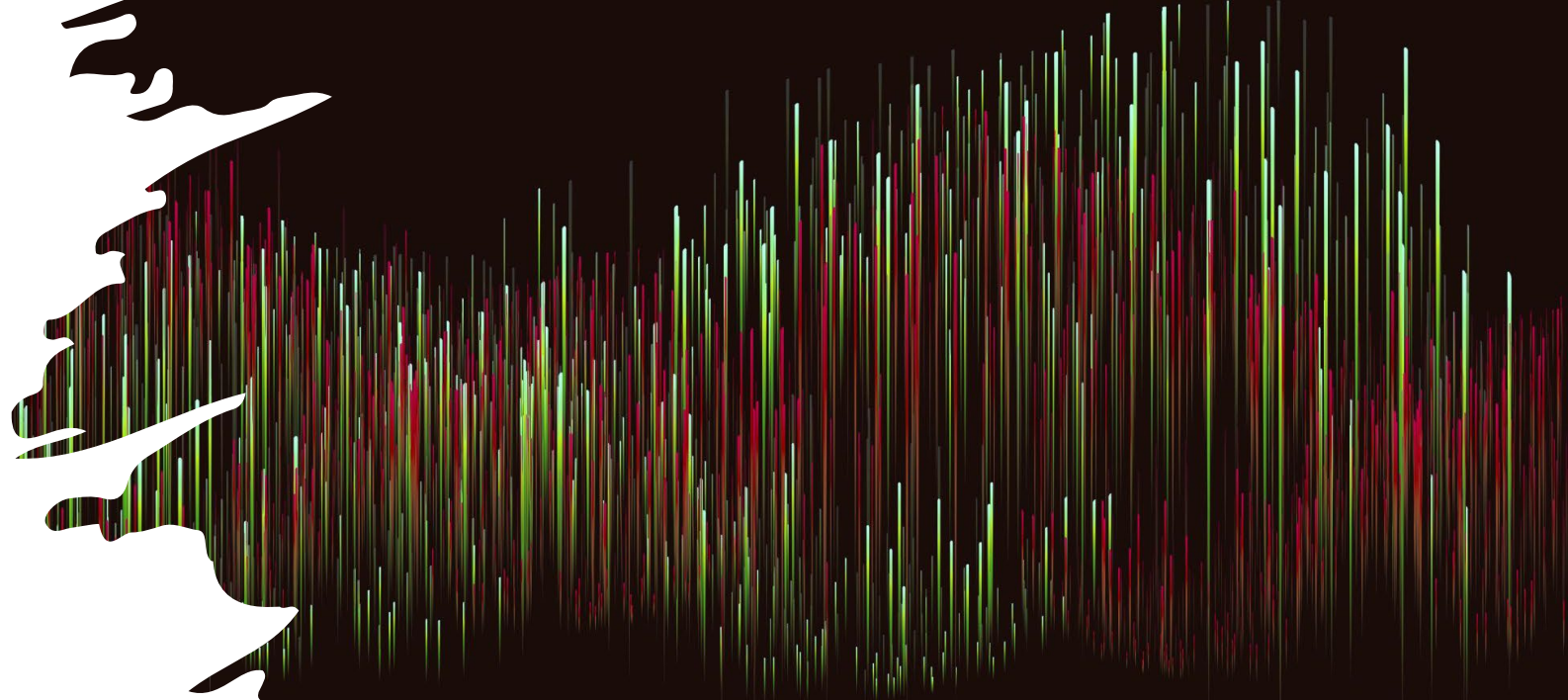


6 Ways to become a better teacher of creative writing

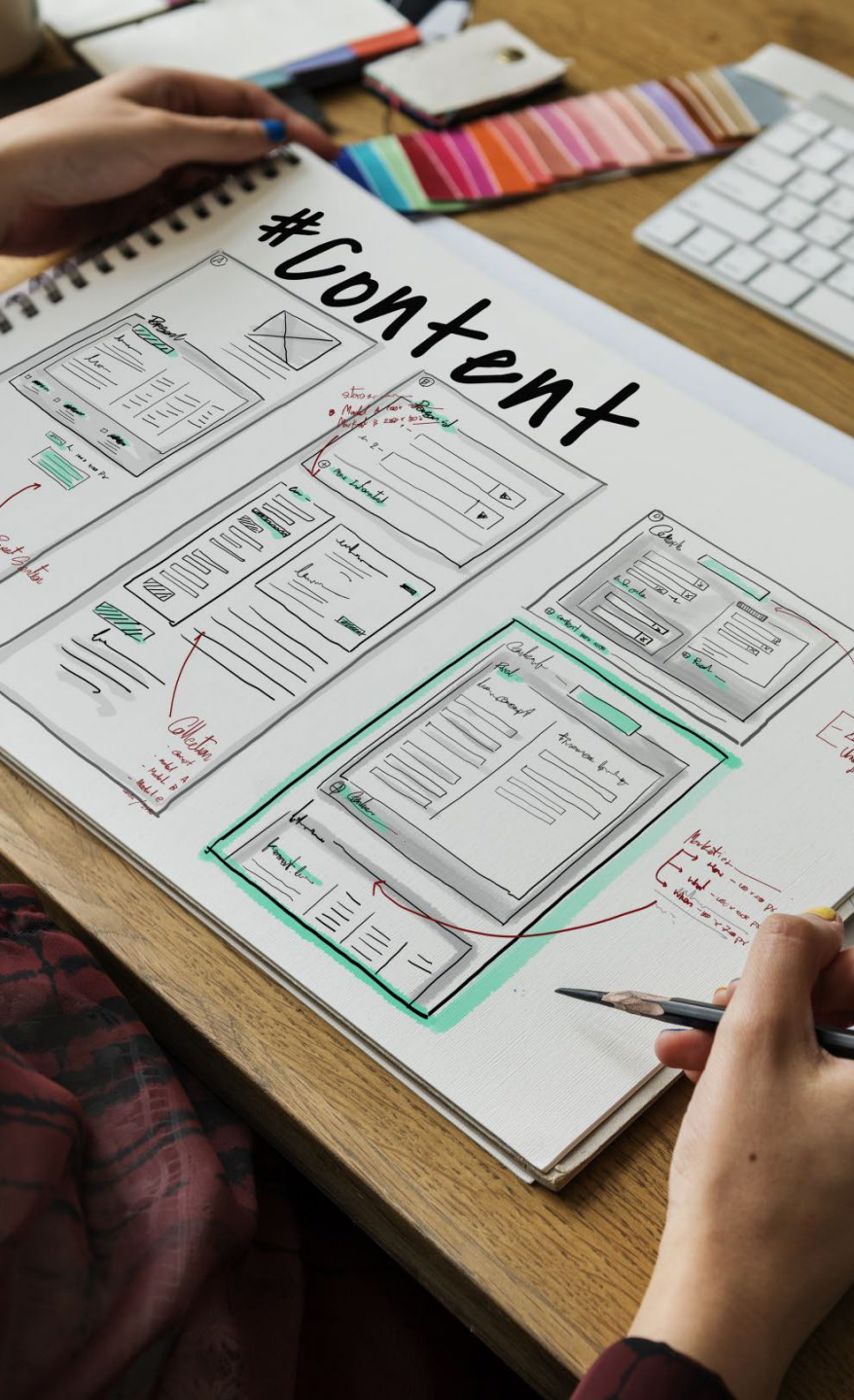
F. Gilbert



Activating Prior Knowledge

- What do you know already as a teacher and learner about the teaching of creative writing? What has worked for you?





Why are you teaching creative writing?

- Put some comments in the chat.

An extract of my writing...

- On a business trip, my stepfather returns with a free lady's handbag to give my mother: it's a big bag, with lots of compartments and loads of useful pockets for make-up. Feeling generous my mother decides to give me the bag -- and requests that I use it as a school bag from that day onwards. I don't have the money to buy another.
- I try my best to shield the bag under coat when I am going to school and bury it under my chair in the class, but it is no good. The boys notice it. During the first few days, they eye it silently, not quite knowing what to make of it. Then one day, a kid called Andrew Rose sees me carrying it over my shoulder in the playground, making my way to the next lesson. He shouts behind me, 'There goes Pilkie and his handbag!' As all the other boys are on their way to the lesson, a strong chant quickly gathers momentum: 'Pilkie and his handbag! Pilkie and his handbag!'

