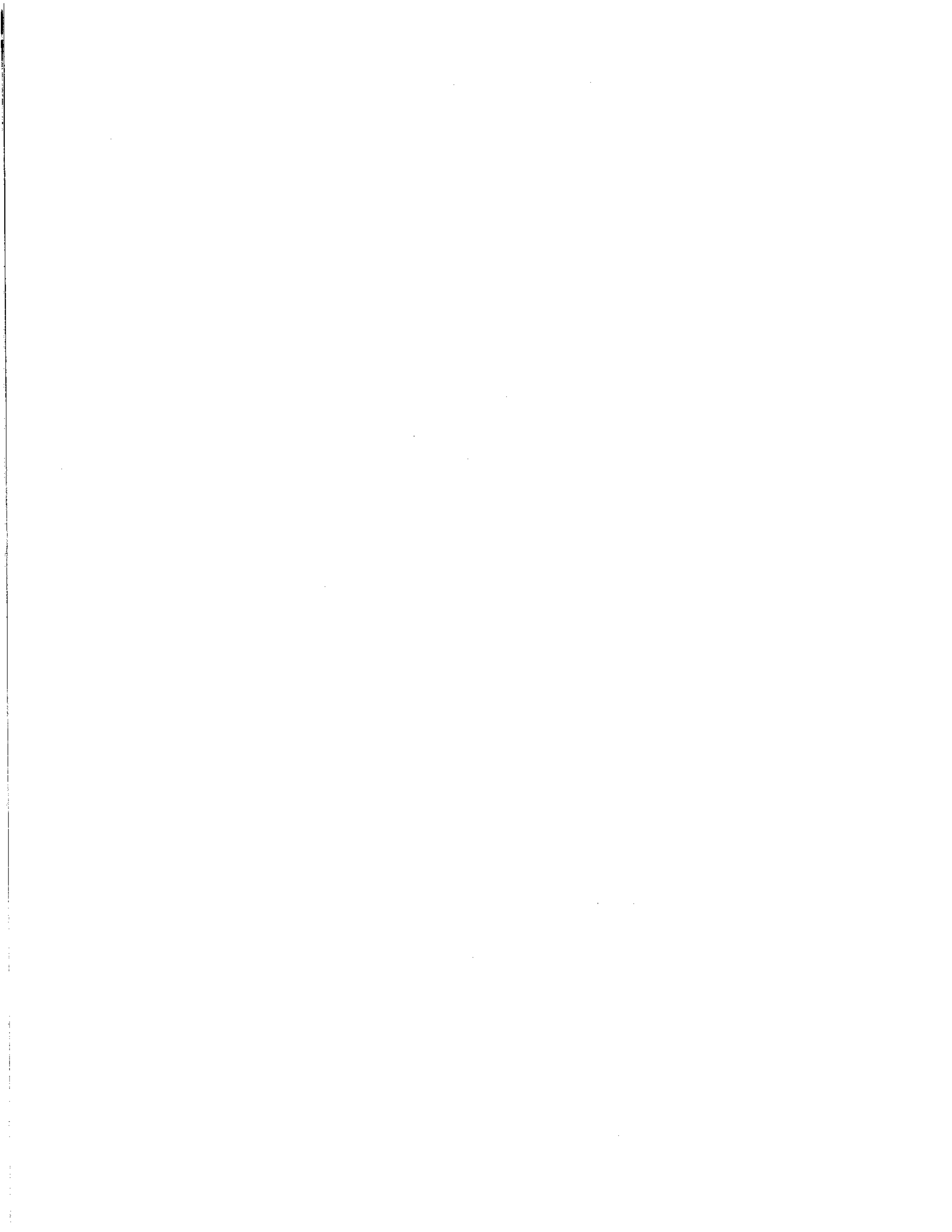
Saskatchewan
Learning

Creative Writing 20

A Curriculum Guide for the Secondary Level

March 1998



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Saskatchewan Education gratefully acknowledges the professional contributions and advice given by the Secondary Level English Language Arts Curriculum Reference Committee.

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Saskatchewan Education also gratefully acknowledges the contributions of:

- pilot teachers
- program team members
- other educators personnel and reviewers.

Introduction

Introduction to the Course

Creative Writing 20 provides opportunities for students to refine their creative writing skills and abilities beyond those developed in the required English language arts courses. This course encourages students to see creative writing as a unique way of thinking, and as a means of constructing and conveying meaning.

Students in Creative Writing 20 are encouraged to explore and develop their own ideas. They are also encouraged to explore many different ways of conveying meaning through writing, and to see how methods and styles vary within cultures and time periods. Through experiences in creative writing, students are encouraged to see connections between their own writing, the writing of others, and the broader world around them.

Aim and Goals

The aim of the Saskatchewan English language arts curriculum is to graduate articulate and literate citizens who will become confident users of language and versatile thinkers. Through the kindergarten to grade 12 program, students develop the ability to adapt language for learning, for expressing ideas with fluency and clarity, and for communicating effectively with others. Creative Writing 20, with its emphasis on the unique expression of ideas, enables students to progress toward this aim.

The general goals of the English language arts curriculum from kindergarten to grade 12 are:

- to develop students' language abilities as a function of their thinking abilities
- to encourage enjoyment of and develop proficiency in writing, reading, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing
- to develop appreciation of, and responses to, literature in all of its forms
- to promote personal growth and social development through developing students' knowledge and use of language, and their understanding of the human condition.

Principles for Teaching Creative Writing

The following principles and beliefs form a foundation for teaching Creative Writing 20:

1. Students learn language through experiences with language.

Creative Writing 20 is a "hands-on" course in which students experience literary genres and various types of language use through their own writing. Students learn about language processes, elements, and conventions as they read, write, and discuss their own and others' writing.

2. The focus of the creative writing program should be on ideas and meaning.

The relevance of creative writing to students is in the exploration and unique expression of their own ideas. Ideas can be expressed directly or indirectly (e.g., through the use of imagery). They can express the students' opinion or point of view, pose a question or paradox, or explore language or form. The point is, writing and other art forms are about meaning, whether that meaning has to do with narrative, daily life, imagination, or language itself.

3. Discussion about the structure of writing genres and use of language should be on how meaning is constructed or revealed, rather than on rules or formulas.

There is no one method or formula for telling a story, no one way to use creative language correctly, and no rule that cannot be broken by a good writer. This is not to say that creative writing or any other artistic endeavour is a free-for-all of self-expression, or that a student can defend sloppy work by saying, "That's just how I write". Rather, the focus should be on what the student has done to develop and support meaning in his or her work.

Questions such as the following can be posed by the teacher:

- How does your use of language contribute to our understanding of the characters or of your ideas about this subject?
- How does the structure of your piece support your ideas or contribute to the reader's understanding of the writing?

- What other pieces of writing do you know about that are structured or written in this way? What did you learn about writing from them?

4. Reading is essential to students' development as writers.

The connection between reading and writing cannot be overstated. Literature provides students with the language and tools to write. By examining the writing of others, students see the wide range of possibilities for creative and expressive language use. By finding writers who inspire them, students can come to understand their own reasons for writing, their own sense of aesthetics, and the value of writing to humankind.

> Note: Teachers can do student writers a great service by introducing them to writers and writing from their own community and province. Through such writing students learn that their own lives and perspectives are worthy subject matter, that writers live everywhere in the world, and that the place where a writer lives has an impact on his or her content and form. By meeting writers, students learn that it is possible to become a writer as a career if they so choose, and are provided with the opportunity to ask questions of a professional in their field of interest.

5. Teachers must provide latitude in allowing students to choose their own writing models.

The study of literature in Creative Writing 20 must be focused on the individual student, and the term "literature" must be broadly defined to include forms of particular interest to high school students (e.g., song lyrics, comic books, independent "zines", speculative fiction, etc.). In this course, literature needs to speak to and inspire individual students if it is to help them understand and grow in their own writing. Students must be seen as contemporary writers with their own cultures, inspired by forms and writing that may not appear in the canon with which the teacher is familiar. The teacher can and should act as a guide, leading students in new directions, but the starting point must be established by the student.

> Note: If there is certain language or subject matter that is not acceptable in a particular classroom, the teacher and students can establish guidelines for works brought to school.

6. Teachers must be sensitive to the variety of language use that exists within social and ethnic cultures.

How language is used to support subject matter and meaning is both culturally determined and intensely personal. Teachers and peers should remember that a writer might be doing something with language that makes perfect sense within a certain context. Students should not be steered routinely toward a homogenous use of language or method of structuring a piece of writing.

7. Writing activities should be planned around students' interests and student-selected topics.

Student learning in creative writing is facilitated when students have opportunities to apply the elements of language in meaningful situations, and when their writing fulfils purposes which are determined by and understood by them. It is crucial to students' learning that they be allowed to handle topics in their own way. The freedom to choose topics and explore them in their own way greatly influences students' attitudes toward writing.

When the teacher introduces pre-writing activities, he or she must allow a degree of choice within a broad frame. The teacher must be prepared for any student to reject a topic completely after discussion, if it is not about what the student would like to write.

8. Creative writing should be seen as a product of the imagination.

The imagination is one of the most valuable gifts a human being can have. The imagination allows people to create, to experience the joy and satisfaction of invention, to predict and hypothesize, and to empathize with others. When a person reads a novel and believes in the characters in that novel, it is because the writer has "imagined" the story into existence in a way that allows the reader to do the same.

When students create a piece of writing, they are creating something that did not exist before--they are imagining it into existence. By using language for creative writing, students make a representational world for themselves and their readers. They learn

to understand the ability of language to stand for experience, to endure limitations, and to reshape familiar forms and elements into new relationships.

9. Creative writing should be seen as a "way of knowing" about the world and humanity.

From the earliest of times, humankind has expressed its way of knowing about the world through the arts. Ancient legends, for example, document historical events, provide explanations for natural occurrences, and describe codes of behaviour and the consequences of breaking them.

The process of writing is a process of thinking. As students write, they make comparisons, inferences, and deductions. They discover relationships; they ponder and reflect about the organization of words, images, and thoughts. As students work their way through an idea by writing, they explore points of view, think about "what if", and synthesize their thoughts about the world, humanity, language, and personal aesthetics.

10. The organic nature of the writing process must be recognized.

An organic process is one that evolves as it progresses. Teachers and students must understand that, although each individual will have a different method for developing a piece of writing, the meaning of a piece of writing is usually revealed through the process of writing. Often a writer will begin from a general idea, but will be unable to state what the piece is about until he or she has completed several drafts. A story writer might, for example, begin with a rough plot idea. When the writer has a draft, he or she might ask, "What is this story about?" (theme) and "How can I revise the story so that meaning is revealed through what the characters say or do?" It is reassuring for students to know that professional writers work this way. Learning what they are writing about is all part of the process; this knowledge is the outcome of the work they do on a piece of writing.

11. There should be an abundance of discussion about writing in the creative writing classroom.

Productive discussion about writing helps students develop an awareness of the relevance and importance of writing. It also provides an opportunity for students to learn from the ideas of others and to explore in more depth what they have read (e.g., through book talks and literature circles).

It is also important for students to discuss their own and other students' work. They can respond to one another's work before, during, and after a piece of writing is created. They can respond in small groups and pairs. Productive discussion encourages thinking and subsequent revision, and that is the spirit in which it should take place.

12. The teacher should write along with students in the classroom.

The participation of the teacher as a writer forms a necessary part of a successful creative writing program. The blank page should be just as much of a challenge to the teacher as to the student. When time permits, the teacher should participate in free writing, journal writing, and drafting in order to model writing activity. Periodically, the teacher should submit a piece of writing which he or she is struggling with, and get student responses to it, similar to how the students are preparing their writing for peer response and for teacher response.

Personal writing allows the teacher to gain insight into the difficulties students might be having. The teacher also gains a sense of the part played by conscious and unconscious processes in creative writing. The teacher comes to recognize more fully the nature of a personal response--that it is unique and represents the imagination of one individual.

Western Canadian Framework

The *Common Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts* (draft, 1998) was developed by the Ministries of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, and Yukon Territory in co-operation with teachers and other educators from these provinces and territories. This collaborative effort resulted in the identification of common educational goals and student learning outcomes designed to prepare students for present and future language requirements. The *Common Curriculum Framework* articulates a shared vision and provides a basis for curriculum development in the respective jurisdictions.

The process of developing common goals and outcomes allowed those involved to explore contemporary thought on specific language arts areas and topics. Among these was the area of personal or creative writing. As a result, recent thinking about creative writing is embodied in the five general outcomes that were derived for English language arts. These are listed on the following page.

Students will listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent to:

- explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences
- comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print, and other media texts
- manage ideas and information
- enhance the clarity and artistry of communication
- celebrate and build community.

Core Curriculum Components and Initiatives

Common Essential Learnings

The Common Essential Learnings include knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be developed across the curriculum. In Saskatchewan, they have been organized in six areas: Communication, Numeracy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Values and Skills, Technological Literacy, and Independent Learning. The incorporation of the Common Essential Learnings into the English language arts program helps students see the value of language arts concepts in school and throughout life.

Teachers can find many opportunities in Creative Writing 20 for developing the Common Essential Learnings in an authentic manner. The following objectives are intended to enhance learning related to creative writing knowledge and processes. When planning for the incorporation of the Common Essential Learnings in daily lessons, teachers should refer to *Understanding the Common Essential Learnings: A Handbook for Teachers* (Saskatchewan Education, 1988) for more information.

Communication

Students will:

- use appropriate vocabulary when discussing writing
- use language as a tool for learning and communicating
- listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent with competence and confidence
- extend their language repertoires
- express their ideas in a variety of ways
- accept that there are many different ways to organize ideas and many possible answers or explanations
- investigate, understand, and apply symbolic meaning
- develop the ability to clarify their thinking and communicate with others.

Critical and Creative Thinking

Students will:

- use language as an instrument of thought
- think reflectively, critically, and creatively
- analyze writing in order to deepen their understanding of writing concepts
- generate and evaluate ideas, processes, and products
- explore alternatives and make and justify decisions
- experience and appreciate the complexity of creative thinking and planning
- approach unfamiliar writing thoughtfully and withhold judgement until they have enough information to respond in an informed manner
- reflect on how knowledge about world literature is developed and how it changes over time
- express personal viewpoints in unique ways
- understand the barriers to critical and creative thinking.

Technological Literacy

Students will:

- use technology as a tool to facilitate their writing and communication
- explore how technology shapes and is shaped by their lives, society, and the environment
- explore how various forms of electronic media affect the impact of the message
- explore ways that technology has affected writing and the writing process
- recognize the inevitability of change due to technological developments and changes in society's norms and values.

Personal and Social Values and Skills

Students will:

- increase self-awareness by reflecting on their own writing
- understand the importance of social responsibility and personal integrity in the use of language
- explore themes, characters, and conflicts through writing
- build upon the ideas of others (e.g., ideas in literature)
- offer and accept constructive criticism
- understand self and society more completely
- empathize with others
- respect cultural perspectives that differ from their own
- respect the opinions and ideas of others.

Independent Learning

Students will:

- develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to become lifelong learners
- use a variety of resources to assist their learning
- set personal priorities
- plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning

- discuss writing and literature encountered outside of school in order to discover relationships between it and in-class learning experiences.

Numeracy

Students will:
- use mathematical vocabulary as appropriate
- understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative data and comparisons
- develop an intuitive sense of measurement and spatial concepts (through descriptive writing, etc.)
- explore and use the concept of probability as appropriate in creative writing (chance, risk, likelihood, etc.)
- understand that divergent thinking often precedes convergent thinking and the discovery of solutions to problems.

Adaptive Dimension

The Adaptive Dimension is an essential part of all instructional programs. It encourages teachers:

> *... to make adjustments in approved educational programs to accommodate diversity in student learning needs. It includes those practices the teacher undertakes to make curriculum, instruction, and the learning environment meaningful and appropriate for each student.*
>
> (*The Adaptive Dimension in Core Curriculum*, Saskatchewan Education, 1992)

The Adaptive Dimension addresses the importance of providing alternatives for students' learning and evaluation in order to promote optimum success for each student. Learning environments for students can be made more accessible through adapting settings, methods, or materials. It is important for teachers to:

- identify students' strengths and needs and continually monitor progress
- accept, respect, and broaden the students' abilities, learning styles, language abilities, and interests
- increase curriculum relevance for students by addressing their cultural backgrounds
- build background knowledge or experience for students when it is lacking
- use a variety of instructional and assessment strategies and procedures to accommodate individual abilities and learning styles
- vary the manner in which students are required to demonstrate their learning
- alter the pace of activities or lessons for students who need it
- vary the types of activities
- vary resources
- provide program enrichment and/or extension when it is needed
- encourage students to participate in planning, instruction, and evaluation
- provide additional practice for students
- provide options for students.

The Adaptive Dimension includes all practices teachers employ to make learning meaningful and appropriate for each student. Because the Adaptive Dimension permeates all teaching practice, sound professional judgement becomes the critical factor in successful learning experiences for students.

In the context of a language arts class, teachers need to be particularly sensitive to English as a Second Language (ESL) students and English as a Second Dialect (ESD) students. Teachers should consider the following guidelines for instruction and assessment:

- model respect for cultural and linguistic diversity by encouraging students to share their languages and cultures
- identify, acknowledge, and respect differences in verbal and nonverbal communication styles by encouraging students to learn and interact in ways that are culturally familiar to them
- extend, if necessary, time for ESL and ESD students to achieve the foundational and specific learning objectives and provide extra support, where possible
- ensure that teacher talk is clear and concise
- provide a variety of resources in English and in the students' first languages
- encourage students to use visual dictionaries to verify meanings or spellings of words
- pair students with fluent English speaking "buddies" for collaborative projects
- provide English language audiotapes
- when assessing students' oral language development, focus on conceptual understanding before pronunciation
- model positive and motivational feedback to develop self-confident, risk-taking language users and learners
- give all students the opportunity to reflect on their progress through self-assessment and evaluation.

Indian and Métis Content, Perspectives, and Resources

> *Saskatchewan Education recognizes that the Indian and Métis peoples of the province are historically unique peoples, occupying a unique and rightful place in society today. Saskatchewan Education recognizes that education programs must meet the needs of Indian and Métis students, and that changes to existing programs are also necessary for the benefit of* ***all*** *students.*
>
> (*Indian and Métis Education Policy from Kindergarten to Grade Twelve*, Saskatchewan Education, 1995)

The inclusion of Indian and Métis content, perspectives, and resources promotes the development of positive attitudes in all students toward Indian and Métis peoples. Increasing an awareness of one's own culture and the cultures of others develops students' self-concepts, promotes an appreciation of Canada's cultural mosaic, and supports universal human rights.

The inclusion of Indian and Métis content, perspectives, and resources in each curricular area fosters meaningful and culturally relevant experiences for Indian and Métis students. Teachers working with Aboriginal students must recognize that these students come from various cultural backgrounds and social settings including northern, rural, and urban areas. The language abilities of Indian and Métis students range from fluency in an Indian language, to degrees of bilingualism in an Indian language and English, to fluency in English. Teachers must understand and respect this diversity and use a variety of teaching strategies to assist students with English language development. Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of teaching strategies that build upon their Indian and Métis students' existing knowledge of language and further extend their English language abilities. Knowledge of cross-cultural education, language acquisition theory, and second language teaching strategies will assist teachers in meeting the needs of individual students. It is crucial to use a variety of instructional, motivational, and assessment approaches that are sensitive to the range of Indian and Métis cultural values and ways of communicating.

Indian and Métis students in Secondary Level English language arts programs are in the process of becoming young adults. All facets of their identities, including their cultural identities, need to be reinforced and extended in order for them to maintain a positive sense of themselves, experience success in school, and graduate as articulate and literate citizens. Secondary Level Indian and Métis students continue to grapple with the complex factors at work in identity formation--gender, family, religion, socio-economic factors, and the nature of one's membership in society and the global community. The issues around identity for Indian and Métis students can be further complicated by the negative attitudes and perceptions they sometimes encounter in society at large. This can result in a serious loss of self-esteem and motivation to succeed in school. Teachers should recognize and counter these negative effects on identity and self-concept through anti-racist teaching strategies. Teachers should also affirm all students' cultural backgrounds and social environments, and foster personally meaningful and culturally identifiable experiences for Indian and Métis students.

All Saskatchewan teachers must integrate accurate and appropriate Indian and Métis content and perspectives in their English language arts program. Teachers have a responsibility to choose resources carefully and teach all students to recognize and discuss bias and stereotyping. Guidelines in *Diverse Voices: Selecting Equitable Resources for Indian and Métis Education* (Saskatchewan Education, 1992) can assist teachers and students in selecting resources and understanding forms of bias in resources that inaccurately portray Indian and Métis peoples. The document can help teachers plan classroom experiences that will increase awareness of such bias and develop students' language and critical thinking abilities. Suggested Indian and Métis resources are included in bibliographies developed by Saskatchewan Education.

It is important that the English language arts curricula and classroom resources:

- reflect the legal, cultural, political, social, economic, and regional diversity of Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples
- concentrate on positive and accurate images of Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples
- reinforce and complement the beliefs and values of Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples
- include resources by Indian, Inuit, and Métis authors and speakers whenever possible
- include historical and contemporary issues.

Multicultural Content, Perspectives, and Resources

A multicultural perspective addresses the major cultural groups in a country. Such a perspective should permeate the English language arts program through the reflection of all peoples' experience. Some guidelines for teachers follow.

- Students should be given opportunities to learn about concepts (racism, for example) by studying the real experiences of groups and individuals.

- The program should help students see historical events from a variety of perspectives. Students should understand the social, economic, and cultural history of people, not just military heroism or campaigns.

- The program should reflect an awareness of stereotyping and generalization. It should emphasize the differences between groups and individuals. For example, many Acadians speak French but some do not. Many Aboriginal people speak their language (e.g., Saulteaux) but many do not.

- The program should reflect an awareness that class, gender, region, and religion all influence individuals and that there is a fine line between generalizing and stereotyping.

- Teachers should choose resources that are representative of diverse cultural backgrounds, that are authentic, and that are free of cultural bias.

Gender Equity

Expectations based primarily on gender can limit students' ability to develop to their fullest potential. Therefore, it is the responsibility of schools to create an educational environment free of gender bias. While some stereotypical views have disappeared, others remain and endeavours to provide opportunities for all students must continue.
The following suggestions from *Gender Equity: A Framework for Practice* (Saskatchewan Education, 1992) may help teachers in the creation of an equitable learning environment.

Teachers should:

- select resources that reflect the current and evolving roles of women and men in society
- have equally high expectations for both female and male students
- spend an equitable amount of time with all students regardless of gender
- allow equal opportunity for input and response from female and male students
- incorporate diverse groupings in the classroom
- model gender-fair language in all interactions
- discuss any gender-biased material with which students may come in contact
- seek a balance of male/female authors and speakers throughout the course
- acknowledge the accomplishments of women and men.

Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities

Portrayal of persons with disabilities in literature and the mass media has been varied and often negative. This has served to teach readers inappropriate information and has engendered attitudes ranging from feelings of pity or revulsion to expectations of superhuman powers of intellect or insight. It is critical that the language arts teacher use materials that portray persons with disabilities realistically and fairly.

Wherever possible, ability rather than disability should be stressed. Materials that imply that persons with disabilities must be cared for or pitied should not be used. Language of the materials should convey respect for the individuality of persons with disabilities. For example, "people with disabilities" or "has a disability" should be used rather than "the less fortunate", "afflicted", or "suffers from a disability".

Heim (1994) suggests that when choosing material for use, it is important to be aware that literature and media frequently portray people with disabilities in a stereotypical way. When evaluating material for use in the English language arts classroom, consider the following:

- Accurate and up-to-date language and information is used to describe the disability. In fiction, the best approach is one where aspects of the disability are revealed, not as the main focus of the book, but through the unfolding of the story.

- Stereotypes frequently found in media portrayals of people with disabilities include: pitiable and

pathetic, object of violence, a burden, and incapable of fully participating in everyday life. When using material that includes characters with disabilities, the resource should provide an insight into the feelings and thoughts of the character with disabilities, rather than using the characters with disabilities as literary archetypes to provoke certain feelings and thoughts in the reader.

- Often a character with a disability is used as a vehicle for the growth of another character who is "normal". The "normal" character gains sensitivity or awareness because of his or her relationship with the character with a disability. The character with a disability does not grow or change. This treatment is troubling because the character with a disability is relegated to a passive role and is not treated as a unique, whole individual.

Resource-based Learning

A resource-based curriculum encourages students and teachers to use a variety of resources in their learning and teaching. In the English language arts program, it is important for teachers to:

- consider a wide range of graphic, visual, auditory, and human resources in their course planning
- create a classroom environment rich in resources
- encourage students to read widely and listen to a variety of speakers
- model resource use by acting as a co-learner with students and by using a wide range of materials and resource people
- teach the skills of researching and locating materials
- encourage students to determine for themselves the skills and resources they need to accomplish a learning task
- incorporate resource-based assignments and projects for students
- collaborate with resource centre staff and other teachers in planning and teaching units or modules
- encourage students to explore a variety of sources, databases, and resource centres for both information and enjoyment
- encourage students to draw upon appropriate resources in their own communities.

Resource-based learning encourages students to develop research and study skills in order to find, analyze, and organize information from a variety of sources. Students learn best when such learning experiences are integrated into a meaningful context, such as a particular assignment. Teachers can assist students to develop these lifelong learning skills by giving them opportunities to learn and apply critical concepts, processes, and abilities.

Course Overview

Course Content

This course focuses on writing as an art form. The curriculum guide is designed to help teachers plan a program that encourages students to develop creative ideas and express them through writing in a variety of forms and genres.

The four major genres of creative writing featured in this curriculum are poetry, short fiction, play writing, and nonfiction. However, the teacher can and should include additional forms if students are interested. The Independent Project module offers the opportunity for students to explore other forms independently if they choose (e.g., radio drama). This module also allows students to participate in such varied experiences as studying with an author, joining a writing group, or obtaining experience with a publishing company.

The content of Creative Writing 20 can be summarized in the following way:

- The course must be based on the foundational and specific learning objectives that have been set for Creative Writing 20.
- In order to develop these objectives, the course must focus on the language processes of reading and writing, although students will also be engaged in speaking and listening as they discuss their own writing, their peers' writing, and reading selections.
- The course must include poetry, short fiction, plays, and nonfiction. How the teacher organizes the course is optional. (Two possible options are explained in this guide.)
- The course must comprise 100 hours.

Developing a Complete Program

Creative endeavours flow from an individual's knowledge, experience, and cultural background. Because creative writing focuses on writing as an art form, there are many connections between Creative Writing 20 and Saskatchewan's arts education program. The arts education curriculum guides describe what are referred to as the "three components" of the program. These are designed to ensure balance among creative activity, the study of works of art, and critical response. These three components apply to creative writing as well, in that they encourage students and teachers to make connections between literature, culture, and the students' own writing.

The three components of arts education as they apply to Creative Writing 20 can be described as follows:

Creative/Productive Component: This component includes the exploration, development, and expression of ideas through writing. The student will learn where ideas come from, and how ideas can be developed and transformed through exploration and critical thinking. Reflection is an important part of the process. Skill development is important also, as long as it occurs within the context of the students' ideas.

Cultural/Historical Component: This component deals with the role of literature in culture, the development of literature throughout history and various world cultures, and the factors that influence writing and writers. In addition, it focuses on writing in contemporary cultures, popular culture, and cross-cultural studies. The intention of this component is to develop in students an understanding that the arts (including the literary arts) are an integral aspect of living for all people.

