

CREATIVE VOICES

Resources for writers

WRITERS'
INNER
VOICES



Edinburgh
International
Book Festival



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Creative Voices: Resources for writers

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This workbook has been produced as part of the Writers' Inner Voices project and features exercises developed by John Foxwell and David Napthine.

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Writers' Inner Voices

Many writers report vivid experiences of 'hearing' the voices of the characters they create and having characters who talk back to them, rebel, and 'do their own thing'. It's an experience described by a wide range of authors from Enid Blyton, Alice Walker, Quentin Tarantino and Charles Dickens through to Samuel Beckett, Henry James, Hilary Mantel and many more.

Writers' Inner Voices is a collaborative research project between the Edinburgh International Book Festival and Durham University's Hearing the Voice which set out to examine the ways in which writers and storytellers experience their characters. This booklet provides details of what we discovered, explanations for what might be going on, and creative writing exercises based on the research.

About Hearing the Voice

Hearing the Voice is a large interdisciplinary study of voice-hearing based at Durham University and funded by the Wellcome Trust. Our research explores the relations between hearing voices and everyday processes of sensory perception, memory, language, literature and creativity, as well as why it is that some voices (and not others) are experienced as distressing, how they can change across the life course, and the ways in which voices can act as social, cultural and political forces.

Weblinks

writersinnervoices.com
hearingthevoice.org
understandingvoices.com
edbookfest.co.uk

Creative Voices: An overview

From 2018–2019, Durham University's *Writers' Inner Voices* project provided the basis for a series of workshops with creative writing groups in and around County Durham. The events were facilitated by John Foxwell (Research and Engagement Fellow, Department of English Studies) and David Napthine (Writer in Residence, *Hearing the Voice*) and culminated in a full-day workshop on 'Creative Voices', which took place in Newcastle upon Tyne in May 2019. The aim of the workshop was to demonstrate how our research into inner voices and 'literary voice-hearing' could be connected with the practice of writing.

Here we present the exercises we created for the Creative Voices workshop, alongside our research into the way writers experience the presence, agency and voices of the characters they create and how these might be accounted for. We also consider what's going on when we 'think' outside of writing, and the kinds of inner voices which we are both producing and listening to all the time in everyday life.

Perhaps the most important thing we found in our research – and something that's worth bearing in mind as you explore the materials in this booklet – is that all writers are different. There was a great deal of variation in pretty much every area we asked about, from whether or not writers 'heard' and/or 'saw' their characters, to whether or not they controlled them, to whether or not the character 'hung around' after the story was finished. Since the exercises are based on what these writers told us, they are also quite varied – so there are some you might find useful, and some just might not strike a chord with you.

Our creative writing exercises cover four distinct themes: inner speech, dialogue, enactive imagination, and agency. Each exercise can be completed alone, with a partner, or as an activity at a creative writing group. We recommend that you work through the exercises in numerical order.

Inner speech

When we think using words, most of us are aware of ‘hearing’ our own voice in our minds – a phenomenon which psychologists call ‘inner speech’. This includes things like ‘the voice of conscience’, but also things like silently repeating a phrase or a number to yourself so that you don’t forget it, insulting or praising someone in the privacy of your own thoughts, planning what you’re going to say or do, and so on.

There are times when inner speech is very noticeable, and times when you’re not necessarily sure whether you’ve done it or not. Much of the time inner speech might be condensed and fleeting – since it’s a kind of talking to ourselves, we often don’t need to provide much in the way of context. However, in activities which involve a bit more complexity we’re more likely to expand our inner speech, and therefore to notice it.

EXERCISE 1: A sample of inner speech

Set a timer for 1 minute. During that time, write down all of your thoughts (i.e. your inner monologue/dialogue), as quickly as you can.

The role of inner speech in writing and reading

So what is inner speech *for*? One of the main ideas is that it’s useful for things like action-planning, problem-solving, memory, and motivation. There’s also some evidence which suggests that we also use inner speech when reading. Some people are very aware of how typography can alter how inner speech sounds: how italics can give *certain* words emphasis, for instance, in ways that might completely change the meaning of a sentence, or how capitals can make the INNER VOICE SEEM LIKE IT’S SHOUTING. However, studies on the subject suggest that people notice their inner speech when reading to different degrees – for some, it’s like a full-on audiobook running in their head, while there are others who aren’t sure that there’s any inner ‘sound’ at all when they read (tinyurl.com/crossing-of-experience).

