

6+1 Traits of Writing



AN INTRODUCTION

The 6+1 Traits of Writing:



1. Ideas and Content
2. Organization
3. Voice
4. Word Choice
5. Sentence Fluency
6. Conventions
7. Presentation

Want a fun way to remember the 6 traits? -- **CSI Vow**

C – Conventions
S – Sentence Fluency
I – Ideas
V – Voice
O – Organization
W – Word Choice



6+1 Traits of Writing



1. IDEAS AND CONTENT



Ideas and Content



- Ideas are all about information.
- This information can come from a writer's own experience and observation, formal research, reading, or talking with others.
- Knowing a topic well is the first step to strong ideas.
- A writer must select details that paint a clear picture for the reader.

Ideas and Content



- Ideas that work well:
 - A solid, main idea that is clear and identifiable (thesis)
 - Interesting, relevant, accurate, selected details and support
 - Clarity so the message makes sense and is easily understood
 - An idea that is fully developed, whole and insightful
 - Concise, to-the-point presentation that shows respect for reader

The ideas are the heart of the message,
the content of the piece, the main
theme, together with details that enrich
and develop that theme.



Writing Break

WHERE DO YOU GET IDEAS?

HOW DO YOU BEGIN TO WRITE?



**This is called the
“pre-writing” stage...
Gathering ideas before you put
pen to paper**

Gathering Ideas



**HOW DO PROFESSIONAL
WRITERS GET THEIR IDEAS?**

Stephenie Meyer – the *Twilight* Saga



She got the idea of her vampire romance series from a vivid dream.

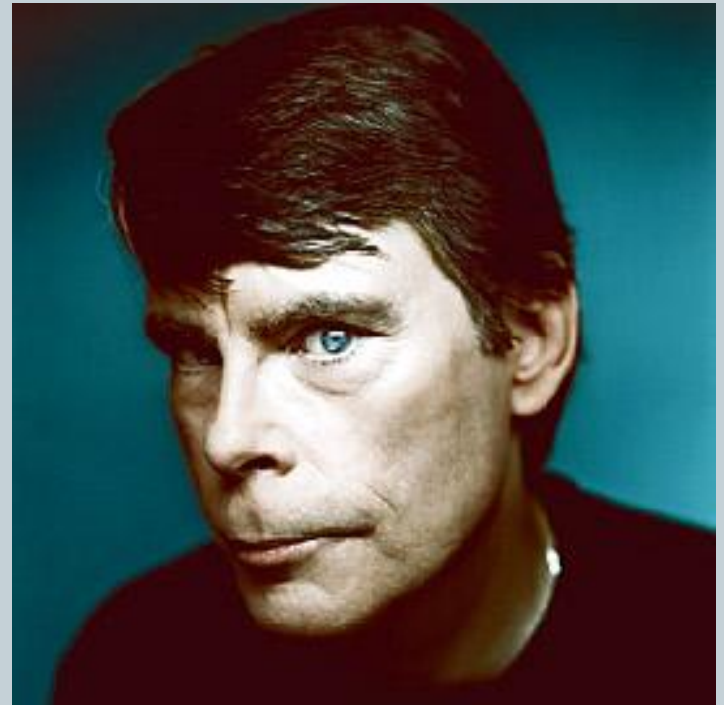
She awoke from this vivid dream, and although she had a million things to do, she began writing and couldn't stop.

Stephen King – famous fiction writer



On his website www.stephenking.com Stephen King says, 'I get my ideas from everywhere. But what all of my ideas boil down to is seeing maybe one thing, but in a lot of cases it's seeing two things and having them come together in some new and interesting way, and then adding the question 'What if?' 'What if' is always the key question.

Stephen King borrows from other works too, like his naming of a town in *Cujo*, Castle Rock – the name of the tribe's fort in *Lord of the Flies*.



