



# **Standard Grade Imaginative Writing:**

## **Strategies for Examination Preparation**

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**Activity 1: Flexing your memory muscles**

Think about a time during your childhood that is vivid. Try to remember a time before you were ten years old. Questions are going to be asked of you: write whatever comes into your head. If you cannot think of an answer, leave it blank.

Thinking about this vivid time, write down:

Someone who meant a lot to you	
Someone you admired	
Your favourite teacher	
Someone or something you were scared of	
Someone who was your friend	
Someone who was your enemy	
Something you remember wearing	
A game or toy you remember	
A place which meant a lot to you	
An event that sticks in your mind	
A visitor you remember	
A food you liked	
A food you hated	
A TV programme you watched	
A song you remember	
A smell you associate with that time	
A colour you associate with that time	
A sound you associate with that time	

**Activity 2: Adding meat to the bones.**

Now take one of these memories and expand it. For example, take your favourite teacher. Ask yourself the following questions. Again, write down the first thing that comes into your head, and if you can't think of a complete answer, move on.

Write down three words or phrases to describe her / his eyes.		Observation
Write down three words or phrases to describe her / his hair.		Observation
Write down three words or phrases to describe her / his face.		Observation
Write down three words or phrases to describe her / his build.		Observation
Write down three words or phrases to describe her / his voice.		Observation
Write down three words or phrases to describe her / his clothes.		Observation
Write down something she / he used to say often.		Observation
Write down three things you associate with her / his classroom.		Observation
Write down the most important thing she / he taught you.		Reflection
Write down three things to describe how your teacher made you feel.		Reflection
Write down three reasons why she / he is your favourite teacher.		Reflection

### Activity 3: Using your ideas

**On your own**, plan each of the following personal / reflective essays. You must use at **least five** of the sections you filled out in Activity 1. Remember, you do not have to write something which is historically accurate!

Example:

“Write about a favourite toy you remember from your childhood.”

Toy – Matt Mason, astronaut, bendy toy with space suit and flying backpack.
Given by <b>someone who meant a lot to me</b> - uncle who talked about the stars and taught me about the constellations.
Lived in house <b>I was scared of</b> – haunted – could feel things creeping behind me along the upstairs corridor
Given to me on a <b>Christmas that sticks in my mind</b> – best ever – snow on ground outside – went to carol service on Christmas Eve – brought Christmas message home – typical dinner – turkey, chipolatas, etc. – “The Great Escape” on the TV and playing charades.
Remember that Christmas especially – <b>visited by aunt from England</b> – bred Golden retrievers – brought eight Goldies with her – heaven for wee boys – one puppy wanted walked – then another – then another – constant playing.
<b>Favourite teacher</b> asked us to bring our best Christmas toys.
At break time, the school bully Jim Aitken, <b>someone I was afraid of</b> , took it off me – teased me and told me I wasn’t getting it back – was rescued by <b>someone I admired</b> , Alan MacMillan, an older boy who threatened Jim.
Don’t know what happened to Matt Mason – disappeared with many other toys – when I think of him now, wish I had him to remind me of those times.

#### 1999 Standard Grade personal / reflective options.

- a) “Stage Fright”

Using this as a title, **write about a personal experience.**

- b) “A gamble that paid off?”

Write about a time you took a chance...

- c) “You’re not going out like that!”

Write a **personal account** suggested by these words.

- d) Think about a time you were separated from a member of your family.

**Write about** your thoughts and feelings when this happened.

**Activity 4: Express yourself.**

This activity helps you to reflect on things which are important to you, and to express your beliefs. Fill out each column in the table below with your top five answers. Don't think too much, but try to be specific: instead of 'I hate travelling', you might write 'I hate lost luggage' or 'I hate stupid sing-songy train announcers'!

What I love	What I hate	What I fear	What I believe	What I value	What I want	What I know about	People who made a difference in my life	Discoveries that made a difference to my life	Decisions that made a difference to my life

**Activity 5: Character in short stories**

In this exercise, put the characters below under what you think is the appropriate heading. That is, do you think a serial killer would be a good character to write a story about? Is a janitor a good short story character?

- a spy            a serial killer            an old age pensioner            a checkout girl**  
**a janitor            an astronaut            a drug smuggler            a detective**

<b>Characters who would be suitable Characters for short stories</b>	<b>Characters who would not be suitable characters for short stories</b>

When you have added the characters given to your list, try to think up some more characters in your group to add to each column.

What do you notice?

What types of characters fall into each column?

### Activity 6(a): Creating characters

The following frame allows you to create a character. Choose an ordinary character to plan – a shopkeeper, a school janitor, a librarian. It is the identification of desires, motives, needs which provides the impetus for a story and makes a ‘boring’ character interesting.

Build	Clothes	Face	Hair	Distinguishing features	Voice	Mannerisms

Now that you have a *picture* of your character, fill out this frame.

Backstory	Present circumstances	Loves / Hates / Fears	Desires	Values & beliefs

**Activity 6(b): Creating characters**

The following frame allows you to create a character. Choose an ordinary character to plan – a shopkeeper, a school janitor, a librarian.

Build	Face	Voice	Clothes	Hair	Personality	Other

**Activity 7: Using your characters**

In your groups, share your characters from Activity 6.

Effective short stories can have a very simple structure.

**Take one main character  
Put her or him in a simple situation.  
Have one main event happen.  
As a result of this incident, the main character changes.**

Think about this plan, and discuss possibilities for the following Standard Grade examination topics using the characters you have created in your groups.

Fill out your ideas on the frame on the next sheet.

**1999 Standard Grade short story options.**

1. **Write a short story** with the title “The Broken Promise.”

2. “Stage Fright.”

**Write a short story** using this as a title.

3. **Write a short story** in which leadership plays an important part.

4. **Write a short story** in which a central character gets involved in gambling to try to solve his or her problems.

5. “You’re not going out like that!”

**Write a short story** suggested by these words.

6. **Write a short story** with the title “Behind the mask.”

**Beginning:**

*Who is in the story?*

*Where is the story set?*

*When is the story set?*

**Middle:**

*What happens?*

*What leads to the major significant event?*

*What is the major significant event?*

**End:**

*How does the character feel about the event?*

*In what ways does the character change as a result of the event?*