

Thank you for receiving Audrey Wood's Smart Piggies' Newsletter, filled with original art, stories, activities, and more!



"Audrey, where do you get the ideas for your stories?"

That's a question I'm asked wherever I go by both children and adults. It's an important question and I'm going to tell you all of my secrets. I have a secret story finding method. If you follow it you will be able to discover all the ideas you'll ever need for writing a story.



I get the ideas for my stories from the following sources: day dreams; night dreams; life experiences; emotions that

Create an "Idea Box:"



When you start catching ideas you'll be amazed how many are bouncing around you. I guarantee you

will find more ideas than you can use in a lifetime!

But here's the trick- if you don't immediately write down the idea or the piece of idea that you have just noticed, it will vanish in an instant. Quickly! Grab something to write on. Use a napkin if you have to! Find a pencil or pen and jot down that slippery little piece of information or observation before it's too



late! Once you've captured the "idea fragment", take it and drop it in a box you've labeled, "Idea Box" and forget about it.

make me think about something in a sad, happy, worried or angry way; doodles I draw while talking on the phone; a sentence that pops out of someone's mouth while I'm walking by; visual sources such as photographs, art magazines, and paintings; memories

I recall of my childhood; a quote written in a book; a line spoken in a movie or play; statements



or lyrics that I misunderstand; subjects that are so exciting to me that I want to investigate; and last but not least, bolts of inspiration sent to me by my muse from out of the blue!

OK, but that doesn't answer the question, "how do I get my ideas?" The above list simply reveals some of the places where I uncover ideas for stories. Here's the secret - *ideas are everywhere*. The trick is *recognizing* an idea when it jumps out in front of you and *catching* it before it dissolves away into thin air.

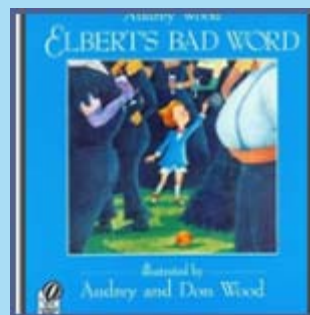
How to Be an "Idea Catcher"

Start this way- one morning, just before you get out of bed, tell yourself, "Today I am going to be "idea hungry". I'm going to be alert and ready for anything I may hear, read, or experience which might lead me to an idea." You may not always get a complete idea for a story, I usually don't. More often, I stumble across a little piece of information that may someday lead to a complete idea.

But don't stop there. Every morning remind yourself to continue to be an idea catcher. Before long your idea box, like mine, will be overflowing with all sorts of bits and pieces of ideas. Information you can use to create stories will be waiting for you whenever you need it.



Now, when you are ready to sit down and write a story, go to your idea box, dump out all of the little pieces of paper you've tossed in there, and begin to play. Allow yourself to skip through your collected bits and pieces of information, arranging them by theme, or just randomly. Eventually one or two or five will surface. Dream on these. As you dream, idea fragments you rejected might assume renewed importance. Dig through the stack again and locate them. Now comes the fun.



Wave a story with the materials in front of you. Usually your ideas will naturally group into several themes because

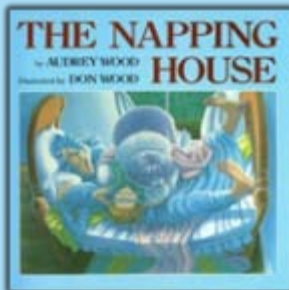
there will be themes that interest you.

Try matching titles with themes,

For instance, you might get an idea for a character. Our friend, Harry Bidgood, inspired the character for my story, KING BIDGOOD'S IN THE BATHTUB.



Or you may be inspired by a situation that interests you. Young children say bad words and adults don't like it. That situation led to the idea for my book,



ELBERT'S BAD WORD. Perhaps a title will lead you to an idea for a story. I used to take our

son for a nap at his grandmother's house. I called her house THE NAPPING HOUSE. This led me to write the book of the same name. An article about the art of recycling sparked the idea for my story, NONA'S RED RACER. A quick sketch turned upside down led to the idea for the character in my book. A quick sketch turned upside down led to the idea for the character in my book SILLY SALLY.

character sketches with photos, and so forth. Occasionally an idea is so strong it stands on it's own. Perhaps you didn't know this until you compared it will all the others. So now you know where I get the ideas from my stories and how I use them. This system has worked for me; perhaps it will work for you, too.

Get out there and catch some ideas-- it's fun!



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