Critical/Responsive Component: This component encourages students to reflect on and respond critically to published writing, their own writing, and their peers' writing. Through this component, students become participants in the interactive process between writer and audience. Students should be encouraged to avoid making quick judgements of unfamiliar work and, instead, arrive at informed personal interpretations. This component encourages students to welcome experimentation with writing, rather than judging new work against traditional criteria.

By including the three components as described above and not focusing just on craft, the teacher can address the needs and backgrounds of each student, and emphasize that the arts are relevant in all cultures and societies.

Teacher Information

The curriculum guide includes a section entitled "Teacher Information". This section provides background information for teachers on the following:

- the creative process
- the writing process
- conferencing
- authors in the schools

- writing poetry
- writing short fiction
- writing plays
- writing nonfiction.

This section can be used by teachers for their own information, but can also provide the content for mini-lessons. However, it not intended that the material in this section be taught routinely or sequentially to students. Mini-lessons created from this section should be based on student need.

Objectives

Teachers should select from the following list as appropriate within their modules and lessons, taking care to cover the objectives over the term. In addition, teachers should add other appropriate specific learning objectives as necessary for their particular students. Student assessment and evaluation should be based on the foundational and specific learning objectives.

Foundational Objectives

Foundational objectives are broad objectives that are to be developed throughout a course. They cannot be achieved through a single lesson, unit, or module. Students, through a variety of developmental learning experiences, will gradually grow toward the achievement of the foundational objectives.

The foundational objectives for Creative Writing 20 are as follows.

Students will:
- develop abilities to write creatively and expressively
- practise the behaviours of committed creative writers
- develop knowledge of creative writing and appropriate vocabulary for discussing creative writing
- recognize writing as a constructive, meaningful process
- recognize reading as an active, constructive process
- practise the behaviours of effective, strategic readers
- recognize the contribution of literature to cultures and societies
- recognize that talk is an important tool for communicating, thinking, and learning
- practise the behaviours of effective speakers
- speak fluently and confidently in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences
- recognize listening as an active, constructive process
- practise the behaviours of effective listeners
- listen effectively in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes.

Specific Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are specific objectives that can be applied to a particular lesson or unit/module. Specific learning objectives related to each foundational objective are listed below. The teacher should also develop additional learning objectives that are a further breakdown of these, as they apply to the activities selected.

Specific learning objectives for Creative Writing 20 include the following:

Writing

- **Develop their abilities to write creatively and expressively**
  - use writing to explore unique personal perspectives
  - use writing to explore ideas in a new way
  - manipulate language for poetic and aesthetic purposes
  - use language as a vehicle for thought
  - write to express understanding
  - write to achieve unity
  - write to engage a reader's interest
- **Practise the behaviours of committed creative writers**
  - understand that the process of writing is a process of finding the internal truth of subject matter, rather than recording external details
  - keep a journal of ideas, reflections, and notes on writing
  - explore personal unique creative processes
  - apply knowledge of literature and literary traditions to writing
  - engage in a process of creative problem solving
  - see the development of a piece of writing as organic and incremental
  - understand the importance of revision and understand that revision involves seeing a piece of writing a new way
  - confer with peers and teachers

- **Develop knowledge of creative writing and appropriate vocabulary for discussing creative writing**
  - understand and write from various points of view
  - understand and use literary devices
  - explore connections between language use, theme, and meaning
  - understand the unique characteristics of poetry, fiction, plays, and nonfiction
  - learn appropriate conventions that apply to a variety of writing genres including poetry, fiction, plays, and nonfiction
  - experiment with a variety of writing genres including poetry, fiction, plays, and nonfiction

- **Recognize writing as a constructive, meaningful process**
  - recognize the value of what is known as the writing process
  - use the writing process to organize thoughts and explore ideas through writing
  - use appropriate pre-writing strategies
  - develop ideas into draft form
  - revise by adding, deleting, rearranging, or expressing the idea in a different way
  - edit, proofread, and present writing

Reading

- **Recognize reading as an active, constructive process**
  - read for pleasure
  - read critically
  - read to find meaning and interpret

- **Practice the behaviours of effective, strategic readers**
  - attempt to understand an author's purpose and intentions
  - recognize patterns of organization and structures
  - recognize various literary uses of language
  - withhold judgement of literary works until adequate information is obtained to arrive at an informed personal interpretation
  - demonstrate an open-minded attitude toward new and unfamiliar work

- **Recognize the contribution of literature to cultures and societies**
  - read works from a variety of cultures and time periods, both historical and contemporary
  - interpret meanings within appropriate contexts
  - relate understanding of literary works to life experiences and personal writing

Speaking

- **Recognize that talk is an important tool for communicating, thinking, and learning**
  - speak to clarify and extend thinking
  - speak to express understanding
  - speak to share thoughts, opinions, and feelings
  - speak to build relationships and a sense of community

- **Practise the behaviours of effective speakers**
  - recognize and adjust verbal and nonverbal elements in keeping with purpose, audience needs, and individual cultural and linguistic background

- **Speak fluently and confidently in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences**
  - practise the roles of group members including: chairing, participating, moderating and reporting
  - prepare a reading of a personal composition

Listening

- **Recognize listening as an active, constructive process**
  - recognize listening as an active process which requires listeners to:
    - anticipate a message and set a purpose
    - attend
    - seek and check understanding by making connections, and by making and confirming predictions and inferences
    - interpret and summarize
    - evaluate and analyze

- **Practise the behaviours of effective listeners**
  - recognize factors that interfere with effective listening, including personal biases
  - be sensitive to ideas and purpose when listening
  - provide appropriate feedback
  - respond personally, critically, creatively, and empathetically

- **Listen effectively in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes**
  - listen for personal pleasure and aesthetic satisfaction
  - listen to: understand and learn, analyze and evaluate, empathize and make connections with others

assess the overall effectiveness of group discussions, readings, and interviews

Representing and Viewing

Representing and viewing are included as language processes, along with the traditional language processes of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Representing and viewing broaden the ways in which students can understand and communicate their learning.

While the emphasis in language arts is on **representing** thoughts, ideas, and feelings in written or spoken forms, students also might use visual, dramatic, and multimedia formats to support their written and spoken messages. When appropriate, students should be given opportunities to communicate and respond through a variety of formats including print (e.g., charts, graphs, tables), visual (e.g., diagrams, photos, advertisements), drama (e.g., tableaux, improvisations, role playing, storytelling, readers theatre), and multimedia (e.g., recordings, films, videos, television).

Students also comprehend thoughts, ideas, and feelings by **viewing**. When appropriate, students should be given opportunities to view a variety of formats including visual (e.g., photos, graphs, cartoons), drama (e.g., tableaux, improvisations, live theatre), and multimedia (e.g., videos, television, CD-ROM). As students read and listen, they encounter visual messages which require response, interpretation, and critical assessment. The interaction between the viewer and the text varies because of students' prior knowledge and cultural perspectives.

By accommodating a variety of learning styles, representing and viewing help students achieve the English language arts objectives. Incorporating representing and viewing into language experiences encourages students to explore and expand the depth of their understandings. Representing and viewing also expand the ways in which students can communicate their ideas.

Methods of Organizing the Course

The teacher does not necessarily have to organize the course according to the four writing genres. Two options for organizing the course are outlined in the section entitled "Module Overviews and Suggested Activities". The outline of each option includes a "starter list" of suggested pre-writing strategies.

The two possible options for organizing Creative Writing 20 described in this guide are as follows:

Option A: Organizing by Context

Module 1: Introduction
Module 2: The World Around Us
Module 3: Popular Culture
Module 4: Imagination
Module 5: Differing Perspectives
Module 6: Independent Project

(Teachers choosing this option could work with the thematic contexts provided or develop their own according to student interests. The challenge of choosing this option will be to keep the contexts broad enough that individual student ideas can develop and grow within them.)

Option B: Organizing by Writing Genre

Module 1: Introduction
Module 2: Writing Poetry
Module 3: Writing Short Fiction
Module 4: Writing Plays
Module 5: Writing Nonfiction
Module 6: Independent Project

(The challenge of choosing this option will be to keep the course focused on the students' ideas and creative processes. The teacher should not allow craft to take precedence or form to determine content.)

Module Content

The following should guide the teacher in planning the modules for Creative Writing 20:

- All modules should be based on the foundational and specific learning objectives outlined on pages 18-20 of this guide.
- The emphasis in the modules should be on student writing.
- Necessary content about writing should be taught through mini-lessons, student presentations, or discussion.
- Necessary content should be taught within the context of the student's own projects, and as the students need the information.

- References to published literature and writers should be frequent.
- Discussion about the creative process, students' writing, writing issues, and the role of literature in society should be continuous.
- Activities should be focused on ideas and getting started with a writing project, unless a need for another type of writing exercise is expressed by a student or group of students.
- Students should spend a significant amount of time learning about what inspires them to write and exploring sources for their own writing. This is true even if the course is organized according to writing genre (Option B).
- Students should experience all four writing genres covered by this course, even if the course is organized according to context (Option A) rather than writing genre.

Daily Scheduling

Daily scheduling will depend, of course, on the students and teacher. Where one teacher and class might require a fairly tight structure, another might function best in a less structured manner. It is important that some flexibility be maintained so that the teacher can respond to student needs and progress. In addition, the teacher should build in some mechanism for allowing for varying rates of progress, as some students will write very quickly and wish to work on many projects at once, while others will work more slowly and methodically according to their personal style.

Two examples of five-day schedules follow. These are intended to be "case study" examples, rather than prescribed schedules.

Five-day Schedule: Example 1

Day One

- 20 minutes - Small group reading and study of literary models from classroom anthologies, teacher collections, or student choices.

- 10 minutes - Teacher explanation of and/or whole class discussion of a pre-writing strategy or activity to explore topic ideas.

- 15 minutes - Some students try new pre-writing strategy or free write in their idea notebooks. Others (identified by teacher in previous lesson) participate in a mini-lesson.

- 15 minutes - Small group peer conferencing and/or discussion of topic choices, of free writing activities, or of work-in-progress. At the same time, some students participate in scheduled teacher-student conferences.

Day Two

- 10 minutes - Teacher presentation of a particular component of the genre or context being studied (mini-lesson).

- 40 minutes - Drafting (student writing, teacher writing). Teacher-student informal or scheduled conferences.

- 10 minutes - Question time. Students ask questions about problems or writing issues. Whole class discussion in response.

Day Three

- Guest author, field trip, library visit, research and/or writing time. Informal teacher-student conferences.

Day Four

- Repeat day two.

Day Five

- Extension, reinforcement, enrichment, or culminating activities such as the following:
  - oral presentations (e.g., author's circle, oral reading, readers theatre)
  - formatting writing for classroom publications, the school newspaper
  - planning or presenting a dramatic performance in connection with the writing accomplished
  - making audio recordings of creative writing combined with music
  - putting up bulletin board displays of creative writing
  - preparing illustrations (e.g., drawings, photographs) to accompany creative writing.

OR

- Peer conferences. Four students per group. Each student leads the group for fifteen minutes of reading/discussion of her or his work.

Five-day Schedule: Example 2

Day One

- 20-40 minutes - Small group or whole class reading and study of literary models, with time included for silent or oral reading, written or oral responses, and group discussion.

- In the time remaining - Teacher presents a mini-lesson on a pre-writing strategy. Students record this strategy in their notebooks and begin to generate ideas for their own writing topics.

Day Two

- 40 minutes - Students work on pre-writing activities. Some students who have selected their topic confer/discuss with peers regarding their topic choices and plans. Others free write, allowing their ideas to flow in a non-stop, natural manner.

- 20 minutes - Teacher presentation of a mini-lesson on some aspect of the module context or writing genre. Students record notes in a separate section of their notebooks.

Day Three

- 45 minutes - Individual student writing and teacher writing (free writing, first drafts, or successive drafts). Teacher conducts some informal conferences.

- 15 minutes - Scheduled teacher-student conferencing and/or peer conferencing, as needed.

Day Four

- 10 minutes - Teacher presents a mini-lesson on a pre-writing strategy or activity. Students record ideas in their notebooks.

- 50 minutes - Scheduled peer conferencing and teacher-student conferencing. These conferences may be for work-in-progress, for revising, for editing, or for proofreading, depending on individual student writing progress and length of piece(s). Students not ready for conferencing continue with their writing.

Day Five

- 60 minutes - Student writing, revising, editing, polishing. Those students who have finished pieces work on extension, reinforcement, or informal or formal publishing activities (e.g., preparing writing for bulletin board displays or for publication in the school newsletter). They might also choose to try another pre-writing strategy.

The two five-day schedules presented above are samples only. Teachers of Creative Writing 20 may construct their own timetables in order to address the needs of their particular students. However, the following should be included in all weekly plans:

- various appropriate components of the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, presenting)
- other writing activities such as free writing and journal writing
- whole class and/or small group discussion of writing and literary models
- mini-lessons on components of writing genre, craft, and thematic contexts
- time for student reflection
- time for peer and/or teacher conferencing.

Classroom Environment

It is essential that student writers work in an atmosphere that inspires confidence, knowing that they can take risks without fear of criticism or ridicule. Teachers should understand that all honest creative endeavour involves risk-taking, especially for adolescents with developing self-concepts. Many students will find their voices in an atmosphere where risk-taking is encouraged and respected.

Teachers must insist that students behave respectfully toward one another. At the beginning of the term teacher and students together could decide on classroom rules and procedures for giving feedback; these could be posted and revised as necessary.

During discussion periods students exchange ideas, consult one another, and share their writing. The sound of constructive conversation is healthy during these times. However, some classroom time should be set aside as quiet time, to enable students to reflect, deliberate, and concentrate. The classroom environment should be predictable and consistent.

Although conferencing is a part of the writing process, teachers should be aware that some

students benefit more than others from group discussion of their work. Teachers should help students determine their preferences for receiving feedback and accommodate them as much as possible. Some students will benefit from working with one partner with whom they have good rapport. Others will benefit most from teacher-student conferences.

It is a challenge for teachers to make all personalities feel at home in a group environment, especially when creative endeavours are often solitary and intensely personal. However, if teachers promote an atmosphere of respect for individual differences, the creative writing program can be a productive one for most student writers.

Assessment and Evaluation

Purpose

The purposes of assessment and evaluation include the following:

- to facilitate and measure growth and progress in particular courses
- to gauge students' growth, development, and progress against stated learning objectives
- to inform students and parents/caregivers about the objectives of the program and student progress toward meeting them
- to provide education administrators and others with information regarding the effectiveness of programs.

Definition of Terms

Assessment: Collecting information on the progress of students' learning using a variety of procedures (e.g., checklists, formal tests, inventories, self-assessment, creative writing portfolios).

Evaluation: Making judgements on the basis of the information collected.

Grading: Assigning a mark based on the information gathered from assessment instruments.

Reporting: Conveying the results to students, parents/caregivers, and administrators.

Principles of Student Evaluation

Given that the most important function of evaluation is the promotion of learning, the following principles should be reflected in the assessment and evaluation of students.

1. Assessment and evaluation reflect the stated learning objectives and are integrated with instruction.

Assessment must be part of the planning process rather than an after-thought. Instruments teachers use must be appropriate and complementary to the instructional strategies used and to the objectives being developed.

2. Assessment and evaluation are continuous and purposeful.

Frequent monitoring of learning allows the program to be responsive to the needs of the students. Assessment and evaluation should be continuous and should not occur only at report card time. Continuous assessment allows teachers to determine individual student needs and to adjust instruction as appropriate.

3. Evaluation expectations should be communicated clearly at the beginning of the course, module, and learning experience.

Students and parents should be informed of the objectives of the program, the means of assessment, and the criteria to be met. Where possible, evaluation expectations should be developed in consultation with students. Teachers also must maintain communication with parents concerning student progress.

4. Assessment and evaluation must be fair and equitable.

Assessment and evaluation must be sensitive to cultural, linguistic, and community situations as well as to individual student needs and learning styles. Where possible, students should be provided with a variety of ways to demonstrate their learning. Students want to know where they stand and yet each responds differently to evaluation. Some students will regard a critical comment as a challenge that spurs them on to better work, while others are discouraged by criticism. As much as possible, these considerations need to be balanced against maintaining common, appropriate standards. Assessment and evaluation should be constructive for each student.

5. Assessment and evaluation should be balanced and comprehensive.

Assessment and evaluation should be varied and balanced. For example, consideration should be given to:

- Teacher/peer/self-evaluation: Teacher-created assignments, tests, and observation criteria provide important evaluation information. In addition, peer evaluation can provide many opportunities for extending learning and for increasing student confidence and involvement in the learning process. Self-monitoring and assessment allow students to become aware of their own learning and to enhance it.

- Content/process/product: Content, process, and product each play a role in assessment and evaluation. Students must know what they are required to learn (i.e., content), how they are expected to learn (i.e., process), and what evidence they will be required to produce as a result of that understanding (i.e., product). It is particularly important in Creative Writing 20 that the final product not be the only means of assessing student progress. Teachers must also observe students' struggles with creative problem solving, their willingness to take risks and try new things, their attitude toward revision, their insights gained from reading and discussion, and their application of critical and reflective thinking.

Diagnostic, Formative, and Summative Evaluation

Diagnostic evaluation should be done informally and continuously. It is used to assess the strengths and needs of students and to make program adaptations. It is used for diagnosis rather than grading.

Formative evaluation should be conducted continuously throughout the course. It is used to improve instruction and learning and to keep both students and teachers aware of the course objectives and the students' progress in meeting those objectives. The results of formative evaluation are analyzed and used to focus the efforts of the teacher and students.

Summative evaluation occurs at the end of a unit of learning--e.g., the end of a module, chapter, or semester. Results can provide information about the effectiveness of instruction and the effectiveness of a program. The results of summative evaluation should form only a portion of the data used to determine students' grades. An appropriate balance of formative and summative evaluation should be used.

A Suggested Evaluation Procedure

Teachers may consider the following suggested evaluation procedure.

Step 1: Determine what content, processes, and products will be emphasized in the course and in specific modules. Review the foundational objectives for the course and the specific learning objectives to be developed.

Step 2: Determine what strategies will be used to assess the content, processes, and products. Many assessment strategies can and should be used. Continuous assessment is essential. The following list of strategies is by no means complete:

- checklists
- anecdotal notes
- portfolios
- written assignments
- self-assessments
- peer assessments
- teacher-constructed assessments
- tests
- interviews
- conferences
- reading logs
- response journals
- writing journals or notebooks.

Step 3: Consider how the objectives, expectations, and assessment and evaluation strategies will be shared with students, parents, and administrators.

Step 4: Decide how the various assessments will be translated into a grade. Remember that continuous assessments should be included, and that grades should not be based on a unit- or module-end assessment only.

Basing Evaluation on Various Writing Activities

Although evaluation of creative activity can be a challenge for teachers, there are many concrete indicators of student progress. Teachers can assess the following in order to make evaluative judgements:

- idea notebooks
- response journals (student responses to their own writing, their peers' writing, and literature selections)
- writing folders which contain all notes and drafts of a particular writing project
- portfolios (criteria for what to include to be determined by students and teacher)
- conference records (peer conferences and student-teacher conferences)
- self-evaluation records.

Teachers might come up with a breakdown of what percentage they will assign to each of a variety of activities in order to arrive at an evaluation. Evaluations might vary, depending on how extensive they are intended to be. Two examples follow:

Project Evaluation

Writing Folder	35%
Final Version	35%
Idea Notebook	5%
Response Journal	5%
Teacher Conference	10%
Self-assessment	10%

(Note: The writing folder includes all notes, drafts, assessments, etc. related to a writing project.)

Module-end Evaluation

Portfolio	60%
Idea Notebook	10%
Response Journal	10%
Peer Assessment	10%
Self-assessment	10%

(Note: The portfolio is a collection of writing, selected by the student according to criteria.)

Writing Folder Assessment

Writing folders contain all notes and drafts concerning a particular writing project. Writing folders should be considered a significant indicator of student growth, as they contain records of the student's process and problem-solving attempts. The folders contain:

- pre-writing ideas recorded by students (both their own and teacher-introduced ones)
- pre-writing/pre-drafting exercises done by students as they develop ways to plan their pieces
- student free writing entries, through which they explore content possibilities before they begin their first drafts
- first drafts, successive drafts, revisions
- completed pieces, some of which will be selected by the students to go into their portfolios.

Teachers can assess writing folders on a continious basis and at the end of a writing project.

Idea Notebook Assessment

Idea notebooks or journals are notebooks, scrapbooks, or sections in a binder that are kept especially for students to record notes, ideas, and insights for their own writing. Students might also paste such things as photographs, pictures, and newspaper clippings, and include brief explanations of why these things caught their attention. Students can keep track of any ideas that interest them, even if they do not know at the time how they might be used in a writing project. They should record in their notebooks at least three or four times per week. The left-hand page should be left blank so that students can add their own reflections on the entries at a later date, or so they can solicit peer or teacher response to their entries.

Of course, privacy is an issue when students keep any kind of journal. Students should have the option of removing pages they do not wish others to see when it comes time to assess idea notebooks. If a student has several private entries, the teacher might arrange a conference or ask the student to do a self-assessment as an alternative to peer or teacher assessment.

Idea notebooks should be assessed on a regular basis. The teacher could proceed in the following way:

- Week One: Each student chooses two entries to read aloud or explain to another class member. The listener responds orally to the first one and writes out a response to the second one.
- Week Two: The same procedure takes place.
- Week Three: Students hand in their notebooks, having chosen four entries they would like the teacher to read. The teacher skims each notebook for completion of entries, reads each of the identified pieces, and responds to two of them.

To keep track of weekly journal entries and their completion, the teacher might use a chart similar to the one included in the sample assessment forms beginning on page 31. Students might be asked to attach such a chart to the inside front covers of their idea notebooks.

Response Journal Assessment

Response journals contain student reflections on reading selections, peer conferences, and discussions about writing in the classroom. A response journal might be a separate notebook, or it might be a separate section in a notebook or binder. The response journal is one way to encourage students to see the important connections between writing and reading, and the importance of discussing other people's ideas about writing. The response journal can be seen as the student's introduction to the field of criticism.

Students can record in their response journals in the following ways:

- on their own time, in response to their personal reading selections
- as a class assignment, after discussion of some aspect of writing
- in response to teacher-assigned reading (e.g., an article on some aspect of writing)
- in response to book talks or literature circle activities
- in response to reviews of books they have read
- in response to peer or teacher conferences about their own writing.

Teachers can assess student response journals in the same ways they assess idea notebooks. They can also be handed in to be assessed by the teacher according to criteria established by the teacher and/or students at the beginning of the course. A sample assessment form for response journals is included in the sample assessment forms on the following pages.

Portfolio Assessment

The portfolio is different from the writing folder in that it is compiled especially for the purposes of assessment and/or discussion with parents or administrators. For example, at the end of a module on poetry writing, the teacher could ask students to put together a portfolio containing the following:

- two notebook entries which could become ideas for poems
- two response journal entries on poems selected by the student
- one first draft of a poem
- one second draft
- one final draft, polished and ready to be published or displayed
- one peer assessment of a first draft poem written by another student.

The following is another example:

- include two entries from your idea journal that best illustrate the kind of insights you have about the world around you
- include a first draft poem that best illustrates the kind of ideas for poems that are most meaningful to you
- include a first draft and revised draft that best show your understanding of revision (i.e., seeing something in a new way)
- include a final draft of a poem that is as good and polished as you can make it.

The teacher can provide cover sheets for each work included in the portfolio. An example follows in the Sample Assessment Forms section. The portfolio might also have a table of contents, listing each item in order, and stating the date each was completed. The following is an example of how marks for a portfolio might be distributed:

Originality of ideas	10
Control of language	10
Organization and structure to convey meaning	10
Mechanics	10
Attempt at trying something new	10
Total	50

Note: Evaluation at the end of the term or semester does not necessarily have to be in the form of numbers, percentages, or letter grades alone. Some schools and teachers may prefer the evaluation to be accompanied by comments concerning the student's growth and progress, especially in an area such as creative writing that is so focused on the individual.

Sample Assessment Forms

The following pages include several checklists and anecdotal recordkeeping forms. These are samples only and are intended to provide initial ideas for assessment.

Teachers should pay special attention to the form "Sample Checklist or Rating Scale for Assessing Creative Processes". Although process is sometimes difficult to assess, this form provides teachers with criteria they may consider.

Sample Creative Writing Assessment

Student's Name: ____________________ **Date:** __________

Writing Assignment: ______________________________

Learning Objective	**Progress Toward Meeting Objective**
• Uses writing to explore ideas in a new way Comment on where the student was at the beginning of the course:	
• Uses the writing process Comment on where the student was at the beginning of the course:	
• Confers with peers and teachers Comment on where the student was at the beginning of the course:	

Sample Checklist or Rating Scale for Assessing Creative Processes

This form may be used to assess several students on one date, or one student on different dates.

The student:	Names or dates					
Contributes to discussion and brainstorming activities.						
Contributes ideas to group discussion of themes, writing genres, or concepts.						
Extends ideas about the theme, writing genre, or concept in a new direction.						
Transfers ideas or knowledge gained from class discussion into personal work.						
Explores several ideas or directions in pre-writing activities.						
Takes risks by exploring something new to him/her.						
Makes connections between own writing and literary selections.						
Shows interest and excitement about own writing project.						
Shows commitment to the experience of creating.						
Challenges self at all stages of the writing process.						
Understands the importance of revision.						
Describes what did or did not work in drafts and/or final product (through discussion, conference, or response journal).						
Identifies what he/she would like to do differently in next draft or project.						
Can describe what writing projects mean to him/her (personal relevance).						
Shows concentration.						
Discusses why choices were made.						
Works independently.						
Confers appropriately with peers and teacher.						
Chooses work to be shared through publication, oral reading, or display.						

Comments:

Sample Response Journal Assessment

This form can be used to assess students' journal responses to their own writing, to others' writing, to discussion about writing, and to literary selections.

Student's Name: ______________________________

Evaluation Period: From __________ **To** __________

Number of Responses: __________

Scale:

1 = weak
2 = fair
3 = acceptable
4 = good
5 = strong

Responses to reading, writing, and discussion are recorded in journal regularly.

Regularly Often Sometimes Rarely Never

Responses are full and complete.
1 2 3 4 5

Responses demonstrate:

- close careful reading/listening
  1 2 3 4 5
- personal connections made with written material or discussion content
  1 2 3 4 5
- reflection on significant issues, themes, or concerns
  1 2 3 4 5
- willingness to respond to a range of styles and forms of writing
  1 2 3 4 5
- insightful reading/listening
  1 2 3 4 5

What has been learned from responding has been applied to subsequent writing.
1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Sample Chart for Checking Off Notebook or Journal Entries

Writer's Name: ______________________________

Daily Journal Entries

Week	Date of Entries					Signature of Reader
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						

Sample Student Record of Conferencing

Student's Name:	Date:
Type of Conference:	
Name(s) of Conference Partner(s):	
Subject of Conference:	
Conference Goal:	
How the Conference Helped:	
What I Liked/Disliked about the Conference:	
Suggestions for Future Conferencing:	
Additional Comments:	

Sample Teacher Record of Conferencing

Student's Name:	**Date:**
Conference Topic:	
Introductory Remarks:	
Student's Strengths:	
New Strengths Portrayed:	
Areas Needing Improvement:	
Goals for Meeting Student's Needs • Action to be Taken by Student • Ways Teacher Can Help	
Other Notes:	

Sample Self-assessment: Form One

This form is general in nature and could be used any time during the term.

Name:	**Date:**
General remarks regarding my creative writing (e.g., genres and topics presently working on):	
Things I do well:	
Areas where I have shown recent improvement:	
Areas needing further work:	
My goal for my creative writing this term:	
Steps I will take to attain my goal:	
Literary works I might study to help me solve problems I am encountering:	
How I will know when my goal is achieved:	
Others concerns or comments:	

Sample Self-assessment: Form Two

This form can be used to accompany writing folder or portfolio assessment. The questions are designed to relate to a specific writing project.

