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How to Come Up with Fresh Story Ideas

By Caterina Christakos

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by: **Caterina Christakos**

How to Come Up with Fresh Story Ideas When Your Well has Been Tapped Dry

When I face the desolate impossibility of writing 500 pages, a sick sense of failure falls on me, and I know I can never do it. Then gradually, I write one page and then another. One day's work is all I can permit myself to contemplate.

—John Steinbeck

I know that it seems easier to make that extra pot of coffee, read that good book, that you have had in storage for the last ten years, and suddenly decide to make the kids that Halloween costume by hand, than it can be to make yourself sit down and write. Believe me, I have been there.

Here are some brainstorming techniques to get your brain pumping again and churning out ideas.

- 1) If you are having trouble coming up with characters or even a story line, try developing an action scene. One good scene to kick off your book can get the rest flowing. Develop the characters and story line around that scene.
- 2) Come up with a problem to solve. Is your main character the class clown or the brainiest kid in school. What type of problem would your character face in his or her normal life? Write your story around the problem and a unique way of solving it.
- 3) For character development use common sense. Use what is in front of you.

Look at your family and friends and see if they remind you of anything. My first Shakespearean teacher reminded me of a caveman or a husky walrus because of his whiskers. Does your Uncle Arthur have whiskers, wear glasses, and walk with a little bit of a waddle? Turn him into a know it all

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beaver or a store clerk, at a bookstore that sells books that you can actually climb into and live out an adventure.

Does your sister have a talent for jumping rope and blowing bubbles, with purple bubble gum? Maybe the heroine for your next book could do the same. Is there a kid in your neighborhood that is always getting into trouble? Hmm, do you think that the creator of Dennis the Menchild might have known one?

You can use your family and friend's talents and their physical characteristics to come up with tons of characters. One hint though— if you choose to make Uncle Charlie a slug or Aunt Emma a rhinoceros, keep it to yourself. They may not be thrilled with their induction into literary history.

Inspiration is all around you, waiting for you to reach out and grab for your next storyline or character. Use stories from the news, jokes that your neighbors tell you, the quirky things that your dog Buster

does in the morning.

One final word – stop criticizing what you have written down. In these first stages, no one cares if you have misspelled words or if your grammar isn't perfect. Just write. The rest will follow, after your story is done.

Caterina Christakos is the author of *How to Write a Children's Book in 30 Days or Less*. To get more writing tips please go to:

Writing fiction can be fun too!

By Gary R. Hess

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Writing fiction is something that all of us have trouble with at one time or another. The thought of coming up with a story which didn't even happen can sometimes even result in shock.

The best way is to approach this the same way as you would a non-fiction story. First, you want to brainstorm. You don't have to do this all at once, you might want to do your daily chores or watch some television... This always helps with the brainstorming. The ideas will come quickly so you might want to take a pencil and paper with you so you don't forget it.

Next, choose which idea you think is best not which is easiest. You want this story to be exciting and thrilling with lots of events.

After you have chosen which idea you want to use, begin creating your characters. Write out the main characters of your story with short descriptions of each. Describe what their personalities are like and what they look like as well. This will later prove to be very helpful in the story making process. You

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don't have to give "concrete" names to any of the characters as of yet. That can come later; this is just to give a hint at what your limitations will be for each character.

Now that you have done this, write out the setting of where the story will begin and perhaps where it will end. Again, this gives you a better understanding of what the character can and can not do. You don't want to go too far off course and end up doing something completely different than what you were first expecting.

The last step is what you have been waiting for, writing the story. Now that you have a main idea of what your story and characters will do you may begin. While you are writing you may change your characters a bit, but don't go too far out of place or it may change the entire story. If you come up with an idea of what you want to happen later on, be sure to write it down.

The best thing about writing fiction is that we don't have limitations on what can happen. We are our characters. If we want them to be a cowboy in the Midwest we can. If we want them to be a pro basketball player on hemorrhoids we can. This is what makes writing so great. We create our own world through our words... Isn't it wonderful?

Gary R. Hess is a writer for

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