**2. Types and Genres of Creative Writing**

**2.1. Creative Non-fiction Writing**

**2.1.1. Definition**

People sometimes assume that non-fiction writing exists only to provide information and is not intended to be read for pleasure; however, this is not necessarily true. Non-fiction writers can adapt many strategies and techniques to make the subject matter interesting for the reader, but still maintain the integrity of the subject matter.

The term literary non-fiction refers more to styles of research and writing than to any one sub-genre of non-fiction or journalistic writing. A biography can be literary, as can a feature article, a history book, or a human interest story. It is, hence, the writer's unique style, research methods, and use of language that make a piece of writing creative or literary (Bolduc, 1996). Moreover, literary non-fiction writers often include their own perspectives and interpretations, and the body of work and variety of interpretations, perspectives, and points of view work together to build a history or to uncover the truth (Peterson, 1991).

For a more understanding of literary non-fiction, it is important to identify its main characteristics. Hence, any literary non-fiction work:

* reflects the writer's desire to involve the reader, and his/ her aesthetic and literary intentions,
* makes use of various techniques commonly used by fiction writers, poets, and playwrights,
* reflects the writer's concern for accuracy, truth, and ethical behaviour in dealing with real people and events (adapted from Amberg & Larson, 1992).

It is important that student writers understand that they have to be able to do the research necessary for gathering information about events, people or anything they want to write about. They must, hence, be able to establish a voice of authority on their topic (Fairfax & Moat, 1981, 1998), and represent accurately the people involved.

Moreover, students need to know that non-fiction writing depends so much on documentation. Hence, they have to understand that they must maintain high ethical standards in their treatment of their subjects and in their methods of documenting research (Kroll, 1990). And, even if they will not be including footnotes or references in their final product (for example, in some informal essays), they should still keep track of all information gathered from interviews or other sources. They should, also, be able to explain where they got all facts or quotations that are presented in their writing.

In other words, it is appropriate to include references (Kirby, 2004) to sources of information. However, this can be problematic; when a piece of writing is intended to flow as a story in the reader's mind, references in the text can interrupt the flow. One solution is to include author's notes at the end; the latter can be presented by page in a way that does not interrupt the flow of writing.

**2.1.2. Genres of Non-fiction Writing**

It is obvious that students will not have the time or experience to produce long works of non-fiction. Hence, the product or type of non-fiction writing should be in keeping with the research students were able to do; thus, short articles will be most appropriate.

**2.1.2.1. Feature Articles**

These may include stories related to popular culture, sports stories, behind the scenes stories, natural environment stories, travel stories, historical stories, and stories about issues or problems (Bolduc, 1996). The latter can take many forms: they can be introspective, information-related, humorous, or satirical.

**2.1.2.2. Personal Essays**

A personal essay is a first person, informal essay about something of great importance to the writer (Haefner, 1992). Its purpose is two-fold: to help the writer sort out his/ her feelings or ideas, and to have the reader experience the process along with the writer. The personal essay is intimate and often revealing of the writer's innermost thoughts and feelings (Elbow, 1990). However, it needs not be serious, but it can be satirical, ironic, or outrageously funny.

It is, also, important for students to know that one of the purposes of literary writing is aesthetic. Hence, even when exploring very personal subject matter, they should be encouraged to think about such literary concerns as structure and language (Goldberg, 1986). Moreover, they need to be encouraged to think about how their personal experience has meaning in the larger context of human experience (Bolduc, 1996).

**2.1.2.3. Biographies**

A biography is the true story of the life of a real and particular person (Wellek & Warren, 1942, 1947, 1949, 1956). Although students will not have time to create a full biography of someone, they might spend enough time with a living person or do enough research on an historical figure that they are able to do an accurate biographical essay or article. If they choose to do a biography, they should remember that there are many literary techniques available to them, and that they should carefully examine setting and social context. In addition to these, they need to know that they might structure their biography around one event or story that is symbolic or particularly representative of the subject (Amberg & Larson, 1992; Baldwin, 1986).

**2.1.2.4. Autobiographies**

An autobiography is an account of a character's life written by him/ herself (Peterson, 1991). It is, hence, possible for students to create unique and meaningful autobiographies if they give thought to literary and aesthetic concerns. Autobiographies do not have to be serious; they can be a humorous look at oneself.

As with all literary writing, if the student chooses to work on an autobiography it should have a clear focus (White & Arndt, 1991). A literary autobiography is more than a chronological account. That is to say, the student might come up with a truly unique way to tell his/her own story, making use of photo albums, interviews with family members for material regarding early years, personal musings, and memories. In respect of this, teachers have to understand that the autobiography should never be a required assignment, because not all students will want to write about themselves and, hence, a student's privacy should always be respected in writing classes.

