

Best of the Pedagogy Papers, 2007  
Association of Writers and Writing Programs

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Pedagogy Team

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NOTE: *The 2007 AWP Pedagogy Papers* are available in a printed version at the  
conference registration area.  
[www.awpwriter.org](http://www.awpwriter.org).

## Preface

The members of the 2007 Pedagogy Forum are pleased to introduce this collection of the fifty best papers of the approximately two hundred submitted to the 2007 A.W.P. Pedagogy Forum.

As an academic discipline, creative writing is both as ancient as Aristotle's *Poetics* and as fresh as a distance learning class taught on the Internet. It is both a hybrid of other disciplines and one that is unique. The essays herein reveal the expanse of our field through the wide breadth of approaches to the teaching of creative writing that exist today. Some writers appropriate and adapt theory and classroom strategies from other disciplines—literature, psychology, cinema studies, composition studies, and visual arts. Some present new riffs on familiar games and exercises. Some raise (again) important issues in our discipline—the grading of creative writing, the mentoring of graduates in the workshop, and the efficacy of the workshop in the undergraduate course. And some papers offer something completely new, ideas that indicate the maturation of our discipline, a coming into our own.

Authors of these papers are likewise diverse, both experienced scholars and those in training. They interrogate methods and issues within and across genres—fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and drama, as well as interdisciplinary subjects. Audiences for these lessons and methodologies range from middle school classrooms to traditional college courses and out into the community and world. In these papers, we glimpse the places and people creative writing and the teaching of creative writing reach. We realize the history and breeding from which our discipline has sprung and the promise of its future.

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especially objective fact—were synonyms that they could barely write a sentence. Their writer’s block came from an inability to let go of their critical, fact-detecting faculties long enough to imagine themselves into the nuances of their pasts.

3RVW)UMWQWVDMQRUMQWKHSSUREKWRWKHURHQMVKFKED  
RIRKRUMRQMKKVVWQWVNDHHCWOYWQWMMQJRUMDWQWQONHWQRQG  
a way to recreate memory on the page.

In this exercise, the focus shifts from fact to form. A standard in poetry writing classes, structural HFVMDHDQWKQRQFWRQFODV

A useful model is the preface from Jo Ann Beard’s KQVRIRWK a short piece that juxtaposes an early memory against a resonant moment in adulthood. For additional models, teachers may want to select RWKHWKRUKUSIDWRUSEMRUVRWKQJZVWQWQKRVDIRUMFKKD?UQJMDQW  
VWHKRRUPURQWKSIDWRIVWQWZVHVKRRH,UHRQWKW  
they read the model only after writing a rough draft.

In this exercise, students write during class where they can be distracted from questioning themselves because, after all, it is just a sketch, an exercise in evoking a long-distant moment. They are asked to FRQFQWUDVHQVDWRBQWKDWKMFHQHQBH :KHMMWVNSOBKDVQWKSRSOH  
ORRNONHKDVRQGFQHBG

The steps of the exercise:

- % :UWHUHQDKRWVWRSSQJRWKUVVWVWU\
- % ISWHIWHQWMRIZVQJJRENQQWRQDWDVQDBHFRQMMWR  
decide on location, actors, costumes, etc.
- % HWWKQNBWRQNKODHRRPWWKDUUMRQDMMQVRWVKWKHVWVWU\ )RU  
example, it might
  - o be a similar event (such as riding in a boat).
  - o echo the emotion (sheer joy, fear, agitation).
  - o link through image (white lace curtains in both scenes).
  - o suddenly come to mind for reasons the writer can’t yet name.

% )QDOZVWQWVDRWVKMFRQBU\  
2QFMWQWVVKDHRBOWWKQFODVZVWQJUBRNJRWKSDVKRBLFXVWKH  
VWUWKWKRIWKSEMKWVKWVHVWVUMRQDKRWKDUUMRQQQFQHWRRQJMFVSRQW  
of view and characterization as well as form. Students will see that true-to-memory detail is not the same as journalistic reporting, and that it is the art of writing the memory—not the material itself—that distinguishes literary memoir.

Ask students to revise their writing for a later class workshop.

Creative writing students often form their ideas of how to write from the experience of analysis in story. One way to help them get back to gut-level, concrete apprehension of skeletal form is to have them act out tableaus of stories. As students form tableaus, they get beyond visualizing story as merely a referential string of words.

The class should be arranged in a circle rather than in rows because the experience is theater in the stand immobile, looking at the stick, so it's important for the leader to tell them they must keep moving. This technique comes from acting. Actors sometimes use a dowel or rod between two characters to establish blocking positions. The actors know that to maintain physical tension the actors must not be too close to each other, nor too far away. The stick makes them keep a uniform, close distance.

the room feel the actual tension between the two people, not just an abstract description of that narrative interesting and instructive.

