

Unbox Your Words
'Permission' Writing Workshop
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Materials

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SHOULD - SHOULDN'TS and ALWAYS/NEVER

Make a list of things you don't think you're allowed to do or that you think you should always do in and connected to your writing. This list is private - it's just for you,

Taboos - things you think you SHOULDN'T do

- general taboos (present tense is awful, never write about sex)
- personal taboos (I never write in the first person; I shouldn't try to be funny)

What you write about

- what sorts of topics/themes do you write about or do you not let yourself write about?

How you write (1)

- which points of view, tense, voice, style do you tend towards or away from?

Do you think what you write is TOO -

short

long

personal/autobiographical

fictional

other...

or **not** short/long/personal/fictional/other **enough**?

How you write (2)

- what time do you write?
- where do you write
- what do you write on, with?
- Doing something at the same time as writing?

Any other writing-related habits?

From FUEL anthology of prize-winning flash stories' Index of First Lines

**Use one or more of them as prompts in any way you like - and try
and break at least TWO of your habits/taboo!**

Your teeth are smudged blueberry.

To: Audit Officer 5688A

Push it down.

The Man picks at the
wallpaper.

That evening, the fish left a strange taste in my mouth.

Is hard to bind heart to harrow and drill.

I opened a can of cat food and grabbed a
saucer and one of the forks nobody likes

Here in the dark you could be any age.

Mam wants a mermaid instead of me

It wasn't the fly fisher's fault she got caught up in his
line

Index of First Lines

1. Your teeth are smudged blueberry. **1**

1996. The night before you go, we choke on our wine watching Jarvis Cocker waft farts at Wacko Jacko. **148**

Aoccdrnig to rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the lttteers in a word are... **111**

And the days were made of auguries. **130**

After the thing with the goldfish, the Joneses decide they need respite at Christmas. **174**

Baby car seats, sometimes with babies in them, swiftly recovered. **181**

Dad tells Mom to feed the damn cat. **51**

Darling mummy, Well, the big day is here at last! **29**

"Don't forget to pick up the jackfruit," you say. **169**

Even by his own high standards, The Great Fantoni's world tour had been a triumph. **152**

Even when severed from the body the limbs of an octopus can function on their own. **136**

For you, I am **47**

First it was cartons and tins on the worktops, then newspapers on the stairs. **93**

For what Giorgi did, the clansmen could have thrown wood tar on him, rolled him in feathers, hanged him. **13**

Fluorescent men in high-vis vests hang like fruit in the trees. **53**

From our ladders we can see the plum-blue Malverns. **98**

Fukuko and her daughters huddle together upon the bluff, far above the churning river. **200**

Grandma ate poison five times before it killed her. **87**

He is three years old and thinks the word for plant is *planet*. **198**

Her **66**

Here in the dark you could be any age. **40**

His parents argue. **126**

I cull through your belongings for a recent photo and find everything but. **81**

I see Gwen at the school gates and she does this thing where she's looking but not seeing... **31**

I opened a can of cat food and grabbed a saucer and one of the forks nobody likes... **85**

I sit rigid, body taut as wooden chair. **17**

I want you to make me pregnant. **56**

Ignition—3, 2, 1. **45**

I'm rushing to push my lunch box in to my bag when I see these two who must be flying a kite on the green triangle ... **44**

In 1953 the polio virus hovered over the summertime streets of Toronto, it multiplied in the warmth... **99**

In hills north of the famous resort, we slip stiles beyond the dam, looking for signs. **33**

internet dating **118**

Is hard to bind heart to harrow and drill. **18**

I steered through fantastic streets of boisterous traffic, past glittering buildings, and footpaths that moved with shoppers. **69**

It is 3:00AM and 告白氣球 by Jay Chou comes on the karaoke machine. **101**

It spins up on a thermal, fluttering in a sparrow-brown envelope (second class) and when she reaches to catch it, her hot-air balloon lurches. **159**

It starts with a single word. **120**

It wasn't the fly fisher's fault she got caught up in his line... **11**

It was such a very hot day, the air flapping like a thick cloth in her face. **38**

Julia Ward Howe in her room on the second floor of the Willard Hotel gathers the sheets around her. **15**

Mam wants a mermaid instead of me and though I slip out of her like a fish in the birthing pool on a rainy day, I have no tail... **194**

Margaret drinks coffee rarely; it's too emotive. **26**

Max watched the boy through the telescope for over an hour. **161**

Mum died reaching for a packet on the top shelf of a kitchen cupboard. **89**

My heart sank. **116**

Noun, a fissure or split **24**

On the phone to your daughter all winter. **20**

People come. **22**

Push it down. **48**

Scene: The Royal Ball. **144**

She can never believe how bright the gorse is, laid in great yellow arcs across the land. **135**

She needs bread. **128**

"So, have you had any paranormal experiences in this house?" **156**

She's in the supermarket – the laundry aisle to be precise. **191**

She wants to be the girl in the passenger seat, feet up on the dashboard, playing with the radio while he drives. **59**

