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Netherlandish Proverbs *and* Girl with a Pearl Earring*: Using images to spark creativity in a first year introduction to creative writing module*

Abstract
This paper provides a brief overview of creative writing programs in New Zealand before discussing definitions of creativity and creative writing. These definitions are then related to a teaching strategy for developing storytelling skills within a first year paper in a Bachelor of Communication Studies (BCS). These skills are seen as an essential element of the academic/professional 'toolbox' for all media practitioners and are implicit in the writing required to achieve the graduate profile of this particular degree. Photoshop® and visual framing theory along with Girl with a Pearl Earring *and* Netherlandish Proverbs *are used to help spark students' creativity and to isolate and clarify the processes of structuring and developing an effective short story. The uses of narrative writing in the media are briefly discussed and the writing paper is linked into the wider structure of the students' degree program.*

Introduction

Creative writing programs are still in their infancy in New Zealand, compared with the number, breadth and scope of such programs in the UK, Australia and elsewhere. For instance, McVey (2008: 289) quotes Harris (2006: 44) who reported '140 undergraduate, 70 Masters and 20 PhD CW programmes in the UK' in 2006. The International Institute of Modern Letters located at Victoria University in Wellington established New Zealand's first Master of Arts in Creative Writing in 1997 and now offers a PhD program as well. The creative writing program at the University of Auckland, taught for many years by Albert Wendt and Witi Ihimaera, is also well known.

The leadership, history and development of these two programs provide both a context and an insight into the creative writing programs scene in New Zealand. Unsurprisingly, both programs are led by writers who are also academics. Manhire was the first recipient of the Te Mata Estate (now sponsored by the National Library of New Zealand) Poet Laureate position and has been teaching at Victoria University since the mid-1970s. Wendt and Ihimaera also have long and strong academic and teaching histories: e.g. Wendt taught at the University of the South Pacific as Professor of Pacific Literature and Pro-Vice Chancellor after being the Principal of Samoa College and before he became Professor of New Zealand Literature at the University of Auckland. Ihimaera has also had a long-serving record at the University of Auckland where he has taught since

1990 after a career as a diplomat for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, notably in New York which was the scene of the seminal incident that inspired the novel *Whale rider* - later transformed into one of New Zealand's most significant films in terms of critical acclaim, commercial success and celebration of cultural identity.

Cultural identity is in many ways at the heart of both Ihimaera's and Wendt's writing: Ihimaera's *Pounamu, pounamu* (1972) was the first collection of short stories by a Maori writer and Wendt's novel *Sons for the return home* (1973) was the first published work by a Samoan writer. As a result, the work of both writers is frequently seen as representing entire national communities: a factor which made Ihimaera so uncomfortable that he stopped writing for nine years after the publication of his second collection of short stories *The new net goes fishing* in 1977. He is on record as stating that he felt his writing was seen as perpetuating a view of Maori with which Pakeha were comfortable, and he had no desire to continue to do this. In a similar fashion, Wendt became the 'voice' of Samoa within New Zealand literature, and both writers have reported feeling burdened by the expectations placed on them as exemplars of their particular ethnic communities. Yet the theme of identity, whether cultural, national, personal, or professional, is often explored within creative writing and thus introducing a creative writing component into a communication degree seemed an appropriate way to encourage our students to write from their own experiences and in their own individual voices.

Creativity and creative writing

But 'creativity' and 'creative writing' can be seen as somewhat problematic concepts within a very media-focussed communication degree with practical and industry outcomes. Part of the problem lies in the varied and often idiosyncratic meanings that are attached to the terms.

Claxton states that 'there are as many different angles on creativity, and as many different kinds of creativity, as there are of learning' (2006: 351). He begins by discussing the view of creativity commonly used in primary schools to describe 'artistic enthusiastic endeavour such as that encouraged during "mediaeval week"' (2006: 351). He contrasts this with the view presented in the psychological literature of creativity being 'quintessentially associated with a sudden moment of abrupt illumination' (2006: 352) exemplified by Archimedes and his bath, before explicating his own 'soft creativity'. He describes soft creativity as a slow process of recurring thoughts, research, pondering a topic and then recursively writing, drafting, rewriting where 'the process of writing is itself a creative fumbling towards something that I *feel* is fruitful, but have not thought before, or not as clearly as I am trying to describe it now' (2006: 352-53).

