

# **Creative Writing Tips For Students**

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**Neha Gupta**

**AN EASY-TO-FOLLOW GUIDEBOOK**



Creative Writing Tips for Students  
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## Introduction

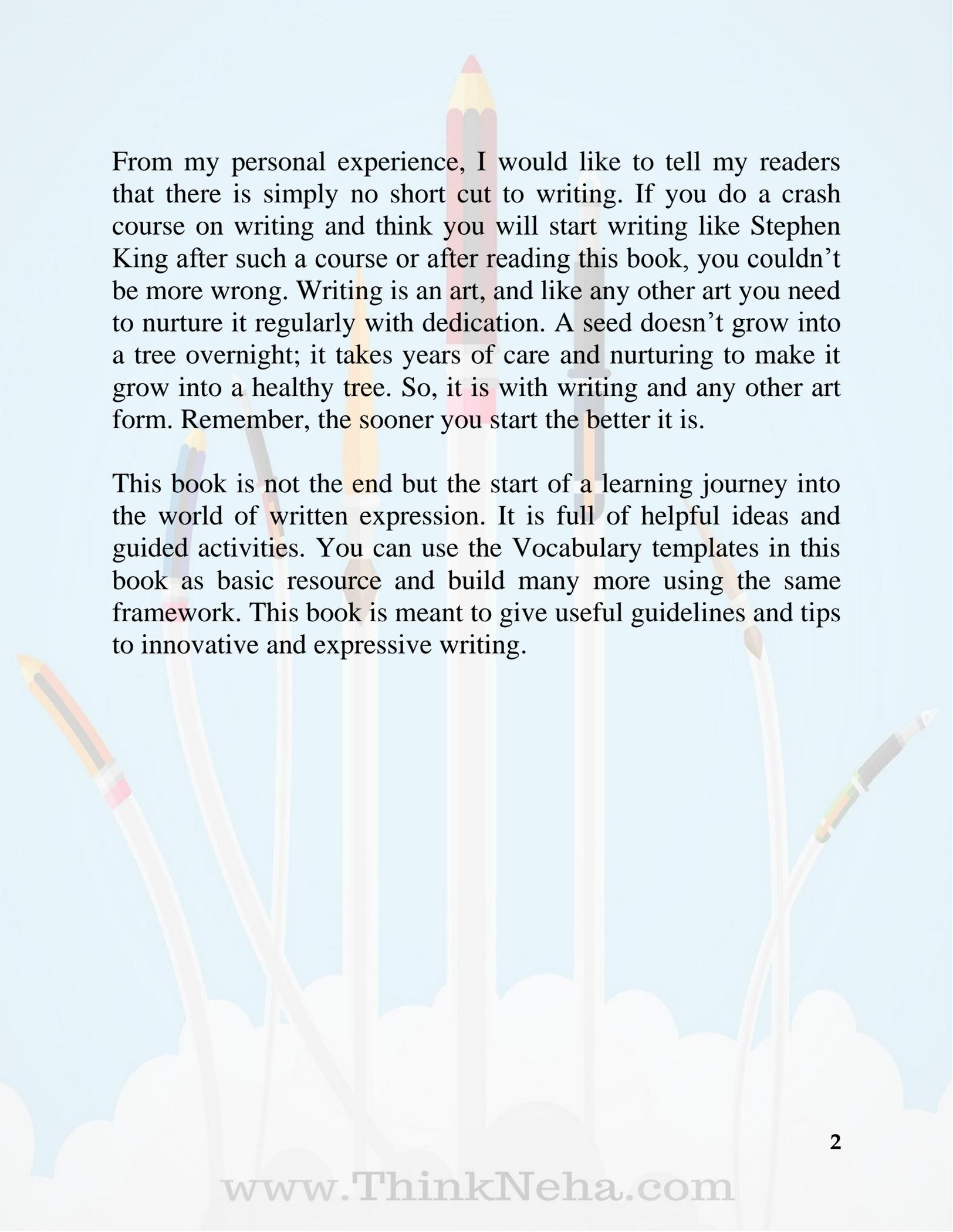
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*We stumbled upon a difficult word.  
The teacher handed me over the dictionary-  
“You love dictionaries, look up this word.”  
I silently protested-  
“I hate dictionaries!”*

*Every week, for 5 long years,  
the same scene was played.  
Gradually, my protests grew fainter,  
the teacher’s smile grew wider  
and I fell in love with the dictionary.  
-Neha Gupta*

This book is meant for elementary and middle grade students. It can be used as a guide and a stepping stone to acquire good creative writing skills. This book constitutes writing tips, guided exercises and readymade templates to help students grasp the significance of good writing.

I have used some vocabulary templates from my personal notes as a student for which I would forever be grateful to my English teacher, Mrs. Sarin who guided me in building good comprehension skills and insightful writing.



From my personal experience, I would like to tell my readers that there is simply no short cut to writing. If you do a crash course on writing and think you will start writing like Stephen King after such a course or after reading this book, you couldn't be more wrong. Writing is an art, and like any other art you need to nurture it regularly with dedication. A seed doesn't grow into a tree overnight; it takes years of care and nurturing to make it grow into a healthy tree. So, it is with writing and any other art form. Remember, the sooner you start the better it is.

