



ELIZABETH AYRES

... has taught writing for more than thirty years at New York University and the College of New Rochelle; through “Poets in the Schools” and “Poets and Writers”; in libraries and senior citizen centers; and in other public forums. Hailed by *New York* magazine and the *Village Voice* for her innovative teaching methods, she is the founder of the Elizabeth Ayres Center for Creative Writing in New York City. Elizabeth Ayres is the author of *Writing the Wave: Inspired Rides for Aspiring Writers*.



BOX 8010 / BOULDER, CO / 80306
www.soundstrue.com

AF00094

ELIZABETH AYRES



THE ULTIMATE

creative writing

WORKSHOP

study guide

Sounds True, Inc., Boulder, CO 80306

© 2001 Elizabeth Ayres

All rights reserved. No part of this study guide may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission from the author and publisher. Published 2001

Printed in the United States of America

Elizabeth Ayres.

The Ultimate Creative Writing Workshop

ISBN 1-56455-841-X

For information on workshops with Elizabeth Ayres, visit www.creativewritingcenter.com, or call the Center for Creative Writing, 800-510-1049.

For a free catalog of audios, videos, and music, please contact:

Sounds True, PO Box 8010, Boulder, Co 80306-8010.

Phone 800-333-9185

www.soundstrue.com

Silence: We have the same problem with silence that we have with peace. Silence is as necessary for human life as are air, food, and water. But most of us are so starved for silence that we don't recognize it as sustenance anymore. When we get it, we toss it away.

They say all life began in some kind of soup of carbon molecules. All life really begins in silence. The silence of the womb. The silence inside a cocoon when a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. The silence inside a seed when a sprout is forming. The silence inside a leaf just before it abandons its mooring to the tree and drifts, brightly colored, to the ground.

Where will we find models, to teach us what silence is?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Brande, Dorothea. *Becoming a Writer*. Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher, 1981.
- Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher, 1992.
- . *The Right to Write: An Invitation and Initiation into the Writing Life*. Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher, 1999.
- . *The Vein of Gold: A Journey to Your Creative Heart*. Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher, 1997.
- Gardner, John. *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers*. Vancouver, WA: Vintage Books, 1991.
- Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986.
- . *Wild Mind: Living the Writer's Life*. New York: Bantam, 1990.
- Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.
- Rico, Gabriele. *Writing the Natural Way: Using Right-Brain Techniques to Release Your Expressive Powers*. Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher, 2000.
- Ueland, Brenda. *If You Want to Write: A Book about Art, Independence, and Spirit*. St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1997.

ELIZABETH AYRES

THE ULTIMATE
creative
writing
WORKSHOP

study guide

Every child can name it. Love. Love is the glue that holds everything together. Love is the Living Light that binds all.

Patience: The Latin root of the word patience is *pati*. It means “to suffer.” Think of all the times in your life when you’ve been told, “Be patient,” or when you’ve told yourself, “Be patient.” There was something you wanted that you couldn’t have, something you had that you didn’t want – you squirmed, writhed, had to bear up under the having, endure the not having. It chafed. It was uncomfortable.

You were suffering.

Were you patient? Probably not. Few of us are, because patience is much more than simple endurance. To be patient is to bear suffering with composure, without discontent or complaint. A patient person is calmly expectant, not hasty, not impetuous. A patient person knows how to await the course or issue of events. Why? What is the source of this willingness to endure pain gladly?

It springs from love. See! The word *patience* and the word *passion* have the same *pati* root. We’ve downgraded passion to mere carnal desire, but real passion entails willingness to suffer all for the sake of love. A mother who deprives herself of new clothes so her children can have them. A father who works two jobs to support his family. The Disappeared in Argentina ... political prisoners in Iran, Martin Luther King, Gandhi. Countless unnamed martyrs for the sake of truth, for the sake of Love.

Peace: Freedom from war. Cessation of hostilities. That condition of a nation in which it is not at war with another nation. That condition of an individual in which there is no war within.

In our culture, peace is not a priority. We are conditioned from our earliest years to desire things: cars, vacations, and gadgets. “More! More things!” we cry. We are continually reminded by advertising hype, by others’ beliefs, that things bring happiness. Unfortunately, seeking after things only brings increased perturbation. Less and less peace, more and more conflicting desires, greater and greater need to get things that will bring happiness.

In fact, most of us experience so little peace that when it comes along, we don’t recognize it. We find peace odd, distasteful, frightening. We prefer conflict, to which we are addicted. We create conflict, so we won’t have to plunge into the unknown territory peace offers.

Peace is an acquired taste, like escargot or artichokes. Strange and unfamiliar, peace should be taken in small doses at first, until one builds up a tolerance for it.

It is (for want of its real name) the Eternal Now. For us, it is rarely more than a brief glimpse. When it comes, we are like a child allowed to peek into a tiny hole in the side of an Easter egg. To the child's amazement, a whole scene is hidden inside the egg. When the Eternal Now comes to us, we are in awe. The whole scene that is past and future comes together, contained in the Now Moment. The past is known to have been a preparation for the moment, as if it had been a road leading straight up to it. The future is known to be an extension of this Moment (not so much a road leading away but a circle radiating outward from it). Past and future cease to have any meaning in the Eternal Now, for they are just this: Now.