**2.1.3. The Writing Process**

According to Zamel (1982), the writing process teaches the students to learn to write by writing; hence, he states that writing is a process of “exploring one's thoughts and learning from the act of writing itself what these thoughts are” (p. 197). The current emphasis in writing instruction is on the process of creating writing rather than the end product (White and Arndt, 1991). The basic premise of process writing is that all students, regardless of age, can write. The initial focus is on creating quality content and learning the genres of writing. The following diagram shows the different stages of the writing process. We will explain them later.



The writing process, hence, describes the phases of a writing project with which all students are expected to become familiar. The purpose of incorporating the writing process in a formal way into language arts programs is to encourage students to adopt certain behaviours that will make their writing better and more complete (Flower, 1985). The writing process, thus, encourages students to see writing as something that develops through exploration, research, consultation, revision, editing, and publishing, or sharing their work with others (Kroll, 1990; White & Arndt, 1991; Harris, 1993) and (Kirby, 2004).The writing process consists of the following phases:

* Pre-writing,
* Drafting,
* Revising,
* Editing and proofreading,
* Conferencing,
* Publishing.

**2.1.3.1. Pre-writing (or generating ideas)**

Pre-writing, or generating ideas (White & Arndt, 1991), embraces all the activities, including planning (Kirby, 2004), through which a writer goes before writing actually begins. Some pre-writing might include activities to stimulate students' thinking, such as completing webs or concept maps. Selecting a topic, conducting research, and note taking or journal writing are also pre-writing activities.

**2.1.3.2. Writing Topics and Pre-writing Strategies**

As a matter of fact, pre-writing strategies can be presented by the teacher to encourage students to explore ideas and begin writing (Leki, 1998). And, the teacher's role is to explain and present, along with examples, each pre-writing strategy. Students, on the other hand, have to write each idea down in their notebooks or journals, to be filed away for use at some later date, that is, as their future reference. Pre-writing strategies help students discover facts, clarify impressions, and use their imaginations. The following are general types of pre-writing strategies.

**2.1.3.3. Brainstormed Lists**

This strategy is a way of generating a large number of ideas for writing. Hence, students write down whatever ideas come to mind, no matter how simple or strange their ideas may be (Brown & Hood, 1989). Superficial observations usually head the list, but as students continue to write, interesting ideas begin to appear. Brainstorming should result in a list of enough useful ideas that students can discard those which are not useful. It can be done at any time, and the resulting list will be used later for creative writing projects.

One of the brainstorming techniques used to generate ideas is what Kirby (2004) calls the ‘web map'; the latter is known as a “graphical organizer”, because, according to him, it shows the students their “story or essay in a diagram”. It helps them organise and plan their paragraphs and research (Withrow, 1987). Kirby used the following diagram to illustrate the idea. The topic he selected is about ‘horses' (in a circle), and all the information related to the main idea is matched to the circle.



Through this technique, that is, brainstorming, students can compose their own lists that might help them decide on themes in the future, such as, favourite things, things that make them angry, important events that have taken place in their lives, things to save or things to throw away, fears, hopes, dreams, regrets, wishes, superstitions, loyalties, or questions. They can also construct word lists (lists of warm words, cold words, rough words, smooth words). What follows are topics that underlie many ideas that students can develop.

**2.1.3.3.1. Places**

Students may be encouraged to recall places that they remember from childhood: places that scared them or fascinated them, or places that amused them. They can, also, develop lists of places that spark their imaginations. Then, on their own time, they might arrange to visit one of these places to take notes and record images and ideas to be used later for writing (Colton & Bergmann, 1999).

**2.1.3.3.2. Memories**

Students may recall memories of events and experiences from childhood, and recreate the perceptions, feelings, and associations which are linked with those memories (White & Arndt, 1991).

**2.1.3.3.3. Pictures**

Pictures are, also, useful sources for creating ideas; thus, students can use magazine pictures, photographs, paintings, and computer generated images; films, can, also, be used to inspire ideas for creative writing (Colton & Bergmann, 1999; White & Arndt, 1991).

**2.1.3.3.4. Persona Activities**

It is possible for students to use their imaginations in unique ways by adopting the persona of something or someone else (Strauch, 1998). They can imagine that they are a different person, a country or an animal, for example.

**2.1.3.3.5. Dreams**

Colton and Bergmann (1999) suggest that both day dreams and night dreams can be sources for pre-writing activities. Day dreams can be used constructively by student writers when they day dream themselves into a celebrity's lifestyle, for example. Night dreams might become topic sources if they are encouraged to remember their dreams (writing them down in a notebook kept by their bed).

