Creative writing project resource guide

What is this guide?

The purpose of this project resource guide is to help support your learning within the creative writing project area. It provides step-by-step suggestions on how to get started and how to continue learning within the project area.

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What is project learning?

We believe young people learn best by doing. In our program, you have the opportunity to choose project areas that interest you. We then offer opportunities for positive learning environments and guidance from adult mentors. We also encourage you to take leadership roles and learn independently.

What is a creative writing project?

Creative writing is an expressive form of literature that allows you to use your imagination and creativity. The form your writing takes is completely dependent on your preferences and interests, but could consist of poetry, fiction (flash, short, or long), non-fiction (memoirs or personal, non-academic essays), graphic novels, screenwriting, and playwriting. Not familiar with some of these genres? Read on to learn more!

Getting started with a creative writing project

Write what you know

"We think our lives are dull, ordinary, boring. Other people have lives worthy of poetry, but not us." –Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson is considered one of the most important American poets and one of the greatest writers of Western civilization. While she is a household name now, she only had ten poems published during her lifetime, despite having written well over a thousand. If Emily Dickinson was able to write thousands of poems from her

bedroom, you can write poems, stories, or whatever your chosen genre is too! Just start with what you know: your experiences, memories, the people and things around you. It is a misconception that writers must lead extraordinary lives in order to write—writing about life is what makes it extraordinary!

Self-doubt and writer's block

Every single writer experiences self-doubt and writer's block time and time again. And guess what? That's normal! The only way to overcome these two things, though, is by continuing to write even if you feel whatever you are writing isn't "good." Sometimes the most important writing is whatever you are able to get out of your head and onto the page in times of doubt.

One way to do that is to consider your own favorite writers or well-known writers. Even writers as famous and as successful as Stephen King have spoken about their fear of failure that they still struggle with!

Start the writing process

1. **Find your inspiration.** Every piece of writing has something it wants to say—a topic or idea to explore. What's yours? You may already have ideas in that creative mind of yours. Or you also may benefit from getting inspiration from others. Either way, find a topic that inspires you to write something. It could be something (or someone) you care a lot about, something you enjoy, something you loathe, something you wonder about or want to learn more about—anything!

   Once you have your inspirational starting point, have a brainstorming session about it to dig in a little deeper. There are many different strategies you can use to find your inspiration! Here are a few to try:

   - List: List as many things as you can about your topic—what it is, what questions you have about it, what it affects, how it impacts your life or those you know, etc.
   - Freewrite: Think about your topic. Then start writing. Anything goes, and spelling doesn't matter. If only questions come to mind, write them down! Include how you're feeling about the topic. Keep the pencil (or keyboard keys) moving for at least 10 minutes.
   - Loop: Looping is a way of freewriting. Start by freewriting, and then stop. Then find an idea in that writing that appeals to you and freewrite

again, this time about that topic. Repeat this a few times, and you may find the topic you want to focus on for the challenge.

- Mind map: Write your topic in the center of a piece of paper. Then think of things that relate to it—its impacts, issues, your experiences with it, etc. Draw a line connecting any ideas that relate to each other. This will create a kind of web. Look at where there are clusters of ideas that all connect that interest you. This can help you see the topic in new ways.
- Draw: Draw whatever comes to mind. This may hint at a topic you wouldn't have otherwise thought of!

2. **Pick a format.** What kind of writing do you want to do? Pick a format that inspires you. You should also set a realistic goal for yourself. If you're going to be busy for a while, or you're new to writing, start simple. Some ideas:
   - Poetry: A written composition that can include rhythm, rhyme, metaphor, and other creative devices. You can write one poem on one subject or a series of poems that go together.
   - Fiction: Fiction pieces can take many different forms and sub-genres, from fanfiction to children's stories, sci-fi to historical fiction, and in any combination. In addition, you can format your fiction stories as flash fiction (very short stories, typically only a couple hundred words), short fiction (a story that is longer than flash fiction but shorter than a novel), and long fiction (a novel length story).
   - Non-fiction: Non-fiction writing is boring, right? No! This is your opportunity to tell stories about *your* own life and experiences. Write an essay about a fun trip you've been on, a close friend or family member, or any meaningful experience you've had.
   - Graphic novel: A form of long fiction that includes illustrations in a comic book format.
   - Screen and playscript: A playscript is a piece of writing for a play that includes character descriptions, dialogue, setting descriptions, and stage directions. Screen scripts are similar, except that they're written for the screen.

   Other format ideas:
   - Series of social media posts or an article educating the public on a topic you are passionate about
   - A display on the different types of poems or genres, or your favorite author or fictional character
   - A display on "What is Creative Writing?"

3. **Do some research.** Writing is easier when you know what you're writing about. So if you have questions that you'd like answers to, go onto the Internet, dig

into your books, talk to experts, and learn what you need to learn. Be sure to look for [credible sources](#)!

4. Start writing. Remember that writing is a process! Even the best writers go through many many drafts before they publish something. So don't worry about what it looks like just yet—polishing comes later. For now, just get some words down. Here are some resources that may help you with the writing process:
   - [I Write Like](#): A fun way to explore different writers and your own writing style
   - [Step By Step Guide To Writing A Story](#)
   - [Poems for Kids](#): A place to explore poetry and maybe get inspired
   - [How to Write a Play](#)

5. **Get feedback.** Once you have a draft that you feel OK about (doesn't have to be great yet), it's time for some feedback. The first person to consult is yourself. Then find someone you trust who is willing to take a look at it for you. But make sure to find someone who will be kind but will also give you helpful feedback. Saying "that was great!" is not very helpful. Good feedback means they've shared something with you that you can use to make it better.

6. **Revise.** Once you know what to improve, you can work on making the writing better. And because writing is a process, you may need to repeat steps 5 and 6 (feedback and revision) two, three, or even four times!

7. **Polish.** Once satisfied with your work, it's time to put on those finishing touches. This involves checking for typos and making final changes to the language to make sure it makes the impact you want it to.

8. **Reflect on the process.** It's both helpful for others and vital for you as a learner to think about what you got out of the experience. If you take your writing to the county fair, the judge will want to know what you learned. Write a short paragraph about what you learned. Not sure what to write? Consider:
   - Why did you choose to write about this topic?
   - Why did you choose this particular format to explore the topic of equity?
   - Overall, what did you learn from doing this project?
   - What do you hope others get out of reading your work?
   - What would you do differently next time?

9. **Share your work!** Sharing (publishing) your work with others is another important part of the learning process because it helps you process, express, and validate what you learned. Here are some ideas for how you can share your work.
   - Enter your writing into a local contest or county fair. Head back to the [creative writing project page](#) for more information about how to exhibit at the fair.
   - Submit your work to a local community newsletter, newspaper, or blog.
   - Visit with a local professional writer to get feedback.
   - Use your writing to spark dialog with friends or family members about your topic.
   - Use [Padlet](#) to share and talk about your writing with others

Take your learning further

You've wrapped up one project…what's next? What questions did this project spark for you? What are you inspired to learn more about? You could try taking your writing to the next level by exploring [equity through creative writing](#) (designed for grades 6 and up).

Explore similar 4-H project areas for other opportunities—maybe writing an illustrated children's book inspired you to learn more about art, or perhaps you'd like to put your poem to music.

Here are other expressive arts projects you may want to check out:

- [Crafts and fine arts](#)
- [Performing arts](#)
- [Photography](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Communication and demonstration](#)

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