

# **The Word Thief**

**An Exercise for my English Creative Writing Portfolio**

**By Robert M.J. Morris**

Once upon a time there was a poor young writer who was stuck for an opening. Try as he might he simply could not find the right words with which to start. Balls of crumpled paper littered the floor around his desk, and the top of his pen was a mangled lump of plastic, pitted with teeth marks.

Finally the writer had an idea. "I know," he said, to no-one in particular, "If I can't write something original then I shall borrow my opening from somewhere else, until my poor brain can create something suitable." Satisfying himself that this was to be a short term answer to his problem – for writers are a foolish breed – he went to his biggest shelf of books and took down the slimmest volume there was. It was a slim book, but it was well worn and much loved, for the writer knew there was no gain in taking words that no-one wanted to read. As he turned to the first page the writer smiled happily, for there – presented before him in tiny black print on a white white page – were a perfect set of words. In fact, they were exactly what he needed.

Sitting back down at his desk the poor writer took a new pen and a blank sheet of paper and began to copy the first few words from the slim book. He knew in his heart that this was cheating but he simply told himself that when the book was finished he would return to these words and replace them with words of his own. But once he had started to write he found that more words quickly followed. This time they were truly his own, but writers are a foolish breed and as the flow of words kept coming he quickly forgot that the first of them had been stolen from somewhere else.

It was not until the book was finally on sale and the writer's work was seen by all that he remembered. But by then it was too late. All the world could see, in tiny black print on a white white page, that the writer was not a proper writer at all, but a man without the skill to write his own opening.

But how, you ask, did the story begin? How else could it begin?

"Once upon a time..."