



# **CRUCIAL CREATIVITY:**

**ADDRESSING STATE STANDARDS WHILE  
FOSTERING CREATIVE STUDENT AUTHORSHIP**

*Amy E. Harter*

*UW-Milwaukee Writing Project*

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# **PRELIMINARY WRITING: THE TENSION OF PUZZLES**

**Respond in writing to the following: write about something in your life—big or small—that causes a puzzle in your mind through some kind of tension, whether positive or negative. It might be the meaning of a relationship, how to spend time or money, a debate or belief, or a question about the world.**

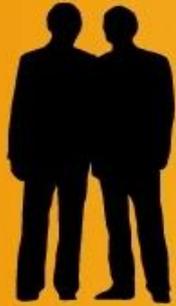
**Share or put aside... we'll utilize this later in the workshop!**



# IMPETUS

- **Creative writing has personally been instrumental in my own development as a writer and a human.**
- **Training young storytellers, poets, and philosophers was what I had in mind when I became a teacher.**
- **Creating fiction, in my opinion, is a vital task for the development of creative thinking in students.**
- **The CCSS seem to suggest that creative writing is superfluous fluff. I feel that this view is a disservice to the minds and hearts of our students, who need experience in creating something altogether new in order to know how to envision solutions to problems. They deserve a chance to tell stories, let their voices off a tether, and explore the power of their own generative imaginations.**

# The 3 Modes of Common Core Writing distributed by grade level\*



Argumentative



Informative/  
Explanatory



Narrative

4	30%	35%	35%
8	35%	35%	30%
12	40%	40%	20%

\*Found on p. 9 of the CCSS ELA / Literacy document.

Infographic created by Dave at TeachingtheCore.com.



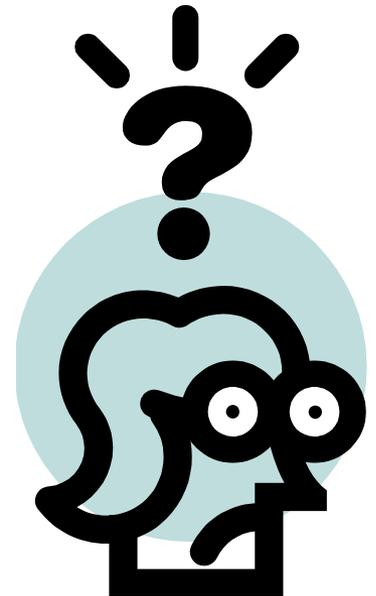
# FROM THE MOUTH OF “THE ARCHITECT”

"As you grow up in this world you realize people really don't give a ~~CENSORED~~ about what you feel or what you think..."

It is rare in a working environment that someone says, 'Johnson, I need a market analysis by Friday, but before that I need a compelling account of your childhood.'"

~David Coleman

**WHAT?!**



# CHALLENGE ACCEPTED.

IT'S TIME TO...

**(Re)interpret creatively, yet appropriately.**

**Clarify the exact meaning of the CCSS language.**

**Experiment with diverse possibilities.**

**Abide by the rules of the game.**

**Disprove via polite subversion.**

**Put my trust in my professional expertise above my desire to completely disregard.**





# INQUIRY

*The following guiding questions provided the framework for my research:*

**What are the benefits of teaching creative writing—as far as student motivation, learning outcomes, marketability, and critical thinking—that cannot be addressed by non-fiction writing alone?**

**How can the teaching of creative writing (such as poetry, fictitious prose, and drama) be used to directly address and fulfill the Common Core State Standards for Writing in the high school classroom?**

# FINDINGS OVERVIEW\*

\*Please see, and feel free to use, my full report in my formal TIW document to provide rationale for your own curricular decisions.

***Today's students need more, not fewer, opportunities to cultivate creativity through creative writing.*** (Elbow, Freeman and Le Rossignol, Gallagher, Robinson, Scanlon)

***Creative writing instruction needs to happen often and purposefully in the writing classroom, so that the cultivation of creativity can occur.*** (Morgan)



# FINDINGS, CONTINUED

***Creative writing satisfies an inherent human need for expression.*** (Hopkins, Brown, Wallace-Segal, Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde)

***The study of creative writing increases writing skills across the board, and allows students to fulfill the important role of makers, rather than mere consumers, of culture.*** (Gallagher, Lasky, Pirie, Wallace-Segal)



# FINDINGS, CONTINUED

***It is possible (and advisable) to abide by the Common Core State Standards while at the same time increasing the amount of creative writing instruction in our classrooms. (Burkins and Yaris, Davis, Gallagher, Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde)***



# BROADENING OUR INTERPRETATIONS

The Way to Interpret the Standards in order to Leave Room for Creative Writing =

Think text purpose and audience, not ~~text type~~.

Think skill displayed, not ~~form used~~.

Ex: Argumentative writing can be accomplished in a persuasive essay... but also in a blog... in a poem... in a play...