Tip 1: Write alongside your students & share your processes



Metacognition



Learning orientation



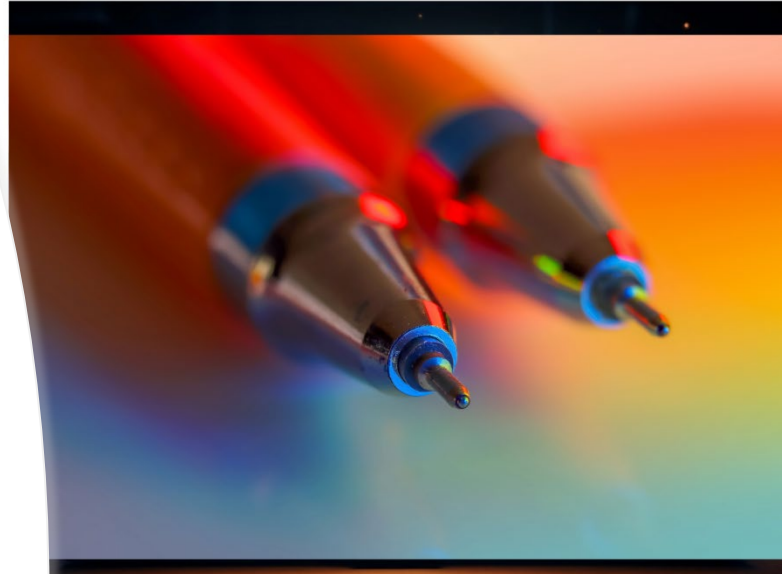
Learning through mistakes



Struggling

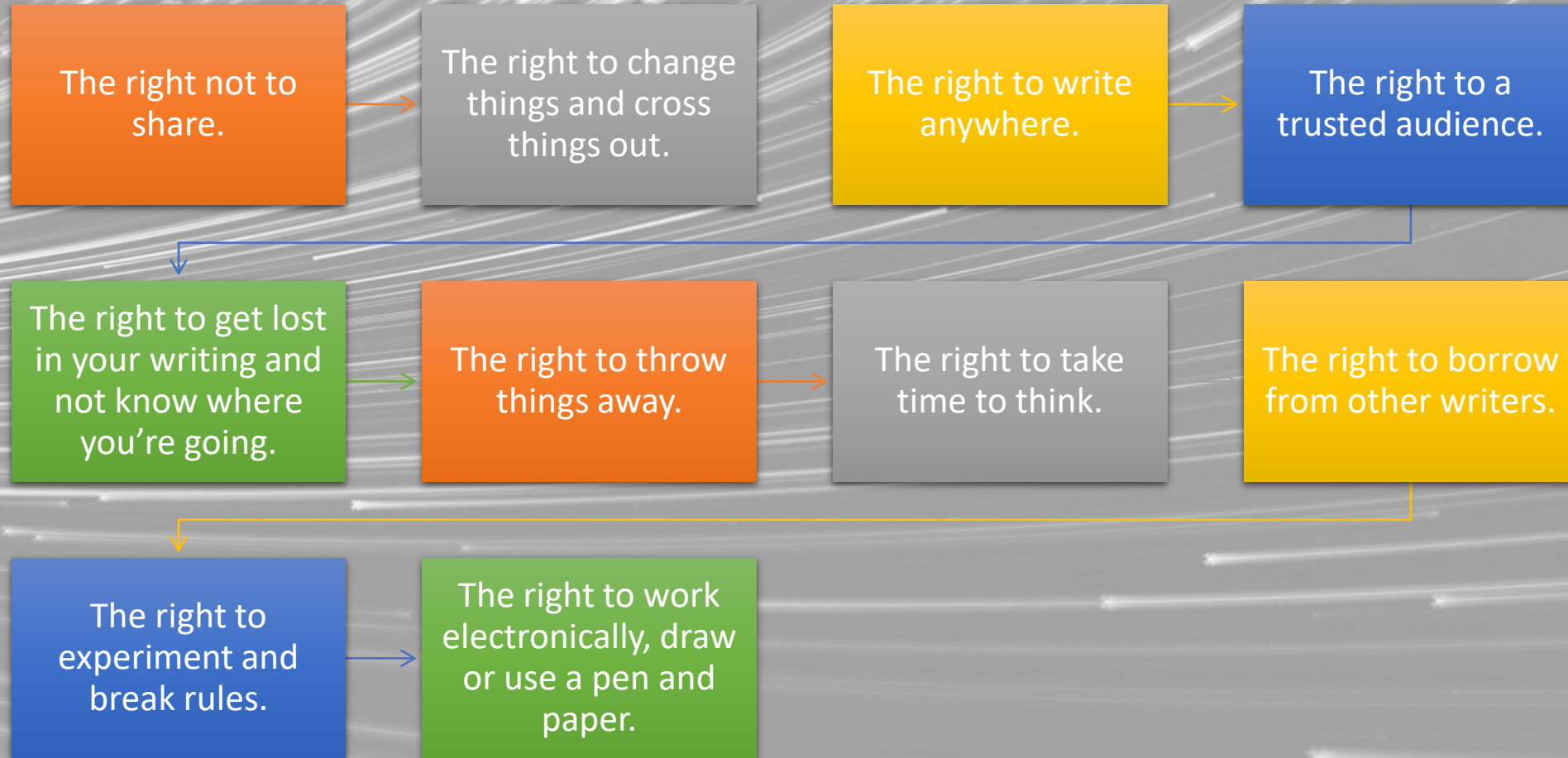


Planning or not?



Planner writers	Discovery writers
I think about it in my head first. I think before I write.	I just really get on with it and things start coming into your head.
I'll probably just think about it my head, how are you going to set it out, and then do it after I thought about it.	Well, I didn't know what I was going to write about and then I just decided that, start and see if I got any ideas when I started writing.
I think about what we have to do and how we've got to do it.	It just flows really; I just started writing... As I write it just comes to me and new words, new sentences, just different things, different ideas...
I think about how I'm going to start the story and how I'm going to continue it.	As I writing it in just comes from their; it just flows and just get more and more ideas.

The rights of the writer



Tip 2: Nurture Automaticity

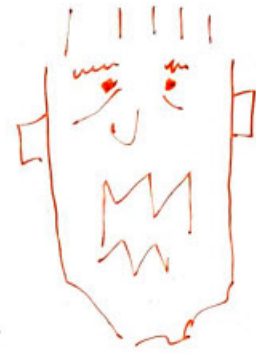


‘The most effective way I know to improve your writing is to do freewriting exercises regularly. At least three times a week. They are sometimes called ‘automatic writing’, ‘babbling’, or ‘jabbering’ exercises. The idea is to write for 10 minutes (later on, perhaps fifteen-twenty). Don’t stop for anything. Go quickly without rushing. Never stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you’re doing. If you can’t think of a word or a spelling, just a squiggle or else write ‘I can’t think of it’. Just put something down. The easiest thing to do is put down whatever is in your mind.’