Many writers would recognise this 'creative fumbling' as a significant part of their own writing practice, regardless of whether their writing was academic, personal or creative. We believe that all three kinds of creativity are equally valid, and that 'artistic enthusiastic endeavour', sudden moments of illumination and soft creativity/creative fumbling should all be encouraged and developed within the education of communication/media practitioners and theorists.

Defining creative writing is also somewhat fraught; witness the ways in which the distinction between academic and creative writing has been questioned by writers such as Antoniou and Moriarty (2008), and Bartomolae (1995). Barthomolae's controversial statement (1995: 62-63) that 'Academic writing is a

single thing only in convenient arguments … There is no writing that is done in the academy that is not academic writing' is particularly relevant to writing within any applied or professional degree, including communication. On the one hand, some practitioners will claim that writing a public relations campaign, a radio documentary or a television screenplay is pure creative writing: others will note that using these genres requires an academic understanding of concepts such as audience, persuasion, narrative structure, voice, popular culture, logical development of an argument or viewpoint, and mass communication, plus having the skills to apply that knowledge. In the sense in which we are using the term 'creative writing' there is not necessarily an either/or: students may write in both an academic and a creative mode where academic knowledge acts as invisible supports for writing which is fresh and new. McVey, who believes that 'all writing is creative writing', explains that:

> any writing, from the published instructions for using a power drill to the most esoteric literary poetry, uses the raw materials of language, experience, knowledge, textual sources and the author's own ideas and imaginings to bring something into existence that did not exist before. (2008: 289)

While not necessarily accepting the notion that writing instructions for using a power drill is comparable to writing poetry, his emphasis on writing bringing 'into existence something that did not exist before' and therefore being 'creative' writing is a viewpoint we can support.

Creative writing within AUT University's Bachelor of Communication Studies

While degrees in creative writing operate at the macro-level, offering a wide range of papers and the opportunity to focus on particular genres such as poetry, short stories, novels or drama, many students' experiences will be at the micro-level and will often only consist of one paper offered within a Bachelor of Arts or Communication Studies. We will discuss the development of creative writing within a particular communication studies degree where an industry and vocational focus is developed side by side with a theoretical understanding of mass media communication.

AUT University's Bachelor of Communication Studies (BCS) began in 1991, was New Zealand's first communication degree and currently offers eight majors in the fields of journalism, radio, television, public relations, digital media, advertising creativity, creative industries and professional communication. Creativity is clearly a core component of these majors and indeed is explicit in the name of two of them - Advertising Creativity and Creative Industries - while being implicit in all. Likewise, writing is a key outcome of the journalism, public relations and professional communication majors, and a high level of writing skills is implicit across all majors.

Indeed, the general professional competencies section of the graduate profile for the BCS states that graduates will 'be effective and responsible presenters of ideas and information using oral, written and visual forms', while in the specific professional competences for each major, writing skills are valued slightly differently according to discipline. The final section of the graduate profile - personal capabilities - also highlights writing: 'Graduates will have developed capabilities to communicate effectively (with clarity, coherence and interest) in oral, written and visual forms'.

Whether using oral, written or visual forms (and, increasingly, combinations of all these forms), communication studies centres on the development of storytelling skills. If all storytelling is not to be just retelling and repackaging of the same old stories - creation myths, boy meets girl, war and death - then it is essential that students in all eight majors know how to tell stories in ways that are both fresh and innovative (creative), and clear and engaging in writing. Thus, journalism students faced with yet another story about climate change or famine in Africa need to be creative in how they present this perennial information, just as advertising students need to find a fresh way of selling soap powder or cleaning products and radio students need to be able to engage the audience with the issue of the day. Similarly, television, public relations, creative industries and professional communication students all need to communicate through both pictures and words.

Developing creative writing skills

Yet creativity is often a challenge to students, and sparking that creativity cannot be left until the end of the program when students are deeply engaged by their majors and engrossed in developing the requisite professional capabilities. Thus, the process of developing creative writing skills is begun in the first year paper *Principles of writing* where a synthesis of creative writing with elements of visual communication and framing theory allows students to apply skills developed in other first year papers in order to gain a deeper understanding of the process of storytelling. The *Image and sound* paper provides students with theoretical tools for image analysis (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006) while the *Media production workshop* paper allows students to produce original work in Digital Media, Radio and Television as well as acquiring basic skills in programs such as Photoshop® and ProTools®.