Name:	**Date:**
What was the main idea you were trying to express?	
What methods did you use to explore and develop your idea during the pre-writing stage of the writing process?	
Did you take a risk by trying something new in this piece of writing? Explain.	
What were some unexpected problems you encountered while you were working on this piece of writing?	
How did you try to solve these problems?	
What was the most interesting thing you did in this writing project?	
What have you learned from this project?	
What have you read that might be connected in some way to what you were trying to do? Explain.	
How might this writing project develop into something else, or be connected to your next project?	

Sample Anecdotal Recordkeeping Form

Student's Name:

Date	Learning Objectives	Comments

General Comments:

Sample Portfolio Assessment: Form One

Student's Name: ______________________ **Date:** ________

Type of Assessment: Continous End of Project End of Module End of Term

Rating Scale: Excellent - 1, Very Good - 2, Good - 3, Fair - 2, Poor - 1

Criteria	Rating	Comments
Student selected appropriate material.		
Portfolio showed evidence of student's understanding of project/module/course objectives.		
Portfolio showed evidence of student's pride in own work and commitment to writing projects/experiences.		
Portfolio showed evidence that student completed assignments.		
Portfolio showed evidence of student's understanding of the process of developing and organizing ideas.		

Other comments:

Sample Portfolio Assessment: Form Two

Note: This form could be attached to each writing selection in a portfolio.

Name:	**Date:**
Genre:	**Title:**

Student Comments:

I chose this piece because ______________________________

____

____

I would especially like you to notice ______________________________

____

____

My plan was ______________________________

____

____

This piece of work shows ______________________________

____

____

Next time, I might ______________________________

____

____

Other comments:

Teacher Information

The Creative Process

It is important for teachers to distinguish between the creative process and the writing process. The writing process describes the phases of a writing project that all students are expected to complete, from pre-writing through to publishing or display.

The creative process, on the other hand, is much more elusive. It describes the process that artists engage in when they are creating something that did not previously exist. The creative process involves the student in decision making about content, genre, form, structure, language, theme, craft, and imagery. The end result is the creation of something new that has its own meaning.

The point at which various decisions are made will be different for each student and, possibly, for each project. Some students will make a decision (about form, for example) at the pre-writing stage and adhere to that decision. Another student might make a similar decision at the pre-writing stage and then change his or her mind several times during revision. Some decisions cannot be made until certain truths about the work become evident to the student. The process, then, is an organic process, and one that is unique to individual artists and students. It describes the complex interaction between the student and the work-in-progress.

Gertrude Stein said the following about writing: "... think of the writing in terms of discovery, which is to say that creation must take place between the pen and the paper, not before in a thought or afterwards in a recasting" (Preston, 1935).

Tips for Teaching the Creative Process

Because the creative process is organic, there is no one way to engage in the creative process and there are no fixed sequential steps that can be taught to students. However, the teacher can assist and reassure students in the following ways:

- ***Make students familiar with the creative processes of various writers and other artists.***

  Read students anecdotes from biographies or books on writers and their work. Post quotations on the bulletin board. Invite authors to the classroom. Create an entire display on creative process or have students do it. Ask each student to find a quotation or story about the creative process of a different writer or other artist. Discuss the anecdotes in small groups or as a whole class.

- ***Draw connections for individual students between the way you see them working and the way a particular writer works.***

  Professional writers often say that becoming a writer is, in part, a matter of learning about their own process. Writers do not automatically know what works best for them or how they discover meaning in their own work. Teachers can help a student by pointing out observations they have made about how the student works. Teachers can validate a student's process by telling the student about writers who work in similar ways and directing him/her to excerpts from biographies or articles on writing.

- ***Routinely ask students questions about their work and the decisions they are making.***

  Many students are not aware that writing creatively involves constant reflection and decision making. Often, students do not realize that they are making decisions as they work. By asking provocative questions, teachers can draw students' attention to the decisions they are making, and let them know that reflection and decision making are expectations.

- ***Encourage students to think about process when they are writing in their response journals.***

  Use a science analogy to help students understand the value of keeping a journal: when scientists create something new, they keep notes and records so they will know what they did and how they did it. When students reflect on their own work, they are thinking about both what they write and how they do it. Thinking about the process will help them build on what they have done and grow in their creative abilities. Encourage them to see that keeping a response journal is a means of learning about their own process.

- ***Encourage students to take risks and see the value of failures and lucky accidents.***

  The term "taking risks" refers to trying something new that might or might not work. Because creative writing is often personal and because it

is eventually shared with a reader, writers (even professionals) are sometimes nervous about attempting new things. However, if writers and other artists do not take risks, they do not grow in their abilities to say something in a new way, or to discover new things about human nature or artistic expression.

It is not necessary for everything the student tries to work. In fact, it is sometimes the failures from which the most can be learned. Remind students that advancements in science and the arts often come about by accident. Encourage them to see the value of accidental discoveries, and to veer in a new direction in the middle of a project if they choose. Taking risks and making decisions about what works and what does not, and which "accidents" are of value, are important parts of the creative process.

- ***Reassure students of the value of individual differences.***

Individual differences and perceptions are the "best friends" of the creative artist. Art works are unique, autonomous expressions and they are so because of the individual differences among the artists who create them. We all have our own experiences with the world, with culture, and with the arts (including literature). We all have our own unique ways at looking at something. It is individual perceptions that have given the world centuries of arts expressions.

- ***Assess and evaluate students' engagement in the creative process.***

Teachers can design their own instruments for assessing student progress in this area. A sample form containing several criteria is included in the Assessment and Evaluation section of this guide. It is important to assess the students' engagement in the creative process in order to determine the quality of the students' creative experience. The product alone will not suffice as an indicator, especially if the students were taking a risk and trying something that might not have worked out in the end. Assessing the students' engagement in the creative process lets students know that it is an essential part of the program. It also allows teachers to assess several different kinds of projects using the same criteria.

The Role of Individual Perceptions in the Creative Process

There are two major factors that influence a writer engaged in a creative process: the writer's perceptions of the real world, and the writer's experience with literature and language. The first provides content; the second provides the means or tools for constructing a new piece of writing.

The student's perceptions of the real world and the student's experience with literature are both unique to that student and must be respected by teachers and other students. The following are examples of factors that influence the individual student's perception of the world:

- urban, rural, and northern perspectives
- various cultural perspectives
- perspectives based on gender
- perspectives based on spirituality
- travel experiences
- knowledge of current affairs
- knowledge of world cultures
- perspectives based on areas of knowledge such as science or philosophy.

The following are examples of factors that determine a student's experience with literature and language:

- reading experiences in a variety of forms (e.g., poetry, short fiction, plays, nonfiction)
- reading experiences in various sub-genres (e.g., mysteries, romance, science fiction)
- experiences with oral traditions
- knowledge of periods of literature (e.g., Victorian, modern, post modern)
- knowledge of world literature and the literary traditions of various cultures
- knowledge of literary criticism.

The teacher can guide students to expand their knowledge of both the world and literature by directing them to resources that might be of interest, providing experiences such as field trips and guest speakers, encouraging students to value their own perceptions and experiences, encouraging discussion in the classroom, and encouraging students to use experiences in other content areas as sources for their writing.

The Writing Process

The writing process describes the phases of a writing project with which all students are expected

to become familiar. The purpose of incorporating the writing process in a formal way into language arts programs is to encourage students to adopt certain behaviours that will make their writing better and more complete. The writing process encourages students to see writing as something that develops through exploration, research, consultation, revision, editing, and publishing or sharing their work with others.

The writing process includes the following phases:

- pre-writing
- drafting
- revision
- editing and proofreading
- publishing.

> Note: Conferencing and discussion are important at all phases of the writing process. Fifteen minutes is an appropriate amount of time for peer conferencing sessions. Students can use this time for discussion of ideas, topic choice, free writing, and drafts, as appropriate. More detailed information on peer conferencing and student-teacher conferencing is provided, beginning on page 54 of this section of the guide.

Pre-writing

Pre-writing includes all the activities a writer goes through before writing actually begins. Some pre-writing might include activities to stimulate students' thinking, such as completing webs or concept maps. Selecting a topic, conducting research, and notetaking or journal writing are also pre-writing activities.

Writing Topics and Pre-writing Strategies

The pre-writing strategies provided in this guide can be presented by the teacher to encourage students to explore ideas and begin writing. Each pre-writing strategy should be explained thoroughly by the teacher and presented along with examples. Students should write each idea down in their notebooks or journals, to be filed away for use at some later date. A few students may wish to try the strategies out immediately, but these strategies should not be treated as assignments to be done by everyone at the same time. They are for students' future reference, to be used as needed. Pre-writing strategies help students discover facts, clarify impressions, and use their imaginations.

The following are general types of pre-writing strategies. (Specific strategies are presented in the section entitled "Module Overviews and Suggested Activities".)

- **Brainstormed Lists.** This is a method of generating a large number of ideas for writing. Students write down whatever ideas come to mind, no matter how simple or strange their ideas may be. Superficial observations usually head the list, but as students continue to write, interesting ideas begin to appear. Brainstorming should result in a list of enough useful ideas that students can discard those which are not useful. Brainstorming can be done at any time and the resulting list used later for creative writing projects. A list created by the class might be posted for reference.

- **Lists Under Topics.** Students can compose their own lists that might help them to decide on themes in the future: favourite things, things that make them angry, important events that have taken place in their lives, things to save or things to throw away, fears, hopes, dreams, regrets, wishes, superstitions, loyalties, or questions. They might list things they do not want for their birthdays, or things they did not do over the holidays. They can also construct word lists (e.g., lists of warm words, cold words, rough words, smooth words).

- **Places.** Students may be encouraged to recall places that they remember from childhood: places that scared them or fascinated them, or places that amused them. They can also develop lists of places that spark their imaginations for some reasons: baseball parks, haunted houses, scientific laboratories, beauty shops, etc. Then, on their own time, they might arrange to visit one of these places to take notes and record images and ideas to be used later for writing. Students can also collect pictures of places that spark their imaginations and keep them in their idea notebooks.

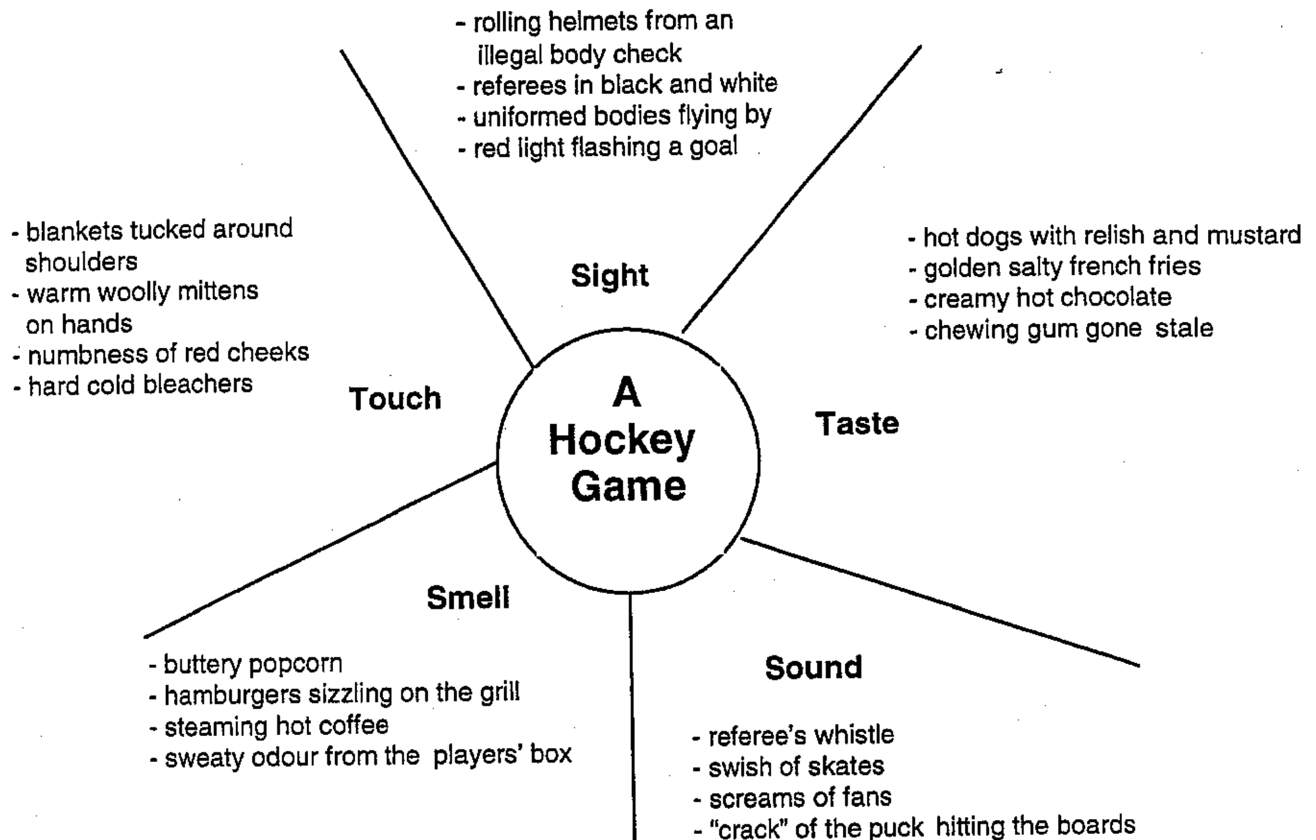
- **Memories.** Students may recall memories of events and experiences from childhood, and recreate the perceptions, feelings, and associations linked with those memories.

- **Pictures.** Pictures are useful sources for ideas: magazine pictures, photographs, slides,

paintings, and computer generated images. Film can also be used to inspire ideas for creative writing. Students can "put themselves" into the picture and imagine what they might experience from a particular vantage point, or they can describe what they see from the outside looking in. They can also create narrative from a picture by imagining what happened before the picture was taken and what will happen next.

- **Image Clusters.** Students might find it useful to create image clusters as a pre-writing strategy. An example follows, using the topic "Hockey Game" and the five senses as categories.

Sample Image Cluster



- **Persona Activities.** It is possible for students to use their imaginations in unique ways by adopting the persona of something or someone else. They can imagine they are a different person, a country, an animal, or the wind. In their minds, they can follow a butterfly, a bicycle, or a five-dollar bill. They might try writing from a variety of points of view (e.g., "becoming" colours, foods, furniture, tools, or musical instruments).

- **Dreams.** Both day dreams and night dreams can be sources for pre-writing activities. Day dreams can be used constructively by student writers when they day dream themselves into a celebrity's lifestyle or someone else's shoes, for example. Students might also imagine "what if" (e.g., what if I had a million dollars or what if I were a world leader). Night dreams might become topic sources if students are encouraged to remember their dreams (writing them down in a notebook kept by their bed), or to "borrow" dreams by asking friends or relatives about their dreams. Students may decide to use dreams as allegories or symbols in their writing.

- **Research.** Research can generate a great deal of useful material for writing. When students have thought of something that interests them, they can research the topic to find out about it. For example, if the topic is an old stone house, the student can trace its history in the local archives. If the topic is an animal, plant, or historical figure, research can be done by visiting the library or using the Internet. If the subject is a living person, the student can contact that person and request an interview, or the student might scan newspapers or local history books to get information about the town or community where the person originated. Familiarity with topics is necessary if students wish to write well about them. In addition, their research might spark a completely different idea.
- **First-hand Experience.** This is one of the very best sources of writing topics. Students can be encouraged to observe events directly and write down their impressions and interpretations.

Idea Notebooks or Journals

An idea notebook or journal should be kept for the purpose of recording anything that might be useful later on for creative writing projects. The notebook or journal might be a bound pad, a steno pad, a spiral notebook, or a loose leaf binder.

Students might also want to carry an additional, very small notebook with them at all times because topic ideas will not always occur to the student in school time. If students keep their notebooks with them and write in them often, these books will become filled with the raw material for creative writing.

In their idea notebooks, students may record such things as images, phrases, thoughts, story lines, experiences, encounters, or emotions. The following are additional suggestions which students may be given for their idea notebooks:

- record descriptions and details of your observations (people, places, events, etc.)
- record interesting conversations overheard (e.g., dinner table conversations, conversations overheard on buses)
- record accounts of your own and other's reactions to situations, events, news stories, etc.
- record ideas for plots that come from everyday experiences (your own and those of others)
- record multi-sensory images (tastes, smells, sounds, etc.)
- clip and paste newspaper or magazine articles, photos, etc.

Free Writing

Free writing is spontaneous writing that may or may not be connected to a particular writing project. Fifteen minutes is a suggested period of time for free writing. During this time students might try out a pre-writing strategy presented by the teacher, develop a topic previously explored, or create a first draft. This should be a quiet writing time.

During free writing, it is important that students write down all that comes to mind. They should write for the full amount of time without going back and rewriting or making corrections. In this way, they will explore their thoughts and moods without trying to be too correct too soon. They will become comfortable with writing as a constant practice.

Some of the writing students produce during this time will not be useful to them later. Free writing helps students to understand that not all writing they do is equally good, and not all writing must be kept. Writers must learn to discard. By the end of a writing project, they may have a different focus or angle on the topic or even a whole new topic, and keeping earlier words and phrases might ruin the final product.

On the other hand, during free writing students will often come up with ideas and phrases that lead them in an imaginative new direction. Because students are not focusing on a product, they take risks in free writing without realizing it. This can result in the discovery of something new--perhaps a new idea, skill, or insight.

Drafting

Creative writing requires blocks of time and students must be able to rely on specific planned time periods for their writing. Therefore, when students begin drafting a piece of writing, teachers should plan classes so that students have the time to work intensively on their drafts.

The important thing to remember about the first draft is that it is an opportunity to begin exploring the idea in a formal way; that is, to begin structuring the idea by taking it beyond notes, diagrams, and journal entries. After students have completed their pre-writing and/or first draft stages, their writing will begin to take shape. They will begin to organize their

thoughts. They will also begin to consider their intended meanings.

Individual Differences in Working Style

The drafting phase of the writing process refers, primarily, to the first draft. However, the writing process is not always cut and dried, and it is sometimes difficult to tell when the first draft ends and the second draft begins. In addition, some students will write a first draft slowly and carefully, while other students will write very quickly. There is no one correct way to write a first draft. Teachers should observe students' ways of working and try to decide when it is best to intervene with suggestions. They should encourage students to get to the end and to complete the first draft.

Some students will revise constantly, even while they are writing a first draft. As soon as they have a few paragraphs or stanzas on paper, they will get an idea for how to make the work better, and will begin again. Although a certain amount of this is fine, some students are such perfectionists that it is difficult for them to go on if they know something is wrong with the piece. These students need to learn that all first drafts are flawed. They can be encouraged to move on by being told that things will happen in the writing as they complete the first draft that will help them revise the beginning. Their writing will actually be better if they complete the piece and then revise in earnest.

Other students will write a complete first draft and immediately want to start something new. These students are good at getting to the end of a first draft, but are impatient with the whole process of revision. Of course, these students need to understand that revision is an expectation, and that their writing cannot reach its full potential without revision. However, teachers should realize that there are students who will learn by writing many different first drafts. Teachers should not limit these students' imaginations by forcing them to write a piece over and over again if they have lost interest in that piece.

Teachers can deal with these different types of students by establishing minimum requirements regarding number of pieces that must be revised, edited, and proofread. In addition, the teacher could establish further requirements for individual students based on their preferred ways of working.

Teacher Writing Time

The teacher should also write and become as involved as the students are in the world of language. When students are writing, the teacher should try to find ten minutes to write along with them. For the remaining student writing time, the teacher may wish to schedule individual student-teacher writing conferences, or to conduct informal conferences by conversing with students about their writing in a more informal manner.

Writing Folders

All writing drafts should be kept, not only while the writing is being developed, but also after it is completed. These drafts are valuable to the student as a collection of thoughts, writing projects, and sources for new directions. They are valuable to parents, as they provide the qualitative information that a mark cannot provide. They are valuable to the teacher as a means of looking back over the semester's work to observe development, find reasons for problems, and assess progress.

Students should keep all notes and drafts for a writing project in a writing folder. They should date their drafts. Students might keep another folder for pre-writing activities, some of which might not develop into writing projects.

> Note: Remember that the writing folder is different from the portfolio. The portfolio is a collection of writing assembled according to specific criteria, for the purpose of assessment and/or display. Students will assemble their portfolios from the work they have kept in their writing folders. For more information on portfolios, see the Assessment and Evaluation section of this curriculum guide.

Revising

Revising is a process of deciding what should be changed, expanded upon, deleted, added, or retained. Revising also includes editing and proofreading. Editing, although it occurs at a later stage of the revision process, still involves revising for structure, sentences, and words to make the work clearer. Proofreading involves revising for style, spelling, and mechanics, so that the presentation of the work is clean and correct. Editing and revising are not mutually exclusive, and can

occur a little at a time as the writer becomes more sure of a certain section of the project.

Methods of Revising

Writing is not a linear process; it is an organic one, where one thing affects another and ideas develop as the writing is in progress. Revision, then, can take many forms. The following are examples:

- One writer might make "successive sketches" of the same picture; the first sketches are very rough and vague, and each one gets clearer, more detailed, more accurate, and better organized.
- Another writer might get half way through a work, change his or her mind about the beginning, start over, write the ending, back up and change the middle, and so on.
- Some writers prefer to focus on one section of a piece at a time, going over that section again and again until they are happy with it, then moving on to another.

Other writers will:

- write alternate versions of the same piece from different points of view, then choose their preference
- take their central themes in several different directions, then work with the direction that most appeals to them
- write different scenes for the same characters, then choose those scenes which are most promising.

There is no one correct way to rewrite, nor is there a correct number of drafts that a writer should expect to complete. Each piece is different and as students become more experienced, they will begin to recognize their own preferred methods of revising.

As students work through their various drafts, a theme will gradually emerge. Their writing will take on a shape it did not have in the beginning. There is no "short cut" to this process. Often an original draft seems wonderful at the time, and then further writing produces an extension of it. The original draft serves as a stepping stone to the second draft.

Students are finished revision when the elements of their pieces all fit together and generally "feel right". When their pieces do what they want them to, even though there still may be some rough edges, they can move on to editing.

Some suggestions for revising appear on the next page.

Editing and Proofreading

Students should be reminded that editing and proofreading are aspects of the revision process. However, they are undertaken by most writers **after** significant revision has already taken place. When students edit, they should pay attention to things like rhythm, pacing, word choice, accuracy, and sentence and paragraph structure, depending on the genre of the piece. A piece that needs no more major revision may still require minor editing to ensure that:

- every word used is the correct one
- the rhythm of the sentences or phrases is correct for the piece
- there are no gaps that need to be bridged
- there are no extraneous words, sentences, or paragraphs.

Proofreading is essentially a technical task. Proofreading is a final check to make certain that everything in a writer's piece is complete and correct. It includes checking spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, capitalization, page set-up, and spacing.

Students and teachers may find editing guidelines in several writers' reference texts listed in the bibliography for this course. Recommended handbooks and dictionaries useful for proofreading are also listed.

Both peer conferencing and student-teacher conferencing will, at certain times, be focused on editing and proofreading. For the purposes of editing or proofreading, students may wish to conduct conferences with their peers in pairs as well as in a larger group.

Many students' pieces will be revised for the classroom audience only. However, some of each student's writing will be published for a wider audience. Publication is an incentive for students to polish their work by editing and proofreading. If students are preparing their pieces for publishing, they will want these pieces to be correct in every detail.

For published material, the teacher will probably wish to assume the final editing and proofreading responsibility. All writers who publish have editors--people who give the writing a final read and look at it in a more detached way. Students must become

aware that receiving additional comments from an editor does not necessarily reflect on their own editing abilities. Editors are simply able to isolate problems the writer may not have been able to recognize because of his or her closeness to the material.

Suggested Revision Guidelines for Student Writers

- Try focusing on your major concerns first (e.g., central plot, theme, image, metaphor, or character). After you have these working, look at slightly less important concerns (e.g., pacing, secondary images).
- Resist the urge to "polish" because, at this point, it can distract from your piece's more important problems. (It could also be meaningless, because you could decide to rewrite what has just been polished.)
- Let your writing take the direction it wants. New ideas and images may appear as you revise. Look at each on an individual basis; if it feels right, be willing to use it, even if it means abandoning your original intention or plan.
- Do not be upset if your piece seems awkward at first. This is common for first drafts. Anything you write can be changed. As you rewrite, your piece will steadily take shape.
- It is not uncommon for writers to like the draft of their project when they first complete it, and then be hypercritical of it the next day. Do not get discouraged. You will like it again once you get involved in the revision process.
- Before you begin a new draft, or after you have made some changes, read aloud what you have done so far, listening closely to the words and absorbing them. This sometimes helps you to notice things you might have missed previously.
- One of the most important aspects of the revision process is cutting or getting rid of all the things you do not need. You may decide to eliminate words or phrases, entire scenes, stanzas/sections, or anything in between. Although deciding what and when to cut is difficult at first, all writers come to realize that cutting is often essential in order to make a work better. The following might help you decide when cutting is necessary:
    - Cut anything which unintentionally repeats what you already said, which does not support your piece, or which does the piece more harm than good. (Remember that some repetition is intentional; if something is repeated for a reason, do not cut it.)
    - If you are uncertain about whether to leave something in or take it out, read the passage aloud twice, once with it in, and once without it. This should help you decide. If you are still unsure, ask a trusted peer what he or she thinks about the passage in question.
    - Cutting words and phrases should not result in changed meaning, unless that is what you intend. For example, you might reduce a very detailed paragraph to a sentence or two, shorten a long description to a few important details, or combine two or three phrases into one, and still retain the original meaning.
    - Once in a while, something that you have written may seem particularly good, but it does not fit into your piece. When this happens, you should cut it. However, you should save it in your writer's notebook for use at some other time.
- Throughout the entire revision process, it is helpful to continue to ask: What do I want to say? What do I want to have happen in this piece? Why did I choose this topic? What is it about this piece that interests me? If you find yourself unable to continue, return to your notebook or journal and look through it carefully. You will probably find something that will get you writing again.
- If, after all your best efforts, a piece simply does not work for you, put it away for a while. Be sure to save everything you have written, as you might get an idea for how to make it work.

Publishing

Publishing, for educational purposes, means making public and sharing with others. Students might post their work on a bulletin board, present their work orally, publish in a school or community newspaper, publish in a student anthology, or perhaps enter their work in writing or speaking contests. It is essential that students select their best work for publication or sharing, as the selection process encourages them to discriminate and develop criteria for judgement.

Teachers might establish a regular time in the schedule for students to prepare their work for publication or sharing. Activities might include:

- preparing for and arranging displays on walls and bulletin boards
- submitting writing to the school newsletter
- performing at school assemblies
- putting up community displays in store fronts or in local libraries
- sharing creative writing in an author's circle
- performing a student-written scene or dialogue for readers theatre or as street theatre
- making and showing a videotape
- having a creative writing fair
- sharing creative writing with senior citizens or hospital patients
- framing writing for display
- making a wall-sized mural or a billboard display
- decorating a T-shirt
- translating student writing into another language, then displaying it.

Formal publication can be exciting and gratifying for students, although it should not become the focus of the program. A student creative writing booklet or magazine can often be desk-top published right at the school. Students can enter their own pieces, design the look of the booklet and the cover, and create illustrations.

> Note: Some students may be reluctant to put their work on display. Although they should be encouraged to display their best work, their requests for privacy should be respected. Writing can be very personal and students might not want to share it with other students or teachers outside of the classroom.