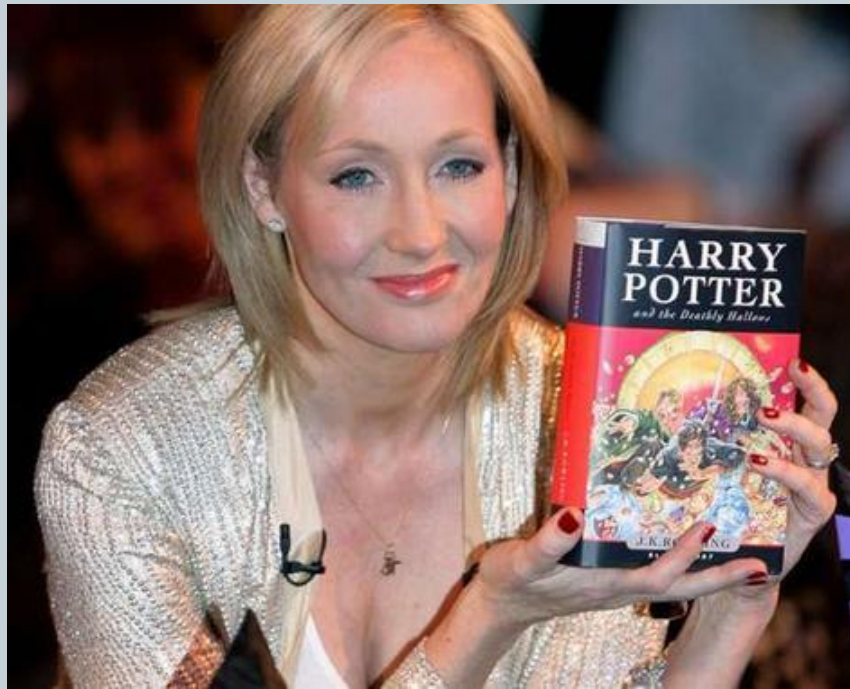
JRR Tolkien – *Lord of the Rings* series



Most of the roots or origins of Tolkien's stories can be found in the early Norse Mythology. Some of the dwarves names can be found there. The Scandanavian odes and stories were a definite influence.

Many of the other items came from his life experiences, including being bitten by a spider when he was young, seeing trees cut down and left to rot, and his service in the British Army in World War 1.

JK Rowling – the *Harry Potter* series



J.K Rowling was riding in a train when the idea for Harry Potter popped into her head, and some of the other characters were still forming when she got off the train. She took some ideas from book she had read to make her number one best seller. GO J.K ROWLING!!!!!!!!!!!!

Rumour has it that she was unemployed when the idea evolved – how fortunate it turned out to be a success!

Deirdre Kessler – Islander children's author



Deidre is a professor at UPEI, but took some time off to travel and attend writing workshops in Tasmania, an Australian island. While she was there she wrote a children's book that was inspired by her surroundings.



Reporters



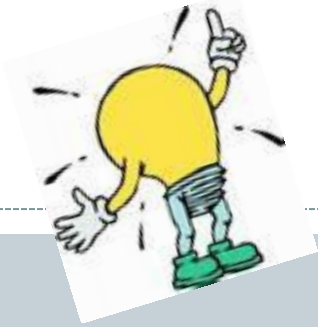
News reporters get their ideas, stories and leads from world events – often these are tragic, heroic, or speak to some part of human nature or interest.



Ways to get ideas:



- Brainstorming ideas (a visual list)
- Clustering ideas (linking ideas from one to the next)
- Freewriting (writing without a destination in mind, just simply putting pencil to paper to see what comes out)
- Sketching (doodling or drawing for inspiration)
- Watching tv (to see what catches your eye)
- Reading another text (for inspiration)
- Listen to music (for inspiration and ideas – even words and phrases can inspire a whole piece of writing)
- Life experiences (your own personal adventures, watching or listening to people interact)



Example: The Ideal Classroom (Ideas)

- Bathroom use as needed
- Colorful walls
- Soft, quiet lighting
- Windows with tasteful curtains
- A library area with many novels, stories, reference materials...
- Tables for group work
- No desk
- A couch and other comfortable seating
- A sink and cupboards for art supplies
- Music playing in the background
- Plant life/ aquarium
- Several computers
- A television, dvd player, and lcd projector
- Lots of school supplies

Ideas Activity 1



My favourites – Create a list of some of your favourite things (think places, activities, foods, people, songs, books, etc.)

Save this list in your writer's notebook.

This is a list of my favourite things:



- Drinking hot chocolate with marshmallows on a snowy day while covered in a soft, comfy blanket
- Thunder storms
- Vacation
- Cuba
- Pop music (yes, by people like Lady Gaga, Beyonce, Pink and Rhianna)
- Fav song – Family Affair by Mary J. Blige or a song by Meredith Brooks (depending on what kind of mood I'm in)
- Romantic comedies
- My dogs (Gizmo and Onyx)
- The beach
- Spending time with my family
- A baby's giggle



Ideas Activity 2



“That makes me mad” – create a list, or draw icons to represent, things that make you mad.

(Think – people who butt in line or complain too much, bad drivers, rain during a picnic, cheaters, cold coffee, etc)

Share your ideas, then save your list in your writer’s notebook.



Ideas Activity 3



Read poem “I Cannot go to School Today”, then make a list of imaginary ailments you could use to convince your mother that you cannot go to school.



Like
this kid!

I Cannot Go To School Today by Shel Silverstein

"I cannot go to school today"
Said little Peggy Ann McKay.
"I have the measles and the mumps,
A gash, a rash and purple bumps.

