



Writer's Block

By Cara Bafile

NARRATOR:

Mr. Lern's assignment sounded simple enough.

MR. LERN:

Write a short play. Use your creativity. Include characters, setting, and conflict. Most of all, think before you write. Bring your first drafts to class tomorrow.

NARRATOR:

For John, however, the assignment was anything but simple.

JOHN:

A play? I can't even think up a topic. What will I write about?

NARRATOR:

At home, John stared at a blank sheet of paper.

JOHN:

Think. Think. You can do this. There must be something to write about. How about baseball? No. I did that last time. What about Japan? No. I don't know anything about Japan. I know! I'll write about an egghead who takes a fall and can't be saved even by all the king's horses and all the king's men.... No, I suppose that's been done.

NARRATOR:

John rested his head on his desk in frustration.

JOHN:

Who am I kidding? I have writer's block!

NARRATOR:

Just then John heard an unexpected and unfamiliar voice.

COWBOY:

Hey there, buckaroo! Don't give up. I'll help you write a rip roarin' tale about the Old West!

JOHN:

Who are you?

COWBOY:

Why, I'm a cowboy, of course. I can tell you stories of gold mines and ghost towns. This is the stuff of history. You can't get more excitin'!

ASTRONAUT:

Hold your horses, cowpoke. The greatest excitement is soaring through space. If you want adventure, science fiction is where it's at. You should write about traveling to Mars.

JOHN:

Space exploration? I don't know anything about astronauts.

ASTRONAUT:

That's why you have an encyclopedia. Use it to choose a destination, and then I'll be your main character.

SAMSON:

Woof! Woof! I'd be a real *character*.

JOHN:

Woof? Who is that?

SAMSON:

The dog you hoped for at Christmas, the one you still want for your birthday. You even gave me a name, remember?

JOHN:

Samson, is that you?

SAMSON:

Ruff! Right! You've been thinking about me for so long. You could write a great play about our first days together.

JOHN:

I hope my parents will come through this time. They said I'm getting more responsible. Maybe I could write about what it would be like to have a dog. That might persuade them I'm ready...

WICKED QUEEN:

The story of a boy and his dog...how original is that? If you want something truly fantastic, try a tale of sorcery and danger.

JOHN:

That does sound interesting. Tell me more.

WICKED QUEEN:

In fairy tales, poor little maidens, like Snow White, are poisoned by hideous villains like me. Hah! Dragons, giants, dwarves, princesses, heroes...any character can exist in a fairy tale!

MOM:

Why live in fantasy when you can focus on your family?

JOHN:

Mom?

MOM:

Yes, John. Remember when we went to the beach and you and Dad uncovered that old shovel from a shipwreck? What fun we had! That's a great story.

JOHN:

Mom, I'm not sure that's exactly what I had in mind.

MOM:

Okay, honey. Just trying to help.

NARRATOR:

The voices in John's head continued to bicker and banter.

SAMSON:

Grrr! I don't care if the story of a boy and his dog isn't original. It's classic.

COWBOY:

Well, we've got lots of "doggies" out here on the prairie, and they all make mighty fine cattle herders. Why, I recall hearin' 'bout one that rustled up twenty lost head of cattle before daybreak.

ASTRONAUT:

Yes, animals are fine, but can we get back to outer space, please? Black holes, asteroids, the great beyond... What can compete?

WICKED QUEEN:

I certainly can. We have amazing battles in fairy tales! Does an astronaut carry a magic mirror? I think not.

MOM:

On *that* we agree. Wicked Queen, John is a nice boy. Stay out of his head.

NARRATOR:

All his characters were so busy arguing, they didn't notice John pluck a pencil from behind his ear and start to write: " Mr. Lern's assignment sounded simple enough...."

