

EMPLOYABILITY ENHANCEMENT THROUGH TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING IN THE TIME OF AUTODIDACT TALENT

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INTRODUCTION:

As Louis Menand¹ in his essay – Show or Tell: Should Creative Writing be Taught?|| observes:
–Creative-writing programs are designed on the theory that students who have never published a poem can teach other students who have never published a poem how to write a publishable poem||
–Unlike the media of oil paints or musical notation, we all have a background using language. That makes the art of writing seem deceptively simple. It isn't.||
Genius gives birth but talent delivers. Language can be taught but creative writers are born. Writers are made, for anybody who isn't illiterate can write; but geniuses of the writing art like novelists, poets and playwrights are born. While you can learn technique, no one can create a voice for you. You either have something to say or you don't. All the decent writers are somewhat troubled souls: that's why they write – as lifelong therapy.

IS IT AUTODIDACT?

Autodidacticism or self-education is the act of teaching oneself about a subject or subjects in which one has had little to no formal education. Many notable contributions have been made by autodidacts. Autodidacticism is often complemented by learning in classrooms and other social settings. Many autodidacts seek instruction and guidance from experts, friends, teachers, parents, siblings, and community.

The fact which still remains is that a professional writer is a person with the discipline to sit at a desk for hours each day to turn the pain into well-structured words and stories designed to hold attention. The creative writing cannot be taught but certain skills can definitely be enhanced. Self-expression, catharsis, and emotions are always not easy to capture in words. And it certainly cannot be taught. As one of the celebrated writers, Hanif Kureishi ²claims: –... creative writing courses are ‘a waste of time’, that ‘99.9 percent’ of his students are ‘not talented’ and ‘just can't tell a story’, and that he doesn't think the fundamentals of creative writing can be taught...||, many teachers will agree with him.

But at the same time, Creative writing- learned or auto acquired, can open up a whole gamut of jobs and enterprises in today's world. Jobs like Advertising copywriter, arts administrator, creative director, digital copywriter, editorial assistant, lexicographer, magazine journalist, newspaper journalist, content writer are some such jobs. Creative writing is predominantly a vocational skill. It is about learning how to bring your ideas to fruition and express them in words. The skills gained outside of your study are vital too, helping you to demonstrate other abilities and interests that may be relevant to an employer. An education or training in writing gives the practice and skills in the craft so that when it comes down to producing the final piece, the words seem to flow "effortlessly" - at least to the reader. Creativity, curiosity, a broad range of knowledge, self-motivation, and perseverance are valuable. You should also apply good judgment and a strong sense of ethics in deciding what material to write or publish.

Buddha of Suburbia author, who teaches subject at Kingston University, added that many of his students could 'write sentences' but not tell stories Whether or not literary creativity can be taught, certain skills can surely be enhanced. Students can certainly have an insight into what constitutes effective or realistic description or style or narrative or point of view. The training also helps them learn voice, diction, plotting, setting, figures of speech or a writer's background and its effect on his writings.

¹ Louis Menand has contributed to *The New Yorker* since 1991, and has been a staff writer since 2001. His book –*The Metaphysical Club*|| was awarded the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for history and the Francis Parkman Prize from the Society of American Historians. He was an associate editor of *The New Republic* from 1986 to 1987, an editor at *The New Yorker* from 1992 to 1993, and a contributing editor of *The New York Review of Books* from 1994 to 2001. He is the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Professor of English at Harvard University.

² ²<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/mar/04/creative-writing-courses-waste-of-time-hanif-kureishi>

Creative writing, like art, is subjective, and therefore difficult to define. The definition of creative writing is writing that expresses ideas and thoughts in an imaginative way. Some of the common forms of creative writings are poetry, essays, news items, fiction, short stories, novels, plays or skits etc. There has been a lot of debate about whether creative writing can be taught. In all the arts, we have come to associate the artist with the artwork, and to think of all forms of art, including literary writing, as springing from a source some call human consciousness and others consider divine. Whatever its inspiration, however, literary writing reflects a heightened awareness of experience.

Our modern view of this process was heavily shaped by the Romantic movement in art, music, and literature, a movement that began in about 1780 and emphasized the individual artist and the sudden, unexplainable workings of the subconscious, especially as inspired by nature. The movement had its roots in England and Germany and extended into American literature in one direction and into the Slavic world in the other. Think of the English poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, of Goethe. They shaped our modern picture of the artist as a being apart from society, touched by the fire of creativity and perhaps a little madness, a rebel but also a receiver of inexplicable insight.