**2.1.3.3.6. Research**

Research can generate a great deal of useful material for writing. Thus, when students have thought of something that interests them, they can research the topic to find out about it (Perry, 1999). For example, if the topic is a living person, the student can contact that person and request an interview, or he/she might scan newspapers or local history books to get information about the town or community where the person originated. So, familiarity with topics is necessary if students wish to write well about them. In addition, their research might spark a completely different idea.

**2.1.3.3.7. First-hand Experience**

This is one of the very best sources of writing topics. Students can be encouraged to observe events directly and write down their impressions and interpretations (Strauch, 1998).

**2.1.3.4. Free Writing**

Free writing is spontaneous writing that may or may not be connected to a particular writing project. Hence, ten to fifteen (10-15) minutes is a suggested period of time for free writing (Elbow, 1973). During this time, students might try out a pre-writing strategy, which a teacher presents for them; they develop a topic previously explored, or create a first draft. This should be a quiet writing time.

During free writing, it is important that students write down all that comes to mind (Elbow, 1973). They should write for the full amount of time without going back and rewriting or making corrections (Brown & Hood, 1989). In this way, they will explore their thoughts and moods without trying to be too correct too soon. They will, hence, become comfortable with writing as a constant practice.

Free writing helps students to understand that not all writing they do is equally good, and not all writing must be kept (Elbow, 1973); they must learn to discard. By the end of a writing project, they may have a different focus or angle on the topic or even a whole new topic, and keeping earlier words and phrases might ruin the final product. On the other hand, during free writing, students will often come up with ideas and phrases that lead them in an imaginative new direction, because they are not focusing on a product, they take risks in free writing without realizing it. This can result in the discovery of something new, like, a new idea, skill, or insight.

**2.1.3.5. Drafting (putting ideas down into form)**

Creative writing requires blocks of time and students must be able to rely on specific planned time periods for their writing (Kirby, 2004).Therefore, when students begin drafting a piece of writing, teachers should plan classes so that the formers have the time to work intensively on their drafts.

The important thing to remember about the first draft is that it is an opportunity to begin exploring the idea in a formal way; that is, to begin structuring the idea by taking it beyond notes, diagrams, and journal entries corrections (Brown & Hood, 1989). After students have completed their pre-writing and/or first draft stage (s), their writing will begin to take shape. They will begin to organise their thoughts and their intended meanings.

However, the way the students draft their pieces of writing differs from one to another. Thus, the drafting phase of the writing process refers primarily to the first draft (Elbow, 1973). But, the writing process is not always cut and dried, and it is sometimes difficult to tell when the first draft ends and the second begins. In addition, some students will write a first draft slowly and carefully, while others will write very quickly. In fact, there is no one correct way to write a first draft (Leki, 1998), and in this case, teachers should observe students' ways of working and try to decide when it is best to intervene with suggestions; they should, also, encourage them to get to the end and to complete the first draft.

Moreover, some students will revise constantly, even while they are writing a first draft. Hence, as soon as they have a few paragraphs or stanzas on paper, they will get an idea for how to make the work better, and will begin again; and, although a certain amount of this is fine, some students are such perfectionists that it is difficult for them to go on if they know something is wrong with the piece. Their writing will actually be better if they complete the piece and then revise in earnest (Harris, 1993).

Other students will, however, write a complete first draft and immediately want to start something new (Brown & Hood, 1989); they are good at getting to the end of a first draft, but are impatient with the whole process of revision. Thus, they have to understand that revision is an expectation, and that their writing cannot reach its full potential without revision. However, teachers should realize that there are students who will learn by writing many different first drafts, and, so, they should not limit their imaginations by forcing them to write a piece over and over again if they have lost interest in it (White & Arndt, 1991). Again, teachers can deal with the different types of students by establishing minimum requirements regarding the number of pieces that must be revised, edited, and proofread. In addition to this, they can establish further requirements for individual students based on their preferred ways of working (Harris, 1993).

During this stage, the teacher should, also, write and become as involved as the students are in the world of language (White & Arndt, 1991). When the latters are writing, he/she should try to find few minutes to write along with them. And for the remaining student writing time, the teacher may wish to schedule individual student-teacher writing conferences, or to conduct informal conferences by conversing with students about their writing in a more informal manner.

All writing drafts can be kept, not only while the writing is being developed, but, also, after it is completed. These drafts are valuable to the student as a collection of thoughts, writing projects, and sources for new directions.

**2.1.3.6. Revising (rethinking and rewriting)**

Revising is a process of deciding what should be changed, expanded upon, deleted, added, or retained. It, also, includes editing and proofreading. Although editing occurs at a later stage of the revision process, it still involves revising for structure, sentences, and words to make the work clearer. Proofreading involves revising for style, spelling, and mechanics so that the presentation of the work is clean and correct (Kirby, 2004). However, editing and revising are not mutually exclusive, and can occur a little at a time as the writer becomes surer of a certain section of the project.

