

1 Success in Writing



CREATIVE WRITING COURSE

41110

Contents

1 Keeping a Journal	1
KEEPING A PERSONAL JOURNAL	1
Catherine Havens in <i>Catherine Havens' Diary</i>	1
Alfred T. Jackson in <i>Diary of a Forty-Niner</i>	5
KEEPING A DETAILED RECORD	8
Edwin Way Teale in <i>North With the Spring</i>	8
2 Developing an Idea	13
SUPPORTING A STATEMENT	13
Donald E. Carr in <i>Death of the Sweet Waters: The Politics of Pollution</i>	13
ARRIVING AT A CONCLUSION	15
J. A. Hunter in <i>Hunter</i>	15
DEVELOPING A CENTRAL IDEA	17
Keith Gordon Irwin in <i>The Romance of Writing</i>	17
PUTTING PARAGRAPHS TOGETHER	19
Marchette Chute in <i>An Introduction to Shakespeare</i>	19
3 Organizing Ideas	23
WRITING TO GIVE INFORMATION	23
S. Carl Hirsch in <i>The Globe for the Space Age</i>	23

WRITING TO GIVE DIRECTIONS	25
Herbert S. Zim in <i>Codes and Secret Writing</i>	25
WRITING TO PERSUADE	27
Allen S. Hitch and Marian Sorenson in <i>Conservation and You</i>	27
 4 Describing the World About You	 33
Jan Struther in <i>Mrs. Miniver</i>	33
Hamlin Garland in <i>Main-Travelled Roads</i>	33
Willa Cather in <i>My Ántonia</i>	33
Bruce Hutchison in <i>The Unknown Country</i>	34
Washington Irving in <i>The Legend of Sleepy Hollow</i>	34
DESCRIBING ANIMALS	35
Elizabeth R. Choate in <i>Give Your Heart to a Dog</i>	35
Ernest Thompson Seton in <i>Lobo, the King of the Currumpaw</i>	37
Rudyard Kipling in <i>Rikki-Tikki Tavi</i>	38
DESCRIBING PLACES	40
Shirley Chisholm in <i>Unbought and Unbossed</i>	40
Mark Twain in <i>The Prince and the Pauper</i>	41
E. B. White in <i>Charlotte's Web</i>	43
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings in <i>The Yearling</i>	45
 5 Describing People	 49
Stephen Vincent Benét in <i>The Devil and Daniel Webster</i>	49
O. Henry in <i>The Duplicity of Hargraves</i>	49
Charles Dickens in <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	49
Robert Louis Stevenson in <i>Treasure Island</i>	49
O. Henry in <i>The Ransom of Red Chief</i>	50

DESCRIBING A PERSON'S APPEARANCE	51
Howard Pyle in <i>Men of Iron</i>	51
DESCRIBING APPEARANCE AND PERSONALITY	52
Pearl S. Buck in <i>My Several Worlds</i>	52
DESCRIBING PERSONALITY ALONE	54
Clarence Day in <i>Life With Father</i>	54
DESCRIBING A GROUP OF PEOPLE	56
Gladys Hasty Carroll in <i>As the Earth Turns</i>	56
 6 Writing Reports	 61
SELECTING A TOPIC	61
GATHERING INFORMATION	63
TAKING NOTES	64
From <i>The World Book</i> , Volume 14	66
Helene and Charlton Laird in <i>The Tree of Language</i>	68
ORGANIZING INFORMATION	72
WRITING A REPORT	73
 7 Writing to Tell a Story	 77
ANECDOTES	78
Bennett Cerf in <i>Try and Stop Me</i>	78
A SHORT NARRATIVE	79
Tenzing Norgay and James Ramsey Ullman in <i>Tiger of the Snows</i>	79
Mark Twain in <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i>	81
A LONGER NARRATIVE	82
August Derleth in <i>The Moon Tenders</i>	82

