

# Creative Writing

4<sup>th</sup>  
Grade



There are no bad ideas  
when you're brainstorming!

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# How to Jumpstart Your Child's Mind with Brainstorming

By Heather Vale Goss

When you ask your child a question, does he routinely give a single answer... and then stop? Is it hard for him to come up with a variety of ideas while taking on a new task, working on a project, or doing homework?

Choosing one solution without weighing the options of others prevents your child from exploring possibilities, and ending up with something even better. Having a flexible mind, on the other hand, allows him to be more creative, make more informed decisions, stand out from the crowd, and excel not only in school, but in every endeavor for the rest of his life.



A great way to practice this skill is through brainstorming. Bruce Van Patter, an illustrator and creative writing teacher for kids, says, “Most children, when trying to come up with an idea, grab the first one that pops into their heads. That idea is bound to be a common one; if it came that quickly to one child, it probably is readily available to the minds of thousands. Brainstorming moves kids past the obvious.”

How can parents help children learn how to brainstorm effectively? Here’s what Van Patter suggests:

## Encouraging

Van Patter recommends providing an environment for your child that encourages the safe exploration of ideas. After all, brainstorming really isn’t just about the results; it’s about the process. It’s kind of like exercising the mind... doing stretches so that you become more and more flexible over time. That’s why people say, “There are no bad ideas when you’re brainstorming!” Obviously some ideas are better than others, but it’s important not to judge or criticize while your child is coming up with them.

Teach your child to think in terms of “no limits”. It might seem crazy at first, but why can’t he build a helicopter-sized model of a dragonfly for the science fair? Let him decide later if he wants to tweak the idea.

## Asking

Next, you can help the process along by asking your child questions. “Questions can gently nudge kids to keep reaching for something different. A very helpful question is to ask is, ‘What if?’” Van Patter explains.

You could also ask questions such as, “What else could you try?” or “What other possibilities are there?” If it’s a report or essay he’s brainstorming, you could ask, “What else is important?” or “What would someone want to know next?”

## Combining

Not all ideas have to be completely from scratch. Van Patter points out, "Creativity is more of a rearranging than a creating. A child can produce an original concept by combining two very ordinary thoughts. The originality comes through the unusual combinations."

One way he has kids do this is to create a grid with one category of ideas down the side, and another across the top. Where each column intersects with each row will be boxes that create new ideas. For example, if your child is brainstorming a story for creative writing class, one category could be animals, and the other habitats. What story could be written about a bear who lives in a swamp? Or an elephant at the North Pole?

## **Expanding**

If your child's too young to write, you can take note of what he says; otherwise have him write down all his ideas on a piece of paper. He might like to draw random circles on the page and write his ideas inside the circles, or he might prefer making a list, or a series of categorized lists. "Brainstorming works best when a whole slew of ideas are recorded, without much editing. The temptation will be to either off-handedly discard ones that seem useless or to stop too soon. Fill a whole page with ideas before sifting through to find that one concept that grabs one's attention. The bigger the stream of ideas, the greater the chance of finding that shining nugget," Van Patter says.

## **Waiting**

After your child has brain-dumped everything he can possibly think of, have him take a short break. This allows him to see the results with a fresh point of view, and lets the subconscious mind start making connections and sorting through the ideas. When he returns, the last step will often come very easily.

## **Sifting**

Now's the time to sort through the page and pick the best idea. If the brainstorm is for an essay or school project, have your child discard the weakest ideas, and divide the rest into topics and subtopics. If he drew circles, he can connect them up with lines and color them to group related ideas. With lists, he can draw boxes or lines to join certain concepts together, or use different colored highlighters to code them.

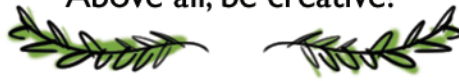
Once your child begins stretching and flexing his mind through brainstorming, you'll find him constantly coming up with new and more creative ideas, and making better decisions as a result!

# Creative Writing



Time to get our imagination caps on! Looking at the scenario on the other page, create a story. Write what the story is about and what is happening. Don't forget elements such as environment and setting. Stories should begin with an opening paragraph to set the mood.

**Above all, be creative!**

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Anything can be happening in the image on the other page when you put your imagination to it! Instead of creating a story, write a song on a separate piece of paper. What is the song about? Perhaps the singer is singing a song about the dragon. Try to tell a story through the song with rhymes if possible.