When it comes to writing, inner speech seems to be equally varied – not just in terms of how it affects what ends up on the page, but in terms of how it relates to the voices within the narrative (or poem, for that matter). Some of the writers we surveyed said that their characters’ voices felt very different from their ordinary inner speech, and were therefore separate from it:

‘Characters feel “outside” me even though I’m hearing them internally. If they don’t feel separate from me, then I can’t hear their voices. But that also means that if I feel like I can control their voices then I can’t hear them – they go silent.’

However, at least as many other writers stated that their characters’ voices were a part of their inner speech, even if they did not entirely ‘sound’ the same (because of age, accent, gender, etc.):

‘I suppose it’s a kind of ventriloquism. Ultimately it’s me speaking to myself, but imagining/putting on a different voice to do it.’

Finally, there was also a significant minority of writers who said that they did not hear their characters’ voices at all, even if their characters sometimes seemed to act of their own accord:

‘Once they are present, they engage in the action seemingly without any guidance. I don’t “hear” them but I know what they’re saying, seeing, feeling, and I just write it down.’

Of course, what the characters say is only a part of what ends up on the page, and the relationship between writing and inner speech more generally is even more complex.

EXERCISE 2: What’s your inner speech like?

In this exercise, we invite you to reflect on your own inner speech and the role it plays in your creative writing practice by considering how you would answer a series of questions. Some of the questions explore what your own verbal thinking is like; others look at the way your characters’ voices and thoughts feature in your inner speech.

You can find a full list of questions on [page 19](#). There’s no need to answer all of them – just have a go at as many as you think will be useful!

Dialogue

Elsewhere in this booklet we looked at inner speech and the various roles it may play in reading and creative writing. But where does inner speech come from? One of the main ideas is that it first develops from outer speech (so, speech), which we start off using as very small children. After a certain point, that 'goes underground' when we stop doing all our verbal thinking out loud, there being some fairly obvious advantages to being able to keep our thoughts to ourselves. Essentially, in terms of how inner speech develops, it's outside-in rather than inside-out. Since the way we learn language and 'outer' speech is through dialogue, there's also an extent to which it keeps that dialogic structure as it becomes internalised. Think of it like having a conversation with yourself – that entails having a part of you that speaks, and a part of you that also listens. (For more information on this process, see tinyurl.com/conversation-in-your-head).

Research into inner speech suggests that people vary in terms of what features of their own inner speech they're consciously aware of (tinyurl.com/inner-speech). For some, the dialogic structure is often very conspicuous, and for some their inner speech contains the voices of other people (for instance, there will be certain thoughts which will 'sound' like they're spoken in their mother's voice, or their boss's). However, there are also some people who experience their inner speech as monologic, and who only ever hear what sounds like their own voice – and there are some who report not experiencing any inner speech at all. Yet the whole question of whose voice is speaking in our thoughts can get even more complicated as it starts edging towards things like memory and imagination. If you're remembering or imagining someone else's speech, how is it really 'their' voice if you're the one producing it? And how can you tell it's not 'yours'?

EXERCISE 3: A little more conversation...

Choose one postcard from the set on [page 20](#) to be your character for this exercise.

Part A

As the character depicted in your postcard, have a go at answering the questions on [page 24](#).

If you're doing this exercise with a partner or group, one person can take on the role of the character, while the partner or other group members ask the questions. Once you've finished, swap over.

Part B

Choose a scenario from the collection of 'prompts' on [page 25](#). Your character is now in this situation.

If you're working on this exercise by yourself, ask your character about the scenario or situation they are in (Nb. You are not taking on the role of the character any more, but talking to them.)

If you're in a group, take on the role of your character and have a conversation with someone else, while that person takes on the role of their character in the chosen scenario.

It's possible that different people will feel more or less comfortable with different parts of this exercise, since the writers we surveyed tended to engage with their characters very differently. Approximately a third said that they could enter into dialogue with their characters, although they varied a great deal in terms of how 'separate' their characters felt. For some, the experience was much like having an imaginary conversation with another person:

'When I'm trying to "put words in their mouth" instead of listening they often talk back. And then we discuss things until I find what they would say.'