Once students have the idea that story is tension between characters, they can begin other experiments. would it change if the two people are in a crowd of other people, trapped in an abandoned mine, or alone on an shape of the story and can feel the connection between character and story and between setting and story.

Other experimentation involves removing the rod and directing the students to form the shapes of other stories in the room. For example, what stories can be built around the three-way tension between two men and a polyandrous family. If they are encouraged and allowed to say whatever comes into their heads, they can begin kind of play imitates the action of actually writing a story, playing with characters and physical context.

The students can be guided to discover complex stories, such as three people in a crowd, a person alone in a desert, a character divided against himself. Student participation is essential as they act out their own primeval stories. One especially effective demonstration is to have a woman stand in a circle of men. They walk forward until their shoulders are touching and she is trapped inside a tiny space. The class can discuss what she

Through the performance of these tableaus, students can move beyond abstraction and sense the dramatic shapes of stories. In addition, they can begin to imitate the generative or speculative actions of the







creatively and do close reading and analysis of canonical texts. For the student who harbors a poet within, ~~W~~~~K~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~V~~~~I~~~~Q~~~~H~~~~W~~~~P~~~~K~~~~W~~~~V~~~~W~~~~U~~~~Q~~~~H~~~~H~~~~J~~~~B~~~~U~~~~R~~~~I~~~~W~~~~H~~~~I~~~~R~~~~U~~~~V~~~~F~~~~K~~~~R~~~~O~~~~D~~~~O~~~~V~~~~W~~~~H~~~~V~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~O~~~~M~~~~K~~~~W~~~~E~~~~K~~~~H~~~~V~~~~W~~ requires a reading of ~~W~~~~K~~~~I~~ , for example, more closely than they’ve ever done before as they try their hand ~~W~~~~Z~~~~W~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~S~~~~D~~~~V~~~~W~~~~K~~~~D~~~~P~~~~K~~~~W~~~~S~~~~D~~~~V~~~~D~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~O~~~~F~~~~F~~~~R~~~~Y~~~~H~~~~H~~~~I~~~~P~~~~W~~~~R~~~~I~~~~W~~~~K~~~~P~~~~X~~~~F~~~~U~~~~S~~~~W~~ ~~Q~~~~R~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~N~~~~Q~~~~R~~~~I~~ ~~V~~~~W~~~~H~~~~W~~~~K~~~~D~~~~V~~~~I~~~~Q~~~~H~~~~W~~~~V~~~~D~~~~O~~~~R~~~~Z~~~~W~~~~K~~~~M~~~~E~~~~K~~~~H~~ to be the creative writer even as she writes an assignment requiring ~~O~~~~W~~~~H~~~~D~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~V~~~~W~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~W~~~~K~~~~M~~~~V~~~~I~~~~Q~~~~H~~~~W~~~~V~~~~F~~~~R~~~~B~~~~R~~~~V~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~S~~~~U~~~~M~~~~R~~~~X~~~~O~~~~N~~~~Q~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~(~~~~O~~~~H~~~~K~~~~D~~~~V~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~I~~~~R~~~~U~~~~P~~ students to analyze, for example—has enabled me to explore poetry of the past ~~M~~~~S~~~~R~~~~W~~ , enriching myself while challenging my students to read closely. For the many writers who also teach classes like Survey of ~~(~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~O~~~~M~~~~K~~~~/~~~~W~~~~H~~~~D~~~~W~~~~K~~~~M~~~~W~~~~H~~~~W~~~~K~~~~S~~~~S~~~~U~~~~R~~~~E~~~~K~~~~D~~~~O~~~~R~~~~Z~~~~I~~~~R~~~~U~~~~Q~~~~Y~~~~I~~~~R~~~~U~~~~W~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~H~~~~S~~~~O~~~~W~~~~H~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~U~~~~V~~~~E~~~~Q~~~~F~~~~K~~~~R~~~~O~~~~D~~~~\~~~~I~~~~R~~~~U~~ both teacher and student, and deepens the pleasure of studying literature, especially that of the remote past.

