

Living Words Creative Writing Workshop Exercise

"Our Basket of Stuff"

Introduction (5 minutes)

Have the workshop moderator introduce the writer and give a introduction about him-or herself.

Icebreaker (5 minutes)

For the icebreaker, pass around a half dollar coin. First, have the guest writer hold the half dollar coin in hand and say, "If you had had this half dollar when you were younger, what would you have bought with it?" Responses will range depending on the time the participant grew up in.

*The clarity, time, and pace of the icebreaker worked very well. This icebreaker, consisting of one object and asking for one response, is brief yet still allows for storytelling.

Writer introduces the topic (about 5 minutes)

Have the writer introduce the theme of the session by saying, "For the next part of today's writing exercise, we're going to distribute these baskets around the room". Pass around three baskets, each filled with a variety of small items. Items might consist of trinkets such as a model car, paintbrush, candy, playing card, cow bell, small teddy bear, or a comic book.

Have the moderator for the day's session add that the participants should "sift through the baskets and find a trinket that you can relate to. Take that piece, and then start thinking about a story relating to it. It can be a memory or a story that you've totally made up. It can be happy, sad, funny, even quirky or weird."

Then write the following instructions on the board:

" Find an object. Tell a story about it."

* It was important to note that the stories did not have to be a memory or something that participants had to reminisce about. Participants were invited to make up their own story about the object. You may even have the moderator ask, "if the object spoke to you, what

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would it tell you?”

Writing (about 10 minutes)

Once the participants choose one or two objects, have them write their stories for the following ten minutes. Allow enough time for them to write, but not enough to become idle.

Sharing (about 10 minutes)

When some participants finish, have the writer interject “I know that there are a couple of you putting last minute touches on your story, but if you don’t mind we’re going to go ahead and start sharing the stories that we’re so anxious to hear.”

Have the writer give instructions for sharing by saying, “there are two things I’d like you to do (1) hold up and show the item or items you chose and then (2) share your story or a portion of that story with us.”

Have the participants share their stories. Some may read straight from their journals while others may use their writings as a prompt for verbal paraphrasing or elaboration.

After each story, have the writer complement the story and thank the participant for sharing. Participants will be encouraged by simple statements like, “Thank you for sharing. I enjoyed that story very much.” Have the writer conclude sharing by saying, “Thank you. It’s interesting to see how the things that are around us every day bring up all these memories and stories.”

Thanks / Goodbye (1-2 minutes)

Have the mediator thank everyone, including the guest writer, and tell everyone what to look forward to the next week.