For others, the dialogue always involved taking on the role of whoever was speaking – 'like a ventriloquist playing all the parts' – so that they would jump back and forth between the characters:

'Writing dialogue involves "being" each character who speaks. For the time they speak, I inhabit that person, and say what I believe they would say.'

There were also some writers who said that although they could not talk to their characters, the characters might still feel separate from them. However, because the characters were in a separate world, it was more like watching them on a screen:

'Sometimes it's as if I am watching a scene in a play or film before I have written the scene, and while I'm writing it.'

Of course, a great deal depends on how you understand 'dialogue' with people who aren't actually present. We don't necessarily tend to think of our inner speech as being a dialogue, or having more than one person in it, but in a sense, perhaps it is, and perhaps we do. It might just be that for some writers, and for some people, this is more pronounced, and therefore more obvious.

Ultimately, it's possible that characters aren't all that different from any of the other 'people' that might populate our inner speech – it's just that because they're fictional creations, they highlight certain parts of experience that we might not otherwise notice. They can slide between being 'you', a view or perspective or 'part of yourself', and 'someone else' that you might feel like you have come to know.

Imagination and the senses

About half of the writers in our study said that they experience their characters from inside their perspective. Some were much more explicit, though, about getting their own imaginative experiences to overlap with their characters'. In other words, they would be their characters in the storyworld – seeing what their character saw, hearing what they heard, touching, smelling, and tasting as they did.

'I see with their eyes, so I can see what they see, feel what they feel – when they touch something or do something, I can smell with their nose – I feel the temperature of the room they are in...'

A few writers also mentioned actually trying out physically doing what their characters said and did – in other words, acting it out – to see whether they'd imagined it 'correctly'.

Usually we only focus on the five classic senses, but we've actually got quite a few more. Senses such as the sense of balance, sense of temperature, sense of pain, and the sense of the position of your body (proprioception), are all also parts of our experience, and sometimes writers would overlap with their characters in these senses too, as a kind of imagining with the whole body. These bodily imaginings also play a significant part when it comes to emotional overlap, since emotions are felt in the body – they're not just 'mental' things.

However, sensory overlap with characters was only reported by about half of the writers we surveyed. For some, since their characters felt separate – as if being watched on a film screen – they were 'observed', but not 'enacted'.

'It is often like letting a video run, stopping it, rewinding it, fast forwarding it. Each time I run it again I see it slightly differently.'

Yet there were quite a few writers who said they experienced both enactment and observation, sometimes because they were switching between one mode and the other, and sometimes because the line was rather blurred.

'I have a dual experience – I still have my own POV [point of view] but I have my characters' too.'

As with the question of whose 'voice' is speaking in inner speech, the distinction between observing and enacting our imaginings becomes rather tricky when we start to probe it further. After all, no one is literally watching the characters on a little screen in their head – this is just a handy way of talking about it. Instead, one possible explanation for how we are physically and emotionally affected by watching things happening to other people – both real and fictional – is that we essentially simulate those things happening to ourselves (such as when we instinctively wince when we're told about a nasty injury). Therefore, there's a sense in which sympathy and empathy are intertwined, as are observing and enacting.

Another way of looking at it is to think about how much we both are ourselves 'from the inside', but at the same time have a sense of how we appear to others 'from the outside'. It's one of the essential guides to how we interact with other people, and affects what we say and do. So in a way, if we're already flitting back and forth between inside and outside in our everyday experience, it's perhaps not too strange that we might do the same thing when we imagine characters.

EXERCISE 4: Being in their shoes

Taking on the role of your character from Exercise 3, imagine inhabiting the place they were in before you 'interviewed' them. Using their senses, explore the environment. Write down their experience of the place.

Agency

Many writers have talked about their characters 'rebellious', 'acting of their own accord', 'talking back', and 'doing their own thing'. It's something that doesn't seem to be tied to any particular genre or period, and it's been reported in many different contexts. However, determining what writers actually mean when they talk about characters in this way can be rather tricky, especially since they're not all necessarily talking about the same thing.

Most of the writers we surveyed (just under two thirds) said that their characters did act of their own accord, and what they described tended to fall into a few different groups (although bear in mind that these aren't hard and fast categories, but rather broad areas with fuzzy boundaries).