Imagination: Such a simple word! The Latin root is *imago*, which means "image, representation, likeness." Our imagination is our ability to form a mental picture of something, and oh! What a thing to be able to do!

The natural historian, Karl Linneaus, used the word *imago* in a fascinating new way. He used it to refer to the fourth and final stage of an insect's existence, after the egg, larval, and pupal stage. The insect is finally called the imago when it assumes its proper form, becoming the "picture perfect" example of what the species should look like. The butterfly, for instance, is an imago. That lovely creature with shimmering wings is the goal toward which the caterpillar aspires.

We have the power to picture that toward which we aspire. Perhaps it's time for us to reclaim our power. Deep inside . . . don't we all know we're meant to have wings?

Joy: In many languages, the word for "joy" and the word for "jewel" are the same. Joy sparkles like a jewel, is precious like a jewel, can be worn to adorn like a jewel. Can be shared. The diamond can be made into a necklace. The ruby can be fashioned into a ring.

To me, feeling joy is like breathing. There's an "in" and an "out" to it. There's the part of joy I savor inside, a deliciously private experience. And then there's the part of joy I express outwardly: a smile, a little song, a light and gladsome step. Haven't you ever noticed how a happy person seems to shine like a jewel?

Light: There is the light we can see: sunlight, moonlight, starlight, electrical light. Dawn, rosy pink over the ocean. Sunset, fiery red behind a mountain. Light dappling green leaves on a summer's evening. Light turning a waterfall into a mountain of jewels. A supernova exploding. Las Vegas after dark.

There is another kind of light, which we cannot see. Light is energy. Light that is the stuff of the universe, the primal "glue" holding all matter together. They keep trying to name it, this Light: atoms, neutrons, neutrinos, and quarks. They try to figure out if it's waves or particles. We know what it is.

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Exercise One – Boxes	1
Exercise Two – Viewpoint and Circles.....	3
Exercise Three – Waking Dreams	4
Exercise Four – The Four Elements	4
Exercise Five – Apple Tree	5
Exercise Six – Coin Toss	7
Exercise Seven – Animals	8
Exercise Eight – Medicine Wheel and Music	10
Exercise Nine – Butterfly	12
Exercise Ten – Rhyme.....	13
Exercise Eleven – Nondominant Handwriting	14
Conclusion.....	15
Glossary.....	17
Additional Resources.....	20
About the Author.....	back cover

yourself, so you could make what was mine your own. In the audio portion of the program, I shared my own poems with you because I also need the opportunity to come before you, not as teacher, but as artist. I, too, need to complete my cycle of communication. I, too, need to send my words out, so they can be taken into your hearts, your souls. If you would like to refer to the written text of my poems, you can find them in the Afterword of my book, *Writing the Wave*. You'll also find in the book a number of adaptations of these exercises you may find helpful.

GLOSSARY

Becoming: In Old English, the word *becuman* meant “to arrive, attain, happen.” It signified “to come to or arrive at some place.” “Becoming,” then, implies a goal. If the entire universe is in a state of becoming, as scientists say, then the entire universe is going somewhere. Where is it going? Where are we going? We do not know. It is a mystery.

“Becoming” entails exchange, for to grow into a new form, an organism must leave its old form behind. The butterfly must abandon the caterpillar it once was. In the mysterious darkness of the cocoon, it must surrender. It must say, “Yes, I will. I will give up all that I know in exchange for what I don’t know but am urged to reach for.” It can’t imagine wings yet, of course. It only knows it is driven to make a bid: old for new.

Bliss: In Old English, the word *blithe* meant “joyous.” Over the centuries, however, poor little “earthly joy” has been influenced by its heavenly cousin, “bless.” The perfect joy of the next life, the beatitude of departed souls, paradise – “bliss” has been apotheosized by “bless.”

But as St. Thérèse of Lisieux said, “All the way to heaven is heaven!” And it’s high time we reclaimed bliss for ourselves, demanded blessings on our ordinary, everyday experience. Because bliss is so much more than just a personal feeling of joyousness. Bliss brings with it a certain attitude of blessing toward others: a joyousness of aspect, a kindness of manner, the “light of one’s countenance” shining on the world. It is a state of supreme delight. It is the perfect joy of heaven, captured, for a moment or two, in this earthly realm.

Eternal Now: There is an experience. So delicate. So difficult to describe in words. Unnameable. Pure gift, this experience. It cannot be sought, for how can you look for what you can’t name?

When it comes, it brings with it a feeling of utter serenity, utter security, and utter contentment. You know beyond a shadow of a doubt that all is as it was meant to be. Everything is unfolding in its proper pattern, according to a perfect plan. As Julian of Norwich said, “All shall be well. And all manner of thing shall be well.”

from your heart and soul and poured forth into words on the page must find its way into the hearts and souls of other human beings (unless you're writing for purely personal reasons – keeping a journal, for instance – in which case the cycle of communication begins and ends with you).