Peter Elbow, *Writing without Teachers*, OUP, 1998, p. 3

Why diagramming?

EXPRESSION!



AESTHETIC RESPONSE ~



MAKING SENSE &

MEANING


of topics & texts



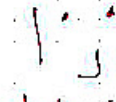
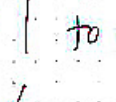


How do you diagram?

① Respond visually & verbally to texts & topics -

② Annotate & use 'secret strings'

③ No artistic skill required: draw  to represent basic concepts.

    to represent basic concepts.

④ Keep it flowing; this is 'low stakes' stuff.

⑤ Explain & dialogue with others about what you are trying to show.

⑥ Re-draft, re-do, & re-interpret.

⑦ Use diagrams, colours, concept maps, maps of consciousness, storyboards.

Utterton's dream

My friend Dr Henry Jekyll was alive again -



I was telling him not to write a will giving every thing to Edward Hyde.

I give all my possessions to Edward Hyde!



Suddenly Dr J's face changed



Try mindful
planning! FG to
illustrate

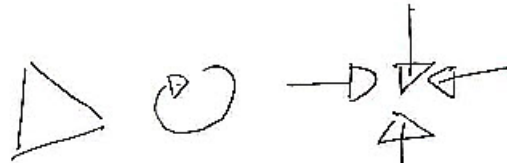
Planning SoW

- ① Think - diverge -
- ② Chunk off time, & figure out your parameters: times, dates, time, content to cover.
- ③ Consider WHY you are teaching this material, WHAT you have to cover & HOW you'll teach it.
- ④ Devise learning objectives/goals for each session, & assessments: S&L, reading, writing.
- ⑤ Plan based on what you know of your class, & be flexible, review your plan, & devise more detailed lesson plans.

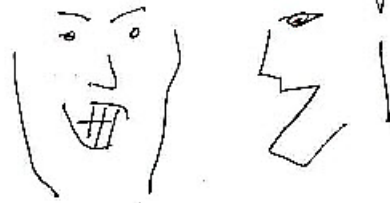


What is diagr-arting?