First off, there were a few writers who seemed to be talking about characters that could be so wilful and autonomous that they almost seemed to have an independent existence.

'They do their own thing! I am often astonished by what takes place and it can often be as if I am watching scenes take place and hear their speech despite the fact I am creating it.'

These writers also sometimes described characters who could have arguments with them, even to the point of expressly demanding larger roles in the story. Of course, such characters weren't at all intrusive, and usually there was a sense that the writer was calling them up or getting into the right frame of mind to talk to them. In any case, what makes this group pretty distinct from all the others is that for these writers at least some of their characters could have full conversations with them, even about things in the real world.

Then you've got what was probably the largest group, which included those writers who didn't experience their characters as fully-fledged entities, but who were still aware of their characters 'doing their own thing'. The writers within this group usually described one (or more) of the following:

- Characters which felt independent but confined to their own world, as if the writer were watching them on a film screen. Often in these cases the writer could drop the character in a situation, then watch to see how the character responded.
- Characters which the writer usually felt as if they were controlling, but which occasionally did or said something that was surprising and felt completely uncontrolled by the writer. Often this was most noticeable as snatches of dialogue, but sometimes it was a scene or action or set-piece
- Characters which weren't necessarily doing anything, but which apparently 'resisted' being forced into dialogue or actions that didn't seem to fit.
- Characters which occasionally 'went off script' or which seemed to be taking the story in a different direction (i.e. the writer had a plot set out, but when they got to a certain point something else had emerged because of the way the characters had developed during the writing process).

Some of this might sound familiar to you, and some of it might sound completely alien – it was an aspect of the experience on which writers differed significantly. It's also worth pointing out that although most of our writers said that when their characters acted of their own accord this always felt like the 'right' thing for the character to do, a few writers said that they still chose whether or not they followed this character-produced alternative:

'My characters can often swing the story in an unpredictable direction. Depending on the story, I can either reign them in or let them run with it.'

Even amongst those writers who said that their characters didn't do their own thing, there was some variation. While a few suggested that they were in complete control of everything, the majority of these writers said that they were aware of 'something' happening, but they didn't think it was so much a case of the characters having minds of their own. Instead, they tried to explain what was going on in a different way – saying, for instance, that it was actually the story which had a mind of its own, or their own subconscious (which is a bit like saying 'my mind has a mind of its own').

'On the very rare occasions where a character has led the story in a different direction than I thought it was heading, I think it's the story making that change, not the character.'

Funnily enough, there were a few writers at both ends of the scale who said that they wished that they were at the other end – writers who wished they did have at least some control over their characters, and writers who wished that they weren't in complete control (usually because to them that looked like less effort). Furthermore, several writers pointed out that what really mattered about their characters becoming independent was that, for them, it made the writing more enjoyable because it became unpredictable.

EXERCISE 5: A roll of the dice

Using a numbered list for each task, write down:

- a. Six positive character traits (e.g. generous, confident, honest, etc.)
- b. Six negative character traits (e.g. manipulative, inconsiderate, violent). If possible, try to avoid using the direct opposites of the positive character traits you've already listed.
- c. Six places (e.g. a park, a sewer system, a bar, your home, Brazil, etc.)
- d. Six objects that can be held in the hand (e.g. a pair of scissors, a flower bulb, a wishbone, etc.)
- e. Six emotional states (e.g. terrified, ecstatic, bored, etc.)

Now using a dice or random number generator, randomly select one item from each list. The five items you have selected now apply to a single character [not the same character from Exercise 3]. Write the scene.

A significant number of the writers who said that their characters acted of their own accord (whether this meant the characters were completely independent or just produced occasional moments of resistance) also talked about having to be at a certain point in the story before this started to happen. A few were even fairly specific about when this would usually occur, saying, for example, that it would happen half-way through the book or after a certain number of words.

'I nowadays just plan my books halfway as I know that in the middle of the writing process the characters will take over the story so my planning will become useless anyway.'

Why does this happen?

This gradual emergence of characters' independence could potentially be accounted for in terms of how we deal with people (what it actually means to know someone), and in terms of how we invent/create things – because of course, characters are both.

