a poem, or maybe you could try adding some artwork. This is your journal. You can do whatever you want, but even though your journal won't be marked on neatness, it's a good idea to keep it legible so that when you read it again in a few days, weeks or months you won't be puzzling over what you wrote.

So, how can a journal make you a better writer?

> *"Journal writing is a voyage to the interior."*
>
> – Christina Baldwin

> *"The nicest part is being able to write down all my thoughts and feelings; otherwise, I might suffocate."*
>
> – Anne Frank,
> from *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition*

A journal can supply ideas for great stories. Feeling bummed because you flunked that test or your best friend is moving away? Can't stop talking/writing/thinking about that goal you made in soccer or maybe that cool guy you're crushing on? Could that be the beginning of a great short story, poem or ballad?

A journal can help you learn the art of storytelling.

A journal, especially if you write in it every day, can help build your writing confidence. Writing is like everything else – playing a musical instrument, playing a sport, doing a craft – the more you practice, the better you are at it.

Secret from a writer

More than a little of the fiction that you love to read was based on either the writer's own experience or the experience of people the writer knows. Sure, there was stuff deleted and stuff added that came from the writer's imagination. Names, places, situations have been changed or tweaked, but most writers, if they're honest, will tell you that some of the best writing comes from real life; from stuff that really happened. Uh huh.

A website on journaling that might be of interest: http://www.writing-world.com/creative/journal.shtml

Reporting and writing an agricultural news story

Finding an agricultural news story may be a bit more of a challenge if you live in the city but it's still possible. After all, agriculture plays a big part in all of our lives, whether or not we actually live on a farm. If we eat, we're connected to agriculture.

Suggestions:
If there is a farmers market in your town or city, you could visit it and talk to some of the people who sell their farm products there. Ask them how they're doing. Are there new or unusual vegetables for sale that you could write about? (Headline: *New purple carrots popular with kids*) Are there new regulations? If yes, how do they affect the sellers? (Headline: *New rules for markets frustrate farmers*) Are there more customers this year than in the past? Why do they think that is? (Headline: *TV food shows spike farmers market sales*)

Does your town or city allow citizens to raise chickens in their backyards? Some do and some don't. You could find out what your town's policy is on this subject and interview people on council and also citizens who are for or against the policy, whatever it may happen to be.

Other suggestions for agricultural stories? Country kids could pick a subject and poll the farmers in their area just about any time of the year. In the spring it might be: What are you planning to plant this year and why? Some crops might be more profitable because there is a shortage. (Headline: *World wheat shortages spike Alberta wheat acreages*.) They might avoid others because of weather or disease issues.

In the summer, a writer could ask how crops are doing? Are they being attacked by pests? Is there enough/too much rain? What do prices look like? In the fall you could inquire about harvests. When you ask several farmers the same questions you'll begin to see a picture forming and you'll be able to write headlines such as: *Area farmers hoping for rain* or *Crops looking good in the Anytown area*.

Animal stories are always popular. Is someone raising an unusual animal? Chinchillas? Alpacas? Icelandic horses? Earthworms? Ladybugs? Check it out.

Good reporting equals accuracy.
Get the five Ws and H: Who, what, when, where, why and how.
Who is the story about? **What** did they do that was newsworthy? **When** did they do it? **Where** did they do it? **Why** did they do it? **How** did they do it? Your job as a reporter is to get the answers to all the questions a reader might have and some that he/she may not have thought of.

You must also be sure you have the facts. You can't report, for example, "Everyone in Anytown is excited about the new rink," unless you know for certain that every single person in Anytown is excited about the new rink.

Make sure you get the correct spelling for names. Never assume that you know. Shaun, Shawn and Sean are all pronounced exactly the same, but Sean probably won't like it if you spell his name Shawn or Shaun. And, once you make one mistake, even if it has nothing to do with the story, readers will wonder if you've made more.

Writing the story

Choosing a headline or title: When writing a news story, try to choose a headline that tells the main part of the story. In the example story in the next section, the headline *Alberta 4-H members helmet up* tells us where the story is taking place, (Alberta) who it is about (4-H members) and what they are doing (helmeting up).

The inverted pyramid is a good model to use for the news story. Think of a pyramid turned upside down. Place the most important information in the top part, the next most important after that and so on.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Inverted_pyramid_2.svg

This model was developed so that news stories could be cut from the bottom if the printer ran out of space. It also means that a busy reader can read the headline and the first two or three paragraphs and still get the story.

For example, in the sample story, *Alberta 4-H members helmet up* in Chapter 12, the fiveWs and H are answered in the first paragraph. This first paragraph is also known as the lead. Its job is to tell what the story is about.

> Example: As of October 1, 2011, Alberta 4-H members in equine (horse) programs at levels one, two and three must wear properly fitted helmets while mounted. "Safety of course, is our main objective," said Stacy Price, president of the Alberta 4-H Council. "We felt it was important to teach the kids at a young age that wearing a helmet is very important and the best way to do it is with our newest members."

Who: Alberta 4-H members in equine programs, at levels one, two and three

What: Must wear properly fitted helmets while mounted

When: As of October 1, 2011

Where: Alberta

Why: "Safety of course, is our main objective," said Stacy Price, President of the Alberta 4-H Council. "We felt it was important to teach the kids at a young age that wearing a helmet is very important."

How: "…the best way to do it is with our newest members."

The most important information of the story is in the lead paragraph. *Helmets are now required for 4H equine members, levels one-three when mounted because helmets will make them safer.* Everything that comes after expands on the lead, gives more information. This is known as the "body" of the story. It is to be hoped that the reader will read the entire story but if he/she read only the first paragraph they would still understand what the story is about.

Stacy Price, President of the Alberta 4-H Council, was interviewed for the story and the writer also researched a brochure from the Ontario Equestrian Federation. Notice the quotations from Ms. Price and notice that when the writer used stats from the Horse Council, British Columbia, this was noted.

Write your story using clear, concise language. Don't use a big word if a short one will do the job. Try to alternate shorter and longer sentences, but don't let any of your sentences get too long. Your goal is to write a clear, easily understood story, not to impress the reader with big words and long sentences.

Let your story cool a day or two, then read it through again. Correct errors. Have someone you trust read it over and give you feedback. Is it understandable? Does it answer all the readers' questions? Is it interesting? Is anything missing?

Example of a news story

Alberta 4-H members helmet up
By Shirley Byers

As of October 1, 2011, Alberta 4H members in equine (horse) programs at levels one, two and three must wear properly fitted helmets while mounted. "Safety of course, is our main objective," said Stacy Price, President of the Alberta 4-H Council. "We felt it was important to teach the kids at a young age that wearing a helmet is very important and the best way to do it is with our newest members."

Levels are based not on age, but time in the club and skill level. Every new member regardless of age begins at level one and on the basis of a yearly assessment, remains at that level or moves up. There are seven levels in all. In addition, all 4-H participants born in 2000 and later will be required to wear helmets so that eventually the rule will apply to all members. Members who don't wear helmets will not be allowed to ride.

Helmets are already the rule for 4-H clubs in Ontario and British Columbia. According to a fact sheet compiled by the Horse Council of British Columbia, horseback riders are hospitalized due to severe head injuries more often than people involved in football, boxing or soccer. While a fall from two feet (60 cm) can cause permanent brain damage, sitting on a horse can elevate a rider's head to 8 feet (3 metres) or more. Riders age 10-14 are most likely to be involved in an accident with a horse, but all ages are at risk.

Helmets must be properly fitting ASTMSEI (American Society for Testing of Materials Equipment Institute) or BSI (British Standard Institution) approved equestrian helmets. Equestrian shops and many western supply stores will have staff members who can help fit a helmet.

There has been opposition to the new rule, just as there was to bicycle and hockey helmets, Price said. "I think the thing is people don't want to be told, not that they don't believe in helmets or don't agree with them. It's just that they don't want to be told that their children have to wear them."