In the initial stages of developing student creativity, we encourage students to begin with their own knowledge and experience expressed in either first or third person, and often in the present tense. Using their own experience allows students to practise dealing with the real world. Thus we are not asking them to *fabricate* information but to consider creative methods for *presenting/writing* that information to an audience as may be required in their later media careers as print or broadcast journalists. This has the added benefit of removing focus from *what* to write - they are already familiar with the situation - and emphasising how to write. For example, students will be encouraged to consider more carefully their vocabulary choices, their uses of description and dialogue, the way in which they structure the narrative and how and when they reveal information to the reader. Again, these are all skills that will be applicable to writing for television, radio, public relations and advertising campaigns. At the same time, using the present tense adds both immediacy and impact to their writing as well as allowing them to experiment - surely another defining feature of creative writing.

The type of short story writing we wish to encourage at this stage of their learning uses a framed event to communicate a kernel of truth to the reader through the mode of 'showing not telling'. As Edgar Allan Poe says: 'Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale' (http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/POE/hawthorne.html). Poe is often credited as the founder of the modern short story (e.g. Cobb 1910; Pasco 1991; Rans 1965; Stovall 1963) and the criteria such as using incidents to enhance a particular effect, paying special attention to the first sentence and painting a picture for the reader that Poe defined in his 1842 review of Hawthorne's *Twice-told tales* continue to be useful in teaching students.

Experience, however, had shown us that students were more likely to try to write a novel rather than isolate an incident and, if a moment of truth or insight was identified, they were likely to deal with it explicitly rather than implicitly as we would prefer. Thus we wanted to find a way to help them refine, frame and develop their stories around one central moment. In an attempt to convey this to students visually, we decided to use the difference in focus, style and intent in Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1665) compared with Bruegel's *Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559).

Figure 1. Johannes Vermeer, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* c.1665, canvas 45 x 39 cm. Reproduced with kind permission of Mauritshuis, The Hague.

We began with the Vermeer painting (Figure 1) and discussed the image and framing of the girl in terms of how she is positioned and why; what the context is; what the painter wished to convey; the many ways the painting can be interpreted; and how it communicates with the audience. This communal brainstorming of meaning for the image began the development of creative interpretation of the work while also preparing students by modelling the type of thinking, isolation of details and sense of structure needed for the next stage of the storytelling process.

Having shown the visual equivalent of the style of writing we were aiming for, we then focussed on ways of reaching this goal. As we wanted these stories to be based on student experience, and as previous students had commented on the difficulty of isolating significance within the chaos and visual, sensory overload of modern life, we used the Bruegel painting (Figure 2) as a creative illustration of life and its complexities. This is life writ large, full of action, life and movement, with multiple characters, many different settings and many different meanings presented by the artist. As the name *Netherlandish Proverbs* suggests, the painter intended the work to be an allegory, but also something more than that. In fact, it is a visual representation of 118 proverbs, each one framed as a moment of truth (Figure 3). Thus it serves as an illustration and a model for the process of isolation and framing that we wanted students to experience and construct in their own writing.

Figure 2. *Netherlandish Proverbs*, Pieter Bruegel, 1559
Cat.No.: 1720, Pieter Bruegel d. Ä., Die Niederländischen Sprichwörter. 1559. Bildmaterial:
Eichenholz, 117 x 164 cm.
Reproduced with kind permission of Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Gemäldegalerie sind eine
Einrichtung der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz
Photo: Jörg P Anders

We also wanted students to learn by doing, so decided to use Photoshop® as a tool to allow them to cut and frame images from the Bruegel painting. The process of physically roaming over the painting using the zoom feature allowed students to look more closely and to engage with the image. We modelled the use of the zoom feature in tutorials and showed how the painter had framed a small section of the larger whole to illustrate a particular proverb, and discussed how the proverb and the image worked together. One example is the section in the lower right quadrant of the painting where the image of the man stretched out on the board unable to reach the food illustrated the proverb 'Not reach from one loaf to the next (too little money)' (Vohringer 1999: 56-57, No. 75). The students were very impressed by this creative intermixing of the visual and the verbal and were keen to examine the painting in more detail.