My mouth is wet, my throat is dry.
I'm going blind in my right eye.
My tonsils are as big as rocks,
I've counted sixteen chicken pox.

And there's one more - that's
seventeen,
And don't you think my face looks
green?
My leg is cut, my eyes are blue,
It might be the instamatic flu.

I cough and sneeze and gasp and
choke,
I'm sure that my left leg is broke.
My hip hurts when I move my chin,
My belly button's caving in.

My back is wrenched, my ankle's sprained,
My 'pendix pains each time it rains.
My toes are cold, my toes are numb,

I have a sliver in my thumb.

My neck is stiff, my voice is weak,
I hardly whisper when I speak.
My tongue is filling up my mouth,

I think my hair is falling out.

My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,
My temperature is one-o-eight.
My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,

There's a hole inside my ear.

I have a hangnail, and my heart is ...
What? What's that? What's that you say?
You say today is Saturday?

G'bye, I'm going out to play!"

Ideas – Telling vs. Showing



- A piece that is strong in ideas moves beyond “telling” into the realm of “showing”.
- A book that is well-written sends you away with a feeling that you actually knew the characters or had seen the setting.
 - Example:
 - ✦ Jane dressed in a unusual way.
 - To:
 - ✦ Jane came to school today in pink and white polka dot leggings and a blue and green plaid shirt. The twelve inch purple feather sticking straight up from her orange hat almost kept me from noticing the army boots on her feet.

Telling vs. Showing



“Aunt Mabel is nice” doesn’t mean much.

But suppose we discover that Mabel rarely loses her temper, even in heavy traffic; cooks dinner for the family, even when her feet hurt; grows her own flowers to make bouquets for her friends; and uses her day off to do volunteer work at the local park.

Now we’re beginning to feel we know Mabel a little – and can even predict what she might do in other situations.

Some “showing” examples from popular authors:



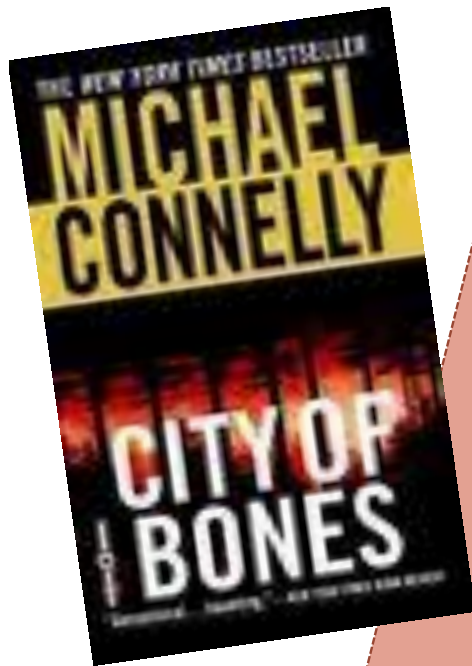
A sense of excitement rose like a palpable cloud over the campsite as the afternoon wore on. By dusk, the still summer air itself seemed to be quivering with anticipation, as a darkness spread like a curtain over the thousands of waiting wizards, the last vestiges of pretence disappeared: the Ministry seemed to have bowed to the inevitable, and stopped fighting the signs of blatant magic now breaking out everywhere.

(Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by JK Rowling)

Can you “tell” the main idea of this passage in one sentence?



Some “showing” examples from popular authors:

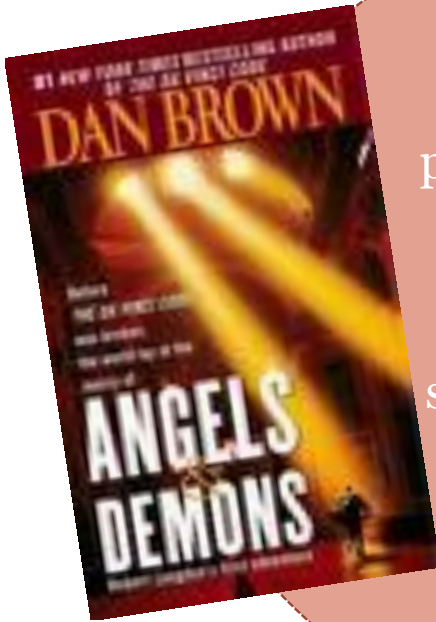


Can you “tell” the main idea of this passage in one sentence?

The woods were dark long before the sun disappeared. The overhead canopy created by a tall stand of Monterey pines blocked out most of the light before it got to the ground.

