Section 4

Creativity in the Disciplines

Abstract

This chapter examines the ways in which creative writing can be taught and the uses it can be put to in different educational and learning contexts. In particular, it explores research-informed, deeply theorized pedagogical strategies that enable learners to benefit from creative writing. It argues that creative writing needs to be nurtured by adopting "flow" activities. With creative writing, this involves teaching people to freewrite and understand why and how freewriting works as a foundation. The chapter explores the cultural history of this area, as well as draws from the author's own significant teaching experience in schools and universities. The chapter shows how freewriting and other flow activities centered around writing can be utilized in many different learning contexts, and the case is made that creative writing should be used in many different fields, including science, psychotherapy, formal research, and the arts and humanities.

Keywords

creative writing pedagogies, flow, freewriting, diagrarting, drawing, decolonization

Chapter 25

Using Creative Writing to Fuel Creativity

Francis Gilbert

Introduction

Before considering how creative writing can be taught in a variety of different contexts, it is important to think about why it is taught. The "how" flows from the "why."

If you view creative writing as a somewhat frivolous "add-on" to the curriculum, you will teach it briefly and probably offer lots of recipes and strategies for the relevant

assessments. However, if you perceive creative writing as a vital activity that all human beings should engage in, you will make it part and parcel of your whole pedagogical approach, encouraging your pupils to carry notebooks and to write freely in your classroom.

Throughout the world, in many higher education institutions, creative writing is taught at degree level, both to undergraduates and postgraduates. In schools, creative writing has a less secure position. Story writing remains a staple topic to teach to young children, but it is less common in secondary curriculums. In the United Kingdom, all pupils aged 15 and 16 years must take a General Certificate of Secondary Education in English, which requires them, at the time of writing, to pen a creative piece in a high-stakes examination. Other jurisdictions have variants on this among older pupils: Sometimes they are asked to write creatively in an exam or for coursework.

But why? This is a good question because the answer is never spelt out. In the United Kingdom, the National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2014) states that

> pupils should be taught to: write accurately, fluently, effectively and at length for pleasure and information through: adapting their writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences: to describe, narrate, explain, instruct, give and respond to information, and argue. (p. 3)

The purpose here, as is the case in many other countries, is largely instrumental: Teaching creative writing is a small component of a wider desire for pupils to "write accurately." What is important is that pupils should be prepared for an imaginary adult life, to be "job-ready" and fit for a fantasy workplace, which, in the minds of policymakers, by and large, does not require creative writing. I use the adjectives "imaginary" and "fantasy" very specifically here because it is impossible to predict what sorts of jobs and careers the pupils of today might pursue in a decade's time, such is the pace of change in society. Significantly, note that this act of imagining the workforce is, in itself, a form of creative storytelling.

The reality is that although there might be policy to direct teachers to make their pupils ready for an imaginary workforce, it is usually high-stakes examinations and prescribed coursework that determine how creative writing is taught in schools and universities. Research shows time and again that learners write for their examiners, with the most high-achieving students learning precisely how creative writing is assessed and adapting their writing accordingly (Gilbert, 2016: Myhill et al., 2023). The drive to attain a suitable mark supersedes all other thoughts in many students' minds, and this, in turn, affects much teaching of creative writing, which can involve a great deal of discussion of mark schemes and reading of pieces that have attained high marks (Cremin & Oliver 2017). In learning environments in which students' creative writing is quantified in the form of a mark, the deeper purposes of creative writing are often lost: The race to get a good mark is all (Davies, 2018). This is why when considering the pedagogy of creative writing, it is important for teachers to reflect upon their methods of assessment; I discuss some more innovative approaches in this chapter because this profoundly affects pedagogy.

In most assessment of creative writing, the form is treated as a unique and special genre which assumes that the writing is "creative." But, of course, this is a highly problematic idea. Is writing stories, poetry, and autobiography the only form of writing which is creative? David McVey (2008) argues,

> The recent growth of CW [creative writing] as a discipline suggests that other forms of academic writing are not creative or are less creative. It is the contention of this paper that all student writing is important and that any kind of writing is a creative act. (p. 293)

McVey highlights the fact that all writing is a form of creation, a way of telling some kind of story whether that story takes the form of an argument, analysis, and so on or, more obviously, a classically shaped story.

The key factor is the creation of marks on the page, the representation of words in the form of writing or what Wenger (1999) terms “reification” that takes place for a community of readers to interpret. All writing has a purpose in that it is addressed to readership, even if that readership is the solitary writer. Our language is a shared, social language, our words have agreed meanings among small groups, local areas, nations, and the world (Harris, 1988).

