The only way to become a writer is to write. It is the only prerequisite. Allow yourself to stray from rules and limits within these pages. Put pen to paper and honor whatever it is that first comes to you to write. For now, these words in progress are only for you. Your skills will develop. You will not run out of ideas. The more words you leave here, the more will come to you. All you have to do is relax and write without guilt or embarrassment. So crack the spine of the creative writer’s guided journal once a day or once a week and fill its pages. By the end, look back at your words and discover the writer who has always been within you. *Sammi LaBue*
words in progress

the creative writer’s guided journal

Sammi LaBue
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From the author: Thanks to all those who have given my words their first home just by listening to them, and the artists who considered me to be one of them, even before I did—especially my teachers, my mom, Adam Dickerson, and Catie Hannigan. An extra thanks goes to Catie for graciously sharing the prompt on p.127, which she originated. Thank you also to DK Publishing, namely Beth and Paula, for trusting my vision and adding kindness and fun to my inbox. Above all, thanks goes to my family, my Fledglings, and, always, my Henry.

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Setting is easily one of the most boring literary terms, yet what it describes can be the most enjoyable of writing tasks: building a world. This is because “setting” is a static term. There is a chair in that corner, a tree over there, a ladder, a window, a door.

But life does not occur on a flat plane. We don’t experience it as an inventory of items. When we walk in a room, our eyes may first drop to consider the sticky substance beneath our feet, or they may close so we can better experience the heat on our cheeks coming from an overhead air vent.

Use these pages to set a stage for your characters and ideas to play on, but also to create an atmosphere that your reader can see and feel for themself.
COLOR

Color allows us to express ourselves and our moods. The colors we wear can reflect the changing seasons, our heritage, or even indicate we are mourning a loss. You can channel this influence in your writing by saturating a scene in a color to create a certain tone or emotion.

Choose one of the following evocative colors. In the space provided, make a list of everything that comes to mind when you consider that color. Once you’ve gathered 10 or more words, begin writing and try to fit all of the listed words into your piece.

Tip
The items in your list may appear in your writing literally (perhaps your piece on black features a crow) or metaphorically (maybe someone is compared to a crow).
PERSON AS PLACE

Some of the most memorable settings in literature become part of the cast of characters. Dorothy and Oz. The old man and the sea. The pilgrims and Canterbury. Flip the idea of setting as a character by instead imagining a person as a place. Think of someone who irritates you—a real person or the idea of one. Now imagine that character as a location. Would they be a dirty motel room or a remote and windy beach, perhaps? Describe that place here.

SETTING VS. CHARACTER

A world well drawn is a world in motion. You don’t always need a person as an antagonist to add conflict to your work. A little precipitation can ignite just enough action for your writing to come alive. Begin writing a scene, real or imagined, which takes place in the middle of a storm. For a jumping-off point, consider starting your piece with this sentence: “The storm was getting closer.”
Sometimes, one arresting image can be enough to have us reaching for a pen. Using found photographs, online image generators, or social media to supply a random image can be an excellent way to fabricate this normally serendipitous creative spark.

For now, practice finding story in surprising imagery by using your words to paint one of these striking scenes on the page.

**IMAGES**

A child running through a graveyard

A flower growing through the cracks of a city sidewalk

A group of construction workers singing on a job site

**Tip**

If you happen to be near a newspaper or magazine, you might also try flipping to whichever page opens first, using whatever image catches your eye as inspiration.