(City of Bones by Michael Connelly)

Some “showing” examples from popular authors:



The camerlengo was nothing like the images of frail, beatific old men Langdon usually imagined roaming the Vatican. He wore no rosary beads or pendants. No heavy robes. He was dressed instead in a simple black cassock that seemed to amplify the solidity of his substantial frame. He looked to be in his late thirties, indeed a child by Vatican standards. He had a surprisingly handsome face, a swirl of coarse brown hair, and almost radiant green eyes that shone as if they were somehow fueled by the mysteries of the universe.....

(Angels and Demons by Dan Brown)

Can you “tell” the main idea of this passage in one sentence?

Some “showing” examples from popular authors:



I turned my head sharply away from him, clenching my jaw against all the wild accusations I wanted to hurl at him. I gathered my books together, then stood and walked to the door. I meant to sweep dramatically out of the room, but of course I caught the toe of my boot on the doorjamb and dropped my books. I stood there for a moment, thinking about leaving them. Then I sighed and bent to pick them up. He was there; he'd already stacked them into a pile. He handed them to me, his face hard.

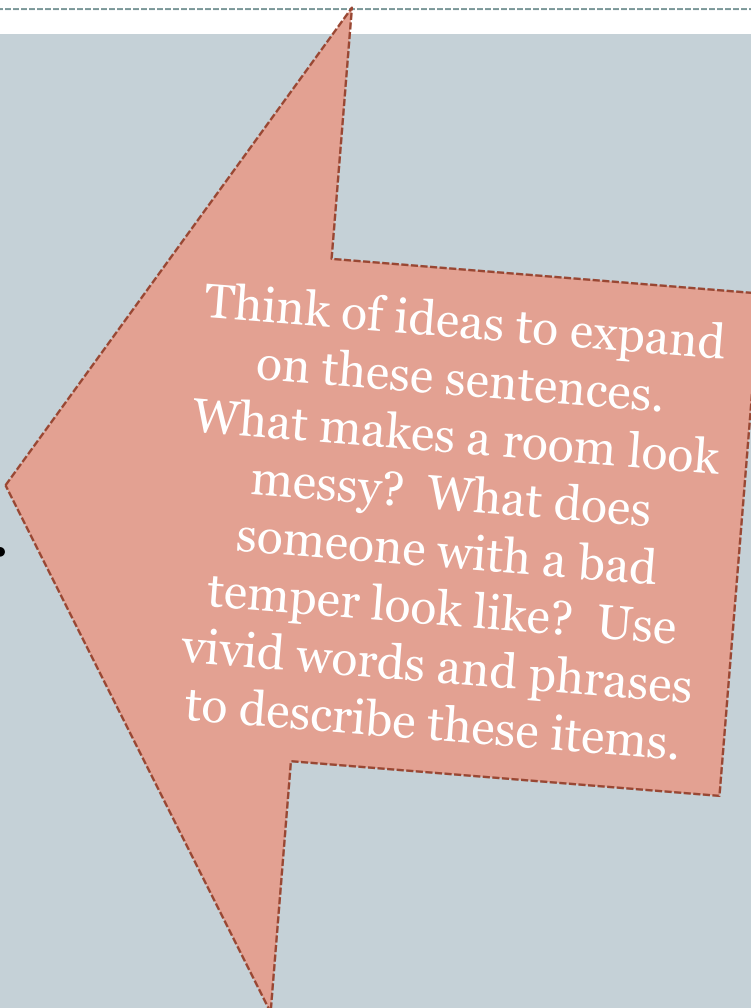
(p.75 *Twilight* by Stephenie Meyer)

Can you “tell” the main idea of this passage in one sentence?



Turn these into showing examples.
Write a brief descriptive paragraph for each.

1. The room was a mess.
2. He had a temper.
3. The situation was frightening.
4. She was a kind person.



Think of ideas to expand on these sentences. What makes a room look messy? What does someone with a bad temper look like? Use vivid words and phrases to describe these items.

A good writer should (for ideas):



- Understand that prewriting (the thinking before you put pen to paper) is important
- Generate ideas from thought and experience
- Borrow ideas from other writers, but use them in fresh and original ways
- Keep a writer's notebook of ideas
- Understand the purpose for writing (the expectations)
- Move from a broad topic to a more focused theme (have a purpose/direction for your writing)
- Use supporting details
- Learn to observe carefully
- Develop thinking skills (comparison, analysis, inference)

Writing Evaluation Task



- Think of a favourite or memorable piece of writing. It could be a favourite book, special greeting card, poem, article, etc. It could be something you remember reading, receiving from someone else, or even something you have written yourself.
- Use this as a reading response log entry for this week.
 - Make sure to include the title and author of the piece, and to briefly introduce what type of writing it is and what it is about.
- Respond to the following questions about the piece of writing:
 - What makes this piece of writing special?
 - Why is it memorable?
 - What characteristics or special “traits” does it have?