Formal Publication

Formal publication can happen in many ways. Local and provincial magazines and newspapers will sometimes feature student creative writing, as will a number of literary publications. Some province-wide publications like *Windscript* (Saskatchewan Writers' Guild), *Golden Taffy* (Saskatchewan Teachers of English Language Arts), and *Young Saskatchewan Writers* (Saskatchewan Reading Council) are specially designed for student creative writing.

> Note: If students express interest in exploring the open magazine market, they must understand that acceptance or rejection is not a valid measurement of the quality of their work. There are many more submissions to a magazine than can possibly be published, and the editor's final decision is based on his or her personal preference. Some magazines receive 500 submissions for every six published, and even professional writers receive many rejections from magazines. In most cases, the classroom creative writing booklet is the best publication project for students. The open market can be discouraging at a time when students need to be encouraged to write and learn.

Contests

Some students may be interested in submitting to writing contests, although contests can also be discouraging because very few people win them. No student should ever be forced to enter a contest, and teachers should make sure students understand that entering contests is not the main reason for writing, and that writing is not a competitive endeavour. That said, contest deadlines do act as an incentive for some students to complete and polish their work. Sometimes entry in a contest includes a subscription to a literary magazine.

Preparation of Manuscripts

When students decide to display their writing or submit it to contests, editors, publishers, or the teacher, the appearance of their manuscripts is important. Students should present their manuscripts on white bond paper, double spacing their lines and leaving a two-centimetre margin on the sides and bottom. Pages should be numbered and the author's name should appear in a header or footer on every page. The author's name, address, telephone number, and/or e-mail address should

appear in the top left-hand corner of the first page. The title of the story, in bold or capital letters, should be centred on the first page. If the student is preparing poetry, each poem should be put on a separate page.

If students choose to send work to magazines or contests, they should prepare a very brief cover letter (a few lines will do). Editors prefer to receive unstapled manuscripts. They also want stamped self-addressed envelopes for the return of the manuscripts. Student writers can expect to wait from several weeks to two months for a reply. They need to be reminded never to take rejection as a reflection of their abilities as writers.

Conferencing

Conferencing, both peer and student-teacher, is an essential component of the creative writing program. It is useful for student writers to receive feedback on all stages of their works-in-progress. However, peer conferences can be destructive rather than constructive if they are not handled well. Students must learn how to present their work for feedback and how to give constructive feedback. It is the teacher's responsibility to observe peer conferencing sessions and intervene if they are not progressing in a constructive manner. The teacher should prepare mini-lessons, as appropriate, to ensure that students are learning and practising the skills of peer conferencing.

Not all students are alike in their need for peer comments. Nor are they alike in the ways they will find comments useful. Some students prefer to meet in small groups, while others prefer one on one conferences. Some students will be best served by teacher conferences. Although students should experience all types of conferences throughout the course, the teacher should attempt to determine student preferences and help students arrange the types of conferences that will be most useful to them.

Peer Conferences

The benefits of peer conferencing are as follows:

- Students have the opportunity to share their enthusiasm for writing with other students who have the same interest.
- Students show increased motivation to write.
- Students write for a real audience.
- Students receive prompts and varied feedback, from several different responders.
- Students learn to be more discriminating writers by:
  - reading what others have written
  - picking up ideas from other writers
  - developing standards through discussion of a variety of writing selections.
- Students learn to consider audience when they see themselves as mediators between their subjects and their readers.
- Students read the writing of others in order to comment usefully, thus gaining valuable practice in critical reading for a real purpose.

As a rule, a group of three or four is a good size for peer conferencing. Each member of the group can read aloud portions of what he or she has written (or the entire piece, if it is short enough) and receive feedback offered by the other group members. Members of each group may want to have photocopies of the materials ahead of time so they can prepare. The teacher may wish to join a group as well, with his or her topic choices, free writing, or first drafts.

Some students may find it useful, at least at times, to exchange their writing with one partner only. This could be true of students who prefer not to share their writing in groups, students who are writing about something very personal, or students who are writing in a style to which it is difficult for other students to respond. Even in a healthy classroom environment, some students will be protective of their writing, and their desire for privacy should be respected.

This is not to say that all students should not learn to give appropriate feedback to others when asked. The teacher should monitor peer conferencing sessions and help students make the choices that are best for them, and that will best help them grow in their writing abilities.

Tips for Successful Peer Conferences

- ***Conduct mini-lessons on appropriate conference behaviour and skills.***

  Students must be supportive of each other and may need instruction in developing the necessary group interaction skills, such as contributing, listening to the contributions of

others, responding to other members' contributions, encouraging quieter members to speak, and practising self-discipline. Students may also need help from the teacher in developing the vocabulary to express the responses they have.

- ***Establish conferencing guidelines with the students.***

  These are "rules of conduct" for peer conferences. They should apply to both the student writer and the peer responders. These can be developed by the class and the teacher, and can be revised as necessary. Post them so they can be referred to easily.

- ***Establish that the leader of the discussion should be the student whose writing is being discussed.***

  This places the student writer in control of the conference. He or she can have specific questions for the responders or ask for general feedback. The writer should see the session as a working session for his or her benefit, and try, as the chairperson, to keep the conference on track so that valuable information is gained. If the teacher senses problems, he or she should step in and model the behaviours of a good leader.

- ***Encourage students to recognize the developmental process of the peer conference.***

  Students generally experience four stages of peer response: sharing, summarizing, responding, and helping. It is useful for students to understand what type of response they want or are getting from the group.

  At the **sharing** stage, students support each other's efforts as writers. Hence, the first sessions of peer response might simply consist of members sharing several pieces of writing, if that is the only stage with which they are comfortable.

  Summarizing can occur when the writer feels confident that group trust has been established. Members of the group retell in their own words the content of the writing being discussed, so the writer can determine if the writing is clear to others.

  When students **respond**, they talk seriously about the ideas at hand, and how well the writer's format serves these ideas. Group members discuss their reactions openly and freely. From the reactions of the group, the student writer learns that writing is serious communication that constructs meaning.

  Helping is the final stage. Student writers are generally ready to help themselves as a result of the discussions which have taken place. Also, writers are often ready for some unobtrusive comments regarding writing conventions, word combinations, alternative approaches, or elaboration. In later conferences which focus on editing and proofreading, group members may help with things like spelling, usage, and punctuation.

Guidelines for Peer Conferences

Students should be provided with some written guidelines regarding their roles. Guidelines similar to the ones on the next page may be given as handouts or displayed in the classroom.

> Note: A peer conference should never be seen as a session of group or committee writing. Changes are always in the hands of the writer, and the writer is free to reject all suggestions if he or she chooses. The assumption should always be that the writer is the expert on the writing selection under discussion. Peers are there to respond only.

Student Guides to Peer Conferencing

Conferencing Guidelines for Writers

- Do not make apologies or explanations concerning your writing (e.g., I did not have much time).
- Never tell your readers how you want them to respond. When you know how your audience has perceived your writing, then you might ask them how they think a different audience might respond.
- Do ask specific questions if you know on what it is that you need feedback. For example, you might ask the group's opinion on whether you should cut a section or leave it.
- Pay attention to what responders have to say and think about what might be behind it. Although what they say may be wrong in your mind, it still might point out a problem you should take seriously.
- Listen openly to responses and take them in, but do not be made helpless by what is said. Remember that you are in charge of your own writing and you will decide for yourself what to do next with your piece.
- Remember that responders are giving feedback on a piece of your writing, not on you as a person.
- Remember that, even if your writing is based on personal experience, you are asking responders to react to the writing, not the experience or your feelings about it.

Conferencing Guidelines for Responders

- Focus on the writer's work. Stay on task.
- Point out and comment on ideas, words, and phrases which move you in some way or seem to have lots of energy.
- React to the writing only, giving specific responses to specific parts. Do not make personal comments or ask personal questions about something you think might be based on the writer's real experience. If the writer wants to tell you about it, he or she will. Even so, the purpose of the peer conference is to focus on the writing.
- Be sure to give an accurate account of what you understand the writer to be saying.
- It is not necessary to evaluate. Writers will gain advice and guidance through the interaction between you and their words.
- Avoid telling other group members how to feel and never quarrel with someone else's reaction.
- Try to understand other people's perceptions, rather than staying locked into your own impressions. (There will always be some words or passages that you will not perceive as others do.)
- Show appreciation for a writer's work, ask about its contents, describe what you like about it, and refrain from making negative judgements.
- Help writers to clarify their intentions for the work, but remember that it is not appropriate for you to try to "rewrite" someone else's work. The writer is the expert on each piece of writing.

Student-teacher Conferencing

Student-teacher conferencing is also essential. In some cases, student-teacher conferences can be more useful than peer conferencing sessions, depending on the student. Teachers should hold regular conferences with all students and make judgements about which students need more of their time. In addition, teachers should regularly talk informally with students as they are working.

The teacher might begin the conference by asking, "How is it going?" or "How can I help you?". It is important that teachers ask questions which are non-directive, non-evaluative, and non-leading, so that students will learn to evaluate their own writing. The teacher might ask directly, "What would you like to accomplish in today's conference?" or "What, in particular, would you like to talk about?". When discussion begins, it is extremely important for the teacher to be positive, and to communicate to the writer that something in his or her draft is worth saying. As the conference progresses, the teacher should continue to ask broad questions that invite response. Typical inquiries might be, "What idea are you developing?" or "How do you feel about the beginning?".

Students must feel that the teacher is interested in what they have to say, and the teacher should never imply that he or she has a greater knowledge about the topic than the student possesses. As with peer conferences, the student should be considered the expert on the piece of writing under discussion. When students are led to discover their own strengths, they become aware that revision does not mean starting all over again.

Authors in the Schools

As additional enrichment, teachers should make arrangements for published authors to visit their classrooms and spend time with their students. Visiting writers will sometimes conduct workshops, chair discussions, answer questions, or read from their own works. Authors may be available for several weeks in a semester, for one week, for a few days, or for a few hours. Students will benefit from seeing "real live" authors at work, and from hearing them read and talk about their writing. Having professional writers in the schools will help to create a generation of students who appreciate contemporary writing. It will also help to make students sensitive to their common experiences and the relationship of those experiences to language.

The presence of a professional writer in the classroom should stimulate students' imaginations through the sharing of creative discovery. Teachers who are interested in having professional writers visit their classrooms should contact the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild for further information and assistance. Their web site address is: http://www.skwriter.com/.

Students will also benefit from attending readings and workshops by authors. These are sometimes sponsored by libraries, community organizations, arts councils, bookstores, or publishers.

Note: The remainder of this Teacher Information section includes information on the four writing genres of poetry, short fiction, plays, and nonfiction. **It is not intended that the content provided be taught routinely to all students.** Rather it is provided as background for the teacher, to be taught as needed in the form of mini-lessons. Mini-lessons or presentations might be made to the whole class (e.g., a brief lecture on point of view) or to small groups of students (e.g., a brief discussion on precise adjective choice with four students working on poems). Students might also take charge of this type of content by presenting to each other.

Writing Poetry

The *Poetry Dictionary* defines a poem as:

> *a text or verbal composition, often written lines, whose language is compressed and resonant and which conveys an experience or an emotion; or simply an aesthetically pleasing arrangement of words* (Drury, 1995, p. 204).

Poets throughout the centuries have tried to define what poetry is to them, and have never been totally satisfied with their own definitions. Poetry has changed and evolved throughout the centuries and will continue to do so as ideas about language change, and as writers explore the potential of language to express ideas in new ways. Margaret Atwood discusses the evolving nature of poetry when she says, "Poetry is a form of human speech and it is used to express, among other things, sentiments that the writer considers appropriate to the occasion" (Atwood, 1982 , p. xxx).

Edgar Allen Poe said that poetry for him was a passion. Emily Dickinson said poetry could make her body so cold no fire could warm her. Robert

Frost said poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom. Sometimes, you cannot get poetry out of your mind. Poetry has the power to excite, anger, comfort, or calm its readers (Berbrich, 1977).

Poetry as a genre takes many forms and sometimes it is difficult to explain what makes a piece of writing poetry. However, poetry has certain qualities that can be articulated. Some of these qualities include its compression of statement, its rhythm, its use of sound, and its unique attention to line length and spacing (although prose poems may be in the form of paragraphs).

As an introduction to poetry writing, students could find a wide variety of "definitions" of poetry, and either present these definitions or display them in some way. They might also find and present a wide variety of types of poems, showing differences in form and in the use of rhythm and images. They may want to record their own definition of poetry in their journals, then compare it with their understanding after they have experienced poetry writing.

Reading and Discussing Poetry

There is no single collection of poetry that will provide an adequate variety of poems suitable for the study of poetry models. A wide range of poetry from many different anthologies should be available for reading, listening to, and discussing. Different poems will appeal to different students. Saskatchewan and Canadian poetry should be included in the discussion whenever possible.

The discussion of poetry should usually take place in small groups, using a type of reader response. Students should understand that any one poem may be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the reader's background experience, perception of language, and world view. The meaning of a poem evolves from the interplay between reader and text. Students will explore meanings for themselves as they become discriminating readers of poetry. They should record individual reflections and responses in their response journals.

Through discussion, students can help each other appreciate words, phrases, images, and scenes. They can discuss and respond to questions such as: What meanings do others see in this poem? Are there things I have overlooked? What makes this poem particularly appealing, challenging, or memorable?

Some students will gain writing ideas from the poetry that is studied: from the poetry's subject matter, the imagery, the tone, or even a specific poetic line. Even when students do not get their creative writing ideas from the study of poetry, poetry study still provides them with a valuable sense of what poetry is, what it looks like and sounds like, and what techniques are available to them for their own poetry writing.

Types of Poetry

It is not necessary that students in Creative Writing 20 try out many different types of poems. The important thing about the students' poetry is that it reflect their own ideas and interests. As a type of poetry is determined by content, it follows that not all types will be appropriate for the students' ideas. The following are the types most likely to interest students.

Lyric Poetry

Most students will want to write and study lyric poetry. Lyric poetry expresses imagination and emotion. It focuses on individual ideas and experience, and can be written in many different forms, including free verse. (Most contemporary poetry is written in free verse.)

Narrative Poetry

Narrative poetry tells a story using exposition, and often a combination of narration and dialogue. The story may be factual, imagined, humorous, or serious. It may be set in the past, present, or future.

Students who decide to write narrative poetry may use almost any type of format, as long as they have a scene, character(s), and a plot or a sequence of events. Sources of narrative poetry may be personal experience, history, the newspaper, the imagination, or a combination of these. Although poetry is not used as often as prose for storytelling today, students should be aware that storytelling was one of the original purposes of poetry.

Prose Poetry

Prose poetry is poetry that appears in paragraph form. A prose poem focuses on a singular idea or image, rather than on a narrative or series of events that result in some kind of change--as in a postcard story, which is a form of very short story that looks like a prose poem. (In fact, the lines between such

forms as prose poems and postcard stories can be very blurry.)

Found Poetry

Students with an interest in popular culture and social issues might be interested in found poetry. Found poems are those which are created from existing material. The author's role is one of identifying the poem and its meaning, rather than of creating it. Poets interested in this idea can find poetry in such unlikely sources as the newspaper, restaurant menus, and graffiti. The poet's interest is in the language and its meaning in a social context.

Dramatic Poetry

Dramatic poetry is poetry written for performance, and might incorporate the dramatic elements of action and dialogue. Poetry written in the speaker's diction also fall into this category (e.g., a monologue). Although dramatic poetry is similar to dramatic monologues or dialogues in plays, a dramatic poem is meant to stand alone and is not dependent on a larger work for its meaning.

> Note: Teachers and students should remember that the study of poetry is essential to the writing of poetry. Although students may draw their content from their own experiences, it is the world of literature that provides them with form and the tools of the trade.

Getting Started: Ideas for Student Writing

Poetry comes from our daily thoughts, experiences, and emotions, and from the writer's involvement with the subject matter. Ideas and topic choices, then, are endless. Students should be encouraged to write about topics in which they have an interest. To spark that interest or to develop it further, students may become involved in various activities. They might:

- explore their immediate surroundings
- investigate the thoughts, dreams, or customs of others
- ask questions (e.g., about family history, local news, past events)
- learn about news events
- read magazines
- recall travel experiences
- study art, photography
- listen to music
- read poems
- read fairy tales or children's literature
- talk to senior citizens
- imagine different scenarios
- reflect on human relationships
- recall childhood memories
- adopt a point of view other than their own
- create an imaginary listener for their poetry (e.g., someone dead, someone famous)
- observe the world around them.

Topics which students choose to explore through poetry may be as varied as the following: cities, nature, schools (e.g., teams, report cards), discoveries, disasters (e.g., storms, accidents), other people, hobbies, fantasies, events (e.g., rodeos, races, garage sales), sports, history (e.g., the Gulf War, the first motorized vehicle), places, the weather, food, health (e.g., the dentist, an incurable disease), animals, holidays, the night, colours, family, job experiences, entertainment (e.g., television, rock concerts, the movies), or everyday objects.

Suggestions for student writing topics must always remain suggestions. Teachers need to be good listeners and must be careful not to impose writing ideas that are not the students' own. However, teachers can help students get started by presenting pre-writing activities. (Suggestions appear in the section entitled "Module Overviews and Suggested Activities".)

> Note: Teachers should remember that these idea-generating exercises are to be used sparingly, as determined by student need. Students must be free to write about their own topics. Many students will come up with their own ideas for writing. They should be encouraged to record all ideas in their notebooks for possible use at a later date.

Beginning to Write

Modern poetry can be just about anything. It is often difficult to tell the difference between a prose poem, for example, and a very short story (sometimes called a postcard story). However, poets tend to have a very specific focus and a passion for language. Students should come to understand that a poem, like other art works, is an entity in itself,

more than simply the sum of its elements. A poem is a unique expression of a thought, emotion, or idea.

Although contemporary poetry is difficult to define, beginning poetry writers might pay special attention to the following:

- focus
- words
- images
- rhythm
- form.

Focus

Most poems have a very specific focus: a central image, a specific emotion, an epiphany, a revelation, an ironic twist, etc. It is a great challenge to take an idea, find the essence in that idea, and then express it using just the right words.

Students will often start with an idea that is too broad and difficult to capture. They will need to spend time learning how to focus their idea and exploring what about the idea is especially important to them. Through understanding the focus, they will be able to make other decisions that will allow them to construct and revise their poem.

Sometimes students need to be reminded that writing is an organic process. Their focus might not become clear to them until they have explored the larger idea through writing. Through the act of trying to capture an idea in words, the focus might emerge. It is then up to the writer to recognize it and explore it further.

The following can help students focus an idea:

- journal writing
- free writing
- concept webbing
- writing first drafts
- discussing ideas and drafts with peers or the teacher.

Words

All writers pay attention to word selection. However, because of the condensed nature and specific focus of poetry, word choice is a primary concern for most poets.

Student writers must learn to choose their words carefully. The following are some reasons for this.

- No two words have exactly the same meaning. A word either means what you want it to, or it does not. Running is different from jogging; a huge pizza is bigger than a large one; a gaunt wolf is more desperate or pitiable than a thin one.

- Words have a variety of connotations in addition to their denotation. Connotations include the public and private associations we have with a word (e.g., home as opposed to house). Connotations are extremely important to the poet because they express feelings and attitudes in addition to meaning determined by definition.

- Different words look different on the page. Shriek somehow looks more piercing than yell. Stumble look like a harder fall than trip. The look of a word is particularly relevant in poetry, which has a visual effect on the page.

- Different words have different rhythms. A writer might select a word for its sound, or how it fits into a phrase, or for the number of syllables it has and how it contributes to the rhythm.

Images

Poems are full of images and it is often an image that is the essence of a poem, or that captures its meaning. Student writers should be encouraged to concentrate on the freshness of images and on capturing meaning through the use of imagistic language.

Images can be expressed through vivid description. They can also be captured by similes or metaphors, which are both comparisons--the first linking two images specifically with "like" or "as", and the second implying a relationship. Symbols are also a means of expressing an image.

Similes are more than simple comparisons. In most similes, the area of similarity is considerably narrower than the area of difference. The effect of the simile depends on how well it can make the reader see the new relationship. A simile must bring together terms that ordinary experience suggests are unlike. No simile by itself ever seems truly poetic; however, it delights and surprises the reader in the context of the poem.

While a simile connects two dissimilar things by focusing on special similar qualities, a metaphor connects two things directly by focusing on the basic essence of each. A metaphor is more than a

substitution of one thing for another; it is the expression of the unique connections between things. In using a metaphor, a writer shifts from an explicit to an implied comparison. It is a shift from a statement which is literally true to one that is literally untrue but is figuratively effective.

A symbol is any detail--an object, action, or state--which has a range of meaning beyond itself. When an image works on a literal level and on an abstract level at the same time, it is a symbol. Often, the poet uses repetition of the symbolic image as a means of drawing it to the reader's attention. However, care must be taken not to make the symbol appear contrived; the symbolic reference is not effective if it seems forced. Also, when symbols are used deliberately in creative writing, they should not be puzzles to assemble or clues to hunt down. They should naturally complement the effect of the piece.

Rhythm

Rhythm refers to a pattern created by words, phrases, pauses, and punctuation. Patterns can be regular, irregular, or random. Rhythm can be both visual (how the words look on the page) and aural (how they sound).

Decisions regarding rhythm include:

- choosing words for their sound in addition to their meaning
- making choices about line breaks
- considering pauses
- considering beat and emphasis
- making decisions about punctuation
- matching the poem's pace to its tone
- matching the pace to meaning
- using devices such as repetition
- working with the natural ebb and flow of the language.

Making students aware of different kinds of rhythm in poetry can result in their conscious efforts to control rhythm in their own poems. Listening to the natural sound of the language and using it to advantage is often the most effective way to control rhythm.

Form

All poetry distinguishes itself through the specific format in which it is written. Many types of poetry are categorized according to the format used by the poet. In addition, some poems take a certain form on the page or form a kind of picture that relates somehow to the content.

For student writers, the most important concepts related to form are the following:

- form and content are connected
- form contributes to the meaning of the poem
- in most cases, the content of a poem determines its form.

Students can be made aware of the established formulas that exist for certain types of poems (e.g., cinquains, diamantes, tankas, senrus, rengas, haikus, limericks, sestinas, ballads, and odes). Occasionally, students will enjoy writing poetry with a specific formula in mind (e.g., such as a sonnet).

Formula poems should not take up too much of the students' time as the form of the poem then becomes the content and the students are not challenged to find form for their own ideas. (In rare cases, a student might develop a legitimate concern with a certain form, exploring the connection between that form and the expression of contemporary ideas.)

Most contemporary poetry is written in free verse. In free verse, the lines of poetry are not measured or counted for accents, syllables, or rhyme. Lines in free verse may be short, long, or variable. Free verse usually uses vivid images and sound patterns; it uses the characteristics of poetic language (e.g., figures of speech, sensory imagery, attention to detail).

> Note: Although some students might be interested in writing rhyming poetry, they should be reminded that the effort in creating rhyming poetry goes into making the rhyme work rather than finding the best form for the idea. However, if a student is especially interested in rhyming or in a type of rhyming poetry such as cowboy poetry, he or she should be encouraged to study different rhyming forms and purposes, perhaps in an independent project.
>
> Rhyme should never be a requirement for student poetry. In most cases students should be discouraged from trying to force rhyme onto their ideas.

Meaning in Poetry

The meaning of a poem is the experience it expresses. That experience may include: a statement of emotion, an understanding of human

character, a story the poem has to tell, a description, an amazing image, an epiphany, or some combination of these things. Meaning consists of much more than just the poem's central theme or message. Meaning is connected to how the poem makes the reader feel or think. For example, it may evoke thoughtfulness, puzzlement, laughter, surprise, joy, despair, anger, fear, or exhilaration.

Most importantly, writers of poetry must remember that no poem has a fixed meaning. Just as the act of writing is an interaction between the writer and the work-in-progress, reading is an interaction between the reader and the finished work. The experience of reading and the meaning will vary with each reader.

Students must be encouraged to value their own ideas, and to consider all the things that contribute to meaning in their work. As they write a poem, they are exploring a unique way of expressing their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. The writer is the person who controls how these are presented through decisions about word choice, images, form, and tone.

Tone

Tone in poetry is the term used for the writer's attitude toward his or her subject, audience, or self. It is the emotional meaning of the poem and is an important part of the total meaning. Readers will not completely understand a poem unless they have a sense of what the tone is (e.g., sarcastic, carefree, happy, angry, reverent, excited, or calm). Almost all the other elements in a poem help to indicate its tone (e.g., imagery, figurative language, rhythm, and form). Recognition of tone, on the reader's part, requires increasing familiarity with word connotations, alertness to nuances of language, and careful study.

The best method by which writers can practise incorporating a particular tone into their poetry is to have readers read the poetry, then discuss it among themselves and with the writer. The writer will then become aware of reader interpretation of her or his work, and will be able to assess how successfully the desired tone was incorporated into the poem.

Theme

The theme is a kind of unifying force which keeps the poem from "going off in different directions". The theme of a poem is not its subject, but rather its central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly. Often, the theme in poetry is some type of comment on the human condition. The theme is often an outgrowth of the subject--the poet's comment on the subject.

Revising First Drafts

Basic questions writers might ask themselves, after they have completed their first drafts, include the following:

- Is the focus clear?
- Does the poem explore or shed light on my idea or question?
- Are the images, descriptions, etc. interesting and convincing?
- Are all the words exactly the right ones?
- Does the poem display originality?
- Does the poem have the impact I hoped it would?
- Am I satisfied with the rhythms when I read the poem aloud?
- Is the poem punctuated in a way that contributes to the rhythm?
- Are the lines broken in the right places?
- Is the form effective?
- Does the form reflect the subject matter or content?
- Is the structure appropriate, and does it allow for meaning to be revealed as I wish it to be?
- Is the theme focused?
- Have I created the best possible ending or last line for my poem?

> Note: Beginning writers often write poetry as an outpouring of feelings. Although it is perfectly normal for teenagers to want to explore their feelings through writing, they should be reminded that one of the purposes of literary writing is aesthetic. Even when exploring very personal subject matter, they should be encouraged to think about such literary concerns as structure and language. They should also be encouraged to think about how their personal experience has meaning in the larger context of human experience.

Writing Short Fiction

Fiction is a mixture of experience and invention. It is a story that is not true, told in prose form. However, it is a reflection or representation of reality and it generally reflects the life experiences of the writer in some way, although not necessarily directly.

Every story operates within its own set of assumptions and expectations regarding what can or cannot happen. The following are some forms of fiction that students might explore:

- **Myths** are narratives that reflect deep human concerns and try to explain natural, spiritual, or social phenomena. Myths can be ancient or modern.

- **Fables and parables** are allegorical stories. They tell about one thing, but are really talking about something else.

- **Tales** are basic stories written first and foremost to entertain an audience and produce some kind of reaction in the audience--laughter, tears, anger, etc.

- **Mimetic** stories are modern stories that imitate real life. Characters are realistic and are guided

- by events and ideas we have come to accept as possible or probable in our daily lives.

- **Fabulous** stories are those which provide a premise that readers are asked to accept. A pattern of realism then operates in accordance with that accepted premise. Science fiction is an example.

- **Dream** fiction creates its own pattern, as dreams do. Dream fiction deals with the unconscious or the sublime. It is not realistic fiction.

- **Metafiction** is a term used to describe fiction that comments, within the work, on itself or on literature.

Getting Started: Ideas for Student Writing

Experience is probably the most relied upon raw material for fiction--experience that is transformed to create an illusion of reality. Student writers will rely heavily on their journals or idea books for subject matter. They will continue to add to their bank of ideas by constantly observing, reading, researching, brainstorming, and recording.

