

A close-up photograph of a weathered, rusted metal fence. The fence consists of vertical posts and horizontal rails, all showing significant rust and wear. In the foreground, there are small, bright yellow flowers growing from the ground. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the fence and some greenery.

*How to Use  
Details +  
Description to  
Bring Your  
Story to Life*

THE WORKBOOK

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# Introduction

How many times have you heard the story where Girl has problems, Boy comes to save her, and then they live happily ever after? Or what about murder in a town, Detective believes it's Suspect A, all the clues point here, but it turns out it was B? How about I put it more simply: I bet you've read a story that has a character with a problem, they struggle to resolve it, but then somehow, they do resolve it enough for the story to end. (Could I be more general?)

Stories are simple: You have a Character, a Place, and a Problem. And these basic plot structures of a story are recycled. Stories have been told a million (probably a bajillion) times.

So, why keep reading them? And why keep writing them?

Because the details change. What makes my story different from yours (and the 500 others that are similar to it) are the details. It's the description that only you can tell. It's what makes my story "MY story" and your story "YOUR story."

But even if we change basic details—names, locations, some important details—it would still be pretty similar. You need your story to be different, to be true, to be YOURS. To get that to happen, we need the details.

Why Details? Here's three simple reasons:

- + To make your story YOURS
- + To fully understand your story
- + To see your places, taste your tastes, feel your feelings, and bring your story to life

So, let's infuse some details and description into your writing! **Follow the directions in the workbook in order** to hone your description writing skills and bring your stories to life. Each prompt will give you a specific detail-writing skill to practice and apply back to the previous prompt. Go in order to emerge with a fully formed strong-detailed scene at the end!

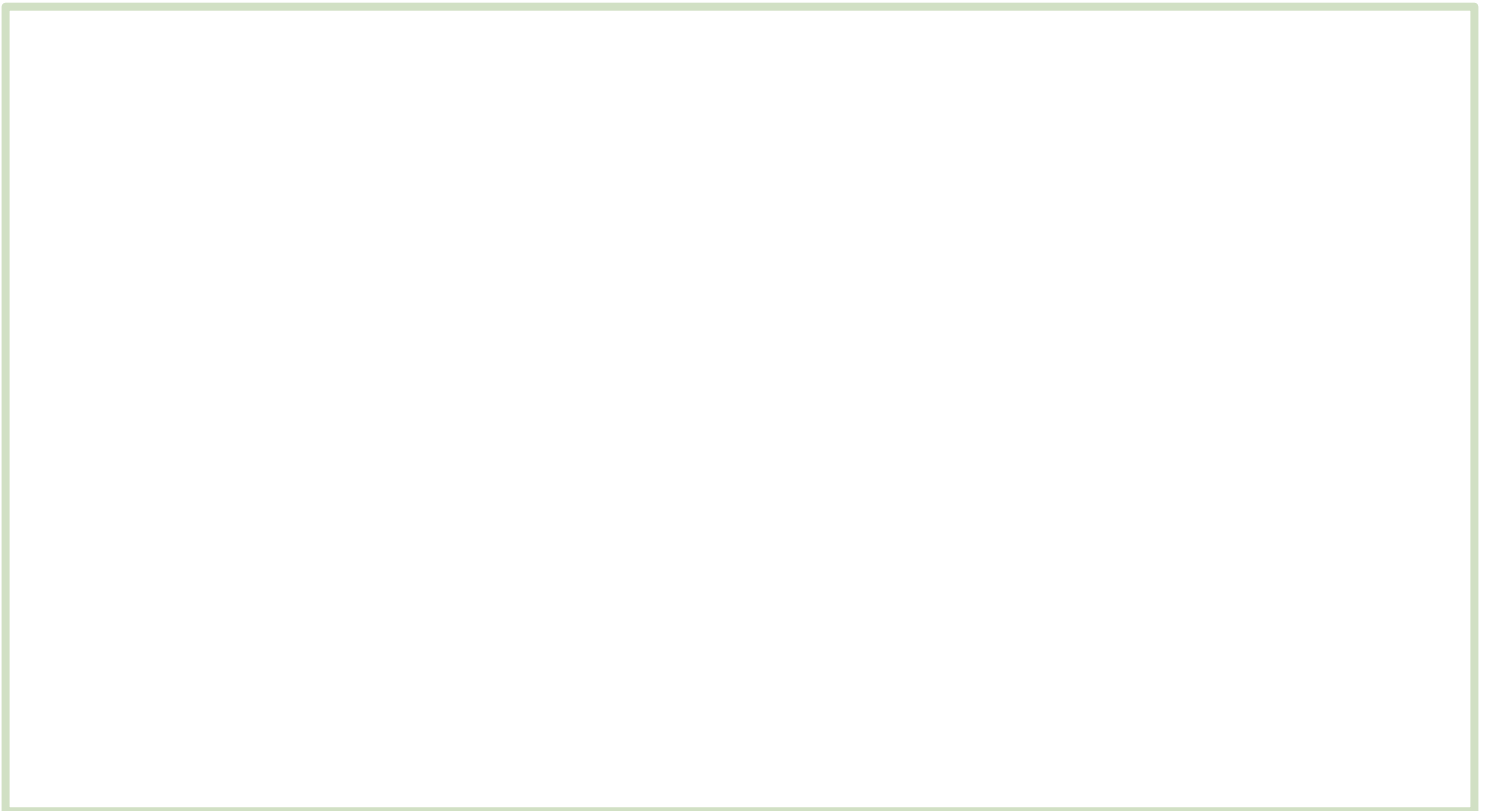
IT'S TIME TO WRITE! LET'S GO!

