Prewriting Ideas

Use these prewriting ideas to help you choose topics to write about. These ideas can also help you focus, explore, or narrow your topic.

► Reading  Read stories in books and magazines. Use them to inspire your own story ideas. Keep a list of ideas in a notebook or journal.

► Brainstorming settings  Work alone, with a partner, or with a small group. Quickly list interesting, frightening, or unusual places where stories can take place.

► Brainstorming characters  Quickly make notes about one or more interesting characters. Tell how they look, think, and act. To get started, think about people you know and exaggerate certain things about them.

► Free-associating  Write the word danger, mystery, contest, or embarrassment. Then write the word or phrase you think of next. Keep writing new words that come to mind until a story idea begins to form.

► Drawing  Draw a scene that shows one or more people doing something. Then write what happens next.

► Looking at art  Study paintings, drawings, and photographs. Tell what stories you see in them.

► Listening to music  Close your eyes and listen to music. Imagine what is happening. Make notes about the stories the music brings to mind.

► Observing  Watch people at school, in your neighborhood, or at home. Notice what they say and do, and imagine how they would handle a certain problem. Write your thoughts.

► Watching television and movies  Think about an interesting movie or television show you have seen. Explore new story ideas that it suggests.

► Using newspaper articles and pictures  Bring to class clippings of articles and pictures from newspapers or magazines. Make notes for your own story using people, places, or problems from the clippings.