

CHAPTER 12

the act of writing | dialogue to analysis to essay

from dialogue —————> to analysis —————> to essay

We always think, all day long, about what we see, what we read, what we do, and who we are. We naturally have a **DIALOGUE WITH THE TEXTS** of our lives. Sometimes, we want to **organize** our thoughts, our feelings, and our dialogues into a **formal essay**.

NOW, where do we get our **IDEAS** for an **ESSAY**?

We know how to develop an essay because we studied the **PARTS OF AN ESSAY** in Chapter 6, page 75. We get the ideas for our essays from within the text we are reading, from our **DIALOGUE WITH THE TEXT**.

As we said in Chapter 11, one way to have a **DIALOGUE WITH THE TEXT** is to respond to the text with our own writing. We call this **FREEWRIING**. In **FREEWRIING**, you are free to write anything. We have only one rule for **FREEWRIING**: you **cannot stop** writing. If you get stuck, without anything to write, write anything, write:

I can't think of anything to say. I'm so frustrated. I'm bored. Can I go now? My name is Cheryl. My name is Cheryl. My name is Cheryl. Wait a minute! I just thought of something to write about.

When you have finished with your freewriting, you may find that it contains good ideas for an essay. From those ideas, you can formulate a thesis for your essay. How do you go from:

freewriting —————> thesis

In Chapter 11, we did a **FREEWRIE** about *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Now, we'll look at that **FREEWRIING** to discover a **THESIS** for our essay. After we've written the **FREEWRIING**, we'll make a list of things we wrote about:

I can picture Alice sitting by a riverbank, stretched out on the grass under a tree, while her sister sits beside her. It looks very inviting. I wouldn't get bored. I'd just take a nap. But Alice got bored. Even her sister's book bored her because it didn't have any pictures or conversation in it. If I were bored, I'd lie back in the sunshine and take a nice long nap. But Alice isn't just bored. Alice is restless. Restlessness can lead you to do something creative. Alice looks around for something to do. I think Alice will do something interesting. I think something will happen to Alice. I want to read on. Who knows what Alice might do? Maybe if I take a nap I will dream the whole book of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland! I will use my imagination to create a story.

Our **FREEWRTING**, our **DIALOGUE WITH THE TEXT**, our **ANALYSIS** of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, gives us an idea:

In the end, Alice was not as bored as we thought.

From that idea, we develop a **THESIS**:

When you are bored, you are passive. When you are restless, you become active, and you *do* something. You become creative. Alice is not so much bored as she is restless, looking for something to do. Her restlessness leads her to use her imagination to do something creative.

With that **THESIS**, we can write the beginnings of an **ESSAY**:

Restless Alice

Boredom makes us passive. But, restlessness makes us active, and we *do* something; we become creative.

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice, sitting on the river bank, "peeped into the book her sister was reading," but it didn't interest her because "it had no pictures or conversations in it." Alice certainly does not like that kind of book! "And what is the use of a book," thought Alice "without pictures or conversation?" Alice was "very, very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank with nothing to do." But, Alice is not just tired, she is impatient with having "nothing to do." Alice is not so much bored as she is restless. Alice's restlessness leads

The Ideas We've Written About

The way Alice is lying around, bored, looks inviting to me.

I'd be lazy.

I'd take a nap.

Alice isn't just bored, she's restless. What will she do to cure her restlessness?

If I were Alice, I'd fall asleep, and to cure my restlessness, I'd dream the whole story of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

We use our imagination—the power of our minds to invent ideas, actions, images, and stories—to come up with fascinating dreams, writings, and art of all kinds.

her to do something creative. Perhaps, at that moment of her restlessness, Alice wrote the story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Perhaps she imagined the whole thing.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland tells us that Alice saw a “White Rabbit with pink eyes” run “close by her.” But, perhaps Alice, in her restlessness, imagines the White Rabbit with pink eyes. Perhaps Alice imagines the White Rabbit speaking, saying, “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!” Alice might imagine that the White Rabbit took a watch from his waistcoat pocket, “looked at it, and then hurried on” down a rabbit hole. Alice could imagine that she “started to her feet” to follow the White Rabbit down his rabbit hole into all of the adventures of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Of course, we don't know if Alice sitting on the river bank imagined the whole book of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. But if she did, she certainly used her creative imagination to lift herself out of her boredom and her restlessness. If she did, she might have enjoyed herself very much all afternoon.

We do know that Lewis Carroll used *his* imagination to give us Alice and her adventures. Perhaps Lewis Carroll lifted himself out of his own restlessness by writing *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

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We have gone from **DIALOGUE WITH THE TEXT** to **ANALYSIS** to **THESIS** to **ESSAY**.

