

CRESSIDA COWELL

Free Writing Friday

WHERE TO START IF YOU'RE REALLY, REALLY STUCK

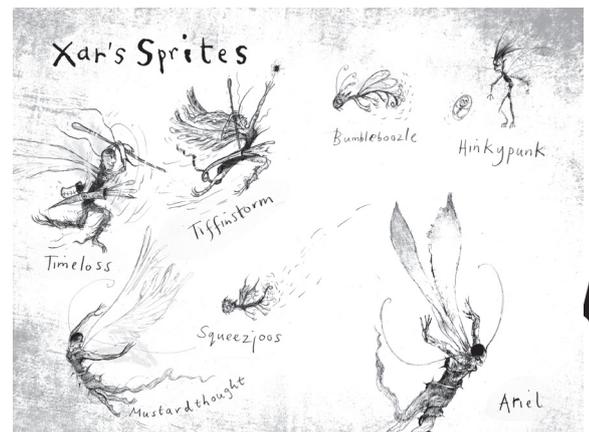
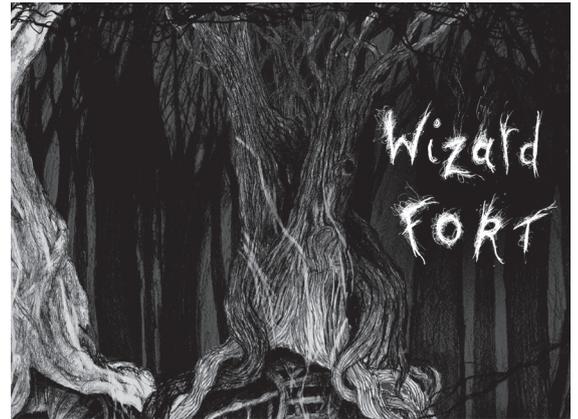
Everyone gets stuck sometimes. If you need a bit of help then here are some ideas from my newest book, *The Wizards of Once*. You can use all of them or only one, it's up to you. Notice the ideas often come out of asking QUESTIONS. Lots of great stories start with a question.

1. One of my main characters, Wish has a banned magical object. What banned magical object would your main character have, and what would its power be? What would your character do to hide it, and who are they afraid might find it? Draw a picture of the object.

2. My other main character is a Wizard called Xar (pronounced 'Zar') who has no magic, and will do anything to get it. Most Wizards grow into their powers when they're about thirteen and Xar is desperate to get his. Would one of your main characters have a power, or not? If so, what would it be?

3. In my world, Xar lives in the Wizard Fort, and Wish lives in the Iron Warrior Fort. Draw the homes of your main characters – they might live in the same place, or different places. Who lives with them? Are they happy there or do they want to escape?

4. Xar is accompanied by lots of different sprites. I got my inspiration from looking at traditional illustrations of magical creatures, but also from research into weird and unusual looking insects. Xar also has Caliburn the Raven for a companion and his Giant, Crusher. Draw some companions for one of your main characters. They could be ogres or bears, or werewolves, or some imaginary creature that no one has ever seen before because you just made it up. Do the companions get on, or do they fight?



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5. Wish and her Assistant Bodyguard Bodkin find a mysterious book called The Spelling Book. What spells would be in your spelling book? Write down some recipes for an invisibility spell, or a shrinking spell, or a spell to make everyone think you're wonderful. What would the ingredients be? Who would find this spell, and would they use it for good or bad? If there was a spelling competition, who would be duelling, and what spells would they use? Would the opponents be enemies, or friends? Do you see how all these questions are giving you ideas?

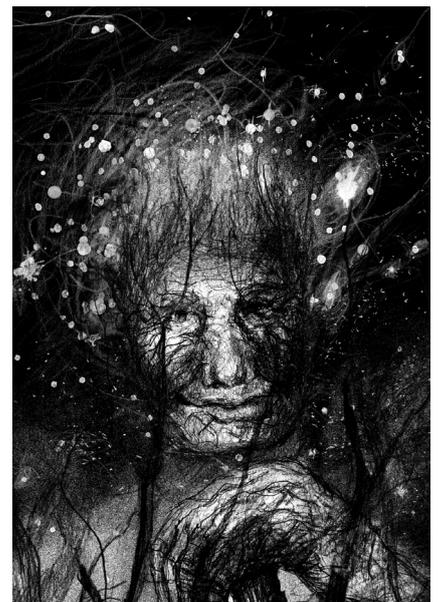
6. Xar and Wish meet in the Wildwoods, where they're not allowed to be. Send one of your characters somewhere they're not supposed to be and write what unexpected event happens when they get there.

They could meet someone, find something, or perhaps that place could be a passage to somewhere completely different. Where could you find a doorway to another imaginary world? It could be a tiny little door hidden behind some moss right at the bottom of a tree, and you have to drink a shrinking spell to get through it. Or maybe it's at the bottom of a suitcase. You put the suitcase on the floor, and open it up, and there's a staircase going down where the bottom of the suitcase should be.

Or maybe it's one of the paving stones on a perfectly ordinary street in Manchester. You check no one is looking, stamp three times, and the paving stone lifts up like a trap door and leads... where? Maybe it's in your own bathroom. You press on one of the tiles and Wooah! The entire wall, including the bath, flips around and you're in a completely different world. What IS that world?

Crusher

7. Here's an illustration of a giant called Crusher, a name that's short for 'Problem Crusher'. What questions would your main characters need to ask him and why? Would he give them a straightforward answer, or a riddle?



8. My two main characters have to cooperate in pursuit of a larger quest. What problem or situation does one of your characters have? Why do they need help, and who can help them? At the end of the story, will they have solved it, or will it end with the reader not knowing (this is called a cliffhanger ending)?

9. What would the title of your story be? Draw the front cover.

10. You'll notice that most books have a short description on the back, giving the reader some information about the story without giving away too many clues. This is called a blurb.

Write a 3 or 4 sentence blurb about your book, as well as a short biography of the author (you!).

Keep asking those questions... Come up with your OWN questions...

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End message from Cressida:

The Wizards of Once is a series full of magic. Magic gives influence to characters who might not otherwise have it, and makes an adventure story even more thrilling. If you read carefully, though, you might notice that I've sneakily put a hidden message beneath the surface. This message is: everyone has magic, every single one of us, because the REAL magic is imagination. Imagination is the most powerful engine in the universe, and the stories that come from YOUR imagination are the best of all.

