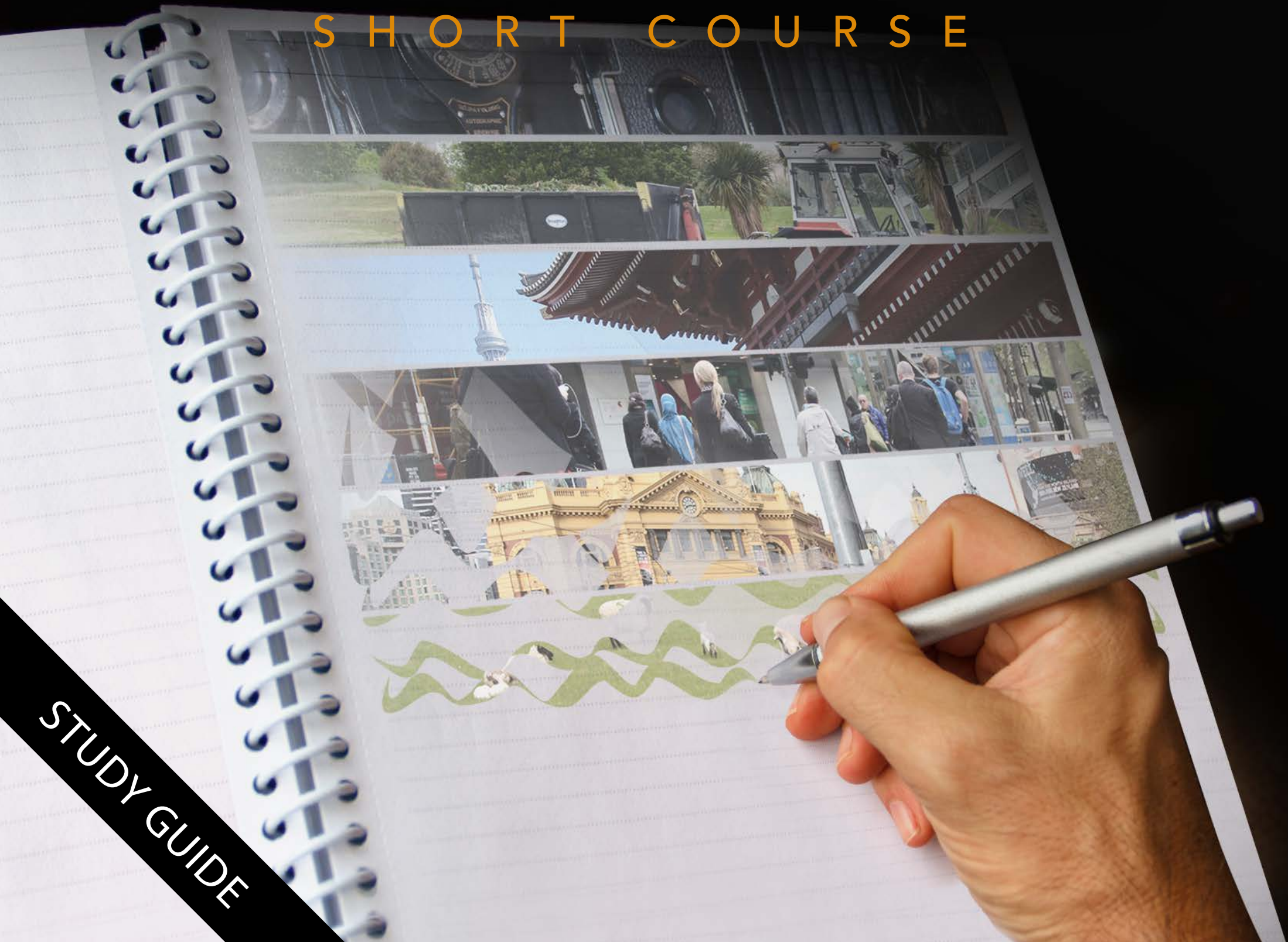


Creative Writing

BASICS

SHORT COURSE



STUDY GUIDE

HOW TO WORK THROUGH THIS COURSE

Over the following pages, you will move through a logical, self-paced learning experience that can enlighten and educate you on creative writing basics.