On the one hand, we're always trying to predict how other people will react to what we do and what we say, even if we're not always aware of thinking this kind of prediction through logically. It's a sort of instinctive 'knowing' which we use all the time in our day-to-day interactions with other people. With people we know well, we often think we have a sense of 'the kind of thing so-and-so' would say or do – it's a part of what makes them who they are to us.

With fictional characters, it's likely that the same sort of processes are at work, at least once you 'get to know them' – and quite a few of the writers we surveyed explicitly compared their relationships with their characters' voices to this kind of learning (and – as tinyurl.com/characters-in-real-life shows – it can be just as true for readers as it is for writers). The sense of the character 'responding' or 'doing their own thing', would, in this sense, come about from being aware of the contrast between having to actively decide how they behave (which is how it starts off) and then starting to know how they behave without having to think it through. Obviously, with real people, there's not usually this sense of starting out by choosing their behaviour when you first get to know them, so the contrast isn't noticeable in the same way. In a sense, the feeling of characters 'doing their own thing' happens because of some thing you've lost, rather than something they've gained.

On the other hand, we need to take into account what happens whenever we make something – whether that be a pot, a sandwich, an argument, or a story. Some philosophical and psychological research suggests that although we often reflectively think we have been in control all the time, this isn't entirely the case. As we make something we are constantly making changes to how we go about it, and we can't always be consciously aware of making every single change (some changes, for example, are just too small or quick for that). Of course, since we were the only person involved, it makes sense to say afterwards that we were responsible when we think about who 'did' the making. With characters, though, we've got 'made things' that are also person-like – and as a result, they are also good candidates for some of that agency.

To put it bluntly, we're not as much in control as we think we are – and because of what characters are, as people and as made things, they just happen to make this a bit more noticeable.

Of course, having characters who do or don't seem to be independent doesn't necessarily make for 'good' writing, or 'bad' writing (whatever they might be) – and there was no part of the experience that was the same for all of the writers we surveyed. Instead, the feeling of characters (or the story, or the 'subconscious') acting of their own accord is perhaps better thought of as a motivating force, because it can make writing to feel like creating and discovering at the same time.

EXERCISE 6: Putting it all together

Take the first character you created in Exercise 3 (the postcard exercise) and the character you created in Exercise 5 (the dice exercise), and the place setting, which you explored with your characters' senses in Exercise 4. Combine these elements to create a new scene and write what happens.

If you're working with a partner or creative writing group, pass the place setting from Exercise 4 to your partner or neighbour so that you have a new place setting for your scene. Write what happens.

Additional exercises

Here we present some additional exercises based on the more specific aspects of writing reported by the writers in our survey.

EXERCISE 1: Six steps

1. Begin writing the following scene: two people are meeting in a bar. One of them has a secret. [15 mins]
2. Continue the scene, focusing on a particular sensory modality (e.g. sight, smell, sound). [5 mins]
3. Continue the scene, but switch 'person' (e.g. if you have been writing in first-person, switch to third-person, or vice-versa). [5 mins]
4. Decide which actors you would 'cast' to play your characters. Continue writing the scene for those actors. [5 mins]
5. The actor you have chosen for your protagonist is unavailable, and instead you must use Morgan Freeman/Anthony Hopkins/Judi Dench/Winona Ryder. Continue writing the scene with this new voice. [5 mins]
6. Was there any resistance at any point? Why? Where would it have come from?

EXERCISE 2: A view from the past

Choose someone you remember from your past (e.g. teacher, a neighbour from when you were a child, etc.). Imagine them in the world as it is today (e.g. in a town centre, a train station, etc.). Write what they experience. [15 mins]

EXERCISE 3: Fragments

Choose five story 'fragments' from a list of seven (you can find the resources you need to generate sets of fragments on [page 28](#)). Write a story which incorporates, or which will eventually incorporate, all five fragments.

Further resources

If you'd like to find out more about inner speech, creative writing and reading, you might find the following resources useful:

Books

Charles Fernyhough, (2016). *The Voices Within: The history and science of how we talk to ourselves*. Profile Books/Wellcome Collection.

Articles

Charles Fernyhough (2013). *The Voices Within: The power of talking to yourself*. New Scientist.