In one assignment, I ask that students recreate the missing lines from ~~W~~~~K~~~~I~~ in which the dragon’s treasure has been disturbed, rousing his fury. This part of the manuscript, I tell my students, was destroyed ~~Q~~~~I~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~Q~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~K~~~~N~~~~W~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~R~~~~U~~~~M~~~~W~~~~R~~~~U~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~M~~~~Z~~~~W~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~G~~ explain them. They must write in accentual-alliterative meter and discuss what they’ve done in the context of ~~W~~~~K~~~~S~~~~R~~~~M~~~~E~~~~V~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~I~~~~U~~~~H~~~~W~~~~D~~~~V~~~~I~~~~Q~~~~H~~~~W~~~~M~~~~W~~~~I~~~~R~~~~U~~~~O~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~U~~~~M~~~~M~~~~X~~~~U~~~~N~~~~V~~~~V~~~~K~~~~D~~ ~~E~~~~\*~~~~Q~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~ \*~~U~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~I~~~~K~~~~W~~ , and it can be used for drama as well as poetry. A variation of this is for the ~~W~~~~E~~~~K~~~~H~~~~D~~~~F~~~~U~~~~V~~~~E~~~~H~~ ~~Z~~~~W~~~~H~~~~R~~~~F~~~~U~~~~H~~~~D~~~~O~~~~H~~~~H~~~~F~~~~R~~~~Y~~~~H~~~~H~~~~I~~~~P~~~~W~~~~I~~~~U~~~~R~~~~B~~~~U~~~~N~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~N~~~~V~~~~W~~~~H~~~~W~~~~V~~~~I~~~~R~~~~U~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~D~~~~V~~~~R~~~~I~~~~W~~ ~~Q~~~~X~~~~W~~~~E~~~~D~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~I~~~~R~~~~U~~~~E~~~~F~~~~S~~~~W~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~W~~~~D~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~W~~~~E~~~~R~~~~U~~~~U~~~~M~~~~H~~~~W~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~W~~~~D~~~~E~~~~R~~~~D~~ ~~S~~~~D~~~~V~~~~H~~~~U~~~~R~~~~D~~~~R~~~~V~~~~W~~~~Q~~~~K~~~~U~~~~N~~ can ~~H~~~~H~~~~W~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~G~~~~F~~~~R~~~~Y~~~~H~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~W~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~P~~~~X~~~~F~~~~U~~~~S~~~~W~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~W~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~R~~~~O~~~~R~~~~J~~~~H~~~~R~~~~P~~ (~~Y~~~~H~~~~Q~~ or Marlowe’s ~~R~~~~F~~~~W~~~~R~~~~U~~)~~M~~~~W~~~~X~~ will require careful analysis of character, theme, and historical context, from church ~~K~~~~L~~~~W~~~~R~~~~U~~~~W~~~~R~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~R~~~~S~~~~H~~~~W~~~~R~~~~I~~~~Y~~~~H~~~~V~~~~H~~~~H~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~O~~~~J~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~H~~~~M~~~~W~~~~S~~~~I~~~~N~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~ ~~F~~~~U~~~~V~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~S~~~~U~~~~M~~~~R~~~~X~~~~O~~~~N~~~~Q~~~~R~~~~Q~~’ ~~V~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~H~~)~~U~~~~Q~~~~F~~~~M~~~~R~~~~K~~~~R~~~~O~~~~Y~~~~E~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~S~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~M~~~~R~~~~S~~~~U~~~~W~~~~W~~~~R~~~~R~~~~W~~~~H~~~~V~~~~E~~~~L~~~~V~~~~W~~~~H~~~~V~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~V~~ ~~K~~~~E~~~~K~~~~D~~~~H~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~O~~~~F~~~~R~~~~W~~~~R~~~~O~~~~I~~~~K~~~~W~~,~~Z~~~~W~~~~W~~~~K~~~~M~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~N~~~~V~~~~W~~~~H~~~~W~~~~V~~~~W~~~~R~~~~Z~~~~W~~~~H~~~~O~~~~M~~~~H~~~~R~~~~S~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~V~~~~M~~ placing Cobb’s work in the context of everything they know about the sonnet—technical features, development ~~R~~~~I~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~R~~~~U~~~~D~~~~G~~~~L~~~~W~~~~R~~~~U~~~~E~~~~D~~~~E~~~~N~~~~J~~~~U~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~H~~~~W~~~~I~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~V~~~~S~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~Q~~~~F~~~~M~~~~W~~~~R~~~~V~~~~K~~~~R~~~~K~~~~R~~)~~U~~~~Q~~~~F~~~~M~~~~R~~~~K~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~ ~~H~~~~U~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~W~~~~K~~~~W~~~~H~~~~E~~~~K~~~~O~~~~M~~~~V~~~~K~~~~R~~~~Z~~~~W~~~~V~~~~Y~~~~Q~~~~A~~~~F~~~~H~~~~E~~~~K~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~M~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~I~~~~R~~~~U~~~~K~~~~N~~~~M~~~~S~~~~H~~~~W~~~~K~~~~N~~~~W~~ also discuss anything in the poem that seems to have gone wrong and reveals Cobb’s less than perfect mastery of the form.

