

COMMON SENSE PRESS CREATIVE WRITING CLUB

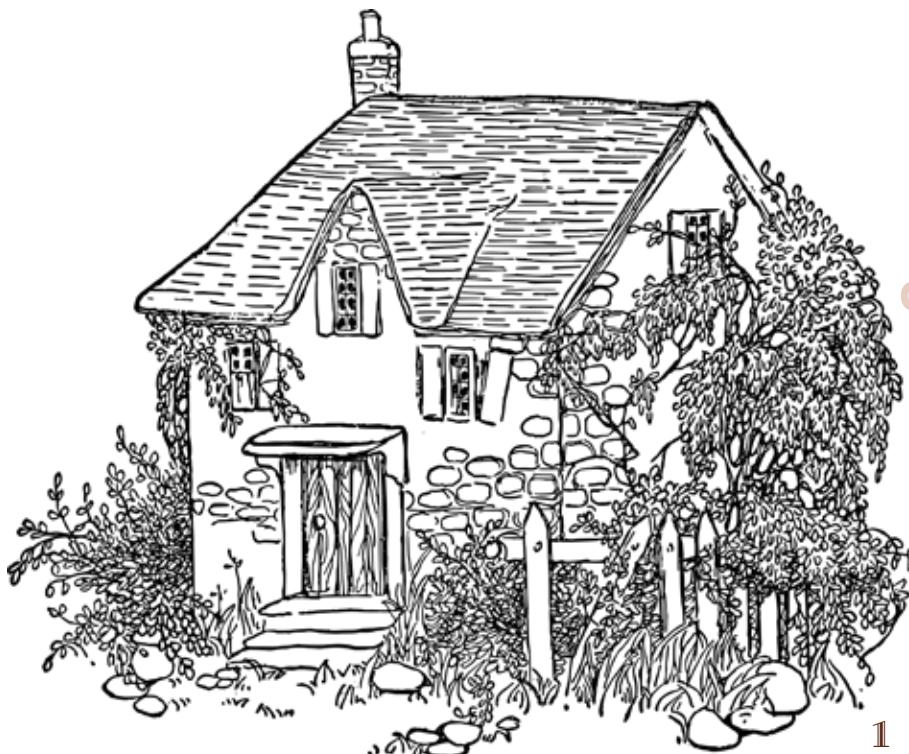
"How perfectly lovely!" sighed Diana, who belonged to Matthew's school of critics. "I don't see how you can make up such thrilling things out of your own head, Anne. I wish my imagination was as good as yours."

"It would be if you'd only cultivate it," said Anne cheerfully. "I've just thought of a plan, Diana. Let you and me have a story club all our own and write stories for practice."

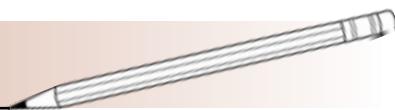
Anne of Green Gables, Lucy Maud Montgomery

Not everyone is good at playing basketball or playing the violin, or dancing, but there are lots of people who play basketball, the violin, and dance every week just for fun, and as time goes by, they find that they are getting better and better.

Creative writing is a skill that can also be improved by lots of practice. Practicing can be dull work. It helps to know that someone is going to read what you have written. That is why joining a writing club is so productive. Over the next few weeks, you will be facilitating students as they continue their writing journey.



Getting Started



First, gather six to eight students who are interested in building their writing skills. Set up a time you can meet each week for about 30 to 45 minutes. Each week the students will have the opportunity to share their work with the group. Having this to look forward to is a powerful motivator for writing. Make sure the students understand how to exercise proper listening skills and good manners. Having someone ridicule your work can quickly destroy the desire to write.

Each week you will lead the group in exploring different writing skills and send home an assignment for the students to work on. Ask that the parents read the assignment and be available to help the student by making sure he or she understands what they are to do. They should be available for the students to talk about what they want to write. This pre-writing is important and takes a lot of stress out of having to immediately sit down and start writing. Finally, they should be prepared to act as a secretary if needed. At this stage, creative writing should not be about grammar and spelling rules. Parents can help proofread and make constructive criticisms. When words are misspelled, they should just tell them the correct spelling and never say, "Look it up!" When the hard work of creating is done, there will be time to make corrections.

Look for ways to make your time together fun. Consider serving refreshments. This should not feel like "school."

Optional: At the end of the class, collect samples of each student's writing and have a club booklet printed as a keepsake for each student.

Week One

(The lessons are scripted to enable you to read them but take the time to review before the club begins so that it sounds more natural. Feel free to add your own thoughts and examples.)

As we begin this creative writing adventure, you may be wondering, “Why am I here?” That’s a good question. After all, writing is hard work. Is it worth it? Why should I learn to write well? Here are a few good reasons. Maybe you can think of more!

1. Writing is a powerful tool. Through it, you can influence people. I like the way Ecclesiastes 12:11 says it, “The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails.” Words are like well-driven nails. In 1839, British author Edward Bulwer-Lytton put it this way, “The pen is mightier than the sword.”
2. Writing helps people communicate. This is a letter from C. S. Lewis’ Letters to Children:

Dear Jonathan,

Yours is one of the nicest letters I have had about the Narnian books, and it was very good of you to write it. But I’m afraid there will be no more of these stories. But why don’t you try writing some Narnian tales? I began to write when I was about your age, and it was the greatest fun. Do try!

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

C. S. Lewis

3. Sometimes writing things down satisfies the need to communicate just with yourself as in diaries and journals.

This is the first diary entry of a famous author named Ernest Hemingway:

My name is Ernest Miller Hemingway. I was born on July 21 1899. My favourite authors are Kipling, O. Henry and Steuart Edward White. My favourite flower is Lady Slipper and Tiger Lily. My favourite sports are Trout fishing, Hiking, shooting, football and boxing. My favourite studies are English, Zoology and Chemistry. I intend to travel and write.

4. By writing, you can record ideas and plans or preserve impressions.

Here's an account of a family's first camping trip:

We went to Juniper Springs to camp for the weekend. The campsite was beautiful. It was raining when we first arrived, but the next two days were clear and cool. On Saturday morning, we took a seven-mile canoe trip. Mom was afraid we would be tired of the trip before it was over, but she was wrong. Everyone had a good time, even though Mom and Tim fell in the river when we stopped for lunch!