This article is provided to subscribers by New Scientist. You can read a free summary at tinyurl.com/life-in-the-chatter-box

Peter Moseley (2014). *Talking to ourselves: The science of the little voice in your head*. The Guardian. tinyurl.com/talking-to-ourselves

Ruairj J Mackenzie (2020). *Inner speech, internal monologues and "hearing voices": Exploring the conversations between our ears*. Technology Networks. tinyurl.com/conversations-between-our-ears

Videos

Charles Fernyhough (2016). *The Science of the Voices in your Head*. The Royal Institution. tinyurl.com/science-of-voices-in-your-head

Podcasts

Radiolab (2020). *Voices in your head*. WNYC Studios. tinyurl.com/radiolab-voices

Research

Ben Alderson-Day and Charles Fernyhough (2015). *Inner speech: Development, cognitive functions, phenomenology, and neurobiology*. *Psychological Bulletin*. tinyurl.com/inner-speech

Ben Alderson-Day, Susanne Weis, Simon McCarthy-Jones, Peter Moseley, David Smailes and Charles Fernyhough. (2016). *The brain's conversation with itself: Neural substrates of dialogic inner speech*. *Social Cognitive & Affective Neuroscience*. tinyurl.com/brain-and-inner-speech

John Foxwell, Ben Alderson-Day, Charles Fernyhough and Angela Woods (2020). *'I've learned I need to treat my characters like people': Varieties of agency and interaction in Writers' experiences of their Characters' Voices*. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 79: 102901. tinyurl.com/agency-and-interaction

Ben Alderson-Day, Marco Bernini and Charles Fernyhough (2017). *Uncharted features and dynamics of reading: Voices, characters and crossings of experiences*. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 49: 98-109. tinyurl.com/crossing-of-experience

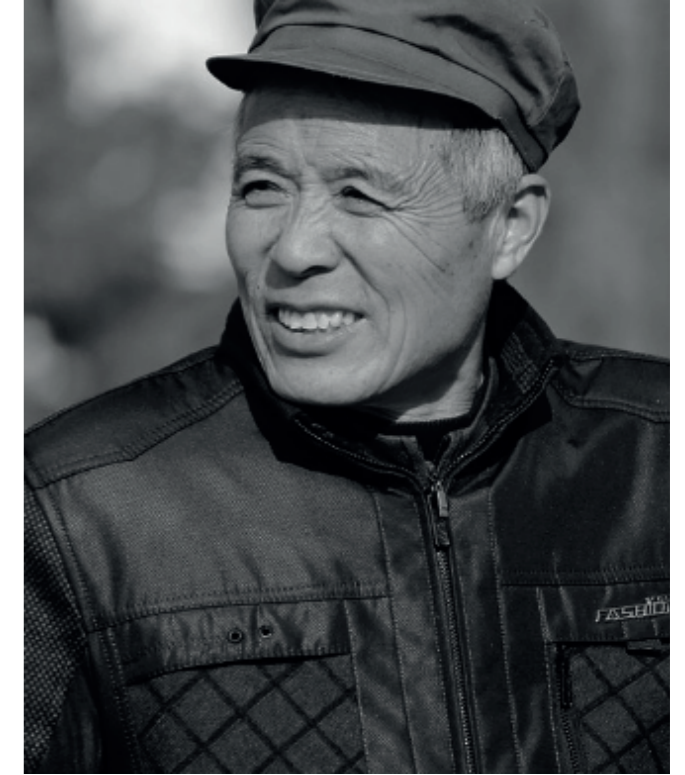
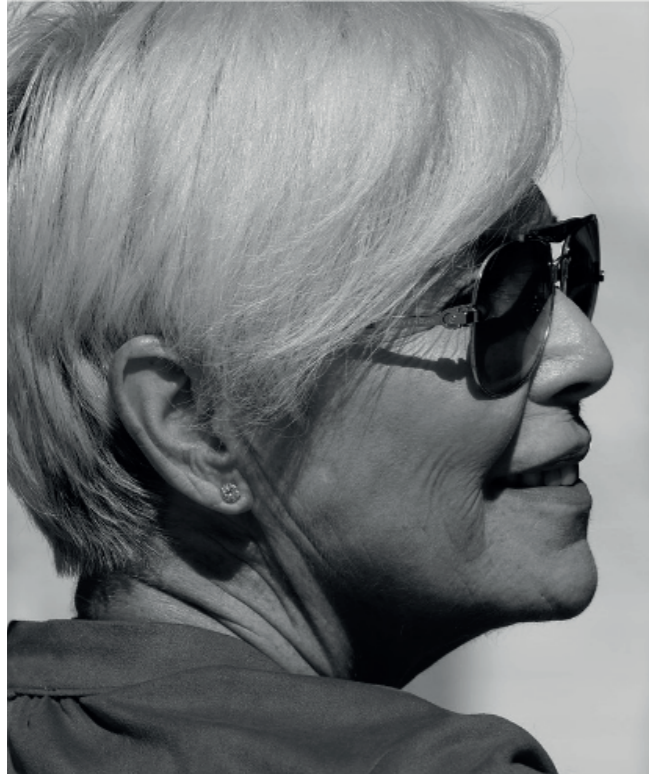
Resources for Exercise 2: What's your inner speech like?