Students' framing and writing choices

We wanted the students to be able to relate the chosen framed image to their own lives and to use the framing of the image as a model for the structure of their short stories. Thus we chose an image to frame that had some resonance for us as writers, and told it as a story before asking students which sections we should delete; which we should highlight; how we should begin and how the story should end. Cremin (2006: 415) believes that teachers acting as writers and learners in front of students and modelling possibilities helps students become more engaged, and certainly, the students we taught seemed to quickly grasp the idea and were soon happily engaged in zooming in on the Bruegel, looking for potential images that would 'speak' to them.

Drawing and explanations courtesy of the Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz

85 Anyone can see through an oak plank if there is a hole in it.
86 a) He wipes his arse on the door (to make light of everything).
b) He goes around shouldering a burden.
87 He kisses the (door) ring (insincere, exaggerated respect).
88 He fishes behind the net (to miss an opportunity, wasted effort).
89 Big fish eat little fish.
90 He cannot bear to see the sun shine on the water (my neighbour's property bothers me and I am annoyed at the sun smiling in the water; envy, jealousy).
91 He throws his money into the water (to squander money; "To throw one's money out of the window"; "Money down the drain").
92 They both shit through one hole (inseparable friends).
93 It hangs like a privy over a ditch (a clear-cut matter).
94 He wants to kill two flies with one stroke (however, none will be caught; excessive ambition will be punished).
95 She gazes at the stork (she wastes her time).
96 To recognize a bird by its feathers.
97 He hangs his cloak according to the wind (he adapts his viewpoint to conform to the circumstance at hand; "He trims his sails to the wind"; "He swims with the tide").

98 He tosses feathers in the wind (all his efforts are for nothing; to work unsystematically).
99 The best straps are cut from someone else's leather (it is easy to dispose of someone else's property).
100 The pitcher goes to the water (the well) until it finally breaks (everything has its limits).
101 He holds an eel by the tail (a difficult undertaking sure to fail).
102 It is ill to swim against the stream (one who revolts and is unwilling to comply with commonly held rules has a hard time of it).
103 He throws his cowl over the fence (he discards the familiar without knowing whether or not he can make it in his new surroundings).
104 This proverb has not been identified with certainty. The following meanings are possible:
a) He sees bears dancing (he is famished).
b) Wild bears prefer each other's company (it is a disgrace if one cannot get along with one's peers).
105 a) He is running as if his backside were on fire (he finds himself in great distress).
b) He who eats fire, shits sparks (whoever undertakes a dangerous venture should not be surprised at its outcome).
106 a) Where the gate is open, the pigs will run into the corn (everything is upside down when there is no supervision).
b) Where the corn decreases, the pig increases (in weight) ("One man's loss is another man's gain").

107 He does not care whose house is on fire as long as he can warm himself at the blaze (he seizes every opportunity to further his advantage).
108 A wall with cracks will soon collapse.
109 It is easy to sail before the wind (under optimal conditions one succeeds easily).
110 He keeps his eye on the sail (he is alert; "To know which way the wind blows").
111 a) Who knows why geese go barefoot? (there is a reason for everything).
b) If I am not meant to be their keeper, I'll let geese be geese.
112 Horse droppings are not figs (don't be fooled).
113 He drags the block (a deceived suitor; to slave away at a senseless task).
114 Fear makes the old woman trot (need brings out unexpected qualities).
115 He shits on the gallows (he is not deterred by any penalty; a gallows bird who will come to a bad end).
116 Where the carcass is, there fly the crows.
117 If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch (when an ignoramus leads others, they will come to grief).
118 The journey is not yet over when one can discern church and steeple (the goal is reached only when one has fully completed one's task). One further proverb relates to the sun in the sky: Everything, however finely spun, finally comes to the sun (in the end, nothing remains hidden or unrequited).

