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WRITE LIKE AN AUTHOR!

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(Author, Illustrator and Patron of Shakespeare Week)

If you have a passion for sharing stories you will probably already be an author. But developing your own style and method of writing takes time, so here are a few tips which I hope might help you.

Come up with an idea

Ideas appear in many different ways, maybe through:

- Something seen
- Something heard
- Something researched
- Something that happened to me (or a friend)
- Or something that just pops into my head, seemingly from nowhere!

But beware, ideas are slippery customers. They have a habit of popping into your head in the middle of the night only to be forgotten by the morning.

So try to **keep a notebook of ideas, both written and illustrated.**



Choose your writing style

Once I have the idea for a story I start planning the writing style. Sometimes I rough out a book in several different styles before it feels right. So save yourself some time by thinking about the best style for your story before you start writing.



Here are some styles you might choose from:

- **Comic-strip:** A sequence of pictures that tell a story, often with body and bubble text.
- **Stories:** Stories can be long or short, but usually have more text than illustration. They usually include characters and an event or problem that needs solving.
- **Chapter Book:** If you have a very, very long story it might work better divided into chapters. This way each new event has space to shine.
- **Diary:** This is written in the first person and records the day-to-day events of a life. It can be your own diary or written from the perspective of a researched, or imagined, person.
- **Journal:** This is written in the first person like a diary, but it can also include ideas, intentions, thoughts, observations and resolutions relating to you or your imagined character.
- **Biography:** This is written in the past tense and is usually the researched life of a well-known person.
- **Poetry:** Some stories are told in narrative verse. It is one of the oldest forms of storytelling.
- **Letters:** Although letters are not so popular as they used to be, they can be very personal and revealing. They are a lovely way of telling a story of one or two people. There was a period when illustrated letters were very fashionable.



Make a writing plan



I like to make a writing plan: nothing too detailed, just a few bullet points so I can see if the story will work. I think of a story as a road – if my road is absolutely straight and you can see the end from the start, it's going to be a boring journey. But if my road goes up and down and takes unexpected turns, it becomes more exciting and the end will come as a surprise.



First sentence and title

I try to make my title and first sentence interesting so people will want to read the story. For example:

	BORING	MORE EXCITING
Title	THE CAT	THE ADVENTURES OF A ONE-EYED PIRATE CAT!
First Line	Susan and John had cereal for breakfast.	Susan's blood ran cold as she stared at John's smashed cereal bowl and empty, broken chair.



Time, place and characters

Finally, I keep reminding myself that the reader knows nothing unless I tell them. So it is important to set your story in a time and place and to introduce your characters. There are lots of ways of doing this. Here are some ways I've tried:

Use your first sentence to make the reveal:

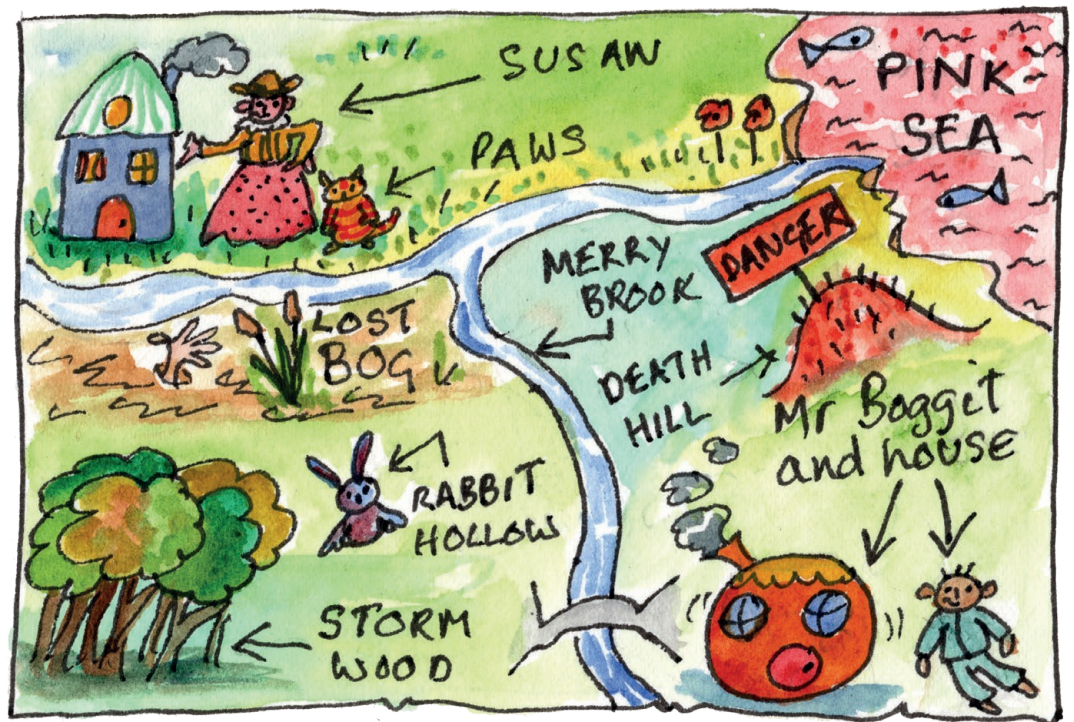
It was a dark, stormy night and it felt as though the little island of Jury was about to be drowned by the rolling waves as Gorland and Garion sheltered in its only cave.

