

CREATIVE WRITING

KICK-STARTING THE IMAGINATION

self-blocking is very difficult to surpass

SOME ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES (or mantras...)

Creative writing (CW) is a **risk**, it's dangerous !

CW is about the imagination and NOT the intellect

CW improves children's performances

Keep it **simple**

Start with the concrete, avoid the abstract

Be lenient / **indulgent** with students / **be positive** :

The ideal is not to mark...

Everyone has imagination, everyone has potential

Put aside your prejudices about the students

Take account of the complex social unit around them

Be careful :

- when you mark a poem / a piece of creative writing
- no psychotherapy, no « open-up / confess » « be personal »,

a sense of forcing kills the imagination

working in groups is safer

deadlines are essential

laughing ~~AT~~ is not laughing WITH

How to make CW safe & fun

TO START

1. Use this following quote by Epictetus :

« *If you wish to be a good writer...* » and ask the students to find the end :

« *Write* ».

<http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/13852.Epictetus>

Putting the words on a page releases the imagination, words build on themselves, they have / create their own energy.

2. Start with a Verbal game

ex: "Once upon a time; there was ..."

Each student has to continue the sentence adding only one word. One can say "stop" and start a new sentence.

(idea : en îlots, faire préparer plusieurs mots de chaque nature: *word bank*)

3. STORIES

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>“ Stories work on you like arrows, Stories make you live right, Stories make you replace yourself.”</p> | <p>ie => <i>they touch you</i> ie => moral side / <i>understanding our behaviour => wisdom</i> ie => escape</p> |
|--|---|

quote by an Apache Indian

T.S. Eliot : “ **The novel is the book of life.**”, novels include peevishness / banality

escape is very important to teenagers, escaping into another world is fine / great :

it's the pleasure of writing and reading.

4. "Memory is an act of imagination."

Life experience is important to write but our teenagers don't have much yet!

So make them use memory that is false / embellished memory then you can contain the individual safely with an exercise

we can transpose/transmute a hard memory into something safe = a poem

IN THE NARRATIVE :

The magic of synchronicity of writing

NB (source wikipedia): <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synchronicity>

Synchronicity is the experience of two or more events that are apparently causally unrelated or unlikely to occur together by chance, yet are experienced as occurring together in a meaningful manner. The concept of synchronicity was first described in this terminology by Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychologist, in the 1920s.

The concept does not question, or compete with, the notion of causality. Instead it maintains that, just as events may be grouped by cause, they may also be grouped by meaning. A grouping of events by meaning need not have an explanation in terms of cause and effect.

1. The importance of the 5 senses = sensual appreciation

Transpose the feeling into meaning (or all the students sound the same)

The students are UNIQUE, so their point of view is UNIQUE too.

NB : SIGHT is the weakest sense to trigger the imagination.

Ex : imagine you're going back to your grandma's = what you "see" will be disappointing

SMELL on the contrary is the best (while taste is also very evocative)

HEARING is fine : use music in creative writing is a good idea.

Ex: using Bach is challenging + you can contrast it with ambient music

Exercise :

Bring an object the students can hold / that means something to them in class.

SIGHT : concentrate / look BUT no clichés: “microscopic” sight, shape etc.

HEARING : drop the object

TOUCH : close your eyes ! : build up your own universe

TASTE / SMELL: concrete description vs abstract

Sensitizing the students to the world around them. Everything is justifiable, can be included, is legitimate => CW is very inclusive

1. **The importance of obstacles and Challenges**

A disadvantage is positive in a story, of course an obstacle can be an internal disturbance (Mac Beth)

2. **The riddle:** it's a poem in itself! It's great to explain metaphor

ex: “ I passed through water and I was not wet

I passed through fire and I was not burnt, What am I ? ” Answer : *the wind*

Activity :

In groups of 5 : the group decides on the subject of the riddle. Each member writes a line corresponding to one sense.

5 use the 1st person, (it's better)

All of them together decide on the 6th line (and I am used as ...)

They read their riddle to the class => sharing is very important

Homework : write a riddle on your own

The riddle is an introduction to poetry

If it's frankly pathetic, find the possibility in it!

Take the feeblest and do something with it

3. **PEOPLE AS...** Think of 3 people you know (friends / family / stars...)

Describe these people as a piece of furniture, and use some details.

Cf: Dickens who described pieces of furniture like human beings)

challenge them, push them further

ATTACK VAGUENESS or philosophical wandering

Turn their work into a poem (free verse is fine, forget rhyme, poems don't have to rhyme!)

How do you turn it into a poem?

Write a line on the board, and make the line breaks / enjambment together

Or **turn it into a story**

To begin with, give them a topic in the form of a word : furniture / city / clothing / a meal / an animal

OTHER POSSIBILITIES FOR getting students to write :

4. **WHY IS ...** Why is soot black? Why is snow white? Why is blood red?

Answer wildly! Answer the rule of your imagination! Go to the "origin" of the explanation

5. **IMAGINE yourself as ...**

A day in the life of a pen / planet Earth ...

NB : short stories can be open, avoid the twist at the end, always look at examples in literature when you write

CALVINO : " In a narrative, any object is always magic."

the handkerchief in *Othello*, the dagger in *Mac Beth*

the invisible object, or the way we interact with it becomes incredibly magical.

To remove blockage, MIME is a good activity.

Make them mime they're taking a book, opening it and reading it : what's the 1st word they "see" ?

HOW TO INTRODUCE NARRATIVE

1. CHARACTER

Building up a Character : work in pairs : think of the mask and the anti-mask

Ex: the racist skinhead and the wounded boy he was

2. GESTURE AND BODY

2 students face each other, they have to imitate the other, they must concentrate on gesture / body language

Describe a body and invent a character

Characters should not just talk : action \Leftrightarrow reaction and NOT the expected reaction

for a total immersion in CW : The Arvon Foundation (one week of CW with professional writers in the UK) <http://www.arvonfoundation.org/Centres>

3. GIVE A SITUATION

Example : "a student gives a poisonous apple to his/ her teacher"

REMEMBER :

nouns and verbs are STRONG while adjectives and adverbs are weak unless you make them strong.

The more adjectives you use, the less efficient it is !