Note: Although the content of fiction comes from experience, the form the fiction takes will be determined by the students' knowledge of literary forms. Students should be reminded that, when they draw on real life, they do not need to retell something exactly as it happened. They can use the emotions and events in a new way. They can transform experiences into myths or metafictional stories, for example. It is important that they understand that fiction is a representation of life; it is not an imitation.

"Relationships" is a common theme in short fiction and one that students often choose to explore. Relationships (family, friends, dating) is an appropriate theme because of the human emotions and conflicts present in most relationships. The writer can often draw upon personal experiences and change them into something related, but different, for short story purposes.

"Memories" is another theme students like to explore. Questions a writer needs to ask, when recalling experiences or incidents, are: What happened? What was there about the experience which makes it unique and meaningful? What is the human truth or meaning that can come from exploring this incident?

Other sources for fiction include:

- observations
- photographs
- newspaper stories
- objects
- anecdotes
- stories told to you by someone else.

As a work of fiction develops, the original inspiration (a memory, for example) takes on a life of its own. Fiction writers often say that the story becomes so alive for them, they cannot remember what actually happened and what they have fictionalized. However, although the final story might contain very few of the facts related to the writer's experience, it may still capture the essence of a particular memory or event. That, in fact, is the goal: to find the essential truth in human experience; to make meaning out of experience through fiction.

Note: The process of writing a story is one of imaging it into existence. If the writer believes in the internal truths in the story, whether or not it is a realistic story, the reader will also be able to imagine the story to life.

Beginning to Write

There are many types of contemporary short story. They range in length from short postcard stories to novella-length long stories. They range in style from very realistic to completely fabulist. Whatever the type of story the students are interested in, the following are elements they should consider when drafting their stories:

- character
- plot
- structure
- point of view
- setting.

Character

Character is the most important element in short story writing. Character is what brings significance to plot and meaning to the story. The fiction writer needs to learn how to create characters who respond, not necessarily realistically but believably, within the world of the particular story.

The writer's purposes regarding characterization are:

- ***To create convincing characters.***

  This does not mean that writers take people they know and put these people into their stories. It does mean that they imagine characters to life, so that they seem like real people.

- ***To make the reader care about what happens to these characters.***

  If the writer is successful at "getting inside" the character being created, the reader will feel what the characters feel and recognize them as having unique human characteristics.

- ***To maintain consistency in characterization.***

  When fictional personalities have been characterized, they should act in a manner consistent with that characterization (unless their inconsistent behaviour is part of the story).

- ***To connect something of great importance to the main character, to the story's outcome.***

  In good stories, the characters are shown through the action, and the action is controlled through the characters. In this way, the plot, characters, and story ending are connected.

Methods of Characterization

Characters can be portrayed directly or indirectly. When using the direct method of characterization, the writer tells the reader what sort of person the character is, through description. The author informs the reader through exposition or analysis, or has someone else in the story tell the reader what a character is like.

Students attempting to use physical description to define their characters (e.g., describing speech idioms, movements, or physical attributes) should be aware that such description can result in a character stereotype. A good story is more concerned with what the character says and does, and how these things affect the outcome of the story. Although some stories do contain physical descriptions, some stories with very strong characterization contain no or very little physical description of the characters.

Using the indirect method of characterization, the writer provides the readers with information, but allows them to draw their own conclusions regarding characterization. Of course, the writer selects the information to be presented, so is still very much in control of the story. Indirect characterization may be accomplished through:

- **Setting:** The character may either fit comfortably into the setting or be an "outsider" for some reason. The resulting perspectives will be very different.

- **Action:** What a person does in a story reveals character and affects the outcome of the plot. The meaning of a story is often revealed by the choices a character makes.

- **Symbol:** Some writers use details and objects in a symbolic way to indicate what Tom Wolfe refers to as a character's "life status"--how a character views his or her position in the world. Such details might include brand names,

descriptions of homes and furnishing, and entertainment choices.

- **Dialogue:** What a person says reveals much about his or her character. Good dialogue is more than simply conversation. It reveals the internal truths of a character.
- **Thoughts:** Looking into a person's mind and listening to that person's thoughts gives readers a picture of what a character is like. Inner conflict can be revealed through thoughts, and the contradictions of a character become clear to the reader if the character thinks one thing and says or does another.

> Note: Some books on writing encourage students routinely to write character sketches that describe how their characters walk, talk, dress, etc. Students should understand that these details can be superficial and might not get at the character's inner self.

Dialogue

One of the most important purposes that dialogue has in realistic fiction is to reveal character. Writers must make every effort to have the fictional people they create speak "in character"; that is, in a manner that reflects what the character believes and how he or she usually behaves.

Dialogue in a short story must have a purpose other than simply representing conversation. However, to be convincing, dialogue must give the illusion of real "talk" within the context of the particular fictional world the writer is creating. The characters in a futuristic science fiction story might not talk the way the students talk, but they must still be convincing in the world of that story. The dialogue in *A Clockwork Orange* is a good example of this.

It is important for students to understand the meaning of the word "sub-text". In fiction, as in life, people often do not say exactly what they mean. The difference is that, in fiction, the text and sub-text of dialogue are carefully controlled by the writer. Tension can be increased in a story if the reader knows what the character wants to say, or is trying to say, or should say; the reader anticipates the character's dialogue and might or might not be rewarded.

A first step in learning to write dialogue is learning to listen and analyze all the various ways and reasons that people talk:

- to talk someone into something
- to gain information
- to exchange ideas
- to "test the water"
- to make someone feel at ease
- to threaten someone
- to think out loud.

Students should be encouraged to listen to many different conversations, read many examples of dialogue in stories, and analyze purposes of conversation and what is achieved through talk.

Dialogue can also be "poetry" in a story. If a writer captures the rhythms and nuances of the way people speak, there can be a tremendous amount of pleasure for the reader in simply enjoying the dialogue of the characters. This is not a concern for all writers, but to some writers dialogue can be musical.

Some students will find that dialogue is very important to them in writing their stories. Other students will incorporate very little dialogue. There is no rule concerning how much dialogue makes a good story. It all depends on the writer's style. Encourage students to analyze their own purpose for including dialogue and to understand what is accomplished in the story through dialogue. Their dialogue must have a purpose that is related to characterization, action, plot, or poetic language (aesthetic purpose). Dialogue must add to the story in some way.

Plot

Plot is that part of fiction that keeps the story in motion. Plot is what happens in a story. It is a sequence of cause and effect events.

It is important to distinguish between plot and meaning. Plot is one level of the story and meaning is another. For example, the plot of a story can follow a character's journey from one side of the country to the other on roller blades; the meaning of the story is something else again and is found in thematic concerns: the conflicts between human frailty and strength, for example.

Some stories are heavily plot-dependent, while others are "quieter" and less dependent on plot. A mystery story, for example, is usually heavily

dependent on plot for its success, and will often contain a complex series of cause and effect events (one thing leads to another). A Raymond Carver story, on the other hand, often has very little plot and is still successful as a short story.

Forward Movement in a Story

The book *Elements of Fiction* (Scholes & Sullivan, 1988) suggests that the following are relevant when examining plot in fiction:

- **Beginning and Ending.** Movement in some stories can be determined by looking at how things are different at the end from what they were at the beginning.
- **Changes in major characters.** Changes to the characters based on what happens to them and how they react (plot) can reveal the meaning of the story.
- **Stages in the Changes.** Characters do not change all of a sudden. There is usually a progression in a story that culminates in some kind of change.
- **Obstacles.** There are always elements working against changes in the story. These might be circumstances, other characters, the past, etc. They can be real or psychological.
- **Various lines of action.** Some complex stories have more than one plot that may or may not intersect. However, one line of action may shed light on another for the reader.
- **Characters or events that seem to make no contribution.** Sometimes there is an element in the story that is not involved in the plot at all, but does contribute to the meaning of the story.

Structure

Structure refers to the story's organization and is different from plot. Structure determines how the story is organized, and how meaning is revealed to or constructed by the reader. The following are a few examples of structures:

- **Chronological.** The events in the story are told as they happen, in time.
- **Rising action.** The story is structured around the cause and effect events of the plot, with the highest tension coming near the end (climax).
- **Flashback.** The writer begins at the climax or some important point in the story other than the beginning. The writer then flashes back to the past and provides details of the events leading up to the point at which the story began.
- **Non-linear.** Events or sections of the story appear in a circular or dream-like way and add up to something only after the reader has assimilated them all.

The structure of a story should be determined by the needs of the story. It is difficult, for example, to impose a rising action structure on a story that does not have a cause and effect type of plot. On the other hand, it would be difficult to write a suspenseful mystery story using a non-linear structure--the reader would have no idea what was happening.

Structure in story writing is a difficult concept and one that beginning writers often confuse with plot. The best way for students to learn about structure is to read, compare, and discuss many stories with a variety of structures. Discussion should focus on:

- what the structure of the story is
- how the structure relates to the plot
- why the structure is appropriate for the story being told
- how the story's meaning is either revealed or constructed by the reader through the story structure.

Meaning

Meaning and structure are closely connected. Where a writer places certain events, lines of dialogue, symbols, images, or introspections will determine how the reader finds meaning in the story. The following are examples:

- Look at a line of dialogue such as, "I wanted a different life". Where that line of dialogue is placed, and in what context, will determine the importance a reader attaches to it. It can be banal, or it can be revelatory, depending on where the writer places it.
- Imagine that a story contains the images of a white table cloth, a large white bird in flight, and a white wedding dress. These images and the associations the reader makes with them are obviously important to the meaning of the story. However, if they are all presented in one paragraph near the beginning of the story, they will be overbearing and lacking context. The

writer must place them carefully in the story so that meaning is gradually constructed through the images and their appearance.

> Note: Students should understand that it is not just what happens in a story that allows the reader to construct meaning. How the meaningful aspects of the story are presented (or how the story is structured) determines what the reader makes of them.

Theme

Theme and meaning are closely connected, although theme is usually something a reader thinks about more than a writer. Most writers do not set out to write a story about a certain theme, although a student might say, "I want to write a story about justice" or "I want to write a poem about love". Although this is fine as a starting point, students should be encouraged to focus on their story and its characters rather than the theme itself, when they begin developing their story. During revision they can think about what the story is saying in terms of theme and whether they need to give the thematic ideas more focus.

Short story writers strive to bring some element of human existence alive. When they do this with conviction, theme naturally arises out of what they have written. Readers, then, state the generalizations for themselves.

Point of View

Point of view refers to who tells or narrates the story. In some stories, the narrator or storyteller is the writer, but usually the narrator tells the story on behalf of the writer, even if the story is told in the first person. (The "I" character in a first person story does not have to be the writer.)

> Note: Point of view is one of the most important decisions a writer makes because it determines how much the reader is allowed to know, to what extent the reader can "see inside" the characters, and through whose consciousness the story is told.

The following describes the four most common points of view:

- **First Person Point of View**

  In the first person point of view, the narrator is a character in the story and speaks from a first-person perspective. (E.g., "I awoke one morning to find the front door wide open and most of my possessions gone, even the dog. I immediately fell into despair, because the dog was my only companion.") The narrator can be either a main character or the person telling the story of the main character. The important thing to remember about first person point of view is that the story is told through the consciousness of one person, so whatever that person thinks determines how the story is told. The main advantage of the first person point of view is the sense of reality and immediacy it provides. Also, if the reader believes in the first person narrator, he or she will believe in the story. The disadvantage is that the reader can have only the information the narrator has. The narrator cannot see what happens behind closed doors.

- **Third Person Limited Point of View**

  Using this point of view, the writer tells the story in the third person, but from the viewpoint of one character in the story. (E.g., "Larry awoke one morning to find the front door wide open and most of his possessions gone, even the dog. He immediately fell into despair, because the dog was his only companion.") The events of the story are seen through the eyes of, and understood through the mind of, that one character. The writer reveals no knowledge of what other characters are thinking, feeling, and doing, except through what the chosen character-narrator can observe or infer. The character telling the story might be either a participant or an observer. The reader can have only the information or knowledge the narrator has.

- **Omniscient Point of View**

  In the omniscient point of view, the story is told using the third person, but the writer can go into the minds of whatever characters he or she chooses. (E.g., "Larry awoke one morning to find the front door open and most of his possessions gone, even the dog. He immediately fell into despair because the dog was his only companion. The dog, however, was having the time of his life, chasing a rabbit and thinking about rabbit stew".) The writer's knowledge is unlimited. She or he can tell

readers what two, three, or all the characters are thinking and feeling. The reader can have whatever information the writer wants him or her to have. The omniscient point of view is extremely flexible, but must be used very carefully. If the story's viewpoint is continually shifting from character to character, the total unity of the piece could be destroyed.

- **Objective Point of View**

  In this point of view, the narrator can comment only on what can be seen or heard. He or she cannot enter any character's mind. (E.g., "Larry awoke one morning to find the front door wide open and most of his possessions gone, even the dog. Larry picked up the dog's empty dish. Then he sat on the porch with his head in his hands.") The reader sees the characters in action and hears what they say but can only infer what they think or feel, or what their personalities are like. The advantages of the objective point of view are that it allows for a great deal of action and speed in a story, and it allows readers to make their own interpretations.

Some novelists mix point of view, writing one section in the first person, for example, and another section in the third. Most short story writers stick to one point of view for the duration of a story (although, of course, there are exceptions).

Tense

Although tense might appear to be a mechanical concern, it is connected to point of view and can be extremely important to a story. When students decide on point of view, they will also have to decide on tense. They might write a story in one tense, and then change their minds and experiment with another. When they have decided, they should take care to be consistent. Inconsistency in tense is a common mistake made by beginning writers.

Most stories are written in either the past tense or the present tense. The present tense has the advantage of being immediate; the reader's knowledge grows at the same time as the characters' knowledge. Past tense has the advantage of distance. The narrator can have an introspection that comes with time having passed.

Setting

A writer chooses a particular setting for the short story, not because of the need to be realistically accurate, but because of what it will accomplish for the story. Setting is used for a variety of purposes.

- The setting can reveal the main character's relationship to the place where he or she is in the story--whether he or she is connected to the setting, at home in it, an outsider, a guest, etc.

- A setting that is vivid increases the credibility of character and action. If the reader accepts the setting as real, that reader is more likely to accept the characters who live there, and their behaviour, as real. (This applies to fabulist settings as well as realistic settings.)

- The setting of a story often has a direct connection to the story's meaning. For example, a description of a house can indicate an overall feeling of loneliness and isolation--a feeling which can be connected to character and theme. Hence, a reader who accepts the particular meaning which a setting may have is also accepting the writer's intent.

- The setting can be used to create mood and atmosphere, if these are important to the story.

- Sometimes, the setting will hold keys to understanding the main character(s) or the supporting character(s). Where a person lives is often very much a part of who that person is.

Note: Students should remember that all fictional settings (even though they give the illusion of reality) are imaginary. Their job as writers is to imagine the setting to life, whether it is a real setting or an imaginary one.

Revising First Drafts

It is not possible to come up with a list of revision questions that will apply to all stories. The criteria for one story might not apply to another. There are, however, some general questions that apply to most stories. When the student has looked at the general questions, he or she can make a checklist of relevant specific questions that can be put to peer responders.

Some general questions that a student can ask about a story are as follows:

- What was the original inspiration for the story?

- Has that changed? If so, how?
- What is my intention for the story now?
- Does it fulfil my intention?
- Are all of the parts of the story that I have included necessary?
- Are any important parts or ideas missing?
- Is the story interesting?
- Does the story say something about human experience that I believe?
- Have I created a world for the story that my readers will believe?
- Are my characters and their dilemmas interesting?
- Is there movement of some kind in my story, either from beginning to end, or within characters?
- Are the stages of movement logical and believable?
- What is the effect of the point of view I have chosen?
- Is it the right point of view for the story?
- Is the tense the right one for the story?
- What narrative elements do I handle well in the story (dialogue, introspection, action, description, exposition)?
- Which ones should I look at again?
- What is the most successful thing in the writing of the story?
- What is the least?

Writing Plays

A play is a complex art form that is concerned with the representation of people in time and space, their actions, and the consequences of their actions. Actions and consequences are extremely important in most plays.

Play writing is similar to fiction writing in some ways: both depend on character and forward movement. A play is also similar to poetry writing in its attention to unity and language. The major difference is that a play must be dramatic in some way; that is, the forward movement must be connected to "dramatic action". The writer controls the forward movement through the characters, what they say and do, and the consequences, rather than relying on other means such as exposition.

A play is a dramatic production that begins with tension, usually arising from an initial dramatic question. One way of looking at this is to ask: Who is the main character of the play? What does that character want most in the context and time frame of the play? What and who are stopping the character from getting what he or she wants? Although this is too simplistic to work for all plays, it is useful for beginning writers and helps them understand the concept of dramatic action.

In a very short play (five or ten minutes) the tension might build to one main conflict (physical, moral, or psychological). In a longer play, tension builds in a series of conflicts (sometimes called rising and falling action). In some plays the conflicts might be physical; in most plays, they are internal and psychological. The latter are the most interesting because they often indicate the play's concern with "the human condition".

In this class, teachers and students should separate writing and performance. Students should concentrate on learning to write dramatic characters and dialogue. Although performance aspects cannot be completely separated from the writing, students need not concentrate on elements such as sets and lighting. Stage directions need only be minimal--whatever directions help the reader to understand the play, whatever actions help the reader understand the words a character says. This frees students to concentrate on dialogue, which is the most important element in a play. In most plays, it is the dialogue that contains the dramatic action, not the stage directions.

The success of a play depends largely on the interaction between the audience and the play. Playwrights usually "workshop" their plays before they are produced. These workshops involve actors and are opportunities for the playwright to see how his or her words can be interpreted, how the dramatic action unfolds, and how the words sound. Workshops are not the same as rehearsals for a performance and, unless the play is at a later stage of development, do not include physical movement and blocking. Actors usually read the play seated at a table, especially if the play is at an early stage. In this class, peer conferencing can be in the form of workshops, when appropriate. Students can read each other's plays aloud, as actors.

A play is a very difficult thing for students to write, in part because it is such a complex form, and in part because most students have seen and read a limited number of plays. The concepts of dramatic action and dramatic dialogue are unfamiliar, and students will have to learn that dialogue in a play can never be static and must move the play forward in some way. The recommendation, then, is for students in this course to concentrate on scenes and very short plays. In most cases, the end result should not be a formal performance of the play for an audience.

However, a staged reading of the play could take place in the classroom at the publishing or presentation phase of the writing process. A staged reading is a reading done by actors with scripts. They may read seated at a table or standing with scripts on music stands. Sometimes a staged reading is presented with minimal movement of characters. If the students wish, a small invited audience could be present (e.g., principal, parents, other students).

> Note: In some cases a student might write a play that is ready for full performance in the school environment. The student might work on an independent study project with a drama teacher and drama students. That is preferable to the whole creative writing class spending time on performance elements. Most students will benefit more from time spent on the words and language of their plays. Those students who are especially interested in play writing should be encouraged to take drama as an elective, in order to learn more about performance.

Getting Started: Ideas for Student Writing

Plays generally begin with a situation, some kind of conflict or struggle, and forward movement toward an outcome or conclusion. Plays can arise out of a writer's own experience, just like stories do. The challenge for the student is to learn the meaning of dramatic dialogue and dramatic action in order that they can translate their experiences into something that is uniquely drama, rather than fiction or poetry.

The following are some sources of ideas for student plays:

Situations. A character finds himself or herself:
- in too deep
- in a potentially embarrassing situation
- in an outrageous or bizarre situation
- wanting to make things right
- knowing something he or she would rather not know
- stranded in some way
- wanting something that is difficult to attain.

Dilemmas. A character finds himself or herself:
- with secret information
- caught between two people
- being forced to take sides
- having to choose between what is good for the individual and what is good for the group
- having to give up something in order to get something else.

Historical Stories. Students might choose to write about:
- a local hero
- an historical event in the community
- something fictional set in another time
- a courageous act
- any historical figure or event.

Adaptations. Students could adapt:
- their own short stories
- their own narrative poems
- myths, fables, legends
- scenes from Shakespearean plays, set in modern times or another era (e.g., the musical *West Side Story* is a re-telling of the *Romeo and Juliet* story, set in New York in the 1950s).

Parodies. Students could write parodies of:
- TV shows
- movies
- famous plays or novels.

What If. Students could ask "what if" about any situation or characters:
- what if you met a person who looked exactly like you
- what if a completely responsible person woke up one day and decided to be irresponsible for twelve hours
- what if you decided to give away every material thing you owned.

Beginning to Write

Students should begin by writing very short plays that are complete in themselves or scenes that might become part of longer plays. A scene is a section of a play in which something happens that moves the play forward. A scene has its own structure and often has its own conflict and rising action. A scene can be thought of as a wave, with its own crest and denouement. Unless a student is especially interested in play writing, there is no need for students to write more than scenes or very short plays in this course.

Students can begin by writing short scenes with the goal of understanding the following concepts:

- characters
- stasis

- actions and consequences
- dialogue
- what if.

Characters

Students often make the mistake of thinking that a character is a person with distinctive quirks. We often say about a person who amuses us, "He's a real character". Students need to understand that, in drama, any character can be interesting if the writer gives that character an interesting dilemma. A character in drama does not have to have distinctive physical characteristics or a unique way of dressing in order to be an individual. Dramatic characters are distinguished by what they say and do, and what choices they make.

Students can begin to understand character in drama by thinking about characters from plays they know (*Romeo and Juliet* or *King Lear*, for example). It is not Romeo and Juliet's external characteristics that are essential to the play. It is their situation, their internal conflicts, and the choices they make that create a moving and interesting play. In the case of King Lear, what matters is that a well-meaning decision made by Lear leads to dire and tragic consequences. Of course actors create a physical presence in their characters, but to the writer, the internal essence of the character is more important. Understanding this frees students to place characters very much like themselves or the people around them in challenging situations.

Playwrights rely on action and dialogue to reveal character (that is, what characters do and say in response to situations created by the writer). Character and action are inseparable; it is the character's personality, morality, past experiences, and world view that determine how the character will react in given situations or toward other characters.

Throughout the course of a play, major characters undergo significant changes. This does not mean their personalities should change. After all, personalities need to be consistent to be believable. However, it does mean that there may be changes in attitude or in fortune, or that the audience comes to view the characters in a different light.

Characteristics are not something the writer "lays on" the characters. That is why it is inadvisable for students to create character sketches or lists of personality traits for their characters. The danger in doing this is that the characters will not be genuine, but will be constructed as stereotypes. If students know the characters they want to write about, they should go ahead and write, and allow the depth of the characters to emerge in the writing, through the engagement of the writer's imagination, and what the characters do and say in certain situations created by the writer.

Stasis

"Stasis" is a word that might be useful to students in trying to decide what they might write about. In a play, stasis refers to the balance that exists at the beginning of a play, at various points during the play, and at the end of the play. Students can examine the state of stasis at the beginning of their plays and how the forward movement begins when the balance is upset by something. For example, in the play *Hamlet*, Gertrude has remarried after the death of her husband, Hamlet's father, and life appears to be back to normal. Then the ghost of Hamlet's father appears and Hamlet decides to avenge his father's death. If Hamlet did not make the decision to avenge his father's death, life would go on and there would be no play. However, Hamlet makes the decision and takes action. The stasis is upset and the play begins to move forward.

There may be several different points of stasis in a play, where balance is achieved and then upset again by a new obstacle or conflict, or by a new development in a character's thinking. It is useful for students to compare the beginnings and endings of their plays and scenes by looking at how the state of stasis has changed.

Actions and Consequences

It is essential that student playwrights understand that "action" defined by action verbs (running, jumping, fighting, eating, etc.) is different from the concept of dramatic action. Dramatic action in a play cannot be separated from the play's characters. Dramatic action refers to the forward movement of the play, and this is usually achieved through what the characters say and do, and the consequences.

Hamlet and *Macbeth*, with which students may be familiar, are good plays for discussing actions and consequences. For example, in the first scene of *Hamlet*, the ghost of Hamlet's dead father is seen by Hamlet's friend Horatio. Horatio decides to tell Hamlet about the ghost. As a consequence, Hamlet decides to try to speak to his father's ghost. As a consequence of that, Hamlet decides his father was murdered; he acts to avenge his father's death, and so on. The entire play can be looked at a series of

actions and consequences, moving toward an ending.

Saskatchewan writer Connie Gault's play *The Soft Eclipse* is an example of a modern play that, although "quiet" in terms of subject matter (no sword fights or wars on stage), is full of dramatic action. The play begins on a hot day in a small prairie town. The town gossip, Ina, learns that the long-absent husband of Mrs. McMillan has just died. The decision is made to keep this news from Mrs. McMillan, and the rest of the play is built on the consequences and complications that result from that decision.

Dialogue

Dialogue in drama strives to move the play forward in some way. The dialogue can contribute to the dramatic action of the play or can reflect inner conflicts.

Dramatic dialogue is dialogue where one character speaks to "act" in some way upon another: to force the character being spoken to into some kind of action that will move the first character closer to what he or she wants in the context of the play. The simplest way to think of dramatic dialogue is as dialogue that has a specific purpose related to action.

In everyday life, one person in an elevator might say to another, "Nice day". There is no real purpose other than to make small talk. The first person is not trying to get the second person to do anything that will have a particular consequence. On the other hand, in a play a person would have a reason for saying, "Nice day". The following is an example: It is early spring. A woman suspects something is buried in her garden, but she is afraid to dig and find out herself. She wants the gardener to do it, but she is afraid to tell him what she suspects in case she is wrong. It is not quite late enough in the spring for gardening, but she tries to hurry the gardener along. She says, "Nice day", as a hint that he should dig the garden.

Sometimes a character's reason for speaking might be related to inner conflict. The following is an example: A character is trying to make a decision about something that could have important consequences. The character is at a bus stop, mumbling to herself, weighing the pros and cons of various alternatives. Another character is standing next to her, waiting for the bus. He tries to make small talk by saying, "Nice day". The first character does not hear him and continues mumbling to herself. Finally, she makes a decision and says to herself, "Yes, that's it". Then she sees the man standing next to her and says, "Nice day". The sub-text of what she says is, "I know what to do. I'm back in the world".

The important thing for students to understand is that all dialogue in a play has a purpose within the context of that play. The biggest mistake beginning writers of dialogue make is having characters exchange lines that do not move the play forward in some way.

What If

"What if" is at the root of all play writing. Students can ask themselves "what if" at any point in their notes or draft writing and examine a multitude of consequences. "What if" can help them see the many directions their play could go and the many actions their characters could take.

Asking "what if" is one of the pleasures of play writing, as it can open the students' ideas up to a range of imaginative possibilities. The important thing is that students look at the answers to their "what if" questioning in terms of consequences--if this happens, then this might happen as a result, and so on. Whatever they decide, it should move the play forward in some way.

Sample Scenario

The following is a scenario describing how a student might begin writing a play.

The student records in her notebook a description of a humorous conversation she overheard in the grocery store: A man and his wife were arguing about whether to buy Christmas oranges. The man insisted that he was allergic to the smell and could not have them in the house. The wife said it was all in his head. She said she looks forward to Christmas oranges all year and why should she not have some when his problem is all in his head.

The student begins by thinking about stasis: There are no oranges in the house. Everything is fine.

The student now thinks about the question, Who is the main character? She decides it is the wife. What does the wife want in the scene? The student decides the wife wants to prove to the man that his "allergy" is all in his head. What is standing in the

way of the wife getting what she wants? The student decides it is the man's stubbornness and his refusal to change his mind, even after the wife proves he is not allergic to the smell of oranges.

The student now has the information she needs to write a scene or a very short play from her notes. Her dialogue will be dramatic dialogue because her characters have a purpose for speaking that is related to action (e.g., the main character's purpose--to trick her husband into admitting he is not allergic to the smell of oranges; the husband's purpose--to keep from admitting that he was wrong).