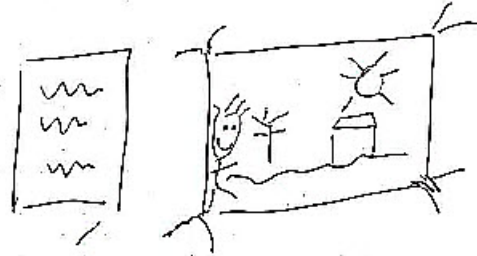
Diagrams



Dialogue



& art



permission to express

yourself ~

you're allowed!



Tip 3: encourage students to draw from their funds of knowledge

Memory triggers: sweets, smells, photographs etc

Fictionalise events: change for better/worse

Important people: fictionalise them, positively/negative e.g. teachers??!

Describing emotional spaces

Memorable anecdotes

The learning pit

Learning this way

reach the level

I don't understand
It's too hard
I want to quit

"This is what learning feels like."



Eureka!

reach the level

I was right not to give up
Ah! I think I'm getting it
Maybe my LP can help
I'll try again

"If you can leap over the pit, you're probably not learning!"

How to Disappear Completely

- ‘So, do you think he’s dead?’ Phil asks.
 - His piping high words, choked with worry, irritate Alan.
 - ‘Dunno,’ Alan says, trying his best to stop his voice from cracking.
 - ‘Are you crying?’ Phil says.
 - ‘Shut up!’
 - Alan rolls over on the bed and turns to the wall, tears leaking across his face.
 - His father is almost certainly dead.
 - Yes.
 - He doesn’t want to be sad.
 - That’s not allowed.
 - Phil gets up from his bed opposite and plods over to his brother, standing over him.
 - ‘You are crying!’ he hisses in surprise.
- ‘I’m not!’ Alan sobs.
 - ‘It’s all right, I won’t tell,’ Phil says.
 - And then he gets into bed beside his big brother, snuggling up to him. Holding him by the shoulders. Alan feels Phil’s soft cheeks against his neck and his trembling fingers on his shoulder blades and thinks about death.
 - It is 1979.
 - The two brothers are lying in the dark on a narrow bed in a house in Southampton.
 - The suburbs outside are quiet.

Tip 4: Cognitive Prompts

Firsts: My first accident, first day at school

Pictures/photographs: personify an object

Films/videos: describe the setting

Powerful extracts/passages



Tip 5: Use objects

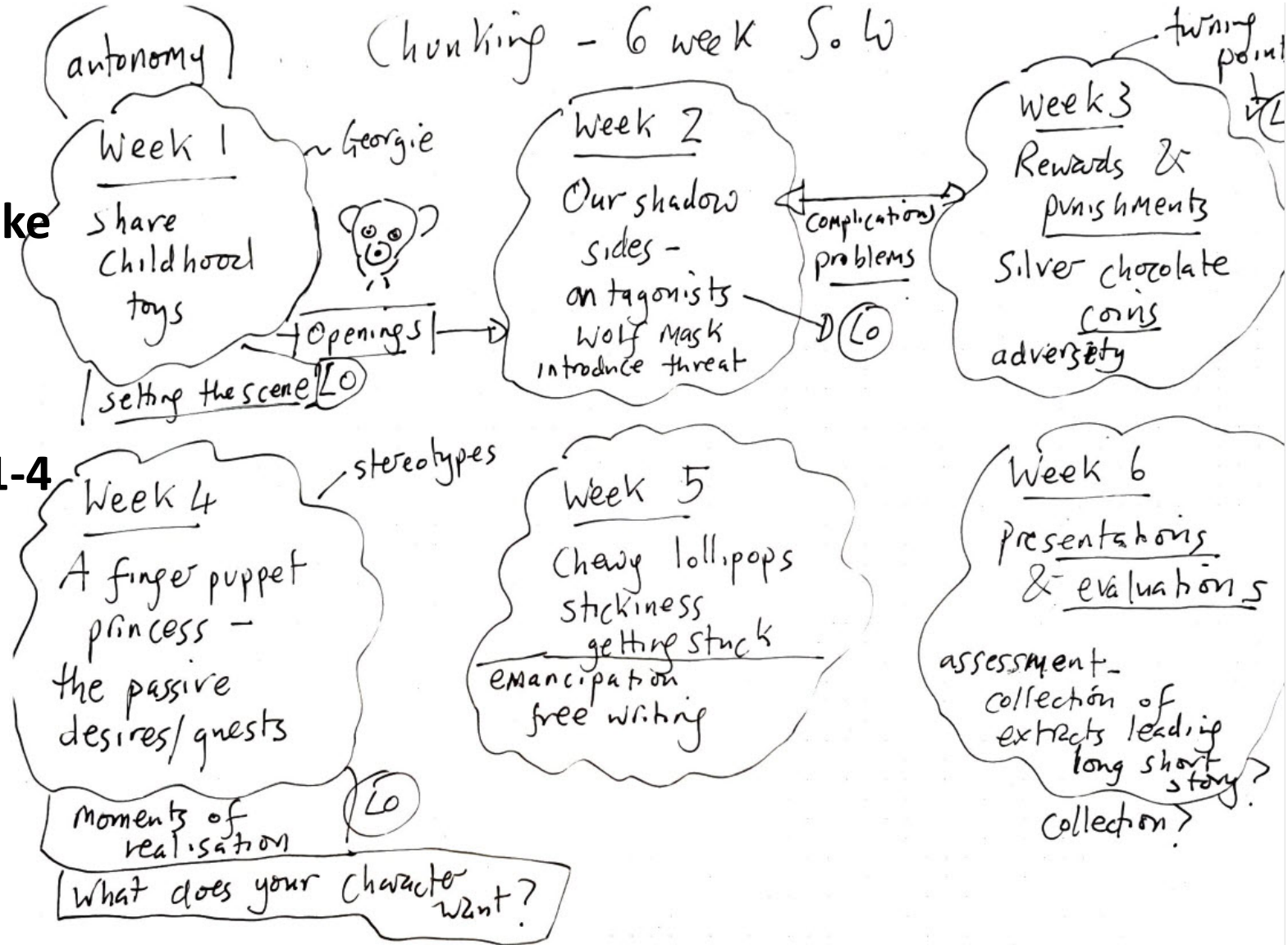
- Choose an object about your person that is valuable to you. E.g. keys, phone, an item of clothes.
- Freewrite or diagram all the reasons why it is valuable to you; describe it; describe when, how and why you like it/use it etc.
- Now imagine that you lose this object...what do you feel like? What would you do?
- You now have the beginning of a story.