# 1 | Notice Everything!

Pick an object and spend five minutes writing down all the details. Just grab something in your house—an old book, a rock, a plant, a lamp—and describe it. EVERYTHING is important. In five minutes, it is impossible to record every detail, but get as much as you can. Use senses, feelings, anything.

**DO NOT go into a whole story just yet! The only thing you're doing for five minutes is documenting details.** This is a free-write prompt to get your mind thinking in the concept of small details. For now, just put pen to paper and get words on the page. It's not a final draft, it's not even a story—the story will come later.

DETAIL BRAIN DUMP:



**\*Remember: These prompts *build* off each other. Make sure you fully complete one before moving onto the next step!**

# 2 | Make Your Language Strong

Get out the dumbbells and put on your tennis shoes—we're going to give your writing a workout. You may have already done this a bit in the description you just wrote. But now we're going to trim the fat and shape the muscles of your language to make it strong. It must prove that it deserves to be here. You want the best description possible. The one that only YOU could write. We can do this through STRONG diction, figurative language, and avoiding clichés.

## STRONG DICTION

**STRONG ADJECTIVES:** Let's say we have an object that is the color red. I could call it red, to be simple, but is it actually crimson, or scarlet? If I have a small object, is it actually teeny-tiny, or microscopic? Write some strong, specific adjectives about your object.

**STRONG NOUNS:** Let's say we have a 12-year-old girl. Is she “your tweeny-bop kid sister” or “a beautiful child who's quickly growing into a young woman.” Write some strong, specific nouns about your object.

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# 2 | Make Your Language Strong