8 Words and Sentences 89

SPECIFIC LANGUAGE 89

Hope Newell in *Steppin and Family* 90

Joaquin Miller in *True Bear Stories* 90

Kate Seredy in *The Good Master* 90

Jim Kjelgaard in *Big Red* 91

Christopher Morley in *Parnassus on Wheels* 91

USING SENSORY WORDS 93

James Street in *Goodbye, My Lady* 93

Rumer Godden in *An Episode of Sparrows* 93

Jean Stafford in *A Summer Day* 94

Gwendolyn Brooks in *Maude Martha* 94

USING COMPARISONS 96

Rumer Godden in *An Episode of Sparrows* 96

Mazo de la Roche in *The White Oaks of Jalna* 96

Laura Ingalls Wilder in *Farmer Boy* 96

ARRANGING YOUR WORDS 97

Fred and Sara Machetanz in *Rick of High Ridge* 97

9 Using Your Imagination 103

AMUSING YOUR READER 103

Edward Lear in *A Treasury of Laughter* 104

PAINTING PICTURES IN WORDS 105

Bashō, *The Cuckoo's Song* 106

Boncho, *The Scarecrow* 106

Buson, *Spring Scene* 106

Ransetsu, *Snow* 107

WRITING FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN	108
Marchette Chute, <i>Dogs</i>	108
Rachel Field, <i>The Animal Store</i>	109
WRITING ABOUT ADVENTURE	110
 10 Writing Reviews	 113
BOOK REVIEWS	113
Earl Schenck Miers, <i>Indian Fighter: The Story of</i> <i>Nelson A. Miles</i>	114
John M. Connole, <i>Eastward to India:</i> <i>Vasco Da Gama's Voyage</i>	114
TELEVISION REVIEWS	116
Peggy Dilts, <i>The Search for Ulysses</i>	116
ANNOTATIONS	117
RECORDING YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT BOOKS	118
Edmund G. Love, <i>A Page Was Turned and the</i> <i>World Opened Wide</i>	119
 INDEX OF AUTHORS	 123
 INDEX OF SKILLS	 125

Keeping a Journal

Just as sailors log important details of their voyages and adventurers record their most exciting moments, some writers keep daily journals of their key thoughts and observations. Parts of these journals often provide the basis for a story or novel. Occasionally an entire journal will prove interesting enough to be published. Two books based on journals are *Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank and *Kon-Tiki* by Thor Heyerdahl.

The selections which follow are from different journals. The discussion questions and writing activities will help you to begin your own daily journal.

KEEPING A PERSONAL JOURNAL

Over a hundred years ago a girl named Catherine Havens kept a journal. Here are some of her thoughts and observations.

August 6 [1849]

from CATHERINE
HAVENS'
DIARY

I am ten years old today.
I am still living in our Ninth Street house [near University Place]. It is a beautiful house and has glass sliding doors with birds of Paradise sitting on palm trees painted on them. And back of our din-

ing room is a piazza,* and a grape vine, and we have lots of Isabella grapes every fall.

It has a parlor in front and the library in the middle and the dining room at the back. On the mantel piece in the library is a very old clock that my father brought from France in one of his ships. It has a gilt head of Virgil† on top, and it is all gilt, and stands under a big glass case, and sometimes I watch my father when he takes off the case to wind the clock, and he has to lift it up so high and his hands tremble so, I am afraid he will break it.

I forgot to say I have a little niece, nearly as old as I am, and she lives in the country. Her mother is my sister, and her father a clergyman, and I go there in the summer, and she comes here in the winter, and we have things together like whooping cough and scarlatina.‡

New York is getting very big and building up. I walk some mornings with my nurse before breakfast from our house in Ninth Street up Fifth Avenue to Twenty-third Street and down Broadway home. An officer stands in front of the House of Refuge on Madison Square, ready to arrest bad people, and he looks as if he would like to find some.

Fifth Avenue is very muddy above Eighteenth Street, and there are no blocks of houses as there are downtown, but only two or three on a block.

Last Saturday we had a picnic on the grounds of Mr. Waddell's country seat way up Fifth Avenue, [at 37th Street] and it was so muddy I spoiled my new light cloth gaiter boots.

August 15

My father is a very old gentleman. He was born before the Revolutionary War.

