Writing Tipsheet 2

Writing Warm-up

Just as athletes warm-up with stretches before they exercise, I often warm-up before writing. My favourite warm-up is freewriting. But what is freewriting? Freewriting is writing without planning, and these are the rules:

1. Write whatever comes into your head (no matter how strange)
2. Don't correct your work
3. Don't stop until your time is up.

Activity:

Write for three minutes without stopping. You might be surprised at what you've written. Maybe it could be something you can use in a story.

Taking a look at dialogue

What is dialogue? If you open any novel, you'll find it. It's the parts of the story where the characters speak to each other, and it looks like this:

> "I mean it, Arnie. You need some sparring practice," said Belly. He nodded fast. "I can teach you."
>
> Now it was my turn to laugh. "What? You?"
>
> "Yeah, me. Dad used to be a boxer, you know."

Dialogue helps to make our stories interesting, but it should give us new information and move the story forward. It should draw us in and help us get to know the characters. Here are some tips to improve your dialogue:

1. Listen to people talking. Dialogue is a cut down version of real conversation – just the interesting bits.

2. Read your dialogue out loud to see how it sounds. Would real people speak that way?

3. Try to break up your dialogue with small pieces of action to make it easier to read. Take another look at the example above – *he nodded fast*, and *Now it was my turn to laugh* are pieces of action (the characters are doing something).

4. Your dialogue should have purpose. Maybe your characters could befriend someone, reveal a secret, argue or tell a lie. It's your job to make something happen!

Activity:

Choose a partner and write a conversation between two characters. Takes turns writing a sentence of dialogue each, beginning with:

> "Do you want to hear a secret?"