IMAGINATION AS A GIFT

by

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You have a great gift — for your own use, and for sharing with others: your imagination. You have imagination because you are a human being. But it is up to you to develop this gift. For those of you who want to develop your imaginations as writers, I have the following suggestions:

1) _Read, read, read._
    a) This lets you see what others have done; gives you a sense of how other writers have used _their_ imaginations; and stimulates you to see what's possible.
    b) It provides you with a deep and sensitive understanding of language — how it works, what it can do; it enlarges your vocabulary because you not only learn new words, but see familiar words in thousands of different contexts.

2_)_ _Train your powers of observation_.
    a) Learn to see details as well as large patterns.
    b) Observe the shapes of things, the smell and taste of things, the feel of things when you touch them.
    c) Listen carefully to people talking so that when you write dialogue it comes out as people actually talk.

If you learn to observe closely and develop a good sensory memory (visual and otherwise), you will be able to file your observations away, so they will be there when you need them.

3) _Practice using your imagination_.

    There are many ways to do this: seeing possibilities in situations and people's relationships, asking yourself: What if — ?

1

EXAMPLES: What if: a family came home after a weekend trip and found that all the furniture had been moved out of their house? The kitchen table, the TV, Mom's potted plants, Dad's golf clubs, the children's beds and clothes and toys. The rugs removed, the pictures taken from the walls, the family photo albums and books taken from the shelves. Nothing but the bare floors and bare walls left, even the family dog and cat gone , , ,

What if there was an antique clock in a secondhand shop which, when its hands were stopped or moved forward or backward, would cause time to stand still, or leap to the future, or retreat to the past? Who would be the one to discover this property of the clock? The owner of the shop? a customer who bought the clock? a burglar? And what uses could this discovery but put to? For what purposes?

4) *Write*, *write,* *write*. *You have to exercise your imagination to develop it.* Train your imagination, and *practice through writing to get better and better in your use of language.* Writing should always be fun; but don't forget that writing *well* is hard work.

The gift of imagination is a wonderful possession:
— for your own use, when writing for <u>yourself</u>; for enjoyment, exploration of possibilities, the pleasure of creation;

— for sharing with others: when you write hoping that someone else will read what you've written, *you* are making a gift of *your* imagination to *them*.

Some thoughts on writing itself:

SHOW, don't tell. Use examples; dramatize; the use of dialogue is valuable in showing character and advancing storyline. Use visual images. Say the most in the fewest possible words. FIRST DRAFT: Write to get your ideas down. Write to please yourself and to have fun. Then let the writing cool before starting the second draft.

SECOND and LATER DRAFTS: re-reading what you've written, and re-writing to improve it. **Re-writing (self-editing) is where you really learn to write**. Re-writing is where the piece is shaped, where new ideas get written in, where you change your mind, where you trim out all the extra words and check to see if you've left out something important, and whether you need to do more showing and less telling.

READ IT ALOUD. Reading the text aloud will show you where rough spots remain, or boring spots, where things get too talky or move too slowly. Remember: if it feels good in the mouth and sounds good to the ear, then the chances are that the LANGUAGE you've used is pretty good. _ALWAYS READ YOUR WORK ALOUD._