This book is not the end but the start of a learning journey into the world of written expression. It is full of helpful ideas and guided activities. You can use the Vocabulary templates in this book as basic resource and build many more using the same framework. This book is meant to give useful guidelines and tips to innovative and expressive writing.

## Chapter 1: Why creative writing skills are important for children

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Good expression both in writing and speaking is very significant in the times of today. Even if you are excellent in studies but lack in expressing your point of view, it's all useless. The great and innovative ideas that lay dormant inside your mind need a way out. And only good language and ability to express those ideas can take you to the top of the success ladder.

Good creative writing skills in students help them not only in the language but other subjects too. Good writing skills help in boosting the confidence of the child in an academic environment. The student who expresses well can confidently assert himself/herself in life. Good writing skills will help them score well in other subjects too. All professions require good communication skills that can come only with practice.

No one is born with the perfect writing skill; one needs to work upon it. It comes naturally to those who read good literature and practice writing regularly. Then again, do not expect instant results from reading. In my practice as a founder of BuzzingBooks, an online children's books rental, I have many parents lamenting that they have seen no significant improvement in their child's writing skill even after he/she has been into reading for six months! My only advice to such parents is to keep patience; developing good writing as a result of good reading works on the sub conscious level and hence

takes time. For example, one of my library members, who is now 12 years of age is adept at creative writing skills; her teacher is always praising her flawless writing and use of expressions. She started reading since the age of 5 years, which is now materializing effortlessly into good writing.

In my experience as an educationist, I have come across many students who excel in academics, but unfortunately fail to make a mark, especially due to lack of good writing and speaking skills. Thinking is not enough, neither having great ideas. Effective communication, both written and spoken is the bridge between the individual and the world around him/her. And this book aims to strengthen the foundation of this bridge.

Excellent writing skills are essential in many fields, such as authors, teachers, editors, people working in publishing houses, researchers, marketing professionals and so on. Regular creative writing helps the child in unleashing his creativity but also making him comfortable with his own ideas.

It is very important for a student to express himself with clarity lest his academic acumen would not be exploited to the maximum. Students who have comprehended well and are able to express their understanding in a clear manner are the ones who win. Students who do not have good writing skills are left to depend upon their rote learning ability and that is disastrous. Words have the power to capture and relay your thoughts. It is important to put your thoughts into words so that the people around you can comprehend you.

I have met many young children who have brilliant minds, full of creative ideas, but they seem unable to crack the code of communication, unable to translate those thoughts into meaningful words. This is where writing skills come into play. Good writing skills stand as asset both in the academic career and in the job field.

## Chapter 2:

### Let's Learn to Write Impressively

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#### BASIC SKILLS FOR CREATIVE WRITING

These are the key ingredients for Creative Writing:



**Reading:** Reading good literature is the first step towards good writing. Good books act like guides and teachers. Reading not only helps in vocabulary building but also shows how words can be used. All the classics, Reader's Digest books and monthly magazines, newspaper editorials are excellent reading material that can be mentally chewed upon. Many children classics

published these days are the re-told versions. And most of them come with average English. Try catching hold of good versions if you are taking the re-told classics. Try Sterling Classics or the original Classics from Penguin publishers. Try reading everything including fantasy, poetry, classics, humor, science fiction, satire or adventure; this will expose you to different styles of writing which you will sub consciously imbibe while reading.

**Writing:** WRITE, WRITE and keep WRITING regularly. There is simply no shortcut to practice. Even a paragraph, or a letter, or how your day went or even penning down your feelings would suffice. You needn't write an essay daily. But make a habit of writing a few meaningful sentences daily. Encourage your child to keep a journal where he/she can document the events or impressions of the day.

**Observation:** A keen observer is the foundation for a good writer. What makes an author different from us? The author sees his characters in all those he meets, finds stories in every incident around him, and chooses backdrops for his stories from every place he visits.

For example, author Ruskin Bond describes nature so minutely and beautifully that only a nature lover and a keen observer can do. Following lines are from his much-loved poem "Cherry Tree"



*“Six feet high my own dark cherry,  
And- I could scarcely believe it-a berry.  
Ripened and jeweled in the sun,  
Hung from a branch – just one!  
And next year there were blossoms small  
Pink, fragile, quick to fall  
At the merest breath, the sleepest breeze.”*

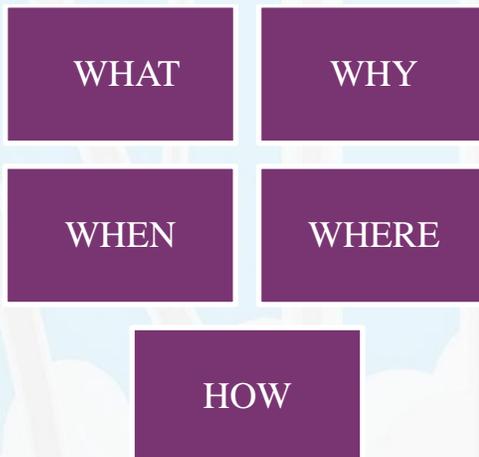
**Imagination:** If you couple your keen observation with quirky imagination, your battle with writing is half won. You have now all the ingredients for a good writing recipe. You just need to blend that with your style of expression. Every child has an inherent talent for imagination and cooking up stories. Try polishing that a bit. Give your quirky and weird ideas a voice. This is exactly what Jules Verne did in his famous novels *“Journey to the Center of the Earth”* and *“The Mysterious Island”*.