* piazza: porch

† Virgil: a famous Roman poet

‡ scarlatina: scarlet fever

I love my music lessons. Last year my sister let me play at a big musical party she had, and I played a tune from "La Fille du Regiment," with variations. It took me a good while to learn it, and the people all liked it and said it must be very hard.

December 10

Ellen and I went out shopping alone. We went to Bond's dry-goods store on Sixth Avenue, just below Ninth Street to buy a yard of calico to make an apron for Maggy's birthday. We hope she will like it. It is a good quality, for we pulled the corner and twitched it as we had seen our mothers do, and it did not tear. Ellen and I call each other Sister Cynthia and Sister Juliana, and when we bought the calico, Ellen said, "Sister Cynthia, have you any change? I have only a fifty-dollar bill papa left me this morning," and the clerk laughed. I guess he knew Ellen was making it up!

Sometimes we play I am blind and Ellen leads me along on the street, and once a lady went by and said to her little girl, "See that poor child, she is blind," and perhaps when I get old I may be really blind as a punishment for pretending.

I hope Ellen will stay all winter. She is full of pranks, and smarter than I am if she is younger, and I hope we have lots of snow. When there is real good sleighing, my sister hires a stage sleigh and takes me and a lot of my schoolmates a sleigh ride down Broadway to the Battery and back. The sleigh is open and very long; and has long seats on each side, and straw on the floor to keep our feet warm, and the sleigh bells sound so cheerful.

Stages run through Bleecker Street and Eighth Street and Ninth Street right past our house, and it puts me right to sleep when I come home from the country to hear them rumble along over the cobble-stones.

There is a line on Fourteenth Street too, and that is the highest uptown.

Just opposite the Bowling Green on Whitehall Street, there is a sign over a store, "Lay and Hatch," but they don't sell eggs.

For Discussion

1. From the things she wrote, what kind of girl do you think Catherine Havens was?
2. What sentences show
that Catherine Havens was a careful observer?
that she had a sense of humor?
3. What kinds of subjects did Catherine select to record in her journal? Why didn't she record everything that happened in the day?
4. Would you enjoy knowing Catherine Havens? Support your answer by referring to her writing.

For Practice

Begin a daily journal of your own to record your most important thoughts and observations. Try to observe carefully, to note exactly what you see, and to express your thoughts clearly.

For your first journal entry write about something you noticed or something that happened between home and school today.

Alfred T. Jackson was a pioneer miner who in the 1850's joined the California gold rush. He kept a journal that not only tells you about the life of the writer but also describes generally what life was like during the gold rush. Here are some of the miner's observations:

January 25, 1852

from DIARY OF
A FORTY-
NINER

Our old cabin is not much to look at outside or inside; dad wouldn't keep his hogs in such a place, yet one could not be more comfortable or more contented than I have been for the past year. I have been lonesome at times and have had blue spells, but they did not last very long. There is nothing but a dirt floor, which we wet down every day to keep it hard, a couple of bunks filled with pine needles where we roll up in our blankets and on which we sleep like logs; three-legged stools for seats; a plank for a table; an open fireplace five feet wide; an iron kettle and a coffee pot; a Dutch oven and a frying pan to cook in; it used to be tin plates and cups until we got high-toned and bought crockery; grub stored away most anywhere; a shelf full of books—we have bought about fifty volumes altogether—and that is about all. We put a big oak-back log in the fireplace, pile up big chunks in front and the wind can howl, the snow fall and the rain beat on the roof, what do we care? The flames leap up the chimney and light the old cabin, the dog stretches out in front of the fire and grunts with contentment or dreams, for often his legs twitch, he whimpers and barks softly, his eyes closed, then wakes up, looks at us in a foolish way until he realizes his surroundings, and goes to sleep again. Pard grows sentimental and quotes poetry and gets down a book, reads a chapter or two and we are off in our minds to England, France, or Spain (we are reading Irving's "History of Granada"). Then we turn into our bunks, the fire dies down to coals, and as they sputter and sparkle I lie and watch the glow and see all sorts of pictures until my eyelids grow heavy, and I don't know anything more until I get a dig in the ribs and Pard says: "Get up, you lazy whelp, and help get breakfast."