Creating assignments like these is time-consuming but pleasurable; I learn more about poetry every time ~~Z~~~~W~~~~H~~~~R~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~R~~~~E~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~Q~~~~W~~)~~R~~~~U~~~~W~~~~K~~~~M~~~~W~~~~H~~~~W~~~~K~~~~R~~~~Z~~~~W~~~~M~~~~W~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~K~~~~W~~~~E~~~~K~~~~H~~~~K~~~~R~~~~K~~~~W~~~~U~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~F~~~~D~~ ~~P~~~~X~~~~F~~~~U~~~~S~~~~W~~~~D~~~~O~~~~S~~~~U~~~~R~~~~Y~~~~H~~~~U~~~~H~~~~W~~~~H~~~~O~~~~H~~~~W~~~~D~~~~V~~~~W~~~~D~~~~W~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~K~~~~D~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~Y~~~~H~~~~W~~~~R~~~~Q~~~~D~~~~(~~~~Q~~~~J~~~~O~~~~M~~~~K~~~~S~~~~S~~~~H~~~~K~~~~M~~~~V~~~~I~~~~Q~~~~H~~~~W~~~~V~~ force the student to focus on the work itself, and they are as close as we can get to plagiarism-proof. If you ~~F~~~~U~~~~V~~~~W~~~~K~~~~K~~~~U~~~~N~~~~R~~~~U~~~~W~~~~K~~~~W~~~~K~~~~R~~~~U~~~~W~~~~K~~~~H~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~H~~~~R~~~~R~~~~J~~~~O~~~~Q~~~~W~~~~D~~~~R~~~~K~~~~U~~~~W~~~~W~~~~K~~~~M~~~~W~~~~H~~







Many beginning writers of poetry don't come to the creative writing workshop expecting a focus on writing exercises that use parallelism early in the semester can help students develop new ways of thinking habit to structure things into symmetrical patterns, including patterns of repetition, is in fact a projection of use parallel structures from a cross-section of cultures requires thinking about how particular patterns within language transcend cultural boundaries. An examination of cultural boundaries can also initiate a dialogue about the value and aesthetics of language patterns, explore the place of rhetorical strategies within poetry, and get students thinking and writing about their own placement along social and cultural spectrums.

and contemporary poets. After reading examples of parallel structures, students perform a pastiche of repetitive language within their own writing. The following steps can help students to develop their own moves into order and invention.

% a phrase describing a scene or object that they feel speaks for them to be repeated. Students repeat the same phrase in each line of a poem but vary the endings of the phrase, completing it with a list of images images that come immediately to mind when they think of the repeated phrase, and then play with the order of the varied endings.

% examples of parallel images. Ask the students to begin with something they saw in recent days in the human world—something that struck them as compelling/beautiful—and then make a leap in a next line to something that suggests this scene in the natural world (an image or scene).

% from the previous line but in a new way.

kind of order, students create surprises; they develop compelling syntactical structures and make leaps within







overlooked detail, and challenges assumptions. A more obvious hallmark of the essay is the way its authors let readers in on their thinking, revealing the process of looking carefully at the evidence and testing it against

that which makes the reader see in a new way. Taking these overlapping qualities between essays and poetry

to prose poems, but these are not always a good source for considering the blending of defamiliarization and

not the kind of essay they like—as (no offense) a bad essay.

Asking students to write poetry in the essay workshop can be a better option than demanding that they

Olds’s poem takes a moment of observation—seeing a young family on the beach—and remembering—

Modeling Olds, a sample of students have found a point, taken out the sarcasm, started over, found a new

topic, seen something new. The poem gives them permission to use metaphor, and when they return to their

essay writing, it gives them an opportunity to consider how metaphor makes the familiar strange and how far

an essayist can go with metaphor. They consider the way genre is driven by audience, what the audience will

the act itself. Reality doesn't need us. A poet knows this, and then, in the midst of a poem, when reality streams  
 WKURJKWKHUGWKDZKNGROWEMQWTFWIDVMMWVWKDKDSRWUDQQRWFKQJWKH  
 world, there is some intrinsic value in the creation of a poem, some connection with the world both the writer  
 and the writing inhabit. And while a poem may not cure cancer, it does have the potential for value. As William  
 BORV:DOBVWMDYSKRKDK\*UH)ORZ;WVIFWWRJW/WKHMIURBRMW  
 PHHDMHURUOENRIKDMIRQWKHHSRWUVMWUWRWKAUOG  
 of man and simultaneously a representation of the innermost fears and hopes of that same world. No doubt any  
 SHVRQKRZVMSRWUKDRQFKHBRKWSRWUQW WNQRZRSOEWDOVKDM  
 they do, but in a society where entertainment comes from all manner of more seemingly stimulating media,  
 KDBSRVVKDHHWRVTKDFQSRBQRWRQOWRWKRVRARZMFKMWRWKRVR  
 PKWUWKPI

Many student-writers wonder about the point of poetic writing. If they do not, it might be a good question to ask. And while the answer is not concrete, I believe it is one that every poet must ask and continue to ponder. After all, a life spent studying poetry will not bring fame or fortune. It can even be considered, in the grand scheme of things, a folly. But poetry can matter. It can illuminate. And it can most assuredly teach.

