

# Writing Resources

Resources created in collaboration with  
National Writing Day partners from across the UK

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## About National Writing Day

National Writing Day is a celebration of creative writing, and is co-ordinated by national literacy charity First Story and delivered in partnership with thirty-five other national partners.

Poems, stories, letters, raps, songs, scripts and more – we want schools, libraries, writing groups and communities across the country to share in this celebration through a series of events and activities.

We want people from across the UK to put pen to paper, unleash their imagination and make their voices heard. You're invited to join us at events across the UK; from Hull to Bristol, London to Edinburgh, Cardiff to Belfast, leading arts and culture venues will open their doors to the public with inspiring events and activities. If you can't find an event close to you, you can **register** your own event at your local school, community centre, workplace or living room.

We want everyone, everywhere to get writing in 2018 for the second National Writing Day. Join us at an event on Wednesday 27th June or share your stories online using #nationalwritingday.





## Introduction

The blank page can be daunting. As both a part-time teacher of English and a First Story writer-in-residence, my working life is spent encouraging young people to put pen to paper and write. As a working author, my writing life is spent encouraging myself to put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, and write. As a teacher, workshop leader and author, I am all too aware of how daunting the blank page can be.

The problem with the blank page is that it can be filled with anything. It can be filled with everything. Being left to grapple with this infinity of possibility can paralyse a writer, stop them in their tracks, leave them struggling to put words down, or, even when words do appear, they are too often deleted, erased, crossed out as soon as they emerge. The blank page is daunting because it gives you nothing but space to hold on to. There is no easy-to-read route across the blank page. That's what makes it a blank page. It hasn't been written yet.

I am a believer in the power of the writing prompt. Writing exercises, writing prompts, make the blank page manageable. They give the blank page boundaries. They give the blank page focus. They help lay a path through the empty space of the page along which each individual writer can craft unique detours.

Each of the National Writing Day activities and exercises included here is a brick upon a pathway designed to help young writers navigate the blank page. A host of ice-breakers and starters support any session leader looking to engage and enthuse their students, with activities ranging from word association games to mini-autobiography, and beyond, to writing bad poetry or metaphorical pen portraits. A series of writing models from a variety of styles give students quality texts to respond to, with writing prompts and activities developed to help facilitate enthusiastic and original responses. There are guides for the use of non-verbal storytelling and group writing that will engage a broad range of ages and abilities, as well as guides for the use of picture books and other images to promote creative writing, and a section of CPD materials to help the teacher or session leader develop engaging strategies and approaches for the teaching of narrative and descriptive writing within the classroom.

I hope these materials will inspire you and your students as we celebrate National Writing Day 2018.

