

## Sample Exercise

Here is a sample exercise based on the simple idea of writing about an object, any object. The idea of “Object Writing” came from Pat Pattison, Professor at Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he teaches lyric writing and poetry. (His book *Writing Better Lyrics* is highly recommended, as are his online courses.)

This is an easy, yet potent exercise for practicing and improving creativity. I have included here:

1. an assignment sheet that I would use in most all of my art classes.
2. a couple of my own object writings to show as examples.

# Object Writing\*

Pick a real object or sense impression (ie the smell of fresh cut grass), more or less at random, and write about it. Focus your senses on that object. All your senses. Include your organic sense or awareness of your inner bodily functions (heartbeat, muscle tension, breathing, nausea, etc) and your kinesthetic sense (your “sense of relation to the world around you whether dizzy, wobbly drunk, falling, floating, etc).

Write about your object. No rules but one. Write for only 10 minutes. Not thinking, but writing. Set a timer if you need to and stop when the bell rings or buzzer buzzes. Write freely. Don’t worry about complete sentences, just focus on your senses.

This is best done first thing in the morning. Do it while the coffee is brewing.

If it helps write the seven types of sensory information at the top of the page before each writing, and refer to them to keep you in the process and your hand moving:

**sight      sound      taste      touch      smell      body      motion**

I will expect to see a notebook filled with these at the end of the semester. If you want, take Sunday off. That’s adds up to only one hour of sensory-focused writing each week.

We will periodically read some of these in class. Be prepared to bring in some of your favorites. I will also offer some variations on the theme as the semester progresses.

If you’re at a loss for an object, exchange a set with your friends.

## **Also recommended on writing**

*Becoming a Writer*, Dorothea Brande

*Writing Down the Bones*, Natalie Goldberg

*On Writing*, Stephen King

*The Elements of Style*, William Strunk and E.B. White

*If You Want to Write: A Book about Art, Independence and Spirit*, Brenda Ueland

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\* see *Writing Better Lyrics* by Pat Pattison,  
also his online course through coursera.com (free?) or Berklee School of Music...google ‘berklee\_object\_writing’

## **little shell**

A thin pink line spirals down from top of cone to point. Not a Barbie pink, but more brown, neutral, subdued. It circles around passing pockmarks and holes worn thru. It's an old shell found on lake bank. A lake of grey-green water bordered by broken concrete and unfettered algae beds.

It's a cone, like those that hold a cotton candy ball. What creature used to carry it as a home. Did this shell move across the lake bed protecting a soft blob of life from bass and heron, catfish and gull?

It's a little shell. Pumiced and rough between finger and thumb. Inch worm habitat. White, grey coney home. Perhaps it dates back to when natives lived on the river shore. Now a lake to house marinas and condos, sca-dooos and Blue Parrott Bar and Grill.

Spiral lines, chambered passages, long abandoned on the frothy shore smelling of sewage and rainwater, rotting fish and Coca Cola. Too small to hear the ocean. Careful you don't drop it in your ear. Silent shell, lost...

## **popsicle sticks**

Popsicle sticks. Lincoln logs for the poor kid. Stuck together with Elmer's glue. Sticky fingers, roll in balls. Sticks on sticks to make rafts and walls. Forts for plastic soldiers who fought in the bushes, shading us and hiding us from summer sun and nosey neighbors. Hot summer made the sticky pops a treat. Banana yellow, root beer brown, sweet and cold and melt in your mouth, but you never let them get that far. The sweet cold, soft ice—bite thru—and hold the stick in your mouth, edge to edge, with your teeth, chomping down, leaving teeth marks.

Popsicle sticks always half colored, half covered in dirty finger prints. Always carrying the sweet sticky smell of the ice it once held.

These days I use them to hold up an old Mexican blanket that drapes across my bedroom window. Not pretty, but functional, keeping out lite, leaving the room dark, like shady bushes in childhood fantasy, the bedroom hides me, lets me find succor in the dark, safe from the world

Popsicle sticks. I go thru dozens, now carrying sugar-free sustenance that keeps me from the hi-calorie, hi-fat snacks every nite. Each stick tossed on my coffee table is a marker of late nite enjoyment, and 100 less empty calories taken in...