

Creative writing

This module is concerned with creative writing in academic environment. Even though the combination of the creative and the academic may seem impossible, they are not opposed poles, believe it or not. We will show you that one cannot exist without the other, we will present writing techniques and teach you to apply them. You have to complete an assignment in this module.

At the completion of the module you should be able to:

- explain in what ways the techniques of creative writing may be used in academic work
- name concrete techniques applicable while writing a scientific text
- apply some of these techniques on your paper (in the concrete, inspiration by an artistic text, inspiration by a visual model, and brainwriting)
- approach the writing of a scientific text in a creative way
- turn a boring research activity (e.g. writing a Bachelor's thesis) into an inspiring and entertaining process

Key concepts

Creative writing - a field dealing with the theory and practice of text creation; acquiring competencies connected with text creation, forming the writer's personality. As a teaching method, it helps you solve problems and acquire key competencies.

Scientific text creation - a process of preparation and writing of a scientific text. It is a complex activity including a large group of theoretical and practical abilities and knowledge.

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1 CREATIVE WRITING

This study material is focused on the techniques of creative writing, above all while writing a scientific paper. These concepts (scientific x creative) may seem very distant; we will try and show you that this is not necessarily the case. You will find that writing a scientific paper may be fun and that you can find inspiration anywhere.

It has surely happened to you that you were supposed to write a paper (seminar, diploma...) and did not know how to move on. Such problems may stress you and lead you to procrastination. Let us do something with it then. First of all we will explain what the terms creative writing and scientific work mean. **Before you find out, however, you will get a small task.**

Divide a sheet of paper into two halves. Draw a mind map on the topic of creative writing on the left half, and a mind map on the topic of scientific work on the right half. What is the result?

How has it come out? The most frequent result is as follows:

You perceive creative writing as:

- something colourful, playful and careless;
- a world in which the letter S may turn into a hissing anaconda, and in which it is not weird at all that the letter I should represent a chimney;
- an area of imagination and the resulting fun.

You most likely describe scientific **work** in a “less colourful” way:

- you see its black and white forms, exact and strict rules;
- you are aware of the importance of statements and opinions declared by frowning and bespectacled scholars.

And maybe you are asking yourselves whether these two worlds can be united in one.

Yes, they can.

Creative writing, that is, cannot do without certain rules, and scientific work cannot do without creative thinking. Thinking cannot be a routine. It needs imagination. The two worlds are thus not contradictory. It is without a question that science is based on sense, concepts and analyses (we do not want to change this). Should we speak of creative writing in scientific work, then, we will think of exercises facilitating scientific work by means of methods of creativity development and problem solving.

There are several such techniques/exercises. Below-mentioned techniques form the basis of brainstorming, mind maps and clustering, among others. They are universal and you can thus use them while writing any text (and not only while writing).

2 MOST IMPORTANT TECHNIQUES

The following labels provide an overview of the most important techniques.

<p>QUESTIONS FORMULATING</p> <p>Solving begins with a question - problem formulation. It is advisable to formulate as many questions as possible; this way you can view the problem from various angles.</p>	<p>THE USE OF EXISTING DATA AND ACQUISITION OF NEW DATA</p> <p>A data overview will allow us to use data to a maximum extent, and show us “white spots” (blanks).</p>
<p>PRODUCTION OF MORE IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS, HYPOTHESES</p> <p>The traditional rational education places emphasis on restraint and economy while solving problems (we formulate only one solution suggestion). It is more effective to formulate more suggestions (the first suggestion is not necessarily the best, so we will be able to choose better).</p>	<p>DATA OVERVIEW AND THEIR ORGANIZATION</p> <p>Problems requiring a creative solution usually have a complicated structure; therefore, a creative procedure places emphasis on the acquisition of data overview (in a written form, in the form of a diagram etc.). This way we perceive the data as a whole, including their parts and mutual relations.</p>
<p>PROBLEM REFORMULATING</p> <p>If we have no idea how to solve a problem, we can try to reformulate it (transform it into a soluble form). We can divide the problem into several sub-problems, simplify it on purpose, or transform it into a more general form.</p>	<p>WILD IDEAS</p> <p>Creative workers purposely try to overcome the traditional viewpoint on things, so they look for extreme and unusual suggestions.</p>
<p>CONNECTING DIVERSE ELEMENTS</p> <p>Wild ideas are usually based on an unconventional connection of several well-known phenomena.</p>	<p>OVERCOMING THE TRADITIONAL VIEWPOINT ON PHENOMENA</p> <p>In order to overcome the traditional viewpoint, we can e.g. ask ourselves: In what other way could we...?</p>
<p>SOLVING DISPUTES, DIALOGUE, DISCUSSION, PROBLEM SOLVING IN A GROUP</p> <p>The resolver may lead a dialogue with themselves (aloud, in writing); a discussion of two or more people is generally easier. While solving complicated problems, it is advisable to search for a solution together; we may cooperate with various specialists, and in this way acquire a complex view.</p>	<p>MODELLING</p> <p>A form of simplifying a problem and its solving by means of a graphic diagram or an external activity (e.g. when we are refurbishing our house, we can draw ground plans, cut furniture out of paper and move it around to see what arrangement is the best).</p>

<p>SPONTANEOUS ASSOCIATIONS, “DREAMING WITH ONE’S EYES OPEN”</p> <p>Unusual associations leading to solutions often occur while we are sleeping, falling asleep, waking up, relaxing etc. We can use this experience on purpose: we devote some time to collected materials (the solution will come of its own accord) and write down ideas which come while we are relaxing or pursuing another activity.</p>	<p>PUTTING PROBLEMS ON ICE, POSTPONEMENT OF THEIR SOLVING</p> <p>If we are unable to find a solution for a longer period of time, we postpone the problem (we relax, devote our time to other work). Our physical condition thus improves, the work ability of nerve cells regenerates, and we are more likely to find a solution.</p>
<p>ANALOGY</p> <p>Analogy means using the experience from solving a similar case in the past.</p>	<p>And others...</p>

3 Creative writing and scientific work

We will summarize what creative writing is.