The student begins the play with the man alone in the house reading a newspaper. The wife comes in with groceries. The audience sees her hide a bag of oranges. The husband does not see her. The wife busies herself in the kitchen and then says, "Do you smell anything?".

Now the student asks, "What if ...?". What if the man says yes, he smells oranges? What if he says no, he cannot smell anything? What if he says no, but then develops strange allergy symptoms? What if he dies in his sleep that night and the wife thinks it was her oranges that killed him? What if he finds the oranges where she hid them and decides to play some kind of trick on her?

The student will probably not know how the play or scene is going to end until she has worked on it for a while. When she has decided what it is about (e.g., revenge), then she can start working toward a meaningful ending. If the student is working on a scene that is to be part of a bigger play, she should concentrate on moving one idea forward from the beginning to the end of the scene (e.g., a scene in which the wife convinces the husband, even though he is suspicious, that there are no oranges in the house).

> Note: Some students might be interested in writing radio dramas, either in this module or in the Independent Project module. The basic elements for radio drama are the same as for stage plays. The challenge is for students to make the characters and setting clear for the listening audience.
>
> Film scripts, on the other hand, are very different from stage plays because much of the story in film is told using visuals. Students with an interest in writing for film might choose to explore their interest in an independent project. They might focus on the role of text and dialogue in film.

The Dramatic Plot

A dramatic plot begins with a concept. A concept can be described in a complete sentence or two. (E.g., A prince decides to avenge his father's murder. He becomes so obsessed with his mission that he brings about the downfall of his whole family.) The basic unit of plot development is the scene, although not all plays are written in scenes. Some plays comprise only one scene. Other plays comprise many short scenes. Scenes can change without any characters leaving the stage.

Dramatic Questions

The dramatic question is what "hooks" the audience's attention before the theme or story line becomes clear. Examples of dramatic questions are: Who did this? What is happening? Will she succeed? Will he find out what we know? Most plays move from one dramatic question to another so the audience wonders about both immediate and final outcomes.

Dramatic Action

Dramatic action is the very core of a play. It does not refer simply to actors moving around on stage. It is a want, a need, a desire, or an objective pursued by the major character(s). Dramatic action must be:

- **Clear.** The playwright must set down clear action through the dialogue.

- **Strong.** A character must know what he or she wants or the audience will lose interest.

- **Incorporated into the dialogue itself.** In most cases, playwrights do not depend on stage directions for providing the action needed. (There are certainly plays where actions without dialogue have symbolic or other significance. However, it is important for students to focus on learning to write dramatic dialogue, rather than relying on physical movement to move their play forward.)

There are several types of recurring action in plays:

- **discovery action,** where the main interest is to find something out
- **persuasive action,** where a character wants to get someone to do something
- **goal action,** where a character can want something either concrete (e.g., money) or abstract (e.g., power)

- **revenge action**, where a character has a strong desire to get even with someone
- **escape action**, where someone needs to get away
- **testing action**, where a character finds out something about someone (e.g., can that someone be trusted?)
- **getting acquainted action**, where a character is trying to get to know someone else
- **choice action**, where a character must decide between two major actions in the play.

The above list does not state all of the possible major actions, but it does provide the most common ones. Playwrights see drama as action and try to create strong "action" objectives for the characters in their plays.

Pace

Pace is especially important in a play. Pacing can be thought of in the same way one thinks of rhythm in music. There is no one pace that is correct for all plays. Obviously, mystery plays or thrillers have a faster pace than quieter character-based dramas. Some scenes call for a slower pace so the audience can take in information or enjoy the beauty of the language. The important thing is for the pace to be well thought out, varied, and in keeping with the content of the play.

Conflict

Conflict is what gives drama its energy. Many plays have a network of related conflicts connected to their characters' wants, needs, and internal questioning. All plays will have a major conflict which will likely consist of a struggle between the protagonist and antagonist. Full length plays of more than one act generally include sub-plots involving secondary characters who strengthen, echo, or contrast the conflict(s) in the main plot.

Inner Conflict

Inner conflict, often the most interesting of conflicts, refers to characters struggling with themselves. Characters may be torn between love and hate, or between courage and fear. They also may be torn between two ethical positions or attracted to two different people. Revealing what goes on in the mind of a character by using only dialogue and action can be quite a challenge. Writers might try giving the character with inner conflict a personal friend or confidant who is not central to the action--someone in whom that character can confide. Often, characters reveal inner conflicts through action that is out of the ordinary for them. Some writers successfully use a monologue spoken by the character to reveal his or her inner conflict, either directly or ironically.

Conflict is sometimes the result of an individual being at odds with society. Society as a whole can be the play's antagonist. Of course, different writers will present different views of society. Writers who are interested in this kind of conflict must be careful not to sermonize or their play will become too didactic.

Obstacles

Many playwrights view conflict as a form of obstacle to the action--an obstacle being an obstruction or hindrance standing in the way of someone getting what she or he wants. This obstacle could be an idea, a deadline, a person, a law, a natural disaster, or a condition such as illness or poverty. Whatever the specific obstacle is, it is something that characters strive to overcome, whether or not they are successful.

Obstacles may be located either outside or inside a character. Examples of external obstacles are: a locked door, an antagonistic relative, a weapon, a deadline, a vicious dog or a bully, a disease, or fear of public ridicule. Examples of internal obstacles include psychological obstacles (e.g., a conflict of loyalties) and flaws in characters (e.g., greed or vanity).

Action comes up against obstacles in plays, thus creating dramatic tension. Often a character must face both internal and external obstacles.

Structure in Drama

A discussion of structure in drama is similar to a discussion of structure in fiction. Structure refers to the play's organization and is not to be confused with plot. Structure determines how the play is organized, how unity and balance are achieved, and how meaning is revealed to or constructed by the reader. Playwrights carefully structure their plays in accordance with their subject matter, so that emotional truths will emerge at the right moments.

The structure of a play should be determined by its needs. The best way for students to learn about structure is to see, read, and discuss a variety of plays, including very short plays. Discussion should focus on:

- what the structure of the play is
- how the structure relates to the plot
- whether the structure is linear or non-linear
- whether the structure gives a sense of balance
- how the play is structured in scenes or acts
- whether the scenes are clearly broken out in the play or whether the play's scenes are "hidden" in the action of the play
- why the structure is appropriate for the particular play
- how the play's meaning is either revealed or constructed by the reader through the play structure.

Symbols and Images

Symbolism in plays can be effective if the symbols are used well and delicately to construct meaning. Symbolism can appear in the language of the play or in the visual aspects of the play (set, props, costumes, lighting). Recurrent images (either real or in figurative language) are also important for constructing meaning. Images do not have the direct meaning that symbols do, but they help the audience build meaning through the associations they have with the images.

Design

There may be some aspects of the set, costumes, or lighting that are necessary to understanding the text or structure of the play. If a writer sees these things as being essential to meaning, he or she should include them in the script. However, the writer should be aware that creative designers can come up with wonderful ways of complementing text through design and the script should not restrict them unnecessarily.

Revising First Drafts

Basic questions writers might ask themselves when revising their plays include the following:

- Are the characters interesting and convincing?
- Is the dialogue effective?
- Does the script display originality?
- Does the play have the dramatic impact it should? Are the dramatic questions strong enough to hold audience interest?
- Has the plot come together effectively (cause and effect, actions and consequences)?
- Are changes or epiphanies experienced by the characters logical? Are they the result of the play's dramatic action?
- Is the structure appropriate and does it allow for meaning to be revealed as I wish it to be?
- Might an audience be able to construct meaning in a satisfying way?
- Are the themes well developed, and will they reach or challenge the audience in some way?
- Have I created the best possible ending for my play?

Writing Nonfiction

People sometimes assume that nonfiction writing exists only to provide information and is not intended to be read for pleasure. However, this is not necessarily true. Nonfiction writers can adapt many strategies and techniques to make the subject matter interesting for the reader, but still maintain the integrity of the subject matter.

The term "literary nonfiction" refers more to styles of research and writing than to any one sub-genre of nonfiction or journalistic writing. A biography can be literary, as can a feature article, a history book, or a human interest story. It is the writer's unique style, research methods, and use of language that make a piece of writing creative or literary.

Literary nonfiction writers often include their own perspectives and interpretations, working under the assumption that presenting facts free of interpretation or perspective may very well be impossible, and that their interpretation is one to add to many others. The body of work and variety of interpretations, perspectives, and points of view work together to build a history or to uncover the truth.

For this course, literary nonfiction can be identified by the following characteristics.

- The work reflects the writer's desire to involve the reader.
- The work makes use of various techniques commonly used by fiction writers, poets, and playwrights.
- The work reflects the writer's aesthetic and literary intentions.
- The work reflects the writer's concern for accuracy, truth, and ethical behaviour in dealing with real people and events.

Brief History of Literary Nonfiction

Nonfiction writing that is literary has, of course, been in existence for centuries. However, the use of the

term literary nonfiction to describe a particular type of journalism or reporting is relatively recent.

"New journalism" was a term that was used when critics and writers became aware of a new style of journalism in the 1960s. In his book *The New Journalism*, Tom Wolfe describes a trend, whereby nonfiction writers adopted the techniques of realist novelists to bring power to their stories (Wolfe, 1972, p. 31). He cites the four following techniques as the ones that brought about significant changes in nonfiction writing:

- **Scene-by-scene construction.**

  Writers told their stories by moving from scene to scene rather than reporting only historical facts. They sought to bring the people involved to life for the reader, so the reader could experience the human context of the story.

- **Use of dialogue.**

  The primary way of creating character was the inclusion of dialogue. Wolfe says that realistic dialogue involves the reader more than any other device and that dialogue defines character more quickly than any other means.

- **Use of third person point of view.**

  Scenes were presented to the reader through the eyes of a particular character, so that readers could feel as though they were inside that character's mind and could understand his or her actions and emotions. This technique meant that the journalist had to do exhaustive, first-hand research.

- **The recording of everyday details.**

  Wolfe says that the details of everyday life were once considered irrelevant in journalism, but that the writers of so-called new journalism understood that these details could be symbolic and contribute to social understanding. According to Wolfe, the recording of such details as habits, customs, attitudes, clothing, and food contributes to an understanding of a person's "life status" or beliefs about his or her position in the world.

Since the 1970s, nonfiction writing has undergone further changes and the term "new journalism" is no longer current. In addition, the criteria that define creative or literary nonfiction writing have changed, and the inclusion of fictional writing techniques is now only one of several defining criteria.

In her book *The Art of Fact*, Barbara Lounsberry (1990) lists the following as the characteristics of literary nonfiction:

- **Documentable subject matter chosen from the real world rather than the writer's imagination.**

  Anything in the natural world is subject matter for the literary nonfiction writer. The following are examples:
  - the lives of individuals (e.g., one person's struggle)
  - human institutions (e.g., government)
  - cultural groups (e.g., country music fans)
  - events (e.g., current events)
  - the natural world (e.g., environmental stories).

- **Exhaustive research.**

  In order to bring the full world of the stories alive, the writer must conduct extensive research and be able to verify every detail.

- **The scene.**

  Lounsberry says that the scene is a necessary element in making a story "artful". Instead of reporting on a story, the writer of literary nonfiction recasts the story so that it has life and depth.

- **Fine writing and literary prose style.**

  Writing cannot be literary without attention to language. Literary writers must be in complete control of their use of language, whatever their prose preferences are. Lounsberry says that "... polished language reveals that the goal all along has been literature" (p. xv).

In his book, *The Literary Journalists* (1984), Norman Sims contends that the change in journalism came about as writers began to see private lives rather than dominant institutions as sources of information. He says that literary journalists saw the need to immerse themselves in complex subjects in order to establish their own perspective and authority, so that they could do more than simply report the facts as presented to them.

Sims gives the following as characteristics of literary journalism:

- **Immersion.**

  Literary journalists invest a great deal of time and effort learning about their subject. They usually begin with an emotional connection to the subject, and then immerse themselves in learning everything they can about the world of the subject and the people involved.

- **Structure.**

  Literary nonfiction writers believe the same about structure that fiction writers do: structure contributes to meaning. Therefore, structure is not simply linear. It is carefully controlled by the writer and is unique to each project. Where a portion of the story is placed, and what it is placed next to, will profoundly affect the meaning the reader constructs as he or she is engaged with the story.

- **Accuracy.**

  The ethical commitment to accuracy has not changed with the advent of literary journalism. If a writer wishes to adopt a voice of authority on a subject, then he or she must be knowledgeable and present accurate information. Dialogue, for example, cannot be invented. If real people speak, then the dialogue must be direct quotation.

- **Voice.**

  Sims says there is no one voice that defines contemporary literary journalism. One writer might use a first person voice, where he or she is very much a part of the story. Another might remove himself or herself from the story and concentrate on the subject's own reality. The commonality is that all literary journalists consider voice a factor in what they do and struggle to find the right voice for their story.

- **Responsibility.**

  Literary nonfiction writers, who often immerse themselves in people's lives and develop personal relationships with their subjects, must recognize that they have a responsibility to themselves and their subjects when the writing becomes public. Although there are no easy answers regarding what is ethical to make public, writers do have a responsibility to let their subjects know what they are doing in their research and why. Because of the subjectivity of much literary journalism, responsibility, purpose, and consequences are things the literary journalist considers.

Getting Started: Ideas and Research

Several of the above listed characteristics of literary journalism have implications for students and their choice of topics or subject matter. Because writers of literary journalism must establish a voice of authority, they must know their subject intimately. For example, if a writer is interested in the subject of casinos and casino gambling, it would be advisable for him or her to spend a great deal of time in casinos getting to know people who gamble, talking to people who work in casinos, talking to addiction counsellors, etc. Through this immersion experience, the writer would be able to set the scene for the reader, present characters through accurate dialogue and detailed descriptions, and present a story with a voice of authority.

Students are not in a position to do this with many stories that might interest them. They should choose their topics with an understanding of what literary nonfiction is and with consideration given to what they will be able to do in terms of research. They can ask themselves:

- What is my personal interest in this topic?
- Will I have the time to research this topic adequately?
- How can I narrow the topic so that I can be successful in my research?
- How can I do first-hand research on this topic?
- Will I have access to the people I need to talk to in order to explore the topic fully?
- Will I be able to spend time in the physical setting so I can accurately set the scene for my readers?
- How can I experience "immersion" so that I can explore my topic fully?
- Will I have access to other resources I might need (e.g., archival material)?

The following are examples of stories that students could conceivably explore:

Day-in-a-life stories:
- senior citizens' home
- hospital

- humane society
- nurse's office in a school
- various occupations

Personal stories:
- biographical accounts
- autobiographical accounts
- childhood memories
- eye-witness accounts

Day-by-day accounts:
- sports team or individual getting ready for tournament or competition
- politician preparing for an election
- person training a dog
- person learning a new language or Braille

Historical stories in the community:
- history of a particular building in the student's own community
- history of settlement in the community
- history of a community leader's career
- history of a particular church in the community

Issue stories in the community:
- handicap access
- care of elderly
- night hunting
- access to language immersion programs (e.g., French, Cree).

The important thing is for students to evaluate whether they will be able to do the research necessary. They must be able to establish a voice of authority on their topic, and represent accurately the people involved. They must understand that they will not just be presenting facts from print or media resources.

Documentation

Students should understand that they must maintain high ethical standards in their treatment of their subjects and in their methods of documenting research. Even if they will not be including footnotes or references in their final product (e.g., in some informal essays), they should still keep track of all information gathered from interviews or other sources. They should be able to explain where they got all facts or quotations that are presented in their writing.

In many literary nonfiction pieces, it is appropriate to include references to sources of information. However, this can be problematic; when a piece of writing is intended to flow as a story in the reader's mind, references in the text can interrupt the flow. One solution is to include "Author's Notes" at the end. Notes can be presented by page in a way that does not interrupt the flow of the writing. The following is an example:

Author's Notes

Page 1

- This information is from an article in the *Leader Post,* Aug. 1, 1957, A2.

Page 2

- Mr. Smith told me this in an interview in his home on Sept. 30 of this year.
- The description of the wreck was derived from a photograph shown to me by Mr. Smith.

As with all forms of nonfiction writing, all information taken from other print or media sources should be referenced, either in the text or in footnotes. Direct quotations from published sources should always be referenced, as should the ideas or theories of others (known as "intellectual property"). Some literary nonfiction pieces include a combination of traditional referencing and author's notes.

Beginning to Write

Students will find useful many of the techniques of fiction and other literary writing. A brief discussion of the most relevant follows:

- setting
- character
- language
- structure
- point of view.

Setting

The connection between place and the people who live or work in a place is of prime importance in nonfiction. The reader can be engaged by a vivid depiction of a setting. Even more important, the setting can contribute to an understanding of the subject. For example, if the topic is a day-in-the-life of a factory worker, the reader will need to be able to

"see" the factory floor in order to understand what the workers do.

Setting can be used to establish atmosphere. For example, a description of carpets with cigarette burns and food stains could establish an atmosphere of seediness and decay. The description of the gym during a basketball game could establish an atmosphere of tension and excitement.

Settings and objects can also have symbolic meaning. For example, a writer might perceive the sterile environment of a hospital operating room as symbolic of dehumanization. Symbolism can refer to common symbols with which most people will associate the same meaning (e.g., hospital white with sterility). Symbols can also have more personal meaning for the writer (e.g., a single light bulb can become a symbol for hope).

If the writer believes that the details of a setting are relevant for his or her story, then they should be included. Their social or symbolic meaning will become relevant to the reader if they are well-described and placed in an appropriate context.

Character

The relevance of nonfiction is usually in its human interest. The writer of nonfiction uses the devices of fiction in order to bring people to life for the reader. Students should strive to:

- be convincing in their portrayal of people
- make the reader care about the people in their stories
- maintain consistency of characterization
- connect something of importance to the people involved.

The writer can simply tell the reader what a character is like and what goes on in the character's mind. The writer can also use indirect methods to establish character. The following (from the Fiction Writing section of this guide) is a useful summary for nonfiction writers.

Indirect characterization may be accomplished through:

- **Setting:** The character may either fit comfortably into the setting or be an "outsider" for some reason. The resulting perspectives will be very different.
- **Action:** What a person does in a story reveals character and affects the outcome of the plot. The meaning of a story is often revealed by the choices a character makes.
- **Symbol:** Some writers use details and objects in a symbolic way to indicate what Tom Wolfe refers to as a character's "life status"--how a character views his or her position in the world. Such details might include brand names, descriptions of homes and furnishing, entertainment choices, etc.
- **Dialogue:** What a person says reveals much about his or her character. Good dialogue is more than simply conversation. It reveals the internal truths of a character.
- **Thoughts:** Looking into a person's mind and listening to that person's thoughts gives readers a picture of what a character is like. Inner conflict can be revealed through thoughts, and the contradictions of a character become clear to the reader if the character thinks one thing and says or does another.

Dialogue is very useful to the nonfiction writer, although it is not a necessary element, just as it is not a necessary element in fiction. Dialogue in nonfiction can be used to:

- portray personalities
- provide information
- give a real sense of how people talk in their everyday lives
- provide social context
- create tension.

If the student writer agrees with Tom Wolfe that the details of a person's everyday life are a window to understanding the person and his or her social context, then they should be included. The student might think about:

- clothing
- food preferences
- mode of transportation
- TV viewing habits
- attitudes
- religion.

The student should understand that these details are only worth including if they contribute to meaning in the story. A character's physical characteristics or possessions do not have to be described, just as they are not routinely included in fiction writing.

> Note: Students should be reminded that if they attribute dialogue to real people, they must take it from their research notes and tapes so that they quote people accurately. If they do not, they are writing fiction. In the case of historical figures, writers sometimes "recreate" dialogue as a type of dramatic enactment. If students do this, they should make it clear to their readers that the dialogue is fictionalized.

Language

Language should be given the same care and attention in nonfiction as in any other literary endeavour. The writer is an artist and language is her or his medium.

There is no one language that is "literary". However, students should:

- use language for a purpose and in a way that contributes to their story (poetic language, terse language, dense language, etc.)
- strive to develop a personal style in their use of language
- be aware of literary devices that might help them tell their story (e.g., metaphor, images, symbols)
- use description as appropriate to their story
- polish their writing with the utmost of care, examining every word for meaning and correctness, and eliminating unnecessary words
- read and discuss literary nonfiction, paying attention to the different ways writers use language.

Structure

How a story is structured contributes to the meaning a reader will take away from it. Structure refers to how the story is put together by the writer, and the order in which information is presented. Structure is the means by which the writer controls the story. Structure can be:

- chronological
- anecdotal
- non-linear
- plotted.

Students will probably complete their research first and then decide on the best structure. For example, a student might decide to spend an entire week-end in a nursing home to conduct research for a story on the elderly in the community. While interviewing many residents, the student might hear one story that symbolizes the experience. The student could decide to structure the writing in a way that builds toward the important story told by the resident.

It is possible that a writer might decide on a structure first and then base his or her research on the structure. For example, a student might decide to spend an eight-hour shift with a 911 emergency operator. The student might decide beforehand that he or she will record whatever is happening on the hour, as a kind of journal entry.

Students deciding on their story structure ahead of time should remain open to the possibility that, during their research, they will discover something that might lead them to change their minds about how to tell the story.

Point of View

A decision about point of view is essential in nonfiction. The writer does not have to tell the story as an anonymous researcher. The writer has, in fact, all the options of the fiction writer. The decision of which point of view to use will affect the way the story is told and the type of insight the reader will have into the characters and story. The most common points of view in literary nonfiction are first person (with the author as the first person narrator) and the third person (either limited or omniscient, depending on the subject matter and the scope of the story).

> Note: For more information on point of view, see Writing Short Fiction in the Teacher Information section of this guide (pages 67-68).

Types of Nonfiction

Obviously, students will not have the time or experience to produce long works of nonfiction. The product or type of nonfiction writing should be in keeping with the research students were able to do. Short articles will be most appropriate.

Feature Articles

The following are examples of feature articles that might be appropriate for students:

- stories related to popular culture

- sports stories
- behind the scenes stories
- natural environment stories
- travel stories
- historical stories
- stories about issues or problems.

Literary feature articles can take many forms. They can be introspective, information-related, anecdotal, humorous, or satirical. What makes them literary is the writer's attention to literary concerns, and the writer's presentation from his or her own perspective rather than from a perspective that comes from another source.

Personal Essays

The personal essay is a first person, informal essay about something of great importance to the writer. The purpose of the essay is two-fold: to help the writer sort out his or her feelings or ideas, and to have the reader experience the process along with the writer. The personal essay is intimate and often revealing of the writer's innermost thoughts and feelings. However, personal essays need not be serious. They can also be satirical, ironic, or outrageously funny.

> Note: Beginning writers can easily fall into the trap of using the personal essay as a kind of catharsis. Although it is perfectly normal for teenagers to want to explore their feelings through writing, they should be reminded that one of the purposes of literary writing is aesthetic. Even when exploring very personal subject matter, they should be encouraged to think about such literary concerns as structure and language. They should also be encouraged to think about how their personal experience has meaning in the larger context of human experience.

Biographies

A biography is the true story of the life of a real and particular person. Although students will not have time to create a full biography of someone, they might spend enough time with a living person or do enough research on an historical figure that they are able to do an accurate biographical essay or article.

If students choose to do a biography they should remember that:

- there are many literary techniques available to them
- they should carefully examine setting and social context
- they do not have to structure their biography chronologically
- they might structure their biography around one event or story that is symbolic or particularly representative of the subject
- their biography should be a search for meaning in the larger context of human experience.

Autobiographies

An autobiography is an account of a character's life written by herself or himself. Writers do not have to be old to write an autobiography. It is possible for students to create unique and meaningful autobiographies if they give thought to literary and aesthetic concerns. Autobiographies do not have to be serious. They can be a humorous look at oneself.

As with all literary writing, if the student chooses to work on an autobiography it should have a clear focus. A literary autobiography is more than a chronological account. That said, the student might come up with a truly unique way to tell his or her own story, making use of:

- baby books and photo albums
- Interviews with family members for material regarding early years
- personal musings
- memories.

> Note: The autobiography should never be a required assignment. Not all students will want to write about themselves and a student's privacy should always be respected in writing classes.

Revising the First Draft

Basic questions writers might ask themselves, after they have completed their first drafts of nonfiction writing, include the following:

- Do I have a personal connection or interest in this idea?
- Was my research complete enough that I was able to establish an authoritative voice?
- If not, what more could I do?

- What did I discover in the process of doing my research? Is that discovery reflected in the story?
- Have I documented or kept track of all my research sources, quotations, etc.?
- Have I been ethical in my treatment of real people and events?
- Does the story have a focus?
- Is my story convincing?
- Have I set the scene for the reader somehow?
- Is the reader able to get a picture of the context in which this story happens or this person lives?
- Have I thought about structure and order in my telling of the story?
- Do I have a reason for choosing the structure I have chosen?
- Is it an appropriate structure for constructing meaning in the story?
- Have I used dialogue in the story?
- If so, have I made good use of dialogue?
- If not, should I consider adding dialogue?
- What literary devices have I used?
- Are the literary devices appropriate? Do they do the job I want them to?
- What is it that makes my piece "literary"?

Module Overviews and Suggested Activities

Options

Teachers have the option of organizing the course according to either context or writing genre. Option A (Context) offers the advantage of encouraging students to see all writing as having connections to the world around them and to their own individual perspectives. Option B (Writing Genre) offers the advantage of providing significant background in all four writing genres. However, the difference between the two should be minimised and should not be seen as a difference in content. All students should explore contexts and ideas, and all students should experience all four writing genres, no matter how the course is organized.

Module Content

The following should guide the teacher in planning the modules for Creative Writing 20:

- All modules should be based on the foundational and learning objectives outlined on pages 18-20 of this guide.
- The emphasis in the modules should be on student writing.
- Necessary content about writing should be taught through mini-lessons, student presentations, or discussion.
- Necessary content should be taught within the context of the students' own projects and as the students need the information.
- References to published literature and writers should be frequent.
- Discussion about the creative process, students' writing, writing issues, and the role of literature in society should be continuous.
- Activities should be focused on ideas and getting started with a writing project, unless a need for another type of writing exercise is expressed by a student or group of students.
- Students should spend a significant amount of time learning about what inspires them to write and exploring sources for their own writing. This is true even if the course is organized according to writing genre (Option B).
- Students should experience all four writing genres covered by this course, even if the course is organized according to context (Option A) rather than writing genre.

Objectives

The foundational objectives provided on page 18 of this guide apply to all modules. Specific learning objectives from pages 18-20 should be selected by the teacher, as appropriate. Selection will vary from classroom to classroom and even from student to student. The teacher should cover all learning objectives over the duration of the course.

Mini-lessons

It is not intended that the content in the Teacher Information section of this guide be taught routinely to all students. Rather, it is provided as background for the teacher, to be taught as needed in the form of mini-lessons. Mini-lessons or presentations might be made to the whole class (e.g., a brief lecture on point of view) or to small groups of students (e.g., a brief discussion on precise adjective choice with four students working on poems). Students might also take charge of this type of content by presenting to each other. Each student might become the "class expert" on one concept or topic.

Incorporating Literature

It is essential that students understand the connection between reading and writing. At the beginning of the term, teachers and students together should generate and post a list of materials they have read in English language arts classes and on their own. These works can then be referred to in general discussion when examples are required to illustrate concepts.

Teachers could also institute "book talks" as a regular part of classroom routine. At some point during the term, each student could present to the rest of the class a literary work that he or she believes is connected in some way to his or her own writing (style, subject matter, geographical location, characters, etc.).

In their writing folders and portfolios, students should be expected to include notes about literature they have read on their own time: what they have learned about writing from the work, what inspires them about the work, what is unique about the writer's style, etc.