It is like an art, very subjective in nature. But People have been struggling to define art for centuries. Some feel that a Monet is definitely the art and a child's drawing is not. Others would say that both are art, and a few would even argue that a child's work is a truer form of art because it's not developed or learned. It's completely intuitive and therefore more creative and artistic. Creative writing presents us with the same dilemma. Sometimes it is also called 'an art of making things up'.

Emma Darwin,³ in her blog –But Can You Teach Creative Writing?|| discusses it very cleverly. She says,

....-1) Yes.

2) Yes, you can teach it, just as you can teach painting or sculpture, or choreography or writing music. Writing's no different.

3) Yes, you can teach within the limits of what that person has in the way of potential, but it's impossible to know what a student's potential is until you have been teaching them for a bit. What I'm really saying here is that all "teaching" should really be called "helping students to learn".

Writing programs can focus on technical aspects such as syntax, subject/ tense agreement, vocabulary, and spelling. Other programs may focus on style, imagery, metaphor, and setting a tone. Or they can be a combination of both. Aspiring writers and editors benefit from choosing an appropriate minor to fill in any gaps in knowledge, either to qualify them as writers specializing in that discipline or to provide other career alternatives. Technical writing requires a degree in, or some knowledge about, a specialized field - engineering & construction, business, or one of the sciences.

SOME OF THE FUNDAMENTALS OF CREATIVE WRITING COULD BE GENERALIZED AS FOLLOWS:

Deciding where and when to write, how to start your writing, writer's block and how to overcome it, developing your imagination, the benefits of reading widely, how to develop your powers of observation, personal qualities such as perseverance, determination, self-organisation, resilience, and confidence, getting the basics right, rules to develop a good style and avoiding common mistakes.

It should also focus on the areas like:

- Developing your writer's craft – finding original titles, writing opening paragraphs that catch the editors attention, planning the main body, checking facts, revision of work and carrying out research
- Techniques for selling your writing – including where and how to find markets and analysis of the markets
- Presenting your work – including layout, cover sheets, submitting your work electronically and query letters to editors
- Legal considerations – including libel, copyright, plagiarism

HOW TO IDENTIFY A CREATIVE WRITER:

Everyone is not a writer and every writer is not a creative writer. Some characteristic features of any creative writer are passion, imagination, rebelliousness or conformity with the society, intelligence, attitude, self-discipline and lots of fresh energy. These qualities can be used to teach certain basic aspects of creative writing. Such as- Character development, Plot development, Vivid setting, Underlying theme,

³ [This Itch Of Writing: The Blog](http://emmadarwin.typepad.com/thisitchofwriting/2012/12/but-can-you-teach-creative-writing.html)- <http://emmadarwin.typepad.com/thisitchofwriting/2012/12/but-can-you-teach-creative-writing.html>

Point of view, Dialogue, Anecdotes, Metaphors and similes, Figures of speech, Imaginative language, Emotional appeal, Heavy description and the last but not the least- lots of imagination.

WHAT CAN ONE TEACH?

- 1) Craft: what makes a well-built story or paragraph or poem, a compelling voice or a beautiful or powerful phrase, and then how to build some of the students' own.
- 2) Technique: how to control the materials of the craft such as words, grammar, syntax, prosody. Then there are the tools: point-of-view, showing and telling, narrative tense, psychic distance, rhyme and rhythm, structure, and so on.
- 3) Process: how to recognize materials and ideas when they arrive that might make a story or a poem; how to go looking for them when they don't arrive; what to do with them next; how to develop them, work them, draft them, refine them, revise them.
- 4) How to read great writing and fellow-students' writing, not just to train instincts and conscious craft and technique, but also because it's the only way students can learn to read their own writing as others do.
- 5) To experiment, and to try things which may not succeed - those wonky ducks again - because no one ever learned anything by staying within the boundaries of what they can already do well.
- 6) To take writing seriously, which some students aren't able to give themselves. It is worth it, you're saying explicitly or by implication: writing better is a worthy ambition. If you're saying they're entitled to take writing seriously, then you're also saying that they're entitled to grieve when their hopes are dashed by a failure, and entitled to get back on that horse once they've got their courage back.
- 7) You're providing a mirror by reflecting a student's work back to them and facilitating the rest of the group's acts of reflection. In expressing how others read something, you're helping the student's imagination to jump the gap between what they read in it, and what the rest of the world reads.

Writing can be taught and must be taught, although many a poor beginner has stalled on the fantasy that it is all inspiration to be waited for, or has defended bad writing on the grounds that it is straight from the heart and not to be tinkered with by those who apply unfeeling editorial techniques. Everything can be taught. Mozart took music lessons. Mika Häkkinen took driving lessons. Perhaps they had something innate to start with, but perhaps it would have stayed innate had they never had lessons. Many of the gifts we think are innate feel natural because we have been taught well, have practiced long and have assimilated the rules.

