

WILD WRITING DURING LOCKDOWN

Wild Writing Workshop © Natasha Carthew

Wild Writing during lockdown

Wild Writing can be great for so many reasons and it's something I've been passionate about my entire life. I started writing in the wild as a young teen, trying to make sense of the confusing world around me and I'm proud to say I've written all my seven books outside.

During these unprecedented times, I think we writers need to find as many ways as possible to write in the wild and not just in order to keep our imagination going, but also for our mental health.

Even if you're self isolating or can only go on a short walk, traveling in the mind through the clouds or towards a sky full of stars can mean the difference between loneliness and a sense of belonging; even watching a colony of ants gathering on a discarded banana skin can make you feel less alone.

The central theme of all my Wild Writing Workshops is connection, connection to the wild places that surround us no matter where we live.

It is my absolute belief that wild writing makes us better creators and my intention as a writer is to challenge the stories that say that humans are somehow separate from nature, because we are not, no matter where we live, we are part of it.

So what are the benefits of writing in the wild?

Now more than ever, we're spending our lives locked into the merry-go-round spin that is the virtual world; we look at the world through screens – TVs, computers, phones – and through these screens it's like we are bystanders, watching the world go by. It makes us better writers to be a part of that world no matter how distant we feel from it at the moment and also better writers when we connect to nature, even from your front step or through an open window.

There are two things that I focus on in my Wild Writing workshops and they are Freedom and Inspiration.

So firstly FREEDOM. There's nothing better than becoming a part of the landscape no matter where you are. There's no electronic distractions no other voices except the murmur of birdsong or strangers to help you escape to whichever world you want.

The second reason for writing outside is INSPIRATION. You can catch inspiration from a million different outside locations and a million different things to stimulate your senses and free your wild mind. Think about your senses, what do you See? Hear? Smell? What can you feel with your hands? Remember, your senses are heightened when in a different environment.

Writing a Word Hoard

So the first thing I'd like you to do is some sensory work and I think it's great to start with a WORD HOARD. A Word hoard warms up your imagination and deals with what is real, the actual. If you

spend just a couple minutes each day writing down everything you can hear, everything you can see and smell and taste and touch, you'll soon have a bank of words to use when you sit down to write a bigger piece. Listen to sounds you've never noticed before. Really make an effort to notice the noises around you, arguments, birdsong, music and don't take anything for granted.

Setting

Now we've warmed up, I'd like you to go beyond the buildings and the concrete to really look at the world around you; the big things like the sky, the sun and the clouds and the wind and the rain to really observe what inhabits this other world, but also the small things, the insects and the lichen, the weeds, the mould on a discarded coffee cup or a crisp packet blowing in the wind. Write anything you notice down in your notebook.

Characterisation

WILD WRITING is a brilliant way to kick writers block to the curb, when you're outside, or even by an open window, you are free to write what you see, hear and smell, but also what you feel.

Try picking a character; for example you might see someone walking past your home or whilst you're out on your walk, write something about their life. Who are they? What in their life has gone before this moment? What are they thinking about? What is going to happen?

It's also a great way to work on DIALOGUE, how people speak to each other, or more importantly how they don't speak, the pauses, the things they don't say and the way they cut in, finish each other's sentences, these are things people do, but you don't often see it done well in novels.

If you can try and find a stranger to write about, they could be walking past your flat or maybe your neighbour singing in their garden; try not to make it too obvious, so the person you're writing about is relaxed in their natural habitat (like a wild animal) and ask yourself a few questions; Who are they? What in their life has gone before this moment? What are they thinking about? What is going to happen next? Can you hear them? What are they talking about? What are their mannerisms? Write all this down, you never know, this could be your next protagonist!

Imagination

OK, so now comes the fun bit, your imagination, a couple of sentences of fiction will do to start off a piece of writing. I'd like you to soak up the human stories around you whilst using your word hoard and your setting and character to come up with something new.

Don't forget to add your nature observations to come up with something new.

Don't forget to use the words in your Word Hoard!

Note: This Workshop is adapted from Natasha Carthew's Wild Writing for beginners workshop