**Expression:** If you are reading good literature, writing regularly, observing people and surroundings, keeping the fire of imagination burning, you are absolutely ready to punch a good essay. Expressing your thoughts is now simply a child’s play. You just need to make small habits that will enhance your English speaking and writing skills. First and foremost, let go of your shyness and reluctance in expressing your thoughts

however childish or insignificant you may find them. Learn to be confident of whatever you are thinking. After all, your thoughts are appendages of your thinking skills and the thinking skill is unique to each individual. You don't need to have same thoughts as your teacher or your friend. It is okay to think on a different plane from your known ones.

## MIND-MAPPING TECHNIQUE

Use mind- mapping skills to make the framework for your writing. For non-fiction writing, you can put the central idea or topic in the center and branch out the 5 questions around it. The 5 questions are WHAT, WHY, WHEN, WHERE, HOW. Think about your topic by segregating into these five questions. This will not only make you write comprehensively but also help in giving a focused direction to your viewpoints.



For fiction or story writing, think of a story map before you start writing; A story map helps students understand the important elements in a story and steers towards a clear thinking. A story map includes characters, plot and setting. Now think of a conflict situation that needs to be resolved. And you have your story ready! The structure of the story includes:

- Introduction- It constitutes not only an impressive opening line but also your story backdrop and characters. Remember, first impression is usually the last impression. Your introduction will set the tone of your entire story.
- Main Body: This is where you bring in the conflict. This is the longest part in your story where you can recall your observed real-life incidents and mix them up with a little imagination. Try to make it as dramatic and precise as possible.
- Conclusion- Hasn't Shakespeare rightly said, All's Well That Ends Well! You need to resolve the conflict well and tightly enough without any loose ends. End the story with a few punch lines that shed clarity and purpose to your entire story. Try experimenting with different ends. Choose the end that sounds more convincing and plausible to your mind. Until you yourself, as a writer are convinced with your story, you cannot convince the reader with it.

## EFFECTIVE HABITS

Some of the mentioned suggestions, if practiced on a daily basis can result in marked improvement of the student's creative writing skills within a few months:

- Read something (apart from your text books) daily. Fix up a time for reading. The best is to read for half an hour before going to bed.
- For every 3 fictions you read, make a habit of reading one non-fiction. When you read fiction, you tend to focus on the story. But non-fiction brings your attention back to the language.
- Use dictionary frequently. When was the last time you picked up a dictionary? Use Post-It notes to note down NEW words while reading to avoid disrupting your reading tone. You can look up those words later.
- Whenever reading a story, make a habit of imagining a different end. This habit will help you polish your imagination skills.
- Learn to observe your surroundings keenly and speak out your observations. Don't shy away from voicing your thoughts. For example, seeing a stray band of white cloud against the blue sky might remind you of a whale in the blue sea or may be a sea horse or a yacht lost in the sea! Try voicing such thoughts. This kind of exercise would make you a keen observer. You will find yourself drawn to little things around you that you may have never taken notice of before. It will help you strengthen your imagination and expression skills.

- Playing word games like Hangman, Scrabble and Crossword help in polishing the language area of your brain.
- Write something every day. Make a diary, 'My Writer's Diary' or any other name you want to give it. Then get down jotting down your day's events, your feelings, about nature, your dreams, and your small notes of thanks. Write anything but write every single day. It can even be about a book you just read or an incident you encountered when you were coming back from school or describing the new hair cut you want. Just about anything. Be clear and precise in your writing. Sit for 2 minutes and think what exactly you want to write about before you write. If you miss a day, make a point of writing 2 notes to compensate for that. This exercise will make you more observant and get you in the habit of writing. You will never ever shy away from writing.

## EXPRESSIONS

Try experimenting with some of the writing tips mentioned here and you will notice how your writing gets transformed in a few months.

- Use shorter sentences. Avoid 'ands' & 'buts' as much as possible.
- Be precise and concise.
- Break your long texts into logically self-contained paragraphs.

- Use Idioms wherever possible. Refer Wren and Martin to learn a couple of Idioms. Until you know the idioms, you cannot use them effectively.