I suppose we are contented because there is nobody to boss us—"Not even a woman," puts in Pard—have money enough so that we need not

live this way if we don't want to, no scandal, no gossip, and nobody to criticise* us as long as we keep off of other people's corns, a jolly good lot of neighbors who live as we do, and our friendship, which is the thing that counts more than all the rest. Naturally I don't want to live this way forever and we have our plans for the future; but in the meantime and until things ripen, we are satisfied with the old cabin.

February 1, 1852

We had a glimpse or two of the sun last week; but it rained most of the time, carrying off the snow with it. I rode down to the Yuba River yesterday afternoon and it was a sight to see. The river is more than bank full, all of ten feet deep, and a madder, wilder rush of water was never seen. I could hear the great rocks grinding and crushing against each other as they rolled over and over, big logs and pine trees swirling down the stream or tumbling end over end as they butted against some obstruction, and the noise was deafening.

February 8, 1852

I spent the day over in Nevada. It is getting to be quite a big town. What a contrast it is to our poky, slow New England villages. There are half a dozen stores which carry all kinds of provisions and hardware, two jewelry shops, two bakeries, a gunsmith store, butcher shop, five hotels, and gin mills too numerous to mention. Saturday night and Sundays—I forgot, one church—are the lively days. Then there are two or three thousand miners in town, the majority drinking, gambling and carousing. Woolen shirts and duck overalls are the fashion, and if you see anybody dressed up it's a sure thing he is either a gambler or a

* criticise: a spelling of *criticize* used in the 19th century

lawyer. What beats me is the craze the miners have for gambling. Every saloon has some sort of game running, and the big ones have a dozen. "Monte," "Red and Black," "Chuck-a-luck," "Twenty-one," "Rondo," and "Fortune Wheels" are the banking games, and they play poker and "Brag" for big stakes. The fool miners work hard all the week and then lose their dust at these games of chance. There does not seem to be much chance about them, for nobody ever heard of a miner winning anything. Of course, the miners don't all gamble; in fact, a lot of them do their trading, get a square meal at the hotel, and go back to their claims. Still, enough waste their money to keep the sports slick and fat. I suppose they are looking for excitement—anything to break the monotony—and this is the way they get it.

For Discussion

1. Would you judge that the writer was a good observer? Support your answer by referring to his journal.
2. Describe the cabin. What was life like in the cabin and the camp? What details give you this impression?
3. Jackson tells you that he and his partner were content. What details does he use to show this contentment? How does he tell you that many of the miners were foolish men?
4. By reading these journal entries, what did you learn about life in a California gold rush town in 1852?

For Practice

Write a journal entry of your own, picturing some part of your life as a student. Include important details to make your journal clear and vivid, just as Jackson did. You might

include details about where you live, and some of your feelings and observations of life in your section of the country.

KEEPING A DETAILED RECORD

The two journals you have read in this chapter are personal. Each one reflects the writer's life. Another kind of journal is one kept in connection with the writer's occupation. Here too the writing depends on good observation and careful recording of details. One such journal is included in *North With the Spring* by Edwin Way Teale, a scientist who writes about nature.

from NORTH
WITH THE
SPRING

During the better part of one cloudless morning I sat in the sand beside one of these mounds of beach heath watching the work of a colony of the larger headland ants. The entrance to their nest was at the downhill edge of the mound and their territory seemed to extend for about twenty feet down the slope across an area of open sand strewn with a few sparse clumps of beach grass and two or three small mounds of *Hudsonia*.* The workers never went above the mound, which was about three feet long and a foot and a half across. Another similar colony had its nest on the uphill side. The workers from this colony appeared to forage† only up the slope. Most of the hunting ground of both colonies was a bare desert of sand. The surface of this Sahara was shifting, unstable; yet across and back, in all directions, these insect Bedouins‡ found their way.

