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As we have already seen an example of following the “word association” strategy for coming up with ideas, below is an example of that other highly valuable strategy: linking with your own experiences.

Let’s say that the question we encounter in the creative writing section of the exam asks us to write a story with a **poodle** as the central feature.

1. Start by thinking about **poodles** and whether you have any memories of one, or what your view on them is, or maybe whether you’d like to have one. Brainstorm these things in a short list:

I once heard that poodles are one of the most intelligent breeds of dog.

You always see poodles getting judged at dog shows, all fancy and done up. I’ve always wondered whether they enjoy it or not.

My friend had a poodle for a while that was very savage towards humans and other dogs.

2. Now that you’ve come up with some memories and experiences linked to the topic, think about how you could use them to come up with a story idea.

For instance, you could decide to write a story from a poodle’s point of view. It’s a highly intelligent poodle, but people around it don’t realise, and they treat it like a stuffed animal or a baby. Sometimes it snaps at people to express its annoyance, but just gets tied up or taken outside. **(This would be the Beginning, or Introduction)**

The poodle is constantly being put in dog shows, and starts calculating ways to get out of it. At one show, the poodle manages to get hold of a bottle of dog shampoo, and pours it into the thermos of its owner. The owner drinks out of the thermos and goes into a violent rage because of the effect of the chemicals on him. He is tackled by security guards and escorted away by handlers watching his every move and ignoring his protests. **(This would be the Middle, or Conflict)**

During the chaos, the poodle manages to sneak away, musing that now it is his owner who is being treated in an infantile, controlling way, and that he has finally shown him what it is like to be a poodle. **(This would be the End, or Conclusion)**

You can see how in this example I have used my memories and experiences of poodles to create a story about a poodle.

If you are given a topic that you are very unfamiliar with, and cannot think of any experiences you’ve had that relate to it, then this approach is probably not the best option to follow. Instead try word association or drawing on things you’ve encountered through your reading of other books and stories.

2 Creative Writing Examples

2.1 Sample Exam Question One – An Object



Let's see from start to finish how to write this piece given the question, following the approach as per section 1.2...

1. Preparation

When: In the periods prior to the exam.

How: Start reading stories and novels. You should be able to access good reading material through your local library. I usually recommend reading novels and stories that you enjoy for at least one hour a day.

This will help build your vocabulary, get a feel of what good creative writing looks like and is likely to help you with using descriptive words in your writing.

students and teachers panicked and began to flee onto the field. The huge creature thundered forward.

Jason could see it clearly. It was ten feet tall, and it had a human body and the head of a bull.

Now Jason understood everything. The teachers and students ran past him, but he was not afraid. He raised his javelin and looked the creature directly in the eye. A thrill of excitement ran through the fleeing crowd, who stopped and watched Jason as he stepped forward, sunlight glinting on his javelin, to do what he did best.

O & A: Story & Content

The excitement has turned into fear through the use of words such as 'huge and monstrous', 'creature' and 'thundered forward'.

Due to the 'imaginative' story where Jason is the one who could kill the beast, the excitement we get from the javelin is greater than we would otherwise from just reality – we are transported to a different, a more exciting story and purpose for the javelin.

Note how the 'imaginative' storyline then progresses to reality in an orderly way. That is, reality is blurred with imagination. This is highly intellectual.

O & A: End

See again how the feel of 'excitement' is reinforced. The end progresses logically from the beginning and the middle because it reinforces the 'favourite sport' to being a 'real purpose'

5. Review & Title (If Needed)

When: Reviewing should **ideally take up 2 minutes** in the exam, after writing. If needed, you should come up with a title for your piece that sums up its whole.

How: See details of this section in **Sample Exam Question One**.

Meeting the Three Tests?

This meets the three tests! If yours doesn't you'll need to go back and re-write so that it does!

Heading

The image is of male about to throw a javelin and the story is about playing javelin throwing. I'd call this story: **The Only Throw**.