

Episode Title: Shocking Results

Synopsis

In this episode, our podcasters take a wild, unpredictable journey through creativity, with brief stops at electric shock therapy, runaway horses in London, WW1 poetry, The word “Cenotaph”, and a poignant discussion of the Royal Artillery Memorial in London – and especially the *Artilleryman Recumbent* (the controversial representation of a dead soldier). These tangents, seemingly unrelated, illustrate a larger point: creativity often thrives in chaos and unpredictability. Most particularly the episode explores how creative risks, even in the darkest of subjects, can inspire the most compelling outcomes.

A link to the images of the Royal Artillery Memorial and the *Artilleryman Recumbent* is here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Artillery_Memorial

Warning: this podcast does talk extensively about war, death, and memorializing the war dead.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to spark conversation and reflection in the classroom:

- What was the most surprising or unexpected topic discussed in the podcast episode?
- How do you think creativity can emerge from chaotic or unexpected situations? Can you think of a time in your own life when something unpredictable led to a creative idea?
- The episode mentions embracing bold, sometimes controversial, creative choices. How can writers take risks in their own stories while still maintaining a compelling narrative?
- The podcast moves from one tangent to another, often without warning. What do you think this says about the nature of creativity? Can writers take advantage of seemingly unrelated ideas to create something unique?
- How do you think a chaotic event (like the runaway horses) could inspire a character or plot in a story? What’s the potential for using such unpredictability in writing?

Writer’s Prompts

Creative exercises to help students apply the themes of the topic:

- **Prompt 1:** Write anything you want on the podcast theme, the *Artilleryman Recumbent*.
- **Prompt 2:** Write on the thoughts of any of the *other* statues on the memorial.
- **Prompt 3:** Write about what people felt when it was unveiled, or when people saw it for the first time.

More general creative exercises:

- **Prompt 4:** Write a scene in which a character’s creativity is sparked by an unexpected or chaotic event. How does the event push them to think outside of their usual boundaries?

- **Prompt 5:** Imagine a character who, much like the spooked horses in London, is trying to break free from societal constraints. Write a scene where this character is faced with an obstacle that forces them to act unpredictably.
- **Prompt 6:** Using the concept of "bold creative risks," write a short story where the protagonist must make a difficult, controversial decision in order to achieve something great (or disastrous).
- **Prompt 7:** Write about a character who's stuck in a creative rut. They're feeling uninspired until they take a literal or figurative detour—what happens next? How does the detour inspire new ideas?

Class Activities

Ideas for group or individual activities to build on the themes of the episode:

- **Group Discussion:** Split the class into groups and assign each group one of the unexpected elements from the episode (electric shock therapy, runaway horses, war memorials). Have each group brainstorm how these elements could inspire a character, plot, or scene. Each group presents their ideas to the class.
- **Creative Chaos Exercise:** Give students a list of random, seemingly unrelated topics (e.g., abandoned theme park, malfunctioning vending machine, etc.). Ask them to choose one and write a short story that creatively connects these elements in an unexpected way. The focus is on making bold, chaotic connections that lead to an interesting plot.
- **Debate:** Have a class debate about the value of taking creative risks in writing. Should writers always push boundaries, or is there a danger in choosing shock value over substance? Encourage students to think about how to balance bold choices with meaningful storytelling.
- **Collaborative Story Building:** In small groups, have students begin writing a short story, but with a twist—every few minutes, they must add an unexpected element, such as a character suddenly making an unpredictable decision, or an outside event (like the horses) disrupting the plot. The story must evolve naturally with these chaotic inputs.

Closing note from the podcasters, Tim & LeeAnna

Creativity isn't a neat, tidy process—it's messy, chaotic, and unpredictable, like the world itself. Embrace the unexpected, take risks, and don't be afraid to let your imagination run wild. Just like the tangents in this podcast, creativity thrives on surprise. Writers should feel free to experiment with bold, unconventional choices that challenge the norms and surprise their readers. Let the chaos inspire you, and who knows—your next big idea might just come from the most unexpected of places. Have fun – we know we did!