

Hi, the exercises below are used at Story Wagon as a way of challenging the borders of the real and imaginary, letting us shake off what's normal, and sense what's really in this moment now with us.

Story Wagon is a touring story sanctuary. It's a towable pop-up bowtop caravan, with a huge writing desk inside and a cupboard full of typewriters.

We offer creative writing, writing for wellbeing & traditional storytelling activities all around Scotland. [www.storywagon.co.uk](http://www.storywagon.co.uk)

Hope that you're well and that you enjoy playing with these thoughts, strategies and prompts

Luke Winter  
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INSPIRATION, from Latin, *inspirare*, to breathe into.

Inspiration as in the breath. Not inspiration as a special act. Not inspiration as something separate. Inspiration as a practice essential to our living. As we breathe in, and out.

To become inspired: to become in tune with what we sense during our breaths. Listen, watch. Breath like sea on shore draws in, out. What's its wake?

Inspiration as sensitivity. Inspiration as listening. Inspiration as empathy. Then let fly, by writing, what needs to be acknowledged with words.

### **Gathering Into Things**

Inspiration is drawing out what is underneath the breath. Inspiration is breathing through sensation. Inspiration is being gathered into things.

When there, when with them, play for play's sake. Forget all glamour, prestige and judgement. Dance your words, your ideas, your visions. Explore with rhythm, trust it to hold you. Celebrate what you sense.

If a subject appears to you and it seems scary, it probably has a lot of energy in it. So write, and explode it with your words.

### **Strategies**

#### *1. Explore Your Genius*

'Genius' is an old word whose meaning has changed in recent history. Only a few generations ago people understood 'genius' as a divine force that attended to every place, every person and every thing. You could recognise, or ignore, the genius of each place, person or thing. Be in touch with its genius, or not.

Now, look at the world anew. Write about the genius of what surrounds you.

## 2. *Magic Words*

There are other old words with weirder histories. They have meant more profound things than the way we understand them now.

Explore writing with these words and see where they take you:

*Fascinate, Charm, Chant, Breath, Genius, Animate, Logos, Glamour, Sing, Spell, Weird.*

## 3. *Four Elements of Imagination*

Play with these four elements of imagination: **addition** and **subtraction**, **division** and **multiplication**. Acknowledge something in your scene and modify its parameters using these four elements. Multiply a property that something has: increase the strength of an animal, increase the intensity of the sunlight. Or divide: make many suns. separate the animal into each of its muscle groups.

Subtract, add, divide or multiply any property in your scene.

**Prompts** *use these as suggestions to begin writing with*

- Imagine how everything is breathing or perspiring. The summits of mountains, skin of the sea, bodies of hibernating mammals. Write about these inhalations and exhalations. Link them.
- The genius of it was ...
- The silent thing grew ...
- Yet to be noticed was ...
- Choose a place / a person / an object dear to you. Write them a letter explaining what you admire in them.
- Write to a friend you haven't yet met.
- Write the journey of a droplet of water as it changes from cloud to rain, drops, becomes a drink, is excreted, drains into soil, freezes and thaws, joins a stream, makes it to sea, evaporates.

## Quotes

“One can say anything to language. This is why it is a listener, closer to us than any silence or any god.”

- John Berger

“Sketch the flow that exists already intact in your mind.”

- Jack Kerouac

“When we get down to it, all that we are and all that we value in this life comes to us as an unearned gift, and what we cultivate, in prayer, is a grateful awareness of this condition. Which is one of abundance. Which is also one of permanent, radical dependency. If we understand prayer as lowering us to Earth, coming back to ourselves not ‘as gods’ but as the barefoot, teeming mutualists we are: something more like moss, or fungi.”

- Mat Osmond

“Genius is not replicable. Inspiration, though, is contagious.” -  
David Foster Wallace