Some of the kids have complained too. Others, not so much. Some clubs have already made helmets mandatory on their own and some kids have decided on their own, to wear a helmet. Helmets for all members, while mounted, are already required in Alberta's Pony Clubs which are not affiliated with 4-H.

"I have heard people say clubs will fold," Price said. "But we actually did a poll of all the horse members. For all of the yelling and screaming we heard initially, the polls showed that members, leaders and parents were in favour of the helmet rule. The majority was in favour."

*This story was published in the *Western Producer* in 2011.

Writing a feature story

To write a feature you will use many of the same skills you used to write a news story: research, finding and interviewing sources.

A news story is about something that happened recently, and is called "hard news." A feature is called "soft news," and can be about almost anything. It can be about issues such as global warming, the increase in home-schooling or trends in teen clothing. A feature can be a profile of a celebrity or any person who has done something unusual or who has an unusual job or hobby. It can be an account of a real-life event, such as how a community banded together to harvest the crop of a neighbour who was in the hospital.

Unlike a news story, a feature has a beginning, middle and an end. It is not written to the inverted pyramid form. But it must be just as accurate, fair and balanced as a news story.

Although a feature can be written in several ways, there is one form that is widely used because it allows a writer to tell a story in an organized way that catches the interest of the reader. The story is arranged into five parts. They are:

1. Title or Headline
2. Lead or Anecdote
3. Nut paragraph
4. Body or Who? What? When? Where? Why? And How?
5. Ending or Conclusion

An anecdote is a little story that shows the main point of the story. It is usually about a real person or persons that the reader can identify with and wants to know more about.

In the sample story, *Night Feeding for Daytime Calving* is the title or headline. The next two paragraphs form the **anecdote**. They tell a little story and, hopefully, make the reader wonder why Ken's cattle all calve during the day.

> Prairie winters are harsh and cold and even colder at night. No one wants to be out in that kind of weather but if you're a cattle farmer chances are you will be. Wet and vulnerable calves have a way of arriving in the darkest, coldest and most dangerous time of the night.
>
> But not at Ken Lindholm's farm. In 2009-2010, every one of his 145 cows gave birth during the day. It was, he admits, a pretty good year but it wasn't all that unusual for the Lintlaw, Saskatchewan farmer. Most of his calves arrive during the day. What's his secret?

The **nut paragraph** is the paragraph that tells the reader what this feature will be about. It's usually not very long, but this one is exceptionally short:

> It's all down to when the cattle are fed, he says.

Now the reader knows this is a story that will tell him/her how feeding cows at night will somehow cause them to give birth to their calves during the day. This is something cattle farmers might want to know, so there's a good chance they will continue reading.

The following paragraphs form the **body** of the feature. They supply the Who? What? When? Where? and How? Two more examples of farmers who feed at night are given. Results from six studies on night feeding are included. Four showed positive results for night feeding. Two showed no benefit to night feeding. It was very important to include these last two in order for the story to be fair and balanced.

Next, we hear from a beef cow/calf specialist, Nancy Noeker. She gives an explanation as to **Why** night feeding is more likely to produce daytime births. Now that we have explained why night feeding is linked to daytime calving, it's time to end the feature.

This was done by answering a question Ken Lindholm had posed earlier in the story when he wondered why better quality feed seemed to make a difference in when the cows calved. Answering this question tidied up the last of the loose ends and ended the story neatly. It's usually a good idea to bring the person or persons in the anecdote back into the story at the end.

Tips for feature writing

- Choose your story idea carefully. Think about what you need to find out, who your sources will be, where you will find the information you need. Try to choose an idea that you're curious about, that you want to find out about. Then it will be even more fun to report and write.
- Don't be afraid to over research. The more information you have, even if you don't use it all, the better you will know your subject and the better your story will be.
- Don't forget to use direct quotes from your sources. A sentence such as *"I'm not a scientist. I can't explain it, but it seems the better the hay the better it works,"* reminds the reader that this is a story about people, not just dry directions. Other direct quotes in the feature serve the same purpose and also help to make the story more believable.
- Use strong verbs. Adjectives and adverbs have their place, but don't overuse them.

Example of an agricultural feature story

Night Feeding for Day Time Calving
By Shirley Byers

Prairie winters are harsh and cold and even colder at night. No one wants to be out in that kind of weather but if you're a cattle farmer chances are you will be. Wet and vulnerable calves have a way of arriving in the darkest, frostiest and most dangerous time of the night.

But not at Ken Lindholm's farm. In 2009-2010, every one of his 145 cows gave birth during the day. It was, he admits, a pretty good year but it wasn't all that unusual for the Lintlaw Saskatchewan farmer. Most of his calves arrive during the day.

What's his secret?

It's all down to when the cattle are fed, he says.

Following a regime he learned from his parents, he feeds his cows once a day and always after 4:00 p.m. He feeds alfalfa/brome bales, supplemented with grain after calving begins. They have access to straw all day. In a typical year up to eighty percent of them give birth during daylight hours. He's been farming for twenty years and in all that time there was only one year when the strategy didn't work. He thinks that was because the feed quality wasn't as good that year and the results in 2009-2010, when the hay was of exceptional quality, would seem to support that theory.

"I'm not a scientist," he says. I can't explain it, but it seems the better the hay the better the hay the better it works. "

A few miles east, in the Okla area Brian and Karen Spray discovered the advantages of late day feeding kind of by accident, says Karen.

"Our boys were in school and Brian was away working. The boys would come home after school and feed the cows at around 4:30 and we started noticing the pattern was different. We had very few cows calving during the night."

The Sprays feed once a day. They offer a mixture of alfalfa, slough hay when it's available, and straw. Karen estimates around 95% of their commercial herd of 170 head calves during the day.

"It's nice," she says. "If you have to go out and check, it's fifteen or twenty minutes and you're back in. You're done. But if you've got one calving you could be out there for an hour or more."

As well as being more convenient for farmers, day-time calving offers other benefits: calving difficulties are easier to manage during daylight, there's time for calves to dry off before the sun goes down, predators are less likely to attack during the day, in large areas calves are easier to find, and feeding in the evening helps maintain the cows' body temperatures during cold winter nights.

A Manitoba farmer, Gus Konefal made the practice of late feeding for day calving famous in the seventies.

One winter, out of necessity, he was forced to feed his cows late in the day; he was hauling feed from a distance and didn't get home until late afternoon. That year he

saw a marked reduction in night time calving. Konefal realized he was onto something and he never looked back.

He developed a feeding schedule that resulted in 80% of his cows calving between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. He fed his cows twice daily, once at 11 a.m. to noon and again at 9:30 to 10:00.

Subsequent studies at the Brandon research station, using Konefal's feeding regime, which came to be known as the Konefal Calving Method, showed a 13.5% reduction in the number of cows calving between midnight and 7 a.m. Tests at the Iowa State University produced results similar to Konefal's although those animals were fed not twice, but once a day, at dusk. A three year study at USDA-ARS, Miles City, Montana resulted in 10-20% lower rates of calving between the hours of 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. for the cows fed later in the day. A British study produced 22% more calves arriving in the daytime if the cows were fed at 10:00 p.m.

On the other hand, an Indiana study of a group of dairy cows showed no benefit to night feeding and neither did another in Florida.

Why does it work? Or not?

Nancy Noecker, beef cow/calf specialist with OMAFRA (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs) first learned about night feeding for daytime calving at university in the eighties, and she's a strong supporter of the method. When the cows are fed is important, she says. How much they are fed is just as important.

"If the feed comes every night at 6 or whatever they know that's when they get fed. They go and they eat. They spend three or four or five or six hours or whatever time eating. Then they lie down and ruminate. The next day is spent laying around, waiting for the next feed to show up. That's when things are quiet and calm and that's when a cow goes off to calf."