Discussion on Writing

Discussion on writing should be continuous in the creative writing classroom. It should occur formally, initiated by the teacher according to need. It should also be encouraged among students. The following are examples of appropriate discussion topics:

- where specific writers get their ideas

- how to learn to be a writer
- the creative process
- how different writers have different writing processes
- how style is influenced by what a writer has read
- how style is influenced by subject matter
- what kind of writing is currently being published in literary magazines
- similarities between writing and other art forms
- censorship issues.

Activities

The activities suggested in the following section are pre-writing strategies. They are intended to help the students find ideas to write about that are interesting and meaningful to them. For Option A, the pre-writing strategies are based on the suggested module contexts. For Option B, the pre-writing strategies are based on the writing genres.

Pre-writing strategies are useful only as practice and for generating ideas. When students have found something that interests them, they should work through the idea in their own way and proceed through the stages of the writing process. As the teacher introduces new strategies, students who are already working on something else can note the strategies in their idea notebooks, for future reference.

Writing Exercises

Sometimes a different kind of writing exercise will be required: one that is aimed at teaching a certain writing concept (e.g., retell a story from a newspaper clipping in the first person and then in the third person, in order to understand the difference in point of view). These exercises should be designed by the teacher in response to student need and follow a mini-lesson. They can be used with the whole class, small groups of students with a similar need, or individual students.

Writing exercises should be used judiciously and only as needed. They should not take up too much class time. If they do, students will not have the time they need to explore their own writing ideas.

The following is an example of a writing exercise designed to teach or reinforce a specific concept.

- The following plot summary can be used to explore point of view:

The story is about a teenager who sees a hit and run accident in which someone is gravely injured. He/she goes to the police but cannot give them any information about the driver of the car. He/she begins to suspect that he/she is being followed by someone, and that it is the driver of the car.

  - Write the events of the above paragraph in the first person from the point of view of the teenager.
  - Write the events in the third person from the point of view of the teenager.
  - Write the events in an omniscient point of view, exploring the consciousness of both the teenager who thinks he/she is being followed and the person in the car, who might or might not be innocent.

Ideas and Genres

Whichever option the teacher chooses for organizing the modules, students should experience all four genres covered by this course and spend a significant amount of time exploring ideas. The difference between Option A and Option B is conceptual and is one of focus. The goal is the same: for students to learn about their own processes and sources for ideas through the writing genres.

Option A: Organizing the Course by Context

This option provides the opportunity for students to choose their own writing genres in order to explore broader contexts. The commonality among the students, then, is the context rather than the writing genre; one student might choose to explore an idea through poetry while another might explore the same idea through nonfiction. Through Option A, students practise selecting the writing genre that best expresses their own ideas. The introductory module in Option A provides background in the four writing genres.

The topics given for Modules 2 to 5 are suggestions only. Teachers can develop other contexts or topics that might inspire their students and offer the opportunity for discussion on where ideas came from for writing.

Module 1: Introduction

The purpose of Module 1 is as follows:

- to introduce students to the creative process
- to clarify the connections between literary traditions, reading, and writing
- to review the stages of the writing process
- to review the basics of conferencing
- to introduce students to the basic vocabulary and concepts for writing poetry, short fiction, plays, and nonfiction.

Module 2: The World Around us

The purpose of Module 2 is to encourage students to see that writers are often inspired to write by the world around them. Student writing could be inspired by such subjects as nature, friends, family, and rural, urban, and northern environments.

Module 3: Popular Culture

The purpose of Module 3 is to encourage students to examine the world of mass culture as a source of ideas. Student writing could be inspired by such subjects as advertising, mass production, the information highway, and mass media.

Module 4: Imagination

The purpose of Module 4 is to encourage students to see that their own unique imaginations are valuable sources for ideas. The imagination can lead students in any direction, from fantasy to science fiction to well-imagined realism. The imagination is the writer's means of bringing an idea "to life" through the various writing genres.

Module 5: Differing Perspectives

The purpose of Module 5 is to encourage students to see that every work of art is completed from a certain perspective and that each writer's background, beliefs, and experiences contribute to his or her perspective. The module will encourage students to learn about their own perspectives through writing and to recognize that individual perspectives differ.

Module 6: Independent Project

Module 6 provides an opportunity for students to work on a project of their own choosing. The focus should be on selection of subject matter and writing genre that is important to the individual student, so students can begin to learn what especially interests them about writing. They might also plan a project in which they work with a writer or another person involved with writing.

Module 1: Introduction

The purpose of Module 1 is as follows:

- to introduce students to the creative process
- to clarify the connections between literary traditions, reading, and writing
- to review the stages of the writing process
- to review the basics of conferencing
- to introduce students to the basic vocabulary and concepts for writing poetry, short fiction, plays, and nonfiction.

Suggested Activities

The following are examples of the types of activities that can be used to introduce students to the Creative Writing 20 course.

> Note: The activities provided in these module descriptions should be viewed as a "starter list" only. Teachers should add other activities they are familiar with or that they find in teacher resources listed in the bibliography.
>
> The activities or pre-writing strategies are intended to add to the students' understanding of concepts and to inspire them to develop their own ideas. When students are inspired by one of the activities, they should continue and take the idea in any direction that interests them, working through the phases of the writing process.

- Introduce the course and procedures: modules, genres, expectations, journals, portfolios, book talks, assessment and evaluation, etc.

- Discuss the following: The creative process is an organic one and is unique to individual artists and students. It describes the complex interaction between the writer and the work-in-process.

- Discuss the following: "... think of the writing in terms of discovery, which is to say that creation must take place between the pen and the paper, not before in a thought or afterwards in a recasting." (Gertrude Stein)

- Create a display of quotations on creativity or the creative process. Ask each student to contribute a quotation, including the writer's name and an approximate date.

- Have small groups of students research and present a brief study of what one writer (of the group's choosing) has to say about creativity or the creative process.

- Create a list of literary works that most of the students have read. These can be works studied in previous English language arts classes or from the students' own reading. Include poetry, fiction, plays, and nonfiction. Post the list for reference throughout the course.

- Have students do a first draft of any piece of writing that interests them. It can be new or a piece of writing on which they have already worked. Have the students go through the steps of the writing process with this piece of writing. For this project only, assign dates for the completion of the phases, so that students go through the phases together. For this assignment only, the focus is on the writing process, rather than the writing itself. (If students are particularly interested in this particular writing project, they can continue working on it beyond this series of lessons.)

- Review peer and teacher conferencing with the students. Practise, using the above writing project. Establish peer conferencing guidelines and post them. Although students will engage in various types of conferencing throughout the course, ask them to be aware of their personal preferences for conferencing: student-teacher, student-peer, or small group.

- Introduce poetry to students by:
  - discussing what poetry is, especially contemporary poetry
  - studying various examples (some brought by students)
  - presenting poetry concepts in mini-lessons (e.g., line breaks, rhythm)
  - discussing what it is that makes a person choose to write a poem from an idea, rather than a short story or a play
  - writing and discussing poems.

- Introduce short fiction to students by:
  - discussing what short fiction is, especially contemporary short fiction
  - studying various examples (some brought by students)
  - presenting short fiction concepts in mini-lessons (e.g., point of view, structure)

- discussing what it is that makes a person choose to write a short story from an idea, rather than a poem or a play
  - discussing the similarities and differences between short fiction and novels in terms of idea, scope, and structure
  - writing and discussing short stories.

- Introduce play writing to students by:
  - discussing what plays are, especially contemporary plays
  - discussing various types of contemporary plays (full length dramas, one act plays, "fringe" plays, street theatre, etc.)
  - studying various examples (some brought by students)
  - presenting play writing concepts in mini-lessons (e.g., dramatic dialogue, dramatic action)
  - discussing what it is that makes a person choose to write a play from an idea, rather than a short story or a poem
  - writing and discussing short plays or scenes.

- Introduce literary nonfiction to students by:
  - discussing what nonfiction is, especially contemporary literary nonfiction
  - studying various examples (some brought by students)
  - presenting nonfiction concepts in mini-lessons (e.g., research sources, incorporating dialogue)
  - discussing what it is that makes a person choose to write literary nonfiction from an idea rather than fiction or more traditional journalism
  - writing and discussing literary nonfiction.

- Have each student select one piece of writing that interests him or her, from any writing genre. Ask the students to consider what the original source idea for the piece might have been (e.g., nature, a memory, human emotions, a dream, history, something from a book or movie, an idea from a specialized area such as physics or philosophy). As a class, create a large concept web of the various sources of ideas for writing. Students can incorporate ideas from the writing pieces they selected and add other ideas as the concept web progresses. The teacher might transfer the concept web onto letter-sized paper and copy it for each student's own reference.

Module 2: The World Around Us

The purpose of Module 2 is to encourage students to see that writers are often inspired to write by the world around them. Student writing could be inspired by such subjects as nature, friends, family, and rural, urban, and northern environments.

Questions for Consideration in Discussions, Peer Conferences, or Student-teacher Conferences

These questions might be asked of the student writer for the purpose of reflection, or the student might adapt them to gather response from peers or the teacher. The questions are suggestions only. Students might have their own questions to ask peers or the teacher. (Other relevant questions specific to genre can be found in the Teacher Information section of this guide.)

- What are the different ways people can be inspired by the world around them?
- About what aspects of the world around you are you especially interested in writing?
- Is there a particular tone you like to take when writing about the world around you?
- What writers do you like who are inspired by the world around them?
- How is some aspect of the world around you reflected in this selection of your writing?
- Does it say what you intend it to say? If not, where does the problem lie?
- What are the strengths of this writing?
- How could this writing lead to other writing projects?

Suggested Pre-writing Strategies

The following are suggestions for pre-writing strategies to get students started on writing projects that are inspired by the world around them.

- Have each student bring to school a small manufactured object from home (e.g., a dinner fork, a wrench, a nail, a sock). Display the objects. Have students:
  - free write about one or more objects
  - come up with five descriptive words for an object and then incorporate them in a poem
  - write a monologue from the point of view of the object
  - choose any two objects and write a paragraph that makes reference to both of them.

- Have each student bring to school an object from nature (e.g., a rock, a pine cone, dried plants). Display the objects. Have students:
  - free write about one or more objects
  - come up with five descriptive words for an object and then incorporate them in a poem
  - free write on personal associations with nature
  - imagine and describe in writing the natural setting from which one of the objects might have come.

- Have each student bring a photograph to school. The photo can be of a person, an animal, a scene, a building--anything. Have students write a paragraph, a poem, or some dialogue about the photo. Next, have students imagine that another character of their own invention is in the above photo. They should think about:
  - where the person is
  - what he or she is doing
  - what happened just before the photo was taken
  - what will happen next.

  Have students write again about the photo with the new character in it. Students might then try combining their two pieces of writing in some way.

- Have students think of some place that is meaningful to them or has been in the past, and have them free write about that place.

- Have students look for "symbols" in the community--flags, logos, emblems, signs, etc. Have students write about one community symbol in several different ways, such as:
  - in a sentimental way
  - in an ironic way
  - in a descriptive way
  - satirically
  - humorously.

- Have each student bring a newspaper article to school that tells a story or describes a sequence of events. Have students write one of the following:
  - a narrative poem
  - a series of diary entries from one person's point of view
  - a passage of dialogue between two people
  - descriptions of the people in the article
  - an "update" article that would be written in a month's time.

- Invite a local historian to the classroom, or go on a field trip to a local archive or museum. Explore community history by listening to stories; looking at old newspapers, local history books, and photographs; examining artifacts; and reading old letters or other such archival material. In response to these experiences, have students:
  - free write
  - describe a setting they learned about
  - retell an anecdote
  - write a story set in the past
  - write a poem about a person or event they learned about
  - write something in which an artifact features prominently
  - write something based on an old letter
  - create a series of letters between two people they learned about
  - write a dramatic monologue for a person they learned about.

- Have students write about something meaningful that happened to them: getting stranded in a blizzard, winning or losing a big game, witnessing an accident, etc.

- Have students write a series of diary entries (hourly, daily, or weekly) about something that happened to them: getting ready for a big game or tournament, getting lost in a strange city, shopping for a pair of shoes. It can be serious, humorous, satirical, etc.

- Have students write a eulogy for a car, a pet, an old pair of jeans or runners, etc.

- Bring an exotic fruit or vegetable to school that most students will not have eaten or with which they will not be very familiar. Have everyone in the class try it and then write a poem, description, story, etc. in response.

- Have students make note of a conversation they overhear somewhere in the community (in the grocery store, in a video rental store, on a bus, in the post office, etc.). Have them recreate the conversation in the form of dialogue.

- Have students describe what they think is the most interesting spot in their community.

Module 3: Popular Culture

The purpose of Module 3 is to encourage students to examine the world of mass culture as a source of ideas. Student writing could be inspired by such

subjects as advertising, mass production, the information highway, and mass media.

Questions for Consideration in Discussions, Peer Conferences, or Student-Teacher Conferences

These questions might be asked of the student writer for the purpose of reflection, or the student might adapt them to gather response from peers or the teacher. The questions are suggestions only. Students might have their own questions to ask peers or the teacher. (Other relevant questions specific to genre can be found in the Teacher Information section of this guide.)

- What are the various ways artists are inspired by or are influenced by popular or mass culture?
- What interests you in particular about popular or mass culture?
- Do you see it as a good thing or a bad thing?
- How is your perspective on popular or mass culture reflected in this writing?
- What tone have you taken to express your ideas in this writing?
- Is it the best tone for expressing your ideas in this piece of writing?
- What are the strengths of this piece of writing?
- In what ways might you explore the effects of popular or mass culture further?

Suggested Pre-writing Strategies

The following are suggestions for pre-writing strategies to get students started on writing projects that explore some aspect of popular culture.

- Discuss the meaning of the terms "mass culture" and "popular culture". Compile a list of all the things students think might be vehicles for mass culture (e.g., television, music videos, advertising, the Internet).

- Have small groups discuss statements such as the following and then present summaries of their discussion to the rest of the class. The purpose is to have students explore the meaning of popular culture.
    - Music videos are valid as an art form.
    - Advertising reflects the values of mass culture.
    - Popular culture can affect society in significant ways (e.g., through fashion trends).
    - Television has an impact on the values of society.
    - Popular culture is visible all around us.
    - Popular culture reflects conformist attitudes.

- Have each student explore the effect of popular culture on society and on themselves by choosing one aspect of popular culture that interests them and creating a concept web or mind map. Display the concept webs as references for the whole class.

- Have students do five minutes of free writing on each of three different broad aspects of popular culture (e.g., fashion, advertising, movies). After they have completed their free writing, ask them to narrow down each of the three topics (e.g., wedding dresses, car ads, Brad Pitt). Have them free write on the narrower topics.

- Have each student choose a product to be advertised and then make a list of words describing the product. Create a poem in the form of an advertising poster.

- Have each student "borrow" a line from a favourite song or movie (e.g., "Make my day"). Create a piece of writing around it.

- Read and study a variety of print advertisements. Have each student choose one and turn it into a piece of writing, incorporating the words from the advertisement, but also adding their own words or ideas in response to the advertisement--making fun of it, embellishing it, etc.

- Have each student select a place that is in some way a gathering place for large numbers of people (e.g., a sports arena, a shopping mall, a movie theatre). Have them write a paragraph describing the place or its atmosphere when it is full of people. Next, give students a list of "what if" statements. The following are examples:
    - What if a space ship landed?
    - What if a lion escaped from the zoo?
    - What if a tornado was sighted?
    - What if a gang of bikers pulled up and parked?

  Ask students to write a paragraph in response to the "what if" statement. Then, ask them to combine their two paragraphs in some way or to use the information in the two paragraphs in a new way (e.g., in a poem).

- Have students write a short description of the plot of a music video with which they are familiar,

focusing on cause and effect. (Because one thing happens, something else happens, and so on.) Then, have them change the plot by introducing a new element (e.g., a new character, a new plot detail, a shift in time).

- Have each student write a "news flash"--some news item that would interrupt regular radio or television programming. Then, have them use their news flash in a piece of writing.

- Have students write about some familiar ritual of popular or mass culture (e.g., a wedding).

- Have students research writing on the Internet. (The Saskatchewan Writers Guild's high school magazine *Windscript* is available on the Internet, for example.) What effect might the Internet have on writing? The writing itself? The independence of writers? The inclusion of photographs and graphics? Have the students create some writing for the school's web site.

- Have students write five minutes of "stream of consciousness" writing as if they were a familiar character from a TV show, movie, or book.

- Have students bring headlines from tabloid papers to school. List as many headlines as possible. Have students free write in response to one or more of the headlines.

- Have students write dialogue between two people featured in a tabloid headline or between two people featured in any newspaper article.

- Conduct a mini-lesson on the art movement called "pop art". Discuss how pop artists often take images from mass culture and create something new with them. Find a reproduction of a famous person from art history, such as the Mona Lisa. Have students begin a piece of writing (any genre) in response to the art work.

- Have students write a dramatic scene between any two characters from art history (not necessarily from the same period).

- Have students write a dramatic scene between characters from two different movies or television shows.

- As a class, list topics for nonfiction articles on various aspects of popular or mass culture. Have each student choose one or more topics and imagine an innovative way to research and write the article. Have them write in their notebooks what they would write about and how.

Module 4: Imagination

The purpose of Module 4 is to encourage students to see that their own unique imaginations are valuable sources for ideas. The imagination can lead students in any direction, from fantasy to science fiction to well-imagined realism. The imagination is the writer's means of bringing an idea "to life" through the various writing genres.

Questions for Consideration in Discussions, Peer Conferences, or Student-teacher Conferences

These questions might be asked of the student writer for the purpose of reflection, or the student might adapt them to gather response from peers or the teacher. The questions are suggestions only. Students might have their own questions to ask peers or the teacher. (Other relevant questions specific to genre can be found in the Teacher Information section of this guide.)

- How is the term "imagination" relevant for this particular piece of your writing?
- What have you tried to do to bring the writing to life for the reader?
- What is unique about the way the writing is imagined?
- What are the particular strengths in the writing?
- How has theme or meaning been created through your imagination?
- How can ideas be reflected through imagination?
- In what places is the writing "well imagined" ?
- In what places does the writing seem to be struggling?

Suggested Pre-writing Strategies

The following are suggestions for pre-writing strategies to get students started on writing projects that focus on imagination.

- Discuss with students the breadth of the topic "imagination". Imagination is the essence of creative endeavour. Many students will think that imagination refers to such writing as science fiction or fantasy. Make sure they understand that imagination also applies to realism. As writers, they imagine something to life for themselves and for the reader, no matter in what kind of writing they are engaged.

- Have students imagine and list all possible uses for an everyday object (e.g., a brick, an egg beater, a toothpick, a paper plate).

- Have students record unusual sounds on tape. Then, have them write words that go with or describe their sounds. Use the sounds and words in a poem or to create atmosphere in a passage of fiction.

- Create a series of "what if" poems: What if I could be a character in my favourite book or movie? What if I lived in Australia? What if I were a rhinoceros?

- Have students create an imaginary landscape (e.g., Earth at the time of the dinosaurs, an imaginary planet, an undiscovered ecosystem). Have them describe their landscape, then use their description in a poem or a piece of fiction, or set a dramatic scene there.

- Have students imagine themselves as another character (e.g., from a book or movie, from history, from a famous painting). Have them, as that character, give a public lecture on a topic such as:
  - the efficiency/inefficiency of public transit or the postal system
  - Canadian unity
  - contemporary music
  - contemporary fashion
  - Canadian versus American football
  - the pleasures of fishing or wilderness camping.

- Tell students about the musical *Sunday in the Park with George* and explain how it was created from a famous painting by Georges Seurat (people in the painting come to life). View a reproduction of the painting or scenes from the video. Have students find a painting with several people in it and imagine what they would say or do if they came to life. Have them write dialogue, poems, or paragraphs.

- Have students imagine that they are inside a common object. Have them make up and describe an imaginary landscape inside that object.

- Have students imagine a "what if" situation. For example, what if you were walking in a park and you saw someone handing out hundred dollar bills to everyone who passed by, without saying a word. Three people come along as you watch.

  Have students imagine answers to questions such as the following:
  - Why is the person handing out money?
  - What does he or she look like?
  - Where does the money come from?
  - Do you take the money?
  - What does each of the other three people do?
  - What does the person with the money do when it is all gone?
  - What are the consequences of taking or not taking the money?

- Have students find two things:
  - a piece of writing that they like and that they feel has been "brought alive" by the writer
  - a newspaper article that describes a series of events.

  Have students work in pairs to decide what their two writers have done to bring the writing alive. Next, have students retell the newspaper narrative using whatever technique they think their selected writer has used.

- Have students think of something that really happened to them. Have them write a personal essay about the event or incident, incorporating techniques of fiction to bring the writing alive (e.g., dialogue).

- Have students think of something that really happened to them. Have them add a fictitious character or incident that did not really happen.

- Have students bring books of fables and fairy tales to school, or get some from the library. Have each student select one fairy tale or fable and retell it as though it were happening in modern times or a modern setting. (They could also use a well-known fairy tale and work from memory.)

- Have students imagine themselves in another time (e.g., historical or futuristic, on Earth, on another planet or space station). Have them describe one or more of the following:
  - the setting
  - how people live
  - plants and animals
  - travel and vehicles
  - the nature of community and inter-community relations
  - government
  - ceremonies (such as marriages or honouring ceremonies).

Module 5: Differing Perspectives

The purpose of Module 5 is to encourage students to see that every work of art is completed from a certain perspective and that each writer's background, beliefs, and experiences contribute to his or her perspective. The module will encourage students to learn about their own perspectives through writing and to recognize that individual perspectives differ.

> Note: Caution should be exercised in this module to ensure that students do not get the impression that writers should be able to write authentically from many different perspectives. A writer can write well only from a perspective that is understood. (However, that is not to say that a writer can write only from his or her own perspective. Many writers do write convincingly from a perspective that is not their own.)
>
> Students should also understand that perspectives are individual: not all women writers share the same perspective, for example; not all Aboriginal writers share the same perspective. An individual writer's perspective (including the student's) is unique and will result in unique ideas and points of view.

Questions for Consideration in Discussions, Peer Conferences, or Student-teacher Conferences

These questions might be asked of the student writer for the purpose of reflection, or the student might adapt them to gather response from peers or the teacher. The questions are suggestions only. Students might have their own questions to ask peers or the teacher. (Other relevant questions specific to genre can be found in the Teacher Information section of this guide.)

- Is the piece written from a particular point of view? If so, what or whose?
- Is the voice convincing? If not, what could help you be more convincing?
- How does perspective influence the writing?
- What is unique about your perspective in this writing?
- What in the writing gives clues about your unique way of looking at the subject matter?
- How is your perspective evident in the theme?
- Is the piece saying what you, the writer, want it to say?
- Does the piece reflect what you, the writer, truly believe?

Suggested Pre-writing Strategies

- Read aloud two or three poems or examine reproductions of two or three paintings that are connected by theme in some way, but are by different artists. Discuss the differences in perspective. Discuss the factors that might influence perspective (e.g., culture, gender, time period, education, experience, geography). As a group, arrive at a broad definition of perspective.
- Divide the class into two groups. Tell one group that its members believe the sun revolves around the Earth. Tell the other group that its members believe the Earth revolves around the sun. Ask each student to write a brief poem (4 or 5 lines) called "The Sun", keeping in mind his or her group's particular belief. Read some of the poems out loud. Discuss how the differing perspectives affected the poems.
- Have each student write a description of himself or herself through a friend's eyes. Then have each student write a monologue for his or her friend that tells a story about himself or herself.
- Have students choose a point of view or a vantage point and describe a setting as seen from there (e.g., from a rooftop). Then, have them change vantage point and write another description (e.g., from a basement window).
- Read aloud a version of the city mouse, country mouse story. Ask students to retell the story in a different way (e.g., as a murder mystery, as a futuristic space story).
- Have students write five sentences, a poem, or a sequence of dialogue about:
  - a time when they were insensitive to another
  - a time when they stubbornly rejected another person's point of view
  - a time when someone refused to see their point of view
  - a time when they were forced to see something from someone else's point of view
  - an argument they had when two very different points of view were expressed
  - a historical or political incident that reflected two very different points of view.

  (Their writing can be either fictional or nonfictional.)

- Describe a place by making up clues to the identity of the inhabitants (e.g., the furniture, objects, pictures). Have students work in pairs and exchange their descriptions. Then, have them write a poem or paragraph about the people who live in this place, or dialogue between two people in this place.

- Have students imagine a particular animal, perhaps a large dog. Ask students to free write or create poems or paragraphs from the following perspectives:
  - the perspective of a person who is terrified of dogs
  - the perspective of a person who takes in stray dogs and tries to find homes for them
  - the perspective of a person who has never before seen a dog
  - the perspective of a space traveller who is studying everything about the planet Earth.

  Or, have them write something from the point of view of the dog encountering each of the above people.

- Have students imagine three characters who are strangers to one another. (They might get these characters by randomly selecting them from a page of a newspaper or by flipping through magazines.) Have them write brief descriptions of who their characters are. Then, randomly assign students a situation, such as the following:
  - their three characters are seated together at a football game where a fight has broken out between fans for the opposing teams
  - their three characters are seated together at a ballet where the lead has just fallen and injured his or her ankle
  - their three characters are in line at a bank that is being robbed
  - their three characters are seated together on an aeroplane and the captain has just announced they are having "mechanical difficulties".

  Have students write one of the following:
  - some dialogue among the three characters
  - the private thoughts of each of the three characters
  - a description of the action that each of the three characters takes
  - a diary entry at the end of the day for each of the three characters.

- Have students find an article in the newspaper or a magazine that is about a controversial issue (e.g., Canadian unity, free trade, the Young Offenders Act). Have them write a "letter to the editor" or a monologue from a point of view that is not their own.

- Have students write a poem from the point of view of a historical figure that interests them.

- Have students write some dialogue between two historical figures from different time periods on the topic "The Future". Their writing can be serious or humorous; this will depend on the figures they choose and how they choose to portray them.

Module 6: Independent Project

Module 6 provides an opportunity for students to work on a project of their own choosing. The focus should be on selection of subject matter and writing genre that is important to the individual student, so students can begin to learn what especially interests them about writing. They might also plan a project in which they work with a writer or another person involved with writing.

Questions for Consideration in Discussions, Peer Conferences, or Student-teacher Conferences

These questions might be asked of the student writer for the purpose of reflection, or the student might adapt them to gather response from peers or the teacher. The questions are suggestions only. Students might have their own questions to ask peers or the teacher. (Other relevant questions specific to genre can be found in the Teacher Information section of this guide.)

- What are the strengths of this writing?
- How is your unique perspective reflected in the writing?
- What is a particular challenge for you in this project?
- How might you see the writing in a new way during revision, so that you are not simply editing the first draft?
- Might any writing exercises be designed to help the student writer with problems he or she is having with this project?
- Are there any literature selections that might inspire the student or help to resolve some difficulties with the writing?
- What are the particular challenges of the genre chosen?

- Is it the best writing genre for this particular idea?
- In what new directions might this writing project lead?

Guidelines for Independent Projects

- Students can select a project inspired by any of the previous modules or from an entirely new source.
- Students can select one of the four genres covered in this course or they can select something different (e.g., a television or film script, a small magazine or "zine" format, a comic book).
- Students should outline the amount of time they will spend on the project and set timelines and check points for themselves.
- Student and teacher should agree on how much in-class time will spent on the project and how that time will be used.
- Students should decide on the type of feedback and conferencing that will most help them, and identify the individuals or group with whom they would like to consult. They might consult with an appropriate person outside of the school, with the teacher's approval (a writer or editor in the community, for example).
- Students should keep some kind of journal or record of their experience and progress. The purpose of this is to help them become familiar with their own creative process and writing habits.
- Student and teacher should identify some literature selections and critical articles or reviews that might help or inspire the student, or increase his or her repertoire with language.
- Student and teacher should decide how and when the project will be assessed and evaluated.
- Student and teacher should decide if and how the project will be published, displayed, or shared with other students.