Draw a map to put at the front of the book/story:

Pinpoint your main characters, also important landmarks and maybe the site of the story's most dramatic event.

Draw or write thumbnail sketches of your characters:

Give their names, ages and dates of birth. You could start your story with this. Or even draw a family tree.



HAVE FUN!

I love writing and illustrating, it never feels like a chore. If you are bored writing your story then your reader will probably be twice as bored, so just have fun! Pick up a pen and give your imagination a nudge. I'm sure you can 'write like an author' – you just need to make a start and write with delight!



DIARY AND JOURNAL WRITING TIPS

Dear Diary

In the first section we talked a bit about the different styles of storytelling, from poetry to comic-strip. I'm now going to give you some helpful tips for writing a journal or diary in the voice of one of Shakespeare's family. In the Shakespeare Week online exhibition 'Shakespeare's family in nine objects' you will find lots of helpful information and videos about the people in Shakespeare's family.

To inspire you I have also come up with my ten top tips for diary writing and journalling, and I've written a fictional diary about Shakespeare's wife, Anne Hathaway. I love diary writing and journalling and I hope you will too!

1. This is the diary of your chosen member of Shakespeare's family, so write in the first person and really try to imagine that you are them. This will be easier if you choose a character you like, or feel sympathy for.

2. Diaries are about events that have just happened, so write in the past tense and try to keep the events in their right order. Remember the era you are writing about – the Elizabethans didn't eat pizza, or have televisions or mobile phones!



3. Immerse yourself in your character's world, and try to construct your diary or journal as you imagine your character might have done. Maybe they would illustrate the diary, add poems, stick in little bits of memorabilia, put in recipes – there are so many things you can do to bring your character to life.

Today I saw a →  eeeeeek!

4. Remember: your reader knows nothing until you tell them! Introduce your character, with dates and places clearly signposted.



You know me not
but I will tell thee all.

5. Fact or fiction – you can choose. We know very little about Shakespeare and his family so your story could be entirely fiction, or partly fact.



6. Your diary is going to be read as a story, so it needs a beginning, middle and an end! All set along an exciting route so that your reader travels with you to the end.



I call my
diary Friend,
'cos it is my
friend.

7. Remember the importance of your first sentence and your title to draw your reader in. Your character is talking to their diary – perhaps they have a pet name for their diary...?



8. A diary, or journal, is a very personal account of events so don't forget to write about your character's secret thoughts, feelings and reactions to events.
9. Keep your diary a manageable length. Maybe split events into a week – or even five days. For example:

Day one: Who, when, what and where.

Day two: Main event

Day three: Add details

Day four: Conclusion

Day five: Your feelings

Day One	Day Two	Day Three	Day Four	Day Five
Introduction Who What When Where	The Big Event!	More about the big event.	The nail-biting conclusion.	Your feelings about the event.



10. When I write a story in diary form I try to become the character. I make the diary as I imagine they might have done, I set up my desk as I think they would have done and for the period of time I am writing their diary I try to talk and think like them.

Verily, younglings, just have fun and enjoy writing your diary or journal!

Here's an idea for a fictional diary: Shakespeare is about to return home from London. What does one of his children feel about that? What does she do to prepare for his arrival? What is the rest of the family doing? Does he turn up? Does he get waylaid? Does he bring presents?

THE ANGRY DIARY

~ PRIVATE ~

FOR ANNE HATHAWAY'S EYES ONLY

This diary is very, very private ~ except for this one week, which is to be read by all who wish to know the true nature of the so-called great bard of Stratford!

Thou canst be great and still as loathsome as a toad!



28th April 1616

The day after the reading of Mr William Shakespeare's Will

Good day, sweet Chuck, as I am wont to call thee, dear diary.

Yesterday was the reading of my husband's will, the great Mr William Shakespeare, famed throughout the kingdom for his playwriting ~ bah! Sweet chuck, you have ever been party to my secret woes and joys, but never until this day have I raged with such anger.

Verily, what I would not give to dig my husband from his grave to deliver a



mighty tongue-lashing! I had thought to have been a truly loyal and loving wife. Forsooth, did he not spend most of his time in London Town, leaving me to care for his household? Did I complain? Was I disloyal? Did I keep a clean and Godly house for him to return to? Verily, verily, verily

I was the most diligent wife as you are my witness, sweet Chuck. And yet all he leaves me in his will is our second-best bed and bedding ~ I will not even look upon the insult.

Pish, my candle is almost gutted so I will have to continue on the morrow ~ 'tis your fault, Will, leaving the candle box to your sister ~ fie on you, you pigeon liver'd dolt!