Figure 3. Extract from the key to *Netherlandish Proverbs* (Vohringer 1999: 37). Reproduced with kind permission of Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Gemäldegalerie sind eine Einrichtung der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

One image - Proverb 92, 'They both shit through the same hole' (inseparable friends) - was a popular choice. Students were drawn to the visual crudity and unusual nature of the image to begin with and then became interested in the meaning attached to the image. The way they creatively applied this image to their own lives was enlightening. For one student, the image recalled an event from her childhood and her story presented a very literal interpretation of the image in a tale of sibling rivalry in which two young children race to get to the toilet first. A male student wrote a very poignant story about the closeness between his mother and his sister and the consequent sense of alienation and isolation felt by both father and son. Another student told the story of two close friends skinny-dipping at night as an illustration of the trust between them and how that trust enabled them to break boundaries and grow even closer as a result.

The methods students used to develop these stories out of the images in the painting were also varied. Some students found an image that appealed to them

and worked solely from the image to create their personal story. Other students were fascinated by the proverbs themselves and the interpretations attached to them linguistically in the key, and used the words alone as a prompt to inspire stories that expressed the same meaning. Yet other students used both the re-framed image and its meaning to generate a personal story: such as the young man who reacted to the image of a maidservant (in the lower left-hand quadrant of the painting) carrying a long set of tongs with a burning coal in one hand and a bucket of water in the other. Proverb 27 states this literally as 'She carries fire in one hand and water in the other', while the interpretation given in the key explains this as 'she is two-faced and deceitful'. When the image was discussed in class, students variously interpreted this as meaning being prepared for any eventuality (the water would douse the fire); sending others to do the dirty and dangerous work; and seeking to balance opposites. One student's response to the image was to turn it into a contemporary story of regret the morning after the night before, told from the perspective of a young man as his best friend's girlfriend scurries around his bedroom, retrieving her clothes and abusing him for having taken advantage of her.

Although the paths to a story of their own were different, students almost unanimously reported that the physical manipulation of the Photoshop® tools to zoom in and out of smaller sections of the painting helped establish an understanding of how to frame an image that was transferable into framing the events of a short story. The details that allowed the painter to visually represent the proverbs, such as the shears or sheep droppings in the group of associated images in the mid-section of the painting, demonstrated techniques for adding details in writing that either helped establish a form of reality or revealed insights into character and motivation. Furthermore, Ellis and O'Rourke (2008) discovered that emphasising the process of framing was useful in helping students make linkages to much of the theory they would encounter later in the degree e.g. visual communication theory (Berger 1972), communication theory (Goffman 1974; Entman 1973; Drake & Donohue 1996), media theory (Scheufele 1999), discourse theory (Fiss & Hirsch 2005), sociology (Benford & Snow 2000), public relations theory (Hallahan 1999) and the news frames of journalism (Galtung & Ruge 1965; Pan & Kosicki 1993; Norris 1997).

Adding more creative writing techniques

Once students were confident in using the framing exercise and choosing elements of the painting to suggest a possible parallel experience in their own lives, most were able to dispense with the painting as a prompt and moved more directly into finding similar short and significant moments within their own lives. At this point, we added advice from New Zealand author Damien Wilkins to 'Get in late and get out early', emphasising the need to remain focussed on the key elements of the story and encouraging students to remove superfluous or unsuitable details and events. Katherine Mansfield once claimed that if any one word was removed from any of her short stories, the story itself would not be the same. While not expecting the same degree of accuracy and ability to manipulate language from first year students, this comment helped stress the need for careful selection of vocabulary, and underlined the importance of emotional overtones attached to particular words. Concentrating on how stories began and ended was another technique introduced closer to the end of teaching. The use of dialogue was encouraged in the beginning of the story to establish characters and add immediacy, and students were encouraged to cut the last sentence from their story (and to carry on cutting, if necessary) until the story ended on a suitable note. Ambiguity was also encouraged so that the reader was asked to engage with the story more and to be an active

participant in creating meaning, thus removing the writer's temptation to become expository in tone and explicit in style.

Student responses

Student responses to a questionnaire showed 83% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that the process of physically framing the image in Photoshop was useful in developing their writing. Other comments dealt with how 'the visual element helped the writing'; how the 'practical element' was useful; and that the process was 'interesting', 'fun' and 'original'. Another group of comments also related to the aspect of finding a moment of truth or developing a theme. These included the 'theme (is) already there'; the framed section already had 'one particular point' and 'helped create meaning'; there was 'lots of selection'; it 'helps [me] think of different aspects to write about'; and reveals 'significant learning times [from own experience]'.

