

Generate Your Keywords

1. Make a list of 10 interesting adjectives and/or processes. Really go fast and write them down with the least amount of thought you can. Processes can be noun-ified adjectives like “globalization.” Interesting adjectives are always good fodder:
2. Make a list of five objects or entities that are part of your research or topic or interests. These should be “distinct” objects and entities and things, and not abstractions like processes or concepts.
3. Make a list of five abstractions or concepts related to your work, but not abstractions that could also be verbs, like “calm.” These should be nouns only. They might also be noun-ified process words.

Academic Mad Libs

Create Your Title

Adjective

Object

Abstraction

4. Pick one from each list of 1, 2, and 3 above—adjective or process, object, abstraction— and combine them in that order to form a title for this piece, adding in any necessary connections, articles, prepositions, etc. For instance, “Through the indestructible ghosts of osmosis.” You can also repeat terms, change the order, or of course go for the oldy-but-goody, the chiasmus—“The intolerable rebellion of ants and the ants of intolerable rebellion.” Now that you are in the middle of making a title- go ahead and indulge in swapping things out from your lists, or move things around till you find one title you like. This can be your title for the exercise.



Generate Your Thoughts

Title:

- 5.** Now go to your object or entity word in your title. Write a few sentences about it below. Explain why it is important or interesting to you.

- 6.** Go to your abstraction word. Write a few sentences about this abstraction, but never name it. Write suggestively.

- 7.** Write a few sentences or phrases that suggest the adjective or process, but without naming it. Suggest its connection to the object.

Create Your Movement

8. Now here is where we play with movement. When you think of the object in your title, what other thing does it make you think of? Think of that other object. Write a line about that– your line could literally be “X suggests Y” or, a more elaborate sentence.

9. Write a few lines that explicitly state how this second object changes your thinking from before, or evokes something new, or takes things into a new area. The point here is to engage some speculative thinking, abstraction, connection, conclusion, dilemma or question that emerges organically, and that causes a shift, and to elaborate on that with your free thoughts.

Great Play !!

And great work! Now you have some thoughts, connections, and even some writing that you would never have had before.

And now you have played at one of the basic building blocks and formal properties of creative academic movement.

The movement from A to B, and the subsequent shift in our thinking that results, is the basic plot movement of many a thesis or book. It is also the basic formal movement of the chapter, and especially, the article.

This is the wide-angle plot movement: **ideas and/or things and/or data change thinking from one way to another way.** In many instances it is a minor movement within a broader movement as well.

Use this playsheet to explore new possibilities and connections and brainstorm. And now that you have practiced the technique, use this worksheet to explore more deliberately chosen terms and titles, or even use it regularly to generate text.

It's not only for brainstorming, or when we get stuck, or when we feel our idea is not new or original or creative enough-- it is also a complete process of working in itself.

Go write your stuff!

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