Option B: Organizing the Course by Writing Genre

This option provides the opportunity for students to explore in some depth the four writing genres of poetry, short fiction, play writing, and nonfiction. The commonality among the students, then, is the writing genre; for example, all students will work on poetry writing at the same time. Through Option B, students learn how their ideas can be expressed in the four writing genres. The introductory module in Option B provides background on ideas and sources for writing.

Module 1: Introduction

The purpose of Module 1 is as follows:

- to introduce students to the creative process
- to clarify the connections between literary traditions, reading, and writing
- to review the stages of the writing process
- to review the basics of conferencing
- to introduce students to the basic vocabulary and concepts for writing poetry, short fiction, plays, and nonfiction.

Module 2: Writing Poetry

Module 2 introduces students to poetry writing. The module encourages students to discuss poetry, learn about the elements of contemporary poetry, and express their own ideas through various types of poetry.

Module 3: Writing Fiction

Module 3 introduces students to fiction writing, especially short fiction. The module encourages students to discuss fiction, learn about the elements of contemporary fiction, and express their own ideas through various types of fiction.

Module 4: Writing Plays

Module 4 introduces students to play writing. The module encourages students to discuss plays, learn about some elements of play writing, and express their own ideas through scenes and short plays.

Module 5: Writing Nonfiction

Module 5 introduces students to writing nonfiction. The module encourages students to learn what makes a work of nonfiction a piece of creative writing. They will also discuss literary nonfiction and its development, read nonfiction, and express their own ideas through nonfiction.

Module 6: Independent Project

Module 6 provides an opportunity for students to work on a project of their own choosing. The focus should be on selection of subject matter and writing genre that is important to the individual student, so students can begin to learn what especially interests them about writing. They might also plan a project in which they work with a writer or another person involved with writing.

Module 1: Introduction

The purpose of Module 1 is as follows:

- to introduce students to the creative process
- to clarify the connections between literary traditions, reading, and writing
- to review the stages of the writing process
- to review the basics of conferencing
- to introduce students to the basic vocabulary and concepts for writing poetry, short fiction, plays, and nonfiction.

Suggested Activities

The following are examples of the types of activities that can be used to introduce students to the Creative Writing 20 course.

> Note: The activities provided in these module descriptions should be viewed as a "starter list" only. Teachers should add other activities they are familiar with or that they find in teacher resources listed in the bibliography.
>
> The activities or pre-writing strategies are intended to add to the students' understanding of concepts and to inspire them to develop their own ideas. When students are inspired by one of the activities, they should continue and take the idea in any direction that interests them, working through the phases of the writing process.

- Introduce the course and procedures: modules, genres, expectations, journals, portfolios, book talks, assessment and evaluation, etc.

- Discuss the following: The creative process is an organic one, and is unique to individual artists and students. It describes the complex interaction between the writer and the work-in-process.

- Discuss the following: "... think of the writing in terms of discovery, which is to say that creation must take place between the pen and the paper, not before in a thought or afterwards in a recasting." (Gertrude Stein)

- Create a display of quotations on creativity or the creative process. Ask each student to contribute a quotation, including the writer's name and an approximate date.

- Have small groups of students research and present a brief study of what one writer (of the group's choosing) has to say about creativity or the creative process.

- Create a list of literary works that most of the students have read. These can be works studied in previous English language arts classes or from the students' own reading. Include poetry, fiction, plays, and nonfiction. Post the list for reference throughout the course.

- Have students do a first draft of any piece of writing that interests them. It can be new or a piece of writing on which they have already worked. Have the students go through the steps of the writing process with this piece of writing. For this project only, assign dates for the completion of the phases, so that students go through the phases together. For this assignment only, the focus is on the writing process, rather than the writing itself. (If students are particularly interested in this particular writing project, they can continue working on it beyond this series of lessons.)

- Review peer and teacher conferencing with the students. Practise, using the above writing project. Establish peer conferencing guidelines and post them. Although students will engage in various types of conferencing throughout the course, ask them to be aware of their personal preferences for conferencing: student-teacher, student-peer, or small group.

- Have each student select one piece of writing that interests him or her, from any writing genre. Ask the students to consider what the original source idea for the piece might have been (e.g., nature, a memory, human emotions, a dream, history, something from a book or movie, an idea from a specialized area such as physics or philosophy). As a class, create a large concept web of the various sources of ideas for writing. Students can incorporate ideas from the writing pieces they selected and add other ideas as the concept web progresses. The teacher might transfer the concept web onto letter-sized paper and copy it for each student's own reference.

- Select one source of inspiration from the concept web (e.g., nature). As a class, do an in-depth study that includes exploration of the following:
  - how that source has inspired writers in different time periods and different cultures
  - how it is reflected in different writing genres

- how it is reflected in popular or mass culture (e.g., comic books or movies)
- varying tones and styles expressed or developed by individual writers
- connections with other art forms (e.g., visual art, dance, music)
- critical writing or reviews that analyze or shed light on the topic.

Module 2: Writing Poetry

Module 2 introduces students to poetry writing. The module encourages students to discuss poetry, learn about the elements of contemporary poetry, and express their own ideas through various types of poetry.

Questions for Consideration in Discussions, Peer Conferences, or Student-teacher Conferences

These questions might be asked of the student writer for the purpose of reflection, or the student might adapt them to gather response from peers or the teacher. The questions are suggestions only. Students might have their own questions to ask peers or the teacher. (Other relevant questions for revision of each genre can be found in the Teacher Information section of this guide.)

- What is the essence of this poem?
- Are the words chosen exactly the right ones?
- Is this the kind of poem that requires the very minimum of words or can it incorporate longer, more complex words patterns?
- Does the rhythm of the poem work?
- How does the poem reflect your own particular ideas about language?
- How does the order of the words or thoughts in the poem help to clarify or reveal the meaning?
- How does your poem reflect your unique "take" on the subject matter?
- What are the strengths of your poetry?

Suggested Pre-writing Strategies

- Introduce poetry to students by:
  - discussing what poetry is, especially contemporary poetry
  - studying various examples (some brought by students)
  - presenting poetry concepts in mini-lessons (e.g., line breaks, rhythm)
  - discussing what it is that makes a person choose to write a poem from an idea, rather than a short story or a play.

- Have students look at or perceive something in real life as though it were a "picture" or a photograph. Have them capture that picture in words.

- Have students think about the sound of words they like. Have them select one and write a poem about why they like the sound of that word.

- Have students find a short poem that they like and analyze it for the following:
  - the subject matter
  - the kind of words and language used
  - whether the writer is a presence in the poem or is at a distance.

  Then, have students write their own short poem in the style of the original. They might do this with several different poems to experience writing in different styles and about different subject matter.

- In small groups, have students select an article in the newspaper that somehow connects to the word "justice" or the word "injustice". Have the group create a "tableau" in response to the article. Then, have each student capture the essence of the tableau in words.

- Have students quickly look around, inside or out. Ask them to seize upon something that leaps to the eye (e.g., a flower, a truck, a dog). Have them write ten descriptors of it. Or, have students write ten one-sentence "lies" about it. Lies are extremely useful to the poet, since before you can tell a lie, you must know what the truth is. Sometimes, truths that were previously hidden will suddenly be discovered.

- Have students write a poem with one of the following conditions:
  - using only adjectives
  - using no adjectives
  - using only sentence fragments
  - using no verbs
  - with no punctuation
  - without line breaks
  - using only words starting with consonants
  - using only words starting with vowels
  - etc.

- Have students find a short article in the newspaper. Ask them to eliminate as many words as possible and still retain the essence of the story. They do not need to worry about sentences or paragraphs, and they can break the lines wherever they want for clarity.

- Have students mix the senses in unusual ways by responding to questions such as:
  - What colour is the number seven?
  - What does red sound like?
  - What colour is surprise, or sleep, or winning, or pain?
  - How does purple taste?
  - Which is louder, a smile or a frown?
  - Which is rougher, yellow or pink?
  - Which is quicker, green or black?
  - Which is friendlier, a point or a line?
  - How is laughter like peanut butter?
  - Is mud softer than midnight?
  - What takes more space, a pickle or a giggle?
  - What weighs more, a scream or a sack of potatoes?

- Have students try one of the following:
  - colour their family or their town
  - describe the smell of success
  - describe the fragrance of a piece of music
  - tell about green feelings or pink feelings
  - describe the feel of touching the night.

- Have students define an abstract idea in concrete terms (concepts such as happiness, war, hate, beauty, family, friendship, pride, jealousy, or anger).

- Have students define events or objects in abstract terms (things like mice, bicycles, tornadoes, blizzards, floods, Chinooks, mermaids, ghosts).

- Music can be a source of inspiration for poetry. Have students free write while listening to music. Afterward, ask them to reflect on how the words and images related to the type of music to which they listened.

- Have students record five or six unusual sounds on tape. Then, have them exchange tapes with a partner and write about what they "see" on each other's tapes.

- Have students create character studies in poem form, by using old family photographs.

- Have students create a series of "what if" poems. (E.g., What if I could be a character in my favourite book or movie? What if I lived in Australia?)

- Have students begin a poem with a word randomly selected in a dictionary, letting their imaginations take over.

- Have students select famous quotations or idiomatic expressions as a place from which to start writing.

- Have students create an argument or a conversation in poem form, featuring any two people (e.g., storekeeper-customer, son-father, pedestrian-motorist).

- Have students write poems in response to their own drawings or sketches.

- Have students write poems in response to paintings, sculptures, or other images in art history books.

- Have students turn a fable, fairy tale, or proverb into a poem.

- Have students find descriptions of events, collections of words, or unusual ideas in daily newspapers, catalogues, cereal boxes, bumper stickers, novels, textbooks, comic books, letters, essays, or recipes. Then, have them recreate the words as "found poetry".

- Have students write a poem to tell a familiar story (a narrative poem).

- Have students work in pairs, with each member of the pair selecting about six words at random from a book. Each partner could then create a poem using all of the other partner's words.

- Have students write a poem in which they compare activity in the same location but at different times (e.g., a certain street at 8:00 am Monday as compared with 1:00 pm Sunday; an arena before, then during, a big game).

Module 3: Writing Fiction

Module 3 introduces students to fiction writing, especially short fiction. The module encourages students to discuss fiction, learn about the elements of contemporary fiction, and express their own ideas through various types of fiction.

Questions for Consideration in Discussions, Peer Conferences, or Student-teacher Conferences

These questions might be asked of the student writer for the purpose of reflection, or the student might adapt them to gather response from peers or the teacher. The questions are suggestions only. Students might have their own questions to ask peers or the teacher. (Other relevant questions for revision of each genre can be found in the Teacher Information section of this guide.)

- What is this story about?
- What type of language have you chosen (poetic, sparse, everyday, descriptive) and is it consistent throughout?
- Is the type of language appropriate for the subject matter, characters, setting?
- Does the story unfold in a way that is interesting, intriguing, or satisfying for the reader?
- Is the story convincing and is it well-imagined? If so, why? If not, what might be the reason?
- Does the structure of the story allow the meaning of the story to be revealed or come clear at an appropriate time for the reader?
- How does the story reflect your unique "take" on the subject matter?
- What are the strengths of your fiction writing?

Suggested Pre-writing Activities

- Introduce short fiction to students by:
  - discussing what short fiction is, especially contemporary short fiction
  - studying various examples (some brought by students)
  - presenting short fiction concepts in mini-lessons (e.g., point of view, structure)
  - discussing what it is that makes a person choose to write a short story from an idea, rather than a poem or a play
  - discussing the similarities and differences between short fiction and novels in terms of idea, scope, and structure.

- Have students write five sentences about:
  - a time when it paid off to be stubborn
  - a time when they either lost or found confidence in themselves
  - what they see when they look out the window
  - being tense, and what makes them feel that way
  - a time when they felt they were insensitive to another person
  - what it is that distracts them and keeps them from concentrating.

- Have students describe a place that always gives them some particular feeling (e.g., their grandparents' house, the library, a cabin, a park).

- As a class, go to some location nearby (e.g., a football field, a cafeteria, a playground). Ask each student to write a full description of the place without looking at what others are writing. When back in the classroom, compare the different detailed descriptions to illustrate the variety of ways in which the same setting may be described.

- Ask students to choose a point of view or vantage point and describe a setting as seen from there (e.g., from an open window, from the air, through the eyes of their pet).

- Ask students to describe the most interesting street corner they know.

- Have students describe a place where someone they know works (e.g., an office, a shop, a hospital, a garage, a trapper's cabin).

- Have students describe a place by making up clues to the identity of the inhabitants (e.g., the kind of furniture they have, the objects on their tables or walls). Have students pair up and exchange descriptions with their partner. Then, have them write about the type of people who live in the place which their partner described.

- Have students imagine that they are inside a common object. Have them make up an imaginary landscape inside this thing (e.g., a light bulb, a computer, a clothes dryer).

- Have students write five minutes of "stream of consciousness" writing as if they were:
  - a character from a TV show, movie, or book
  - the manager of a convenience store
  - a postal carrier
  - a day care worker after a hard day
  - a person on his or her 100th birthday
  - a sports figure
  - a super hero.

- Ask students to imagine a "what if" situation. For example, "what if" they were standing in line at a bank and a suspicious character walked in holding something under his or her coat. This

person walks around the bank in a suspicious manner and seems to be checking out the security system. Have students imagine five different characters in the line at the bank and write a paragraph about:
  - why each is in the bank
  - what each is thinking about while standing in line
  - what each does when he or she notices the suspicious character
  - what the consequences are of what each character does.

- Have students write a dialogue between two people that characterizes them both, without referring directly to either character's personality traits.

- Have students write a dialogue between two people that characterizes someone who is not present, without actually describing the person's character directly.

- Have students select a character they have already imagined for possible use in a short story, and write a brief dialogue between that character and another person under each of the following conditions:
  - one is trying to convince the other to go to a movie
  - one is trying not to let slip a piece of information that he or she has that might affect the other
  - one is trying to tell the other something but cannot get it out
  - the two are driving to the wedding of a mutual friend, who used to go out with one of them.

- Have students write opening paragraphs that contain some sort of "narrative hook" for these two possible short stories:
  - A middle-aged career woman dies suddenly, leaving unfinished business. She is given one day of grace to come back and settle things.
  - A young man decides to fake his own death and move to a distant country.

- From magazines, have each student select a photograph that contains people. Ask them to look at the photograph and assign it a one-sentence theme. Ask them to describe, in writing, the setting and the people. Then, ask them to put a plot in motion by presenting one of the characters with a choice, having the character make a choice, and then imagining what the consequences are.

- Have the students picture, in their minds, a rowboat tied to a dock. Ask them to imagine a person, who gets into the rowboat and rows it out into the lake. When the person gets to the middle of the lake, does he or she:
  - set the oars inside, let the boat drift, and read a book, lose track of time, get caught in a storm, etc.?
  - meet other people out there, who are fishing, diving for a sunken wreck, planning a robbery, etc.?
  - drop the boat's anchor and go for a swim, explore the opposite shore, lose the boat, etc.?
  - become surprised by a gust of wind and lose an oar, drift to an unknown place, get rescued by a stranger, etc.?

- Describing physical action presents a unique challenge. Students might try some activities like the ones which follow:
  - Describe a young child eating.
  - Write a description of a person doing a sport well.
  - Describe a particular animal or bird running, jumping, flying, etc.
  - Describe someone at work (e.g., a mechanic, a postal carrier, a dental hygienist, a dog trainer).
  - Write about the movement of a crowd of people.

- Bring a collection of everyday objects to school and display them on a table. Have each student select two seemingly unrelated objects and write something that includes both of them. Ask them to think about how the presence of one affects the meaning of the other (e.g., apple and knife, pillow and knife, CD and knife).

- Have students write about something changing:
  - a wheat field ripening or being harvested
  - a person changing his or her mind
  - the sky changing colour
  - a person changing his or her image or style of dress
  - a person putting on a disguise
  - a person becoming angry
  - a school gym becoming an emergency shelter during a blizzard or a summer storm.

- Have students think about the meaning of the word "atmosphere" and how atmosphere can be

created. Ask them to create atmosphere in describing one or more of the following situations:
  - a jazz club where a young musician is about to play his or her first professional gig
  - the grounds where a powwow is about to begin
  - a stadium where a famous rock musician is about to come on stage for a concert
  - a small concert hall where a string quartet is about to play
  - a parade route where a marching band is about to pass on Canada Day
  - an old apartment block after midnight where the sounds of a single instrument can be heard (e.g., guitar, trumpet, drum).

- Ask students to find an article in the newspaper that tells of a series of events (narrative). Have students retell the story as a "parody" of a certain type of fiction: a mystery, a western, a romance. They might tell the same story several different times, as a different type of fiction.

Module 4: Writing Plays

Module 4 introduces students to play writing. The module encourages students to discuss plays, learn about some elements of play writing, and express their own ideas through scenes and short plays.

Questions for Consideration in Discussions, Peer Conferences, or Student-teacher Conferences

These questions might be asked of the student writer for the purpose of reflection, or the student might adapt them to gather response from peers or the teacher. The questions are suggestions only. Students might have their own questions to ask peers or the teacher. (Other relevant questions for revision of each genre can be found in the Teacher Information section of this guide.)

- What is this scene or play about?
- Is the type of language consistent and appropriate for the subject matter, characters, situation (poetic, sparse, everyday, heightened)?
- Is the dialogue dramatic rather than conversational; that is, does it push the characters to action (internal or external)?
- Does the play or scene unfold in a way that is interesting, intriguing, satisfying, or challenging for the reader?
- Are the characters convincing and well-imagined? If so, what have you, the writer, done successfully? If not, what might be the reason?
- Does the structure of the play or scene allow the meaning to be revealed or come clear at an appropriate time for the reader?
- How does your scene or play reflect your unique "take" on the subject matter?
- What are the strengths of your dramatic writing?

Suggested Pre-writing Activities

- Introduce play writing to students by:
  - discussing what plays are, especially contemporary plays
  - discussing various types of contemporary plays (full length dramas, one act plays, "fringe" plays, street theatre, etc.)
  - studying various examples (some brought by students)
  - presenting play writing concepts in mini-lessons (e.g., dramatic dialogue, dramatic action)
  - discussing what it is that makes a person choose to write a play from an idea, rather than a short story or a poem.

- Ask each student to write two or three "what if" statements and throw them all in a shoe box. (E.g., what if a black limousine pulled up and the Queen got out?) Next, ask each student to find four different characters in magazine ads or pictures, and throw them in a different shoe box. Next, ask each student to find two pictures of a place (e.g., a natural setting, an airport lounge, an office). Throw them in another shoe box. Now, ask students to choose randomly two characters, a setting, and a "what if" statement and write some dialogue.

- Ask students to change a short story, fable, fairy tale, or myth into a short play.

- Ask students to take the main idea of a narrative poem and write it in play form.

- Ask students to write an episode of a weekly television series as a short play. This can be an episode they have seen or one they make up.

- Have students imagine themselves at a social gathering with a famous movie or TV star. They want to speak to the famous person, but they do not want to appear uncool or act like a "groupie". Write a monologue in which they think out loud

about how they will contrive to speak to the famous person.

- Have students imagine themselves as one of a number of hostages being held by a terrorist group. What do all the people involved say?

- Have students write a conversation they have overheard and then extend it.

- Explore the meaning of the word "sub-text". Have students write a conversation between two people, where they do not say directly what they mean. The following are examples:
  - One person wants to ask the other to go to a movie but is shy. They talk about the weather.
  - A student is trying to tell his or her parents about a bad mark on an exam. They talk about the dog.
  - Two friends have applied for the same job. They are both trying to find out if the other got called for an interview without actually asking. They talk about music on the radio.

- Have students create a conversation in which two people are talking: one has a secret and the other is trying to find out what it is.

- Have students invent a detective and a villain, and write a typical conversation between them, showing their styles or ways of speaking.

- Have students write dialogue between one person who is furious and another person who is trying to calm the first person down.

- Have students take a scene from any Shakespeare play and rewrite it, setting it in modern times.

- Have students work in small groups. Provide enough newspapers so that everyone in the group has a copy. Have each group pick a news story from the paper and write it as dialogue (e.g., a bank robbery, a trial, a car accident, a human interest story).

- Explore the meaning of the term "dramatic action". Have students write dialogue in which a character must make a choice and the choice has consequences.

- Have students write a monologue for a character in a one-person play. The character is telling the audience a story that is particularly revealing.

  The story is:
  - about a dream that caused the character to rethink something
  - about something that happened when the character was a child
  - about a time when the character was really embarrassed
  - about something that changed the character's life
  - about a decision that ended up being the wrong one.

Module 5: Writing Nonfiction

Module 5 introduces students to writing nonfiction. The module encourages students to learn what makes a work of nonfiction a piece of creative writing. They will also discuss literary nonfiction and its development, read literary nonfiction, and express their own ideas through nonfiction.

Questions for Consideration in Discussions, Peer Conferences, or Student-teacher Conferences

These questions might be asked of the student writer for the purpose of reflection, or the student might adapt them to gather response from peers or the teacher. The questions are suggestions only. Students might have their own questions to ask peers or the teacher. (Other relevant questions for revision of each genre can be found in the Teacher Information section of this guide.)

- What is the subject matter?
- What techniques have you used to make the story interesting or bring it alive for the reader?
- If you used fictional techniques (e.g., dialogue), can the reader trust you to have told the story accurately, and with integrity and respect for the people involved?
- Does the story unfold in a way that is interesting, intriguing, or satisfying for the reader?
- Is the story convincing? If so, why? If not, what might be the reason?
- Does the structure of the story allow the meaning of the story to be revealed or come clear at an appropriate time for the reader?
- How does this writing reflect your unique "take" on the subject matter?
- What are the strengths of your nonfiction writing?

Suggested Pre-writing Strategies

> Note: If students show an interest in extending these pre-writing strategies into major projects, they should consider how they will conduct research that will enable them to have real insights into their subjects. This is especially important with nonfiction because the writer's personal perspective is an important part of the writing.

- Introduce nonfiction to students by:
  - discussing what nonfiction is, especially contemporary literary nonfiction
  - studying various examples (some brought by students)
  - presenting nonfiction concepts in mini-lessons (e.g., research methods, incorporating dialogue)
  - discussing what it is that makes a person choose to write nonfiction from an idea rather than fiction or more traditional journalism.

- Have students look at an object from a totally different angle than usual (e.g., sideways, upside down, in an extraordinary light).

- Have students write about an incident or event, looking at it from an unusual angle (e.g., the school bus breaking down from the point of view of the tow-truck driver, a school basketball game from the point of view of a person who lives across the street from the school).

- Have students find a newspaper article that describes an event or occurrence. Have students write the story as though it were fiction, shaping it with a beginning, middle, and end, but at the same time not changing the facts of the story.

- Have students think of an issue in their own community and write a personal perspective on that issue.

- Have students find an article in the local newspaper or a local history book that is historical in nature. Have them visit the setting if possible and then write a description of the setting that will help bring the real event to life for the reader.

- Have students describe a setting they believe could be symbolic of something that happens in that setting. Their description should incorporate symbolism (e.g., the symbolism in rows and rows of identical work stations in a factory).

- Have students describe something that takes place over time using a diary type of format (e.g., preparing for an election, getting ready for an important sports event, training a dog, learning to drive).

- Have students interview someone who interests them and find an unique way to describe the results of the interview (other than the usual question and answer method).

- Have students imagine a topic they would like to learn about by immersing themselves in the topic and the lives of the people involved. Have them write an imaginary project proposal for a potential publisher. In their proposal, they should explain what they will be doing and why. They should also explain their personal interest in the topic and why they are the right person to write this story.

- Have students find an article in the newspaper about something momentous that happened to someone. Ask them to pretend the incident happened to them (e.g., getting stranded overnight in a blizzard, saving someone from a fire). Write a "personal essay" on what the incident meant to them and how it might change their lives.

- Have students think of something similar to the above that really happened to them. Have them write five different beginning paragraphs that could lead to different ways of telling the story.

- Have students write the story of something that really happened to them using one of the following for literary effect:
  - symbolism
  - repetition
  - suspense.

- Ask students to think of some aspect of human nature that they could "poke fun at", the way Stephen Leacock did.

- Have students think of a frustrating occurrence from everyday life (e.g., locking the keys in the car, dealing with voice messages when you are trying to call a business). Have them write a

humorous anecdote that shows the extreme way human beings sometimes respond to minor aggravations.

- Have students choose a real historical figure and research to find out more about the person, his or her contribution, and the times he or she lived in. Ask students to:
  - write diary or journal entries for the figure they have selected
  - write a personal essay as that figure
  - "interview" the person and then write up the interview in an interesting way
  - write an article on the person and his or her particular contribution, using some of the techniques of fiction writing but still capturing what really happened.

- Have students interview someone in the community who was/is involved in an historical or human interest event (e.g., a veteran, an athlete, an elder, a local hero). Have students write a human interest article on that person, making special effort to bring the story to life for the readers using some of the techniques of fiction. The following are examples:
  - recreating dialogue between the person and another person involved, based on quotations from the person interviewed
  - using a story structure that you might use to tell a fiction story (e.g., with some kind of rising action and a climax)
  - using descriptive language to set the scene or create an atmosphere for the reader
  - telling the story in the first person so that you can record your own responses as you learn the details.

- Have students plan their own autobiography, thinking about what the tone and focus might be. Have them write the introductory section.

Module 6: Independent Project

Module 6 provides an opportunity for students to work on projects of their own choosing. The focus should be on selection of subject matter and writing genre that is important to the individual student, so students can begin to learn what especially interests them about writing. They might also plan a project in which they work with a writer or another person involved with writing.

Questions for Consideration in Discussions, Peer Conferences, or Student-teacher Conferences

These questions might be asked of the student writer for the purpose of reflection, or the student might adapt them to gather response from peers or the teacher. The questions are suggestions only. Students might have their own questions to ask peers or the teacher. (Other relevant questions for revision of each genre can be found in the Teacher Information section of this guide.)

- What are the strengths of this writing?
- How is your unique perspective reflected in the writing?
- What is a particular challenge for you in this project?
- How might you see the writing in a new way during revision, so that you are not simply editing the first draft?
- Might any writing exercises be designed to help the student writer with problems he or she is having with this project?
- Are there any literature selections that might inspire the student or help to resolve some difficulties with the writing?
- What are the particular challenges of the genre chosen?
- Is it the best writing genre for this particular idea?
- In what new directions might this writing project lead?

Guidelines for Independent Projects

- Students can select a project inspired by any of the previous modules or from an entirely new source.
- Students can select one of the four genres covered in this course or they can select something different (e.g., a television or film script, a small magazine or "zine" format, a comic book).
- Students should outline the amount of time they will spend on the project and set timelines and check points for themselves.
- Student and teacher should agree on how much in-class time will spent on the project and how that time will be used.
- Students should decide on the type of feedback and conferencing that will most help them, and identify the individuals or group with whom they would like to consult. They might consult with an appropriate person outside of the school, with

the teacher's approval (a writer or editor in the community, for example).

- Students should keep some kind of journal or record of their experience and progress. The purpose of this is to help them become familiar with their own creative process and writing habits.
- Student and teacher should identify some literature selections and critical articles or reviews that might help or inspire the student, or increase his or her repertoire with language.
- Student and teacher should decide how and when the project will be assessed and evaluated.
- Student and teacher should decide if and how the project will be published, displayed, or shared with other students.

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