

CRESSIDA COWELL

Free Writing Friday

Hi,

My name is Cressida Cowell, and I'm the author and illustrator of the *How to Train Your Dragon*, and *The Wizards of Once* series, as well as the *Emily Brown* picture book series. I'm also an Ambassador for The National Literacy Trust.

I've been an author now for twenty years, and hundreds of kids, teachers and parents have asked me what I think is the one thing they can do to encourage creativity and develop stories. My answer is always: have a notebook to draw and write just for the fun of it.

What makes this notebook special is that NO ONE is allowed to correct it. Your spelling and grammar and handwriting doesn't matter in this book. What matters is that it's a place for ideas and for FUN. Spend 15 minutes a week (or longer – it's up to you) writing, or drawing in it. You can write stories, or notes from any exciting facts that you've found, or drawings, or comic strips, or ideas for films or little pictures of characters. You can write about books you've read or films that you've watched. This is YOUR notebook, and you can put whatever you like in it.

I started writing and drawing when I was very young, and I've kept notebooks ever since. Some of the story ideas I had about Vikings and dragons eventually became the *How to Train Your Dragon* book and film series. I still keep notebooks now – for my most recent series, *The Wizards of Once*, I kept a big A3 scrapbook for five years.

On the following pages, I've given some tips and starting points, because sometimes being faced with a blank notebook can be a bit daunting. If you don't need them, that's OK, you can start by yourself. The most important thing is that you enjoy what you're doing.

Keep writing, drawing, and creating!

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Changing life stories

MESSAGE FOR ADULTS:

Jonathan Douglas, Director of the National Literacy Trust: 'A love of writing can unlock children's imaginations, aspirations and academic potential. Yet half of school children tell us they don't enjoy writing because they struggle with spelling, punctuation, and knowing what to write. That is why we are so thrilled to be supporting Cressida Cowell's Free Writing Friday campaign. By giving children the freedom to explore their thoughts and ideas through writing – without the fear of having their work corrected or judged – we can help children discover a love of writing that will last them a life time.'

Cressida: 'The aim of Free Writing Friday is for kids to have fun. Children, in my experience, are naturally creative, and giving them time and space to write down ideas is often tricky in all our busy lives.'

I want to emphasise how important creativity is both to an individual's achievement and to the UK economy. We need our kids to be creative. The creative industries generated £92 billion for the UK in 2017, and we want the next generation to continue this strength. Whatever path they choose in life, though, creative thinking is invaluable – problem-solving, innovative ideas, and dealing with new challenges are skills that children can begin learning at an early age with nothing more than a notebook and a pencil.'