Creative Writing

Creative writing encompasses many elements, characteristics, and forms. However, developing as a creative writer typically includes reading critically, writing frequently, and paying attention to issues of authenticity, audience, and form. This handout provides general concepts for creative writing, but always tailor your work to your audience and assignment.

Read Critically

Reading informs writing. Consistent, critical reading yields familiarity with the written word. Read critically, paying attention to both form and content. The following questions may be useful as you read:

- What do I like or dislike about this piece of writing?
- How does the writer use literary devices (e.g., metaphor, symbolism, imagery) to shape the text?
- How does the piece make me feel? How does the author evoke that feeling?

Identify techniques used by other writers that you want to try within your own creative writing practice.

Write Authentically

While reading the work of other writers may inform your writing, rather than replicating the work of others, make your writing your own. Ask yourself the following questions as you try to write authentically:

- What experiences, observations, or ideas can I uniquely contribute?
- Am I writing what I want to convey to others, or is my writing based on what I think others want me to write?

As you develop as a writer, try to be true to yourself, and actively seek to find your own perspective and voice.

Remember the Audience

Writers need readers. As you write, think about your audience. Provide your audience with a degree of clarity and purpose. As you write, think about your audience by considering the following questions:

- How might readers respond to the topic, form, or style of the text?
- What might be confusing for reader? What might readers misunderstand or misinterpret?
- What should I clarify for readers or leave readers to interpret on their own?

Seek feedback from readers. A reader's response can help you find ways to improve your connection with your audience.

Consider Form

Make your decisions about form deliberate by carefully considering which form best matches your audience, content, and purpose. Consider the following questions as you make choices about form:

- What do I want to accomplish with my writing? Does any particular form lend itself to accomplishing that aim?
- How would the text function differently as a novel, poem, screenplay, or essay?
- What does each form (novel, poem, screenplay, or essay) do that no other form can do?

Write Frequently

Developing an understanding of writing and an ability to write requires practice. Write regularly knowing that much of the writing done will be for your own learning. The important thing is to **practice**. Try the following:

- *Keep a writing journal.* Carry a notebook to write down impressions and ideas.
- *Use writing prompts.* Many websites and books offer prompts that can help you begin writing.
- *Freewrite.* Freewriting can help break down the mental barriers. While freewriting may not produce the text you want, it may help you develop and sort through ideas.

As you write regularly, leave time to reflect on both your writing process and the writing you produce. Remember that developing as a creative writer takes time and practice. As you write, learn to share your work and make use of feedback. Regularly writing, reflecting, and revising your work will help you learn and develop as a creative writer.