**Dan Powell**

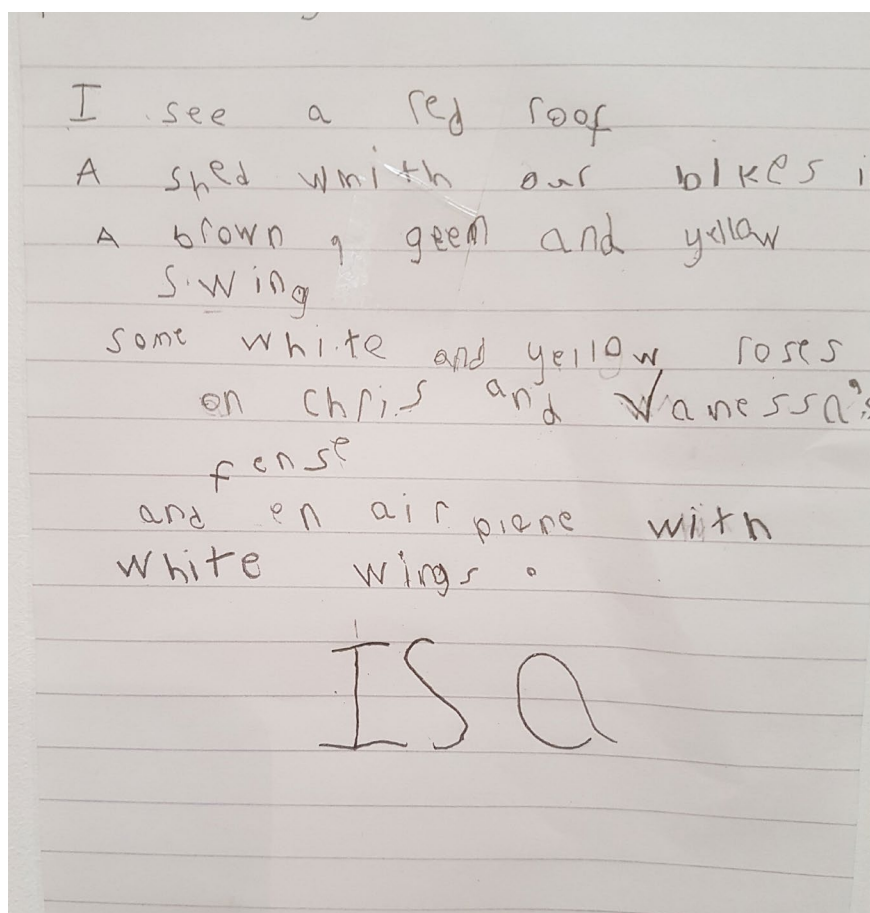
for National Writing Day

## Write Away!

National Writing Day aims to inspire creative writing on a grand scale because. Creative writing connects people to their own voice, their own language and their own story. Studies have shown that writing can benefit educational growth, promote wellbeing and build confidence through self-expression. Young people and children are more inclined to write creatively if they see adults around them doing so and writing can benefit people of all ages.

This year, for National Writing Day, we're asking schools, students, families and our communities to participate in a free-writing activity called Write Away! We'd love to see every student and adult in your school engage with this ten-minute activity, perhaps during an assembly, the beginning of a lesson or during form-time on 27th June. Beyond spreading the joy of writing for its own sake, this task is designed to engage everyone in an activity that feeds into all strands of SMSC as well.

The free-writing is stream-of-consciousness writing. You just need to set a timer and keep writing until the timer stops. The theme for Write Away this year is "I feel most free when..." At this stage, all you need to do is plan the time into your school day on 27th June and let your staff know. Nearer the time, we'll issue a resource which will walk everyone through the task via a three-slide power-point presentation. Please check the National Writing Day website on 1st May 2018 when these resources go live. National Writing Day aims to inspire creative writing on a grand scale because. Creative writing connects people to their own voice, their own language and their own story. Studies have shown that writing can benefit



## Narrative Writing Starters

### Building up

Write a three-sentence story. Beginning, middle and end. Now break each sentence into three more. Then break each new sentence into three more again. Keep doing this to build up the narrative.

### Character-invention tasks

1. Each student in the group suggests one thing a character cannot be, with the group leader/teacher listing them on the board. Students must then write for five minutes describing a new character, but it cannot be any of the things listed.
2. Make an A-Z list of the characteristics of your character.

### Extending the metaphor

'My teacher is like an... eagle.' Remove 'like'.

Now think about what eagles (or whatever) do, and extend the metaphor.

'My teacher is an eagle swooping round the room, hovering over his students, diving down on innocent prey and demolishing them with the terrible grip of his talons.'

### Six-word stories

Show students examples of this condensed form of storytelling, e.g. 'No taxidermist loved his daughter more'; 'For sale. Baby shoes. Never Worn.' How many can you write in five minutes? Ten minutes?

### Word bingo

Use a bank of words from a variety of word types (noun, verb, adjective). Give the group a word they must include in their first sentence of a story about anything they like. Then, from your list, call out one word every thirty seconds. You can increase or decrease the time between words to raise or lower the pressure on the students.