Use objects to structure

- Opening: set the scene/describe the object (the phone under some socks)
- Complications: a character encountering a problem because of the object (e.g. a very punctual, organised person who has issues about saying sorry loses their phone)
- Crisis: the problem gets worse, the character has to make a decision (they can't phone their love interest to say they will be late)
- Climax: the problem explodes in the character's life (their love interest leaves them)
- Resolution: the character has changed in some way because of the problem/object (they confess to being scatty)



Tip 6: Make lesson planning creative!
Use tips 1-4 to help!



The Creative Writing Teacher's Toolkit

- <http://www.francisgilbert.co.uk/2024/02/the-creative-writing-teachers-toolkit/>



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The Creative Writing Teacher's Toolkit

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An article which outlines how creative writers might teach creative writing, using relevant theories of learning.

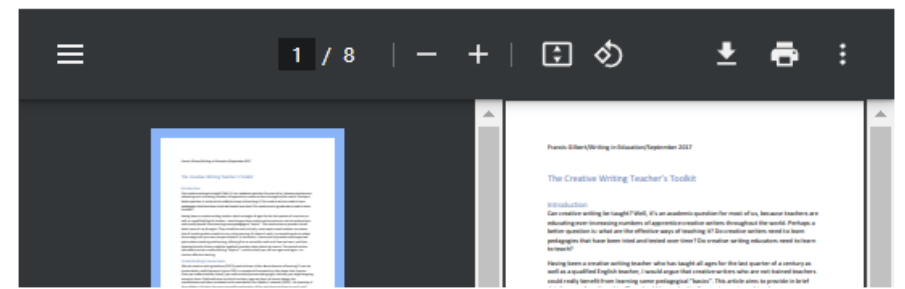
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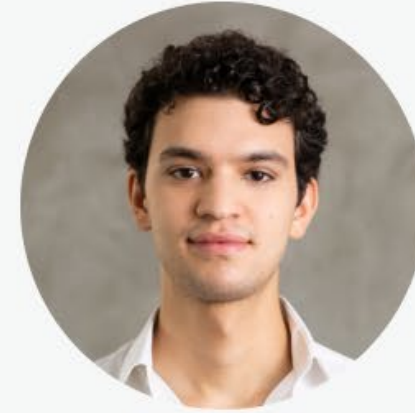
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