When writers think carefully about their purposes and readers, then invariably their writing becomes sharper edged and more communicative and meaningful (Jones et al., 2013).

In my article “Why Teach Creative Writing” (Gilbert, 2021, p. 148), I outline how different creative writing teachers aim to

- facilitate their students’ personal growth and healing;
- encourage the exploration of unknown topics;
- help their students sell their writing;
- connect them with significant texts and well-established creative writing processes and practices;
- foster critique about the world through their writing; and
- cultivate profound learning.

Why is considering the “why” of teaching creative writing so significant? It’s my argument that everything flows from a teacher properly understanding their purposes (Cremin & Oliver, 2017; Jones et al., 2013). If they know that they are teaching to heal, explore, sell, engage with literary heritages, analyze, or encourage activism in the world, then they will produce lessons with goals or learning objectives that are profoundly shaped by these purposes. But, of course, there are many more purposes to teaching creative writing than the ones I have listed.

For a creative writing teacher to be successful, I believe they need to understand just how central the fundamental tenets of much creative writing—storytelling and poetry—have been in human culture, and then armed with that knowledge start to shape their pedagogical purposes. For this reason, I outline a brief history of the teaching of creative writing—something rarely considered—and then explore various techniques that provide the fundamental staples for much creative writing teaching. These staples, however, can only be properly taught if this history is deeply absorbed and understood. In this chapter , I argue that creative writing can be used in all sorts of educational contexts—not just when teaching poetry, life writing, script writing, and fiction. Creative writing can greatly aid scientists, mathematicians, economists, historians, geographers, sociologists, and so on (Bolton, 2011) if teachers and learners of these subjects understand what they are using creative writing for. This reasoning will become clear as my argument unfolds.

Methodological Underpinnings: Decolonizing Creative Writing

It is important for teachers of creative writing to remember that for hundreds of thousands of years of human history, nothing was written down, and that stories were told orally. As Bernardo Evaristo (2020) notes, the entire realm of creative writing is founded upon an African storytelling canon, which is necessarily invisible because it was never written down. She writes, “Yes, this is how storytelling began. In Africa, along with the human race. Imagine early African woman learning how to tell her children stories at bedtime in order to send them to sleep.”

Evaristo (2020) imparts a vital lesson here: We need to be careful about considering where our creative writing is coming from. As Hampton and DeMartini (2017) note, European countries since the Renaissance have had a “tradition of creating and telling stories about other peoples’ histories, societies, and cultural practices” (p. 250). They argue that this tradition is part of “imperialism” and that the process of Western Europeans imposing their

stories as “universal truths” has been a vital part of their colonizing of countries. In this context, the West’s mobilization of the subjects of science, geography, and history as inalienable truths can be seen as a form of oppression. Although these subjects might rely on facts, the facts themselves are culturally situated and are, seen in this light, fictional to the extent they are part of the story the West tells its subjects. As Hampton and DeMartini write, “Rather than ‘truth,’ Western European stories—like all stories—represent historically and culturally specific ideas, desires, and socio-political and economic interests” (p. 250).

In *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet*, the academic Raj Patel and the journalist Jason Moore (2018) explore why the planet has now entered the age of what they call the Capitalocene. This is a deliberately provocative neologism and in sharp contrast to the Anthropocene; their argument is that it is largely the forces of rampant capitalism that have driven the earth to the brink of environmental collapse and social breakdown. The label Anthropocene for them is inadequate because it suggests that there is something inherent in human nature that has led to our current situation; they reject such essentialism and argue that a collision of capitalistic ideologies, human beings, and the planet has caused our current situation. They take a “world ecology” view of history, and this is the approach taken here; we cannot divorce humans from nature in the way that much humanist thinking does. We need to think of ourselves as inextricably interconnected with the earth to understand what has happened to us. Similarly, the viewpoint adopted here is that creative writing cannot be divorced from the environmental, social, and historical factors that caused it, and that is why this brief account of how it might be decolonized is contextualized with this methodology.

