

# Ask a Writer

with

PIERS  
TORDAY

For  
Key Stages  
2 & 3

Ages  
9-12



MINISTRY  
OF STORIES

## HOW IT WORKS

This writing pack is brought to you by Ministry of Stories as part of **National Writing Day 2019**.

The pack is for teachers and facilitators, to help you support young people discover a new piece of writing, learn about the writer's process, and write their own adventure story.

Watch the accompanying video interview and reading from author Piers Torday to learn about his work and writing process: [Ask a Writer with Piers Torday](https://youtu.be/ff02Ykebayw) (youtu.be/ff02Ykebayw).

## OBJECTIVES

- To discover and learn about a contemporary writer
- To learn about how you could apply tips from a professional writer
- To play with narrative and experiment with a new writing exercise

## STEP ONE

Watch [Ask a Writer with Piers Torday](https://youtu.be/ff02Ykebayw) and discuss the following questions as a class:

- 1 What is one thing the writer mentioned that you found interesting or surprising and why?
- 2 What did you find helpful and why?
- 2 How is writing a 'passport' and where can it take you?

## STEP TWO

As a class, read the extract from *The Last Wild* by Piers Torday (overleaf), and discuss the following questions:

- 1 What is the extract about?
- 2 How does the writer build tension and keep you reading?
- 3 What phrases or lines do you find exciting and why?

## STEP THREE

Take a line from the extract that you like and use it to freewrite your own adventure about escaping from somewhere.

You could be fleeing a prison or a dangerous situation, or even an awkward social situation.

Use the line as a your first line or weave it into the story elsewhere.

## ‘ESCAPE FROM SPECTRUM HALL’

– *The Last Wild* –

I land with a massive splash in a puddle. There’s a disco display of torch beams going on over my head, but the wardens can’t get down.

‘Come on!’ says one of them, and then I hear their boots running overhead as their lights move away. I’m in total darkness, with hundreds of cockroaches clicking and scratching around me. I start crawling after them.

I say crawling, but actually it’s more like swimming, the water is so deep. I didn’t even know cockroaches could swim, and here they are paddling alongside me. They don’t speak, not even to one another, or stop to rest, just keep on pushing forward. The wardens’ thumping feet have totally faded away now and all I can hear is my own breath echoing off the wet walls and the occasional scratch from a roach.

This tunnel isn’t a smooth pipe. It’s jagged and uneven, and I keep cutting my hands on the rocks. It might be my imagination, but the further we go, the deeper the water seems to be getting.

As the water rises, I can feel the floor of rocks fall away from my feet and I start to bump and scratch my head as the roof of the tunnel gets closer and closer. I’m working hard just to stay afloat.

Slowly and steadily, more and more water, tasting of soil, starts to splash into my mouth as my arms grow tired.

‘Slow down!’ I call out into the blackness. ‘I can’t keep up.’

There’s no reply, just quiet splashing. Then, very faintly, some distance up ahead, I hear a deep voice, like the beat of a drum.

‘We must keep going. There is no time to lose.’

But the ceiling of the tunnel has dropped down right in front of me. Tracing the outline of rock through the water with my hands, I try to search for the narrow layer of air between it and the water that they expect me to swim through. Except there isn’t one. The tunnel from here is completely underwater.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### Get Writing with Ministry of Stories

[ministryofstories.org/get-writing/](http://ministryofstories.org/get-writing/)

### 826 Digital

[826digital.com](http://826digital.com)

## SPECIAL THANKS

Alistair Hall at We Made This — Graphic Design

## ABOUT US

**Ministry of Stories** champions the writer in every child. We were founded by Lucy Macnab, Ben Payne and best-selling author Nick Hornby, who wanted to create a space for young people in East London to become authors.

Through innovative writing clubs, small-group mentoring and fun writing resources, we help young people discover and realise their own creative potential.

Ministry of Stories centre was inspired by San Francisco's 826 Valencia and resides behind its own fantastical shop, Hoxton Street Monster Supplies, which has been selling goods such as *Cubed Earwax* and *Thickest Human Snot* to London monsters since 1818. All proceeds from the shop go back into the Ministry.



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