

Learning to write with all five senses

WRITER'S CORNER

By Darien Gee

Quote of the Week: "The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug." Mark Twain

Prompt of the Week: Write a story that begins with something breaking, shattering, or exploding.

I recently visited a ceramic

studio in China where a class of hearing-impaired students were learning to coil clay. The ceramic artist who was leading the demonstration said he'd never seen beginners roll the clay so perfectly—it was as if they'd been doing it for years.

"Better than most folks with all five senses intact," he told me.

Good writing employs all the senses. The reader must be able to hear, feel, smell, even taste the writing. If not, the writing won't work—it won't transport the reader. This rule applies to all kinds of writing, fiction

or nonfiction. Book reports, magazine copy, novels, screenplays, speeches. In other words, everything.

The fastest way to develop good sensory detail in your writing is to do exercises that focus on each sense. For example, one day sit on the beach and write about the texture of sand. Think about describing sand to someone who's never seen or felt sand before. Observe people on the beach and notice how the sand shifts and moves under their feet. What happens to the sand when a wave comes in? When a child pushes it together to make a

sand castle? And so on.

The next day write about eating poi. Even if you end up with descriptive detail you might never use when writing a story about poi, this extra work will help you find the right words sooner.

On another day stand in line at KTA or Foodland and close your eyes. What do you hear? What do the voices sound like? What can you tell about the person or persons by their words, their tone of voice? What other sounds do you hear? Listen carefully. The squeaky wheels of the grocery cart, the beep of the register, the pages of

a magazine being turned? The crispness of a paper bag being opened?

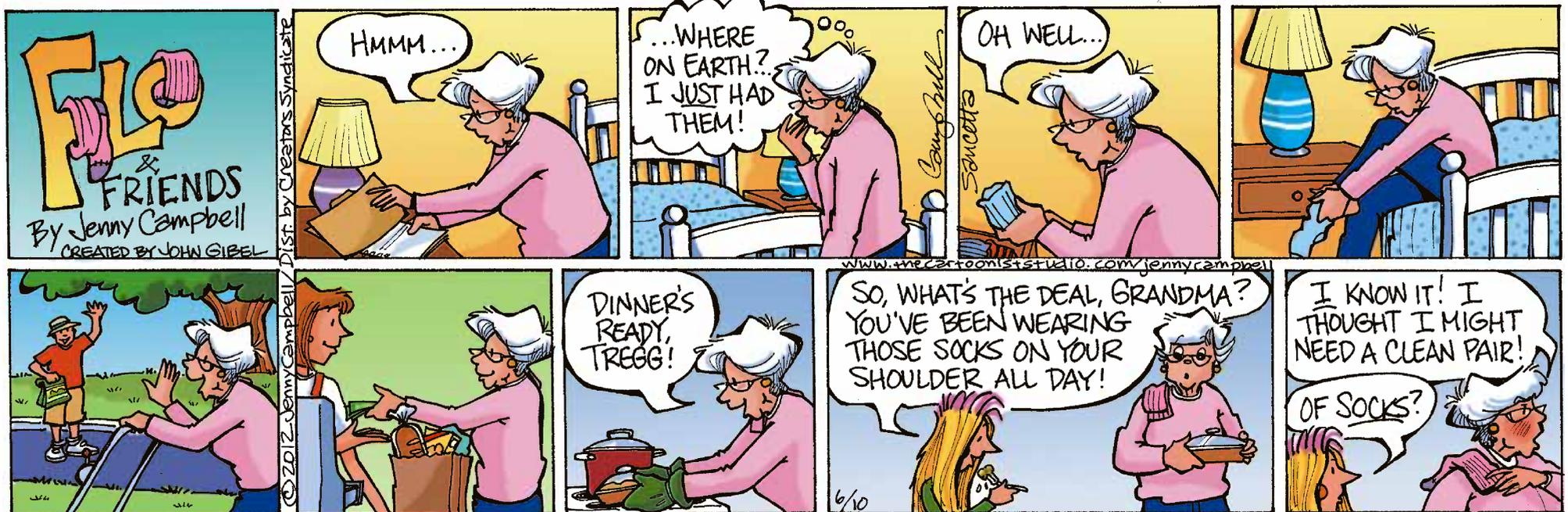
These exercises will strengthen your writing muscle. This may all seem a bit tedious and boring, but it's only an exercise, a bit like doing push-ups or chin-ups. You're not running the marathon yet, just training for it.

Like most things, good writing doesn't happen without a bit of effort. You don't need to commit huge amounts of time to this, just work it in every now and then to make sure you are giving yourself and your

writing every best effort to improve. This week, spend a little time with sensory writing.

And an invitation for those of you just joining us: take the 2012 Summer Writing Challenge by writing a page a day or ten minutes a day until August 2. For more information, look at the June 7 North Hawaii News issue online under "eEditions."

Until next time, write well!
Darien Gee aka Mia King is a national bestselling author based in Waimea. For more information, visit dariengee.com or miaking.com.



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