Patel and Moore (2018) draw upon a rich research base to point out that colonization only happened in the modern sense of the word once certain cultural stories arose in the West about human’s relationship to nature. It was not until the Renaissance that white men in

considerable positions of power—philosophers, writers, tradesmen, aristocracy, artists, and cartographers—began to view nature as separate from "man." The French philosopher Descartes argued that the mind was separate from the body. This changed the ways in which these men viewed the world, changed their "gaze"; from this time onwards, nature, the bodies of the marginalized, the powerless became ripe for colonization. Moore and Patel write,

> That gaze always belonged to the Enlightened European colonist—and the empires that backed him. Descartes's cogito funneled vision and thought into a spectator's view of the world, one that rendered the emerging surfaces of modernity visible and measurable and the viewer bodiless and placeless. Medieval multiple vantage points in art and literature were displaced by a single, disembodied, omniscient, and panoptic eye.(38)

In other words, colonization was not and is not just the process of forcibly taking over people's lands, of using their labor and environment for the pursuit of the colonizers' own profit and power, but it is also a way of seeing the world. This is the connection I'd like to make to creative writing. The white, Western colonizers had a narrative internalized in their heads and deeply embedded within their cultures which meant that foreign lands, other peoples, and their bodies were ripe for exploitation.

Perhaps most notably, it is Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719/1994) that contains one of the earliest examples in the so-called Western literary canon of this mindset. The eponymous protagonist is shipwrecked on a desert island, where he meets an Indigenous settler, Man Friday, and attempts to teach him to be "civilized." As Rehman (2013) notes, "In Crusoe's lessons to Friday we find signs of the linguistic colonization of the indigenous by the settler. These lessons can be viewed as one of the earliest representations of English linguistic imperialism" (p. 132). Here is one of the most famous and earliest cases of creative writing being colonized, namely perpetuating the narrative that Indigenous peoples and cultures

needed their oppressors. Colonization was facilitated by the idea that white male Western culture, so-called "enlightened thinking," was superior in every way to alternative ways of thinking and being. The enlightened mind was, to coin the philosopher Gilbert Ryle's (1949) phrase, "the ghost in the machine"; it was and is abstracted male whiteness, divorced from its embodied state, haunting other cultures and ecologies with its poltergeist knowledge, spectral rationality, and phantom civilization.

Contextualizing the Pedagogy of the Creative Writing Workshop

This colonial legacy of the separation of mind and body is still very much prevalent in our educational institutions today, founded as they were in the colonial period. Creative writing is no exception to most other subjects in its emphasis on disembodied "brain work," its written assessment rubrics, and its normative pedagogies (Myhill et al., 2023; Oliver, 2017). The creative writing workshop, which was developed at Iowa University during the 1930s, has provided the pedagogical structure for much teaching of creative writing, particularly at university. In brief, this model involves students' work being read by the other students and the tutor in the class, and everyone except the writer commenting on the work, pointing out the positives and negatives in a piece of work. Although there is not a "set" creative writing curriculum, over time, certain writing approaches have emerged as normative: There tends to be a focus on writers writing about their own personal experiences, an emphasis on "show, don't tell," and a tendency for certain writing styles (e.g., the short stories of Ernest Hemingway and Raymond Carver) being preferred over others (Kearns, 2009). But as Eric Bennett (2012) notes, the Iowa workshop's focus on the importance of personal writing and implicit marginalization of more political writing and its obsession with writer's craft at the expense of examining wider social issues are highly problematic. Bennett argues the Iowa model was influenced, if not funded, by the Central Intelligence Agency, with a few of its graduates becoming operatives (p. 78).

Using the Iowa workshop model means that creative writing teachers do not have to think very much about pedagogy. The format itself is effective: It is dialogic and interactive, and it is very focused on developing craft, voice, structure, and style. A creative writing teacher can bring their own unique knowledge to it.

However, it has two problems. First, the power structures of our education system mean that the creative writing teacher's views tend to dominate—particularly when work is formally assessed. This means that students can simply learn to "ape" the preferred style of their tutor. Second, if the "gag rule" is imposed, whereby the author whose work is being discussed is not allowed to speak, the experience can be demotivating and bewildering (Kearns, 2009, p. 792).

Critical Literacy

How might a creative writing teacher surmount the problems of both imposing strangulating norms and demotivating students?