It's pretty simple, really. If the words on your page aren't shared with other human beings, they're just unused batteries, collecting dust in a drawer. And if your words aren't fulfilling their purpose, then you, the writer, can't grow. Imagine what would happen if you tied a black bag around a rosebush just before it came into bloom. If the poor thing can't complete its growth cycle, it will shrivel up and die. That's why, at my Center for Creative Writing, we hold salons. I use that name because I wanted to break away from the "typical" writing workshop. You know. You bring in what you've written and everyone sits around and tells you what's wrong with it. In such an environment, the cycle of communication never really completes itself. It's short-circuited because, focusing on "critiquing," participants can't listen. The writer's words never really have a chance to penetrate into the hearts and souls of others.

At Center salons, the participants listen to each other. Listen well and deeply. So when we ask, "Something got communicated, what was it?", everyone can tell the writer what they got out of the piece. "This is how it made me feel. This is what it reminded me of. I saw, heard, noticed, liked that and that and that." Once his or her words have fulfilled their destiny – transferring the writer's life force into the listeners – the writer can go home satisfied. The cycle is complete. He or she is free to go on to the next work, which is bound to evidence growth, just as the rose bush, allowed to bloom this summer, is bound to be larger and fuller next year.

I suggest you form your own salons. We've found six to be the magic number. Six writers, reading for 15 minutes each, with about 10 minutes of feedback for each reader. You can hold a lovely salon with as few as four participants, but more than six will probably put you all on overload. Don't wait to share what you've written. It may be years before your work wends its way into print. Even when it does, knowing your words are floating around out there somewhere may not give you the immediate, visceral satisfaction of reading to a small group of devoted listeners. Seeing the rapt expression on their faces. Hearing their laughter, or perhaps, noting their tears. (If you'd like guidelines for starting your own Writer's Salon, you can call the Center's toll-free number provided in this guide.)

Throughout this program, I've been your teacher and guide. I've shared with you everything I know about the creative process. I've used myself as both microscope and specimen, because all the techniques I've passed on to you, I learned by watching my own working methods. Analyzing, codifying, putting my ways of working into exercise form so you could experience them for



INTRODUCTION

I've said it before and I'll say it again: Creative self-expression is the birthright of each and every human being dwelling on the planet. Congratulations on claiming what's yours. I honor your courage, your commitment, and your willingness to take a chance and open yourself up to something new.

To make your exploration of the creative writing process a little easier, I've written this study guide. You could think of your audio program as you and me, quite literally together on a journey. There, I give directions and point out the sights. Here, you have a map you can refer to on your own. You'll find a brief summary of each exercise, as well as a breakdown of the exercise steps and some illustrations I thought you'd find useful.

EXERCISE ONE – BOXES

This exercise shows you how to use a technique I call “imaginative layering.” You'll learn how to generate raw material from nothing but random stimuli and your own imagination. In other words, with layering, you get a handle on the basic writing act.

Steps

1. Divide a blank sheet of paper into four equal boxes.
2. On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of sounds you're hearing now.
3. Write down alternate phrasings of each sound.

THE ULTIMATE CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

4. Put one sound in each of the four boxes.
 5. Put one color in each box.
 6. Write down the link between the color and the sound.
 7. Add a taste to each box.
 8. Add a memory to each box.
 9. Add a country to each box.
 10. Add a male or female to each box.
 11. Give each person a height and weight.
 12. Give each person an occupation.
 13. Give each person a secret.
 14. “Mush” together the layers from two of the four boxes.
 15. List five good qualities possessed by this piece of writing.
- Here’s an example of what your four boxes might look like once they’re filled in:

lawnmower green Ireland my mother taking me to ride the ponies adult female 5’6” 135 lbs. teacher knows that the world is really flat	birds chirping purple Alaska climbing a tree female child 3’ 85 lbs. plays all day her mother is having an affair with the milkman
traffic red Australia the day I left home for my first apartment adult male 6’ 1” 195 lbs. knows why Ayers Rock is <i>really</i> red	hum of air conditioner white France sailing on the Chesapeake adult male and little boy 5’11” and 3’3” sailor and apprentice sailor the sailor kidnapped the kid

figure 1

you don't usually use. The principle underlying the method is that when you use your controlled hand, you'll tap into controlled (i.e., conscious) thoughts; but, when you use your uncontrolled hand, you'll tap into uncontrolled (i.e., unconscious) thoughts. So for all the steps below, use your nondominant hand.

Steps

1. Beginning with the phrase "I like," write down your favorite color.
2. Beginning with the phrase "I like," write down your favorite food.
3. Beginning with the phrase "I like," write down your favorite animal.
4. Beginning with the phrase "I like," describe your favorite landscape.

In your imagination, go to that landscape and see the house of your dreams, as fantastic as you can make it. Describe the outside of your house. Describe the inside of your house. Describe the writing room of your house.

Imagine that in the writing room you find a book you've already written. What is the title of the book? What kind of book is it (poetry, novel, stories, essays)?

5. List five words that describe the style in which the book is written (e.g., humorous, lyrical, passionate).
6. Using your nondominant hand, "begin" the book.

