

SPARK YOUR CREATIVITY

Five activities to breathe new life into your manuscript

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Breathe Deep: A Writer's Nature Walk

Get out of your head and into your body. Take a walk around your neighborhood, and while you walk, gather five-seven interesting objects. Think about your senses, and try to find objects or images that appeal to each. For instance, a fuzzy caterpillar might appeal to the sense of touch, while a wind-chime might appeal to your ears. If you can, take the objects you find back to your office. If your physical object can't be taken, try taking a photo instead.

When you're back in your writing space, line up your objects and photos (if you can print them, or put your camera nearby so you can take a look.) As you write your next scene, try to include at least three of the objects you've chosen. You might find new inspiration by using these objects, or you may choose to later take them out, but the creative challenge of including them is sure to liven up your writing, regardless.

In Your Character's Shoes: An Unusual Shopping Experience

Choose a store your character would enjoy visiting. Give yourself twenty minutes to explore the store and consider what items your character might select to buy for him or herself. Think about what he or she would buy with five dollars or less. What one item would he or she buy and feel as though it was a complete splurge? What item might he or she throw in, just at the last minute? If you like, purchase a small item that reminds you of your character to keep in your writing space.

Then, when you're back in your writing space, write a journal entry about what you learned about your character from this experience. You may include some elements of your shopping trip in your story, or it may be just an exercise to get to know your character better.

Throw the Dice: A Spontaneous Scene

Find an old set of dice, or buy one at a local party store. If you can find oversized dice, all the better. On small round labels, write six settings your character might encounter in the world of your story. Stick one label to each side of one dice. On the other dice, add labels that give a tone for the scene. You may choose emotions, such as "frustrating," "lonely," "surprising," or "joyful." You might also choose ambiance words, such as "stormy," "dark," "sunny," "noisy." Then, roll the dice and write a scene using the emotion and setting you roll. The best combinations are unexpected ones, such as a "stormy classroom," or a "lonely mall."

Paste and Paper: Collage an Idea to Life

Gather a small stack of magazines, and give yourself about twenty minutes to page through them. Before you begin, give your collage a title, preferably one that will help you solve something you're currently working on in your story. For instance, "What Triana Cares About Most," or "Life in the Town of Dundee," or "What Henry Carries in his Pockets," etc. Find images and words that associate with this title, and cut or tear them out. Gather a whole collection before arranging them on your page. Once you've spend

twenty minutes (or so) collecting, arrange them into a collage. Don't feel obliged to include every picture you chose in your collage. Notice the ones that fit and the ones you choose to leave out. Label your collage, if you choose, noting important elements, such as "Dundee jobs include," and "In Dundee, people value," etc, with a collection of images. There's no wrong way to make a collage! Then, post your artwork in your writing space.

Afterward, take a moment to freewrite about what you learned while working on your collage, making notes about new scenes you may want to add into your story, or new information you want to include somewhere.

Rhythm and Mood: Set the Tone with a Playlist

Set aside twenty minutes to look through your own music files. Create a playlist of songs that would appeal to your main character. If you like, gather a few new songs, too. Then, if you want to extend the experience further, create a playlist for another important character in your story, perhaps even for the antagonist.

Try writing a scene that is driven by your main character while listening to their playlist. Then, try writing a scene driven by another character while listening to their playlist. Experiment. What happens when you write a scene between your character and your antagonist while playing the antagonist's playlist? Does your character work harder to take control of the scene?

Do you need more creative inspiration, or are you feeling stuck on your project? Do you know Naomi offers consultations and mentorships via skype, email and in person? Common focuses for these sessions are creative goal setting, strategies for unblocking, writing skill development, uncovering one's unique writing voice and passion, business and marketing basics for writers, and overall accountability and momentum. For more information, email Naomi at naomi@naomikinsman.com.