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Hello, fellow writers, readers and creatives!

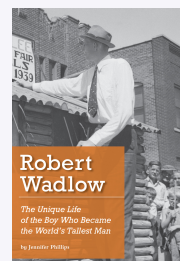
What's New

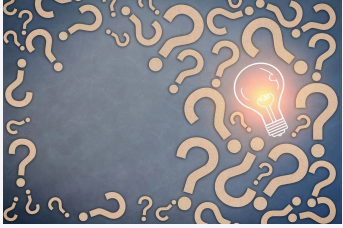
I am still getting my head around all that I learned at the October [Highlights Foundation](#) workshop on developing picture book biographies. Nestled away in the Poconos in Pennsylvania, the setting creates this amazing climate for creativity. I was surrounded by fellow authors, illustrators, agents and editors. We ate meals together and shared details about our projects and lives. And we could break away when needed for solo "unworkshop" time to work on our efforts.

This gave me direction for the next draft of **my children's biography about social reformer Horace Mann**. It has been my "conniption" project, challenging me in so many ways. But I came away with new ideas about different story structures, incorporating your subject's voice and a specific way to study similar books (called mentor texts). I've started a [Pinterest board about Horace](#) while I work to finish the manuscript.

I continue to get the word out about the updated edition of children's biography on *Robert Wadlow: The Unique Life of the Boy Who Became the World's Tallest Man*.

If you know someone who would enjoy this, [please let them know to give it a look!](#)





Creativity Practice: Constraints

This fall, I am delivering my workshop in local libraries that explores **simple ways to bust out of our usual ways of thinking**. These are helpful in various aspects of life and that includes our writing.

Constraints involve taking away things we over-rely on, leaving us to cope. Creativity often is the result.

This happens all the time in real life, often in dire circumstances. Consider natural disasters. People are faced with extreme constraints and loss of typical resources. They must get creative to survive.

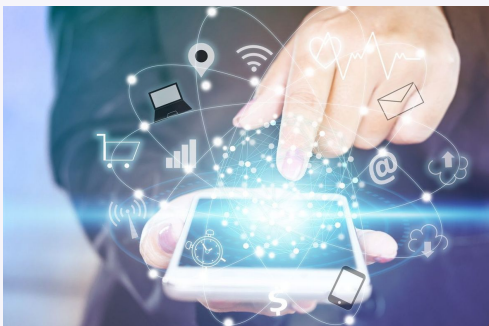
For our writing, a **popular constraint is to limit word count** and see what emerges (often called flash fiction). There's the famous story of Dr. Seuss (Theo Geisel) accepting the challenge to write a story using no more than 50 different words. The result was *Green Eggs and Ham*.

I've been jotting down six-word stories about my biography subject Horace Mann as a constraint to help bring his story into focus. Two recent examples: *No? Or not yet? We'll see.* and *Shoddy schools, no rules. Change's coming.*

Other ways to use constraints in your writing?

- * Take away something your beloved character might rely on and see how he/she copes.
- * Create a law that something important is banned.
- * Remove a common element in a setting (sidewalks, streets, etc).
- * Block one of the character's senses.

You get the idea. What can you constrain in your current writing project to boost the level of creativity?



Cool Resources

Want to embrace the idea of constraints? Here are a few articles to explore:

- * [How Constraints Force Your Brain to be More Creative](#)
- * [The Benefits of Constrained Writing](#) (with methods to try)
- * [Spark Your Creativity by Thinking Inside the Box](#)

Alright, off to get my coffee.

Happy writing and creative thinking!

Jennifer Phillips

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