CONCLUSION

This is the end of the study guide. But it's certainly not the end of your relationship with writing. Do you know what lured you into this great adventure? Have you plumbed the depths of your unconscious and faced your fears? Have you risked expressing that Self in your voice, your style, whatever form feels good and right to you? Have you flung wide imagination's doors, knowing that, come what may, you can put it all into words? And has your daring paid off? Do you know you have something to say? Are you determined to say it?

It's important to remember that the writer's task isn't finished when the work is on the page. In the audio program, you've learned that the word "communication" means "to be one with." During the exercises, you've had a chance to "be one with" your own Self. Your act of creation has made you "one with" the divine Source. But what about other people? Don't you need a chance to be "one with" them, too?

You've heard me say often enough that a piece of writing is like a battery. It's charged with your feelings, memories, imaginings, and so forth. But batteries are not meant to sit on shelves. Batteries have a purpose in life, a destiny to fulfill. Batteries are meant to light up flashlights, keep radios running at the beach, make little pink bunnies go on and on. Your writing has a purpose, too. A destiny, if you will.

I call it "completing the cycle of communication." That which has come

3. Begin selecting pairs of words from the column, allowing them to evoke an image (see figure 10).

EXAMPLE OF CHANGING RHYME TO PAY DIRT

Rhymed Words, Column 1	Pay Dirt Words
pelosós	lost socks
socks	socks lost
toss	felt
lost	soft
fel	moss toss moss cost
pelmel	costly moss
felt	rich
fell	green moss lush
bell	forest green rainforest birds tropical
tell	pelosós
well	bell
sell	sell
foss	sell the bell
toss	silver bell
moss	silver bell in the forest
cost	silver bell buried in moss
toss	
posh	

figure 10

4. Freewrite for twenty minutes, playing around with your images.
5. Identify a primary emotional quality in the writing and create a “possibility statement” for it. A possibility statement is a sentence that starts “It might be...” For example, “It might be a story about a group of archaeologists in the rain forests of Peru.” Or, “It might be a poem about the rich treasures of creativity.”
6. Evolve your possibility statement into a piece of writing.

EXERCISE ELEVEN – NONDOMINANT HANDWRITING

Writers are not nuclear power plants. Whenever we finish a work – a book, a poem, a story, an essay – we’re at least temporarily depleted of psychic energy. “What do I write about next?” is a question you will have to answer time after time for the rest of your writing life. Don’t hit the panic button. Instead, use this simple technique to discover your next writing project. It’s called nondominant handwriting, which means writing with whatever hand

EXERCISE TWO – VIEWPOINT AND CIRCLES

Now you're going to learn how to use point of view to manipulate your writing. Understanding this basic writing tool will give you the confidence to keep on. You'll also explore artistic purpose, using simple circles as a tool to understand the relationship between actual and invented experience.

Viewpoint

1. Think of a person you know.
2. Describe that person using the word "he" or "she."
3. Have that person describe himself or herself (use the word "I").
4. Describe that person as if you were a relative of his or hers.

Circles

1. On a blank sheet of paper, draw a large circle, then a smaller one inside it (see figure 2).

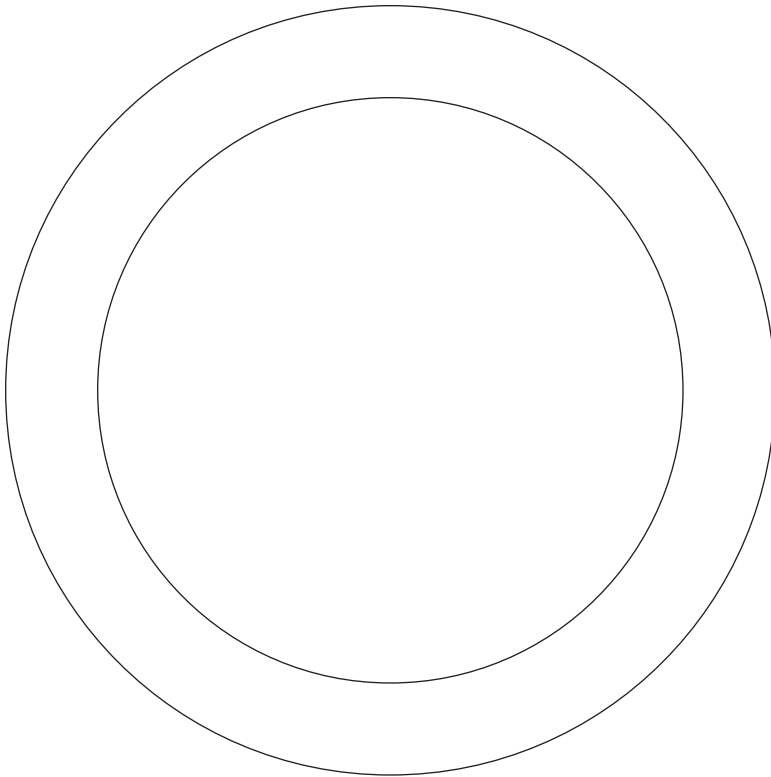


figure 2

2. Think of a tree you've actually *experienced*.
3. Write down facts about this tree in the inner circle.
4. Write down facts that you can remember about trees in general in the outer circle.
5. Write an intention sentence (i.e., state your purpose).
6. Combine Steps 2 and 3 according to your stated purpose.