It is important from the outset to understand that learning about something is not the same as just reading about it. Learning implies a permanent change in what you know and can do.

Anyone can read a book and understand it; but for most people the detail of what you read is largely forgotten.

Reading something once only puts information into short-term memory. It is soon lost if you don't 'work' on it. Studying the same information takes longer, but by thinking about it and processing it you can transfer that information to long-term memory. This way, you will enhance your ability to recall and apply that information for years to come. If you take your time to work through the 6 lessons that follow, you will learn.

Read, Reflect, Research, Revise

Throughout the following pages, you will find not only things to read about, but also things to do:

1. Throughout each lesson, there are suggestions of things to do under the headings "Learn More". These are all sorts of ideas about things you can do in order to explore the subject further.
2. At the end of each lesson, there is an interactive selfassessment test (assignment), for you to undertake. When you click on this, your computer needs to be online. You will be taken to our cloud-based online school. The answers you choose will be evaluated immediately, and your results can be seen on completion of each test. You can return and repeat tests if you wish.

Undertaking these tasks will involve reflection, research and revision of the topics you read about. By repeatedly encountering each topic in different ways, your perspective on each subject will broaden, and the commitment of information to longer term memory will strengthen.

You don't need to undertake all of the suggested tasks if you don't want to; but we strongly recommend that you do some in each lesson, and that you take all of the self-assessment tests.

The more time you spend doing these things, the stronger your learning will be.

Completing the Course

After completing all 6 lessons you will be presented with a final assessment which can also be undertaken online.

Do not attempt to do this until you have worked through all 6 lessons, and feel like you have learnt the subject well.

Upon finishing this final assessment you will immediately see your final results, and you can save a pdf copy of those results as a "Certificate of Completion".

Welcome Audio

Click the button below to listen to the welcome audio for this course. This feature is supported by most computers and some mobile devices.



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LESSON 1 SCOPE AND NATURE OF CREATIVE WRITING

Many of us harbour a fantasy about being a creative writer, but what do we really mean by that? If we were to divide writing into two broad categories these would usually be fiction and non-fiction. Most people would consider creative writing to fall under the category of fiction, and indeed it usually does. In recent years however, a new genre of writing known as creative non-fiction has emerged in which the goal is to write a factual account which reads like fiction, but which utilises literary techniques. Creative non-fiction might be regarded as a hybrid between fiction and non-fiction.

Others would argue that many other forms of writing can be creative regardless of whether they are fiction or not. The words chosen and the way they are combined can still be creative even if the writer is simply writing down the facts of a particular incident from a news story, or writing about a new style of dress in a fashion magazine. For the purposes of this book however, our emphasis will be mainly on fiction and creative non-fiction writing.



DEFINITIONS OF CREATIVE WRITING

It is difficult to offer an absolute definition of creative writing. Perhaps even to attempt to do so would be somewhat paradoxical. A broad definition of creative writing would be something along the lines of “an open and imaginative form of writing in which the author freely expresses their unique thoughts and feelings”. It is the focus on authenticity, imagination, and expression which separates creative writing from other forms.

In an attempt to clarify what creative writing is, Mary Lee Marksbury (Foundation of Creativity, 1963) quotes Witty and LaBrant who stated that creative writing is:

“A composition of any type of writing at any time primarily in the service of such needs as

- The need for keeping records of significant experience,

LEARN MORE >>>

Suggested Tasks

Before leaving this page; write your own one sentence definition of Creative Writing; on a piece of paper. Put this paper away until the end of the course.

- The need for sharing experience with an interested group, and
- The need for free individual expression which contributes to mental and physical health.”

From this we can see that the authors emphasise how creative writing fulfils certain needs in the writer.