But quite often cattle will eat far more than they need. For this system to work, feed rations must be calculated so that each cow gets enough to eat but not too much. The idea is to get the food in, get the cud chewed and have the cow done with digestion and ready to give birth during the day.

The time of feeding isn't written in stone. Some farmers like 4 or 4:30, others might go as late as 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. Whatever works for you, is fine, she says. Just make sure you start the later feeding regime two weeks to a month before your first calf is expected.

Ken Lindholm's reasoning of better feed resulting in more daytime calves, makes sense, Noecker says. The higher quality feed was probably easier to chew and better tasting too. "They were probably eating faster and then waiting around longer for tomorrow's meal – a good time to lie down and calve!"

This feature was published in *Grainews*

Writing a short story

> *"A short story must have a single mood and every sentence must build towards it."*
>
> – Edgar Allan Poe

> *"I love short stories because I believe they are the way we live. They are what our friends tell us, in their pain and joy, their passion and rage, their yearning and their cry against injustice."*
>
> – Andre Dubus

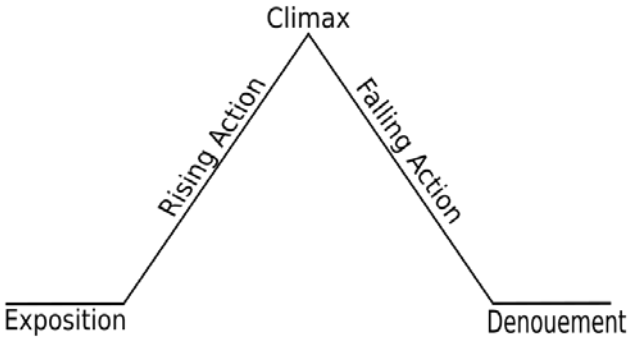
A short story is a piece of fiction, usually less than 5,000 words. A story of 1,000 words or less can be called flash fiction. Short stories usually contain these five elements: **plot, setting, character, conflict and theme**.

How a short story works

Plot is what happens in the story. The story begins with the introduction of the main **character** or characters and the **setting**. The setting shows where the story is taking place and the connection of the characters to each other. This part of the story can also be referred to as the **exposition**.

The **conflict** of the story is shown with rising action. Events become complicated. There is more and more tension, as the main character struggles to reach his/her goal. When the stakes are the highest the **climax** or **turning point** of the story is reached, and the issue is resolved. The main character might get what he/she wanted or he/she might see another **resolution**. The conflict is resolved or not, the tension is greatly lessened and the loose ends are tied up. This may also be referred to as the **denouement.** During, or after reading the story the reader understands what the **theme** of the story is.

The rising action, climax, falling action and denouement (resolution) is shown in the following illustration known as Freytag's pyramid. Freytag was a nineteenth century novelist.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Freytags_pyramid.svg

Notice how this is different from the inverted pyramid used for a news story.

You can practice picking out the different elements of a story at this site: http://www.learner.org/interactives/story/index.html

More about characters

Short stories use few characters. There just isn't room for a lot of people. Each character must be there for a good reason. The goal of the short story writer is to make his or her characters real and believable.

Let's say you're creating your main character. Draw a picture with words. What does he look like? What are his likes and dislikes? What does he believe in? What are his dreams? And in this story, what does he want?

Show, don't tell

Okay, you know your characters. Now, try to show your readers what they're like through their actions, not by telling them. For example, if you wanted to let your readers know that your main character, Lizzie, loves cats, you could write, "Lizzy loved cats." That would be telling them.

Or, you could write something like. When Lizzie was eight, she adopted two cats from the SPCA. When Lizzie was ten, her parents told her that she could have her own smart phone for her birthday. "That would be nice," Lizzie said, "but what I'd really like is another cat." Those two lines show you that Lizzie loves cats.

More about conflict

If there is no conflict there is no plot. Many short stories are about the main character or characters wanting something. Conflict is basically, anything that stops the main character from getting what he/she wants. If he/she were to get what he/she wants in the first paragraph, that would be the end of the story.

For example, think about this twist on the fairy tale, *Cinderella*: Cinderella wants to go to the ball. Her stepsisters think that's a wonderful idea. They help her shop for a gown, do her hair and makeup and off they all go. She meets the prince there and they get married. No conflict – no story.

Another example: In the upcoming short story sample, Emma, the main character, wants her parents to be like other parents. She wants them to stop being clowns. But they enjoy clowning and want to continue. She hopes the move will stop them. It doesn't. She hopes they'll be so busy with new activities that they'll stop. They don't. All conflict.

There are four different kinds of conflict.

- Man versus man or man/woman against the forces of nature, or animals. Example: the short stories of Jack London. http://www.jacklondons.net/northstories.html
- Man/woman against circumstances. Example: *Pinky, Binky and Me* (in next section)
- Man/woman against society, ideas, rules or those in authority. Example: *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
- Man/woman against him or herself. Character struggles with temptation, physical limitations, choices, etc. Example: Main character, Rob, is a vampire who has reformed and is living as an ordinary person. But he is constantly tempted to go back to the old life by his best friend, Brad, who is also a vampire. Brad gets into serious trouble and the only way Rob can save him is to return to his vampire ways….

What is the climax of the story?

The climax, or turning point is the highest point of action. In the short story, *Pinky, Binky and Me*, as Emma watches her parents perform, she remembers how proud she was of them as a little girl, and she, starts to realize she has no reason to be ashamed of them now. She is digesting this when her friend Meredith blurts out, "*Your parents are really talented, Emma! I don't understand how you could possibly find them embarrassing!"* And Emma sees the hurt on her mother's face as she hears those words. This paragraph is the climax or turning point of the story:

> Sometimes it takes me a long time to figure out what everybody else already knows, but in that split second I knew the problem wasn't with my parents. The problem wasn't with Binky and Pinky.
>
> The problem was with me.

After that, the story quickly resolves. Emma hugs her parents, not minding the greasy clown makeup this leaves on her cheeks. That, and the final few sentences, show that the conflict has been entirely resolved:

> "Hey Emma!" Romeo, a.k.a. David pointed at my face. "Did you collide with the clowns?"
>
> "The clowns are my mum and dad, David."
>
> "Cool!"
>
> "Yeah. Way cool!"

What is the theme of a story?

The theme of a story is the main idea that the author is trying to get across. Some common themes of stories, books and movies are:

- Things aren't always what they seem to be.
- Don't judge a person by outward appearances.
- People can change.

The **theme** of *Pinky, Binky and Me* is: It's okay to be different, even if you're somebody's parent. While most stories have a theme, writers should try not to make it too obvious. People don't like to be made to feel they are being lectured or preached at.

How a story is told: point of view

Point of view means, who is telling the story? From whose point of view is it being told?

Point of view is important because it has a huge effect on the story.

If the main character or another character is telling the story, the point of view is **first person.** *Pinky, Binky and Me* is an example of a story told in the first person**.**

> **I** loved Toronto, and **I** wasn't too impressed with leaving the world as **I'd** known it since **my** life began. **I'd** never moved before, never had to make new friends or fit into a new school. **I** was more than a little nervous about the situation.

First person viewpoint shows the thoughts and feelings of the person telling the story, but the storyteller or narrator cannot know or tell the thoughts and feelings of any of the other characters.

In **third person limited viewpoint**, the story is told from inside the head of one of the characters, often, but not always, the main character. If the above paragraph from *Pinky, Binky and Me* was in the third person limited viewpoint it would read:

> **Emma** loved Toronto, and **she** wasn't too impressed with leaving the world as **she'd** known it since **her** life began. **She'd** never moved before, never had to make new friends or fit into a new school. **She** was more than a little nervous about the situation.

Third person limited viewpoint shows the thoughts and feelings of one character, in this case Emma.

In **third person omniscient** or **all seeing viewpoint**, the author is usually not a character in the story but he/she knows everything about everybody. In older short stories such as *The Gift of the Magi*, this viewpoint is often used. The author will sometimes comment on the story and even offer bits of advice as in:

> There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

Second person viewpoint is not that common. A second person viewpoint story puts the reader in the story and creates the illusion that the story is happening to him/her.