And the booty they discovered in this unlikely area was surprisingly varied. Over a period of about two hours I noted down the loads brought

* *Hudsonia*: low herbs with crowded needlelike leaves

† forage: wander in search of food

‡ Bedouins: desert-dwelling Arabs who wander from place to place

home to the one nest by the foraging workers. Some of the entries in this record are given below:

10:10 A.M. Two ants appear dragging a dead ant of their own species. Its abdomen is deflated and flat.

10:14 A.M. One ant appears with a dead pillbug in its jaws. It holds it by one end and the pillbug curves back over its head like a halfmoon. Just before it reaches the entrance to the nest, a gust bowls it over. Tumbling down a slope, first the ant, then the pillbug on top, the insect and its burden roll to the bottom of a small depression. There the ant regains its feet and continues to the nest.

10:22 A.M. An ant brings in a small green aphid.

10:31 A.M. A grayish spider is the burden of another worker.

10:39 A.M. Two ants appear dragging the body of a small brown caterpillar. One ant is at each end. They pull the caterpillar sidewise up the sand. At one point, the middle of their burden catches on a tiny clod as it drags along. For almost a minute the two ants tug and struggle until, by unequal pulling, they seesaw the caterpillar free.

10:44 A.M. An ant arrives with a small red ant, dead, in its jaws.

10:50 A.M. A worker comes in with a lump of something soft and translucent.* Is it partially dried honeydew produced by aphides?

10:59 A.M. One of the legs of a May beetle is brought home in the jaws of a hurrying worker. The insect carries its burden on a beeline across the sand to the entrance of the nest.

11:02 A.M. A single ant comes up the slope easily carrying what seems a tremendous load, the front section of the chitin† face of a May beetle.

* translucent: partly transparent

† chitin: a horny material forming part of the outer surface of an insect

11:13 A.M. Another dead pillbug arrives.

11:15 A.M. An ant brings in a small green caterpillar with a black head.

11:22 A.M. A worker arrives with the wing of a small wasp. It carries it jauntily* as though it were as light as a feather.

11:31 A.M. This time it is the leg of a fly that is brought in.

11:45 A.M. Laboring straight up the slope, three ants appear dragging a formidable burden, a black, square-bodied beetle fully half an inch long. Time and again they reach the top of some little rise only to have the soft sand give way beneath their feet. They slip and roll back and begin again. As they near the nest, half a dozen other ants join them. But nine ants seem to make less progress than three. They stumble over each other. They pull in opposite directions. The black beetle moves like a pushball, with the tide of battle going first one way, then the other. Fully twenty minutes of furious labor goes into getting the beetle across the last foot of sand.

11:53 A.M. A worker comes in with a small greenish bug in its jaws.

12:06 P.M. The shard of a reddish beetle is brought in by a worker.

12:11 P.M. Another May beetle leg arrives.

12:20 P.M. Two workers labor up the sand dragging a greenish caterpillar seven-eighths of an inch long.

In order to identify these varied burdens, I had to intercept the workers at the entrance to the nest. To the colony that morning, the world must have been a place bewitched. Worker after worker, laboring to bring home its hard-won booty, would almost attain the goal only to have the prize snatched away. This was a Black Friday in the economy of the anthill. However, in the end, like a good king in a fairy tale, I dumped all the accumulated plunder back on the threshold of the nest when I was leaving.

* jauntily: in a lively manner

For Discussion

1. Teale's journal records scientific observation. How is the subject of his journal different from that of the others you have read? How is the purpose different?
2. Why does the author keep a minute-by-minute record? When you have finished reading the detailed account, what impression do you have of the ant colony?
3. Even though the journal is about a scientific subject, what do you learn about the writer? Which details suggest that he has a sense of humor?

For Practice

Choose some activity from life around you and observe it closely, keeping a *timed* record of what you see. Here are some ideas for things to observe.

People going in and out of a store, church, or movie theater

People getting on and off an elevator

Cars passing a certain point

An animal or group of animals during feeding time at a zoo

A child (children) eating or playing

SUMMARY

Use the models in this chapter to show how the following qualities are important to good writing:

Observation

Exact and vivid details

Selection of what to include

Purpose