Like many educationalists working in this field, many theorists and researchers (Freire, 2014; hooks, 2014) argue that we need to develop learners' "critical literacy" in order to teach creative writing. This involves creative writing students learning about their place in the world by drawing upon their own personal experience, their own "funds of knowledge" (González et al., 2005), but crucially rather than only understanding themselves as isolated individuals, starting to see themselves as part of a wider society. In the master's creative writing and education course I lead at Goldsmiths, this means students learn about ethnography, where researchers embed themselves in communities and become part of the world they are researching. In my course, students are invited to write autoethnographies, in which the writer seeks to understand the worlds from which they emerged, situating themself in their social, ethnic, psychological, and political contexts (Gilbert & Macleroy, 2021; Muncey, 2010). For the creative writing teacher, this entails developing a curriculum that

embraces not only the reading of literature but also that of ethnographic and autoethnographic research, and requiring learners to discuss their own "positionality," exploring how their social class, their race, their age, and so on have shaped who they are, what they read, and what they write. This dialogic discussion is vital to the pedagogy, and it fosters a critical literacy whereby students understand their colonized histories, their intergenerational traumas, and the ways in which the societies they have been born into have shaped and "created" them. For theorists such as Cropley (2015) and Craft (2008), what brings out the creative element in pedagogy are these factors: Students are encouraged to learn independently but also to cooperate, integrating what they learn about themselves with other students' narratives and the teacher's knowledge.

Pedagogical Considerations

Encouraging Flow; Freewriting

The concept of critical literacy embraces the radical idea that students should be free to express what they want to express and then to be given time to reflect upon what they have learned about themselves and the world in the process. In effect, a critically literate creative writing educator views creative writing as a form of research (Gilbert & Macleroy, 2021) and structures their pedagogy so that their learners can find out what they know already and what they need to know through writing activities such as freewriting (Gilbert, 2017). Effective creative writing teachers are always searching for activities that nurture "flow" activities. These states are achieved when humans undertake "painful, risky, difficult activities that stretch the person's capacity and involve an element of novelty and discovery" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 110). One of the best ways to do this is by encouraging regular freewriting: giving permission to writers to write whatever they want or think to write, with the constraints that they must write for a certain period of time, usually approximately 10–15 minutes (Elbow, 1998: Hanauer, 2022). Freewriting is an excellent way to overcome writer's

block because it encourages what Boice (1993) terms “automaticity”—basically another word for flow. This form of writing emerged as a practice in the late 19th century when spiritual mediums contacted the dead through the Ouija board, with a medium seemingly writing automatically because they were in contact with the dead (Boice, 1993, p. 30). Later on, the pioneering psychologist William James, the brother of novelist Henry James, used automatic writing in his research on mentally ill patients (James, 1889, 548–563), and the psychotherapist Carl Gustav Jung deployed it in his treatment of his patients. As Elbow (1998) notes, regularly freewriting helps writers free themselves from their internal critics, as well as get rid of the “garbage” in their heads, which writers then begin to view as a source of inspiration. For Elbow, freewriting forms the basis for “growing”—which involves letting one’s writing evolve naturally—and “cooking”—which involves using recipes, putting different ingredients together. Gillie Bolton (2011) perceives freewriting as a vital tool for learning and research, as well as a creative tool. Crucially for most of these theorists in different fields—James, Jung, Elbow, and Bolton—freewriting enables the writer to access new ways of thinking, imagining, and writing—a vital component of creativity. However, as Bolton points out most forcefully, it is only through the process of reflection on this freewriting that significant learning happens. Bolton has written and researched on this area for decades, advising professionals in many fields—teaching, medicine, and social work—to use freewriting as a vital reflective tool that facilitates growth. Her articles and books advocate what she calls “through the mirror writing”; like Alice in *Alice in Through the Looking Glass* (Carroll, 1871), the writer should “step” into their mirror world by reading their freewriting, taking some aspect of their freewriting—a person or an object usually—and writing from a different perspective using that object/person (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). So, for example, if their freewriting was about someone they hated, they would write from the hated person’s perspective, or if it was about walking in a park, they might write from the

park's point of view. Then they would reflect again upon both pieces of writing and have a go at writing a public-facing piece of writing. Vitally no freewriting needs to be shared. The writer has the freedom of their privacy until they are very specifically invited to write for a public audience. In my experience, having led many workshops using "through the mirror writing," the results are always exciting and creative. Writers are emancipated by the freewriting, they step outside of themselves with the reflexive exercise of writing from a different perspective, and they have the time and space to write publicly. This work is then discussed in empathetic, compassionate fashion. For Bolton, the psychotherapist Carl Rogers' concept of "unconditional positive regard" (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018; Rogers, 2004) is vital to the workshop environment: All participants are invited to read their own and other people's work in a positive but critical light.