A Reasonable Sum, by Gordon Korman, http://www.gordonkorman.com/reason.htm is told in the second person:

> Well, you stayed up all night, but today came anyway. Your head aches, your stomach groans, and your palms are sweaty. In short, you're nervous. You are starting high school today even though you are far too ill to be out of bed.

Second person point of view is seldom used in fiction but has been popular with "Choose Your Own Adventure" type of books.

To learn more about second person point of view visit http://www.the-writers-craft.com/second-person-point-of-view.html

To learn more about short story writing try this interactive website: http://www.calgaryacademy.com/ICT/ss/shortstory.html

Example of a short story

Pinky, Binky and Me
By Shirley Byers

My parents are a couple of clowns.

No, seriously; that's what they do.

In their real lives, Dad's a contractor and Mum's a nurse, and they're more or less normal. But come the weekend and they morph into Pinky and Binky. The baggy, garish, one-piece outfits, the oversize shoes, the round, red noses – they've got it all.

It wasn't so bad back in Toronto. In the city there were lots of clowns and they kind of blended in. They even belonged to a clown club, excuse me, guild. Jest for Laughs. Really.

We moved to Chilton at the end of January in time for me to start the second semester at the high school. Mum had landed a job at the hospital and Dad was working on the new Credit Union. My parents were like a couple of kids who'd found smart phones in their Christmas stockings. They'd dreamed of moving out of the city for years.

I loved Toronto, and I wasn't too impressed with leaving the world as I'd known it since my life began. I'd never moved before, never had to make new friends or fit into a new school. I was more than a little nervous about the situation.

But I figured there might be some advantages to this move. I was thinking, maybe Mum and Dad would finally decide to retire the act, to leave dear old Pinky and Binky behind in Toronto with my Barbie doll house and my Little Pony collection. And, after all, in a town of 2500, how much demand could there be for a couple of forty-something clowns?

Dad and I were in the kitchen unpacking. As he ripped masking tape from boxes, he described the vegetable garden he was planning for the big back yard. I couldn't help smiling. "You're a country boy at heart, aren't you Dad?"

He grinned. "You betcha. And Emma, I just know you're going to love it here too. The air is so fresh and clean. The people are so friendly. I'm cutting way back on my work load and Jill will be working part time so we'll finally have the time to do the things that are really important. That goes there." With one hand he pointed at the rack over the stove and tossed me a spatula with the other.

I caught the flying utensil and hung it up. "So, what are you and Mum going to do with all that freed up time?" I pulled wadded newspaper out from around a crockpot and waited for him to tell me they were going to get involved in volunteer work, teach a Sunday School class, maybe take up bird-watching.

Before he could answer, there was a manic giggle from the hall. I knew that giggle and knew before I turned what I would see. Mum, in her pink clown suit, her pinkier clown nose and her pinkiest clown wig, cartwheeled into the room and into a pink heap at my feet.

"It's Pinky!" Dad's features sprang into his Binky face, that exaggerated expression of glee that makes him look like a middle aged chimpanzee.

Then of course they went into their old routine where he puts his hands under her arms and tries to pull her up and she does the noodle-legs and keeps schlepping down again, and again, and yet again.

I resisted the temptation to roll my eyes. This could go on all night. But I could be patient. I could be gracious. After all, Dad had practically promised they'd be giving up the act.

"It's good to see Pinky in action one more time Mum. Binky too, Dad. Too bad all that great new stuff you want to do will pretty much eat up your week-ends. I guess we won't be seeing much of Binky and Pinky." I tried to infuse just the right amount of grief into my voice.

"Oh, no Sweetie We could never, never give up Pinky and Binky. Cutting back on our jobs will give us the time we've always wanted to devote to clowning. It'll be wonderful!"

Wonderful. Right. It was going to be hard enough trying to fit into a new town and anew school without having Binky and Pinky to explain.

The next day was Sunday. At church, I met Elaine and Meredith who were both sixteen like me. Elaine home-schooled but Meredith went the high school in town. "I'll come by your house tomorrow morning," she said, "and we can walk to school together.

I could have hugged her. Because of Meredith my first day at Chilton High was pretty okay. She introduced me to everyone and kind of stuck by me. It was the middle of the year, but it turned out the drama club was starting rehearsals for Romeo and Juliet and they were desperate for members. All the actors had been chosen, Mrs. Rice, the drama coach told me, but if I wouldn't mind painting flats and helping with props she could guarantee me a part in the next production. And, did I prefer chocolate or maple fudge for after practice snacks? I was starting to think maybe Dad was right. I might get to love it in Chilton.

Then… when we'd been in Chilton exactly one month, Binky and Pinky re-emerged.

I'd stayed at school late for a drama club meeting. When I got home, Mum and Dad were "rehearsing" in the family room.

"Guess what, Emma?" Mum bounced over and gave me a hug. "Your drama coach just called. She wants us to perform during the intermission at Romeo and Juliet!"

I felt my mouth drop open, felt my heart change places with my stomach and from somewhere far away I heard Dad explaining that Mrs. Rice had said that Drama Night was always a family night in Chilton, but this year she was worried that Romeo and Juliet might be a little "heavy" for the younger children. When she'd heard about Binky and Pinky she couldn't wait to call and ask them if they would do a "mini-show" during intermission.

I stood in the doorway watching them cartwheeling, pantomiming, pulling each other's noses, telling corny jokes. And for about the millionth time I thought, why can't I have normal parents? A mum who bakes cookies and clips coupons, a dad who plays golf and grunts from behind a newspaper?

The next day, Meredith and I were sitting on a bench outside homeroom, eating lunch. "Hey, Emma,"she said as she twisted the cap off a bottle of water. "I hear your folks are professional clowns."

I darted a glance at her. Was she laughing at me? It was hard to tell, but I didn't think so.

I shrugged. "Well, yeah. I guess so."

"That is so neat! I've always loved clowns. Are they teaching you stuff too so you can join the act?"

My "NO!" came out way louder than I'd intended. A girl at her locker halfway down the hall turned to look. My face burned.

"Emma!" Meredith stared at me for a long, uncomfortable minute. "Are you embarrassed about your parents, I mean, because they're clowns? Does that like… bother you?"

I shrugged again, and sighed. "Yes, it does. Wouldn't it bother you if it was your parents jumping around, making fools of themselves?"

"Well… I don't know. I mean sure, my folks do tons of things that embarrass me. Those ratty, old overalls my dad wears when he's in the handyman mode, my mum's cooking. But clowns are neat! You should be proud of your parents."

Yeah sure. If only I could come down with some serious, but not too serious illness that would keep me home Drama Night. Maybe a little appendicitis? A touch of food poisoning? Temporary amnesia?

If Drama Night was family night, every family in Chilton must have been in that gym. I hadn't seen Mum and Dad since we'd arrived at the school and they'd scurried off to get into costume. The scenes whizzed by and I was too busy lugging props and adjusting lights to think of anything else. It seemed as if only moments had passed when I heard Grady Lohans announcing the 15 minute intermission and some "special" entertainment. My stomach starting doing weird little, flip-flops and I really, really wanted this night to be over or to never have happened.

Then, I heard it… Pinky's trademark giggle.

Slowly, carefully, I tiptoed to where I could see them while still staying out of sight in the wings.

I watched Pinky and Binky turning cartwheels, doing the noodle legs, telling jokes, playing up to the kids in the front row. Pinky brought two little girls up on stage and pulled scarves out of their ears.

I hadn't seen her do that in years. When I was little, I used to sit at the front at all of their performances and Mum would always pull a scarf out of my ear. I used to think that was so neat.

I stood there, watching them, remembering, and I wondered when exactly I had stopped thinking Binky and Pinky were so neat. And why.