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

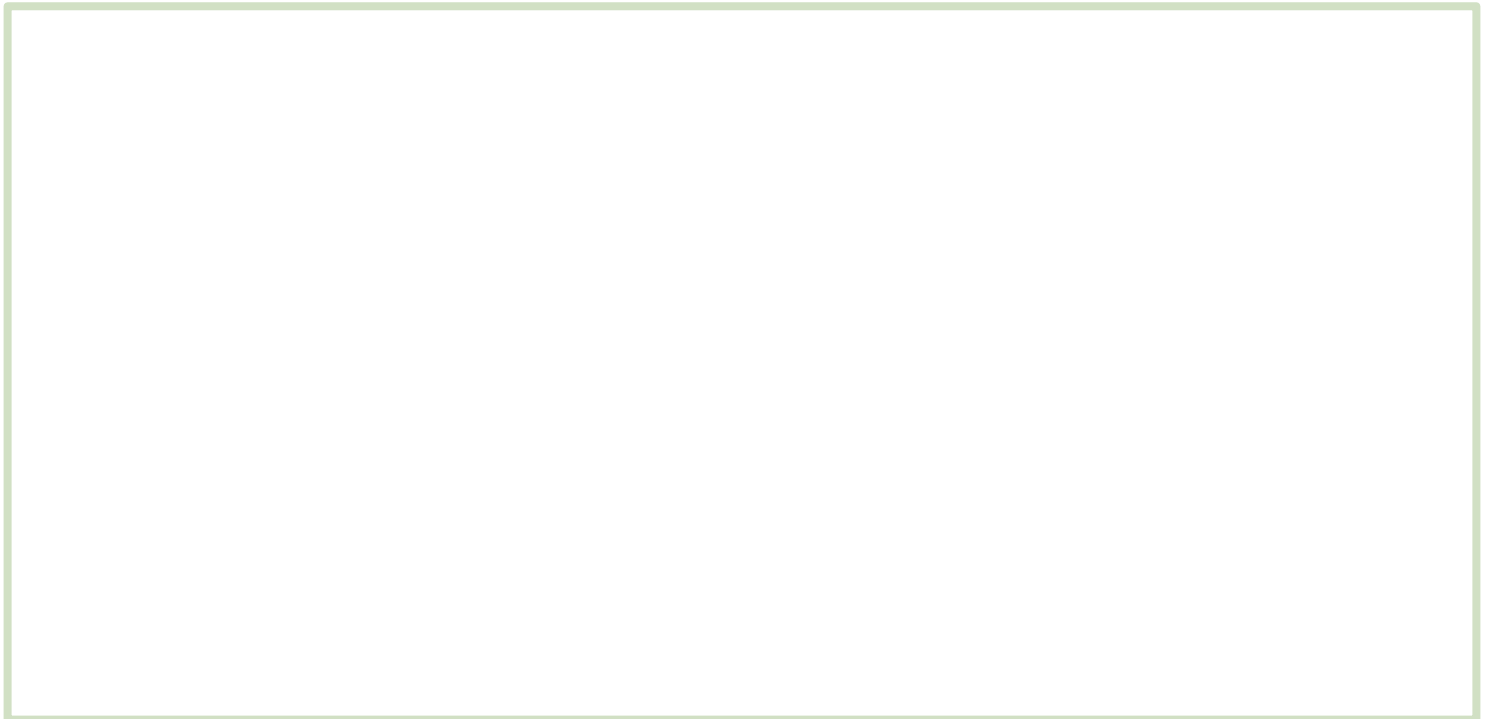
**SIMILES:** A simile compares 2 things using “like” or “as”.

**METAPHORS:** A metaphor compares 2 things without using “like” or “as”.

Brainstorm a few different similes and metaphors that compare the details to your objects of other things. Be considerate with what things you’re choosing to compare your details to, as that will reveal much about the way you think and the way your character perceives the world. It will help set the tone of the story. For example: is that red is “the color of a cherry tomato still on the vine” or “the color of a red solo cup”? Those are 2 very different comparisons to make.

**Bonus:** *Figurative language is more than just similes and metaphors. If you’re feeling adventurous, try playing around with personification, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, understatement (litotes), alliteration, or oxymoron!*