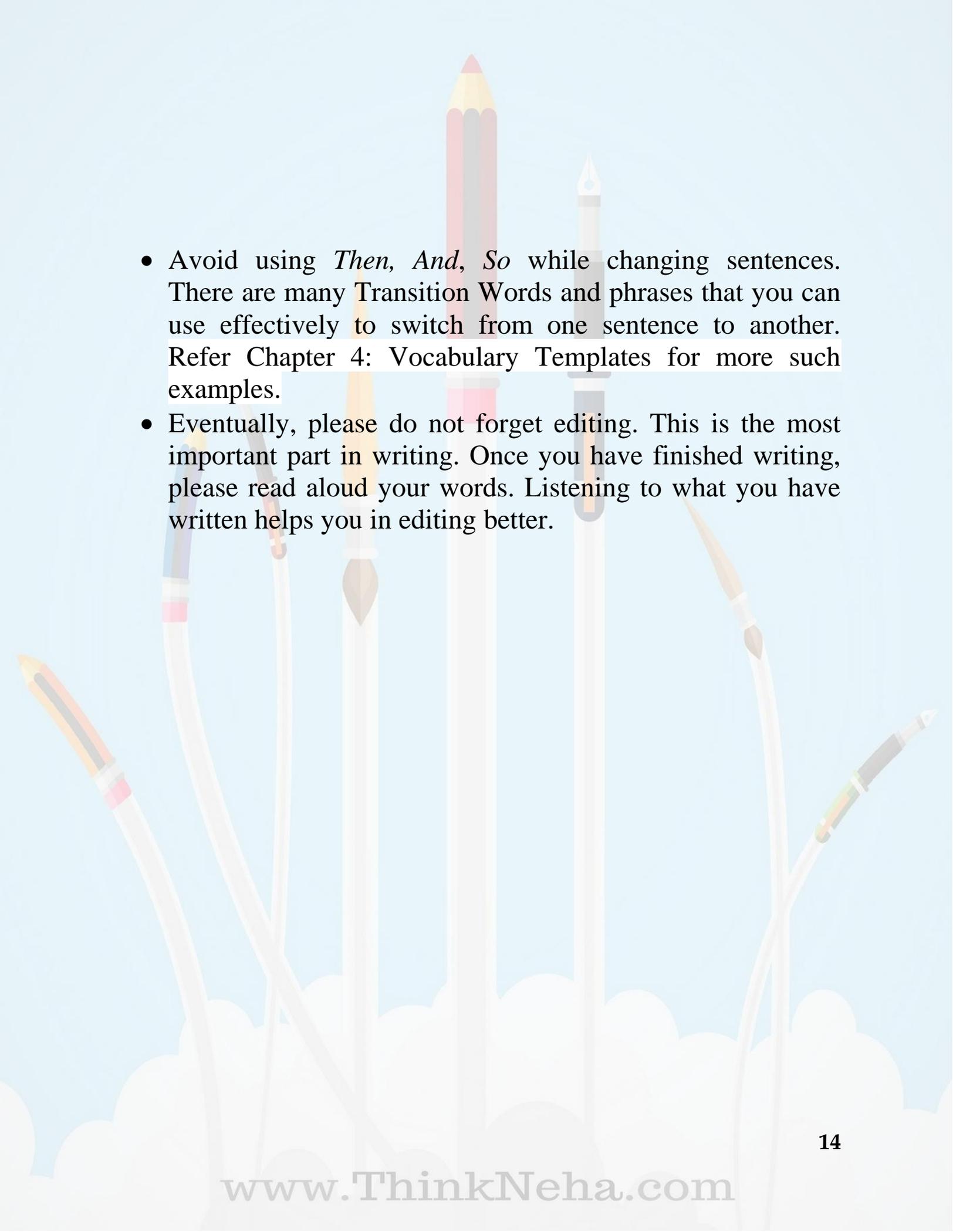
For example, here is a simple sentence made richer by using a very common idiom:

- The old man *died* in his sleep last night.
- The old man *passed away* in his sleep last night.

- Using similes and metaphors enhance your writing. It's like enhancing your plain writing with jewels.
- Punctuate your sentences well. This is important but most overlooked part of any writing. Correct punctuation gives strength to your writing.
- Try using famous phrases in the introduction or the conclusion of your essay. Well-read people are seen quoting famous phrases from Alice in Wonderland and stories of Shakespeare.
- Learn to substantiate your point in essays by quoting from the speeches of famous people. For example, when writing an essay about the Freedom Struggle of India, you can use the famous lines of Pandit Nehru: "It must have been a proud moment for all Indians to hear Nehru ji saying- *At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.*"
- Make bare sentences lively by adding in appropriate adjectives and adverbs.

For example:

- I saw that girl gazing at the sky.
- I saw the *pretty* girl gazing at the *moonlit* sky.

- 
- Avoid using *Then*, *And*, *So* while changing sentences. There are many Transition Words and phrases that you can use effectively to switch from one sentence to another. Refer Chapter 4: Vocabulary Templates for more such examples.
  - Eventually, please do not forget editing. This is the most important part in writing. Once you have finished writing, please read aloud your words. Listening to what you have written helps you in editing better.

## Chapter 3:

### Resources for Guided Writing

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#### JOURNALS

It's best to make a daily journal wherein you can write about your feelings and ideas, or how your day went. If seeing a blank paper without any topic seems daunting to you, there are many journal books in the market that are really good. I have mentioned a few of them here:

- Start Where You Are: A Journal For Self-Exploration by Meera Lee Patel
- 642 Things To Write About by San Francisco Writers' Grotto
- The Imaginary World of by Keri Smith
- Wreck This Journal by Keri Smith
- Me: A Compendium: A fill-in Journal for Kids by Wee Society
- 1 Page at a Time: A Daily Creative Companion by Adam Kurtz
- Becoming Me: A Work in Progress by Andrea Pippins
- Gratitude Journal For Kids by Mirabell Publishing
- Pick Me Up: A Pep Talk for Now and Later by Adam Kurtz
- Write Your Best Story Ever Notebook by Christopher Edge

## BOOKS TO ENHANCE IMAGINATION

You can try wordless picture books and discuss different stories around it. It's a fun group activity to do. Books under Katha publishers are designed specially to enhance the critical thinking skills and imagination in a child.