### Writing race

List the things your character has in the fridge or the attic, or small items he/she owns, or expensive items, or things in his/her pockets – first person to fifty things for their character wins. Now write for ten minutes about this character. Include as many of the things from your list as you can.

## Descriptive Writing

### Difficult description

On the board, get students to create a list of things that are difficult to describe, then select one and try to describe it. Or have them write one thing on a slip of paper, collect them in a hat, and then pull one out to write about.

### Haiku

Always a solid exercise in creating short, powerful descriptions.

### Sensory camera

Ask students to imagine a descriptive POV as that of a camera capable of 'shooting' all five senses. Start from the long view of the thing being described, then move in to more specific detail. Try to use all senses at each point. Use images and/or sound banks with this exercise to help bring the writing to life.

### Sound banks

Find MP3 files of relevant sounds to play to the group. The White Noise app (multi-platform; [www.tmssoft.com/white-noise](http://www.tmssoft.com/white-noise)) features a variety including storms, fire and the sea. Have the soundscape play and the students write in response to it. The work from this short-burst task can be returned to for ideas when embarking on writing more extended descriptive pieces

### Strange sensations

Try to describe smells and tastes without using words like sweet or sour. Force them to invent an original vocabulary for these senses (e.g. a 'brownish, owly' taste).





## My Treasure Chest

### Aim:

Children discuss what is precious to them and share some of their special memories.

### Preparation:

In preparation for this activity, ask parents/carers to help their child find and bring a photograph of someone who is special to them or a picture/item that reminds them of a special day to share. Alternatively, this activity can be enjoyed at home.

### Activity (thirty to forty minutes):

Show the children a family photograph/album and explain who the people are pictured. Describe what these people are like and why they are special to you. What does 'special' mean? How does 'special' feel? Encourage the children to discuss this in any context they can and how it makes them feel inside their tummy/body. The children will probably expand the idea of special to include memories and items. Show further photographs of an event, such as a party/wedding, and also mementoes such as a souvenir from a holiday. Describe to the children how these memories make you feel, and begin to collect some words to write on a board or on paper on the floor. In small groups, encourage the children to share their special items and explain how they make them feel.

Explain to the children that special people and memories are our most precious treasure, and to help them keep them safe they are going to make a Treasure Chest. Giving each child a cereal/shoe box, allow them to paint and decorate their treasure chest to take home and use as a memory box.

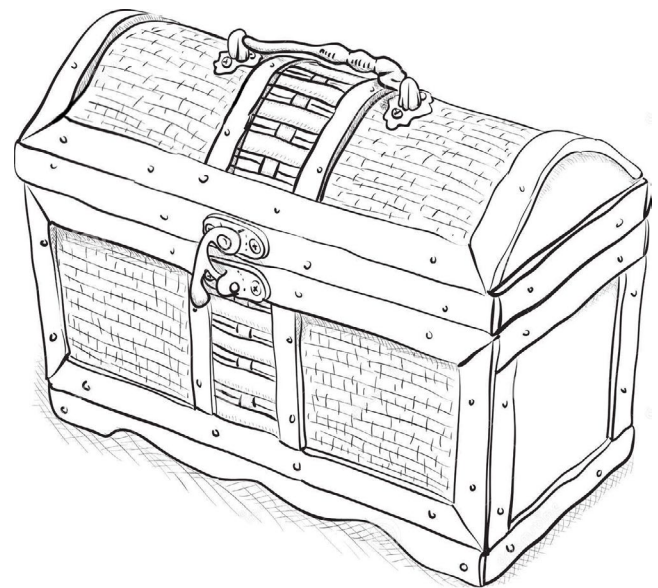
### Learning areas:

- Communication and language: speaking, listening and sharing ideas.
- Literacy: linking sounds and letters, beginning to read and write.
- Feeling good: developing a positive sense of themselves, doing things that help build confidence.
- Being creative: expressing ideas and sharing feelings through art, music, movement, role play and design technology.