EXERCISE THREE – WAKING DREAMS

Now you will build on your understanding of purpose to communicate a specific idea. This changes the random nature of the “imaginative layering” method and will help you feel you have command over the writing process. It will also help you avoid the single biggest mistake beginning writers make: trying to work with half-baked ideas.

Steps

1. Invent a dream.
2. Write down a world situation.
3. Invent a second dream.
4. Write down a personal situation.
5. Note the ways in which the two dreams are alike.
6. Note the ways in which the two situations are alike.
7. Identify one theme in all of the above processes/work.
8. Using the theme alone, brainstorm images or scenes that express the theme.
9. Select one image or scene and write about it in depth, keeping the theme in mind.

EXERCISE FOUR – THE FOUR ELEMENTS

Now you know how to generate raw material. You can identify a main idea or theme within it, and invent new layers that embody the theme. In other words, you can now “freewrite” with confidence, and you’re ready for the next skill level. Here – and in the next two exercises – you’re going to enter into an exploration of what I call “artistic structure.” I use this term to cover a wide range of techniques that, taken together, will help you impose an underlying form on – and an organic shape to – your writing.

Steps

1. Make four boxes by drawing a vertical and a horizontal line across the middle of a blank sheet of paper.
2. In each box, put one of the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water).
3. Add a color to each box.

4. On the “universal” or “not me” wing of the butterfly, jot down four events in the life of the world which embody that same lesson (e.g., the breakup of the Soviet Union or the “care of the soul” movement in the latter part of the 20th century).
5. Write about one of the personal incidents in detail, summoning up all the feelings connected with it, both positive and negative.
6. Select one impersonal event and write about that, incorporating the feelings and images brought to consciousness by the previous step.

EXERCISE TEN – RHYME

So far, all our exercises have concentrated on the realm of ideas and images. Sound is an important dimension of language, one you can use both to “beef up” your work as well as to delve further into your deepest source of material. The following is a technique to help you accomplish those goals.

Steps

1. Select four words you love the sound of, and write each word at the top of a column.
2. Select one word, working down the column, rhyming it (or its component syllables) as fast as you can. Nonsense rhymes are okay (see figure 9).

EXAMPLE OF RHYMED COLUMNS

<i>pelosós</i>	<i>picante</i>	<i>zipper</i>	<i>fidget</i>
socks	micante	flipper	midget
toss	ficante	mipper	sidget
lost	milante	nipper	it
fel	tay	lipper	fit
pelmel	say	sip	tip
felt	hay	sipur	sit
fell	may	er	fidge
bell	fey	stir	midge
tell	pray	sir	bidge
well	picante	purr	budge
sell	can	fur	wudge
foss	tan	mur	sudge
toss	fan	Big Sur	fidget
moss			sligit
cost			sippit
toss			strippit
posh			ribbit

figure 9

EXERCISE NINE – BUTTERFLY

Everything you write needs to be rooted in your passion. Think, for instance, of a vase of flowers. The blooms will be beautiful for a few days, but cut off from the growing plant, they're no longer alive. They will wither and die. This exercise will help you attach your writing to your deepest roots – passions, emotions, values, and beliefs – so that it will never wither and die.

Steps

1. Make a list of four “lessons” you have learned in your life so far (e.g., how to function as an autonomous individual or how to care for yourself).
2. Copy the illustration shown in figure 8 onto your own paper to create a worksheet for the exercise.

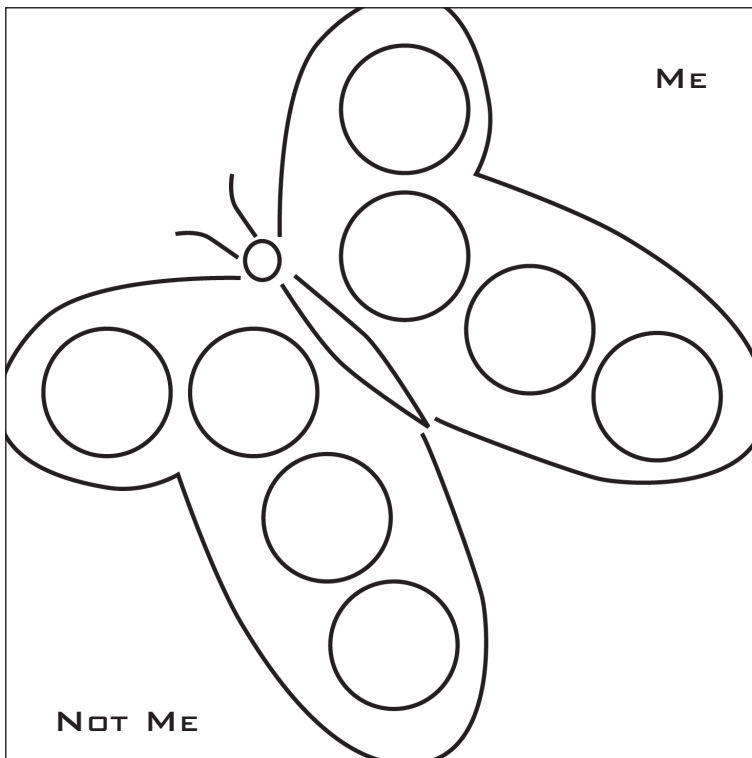


figure 8

3. Select one lesson. On the “individual” or “me” wing of the butterfly, jot down four incidents from your life which embodied that lesson (e.g., leaving home for the first time or learning to cook healthy food).