Teaching creative writing does not simply provide people with a manual, but rather with an ambiance, with feedback, a context in which to write and perhaps most importantly, provides a writer with somebody who is expecting them to deliver, on time. All good writers need feedback - otherwise, there would not be so many acknowledgment pages in modern books. There seems to be a real hunger to know about the writing process. The thing is, all writers approach the process differently. creative writing can be taught, but only by published writers. A student with some aptitude and interest can benefit an awful lot from coaching and mentoring and sharing their work with other students. But there are no rules; you can't say "this is how you write a short story" or "this is how you structure a novel" because something good that doesn't follow that pattern will always come along to challenge that. That said, it's difficult to turn a boring writer into an interesting one. And people who don't read a lot rarely write well.

You can't teach someone to be a great writer, but you can probably teach them to be a decent writer. People increasingly harbor dreams of becoming the next breakout J.K. Rowling or John Grisham. They're trawling the twin oceans of idea and marketplace for the next —Hunger Games|| or —The Glass Castle.|| The Internet and self-publishing don't help this perception, either, tempting us — almost telling us — Hey, you non-professional, untrained writer, you too can add your voice to the gazillions of words and works out there. Put up a blog, hang out a virtual shingle and readers will be hanging on your every word. In short, the creative writing industry — and it is an industry — has sprung up in the rich soil of these wannabe writers' collective dreams, nourished by, one hopes, hard work.

EMPLOYABILITY OF CREATIVE WRITING:

Employment of writers and editors is expected to grow at a high speed. Opportunities from newspapers, periodicals, book publishers, and nonprofit organizations are expected to increase with demand for these publications. Magazines and online publications and services have developed a variety market niches to appeal to special interest groups; if you have expertise in a particular field, look for publications in that area. Many different businesses and organizations are using newsletters and Internet websites more, and the advertising and public relations fields are also providing a steady demand for new writing professionals. Demand for technical specialty writers in areas, such as law, medicine, and economics is expected to increase as technologies expand in these areas.

Almost 25% of jobs for writers and editors are salaried positions with newspapers, magazines, and book publishers. Substantial numbers, mostly technical writers, work for computer software firms. Some writers develop publications and technical materials for government agencies or write for motion picture companies.

As in painting and music and dance, students can be taught fundamentals that will vastly improve their initial efforts, and save them from frustrations and dead ends. What's largely missing in creative writing instruction is schooling in how to be a writer. More than degrees and classes, and beyond creating good work, what writers need are ways to recharge, remain hopeful and compete in a literary landscape ruled by social media, diminishing advances, consolidation of the old presses and a vast diffusion of the new.

All writing is creative, there is no demarcation line between 'functional' writing and creative writing. There is no fixed point in a child's development when creativity takes precedence over writing learned in the classroom. It is thereupon the child's first exposure to the alphabet. To say that there is no point in teaching creative writing is no different to saying that there is no point in teaching the dull masses to read or write at all. It is a scandalous thing to say.

The American novelist Wallace Stegner⁴, who founded one of the first American graduate programs in creative writing, at Stanford University in California, was once asked in an interview whether he thought a teacher could really evoke talent in writing. He answered: —A teacher probably can't, but a class sometimes can... Talent can't be taught, but it can be awakened - by reading, by contact with other talents, by exposure to an environment where the expression of talent is valued and encouraged... All a teacher can do is set high goals for students

- or get them to set them for themselves - and, then, try to help them reach those goals.||

As Elizabeth Kostova⁵, in her essay, 'The Myth of Creative Writing: Can it be —Taught||?'' discusses: —Can creative writing be taught? Yes - and no. Creativity cannot be taught. It exists as an inherent force in people, an urge stronger in some than in others. But writing itself, or aspects of it can be nurtured by teaching, also a great art. I believe that every accomplished, successful, or experienced writer owes a debt to the craft and to those who have encouraged him or her, and has an obligation to foster the talents of beginning or aspiring writers.||

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⁴ Wallace Earle Stegner was an American historian, novelist, short story writer, and environmentalist. Some call him "The Dean of Western Writers." He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1972 and the U.S. National Book Award in 1977.

⁵ https://litenet.bg/publish21/e_kostova/mityt_en.htm Elizabeth Kostova, E-magazine LiterNet, 24.05.2006, № 5 (90), The lecture is presented in The Red House (Sofia), 21.05.2007.