29th April 1616

Sweet chuck,
This morning brings no relief from my anger.



← Bed
Bug

Later the same day:

I had thought to miss you, my once dear husband, but now I am sick when I do think on thee. Martha, our maid of nigh on ten years, says the second-best bed has long been infested with bed bugs and woodworm. Also 'tis so low you cannot fit a chamber pot beneath it, and every time you turn over the great, black, ugly thing creaks! Even the bedding is of the poorest quality. Will, you knew I hated to sleep upon it!

Things you could have bequeathed me in its stead:

A word of affection.

Thanks for my loyalty, love and dowry.

Our very best bed ~ or even the third-best bed.

The plate you left to our grand-daughter, Elizabeth ~ and her not yet nine years old!

Our wall hangings that be so beautiful and finely crafted.

Oh I could go on but I am too blathered. I shall seek the counsel of my daughters, Susanna and Judith, for they will surely advise me on how to avenge this insult.

Later:

I have a mind to pin these pages in the town square, so all can see the shame of Mr William Shakespeare.

30th April 1616



← Very thick!

Good day sweet, understanding chuck,

My visit to Susanna did not go well, by my troth, she is as thick as Tewkesbury mustard. She cares not that I have been so insulted, but only weeps and wails at the loss of her 'good, kind papa'. Ha, she should think more about the living than the dead! She had the gall to say I should be honoured to have such a thoughtful husband, fie on the girl. Just because Will provided generously for her, she mocks her poor mother's woes.

I have a mind to set the bed in the town square along with these pages and make a bonfire of it. Yea, and throw in his miniature portrait that he did so prize, what a blaze they would make ~ along with the bed bugs and woodworm!

1st May 1616



May Day

Greetings sweet chuck,

'Tis May Day and Stratford town square is decked with wildflowers and ribbons. But 'tis no time to celebrate, as I did tell Judith when I visited her this morn. Her papa has insulted me ~ even the leaving of the second-best bed was added as an afterthought, and written between lines of his will in a hand so shaky 'tis like to be contested. I told her it's not to be borne ~ she just laughed. Verily, she is a cloak-bag of hen guts!

Judith didn't even offer her mother a cup of tea, but said she must hasten to prepare the evening meal. Fie on her, what it is to have two such ungrateful daughters. I will show them all. Today the town square is decked with ribbons, tomorrow it will be decked in flames! For I will make a public burning of the second-best bed, along with the bed bugs, woodworm and portraits! I shall employ the services of the town crier so that all will witness the shame of the great playwright of Stratford.



2nd May 1616

Sweet chuck,

Did ever a day dawn so brightly? I have alerted the town crier and employed my good son-in-law, John, to carry the unmentionable items to the town square ~ he knows not why. He is to bring a cart at noon. I have decided to wait until sundown to light the bonfire of Will's shame, for then the flames will burn brightest.

Sweet chuck,

This is our secret, for if I should tell John the reason for the cart, he would surely refuse to help me. This is the poster I shall display in the square, and the town crier will read it loud and clear for those who do not have the gift of reading.

HEAR YE, HEAR YE, HEAR YE!

*This here is the second-best bed
of Mr William Shakespeare,
left to his loyal wife Anne
Hathaway. Verily, she is the
most insulted wife in all of
Stratford, this being the only
item left to her in his will
after over thirty years of
marriage. Not a word of love
or praise, just this bed and the bugs therein.*



*May all in Stratford enjoy the bright flame of Mr Shakespeare's shame, which it
is to be hoped will burn long into the night. May the flames reach the heavens, so
Mr Shakespeare may see that his wife is not to be treated thus!*

Sweet chuck, I am both nervous and excited. The hour for John's arrival approaches!

THE FOLLOWING DAY

Oh, Sweet chuck,

*You will not believe this ~ my dear lambkin, my love, my joy had writ me a
letter and hidden it under the pillow of the second-best bed. Did it not fall to the
floor as John and I dragged the furnishings from the bed.*

'Twas all writ in my dear husband's best
hand, and didn't he love me more than
life itself, and hadn't he left me the bed in
memory of our dear children, all born in that
very bed. Oh the dear man, and he did remind
me of the laughs we had trying not to step
into the full chamber pot of a night, since it
wouldn't fit under the bed!



Also under the pillow was a purse full of silver for the repair of the bed
and new bedding. But best of all was a parcel wrapped in cloth and ribbon,
containing a shawl of the finest wool that he had bought me in London Town.
He said it was to keep me warm now that I won't have his arms about me.
And don't I love that dear lambkin for his tender thoughts, indeed I do.

Truly my sweet Chuck, the memory of what I was planning is enough to
sour ripe grapes and more. And me so lucky as to be married to the world's
most famous playwright, fie on you Anne, what a fool thou wast to dream of
besmirching his precious memory. Why I do believe that 500 years from now
Mr William Shakespeare's name will still be known.

Goodnight sweet Will, my blessed love.

P.S. John did make good use of the cart, for he took my very best bed to the
carpenter for repair and the fitting of new furnishings.