4. Add a shape to each box.
5. Add a sound to each box.
6. Add an emotion to each box.
7. Add a visual image to each box.
8. Add your own layers to each box.
9. On a separate sheet of paper, draw a circle and transform the circle into a compass by inserting the directions “north,” “south,” “west,” and “east.”
10. Write one element at each compass point.
11. See which elements “meet” each other on the compass.
12. Use the “meeting” between each compass point to provide a “meeting relationship” among the elements.
13. Create a piece of writing that expresses the encounter or exchange between the first two elements.
14. Create a piece of writing that expresses the encounter or exchange between the second pair of elements.
15. Create a piece of writing that expresses the encounter or exchange between the third pair of elements.
16. Create a piece of writing that expresses the encounter or exchange between the fourth pair of elements.
17. Link the four sections by creating a fifth section and a title for the piece as a whole.

EXERCISE FIVE – APPLE TREE

This exercise is going to give you an immensely valuable tool you can use to organize any kind of writing. You’ll learn the difference between free flow (a right-brain activity) and organization (a left-brain activity.) You’ll learn how to impose order on your free flow without sacrificing flexibility and spontaneity in favor of order and structure.

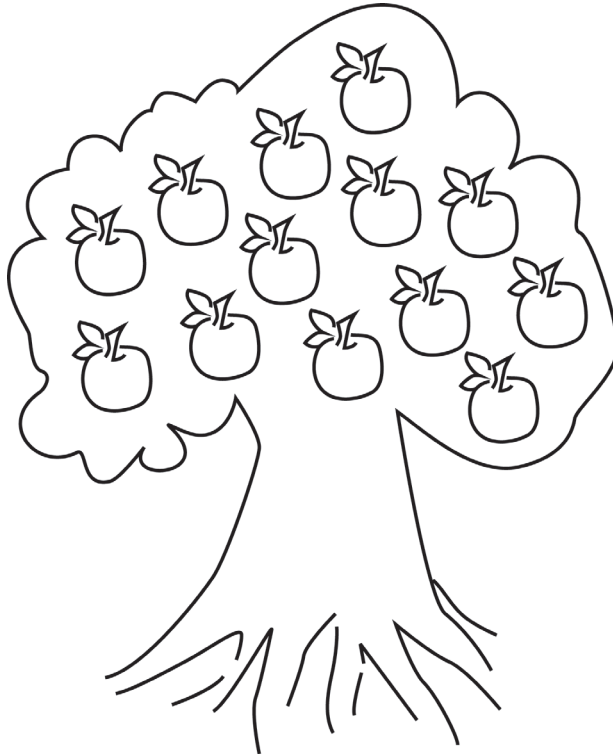
Steps

1. Write freely for twenty minutes.
2. Identify at least three to six main ideas in that writing.
3. Create four images/scenes for each theme.
4. Number blank sheets of paper to represent each basket you’ll bring to the orchard.
5. “Pluck” your apples by rewriting the images onto the numbered baskets (now no longer thematically linked).
6. Change the order of the apples within each basket by renumbering them.

THE ULTIMATE CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

7. Begin with Basket I, Apple 1. Weave each Apple into the piece of writing, following the order created in Step 6.

See figure 3 to help create your own “Apple Tree Worksheet.”



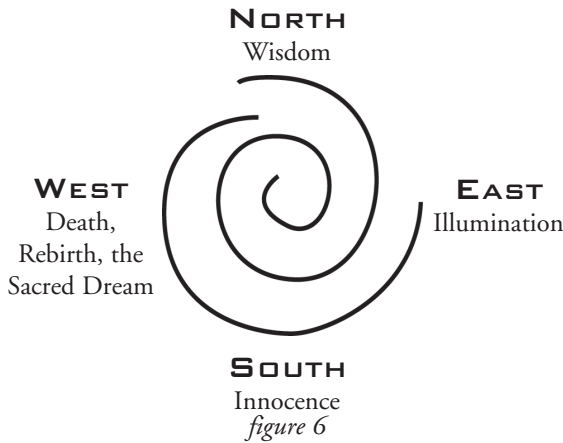
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

figure 3

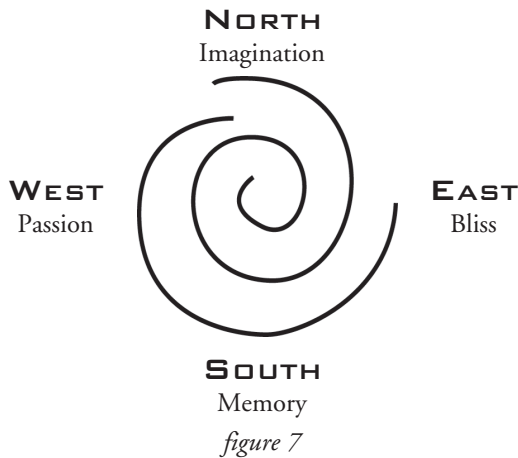
THE ULTIMATE CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

6. Locate a work-in-progress. It can be an exercise from this program, or any unfinished story, poem, or essay you have around the house.
7. Selecting the compass directions not previously used, write an intention statement, such as, “These compass points will continue my story (or poem, essay, and so on) by revealing such and so.”
8. Write a new scene or image triggered by the ideas of Steps One/Three or Two/Four. Use this new material to continue the work-in-progress. See figures 6 & 7 for two variations on the Medicine Wheel you’ve already used.