### PICTURE BOOKS:

- Fledolin by Ante Damm
- I have a home by Claudia Legnazzi
- The Glass Tree by M. Mukundam
- What Shall I Make by Nandini Nayar
- Ish by Peter Reynolds
- Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson
- The Dot by Peter Reynolds
- One Hundred Hungry Ants by Elinor J Pinczes
- Inch by Inch by Leo Lionni
- On the Top of A Pin Was by Geeta Dharmarajan

### BOOKS for MIDDLE GRADERS:

- The Chronicles of Narnia
- Harry Potter
- What If by Randall Munroe
- Mind Maps for Kids by Tony Buzan
- The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes
- Mathematwist by T.V. Padma
- The Nose Doctor

- At Least A Fish by Anushka Ravishankar

## BOOKS AS MENTORS

- Books by Usha Pandit are considered excellent for building creative writing skills.
- Reader's Digest- Consider subscribing the monthly magazine of Reader's Digest. Encourage the child to read and reproduce in own words, some of the articles and stories in these magazines. Focus on 'Drama in Real Life' for some impressive phrases and excellent use of difficult words.
- Shakespeare- Read the original stories by Shakespeare to help build a richer vocabulary.

## WEB RESOURCES

<http://www.creativewritingprompts.com>

<http://kidslearntoblog.com/>

<https://thisreadingmama.com/creative-writing-activities/>

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/story-starters/>

<https://www.superteacherworksheets.com/journal-prompts.html>

<https://littlebirdtales.com/>

## Chapter 4: Vocabulary Templates

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### THEME BASED PHRASES

#### **Fire:**

- Red-blue jet like flames
- Tongues of fire leapt out like wild serpents
- Inferno of leaping flames
- Burst into flames
- Extinguish (put out) the blaze
- Engulfed in flames
- Gasping for fresh air
- Description of smoke: Black and Grey color, Fliffly columns of smoke, Choking smoke, Thick wall of smoke
- Charred to death
- Beat out the flames with bare hands
- Thick smoke wafted out from the open windows
- Fire roared like a tornado
- Walls of smoke everywhere
- Smoke descended in huge smothering clouds
- Smoke billowed from the roof of the building
- Walls fully ablaze with fire
- Clothes burst into flames
- Gaspd for air
- Sucking in acrid smoke
- Groped blindly amidst thick smoke
- Wrapping the child in blanket

- Flames leaping to the ceiling
- Pinned beneath the pile of burning debris
- Raging fire
- Hit with tremendous heat and smoke
- Felt as if going down the chimney
- Fire lapping up the building
- Fire reduced to smoldering embers
- Fire is knocked down (under control)
- Smothering the flames
- Long hoses sprayed water at raging flames
- Like angels, firemen appeared through the smoke
- Firemen combed (searched) the area for survivors

### **Rain, Thunder, Storms:**

- Sky was overcast
- Thunderclouds gathered
- Terrifying roar of thunder
- Thunder rumbled in the distance
- Lightning flashed
- Storm broke with a deafening crash of thunder
- Shaft of lightning streaked past the sky
- Ferocious storm
- Verbs for lightning: Streak, Flashed, Dart, Zoom, Criss-cross, Shot, Scintillate
- Cold wind was biting
- Icy wind stung my face