It is a field dealing with the theoretical aspects of text creation and their application in practice (by means of creative training). We can also perceive it as a creative activity forming the writer’s personality. It is based on a set of methods suitable for the development of creativity and problem solving. As a teaching method, creative writing helps you solve problems and acquire key competencies.

What is scientific creativity, then?

It is a convergent thinking of the left hemisphere. Science without creativity would be mere routine and would not be able to move on. Science needs new questions, approaches...

The techniques of creative writing can be **applied in two stages** - text preparation and writing itself.

The creation of a scientific text can be divided into a preparatory stage and the stage of writing itself.

A. in the preparatory stage:

- examining our feelings (what do I want to write and why?);
- examining the existing knowledge about the paper topic;
- examining our motivation; paper planning;
- collecting ideas and materials (searching for ideas, reading, archiving).

B. in the process of writing itself, you focus on:

- writing training (stylistics, grammar, typography),

- self-assessment,
- assessment.

With every step/point **you can use creative techniques**. Among these techniques are e.g.:

- brainstorming,
- brainwriting,
- mind maps,
- illustrations,
- clusters,
- alphabetaries,
- timelines,
- acrostics,
- instructions,
- automatic texts,
- role-playing,
- inspirations by models...

4 Methods - examples

Inspiration

While collecting ideas, you may use various methods. You already know brainstorming; now we will have a look at a second method - inspiration by a picture. The purpose of this method is to inspire you to acquire new impulses. The model may be anything - a photo, a replica, a postcard. Hand-drawn pictures are perfect.

Look at some picture and write any idea regarding the relationship between the picture and your problem.

Clustering - controlled associations

Now we will have a look at the method of clustering, i.e. a technique of controlled associations. This method was introduced by Gabriele L. Rico in 1976. Both brain hemispheres are used. The right hemisphere works first, and its task is to generate as many associations as possible. The left hemisphere then rationally processes them step by step. Writing is linear, while collecting ideas is non-linear.

Procedure: define a keyword, write it down in the centre of a sheet of paper and circle it, write down associations around this core (in radiuses and lists); when you run out of associations, return to the original word and start over, write down words in a different direction, you can draw links where you feel them appropriate; the resulting cluster will look like a spiderweb, a network or a cluster...

You can pick anything that you think you might use, anything that is inspiring etc. This method is better than brainstorming if you work alone and want to find out the state of your knowledge quickly.

Book titles

This method means you search for new titles of your paper. The purpose of these titles is for you to be able to look at your work from a different viewpoint. You look at your topic from various perspectives and at the same time distance yourselves from a “serious” perception of the paper.

Instructions

Try to reformulate the title of a scientific paper in such a way that it is catching and suitable for publishing as non-fiction and then as a book for children and youth.

Example

The title of a scientific paper:

The motif of graveyard in the works by J. H. Krchovský

Change:

Above one graveyard

Undead, yet lifeless

Once upon a time there was a graveyard

Synectics

You can try the method of synectics, which is based on the work with metaphors and analogies. And works even in situations in which imagination cannot really be applied. The idea of this method is a belief that anything can be connected.

Procedure:

1. describe your problem (for example, “the street noise bothers me”)
2. create analogies as different as possible (the roar of engines, dental drill)
3. create analogies to yourself (I cry for help, sing loudly enough)
4. create fantastic analogies (a battle of giants who move noisily)
5. create emotional analogies (big bang, end of the world)
6. analyse (try to find a solution to all analogies, e.g. battle of giants = try to agree on ending the fight, or take up a shield)
7. apply the solution to the original problem (I will take up a shield => I will study somewhere else; trying to agree on ending the fight => I will discuss my family problems)

SCAMPER

A good method is the method SCAMPER or Osborne's questions. The method is named after Alex Osborne, the father of brainstorming. Each letter represents several questions:

S – Substitute

Which part of the solution may we replace? What can be replaced? You can use something new and original.

C – Combine

Is it possible to join some functioning parts of the solution?

A – Adapt

What change may help solve the problem? Is it possible to use a functioning solution from a different field/different work?

M – Modify

Can you change anything in the current solution? A function, a shape, anything... Can you add anything or take anything away?

P – Put to another use

Is it possible to use the current solution in a different way? Who could use it?

E – Eliminate

What will happen if you eliminate some parts? Can you eliminate an element which is generally used?

R – Reverse

What can be regrouped? Turn everything upside down. Look at the solution from a different viewpoint and turn its every part.

Summary

You have learned that creative techniques may easily be applied while writing a scientific paper. Scientific work cannot do without imagination, it needs new questions and impulses.

We have not mentioned all methods of course; they are many. These are mere suggestions. If you want to learn other methods as well, have a look at recommended literature.