Here's another **FREEWRTING**, a **DIALOGUE WITH THE TEXT** of *Alice in Wonderland*.

I just realized how the idea of time plays an important part in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. The story begins with Alice almost outside of time. She dreamily sits, bored, on the banks of the river. Suddenly, the White Rabbit brings time into the picture. The White Rabbit says, “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late.” He took a watch out of his pocket, “looked at it, and then hurried on.” When time comes into the story, things start to happen. The action begins!

Time is one of the most important aspects of our lives. We all experience time every day, from morning to evening. We know that we have to be somewhere, for example, at 1:30. We look at our lives in terms of time: we are infants; we are teenagers; we are adults. We look at time in history. We say, “in the Nineteenth Century,” “in the 70s,” “in the future.” And we even know time in terms of the whole universe. Many scientists now believe that the universe is about 15–20 billion years old.

People have always contemplated **time**, written about it, and made paintings and drawings about it. In 1931, the Spanish surrealist painter Salvador Dalí painted a painting he titled *The Persistence of Memory*. That painting portrays a landscape with some fascinating images of **time**. In Chapter 8, page 105, we talked about the paintings in the Cave at Lascaux as a kind of early “language.” All painting,



in its desire to break the silence of our lives, speaks to us with a visual “language.” Here, Dalí lets his imagination go, much as Lewis Carroll does in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. We’ll use this painting in the Exercises for this Chapter.

Surrealism =

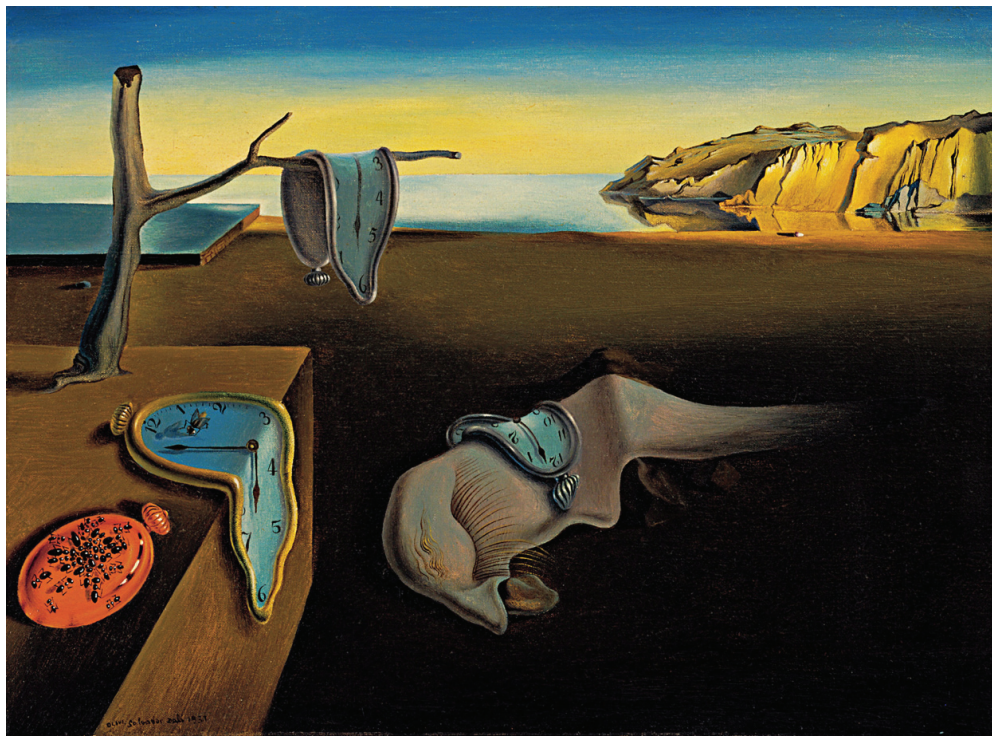
From the French:

sur = super

réalisme = realism

Surrealism was one of the exciting art and literature movements that began in the early 1920s in Paris and spread around the world. It influenced the visual arts, literature, film, and music as well as political thought and practice, philosophy and social theory.

To convey a reality above our ordinary reality, including our dream life, surrealism uses imaginary, unusual images and language and puts images and ideas together in ways that we don’t see in daily life. Surrealist artists and writers still practice that art style today.



Chapter Review: Dialogue with the Text

We naturally have a **DIALOGUE WITH THE TEXT**, and those **TEXTS** include the books we read and the art we see.

We get our ideas for an essay from *within* the text, from our **DIALOGUE WITH THE TEXT**.

In **FREEWRTING**, we generate ideas, and we see what we're thinking about, and we have a **DIALOGUE WITH THE TEXT**.