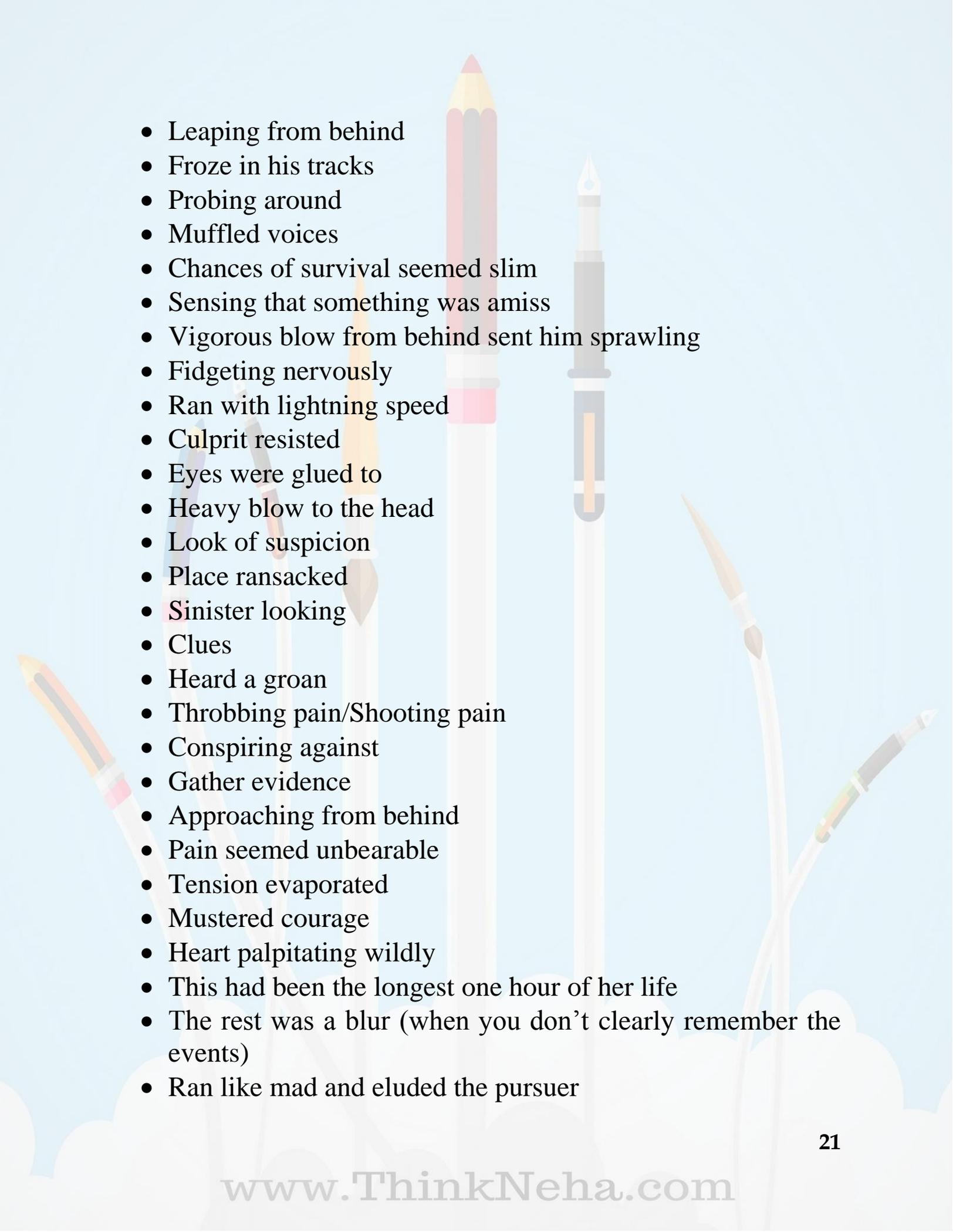
- Face felt sandblasted
- Get caught in the storm
- Torrential rain
- Swollen river
- Ducked into trees for shelter
- Words describing Rain: Drizzling, Torrential rain, Downpour, Raining like cats and dogs,
- Dripping trees
- Raindrops spattered against the window panes

### **Horror/Ghost:**

- Heard tingling of keys, sounds of footsteps
- Ghostly rapping sounds
- Shadowy figure
- Eerie silence
- Strange smells filled the air
- Strange noises resounded
- Covers yanked off at night
- Felt a blast of cold air
- Octopus like hands clutching at my throat

### **Adventure/Thrill/Mystery:**

- Mind went blank
- Shielded myself against the tree, wall or any appropriate barrier
- Badly shaken

- 
- Leaping from behind
  - Froze in his tracks
  - Probing around
  - Muffled voices
  - Chances of survival seemed slim
  - Sensing that something was amiss
  - Vigorous blow from behind sent him sprawling
  - Fidgeting nervously
  - Ran with lightning speed
  - Culprit resisted
  - Eyes were glued to
  - Heavy blow to the head
  - Look of suspicion
  - Place ransacked
  - Sinister looking
  - Clues
  - Heard a groan
  - Throbbing pain/Shooting pain
  - Conspiring against
  - Gather evidence
  - Approaching from behind
  - Pain seemed unbearable
  - Tension evaporated
  - Mustered courage
  - Heart palpitating wildly
  - This had been the longest one hour of her life
  - The rest was a blur (when you don't clearly remember the events)
  - Ran like mad and eluded the pursuer

- Deserted area
- Desperate shouts

### **Expressing Emotions:**

- Shuddered at the thought
- Anguished by betrayal/incident
- Shaking with anger
- Tormented, Devastated
- Euphoric
- Seething with anger
- Bubbling with excitement

### **TRANSITION WORDS**

- Moreover, So much so, Not only this
- However, Nevertheless, Though, Notwithstanding
- Thereupon, Therefore, Consequently, Accordingly
- Furthermore, Additionally
- Meanwhile, Sometimes, Afterwards
- Finally, Eventually, Ultimately, At last, Lastly
- That very day, The next day, One afternoon
- Perhaps, Although, Frequently
- Subsequently, Simultaneously
- During, Next week

- As a matter of fact
- By and large
- Incidentally, In my opinion
- Presently, Presumably
- Alternatively, Conversely
- To wrap it all up, To summarize, In conclusion, To sum up