The audience loved them. Every time they tried to end the act they were clapped back on the stage. Shakespeare might have been re-written that night in Chilton, R and J might never have played their famous final scene. But finally, waving and blowing kisses, Binky and Pinky ducked through the closed curtains.

"They're great!" Meredith was beside me, facing me. She shook her head. "Your parents are really talented, Emma! I don't understand how you could possibly find them embarrassing!"

Even as the words were coming out of her mouth I saw the pink glow of Pinky's nose behind her. My mum's eyes met mine and I knew she had heard it all. She didn't say a word, just gave me a little smile and a wave, then turned and went back to meet Dad.

Sometimes it takes me a long time to figure out what everybody else already knows, but in that split second I knew the problem wasn't with my parents. The problem wasn't with Binky and Pinky.

The problem was with me.

"You're absolutely right, Meredith," I said, watching my Mum and Dad heading offstage. "They are great. And I think it's about time I told them so."

And I did. Then, after hugs and kisses that left greasy clown makeup on both my cheeks, I had to run backstage and help Juliet back into her wig.

"Hey Emma!" Romeo, a.k.a. David pointed at my face. "Did you collide with the clowns?"

"The clowns are my mum and dad, David."

"Cool!"

"Yeah. Way cool!"

This story was published in *WITH* magazine.

Creative non-fiction: telling the true story

"In a world of celebrities and fiction, fantasy and virtual reality, the world needs some creative nonfiction. In fact it needs a lot!"

– Samir Husni, *Mr. Magazine*

Creative non-fiction (CNF) is a form of writing that uses storytelling tools to tell a true story. Creative nonfiction may read like fiction, but it's a true story; it really happened. Memoirs, essays and factual writing can all fall under the definition of creative nonfiction. Creative non-fiction can also be called narrative non-fiction, literary journalism, and fact-based storytelling.

"It is fact based writing that remains compelling, undiminished by the passage of time, that has at heart an interest in enduring human values, foremost a fidelity to accuracy, to truthfulness."

– Carolyn Forche and Philip Gerard,
from the book *Writing Creative Nonfiction.*

In his book, *Writing For Story*, two time Pulitzer Prize (a very big deal in the world of writing awards) winner, Jon Franklin, talks about the non-fiction short story and why he has written a book about this form: "I chose it because I believe it to represent the revival, in new form, of the old fiction short story – the traditional training ground for writers."

One of his first CNF stories, Franklin says, was about a mentally challenged man who had mistaken pain for love, but went on to learn, with the help of a kind nurse, "that love was something quite different." Another followed a road crew building a median wall down the middle of a busy highway.

"The biggest difference between the short fiction story form and the non-fiction short story is that the short story is true," writes Franklin. "This means the young writer must learn basic journalistic techniques, such as interviewing and researching, in addition to the traditional ones. But in writing terms, the two forms are identical."

Scan through old issues of *Reader's Digest* and *Guideposts* for examples of CNF stories. Look for stories of narrow escapes, exciting rescues and how people overcame obstacles in their lives.

Ways a CNF story is similar to a news story

- Both are based on facts, on events that really happened. Anything that didn't happen cannot be in the story. Nothing can be made up or guessed at.
- A writer uses the tools of research and interviews for both.

Ways a CNF story is different from a news story

- A news story contains only the facts and is told from the point of view of the unbiased reporter. A CNF story might be told from the point of the reporter OR from the point of view of the main character or another character in the story.
- A news story sticks to the externals as in: *Ken and Sally Webster were arrested Tuesday morning for the November 30 and charged with the November 28 robbery at the Bank of Montreal in Anytown, P.E.I.*
- A CNF tells the story, but also tells the story behind the story and may even get into the heads of the characters in the story. This is called, "showing their motivation," or showing why they did what they did. It might follow Ken and Sally back to when they first married and bought a farm near Anytown, tell us about their struggle to make the farm pay as they tried to deal with bad weather and poor crops. It might show how they became more and more desperate as the bills piled up, how they got the idea of the bank robbery from a TV show and how they planned the robbery step by step. It might show how over time they were able to convince themselves that this was their only option. It might then go on to show the robbery from their point of view. It

might conclude with their arrest or it might go on to show what happened next. (See next section on parts of creative non-fiction.)

- A news story is told in the inverted pyramid form. A CNF takes the form of a short story. **There is rising action, a climax or turning point, then falling action. There may or may not be a clear cut resolution.**

Ways a CNF story is similar to a feature story

- Both are based on facts, on events that really happened. Anything that didn't happen cannot be in the story. Nothing can be made up or guessed at.
- A writer uses the tools of research and interviews for both.

Ways a CNF story is different from a feature story

- Creative non-fiction reads like a short story. It has a beginning, middle and end.
- A feature story usually follows the form of **lead, nut paragraph, body** and **conclusion**.
- A feature is told from the point of view of the writer. A CNF story may be told from the point of view of one of the characters in the story.

Web info on creative non-fiction:
http://www.writersandeditors.com/narrative_nonfiction_57378.htm

How to write creative non-fiction

To write creative non-fiction (CNF), we use both fiction and non-fiction techniques.

First of all, we need to find a true story. How do we do that?

Susan Sontag was an American essayist and filmmaker. She had this to say about finding story ideas: "Do stuff. Be clenched, curious. Not waiting for inspiration's shove or society's kiss on your forehead. Pay attention. It's all about paying attention. Attention is vitality. It connects you with others. It makes you eager. Stay eager."

Jon Franklin, in his book, *Writing for Story,* compares the writer to a scientist. The one who is out there thinking as well as looking, is the one who's more likely to find a great story. This is his definition of a story: **A story consists of a sequence of actions that occur when a sympathetic character encounters a complicating situation that he confronts and solves.**

Let's look at our example of CNF in the next section, Example of creative non-fiction, *The Letter*. Let's see if it fits Franklin's definition of a creative non-fiction story.

Doris is our **sympathetic character**. In the first paragraphs of the story we learn she is English, working in a London hospital and she has met Jack, a Canadian soldier that she likes very much.

World War II is a very big **complicating situation**. Doris doesn't really want to fall in love with a soldier, who could be killed in battle. Best case scenario: he lives, they marry and she is obliged to move to Canada, thousands of miles from her family and friends. (In those days, women lived where their husbands lived. End of discussion.) More complications.

Doris decides to get out of town. She goes to visit her family in the North of England. Before she leaves she writes Jack a letter, explaining why they can't see each other again. She has confronted the complicating situation but it is about to become more complicated.

Jack doesn't get the letter, probably misses her and decides to visit her at her home. More complications.

Doris realizes that she can't let him go. She confronts the complicating situation, faces the reality of a less than perfect scenario. "And it didn't matter, it didn't matter, it didn't matter. I knew that I couldn't live without him." This is the resolution of the story. Our sympathetic character has confronted the complicating situation (she can't live without Jack), and decided that she can live with it.

And, as we learn in the final paragraph, it all turned out very well.

Example of creative non-fiction

> **The Letter**
> By Doris Byers as told to Shirley Byers
>
> In the fall of 1942 I agreed to fill in for a friend on a blind date and met Jack, a Canadian soldier. I was twenty-two. I'd been working as a receptionist at London's Hospital for Sick Children for six years. For three of those years the world had been at war. But for a brief time the bombing of London had eased. Jack and I began to date and only occasionally did we hear the wail of the air-raid siren, or interrupt an evening to dive into the nearest air-raid shelter.
>
> When I finished work at five he would meet me, and off we would go on another adventure. We went to Madame Tussauds, the London Zoo, the museum. We saw Gracie Field and Vera Lynne in concert at the London Palladium. And sometimes he would whisk me off to an out-of-the-way restaurant he had discovered that served ham sandwiches or maybe even steak, rare treats in severely rationed England.

It was all quite lovely, and it wasn't too difficult to imagine myself falling in love with this dear, sweet man.