It is an assumption for many young writers that poetry is the realm of emotion and of heart, and, for the most part, that is an apt supposition. Wordsworth in his 3UHDWR/UEDDO VTRUDOJRRSRWU\  
 MWKMSRQWQHXRYHAKISRHAIHQJVQWKRJKWKMMUBRMWRKEKQYDNQH  
 attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual  
 RUJQEVHVDMKQVRWKRKWKWORQJQSO,WLBRUWQWWRUHRKVVWQWVWKMSRWUFQ  
 be more than spew on a coffee shop napkin (though there have probably been quite a few successful poems  
 FRBRVHVKKQHQHWKMSRWUFQFRHURPAAWRQQWVWRQQMQIURFWX

Most successful poets spend time researching many of the things they write about and for beginning poets this may be a surprise. A good exercise to get students thinking about the many ways a poem can mean  
 MWRJW/WKMRUMBFKVRW/KQJWKHWHMWEQWRQQVLSUWRQIRUWKHUNWKURJKVW  
 Assign a poem that must be inspired or crafted out of this research and get students to share with the class the process they went through to compose the work. They may be surprised at what they discover and even learn a new way of writing. They may even begin to see how a poem can mean something larger than their own experience and use the opportunity not only to learn something new but also to teach their readers (and at least their classmates) something about the world around them.













hair color and dress. After this admission, she outlined several useful approaches to characterizing with depth

and, subsequently, voice. In writers at the intermediate or advanced levels are amply prepared for a more in-depth exploration of the third-him or her through another character's prejudices, or point of view.

them bring to class several examples of different sorts of third-person narratives, drawing upon source materials as varied as their course reader, fairy tale, even the newspaper. In class, use the students' examples and your own to show the spectrum of choices between omniscience and objectivity. Ana Castillo's novel \*R\* offers several apt examples of an omniscient and opinionated narrator, and students generally appreciate that employ a limited third-person narrative, but it's useful to have students distinguish between approaches when the tornado touched down, and he reckoned that it was just a matter of seconds before Rita came out,

Once the class has explored some of these ideas as a group, students should be instructed to try writing the same passage in three or four different ways, considering what each choice offers and what it costs.







philosophy and rhetoric. As a format for written workshop critiques, the dialogue can help students develop  
SSUREKMWURUQJWKWJRRQW\$EEDQRVWEUMSRQVM3UMFUSWYHMSRQVMFQH IHWYV  
QMVQJWKHRRQWFKQEDSURQMRIRHQQJZM/HVQXFUSWVWVKIOWQQJSSUREK  
FQOHHWRVTDQRVW/KHRBOW/MQBW/MRIRUHQFZVQJMSURQW  
QQHIVROWRQV, QMDMSRQHWKWRKWNKDHQJWWRQHWISRQWVRISUREWYH

debate—a debate that you will have to craft. This approach expands the function of reading beyond a hunt for failures. In order to construct an effective dialogue, the responder must look for sites of ambiguity, sites that  
JHHVPSRVVDW/MRIQWHSUMW/RQRUVKMWOBQWRVHRBOW/RUBW/MQHQJQH  
IRUGHQWQJQHFWVQQRWDD\$WRRIDWFKQEDSURQMRIRIQVHQWFODW\

KQRJMIRUBQW/KDOVW\$WRWKQW/HMWVQGSRVW/RQVRIFWRQZV/HV)UVWRIDO  
FWRQZV/HVNQRW/KD/RQRIWKMUW/MRIJRRORJMWKDW/QFRQFRQAW QRJHDDWOW

two participants; we can call them by the rhetorical term TMWRUWt’s worth drawing a distinction between  
TMWRUMd FKDEWHV—the speakers in the dialogue are foremost vehicles for ideas and positions; their  
personalities should always be secondary and not get in the way of the discussion itself. In order to produce  
a debate, the TMWRUMave to differ in their opinions about certain aspects of the story. To create this debate,  
the responder, who likely begins with his or her own initial impressions and perhaps prescriptive suggestions,  
KWDVRFRQVHQKRW\$SRWQWDFRQWHSRVWRQV)RUEKRMHFWRQWRVWVKQJWKW/WKMWRU\  
does that is put into the mouth of one TMWRUa defense or alternative interpretation must be developed for the  
other. In the act of creating these multiple readings, the responder is forced to question his or her assumptions  
RUJVVWBUWVRQVDQWREBQW/KHMLWQFWRJUSSOQJW/KFRBOW/WKDW/KHUNVKRSIRUB  
can sometimes foster. Often, in gathering the evidence for a counter-position, the responder’s own initial  
SHFSWRQRIWKMWURUPKQJHRBOW/HUHQJIUREV3OW/RQEQFMWRUIRRGFVYH  
ORJRUZUNVKRSVMSORUDW/RUQRWQWE3OW/RXQJDEH/FUDW/MWKHSHKQW/IRRG  
workshop dialogue will not have one clear winner. Our TMWRUMshould be interested in exploring differences of  
interpretation and teasing out nuances.