### OPENING LINES

- To begin with...
- As I go down memory lane,...
- You can start with a simple sentence describing the weather like- *“It was a bright, sunny day.”*
- You can start with a phrase that can give inkling to the story.
- Start with a mystery element for an adventure story, for example- *“Everyone turned back and stared at the boy!”*
- You can start with a generic sentence like *“Most people would agree to...”*
- Other examples:
  - “It is often believed...”*
  - “We live in a time and age when...”*
  - “It is incredible to think...”*
  - “It was a cold, moonless night.”*
  - “The rain was pouring down...”*
  - “Long ago, there was...”*

## USAGE OF IDIOMS

1. Admire, Respect- Look up to
2. Have patience- Bear With
3. Decide, Reconcile- Made up
4. Disappear- Slip away
5. Despise, Hate- Look down upon
6. Died- Passed away
7. Escape- Get off
8. Extinguish- Put out (Used in context with fire, lights)
9. Expecting someone/something with pleasure- Look forward to
10. Execute- Carry out
11. Finished, Expired- Run out
12. Investigate, Find- Look into
13. Losing hope- Give up
14. Maintain- Keep up
15. Postpone- Put off
16. Reduce- Cut down
17. Resemble- Takes after
18. Surrender- Laid down
19. Submit- Give in
20. Tolerate, Endure- Put up with
21. Unconscious- Passed out
22. Excited- Worked up
23. Wrecked- Cast away (Used in context of ships/boats)
24. Formal complaint- Press charges, Lodge an FIR
25. Puzzled- At his wit's end
26. Being suspicious- Smell a rat
27. Deliberately- In cold blood

28. In writing- In black and white
29. Team work, consulting one another- Put your heads together
30. Ignorance- Keep in the dark
31. Out of one's element- Like a fish out of water
32. Working hard- Burning midnight's oil
33. At once, Immediately- Spur of the moment
34. Under absolute control- At your beck and call
35. Doubt- With a grain of salt
36. Praising oneself- Blowing his own trumpet
37. Disappeared suddenly- Vanished into thin air
38. Confused- At sea
39. Very attentive- All ears
40. Irregular- Fits and starts

### **SYNONYMS FOR COMMON USAGE**

- Surprised- Astonished, Amazed, Stunned, Shocked
- Fear- Trepidation, Anxiety
- Beg- Plead, Request
- Rare- Seldom, Occasional, Infrequently
- Confused- Perplexed, Bewildered
- Instinctively- Spontaneously, As of habit,
- Cruel- Ruthless
- Poor- Impoverished, Economically weak
- Pretending- Feigning, Fabricating
- Shout- Yell, Shriek, Scream
- Quickly- Hurriedly, Quickly, In a jiffy

The background features several stylized pencils and pens of various colors (red, yellow, blue, green) arranged vertically and diagonally against a light blue sky with white clouds at the bottom. The title is centered at the top.

## APPROPRIATE USE OF COMMON VERBS

- Drums Rolled
- Boat drifts
- Wind blows
- Thought crosses the mind
- Eyes flashed angrily
- Drop hints
- Tears rolled down my face
- Trim nails *but* prune trees
- Draw the curtains
- Taking off the hat
- Taking a stroll- Walking leisurely
- Snake slithers, Horse gallops or trots, Birds perch, Eagles soar

## Chapter 5: Guided Exercises

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### ELABORATE A SIMPLE SENTENCE

Tips and Hints: Try making a picture with your words. Focus on details. Using adjectives and adverbs can help.

Example-

- I love gazing at the sky.

I love gazing at the blue sky.

I simply adore gazing at the pristine blue sky in the spring.

I simply adore gazing at the pristine blue sky in the spring and especially when I am in a contemplative mood.

- The man ate dinner.

The bulky looking man sitting alone at the corner table gobbled his sandwich.

The bulky looking man sitting alone at the corner table in the food court gobbled his grilled sandwich.

The bulky looking man sitting alone at the corner table in the food court, made nervous gestures while gobbling his grilled sandwich.

Here are some exercises for practice:

**Elaborate the following sentences to make them more meaningful:**

1. The girl walked to school. (Hint: Elaborate on the GIRL, how she walked and WHY she must have been in a hurry)
2. The woman was crying. (Hint: Try using phrases like ‘tears rolling down’ or words like sobbing)
3. He made a face.
4. It was cloudy.
5. The teacher glared at the student.

**WEB CHART OF WORDS:**

What comes to your mind with the following words? Use your imagination and observation to write down whatever comes to your mind with the following words.

1. Garden
2. Picnic
3. Dinosaurs
4. Mountains
5. Sea Voyage
6. Exams
7. Rainy Season

- 8. Hospital
- 9. Fashion
- 10. Sports

### IMAGINATIVE SIMILES

**Let your imagination run amok! Fill in the blanks with suitable similes.**

1. The bird was as tiny as .....(remember the tiniest bird you have ever seen and what comes to your mind if you have to comment on its size)
2. The blood was as red as .....
3. She looked as fragile as a.....(you can compare in reference with her weight or size or her frame in general. You can also use words/phrases that come to your mind with the word Fragile)
4. The crocodile sliding on the river edge looked as humongous as .....
5. His eyes shone with excitement like .....
6. The forest fire spread like.....

### MAKE A LIST OF DIFFERENT EXPRESSION OF VOICES:

For example: Shrieking, Hushed whisper, croaked an awkward hello, muttered under her breath, voice dripping with sarcasm, bloodcurdling scream.

