

# I Remember / I Don't Remember

## MEMORY IS IMAGINATION

Memory is an aspect of imagination. For writing, memory is one of your most important tools. But you don't need an excellent memory to use it well. A single phrase, an image, a fragment of a story, one object from the past is enough to spark the creative, intuitive mind. Especially rich are incidents and images stored away that you aren't sure ever actually occurred; dreams or stories someone has spoken of so many times that they're engraved as past realities. No matter what their source may be, memories are doorways to new pieces of writing.

Memory is like a muscle. The more you use it, the stronger it becomes. One memory sparks another. Each time you write from memory, another fragment filed in that ninety percent of the human brain that science doesn't understand slips into consciousness and a creative shift takes place.

***Begin with the phrase "I remember" and start writing. It doesn't matter whether you stick with one memory or list several. You can retrieve memories from as far back as childhood to as recently as yesterday. If you get stuck just keep repeating the phrase "I remember," in writing, until something else forms in your consciousness. Don't even be concerned with the authenticity of the memory. Just record whatever comes to you. Don't stop until ... your teacher says, "You may wrap up your last thought" or you have written for a full three minutes.***

**"Memory is a net."**

~ Oliver Wendell Homes, Sr.

## I DON'T REMEMBER

Just as exercising a muscle involves resistance, it strengthens the imaginative mind to approach it from an angle it resists. What you don't remember is also material for your imagination to build on. Non-memories may involve parts of the past you have difficulty recalling. They may include what has been absent from your life: *I don't remember having my own bedroom*. They might even be humorous or sarcastic: *I don't remember ordering a blizzard for the day I was supposed to fly to the Bahamas*.

***This time, begin with the phrase, "I don't remember," and write for three minutes. If you draw a blank at any point, repeat the phrase "I don't remember," in writing, until something else forms in your consciousness. Notice if one of these non-memories suggests a section of a piece, an experience for one of your characters, or perhaps a topic to write about.***

**"Not knowing when the dawn will come I open every door."**

~ Emily Dickinson