

Designing an online Creative Writing workshop: individual activity

Collection: Online teaching

Resource: Workshopping online

Approximate duration

2 hours

Learning outcomes

1. To reflect on ways in which the Creative Writing workshop might be supported by technology.
2. To have available an extended repertoire of tools and media for engaging students in writing exercises.

Introduction

Workshopping student writing takes place regularly in a Creative Writing course. In this exercise you are going to look at how the process of workshopping student writing might translate into an online experience. The activity starts with a reflective exercise about your experiences of workshopping. Then, you look at three different ways in which student writing is being worked on/evaluated/discussed online by Creative Writing practitioners in the field as a stimulus for thinking about how a workshop idea could be taken online. This then leads to the development of a lesson plan for a Creative Writing workshop of your own.

The activity

1. Start the activity by thinking about your experiences with the Creative Writing workshop. You might like to capture your reflections in a blog, electronic portfolio or an online doc (e.g. a Google doc)
 - What have been your experiences of teaching in a workshop environment? What kind of approach works best? Why is this? Do different approaches work in different contexts...e.g. undergraduate vs postgraduate? Screenwriting vs Poetry?
 - Was workshopping a new teaching approach for you or had you experienced workshopping as a student previously? If so what were your experiences of that?
 - Have you even experienced an online workshop of any sort? Was that successful? Why? If not why not?
 - What doesn't work as well in the workshop?
 - What are the limitations you may encounter in the workshopping format?
 - What do the students think?
 - What does the feedback from your end of module/course surveys tell you?
2. On a piece of paper imagine a teaching situation you might find yourself in in the next few months where a workshop is required. How might you structure a lesson plan for a face-to-face Creative Writing Workshop?
3. In the next part of the activity think about how you might transfer this idea to an online environment. Would you be able to do everything you wanted to do face-to-face? Could you really stimulate the kind of discussion you probably desire online? To help stimulate your thinking about the approach you might use and technologies you might employ to achieve your learning outcomes look through the examples below of ways that colleagues have employed technologies (a Realtime document being updated, Online discussion forums and Synchronous web conferencing). Do any of these approaches give you ideas about how you might take your idea online.
4. Revisit your original plan and revise it for an online environment.
5. Paste your results into your notebook/ recording mechanism of choice.



Materials

1. Real-time workshopping online

Spurred on by the appalling waste of paper, and the limited conceptions of editing, involved in many Creative Writing workshops, Steve May at Bath Spa university introduced *Etherpad (a free online resource) to selected groups of Creative Writing students at Bath Spa University. Etherpad is a web-based collaborative real-time editor , and instant editing(i.e. it allows multiple access to one document at the same time).

Noted benefits:

- The added levels of feedback;
- The diminishing preciousness of writers about their work;
- The value of the "thing" writers could take away with them after the session.

You can view the film on Vimeo now (<http://vimeo.com/21299743>).



*The EtherPad technology employed in this videoclip has been integrated into a number of newer tools on the web since this project took place. One popular one is [Typewithme](http://typewith.me/) (<http://typewith.me/>)



2. Online workshops and discussion forums in the Creative Writing Classroom

Jackie Pieterick and Candi Miller from the University of Wolverhampton asked the question: Can discussion forums be an effective tool for engaging more experienced undergraduate students in writing communities and the Creative Writing ethos? Their chapter in an [English Subject Centre Good Practice Guide to using discussion forums](#) published in 2010 provides a wealth of answers to that question. You can follow the link to the guide on the Issuu website below (p31- 39)

(<http://issuu.com/englishsubjectcentre/docs/onlinediscussion>)

3. Running poetry workshops by web conferencing

In this short clip (13 minutes) , Michael Symmons Roberts talks about how the Creative Writing workshop is reconfigured for an international group of students who never actually meet face-to-face. This talk formed part of an English Subject Centre day long conference on [*Creative Writing: Teaching & Technology](#)



* You can watch other videoclips from the presentations on this day on the [English Subject Centre website](#).



Links & References

- [The Writing Workshop for Dummies: how the new teacher can mentor first-time writing students](#)
- [Online Discussion in English Studies: A Good Practice Guide to Design, Moderation and Assessment](#) (HEA English Subject Centre Report Series, No. 21, 2010). ISBN: 978-1-905846-40-5.
- [TypeWith.me](#) - a replacement for EtherPad, providing live document sharing

Relationship to the Professional Standards Framework

- **Area of Activity 1:** Design and planning of learning activities and / or programmes of study.
- **Core Knowledge 2:** Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- **Professional Values 3:** Commitment to the development of learning communities
- **Professional Values 4:** Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity

More information about the Professional Standards Framework can be obtained from the summary factsheet in the *Subject & Pedagogy* collection in HumBox.

<http://humbox.ac.uk/2731/>

Resources in the Online teaching Collection

- Online teaching: introduction to the collection
- What are VLE's good for?: resource overview
 - What is a VLE and why use it?: group activity
 - What is a VLE and why use it?: individual activity
- The design of online activities in English Studies: resource overview
 - Evaluating online activities in English Studies: group activity
 - Evaluating online activities in English Studies: individual activity
- Designing learning with new media: resource overview



5 | This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.

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- Exploring new media and its potential in teaching: group activity
- Exploring new media and its potential in teaching: individual activity
- Designing an online activity in English Studies: group activity
- Designing an online activity in English Studies: individual activity
- Teaching with digital archives: resource overview
 - Teaching with digital archives: group activity
 - Teaching with digital archives: individual activity
- Online discussion in English Studies: resource overview
 - Should online discussion be assessed?: group activity
 - Should online discussion be assessed?: individual activity
- Workshopping online: resource overview
 - Designing an online Creative Writing workshop: group activity
 - **Designing an online Creative Writing workshop: individual activity (*you are here)**