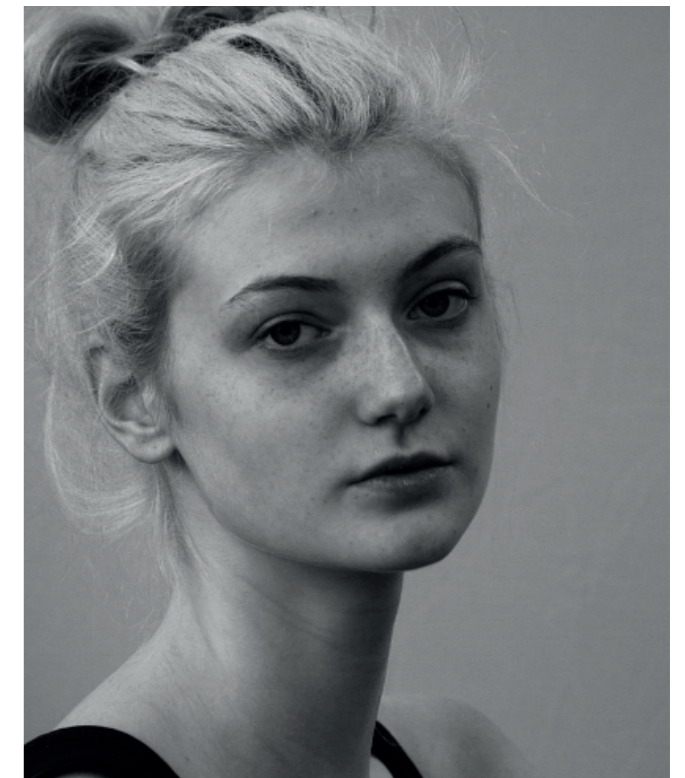
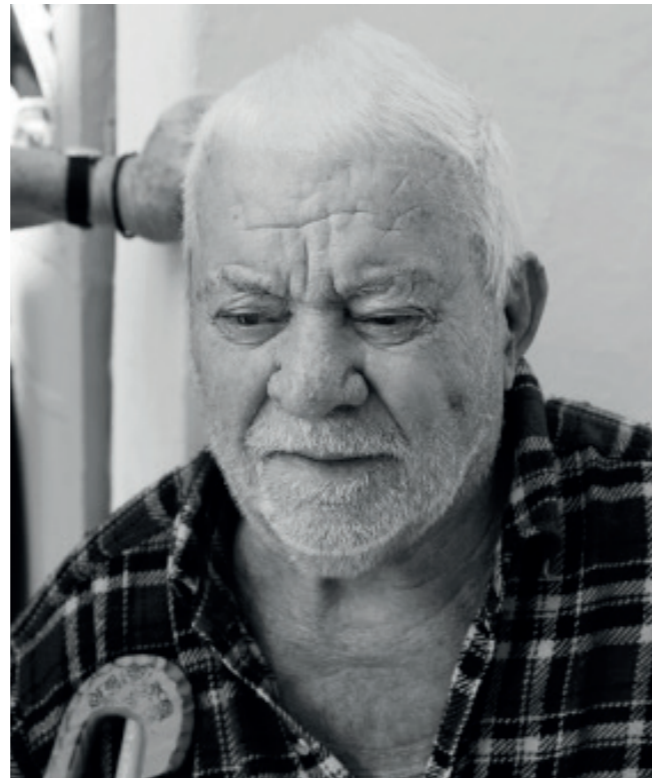
In this exercise, we invite you to reflect on your own inner speech and the role it plays in your creative writing practice by considering how you would answer a series of questions. Some of the questions explore what your own verbal thinking is like; others look at the way your characters' voices and thoughts feature in your inner speech.

