

Clustering

Purpose:

To generate and organize ideas for writing.

Procedure:

1. Choose a nucleus word and circle it on a blank sheet of paper.
2. Cluster, circling each new thought and connecting it. Don't force meaning—just let it be uncovered. Go with the flow.
3. When a different train of thought strikes you, start again at the nucleus and continue until those associations are exhausted.
4. Cluster until you feel a sense of directions or purpose—a feeling that you have something to say. This often happens within two or three minutes. (Don't demand of yourself cultured pearls of wisdom at this point—you just want something worth saying.)
5. Write. The length can range from a few sentences to a page. You can write in prose paragraph form, poetry, a dialog . . . Mine and refine what your cluster dug up.
6. When you feel the end of the writing coming, circle back to the ideas that you began writing with by repeating a word, phrase, or idea from the start. Such closing tends to give a satisfying feeling to both writer and reader.