

What would Chekhov do?

(Exercising Your Way to Fame and Fiction)

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3th Installment

Free Writing

This technique was first mentioned in a book called *Becoming a Writer* by Dorothea Brande, published in 1934. It's also known as automatic writing. Pick up a pen and write about whatever is there, or about a suggested topic, and don't stop for five minutes or ten minutes or whatever. I'll give you the topic this time. The secret here is not to think. Write fast. If you're stuck, write, "I'm stuck. I'm supposed to be writing about smoke, but I can't . . ." Just don't stop. Don't censor yourself. Don't worry where it's going. Follow the accident. The only way to go wrong is to think. The first time is the hardest because we are so used to thinking and being analytical, and all that. Set your timer for five minutes—you don't want to be looking up, distracting yourself.

Since fiction is something that comes out of you (poetry, too, for that matter, and memoir, of course), free write on your family. Do so from any angle, any voice, in any form. Go! Write for five minutes—until the alarm goes off. Writing isn't so hard, is it? How did you end up defining “family”? Were you surprised at anything or anyone that turned up? Remember that you can free write at any time about any subject all by yourself. It's a good way to prime the pump, so to speak.

End of 3rd Installment