There's no need to answer all the questions – just have a go at as many as you think will be useful.

- When are you most likely to notice hearing your own thoughts? *Are they always spoken in the same voice, or does it ever change?*
- How would you describe your inner voice (i.e. the voice you think in verbally)? *Is it at all different from the voice in which you speak out loud?*
- When you think verbally, are you speaking or listening? *Are there times when it feels more like you're speaking or listening?*
- Can you make your inner voice speak in a different accent? A different tone? A different volume? *How much would it have to change before it stops being recognisable as 'your' voice?*
- Are you ever aware of planning out a sentence or phrase before writing it down? *Does it ever change by the time it gets onto the page?*
- Do you always/ever have a sense of your verbal thoughts being spoken to someone? *Is the same true of the dialogue you write?*
- Do you have a 'narrator' voice? Is it at all different from the voice you normally think in?
- To what extent do you hear your characters speaking in 'your' voice? *What about when you remember the voices of real people?*
- How do you know what your characters' voices should sound like? *What about the voices of other writers' characters?*
- Can you ever hear the thoughts of your characters? *Is this different from hearing them speak?*
- When you imagine your characters' speech, does it feel more like you're listening to them or speaking on their behalf?

Resources for Exercise 3: Picture postcards





Resources for Exercise 3 (Part A): Character questions

The task is to 'interview' your character. Here are some sample questions to get you going:

- How do you feel about where you come from?
- How do you feel about your family?
- Who are your closest friends, and why do you like them?
- Are there people who dislike you? Do you know why?
- Is there anyone you like, but don't respect? Or anyone you respect, but don't like?
- What makes you happy?
- What makes you angry?
- How do you relax?
- Do you have a faith or philosophy?
- When was the last time you laughed and/or cried?
- What do you most want to achieve?
- What are you most proud of?
- What do you keep hidden?
- How do you feel about being interviewed like this?
- Do you think we would get along?

Resources for Exercise 3 (Part B): Situation prompts

Print out the sheets overleaf and cut along the dotted lines to make a pack of 'situation prompts'. Turn the cards upside down and randomly select one. Your character is now in this situation.

We've included some blank cards in the pack, so that you can add your own situations to if you would like to do so.

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Your character is... | Your character is... |
| writing their signature | staring at a photograph |
| Your character is... | Your character is... |
| clapping unenthusiastically | counting money |
| Your character is... | Your character is... |
| dancing | buying flowers |
| Your character is... | Your character is... |
| throwing away a book | peering through a window |
| Your character is... | Your character is... |
| writing their will | standing by a monument |

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Your character is... | Your character is... |
| | |
| Your character is... | Your character is... |
| | |
| Your character is... | Your character is... |
| | |
| Your character is... | Your character is... |
| | |
| Your character is... | Your character is... |
| | |

Resources for Additional exercises: Fragments

Print out this sheet and cut along the dotted lines to make a pack of story fragments. Randomly select seven to generate a set.

A man in a suit sneezing into a bouquet of flowers

A woman slowly pushing a cleaning trolley along a hospital corridor.

Being uncomfortably aware of the elderly lady knitting in the corner of the room, who seems to be watching everything closely.

A fist slamming down on the table, making the cutlery jump.

An elderly man sitting on a bench in the park, feeding treats to his dog, and watching the kids on the swings

A girl coming to a stop as her bus pulls away in the rain

A body tumbling out the opened boot of a car.

A middle-aged lady, dressed to the nines, carrying a briefcase.

A man and a woman half-running together down a street, throwing occasional glances over their shoulders.

Seeing the lights of a train approaching the platform through the snow.

A woman stuffing clothes into the suitcase on the bed.

One person approaches another who stands on a windy hillside, staring out to sea.

A fat man walking a small dog

A farmer in a public bar

A fisherman in the rain

A police officer on a summer's evening

A building collapsing

"I never said he kissed his wife."

"If only I could make you see what I see."

"Come on. We're not hurting anyone..."

"There's more than one way to skin this particular cat."

"I said I would, and I will. But can't you see? I can't do it yet."