Some may worry that a dialogue response might produce equivocation—a multiplicity of voices and  
perspectives which do not lead toward any one path of revision and which may not convey what the responder  
UBOWKQNVB\$WKMWRUVDWLWEVKFMVRUIDNFWLWUNKDW/KHEMRW/KQJVWKM/WKQRJH  
does not do well. It is not very good at offering straightforward prescriptions. It is not good at making broad  
WVKWEMQWVIRUKREQRQHQJW\$ONW/KMRU\$QWONW/KL,WLQIDWQRWJRRW  
drawing strong conclusions generally, since the positions of the TMWRUMare always in tension.

But what the dialogue format does produce is a greater range of choices for the author being  
workshopped to consider, and, moreover, the responders have a much better understanding themselves of what  
the choices they are presenting entail and just how contingent is their usefulness. It is a format that rewards  
complexity by reproducing it, and, as such, is not just a classroom gimmick, but can be an eminently effective  
practice for advanced workshops.

Students new to writing poetry often struggle at crafting a poem in a regular meter for many reasons.

3HKSDVWKEHIDDKWKKSURFMVRIVFQQJQDRIYHVRUSHKSDVWKEHRWXWR  
KEHQJWKHKWKKEQWKHERMWRWKMHYM,INVIQWRZWRERQH  
KEMWOWEFWYWDQJWKMOOEVWVWUHOVKWKSOEPWRIVWUMVMOODM KHFMM

can help students see how to control the meter of their lines.

First, have students write ten syllable sentences on index cards. Write some of these on the board and begin scanning them. Very few will be in iambic pentameter, but with a little work, students can be shown how to turn the lines into blank verse sentences. One easy way to revise these sentences toward iambic ones is to focus on using only one and two syllable words, offering examples of such sentences from poets. For example, 3NQRZWOKEV, QWWRVDEBRRU3UVWVKQJ, PRQQBMVZED\*OQ Maxwell).

Second, students should work on putting the skills they learn from this process into writing a poem  
POQJZUCQWRDKWKEVNHRQ)QSRWKDHDUKWKQGRYFVWVVKWQWD  
words—nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs—leaving only blanks with the rhythm marked above the lines.  
)RUHMHWUWKQENQHJVOQH  
,QVIQVWKDFQWESHKQJVRWK might become:

U  
In \_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_-ing \_\_\_\_\_.

/MHRQVDCHEWKRJKWKURJKRWKSRIRUHQJWKHWQWVWKMNDWRQRI  
this poem, read the remaining nouns and verbs, instructing students to think of a topic for a poem suggested by  
WKMHUCGWKPHUWDLWRIWQWRURUWUGWKWKWHHDWRWKDWRSE KMKRQG  
scan these words, marking the stressed and unstressed syllables. Then give them the skeleton poem, instructing  
WKWRQOQWKHQNVWKEUCWKDWWKHKWKESDWHQWUQJWRSWSDWVRIVSHKKEHVM  
WKWVWKHQWKMKRQQRWKEUURWWDQJVEHQFMKMSRQWVHWKHQJR  
back through it working on making more sense.

:KQSRQHUHDUKWKDOKUNFKQENQHJVOQVUNVHOHMRQO\  
one sentence. As beginning students often write lines that are primarily end-stopped, a poem such as this one  
helps them see how to extend sentences and thoughts past the end of the line, through the entire poem. As a  
RQXWKLSRNMUKHQJWKHKWUGQWKSRRUFKQJQJWKWRRWKHUKH  
KUCQVRJLWVKMWQWVWKMMDWDRQRIZWQJDKBRMQLWKWDRMWHVRRQH  
else's.







explores that

important, though often unexplored territory of American prison literature. In it, we see the potential of activism through creative writing, something that more often than not remains untapped within the academic institutions. Importantly, Franklin reminds us that through the work of creative writing in the prison, inmates experience outside of the penal system, it would behoove us to understand and embrace this mission; one way to do it is to use the workshop as a space for service learning. Students can help bridge the gap between the incarcerated

a group of students to collect oral histories from the inmates. Together, the students and inmates will compile the stories under a unifying theme (which, by the way, often isn't about crime or even prison life itself) and create a play that can later be performed in and/or out of the prison.

In advance of this project, after the proper paperwork and details are worked out with the prison staff, it's best to introduce the students to the inmates in a small group setting. Use this time to introduce the goal of the play: Ask everyone—including the students from your own workshop—to write down a one-sentence the individual's story to become not only part of a whole story through a produced play, but a whole experience devoted to service to others and learning through that service.