But threaded through my happiness was the reality that across the English Channel, the war raged on. Any day now, Jack would be posted overseas, to where the fighting was. I knew that he wouldn't even be able to tell me where he was going, when he was going. One day, he would just be gone. And by and by perhaps I'd get a letter from somewhere in Europe, stamped with the Censor's mark of the Canadian Armed Forces. Or even worse, a telegram beginning with the words: "We regret to inform you…."

And, if he did come back… then what? If I married him I would be bound for Canada, leaving my family, friends and life as I had known it for twenty-two years.

I made arrangements to take three weeks off work and visit my parents in the north of England. And I wrote Jack a letter, explaining all of the very good reasons that I would not see him again. The next day, on my way to Victoria Station, I mailed it. Jack was stationed at Brighton, about 45 miles from London. I knew the letter would be in his hands tomorrow, the next day at the latest.

At home, my parents fussed over me. I played with my younger siblings, visited my grandmother, went to the cinema with my cousins. Three days passed; a week; nine days. By now Jack would have gotten the letter…. Soon; I would go back to London. Had I made the right decision? It was a moot question. I would never see him again.

One rainy afternoon there was a knock at the door.

Must be one of the neighbours, popping in to say hello, I thought as I went to answer it. But it wasn't a neighbour. It was Jack.

"I got a three-day leave," he said. "I thought I'd come up and visit you."

I stood, stunned, staring at him as dozens of thoughts raced through my head. He must have gotten my parents' address from one of the girls at work. But, why had he come? Surely he had received the letter. It had been ten days.

And yet, there he was, standing on my mother's whitewashed front step, grinning at me – asking me if I was going to invite him in. I had never been so happy to see anyone in all of my life. I couldn't stop smiling.

I had known Jack only a few months, but I knew he would not go where he wasn't wanted. If he had seen the letter, if he had thought there was even the slightest chance that he wouldn't have been welcome, he would never have come. He couldn't have received the letter.

He was the same, sweet, funny Jack he had been in London. He chatted with my mother and father. He teased my younger sisters and brother. Even the cat loved him.

Before I knew it, the three days were gone, and I was seeing him off at the railway station. Down the line the train's whistle sounded, then died away as the London locomotive chugged its way up to the platform. I thought of all the trains and ships and the horrible war that would take us away from each other over the next months, perhaps years. I thought of all the obstacles that lay before us, all the problems we would certainly encounter, the heartbreak that could be around the next corner. And it didn't matter, it didn't matter, it didn't matter. I knew that I couldn't live without him.

"When you get back to Brighton, there'll be a letter waiting for you," I told him, as he swung up onto the train, "a letter from me. Don't read it. Rip it up and throw it away. I should never have written it."

Sure enough, the letter was waiting. It had finally arrived. He didn't rip it up. He read it.

And years later, on a little farm in Saskatchewan, every once in a while he would tease me about the "Dear John" letter I had written him so long ago – the letter that mysteriously, wonderfully, miraculously had taken ten days to travel 45 miles.

This story was published in *Chicken Soup for the Single's Soul* in 1999.
It was later adapted to film and broadcast in the *Chicken Soup for TV* series.

Ballads, what they are, how to write them

A **ballad** is a form of verse. It tells a story and is often set to music. Ballads were first created in the later medieval period, around AD 1300. They were very popular in the British Isles and across Europe. They later emerged in North and South America, Australia and North Africa.

Composers and singers of ballads, or balladeers as they were called, would make their way from town to town telling their stories in song. These stories were often tales of love and loss, acts of bravery, political intrigue, and tragedy. Today, a ballad can also be "any light, simple song, especially one of sentimental or romantic character, having two or more stanzas all sung to the same melody." Dictionary.com But for our purposes, we will look at the traditional ballad which tells a story.

Because of their length, it's not a long story full of details. The backstory, or what happened before, is not given in great detail. Ballads are written in the form of speech popular at the time of writing.

Ballads can take several forms. A popular one is the four-line stanza with the rhyme scheme of **ABCB**. This means that the second and fourth lines rhyme with each other. Ballads can also have the rhyme scheme of **ABAB**, or any rhyme scheme that seems to fit.

For example, the language used in the ballad *Lord Randal* (http://www.pteratunes.org.uk/Music/Music/Lyrics/LordRandal.html) is very different from the language used in *The Cremation of Sam McGee*, by Robert Service (http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-cremation-of-sam-mcgee/), and Bon Jovi's *Living on a Prayer* (http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bon+jovi/livin+on+a+prayer_20022256.html).

More on ballads can be found at: http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Ballad

This site compares *Lord Randall* with Bob Dylan's ballad about nuclear war, *A Hard Rain's a Gonna Fall*: http://englishyay.wordpress.com/2010/02/18/lord-randallbob-dylan/

> *"It's the ballads I like best, and I'm not talking about the clichéd ones where a diva hits her highest note or a rock band tones it down a couple of notches for the ladies. I mean a true ballad. Dictionary definition: a song that tells a story in short stanzas and simple words, with repetition, refrain, etc. My definition: the punk rocker or the country crooner telling the story of his life in three minutes, reminding us of the numerous ways to screw up."*
>
> Stephanie Kuehnert, *Ballads of Suburbia*

How many syllables in a haiku? Does it matter?

> *"I propose that the 'Western Haiku' simply say a lot in three short lines in any Western language. Above all, a Haiku must be very simple and free of all poetic trickery and make a little picture..."*
>
> Jack Kerouac, *Book of Haikus*

A haiku is a form of poetry that originated in Japan. It is an unrhymed three-line poem. Haikus have been written in various forms. There are actually haikus that consist of a single word, but the traditional pattern in English is for a haiku to be made up of 17 syllables. Lines one and three have five syllables and line two has seven syllables. The word haiku is the same for both singular and plural. You might read one *haiku*, or you might read several *haiku*.

Characteristics of haiku

- Haiku traditionally focus on nature.
- They are compact little poems that present a clear image.
- They include a seasonal word such as rain or snow to tell what time of year it is.
- Haiku are written in the present tense.
- There are three parts to a haiku. The first is part of the image. The second is part of the image and the third is a surprise connection between the first and second parts.
- The aim of a haiku, as with all creative writing, is to show, not tell.

- Haiku are all about sensory language. They appeal to the reader's sense of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste.

Here are some examples of haikus:

> **Precipitation**
> Frozen twig branches
> stretch to tickle cuddled clouds.
> Sky giggles down snow.
>
> **Marker**
> Clump on the prairie,
> creeping caragana shroud;
> farm yard rests in peace.
>
> **Storm**
> Voice loud, breath smoky
> thunder scuttles white, wool clouds;
> then washes them with rain.
>
> **May**
> Hungry wee hummer
> buzzes Joey's red-peaked cap.
> "Get the feeder up!"
>
> All of the above haiku were written by Shirley Byers and published in the magazine, *Western People*.

You can find out more about haiku at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haiku
http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/how-to-write-a-haiku/
http://spice.stanford.edu/docs/138

Ten tips for writing haikus can be found here:

http://www.haikuworld.org/begin/mdwelch.tentips.html

Writing a memoir

> *"A memoir is how one remembers one's own life, while an autobiography is history, requiring research, dates, facts double-checked."*
>
> –Author Gore Vidal in *Palimsest: A Memoir*

An autobiography is the story of an entire life, written by the person who lived it. A biography is the story of an entire life written by someone other than the person who lived it.

A memoir is a story from a section of a person's life rather than his or her entire life, written by the person who lived it. For example, someone might write a memoir about the five years they worked as a pro hockey player in the NHL.

A memoir may also be a story about a theme or thread of a person's life. For example, someone might write a memoir about some or all of the pets they have had, they might write a memoir about the different houses they have lived in, or about the people who have been their best friend at different times in their lives.

