Break the Block
by Van Tran Nguyen
Writing Assistant

Have you ever had a research paper that needed to be turned in? You just sat at the keyboard, staring at your blank, soulless computer screen without being able to produce a single, usable sentence. Obviously, your soul literally screamed for the proper thoughts and phrases to put in your work. Don’t panic! Instead of hitting your head against the keyboard or chewing your pencil into hundreds of pieces read this article and learn how to overcome writer’s block. Find your writing flow, avoid anxiety, and prepare...

If I run out of ideas, I just type several “x’s” to keep my fingers moving.

a great research paper.

The most desirable state for a writer to obtain is flow. Flow occurs when you are focused in your writing and you forget everything around you. The best part is when you fall so deeply into this state that you just want to keep writing. It is not always easy to get into flow. There are several things in your daily life that distract you such as tasks that demand being done before you sit down and write.

As a mother of two boys, a full time student, and a part-time worker, I definitely can relate to that problem. It is hard for me to find the time to write everyday. To resolve this matter I like to write at night when my sons are in bed.

Flow usually doesn’t happen on its own. You have to entice yourself...

See FLOW page two

The Writing of Nature

Vanessa Beltran, a First First Year Experience English student, shares data she gathered while on an entomological exploration of the Gavilan campus in March. The nature walk was guided by Bill Ungs, a bug enthusiast and tutor in the Disability Resource Center. Ungs estimates there are about 5,000 species of insects living at the college. To fully experience the insect multitudes takes patience and awareness and gives writers fresh opportunities to witness life. For more see WRITING PROMPT page two.

The gift of writing Changed a life

Isaac Morales
Gavilan Student

I used to hate it. “Writing is the stupidest most boring waste of time!” I would exclaim to my mom. “Everyday my teacher wants us to write something!”

I didn’t know if my mom really understood how I felt. I knew it had been a long time since she had an English teacher breathing down her neck.

I was in the third grade when I felt I had enough with writing. I remember when the teacher would say to the class, “Today we are going to write an essay.”

“Oh no!” I thought. “I hate writing! I’m going to fail this assignment.”

I would get even more stressed when the teacher would add, “This assignment plays a big part in your grade. If you don’t do it, you will fail the class.”

And so I was the one who would fail the class because I wouldn’t do the essay.

“God,” I thought, “my Mom’s going to be mad!”

I remember all the times I was sent home with my report card. I would see GIFT bottom page two
**Writing Prompt**

**This bug’s life**

Step up to any bush on the Gavilan campus and wait ten motionless minutes. Your patience will be rewarded with a vision of teeming life that you might not otherwise known was there.

The college is home to more than 5,000 species of insects, according to Bill Ungs, an entomologist and Disability Resource Center tutor. In his years of exploration he’s captured about 1,000 examples of the insects who live here. There are fat black bumblebees, thin yellow wasps and a number of flies that look like big yellow bees. You’ll also find white butterflies and blue ones. They look almost alike, but each are a unique species.

Why should writers care? Being able to really “look” is an important skill for writers to cultivate. Ungs points out that few people have ever even taken the time to watch something smaller than a bird. But an hour spent observing an ant can help writers develop a new level of awareness that will show up on the page in interesting and often surprising ways.

Try this: Pick a square foot of bush, soil or sidewalk. Sit or stand comfortably for at least five full minutes. Be aware that motion will scare the bugs away. Instead of growing restless, try noticing your breath and the senses that are awakened just by standing still. After about five minutes (maybe more) you should begin to see insects.

Take notes about what you see. Compose a poem. Play with your words. Draw a picture. Write a story. Feel the moments you’ve shared with the life around you.

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From FLOW page one

focus your energy on writing, you are creating the possibility for flow to occur. “I approach writing as a creative, fun exercise in living,” says Alexander, “so I try to pay myself into a writing mood by listening to music, looking at images, and taking mental and physical day trips away from my routine life.”

“Writing anxiety” and “writer’s block” are the natural results of not feeling confident about your words and ideas. You may be confronting a new writing form, working on a tight deadline, or responding to a topic that you are not familiar with.

To boost your confidence and get some flow, get support from a writing friend who will encourage you in your writing life. Alexander says joining a writing group can also help you to recognize the strengths you already have. Think “I can write” instead of “I can’t write.”

Thinking of yourself as an apprentice, rather than an expert allows you the freedom to make mistakes and keep trying. Talking to other writers with the same assignment can help you learn that anyone can get confused or feel overwhelmed. Looking at other writer’s work can also help you generate your own response to a topic.

