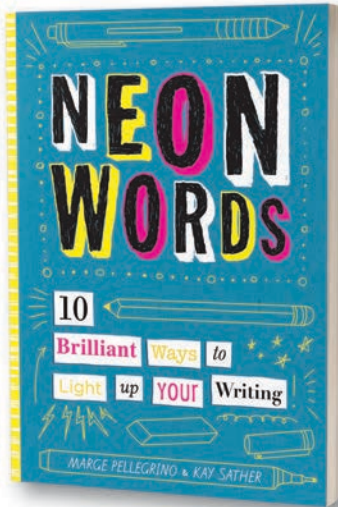




The Benefits of Expressive Writing



Neon Words: 10 Brilliant Ways to Light Up Your Writing is more than a writing workbook; it's an introspective writing experience. With sections dedicated to honoring, strengthening, and playing with words, young writers learn to view their writing and themselves in a new light.

This article is a modified excerpt from *Neon Words* by Marge Pellegrino & Kay Sather. You can purchase the full book with 20% off and free domestic shipping [here](#) and entering code MPKIDS20 at checkout.

Expressive writing has many benefits. Writing about life helps people, among other things:

- get healthy! Research shows that people who write about emotional upheavals require fewer doctor visits and are generally happier.
- combat depression! Writing a gratitude journal helps with mood. Expressing yourself lets you ditch your stress for a while.
- build their brain! People best express themselves in different ways—through words, music, movement.

Some people prefer to be alone to be inspired. Others think best by talking to people. Trying a variety of writing activities can spur new ways of thinking, resulting in stronger, smarter writers!

Neon Words: 10 Brilliant Ways to Light Up Your Writing, provides young writers with writing prompts and book-making activities to help them learn about creative writing by honoring, strengthening, and playing with their ideas and words. Writing activities can spark imagination and allow young writers to make their writing more powerful, but they can also help kids engage with words to be more present in life and to use language arts techniques for self-discovery and emotional well-being. Here's a prompt for young writers:

Take a writing activity about antagonists, for example. In the Villainous Voices activity, writers are invited to think about a disagreement they've had with someone else, but from their adversary's point of view.

In a story, the reader sides with the protagonist: the main character, the lead actor. It's the character we find ourselves rooting for. The antagonist, on the other hand, is often the one who causes problems: the villain, the one who creates the story's tension. They're the character we hope gets the short end of the stick.

Have you ever read *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by "A. Wolf"? (The author is really Jon Scieszka.) As the title suggests, you don't usually hear the wolf's take on the classic folk tale. In *Wicked*, Gregory Maguire writes a backstory for *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, giving the villain—that is, the Wicked Witch of the West—the leading role; this is a complete departure from the original. Now it's your turn. List a few people with whom you've had a disagreement. People you've argued with. People who see a situation from a different vantage point than you. Anyone in your life is fair game:

- Your mother
- Your father
- A sibling
- Other relative
- A friend or ex-friend
- A teacher
- A pet

Think about the argument:

- Where were you? (scene)
- What happened? (action)
- What was said? (dialog)

If it helps to take notes first, or jot down key points, go for it!

Now retell that story, only this time as the person you clashed with. Invite them to speak as the protagonist. Look for the positive thinking that you couldn't see in the heat of emotion. Be honest. What do you think motivated them—and now you?

Why would you want to do this? Writing-wise, it helps you get into the head of each of your characters to make them more complex, authentic, and honest. You want them to ring true, even if they're fictional.

In real life, this helps you empathize with others, improving your people skills. It gives you clarity of logic, helping you better understand why people act or say what they do. You may discover that making assumptions about someone's behavior doesn't always give you the full truth of a situation.

Creative writing is a powerful form of self expression that can help your child explore their feelings, experiences, and dreams, as well as build empathy for and understanding of others.

This Article's Author

Marge Pellegrino is a teaching artist who facilitates writing and expressive arts workshops in schools, libraries, and community settings for challenged and mainstream audiences. Her books include *Too Nice, My Grandma's the Mayor*, and the award winning *Journey of Dreams*. She co-wrote *The Sculpture Speaks: A Refugee's Story of Survival*, which supports the work of the Owl & Panther program for refugee families impacted by torture and traumatic dislocation. She grew up in New York and lives with her family in Tucson, AZ.

Kay Sather is an experienced designer, illustrator, and freelance writer. She lives in Tucson, AZ.

Neon Words: 10 Brilliant Ways to Light Up Your Writing

Neon Words is a book that will illuminate the writer in you. By using the tools and activities here, you'll connect the word-organizing part of your brain with your free-ranging imagination — and you'll love what you've captured on the page! It's an exciting, confidence-boosting, and deeply satisfying experience.

Whether you want to be a writer, or just want to explore what it's like to create with language, you'll discover that playing with words can help you be more present in your life and, best of all, it's lots of fun. Who knew writing could be so enlightening?