## EXAMPLE:

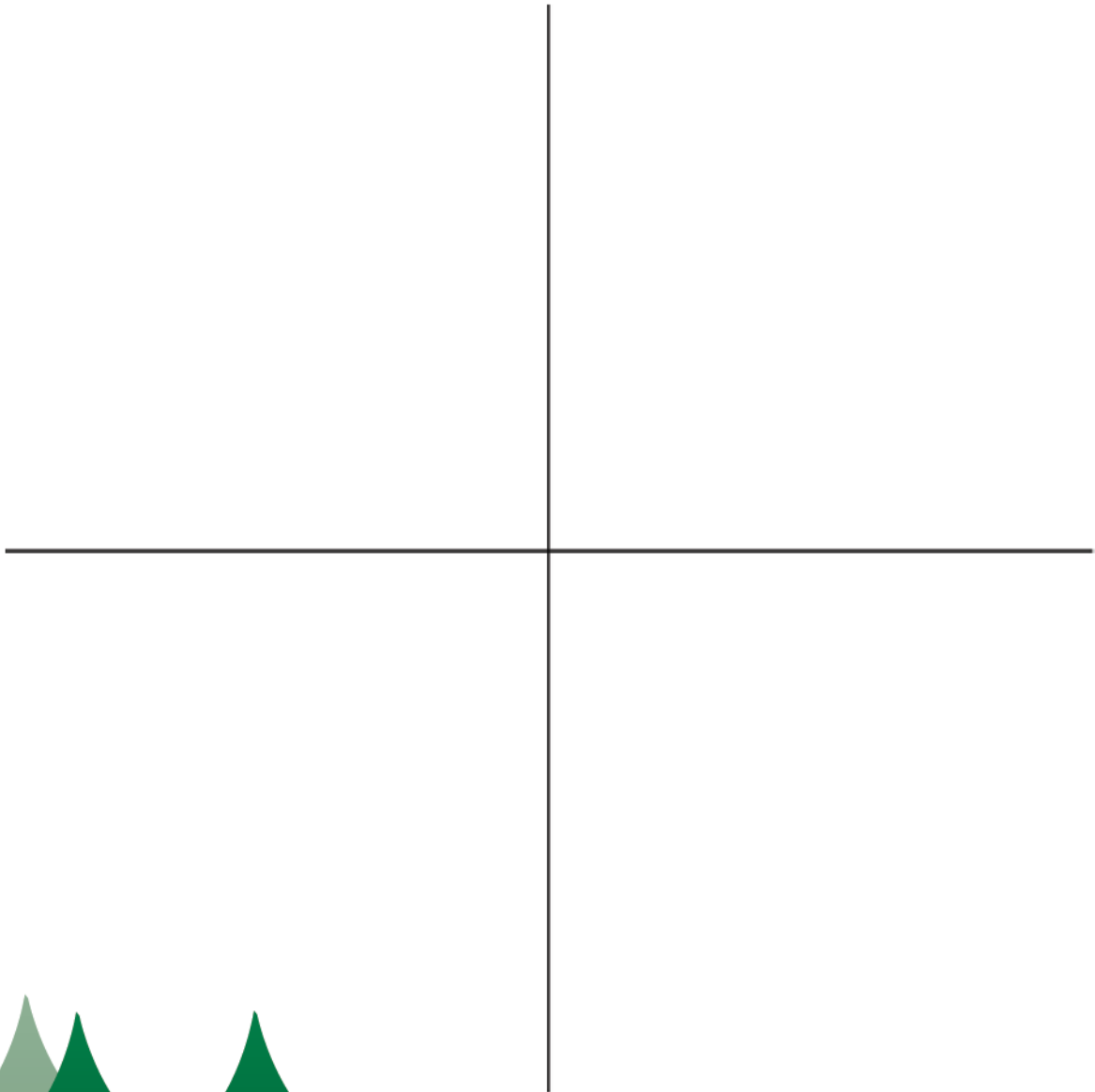
**It was about ten years ago today,  
the best of friends came to play.  
One friend, green and a little shy,  
the other friend, an average country guy....**

[illegible]

Ever heard of a *haiku*? A Haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry. What is interesting about haikus are their structure. A haiku has three lines. The first and last lines have 5 syllables. The middle line contains 7 syllables. Using the scene on the other page create your own haikus. Look at the example below for more understanding.

## EXAMPLE:

**Beyond the mountain,** ← 5 SYLLABLES  
**the green dragon dreams of friends,** ← 7 SYLLABLES  
**who can sing and dance.** ← 5 SYLLABLES





Why is the man singing? In the space below create a dialogue between the man and the dragon. The conversation should explain why the man is singing. Use the writing format below to write the dialogue. Try adding a narrator to set a distinct mood.

**Narrator:** On a sunny afternoon Drogba the dragon and Earl debated on which was the tallest mountain in Cougar County.

**Earl:** You're on! If you're right, I'll sing for you all day long.

[illegible]

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### EXAMPLE:

**Turtle:** What is it? Is it bad?

**Turtle:** I know! A new wax job on my shell!



Do you know what a haiku is? A Haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry. What is interesting about haikus are their structure. A haiku has three lines. The first and last lines have 5 syllables. The middle line contains 7 syllables. Using the scene on the other page create your own haikus. The haikus can be related to a spell or magic words if you'd like. Look at the example below for more understanding.

## EXAMPLE:

**I see your future,  
it is full of surprises,  
no need to worry.**

← 5 SYLLABLES

← 7 SYLLABLES

← 5 SYLLABLES







The scenario on the previous page can give way to thousands of different stories. There are clearly two characters in a unique setting. Create a short story about what you see below, but to make things more interesting choose an item from the box to add to the story. You may choose as many as you want. You may need to use another piece of paper .



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This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. In the top right corner, there is a decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping circles in various shades of green, creating a bokeh or bubble effect. The overall design is clean and minimalist, suitable for writing or drawing.

Draw a scene from your story here and write a description below. Maybe you added a new character, what does he or she look like? Try to include facial expressions to add emotion to your story!

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# Great job!

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