

## Focus

No hocus pocus. Simply FOCUS.

**F** Facts

**O** Observation

**C** Content

**U** Understanding

**S** Structure

Without **FOCUS** we can achieve nothing.

With **FOCUS** - and with courage, commitment and concentration - we can achieve anything.

1. Facts. Make a friend of your library and create your own 'topics file'. Use your handout on Finding Out About Finding Out. You can use facts both in prose writing, e.g. for memoir, or freelance journalism, or 'how to do it' articles, etc. You can also use facts to make your imaginary story 'ring true'.

2. Observation. You can add layers to your writing simply by using your developing powers of observation to add something extra, e.g. a detail about the weather, or a description of the room where some action takes place. Your reader will find these things important in themselves, as adding texture. You as writer will find them helpful to create atmosphere, making things seem more 'real' by rounding out your story and bringing it to life.

3. Content. In storytelling there are things you decide to include, and things you decide to leave out. Working out your content helps you to make decisions as to what form the story will take, and how to write it.

4. Understanding. To levels of understanding comes into play when you write: what it is that you want to say, and how to share that with the reader. Sometimes this means 'reframing' what we know as if it is new to us: understanding what the thing is to YOU, understanding how the reader will COMPREHEND it.

5. Structure. Delay thinking about structure until you've done a draft or two. With prose, CISS and CIP can provide the structure. And a story is one scene after another - it's as easy as that - so pretend you're observing a play with real characters doing real actions. Write your story scene by scene. Then check each scene in the overall drama that is the story you are writing. Does it create tension - a desire to know what happens next and how it's all going to turn out? Does it push the story forward? Remember, if something does not ADD to what you're writing, then it is SUBTRACTING from it.

The main influence on structure is what you want to end up with. Whatever your writing is based on – idea, observation or emotion – plan and construct it for clarity and flow. Think about beginning, middle and end. If it's fiction, include in your structure the plot, characters, description and dialogue for a well-thought out and rounded story.