Politicians or military leaders have written memoirs such as *My Years as Prime Minister*, by former Prime Minister, Jean Chretien or *Brian Mulroney, MEMOIRS: 1939-1993*, by former Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney. A 4-H member could write a memoir about say, *My First Eight Years of School* or *My Life so Far as a 4-H member* or *Memoirs: 2000-2005: My Years as a Small Child*.

This website has a lot of good information about memoir writing, as well as an excerpt of a memoir written about 15 months in the life of a teenage girl: http://www.squidoo.com/memoir-examples1

Tips on memoir writing:

- A memoir is non-fiction but it can be written using fiction techniques. Don't just write this happened, then that happened etc. Try to recapture those moments you're writing about. How did you feel? Were you happy? Sad? Scared? What did that look like?
- Stay away from worn out words and phrases, also known as clichés. Find fresh ways to express yourself. For example, imagine you were carrying a bag of chicken feed down a narrow path on a cold, dark winter morning. Suddenly something jumped out of the dark and landed at your feet. Instead of writing, "That sure startled me," the person this happened to wrote, "My heart jumped

into my mouth and I almost horked it out!" That's original. That paints a word picture we can relate to.

- A memoir can start anywhere. How about beginning at the moment of most intense action in the story, and filling in the backstory later?
- A memoir doesn't just record events. It can also help the writer to understand his or her self, in much the same way a journal can. If you listen carefully, your memoir might be telling you something.

> *"The magic words for fiction writers are, 'What if...?' For memoir writers, 'I remember...' breaks the ice."*
>
> – Lou Willet Stanek from her book *Writing Your Life*

Writing an email

> *" ... I was discussing the use of email and how impersonal it can be how people will now email someone across the room rather than go and talk to them. But I don't think this is laziness, I think it is a conscious decision people are making to save time."*
>
> –Margaret J. Wheatley, writer and management consultant

Email can save time, but its speed can also be a disadvantage. Once you hit "Send," there's no turning back. After it's gone, you might wish you could change the words you wrote. But it's too late.

A letter can be formal or informal. And so can an email. If you're emailing a friend to ask if she's going to the game, there's probably no harm in using text-speak. On the other hand, if you're emailing your grandma (who may not know text-speak), asking your teacher about an assignment or applying for a job, you'll need to use full words and sentences. To many older people, people in positions of authority and people who don't know you personally, full words, correctly spelled and proper grammar show respect.

This wiki how site gives tips on emailing your teachers: http://quickhelp.wikihow.com /Email-Teachers.

Things to think about before you hit "Send."

One problem with email and with texting and with written letters is that the person you're communicating with cannot see you. That's a problem because much of our communication is non-verbal. That means that in an actual encounter, when two or more people are in the same room and can see each other, much of what is said and understood is from the facial expression of the speaker. Body language can also play a part. And so can tone of voice. A sentence that is written with one meaning in the mind of the writer can be given an entirely different meaning by the person reading the email, text or letter.

For example, if Jasmine and Rachel are together and Jasmine says to Rachel: "I just love opera music. I listen to it all the time," in a certain tone of voice, and then smiles and winks, Rachel will understand that Jasmine doesn't really love opera music.

But, what if those same words were written in an email? Rachel can't see Jasmine or hear her tone of voice. She might take the words at face value and not understand that Jasmine was joking. It's important to make sure your meaning is clear in an email, especially if you're making a joke. Could the person receiving the email understand that you are joking or will they take you seriously and be hurt? Before you send an email, take a minute and think about how you would feel if you received the email you just wrote.

An email exists indefinitely. Maybe you're angry or sad or excited and it all spills out onto an email. "Wow! It feels so good to get that out!" you say to yourself. "When he/she reads this he/she will really pay attention. He/she will know exactly how I feel and why he/she is completely and totally wrong!"

But will you feel differently next week or tomorrow or in an hour? And will you wish you hadn't sent that email? If your emotions are in charge, why not take a minute or an hour or a day to chill out before you send that email? But writing things down can help to sort out our feelings. Instead of putting them in an email, why not put them in a blank file, protected with a password, or in your journal? (See sections and activities on journaling in this project.)

Writing a résumé and cover letter

Though some of you may not be quite old enough at the moment to be employed, the day will likely come when you want to apply for a summer or after school job. Writing a résumé is an important skill to have when that day comes. To find the minimum age for employment in your province or territory, check out this Government of Canada site, Am I Old Enough to Work?: http://www.youth.gc.ca /eng/topics/jobs/age.shtml.

A résumé is a summary of your experiences and skills. It highlights your accomplishments to show a potential employer that you are qualified for the job for which you are applying. It doesn't need to be longer than one page.

As a student, you may have had little or no work experience. That's okay. No one expects a 16-year-old to have an extensive work record. According to the Youth Canada site, Writing a Résumé (http://www.youth.gc.ca/eng/topics/jobs/resume.shtml), a functional resume is best for a student. Rather than listing past jobs in chronological order, this type of résumé focuses on skills gained from previous jobs, activities, experiences or volunteer work.

Do include your extra-curricular activities such as Student Council, drama club, sports, school newspaper and leadership experiences such as organizing a Terry Fox Run or managing the school canteen.

Try to tailor your resume to the job you are applying for. To do that, think about the skills the job would require and try to figure out if there have been experiences or extra-curricular activities in your life that have given you those skills. Don't lie but don't be too modest either.

For example, let's say you're applying for a job as a server at a local restaurant or for work with a caterer, both jobs involving food and people – bringing food to people. Have you ever helped out in the dining room at camp? Have you worked in the cafeteria or canteen at school? Have you worked in the rink kitchen? It's all experience working with people and food. Include it in your résumé.

You're applying for a job where you will be one of several workers on the job at the same time. Make sure you mention any team sports you play or have played, and groups you belong to, all proof that you can work well with people. You're a good team player.

The following example of a functional résumé was composed using the template at: http://www.youth.gc.ca/eng/topics/jobs/tp_functional_resume.shtml

Imaginary Tom Campbell is 16-years-old, and in grade 11. He's applying for a job at the *Anytown Sentinel*, the local weekly newspaper. The Sentinel wants a student who can come in on production day to help set up the paper on a computer. There will also be an opportunity to proof (read and check spelling and grammar) some of the copy that comes in from volunteer writers in the community, such as club and school reports. Eventually, there will be the opportunity to report and write stories for the newspaper.

Tom Campbell
Box 563
Anytown, SK S0A 1W0
555-555-5555
t.campbell@pretendguy.ca

Skills and abilities

Summary

- Strong work ethic
- Speaks and writes both English and French fluently

Communication skills

- First prize in Canadian Legion essay contest at the Provincial level in 2012
- Summer scholarship for Young Francois Writers in Quebec City in 2012
- First prize at Provincial level in 4-H Public Speaking in 2010 and 2011

Self-starter

- Supervised and cared for younger nephews (ages six and eight) for five days and four nights when their parents attended Agribition in 2012. This included making meals, getting the children to school, supervising homework and playtime as well as doing some laundry and housework
- Organized Snowmobile Safety classes in the winter of 2011-12 at the Anytown Arena
- Raised and showed 4-H calves for the past six consecutive years

Computer Skills

- Proficient in the use of Microsoft and Mac computer programs
- One of the founders of the Anytown Computer Club, a group of high school students who get together to learn new skills and offer computer help and troubleshooting to students free of charge

Experience

Farm sitting: 2010-12
Did chores including feeding pigs, chickens, sheep and household pets for farmers in the Anytown, Sask. area

Babysitting: 2009-12
Babysat siblings and neighbourhood children evenings, weekends and school holidays

Volunteer experience

- Junior editor of *The Bugle*, Anytown High School online newspaper
- Terry Fox organizing committee
- Stage crew Anytown High Drama Club

Education

Anytown High School
2010 to present

A cover letter is a formal letter that accompanies your résumé. Its purpose is to offer new information, not included in the résumé and to further personalize your job application. Ideally, you should write a fresh cover letter for each job application.

