



SPEED D.A.T.E.S FOR CREATIVE WRITING

D: Dialogue

CRISTY'S TIPS: Use dialogue to reveal character. Choose the style of speaking your character uses. Choose the types of words your character uses. Ask questions. Answer questions with questions. Tell half-truths. Have fun...

EXAMPLE:

'Please, Mrs Glock?' I beg. 'Pleeease? Just give me one more chance. This won't be like the last time, I promise.'

Mrs Glock arches a carefully pencilled eyebrow. 'Like the last seven times, you mean?'

I push my face into an expression of innocent surprise. 'Seven? Are you sure?'

'Quite sure.'

'Hmm.' I frown and start racking my brain for a new plan. 'That seems kind of high.'

'No, Wednesday,' Alfie says helpfully, 'it's definitely seven. Remember? You've had three blackouts, two meltdowns, one spontaneous electrical discharge and one, um ... inexplicable rain of fireballs.'

Alfie smiles and shakes his head. 'Boy, remember that one?'

Mrs Glock's face twitches. 'I remember,' she says in a voice like ice.

(From *Wednesday Weeks and the Tower of Shadows*)

A: Action

CRISTY'S TIPS: Your characters have to **DO** something. Use strong verbs. Write slow things fast (or skip them entirely). Write fast things slow (use lots of detail).

EXAMPLE:

Cam yelled. Liv dropped Sophie's hand and ran to the river. Now Cam was running too, but Liv reached the riverbank first, just as Jack's head burst above the raging water. He was gasping, eyes wide. And he was disappearing downriver, fast.

"Here!" Liv screamed, running along the riverbank. She held out one end of a long branch. "Grab on!"

Liv dodged trees and slipped over roots as she raced. Jack struggled and splashed towards her, fighting the boiling current to reach out for the branch. But it was never going to work. Liv was too slow. Jack was being pulled downstream too fast.

(From *Beneath The Trees*)

T: Thoughts

CRISTY'S TIPS: Thoughts let you share your character's worries, imaginings, fears, feelings, ideas and plans... When a reader can get inside a character's head, we feel closer to that character.

EXAMPLE:

Isaac's stomach tangled into itself. He'd tried wheelies a few times, but they'd never really worked. Perhaps this was the place to learn how. Perhaps this island was the place for loads of new things, like making friends with the bronze-haired girl, for a start. Only, he wasn't sure Mum would agree.

What he needed was a plan.

(From *To The Lighthouse*)

T: Thoughts (continued)

EXAMPLE:

Alfie's my best friend – okay, technically my only friend – and I know it's not his fault he's a genius. But sometimes – especially times like now, when my whole future is on the line and I'm trying to concentrate – I wish he could dial it back a little. That's all. You know, just a smidge. I just don't know how to tell him without coming across like a total grouch.

(From *Wednesday Weeks and the Tower of Shadows*)

E: Exposition / explaining

CRISTY'S TIPS: Describe where you are and what things look like. Play with language. Use similes and metaphors. Harness the rule of three...

EXAMPLES:

The river was writhing and raging like a wild thing. Cream and caramel waves seemed to plough through the forest like bulldozers.

(From *Beneath The Trees*)

The quokka stared at him, its black eyes serious as it nibbled a ripe fig held in two furry paws. It looked like a teddy bear crossed with a miniature kangaroo.

(From *To The Lighthouse*)

I sneak a peek at my laptop. But instead of coloured blocks, the screen is filled with dancing monkeys, flying puppies and what appears to be a portrait of Elvis drinking coffee.

(From *Wednesday Weeks and the Tower of Shadows*)

S: Senses

CRISTY'S TIPS: Including details about how things smell, sound, taste, look, feel to the touch, and feel in your heart is a great way to connect with the reader.

EXAMPLE:

The smell hit Fiona first. Formalin and chemicals, clawing at the back of her throat. Grabbing at her eyes, her nose. The dissection room was huge, with high windows, bare walls and a floor that echoed every sound. Long stainless-steel tables were distributed around the mopped floor, shrouded in white sheets. Under the sheets lay, what? Human bodies? Fiona swallowed back the bitter chemical taste, and her fear with it.

(From *Aussie STEM Stars: Fiona Wood, inventor of spray-on skin*)