Flow is more likely to enter your life when writing becomes a habit. Give yourself the gift of time, which allows for a greater possibility that flow will occur. Avoid writing anxiety by believing in yourself. Ask for help from gentle peers, and don’t be afraid to make mistakes. So, what are you waiting for?

Get a hold of that pencil; put your finger on that keyboard; take deep three breaths and let your ideas...

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From GIFT page one

quickly try and think of ways to get rid of it or not let my mom feast her eyes on my horrible grade.

“If I throw it away,” I thought, “my mom will ask me about it because my sister will show her’s.” Still, I would think of plan after plan. “If only I could change the F into a B.” But no matter how many plans I came up with, they all resulted in failure, and my mom would find out.

“Maybe I shouldn’t have told her how I felt about writing,” I thought after I was scolded one more time about my bad grade.

It seemed like there was no end to it. To every grade, to every class and to every school, writing would follow me. It would haunt me...
Two Poems
by Richard Tice

Into Light
The sand, white as salt
and sunlight, is whiter
than seagulls, than wind
whitening the waves, is higher
than seagulls’ cries,
raises beyond the sounding
whitecaps and climbs
to a silent sky losing
all its whiteness to where
the sand peaks, then masses
for the final, heavy curve
hurling from sight into forever.

From the book
“Degrees of Light”

nothing moves:
not dry grass, not water,
not the blue heron

From the book
“Familiar and Foreign”

Excerpt from
A Communion of Saints
by Meg Withers

…and there was at that time a new cindy-rella-mae-oida

in which our great freckled girl with red braids peanut butter
gat-toothed grin…in paradise under a sun where she should
not be…but there you are…she is walking into the crooked
picture palace bar where queers sit all day long stacked on
chairs like used books with rumncoke companions…uneasy
smiles facile longing…much wishful maudering on about
lovers (who never make appearances except in dreams)...
so they are stuck with this tomboy who wants to belong and
doesn’t quite know how to be a girl at-all atall…no moira
mary clare she don’t not-a-bit-of-it…thus she left old places
of sorrow…claimed boy/girls as…
…hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou
shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. selah.
—Psalms 32:7

That was the last thing I said
to Mrs. Roland, and the last time I
would see her.

When my sixth grade year
was finally coming to a close, rumors
were spreading about her.

“I can’t hold it any
longer!” I thought to
myself. I wrote five
pages for the first
time in my life, and I
never felt so good.

I saw a kid I had known
throughout the year and asked him,
“What’s up with Mrs. Roland? I’ve only
seen her once this year. Is she OK?”

“She died,” he told me. “She
was really sick and in the hospital and
stuff.”

I couldn’t believe it. I was
hoping to talk to her again and see
if she could help write a story for my
class, but she was gone.

I remember the last day of
sixth grade. I sat at my desk with
my head resting on my hand. I
occasionally sighed. I was depressed
knowing that I would never see Mrs.
Roland again. Suddenly, I heard the
intercom, “Mario Isaac Morales to the
office, please. Mario Isaac Morales to
the office.” The voice boomed.

I got out of my seat, grabbed
my backpack, and walked out the
door.

I walked down the long hall to
get to the Principal’s office.

“What do they want?” I
thought to myself. “I hope I’m not in
trouble for anything.”

I got to the office door, yanked
it open, and walked in. I saw the
Principal in her personal office. She
was sitting at her desk, signing some
papers or something. I saw there was
nobody else around, so I walked in.

“You called?” I asked in a
slightly concerned manner.

“Yes,” she said. “Now, you
know Mrs. Roland has passed on.”

“Yeah,” I replied sadly.
The principal pulled out a
package and handed it to me. “She
When I got home, I opened the package. It was a beautiful journal. I opened the hard cover and read a note Mrs. Roland had written.

“To Isaac,” it said. “May you find joy and success in writing.”

I was ready to burst into tears, but instead, for the first time, I got the urge to write how I felt. I grabbed a pen and broke loose. I wrote my thoughts, my feelings, my pain. I expressed it all. My eyes were suddenly open to all that writing can be for me—my revenge, my hurt, my weapon, my shield, my hopes, my dreams, my life. “I can’t hold it any longer!” I thought to myself, I wrote five pages for the first time in my life, and I never felt so good.

Since that day, my love for writing has grown. It has blossomed into my stories, scripts and poems. Writing has made me out-spoken inside. It has changed my life completely. Mrs. Roland believed in me, and I was shocked to find out just how right she was about writing. Now when a teacher says, “We’re going to write an essay,” I smile and think to myself: “An essay, consider it done.”