**2.1.3.6.1. Methods of Revising**

Writing is not a linear process; it is an organic one, where one thing affects another, and ideas develop as the writing is in progress. Revision, then, can take many forms (Brown & Hood, 1989). The following are examples:

* One writer/student might make successive sketches of the same picture; the first sketches are very rough and vague, and each one gets clearer, more detailed, more accurate, and better organised.
* Another writer might get half way through a work, change his or her mind about the beginning, start over, write the ending, back up and change the middle, and so on.
* Some other writers/students prefer to focus on one section of a piece at a time, going over that section again and again until they are happy with it, then moving on to another. (Adapted from Strauch, 1998, and Leki, 1998).

There is, hence, no one correct way to rewrite, nor is there a correct number of drafts that a writer should expect to complete. Each piece is different and as students become more experienced, they will begin to recognize their own preferred methods of revising (White & Arndt, 1991).

As students work through their various drafts, a theme will gradually emerge; and their writing will take on a shape which it did not have in the beginning. They must, however, understand that there is no short cut to this process.

Students finish revision when the elements of their pieces all fit together. When their pieces do what they want them to, even though there still may be some rough edges, they can move on to editing.

**2.1.3.7. Editing and Proof-reading (giving reader feedback)**

It is very important for teachers to remind their students that editing and proofreading are aspects of the revision process. However, most writers undertake the latters after significant revision has already taken place. When students edit, they should pay attention to things like rhythm, pacing, word choice, accuracy, and sentence and paragraph structure, depending on the genre of the piece (Kirby, 2004). Hence, a piece which needs no more major revision may still require minor editing (Leki, 1998) to ensure that:

* every word used is the correct one;
* the rhythm of the sentences or phrases is correct for the piece;
* there are no gaps that need to be bridged;
* there are no extraneous words, sentences, or paragraphs (Brown & Hood, 1989; Kirby, 2004).

Proofreading is essentially a technical task; it is a final check to make certain that everything in a writer/student's piece is complete and correct. It includes checking spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, capitalization, page set-up, and spacing.

For the purposes of editing or proofreading, students may wish to conduct conferences with their peers in pairs as well as in a larger group (Brown & Hood, 1989; White & Arndt, 1991). Many their pieces will be revised for the classroom audience only; however, some of each student's writing will be published for a wider audience. And as an incentive for students to polish their work, through editing and proofreading, publication is very helpful and encouraging.

Hence, for published material, the teacher will probably wish to assume the final editing and proofreading responsibility. Students need to know that all writers who publish have editors, that is, people who give the writing a final read and look at it in a more detached way. They must become aware that receiving additional comments from an editor does not necessarily reflect on their own editing abilities, because editors are simply able to isolate problems which the writer may not have been able to recognize as he/she is closer to the material.

**2.1.3.8. Publishing (sharing writing with audience)**

For educational purposes, publishing means making public and sharing with others (Fairfax & Moat, 1981, 1998). Hence, students might post their work on a bulletin board, present their work orally, publish in a school or community newspaper, or, perhaps, enter their work in writing or speaking contests. It is essential that students select their best work for publication or sharing, as the selection process encourages them to discriminate and develop criteria for judgement (Fairfax & Moat, 1981, 1998). For these reasons, teachers might establish a regular time in the schedule for students to prepare their work for publication or sharing.

Furthermore, formal publication can be exciting and gratifying for students, although it should not become the focus of the programme. Thus, a student creative writing booklet or magazine can often be published right at the school. Students can, then, enter their own pieces, design the look of the booklet and the cover, and create illustrations.

**2.1.3.9. Conferencing (getting reader feedback)**

Both peer and student-teacher conferencing is an essential component of the creative writing programme. It is useful for student writers to receive feedback on all stages of their works-in-progress (Leki, 1998). However, peer conferences can be destructive rather than constructive if they are not handled well. So, students need to learn how to present their work for feedback and how to give constructive feedback. It is the teacher's responsibility to observe peer conferencing sessions and intervene if they are not progressing in a constructive manner. He/she should prepare appropriate mini-lessons to ensure that students are learning and practising the skills of peer conferencing (White & Arndt, 1991).

Yet, the teacher has to pay attention to the fact that not all students are alike in their need for peer comments, nor are they alike in the ways in which they will find comments useful. Thus, some of them prefer to meet in small groups, while others prefer one on one conferences; others, however, will be best served by teacher conferences. Thus, although students should experience all types of conferences throughout the course, the teacher should attempt to determine their preferences and help them arrange those types which will be most useful to them.