# HIP HOP FOR NARRATIVE, ARGUMENTS, AND INFORMATION

## \*Sample creative writing assignment

## \*Why hip hop?

Hip hop/spoken word is a type of *poetry*... a genre clearly deprivileged by the standards, and even by creative writing supporters of a more traditional lean.

YET: Watch its effectiveness and chameleon-like ability to serve serious academic purposes, when it comes to effective writing of ALL THREE types promoted by CCSS.

## \*Real products, real consumers

Hip hop is one of the most popular musical genres in the United States. Its messages reach wide audiences. Ex: The official YouTube video of “Same Love” had over *53 million views* at the time this presentation was written. Can Coleman say that’s not impactful?

# ***WRITE LIKE THIS***

## **PEDAGOGY**

**\*As we move through the workshop, I'm using the mentor text modeling method touted by Kelly Gallagher in *Write Like This* (2011).**

- 1. Read – What is being said in the example piece?**
- 2. Analyze – What techniques are being used to reinforce the message?**
- 3. Emulate – Teacher goes first, imitating the style of the example. Then, students try it, moving ever closer to independence as students revise and gain skills.**

# READ

**\*At this time, we'll break into three groups. Each group will read one of the following sets of lyrics. If you are able, try to listen to the audio of your piece as well; headphones will be provided, or you can briefly exit the room for a communal listening experience! (See links below). The lyrics are found in your packet. What is your piece about?**

**GROUP ONE: “Mineshaft II” by Dessa**

**GROUP TWO: “Same Love” by Macklemore & Ryan Lewis feat. Mary Lambert**

**GROUP THREE: “Kenji” by Fort Minor**

# ANALYZE

As a group, respond to these questions about your text:

- 1. What message is the author sending?**
- 2. What are the purpose and audience of this text?**
- 3. Where are important moments?**
- 4. Are there structural patterns?**
- 5. Is this writing narrative, argumentative, or informational?  
More than one?**

# WHAT DID WE NOTICE?

Something structural that I noticed in all the examples...

**-The lines are mostly of similar length (take same amount of time to say)**

**-Often the ends of the lines rhyme twice or more in a row, or in every other line**

**-If a line doesn't have a matching end rhyme, its end usually rhymes with a word inside that same line**

# SEE?

He wondered if he'd live it down when they were **free**  
The only way out was joinin' the **army**

And supposedly, some men went out for the army, signed **on**  
And ended up flyin' to Japan with a **bomb**

That 15 kiloton **blast** put an end to the war pretty **fast**

Two cities were blown to **bits**, the end of the war came **quick**

# EMULATE

Me first (lyrics are in your packet):

[Click here to listen to my hip hop piece.](#)

**\*I decided to create an argumentative/narrative piece with other English teachers as my audience, for the purpose of persuading them that creative writing has an important place in our curriculum!**

**\*I also tried to follow the structural rhyming rules that I observed in my mentor texts.**

# EMULATE

All right...YOUR turn!

**\*Come back to your initial writing topic from the beginning of the workshop. See if you can transform it into five lines... or more... of hip hop! If you are thinking about classroom applications, consider whether you're going for narrative, argumentative, or informational writing.**

\*If you want to try your rhymes to a beat, they are easy to find by simply search online for “free backing tracks” or “free hip hop beats.” I found mine here: <http://www.soundclick.com/bands/default.cfm?bandID=156970>

\*Another good resource for this kind of thing is a rhyming dictionary:

<http://www.writeexpress.com/online2.html>



# **RETURN TO THE STANDARDS**

**Take a look at the writing you've created.**

**Take a look at Appendix B in your packet– the Common Core State Standards for writing, grades 11-12.**

**Which standards were, at least in part, fulfilled by your participation in this activity? Which might be fulfilled by “tweaking” the activity a bit?**

**"Teachers are free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful in meeting the goals set out in the Standards" (CCSS, ELA, 4).**

# **EXTENSIONS AND ADAPTATIONS- WHAT'S NEXT?**

**Creative writing can be modeled for and taught to any grade level in any subject. Story is simply another “language” through which to tell the world.**

**My sample ideas:**

- **4<sup>th</sup> grade science – a fictional story about a journey through a specific ecosystem (informative and narrative!)**
- **7<sup>th</sup> grade English– a poem about the results of a geneology research project (informative and narrative!)**
- **10<sup>th</sup> grade math—a dramatic skit that demonstrates how unit skills can be applied in a real career (persuasive and informative!)**

**What are yours?**

# Thank you!

**Come talk with me about teaching on**

**[www.UniverseAsText.com](http://www.UniverseAsText.com)**

**or**

**Search “Universe as Text” on Facebook to follow me  
there!**

# FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

**-Did the workshop address any of your own teaching questions/concerns?**

**-Were my points of inquiry, findings, and activity explained in a way that made sense? Could you follow my train of thought that connected them to each other?**

**-What could I have done differently or in addition to make the writing [hip hop] portion accessible and successful?**

**-What could I do to make the presentation as a whole more relatable, effective, or engaging?**