



## Finding Creative Ideas: You Must Dig the Bait

By Beulah Wood

*Does creativity depend on bright ideas or hard work?*

Winston Churchill said, “A writer should shut himself up in his study and work steadily.”

George Bernard Shaw took a long bus-ride.

Mark Twain smothered his fried eggs in pepper to sharpen his faculties.

Dr. Johnson of dictionary fame needed a purring cat, orange peel, and plenty of tea to drink.

I like this anonymous ditty:

Sitting still and wishing

Makes no person great.

The good Lord sends the fishing,

But you must dig the bait.

All creativity comes from God, but it is not always there when we want it. We live among obstacles. Many schools promote rote learning. Friends may laugh. Our hierarchical organizations, or harsh words, rigid rules, or our own hectic pace cramp us. Some are afraid of change. For some stress inhibits ideas, but look how an approaching deadline can draw innovation!

We find creativity **both** in sudden inspiration and in hard work—every time. Thankfully, it does not depend on intelligence.

Thomas Edison, inventor of the gramophone and the electric light, was

expelled from school at the age of 12, for being “educationally subnormal.”

So what are creative people like?

- Creative people are positive. They believe they have something to offer. They are enthusiastic, against pat answers, curious.
- Creative people enjoy new challenges. They take up hobbies, read, travel and enjoy physical exercise.
- Creative people wonder and observe. They notice their surroundings and keep a journal of ideas.
- Creative people know their subject. They do the needed study and research. They know the saying: “Genius is 1 per cent inspiration, and 99 per cent perspiration.”
- Creative people give themselves an environment that promotes ideas. Walking encourages many—oxygen for the brain and time to think. They go out into the sunshine.
- Creative people encourage their subconscious mind. Some think as they go to bed about the idea they need and find a new idea when they wake. Rudolf Flesch, in his classic *The Art of Readable Writing*, gave this recipe:

Draw upon all your ideas, experiences, memories, and move them about until you feel the click, the electric spark, the sensation of “That’s it.” Get your facts, think hard of the best way of presenting

them, and then “think aside.” Let the matter drop for a while until you suddenly hit upon a striking combination of ideas.

- Creative people keep the mind on the job during other tasks. Ideas germinate like seeds in a garden. This was how Gutenberg thought of the printing press. Gutenberg knew how to print designs from carved woodblocks, but he wanted to print entire pages of the Bible, and he couldn't carve all 1,300 pages of the Bible out of blocks of wood. He thought about how coins were cast in molds and how seals were used to print designs in sealing wax. Then one day he took part in the local wine harvest and noticed the power of the winepress that squeezed the juice out of the grapes. There was his answer! He invented the letterpress by combining the separate skills of stamping with a seal and pressing wine. No one had connected these two methods before.
- Creative people ask questions and pray. If you do not stop what you are doing and try to be more creative, you will not be more creative. It is as simple as that. As Christians we ask a question and pray for the answer. The great music composer Johannes Brahms asked God for creativity, and wrote, “Straightway the ideas flow in upon me, directly from God.” J.R.R. Tolkien, the devout Roman Catholic

writer of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, sometimes prayed for a new story and said God gave it to him.

- Creative people start working. When you cannot get started, start anyway and the inspiration comes. And keep going if the ideas flow. Go back and edit later for grammar and logic.
- Creative people recognize their dependence on God. If we have creative ideas, it is all gift. People who are proud often lose the gift. Albert Einstein stated, “I know quite certainly that I myself have no special talent. Curiosity, obsession, and dogged endurance, combined with self-criticism, have brought me to my ideas.” Composer Antonin Dvorak said, “Do not wonder that I am so religious. An artist who is not could not produce anything like this.” In receiving and using creativity, we act in the delighted energy of a gift from God.

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