In the days that follow, assign the university students to complete the oral histories for the inmate the histories and return them to the prison group in a meeting devoted to connecting the stories. These the possibilities available in this experience. Rather, help the students look for what connects each act in the writer's faith in the written and spoken word.

Individual emotional expression often risks misinterpretation. When beginning writers are concerned with representing their feelings exactly, they often employ language that confuses or alienates fellow workshop scenarios occur with considerable frequency, it becomes important for novice writers to realize that emotional intent is sometimes very different from actual effect. In order for writing to be successful, communication with hears itself and what is around it, sees itself and what is around it, looks back at those who look into its gaze importance in composition, it may be useful to employ techniques found in composition classrooms. A creative writing instructor should be able to incorporate the following exercises and practices with success into their classroom:

- % because it allows the writer to come to an awareness of personal aesthetics and to develop goals for communicating that aesthetics to a future reader.
  - % exactly how those changes were made, student writers can again become aware of their aesthetics and of what kind of readership they ultimately want for their work.
  - % Ask students to envision a material audience for their own work and instruct them to interrogate their evaluating how the language creates those effects.
  - % reactions to a performance, they become the audience they most likely hope their own work will receive some day. They can then evaluate the space between writer/speaker and reader/listener and can decide how to shape that space through performance.
- by students who may claim that thinking about reader reactions hampers their expression, corrodes the instructor to emphasize that artistic integrity can be maintained by considering audience primarily during the process and thus remaining undeterred by audience concerns throughout the process. Also, the instructor should explain that a skillful writer brings stories, poems and essays to their full potential by considering intended effect, and that a successful writer works to make his or her intentions correspond as wills. If we reveal to our students that the relationship between writer and reader can be a fruitful one, chances are good that our students will write with greater self-awareness and greater power.



are still relevant since the mentorship model is alive and kicking—perhaps never more profoundly than at the  
JUNH OMKHHWRUVIRFXRQWKMFUFVLYZVQJVWQWVQOQKPHWDEH  
MKRSQRWEMWRDWOH/KDRIWQHVMWKEWRUYRQ,QWKMFSDWVKQWRUVKSUROHOMW/W  
RIWQVFWQOQVHFROORUDVEMKZQV

This last concern bears particular interest alongside the treatment of grades in the graduate workshop.  
If indeed (false) collaboration is the modus operandi in the mentor-student relationship, is imitation the means  
WRJRRJUBRVHHQWOFUFVLYZVQJVWQWVZVW/KWHQFMWRDQKHQWRUV||  
MWKWEVQFRQVFRXORUQRWQRUHWRSRIRUHOQWKKUNVKRS"

There lacks an easy prescription for either the instructor or student in avoiding this trend, and to be fair,  
WKHMMHQMWRKWKHRUQRWWKLVWUHQDWRJWKHDKQJLVUMQWVQDQWHZVQJ KH  
complications arise when the mentor-student rapport resembles more closely that of a IUQKKE , which is often  
the case as teachers begin see their master’s and doctoral students as potential colleagues. This relationship,  
although wonderful in many ways, creates tension when it comes time for the mentor to assign a grade to the  
VWQWVKUN,WLNDWRVDKHMWIRUDWQWWRUHMMVWKQSHIFWMDWRQIURP  
a mentor/friend; this, coupled with the obvious anxiety located in grading art, makes grading particularly  
strange in the graduate, versus undergraduate, creative writing program. At the heart of this strangeness is the  
assumption that the graduate student has earned a status at which a grade isn’t really appropriate anymore; it’s  
the IBN —both from the workshop, and the mentor—that matters.

Yet, for many programs, there still exists an undeniable marker at the end of the day: A, B, or (the  
WZVWUNMQBKRWQVQRVHUFWKKWVKHEIRUJUFKRROVWDOKROQNDV JRRG  
QNDV badDHDNDWHDNDQ

becomes the imagined standard for publication, reinforcing the idea that graduate-level creative writers are  
being groomed to be SURIMVRQDQWKKMDWRQRIWKHSHIRUQFMKRQDQKMD  
KKHUDOMHVWKBNDWQRVNDQVVRQDSOQJHQKEKMLSRVVDRQWL  
oneDHDNDWHDND RHH

the publication-standard, but to suggest that it, too, seeks a concrete value in place of the abstract—much like  
a grade. The question becomes, then, can any one measurement do the work of the workshop’s variegated  
IBNKMIBNVSSRVHUMQWVQDQWHJUVWKKHGIWKHWHRUVMWHWKRKM  
it translate—or more importantly, WUQVIHRKUNVKRSWRDND"

Many mentors admit to giving all A’s (as long as the requirements are met). The publication rate is  
VRHHRQEQSHFQWRMVKMQRWSRVFURDQJQFRQQHW3HKSQQRWRUMKQWKH \$  
(QV\*RRGKELWKKWQOQJTMWRQ :KRKDRKUNWK" Mentors, after all, are good for more  
than grades.