THE NORTH AMERICAN MEDICINE WHEEL



ELIZABETH AYRES IMAGO† WHEEL



† The word *imago* refers to the fourth and final stage of an insect’s existence, when it becomes the true “picture” of its species. Imago connotes metamorphosis.

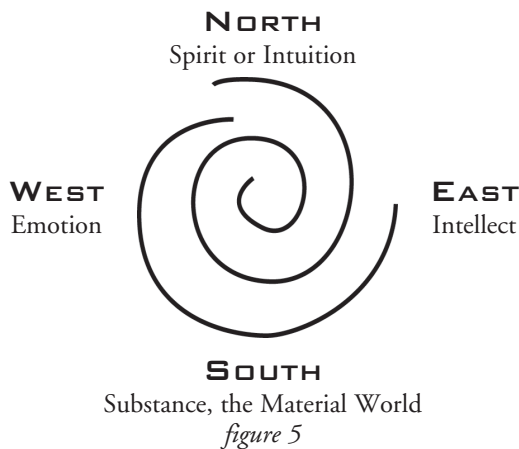
car pull up on their cobblestone driveway and realized she hadn't even started dinner. Looking at her family, the woman knew that the only way to break free of her nightmare would be to entrust her failures to her Higher Power and let faith lead her back to fullness of life.

EXERCISE EIGHT – MEDICINE WHEEL AND MUSIC

Now you're ready to face the challenges of an ongoing writing life. The upcoming exercises are like troubleshooting sections. You need these problem-solving techniques because no matter how smoothly your work is going now, at some point you're going to run out of ideas. Your enthusiasm will dry up. The writing will grind to a halt. You'll be smack dab up against the wall. Don't despair! Use these techniques instead.

Use the Medicine Wheel (see figure 5) for the steps of the exercise.

THE SOUTH AMERICAN MEDICINE WHEEL



Steps

1. Write a brief scene/image inspired by the north or “spirit” position of the Medicine Wheel.
2. Write a brief scene/image inspired by the east or “intellect” position of the Medicine Wheel.
3. Write a brief scene/image inspired by the south or “material realm” position of the Medicine Wheel.
4. Write a brief scene/image inspired by the west or “emotion” position of the Medicine Wheel.
5. Choose one pair of images, either north/south or east/west. Using these as imaginative layers, create a fresh piece of writing.

EXERCISE SIX – COIN TOSS

Here, you continue to balance both sides of your brain by learning how to create a left-brained outline using right-brained layering techniques. A classic structural device, outlines can enhance your ability to craft and shape your work. Unfortunately, you've probably been taught to abuse, not use, this tool, so here's a remedy for the "outline phobic."

You can use this page as a worksheet, or copy it onto a larger sheet of paper.