I developed Bolton's ideas when I coined the term *diagrarting*, which is the mixture of using diagrams, art, and dialogue when writing/drawing creatively (Gilbert, 2022). I wanted to include the act of drawing in the writing process, not to improve people's drawing but, rather, to improve their writing and creatively thinking and work in a kind, accepting, positive way. Figure 25.1 is a diagrart of what diagrarting is; it uses the principles of freewriting—permission to expression—in order to unlock creativity. Significantly, however, a diagrart is a public-facing piece of writing in that a diagrarter should be willing to talk through what their diagrart means to them. Obviously, teachers can give permission for them to be private, which may be an appropriate pedagogical decision in some cases, if very sensitive topics are being diagrarted.

Insert Figure 25.1 here

Diagrarting and Bolton's "through the mirror writing" involve iterative processes of writing/drawing, reflection, discussion, and redrafting for a particular purpose. Whether that

is publication, self-improvement, or formal or informal learning is for the teacher/learner to decide.

In essence, most learning in the field of creative writing works as follows: A writer writes, reflects upon their writing, and then seeks to improve it. The individual writer can reflect themself upon what they have written, but often they find it difficult to fully appreciate what they are communicating and what they are not, and so sharing writing with communities of empathetic readers is vital. How this is done is the critical point. As we have seen, the Iowa workshop model can lead to demotivated students. A critical literate approach to creative practice, as advocated by researchers such as Bolton, often means that there is equality between the writer and their readers, an atmosphere of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 2004), and a shared sense of purpose. For Elbow, this means that the best creative writing classes are "teacherless." He writes,

> To improve your writing you don't need advice about what changes to make; you don't need theories of what is good and bad writing. You need movies of people's minds while they read your words. But you need this for a sustained period of time—at least two or three months. And you need to get the experience of not just a couple of people but of at least six or seven. And you need to keep getting it from the same people so that they get better at transmitting their experience and you get better at hearing them. And you must write something every week. (p. 110)

Assessment and Creative Writing

As has been discussed, teachers need to think very carefully about how they might assess creative writing when shaping their lessons. Assessing creative writing is a very tricky and complex issue (Donnelly, 2015). The question must be asked: Can creative writing ever be assessed correctly? People's creative writing is very personal, and readers are similarly

idiosyncratic, with one reader loving what another might hate. When we start to consider how to assess creative writing in a formal way, things become even thornier. Can creative writing ever be graded? Whose judgments should be trusted? Who's not?

The issues can be unpicked to a certain extent by trying to answer the following key questions:

- Why assess the work? The purposes of the assessment need to be interrogated.
- Who is assessing the work? Issues connected with readership, judgment, and authority must be explored.
- How might you assess the work? The processes of assessment have to be thought about.
- What is being assessed? The content/knowledge/skills and so on must be considered.

Why Assess Creative Writing?

This is possibly one of the most vital questions to ask first when setting up assessments for a creative writing course: Why is the writing being assessed? The Independent Teacher Workload Review Group (2016) notes that assessment and marking generally should be

- meaningful;
- manageable; and
- motivating (pp. 8–11).

This is brilliant advice to keep in mind with all marking/assessing. The assessment must have a clear purpose (be meaningful), it needs to be manageable in that teachers should be able to do it without unnecessary extra workload, and it needs to motivate the students to do better.

As I have noted (Gilbert 2021), creative writing is taught for many reasons, including to

- heal (creative writing as a form of therapy);

- explore (creative writing as a way of exploring different worlds and subjects);
- sell (teaching students to "vend" their work);
- impart literary craft (teaching to impart a literary heritage);
- make people more socially aware (creative writing as activism); and
- learn (creative writing used a tool to assist learning).

Creative writing teachers may have very different reasons for assessing their students' creative writing. The healer–teacher will possibly look at the ways in which their students' work has helped them deal with their problems. The explorer–teacher will assess to determine the extent to which the writing explores different worlds and subjects in an imaginative way. The vendor–teacher will assess work on its marketability. The author–teacher will assess the literary quality of the work according to the literary tradition they value. The activist–teacher will assess according to the impact a piece of writing might have upon its readership. The learner–teacher will assess the writing according to the extent it reveals a student's learning on any given topic.

Who Assesses Creative Writing?

This is a vital question. There are three audiences involved when assessing work:

- The teacher
- The self
- Peers

The creative writing workshop is typically set up to ensure that creative writing pieces are assessed in peer-led environments, although as Kearns (2009) notes, this is fraught with difficulties, particularly when certain models are followed. For example, Kearns argues that orthodoxies such as not allowing the author being assessed to speak, "fault finding," and stringent application of rules such as "show, don't tell" lead to students feeling demoralized and demotivated at the end of the workshop.