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE BRAINSTORM



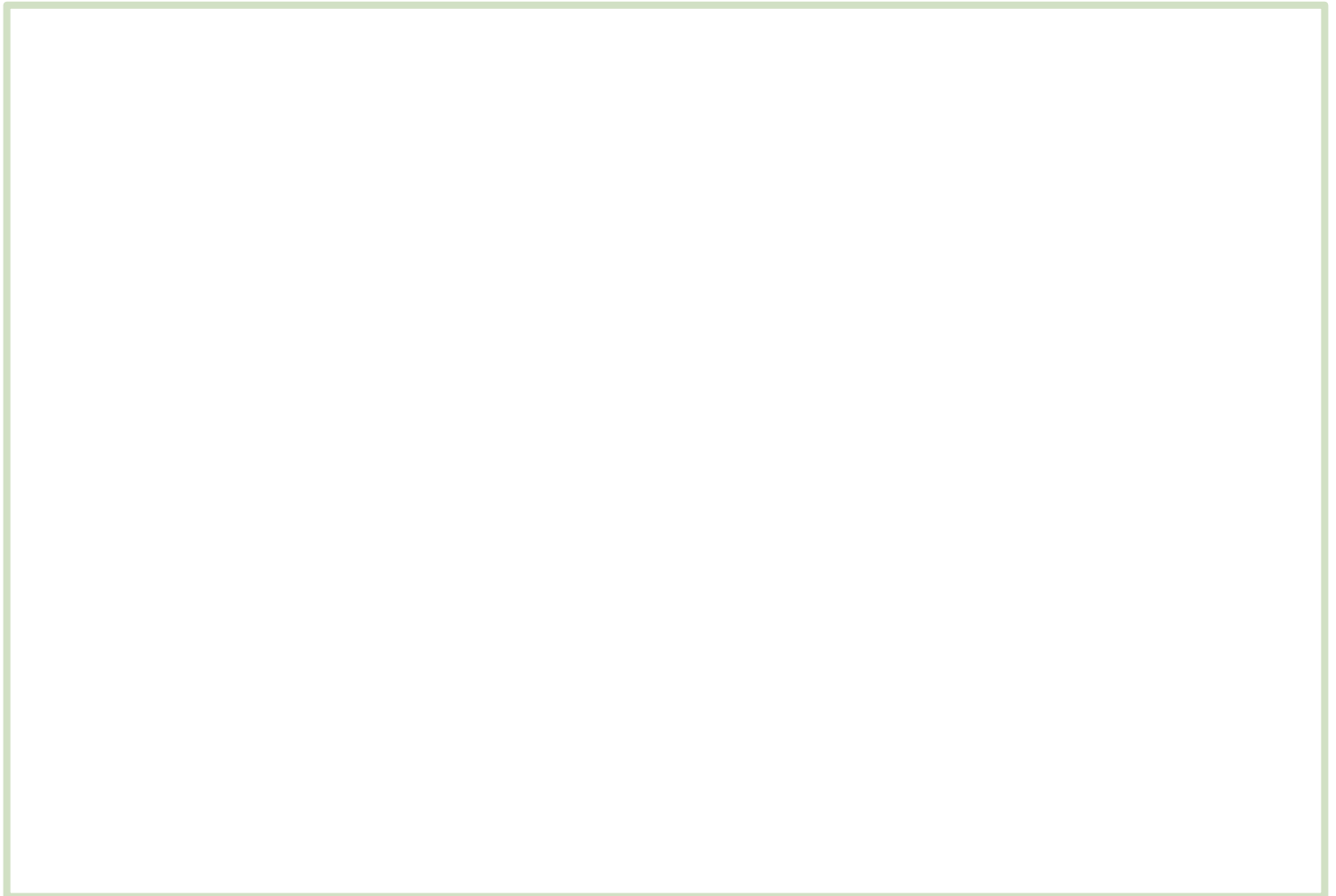
# 2 | Make Your Language Strong

## CLICHÉS

Clichés will ruin your writing faster than the speed of lightning (see what I did there? Brainstorm any and all clichés you can think of right now. Dump them all out on this page.

When you're done, **don't use any of them. Ever. Period. End of discussion.** They're just not worth it.

## CLICHÉS BRAINSTORM





## *Now, go back to your original detail dump of your object*

Armed with your strong nouns, strong verbs, strong adjectives, figurative language, and your list of clichés to avoid “at all costs,” go back to your original detail dump in the first exercise.

Revise your original writing to include this language. Infuse your details into your description. Tone up this short description and watch it start to come to life!



# 3 | Find Character Relevance

Go back to your object description, now fully written and beefed up, and find the meaningful details for your character in this scene (I'm sure there's some in there!). What kind of character owns this thing? This object must earn its place in your character's life, and your story. Why does it deserve to be here?

WHAT KIND OF CHARACTER OWNS THIS OBJECT? WHY DO THEY HAVE THIS PARTICULAR ONE? HOW DID THEY OBTAIN IT?

WHY ARE THEY DESCRIBING THIS OBJECT LIKE THIS RIGHT NOW? HOW ARE THEY FEELING? WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THEIR LIFE FOR THEM TO DESCRIBE IT IN THIS WAY?

WHY IS THIS CHARACTER LOOKING AT THIS OBJECT RIGHT NOW ANYWAY? WHAT HAPPENED JUST BEFORE THIS THAT CAUSED THEM TO PAY ATTENTION? WHAT IS THIS ATTENTION MAKING THEM THINK ABOUT?

WHY IS THIS OBJECT SHOWING UP IN THIS SCENE WITH THIS CHARACTER? WHY DOES THIS OBJECT DESERVE TO BE HERE?

## 4 | Rewrite This Scene

Finally, armed with everything you've just discovered, rewrite this scene with this in mind. Think about your diction, your character, and your object's description. Write the scene with the details only you can provide.

# Want even more?

If you would like more resources on writing (craft, mindset, or authorpreneurship) check out **[www.rachelgiesel.com](http://www.rachelgiesel.com)**!

Want to tell me about your experiences? You can find me on Instagram and Twitter **@rachelgiesel** or email me directly at **[rachel@rachelgiesel.com](mailto:rachel@rachelgiesel.com)**.

You can also connect with me and other writers in our Facebook Group **[www.facebook.com/groups/realgoodwriter/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/realgoodwriter/)**.

HAPPY WRITING!