## PARAGRAPH WRITING

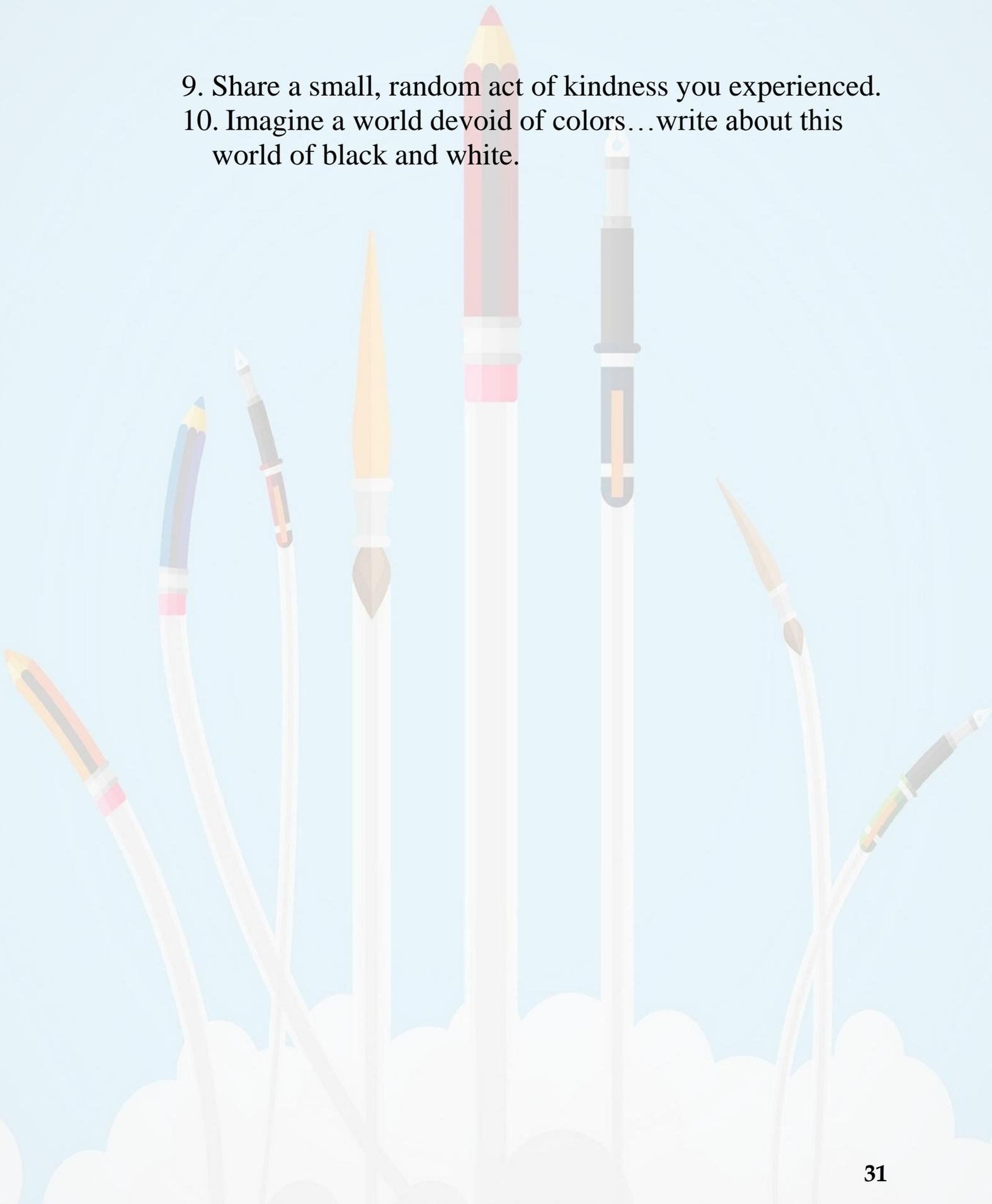
**Express yourself on the following topics:**

1. The last day of my summer vacation
2. When I look out of my bedroom window
3. My favorite corner at home
4. Gazing at the sky
5. Being naughty
6. What I love the most about my school
7. What makes me happy
8. Home alone
9. What heaven must be like
10. People who inspire me

## WRITING PROMPTS:

1. If our Earth becomes inhabitable...
2. If you get a chance to act your mom...
3. Write an alternative ending of a story or book you recently read
4. It was midnight and moon was shining brightly...
5. What if...
6. Pick a wordless picture book and write about it in your own words
7. What would you do if you were given an year of free/unscheduled time
8. How would the world be different if the printing press had never been invented?

9. Share a small, random act of kindness you experienced.
10. Imagine a world devoid of colors...write about this world of black and white.



## About the Author

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Dr. Neha Gupta is a medical writer, blogger and a social entrepreneur. She is the founder of BuzzingBooks, a successful children's online book rental service in India that has been awarded by the pan India "Small Business Local Buzz" program initiated by Intuit Inc.

She is a passionate traveler and a compulsive book hoarder. She pens down her philosophical impressions on life in her personal blog named ThinkNeha.com.