The cover letter introduces you, states the position you are applying for and explains how you found out about the job. It explains how you are qualified for the job, requests an interview and thanks the employer. It's important to make sure there are no typos or grammatical errors in your résumé and cover letter. Do not rely on spell check. Make sure the name of the potential employer is spelled correctly.

This site shows an example of a cover letter for an advertised job:
http://www.youth.gc.ca/eng/topics/jobs/ex_cl_advertised.shtml

This site shows an example of a cover letter for an unadvertised job:
http://www.youth.gc.ca/eng/topics/jobs/ex_cl_unadvertised.shtml

Resources for learning

This unit will help members find resources and resource persons in the community.

People: how to find people in your community who can help you learn more about writing

Writers are everywhere and they are usually happy to help another writer if they can. Newspaper editors and reporters can be excellent resources on reporting and writing news stories and possibly features and creative non-fiction.

You may have other writers in your community too. Ask your parents and other people if they know of other writers. Check the "Writers' organizations and events" section at the end of this book for contact information for provincial writers' organizations. These often have lists of writers who belong to the organization, along with their contact information. People at the headquarters for these organizations may be willing to answer brief questions over the phone or by email.

Some writers may be available to give presentations to groups such as yours. They will usually require a fee for their services. Contact provincial writers' guilds to see if they have funds to help with these expenses.

Books & websites to expand your knowledge

There are many excellent books on writing. The following three are at or near the top of many writers' lists. They can be found at your library, through interlibrary loan, or purchased at a bookstore or online.

On Writing by Stephen King
Horror, suspense, science fiction and fantasy writer, Stephen King has written a highly readable book that has been described in *Entertainment Weekly* as "part memoir, part master class by one of the bestselling authors of all time." King tells how he became a writer and gives solid advice on the craft of writing.

On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Non-fiction by William Zinsser
This book has been around for a while but it's still among the best when it comes to instruction on the craft of writing non-fiction.

The Elements of Style by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White
This is a book on style – how to write well according to the rules of grammar and proper usage. Sounds boring, but it's not.

Helpful websites
Young Poets – http://www.youngpoets.ca/about
Young Poets is a project of The League of Canadian Poets. It's a fun and informative site for young poets and for English teachers.

Education Insider – http://education-portal.com/articles/40_of_the_Best_Websites_for_Young_Writers.html
This site lists 40 sites especially geared to teen writers.

Could you get published?
Getting published, seeing your name in print. It's the dream of most writers. Could it happen to you?

It could. Writing is a competitive field but there are opportunities.

Your local weekly newspaper is a good place to start. Maybe your 4-H club submits a report to the paper after every meeting. If it doesn't, you could consider volunteering for the job. You won't get paid, but you will get some experience in reporting and writing.

Does your school have a newspaper? Check it out. They might be looking for reporters. If your school doesn't have a newspaper, how about starting one? An online newspaper might be the answer. There are websites that can help you. Just type "starting an online newspaper" into your search engine.

You might also have a chat with your computer and English teachers. Maybe they'd consider making a school newspaper a class project that you could even get credit for.

If you'd like to try your luck submitting stories to magazines and maybe even book publishers, marketing books such as *The Canadian Writer's Market* and *Writers' Market* will be useful. They supply the names and contact info for magazines and book publishers, along with helpful articles on writing. These books are updated every year and are usually available in larger libraries.

Here is a magazine and two websites that focus entirely on stories (and some art) for young people, written by young people:

Creative Kids, is a print magazine entirely written and edited by kids (under adult supervision). Kids from all over the world are invited to submit fiction and non-fiction as well as art and puzzles all suitable for ages 8-16. Check it out at: www.ckmagazine.org.

Figment, at http://figment.com is described in Montrealfamilies.ca in these words: "Geared to those ages 13 and over, this heavily moderated site is designed to help teen authors read the works of other young writers, connect with them in a safe environment and share their written works online." Tip: If you loved *Vampire Diaries*, you might love this site.

Merlyn's Pen is a U.S. site that publishes writing by teens. You can read stories written by other teens and submit your own work, enter contests, read young writers' success stories and more. Check it out at: http://www.merlynspen.org/

Writers' organizations & events

All of the provinces, except Ontario, have provincial writers' guilds or federations. These are organizations that support writers by holding workshops, offering advice and answering questions about writing. They may offer special programming for student writers and they all offer student membership at reduced rates.

All of the writers' organizations listed here exist to help and encourage writers, regardless of their age and writing experience. They often run writing contests, sponsor mentoring programs and offer a regular newsletter with marketing opportunities and news from the writing community. Though the territories don't have writers' organizations, they do have writers and events for writers. Check out their sites.

Alberta
The Writers Guild of Alberta
http://www.writersguild.ab.ca/
Phone: 1-800-665-5354

Annual Memberships: Regular – $70; Student – $40

- Each July, students can attend Wordsworth, a residential writing camp at Bragg Creek, just outside of Calgary. Week long camps are available for ages 12-14 and 15-19 with writing workshops and writing exercises led by resident and guest writers.
- Young writers in Edmonton and Calgary can join a teen writing group and meet monthly with other young writers in groups led by adult moderators with experience in writing and publishing.

British Columbia
Federation of B.C. Writers:
http://bcwriters.ca/v2/home-2/

Annual Memberships: Regular – $80; Youth (under 25) $45

Manitoba
Manitoba Writers' Guild:
http://www.mbwriter.mb.ca/
Phone: 204-944-8013

Annual Memberships: Regular – $60; Student – $30

New Brunswick
Writers Federation of New Brunswick: http://www.wfnb.ca/
Phone: (506) 459 7228

Annual Memberships: Regular – $40; University – $20; High School – $10

Newfoundland Labrador
Writers Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador
http://wanl.ca
Phone: (709) 739-5215

Annual Memberships: Regular – $45; Student – $25; 17 & under – Free

- Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador has a youth rep on their board of directors and are working to re-activate a youth committee. Attendance at programming aimed at youth has been low.

Northwest Territories

- Northwords Writers Festival is held the first full weekend in June and goes from Thursday to Monday. Besides organizing the writers' festival Northwords holds workshops, offers mentorship and sponsors contests for writers. Find out more at: http://nationtalk.ca/story/northwords-writers-festival-june-12-14-yellowknife-nwt/

Nova Scotia
Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia
http://writers.ns.ca/
Phone: (902) 423-8116

Annual Memberships: Regular – $45; Student – $20

- Through the Writers' Federation Writers In the Schools programs, students are offered workshops and readings. One member, a journalist, does workshops with students to produce a newspaper.

Nunavut

A list of writers from Nunavut can be found at:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Writers_from_Nunavut

Prince Edward Island

PEI Writers' Guild Prince
http://www.peiwritersguild.com/pei-writers-guild/

Annual Memberships: Regular – $25; Student – $10; Family – $40

- Writers in the Schools Program: "Every year PEIWG arranges and pays for author visits to public schools to inspire children and teachers about the act of writing." (from the PEIWG website)

Quebec

Quebec Writers' Federation
http://www.qwf.org/
Phone: 514-933-0878

Annual Memberships: Regular –$25; Student – $10

- QWF may occasionally offer workshops geared to highschool age writers.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan Writers' Guild: http://www.skwriter.com/
Phone: 1-800-667-6788

Annual Memberships: Regular – $75; Student – $55

A list of links especially for young writers can be found at:
http://www.skwriter.com/links/resources-for-young-writers

Yukon Young Authors' Conference

- Yukon Young Authors' Conference is a two day festival whose stated purpose is to encourage student writers to develop their potential, to make students more aware of Canadian writers, to introduce students to successful Canadian writers and to introduce Yukon writers to each other. Young people wishing to join the festival submit writing to a Selection Committee. Conference attendees are chosen based on the quality of their writing.

  For more information go to: http://yukonyoungauthors.weebly.com/concept.html and follow the links.

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