

Orwell Youth Prize: Guide to Starting Writing: 2020-21

A NEW DIRECTION: STARTING SMALL

You can begin in one of three ways:

- Research
- Plan
- Practise

Research. You can research any topic that might benefit from a ‘new direction’, until you find the thing that gets you going. Don’t forget to ‘start small’, whatever that means for you. Once you have a good idea, look for material that will deepen your own thinking. That might include: wonder walking in your own area (see Lesson 1 on the website); facts and analysis that will make your new direction work; the new directions others have taken, to which you may react.

Plan. Brainstorm first: write whatever comes into your mind on a topic ... until a solid idea starts to emerge. Then, when you are happy with the idea – and have decided which form you are writing in – you can make brief notes, organising them to give the piece shape (especially beginning, middle, end). The plan is the guide that keeps you on track as you write, though you may well change it as you go along.

Practise. If you’re confident you know where you’re going, you can start writing a piece straight away. Don’t forget that writing is a process and that you will alter your work as it takes shape and after others have read it.

If you don’t have another idea, try one of the following:

- 1) Invent a **news story** based on what would happen if your new direction was taken up by your community. Make up quotes from people involved. OR
- 2) Write a piece of **journalism** from the point of view of an undercover journalist, attempting to expose an untold story that makes your new direction vital.
- 3) Write a **story** from the point of view of someone who has benefited from your new direction. What challenges are there in that new direction? How do they cope? OR
- 4) Write a **script** of the conversation between one person who loves your new direction – and another who hates it.
- 5) Write a **performance poem** with one of these titles:
‘You say it’s small, I say it’s big’ ‘They said it couldn’t happen’ OR invent your own title.