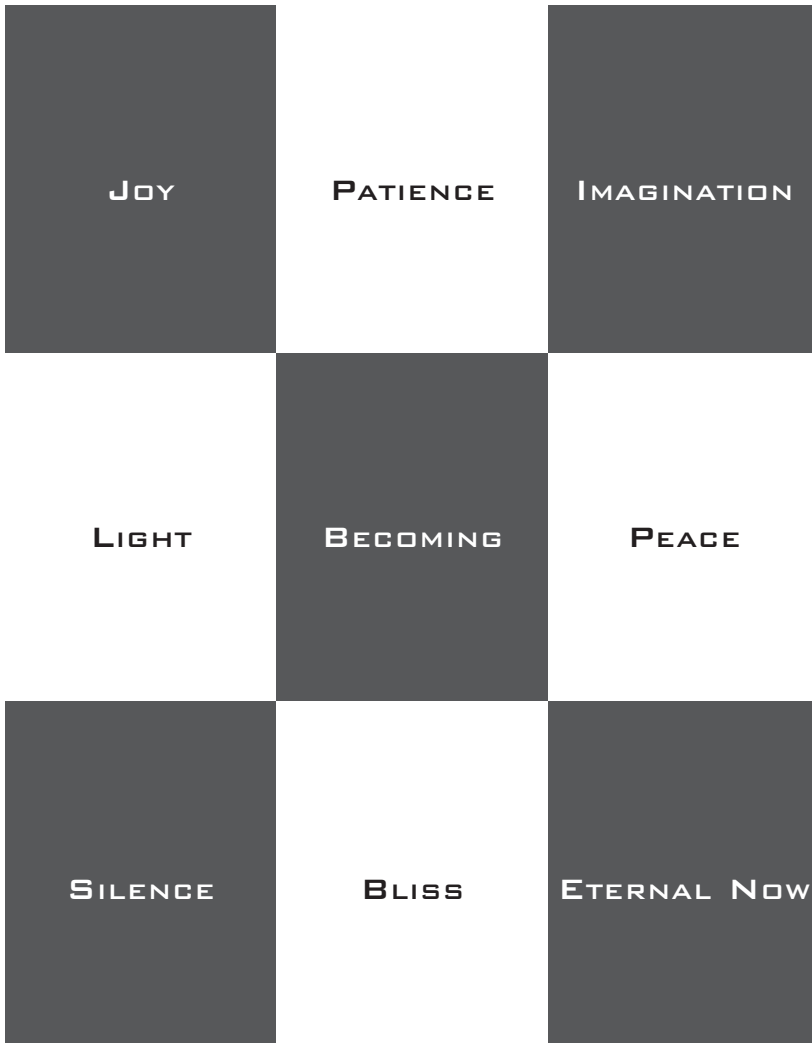


figure 4

THE ULTIMATE CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

Steps

1. Get three blank sheets of paper and label the first “Beginning,” the second “Middle,” and the last “End.”
2. Toss a coin onto your Coin Toss “Worksheet.” Use this word as your “Beginning.” Repeat the above process, making the second and third words your “Middle” and “End.”
3. Brainstorm on the meaning of the first word, using the sheet labeled “Beginning.” Brainstorm on the meaning of the second word, using your “Middle” sheet of paper, and finish by brainstorming on the meaning of the third word.
4. Use the glossary (p. 17) to brainstorm further on the meaning of each of the three words.
5. Add a list of nouns to each sheet.
6. Create a “map” by spreading the worksheets out on the floor and adding pictures and layers.
7. Create a sustained piece of writing based on the map.

EXERCISE SEVEN – ANIMALS

This exercise will take you through a process whereby an existing structure is superimposed on unrelated raw material. You’ll also have a chance to use what I call “extrospection” – the opposite of introspection. Extrospection means turning to the world outside yourself as a source of inspiration, identifying existing structural models, and then adapting them to the specific needs of your own process to create a work that is uniquely self-expressive, yet possesses the coherence of the original structure. For example, James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is uniquely his, yet closely follows the structure of Homer’s *Odyssey*.

Steps

1. Write freely.
2. Jot down the names of four animals.
3. Create a silly story, and bring the four animals into interaction.
4. Number the animals one through four in the order in which they appear in your story.
5. Analyze the relationship among the animals, using the example provided as a model (see p.9).
6. Slash a vertical and horizontal line across the raw material created for step one.
7. Circle one noun in each box, and number them one through four.
8. Create a piece of writing in which the content of the four nouns is superimposed on the form of the four animals.

Here's an example of a typical animal story.

Zebra, Aardvark, Moose, Mouse

Feeling so proud of his stripes, the zebra hardly noticed that the landscape had changed. White snow, vast open sky ... it wasn't until a moose's bellowing voice interrupted his reverie with a loud "What are *you* doing here" that the zebra realized he was no longer in his native clime. "What *am* I doing here?" he asked himself. "More to the point," a shrieky little voice exclaimed, "How did we *get* here?" The zebra and the moose looked down at the source of the shrill sound to see a little mouse staring up at them with beady eyes. "I think this must be a dream," they all said at once, and at that moment, the aardvark woke up.

Here's an example of two types of structural analyses, depending on whether you include a narrator in your animal story or not.

Sample 1: Structural Analysis of Animal Scenario

Animals 1, 2, and 3 are all a part of animal 4's dream, although they do not know this. Animal 1 is very egotistical, to the point where he doesn't even notice his surroundings. It's only when animal 2 shouts at him that awareness dawns. When animal 3 appears, the animals integrate their strange experience and arrive at a simultaneous and mutual conclusion. The dreamer, animal 4, never appears.

Sample 2: Structural Analysis with Narrator

Narrator looks out window and sees animal 1. It is morning, and the narrator is puzzled to find animal 1 in a cold habitat. Animal 1 doesn't seem to realize where he is, however. It's only when ... [continue as above].

Here's an example of what NOT to do:

Four Nouns Superimposed on Animal Scenario

The sky, the couch, and the cobblestones are all a part of faith's dream, although they do not know this. The sky is very egotistical, to the point where it doesn't even notice its surroundings. It's only when the couch shouts at him that awareness dawns. When the cobblestones appear, the three different realities integrate their strange experience and arrive at the simultaneous and mutual conclusion. The dreamer, faith, never appears.

Here's a sample of a story using four nouns and based on the structure of the animal story.

Story Suggested by Four Nouns and Animal Scenario

The woman lay on the couch, staring up at the sky. She didn't see the sky, which was a beautiful bright blue, all scudded with clouds. She was sunk deep in her own thoughts, blaming herself for her recent miscarriage. Shrouded in her imagined failures, she'd lost all awareness of her surroundings. Suddenly, a small voice piping, "Mommy, what are you doing on the couch, have you been here all day?" snapped her back to reality. Simultaneously, she heard her husband's