

CREATE WEEK

WHAT'S IN THE BAG? WITH AUTUMN SHARKEY

A creative writing activity to help you develop a new character.

MATERIAL LIST

You will need

- Something to write with
- Something to write on
- A timer



STEP 1

Choose a person and a place. You could use a: Woman at a train station; Person in a suit, walking in the rain; Child at a birthday party; Mountain climber in a shopping centre; Clown on a train

Use one of these examples, change something about one of them, or invent your own.



STEP 2

Think about what kind of bag your character could be carrying? Could it be a rucksack, a briefcase, a purse or a wheeled suitcase? Choose one and note it down.

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STEP 3

What's in your character's bag? Set a timer for one minute, and list everything that comes into your head. Some items may be very ordinary, some items might be surprising! See how long a list you can create.



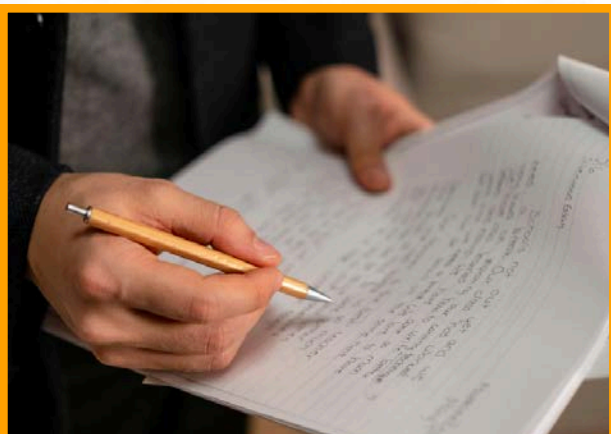
STEP 4

Read back through your list, and notice what makes you pause and think. Choose one item.



STEP 5

Set a timer for three minutes, and write down all the details that come into your head about your object. It doesn't have to make any sense, the only rule is that you don't stop writing until the timer is up.



STEP 6

Read back through what you've just written. Notice any words or phrases that you find interesting and underline them.

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STEP 7

Set your timer for another three minutes, and write about why your character is carrying that particular object on that particular day! You may find some of the words you underlined earlier coming back to you, you may take the story in a totally different direction.



STEP 8

Read back through what you've written. Again, notice any words or phrases that interest you. These thoughts can form the basis of a new character.

EXTENSION

In the last ten minutes you've developed a character, starting from the inside of their bag. Well done! You can stop now, use the exercise as a creative warm-up for a writing project, or take the ideas that you've just developed and write a short story by describing your character deciding to pack the object in their bag, moving to the point in the day when the object comes into use, and the imagining what happens next.



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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Autumn is a creative facilitator, writer and poet. Autumn uses a multi-art approach to facilitate storytelling – from group songwriting about outer space, through to developing narrative card games, and building immersive experiences to engage families in the climate change conversation. Autumn holds an MA in Education & Creative Writing from Goldsmiths' University and is a Bridport Prize shortlisted writer, with poetry published across independent media.

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