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Seeds (Shorter Activities)

Seed 1: Writing in Colour

Paint producers, like B&Q or (if you're fancy) Farrow & Ball, use names to describe their product range, putting them into colour charts or paint colour cards.

Here are some examples of real paint names:

- Drawing Room Blue
- Orangery
- Glastonbury Field
- Yellow Submarine
- Cappuccino
- Jungle Green
- Burnt Plum
- Volcanic Ash
- Wild Grape
- Ambitious Amber

As you can see, they're trying to give a mood or atmosphere through these names (to sell the paint). There are plenty of spoof versions online – including Literary Paint Names, 'Gatsby's Roadster' and 'Dorian Gray', or a Farrow and Ball spoof chart, with colours like 'Flowers from ESSO' and 'Hipster's Curtain'.

- ➔ Look around the room you're in now
- ➔ Create a colour chart of five or more names for the colours of things in it.
- ➔ Try to make each one unique and particular, but no more than three words.
- ➔ Can the 'paint names' relate to this room and/or how you're feeling today?

Seed 2: Feeling Feelings

Choose a selection of objects from around your home, especially those with varied textures – eg *ribbon, pine cone, seashell, button, sponge, bubble-wrap, elastic band, twig, wool, dry leaf, rubber ball, fake fur, conker shell, zip*.

- ➔ Select one of these which mirrors your mood today, eg you might feel 'scratchy and irritable' (like a pine cone), light and easy (like a dry leaf), or wound tight (like an elastic band).
- ➔ Hold on to this object and freewrite for five minutes, using the texture to describe how you're feeling. Remember, you can pause at any time, or leave this piece if it doesn't feel good today.
- ➔ If you're out and about and can visit a museum, you could do the same thing with some of the exhibits. NB: there are usually a few you can touch, otherwise you'll need to use your imagination (and not get in trouble picking things up).

In Our Own Words

“Using touch keeps you grounded in the moment and the object can serve as a metaphor for something that’s hard to describe.”

Hear _____ introduce and reflect on this activity and share writing inspired by it, by scanning this QR code:



Seed 3: Naughty Untruths

Make some notes on these questions:

- ➔ Make a quick list of six or so 'naughty' things you've done – **but**
- ➔ Three will be **true** and three will be **false**
- ➔ Get a friend to write these too and see if you can guess which is which
- ➔ What made your made-up naughtiness 'believable'? What gave you away?

Shoots (Medium Length Activities)

Shoot 1: Colour Chart Poem

Find an artwork you're interested in and want to work with, you can use online galleries through Google Arts and Culture, search for 'online art galleries – or head to your local art gallery in person if you can.

- ➔ Create a paint chart based on a particular artwork, using the same approach as the first activity. You can do this solo or write with a friend and fellow writer.
- ➔ See if you can notice colours you hadn't before and give them a name which relates to the artwork you're working with.

Example: 'Flowers in a Glass Vase' by the 2019 Beyond Words Group

***Flowers in a Glass Vase* by Rachel Ruysch** (A Paint Chart Poem, for a Wilkinson's Home range)

Poisonous Envy	Alien Human	Cloudbreak
Clouded Judgement	Moonbeam	Catfight
Rose Quartz	Boldness Blossoms	Outer Space Rain
Vintage Florist	Creased Leather	
Bubblegum Surprise	Split Lip	Peridot Green
Forest Faces	Classic Book	Dragon Heart
Dried Seaweed	Dark Smile	Stone Cold
Lapis Lazuli	Moonlight Lit	Reaching Purple
Pyrography	Penguin Abyss	Champagne Bubbles
Old School Desk	Cloudy Quartz	Elderly Underpants

Shoot 2: No Ideas but In Things

Choose an object at home, or out and about, and describe in as much physical detail as you can:

- ➔ Describe its texture, dimensions, colour, material, smell (if it has one), and anything else you notice about it.
- ➔ How does the object make you feel?
- ➔ What kind of story or backstory does this object suggest to you?
- ➔ Repeat this process with another object or two, if you feel like a challenge
- ➔ Make some notes about the kinds of story this object (or objects) might appear in.

(‘No ideas but in things’ is a phrase from the 20th century poet William Carlos Williams, which we can understand as the importance of finding concrete images to express thoughts and feelings.)

Shoot 3: Growing Up, Growing Old

What do you think about getting older and about older people?

Think about being older, getting older yourself, and make some notes on the questions underneath:

- ➔ How old is 'old' to you?
- ➔ What do you think older people look like? Sound like?
- ➔ What do you think older people do, or 'should' do?
- ➔ Where do these ideas about older people come from?
- ➔ You could chat to someone you know about this too.
- ➔ Could you talk to an elder person, or watch interviews, to find out about their experiences?

Reflect on these ideas in your notebook/journal/phone/papyrus.

- ➔ **Freewrite on those ideas for 5 or more minutes.**

If you'd like to do more with this, have a look at **Tree 3** to develop it into a longer poem.

