

Creative Writing for Critical Thinking

Hélène Edberg

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Creating a Discoursal Identity

palgrave
macmillan

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ISBN 978-3-319-65490-4 ISBN 978-3-319-65491-1 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65491-1>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017954794

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Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

Can creative writing serve as a method to develop critical thinking? Many writing researchers and university lecturers are engaged in various programmes to enhance students' writing performances and their capacity to reflect and think critically. In this book, I suggest a new approach to creative writing, emphasizing the learning potential inherent in creative writing as a sociocritical method for learning critical metareflection.

Researchers and lecturers spend huge amounts of time and energy trying to understand the writing process and to find best practices. Yet the question remains: Why do some students learn a lot and others little when they write to learn? It is a fascinating question indeed, and this book is an invitation to discuss it. My aim is to explore how the narrative imagination may be used for critical thinking purposes, to open up for new insights into the possibilities of creative writing as a method to develop writers' critical metareflection. In particular, I explore the potential of creative writing in terms of writers' sense of critical self-reflection and awareness of language as a carrier of cultural beliefs and value ground.

The book also attempts to suggest some new ways of interpreting variations in learning outcomes that result from writing. In two case studies, I analyse students' learning trajectories through the patterns these trajectories leave in the reflection texts that they write. Such patterns may be interpreted as resulting from a negotiation between individual motives and perceptions of identity and motives and objectives found in the

context of the learning environment. The negotiations have impacts on the learning outcomes. It turns out that certain ideas about writing and dreams about future identities quite outside of the seminar room exert influences on what writers *choose* to learn within the academic context. I illustrate some of the ways through which this complex web of circumstances plays out in the book. Readers who ponder about the enigmatic learning processes that are involved in writing will gain, I hope, food for further thought.

Is it possible to transfer a creative writing method to any writing course? This is another interesting question addressed in the book. The answer must be yes. There are some very promising possibilities and scopes, although the learning outcomes will vary depending on the context and the learners.

Last, but not least, readers who are on the lookout for educational and instructional advice will find some in the final chapter, which addresses pedagogical implications of working with creative writing. Some practical approaches are sketched out, and a few applications are discussed.

Stockholm, Sweden
September 2017

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