### Resources needed:

- Photographs or special items such as souvenirs
- Boxes
- Paints
- Glue
- Glitter

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National  
Literacy  
Trust

### Contribution

We are grateful to the **National Literacy Trust** for contributing this resource to National Writing Day.

## 'My Name is...' For All Ages



1. **Aim:** A quick writing exercise to get students' pens moving

2. **Preparation:** Ask all students to bring a pen and paper to assembly.

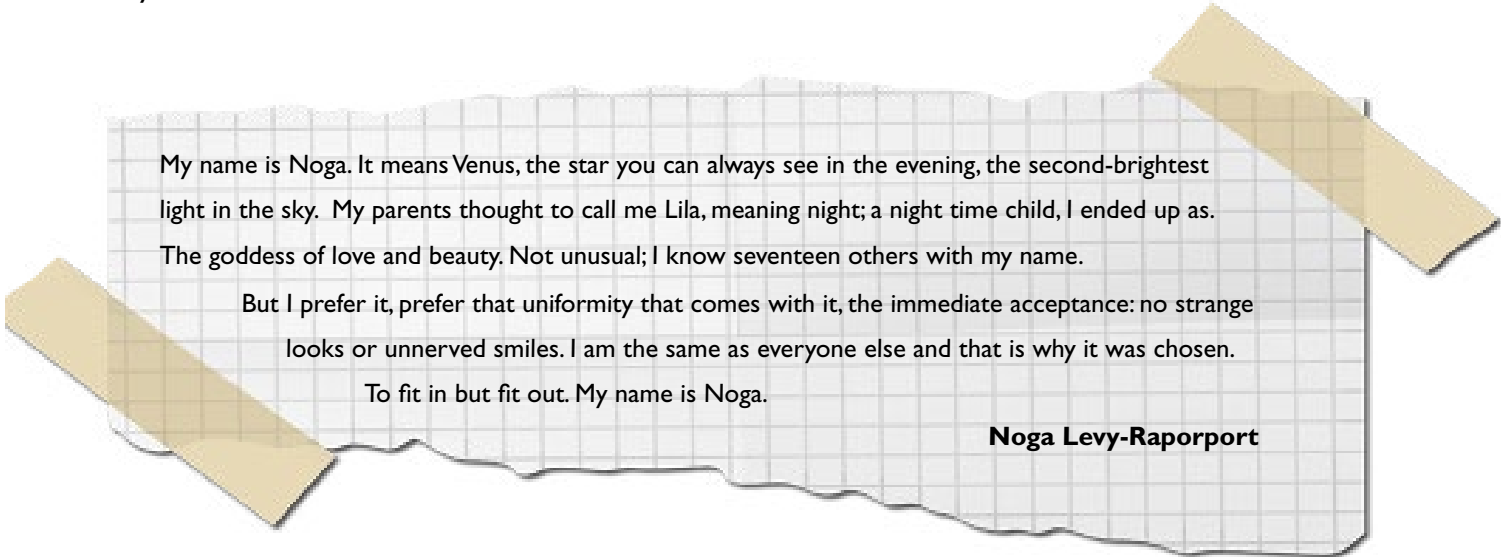
3. **Warm up:** Ask students to try and do a synchronised clap. They won't manage it first time!

Lead them with one big clap above your head. Keep trying this and asking them to do it with you until they are all in sync.

4. **Exercise:** Ask students to write down 'My name is...' then their first name and surname' at the start of their first line.

Then ask them to think about what their name means to them and tell its story. Prompts:

- Why did you get given that name?
- What does it mean?
- Do you like your name?
- Do you wish you were called something else?
- What do you feel when people call your name?
- What does your name sound like?
- If your name was an animal, what animal would it be?



My name is Noga. It means Venus, the star you can always see in the evening, the second-brightest light in the sky. My parents thought to call me Lila, meaning night; a night time child, I ended up as. The goddess of love and beauty. Not unusual; I know seventeen others with my name.

But I prefer it, prefer that uniformity that comes with it, the immediate acceptance: no strange looks or unnerved smiles. I am the same as everyone else and that is why it was chosen.