For some, they *are* the grade.





This exercise is designed to help beginning students generate a one-act play. As set forth in Stephen Minot's *How to Write a Play*, a dramatic question needs to create an initial concept—the generating device suggested in Minot's book—so I have devised

- % First, create a character with a distinctive aspect of appearance (i.e. wears a cowboy hat) For the purpose of this exercise, ask that each character
- % Then write a brief description of a simple stage setting that includes a table bearing a discernable object: i.e. a brass urn, tall vase, briefcase, pile of books, a cat carrier—whatever strikes the student as somehow interesting.
- % Next begin the play using the braiding technique whereby the speakers alternate in a set pattern, speaking and brief stage directions:

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Continue this at home; see what happens.

The idea is to create a method that allows a drama to emerge from within rather than by force—and to emerge quickly.







writing who frequently may be more focused upon techniques of plot and dialogue or description of place. Too often, the people in a novice's story are either completely good, or, as in the portrayal of antagonists, completely or negative in characters, the writers distrust either their abilities to convey theme or the ability of readers to understand it. An interesting exercise in recognizing and remediating this tendency to create one-dimensional

The assignment is simple enough: describe a person you really dislike. Most students have no problem in recalling the details of their subjects, and in minutes, smoke may appear to rise from the papers as detailed memories of past transgressions and annoying behavior are channeled through ballpoints and scrawled in bold longhand with emphatically dotted i's. Many students will abandon mere description and launch into lengthy narratives, determined to tell their sides of the stories. The descriptions are then read aloud. Many will be sagas of deceptive, insensitive, two-timing males or females who were once romantically involved with the authors or the backstabbing, bottom-feeding, so-called friends who stole these lovers. Interesting but hardly surprising. Other essays will probably include descriptions of overbearing job-supervisors, underhanded co-workers, and the students often share certain traits: they have no redeeming qualities, no small goodness deep in their hearts, no mothers who love them. One might assume that they are also universally cruel to animals. Most will be physically repulsive. They are, in other words, all bad.

The unexpected twist in this assignment occurs in part two: describe yourself through the eyes of the actual people they have just described. When work begins, the writers appear noticeably more contemplative as read aloud. Typical characters described in this portion of the exercise may actually be quite charming in most respects, having much less of the unredeemable within their souls, and perhaps just an occasional, reasonable limits. Most are physically attractive. They are, in fact, much more human, much more believable,

A comparison of the two essays should reveal to students a process through which characters come to be moral lesson apparently applies here, or perhaps it should. If we portray our characters as sympathetically as we would wish ourselves to be portrayed, they might become more the types of multi-dimensional, and therefore

ABC of Reading

Undergraduate creative writing students often underestimate the role that reading plays in their own writing process. Though they may be excited to read work by established poets, they sometimes struggle to extract techniques and approaches that can then be applied to their own work. This is partly due to the fact that while they are often asked to articulate their own poetics, they are rarely required to make connections between their poetics and the larger tradition. Because of this, creative writing teachers need to reconsider the popular assignment in which students propose their own theory of poetry.

Though the *ABC of Reading* is a useful text is as much a text gives students a model for writing about their articulate the relationship between their reading and their writing practices:

: You should discuss at least three these works. As you are examining your reading and writing, begin to ask yourself what your writing in mainly in three ways, called phanopoeia, melopoeia, and logopoeia. You can use a word to throw a visual image on to the reader’s imagination, or you charge it by sound, or you use groups of words to conclusion of this assignment, you should have a better understanding of the relationship between your reading and writing practices.

This assignment allows students to see that reading and writing are inextricable activities. When students their writing practices, they gain access to an endless source of poetic inspiration.









Once upon a time in a small graduate workshop, one student began to apologize for her remarks. She made lengthy, cogent, and apt comments about poems up for discussion. She gave examples of how this couldn't possibly have been correct or useful. Soon her best friend began to mumble off her points as well.

an exploration of poetic form.

\$RORJD An apology in the contemporary sense involves expressing regret and asking pardon for offense. An apology, or \$RORJD, in the literary tradition is something else entirely, a formal defense or

hearing students apologize is the feeling that the students aren't comfortable enough in the workshop. Why do

In : The pedagogical goal of the apologia assignment here is to purge the students of their need in workshop for reinforcement and instead to foster assertiveness. The leader addresses this goal only after the project is complete.

The project begins with a set of poems for reading and with these questions to foster discussion: Which

SDMD from

\*: Write a defense of yourself as a critic of poetry. or Write a defense of yourself as a poet. or Write a defense of poetic technique.

\*A spin-off assignment might be: Write your errata. Okay, you don't like what you said in workshop. Be