Creative writing is any writing that is original. This means it can include anything that did not exist before the writer created it. As such, a writer may construe an original interpretation of a well-known story, and this may still be regarded as creative writing. Although they have not generated the main story line, they have created their own take on it.

History is strewn with examples of stories which have been rewritten over the centuries. If you consider the story of Little Red Riding Hood, there are many versions of the story. It began as a folk tale before being first penned by Charles Perrault in France in the seventeenth century. Later versions include those of the German Brothers Grimm in the nineteenth century which were based upon two German interpretations of the tale. In addition, several different films have been created. Each version portrays the author's unique stance, their own expression of creativity. When re-interpreting a story one must be careful to avoid plagiarism, something which will be reviewed in detail later in this book.

Creative writing also makes use of many literary techniques which may stimulate the reader's imagination, keep them interested, enable them to connect with the characters, and stimulate their emotions. Unlike non-fiction where the emphasis is on conveying facts in a precise and comprehensible fashion,

fiction often employs abstract thoughts and concepts which encourage the reader to apply their own interpretations and make their own conclusions.

PLOTS IN CREATIVE WRITING

There have been many attempts to classify the plots underlying creative writing. One of the first to do this was a Frenchman named Georges Polti in the nineteenth century. He studied Greek classical literature and compiled a list of thirty-six plots which he referred to as 'situations'. He claimed these situations, which included things like madness, adultery, murder, abduction, disaster, and ambition, underlay all creative writing. These situations were published as a guide for writers and dramatists.

Later, in the early twentieth century, Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch, a writer and literary critic, argued that there were only seven plots based around conflicts which could be used in any story:

- Man against nature
- Man against man
- Man against himself
- Man against God
- Man against society
- Man caught in the middle
- Man and woman

Other have suggested there are ten plots, and yet others reduce these to five or even just three. This doesn't give an awful lot of scope for originality of expression and drastically reduces the

odds of producing something which is not a repeat of someone else's work.

You may question whether all plots can be explained through such simplistic rules as the ones listed above, however if you take these general headings and translocate them into the modern world, you will probably find that you are hard pushed to think of a plot that could not be explained in some way by one of these. For example:

- Avatar – man against nature, man against man, man against himself, man against god, man and woman, man caught in the middle
- 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (Jules Verne) – man against nature, man against man, man against himself, man against society, man caught in the middle.

Using Quiller-Couch's plots above, 'God' could mean:

- Those in control
- An alien being
- A superior person.

It does not specifically have to be a deity. 'Man and woman' could be about relationships between:

- Men and women
- Men and men
- Women and women
- Family members
- Friends, and so on.

Others have argued that there are more plots than this - that the seven basic plots, or any other specific number, is an oversimplification. Whilst many beginners courses and books on the topic attempt to reduce plots down to a given number, plots are far more complex than this. They are formed on many different levels and may go off on any number of tangents. Therefore, whilst reducing plots down to a particular list of possibilities might be useful in attempting to analyse and understand the story, it does not shed much light on the direction of the plot.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE - CREATIVE

How much originality does writing need in order to be creative? The heading of this section lends itself from Shakespeare but is it creative to play on his words or is it 'old hat' and clichéd? To some extent our perceptions of creativity are influenced by our own experiences, but they are also influenced by the views and opinions of others.

An advertising slogan that seems to be original would ordinarily be considered creative. A fiction story based upon an old classic (e.g. modern versions of 'Snow White') might also be thought of as creative, but is it as creative as the advertising slogan? Arguably it is not because it is a recreation of a familiar story rather than something entirely new.

If you take a biographical story and change parts of it to protect the names of people involved, or to make events more sensational than they really were - is this creative writing? Based upon what was discussed under definitions of creative writing we would have to conclude that it is, but we might also consider that perhaps the parts that were contrived were more creative than the rest.

LEARN MORE >>>

Suggested Tasks

Think of some books or shorts stories that you have read and try to decide on the plots that are covered in the story. Do you think seven plots is enough?