To fit in but fit out. My name is Noga.

**Noga Levy-Raporport**

Give them 5 minutes to write down whatever comes into their minds.

Ask them to round off with 'My name is... their name' again at the end of the piece.

5. **Presentation:** Allow 10 minutes for students to stand up and read their work to the assembly.



## Free talking

- Suggest all students walk freely around the classroom space.
- Tell them that you're going to give them a prompt, and that when you say go, they should all talk aloud at the same time on the subject of the prompt until you say stop.
- Everyone has to keep talking, no matter what, and if they run out of things to say, they can say 'blah blah blah' until they think of something else.
- Give them the prompt (consider using the 'I feel most free when...' activity prompt) and say go.
- Time them talking for 5 minutes. After they've finished, ask them how they found that. Was it easy to think of things to say?
- Did they say blah blah blah a lot?
- Ask them to write for two minutes about the thing that surprised them most that they said

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### Contribution

We are grateful to the **Ministry of Stories** for contributing this resource to National Writing Day.



MINISTRY OF STORIES

## The View From My Window

*Choose your window*

*Tell your story*

*Share on social media*

**Aim:** Inspire the students to produce a piece of writing in response to the view from the classroom window. This can be appropriated to be set homework for students to respond to the view from a window in their home.

**Time:** 30-40 minutes

**Key Stage:** All Ages

**Materials:** Pens or pencils, paper and the #TellYourStory polaroid stickers enclosed in this pack. Part of this activity requires access to Instagram or Twitter so students can share their work online. Alternatively, you could set this as homework for students, asking them to use the polaroid stickers at home.

**Warm Up:** Ask students to read the two poems enclosed. Encourage them to think about times they have day-dreamed while staring out a window or perhaps times they have used

**Exercise:** You can use some or all of these short writing techniques to get students started with their writing. Feel free to amend as you see fit.

**1. Gaze:** start by asking students to look out window nearest them. If you don't have a window in the classroom, ask students to imagine the view from a window in their home.

**2. Zooming in:** ask students to think about this view and brainstorm various descriptions from large to small scale. Start in the distance, with larger objects, then to the middle distance, and then to the foreground and smaller objects. Then reverse the process and 'zoom out'.

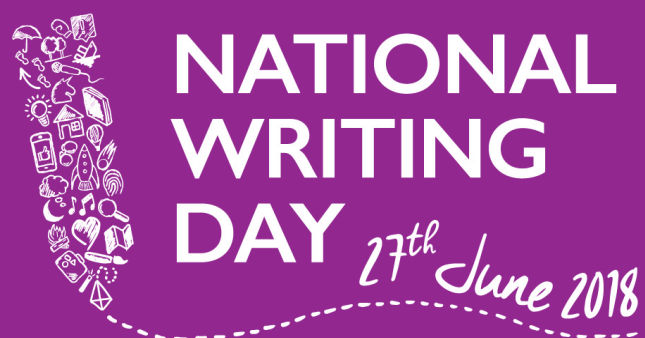
**3. Zooming out:** ask students to look for the smallest detail they can find in the view, describe it in detail, then pull out to the middle, describe that, then pull out again to take in the full landscape of the view. This technique can be combined with 'Zooming in' to help craft a controlled structure for descriptive writing tasks.

**4. Sentence starters:** Ask the students to continue these sentences:

- \* At the centre of the view...
- \* At the edge of the view...
- \* In the light...
- \* In the shade...
- \* What is moving in the view?
- \* What is static in the view?
- \* What is the brightest colour in the view?
- \* Which is the dulllest?
- \* If the view had a mood, what would it be?

**5. Write:** Finally, ask your students to write something in response to the view they have chosen; either the classroom window or a window at home, if set as homework.

**6. Read:** Ask students to read aloud either a favourite line or the whole piece they wrote



[www.nationalwritingday.org.uk](http://www.nationalwritingday.org.uk)