She watched as he tucked into the grub. **84**

That evening, the fish left a strange taste in my mouth. **154**

that your secondary school boyfriend will snog your best friend at a *Coldplay* gig while you are in the toilet queue... **183**

The bank sits a half mile out, as if it doesn't want anything to do with the rock-bottom town it serves. **35**

The boys call her Wardy, like she's one of the lads, a bit of a laugh. **94**

The button wife bends her body across the bed, but the cloth husband is not interested in touching her. **142**

The Captain wakes, reborn into the *Golden Age* for the sixteenth time. **5**

The Man picks at the wallpaper. **177**

The resonance of tires against the wet road is a mantra, strong and steady. **164**

The Sauders are almost prepared for winter. **186**

The year it happened was the year that I moved into my own head. **62**

Three times with his grunting and the calloused hand over my mouth: first, the kitchen wall rough at my back... **91**

To: Audit Officer 5688A **77**

Two light bulbs burned out in the basement, so I used the flashlight app on my smartphone while carrying my cat... **202**

Upon landing, Johannes Kepler looks back at Earth, a blue-green ball tossed high in lunar sky. **150**

We learn that there are tubes inside of us with sleeping babies. **43**

We thought we'd be safer away from the city. **72**

When Da booked our first holiday, a weekend in a caravan in St. Andrews, Ma wept. **132**

When it became clear she truly was the most fascinating woman in the world, everybody wanted to be near her. **166**

Pieces on the Ground

By Marianne Boruch **Source: Poetry (February 2019)**

I gave up the pencil, the walk in woods, the fog
at dawn, a keyhole I lost an eye to.

And the habit of early, of acorn into oak—
bent tangled choked because of ache or greed,
or lousy light deemed it so.

So what. Give up that so what.

O fellow addicts of the arch and the tragic, give up
the thousand-pound *if* and *when* too.
Give up whatever made the bed or unmade it.

Give up the know thing that shatters into other things
and takes the remember fork in the road.

The remember isn't a road.

At noon, the fog has no memory of fog, the trees I walked
or wanted to. Like the pencil never recalls its least
little mark, the dash loved, the comma which can't,

cannot dig down what its own brief nothing
means on the page. I don't understand death either.

By afternoon, the brain is box, is breath let go, a kind of
mood music agog, half emptied by the usual
who am I, who are you, who's anyone.

Truth is, I listen all night for morning, all day
for night in the trees draped like a sound I never quite

get how it goes. There's a phantom self, nerved-up
as any arm or leg.

Of course I was. Of course I stared from the yard,
my mother at the window

rinsing knife and spoon and the middle of her life.

In drawing class, all eyes fix on the figure gone
imaginary, thinning to paper. Not the wind or a cry
how the hand makes, our bent to it—

pause and rush, rush and pause—

small animals heard only at dark, spooked in the leaves.

Things Left and Found by the Side of the Road

Jo Gatford, winner, Bath Flash Fiction Award, Feb 2018

Baby car seats, sometimes with babies in them, swiftly recovered. Nettles flourishing in the face of toilet breaks. Things said in anger and in tiredness, whipped free from wound down windows. Singular shoes. Houses turned into islands, refusing to bow to the bypass, clinging to their land. Roadkill; fox-ochre and badger-stripe and innards turned out. And crows, wherever things are dead and forgotten. Shopping lists never fulfilled. Plastic bags, flocks of them, as everlasting as the old gods. GPS-related swearing. A horse, filthy white, the same colour as its hay, watching the traffic, dreaming of leaping three lanes to greener grass. Dozing lorry drivers, longwave sewn into their sleep. The shouts of children: *Cows! Red car! Lions! Lions? No. Cows!* The snap-shut replies of parents who should have stopped for a wee miles ago. Imaginary friends, abandoned because of older sisters who said they were babyish. Garden centres where time is liminal and space folds in on itself somewhere between the box shrubs and the trellis. Petrol stations, though never when you need one. Yawns no longer suppressible. A cigarette butt flicked through a window slot, its glowing ash streaking back inside to burrow into denim thighs. Traffic cones like shells for urban hermit crabs, crushed and dented, flashing silently into the night. A moment of lapsed concentration. A time when you wouldn't make it home for Christmas, or the weekend, or at all. A time when these were Roman roads and the unexpected turn would not have existed. A time when all of this was nothing but fields. Car parts, tyre skids, blood spots, and perfect cubes of safety glass. The knowing sighs of EMTs. Roadside recovery phones standing at respectful intervals like neon orange sentinels. Angels, fallen, bewildered in concrete, wondering where all the souls have gone.

From the FUEL anthology of prize-winning flash fictions

Fifth Grade

Brianna Snow, winner, 2017 National Flash Fiction Day Microfiction Competition

We learn that there are tubes inside of us with sleeping babies. One day, boys will wake them up. The babies will grow, open our bodies, and fall out. Until then, we'll bleed—a baby's death each month. Ms. Miller sits at her desk in the back of the room while the video plays. We turn to her to see if this is true. She's holding her stomach with both hands. We look down and do the same.