Trees (Longer Activities)

Tree 1: My Dreams are *Warming Rays*

Create a poem which describes your life through colour, using this form for your piece:

If my _____ (eg, life, dreams, hopes) were a colour

it/they would be _____ (eg, 'Warming Rays', or 'Dessicated Blu-Tac')

you would find it _____ (eg, 'among the clouds in the peak of summer' or 'the walls of abandoned offices')

Write as many or as few as you'd like to and see where this takes you.

In Our Own Words

"I like the way it lets your imagination loose. Your creativity warms up and your self-expression becomes freer."

Hear _____ introduce and reflect on working with colours and share her writing inspired by it, by scanning this QR code:



Tree 2: Story Objects

Work with everyday (or museum) objects to spark ideas and stories.

Use an object as the starting point to begin developing a story, featuring the feelings the object brought up, the descriptions, and your story ideas

- ➔ Develop these characters into their own story or stories
- ➔ Stories often involve people, places and problems:
- ➔ What relationships might your character have?
- ➔ What are the settings your object suggested? Could you put them somewhere else, somewhere new and surprising?
- ➔ What problem or dilemma might your character face?
- ➔ You could write your story as short fiction, graphic novel, play or film script, computer game outline, narrative poem, or whichever other types of storytelling you're into.

Example:

'Midnight Struck' by Megan Vincent, was inspired by a clock:

Midnight Struck

The clock struck midnight in the apartment's dead silence. Mia was fast asleep, the noise of the leaves rustling outside began to overtake the silence. The wind howled. The window began to screech as it opened, ever so slightly. All of a sudden, this room so deadly silent, turned into a storm of disaster.

The room began to shake, shelves fell, doors slammed. Pictures dropped, as the glass from the frames broke into millions of pieces. Then out of the blue, the noise stopped with a sudden halt. The room fell silent, as light began to flicker. The room fell cold. Mia awoke, shivering, unsure of where she was. It was like a different place, as if she was just in one long nightmare.

She looked so frightened. She noticed a glass bottle – a family heirloom that her mother gave her. But it wasn't just sat where she left it.

It floated, in the middle of the room. Confused and exhausted she reached for the tarnished old bottle. It dropped, but bounced across the room – until suddenly, it broke.

As it did, it unleashed a grey cloud of smoke which floated to the other side of the room, creating a bubble around Mia. It wasn't there to protect her. She lay on the bed and fell back to sleep.

She awoke the next morning, not knowing what had happened. Something was different about her: was it really her?

Tree 3: Growing (B)older

Have a look at 'Warning' by Jenny Joseph (online), which starts off: 'When I am an old woman, I shall wear purple'. She goes on to say that she'll spend her pension on, "brandy and summer gloves" and "eat three pounds of sausages at a go," amongst other things.

Inspired by these poems, create a mindmap of all the *eccentric* and naughty things you will do as an older person (and which you might not be allowed to do now).

(Remember that being 'eccentric' means, "not behaving or thinking in an ordinary or accepted way; odd; peculiar". Writing is a brilliant place to embrace our eccentricities!)

Questions about your eccentric older self:

- ➔ What you'll wear as an older person?
- ➔ What you'll spend your money (or pension) on?
- ➔ How will you behave in public places?
- ➔ What will you eat too much of?
- ➔ What *won't* you spend your money on?
- ➔ What naughty things you'll do?
- ➔ How will you get around?
- ➔ Where will you do these things?
- ➔ Who you'll annoy or get revenge on?
- ➔ How will you be towards young people?
- ➔ What will you get away with?
- ➔ A new hobby you'll take up?
- ➔ Things you'll collect?
- ➔ Which of these could you *practice* now?

Enjoy being the worst behaved old person imaginable!

Take it Further

Time to put all this into a piece of writing:

- ➔ Spend 10 – 20 minutes, or as long as feels right for you, writing this into a poem or story.
- ➔ Use the ideas from your mindmap to inspire you and see what else comes to you as you write.

In Our Own Words

"I liked imagining my older and naughtier self and it reminded me to keep being eccentric now, not just when I am older."

Hear _____ introduce and reflect on this activity and share writing inspired by it, by scanning this QR code:



Example:

Older

When I am older,
I will wear my baggy fancy jumpers,
rock them with trainers and jeans and skirts.
I will wear my hair in two buns
and dark purple and black.
I will be wearing every trendy thing
looking like a teenager because
who said there were different types
of clothes for old and young?
When I go to the café,
I will get my hot coffee
and walk out without paying
and, if caught, act like I don't know
nothing and act deaf.
I will go to the park and run
around, get on the swing
and if anyone's on there – kid
or adult – I will push them off.
I don't care what happens.
I will go to the store,
get all the food I want
and eat it right there.

– Sahra Hilowle, student at City Academy Bristol (First Story anthology, 'Know The Things That Make You Glow')

Polishing Your Poem

Once you've done this, for an extra challenge, you could think about developing some of your writing:

- ➔ Underline or highlight three things (objects) in your writing, eg a piece of clothing, or a place
- ➔ Can you make them even more specific and surprising? If it was 'the shop', could that become 'the freezer section at Waitrose', or 'the silver counter at *Oh My Cod!* Chip shop'
- ➔ See if you can change three of these, making something *general* into something *unique* and, yes, eccentric.