As well as liking the exercise and understanding how it was intended to help them focus on and frame their own creative writing, their comments showed real depth of insight. For example, one student summarised the point of what had been learnt as being about 'writing a story about a brick in a wall rather than the whole wall', while another student stated:

> It's a bit much to take on the whole Bruegel picture at once so by breaking it down it also helped me to understand the proverbs. It was helpful to have a frame around it as I could then focus on that one point and let my mind go wild. You can think how it relates to things/events you've heard of or experienced yourself.

These students had clearly understood the aim of our teaching, and many felt confident that they would be able to apply their newly developed writing skills to both the varying genres required in their chosen major and to creating (and deciphering) visual and verbal narratives. Some are very keen to continue this process and asked about other opportunities to choose creative writing papers within the degree or in postgraduate study.

What the teachers learned

Furthermore, the teaching team has considered ways of extending these teaching techniques, such as setting time aside for students to critique each other's work and linking with the *Image and sound* tutors so that the students are alerted early in Semester 1 to the uses of framing theory outside visual communication. We now include images as prompts for writing in both assessments and examinations and have tried to widen the use and understanding of proverbs from a variety of cultures so that all students can relate to them and understand their significance as encapsulating so-called universal truths in culturally specific forms. We have noted a steady increase in students choosing the creative writing option in exams and performing well in this area.

Moreover, we seem to have removed some apprehension and dislike of creative writing. Such attitudes may have resulted from the fact that 'Creativity implies a deviance from past experience and procedures' (Michalko 2001: 82). Students entering university after completing Levels 1-3 on the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) framework have often become obsessed with

assessment to the detriment of learning; i.e. they will do what they think the teacher wants or the achievement standards dictate rather than trusting their own personal voice. Such students often find creative writing papers or programs challenging as they are in effect telling students to move away from past experiences and procedures, to throw away the rulebook and to take risks, despite Bickham's warning that 'The things that made a good story long ago still make a good story today' (1994: 10).

Conclusion

Thus we have discovered that using a visual prompt students can link to their own experience is an effective method of stimulating engagement with the creative writing process and of sparking creativity. Making connections across the curriculum by using digital media tools, visual communication theory and creative writing processes appeals to students and gives them a new insight into the processes and procedures of effective short story writing. Framing an image and structuring a story have much in common and students who are kinaesthetic learners respond well to the physical process of manipulating images and selecting details to emphasise. Interestingly, students had little difficulty in relating to the art of either Vermeer or Bruegel despite their being painted in 1665 and 1559 respectively. In a similar vein, the words of the proverbs themselves still seemed to have meaning for these students as they could make a link between the shared experiences captured in the Bruegel painting and in the proverbs with their own lived experience. The fact that the painting of *Girl with a Pearl Earring* had also made a transition from artwork to novel to film (Paterson & Webber 2003) meant that some students were familiar with the painting and the text, and the wide range of possibilities and story that a contemporary writer, Tracy Chevalier (1999), had developed from this single image.

Teaching students some simple techniques to develop creative ideas helps with the scaffolding of learning process in writing for particular majors and for developing creative writing throughout the rest of the degree. This is demonstrated in further papers such as *Visual communication* in Year 2 where students study how and why ideas are communicated through visual formats, or in the whole suite of digital media papers where using a computer to tell a story in sound, graphics, images and animation pushes the students further than expressing their ideas in writing. Likewise, knowing how to use sound creatively in the radio major and film in the television major can be linked back to a solid understanding of the short story format. In journalism, the story is also central to practice as it is in the professional communication major, while PR practitioners believe that being able to frame the story to suit the client and the product is a core skill in their discipline.

Finally, learning to break out of the frame that is often put around knowledge and used to stifle creativity allows students at university to do the opposite of what Michalko believes students are taught to do at school:

> In short, we were taught 'what' to think instead of 'how' to think. We entered school as a question mark and graduated as a period. (2001: 284)

With the right teaching and guidance, students of creative writing can reverse this process and, by using McVey's 'creative fumbling' process, approach their own moments of truth. But such moments of truth will normally lead to more questions and the realisation that a good university education is built on a solid

foundation of asking questions rather than on providing answers. Developing creativity allows students to frame these questions in an innovative and thought-provoking fashion.

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