A frequent problem with peer and self-assessment is that students are asked to assess things that they may not be qualified to assess. For example, many students may not have read enough to be able to assess the literary quality of a work according to certain literary traditions. Often, teachers, particularly with younger learners, ask students to assess their own work and that of others by recipes such as "what went well" and "even better if" or other structures such as "Two wishes and a star" or "A medal and a mission." The problem with this is that many students simply are not qualified to comment on "what went well" and may be passing on incorrect information to themselves or other people. The way around this is to shift from taking a performative approach—judging what is "good"—to a learning orientation, as advocated by Watkins (2010): Most students can validly assess what they enjoyed about writing/reading a piece, what they learned from it, and what they would like to learn more about.

Kostelnik (2014) points out the problems with students being overreliant on their tutors for getting feedback on their writing. In such classes, possibly run by an "author–teacher" type, most literary judgment is conferred upon the tutor, with the result that students do not learn a huge amount, except to defer to a "higher authority." Kostelnik tries to work around this by posing questions to the students in her feedback rather than making judgments, thereby making them consider what they think they need to improve.

How Do You Assess Creative Writing?

There are two major ways of assessing creative writing: norm-referencing and Criterion-referencing.

In criterion-referencing, each student is judged against predetermined absolute standards or criteria, without regard to other students; thus, it is possible for a majority to obtain the top grade—for example, "A"—or, conversely, for none to do so. In norm-referencing, a predetermined percentage of students (usually with some margin of flexibility) would obtain

a certain grade; if the entire class is inadequate, there would still be the same number of A's, and, conversely, if the entire class is outstanding, the same number of D's must still be awarded (Lok et al., 2016, p. 450).

Both approaches are fraught with difficulties for creative writing, but once you clarify your purposes for the assessment, things become much easier. Most creative writing assessors take a "criterion"-based approach to assessment. That is, they provide a set of criteria by which they will assess work.

Peter Elbow (1998) is possibly the most creative about assessment of creative writing. He suggests the following strategies (pp. 85–101):

> Pointing: Pointing out favorite bits
>
> Summarizing: Summarizing the plot, the main events
>
> Telling: Telling the writer what happened to you as you read the writing
>
> Showing your reactions: Describing the writing as it was the weather, a form of motion or locomotion, as a piece of clothing, a landscape or terrain, a color or colors, shapes, animals, vegetables, musical instruments, bodies, a magical evolution of another piece of writing, what you think the intention of the writing was, a contrary reaction to something on their mind, written before or after something happened to them; pretend that it was written by someone you have never seen and describe the person; doodle a response; the sounds the writing inspires; move or jabber in response; a 10-minute writing exercise in response to the writing; meditate upon the writing and explain your meditation

This is how creative writing can assist with all subjects in terms of creative assessment. The challenge to teachers is to respond creatively to their pupils' work; these sorts of creative responses could be combined with more traditional grades (or not). The point is that the teacher must use creative writing to respond in a unique and responsive, reciprocal way to

what they are encountering in a pupil's work by making analogies for it (describing the work as weather/clothing, etc.), summing up the main parts of it in a list, exploring their own experience reading it, and so forth.

Conclusion

Creative writing as a term is highly problematic because much creative writing can be uncreative, and much writing that is not labeled as creative is actually very creative. The genre of what we now call creative writing has emerged from the most ancient of human roots: oral storytelling. The colonial legacy has positioned much creative writing in the past two centuries in particular in a hierarchical fashion, with the predominantly white, male literary canon, created by white males in academia. We are now at a point of rapid change. The earth crisis, the marketization of much of the world, and the fragmentation of social groups and family structures have led to people from all walks of life reaching to writing, journaling, and autobiographical writing as a form of therapy—as a mode of reflection to help us understand what has happened to us. Writers who use freewriting and strategies such as diagrarting (Gilbert, 2022) can find fruitful, joyful avenues of creativity, which can then lead to more polished pieces of work. However, writers can, when working in restricted educational settings that involve high-stakes assessments, find writing to be a form of imprisonment, trying to please their imagined assessors. But creative writing can be used as a form of assessing in itself, and this can be mobilized by many different teachers as a way of motivating their pupils/students.

Crucially, creative writing should not be consigned as a strategy to be taught only within creative writing classes: Most teachers can use the staples of genuinely creative writing (freewriting, diagrarting, and reflective writing) in many other learning contexts.

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